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Proceedings

OF THE

Wesley Historical Society

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Volume 51 **October 1997**

ALL TOGETHER NOW! THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH 1907 - 1932

The Wesley Historical Society Lecture for 1997

If the inspiration of the United Methodist Church came from the Big Idea of its day, Methodist Union, then its constitution came from endless meetings by wealthy and well meaning men. It is easier to examine administration than inspiration so this paper looks at the United Methodist Church as the creation of committees and conferences - what it inherited and what it made of its inheritance. In other words what it meant in 1907 and the following twenty five years to be 'All together now'. The people who were moved about on the chess board of ecclesiastical politics in 1907 were people who took their religion seriously and, facing daunting problems within and without, they did their best to make their church a microcosm of united Methodism. Their real achievements were overshadowed by the preparation for the next move in 1932 and we are still teased with the unanswered question 'How would the United Methodists have survived if Methodist Union in 1932 had not happened as it did?' In this short paper many aspects of the life of the church have to be omitted including its work amongst the young and its overseas missions.

Now - September 1907

For the half-century from 1857 until 1907 there were five major Methodist denominations, all of which had been cast in the same mould, but up to 110 years of separate development had encouraged individual emphases and viewpoints. The Wesleyans were by far the biggest with

half a million members but they had half an eye on the Church of England. The Methodist New Connexion had more than half an eye on the Wesleyans but they were only 7% of their size with 37,000 members. The evangelical Primitive Methodists were very large with over 200,000 members. The Bible Christians were somewhat similar to the Primitives but were only 16% of their size with 32,000 members. The United Methodist Free Churches (often referred to as 'Free Methodists') were the third biggest with 80,000 members. Originating in schism they were suspicious of the Wesleyans.

Over the forty years up to 1907 these five looked at each other as potential partners but in the end it was the smallest three that named the day, the Bible Christians, the Free Methodists and the Methodist New Connexion. The new church with 149,000 members called itself the 'United Methodist Church' and the Primitives and the Wesleyans waited on the side lines to see how this prototype union fared.

In 1907 there were practical reasons for organisational union as three or more Methodist chapels might be competing with each other in one High Street or, worse still, in one village - union would put an end to that. For such small denominations 'leakage' or loss of members when they moved was a serious problem - union would put an end to that too! In 1906 Annie Argall wrote that mothers were all for union, 'When Tom or Bob leaves home for work in a distant city, where there is no Bible Christian Church, it is always a grief to the motherly heart that the boy has to break the links that bound him to the Church of his fathers. In the Union area [*sic*-era?], a United Methodist Church will be found in almost every part of England.'[1] When the dust of union had settled it was only too obvious that many parts of England were still without a UM church. In March 1913 the Quarterly Meeting of the Ringsash Circuit in mid-Devon lamented, 'We suffer much through removals. There is a steady drain from all the countryside which not only lessens the material we have to work upon but takes from us some of our best workers and most devoted members'.[2] From Devon this steady drain usually headed for vast impersonal London. The Bible Christians' Jubilee Chapel was not far from Wesley's Chapel and their first plan after union offered, 'Should any of our friends in the country be coming to North London to locate, if they will communicate with the resident Evangelist [R. T. Buttle] some days before coming he will be pleased to do his best to get them suitable lodgings at a convenient distance from the Jubilee Chapel and meet them at any railway station.[3] With only 8,000 members in the whole of London it was inevitable that most newcomers would be lost to another Methodist or Free Church.

1 1906 *BC Mag* p. 451 Argall, Annie E., 'From a Woman's Point of View'.
2 DRO 2405D/9 Quarterly Meeting Minutes.
3 Ward Scrapbook, MCA. Plan Nov. 1907 - Jan. 1908.

In the summer of 1907 the annual Conferences of the Bible Christians, New Connexion and Free Methodists were formally adjourned to a Uniting Conference on 17 September on the neutral ground of Wesley's Chapel. On the evening of the 16th there was a Grand Reception and Conversazione at the Portman Rooms in Baker Street but next morning people were queuing at Wesley's Chapel at twenty to six.[4] Events began at ten and at a quarter to ten the chapel was packed beyond belief.

W. B. Lark of the Bible Christians, the senior ex-President, opened proceedings and they sang the hymn 'My heart and voice I raise' in preference to 'And are we yet alive?' Then, as was the custom, distinguished visitors were spotted in the gallery and prevailed upon to come down to sit on the platform. Next, Edward Boaden of the Free Methodists, who had entered the ministry in 1849, was elected President. He presided over nearly 700 representatives of the three denominations and each group separately and together voted for the proposed union, first the MNC on the President's left, then the BCs on his right, then the FMs in front of him. Then they voted together, 'The motion was carried with absolute unanimity, amid tears of joy, exultant shouts and tumultuous emotion'.[5] Eight years later the united church had to appeal for £80,000 to bolster the ministers' pensions and there were 10,000 less members to pay for it but that, like the Great War, was in the future.

With a total of only 76 United Methodist chapels in the whole of London it was remarkable that there should be one of each denomination within a mile of Wesley's Chapel. The BCs were in Fairbank Street, the FMs in Willow Street and the MNC Mission was in Packington Street. During the Uniting Conference the BC chapel laid on 'a comfortable sixpenny tea'.[6]

Despite the excitement at Wesley's Chapel, union was not an event but a process and this had begun in earnest in January 1904 when an average of 93% of the Quarterly Meetings voted for union.[7] In 1905 the Quarterly Meetings approved the constitution by nearly 90%[8] and the 1906 Conferences approved the necessary documents - a Parliamentary Bill, a Deed Poll and a constitution. Changes to circuits were likely to be unpopular so they were to be left alone for the time being but the districts were a connexional matter and proposals for eighteen new districts were approved. The arrangement of the new districts were so unsatisfactory that the 1907 *Minutes* included a half-apology.

4 *Souvenir and Handbook of the First and Historic Conference* 1907 p. 59.

5 Smith, H. et al (Editors) *The Story of the United Methodist Church* (1932) pp. 6-12.

6 *Souvenir* 1907 p.65.

7 1904 BC *Mins* pp. 38-41. The denominational averages FM 92%, MNC 93%, BC 97%.

8 1906 FM *Mins* p.325.

'Difficulties have been especially great with respect to the Lincoln and Norwich District and much more time has been spent trying to make arrangements that would be far more acceptable'.[9] This new district stretched an unworkable 130 miles from Lincoln to Lowestoft.

In 1997 the *Methodist Recorder* published a Wesley Day sermon by the Chairman of the Leeds District asking rhetorically 'Is it perhaps time we laid Mr Wesley gently and lovingly to rest?'[10] Ninety years ago in 1907 the new United Methodists actually did this, at least in so far as their stated doctrines were unrelated to the person and writings of Mr Wesley and their powers permitted them to amend these doctrines every ten years. The doctrines were unexceptionable enough, including hell as 'the resurrection of condemnation', whatever that means.[11]

The fingerprints of the old denominations were on the new constitution. The New Connexion's contribution was the idea of Guardian Representatives, who, like the Wesleyans' Legal Hundred, were chosen from the great and the good to give stability, continuity and bottom to the conference. It was overlooked that the New Connexion's own Guardian Representatives had been appointed for life so a compromise was adopted, they could attend the UM Conference 'with full liberty to speak but not to vote'.[12] A typically Free Methodist proposal approved in 1906 was that Conference would requisition money from circuits for the ministry but would only appeal for support for other funds and institutions.[13] In 1907 the Deed Poll silently replaced 'appeal' by 'such action as it may deem necessary or expedient' and the Free Methodists' tradition of circuit independence ended without a struggle.[14]

This then was the new United Methodist Church with its new constitution, doctrines, name and districts but with 149,000 old members and 425 old circuits. Its first class ticket was issued in December 1907, with the text, 'Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. Ps. 133.1'

All Together - A National Church

Although the united church did not fulfil Annie Argall's forecast of having a congregation in almost every part of England it did cover a much wider area than any of the three denominations. They had been so

9 1907 UM *Mins* p.109. (Hereafter, *UM Minutes* are cited as *Mins.*)
10 *Methodist Recorder* 22 May 1997 p.8 Townsend, M., 'Marks of a Methodist'.
11 1907 *Mins* pp. 40-41.
11 1907 *Mins* pp. 40-41.
12 1907 *Mins* p. 105.
13 1906 *FM Mins* p. 332.
14 1907 *Mins* p. 51.

regional that the New Connexion never held its Conference south of Birmingham, the Bible Christians never north of Bristol and the Free Methodists only once south of Bristol.

The Bible Christians were the smallest and were concentrated in the South West, spilling round into South Wales and with surprisingly strong but remote colonies along the South Coast and in Kent. From the perspective of the great cities in the North and Midlands they seemed poor and unsophisticated in their rural heartland but that was to overlook their strength in Plymouth, Portsmouth, Bristol and Cardiff. The awkwardly named United Methodist Free Churches were the largest and their radical origins in schism from Wesleyan Methodism explained their strength in the urban and industrial area of the North and Midlands but they had a significant presence in the South. The Methodist New Connexion, dating from 1797, was the most urban and intellectual and nearly 90% of its chapels were in industrial villages or towns.

Geographically United Methodism was concentrated in the north and midlands of England and there was a great wedge-shaped swathe of Middle England where United Methodism hardly existed. Imagine an east-west line drawn through the centre of this swathe, passing through Hereford, Evesham, Banbury, Bedford and Ipswich. To the north of this line lived 61% of the United Methodists because that was where the old denominations had been strong. In fact the MNC had nearly 97% of its membership north of the line and the Free Methodists had 76%. To the south of the line the Bible Christians had 96% of their members so they and the New Connexion were strangers. There was a marked clustering of circuits around the northern industrial areas and conurbations, Birmingham, Nottingham, Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds and Newcastle but there were clusters in the south too, especially West Cornwall and Bristol. Industrial South Wales had fewer than 3,000 members and North Wales had fewer than 750. There were no circuits in Scotland. On the other hand, islands were something of a United Methodist speciality with circuits on the Isle of Wight, the Scillies and the Channel Islands as well as the Isle of Man.

A mere 4% of the Bible Christians lived north of our line and their strength lay in the south west where they dominated United Methodism. In Devon in 1907 there were 9,000 Bible Christians, a mere 900 Free Methodists and a trivial 37 New Connexion members. As a result enthusiasm for local union in Devon was never great, partly because most of the former Bible Christians had no one to amalgamate with. In Plymouth the circuit amalgamation of 1908 was undone two years later[15] and at Exeter they never tried.

[15] 1910 *Mins* pp. 17-18.

On any count and especially in proportion to population United Methodism in London and the South East was alarmingly weak. There were few UM circuits in the South East - only one circuit in Surrey, five in Hampshire and seven in Kent. The North was a contrast - 69 circuits were in Yorkshire, 57 in Lancashire, 21 in Durham, 16 in Staffordshire and 15 in Cheshire. In the South West there were 41 in Cornwall and 25 in Devon. Generally the United Methodist Church was strongest in the great industrial cities, especially those based on old industries, and in order of numerical strength these were Sheffield, Manchester, Leeds, Stoke on Trent, Bristol, Nottingham, Newcastle, Halifax, Sunderland, Rochdale, Birmingham and Huddersfield. This concentration in areas of old industry made the United Methodists gravely vulnerable and the depression, particularly in the textile areas of the North, affected a disproportionate number of their circuits.

Sheffield proved to be the stronghold of United Methodism with over 4,700 members, despite there not being a single Bible Christian congregation for many miles around. It was in Sheffield that Joseph Ward, the great industrialist had his account with the Midland Bank and it was with the same bank and branch that the United Methodist Church placed its account.[16] It was in Sheffield that the 1908 UM Conference was held and W.D.L. Cann, the pastor of the Chagford ex-BC circuit in Devon, was there. While sitting in Sheffield's great Hanover Chapel, he might have calculated that it could contain the whole membership of his circuit more than seven times over. Back at home he wrote about it in his circuit plan, 'It was my pleasure to attend the sessions and also most of the public services and my only regret is that a greater number if our people could not share in the rich experience. But it is a far cry to Sheffield. It is, however, a consolation to many western folk that the next Conference is to be held in Plymouth'. He went on 'Owing to the hay harvest the attendance at the Quarterly Meeting was unusually small,[17] United Methodism in Chagford was very different from Sheffield.

As an indication of the location of United Methodism's centre of gravity, three of the twenty six conferences came to Sheffield and the others were mostly in the Midlands or North. Eleven Conferences were held in the triangle of Manchester, Leeds and Sheffield, all within 35 miles of each other. Five Conferences were held in the triangle of Birmingham, Nottingham and Hanley, all within 50 miles of each other. The seven in the south-west were spread across 150 miles. Conference was twice in London and once in Newcastle.

