

## Book Reviews

*The Development of Wesleyan Holiness Theology* (Wesleyan Theological Journal, Vol. 13, Spring, 1978). Wesleyan Theological Society, Marion, Indiana. n.p. \$2.00.

This volume (paper bound) is published by the Wesleyan Theological Society and comprises those addresses delivered by scholars from various colleges and universities in the United States at their Spring, 1978 meeting. It is a good collection of articles dealing with the "development" or "shaping" of Wesleyan holiness theology, with the exception of the President's address, which deals primarily with the *Epistle of James*, treating it as a letter that describes and defines "wisdom from above" or what the author believes Wesley called "entire sanctification". At the same time this writer labors the point that teachers, especially teachers of religion, are not qualified for their tasks unless they have this wisdom (p. 12). However, the remainder of the addresses in the book deal with the general subject of the development of Wesleyan holiness theology in America.

The addresses printed here are of varying degrees of interest and importance, but in general they are well-written and well-documented. Occasionally a ter will become polemical; likewise, there is some attempt to dispute with writers who have dealt with this subject previously, e.g. Nathan Bangs, John Peters and others, with a slight tendency to use these men as whipping horses. Occasionally, perhaps the fault of the printer as much as anyone, names and words are misspelled (Heman Bangs is called "Herman" twice on one page). But the content of the articles is good.

John Knight's article on the influence of John Fletcher on the development of Wesleyan theology in America, while dealing heavily with the theological relationships between Fletcher and John Wesley, yet includes a section dealing with the popularity of Fletcher's *Works* in the early years of Methodism in America (pp. 22f.). The article dealing with the holiness theology as expressed in the thought of Asa Mahan, by James E. Hamilton, is, as he readily acknowledges, going over ground previously covered in meetings of the Society. Yet there is a freshness and a well-thought-out presentation of the outlook of this American theologian who attempted to deal with holiness theology from something of a philosophical point of view.

Finally, the article by Timothy L. Smith (Johns Hopkins University), which stresses the attempt of Charles G. Finney to synthesize the Wesleyan doctrine of "the Sanctifying Spirit" with the Puritan Covenant theology, is a gem which is as important to Methodism now as it was then. To read Smith is to find considerable illumination on a problem which actually persists in American religious thought today: namely, how the influence of the Holy Spirit affects not just the individual's Christian action, but also the social ethos of American culture.

This review does not attempt to cover all the addresses printed in the volume, obviously. Hopefully, enough has been said to help the reader realize that these presentations make for excellent, challenging reading. It is to be hoped that more is to come and that the materials from the Wesleyan Theological Society will be easily available.

James H. Overton  
Elon College

Adrian Hastings, *African Christianity*. New York: The Seabury Press, 1977. 105 pp. \$8.95.

Father Adrian Hastings, who has worked and traveled in Africa for some years, packs more information and insight into these pages than can be found in many books several times as long. His approach is ecumenical, dealing with Protestant and Independent churches as well as the Catholic church; in fact, there is little in the text that would identify the author as Catholic rather than Anglican, Presbyterian or Methodist. After providing a brief but well-packed historical background, he deals with the contemporary problems of foreign missionary presence, cultural revolution, healing and politics.

African Christianity is enthusiastically "denominational" and continues to create new denominations. Father Hastings sees this as in part the result of a successful communication of the Protestant spirit. Thus, schisms within African Methodism show that the Africans are "good Methodists, rather than bad." (25)

There is also, however, a tendency toward the development of a complex hierarchy with historic titles. Thus, the Methodist Church of Nigeria now has archbishops and a Patriarch. Some Independent churches give titled positions to a large percentage of their membership. Although such titles may sound "undemocratic," Hastings suggests that, in fact, they provide dignity and recognition for large numbers of people.

