

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Unity of the Church and Human Sexuality: Toward a Faithful United Methodist Witness*. Nashville: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, The United Methodist Church, 2018. 554pp. \$10.00.

After the 2016 United Methodist General Conference in Portland once again confronted the role of LGBTQ+ persons in the church with bitterness and little hope of resolution, the Conference asked the Council of Bishops to appoint a Commission on a Way Forward to propose a solution to the impasse to a special General Conference in 2019. To provide a scholarly dimension to the conversation the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry and the Association of United Methodist Theological Schools held a Colloquy on the Unity of the Church and Human Sexuality at Candler School of Theology on March 9–12, 2017. The papers from that colloquy compose this volume.

The contributors are faculty members of the thirteen official seminaries of the church plus a scholar from Asbury Theological Seminary. There were two international representatives—one from Africa (Mozambique) and one from Europe (Denmark). They presented twenty-four papers, along with a foreword by Candler Dean Jan Love and an afterword by Bishop Kenneth Carter, one of the moderators of the Commission. Each scholar was invited to speak out of her or his long engagement with theology, ethics, and the Wesleyan tradition and to present their own view of a way forward for the United Methodist Church. As one might expect, there are wide differences in approach.

William J. Abraham (Perkins), for example, regards the crisis on a par with the major doctrinal controversies of the church (Nicene, East-West division, the sixteenth-century Reformation, and the emergence of liberal theology in the nineteenth century). The way forward he proposes is through the mechanism the UMC follows for making decisions. In his view, traditionalists continue to have a majority of the votes; therefore, progressives should leave and form a new church. Such action would be less disruptive than division.

Kenneth Collins (Asbury) views the controversy through Wesleyan spectacles, but he sees the current crisis as a result of the rejection by progressives of the doctrine of Christian perfection, a cardinal element in Wesley's theology. The same can be said for the church's stance on divorce and remarriage. Short of division, the way forward would consist of mutual repentance by traditionalists (of the current stance on divorce) and progressives (of LGBTQ+ sexual relations).

Other scholars look at the current crisis more pragmatically. Though it is no less serious in their view, they place it in a long line of Methodist

controversies over the power of the episcopacy, the role of the laity, racism and slavery, social reform, the holiness movement, the role of women, and divorce. Indeed, Russell Richey (Candler) defines the current state of the church as “untied Methodism” and seeks to find a way to accommodate those who disagree within the framework of the UMC. Jørgen Thaarup (Europe), Kendall Soulen (Candler), and Edward Phillips (Candler) argue that homosexuality does not rise to the level of a doctrinal standard. Barry Bryant (Garrett-Evangelical) reminds us of the chimeral nature of the “Wesleyan Quadrilateral” itself.

Other lenses through which the current crisis may be viewed are womanist theology (Karen Baker-Fletcher, Perkins), ecumenism (Sarah Lancaster, Methodist Theological School in Ohio; Charles Wood, Perkins), and Christian ethics (Sondra Wheeler, Wesley).

While this review is being written, the enabling legislation for the three plans submitted by the Council of Bishops and perfected by the Commission is being released. This collection of essays remains vital study for those who will make decisions at the 2019 General Conference and those of us who will seek to live faithfully in the aftermath of those decisions.

A. V. HUFF, JR.

*Professor of History Emeritus  
Retired Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean  
Furman University  
Greenville, South Carolina*

David N. Field, *Bid Our Jarring Conflicts Cease: A Wesleyan Theology and Praxis of Church Unity*. Nashville: Foundry Books, 2017. 179pp. \$31.59.

In *Bid Our Jarring Conflicts Cease*, David N. Field offers a theology and praxis of church unity grounded in the theological insights of John Wesley. A lay member of the United Methodist Church in Switzerland, Field serves as Academic Coordinator for the Methodist e-Academy and Research Associate of the Research Institute for Theology and Religion at the University of South Africa. He demonstrates in this work that lay theologians can have a comprehensive grasp of our theological tradition and can offer a compelling contemporary challenge grounded in the richness of his reading and study.

Field’s principal insight is one that deserves deep consideration in the present predicament of The United Methodist Church as well as other Wesleyan church bodies: the principal ground of our unity in Christ and as Wesleyan communities should be the pursuit of Christ-like holiness; not just a doctrine or teaching about holiness, but actual, lived holiness that bears the self-giving image of Christ in the world. It is as sound an insight as I can imagine, and one that has not been voiced nearly enough in our recent discussions of divisive issues about human sexuality.

