I have, of course, heard of this action by a church. In fact the famous preacher, Henry Ward Beecher, would offer a slave girl for sale from his pulpit. The idea, of course, was to secure her freedom in this way, since the buyer was expected immediately to release her.

But the subject for research centers in the fact that the Drexel Hill Church apparently transacted this business in 1880 long after slavery had been abolished in our country.

Possible solutions, of course, include the idea that the church was really providing the education for the former slave girl and thus “purchasing” or insuring her future well being. But is this what the action means and were there any similar actions in other congregations? Here is an item for the research efforts of some young student in history that might be worth pursuing. Certainly, the Methodist churches, in particular, have an excellent track record in providing education for the freed blacks after the War Between the States. Maybe this is one piece of that long record.

BOOK REVIEWS


Good conference histories appear every now and then; excellent ones are rare. But an excellent one has shown up—by an Episcopalian. No matter, he was raised and educated a Methodist, and few Methodists could equal his account of the Mississippi Methodists over the last nearly two hundred years.

Ray Holder, native Mississippian, was baptized a Methodist, attended Millsaps College, Duke University, and other universities before entering the Episcopal priesthood. He has served as rector in several parts of the nation, and as a dean of a theological seminary. In 1977 he was the author of a biography of William Winans, outstanding leader in early Methodism in Mississippi and Louisiana.

Holder’s volume is an effort—and a successful one—to examine “the ‘racist’ image which my Methodist friends have painfully borne since abolitionists unleashed their juggernaut upon slaveholders early in the 1830s.” Threading its way throughout the book, this theme is examined in all its aspects, and yet the whole story of Mississippi Methodism is covered. This includes (1) ministry to the Choctaw and other Indians; (2) serving as the hub of Methodist expansion in Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, and Texas; (3) the sending forth of J. W. Lambuth to China, followed by his
son, Walter Russell, who ministered to many peoples of the earth, and (4) especially the crucial racial issues in more modern times.

The later phase of the story presents the extraordinarily difficult task faced by Mississippi Methodists—caught in the conflict between a social system that could not be changed overnight and the demands of the Gospel, fashioning strategies that seemed slow to those who demanded instant success for the Kingdom of God, and finally the acceptance by Methodists in Mississippi of positions some vowed would never prevail.

Though a brief book (162 pages) as conference histories go, it is remarkably detailed. It outlines the persons responsible for patiently guiding the sentiments—and the machinery—of the church toward the goals of inclusiveness. This included accepting black students into Millsaps College and approving the elimination of the Central Jurisdiction. Not all events were interpreted as sweetness and light. At a certain juncture the author states: “Much had been accomplished, much was to be lamented, much was yet to be undertaken...”

Great credit for the final steps of integration are given to Bishop Edward J. Pendergrass, who “was convinced that church doors would be opened by practical men, not idealists.” The volume closes by affirming that “in moments when the destiny of this sovereign state of the Republic had hung in the balance, Wesleyan men and women of stature refused to bend the knee to demagoguery.”

—Walter N. Vernon
Nashville, Tennessee

Paul K. Conkin, *Gone With the Ivy, A Biography of Vanderbilt University* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985) $49.95.

This mammoth (810 pages) story of Vanderbilt University “sees all and tells all” about the history of this institution that southern Methodists began as their only university in 1875. Along with the achievements and successes of this university in the past century, its failures and limitations are probed. Reviewer John Egerton—a noted journalist in his own right—has commented that the book is for many “an absorbing, stimulating, penetrating, and provocative volume... for others its unflinching honesty will be painfully excessive.”

Vanderbilt University, of course, does not now maintain any legal connection with The United Methodist Church except a nostalgic one because of its origin and early years. However, Methodist memories are still here, especially in the Divinity School where Methodist professors have long been—and still are—prominent.

Dr. Conkin has a full and adequate summary of what Methodists were like at the time of Vanderbilt’s founding. But he seems unnecessarily hard on southern Methodists for not pouring enough money into Vanderbilt to make it the equal—or at least as promising—as Princeton and Yale.
Those colleges/universities had started by the early or mid-1700s. They seem to have had as many early struggles as did Vanderbilt in its early years, and Vanderbilt was launched in the post-Civil War years when the South was prostrate economically. Conkin himself spells out this fact but continues to compare Vanderbilt's financial situation with that of such schools as Johns Hopkins—which began about the same time as Vanderbilt but with a gift of $3,500,000.

