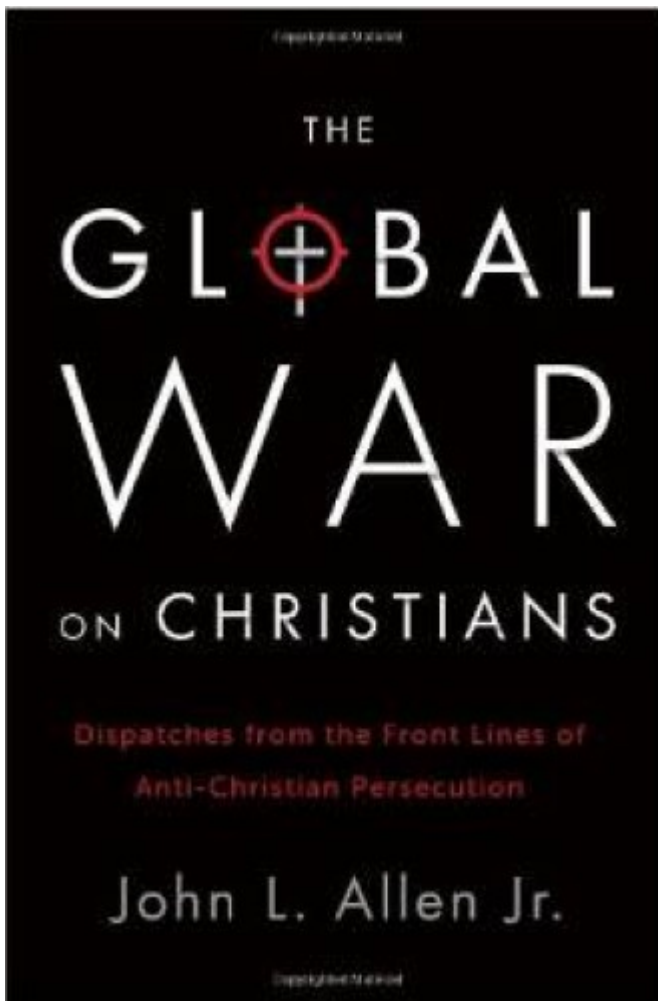


Global Christianity & American religious history

selected by [Philip Jenkins](#) and [Grant Wacker](#)

This review appears in the [October 15, 2014](#) issue.

