

Book Reviews

The Methodist, Evangelical, and United Brethren Churches in the Rockies, 1850-1876, edited by J. Alton Templin, Allen D. Breck, and Martin Rist. Denver, Rocky Mountain Conference, United Methodist Church, 1977. 664 pp.

This big volume (four pounds) dealing with a big conference area (nearly 300,000 square miles) has been prepared by an impressive group of thirteen scholars and historians, about half of whom are professors in Colorado. Frequently a composite work of this type suffers from unevenness of treatment, omissions, or duplications but in this case there was evidently careful planning and judicious editing by a team made up of J. Alton Templin, Allen D. Breck, and Martin Rist to assure a harmonious whole.

The volume covers the subject thoroughly. In the sections on beginnings, among Northern and Southern Methodists, the Evangelical Association, and the United Brethren in Christ, there is close attention to local church activities, in most cases consisting of a brief history of each local church. Later sections concentrate on conference-wide movements and activities. The longest single section deals with the twenty-eight-year service of Bishop Henry White Warren from 1884 to 1912, first resident bishop.

A significant section deals with the particular environment in the Rocky Mountain area and its effect on religion and church life. The great distances, the rough terrain, the emptiness, the scattered population, the scarcity of water--all these had their effect on church life. The account also indicates the unexpected variety of racial and ethnic groups in these western states, and the frequent labor problems, especially around 1900 in the mining areas.

A special feature in the Appendix gives lists of conference meeting places and dates, founding dates of churches, numerous maps showing location of churches, church membership statistics, and photographs of ministers, lay persons, bishops, and buildings of churches and other institutions.

A minor criticism of content is the lack of human interest stories or incidents that would bring forth laughter or tears, but there is no lack of good, solid facts, buttressed with dates, places, and footnotes. A minor editorial criticism is that some long quotations are set off in smaller type and some are not; and that chapter headings in the body of the book do not conform identically with the same headings in the table of contents. But these are relatively minor matters in a well researched and well-written volume.

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