BOOK REVIEWS


Trying on another century, the curious wear emotions and thoughts of a different age as they peek into the ribbon tied bundle of letters buried in the depths of the musty trunk. But more than just correspondence of Grandma and Grandpa, intimate and significant revelations lie bound in the compilation of letters of David and Catherine Blaine.

Seattle was 1½ years old in 1853 when Catherine — the city’s first schoolteacher, and David the city’s first Methodist Episcopal minister arrived. They stand uncloaked before the reader. Through letters; they court, chronicle their travel by boat from New England to San Francisco and on to Puget Sound, and reflect on beginning a life together in the inexperienced Pacific Northwest.

The importance of primary sources is reinforced by a collection such as this. No kind interpretive eyes of the modern historian cover or magnify the real people.

Young theological student David, in need of money, appeals to his parents for assistance, sparing no tactics to obtain his needs.

You might be disposed to say...that my education was good enough and it was folly to spend so much money for nothing...But I know that you do not appreciate my wants or feelings...Now I suppose I can leave my studies if I am obliged to do so...and earn some money to prosecute them, but it would be a damage to me, in that it would secularize my mind and...unsettle my plans. (p. 26,27)

Catherine, eighteen at the time of the first Women’s Rights Convention in her home town of Seneca Falls, New York, exhibits the strength and self consciousness of many nineteenth century women. Wooed by correspondence from David, she speaks her mind, perhaps risking his displeasure.

My reluctance to consent to correspond with you proceeded for two or three causes. One is that letter writing is extremely distasteful to me...

You see, Mr. Blaine, I have failed to comply with your request as to the discussion of the doctrinal part of religion. I felt the practical part should interest me now... (p. 30,31)

Despite the obvious independence of spirit exhibited by Catherine throughout the collection, the nineteenth century cultural norm of “husband’s priorities equal family priorities” carried into the Blaine household. She speaks mainly of hearth, home, and baby and almost
nothing of her school teaching. Yet in the annals of Seattle history, her contributions are more widely known — this reviewer even having attended Catherine Blaine Junior High School in Seattle.

Fifty-four letters by Catherine, thirty-one by David, and five by both, come mostly from Puget Sound and Oregon to family “in the States’” (Seneca Falls). They allow the reader to live with the Blaines day by day. Catherine’s vivid descriptions make this native Seattleite reviewer homesick for the beauty of her city when Catherine tells her family of the lush land, the gentle climate, the smell and taste of the Sound and its fish. Defensively this reader reacted when the next day the Blaines see their Eden on Earth as a “God forsaken land so far from civilization.”

If expecting a history of specific events in the early days of white inhabitants on Puget Sound, the reader will be disappointed in the documents saved and copied in 1932 by the Blaine’s younger son Edward. Rather the letters reveal the culture and responses of Catherine and David to the new world of the frontier. A sense of eavesdropping prevailed as this reviewer looked in on personal conversations about the weather, the neighbors, the state of the church, the nature of ministry, the possibilities in land speculation, the problems with the “savage Indians”, the relationships between husband and wife, the state of missions, and more.

The collection is a springboard for the curious. There is almost no end to the questions for further pursuit raised by the Blaine letters. Who were the women of Seneca Falls and how did the Convention of 1848 affect their lives? What parenting guides — or lack of them — informed the raising of children in the newly settled West? Who, in the primary documents of Puget Sound history, spoke of Rev. Blaine and how was he and the church viewed by the secular world? Who were the clergy wives of the West (clergy husbands probably did not exist) and what affected and shaped their lives? Questions sparked by comments jump from every page.

One question remaining unresolved might have been answered had an epilogue followed the present “end” of the book. Why did the letters just seem to “quit”, the last one indicating nothing significantly different from the normal course of daily events? The preface indicated a chronology of events preceding and following the letters, but to the reader who now knows intimately these significant Methodist people, dates alone do not suffice.

