

BOOK REVIEWS

Edwin Welch, *Spiritual Pilgrim. A reassessment of the Life of the Countess of Huntingdon*, Cardiff, Wales: University of Wales Press, 1995. xiv + 233 pp. £30.00. Available in the USA from Books International, Inc., P.O. Box 605, Herndon, VA 22070-0605, \$60.00.

The Countess of Huntingdon (1701–1791), was coeval with the Wesleys, a lifelong friend of Charles and his wife, both early friend and later rival of John, living a somewhat similar life to his own as an imposing evangelical leader. The Countess died three months after Wesley, leaving strict instructions for a simple funeral, and forbidding any “official” biography. As a result the two volumes of her 1839 *Life and Times* are kindly described by Henry Rack as “inaccurate, irritating, but indispensable.” At last the closing adjective may be discarded, even though this taut but reliable volume can hardly answer all the questions posed by church historians about the Countess’s enormous charities, her vast evangelical enterprises, and the hosts of clergy, high, low, and embryonic, who flocked around her.

The two noble families of Shirley and Hastings whom she linked are outlined in select pedigrees by the author at the outset—though her husband, Theophilus, 9th Earl of Hastings, was not born in 1616, as misprinted, but 1696. Dr. Edwin Welch doubtless found it tedious to describe the many squabbles among these titled families, though he also wisely reminds us not to place too much stress on her noble rank, for her parents lived on a soldier’s pay and the charity of relations. She was “the second daughter of the penniless younger son of a peer.” Even Dr. Welch’s exhaustive researches in an amazing medley of manuscripts on both sides of the Atlantic and beyond have failed to document Lady Selina’s place or exact date of birth in 1707, no more than they have secured much detail about her 1739 conversion.

The death of her deeply loved but intestate husband at the age of fifty in 1746 left her in deep emotional shock and with four minor children to care for, as well as a large estate. The 10th Earl, Francis, spent over a decade touring Europe, in 1752 the elder daughter married Lord Rawdon, the younger son died in 1758, the other daughter in 1763. Only then could the Countess take up her own life’s work in many varied forms of gospel religion. Her world-wide correspondence is enormous and rich, once we solve the unpunctuated flood of her execrably spelt writing, as Welch has succeeded in doing with immense patience, skill, and fortitude.

The Wesley brothers and George Whitefield came into Selina’s orbit before her widowhood. Their mutual friend, James Hutton, English Moravian leader, gave a pen-picture of his first meeting with her in 1740: “The Countess, who had sent for me, I found more eager to hear the Gospel than anyone I ever saw before. . . . She receives the Gospel very simply, and believes it. . . . She has great liking to the Brethren; she does not lack good sense, but has a very violent temper.”

In 1764 the Welsh evangelist, Howell Harris (1714–1773) inspired her with the idea of building a college near his own home in Trevecka “to train young men to the Lord.” From 1768 until her death this became her main hobby as well as personal home. She furnished the students’ library, staff, tuition, and maintenance, as well as spiritual direction. She used her “legal right as a widowed peeress to appoint Anglican chaplains” to staff the private chapels she founded in popular social centres such as Brighton, Bath, Tunbridge Wells, and Spa Fields in London. In 1783, as “S. Huntingdon, Seceder,” she drew up fifteen Calvinist articles of doctrine for The Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion, read at the primary (presbyterian) ordination in Spa Fields. In 1784 an “Apostolic Society” was founded in London to assist her funding of the College, and to guide the future of her Connexion, though this remains an incidental element in this highly selective but carefully documented biography.

Frank Baker
Durham, NC

Adam Potkay and Sandra Burr, eds., *Black Atlantic Writers of the Eighteenth Century: Living the New Exodus in England and the Americas*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995. 268 pp. Cloth, \$39.95; paperback, \$16.95.

Though religion is not the sole focus of these brief autobiographies, the Great Awakening/Evangelical Revival did touch all four of the Black writers anthologized in this volume. In New Jersey, the Nigerian Ukawsaw Gronniosaw was owned by Theodore Frelinghuysen, who both converted and (just before dying) freed his slave. George Whitefield helped him settle in England in the early 1760s, and his *Narrative* was first published in 1770 with a preface by Walter Shirley of the Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion.

Whitefield’s preaching also helped convert the free-born New Yorker John Marrant in 1769, who soon thereafter taught slaves and evangelized Indians in the south. In England he, too, fell under the influence of the Countess of Huntingdon, was ordained in her Connexion, and on that account sailed for Nova Scotia, where he unsuccessfully competed with North American Methodists like Freeborn Garrison. His *Narrative* of 1785 features an extended stylized account on his captivity among the Cherokees. A 1789 sermon, also included here, demonstrates that his membership in the first Black Masonic Lodge (in Boston) was fully compatible with his view of Christianity.