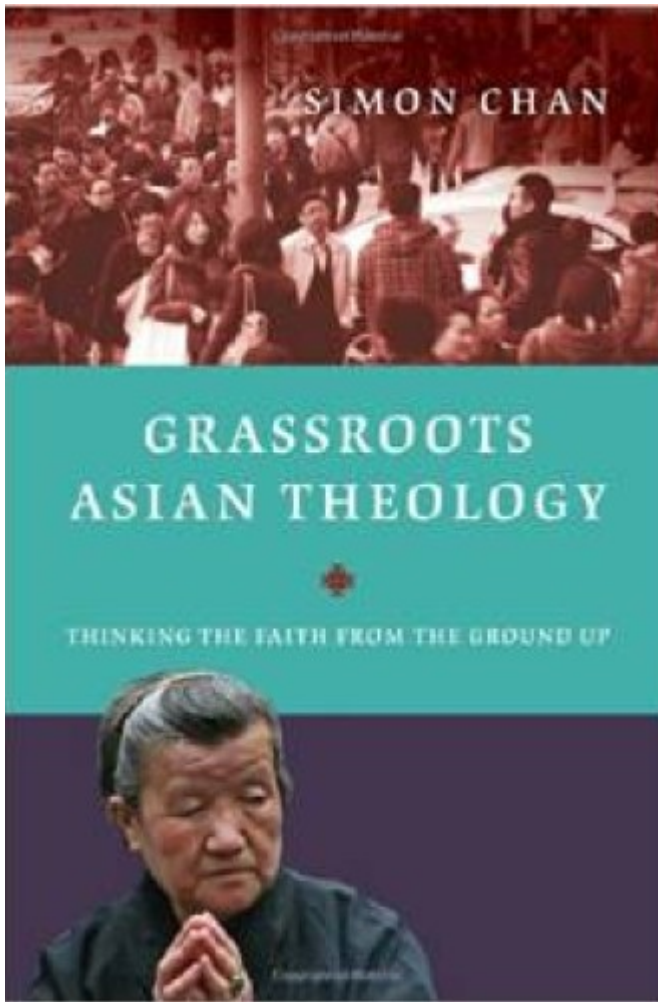
In Review



The Global War on Christians

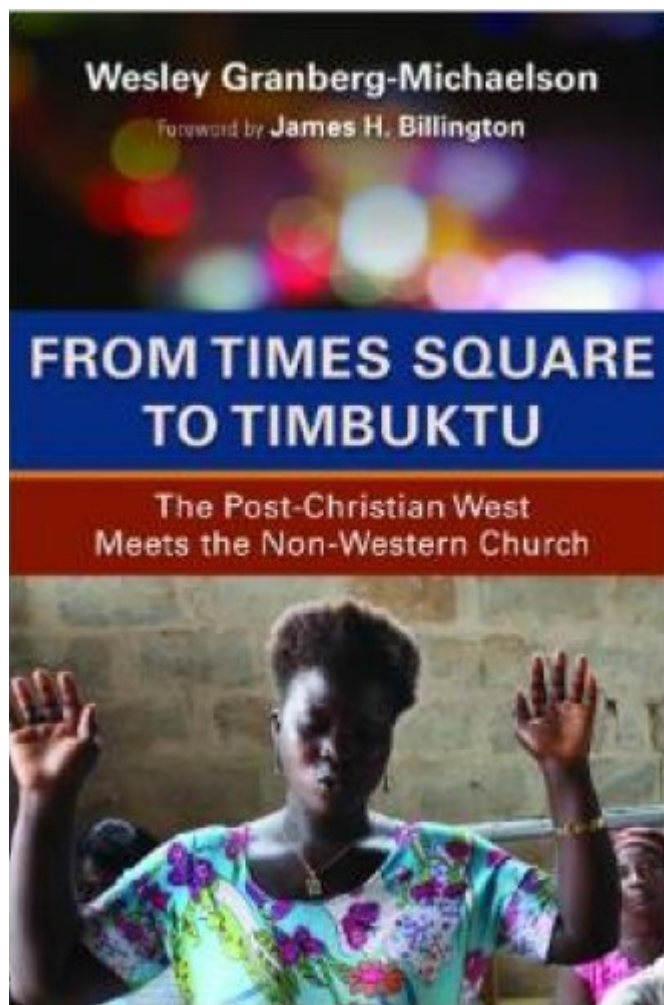
by John L. Allen Jr.