The book is richly documented by reference to the writings of John

Wesley in the central period of Wesley's life (after Aldersgate, and before the divisions and controversies of the 1760s and beyond). It sometimes gives sustained accounts of Wesleyan texts dealing with holiness and the forms of Christian unity that should flow from holiness.

Field makes reference to some contemporary scholarship on John Wesley's theology, but sometimes dismisses insights from other contemporary Wesleyan theologians as being irrelevant to his present purpose. And he makes some claims about contemporary scholarship that are undocumented and do not always ring true in my reading. For example, he claims that "Wesleyan scholars generally divide" Wesley's writings into three particular periods (xv).

Throughout the early chapters of the book, Field maintains that John Wesley did not distinguish between "doctrines" and "opinions," as some interpreters (including myself) have maintained, though Field does clarify that John Wesley held some doctrines (or "opinions") to have much greater weight (and are thus much more needed for unity) than others. As a study in eighteenth-century terms, I think this is correct and some of us have probably employed the contemporary distinctions between "doctrine" (as that to which a community gives consent) and "theology" (as any critical reflection on religious beliefs) too readily as a contemporary expression of a parallel distinction that Wesley made between essential or fundamental teachings (whether he called them "doctrines" or "opinions") and those not necessary for the unity of a particular Christian community (much less those necessary for salvation). I suggest that contemporary authors should be expected to use terms with contemporary meanings unless they are quoted as denoting historic (eighteenth-century) meanings.

In these same chapters, Field explores at some length the contortions in which Wesley found himself when considering the wording of specific historic creeds or doctrinal statements, as when Wesley seems to have valued the first part of the Article of Religion defining "church" as a body of believers more than the second part of the Article that adds that a church must be a body of believers where the Word is preached and the sacraments are duly administered. Field explores Wesley's often-repeated idea that it is living religion itself and not particular forms of words that matters. I do not think that Field is mistaken about this: Wesley came very close to dismissing all forms of words apart from scripture as only approximations of the reality of our experience of the divine. But it leads me to fear what some critics of early Methodism feared, to put it dramatically, that Methodists came frightfully close to simply identifying God with their experiences of God.

I would like to have seen more about corporately-affirmed doctrine in this study beyond simply what John Wesley thought. To return to the example above, Field cites the Anglican definition of "church" from the Articles of Religion and notes that John Wesley incorporated (past tense) it into his own edition of the Articles of Religion. But there is no indication that this Article continues to serve as an authoritative standard of doctrine for The United Methodist Church (and other Methodist church bodies) today. And that, I

would think, would be relevant to a discussion of unity in Wesleyan and Methodist church bodies.

None of this is to detract from David N. Field's passionately argued thesis that the key to unity in a Wesleyan framework is Christ-like holiness. A better word could hardly be spoken in our present situation.

TED A CAMPBELL  
Perkins School of Theology  
Dallas, Texas

April E. Holm, *A Kingdom Divided: Evangelicals, Loyalty, and Sectionalism in the Civil War Era*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 2017. x + 276pp. \$47.50.

In this readable, engaging, probing and revisionist study, Holm examines nineteenth-century sectionalism as illustrated in, and indeed perhaps caused by, the Methodists, Presbyterians and Baptists. The book contributes to our understanding of the cleavages in all three Midwestern denominations that antedated the Civil War but in the case of Baptists continues structurally to this day and for Methodists and Presbyterians suffuses ideological/theological/ethical conflicts.

I appreciate this fresh interpretation of Midwestern (and largely northern) sectional dynamics among Methodists but Holm neglects to reference the very fine scholarship by Robert Sledge, Reginald Hildebrand, H. Shelton Smith, Donald Mathews, Brooks Holifield, Frederick Norwood and a host of others. Holm notes but does not really use the comparable study, C. C. Goen's *Broken Churches, Broken Nation*. Like Goen's volume and Smith's *In His Image, But . . .*, Holm examines how border state Methodists, Baptists and Presbyterians positioned themselves on slavery, anti-slavery, Civil War and Reconstruction. For Methodism she focuses on Ohio and Missouri with nods to Kentucky and to other border states. Holm makes very good usage of the array of nineteenth-century Methodistica and probes pertinent holdings at Emory and the Library of Congress—at the latter the Matthew Simpson papers. She does not, however, get to the holdings at GCAH/Drew or Ohio Wesleyan. Similarly, the *Christian Advocate*, *Western Christian Advocate*, *Methodist Quarterly Review*, and *Missouri Methodist* and the *MEC Journal* receive attention but not the *MECS Advocate, Review* or *Journal*.