Quobna Ottobah Cugoano’s Christian connections were primarily with evangelical Anglicans. Kidnapped from his native Ghana and brought to London in 1772, he was baptized in the fashionable parish of St. James, Westminster. By 1786 he was allied with the Clapham Sect and their work against the slave trade, even writing George III on the subject. Before drop-

ping from view in 1791 he expressed interest in the repatriation project being developed in Sierra Leone. His *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil of Slavery* (1787) mentions both Gronniosaw and Marrant and was probably edited by his good friend, Olaudah Equiano.

Equiano, another Nigerian, reached England after time on a Virginia plantation and service in the British navy, and was baptized an Anglican at St. Margaret's, Westminster, though Calvinist dissenters played a larger role in his later evangelical conversion. He took up the anti-slavery cause, sponsored both by the Clapham evangelicals and by the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion, and died in 1797, having already published his *Interesting Narrative* (1789).

While literary convention weighs heavily in these writings (most notably the evangelical autobiography, but also, in one case, the captivity narrative), and though the editorial work of English evangelical friends cannot be ruled out, the voices of these four remarkable men do come through. The richness of African culture, the slave trade's horrors, the liberating power of education and evangelical Christianity, and a rhetorically effective abolitionism all emerge effectively.

The editors are not completely sure-footed with regard to Methodism, which they treat as a generic category including both Whitefield and the Countess of Huntingdon. In fact, Wesleyan Methodism, proper, really does not figure in these accounts. Nevertheless, they have carefully excerpted, introduced and annotated important narratives that should appeal to all readers interested in slavery, Black culture, and Atlantic evangelicalism.

Charles Wallace
Salem, Oregon

Stephen R. Graham, *Cosmos in the Chaos: Philip Schaff's Interpretation of Nineteenth-Century American Religion*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1995. 226 pp. \$22.00.

Philip Schaff (1819–1893) was one of the major figures in American Protestantism in the second half of the 19th century. He was a talented biblical scholar, an outstanding church historian (and founder of the American Society of Church History), a competent theologian, and an advocate of ecumenism while it was in its infancy in the United States. Graham's book is a lively study of Schaff's multifaceted career as a theologian and church leader. It is especially illuminating for way in which it traces changes in Schaff's attitudes toward the nation and its churches from the time he arrived as an immigrant professor bound for the German Reformed Seminary at Mercersburg, PA, to his later years as a teacher at Union Theological Seminary in New York.

Schaff was critical of American Methodism during his early years at Mercersburg, which began in 1844. He thought Methodism was at the heart of the divisive "sect system" which caused religious chaos in America. However, Schaff gradually came to have an appreciation for Methodism and its place in the denominational life of American Christianity. While this book does not deal extensively with Methodism, it provides a very important window into the life of American Protestantism in the United States in the 19th century, especially with regard to denominationalism and Schaff's vision of an "evangelical catholicity."

Charles Yrigoyen, Jr.
Madison, NJ

Reginald F. Hildebrand, *The Times Were Strange and Stirring: Methodist Preachers and the Crisis of Emancipation*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995. xiv + 189 pp. \$45.95 hardcover. \$17.95 paperback.

This book by University of North Carolina professor Reginald Hildebrand will be the standard reference to comprehend the denominational complexity within U.S. Methodism (excepting Wesleyan and Free Methodists) in the post Civil War era in the American south. Hildebrand explicates how five denominations represent three distinct patterns in the transformation of antebellum church identities for black Methodists and of different responses to emancipation and ecclesiastical reconstruction.

In part I, Hildebrand depicts the features of the postbellum reaction in the white Methodist Episcopal Church, South to black freedom, and the renegotiation of church relationships wrought by and for its former slave members. White "evangelical paternalists" initiated a "separate but equal" program beginning at the General Conference of 1866 and culminating in the formation of the CME Church in 1870. Anticipating Booker T. Washington's racial compromise, black traditionalists cooperated with this venture by holding on to church property (a factor Hildebrand neglects), by disavowing political Reconstruction and by combining racial separation with a new paternalism from white southerners. The scheme did not succeed except for forming a new black southern denomination and its church property. The first CME leaders, all of whom came out of slavery, discovered that lynching could not be stopped by the church's disavowing politics. White southern Methodists, who contributed only one-tenth to CME education between 1884 and 1903 of the total given to plantation missions for the twenty years after 1844, found the new paternalism channelled through black leaders less satisfying than the evangelization of slaves. In the end, Hildebrand soberly concludes, their compassion degenerated into contempt.

In the second part Hildebrand portrays the different social gospel of African Methodism in its mission to the newly emancipated. Here his analysis

is flawed only by his almost exclusive concentration on the African Methodist Episcopal Church, with only a few references to the African Methodist Episcopal, Zion tradition. He acknowledges the problem of a northern free black cultural arrogance that sometimes marked the African Methodist program of social transformation. That agenda embraced Republican party politics, education, economic self-sufficiency and, when Reconstruction ended, the return to black emigration—focused here more on Africa than on the exodus movement to the American west which began in 1879. The foundation of the program was a version of the Christian gospel which affirmed the full “manhood” in church and society of those formerly held as chattels.

