

has been a Hebrew teacher for more than thirty-five years, and since he prefaces his work with a cautious note that places the analytical enterprise in the dynamic context of "culture," where "syntax" and "style" play a decisive role.

With all these reservations in mind, Owens' work has its place as a control and reminder, but never can it be a primary or final guide to supersede the necessary task of "intelligent" analysis.

Andrews University

JACQUES B. DOUKHAN

Rack, Henry D. *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism*. Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989. xvi + 656 pp. \$39.95.

Oden, Thomas C., and Longden, Leicester R. *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage: Essays of Albert C. Outler*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991. 267 pp. Paperback, \$14.95.

Amid the large amount of recent Wesley publishing, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, by Henry Rack, a Methodist minister, Wesley scholar, and lecturer in ecclesiastical history at the University of Manchester, is, by any reckoning, one of the most important studies of Wesley and the eighteenth-century Methodist movement.

In spite of the vast bibliography upon which Rack draws, reflected in some 82 pages of endnotes, the work appears to be based more on secondary sources than on the eight volumes of the Bicentennial Edition of Wesley's works published by early 1988, and builds more on reinterpretation than upon analysis of primary Wesley sources. Rack indicates at the outset that the challenge to the writer on John Wesley is not "lack of evidence or even of research"; it is the need "to penetrate the legend created by his followers and biographers. . . ." (p. xii). What the task calls for is "fresh interpretation rather than new facts" (p. xiv). And taking a realistic approach in this fresh interpretation, Rack has produced a book with which, the dust cover warns, "Methodists may feel unhappy."

The scope and structure of the book are indicated by the subtitle, *John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism*. Setting out to remedy what he considers to have been a defect in earlier Wesley studies, which focus too narrowly upon the story of the man, to the neglect of the social forces of the times and of the Wesleyan movement, Rack has given us a historical biography which locates Wesley within the patterns of thought of the eighteenth century and in the light of his relations with the Anglican Church and of his audience and following. As the title *Reasonable Enthusiast* suggests, this dual focus also serves as a foil against which to develop the paradoxes and tensions in the life and thought of Wesley himself. Wesley is presented as a man of two

worlds—an empiricist following Locke and the Enlightenment, but also an enthusiast giving credibility to a degree of heavenly illumination. The complex of tensions within Wesley's personal life and that of the movement is developed like a geological fault throughout the study.

Rack fulfills his purpose of bringing a fresh, new interpretation to the historical study of Wesley and Methodism. His work is penetrating and thorough and conducted with a high degree of objectivity. It rises above the many studies which exhibit a bias, either negative or positive. Particularly well covered in this study are the development of the Methodist organizational system and societies and Wesley's affective relationships with women. It would seem, however, that more attention should have been paid to Charles Wesley, to the relationship between the brothers, and to Methodist women preachers.

It is not so certain, however, that Rack does justice to Wesley's theological thought, which he regards as a "rough and ready . . . response to the practical needs thrown up by a revival situation" (p. 409). Rack is more inclined to read Wesley's theology off the surface of the movement than from a study of the roots of Wesley's thought. "To interpret all this in terms of Wesley's sources is not very helpful" (p. 409). This approach is borne out in the pattern of Rack's work, for he pays little direct attention to the letters between "John Smith" and Wesley or to his "Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion," which relate directly to Wesley's understanding of enthusiasm. He pays even less attention to Wesley's sermons, which were available in the new critical edition when he wrote. Rack's fundamental assessment of Wesley's theology is somewhat negative. In his view, it was "intellectually flawed," with little likelihood "that it would become significant" (p. 409). In the final analysis, he regards Wesley as a rationalist in form and an enthusiast in substance. The implication is perhaps that Wesley was an eighteenth-century man without an adequately thought-through theological system to speak to contemporary concerns. One gets the feeling, reading between the lines, that Rack the historian is somewhat negatively inclined toward theological dogmatism, and perhaps this provides the background for his views on Wesley as a theologian. In the judgment of this reviewer, John Wesley's theological contribution is not given adequate weight, nor is it studied at adequate depth in this volume.

In spite of its shortcomings in theological exposition, this book makes a large contribution to Wesley studies. It goes further than any other study to portray Wesley, his contemporaries, and the Methodist movement realistically in the world of their times. Rack is intimately acquainted with, and makes excellent use of, a vast body of Wesley literature and accurately characterizes much of it with a deft touch. To read the book is to renew acquaintance with the major contours of, and contributors to, Wesleyan thought. Not necessarily the best book for the person making a first ac-

quaintance with Wesley, it will certainly occupy a major place in scholarly circles for a considerable time to come.

*The Wesleyan Theological Heritage* is comprised of a series of fifteen selected essays written from 1961 to 1988 by Albert Outler, the late dean of British Wesleyan studies. This work is an ideal companion volume to those chapters in Rack's book (mainly chaps. 11 and 12) which deal with Wesley's theology. Whereas Rack sees Wesley's theology to a considerable extent as a response to the needs of the revival, Outler has made a meticulous investigation of the root sources of Wesley's theology. Outler thus approaches Wesley's theology from exactly the opposite direction from that of Rack. Nobody has been as well qualified to approach Wesley's theology this way as Outler, with his preparation in patristics, his long immersion in the Wesley writings in the production of the *John Wesley* volume in *A Library of Protestant Thought*, and the preparation of the four volumes of Wesley sermons for the Bicentennial Edition.

Most of the essays reproduced in this volume have been published before, but in scattered places, and have been difficult for the newcomer to Wesley studies to locate and assemble. The volume avoids unnecessary duplication in that it does not reproduce essays to be found within the more commonly available Wesley literature.

The informed Wesley scholar will have read many of these essays over the years, but this by no means detracts from the sheer delight of reading them at a single sitting and experiencing the cumulative force of the problems to which Outler subjects Wesley and the conclusions Outler develops. The difference between the methodologies which Rack and Outler employ in analyzing Wesley's theology is wide, and in spite of the Wesleyan commonalities that unite them, their conclusions regarding Wesley's theology differ considerably. The two books should provide the basis for more than one stimulating seminar debate.

Andrews University

RUSSELL L. STAPLES

Robertson, O. Palmer. *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990. 357 pp. \$28.95.

In this commentary Robertson treats some of the neglected "minor" prophets in the prestigious NICOT series. Since the author has taught for two decades in well-known theological schools (Westminster and Covenant) and is currently pastoring a church, one expects a combination of interest in both the message of these three prophetic books and its application to the modern situation. The reader will not be disappointed: applications are made throughout to the modern situation.