

A Rebel Saint: Baptist Wriothesley Noel, 1798–1873.

By Philip D. Hill. Cambridge, UK: James Clarke & Co., 2022.
252 pp. \$38.00 paperback.

In his recent biography, *A Rebel Saint: Baptist Wriothesley Noel, 1798–1873*, Philip D. Hill addresses what he describes as a deficiency in the historical narrative of religious thought in nineteenth-century Great Britain. He notes that his subject, though important among his contemporaries, has been somewhat overlooked due to his conspicuous secession from the Church of England in 1848. Hill's goal therefore was to assess Noel's "overall significance" (1) in a period characterized by religious dissent as many struggled to identify the best approximation of "the one true church." Building on the work of notable scholars, including David Bebbington and Grayson Carter, Hill's scrutiny of archival materials, presented with refreshing informality of style, enriches our understanding of the motives and character of this extraordinary man and of the times in which he lived.

Noel inherited nobility from both sides of his family. His father, Sir Gerard Noel Edwardes (1759–1838), was heir to the fortunes of Lord Hamilton (1709–1748) and the Gainsborough family. His mother, Diana, nee Middleton (1762–1823), inherited both the title of Baroness and the evangelical faith of her family. While his father squandered his financial inheritance, his mother gave to Noel and his seventeen siblings the legacy of a secure moral foundation based on the Reformed Protestant theology which informed the family's affiliation with John Newton (1725–1807), members of the evangelical Clapham Sect, and William Wilberforce (1759–1833).

As a privileged aristocrat, Noel obtained ready access to education and social standing. But Hill's analysis demonstrates that he was also a man of deeply held religious convictions, which led him to forfeit many advantages as he sought to advance the evangelical messages of personal salvation and communal activism on behalf of the poor. When Noel's early career direction after Cambridge shifted from the law to the ministry, he maintained a consistent interest in social and religious causes, always informed and motivated by his evangelical faith and commitment to the Church of England.

His first appointment to the large parish of St. John's Proprietary Chapel, Bloomsbury, became the base for twenty-two years of effective ministry during which time he authored over 90 books and pamphlets and became what Carson has described as "perhaps the most influential 'Gospel clergyman' of his generation" (Grayson Carter, *Anglican Evangelicals: Protestant Secessions from the Via Media, c. 1800–1850*, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2016[Q2]). As chaplain to Queen Victoria, his influence was sought and extended in a wide variety of controversial developments that concerned both church and state, including the Maynooth crisis in Ireland, the Scottish Disruption, and the Tractarian movement. In each case, Noel's arguments are carefully documented, and his commitment to promoting evangelical ecumenicism and interdenominational cooperation is clearly defined.

Noel's insistence on church unity coupled with his concern over urbanization and its related social and spiritual problems led to his decision in 1835 to support the London City Mission against the disapproval of other high churchmen including the Bishop of London. Thus, when church bureaucracy hindered the spread of the Gospel and its concurrent goal of alleviating poverty, Noel stood on the side of principled expediency.

Familiar with the success of Thomas Chalmer's "experiments" in Glasgow and Edinburgh, he embraced the ambitious vision of David Naismith for city missions as "parachurch" organizations or interdenominational church communities served by trained laymen and earned for himself the well-deserved title of "the father of the London City Mission" by virtue of his staunch support of its efforts.

The crisis of Noel's career came in 1848 during a period when the Scottish Disruption (1843), Cardinal Newman's conversion to Roman Catholicism (1845), and the formation of the Evangelical Alliance (1846) highlighted divergent religious perspectives throughout Great Britain. Noel's years of practical observation and engagement in religious controversy culminated in his conclusion that state support and the patronage system diminished the church's spiritual vitality. As a result, he resigned from his position in London as Anglican divine; he endorsed credo-baptism and accepted a call to the Baptist pastorate of John Street Chapel, Holborn. This radical departure from the established church in favor of a dissenting congregation was considered by some as a cultural "earthquake" and epitomized the independence of thought that characterized Noel's life.

Two notable instances from Noel's personal life reflect the rebel spirit that inspired the title of Hill's biography: his carefully retained distance from the influence of Charles Simeon (1739–1836) while a student at Cambridge and the distance he established from his father when matters of personal integrity and career direction were at stake. While Hill develops the theme of Noel's independence of thought in these and other relationships, he offers few intimate details of the formative spiritual epiphanies and disciplines that informed and molded Noel's clear-eyed view of each complex situation that he confronted throughout his long career.

In the final analysis, Hill has achieved his goal of assessing Noel's overall significance by providing his readership with a reliable portrait of a man who blended conviction with grace in the pursuit of a unified church. In so doing, readers are reminded that in an age characterized by vigorous, often contentious debate, it is still possible to be guided by Christian charity, and to choose principle over status when professional choices have to be made.

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***The Recovered Life of Isaac Anderson.* By Alicia K. Jackson.**
Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2021. xi + 222 pp. \$52.91
cloth, \$23.00 paper.

Anyone who resided in Rochester, New York, in the final few decades of the twentieth century was likely familiar with the Reverend Raymond Graves. This longtime pastor of New Bethel Christian (formerly Colored) Methodist Episcopal Church left a large footprint in antiracist activism through insurgent organizations and initiatives for just policing, black employment opportunities, and equitable housing for the poor. Graves's ministry and that of other like-minded ministers and members of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (CME Church) contradicted an historical identity marker