

## BOOK REVIEWS

Margaret Batty, *Scotland's Methodists, 1750-2000*, Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2010. 277 pp. £30.

Dr. Margaret Batty, former lay missionary to British Guiana, and local preacher, brings her long experience and archival research of Scottish Methodism to this full length scholarly treatment. Based on years of archival research at John Rylands and the National Library of Scotland, and building on her Ph.D. work at the University of London, Batty provides the first one-volume secondary analysis of the Wesleyan movement in Scotland since T. Parker's *Methodism in Scotland* was published in 1867. She provides a narrative from primary sources that nicely contextualizes the most recent research in Scottish Methodist historiography: W. F. Swift's published lectures *Methodism in Scotland: The First Hundred Years* (1947); and Frank Whaling's trenchant 2000 article in the *Journal of the Wesleyan Historical Society Cumbria Branch*, "The Development of Methodism in Scotland."

To say that her volume advances Scottish Methodist studies and will be most welcome by students of all Methodist History is stating the obvious. What is not so obvious, however, is the strong lay reading she casts on the Wesleyan movement in Scotland. Her research demonstrates and argues successfully, how the power of lay preaching and laity on the Scottish circuits was both a strength and ultimately, one of the weaknesses of the Wesleyan movement in Scotland.

The volume treats Wesley's own preaching and legacy in Scotland adequately in the first chapter. Wesley's preachers and their work are highlighted even in this chapter. Batty then accurately charts the spread of the Wesleyan movement throughout the cities and regions of Scotland, demonstrating how early tensions and breaks in the Methodist connectional system arose in Scotland. The book therefore is no mere recounting of the history of Wesley's trips and well known resistance in Scotland. Nor is it merely a string of biographies of the important itinerant preachers in the movement. Rather, Batty has made a strong attempt to place the salient features of the Wesleyan revival (theological distinctives, the class meeting, itineracy) within the Scottish ecclesial ecology over the entire period of the movement. She effectively argues that Methodism was resisted not so much from theological debate with its strong Calvinist opponents. Robert Haldane's work shows there was ample desire for alternatives and revival (37). Batty demonstrates that it was the layperson's resistance to itineration and lack of longevity among the preachers that resulted in an inability for Methodists to obtain and maintain property. These factors together dampened the movement.

Schisms only exacerbated the always tenuous property questions in Scottish Methodism. Methodism in every phase lost penetration and opportunities for consolidation, because its preachers—as committed as they were to itineration—were swimming against the cultural tide in Scotland. Calvinist patterns of the Kirk at the center of a solid political order made Methodism's connectionalism seem indifferent to local concerns. There were charges that Methodists were not Scottish enough, or educated enough, ultimately gave way to the reality that the movement was not financially solvent enough—all deadly charges in Scotland. It is all the more ironic that despite the disdain held for Wesley's preachers, Wesley himself grew to be highly respected in Scotland late in his life.

The volume will be useful to preachers and lay students of Methodism, who wish to know what it was like to preach and live out the Wesleyan-Arminian message in a Reformed context—when such distinctions really mattered. The competing visions of how to arrive in heaven from Scotland, placed great demands on the Scottish preachers, and offers surprising lessons. Batty's volume functions as an insightful laboratory into the limits of Wesleyan universal translatability: the very Wesleyan distinctives that have promoted the spread and indigenization of the movement were largely resisted in a culture shaped by Scottish church polity and sensibilities. The volume's very detailed account of how debts and schisms left the church weakened almost from inception, reminds us of the worldly realities affecting Christian expansion and contextualization. As such, we are indebted to Batty for her sobering study of both the promises and the harsh realities the heirs of Wesley face in cultures shaped by splintering visions of Christendom.

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*Methodist and Pietist: Retrieving the Evangelical United Brethren Tradition.*  
J. Steven O'Malley and Jason E. Vickers, eds. Kingswood, 2011. 289 pp.  
\$46.00.

