BOOK REVIEWS


Members of the various women's home and foreign missionary societies of United Methodism's predecessors between 1869 and 1920 were, for the most part, middle-class women who were not employed outside the home. Their involvement in church work was a major outlet for their talents and energies. By the 1920s, however, a growing number of middle-class women were joining the labor force. How did women's societies adapt to their schedules, their needs, and their interests? This is the question Ann Fagan addresses in *This is our song*.

Within most of United Methodism's predecessors, employed women attended evening circles of the women's missionary societies. Some, particularly the Christian Service Guild of the Evangelical United Brethren Church, viewed employed women as a distinct constituency. However, it was the Wesleyan Service Guild of the Methodist Episcopal Church that was "the best organized and most self-conscious group of employed women within the predecessor denominations," and *This is our song* is largely the story of the Guild.

In the two important chapters that begin the book, Fagan places the Guild's founding in the context of the history of women's volunteer organizations and the growth of women's paid employment outside the home. Later chapters discuss the sometimes rocky relationship between the Guild and older women's organizations, the Guild's importance as a support system for single employed women, and efforts to adapt the Guild's programs to rapidly changing times. The book has extensive footnotes and a good bibliography that includes general women's history titles as well as United Methodist-related sources.

The Wesleyan Service Guild merged with other women's organizations to become United Methodist Women in 1971. The end of the guild's separate identity meant that its story became submerged beneath those of larger women's groups. Through her careful scholarship, especially the diligent use of primary sources, Ann Fagan has recovered an important piece of the puzzle that is the history of women in United Methodism.

SUSAN M. ELTSCHER

Madison, NJ

This book plows new ground; and its furrows are deep, so that the seeds sown therein produce a plentiful and rewarding harvest. Indeed, it is the first book in this generation—that is, in this half century—to explicate the nature and contents of American Methodism's doctrinal standards, and with a thoroughness that not only covers all the historical facts appertaining to the subject but also lays bare their implications.

This book is not a text of systematic theology. Instead, it is an essay in Methodist historical theology. Yet its subject is so relevant to the contemporary theological impasse in Methodism and its findings so poignant, remedial, and renovative that it might well become such a text and would be a healthful substitute for much of what is labeled Methodist theology but is a far cry from the doctrines John Wesley believed and taught.

In fact, the purpose of the book is to show the continuity between Wesley's teachings and the theology and ecclesiology of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America at its origin in 1784 and in its development through the Asburian era and, for that matter, during the better part of the nineteenth century. Its contention is that the First Restrictive Rule, drawn up by Joshua Soule, and adopted by the Conference of 1808, which consisted, at least by right of law, of all the clergy of the denomination able to attend, provides the church with unalterable Wesleyan doctrinal standards which should be known, believed in, and practically applied by United Methodists today, so that the theological link between Wesley and us should not be broken.

The author makes a distinction between theology, which he defines as “a reasonable account of God,” and divinity, which he explains as “an account of God as he is known by way of his self-manifestation in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior through the illuminating and converting work of the Holy Spirit.” The latter, which is Wesley's practical divinity, or experimental (we would say experiential or empirical) religion, attaches discipline (life, character, and practice) inexorably to doctrine, so that what the Holy Spirit enables us to believe with our minds and to feel in our hearts, he empowers us to become as new persons in Christ.

Except for the sources selected, the book contributes nothing new or original in its explication of Wesley’s conception of salvation. Prevenient grace should come after original sin and before conversion or as a concomitant of original sin, not where the author places it as the ninth element in the Wesleyan scheme after penitence, self-surrender, forgiveness, and assurance, which could not take place without prevenient grace.

The contribution of the book lies in its application of Wesley’s “Little Body of Experimental and Practical Divinity” to the development of American Methodism, giving it its character and self-identity. Without it Methodism would have no identity at all. The use of Wesley's hymn-
book, Conference Minutes, Journal, and Sunday Service in comparison with his use of Cranmer's Homilies in illuminating his "Practical Divinity" is a major contribution this book makes to Wesleyan theology. The book gives the *coup de grace* to the contention that American Methodism's doctrinal standards are only the Articles of Religion and the General Rules.

The book displays massive learning on the part of its author. The footnotes alone are a gold mine of information and insight and should be read along with the text. This book is crucial to the proper understanding of our church and is therefore a tract for the time as well as a superlative contribution to Wesleyan theology.

**William R. Cannon**

*Atlanta, GA*


This is a handsome volume which fills a gap in Wesley studies, but it is flawed by technical and textual inaccuracies, misinformation, and its documentation is not always thorough. It is not a critical edition of the texts it includes.

