

Book Reviews

Robert Watson Sledge, *Hands on the Ark: The Struggle for Change in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1914-1939*. Lake Junaluska, N.C.: Commission on Archives and History, United Methodist Church, 1975. 264 pp., paperback, \$5.95; cloth, \$8.95.

On the eve of the long anticipated General Conference of 1918, Theo. F. Brewer warned his fellow members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South: "Hands off, brethren! Don't touch the ark, or try to turn over the cart. Remember Uzziah [*sic*], O'Kelley, and many others whose bones lie bleaching along the way." With this image Robert Watson Sledge leads us through the final, significant quarter century of the life of the M. E. Church, South, culminating in the 1939 union with the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Protestant Church to form The Methodist Church. For this study Sledge has received the 1972 Jesse Lee Prize awarded by the Commission on Archives and History of the United Methodist Church.

The focus of this denominational history is on "the development of a major reform movement within the denomination and the conservative countermovement it induced. At the end of World War I conservatives dominated the life of the M. E. Church, South, but by 1930 control had shifted to more progressive forces. At the beginning of this period a series of issues tended to divide the denomination into two camps, conservatives (sometimes dubbed "fundamentalists," "mossbacks," or "reactionaries") versus progressives (alternately called "modernists" or "liberals"). Fairly consistently conservatives supported "the Church" against "the University" in the struggle for control of Vanderbilt University; agreed with the Bishops versus the Board of Missions in the turmoil over authority on the mission field; repudiated the strategies of the Movement for Revision for democratizing the Church; stood staunchly for a literalistic understanding of Scripture; and, opposed unification with the Northern Methodists. After the General Conference of 1918 some of the rancor was set aside as Southern Methodists launched impressive campaigns on behalf of missions — "the Centenary" —, education — "the Christian Education Movement" —, and Pensions. But it was the issue of unification that surfaced again and again in the twenties and thirties to tear at the fabric of the M. E. Church, South. Sledge skillfully tells the story of the various ideologies, politics, and persons that telescoped in these few years much of the heartache and courage of Southern Methodism over its entire nearly century long history.

In the unification fight, emotions went as deep as any other controversy the Church had ever faced, and it involved nearly every Southern Methodist. Few were indifferent and none were unaware that a fight was on. Before it was over, brother was arrayed against brother, friendships were shattered, unfair acts had been committed and unkind words said, and sizable portions of the Church had threatened secession.

Unification did succeed and Sledge's contribution to this story is not so much to add new information as to assemble in an orderly fashion all of the different aspects of the account.

Sledge's study now gives us in one volume a story too often treated as an appendage to other larger stories: Religion in America or the South, or even the Methodist Church viewed backwards from the vantage point of a united body. As a denominational history its strength is also one of its weaknesses. Carefully researched, accurate in detail, sometimes telling the reader more than he wants to know about a given issue, the interaction of Southern Methodism and Southern society does not really come off. To be sure the opening chapter is entitled, "The Southern Scene, 1918-1938," but after the scene is set it is allowed to recede into the background and we miss the fascinating interplay of cultural mores and religious values. We are told of positions adopted on various issues, but even when personal correspondence is used to supplement official minutes, there is an absence of the fruits of social history which would help us see ideas flowing out of economic and social configurations.

This reviewer is also concerned about issues that were not treated substantively, most notably race and women. Even if one argues that there was not much movement on the race issue in these years — which must qualify any judgment about the triumph of progressive forces — this issue was more important than one would gather from a knowledge of the official proceedings. In the same vein we now know that of the small but significant number of women who embarked on careers in social reform, an impressive proportion were affiliated with the M. E. Church, South. For many of these individuals — Will Alexander, Lucy Hammond, Willis D. Weatherford, etc. — their work was done as Methodists but often carried on through auxiliary or even so-called secular channels.

On balance Sledge has given to the study of Methodism and Religion in America a useful source for future interpretation. A dissertation in origin, it is not fair perhaps to expect the kind of historical analysis that is still needed and that would make the study more useful to a larger audience. More descriptive than analytical, *Hands on the Ark* nevertheless deserves to become a valuable frame of reference for students, scholars, and church leaders.

— Ronald C. White, Jr.
Whitworth College

Adolph L. Dial and David K. Eliades, *The Only Land I Know: A History of the Lumbee Indians*, San Francisco: The Indian Historian Press, 1975. Paperback, 174 pp., Bibliography, Appendix, \$6.00.