Conkin accurately points out that early "Methodists, unlike Presbyterians, simply did not have a bookish church that gave strong support to the life of the mind. Increasing numbers of Methodists like McTyeire recognized this as a handicap and set about trying to correct it. But cultural change is slow."

The volume gives a detailed account of almost every decisive problem that has confronted the leaders of the university—including the handling of explosive issues such as the activities of homosexual students and of the James Lawson "explosive episode," both in 1961 and in 1970 when he returned for graduate study. Conkin does not hesitate to evaluate how the issues were handled.

This volume withal is a stimulating and thoughtful account of a university of which Dr. Conkin says, "I doubt that students, anywhere in America, get a significantly better education than do present undergraduates in the College or professional students in Medicine and Divinity."

As to its Methodist origins, historian Conkin writes, "Vanderbilt's Methodist origin still shapes it much more than anyone might suspect by present appearances. Methodism, in the South, set the standard for a type of evangelical Christianity—doctrinally loose, emotionally warm, morally rigorous, and intellectually soft. . . . The early Methodist imprint, and the continued and vital role of a Divinity School has helped make religion an important academic concern at Vanderbilt."

The volume is an amazingly complete account, and omits hardly any aspect of the university's history. Few universities have had as penetrating a study as this one. The author states, in closing, that a great university needs to acquire self understanding—and that to help in this search for identity is what he has attempted.

—Walter N. Vernon
Nashville, Tennessee


Professor Frederick A. Norwood, dean of denominational historians in the United Methodist Church, has provided his colleagues with the standard set of books for seminary use for the remainder of this century. In

To say that these welcomed contributions will be standard for the last quarter of the century is not to say that they are definitive. United Methodist historians are learning so many new stories that a definitive textbook and supporting sourcebook are not possible today. Even so, this reviewer has some questions about this collection.

The opening section, “The Wesleyan Source,” seems quite weak. In a book where space is at a premium Woodrow Wilson's address on John Wesley does not deserve twelve pages. Then, the snippet about Sophia Hopkey is trivial. The Wesleyan source would be much better illustrated by Susanna Wesley's account of her child rearing regimen; Wesley's *Journal* entry about Aldersgate; the General Rules; the Model Deed, and the Deed of Declaration (Deed Poll).

Similar criticism applies throughout the book. There is hardly anything from Francis Asbury! The selections on Wesley's ordinations for America omit his diary entry that he "ordained" Thomas Coke to the superintendency. Where is the 1876 Cape May agreement which formally ended hostilities between the northern and southern episcopal Methodisms? Where is the Social Creed of 1908?

*Sourcebook* exhibits an awareness of the ongoing recovery of the histories of women and of ethnic and racial minorities in the UMC. By having special sections devoted to these groups ("Women Find a Voice," "Minority Aspects") it also demonstrates that these histories have not yet been integrated into the mainstream of the denomination's collective consciousness of its past.

Discussion about the place of Methodism in American society would be stimulated in UM history classes if *Sourcebook* had included Winthrop Hudson's article on the historiographical concept of a "Methodist century" in American church history [*Methodist History*, 12:3 (April, 1974), pp. 3-15].

Finally, Abingdon is not to be congratulated on the production aspects of this book. The single spacing and reduced print make the pages uninviting and set up visual barriers for many people. The book looks like so much overflow from an alphabet vat; altogether a physically ugly production.

In sum, the teacher of United Methodist history is unlikely to see this as the definitive book of source readings. It will have to be supplemented at many places. Nevertheless, it is a very helpful addition to the teaching tools in United Methodist studies. Frederick Norwood's *Sourcebook* brings United Methodists closer to the fountains and the flow of their current in the larger tradition of the church catholic.

