
Is this the Richey/Rowe/Schmidt volume that Methodist historians have been anticipating, or is that long-expected book yet to appear? The answer is yes. This is not their text for seminary courses on United Methodist history. Titled *The Methodist Experience in America*, it has been scheduled by Abingdon for publication in late 1995 or early 1996. Meanwhile, the historical essays they selected for this Kingswood release give the student of Methodist history a rich sampling of the detailed studies that underlie comprehensive historical narratives.

The editors explain that this volume “provides new perspectives and fresh readings on important Methodist topics; it opens new topics for Methodist self-understanding; it takes in-depth or case-study attention to subjects that overviews must slight.”

The first section, headed “The Founding Period,” opens with Donald Mathews’ argument that the Methodist ideology of orality, itineracy, sensibile faith, and *communitas* achieves complete realization in black Methodism. William Williams identifies the reasons for Methodist “success” in the Delmarva Peninsula, 1769–1820. Frank Baker and Richard Heitzenrater examine doctrinal concerns. Paul Sanders charts American Methodism’s understanding of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Jeffrey Mickle sees Francis Asbury’s doctrine of ministry as a modified Anglicanism, moving from the top down; while Philip William Otterbein moved from the bottom up, espousing a modified Presbyterianism. Will Gravely describes the rise of black denominationality. Diane Lobody hears “women’s voices blending felicitously with the ecclesiastical men’s chorus” in early American Methodism. Doris Andrews researches the class meeting records of Philadelphia’s African Methodists, 1794–1802.

Eight scholars writing under the second heading, “Nineteenth-century Patterns,” introduce the reader to how Methodist ministers responded to partisan politics; deal with “holiness” and systematic theology; examine the spiritual autobiographies of African American women and the troubled relationship between Methodism and Native Americans. Jean Miller Schmidt probes the split in Methodism’s charter between the public, “reforming the Continent,” half and the private, “spreading scriptural holiness,” half. Joanna Bowen Gillespie chronicles the way Methodist women found a voice in print. Donald Marti narrates the achievement of a philanthropic conscience by rich Methodists.

Several quotations found under the third heading, “Reforms,” are worth the price of the book. Kenneth Rowe quotes James M. Buckley's...
speech denouncing an invitation to Anna Oliver to preach at the New York Methodist Preachers' Meeting in 1877. Buckley said: "I am opposed to inviting any woman to preach before this meeting. If the mother of our Lord were on earth I should oppose her preaching here." Carolyn DeSwarte Gifford, quoting extensively from W.C.T.U. sources, reaches the conclusion that W.C.T.U. leaders "encouraged women to identify with Christ 'the Sinless Victim,' rather than with sinners in need of salvation."

Other chapters in the third section treat theological, women's, and bureaucratic concerns. Mary Agnes Dougherty, in her study of deaconesses, faults a man for "unconscious androcentrism." She herself falls into the trap of "America-centrism" by ignoring the Continental and British antecedents of the "American" social gospel.

George McClain kicks off part four, "The Twentieth-century View," by detailing the history of the Methodist Federation for Social Action, followed by Donald Gorrell's tracking of the eighty-year career of Methodism's Social Creed. Stephen Perry describes how the lay desire for responsible stewardship led to the insistence that Methodism's general agencies become fully accountable to the General Conference. Dale Dunlap takes an across-the-years look at itinerant ministry; James White does the same for worship. One must assume the editors thought they had to include something on ecumenism; that is the only explanation for printing John Deschner's material, which is a "position paper," not historical research.

Richard Heitzenrater, analyzing the "ministry studies" since 1948, strikes this spark: "We are so desirous of harmony, so afraid of hierarchical tendencies, so inclined to be non-directive, and wanting so much to facilitate, to embody, to heal, to enable, to lead from behind, and to see it all from the underside, that no one wants to provide any real leadership or is willing to make firm, responsible decisions."

Russell Richey wraps up this unusually rewarding volume by reporting on how Methodists typically answer the question, "Who are you?" They begin, in the time honored manner of the storyteller, to spin a tale of who heard God and did what, where, and when. This book, like the narratives of a garrulous yarn-spinner, offers highly pertinent "asides" that add color and a sense of reality to the main story.

JOHN G. McELHENNEY
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As a feminist, fundamentalist, and founder of her own denomination (The Pillar of Fire), Alma White's intriguing life is a publisher's dream.
The apparent oxymoron of feminist fundamentalist reaches out and grabs the attention of any would-be reader. However, from the very first page, Stanley is careful to warn her readers against imposing our current notions of either term back onto Alma White in particular, and early twentieth century life in general.

