

## BOOK REVIEWS

Ahlstrom, Sydney E., and Carey, Jonathan S., eds. *An American Reformation: A Documentary History of Unitarian Christianity*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1985. xvii + 493 pp. \$39.50.

The central role of Unitarianism in mid-nineteenth-century American intellectual history and the development of Christian liberalism is undoubted. It was most vibrant during the half century preceding the Civil War as its spokesmen preached their doctrines of the intrinsic goodness of man and the immanence and loving-kindness of God. William Ellery Channing, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Francis Parkman, George Bancroft, James Freeman Clarke, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, James Russell Lowell, and Oliver Wendell Holmes are a few of the important individuals who developed in the matrix of Unitarianism and who transformed the intellectual life of America in a score of fields.

Despite the prominence of Unitarianism, its history has not received the treatment it deserves by historians of American religion, probably because the denomination tended to slip off the left edge of Christian liberalism in the post-Civil-War period as it came to focus more on strictly ethical and cultural concerns. For many Christians such a move verified the often-repeated "prophecy that Unitarianism was merely a halfway house on the road to infidelity" (p. 27).

A major contribution toward filling the Unitarian void in American history has been provided by the late Sydney Ahlstrom and Jonathan Carey in their *An American Reformation*. The idea for the volume was conceived by Ahlstrom in the 1950s as a parallel treatment to match Perry Miller's anthology, *The Transcendentalists* (1950). Ahlstrom desired to fill the gap between transcendentalism and Miller's earlier documentary history on *The Puritans* (1938) with his *An American Reformation*. That desire, however, was sidetracked as Ahlstrom put his full energies into his monumental *Religious History of the American People* (1972). As a result, his work on Unitarianism was eventually published posthumously.

The purpose of *An American Reformation* is to foster understanding regarding the religious viewpoint that undergirded the "New England renaissance." The volume's thesis is that the Unitarian renaissance was truly an "American Reformation—the distinctive transformation of Christianity and Calvinism in the eighteenth century through Arminianism and other Enlightenment influences into nineteenth-century liberal Christianity" (p. xii). Boston became the movement's Wittenberg, and William Ellery Channing its Luther.

The anthology is divided into five sections: Origins and Founding, Doctrines and Theology, Ethics and Moral Theology, Uncertainties and Conflict, and The Challenge of Emerson and Transcendentalism. Within each section the selections are arranged for good reading sense rather than chronologically. Each selection is prefaced by a concise introduction that places it in its historical context. The editors opted to limit the number of selections, rather than to abbreviate them unduly. As a result, these documents have generally been only slightly abridged.

Included in the anthology are selections from such notable Unitarians as Charles Chauncey, Andrews Norton, William Ellery Channing, James Freeman Clarke, Jonathan Mayhew, and others. Some of the selections are well known, while others are less known. Also included is a short section on Unitarian hymns. All selections represent distinctly religious Unitarian thought rather than the movement's thought in general.

One of the most useful contributions of *An American Reformation* is Ahlstrom's forty-page introduction that defines Christian Unitarianism, discourses upon its intellectual background, places the movement in its American context, and expounds upon its historical development and doctrinal positions. The introduction is, in its own right, a well-informed and sophisticated contribution to the history of American Unitarianism and American intellectual history.

The editors have put all students of American religious development into their debt by providing in *An American Reformation* easy access to a body of seminal documents that generally have been rare and difficult to locate. Their anthology is an indispensable contribution to students of nineteenth-century American religious thought.

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Miller, Robert M. *Harry Emerson Fosdick: Preacher, Pastor, Prophet*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985. xvi + 608 pp. \$34.50.

*Harry Emerson Fosdick* is a massive biography of a massive man. Living from 1874 to 1969, Fosdick was the most well-known interpreter of religion to the general American public for several generations. Through his many best-selling books, his national radio broadcasts, his pastoring and public speaking, his advocacy of a vast number of social causes, and his pioneering of pastoral counseling, he directly influenced the lives of millions. Beyond this, he indirectly influenced still others through his teaching of homiletics at Union Theological Seminary from 1908 through 1946. To many he is best known for his part in the fundamentalist-modernist controversy of the 1920s. His 1922 sermon, "Shall the Fun-