

BOOK REVIEWS

Phyllis D. Airhart, *Serving the Present Age: Revivalism, Progressivism, and the Methodist Tradition in Canada*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992. x + 218 pp. \$34.95.

Through continuing research, wide reading, and careful thought, Dr. Airhart has effectively developed a 1985 doctoral dissertation into a major contribution to the history of religion in North America for the late nineteenth and early twentieth century period. Focused on Methodism in Canada, her thoroughly documented study has much to offer not only to those concerned with the Methodist churches on this continent but also through its probing analysis indirectly to anyone seeking a fuller understanding of significant continuities and changes in many denominational traditions and interdenominational movements. Selecting as her primary sources the Canadian Methodist denominational press (especially periodicals) and sermonic literature, combining insights from historical and social studies approaches (yet aware of both strengths and limitations in those choices), she has probed into shifts in piety from the nineteenth-century emphasis on the revivalist conversion experience to the twentieth-century trends toward liberal evangelicalism and the social gospel. She documents the thesis that the importance of saving society did not displace concern for the care and cure of souls, but reinterpreted it. As "Methodists juxtaposed revivalist piety with progressivist presuppositions" they blended old and new in an unintended mix difficult to understand, both then and now. In the broader cultural "organizing process" of the progressive period, familiar phrases and emphases took on new colorations and meanings. As we look back, the gap between the traditional and the modern looks far wider than was felt at the time for "even the progressivists saw themselves as merely faithful transmitters of the revivalist tradition of 'the fathers'" (p. 63).

An associate professor at Emmanuel College of the University of Toronto, Airhart discusses many aspects of the transitions in religious life during the period of her study, including such matters as conflicts in theology and practice, tensions over nurture and education, shifts away from revivalism as evangelism was interpreted in broader terms, quarrels with holiness and premillennialist movements, and the forging of new alliances and associations, a number of them across denominational lines. Her study is relevant not only for an understanding of the United Church of Canada, into which the Methodists entered in 1925, but also for all continuing Methodist (and other) bodies on the North American scene. A useful bibliography and an index complete this stimulating book. It is one worth taking seriously by whoever reads it, but the scholar is somewhat hampered by the location of its impressive documentation in notes in the

back (pp. 149 to 193) instead of at the foot of each page. But do not let my continuing annoyance with backnotes in such fine studies as this turn you away from a probing, readable, valuable work.

ROBERT T. HANDY

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Arthur Skevington Wood, *Revelation and Reason: Wesleyan Responses to Eighteenth-Century Rationalism*. The Wesley Fellowship, 1992. 102 pp. \$9.00. Available from Barry Bryant, 508 Heritage Drive, Columbia, TN 38401.

This very useful study by a leading Evangelical scholar in British Methodism examines in some detail the interaction of two contrasted features of the eighteenth century. To describe the century as an "Age of Reason" may be a serious oversimplification, but does draw attention to one of its predominant characteristics, pervaded as it was by the influence of John Locke. At the same time it saw the rise of the evangelical movement, with Methodism at its heart, partly as a reaction against the prevailing rationalism.

Underlying other major issues of debate was that of the rival claims of reason and revelation as sources of authority in religious matters, an issue that remains unresolved more than two centuries later. The eighteenth-century controversies therefore have more than antiquarian interest for us.

An opening chapter traces the rise of Deism and Socinianism and then examines John Wesley's credentials as a defender of the Christian orthodoxy they challenged. The man who made this appeal to "men of reason and religion" is presented as a reluctant, but intellectually competent, apologist as he engaged in controversy with those whom he regarded as a threat to orthodox believers. His engagement in debate was, therefore, one expression of his evangelical and pastoral concern.

The remainder of the book is given over to a study of three important intellectual disputes. In the first, Wesley himself countered what he saw as the Pelagianism of Dr. John Taylor's *Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin* (1740). In the other two, the opponent was the Unitarian Joseph Priestley, particularly in his three-volume *Institutes of Natural and Revealed Religion* (1772-1774). Priestley was answered in the first place by John Fletcher and then, after Fletcher's premature death, by Joseph Benson, one of the ablest of the younger itinerants in the closing years of Wesley's life.

Dr. Wood's exposition of these controversies is lucid and detailed and usefully reminds us of an intellectual dimension to the Methodist movement that has sometimes been overlooked or underplayed. "Folk

theologian" Wesley may have been, but he was also no mean apologist among his fellow intellectuals.

Since the Wesley Fellowship exists to promote the relevance of Wesleyan theology for today, a further chapter re-examining the eighteenth-century debates in the light of more recent scholarship (and especially the revolution in biblical studies) would have seemed appropriate. Both the Preface and his closing paragraph indicate that the author is aware of this, but he does not address the matter. A short index would also have enhanced the book's value.

JOHN A. VICKERS
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**MINUTES
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

Meeting of the Society
August 15, 1992
Cherry Creek Inn, Denver, Colorado

President Sledge convened the meeting at 3:38 and announced an agenda.

MINUTES: The minutes of the 1991 meeting were approved as printed.