Given her extensive attention to the Presbyterian and Baptist sagas and materials, we should not expect more engagement with Methodist resources but readers will profit from some knowledge of mid-nineteenth century Methodism. Then they should find fresh and striking her comparison of the Midwestern patterns of sectionalism, of western patterns of identity giving way to a N/S border mentality, of neutrality during the Civil War proving unviable thereafter, of northern church identities heading south, and of the spirituality of the church providing new denominational grounding.

Holm's border and Midwestern focus should be helpful to those who

construe Methodism as an Asbury- and Delmarva-shaped movement which wandered west. Folks there, she makes clear, shaped and reshaped their sense of who they were, what Methodism was about, and where it should head. We'll need to refine how we narrate the denominational sagas. The divisions of the three denominations and the short and long term post-1844 contested property issues between the MECS and MEC, long treated in standard Methodist histories, get a fresh read. For instance, northerners bringing the American flag into the conference or sanctuary I have treated as indicative of Methodist support for the Union cause. She, however, probes by name or instance very interesting refusals by Missouri preachers to display the flag, observe days of fasting and thanksgiving, pray for the Union cause, and take loyalty oaths. Such stances elicited persecution and penalties from the northern military and political authorities.

Holm shows how such experiences by border religious communities during the war and into Reconstruction led their leadership to grasp as no longer viable their earlier efforts at neutrality and for ongoing relation to both their northern and southern denominational compatriots; so, in characteristic fashion, she bullets the emerging stances of southern and northern churches. The southerners construed the persecution received and victimhood experienced as coming from "partisan fanatics" and their own "innocence" as evidencing their moral and doctrinal purity. The northerners deemed the southerners as, first, having perverted their faith by defending slavery, second by politicizing the church by supporting secession and the Confederacy, third by persecuting true believers (northerners) during the war, and fourth by demonstrating their own sectarian/schismatic character through such antics and showing their northern compatriots to be "the true, original churches" (180–182).

In various ways, with the sectional focus and probing research Holms takes us to deeper understanding of Methodist divisions, still operative for the UMC in jurisdictional lines and divisions on abortion and homosexuality.

RUSSELL RICHEY  
Dean Emeritus

*William R. Cannon Distinguished Professor of Church History Emeritus  
Candler School of Theology  
Atlanta, Georgia*

James Hudnut-Beumler and Mark Silk, eds., *The Future of Mainline Protestantism in America*. New York: Columbia UP, 2018. 228pp. \$30.00.

*The Future of Mainline Protestantism in America* is one of the edited volumes of *The Future of Religion in America* series, exploring "the current state and prospects of the principal religious groupings in the United States. Informed by survey research, the series explores the effect of the significant realignment of the American religious landscape that consolidated in the

1990s, driven by the increasing acceptance of the idea that religious identity is and should be a matter of personal individual choice and not inheritance” (introductory page).

That said, in 1960 more than half of all Americans identified themselves with one of the mainline Protestant denominations. This number had declined, however, to just 10 percent by 2015. Between 1990 and 2008 Americans who described themselves as “Protestant” shrunk from 17.2 million to 5.2 million, while those who described themselves as just “Christian” or “non-denominational Christian” more than doubled from 5 to 10.7%.

In a well-researched, in-depth series of essays, this volume explores how and why “religious identity has changed and what the developments in the major religious institutions and traditions have been—and where they are headed” (ix). In its introduction, the terms “mainline,” “Protestant” and “denomination” are defined and the role of denominationalism in American religious organization is discussed.

The remaining essays include an in-depth demographic analysis of who mainline Protestants are today (relating to age, education, income, racial and ethnic makeup, gender, political identity, and marriage and family patterns), their current beliefs and practices, and the future of Mainline Protestant Institutions—especially denominational colleges, universities, and seminaries. Further, the conflicts which have divided and continue to divide mainline denominations (including salvation, baptism, slavery, social reform, temperance, women’s roles, fundamentalism versus modernism, abortion, and sexual identity) are explored, as well as the influence that mainline Protestants have had in international relations.

