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Proceedings OF THE Wesley Historical Society

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NINETEENTH-CENTURY METHODIST THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE PRINCIPALS A Survey

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FEW would argue with David Thompson's assertion that nonconformity was one of the major formative influences on Victorian Britain, for the Religious Census of 1851 revealed the fact that of seven million worshippers attending divine service on Census day, roughly half were counted in a nonconformist chapel.¹ Even if it was easy enough for a Victorian to avoid attending a service, it was virtually impossible for him to escape the influence of nonconformity—and the Evangelicalism with which it was most closely associated—in a society whose very customs, attitudes and institutions, for example towards alcohol, welfare, education, and leisure, were so largely moulded thereby.² Political life too, especially in the years between 1870 and 1914, was informed by a powerful and vital "nonconformist conscience".³

If the main physical manifestation of this pervasive influence was the ubiquitous chapel, then its chief human embodiment was the full-time minister, for preaching and preachers remained a major channel of communication throughout the nineteenth century. In this the great nonconformists were the star performers, outshining all others. Their prominence was ensured by the centrality of the

¹ D. Thompson: *Nonconformity in the Nineteenth Century* (1972), p. vi.

² B. Harrison: "Religion and recreation in nineteenth-century England", *Past and Present*, vol. 38 (1967). For the evangelical wing of the Church of England, see K. Heasman: *Evangelicals in action* (1962).

³ See S. Koss: *Nonconformity in modern British Politics* (1974) and D. W. Bebbington: *The Nonconformist Conscience: Chapel and Politics, 1870-1914* (1982).

sermon in nonconformist worship and further enhanced by growing ritualistic tendencies in some parts of the Anglican communion. Small wonder that a writer in *The Inquirer* could claim in 1874 that by the culture and faithfulness of ministers, more than any other cause, has Nonconformity been perpetuated. Where religious prosperity abounds, where a Church is powerful, numerous and respected, the source of this may be traced not infrequently to the minister.⁴

He clearly included Methodists in this suggestion, even though within the various Methodist polities the actual power enjoyed by the minister varied enormously. Among Wesleyans, the primacy of the ministers was well caught in the comments of a representative at the 1878 Conference:

It seems to me abundantly clear that the governing power in the Church . . . belongs exclusively to the clergy . . . and that to the laity . . . it belongs only to obey.⁵

The New Connexion and the Bible Christians gave rather more say to laymen, whilst the Primitives went farthest in circumscribing ministerial power. Furthermore, all the Methodist connexions were heavily dependent on laymen for much of their routine administration and oversight—a situation which produced frequent tension and sometimes schism.

Even so, the Methodists always had more full-time men than the other nonconformist denominations. In 1851, for instance, there were nearly two thousand Methodist ministers and only fourteen hundred Congregationalists. By 1900 the Congregationalist figure had risen to 3,086, by which time there were 3,707 Methodists.⁶ It is clear, too, that whatever the restraints on their constitutional powers within the denominations, the full-time ministers enjoyed considerable status and respect within Methodist chapel society. Wrote one Methodist woman in 1831:

How privileged am I to be permitted and enabled to receive the ministers of the Gospel: and what an honour conferred on us to have the ambassadors of Christ under our roof.⁷

Lax of Poplar reckoned that his greatest childhood delight had been to sit at the feet of a good preacher. "I watched every movement, drank in every word, and regarded the man as a kind of demi-god."⁸ The anthropologist A. D. Rees commented on this in his study of rural Montgomeryshire. Virtually every child, he suggested, was well acquainted with the local ministers. "As often as not a Gallery of the most distinguished of them has looked down on him from the walls of his father's house as he grew up."⁹ Nearly all the retired

⁴ *The Inquirer*, 12th December 1874.

⁵ Quoted in R. Currie: *Methodism Divided* (1968), p. 167.

⁶ Figures from the *Congregational Year Book*, 1847, and R. Currie, A. Gilbert and L. Horsley: *Churches and Churchgoers: Patterns of church growth in the British Isles since 1700* (Oxford, 1977), pp. 204-5, 209. The Methodist figure does not include the Bible Christians.

⁷ E. Morgan: *Memoirs of the late Mrs. Mary Timms* (1835), p. 67.

⁸ W. H. Lax: *Lax, his book* (1937), p. 103.

⁹ A. D. Rees: *Life in a Welsh countryside* (1975 edn.), p. 114; cf. W. J. Edwards: *From the valley I came* (1956), p. 89.

Methodist ministers interviewed as part of an oral history project in the 1970s reckoned that when they began work in the 1920s they were regarded as figures of standing, not only in the chapel community, but also in the wider society in which they lived and worked.¹⁰

It is surprising, therefore, that historians generally have paid so little attention to this influential element within nineteenth-century society. Homage of a sort, usually hagiographical, has been paid to the great pulpit princes of Methodism; but what of that vast army of long-forgotten men who in their own way did as much to inform, instruct and mould public opinion as did their more illustrious brethren? It was written of the Rev. John Gaskell, a United Methodist minister who died in 1914:

He never walked in Connexional high places, but plodded patiently on in lowly and somewhat sequestered paths. Not widely known, but where well-known, beloved. He was one of the many who, in undemonstrative yet faithful fulfillment [sic] of duty wherever they may be called on to labour, contribute largely to our Connexional stability and progress.¹¹

Of men such as these the historians have made little. We still know almost nothing about the social and geographical origins, educational backgrounds, career patterns, or life experiences of the typical Methodist minister.¹²

It is only to be expected, therefore, that a similar ignorance should prevail about those responsible for the education of the ministers. It is here perhaps that the historians' failure to learn from the sociologists is most remarkable, in that modern studies suggest that, for Anglicans at least, the training college experience is one of the main shapers of political, religious and social views.¹³ If the nineteenth-century training experience for Methodists was equally significant, then it would clearly be of importance to know something of the men responsible for that training. It might of course be objected that such a study is of limited value, since not all Methodist ministers in the nineteenth century received formal college training. But by 1900, when nonconformist influence was at its peak, 58 per cent of all active Methodist ministers had been to college. This figure

¹⁰ C. D. Field: "Sociological profile of English Methodism", *Oral History*, vol. 4 (1976), p. 91, note 82.