In the third part Hildebrand reassesses the Methodist Episcopal Church’s return to the region of the defeated Confederacy. He dramatizes its struggle to define its mission, the emergence of a biracial coalition of anti-caste radicals within this conservative denomination and the alignment of its social gospel with the civil religion of the Republican Party. The outcome of this program was to concede to the color line in ME schools and annual conferences and to marginalize black Methodists and their white allies both within the denomination and the Republican Party.

This study assumes the value of the church as a social and political force, the importance of religious affiliation as a factor alongside selecting surnames, work patterns, and places to live by the freedpeople and the religious dimension of the experiment in biracial democracy which Reconstruction represented. Carefully researched and documented and cogently written, *The Times Were Strange and Stirring* depicts a most important moment in the poignant saga of religion and race in the American experience.

Will Gravely
Denver, CO

S T Kimbrough, Jr., editor, *Methodism in Russia and the Baltic States. History and Renewal*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995. 253 pp. \$15.95 paperback.

This is a book that is long over-due. The fascinating story of how Methodism spread to these countries has never really been told. The method developed by the author/editor is rather ingenious: He has gathered already existing material, organized it, and in addition added new research of his own, as well as the history of the rebirth of Methodism in the former Soviet Union, an overview of which has not been available until now. One may seriously question this method from a historian’s viewpoint: Some of the material is dated; one finds the contributions of the various authors somewhat uneven, representing different levels of scholarship. However, when that has been said, one should never forget that a turbulent, suppressive political situation has dominated the picture all along, and has resulted in much historical mate-

rial being destroyed or inaccessible. Therefore, this book is a necessary and important start of what is hoped to become a new wave of serious historical research in this area.

Another valuable contribution is the detailed timeline provided in the back of the book. It contains much information otherwise not accessible, and gives an overview which is very helpful for all who really want to get a hold of the developments. However, there are some misprints of names: p. 212, year 1881: should be "Nikolaistad", not "Nikloaistad"; p. 214, year 1910: "Kuanas", should be "Kaunas". On the same page, year 1922: "Buoksental" is a misspelled German form of the name, in Finnish it is "Vuoksenlaakso" (Vuoksen Valley). Some information about Methodism in Sweden needs to be more accurate: p. 212, year 1859, "The first Methodist Church in [is] founded in Sweden". There were groups gathering at various places that early. However, the first organized congregations were established in Vallda (outside Gothenburg), and Stockholm (Saint Paul's Church). Further, on the same page, years 1870 & 1874, the "conference" in Sweden is mentioned. But there was no conference there until 1876, when King Oscar II by Royal Decree authorized the Methodists to form the first non-Lutheran church in Sweden with full rights. Later that year the first conference was organized. Up to that time there had been only Annual Meetings of the preachers in the Swedish Mission. For the sake of clarity, still another point should be mentioned: Chapter 1 has the heading "The Methodist Church in Finland, Russia, and the Baltic States". The correct name is "The Methodist *Episcopal* Church", which is the name also Nuelsen, from whom this chapter is taken, uses ("Die Bischöfliche Methodistenkirche").

This work is in effect a kind of chronicle of people, pastors and lay, who were fired up for Christ and *felt compelled* to proclaim salvation and new life in His name. During a very trying time, with persecutions, revolution and hunger, they worked diligently to lead people to the Lord, and served them in their material needs as far as resources were available. It is therefore an irony of history that the suppressive regimes are gone, while the church is reestablished or revitalized.

This book should be carefully read by lay and clergy alike. Read your history and be wise!

Ole E. Borgen
Norway

The Works of John Wesley on Compact Disc. Available from Providence House Publishers, 238 Seaboard Lane, Franklin, TN 37067. (Telephone: 1-800-321-5692) \$149.95.

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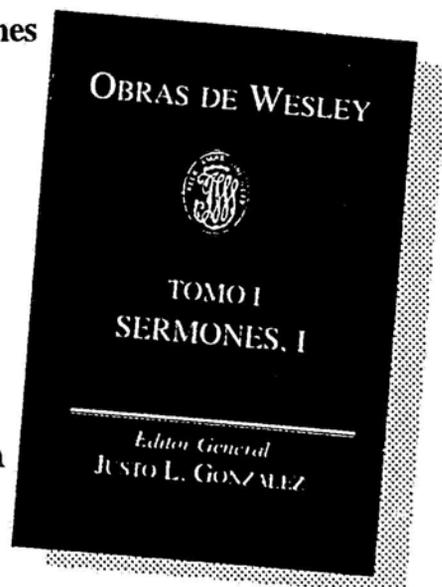
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