The new church inherited historic loyalties as well as historic regionalisation although the first President tried to play this down. They

16 1910 *Mins* p. 32.

17 Author's collection. Chagford Plan July - Oct 1908.

had, he wrote, been three parallel rivers running to the same ocean of heavenly power and Christian achievement. He continued, 'The stain of the soil through which each river made its way may continue awhile' but marks of diversity will soon disappear leaving no one guessing 'that it has not been a pellucid, crystal stream, issuing from one spring flowing in one channel since the beginning.'[18] The Bible Christians knew perfectly well where their parallel stream had come from and insisted on an 'ex-BC Centenary Meeting' at the 1915 Conference but by then Boaden was dead.

All Together - At The Centre

As a connexional church, United Methodism had a centre and margins and there were people and institutions at each.

Presidents

Although it was the New Methodism of its day there was no young leader. Seven of the first nine Presidents had been President in their former denomination and by 1921 seven of the first fourteen Presidents were dead. The average time in the ministry before taking the presidential chair was 40 years and eighty-year-old Edward Boaden, the first President, had been in the ministry for a remarkable 58 years. Free Methodism provided ten Presidents and the others eight each. The Presidents were predominantly circuit ministers with a sprinkling of full time officers such as George Parker, Secretary of Assessed Funds, Henry Smith, the Book Steward, Charles Stedeford, the Foreign Mission Secretary, and John Moore, the Home Missions Secretary. Not one President had been ordained as a United Methodist and the able younger men, who had been, were lost sight of after the Wesleyan-dominated union of 1932.

Officers

Reduction in administration costs had been promised as one advantage of union and only six ministers were set apart as connexional officers together with the principals and governors of colleges and schools.[19] Although this was a prudent economy in view of the church's financial state it did mean that the young church was deprived of central direction and accessibility in its formative years. The United Methodist Conference had a ministerial secretary for the first four years followed by twenty two lay secretaries and it was from the New Connexion, not the democratic Free Methodists, that this innovation came.

[18] 1907 *Mins* p. 6.
[19] 1907 *Mins* p. 150.

Laymen

For its connexional lay officers United Methodism looked to a small band of remarkably wealthy men inherited from the New Connexion and Free Methodism. Mostly their wealth came from self-help but wealth and civic honours did not prevent their carriages stopping at the chapel door on Sundays and Bible class nights. There was certainly a hint of lionising and obituaries give more than a hint of the sanctifying influence of great wealth but the Wards, Hepworths, Turners, Butlers, Mallinsons, Duckworths and the others gave and worked with enthusiasm. Below them was a lower rank of mayors, magistrates and headmasters. The touchstone for a leading United Methodist layman was a seat on the bench and fifteen of the thirty United Methodist laymen on the Union Committee were magistrates.[20]

No great name was greater than Free Methodism's Sir James Duckworth of Rochdale (1840-1915), who had been one of their two lay Presidents. He was a JP, a Knight and a Guardian Representative. His was a story of rags to riches, starting in a cotton mill at seven years old. He graduated from selling tea door to door until he opened a shop in 1868 and eventually built up a grocery chain. Inevitably he became Mayor of Rochdale and the Liberal MP for Middleton.[21]

Joseph Hepworth JP (died 1911) came from the New Connexion in Leeds. He retired to Torquay for his health and, finding no New Connexion chapel there, he bought an independent Mission and installed a supernumerary minister, the only MNC cause in Devon and private enterprise at that.[22] Hepworth had left school at twelve and worked in a mill but after moving from Huddersfield to Leeds he founded the well known clothing business. When he moved to Torquay the Woodhouse Lane Circuit would not release him so he maintained his membership and offices which were discharged by his son. He was of course Lord Mayor of Leeds and a United Methodist Guardian Representative.[23]

The Butler brothers, Thomas and William were the product of Bristol Free Methodism. Both were JPs and both visited the mission fields. Afterwards Mrs. Thomas Butler wrote a large book about their travels[24] but travelling and publishing on this scale was only possible for the self-confident wealthy.

20 1920 *Mins* pp. 252-53.

21 1908 UM *Magazine* pp. 103-105 Stuttard, J., 'Worthy Workers Amongst us. Alderman James Duckworth; Also *Rossendale Free Press* 7 May 1988 Bowden, K., 'Pauper Who Became King of Grocery Empire.'

22 1908 UM *Magazine* p. 500.

23 1910 UM *Magazine* pp. 57-60 Packer, G., 'Worthy Workers Amongst us. Mr. Joseph Hepworth.'

24 Butler, Mrs. T. *Missions as I Saw Them* (1923). This was received more favourably at home than on the mission field.

These leading men deserve investigation, especially the Mallinson family of East London, who helped to keep the affairs of the connexion solvent, but none are to be found in the *Dictionary of National Biography.*

Theological Colleges

Ministerial training should be a unifying force but the background and training of the ministers who had come into United Methodism was anything but unified. Not until 1890 did any Bible Christian ministers have a college training and that was at Shebbear College, their boys' school in North Devon. The other two denominations each had a college, located on either side of the Pennines. The New Connexion's college was at Ranmoor in Sheffield, with room for fifteen students. The generosity of Thomas Firth of Sheffield largely paid for it in 1862-64, the money coming from his steel works specialising in armour plate and armour-piercing shells. The Free Methodists' college was in Victoria Park, Manchester with room for twenty two. Established in 1876, it was enlarged in 1896 by Sir James Duckworth.

One of the few decisions taken at the 1907 Uniting Conference was that students should be transferred from Shebbear[25] but at least six students continued there for the next year. Some rationalisation took place in 1913 when first-year students went to Ranmoor and the others went to Victoria Park but both closed in the Great War and Ranmoor did not re-open. Victoria Park College in Manchester did re-open in 1919 and began an increasing co-operation with the Primitive Methodist Hartley College nearby. This cross-denominational training was a preparation for the post-1932 church.

Deaconess Institute

The new church inherited its Deaconesses from the Free Methodists. They were established in 1890 in London as a local venture by the two Bowron brothers. In 1903 the brothers bought No. 25, Bolingbroke Road, looking over Wandsworth Common, to be a training institute called Bowron House. Here young women received training for service in the churches and evangelistic missions. A new era began in 1922 when Robert Gair was appointed as the first residential Warden. His daughter Mrs. Anne Turner of Sidmouth was a schoolgirl then and has told me her memories of life at the institute with its ten students. The old era was still present in the form of Sister Constance who showed Mrs. Gair how the girls' bonnets had to be trimmed with hand-set pleated lace and they wore capes with starched collars. Mrs. Gair's priorities were different, to make Bowron House a real home for the girls.[26]

[25] 1907 *Mins* p. 137.

[26] Personal Information from Mrs. Ann Turner, *née* Gair.

After Methodist Union in 1932 it was inevitable that the small Institute should close and the girls moved to the Wesleyan Deaconess Institute in Ilkley. However Mrs. Turner remembers her father's enthusiasm for union and his work at the Institute from 1922 to 1935 with great pride and has no doubt that a superior training was received there. Visiting tutors came in for individual subjects, including Mr. Codling for elocution to ensure that no deaconess ever read looking down her chin.

Schools

Even if an education in a Methodist school increases denominational loyalty it is a long term process at best. At any rate the new church inherited a surprising trio of private schools; surprising because two were from the Bible Christians. Shebbear College for boys in remote North Devon had humble Bible Christian beginnings in 1841. The Free Methodists were next on the scene in 1877 with their Ashville College for boys with the more bracing climate of Harrogate, 300 miles from Shebbear. In 1929 a local school, called New College, was purchased to be the junior school. Last in 1884, was the Bible Christians' Edgehill College, providing education for ministers' daughters and the middle class girls of Bideford, 11 miles from Shebbear. All three survive today.

Chapel Department

Chapels are the most local of the Methodist institutions but their debts were an urgent central concern. In 1909 the ex-BC section of the 'Chapel Relief Fund' reported with some diplomacy but little hope 'In a few cases our friends in their desire for extension and the ingatherings of the people have entered on enterprises more costly than perhaps some less enthusiastic brethren would have ventured on ... But if ... the people are gathered in to hear the Gospel and become saved, then help will doubtless be willingly and cheerfully rendered.'[27] A repeated complaint from the Chapel Committee was that the Districts contributed very little to the Chapel Loan Fund but kept asking for large grants - connexionalism in action! It might have mentioned also that most chapels did not adopt the new Model Deed, the most unifying factor of all, and the chapels were held on one of another six standard deeds.[28]

Property debt continued to dog the local church and frustrate local and central initiatives. In 1923 the Chapel Committee reported that all proposals for aggressive mission work would have to be examined before being adopted. '... it is no longer possible for churches to thrive under the burden of heavy debts. A new mood has developed and it is

[27] 1909 *Mins* p. 304.
[28] Smith H. et al, p. 162.

almost fatal to success that it should be whispered abroad in the neighbourhood that a certain church is heavily mortgaged.'[29] Chapel debts were a waking nightmare for ministers but at least one was well prepared, 'After spending some years at our Shebbear College, Mr. Bassett became apprenticed to a chemist in Holsworthy. It was here he acquired those business methods which helped to make his ministry so successful!'[30]

The Printed Word

The united church inherited three publishing houses. The united book room was at the ex-Free Methodist premises at 12, Farringdon Avenue and the Free Methodist Magnet Press at Peckham was retained. The new book room employed two full-time ministers, as Book Steward and Editor.[31]

The three denominations had bequeathed four hymn books, the Bible Christians, Free Methodists and New Connexion each had their own and the New Connexion had recently co-operated in the production of the 1904 Wesleyan Hymn Book. It was obvious that most congregations would not discard serviceable hymn books so expediency prevailed and each book was re-issued with a new title page, 'The United Methodist Church Hymnal (Bible Christian Hymns)' and so on.[32] The former Bible Christians used the *Bristol Tune Book* and in the 1960s an elderly lady still remembered the 'good old Bristol tunes.'

In 1913 a United Methodist Book of Services was produced which provided for the 'Observance of Communion' and the 'Recognition' of local preachers. Three years later the Book Room published a book of responsive services by Ernest Capey of the New Connexion which went into a second edition in 1917.[33]

There was a variety of periodicals - a monthly magazine and a weekly newspaper as well as a magazine for families and children, for which the name *The Pleasant Hour* was later settled on. The *United Methodist* newspaper was a continuation of the *Free Methodist* and the *Missionary Echo* was also inherited from the Free Methodists and was continued by the Missionary Committee until 1932. From the first it was the church's policy that the aim of their periodical publications was 'definitely to foster the spiritual life, activity, and loyalty of the members of the United Methodist Church to the utmost.'[34] Publishing such periodicals

29 1923 *Mins* p. 251.
30 1918 *Mins* p. 52 Obituary.
31 1907 *Mins* pp. 129-131.
32 1907 *Mins* p. 128.
33 Capey, E. F. H., *Sanctuary Worship. Responsive Services, Sentences and Prayers Arranged for Public Worship* (1916).
34 1907 *Mins* p. 129.

was easy but making them profitable was difficult as United Methodists were reluctant to buy their own literature and indeed some issues of the periodicals were not very interesting. In 1908 the magazine broke even but not the newspaper, while the *Pleasant Hour* was only selling 11,000 each month and needed 25,000 to be viable.[35]

As early as 1912 it became clear that the Book Room was facing financial difficulties and could not support two ministers. Henry Hooks became the new Book Steward but had to edit the magazine as well. Henry Smith continued to edit the *United Methodist* but also took charge of the Deaconess Institute. At the same time the *Pleasant Hour* was killed off because of its 'serious annual loss'.[36] When Smith retired in 1923 the Book Steward had to take over the newspaper as well but with the help of a committee.[37] In 1932 the last Publishing House report deplored the lack of support especially as the newspaper had been 'a great drain on the resources of the Publishing House.[38]

Until September 1910 the denomination's class tickets bore the words 'Founded 1907' but then they were left off by resolution of Conference, 'the words are misunderstood and are frequently quoted to our disadvantage.'[39]

All Together - At The Margins

Life and Worship

In 1907 the United Methodists at the margins had a new name but no new role model and they carried on very much as before. Even in the late 1920s when a further union was only four or five years away Keith Parsons, from a BC background, remembers that the ex-Free Methodist churches in Bristol seemed 'like Congregationalists.'[40] His recollection is that continuing local differences in ethos and practice created no problems as United Methodist congregations of different traditions continued to worship in different buildings.

