

## BOOK REVIEWS

Geordan Hammond, *John Wesley in America: Restoring Primitive Christianity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. 256 pp. \$90.00.

The first book-length study of the Georgia mission, *John Wesley in America: Restoring Primitive Christianity*, has the capacity to change the way we see and study Wesley. Arguing that “the ideal of restoring primitive Christianity was at the forefront of Wesley’s thinking and is crucial to interpreting the Georgia mission,” Hammond’s scope extends well beyond the short time the Wesley brothers spent in the fledgling colony (6). The author identifies no fewer than five “secondary themes” included in this effort to challenge numerous existing biographies that have labeled the Georgia mission nothing but a failure or have “de-anglicized” John Wesley (5).

In the first three of five meticulously organized chapters, Hammond first confronts the stereotype of young Wesley as a legalistic High Churchman with fresh insight into the Essentialist Nonjurors’ theological influence on Wesley’s conception of primitive Christianity, then highlights his practice of it aboard the *Simmonds*, and compares his conception of it with that of his German counterparts, the Moravians and Lutheran Pietists. In two longer chapters he uses seven different loci to evaluate Wesley’s application of primitive Christian theology and practice in Georgia, then deftly examines the three sources of colonists’ opposition to Wesley. From this contextualization emerges a groundbreaking understanding of the Sophia Hopkey Williamson controversy. Hammond’s conclusion acknowledges the adapted but continued emphasis on primitive Christianity throughout Wesley’s life.

Hammond speaks modestly of his work when he writes, “In terms of the field of Wesley Studies, this book may be seen as a contribution to what Albert Outler labelled ‘Phase III’ of Wesley Studies: evaluating Wesley in his own historical context, which includes seeking to understand Wesley in the light of the sources that shaped him” (6). Its suitability to syllabi of United Methodist History courses is unquestionable, but it is also useful to missiologists and post-colonialists. Hammond equips the latter to analyze Wesley’s evolving view of the “noble savage” as well-suited to primitive Christianity, his epistemic humility in the few interactions he had with Indians, and his insistence—even after being disappointingly appointed to Savannah’s parish ministry instead—on wearing long linen trousers and sleeping on the ground, in preparation for the life among the Indians that he still anticipated (120).

Many Methodist scholars may reject what appears to be Hammond’s comparative diminishment of the Aldersgate experience in his correction to the traditional view that it brought about a change in his churchmanship after

legalist Wesley suffered spiritual crisis and returned from Georgia a total failure (196). Nevertheless, Hammond's argument draws carefully from a deep well of primary sources, including three different "layers" of Wesley's journals: his diary, his manuscript journal, and his published *Journal*, read alongside often overlooked writings of Moravian and Lutheran Pietist contemporaries in Georgia (9). To the reader's benefit, Hammond has mined *The Colonial Records of the State of Georgia* and histories penned as polemical denunciations of Wesley, as well as positive endorsements.

With this wealth of material, Hammond achieves his primary purpose of interpreting the Georgia mission via Wesley's effort to restore primitive Christianity, while offering a more accurate portrait of Wesley through contextualization (194). Amid the wealth, the minor flaws stand out for their shallowness, such as his quite possibly accurate but comparatively unsubstantiated claim that Wesley's "promotion of women to positions of spiritual authority" was not planned but "rather a result of his past experience of relating to his mother and sisters on an equal spiritual plane" (189). This relative weakness does not diminish the importance of this excellent read.

NATALYA CHERRY, PH.D. CANDIDATE  
*Perkins School of Theology*  
*Southern Methodist University*  
*Dallas, Texas*

Kyle T. Bulthuis, *Four Steeples over the City Streets: Religion and Society in New York's Early Republic Congregations*. New York: New York University Press, 2014. 270 pp. \$40.00.

*Four Steeples over the City Streets* takes the reader into the religious life of Manhattan during the early Republic by studying Trinity Episcopal Church, John Street Methodist Episcopal Church, Mother Zion African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, and St. Philip's Episcopal Church (an African American congregation). The history of these four churches, two white and two African American, are woven in a complex matrix with the great social issues of the day which includes slavery, racism, gender, as well as economic conditions and the social class of the congregants. Thankfully, this is not an institutional history of the four churches but a social and analytical history of how these four churches interacted with the social realities of New York City as it grew so quickly during these years. The construction of the churches, the role of clergy, and the make-up of the lay membership of the churches all come into play but as participants in larger issues, not for their own sake. All of this was placed in the context of the history of New York City itself. The author pointed out, in spite of the book's title, of the four churches, only Trinity had a steeple but this was a way that the title

could speak to the prominence of the four congregations in this case study.

