

Keith Joseph, Milton Friedman, F. A. Hayek, and monetarist think tanks. At the time, most Tory MPs did not realize how far her views had shifted. And so they elected the first female leader of the Conservative Party in a fit of absence of mind, mainly (Cannadine concludes) “because she was not Heath” (21). Many of those same MPs, “drawn from the male worlds of public schools, regiments, professions, boardrooms, and clubs, soon began to wonder what they had been doing when they voted for *her*” (24).

In her successful 1979 election manifesto, there was much about cutting taxes and controlling the money supply, but practically nothing about privatization or curbing the trade unions. Her first cabinet consisted mostly of Heath men, so she could only ram through her controversial programs by bypassing, firing, or “handbagging” them. And after eleven years of systematically alienating the Tory establishment, she paid the ultimate and inevitable price.

The Iron Lady survived as long as she did largely because she knew when to bend to reality. However reluctantly, she agreed to transition Rhodesia to majority rule. Even after the Irish Republican Army very nearly assassinated her, she ratified the Anglo-Irish Agreement. She knew she could not fight for Hong Kong as she had fought for the Falklands. Having lost the inner cities in the 1987 election, she directed £3 billion in aid to those areas. But conversely, when she was a rigid Thatcherite, she often steered firmly towards disaster. Her resistance to sanctions against South Africa left Britain diplomatically isolated in a morally untenable position. And her insistence on the poll tax was pure and simple political suicide.

Sharply written and compact, this volume would be ideal for classroom use, explaining not only Margaret Thatcher but also the world she worked in and helped to transform. Today, when another generation of strong-headed, disruptive politicians are taking on establishments and polarizing public opinion, your students might be fascinated to learn about a larger-than-life populist prime minister. As Cannadine sums her up, “She wanted to make Britain great again” (34).

Jonathan Rose  
Drew University  
[jerose@drew.edu](mailto:jerose@drew.edu)

PETER CATTERALL. *Labour and the Free Churches, 1918–39: Radicalism, Righteousness and Religion*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016. Pp. 322. \$109.80 (cloth).  
doi: 10.1017/jbr.2017.215

Peter Catterall's *Labour and the Free Churches, 1918–39: Radicalism, Righteousness and Religion* is a good book, stacked with both a mass of hard-won statistical data and wise judgments, such as putting a revised interest in a sacramental concept of life alongside the adoption of liberal theology as transforming the moral economy of the Free Churches and thus allowing for a greater receptivity to socialist ideas. Its main concern, as a study of the interrelationship between religion and politics, is to examine the subtle but important interplay between a well-established religious network such as British Nonconformity (the ambits of which are here nicely explored) and the emerging Labor Party in the interwar years, which goes beyond the oft-cited epigram of Morgan Phillips that “Socialism in Britain owes more to Methodism than to Marx.” Excusing the contraction of Nonconformity at large to Methodism, it is to be noted that Phillips made this judgment when addressing the Socialist International and was thus distinguishing the ethos of the British movement from that of its continental neighbors, with their often anti-clerical, if not anti-church, emphases.

Nonconformists in the emerging twentieth century had to be wooed away from their traditional alliance with the Liberal Party, an alliance that had signally failed to deliver much that was expected of it, a task that became easier once nonconformist leaders were convinced of the possibility of the beneficent intervention of the state on account of the scale of so many social problems, now seen as beyond the capacity of even the most munificent philanthropy. Moreover, the split in the Liberal Party, notwithstanding, or indeed perhaps because of, Lloyd George's leadership, liberated some Free Church leaders to desert the old Liberal Alliance and to give open support to the Labor Party even if not its socialist ideals; accordingly, the increasing weakness of a Liberal Party fraught with faction also played its part in the corrosion of the old Liberal-Nonconformist Alliance.

Catterall explores the attitude of Free Church leadership to the rise of the new party by reviewing debates encountered in the religious press. Here, the lingering attractions of the old agenda of the nonconformist conscience, with its concern initially for the abolition of legislation that discriminated against nonconformists, gave way to a broader agenda that included a concern for temperance, sexual morality as attached to proper family values, the social consequences of mass gambling, the culture of the race-course, Sunday observance, and the ending of state support for confessional education, itself the parent of the passive-resistance movement. Elements of this agenda enjoyed surprising longevity even in the life of the Labor Party, while other elements simply became anachronistic. There were also other constituencies for the infant Labor Party to satisfy: alongside chapel appeared the interest of the alcohol-consuming Working Men's Club.

Some aspects of the old conscience already demanded a measure of state action, as for example in the concern for a morally defensible foreign policy and the shortage of decent and affordable housing, but new issues such as widespread and apparently intractable unemployment that blighted whole regions with the long-term decline of the nation's great staple industries, coupled with the need for fairness for workers of all sorts and the difficulty of reconciling the rival interests of labor and capital, now paved the way for a more complex social agenda.