The story of the Lumbee Indians is a fascinating narrative in its own right. According to Lumbee tradition (and much circumstantial

evidence), the Lumbees derived their unique English culture from intermarriage with the survivors of Sir Walter Raleigh's "Lost Colony." The relations between Lumbees and Europeans in Eastern North Carolina "were generally serene" (p. 29) until the rise of the color line in the Antebellum South. Deteriorating relations reached their nadir during the Civil War and the "Lowrie War" of the Reconstruction Period. After the "Decade of Despair," 1875-1885, (p. 89) the establishment of state schools for Indians, especially the Croatan Normal School, became symbolic of both improving Indian-white relations and Indian development. Indian progress reached a climax in the Post-World War II Period with the famous rout of the Ku Klux Klan in 1958, the establishment of an Indian bank and newspaper, and the rise of Lumbee politicians and political power.

The history of the Lumbees also provides a needed perspective on the cultural diversity of Native Americans. The Lumbees proudly identify themselves as Native Americans even though their early adoption of most elements of English culture separates them from most cultural traits which the general public identifies as "Indian," e.g. dances, language, dress.

The Only Land I Know does not measure up to the significance of the Lumbee Indians. Its greatest weakness is its lack of source footnotes, especially when there are conflicting interpretations of the date, e.g. the Reconstruction Period. It has no index.

Its discussion of religion does not explain the origin or dominance of Baptists and Methodists among the Lumbees nor does it relate these denominations to Lumbee superstitions. There is virtually no mention of non-religious voluntary associations or businesses or explanation of their absence. The extended discussion of activities such as hog-killing and quilting parties (common to most rural Americans of the period) adds little to an understanding of the Lumbees.

Despite its failings, this short, well-illustrated book presents the main points of the Lumbee story in a popularly-written, clear, concise format. It makes a scholarly contribution by utilizing several interviews with elderly Lumbees. By indicating the importance and uniqueness of the Lumbees, it might inspire others to write a more scholarly, comprehensive, comparative study of the Lumbee Indians and their place within Native American and American History.

— Robert G. Sherer
Wiley College

J. Gordon Melton, **Log Cabins to Steeples*, Nashville, Tenn.: Parthenon Press, 1974. xxvii:417 pp., \$6.95.

Log Cabins to Steeples is an account of the several denominations which made up the Methodist Church in Illinois from 1824 to 1974, with

emphasis being placed on the Methodist Episcopal Church because of its size and predominant role. However, the author includes discussions of other Wesleyan churches, such as the African Methodist Episcopal, the Free Methodist and the Evangelical Congregational Churches and the holiness organizations.

Illinois was settled by immigrants from eastern states who brought their religion with them. In turn others later carried their beliefs and institutions to the newer states of the union. Being in the heartland of America, Methodism in Illinois became a microcosm of the larger movement. From a church of the prairie it became the church of highly developed agricultural areas and urban centers. Most of the important issues which the church faced found expression here. Some had their principal focus in Illinois. Because annual conferences and the activities of various individuals extended beyond state boundaries, this history provides considerable information on numerous topics as they related to a larger area of the midwest than just Illinois.

The history is divided into three parts. The first deals with the organization and development of the church during the period of early settlement in Illinois. The second portion covers principally the nineteenth century after the Civil War in which the church became stabilized, and the third deals with twentieth century problems and activities. Melton makes no attempt, rightfully so, to discuss all persons and churches having a place in Illinois Methodism. Rather, he has selected those which are representative — individuals such as Jesse Walker, Peter Cartwright, Frances Willard and Harris Franklin Rall, and churches in major centers, such as Chicago and Evanston.

Melton has placed Illinois Methodism in the context of both environment and broader church history. He recounts in considerable detail the interaction of the church with the growth and problems of Illinois. He also provides extensive historical background on Methodism, thus helping the reader to gain a better perspective of Methodism in one state in relation to the whole.

The author has covered many aspects of church growth. He has recounted developments in the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, the Methodist Protestant Church, the United Brethren and the Evangelical Association, as well as the foreign language conferences and the black churches. He has not overlooked the institutions of the church, including schools and educational programs, hospitals, homes for orphans and the aging and missionary societies. On issues that confronted the church, he has covered adequately social issues such as war and peace, slavery, temperance, and the place of women; the revolution in theological thinking; anti-Mormon and anti-Catholic activities in Illinois; the development of a social creed for the church; and denominational ecumenism. In so doing Melton has carried out his intention of being highly selective, leaving for other historians the task of discussing issues

such as missions, racism and lay representation.

Melton has made good use of church periodicals, conference reports, memoirs and other writings to prepare a fine history which reflects the growth, problems, programs, and institutions of the church as a whole as evidenced in one state. The many illustrations and the data on the Illinois conferences add to the value of the book.