The author himself laid out his purpose, “Urban expansion also influenced religious experience. I wanted to determine how the city’s churches responded to these changes: how their respective religious traditions shaped the way they reacted to the city, and how changes in the city affected the way they perceived and received religion in these years” (2). The book is to be commended as a first rate academic study arising from the author’s doctoral dissertation and is extensively researched using much primary material and reflects interaction with appropriate secondary scholarly works. The notes, bibliography, and index contribute to its scholarly quality.

The significance for Methodist studies is limited because two of the four congregations are Episcopal, one is African Methodist Episcopal Zion, and one is now a United Methodist congregation with Trinity Church seemingly given pride of position. The reader will need to have those broader denominational interests to find the work engaging. The prominence of African Americans and women in the narrative is most welcomed.

Reading with Methodist eyes, however, I did not find myself in agreement with the author’s description of “the thousands of verses that flowed from Charles’s pen,” as “filled with piety and brimming with emotion” (21). To me, they are much more than that. While colonial era Methodists related to the Church of England, I would not refer to them as “a branch of the Anglican Church” or to “Methodism’s status as a missionary wing of the church” (37). I would suggest that Methodist readers turn first to Philip Hardt, *The Soul of Methodism: The Class Meeting in Early New York City* or to Dee Andrews, *The Methodists In Revolutionary America, 1776-1800*, even though *Four Steeples* also includes a later period.

The author has written a fine study with the comparisons, both similarities and contrasts, of how these four congregations, with similar ecclesiological heritages, interacted with society. That is a considerable undertaking and in this case, executed with skill.

ROBERT J. WILLIAMS, PH.D.  
Retired General Secretary, GCAH  
Ocean City, New Jersey

*Reconsidering Arminius: Beyond the Reformed and Wesleyan Divide.* edited by Keith D. Stanglin, Mark G. Bilby, & Mark H. Hamm. Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2014. 169 pp. \$39.99.

The spirit of Jacob Arminius lurks in the shadows of many of the contentious theological debates that rage within Protestantism. Lionized by his followers and vilified by his detractors, Arminius and his work mark a significant theological fault line for a variety of Protestant denominational groups.

Keith Stanglin, Mark Bilby, and Mark Mann's edited volume *Reconsidering Arminius: Beyond the Reformed and Wesleyan Divide* challenges these polemical characterizations. By bringing together the work of both Reformed and Wesleyan scholars in a collection of seven essays, *Reconsidering Arminius* approaches Arminius on his own terms as a means of distinguishing his actual work from vague and polarizing notions of Arminianism.

The first two chapters of this work situate Arminius in his historical context in order to appreciate the ways in which he deviated from and maintained fidelity to his Reformed setting. Richard Muller's chapter on Arminius's conception of the threefold office of Christ insightfully notes how Arminius stood within the Reformed tradition while also deviating from it in ways that eventually resulted in Remonstrant theology. These essays continue with Thomas H. McCall's challenge to the notion that Arminius's modal logic inadvertently results in determinism.

The collection proceeds with historical chapters by Jeremy Dupertuis Bangs and W. Stephen Gunter. Bangs's chapter follows the English Pilgrims whose sojourn in the Netherlands overlapped with both Arminius and the Remonstrant controversy. This chapter offers insight into the theological and political pressures that influenced the Dutch ecclesial authorities' treatment of Arminius and his successors. Gunter's chapter traces the development of Arminius's soteriology as inflected by the Synod of Dort, English Arminianism, John Wesley, and John Fletcher. Gunter demonstrates how Wesley's soteriology reflects Arminius' emphasis on God's action through prevenient grace and contends that Fletcher's soteriology obscures this emphasis with its preoccupation on the role of works in "working out our salvation" (88). In this way, Gunter provides a model for Methodist and Wesleyan scholars who wish to return to Arminius himself or desire to explore how his original theological claims developed throughout Methodist/Wesleyan history.

The collection concludes with three chapters that consider Arminius' theological commitments in relation to two prominent Reformed theologians and the assertions of Open Theism, respectively. Oliver Crisp poignantly analyzes both Arminius's and Jonathan Edwards's doctrine of creation and contends that Edwards, not Arminius, proposes the most significant innovations to Reformed orthodoxy. Similarly, E. Jerome Van Kuiken facilitates a dialogue between Arminius and T. F. Torrance, which reveals convergence with regard to Christ's role as the foundation and executor of predestination and their shared pastoral concerns about assurance and spiritual despair. In the final chapter, John Mark Hicks posits that Arminius's views of divine intent and God's ability to imbue events with significance reveal a bent toward Reformed theology rather than Open Theism.

