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Jean-Pierre van Noppen

Transforming Words

The Early Methodist Revival from a Discourse Perspective

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Hitherto, the language of the Methodist revival has received only moderate, and mainly descriptive, attention. This study moves beyond description and approaches the phenomenon from a «discourse» angle. A corpus-based investigation of the workings of Methodism in its many different discourse aspects highlights how and why Methodism in its early Wesleyan stage was remarkably efficient in providing a multi-modal message which answered the needs and aspirations of the underprivileged. A critical assessment shows that there is little reason to indict the Wesleyans with any manipulative intent. Wesley's discourse did, however, contain some elements which were misunderstood and misapplied when later Methodism lost its Wesleyan touch; but the Methodist revival as a whole cannot be indicted with deliberate manipulation of the working masses.

Contents: Dimensions of Discourse Analysis: Participation – Purpose – Medium (Sermons, Hymns, Tracts, Magazines, Journals) – Settings (Field Preaching, Itinerance, Societies, Sunday Schools) – Form (Language, Gender, Class, Register, Imagery, Semantics) – Content (Theological, Social, Ethical) – Norms of Interpretation – Reception – Political Impact.

«Van Noppen has done much more than introduce to Methodist studies a current type of linguistic analysis. He has added a new tool to uncover further dimensions of historical understanding to early Methodism, casting much light on the audience as well as the well-publicised leaders.» (Henry D. Rack, Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society)

The Author: Jean-Pierre van Noppen graduated from the Université Libre de Bruxelles with a doctoral dissertation on communication problems in popular theology. He now holds a professorship in English linguistics at the same university, where he has been active as a grammarian, lexicographer, bibliographer and journal editor. His current teaching and research interests are in non-literary (pragma)stylistics and critical linguistics. His publications include *Theolinguistics*, *Metaphor and Religion*, *How to Do Things with Metaphor*, an English grammar, two bibliographies on *Metaphor*, and the collective volumes *New Horizons in Stylistics* and *Text and Ideology*.

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