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# Proceedings

OF THE

## Wesley Historical Society

*Editor:* E. ALAN ROSE, B.A.

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### THE WESLEYAN REFORM MOVEMENT IN BRADFORD - a story of two divisions

From the end of the eighteenth century there was recurrent conflict within Wesleyan Methodism between the orthodox view that all authority was vested in Conference and the ministers in accordance with the principle of the pastoral office,<sup>1</sup> and a lay viewpoint which looked for wider involvement in decision making. The secessions of the Methodist New Connexion, the Protestant Methodists and the Wesleyan Methodist Association arose basically out of this disagreement, and during the late 1840s there was a new challenge to the way in which the Connexion was being governed. The situation was brought to a head when the Fly Sheets, strongly critical of the Wesleyan hierarchy and originally sent only to the ministers, were published and so became more widely known.<sup>2</sup> The Wesleyan Conference could have decided to ignore the Fly Sheets, in which case they might have been soon forgotten, but instead Conference took steps to determine their authorship. In this they were not successful, but three ministers were expelled by the Wesleyan Conference in 1849. They were Rev. James Everett, on the grounds that he was suspected of writing the Fly Sheets, and Rev. Samuel Dunn, and Rev. William Griffith, who had contributed to publications critical of Wesleyan policy.<sup>3</sup> The sesquicentenary of this event in 1999 has led to some renewed interest in the period, including a number of recent articles in *Proceedings* describing the local impact of the Wesleyan Reform movement in Derbyshire, Exeter and Norfolk.

Across the country there followed a traumatic division between

<sup>1</sup> J. C. Bowmer, *Pastor and People*, (1975) pp 198-228.

<sup>2</sup> Anon, *The Wesleyan Reform Union, its origins and history*, (Sheffield, 1896), includes the full text of all the Fly Sheets.

<sup>3</sup> William Griffith wrote for *The Wesleyan Times* and *The Wesley Banner and Revival Record*. Samuel Dunn contributed to *The Wesley Banner and Revival Record*. At the 1849 Conference both men refused to cease writing for these publications.

those Wesleyans who remained loyal to Conference - dubbed 'Conference Methodists' by the Reformers - and about a third of the members who left or were expelled from their chapels as Wesleyan Reformers. In Bradford this separation of Wesleyans and Reformers was followed a few years later by a second division, less traumatic but equally far-reaching in outcome, between those Reformers who opted to join the United Methodist Free Churches,<sup>4</sup> and those who chose to join the Wesleyan Reform Union.<sup>5</sup>

Although the first of these divisions began soon after the 1849 Conference, the number of members involved was comparatively small until the decision of the 1850 Conference to demand of ministers that they remove from membership all those who showed any trace of sympathy with or support for the Reformist position. The effect of this policy in the Bradford Wesleyan chapels was that agitation turned quickly into open conflict, and vast numbers of Reformers, either expelled from their chapels or leaving as a matter of principle, sought temporary preaching rooms until new Reform chapels could be financed and built. Most Wesleyan societies in Bradford had belonged to the same circuit until 1835, which meant that in 1849 the Reformers from the Bradford West, Bradford East, and Great Horton circuits were already known to each other. They therefore ignored Wesleyan circuit boundaries and formed a single Bradford Wesleyan Reform circuit, and a smaller Great Horton Reform circuit.

The Wesleyan societies in certain villages to the north of Bradford were in the Woodhouse Grove circuit, which was then in the Leeds District, and their members were thereby isolated from the network of relationships within the rest of Bradford. In practice the Woodhouse Grove circuit was only briefly involved in the Reform agitation, when Reformers from Yeadon walked down to the Thorn chapel at Idle in 1849 to support potential Reformers who planned to take over the Sunday School.<sup>6</sup> This 'backing-up', as it was described by a local historian, failed in its purpose. Two men who had given stone and money for the Sunday School claimed the right to be reimbursed if it was taken over, and although the Sunday School Anniversary collections were down that year, and only a quarter of the usual scholars walked in the Whitsuntide procession, there was in fact no Reformist secession in Idle.

However, throughout the rest of Bradford the support for Reform was extremely strong. William Savage, a local preacher in the Bradford

<sup>4</sup> O.A. Beckerlegge, *The United Methodist Free Churches*, (1957).

<sup>5</sup> W. H. Jones, *History of Wesleyan Reform Union*, (1952).

<sup>6</sup> W. Watson, *Idle Thorpe Wesleyan Methodist Chapel 1810-1910*, (Bradford, 1910) p.102.

West circuit who was a delegate to the National Reform Meeting in London in March 1850, subsequently gave a report to a meeting held in the Bradford Temperance Hall, then the Reformers' place of worship. When the superintendent minister discovered that Savage had addressed a meeting, called to raise funds for the expelled ministers, he withheld his class ticket. Gregory records that this incident had widespread repercussions, as Savage appealed to the District Chairman for a hearing at a Minor District Meeting, and his membership was restored.<sup>7</sup> When the issue was raised at Conference it was accepted that in accordance with the 1835 Regulations, expulsion was dependent on an appeal to a Minor District Meeting, and could not be an arbitrary decision by a minister, although this ruling was soon to be overlooked. In the Bradford West circuit a quarter of the members left Wesleyan Methodism between March 1850 and March 1851.

Each group of Reformers resolved their difficulties in the way they saw as most appropriate, but throughout Bradford the usual reaction was to build a new Wesleyan Reform chapel as near as possible to their former Wesleyan place of worship. Within the Bradford West circuit, consisting of six societies, the Reformers from Kirkgate chapel in the town centre met in the Oddfellows' Hall until they were able to build a large chapel in Westgate, with a carved inscription 'Opened by the Wesleyan Reformers 1854', indicating their intention to remain a separate society. Before this, the aim of many Reformers, locally as well as at their Delegate Meetings, appears to have been to reform the Wesleyan connexion from within, and to seek some form of reconciliation. The inscription on Westgate chapel made the significant statement that these Reformers could no longer see any way back into the Wesleyan system.

The members who left the White Abbey Wesleyan society opened a Reform chapel in nearby Abbey Street, and those from Centenary chapel, having first built a chapel in Park Lane, some years later built again at Central Avenue. At the Wesleyan Sunday School opened in West Bowling in 1823, 'to be denominated a Wesleyan Methodist Sabbath School, yet free for the children of every religious denomination,' there was exasperation over the Reform issue which led to physical violence.<sup>8</sup> At a service taken by a local preacher who supported Conference, the Reformers present resented the fact that a collection was taken for 'poor circuits', meaning those circuits where the Reformers had 'stopped the supplies.' Those attempting to take the collection in their hats - the collection plates having been hidden - were

<sup>7</sup> B. Gregory, *Sidelights on the Conflicts of Methodism 1827-1852*, (1898). pp. 472-3.

<sup>8</sup> Physical violence over the issue of Reform in Bradford also occurred at Wibsey and Great Horton.

physically restrained and their clothing was torn, and four members subsequently appeared in court. The dispute over the ownership of the premises went to litigation, and possession was eventually granted to the Reformers for use as a Sunday School only, in keeping with the inscription over the entrance. This left the Wesleyans with no premises, and the Reformers without a chapel, and Muff Field Wesleyan Reform chapel was opened nearby in 1853.<sup>9</sup> The Low Moor Wesleyan Reform Union chapel, however, did not begin as a secession from a Wesleyan society in this circuit, but was in fact the result of a disagreement within a Primitive Methodist society in about 1870.<sup>10</sup>

There were secessions from six of the eight societies in the Bradford East circuit during the Reform period. John Bearder, a member at Dudley Hill who became a Reformer, wrote afterwards,

Well, there came a day when trouble and anxiety seemed to be hanging over the Wesleyan Body.... the great body of preachers acting arrogantly towards the great body of members, usurping too much authority over the people, seeming to want to lord it over God's heritage.... allowing no lay representation. All societies were in a ferment. The people, or many of them, withdrew their allegiance, saying in their hearts, 'We will not have these to reign over us'.<sup>11</sup>

When the delegates sent by the Bradford East circuit to the Reform Meeting held in London in March 1850 reported back to the meeting in Bradford Temperance Hall, the chairman was interrupted by John Wesley Barrett, a Wesleyan who arrived like Daniel in the lions' den to challenge the record of voting at the March quarterly meeting of the Bradford East circuit. He claimed that the majority present had voted narrowly in favour of Conference, and despite some barracking it was agreed that there had been some confusion over the vote. Not surprisingly those at the Temperance Hall were certain that the Reformers had been in majority, although it was accepted that in the confusion 'some had voted with both hands'.<sup>12</sup>

The Reformers who left Eastbrook chapel in the town centre met in the nearby Temperance Hall until they opened Bethesda Wesleyan Reform chapel in Peckover Street in 1852.<sup>13</sup> They moved to smaller premises in 1881, using the title 'Congregational Methodists', and in 1894 they rejoined the local Wesleyan circuit, the only Reform society in Bradford to do so. From Bradford Moor (Greenhill) chapel the Reformers met where they could until they opened Laisterdyke 'Free

<sup>9</sup> S. M. Thornton, *Muff Field*, Bradford, n/d., c. 1950.

<sup>10</sup> L. E. E. Blackburn, *Low Moor Wesleyan Reform Chapel Golden Jubilee Handbook*, (Bradford, 1979).