Image



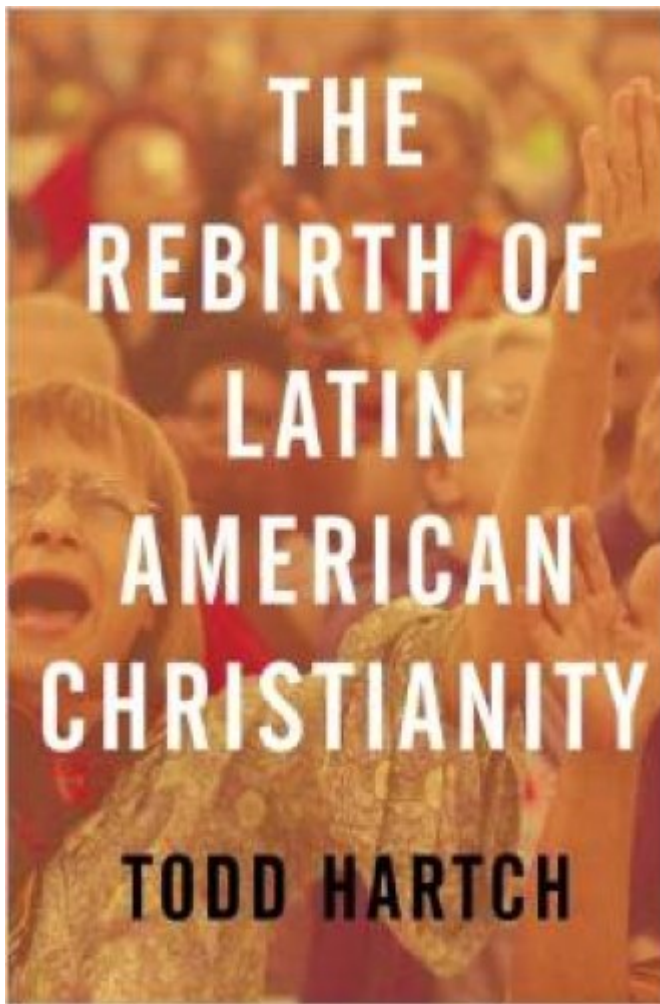
Grassroots Asian Theology

by Simon Chan
IVP Academic



From Times Square to Timbuktu

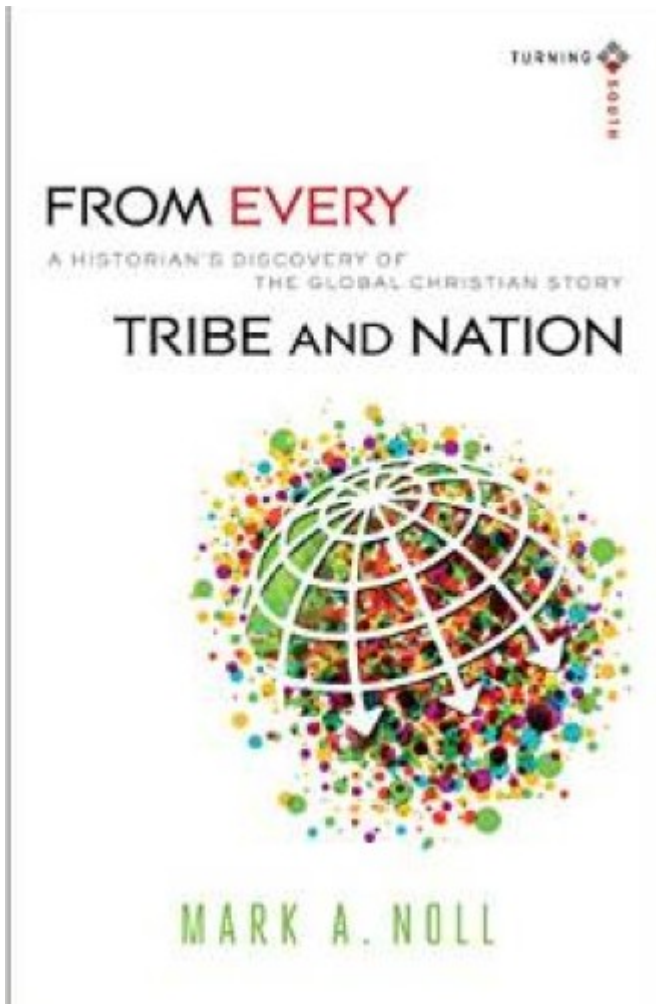
by Wesley Granberg-Michaelson
Eerdmans



The Rebirth of Latin American Christianity

by Todd Hartch

Oxford University Press



From Every Tribe and Nation

