


to dedicate it to the Service of GOD. What is implied in this, we shall easily see, if we consider 1. What we must, 2. What we may, 3. What we may not do of it.

5. We must if we will obey this Com-
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WESLEY
AND
METHODIST
STUDIES



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renews the
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is Holy.
Business

to perfect his Image in our souls, To bind
Mercy and Truth about our Neck to write
them deep on the Tablet of our Heart.

Not that our Mind need be every Mo-
ment intent upon This: That might make

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Cover: Manuscript page of Charles Wesley's sermon 'Remembering the Sabbath' reproduced courtesy of the Librarian and Director, The John Rylands Library, The University of Manchester.

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authority derives not from ordination, but from episcopal appointment and Conference authorization.

As Matthews demonstrates throughout the book, this is hardly a new matter. Beginning with the Methodist Protestant Church in 1900, each of the denominations that directly preceded the UMC at some point approved legislation allowing certain unordained preachers in pastoral roles to preside at baptism, the Lord's Supper, or both, though this privilege had variously defined restrictions. Lengthy and lively debates preceded these approvals, and on this subject (as he did with debates related to the deacon) Matthews helpfully supplies selections from the transcriptions of the discussions contained in official denominational records. The UMC at its founding in 1968 did not allow sacramental presidency for lay pastors, but eight years later gave them circumscribed permission. Matthews observes that with changing demographics in the UMC, the numbers of the unordained who take on the sacramental function of elders is gradually increasing as the numbers of persons ordained as elders decline, making urgent the need to reconsider the relationships between ordination, ministerial orders, and sacramental authority.

The uniqueness of this book as a denominational history on orders and sacraments is its clear and detailed documentation of the shifts in theology and polity that brought the UMC to its current thinking and practices. As such, it would be a useful and informative text for readers interested in Methodist history, ecclesiology, sacramental theology, and current issues related to Christian ministry.

*Reviewed by Karen B. Westerfield Tucker,
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Darryl W. Stephens, *Methodist Morals: Social Principles and the Public Church's Witness*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2016. 320 pp. £50.95/\$48 hb. ISBN: 978-62190-240-9.

Darryl Stephens, Director of Methodist Studies at Lancaster Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania, has written an excellent study of the United Methodist Church's Social Principles as 'an authentic voice of Methodism, a church faithfully proclaiming its witness in the world' (9). This positive evaluation of Social Principles is made in full recognition of the complex and often controversial process by which the Social Principles have developed and changed, as well as the need for substantial improvement that he recommends.

The first chapter, 'Heir to the Social Creed', traces the historical antecedents of Social Principles in the documents and decisions of the United Methodist Church's (UMC) predecessor denominations. This provides the background for a detailed study of the composition and development of the Social Principles in the second chapter. Stephens emphasizes the importance of the process of moral decision-making over against the text that is produced. Even when this process is often fraught with tension and political manoeuvring, it is significant that the UMC engages in wrestling together over its ethical witness to the broader society. He proposes that the result is a set of 'middle axioms' that ought to 'promote dialogue about moral issues upon which faithful Christians may have different opinions' (48). These differences ought to be a motivation for continued dialogue, learning, and teaching. However, the way some of the statements are worded obscures this.

In the third chapter, 'Politics and Grace', Stephens analyses how the Social Principles relate to spiritual and moral formation. He notes that historically, Methodists have understood themselves as a holiness movement and their moral statements have been directed toward the church members as a tool for moral formation. The Social Principles are different as they are directed not only to the members of the church but also to the broader society. They are a document of public witness. That does not mean that moral formation is unimportant but for Stephens, this is relocated to the process of discussing, writing, editing, and changing the Social Principles. However, this process is made more complex as it takes the form of democratic decision-making at General Conference and is thus subject to the complex politics of the UMC, where the desire to ensure that a particular opinion becomes part of the Social Principles is often stronger than the desire to participate in a process of spiritual growth through discussion and mutual decision-making.

Chapter 4 on 'Theological and Moral Learning' describes the theologically 'thin' character of the Social Principles and their lack of in-depth engagement with the key theological themes of the Methodist tradition. Rather than providing theological ethical reasoning, the Social Principles make assertions. As the document is revised at each General Conference, these assertions are often the product of particular political processes rather than a carefully integrated theological framework. Importantly, Stephens notes the numerous similarities between the Social Principles and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, suggesting that its most significant intellectual heritage lies in the secular human rights traditions.

The fifth chapter examines various adaptations made by the Central Conferences outside the United States, emphasizing the United States-centric character of the General Conference-approved version. The sixth and seventh

chapters deal with the issues around sexuality and marriage—these go beyond the Social Principles to examine how the statements in the Social Principles (and earlier ethical guidelines) were interpreted, turned into church law, and applied in the life of the church. Stephens again notes the lack of a theological ethical framework. The final chapter compares the vision of the public identity and witness of the Church that emerges from the Social Principles with the ecclesiologies of Paul Ramsey and Stanley Hauerwas. A conclusion affirms the Church's engagement with the world.

This brief summary does not do justice to the wealth of information to be found in the book, in particular the detailed historical work on the text of the Social Principles and other ethical texts. The book challenges the UMC in four ways. The first is a broad challenge of what is the character of the Church's public ethical witness. The second is the importance of the process of dialogue in forming that witness. The third is tension between internationally applicable principles and the realities of diverse contexts. The fourth, and to my mind most significant challenge, is how our Methodist theological tradition should inform and shape our ethical decisions. Some of these issues are addressed in the revised Social Principles to be put to the 2021 General Conference. Whether they have succeeded would require another book.

*Reviewed by David N. Field,
Methodist e-Academy, Basel, Switzerland*

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Robert D. Branson (ed.), *Global Wesleyan Encyclopaedia of Biblical Theology*. Kansas City, MO: The Foundry Publishing, 2020. 463 pp. £47.15/\$58.26 hb. ISBN: 978-0-8341-3823-0.

A short preface states the volume's nature and purpose: to be a companion volume to the *Global Wesleyan Dictionary of Theology* of 2013. The introduction explains the main features of Wesleyan biblical interpretation. It is a tradition in which the Spirit 're-imagines' the study of the Bible as an encounter with God, working within the church as the context for such reading, and making possible a life of holiness characterized by love of God and neighbour (37). A subsequent entry amplifies this Wesleyan tradition (395–401).

Twelve schools of hermeneutics feature in the entries, including Asian, Indian, and reader-response hermeneutics. The entry on Caribbean