The reader meets the aged David in the “Foreward” where the entire sketch written by him in the 1890’s looks over the span of his life in the West. He provides a background to the letters and reveals his philosophy and concern for the history of the area. Helpful editorial notes point to spots where the old pastor’s memory strays with the passing years. The
cross-check to references about the event in the letters in his more youthful days reminds the reader of the indisputable value of primary documents of all kinds.

The large print of the exquisitely bound book makes an easily read volume for all eyesights. The Blaines’ unique, personal perspective into the Puget Sound experience can combine with the history found elsewhere to bring a vision of yesterday that is less than complete if either stands alone.

If only more Annual Conference Committees on Archives and History had compiled documents and stories from their areas.... If only more trunks in more attics had been searched... If only more letters tied together had been saved... If only...

The Rev. Marilyn Owen Robb, Pastor
Parish of the Holy Covenant
Chicago, Illinois


“This volume intends to portray the historical development of Methodism among black people since 1758,” (Preface). J.H. Graham’s lengthy tenure with United Methodism’s Board of Global Ministries is put to good use. The role of blacks in American Methodism is a story long overdue. It must be told. The full history will require painstaking research, thorough analysis of data and will fill volumes. Graham’s work might be called a brief introduction, aimed at a lay readership.

Beginning with Wesley’s baptism of “two Negroes belonging to Mr. Gilbert...” (p. 1) Graham develops his theme, employing thumbnail sketches of “Early Black Evangelists.” Unfortunately there are errors, as in referring to Harry Hosier (pp. 2-3) we are led to confuse him with the other “Black Harry” whom Thomas Coke knew in the West Indies (see Coke, *Journal*, 1793, pp. 64, 94, 126). Mention is made of Henry Evans and Peter Williams. John Stewart is given more adequate coverage. Black members of Strawbridge’s Log Meeting House and the John Street Society appear briefly.

The important 1784-1844 period focuses on growth of black membership and action — or lack of it — by General Conferences regarding slavery and ministry among the oppressed. The Methodist Protestant Church is not mentioned. In discussing 1844-1863, only a few lines are devoted to The Methodist Episcopal Church, South (pp. 27-28). The thrust is wholly toward the painful wrestling within the Methodist Episcopal Church, continuing until 1939. A listing of “Black Conferences” from 1864 until 1924 (pp. 35-46) is valuable. Vignettes are given of the work of The Freedmen’s Aid Society, The Woman’s Home Missionary Society, Negro Institutions, along with short histories of
Black Colleges and noted Black Churches. These important sketches are much too brief.

We have a thoughtful look at "Black Conferences under White Leadership, 1901-1919," along with the "area system" culminating in the election of Bishops Robert E. Jones and Matthew W. Clair, Sr. in 1920. Perhaps the most poignant section discusses The Plan of Union and The Central Jurisdiction (pp. 86-107), as the author makes vivid the heartache and struggle for an inclusive church. A helpful listing of outstanding laypeople, pastors, and bishops is included. There is no mention of The Evangelical United Brethren Church’s ministry to black people.

What of the future? "Will Black Methodists become a 'leaven' or an enclave?" The author affirms, "Black Methodists must continue to respect their African heritage as well as their Methodist heritage," (p. 153), as the church strives to "make manifest the oneness of humanity in Christ..." (p. 155). There are limitations to this work: its scope, and at several points its accuracy. Nonetheless, we are grateful for the study. It is a beginning.

W. Thomas Smith
The Interdenominational Theological Center


Scholarly and popular interest in locating documentation on the lives and achievements of women in earlier periods has provided the impetus for several recent projects to identify and publish information about women’s papers. Such projects are essential because, although many women’s letters, diaries, and other records have been preserved in archival and manuscript repositories, few can be located through existing finding aids.

This guide grew out of work done by Darlene Roth and Virginia Shadron for two other projects: the Women’s Records Project of Georgia, Inc., a local project, and the Women’s Sources Survey, a national project sponsored by the Minnesota Social Welfare History Archives and funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Only an incomplete listing of the holdings of the Manuscripts Section of the Georgia Archives could be completed in time for submission to the Women’s Sources Survey. The Women’s Records Project of Georgia sponsored the completion of the survey work and, with the support of the Georgia Archives, published this guide.

