
Several issues in modern American Methodism can be illuminated and informed by these six essays offering a revisionist interpretation of American Methodism in the period 1770–1810. This is not a history of institutional development or a recounting of the heroic deeds of the Methodist elite. The work in no way supplants Frank Baker's *From Wesley to Asbury* (1976), which does focus on institutional origins and figures in the Methodist pantheon of heroines and heroes. Neither does it replace the need for the reader to be familiar with a basic narrative account of the period. What it does offer is a superb analytical paradigm for reinterpreting the "nature and development of Methodism" by using "the language of religious experience."

Richey, Associate Dean of the Divinity School, Duke University, makes ample use of primary source material, especially journals and other writings of lesser known figures along with those of Asbury and others of fame. He identifies four languages of Methodism as a way of organizing these source materials: (1) popular or evangelical; (2) Wesleyan; (3) episcopal; (4) republican. (p. 83) While one chapter examines the interplay of all four languages, it is the popular or evangelical vernacular that shapes the interpretative paradigm in the other chapters. Also, other words and images are used to describe the Methodist experience, such as fraternity, Zion, melting, and quarterly meeting. The power and relevance of this book is in its application to contemporary church-wide debates.

The nature of collegiality (termed fraternity by Richey for compelling historical reasons) and community as experienced by those of the pulpit and pew two centuries ago seems to preview contemporary debates and tensions on such topics as ordination, conference membership, the clergy covenant, and the demands of itinerancy. Fraternity, Richey writes, "suggests, for early Methodism, that purpose rather than status and function took primary place in the life of the ministry and of the church. The fraternity pledged itself to ideals, to commitments, to the vigors of itinerancy that quite literally wore out the preachers. . . . This was a purposive order, a preaching order." (p. 18)

Current understanding of the nature and purpose of Conference can be impacted by remembering the revivalistic impulse of the early conferences, both quarterly and annual. This theme is played out twice, once in tracing the transformation of quarterly conference to camp meeting, and once in interpreting "conference as a means of grace." "Hearing the testimony of the persons at the various stages of candidacy—the consuming task of annual conference—was administration that could be inspiring, instructive, renewing, and certainly community building." (pp. 29–30)
Maybe it was and still is unfortunate that “revival assumed its own form as camp and protracted meeting and conference transformed its spiritual substance into business.” (p. 80) My conference, for one, is seeking, somewhat, to reverse that transformation.

In spite of conventional wisdom that emphasizes early Methodist commitment “to reform the continent” and initial efforts to eliminate slavery, Richey found that language used to describe reform efforts was “intellectually naive, naked, lacking the knowledge of good and evil.” (p. 46) These efforts to create Zion disconnected them from affairs of the state. In the debate over personal and social holiness, we do well to remember “the politically ambiguous and eschatological character of Methodist reform and social ethics” of this period, (p. xvi) not to repeat those limitations but to avoid repeating them.

For the readers acquainted with early Methodist historiography, these essays are fascinating reimages of movements and transitions, virtually from the underside of history, that is, what Methodists were actually experiencing in their religious life. Richey offers a fresh and promising approach to writing denominational history. For readers of this journal, three of the six chapters were based on articles that had appeared in Methodist History, but taken together and read as a whole, are well worth rereading.

ROBERT J. WILLIAMS
Cherry Hill, New Jersey


Knight is an adjunct lecturer in Wesleyan theology at Candler School of Theology (Emory University). This study is a revision of his Ph.D. thesis at the same institution. It is a thesis well worth publishing.

Knight’s focal topic is John Wesley’s understanding of the means of grace. His contribution to Wesley studies reaches far beyond this topic, because he insists that Wesley’s emphasis on the means of grace can only be understood in light of his conception of the Christian life. To provide this context Knight draws together several streams of recent scholarship to highlight the dynamic and relational nature of both grace and holiness in Wesley’s theology. As he argues, the grace of God is not simply a juridical “benefit” or an infused “gift”; it is the presence of God in our lives, empowering our progressive renewal in holiness. And holiness itself is much more than avoiding sinful actions; it is the recovery of the affections or dispositions (tempers) from which truly Christ-like life flows.

