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Review of *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600-2000* by Colin Kidd

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their foods into the Pacific, for example, is included rather inexplicably under the heading of the Columbian Exchange (which happened centuries later), and he argues that the Western Hemisphere lacked “good-quality protein” (p. 156), which would have been news to the bison hunters of the plains and prairies and the salmon fishers of the northwest coast. Kiple also claims that hunter-gatherers “harvested plant and animal foods . . . without attempting to control [their] life cycles” and that many of their activities simplified ecosystems (p. 64), when in fact much of the current scholarship on indigenous land-management practices suggests that such societies had subtle but profound methods of manipulating ecological systems that often increased biodiversity.

This is not a matter of political correctness. Rather, it is a matter of both factual accuracy and of writing global history that challenges, rather than reifies, the narratives to which we are accustomed. At times, Kiple succeeds in this; he interrogates food group charts (“who is supposed to benefit from such nutritional guidance?” he asks on page 262), and he offers a fascinating discussion of nineteenth-century debates over menarche and nutrition as they related to discourses on race, class, and gender. He also deals fluently with the dialogic relationship between “nature” and “culture.” For all its strengths, though, *A Movable Feast* illustrates the challenges inherent in writing inclusive global histories. As Kiple himself notes, for most of our tenure on the planet (and, I would add, during much of the ten millennia that are his subject), sedentary agriculture—not to mention Western hegemony—were more exceptions than rules. For many of us working in global and world histories, incorporating peoples and places outside the “centers” of “civilization” and working to escape the teleology of “progress” are primary agendas, and Kiple’s valuable contribution confirms that the study of food may be one of the most fruitful strategies for achieving them.

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The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600–2000. By COLIN KIDD. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. 318 pp. \$75.00 (cloth); \$27.99 (paper).

This is an ambitious, engaging, and richly detailed book. In urging us to look at race as a scriptural problem, rather than just a scientific

one, Colin Kidd posits that “interpretations of the Bible and certain branches of the discipline of theology have played an influential role in shaping racial attitudes over the past four centuries” (p. 1). Not only does this force historians of race to shift their focus from scientific racism to racialized theological controversies, it also requires its readers to explore beyond the temporal boundaries with which they might be most comfortable. In other words, Kidd demands not only that we look at race as a theological issue, but also that we take a macro-chronological view of how it has developed from the onset of European expansion to today.

The Forging of Races begins with a brief survey of the most significant scientific explanations of racial difference and provides a useful overview of the various “race as biology” arguments. After establishing the well-known formulation of race as a cultural construction, Kidd then turns to the most important racial controversies within the Bible itself. Although the Bible rarely, if ever, used racialized language, its interpreters have ascribed a racial significance to many scriptural texts, examining everything from the race of Adam to the curse of Ham, and even the ethnicity of Christ himself.

The rest of the book is divided into six thematic chapters that generally follow a chronological order. In the first two chapters, Kidd explains that, as Europeans encountered new peoples during the early modern era, theological concerns circumscribed any efforts to make racial differences inherent or naturalized. While theologians, rather than scientists, had the monopoly on explaining racial differences, they were still operating within an intellectually orthodox paradigm that privileged the unity of the human family and declared any hint of polygenesis (multiple creations) or pre-Adam creation as heresy. Kidd’s chapter on the Enlightenment suggests continuity with, rather than divergence from, these previous efforts to remain within this monogenetic paradigm. Nevertheless, the more skeptical philosophers who were on the radical fringe of the Enlightenment, such as Voltaire and other French *philosophes*, began a sustained attack on biblical texts that would result in a momentary displacement of scriptural authority from racial discourse.

