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Cover Illustration:

Portrait of Susanna Wesley. Oil on canvas, 18th century, image courtesy of the trustees of Epworth Old Rectory. Written on the back Miss Annesley afterwards Mrs Susanna Wesley mother of John and Charles Wesley. Photographed by Donald H. Ryan.

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Grand-daughters to Susanna: Wesleyan Women's Discipleship, 1800-1860

The Annual Lecture of the Wesley Historical Society delivered at Epworth Memorial Church, on Saturday 29 June 2013

Wesleyan women of the first half of the nineteenth century are at a dual disadvantage as subjects of historical study. They are women, so contemporary public narratives were largely constructed about, but not by, them. And they are Wesleyan, so they may be perceived in the historical context as oppressed; silenced by a branch of Methodism that privileged public (and therefore male) structures of authority and (by implication) proposed a domestic model of discipleship for women.

David Hempton suggests that: 'Before 1810 female domesticity on the whole was not paraded as a model in Methodist publications; women were admired rather for their religious experience, progress in holiness, and contribution to the religious and social mission of the church . . . yet by 1850 women came to be admired more for their pious domesticity than for their public contribution to the work of mission'.¹ Linda Wilson, surveying Nonconformist women's spirituality between 1825 and 1875, characterises the image of Primitive Methodist women as least conformed to the 'domestic' ideal ('noisy in prayer, sometimes preached . . . more hospitable than other women'), and that of Wesleyan women as showing 'less emphasis . . . on personal devotions and domestic concerns than . . . Baptist and Congregationalist accounts'.²

More domestic than their forbears, less domestic than their contemporaries? Was there anything distinctive about Wesleyan women's discipleship, both as presented as an approved public image and as experienced in specific lives and contexts, in this period? The examination of both image and experience may be helpfully bounded by two defining events: the limitation of women's preaching (in undivided Methodism) in 1803, and the emergence of women onto a Connexion-wide stage with the setting up (by women) of 'The Ladies' Committee for the Amelioration of the Condition of Women in Heathen Countries, and for Education etc.' in 1858.

This study draws on the changing public accounts of women's Christian lives and deaths as depicted in obituaries³ in the 'Magazine'⁴ (their quantity ranging between 15

¹ David N. Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 140. The comment refers specifically to America but is prefaced by: 'As in Britain . . .'.

² Linda Wilson, *Constrained by Zeal: Female Spirituality Amongst Nonconformists, 1825-1875* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000), pp. 223-4.

³ This term is used to cover all death notices. Headings varied from time to time, but whether 'Memoirs', 'Biographies', 'Lives', 'Obituaries', 'The Grace of God Manifested in the Life of . . .', 'An Account of . . .', 'The Experience/Happy Death of . . .' or 'Recent Deaths', they were always editorially grouped according to their perceived order of length or importance.

⁴ This term is used to cover the various titles under which the Arminian/Methodist/Wesleyan Methodist Magazine was published. Its status as the official organ of the Connexion remained unchanged.

in 1810 and 195 in 1845) at five-year intervals from 1800 to 1860. Simple statistical analysis shows a changing picture of women's discipleship over the period, and local evidence, largely drawn from the south of England, nuances this image. These latter sources, while less (or not at all) concerned with constructing an 'image', are patchy and discontinuous. The 'Magazine' offers an evolving panorama with occasional close-ups: local sources present vivid snapshots whose context must often be sought elsewhere. The term 'discipleship', used in preference to the more comprehensive 'spirituality', indicates the intention (while not ignoring or denying the importance of worship and private devotion) to focus on the active expression of faith in church and society.

The title links the pedigree of women's discipleship in Methodism with the location of the Society's 2013 Annual Meeting at Epworth, the site of the best-known expression of Susanna Wesley's own active discipleship in her kitchen.

1. Leadership

The term 'leadership' is not often associated with Wesleyan women in this period. But although social expectations limited women's role, I argue that Wesleyan structures gave them particular opportunities to exercise significant leadership within the limits of respectability, and to develop transferable skills for a changing society.