¹¹ *The United Methodist*, 9th July 1914.

¹² But see C. D. Field: "Methodism in Metropolitan London, 1850-1920" (Oxford D.Phil., 1974)—a thesis which the author kindly gave me permission to consult. The basis for such a study, which I have begun under the auspices of the Social Science Research Council, is provided in the following works: O. A. Beckerlegge: *United Methodist Ministers and their Circuits* (1968); William Leary: "Primitive Methodist Ministers and their Circuits" (typescript in the Methodist Archives, Rylands Library, Manchester); W. Hill: *An Alphabetical Arrangement of the Wesleyan Methodist Preachers* ["Hill's Arrangement"] (1827-1836).

¹³ R. Towler and P. Coxon: *The fate of the Anglican Clergy* (1979); cf. C. Hill: *Towards the dawn. What's going to happen to Britain* (1980), p. 129: "I went into theological college a simple Bible-believing Christian... It wasn't long, however, before the Bible was systematically torn apart for me and the whole basis of my faith shattered."

disguised some major differences between the various connexions. The Primitives, for instance, had always seen their ministers primarily as evangelists rather than church-builders. Their "institution" in Sunderland did not open until 1865, and it was not until 1892, several years after it had been replaced by their college in Manchester, that the course was extended from one to two years. By 1900, therefore, only 37 per cent of active PM ministers had attended college. Among the UMFCs the figure was 48 per cent—a reflection mainly of that connexion's late commitment to formal ministerial training. Victoria Park college did not become fully established until the late 1870s. But at 78 per cent the proportion of trained Wesleyan ministers could well stand comparison with the 79 per cent of trained men in the best educated of all the nonconformist denominations, the Congregationalists. So too could the Methodist New Connexion, 72 per cent of whose ministers in 1900 had been through college.¹⁴ These high proportions reflect the early interest taken by both connexions in ministerial training. The Didsbury and Richmond branches of the Wesleyan Theological Institute had opened in the 1840s, to be followed by the Headingley and Handsworth branches in 1868 and 1881 respectively. The New Connexion college at Ranmoor began its work in 1864.

There is no *a priori* reason to believe that the Methodist training establishments in the nineteenth century were any less influential on their students than were their modern Anglican equivalents, and there is plenty of empirical evidence to support this view. Thus it is recalled of W. F. Slater of Didsbury that he had been "greatly beloved" and that "his influence upon the students was deep and abiding".¹⁶ Dr. Tasker of Richmond was said by one of his former pupils to have exercised "a very gracious influence upon the men".¹⁶ Nor can all such comments be discounted simply as concessions to polite convention, since there were ministers prepared to be openly critical. One former student at Richmond complained about the curriculum, and then added bitterly that

most lamentable of all was the so-called "class-meeting" which met weekly under the leadership of the Governor. What should have been the peak of a week's experience for many of us was its nadir, so ghastly in its unreality was it.¹⁷

Even so, there can be no doubt that the Methodist theological colleges shared the prevalent nineteenth-century philosophy of education which did not encourage the pupil to question the ideas and information handed down by his tutor. When Thomas Jackson gave the inaugural address at the opening of the Richmond session in 1860 there was no doubt in his mind as to the main purpose of theological

¹⁴ Calculated from *Congregational Year Book*, 1900, and samples taken as part of my Social Science Research Council project.

¹⁶ W. B. Brash and C. J. Wright: *Didsbury College Centenary, 1842-1942* (1942), p. 108.

¹⁶ F. H. Cumbers (ed.): *Richmond College, 1843-1943* (1943), p. 67.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 67.

training. It was to produce sound, evangelical men, to which end, he said, "every effort is made to give them right views of revealed truth".¹⁸ Students even expected to be taught the "right views", and a later Richmond principal, W. T. Davison, was investigated by the Theological Institute Committee after complaints had been made that he was unsettling the students by his too-liberal approach to the new biblical criticism.¹⁹ In general, the tutors exercised a very close supervision over their charges. "I don't think the men are *now* required," wrote W. H. Hunt in 1943, "to 'consult the Governor' about some things as they were then."²⁰ Certainly the college staffs were well aware of their opportunity to influence students. Principal Hellier of Headingley wrote that

A tutor [will] inevitably determine by his own character and conduct what the standard of religious attainment shall be . . . [he] guides in some cases the founders of churches—this is a great work indeed, and requires great and uncommon qualifications.²¹

It is with the precise nature of these qualifications that this article is concerned, the purpose being to build up a composite picture of the men who did so much to shape the Methodist ministry in the heyday of its influence from about 1870 to 1914. The personnel under consideration are those who served as principals or governors of Handsworth, Didsbury, Headingley, Richmond, Ranmoor, Hartley and Victoria Park colleges in the period before 1914. Those whose time in office lasted less than five years have been excluded on the ground that such a short tenure was unlikely to have influenced many students. This gives 28 individuals, representing 80 per cent of all those holding office between 1840 and 1914. The decision to deal only with the heads of the various institutions has been prompted in part by the need to keep to manageable dimensions the number of individuals under analysis. There is, however, rather more than a purely statistical rationale to this. The college principals ultimately were responsible for setting the general tone of their institutions, usually taught theology, and had the pastoral oversight of their men. The colleges were generally quite small, hence theirs was almost certainly the dominant influence to which the students were exposed. As the *Wesleyan Magazine* put it in 1878,

there is, perhaps, no position in the appointment of the Wesleyan Conference which, rightly apprehended, devolves more serious responsibilities than that of the Governorship of any one of the theological colleges.²²

Furthermore, it was an influence which often lasted well beyond the aspiring minister's college years. C. Ryder Smith, recalled one former student at Richmond, "exercised a spell upon me which I am happy to say remains to this day, and will endure".²³

¹⁸ T. Jackson: *The present demand for a well-trained Ministry* (1860), p. 8.

