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Proceedings OF THE Wesley Historical Society

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THE CONTEXT AND CONTENT OF MID-VICTORIAN WESLEYAN ECCLESIOLOGY.

THE two decades from mid-1860s to the mid-1880s marked the last flowering of distinctively Wesleyan ecclesiological thought. Prior to these years, the Connexion was involved in the series of acute crises culminating in the Disruption of 1849-51 and the loss of many members in the immediate aftermath of that Disruption. By the 1860s, the Wesleyan Connexion was resuming slow, but unspectacular growth. In the judgement of many of its leaders, it was now at ease with itself in a manner that had eluded it in the three decades prior to the Disruption¹. Over the three following decades, the Connexion made a series of judicious adjustments to the spirit of age without sacrificing its essential nature². After the mid-1880s it began to lose some of its distinctive ethos and even more of its distinctive understanding of ecclesiology and the ministry as it entered into ever closer cooperation with the other Free Churches and began to talk increasingly of the possibility of Methodist reunion. The distinctive Wesleyan emphases in ecclesiology and understanding of the ministry were not entirely lost in the subsequent decades, but they became attenuated. The diverse ecclesiologies embraced by such people as George Findlay, Hugh Price Hughes and John Scott Lidgett all represented considerable breaches with the classical Wesleyan tradition represented particularly by James Rigg and Benjamin Gregory³.

1. For the contemporary Wesleyan sense of progress in this period see the anonymous, *Methodism in 1879*, (1879) (hereafter cited as *M79*), pp 2, 4, 9.
2. Rigg, J. *Connexional Economy of Wesleyan Methodism*, (hereafter *ConnE.*) 2nd edition, (1878) assesses the balance between lay and ministerial elements in the governance of the Connexion at the time. See esp, ch 7, pp 103-22.
3. For Rigg, see especially *ConnE* and his *Principles of Church Organisation*, (1887), 3rd edn 1897 (hereafter '*Principles*'). For Gregory, his *Holy Catholic Church*, London, 1873. (hereafter '*HCC*') and his *Handbook of Scriptural Church Principles*. (hereafter *Handbook*). For the later writers see Findlay, G, *The Church in the New Testament*, (1893), Lidgett, J.S. *God, Christ and the Church*, (1927), and Hughes, D, *Life of Hugh Price Hughes*, (1904) pp 435-480 'The Catholic idea of Church.'

Wesleyan Methodism during the period under consideration, retained the essential ethos that had characterised it before 1850, while modifying its structure in a manner considered both by leading ministers and laypeople to conciliate legitimate lay demands for a greater say in the affairs of the Connexion. At the same time, the essential authority of the 'Pastoral Office' was preserved. In doing these things the Connexion was believed to have achieved a balance that was in accordance with apostolic precedent, a balance which, however, had eluded other churches, including other branches of Methodism. The admission of laymen to Conference in 1878 was seen as setting the seal on this unique and maturing balance. Laypeople now had authority to debate and influence financial and some other decisions at the highest level. There was, however, still to be a 'pastoral session' of the Conference, dealing with vital matters of ministerial discipline and stationing that were deemed to be part of the inalienable prerogative and responsibility of the separated ministry. It was believed the Wesleyan Methodism of the seventies and eighties of the last century had squared the circle of rightful ministerial authority and proper and full lay participation in the governance of the Church. Wesleyan Methodism prided itself on the fact that it involved its laity in more activity, both spiritual and administrative, than any other church, including those that prided themselves on being more 'democratic'⁴. At the same time it had a ministry that was neither, on the one hand, prelatical and hierarchical, nor yet, as in most Free Churches and even in some of the non-Wesleyan Methodist bodies, the mere hired servant of the people⁵.

Wesleyan Methodism thus retained and cherished the somewhat cosy ethos of an ecclesial 'peculiar' institution, while vigorously asserting its 'catholic' spirit in line with the call of the Liverpool Conference of 1820 to the Methodist people to 'ever maintain the catholic spirit of primitive Methodism' and to 'be the friends of all and the enemies of none'⁶. The Wesleyan establishment believed that, in both respects, it was being strictly loyal to its heritage. It believed that contemporary Wesleyan Methodism had attained new heights of maturity, influence and prestige. Thus, the author of the anonymous, *Methodism in 1879*, could make the following self-confident assertion:

We may ask what is the position of the Methodist body in 1879 as regards the other churches. Does it not occupy a similar position to

4. *ConnE*, p 132-3.

5. *ibid*, especially, pp 120-2 for Rigg's summary of the situation in 1878. For Rigg's attacks on the minister in independency as 'the mere hired servant' see *ibid*, ch 2, pp 24ff. For Gregory's nuanced view of the role of the minister, see *HCC*, p 103.

6. Cited in Simon, J.S. *Summary of Methodist Law and Discipline*, 1923, pp 268-9.

that which England does among the nations of the earth? The statement, 'the friends of all and the enemies of none'... was never truer today. The Wesleyan denomination is everywhere held in respect, in many quarters in the highest respect⁷.

This rather pompous statement had a limited degree of legitimacy. By dint of the combined ministerial and lay evangelistic energy on which it prided itself, Wesleyan Methodism had succeeded in becoming more geographically widespread in England than any other denomination with the sole exception of the Establishment. It had its admirers amongst some of the evangelical and broad church clergy as well as amongst such dissenters as R.W. Dale⁸. However, it was also painfully and humiliatingly aware of the attitude taken to it by the Tractarians and of the offers made by such people as the Bishop Wordsworth of Lincoln, in 1873, to re-absorb Wesleyan Methodism into the Church of England on very unequal terms⁹. If Wesleyan Methodism clung to its profession of the 'catholic spirit' it did so in a rather isolationist way. Leading Wesleyans admired the evangelistic spirit of the Primitive Methodists, but had no desire to unite with a church that entertained such a different view of ministerial authority. Individual dissenting leaders, such as Dale and Spurgeon, were greatly admired for their own qualities, but their church systems were regarded as deficient in evangelical potential, to say nothing of being mistaken in their independent ecclesiology¹⁰. Anglicanism was hopelessly compromised by the inroads of Romanism and infidelity: in other words by unacceptable levels of high and broad churchmanship. Above all, it lacked the capacity for self-reform. When, in 1887, James Rigg wrote his *Principles of Church Organisation*, the last significant ecclesiological work of this era, he found all other Protestant systems, continental as well British, wanting in comparison with Wesleyan Methodism¹¹.

On the other hand, Wesleyan Methodism refused to condemn, *per se*, either the principle of establishment or of episcopal government. However critical they became of the Anglican Church in practice, the Wesleyans refused to condemn episcopacy as necessarily unbiblical or unacceptable¹². They refused to become involved in agitation against the principle of establishment, believing that the appropriateness of

7. M79, p 4.

8. See Dale's visit to the 1879 Conference and his speech, *Methodist Recorder*, 1-8-79.

9. Turner, J.M. *Conflict and Reconciliation*, (1985), p 178.

10. Rigg being the especially severe critic, see esp. *ConnE*, *Principles* pp 170-203.

11. *Principles* passim. Rigg attempts, in most cases, to balance his negative remarks with some affirmation of the church under discussion, but one is left with the distinct impression that none can quite compare with Wesleyan Methodism.

12. Rigg is very critical of Anglican provision for fellowship, but he holds back from any blanket condemnation of episcopacy. *Principles* p 93.

establishment for any one particular church anywhere had to be judged in terms of the evangelistic opportunities it afforded set against any evils that might accrue from state interference and control¹³. The Wesleys also steadfastly refused to follow the Tractarian example in unchurching those of whose ecclesial systems they happened to disapprove. Hypercritical they might be of others, and, in respect of the Independents, perhaps sometimes unfairly so, but they never denied the title of church to any community that confessed the deity of Christ, the efficacy of his atoning death and belief in the Trinity. Benjamin Gregory denounced the exclusivist ecclesiology of the Tractarians precisely as 'uncatholic'¹⁴. This generosity of spirit, however, left loose ends in Wesleyan ecclesiological thought. Did they believe that 'connexionalism' was, to use an Anglican phrase, of the *bene esse* of the Church? Much that they wrote certainly implied this, though Rigg, the doughtiest defender of connexionalism, also accepted that, in certain circumstances, other forms of polity might be more appropriate. He did not, however, give any examples. Perhaps he never made up his mind on the matter¹⁵.

By the mid-1880s, Wesleyan Methodism was beginning to emerge from its relative isolation. The first signs developed of a real desire for Methodist reunion, initially stronger among the non-Wesleyan churches than in the parent body, but certainly gaining approbation from some Wesleyan leaders, particularly those of a rising generation, such as Hugh Price Hughes, while meeting with scepticism as to both their practicality and desirability from such veterans as Rigg¹⁶. Younger leaders like Hugh Price Hughes and John Scott Lidgett also responded favourably to the movement for closer Free Church cooperation¹⁷. By the nineties, a few advanced souls, like Hughes and Henry Lunn, were even exploring the possibility of ultimate reunion with the Church of England, something that had been almost universally ruled out by the Wesleyan leaders of the sixties and seventies¹⁸. Recognition of the need for initiatives in mission in inner city areas had led to the creation of the central halls and a keen struggle for modification in the rules of itineracy for ministers¹⁹. With these developments came the gradual attenuation, to the point of partial eclipse in the earlier years of the twentieth century, of the

¹³ M79, pp 89-114. There is a clear desire to avoid any political activity that might interfere with the evangelistic priority of Methodism.

¹⁴ HCC, p 7.

¹⁵ ConnE, p 23

¹⁶ Principles pp 324-42.

¹⁷ Hughes, D, op cit, pp 435-80. Turner, op cit, p 181.

¹⁸ Turner, op cit, p 181. For Rigg's attitudes in the sixties and seventies as typical of most Wesleyan opinion on relationships with the Church of England at the time, see Telford, J. H Rigg (1909), esp. pp 220-271.

¹⁹ The question was frequently discussed in the early 1890s. See eg. WM Mag, 1892, pp 19ff (Rigg's observations) and 442 (Gregory's).

classical ecclesiology that is the subject of this paper. The ecclesiology was, however, never formally renounced, and, more recently, there has been a revival of interest in the themes of connexionalism and accountability in the context of ecumenical ecclesiological debate and the more general renewal of Methodism²⁰.

