BOOK REVIEWS


In the present work, Dr. Peter J. Paris sets out to illuminate the religious social ethics of a very strong tradition in this country. He seeks to help the reader come to know more about the black religious experience. The author, Homrighausen Professor of Christian Social Ethics at Princeton Theological Seminary, bases his study on careful analysis of the official records of two black denominations, the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church, and the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A. These two, he contends, represent the oldest and strongest groups within this tradition. He chose these after careful study of the social teaching of various other denominations revealed what he considered to be insignificant differences.

His analysis of the records leads Paris to posit that the central theme of the black Christian tradition is "the parenthood of God and the kinship of all people." From this base, he deals with various important aspects of the tradition and history. He develops and expands upon political dimensions of black religion, moral theories and dilemmas, sociological and cultural elements, and concepts of power within the black churches and society in general, to name just a few. At the very end of the work, he includes two interesting appendices: 1) a copy of the African Methodist Social Creed; and 2) "A Statement by the National Committee of Negro Churchmen," which appeared originally as a full-page ad in the *New York Times* on July 31, 1966. In this work, Paris has brought life to what are usually quite boring church documents. He has analyzed carefully and written clearly, providing the reader with a brief, yet exacting look at a long, rich tradition in this country. His book is well worth reading.

Raul Fernandez-Calienes
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Religious nonconformity has been in decline in England for virtually the whole of the present century, with the ecumenical movement adding a complicating factor to the scene. At the same time, nonconformist architecture, once scornfully ignored by local historians and art critics alike,
has been attracting more and more attention in recent years, under the influence of the late John Betjeman and others.

Among the growing band of devotees Christopher Stell is widely recognized and respected as the leading authority in this field. Many years of devoted labours for the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England have come to fruition in this splendid volume, which represents an outstanding achievement for both author and publisher alike.

Geographically, the volume extends northwards from the Thames Valley and the Severn estuary to the north Midlands, a generous spread which furnishes a wealth of material, enabling us to study in considerable detail both local and denominational variations in nonconformist chapel-building. Special attention is given to buildings surviving from before 1800, but the survey also covers the 18th century, with the result that Methodism figures prominently. A wealth of architectural detail and information on furnishings is accompanied by brief historical notes in many cases, a welcome feature which makes the volume considerably more interesting and useful to the historian than Pevsner’s blinkered approach in his Building in England series. No page is without its illustrations, whether photographs, line-drawings or architectural plans, which make the book a joy to browse in.

Of particular interest to Methodist readers will be the section on Bristol, with its detailed treatment of Wesley’s ‘New Room’ and shorter descriptions of Portland and Old King Street chapels, no longer, alas, in existence: a reminder of how vulnerable are these visible and tangible links with the past in a world of change, redevelopment and liturgical experiment. But lesser known Methodist examples are thickly strewn throughout the book, which, despite its size and weight, would serve as an admirable guide to any Methodist or nonconformist pilgrim in central England.

The author writes with a combination of knowledge, authority and enthusiasm which ensures that his book will long remain an indispensible reference work for all historians of English nonconformity; so much so that no one will be satisfied until we have further volumes covering the remaining areas of the country. Because he is well aware that the ‘bricks and mortar’ are an outward expression of the faith and worship of particular congregations and the denominational traditions they embody, his book is as indispensible to the church historian as to the historian of architecture.

John A. Vickers
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Perhaps in part because of the legend of David Livingstone, the contribution of the Scots to British missions has been much more widely known and assumed than the Irish contribution. In Norman V. Taggart’s book, *The Irish in World Methodism 1760-1900*, Irish Methodism’s part in world mission is examined under a number of headings, including organization, emigration, lay men and women, theology of mission, and a series of case studies of Irish missionaries of some distinction. Ireland’s history of famine and unrest in the nineteenth century inevitably makes emigration the most significant of these headings, and Taggart indeed underlines that the emigration of lay people was more important for the role of Irish Methodists overseas than the missionary strategy of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society.