The term 'the Angel out of the House', coined by Richard Helsing, describes the way that public roles in any church community could be viewed as extensions of women's role in the home.⁵ Methodism gave an even more positive justification for such activity. Its history and theology privileged 'activism' ('usefulness') as the strongest possible evidence of conversion and sanctification, and this is reflected in obituaries. In both 1800 and 1805, 15% and 16% respectively of their women subjects identified as having carried out some named form of 'public' discipleship activity (i.e. in addition to private devotion, journal-keeping and attendance at the 'means of grace'). This proportion increased to 56% in 1815 and remained at around that figure until the end of the study period (70% in 1820 and 1825).⁶ This is a different dynamic from that proposed by Hempton. Wesleyan Methodism supported activities which were indeed extensions of domestic roles, gave them a more institutionalised and therefore 'public' dimension and constructed its public narrative accordingly.

Class Leaders

Women in Wesleyan Methodism at this time had no control over 'theological education, church property, preaching, publishing, ecclesiastical committees, and the construction and implementation of church policy'.⁷ But the office of Class Leader

⁵ For discussion of this category and its significance, see Wilson, *Constrained by Zeal*, pp. 189-190.

⁶ These proportions were altered from the late 1830's when large numbers of very short notices of 'Recent Deaths' were introduced. But even in this category the 'activist' proportion was 45% in 1850 and 44% in 1855.

⁷ Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*, p. 149.

gave them an acknowledged leadership role with a public, albeit limited, voice. It is the office most frequently ascribed to women memorialised in the *Magazine*. Although the majority of Methodist members were female, at least until 1830⁸, the public image of the Class Leader was predominantly male: in 1850, for example, 60 (42%) of the 143 men commemorated by ‘Memoirs’ and ‘Obituaries’ were identified as Class Leaders but only 15 (10%) of the 154 women. In 1850, of the 60 male Class Leaders five were described as holding ‘that important office’⁹ or ‘that responsible charge’¹⁰, but none of the 15 women. The trope ‘a class of females’ or ‘a class of young persons’ became common from around 1840, serving to stress the particular and limited scope of women’s office. There is no evidence in the ‘*Magazine*’ sample of a woman leading a mixed-sex class. Nevertheless these women held a recognised position of leadership within an increasingly institutionalised denomination.¹¹

The character of a praiseworthy Class Leader, male and female alike, as depicted in the ‘*Magazine*’, embraced the qualities of ‘faithfulness’, ‘diligence’ and above all ‘usefulness’. The terms ‘affectionate’, ‘faithful’ and showing ‘sympathy’, together with ‘useful’, became the preferred descriptors for women (male leaders being also occasionally described as ‘affectionate’).¹² The comment from 1845 about Mrs Sarah Raven puts flesh on these dry bones: ‘She regarded her members as the children of her family, and never ceased to care for them’.¹³

Reluctance to serve as a Class Leader, often characterised as ‘diffidence’, is frequently named in women’s obituaries. It may have been linked with practical problems, whether of health or family responsibilities – issues weighing particularly heavily on women leaders. Mrs Elizabeth Williams wrote to her mother that her work as a Class Leader and a Visitor for the Strangers’ Friend Society ‘calls me from my family, who are very frequently sick’.¹⁴ Obituaries, however, gave greater prominence to socially conditioned expectations about a woman’s character. Mrs Jane Brownell had ‘led a Class abroad, yet, under a sense of her inability . . . always declined taking that office in England’¹⁵. The Rev. Thomas S. Squance passed judgment on Mrs Mary Corderoy who, having become a Class Leader ‘with much fear and trembling . . . was but too quickly overwhelmed and felt obliged to retire . . . This was undoubtedly a departure from the path of duty, though she did not so consider it’.¹⁶

⁸ Clive D. Field, ‘The social composition of English Methodism to 1830: a membership analysis’ in *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, vol. 76, no. 1, (Spring 1994), 153-78.