The leading ecclesiologists of mid-Victorian Wesleyanism were James Rigg (1821-1909) and Benjamin Gregory (1820-1900). They worked creatively on the earlier Wesleyan traditions of theology and practice, bringing them perhaps to the fullest point of development then possible and throwing out interesting theologoumena that are still of interest today. The differing approaches of Rigg and Gregory harmonised and contrasted with each other. Both men were leading members of the contemporary Wesleyan ministerial élite. They succeeded each other as Presidents of Conference, Rigg occupying the chair in 1878 and Gregory in 1879. Rigg was the more accomplished ecclesiastical statesman, preoccupied with defending the Wesleyan system against its critics, most especially those Independents who had assailed Methodism so bitterly during the Reform crisis of 1849-51²¹. Gregory, who spent much of his ministry as Connexional Editor, from 1868 to 1893, was the more creative theologian, producing the one great work of Wesleyan systematic ecclesiology in 1873. He also subsequently wrote a specifically apologetic work, *Handbook of Scriptural Church Principles*, (1888), which contained an ecclesiologically-interpreted history of Methodism as it had evolved from 1739 till 1878. It is difficult to trace all the sources of Gregory's ecclesiological thought since his *Holy Catholic Church* is very sparsely referenced, but, despite the lack of specific mention of Methodism in the main text, it is not difficult to identify the essentially Wesleyan inspiration of much that he says²².

Gregory devoted far more attention to general ecclesiological issues. Whereas Rigg's overall doctrine of the Church is largely implicit and has, in the main, to be inferred from his largely polemical or apologetic writings, Gregory had an explicitly highly developed doctrine of the Church, using metaphors and images not frequently found on the lips of Wesleyans in this period. He talks of the Church as 'the continuator of Christ's work' and 'the organ of his highest action upon the world, and that, not only by authorization, but, still more, by derivation of life from

²⁰ See, for example, the seminal articles by Brian Beck in *Epworth Review*, May/Sep 1991, also Robbins, B. and Carter, D. 'Connexionalism and Koinonia', 'One in Christ', 1998, pp 320-336. A strong interest in connexionalism is also apparent in the collection of essays by younger contemporary Methodist theologians, *Methodism and the Future*, edited by Jane Craske and Clive Marsh, (1999).

²¹ For Rigg, see the standard biography by Telford, J. *James Harrison Rigg*, (1909), and my short WMHS booklet, *James H Rigg*, (1994)

²² For Gregory, see his own, *Autobiographical Recollections* (edited with a later chapter on his father's later life by his son), (1903). There is no modern biography of Gregory.

Him, and by the fact that His Spirit is its animating principle'. He talks of the Church, the Bride of Christ, as being, 'to Christ, the realisation and perfection of His own full ideal of Spiritual beauty and perfection. The church is His fullness of restful, blissful, consummate satisfaction in loving and in being loved again'. His headship of the Church is 'no mere honorary headship, but a real communication... of his own nature'²³. It is not always easy to tease out the exact significance of Gregory's statements, encased as they are in rather flowery language, but in 1920 a Jesuit expressed strong appreciation of his ecclesiology which, in some respects was closer to that of the 'catholic' tradition than that of almost any other contemporary Protestant theologian. More protestant was Gregory's insistence that Christ was also the head of each believer. Also Protestant was his emphasis on the Church as being an aggregate of believers as well as a corporate body; relationship with Christ necessarily implied the duty of ecclesial belonging but did not arise solely through the prior act of adhesion to the Church. Gregory combined some clearly Protestant emphases with an organic concept of the Church not normally stressed in Victorian Protestantism²⁴.

Rigg and Gregory were the ecclesiologists who most faithfully echoed the church consciousness of Wesleyan Methodism in this period. Alfred Barrett's *Ministry and Polity of the Christian Church* (1854), from which, in particular, much of their work was a development, continued to be an influential work. W.B. Pope had an ecclesiological section of about a hundred pages in his great *Compendium*, but it dealt with abstract issues in general ecclesiology and did not reflect the ethos of his time in the Wesleyan Connexion to the extent that Rigg and Gregory did. W.F. Slater in his Fernley lecture, *Methodism and the Apostolic Church*, of 1885, consciously complemented Gregory's work²⁵.

The context within which Rigg, Gregory and Slater worked, was that of a Wesleyan Methodism smug, almost to the point of triumphalism, and yet also anxious about its future. Perhaps both phenomena are explained by the nature of the Connexion and its internal development, aspects of which certainly filled Rigg with foreboding. The Connexion

²³. HCC. p 21.

²⁴. HCC, pp 21, 24.

²⁵. Pope, W. B. *Compendium of Christian Theology*, 3 vols (1880) vol 3, pp 259-364 for his ecclesiology.

²⁶. Conference ruled in 1891 that Wesleyan Methodists should henceforth refer to their denomination as a church rather than as a connexion. Oldstone-Moore, C. *Hugh Price Hughes*, Cardiff, (1999), p 226. Hughes was anxious to make a point about the national responsibility of Wesleyan Methodism, but the fact that he applauded a move that seemed to see the terms 'church' and 'connexion' as contrasting rather than complementarily describing the same ecclesial phenomenon, as Gregory had asserted, is a sign of the changing ecclesiological ethos within contemporary Wesleyan Methodism.

still officially denominated itself a series of societies and the term 'church' was not officially applied to it until 1891²⁶. It retained much of the atmosphere of a close-knit society, especially among its ministers and lay leaders. Modern historians have made rather heavy weather of the 'society-church' question and the point at which it might be said that Wesleyan Methodism cease to be a 'society' and could be called a 'church'. Both Rigg and Gregory would have found this argument artificial and meaningless. Gregory in particular, insisted that Wesleyan Methodism was both because the Church, when being most fully true to its nature, was bound also to be a society. Both pointed to the very early development of a form of authentic church consciousness within the early societies, long predating the formal breach with Anglicanism. Rigg talked of Methodism being as much a revival of primitive fellowship as of doctrine²⁷. Gregory quoted Wesley as saying in 1748, 'we establish true church fellowship where it was previously non-existent'²⁸. Nethertheless, both theologians did help to articulate a clearer ecclesial consciousness amongst Methodists.

Wesleyan Methodism was the most tightly disciplined, cohesive body within Victorian church life. Only the contemporary Roman Catholic Church could rival it in terms of doctrinal homogeneity, and no body could rival it in terms of *esprit de corps*. The writer of *Methodism in 1879* argued that, on account of the connexional system and the itinerancy, no church could match it in breadth of vision and sympathy. The constant movement of ministers and the intimate fellowship of the circuits, and, to a lesser extent the districts, meant that ministers were likely to know a wide range of people in the Connexion, and also that laypeople were likely to know a wider range of ministers than was the case in any other denomination²⁹. Every Methodist was also, *ipso facto*, a member of the Missionary Society. A concern for the state of the Universal Church beyond one's immediate parish or congregation was alleged to be one of the most laudable characteristics of Methodism. Quite apart from all this, it was also held to be the church best adapted to evangelism all over the world³⁰.

The sense of catholic friendliness towards all other churches was complemented by a sense of the very real superiority in practice of Methodism. This sense arose mainly out of contemplation of the rapid advances of Methodism over the previous century, abroad as much as in Britain, but it was also partly reactive. Rigg was deeply offended by Independent attacks on Wesleyan ecclesiology and practice at the time of the Disruption. He wrote the first edition of his *Connexional Economy* in

²⁷. *Handbook*, pt 1, p 256, Rigg, *Principles* p 207.

²⁸. *Handbook*, pt 2, p 17.

²⁹. M79, p 137.

³⁰. M79, p 139.

1852, contrasting the excellences of Wesleyan organisation with the *lacunae* of Independency. It is significant that, in 1878, the Conference Office encouraged him to reprint it with only minor amendments³¹. In the interim Rigg concentrated his ecclesiological fire rather more on the Church of England, attacking 'Romanising error' and the broad churchmen, stressing the lack of any disciplinary system in the Church of England that could cope with such evils, and repudiating Anglican assertions that, in separating from the Church of England, Wesleyans had been disloyal to Wesley's wishes³². Deeply impressed by the enormous growth of the American Methodist Episcopal Church, Rigg held that it was just as likely that Methodism might 'absorb' Anglicanism as vice versa³³.

Despite such triumphalism, unease lay close to the surface. However strong the discipline of Methodism, Wesleyan leaders knew that they could not insulate themselves from the rapidly changing environment of their period. They were uneasy about the growth of broad church thinking which threatened to undermine the evangelical experimentalism that lay at the heart of the Methodism they knew and loved. Rigg discerned elements of broad church laxity creeping into the other Methodist connexions, a fact that reinforced his coolness towards Methodism reunion³⁴. The Wesleyan establishment was keenly sensitive to any heresy in its own camp, however mild and cautious³⁵. Wider issues of secularisation caused concern. The placidity of the Connexion could not compensate for the fact that it was growing much more slowly than in the first half of the century. The writer of *Methodism in 1879* and Rigg were both concerned about the growth of worldliness among middle class congregations, such congregations being the key growth point of contemporary Wesleyan Methodism³⁶. A blip in the membership figures, a 0.5% decline over the years 1878-80, particularly focused these concerns.

Another serious cause for concern was the question of the status and future of the class meeting. It was clear the class meeting had lost much of its former popularity. Many were no longer meeting faithfully in class as discipline still required. Others were being inhibited from seeking formal membership because they did not want to submit to the discipline of meeting in class. The Wesleyan leadership was extremely

³¹ *ConnE*, pp 2-3.

³² Rigg, J. *The Churchmanship of John Wesley*, (1868)

³³ *ibid*, p 2-9.

³⁴ Rigg, *Principles*, p 326ff

³⁵ cf my own article on 'Joseph Agar Beet and the eschatological crisis of 1902', *Proceedings*, 1998, pp 197-216. Wesleyans were rather self-congratulatory about their doctrinal orthodoxy and cohesiveness. See eg. M79, p 65 'more steady in doctrine than any other church in the country'

³⁶ M79, p 150.

reluctant to abandon this discipline, one of the hallmarks of traditional Methodism. Many leading ministers wrote treatises on the importance of class meeting³⁷, including advice on how classes might be led more effectively. Wesleyans were nettled by the repeated claims of others, especially Congregationalists, that the discipline of meeting in class was an 'unscriptural' requirement for church membership. However, in 1889, Conference did concede that ministers should not expel those who failed to meet in class³⁸. This was a defining moment in the evolution of Wesleyan Methodism. A situation in profound disaccord with classical Wesleyan ecclesial theory and practice was accepted. It removed a feature that had so strongly differentiated Methodism from the other Free Churches and heralded the era of close Methodist cooperation with those churches on the basis of a rather reductionist ecclesiology and, arguably, a lower common denominator of Free Church practice. This era was to last from the nineties to the fifties of the next century.

