As stated above, Land is concerned herewith the major and significant of Adventism, and although his inclusions are, of course, debatable, the range is impressive.

It is no secret that Seventh-day Adventists have always grappled with the way the public has perceived them. A concern of Adventists in this age of transparency and accountability is how to be open and honest about the past while still being sensitive to public perception. This series of historical dictionaries by Rowman & Littlefield has provided an opportunity for authors of diverse philosophical and religious persuasions to present their histories as they see fit, to speak instead of being spoken about. In writing this book, Gary Land does Adventism a service.

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Methodism in the American Forest, by Russell E. Richey, New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. 230 pp. ISBN 9-780-1993-5962-2. Hardcover, US$55.00.

Russell E. Richey is currently dean emeritus of Candler School of Theology and William R. Cannon Distinguished Professor of Church History Emeritus at Emory University. His eminent career is characterized by his passion and love for early Methodist history. Richey is a research fellow of the Center for Studies in the Wesleyan Tradition, author of seven books on Methodism, and edited the *Methodist Review*. In addition to his many accomplishments, Richey is currently working on a new book, titled, *Methodists in America*, for Columbia University Press. His profound knowledge of early Methodist history and acute grasp of its spiritual ethos deeply characterizes the work herein reviewed: *Methodism in the American Forest*.

The purpose of *Methodism in the American Forest* is to offer "yet another look at Methodist ministry, its hallmark pattern of itinerancy, and ministerial dimensions of ecclesiology" (p. 10). Richey achieves this goal by focusing on Methodist preaching in sylvan settings. Though Methodist ministers usually preached in homes, chapels, or other buildings, the author demonstrates that the woodlands provided meaningful and significant spiritual experiences for many as they witnessed for Christ on America's frontier (cf. p. 6). Since these experiences provided "theologically potent images of Methodism" (p. 28), Richey highlights some important aspects of the denomination's early self-understanding.

The author's primary sources include the diaries and journals of preachers, biographies and autobiographies, and other early Methodist publications and official church documents. In addition, Richey carefully critiques secondary sources written by subsequent Methodist historians that provide an unbalanced perspective of the history of camp meetings. Finally, the author also interacts with current scholarship, noting some significant and recent studies that complement his thesis. The masterful use of all these sources reveals that the author is immensely steeped in and abundantly familiar with early Methodist culture and religious commitment.

Methodism in the American Forest is prefaced with an overview-styled introduction and contains five chapters. Richey also includes an appendix that chronicles, in timeline arrangement, John Wesley's "Preaching under Trees and in Groves." The book is thematically focused as a representative study. Richey establishes a firm chronological progression of early Methodist sylvan experiences in America, but is not exhaustive in his treatment. It should also be noted that this study is focused on the perspectives of Methodist ministers, rather than the lay people.

After introducing the topic and explaining the outline of his book, Richey provides, in chapter 1, the foundation for his argument—that "Methodists sacralized American woodlands ... as shady grove (nature's cathedral), as garden (Gethsemane where temptations might be fought and spiritual solace sought), and as wilderness (a challenge through and into which the Methodist 'gospel' must be taken)" (p. 7). The chapter is full of firsthand accounts of Methodist ministers that approached, or reacted to, the American forest in one (if not all) of the three categories mentioned.

The second chapter describes how sylvan experiences eventually developed into camp meetings. Richey argues that this "Methodist signature" was a transition out of the quarterly meetings and continued to evolve over time (cf. p. 7). A discussion of race relations during camp meetings before the Civil War brings this chapter to a close.

Chapter 3 is largely focused on theology and expounds upon the shady grove, garden, and wilderness theme that was introduced and explained in the first chapter. Since this chapter shifts from a historical to a theological discussion, Richey suggests that those disinterested in doctrinal discussions "can readily jump straight to the fourth chapter" (p. 7). If readers were to follow this suggestion, however, they would also miss the author's historical treatment of camp meetings in relation to Native Americans, which concludes chapter 3.

