

METHODIST HISTORY AT THE BICENTENNIAL: THE STATE OF THE ART

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American Methodism's belief in God acting in and through history endows the past with momentous importance. It becomes a potent force for the historian. Each successive generation of Methodists, and each successive schism or reunion of the Methodist family of churches, demanded a fresh telling of the story from its own perspective and for its own purposes. Church history for most of the church's two hundred years was no mere avocation for retired folks or a scholarly luxury. It was central to the church's task. John Wesley's own *Short History of Methodism* (1765) and a much fuller "short" history in volume four of his *Concise Ecclesiastical History* (1781) were produced partly in defense of his evangelical movement, partly as examples of his favorite theme: "What hath God wrought!" Thrown on the defensive in face of external charges of an invalid ministry and internal demands for democratic reform, Francis Asbury also found history a powerful ally. It is not surprising that succeeding generations of Methodist historians followed the lead of Wesley and Asbury and offered apologetics and progress reports as church history.

Progress Reports and Apologetics as Church History

Church leaders and layfolk alike found history handy in defending the discipline and doctrine of their particular branch of the family tree. By counting the converts year by year the largest especially could also show God's favor for their version of Methodism. The incontestable seal of historical growth in numbers and geographical spread announced God's chosen standard-bearers. Armed with these signs of divine judgment, Methodist historians took the offensive, confidently issuing verdicts on past issues and movements without hesitation.

In the early 20th century historical writings became professional and turned academic. The new "science" of church history taught that history emerges out of the environmental context and that historical analyses must rest upon a verifiable base. So the church's historians placed their stories within the context of American history and sought the explanations for its development in the cultural and historical forces of the time. Despite new skills, Methodism's modern historians failed to avoid the twin pitfalls of parochialism and triumphalism. Methodism's best known 20th century church historian, William Warren Sweet, used his upbeat

denominational history of 1933 to further institutional goals by pushing unification. "United" Methodism's large size and national distribution also determined for him its God-blessed and "typically American" status.¹

Chronicles of God's Elite

An even more fatal flaw than the persistent tendency to use history to defend the establishment and count the converts has been the exclusivist, if not élitist, stance of much of Methodism's historical writing. Until recently the church's histories have suggested that clergy were God's principal agents among the Methodists. Most of the church's histories have been written *by* clergy, *about* clergy, *from* clergy records. And *special* clergy have been largely in focus—bishops and bureaucrats, General and Jurisdictional Conference delegates, board and agency staff and members. The domain of these special clergy has provided the stage on which the church's history unfolded and the rhythm by which it has been punctuated—as if the church's history was made principally in office buildings or civic arenas rather than sanctuaries and Sunday school rooms, as if it unfolded quandrennially General Conference by General Conference rather than annually and weekly as countless ordinary pastors and layfolk gathered at the regional and local level to hear and respond to God's word.

All this occurred despite the fact that Methodism's theology never identified the church with clergy, let alone bishops or bureaucrats! Wesley and Asbury, Otterbein and Albright developed the idea of a partnership in ministry between clergy and layfolk. They gave ordinary people extraordinary responsibilities for leadership and pastoral care. The Methodist and Evangelical and United Brethren movements would have flopped if it were not for this network of committed lay leadership. Yet the standard histories of Methodism from Jesse Lee's first (1810)² to Frederick Norwood's last (1974)³ are strangely weak when it comes to views from the pew.

The two-hundred-year focus on clergy in Methodism's histories has also meant that white, middle-class, middle-aged males were the church's chief heroes. All of this happened despite the fact that the people called Methodist through the years have been a very diverse lot. Its membership has always been—and is now—more diverse than any other American Protestant body—more diverse in terms of race, region, ethnic orientation, socio-economic level, theological mind-set, political conviction and lifestyle. Yet until very recently the almost universal trend was to submerge

¹James L. Ash, *Protestantism and the American University: An Intellectual Biography of William Warren Sweet* (Dallas: SMU Press, 1982).

²Jesse Lee, *A Short History of the Methodists* (Rutland, Vt.: Academy Books, 1974). This facsimile reprint of the 1810 printing with a new index is regrettably now out of print.