On these terms the crucial question about the means of grace becomes how they function to empower and to guide the gracious renewal of
Christ-like affections in our lives. The focus on this question is precisely what distinguishes Knight's book from existing studies of Wesley's understanding of the sacraments and other means of grace. Previous studies have been largely preoccupied with Western scholastic debates over the validity or juridical necessity of the sacraments. Their emphasis has fallen on finding traditional warrant for Wesley's position (whether high-church or low-church). Largely ignored has been the question of the practical-theological wisdom evident in the unique constellation of means of grace that Wesley commended to his followers.

Knight focuses precisely on this question. His basic claim is that there is a purposeful pattern to the means of grace commended by Wesley. This pattern reflects the dual need for holy tempers to be graciously empowered and responsibly shaped. When the Christian life is pursued apart from the gracious empowering of God it degenerates into ritualism or legalism. When one emphasizes God's empowering presence apart from formative disciplines that shape Christ-like tempers, it devolves into enthusiasm or antinomianism. To avoid these distortions, Knight argues that Wesley carefully integrated means of grace that are primarily effective for opening us to God's empowering presence with means that are uniquely effective in shaping us in terms of the identity of God. Interestingly, Knight's identification of these two counter-balancing sets of means of grace roughly parallels the distinction between traditional Anglican means of grace and the distinctive Methodist means (cf. p. 173). This casts new light on Wesley's concern that his Methodist renewal remain within the larger church!

With his focus on developing holiness, and its technical absence from lists of the means of grace, Knight could have avoided discussing the topic of Wesley on baptism. Instead, he presents a powerful argument that Wesley's understanding of baptism—and Christian initiation in general—must be developed in terms of the model of adult baptism (pp. 178ff). This does not lead him to reject infant baptism, but to place it in the context of the crucial role of the catechumenate. In the process he renders insightful critiques of much of the previous discussion of this issue.

As should be evident by now, I found this study to be a very significant contribution to Wesley studies. More importantly, it is a contribution to the larger Christian community as we seek to understand the nature and nurture of Christian life.

Randy L. Maddox
Sioux Falls, South Dakota

A reviewer should justify his qualifications. He should know the subject. I can only walk around the perimeters of the communications revolution. The moment you get into bytes and acronyms I’m lost. Maybe that’s what is needed here: the perspective of an outsider’s view. The author is a professional insider, most of whose life has been lived with techniques of communication. Let one speak whose idea of "equipment" is pad of paper and pencil.

The first point is easily made. The work is well conceived and well written, although scholarly frame is scarce. The chief source is the records of United Methodist Communications and its antecedents. Ed Maynard writes effectively with admirable balance about events which have had their share of both pain and joy. Generous illustrations are provided.

What a generation for a true "communicator" to live through! Between Stoody and Burgess a new world came into being. The author is well aware of rapid movement and change, and acknowledges episodes of confusion and unsuccessful enterprise. Not long ago the whole church stumbled, as, envious of commercially successful TV evangelists, it sought to create its own United Methodist television station. A campaign for 25 million dollars flopped spectacularly, leaving instead a debt of a million dollars. But the chapter "Getting on the Tube" relates how, in spite of all the difficulties, the church can indeed develop a TV presence with *Catch the Spirit*.

Much in this story has to do with computers and electronic media. That means continual reference to the high costs involved. Technological wonders don't come cheap. Time and again there is disappointment over the failure—or inability—of the church to provide funding. What could be done if only . . . ! The result has sometimes been unusual caution.

Along with the frustrations over funding came another problem: debate, sometimes contentious, over the real mission of the church. What role do the unprecedented means of communication play in evangelism? Should the church advertise itself or quietly offer itself in service? Between the excesses of commercialized evangelism and the anonymity of love lie many options. All of them are costly.

It is interesting to note that this history of communications in an era of technological revolution takes the form of a *book*, with a (modest) *Bibliography*.

**Frederick A. Norwood**  
*Delaware, Ohio*

John Wesley’s *Journal* is one of the great classics of Christian literature. Unfortunately, the fact that it is only available in four or eight volume editions tends to discourage the Methodist pilgrim from carrying it along to follow in Wesley’s footsteps. In 1947 Robert Haire published a narrative of Wesley’s twenty-one visits to Ireland, based on the *Journal*. That was infinitely more portable. Now Samuel J. Rogal has performed another service for us.