On the local level, questions of foreign personnel and finance are largely irrelevant, and the differences in actual community life between Catholic, Protestant and Independent churches are not as great as might be supposed. Popular African Christianity "sits lightly enough on mission structures of any sort." (57) There is widespread belief in spirit possession, angels, dreams and witches. As Hastings points out, these are not only in continuity with African tradition but also with the Bible; "Gabriel may well appear to the devout believer upon a Lagos beach." (55)

The church has also been associated with politics; the story of Bishop Muzorewa of the United Methodist Church in Rhodesia is "a fascinating but tragic object lesson in the problems inherent in church leadership within the arena of political liberation." (91)

Christianity may be more "alive" in sub-Saharan Africa than anywhere else in the world and this is probably the only area in which it is growing faster than the population. Everyone interested in this phenomenon should read Father Hastings' book.

Newell S. Booth, Jr.  
Miami University (Ohio)

James D. Morrison, *Schools for the Choctaws*. Durant, Oklahoma: Choctaw Bilingual Education Program, Southeastern Oklahoma State University. 368 pp., \$7.00 paper.

This careful study of schools for Choctaw children and youth from about 1820 to 1900 includes considerable attention to mission schools operated by church groups — both in Mississippi before the removal to the West and in Indian Territory after the removal. Earliest of these were schools founded and staffed by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in 1818 in Mississippi. A Methodist school followed in 1827 under the guidance of the Rev. Alexander Talley, sometimes called the Apostle to the Choctaws. There were four Methodist schools before removal.

The removal to the West was expedited among the Choctaws by the labors of the Rev. Mr. Talley. In the fall of 1831 Talley got two schools started in the Fort Towson area. One of the earliest teachers was Thomas Myers; another was Moses Perry; and a third was Mrs. J.W.P. McKenzie, who served as teacher when her husband was the Choctaw Circuit pastor.

*Schools for the Choctaws* deals with several early short-lived Methodist schools and with later, more permanent ones at Fort Coffee — Fort Coffee Academy for boys and New Hope Academy

for girls. Early teachers there were Rev. William H. Goode and Rev. Henry C. Benson. Both schools closed during the Civil War; New Hope reopened in 1871, but in 1896 the building burned and the school ceased to operate.

This account is a fine contribution to the history of early Choctaw education.

Walter N. Vernon,  
Nashville, Tennessee

Darrell Reeck, *Deep Mende: Religious Interactions in a Changing African Rural Society*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976. 102 pp. 28 guilders.

"Deep Mende" refers to the traditional communal ties of the Mende people of Sierra Leone. Reeck gives a brief account of how these ties have been threatened but not destroyed by outside forces. He uses personal contacts as well as documents in developing what he calls "a case study in historical sociology with an emphasis on religious ethics." (p. 2)

Outside forces became significant in the life of the Mende during the second half of the nineteenth century, with the development of trade, the arrival of missionaries and increasing British interference in the political process. Change was gradual until the "White Man's War" of 1896-98, which resulted from the radically different economic, political and religious assumptions of the Mende and the Europeans. After the war, the Mende sought to make the best adaptation possible in their new role as a defeated people. They managed to retain much of their traditional system under these changed conditions by integrating aspects of the "modern" into the "traditional," thus preserving "Deep Mende."

One of the important outside influences was the missionary activity of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ (now part of the United Methodist Church), which contributed, perhaps unintentionally, to the process of "modernization." Reeck finds that "selected aspects of missionary Christianity," were incorporated into the traditional pattern of Mende life. (p. 75) This led not only to "modernizing" change among the Mende but also to a "traditionalization" of Christianity.

Reeck provides useful information about change in one group and interpretation of the process of change which is probably applicable to many groups. Unfortunately, the book seems somewhat disjointed; modernization theory, political history and religious history are not sufficiently coordinated to make one overall im-

pression. This reviewer would also expect a book called *Deep Mende* to tell us more of the traditional system. Reeck refers to other sources of such information, but a chapter on the deeper communal ties would have provided a firmer basis for the developments that are discussed.

