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Proceedings

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WESLEYANS AND CALVINISTS IN HARMONY: THE WELSH HYMN BOOK OF 1927

The moves towards reunion which formed a major preoccupation of English speaking Methodism in Britain during the 1920s were of small interest to Welsh speaking Methodists. Neither the Primitive nor the United Methodist Connexions had any presence among Welsh speakers and Welsh speaking Methodism was entirely located within either the Wesleyan Methodist or the Calvinistic Methodist Connexions. The approaching union was, of course, of no direct concern to the Calvinistic Methodists. So far as the Wesleyan Methodists were concerned, references to the union negotiations in the manuscript *Journal* of the Welsh Wesleyan Methodist Assembly¹ and in the denominational magazine *Yr Eurgrawn Wesleiaidd*² [The Wesleyan Magazine] were few and far between and did not record any strong reaction beyond a general welcome for the proposed union and a feeling voiced by some that union would bring the church closer to the common people and therefore more in line with the existing spirit of Welsh Wesleyanism.

While English speaking Methodists were grappling with the issue of reunion the concerns of their Welsh speaking counterparts were directed towards other matters which were of far greater moment to them. One of the most pressing of these was the production of a new hymn book. The story of the planning, production and final result of this endeavour is of interest not only for the history of Welsh

¹ The manuscript *Journal* is held in the National Library of Wales, Department of Manuscripts and Records at WMA 2030-2036D. Pages are numbered within each volume.

² The magazine had several changes of title during its long life from 1809 to 1983. It is referred to hereafter as *Eurgrawn*.

Wesleyanism but also within the wider context of British Methodism.

Almost as soon as the first world war was over the Welsh Wesleyan Assembly began serious consideration of the need for a new hymn book. The *Journal* for 1919 notes that 'The Assembly decided that the whole question of issuing a New Hymn and Tune Book be re-committed to the [Welsh Bookroom] Committee.'³ The book in use at the time was *Llyfr Emynau y Methodistiaid Wesleyaidd* [The Wesleyan Methodist Hymn Book] which had been published in 1900. This was the latest in a series of books for the use of Welsh Wesleyans going back to 1802.

There was not, however, universal agreement on the need for a new book. In 1920 the Rev. D. Tecwyn Evans wrote a series of seven articles for the *Eurgrawn* in which he exposed the shortcomings of the 1900 book. He listed theological and linguistic errors, poor translations, wrong attributions, unwarranted changes to texts, inclusion of bad hymns and exclusion of good ones. D. Tecwyn Evans had throughout his life a passionate concern for the Welsh language and his strongest criticism was directed against the linguistic deficiencies of the 1900 book. He quickly put his cards firmly on the table:

credaf fod yr iaith ei hun, hen sôn am ddim arall, yn ddigon o reswm tros gael Llyfr newydd. [I believe that the language itself, not to speak of anything else, is sufficient reason for having a new Book.]⁴

Even so, he acknowledged that not everyone felt the need for a new book:

clybuwyd gwyr amlwg iawn yn taeru mewn Cyfarfod Taleithiol y llynedd mai'n Llyfr Emynau ni fel Cyfundeb oedd y goreu yn yr iaith, ac nad oedd eisiau'r un newydd o gwbl. [very eminent men were heard maintaining in the District Meeting last year that our Connexional Hymn Book was the best in the language and there was no need at all for a new one.]⁵

D. Tecwyn Evans himself was in no doubt of the need for a new book. He pleaded for a book that should be better selected, that should do justice to the high literary quality of the best Welsh hymns, and that should be linguistically sound and carefully edited. Despite the many merits of the 1900 book, which he freely acknowledged, he did not feel that it had attained the desired standard on any of these counts. His own preference would have been for an interdenominational book for

³ *Journal* 1919, p.321.

⁴ *Eurgrawn* 112 (1920) p.109. Where sources are in Welsh an English translation is given. It should be noted that the originals are frequently haphazard in their use of Welsh accents. In all cases the Welsh appears as in the original.

⁵ *Eurgrawn* 112 (1920) p.307.

all the evangelical denominations, but he accepted that such a book would not be possible at present since the Baptists and the Congregationalists had recently undertaken new books of their own.⁶

There is no evidence of serious movement towards a new book until 1923 when the Assembly *Journal* records:

The Assembly welcomed the idea of having a United Hymn and Tune Book for the Methodists in Wales, and appointed a committee of six to meet the committee of six appointed by the General Assembly of the CM Church, to consider whether it is possible to bring this about and to report to the next Assembly.⁷

This is the first mention on the Wesleyan side of the possibility of uniting with the Calvinistic Methodists to produce a joint hymn book. On the face of it the suggestion was unexpected. The Calvinistic Methodists, tracing their origins to Howel Harris's conversion experience of 1735, had, since their separation from the Church of England in 1811, formed a separate denomination which included both Welsh and English speaking churches. The sending of Welsh speaking Wesleyan missionaries into Wales in 1800 by the British Conference had been largely designed to counter the Calvinistic preaching which had taken such a hold on the Welsh people. During the nineteenth century the theological differences between the two bodies had led to often bitter disputes.

How far the Calvinistic Methodists had relaxed their doctrinal position can be seen in the valedictory address given by the Rev. E. O. Davies as Moderator of the North Wales Association in March 1923. In his address E. O. Davies called on the denomination to change its Confession of Faith to take account of the fact that it no longer embraced a Calvinistic theory. He stated:

Ni cheir dadl heddyw rhwng Calfin ac Armin. Credir gan rai eisoes y gwnai yr un Llyfr Emynau y tro i'r ddau. {There is no debate today between Calvin and Arminius. Some already believe that a single Hymn Book would serve both.}⁸

The editor of the *Eurgrawn*, the Rev. Thomas Hughes, drew attention to this address in his editorial in August 1923.⁹

The suggestion of a joint hymn book came from the Calvinistic Methodists. The Calvinistic Methodist Church had in 1919 established a

⁶ *Eurgrawn* 112 (1920) p.20-3. The Baptist book had appeared in 1915; the Congregationalist book followed in 1921.

⁷ *Journal* 1923, p.456.

⁸ *Cylchgrawn Hanes y Methodistiaidd Calfinaidd: Transactions of the Calvinistic Methodist Historical Society* 8 (March 1923) p24.

⁹ *Eurgrawn* 115 (1920) p.305.

‘Re-construction Commission’ which advocated the revising of the denomination’s hymn book:

one of the Commission had been in consultation with brethren from among the Welsh Wesleyans, because they were also contemplating having another collection of hymns. The Book Committee mentioned in its report to the Liverpool Assembly (1923) that we would be called upon ere long to prepare a new Hymn and Tune Book, and that the Wesleyans were in great haste to possess such a book. It was suggested that the Assembly consider the possibility of securing one book for both Connexions. The Assembly readily agreed to the suggestion...¹⁰

At the General Assembly of the Calvinistic Methodists in May 1923 E. O. Davies formally proposed that the Assembly should adopt the idea of a joint hymn book and put the proposal to the Wesleyans at their Assembly, inviting them to choose six men to meet with six from the Calvinistic side. The Assembly adopted the proposal and selected six men, three each from north and south Wales, to represent them in the discussions and report back to the next Assembly.¹¹

The Wesleyan Assembly duly agreed and appointed six ministers to serve on the committee to discuss the possibility of a joint book. They were the Revs Thomas Hughes, John Felix, Evan Isaac, Llewelyn Morgan, D. Tecwyn Evans, and O. Madoc Roberts who was to serve as Convener for the Wesleyan side.¹² The representatives of the two bodies met at the Calvinistic Methodist Theological College in Aberystwyth in July 1923 and reported back to their denominations in 1924. Their unanimous resolutions were adopted by both denominations.