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Baker Academic

ELLEN HARMON WHITE

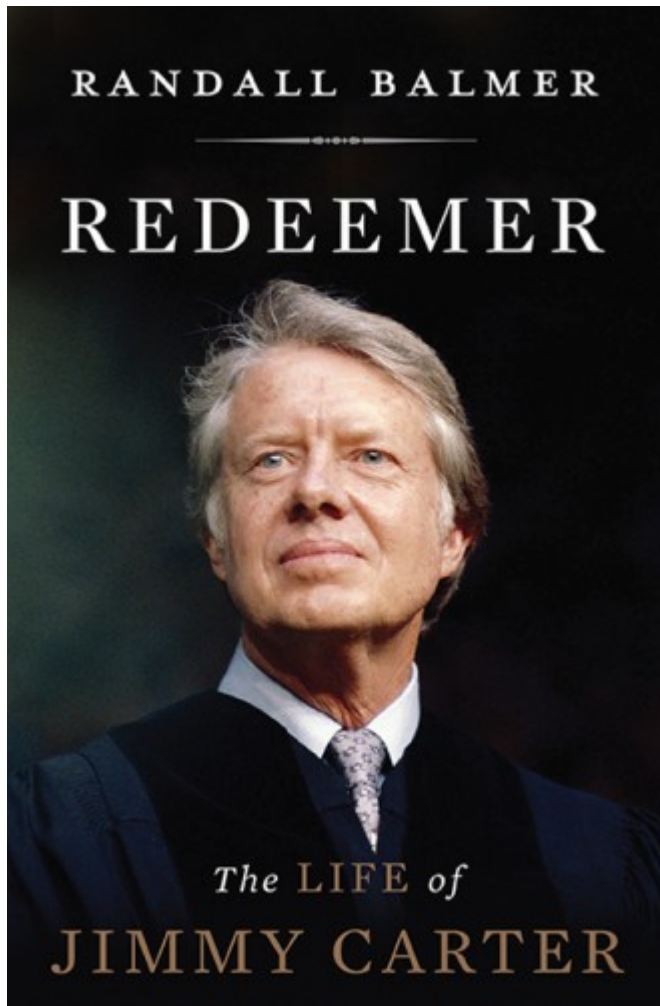


American Prophet

Edited by TERRIE DOPP AAMODT,
GARY LAND, and RONALD L. NUMBERS

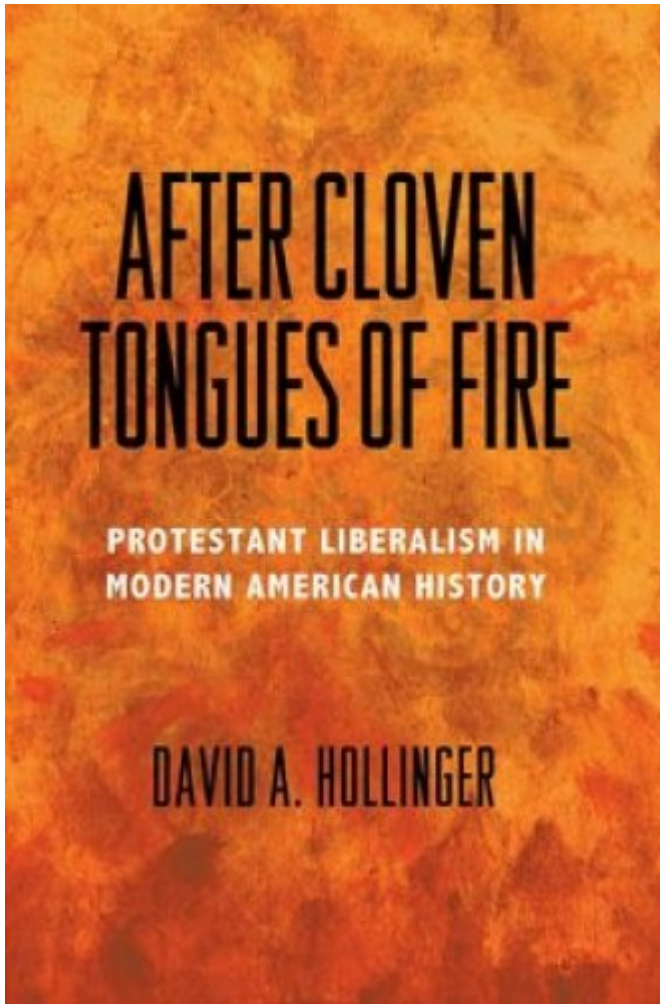
Ellen Harmon White

edited by Terrie Dopp Aamodt, Gary Land, and Ronald L. Numbers
Oxford University Press