However, if local traditions were accepted, being a United Methodist was being part of a supportive family. Leisure hours were pleasantly filled with worship, socialising, eating, speaking, listening, money-raising, meetings and, of course, bazaars. Few bazaars could compete with the one held in November 1907 at Hanover Chapel, Sheffield. On the third day there was a demonstration by two hundred children from the circuit who built a church nearly 11 feet 6 inches high, symbolising

35 1908 *Mins* pp. 245-46.
36 1912 *Mins* pp. 294-95.
37 1923 *Mins* p. 239.
38 1932 *Mins* pp. 286-87.
39 1910 *Mins* p. 22.
40 Personal Information from Keith Parsons.

the way in which the UMC had been built up. The finishing touch was three bells, one for each denomination.

For Tom Gent of Thorne Memorial Chapel in Barnstaple life as a young United Methodist in the late 1920s was very happy, from playing 'a hunting we will go' at the Christmas parties to taking Scripture exams and receiving certificates signed by the President of Conference.[41] Young people of all ages could join Christian Endeavour which fulfilled some of the role of the Wesley Guild. Locally United Methodism reflected the small town character of Barnstaple, as most of the church officers and leading members were proprietors or employees of local shops selling guns, clothes, millinery, stationery, boots, saddles or china. Three members, including two butchers, were Borough Councillors. Until the coming of the multiples it was common for members of any congregation to patronise shopkeepers who attended the same church and this certainly happened in Barnstaple. I am grateful to Ralph Wilkinson for the information that in the north of England United Methodists could demonstrate their denominational affiliation when they bought their groceries. Sir James Duckworth built up a chain of corner shops under the name 'James Duckworth Limited', with many branches in Lancashire and West Riding and in some northern towns they were the main rivals of the Co-op. Many United Methodists regarded it as a matter of principle to patronise 'Jimmy Ducks', whereas equally principled Wesleyans would shop at 't'Co-op'. Both Jimmy Ducks and the Co-op had their origins in Rochdale and the former survived until the early 1970s.[42]

Sunday worship was central to the life of the church often with a prayer meeting at the end of the evening service and very similar preaching services were held regularly on a week-night. Keith Parsons recollects that church service books were not usually available to the congregation and this was still the situation in the 1950s and even later in some Devon circuits and elsewhere. Books of offices had been produced by each of the three denominations but they were still regarded with suspicion and perhaps even hostility. If they were used at all it is likely that only the minister had a copy. Mr. Parsons recollects a number of points of practice from the late 1920s. 'Read' prayers were not acceptable but a hymn might be read responsively. At the well-to-do Redland Grove Church in Bristol (former Free Methodist) attended by the Butler family, the service book was eschewed but the congregation chanted a psalm every Sunday. Services such as baptism might be conducted extempore but with the use of the Trinitarian formula. Communion might be largely extempore but with the words of

41 Personal Information from Tom Gent.

42 Personal Information from Ralph Wilkinson.

institution read from the Bible although not associated with an act of consecration and certainly without manual acts. The book might be followed for a funeral and especially the marriage service with its legally required words. Almost inevitably at prayer meetings participants repeated themselves week after week. At Barnstaple in North Devon Tom Gent remembers that well after the 1932 union communion was conducted without a book, 'which is what people wanted', and the minister would begin with 'When I Survey' or some similar hymn. Communion, always called 'the sacrament', was generally a separate service at the end of a preaching service and only 'real Methodists' would stay. This gave an opportunity for people to regroup by sitting in alternate pews, where they received the elements from the stewards.

It is certain that there was a wide range of practices in worship ranging from using Capey's book to singing Sankey's choruses and it is a matter of urgency that personal recollections of worship should be recorded, while those who remember United Methodism are still available. Even where there is documentary evidence it is sometimes ambiguous. A plan from St. Just in West Cornwall[43] showed that not one of its nine chapels had communion in that quarter and it was not unique in this.[44] Does this mean that communion was not observed at all or were local ad hoc arrangements made? Of course plans are an invaluable source and, as an example, I have plans for the last quarter of 1922 for four of the five circuits based on Penzance.[45] These show that eight out of ten Wesleyan chapels had communion at least once that quarter, compared to five out of the eleven chapels in the former BC, MNC and Free circuits.

In rural areas the social distinctions between church and chapel were still obvious, which encouraged an entrenched attitude to worship by chapel congregations. The former Bible Christian circuit based on Northlew in North Devon was as rural as could be and it expressed a strongly anti-sacramentalist view in 1922 when Quarterly Meetings were asked to comment on the new union proposals. 'We are not opposed to the union of our churches', Northlew responded, 'but we strongly feel that there should be some amendment to the Scheme before it is finally passed ...'.[46] Three of their many amendments are related to sacramental worship and are a classic illustration of the difference between those who propose in committee rooms and those who dispose at the margins. They also reveal a certain ignorance of what the United Methodist position was and had been since 1907.

43 Author's collection. St. Just Circuit Plan, Aug. - Oct. 1929. (Ex-BC).

44 Author's collection Eg Week St. Mary, Cornwall, 1910; Dalwood, Devon, 1910; Ringsash, Devon, 1919; Chagford, Devon, 1921. (All ex-BC).

45 Author's collection. Wesleyan, Ex-BC, Ex-MNC, Ex-FM.

46 Devon Record Office 1813D/6 Quarterly Meeting Minutes.

The first of these three resolutions was 'That the basis of membership be a professed loyalty to Xt. as Lord and attendance at the ordinary means of grace; that there be no insistence on adult baptism or on a sacramental test.' This was an ignorance of or disdain towards their own church's doctrinal tenet number XI[47], 'The Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are of Divine appointment and of perpetual obligation' and the UM Service book included a service for adult baptism.

Their second resolution was a matter of principle or priestcraft 'That the imposition of hands be eliminated from the ordination service'. As United Methodists they were on stronger ground here for, in their book, the act of ordination appears to be only a seven-line prayer by the President and there is no rubric for laying-on hands. The Bible Christian office had been a little more demonstrative - it required the congregation to raise their hands in affirmation.

Their third resolution was 'That the local churches shall have full power to decide all questions with regard to their own sacramental services.', in other words communion without the book. We have seen that this is what some people wanted but the minister's 'extempore' prayers may have owed more to the book than they realised.

Turning from communion to the place of women, they had a whole hierarchy of approved activities, from opening bazaars to pouring tea, but it was not given to all to do either of those activities! The Deaconess Order was an opportunity of full time service but this ended on marriage, which was considered to be a vocation in itself. The ordained ministry was closed to women but local preaching was open so in the 1920s Alice Barwick became a local preacher at the age of eighteen and walked up to seven miles each way to preach in the country chapels around South Molton in North Devon. She offered to become a deaconess and the committee reminded her of 'When did you last see your father?' She was accepted and called Sister Amelia, because there was already an Alice, but she met Mrs. Thomas Butler and within weeks was on her way to the China mission, which was her childhood dream. This displeased the Deaconess Institute and she was never again Sister Amelia.[48] Being a woman, despite all her gifts and enterprise, Alice Barwick could not become a minister, nor a Guardian Representative, nor Conference Secretary, nor a Secretary or Treasurer of a Connexional Committee. After 1910 she might have been a member of Conference but as part of a largely male assembly.

[47] 1907 *Mins* p. 41.

[48] Austin, A. L., *The Beckoning Land. The Dairy and Memoirs of A. L. Austin 1920-7* (New Zealand 1979) pp. 11-19.

Chapels

Closure of more chapels would have forced local people to come to terms with each other but chapels had officers and congregations and closure to the Glory of God was not on their agenda. Had not the Chapel Committee said approvingly in 1908, 'The love of our people for the house of God has not been diminished, they still take pleasure in her stones, and by consecration and sacrifice still show love for the "courts of the Lord".'?[49] That was the problem! If closing chapels was the purpose of union then keeping them open was the price of union. Between 1908 and 1932 the number of chapels dropped by only 13% (2521 to 2193) but even this reduction included some double counting.

Circuits

The united church inherited 425 circuits[50] but by 1932 this number was reduced by only 18% to 348 circuits, for Methodist people love their circuits almost as much as their chapels. However regionalisation meant that in many areas there was no overlapping of United Methodist circuits and in a substantial area of North West Devon the ex-Bible Christians were the only Methodist presence of any sort. There were only five places where each denomination had a circuit, London, Birmingham, Penzance, Truro and Barrow. The Barrow circuits joined as soon as possible but the Penzance ones never did. In Truro three circuits quickly became two but with no further amalgamation.

In 1907 no less than 225 circuits or 53% of the total had a single minister. In 1932 fifty-three circuits had no minister at all or were the subject of some local arrangement, for example a Liverpool circuit minister had charge of the Isle of Man. There were forty probationers and pre-collegiates and fifteen of these were stationed on their own. G. T. Brake tells the story that students at Victoria Park College would write on the blackboard 'God save me from Kingsbrompton', an ex-BC circuit of twelve chapels in the Brendon Hills in Somerset.[51] To be accurate it was a single-station probationer's appointment only from 1926 to 1932.

Desperate measures were needed in Kent where the cluster of ex-Bible Christian circuits were disheartened and debt-ridden. The 1920 Conference took the novel step of designating James Ellis *to* 'General Superintendent' for the 'Kent Area' together with Hastings in Sussex with responsibility for consolidation and aggression.[52] In 1924 Ellis

[49] 1908 *Mins* p. 270.

[50] The 1907 denominational *Minutes* show the FM contributed 237 circuits, MNC 92 and BC 96. The 1907 UM *Minutes* include an outdated total of 431 circuits.

[51] Brake, G. T., *Policy and Politics in British Methodism 1932 - 1982* (1984) p. 242.

[52] 1920 *Mins* p. 114.

reported that as 'Moderator' his brief was to halt the closure of churches but the efforts to raise money and reduce debts had led to the neglect of the church buildings themselves![53] Happily, he reported, laymen were now taking charge of finance instead of the ministers who had been responsible 'for seeing that bankruptcy did not wait at the church doors.' His five years were not long enough to turn the tide, six of seven units only had 483 members between them and from 1921 to 1932 four had no minister of their own.

An almost complete national picture of the circuits at the time of 1907 union survives thanks to Joseph Ward, Sheffield's leading United Methodist. In November 1907 he wrote to all circuit superintendents asking for the circuit plans before and after union and these survive in the Ward Scrap Book in the Methodist Archives. Ernest Flower of Cowes had no plan as he took practically all the services himself. Callington had a joint plan for BC's and FM's before union. Old habits die hard so the ex-Free Methodists in Manchester entitled their plan 'United Methodist Churches'. Others made the denominational connection for the avoidance of any doubt, 'Crondall United Methodist (Late Bible Christian) Mission Plan'.

The Sheffield plans in the Ward Scrapbook included fifty-one chapels with a multitude of busy activities and organisations. The Free Methodists already had a Sheffield Free Methodist Council for 'the promotion of Free Methodist extension in the city and neighbourhood', which produced a booklet plan for their four circuits. After union the plan and the council was enlarged to include the three ex-MNC circuits but the fact of the union was never mentioned. The plans show that Mount Tabor chapel had a branch of the Yorkshire Penny Bank and the special preacher for the Chapel Anniversary at the great Hanover Chapel was S. B. Lane, minister of the Bible Christian cause at Brighton. The young Will Hudspeth was one of the thirteen students from Ranmoor College who preached around Sheffield.

Sheffield, with its city-wide United Methodist Council, was one face of United Methodism but another was Matley near Stalybridge where the District Home Mission Committee opened a mission chapel in hopes in 1909. The adjoining circuit would not accept it, it never had a minister and in 1932 it had thirteen members.[54] The ex-BC Greenbank Chapel was for Plymouth what Hanover was for Sheffield. From its opening in 1886 until 1936 for all but thirteen years the minister of the Greenbank Chapel in Plymouth was, had been or would be, President.

[53] 1924 *Mins* pp. 147-148.

[54] Personal Information from Alan Rose.

Ministers

Itinerancy following a centralised training made the ministry a potent unifying force at the margins although its role as an engine of change was mitigated by the ex-Free Methodist attitude to ministry. It is remembered that the ministry became more integrated than might have been expected from the initial differences in stipends, pensions, background, training and experience. It is remembered too that some ambitious young ministers sought to be stationed across former denominational boundaries to further their careers.[55] Some ex-Wesleyan ministers were shocked by what they found in ex-UM circuits after 1932 but was there a parallel after 1907?

Initially a minister's stipend depended upon his former denomination so that in 1907 he received either £120, £110 or £90 if he had been New Connexion, Free or Bible Christian respectively.[56] The minimum was brought up to £110 in 1911 with a promised increase not later than 1920.[57] Inflation intervened and the minimum for a minister became £120 in 1916[58], £144 in 1918[59], £200 in 1920[60] and £240 in 1921.[61] It remained at £240 until 1932 and beyond.[62] Some circuits were able to pay allowances that were much better than the minimum and presumably they obtained proportionally better ministers. For many circuit stewards these increases were a nightmare but the 1919 *Minutes* offered no sympathy, decreeing that the average number of members per minister was only 225 and if circuits had difficulty in raising the money they should amalgamate to achieve an average of 250 members per minister![63] United Methodist pastorates were short by current standards and in 1932 only twenty four circuit ministers had been in their current circuit more than six years, ranging from twelve with seven years to one with twenty years at South Shore Blackpool. The obituaries in the United Methodist *Minutes* were refreshingly frank and some revealed endearing idiosyncrasies.