⁹ *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine (WMM)* 4th ser. vol. 6 (1850), 653, 1211, 1216, 1416.

¹⁰ *WMM* 4th ser. vol. 6 (1850), 648.

¹¹ See especially Margaret Batty, *Stages in the Development and Control of Methodist Lay Leadership, 1791-1878* (Peterborough: Epworth, 1988).

¹² Among those women who qualified for a more extended notice in 1850 (19 ‘Biographical Sketches’ and 4 ‘Memoirs’) the term ‘faithful’ is the most common descriptor (four occurrences) with ‘affectionate’ occurring twice.

¹³ *WMM* 4th ser., vol. 1 (1845), 1212.

¹⁴ *Methodist Magazine (MM)*, vol. 39 (1816), 446.

¹⁵ *MM*, vol. 38 (1815), 767-8.

¹⁶ *WMM*, 4th ser., vol. 6 (1850), 1020.

‘Fear and trembling’ were, however, rooted in theology as well as in social expectations. Writers invoke subjects’ awareness of ‘the serious responsibility connected with (the office),’¹⁷ and ‘the anxiety she felt for the spiritual interest of the members of the class committed to her care’.¹⁸ Mrs Jane Hunt took account of both the personal and the corporate dynamics when, on being asked to become a Class Leader in 1813, she wrote in her journal: ‘It has long been my prayer that the Lord would increase my usefulness, and he has been pleased to answer it in this way. I would willingly decline the serious office, but I dare not. I trust that I can hear the Lord calling me by his church; and if so, He can and will qualify me for the duties required . . . I am to cast myself, with all my insufficiency, upon my God’.¹⁹ Wesleyan Methodism thus both publicly valued diffidence as evidence of femininity and encouraged its transgression.

Class leaders plus: women in wider leadership roles

Even the public narrative of the ‘Magazine’ does not limit women’s leadership roles to passively ‘taking care of’ an allocated class. It refers infrequently but persistently to women ‘raising a class’ and seeking members.²⁰ Mrs. Thomasin Flamank, though highly unusual, is being described as the Leader of a Society (rather than a Class) at Polruan.²¹ Elizabeth Wood of Bradford ‘gathered a Society’.²²

Local sources reinforce such activist narratives. The fluid conditions more often associated with early Methodism persisted in situations of expansion and revival throughout the period. Small domestically-based societies continued to proliferate and women were thus given opportunities for informal leadership. In the Southampton Circuit, where Southampton was the only society with a membership in excess of 100, new societies were being founded in the 1820’s and 30’s.²³ In small societies where ‘the Friends manage as well as they can’²⁴ for the provision of Stewards, women could exercise generalised leadership. At Timsbury, with 13 members in 1837-8, Mrs Jewell was the only Leader, a Steward, and also ‘manages the money affairs’ (as did Mrs Flemish at Nursling and Lucy Parker at Crowd Hill²⁵). At Fawley ‘Brother and Sister Thicks’ ran a mission enterprise on the edge of the New Forest. With a small membership in 1836-7 it accounted for 54% of the circuit’s total order of magazines aimed at ‘cottagers’ and children, with Mrs Thicks in charge of the ordering. In the

¹⁷ *WMM*, 2nd ser., vol.4 (1825), 727.

¹⁸ *WMM*, 3rd ser., vol. 5 (1840), 997.

¹⁹ *WMM*, 4th ser., vol. 6 (1850), 1247.

²⁰ *WMM*, 3rd ser., vol. 9 (1830), 449-50; *WMM*, 3rd ser., vol 14 (1835), 240; *WMM*, 4th ser., vol. 11 (1855), 663, 975; *WMM*, 4th ser., vol. 16 (1860), 579.

²¹ *WMM*, 2nd ser., vol. 9 (1830), 502.

²² *WMM*, 3rd ser., vol. 48 (1825), 79.