¹⁹ W. T. Davison: *Mystics and Poets* (1936).

²⁰ Cumbers (ed.), op. cit., p. 67. (Italics mine.)

²¹ A. M. and J. B. Hellier: *Benjamin Hellier: His life and teaching* (1889), p. 33 f.

²² *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1878, p. 346.

²³ Cumbers (ed.), op. cit., p. 118.

In order to bring out change over time, the years between the establishment of the first branch of the Wesleyan Theological Institute and the outbreak of war in 1914 have been divided into two equal periods. Each individual has been allocated to that period which covers his time in office. Group A refers to 1840-77, group B 1878-1914. Where any principal's term overlapped these terminal dates by more than three years he has been included in both groupings. Finally, it should perhaps be borne in mind that despite the wide range of sources from which evidence has been culled for this analysis—obituaries, private correspondence, biographies, autobiographies, Boase's *Modern English Biography since 1850*—there are still a few gaps (probably now unfillable) in our knowledge. The most serious from the viewpoint of the social historian is the lack of any systematic information concerning the occupations of our subjects' fathers, and thus the difficulty of allocating them to a social class.

Table 1. COLLEGE PRINCIPALS: PLACE OF BIRTH (by percentage)

	A	B
Rural Wales ...	—	4
Urban Scotland ...	—	9
Rural Ireland ...	—	4
Total Celtic ...	—	17
Abroad ...	—	4
Rural England ...	33	30
Urban England ...	55	30
Market town ...	11	17
London ...	—	—
Total Rural ...	44	55

Table 1 analyses the principals' birthplaces, and several features prompt comment. The non-appearance of London is clearly a reflection of Methodist weakness in the capital. More striking, however, is the fact that almost one-fifth of the men in office after 1878 came from the Celtic fringes of Britain. If we also take into consideration the high and growing proportion coming from rural areas (including market towns whose predominant ethos was probably rural rather than industrial), it would appear that the Methodist training colleges were presided over in the main by men whose own values and norms had been shaped in environments vastly different from the English industrial urban world in which their students were generally being called to work by the end of the nineteenth century.

Furthermore, as Table 2 suggests, the principals often had little

Table 2. COLLEGE PRINCIPALS: PERSONAL BACKGROUND (by percentage)

	A	B
Ministerial father ...	22	17
Secular work ...	45	43
Secular work unknown ...	22	30
No secular work ...	34	27

direct experience themselves of the secular world in which the ministers had to operate. Roughly one in five came from ministerial homes whose whole outlook was conditioned by chapel society, frequent removals, and, naturally enough, by an intensively spiritual atmosphere from which worldly influences were carefully screened. In this respect the principals' experience often reinforced that of their students, quite a high proportion of whom also came from ministerial homes. One whose childhood had been spent in such a home later testified to its stultifying effects. He had, he claimed, been totally unable to assess its values because he had nothing against which to measure them.

I had no data concerning the lives of ordinary men. The only lives I knew by actual observation were highly specialised. I was as truly separated from the common life of mankind as though I inhabited a cloister.²⁴

To some extent perhaps, the limitations imposed by a narrow upbringing could be offset by some secular work experience. Table 2 indicates that just under half of the college principals had such employment at some time. However, it is important to note that such jobs could not have lasted for very long, since the average age at which the principals began their own circuit careers or training was only 21. Furthermore, all of them spent their secular working lives in commercial and retail enterprises, not in industry. In its own way, such work could be just as narrow and restrictive as life in a ministerial home. Giving evidence before the Royal Commission on Labour in 1893-4, W. Johnson, secretary of the National Union of Shop Assistants, pointed out that

The average warehouse clerk and assistant goes into the business at an early age. Indeed, from the time he goes in as a rule he is shut off from all communication with the world and he does not know really the changes that are taking place around him. He does not read the daily papers . . . and knows nothing of the outside world.²⁵

Further confirmation of this relative lack of familiarity with the secular world is provided by Table 3. It uses the extent to which the principals were actively involved in politics, municipal, educational and charitable institutions, or intellectual pursuits, as a proxy for interest in the world outside the confines of denominational life. The results are hardly impressive. All the social and political activity discovered was confined to one connexion only—the Primitive

Table 3. COLLEGE PRINCIPALS: SOCIAL ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE COLLEGE (by percentage)

<i>Type of activity</i>	COLLEGE (by percentage)	
	A	B
Theological publication ...	33	35
Other publications ...	—	9
Social or political ...	11	17

²⁴ W. J. Dawson: *Autobiography of a Mind* (1925), p. 43.

²⁵ Quoted by R. McKibbin: "Work and Hobbies in Britain, 1880-1950", in J. Winter (ed.): *The Working Class in Modern British History* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 141.

Methodists. Men like Victoria Park's Anthony Holliday, who served on school boards in Leeds and Manchester, or Hartley's William Johnson, who was elected a Fellow of the Linnæan Society for his work on lichens, were very much the exception. For the rest, the "one defect" which an obituarist discerned in Principal Sherwood of Victoria Park college—"with what he called 'affairs' he had little interest or knowledge"—would appear to have been generally true.²⁶

To some extent this narrowness was hardly surprising. Given the Methodists' relatively short tradition of college training, they could not look to a large pool of formally trained and qualified men from whom to appoint. Thus they were more or less compelled to use men of long practical experience, as Table 4 indicates. This policy no doubt was encouraged by the opposition voiced in some connexional circles to the whole concept of an academically-trained ministry. Naturally this practical experience of ministerial life must have been useful in instructing students, but the combination of the principals' own rather narrow backgrounds and the Methodists' general emphasis on preaching meant that relatively little attention was devoted to the pastoral side. The lectures which Jones Davies of Hartley gave to his PM students are certainly very revealing in this respect. When they were published, nine chapters concerned themselves with the minutiae of sermon-preparation, -construction and -delivery. In those chapters appearing in the section described as "Pastoral" only three dealt with human problems. The majority discussed administrative matters such as finance and the conduct of church meetings.²⁷ This imbalance perhaps indicates why a PM committee set up in 1908 to consider ministerial training recommended that it should incorporate a much greater pastoral element.²⁸ A similar thrust was evident in the proposed reform of college curricula adopted by the Wesleyan Conference in 1902.

