BOOK REVIEWS


The stature of Richard Heitzenrater as the preeminent Wesley scholar of his generation stands out in Mirror and Memory. Here he appears as the persistent excavator of facts—the code that released the secrets of John Wesley's diaries; a Latin treatise that expands our understanding of the word Methodist; an x’d out paragraph in the manuscript journal of the 1808 Methodist General Conference that calls for a fresh look at traditional interpretations of Methodist doctrinal history. Heitzenrater also comes before us as a sensitive theologian, offering in his chapter on Aldersgate the best insights currently available on May 24, 1738. Finally, he shows himself here as a stylist of note, writing crisp, jargon-free English, which makes this indispensable book a joy to read.

Two illustrations: Heitzenrater demonstrates, as a result of his painstaking study of Wesley’s decoded Oxford diaries, that there were several Holy Clubs at Oxford, meeting in the rooms of students at four colleges, with different yet somewhat overlapping memberships. Even more interesting than his picture of the Holy Clubs is his discovery of a Latin treatise indicating that the name Methodist may have been hurled at Wesley as much for the Arminian theology he was expounding at Oxford as for his obsession with methodizing his every waking hour.

Second, Heitzenrater reports a discovery he made in Madison, New Jersey, when Kenneth Rowe, Drew University's Methodist Librarian, brought the manuscript journal of the 1808 Methodist General Conference out of the vault. A neatly written paragraph with a large X drawn through it stared up at him. The paragraph recorded a motion to the effect that Wesley’s Notes and Sermons and Fletcher’s Checks be understood as containing “the principal doctrines of Methodism, and a good explanation of our articles of religion.” The motion lost. Not only did it fail of passage, but also the General Conference ordered it struck from the Journal. So that x’d out motion in the 1808 General Conference Journal, discovered by Heitzenrater, stands as a question mark over assertions that Wesley’s Sermons and Notes dominated Methodist doctrinal standards in early nineteenth-century America.

Minor errors dot Mirror and Memory. John Wesley preached his Plymouth Dock Sermon on Backsliding—an eyewitness account of which Heitzenrater publishes—Monday, September 1, 1766, not 1765 (p. 168). And the May, 1738, exchange of letters between John Wesley and William Law is found in Works (Bicentennial edition), Volume 25, between pages 540 and 550, not 240-50 (p. 246). Such typographical errors are inevitable, of course, in a book crammed with details—the details which, along with
Heitzenrater's masterful interpretations, make Mirror and Memory one of those rare books that no student of Wesley and American Methodism dare fail to own and study.

JOHN G. McELLHENNEY
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Welthy Honsiger Fisher lived many lives in her 101 years: school teacher, would-be opera singer, Methodist missionary to China, author and speaker of note, mission fundraiser and recruiter, woman of fashion and culture at home with American high society, wife of Methodist bishop Fred Fisher, friend of Tagore and Gandhi, champion of literacy and founder of Literacy House in India. Hers was a life lived on a broad scale and often far ahead of her contemporaries. She was a Methodist who valued Eastern thought and spirituality; she was a woman living the ideals of feminism; she was an American missionary who stood for indigenous leadership in China and India; she was a septuagenarian when she started her largest venture, Literacy House.

Sally Swenson, Welthy's companion of her last fourteen years, has chronicled her entire life in this book. Working from tapes, diaries, letters, Welthy's and Fred Fisher's writings, Swenson has put together a massive volume of minute information on the life and passions of this compelling woman.

Divided into five sections, the first concentrates on Welthy's girlhood in upper New York State and her coming to adulthood with the choices before her after college. It ends with her decision to leave behind her suitor from Wall Street and the narrowness of domestic life prescribed for women at the turn of the century for a life of service and adventure as a missionary.

The second section describes her years as Methodist missionary in China, the principal of Bao-Lin School in Nanchang. Here Welthy came face to face with the heavy oppression of women, female infanticide and foot-binding its primary symbols. She also met western imperialism among the missionaries. Swenson describes Welthy's determination to fight for women's right to full intellectual development, her democratic educational methods that included training of Chinese leadership, and her developing sense of religious tolerance. These last two were the beginning of a lifetime of tension with the church.

The third section focuses on Welthy's marriage to Bishop Frederick Fisher, a partnership of physical, intellectual, and spiritual passion. Both committed to a Christianity which recognized the contributions of other
religions and other peoples, their life in a country in great social ferment was challenged and deepened by their friendship with Gandhi.