³Frederick A. Norwood, *The Story of American Methodism* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1974).

distinctive traditions in the still boiling melting pot. The inevitable result was that all Methodism was seen through white Anglo-Saxon eyes. German, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, and Italian Methodists, as well as Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Filipino Methodists were merged into the main line and almost lost to view. The same fate was in prospect for black, Hispanic and Native American Methodists until recently. A sad commentary on the male bias of most Methodist historians is the fact that about half of the story—that part dealing with the women of Methodism—has been largely ignored and is only with great difficulty being rediscovered. Something of the same could be said for youth and children.

The study of the historiography of American Methodism which I have hinted at here and reported on more fully in a soon-to-be published essay are only initial explorations. Much more work needs to be done if we are to fully understand the art of Methodist history, then and now.

Finding the Resources

On the eve of the Church's bicentennial many surveys, conference histories, and studies of major periods and movements may still be faulted for their tendency to defend the record, count the converts and focus on white male leadership. However, during the last decade the Church's historical enterprise has become less happy and more honest, less defensive and more attentive to the "underside" of Methodism's history. But we have only begun to scratch the surface. The discussion and documentation of the majority forces of lay women and men and the minority forces of racial, ethnic and dissenting Methodists in even the best new studies is still thin and scanty. A fully inclusive story will have to await another decade or so of solid monographic studies on a host of problems and themes, at the several levels of the Church's life, in widely varying contexts, and employing fresh methodologies.

To write the "new" Methodist history, we will have to look to new sources. We will have to read more diaries and autobiographies of lay women and men than we have. We will have to tape and listen to more oral interviews. We will have to comb local church records as well as general church records. We will need to search for printed texts and unprinted notes and recordings of the sermons Methodists listened to. We will have to examine the Sunday school curriculum they studied and the popular newspapers and magazines they read.

Our efforts to this end are hampered by a scarcity of primary materials. For this reason we need proper archives at every level of the Church's life. A definitive, or even adequate inclusive bottom-up history of Methodism has yet to be written, partly because an appropriate collection of the primary sources is not yet available, so we go on getting tertiary accounts based on secondary sources. The United Methodist Church has only begun to implement a decent archival policy and program to match

its new home on the campus of Drew University in Madison, New Jersey. Ambitious projects to gather the records of women and ethnic minorities are under way and substantial progress has been made in the Church's national archives and in the larger Methodist research collections in the Church's several seminary and university libraries. Much remains to be accomplished, especially in gathering, cataloging, and preserving the basic historical records of the out-groups—women, ethnic minorities, and reform caucuses—which belong to the United Methodist tradition. The desperate struggle for survival and self-affirmation through which they have gone has left a tragic scar on the disappearance of so many important original records.

In the realm of bibliographies and guides to the literature, Methodist historians have never had it so good. Books, pamphlets and theses are exhaustively described and located in the author's *Methodist Union Catalog: Pre-1976 Imprints*.⁴ Although only five of the projected twenty volumes have been published, covering titles with main entries A through H, the editor plans to publish one volume a year until the project is completed. The MUC is a record of the cataloged holdings on Methodist subjects of more than 200 libraries, including the major Methodist research collections in the United States, Canada, Great Britain and several other European and non-Western countries. United Methodism's periodical output has been definitively described and located in John and Lyda Batsel's *Union List of United Methodist Serials 1773-1973*.⁵ More than two thousand periodical titles were identified and located; less than a dozen have been even modestly mined by the Church's historians. Phase two of the serials project, covering the periodical publications of non-United Methodist denominations in America (the three independent black Methodist churches, the Free Methodists, Wesleyan Methodists and others) is underway under the editorship of Michael Boddy of the Drew University Library. A preliminary checklist will be issued in 1984. The first of several sections of the *Catalog of Methodist Archival and Manuscript Collections*, compiled by Homer L. Calkin, has been published.⁶ Upon completion that catalog will help Methodism's future historians tap incredibly rich resources in widely scattered depositories. Taken together the speedy completion of Methodism's three major bibliographical projects may spark a genuine renaissance in Methodist historical studies.

⁴Kenneth E. Rowe, ed., *Methodist Union Catalog: Pre-1976 Imprints* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1975 and continuing).

⁵John and Lyda Batsel, *Union List of United Methodist Serials 1773-1973* (Evanston, IL: Garrett Theological Seminary, 1974). Copies are still available from the office of the General Commission on Archives and History of The United Methodist Church, P.O. Box 127, Madison, NJ 07940.