—Charles W. Brockwell, Jr.
University of Louisville

This brief book is a series of essays written in celebration of American Methodism's Bicentennial. Each essay attempts to delineate some aspect of the history of the Wyoming Conference. The reader is reminded that the Wyoming Conference has nothing to do with the state of Wyoming, but the Wyoming Valley of northeastern Pennsylvania and south central New York, following the upper reaches of the Susquehanna River. The book's most attractive cover is a color painting of the Wyoming Valley by Jasper Francis Cropsey, 1864, the original of which is in The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.

As would be expected in any collection of essays, some are better than others. I wondered why an essay needed to be devoted to Joseph Smith, the Mormon founder, even though he did come from Susquehanna country. The essay on "The Authority of the Conference," is more general than specific in relation to Wyoming Methodism.

The book's strengths lie in the exploration of the revival beginnings of Wyoming Valley Methodism, the essay on George Peck by Edgar F. Singer, and Glenda Taylor's essay on "Preacher's Wife." There is another section dealing with the women's organizations in the Conference and a concluding chapter on "Swords and Plowshares: Wyoming Responds to War."

On reading these essays, one gets the idea that George Peck was one of the leading figures of Wyoming Conference history. He was a pastor, presiding elder, educator, editor of *Methodist Quarterly Review* and *Christian Advocate*, and oft-times delegate to General Conference.

Persons interested in United Methodist history will find this interesting reading. It is not meant to be a Conference history. Yet its nine essays give a flavor of Methodism in an interesting region of our Country.

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Robert B. Steelman
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Mr. Banks' volume on Ann (Nancy) Bolton is a welcome addition to the growing number of studies which seek to illuminate the role of women in early Methodism. Dr. Maldwyn Edwards' *My Dear Sister* (Penwork (Leeds), 1980) and E. K. Brown's *Women of Mr. Wesley's Methodism* (Mellen, 1983) are other such works. Miss Bolton was a close friend and co-worker of Mr. Wesley who lived most of her life in the village of Witney. The present volume is not a full biography, because we do not have the data to prepare such a volume. We know almost nothing
about her life before age 19 and scarcely more about the last 22 years of her life, after the death of her husband. The work is arranged topically rather than chronologically. Thus chapters address her relation to Mr. Wesley, her place in her time, her problems of ill health, her long courtship by Mr. Arundel and her wooing by and wedded life with Mr. Conibeere, among other topics. One chapter seeks to discover what her life on a rural farm may have been like by examining the journals of a niece who lived on the same farm some decades after Nancy left it.

The sources used are primarily her manuscript journals and letters and the writings of Mr. Wesley and other friends. John Wesley himself addressed no less than 117 letters to her in 24 years. Many of the Bolton letters and the journals are available in print for the first time in this volume. This is the major value of the publication. One also appreciates the ten pages of pictures of her homes, of certain of the documents and of other items. One regrets the lack of an index of names and the total absence of full footnotes to or bibliography of secondary works consulted.

The most interesting sections deal with her relationship to Mr. Wesley. Certainly they were very close friends. He visited frequently in the homes she kept for her father near Witney. He saw her as the chief support and leader of the Witney society. She was some 40 years his junior, but he wrote to her in terms of very considerable affection. He called her “the perfect pattern of womanhood” (p. 52) and “the sister of my choice.” (p. 7) We may agree with Mr. Banks’ judgement that the relationship was “completely unsexual” (p. 47)—or at least as non-sexual as a relation between a man and woman who are truly fond of each other can be. Still, one has to argue that he has not proved his flat assertion that she was “his [Wesley’s] closest woman friend.” (p. 51). It seems to me to be very difficult indeed to distinguish either in quality (i.e. genuineness of affection) or in quantity (i.e. depth) between his love for Miss Bolton and his deep affection for several other women—Mary Bosanquet Fletcher, Elizabeth Ritchie Mortimer, Sarah Crosby and Hester Ann Rogers among them.