Newell S. Booth, Jr.  
Miami University

Robert G. Tuttle, Jr., *John Wesley: His Life and Theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978. \$9.95

Another biography of John Wesley? Yes, and a good one. The author has spent the greater part of his adult life pursuing the theology of John Wesley, living in the center of Wesley's early pastoral activities, and earning his doctorate from the University of Bristol where he wrote his doctoral dissertation on the topic, "The Influence of the Roman Catholic Mystics on Wesley." Much of the essence of the dissertation is included in the first two parts of the book, if, indeed, the author really gets completely away from the manner of that influence upon Wesley. One will hardly find a better presentation of Wesley's encounter with continental mysticism anywhere. The influence of de Renty, Fenelon, Scupoli and others upon Wesley's reading and experience, particularly before Aldersgate, is, according to the author, quite pronounced. Among British mystics, William Law and Jeremy Taylor, as well as the Scottish Scougal, are brought in to accentuate the development of what Wesley called "inner holiness." Most readers of materials dealing with Wesley and the mystics will be familiar with the fact that Wesley read and edited much of the available material on mysticism and published a considerable amount of it in the *Christian Library*. However, Tuttle is not just going over familiar ground; he makes a startlingly successful effort to show that mysticism, in spite of Wesley's insistence that he could not accept the mystical theology, held a strong appeal for Wesley even in his later life.

The makeup of the volume is unusual, if not unique. It is organized into four parts, each of which concludes with an "Analysis." Actually, the chapters making up each Part are broadly biographical, updated with results of modern research, therefore not simply a repetition of what is found in the general run of Wesley biographies. Of course, the biographical pattern is of necessity the same, though Tuttle does reserve Part IV for a deeper look into

Wesley's theology (as contrasted with his travels and organization of Societies throughout England). By now, followers of Wesley know that he was not, theologically speaking, a "system-maker." There is no need to expect such in any theological treatment of Wesley. However, this is not to say that Wesley was no theologian, even if he never succeeded in clarifying his position on the doctrine of perfection. And Dr. Tuttle does not imply any such thing. Wisely, he presents Wesley as a man whose obligations to his people took precedence over the writing of theological treatises. He (Wesley) was much more concerned to edit and publish the works of others in order that the poor might know the best (in Wesley's thinking) of extra-biblical thought in their time.

The work includes several maps that assist the reader in finding his way around those areas of England, Ireland and Scotland where Methodism flourished. The maps are still too brief and sketchy (we need badly a set of maps that detail Wesley's itinerary). Four bibliographies (at the end of each Part) are included. One would have been sufficient, considering that the four are repetitions.

But it remains that this is a work which reflects Wesley's views (the biography is narrated in the first person, which carries certain dangers). Of greatest importance is the fact that the author is "into Wesley." He has spent ten years of intensive study (p. 329) of Wesleyan materials; he has lived in and around Bristol; and it appears that he is not ready to discontinue studying the founder of Methodism. He has traveled widely in England, has familiarized himself thoroughly with Wesley's *Journal, Letters, Sermons*, and a voluminous amount of other reader research. His task of putting all this on paper turns out exceptionally well. It is a good theological biography.

James H. Overton  
Elon College

Thomas Daniel Young, *Gentleman in a Dustcoat: A Biography of John Crowe Ransom* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University, 1976). Paper, \$8.95.

(This piece is not intended as a thorough review of this book, but is simply calling attention to Mr. Ransom's Methodist background.)

The man once considered "the dean of American poetry," John Crowe Ransom, was the product of a Methodist parsonage in

Tennessee. He was the son of the Rev. John James Ransom, who attended Emory and Henry College and who began his ministry in 1875 as a missionary to Brazil where he served until 1886. John Crowe's paternal grandfather was also a Methodist preacher — the Rev. R.P. Ransom.