The joint committee’s five resolutions were:

1. We are of opinion that it is possible to agree on suitable Hymns for the use of the two Methodist bodies.
2. We are of opinion that all financial matters relative to the printing and selling of Books can be agreed upon.
3. That the Hymn Book shall be prepared by a Joint Committee to consist of ten Wesleyan Methodists and fourteen Calvinistic Methodists.
4. That the Hymn and Tune Book shall be prepared by a Joint Committee to consist of three Wesleyan Methodists and six Calvinistic Methodists.

¹⁰ Gomer M. Roberts, *These hundred years (1864-1964): a history of the beginning and development of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Wales*, translated by Eliseus Howells (Caernarfon, 1964) p.85. According to E. O. Davies, writing in the Magazine *Y Drysorfa* [The Treasury] 1927, p.375, there had been informal meetings of groups of Calvinistics and Wesleyans in north and south Wales in 1922.

¹¹ *Blwyddiadur y Methodistiaid Calfniaidd* [The Calvinistic Methodist Yearbook] 1924, p.60. *The Blwyddiadur* prints the minutes of the General Assembly.

¹² *Journal* 1923 p.456.

5. That the Executive Committee of the Wesleyan Methodist Book Committee and the Executive Committee of the Calvinistic Methodist Book Committee, jointly, shall prepare a report on the best financial arrangements relative to the printing and selling of the Books, and that their report shall be incorporated into this report.¹³

The Bookroom Committees further recommended that production costs should be borne pro-rata according to number of members of the two bodies. The numerical superiority of Welsh Calvinistic Methodists was reflected in the composition of the committees.

The Joint Committee set about its work with enthusiasm. The Rev. Dr Owen Prys, a very experienced theological college Principal from the Calvinistic side was appointed President and the Rev. Thomas Hughes, a senior Wesleyan and editor of the *Eurgrawn*, was appointed Vice-President. The Secretaries/Conveners were the Rev. E. O. Davies, who more than anyone appears to have been responsible for instigating and promoting the idea of the hymn book, for the Calvinists and the Rev. O. Madoc Roberts, Steward of the Welsh Wesleyan Bookroom, for the Wesleyans. Sub-committees were formed to make recommendations about hymns and psalms in the present books that should be retained and to recommend new hymns and psalms that should be included in the new book.¹⁴ A report to the Wesleyan Assembly in 1925 referred to the excellent spirit of co-operation shown in the discussions of the sub-committees.¹⁵

The 1926 Assemblies of the two bodies heard that a draft copy of the new hymn book was ready and the Book Rooms were urged to have the book out before the end of the year. Wesleyan churches and Sunday schools were urged to set up saving clubs in order to establish reserves to pay for the book when it was ready.¹⁶ When E. O. Davies presented the draft to the Calvinistic Methodist General Assembly 'cyfododd y Gymanfa ei dwylaw a safodd ar ei thraed i ddatgan ei chymeradwyaeth' [the Assembly members raised their hands and stood to demonstrate their approval].¹⁷ In fact, the book did not appear in 1926 but the 1927 Assembly heard that it would be ready by the end of summer.¹⁸ The words edition was finally published at the end of 1927 with the title *Llyfr Emynau y Methodistiaid Calфинаidd a Wesleaidd*

¹³ *Journal* 1924 p.494.

¹⁴ Details of the composition and work of the sub-committees are given in the Minute Book of the Joint Committee. National Library of Wales, Department of Manuscripts and Records CMA 76. There is also a clear and concise account by E. O. Davies in 'Y Llyfr Emynau newydd: ei hanes' [The new Hymn Book: its history], *Y Drysorfa* 1927, pp.375-8.

¹⁵ *Journal* 1925 p.17.

¹⁶ *Journal* 1926 p.53.

¹⁷ *Blywyddiadur* 1927 p.120.

¹⁸ *Journal* 1927 pp.87-8.

[The Calvinistic and Wesleyan Hymn Book]. The words and tunes edition appeared in 1929.

In addition to the sub-committees responsible for recommending hymns for inclusion the Joint Committee also established text and tune committees. The Text, Language and Authorship sub-committee comprised two Calvinistic and two Wesleyans. The Calvinists were Sir John Morris-Jones, Professor of Welsh at Bangor, who acted as chairman, and the Rev. J. T. Job. The Wesleyans were the Rev. D. Tecwyn Evans, who acted as secretary, and the Rev. E. Tegla Davies. I shall say a word about each of these shortly.

Inevitably, the new book met with adverse criticism, not least during its preparation by those who had not even seen a draft of what was intended, as D. Tecwyn Evans noted in an article in the *Eurgrawn* in January 1928 shortly after its publication:

Credaf na chondemniwyd cymaint erioed ar un llyfr arall cyn ei weled ag a wnaed ar y casgliad hwn o emynau. [I do not think any other book was so condemned before it was seen as this collection of hymns.]¹⁹

Once the book was published, however, it was gradually accepted and established its place as the recognised hymn book of the two denominations. The editor of the *Eurgrawn*, the admirable Rev. Thomas Hughes, himself the Vice-President of the Joint Committee, repeatedly pointed out its merits in terms of both content and linguistic felicity. In a thoughtful editorial in May 1928 Hughes directed attention particularly to the selection of psalms and passages of scripture for singing or recitation, the high standard of the hymns of praise, and the richness of the selection of hymns expressing the experiences and privileges of the Christian life. He noted, too, that the compilers had made a serious effort to include hymns on the practical duty of the Christian in the world, though he had to admit that hymns expressing what Hugh Price Hughes called the 'ethical aspect' of the faith were in short supply in Welsh.²⁰

In fact, the 1927 hymn book served the two denominations well. It has remained the accepted book for both bodies until the present day. In 1985 a supplement was published, including a further 212 hymns and songs to add to the 770 in the original book.²¹ A committee is at present at work to produce a new Welsh language hymn book, hopefully to be published during the year 2000. This will serve not only the Methodists and Presbyterians but also the Welsh Baptists and

¹⁹ *Eurgrawn* 119 (1928) p.33.

²⁰ *Eurgrawn* 120 (1928) pp.198-200.

²¹ *Llyfr Emynau a Thonau y Methodistiaid Calфинаidd a Wesleiaidd: Atodiad* [The Calvinistic and Wesleyan Methodist Hymn and Tune Book: Supplement] (Caernarfon, 1985).

Congregationalists and the Welsh speaking congregations of the Church in Wales.