Table 4. COLLEGE PRINCIPALS: AGE AT FIRST PRINCIPAL'S APPOINTMENT; LENGTH OF MINISTERIAL EXPERIENCE (by percentages)

Age at appointment			Pastoral service	
	A	B	A	B
Below 39	...	—	0 - 4 years	... — 4
40 - 44	...	4	5 - 9 "	... — —
45 - 49	... 33	9	10 - 14 "	... 11 —
50 - 54	... 22	13	15 - 19 "	... — —
55 - 59	... 22	39	20 - 24 "	... 11 9
60 - 64	... 11	35	25 - 29 "	... 33 17
65 plus	... 11	—	30 - 34 "	... 22 17
			35 - 39 "	... 11 35
			40 years plus	... 11 17

A second outcome of this policy of appointing older, long-serving men to principalships was that few of them had high educational

²⁶ *United Methodist Magazine*, 1920, p. 174.

²⁷ W. Jones Davies: *The minister at work* (1910).

²⁸ "Report of a special committee on the affairs of the Theological Institute", *PM Minutes*, 1910, Appendix XVII.

qualifications themselves, as Table 5 suggests. This was strange, because so many of those who argued the case for having a formally trained ministry did so on the ground that the Church could not afford to have in its pulpits men who were less well educated than the populace at large.²⁹ Yet this condition was *not* extended to the men who *trained* the ministers! As a result the Methodists never matched, at least in quantitative terms, the contribution made to secular and theological scholarship by the Congregationalists. Dr. J. E. Rattenbury reckoned that his tutors positively "discouraged pursuit of university degrees", and it is clear that the general intellectual level of the college curricula left something to be desired.³⁰ By the end of the century, Methodist training was thought to be old-fashioned, inflexible, and undemanding. "I left college in 1887," recalled one man, "without ever having so much as heard of 'The problem of the Old Testament'."³¹ Another claimed that

we were sublimely unconscious of the movements of destruction and reconstruction which the historians can now see were already at work. The Darwinian hypothesis did not disturb the Didsbury of my day. Karl Marx was never mentioned, and as for Biblical criticism, all we knew was that Wellhausen, Ewald, and Kuenen were slain three times a week by our Theological Tutor . . . we were behind the times . . . and lived in strange ignorance of what was transpiring in the world of thought.³²

Table 5. COLLEGE PRINCIPALS: HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION ATTAINED (by percentage)

	A	B
University ...	—	4
Theological college ...	—	39
Grammar school ...	33	17
Private tutor ...	33	—
Village school ...	11	9
None, self-taught, or elementary	22	30

In his stimulating discussion of falling nonconformist growth-rates after 1885, A. D. Gilbert suggests that such a decline was an inevitable concomitant of an urbanizing, industrialized society.³³ There are doubtless many reasons why, in principle, this process occurred, but this article raises the possibility that, for Methodism at least, part of the explanation lay in the type of men charged with ministerial training in the period before 1914. On the whole, they had little personal experience of secular industrial life. Their formative years were generally spent in areas whose dominant ethos was agrarian, and often in homes whose horizons were severely circumscribed by the demands of chapel propriety. If the Methodist principals could pass on the experience of long ministerial careers, they lacked both the flexibility of youth and the formal training which might

²⁹ Jackson, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

³⁰ Quoted in Brash and Wright, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

³¹ Cumbers (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 72.

³² Brash and Wright, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

³³ A. D. Gilbert: *Religion and Society in Industrial England* (1976), pp. 187 ff.

have enabled them to cope more effectively with the demands a changing society was likely to make upon their students. It is not surprising that many students found the transition from college to circuit life very traumatic. It has been estimated that 10 per cent of Wesleyan candidates never entered the ministry after completing their education.⁸⁴ The *British Weekly* claimed in 1887 that the Free Methodists were losing four men a year through resignations, whilst an article on the New Connexion estimated that a quarter of the men entering their ministry between 1856 and 1888 withdrew, one-third of these for dishonourable reasons, the rest to enter other churches, secular work, or retirement brought on by ill-health.⁸⁵ Many obviously fell into the same disillusionment encountered by W. J. Dawson, who quit the ministry in favour of social work. He wrote that as a "seller of rhetoric" he

might accomplish some good, but what did it all lead to? The old conviction of the futility of speech to influence conduct returned upon me with redoubled force. For years I had spoken to the same people and they remained the same people.⁸⁶

All in all, therefore, there would seem some plausibility in the thesis that at the very apogee of its influence the Methodist element within nonconformity was being undermined from within by an inadequately-trained ministry. Contemporaries were vaguely aware of this, hence the interest in the content of college courses and the various suggestions made for improving student quality and college effectiveness.⁸⁷ No one, however, drew attention to the qualities of the college principals. But a question-mark must stand against their suitability to train men to deal effectively with the pastoral and theological problems likely to be encountered in the urban, industrial society that Britain had become by the end of the nineteenth century—a society in which accepted norms and beliefs were constantly under challenge from new scientific, historical, philosophical and theological thought.

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⁸⁴ *Wesleyan Conference Report*, 1892, p. 156.

⁸⁵ *British Weekly*, 11th February 1887; T. Hudson: "Our Ministry", *MNC Magazine*, 1888, p. 9.

⁸⁶ Dawson, *op. cit.*, p. 314.

⁸⁷ The evidence of this concern is easily seen in contemporary literature. See, e.g., G. G. Findlay: *The Education of the Wesleyan Ministry* (1903).

