

## BOOK REVIEWS

Robert H. Terry, *Neighborhood Center: An Urban Love Story*. Scotland, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1992. 250 pp. \$14.95.

Dr. Terry presents the story of Methodist Episcopal mission work in Harrisburg, PA. He follows the development of the Methodist mission, established in 1910 by the Board of Deaconess Work and the Woman's Home Missionary Society to work "among the foreign speaking people in that section of the city," into the Central Pennsylvania Conference's Neighborhood Center of the 1990's.

Minute books and other primary sources document the mission's early work: "The thrust should be first education, as the foreign people are anxious to learn the English language, and in this way get acquainted with them and win their confidence, and later, introduce the spiritual work among them."

The ministry was originally one among Italians and other western-European immigrants that was "not to encourage the admission of American born children" but to include "the many Slavish children which should be brought into the school." Today the Center provides a full range of educational, cultural, advocacy, assistance and support services to a predominantly Afro-American clientele.

The volume is of value to four audiences: those desiring to learn about the Methodist work in Harrisburg and the history of the Neighborhood Center; those studying changing urban patterns and problems in post-Civil War America; those interested in the inner-city work of Methodist Episcopal deaconesses; and those investigating and/or writing about organizations or institutions in general.

The book's strength lies in its organization into nine chapters—one for each decade of the Center's existence. A professional historian, Dr. Terry continually sets the stage for his unfolding narrative by beginning each chapter with an overview of the relevant movements and events of the decade. He successfully uses such settings of historical and sociological context to enhance the Center's story without digressing, sermonizing or loading down the reader.

Another distinctive feature of the book is its ending each chapter with transcribed excerpts from interviews the author was able to obtain with persons who had been served by or who had worked in the mission during that decade.

The author states concerns over presenting material, terminology and ministry emphases that may now appear condescending, ethnocentric or even racist. He needs to make no apologies, for he accurately and tastefully captures the flavors of the various decades without sacrificing historical accuracy or offending modern readers.

Several minor difficulties detract from the flow of the story: the apparent lack of a final proofreading of the type-set text; the departure within some chapters from chronological order; the mentioning of individuals without properly identifying them; the lack of grammatical editing of the transcribed interviews – although the appropriateness of such action may be open to question.

*Neighborhood Center: An Urban Love Story* is a worthwhile contribution to the literature of inner-city mission work, and a refreshing example of how to present material that could have been merely tedious documentation.

MILTON W. LOYER  
Mechanicsburg, PA

Charles H. Scobie & John W. Grant (ed.), *The Contribution of Methodism to Atlantic Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992). (i-ix, 281 p.) (\$39.95 Can.)

This fine collection of fourteen articles from a conference marking the 150th anniversary of Mount Allison University in New Brunswick in 1989 reflects the strong spirituality and the broad influence Methodism had on the religious, educational, and cultural development of Atlantic Canada. Mount Allison University, in itself, is both an example and an agent of this influence. Although Newfoundland began receiving British Wesleyan missionaries in 1766 and Nova Scotia was the site of the first American Methodist foreign mission, the region failed to develop into a Methodist stronghold. Because of Methodism's minority position among Protestant denominations in Atlantic Canada, it has failed to attract the scholarship it deserves. This oversight has been significantly reduced by this uniformly high quality collection.

The featured papers by Owen Chadwick and John Webster Grant respectively provide a critical overview of Methodism's origins in Britain and its place in Atlantic Canada. The other articles range from an important re-evaluation of Methodism in eighteenth-century Newfoundland to an analysis of the underlying features of the church union movement in Prince Edward Island in 1925. Between are papers on the Great Awakening, nineteenth-century charitable work in Nova Scotia, and the nature of Methodist identity in New Brunswick. The remaining seven articles elaborate important aspects of Methodist contributions to education, literature, and hymnody in the region and clearly illustrate that the study of Methodism must include its intellectual and social influence on the community. On the whole, the articles deal with themes of current importance in the general historiography of Methodism and Maritime history and are both valuable in themselves and point out the rich potential for further study.

In conclusion, the work of these fine Methodist scholars provides important correctives and evocative evaluations by integrating new research with significant insight and analysis. The usefulness of the collection is further enhanced by the integration of scholarship from a variety of disciplines, especially English literature. Charles Scobie and John Webster Grant have done an excellent job of organizing, introducing, and presenting this volume. As well, many of the topics discussed are of importance well beyond the narrow geographical borders of the region. Together they significantly broaden our understanding of Methodism in Canada and indeed in the English-speaking world. The book will also provide a critical base of understanding for those who are not generally familiar with Canadian religious developments.

NEIL SEMPLE  
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A. Gregory Schneider, *The Way of The Cross Leads Home: The Domestication of American Methodism*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993. 257 pp. \$29.95.

This is a book about unintended outcomes of devotional practices among early American Methodists. The central argument is that "the forms of social religion in American Methodism laid foundations in white people's experience for the adoption of an evangelical version of Victorian domestic ideology" (p. xxii). The title indicates the extent to which the author finds the "experimental religion" of the early class meeting issuing in paradoxical outcomes over time.

