

Book Reviews

Baker, Frank, *William Grimshaw, 1708-63*. London: Epworth Press, 1963.

William Grimshaw was born five years after John Wesley, yet he preceded him to the grave by twenty-eight years. "Slow rains last long, but violent fires soon burn out themselves," and William Grimshaw lived recklessly both as a sinner and a saint. More than anyone else in the Methodist movement, he was the impetuous zealot who would "take the Kingdom of God by storm."

His parish was Haworth, on the bleak moors of Yorkshire, later to be dramatized and made famous in literature by the novels of the Bronte sisters, whose home was the very parsonage in which Grimshaw lived during the twenty-one years of his curacy. There are many relics in the house, now a national monument, that go back to his time and some of which were his personal effects. He sleeps in the graveyard around the church, and every visitor to the place is regaled by the town folk with stories from his life.

His method of pastoral care was, to say the least, unusual. He visited "pubs" and brothels, rounding up his wayward sheep and driving them with a horsewhip into the church.

"This stocky, rugged faced man was far removed from the conventional image of the evangelical preacher." Once he joined on the highway two men as ugly and unprepossessing as himself. He asked them where they were going. They said, "We are going to hear mad Grimshaw. We shall have some rare sport tonight." He asked if he might accompany them, as he would like to hear Grimshaw himself. They laughed, joked, and plotted mischief for the service and the preacher. Imagine their surprise and embarrassment when their companion mounted the pulpit and riled them with their own words. The real sport that night was their conversion.

This exciting story of Grimshaw and his times, which once excited the imagination and employed the pen of Robert Southey, poet laureate of England, is told afresh in this charming biography by Frank Baker. His excuse for writing it was the finding of new source materials and the fact that a documented biography of the Yorkshire evangelist had never before been written. These constitute a legitimate reason for Baker's work. He has used his time well. All pertinent data have been assembled; every major incident has been carefully documented; the story is well told; and the subject is both interesting and instructive.

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Dolbey, George W., *The Architectural Expression of Methodism*. London: The Epworth Press, 1964. (35s net).

This book is forceful and rewarding in what it says. It is disappointing in what it does not say. One certainly finds in the volume what the title

suggests—the architectural expression of Methodism in its first century, that is, from the middle of the eighteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth.

The author's thesis is that architecture—buildings—expresses faith and religion as much as liturgy and creed. Every building with its range of functional possibilities is an affirmation of faith. He considers scores of church buildings constructed during the century indicated and seeks to show that while they were built to serve the needs of the people they also express their faith.

There was no one style of Methodist architecture. The author identifies several types as follows: the meeting house, dissenting meeting house, octagonal chapel, Moravian chapel, square chapel, the pepper box chapel, the Sunday school, thatched chapel, auditory Anglican plan, classical plan, Georgian influence, Gothic arches, and City Road type. In every type of building the placing of the pulpit—usually in the center—and the table for the Lord's Supper was considered important. Though there was no distinctively Methodist architectural plan for church buildings, the Methodist church buildings generally were characterized by simplicity, beauty, and functional design for preaching, administering the sacraments, and serving the needs of the societies and the poor.

This book has historical perspective. It traces briefly developments in church architecture from the first century to about 1850. It presents John Wesley's views about church buildings.

This volume does not say what Methodism is or what about Methodism is expressed in the scores of Methodist edifices which it discusses. Apparently the writer leaves it to the reader to conclude that Methodism is an intangible reality which makes men akin to the divine. He suggests that while Methodism in the period studied incarnated itself in many forms of architecture, they were forms that had elegance in their simplicity, and where they were ornate it was for praise not pride, and where there were oddities they did not detract, they served.

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Harkness, Georgia, *The Methodist Church in Social Thought and Action—A Summary*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1964. (Paper, \$1.50).

As its title indicates, this book is a summary of four volumes. In 1960 the Board of Social and Economic Relations of The Methodist Church brought out the four books by Richard M. Cameron, Walter G. Muelder, S. Paul Schilling, and Herbert E. Stotts and Paul Deats, Jr. They are known as the MESTA books (The Methodist Church in Social Thought and Action). They traced historical developments in social action in Methodism from John Wesley to the twentieth century, considered the relation of theology to Methodist social action, and discussed guidelines for strategy. Dr. Harkness summarizes the major emphases in each volume and states clearly and concisely what each is trying to say.

Dr. Harkness deals with the theological roots of Methodism's concern

in the social fields. She amplifies the social implications of Wesley's theology.

Perhaps what is lacking most in some of our social concerns and social action today is a biblically based, Christ-centered theology. Social concerns do not make necessary the Gospel; the Gospel makes necessary social concerns. Dr. Harkness affirms that the root is theology while the fruit is social concern and action in the name of Christ.

This condensation is a good study book for groups and individuals. Dr. Harkness has included the page numbers from the four original volumes and a list of discussion questions at the end of each chapter so as to give the reader guidance for the use of the larger volumes. Dr. Harkness's book can serve as a text for a series of studies on Christian social thought, concern, and action. Through the leadership of the Holy Spirit such studies might well be one of the avenues to Christian renewal for the church.

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Lee, Elizabeth Meredith, *As Among the Methodists*. Methodist Board of Missions, 1963. (\$2.95).