<sup>11</sup> J. Bearder, 'Memoirs of Dudley Hill', family papers held by the late Eric Robinson.

<sup>12</sup> *Bradford Observer*, 14 March 1850.

<sup>13</sup> The Annual Assembly of the W.R.U. in 1860 was held at Bethesda Reform chapel.

Wesleyan' chapel in 1857. At Farsley, now in the Leeds district, the few remaining Wesleyans were obliged to auction the chapel as they could no longer maintain it. Inevitably, in 1851 the Reformers, who formed the majority of the congregation, bought the premises, leaving the Wesleyans without a chapel there until 1865. The members of a Wesleyan class which met in Bierley Lane became Reformers, and in 1855 they built Bethel Wesleyan Reform chapel at Bierley Bottoms.

There was strong support for Reform at Dudley Hill, where William Griffith was invited to address a meeting in the Sunday School. When the crowds arriving to hear the expelled minister were seen to be far too numerous for the limited space in the hall, some of the chapel trustees agreed to open the chapel for the occasion.<sup>14</sup> Those who subsequently left Dudley Hill as Reformers built Wesley Place Wesleyan Reform chapel lower down Wakefield Road, possibly with the help of members from Prospect chapel who supported Reform, but a further division occurred at Wesley Place and most of the Reform congregation left to build Salem Chapel by 1861 in Sticker Lane, and this time they chose to join the Methodist New Connexion. An incident in this circuit recorded by Gregory probably took place at Dudley Hill.<sup>15</sup> In September 1849, at a time when feelings were already running high, the incoming superintendent minister found by enquiry that certain leaders had subscribed to the Relief Fund, and 'he took their class books and bestowed them in his pocket', thereby expelling all the members of those classes. Such expulsions were sometimes described by Reformers as 'excommunications', but they were also referred to as being 'dis-membered by the ministers'.

The Great Horton Wesleyan circuit also consisted of eight societies, of which those at Allerton, Clayton and Clayton Heights appear to have been unaffected by the Reform agitation, but the records of membership were not entered in the circuit schedules during the Reform agitation, and some pages are missing. The very strong support for Reform among the congregation at Shelf led to the loss there of 85 per cent of the members, who opened Bethel Wesleyan Reform chapel on the other side of the main road in 1853.<sup>16</sup> At Great Horton over 200 members left, two thirds of the total, and there was litigation over the ownership of the chapel. The Reformers held the deeds but the Wesleyans had the keys, and when the Bradford magistrates dismissed the case a new Wesleyan trust was formed. The Reformers built a new chapel next door, again called Wesley Place to emphasise their loyalty to the founder of

<sup>14</sup> *Bradford Observer*, 31 October 1850.

<sup>15</sup> Gregory, *Sidelights*, p. 471.

<sup>16</sup> J. Parker, *Illustrated Rambles from Hipperholme to Tong*, (Bradford, 1904) p. 360.

Methodism. This chapel was completed in 1851 and enlarged the following year, but some time later, on the grounds that they were close to a Congregational polity, they left the Reform circuit and joined the Congregational Union. They were the only Bradford Reform society to leave Methodism.

Some miles away in the village of Thornton, one member suggested that 'All they need to do is build a wall across the middle of the chapel, one section to worship each side - before long they'll want it clearing away',<sup>17</sup> but in practice the Reformers built another chapel in 1857 in New Road. A mile away from Thornton in the small community of Egypt the Wesleyan Sunday School fell victim to the Reform agitation. The leader one Sunday invited 'as many as was for him' to follow him to Moorcock Farm. Most of the scholars moved out and they held their classes in the farm, although relationships with those left behind seem to have remained cordial, as some weeks later the Wesleyan Sunday School was closed so that the remaining scholars could attend the Sunday School Anniversary at the farm! The Reformers later took over the Sunday School premises, and in 1891 they built Egypt chapel which was in the U.M.F.C. circuit, although the well outside the building retained the old inscription, 'Wesleyan Sunday School'.

The strength of local support for Reform was indicated most strongly when former Wesleyan premises were taken over for Reform use. This happened at Wibsey, where the chapel in Holroyd Hill lost over 200 members to the Reformers, and barely a quarter of the congregation remained Wesleyans. They continued to use the chapel for a time, while the Reformers met elsewhere, but when the premises were put on the market in 1853 they were bought by the Reformers, who moved back into the building they considered to be their own. There was a similar situation at Slackside near Wibsey, where the Reformers took over the school chapel.

Such events involved the loss of 1880 members from the three Wesleyan circuits in Bradford. Nearly every society was affected, but various factors ensured that the problems faced were different for every society, and indeed for every individual member. Personal relationships and the degree of commitment to Wesleyan principles were clearly important factors, but the single most important factor was probably the attitude of the various Wesleyan ministers towards their members. Benjamin Gregory was in no doubt from his own experience as a minister that some of his colleagues were willing to exercise restraint, while others were determined to defend the principle of pastoral

<sup>17</sup> J. Wilman, 'A short history of Bethel Methodist Church and Egypt Sunday School, Thornton, 1852-1880', unpublished ms., c. 1938.

authority at any cost.<sup>18</sup> The ministers' own situation was not an easy one as Conference had placed them in an invidious situation. They acknowledged their responsibility for the souls of their members as men who would be called to account, yet if they were lenient they were criticised by other ministers, but if they expelled members their actions weakened or even destroyed the societies for which they were responsible. The problem was complicated by the fact that during the agitation each circuit had more than one minister, and the ministers all served in more than one circuit.

Most of the events which divided congregations in Bradford took place between the Conferences of 1850 and 1851, with very few divisions taking place after 1852. The first Reform chapels in the town were built in 1851 and almost all were completed before the end of the decade. The Bradford and the Great Horton Wesleyan Reform circuits were established by 1851, and although surviving records of both circuits are sparse, they seem to have worked together, and at one time they issued a joint preaching plan.<sup>19</sup> Their function was to liaise with each autonomous society, to appoint delegates to represent them at the annual assemblies of the Reform League,<sup>20</sup> and to draw up circuit preaching plans. These were very similar to the Wesleyan plans in style, and because the Reformers saw themselves as true Wesleyans they continued, rather confusingly, to use the title of 'Wesleyan Methodist Preaching Plan'. Only the absence of any ministers' names, and sometimes the inclusion of the Reformist text 'One is your master, even Christ, and ye are all brethren'<sup>21</sup> indicate their origins.

The annual Delegate Meetings<sup>22</sup> were held for several years wherever the Wesleyan Conference was meeting, in an unsuccessful attempt to put their point of view to the Wesleyan leaders, but as the possibility of reconciliation faded, attention turned to planning for the future. In 1852 the Declaration of Principles outlined the beliefs and aims of the Reformers, and having been approved at circuit and society level the Declaration was confirmed at the Annual Assembly in 1853, which was held in Bradford, and from that time the Wesleyan Reformers could arguably be considered as a new Methodist denomination. One important factor at the time was that from the 1830s onwards the Wesleyan Methodist Association had been involved in what we might

<sup>18</sup> Gregory, *Sidelights*, pp, 481, 491.

<sup>19</sup> Wesleyan Reform Preaching Plan of the Bradford and Great Horton circuits (headed 'Wesleyan Methodist Preachers' Plan') for March to June 1851. John Rylands University Library, Manchester, Leeds Scrap Book, MAW/MS/319.

<sup>20</sup> From 1856 the Reform League was known as the Reform Society.

<sup>21</sup> Matthew, Chapter 23, verse 8 (A.V.).

<sup>22</sup> 'Delegate Meetings' became 'Annual Assemblies' before being 'Conferences'.

now describe as 'talks about talks' with other Methodist groups.<sup>23</sup> It was not therefore, unexpected that talks should take place between the W.M.A. and the Wesleyan Reformers, the first contact being made as early as 1851.<sup>24</sup> More formal talks were held in 1854, when amalgamation was discussed, and this was approved at local level, subject to the support of a two thirds majority of Reform Delegates. This was achieved in 1856, and from May 1857 it was possible for individual Wesleyan Reform societies or complete circuits to join the United Methodist Free Churches.

The second division in Bradford, between the Reformers who joined the U.M.F.C. and those who chose the Wesleyan Reform Union, was a slow process, starting in 1857 and not ending until about 1868. When societies had the opportunity to join the U.M.F.C. there was at first only a limited reaction from the Bradford Reformers. The congregation at Westgate opted to join the Free Methodists, and they were followed by Farsley and Thornton (New Road), but it was almost ten years later that they were joined by the Reformers at Dudley Hill (Wesley Place) and Laisterdyke (Swaine Green). One can imagine the caution with which the members of these societies watched the progress of their friends within the U.M.F.C. before they decided to make the same decision

Apparently unwilling to commit themselves to the discipline imposed by another Methodist connexion, however different it claimed to be from Wesleyan Methodism, the remaining Wesleyan Reform societies in Bradford continued for several years within the original Reform circuits. Despite the similarity of their titles, these early Reform circuits were quite different from the subsequent Bradford Wesleyan Reform Union circuits. Envisaged at first as only a temporary arrangement, the original circuits included all the Reform societies, and existed only from the beginning of the Reform movement to the time when each society had decided its future policy. After the first societies had joined the U.M.F.C., and negotiations at national level led to the formation of the Wesleyan Reform Union, members of the undecided Bradford Reform societies realised that joining the W.R.U. would not deprive each society of its autonomy. The remaining societies of 'non-amalgamating Reformers' therefore became formally part of the W.R.U.