From the point of view of the Wesleyan Methodists the most striking feature of the 1927 book was the paucity of hymns of Charles Wesley. During the nineteenth century a significant number of translations of Charles Wesley's hymns had been produced, most notably by John Bryan. Bryan was one of the earliest Welsh Wesleyan preachers. Ordained in 1801, he moved away from Wales to work in England in 1816, and later left the ministry. The 1900 Welsh Wesleyan hymn book contained 108 translations of Charles Wesley (11.6% of a total of 928 hymns in the book).²² The 1927 book only had 22 Charles Wesley hymns (a mere 2.9% of the total of 770). By contrast, the 1933 *Methodist Hymn Book* had 243 (around 25% of the total of 984). That is to say that, while English speaking Methodists continued to be exposed to a very significant amount of Charles Wesley in their hymn book, he had only the most minor presence in the hymn book used by the Welsh speaking Methodists from 1927 onwards. Interestingly, the 1985 Supplement did not add a single Charles Wesley hymn, though translations into Welsh had been made of several of his hymns in the twentieth century.

It is interesting to compare this with the presence of William Williams Pantycelyn in the 1900 and 1927 books. Pantycelyn (1717-91)²³ was to Welsh Calvinistic Methodism what Charles Wesley was to English Arminian Methodism. The 1927 book included no less than 248 hymns by Pantycelyn (some 32% of the total hymns in the book). The 1900 Wesleyan book had 131 (14% of the total). The previous Calvinistic Methodists hymn book, *Llyfr Hymnau y Methodistiaid Calфинаidd* [The Calvinistic Methodist Hymn Book] of 1897, itself heavily revised re-working of an earlier book of 1869, had no less than 477 by Pantycelyn (50% of a total of 955 hymns in the book) and, so far as I can see, a mere three by Charles Wesley.

How does one account for the near absence of Charles Wesley from the 1927 book? Is it an indication that the Wesleyans, in their desire to co-operate with the much larger Calvinistic Methodist body, had, in effect, sold their birthright? The figures for Charles Wesley and Williams Pantycelyn in the 1897 Calvinistic book might suggest such an explanation. Examination suggests, however, that there were other influences at work.

All the indications are that the members of the Joint Committee were looking to produce a hymn book which should be of a high

²² There are actually 931 hymns, but three English hymns have crept in for no apparent reason. All the hymn books have short sections of English hymns for use when visitors are present but I have not included these in this survey.

²³ Pantycelyn is the name of the family farm. William Williams is generally referred to as Williams Pantycelyn, or simply Pantycelyn.

linguistic and literary standard. This was particularly true of the members of the Text, Language and Authorship sub-committee. Sir John Morris-Jones, the chairman, was Professor of Welsh at the University College of North Wales, Bangor. His important book, *A Welsh Grammar, Historical and Comparative* (1913), together with his work as literary critic, scholarly editor, eisteddfod adjudicator and poet, had established him as a leading authority of his day on the Welsh language. As well as chairing the Text, Language and Authorship sub-committee, Sir John also chaired the joint sub-committee that decided on hymns to be carried forward from the existing hymn books of the two Connexions. At the same time as he was working on the hymn book he was also chairing a committee of the Board of Celtic Studies of the University of Wales which in 1928 produced an extremely influential report entitled *Orgraff y Iaith Gymraeg* [The Orthography of the Welsh Language]. This marked the culmination of thirty years campaigning by Sir John and others to produce an acceptable standard of written Welsh. The fact that the 1927 hymn book was the first to follow the new standard is one reason why it has lasted so well.

Of the other members of the Text, Language and Authorship sub-committee, E. Tegla Davies was a distinguished novelist and essayist of high literary standing. He was the most distinguished creative prose writer among the Welsh Wesleyans then or, indeed, at any other time. In his autobiography he has left an amusing account of Sir John Morris-Jones's autocratic control of the sub-committee.²⁴ Indeed, he goes so far as to say that it did not matter who the members were since Sir John effectively was the sub-committee. J. T. Job was a poet and hymn-writer, once a crowned bard and three times chaired bard at the National Eisteddfod. D. Tecwyn Evans, the secretary of the sub-committee, had compiled a Welsh grammar, which had appeared in three editions²⁵ and which was regularly used as a set text for Welsh Wesleyan ministers during their candidature. His own high view of the literary merit of native Welsh hymns had been firmly expressed in his 1920 articles in the *Eurgrawn* on the previous Welsh hymn book in terms calculated to raise the eyebrows of English readers:

Credaf nad oes ddim byd gwell fel llenyddiaeth yn llenyddiaeth ardderchog Cymru na'n hemynau ar eu goreu - nid wyf yn sicr a oes rhywbeth cystal. Yn hyn o beth yr ydym fel cenedl yn tra rhagori ar y Saeson. Ychydig o emynau mawr fel llenyddiaeth sydd gan y Saeson o'u cymharu â'r Cymry. Nid ydys yn sôn yn awr, sylwer, am werth diwinyddol, profiadol, ysbrydol emynau'r Saeson, ond dywedyd yr

²⁴ *Gyda'r blynyddoedd* [With the years] (3rd ed., Liverpool, 1952) pp. 169-70.

²⁵ *Yr Iaith Gymraeg: ei horgraff a'i chystrawen* [The Welsh language: its orthography and syntax] (Liverpool, 1911, 1915, 1922).

ydys nad yw toreth fawr eu hemynau hwy ar yr un gwastad o lawer a thoreth emynau Cymru o ran gwerth llenyddol, o ran coethter ac arucheled ymadrodd, athrylith a dychymyg, beiddgarwch a thrheiddgarwch a rhwysg meddwl. Nid wyf yn tybio y gallai unrhyw genedl dan yr haul gael cystal llyfr emynau a ni'r Cymru, heb son am ei well.

[I believe that there is nothing better *as literature* in the excellent literature of Wales than our hymns at their best - and I am not sure if there is anything as good. In this we as a nation far excel the English. Compared with the Welsh the English have few hymns which are great literature. Note that we are not now referring to the theological, experiential, spiritual value of English hymns; but we are saying that the mass of their hymns is not on the same level as the mass of Welsh hymns in terms of literary value, refinement and sublimity of expression, ingenuity and imagination, boldness and penetration and authority of thought. I do not suppose that any nation on earth could have such a good hymn book as the Welsh, never mind a better one.]²⁶

Given the desire to produce a book that should be of high linguistic and literary merit it is not surprising if translations were carefully scrutinised. In the end a total of around 80 hymns translated or adapted from English were selected, together with a small number of translations of adaptations from other languages. The overwhelming majority of the 770 hymns in the book are original compositions by Welsh writers of all the main denominations from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries, including particularly strong representation of hymns from the Welsh Independent and Baptist traditions.

The 1927 book is certainly of considerable literary and linguistic merit. To what extent, though, is it a Methodist book? In particular, what does it say about the Welsh Wesleyan understanding of the faith? If, as has often been said, English speaking Methodists have traditionally learned the faith through hymns, what faith did Welsh speaking Methodists imbibe from this book?