'He always said what he believed and felt without (as was sometimes thought) sufficiently regarding the consequences.'[64]

55 Personal Information from Alan Cass.
56 1909 *Mins* p. 366.
57 1910 *Mins* p. 363.
58 1916 *Mins* p. 39.
59 1918 *Mins* p. 17.
60 1919 *Mins* p. 16.
61 1920 *Mins* p. 15.
62 1932 *Mins* Appendix p. 255.
63 1919 *Mins* p. 16.
64 1910 *Mins* p. 45 Charles Bridgman, ex-BC.

'He made no bid for popularity. He shunned publicity. He was never guilty of sending glowing reports of his own work to the newspapers.'[65]

'He was exceptionally democratic, his views being often greatly advanced of his time. "I should vote Labour next time, if I had the chance," he remarked ... .'[66]

Now - September 1932

The 1907 union between the three smallest Methodist churches had been the first step in rationalising Methodism, with its continuing problems of overlapping and divided witness. Not everyone felt or feels it needed rationalising but, for some people and most officials, three Methodist denominations were two too many. In 1913 the Wesleyans opened negotiations for another and larger Methodist union but, despite invariable expressions of great cordiality, union took 19 years to secure.

It took seven years for the first tentative scheme to be reported to the three Conferences in 1920, Wesleyan, Primitive and United. In this scheme there were no Guardian Representatives, the doctrines were firmly linked to John Wesley and the Conference would have no power to alter, amend or repeal them.[67] When the views of the 1921 May Synods were made known the Union Committee reported that each denomination seemed to want the proposed constitution to be more in harmony with its own usages! The United Methodist districts were broadly in favour of union as a principle but they saw that the devil is in the detail and unsuccessfully requested the power to revise, a presidency open to laymen, doctrines not linked to Wesley's writings and lay administration approved by Quarterly Meetings not Conference.[68] The Quarterly Meetings were consulted in December 1922 and again in December 1924, when an amended scheme went down for approval. The Quarterly Meetings comprised the local officers of Methodism and the corrected proportions of individuals in favour were Primitives 71% and the Wesleyans 67% The United Methodist laymen, who knew about union from personal experience, voted a mere 66%.[69] In terms of Quarterly Meetings with majority votes the figures were much higher, nearly 79%. for the United Methodists.

Despite this half-hearted support at the grass-roots, the 1925 UM and Primitive Conferences approved the scheme with 93% but the Wesleyans produced a derisory 64% in their Pastoral Session and only

65 1914 *Mins* p. 67 George Kaines, ex-FM.
66 1919 *Mins* p. 86 Jabez Drew, ex-BC.
67 1920 *Mins* p. 270.
68 1921 *Mins* pp. 13-16.
69 1925 *Mins* p. 22.

75.8% in their Representative Session. This was the beginning of three years of acrimonious indecision by the Wesleyans. In 1926 the UM Conference said it 'urgently desires that this Union may be brought about with the least delay possible.'[70] and voted for it by 95%. In that year the Wesleyan Pastoral Session still offered an unredeemed 70.4%.[71] In 1927 things deteriorated further and the vote was unsuccessful in both Wesleyan Sessions. The crisis was resolved at the 1928 Conference by a grudging but dramatic vote of exactly 75% in the Wesleyan Pastoral Session. There would be an Enabling Bill in 1928, a final vote in 1931 and union in 1932.[72] The United Methodists' approach had been typically open and straightforward for which they suffered three years of rejection and in the end the much-vaunted union turned on the vote of one Wesleyan minister.

By August 1932 the atmosphere was euphoric but a remarkably frank *Recorder* editorial warned, 'There is nothing in the union of churches considered in itself that inevitably or even probably leads to the new birth of the Spirit.'[73] The Methodist people had heard the same message a decade before from opponents of the proposed union. These had emerged in 1922, as the Wesleyan 'Other Side' and the United Methodist 'Progressives'. The mainly ex-Free Methodist Progressives were headed by John Higman, a Devonian from Tavistock. He was described as 'somewhat shy and shrank from frequent fireside contact and wayside familiarity' but he saw that 'certain vital principles were in danger of being sacrificed.'[74] He used pamphlets as a weapon in his campaign and it is a tribute to the United Methodist church that some were printed by the denominational press. We can hear his voice in the Progressives' printed manifesto. Wesleyan ministers were against union, this said, and their church would be rent, especially as many Wesleyans preferred to look to Lambeth. There was abundant evidence that those Churches have been most alive and progressive which have risen in division for the sake of some theological conviction or ecclesiastical principle. With regard to the details of the scheme the Wesleyans were not giving up much and it was clear that there were two distinct types of Methodism in England - the specific Wesleyan type and that for which the United Methodist and Primitive Methodist Churches have stood since their origin.[75] 'Types' and 'Standpoints' became the coded language by which fellow Methodists justified their disinclination to come to the point with each other.

70 1926 *Mins* p. 22.
71 Currie, R., *Methodism Divided* (1968) p. 283.
72 Currie p. 286.
73 Currie p. 289.
74 1932 *Mins* p. 47 Obituary.
75 Higman, J. N. and others *Methodist Union. Manifesto of Progressives* (nd) See also Bolton, A. J. *The Other Side* (1994).

Higman did not live to see the last UM Conference in Bristol, where three representatives voted hopelessly against Union. The Uniting Conference was held in London in September 1932 in the Albert Hall and the United Methodists were less than 17% of the new church with its 830,000 members. Only two United Methodists occupied the Presidential chair. The first of these was William Jackson and the second was Richard Pyke in 1939. Born in Devon in 1873, Pyke's ministry began with the Bible Christians, continued through a quarter of a century of United Methodism and he died in Methodism aged 93. After him no President came from the United Methodist tradition although the last ex-Primitive was Walker Lee in 1965.

The last United Methodist class ticket for September 1932 bore the text, 'It shall come to pass that at evening time it shall be light. Zech. 14.7'

In Retrospect

In 1929 when union was assured, the Conference decided to immortalise itself by authorising an Official Handbook, to be subsidised from the budget of the Connexional Departments.[76] *The Story of the United Methodist Church*,[77] appeared just two months after the 1932 union and is useful for names and details but it remembers mostly sunshine. A more sombre but more realistic connexional picture was given in the 1927 report of the Home Mission Committee which admitted to *naïveté* prior to 1907 and problems after that.[78] This report divided up the twenty years since 1907 into two periods. During the first period the Committee had raised large sums of money to honour pre-1907 commitments and had had the delicate task of amalgamating circuits. It had worked for the unification of the ministry which 'took years for its accomplishment,' and it had re-arranged the Connexional funds which had 'called for generous statesmanship'. During the second period union had been to the fore because 'Union is one of the working principles of modern life, in business, in politics, in religion!' The committee had encouraged the Debt Extinction Scheme but actual extensions had been few, at first because of paying off old debts and more recently because of difficult trade conditions, high building costs, a shortage of ministers and a chronic shortage of money.

In the same year, 1927, the Chapel Committee Report echoed the need to remove the 'old' debts in London, Lancashire and eventually in Yorkshire.[79] Implicit in this `Chapel Committee Report was the

[76] 1929 *Mins* p. 9.
[77] Edited by Smith, H., Swallow, J. E. and Treffry, W. Preface dated Nov. 1932.
[78] 1927 *Mins* pp. 135-138.
[79] 1927 *Mins* p. 267.

admission that their church was only the sum of its constituent congregations, 'The scope of the Committee's work', it said, 'is limited by the Funds entrusted to it.' Despite some very large individual donations the United Methodist people did not give sufficiently to finance the centrally-directed aggressive evangelism that was to be the hall-mark of their church. Dramatically the Report warned, 'Unless Church accommodation is provided on a scale far beyond anything being attempted at present, England will be faced with a problem of paganism within its borders more terrible than the paganism of the slums - the paganism of the suburbs.'[80] Those at the centre had coveted a national role for themselves but in the end this proved unsustainable. Drastic efforts were made centrally to bring the finances into the black but it was not enough, the congregations had their own ministry and chapels to support and could not pay for the evangelisation of England as well. In an unexplained way the forthcoming union was to see to that and the United Methodists were not alone in believing this. The brochure for the 1932 Wesleyan May Synod of the Sheffield District promised, 'The last Wesleyan Synod ends. There have been great times in the past and great work has been done. Now our faces are towards the new order, a new Canaan waits to be possessed by a New Church.'[81]

For many members neither the 1907 nor 1932 unions brought immediate and significant change and until recent years, for example, circuits like Shebbear, Ringsash and Hatherleigh, all in mid-Devon, contained only ex-Bible Christian chapels. One area in which change was perceived was the ministry. In 1907 it had seemed self-evident that fewer candidates would be needed but the Great War changed everything, the colleges closed, potential candidates went to the trenches and young ministers went to be chaplains. The backlog was never made good and in 1926 a Commission on the Scarcity of Candidates reported that the average number of candidates had been 13 when 25 were needed. They suggested eleven possible reasons including, '... the ultra conservative attitude of many of our church members towards new ideas.'[82] A candidate of course had to be a young man who had not reached his twenty-fourth birthday.[83]

Between 1907 and 1932 the adult membership dropped by some 5% (148,224 to 140,458) and the number of societies by some 8% (2,360 to 2,161) but the active ministry decreased by over 26% (720 to 530). The inevitable result was that the average number of members per minister went up from 206 to 265 and the average number of churches per minister went up from 3.3 to 4.1. In the end the United Methodist

[80] 1927 *Mins* p. 269.
[81] Author's collection.
[82] 1926 *Mins* pp. 17-18.
[83] 1914 *Mins* p. 284.

Church passed to the new church no less than 541 active ministers, as well as 2,193 buildings and 139,019 members.

The United Methodist Church was never the force in the land it had hoped to be but it did its best and, although it was an administrative creation, is remembered with great affection as being in some ways superior to the present article. Its people took religion seriously and it had ministers like John James Hart, an ex-Bible Christian from Southampton. 'He exercised his ministry in spheres that were very diverse, and that lay as far apart as the clay workers and fishermen of Cornwall, the coalminers of Derbyshire, and the operatives of Ashton and Oldham and he served with great devotion and faithfulness.'[84] Devotion and faithfulness were to be seen too in historic old congregations like Scotland Street in Sheffield. When the second New Connexion Conference was held there in 1798 it was on the edge of the open country but by the 1900s it was in the centre of a great slum. The congregation was advised to close and rebuild in the suburbs but they resolved instead to be a mission to the poor streets around it.[85]

R. F. S. THORNE

(Roger Thorne is a retired chartered engineer, now a lay worker (pastoral) in the Exeter circuit.)

[84] 1926 *Mins* p. 42 Obituary.
[85] 1929 UM *Magazine* pp. 326-330 'Our Zions and Bethels. Scotland Street Mission, Sheffield'.

Robert Wilfrid Callin 1886-1951 Parson, Padre, Poet by Kenneth Lysons, is a short biography of the Primitive Methodist minister best known for his hymn, 'O Lord of every lovely thing' (MHB 587). It is available from Church in the Market Place Publications, 1 St. James' Terrace, Buxton, SK17 6HS, price £3.50, post free.

Samuel Francis Collier, by John Banks (£2.75) is the latest in the 'People Called Methodists' series from the Methodist Publishing House. It is largely a distillation of George Jackson's *Collier of Manchester* published nearly 75 years ago and benefits from the author's experience as a later superintendent of the Manchester Mission. Crammed with good stories and memorable incidents, this ought to be one of the most popular pamphlets in this excellent series. All that is missing is some account of Collier's involvement with the *Methodist Weekly,* the shortlived radical alternative to the *Methodist Recorder.*, which was published in Manchester.

LEEDS AND THE METHODIST NEW CONNEXION

EARLY eighteenth-century Leeds experienced increasing prosperity not simply because it was a market town but because it was emerging as one of the main centres of the West Riding cloth trade. The process of industrialisation was marked by improved communications, such as the opening of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal to Gargrave in 1777. By the 1790s much infilling of the remaining land behind the main streets was taking place, and on such a site Ebenezer Chapel would be built; a contrasting wealthy west end and poor east end emerged. The range of industrial activities by 1800 was considerable, including dyeing, cotton and flax spinning, machine manufacturing; steam power began to be used. Leeds was experiencing rapid economic and social change, with implications for the religious side of the town.

