

open to them as any moral agents. Southerners boasted that the slaves freely accepted labor discipline as a means to instill both moral self-restraint and a superior work ethic. Slavery was viewed as a free labor system and therefore would generate great prosperity for all.

Racist assumptions underlay evangelical proslaveryism. Advocates argued that God had permitted the enslavement of the Africans on account of their moral debasement. Slavery would move slaves in moral paths through the inculcation of internal mechanisms of control. Slavery therefore was part of a divine plan for the redemption of the African race. Southern evangelicals looked forward to the eventual end of slavery and the colonization of the blacks back to Africa on a divinely controlled timetable.

Debating the abolitionists convinced southern evangelicals that they were the true orthodox Christians. They charged abolitionists with doubting God's moral ordering of the universe. Such faith allowed south-

ern church leaders to employ apocalyptic and prophetic rhetoric to rally their region behind the Confederacy. Defeat in the Civil War did not end southern whites' belief in their moral superiority, but it did cause them to lose optimism and diverge from the national faith in progress. Postbellum southern religion retreated into pessimism and otherworldliness, recovering its love of progress and laissez-faire capitalism only when regional prosperity returned in the last decades of the twentieth century. By placing proslaveryism within a persistent ideological mainstream, Daly challenges historians to acknowledge that for the past two centuries national elite groups have used religion to justify their own prosperity and to rationalize racial and economic inequalities as consequence of the underclass's character failings.

JOHN R. MCKIVIGAN is Mary O'Brien Gibson Professor of History at Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis.



The Spirits of America
A Social History of Alcohol

By Eric Burns

(Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004. Pp. 336. Notes, select bibliography, index. \$29.00.)

Eric Burns has given us an enjoyable but rather enigmatic book. It is beautifully written and it purports to address a serious subject—America's

long and frequently controversial experience with beverage alcohol. But for all of the promise of its title, the book has a hard time defining itself.

It says little about changing American drinking patterns, and even less about the cultural implications of various drinking behaviors. Instead, the narrative quickly turns to the familiar topic of the rise and fall of the temperance movement and the experiment of national Prohibition. This is a well-traveled road, and Burns has little new to add, even as popular histories go (John Kobler's *Ardent Spirits: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition* [1973] covered much the same ground a generation ago). Thus we are left with an engaging text that devotes most of its attention to what we already know and much less to matters that could benefit from closer scrutiny.

To be fair, Burns has written for a popular audience, not for specialists or professional historians. One of the problems in reaching a wider readership, however, is a tendency to focus on dramatic anecdotes and personalities, which may not be particularly useful in explaining wider trends or developments. One comes away from the author's treatment of post-Civil War temperance activists, for example, with the feeling that they were slightly ludicrous, and that Drys were somehow inherently naïfs or even cranks. There is an entire chapter on the antics of Carry A. Nation, wonderfully titled "Hatchetation." It is delightful to read, but even Burns concludes that the mainstream temperance movement put little stock in the volatile Ms. Nation. So why a chapter, other than the fact that

Nation was a media darling? There is far too little effort here to explain why millions of Americans came to see the beverage alcohol industry in terms that our generation reserves for crack cocaine dealers, and to understand why so many temperance workers waged their campaign based upon what they believed to be valid medical, social, and economic evidence.

The account of national Prohibition is similar. Burns acknowledges that Prohibition-related violence was much less than popularly supposed, but he focuses on the familiar stories of speakeasies, big-name bootleggers, and lawmen. It is fun to read, but key points get submerged. Burns is fully aware of the damaging aspects of alcohol abuse, for example, but he scants the fact that the dry crusade *did* reduce drinking-related health and social problems. He laments the casualties inflicted by denatured alcohol and other poisonous concoctions vended during the Volstead years, but fails to ask how these compared to the toll of legal pre-Prohibition liquor. Burns missed a chance to put these issues before the popular reader.

Burns's use of secondary literature can also be problematic. He quotes judiciously from other authors (myself included), but as is often the case in popular history, subtleties and controversies get lost. He relies on W. J. Rorabaugh's work (rightly so) to note that post-Independence republican hymns reinforced liberty of personal choice and behavior, including the choice to drink. But other schol-

ars have noted that this same republicanism also propelled a drive to perfect the mores of the new republic, thus encouraging temperance voices.

Now the good news: Burns, a journalist with Fox News, writes superbly, and I enjoyed every page. The book is well organized and moves briskly through many good stories of the temperance wars; there is even some poignancy (see the last sentence devoted to Carry Nation). Finally, Burns's overview of the modern sta-

tus of drinking as a social and political issue, including some realistic observations on the efficacy of Alcoholics Anonymous, may be the most informative part of the book. At least *Spirits of America* is a good read.

MARK EDWARD LENDER is chairman of the History Department at Kean University, Union, New Jersey. He has written widely on the history of alcohol problems and has just finished a book on the federal courts.



Preaching Eugenics

Religious Leaders and the American Eugenics Movement

By Christine Rosen

(New York: Oxford University Press, 2004. Pp. viii, 286. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$35.00.)

Attention to the relationship between science and religion in the early twentieth century has been dominated by the Scopes Trial of 1925, where spokespersons for religion and science are depicted as stark adversaries. Christine Rosen, a fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C., has added new dimensions to the discussion with *Preaching Eugenics*, an analysis of liberal religious leaders' support of the eugenics movement at the beginning of the twentieth century. Influential ministers, rabbis, and priests embraced—often enthusiastically—the eugenicists' goal of improving humanity through “better breeding.” In one example, the Reverend Oscar

Carleton McCulloch, of the Plymouth Congregational Church in Indianapolis, conducted one of the earliest family studies on the “degeneracy” of the so-called Ishmael family of Indianapolis in 1888. Others lent their names and participation to eugenics organizations such as the American Eugenics Society (AES), wrote messages for eugenics sermon competitions, and enrolled their families into “fitter families” contests.

Rosen addresses the apparent contradictions in religious support of a movement that was often accused of “playing God.” She concludes that liberal religious espousal for eugenics cannot be understood apart from the context of progressive reform in