<sup>23</sup> The Protestant Methodists of Leeds amalgamated with the Wesleyan Methodist Association, as did several smaller groups including the Arminian Methodists of Derby and the Independent Primitive Methodists of Scarborough. The W . M . A . held a series of talks with the M.N.C. over the possibility of a merger. R. Currie, *Methodism Divided*, (1968) pp 219-230.

<sup>24</sup> Beckerlegge, *United Methodist Free Churches*, p. 41.

within either the Bradford W.R.U. circuit or the Wibsey W.R.U. circuit.<sup>25</sup> This process was completed by about 1868, at which point the two original Reform circuits in Bradford no longer had a function and ceased to exist.

In view of the way in which the Bradford Reformers were divided between the U.M.F.C. and the W.R.U., it is interesting to consider the quite different but significantly unanimous decisions reached by their Reformist colleagues in neighbouring circuits who found themselves in very similar circumstances. In the Shipley circuit to the north of Bradford, the Reform movement led to a major secession from Shipley (Providence) Wesleyan chapel, and the building of a Wesleyan Reform chapel in Hall Lane.

In the Bingley circuit there were secessions from Wesleyan societies in several villages, and three new Wesleyan Reform chapels were established. The Reform chapel at Denholme served the Reformers from there and from Cullingworth, and the Mickleton Reform chapel was reasonably convenient for those from Eldwick and Morton. At Harden, apparently the centre of Reform activity in the circuit, the Reformers took possession of the Wesleyan chapel until the ownership was granted to the Wesleyans by the Court of Chancery in 1853. There were complaints at the Wesleyan Local Preachers' Meeting of the Bingley circuit in 1850 that Joseph Bradley of Harden 'annoyed one of the local preachers of the Horton circuit...just previous to his going into the pulpit to conduct divine service, disturbing his mind by passing his violent censure on the superintendent of the above circuit and saying that he was going to hell.' Bradley's views on the Theological Institution were made clear when 'at Manningham and Cottingley he was heard to say that he would give five pounds for gunpowder to blow up all the colleges in the kingdom,' and he was one of several local preachers whose names were removed from the plan. All four of these Reform societies joined the Wesleyan Reform Union, although it is not clear whether this was the result of decisions made at each chapel or made jointly through a circuit meeting.

To the south of Bradford, in the adjacent Birstall and Cleckheaton circuits, the Reform movement caused even greater disruption than occurred in Bradford. From the eleven societies in the Birstall circuit there was a loss of 937 members, 54 per cent of the membership. Eleven new chapels were opened in the Wesleyan Reform tradition, which

<sup>25</sup> The original Great Horton Wesleyan Reform circuit included the secessionists from societies in the Wesleyan Great Horton circuit, but when the Great Horton Reformers became Congregationalists, it was appropriate to name the circuit after the strongest remaining society, which was then at Wibsey. It therefore became the Wibsey W.R.U. circuit.

resulted in every community having at least two Methodist chapels very near to each other for a century, one a witness to Wesleyan views of the pastoral office, the other a reminder of the determination of those seeking a more democratic form of Methodist polity. During recent decades at least one of each pair has closed, and the descendants of both congregations now worship side by side in the remaining premises, almost certainly unaware of the battles of the past.

In the Cleckheaton circuit the Wesleyan losses were even more serious. The eight societies lost 548 members, representing 71 per cent of the membership. As an indication of the strength of the support for Reform in the Cleckheaton circuit, five of the Wesleyan chapels were taken by the Reformers. At Cleckheaton the Wesleyans were so reduced in numbers that they were unable to maintain their premises, which were put up for sale. The chapel was bought by Samuel Law, a local mill owner, who arranged for Reformist lessees to control the premises until a much larger chapel was built nearby in 1879. At Brighouse the Reformers rented the chapel from the Wesleyan authorities until they were able to buy it in 1873, and at Scholes the Reformist majority took possession of the premises, the Wesleyans being left without premises in the village until the building of a chapel at Hartshead Moor in 1890. The small congregation at Wyke Common apparently decided unanimously to support Reform, and retained possession of their premises. At Littletown one of the circuit stewards was looking over the manse after one minister had left, and before the arrival of his successor, and found the key had been left in the circuit safe. Being a Reformer and more than slightly interested in the legal position of the chapel, he extracted the chapel deeds and discovered that if the collections became insufficient to maintain the premises, the trustees were to inform the Conference. If no money was forthcoming within three months the property could be sold and the trust dissolved. More than three quarters of the congregation were Reformers, and by withholding their contributions they ensured that the premises could not be maintained financially. A Halifax solicitor acting for the trustees wrote to inform the President of Conference, and the trustees received an acknowledgement but no money. In February 1852 the building was auctioned quite legally in the presence of three solicitors, one of them Mr T.P. Bunting, the son of Rev. Jabez Bunting. The Reformers knew how much was needed to pay off the debts on the chapel, and it was sold to them for that amount, so that they retained ownership of what they regarded as their chapel, free of debt, and with no surplus to be paid to the Connexion. At Heckmondwike 79 per cent of the congregation left the Wesleyan society and built a larger Reform chapel on the opposite side of the road, prompting the remaining Wesleyans to rebuild in order to have chapel premises of a similar size.

After considerable discussion, and negotiations with both the U.M.F.C. and the W.R.U., the Birstall and Cleckheaton Reform circuit meetings then decided separately to join the U.M.F.C.

Circuit	Wes	WRU	WR/UMFC
Bingley	7	3	0
ShIPLEY	5	1	0
Woodhouse Grove	6	0	0
Bradford West	6	3	1
Bradford East	8	2	3
Bradford Great Horton	7	1	2
Birstall	10	0	9
Cleckheaton	7	0	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>21</b>

Circuit	Members in 1848	Gain	Loss by 1854	as %
Bingley	1167		272	22%
ShIPLEY	444		131	31%
Woodhouse Grove	533	+30	-	+6%
Bradford West	1900		405	22%
Bradford East	2124		753	35%
Bradford Great Horton	1448		722	50%
Birstall	1724		730	42%
Cleckheaton	772		548	71%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>10112</b>	<b>+30</b>	<b>-3561</b>	<b>35%</b>

In view of the unanimity of the decisions in the adjacent circuits, the choices made by the Bradford Reformers seem in retrospect to have been unfortunate. With fourteen chapels the Reformers might have made a quite significant contribution to either Methodist tradition within the town, at least up to the early years of the twentieth century, but being divided over their allegiance neither group was numerically large, and the Reform chapels were scattered across the town.

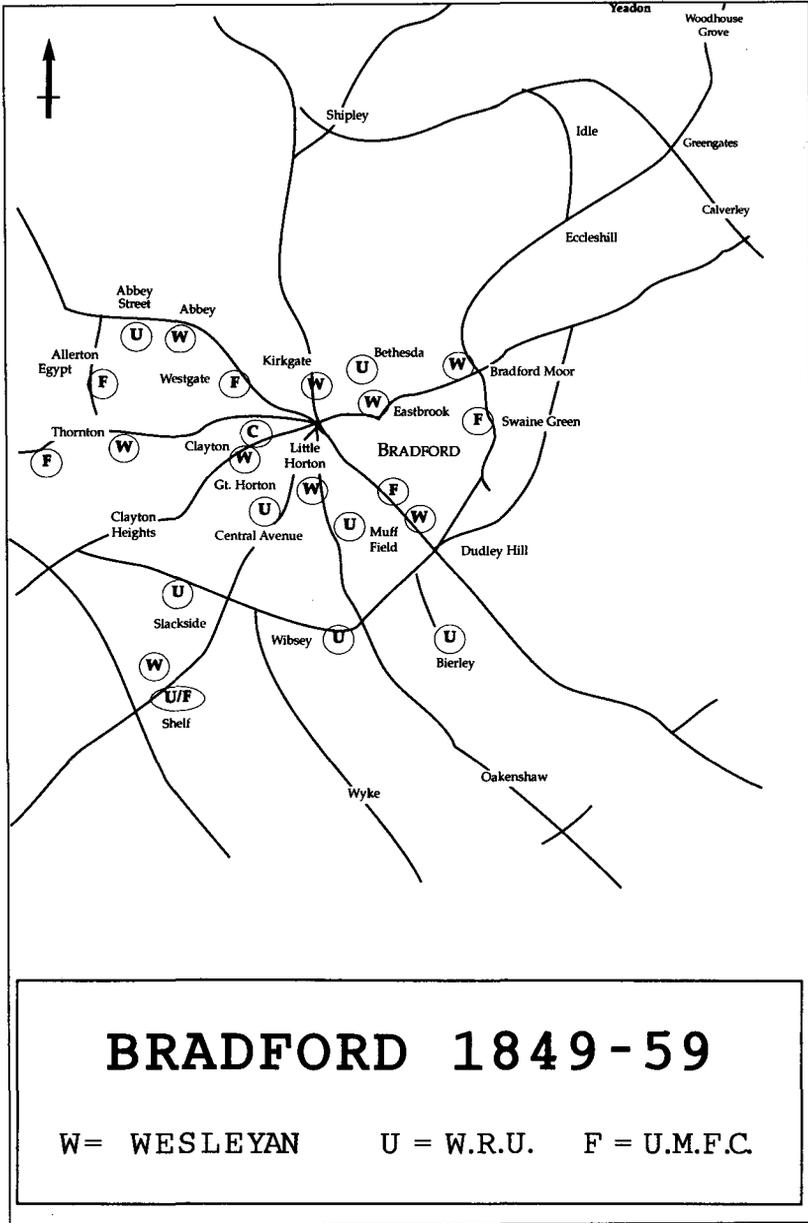
Had all the Wesleyan Reformers in Bradford chosen to join the Free Methodists they would have dominated the U.M.F.C. circuits in the town, as there was only one ex-Protestant Methodist society in Eccleshill (Victoria Road), and one ex-W.M.A. society at Bridge Street. They would have become United Methodists in 1907 and Methodists in 1932, but even as a larger group they might then have been unable to maintain a significant presence within Bradford Methodism. Shelf (Bethel) which had moved from the W.R.U. to the U.M.F.C. later became a free church, and of the other five societies in the U.M.F.C. tradition, Westgate closed in 1913, and three others were lost during the post-war amalgamations and closures. The only ex-U.M.F.C. society in Bradford dating back to the Reform period now meets in new premises at Thornton (New Road), although West Bowling (Park), opened in 1878 by the U.M.F.C., is also active.