Redeemer

By Randall Balmer
Basic Books



After Cloven Tongues of Fire

By David A. Hollinger
Princeton University Press

BLESSED



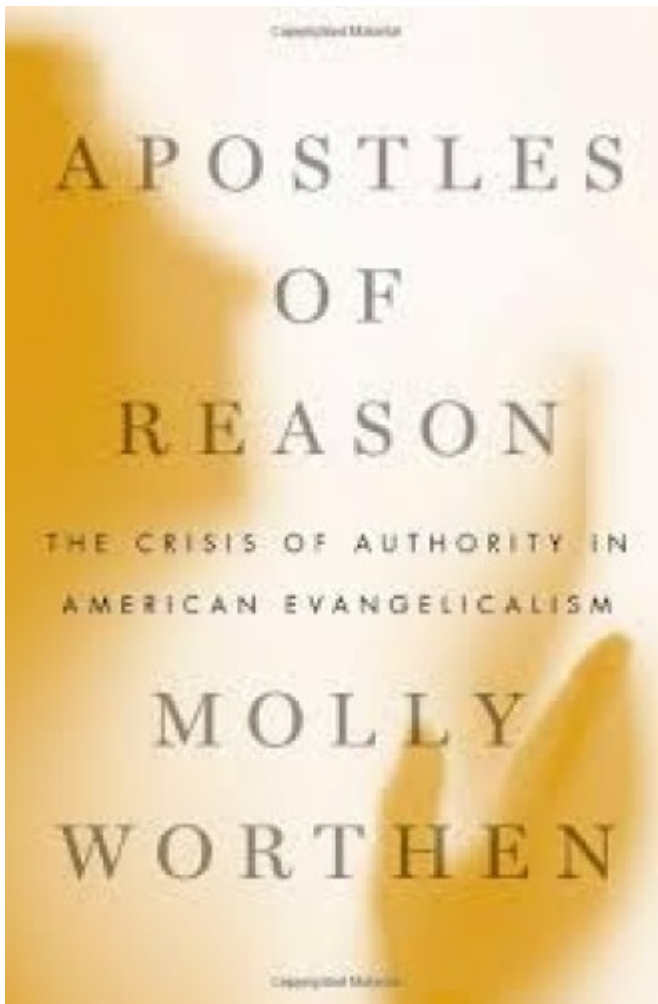
A History of the American Prosperity Gospel

KATE BOWLER

Blessed

Kate Bowler

Oxford University Press



Apostles of Reason

By Molly Worthen

Oxford University Press

The Global War on Christians: Dispatches from the Front Lines of Anti-Christian Persecution, by John L. Allen Jr. Thankfully the West has become a little more aware of the violence and mayhem directed against Christians globally, but Allen's catalog of atrocities stuns and enrages nonetheless. It gains its power from the author's very wide knowledge of conflicts around the world, and also from his refusal to focus excessively on any one culprit. Had it been written by a more simplistic author, *The Global War on Christians* could have turned into an anti-Islamic tract, which this certainly is not. Read and weep.

Grassroots Asian Theology: Thinking the Faith from the Ground Up, by Simon Chan. Particularly in charismatic forms, Christianity has spread widely across Asia in recent

years. Plenty of elite and academic authors have interpreted the emerging faith, but it is a pleasure to read Chan's account of the thought world of ordinary believers and their communities. Just how are concepts like the Trinity and the work of the Holy Spirit presented in Asian contexts? Chan does an admirable job of addressing Catholic and Orthodox traditions, as well as Protestant and Pentecostal.

From Times Square to Timbuktu: The Post-Christian West Meets the Non-Western Church, by Wesley Granberg-Michaelson. This book is a thoughtful exploration of the implications of shifts in Christianity worldwide, with particular emphasis on congregations and institutions in the Global North, in light of modern-day mass migrations. Granberg-Michaelson suggests that we should see each and every migrant as a potential missionary.

