

BOOK REVIEWS

He Included Me: The Autobiography of Sarah Rice. Transcribed and Edited by Louise Westling. 181 pages. Illustrated. The University of Georgia Press. Hardcover, \$19.95. Paperback, \$11.95.

Procrastinaors who delay getting out their tape recorders—perhaps rationalizing that oral histories will be of interest to few—may be amazed at the reception of this autobiography. Scholars are calling this first person account of the life of a black woman who survived poverty and social injustice to become a community and church leader an important record of the black experience in the 20th century south.

What's more, it doesn't take a scholar to appreciate the story of Sarah Rice, a resourceful, generous, articulate woman. University press publications are seldom best sellers, but *He Included Me* went into its second printing soon after its release, and is now available in paperback.

A number of newspapers, including the *New York Times* gave this oral narrative favorable reviews and Geraldo Rivera invited Rice and Westling to appear on his show. Rice's story, which is quite unlike the tales told by Geraldo's usual guests, has broad appeal. She vividly describes her life as an AME minister's daughter, sharecropper, teacher and—during the Depression when she lost her job teaching in black schools—worker in white family homes. She is also a community activist, church worker and keen observer of life in the segregated south.

During the years when Rice was cleaning and ironing for Westling's family, Westling, who was then a teenager, and the resourceful older woman became good friends.

It was Rice who decided that the story of her life which began in 1909 should be written and that Westling, an associate professor of English at the University of Oregon, should be the transcriber. Westling, who had long regarded Rice as a confidante and wise friend, agreed to tape record and transcribe Rice's memories, never intending to produce a book. The story unfolded as they sat at Rice's dining room table in Jacksonville, Florida, and at Westling's dining room table in Eugene, Oregon.

Westling describes Rice as someone who has "a vivid sense of herself . . . a natural leader . . . hilariously funny, and a natural storyteller with a good memory." Her formal education ended in the ninth grade—there were only nine grades in her school—but she was able at 17 to teach in a black school because she lied about her age.

"You were supposed to be 21," Rice recalls. "White people just kind of look at black folks and think they all look the same, so I could pass for 21 with them."

The title of this book comes from a song Rice learned from her mother, a song that had special meaning during one of the many times

when their food supply was gone. It was getting dark when Rice's mother, while praying, "Lord what can I do?" went down into the field by the railroad tracks to see if she could find some food, knowing that the corn there was "not dry enough to shuck . . . but too hard to boil . . ."

"She pulled an ear of corn and looked at it hard, and the idea came to her to take some ears home and grind the corn in our meat grinder. She came up the hill from down in the bottom, carrying the corn and singing that hymn about 'Jesus included me.' When the Lord said, 'Whosoever will,' He included me too.

"We ground and sifted that corn, over and over, until we shook out enough to make a great big hoecake. It was kind of grainy, but sweet! That was some of the sweetest corn bread that I have ever tasted, and we had bread to last until the corn got dry enough to mill. Mama said she just knew the Lord wasn't going to let us starve."

After marrying a Baptist deacon Rice became a leader in the Baptist church, but her story is of special interest to Methodists. Her father, the Rev. Willis James Webb, was an AME minister who preached in Birmingham and rode circuit in southern Alabama. He supplemented his ministerial salary by working as a carpenter, brick mason (he got less than five dollars a chimney, "and that was from the ground up") and farming.

With other ministers, he founded a Methodist school named the Coffin County School after Bishop L. J. Coffin. When that school was unable to make it financially, he and his wife lost their home which they had mortgaged to make a down payment on the school. In 1925, Webb died in his pulpit of heart failure.

Methodists will be amused at a frequent explanation for the controversies Rice has caused in Baptist organizations, especially for her efforts to gain recognition for the contributions of women: "She came from the Methodist church."

She doesn't apologize: "They said I had Methodist ideas; well, whatever the ideas were, they were succeeding. Somebody asked them why they were worrying about it, since we were progressing. That shut that one off."

We were the "richest poorest people in the world," Rice recalls. It was important that her father, being the minister, look dignified and he managed to do so:

"If we needed the mule for plowing, Papa would walk. He would carry his old leather grip with a shirt in it and a handkerchief made out of a piece of flour sack that Mama had hemstitched around to make it look nice. His shirt would be starched with cornmeal starch. Mama would put some meal in the water and just boil it and drain off the water to get the starch. Most of the shirts didn't have collars on them, because the men wore celluloid collars . . ."