This book, coming as it does soon after the fortieth anniversary of the merger between the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren (EUB), is long overdue. (The editors comment that many of the contributors made that very remark when the volume was proposed. They were right.) Those of us who teach the required courses on Methodism to seminarians have for some time felt acutely the lack of attention we are giving to the EUB narrative. While Behney and Eller's *History of the EUB* and the recent *Making of an American Church* (which emerged from a conference celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Evangelical Church/United Brethren merger)

have helped to address that imbalance, they were not—as this book was—actually designed with United Methodist (UM) ordination classes in mind.

That is not to say that the book can only be read with profit by UM seminary students, although it certainly will be. Clergy already in ministry (especially in geographical regions relatively untouched by EUB influence during the denomination's existence) and interested UM laity will also benefit from having under one cover a clear and thoughtful introduction to EUB history, doctrine, and polity, along with reflections on how the EUB tradition speaks to modern United Methodism. The editors note that some traditions have faded because there was nothing in them worth remembering, but others because “an insufficient number of people are willing to do the sorts of things necessary to keep those traditions alive,” a fate they are not willing to see happen to the EUB witness. They argue that “if taken seriously, the EUB heritage can be a source of renewal and revitalization in United Methodist doctrine and theology, polity and liturgy, evangelism and mission, and in social ethics and action” (viii).

The book is divided into three parts: history; doctrine and theology; and polity and practice. The contributors were deliberately drawn from both the former Methodist and former EUB traditions in order to take advantage of both the deep knowledge of insiders and the “critical perspective” of outsiders. They consist of current and retired scholars, most (although not all) from UM seminaries in the United States. United Theological Seminary, which currently houses the Center for the EUB Heritage, is especially well-represented. All the essays are solid and interesting, and some are especially thought-provoking.

The opening section on history features K. James Stein on the Pietist background of the EUB movement and Pietism's emphasis on fellowship, discipleship, and life “in Christ” (14); Scott Kisker on the founding of the United Brethren in Christ (UBC); and Kenneth Rowe on the early days of the Evangelical Association (EA). Particularly interesting are the narratives of early contacts between both EA and UB leaders and Francis Asbury. Asbury had good personal relations with Boehm and Otterbein, but found the UBC lacking in authority and discipline. And, despite repeated overtures from the EA, he was cold to the idea of the “Albright People” becoming a German-only-speaking conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC) due to his desire for bilingual preachers and missions. Ironically, after Asbury's death, the MEC did start a German-language ministry: “by then [1836] it was too late to invite the Evangelicals back” (52).

The theology section also begins with an exploration of Pietism, this time by J. Steven O'Malley, who focuses on both the well-known influence of Reformed Pietism on the EUB founders and that of the more obscure and visionary “radical” Pietists (Philadelphians and others). Both gave the EUB a strong emphasis on “the prophetic emergence of community as the end-time manifestation of a renewed Pentecost” (57-58). Tyron Inbody and William Naumann survey doctrine and theology in the UBC and the EA/EC, with a focus on the ecumenical and pietistic emphases in both tradi-

tions. Inbody notes perceptively many tensions between UB and Methodist ecclesiologies, with the UB “suspicious of and resistant to organization and authority, whereas Asbury had made organization, order, and authority central to Methodist polity” (90). These tensions still influence the UMC. In one of the book’s most intriguing essays, Jason Vickers compares the EUB Confession of Faith with the Methodist Articles of Religion, with the EUB coming out far ahead in terms of a “robust pneumatology” and a “robust ecclesiology” (134-135).