These essays present a fascinating picture of the influence that mainline Protestants have had on American life—not just religious life, but social, cultural, and political life, as well. In many ways, mainline Protestants have been the conscience of America as they have advocated for a better life for all Americans and for social justice for all people and have supported numerous social services and mission projects in America and around the world, all stemming from their understanding of who they are as Christians. Though the numbers and subsequent influence of mainliners has declined dramatically, the authors conclude that mainline Protestants still have a strong role to play in all arenas of American life, yet they also all agree that some changes are needed if the mainline churches are to survive.

These well-researched and well-written essays present a comprehensive description of who mainline Protestants have been and are today, their influence in both religious and public life in America, and the ways their influence continues into the future. They speak equally to educators, administrators, and the laity in The United Methodist Church and all mainline denominations. This book is well worth reading by those at all levels of the mainline church who are interested in supporting the continuing role of mainline Protestants in America and beyond.

THE REV. PATRICIA THOMPSON  
*Morrisville, Vermont*

Christopher P. Momany, *For Each and All: The Moral Witness of Asa Mahan*. Nashville: Foundery Books, 2018. 214pp. \$39.99.

Participants in movements for social justice are often correct to implicate the church, particularly in the post-Enlightenment West, for its role in perpetuating institutional oppression. But this need not always be the case, especially for those who stand in the heritage of the Wesleyan Holiness movement, as Christopher P. Momany shows in his excellent biographical profile of Asa Mahan (1799–1889). As we read in *For Each and All*, Mahan's ecclesial and academic leadership in the mid-nineteenth century America set forth an apologia for a robust, social reform-minded theology squarely situated on the shoulders of evangelical revivalism, Kantian moral philosophy, and the Wesleyan holiness tradition, establishing a legacy that bears fruit to this day.

Momany traces Mahan's rise to the presidency at Oberlin Collegiate Institute (today's Oberlin College), his subsequent work as founding president of Adrian College, and his fierce abolitionist preaching and social influence throughout his adult life. The first three chapters trace the philosophical undercurrents of Western ethics, briefly examining such thinkers as William Paley, Henry David Thoreau, and others to illustrate the tension between "a concern for 'the good' with a concern for 'the right'" (33). Momany gradually paints a background for the emergence of Mahan's views, in which he used Kantian concepts to describe abolition as a categorical social imperative.

By chapter four, Momany's discussion comes to a head in the stark disjunction between the deontological views of Mahan, which condemned slavery as inherently wrong and saw its eradication as necessary to a life of holiness, and the "consequentialist" views of others, such as Mahan's faculty colleague, the evangelist and social reformer Charles Finney. (The latter's abolitionism, unlike Mahan's, was diluted by a willingness to overlook a degree of injustice in search of social "benevolence" [120], in order to avoid civil war.) Chapter five traces Mahan's Wesleyan theology of Christian perfection, demonstrating that it was *because of*, not in spite of, his theology that Mahan confessed abolition as a moral imperative. To him, the Law of Love, "perfect obedience to the moral law" of love for God and neighbor (140), necessitated the eradication of the evil institution of slavery.

Chapter six draws connections between Mahan's intellectual commitments and the influence he had at Oberlin, at Adrian, and in his written work, including on such figures as Abraham Lincoln. Momany concludes his discussion with a brief mention of intellectual trends at Mahan's two academic institutions since his tenure, and a consideration of the continued, if unsung, applicability of the "Old Doctor" (202) for today's issues of justice, particularly modern-day slavery.

Central to Momany's narrative of Mahan's life is the demonstrated weaver-work of Holiness theology throughout Mahan's moral philosophy. Often, these convictions came at personal cost. He insisted on the importance of human response to God's grace, breaking with the Calvinist seminary that trained him and triggering the public consternation of a former professor.

Other theologians—who agreed with Mahan’s Arminianism—nonetheless took issue with him, as well. He was often polemical, for instance, and even brash, as to the nature of sanctification, as in his denunciation of “lukewarm” Christians (cf. Rev. 3:16 KJV). Mahan, by Momany’s telling, was convinced that too many professing Christians trusted their “past experience of conviction and redemption instead of ongoing intimacy with God” (163), neglecting the continual pursuit of holiness after being justified. For Mahan, justifying grace was hardly the final moment in a believer’s development: reception of God’s grace had to manifest itself forward into the world, through love of neighbor, which would include ending the enslavement of persons, who were (as Kant might have said) ends in themselves.