The volume is an annotated anthology of selections from Charles Wesley's writings woven into "a sort of autobiographical tapestry" (p. iii). Five main emphases form the structure of the editor's "Introduction" (pp. 3-57) and influence the selection of material: Charles Wesley—the man, his prose writings (journal, letters, and sermons), the hymns, sources of Wesley's poetic diction, and his theology. The literary selections of the *Reader* are seen as "windows" to Wesley's life and thought and are structured largely in chronological fashion throughout his life beginning with "Georgia and the Making of a Minister" (1735) and ending with "The Final Days" (1788).

Walter Hooper wisely cautions in his "Preface" to *C. S. Lewis Poems*: "It is best to fight shy of what Lewis himself called the 'Personal Heresy': reading a man's works as autobiography."¹ Nevertheless, it is very useful to see Wesley's writings in their life context as far as that is possible within the confines of this volume.

**Value of the Reader**

While one may occasionally question the editor's arrangement of the material, on the whole it offers a perceptive overview of Charles Wesley's

life, work, literature, and many aspects of his thought. In the section "Charles Wesley’s Theology" (pp. 35-48) the editor discusses specific theological themes, such as “Universal Redemption,” “Christian Perfection,” “The Holy Spirit.” The section has value for an overview of Wesley's theological frame of reference, but should not suggest to the reader that his theology is to be grasped primarily through a compendium of the theological ideas summarized here. Some subsequent chapters of the Reader treat related themes, such as “The Stillness Controversy,” “The Predestination Controversy,” which provide valuable insight into Wesley’s response to issues of his time. One finds excellent selections from the eucharistic hymns of Wesley, though they are relegated only to the discussion on “The Stillness Controversy” (see pp. 276-284). While it may be important to read them against that backdrop, their unique, lasting, and contemporary ecumenical importance merit a more substantial treatment. They give balance to the “Methodist captivity” of Wesley and are primary to an understanding of the nascence of Methodism as an evangelical and a sacramental movement within the Church of England of the eighteenth century.

The interspersing of letter and journal excerpts in the first half of the volume is very useful in introducing the man and his thought. Tyson weaves this thread well. Since Charles Wesley is usually thought of as “the hymnwriter,” it is most advantageous to read some of his sermons in this context, especially “Awake, Thou that Sleepest” and one based on John 8. Some of the previously unpublished letters of Charles Wesley included in the Reader shed light on his relationships to his brother John (and his published correspondence with Charles), the Church of England, his wife and children, and the Methodist societies. The editor's introductory comments preceding many selected readings assist the reader in grasping the interrelationships of the readings themselves, as well as their relationships to history, church and society, and the family and thought of the Wesleys.

Problems of the Reader

Missing from this Charles Wesley Reader are any examples of his secular verse. In a lengthy, non-hymnic poem such as “The American War” one finds valuable insights into socio-political perceptions which shaped his world-view and theology. In the “nursery” poems for his children one senses the warm humanness which pervaded Wesley’s concept of social holiness. In his secular verse one sees Wesley writing as the secular poets of his time.

The four main problem areas of the volume have to do with (a) unpublished materials, (b) substantially authentic texts, (c) documentation, and (d) misinformation.
(a) Unpublished materials. Tyson explains in the “Preface” that “Much of the material [in the volume] is unknown or previously published” (p. v). Indeed a significant contribution of the Reader is that it puts into print for the first time some hitherto unpublished material. Unfortunately he does not carefully explain his method of documentation, citations are often confusing, and the reader too frequently is left to wonder what material was previously unpublished. The editor carefully notes which letters he has published for the first time, but such care is not taken with the unpublished poetry. For example, some sources are cited as “Ms.” (manuscript), but the editor does not indicate whether poems so designated are unpublished or whether he is publishing Wesley’s manuscript version of a published poem. In the section from pages 445 to 476 there are seventy-three poems on scriptural passages. Thirty are designed as from “Ms.” sources. Twenty of them appeared in full and one in part in George Osborn’s The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley, 13 vols. (London: 1868-1872, henceforth cited as Poet. Works). Ten of the “Ms” poems printed on pages 445-476 are indeed published in this volume for the first time without such designation: Nos. 269, 270, 273 (verse 1 appeared in Poet. Works, verse 2 is published here for the first time), 274, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 288.