The final section on polity and practice discusses ordination and the episcopacy (James Kirby), liturgy and sacraments (Kendall Kane McCabe), the EUB’s mission to Germany (Ulrike Schuler), the connection between holiness and social practice (Wendy Deichmann Edwards), and women’s roles (Paul Chilcote). Kirby argues (with humor—a pig farm enters into the discussion, as does Frank Smith’s quip that retired bishops, instead of being allowed to talk and not vote, should be allowed to vote and not talk) that the EUB practices of term episcopacy, electing bishops out of General rather than Jurisdictional Conferences, electing district superintendents, and designating a presiding bishop are all ideas whose time has come in the UMC. McCabe notes the emphasis on a Passion/cruciform spirituality in EUB liturgical practice, as well as the ways in EUB which tensions between theologies of baptism and dedication still color the modern UMC. Edwards asks whether a focus on the EUB tradition might help the UMC recover its doctrine of sanctification and assist the denomination in “overcoming its vast, searing, and distracting divisions over social practice” (189). The essays by Schuler and Chilcote introduce preachers, missionaries and activists who will be new to most readers from the Methodist tradition.

The afterword by William Abraham is vintage Abraham in its critiques of the “mess [United Methodism] is in doctrinally” (223), in large part due to Albert Outler’s attempts at the time of merger to “impose his own theology (dressed up as a reading of Wesley) on the whole church” (217). This is an issue Abraham has discussed before at length, but here he notes that he sees the EUB tradition and its “radical openness to the work of the Holy Spirit” as a cure—and that he hopes reflecting on the EUB’s charism will lead United Methodists to be more “open to all the gifts of the Spirit that have been given to the church catholic” (226).

In large part, the aim of the editors for this book has been fulfilled. The book brings alive the EUB heritage, including its flaws (although it treads rather lightly in that area), in ways that helpfully enable UM preachers and teachers to give more than lip service to the importance of the EUB heritage. The authors also raise provocative questions about how best to bring that heritage to bear on bringing a badly-needed renewal to United Methodism. Not everyone will agree with them on all the answers, but it is long past time that someone began to ask the questions.

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George C. Rable, *God's Almost Chosen Peoples: A Religious History of the American Civil War*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010. 586 pp. \$35.00.

*God's Almost Chosen Peoples* is the latest addition to a growing corpus of scholarship examining the relationship between religion and the U.S. Civil War. Building on the fine work of Mark Noll, Harry Stout, Allen Guelzo, and others, award-winning historian George Rable offers the most expansive and thorough take on the subject to date. Building on previous scholarship exploring the war's theological and moral debates, Rable frames his study as "a broad narrative that shows how all sorts of people used faith to interpret the course of the Civil War and its impact on their lives, families, churches, communities, and 'nations'"(6).

In spite of the disclaimer that the book is not thesis-driven, the central theme of Providence is emphasized throughout. Utilizing a vast array of primary sources, Rable demonstrates the ways in which men and women, black and white, clergy and laity, Union and Confederate, soldier, civilian, and slave, on the battlefield and at the home front, each saw the hand of God in every shift of the war's course. He also includes in his analysis Mormons, Catholics, and Jews—previously ignored groups who demonstrate the variety of religious voices and church bodies involved in the conflict.

But Protestants are never far from view and loom large throughout the book. Methodists and Methodism feature prominently in Rable's narrative, receiving perhaps more attention than any other group. He notes Abraham Lincoln's own assessment "that the Methodist Episcopal Church . . . [is] by its greatest numbers, the most important of all" the churches involved in supporting the Union cause (336), and the same could certainly be said of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in supporting the Confederacy. Rable succeeds in analyzing both individual beliefs of disparate figures and the war's affect on churches and denominations. Ironically, as the war reinforced regional denominational divisions, pitting Methodists against Methodists and Baptists against Baptists, it also encouraged ecumenical efforts, especially in military camps, as the always-in-short-supply chaplains ministered to all willing souls, diminishing differences between not only Protestant rivals but in some cases Catholics, too. Believers of all sorts thus alternately competed and cooperated with one another as they each strived to make sense of God's Providence, and its relationship to the conflict in which they found themselves engaged.

In short, *God's Almost Chosen Peoples* offers the most complex and detailed analysis of religion and the Civil War yet written. This complexity may occasionally cause readers to find themselves lost among the trees of the proverbial forest, but in the end, they will not only better understand religion's role in the Civil War, but also more fully appreciate the complexities of history, especially at moments when personal and public faith and prolonged war intersect.