If, on the other hand, they had all joined the W.R.U., there is no certainty that all the societies would have remained active to the present day. There are currently five churches in the Bradford circuit of the Wesleyan Reform Union, four of which began as secessions from Wesleyan societies. They are at Bierley Lane, Central Avenue, Low Moor, Muff Field, and Slackside, as well as those at Shipley and Micklethwaite near Bingley.

It might be misleading to assume that Bradford was typical, either in the strength of the Reform movement locally, or in the subsequent division among the Reformers. In practice the Wesleyan Reform Union has most of its societies in Yorkshire and the Midlands, while most of the societies of the U.M.F.C. were in Yorkshire and Lancashire, with smaller numbers in Durham, the Midlands, Bristol, London and Cornwall. Many parts of the country were therefore without any Wesleyan Reform societies for those who left or were expelled from the Wesleyan chapels, while only a limited number of places, including Bradford, provided a choice of two destinations for the Reformers. However, in view of the united decision by the Reformers in Shipley and Bingley to join the W.R.U., and the decision of the Cleckheaton circuit meeting to join the U.M.F.C. in 1860 and the similar decision in the Birstall Reform circuit two years later, one is left asking why the Bradford Reformers were divided. Was there no lead from their circuit officials? Was there a strong feeling towards or against either the U.M.F.C. or the W.R.U. in particular societies? Or was it that the Wesleyan Reformers in Bradford, once they were free from 'the shackles of priestly despotism,' divided their loyalties on the basis of chance decisions?

J. GORDON TERRY

*(Gordon Terry is a retired head teacher and a local preacher in the Birstall and Spen circuit.)*



# SIDELIGHTS ON THE VICTORIAN WESLEYAN MINISTRY

## The Diary of Charles Prest, 1823-75 - A Quantitative Analysis

Charles Prest was born at Bath on 16 October 1806 and died at Lee on 25 August 1875, after several months of fluctuating health, being buried at Nuneaton Cemetery. He underwent a conversion experience in January 1821, became a local preacher in the Bath circuit in August 1823, resolved to enter the Wesleyan ministry in March 1828, and commenced his itinerancy in December 1829 as a supply to a disabled preacher (John Morris) in the Bristol North Circuit. He laboured in eleven further circuits, mostly in the cities, becoming a superintendent minister in 1845. He progressively gained fame as a preacher, often controversial and argumentative, and as an advocate of home missionary work. In 1855 and 1856 he wrote two influential pamphlets on the latter subject, mainly inspired by the publication in 1854 of the results of the 1851 religious census,<sup>1</sup> which had revealed what was to the Victorians a shocking degree of absenteeism from public worship. He was therefore in 1857 the logical choice to be set apart by Conference as the first full-time General Secretary to the Wesleyan Home Mission and Contingent Fund, in which office he remained until his death, concentrating his energies and his growing but still rather limited funds disproportionately on rural evangelism and, to a lesser extent, on chaplainances to the armed forces; it was left to a subsequent generation to develop the work of Methodist city missions. Prest also served as a Secretary to the Wesleyan Committee of Privileges for nineteen years from 1842, a position which gave him ready opportunity to express his staunchly Protestant views by involvement in the Evangelical Alliance and many no-Popery campaigns, and as Ministerial Treasurer of the Schools Fund for sixteen years, in which role he played a part in promoting the building of the New Kingswood School. Prest was elected a member of the Legal Hundred in 1850 and, by 230 votes, President of the Camborne Conference in 1862. He published a number of theological works, the most important and substantial of which was on the witness of the Holy

<sup>1</sup> C.Prest, *The home-work of Wesleyan Methodism: its sustentation and extension, viewed in relation to the support and application of the Contingent Fund* (London: sold by J.Mason, 1855), and *Fourteen letters on the home-work of Wesleyan Methodism, its sustentation and extension: addressed to the editors of the 'Watchman' newspaper in the years 1855 and 1856* (London: sold by J. Mason, 1856). Prest also summarized the official report of the 1851 religious census in *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, Vol. LXXVII (1854), pp. 129-34.

Spirit, in 1867, which had reached a third edition (revised and enlarged) by 1871.<sup>2</sup>

Prest has not been particularly well served by posterity. There is, unfortunately, no full scale biography of him, although the published version of the funeral sermon, preached by Frederick James Jobson in the City Road Chapel on 6 September 1875, did include a sketch of his life.<sup>3</sup> Jobson was a major source for Henry Bleby's biographical articles on Prest in the May and June 1880 issues of the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, supplemented by Bleby's personal reminiscences from being a ministerial colleague of Prest's in the Hull West and City Road circuits.<sup>4</sup> There were also a number of other contemporary or near-contemporary appreciations, including: features in the secular press at the time of his elevation to the Presidency of Conference;<sup>5</sup> the customary obituary in the Wesleyan Conference minutes for 1876;<sup>6</sup> and a notice in the roll-call of Wesleyan Presidents.<sup>7</sup> However, Prest was not thought to be sufficiently important to warrant inclusion in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, nor even in George John Stevenson's *Methodist Worthies* (1884-86); only recently has he secured a place in some standard reference works.<sup>8</sup> Of the non-biographical treatments, most relevant is to mention that Robert Jay Rice has illuminated the home missionary background to Prest's work in an American doctoral dissertation.<sup>9</sup> With regard to manuscript sources for Prest, there are over two hundred in-or-out letters (almost half of them from William Harris Rule in 1857-65, on Wesleyan work for the armed forces), two volumes of sermons and

<sup>2</sup> C. Prest, *The witness of the Holy Spirit* (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1867). See also, his earlier *An essay on the witness of the Holy Spirit* (London: printed by J. Nichols, 1848). A list of Prest's principal publications appears in G. Osborn, *Outlines of Wesleyan bibliography* (Wesleyan Conference Office, 1869), p.158

<sup>3</sup> F. J. Jobson, *The course fulfilled: a sermon preached... on the death of Reverend Charles Prest... with a sketch of the life and services of the deceased* (Wesleyan Conference Office, 1875).

<sup>4</sup> H. Bleby, 'Biographical sketch of the Reverend Charles Prest', *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, (1880), pp. 321-8, 401-10.

<sup>5</sup> For example, *Illustrated London News* and *Illustrated Times*, 23 August 1862.

<sup>6</sup> Wesleyan Methodist Conference, *Minutes* (1876), pp. 12-14; also in *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, (1876) pp. 934-5.

<sup>7</sup> *Wesley and his successors* (C.H. Kelly, 1895), pp. 197-8.

<sup>8</sup> For example, *The encyclopedia of world Methodism*, N.B Harmon, general editor (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1974), Vol. II, pp. 1,947-8 (by J.H.S. Kent), and *The Blackwell dictionary of evangelical biography, 1730 - 1860*, edited by D.M. Lewis (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), Vol. II, p. 902 (by J.B. Cutmore).

<sup>9</sup> R. J. Rice, 'Religious revivalism and British Methodism, 1855-1865' (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Ph.D thesis, 1979), especially pp. 34-73.

plans, and sundry family papers in the Methodist Archives and Research Centre at Manchester; and there is a smaller collection of correspondence at the New Room in Bristol.

Charles Prest's diary, together with that of his son from his marriage to Susanna Batchelor in 1833, Charles William Prest (1836-1918), also a Wesleyan minister, came to light in 1973 and was drawn to the author's attention by John Prest, fellow of Balliol College, Oxford and a direct descendant, into whose custody the diary had passed. Apart from some limited and incidental use made by the present author and by David Hempton in the 1970s when preparing two more general works of Methodist history,<sup>10</sup> the diary's existence does not seem to be generally known. It is deserving of more extensive examination than is possible here, as a source for both local and connexional Methodist history, not least because it is so continuous, covering almost the entire period of Prest's career as a lay and ordained preacher, from August 1823 to May 1875. The present note concentrates on a quantitative analysis of Prest's public engagements and sermons, as he recorded them in his diary (although correcting for his arithmetical errors), in an attempt to throw light on the day-to-day life of a circuit minister and connexional office-holder. These engagements were recorded on the right-hand pages of the diary. The left-hand pages were reserved for miscellaneous comments and were often left blank in the early years; however, from 1845, as Prest progressively acquired connexional prominence, they were increasingly used to list other 'non-public' commitments, generally committee work of one sort or another, although with what degree of comprehensiveness it is hard to tell. Occasionally, space was given over to other matters; for example, there are three lists of the names, ages and occupations of candidates for the Wesleyan ministry at the July examinations in 1844, 1853 and 1854.

