

BOOK REVIEWS

Christoph Raedel. *Methodistische Theologie im 19. Jahrhundert. Der deutschsprachige Zweig der Bischöflichen Methodistenkirche*. Kirche – Konfession – Religion, Band 047. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004. 386pp. 59.00 (Euro).

In this large book Dr. Christoph Raedel provides us with a study of 19th-century theology of the German-speaking branch of the Methodist Episcopal Church on both sides of the Atlantic (U.S., Germany, and Switzerland). The book is the result of thorough research in archives and libraries in Germany and the U.S. Raedel identifies three principles – a formal, a material, and a medial – that characterize German-speaking Methodism of the time: the formal principle is the Reformation's *sola scriptura*. The material principle is *sanctification* as the key idea of Methodism. The medial principle is *experience*. These three principles are the recurring lens through which he evaluates the theological stands of German-speaking Methodists. The four foci for the presentation are 1) the order of salvation as fundamental structure of Methodist theology, 2) theological debates with Catholics, Baptists, and Lutherans, 3) questions of revelation and reason, not least as they were treated in the controversies around secular materialism and Darwinism, and 4) the ecclesiological consciousness of German-speaking Methodism.

The book is a valuable tool for anyone interested in Methodist history and theology and treats many texts for the first time, among them many unpublished texts, but not least countless articles from *Der Christliche Apologete* edited by Wilhelm Nast. Of value as well are more than three dozen short biographies of German Methodist preachers and an extensive bibliography.

Raedel does a fine job comparing and contrasting arguably the two most influential German-speaking Methodist theologians of the time, German born Wilhelm Nast, who lived and died in the U.S., and Swiss born Arnold Sulzberger, who taught many years at the Methodist seminary in Frankfurt. Raedel shows how Nast, influenced by Phoebe Palmer and the growing holiness movement in the U.S., emphasized the possibility of instantaneous sanctification, while Sulzberger, more faithful to a Wesleyan trajectory, treated sanctification as a gradual process. In spite of the differences between these theologians, however, Raedel is not prepared to draw any conclusions regarding the general differences between Methodist theology on both sides of the Atlantic.

Among Raedel's most noteworthy observations regarding the specific character of German Methodist theology are his conclusion that its polemics against the heavy reliance on Roman Catholicism on tradition as a source beside Scripture blinded it to its own dependency on Methodist tradition. Raedel does not find it justified to talk about a quadrilateral when it comes to 19th-century German Methodist theology. Rather, Scripture was seen as the sole source for theology, while reason, tradition, and experience were treated as means. Regarding the relation of German speaking Methodism to John Wesley's theology, Raedel attests *programmatically* continuity to the German Methodists. Discontinuities he prefers to call *adjustments of emphasis* (*Akzentverschiebungen*). He lists four such adjustments: German-speaking Methodists in comparison to Wesley had an ethicizing tendency in its understanding of anthropology, an individualizing tendency in its understanding of sanctification, a psychologizing tendency in terms of its description of Christian perfection, and a systematizing tendency that showed itself in the firm rejection of Wesley's belief in the coincidence of baptism and rebirth.

Notwithstanding its erudition and thoroughness, some questions remain. First, a clearer positioning of the author himself in the methodological part and throughout the book is missing. While he criticizes other treatments of Methodist theology for their narrowness of approach and their tendency to read contemporary issues into the texts of the 19th century, nothing is explicitly revealed about the authorial perspective and voice, which repeatedly talks in generalizing terms about German-speaking Methodism of the 19th century. (To be sure, there is a brief mentioning of the dominance of Wilhelm Nast's texts in the beginning.)

Second, the cultural and political context of German Methodist theology could have been emphasized more in its significance. We hear hardly anything for example about the theological significance of great historical events such as the revolution of 1848 in Germany and nothing about the Civil War 1861-1865 in the U.S. Also, one wonders in what way *Der Christliche Apologete*, as a major source for Raedel's conclusions, compares with the many other Methodist *Christian Advocates*, which were shaping English speaking Methodism. In other words, specifically for the U.S. context one still wonders how much difference there was between German-speaking and English-speaking Methodism.

Third and finally, we miss Raedel's own theological assessment of his findings about the theology of German speaking Methodism of the 19th century. What is the relevance of this study for contemporary Methodist theology? Raedel is curiously silent about this. Only in certain issues, such as the question of children's baptism, can one intuit the author's leanings. Or, does Raedel want to give an "objective" report? But why, then, end the book with a comparison of his three principles (*sola scriptura*, sanctification, experience) with Theodore Runyon's three dimensions (orthodoxy, orthopraxy,

orthopathy), a comparison that in its brevity gives a rather forced impression?