⁶Homer L. Calkin, *Catalog of Methodist Archival and Manuscript Collections* (Arlington, VA: World Methodist Historical Society, 1982 and continuing). Part 2—Asia and Part 3—Australia and the South Pacific Islands have been published to date.

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The author's 1982 *United Methodist Studies: Basic Bibliographies* serves as the best introductory guide to the most important current resources in book form.⁷ The index to Methodist periodicals which scholars relied upon for twenty years, *The United Methodist Periodical Index*, regrettably has been discontinued by the Church's publishing house. But for the years 1960 through 1980 it taps a large body of material buried in the Church's voluminous official periodicals and Sunday school curriculum. The Church's General Commission on Archives and History has published two titles of a projected five in its "United Methodist Bibliography Series": basic reading lists on Native American Methodists and Methodist Women.⁸ A third guide covering the literature of black Methodism will be issued in 1984.⁹ A bibliography of newly-published Methodist historical literature is published annually in the *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* (London), which includes works on American topics. Both *Methodist History* (since 1970) and the *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* (since 1963) have published regularly useful lists of doctoral dissertations on Methodist themes.

Two encyclopedias of Methodism are still in print and highly useful. Nolan B. Harmon's 1974 *Encyclopedia of World Methodism* in two large volumes has become a standard reference tool.¹⁰ A supplemental volume to fill in gaps, especially on women and ethnic minority subjects, has not gone beyond the talking stage but would greatly extend the encyclopedia's usefulness. Matthew Simpson's century-old *Cyclopedia of Methodism* recently has been reprinted and is still standard for the nineteenth century.¹¹

Frederick Norwood's 1974 replacement for William Warren Sweet's 50-year-old standard survey, *The Story of Methodism in America*, and the brief but tantalizing Bicentennial studybook, *Proclaiming Grace and Freedom*, written by Frederick Maser, Charles Yrigoyen, Jr. and Kenneth Rowe and edited by John McEllhenney, have become the basic surveys.¹²

⁷Kenneth E. Rowe, *United Methodist Studies: Basic Bibliographies* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1982).

⁸Thomas E. Lenhart, *Native American Methodists: A Reading List* (Lake Junaluska, NC: General Commission on Archives and History, The United Methodist Church, 1979) and Kenneth E. Rowe, *Methodist Women: A Guide to the Literature* (Lake Junaluska, NC: General Commission on Archives and History, The United Methodist Church, 1980). Copies are still available from the General Commission at its new office in Madison, NJ.

⁹Jonathan A. Carlsen, Larry G. Murphy and J. Gordon Melton, *A Bibliography of Black Methodism* (Madison, NJ: General Commission on Archives and History, The United Methodist Church, 1984).

¹⁰Nolan B. Harmon, ed., *Encyclopedia of World Methodism* (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1974). 2 vols.

¹¹Matthew Simpson, *Cyclopedia of Methodism* (New York: Gordon Press, 1977). Reprint of the 1876 edition.

¹²Norwood, *op.cit.*; John G. McEllhenney, ed., *Proclaiming Grace and Freedom: The Story of United Methodism in America* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1982).

Ten years after its publication, Norwood's history continues to serve well as the standard textbook. His 1982 *Sourcebook of American Methodism*, with brief selections arranged topically within four chronological periods, is a splendid companion to his basic text.¹³ The recent reprinting of Charles W. Ferguson's 1971 *Organizing to Beat the Devil: Methodists and the Making of America* provides a snappily written but less inclusive and critical survey as Norwood and McEllhenney.¹⁴ William Warren Sweet's 1953 revision of his 1933 classic, *Methodism in American History*, remains in print but ought not to be.¹⁵ Behney and Eller's 1979 conventional but competent history of the Evangelical United Brethren family of churches functions best as an encyclopedia for reference rather than an insightful and connected narrative.¹⁶

On the shelf of recently reprinted Methodist classics, the facsimile reprint of Jesse Lee's first history¹⁷ and Bishops Asbury and Coke's annotated edition of the Church's discipline of 1798¹⁸ have been joined by several important reprints of early conference minutes,¹⁹ and scarce autobiographies of Richard Allen and Henry Boehm, Phoebe Palmer and Anna Howard Shaw.²⁰ A complete transcription of the journals of one of Asbury's chief assistants, Freeborn Garrettson, has just been published for the first time by Drew University.²¹ A facsimile reprint of John Wesley's

¹³Frederick A. Norwood, ed., *Sourcebook of American Methodism* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1982).