It is worth exploring the importance of the class meeting in the ecclesiology and ecclesial consciousness of this period. Rigg called the class meeting 'the germ cell' of the entire system³⁹. Gregory appended to his *Holy Catholic Church* a long appendix on recurrent approximations to the class meeting in earlier periods of Church history⁴⁰. These, he alleged, showed the inherent instinctive need felt by Christians for some such system of close fellowship, for which Methodism alone had subsequently made proper provision. Both Rigg and Gregory held that the class meeting was essential to the maintenance of vital evangelical religion. Without it, Protestant churches would fall into a cold formalism, whether of a hyper-Calvinist or a liberalising form⁴¹. Part of the temptation of Popery was that, in the confessional, it could meet, illegitimately, a need for spiritual direction and oversight for which Methodism, alone, provided legitimate facilities through the class meeting⁴². Rigg also argued that the class meeting was the nursery of all Methodist leadership. Within it, members not merely grew in faith and maturity, but also in ability to speak and to lead in prayer. Here the future Local Preachers and ministers were discerned. The end of the class meeting would be the end of Methodism, at least as hitherto known⁴³.

37. Including Rigg himself. 'The Methodist Class Meeting' (1865), reprinted as appendix to 'Connexional Economy', p 170ff

38. For an account on these discussions at this Conference on the subject of the 'Class meeting' see *WM Mag* 1889 pp 710ff

39. Rigg, *Class meeting*, op cit.

40. *HCC*, pp 217-245.

41. Rigg, *Principles* pp 16-17.

42. *ConnE*, pp 208-220.

43. Rigg, *ConnE* p 170ff, *Class Meeting*, op cit.

Rigg added, triumphalistically, that Methodism made more extensive use of its laity than any other church, contrasting it favourably, in this respect, with both Anglicanism and Independency⁴⁴. The class meeting was also a disciplinary organ. A concern for disciplined nurture in the faith was at the heart of Methodism and also accounted for the the great emphasis laid on the Pastoral Office. Ministers held the final responsibility for the oversight of the class leaders and, indeed, of the whole interlocking structure of Methodism. The concern of Rigg and other mid-Victorian Wesleyans was, however, not purely negative. Anxious as they were to exclude error, they were even more concerned with the value of their system in replicating and enhancing that 'being of one heart and mind' that they saw as being at the heart of apostolic Christianity⁴⁵. It is here that we can see them refining their ecclesiology in dialogue or in conflict with the tendencies of their age.

Rigg believed that the maintenance of apostolic doctrine depended on apostolic fellowship. Methodism was characterised by experimental evangelicalism, in contrast alike to the Calvinism, sacramentalism or rationalising broad churchmanship prevalent elsewhere. Experimental religion depended on the laboratory (the expression is mine not Rigg's), as it were, of the class meeting, and, less immediately, on the wider structures that sustained it. Rigg feared, and some today might regard his fears as justified, that a Methodism that lacked the class meeting might soon degenerate into a 'speculative latitudinarianism'⁴⁶. In Rigg's remarks on this theme we can see the admixture of triumphalism and fear to which I have alluded. He argued that Methodism had largely won the battle against Calvinism; the latter was retreating everywhere, even in Scotland. He admitted that the battle against sacramentalism was harder, but he did not doubt it would be won in the long term. At the same time he feared the loss of traditional Methodist ethos, and, significantly, added a chapter entitled 'Decrease, its causes and remedy', to the 1878 edition of the *Connexional Economy*⁴⁷.

Methodism cannot be understood without recognition of the link it made between experimental evangelicalism and its structures. Both also involved an eschatologically focused understanding of the Church and its structures which comes out particularly clearly in Gregory. He argued that no strict definition of the Church was given in Scripture. Nevertheless, 'a clear and complete ideal is set forth, and the organisation is best which tends most strongly and most securely to the realisation of that ideal', which is then defined in terms of the Church attaining to the full development of its powers as sign and instrument of

44. *ConnE*, pp 55-61.

45. cf Rigg's Presidential sermon of 1.12.78 as printed in *WM Mag*, 1878, pp 798ff.

46. *Principles* pp 208-220.

47. *ConnE*, pp 191-208.

the Kingdom of God, a point Gregory was to develop further in a key sermon in his presidential year⁴⁸.

Whilst others contended for their ecclesial systems and insights on the basis of Scripture, or Scripture and Tradition, as setting norms that must be received from antiquity, the Wesleyans appealed to living experience, not as a source detached from Scripture but as confirmatory of it, and, in the case of Gregory, as pointing towards that eschatological destiny of the Church which he perceived in Scripture. This understanding of the role of experience was regularly sung by the ordinary faithful as well as receiving the reflection and teaching of their pastors and theologians. The *Large Hymn Book* of 1780 remained the core of the Wesleyan Hymn Book throughout the century with its numerous hymns extolling the proof of divine love in the lives of the faithful. Many of Charles Wesley's hymns, particularly those written for the 'society meeting and parting', also touch on the eschatological destiny of the Church and on the present experience of the Church in fellowship as anticipatory of the life of the age to come. Perhaps surprisingly, in view of the great predilection of Methodists for quoting hymns, the mid-Victorian ecclesialogists quote them rarely, but one cannot but feel that the sentiments encapsulated in Wesley's hymnody must have been present in their minds as they wrote. A hymn such as 'All praise to our redeeming Lord', a perennial favourite in Methodism to the present day, sums up much of their vision with its extolling of the present communion of the faithful and its exultation in the Wesleyan emphasis on 'a fully present and experienced salvation'⁴⁹.

Closely linked to this emphasis on experience was a parallel emphasis on the adaptability of Methodism, which was also seen by Gregory as a principle of wider applicability in the life of the Universal Church. Rigg argued that Methodism was the church most fully equipped to meet the demands of evangelisation, in the main because it was the church most able to use its laity most fully in that work⁵⁰. He also stressed that the increasing association of the laity in the responsible direction of the church was a necessary adaptation in an era when the laity were better educated than ever before and, therefore, more capable of such responsibility⁵¹. Gregory went even further in his insistence that 'a church is not so much at liberty as it is under an obligation to adjust its organisation to its environment and the changing exigencies of its work and warfare'⁵². He also recognised that the 'ideal of the Church was not

⁴⁸ HCC, p 17. Sermon, 'The Gathering Together of all things in Christ' in Gregory, B, *Sermons and Pastoral Addresses*, (1881), pp 85-109.

⁴⁹ *Hymns and Psalms*, no 753. Hymn 500 in the classic 1780 selection as reprinted up to 1877.

⁵⁰ *ConnE*, pp 36-54.

⁵¹ *ibid*, pp 115-122.

⁵² *Handbook*, pt 1, p 90.

fully recognised in apostolic times, but it is to be realised before the completion of the Church's history. All the church arrangements made by the apostle were made with direct reference to the ultimate attainment of this perfection'. It is from this standpoint of churches' approximation to the ideal of being able to 'present every man perfect (Col 1 v 28) and 'coming to the attainment of the full stature of Christ', (Eph 4 v 13) that we must understand both the Wesleyans' ecclesiological self-evaluation and their evaluation of others⁵³. Taking this perspective, they did not make a rigid distinction between churches and non-churches, as did those Tractarians that accepted the 'branch theory' of the Church, identifying the three branches as Roman, Orthodox and Anglican, and thereby unchurching everyone else. Rather, they saw all Christian communities that confessed the lordship of Christ (the Unitarians alone being unchurched on account of their defective christology) as being, at least potentially, *in via* towards a more rounded ecclesiality. Some they saw as being in an arrested state of development. Such was the case with Independency, in so far as it lacked both the discipline and strengthening of a connexional system. Both Independency and Anglicanism were defective in the sense that they both relied far too much on the exclusive spiritual leadership of the incumbent or minister instead of stimulating the dormant gifts of local lay leaders⁵⁴. Implicitly, Rigg and Gregory claimed for Wesleyan Methodism the front place in the race towards ecclesial perfection without being blind either to its present inadequacies or to the very real possibility of future development. Gregory, in particular, did not ignore the possibility that, despite the general excellence of Wesleyan Connexionalism, other churches might stress certain attributes of a rounded ecclesiality more fully. Thus, he could say, 'if we find in the Church an institution of real historical continuity, let us not say, "This is Popery"'. If we find in it an eager inclusiveness... let us not say Latitudinarianism'. He did not overlook the fact that Methodists should learn from others⁵⁵.

Closely related to the emphasis on experience and adaption were the Wesleyan use and interpretation of Scripture in ecclesiological matters. In view of their rejection of the concept that Scripture laid down any eternally obligatory pattern of church government, it is not surprising that the Wesleyans repudiated any biblical fundamentalism in such matters and any biblical 'restorationism' such as was then espoused by the Plymouth Brethren⁵⁶. The Wesleyans argued that outline principles rather than detailed precepts were laid down in Scripture. In particular

⁵³. HCC, p 17.

⁵⁴. cf Rigg, *ConnE*, pp 54-60

⁵⁵. HCC, p 4-5.

⁵⁶. It is interesting to note this point being made by Agar Beet, a little later, Beet, J.A. *Church and Sacraments*, (1907) p 68.

they repudiated the idea that either historic, diocesan episcopacy or congregational independency had any mandatory biblical foundation. They did, however claim that interdependent connexionalism accorded best with the general tenor of church life as presented by the New Testament writers. They accepted that connexionalism, in the full form later practised in Methodism had not then existed, and, indeed could not have existed in its later shape in the conditions obtaining in the ancient world. They did not claim that the contemporary form of connexionalism was in any sense perfect or irrefractable. They argued, however, that the behaviour of the apostles, the constant communication between the churches and the holding of the Council recorded in Acts 15, all implied that the New Testament church was imbued with a thoroughly connexional spirit which encouraged, to quote Gregory, 'the finest circulation through every part of the system'⁵⁷.

Additionally they placed high emphasis on the authority of the apostles and argued, particularly in contradistinction to Independents, that it was a biblical principle that 'the ministry appointed their successors in the ministry'⁵⁸. This might seem half-way to Tractarianism, a point which they would have repudiated. In two vital matters, they differed from the latter in their doctrine of the ministry. Like the Tractarians, they accepted that it was of divine appointment in the Church. Unlike them, they denied that ministerial commission had to be transmitted by tactile succession of a special order of bishops. They also denied any exclusive doctrine of sacramental grace that might make the ministry a necessary intermediary between the soul and God. Their doctrine was one of apostolic recognition rather than succession. This doctrine of apostolic recognition is the key to understanding the distinctive flavour of Gregory's ecclesiology, and, in particular, his generous attitude to Christian communities that were, in so many ways, radically different from Methodism.

