A Perfect Bable of Confusion: Dutch Religion and English Culture in the Middle Colonies

By Randall Balmer

RANDALL Balmer has written a solidly researched, well-crafted monograph that should appeal to general readers interested in the ethnic and religious history of colonial America. His book describes the decline of Dutch language and culture in New York and later New Jersey, from the English conquest in 1664 to the later eighteenth century, through a careful examination of the development of the most important Dutch cultural institution, its Reformed church. The state church of the Netherlands and its new world colony, this denomination faced difficult times during the later seventeenth century as wealthier members became attracted to the Anglican denomination and English ways, while others, usually poorer, attempted to defend their Dutch identity.

This division eventually helped fuel Leisler’s Rebellion. (Leisler represented the more staunchly Dutch Reformed religious sentiments in the larger social-economic rebellion that bore his name.) Many of the poorer Dutch who backed Leisler migrated westward into New Jersey, but enough remained in New York to continue the divisions among the Dutch. With time this dispute died down, but many prominent Dutch, and especially women, became interested in defending their denomination and language against Anglicization. The Dutch who migrated to New Jersey found themselves without ministers in a rapidly changing situation, and thanks to the efforts of ministers such as Theodorus Frelinghuysen and his relatives, became receptive to an evangelical pietism that extended across national and denominational lines. By the American Revolution, the Dutch in New York had begun to surrender their language, and despite some resistance, had become Anglicized and ready to stand by the British Empire. At the same time, their pietistic, evangelical cousins in New Jersey, who had become Americanized, backed independence. Despite different itineraries, both groups had arrived at the same place, or as Balmer explains, “after more than a century of English rule the Dutch finally succumbed to the twin pressures of Anglicization, after the manner of the Church of England on the one hand, and assimilation to the broader, heterogeneous culture of the Middle Colonies on the other.”

Balmer’s work opens up a series of vistas for the general reader. His interest in Dutch acculturation to English and American patterns prevents it from becoming a narrow ethnic or denominational study. Having a fine political sense, he also gives a concise, well-written account of Leisler’s Rebellion. In reading the work one will also realize the importance of the Dutch Reformed tradition and its ministers to the broader movement of evangelicalism known as the Great Awakening. In short, this well-written and organized book will be a good read for someone who has been looking for books about the Dutch, the middle colonies, or colonial religion. My only caution to the general reader is that Balmer fails to give a sufficient account of the organization or theological development of the Dutch church, and fails to indicate the links between that Calvinistic, reformed denomination and all those other Calvinists, from the Ulster Presbyterians to the Hungarian Reformed. This makes it difficult to place Frelinghuysen and the other Dutch evangelicals and pietists within a perspective of their own and other...
reformed traditions. This becomes especially important since Freelinghuysen’s “European” ideas seemed perfectly acceptable to many of his American Presbyterian and Reformed colleagues.

Scholars, who often take a narrower and perhaps more jaundiced view than the general reader, will be particularly thankful for the book’s strengths, and will perhaps notice other positive contributions. The reader has never encountered as solid and succinct an account of the ethnic and religious background to Leisler’s rebellion, and of the continuing battle between the Leislers and their enemies for almost two decades following 1691. Balmer sheds significant light on the role of Dutch women and how their efforts helped to keep their denomination alive in New York City. He also has a good grasp of the close relationship between religion and state in colonial New York, and how politics affected the church even when the government established only a single Anglican parish.

But there are weaknesses. His failure to develop the European background makes it difficult to discover, let alone account for, changes over time within the Dutch Reformed church or the European roots for many of supposed “American” attributes of the Great Awakening. I am also doubtful if the line between the evangelical Pietists and the more conservative New York based Dutch Reformed can be closely correlated, as he suggests, to social-economic differences of the poorer New Jersey Dutch attracted to evangelicalism and the wealthier ones, or at least their wives, who remained in the old tradition. My guess would be that both the poor and well-to-do Dutch in New Jersey supported Pietistic ministers because they had little choice; in New York City, however, the congregation could always recruit a more conservative minister through Amsterdam. I also suspect that a close analysis of

**BOOKCASE**

**Andrew Carnegie**
By Joseph F. Wall

THE definitive biography of Carnegie and his times is widely considered an outstanding work of economic, political and intellectual history. The Press is the first to publish a paperback version, and an Andy Warhol painting of Carnegie graces the cover.

**The American Steel Industry, 1850-1970**
By Kenneth Warren

Warren, a Lecturer in history at Oxford University (his article about Henry Clay Frick appears in this issue of *Pittsburgh History*), traces the changes in technology and in key geographic locations for iron- and steel-making since the industry’s dramatic rise to prominence during the industrialization period. In sizing up the national industry, the Pittsburgh region obviously figures heavily in Warren’s analysis: the interplay between physical factors, such as the area’s abundant natural resources, and human machinations in market-making, corporate affairs, and government policy.