¹⁴Charles W. Ferguson, *Methodists and the Making of America* (Austin, TX: Eakin Press, 1983). Reprint of the 1971 edition.

¹⁵William W. Sweet, *Methodism in American History*. Revised edition. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1953).

¹⁶J. Bruce Behney and Paul H. Eller, *The History of the Evangelical United Brethren Church* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979).

¹⁷Jesse Lee, *op.cit.*

¹⁸*The Methodist Discipline of 1798, including the Annotations of Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury*, edited by Frederick A. Norwood (Rutland, VT: Academy Books, 1979).

¹⁹*Minutes of the Methodist Conferences Annually Held in America from 1773 to 1813 Inclusive* (Swainsboro, GA: Magnolia Press, 1983). Facsimile reprint of the New York, 1813 collected edition of the minutes. Academy Books of Rutland, VT has announced the forthcoming publication in facsimile of the Methodist Conference minutes 1773-1794 with introduction and annotations by the Rev. Edwin Schell.

²⁰Richard Allen, *Life Experiences and Gospel Labors* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983). Reprint of the 1960 bicentennial edition. Henry Boehm, *Reminiscences* (Willow Street, PA: Boehm's Chapel Society, 1983), facsimile reprint of the 1875 edition with new index by Abram W. Sangrey. Several of Phoebe Palmer's now rare publications are available in reprint from Schmul Publishers, Salem, Ohio: *The Promise of the Father* (1859), *Entire Devotion to God* (1849) and *Full Salvation* (1855). Anna Howard Shaw, *The Story of a Pioneer* (New York: Kraus Reprint Co., 1972), reprint of the 1915 edition. L. C. Rudolph's 1966 biography of Francis Asbury was brought back into print in 1983 by Abingdon Press.

²¹*American Methodist Pioneer: The Life and Journals of the Rev. Freeborn Garrettson 1752-1827*, with introduction and commentary by Robert D. Simpson. (Madison, NJ: Drew University Library, 1983).

Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America, with introduction and commentary by James F. White, will appear in a special issue of the Church's clergy magazine, *Quarterly Review*, in 1984. Facsimile reprints of other founding documents—the Church's first book of discipline and its first hymnbook of 1784—may appear in time for the bicentennial.

Expanding the Horizons

Budding Methodist historians in the past decade have been busy expanding the horizon of Methodism's historical vision to include ethnic minorities and women. Although still in the "bits and pieces" stage, black history came first and is most advanced of all. A rich literature of monographic studies has begun to appear, but a full-scale history still awaits writing.²² Still there are gaps. No competent history of the Central Jurisdiction, Methodism's segregated administrative unit for blacks between 1939 and 1968, exists. Nor do we have adequate histories of the several historic black annual conferences from their founding shortly after the Civil War to their dissolution in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The Church's historic commitment to black education and the important work of the Freedmen's Aid Society await further study.

Frederick Norwood and Walter Vernon have produced several important articles on Methodism's ministry to the Native Americans, but we have only begun to uncover that part of the Church's heritage.²³ Hyung-chan Kim and Illsoo Kim include chapters on Methodism's ministry to the rapidly expanding Korean Americans in the post World War II period.²⁴ Lester E. Suzuki's study of Methodism's *Ministry in the Assembly and Relocation Centers of World War II* is a notable contribution to the Japanese story.²⁵ No notable recent book or article tackles Methodism's ministry to the Chinese or Filipino communities. Much work needs to be done before the definitive history of Asian-American Methodism can be fully told. Alfredo Nanez's 1981 *Historia de la Conferencia Rio Grande de la Iglesia Metodista Unida* marks a major contribution to Hispanic American Methodist studies,²⁶ but little else has appeared covering the story of Methodism's ministry to Hispanic Americans in the urban areas of the east and west coasts and midland cities.

²²See Carlsen, et. al., *op. cit.* See note 9.

²³See Lenhart, *op. cit.* See note 8.

²⁴Hyung-chan Kim, *The Korean Diaspora* (Santa Rosa, CA: Clio Publications, 1977), especially "History and Role of the Church in the Korean American Community," pp. 47-64; and Illsoo Kim, *New Urban Immigrants: The Korean Community in New York* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981).