²³ The Circuit Memorandum Book of 1814 -1835 (Southampton Records Office [SRO] D/Meth/1/11) and the Circuit Schedule Book of 1836–1855 (SRO D/Meth/1/7/1/1, 2, 3, 4) give details of leadership and membership. This latter document represents the implementation of the Conference decision of 1835 instituting annual returns of statistical information – the ‘October Count’.

²⁴ SRO D/Meth/1/7/1/1, 2, 3, 4 (1837-8).

²⁵ *ibid.*

Andover Circuit, at Collingbourne with a membership of 46 in 1844 a woman led a class of 15 females and 6 males.²⁶

Expansion meant preaching being begun in private houses, giving women the opportunity to exercise significant spiritual and practical leadership. In the Melksham Circuit in Wiltshire, with rapid expansion in the early decades of the nineteenth century, women formed societies and gave money.²⁷ Preaching was commenced in houses and cottages in many places in Dorset in the years immediately after 1816.²⁸ The same picture is present in other areas (Lancashire in the 1860's, for example).²⁹ Revival also gave women opportunities to exercise extended leadership roles. In 1831 in Wimborne, when 'a great revival took place', 'one Sunday Mr Bowes preached . . . Mrs Bowes, who frequently exhorted in public, delivered an address to the congregation, which was accompanied by great spiritual influence'.³⁰ Women's role in this circuit was long remembered and honoured.³¹

Obituaries in the 'Magazine' show how women could shape the developing institutions of Wesleyan Methodism by using financial resources under their own control and by influencing family members. Involvement in chapel-building is a case in point, whether indirectly – Miss Ryle, 'using all her influence with her father'³²; the Bull sisters, forming with an older woman a 'junto of females' to strengthen their father's resolve when the money ran out³³; Mrs Brough 'render(ing) her husband, upon whom rested a considerable part of the burden, valuable assistance . . . (raising) a considerable sum . . . by a ladies' bazaar . . .'³⁴, or more directly – Mrs Spencer³⁵ and Mrs Deane³⁶ using their own financial and property resources.

Leadership of a more structured kind was possible for women in other settings than leading a class. The paucity of references to charitable organisations in earlier obituaries probably reflects a convention of the genre, as the existence of Strangers'

²⁶ Hampshire Archives Centre [HAC] 96M72/NMC/B7.

²⁷ 'Mr James Rogers . . . formed, in a cottage, a society of three persons . . . Jane Drewett, Virtue Morgan, and Sarah Pierce or Price'. Mrs Morgan died in 1849 and left £50 for Methodism in Tinhead. She and her husband bought land when the life interest in the previous chapel fell in in 1828 and she 'exerted herself most successfully in obtaining subscriptions'. Miss Mary Taylor (d 1836) left £100 to reduce the chapel debt. All the named bequests for Tinhead are from women. Rev. Thomas R. Jones, *The Departed Worthy: A Narrative of the Religious Life and Labours of Mr. Charles Maggs; with Notices of Some Members of his Family, and of Wesleyan-Methodism in the Melksham Circuit* (London: Alexander Heylin, 1857), pp. 127-8, 131.

²⁸ John S. Simon, *Methodism in Dorset: a Sketch* (Weymouth: James Sherren, 1870).

²⁹ William Jessop, *Methodism in Rossendale and the Neighbourhood: with some notice of the rise and progress of the United Societies, and of contemporary events* (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1880), pp. 242-3; Thomas Hargreaves, *Wesleyan Methodism in Accrington and the Neighbourhood* (London: Woolmer, 1883), p. 113.

³⁰ Simon, *Methodism in Dorset*, p. 43.

³¹ 'in addition to the ministers, many laymen have laboured long and hard, and "honourable women not a few" to raise the Circuit to its present state of efficiency'. Simon, *Methodism in Dorset*, p. 88.

³² *MM*, vol. 23 (1800), 117; *WMM*, 4th ser., vol. 11 (1855), 91.