Michael Nausner
Reutlingen, Germany

Allan J. Bowers, *Life from a New Angle: A Journey of Faith*. Exeter [England]: Alpha Publishing, 2005. 178 pp. £7.50 UK (approx. \$14.00 US). Obtainable from the author, Allan J. Bowers, "Treetops," 25, Woolbrook Park, Sidmouth, Devon [UK] EX 10 9DX.

Allen Bowers, a Methodist minister in the British Connexion, surveys more than eighty years of life and nearly sixty years of ministry, both in England, Hong Kong, and Korea (with a brief and cheerful interlude in Oregon), in a deeply personal and reflective account with a clear and cultured style, which at times, especially in passages on the beauty and power of nature, rises to eloquence. The style is indeed the man: ordered, disciplined, committed to grace and accountable stewardship, questioning in faith and in continuing quest for understanding. To achieve the difficult London University B.D. degree at age 77 is a remarkable example of endurance and courage.

The world in which Allan Bowers grew up has almost vanished, as he is well aware. He gives us numerous examples of this change in domestic and artistic areas, in theology and church procedures. The degree and extent of these changes becomes clearer than expected to a reader who has gone through only some of the same years. At the same time, some issues endure, e.g., how to cope with the unexpected at weddings (even when the bride is late because her taxi has lost a door on the way). The emphasis of Bowers' ministry has been on faithful preaching and visiting, on Bible study and fellowship in maturing discipleship, in church construction, even in the face of acute financial challenges, and on an expanding sacramental ministry for healing.

Army chaplaincy in the Far East during the last phases of the Korean War and in England provided the author with scenes and thoughts which call for humble reflection in us who have not known the worlds into which the service took him. The descriptions of worship (generally; of ordination; of church dedication), of what was done and what it felt like, are historically and pastorally instructive. Bowers' accounts of colleagues are uniformly charitable. His consistent purpose is (p.163), "to celebrate light, not darkness, and conviviality, not gloom."

Readers unfamiliar with the British scene will discover much that is unfamiliar, but for that very reason every individual and every specialist collection with "Pan- Methodist" interests would be well advised to obtain this autobiography, as an example of committed pastoral labor in the Methodist ethos far from the lime-light.

David Tripp
Rolling Prairie, Indiana

Marilyn Färdig Whiteley. *Canadian Methodist Women, 1766-1925: Marys, Marthas, Mothers in Israel*. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2005. 280 pp. \$49.95.

Canadian Methodist Women, part of the “Studies in Women and Religion,” series from WLU Press, describes these women’s varied roles from Methodist beginnings in the 1760s until the merger in 1925 creating the United Church of Canada. The author, now an independent scholar, was formerly on the staff of the United Church of Canada Archives, and the book’s highly detailed narrative draws from her research there as well as at conference and local church archives throughout Canada.

Färdig Whiteley begins her tale with the women who hospitably welcomed early itinerants and the wives of traveling preachers who shared in both hardships and ministry opportunities. Methodist women shaped family worship, led class and prayer meetings, preached at revivals, traveled as evangelists, taught Sunday School, led church music programs, and founded benevolence societies and Ladies’ Aids. In 1876 a Women’s Missionary Society was founded in the Methodist Episcopal Church of Canada and in 1880 in the Methodist Church of Canada; after Canadian Methodist union in 1884 the united WMS developed into a powerful body that managed its own budget and sent its own missionaries. The deaconess order was introduced in 1890, and women’s home mission work in the early 1900s focused on social reform and education. Färdig Whiteley concludes her tale with the efforts of Methodist women to gain lay representation in official structures — quarterly boards, Annual Conference, General Conference — and assert their right to ordination. (Women’s ordination did not occur until 1936, after the United Church merger).

This book arrives at an auspicious time for American Methodists as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of women being granted full clergy rights in the Methodist Church (U.S.). Färdig Whiteley reminds us (as have Jeanne Miller Schmidt, Susie Stanley, Elizabeth Muir, and others) of women’s long and fruitful history of ministry in North American Methodism. She presents a multitude of useful facts and entertaining anecdotes, told in an organized and well-documented, if occasionally repetitively structured, narrative. These stories will be new to many, particularly U.S. Methodist readers (the book assumes a familiarity with Canadian Methodist history which it would be well for the U.S. reader to acquire before embarking.) While *Canadian Methodist Women* lacks extensive contextual reflections (beyond obvious observations about women challenging patriarchal culture), Färdig Whiteley has laid immense descriptive groundwork. Her work will enable others to reflect more deeply on what these women’s stories tell us about their time, and have to teach us about our own.

Jennifer Woodruff Tait
Madison, NJ