JOHN COFFEY: *John Goodwin and the Puritan Revolution: Religion and Intellectual Change in Seventeenth-Century England*. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2006; pp. xii + 337 + illustrations.

Among the lacunae of modern puritan scholarship, a comprehensive intellectual biography of the Independent divine John Goodwin has long ranked with the majors. The "Great Red Dragon of Coleman Street" set forth in his full array of colours has been sorely missed. Until now, that is. John Coffey, in an exhaustive study, has addressed the life and writings of a man whose intellectual fruits were forbidding in range and extent, often technical in complexion and finely tuned in attendance upon minutiae of doctrine and exegesis, and consistently audacious in posing challenges to received wisdoms and regnant authorities.

Opening with Goodwin's early career and his introduction to Calvinism and its complications, Coffey proceeds in the next chapter to the beginnings of the ministry at Coleman Street — anti-preparationist in piety and still "mainstream" in ecclesiology, theologically at variance with Laudian Arminianism yet espousing an incipient universalism set forth in the dual name of the containment of antinomian excess and the cure of legalistic doubt. Then follows (Chapter 3) an examination of a portentous "soft" Calvinism and a Grotian view of the atonement, the tensions endemic to which would eventually propel the unravelling of Goodwin's doctrine into a full-bodied Arminian soteriology. "Civil war among the godly" returns the focus (Chapter 5) to theology and its crises, to Goodwin's need to deliver his name against cacophonous imputations of heresy and, in the process, to radicalise his own position under the pressure of "militant presbyterian attack" (131, 133). Returning (Chapter 7) to soteriology, Coffey enquires into his subject's definitive break with Calvinism in 1647, analysing the various statements of Goodwin's new faith and the horrified reclaiming of redemption on the part of orthodox respondents. The period of the Commonwealth and Protectorate (Chapter 8) required him to continue the long task of disassociating himself from ever-proliferating heresy while yet propagating his own soteriological unorthodoxy, and to count the costs in lost political influence that was unorthodoxy's unwelcome bequest. The final chapter situates an aged Goodwin in the England of new captivity — threats, more troubling than those previously encountered, are now posed by the restored church and reprobated by Goodwin as legalistic, popish, worldly, Babylonish.

The book's chronological architecture produces something of a recycling effect, periodically playing back Goodwin's many consistently held views as the narrative rolls along. But the value of such repetition resides in Coffey's sensitivity to Goodwin's durable engagement with the crises that littered the public world in which he operated; and if we see a mind disposed to the retention of particular rhetorical and doctrinal anchors, we are also treated to an openness and fluidity of intellect. Coffey's Goodwin is excitingly venturesome and decidedly tetchy in the business of formulating and defending doctrine. Not one to play the dry-as-dust, and always to some extent the aggrieved outsider, Goodwin fanned the flames along many of the flash points of his age's politics of discourse.

Coffey is acutely aware both of Goodwin's sociability and of his singularity. A man of influence, ministering to parishioners in high places, a respected divine on familiar terms with key players in the puritan brotherhood, Goodwin is also a self-made storm front: a querulous polemicist, an overturner of soteriological orthodoxies, a disjoiner of biblical "inke and paper" from evangelical "substance," a maker and defender of congregationalism, a path-breaker in places where few clergymen dared to tread. An

insider, yet a target of insiders' wrath; in the brotherhood, yet also kept out of its highest colloquy and little enamoured of its most deeply held Calvinist verities: Coffey's descriptors betray the difficulties of holding down the man. Thus, for all that Coffey competently lays bare Goodwin's religious and political "radicalism" and "revolutionary" commitment, we also hear of Goodwin the "orthodox" disputant, the besieged deflector of heresy animated by "residual conservatism," the "cautious," "tradition"-bound occupant of the doctrinal "mainstream" (155, 235, 249, 252). This descriptive instability makes an important point of its own, namely, that Goodwin the apostle of liberty of conscience was not espousing a theological free-for-all. Rather, he knew his heresies, and despised them; but his weapons were determinedly and controversially "spiritual." Antinomians, Socinians, Seekers, Ranters, Baptists, Quakers, Fifth Monarchists, Jesuits — these were the constituents of a gallery of horrors, but they were to be put down with discursive rather than punitive weaponry.

John Coffey has painted the colours of John Goodwin, giving us splashes of the rancorous red of Thomas Edwards's heresy-spitting monster, but carefully applying manifold tints and layers in order to compose an absorbing and intricate picture. Meticulous in its scholarship, *John Goodwin and the Puritan Revolution* is a much-needed contribution, a must-read for scholars of the seventeenth century.

David Parnham
Independent Scholar, Melbourne

Daniel Dubuisson: *The Western Construction of Religion: Myths, Knowledge, and Ideology.* Trans. William Sayers. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003 [1998]; pp. xii + 244.

Dubuisson's book appeared in French in 1998 and by the time of its translation into English in 2003 much of his argument had ceased to be controversial and had been absorbed into a subset of Studies in Religion scholarship that investigated the origins of the discipline, the political and religious allegiance of key scholars, and particularly focused on the Eurocentrism of the term "religion" (Talal Asad, Russell T. McCutcheon, Timothy Fitzgerald, among others). Dubuisson asks three questions: is Christianity the Western form of a thing (religion) that all cultures possess? Is "religion" a term which actually is derived from Christianity and therefore unique to the West? Finally, "should we not, moreover, go somewhat farther and ask whether religion is not effectively the West's most characteristic concept, around which it has established and developed its identity, while at the same time defining its way of conceiving humankind and the world?" (9).

All these are interesting questions and worthy of consideration. However, as is the case with most deconstructive activities the results are unsatisfying. Dubuisson does propose an alternative to "religion"; he is an anthropologist and suggests that "cosmographical formation" is better (this concept is articulated in Chapter 9, "Prolegomena"). However, the gaping holes in the argument that precedes this revelation do not encourage confidence that he has the right answer. Dubuisson glories in the disparate nature of the phenomena called "religious" (as if the disparity constituted illegitimacy) and reproduces one-dimensional views of religions other than Christianity (for example, his insistence that Confucianism is not religious at all is dependent on very selective scholarship — he clearly is unaware of Herbert Fingarette — and his discussions of Buddhism and Hinduism are similarly flimsy). He constantly questions the legitimacy of using "religion" in any context, but sanctions the equally problematic and equally Western-centric terms like science, art, history, poetry, and politics.