John Crowe Ransom entered Vanderbilt University in 1903; after two years he dropped out to teach school for two years, and then returned in 1907 to finish his A.B. In his senior year he edited the literary magazine, the *Observer*, where he began his voluminous output as a literary critic and poet. Later he helped organize "the most articulate and influential group of writers the section has ever produced; writers who would not only unclog the stream of Southern literature but for three decades would direct its flow." The group was known as the Fugitives, of course, and among its followers were such luminaries as Robert Penn Warren, Allen Tate, and Donald Davidson.

Ransom's highly classical education at Vanderbilt and as a Rhodes scholar in Oxford turned him toward philosophical questions, and he probed some of the basic questions in religion: What is man's destiny? What is the proper relation of man to the God of nature? He wrote: "Little by little the God of the Jews has been whittled down into the spirit of science or the spirit of love, or the spirit of Rotary; and now religion is not religion at all, but a purely secular experience, like Y.M.C.A. or Boy Scouts. Humanism in religion means pretending that man is God." Life cannot be fully explained by science, he held; mankind must resort to religious myth if he is to perceive the true relationship which exists between the physical and metaphysical realms. "Religion is fundamental and prior to intelligent (or human) conduct on any plane," he held.

Ransom's interest in such questions took him far beyond the church of his day although for a time in the mid-1930s he attended the Arlington Methodist Church in Nashville, and taught a Sunday School class there. But when some members discovered that he did not repeat the Apostles Creed (because of questions he had about the doctrine of the Trinity) they looked askance at him and he stopped going. But as long as his father continued to preach, he occasionally went to hear him. Two of his many books were *God Without Thunder* and *Poems About God*. In 1912 the *Methodist Review* (Nashville) carried an article by him regarding his experiences as a student at Oxford University.

Walter N. Vernon  
Nashville, Tennessee

Michael S. Edwards, *S.E. Keeble, the Rejected Prophet*, Wesley Historical Society, 1977, pp. 71, 50p plus postage.

This study presents to us an important, but largely neglected, figure in a period when British Methodism was poorly led despite a number of 'great names' who failed again and again to interpret the signs of the times. It is a book without halos. There is a refreshing candour in the examination of the 'historical roots of our present plight' which extends to his treatment of the central figure. It raises questions regarding the relationship of religion and politics which are of universal significance in our age.

Much of Keeble's outlook can be traced to the 'lifelong dilemma' which his early years thrust upon him. 'On the one hand he knew the love and security of a Christian home . . . On the other, he knew the ruthlessness of a competitive economic system in which the behaviour of professed Christians was no different from anyone else's.'

The period was one which saw a growing secularisation of society, before which the traditional ecclesiastical structures proved not only powerless but themselves vulnerable. Keeble was almost alone in contemporary Wesleyanism in making a serious, though not uncritical, study of Marx. He came to see that Social Gospellism was no answer to the situation and rejected the Non-conformist Liberal illusion that it could hope to impose its moral standards on the nation. The whole effort to assert Nonconformist pressure on the government in the closing years of the 19th Century was misplaced. 'Only Christian participation in genuinely secular political choices would "serve the present age".' Christian social concern for him, therefore, meant something much wider than concern about the traditional vices of drink, gambling and the like.

It was Keeble's fate that, after years of indifference and suspicion on the part of the Wesleyan leadership, he was officially adopted, though his views received little more than lip-service, being either misunderstood or misinterpreted. His Christian socialism was never likely to become the political creed of the Church as a whole, though he has his offspring in the left-wing politics of men in the Methodist ministry today. 'Whether they realize it or not, they follow in the footsteps of S.E. Keeble, the pioneer of them all. He has been one of the seminal influences in 20th century Methodism.'

Mr. Edward's study deserves a wide circulation both among Methodist historians aware that Methodist history does not end

abruptly at 1791, or even at 1850, and among all those whose concern is more for the contemporary mission and involvement of the Church in a secular society. It is regrettable that numerous typing errors and poor quality duplicating amount to a format totally unworthy of a particularly valuable study; but no one should be put off by these externals.

John A. Vickers  
Bognor Regis, England