In the first place, in championing the "woman's cause," Alma White constructed her feminism on a biblical foundation. Indeed, it was her Christian faith that energized her to preach a militantly feminist message throughout her career. Consequently, although modern feminism is often associated with liberalism and a libertine lifestyle, Alma White's life demonstrates that feminism and Christianity can be quite compatible. In this respect, notes Stanley, White was typical of hundreds of women ministers in the Wesleyan/Holiness movement, which at a time when most denominations denied women access to their pulpits, claimed that God called both men and women to preach.

As to White's fundamentalism, Stanley observes that it was only in her "militant opposition to modernism" that White deserved the title. Outside of sharing fundamentalism's enemies, White stood apart from that movement in many significant ways. To cite just two examples, most fundamentalists were Calvinists who stressed reason, whereas Alma was a Wesleyan who emphasized experience; moreover, fundamentalism adopted an extreme doctrine of inerrancy, while White revered the Bible as divinely inspired and "the only sufficient rule of faith and practice," without demanding that it was without error in every detail.

Stanley's research is thorough and refreshingly honest (as evidenced by her discussion of White's unabashed support of the Ku Klux Klan). The result is a well-rounded biography which enhances the reader's understanding of the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition, the women's rights movement, and a significant twentieth-century woman and the denomination she founded.

Dale H. Simmons
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United Methodism today is engaged in a debate about the theological meaning of baptism. The study authorized by the 1988 General Conference helped focus some of the questions without always providing clear directions for answers.

Felton's book helps us think about both questions and answers by tracing the development of baptismal theology and practice in American
Methodism. She begins with the theology of baptism in John Wesley, reminding us that Wesley held a "creative synthesis of objective and subjective elements, of ecclesiastical and evangelical aspects." Wesley believed that infant baptism was a sacrament through which grace cleansed infants of inherited sin and gave them spiritual rebirth through Christ. This was a sacrament of initiation which admitted children to membership in the church. Wesley also believed that children fall into actual, personal sin as they grow and this damages their relationship with God. Hence the need for conversion as an adult. Unfortunately, Wesley was never clear about the relationship between the two elements.

Equally unfortunately, Wesley's synthesis did not survive the crossing of the Atlantic — and here begins the major part of Felton's work. Using official documents of the church, sermons, the hymnals, journals of preachers, Sunday School literature, and other sources, she shows how the synthesis unraveled. First, she says, the revivalist milieu of early American Methodism rejected Wesley's emphasis on God's action and the validity of sacramental grace. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the development of confidence in humanity's moral ability and thus we also lost the emphasis on conversion. Finally, due to the optimistic view that children are born morally good, American Methodism lost its sense of baptism as a sacrament, and began to see infant baptism as a "christening" or "dedication."

Felton, a professor at Duke Divinity School, links this impressive historical account to the key theological questions around baptism in today's church: What is the significance of infant baptism and its relationship to later spiritual development? (Linked to this question is the divisive issue of baptismal regeneration.) Is "infant dedication" valid for United Methodists? What is the role of confirmation in the life of the church? What is the relationship between baptism and church membership?

This book is grounded in serious historical and theological scholarship. It covers an incredible breadth and depth of reading and analysis of historical documents. But it is also a rare gem among scholarly works, one that is easy to read for the non-specialist. *This Gift of Water* is indeed a gift to a denomination struggling to define its understanding of baptism in the life of the church.

John Gooch

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These volumes make available in an inexpensive form important selections from the first four volumes of *The Works of John Wesley*, 1984–1987, all edited by Albert Outler. This new critical edition of Wesley's works is an enormously valuable tool in the understanding of Wesley's theology; unfortunately, the cost (almost $50 per volume) makes it impractical for classroom use and inaccessible to many interested readers. These two books do much to remedy this situation.

The introduction is a complete reprinting of Outler's introduction to the sermons found in Volume One. It begins with a brief but rich description of Wesley's life and character, followed by a discussion of Wesley's practice and style of preaching understood in the context of the English tradition. Outler then traces the development of the sermon corpus itself, including the significance of unpublished early sermons and the rationale for the ordering of those Wesley published. Finally, Outler analyzes the theological method and use of sources evidenced in the sermon texts.

The anthology is a collection of 50 of the 151 sermons found in the *Works*. Most of Outler's copious footnotes have been removed (occasional translations of Latin quotations remain), but his extremely valuable introductions to the individual sermons have been retained, themselves abridged and updated by Heitzenrater.

Unlike the *Works*, the sermons in the anthology have been arranged chronologically, from an early unpublished sermon preached in 1730 to two sermons written in 1790 during the last year of Wesley's life. According to Heitzenrater, this chronological ordering was preferred by Outler as it shows the successive development of Wesley's thought.

