

financed their ministry. David Bundy's chapter, uniquely in the volume, provides a study of a female preacher who engaged in the networks of the Radical Holiness Movement while remaining in the Victorian conception of a model spouse of a Wesleyan Methodist superintendent minister. Catherine Stephens Smith's fascinating journey is reconstructed by Bundy via her husband, Thornley Smith's, published memoir of her, as well as sources relating to the developing Radical Holiness Movement in Britain. Bundy shows how she found her voice and ministry, in part, through public speaking (largely to other women) in Holiness Movement events.

A theme that runs through Part II is the decline of women preachers in all branches of nineteenth-century British Methodism. It receives attention in Tim Macquiban's chapter on early Primitive Methodist women preachers, and Colin Short's essay on female preachers among the Bible Christians. This topic is the focus on Jill Baber's chapter in relation to Primitive Methodism. While there were over one hundred women appointed as itinerant preachers from 1813 to 1844, comprising nearly twenty percent of all preachers, none appear in the official records of Primitive Methodism after 1862. Nonetheless, female preaching in Primitive Methodism never became extinct, as there continued to be women local preachers. Barber insightfully enumerates eight reasons for the decline of women preachers in Primitive Methodism, many of which apply to Methodism as a whole in nineteenth-century Britain.

Part III, "Women Methodist Ministers Reflect," contains the reflections of Christiana Le Moignan, Judith Maizel-Long, and Michaela Youngson. Le Moignan was one of the first women accepted to the ministry when it was opened to women in the early 1970s, going on to become the second woman to be President of the Conference. She considers the place of her story in the history of Methodist women preachers. Maizel-Long was a superintendent and theological tutor. She recounts the interesting journey of her calling as a Methodist minister and her commitment to feminism. Youngson was President of the Conference in 2018–19 and is currently Assistant Secretary of the Conference. Her reflections focus on women and leadership in the Methodist Church today. Collectively, these personal testimonies provide examples of how recent Methodist women ministers have experienced their calling and exercised their ministry.

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First Baptist Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Edited by **Deborah Bingham Van Broekhoven.** *Baptists in Early North America 7*, ed. **William H. Brackney.** Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2021. 530 pp. \$60.00 cloth.

The earliest records of what became Philadelphia's First Baptist Church open with an anomaly: The city that housed colonial Baptists' first denominational body, the Philadelphia Baptist Association, formed in 1707, lacked an independent Baptist congregation until the 1740s. Instead, Baptists who worshiped in Philadelphia met as a branch of a Welsh congregation eleven miles distant in Lower Dublin township, the Pennepack Baptist Church, named for the creek (now called "Pennypack") in which it

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