FINANCES: The treasurer, Richardson, presented a report and budget for 1993. An original of that report is made a part of the manuscript board minutes. The financial statement 1991-1992 was for 14 months, showed an initial balance of \$7,851.72, receipts of \$14,385.80 for membership, \$3 for sales, \$434 for contributions and \$289.23 for interest, for a total of \$15,112.03. Expenditures were \$8,523.88 for MH, \$1,840.39 for HD, \$2,817.94 for the 1991 annual meeting, \$763.67 for sections, \$1,092.71 for promotion, and \$3 for publication sales. Total \$15,041.59 and balance \$7,922.16. Two CDs are held, \$7,140.45 and \$2,691.47 plus interest.

The Budget was presented. Income from memberships \$15,400, from gifts and interest \$600 and from a matured CD \$2,900 for a total of \$18,900. Expenditures: sections \$800; Board of Directors (annual meeting) \$3,000, MH \$9,000, HD \$2,000, promotion and administration \$2,000 and contingency \$2,000, for a total of \$18,900. She explained that the CDs would both be cashed, one to be invested in UMDF. A motion to adopt was made, seconded and passed unanimously.

SECTIONS: Gary Ferrell reported for local church history a good program, but a quiet year. The business meeting produced no items requiring action. The by-laws were reviewed. Patricia Thompson, for commissions and societies, noted that by-laws were passed. Individuals shared information about how commissions worked; programming for Dallas was discussed; archival matters will probably be the focus. Jarret Gray reported that education and research had elected a chair, Gray and Charles A. Green as vice-chair, both for four-year terms. A call for papers will be issued for the Dallas program, focusing particularly on the formation of the UMC. A vision for and the future of the section were also discussed. Fern Christensen spoke about broader uses of genealogy, noted concern about ministerial records and their preservation. The program focussed on computer programs for handling genealogical records. The section expressed concern about reaching archivists. The Dallas program will be a case study. GCAH: Susan Eltscher reported for the Commission. She reiterated Commission willingness to assist and support the Society.

MEETINGS: Vice-president Boeder prefaced her report by noting that the Society had moved through the jurisdictions. Texas and Southcentral are acting as hosts for the 1993 meeting in Dallas for the 25th anniversary of the UMC, April 23-25 or the weekend closer thereunto.

In August 1994 the WMHS will meet in Madison and invites the Society to meet in conjunction, Aug. 13-17, theme "history of missions". St. Simon's has been set for 1995 convocation, August 25-28; the Commission invites the Society to meet then as well.

MEMBERSHIPS: The secretary reported for the board a motion "That the Society maintain \$1,000 in an interest-bearing fund for each (living) honorary membership, invest any life membership on receipt, and treat the earnings as unrestricted income." Passed.

A second motion to establish the fee for institutional membership at \$30 per year also Passed. Richey reported also the treasurer's request that reduced joint membership fees from annual conferences be given only for five or more received at one time was taken up and an action that joint memberships be honored only if they come from the duly authorized officer of the conference-approved historical society. The following structure of membership and fee categories were approved in 1991:

Individual	\$20.00*	Patron	\$100.00
Student	\$15.00*	Life	\$500.00
Family	\$25.00* (one HD, one MH)		

EDITOR OF HD: Richey also reported a motion that Sledge be appointed editor of HD.

COMMITTEES: The president announced his intention to appoint a committee to select honorary life members, Jim Morris, Jarrett Gray and Ted Agnew. For a nominating committee for new officers, Sledge indicated that he would approach the following:

Janet Engle, western	Edwin Schell, northeastern
Charles Finney, northcentral	Bishop Thomas, southeastern
Bradley Sue Howell, southcentral (chair)	

The president also reported the proposal to create a membership secretary and to select the person to be responsible for membership, recruitment, correspondence, on-going care, production of brochures. The term was understood to be annual. Sledge suggested that eventually such a position might be a fifth officer and suggested that the Board develop an amendment to be passed in 1994.

The new Disciplinary paragraph and By-laws were distributed. The president then called attention to the proposed and previously circulated revision in the make-up of the board, specifically article 6, creating a new section 4 and renumbering the current 4 as 5.

- a. The Nominating Committee shall present at least two nominations for each elective office.
- b. The Nominating Committee will, in selecting candidates for the officers of the Society, take into account the demographic diversity of the Society's membership.
- c. For purposes of achieving demographic balance, the Board may at its discretion, elect up to two additional members at large.

The motion was approved unanimously by show of hands.

Richardson moved that the April 1993 event to be hosted in Dallas by the Southcentral historical societies be considered a major celebration of the establishment of The United Methodist Church 25 years ago and that communications be sent to the Council of Bishops and the General Council on Ministries requesting their appropriate participation. Passed unanimously.

Lois Yost suggested that the Society take advantage of this event for recruitment purposes. Jim Morris invited nominations for honorary memberships and indicated that such a call would also be placed in HD. Following announcements, an expression of appreciation to Boeder, and negotiations for Sunday rides, Sledge adjourned the meeting at 4:41.

Respectfully submitted,
Russell E. Richey
Secretary