This anthology has decided advantages over the "53 Sermons" which have been traditionally used as doctrinal standards in American Methodism. While 32 of the 53 sermons are found here, a number of other important sermons are included as well. Among these are "On Working Out Our Own Salvation," which addresses the issue of grace and works, and "The End of Christ's Coming" and "God's Love to Fallen Man," which offer Wesley's response to the problem of evil and set his soteriology within the larger context of creation and eschaton. Of course, everyone who teaches in this area will have a sermon which inexplicably was omitted from this collection (mine is "The General Spread of the Gospel"). However, we remain indebted to the editors for both of these affordable and usable books.

Henry H. Knight III

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Professor White's aim is a balanced and comprehensive account, which illustrates the manifold varieties of Christian worship and gives due emphasis to developments in North America. He divides church history into five periods, breaking at the years 133, 604, 1500, and 1700, and follows several themes through each of these eras. These themes include the leaders of worship; sacraments and preaching; pastoral rites, such as marriage; daily public prayer; the liturgical calendar; and church music and architecture. The final chapter considers the future of Christian worship.

White's book goes a long way toward attaining its goal. Individuals who are acquainted with the story it tells, as well as persons who are new to the subject, can all profit from it. If the reader has a collection of sources at hand, so much the better. Bard Thompson's *Liturgy of the Western Church* and White's own *Documents of Christian Worship* would be appropriate choices.

This account is written from the "top down;" responses from the "bottom up" are rarely mentioned. White describes what bishops, theologians, and liturgical scholars have said or done. One may ask, how did laypersons react to the doctrines they propounded and the rituals they introduced? On the other hand, laypersons have created new patterns of worship and compelled old ones to change, a subject which receives little attention here. I take two examples from nineteenth century Methodist history. Deborah Valenze has analyzed the cottage prayer meetings which Primitive Methodist women organized. Anna Jarvis brought to fruition her mother's dream of a regular Mother's Day service.

Some of White's generalizations are open to question. Zwingli's influence on the Anglican tradition, as over against the 1552 Prayer Book, was not as strong as White implies. He glosses over Wesley's problems with baptismal regeneration. And is it just to say that "American Methodism accommodated itself readily to the Enlightenment"?

*JOHN C. ENGLISH*
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Anne M. Boylan has made a major contribution to our appreciation of the American Sunday School. The first version of this work was her dissertation at the University of Wisconsin; the book manifests both the considerable assets and some of the inherent liabilities of its origin. The
author's prodigious research is apparent and impressive. Her chief sources include records of the American Sunday School Union, of Sunday School organizations in several denominations, and of Sunday Schools associated with particular congregations. In addition, she has utilized sundry periodicals and other types of church literature, as well as personal materials of participants in various aspects of the movement. Her copious notes provide useful documentation and the concluding bibliographic essay offers direction to readers interested in pursuing this area of study. Numerous statistical tables and illustrations enhance the work. Indeed, the book teems with so many details that careful reading is required in order to extract the main points. The author provides significant assistance to her readers through cogent introductions and summations in each chapter, as well as an opening essay and conclusion which offer integration and synthesis. Her organizational scheme skillfully blends topics and chronological development.

Professor Boylan portrays the Sunday School as "an agency of cultural transmission [which] almost rivaled in importance the nineteenth century public school" (p. 33). In her first chapter, she traces the origins of American Sunday Schools in the period 1790 to 1830. In chapter 2 she contends that the existence of effective Sunday Schools teaching specifically religious beliefs and values was essential to persuade evangelical Protestants to support public schools which were, at most, vehicles of a generic Protestant ethos. The focus in chapter 3 is on the two major organizations of the movement—the American Sunday School Union formed in 1824 and the teachers' conventions of the last four decades of the century.

Chapter 4 treats Sunday School teaching as a calling—especially attractive to young women—which shaped the lives of both teachers and students through an intimate relationship of mentoring. The final chapter, "Conversion and Christian Nurture: Children and Childhood in Sunday Schools" is, to this reviewer, the most insightful and helpful. Boylan traces the effects of changing understandings of the moral nature and spiritual capacity of children which modified the Sunday School from an "incubator of conversion" (p. 139) to an agency facilitating "the process of life-long spiritual growth" (p. 165).

Professor Boylan persuasively presents the Sunday School movement as an institutional development of the nineteenth century which functioned as a potent vehicle of socialization in the values of evangelical religion and cultural transmission of Protestant nationalism. For scholars of religion, the significance of her work is strengthened by her perceptive attention to theological issues.

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