The fourth section focuses on Welthy's life after Fred's death, a time of extensive travel and intensive inner searching. This period leads back to India, and to Gandhi, with his exhortation to focus on reform in the villages, with the people.

The fifth section highlights Welthy's development of Literacy House, the headquarters for a whole network of training centers focused on bringing literacy to India's villages. This project, begun at age 74, was the culmination of her work, as it drew on the best literacy techniques available, matching them with the oral tradition of the people. She built there the House of Prayer for All People, a simple chapel where peoples of different faiths could pray in their own way.

Swenson has produced a huge volume of material on Welthy Hon-siger Fisher, a great resource for further study. This reviewer had difficulty with the sheer enormity of the project, the inclusion of an incredible amount of data, some of which was simply not necessary. The recitation of numerous visits with an incredible array of people, complete with descriptions of Welthy's attire, blurred the focus. Swenson could have profited by a ruthless editor. Her stance is that of adoring companion; there is little criticism of Welthy, no attempt to put her in historical perspective, no hard questions asked—of Welthy or her critics. I leave this book fascinated by a woman of great energy and talent, but with many unanswered questions: How much of her work was truly anti-imperialist, how much done out of a need to find an outlet for her own personality? Was she truly a world citizen, or an actor needing a broad stage? How do we situate her in the women's movement? in Methodism? in the civil rights movement based on Gandhi's principles? Swenson has given us a good look at Welthy Honsinger Fisher. Assessing her impact is a task yet ahead.

_Susan A. Cady_

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Bob Parrott has collected thirty-three “sermons” from the files of Albert C. Outler. The full-page photograph of Outler on the cover of the book exhibits the esteem and affection the editor holds for the teacher he calls “Dr. O.” In his preface, “An Egghead in the Pulpit,” Parrot presents the book as “a memorial” to his beloved teacher. “More than that,”
it is a "salvage operation" to make available to a larger audience Outler's gifted conversations between scripture, Christian tradition, and contemporary culture.

The "sermons"—some of which were actually popular lectures—are arranged in chronological order from the late 1940's through 1985. The editor provides an introductory comment for each sermon-lecture, detailing context and content, and frequently adding anecdotes of Outler's life. A "Biographical Profile" completes the book. This arrangement suggests a secondary purpose in the mind of the editor: namely, a biographical introduction to Albert Outler.

The carefully chosen selections from Outler's work give us important glimpses of Outler's famous humor, his critical observations on culture, his wide-ranging historical perspective, his analyses of Methodist problems and piety, and even an autobiographical reference to his prayer-life. The chronological order of the sermons thus serves a dual purpose. It shows, first, how a Wesleyan focus in the Catholic spirit can be relevantly preached in changing contexts. Second, it provides the student of twentieth century religion and culture a rich slice from the work of one of the most significant interpreters of the Wesleyan tradition.

The best news about these sermons is that they are a delight to read. They are Wesleyan in tone: they make constant reference to grace in all its forms, from prevenient to perfecting; they emphasize the Spirit's role in the mystery of human selfhood and community; they are suffused with the ethical imperatives of the gospel of freedom; they search for the disciplined path between legalism and antinomianism; they disguise great learning in popular presentation. The alert reader will find them intellectually exciting and spiritually challenging.

Given Outler's own wry penchant for "nitpicking" it would be very un-Outlerian to be silent in this review about the lapses of the publisher and the editor. Parrott intimates that Outler had reservations about publishing this material. Surely Outler would have been chagrined at the editorial introductions which sometimes border on hero-worship. Nor would he have failed to mention the book's numerous typographical errors (pp. 25, 30, etc.), misspellings (pp. 136, 146, 175), misquotes (pp. 66, 93), and incorrect dates (pp. 277, 278). Nevertheless, both Abingdon and Parrott have made an important contribution. There is a hint (p. 10) that this volume is only the "first fruits" of the harvest of unpublished Outler manuscripts. We hope that further Outler texts will follow, edited of course with a modest Outlerian pedantry.

Leicester R. Longden
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In *John Wesley on Religious Affections*, Gregory Clapper provides a critical study of the experiential dimension of Christian life and theology in the writings of John Wesley. Experience plays a key role in the thought of Wesley. Clapper clarifies important terms central to Wesley’s vision of Christianity and argues for the continued relevance of his practical theology in a post-modern world.