Leeds was typical of the large, northern parishes of the Pennine flanks; its medieval church was in the in-township and eight of the ten out-townships had chapelries. Old Dissent was represented by a Presbyterian congregation which under Joseph Priestley's ministry became Unitarian, an Independent congregation which became Arian, and Quakers. As the century progressed new Baptist and Independent congregations were formed. Methodism in the town was almost fifty years old when Wesley died in 1791. The pioneering work of John Nelson had established a society at Armley in 1742 and by the following year a society had been established in Leeds itself, where William Shent, barber and peruke maker, opened his home in the then market place. Such was the success and influence of Leeds Methodism that it soon became the centre for one of the largest circuits in the country and a conference town. The society met at the Boggart Chapel and there was another chapel in the north of the in-township at Woodhouse; there were chapels in the out-townships at Armley, Bramley, Holbeck and Hunslet.

The appointment of William Bramwell to the Dewsbury Circuit in 1791, following the loss in 1789 of a new chapel and secession of John Atlay, marked a new era of progress when late in the following year a revival broke out, which continued on Bramwell's appointment to the adjacent Birstall Circuit in 1793. During the winter of 1793 the revival flame burned deep in the heart of the West Riding, in such circuits as Bradford, Halifax, Otley and Sheffield. Leeds was no exception: a circuit membership of 2080 in 1791 reached a peak of 3450 in 1795. This led to geographical expansion, foundations being laid for new societies, such

as Headingley, and new chapels were erected at Chapel Allerton, Wortley and Farnley. Many of the new members were young people and into membership were brought those who did not have the traditional Methodist allegiance to the Church. Did the revival contribute to the ensuing Kilhamite secession?[1]

Even before Wesley's death steps were being taken to ensure the continuation of the Connexion once he was no longer here. This was not without controversy, as the events at Dewsbury illustrate. The Conference immediately following Wesley's death continued the process but with such issues as the right of trustees and whether the sacraments should be administered, the whole question of the societal nature of Methodism within the Established Church was being challenged. Thus when Conference assembled in Leeds in July 1793 tensions were already emerging in the circuit. The Old Boggart seems to have been controlled by conservative-minded trustees who opposed the celebration of sacraments in contrast to the societies at Holbeck, Hunslet and Woodhouse where more liberal views were prevalent. At Holbeck baptisms had taken place since 1785.

The emerging leader of the radical element in Leeds Methodism was Robert Oastler (1748-1829), a merchant and local preacher who had settled in the town, his wife's home, in 1789.Originally a Tory, he acquired political views which made him a 'Tom Painite' and his circle of friends included Edward Baines, later proprietor of the *Leeds Mercury*. It was probably because of Oastler's efforts that late in 1793 or early 1794, with the unanimous consent of the Leeds Leaders Meeting, and possibly reflecting the growing membership as a result of the revival, a room holding about five hundred was taken in Sadler's Yard. 'Bethel', as it was known, became the home of the society's more liberally minded elements. In part, Bethel was taken because the Rev. Miles Atkinson (1741-1811), an Evangelical Tory and Parish Church lecturer since 1769, seems to have offended some of the Methodists in his congregation. More significantly, it underlay a desire for Church hour services in Leeds. Initially both local preachers and ministers supplied Bethel; John Entwisle and Thomas Hanby gave support and after the 1794 Conference, when Hanby was elected President, William Thom and Francis Thoresby.[2]

There was growing fear of schism in Leeds but when it did come it was over the expulsion of Francis Thoresby [Thursby]. A minister since 1791, according to John Pawson his ordination at Liverpool by Coke in October 1793 was the first to be done in public; although destined for

1 John Baxter, 'The Great Yorkshire Revival. 1792-6'; in M. Hill (ed), *A Sociological Year Book 7* (1974), pp. 46-76.

2 Wray MSS, XI, fos.102-3. Leeds Reference Library.

Jamaica, he remained in the home work and came as the Leeds Circuit's junior preacher in 1794. Thoresby was suspended by the Leeds District Meeting for indecent behaviour towards females, mainly servants, and from the Conference of 1795 ceased to itinerate. Perhaps there was little sympathy for Thoresby initially but with Joseph Benson's coming as superintendent in 1795, there was a marked deterioration with the radical element in the town's Methodism and Thoresby gained support. By 1796, despite his own wavering fortunes, including the disastrous collapse of the garret meeting room in which he was preaching and which resulted in deaths and injuries, Bethel, George Street was erected for him and continued in use until purchased by the Independents in 1802; the same year also saw the publication of his hymn book.[3]

The appointment of Benson to Leeds, far from being conciliatory, inflamed the situation. Within the Bethel congregation there was considerable opposition to Benson's support of the pro-Church party, and his actions when in Bristol. At the close of 1794 John Kidson, a local preacher, under the pseudonym 'Onesimus', wrote a pamphlet critical of Benson.[4] The presence in Leeds of a number of influential women, including Sarah Crosby, Ann Trip and Elizabeth Ritchie seems to have added to the difficulties. Pawson, Entwisle's brother-in-law commented: 'I believe the women are the principal mischief makers. Miss Richie is as bad as the worst of them.'[5]

If Benson, on coming to Leeds had indicated a wish for neutrality by siding with neither party, even declaring a willingness to preach at Bethel, Thomas Hannam, a local preacher, soon recognised the reality:

> Mr. Benson has promised to preach at Bethel on Thursday night, but we have little reliance upon him as he is biased *(sic)* by the "Female Brethren".[6]

By early 1796 the only itinerant willing to supply Bethel was William Thom, who would later join Alexander Kilham. As a result, a meeting of the travelling preachers, trustees, stewards and leaders was held in February. It was probably this meeting which formulated an address with a hundred signatures, including those of five Boggart Chapel trustees so that the case could be put before Conference but it was later

3 Wray MSS, XI, fo.7. John C. Bowmer, 'Ordinations in Methodism, 1791-1836', *Proceedings*, xxxvi, (1967-8), pp. 38,111. A Leeds Methodist [Matthew Johnson], 'Recollections of Methodism in Leeds during the past fifty or sixty years', *United Methodist Free Churches Magazine* (1863) p.16.

4 Onesimus [John Kidson], *An affectionate address to the members of the Methodist Society, in Leeds, and elsewhere, respecting the late transactions at Bristol* (Leeds,1794). Thomas Hannam to Rev. Alexander Kilham, 28 March 1796: MCA.

5 John Pawson to Charles Atmore, 4 December 1794: MCA Lamplough Collection 658c.

6 Thomas Hannam (Leeds) to Alexander Kilham, 22 January 1796: MCA.

claimed that this was not done. Relationships between the Bethel congregation and Benson continued to deteriorate.[7]

It was the death of Oastler's twelve-year-old son, Robert, on 13 February 1796 which precipitated the next crisis. Benson, presumably on the grounds that it should be in the parochial churchyard, opposed the request for the interment to take place in the previously unused Boggart graveyard, but with the majority of the trustees supporting the burial, it took place. As Benson refused to conduct the burial, it was taken by the Rev. Thomas Langdon, a Particular Baptist. In his later years Oastler would return to the Old Connexion from the New, but his wife remained loyal to the New Connexion until her death, although also attending the Baptists.[8] The situation was further exacerbated when Kidson was expelled for allowing Thoresby to preach at his house.[9]

The Connexion, tired of continuing disruption, at the Conference of 1795 agreed to the Plan of Pacification, a compromise between pro-Church views like those of Benson and a moderate position typified by the Rev. Samuel Bradburn. The Methodist radicals were left unsatisfied. Their spokesman was Alexander Kilham, who had a number of supporters in Leeds. The Plan left Methodism essentially intact, preserving its societal nature within the Church and yet allowing it to become a church. The compromise was in many ways unsatisfactory and in Leeds led to complex developments. Early in 1795 Church hour services were being held at Bethel and Hunslet but in the wake of that year's Conference decision this was extended within the Leeds Circuit with only the Boggart Chapel holding non-Church hour services, a situation which would continue until the division of the circuit in 1826.

Kilham's supporters were divided over the next move, especially as some of their grievances had been met, although the question of lay and trustee representation remained. Kilham now published *The Progress of Liberty* which advocated a new constitution.[10] Complaints over Kilham's conduct being received by the Newcastle District Chairman, the matter was referred to the District Meeting at Sunderland and thence to Conference. *En route* to the Conference, in London, he stayed at Leeds on Monday 25 July 1796 where he found Benson to be 'warm' but not as much as he expected. Kilham was tried by Conference and expelled by a unanimous vote for publishing 'indecent and slanderous language'.

7 William Thom to Alexander Kilham, 2 February 1796: MCA.

8 Wray MSS, XI, fo.101
James Dickinson to Rev. Alexander Kilham, 27 February 1796: MCA.
John Pawson to Rev. Charles Atmore, 24 February 1796: MCA Lamplough Collection 658.

9 Hannam to Kilham, 28 March 1796.

10 Alexander Kilham, *The Progress of Liberty, amongst the people called Methodist, to which is added the outlines of constitution* (Alnwick, 1795).

As this final drama was being enacted the evidence suggests that Leeds was increasingly becoming the base for a potential lay revolt supporting Kilham and his ideals At the time of his appearing before a three-day Special District Meeting, James Dickinson wrote from Leeds to send him the best wishes of six local preachers. At this meeting Kilham agreed to write no further pamphlets but a way round was found by using others' signatures. Benson, writing in response to one by Smith and Longridge, argued that liberal democratic rights were in reality the subjection of the ministers.[11] The difficulties in Leeds continued to be complicated by the presence of Benson and yet Thomas Hannam could tell Kilham that the *Progress of Liberty* 'was generally approved by the circuit' and an informal meeting held prior to the March Quarter Day resulted in the pamphlet having 'met with unanimous approbations' with 'all resolved to give it all the support in their power'. Benson, on seeing a light in the Boggart vestry, enquired as to the purpose of these meetings and it was 'reported that he himself designed answering the letter'.[12] Hannam optimistically thought that Benson 'warmly approved it'; events soon proved him wrong.

Leeds now emerged as the main centre for printing, ordering and distributing Kilhamite pamphlets, including the inevitable reply to that of Benson. In this Hannam played a major part so that by the summer he had become 'rather obnoxious to a certain party',[13] (presumably and not surprisingly, Benson) and no doubt anticipated his expulsion for this. Kidson, having previously being expelled for supporting Thoresby, was free to sell Kilhamite pamphlets without the threat of Connexional discipline. Others selling these pamphlets included Langdon, the Baptist minister, and John Saville a shoemaker and trustee of Hunslet where Kilham had much support and Benson little sympathy.[14] The publication of *The Methodist Monitor*, printed by Binns & Brown and the forerunner of what would become the MNC magazine, was another step forward. However, there is evidence that a number of Kilham's Leeds supporters, fearing expulsion, were unwilling to openly subscribe to it.

The importance of Leeds was further emphasised in October 1796 when Kilham came to reside in the town with Christopher Heaps, a lead merchant and of a family which would give considerable support over the generations to the New Connexion, both locally and nationally. The Heaps family had originally been Presbyterian and may have been one of the families at Mill Hill Chapel which joined the Methodists when it

[11] Joseph Benson, *The disciplines of the Methodists defended in a letter to Messrs. Smith, Longridge & Co. in answer to their late address to the Methodist Societies* (Leeds, dated 22 March 1796).

[12] Hannam to Kilham, 28 March 1796, MCA.

[13] Hannam to Kilham, 4 August 1796: Hannam became the first MNC Book Steward.

[14] Hannam to Kilham, 24 August 1796: MCA.

became Unitarian. Given the growing importance of Leeds as well as its geographical position, this was a sensible move and one done in preference to Kilham becoming the minister of Milburn Place Chapel, North Shields. Leeds was a far better base than North Shields to enable Kilham to preach in such centres of support as Halifax, Huddersfield, Hull, Sheffield and York; then in early November he went on a similar tour of Cheshire and Lancashire to rally support. Both Methodist and Dissenting chapels offered him their pulpits. In Leeds three Dissenting chapels were offered and the trustees of Hunslet allowed him to preach, even if access had to be gained *via* a window because Benson had taken the keys.[15]

Effectively by the close of 1796 the Kilhamites had formed a Connexion within the Connexion, and with a number of societies, both Connexional and Independent, giving support, in addition to the publishing of a magazine, the likelihood of secession was increasing. The main need was now financial and by November serious consideration was being given to establishing a public fund:

> Several of our Friends now think it would be a prudent & wise step, as matters must now be coming to a head, that a Public Fund, either by loan or subscription, or by both, should be immediately commenced.[16]

There were those in Leeds, such as Oastler, who would give this type of support as matters began to come to a head.

