baptized new members. The Philadelphia Baptists did not organize themselves as an independent congregation until 1746, although they appear in the Pennepek records as early as 1698, and full congregational records exist only from 1757, this printed edition ending in 1806.

Van Broekhoven's superbly edited records chart First Baptist's rise from a small and late organizing group to one with a significant presence in the Philadelphia Baptist Association. Initial two-to-six-line entries in the late 1750s ballooned to multiple paragraphs as early as 1762 and remained so for the next half-century, filling five hundred printed pages in this edition despite missing records between 1775 and 1779. Van Broekhoven's introduction highlights issues that course through the congregation's minutes—money, struggles and successes with clergy, member problems, women's roles in the congregation, cautious dealings with Black Baptists, the centrality of singing and hymns in worship, relations with other White Baptist congregations and the Association, and, of course, unending issues with its sanctuary.

Spot-checking Van Broekhoven's edition with the First Baptist manuscripts available online through the extraordinary Philadelphia Congregations Early Records project (https://philadelphiacongregations.org/records/), which provides beautifully digitized copies of multiple Philadelphia church and synagogue materials, confirms its excellence. It reproduces even deletions in the records, straightens out confusing financial entries, and provides footnotes that explain puzzling references, allusions, and gaps in the manuscript entries. Here, then, is another excellent volume in Mercer University Press's important *Baptists in Early North America* series. It should be in the library of every Baptist college and of every U.S. research university.

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The Church of Saint Thomas Paine: A Religious History of American Secularism. By **Leigh Eric Schmidt**. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2021. 272 pp. $27.95 hardcover.

Scholarship on religious skepticism in the United States has focused on the cultural anxiety and political friction that arose alongside public expressions of disbelief. *The Church of Saint Thomas Paine* makes a new argument about American secularism by exploring its *religious* nature. Instead of seeing religious freethought as its enemies did, namely as utterly atheist and anti-religious, Schmidt shows how freethinkers, beginning in the nineteenth century, sought to replace crucial elements of religion with their own secular versions of the same. Secularists re-purposed elements of theistic religion for non-theistic ends, creating secular objects, practices, and communities meant to have the emotional power of traditional religion, minus the metaphysics. The surrogacy, Schmidt says, was also a supersession: the "religion of secularism would have its own saints, martyrs, and relics; it would cultivate its own liturgical projects and material practices; it would build its own churches of humanity to replace churches of God" (p. x). The book's three chapters focus in turn on the relics, rituals, and communities

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by which secularists sought to cultivate this-worldly reverence in lieu of supernatural religion. But certain questions remained unresolved for many freethinkers and arguably also for scholars today: what exactly constitutes "real" religion, and is an irreligious religion even possible?

The ambivalent nature of secularist religion comes to the fore in the tenacious pursuit of the lost bones of Thomas Paine. Paine's admirers disavowed the mystical power of traditional religious relics even as they indulged in the idea that Paine's physical remains exerted a secularizing influence on the living. Touching a bit of Paine's brain, an artifact of dubious provenance on display first in London and then New York, might deepen one's disbelief. While freethinkers were "uncomfortably aware of the incongruities of their own devotion to the secular Thomas Paine" (p. 60), they remained "attracted to sacred things in spite of themselves" (p. 69). This was the conundrum of the secular relic-hunter, whose aversion to religious superstition coexisted with a longing for supernatural connection with the revered prophet of freethought.

Funerals offered another opportunity for replacing religious rites with secular ones. Appalled that even the most outspoken secularists might, upon their deaths, have their funeral wishes overturned by a presiding officiant and have their souls commended to a God they did not believe existed, secularists banded together to take control of their last rites. But how to make the moment both dignified and touching? Small groups like the Church of Humanity, the First Positivist Society of New York, and the Society of Moralists experimented with humanistic rites that offered a reverent secularism, a hallowed ceremony recognizable as such but defined by its refusal to acknowledge an afterlife. Manuals like *A Secular Funeral and Marriage Hand-Book* offered guidance on how to re-write rituals to afford them a sanctified secularism.

