

## BOOK REVIEWS

Othal Hawthorne Lakey, *The History of the C M E Church*. Memphis: The C M E Publishing House, 1985. 683 pages.

This volume is a welcome portrayal of the history of an important branch of American Methodism—the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, organized in 1870. The author is Bishop Othal Hawthorne Lakey, one of the denomination's most effective leaders, now serving as his church's episcopal leader in Cincinnati.

The volume begins with an in-depth examination of the roots of the denomination—the meaning of slavery to blacks, the attitude of early Methodism toward slavery, the nature of Christian faith among black Methodists, the mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, to the slaves, and the attitude of white Southern Methodists toward the Negroes who were their fellow church members. Lakey has exhaustively mastered the data on the topics, has seen the picture clearly, and has seen it wholly. He has drawn on writings and judgments of such authorities as John Hope Franklin, W. E. B. DuBois, Carter G. Woodson, Alex Haley, Sydney E. Ahlstrom, Kenneth E. Latourette, C. Eric Lincoln, W. D. Weatherford, and Grant S. Shockley.

The author makes clear why emancipation and Reconstruction did not at first help the Negro: "It was a freedom of form without substance which, though removing the legal bonds of private ownership, did not thereby bestow upon the freedmen the rights, privileges, and opportunities other citizens enjoyed. Thus, though the freedmen no longer 'belonged' to a specific owner, they did not 'belong' anywhere in the society in which they were suddenly set free." After analyzing the Reconstruction period, Lakey concludes that the "efforts of Reconstruction had, in the long run, a very deleterious effect on the future of black people in the South."

The book probes the question of why black members of the southern Methodist Church did not turn to the African Methodist Episcopal Church or to the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church—or to the Methodist Episcopal Church itself, which persuaded numerous members, and whole churches, to join it. Why did some black Methodists prefer their own denomination? Lakey answers that it was partly their "affinity with Southern whites derived from slavery experience."

Lakey's account of the "Setting Up" (not "Setting Off," he insists) of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church in 1870 draws on the written records of that event, as well as the recollections of those present. Both parties to this "division"—white and black—agreed to the division, though the Methodist Episcopal editor of the *Western Christian Advocate* charged that the Southerners were "glad to get rid of the Negroes." Lakey comments that the Southern Church "did the only thing it could do under the

circumstances of the times and in light of what the colored members themselves wanted.”

This 683-page volume gives 223 pages to tracing the background of the CME Church through its organization in 1870. The account also gives eight more chapters to the story of the subsequent history. In it are traced the founding of Lane, Paine, Texas, Miles, and other colleges to assist Negro students to gain a start in life.

Lakey does not hesitate to mention the occasional conflicts in the church—such as the struggle of several bishops over the name of Texas College, and the struggles over episcopal elections. These struggles had various causes: some over matters of principle, some over light or dark visaged leaders, some over a personal power struggle. Some participants in these encounters were designated as “brilliant, charismatic, strong-willed, opportunistic, and highly ambitious.”

Bishop Lakey is well-equipped to provide this account, for he grew up in a CME Church in Shreveport, Louisiana, served as a CME pastor for twenty years before becoming editor of the CME Church’s official paper, *The Christian Index*, from 1974 to 1982. He is a B.A. graduate of Whitman College, holds a Master of Divinity degree from Drew Theological School, and the Master of Sacred Theology from Perkins School of Theology. He has taught religion at Texas College in Tyler, Texas, and has represented his denomination on the Consultation on Church Union. Bishop Lakey is the author of an earlier book, *The Rise of “Colored Methodism”* in 1972. This new volume is well illustrated, has excellent end notes, and is indexed.

—Walter N. Vernon  
Nashville, TN

Richard P. Heitzenrater, editor, *Diary of an Oxford Methodist: Benjamin Ingham, 1733-1734*. Durham, North Carolina, Duke University Press, 1985. 311 pages. \$37.50.

Just after seven o’clock in the evening of Monday, May 27, 1734, Benjamin Ingham entered James Hervey’s room at Lincoln College, Oxford. There James Walker confessed to sleeping through his alarm, while Ingham boasted of alacrity in responding to his. Yet the very next morning, he slept through his 4 a.m. wake-up call. And ninety days later, when he was awake and writing his diary, he placed this admonition beside 4 a.m.: “Trust not to thine own strength, but be humble.”

Back home in Yorkshire in August after taking his Oxford degree, Ingham was still fretting about being a slugabed. So he resolved “to rise at the first call; if not, to miss my breakfast, or supper . . .” All this self-sentencing he found necessary, even though he had told John Wesley on

July 27 that because he was “vastly deficient in rising regularly and early,” he had arranged for a woman to call him.

We might interpret Ingham’s fussing about early rising as the scrupulosity of a monkish young man who had resolved “not to put my hands into my breeches to prevent unchasteness.” But his diary—meticulously transcribed and edited by Richard P. Heitzenrater—is much more than a record of the cooling of adolescent heat. It is a mirror of Oxford Methodism, its thought and practice, reflecting what it was like to be influenced by Charles and John Wesley in the mid 1730s.

Central to that influence was diary-keeping, a practice based on the thought that no action is indifferent. So Ingham recorded books read, ale bottled, prayers prayed, nails pared, meals taken or forgone, birds hunted, conversations—whether learned or religious or useful or idle, drunkenness avoided, paying a poor woman to mend his shirt, and on Saturday, August 17, 1734, at 7 p.m., “Got shaved and visited a sick child.”

But a catalogue of events is bare—and boring—if the diarist does not add his evaluations. Ingham’s diary holds the reader’s interest by including daily summaries of blessings and sins. It was a blessing that he did not lend his Oxford gown to be used in a village play. It was a sin that he disputed with Charles Wesley, who had taught him his “exacter” system of diary-keeping, which included assessments of his degree of focused attention on the matter at hand and of his periodic sharp focus on God. So Ingham duly noted that his degree of attention while reading a sermon by John Wesley was “indifferent.”

All these intimate jottings were not private, however. They were the basis for confession. When, on March 1, 1734, Charles Wesley taught Ingham and a friend how “to keep an exacter diary,” he also advised them “to show one another our diaries every time we meet.” So Ingham’s frequent references to indulging “unchaste thoughts” were not for his eyes only. They were shared with others, just as on at least one occasion he “heard Charles Wesley read his diary.”

For Benjamin Ingham then, diary-keeping was a means of moralizing his thoughts and deeds. For us, his diary is an intimate glimpse of what it was like to be a pre-Aldersgate follower of John Wesley. It fills in two months of a gap in Wesley’s own diary. And finally, it was the finding of Ingham’s diary in the British Methodist Archives that gave Heitzenrater the clues he needed for decoding Wesley’s diary.

So if the price of the volume seems steep, methodize your book buying until sufficient funds are on hand. For it will give you a clearer picture of Oxford Methodism than a shelf-load of secondary accounts. And it will prepare you for Heitzenrater’s forthcoming edition of Wesley’s diaries, in which we can expect the same brilliance of detective work, the same meticulous scholarship, and the same gracefully written commentary.

—John G. McEllhenney  
West Chester, PA