The comment just noted is an example of several places where Mr. Banks leaps to judgments that are speculative at best. (1) He flatly tells us that “she was suffering from an exogenous agitated depression” (p. 61) due largely to frustration consequent upon Wesley’s urgencies that she not marry the man who was courting her most earnestly. This is possible, of course, but it certainly is not proved by the data presented. (2) We read, “There is little record of the reasons for her spiritual struggle; she must have been one of those who was given to doubt and ‘reasoning’.” (p. 51, Italics mine) Indeed, she may have been so. But surely “must” is too strong a judgment in a matter on which we have just been told there is “little record.”
Methodist History

(3) The following also may be true but is not proved. “It must be admitted that among all Wesley's women correspondents and friends, Ann was probably the most obedient.” (p. 53) No detailed comparison is made to Elizabeth Ritchie or Mary Bosanquet—who like Ann delayed their wedding plans due to Wesley's advice—or several others. All of Mr. Wesley's close woman friends took his advice seriously. They did not remain his friends long if they did not. One feels that Mr. Banks' enthusiasm for Nancy may well have run away with him in this judgment.

(4) Mr. Banks notes that Miss Bolton finally married some 10 months after Wesley's death and suggests that the move resulted mainly from the fact he was no longer around to advise caution. (p. 66 and p. 82) But we also note that the date of her marriage is four months after the death of the father for whom she had kept house for three decades and whom she had nursed for several years. The latter's demise may well have done more to free her up for marriage than Mr. Wesley's passing. It is also worth nothing that Mr. Conibeere did not begin to court her until after Wesley's death. His own first wife preceeded the Methodist patriarch in death by only three months.

Despite such questionable judgments, we welcome this volume. It tells us much not before known about an outstanding woman leader in Mr. Wesley's Methodism. The long passages quoted from her journal and from the letters exchanged between her and Mr. Wesley provide insight into her character, the character of early Methodism and Wesley's attitude toward women leaders. She was one of several remarkable women in early Methodism. This book prompts us to hope for further volumes of the kind on Mary Bosanquet, Lady Huntingdon, Elizabeth Ritchie et al.

—Earl Kent Brown
Boston University
School of Theology


The class meeting played so crucial a role in early Methodism that it is surprising how little scholarly attention has been given to it. Dr. Watson's study is both theological and historical—and also, at appropriate points, sociological. His interest is practical as well as academic, arising out of his work in developing Covenant Discipleship Groups in the church of today.

The study itself is relatively short, but is supported by detailed documentation and supplemented by a useful series of appendices setting out some of the relevant sources. The early chapters deal with the background to the class meeting in John Wesley's Anglican and Puritan heritage, and the 'theology of discipleship' which he developed as his
evangelical ministry took shape. Here, and in the account of how the class meeting became a key factor in early Methodist polity, we are on familiar ground, though the author brings new insights to bear on Wesley's motives and purposes. As ecclesiola in ecclesia the Methodist societies presupposed the life and worship of the national church and were designed to supplement it. Methodism's development into a new denomination radically affected the role of the class meeting and subjected it to new strains.

The class meeting was vital to the healthy growth of Methodism as a means of spiritual nurture for converts, or, in Watson's phrase, as, a means of 'implementing accountable discipleship' through 'a process of mutual response and support.' Regular attendance was a condition of society membership for many years. Dr. Watson is well aware that no mere revival of it in its original form can serve the present age, but he is concerned to apply its essential rationale to the needs of our time.

A number of questions remain unanswered—and almost unasked—by this study. How were the early class leaders chosen and trained? From what social and cultural background were they drawn? How closely to Wesley's ideal did the early classes approximate? Did they serve as a focus for tension within the societies, and where did the majority of class leaders stand in the controversies which beset Methodism in the years after Wesley's death? In particular, the decline and virtual demise of the class meeting in the 19th century calls for more detailed attention than is given to it here. I suspect that there were a number of differences between English and American Methodism in this respect, but this dimension is not explored in Dr. Watson's book. Since history is made by people quite as much as by institutions, the role of the class leader was clearly crucial. No doubt the difficulties of the role and the shortage of suitable leaders contributed to the decline more than the present study seems to indicate.

John A. Vickers
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This series has already proven to be an outstanding aid for research and scholarship. It will be used for decades to come. Each new volume brings closer to completion the set which is expected to contain twenty volumes. It is indispensable for persons who are studying the Methodist tradition. Dr. Rowe has established himself as one of the preeminent bibliographers of Wesley and Methodist studies.

Charles Yrigoyen, Jr.