Prest's public engagements as a local preacher, from 1823 to 1829, as a circuit minister, from 1829 to 1856, are all summarized in table 1. From this it will be seen that during these years he undertook almost 7,000 engagements (fairly equally divided between Sundays and weekdays, apart from his time as a local preacher), travelled some 115,000 miles (making allowance for the period before August 1831, when Prest kept no record of the distance he covered), and preached over 5,500 sermons. This load was not evenly distributed throughout these four decades. Not unexpectedly, he carried the lightest burden as a local preacher, with a weekly average of 1.6 engagements, at each of which he preached a sermon. In the three small-town circuits in which he itinerated

<sup>10</sup> C.D. Field 'Methodism in metropolitan London, 1850-1920' (University of Oxford D.Phil. thesis 1974); D.N.Hempton, *Methodism and politics in British society, 1750-1850* (1984).

between February 1830 and August 1833 his weekly engagements more than trebled, averaging 5.6 in Dunster (including 5.6 sermons), 6.1 in Chipping Norton (5.7), and 5.6 in Daventry (5.4). His workload then appeared to reduce in the eight city circuits which followed, his weekly engagements being consistently less than 5 (4.5 in Manchester II, 4.9 in Bristol North, 4.8 in Birmingham West, 4.3 in London III, 4.1 in London VII, 4.3 in Hull West, 3.8 in London I, and 4.5 in London IV). His weekly average of sermons preached fell continuously from 3.9 in Manchester II to 2.6 in London I, and the proportion of sermons to total engagements from 88 to 69 per cent over the same period. However, the mean distance travelled each week rose at the same time, steadily at first, from 34.7 miles in Manchester II to 36.0 in Bristol North to 42.2 in Birmingham West; then more rapidly to 69.4 in London III and to 99.6 in London VII; dipping slightly to 96.5 in Hull West, doubtless in part as a result of the collapse of his health during the third year of his ministry in this circuit; and climbing again to 111.9 in London I and to 142.9 in London IV. This increase in travelling in 1842, coinciding with Prest's appointment to the Committee of Privileges, and especially from 1845, the year both when he became a superintendent minister and when the foundations of the Evangelical Alliance were laid for which he was eventually such a vigorous campaigner, reflects Prest's growing importance in connexional and Protestant life and the greater number of requests he was receiving to preach or to speak further afield.

**Table 1: Public Engagements of Charles Prest as Local and Circuit Preacher, 1823-56**

Circuit	Period (month/ year)	Sunday engagements	Weekday engagements	Total engagements	Sermons	Miles travelled
Bath	8/23 - 12/29	412	117	529	528	
Bristol North	12/29 - 2/30	19	28	47	47	
Dunster	2/30 - 8/30	73	73	146	143	
Chipping Norton	9/30 - 8/31	124	180	304	286	
Daventry	8/31 - 8/33	298	284	582	558	4,573
Manchester II (Irwell St)	8/33 - 8/36	350	350	700	614	5,410
Bristol North	9/36 - 8/39	318	451	769	581	5,623
Birmingham West	8/39 - 8/42	342	410	752	533	6,577
London III (Spitalfields)	9/42 - 8/45	298	373	671	514	10,821
London VII (Chelsea)	9/45 - 8/48	285	361	646	494	15,535
Hull West	9/48 - 8/51	271	400	671	460	15,058
London I (City Road)	8/51 - 8/54	280	316	596	413	17,456
London IV (Southwark)	9/54 - 12/56	238	310	548	362	17,294
<b>Total</b>		<b>3,308</b>	<b>3,653</b>	<b>6,961</b>	<b>5,533</b>	

A detailed analysis of his four London ministries, in 1842-48 and 1851-56, throws light on Prest's increasing standing in the connexion. During these years he was kept continuously busy, there being only twelve Sundays on which he had no public engagement whatsoever and a further sixty-four (twenty-eight of them whilst in London I) with just one engagement; in other words, on almost seven Sundays in every eight he had at least two and sometimes three appointments. These were not necessarily preaching appointments; indeed, during his last London circuit ministry he did not deliver a sermon at one third of his engagements. Of all his public engagements in these four ministries, 632, or 26 per cent, were undertaken outside his home circuit or for non-Methodists within the circuit boundaries (these are distinguished by underlining entries in the diary). These were most typically foreign missionary meetings and anniversaries (29 per cent), chapel anniversaries (15 per cent), and Sunday school meetings and anniversaries (14 per cent). In addition, account has to be taken of his other commitments, mostly committee meetings, as noted on the left hand pages of his diary. These were especially numerous during his second to fourth London ministries, totalling 552, equivalent to an addition of 31 per cent to his public engagements during the years in question (1845-48, 1851-56). Cumulatively, his public engagements and other commitments averaged 5.4 each week for this period of his career, not dissimilar to his workload in 1830-33.

Officially Prest was not separated for Home Mission work until the Conference of 1857, but he seems to have been engaged in it almost continuously from January of that year, in his capacity as one of the Secretaries of the Home Mission and Contingent Fund, to which he had been appointed at the Conference of 1856. His activities from that date until May 1875, three months before his death, are summarised in table 2, from which it will be seen that, during this period, he fulfilled over 2,300 public engagements, preached 1,200 sermons, travelled nearly 170,000 miles and carried out over 500 other commitments. In an 'average' week he travelled 175.3 miles, kept 2.4 public engagements (only 47 per cent of them on Sunday), preached 1.3 sermons, and had 0.6 other commitments. In certain respects, this represents a decline in activity relative to many of his years in the circuit ministry, which might be thought to be consistent both with a more desk bound job and with his advancing age and infirmity. But appearances are deceptive, for, at the same time as undertaking fewer engagements, he was travelling much greater distances to get to each (the number of miles travelled per public engagement averaged 71.6 in 1857-75 compared with 16.6 as a circuit minister in 1831-56), and he was typically preaching or speaking to much larger audiences at each engagement. Exceptionally, on the evenings of 25 March and 18

October 1860, he recorded in his diary that he preached in the Standard Theatre and Britannia Theatre in London to, respectively, 4-5,000 and 3,000 people. Within this home missionary phase of his career a watershed was obviously reached in 1867, from which time his engagements and commitments and the miles he travelled tended to reduce, doubtless a function of age. His single busiest year in terms of engagements and commitments combined was 1857 (with a total of 202), but in respect of travel it was 1864, interestingly not the years in which he occupied Mr Wesley's chair. In fact, it was 1863, which substantially coincided with his presidential term of office, which saw the fewest number of miles covered in any complete calendar year.

Year	Sunday engagements	Weekday engagements	Total engagements	Sermons	Miles travelled	Other commitments
1857	81	100	181	86	11,353	21
1858	61	93	154	68	9,029	12
1859	74	82	156	74	8,875	31
1860	67	93	160	72	8,679	24
1861	66	92	158	77	11,077	34
1862	52	75	127	58	9,235	15
1863	62	89	151	80	5,090	23
1864	69	76	145	70	17,805	19
1865	69	78	147	69	10,620	25
1866	65	62	127	66	10,439	37
1867	62	48	110	65	8,700	33
1868	57	46	103	62	6,880	27
1869	48	55	103	67	8,608	27
1870	59	53	112	65	7,387	28
1871	57	43	100	57	6,413	32
1872	54	49	103	61	8,056	39
1873	53	50	103	57	9,049	46
1874	37	51	88	45	9,186	44
1875 (part)	8	10	18	9	1,486	21
TOTAL:	1,101	1,245	2,346	1,208	167,967	538

The value of the diary is by no means restricted to this overview of Prest's engagements and activities. It is also possible to analyse the sermons which he preached, since in most cases their texts are recorded. Such an analysis has not been conducted for all 6,741 sermons, but various snapshots have been taken, from which two conclusions can be drawn.

The first conclusion is that, probably like the majority of his ministerial contemporaries, Prest preached overwhelmingly from New Testament texts, apart from a relatively Old Testament phase very early in his itinerancy. The proportion of New Testament texts to the whole stood at 78 per cent in 1823-48, 52 per cent in 1830-31, 73 per cent in 1840-41, 71 per cent 1845-48, 72 per cent in 1851-54, 81 per cent in 1860-62 and 76 per

cent in 1870-72. During his two London ministries of 1845-48 and 1851-54 Prest preached from 17 of the 39 books of the Old Testament, and from 24 of the 27 in the New Testament. The books used 10 or more times in these six years were, from the Old Testament, Psalms (100), Isaiah (48), Job (22), Zephaniah (15), Proverbs (14), and 2 Kings (11); and, from the New Testament, Romans (88), John (65), Acts (58), Hebrews (57), Ephesians (43), Luke (42), 2 Corinthians (37), 1 Corinthians (31), Revelation (29), Matthew (24), 1 Peter (20), 1 John (19), Colossians (16), Galatians (16), Philippians (15), 1 Thessalonians (12), and Timothy (12).