Kidd then tackles how, caught in a nineteenth-century crisis of faith, American defenders of slavery and British imperial ideologues sought to square scientific racism with traditional Christian texts. While polygenesis might have provided the perfect justification for racial slavery and oppression, Kidd notes that most theologians eschewed it and instead opted for a middle ground that fused an understanding of common creation with biblical proof of the sacred legality of slavery. Build-

ing upon these insights, Kidd then examines the complicated ways in which the architects of Aryan racial ideology employed sacred history and Biblical exegesis to articulate an ideology of difference between the races. Using anthropology and philology to rethink sacred texts, Aryan intellectuals began to argue that religious superiority developed from racial makeup, not the other way around. This rhetorical strategy, in their minds, not only vindicated imperial expansion, but also propagated an attitude of racial hatred that could ultimately justify biblically sanctioned racial extinction. Race and theology were becoming intertwined.

The final two chapters push into the modern era and explore several manifestations of racialized religion. Kidd demonstrates how the nineteenth century's crisis of faith and obsession with racism collaborated to create new, race-based (though not necessarily racist) religions. The most influential of these was British Israelism, which contended that Anglo-Saxons were in fact the true descendents of the Lost Tribes of Israel and were therefore heirs to all the spiritual blessings and divine covenants that such a pedigree would entail. But Kidd also goes on to explain how the Christian Identity movement, Mormonism, and even the rise of Theosophy were all, in some way, theological productions that owed their origins and development to the race-based thinking of the nineteenth century. Finally, Kidd's last chapter examines how black countertheologies in both Africa and America appropriated these racialized scriptural texts—focusing mainly on the story of Ham—to redirect the biblical narrative and portray it in a much more Afro-centric light. While some streams of black theology focused on the unity of mankind, others crafted a black nationalist, black separatist theology that staked out a territory of black racial and spiritual superiority, essentially taking hundreds of years of white-dominated racialized theology and using the same idioms and strategies, but simply inverting them. It is therefore no surprise, Kidd argues, that black Judaism and black Islam developed out of this racially charged Protestant milieu.

A book covering so much intellectual, geographic, and temporal territory is bound to have gaps. Kidd says nothing about Quakers or Moravians, two religious groups that not only fall clearly within the bounds of Protestantism, but also had a lot to say about race, equality, and universal brotherhood in the early modern Atlantic world. Another interesting approach is that he includes black Jews and even the Nation of Islam under the umbrella of Protestantism. Though this might serve Kidd's interpretive purposes, it is questionable whether those groups really perceived *themselves* as part of the Protestant heritage. These questions, however, only highlight the fertility of this topic

and the need for further research into the relationship between race and theology.

The complexity, richness, and nuance of Kidd's interpretation make this book a necessary read for anyone interested in Atlantic history, the cultural construction of race, religious history, or even the history of science. Though *The Forging of Races* might not "revolutionize" our understanding of race (as the back cover claims), and even if its conclusions are not necessarily "shocking" (p. 1), it nevertheless surveys and clarifies a very thorny intellectual landscape. In the end, Kidd concedes that there is no overarching thesis that can be applied to a study of race and religion. The title of his book is therefore wholly appropriate. Just as "forging" implies a process of creative fabrication, Kidd has demonstrated how, through Protestant theology, the very idea of race itself was constantly being forged, challenged, appropriated, and reforged throughout the four hundred years of Protestant encounter with the Atlantic world.

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The Travels and Journal of Ambrosio Bembo. By AMBROSIO BEMBO. Translated from the Italian by CLARA BARGELLINI. Edited and annotated with an introduction by ANTHONY WELCH. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007. 470 pp. \$60.00 (cloth); \$24.95 (paper).

Indo-Persian Travels in the Age of Discoveries, 1400–1800. By MUZAFFAR ALAM and SANJAY SUBRAHMANYAM. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007. 399 pp. \$99.00 (cloth).

These two books that came out in 2007 from prestigious university presses are important contributions to travel writing and historiography. Ambrosio Bembo's travelogue is a fascinating logbook of his journey from Venice through the Middle East to India and back, providing a unique glimpse at the cultural geography experienced by a seventeenth-century European merchant. Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam's scholarly work opens with remarkable clarity and large brushwork some new vistas on the way in which the rich and varied cultural space between Turkey and China was perceived, inhabited, appreciated, and made sense of by the Persian, Turkish, and Indian Muslim (with the exception of the Russian orthodox Nikitin) travel-