

BOOK REVIEWS

Elsie W. Cooper, *Endless Song: A Celebration of Life*, with a Foreward by Kenneth G. Greet. Bognor Regis: World Methodist Historical Society Publications, 1986. 121 pp. \$5.00.

Helen G. McKenny, *A City Road Diary, 1885-1888: The record of three years in Victorian London*, ed. Alfred Binney and John A. Vickers. Bognor Regis: World Methodist Historical Society Publications, 1978. 111 + viii pp. \$5.00.

These short volumes allow American Methodists to hear the English accents of two more women's voices, telling parts of the story we rarely attend to on this side of the pond. One is the autobiographical reflection of a circuit minister's wife, centering on the harrowing days of the blitz in wartime Bristol; the other is the diary of a young woman during her father's service as Superintendent of the City Road Circuit in late Victorian London.

Elsie Cooper's is more a family memoir, nearly half of it sketching her roots and the world of her turn-of-the-century Nottinghamshire childhood with descriptions of food, clothing, cottages, relatives, and other every-day details. Even after the midpoint of the book, when she marries the Rev. Frank M. Cooper, Methodism is curiously in the background, though the itineracy and its duties obviously set the scene.

Instead of focusing on sermons or connexional politics, and without wearing her piety on her sleeve, this preacher's wife concentrates on the quiet heroism of ordinary folk during World War II, including her family's own sacrifices and narrow escapes in the Battle of Britain. Yet the Methodist ethos is still discernable—in her perspective on an uncle's pacifism during World War I and the racism of American GI's she entertained in the manse just prior to D-Day, in her reflections on the vicissitudes of family life, and in her plea for peace in a nuclear age, as well as in the more explicitly religious verses which frame the book and give it its title.

This sprightly anecdotal evocation of a life and an era would have been even more interesting had it included material on the writer's own education, her early career in teaching, and her experiences between the end of the war and the early 1980s when she took up her pen.

Some seventeen years before Elsie Cooper was born, Helen McKenny, then in her mid-twenties, began her daily record of the state of her own soul and the state of British Methodism as it was visible in the comings and goings at City Road Chapel. Her own exhausting involvement in the work of the circuit is stage center: visiting the neighborhood poor, teaching Sunday School, attending class (and countless other) meetings, playing the organ at services, pouring endless cups of tea at various gatherings, and dutifully showing Welsey's "relics" to a never-ending stream of

American Methodist pilgrims. In addition we read her quick and usually complimentary notices of the several sermons she heard in a given week ("dear Father's" always got good marks; others, such as Henry Ward Beecher's "rambling and pointless" effort at the City Temple, did not).

Her spiritual struggles are much more explicit than Elsie Cooper's, and much more conventionally expressed. Yet humorous lines flash from the page as well (one preacher is "quite a character and his prayers are queer beyond expression"). And she is not above a little denominational sacrilege, as when the family's impending move drives her to address the shade that seems to haunt the precincts: "Listen, Mr. Wesley! It does seem hard to make your poor preachers move about like this!"

Dozens of Mr. Wesley's "poor preachers" passed through Wesley's Chapel during the McKennys' stay, were duly noted in the diary, and are helpfully indexed for us by the editors. Among the many British Methodist readers of this journal will recognize are the Wesley editors and historians Telford, Tyerman, Curnock, Osborn, and Stevenson. Hugh Price Hughes is here also, and so are such Americans as the missionary Bishop William Taylor, Garrett prof. Milton Terry, and Chataqua supporter Bishop John Vincent. McKenny also occasionally looked beyond the Methodist scene, as when she describes services and sermons at St. Paul's Cathedral or the City Temple or recounts the hoopla of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee.

Both of these personal documents are helpful additions to our store of knowledge about British Methodism in their respective eras from a woman's point of view. They are available by mail (postage additional) from WMHS Publications, 87 Marshall Avenue, Bognor Regis, W. Sussex PO21 2TW, U.K.

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L. D. Hulley, *To Be and To Do: Exploring Wesley's Thought on Ethical Behaviour*. Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1988. 82 pp.

Readers of this review should be made aware of the theological, not historical, nature of this essay. Having noted this, it is proper to express appreciation to Hulley, professor at the University of South Africa, for another study on Wesley's ethics. Initially this essay appears repetitive of other Wesley analyses, but there are important accents on "being" and "doing" which set the book apart. A critical definition of holiness as an ethical category is enunciated when Hulley writes that, "relationship plus behaviour are an important key to his (Wesley's) understanding of the concept." (13) "Morally good behaviour must be an expression of faith. . . ." Sanctification must . . . be seen in large part as living morally good behaviour, . . . a continued course of good works springing from a holy life." (20, 22) While that is commonplace Christian thinking concerning

the meaning of sanctification, some have expressed Wesley's ethics so strongly in terms of "being" as to diminish "doing." More have accented "doing" than "being." Where "being" and "doing" are not meshed, wrong behavior has been rationalized, sometimes in this sense: "Since my inner life is holy, this behavioral flaw is a weakness that I do not need to be troubled about." This isn't Wesleyan, but a variation on much of Christendom's accent on profession of faith more than a Christian obedience. Hulley devotes important space to the question of perfection, mistakes and sins (42-45) in addressing Wesley's approach.

For Wesley, Hulley suggests, "being morally good by definition is doing God's will." (29) Hulley pursues the issue whether such moral good may be achieved apart from Christ. His answer is that Wesley finally insists that good proceeds from non-Christian persons through prevenient grace. This goodness is preliminary to evangelical faith, not contributive to it. The grace which makes faith possible is alone contributive to faith. The critical issue is obedient trust as the fountain of good works. Good deeds engendered by human self-sufficiency are part and parcel of the pride which brought man and woman into their alienation from God. As Hulley expressed this Wesleyan insight, "Christian behaviour - both religious and moral - is therefore seen as taking place 'in relation to' God and "in subordination to his pleasure' [citing Wesley's *Plain Account*]."

In expressing the integral relationship of being and doing for Wesley, Hulley asserts the importance of love as the connective links for both. Further, he asserts the necessity of the Spirit's vital work in establishing virtuous behavior. Love is not based on a simple human decision to love, but is the action of grace throughout life. It is the fruit of the Spirit, who makes both inner "tempers," strengthened by "acts and piety," and outward service or "works of mercy," achieve their fulness.

The concluding chapter deals with ethical theories discovered in Wesley. Love functions axiologically, shaping Christian values, and deontologically, directing the believing to the fulfillment of duty. The absence of Christian values as well as a sense of Christian duty suggests the absence of love, "proof that the Christian disposition of the heart, the *be-ing*, is absent." (66) Conscience defines values and reinforces duty. Good intention makes the person acceptable even when the execution of the deed is deficient, and therefore contrary to law, strictly defined.

Hulley accents the importance of love, law, conscience, intention, utility, and happiness to show the relationship of be-ing and do-ing. With the exception of the concept of utility his discussion is strong. Although the book marginally stresses the application of Wesley's ethics to the moral issues, per se, it is obvious that he recognizes that Wesley formed his ethics in social ferment, not in a theoretical vacuum.