As a part of the 75th anniversary of deaconess work in the U. S. A., Miss Lee has written a history of the deaconess movement under the title "As Among the Methodists," taken from Webster's definition of the word *deaconess* who is described as "a chosen helper in church work, as among the Methodists." In most readable, interesting style, Miss Lee tells us of the beginning of the movement in the early church and of periods of decline and expansion during its historical development through the centuries.

Specific illustrations are given from the days of Paul's writing in the book of Romans, "I commend to you our sister, Phoebe, a deaconess of the church . . ." to the call of Methodism today for the "PQW" or "professionally qualified woman" with spiritual depth, willing to put her experience to work for the church. Historically we trace the deaconess movement in Germany, England and Scandinavian countries. Miss Lee gives us that background and the story of deaconess work in the United States during its 75-year history in this country.

We are told of the training and administration provided for those who enter the deaconess relationship. Since there are still many false notions and vague ideas as to the actual meaning of the deaconess commitment, it is refreshing to be given insights through testimonials of those who find fulfillment in this Christian vocation. We are challenged by the great extent of its ministries. We are inspired by the ever-widening sphere of influence of Christian witness as the deaconess, in dedicated service, moves out into today's world under the direction of the church. Women of many lands are adding new chapters to the history of the movement. As Bishop Gerald Kennedy says in his "Foreword" to this book, "the deaconess is one of Methodism's heroines and it is time for us to present her

to the young women of our churches. Let me, therefore, commend this book to you."

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Outler, Albert C., Editor, *John Wesley*. A Library of Protestant Thought. New York: Oxford University Press, 1964. (\$7.50).

One of the first volumes published in the new Library of Protestant Thought, Albert Outler's *John Wesley* is a favorable omen for the outstanding success of this series. The new series endeavors to "pick up" where the well received Library of Christian Classics "left off" with the sixteenth century classical reformers. We are promised a "balanced view of how the Protestant mind has thought and spoken since the Reformation."

The Outler organization of Wesley's theological writing combines first-rate scholarship with a definite mission, to show the integrity and significance of Wesley as a "folk" theologian. For a variety of reasons no one has run down Wesley's contributions as a theologian more than his own people, the Methodists. It is not surprising then that other churchmen and especially historians of doctrine have accepted this Methodist disclaimer. A thorough study of Outler's volume will right the balance and give Wesley his significant place in Protestant thought. Certainly American theology in the nineteenth century owes more to Wesley than any other theologian.

The book is a marvel of exacting scholarship to be appreciated especially by those who have wandered in the wasteland of Wesley texts before. The editor's footnoting of sources for Wesley's quotations—notoriously garbled at times—and reading indebtedness are truly remarkable. We are brought closer to the historical origins of Wesley's thought in this single volume than ever before. Furthermore, the editor has been painstaking in his efforts to give us a reliable text, collated with other editions and as close to the original as possible. A number of previously unpublished Wesley materials have been used toward this end.

Outler's editorial introductions to the entire collection and each individual selection provide a most helpful Bedaeker throughout the tour of Wesley's thought. The book primarily organized around this general introduction, though only 32 pages in length, provides a most succinct theological biography of the great evangelist's biographic development. Here the Methodist myth of Aldersgate as the evangelical conversion of Wesley is skillfully called into question. Those who have traditionally ignored Wesley's earlier conversion (1725) and Christian witness before Aldersgate or his moments of depression and doubt concerning his salvation immediately subsequent to Aldersgate, had best read carefully Outler's closely documented presentation.

Again, we are shown a Wesley who was primarily a son of the English Reformation and the rootage it maintained in the preceding Catholic centuries. Wesley was not a revived Luther, Calvin or even Jacob Arminius as some have eagerly painted him. He has his parallels to each

of these earlier reformers, but his sources are not there. Rather, Wesley drank deeply of the 16th and 17th century Anglican divines who gave official utterance to their Protestantism in the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion and the Homilies. But more than this they introduced Wesley to their love for the theological fathers of the early undivided church prior to the sixth century. There was to be found a tradition of "evangelical synergism"—Augustine's "God does not save us without us"—which became so characteristic of Wesley's faith *and* works blend.

Outler's most striking claim, one not yet thoroughly examined and accepted by Wesley scholars, concerns the origin of Wesley's perfectionism in the mystical theology of Gregory of Nyssa through what Wesley thought was Macarius the Egyptian. This Byzantine tradition of perfection as the goal of the Christian life rather than the more familiar latin concept of a static perfection attained and maintained unconditionally would prove most helpful in clarifying the holiness controversy that has frequently suffocated Wesleyan theological development.

Other sources of Wesley's thought are documented by Outler—Moravian, Spanish and French mysticism, Jonathan Edwards. Puritan writers like John Owen, John Goodwin, and Richard Baxter should be given more credit than the present volume indicates.

Outler finds Wesley's uniqueness as a theologian not in originality or systematic definition. His greatness lies in his balance of the evangelical and the catholic, his ability to combine the Protestant *solī fide* with the Catholic *amor dei*, his insistence upon the initiative of God and the responsibility of man in salvation. And with these two combined there is added the evangelical fervor of a God-intoxicated passion for the souls of men.

Here is a book which should be on every minister's reading list—not just the Methodists. For here is a convincing case for Wesley's admirable contribution to the wider ecumenical discussion today. Surely this volume will find its way to the reading list of many a seminary course in historical and systematic theology.

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