Among recent publications of local interest are transcriptions of two diaries. From Westmorland comes *The Diary of Hannah Wharton, 1871-73*, edited by John Burgess, which may be obtained, price £1 80p., from the Cumbria Religious History Society, Low Croft, Turpenhow, Carlisle, CA5 1JD. Earlier in this volume there was a passing reference to *Thomas Longley in Cornwall, 1798-1801*, edited by Cedric Appleby. This account of three years spent as an itinerant in Cornish circuits is available, price 50p. plus postage, from the Rev. Thomas Shaw, 14, Lannmoor, Lanner, Redruth, Cornwall, TR16 6HN.

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CLIVE D. FIELD.

NEWS FROM OUR BRANCHES

THE branch journals, supplemented in some cases by correspondence, present a picture of continuing and perhaps growing activity along the lines indicated in my last report. Meetings, lectures and journals have kept the branches in being, and pilgrimages have been made to many places—Whitby, the northern Dales, Charlemon, Oldham, Epworth, Lichfield, Bath, Tavistock, Trewint and the Cornish preaching-pits. The growing popularity and usefulness of museums along both the British and the Methodist heritage-trails is reflected in the journals: **London** has an account of the new Museum of Methodism at City Road chapel, **Cornwall** describes its Museum of Cornish Methodism, which has recently been extended, and **Ireland** reports improvements made at the Historical Room in Belfast, as well as a programme of cataloguing and indexing in progress there.

The journals continue to offer help and guidance to researchers. The **Plymouth and Exeter** journal contains a valuable account by Mr. C. J. Spittal of the resources of the New Room, Bristol. The **West Midlands** journal contains the Rev. William Leary's account of the Methodist Archives and Research Centre. Our research guide, *How to write . . .* (as we call it), continues to be a most useful tool, but Mr. Alan Rose's 14-page article "In quest of Methodist History" in the **East Midlands** journal is worthy of separate publication. There is room for more than one guide of this kind in a field so complex as that of Methodist local history.

A parallel development to the museums is the Wesley Trail, such as the ambitious six-months programme arranged by the Calderdale Tourist Service in the North and the ITV series on "The Wesley Way" in Devon and Cornwall.

Cornwall reports a joint meeting with other historical societies at the Royal Institution of Cornwall, and **Yorkshire** a contact with the Yorkshire Archæological Society. The **West Midlands** journal contains a useful list of the many repositories in which archival material from the circuits in the area is to be found, and also lists articles relating to Methodism which have appeared in the *Blackcountryman* journal. Lectures, articles and publications include "Luther and the Methodists", by Rev. Prof. E. G. Rupp, and "Methodist Union", by Rev. Dr. John C. Bowmer [both **North-East**]; "The Norwich Winter Riots, 1751-52", by Rev. Elizabeth J. Bellamy [**East Anglia**]; "Early Primitive Methodist Hymns and Tunes", by M. G. White, and "On tracing Methodist ancestry", by R. Ratcliffe [both **Lincolnshire**]; "John Wesley in Wirral", by P. S. Richards [**Lancashire and Cheshire**], and "Primitive Methodists in Devon", by R. F. S. Thorne [**Plymouth and Exeter**].

To list the items relating to localities would require more space than is available, but the following examples may be mentioned on account of their length or special interest. (They do not include reprints from newspaper files, of which there are a number of examples.) Bristol: Old King Street chapel [**Bristol**]; "Primitive Methodism in Kendal", Brampton and Soulby [**Cumbria**]; "Early Methodism in West Cheshire" and High Legh Independent Methodist church [**Lancashire and Cheshire**]; "Rural Methodist Worship in South Lincolnshire, c. 1898-1914" and "Wesleyan Methodism in Rippingdale" [**Lincolnshire**]; Islington and West Street chapel, Seven Dials [**London**]; Healaugh, and Didsbury college [**North-East**]; "Wesleyans and Primitives in the West of the Island" [**Isle of Man**]; "Free Methodism in Otley" and "Early Methodism in Doncaster"

[**Yorkshire**]; "The Free Wesleyans of Liskeard", "John Wesley at St. Mary Arches, Exeter", Bangors (a Methodist shareholders' chapel), and (omitted from my last report) North Lew, which the Rev. R. K. Parsons has established as the first Bible Christian chapel, pre-dating Shebbear [all **Plymouth and Exeter**].

Biographical studies can be represented by "John Harris, the Miner Poet of Bolennowe" [**Cornwall**]; George Morgan [**East Midlands**]; "Daughters of the Manse" [**Lancashire and Cheshire**]; John Fletcher [**London**]; Samuel Pollard, and "The Callards of Torquay" [**Plymouth and Exeter**]; John Roberts's Journal [**West Midlands**]; "Peter Mackenzie and Coundon" and "The Upright Story" [**North-East**]; and "Enos Nuttall, 1842-1916", Wesleyan minister and later Archbishop of the West Indian Province [**Yorkshire**].

Several branches have published lectures that have been given: that by our President on "The Sunday Service, 1784", the publication of which this year marks the bicentenary, was given to the **Bristol** branch and to the Friends of Wesley's Chapel. The **North-East** branch reports that the three lectures given to mark the 175th anniversary of Primitive Methodism are available on cassettes. The branch celebrated its 21st birthday in 1983, and this year the **Irish** branch were the first to celebrate the bicentennial of American Methodism when the Rev. Dr. Norman Taggart spoke of the significance of 1784, at the same time linking it to the bicentennial of 1766, so closely connected with Ireland. In much the same way this year's bicentennial celebrations at Pill link it with the embarkation of Francis Asbury in 1771.

Local Branches

Additions and corrections to the list printed in *Proceedings*, xliii, p. 87, are as follows:

Membership

East Anglia—31
Lancashire and Cheshire—173
North-East—211

Secretaries

Cornwall—Mr. W. E. Walley, Park View, Ponsanooth, Truro,
Cornwall, TR3 7JA
Cumbria—Mrs. Jean Coulthard, 32, Croft Road, Carlisle.
East Anglia—Rev. Elizabeth J. Bellamy, B.A., 8, St. Andrew's Close,
Holt, Norfolk, NR5 6EL

Journals and other Publications received

Bristol	...	...	No. 37; <i>Old King Street Chapel; The Sunday Service, 1784</i>
Cornwall	...	...	Vol. VI, No. 4
Cumbria	...	...	No. 14
East Anglia	...	...	No. 43
East Midlands	...	...	Vol. I, Nos. 7, 8
Lancashire and Cheshire	...	...	Vol. IV, Nos. 8, 9
Lincolnshire	...	...	Vol. III, No. 7
London and Home Counties	...	...	Nos. 28, 29
Plymouth and Exeter	...	...	Vol. VI, Nos. 1, 2
West Midlands	...	...	Vol. IV, Nos. 2, 3
Yorkshire	...	...	Nos. 43, 44

THOMAS SHAW.