Gregory comments on the account, in Acts 8, of the founding of churches, by initiative independent of the apostles, in Judea and Samaria, and of the subsequent reaction of the apostles to this development. He regarded the initiative as a 'signal instance of the spontaneousness of the Early Church' and went on to remark that 'whenever, wheresoever and by whomsoever, the Spirit prompted church action, and gave it the imprimatur of spiritual success, they (ie the apostles) at once, recognised, revered and rejoiced in his work'. However, he then added, 'what the apostles did with the result of spontaneous evangelistic action was to lose no time in recognising it and

⁵⁷ eg. *HCC*, p 54, cf also Rigg, 'Principles' pp 3-23. 'ConnE' pp 3-24.

⁵⁸ *ibid*, p 24-5.

connecting it'⁵⁹. In the juxtaposition of the coordinate importance of recognition and connexion we have the clue to the apparent paradox of the Wesleyan generosity in recognition of other churches combined with the insistence that the connexional principle was, nevertheless, not merely legitimate but in closest conformity to apostolic practice and ideals. In both Rigg and Gregory, there is a desire to recognise true corporate life in Christ wherever it is found. Rigg, who so often belittled Independency in the abstract, is nevertheless prepared constantly to recognise that independent churches and associations of independent churches can be effective, even though only by dilution of essential independent principles, whether by conceding more authority to the pastor than normal, or by forming associations⁶⁰. In the latter case, one has to accept that Rigg had misconstrued Independency; there had never been any bar to the churches forming voluntary associations, from which, of course, they remained free to withdraw⁶¹. The key feature distinguishing 'independency' from 'connexionalism' lay not in association but in accountability.

A real advance in the ecclesiology, by both Rigg and Gregory lay in their recognition that connexionalism expressed both a spirit and a relationship and was thus more than a device for disciplinary or evangelistic efficiency. Earlier Wesleyan ecclesiologists such as Barrett, had explored the disciplinary and evangelistic roots of connexionalism. Rigg and Gregory took the argument to a higher plane, talking of the 'circulation of love'. The spirit of connexionalism was neither autocratic nor democratic. Rigg emphasised, as against both Independents and Methodist reformers, that there could be no simple application of political styles or doctrines to the Church which was a christocracy, to be ruled according to the principles of Christ and in the fellowship engendered by the Holy Spirit⁶². According to Gregory, everything depended on maintaining the spirit of love and the spirit of mutual forbearance and preferring of one another in honour⁶³. The Wesleyans had also long defended their system against charges of autocracy on the grounds that no one was or ever could be forced to become a Methodist. People choose voluntarily whether to submit themselves to the Methodist discipline, as, in their opinion, the best suited to bring them to full salvation. Any superiority of Methodism lay precisely in this.

⁵⁹. *HCC*, p 50

⁶⁰. *ConnE*, p 36-54.

⁶¹. Both Baptists and Congregationalists formed county unions in the nineteenth century. In some places, smaller chapels were grouped into preaching plans analogous to those of the Methodist circuits. This happened in the hinterland of Bristol with the Bristol Itinerant Society (Congregationalists) and the Bristol Baptist Itinerant Society.

⁶². *Principles* p 170-171.

⁶³. *HCC*, p 152-3

Commenting on the famous summary of church life in Acts, 2, vv42-7, Gregory says,

What is meant by giving themselves to the apostles' doctrine is very plain. They devoted themselves to the learning, to the experimental realisation and to the assiduous practice of those truths that it was the principal practice of the apostles to teach⁶⁴.

For Rigg and Gregory this was the true 'apostolic succession', the continued and faithful replication in the life of the Church of the principles and ideals of apostolic Christianity. They did not expect the exact reproduction of New Testament institutions. They emphasised the freedom with which the apostles, beginning with the creation of the diaconate, had improvised forms of ministry to meet new situations⁶⁵. They regarded this principle of adaptability as one that had been revived by Wesley and carried into later Methodism. Rigg argued that there was a real principle of development at stake and he was scathing in dismissal of the widespread Anglican reliance on the first four centuries alone⁶⁶.

Their ecclesial context and ecclesiological insights led both Rigg and Gregory to retain, but nuance and complement, the Wesleyan doctrine of the Pastoral Office. Bunting and Barrett had laid the stress on discipline, mutual ministerial oversight and evangelical efficiency. Rigg reasserted this teaching, but stressed the way in which ministerial prerogatives were counterbalanced by lay rights in discipline through the Leaders' Meeting. Gregory complemented his high Wesleyan assertion that the minister was 'the servant of the Church, but of Christ first and was neither menial nor minion' with an emphasis on his being simultaneously the 'ruling servant' and 'serving elder'. He called the minister the 'impersonation of order and harmony, the keystone of the arch of unity', thus emphasising his role as the one responsible for maintaining not just unity within the societies or circuit within which he was stationed, but their unity with the wider Church⁶⁷.

On the question of Christian unity, Rigg took the line most generally taken by contemporary evangelicals that organic unity, as already being proposed by some, was not required by Scripture. Rigg regarded it as impractical, even amongst the varying Methodist bodies, on account of their differing principles, particularly with regard to the authority of the ministry and the Conference. He also believed that different churches providentially fulfilled different evangelical 'niches'; thus the Primitives, whom he held in high regard, were likely to be more effective in mission to the very poor than the Wesleyans⁶⁸.

⁶⁴ *ibid*, p 76.

⁶⁵ *Principles* 27-8.

⁶⁶ *ibid*, p 25.

⁶⁷ *HCC*, p 103.

⁶⁸ *Principles* 320-1.

Gregory, with his broader, more eschatologically orientated view, took a different line. Commenting on the famous prayer of Christ in John 17, he anticipates much modern ecumenical ecclesiology,

According to the prayer of Christ, the unity of the Church and the spirituality of the Church must progress equally, and the consummation of one is the consummation of the other, 'I in them and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one'. To despair of the holiness of the Church is to despair of the outward unification of the Church, and to despair of the regeneration and reconciliation of the human race⁶⁹.

Gregory spelt out more clearly than any other Wesleyan theologian previously what Rex Kissack has since called 'the ecclesiological consequences of the Wesleyan doctrine of Christian Perfection'⁷⁰. In this sense, he developed the ecumenical logic of the Wesleyan ecclesiology. Moreover, he related it to his total eschatological vision, arguing that a united Church would lead to a united world, 'for, seeing this heavenly wonder, the world will believe'... 'given a truly united, loving church, all nations will flow into it'⁷¹. Nor was his vision purely utopian or relegated to an impossibly distant future. He believed that increasing convergence in biblical scholarship and the increasing contracts between church leaders would ripen into convergence on many other matters. He talked of the possibility of a 'voluntary federation' of churches but seems to have meant more by this than was to be implied by some of those free churchmen who, twenty years later, began to look in that direction. He seems to have envisaged real mutual reception and enriching of insights rather than mutual recognition⁷².

Between them, Rigg and Gregory had done much to sharpen and enrich the Wesleyan ecclesiological tradition. Soon, however, their achievement began to be eclipsed in the process of a sort of 'dumbing down', to use a modern expression, of the authentic Wesleyan tradition. This came about partly as a result of increased cooperation with the other Methodist bodies and Free Churches and partly as a result of increasing liberal Protestant influences which found little to cherish in traditional Wesleyan ecclesiology. J.W. Grant has recorded a parallel loss of ecclesiological distinctiveness in the older Free Churches⁷³. The last ecclesiologists in the classical tradition were W.F. Slater, writing in 1885 and William A. Quick in 1891. Slater argued that Methodist practice and

69. HCC, p 189.

70. Kissack, R, *Church or no Church*, (1964), pp 145-6.

71. Gregory, B, *Sermons and Pastoral Addresses*, (1881), p 101 in sermon 'The Gathering Together of all things in Christ', pp 85-109.

72. HCC, p 204, pp. 208-10.

73. Grant, J. W. *Free Churchmanship in England, 1870-1940*, (nd), deals with this decline.

spirituality accorded more closely with those of the apostolic church than did any other tradition. He also envisaged connexionalism as a possible Wesleyan contribution to universal ecclesiology. Quick reinforced the work of both Gregory and Slater in his *Methodism a Parallel* which examined the way of life of the early Methodists in direct comparison with that of the apostolic and sub-apostolic churches. In classic Wesleyan mode, he maintained that Methodism represented a rediscovery and reappropriation of that experimental, evangelical religion that was the hallmark of the apostolical age. Methodism had replicated the apostolic practice of spontaneous adaption to evangelistic needs⁷⁴.

Hugh Price Hughes in the 1890s claimed to have recovered a truly 'catholic' concept of the Church. He certainly held a high concept of the Church's call to preach social as well as personal righteousness, but he held no real interest in relating the riches of traditional Wesleyan ecclesiology to this sense of national responsibility⁷⁵. Many in the rising generation of the Wesleyans saw the church rather simplistically as the company of the friends of Jesus, a point well illustrated in George Findlay's short study of New Testament ecclesiology, published in 1893⁷⁶. Agar Beet, in 1907, and John Scott Lidgett, a little later, were to recover a higher doctrine of the Church, but they lost sight of the traditional Wesleyan emphases as did Newton Flew in the thirties⁷⁷. Apologies for Methodism emphasised the reasonableness of the grounds for the break with the Church of England in the 1790s and asserted the catholicity of Methodism, but they ignored the connexional principle, which is nowhere mentioned in the 1937 Conference statement, *Nature of the Christian Church*⁷⁸.

The achievement of Rigg and Gregory was the achievement of the last era in which not merely did British Wesleyan Methodism feel itself to be really distinctive but could also validly make such a claim. As such, it deserves to be better remembered than has hitherto been the case.

DAVID CARTER

(David Carter delivered the WHS lecture in 1998)

(paper originally presented to the seminar in Modern Religious History, Institute for Historical Research, London, February 1999),

⁷⁴ Slater, W. F. *Methodism in the Light of the early Church*, Fernley Lecture, (1885) p 137. Quick, W. A., '*Methodism a Parallel*', (1891).

⁷⁵ Oldstone-Moore, op cit, esp pp 2, 135ff, 146, 156 for exposition of Hughes' ecclesiological views.