"It was a good thing that Papa wore a coat, because sometimes the shirts would be all patched up under the coat where you couldn't see the

patches. Sometimes he would only wear a shirt front, and then he would preach flat-footed, not moving around or using his arms. I would be so proud—I knew my daddy was the preachingest man that ever was. We thought he could beat anybody in the world.”

Rice truly is an exceptional woman who has maintained her dignity when others would have been defeated by poverty and racial discrimination. Her oral narrative concludes with these words:

“Through all the trials and tribulations I’ve had, I’m still reminded of Mama’s old song, ‘He Included Me,’ and I know it’s true, because otherwise I wouldn’t be here to tell this story. ‘When the Lord said, “Whosoever will,” He included me too.’ Yes. Jesus included me. Yes, Jesus included me.”

This story is one well worth reading, one that would not have appeared in print had Rice not insisted that Westling record it.

NANCIE PEACOCKE FADELEY
Eugene, OR

Lowell Messerschmidt, *Bauern-Sensei: The Story of Susan Bauernfeind, Pioneer Missionary to Japan*, Lima, Ohio: Fairway Press, 1991, 158 pp.

In 1900 a young lady landed at Yokohama port, Japan, as the first woman missionary of the Evangelical Church from the United States.

Susan Bauernfeind, born in an obscure village in Minnesota, brought up in a poor farmer’s family of humble Christian faith, a self-made woman, heard the call of God in her youth, determined to be a servant of Jesus Christ, devoted herself to the cause of evangelism in Japan for forty-one years, returned home urged by the U.S. officials because of the danger of war, and while still in church work, died on October 27th, 1945.

Here is the life-story of a worker of Christ, who “looked upon herself primarily as an evangelistic missionary,” but worked in whatever fields and spheres she was confronted with in serving her Lord. She was an industrial missionary working with factory laborers. She taught Bible in classes and to individuals. She established a Bible training school to train native workers. She founded kindergartens and orphanages. And she erected churches, one of which later became “The Susan Bauernfeind Memorial Koishikawa-Hakusan Church,” and is one of the strong churches now in the Tokyo metropolitan area. When she was asked to speak to any kind of group, young and old, men and women, housewives and farmers and factory-workers, she never refused to go however far-distant the place was. Very often she spoke “to the people who have never before heard the Christian message.” In all these works of Christian mission, she was one of the pioneers to sow the seeds of the Gospel in the heathen land and she believed that “it is the Lord who gives the increase.”

Being the nephew of the missionary, the author took full advantage to make use of Susan's diaries and correspondence as the primary sources in writing this story. This makes the story a living drama. In writing of the missionary's life and works the author describes the scenes and customs of early 20th century Japan which have now disappeared and are not known by the ordinary Japanese people today. This itself is very interesting, though there are many mistakes and misunderstandings. The reviewer wonders how the author ever got such wrong information that is scattered here and there in the volume concerning mainly the historical facts of Japan. The author writes that there were many Japanese who helped him with information and research. This reviewer, therefore, considers that they should be held responsible for the mistakes, since the author is not a historian.

With all this, the book is still a very fascinating and inspiring story of an early missionary who devoted her life entirely to the cause of Jesus Christ.

TAKEO KEGA
Yokohama, Japan

David G. Hackett, *The Rude Hand of Innovation: Religion and Social Order in Albany, New York, 1652-1836*. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991. xv + 240 pp. \$29.95.

This winner of the American Society of Church History's Brewer Prize may not seem at first blush to require a *Methodist History* review. It concerns itself with the Dutch and Calvinist order stamped on the community of Albany and with the dissolution, or better, the transformation of that order in the revolutionary and national periods. However, in Albany's evolution from familial/ethnic/religious Dutch to Anglo and Yankee moral/democratic order, the Methodists had a role to play. Hackett describes those changes and that role carefully. This is social history at its best, exacting in its control of demographic, economic and political detail but rendered in lively narrative, even dramatic style.