Inevitably, the book is something of a compromise theologically, conveying neither a strongly Arminian understanding of the offer or salvation nor a strong commitment to the doctrines of predestination, election or limited atonement. Indeed, these were all doctrines which, while fiercely defended by Calvinistic Methodists in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, were no longer widely held by the Connexion by 1927. As the Rev. Evan Roberts remarked in his favourable review of the book in the Wesleyan weekly newspaper, *Y Gwylieddydd Newydd* [The New Watchman],²⁷ the ordinary Welshman in

²⁶ *Eurgrawn* 112 (1920) p.21.

²⁷ 16 Rhagfyr [December] 1927, p.7.

1927 would pay scant attention to theological niceties since he knew next to nothing about such matters.

Where the book has an undeniably Methodist feel is in its celebration of personal growth in holiness, and the intense longing for a close personal relationship with God. Much of this derives from the real similarities between Pantycelyn and Charles Wesley. Both were products of the eighteenth-century evangelical awakening. Both wrote hymns that were grounded in a detailed and wide-ranging familiarity with the Bible. Both expressed a deep personal sense of closeness to God. Both were also true poets whose delight in language and in metrical experiment adds richness and excitement to their work. What is interesting is that, while they drew their religious strength from a common source, the poetic traditions within which they worked were very dissimilar. This has been finely put by Dr Glyn Tegai Hughes:

The English hymn-writers of the eighteenth century were writing at a time when a sober, conventional, formal style characterized much of the verse that we now think of as Augustan. This style they translated into an affective mode under the increasingly powerful influences of 'enthusiasm', and they had to do so in a language that had some chance of being understood by the unlearned in the congregation. John Wesley, in his Preface to his 1779 hymn-book, made clear his intentions in words that anticipate those of Wordsworth in the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*: 'Here are, allow me to say, both the purity, the strength, and elegance of the English language; and, at the same time, the utmost simplicity and plainness, suited to every capacity.' Pantycelyn's quite extraordinary achievement is to have obtained the same kind of effect in a language with a substantially different poetic tradition, opening up almost alone the possibilities of the lyric in Welsh and producing a body of literature readily available to the common man.²⁸

The 1927 book is, of course, more than Pantycelyn, as the 1933 *Methodist Hymn Book* is more than Charles Wesley. And yet they do obviously dominate the two books both statistically and in terms of poetic stature. It is difficult to pronounce definitively on the difference it would make to one's sense of the specifically Methodist interpretation of the Christian faith to be brought up on large doses of the one as opposed to the other. What is perhaps surprising is that experience of a shared hymnody did not draw the Wesleyan and Calvinistic Methodists closer together in the years that followed.

The fact that the Calvinistic Methodists had proposed a joint book and had co-operated so happily to produce it prompted some of the

²⁸ Glyn Tegai Hughes, *Williams Pantycelyn* (Cardiff, 1983) p.116. This is a very perceptive introduction to Pantycelyn for the English reader. Interestingly, the author comes from the Welsh Wesleyan tradition.

Wesleyans to indulge in wishful thinking. In March 1928 the Rev. W. O. Evans wrote in the *Eurgrawn*:

Y mae lle i obeithio na oedir yn hir i gyflawni'r bwriad sydd ar droed ers blynnyddoedd i gysylltu'r tri Chyfundeb Methodistiaidd Seisnig yn un corff. Ond ni fydd yr undeb yn gyflawn na'r corff yn gyfan heb y Methodistiaid Calfinaidd. A phan na allai'r Wesleaid Cymreig a'r Methodistiaid gyda'i gilydd ffurfio'r Adran Gymreig o'r un Eglwys Fethodistaidd? [There is reason to hope that there will not be a long delay in completing the intention that has been under way for years to connect the three English Methodist Connexions in one body. But the union will not be complete without the Calvinistic Methodists. And why cannot the Welsh Wesleyans and the [Calvinistic] Methodists together form the Welsh Section of the one Methodist Church?]²⁹

The Rev. J. Wesley Felix, too, describing Methodist union in the Calvinistic Methodist magazine, *Y Traethodydd* [The Essayist], wrote of the sadness of some Wesleyans that the Calvinistic Methodists were not part of the union and expressed the hope that there would in due course be one united Welsh Methodist body.³⁰

The Rev. E. Tegla Davies expressed a similar hope at the conclusion of his contribution to *The Methodist Church: its origin, divisions, and reunion* in 1932:

We welcome union not because it affects us in Wales at present to any marked extent, but because we trust that it will be the means of uniting us and the other Methodist Church in Wales. All the greatest differences of doctrines, which made our fathers sworn enemies, have long since disappeared, and already we possess a common hymn-book. We sincerely hope that union in England will pave the way for Union in Wales, that here also Methodism may become one body and stand united.³¹

These were influential voices. Nevertheless, whatever dreams of unity the 1927 hymn book may have aroused, it was always improbable that they would be realised. There were a number of reasons for this. The Welsh Wesleyans owed allegiance to the British Methodist Conference. It was not likely that they would relinquish this or that the Calvinistic Methodists, who were an independent church in their own right, would accept such a yoke. Long-standing

²⁹ *Eurgrawn* 120 (1928) p.93. W. O. Evans later wrote in similar vein in *Y Gwilyedydd Newydd* [The New Watchman] 28 Ionawr [January] 1932, p.4, when reporting on Methodist union.

³⁰ *Y Traethodydd* 3ydd gyfres [3rd series], 1 (1932) pp.12-23.

³¹ 'Welsh Wesleyan Methodism' in *The Methodist Church...ed.* A. W. Harrison *et al.* (1932), p.178.

similarities of church government drew the Calvinistic Methodists into a more informal relationship with the Presbyterian Churches - a relationship which allowed them to keep their autonomy and at the same time enjoy a wider fellowship with similar churches in other countries across the world.

At least one Calvinistic Methodist minister regretted this. In 1938 the Rev. H. P. Roberts of Wallasey wrote:

I have often wondered why the Welsh Calvinistic *Methodist* Church gravitated in the course of time towards the *Presbyterian* Church of England and adopted a new name - Presbyterian Church of Wales. As regards doctrine and church government we are certainly akin to the Presbyterian (though the use of a common hymn-book proves that the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists and Welsh Wesleyan Methodists have no serious doctrinal differences now), but as regards origin and history we are closely related to English Methodism. Presumably doctrine and polity prevailed over origin and history, especially polity. It must be our Presbyterian form of government that has carried us away from English Methodism, our twin sister, towards Presbyterianism... But one cannot help asking the question - would it not have been to the advantage of the Welsh Calvinistic *Methodist* Church if it had been included in the Methodist Union of September, 1932? Have we to all intent and purposes dropped out of the Methodist family?³²

Had the Calvinistic Methodists moved closer to the Wesleyans rather than to the Presbyterians it would, of course, have made no difference to their Welsh hymn book. It would presumably have meant, though, that their English speaking churches would have sung from a Methodist rather than a Presbyterian hymn book. Yet how little this was ever likely to happen is clear from the fact that the English speaking Calvinistic Methodists were already, with the blessing of the General Assembly, participating in the preparation of the *Revised Church Hymnary* at precisely the same time as their Welsh speaking brethren were working on the 1927 *Llyfr Emynau*. In the end the 1927 book was a free-standing venture in co-operation between the majority Welsh speaking arm of the Calvinistic Methodist Connexion and the minority Welsh speaking arm of the British Wesleyan Methodist Connexion. Despite the dreams of some Wesleyans it is doubtful whether the Calvinistic Methodists ever intended that it should be more than that.