Throughout the country, small but ambitious groups of freethinkers organized the unchurched into secular congregations. Felix Adler, son of a prominent rabbi, created the Society for Ethical Culture in New York with off-shoots in Philadelphia, Chicago, and St. Louis. The Independent Religious Society (Rationalist) in Chicago, the First Secular Church in Portland, Oregon, the Church of Humanity in Great Bend, Kansas, and the Church of This World in Kansas City, created communities of ethical support without creedal constraint. Insisting on the primacy of deed over creed, and convinced that earnest ethical action was religion enough and nothing less than a religion, secularists pursued what Schmidt describes as the "hybridity of a devout humanism that remained at once emancipated from religion and yet wedded to it" (p. 138). In hindsight, the churches of the unchurched did seem to provide a surrogate religion for their adherents, who insisted that secularism was more than a philosophical or moral enterprise; it was a religion of and for humanity. But uncertainty remained their lot as well. "They were still something, rather than nothing, religiously speaking; they still belonged, but to what exactly—that was an unsolved puzzle" (p. 160).

Twentieth-century critics knew well how to turn the claim of a secular religion against its proponents, and the substantial Epilogue tells the story. Drawing on the 1957 court decision that recognized the Fellowship of Humanity as a tax-exempt religious group, and making much use of the now-famous footnote in the 1961 *Torcaso* decision that included Secular Humanism in a list of religions, conservatives defined secular humanism as an atheist *religion* aggressively hostile to theistic faith. These critics perceived a massive conspiracy to undermine religion in public schools with a weaponized secularism that was not, in their view, religiously neutral or harmless, but an antireligious religion of immense influence. In their increasingly polarized view of the world,

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one can only be for or actively against theist religion. Efforts to achieve a religion of humanity or a religion within secularism or a religious humanism flummoxed this binary and appeared either oxymoronic or deceitful.

Schmidt gives us the fascinating history of a tiny minority: freethinkers in search of a shared, ethical secularism that might carry religious meaning and serve in the place of religion without becoming one. The book shows secularism as a religious project (of sorts). Written with clarity and verve, *The Church of Saint Thomas Paine* will appeal to readers in and beyond academia who wish to understand the sincere and sometimes successful efforts to craft secular substitutes for theistic religion.

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"For the Good of Their Souls": Performing Christianity in Eighteenth-Century Mohawk Country. By **William B. Hart**. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2020. 288 pp, 6 b&w illustrations. $90.00 hardcover; $26.95 paper.

William B. Hart's, "*For the Good of their Souls*" joins a vibrant and growing body of scholarship devoted to the study of missions and Native Christianity in the eighteenth-century Northeast. Hart's book is a careful exploration of the Anglican mission to Mohawk peoples over the course of a century from its founding in 1712 at Fort Hunter, New York, near the Mohawk town of Tiononderoge, located at the confluence of the Mohawk River and Schoharie Creek. After laying the theoretical and methodological groundwork (more on that below) in the *Introduction*, Hart offers a brief overview of Mohawk political, religious, and cultural life in the decades leading up to the Fort Hunter mission, including an account of Mohawk engagement with the Jesuits of New France and the New France and Dutch Calvinists of New York. The next three chapters explore the beginning, middle, and final years of the Anglican mission in the Mohawk Valley, which came to an end with the onset of the American Revolution. A final chapter continues the focus on the Mohawk engagement with Anglican Christianity in the diaspora, focusing on the Grand River settlement led by Thayendanegea/Joseph Brant and the Quinte Bay settlement of Tyendinaga led by John Deserontyon.

With the subtitle, "Performing Christianity," Hart joins a rich historiographical conversation about the meaning of Native engagement with Christianity. In recent decades, this dialog has shifted from a focus on the extent and authenticity of "conversion"—which unintentionally affirms European Christianity as the benchmark—to an exploration of the forms and meanings of indigenized Christianity. Linford Fisher in his *Indian Great Awakening: Religion and the Shaping of Native Cultures in Early America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) makes the case for studying "affiliation" rather than conversion, allowing for gradations of engagement without the value judgment of authentic versus "merely" strategic. My work, in *To Live upon Hope: Mohicans and Missionaries in the Eighteenth-Century Northeast* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press,

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