³³ *WMM*, 3rd ser., vol. 19 (1840), 895-6.

³⁴ *WMM*, 4th ser., vol. 11 (1855), 91.

³⁵ *WMM*, 4th ser., vol. 6 (1850), 564-6.

³⁶ *ibid.*, 653.

Friend, Child-bed Linen and Dorcas Societies from the eighteenth century onwards is well attested.³⁷ The ‘Magazine’ celebrates individual efforts, from Mrs Suckley in 1800³⁸ to Mrs Davies in 1855.³⁹ But organised endeavours are also noted even in the earlier years: Mrs Thompson, active from around 1800 onward⁴⁰ and Mrs Rebecca Mason, who ‘took a very active part in the establishment of the Society for Lying-in Women in Birmingham, of which she was Secretary at the time of her decease’ (aged 26) in 1807.⁴¹ More structured activity is however presented from the 1850’s onward, with roles such as ‘President of the Hull Methodist Child-Bed Relief Society’⁴² or ‘Secretary to the Committee’ set up to extinguish the debt on the new chapel⁴³ occurring more frequently. Individual efforts were still valued, but so too was the development of administrative skills.

Ministers’ wives occupied a special place. Wilson wonders whether Wesleyan Methodism was less likely than Primitive Methodism to expect them to lead a class⁴⁴, but in my sample, in every year but one, the total number of ministers’ wives always included at least one Class Leader.⁴⁵ Opinions about their role were however divided. By the 1850’s some writers assumed that readers would know and approve of what was meant by ‘the arduous and responsible duties of a minister’s wife’. Failure to undertake them might attract disapproval. The wife of Mr Worrall was prevented by ‘invincible and constitutional timidity’ from ‘engag(ing) in those publick exercises in which many pious females have been eminently useful’.⁴⁶ Some had nothing but praise for wives who took no part in ‘publick exercises’ and excelled in domesticity.⁴⁷ The daughter of the Revd Mark Daniell managed to dismiss her mother’s life as both important and uninterestingly private: ‘The usual routine of a Methodist Preacher’s wife, though crowded with duties and responsibilities, affords but little that can embellish narrative, or interest beyond its own circle’.⁴⁸ Whatever the character of the minister’s wife, the writer could find an acceptable norm by which to praise her!

Missionaries’ wives were given even more prominence in the ‘Magazine’ than the wives of preachers. This question, particularly as reflected in published biographies, is

³⁷ Timothy S. A. MacQuiban, ‘Friends of all? The Wesleyan response to urban poverty in Britain and Ireland, 1785-1840’, in Richard P. Heizenrater (ed.), *The Poor and the People called Methodists, 1729-1999* (Nashville: Kingswood Books 2002). Rowland C. Swift, *Lively People: Methodism in Nottingham 1740-1979*. (Nottingham: Department of Adult Education, University of Nottingham, 1982).

³⁸ She ‘sought out the poor and afflicted . . . and administered relief to their bodies and souls, according to her ability’. *MM*, vol. 23 (1800), 261.

³⁹ She gave ‘kind attentions to the poor and the afflicted, whom she often visited to administer temporal relief and spiritual advice. *WMM*, 5th ser, vol. 1 (1855), 191.

⁴⁰ ‘She took an active part in those female charitable institutions which existed in many of the Circuits to which her husband was appointed’. *WMM*, 3rd ser, vol. 19 (1840), 994.

⁴¹ *MM*, vol. 32 (1807), 520.

⁴² Obituary of Mrs Stephenson, *WMM* 4th ser., vol. 11 (1855), 93.

⁴³ Obituary of Miss Eliza Hessel, *WMM*, 4th ser., vol. 16 (1860), 190.

⁴⁴ Wilson, *Constrained by Zeal*, p. 204 I would attribute her finding to the nature of her sample.

⁴⁵ Ranging between 1 in 1810 and 15 in 1845.

⁴⁶ *MM*, vol. 23 (1820), 839.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, 624.

