

BOOK REVIEWS

Theodore R. Doraisamy, *Oldham--Called of God: Profile of a Pioneer: Bishop William Fitzjames Oldham*. Singapore: The Methodist Book Room, 1979. 103 pp., \$5.00 (hardback), \$4.00 (paperback).

William F. Oldham was surely an interesting and significant figure in the history of Methodist overseas missions. He was born in Bangalore, South India, into a traditionally Roman Catholic family of Irish-British antecedents. When a teenager the famed (and maverick) American evangelist, William Taylor, converted him to Methodism. He then obtained an American education at Allegheny College and Boston University, after which he returned to India as a missionary only to discover that he had been assigned to Singapore. The formative years of his career were therefore spent in Southeast Asia.

He accepted without complaint and established a successful mission. Particularly noteworthy was his educational work in the Chinese community. He seems to have worked miracles convincing wealthy, non-Christian Chinese businessmen to support the Anglo-Chinese school he founded. In 1889 he returned to the United States for health reasons, where he remained fifteen years serving as a pastor and professor. In 1904 he was elected Missionary Bishop of Malaysia and the Philippines. In 1912 he became a secretary of the mission board and ended his career as Bishop of South America.

In the context of the times, Oldham's beliefs on a variety of topics are best described as middle-of-the-road. He was, for example, strongly influenced by the Social Gospel Movement yet in no way minimized the importance of individual salvation. He saw value in other religions and welcomed the new discipline of comparative religions, while still insisting that Truth was to be found mostly in the Bible and Christian tradition. Appointed by the Governor of the Straits Settlement and Federated Malay States to a commission to make recommendations on the use of opium, Oldham once again displayed his moderation. Instead of urging the immediate abolition of the drug's use, the bishop urged gradual elimination consistent with opinion in the Chinese community. In sum, Oldham was a man of tolerance and broad understanding who nevertheless held firm to basic convictions.

In a sense, Oldham was also a moderate when it came to demands that indigenous people assume positions of leadership in the missions.

This is a subject of particular interest to Theodore R. Doraisamy, a long time leader of Methodism in Southeast Asia. Though his assessment of Oldham is generally very positive, even laudatory, he takes the bishop to task for his failures on this point. He had, writes Doraisamy, "a lacuna with respect to developing indigenous leadership." (p. xv) As leader of the Singapore mission, the author contends, Oldham failed to prepare Asians for leadership. Likewise in the Philippines, thinks Doraisamy, Oldham displayed insufficient sympathy with Nicolas Zamora, a Methodist pastor who in 1909 led a successful schism from the church over nationalistic issues. "It appears," he writes nicely, "that Oldham at a pinch joined the Establishment." (p. 69)

Yet one senses that the bishop's heart lay with those who wanted to turn the leadership over to the local peoples. In the Philippines his views were unquestionably in advance of most Methodist missionaries. And as secretary of the mission board (1912-1916) he urged his missionaries to move forcefully on the question of preparing indigenous people for leadership positions. Still, it is hard to disagree with Doraisamy's conclusion that his recommendations might have carried more weight had he set a better example as missionary bishop.

Oldham--Called of God is a welcome addition to the literature of Methodist missions. For such a short work, the research in manuscript and published primary sources is unusually substantial and helps compensate for some stylistic and organizational deficiencies. Yet, as the author readily concedes, the book is only an introduction, a "profile of a pioneer." The Philippine experience, the years in the United States, and the South American sojourn, for example, are touched only briefly. Hopefully someone will heed Doraisamy's plea to undertake a full scale study of this intriguing figure.

--Kenton J. Clymer

The University of Texas at El Paso

C. Howard Hopkins, *John R. Mott: 1865-1955: A Biography*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980. 816 pp. \$22.50.

In this major new biography, C. Howard Hopkins tells the story of a provincial midwestern youth who, through unusual executive ability, personal magnetism, and effectiveness as an evangelist, became the leading Protestant ecumenical statesman of his time.

During his varied career Mott was involved in the YMCA, the student missionary movement, several diplomatic missions, various national church councils, the World Council of Churches, and the World's Student Christian Federation. In addition, during World War I, he served on President Wilson's Mexican Campaign and the Root

Mission to Russia, and chaired the United War Work Campaign.

Mott received honorary doctorates from several universities and honors from religious leaders and princes in many countries; in 1946 he shared in the Nobel Peace Prize.

While Hopkins emphasizes Mott's many achievements, he also tells of his personal life--the struggles, failures, and successes. Thus, the work is a balanced biography of a man whose accomplishments remain an important influence on the world, almost 25 years after his death.

C. Howard Hopkins retired as Professor of History from Rider College, Lawrenceville, New Jersey, in 1975.

Rebecca D. Radde, *Meridian College*. Privately published. Order from the author at Route 2, Meridian, Texas 76665. 1979. 223 pp. \$10 includes tax and mailing.

The Methodists in Texas — as in many other states — started more colleges than they could support. Meridian College was one in that category. It began in the fall of 1898 as a private high school called Meridian Academy. In 1907 the Gatesville Methodist District Conference voted to establish a college in its area, and the Academy property was given to the new institution. Dr. (later bishop) H.A. Boaz encouraged the venture, and Bishop Joseph Key gave the address at the cornerstone laying. After twenty years of struggle the college was bankrupt, with a \$40,000 debt, most of which was due to athletics. President for ten of the college's best years was Dr. George F. Winfield, widely known in Texas and Mississippi as a fine educator. The author has re-created her story from meager records, and rescued much information from oblivion. Among students at Meridian College who have been well-known in Texas Methodism are Olin W. Nail and Cecil Peeples.

--Walter N. Vernon
Nashville, Tennessee

Thomas Olivers of Tregynon, edited by Glyn Tegai Hughes. Tregynon Newtown Powys: Gwasg Gregynog, 1979, 56 pages, \$30.00 (additional \$5.00 charge for handling and bank exchange)

This is a reprint of the autobiography of Thomas Olivers, a Welsh Methodist preacher, which had been originally published two hundred years ago. Olivers was also a hymn-writer. The work has been annotated by Mr. Glyn Tegai Hughes with an introduction and footnotes. The latter were placed at the end of the book rather than individually on each page. There is a reproduction of the engraved

portrait of Thomas Olivers which has been done in collotype. Each copy in this limited edition of 375 books has been prepared as a collector's item.

Winthrop College Archives and Special Collections: A Guide to Records Relating to Winthrop College, Compiled by Ron Chepesiuk, with an introduction by Dr. Arnold Shankman, Winthrop College, Rock Hill, S.C. 29733, 1979. 41 pp. \$2.00.

Winthrop College has joined the growing number of archival repositories issuing guides to their holdings in order to encourage research by scholars and students. This guide to the records of Winthrop College supplements an earlier description of the manuscript and oral history collections also compiled by Archivist Ron Chepesiuk.

Winthrop College is of interest as one of the earliest (founded in 1886) and, until the 1974 decision to adopt co-education, most important public colleges for women. The archival holdings generally are sources for work in the history of education, the history of women, and the history of South Carolina. There are only limited holdings on religious programs at the College and the missionary activities of alumnae.

The College records, Dr. Shankman points out in his Introduction, in addition to their traditional use for college history, genealogy, and biography, are potential sources for research on a variety of topics in women's history. For example, they contain important data on the history of the single working woman's struggle for economic equality, as shown in records of Winthrop's female professors who petitioned for equal pay for equal work as early as 1910; there are also numerous sources documenting the development of the field of home economics and the home demonstration movement in South Carolina.

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