The second conclusion to be drawn about Prest's sermons is that, despite the inevitable temptation arising from the itinerant and circuit systems to reuse them many times over in differing places and to differing congregations, the pattern of reuse is really quite variable. This phenomenon has been studied in relation to Prest's two London ministries of 1845-48 and 1851-54, when he preached 907 sermons, 869 of which are fully decipherable down to chapter and verse. These 869 were based upon 264 individual texts. As table 3 illustrates, these texts were not used evenly. At one extreme 41 per cent of the texts accounted for only 12 per cent of all sermons delivered; at the other, 6 per cent of the texts accounted for 21 per cent of the sermons. The texts which were used 10 or more times during these six years were: from the Old Testament, Isaiah 30, 18 (15), 2 Kings 5 (11), Zephaniah 3, 17 (11), and Isaiah 53, 11 (10); and, from the New Testament, Romans 14, 17-18 (17), Revelation 22, 3 (16), John 16, 14 (14), 2 Corinthians 5, 13 (13), Hebrews 9, 13-14 (13), Romans 8, 6 (13), Hebrews 12, 28 (11), Philippians 3, 13-14 (11), Acts 4, 18-20 (10), John 16, 8 (10) and Romans 5, 10 (10).

Table 3: Frequency of Use of Sermons by Charles Prest in 1845-48 and 1851-54

Times preached	Number of sermons	Percentage of texts	Percentage of sermons
once	108	41	12
twice	40	15	9
three	32	12	11
four	18	7	8
five	19	7	11
six	10	4	7
seven	8	3	6
eight	9	3	8
nine	5	2	5
ten or more	15	6	21

It is impossible to say how typical this quantitative analysis of Prest's activities is of nineteenth-century Wesleyan local preachers, ordained ministers and connexional office-holders as a whole. So far as is known, no other diary has been subjected to quite such systematic

published treatment, whilst the number of such diaries extant in manuscript, especially covering such a long and unbroken period, and potentially available for statistical analysis, does not appear to be great. Whether representative or not, however, Prest's diary does enable us to lift the veil somewhat on the mysteries of the Victorian Methodist ministry, to penetrate the quasi-hagiography of so much of its published biography, and to glimpse the reality of the everyday lives of the men who filled the pulpits of Methodism and directed its connexional policies.

CLIVE D. FIELD

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## LOCAL BRANCHES REPORT 2000

Sadly our 17 Branches will be reduced by one as the Plymouth and Exeter Branch will almost certainly cease to exist this coming autumn. Also putting it diplomatically, one or two other branches are not as active as they once were. On the other hand, many branches are full of life and enthusiasm.

The importance of our branch journals is a recurring theme in my reports and we are indebted to the initiative and persistence of Jeffery Spittal, Librarian of the New Room, Bristol. He has written the report below on their complete holdings.

Back in the 1970s my late brother formed a collection of chapel crockery, mainly from North Devon. I have added to it considerably but with no real idea of what to do with it all except preserve it. Having recently moved house, I have begun offering the items to appropriate local museums and have been surprised but greatly relieved at their enthusiastic response. Chapel china with the chapel's name and denomination too makes an attractive and visual social and religious comment. So far I have given donations to four museums with several more to come but already I have learned two things. First, local museums have clearly defined geographical areas from which they acquire material. Second, it is sensible all round to donate material unconditionally. I commend to our branch officers and members that they locate and secure pieces of crockery, especially from closing chapels, in co-operation with their local museum.

ROGER THORNE

In 1990 the Library of the New Room in Bristol began assembling runs of back issues of all the Journals, Bulletins, Newsletters etc. produced regularly by all WHS Branches either currently or in past years. It now holds the full range of publications and the receipt of current issues is maintained through an exchange scheme.

This collection of branch periodicals is unique because of its completeness and is therefore for reference only, a vital restriction of its use since some issues may be unique or on flimsy worn paper. Researchers may however request photocopies of any desired article by ringing the Hon. Librarian of the New Room, Mr C. J. Spittal, on his home number 01454-773158. The cost of photocopying will be 10p per page (anything less than 5 pages free) and delivery of copies should be possible within ten days.

The collection has been subject-indexed: copies of the index - *Wesley Historical Society: Index to the Proceedings of the Local Branches 1959-1994* - are available from John Rylands University Library of Manchester, Deansgate, Manchester M3 3EH (Tel: 0161-834-5343/6765, Fax 0161-834-5574) at a cost of £6.00. Material indexed after 1994 can be traced by contacting the Hon. Librarian on 01454-773158. It is hoped that the two lists can be amalgated in the future.

The 1959-1994 index contains some 4000 entries and its continuation around 600.

C. J. SPITTAL

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## **Methodist Archives: Manuscript Accessions, February 1999 - February 2000**

Further small instalment of the Donald Soper archive, comprising Brian Frost's account of Lord Soper's 'Outlook on Christmas'.

Six deeds relating to the conveyance of the Birchin Lane chapel, Manchester 1751. (Deposited by the Manchester Methodist Mission)

Easingwold Circuit Plan, 1855.

Photograph album, Hartley Victoria college, c. 1920.

Group photograph of United Methodist ministers, Victoria Park, n.d (Deposited by Alan Rose).

Boxes of papers and volumes relating to the late Rev. Raymond George (From Raymond George estate).

Six boxes of Armed Forces Board papers.

Thirty-eight boxes of Methodist Colleges & Schools papers from Methodist Church House.

Extracts from various 19th century antiquarian newspapers relating to Methodism.

Headingley College class register, 1930.

Parcel of prints of named Methodist chapels, 19th century (Deposited by Property Division).

Envelope of Richmond College material including correspondence, newsheets of 'old boys' and lists of students, 1843-1947.

Xeroxed copy of 'Life of Mrs Ann Burton by Sarah Broadbent', London, 1842. (Deposited by Leslie Hale).

File of 'Methodist Church ministers profiles (stationings in 2000)' [Prepared by Connexional Church Membership Committee.] CLOSED UNDER 75 YEAR RULE. (Deposited by Alan Rose).

Printed 'Training notes for Visitors' [a manual for Visiting], September 1968 (Deposited by Alan Rose).

Parcel of research notes relating to Methodism in North Wales, particularly in relation to English Language issues (Deposited by Rev. John Davies).

PETER B. NOCKLES

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## BOOK REVIEWS

John T. Smith, *Methodism and Education 1849-1902: J. H. Rigg, Romanism, and Wesleyan schools*. (Clarendon Press 1998. Pp. 258 £42.00. ISBN: 019 826964 1.)

There is much literature on Methodist Sunday schools, but the subject of Wesleyan Methodist day school education has been comparatively neglected. John Smith's important study of nineteenth-century Wesleyan elementary education, a revised version of his Hull Ph.D thesis, fills this historical lacuna.

Smith charts the late but remarkably rapid rise in the number of Wesleyan day schools from a mere 22 in 1837 (when there were 3,339 Wesleyan Sunday schools) to 912 by 1873, followed by a gradual decline to 738 by 1902. As Smith explains in chapter one, the early Methodist sluggishness on educational expansion was caused by lack of finance but also by an undeveloped denominational identity and hence reluctance to enter into direct competition with the Church of England. The growth of state education after the 1820s, the challenge of Roman Catholic expansion, and the impact of the Oxford Movement on the Church of England, forced a re-evaluation of Wesleyan attitudes. The 'spectre' of Puseyism increased Wesleyan suspicions of the established church and encouraged Methodists to oppose governmental proposals such as those of Russell (1839) and Graham (1843) which they feared would increase Anglican influence. The Wesleyan Education Committee was set up and a push towards the creation

of Wesleyan denominational schools made in the 1840s primarily in self-defence - to prevent adherents from drifting away to other churches.

From chapter two onwards, Smith presents the story of nineteenth-century Methodist education from the perspective of a notable campaigner, Dr James Harrison Rigg (1821 - 1911). Rigg was tireless in his defence of teachers, and forward-looking in his educational philosophy (advocating science tuition in school and a similar education for girls and boys). He opposed the ultra-Voluntaryists, and favoured denominational teacher training, vigorously opposing the post-1870 trend for Wesleyan village day schools to close as detrimental to the Wesleyan cause (Roman Catholic day schools were on the increase). As a prominent member of the Wesleyan Education Committee from 1859 and head of Westminster Teacher Training College from 1868, Rigg was at the forefront of Methodist policy in relation to School Boards, the Education Act of 1870 and Sandon's Act of 1886. However, Rigg's 'ascendancy' was increasingly challenged by a powerful lobby within Methodism represented by William Arthur and later, Hugh Price Hughes, which regarded Methodist support for the denominational school system as aiding Anglican endowment and hegemony. This lobby, keenly sensitive to fears of 'Popery' and 'Puseyism', came to regard state schools as a solution to the spectre of 'Ritualist' proselytism. Rigg's cooperation with the high church Anglican Canon Gregory and the Roman Catholic Cardinal Manning on the Cross Commission (1885-91), particularly antagonised on this faction, led by the strident proponent of 'secular' education and the 'Nonconformist conscience', Hugh Price Hughes. Rigg was outvoted for the first time in January 1891 on the Conference Special Committee, a vote which marked the effective demise of the Wesleyan denominational schools. Rigg's position was undermined by revelations in Purcell's biography of Cardinal Manning, published in 1896. In it was reprinted a letter from Rigg to Manning in 1888 praising the latter's pro-church school policy and attacking Hughes by name. It was an embarrassment for Rigg who had always rejected Hughes's suggestion that he was in league with Roman Catholic and high church educational interests. Thereafter, Hughes rather than Rigg determined the shape of Wesleyan educational policy.

