

BOOK REVIEWS

Charity R. Carney, *Ministers and Masters: Methodism, Manhood and Honor in the Old South*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011. 188 pp. \$35.00.

Historians such as Christine Leigh Heyrman have described how evangelicals brought their faith to the early national and antebellum South. Cynthia Lynn Lyerly and John H. Wigger have shown how Methodism expanded its influence and membership in the early Republic. With *Ministers and Masters*, Charity R. Carney has made an important contribution to this body of work and to Methodist studies by demonstrating how southern Methodist ministers reconciled their equalitarian religious beliefs with the concept of manhood within the honor culture of the Old South. Similarly to previous historians, Carney concludes that Methodist ministers faced a number of problems proselytizing the section as many of the tenets of Methodism contradicted southern culture. These issues forced them to adapt to their new situation. New to antebellum Methodist history, however, is Carney's compelling argument that, by the 1840s, these men overcame these difficulties by claiming a dual heritage that made them both Methodist ministers and bona fide southern men. Carney masterfully shows how Methodist clerics in the South gradually grew apart from their northern brethren, cumulating in the 1844 denominational schism and the establishment of a separate southern Methodist church. One of the more innovative aspects of this work is the argument that Methodist ministers, seemingly at odds with southern patriarchy, enlisted those on the bottom of the social hierarchy, such as white children and slaves, to save the souls of those to whom they were normally subordinated. But Carney demonstrates that the ministry was also able to construct an ecclesiastical hierarchy to maintain control of the church and fit it into southern society.

For sources, Carney relies on a number of published memoirs, biographies and histories. These are supplemented with manuscripts left by ministers and Methodist periodicals. While the writings of ministers are used from throughout the South, much of *Ministers and Masters* focuses on the leading clerics, oftentimes the bishops. Certainly these white men left the largest amount of resources, and there are limited materials written by ordinary ministers. But a greater effort to incorporate a few more of these voices likely would enhance the argument. Besides an error on page ninety-six mistakenly mentioning Bishop James O. Andrew, a prominent figure in the book, as a minister living in Virginia, Carney's prose is excellent as she is able to bring to life many of the minister's stories. *Ministers and Masters* is

well worth reading for anyone interested in Methodism, society, slavery, and gender relations in the antebellum South.

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Geordan Hammond and Peter S. Forsaith, eds., *Religion, Gender, and Industry: Exploring Church and Methodism in a Local Setting*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011. 238 pp. \$28.00.

Though the value of “conference volumes” can be enhanced or limited by the ability of their editors, they rise or fall on whether the original conference was genuinely worthy of note. By that standard, this collection does very well. It presents papers from a 2009 conference in England that focused on the ministry of John and Mary Fletcher of Madeley, Shropshire, as well as that of her protege, Mary Tooth, and the circle of women preachers and leaders that centered on them for decades. The conference was unusual in bringing together such a widely variegated body of scholars—from theologians to gender studies specialists, from historians of industry and work to historians of Methodism and the Church of England. These papers interweave to create a rich and surprisingly varied local history of a very special place at a very important time.

This volume is of significance to students of Methodism because it brings us closer to understanding the special, perhaps unique way that Methodism functioned in Madeley as an integral component of Anglican parish ministry. Not only that, because of the particular roles and abilities of John and Mary Fletcher, their parish served as a support center for women in ministry and a center for theological development—all in the economic and social context provided by a center of industrial innovation that includes Coalbrookdale, often called the “birthplace of the industrial revolution.” This volume shines by bringing together strong work by historians in all of these areas, creating an unusually fruitful set of perspectives and juxtapositions.

Religion, Gender, and Industry is potentially helpful to Wesleyan and Methodist scholars in the US because it provides us with a “thick description” of how Methodism looked in one part of its native land and refreshes our understanding of developments in fields we could easily overlook. As a kind of bonus for those primarily interested in the American impact of events in Shropshire, the volume includes essays by Laurence Wood and Harold E. Raser on how the theology of John Fletcher influenced American Methodism and the Holiness Movement.

It is very hard to find such a wealth of recent scholarship in such an accessible and affordable form. This slim, well-edited volume is certainly

of interest to scholars interested in English Methodism; it might also be of use in courses that examine the history and development of Methodism, the theological development of Methodism, or the ministry of women.

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Jill K. Gill, *Embattled Ecumenism: The National Council of Churches, the Vietnam War, and the Trials of the Protestant Left*. DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2011. 563 pp. \$40.00.

Embattled Ecumenism: The National Council of Churches, the Vietnam War, and the Trials of the Protestant Left is a scholarly, well-documented history written by Jill Kill, Professor of History at Boise State University. Gill is very conversant with ecumenism, the history and structure of the National Council of Churches (NCC), and its major denominations. She has done postdoctoral study at Hartford Seminary and her interdisciplinary training is evident throughout her study.

As a successor to one of the actors in the book, Dudley Ward, former general secretary of the United Methodist General Board of Church & Society, and as one who spoke out against a war with Iraq in August, 2002, I was fascinated to learn how early, strong, and clear was the United Methodist leadership voice against the Vietnam War. I am also grateful that Dr. Gill chose to include a significant epilogue entitled, "Forty Years in the Wilderness," in which she describes the vigorous opposition to war with Iraq under the leadership of the NCC's then general secretary, Bob Edgar, a United Methodist minister.

Because a history of the role of the NCC in the period of the Vietnam War necessarily involves accounts of meetings, minutes, and documents, Gill helps to add humanity to the story by focusing on two people who served on the NCC's staff, Robert Bilheimer and Gerhard Elston. Bilheimer attended Yale University and its Divinity School in the mid-1930s and became committed to the ecumenical movement through the campus Student Christian Movement chapter which he led. He served on the staff of the World Council of Churches, became acquainted with all of the major ecumenical leaders of the era, and developed a passion for social justice through support of causes such as the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa before heading up the International Affairs Commission of the NCC. Bilheimer hired Gerhard Elston, a Lutheran whose family was identified as Jewish by Hitler and then had to leave Nazi Germany, to lead the NCC's Vietnam Affairs program. Through these two individuals, we follow the growth of the NCC's opposition to the Vietnam War and its subsequent challenges and difficulties.

Dr. Gill pays significant attention to the gap between local church mem-

bers and clergy on the one hand and NCC and denominational leadership on the other, a source of frustration and concern to all involved. There are many reasons for the gap between laity and church leadership, but the NCC's refusal to knuckle under to McCarthyism and its steadfast support for the civil rights movement led it to question the prevailing American culture. This, in turn, led it into conflict with the largely white, middle-class, conservative local church membership of its member communions.

To this day, the clash between prophetic witness and affirmation of the prevailing culture continues.

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