humanity in a particular world explained by the worldly sciences, if you will, of biology, chemistry, physics, psychology, anthropology, etc. So with a pursuit of interdisciplinary dialogue, the goal ought not to be a complementary resounding of the proverbial gong to claim relevance but a critical reinterpretation of meaning in light of the God who has revealed himself in the person and mission of Jesus Christ, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, for the glory of the Father—a critical reinterpretation to demonstrate the peculiarity of the theological voice along with the universal significance of its proclamation in a world that is described by natural and social scientific grammar.

Though somewhat critical of how the interdisciplinary argument of this book was constructed, Fisher has produced a very well written and scholarly considered piece, which deserves a careful read (and one that I will pick up again for further reference and consideration). In fact, though I may not agree with how the term of and/or enthusiasm for coherence was used in this book; I will admit that Fisher was careful to demonstrate how cosmic significance may be demonstrated in both the theological and scientific data. This task required a great deal of careful analysis and critical thought that is more than adequately demonstrated in this piece. Thus, this book will do well to further the discussion between the faithful and the secular sciences and should be one to include on the reading list of anyone interested in pursing an understanding of contemporary conversations between science and theology.

Ashley Moyse

***The Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies*. Eds. William J. Abraham and James E. Kirby. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. (761 pp.) [ISBN: 978-0-19-921299-6]**

Of the writing of books about John and Charles Wesley and Methodism there is no end. Arguably Richard Heitzenrater gives the best overview of the hundreds of books so far published (Richard P. Heitzenrater, *The Elusive Mr. Wesley* [Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 2003], pp. 345-397). To this extensive list is now added *The Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies* edited by William J. Abraham and James E. Kirby, essentially a tome about Methodism rather than the Wesleys. While Oxford went with Methodist Studies, Cambridge University Press in another 2010 publication, chose to focus on John Wesley (*The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley,* edited by Randy L. Maddox and Jason E. Vickers

[Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010]), in what amounts to a companion work. Much of the *Methodist Studies* handbook is taken up with a critique of what Methodists did and what happened to Methodism post the Wesleys. However, a reoccurring theme in most of the chapters is lament, rather than celebration.

Although I found the constant echo of lament tiresome, it has to be said that John and Charles Wesley never intended to create a separate Church or denomination. They were more intent on renewing the existing church from within and did this by founding a Protestant order. Not surprisingly, when Methodists established a new denomination after the Wesleys they found it nigh on impossible to translate much of Wesleyanism into denominational Methodism. It just isn't a natural fit and therein lies the reason for the lament. Personally I would have like to have seen more Wesley and less Methodism, especially in light of the sociological re-emergence of monastic and intentional orders.

The contributors to the handbook are an impressive lot. J.C.D. Clark surveys the eighteenth century context, Richard Heitzenrater looks at the founding brothers, Ted Campbell writes on the Wesleyan motif of the 'means of grace', Kenneth Collins expounds on 'Assurance', Stephen Long and Stanley Hauerwas probe theological ethics and David Bebbington, the last contributor, teases out the link between Methodism and culture. The editors also contribute; Kirby on Methodist Episcopacy and Abraham on Christian Perfection. In total, there are forty-two contributors framed in six clusters: the history of Methodism, Ecclesial Forms and Structures, Worship; Spiritual Experiences, Evangelism, Mission, and Ecumenism; Theology, Ethics and Politics. One notable exception to the list of contributors is the significant Wesleyan scholar, Randy Maddox of Duke University.

It is refreshing to note that the handbook is not a Euro-centric treatise. Pablo Andinach comments on Methodism in Latin American, Swee Hong Lim explores music and hymnody, Sergei Nikolaev the Orthodox challenge to Methodism in Russia and Simeon Ilesanmi on Politics in Africa. Of concern is that less than a quarter of the contributors are women. This hardly sits well with the progressive stance that John Wesley took on gender in his day.

If the handbook is somewhat weak on primary literature; namely the respective contributions of John and Charles Wesley, it is very helpful as a resource on contemporary debates within secondary literature on Wesley and Methodism. For the purposes of this review, three examples of this healthy in-house debate suffice. First, Jason Vickers, one of the editors, takes issue with John Cobb, a fellow Methodist scholar. Vickers frames Cobb (*Grace and Responsibility: A*

Wesleyan Theology for Today) as a process theologian who on the one hand is willing to embrace the language of the Nicene and Chalcedonian Creeds concerning Christ but on the other hand 'reject what they take to be the substance-oriented metaphysics 'behind' that language' (p. 565). A second example is that of Philip Meadows on William Abraham. In 1989 Abraham published an important book *The Logic of Evangelism*. In it he critiques the soteriological paradigm of evangelism that focuses on a personal salvation. Abraham prefers a more missiological paradigm that focuses on Christ as Messiah. Salvation is not the ends but the means, as it enables discipleship and realigning life around the purposes of the Messiah. Meadows suggests Abraham's paradigm is as much an extreme position as that of the soteriological paradigm. He posits a Wesleyan paradigm that holds the soteriological and missiological in critical tension (p. 415). A third example of in-house debate again features Abraham, this time taking issue with two prominent Wesleyan scholars in Outler and Maddox on 'perfection'. It is his view that both Outler and Maddox have softened Wesley's position so as to make perfection more relevant or palatable to modern ears (p. 595).

If for no other reason, the *Handbook of Methodist Studies* is a good buy because it exposes current debates within Wesleyan and Methodist scholarship. Also of value is the way in-house Wesleyan scholars engage with those outside 'the house'; for example, Jim Packer, Don Carson, and the Southern Baptists.

Many of the themes have been covered elsewhere and so there is nothing particularly new in this volume. Given the increase in published works on Wesley and Methodism it was always going to be difficult for Abraham and Kirby to furnish a ground breaking volume. A notable exception is Thomas Frank's chapter on 'Discipline' (pp. 245-61). Frank admits to sparse literature on this subject, numbering 'three or less in most every generation' (p. 245). This dearth of scholarship on Discipline is surprising given how central this motif is to Wesleyan and denominational Methodism.

Students, pastors, scholars, historians, and missiologists will all profit from *The Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies*. Much ink has been spilt in its 761 pages and I commend the work and words that have emerged.

Mick Duncan