*Reconsidering Arminius* provides a clarion call to return to the person and work of Jacob Arminius as a means for navigating the Reformed and Wesleyan divide. These diverse essays astutely challenge vague and polemical conceptions of Arminianism and offer models for reengaging Arminius in both historical and theological studies. Their use of Arminius's own writings

and attention to his historical context reveal the voice of an innovative Dutch Reformed theologian. These essays display the fruits of both Reformed and Wesleyan scholars and will whet the appetite of theologians and historians alike. In this way, *Reconsidering Arminius* succeeds not only in encouraging a return to the man who stands at the wellspring of the Reformed-Wesleyan divide but also in modeling how to traverse it.

ANDREW KLUMPP, PH.D. CANDIDATE  
*Perkins School of Theology*  
*Southern Methodist University*  
*Dallas, Texas*

*Brands Plucked from the Burning: Essays on Methodist Memorialisation and Remembering*, edited by David J. Hart and David J. Jeremy. Evesham, England: Wesley Historical Society, 2013. 271 pp. \$23.00/£14.95.

As United Methodists prepare for General Conference in May—and especially as United Methodist historians and archivists contemplate the potential impact of various legislative proposals which threaten those ministries—our colleagues across the pond offer a thoughtful reflection on the purposes and value of that work. *Brands Plucked from the Burning* is an extended meditation on why Methodists have particularly valued an essential component of denominational history: the biographies and autobiographies of our ancestors in the faith.

Co-editors David Hart and David Jeremy collected a series of papers presented at the 2011 Wesley Historical Society conference, “Memorialising and Remembering: Life Stories in Methodism”; and added to those a lengthy essay by Jeremy that reviews British mourning, funeral, and burial customs from the late eighteenth century through the early twentieth, a helpful structure through which to view the particularities of Wesleyan Methodist practices. Hart and Jeremy argue that “Wesleyan forms of memorialisation helped to create a particular Methodist identity,” especially during the early decades of the movement (97). The dissemination of those life stories, primarily through publication in *Arminian Magazine*, was a deliberate strategy on the part of John Wesley that successfully imprinted in his followers a deep desire for an intense spiritual experience such as was conveyed in the stories. The result was construction of a hagiography, if not martyrology, that inspired converts, aided in social bonding among them, and helped to define what it meant to be a Methodist.

Barbara Prosser’s essay describes the process through which *Arminian Magazine* was transformed from an overly-intellectualized theological journal to the repository of the “relevant and inspiring spiritual accounts of the lives of the first Methodist preachers,” and a way for Wesley to further exert

control over the chaos that was early Methodism by his editorial choices (111). Gareth Lloyd's contribution is an analysis of John Wesley's extraordinary personal influence on Methodism even to the present day, how his role came to be understood after his death, and both the positive and negative ways in which his centrality has affected the development of the various forms of Methodism. Lloyd accurately points out that whenever Methodists quarrel—and they do quarrel often—all of them, on all sides of any argument, “cling to the founder's coat tails,” insisting that only they have interpreted Wesley's intentions and theology correctly (158).

My only real quibble with this book is that John Lenton's discussion of his current project, a prosopographic study of those who left the Wesleyan ministry (chapter five) appears well before Clive Field's review of the sources available to those who would engage in prosopography, an essay that comments on Lenton's previous and ongoing work (chapter eight). Placing Field's chapter immediately prior to Lenton's would have given the text a more graceful flow. Lenton's work offers to fill important gaps in our knowledge of the earliest itinerants and why they walked away from what had once compelled them to the most dramatic of life-changes.

Terry Hurst provided an interesting article on biographical information that can be collected from the study of tombstones and other church monuments, which he illustrates with the case study of John Wesley's stepdaughter, Jane Vazeille, her husband William Smith, and their descendants who are buried in the churchyard of St. Andrew's parish in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Janet Kelly's treatise examines the enormous sacrifices and sufferings of the wives of early nineteenth century Methodist itinerant preachers, a topic that has been considered far too little.

Taken as a whole, *Brands Plucked from the Burning* covers its subject from an interesting variety of perspectives, from the necessary case studies and analysis of individual circumstances, through to the significance of biography to Methodist self-understanding and identity formation. It is a useful affirmation of the work in which our denominational scholars engage.

JANE DONOVAN, D.MIN.  
West Virginia University  
Morgantown, West Virginia

*Methodism in the American Forest*, by Russell Richey. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. 230 pp. \$55.00.