Mr. Rogal has abstracted all the Irish references from the *Journal*, the Diaries, the Sermon Register, and the Letters of Mr. Wesley. He has brought them together according to locality, grouping in a single article all references to any one town, village or rural area. It is a very considerable achievement, and makes it a simple matter to study all that Wesley said about each place. For each major locality there is a brief introduction, culled from a number of guidebooks.

Since Celtic times Ireland has been divided into four provinces. The first thing to disconcert the Irish reader is the fact that these natural historical divisions have been set aside, and Mr. Rogal has made his own divisions of the country, for which there appears to be no logical reason. The second thing is the abundance of spelling mistakes, some of which have a serious effect on the presentation of the material. On page 142, the name of Thomas Walsh’s first appointment is given as “Skonell,” which is not possible in Gaelic orthography. The Gaelic alphabet has no k. (Neither has it an h, but in transliteration h is used to indicate that the preceding consonant carries an aspiration mark.) In four other references to the place it is spelled correctly, but it is indexed under both spellings, giving the impression that there were two locations instead of one. Whenever the River Nore is mentioned, it is spelled “Noire,” suggesting a misreading of manuscript notes. Coolalough was not a town (p. 294); it was a gentleman’s estate. On page 689 we are informed that Dingins “no longer appears on standard maps.” It is, in fact, marked on the Ordnance Survey ¼ inch to 1 mile map, section 12, which is readily available in any stationer’s or bookseller’s shop.

John Wesley was the founder of Methodism. To describe him merely as “the Founder of British Methodism” smacks of chauvinism. The considerable British garrison in Ireland in the 18th century was there not primarily to defend the country from foreign invasion, but to defend the new landlords from the dispossessed. Between the Cromwellian and Williamite settlements nearly half of the land in the country passed from Catholic into Protestant hands.

To describe Hester Ann Rogers as “one of his young, devoted female itinerants” (p. 103) gives a false impression. “Itinerant” has a precise
meaning in Methodism, and Wesley did not employ female itinerants. Wesley's wife did not supervise the orphan house at Newcastle-upon-Tyne; it was Grace Murray who played a leading role in that city.

We are given detailed accounts of Wesley's visits to Newmarket on Fergus in county Clare (pp. 229 ff), all of which are misplaced. The visits so carefully described were to a small village on the other side of the Shannon, in county Limerick. In Wesley's time this village was called Newmarket; it is now known as Pallaskenry.

It is a useful idea to afford the reader some impression of each town or village and its associations, but the material offered appears to have been overly influenced by whatever guidebook happened to be at hand. Why specify the penal laws applying to Galway? Similar legislation applied throughout the country. In the list of Dublin cathedrals and churches (pp. 484-485) four are mislocated.

The layout of Trinity College was determined not by a desire to follow an English pattern, but by the fact that the original college buildings had been those of All Hallows monastery, and the development of the college followed the monastic pattern. Armagh did not decline from a Cathedral city to mud huts (p. 717). The location of Celtic sees was determined not by cities, but by the presence of substantial abbeys.

One could add other instances to this list of misinformation, but the task becomes tedious.

Mr. Rogal has not been well served by his typesetter. Apart from the many spelling mistakes, there are displacements of several headings. Several appear, incongruously, at the foot of the pages preceding the pages on which the relevant articles commence. Part of a sentence near the bottom of p. 397 seems to have been omitted, as the reference to 1833 in Daingean is unintelligible.

Speaking at Radcliffe College in 1963 Barbara Tuchman said:

> The writer of history, I believe, has a number of duties vis-a-vis the reader, if he wants to keep him reading. The first is to distil. He must . . . assemble the information, make sense of it, select the essential, discard the irrelevant—above all, discard the irrelevant. . . .

Had Mr. Rogal followed Mrs. Tuchman's excellent advice, travellers wishing to use it as a vade mecum need only have packed one volume in their baggage, presumably at half the cost.

