

Book Reviews

Rachel Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope: Mohicans and Missionaries in the Eighteenth-Century Northeast* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2008). Reviewed by Craig D. Atwood.

Stockbridge, Massachusetts, is famous in American history as the refuge of the Puritan divine Jonathan Edwards when he was ousted from his pulpit in Northampton, but Stockbridge also represents an early attempt to bring native peoples into colonial society. Stockbridge was established by New Englanders as a mission station where natives were to be assimilated into English religion and culture. In neighboring New York colony the village of Shekomeko was one of the most important Mohican settlements. It was there that the Moravian missionary Christian Rauch made a lasting impression on a sachem named Tschoop by sleeping in one of their tents rather than fearing for his life. Rauch's trust in the essential goodness of the natives and his eloquent preaching about Christ convinced Tschoop to convert to Christianity. He was baptized as Johannes and became one of the most effective Moravian preachers in America. (He also became something of a literary hero. In the James Fenimore Cooper novel *The Last of the Mohicans*, the two noble Mohicans, Uncas and Chingachgook, were based on two Moravians in Shekomeko, Tschoop and Shabasch.)

Stockbridge and Shekomeko offer two distinctive windows into the world of the Mohicans and their response to Christian missionaries. Wheeler demonstrates that native peoples were not passive recipients of Christianity; they critically examined the message that was preached and adapted it for their purposes. They were open to Christianity, in part, because of the social disruption caused by European colonization. The natives in Stockbridge hoped that they could secure a place in New England society by adopting Christianity and fighting alongside the Americans against the French. For the most part, this strategy failed because few New Englanders recognized natives as equals, even when the natives were baptized. Jonathan Edwards was an exception, but he could not prevent the gradual usurpation of native lands and erosion of native rights in Stockbridge. Eventually, most of the Mohicans there relocated to Wisconsin. Some returned to their original religion, but many remained Christian.

The story of Shekomeko is both more hopeful and more tragic. Wheeler documents the difference between Moravian and Puritan mission theory and practice. Whereas the Puritans believed that European civilization was a prerequisite for receiving the gospel, the Moravians believed that God was already at work among the natives before missionaries arrived. Unlike many colonists, the Moravians were not seeking to take land from the natives nor to use them as pawns in colonial wars. Moravians were also remarkably accepting of the native economy and social structure. The Moravian emphasis on the power of the blood and wounds of Jesus to cure sin and heal the soul resonated with Mohican beliefs in spiritual powers. Moravians relied heavily on native preachers, like Johannes, who communicated the

gospel in native idiom and helped organize the Mohican Moravian church. As far as religion goes, the Moravians were far more successful than the Puritans, but they could not protect their converts from the worst effects of colonization. By 1800 Shekomeko was abandoned and its population scattered.

As a tragic summary of the Mohican Moravian experience, Wheeler offers the story of Joshua. He was the son of the native preacher Johannes and lived for sixty-four years as a Christian. During that time he was forced to leave his home many times because of European violence. He was arrested by the British on suspicion of being an American spy during the Revolution, but several members of his family were murdered by an American militia at Gnaddenhutten. All of his ten children died before him, and he saw the world he knew slowly being destroyed. He questioned the goodness and power of Christ, but did not renounce Christianity. During a revival of native religion led by a prophet named Tenskwatawa, Joshua was murdered because he was a Moravian.

Wheeler argues persuasively that there were few good options for Mohicans in their relationships with colonists. All choices led to loss of culture, social disintegration, exile, and violence. Though the Moravians offered the hope for a better way, they were powerless to protect the Mohicans.

Wheeler has done a masterful job of telling two inter-related stories in ways that illuminate both. She handles the Moravian sources particularly well, and is to be commended for recognizing that the Mohican Moravians were both Moravian and Mohican. Her analysis of tribal and colonial politics is nuanced and instructive, but she is at her best when discussing ways that native peoples incorporated Christian ideas into their changing worldview. Particularly intriguing for Moravian studies is her assertion that by 1803 the Moravians had changed their approach to native peoples and missions in general. She notes a growing racism in Moravian accounts and less use of the kinship language of “brother” and “sister” that characterized the first generation of missions. Anyone interested in Moravians missions historically or in the present should read this book carefully.

Donald E. Frey, *America's Economic Moralists: A History of Rival Ethics and Economics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009). Reviewed by Craig D. Atwood.

One of the most important areas in social ethics is the economy, but few modern pastors or theologians are interested in economic theory and methods. Over the course of the 20th century the field of economics became dominated by specialists who developed complex mathematical and computer models that mystified the average person. As a result, economics as a discipline became strangely divorced from the quotidian world where real people buy and sell, live and work. In fairness, one could say the same thing about theology.

In his most recent book Donald Frey, an economist at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, NC, examines the history of American economic theory, especially as it intersects theology and moral

theory. *America's Economic Moralists* is thorough, insightful, and compelling. Frey undermines the claim that economics is an objective science, and he shows that the major schools of economic theory are based on fundamental assumptions about human beings and morality. From the Puritans to the Chicago school of economics, economic models reflect the ethical perspectives of the economists. This ethical dimension of economic theory has been more pronounced in some models than in others, but there is no such thing as morally neutral economic theory. In essence, Frey argues, theology plays a significant role in economics, especially when economists claim to be agnostic.

Frey proposes that two rival conceptions of the world govern different economic theories. The first, which he calls "autonomy morality," asserts that humans are individualistic and motivated exclusively by self-interest. This morality is the basis of much *laissez faire* capitalism, and it elevates individual freedom of choice to the primary value for society. It is often coupled with a view of nature as a competition for scarce resources. Although rooted in the Enlightenment, autonomy morality found support in Darwin's theory of evolution as "survival of the fittest." Frey argues persuasively that this approach to the economy actually encourages the preservation of the status quo, especially the preservation of wealth in the hands of the powerful and the oppression of the weak. Frey shows that despite persistent claims to the contrary, empirical evidence does not support the claims of autonomy morality, particularly in the economic sphere. In short, Adam Smith's "invisible hand of the market" is as much a matter of faith as the providential God of the Puritans. Frey is particularly bothered by Christian thinkers (such as the Baptist Francis Wayland) who promoted autonomy morality.

The rival to autonomy morality is "relational morality," which Frey argues is more consistent with a Christian worldview. Relational morality views humans as existing in a web of relationships, including family and neighbors. Frey examines several different schools of Christian thought, including the Puritans, the Moravians, and the Social Gospel movement, to demonstrate that rival theologies recognized the fundamental truth that individuals have responsibility for the welfare of others. His analysis of Moravian economic theory is very helpful, and he rejects the argument that Moravian communalism was simply a practical response to frontier conditions. Rather, he sees the Moravian economic system as a sophisticated attempt to actualize the Gospel of Jesus in all areas of life, including labor and commerce. More pertinent for contemporary discussions, Frey examines several 20th century economists, such as John Kenneth Galbraith, who embraced relational morality as a foundational aspect of sound economic theory. A solid economy is one that provides the maximum benefit for all who are affected by it. For Frey, Christian theology should and can inform economic theory by reminding economists that human beings do have responsibility for the welfare of one another.

Pastors and lay persons should read this book. It is a masterful history of rival economic theories that can inform political and theological discussion. Although the prose gets rather dense, Frey writes for the non-specialist. Moravians, in particular, will be interested in his claim that Moravian theology has addressed economic issues.