

## BOOK REVIEWS

Although we intend to continue to bring our readers major reviews of books dealing with the Wesleyan and Methodist tradition, with this issue we want to begin occasionally to call attention in short notices to other books which supply a wider context in which the Wesleyan tradition may be understood.

— The Editors

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*Women in New Worlds: Historical Perspectives on the Wesleyan Tradition.* Edited by Hilah F. Thomas and Rosemary Skinner Keller. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1981. 445 pp. \$12.95.

Those who attended the Women in New Worlds Conference in Cincinnati, Ohio, in early 1980, have rejoiced in the appearance of this volume, containing twenty essays selected from the fifty-eight papers presented at that conference. This book makes those twenty essays available to the general church and to all who are interested in women's, social, and religious history. The essays selected by the screening committee are inclusive in terms of ethnic and racial diversity and represent a broad spectrum of women in the United Methodist tradition. In a helpful introduction to the volume, Rosemary Skinner Keller comments on the complex role religion has played in women's lives, both reinforcing the traditional view of woman's place and empowering women to break out of these prescribed roles and move into enlarged spheres of participation in institutional church life and in the "world." While the organization of any collection of essays may occasion lively debate, this arrangement is effective in detailing, as Keller puts it, "the expanding circles of women's lives."

The book is divided into five major sections. The first, entitled "The Larger Setting: Women in Church and Society," contains two keynote addresses from the Women in New Worlds Conference by historians Donald G. Mathews on "Women's History/Everyone's History" and Kathryn Kish Sklar, "Historians' Changing Views of American Women in Religion and Society." These essays set the writing of women's history in the United Methodist tradition in the

larger context of history writing about American women and religion in the last fifteen years. Mathews is persuasive that the introduction of women into our historical consciousness demands the rewriting of everyone's history. Sklar describes five stages in women's history writing, noting that characteristics of the third and fourth stages are bound to persist in the 1980s, namely attention to the ways women have benefited from their religious beliefs, and the use of new methods for studying the effects of class, ethnicity, and race on women's experience. She concludes, "we may safely predict that the pathfinding national conference on church women's history sponsored by the United Methodist General Commission on Archives and History, and the publications that flow from it, will multiply the links between students of women in the United Methodist tradition and scholars who are researching women, religion, and society from alternative perspectives." The essays on women in United Methodism are arranged in four sections: "The Spiritual Empowerment of Women," "Contributions of Women to Church Life," "The Status of Women in Institutional Church Life," and "The Movement of Church Women into Social Reform."

The section on the changing status of women in institutional church life is very strong. There is a powerful cumulative effect in bringing together the stories of women's struggles for full laity rights, for recognition of the autonomy of women's missionary societies, and for the right to preach, in all the antecedent denominations of the United Methodist Church as well as the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Because of the diversity and inclusiveness of the essays, every reader should discover new material here. I found especially interesting and instructive the essays by Virginia Brereton on Methodist training schools for women in the late nineteenth century, by Clotilde Falcon Nanez on the contributions of Hispanic clergy wives to United Methodism in the Southwest, and by Miriam J. Crist on Winifred L. Chappell, Methodist deaconess and editor of the *Social Service Bulletin* for the Methodist Federation for Social Service. The quality of essays is always uneven in a collection like this, but in my judgment the level of scholarship and insight into the issues is remarkably good here. (There is a helpful description of the credentials and professional involvement of each of the contributors at the back.)

*Women In New Worlds* is a welcome resource book for United Methodist women's history. When I used it in my seminar on Women in American Religion this past Winter, it was greatly appreciated by students. I intend to make it part of my course on United Methodist History and Doctrine and I hope others will do the same. It would also

meet a felt need in United Methodist local churches for material on women in our tradition. I congratulate those who were involved in this project, and look forward to the next volume!

Jean Miller Schmidt  
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Hliff School of Theology

*The Burned-over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850.* By Whitney R. Cross. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982 (c1950). pp. xvi + 383. \$8.95 paperback.

It has been an interesting experience to read an unaltered reprint of a work one first studied more than thirty years ago and has used often through the years since. A quick look at books on American religious history produced across those years shows how standard a work *The Burned-over District* quickly became — from 1950 to today it has informed those who seek to interpret the overall story of religion in America, or the parts of that tale which deal with the national period. In its highlighting of the importance of a given region in a nation's religious history, it has provided a useful model, and has helped to stimulate further researches in the times, places, and topics it probed and interpreted.