Irish Methodism declined sharply in numbers from the middle of the nineteenth century in 1900, but Australia, the U.S.A., and especially Canada often drew Irish emigrants who took a prominent part in Methodist life in those countries, although it is acknowledge that some emigrants were lost to religion. The author notes that there is regrettably little original material on the attitudes of Irish Methodist emigrants, although he suggests that they were British patriots and that Roman Catholicism was seen as responsible for Ireland’s poverty, which only the Protestant gospel was thought to cure. The author also suggests that some Irish Methodists in the U.S.A. were particularly sensitive to what they saw as authoritarian of unscriptural developments in the Methodist Episcopal Church, perhaps because of their familiarity with, or indeed conversion from Roman Catholicism. These are interesting suggestions concerning the distinctive marks left by Irish origins on the religion of emigrants, but the author offers us little more that enables us to characterize Irish Methodism overseas, unless we are to rely on the descriptions of national character that the Victorians themselves often employed, and which are quoted in this book. The author provides not so much an Irish perspective on Methodist expansion, but more a catalogue of Irish emigrants and missionaries, and their doings. Taggart acknowledges that his approach is biographical and thematic, which allows him to write some lively biographical sketches, but his treatment of the Irish and Methodist context of his subject lacks development. It is perhaps the lack of context which gives a certain incoherence to the book as a whole, and which rather inhibits historical analysis. It would, for example, have been interesting to know whether his research cast any light on the role of the churches in emigration from Ireland, in forming or strengthening the links in the chain of migration which other historians seem to have identified.

The book perhaps comes closest to developing an Irish perspective on Methodist expansion when it examines the relationship between the
Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society and its Hibernian Auxiliary. Surrounded by distress and disorder, Irish Methodists nevertheless seem often to have been generous givers to missions, but had a subordinate role in the decisions and policy of the WMMS. Confusion arose over the funding of missionary work in Ireland itself, so that money raised in Ireland for the whole work of the WMMS seems sometimes in practice to have been retained for the mission to Roman Catholics in Ireland, thus seeming to confine locally Irish interest in mission. The author points to the recurrent dissatisfaction caused by these arrangements. It was not, apparently, until 1898 that Irish Methodists had their own missionary, and financial support for him was in fact disappointing.

The case studies of Ireland's more distinguished or controversial missionaries provide valuable illustrative material on recurrent problems of mission in the nineteenth century. India, where James Lynch and later William Butler worked, was dominated by a caste system and by white rulers who preserved their social distance from their brown subjects. We see James Lynch discussing whether Hindu caste converts need break their caste on becoming Christians, and developing a superior attitude to native Christian leaders, as well as his growing desperation over the finances and communications of the mission. Butler's early missionary achievements were destroyed in the Mutiny of 1857. The author's treatment of the work of John Barry in the West Indies shows the range of views on slavery held by early Methodist missionaries, and the delicate path on this issue which the WMMS attempted to tread.

Finally, the author's careful review of the theology of mission of Adam Clarke and William Arthur, both Irishmen and leading proponents of Methodist mission, emphasizes the way in which mission was seen by them as the vocation of all Christians and of the whole church. Such and understanding has always been strong in Methodism, and this book helps to delineate its consequences for the small and often struggling minority of Methodists in Ireland.

S. C. Potter
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Nineteenth century mission efforts were often empowered by adventurous stories of missionaries who carried the gospel to distant lands and the startling tales of their converts. A preeminent example is the story of Jason Lee, Methodism's first missionary to the Pacific Northwest. Methodist missions were only beginning in 1831 when a deputation of four
"Flathead" Indians from the Oregon territory appeared in St. Louis inquiring about the white man's Great Spirit. The call for a mission to these Indians was responded to by Jason Lee, one of Wilbur Fisk's former students and a recently ordained New England Methodist preacher.

Lee's mission was the topic of much interest in its own day gaining wide publicity. It was written about extensively through the 19th century, but now is known only by brief coverage in mission histories. The reissuing of Cornelius Brosnan's extensive treatment of the mission makes currently available the breath and drama of the story. Brosnan's volume was first published some fifty years ago (1932). The present edition is unchanged except for the addition of several appendices noting recent celebrations of the work of Jason Lee in Oregon and in his native Troy, NY conference.

Brosnan carefully presents Lee's many adventures, trials and success covering all aspects of frontier life, e.g., learning the languages in which the gospel could be proclaimed; erecting handhewn mission buildings; establishing farms, mills, and cattle herds to support the community and thereby establishing the first permanent American colony in the area; superintending a wide mission station scattered across central Oregon; working to establish the territory as an American state; and founding the first institution of higher learning in Oregon. His additional endeavors to sustain the mission through extensive mission tours is detailed giving insight into the attractiveness of missions during the period. Brosnan also treats in detail the difficulties encountered by Lee both in the mission and through critique from coworkers and others.