Momany’s respect for Mahan is evident. To give but a few examples: Momany praises Mahan for his witness in the face of his former professors; his willingness to join students in a walkout from Lane Theological Seminary when it tried to circumscribe debate about slavery; and the cost that Mahan’s views had on him personally (his son died of wounds suffered while fighting for the Union in the Civil War, himself heir to his father’s passion for eradicating slavery).

But Momany’s narrative is tempered with realism as to Mahan’s flaws. Some faculty at Oberlin found his moral certitude sanctimonious. They felt that Mahan “overrates both his natural abilities and his moral attainments, and [that] he underrates the ability and character of his brethren” (162). Momany also finds Mahan susceptible to “philosophical sass” in his public arguments with Charles G. Finney on points of ethics, as when he claimed that Finney and his disciples were sincere “in spite of their theory [of virtue], not in consequence of it” (123).

Momany’s monograph is a measured portrait of a Christian thought-leader whose influence helped to end slavery in America, and who set the stage for a theology of social justice for the marginalized, not as separate from the pursuit of holiness, but as inherent within it.

DOUGLAS M. STRONG

*Dean and Professor of the History of Christianity  
Seattle Pacific University School of Theology  
Seattle, Washington*

Riley B. Case, *Faith and Fury: Eli Farmer on the Frontier, 1794-1881*. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society Press, 2018. iv + 219pp. \$24.95.

This is a very fine rethinking of Methodist history from a Midwestern American perspective, a corrective to or adjustment from narratives that read American history generally and the Wesleyan/Methodist story particularly from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Sometimes, indeed, we do not get the church’s witness much beyond the Appalachian ridges. When settling in Indiana, so Case shows, preachers and laity reshaped who they thought Methodists ought to be, seek, and treasure.

He focuses Methodism's nineteenth-century evolution through the story of one minister, albeit one who personally tested and then shattered, at least regionally, the denomination's multiple constraints. Case's succinct 200+ pages combine autobiography and historical overview to repeatedly re-set the stage before then letting Farmer speak for himself. Thereby Case succeeds in intertwining his own contextualizing of a multi-faceted ministerial, political, business, farming, camp-meeting, publishing, missionary, anti-Catholic but ecumenical, chaplaincy and prophetic career with Eli Farmer's autobiographical writings. There may well be other publications or republications of journals or autobiographies that successfully sustain the narrative with such interlacing, but this is a model from which to work.

The approach clearly helps with the sheer complexity, range and variety of Farmer's endeavors. Farmer labored among the poor, preached briefly to Native Americans, went south for a brief ministry among slaves but also interacted with Methodist kingpins—notably Lorenzo Dow, Peter Cartwright and Matthew Simpson. Farmer launched a (religious) newspaper and ran for Congress. He served in the army during the Civil War, as did his five sons, one of whom died from his wounds.

Various personal, economic, interest, fiscal and family factors shortened Farmer's ministry as conference member and in under-appointment ministry. As a local preacher, he itinerated into the various aforementioned endeavors and his narrative provides a look into the vicissitudes, constraints and ordeals of the local preacher. He voiced complaints and became one of the critics of "these tyrants," the bishops, and of the presiding elders who constrained and frustrated his revivalistic impulses and interest in collaboration with other denominations. Farmer, Case argues, launched and led an Indiana-based effort which sought, as its name indicated, "Christian Union." In various exploratory efforts, Farmer experimented with schemes of bringing the people, congregations, and leadership of various churches together, not initially breaking ecclesial ties and identities for the purpose of inventing another denomination.

Farmer's attending to "Christian Union" and so little to Methodism's north-south division, especially when his trip south occurred in 1846, seemed very strange. Case does not explain this disinterest when he briefly treats the division. Nor does Case comment on the different agenda of the Ohio Christian Union movement with which Farmer's Indiana group eventually merged. As Kenneth Brown showed in his *History of the Christian Union Church* and we do in our *Methodist Experience in America: A History*, this Ohio Union movement gathered preachers and people who resisted the war effort and the MEC's support of the Civil War. They, the Ohioans, wanted a "Christian" not an American union. Still, again, it is a very fine book.

RUSSELL E. RICHEY

Dean Emeritus

William R. Cannon Distinguished Professor of Church History Emeritus  
Candler School of Theology  
Atlanta, Georgia

Julius H. Rubin, *Perishing Heathens: Stories of Protestant Missionaries and Christian Indians in Antebellum America*. Lincoln, NE: U Nebraska P, 2017. 248pp. \$50.00.

