

BOOK REVIEWS

Andrew O. Winckles, *Eighteenth-Century Women's Writing and the Methodist Media Revolution: "Consider the Lord as Ever Present Reader"* Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2019. Pp. 288. \$120.00.

In this book, Andrew O. Winckles presents a complex account of Methodism as media revolution, in other words, its discourse practices contributed to the transformation of the protocols of mediation in British culture. He examines the discourse practices of Methodist women to show how Methodism maps onto British literary culture of the long eighteenth century to show Methodism's impact on the media culture of the larger society. The result is a wealth of detail about Methodist women's lives and work, as well as some challenges to widely held views about Methodism.

Methodist women are important for "mapping" Methodism onto culture because Methodist women more often than Methodist men were forced to adapt discourse structures for their own purposes. Winckles' research shows how women used the media practices of Methodism (oral communication, handwritten materials, printed publications) to create space for their voices in public. The network of circulation for women's handwritten letters, poetry, and forms of life-writing (aided by circuit riders and a national postal system) provided opportunity for theological discussion among women that has not always been recognized. Winckles shows that what we may take to be private correspondence was much more public in nature and that women did their theological work in different ways than men.

Of these three elements in media practices, print culture was least used by and available to women. The lack of print material has left women writers in obscurity, but Winckles' work shines light on figures that have been ignored. His research displays the importance of their contributions to literary culture despite not being in print. In fact Winckles argues that Sally Wesley was a prolific writer who understood herself as a scholar and intellectual, even though she made a conscious choice to publish in print rarely. Print publication was so dominated by male editors that women had more control over their work using other media.

Winckles compares Methodist women's writing to other writing in Britain at the time to show how Methodism participated in and influenced broader media culture. He argues, for instance that both Mary Wollstonecraft and Hester Ann Rogers in their various versions of life-writing use the discourse of enthusiasm as an alternative to male discourse structures for expressing emotion, imagination, and desire. After the women's deaths, male editors in both cases tamed this discourse. "Textual enthusiasm," which includes not only content but also production and dissemination, destabilized ordinary conventions and allowed them more authentic self-expression (115).

After Wesley's death, Methodist men were less open to women's preaching and leadership, restricting Methodist women to domestic space. Women's networks of circulating manuscript material, though, continued to provide women an important public space. Winckles' work shows the importance of paying attention to their handwritten material for a fuller understanding of Methodist history. His work may also help scholars take women's print material more seriously. For instance, Agnes Bulmer's epic poem *Messiah's Kingdom* is presented in this book as theological reflection that relies on experience in ways that Richard Watson and Adam Clarke do not, and so adds an alternative Methodist voice to our theological history.

One of the views of Methodism that comes under scrutiny in this book is the idea of what "evangelicalism" means. Winckles explains how Bebbington's list of key characteristics of evangelicalism cannot themselves account for resistance to Methodism in the long eighteenth century, so he looks to discourse and rhetoric to account for the unsettling character of Methodism. In the end, he finds it more productive to think of evangelicalism as a set of discursive practices, rather than a set of beliefs. For him, this shift can account both for the variety of expressions of evangelical media in Methodism as well as the broad impact evangelicalism has had on British and American culture. This approach may be more useful in media studies than it is in Methodist studies as it can clarify cultural communication patterns better than it can clarify theological patterns and conflicts, even within evangelicalism.

Winckles has not written a book that is strictly Methodist history, but he has opened avenues of study regarding Methodist women that contributes to a fuller understanding of Methodist history. These insights should be taken seriously.

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S T Kimbrough, Jr., *May She Have A Word with You? Women as Models of How to Live in the Poems of Charles Wesley with Commentary*. Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2019. Pp. 142. \$15.20 (paperback).

During Charles Wesley's lifetime, English-speaking women on both sides of the Atlantic were finding public voices, as is evident in their contribution to outcry against the slave trade. Some scholars see the early Methodist movement as empowering women through its emphasis on spiritual journals, letters, and published testimony. In *May She Have a Word with You?* S T Kimbrough, Jr., provides a selection of Charles Wesley's poems about women and argues for Wesley's high view of women's capacity for Christian proclamation, teaching, and service. Kimbrough also presents these women as timeless patterns for Christian life.