LIONEL MADDEN

(Lionel Madden was formerly Head of the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth)

³² *Cylchgrawn Cymdeithas Hanes y Methodistiaid Calfinaidd: Transaction of the Calvinistic Methodist Historical Society* 23 (1938) p.35.

THE MAKING OF AN EARLY BIBLE CHRISTIAN CIRCUIT

(continued from page 130)

To turn from financial to other problems, we are again reminded that, especially in the earlier days, we are looking at a pioneer situation, both in the Weare circuit and in the connexion as a whole. The Bible Christian *Minutes* list the appointments of the preachers for the forthcoming year, but examination of the quarterly accounts shows that often preachers were moved in the middle of the year. In the days of William O'Bryan's direction, one suspects that he, as General Superintendent, moved them at will; others were certainly transferred to cope with emergencies.

The early years are full of these mid-term adjustments. We have seen that Elizabeth Dart was called out of retirement until disappearing from the circuit accounts in Midsummer 1823. For some reason the circuit paid for six weeks' lodging for her in the following quarter, although no stipend is recorded, so perhaps the payment was a delayed account; yet the *Minutes* show her as appointed to Bristol in 1823. Where did she actually serve for most of that year? In 1824 she was appointed to Monmouth but in March 1825 she returned to Weare, remaining there for the next six months. In 1825 she was stationed at Kilkhampton (probably her home) as a supernumerary but spent the autumn in Weare circuit, which paid her a quarter's salary and sickness expenses. Other female preachers were drafted in as replacements: Grace Palmer in the summer of 1823, Mary Cottle in the summer of 1824 and in the Christmas quarter of 1825 Winifred Rowlands was fetched from her Somerton appointment and spent six months in the circuit.

That connexional year was a tangled year for Weare. Both male ministers (Paul Robbins and James Roberts) spent some time outside the circuit (perhaps in Bedminster) as is indicated by the fact that in each case one quarter's salary was paid only in part, presumably the other part was paid by the other sphere of labour. Consequently William Reynolds, appointed to Kingsbrompton in 1825, spent the Lady Day quarter of 1826 in Weare, as did Mary Hewett, who was transferred from Exeter 'travelling expenses from Exton 9/9' and remained for two quarters. And, also in the June quarter of that year, after William Reynold had gone back to his own circuit, James Way was recruited as a supply for six weeks; he entered the ministry formally in the Michaelmas quarter, and became one of the Connexion's distinguished ministers.

After that, ministerial life was undisturbed for twelve years, until in March 1838 James Hinks and John Treloar (at Weare and Forest of Dean respectively) exchanged circuits, as had been decreed by the 1837 stations. In 1839 George Batt was appointed to the circuit, staying two years, but in each quarter received only half-stipend; again one assumes he was serving in Bedminster, which appears to have been semi-independent, not listed separately in the *Minutes*, but paying a half-stipend to a Weare preacher.

In 1841 'another' is listed in the Minutes after J. H. Prior and John Williams, and the person found was one M.A. (Mary Anne?) Webber, but after a few weeks she apparently found herself unsuited to the work, and in December her place was taken by Thomas Inch, a new recruit; he was so satisfactory that the following summer the quarterly meeting recommended him as a 'proper person' for the ministry, expressing their readiness to have him reappointed. Conference concurred with the first half of the resolution but appointed him elsewhere.

In the autumn of 1846 George Davis suddenly quitted the ministry (it was early in his third year), so that in December Pontypool was again called on to supply the vacancy, in the person of the veteran Catherine Harris, who remained in Weare for the remaining nine months. One wonders, incidentally, in what practical way Pontypool Mission was recompensed for the frequent withdrawal of its only preacher. And an almost identical situation arose in the autumn quarter of 1849. Thomas Hobbs, also in his third year, withdrew after two months and John Brown was recruited to fill the vacancy. Once again the quarterly meeting recommended him for the ministry, and this time Conference reappointed him to the circuit in 1850.

This recital vividly illustrates the problems of a circuit in pioneering days, the heavy toll on the enthusiasm of the (mainly) young preachers, leading to resignations and breakdown in health, the discipline exercised by the Connexional leaders in moving preachers as they were needed - and, not least, the readiness of the preachers to submit to this regime. It is difficult to know how much the devotion of the preachers was appreciated by the rank and file membership.

At Midsummer 1853 the circuit steward records 'Average per member during the year with Quarterage and Collections 1s2³/₄d and Half a farthing'. Just over a penny a week. Taking into account that congregations included at least as many hearers as members, Thomas Shaw's statement¹ that the average Bible Christian weekly contribution in 1862 was less than a halfpenny a week cannot be far wrong.

Indicative of the ethos of the community is the varying number of preaching places; it is only with the 1850s that the list is the same from quarter to quarter. As we saw, at Lady Day 1823 there were eight preaching places; these had dropped to five three months later. At Lady Day 1824 the total was eight again but a quarter later enthusiasm and possibly a revival had taken the preachers into no less than nineteen places. This figure had reached 26 by Christmas 1826, the highest total the circuit ever reached; there were 24 places as late as March 1842 but six months later the number had dropped to seventeen. Between 1845 and 1853 it varied from twelve to fifteen. The last schedule lists: Allerton, Bleadney, Bleadon, Biddisome, Draycott, Huntspill, Mark, Priddy, South Brent, Worle, Webbington, Weare, Weston-super-Mare, Westbury and Clewer. At Midsummer 1853, Bleadney and South Brent (ie Brent Knoll) were the largest societies with 38 members each, Weare having 26 and Draycott 24; Weston-Super-Mare had but 15 members.

¹ T. Shaw *The Bible Christians 1815-1907* (1965) p60.

Weare itself had a chequered history. It first figures in the quarterly schedules at Midsummer 1824, the quarter that saw the sudden upsurge in the number of preaching places. It headed the list though its fourteen members with twenty on trial was easily outstripped by Nailsea's 32 members with three on trial, and in the following quarter its members totalled but sixteen with only three remaining on trial; Nailsea remained easily the strongest society until it took a sudden plunge not many quarters before its last appearance at Michaelmas 1840. One wonders why a society with 40 members at Christmas 1837 should have had only eighteen, six months later.

But Weare, while it headed the list on its first appearance, and while the circuit was named after it from the same date, was never a strong society. One may assume that it gave its name to the circuit as it was at the centre of the area, and as the preacher was stationed there, as probably was his colleagues. Allowing for the usual variations, membership at Weare gradually declined, reaching three in 1833. Over the next ten years there was, at first, a slight and fluctuating recovery, though membership never again reached double figures; finally they sank again, until Weare made for the time being its last appearance at Lady Day 1842 with two members. "Weare" still remained the name of the circuit and in 1843 both preachers still lived there.