The guide is divided into three sections, listing collections of papers of individual women, families, and organizations. Each brief entry gives the inclusive dates of the collection and the size, ranging from a single item to 100 cubic feet; identifies the individual, family, or organization...
that is the subject of the collection; briefly describes the types of materials included; mentions any restrictions on the use of the collection, and notes whether an inventory is available. Use of the guide is facilitated by an index which includes subjects as well as proper names of individuals, organizations, and places. For researchers, the most valuable part of the guide is the family section, which identifies women’s papers within larger collections, very few of which are listed under women’s names or give other obvious evidence of including materials created by or about women. Subject indexing, although limited, is another useful feature. For example, although there is no mention of Methodism or of the United Methodist Church, the index does indicate that there is material about religion in 15 of the 142 collections described.

Current scholarship on women will benefit from the preparation and publication of similar guides to the holdings of many other state archives that have been incompletely reported to the Women’s Sources Survey and to the National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections.

Patricia King, Director
Schlesinger Library on the History
of Women in America
Radcliffe College


That the Northern churches had a major role in the abolitionist movement has long been known. Because of their liberal religious doctrines one might assume that the Unitarians represented the backbone of the antislavery crusade. Not so, claims Douglas Stange, who has written a thoughtful study on how Unitarian leaders viewed the efforts to abolish slavery. It took the political tumult of the 1850s to persuade Unitarian clergymen to abandon their mild criticisms of slavery and recognize that human bondage was so evil that political preaching and participation in antislavery reform were needed to save the republic.

In 1831, the year of Nat Turner’s revolt and the year that William Lloyd Garrison started to publish The Liberator, there were three strains of abolitionism present among Unitarian leaders. Philosophical antislavery, the first and historically the oldest of the three, ignored emotionalism and deplored unnecessary disruption of the social fabric. Its defenders called for gradual emancipation and, in some cases, even favored monetary compensation for slaveowners. Paternalistic in their relations with blacks, “they simply did not see slavery as a paramount issue demanding their committed attention (p. 31).”

Political antislavery, on the other hand, was less sympathetic to
slaveholders. Its advocates wanted change via the ballot box and hoped to bring the freedom of the North to the territories in the West and Southwest. Political antislaverymen were unable to consider blacks as equals and did not consider abolition the sole important issue before the country. Their rhetoric sometimes made them appear more radical than they really were. Stange concludes that they hoped “to reform society, a slow process, rather than remake society (p. 120).”

Most radical was religious antislavery. Some of the advocates of this philosophy were devoted followers of William Lloyd Garrison. They “found in abolitionism a release of...pent-up feeling for a Christ-centered evangelical Unitarianism, whose energy needed to be expended against sin and on behalf of Christ and His people (p. 45).” The most fervent of these made abolition “their life...their love...their religion (p. 45).”

By the 1850s philosophical antislavery was no longer fashionable, and political antislavery had merged with religious antislavery. Such legislation as the Fugitive Slave Law had effected the merger, for Unitarians were increasingly outraged at what they considered the excessive power of the South to foist her peculiar institution on the whole nation. This outrage was exploited by Garrisonians, but to the very end of the decade many Unitarians were still unable to treat blacks as equals.

Patterns of Antislavery Among Unitarians is well researched, for Stange has examined a wide variety of primary sources. His book does provide some new insights on the coming of the Civil War, and there are fascinating vignettes of several Unitarian leaders. Unfortunately the author has used chapter sub-headings to editorialize and moralize. Furthermore, the volume is poorly organized and presupposes familiarity with the antislavery crusade. Although the book belongs in academic libraries, it will be of more value to specialists than to novices.