Hackett helps us see on a community and neighborhood level what Nathan Hatch (*The Democratization of American Christianity*) shows us on a national level—how movements that burst onto the North American scene during and after the revolution found ways of giving form and expression to the impulses of change, democratization, commerce and order epitomized and unleashed by the struggle for independence itself. Like *The Garden of Methodism* by William Williams, Hackett's work explores the "appeal" of Methodism, confirming what Methodists have long said about themselves—that doctrines like free grace, the Arminian conceptions of human nature, expectations of a transformed life and communal

structures to guide and sustain such transformations captured the hearts and imaginations of marginalized persons and oriented them towards productive roles in society. Hackett demonstrates that appeal and its results, charting, for instance, the occupations of members and leaders. In 1830, Methodist men came disproportionately from the skilled and unskilled working ranks, 48% and 22% respectively for a 70% total. Presbyterians by contrast drew almost 60% of their membership from two higher economic categories "petty shopkeepers" and "merchants, professionals and public officials."

This is, then, a book useful to us precisely because it focuses on the social order as a whole and locates Methodism therein.

RUSSELL E. RICHEY
Durham, NC

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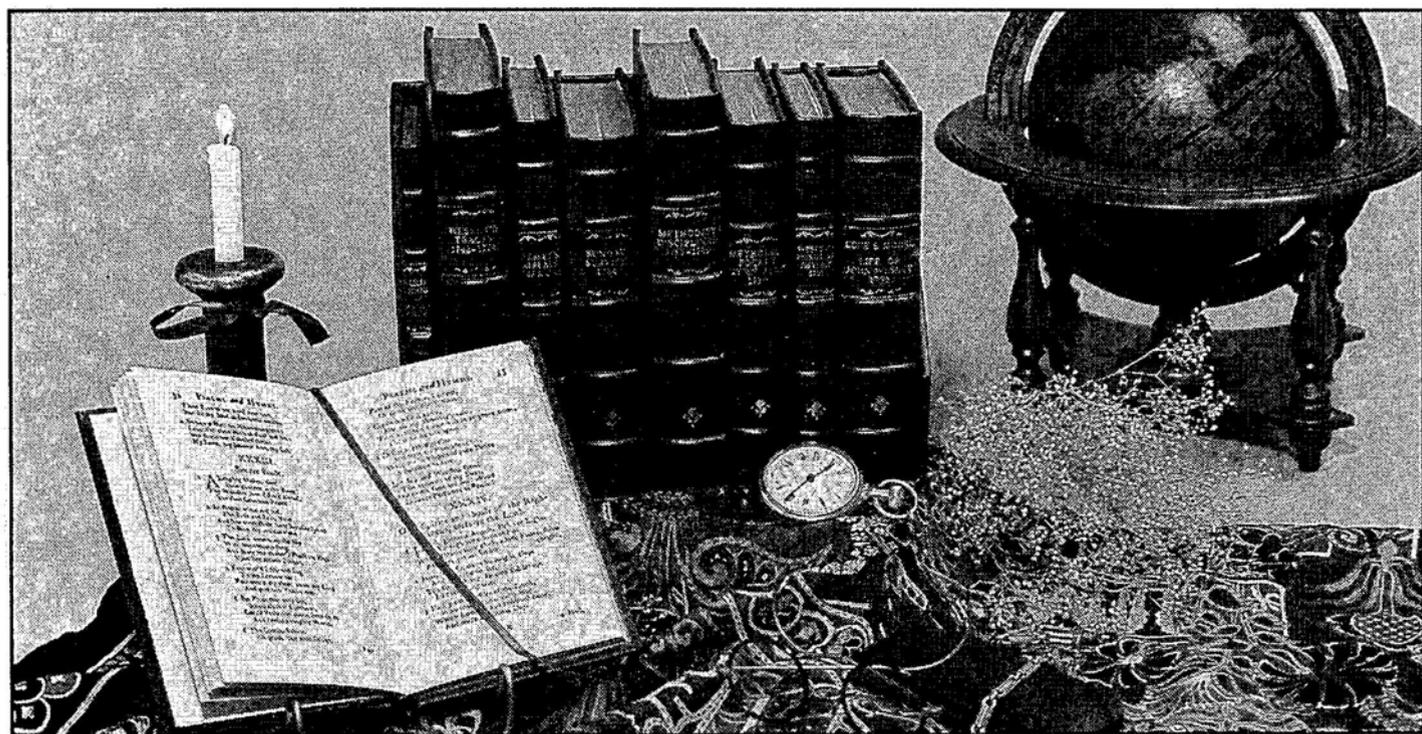
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