In *Perishing Heathens* Julius H. Rubin “recounts the stories of missionary men and women in the period between 1800 and 1830 who responded to the call to save perishing heathens [*sic*] in missions to the Osages in the Arkansas Territory, to the Cherokees in Tennessee and Georgia, and to Ojibwes in the Michigan Territory” (1-2). The missionaries presented by Rubin exemplify the religious ideals of the Second Great Awakening by embracing the New Divinity theology; Samuel Hopkins’s ethical principle of “disinterested benevolence,” which rejected personal interests for the sake of Christ; and Jonathan Edwards’s book *The Life of David Brainerd*, which became the exemplar of evangelical missionary piety. In this type of evangelical personhood the missionary practiced methodical self-examination through prayers, meditation, and fasting, which then revealed the deplorable condition of the heart full of pride and sin. Such practices led missionaries and new converts not only to intense moments of melancholy and depression but also to great highs with the Lord. This is why the missionaries believed that they would build the kingdom of God in America by civilizing and converting perishing heathens.

Rubin divides the book in six chapters. Chapter one narrates the travails of David and Alice Bacon as missionaries to the Ojibwes in Michigan’s Lower Peninsula from 1802 to 1804. After their efforts to establish a mission post failed, David worked as a domestic missionary in the Ohio Reserve. This missionary appointment did not go well either, forcing Bacon to experiment in the creation of an idealized Puritan village in Hudson, Ohio. Full of monetary debt and another missionary failure, Bacon ended up becoming a traveling Bible salesman.

Chapter two reconstructs the life and ministry of a single female missionary from the Union Mission to the Osages. The missionary vocation of “Miss D” exemplified a life broken by disease and disappointments. A convert and member of the Congregational Church of Litchfield, Connecticut, pastored by Lyman Beecher, Miss D volunteered to be a missionary at the age of twenty-one. After a prolonged voyage from New York to Arkansas, Miss D succumbed to malaria, bilious remittent fever, tuberculosis, and was afflicted with delirium. For almost four years, members of the Union Mission provided around-the-clock care for Miss D. She never recovered and was admitted at the Hartford Retreat, an asylum for the insane, when she was twenty-seven. Rubin argues, “Her missionary vocation, forged in the smithy of Brainerd’s evangelical piety, ended in failure, despair, madness, and early death from infectious disease” (73). Chapter three investigates the endless chain of religious intelligence through the mass publication of memoirs, correspondence, and accounts of missions in the formation of an American evangelical identity, which provided the ideological model to be emulated in light of the new personhood of evangelical piety forged at the

crucible of disinterested benevolence and piety.

The second part of the book is dedicated to Native American converts. Chapter four narrates the life of an Osage youth upbringing in the Union Mission. When he came of age, “K” traveled to the Cornwall Foreign Mission School in Connecticut to continue his formal education. After ten months at Cornwell, the school closed its doors because of the intermarriage between two promising Cherokee male students to two white females from the vicinity. After this event, K entered into a melancholic state of depression and was institutionalized for three months in an asylum. He recovered and was sent to Miami University in Ohio by the Union Mission. After one year in college, he returned to the Union Mission but died of tuberculosis the same month he arrived. Chapter five describes the lives of Cherokee converts of the Brainerd Mission in Tennessee and the Springplace Moravian Mission in Georgia, while chapter six explores the Chippewa-Métis elite groups in Mackinaw and the Michigan Territory emphasizing the conversion of female Native women—especially the life of author, poet, and folklorist, Jane Johnson Schoolcraft.

As Rubin admits, the book could have been improved by the addition of missionary endeavors by Baptists and Methodists in the same period and regions. That said, stories remain that leave the reader wondering why the Moravians were against the initiative of Margaret Ann, an elite Cherokee woman, to evangelize the black slaves in her plantation. Further, how was the treatment and relationship between métis elites to black slaves? If Margaret’s husband, James Vann, son of a Cherokee mother and a British trader, was a tyrant who executed justice “by burning men alive,” how did she cope with living with a tyrant?

As all great historical accounts, *Perishing Heathens* uncovers and reconstructs stories that otherwise would have remained hidden to the public. The stories in this study exemplify the missionary and the missionized victories, frailties, and illusions of evangelical personhood and millenarian expectations of establishing the kingdom of God on earth in the beginning of the nineteenth century by civilizing and converting “perishing heathens.”