**The Steel Workers**
By John A. Fitch
New introduction by Roy Lubove

Here lie the results of the famous Pittsburgh Survey inquiry into the life of the district’s work-

**Campaigning With the Roundheads: The History of the Hundredth Pennsylvania Veteran Volunteer Infantry Regiment in the American Civil War 1861-65**

By William G. Gavin

This volume provides a thorough history of the famous 100th Pennsylvania Veteran Volunteer Infantry Regiment, the “Roundhead Regiment,” recruited from Lawrence and adjacent western Pennsylvania counties. It contains first-hand “human interest” accounts by members of the regiment and a wealth of original manuscript material, the bulk of which has never been published. The plethora of maps, photographs and primary documents makes this a valuable research volume.* Patience may be needed, however, when trying to find the book, titled variously *The 100th Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers, The Hundredth Regiment (on the cover), The 100th Pennsylvania Roundhead Regiment 1861-1865 (on the spine), and Campaigning With the Roundheads: The History of the Hundredth Pennsylvania Veteran Volunteer Infantry Regiment in the American Civil War 1861-65* (on the title page).
some of the non-New York City churches in New York might disclose a considerable mixture of social-economic classes within these congregations. This also relates to an important conclusion of the book about which group took which side in the American Revolution. The New Jersey congregations undoubtedly included fewer Tories than did those in the City, but after all, the British had occupied New York City for over six years. I would suspect that many of the conservative Dutch Reformed in the Hudson Valley might have supported the Revolution.

Despite these criticisms I believe that Balmer has performed the exceptionally difficult task of producing a monograph that can be read with pleasure by the public, and with profit by the scholar. Read it and you will have better insight into the society that terrorized Ichabod Crane.

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Socialist Cities: Municipal Politics and the Grass Roots of American Socialism
By Richard W. Judd

RENEWED interest in community studies has sparked attempts to use local history to answer larger questions. This book illustrates that quest, as Richard Judd tries to explain the absence of a viable socialist movement in the United States by examining midwestern municipal politics. He describes and analyzes a handful of towns and cities where socialists experienced some success in the 1910s in order to pinpoint factors responsible for their more disappointing national record. This approach allows Professor Judd to provide specificity in time and place which general accounts of socialism usually neglect. In addition, he attempts to transcend the bipolar explanations of the failure of socialism in the United States found in most studies; either they focus on external causes such as national affluence or on internal causes such as sectarianism and schism. Professor Judd describes an interaction of both factors in explaining socialist setbacks in municipal politics.

He traces the roots of socialist municipal politics to the late nineteenth century and the activities of working men’s parties, the Knights of Labor and the Socialist Labor Party. In 1904 the Socialist Party of America endorsed candidates at the municipal level and tried to provide cohesiveness for scattered socialist efforts. Victories in Milwaukee, beginning with the election of Emil Seidel as mayor in 1910, became symbols of hope. However, Milwaukee proved to be an anomaly since socialists won most of their victories in the small towns and villages of the Midwest’s industrial belt.

Working-class votes provided the main support for the socialist municipal victories, and strikes often served as a prelude to these successes. Urban workers garnered benefits from socialist administrations that brought sanitary improvements to working-class districts, often raised wages and reduced hours for municipal workers, and supported strikers. Socialist officials had a more complex relationship with urban progressives who sought a “good business climate” and professionalism but resented the class politics of the socialists.

Locals formed the backbone of socialist party activity and provided the testing ground for its ideas and policies, and the staging ground for its press, parades and picnics. In Ohio, grass roots activity reached a peak as socialists achieved their most substantial victories in mayoral and council races. In 1911, and to a lesser extent in 1913, socialists translated labor support and socialist enthusiasm in combination with weakened, regular party machines into electoral victories. The 1911 victories in Lima and Lorain provide case studies of this process at work.

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whether to fill appointive offices with expert, nonpartisan officials or socialists. This issue aggravated another conflict between those who sought to build class consciousness and those who focused on honest and economical government, and this dispute contributed to political defeats. In Dayton, the socialists faced other problems as a Citizens’ Campaign targeted the middle class in its successful drive to establish a commission government. The Cleveland party took a more radical path, but a combination of external repression and internal factionalism undermined its efforts.

Events in two Pennsylvania communities should be of particular interest to readers of Pittsburgh History. In November 1911, New Castle workers elected a socialist mayor and several councilmen in the aftermath of a tumultuous steel strike in 1909-1910. This 16 month conflict pitted workers, supported by both the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers and a corps of organizers from the Industrial Workers of the World, against the mill owners, supported by local merchants and elected officials. The failure of the strike cost the steelworkers their voice in the industry, and they turned to political action