Arnold Shankman
Winthrop College


This is an exceptional volume written to share the story of an unusual people, sometimes called “Brethren”, “River Brethren”, or “Brethren in Christ”. The historian will be intrigued by the unfolding of a history. From a people who in their early years seemed in firm control of their pilgrimage, the Brethren are increasingly influenced by external forces. Economic historians will observe the relationship between Christian faith and economic developments in this story (the “Protestant ethic”). The Brethren believed in faithful and diligent stewardship in work and worship. Sociologists will ponder the encounter of faith with
culture and the growing difficulty of the Brethren in maintaining their distinctives. Following the sect-church distinctions of Ernest Troeltsch, some will consider how this small fellowship, generally exclusive, gradually takes on a more open stance. Theologians will be particularly interested in the synthesis of Anabaptist, Pietist, and Wesleyan interpretations with the theological tensions which followed. Even Biblical scholars will find some useful material, noting the range of interpretation from the proof-text method to a sense of the life situation (Sitz im leben) from which the Biblical writer speaks, e.g., in the Brethren discussion over prayer veiling.

There is much more but the essence of Professor Wittlinger's work is story, the pilgrimage of a people, his own people. The story is about piety and obedience, emphasizing a heartfelt relationship with Christ and obedience to Christ as the hallmarks of Brethren life. Beginning about 1780, the Brethren were predominantly Anabaptist in theology and Pietist in practice. From 1880 to 1910 they experienced significant transitions, primarily influenced by conservative, evangelical Protestantism, especially the American Holiness movement. Sometimes "Wesleyan Holiness", as Wittlinger identifies it, was taught in extreme forms while others proclaimed it with the calm moderation of Wesley. Gradually the Brethren began to affirm the doctrine even though it varied from the historic Brethren position that justification and sanctification occur simultaneously. The consequent tensions are indicated in a remark by a Brethren in Christ friend who described the experiential transitions which followed holiness teaching: "The Brethren had been humble pilgrims. Now they became victorious saints."

The years from 1910-1950 are years of adjustment. Many of the Brethren leave the rural setting to assume urban roles. Wesleyan holiness thought became settled persuasion. Camp meetings became the forum for this teaching. The Anabaptist concern for nonconformity in lifestyle and the opposition to war received a searching test in these years of two world wars. The Brethren peace witness was very significant but some young men served in the military, usually in non-combatant roles. Deeply concerned over the flow of men to the services, the Brethren General Conference of 1942 created a rigid policy which called for an automatic exclusion from membership for the person accepting military service. Many young men chose alternate service (Civilian Public Service) at great personal sacrifice.

Educational advances were achieved in this period with the founding of Messiah College and Upland College. Local church education grew. Indoctrination was attempted to undergird the faith of the young. Theological education for the ministry took shape with the naming of several Wesleyan or Anabaptist seminaries as approved schools.
A second period of transition (1950-1975) involved greater contact with evangelical ecumenical agencies. The National Association of Evangelicals and the National Holiness Association offered fellowship resolving some of the Brethren misgivings about inter-church activity. A new concern for evangelism and nurture became evident. Nonconformist patterns became less rigorous. Insistence on trine baptism was modified so that re-baptism was not required of persons coming from other churches. The prayer veiling (head covering) which women had long practiced became less common. The Brethren “emphasis on piety increased while their emphasis on obedience decreased,” writes Wittlinger (p. 498). He wonders whether identification as “Brethren in Christ” is coming to lack substantive meaning (p. 545).

Dr. Wittlinger works less with a thesis than with an objective. As one of the Brethren he realizes that his story is nuanced by the intimate associations of a lifetime. Nevertheless, it may be argued that the researcher in his own church’s history offers an authenticity which an outsider cannot achieve. This book is authentic.

Is the witness of small fellowships like the Brethren in Christ being diluted by an increasing cultural accommodation? This seems to be Wittlinger’s inference, intended or not. Cultural norms, which are the norms of the common denominator, repeatedly probe the value centers of nonconforming bodies like the Brethren. Their seductive appeal is difficult to identify and to resist. Christians must never wear blinders or live ostrich-like with their heads in the sand. Jesus taught that we must be “in” the world, but not “of” the world. Wherever Christian fellowships maintain this balance the work of mission will be carried forward. All Christians should earnestly join in “the quest for piety and obedience.”