²⁵Lester E. Suzuki, *Ministry in the Assembly and Relocation Centers of World War II* (Berkeley, CA: Yardbird Publishing Co., 1979).

²⁶Alfredo Nanez, *Historia de la Conferencia Rio Grande de la Iglesia Metodista Unida* (Dallas, TX: Bridwell Library, Southern Methodist University, 1981). Also available in English.

A promising new study of Methodism's ministry to Scandinavian Americans in the 19th century has been written by Henry C. Whyman and the late Wesley M. Westerberg. Titled *The Hedstroms and the Bethel Ship Saga*, it will be published in 1984 by the American Swedish Historical Society.

One of the most active and fruitful areas of research on the eve of the Church's bicentennial is Methodist women's history. Ably and well funded, the United Methodist Women's History Project, begun in 1978, blossomed three years later when a major scholar's conference was held in Cincinnati, the first such conference on church women's history by an American denomination. Forty of the best papers were chosen for publication in two hefty volumes entitled *Women in New Worlds*.²⁷ The conference and its published papers have given United Methodist women's history a hearty send-off. In the meantime Elaine Magalis' 1973 introductory survey, *Conduct Becoming to a Woman*,²⁸ is out of print and no replacement appears on the horizon. A growing number of dissertations are being written and essays and monographs are being published documenting aspects of women's history. In time they will become the basis for a full-scale history of Methodist women.

Rethinking Methodist History

Much promising but largely uncharted terrain is open to those who would take up the challenge of rethinking Methodist history. Major interpretations need to be reexamined and revised; schemes for inclusion of blacks, Asians, Hispanics, Native Americans, and non-United Methodist denominations, in addition to women, need to be designed and implemented. The story needs to be seen in the light of the larger Protestant and American experience as well. New approaches and methodologies need to be modeled and tested. Previously unexamined sources must be discovered and studied. Uncharted aspects of the tradition need to be described and interpreted.

Popular piety is one area worth exploring. The story of how Methodism's local churches were designed, built and paid for, and what went on inside them on countless Sundays has been largely untold. Ironically, the popularity of Methodism's piety was regularly tabulated and celebrated by its historians, but the shape and power of its piety has been undescribed and unassessed. A competent history of public worship and the sacraments in American Methodism has not been attempted. William Wade has taken a first step with his excellent Notre Dame disser-

²⁷*Women in New Worlds*, edited by Rosemary Skinner Keller, Louise L. Queen and Hilah F. Thomas (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981-1982). 2 vols.

²⁸Elaine Magalis, *Conduct Becoming to a Woman: Bolted Doors and Burgeoning Missions* (New York: Women's Division, Board of Global Ministries, The United Methodist Church, 1973).

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tation on public worship in the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South from 1784 to the joint hymnal of 1905, but it remains unpublished.²⁹ No adequate new studies of Baptism and the Lord's Supper have appeared. The hymnody of the several traditions of United Methodism has received little scholarly attention. Carlton R. Young charted the principal American Methodist hymnbooks in the 1970 "companion" to the 1964 hymnal, but no one has taken the time to examine them critically.³⁰ An extensive collection of them awaits eager students in the Church's national archives. J. Jefferson Cleveland provided a brief historical introduction to black hymnody in *Songs of Zion* (1981) which needs to be fleshed out.³¹ Happily a competent biography of one of Methodism's principal black hymn writers—Charles A. Tindley of Philadelphia—has been written.³² Methodism's distinctive traditions of class meetings and prayer meetings are unchronicled, although several fine, though unpublished, doctoral dissertations on the subjects have recently appeared.³³ No adequate history of the Church's educational enterprise from the Sunday school through the colleges and universities is available. When will someone tackle the Methodist Youth Fellowship and its Epworth League antecedent or the Men's Brotherhood?

One potentially rich source for recovering Methodism's popular piety is historical fiction, particularly novels. Numerous popular religious novels have been written by and about the Methodists through the years.³⁴ Although a few have become recognized classics of American literature, in the hands of sensitive historians they can become revealing documents. Anchored in patterns of church life which the authors knew first hand, novels could be more frank and open, more believable, even critical of what life as a card-carrying Methodist was really like in bygone eras.³⁵

²⁹William N. Wade, *A History of Public Worship in the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South from 1784 to 1905* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1981). Microfilm and xerographic copies available from University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, MI.