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at Duke Divinity School, Kimbrough has explored Charles Wesley's theological themes in *The Lyrical Theology of Charles Wesley* (Cascade Books, 2013). His work with Charles Wesley manuscripts includes *The Manuscript Journal of the Reverend Charles Wesley, M.A.* with Kenneth G. C. Newport (Abingdon, 2008) and *The Unpublished Poetry of Charles Wesley* with Oliver A. Beckerlegge (Abingdon/Kingswood, 1988, 1990, 1992). *May She Have a Word with You?* draws on Kimbrough's earlier work and makes solid use of resources from eighteenth-century hymn collections to recent scholarship.

May She Have a Word with You? is deliberately limited in scope, presenting selected works about women with brief commentaries. This makes it a useful and accessible introduction to Charles Wesley's writing about women. Kimbrough states his case succinctly, arguing that Charles Wesley saw women as equals in ministry, that these poems help us "to see the values women had in the early Methodist movement" (xix), and that they provide a timeless model of "balance between active faith and contemplative life" (137). Kimbrough's assertion that the poems allow these women to "speak once again to us in their exemplary words and lives" (xix) is somewhat problematic. While Kimbrough clearly argues for women's agency and worth, he does not explicitly distinguish between women's actual voices and men's re-voicing of them.

The selected poems present women as seen by a sympathetic male contemporary employing eighteenth-century poetic conventions to construct models for emulation. From the 1760s through the Regency, conduct books were popular as readers sought models of morality and manners for turbulent times. Conduct books often employed gendered ideals as in Mrs. [Hester] Chapone's *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind: Addressed to a Lady* (1773) and Thomas Gisborne's *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* (1797). While Kimbrough does not allude to conduct books, the poems included suggest Charles Wesley's awareness of this genre. Kimbrough does point to Joanna Cruikshank's work on the culture of sensibility as an important context. It may be useful to read Kimbrough's book alongside Vicki Tolar Brown's *Spiritual Literacy in John Wesley's Methodism* (Baylor University, 2008); reviewed in *Methodist History* 47.4 (July 2009). Brown's discussion of literacy as a tool for empowering marginalized groups in early Methodism devotes a chapter to women's authority and agency.

Kimbrough's biographical sketch in the "Introduction" focuses on Charles Wesley's relationships with women, including his mother and sisters, his wife Sarah (Sally) Gwynne and his gifted daughter, also named Sally. The selections and commentary cover "Women of the Bible," "Women of the Eighteenth Century," and "Prose," followed by a concise but detailed "Summary" of arguments. "Women of the Bible" establishes key themes, emphasizing women's courage as "first proclaimers" of the gospel, with Mary Magdalene and others enacting roles usually "attributed to men in the church" (3). Mary and Martha serve as exemplars of the crucial balance between contemplation and action, while the "Tabitha/Dorcas" chapter emphasizes practical ministry in response to eighteenth-century social needs.

The “Woman of Canaan” is the book’s only poem written in the first person, a rhetorical strategy Wesley employs to depict a woman practicing theology.

The central section focuses on women Charles Wesley knew personally, using verse eulogies, funeral hymns, and epitaphs written over a fifty-year span. Each contributes to the central “Mary-Martha” paradigm, while exploring themes of self-effacement, service, friendship, and good death, often dramatizing a shift from works theology to service grounded in grace. Most construct images of woman that “let us on her virtue gaze” (29). Only two—Mary Stotesbury and Prudence Box—are imagined as speaking directly and Kimbrough acknowledges the “as if” nature of these moments (109). Although Kimbrough’s approach depends on “woman” as a category without considering intersectionality, he includes women of various social ranks (from Lady Hotham to Prudence Box, a maid) and marital status.

The book ends by discussing a prose account (not anthologized) of Hannah Richardson’s holy death and summarizing Kimbrough’s arguments. *May She Have a Word with You?* is clearly organized, with helpful notes, selected bibliography, and index. This is a useful introduction to Charles Wesley’s thought about women, laying groundwork for further study.

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Elmer Colyer, *Trinitarian Dimensions of John Wesley’s Theology*. Nashville: New Room Books, 2019. Pp. 334. \$42.90.