Early American Methodist itinerants frequently preached in the woods and shady groves to escape the summer heat. This transition away from fields and public squares was indebted to John Wesley, who believed that Methodists were called to spread Scriptural holiness across the entire nation. Yet, as

noted by Russell Richey, the forest assumed unique significance in American Methodist theology, practice, and polity. The forest served as cathedral, confessional, and challenge until the nineteenth century, when the church became identified with home, pulpit, school, and shop. *Methodism in the American Forest* examines the content and character of this transformation.

The forest was the cathedral where Methodists worshiped, confessed their sins, and embraced the challenge of holy living. At first, they gathered in the woods to praise God and conduct business at quarterly meetings. Camp meetings eventually assumed their place as Methodist revivals. Richey extensively documents the prominence of and religious enthusiasm present at camp meetings. He also surveys the theological images, terms, and metaphors that camp meetings contributed to American Methodism. The forest presented Methodists with the doctrines of creation, soteriology, and ecclesiology and their relation to God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. These images, terms, and metaphors often went unrecognized by itinerants and laity.

Five types of camp meetings emerged during the nineteenth century: primitive, programmatic, perfectionist, popular, and progressive. Richey argues that these types reflected a wide variety of theological emphases, the Holiness and Sunday school movements, the church's liberal and evangelical wings, and the growing divide between rural and urban Methodists. Many members had already relinquished the church as wilderness, garden, and grove for home, pulpit, school, and shop. This narrative of ecclesial growth and division is an important contribution to United Methodist Studies. For decades, scholars have debated why The Methodist Episcopal Church transformed from a small, alternative society into one of the largest Protestant denominations in the United States. Richey confirms that a comprehensive analysis must include reference to the adoption and gradual surrender of the forest.

United Methodist Studies is primarily comprised of institutional and personal histories of early American Methodism. One way that *Methodism in the American Forest* balances these historiographical lenses is by utilizing itinerant journals and denominational histories as primary sources. Another way is by describing The Methodist Episcopal Church as connection rather than church. Richey believes that terms such as "connection" and "society" are better descriptors than "church" and "congregation" because they possess the elasticity that characterized American Methodist practice and polity. This argument is indebted to three of his previous works, each of which provides greater insight into the present publication: *Early American Methodism*, *Methodist Connectionalism*, and *The Methodist Conference in America*.

In *Methodism in the American Forest*, Richey persuasively contends that the forest assumed a prominent position in American Methodist theology, practice, and polity. Furthermore, he provides valuable insight into the complex, evolving relationship between the forest, camp meetings, and the growth and division of the church. Given the limited scope of the book, questions remain regarding the role of the forest after the mid-nineteenth

century. Hopefully, Richey and other United Methodist scholars will address these questions in future publications.

JARED MADDOX, PH.D. CANDIDATE  
*Perkins School of Theology*  
*Southern Methodist University*  
*Dallas, Texas*

### NEW AND NOTEWORTHY

*Methodism in Australia: A History*, edited by Glen O'Brien and Hilary M. Carey. Farnham, England and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015. 278 pp. \$124.99.

This first modern study of Methodism in Australia was developed to commemorate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the introduction of Methodism to that continent on August 10, 1815. The volume is a collection of essays organized by chronology and theme, each written by a different scholar or pair of scholars. The editors have pulled the various contributions into a thoughtful, consistent tome, and are to be commended for producing a significant addition to world Methodist historiography.

*Ministering Sisters: A Directory of the Members of the Wesley Deaconess Order, 1890-1988, and Their Appointments*, compiled by E. Dorothy Graham. Evesham, England: Wesley Historical Society, 2014. 480 pp. \$33.53.

This painstakingly detailed compendium of every deaconess who served during the noted years, complete with appointments and basic biographical data, will be an invaluable resource for scholars of the Deaconess Movement in the Wesley Deaconess Order of the Methodist Church (United Kingdom) and its predecessor denominations.

*Memorializing Motherhood: Anna Jarvis and the Struggle for the Control of Mother's Day* by Katharine Lane Antolini. Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 2014. 160pp. \$27.99.

Antolini provides an interesting account of Anna Jarvis's surprisingly conflict-ridden efforts to create a national holiday honoring and romanticizing motherhood. The story is only tangentially related to Methodist history, as the first Mother's Day celebration was held on May 10, 1908, in Andrews Methodist Episcopal Church in Grafton, West Virginia. Jarvis's mother was a member of that congregation and Jarvis herself had grown up there, but by the time the holiday was created, Anna Jarvis was a Philadelphia Presbyterian.

JANE DONOVAN  
*Book Review Editor*