BOOK REVIEWS


One of the least celebrated characteristics of Methodism is its encyclopedic bent. That Methodists of all varieties are incessant biographers, programmers, and statisticians, is nowhere more apparent than in the long succession of historical dictionaries which they have produced. These handbooks, which supplement (but do not supplant) the two-volume *Encyclopedia of World Methodism* published in 1974, are the latest arrivals in this procession.

The new books perpetuate Methodist family proclivities, giving especial place to official history, biography, and organizational innovation. Editors all come from church schools and agencies: Perkins, Duke, Drew and the General Commission on Archives and History of the United Methodist Church. Significant changes in the Methodist mind-set are apparent. Bishops, who in 1878 (Simpson) and in 1974 (Harmon) served as editors, have been succeeded by centrist historians. The essential role of women in Methodism from time immemorial as well as the current thrust of the women’s movement is given sanction by the presence of Susan Warrick as co-editor and by contemporariness of topics and persons treated in the first-named work.

Yrigoyen and Warrick aim at comprehensiveness. Through a “Chronology” (pp. xv–xxv) and Frank Baker’s “A Brief History of Methodism” (pp. 1–12), the editors attempt to give an overview. Space limitations and the immensity of the topic, however, results in attention being diverted from non-American (particularly British) subjects. For example, although Wesley and his immediate disciples and the whole of American Methodism receive extensive treatment, later British and Canadian developments receive scant attention. Continuing a long-standing tradition, Yrigoyen and Warrick devote fully a sixth of their work to bibliography, a welcome feature.

Kirby, Richey and Rowe focus solely on American Methodism. In contrast to Yrigoyen and Warrick who rely heavily on other specialists, the three sections of this work (though later edited) were originally drafted individually: “Bishops,” by Kirby; “Conferences,” by Richey; and “Members,” by Rowe. The result is a work more sharply focused as to time [nineteenth and early twentieth centuries], place [United States], and content [structure and discipline]. Stress placed on developments in the American church before 1939
results in a selection of topics and personalities less amenable to present fashions and priorities.

Both works are products of an ecumenical culture and are published in series devoted to examining denominational traditions comparatively. Designed for readers inside and outside of Methodism, the two books both complement and supplement one another. They deserve the attention of every serious student of Methodism.

CHARLES EDWIN JONES
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma


There are a few dissenters among the clergy in the antebellum South and during the Civil War who denounced slavery and criticized secession. They took the risk of running against the tide and suffered the expected consequences. While their circumstances were difficult in the years preceding the war, their situation grew severely dangerous after the Confederacy had been formed. Chesebrough masterfully and succinctly tells their story in this book. He concludes by calling them a “creative minority” which he defines as, “the few who understand what the current challenges are and offer new answers to counter new problems” (p. 87). Along the way we are introduced to some “dissenting” Methodists, namely, Anthony Bewley, Daniel Worth, John Hersey, Wesley Smith, and others. There are lessons here for our time.

CHARLES YRIGOYEN, JR.
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We are delighted to call attention to this new edition of one of the most important works on English theology and worship. It is a classic! Davies’ original five-volume work is presented in three paperback volumes and a new Volume VI (in the third paperback “Book” of this new edition) is added dealing with the period from 1965 to the present. Methodists and those interested in Methodism will find the section “From Watts and Wesley to Maurice, 1690–1850” of special interest. Our gratitude to Eerdmans for making this invaluable set available!

This is a reprint of the 1956 edition of this book by the scholar-pastor who taught at the Theological School at Drew University for several years. Before his death in 1985, Hildebrandt co-edited Volume 7 of the new edition of "The Works of John Wesley," titled, *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of The People Called Methodists*. In this book Hildebrandt discussed the theology of the Wesleys as scriptural, practical, missionary, and catholic.


A casual glance at the *Discipline* of The United Methodist Church quickly reveals three distinct meanings of the word "conference." In one usage the term refers to a geographic area populated by United Methodist churches. A second usage refers to the annual business meeting composed of clergy and laity and that meeting's supporting structures of agencies. The third usage refers to that collegial body of ordained ministers to which only they can be admitted. How these usages developed is one of the topics covered by Russell E. Richey, Associate Dean at Duke Divinity School, in his latest book, *The Methodist Conference in America: A History* (Kingswood Books, 1996). Richey argues that the conference in its earliest years could be described under three terms: polity, fraternity, and revival. The conference, first as quarterly, then as annual and finally as general, was the guiding dynamic of Methodism. It directed Methodism's mission (polity) and it served as a locus of identity and nurture (fraternity) and itself participated in its own mission (revival). It was not uncommon for revivals to break out at quarterly, annual and even general conference. Richey describes how polity, fraternity, and revival *vis-a-vis* the conference was stretched and redefined as Methodism grew in numbers and in size. The idea of conference was redefined as conference boundaries were developed, as first camp meetings and later campgrounds or retreats developed, as boards and agencies came into existence, and as politics came in along with polity. In many respects this is as much a history of the Methodist spirit and spirituality as it is of polity. Richey argues that our sense of sacred time and space for some 150 years was carried by the concept of conference and only in the past couple of decades have we begun to shift to new paradigms. This guiding dynamic, originally embodied by the concept of "conference," spreads out into such avenues today as the local church and the general agency, as well as the conference. The book opens up several avenues for further study. One would be a closer look at the 19th century foreign language conferences. Richey's view of these institutions is somewhat ambivalent. Another would be a closer look at the
geographic conferences. Though Richey wishes to include the laity in this look at conference, too often one feels that the ministers are the real focus. In this analysis Richey’s sources are conference journals (annual and general) and general histories. The annual conference histories need to be added to this mix. Such remarks aside, Richey’s work is a significant and important addition to the understanding of the Methodist of its mission and its spirituality.

L. Dale Patterson
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This is a reprint of the 1990 volume. It is an anthology of prayers from various periods of church history. Included are such notables as Augustine, Anne Bradstreet, John Calvin, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, William Sloane Coffin, Jr., Martin Luther King, Jr., Mother Teresa of Calcutta, and Teresa of Avila. Methodists will be happy to see selections from the Wesleys (Susanna, John, and Charles) as well as Thomas a Kempis, Ephraim of Syria, Francois Fenelon, and others who influenced the Wesleys. If it is true, as John Wesley advised, that it is difficult to carry on a vital prayer life without using the great prayers of women and men from the Christian tradition, then this volume is to be prized.