The text consists of extensive description and illustration from diaries, accounts of revivals and conversions and excerpts from journals like *Western Christian Advocate* and *Ladies' Repository*. The location is the movement from "the Chesapeake region" to "the western frontier," primarily in Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. The author begins by establishing that the culture fostered in the Chesapeake region was a patriarchal "culture of honor."

Considerable attention is given to the gradual shift away from a culture in which control of behavior was based on awareness of community judgments to the culture of later evangelicals in which behavior was controlled more by an internalized conscience and fear of guilt. Put another way, a central focus of the book is a "thick description" of the way behavioral norms shift from external to internal motivations. It is the latter that evangelical Methodists helped to construct through their emphasis on inner feelings and motives as a part of the conversion and testimonial process.

Schneider argues that the practice of requiring individuals to "testify" about their religious experience in class meetings and love feasts was an

important vehicle of gradual change in perceptions about world, self, and God. He demonstrates how the earlier practice of “testimony” about religious experience moves out of the sphere of “social religion” — the class meeting and love feast — and into the “private sphere” of the home in the form of the family altar and deathbed rituals.

Whereas “the way of the cross” offered a strategy for overcoming fear for survival on the early frontier, as towns and rural areas became more settled, “the way of the cross” more often referred to the “self-sacrifice” of women for their families. Whereas the reference point of “home” in the earlier period was “heaven,” in the later phase, the Christian home itself was regarded as heavenly. “The way of the cross, then, not only led home; it also made home heavenly” (p. 156). In the process, the dialectic of social religion which had “an iconic moment and an instrumental moment” began to transfer the formative power and love earlier associated primarily with God to the role of mothers in the home.

Schneider’s use of categories of rhetorical analysis — ideology, metaphor, and paradox — to frame his interpretation help him avoid oversimplifying this complex cultural phenomenon. Among the paradoxes described are two of special interest to historians. The first is the question of the actual impact of the reforming impulses of Methodism. The second is his treatment of the effect of familial language on the changing self-perceptions of women in the 19th century.

Herein lies a question about methodology. Schneider treats all diaries and memoirs as equally reliable sources. In the first half of the book he relies on diaries of itinerant preachers for information. In his account of the changing self-perceptions of women he fails to note that information cited about their changing perceptions comes from other people, in two cases from their husband’s memoirs. While noting that women began to live up to their “ideology,” he doesn’t ask if husbands writing about wives are also living up to an “ideology.”

This is not a small quibble. It raises a question about the extent to which any historian can treat diaries and memoirs as a reliable source of information and basis for generalizations. Nevertheless, this is a provocative contribution to revisionist interpretations of the history of American Methodism.

JANET F. FISHBURN  
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Henry C. Whyman, *The Hedstroms and the Bethel Ship Saga*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992. 183 pp. \$19.95.

Henry Whyman rather modestly declares of his work: “It is my hope that this book will contribute both to immigrant history and Methodist history.” He does both effectively.

Carefully researched and engagingly written, this is a story which has never been adequately told. The immigrant and the Methodist story, as usual with any history, is a story wrapped up in persons. The persons in this case are the Hedstrom brothers, Olof and Jonas, as well as an all-star roster of other significant Scandinavian leaders. The story of their work and the romantic tale of the "Bethel Ship" or "God's Houseboat" riding at anchor at Pier 11 on the Hudson River is a delight to read.

Olof Hedstrom and the others who labored with him directly or indirectly performed not only a ministry to Swedish sailors in New York City, but also through so many of the converts promoted the establishment of Methodism as these immigrants went West. A primary figure in that westward movement was Jonas Hedstrom, especially as he encouraged large numbers of Swedes to settle in Illinois. Very interesting, however, is the reverse movement which occurred. Many immigrants returned home to Sweden and other Scandinavian countries taking their Methodism with them. Through such persons Methodism was planted in various forms in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark.

I found Chapter 4, "Olof Hedstrom's Relation to the Läsare," to be of special interest. It is a helpful discussion of Pietism on the Continent and in Sweden in particular. The thread of connection runs from this pietism through the Moravians to John Wesley's spiritual pilgrimage and easily ties to the work of the Hedstroms. True to the Wesleyan spirit Hedstrom's Bethel Ship in New York prompted ministry not only to the sailors' souls, but also to their physical and social needs.

There are other gems to be mined in Whyman's work. Because of Olof's circuit riding in the Catskills from 1835 to 1844 there is local history as well as genealogy to be discovered. This is especially useful because the work is well documented and indexed, making subjects easy to find.

If you are unable to do nothing more than scan this work, take the time to read Dr. Kenneth Rowe's excellent Foreword. In five pages he sets the context for the immigrant story, the Hedstroms, and the Bethel saga.

ROBERT DREW SIMPSON  
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*Elsie H. Landstrom, Hyla Doc: Surgeon in China Through War and Revolution.* Fort Bragg, CA: Q.E.D. Press, 1991. 288 pp. \$12.95.