For the published poems in this section (pp. 445-476) Tyson has used primarily Poet. Works which he lists with the volume and page number in parenthesis after the scriptural reference and verse preceding each poem. Generally, he does not document the primary source from which many of these poems come, namely, Charles Wesley’s Short Hymns on Select Passages of the Holy Scriptures, 2 vols. (Bristol: Farley, 1762, henceforth cited as Short Hymns).

(b) Substantially authentic texts. Although the editor claims, “I have endeavored to preserve Charles Wesley’s own spelling, punctuation, and form when materials are printed from his manuscripts” (pp. v-vi), he has often not succeeded. There is also much divergence of spelling, capitalization, italicizing, and punctuation from Wesley’s original, printed sources. There are poems printed in the volume with incorrect rhyme, lines which scan improperly, incorrect wording, incorrect spellings, and internal omissions. There follow examples of these discrepancies:

1. incorrect rhyme, No. 191, verse 6, the concluding, rhyming words of lines six and eight are “groans” and “own” respectively. “Groans” = “groan.”

2. improper line scan, No. 184, verse 5, line four:

   And ask for it I gain it, in Jesus his mind.

   The third and fourth words should be the one syllable word “till,” hence a line with one less foot in accordance with 10.10.11.11 metre.
3. **incorrect spelling**, No. 184, verse 4, line four:
   
   A deeper foundation a soldier love.
   
   The fifth word “soldier” = “solider.” The line as printed also scans improperly.

4. **Internal omissions**, No. 180, verse 3, line five is omitted completely:
   
   The work of grace so well begun.

5. **incorrect wording**, No. 180, verse 3, line seven (actually line eight, but line five has been omitted):
   
   And Satan lays the lunacy and waste.

   The words “lunacy and” = “vineyard.”

These are not isolated instances. No. 180 includes over a dozen errors within a five-verse poem.

(c) **Documentation.** Though some problems of documentation have already been noted, there are others. The arrangement of citations is occasionally confusing. Entries No. 223 and No. 226 have “Ms. Acts” and “Ms. Matthew” respectively as part of the poem titles above the scriptural reference and verse. Subsequent scripture hymns, however, list the “Ms.” designations in parenthesis below the scriptural reference and verse. Other documentation is inaccurate: Two poems numbered 83 (pp. 267-269) and 85 (pp. 272-273) are cited as published in *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, 1739 and 1740, when in fact they appeared only in the latter.

   Many of the footnotes in the *Reader* are at such a high level of scholarship, one wishes it could have been maintained throughout.

(d) **Misinformation.** On p. 26 the editor claims that *Short Hymns* (1762) “included more than 5,100 hymns.” In fact, the two volumes contained only 2,349 poetical entries (two poems were given the same number). Osborn included these poems under Wesley’s title for *Short Hymns in Poet. Works* but amplified the number to 5,100 (1,609 Old Testament entries, 3,491 New Testament entries) primarily from manuscript sources. The editor apparently failed to check the original published and unpublished Charles Wesley sources against Osborn’s *Poet. Works*.

   On p. 27 the editor states: “There are over 1,200 ‘Short Hymns on Select Passages of Scripture’ that exist only in manuscript form, written or edited in Charles Wesley’s own hand.” This reviewer assumes that “only in manuscript form” means “unpublished.” There are unquestionably over 1,200 hymns and poems which had remained unpublished until 1988, but only about 850 are based on passages of scripture.

   Some printing errors are very obvious, such as the skip in numbering of footnotes in chapter 7 from 11 to 16 and occasional misalignment of poetical lines.
The volume is apparently not intended as a critical edition of the included material, but for a general reading audience. Nevertheless, the reader has a right to assume that the texts reflect with substantial accuracy Wesley's own composition. There are many instances in the Reader where they do not. For this reason it is hoped that the publisher will consider a revised edition which will give the careful attention to detail which this material requires.

One must laud the editor for assembling a volume with a wide range of material which provides a broad view of Charles Wesley based on his writings, many of which are not available in any other extant publication. As valuable as the Reader is for this contribution, it must be used with caution by the careful student and scholar.

S T Kimbrough, Jr.
Princeton, NJ


Nathanael Burwash, educator and theologian, was a major figure in Canadian Methodism. His father's family were loyalists from Vermont, who settled in Quebec before moving to a small community in central Ontario. Pious and thoughtful, Nathanael studied at Garrett and Northwestern, and later at Yale. Seven years after ordination in 1864, he became the first professor of theology at Victoria University, later serving that institution as president and chancellor. He was a champion of university federation, leading Victoria to a new campus in Toronto and a participant in the University of Toronto, which became the largest university in the British Empire. He was also a champion of church union, chairing the doctrine commission which prepared the Basis of Union for what became the United Church of Canada (1925).