⁷⁶ Findlay, G. *The Church in the New Testament*, (1893) However, Findlay shows awareness of a richer ecclesiology in his *Epistle to the Ephesians*, (1900).

⁷⁷ Beet, J. A. *The Church and the Sacraments*, (1907), Lidgett, J. S. *God in Christ Jesus* (studies in Ephesians), 1915, *God, Christ and the Church*, (1927).

⁷⁸ *Statements of the Methodist Church on Faith and Order 1933-83*, Peterborough, (1984), pp 5-42.

METHODIST EXCISE OFFICERS

FROM time to time students of Methodist history come across references to excise officers as members of early societies, and may sometimes confuse them and their duties with customs officers, although the two services were completely separate until the twentieth century. John Wesley crossed their paths a number of times on his travels, as his correspondence shows. The best example is a letter he wrote to Mrs Dickinson at Taunton in August 1776. Her husband was a former linen draper in London who had entered the excise service some years earlier and, according to the editorial note, had become 'Superintendent of Excise' (presumably meaning 'Supervisor') in Taunton. Although he was possessed of a considerable estate in Devon, he was unable to send his son, Peard, to university. The latter had to wait for his rich uncle, Peard, to die intestate before he could depend upon his widowed aunt to foot the bill for his course at Oxford from 1779. Wesley sent a letter of reassurance to Mrs. Dickinson:

...None that are in the Excise incur any danger by being a member of our Society; but several officers have been made supervisors, and Mr. Ball is now a collector. So that Mr. Dickinson has nothing to fear from any quarter, but may just do as he is persuaded in his own mind.¹

Incidentally Peard Dickinson (who was to marry the daughter of a customs officer) was, after ordination, to prove a valuable colleague to John Wesley at City Road.

The Mr. Ball mentioned in the letter was a senior officer in the Excise service to whom John Wesley apparently applied for a favour, probably promotion, in December 1769. This was on behalf of an excise officer called Robert Bell in Longtown, Cumberland. The latter had been converted under Grimshaw and taken his new faith with him to Carlisle in about 1767, where he gathered together a class in a cart-shed. Wesley applied some pressure before he could get him to agree to grant the request, but was able to write to Bell that there was 'little reason to doubt but the thing will soon be accomplished'².

It is difficult to find precise information about the excise service at that period. It was concerned with inland duties on a wide, often changing, range of commodities, including some, such as tea, tobacco, wine and spirits, that were in effect re-checked after passing through customs at the ports. Other products varied from candles to cocoa and

1. (ed). John Telford: *Standard Letters* vi, p227, v, p229; *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* (1802) pp. 492-507.

2. Telford op. cit. v, pp 163-164.

salt to snuff, and constant checks were made on brewers and maltsters. The field duties of the various grades of surveying officers bore a striking similarity to the activities of Methodist preachers. In a rural area where the relevant traders were thinly scattered the jurisdiction of an officer was called 'a ride', and a more densely industrialised, urban area was a 'foot-walk'. Officers were moved on every few years. A supervisor was responsible for a district composed of a series of rides and walks, and a collector was in charge of several districts.³

John Wesley exchanged letters with the Commissioners of Excise in 1776. For nearly twenty years people had been taxed upon their silver plate, and in May 1776 the House of Lords instructed the Commissioners to send letters to suspected defaulters, like Wesley, whom they could not 'doubt but you have plate for which you have hitherto neglected to make entry.' His reply was terse:

Sir, I have *two* silver teaspoons at *London*, and *two* at *Bristol*. This is all the plate which I have at present; and I shall not buy any more when so many round me want bread.⁴

As Britain developed its world trade, linked to an expanding empire and revolutionary changes in industrial production, the excise service was enlarged. New areas of responsibility were added more quickly than the obsolete ones were weeded out, and the number of employees rose from 3,155 in 1797 to 3,516 in 1815. The Parnell Commission held an inquiry 1831-1836 and reduced the work force to the 1797 level. The growth of free trade during the Victorian era reduced the service's importance.⁵

An interesting example of an excise officer's producing a significant influence upon local Methodism occurred in the Grantham Circuit in the late Georgian period. In November 1831 the Excise Board appointed 28-year old Thomas Wheeler as surveying officer of the Oakham 1st Ride in the Northampton Collection. For some reason he resided twelve miles from Oakham, across the Lincolnshire border in Colsterworth, a village on the Great North Road. Methodism has been established there since 1799 and for some years its members had been meeting in a converted barn. A revival was just beginning, with the dozen members of 1830 rising to 20 in 1832 and 35 in 1835⁶. The young excise officer, despite the suspicion that some of his neighbours may have harboured about his occupation, became an active supporter of the Wesleyan Society. Within

3. Parnell Commission of Inquiry into the Excise Establishment ... (1831) pp. 74-92.

4. P. Langford *A Polite and Commercial People* (1989) p. 402; Telford op. cit, vi, p. 230

5. Parnell Commission 20th Report (1836) Appendix, pp. 92.

6. Public Record Office CUST 47/586, 88; B. J. Biggs *Our Colsterworth Heritage* (1996). p 16.

about three years he was involved in plans to sell the barn and build a stone chapel, 43 by 30 feet, at a cost of £220. In a book published in 1836, just after he had ceased to be superintendent of the Grantham Circuit, Thomas Cocking referred to the enterprise in these terms:

For the accomplishment of this substantially neat and commodious edifice, the society is much indebted to the laudable exertions of Mr. T. Wheeler, an excise officer, then resident in the village.⁷

The phrase 'laudable exertions' rather than generosity suggests that Wheeler's contribution was more practical than financial. He had a humble social origin in Fenny Stratford, Buckinghamshire, where he had been 'bred a servant'. His salary in Colsterworth was £100 p.a., when local farm labourers earned just over £30 p.a., with the addition in some cases of cottage and garden (a relatively high rate compared with southern counties). However, Wheeler had to cover the cost of lodgings and a horse, and probably attempt to save a lump sum as security for his next post. It is difficult to imagine how he found opportunity for 'laudable exertions'. The average working day for an official in his position lasted between twelve and thirteen hours sometimes starting at 3.00 a.m., and a ride officer was likely to cover at least eighteen miles a day. Somehow or another he managed to inspire the villagers to lay the foundation stones of the chapel in June 1835, ready for the opening services in November of the same year. However, just one month before the opening the Excise Board decided to transfer him to Retford, over forty miles north of the Great North Road. A few weeks earlier Thomas Cocking had been moved to the same place by the Methodist Conference. It may be that readers have discovered further contributions to the Methodist cause from this young man, as he was moved about within the Excise Board's 'circuit system'.

BARRY J. BIGGS

(Dr. Biggs, formerly Principal Lecturer in History at Eaton Hall College, is currently local pastor at Colsterworth in the Grantham Circuit).

7. Thomas Cocking *The History of Wesleyan Methodism in Grantham and its Vicinity* (1836) pp. 366-367.

8. P.R.O. CUST 116, 37; PRO CUST 47/586, 88; P.R.O CUST 47/613, 121; Parnell Commission 20th Report (1836) p 92.

Musical Methodists in Lincolnshire by William Leary (pp. xiii, 113) is a wide-ranging survey of musical activity in the form of 74 'items' from all parts of the county. Choirs, organists, brass bands, eisteddfods, concerts are all here. Mr. Leary's enterprise could be well emulated elsewhere. Copies from the author at 7 Balder Court, Scartho Park, Grimsby, DN33 3RD, price £4.50 post free.

The Revd Dr John Coates Bowmer 1911 - 2000

John C. Bowmer was born in the small community of Esh (County Durham) and grew up nearby in the colliery village of Cornsay. The religious and social influences which played upon him in his formative years included Methodism of the New Connexion/United Methodism tradition, the close knit life of the pit village, the open Durham countryside on its doorstep, and the prevailing presence of Roman Catholicism which is rooted in that part of the county and reinforced by the presence of Ushaw College. It is tempting to consider whether the strong awareness of Roman Catholicism in his formative years may have played some part in stimulating John Bowmer's adult interest in the sacramental practices of Methodism.

He was educated at the village school in Cornsay and at the Johnston (Secondary Grammar) School in Durham City, some six miles distant. His first job was in the Education Department at Durham County Hall, but the call to the ministry came and he was accepted for theological training in 1932 by the last Conference of the United Methodist Church before Union. A pre-collegiate year at Blackpool was followed by training in Manchester, at the ex-UM Victoria Park College (1933-4) and then at the ex-PM Hartley-Victoria College (1934-37). After two years probationary service in Hull he was ordained, and he married Winifred Rutter. They had one son, Michael.

Dr Bowmer served as a minister from 1939 to 1962 in the Jarrow, Ryton and Prudhoe, Castleford, Paisley Mission, Seaham and North Shields/Whitley Bay circuits. Despite the demands of circuit ministry he also devoted himself to serious study, the fruits of which were several degrees, B.D. (London 1941), M.A. (Leeds 1949) and Ph.D. (Leeds 1960). His academic theses were published in book form as *The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in Early Methodism* (dedicated to his mother) 1951, and *The Lord's Supper in Methodism 1791-1960* (The WHS Lecture) 1961. His final major publication (the Fernley Hartley Lecture) was *Pastor and People: A study of Church and Ministry in Wesleyan Methodism 1791-1858*, 1975. In addition to Dr Bowmer's books there came from his pen a steady stream of articles on Methodist historical and liturgical themes published in the *London Quarterly & Holborn Review*, the *Methodist Magazine*, the *Methodist Recorder*, *WHS Proceedings*, the *N.E. Bulletin of the Wesley Historical Society*, and the *Local Preachers' Handbook*.

Dr Bowmer's career took a sudden and unexpected turn in 1962 when, as a result of the death of Revd Wesley Swift, he was appointed to succeed him as Connexional Archivist (to 1976), and as Editor of the *Proceedings* (to 1980). It ought to be said that in the midst of these developments Dr Bowmer found time to encourage the founding in 1962 of the North East Branch of the Wesley Historical Society, one evidence of his enthusiasm to foster interest in Methodism's past at the grass roots. He served as one of the Presidents of the NE Branch from 1977 and was President of the National WHS from 1974 to 1981. Two of his last publications, pamphlets on

The Historic Chapels Trust acquires Penrose Methodist Chapel

HCT Trustees first visited Penrose in January 1998 at the suggestion of English Heritage which was then carrying out a study of historic chapels in Cornwall, *A Survey of Nonconformist Chapels in Cornwall*, published in 1997. A small congregation still worshipped but divided its allegiance between two churches at Rumford and at Penrose. It made sense to centre services on the former.