One way to take a book seriously is to criticize as well as to praise it, cite it, and use it — and from its first appearance this book has been taken seriously. An early reviewer, Robert Hastings Nichols, commended the author's "remarkably full and accurate picture of the society about which he writes," but faulted his knowledge of church life (*Church History*, 20 [1951], 96). Timothy L. Smith called the book "an admirable regional study, marred only by unawareness of the extent of 'enthusiasm' in seaboard cities" (*Revivalism and Social Reform* [New York, 1957], p. 238). Mario S. Pillis rather sharply criticized as inadequate the chapter containing a demographic interpretation of the social sources of the Latter-day Saints, but also observed that "the mere fact that any genetic study of Mormonism must begin with Cross's brief one-chapter account is a tribute to his pioneering contribution to the contextual approach to Mormon religion and other 'ultraisms' of the Jacksonian era" (*Church History*, 37 [1968], 52). Contemporary social historians find increasing difficulty with his lack of precision concerning such matters as ethnicity, class structure, and the role of women — admittedly topics with which much recent scholarship has been concerned. One anticipates promised "revisionist" studies of the region to which Cross helped to direct much scholarly attention.

Yet the book has become a classic work still worth attention, and it is good to have it readily available again in paperback form. There are at least two major reasons for its durability. First, it is work based largely on a wealth of primary sources — books, periodicals, journals, newspapers, and manuscripts, from which apt quotations are tellingly selected. Hence, despite deficiencies of interpretation, the book carries a ring of authenticity and conveys something of the atmosphere of its period. Second, it offers good narrative history as it describes in often memorable ways events and persons associated with the history of revivalism, temperance, abolition, perfectionism Mormonism, reformism, ultraism, millennialism, and spiritualism. Charles G. Finney is the book's central figure, but many another colorful person briefly "comes alive" as the story unfolds. Readers of this journal will find a surprising amount about Methodism in the burned-over district.

That some of this fine work's definitions, interpretations, and approaches are now out of date is in a way a tribute to it, for it has been instrumental in focusing scholarly attention to the study of religion and culture in western New York, and by its informative footnotes it has opened avenues for further research. It is still the place to begin a study of the burned-over district, and to continue to use for both reference and enjoyment.

— Robert T. Handy  
Union Theological Seminary, New York

Henry Warner Bowden, *American Indians and Christian Missions: Studies in Cultural Conflict*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981. 255pp. \$14.95.

All of us know something about the historical interrelationships between native Americans and the white settlers from Europe and England and their offspring. For many of us what is known is a mixture of fact and myth. This book provides historical evidence on the religious dimensions of the interaction of the red and white cultures in America. From colonial days through the 18th and 19th centuries and into the present Bowden has sketched the confrontation of Christianity with native American religions. Although the mention of specific Methodist work is rare the author helps us to understand the context in which Christian missions to native Americans may be historically understood and assessed. This is an excellent introduction to the topic.

— Charles Yrigoyen, Jr.

James Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokees*. 666pp. \$20.00 hardback; \$10.95 paperback.

A new printing makes available again copies of this well known volume which was first published in 1891. Students call it "probably the best brief tribal history of the Cherokees," for the period covered. There are a few references to mission work, including Methodist, and fairly numerous references to John Ross, who was a member of the Methodist Church. Available only from Charles Elder, 2115 Elliston Place, Nashville, TN 37203.

— Walter N. Vernon

### A Friendly Apology

by  
Lewis V. Baldwin

In the January, 1982 issue of *Methodist History*, Dr. Frederick E. Maser charges that I made an unintended incorrect statement in stating that "Frederick A. Norwood, in his *Story of American Methodism*, published in 1974, became the first Methodist scholar since Simpson to make significant references to the Union Churches in a major comprehensive historical study of American Methodism." I made this point in my article on the A.U.M.P. and U.A.M.E. Churches in the April, 1981 issue of *Methodist History*. After checking pages 615-617 of Volume One of *The History of American Methodism*, published in 1964 in three volumes by the Abingdon Press, I found that he is indeed correct. I had read parts of this study but had somehow missed the references made to the U.A.M.E. Church by Dr. Maser and the late Dr. George A. Singleton. I apologize to Dr. Maser for the oversight, and I promise that this same mistake will not appear in my major historical work on the A.U.M.P. and U.A.M.E. Churches which is scheduled to appear in published form next year.

I appreciate Dr. Maser's complimentary remarks concerning my article on the A.U.M.P. and U.A.M.E. Churches. Perhaps he can offer useful criticisms of my major work when it appears in published form.