—Homer L. Calkin
Arlington, Virginia

Walter Brownlow Posey, *The Development of Methodism in the Old Southwest, 1783-1824*. (Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1974), 151 pp. diags. \$10.00

This reprint of a book first published in 1933 is one of twenty-four volumes in a series entitled "Perspectives in American History." One other religious title, *The Attitude of the Northern Clergy Toward the South, 1860-1865*, by Chester F. Dunham, is included in the series.

Posey's study of Methodism in the "Old Southwest" (Kentucky, Missouri, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana) begins with a description of the first efforts by Methodist clergymen and laymen to carry the Gospel into this region; continues with an analysis of the importance of the circuit rider, the camp meeting, the War of 1812 and earthquakes, to the success of the movement; includes a study of the work of Methodists in education, missions to slaves and Indians, and the temperance movement; and concludes with an examination of the organic structure of the church and of this institution's maturation. Posey's presentation is more factual and appreciative than it is analytical and critical.

Much of the material from this work on Methodists and similar studies on Baptists and Presbyterians was incorporated by Posey in *Frontier Mission: A History of Religion West of the Southern Appalachians to 1861* (University of Kentucky Press, 1966, 436 pp. \$9.00). Since the latter volume is much larger, deals with seven different denominations (Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, Disciples of Christ, and Cumberland Presbyterians as well as Baptists, Methodists and Presbyterians), and covers a longer period of time, the shorter, more detailed work on Methodists will be of interest to people whose primary concern is the development of American Methodism.

—Joseph Mitchell
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Roy H. Short, *United Methodism in Theory and Practice*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974, 205 pp., \$5.95.

This is a very interesting and useful little book — a sort of updated

manual that United Methodists who are at all interested in how and why the UMC works as it does will greatly profit from. It is compact, clear and, above all, "sensible."

It begins by stressing "method" as a Methodist instinct and then moves on to a series of practical comments about "connectionalism" and church law, about "the church" and church membership, about the ministry and laity, about the United Methodist conference system, etc. On each topic, the comments are set in a generally sound historical perspective and are always oriented toward "application." Thus, the book will be an admirable resource for study groups in local churches and also for parallel reading in seminary courses in United Methodist "polity."

Its most obvious value lies in the fact that it is a sort of precipitate of the practical wisdom of a man whose experience as a bishop and as Secretary of the Council of Bishops has given him a wide and rich perspective on the concrete issues that concern the generality of United Methodists. His interpretation of our episcopal polity is admirably realistic and modest. He realizes — and repeats — that the United Methodist episcopacy is *not* a third order (pp. 44, 60) and that it makes "no claim to historic succession" (p. 61). He exaggerates by a little when he says (p. 61) that "the only real power" of a United Methodist bishop is in his "life, character, leadership," etc. — but he qualifies this presently (p. 83) by adding that "the final decision regarding *every* appointment is with the bishop." He idealizes the realities of the appointive system by at least a little (p. 51): "Every set of annual appointments should mean, and can mean, the careful deployment of a total team with each minister being given opportunity to play the best possible role...." This, surely, is the intention of our best bishops, but it is not always so perceived by all the members of the "total team."

There is a moving passage (p. 120) about United Methodist ordinations and what they mean, along with the interesting suggestion that such ordinations need not take place at Annual Conference, but might very well be done in local churches — which is quite correct! One misses, however, what might have been said about the crucial distinction between ordination and election to and reception into "full connection" in Annual Conference membership. This "double tract" distinction conceals an ecclesiological issue that needs more pondering than it has had.

Bishop Short's closest approach to actual advocacy is his chapter on "Jurisdictions" (XIII) where he gives us both a description of and argument for an active jurisdictional program. One of the most interesting — and the most nostalgic! — chapters is aptly entitled "The Attic of United Methodism." Here we are reminded of many things in our heritage that we have discarded, to our unwitting loss.

The book's most obvious weakness is its relative neglect of the theological foundations and fonts of Methodist "pragmatism." There are,

one thinks, profounder reasons for our being. We have a richer heritage, a wider ecumenical horizon, more powerful imperatives in mission than one might guess from this survey. And it is this comparative neglect of "theory" that may account for a certain pervasive tone of complacency in it. Reform, renewal, and basic change do not seem to be urgent concerns for Bishop Short; it is almost as if his basic recipe for continued success is the *improvement* of what we already have and what we have been trying to do all along.

Even so, here is a manual that will inform, clarify and inspire United Methodists at almost every level — especially those whose present experience and sense of "churchmanship" is nominal and vague. On this account, and many another, it deserves wide circulation and a careful, critical reading by United Methodists at large!

— Albert C. Outler
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