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Book Review: Divining History: Prophetism, Messianism, and the Development of the Spirit

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Svenungsson, Jayne. **Divining history: prophetism, messianism, and the development of the spirit**, tr. by Stephen Donovan. Berghahn Books, 2016. 223p bibl index (Making sense of history, 26) ISBN 9781785331732, \$110.00; ISBN 9781785331749 ebook, contact publisher for price.

Insightful, astute, thoughtful, this book traces the developments of liberal Jewish and Christian theologies of history. Drawing on Abraham Heschel's *The Prophets* (1962), Svenungsson shows how the West's notions of justice in history stem from ancient biblical prophecy and how that legacy echoes in notions of redemption in history. She examines the divine justice of the prophets' ethical call to translate righteous behaviors into a praxis that cares for the weak, the defenseless, and the vulnerable. In doing all this Svenungsson steers between the Scylla and Charybdis of, on the one hand, anti-Utopian postmodernism in the wake of a century of genocides and world wars and, on the other, apocalyptic visionary ascetic withdrawal into otherworldliness. With regard to the history of messianic visions of redemption, she shows that propheticism is not coterminous with apocalypticism. Though Svenungsson is familiar with a broad and rich panoply of intellectual discourse, surprisingly absent from her bibliography are Emil Fackenheim's *God's Presence in History* (CH, Apr'71), Eliezer Berkovits's *Faith after the Holocaust* (1973), and ultraorthodox Jewish meditations on history such as *Wrestling with God*, ed. by Steven T. Katz, Shlomo Biderman, and Gershon Greenberg (CH, Jul'07, 44-6195). Creatively synthesizing many primary and secondary texts, this book will interest religion and philosophy students, theologians, and historians.

--D. B. Levy, *Touro College, Lander College for Women*

Summing Up: Recommended. Graduate students, researchers, faculty.