Mission practices and philosophy have so changed in recent decades that the book sometimes appears quaint and unusually laudatory. Apparently written first as a dissertation, the work suffers from occasional "overkill" in supporting materials (e.g., wedding contracts for the territory are interesting but not crucial or particularly relevant to the story — p. 89). The story also jumps ahead of itself in places (e.g., the story of a second mission station is assumed on page 92 and not discussed until page 165). However, such problems are outweighted by the genuine insights into early American missions that the book provides. Obviously based on extensive research on both American coasts, the work makes available a wealth of primary mission resource materials which will be interesting to laypersons, pastors, and professional historians.

Robert C. Monk
McMurry College


In the Preface to her biography of Frances Willard (1839-1898), president of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) from 1879
to 1898, author Ruth Bordin lists three reasons why a new biography of the famous reformer is necessary. First, she notes the discovery and microfilming in the 1980s of Willard source material—49 volumes of her diaries, correspondence, and scrapbooks to which Willard's previous biographer Mary Earhart (Dillon) did not have access when she wrote *Frances Willard: From Prayers to Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1944) over four decades ago. Second, she points to the appearance of a new generation of U.S. historians which does not consider temperance a discredited reform and thus produced a body of scholarship treating the history of alcohol abuse and the variety of remedies sought for it with the seriousness it deserves. Third, the new discipline of women's history has emerged over the past two decades and has contributed a wealth of new data, frameworks, and methods for historical study.

Utilizing these newly-discovered Willard sources (as well as the vast amount of WCTU and Willard materials microfilmed in the mid-1970s as part of the *Temperance and Prohibition Papers*, edited by Randall C. Jimerson, Francis X. Blouin, and Charles A. Isetts [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1977] and taking advantage of the insights and scholarship of both women's historians and historians of the temperance movement, Ruth Bordin has produced a solid, readable biography of one who was, in the judgment of her contemporaries, the most famous woman in America at the close of the nineteenth century. Perhaps even more importantly for readers of *Methodist History*, Frances E. Willard was unquestionably the most famous American Methodist of her time, male or female.

Through Bordin's skillful presentation in what is essentially a political biography, Willard emerges as a consummate politician and organizer. As she moved purposefully toward the presidency of the WCTU and then headed what became under her leadership the largest women's organization in the last quarter of the century, Willard carefully developed a leadership style melding together particular talents and strengths in a process which Bordin minutely traces.

Willard had the rare ability to couch somewhat radical goals such as woman suffrage in conservative language appealing to her mostly middle-class evangelical Protestant audiences (for example, "the ballot for home protection," a rallying-cry of the WCTU). In fact, she personified this traditional "packaging" of innovative notions as "womanly woman" yet, nonetheless, one who by the late 1880s championed organized labor and by the early 1890s could call herself a Christian socialist. Building on the broad base of her friendships among temperance, labor, political, women's rights, and denominational leaders, Willard often led the way in creating and maintaining reform networks crossing political parties and class lines, healing regional splits caused by the Civil War, and finally bridging the Atlantic ocean and extending around the world.
Bordin is at her best showing her readers the process by which Willard empowered both herself and hundreds of thousands of other women. She convincingly answers the question one inevitably asks when confronted by the awesome power Willard wielded so gracefully: How did she do it? Bordin also addresses the accompanying question: Was Willard able to maintain her power? by chronicling the decline of her influence and authority during the 1890s as her health failed and key coalitions she had constructed began to fall apart.

Yet something is missing from this biography, perhaps best briefly stated thus: we now know much about how Willard did what she did. But we do not really learn why she did it. Disappointingly, we learn little about the nature of that faith. We are given instead an interestingly political account (and the most complete account thus far) of Willard’s role in the 1888 General Conference when she and four other women duly elected as delegates from their annual conferences were denied seating. And we understand better Willard’s tolerant, ecumenical spirit which prevailed in an age when American Protestantism was still inclined toward narrowmindedness. But Bordin merely skims the surface of a spiritual life of stunning depth and complexity which is revealed in the diaries of Willard’s young womanhood as well as in later, published works.

Having just read Willard’s diaries for 1855-1868, I can attest to the existence of a passionate soul vitally engaged with theological issues and personalities, seeking a personal relationship with her God, experiencing refreshing times of God’s presence and seasons of dryness when God seemed absent. The diaries portray a fundamentally ethical being who struggled with difficult decisions prayerfully and worried lest day-to-day matters obscure the spiritual discipline which must underlie and sustain dailiness. Until we probe those spiritual depths, we will have only a partial picture of Frances Willard, one in which her very heart is left out. The biography in which Willard’s heart is truly bared and her spirit celebrated has yet to be written.