Hughes, the founder and editor of the influential *Methodist Times*, could be something of a firebrand, though a more sympathetic picture of Hughes's educational philosophy emerges from Christopher Oldstone-Moore's recent biography, which deserves to be read alongside Smith's study of Rigg. Rigg however, had cause to feel misunderstood. His attitude to the Church of England was somewhat ambivalent. He was fiercely critical of the Oxford Movement, ritualism, and anything savouring of sacramentalism (even baptismal regeneration), and opposed (pp. 129-30) to the Methodist use of the Prayer Book, which he sought in 1882 to replace by a more protestant service book. On the other hand, Rigg was less anti-Anglican and anti-Catholic and had a broader understanding of the pastoral ministry than

many of his Methodist contemporaries. His *Oxford High Anglicanism* (1889) offered a searching critique of Tractarianism from a protestant perspective, but it was more balanced, nuanced, and fair in its treatment than Walter Walsh's notorious contemporary polemic *The Secret History of the Oxford Movement*. Rigg's understanding with Manning was based on mutual respect and a mutually deep aversion 'to the principles of secularism in education'. Smith concludes that by his force of personality and breadth of political and ecclesiastical contacts, Rigg 'more than anyone had prevented the hostility between the Church of England and Methodism becoming a more acrimonious schism, although by doing so, he intensified the divisions in Wesleyan ranks' (p. 235).

Smith's study, enriched by some valuable statistical appendices, is well structured and closely based on extant source materials. The volume reveals the scope, already pursued by the author, for further comparative work on Methodist and Catholic education in the Victorian era. The middle sections of the book might have benefited from some pruning (especially as some portions had already appeared in a fine article in *Recusant history*, vol. 23, no. 1, May 1996, under the title, 'The Wesleyans, the "Romanists" and the Education Act of 1870') but nonetheless this book represents a fine piece of scholarship which reveals much about a neglected figure and subject.

PETER B. NOCKLES

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J. P. van Noppen, *Transforming Words. The Early Methodist Revival from a Discourse Perspective*. Religions and Discourse vol. 3 (Peter Lang, Bern, Berlin, Frankfurt, New York, Paris, Wien, 1999, pp. 248, £26.00, ISBN 0-8204-4236-4)

As the author points out, there have been few linguistic analyses of the literature of early Methodism and those few largely innocent of computer aids or modern approaches to linguistics. Dr van Noppen is effectively a pioneer in studying Methodism in terms of critical 'discourse analysis'. That is to say, he is concerned to examine the role fulfilled by language in early Methodism, how it was received by its target audience and why; how its use and reception was related to the social context. Those who now study texts and their contexts often argue that people using various kinds of language are liable to be affected by assumptions which directly or indirectly legitimise existing power relationships. Wielders of power can use language to condition or influence people's thoughts and actions in favour of vested class or party interests. As van Noppen points out, this suggests that an analysis of Methodist discourse may be useful for assessing accounts of Methodism which have portrayed it as psychologically or socially manipulative - William Sargent's charges of brain-washing or E. P. Thompson's of services to factory-discipline are cases in point.

Van Noppen's aim is to study how the discourse of early Methodism operated and how it related to contemporary social attitudes. For him, 'discourse analysis' is not narrowly textual and linguistic but draws on a wide range of evidence to explain the impact of Methodist discourse inside and outside the Methodist community. This gives a fuller understanding than text analysis alone could supply. Though not primarily concerned to settle conflicting accounts of Methodism as repressive or liberating, van Noppen points out that judgements of this kind are often influenced by the writer's ideological premisses. His hope is that a measure of objectivity may be introduced into such debates by discourse analysis so as to explain how Methodism influenced its audiences and how far this can be regarded as manipulative.

To this end he not only examines the various Methodist media of communication - sermons, hymns, tracts, books, magazines, journals, biographies - but also such evidence as survives for the ways in which the message was received. With the help of colleagues he produces computer analysis of Wesley's sermons ('Sermonquest') and the 1780 *Hymns* ('Hymnquest'), details of which are given in appendices. But beyond this and Wesley's other works he has drawn on an impressive range of sources including Methodist biography and attacks on Methodism plus an extensive range of secondary sources. A number of these, especially recent Continental work, will probably be unfamiliar to English students of Methodism including the present reviewer and are very welcome.

The main body of the study discusses audience participation (addressers and addressees); the purpose of discourse; discourse media; discourse setting; discourse form and content; discourse reception; Methodism and politics. Both theological and secular aspects of Methodist appeal are considered.

Dr Van Noppen's conclusions are balanced, judicious and carefully nuanced. Single-minded and generalised praise or condemnation of Methodism is misplaced in view of the variety of Methodism in place and time. The message of Methodism was conveyed through diverse media adapted to the people and situation. Favourable reception was influenced by the message of love to the underprivileged, aided by skilful speaking and the attraction of hymns along with the state of mind and aspirations of the audience, but the effects are not to be seen simply as the result of conscious manipulation. Though primarily concerned with spiritual salvation, Methodism also preached social holiness and led to social results. Despite Wesley's determined advocacy of the strict use of time and the value of work, there is little ground for claiming that he was concerned with deliberate social and political manipulation. His political and social conservatism was mainly a defence against charges of social subversion. Contrary to what is sometimes claimed, his 'evangelical economics' was fundamentally anti-capitalist in its hostility to wealth accumulation. It was the later, nineteenth century, development of

Methodism which gave most colour to charges of its being a vehicle for work-discipline and the loss of appeal to the masses.

This study, based as it is on a very careful evaluation of a wide range of evidence as well as technical discourse analysis, avoids the generalised praise and blame of Methodist social characteristics which has marred too many attempts to assess early Methodism. Methodist historians should not be put off by what to many of us will be the unfamiliar mode of 'discourse'. For apart from the merits of the overall analysis the book is full of fresh and illuminating observations on well-worn topics - Wesley's preaching and writing style and their effects; the characteristics of the hymns; his economic, social and political attitudes. In particular, much light is shed on the still-neglected subject of the nature and response of his audience. There is also potential here for further investigation. For example, there is still unexploited material in early Methodist biographies and letters for further understanding of the audience. On hymns, there is anecdotal evidence for the actual use of hymns by the rank and file in terms of favoured hymns and the adaptation of secular tunes for them.

Van Noppen has done much more than introduce to Methodist studies a current type of linguistic analysis. He has added a new tool to uncover further dimensions of historical understanding to early Methodism, casting much light on the audience as well as the well-publicised leaders.

HENRY D. RACK

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John A. Hargreaves, *Halifax, Town and City Histories*. Edinburgh University Press. 1999. pp 274. £18. (ISBN. 1.85331.217.7.)

A local history can often be boring to other than its denizens but *Halifax* is a first rate piece of work. Both the meticulous accuracy and vigour of the writing, with 140 well-chosen illustrations, set a standard which will be hard to equal. The town of Halifax has characteristics which make it a historian's delight. One can trace so much of English history here - the dominance of the wool trade, the 'astonishing trading town' of the eighteenth century, the new large scale style of manufacture after 1850, Halifax becoming the home of toffee (Quality Street indeed!), the Building Society, and the Halifax Choral Society, the equal of Huddersfield any day! Then we trace the decline of the textile industry with all its consequences.

Let us highlight the church. Dr. Hargreaves shows the way in which Halifax parallels and sometimes 'bucks' national trends. The *parish* of Halifax, the largest in Yorkshire in Wesley's day, much larger than the town, is a paradigm of the social conditions for the rapid rise of Methodism, following the era of Puritanism. By 1843 there were 110

nonconformist chapels and 22 Anglican churches and chapels in the parish. Halifax headed a Methodist circuit in 1785, it provided the first President after Wesley in William Thompson and in William Thom, the leader of the MNC after Kilham, strong in this area.

Nonconformity flourished in Halifax in the Victorian period with powerful lay leaders and large working class participation in Sunday Schools - the fourth biggest in numbers out of 55 large towns, producing a 'folk religion' of great importance. It was a town young in population. Dr. Hargreaves' demographic figures show an increase in the age of inhabitants producing a consequent ageing and decline in church membership in 'an overchurched town'. Decline had set in before the First World War but there was a small increase in Wesleyans and PM's (not UM's!) in the 1920s. In 1959 Methodist membership was 2,896, in 1983 1,574 though decline was less swift at that time. The population is now ageing again.

The mill owners like the Akroyds and Crossleys fostered in the end close social harmony after the period described by E.P. Thompson. This was true later of the Mackintoshes but sometimes the competition led to the shooting up of church and chapel spires in un-christian rivalry! Their political involvement is a fascinating story, too, with Luddites, Chartists, Liberal ascendancy and the rise of Labour.

Dr. Hargreaves is fully abreast of recent historiography like the work of Simon Green, entirely free of sentimentality especially on difficult educational issues. His statistics are illuminating in showing occupational trends like the decline of the 'labour aristocracy', domestic service and women in the textile industry.