Clapper speaks of the experiential dimension of Wesley’s writings in terms of “the affections.” The most common meaning of “the affections” pertains to “the general orientation of the person” (51). This orientation includes the emotions. So it was important to Wesley that theology understand the causes, nature and importance of felt experience within believing individuals in order to provide a holistic version of Christian life and theology.

Clapper argues that Wesley provides a holistic vision through an affection-laden language, which does not pander “to the masses but is in fact the most true and adequate way to talk about Christianity” (3). In fact, Clapper maintains that Wesley’s conception of affectivity is quite sophisticated for several reasons. First, Wesley points out the need for inner *formation* as well as inner *discovery*, recognizing that Christianity involves an “orthokardia” (right heart) as well as “orthodoxy” (right belief) and “orthopraxis” (right action) (154, 160). Second, Wesley’s constant emphasis on the patterning, forming and disciplining of the affections reveals an area of theological coherence or logic, too often missed by those who caricature him as being unreflective or uncritical in his appeals to experience (162). Third, Wesley provides a uniquely integrated theology which emphasizes the gospel in relationship to the heart and “thus gives a positive vision for the role of doctrine in the emotional life” (169). These insights, along with others suggested by Clapper, help us to see how the affections, as understood by Wesley, contribute constructively to a more holistic vision of Christian life and theology.

In addition to these insights, Clapper raises several issues which require further consideration in the study of Wesley. First, it remains questionable whether Wesley—must less Christianity as a whole—would want to say that “affection-laden” language is the most true and adequate way to talk about Christianity, especially since Clapper argues for a more balanced conception which integrates orthodoxy and orthopraxis as well as orthokardia. Second, Clapper points out the influence of Jonathan Edwards in the development of Wesley’s thoughts on the affections, but Clapper limits this analysis to one of the last chapters, putting in doubt
the extent of Edwards' influence or the extent of Wesley's unique contributions on the subject. Third, in arguing for the contributions of Wesley to a "practical theology in a post-modern world" (169), Clapper relies too heavily upon an understanding of religion along cultural-linguistic lines as found in *The Nature of Doctrine* by George Lindbeck. Although Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic category of religion may help in the analysis of Wesley and the affections, it does not supply a sufficiently holistic framework with which to meet the criteria for being either "practical" or "post-modern."

*John Wesley on Religious Affections* represents the first volume in the scholarly series on Pietist and Wesleyan Studies published by Scarecrow Press. Clapper's book represents an excellent contribution to the renaissance of Wesleyan studies in the latter half of the twentieth century, and it bodes well of future publications in the series.

DONALD THORSEN

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A new edition of Mrs. Bibbins' account of early American Methodism is a welcome contribution to the available material on this subject, particularly since the first edition of her work (1945) is generally unavailable. Her special emphasis on Robert Strawbridge and the centrality of Baltimore and Maryland in the early history of Methodism needs to be read by all students of Methodist history.

The book deals with the early meeting places at Sam's Creek, Baltimore County and Baltimore City, and other places in Maryland, and then touches on the work of Methodism elsewhere. The weight of its emphasis is on the Maryland area. In its coverage of Methodist work in New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey, it stresses the influence of the preachers from Maryland. The visitor who intends to make a pilgrimage to "Strawbridge Country," as well as the interested Methodist who cannot travel there in person, will find the book well worth reading.

The author attempts to show that Philip Embury must have begun his work in New York after Strawbridge had begun his work in Maryland. It is interesting that she argues that Embury could not have been conducting a Methodist class or society from 1760 to 1766, when he was assuming baptismal vows in the Lutheran church; but she also assumes that Strawbridge was a Methodist preacher before and after he was supposedly
ordained by the German Reformed minister Benedict Swope. She also attempts to show that Asbury was wrong in his opposition to the administration of the sacraments by lay preachers, and that Wesley was wrong in his prolonged refusal to ordain the Methodist preachers. She does not speak in glowing terms of the British preachers, or of the man who sent them to America: “The cry for ordinances waxed irresistible. . . . For six years they had yielded to Wesleyan opposition” (p. 112). The subtitle of Chapter One in Part II (p. 109) states her position succinctly: “Strawbridge's Challenge for the Ordinances Results in the Election of Asbury as Superintendent and the Creation of a New Church.” This subtitle might well have been used as the title for the entire book.

Some interesting issues are raised by this book. The author states that Strawbridge, a Methodist lay preacher, had baptized as early as 1761 or 1762 (pp. 5, 7), that tradition states that Strawbridge was ordained in 1772 by the German Reformed minister Benedict Swope (pp. 11, 90), that Strawbridge probably baptized converts in a spring (p. 13), and that Asbury noted “some little irregularities” in the work in Maryland in 1772 (p. 32).