Dr. Elmer Colyer sets forth a trinitarian study of the works of John Wesley in this monograph. The text attempts to fill a void in the study of Wesley’s theology, as few have written at length about Wesley’s theology in this regard (1). What unfolds from this point is a study of history, Wesley’s sermons, and various theological texts produced by John and Charles Wesley that contribute to an understanding of how Wesley established a theology dependent upon a Trinitarian understanding of God.

Chapter 1 introduces the reader to the Trinitarian controversies which were fought throughout English religious and academic circles beginning in 1640 and culminating in Wesley’s preaching of the sermon, “On the Trinity.” This chapter plots out the rise of various anti-Trinitarian movements in England, and the various defenses which, says Colyer quoting Wesley, “hurt the cause which they intended to promote” (7). The first chapter provides a strong opening that in itself justifies the existence of this monograph. The historical study of various figures throughout the formation of English philosophical and religious traditions sheds light on Wesley’s perspectives as well as providing a window into an oft overlooked aspect of the religious controversies of England post-Cromwell.

Chapter 1 concludes with an analysis of “On the Trinity” identifying core features both of Wesley’s response to the Trinitarian controversies and

Wesley's Trinitarian views. Colyer portrays Wesley as rejecting arguments that try to explain how the Trinity can exist as both three and one, and against anyone who says mystery is foreign to the Christian faith (73). Secondly, this conclusion establishes a view of Wesley's Trinitarian doctrines that depend upon us meeting the Triune God in a way that is participatory, evangelical, economical, and doxological (75). The full implications of these aspects is highlighted a few pages later in which Wesley's, "On the New Birth," is used as a framework for understanding each category (94–95).

With the four key aspects of Wesley's theology defined, the text then focuses upon how these manifest in the works of John Wesley. Moving beyond simple definitions and terms, the text explores how Wesley conceived of catholicity, salvation, ecclesiology, and embodied faith. Even with such a diverse catalogue of subjects, the book manages to dig into Wesley's texts and find those Trinitarian kernels which produce a coherent theology. What becomes clear throughout the analysis of Wesley's various works is that Wesley was thoroughly a Trinitarian thinker. There is no aspect of Wesley's preaching, teaching, or administration which was not rooted in the plurality and unity of the Godhead.

Relevant to a modern United Methodist audience, the chapter entitled "A Participatory Trinitarian Understanding of the Church," tackles some of the more difficult aspects of a diverse worshipping body living into their Trinitarian identity. Beyond simply establishing Wesley's Trinitarian ecclesiology, Colyer lays out the full theological gifts and hazards that the Church faces in its Trinitarian identity. In a church that day to day faces the reality of a possible schism, reading Wesley's call to be united and one as God is one should give all Methodists room for pause as we consider our future—either together or apart.

The greatest contribution this book provides is a coherent and exhaustive search for how Wesleyans can express their Trinitarian beliefs. This book connects the sometimes abstract concepts of Trinitarian theology and relates it to the Standard Sermons and Doctrinal documents of the Wesleyan tradition. In setting out to document the way in which Wesley understood the Trinity, this book is a triumph. After reading, the reader should have a more concrete conception of Trinitarian Theology (both catholic and Wesleyan) and the Trinitarian contexts in which John Wesley wrote.

For Wesleyan scholars and practitioners alike the oft-neglected Trinitarian features of Wesley's theology are presented clearly and coherently. This book, it should be said, is not an attempt to innovate on Trinitarian doctrine. It is a synthesis and analysis of Trinitarian thought throughout the life and works of John Wesley. However, for all persons who are seeking a greater understanding of the Wesleyan conception of the Trinity, this book delivers on what it sets out to do. Accessibly yet exhaustively, this book is a resource for lay, clergy, and scholar alike.

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Donald Henry Kirkham, *Outside Looking In: Early Methodism as Viewed by Its Critics*. Nashville: New Room Books, 2019. Pp. 358. \$49.99.

Outside Looking In: Early Methodism as Viewed by Its Critics surveys several hundred eighteenth-century anti-Methodist publications. The book spotlights the literary tactics of European writers who provided their readers with critical views and assessments of the Methodist movement from outside the tradition. The published attacks varied from hostile missives to over-simplified caricatures. Methodists faced assault in print by means of open letters, novels, and within the scripts of the theater. The publications also included broadsides, essays in periodicals, and an assortment of pamphlets published in the British Isles/U.K. between 1738 and 1800.

