apparences d'une version condensée, d'un « digest » mal digéré, aboutit à une déperdition du propos ultime de Roy.

Au bout du compte, le portrait qui se dégage de cette Gabrielle Roy traduite est en adéquation avec le rapport difficile, souvent souffrant, qu'a eu cette écrivaine avec l'Autre, aussi bien en elle qu'au dehors.

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James Simpson. *Burning to Read: English Fundamentalism and Its Reformation Opponents*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007. 368 pp.; US \$27.95 ISBN 9780674026711

Few moments in the history of reading are as complex as the Protestant Reformation, and few provide a greater sense of reading's immense cultural significance. In *Burning to Read: English Fundamentalism and Its Reformation Opponents*, James Simpson contends that early sixteenth-century England underwent a widespread crisis in which old systems of institutional and social faith were replaced with a rigidly literal and deeply suspicious adherence to texts. He argues that this phenomenon was instigated by what he problematically assumes to be the "impersonal technology of printing," along with new forms of commercial and political rationalization (230). This suspicious approach to texts was perpetuated by the literalism demanded by reformers (referred to here as "evangelicals"), a mode of reading which produced overwhelming social, political, and psychic consequences that we are still confronting.

Martin Luther and William Tyndale constructed Scripture as an absolute locus of authority interpretable outside any institution (a crucial strategy, given their unstinting denunciations of the Roman Catholic Church). Simpson adroitly unpacks the numerous contradictions that arise from the assumptions that Scripture is self-interpreting and that it must be read according to strict literalism. He reveals how, inevitably, evangelicals were forced to acknowledge that interpretation requires something prior to the text (ultimately this "something" turns out to be divine election, whose presence or absence explains why some can read Scripture "properly" and others cannot, even though Scripture is ostensibly transparent). Along these lines, Simpson effectively illuminates an array of other

evangelical paradoxes: reformers perpetually use the allegorical mode they ostensibly eschew; their initial enthusiasm about individual Christians' right to read Scripture for themselves swiftly transforms into reading guides and then repressive constraints on hermeneutic possibility. Simpson hones in on the destructive results of this reading program: the rigidly literalist mindset inevitably leads to a plethora of conflicting interpretations, and then to authoritarianism, paranoia, and persecution. He makes the interesting argument that vehement conviction of biblical simplicity inevitably leads to a hermeneutics of suspicion about everything else, including one's fellow evangelicals.

The major alternative to this regime was offered by Thomas More, and its historical rejection is catastrophic for Simpson. For More, Scripture can be legitimately interpreted only under the divinely-instituted auspices of the Roman Catholic Church. True interpretation is part of the gradual unfolding of God's revelation: More's sensitivity to the historical nature of meaning contrasts sharply with the evangelicals' rejection of history as error and recasting of the Law and Gospel as elements of individual psychic struggle. Coinciding with our present understanding that interpretation is always situated and historical (Simpson aligns More with contemporary philosophical pragmatism), for More reading always involves prior knowledge and occurs within a specific interpretive community. Meaning cannot be confined to the literal, but rather depends on pre-textual circumstances.

More is difficult to construct as a hero, though. Attempting to account for More's zealous persecution of evangelicals, Simpson opines that More was infected with his opponents' violent traits. Simpson suggests, but does not provide an argument for, a connection between More's obsessive, word-for-word quoting of his opponents and his brutal desire to see them burned at the stake. Simpson blames More's viciousness on the "punishing disciplines" of "distrustful literalism," describing it as a "virus" acquired through years of writing polemics in the impersonal, decontextualizing medium of print (260–61).

These literalist and proto-pragmatist approaches to reading, represented respectively by the evangelicals and by More, resonate powerfully in our own time, and Simpson frames his history with the contemporary dichotomy of fundamentalism and liberalism. He states that liberals have erroneously tended to perceive their historical roots in the reformers' rejection of institutional authority and ostensible celebration of individuals' rights to read for themselves. By focusing on what he repeatedly calls its "dark" features, evangelical reading emerges as wholly authoritarian and

bound to an exclusionary predestinarian theology which divided elect from reprobate, and right from wrong readers. Indubitably, when these features are foregrounded the early Reformation appears as anything but the source of liberalism; indeed, Simpson contends that we should understand the evangelical movement as the source of fundamentalism, liberalism's chief enemy.