As the final drama was being enacted, evidence from the Leeds Circuit plan[17] points to the Kilhamites still being in control at Bethel. Of thirteen appointments taken there, at least seven were taken by local preachers who would secede to the New Connexion, including Hannam, Oastler and the Fowler brothers of Armley: In contrast no appointments were taken by local preachers at the Boggart Chapel. Hannam could open the new year claiming that: 'We are going well at Bethel.' If this was still the case, it would not last long, for opposition was growing, especially from Benson, who now stopped William Myles, appointed at the 1796 Conference, from preaching at Bethel. At the March 1797 Quarterly Meeting the crisis came to a peak when Benson, constitutionally correct, enquired why local preachers were celebrating the sacraments at Bethel.[18]

Meanwhile Kilham's wife suddenly took ill at Manchester early in November 1796. By mid-January her condition had declined and her

[15] Hannam to Kilham, 24 August 1796: MCA.

[16] Hannam to Kilham, 20 November 1796: MCA.

[17] Leeds Circuit Preaching Plan, October to January 1796-7: Leeds District Archives Bruns.7. The plan has been damaged by folding along the Bethel entries making a full analysis impossible.

[18] Hannam to Kilham, 24 August 1796. Hannam to Kilham, 27 January 1797: MCA. Kilham to James Harrop, 24 March 1797: MCA.

death anticipated. Advised to return to Leeds in stages, the Kilhams got no further than Ashton-under-Lyne, where she became too ill for further travelling and from then until her death on 23 February she required continuous nursing. Unexpectedly, Ashton-under-Lyne had become Kilham's temporary base. On his wife's death Kilham, freed from his ties to Ashton, returned to Leeds, which became his base for a preaching tour of the East and North Ridings. Pawson, critical of Kilham but equally unhappy at Benson's authoritarian handling of the Leeds situation, commented:

> Kilham, I hear, is in the neighbourhood of Leeds where he is endeavouring to do all the mischief he can. Mr. Benson says his party is small, but I believe it would have been much smaller, if he had acted as prudently in Leeds, as Mr. Mather has done in Manchester.[19]

Although it is now uncertain precisely what took place at the March Quarterly Meeting, it would seem the likely outcome was a decision to acquire Ebenezer Chapel from the Particular Baptists ostensibly because Bethel was outgrown but realistically to provide Kilham with a pulpit. Baptist work in Leeds commenced in January 1779 and the Rev. Thomas Langdon (1755-1824), who would bury Oastler's child and sell Kilhamite pamphlets, came from Bristol College to a congregation which opened a chapel in St. Peter's Street, later to become the Protestant Methodists' Stone Chapel. On Langdon's return to Bristol, the Rev. Walter Price filled the vacancy until Langdon was formally ordained at the Leeds pastorate on 27 June 1782. At this, some of the congregation withdrew and opened Ebenezer Chapel for Price, probably by 1785. Certainly the lease leading to the development of the land upon which Ebenezer Street would be built, was signed in December 1784 and the chapel graveyard was in use from 1786. Even so, the site of Ebenezer was not conveyed until 1 September 1787. Price died on 26 July 1794 and his successor, the Rev. Hugh H. Williamson, was ordained on 24 June 1795 but by early 1797, Ebenezer was redundant. Consequently it was sold to a group of nine chapel 'managers' sympathetic to Kilham, who opened the premises on 7 May 1797.[20]

[19] Pawson to Atmore, 31 March 1797 in *Letters of John Pawson*, (ed Bowmer & Vickers), vol. ii (1995), p. 113.

[20] F. Beckwith. 'A forgotten Eighteenth Century Baptist Chapel in Leeds', *Baptist Quarterly* ns ix (1938), pp. 125-6.
H. W. Robinson et al., *The Baptists of Yorkshire, being the centenary memorial volume of the Yorkshire Baptist Association* (Bradford & London, 1912) pp. 144-5.
A. Kilham, *The Substance of a Sermon preached at the Opening of the Ebenezer Chapel, Leeds, on 7 May 1797, for the use of the Methodists; formerly used by the Particular Baptists* (Leeds, 1797) *passim.*

On hearing the news, Pawson accurately perceived the inevitable:

> The Bethel people in Leeds bought the Baptist chapel and Kilham was to open it, and keep a love-feast in it yesterday ... I suppose a separation is formed in Leeds, Liverpool, Chester, Macclesfield and in how many more places this will happen before Conference, who can tell?[21]

This was in marked contrast to Benson's dismissive view of the Kilhamites at the time of the previous Conference: ' I thank God we go on well here, in town & country, Kilham being able to make no impression in any part of our or get one single place open to him.'[22]

Formal opening or no, the Baptismal Register records Kilham baptising a child on 8 March at about the time of the quarterly meeting which brought the crisis at Bethel to a head.

With the opening of Ebenezer the separation in Leeds had taken place and yet in his sermon Kilham still looked to Conference making further concessions which would allow them to re-unite: 'The Managers of the chapel will cheerfully unite with the Conference next July if they will grant them the privileges that they have the right to have.'

Others, such as Henry Taylor, were not as hopeful of further reforms; 'By this time, I think you must have lost all expectations of reform taking place in our Connexion. If you have not, I have.'[23]

The first quarterly meeting of the seceders was held on 15 May, seemingly at Bethel. It appears likely that the whole Bethel congregation transferred to Ebenezer but as Bethel was not Connexional property, these premises were retained.

On the morning of 31 July 1797 the Methodist Conference opened at the Boggart Chapel, Dr. Thomas Coke being elected President: in addition to the Legal Hundred there were about seventy lay delegates come to put their case. Those in favour of reform met at Ebenezer. Kilham was appointed a delegate by the Hunslet trustees but was refused admission on the dubious grounds that it was claimed that he was still a circuit minister. The first meeting between the Conference and the delegates on 1 August showed Conference willing to make further concessions without sacrificing power; these became known as the Leeds Regulations. A final attempt failed to get these Regulations further amended to allow lay representation at Conference or the district meeting. At this the secession formally took place.

D. C. DEWS

to be continued .....

[21] Pawson to Atmore, 8 May 1797 in *Letters* ii, p. 117.

[22] Rev. Joseph Benson to Rev. John Stamp, 8 August 1796: MCA Benson Correspondence.

[23] Henry Taylor to Alexander Kilham, 5 May 1797, cited in *W.M. Mag* 1845 p. 433.

Annual Meeting and Lecture

Following the customary members' tea, enjoyed by around forty members and friends, at Wesley's Chapel, City Road, London on Monday, 30 June 1997 the Annual Meeting of the Society convened under the chairmanship for the first time of the Rev. Dr. John A. Newton to whom the General Secretary, on behalf of the Society, offered congratulations on his award of the C.B.E. in the Queen's Birthday Honours. Dr. Newton in welcoming Miss Noorah Al-Gailani, the curator of the Museum of Methodism, thanked her for extending the opening of the Museum so that members could visit it.

The usual business of the Society was conducted with eleven members who have died during the year being remembered; the minutes of the last meeting being signed and reports received. The following items of special interest from the reports should be noted. The President mentioned the work at the New Room and the developments at Charles Wesley's House in Bristol. The Treasurer presented his report and the accounts (printed elsewhere in this issue) and recommended the following subscription rates: British individual £9.00 - annual, £32 - 4 year and covenanted; Overseas £12.00 ($24.00), £44.00 ($88.00); British institutions £12.00; Overseas £16.00 ($32.00). He emphasised that the increase was to honour the promise to make more money available for the WHS Library. The Registrar pointed out the need to recruit members as at present the number of new members was simply balancing out the losses. Dr. Vickers indicated that a flyer about the Consolidated Index to the *Proceedings* would go out in October and that publication would depend on the response. *[members please note and order].* The librarian reported on the developments at the WHS Library - reshelving, conservation, re-binding etc - and urged members to avail themselves of this invaluable resource for study and research. Opportunity was given for members of any of the local branches present to report on their own area. Dr. Graham gave the Conferences Secretary's report indicating that the next WHS/WMHS Conference would be held at Wesley College, Bristol from 14th-17th April 1998 with the title 'Revival, Retreat and Reunion: Methodism 1890-1932' Details from the Rev. Colin Smith.

The Officers of the Society were re-appointed for 1997-8, with the addition of Mrs. Sheila Himsworth, who will become Conferences Secretary in 1998, and Mr. David A. Barton as 'member representative' for the next three years. The President thanked all the officers, the authorities at Wesley's Chapel and the London and Home Counties Branch of the WHS for fulfiling their various roles and tasks so efficiently.

Our Local Branches Secretary, Mr. Roger F. S. Thorne, gave the Annual Lecture with the title: 'All Together Now: The United Methodist church 1907-1932'. The Rev. C. Norman R. Wallwork chaired the lecture which is printed in full in this issue.

E. D. G.

Income and Expenditure Account for the Year ended 31st December 1996

INCOME.	£	£
Subscriptions (Note 1)		5,378
Donations		45
Irish Branch		641
Sales of *Proceedings* (back numbers)		152
,, other Publications, etc. ...		41
Library—Tickets, Donations, Sales		86
Annual Lecture Collection ...		45
Advertisements		100
Bank and Building Society Interest		227
War Stock Dividend		8
		6,723
EXPENDITURE.	£	
Proceedings and distribution	3,803	
Other Printing	208	
Library	1,270	
Annual Lecture ...	90	
World Methodist Historical Soc.	112	
Administration Expenses	511	
Advertising	50	
Bank Charges (Foreign Chqs.)	79	
Subscriptions and Donations	64	
		6,187
Excess of Income over Expenditure		£536

Balance Sheet as at 31st December 1996

ASSETS EMPLOYED (Note 2)	£	£
£225 3½% War Stock (at cost) (Note 3)		225
Current Assets—	£	
Sundry Debtors ...	42	
Income Tax recoverable	1,032	
Leeds & Holbeck Bld. Soc.	9,027	
T.S.B.—Conference Sec.	1,153	
Midland Bank (Current A/c)	1,435	
Cash in hand	211	
	12,900	
Current Liabilities—		
Sundry Creditors ...	298	
Subscript'ns paid in advance	6,667	
Conf'nce Fees ,,	—	
	6,965	
Net Current Assets		5,935
		£6,160
REPRESENTED BY		
Balance at 1st January 1996 ...		3,477
Add Excess Income over Expenditure		536
		4,013
Conference Fund Surplus ...		1,153
Library Appeal Fund		994
(Signed) RALPH WILKINSON, *Honorary Treasurer.*		£6,160

Notes to the Accounts

1—SUBSCRIPTIONS	£	£
Unexpired Subscriptions at 1st January 1996—		
Ordinary Members ...	5,554	
Life Members (estimated)	180	
		5,734
Received during year*		6,061
Income Tax recoverable		250
		12,045
Less Unexpired Subscriptions at 31st December—		
Ordinary Members ...	6,507	
Life Members (estimated)	160	
		6,667
		£5,378

*No account has been taken of subscriptions in arrears at 31st December 1995, whether or not recovered since, but any previous arrears received during the year are included in the above figures.

2—ASSETS EMPLOYED

The Library and stocks of Publications have not been valued, and are not included in these financial statements.

3—WAR STOCK

Market value at Balance Sheet date .. £99

AUDITOR'S REPORT—I have audited the financial statements in accordance with approved auditing standards. The amount of subscriptions paid in advance by members includes estimates based upon a reasonable interpretation of the available data. No account has been taken of possible arrears of subscriptions. Other assets and liabilities have been independently verified.

Subject to the matters mentioned above, in my opinion the financial statements give a true and fair view on an historical cost basis of the state of affairs of the Society as at 31st December 1996, and of its overall surplus for the year then ended.

York, 30*th June* 1997.

(Signed) J. R. L. HUDSON,
Chartered Accountant.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Protestant Evangelical Awakening by W. R. Ward. (Cambridge U.P. 1993 Price £45)

'I have attempted,' writes Professor Ward of this book in another context, 'to establish the setting of the British revivals in that of the Protestant world as a whole (and the European Protestant world in particular) in *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening*.' As a student who has viewed the Evangelical Awakening only in the 'context of Atlantic civilization' I needed to read this book. As an evangelical I especially needed to read the book because I tend to divorce the study of religion from its political context, and Professor Ward's great contribution to my understanding of the Evangelical Awakening is his firm rooting of revival in the complex political dynamics of the eighteenth century.