Following the visit HCT expressed its willingness to acquire the chapel and the Methodist managing Trustees approved the proposal in March, 1998. The change of ownership was completed early in 2000. The trust acquired the chapel for the nominal sum of £1 under a Scheme made by the Charity Commission. The transfer was made possible under the Charities Act, 1993 that allows religious bodies to pass ownership of redundant chapels to the Historic Chapels Trust for less than their full market value, should they wish to do so.

The Historic Chapels Trust was established in 1993 to take into ownership redundant chapels and other places of worship in England provided they are of outstanding architectural and historical interest. Its object is to secure their preservation for public appreciation and to conserve their contents and burial grounds. The trust is in all instances an 'acquirer of last resort'. In cases where a listed chapel can be adapted for a sympathetic new use the Trust does not become involved.

Penrose Methodist Chapel, a Grade II* listed building, was an ideal acquisition. It was difficult to suggest another use for the single-cell chapel that would not drastically compromise its character and very complete set of



fittings and furnishings. Moreover the curtilage of the building is severely constricted, thus preventing the erection of any useful ancillary accommodation.

The chapel, built by the Bible Christians, dates from 1861 and is an exceptional survivor among small wayside Cornish Methodist chapels. It is constructed of local slate rubble and originally had a slate roof. There is a centrally placed door in the long side of the chapel facing the road. The interior is simple with plain plastered walls and tiered box pews. These form a complete and original set and are disposed in a manner which is more reminiscent of the late eighteenth century than the mid-Victorian period. The pulpit has turned balusters. There is a panelled enclosure in front that was probably designed for a choir or a group of musicians. This is a very rare feature to survive today though it was once more common in rural Methodist buildings.

David Scott, a chartered building surveyor, has been appointed to supervise repairs. The slate roof will be reinstated and there will be some dampness to deal with, particularly in the rear walls. In general our approach will be to retain the chapel just as it has been left, retaining the patina and marks of age.

John Bowles, our honorary organs adviser, has recently examined the two reed organs in the chapel and put forward proposals for their repair. The larger reed organ was manufactured by Bell of Guelph, Ontario, Canada. The instrument seems to be intact with seventeen stop knobs above the keys although it has not been played for a long time. The smaller reed organ was bought from another chapel. In time we may be able to identify a suitable chapel in the South-West in which to re-house it.

Once HCT has acquired a chapel it is normal practice to hold a public meeting which will establish a Local Committee, and to identify a key holder willing to admit visitors at all reasonable times. The Committee is responsible for organising suitable events and for holding occasional services of worship. Marriages and other special services will be welcomed. Fortunately the layout of the seating makes Penrose ideal for small concerts, meetings and other gatherings. Trustees will foster activities of this type to take place. Given the local interest in the chapel it should be possible for us to find a sufficient number of keen people to take part in building a new future for Penrose.

Penrose Methodist Chapel is the thirteenth chapel to be taken into care by the Trust and its first Methodist chapel. The Trust is delighted to have acquired it and will look after it in as sensitive a manner as possible. For further information about the Trust and its chapels, please contact the Director at 29 Thurloe Street, London SW7 2LQ (020-7584-6072). There is a body of subscribing Friends who receive two Newsletters a year. New subscribing Friends are always welcome.

DR. JENNIFER M. FREEMAN
DIRECTOR

THE ANNUAL MEETING AND LECTURE

The Annual tea, meeting and lecture was held at St. Andrew's Methodist Church Undercliffe, Bradford on Monday, 26 June 2000. Congratulations were extended to the Rev. Tim Macquiban on being awarded his Ph.D. Those who had died during the year, including the Rev. John C. Bowmer (President Emeritus) and the Rev. Dr. Frank Baker were remembered. The General Secretary reported that she had written to both Mrs Baker and Dr. Bowmer's son. She was asked to convey greetings to Mrs Baker from the meeting.

All the serving officers were reappointed and thanks extended to Mr. David Barton who had reached the end of his term as 'member at large'. The Rev. Gilbert Braithwaite was appointed in his place to serve for three years. Mr. Ralph Wilkinson gave notice that he wished to retire as Treasurer from the 2002 Annual Meeting (so if any member feels moved to offer for the post, please let the General Secretary know!).

The Treasurer presented the accounts for 1999 (see p244) and remarked that the Library Appeal had now passed the halfway mark. With regard to subscriptions he reported that because of the phasing out of covenants there needed to be some change and he recommended that the yearly rate of £9.00 be retained, but that the 4-yearly one rise to £33.00. This was agreed. The Rev. Donald Ryan (Registrar) noted that the membership numbers were down. The Editor (Mr. E. A. Rose) pointed out that last year's lecture was not printed as he had never received the script and this year's one was being produced as a separate booklet. This would leave more space for contributions of which he had a number in hand. Mr. Ryan reported, for Mr. Taberer, that a number of orders had been received for the 'sale' of back copies of the *Proceedings*. Dr. Vickers (Librarian) stated that things were much the same at the Library despite the changes due to the merger of Westminster College with Oxford Brookes University. Binding and conservation, identifying and filling 'gaps', and the building up of duplicate copies for the open shelves was continuing. He expressed appreciation for the work done by Martin Astell. The matter of the WHS being put on the Internet was referred to the Executive Committee. Mrs. Sheila Himsforth (Conferences Secretary) informed the meeting that the next WHS/WMHS Conference would be held from 9-12 April 2001 at Regent Park College, Oxford on the subject of Education. The exhibition in Huddersfield Art Gallery for which Peter Forsaith was responsible was much appreciated. Members of local branches who were present gave brief accounts of their activities. All their reports were received with thanks.

The General Secretary announced that the 2001 Lecture will be given by the Rev. Dr. Ralph Waller in the Ipswich area. Thanks were extended to the minister, leaders and members of St. Andrew's for their hospitality.

The lecture, chaired by Dr. John A. Vickers, was given by Mr. John H. Lenton who took as his subject 'My Sons in the Gospel: Wesley's Itinerant Preachers', which provided a fascinating glimpse of early Methodist history. The lecture will be obtainable from Mr. A. A. Taberer, 79 Crewe Road, Nantwich, Cheshire, CW5 6HX, price £3 (US \$7) inclusive.

E. DOROTHY GRAHAM

BOOK REVIEWS

A Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland, edited by John A Vickers. (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 2000. pp. 438. £30.00. ISBN: 0 7162 0534 3)

Edwin Waugh's depiction of the adverse effects of drink on family life, *Come Whoam to thi' Childer an' Me*, sold 20,000 copies in a matter of days. It is pleasant to think that this *Dictionary* may enjoy like success, for it is unique, informative, authoritative, remarkably comprehensive, and, by today's standards, reasonably priced. The editor and his advisers are to be congratulated on a work which will be valued by churchgoers, historians, theologians and ecumenists; and there may even be enough statistics here to satisfy scholars of the bean-counting sort.

The editor explains that the work is a 'first port of call' (in which case more consistent reference to the *Dictionary of National Biography* would have assisted some readers to the next port), and that the objective has been to present basic information concisely. In such a work of 'bones' one does not look for fine writing, but for clarity and accuracy, and these are to be found. The bonus is that despite the constraints, writers such as David Carter and John Newton prove themselves to be fluent miniaturists, while one may be forgiven for suspecting that in his article on Eastern Orthodoxy Gordon Wakefield manages to show his colours: 'The doctrine of theosis (deification), though Protestants of the Barthian school have deemed it dangerous, is found in the Wesley hymns'. The several tribes of Methodism are in capable hands, as such names as Oliver Beckerlegge, Geoffrey Milburn and Alan Rose testify. The article bibliographies, though brief, will assist those who wish to enquire further, though very occasionally more authoritative references could have been substituted for some of those given. A comprehensive bibliography completes the volume.

The editorial claim that Calvinistic Methodism is included needs to be qualified by the observation that while the pioneers are there - Whitefield, the Countess of Huntingdon, Harris, Rowland and William Williams; and while there is a general article on Welsh Calvinistic Methodism (or Presbyterian Church of Wales), post-pioneer biographies are at best scarce.

But if not quite all of British Methodism is here, an enormous slice of it is. In addition to biographies we have articles on Methodism in the several geographical regions of Britain, on its missionary outreach, on its finances and property, on its doctrine, worship and church government (which last Susan Howdle manages to make less than soporific), and on its many institutions. The Methodists seem to have thought of everything: not only a Fellowship of the Kingdom and a Methodist Sacramental Fellowship, but also a Methodist Philatelic Society and a Worn Out Ministers Fund.

Readers unfamiliar with Methodist ways will welcome such articles as that on the Class Meeting, though they may remain a little confused as to the relation between Baptism and Membership (is it conceivable that the occasional Methodist is in the same puzzled state?). The differing ordination practices of

the several branches of Methodism are theologically revealing, as is the remark of James Thorne the Bible Christian, that the term 'Reverend' is 'unscriptural and a badge of popery'.

In a work of this kind we expect to find the Wesleys, Alexander Kilham, Hugh Bourne, Jabez Bunting, and we are not disappointed. But the 'hinterland people' are very well represented. We have John Adams-Acton the sculptor; the soprano Ada Alsop who, no doubt, could have made mincemeat of Francis Duckworth's famous tune, 'Rimington'; numerous dynasties both ministerial - Moultons, Rattenburys; and business - Chubbs (locks) and Ranks (flour and films); Joseph Orton, advocate for Australia's aborigines; Joseph Arch the early trade unionist and Len Murray the latter-day one; Sarah Mallett who began preaching during epileptic fits; J. Agar Beet, 'the greatest 'forgotten' theologian of British Methodism'; G. B. Evens, the BBC's 'Romany'; Elizabeth Bultitude of the 'large and rubicund face', the last PM female itinerant and the only one to 'die in the work'; the ubiquitous David Frost; Billy Bray, 'the King's son'; William Pickles Hartley who made jam; and Howard Belben, the first minister your reviewer can remember. There is a sprinkling of MPs, among them Michael Foot, George Thomas and Michael Stewart; and the following are among academic Methodists to be found in a variety of disciplines: Geoffrey Rose (epidemiology), Herbert Butterfield (history), W. D. Wright (applied optics), C. A. Coulson (mathematics and science), H. Cecil Pawson (agriculture), H. F. Mathews and A. Victor Murray (education), and T. E. Jessop (philosophy). A sizeable number of Methodists was involved in the temperance movement: Peter Thompson bought the Old Mahogany Bar, 'a notorious gin palace', and Wilton's Music Hall, and turned them into mission halls. On the other hand John Wesley Thomas opposed teetotalism and, for good measure, the Pope and J. Everett too.

