and the Reformed tradition; and a fairly lengthy account of the changes that transpired in various other European countries (France, Scandinavia, Scotland, Poland, Hungary).

The reader is sure to be impressed by the lucid, pleasing, narrative quality of this history. It is engaging, informative, and learned without being overly technical. Hillerbrand gives due weight to the religious significance of, and motivation for, the Reformation movement without neglecting the crucial, perhaps inevitable, social and political factors that shaped the course of events. With the appearance of this book, he has certainly eclipsed his earlier 1971 offering, both in terms of breadth and depth. While this book is listed at 504 pages, including the helpful bibliography and index, the type is quite small and thus reads as a much longer work. The footnotes are kept to a bare minimum, with the attending strengths and weaknesses of such an approach, and often include foreign language sources largely inaccessible, at least to novice students of the Reformation (e.g., Luther and Calvin are cited from the Weimar Ausgabe and Corpus Reformatorum editions of their works, with no corresponding English citations). Those interested in full-orbed treatments of Calvin and Zwingli (among other Reformation luminaries) may find themselves a bit disappointed by the comparatively scant attention paid them, insofar as Hillerbrand has chosen to focus in particular on the burgeoning developments in Luther’s Germany, as well as the subsequent impact of those developments in England and in various countries yet to attract widespread scholarly interest. Although this book seems especially suited to graduate level courses in Reformation history or theology, it would likely fare well in upper-level undergraduate instruction as well and is surely not to be missed by scholars of the Reformation.

—Marcus Johnson


In *Between Faith and Unbelief* Elisabeth Hurth explores the limits of belief in American Transcendentalism and the role that German biblical criticism and philosophy played in both expressing and testing those limits. By arguing that “atheism was part of the discursive and religious context from which American Transcendentalism emerged” (1), Hurth shifts the focus on Transcendentalist faith from its relationship with establishment Unitarian orthodoxy to its critical preoccupation with the skepticism of German biblical critics such as Reimarus, Eichhorn, and Strauss, and the philosophy of Feuerbach and Schopenhauer. Indeed, when Andrews Norton, Unitarianism’s leading scholar, decried the “atheistical” tendencies of Emerson and his “new school” coreligionists, he likely had no idea how close to the truth he may have been. As Hurth is careful to point out, atheism can mean several things, and in antebellum New England it generally connoted the rejection of the supernatural God of historical Christianity.
To be sure, while what has been called Emerson’s “ego-theism” was at least that, he and many of his Transcendentalist colleagues went much further, denying the personality of God and identifying the principle of divinity as something universal, a force as much within the human soul as external to it. So amorphous an understanding of divinity contains within it the seeds of atheism, particularly when joined with the hyperemphasis on the autonomy of the soul so characteristic of Transcendentalism’s leading lights. How far this actually is from Feuerbach’s projectionist theory of God has been a matter of some debate in Transcendentalist studies. Hurth’s research here suggests a much closer relationship than has traditionally been accepted.

Hurth locates this specter of Transcendentalist unbelief in the University of Göttingen and its biblical critics (chap. 1). The first three decades of the nineteenth century constituted something of a German mania among the theological community in America with some of its best students traveling to German universities to learn the latest in exegesis and theology. The eagerness with which American students took up their studies in Germany was not often matched by the professors and ministers they left behind. Nearly every biblical scholar in America expressed real doubt and concern with the historic-critical methods taught in the German universities, often equating these higher critical methods with “deism and with mere ‘irreligion’ or atheism” (11). Hurth’s account of the correspondence between the Emerson brothers (William in Göttingen, Ralph Waldo at home in Boston) is representative of the threat German critical methods presented to American theological sensibilities, both orthodox and Unitarian alike. Having gone to Germany with every intention of training for the ministry, William abandoned these plans within a few short months, laying his decision at the feet of Eichhorn’s teaching (17). As history records, Ralph Waldo would later follow his brother in exiting the ministry, albeit in much more dramatic fashion and with far more implications for American religion. Yet, there were many more who returned from German universities no longer assured of the historical veracity of the gospel narratives and in particular of the events of Jesus’ life. This skepticism ran exactly counter to the evidentialist bent of American biblical exegesis and was opposed by orthodox and Unitarian practitioners alike. It was not long before intuition and experience replaced miracles and historical as the bywords of biblical studies (28). Soon enough evidence for the truth of religion shifted from the historical to the intuitive as the Gospels came to be accepted more as myth than historically reliable accounts. This unreliability only served to legitimate the Transcendentalist acceptance of the “intuitive basis of religion against the Unitarian reliance on biblical miracles” (50).