The Awakening began among the sizeable Protestant minorities scattered throughout the Hapsburg domains of central Europe consequent upon the imposition of Roman Catholic confessional absolutism from c.1620. In Silesia it derived its leadership from the dominant figure of Casper Neuman in Breslau, and was nourished from Halle where Auguste Francke held sway. Silesia, in turn, sustained the revival in Poland. Steinmetz at Teschen sustained the Czechs, and Zinzendorf at Herrnhut offered them sanctuary. The Salzburgers demonstrated that peasant itinerant preachers, the Bible and good reformed literature could sustain a religious movement without the help of a formal ministry and church organization. The persecuted moved west for refuge and took their revivalistic fervour with them to the discomfiture of the sterile formality of the Lutheran church. Some of the refugees went as far afield as North America. To the far east of Europe Swedish prisoners of war experienced a revival in Siberia. Revival now began to make its way almost simultaneously in the 1730s to the British Isles and the North American colonies, and, in the 1740s, just as it was declining in central Europe, among the Dutch Reformed church around Mulheim where Gerhart Tersteegen took his quest for mystical perfection into the market place and the kitchen. The most enduring of the revivals emerged from the bosom of Anglican High Churchmanship in the person of George Whitefield and the brothers Wesley. This epic movement of the Holy Spirit was sustained and informed by an 'information network' between centres like Halle, Boston, Glasgow, Herrnhut, and the royal court in London which linked together the leading figures of The Awakening.

Because of the constraints upon space imposed by the costs of printing this book is virtually an historical digest. There is a tremendous amount of information packed into each paragraph. I decided therefore that the best way to review the book was to employ the definite criteria used by Rowan Williams, the Bishop of Monmouth, for studying the relationship between belief and context in the past. According to the bishop it is not enough to

ask what problem a belief was supposed to solve. One must 'look at the tensions within a period that produce the impulse and energy for new models and vocabularies and forms of interaction and social combination to emerge.' In particular one should 'raise the question of how and for whom' the belief in question works.

The problem that needed to be solved was the inability of the confessional churches of the regions concerned to meet the need of a sizeable minority of their populations for a personal religion combining emotional fulfillment with a sense of individual responsibility. It was in Professor Ward's treatment of this theme that I found a line of fruitful research, namely, his statement, 'ordinary Protestants stayed themselves against a century of trial and terrible defeats by appeal to a spiritual tradition common to Catholic and Protestant.... At all social levels there was a practical eclecticism between Christianity and superstition and among spiritual writers of various confessions.'

The tensions that gave rise to the awakening involved the general subordination of church to state in the eighteenth century as an instrument of the latter for promoting deference to the established order and moral responsibility. In Eastern Europe it was the need to preserve national identity enshrined in local customs against central governments intent on imposing forced labour to offset the general shortage of a labour force. In North America the need to preserve the original impetus to create a social order based on theocratic principles against the challenge of a growing population more interested in the possession of land than in the purity of the church. In Britain it was the need to reform the established churches from within in order to bring them back to the purity of the New Testatment church.

Although Professor Ward's main concern is with the literary and intellectural elite he does deal with the problem of how and for whom the beliefs of the awakening worked, and the reactive element between the faith their teachers wanted the common people to embrace, and the use to which that faith was put by the common people to serve their own immediate needs. We are told of the customary practices of central Germany, the nature religion coupled with the veneration of fire in Livonia, miraculous cures in northern Germany, apocalyptic hopes in Hungary, and the bewildering physical phenomena attending the migrant French prophets in south-west Germany, Switzerland and England. Due mention is made of the hallmarks of popular revival - the reformation of manners; highly emotional, protracted prayer meetings, love feasts, and hymn singing; itinerant and open air preaching, class meetings, and communal experiments in founding the pure church. I did find it hard, however, to accept Professor Ward's identification of the Swedish Army's use of Church Parades with what is commonly understood as camp meetings.

Any piece of writing by Professor Ward would be incomplete without at least one wayward historical judgment. In my opinion his book closes on a highly contentious note with a final section entitled, 'The Decline of the

Methodist Movement'. Professor Ward seems to argue that Wesley's proposed reform of the Church of England was an expression of his High Church Tory politics, and involved some kind of Methodist constitutional structure. Because Wesley did not achieve this aim the Methodist movement must be regarded as a failure. However, when John Fletcher proposed the formal establishment of a Methodist Church of England in 1775 designed to fulfil the aim of serving God according to the purity of the Gospel and the original design of the Church of England, Wesley vetoed the proposal. Wesley saw that his aim could only be achieved at the cost of secession which at that time would be damaging to both the church and the nation. When the opportunity presented itself to create such a church in the independent American colonies he jumped at the chance. The Methodist Episcopal Church can be regarded as the triumph of Methodism in the form Wesley originally desired for the Church of England. It can be argued that Methodism's influence on the Anglican evangelicals in the eighteenth century, and on the Tractarians in the nineteenth century, was one of the factors which finally led to the completion of the reform of the Church of England by the end of the nineteenth century.

Such criticism cannot detract from Professor Ward's masterly survey of the complex events, personalities, social changes, and intellectual currents involved in the Protestant evangelical awakening. The general reader interested in the wider context of the Methodist revival should not be deterred by the amount of background information required in order to get the most out of this book. It will reward the general reader to make the effort to come to terms with the demands made by the book in order to appreciate the rich diversity of Professor Ward's stimulating and challenging insights. It is a book to which one can return again and again.

C. H. GOODWIN

Bedfordshire Chapels and Meeting Houses: Official Registration, 1672-1901, edited by Charles Edwin Welch (Publications of the Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, Volume 75, Bedford, 1996, pp. x, 231, £15.00 to non-members including p&p, from the Society, 10 Kimbolton Avenue, Bedford, MK40 3AD, ISBN: 0 85155 0 58 4).

Fresh from his acclaimed biography of the Countess of Huntingdon, the prodigious Edwin Welch has performed yet another invaluable service to scholarship in offering us this meticulously-researched and elegantly-produced calendar of the official registrations of Nonconformist and Roman Catholic places of worship in Bedfordshire. These were made before a variety of ecclesiastical and civil authorities under a variety of legislative arrangments commencing with Charles II's declaration of indulgence in 1672 and persisting to this day (Welch's terminal date of 1901 is, in that sense, quite arbitrary). Welch has brought these records together for the first time

(principally from the Bedfordshire Record Office, the Public Record Office, and the Office for National Statistics) and rearranged them into an alphabetically-ordered sequence of 119 ecclesiastical parishes (with Bedford and Luton being treated as a single parish each for this purpose), within each of which the registrations appear chronologically. All told he lists 1,124 licences, of which 1,002 were for worship and 122 (all post-1837) for marriage. Of the 1,002 registrations for worship, 694 pre-date 1852 (in which year the responsibility for licensing transferred from ecclesiastical authorities and quarter sessions to the Registrar-General), and the majority of these were for houses, rooms, barns or other temporary places of worship rather than for permanent chapels.

Although it is beneficial to have the Bedfordshire official registrations brought together within a single set of covers, and to stand alongside the editions of the pre-1852 licences which have already been published for Wiltshire (reviewed *ante*, Vol. xlv, pp. 151-2), Staffordshire and Hampshire, it should not be forgotten that, as Welch reminds us, the pre-1852 data especially require careful interpretation. First, not all the records appear to have survived; this seems to have been especially true of registrations before the quarter sessions, of which just 70 are calendared here, only two before 1715 and those for the parish of Kensworth, then in Hertfordshire. Second, registration was, in effect, a voluntary process, so that some places of worship never became licensed and others registered many years after they actually opened. Several Bedfordshire Methodist examples of both phenomena occur; indeed, it was quite common for a zealous superintendent minister to block-register all unlicensed chapels in the circuit on the same date, up to nine of them on one occasion. Third, no provision for cancelling registrations existed until 1837, so it is not always obvious just how long a meeting continued in existence; in a number of instances it is clear that a congregation moved in relatively quick succession from one temporary place of worship to another, leaving several superseded but uncancelled licences behind it. Fourth, many registrations contain very imprecise information about the location of the chapel, sometimes just the name of the parish.

Fifth, and perhaps most seriously, many licences failed to record the specific denomination on whose behalf the place of worship was registered. Even after deducing the denominational identity of various meetings from internal or other contextual evidence (for example, the 21 early-nineteenth-century licences deemed to be Wesleyan on account of the fact that they were written out on a standard form printed by the connexional bookroom), Welch has failed to identify the denomination of 543 of the 1,124 registrations, some 48 per cent. The 304 Methodist licences (217 Wesleyan, 86 Primitive Methodist, and 1 Free Methodist - at Wilshamstead in 1895) described as such or otherwise identified by Welch do not, therefore, paint the full picture of Methodist activity in the county. This is particularly the case with Wesleyan Methodism during its formative phase (according to the calendar, the first self-styled Methodist place of worship was not registered

until 1805). Local historians having readier access than the Canadian-based Welch to published chapel and circuit histories (Welch only appears to have made significant use of the Dunstable circuit history of 1993), circuit plans, ministerial directories and, most notably, the transcript of the Bedford St. Paul's circuit class book for 1781-1806 will fairly easily be able to identify with their help additional Wesleyan registrations for the final quarter of the eighteenth century and the first of the nineteenth. Much the same would be true for the Old Dissent, for which transcripts of several early Bedfordshire church books have been published.

Welch has added value to his edition by supplementing the calendar with a number of research tools. Most obviously, he has contributed an efficient sixteen-page introduction tracing the development of the relevant legislation, reviewing the Bedfordshire registration sources, providing historical notes on the various denominations which were active in the county, and describing editorial methods. The calendar itself is punctuated by 50 black and white illustrations, 17 of them of Methodist chapels. There are five appendices, each containing an official or unofficial list of Nonconfirmist places of worship in the county: two versions of the John Evans list of Old Dissent in 1715-29; the Josiah Thompson list of Old Dissent in 1772-73; the Samuel Lewis list of 1842 (from his *Topographical Dictionary of England*, at which date Wesleyan congregations were to be found in 31 places in the county); the Registrar-General's first published list of registrations in 1908 (when there were 293 active registrations for Bedfordshire, 186 of them Methodist, 133 Wesleyan, and 52 Primitive Methodist, 1 Free Methodist, 131 for worship and 55 for marriage); and trust deeds enrolled in Chancery between 1736 and 1865 (of the 188 with an identified denominations, 98 were Wesleyan and 29 Primitive Methodist). It should be noted that a list of chapels in existence at the time of the 1851 religious census is not included by Welch since the Bedfordshire Historical Record Society has already published (in 1975) an edition of the original enumeration returns for the county. Finally, there is a twelve-page index, mostly of personal names mentioned in the registration documents, and thus a valuable finding aid for Bedfordshire Nonconformist biography.

CLIVE D. FIELD

The Religion of the People - Methodism and Popular Religion c1750-1900, by David Hempton (Routledge 1996. pp. xii. 239. £45. ISBN 0 415 07714-1.)

'Methodism was the most important religious movement in the English-speaking world in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It helped reshape the denominational order in the British Isles and North America and deeply affected the lives of many millions of people'. So says the Preface to this first class clutch of articles - some new, some greatly updated revisions which

further establish Professor David Hempton's reputation, parallelling his broader *Religion and Popular Culture in Britain and Ireland* (CUP 1996).

Why did Methodism make such a broad appeal not only in England but in Ireland and America? 'From the Kingswood collieries to the American frontier and from the border countries of Southern Ulster to the Welsh valleys, Methodism offered individual assurance and community disciplines' (p. 27). *How* did evangelical religion, popular 'folk religion' and social change interact? Were more working class people associated with religion in some form than meets the eye? Questions at the forefront of historical research, as in the notable recent work of Hugh McLeod. These are matters at the heart of this book.

Several basic approaches are detailed by Hempton who, rightly, rejects any all-embracing interpretation. Paradox and ambiguity are favourite words, also a realisation that there were 'many Methodisms in many places at many times'.

Firstly we have the assertion that Methodism was vital in producing a pluralistic religious society which neither church nor state could prevent. Chapter 4: 'John Wesley and England's *Ancien Regime*'; chapter 6: 'Thomas Allan and Methodist Politics 1790-1840' and chapter 8: 'Methodism and the Law in English Society 1740-1820' illustrate this complex story which culminated in the aftermath of Lord Sidmouth's Bill of 1811 in which the Connexional solicitor Thomas Allan (backed by powerful dissenting groups) produced the new Toleration Act of 1812. England was now a plural society, religion was a voluntary matter, the quarterly Methodist class ticket being a symbol of it. Much more had to follow, including Roman Catholic Emancipation in 1829 which Jabez Bunting supported. Wesley might not have been amused but 'If certainly not a self-conscious rebel, Wesley was far from a comfortable conformist' (p. 90). The Hempton thesis neatly turns Elie Halévy on his head.