But in March 1847 suddenly Weare makes a fresh appearance with ten members contributing 12s 6d to circuit funds. Comparison of the circuit's membership figures for the previous quarter shows little other change, so we are not dealing with a Bible Christian revival, unless there had simply been a mission at Weare itself; and over the next six years membership grew slowly, until June 1853 it stood at 26. From time to time it hosted the quarterly meeting, though only rarely after 1833. Bleadon, South Brent and Draycott were the most frequent venues, though the place of meeting is not invariably mentioned.

Membership in the circuit as well as the number of preaching places, fluctuated. Beginning with the first six reported in March 1823, it grew steadily to reach 153 in September 1824. It then varied, before another slight leap brought the figures to 202 in March 1829. This was followed by some decline, until further improvement gave the circuit 218 in March 1838. The greatest advance was made between 1841 (198) and March 1842 (294) - curiously, the period when Weare itself disappeared. Clearly there had been a revival, equally clearly it had not touched Weare. But 320 was reached in June 1842, falling to 277 the following quarter. But in that quarter six places disappeared from the circuit, one of them with 22 members. What had happened? Had there been some rearrangement of circuit boundaries? The circuit and connexional minutes do not help; though the 1842 *Minutes* refer to the 'gracious revivals' in various parts of the connexion during the year. Again there followed fluctuation, and a new high level was reached in June 1843 with 324 members; but thereafter, with variations, there was a slow decline, so that the last recorded figures are 248.

There are not many other details to be found in the Weare Circuit Book.

John Herridge, who became circuit steward in September 1844, and whose beautiful copperplate writing continues thenceforward to the end of the volume, gave brief statistical details from June 1850, listing in that year fourteen male and four female local preachers, six Sabbath schools (in fourteen societies) with twelve male and nineteen female teachers, and 159 boys and 164 girls.

There is only one reference to chapels in the book, when in July 1839 a modest schedule lists four 'connexional chapels', viz. at Draycott, Stock, South Brent and Bleadney; of these, only Stock had no capital debt; that at South Brent totalled £280, and the Midsummer quarterly meeting in 1843 recommended the state of South Brent Chapel to the consideration of the District Meeting and the General Chapel Fund; that Fund in 1843 granted South Brent £10. Similarly, Draycott chapel was recommended for help the following year. This schedule does not mean that all the other societies were restricted to preaching places; some no doubt were, but probably the majority had chapels in private hands, or not connexionally settled.

Each year the pastor was expected to submit a report on the spiritual state of the circuit, and from time to time the summer quarterly meeting resolved that his report is correct. For some years also the stewards had to reciprocate, as it were; so we find the occasional resolution, 'That the preachers receive their usual certificate.' The same summer quarterly meetings often requested that the preachers be reappointed, giving as the reason in 1836 'as strangers would not be acquainted with the state of the circuit.' Sometimes as we have seen the meeting recommended that a supply be accepted for the ministry. And the June 1840 meeting showed further advance towards a more regular and settled manner of conducting affairs when it resolved to obtain a Preachers' Meeting minute book, partly in order to record the attendance of the preachers and partly to check their faithfulness in keeping their appointments. But the meeting was not to be purely of a business or inquisitorial nature. It was resolved to hold three meetings a year and that the meeting be accompanied by a Watch Night 'at which three of four of the local preachers shall preach.'

Such are the details of the life of a circuit over the period of its first thirty years, as can be found in its Circuit Book. Many questions remain unanswered; at times one is left wondering who compiled the schedules of membership and accounts, as the handwriting is by no means always in the hand of the circuit steward. John Herridge's reign of nine years is an exception. Judging by their signatures, some stewards were 'unlearned and ignorant men' - it would be unkind to name them. Some of them signed the accounts, others forgot to do so, or perhaps did not know they should. And one or two of the pastors, such as Andrew Cory and Matthew Robins, countersigned.

All in all, the volume is not only the record, if one reads between the lines, of a company of Christ's very humble people seeking to spread the Gospel, with all their failures and successes, but also a fascinating human document.

The Revd. Dr. Frank Baker 1910-1999

Frank Baker, who died on October 11 last year, needs no introduction to members of this Society. It is a measure of his unique stature as a historian of Methodism that his 80th birthday was marked by a special issue of the *Proceedings* in May 1990 and little needs to be added to the tribute paid to him then by our President Emeritus, Dr John Bowmer.

His memorial is one that will defy the passage of time, since it takes the form not only of an incredible range and volume of published work, of which his major books are no more than the mountain peaks, but also of the on-going Bicentennial Edition of Wesley's Works, which his vision and dedication first conceived and then began to turn into reality. Though much remains to be done before the edition is complete, his meticulous scholarship and high standards will continue to be the yardstick by which the volumes that are still to be edited and published will be judged.

But his living memorial remains, even more, in the generations of Methodist scholars he helped to train, especially after his move to Duke University in North Carolina in 1960, and in the wider circle of those in whom over the years he inspired an active interest in Methodist history. Frank's scholarly achievements were so formidable that they might have constituted a serious discouragement were it not for the unfailing helpfulness and support he gave to younger scholars on both sides of the Atlantic. He was a great inspirer as well as a setter of daunting standards. No query was too trivial to justify, and receive, an informed answer; and no pleas for help went unheeded.

Frank joined the WHS early in his ministry, and served for many years as Registrar and then from 1949 to 1961 as General Secretary. He twice gave the annual Conference lecture - in 1948 on Charles Wesley and then in 1984 on 'John Wesley and America'. Though he never returned to live in England, he maintained strong ties of friendship and co-operation with fellow British scholars. After his formal retirement in 1980, he gave himself even more wholeheartedly to his work on Methodist history and its fruits continued to appear in a steady stream. Alas, not even the indefatigable Frank Baker could achieve all he set himself to do and projected, or uncompleted, ventures remain for others to take up in tribute to him. His full-scale biography of Charles Wesley remained a pipe-dream. His edition of John Wesley's letters is still to be completed. Above all, perhaps, there are the two volumes of Wesley Bibliography. It remains for someone else to undertake the daunting task of building on the foundations he laid for these volumes, which will form the key-stone of the Bicentennial Edition. He has left us all deeply in his debt.

JOHN A. VICKERS

BOOK REVIEWS

Martin Luther and John Wesley on the Sermon on the Mount by Tore Meistad, (Pietist and Wesleyan Studies, No 10), Scarecrow Press, Inc, 1999. £52.25. ISBN 0 8108 3567 3.) Obtainable via Shelwing Ltd, 4 Pleydell Gardens, Folkestone, Kent, CT20 2DN

This book is significant for several reasons. Firstly, it marks another stage in the welcome broadening of the tradition of Wesleyan theology into cultures other than the Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Saxon derived. German Methodist scholarship has been significant for some time and a Spanish edition of the works of Wesley is in preparation. Now we have this very significant achievement in comparative theology by a Norwegian scholar. Hopefully this book will stimulate ecumenical dialogue between Methodists, Lutherans and Anglicans. I include the last named tradition because the relationships between all three communions should become closer as their adherents world-wide grasp the significance of the entry of the Norwegian and Swedish Lutheran churches into the 'Porvoo' Agreement and, also, into pulpit and altar fellowship agreements with the United Methodist Church in their two countries.