³⁰Carlton R. Young, "American Methodist Hymnbooks," in *Companion to the Hymnal* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1970), pp. 54-61.

³¹J. Jefferson Cleveland, "Historical Accounts of Hymns, Spirituals and Black Gospel Songs," in *Songs of Zion* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981).

³²Ralph H. Jones, *Charles Albert Tindley, Prince of Preachers* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983).

³³David F. Holsclaw, "The Demise of Disciplined Christian Fellowship: The Methodist Class Meeting in 19th Century America," unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California, Davis, 1979; David L. Watson, "The Origins and Significance of the Early Methodist Class Meeting," unpublished doctoral dissertation, Duke University, 1978.

³⁴For example, Edward Eggleston's 1874 novel, *The Circuit Rider*; Harold Frederick's 1896, *The Damnation of Theron Ware*; and the series of novels by Corra Harris on *The Circuit Rider's Wife*, *The Circuit Rider's Widow*, and *The Circuit Rider's Son*, published 1910-1921.

³⁵Kenneth E. Rowe's "Images of Methodism in American Literature," unpublished Ryan Lectures at Asbury Theological Seminary in the fall of 1982, took some first steps in this direction.

The Church's constitutional history, along with the story of its developing and shifting authority centers and governance patterns, is another field ripe for study. Studies of dissent and reform would be a timely topic in these days of the flowering of caucus Methodism. The Church's wavering commitment to the ecumenical movement from the family-style ecumenism of the late Victorian era through its participation in the conciliar movement of the early twentieth century down to its mid-century participation in the Consultation on Church Union and the conversations with Catholics and Lutherans and dialogues with Jews and other world religions ought to be studied soon. The twenty-year-old studies by Cameron and Muelder of *Methodism and Society* and Dudley Ward's 1965 study of *The Social Creed* are now long out of print and need fresh updating.³⁶ Detailed studies of both Methodist and E.U.B. response to such social issues as slavery and racism, war and peace, politics and government, the search for economic justice and the concern for alcohol and drug abuse through the years would make a major contribution to the writing of a full-scale history of United Methodism's social thought and action.

Wade Barclay's landmark history of Methodist missions, begun in 1949 and continued by J. Tremayne Copplestone in 1973, covers only the Methodist Episcopal story through 1939.³⁷ Volumes covering the missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, the Methodist Protestant Church and the Evangelical and United Brethren Churches are in preparation. Other more focused studies of United Methodism's missionary enterprise at home and abroad are also needed to complete the story.

With regard to the church's theological history, Thomas Langford's 1983 *Practical Divinity: Theology in the Wesleyan Tradition* provides the first attempt at a comprehensive history.³⁸ An older classic in the field, Robert E. Chiles' 1965 *Theological Transition in American Methodism 1790-1935*, is now happily reprinted.³⁹ Gerald O. McCulloh's *Ministerial Education in the American Methodist Movement* (1980) provides a good introduction to the topic but breaks no new ground.⁴⁰ Of the church's

³⁶Richard M. Cameron, *Methodism and Society in Historical Perspective* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1961); Walter G. Muelder, *Methodism and Society in the Twentieth Century* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1961); A. Dudley Ward, *The Social Creed of the Methodist Church* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1961; revised edition, 1965).

³⁷Wade C. Barclay, *History of Methodist Missions* (New York: Board of Missions, The Methodist Church, 1949-1973). Volume 4 by J. Tremayne Copplestone.

³⁸Thomas A. Langford, *Practical Divinity: Theology in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983).

³⁹Robert E. Chiles, *Theological Transition in American Methodism: 1790-1935* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983). Reprint of the 1965 edition.

⁴⁰Gerald O. McCulloh, *Ministerial Education in the American Methodist Movement* (Nashville: Board of Higher Education and Ministry, The United Methodist Church, 1980).

seminaries only Boston and Garrett have high quality published histories.⁴¹ Douglas Chandler and Clarence Goen have written a new history of Wesley Theological Seminary but it is as yet unpublished.