Leon O. Hynson, President, Evangelical School of Theology


In this work Professor Holifield sets forth the results of a very extensive investigation into an area where scholarly neglect has reigned almost unchallenged. The conclusions of this solidly grounded, well-organized and thoroughly readable study go far to unseat the usual characterizations of religion in the ante-bellum Southern United States. Intentionally directing his attention away from the conventional preoccupation with the back country and the frontier and toward the southern towns, Holifield finds usually presumed emotionalism and obscurantism replaced by an over-riding concern for the task of apologetics. Demonstration of the intellectual respectability of orthodox
Christianity in the market place of modern ideas is found to dominate the theology of the Southern towns. In this work Holifield gives us a delightful combination of social, intellectual, and theological history. He first sets out to place his roster of carefully selected urban divines in their socio-economic context in the culture of the southern towns. He there makes clear the personal and professional motives which stimulated their theological undertakings and in large measure shaped their views. Holifield then moves on to chronicle the fixing of the urban theologians upon a rationally grounded and developed orthodox position. In presenting this development the author puts beyond any question his qualification not only as a social but as an intellectual and theological historian. His tracing of the various sub-currents which culminate in the positions which he is presenting is always solid and at points near brilliant. This careful attention to the rootage of ideas greatly enhances both the credibility and the usefulness of the book. Holifield's combination of social and intellectual history bears particularly excellent fruit in his treatment of the endeavors of these thinkers in the field of ethics. There the interplay of social, economic, philosophical, and theological forces is of special interest as the urban churchmen sought to render their society and culture normally intelligible.

This fine work opens a vast virgin territory for theological-historical scholarship, meanwhile redressing a major misconception that there were no southern theologians, gentile or otherwise. One can only hope that the investigation may go further. For example, the author seems to be still assuming that the religion of the frontier and the back country was an emotion-dominated revivalism with no real concern for apologetics and rational argumentation. A preaching coat, town manners, and philosophical sophistication may have been put on at one time, but this hardly precludes even revivalists from an appeal to reason. For his Gentlemen Theologians we stand greatly in debt for an excellent study, and eagerly await its further development.

James D. Nelson
United Theological Seminary


These notices cover the Southeastern United States for this period, namely, the states of Georgia, Alabama, North and South Carolina, Florida, Mississippi and Tennessee, and occasional notices from other states. The book contains close to 70,000 names of individuals. Volume 2, covering the Civil War and later period will be published at a later date.
WOMEN IN NEW WORLDS: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES
ON THE UNITED METHODIST TRADITION

a national conference in women's history
will be convened by the

General Commission on Archives and History
of
The United Methodist Church

under the auspices of its

WOMEN'S HISTORY PROJECT

on

February 1-3, 1980

Netherland Hilton Hotel
Cincinnati, Ohio

For further information write:
Ms. Hilah F. Thomas, Coordinator
Women's History Project
475 Riverside Drive, Room 1700-B
New York, New York 10027
Thomas Laidman Hodgson was a missionary of the Methodist Missionary Society. He was in South Africa from 1821 to 1831, and played a leading part in establishing the first Christian mission beyond the Vaal River within the borders of what was later to become the Transvaal. He worked for four years among the Seleka-Rolong, a Tswana group, and later among the Griquas for a period of two years.

These journals contain important information on the Difaqane, the period of turmoil in the interior of South Africa which preceded the Great Trek. They also constitute a valuable record of the interaction between missionaries and an African chiefdom which had had no previous contact with missionaries. In addition, Hodgson’s comments on social and economic conditions both within the Colony and beyond its borders are of considerable interest.

The Journals of the Rev. T. L. Hodgson, like The Papers of John Mackenzie, have been published under the auspices of the African Studies Institute of the University of the Witwatersrand, the publication of both books being based on original material held in the Historical and Literary Papers Section of the University Library.