Meistad's aim is to explore Wesley's understanding and use of the Sermon on the Mount in contrast with Luther's use of it. About half the book is dedicated to a close examination of the interpretation of the sermon in Wesley's preaching (thirteen of the 'forty-four' sermons were devoted to it) and other works. Meistad shows that it was central for Wesley's holistic and practical theological vision. Nowhere else in Scripture, according to Wesley, is such a summary of the whole of Christianity given as in the Sermon. The Beatitudes are 'the sum of all true religion', and, according to Meistad, the hermeneutical key of the Gospel for Wesley.

Meistad uses his comparison of Wesley's and Luther's interpretation of the Sermon to make illuminating points about their differing theological and exegetical assumptions, touching also on the influence of their respective historical contexts. Differences between them involve differing attitudes to the relationship between creation and soteriology, different estimates of the function of the law and different attitudes to eschatology. For Luther, the key emphasis is on the formal relationship of sinful humanity to God, for Wesley it is on God's gracious action in fulfilling the goals of his creation. For Luther, the function of law is to illuminate the hopelessness of the human condition. It has no positive function; only faith is important. For Wesley the law is seen in a much more positive light. The law, as revealed in the Sermon on the Mount, illuminates God's original and continuing plan for his creation. It is command in the context of gracious promise. The beatitudes specify graces of Christian character that God can confer and then the patterns of human activity that are the

appropriate, grace-enabled responses to it. Luther, by contrast, sees the state of life indicated in the beatitudes as a series of consoling promises of what shall be in the fullness of the Kingdom. Wesley sees the states of life indicated as very real possibilities within this life, and as potentially having a wider effect on social relationships and not merely an individual sanctifying effect.

In his concluding chapter, Meistad makes a penetrating comparison of the theologies of Luther and Wesley. At various points throughout the work, he gives helpful tabular summaries of his comparisons on specific points, such as the understanding of the Law in Luther and Wesley.

It is a pity that the price of this book is likely to confine its availability to a small number of scholarly libraries. The central half of the book contains many excellent detailed expositions of Wesley's understanding of the Sermon that would be extremely useful to and usable by ministers and local preachers. It is more than just a book for systematic theologians and historians of doctrine. It would be helpful if Prof. Meistad and his publishers considered a shorter, cheaper and more popular version that could serve as an affordable resource to ministers and preachers. The present book is, however, an extremely welcome addition to the scholarly literature in the field.

DAVID CARTER

Divine Compassion: The Intercession of our Lord. Charles Wesley's Hymns Today by Arnold Cooper (Wesley Historical Society Publishing Office [Alfred A. Taber] Bankhead Press, 79, Crewe Road, Nantwich, Cheshire 1999 pp. 93. £6.)

This study is devoted to two main areas of research: the heavenly intercession of the exalted Christ, and the Eucharistic Hymns of Charles Wesley. It embodies the substance of a dissertation in Applied Theology, for which the author was awarded the degree of Master of Theology by the University of Oxford. Yet it is no narrowly academic treatise. Its personal and pastoral roots are revealed in the dedication 'To Robert'. Robert, a brilliant grandson of the author, died suddenly in his first year at university. In his grandfather's words, Robert, 'was a person with a strong social conscience and some vague belief in God but no formal commitment to Christ'. Was he then beyond hope of salvation? Mr. Cooper believes not, thanks to the universal grace of God in Christ - Charles Wesley's 'For all...' - and to the continuing intercession of the Saviour, who, in his sacred humanity, ever lives to intercede for both the living and the departed.

The author explores to great effect the extraordinary richness of the Eucharistic Hymns, whose dominant theme is God's illimitable grace in Christ, referred to 88 times in the collection. 'Grace is inward, pardoning, utmost, double, hallowed, perfect, saving, rich, continuing, gospel, present,

redeeming, covenant, unfathomable, boundless, preserving, nourishing, atoning, imploring, divine, ransoming'. (p. 18) Intercession is seen essentially as co-operating with grace to produce a free response in those prayed for. The universalist emphasis of the book is clear; but it is no cheap or glib universalism that is being put forward. Rather, the author emphasises that he is arguing, 'that the intercession of the ascended Lord, his continuing passion in glory, his praying with strong crying and tears in which the Church is privileged to share, is God's costly way of bringing all to salvation.' (p.36)

Mr. Cooper admits that this thesis goes beyond Charles Wesley's hymns, which stress Christ's continuing intercession for *believers*, as for example in -

He ever lives and prays
 For all the faithful race;
 In the holiest place above
 Sinners' advocate he stands,
 Pleads for us his dying love,
 Shows for us his bleeding hands.

The author recognises biblical objections to his thesis; but it has also to be said that critics who take a much harder and narrower view need to weigh carefully the fact that, 'many died before Christ came and many have died and many will die without the opportunity to believe since he came'. (p. 35) I have myself heard such hard-liners dogmatically consign all such non-believers to the pit. That surely is to libel the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; to make him inferior to any loving human father. Jesus, on the contrary, teaches that our Heavenly Father is infinitely *more* loving than any human parent. 'If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!' (Matthew 7:11. NRSV). That is the optimism of grace which Mr. Cooper advocates, and which he finds so powerfully present in Charles Wesley.

JOHN A. NEWTON

Friends of Religious Equality. Nonconformist Politics in Mid-Victorian England by Timothy Larsen. (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1999. Pp 300 £40.00 ISBN 0 85115 726 2)

Nineteenth-century Nonconformity has had a bad press. Caricatured by contemporary novelists and patronised by Matthew Arnold, it has often been dismissed or misunderstood by historians quick to read the entire Victorian period in terms of the crusading mentality of the 'Nonconformist Conscience', epitomised by Hugh Price Hughes, that 'Day of Judgement in

breeches'. This carefully researched and well-written study by Timothy Larsen seeks to set the record straight, at least for the period 1847-67. Dr Larsen argues that the theological motivation underpinning Nonconformist political ideology and behaviour has been overlooked. Congregationalist ecclesiology, shared by the Independents and the Baptists, fuelled a voluntarist approach to religion which was capable of wide application. 'Religious equality,' he claims, 'was a grand political worldview, an overarching principle, which took the politics of Dissenters beyond merely defending their own special interests and into offering a larger vision of the work of the state and its relationship to its diverse subjects.' (pp. 256-7). This hypothesis is worked out in detail in discussion, among other topics, of Nonconformist grievances, disestablishment, the education issue, questions of moral reform (temperance and sabbatarianism) and pacifism. The conclusion overall is that Nonconformists in this period took their loyalty to the voluntary principle through to its logical conclusions: not only campaigning for the removal of their own historic disabilities, but also supporting the admission of Jews to Parliament; opposing the Maynooth grant as a form of state endowment, but standing aloof from intolerance and 'no popery' agitation; seeking to 'keep Sunday special' themselves, but refusing to endorse coercive sabbatarian legislation. Even the volte-face over state education in the late 1860s may be accommodated when it is recognised that national schooling on a secular basis need not infringe religious equality. A thorough interaction with contemporary sources and with modern historiography informs the investigation of each issue.