The skepticism brought back to American classrooms and pulpits did not at first find much fertile ground. While some such as Henry Hedge refused to teach what they had learned in Germany others simply abandoned theology and biblical studies for occupations without potential for
ideological conflict. Still, there was enough of a skeptical spirit afoot to at least entertain the radical conclusions of Strauss’s *Das Leben Jesu*. Indeed, Hurth makes Strauss a main character in her account and a much more important influence in American Transcendentalism than has often been recognized (Octavius Brooks Frothingham’s classic study *Transcendentalism in New England* references Strauss only once, as does Paul F. Boller’s *American Transcendentalism, 1830–1860: An Intellectual Inquiry*. Even Philip F. Gura’s widely praised new volume, *American Transcendentalism, A History*, treats little of Strauss’s influence on Transcendentalist thought.). By Hurth’s lights, Strauss plays a significant role in Transcendentalism’s final sloughing off of Unitarian evidentialism and reliance on the miraculous as credentials of faith. More than a few among even the Transcendentalists were put off by Strauss’s mythologizing of the gospel accounts, and Unitarians used Theodore Parker’s positive review of Strauss’s work in the July 1840 *Christian Examiner* to brand him an infidel and outright atheist—America’s own David Strauss. Yet, in the end neither Parker nor even his most radical colleagues could fully embrace Strauss’s Hegelian interpretation of Christ as a merely accidental symbol and of a divinity whose true location was found ultimately in the whole of the human race (64, 74). Hurth does well here in parsing the fine line between Transcendentalism’s barely qualified acceptance of much of Strauss’s program and methods and what would have constituted a full-on embrace of his own positions. Still, one is left to wonder (as Hurth herself seems to do) what exactly it is that keeps Transcendentalism from sliding over completely into unbelief. Whatever it was, even Transcendentalism as a movement was never able to completely dispense with the “ideal Christ” even though his essential historicity was at odds with transcendentalist intuitionism (91).

The final half of the book deals primarily with Transcendentalism’s engagement with German philosophy, most primarily in the work of Ludwig Feuerbach and Arthur Schopenhauer. Here again, the conceptual analogues between Transcendentalism and Feuerbach’s philosophy appears to push it to the brink of unbelief, despite the apparent incompatibility of Transcendentalism’s idealist metaphysics and Feuerbach’s radical materialism. However, Emerson’s insistence on revelation as a disclosure of the soul and the identification of self-reliance with God-reliance is but a short move from “the subjective proposition that religious truth coincides with man’s spiritual needs and desires” (106). That Parker once declared Feuerbach to have been a better witness for the Christian faith than Jonathan Edwards and his fire-and-brimstone kind only provided New England’s faithful with more ammunition than they needed to consign Emerson, Parker, and their followers to the school of atheism (134). Yet, once again, what appear to be clear declarations of unbelief dissipate in even Parker’s conclusion that it is “God out of man who raises in him the awareness [of his] … dependent existence” (146). Emerson would eventually turn to Jakob Böhme as his cure from atheism and not even his short dalliance with Schopenhauer’s
fatalism and nihilism could put him off of his view that faith in God—whatever his source and however he may appear—as somehow necessary for “a truly healthy and vigorous soul” (180).

Hurth’s account of Transcendentalism’s brush with unbelief is a fine contribution to the intellectual legacy of American progressive religion. If she is unable to finally provide a satisfactory answer to Transcendentalism’s apparent unwillingness to grapple with the “atheistical” implications of its own thought, it is no fault of her scholarship or writing. In an otherwise fine volume, the best answer to this open question may be the eclectic nature of a theological and spiritual movement that just happened to emerge during a particularly volatile period of American religious history; perhaps it was simply that the dogmatism of atheism appeared to its adherents no less dogmatic than the dogmatism it had already rejected.

—Jeffrey A. Wilcox


This most recent addition to the new series of critical editions of Calvin’s works is Calvin’s treatise on the bondage and liberation of the will, Defensio sanae et orthodoxae doctrinae de servitute et liberatione humani arbitrii, adversus calumnias Alberti Pighii Campensis. Anthony Lane, with Graham Davies, provides this critical edition after having already produced an English translation in 1996 (The Bondage and Liberation of the Will: A Defence of the Orthodox Doctrine of Human Choice against Pighius). Lane admits that the overlap between the introduction and the notes of the two volumes is significant, but this volume, obviously, works much more deeply with the Latin texts of Calvin and Pighius (books 1–6 of Pighius’ De libero hominis arbitrio are reproduced in facsimile on pages 331–450 of this volume).

In the introduction, Lane notes that the importance of this edition is twofold: first, it is Calvin’s fullest treatment of the issue of the relationship between grace and free will (containing important material not found elsewhere in his writings) and second, it contains more discussion of the early church fathers than any other of Calvin’s works besides the Institutes of the Christian Religion.

Calvin’s work was originally written to combat the teaching of the Dutch Roman Catholic theologian Albert Pighius (1490–1542). Pighius was educated in large part at Louvain and served in posts in Rome and Utrecht. During his career, Pighius wrote many significant works, many of them defending Roman Catholic ideas against the Protestants. It was in one of these polemical works, the De libero hominis arbitrio of 1542 that Pighius embarked on a wide-ranging attack of Calvin’s understanding of free choice, nature, grace, sin, and divine foreknowledge. Calvin responded in the months following: His Defensio sanae et orthodoxae doctrinae was available