Popular religion is the second major concern. We have brilliant summaries of the debates among historians typified by Wearmouth, E. P. Thompson, W. R. Ward and Alan Gilbert. Hempton avoids a functionalist view of Methodism. It was a religious group primarily, but with its combination of ardour and order was able to be a powerful agent of community at the margin of society especially where the older order was weakest, but it was also within itself 'a lightning conductor for conflicts endemic in early industrial England'. Chapter 1: 'Methods and Margins' - a rewrite of the WHS Lecture of 1994; chapter 9: 'Popular Evangelicalism' and chapter 5: 'Jabez Bunting, the formative years 1794-1820'. show just how diverse Methodism was. The 'alternative magic of religion' changed older folk habits or flourished alongside them. Flora Thompson's *Lark Rise to Candleford* is good evidence as well as historians like Obelkevich. In his proper enthusiasm for 'ranters, radicals and revivalists' and the vital role of women within the revival, there is a slight tendency to romanticize the itinerant style - a read of John Pawson's *Letters* is a corrective! - and hence to make Jabez Bunting into a 'connexional brontosaurus' (p. 74). There is a little

more to be said for 'high Wesleyanism' despite its gross insensitivity. One of the delights of Methodist history is that one has to account for *both* Jabez Bunting *and* Gideon Ouseley (ch. 7).

This brings us to a third emphasis, the adaptability of Methodism - 'the sheer variety of the eighteenth-century evangelical revival in terms of geography, theology, denomination and social class' (p. 177). W. R. Ward has established *that* beyond dispute, Hempton shows the development of this. He looks at the USA, following Russell Richey, and Ireland (chapter 2: 'Methodism and Irish Society 1770-1830', chapter 10: 'Women and Evangelical Religion in Ireland 1750-1900').

Almost prophetically Professor Hempton suggests that much more work is needed on the early itinerants and local preachers - the Pawson Letters and *Workaday Preachers* duly appeared! Whatever may be happening to Methodism now, historical studies are alive and flourishing. We can only hope for more work of this quality. This book is well produced with meticulous end notes. A review can hardly attempt to summarise the riches here. A splendid read.

JOHN MUNSEY TURNER

The Sunday Service of the Methodists: Twentieth-Century Worship in Worldwide Methodism, edited by Karen B. Westerfield Tucker (Kingswood Books, Nashville, 1996, ISBN 0-687-01134-5)

This is an exciting and pioneering work of reflection on Methodist worship worldwide, illustrating its geographical and cultural diversity. It draws on the research and experience of a number of noted liturgists and theologians.

Karen Westerfield Tucker in the first paper offers the basis for discussion throughout, of the relationship between form and freedom as John Wesley's legacy for Methodist Worship, analysing the theological criteria for liturgical revision then and now. She highlights the influences of Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Experience as a distinctively Methodist slant to classical Anglicanism whilst demonstrating its debt to evangelical piety. She describes the core features of Methodist worship, noted for decency and simplicity 'in spirit and in truth' with a freedom expression which empowered the Methodist people to break out of Anglican norms.

Raymond George, in a characteristically thorough and concise piece, traces the pattern of Methodist worship from the 1784 book to the 1975 Methodist Service Book with some notes on more recent developments including useful textual criticism.

Other contributions in this large book are wide ranging, dealing with questions of inculturation of liturgical material infused through the missionary movement throughout the world with some interesting vignettes of worship in such places as Kenya, Zimbabwe and Korea as well as the Old

Commonwealth and the USA. They represent a wide variety of regional traditions which reflect the diversity of Methodist origins and development and the influence of other religious and social phenomena such as pentecostalism and the anti-slavery movement.

The impact of the Liturgical and Ecumenical Movements is assessed in a perceptive essay by Geoffrey Wainwright on 'Methodism through the Lens of Lima'. Eric Lott's essay on the liturgy of the Church of South India is an important one in assessing the impact of this ecumenical development 50 years on. The collection is concluded with a summary essay by Tucker of observations on 'Sunday Worship in the World Parish' and an appreciation of the work of the American Methodist liturgist James F. White who has had an important contribution in fostering liturgical studies among younger Methodist scholars.

This is an impressive collection of essays which coheres well and enriches our appreciation of Methodism's 'World Parish' in faithfulness to the Wesleyan legacy. It is accessible to more general readers as well as those specifically interested in the development of Methodist worship and in the use of resources from around the world to enhance our own practice of worship.

TIM MACQUIBAN

Goodwill on Fire: Donald Soper's Life and Ministry by Brian Frost (Hodder & Stoughton, 1996, pp.x 324, £20.00 ISBN: 0 340 64283 1)

Yet another Soper biography, with so many neglected subjects crying out for attention? Or is it just that market forces prevail?

Reluctantly differing from earlier reviewers and the hand-picked mandarins quoted on the dust-jacket, I have to say that the writing abounds in clumsy and ambiguous sentences. (No one who could write the opening sentence of Chapter 9, for example, can hope to command a literate readership.) The author needed a more competent or conscientious copy editor to come between him and the public. The text itself is remarkably disjunctive, as if written on paper slips and then shuffled into some kind of order. As a result, little is given sustained attention: the author might as well be addressing a Tower Hill audience. The alliterative chapter headings pursue their relentless way from 'Pupil' and 'Parson and Parent' through to 'Pensioner and Penitent' and 'Passionate Pilgrim' - and sit so lightly to the text that you could almost permutate them at will.

This latest panegyric certainly piles up the facts higher than ever; but, despite a useful evaluative Epilogue, the definitive verdict on this Gulliver in Lilliput must await a longer perspective, when it may emerge whether the Soper phenomenon was part of the last agonies of the Faith or one strand in its rejuvenation.

JOHN A. VICKERS

NOTES AND QUERIES

1506 SAMUEL WESLEY JR. AND ROBERT SOUTH

'.... the three Persons, as it were, met in council about the grand affair of man's salvation' in Robert South, *Sermons Preached upon Several Occasions*, (new edn, Philadelphia, Spring & Ball 1844), Vol. III, 530, from Sermon XXIX, "On the Person and Office of the Holy Ghost" (see pp. 521-31) is echoed in Samuel Wesley's couplet:

> Who join'd in Council to create
> The Dignity of Man...,

in his 'Hymn to God the Holy Trinity' first printed in Webster's *Weekly Miscellany*, No. LXXXVIII (August 17, 1734), and very promptly and probably without permission reprinted in Cave's *Gentleman's Magazine* for August, 1734 (p. 448), before Samuel could include it in his *Poems on Several Occasions* (1736). South's simile also, directly and/or by way of Samuel's adoption of it, provides the theological and poetic matrix for Charles' imagery (see Notes and Queries Nos. 1488, 1499) in his 'To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Who sweetly all agree'.

Robert South (1634-1716), Student of Christ Church, luminary of Westminster School and Prebendary of Westminster Abbey, together with Bishop Francis Gastrell, was a hero of Samuel Jr.'s, as a champion of Trinitarian orthodoxy (this sincere theological approval being given an extra piquancy by Westminster + Christ Church *pietas*). On Gastrell's and South's doctrinal soundness, see Samuel's *Poems on Several Occasions*, 1736 edn, pp. 125-130 and 227-233.

South is now seldom recalled, although his public rebuke of Earl Dudley (alternatively Lord Lauderdale) for snoring during a sermon loudly enough to wake the King was sufficiently proverbial to survive into a twentieth-century German anthology of ecclesiastical trivia (Euthymius Haas, *Der vergnügte Theologe*, 1. Sammlung, 3. vermehrte Aufl., Giessen, Töpelmann 1932, pp. 100-101), and even into Stephen Pile's *Book of Heroic Failures* (London, Futura edn 1979) p. 41. This substantial figure deserves even more remembrance for his theological achievements; some aspects of them have recently been considered by Gerard Reedy, S J, *Robert South, 1634-1716: An Introduction to his Life and Sermons*, C.U.P. 1992. Methodist interest in South seems to have been confined to the New World: his sermons were reviewed in *The Methodist Review* 26 (October 1844) pp. 587-605, and L. H. Chrisman, "Robert South, Master Preacher," *Methodist Quarterly Review* 79/4 (October 1930), pp. 604-616.

DAVID H. TRIPP

1507 AN UNPUBLISHED LETTER OF W. RUSSELL MALTBY

The Revd W. Russell Maltby had a distinguished career: he was born in 1866 and entered the Wesleyan Methodist ministry in 1893. After service as a circuit minister he was for many years Warden of the Deaconess Order. He

died in 1951. He published two well known books: *The Significance of Jesus* (1929) and *Christ and his Cross* (1935), the first Cato lecture. From 1901-1903 he was the resident minister of Seacombe Wesleyan Methodist Church and the recently founded Liscard Wesleyan Church, Wallasey (later renamed Trinity Methodist Church, closed and demolished in 1994). The Liscard Church had a very active social life, part of which was a Cycling and Rambling Club. This club had its own magazine: *Afoot and Awheel*; at first it was handwritten (in beautiful copper plate writing) and, later typed. It was circulated among its members who signed the list at the back of each volume that they had read it. Probably only one copy, at least of the earlier volumes, was ever published. In 1908 the editor, Mr. Etchells, wrote to Dr. Maltby, at Prestwich Park, Manchester, to ask him to write a letter for the Christmas number of that journal. Here is that letter dated 23 December 1908:

Dear Mr. Etchells

Your letter reached me yesterday. Your Christmas number should be out by now, but I'll give you my counsel nevertheless. I advise all Cyclists and others to get the indispensable Three-speed Gear. And the best is the one that Bunyan used, namely, "This I have resolved on, to wit, to run when I can, to go when I cannot run, and to creep when I cannot go." And it can be obtained for nothing but the asking, "They that wait upon the Lord shall change their strength - they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall walk and not faint"

Yours faithfully

W R Maltby

The original was typed and signed. The letter is just as it was sent. I am grateful to Mrs. R. Ridyard, of Greasby, Wirral for lending me the original letter.

PETER S. RICHARDS

1508 JOHN WARNES AND HIS DIARY

John Warnes, born 1828 at Litcham, Norfolk, was a member of the Ebenezer Primitive Methodist Church, Beaufort, Ebbw Vale. For 40 years he was a Primitive Methodist local preacher.

For just nine months, he was a Travelling Preacher in the Tredegar P.M. Circuit: his ministry started in January 1855 and he resigned his 'Ministerial Office' in September of that year.

He wrote a diary of his activities, which gives a unique glimpse into Primitive Methodism in this area. It covers a very short period, but is informative of the times and conditions under which local preachers worked. The diary has been transcribed by local historian, Keith Thomas, who with minimal correction, has with some improvement, made it a little easier to read. One-off copies can be supplied at cost.

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It seems odd by today's standards that John should leave his work as a Travelling Preacher because of ill health, and then return to work as a miner. He records his experiences shared by many preachers as - 'felt rather dark.' and 'Had a pretty good liberty.' Many of us will be comforted by his comments.

KEITH THOMAS
Beech House, 29 Glan yr Afon, Ebbw Vale, Blaenau Gwent, NP3 5NR.

1509 WESLEY BIBLE UNION

I am working on the history of the Wesley Bible Union, founded in 1913 within Wesleyan Methodism to campaign against Modernism. The W.B.U. soon became interdenominational, changing its name in the early 1930s to the British Bible Union, and my impression is that support within Methodism was always somewhat limited. I would be glad to receive any information about the W.B.U./B.B.U., or about its early leaders, Sir William Smith, Messrs Oates Ingham, W. Shepherd Allen, S. Rathbone Edge and J. W. Laycock and the Revs William Spiers, Harold Morton, G. Armstrong Bennetts, W. Backhouse, Benjamin Weaver and Dinsdale Young. Any news of surviving archives would also be most welcome,

MARTIN WELLINGS
11 Wodhams Drive, Brackley, Northants, NN13 6NB

1510 LORD FORTESCUE AND SAMUEL KEEN

I was interested in the note (No 1500) by Roger Thorne in the May *Proceedings* on Lord Fortescue and his sympathetic attitude to Methodists. In the 1872 *Minutes* of the Bible Christian Conference the peer's name appears in the obituary of Samuel Keen, an influential pioneer minister in South Australia. Keen was born at South Molton in Devon in 1818. Converted as a young man he was subject to some persecution. The earl was sympathetic to his plight and arranged employment with the Dowager Lady Fortescue. This enabled him to preach and to prepare to study at Shebbear College. Keen joined the Bible Christian Mission in South Australia in 1852.

ARNOLD D. HUNT

"To fill his courts with songs of praise" - the transformation of a chapel, 1897. 28 pp. 1997.
The interior of Staple Hill Methodist Church (then 'Hebron' UMFC) was remodelled as the local contribution to Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. This account of the 'transformation', based on contemporary periodical reports and including four photographs, is available from the compiler - John B. Edwards, 85 Broad Street, Staple Hill, Bristol BS16 5LU, price £2 (inc. postage).

E. A. R.