The book ends with Halifax no longer draped in constant smoke but a centre of Yorkshire tourism, an interesting example of a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic town with new life and enterprise as exciting as the 'millocracy' of the nineteenth century. Altogether a delight to handle and read.

JOHN MUNSEY TURNER

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Wesleyan Theology CD-ROM (Fletcher-Long Books, 2 Brearly Street, Handsworth, Birmingham, B12 0JJ. £39.99 post free)

The contents of this CD-ROM are the most curious hotch-potch I can remember coming across and, despite the title, are in fact a mixture of theology and history. No particular harm in that, except that whoever made the choice appears to be poorly acquainted with the material and to have had no coherent guiding principles. The most substantial items are a 4-volume edition of John Fletcher's *Works* (edition not specified) and 7 volumes of what is described as *Early Methodist Preachers*. As no 7-volume edition of the latter exists, I was puzzled by this until closer

examination revealed that this is *not* Jackson's work, but Telford's revised edition familiar to all (except, it seems the compiler of this CD-ROM) as *Wesley's Veterans*.

The remaining items serve mainly to deepen one's misgivings. Nathan Bangs' *History of Methodism* is, of course, a history of Methodist Episcopal Church (and hardly the most up-to-date at that), and only marginally concerned with British Methodism. Two other items are of American origin and doubtful usefulness as a new millennium approaches. *Fundamental Christian Theology* by A. M. Hills was published in 1931 at Pasadena, CA. I cannot pronounce on a work that I have never seen, but the fact that it is not cited in any recent work on Wesley's theology seems to speak for itself. The same may be said of Binney's *Compend Improved* (New York, 1875) and McDonald's *John Wesley and his Doctrine* (Boston, 1893). If you are researching the history of 19th century American Methodist theology, these may be the very sources you are looking for. If not, you will be left with a 115-page biography of John Fletcher by Margaret Allen, published in 1905 by the Salvation Army Publishing Department as No. 13 in its 'Red Hot Library', but apparently unknown to more recent biographers of Fletcher.

There is an acknowledgement to the Rev. D. Crossman who both helped with the production and wrote a foreword to each work included. I have to say, in all honesty, that the result of his labours inspires me with no confidence at all in his scholarship.

JOHN A. VICKERS

Brian F. Spinney *Tuned for praise: the story of Methodist hymn-books and their revisions in the 20th century from Wesley's Hymns to Hymns and Psalms*, 40pp, £2.50 (by post £2.75) Available from the author.

Most British readers of *Proceedings* were probably brought up on the *Methodist Hymn Book* of 1933, which will always retain a special place in our affections -- and indeed is still the principal hymnal used in certain evangelical Methodist circuits 16 years after the introduction of its successor! But as Bryan Spinney points out in this commendable little guide to the principal hymn books of 1904, 1933 and 1983, it is important to present a book with suitable hymns for all the different circumstances and moods of worship in a world which has seen unrivalled changes in the last 60 years. To say nothing of restoring an author's original wherever possible (e.g. *HP* 440 v.2), dealing sensitively with the question of inclusive language (e.g. *HP* 104), and reflecting the unprecedented changes in social and missionary changes emphases, necessitating a much more singable version of *MHB* 815, for instance. All profits from sales of *Tuned for Praise* are for NCH Action for Children, whose founder's

contribution to our hymnody reduces from two in 1904 to one in 1933 and none at all in 1983!

K. F. BOWDEN

## RECENT PUBLICATIONS

*John Wesley's House: Centenary Symposium Papers* (£3 + £1 postage) prints four papers given at a day conference at Wesley's Chapel in February 1998 to mark the bicentenary of Wesley's moving into his house in City Road, London. The papers cover new ground and are an important addition to the literature on Wesley's Chapel. Also welcome is a new edition of Nigel McMurray's *The Stained Glass of Wesley's Chapel*, (£3 + £1 postage) in a new and more convenient format, but still lavishly illustrated in full colour. A new edition of Helen McKenny's *City Road Diary 1885-1888* is now available. If you missed this fascinating account of life in Victorian London the first time round, don't let history repeat itself.

The above titles are all available from Wesley's Chapel.

## NOTES AND QUERIES

### 1536 ANOTHER BIBLE CHRISTIAN CIRCUIT BOOK

In recent articles Dr Beckerlegge has described the Circuit Book of the Bible Christians' Weare Circuit, which began in 1822 when the circuit was started. The circuit lay to the east of the Bible Christians' heartland in the South Western counties and in its early days extended from Weston Super Mare to Bristol although later Bristol formed its own circuit. To the south west lay another Bible Christian circuit, Taunton, which was the limit of the heartland in which the Bible Christian circuits were more or less contiguous. By a kindly providence the writer, who is the District Archivist, recently discovered the original Taunton Bible Christian Circuit book in Devon and it will be deposited in the Somerset Record Office.

The Taunton Book covers the years 1840 to 1867 and could also be called the Milverton book as that West Somerset village was head of the circuit for a few years. It was also divided off from the intensely rural Kingsbrompton circuit which was immortalised in its later days by Lewis Court's *Romance of a Country Circuit*. As a rural denomination the Bible Christians established several of their circuits on villages, which caused tensions when work spread to neighbouring market towns and chapels were opened there. There is a strong hint of that here as Taunton soon became the head of the circuit and the name Milverton was dropped.

Quite typically, at least thirty one places are listed in the book where preaching was carried out for at least a quarter or two but eventually the

circuit settled down to just five places, some of which survived until after the Methodist Union of 1932 and indeed I preached in Halse and Hillcommon in the 1950s. Only one, Wellington, now survives in use. Between Taunton and Weston a Bridgwater circuit with two chapels was established but not until 1866.

ROGER THORNE

### 1537 BLACK PEOPLES IN METHODIST RECORDS

The Black and Asian Studies Association is embarking on a project to create a database on the presence of Black people in Britain since the 16th century. We are asking that people carrying out their own research in parish, church, chapel, jail, workhouse, settlement, etc records send us any data they come across on Black people. It seems from the data sent to us thus far that Black peoples have been scattered across the whole UK, in towns, villages, great houses, etc, for the past four hundred years. While the information in these records is very limited, we should still be able to 'map' the Black presence in the UK with the aid of contributors.

It seems likely that as John Wesley pronounced against slavery much earlier than the Church of England, that Black people would have been attracted to the Wesleyan /Methodist churches. Thus if there are many entries in the parish records, there should also be entries in the Wesleyan/Methodist records. Could we therefore ask your readers to send us any information they come across?

MARIKA SHERWOOD

c/o ICS, 28 Russell Square, London, WC1B 5DS

### 1538 WHERE IS SWATTERS CARR?

I have recently been given a wooden gavel inscribed as follows: 'Swatters Carr Wesleyan School Chapel. Presented to Mrs I. Iveson on her laying Memorial Stone 14 December, 1892'. The Property Committee in Manchester have no record of this chapel, which suggests that it may not be in Britain. I would be glad to hear from anyone who knows about the whereabouts of this chapel.

REV R.V. ENTICOTT

14 Monkton Hill, Chippenham, Wilts, SN15 1EP

### 1539 A PRAYER OF J. H. MOULTON

The poem quoted by Cyril Rodd in the February *Proceedings* (Note 1533) is to be found in *James Hope Moulton 1863-1917* ed by H. K. Moulton, Epworth Press 1963, on page 17, where it is headed 'At the Classroom Door'. He wrote the poem when he was teaching Indian students in the United Theological College, Bangalore in the last months of his life.

JOHN MUNSEY TURNER

## **THE ANNUAL LECTURE**

will be delivered in St Andrew's Methodist Church,  
Undercliffe, Bradford

on Monday, 26th June 2000 at 7.30pm

by John H. Lenton MA MPhil

**'Wesley's Preachers'**

Chairman: Dr John A. Vickers BA, BD.

The lecture will be preceded by TEA\* for members at 5pm  
and the annual meeting at 6pm.

*\* Please book with the General Secretary by 12 June.  
Cost £2.00-£3.00 per head.*

**Nominations for a Member at Large to serve on the  
Executive Committee for a three year term should be sent to  
the General Secretary by 10th June 2000.**

### **DIRECTIONS TO ST ANDREW'S UNDERCLIFFE**

#### **From M62 (West)**

Leave Motorway at Jct. 26 and take M606. At roundabout at top of M606, turn right onto Bradford Ring Road (A6177). Stay on this road, passing over a roundabout and three sets of traffic lights, for about 2 miles. \* After you pass a golf course on the left, (bounded by a high stone wall!) the road rises up slightly, through the third set of traffic lights. As you get to the top of this incline, a Daewoo garage appears on your right, opposite which the ring road veers left into Northcote Road. Turn left into Northcote Road, and you will see St Andrew's ahead of you on the right.

#### **From M62 (East)**

Leave Motorway at Jct. 27 and follow the signs for Bradford (A650) for about 1½ miles, until you reach the Ring Road (A6177). Take the slip road up to the roundabout and take the third exit, which is the ring road, towards Undercliffe. In about 1 ½ miles you will join the above instructions at \*

#### **From Huddersfield via A629/M62**

Take A629 (from the Huddersfield Inner Ring Road on the top side of town) towards Halifax. After a couple of miles, this meets a large open roundabout. Take the first left towards M62 (Jct. 24), passing under the motorway to join it driving eastwards. Proceed to Jct. 26, then follow the instructions at the top of the page.