The fourth chapter is devoted to the evolution of camp meetings throughout the nineteenth-century. Richey categorizes these changes into "five related but distinguishable garden, grove, and wilderness projects," including: primitive, programmatic, perfectionist, popular and progressive (p. 123). Though five categories are introduced in this chapter, only the first

four are treated. The fifth and final chapter is focused on Richey's fifth category—progressive—and also serves as a conclusion to his book. With this chapter, *Methodism in the American Forest* is essentially brought to a close (with the exception of the appendix).

Richey takes a unique historiographical approach in this book by systematizing aspects of American Methodism in order to extract theological coherence from a practiced, or lived, theology and ecclesiology. In spite of challenges, Richey accomplishes this intimidating and daunting task with finesse and his work will undoubtedly provide a new standard for Methodist scholars and theologians seeking to harmonize their heritage with current religious practice. Though Richey achieves this feat, the book does have some distracting features, a few of which are offered here as representative examples. First, the five categories of Methodist camp meetings (primitive, programmatic, perfectionist, popular, and progressive) are introduced on page 123, but the discussion of the first category does not commence until page 138. Though the pages in between provide relevant information, it is necessary to return to page 123 to remember the significance of the word, "primitive," by the time one arrives to page 138ff.

A second distraction in this book relates to the way words and phrases are sometimes emphasized. In Richey's discussion of the five categories of camp meetings, he underscores only the second (programmatic) and fourth (popular) with bolded type (pp. 146, 156, cf. 160). One wonders why the first, third, and fifth categories did not receive the same emphasis. Third, it is also rather odd that only the second category is introduced with a number (i.e., "second"; p. 146), while the other four categories are not numbered in pages 138ff. Though these things are all minor, they do detract somewhat from the readability of Richey's book and could have been resolved without much effort.

Another curiosity is Richey's placement of the discussion on African Americans and Native Americans, which appear at the ends of chapters 2 and 3, respectively. It seems that since the book is written and organized thematically, these discussions could have been included together in a new chapter. A section devoted to female Methodists in American forests would also compliment such a chapter. Though Phoebe Palmer is generously discussed (see specifically pp. 151-156) the focus is on holiness, rather than gender in particular. It seems that a broader examination of women vis-à-vis Methodist camp meetings and sylvan experiences would have complimented Richey's book nicely.

One other aspect that could have been included relates to non-Methodist usage of America's woodlands in religious activities. Richey's study is focused on Methodists (as the title of his book clearly indicates), yet the significance of Methodism's sylvan experiences could only be enhanced by a brief evaluation of the broader religious context. Were Methodist's the

only religious body to regularly utilize America's forests within worship services? This seems unlikely, but if so, how did this style of worship impact other Christian denominations? For example, Richey explains that many Methodist's "conversion experiences and calls to ministry came as they prayed and meditated in the woods" (p. 38). Other ministers, such as the Baptist William Miller, also experienced a call to ministry after prayer and meditation in the woods (cf. David L. Rowe, *God's Strange Work: William Miller and the End of the World*, Library of Religious Biography, Mark A. Noll, Nathan O. Hatch, and Allen C. Guelzo, eds. [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008], 98). How did Miller's experience, and others like it, relate to Methodism? Or, are these experiences entirely unrelated? Perhaps early Americans in general found religious meaning and significance in the forests—a haven for spiritual devotion and prayer? Though it would not be necessary to give these questions lengthy consideration, at least some discussion may have been beneficial, as it would highlight the uniqueness and/or influence of Methodism.

In spite of a few distractions and suggested additions, it should be emphasized that Richey's book is highly recommended. It has an important focus—one with which all Christians can relate. It reminds the reader of an important aspect of early American religious life and offers principled lessons that remain valid today. Though times have changed, Richey has done a great service in highlighting the "theologically potent images" that early Methodists found in the American forest while journeying through "wilderness, grove, and garden" experiences.

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The Love of God: A Canonical Model, by John C. Peckham. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015. 295 pp. ISBN 978-0-8308-4079-3. Softcover, US$32.00.

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