BOOK NOTICES

Evangelicals United: Ecumenical stirrings in pre-Victorian Britain, 1795-1830, by Roger H. Martin. (Scarecrow Press, Metuchen, N.J. and London (1983): pp. xii. 230, \$17.50.)

This useful work by an American pupil of Dr. John D. Walsh has three principal weaknesses: it is hazy in its long-range perspective, suffers from a considerable trail of minor factual errors, and is inhibited in its pursuit of explanations by a total innocence of social history; but, at the end of all, it is not a negligible achievement. Much of the story of "catholic Christianity", the great age of undenominational evangelicalism, which is Dr. Martin's theme, is well known; but by working steadily through the archives of the London Missionary Society, the Bible Society, the Religious Tract Society and the Jews Society, he adds a good deal of valuable narrative detail to what is already known of those four important bodies. The last of his four is indeed not well-known; and his brief essay, necessarily ending in 1815 after the Jews Society became, in effect, an Anglican body, is welcome, both in itself and as the distant background to the mid-century concern with the Jerusalem bishopric. (To take out the first bishop, Alexander, it is amusing to note, the Royal Navy offered H.M.S. *Infernal*, and, this being rejected by the Primate, substituted H.M.S. *Devastation*!)

While he sticks to his plain tale, Dr. Martin is valuable, but he feels bound to set his subject in the framework of the pre-history of the ecumenical movement, and to derive from it some not very applicable lessons for that movement. This will hardly do! The author quotes, without drawing the moral, Sir James Stephen's aphorism that

for the cure of every sorrow by which our land or race can be visited, there are patrons, vice-presidents and secretaries. For the diffusion of every blessing of which mankind can partake in common, there is a committee.

The period indeed saw the application of contractual notions to the furthering of the work of God on an unparalleled scale, and necessarily evoked a protest from those pledged to a symbolic view of the Church—high churchmen, very Strict and Particular Baptists—even, in the end, Wesleyans whom, in his wilder flights of fancy, Alfred Barrett tried to get out of connexionalism and into a symbolic self-understanding. The ecumenical movement, heavily committed to the idea that there is no ultimate conflict between loyalty to denomination and loyalty to the "coming great Church", and hence committed to the discovery of symbolic foci of unity is, for good or ill, clearly on the side of the enemies of Dr. Martin's heroes and on the side of those who think it indecent to inquire too closely how far ecclesiastical machinery, denominational or ecumenical, serves the instrumental purposes for which it may be supposed to exist, or to have been created.

It would be wrong to overload a short review with lists of small factual errors, which in total do not affect the value of the author's main story; but, to give a sample, Zinzendorf was not an "ordained Lutheran" in the sense of being in Lutheran orders, Robert Hawker was vicar of Charles Church, Plymouth, not of Charles, near Plymouth, and Gossner worked from the Allgäu, not Swabia. Finally, no explanation of the revival of denominationism is likely to convince which does not examine the social roots of tension within denominations. To blame Anglican intransigence

and the alleged fact that "'Moderate Calvinism' was Calvinism in decay" is to do justice neither to the scope of ecclesiastical intolerance nor to the variety of theology of which that intolerance could make use. But the final verdict to the student must be: use an undoubtedly useful book, but do not swallow it wholesale.

W. R. WARD.

Brothers in Ministry: The Story of Walter and Francis Bertram James, by David W. James. Price £1 50p. post free from the author at 21, Eaglehurst, Eagle Road, Branksome, Poole, Dorset, BH12 1AP.

Brothers in Ministry contains brief biographies of the Rev. Walter and the Rev. Francis B. James—and much besides. David James, now a supernumerary after a full and busy ministry in India and in English circuits, has found time to gather together personal reminiscences of a family circle and tradition to which he is indebted and of which he is obviously proud.

"Parents and Sisters" (chapter 1) portrays the kind of family background, Anglican-Methodist and working-class, from which many a Methodist ministerial family sprang. Chapter 2 is a portrait of Walter James, necessarily brief because of his early death (1908) after just four intensive years of ministry. However, this chapter provides valuable (and amusing) insights into the rigorous ministerial discipline of the Wesleyan Conference even as late as the beginning of the present century.

The remaining two-thirds of the book is devoted to Francis B. James, and concludes with a selection of ten of his "For the Quiet Hour" articles which graced the pages of the *Methodist Recorder* for some thirty years. Francis (Frank to his friends) was a fine product of the Wesleyan tradition at its best—a man who would undoubtedly have enjoyed a warm friendship with the Wesleys. "Methodists are a reading people," claimed John Wesley, and Francis James was one of this select band. He was deeply read in "our literature"—the Wesleys' journals, letters, and hymns in particular. His apt quotations were a stimulus to many post-Union Methodists of the non-Wesleyan traditions to begin their explorations of that literature for themselves.

Yet, proud as Francis James was of his Methodist heritage, he was completely ecumenical in his reading. His knowledge of Catholic and Reformed spiritual writing was immense, and enabled many Methodists to find rich pastures in traditions other than their own. Those who share his love of reading owe a debt to Francis for his many "introductions"—particularly to the English mystics.

It seems unlikely that the four volumes of selections from "For the Quiet Hour" articles (*For the Quiet Hour* (1937), *Still with Thee* (1940), *Heart speaks to heart* (1946), and *With God and His friends* (1950)), nor his *The Way of Prayer*, will ever be reprinted. We can but hope that the many copies which must still remain on Methodist shelves will not be destroyed, but treasured and read by Methodist generations to come.