The Rebirth of Latin American Christianity, by Todd Hartch. In recent decades, Latin America has witnessed an upsurge of new forms of evangelical and Pentecostal Christianity, which has in turn provoked Catholic revival movements. Hartch's book gives us a valuable and accessible survey of these trends, covering both Catholic and Protestant aspects. He also discusses modern developments in terms of the deeper history of the continent and its original phases of Christianization.

From Every Tribe and Nation: A Historian's Discovery of the Global Christian Story, by Mark A. Noll. If you are looking for a single book to guide you through the emerging study of world Christianity, this should be the one. Noll packs a remarkable amount of material into a short space, including a moving account of his personal discovery of the wider Christian world. His breadth of cultural knowledge continues to amaze and delight. This is going to be a classic in the field.

Ellen Harmon White: American Prophet, edited by Terrie Dopp Aamodt, Gary Land, and Ronald L. Numbers. Ellen Harmon White (1827–1915), the effective founder of the Seventh-day Adventists, is one of the most creative and influential figures in American religious history. She was a prolific writer. One book alone, *Steps to Christ*, saw a circulation of 100 million copies in 165 languages. Adventists now number 18 million adherents and boast some of the largest education, hospital, publishing, and missionary programs in the world. This volume of scholarly essays, crafted by nearly two dozen distinguished scholars from both inside and outside the tradition, addresses multiple aspects of White's life, legacy, and social and cultural environment. All of the contributions are deeply researched, fluidly written, and imaginatively argued. (Full disclosure: I wrote a very brief foreword for this

substantial and remarkably wide-ranging volume.—GW)

Redeemer: The Life of Jimmy Carter, by Randall Balmer. Once again Balmer proves that he is one of the finest narrative historians in the business. In this fast-paced biography of Jimmy Carter, he weaves social and especially political history into a revealing examination of the powerful role that evangelical faith played in Carter's life. Balmer persuasively argues that Carter found his true role—his ministry, if you will—after he left the presidency, in his compassionate endeavors and forceful advocacy of human rights. Balmer does not hide his admiration for Carter, but he also candidly acknowledges Carter's political missteps. In the deeply moving epilogue, Balmer describes a recent personal visit with Carter and offers a theologically informed rumination on the meaning of Carter's life.

After Cloven Tongues of Fire: Protestant Liberalism in Modern American History, by David A. Hollinger. In these tightly argued, elegantly written interlocking essays, Hollinger, one of America's premier historians, examines the career of liberal Protestantism in the United States. He argues that the numerical decline of the mainline, which began in the 1960s, has been accompanied by steady growth in its influence on broadly progressive currents in American life. The mainline's solicitude for equality, justice, and pluralism expressed itself in social movements that pursued those same goals through secular means. The gem in the volume is an autobiographical essay in which Hollinger charts his own pilgrimage from the provincial German Baptist Brethren faith of his youth to the secular cosmopolitan view that has informed his appreciation of the mainline's enduring strength.

Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel, by Kate Bowler. *Blessed* tracks the history of the millions of believers who have turned to megachurch pastors and televangelists in search of spiritual, physical, and financial abundance. Reviews of the book brim with superlatives: "tour de force," "razor sharp," "expertly executed," and "stunningly empathetic." Bowler shows how the prosperity gospel movement has drawn from multiple denominational, racial, ethnic, and even secular subtraditions. She identifies both the dazzling diversity and the common understandings that have given the prosperity gospel coherence. Though the focus is primarily American, Bowler looks at Canadian and developing world versions too. She treats prosperity partisans, especially laity, with respect, and with remarkable subtlety she shows how to appreciate the human texture of the story without endorsing all of the prosperity gospel's theological claims.

Apostles of Reason: The Crisis of Authority in American Evangelicalism, by Molly Worthen. This book's virtues are many. The prose alone—consistently clear and vigorous, and sparkling with memorable turns of phrase—is worth the price of admission. Worthen argues that evangelicals' core identity lies in a common set of questions about authority, especially about the role of the Bible and the Bible's accuracy. She shifts the focus from tired discussions about culture wars and kitsch trends to a respectful, though not uncritical, analysis of the serious ideas that energized the evangelical movement. It is a singular accomplishment.