DUDLEY LEVISTONE COONEY
Dublin, Ireland

As Randy Maddox notes in his introduction, recent Wesley scholarship shows signs of a paradigm shift away from the “standard” interpretation of Aldersgate as a subjective conversion experience. Instead of seeing Aldersgate “as the decisive experience in Wesley’s life,” these newer interpretations understand it as “an important further step in his spiritual development when his intellectual convictions about God’s gracious acceptance were appropriated more deeply at an affectional level” (18). Such interpretations also argue that Wesley’s own initial understanding of Aldersgate must be qualified by his later, more mature reflections.

The centerpiece of the book is the lengthy essay by Richard P. Heitzenrater. He argues that both proponents and opponents of the standard interpretation “must embrace some anomalies that cause disjunctions in their own argument”: if it is a watershed, why “would Wesley ignore this event for the last half of his life;” if not, “why did its central feature (the experience of assurance, the witness of the Spirit) become a fixture at the heart of his preaching and theology?” (50).

Heitzenrater argues that although “Aldersgate was a crucial step in his spiritual pilgrimage at the time, his expectations were not fully met by the experience, and his subsequent reflections on the event caused him to modify many of the theological premises upon which those expectations were based” (50-51). The disappointed expectations led Wesley to make the careful distinctions between faith, assurance, justification, and entire sanctification, as well as between degrees of faith, which mark his mature theology. At the same time, Wesley’s experiential encounter with the power of the Holy Spirit at Aldersgate decisively transformed his theology.

The remaining six essays exhibit two distinctive approaches to reconsidering Aldersgate. The first is to highlight important elements of Wesleyan spirituality for which Aldersgate does not account, and which the standard conversionist understanding thereby obscures. Roberta C. Bondi points to Wesley’s emphasis on Christian perfection as the goal of the Christian life, and the regular discipline of prayer as essential to growth in sanctification. David Lowes Watson counters the inward individualism of the standard interpretation with Wesley’s emphasis on the Christian life as outward and communal through accountability to a shared discipline in class meetings. For Theodore Runyon, Aldersgate is misunderstood as an inward experience; rather faith was for Wesley a “spiritual sense” which enabled persons to experience God as external reality, and is thus oriented outward rather than inward.

The other three essays demonstrate how historical and theological contexts have encouraged changing interpretations of Aldersgate over time. Jean Miller Schmidt shows that the standard interpretation of Aldersgate was not emphasized prior to the twentieth century. W. Stephen Gunter
explores interpretations of Aldersgate within the holiness movement, where it has sometimes been seen as a second definite work of grace. Randy Maddox, whose opening introduction provides a helpful typology of positions, concludes by showing how changing theological concerns have led to shifting interpretations of Aldersgate.

This book serves not only as a valuable contribution to the current discussion over the meaning of Aldersgate, but is a helpful introduction to central themes in Wesley’s theology and spirituality.

HENRY H. KNIGHT III
Atlanta, Georgia


This admirable volume records the stories of active churchwomen at the local and annual conference levels in North Georgia, and is a sequel to *The Journey: United Methodist Women in North Georgia, 1878–1983*. The History Project Committee, chaired by Marie W. Copher, has collected biographical information about more than 500 women, and for that service alone they are to be commended.

The book is organized topically, and biographical sketches are interspersed with historical exposition and analysis. Topics include persons who have served as “missionary educators,” women’s support for ecumenism, the women’s societies and racial justice, churches named for women, a celebration of women’s work at the local level, and the current programs of United Methodist Women.

Throughout, the Committee’s concern for inclusion is evident on two levels. First, there is substantial emphasis on the lives, experiences, and service of African American women, as well as acknowledgment of the racism that tarnishes churchwomen’s history. Second, the authors have made every effort to remember and celebrate those “ordinary” women whose activities have centered on their local communities. The history of the North Georgia Annual Conference includes such prominent figures as Carrie Parks Johnson, Dorothy Rogers Tilly, and Thelma Stevens. It also includes Mary Clifford White Holland, active in women’s missionary societies for sixty-nine years; and Manelle B. Richardson, who taught Sunday School in her church from the age of eighteen to near the end of her life at age ninety-two. The authors recognize that service at all levels of the church is worth recovering and celebrating, and historians should be grateful.
The text suffers from some misplaced commas and apostrophes that should have been caught in the copy editing, but all in all this is a hand­somely done book. Its extensive index is most helpful.

Susan M. Eltscher

Madison, New Jersey