Historical studies of the ordained ministry have advanced little from Gerald McCulloh's 1960 collection of essays on *The Ministry in the Methodist Heritage*.⁴² Nothing comparable to John Bowmer's impressive study of the ordained ministry in British Methodism has appeared for the American scene.⁴³ Episcopacy studies have advanced little beyond Gerald Moede's *The Office of Bishop in Methodism* (1964)⁴⁴ and the unpublished dissertations by Barton and Spelman,⁴⁵ apart from Joseph Mitchell's recent study of episcopal elections.⁴⁶ Bishop Roy Short's recent *History of the Council of Bishops 1939-1979* is regrettably little more than an insider's summary of the agenda of council meetings and brief biographies of each new bishop.⁴⁷ The status and role of the beloved "D.S." is even less well known and studied.

For those latter-day Methodists oriented to the visual and pictorial, the field of Methodist historical studies has little to offer. Most films or filmstrips on the history of Methodism in America are dismal. One major breakthrough into the world of high quality audio-visual presentations of the tradition is a recent video-tape on the role of the deaconess. "The Deaconess Story," prepared by Mary Agnes Dougherty and based on her splendid 1978 University of California at Davis doctoral dissertation on the American deaconess movement, is I hope the first of a new genre.⁴⁸ Drew University is planning to publish in 1984 a high-quality illustrated history, *Two Hundred Years of United Methodism*, using the superb graphics collection of the General Commission on Archives and History and the Drew University Library. The volume should be a welcome

⁴¹Richard M. Cameron, *Boston University School of Theology 1839-1968* (Boston: Boston University School of Theology, 1968); Frederick A. Norwood, *From Dawn to Midday at Garrett* (Evanston, IL: Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, 1978).

⁴²Gerald O. McCulloh, ed., *The Ministry in the Methodist Heritage* (Nashville: Department of Ministerial Education, The Board of Education, The Methodist Church, 1960).

⁴³John C. Bowmer, *Pastor and People: A Study of Church and Ministry in Wesleyan Methodism* (London: Epworth Press, 1975).

⁴⁴Gerald F. Moede, *The Office of Bishop in Methodism: Its History and Development* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1964).

⁴⁵Joseph Mitchell, *There Is an Election! Episcopal Elections in the Southeastern Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church* (Troy, AL: Leader Press, 1980).

⁴⁶Jesse Hamby Barton, *The Definition of the Episcopal Office in American Methodism* (Madison, NJ: Drew University, 1960) and Norman W. Spellman, *The General Superintendency in American Methodism 1784-1870* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1961).

⁴⁷Roy H. Short, *History of the Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church 1939-1979* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980).

⁴⁸Mary Agnes Dougherty, "The Deaconess Story" in *Churchwomen of the Past*, a documentary series. Address inquiries to History Media, 909 Carmel Avenue, Albany, CA 94706.

replacement for Elmer T. Clark's aging *Album of Methodist History*. Drew University also published in 1982 an imaginative "Archives Kit" featuring more than two dozen representative documents or artifacts reproduced on card stock for display or "show and tell."⁴⁹

To compare notes and map strategy for the "new" Methodist history, several hundred scholars and teachers, pastors and layfolk, gathered at Drew University in the Spring of 1983. Jointly sponsored by the University's Theological and Graduate Schools, the Division of Ordained Ministry of the Board of Higher Education and Ministry and the General Commission on Archives and History of The United Methodist Church, the consultation sought fresh appraisals by scholars actively engaged in examining the Methodist past. Fifty persons were selected to present papers which explored new themes or reappraised older ones, experimented with new methods borrowed from other disciplines, and explored unused or under-utilized research collections. Two dozen of the best papers have been chosen for publication in a volume tentatively titled *Rethinking Methodist History*. When published it will exhibit the growing edge of American Methodist historical studies.

On the eve of the bicentennial United Methodists find themselves struggling to understand what it means to be a pluralistic as well as a united church. Ecumenical yearnings toward unity are matched by internal yearnings toward schism. A truly competent and inclusive history could make a very real contribution to the Church's self-understanding. A full record must be carefully kept and updated, landmarks need to be sought out and celebrated, and a new generation deserves to be liberated from the misconceptions of the past, if the Church is to move with understanding and freedom into the future. That means a candid acknowledgement of the coming of age of Methodism's several caucuses—Asians, blacks, Hispanics and Native Americans, and not least women—the only minority group which has always been a majority. Above all this means a more lay-oriented, locally-rooted approach to all our history writing. The time has come to redress the balance and rediscover and celebrate the rich diversity of the Methodist family—then and now.

⁴⁹Drew University Archives Campaign, *Archives Kit*. Available from Dean Stanley J. Menking, Drew University, Madison, NJ 07940.