



DISCOVERY

Edited by
FREDERICK E. MASER

Recently I purchased a copy of the first edition of the first volume of *The History of Georgia* by Captain High M'Call, published in Savannah, Georgia in 1811. I understand the work has since been reprinted. M'Call is purported to have been a Revolutionary officer and pioneer who wrote his account from personal knowledge and from manuscript sources no longer extant. I immediately looked to see what he had to say about John Wesley, and I discovered a poem supposedly written by Wesley entitled "Georgia." It is debatable whether the poem was or was not written by Wesley. I did not find it in the thirteen-volume edition of the poetical works of the Wesleys, nor did I find it in the usual places one would expect it to turn up. Moreover, at the time the poem was purportedly written by Wesley he was busy translating the hymns of the Moravians from German into English. However, for what it may be worth I record the account of the poem as entered by the Captain.

In the meantime [probably during the 1730s] the most extravagant accounts of this paradise of the world [Georgia] were circulated in England: numerous hackney muses might be instanced, but I shall confine myself to the celebrated performance of the reverend Mr. Wesley, where a sufficient stock of truth and religion, might be expected to counterbalance a poetical licence: this was said to have been written about the time he was courting the smiles of justice Causton's niece: the poem is entitled "Georgia," and some verses upon Mr. Oglethorpe's second voyage.

"See where beyond the spacious ocean lies
A wide waste land beneath the southern skies,
Where kindly suns for ages roll'd in vain,
Nor e're the vintage saw, or rip'ning grain;
Where all things into wild luxuriance ran,
And burthen'd nature ask'd the aid of man.
In this sweet climate and prolific soil,
He bids the eager swain indulge his toil;
In free possession to the planters hand,
Consigns the rich uncultivated land.
Go you, the monarch cries, go settle there,
Whom Britain from her plentitude can spare;
Go, your old wonted industry pursue;
Nor envy Spain the treasures of Peru.

“But not content in council here to join,
 A further labor, *Oglethorpe*, is thine:
 In each great deed, thou claim’st the foremost part,
 And toil and danger charm thy gen’rous heart:
 But chief for this thy warm affections rise;
 For oh! thou view’st it with a parent’s eyes:
 For this thou tempt’st the vast tremendous main,
 And floods and storms oppose their threats in vain.

“He comes, whose life, while absent from your view,
 Was one continued ministry for you;
 For you, were laid out all his pains and art,
 Won ev’ry will and soften’d ev’ry heart.
 With what paternal joy shall he relate,
 How views its mother isle, your little state:
 Think while he strove your distant coast to gain,
 How oft he sigh’d and chid the tedious main!
 Impatient to survey, by culture grac’d,
 Your dreary woodland and your rugged waste.
 Fair were the scenes he feign’d, the prospect fair;
 And sure, ye Georgians, all he feign’d was there.
 A thousand pleasures crowd into his breast;
 But one, one mighty thought absorbs the rest,
 And gives me heav’n to see, the patriot cries,
 Another Britain in the desert rise.

“With nobler products see thy *Georgia* teems,
 Cheer’d with the genial sun’s directer beams;
 There the wild vine to culture learns to yield,
 And purple clusters ripen through the field.
 Now bid thy merchants bring their wine no more
 Or from the *Iberian* or the *Tuscan* shore:
 No more they need th’ Hungarian vineyards drain,
 And France herself may drink her best Champaign,
 Behold! at last, and in a subject land,
 Nectar sufficient for thy large demand:
 Delicious nectar, powerful to improve
 Our hospitable mirth and social love:
 This for thy jovial sons—nor less the care
 Of thy young province, to oblige the fair
 Here tend the silk-worm in the verdant shade,
 The frugal matron and the blooming maid.

To this poem, which he claimed was written by Wesley, the Captain added the following condemnation:

The bad effects which would arise from such a picture so overcharged, are evident. Idlers who saw this description from the pen of a clergyman, and calculated on its truth, removed to Georgia, under the belief that the labor of one or two days in the week, would enable them to dress in silk and riot in wine, the remainder of their days: With such expectations many came to Georgia, where to their astonishment they found nothing but complaints, discontents, poverty, disease and wretchedness.

The Captain continues in this vein for another paragraph.

To me it is doubtful if Wesley ever wrote this poem. It simply is not characteristic of the man to have sought to lure persons to Georgia with a picture of a community overflowing with wine and luxuries. Wesley's picture of Georgia is actually written in prose and can be found in his *Journal*. It is clearly stated, accurate, and—with the possible exception of his opinion of the Indians—a well balanced, straightforward account.

I record this statement of Captain M'Call because it illustrates how as late as 1811 people were still attributing to Wesley things that he probably never said or wrote. It is for this reason that he often pleaded with people to first read the writings of the Methodists and become acquainted with them personally before taking pen in hand to condemn them.

On the other hand, I would be happy to hear from those of my readers who may believe that Wesley did actually write this poem and may be able to produce documentary evidence to support their position. It would be nice to know.

BOOK REVIEWS

John G. McEllhenney, ed., Frederick E. Maser, Charles Yrigoyen, Jr., Kenneth E. Rowe, *Proclaiming Grace and Freedom, The Story of United Methodism*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1982, 141 pp., \$6.95.

Of course any theme can be developed within any given space provided the boundaries are clearly understood. But the retelling of the story of United Methodism in 125 pages is a formidable challenge. The authors of *Proclaiming Grace and Freedom* deserve high credit for editorial discipline, which is usually very painful. They have accomplished what they set out to do, namely, to provide, for the Bicentennial observance centered on 1984, a brief and inexpensive account in readable style and format of United Methodism and its antecedents (but not the other Methodisms).

Such writing exacts its price. Instead of real persons you get names, and frequently not even that. People who are familiar with the subject will note the absence of many names, places, events, issues, controversies, doctrines, and even whole denominations, all important. To have attempted to include all of these, however, would have resulted in intolerable clutter. One does miss Jesse Lee (and Jason too), Ezekiel Cooper, Nicholas Sneath, Matthew Simpson, Francis J. McConnell, and Edwin Lewis. But Tittle is there, and Oxnam. Lydia Sexton is listed, and so is Anna Howard Shaw, but not Anna Oliver. Recent developments among ethnic components are well summarized; but, except for black Methodists, early history is slighted. It is *United Methodism*—a denomination. One looks in vain for Free Methodists and Nazarenes and the rest.