The editor and his advisers clearly faced daunting problems of selection, and these are never more acute than when making decisions concerning the living. Thus we have the historians John Kent, John Walsh and Reginald Ward, but not Henry Rack and Peter Stephens. And might not Owen Evans have been included among the biblical scholars Barrett, Grayston, Hooker-Stacey, Marshall and Young - not least for his stalwart work on the Welsh Bible? Present-day British Methodism's most prolific philosopher of religion, David Pailin, is likewise absent.

Methodism's ecumenical contribution is inadequately treated. There should surely have been more than a passing reference to the Free Church Federal Council and its predecessors, to which Methodists have contributed with varying degrees of enthusiasm; and while the articles on the World Methodist Council and Geoffrey Wainwright note (without specifying them) that Methodists have been engaged in international bilateral dialogues, there is no indication of the results of this theological work, some of which bear directly upon such included topics as Calvinism and Arminianism. Again, I could find no reference to those numerous Local Ecumenical Projects in which so many Methodists are involved. No doubt one's occasional suspicion that at the point of ecumenical decision some Methodists become afflicted with a touch of the

Buntings is to be devoutly repented of. It would, however, be sad if they really felt that the world is their parish - provided that it's Methodist!

Occasionally one queries the balance between articles. Thus the editor does well to confine John Wesley to just over five columns, but E. S. Waterhouse surely deserves more than nine lines, in none of which are his published works referred to. His article does, however, include an example of what used to be called a 'human touch' - the kind of miscellaneous information of no great significance which nevertheless eases the passage of dictionary writers and readers alike. We learn that Waterhouse, a railway enthusiast, 'often travelled on the footplate'. But Geoffrey Wainwright's fondness for Yorkshire County Cricket Club is passed over in silence - as well it might be, says this Surrey man.

ALAN P. F. SELL

Methodist Spirituality by Gordon S. Wakefield (Epworth Press, 1999, pp128, £9.95 ISBN 0 7162 0525 4)

This is the latest volume in the 'Exploring Methodism' series, following Barrie Tabraham's *The Making of Methodism*, John Munsey Turner's *Modern Methodism in England 1932-1998* and Thomas Langford's *Methodist Theology*. Gordon Wakefield is a sure guide, for spirituality has been the main theme of his writings ever since *Puritan Devotion* in 1957. The present work is actually a revision and expansion of his 1966 WHS Lecture, *Methodist Devotion: The Spiritual Life in the Methodist Tradition 1791-1945*¹. It even carries the same dedication to the memory of Charles Herbert Brown and Ernest Warner, Methodist ministers. The book is in three parts, 'Wesleyan Legacy', 'Nineteenth-Century Developments', and 'The Twentieth Century', corresponding to the three parts of the earlier publication. The middle part is 'the least altered from 1966'; the third part, taking the story beyond 1945, naturally contains the most new material. Here, for example, we find an interesting section on T. S. Gregory, whetting the appetite for the author's forthcoming longer study. Neville Ward is given deserved recognition as the 'one Methodist spiritual writer of genius' of recent years. (*The Use of Praying*, published in 1967, was surely the most important book to appear during Gordon Wakefield's time as Connexional Editor). The final chapter includes a summary of *Holiness*, the searching study by the late Donald Nicholl, a Roman Catholic layman. Wakefield discerns in it a 'restatement beyond Methodism' of Wesley's 'grand depositum', belief in perfection and desire for holiness. 'Methodists should not be sour because the main reason for their existence has been interpreted for our time by one not of their own'. It is perhaps pertinent to add that T. S. Gregory, who himself became a Roman Catholic layman, considered that he remained a Methodist in the sense that mattered most.

BRIAN G. POWLEY.

¹ Reviewed in *Proceedings* 35 p 176.

A Methodist Life by Oliver A. Beckerlegge, (Loughborough, Teamprint 2000, pp 180. £10.00 plus £1.25 postage. Available from Trinity Methodist Church, Royland Road, Loughborough LE11 3EH)

The book begins with chapters on Dr. Beckerlegge's forebears. His paternal grandfather entered the United Methodist Free Church Ministry in 1864, and in 1872 he married Louisa Dodgson, whose father, Jonathan, was a Wesleyan Reform Local Preacher known as 'The Trumpet Voiced Evangelist'. These early chapters are, naturally, of particular interest to the Beckerlegge family, although quoted letters give a valuable insight into life as a Minister and lay preacher in those early years. Beckerlegge's father founded his own engineering business, and despite initial difficulties, went on to build a thriving enterprise employing some 20 to 30 workers. Brought up in a Methodist family, the author describes activities in the busy United Methodist Chapel in Sheffield which he attended, and his description of the Whit Sunday gatherings brought back my own memories of such events in Yorkshire.

In 1932 Oliver Beckerlegge entered Sheffield University to read French and German, and during his second year spent a term abroad in Germany. Later, while studying for his Ph.D. he returned to Germany for eight months, teaching in Dusseldorf, and was there during the infamous 'Kristallnacht'. when the Nazi militia mounted a concerted attack on Jews, their synagogues, homes, and shops. In an Appendix he gives extracts from letters he wrote during those days.

Dr. Beckerlegge spent the war as a schoolmaster at a private school in Derby, his experiences in Germany confirming his conviction to register as a Conscientious Objector. In 1944 he candidated for the Ministry, and after a year in circuit went to Richmond College for Theological Training. In subsequent chapters he records life in the various circuits in which he served, describing a host of incidents and characters. That record is, of course, unique to the author, but many Methodist Ministers will find shades of their own ministry within it.

In his chapter on 'The Anglican Methodist Conversations'. Dr. Beckerlegge speaks frankly of his opposition to the unity scheme - an opposition which remains to this day. He was a founder member of the Voice of Methodism Association, and was editor of *The Voice* for many years. At the end of his book Oliver Beckerlegge gives a long list of published writings, among them Volume VII of Wesley's *Works*, a Critical Edition of 'Hymns for the Use of the People called Methodists', edited with Franz Hildebrandt) which took some twenty years to complete.

Dr. Beckerlegge's book is well written, and gives a good insight into circuit work from a distinguished Methodist scholar who spent almost the whole of his ministry in circuit life. It will be of interest to the general reader.

GEOFFREY R. SENIOR

Windows on Wesley: Wesleyan Theology in Today's World by Philip R. Meadows (ed.,) (Applied Theology Press, Oxford 1997 pp. ix + 175, £7 ISBN: 1 874677 107)

Seven scholars undertook to recover Wesley and his successors as theologians, to reflect on contemporary issues in the light of those insights and then to restate the tradition for the contemporary context. For Munsey Turner the genius of Wesley was his ability to draw together faith and works, scripture and tradition, revelation and reason and to make them all serve within a framework. In Orcibal's phrase 'a theologian with ability to select'. In Wainwright's list modern Methodists, like their founder must be committed to the primacy of scripture, to evangelism, to generous orthodoxy, to sanctification, to social concern and to the Lord's Supper. Philip Meadows looks at Wesley's views God at work in the world. Along with Wesley's 'successor-interpreters' we live within the threefold tension of freedom, choice and God's saving work. Elizabeth Harris warns us not to make Wesley jump two centuries but still thinks world-wide Wesleyan mission was one of universal love without real understanding of other faith-communities. For Tim Macquiban Wesley believed in individual transformation and social change through small groups. Only with William Booth and Hugh Price Hughes did Methodist tactics change. One of the finest pieces of writing in the book is David Deeks' reflection on Wesleyan and contemporary views on personal, radical and social economy. A more stunning passage on the Trinity and the economy of love would be hard to find. John Harrod sees in Wesley a generous and committed ecologist - the Arminian concerned about the welfare and future of animals. I suppose the acid test would have been whether Wesley protested about the hunt! In his examination of Wesley's eschatology Herbert McGonigle confirms the great preacher's belief in the literal bliss of heaven and the awesome reality of eternal punishment, but to all there had to be given their right to faith, repentance and eternal life. There are a number of misspellings in the end notes.

NORMAN WALLWORK

English Spirituality in the Age of Wesley, edited by David Lyle Jeffrey and published in Grand Rapids, Michigan by William B. Eerdmans, originally appeared in 1987 under the title *A Burning and a Shining Light. English Spirituality in the Age of Wesley*. The editor is professor of English literature at the University of Ottawa, and has edited a companion volume entitled *English Spirituality in the Age of Wyclif*. Readers of the present anthology will be attracted by the juxtaposition of well-known pieces such as John Wesley's sermon 'The Scripture Way of Salvation',

and less well known, sometimes out of print, items, including the concluding chapter of Williams Law's *A Practical Treatise upon Christian Perfection*. The anthology also includes writings by Isaac Watts, Elizabeth Singer Rowe, Philip Doddridge, Charles Wesley, George Whitefield, Christopher Smart, John Fletcher, John Newton, William Cowper, Hannah More, and William Wilberforce, together with the editor's introductions.

The book should however be used with caution. The spelling is Americanized, not altogether consistently. The editor appears to have a really strong bias against John Wesley, especially as regards his dealings with Whitefield. There are some startling misprints, such as 'disasterous', and the punctuation of Charles Wesley's 'God of eternal truth and grace' on page 276 leaves one verse without a main verb. Most seriously, perhaps, the editor has interpreted rather liberally his editorial principle of 'in some instances, exchang[ing] now obsolete words and certain archaisms with modern equivalents' (x). This led the present reader on a fruitless search for an apparent occurrence of 'rat-race' (124) more than two centuries earlier than the first attestation noted in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. What William Law wrote in 1726 was 'chase', but is this really now an archaism?

PAUL ELLINGWORTH

It Crossed My Mind by William Leary, 1998, pp 62. Copies from the author, 7 Balder Court, Scartho Park, Grimsby, DN33 3RD. £2.50 post free.

This patchwork of reflections, thoughts and comments is a sheer joy and delight to read. It is no ramblings of an octogenarian but perceptive insights from a man with a mind that has been enriched by wide reading, lively historical research and is brought to life with personal friendships, family experiences and a deep Christian Faith. Even though it is in part autobiographical it is not a person writing about himself because we are constantly being given insights into faith, philosophy, folksy thoughts and personal memories such as the moving tribute to his son Paul. There is something for most if not all people to enjoy in this gem.

