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Editor: REV. JOHN C. BOWMER, M.A., B.D., Ph.D.

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BOOK NOTICES

John Wesley's Letter to a Roman Catholic, ed. Michael Hurley, S.J. (Geoffrey Chapman and Epworth House, Dublin, 7s. 6d.)

John Wesley's distrust of Romanism as a political force did not in the slightest degree diminish his love for individual Roman Catholics nor his resolve in paragraph 17 of his *Letter* not to think or speak or do anything hurtful or unfriendly. Indeed, the *Letter to a Roman Catholic* ends with a noble appeal "to help each other, on whatever we are agreed leads to the Kingdom." This did not mean a theological indifferentism. Bishop Odd Hagen and Cardinal Bea, who write prefaces, as well as Father Hurley himself, are concerned to show that John Wesley regarded indifference to all opinions as "speculative latitudinarianism", and that men who "jumble all opinions together" are of a "muddy understanding".

In his *Word to a Protestant*, John Wesley pointed out serious doctrinal differences, and in his *Letter to a Roman Catholic* he enunciated the Protestant belief in God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, in the Church, and in the life everlasting. It was for this very reason that he wanted a dialogue with Roman Catholics. "Come, my brother, and let us reason together." Chiefly, however, he wanted no differences to prevent a mutual provoking to love and good works. "If we cannot as yet think alike in all things, at least we may love alike."

It is the eirenic tone and temper of this splendid letter which, together with his sermons on "A caution against Bigotry" and "The Catholic Spirit", sets John Wesley so far ahead of his age in such notable charity of spirit. Indeed, it is perfectly in accord with the present rapprochement between Roman Catholics and Methodists and the conversations on many levels being conducted between them.

It was therefore an excellent idea of Father Hurley to edit a fresh edition of the *Letter* and to secure a joint production by Roman and Methodist publishers. Indeed the idea is better than the execution, because the author might have made further references to Wesley's other writings on the subject and to his personal relations with Roman Catholics. But this is a small matter. The venture must be warmly applauded. Its publication at this present time can do nothing but good.

MALDWYN L. EDWARDS.

Journal of Various Visits to the Kingdoms of Ashanti, Aku, and Dahomi in Western Africa, by Thomas Birch Freeman. Third edition (1968), with a new Introduction by Harrison M. Wright. (Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., pp. xxxix, x. 298, 84s.)

Freeman's best-known published work attained immediate popularity in its day, but is now reprinted for the first time since 1844. A facsimile reproduction of the 1844 edition is prefaced by a wholly admirable survey, based on materials in Ghana and in England, of Freeman's life and work. Professor Harrison Wright of Swarthmore College appears to have not only read but digested the entire corpus of Freeman's largely unpublished extant writings, together with the relevant secondary sources. Perhaps his most valuable contribution to Ghanaian history lies not even in the quite numerous new facts he has discovered, but in his measured reassessment of Freeman's achievement, which shows how wide, after all, is the *via media* between hagiography and "de-bunking". Incisive judgements—"Freeman's manner with African leaders was tact itself"—"He did not delegate authority well"—are grounded on the rock of research which does not

stop with the details of Freeman's own and his colleagues' careers, but reaches out into his missionary methods, his brief career in government service, the secular history of the period, and the different versions of the *Journal* itself. Place-names in the Introduction are given (with the exception of Whydah/Ouidah) in both nineteenth- and twentieth-century spellings. There is, alas! still no index.

PAUL ELLINGWORTH.

The Methodist New Connexion in Dawley and Madeley, by Barrie Trinder. (Wesley Historical Society West Midlands Branch Occasional Publication, pp. 20 + appendices and maps, 3s. post free.)

There are several reasons why this booklet deserves widespread attention. The Madeley and Dawley area is a particularly interesting one, as the cradle of the Industrial Revolution, as the scene of John Fletcher's ministry, and, most recently, as the site chosen for redevelopment as a "new town". More specifically, the present study is a good example of the growing interest in nineteenth-century Methodism, and deals with a branch of the Church that has not had its fair share of competent attention. Then again, much of its virtue lies in the fact that it places the church firmly in its social and cultural setting, and sees it not, as is so often the case, in isolation but as part of the local community. The credit for this must go, at least in part, to the fact that the booklet is the outcome of an historical study group which has been working for two winters on the role of the churches in the Dawley area. Too much of our research into local Methodist history is the work of isolated individuals, and the ploughing of lone furrows does not make for breadth of vision. This booklet shows what can be achieved by a group under really able leadership; and to recognize this is to emphasize, rather than minimize, the contribution of Mr. Trinder himself both as the group-leader and as the author of the resulting booklet. It should be read by everyone engaged in local Methodist history or interested in the nineteenth-century church.

JOHN A. VICKERS.

Presidential Notes

IT was my privilege during the first two weeks in July this year to visit Lake Junaluska, which can fittingly be looked upon as the headquarters of World Methodism. Here I was able to give a series of lectures on the early beginnings of the Methodist story to representatives from the Historical Associations of the South-Eastern Jurisdiction, which forms the largest group of Methodist historical societies in the whole of the United States. It was my pleasure to attend the business meeting, and to sit next to the Rev. Dr. Frank Baker, the former secretary of our Society, who is a trusted and revered member of the American Methodist Historical Societies' Association. His pre-eminence as a Methodist historian is fully recognized.

I was able also to discuss plans for a worthy series of meetings for the International Methodist Historical Society to be held when the next World Methodist Conference meets in Washington in 1971. As President of the IMHS, I was particularly glad of the opportunity to make other suggestions for the joint development of our interests that had already been discussed by Dr. Maser, Dr. Bowmer, the Rev. Thomas Shaw and myself during the time when the British Conference was meeting in London in June. Altogether it was a most happy and worthwhile visit.

MALDWYN L. EDWARDS.