

## Book Reviews

Bartels, F. L., *The Roots of Ghana Methodism*. Cambridge University Press, 1965. 368 pp. (\$9.50)

This book by a native Ghanaian who was educated in Methodist schools in Ghana and in England, may reassure some readers that "the church is of God, and will be preserved to the end of time, for the promotion of his worship and the due administration of his word and ordinances, the maintenance of Christian fellowship and discipline, the edification of believers, and the conversation of the world."

The Methodist mission seems to have had only a precarious foothold on the Gold Coast (Ghana) for the first fifty or more years—it began in 1836. One marvels at the capacity of missionaries and the mission to endure in the face of all the difficulties and discouragements which beset them. In the first fifty years or so many of the missionaries, unaware of how to avoid or cure malarial fever, died within a few weeks or months after arrival on the Gold Coast. But when at the point of death they not only did not complain, they urged the church in England to send other missionaries to take their places. At times when the little native Methodist societies were without leaders, the people still met to sing, worship, and encourage and strengthen each other in the faith. Neither the missionaries nor the native Christians lost heart.

Perhaps one secret of the perseverance and success of the mission was the continued emphasis on the maintenance of schools. It was not easy to keep them going, but the church at home and the missionaries on the field never gave up. From the beginning in 1836 to this day, Methodism in Ghana has operated schools. In the nature of the case, it could not educate all the children, but the church trained some, and some they taught became leaders not only in the church but also in nearly every phase of the life of the people. The education offered was not always adequate. There was evidence that it did not always train young people for life in Africa; in some instances it made them unwilling to work with their hands. But even so, the educational work of the missionaries made and still makes a great contribution in Ghana. The late J. E. Kegwir Aggrey, a choice Christian spirit and one of the most brilliant native Africans of the last generation, was a product of Methodist schools on the Gold Coast (Ghana). For years church and state in Ghana have worked together in the field of education in a way unknown in America until the rise of the present administration in Washington.

Two points are obvious as one reads this book. First, the Christian mission in a place like tropical Africa is a civilizing leaven. The church may insist that its business is to save souls—and the Methodist mission in Ghana did that, making numerous converts and building up the church. But at the same time it was introducing the knowledge, ideas, ideals, values, morals, science, and skills that go along with modern civilization. Second, the Christian mission tends to create, sharpen, or build up the spirit of nationalism. Within a few years after the mission began, nationalist feelings were being expressed by the people. The author observes, "Nationalism appears to be an essential stage in the emancipation of man." (p. 143.)

In some ways the Africans from the beginning seemed quite willing to "receive with meekness the engrafted word." But to this day some have been unwilling to accept the Christian standard of monogamy in marriage. In 1960, the Methodist constituency in Ghana numbered 153,000 out of a population of 6,750,000. But only 51,000 of these were full members of The Methodist Church. Many of the others were junior members, but some 25,000 of them were mature persons on trial—too old to be classed as junior members but too inadequately prepared to be received into full membership. The author says one reason why many are perpetually on trial in the church is the "problem of polygamy" which is part of the traditional pattern of social and economic life in Africa. Like Gentiles in the ancient world who were attracted to the high moral standards and other good features of Judaism but still would not become Jews, so many Africans have been attracted to the fellowship of the Christian church and they join in such of its activities as the church will permit, but they will not meet the requirements of full church membership.

When the time for autonomy came in West Africa, British Methodism suggested a West African Methodist Conference or church which would include Nigeria and some other countries. But the Methodists in Ghana wanted a church of their own and it was organized as such. The reader concludes that Methodism now has a strong foothold in Ghana.

The book is well written and documented. The author writes with typical English poise and balance. American readers who know little about the details of geography in West Africa would have welcomed a simple line map in the back of this volume locating the cities, schools, and church districts. The price of \$9.50 seems unusually high for a book of this kind.

—ALBEA GODBOLD

**Stephens, Frank F., *History of the Missouri Methodist Church*. Columbia: The Missouri Methodist Church, 1965. (\$4.00)  
(Available from Missouri Methodist Church, 9th and Locust, Columbia, Mo.**

Very few local churches can be as fortunate as the Missouri Methodist Church in Columbia, Missouri in having a professional historian as the author of its history, especially one who has played a most important part in the life of his church over a period of many years as well as in the life of his denomination. Dean Stephens taught American History at the University of Missouri over forty years and during that time held leading positions in his church. He also was a member of four General Conferences and the Uniting Conference in 1939.

The result is an unusual history. We have an extended account (221 pages) which presents the story of a significant church in its denominational, cultural, economic and political setting. One cannot read this book without learning a great deal about Methodism in general and about all of the forces which affected life in Missouri from its raw frontier days, through the anguish of the Civil War period and up to the present. While Columbia did not appear in the list of appointments until 1834,

its story actually began with the appointment of Joseph Piggott to the new Boonslick Circuit on the Missouri frontier in 1815. This circuit included the area in which Columbia later grew as the seat of a great state university.

All who are interested in the Church serving the campus will find this account helpful because here is the story of a church struggling with inadequate resources to meet its responsibilities to a growing university community, and the eventual response of an entire state to this opportunity. The three conferences in Missouri shared in the appointment of a Minister to Students as early as 1913 and they assisted in the building of the "Cathedral of Missouri Methodism" which was completed in 1930. Here also is the account of the agonizing struggle with debt during the depression of the thirties, the final victory and the greatly expanded program of the present.

I wish that Dr. Stephens had included more of the interesting material related to the early circuit riders of the Missouri frontier. He chose wisely, however, to give chief consideration to the development of the the church as it sought to fulfill its responsibilities to the university community. No one previously has recorded this important development, while fortunately two of the early circuit riders of the area left vivid accounts of their work. (John Scripps, who was on the Boonslick Circuit in 1817, and Jacob Lanius, whose *Journal* has much valuable material.)

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