D. H. RYAN

Donald English: An Evangelical Celebration (Moorley's, 23 Park Road, Ilkeston, DE7 5DA, £2.50) is a wide-ranging collection of affectionate tributes which reveal much about Methodism's most prominent evangelical leader of the past two decades. It is hoped that a biography will follow.

Heage Hall, The Haunted House by Thomas Shore first appeared in the pages of the *Original Methodists Magazine* between 1856-58. The O.M.s were dissident Primitive Methodists in South Derbyshire and Thomas Shore was one of their local preachers. The book has been edited by Dr. Gordon Gadsby and is available from him at 47 Milton Crescent, Leicester, LE4 0PA at £4.95 post free.

LOCAL HISTORIES

The Life and Origin of Dudley Methodist Church (Annitsford, near Cramlington, Northumberland) (56pp illus). Copies from Margaret Robson, 14 Wardle Drive, Annitsford, Cramlington, NE23 7DB, no price stated.

Cleadon Village Methodist Church Centenary 1899-1999 by Jim Slater (36pp illus). Copies, £3.00 post free from Rev F. Sykes, 61 Woodland Road, Cleadon, Sunderland, SR6 7UD.

Searching Bath for John Wesley by Bruce Crofts and Stan Roe (folded card). Copies, £1.00 post free from Bruce Crofts, 4 Abbey Court, Edward Street, Bath BA2 4DX.

A History of Centenary Methodist Church, Boston ed by Colin Shepherdson (62pp). Copies, £3.80 from the author at 137 Horncastle Road, Boston, Lincs. PE21 9HX.

Methodism in a West Yorkshire Village (Denby Dale) (64pp illus). Copies, £8.50 post free, from Rev. T. Peter Arnold, 25 Barrowstead, Skelmanthorpe, Huddersfield, West Yorks HD8 9UW.

The History of Methodism in Carlton (E Yorks) 1899-1999 by Richard Moody (36pp). Copies, £3.50 post free, from the author at 24 Station Road, Riccall, York, YO19 6QJ.

Burstock Village and Chapel by Arnold Johnson. Copies, £2.95 post free, from the author at 53 Churchhill Avenue, Burstock, Hull HU12 9HP.

The Story of Gwithian (Methodist) Chapel by Charles Thomas (11pp). Copies, £1.00 post free from the author at Lambessow, St Clement, Truro, TR1 1TB.

The Methodist Church, Stamford Street, Ashton-under-Lyne 1799-1999 (ex-MNC) (24pp illus). Copies, £2.00 post free, from D. Gaskell, 9 Eaton Drive, Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancs OL7 9RW.

Wesley Methodist Church, Newtown, (Powys): The First 200 Years by Glyn Tegai Hughes (24pp). Copies, £2.50 plus postage, from the author at Rhyd-y-Gro, Tregynon, Newtown, Powys SY16 3PR.

230 Years in Methodism in Hambleton by Richard Moody (32pp). Copies, £2.40 post free, from the author at 24 Station Road, Riccall, York, YO19 6QJ.

Chillington Methodist Church (Devon) 1850-2000 by Ron Bates (50pp). Copies from Rev. Stephen J. Robinson, 11 Kingsley Road, Kingsbridge, S. Devon TQ7 1EY, no price stated.

Luton Methodism in the 20th Century by I. P. Rumbles (44pp). Copies, £4.50 post from Marion Borgars, 21 Benington Close, Luton LU2 7YJ.

NOTES AND QUERIES

1540 COVENANT, ALLEINE AND AUGUSTINE

Further to Notes and Queries, No. 1456 ('A Stoic Source for 'the Covenant Prayer'? in *Proceedings* XLVIII p.164), an alternative source for Richard Alleine's 'put me to what thou wilt', etc., or a path by which any Stoic influence might have been mediated, may be St Augustine's *Soliloquies*, I: 24:

Lead by what way thou wilt, through what things thou wilt, how thou wilt. Lay on me things ever so hard, ever so strenuous, and if only they are within my power, I doubt not that I shall perform them if only may thereby arrive whither I long to be.

ET from C. C Starbuck in *Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Vol. VII (repr. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1956), p. 545

The Latin reads:

Duc, age qua vis, per quae vis, quomodo vis. Impera quavis dura, quaelibet ardua, quae tamen in mea potestate sint, per quae me quo desidero perventurum esse non dubitem.

Soliloquiorum Libri duo Sancti Aurelii Augustini Hipponensis Episcopi, curante F.E.T., Villona, PA 1921, p. 31

Interestingly, the *Soliloquies* were part of Augustine's intense literary output while he was moving from his conversion under Ambrose's ministry (summer, A.D. 386) to the moment of his baptism (Easter A.D. 387). This passage is the voice of the seeker, answering to the summons of Reason, through whom God addresses and challenges the seeker. Here, the seeker surrenders to the leadership of Reason, and therefore indirectly to the authority of God. Despite the considerable differences in presuppositions (Augustine's seeker has begun to acknowledge the authority of Scripture and the Christian dispensation of grace, but needs reassurance as to the rightness and reality of the spiritual quest), there remains a remarkable parallel to the situation of the spiritual seeker addressed by both Joseph Alleine in his 'Directions' and Richard Alleine in his *Vindiciae*. Both these writers labour to bring him or her to a closure with God 'aptly accommodated to all the substantials of our baptismal covenant'. A partial English rendering of the *Soliloquies* appeared in 1631; the Latin was available in Erasmus' edition; and Soliloquy 2 is explicitly quoted in Joseph Alleine's *Alarm to Unconverted Sinners* (1674 ed., p.163).

Other, less compelling, similarities (in the English translation, Latin original and echoes and parallels in the *Vindiciae*) are:

"To thee I feel I must return: I knock; may thy door be opened to me;

teach me the way to thee' (I: 5, p. 539 Starbuck), 'Ad te mihi redeundum esse sentio. Pateat mihi pulsanti ianua tua. Quomodo ad te perveniatur doce me" (Latin, p.13);' cf. Alleine's 'here I will stay, I will not stir from thy door', and, from Joseph Alleine's Covenant Prayer: 'Now Almighty God, searcher of hearts, thou knowest that I make this Covenant with thee this day, without any known guile or reservation, beseeching thee, if thou espiest any flaw or falsehood therein, thou wouldst discover it to me, and help me to do it aright'.

'...nothing can be truly said to be real, except those things which are immortal' (I. 29, p. 547 Starbuck, adapted), 'Nulla igitur recte dicuntur esse nisi immortalia'; cf. Alleine's 'Get these three principles fixed in your hearts: that things eternal are much more considerable than things temporal....'

'Steadfastly believe in God, and entrust wholly to him as much as thou canst. Be not willing to be as it were thine own and in thine own control, but profess thyself to be a bondman of that most clement and most profitable Lord' (I. 30, p. 547 Starbuck, adapted), 'Constanter Deo crede, eique totum committe quantum potes. Noli esse velle quasi proprius, sed eius clementissimi et utilissimi Domini te servum esse profiteri', (Latin p. 36); cf. Alleine's 'Yield yourselves to the Lord, that is, as his servants, give up the dominion and government of yourselves to Christ... Go to Christ, and tell him, Lord Jesus,... let me be thy servant, and spare not to command me; I will be no longer mine own, but give up myself to thy will in all things'. (This last sentence is the source of G. B. Robson's, 'I am no longer my own, but thine', which he placed before '....put me to what thou wilt', in what has come to be called 'The Covenant Prayer'.)

DAVID H. TRIPP,
DIANE KARAY TRIPP

1541 NEW ROOM LIBRARY

The library of the New Room in Bristol has now been re-shelved in two rooms in a way more convenient for the users than the former accommodation in the Living Room cupboards. Only runs of the older periodicals remain in those cupboards but nearly everything else along with the catalogue is at hand easily accessible for working purposes in one place. One of the two rooms will be known as the 'Davis Room' and the other the 'George Room' in memory of two distinguished former Wardens. From their libraries considerable additions have been made to the New Room library stock and its collections of hymn books and hymnology has also been enlarged from selections (some items not already there being added to the MMS stock at Wesley College) made from the library of the Revd. Wilfrid Little prior to him moving from Bristol. The New Room has also acquired a photocopier.

Anyone desirous of using the library should either write to the Hon. Librarian, Mr. C. J. Spittal, 162 Church Road, Frampton Cotterell, South

Gloucestershire, BS36 2ND (SAE to be enclosed please) or telephone 01454-773158. Observance of 'normal business hours' (say 9a.m. to 9p.m.) would be appreciated. 11.00p.m. as one recent prospective user seemed to expect, does not always find the Hon. Librarian at his brightest or best!

C. J. SPITTAL
Hon. Librarian/New Room Bristol.

1542 WESLEYAN THEOLOGY CD-ROM

Further to Dr. Vickers' judicious review (*Proceedings*, May 2000, pp. 190-1): A. M. Hills (1848-1935), after serving in the Congregational ministry, was a prominent theologian in the church we now know as The Church of the Nazarene. He belongs in the American Holiness tradition, which is explicitly Wesleyan in its self-understanding (hence the title of the CD). Amos Binney was of the Methodist Episcopal Church. His 1839 *Theological Compend* was never known, I think, in Britain, but immensely popular in American Methodism, as a basic text-book for Sunday-School teachers, exhorters, Local Preachers and Candidates for the itinerancy. Binney's son-in-law, Daniel Steel, who produced *Binney's Compend Improved* in 1874, was another major figure in American Holiness circles. There was a further revision in 1885, by the great theologian of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Thomas O. Summers; but that is hardly likely to be the version incorporated in this CD. The British counterpart of the Binney-Steele *Compend*, in role though certainly not in stature, was surely the work of William Cooke, of the New Connexion, successive editions of whose *Christian Theology* were far more wide-ranging and detailed in their developing engagement with new phases of thought and controversy.

Hills and Binney, and the other materials in Mr. Crossman's CD, represent a use of 'Wesleyan' in a specialised sense, as a short-hand for post-Phoebe Palmer holiness teaching, which, as Dr. Vickers indicates, differs from that more familiar to readers of these *Proceedings*. Details of these authors (but not of McDonald) are from Thomas A. Langford's *Practical Divinity* (new edition, Nashville, 1998), Vol. 1, pp. 120-1, 264-5.

DAVID TRIPP

Clerihew Corner

The only ryhme for Sangster
Is gangster,
But who could speak ill
Of dear Will?

ANC