Centre stage throughout the study is occupied by the representatives of Old Dissent: Baptists, Congregationalists, Friends, and occasionally Unitarians. Wesleyan Methodism, 'this large, anomalous body' (p. 141), generally appears as the contrast, properly recognised by contemporaries if not by all historians as distinctive in origins and principles, and therefore equally distinctive in political attitudes and practices. Other Methodist groups, especially the UMFC, are often found ranged with the Dissenters. A suggestive comment in the conclusion may be worth further exploration: how much turned on differences of ecclesiology? Dr Larsen notes that a premium on congregationalist ecclesiology promoted the Dissenting world-view, whereas the Wesleyans emphasised soteriology and were more pragmatic in matters of church polity. Is this true of the Reform era, when Conference authority and connexional principles were at the centre of debate? Although it is beyond the scope of the present study, it would be good to see this taken further.

Dr Larsen has written an insightful study of mid-Victorian Nonconformity, for which students of the period will be most grateful. The Boydell Press is also to be congratulated on a well-produced contribution to its series of Studies in Modern British Religious History.

Wesley in Scotland. The Journeys of the Rev. John Wesley A.M. Illustrated with Maps by George W. Davis (1999, pp 49, £3 incl p/p from Author, 6, Gowan Park, Arbroath, Angus, DDII 2BN, ISBN: 0 952892 2 7)

For at least 120 years Methodist historians have plundered the *Journal* to describe John Wesley's visits to a town (e.g. Taunton, 1988), a county (e.g. Cornwall, 1879) or a country (e.g. Wales, 1971). Now it is Scotland's turn and this booklet, with text and maps apparently produced by the author on his computer, shows that technology can be the servant of history. For each of Wesley's 22 visits Mr Davis gives us a route map and the text from Curnock's edition. The editing is susceptible of improvement but this publication is a useful contribution from a fellow Engineer.

ROGER THORNE

Ploughboy's Progress: the Life of Sir George Edwards by Noel G. Edwards. (Centre of East Anglia Studies, University of East Anglia, 1998. pp. 156. £10.00 ISBN 0 906219 46 9)

Born in 1850 into the poverty of a Norfolk agricultural family, where unemployment, near starvation and the workhouse were never far away, at five George Edwards began work by scaring away crows. A conversion experience in 1869 brought him into Primitive Methodism. His call to preach and his wife teaching him to read and write followed marriage in 1872. Social unrest led him into agricultural trade unionism and Liberal politics, until in 1918 he joined the Labour Party, subsequently serving twice as the Member for South Norfolk. Written by his adopted son, himself a Christian Socialist, pacifist and local preacher for over sixty years, this is an excellent account which serves to remind those of us sat in comfortable pews of what some of our Methodist forebears suffered in their desire for social justice for the gospel's sake. This updates Edwards' extremely scarce and moving autobiography *From Crow Scaring to Westminster*, (1922) until his death in 1933. Alun Howkins, who has edited this account, is to be congratulated on achieving its publication.

D. COLIN DEWS

Forward with the Past by William Leary, 1996, pp 46 illus. Copies from the author, 7 Balder Court, Scatho Park, Grimsby, DN33 3RD, £2.50.

This publication covers for the first time the area of the Grimsby and Cleethorpes Methodist Circuit. William Leary is to be congratulated on his painstaking research, which includes a detailed appendix of dates of chapel openings, both Wesleyan, Primitive Methodist, United Methodist

and Post Union. The story begins with William Blow and others walking from Grimsby to Epworth in 1742 to hear John Wesley preach. They were so inspired that the following February they invited John Wesley to visit Grimsby. He could not go but sent John Nelson and the result was the founding of a Methodist Society. We are taken on an exciting journey, which shows how the various branches of Methodism missioned and still mission the area. This is a very readable and well-informed publication, which will be of interest to a wider readership.

D. H. RYAN

NOTES AND QUERIES

1533 A PRAYER OF J. H. MOULTON

Recently looking up the date of J. H. Moulton's Greek Grammar I happened to turn to the end of the Preface and in my second-hand copy the previous owner had pasted in the following (handwritten) note:

The last recorded prayer of Rev James Hope Moulton, MA, DLitt, DD, written before delivering a lecture at Bangalore College, S. India, Feb 21. 1917.

Lord, at Thy Word, opens your door inviting
 Teacher and taught to feast this hour with Thee:
 Opens a Book, where God, in human writing
 Thinks His Deep Thoughts, & dead tongues live for me.

Too dread the task, too great the duty calling,
 Too heavy far this weight is laid on me!
 Oh! if mine own thought should, on Thy words falling,
 Mar the Great Message, & men hear not Thee

Give me Thy voice to speak, Thine ear to listen,
 Give me Thy mind to grasp Thy Mystery,
 So shall my heart throb, & my glad eyes glisten,
 Rap with the wonders Thou dost shew to me.

I have no idea where it comes from, or whether it has ever been published. There is no name in the book and the note is unsigned. Does it come from a published source?

C. S. RODD

1534 CAMP MEETINGS AT SYDE, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

I write apropos the reference to 'Camp meetings today' *Proceedings* 52 Part 1 February 1999. The assertion that camp meetings 'are also still held near Cirencester' (p. 14) is incorrect.

Briefly, camp meetings were held between 1947 and 1965 in a barn at Syde, Glos. by courtesy of the owners Joseph and David Whitaker. Much of the farm there is still owned and farmed by members of the Whitaker family.

During the years above a number of Methodist celebrities addressed meetings. Two particular occasions were notable: one in 1949 when the speaker was the Rev. Dr. W. E. Sangster and the other in 1959 when Pastor Martin Niemöller preached, and at each of these events the audience exceeded six hundred people. I attended some of the meetings after 1960. I have checked the record with my friend Mr Malcolm Whitaker of Holcombe Farm, Syde.

PETER W. GREETHAM

1535 WINDERMERE METHODIST CHURCH BELL RINGS AGAIN

The Windermere church bell which had to be dismantled during the Second World War, has been rung again for the first time in over fifty years. It was decided to replace the bell after repairs to the roof and bell-cote were needed for the church which is now more than 130 years old. Over the past 25 years the bell-cote had been leaning more and more and looked as though it might collapse on to the roof. The old bell, largely forgotten by most, was discovered in the church's cellar, but in a terrible state. Assistant Property Steward Derek Pratt was given the challenge of trying to renew it. He was amazed at the help which was forthcoming. Local blacksmith Tommy Bland refashioned the pivots. The local Yacht Club provided a suitable rope. The bell was re-dedicated in time for Christmas (1998) and now is rung every Sunday before morning service and on other special occasions.

NORMAN PICKERING

Clerihew Corner

Everett, Griffith and Dunn
 Strove for a place in the sun.
 But that petulant trio
 Had nothing but brio.

ANC

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