However, given Simpson's avowed liberal sympathies, and despite his laudable commitment to reaching beyond both a simplistic celebration of evangelicals as liberators and a reductive dismissal of anti-evangelicals, his treatment of some of the more problematic features of More is surprising. More writes that God has designated some to be readers and some to be mere hearers: the mass of Christians need to have the Bible mediated for them by an authoritarian institution that can legitimately deny them access. This appears to be a general principle for More, not a special practice implemented to combat heresy. Simpson frequently points out that More was not opposed to making the Bible available in the vernacular; he places less emphasis, however, on More's belief that Scripture should be administered to the laity by the clergy, who would, if necessary, prohibit access entirely.

In an attempt to reframe the discussion, Simpson contends that to focus on the Church depriving lay readers of the Bible is misleading, and that we need to concentrate instead on how More's polemics "are about differing definitions of self and communities that derive from different reading practices" (32). Even if we accept this assumption about priority, which obscures fundamental issues of institutional power, it remains that More's understanding of self and community hinges on an authoritarian system of suppression (as, indeed, did that of his evangelical opponents). Simpson writes that the "social distrust" of the evangelicals "is everywhere answered by More's hermeneutics of credible, unwritten sources of confidence," which is "always ... underwritten by communal understanding" (257). While this description of More's hermeneutics might reveal why Christians trust Scripture to be the Word of God, it leaves out the extent to which the institutional context of Morean reading is founded on distrust of the layperson. Despite Simpson's condemnation of evangelicals for their relentless suspicion and drive to persecute, and his own championing of liberalism, he puzzlingly avoids the distrust and exclusion at the heart of More's model of reading.

While in many ways Simpson's account of the early English Reformation is hardly revolutionary—it reflects a familiar picture of a communal, organic society sundered by the paranoid individualism

of modernity—this book represents a salutary effort to energize study of the Reformation by setting it alongside one of the most pressing social and political issues of our present moment. Though the term “fundamentalism,” as Simpson acknowledges, is of twentieth-century coinage, in many ways Luther and Tyndale’s reading regime bears significant resemblance to contemporary forms of scriptural fundamentalism. We are all familiar with the extent to which, on the basis of a literal understanding of their sacred texts, today’s fundamentalists argue against cultural relativism and reject the liberal notion that we must continually reassess sacred texts in light of historical change.

Still, despite his productive framework, and his assertion that sixteenth-century literalism has a direct impact on our present moment (222), Simpson offers no analysis or even description of contemporary fundamentalist reading programs. His book is essentially a study of several decades of sixteenth-century reading, bookended by cursory references to present-day fundamentalism, a cultural formation treated as stable and transparent. Understanding “fundamentalism” as a single, straightforward object is problematic: contemporary forms of fundamentalist religion are sites of contestation and contain manifold and conflicting hermeneutic assumptions and convictions. They are clearly not identical with early-modern literalism. Fundamentalist reading programs in all religious traditions undergo significant evolution over time. What exactly is the relationship, then, between early sixteenth-century “fundamentalism” and the fundamentalisms of today? While these issues are not addressed by Simpson, he does offer a valuable entry into this discussion with a passionate and provocative argument which will doubtless bring about renewed attention to our troubling Reformation roots.

TRAVIS DECOOK

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D.F. McKenzie and Maureen Bell. *A Chronology and Calendar of Documents Relating to the London Book Trade 1641–1700*. 3 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. Vol. 1: xviii, 643 pp.; £85.00 ISBN 0198184107. Vol. 2: viii, 458 pp.; £85.00 ISBN 0198181760. Vol. 3: viii, 468 pp.; £85.00 ISBN 0199285586

These three beautifully produced volumes provide a remarkable account of printing and publishing in London in the late seventeenth