The author has identified 651 anti-Methodist pamphlets ranging in size from a few pages to more than one hundred. Most are less than a dozen pages. The publications were made affordable to be purchased by readers and some were even distributed at no cost. Diatribes were published in periodicals such as *Fogg's Weekly Journal* and *Gentleman's Magazine* and Methodists were mocked in theatrical performances such as *The Mock-Preacher* (1739) and *Methodism display'd* (1743). Authors often used pseudonyms and published under names such as "Candid Calvinists," "A Friend of the People and their Liberties," "Americanus," or simply "W.Y."

The volume is based on the author's 1973 doctoral dissertation and builds upon the earlier work of scholars including Luke Tyerman, Richard Green, Frank Baker, and Clive Field. The author presents an open and sympathetic view of anti-Methodist authors and intends to avoid casting a hagiographical shadow onto the Methodist movement championed by earlier scholars. Readers are invited to view eighteenth-century Methodism with a more critical lens and the examples of anti-Methodist publications provide glimpses of Methodism as viewed by its critics. Ultimately, the author desires "opponents to be heard in their own words and to provide you with material otherwise inaccessible" (11).

Chapters 1–5 investigate the sources of Anti-Methodist pamphlet attacks that included bishops and clergy of the Church of England. Influential critics included such luminaries as Edmund Gibson, bishop of London. They explore how anti-Methodist publications caricatured Methodists as anti-intellectuals, fear-mongers, and Papists. They examine the theme of doctrinal deviation by demonstrating how pamphleteers accused Methodists of abusing scripture, bibliomancy, and excessive inspiration from the Holy Spirit. The publications also reveal how writers criticized the practices of band meetings, classes, field preaching, itineration and jail visitation. Anti-Methodist authors expressed concern about social upheaval in the home caused by Methodists neglecting their responsibilities for family and vocation to participate in Methodist-sponsored activities. Claims were even made that Methodists spent too much time praying, reading the Bible, fasting, and attending meetings.

Chapters 6–9 note anxieties within the Church of England as Methodists were charged with being a new form of Puritanism, ignoring the regulations

of the *Book of Common Prayer*, and stealing pulpits and parishioners from the established Church. Methodism, according to the pamphleteers, was undermining the political foundations of the state. Regarding John Wesley's *A Calm Address to Our American Colonies* the author notes "no single publication he issued created such an intense storm or was attacked with more severity" (237). Methodists were accused of altering the liturgy of the Eucharist and proclaiming extempore prayers and sermons. Even the Wesley hymnal was considered too sentimental and brought God and the singer into a relationship considered too familiar. Finally, the volume demonstrates how John Wesley turned the tables on the pamphleteers by authoring his own anti-Calvinist publications. These writings triggered intense literary responses from long-time associate George Whitefield and anti-Methodists. The volume concludes with a helpful Appendix and comprehensive Bibliography.

The Bibliography of eighteenth-century anti-Methodist publications is worth the price of purchase alone. In these pages, the author uncovers an exhaustive listing of publications that paint visual and literary critiques of the Methodist movement. These images of Methodism were often less than complimentary and at times even apocalyptic. The volume helpfully considers the interplay between British culture and religious power during the eighteenth-century as Methodists challenged the theological foundations of the Church of England and made its leaders nervous. The author self-identifies one limitation of the book as only covering a regional focus of "anti-Methodist pamphlets that appeared in the British Isles during the eighteenth century" (11). One additional limitation is the lack of regular, active engagement between the author and contemporary scholars. While reading the many examples of anti-Methodist publications is a fascinating and illuminating showcase of primary sources, readers miss out on the author engaging more critically with contemporary scholars and their scholarship.

Overall, the volume is a valuable contribution for those working in Wesley and Methodist studies, for students taking courses in Methodist history, and for general readers interested in the literary challenges faced by Methodists during the movement's first century. The volume provides readers with glimpses of contested agency from the perspectives of those who rebuffed and rebuked the Methodist movement during its early emergence and growth in the United Kingdom. Contemporary readers can investigate many of these anti-Methodist works by exploring the Eighteenth-Century Collections Online (ECCO) database where many of the pamphlets cited in this book have been digitized and made available.

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