Though nearly two-thirds of this book, which includes two family photographs, is concerned with Francis James, his wife Louie, his daughter Margaret (a distinguished teacher and headmistress) and his many friends, W. Russell Maltby (whose *Obiter Scripta* he so painstakingly edited), Leslie Weatherhead and others are also recalled. As one whose personal devotional life and reading owes much to F. B. James, it is a joy to commend this splendid little book.

EDWIN THOMPSON.

Where I used to play on the green: A Novel, by Glyn Hughes. (Gollancz (1982): £7 95p.; Penguin (1983): £2 50p.)

The title of Mr. Hughes's novel, and the poem by William Blake from which it is taken and which appears as the epigraph to the work, would not suggest to the casual observer a biographical study of William Grimshaw, the eighteenth-century evangelical curate of Haworth and active spirit in the celebrated Haworth Round. Mr. Hughes has come to Grimshaw as a prominent figure in that part of the Yorkshire-Lancashire Pennine border country whose character he explored in *Millstone Grit* (1975) and as a man whose career might be depicted as a focus not only of the tensions in the life of that area created by industrialization, but also the perennial tensions which Blake celebrated between innocence and the trappings of religion. Hughes acknowledges some debt to Frank Baker's life of Grimshaw (1963), but does not pretend to follow Dr. Baker in interpretation. He also makes acknowledgements to E. P. Thompson's radical critique of Methodism. Blake's sensitive evocation of the human predicament is too fugitive to provide a model for the sort of enterprise that Hughes has undertaken, but Hughes's writing is at its best and most perceptive in a few incidents where this sensitivity escapes from the strait-jacket of his dogmatisms. Thompson's stereotypes—sometimes abridged by Hughes to the point of caricature—are too rigid to provide a tool for describing the behaviour of "Methodism" in the partly rural, partly industrial, partly pagan and wholly brutal and brutalizing environment of the frontier society in which Grimshaw ministered.

At times it seems that there is a television script straining to get out of this novel (a mixture of *Emmerdale Farm* and *Whoops Apocalypse?*), and although false Methodist piety may be embarrassed by some of the scenes which Hughes presents—protracted class meetings symbiotic with orgies—a sense of irony should save the historian in an area which has no place for the squeamish.

There is a place for use of the historical novel in attempting an understanding of the past, but for such an enterprise to be successful it needs to be governed by a more accurate scholarship than Hughes deploys—it is not good enough to transpose incidents from Edinburgh courts to the Leeds of earlier decades—and by an exercise of the imagination which has undergone the real discipline of "emptying itself" out of the present into the past. Such an exercise would show respect for the changes that occur from place to place and from decade to decade which Hughes does not pretend to; it will not do justice to the material to throw into one promiscuous jumble random instances of "man's inhumanity to man" from all over the place. Hughes has something to say—E. P. Thompson has said it better in some of his Christmas poems—but this sort of novel is not the best way of saying it. Methodist historians should note this book, and may be mistaken if they do not take it seriously. They themselves may be partly responsible for the garbled versions of Methodism which too often appear to fill the gaps left by reticence. A. N. CASS.

The Sunday Service, 1784, by A. Raymond George. (The Friends of Wesley's Chapel Annual Lecture No. 2: pp. 12 plus cover, 70p. from Wesley's Chapel, City Road, London, E.C.1.)

The topic of the 1983 annual lecture, the second in the series, is one on which the lecturer is an acknowledged authority. However, he confesses in the opening paragraph that what he presents is "a largely factual paper

which really contains nothing new for those who are fully acquainted with the subject"; but there must be many of our readers who do not come in that category, and to whom this lecture will be new and refreshing.

The story of Wesley's Prayer Book (for such indeed was *The Sunday Service*) begins just two hundred years ago (in 1784), when John Wesley "set apart" Thomas Coke to superintend the work in America and equipped him with a service-book which was simply a revision of the Book of Common Prayer. This service-book, however, eventually gained a wider use, especially in Britain, where it came to be known as "Mr. Wesley's Abridgement".

After this historical review, Mr. George then goes on to discuss three relevant points:

- (i) the reason why Wesley revised the Prayer Book as he did; was it purely practical, i.e. simply to shorten the service, or were there theological motives?;
- (ii) the nature of textual variants, and by whom they were made;
- (iii) what is the "Sunday service" of the Methodists?

All these issues are discussed with the clarity one always associates with our Society's President, and the lecture concludes with a comment on the current *Sunday Service*—a phrase of Wesley's which "has now been put to fresh use".

It is to be hoped that those of our readers who have not access to the many articles which have appeared in these *Proceedings* on the subject of Wesley's service-books will avail themselves of this excellent summary.

JOHN C. BOWMER.

A Mountain Road: An Autobiography, by Douglas W. Thompson.

Published by Margaret Thompson at 3, Ashmore House, 12, High Street, East Hoathly, East Sussex, BN8 6DP (1983): pp. vii. 192, £3 50p.

One's only negative comment about this book concerns externals, and it is fair to dispose of it first. It relates less to those responsible for its publication than to the commercial publishers who judged that it would not sell, and to the situation in which their judgement was taken. The result is that, although it is attractively produced and printed, it has not benefited from fully professional copy-editing and proof-reading.

This having been regretfully said, the book from every other point of view is sheer joy. Douglas Thompson's widow says simply in her Preface: "He enjoyed writing his autobiography"; and it shows. "Gentle" is not perhaps the first word one would choose to describe his life, either inwardly or outwardly, but otherwise "the elements" were indeed

So mix'd in him that Nature might stand up
And say to all the world, "This was a man!"

Psychologists could doubtless say the same thing less attractively. In common language, each of his many qualities seems to have been balanced by its converse; yet not by subtraction or even by way of paradox, but by a natural complementation which, like "normal vision", is rarely achieved in real life.