Carolyn De Swarte Gifford
Northwestern University


There are few individuals in the world with name recognition equal to that of Oral Roberts. And yet, for all his notoriety, Roberts has virtually escaped scholarly notice. David Harrell blames this neglect on the pervasive condescension of academics and intellectuals who find it hard to entertain the thought that an “Okie Holy Roller” should be taken serious-
ly. As a result, most of the information on Roberts is fed to the public through media coverage which has generally focused narrowly on his blemishes—real or imagined. To remedy this situation, David Harrell offers this voluminous work which attempts to show the man behind the warts and the character behind the caricature.

The book traces its subject from a poor preacher's son to the president of a multi-million dollar educational, medical, and evangelistic conglomerate. Throughout the work, all of the ministry's major successes and failures are vividly presented through the eyes of those involved—friend and foe alike. The depth and diversity of information compiled by Harrell owes much to the surprising amount of cooperation afforded to him by Roberts and his organization. Indeed, at one of their first meetings the evangelist cautioned Harrell to “talk to people that don’t believe in us” in order to get “the whole story” [xi].

As much as it is in the power of any biographer, Harrell has succeeded in presenting “the whole story.” However, there are those rare occasions when Harrell loses his historical objectivity. For example, when discussing Oral and Evelyn's relationship with their oldest son Ron (who committed suicide in 1982), Harrell remarks, “They did everything but accept him as he was—that they could not do. He was their son, but he was prodigal” [339]. More typically though, Harrell provides the reader with invaluable insights into Robert's life and character while comparing and contrasting his subject with the overall historical-religious milieu of the 20th century holiness, pentecostal, and healing traditions. At the very least, Harrell's insights into these traditions make the book well worth the read especially when one considers that as many as 29,000,000 Americans today label themselves either Pentecostal or charismatic. In many ways this is their story as well, but it is also a tale of America, for in highlighting Roberts' acceptance of individualism, pragmatism, and capitalism Harrell has succeeded in showing how much the life of Oral Roberts is An American Life.

Dale H. Simmons
Drew University


The central event of Phoebe Palmer's life occurred on the evening of July 26, 1837, when she experienced entire sanctification. The result of her experience was a remarkable career of Christian service that places Palmer at the heart of the 19th century Methodism. Charles Edward White gives us a fresh opportunity to examine the life of Phoebe Palmer in his
impressively researched biography. The first four chapters survey Palmer’s life, while in the last chapters White analyzes the four aspects of her career named in his title.

Unlike recent studies of Palmer which focus on her contributions to feminism, White’s emphasis is on her theology, which “shaped the theology of the holiness movement” and continues to have an impact on the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. He finds Palmer to be a direct descendant of John Wesley, and her emphasis on the “second blessing” not a rejection of Wesley but a simplification. “She pursued the logic of his arguments beyond the point where they had led him. She strongly asserted what he had quietly expressed,” and modified his doctrine of sanctification in six specific ways. In all other matters she was a typical 19th-century Methodist.

Palmer was also a revivalist, a feminist, and a humanitarian. White asserts that Palmer “civilized and systematized the methods of frontier Methodist revivalism,” and helped bring revivalism into the modern era with her emphasis on the lay ministry. As a feminist, Palmer revived the Methodist tradition of female ministry, influenced contemporaries like Catherine Booth and Frances Willard, and helped prepare the way for women like Amanda Smith and Maggie Van Cott. Her life, writings, and activities promoted the cause of women’s rights. In her role as a humanitarian, Palmer was a leading figure of the benevolent Empire. Like many of her contemporaries, an initial evangelistic fervor for lost souls developed into a humanitarian concern for the whole person. White discusses her numerous Benevolent activities, most notably the Five Points Mission in New York City, a forerunner of the settlement house movement.

The book includes several valuable appendices: the dates and locations of Palmer’s camp meetings and revival services; a list chronicling Hiram Mattison’s bitter opposition to Palmer in a series of articles in the *New York Christian Advocate and Journal* (1851-1856); and Palmer’s Covenant of Entire Consecration, a model she devised for believers desiring a way to “lay it all on the altar.”

White ably portrays Palmer as a major figure in American religious history and as one of the most influential American women of her century. He has made an important contribution to the body of scholarship on the life and legacy of this most fascinating woman.

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