⁴⁸ Obituary of Mrs Daniell, *ibid.*, 897.

dealt with in more detail elsewhere.⁴⁹ The ‘Magazine’, as well as the biographies, deploys a discourse in which marriage has a quasi-public nature: the decision to marry is seen as a means of embracing a vocation or at the very least as a dispensation of Providence. Hannah, asked by the Revd Henry Fleet to marry him and accompany him to Sierra Leone, wrote that ‘the expectation of being the instrument of saving souls from death, raises me above all obstacles’.⁵⁰ Jane Allen’s manuscript journal illustrates the possible impact of such a decision on a woman’s spirituality. Its tone changes dramatically from introspection to outward-looking activity on her becoming engaged to a missionary.⁵¹

2. *The discipleship portfolio*

The most cursory reading of women’s obituaries in the ‘Magazine’ presents a group of activities which took women outside the domestic sphere. These might involve organised ‘leadership’ roles or might be more individual and informal. In addition to the office of Class Leader, the frequently occurring roles are those of visitor of the poor and sick, Sunday School teacher, Missionary Collector and tract distributor. Closer analysis of the material reveals some interesting patterns.

Visiting the sick and poor

The activity of visiting the poor and sick is mentioned in the ‘Magazine’ almost as frequently as the office of Class Leader. It could (and can) be seen both as a relic of an older concept of ‘family’ embracing neighbours, servants and dependants, and also as a more structured charitable activity legitimising women’s caring activity outside the family’s now more tightly-drawn boundaries. It was therefore a commendable activity from any point of view, unlike more public leadership roles or activities which involved collecting (e.g. missionary subscriptions) or distributing (e.g. tracts). While it empowered women to be ‘Angels out of the House’,⁵² its impact on ‘the house’ could be dramatic: ‘Often would (Mrs Elizabeth Budgett) disappear from the bosom of her family, without intimation or knowledge, for hours together, for the purpose of feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, instructing the ignorant, and praying with the sick and dying’.⁵³ As already noted, there is more emphasis on organized activity by mid-century, with such phrases as: ‘She entered heartily into any means by which she might serve the institutions of Wesleyan Methodism’.⁵⁴

In obituaries before 1830 (what one might almost describe as the ‘pre-Wesleyan’ period of this study), which focus almost exclusively on the subjects’ spiritual life, visiting the poor and sick and a being Class Leader are the only named activities until

⁴⁹ M. Jones, ‘The active duties . . . proper to her station: Women and Mission(s) in Wesleyan Methodism 1813-1858’, in Martin Wellings (ed.), *Protestant Nonconformity and Christian Missions* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2014), pp. 40-56.

⁵⁰ *WMM*, 3rd ser., vol. 19 (1840), 328.

⁵¹ DHC D/BTM/F2/2 Journal of Jane Allen, p. 24.

⁵² Wilson, *Constrained by Zeal*, pp. 189-210.

⁵³ *WMM*, 3rd ser., vol. 4 (1825), 658.

⁵⁴ *WMM*, 5th ser., vol. 1 (1855), 672.

Missionary Collectors and Sunday school teachers, together with tract distributors, appear from 1825. Later examples occasionally imply a 'portfolio' of activities which the reader would understand.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, in the sample years between 1840 and 1860 between one-half and one-third of the women who visited the poor and sick undertook this activity alone. It is worth reiterating, however, that this traditional female activity is registered no more often than being a Class Leader, and between 1850 and 1860 the most common combination of two activities in the 'portfolio' is sick Visitor and Class Leader. This could both have given an authoritative twist to the sick visiting and reinforced the 'affectionate' dimension of the female Class Leader's role. Or it could simply be an expression of a continuing holistic spirituality: visitors might offer 'instruction *and* relief'⁵⁶ (my italics) or, while 'quietly and unostentatiously visit(ing) her poor neighbours' also '(urge) them to flee from the wrath to come'.⁵⁷