After a Steinbeckian succession of secular jobs, Douglas Thompson experienced conversion as liberation; soon after, was called to the ministry; and thereafter devoted himself single-mindedly to the work of a Methodist preacher in the most varied situations: from central hall to rural circuit,

from troubled pre-revolutionary China through Stalag Luft 3 (which as he describes it sounds not unlike a war-time central hall) to a newly-created post at the head of the Methodist Missionary Society, and "Wesley's Chair" during the last great period of restructuring.

It is a fine story, grippingly told. It is also a valuable source for the history of World Methodism. Yet, not surprisingly, and although Douglas Thompson had nothing to hide, it is not the whole truth about him. For one thing, it is an action story—a book about people and events; there is almost nothing about the books which, from the almost Narnian *Mystery of the White Stone* to his life of Donald Soper, that kindred spirit, are their own monument. For another, his life was simply too full to be packed into less than two hundred pages. The reviewer remembers him best as a much senior colleague at the Mission House, dazzling and sometimes baffling fellow-workers who thought they could understand any proposition; occasionally even infuriating more reflective members of the staff by an instant, instinctive judgement which (unforgivably) often proved right; and, like Karl Barth, sometimes taking a course "against the stream", as on the issue of black churches in Britain, whose apparent illogicality was in reality based on a deep synthesis of lived experience which he had neither the time nor the inclination—perhaps not even the temperament—to argue out step by step. PAUL ELLINGWORTH.

The March of Methodism in Singapore and Malaysia, 1885-1980, by Theodore R. Doraisamy. (Methodist Book Room, Singapore 0617: pp. iv. 110, hard cover, US\$8; soft cover, US\$6.)

What hath God wrought: Motives of Mission in Methodism from Wesley to Thoburn (same author and publisher: pp. xx. 132, US\$10.)

Bishop Doraisamy, formerly Principal of the Singapore Teachers' Training College, is devoting his retirement to historical research, and these two books are part of the result. Both are attractively produced and well documented, and the second has the added advantages of a bibliography and index.

The essentially American perspective is right and proper in the account of a mission that stemmed from and was sustained by American Methodism, but becomes something of a hindrance in his study of missionary motivation. Here, beginning with Wesley and Coke, he carries his story down to the era of Bunting and Watson in the early nineteenth century; but, as these names indicate, his focus is on the motives of those who promoted and supported mission rather than on those of the missionaries themselves. There is then a rather abrupt switch to an examination of later American missions. An analysis of the differences of motivation between British and American missionaries working in India would have been interesting at this point. Instead, the final "review and summary" does not quite succeed in bringing coherence and unity to the study.

JOHN A. VICKERS.

"*Our Hymns*": *A Commentary on Methodist Hymnology, 1737-1984*, compiled by Kenneth Mankin (duplicated typescript, pp. [i. 31]).

The publication of the 1983 *Hymns and Psalms: A Methodist and Ecumenical Hymn-book* has been the occasion of local launching festivals in many parts of the Connexion, in some cases with accompanying literature; and the Rev. Kenneth Mankin has compiled a useful chronological handlist of some 140 hymn-books, tune-books, hymn-and-tune books and minor collections of hymns published by the various sections of

Methodism from John Wesley's "Charlestown" hymn-book of 1737 (see *Proceedings*, xxxi, pp. 186-93) to the present day, though he has not included several quite well-produced "mission" hymnals (words and music) published by both Wesleyans and Primitive Methodists, c. 1875-1925. Explanatory notes and comments are appended to the principal entries, and all are grouped under denominational headings, occupying 27 pages. In addition there is a 4-page list of titles in chronological order.

Inevitably some typing errors have appeared, and so we read "God of Conceit" (!) for Dick Jones's "God of concrete . . .", and there is the surprising spelling of Whatts for Watts throughout the 27 pages. On page 25 what should have been 1969 *Hymns and Songs* has come out as *Hymns and Psalms* (hard enough already to avoid slips of the tongue here!).

Nevertheless, Mr. Mankin has performed a useful exercise in setting out for present-day Methodists the lengthy pedigree of what they sing, covering almost two hundred and fifty years. ALFRED A. TABERER.

Y Diwygiad Mawr [The Great Revival], by Derec Llwyd Morgan (Llandysul: Gwasg Gomer (1981), pp. xvi. 320, £6 75p.) is a study of the Calvinistic Methodist revival in Wales during its earliest period (1737-1790/1), the age dominated by Howell Harris, Daniel Rowland and William Williams, Pantycelyn. Written entirely in Welsh, its publication is a reminder of the continuing flow of Welsh-language material relating to the history of Calvinistic Methodism.

The standard history of the movement during the eighteenth century is contained in the first two volumes of the *Hanes Methodistiaeth Galfnidd Cymru*, edited by Gomer M. Roberts. Although there is inevitably some overlap with this work, the principal aim of *Y Diwygiad Mawr* is to provide a detailed analysis of the thought and imaginative life of the revival as these are revealed in the *published* writings of the revivalists. The book contains frequent references to the Wesleys, to Whitefield, and to the theological tensions between the various manifestations of eighteenth-century Methodism in Wales and England.

Rowland Wardle Burroughs

THE Methodist Church and this Society have suffered a great loss through the death of Rowland Wardle Burroughs on 30th May 1984. Roy, as he was known to his numerous friends, was a local preacher for 53 years and a keen Methodist who closely followed the affairs of the Connexion. He was a dedicated supporter of village Methodism, and for many years had worshipped and worked in village chapels, which he valued for their witness and their contribution to rural community life.

Roy was a member of this Society for over thirty years, and had a keen interest in and a wide knowledge of Methodist history. Although not an officer of the Society, he was always ready to give his professional services when needed, and the Executive Committee came to regard him as their legal adviser. In this capacity he successfully brought to a conclusion the application of this Society to be registered by the Charity Commissioners. It is principally, however, as a loyal friend that he will be remembered. To quote the announcement of his death, he was "a faithful servant of his Master and his Church".

We remember Mary his widow, and his son and daughters, assuring them of our sympathy in their sad loss. R.C.S.