This work by Mrs. Bibbins states—in some places seems to overstate—the case for the importance of Strawbridge in the founding and spread of Methodism in America. On its own side it comes across as being parochial. To those on any other side it sometimes appears to be hostile or defensive. It is to be hoped that this book will gain a wide circulation and that the purchase of many copies will encourage its publishers to give us a third edition. In the third edition, perhaps a few changes will be made: The founder of the Evangelical Association was Jacob Albright, not Allbright (p. 91); the associate of the Wesleys was George Whitefield, not Whitfield (p. 141); the episcopal leaders of American Methodism were Dr. Coke and Mr. Asbury, not Mrs. Asbury (p. 57); and the hero of the book is Strawbridge, not Strawberry (p. 19).

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One of World Methodism’s elder statesmen, Eric Gallagher superintended the Belfast Central Mission for twenty-two years (1957-79), in a city divided by conflicting national and religious traditions. He has been pastor, ecumenical leader, denominational President, and pioneer in the frustrating search for peace in the north of Ireland. An active member of the Wesley Historical Society, Irish Branch, he co-authored

The Mission began in response to astoundingly swift industrial and urban growth, with the added dimension of "sharp segregation into tribal areas" which has continued into the present day. When a growing number of churches could not keep pace with urbanization and its attendant poverty, the 1889 Conference established this "mission of the whole Methodist Church to the city." The Mission initiated one innovative strategy after another in pursuit of its vision "to make Belfast like unto the City of God." It successes were impressive, especially in view of the enormous financial requirements and the volatility of its surroundings.

Centered at Grosvenor Hall, with satellites across and beyond Belfast, the Mission has had to adapt to the daunting needs of a changing city. Especially interesting is its response to sectarian conflict along the way. There emerges a pattern among leadership and congregation of commitment to reconciliation, fairness, and peace. From Home Rule debates to the Anglo-Irish Agreement, the Mission's Protestant stance has been moderated by a willingness to serve all people, to avoid "party-political" involvement, and to maintain dialogue between communities.

The response to intercommunity strife is especially prominent as Gallagher describes the period in which he was Superintendent. In 1966 he told a Grosvenor Hall gathering: "I look out upon a city that needs as it never needed before a gospel of reconciliation." Amid escalating tensions in 1968, Gallgher chaired an Ulster television program in which Prime Minister Terence O'Neill and Nationalist opposition leader Eddie McAteer pleaded for restraint. "I regarded that as . . . recognition of what the Mission stood for." During times of actual violence the Hall served as a haven for refugees and a point of stability and compassion located exactly between Protestant and Catholic neighborhoods.

Despite population shifts resulting from violence and urban renewal, there remained an active "congregation of remarkable tolerance coupled with evangelistic and social concern." In the midst of a bitterly divided city, "member after member refused to surrender to sectarianism." Congregational attitudes were tested in 1974 when Gallagher and other Protestant leaders held secret talks with the Provisional IRA and its political arm, Sinn Fein, at Feakle, Co. Clare. Their efforts, when they became known, were roundly condemned by militant Protestants and Gallagher returned to Belfast amid verbal abuse and threats. Uncertain of his own people's response, he rejoiced as the next Sunday's congregation, unusually large, told him of their appreciation and support. "To serve
such a people," he writes, "was the greatest honour the Church could bestow on any of its ministers."

The extent of the Belfast Central Mission is indicated by mid-'80s annual budgets of 500,000 pounds and a staff of sixty. Throughout the book, the author emphasizes the role of paid and volunteer staff. His stress on lay involvement makes this book a people's history, not merely a record of clerical accomplishments.

The story of Irish Methodism is not well or widely known in the USA, in spite of the enormous contribution of Ireland to American Methodism, from its origins in Maryland and New York through the stream of immigrants in our formative nineteenth century. This newest of Gallagher's works takes us beyond media images of Northern Ireland to the more complex realities of Methodism's outreach within a battered society.

Irish Methodism has often displayed the virulent anti-Catholicism that has for so long issued in discrimination and violence. But within the church there is a strong, enduring tradition of peace and justice, openness and compassionate service. It is this tradition that forms the heart of Gallagher's fine account of the Mission as it begins its second century, "reminding men and women of a divided city of their need to be reconciled not only with the God who made them all but with each other." It is a story that more American Methodists need to know and appreciate.

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