Crucial to this study were the dynamics of the local community, for it was here that the chapel effected most influence and nurtured those who were to take part in politics, locally and nationally. Leadership in chapel life equipped typical autodidacts like the Norfolk Primitive Methodist George Edwards to transfer acquired skills via the Agricultural Workers Union into the Labor Party, in 1920 becoming Norfolk's first Labor MP. This leads on to consideration of the major argument that canvassers of the importance of nonconformity on the development of the Labor Party in the interwar years have advanced, namely that it was the nonconformist culture that shaped the thinking of the personnel of the emerging party, here statistically traced with admirable assembling of the data, with biography making a crucial contribution.

The final focus for analysis is described in terms of "ideas and ideals," where Catterall analyzes the degree to which ideas of class and class conflict were critical to the evolution of a Labor Party that had other sources of thought other than those provided by Marx, namely chapel commitment to ideas of liberty, the rule of conscience, and a critical equality among those created by God in his own image, which became easier when a Communist Party, clearly committed to Marxist Socialism, emerged to Labor's left. By contrast, Catterall concludes that the chapel-backed Brotherhood Movement did much to support the emergence of the Welfare State by applying a wide but purposeful definition to Christian citizenship.

United and in alliance with the Liberal Party, Nonconformity was a force to be reckoned with, but its influence was greatly diluted as the allegiance of its members split between all three parties. Nevertheless, it had significant importance in the emerging Labor Party, where its interests were more heeded than in the old Whiggish Liberal Party, whose recent endeavors in the war effort also caused the estrangement of those nonconformists increasingly

worried about the heightened rhetoric used in support of the allied cause. All this was happening at a time when the Free Churches were clearly on the wrong side of the peak of their membership and when the Free Church Movement as such was being questioned in an increasingly ecumenical age. While Catterall's analysis of the interaction between the Free Churches and the emerging Labor Party is properly complete, there is much here more generally stated on the way the Free Churches addressed society in the interwar years.

This reviewer's only regret is that Catterall uses dated denominational histories rather than the most recent and period-relevant work on Congregationalists and Baptists such as the studies by Alan Argent and Ian Randall.

John Briggs  
*University of Birmingham (emeritus)*  
[jhy.briggs@virgin.net](mailto:jhy.briggs@virgin.net)

STEPHEN CHEEKE. *Transfiguration: The Religion of Art in Nineteenth-Century Literature before Aestheticism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. 288. \$95.00 (cloth).  
 doi: 10.1017/jbr.2017.216

In *Transfiguration: The Religion of Art in Nineteenth-Century Literature before Aestheticism*, Stephen Cheeke explores how Victorian writers and artists complicated the relationship between religion and art, analyzing how they anticipated but also nuanced the more recognized narrative of a secularized religion of art in late-nineteenth-century aestheticism. Building on the work already conducted in his study *Writing for Art: The Aesthetics of Ekphrasis* (2008), Cheeke continues an interdisciplinary course of scholarship that includes Hilary Fraser's seminal *Beauty and Belief: Aesthetics and Religion in Victorian Literature* (1986), Pierre Bourdieu's *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* (1992), and Rachel Teukolsky's *The Literate Eye: Victorian Art Writing and Modernist Aesthetics* (2009). Cheeke focuses his new book more specifically on how religious concerns resonated closely with those of aesthetics. Such concerns include the possibility of belief, the danger of idolatrous imagination, the risks and raptures of conversion, the problem of evil, and the promise of transfiguration as the raising of mimetic naturalism to see the ordinary anew.

Cheeke's first chapter continues the holistic discussion of the introduction, not yet delving into the close readings of canonical Victorian artists and writers that organize his subsequent chapters. He begins by tracing how "the museum age" formed itself around the alternately rapturous and unsettled feelings raised by Napoleon's confiscation of classical and Renaissance artworks from Italy (31). As Protestant British viewers encountered Catholic art displaced from its original religious settings into a secular space, some were troubled by the works' loss of "sacred aura" (33), while others felt the need still to respond with an "eye of faith" (38). Cheeke outlines how such ambivalence set the stage for the permutations of what would become the mantra of aestheticism, art for art's sake, which by the end of the century assumed the status of a new moral way of life. He outlines different narratives about the relationship between religion and art in the nineteenth century: interwoven substitutive metonymy, separate paralleled allegory, outright usurpation, and restatement as transformation, alienation, or intensification (39–45).

Cheeke centers most of the chapters on Renaissance works of art that proved provocative and controversial touchstones for Victorian art critics. In chapter 2 he considers Raphael's *The Transfiguration* (c. 1519–20), one of the most commented-about artworks in the nineteenth century. Cheeke focuses on how the Pre-Raphaelites and John Ruskin criticized the painting's aesthetic form as being "too explicit" and "artificial" (75); they