ANGEL D. SANTIAGO-VENDRELL  
*Asbury Theological Seminary*  
*Orlando, Florida*

Kyle B. Roberts, *Evangelical Gotham: Religion and the Making of New York City, 1783-1860*. Chicago: U Chicago P, 2016. 352pp. \$50.00.

*Evangelical Gotham: Religion and the Making of New York City, 1783-1860*, is an ambitious study documenting the historical intersections between the growth and development of New York City and the evangelical communities that flourished there between the American Revolution and the Civil War. Staging New York City as his backdrop, the author describes this de-

veloping urban context as “Gotham,” a fertile landscape that functioned as an early American spiritual marketplace. The volume is divided into three periods framed by the American Revolution and the Civil War. Several transitions occur throughout the text marked by the War of 1812 and the Panic of 1837.

Roberts describes evangelical Christians as religious adherents committed to a faith system that developed no creed or institutional body, yet were anchored in the tenets of conversion, biblicism, and crucicentrism. Proponents of this influential Protestant religious movement affirmed their faith in Christ resulting in the regenerated lives of individuals, the restoration of the Christian community and the rebuilding of the world according to God’s design. Early American evangelicals were particularly concerned with the salvation of their families, friends, and neighbors so they formed churches, Sunday schools, and voluntary associations. In doing so they implemented technological innovations in printing, resulting in the distribution of hundreds of thousands of Bible and tracts that “profoundly shaped the development of early nineteenth-century New York” (11).

The evangelicals of Gotham “actively competed in the urban spiritual marketplace by mastering the tools of commercial culture to attract new and retain old congregants. They innovated and borrowed marketing and advertising techniques, branded their churches in a recognizable architectural style, invested in the latest printing technologies, and devised new organizational structures” (2). They intentionally addressed social causes such as temperance and antislavery while also being shaped by their own activities and innovations in areas such as urban missionary work and the employment of the printing press. Ultimately, “all evangelicals experienced New York differently,” Roberts writes, “some saw it as a city of deliverance or the Celestial City and settled down; others saw it as Vanity Fair, or worse, and kept moving,” adding that “all contributed to the rise of Evangelical Gotham” (17).

The volume offers a broad perspective on the origin and developments of evangelical Christianity in New York City while burrowing down to sketch the development of Methodism in Manhattan, with attention in chapter seven to John Street United Methodist Church. For Roberts, John Street Methodist Episcopal Church “provides a useful lens for exploring the ways in which evangelicalism’s efforts to transform the city allowed the city ultimately to transform evangelicalism” (220).

The author describes the British loyalist tendencies of Methodist founder John Wesley and connects John Street congregants to early attempts to establish Methodism in America, particularly through the efforts of John Street’s early European immigrant founders. Key participants in the narrative include Francis Asbury, Philip Embury, Barbara Heck, and Captain Thomas Webb. Roberts also briefly spotlights understudied Methodist churches as part of the early New York Conference including: Allen Street MEC (founded in 1811), Bedford Street MEC (1810), Bowery Village MEC (1818), Duane Street MEC (1797), and Forsyth Street MEC (1789). Roberts examines the

architectural evolution of John Street and identifies the construction of the church in 1768 as the “first purpose-built Methodist meetinghouse in North America” (222). The book also offers brief glimpses into the connections between John Street; Peter Williams, Sr., of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church; and the mission work of New York Methodists to German immigrants and the sailor communities of lower Manhattan.

Roberts includes a wide array of primary sources in his study including broader historical works on ecclesiastical development in New York City, such as Samuel A. Seaman’s *A Familiar Conversational History of the Evangelical Churches of New York* (1839) to more focused denominational histories, such as Nathan Bangs’ *A Short Historical Account of the Early Society of Methodists Established in the City of New York in the Year 1763* (1824). The author also investigates local New York City newspapers such as the *New York Daily Times*, *New York Daily Tribune*, and *New York Christian Advocate and Journal*, as well as denominational resources, including the *Minutes of the Annual Conferences* and the minutes of the John Street Board of Trustees.

The book is a significant contribution to the study of American religious history and to the history of Christianity in New York City. The volume is also useful as a historical lens through which to examine the development of early Methodism in America. The volume will be valuable for scholars and researchers interested in the development of American Methodism in New York City during the early eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

CHRISTOPHER J. ANDERSON

*Special Collections Librarian and Curator of the Day Missions Collection*  
*Yale University Library*  
*New Haven, Connecticut*