*Hyla Doc* is the captivating story of Dr. Hyla Watters (1893–1987), Methodist missionary and chief surgeon at Wuhu Hospital in Anhwei Province, China, from 1925 to 1949. This remarkable woman was born into a parsonage family and was interested in China from childhood. During her years at Wuhu, she experienced Chinese civil war, the Japanese occupation in 1937, internment under the Japanese for two years following

Pearl Harbor, and repatriation. Returning to China under anarchic conditions, she reclaimed Wuhu Hospital from the Japanese Imperial Army, who had reduced it to shambles. After rebuilding medical services, she was forced to leave China because of the Communist occupation. In 1950 "Hyla Doc" was assigned to Liberia where she worked for eleven years and was ordained in 1953. At age 67, she hitch-hiked across northern Africa before returning to medical practice in the United States. In 1980 she retired from medicine and visited China, reopened to foreigners after decades of Communist rule.

Landstrom edits this volume well, weaving into a narrative Watters' correspondence and supplemental information obtained from interviews and other missionary papers. Her introduction and footnotes put Watters' story in context, beginning with her childhood and continuing until she left China in 1949. The book flows well, thanks to Watters' positive spirit and story-telling ability and to Landstrom's skillful work. Noteworthy is Watters' description of numerous medical ailments and the attitude toward them by the Chinese, as well as western medicine's attempts at amelioration. Also fascinating is the account of efforts to maintain medical services during the Japanese occupation and subsequent world war.

The woman revealed in this book was brave and inquisitive, deeply attached to the Chinese people for whom she repeatedly risked her life. Having studied comparative religions, Watters approached Chinese religions respectfully and was able to find in them spiritual truths. At the same time, she took advantage of the opportunities opened to her by her medical practice to witness to Jesus Christ, the "carpenter who ate bitterness" (p. 139). Through her eyes, one sees clearly the merits of medical work as a form of mission. I highly recommend this book, both to general readers and to those with special interest in missions.

DANA L. ROBERT  
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Jon Michael Spencer, *Black Hymnody: A Hymnological History of the African-American Church*. Knoxville, Tennessee: The University of Tennessee Press, 1992. 292 pp. \$18.95

Any student of history of the African-American church and its music would benefit from the impeccable chronology of Jon Spencer's study. He graphically illustrates the shifts and developments of four of the mainline denominations among African-Americans: Methodist, Baptist, Holiness, and Pentecostal, as well as the viable groups of African-Americans among the Episcopalian and Roman Catholic church in the United States.

Spencer's analysis of the texts of the hymns provides excellent insight into the doctrines and theology of the various denominations. His carefully documented facts include significant persons, places, and circumstances both past and present that dictate the course of each denomination. His "hymnological lens" focuses carefully on the very souls of the composers who in turn reveal through their texts, doctrinal statements and principles. This can be seen in the texts of the various genres within black hymnody, the traditional hymn, the spiritual, the gospel song, both traditional and contemporary, as well as in simple choruses.

In the case of Methodism, Spencer reveals how the texts of the hymns reflect the foundations of four denominations of black Methodists, all springing from the original Methodist church organized by John Wesley. Although the nation's history of African-American slavery and disenfranchisement had its definitive role in the birth of all American denominations, Spencer finds in the text of the music of black Methodists a doctrine of freedom and the urgent desire of African-Americans to recapture the spirit of the invisible church. He quotes a characteristic verse containing this doctrine which was written for the 1946 celebration of the A.M.E. Zion Church:

"God, who truly alone shall free us,  
Loose our minds from fetters strong,  
That we, knowing Thy pure purpose,  
Make our deeds square with our song.  
Touch our minds, shake off our shackles,  
Hope of Ages, Thou, our God."

Spencer states in his preface that, "since singing is an essential part of the black Christians' religious history and culture," his hymnological history "should be a helpful supplement to other histories of the black church."

Although the texts explored by Spencer strongly support this ethic, the texts are primarily those of male composers. The only woman given significant space in the hymnological lens is Mother Tate of the House of God (holiness). A balance of the exploration could have been achieved if the texts of other women composers, not necessarily ministers and pastors, could have been explored, e.g., Lucie E. Campbell, "Only a Look at Jesus," Doris Akers, "Sweet, Sweet Spirit" and Mary Lou Williams, "Mass for Peace."

His discussion on adaptation of works, particularly the adaptation of the civil right's movement hymn, "We Shall Overcome," showing how oral traditional adapts hymns to meet social needs was noteworthy. A perfect example was the juxtaposition of the tune of the old Baptist hymn, "I'll Be All Right" and the text of Charles Albert Tindley's gospel hymn (Methodist) "I'll Overcome Someday."

The admonition Spencer gives in his postscript challenges the African-American church to struggle against surmounting odds to achieve human fulfillment through religion. It is a challenge and responsibility inherited by the African-American church from the days the first shipload of Africans arrived on American shores. If the challenge is accepted, African-American churches will move into the 21st century with great pride in their achievements and contributions to the theology of Christian music.

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