Professor Van Die, who teaches history at Queen's Theological College in Kingston, Ontario, has carefully crafted her dissertation into a highly readable book. More than a biography, it is an intellectual history, an exploration of the mind of Burwash and the changing nature of Canadian Methodism during that period.

Six significant issues of his time are brought under scrutiny: 1) childhood religious education vs. conversion; 2) the impact of reason and Darwinian science on religion; 3) the growing affluence among the laity; 4) the impact of higher criticism on theological education; 5) university federation; and 6) church union and the disappearance of Methodism. Van Die focuses attention on the theological assumptions which allowed serious
young Methodists to accept the critical thought of the period, while retaining the basic tenets of their evangelical religion. The position taken by Burwash, she points out, allowed faith to remain a vital component of early twentieth-century Canadian students and society during a time which historians have generally viewed as an era of religious decline. Burwash was a bridge between the pietistic evangelical Methodist heritage and the new theological re-thinking of faith prominent at the turn of the century. Van Die persuasively argues that the evangelical tradition within Methodism became an integral part of the life and thought of the new United Church.

J. William Lamb
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Alice Lucy Cobb, A Tapestry of Service. Nashville: Church and Community Workers Organization, 1989. 284 pp. $11.50.


Charles Wesley affirmed, “let me commend my Saviour to you.” In the same way, let me commend my Saviour to you through these two books. Cobb summarizes the one hundred year history of church and community ministry, a significant dimension of our national mission work. She includes a listing of the workers and projects from 1885 to 1985.

The History Committee has provided an excellent source of stories from the experiences of men and women sharing their faith through enabling others in churches and communities across the nation. These stories can be used for “mission minutes” during worship or other gatherings of God’s people. All those listed as serving through this challenging ministry have stories to tell. Learn who they are and listen to their stories.

Both books are available from Kathryn L. Mitchem, Route 4, Box 304A, Ashland City, TN 37915. Prices include shipping.

Betty Swarthout
Maplewood, NJ


This festschrift for 200 glorious years of New England’s always outnumbered Methodists, while not a history of the present Southern New
England Conference, has much to celebrate, and it does so via the pens of nine contributors. They chronicle events from Jesse Lee’s initial appointment to a present enriched by ministries of women.

New England leadership in abolition, education, ecumenism, empowerment of women, temperance and publishing is documented. A wide ranging ethnic ministry and the founding of Goodwill Industries illustrate the vibrancy of Wesleyanism amid contending heterodox and orthodox faiths.

Firsts always risk contention: Francis Burns in 1858 was the first missionary elevated to bishop not Burt in 1904, and Wilbraham Academy 1817 could hardly best Cokesbury College (opened 1787) as “the first Methodist educational institution” (p. 75).

Errors which someone should have caught include Coke, not Asbury, promising in 1787 to limit his episcopate (p. 46); Cox, our first overseas missionary, was long dead in 1882 (p. 138); the EUB merger was in 1946, not 1945 (p. 156) and Methodist–EUB Union was approved by simultaneous General Conferences in November 1966 (p. 157).

Opposition to Methodism by the established church (Congregationalists) is cited, but unnoticed is the rare 56-page published reply of George Roberts, the Methodist pastor at Hartford in April 1793 to Rev. Nathan Williams and Dr. Huntington published at Philadelphia in 1794. Roberts’ work illustrates that Methodists tellingly contended against the “Standing Order” with voice and pen. So much so that gains in New England prevented a net loss of membership by American Methodism in the 1790s. By 1803 New England Conference churches enrolled 3% of the American members, rose to 5% by 1816, but fell to 2½% in 1839 while now fewer than 1% of United Methodists belong to Southern New England churches. How impressive then that this Conference raised more than 10% of the entire Fund for Reconciliation!

The book is better indexed than many comparable volumes and enjoyed the usual proficiency of Sharp Offset in its commendable getup.

Some assertions are not well grounded: It is difficult to call the Colonization movement “pro-slavery” when it sought to free bondsmen to colonize and evangelize Africa; so again, the Itineracy Committee of the 1836 General Conference did not single out New England for correction but sent every Conference the same report. The bibliography might well have included the “Methodist Preacher,” a Boston monthly 1830–1833, in which 15 of 54 sermons published were by New Englanders—a highly significant proportion. So also has New England been for two hundred years.

Edwin Schell
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