Sunday School teaching

The prominence of Sunday School teaching in obituaries fluctuates (after its first appearance in the sample in 1820) at around roughly 10% of subjects in any one year. It shows some distinctive features. The age profile of Sunday School teachers is (unsurprisingly) young, with nearly half of them aged 35 or under at the time of their death. Of the 61 teachers identified, only 17 are described as holding no other office or undertaking no other activity – a marked though not unexpected contrast with sick visiting. 16 were tract distributors and 17 were Class Leaders. 'Collecting for the Missions' was the commonest combination with 22 individuals. 10 of the 61 combined being both tract distributors and Missionary Collectors with their Sunday School teaching. By the 1850's there is a clear sense of a 'portfolio' emerging, particularly for young people. Teachers are commended (although less frequently than Class Leaders) for being active, useful, efficient and zealous.

Miss Eliza Conway 'engaged, with great zeal *and uncommon success*, in teaching a Sabbath school class'⁵⁸ (my italics). The realities of Sunday School teaching which produced this comment can be dimly discerned from local sources. A series of registers from Poole between 1838 and 1843 shows more pupils per teacher for girls' classes, with higher numbers of girl pupils.⁵⁹ All the women teachers but one were unmarried. The sporadic nature of attendance is a marked feature. For the first quarter of 1839, 18 out of 82 girl pupils (23%) registered 3 attendances or fewer out of a possible 15. The best attender appears to be a teacher's relative. In the first quarter of 1843, out of 101 girl pupils on roll, 42 did not appear at all. Records from the Wiltshire villages of Tinhead and Edington again indicate a fluid and hard-to-manage

⁵⁵ 'a Missionary Collector, Visiter of the Sick, Sunday-school teacher &c'. *WMM*, 3rd ser, vol. 19 (1840), 618 and: 'She zealously promoted the interests of the Bible Society, the Missionary Society, the Tract Society, the Sunday-schools, &c'. *WMM*, 3rd ser, vol. 19 (1840), 542.

⁵⁶ Obituary of Hannah Sprague, *WMM*, 3rd ser, vol. 19 (1840), 334.

⁵⁷ Obituary of Miss Elizabeth Sowler, *WMM*, 5th ser, vol. 1 (1855), 474.

⁵⁸ *WMM*, 4th ser., vol. 6 (1850), 208.

⁵⁹ DHC D.980 Southwell Methodist Church (Poole), Sunday School Register, 1826-1858.

situation for teachers.⁶⁰ For both boys and girls there is constant to-ing and fro-ing (of small numbers) between the Methodist school and the Church school, including in 1850 'Girls Removed to Church School By their friends'. Teaching staff were also changeable, whether through bad behaviour, family responsibilities or economic necessity.⁶¹

Societies in the Southampton Circuit (led by Fawley) were supporting their Sunday School work by buying copies of Connexional publications: the Children's Magazine, the Youth's Instructor and the Cottager's Friend.⁶² A change in the (adult) educational role of the Circuit may be indicated by the stock records of the books it owned and loaned. In 1801 these included at least 25 copies of John Wesley's sermons, together with John Fletcher's *Checks to Antinomianism*, Joseph Alleine's *Alarm to the Unconverted* (1672) and Adam Clarke's *Letters*, as well as twelve copies of five women's biographies and eleven copies of four men's. After 1807 the stock consisted almost entirely of hymnbooks, but after 1812 Lives of Mrs Fletcher, Mrs Rogers, Mrs Cooper and Mrs Pawson were nearly always in stock, together with multiple copies of *The Dairyman's Daughter* (1814). We may not know who was doing the reading (when the books were there), but we know that they could read about women.

Collecting for the Missions

Supporting overseas mission enriched women's discipleship by offering opportunities to gain information, develop approved public roles, engage in pastoral relationships and practise skills of administration.⁶³ The appearance of Missionary Collectors in obituaries coincides with the Missionary Society activity of 1813-8 but does not increase markedly in either number or frequency thereafter. While the combination of Sunday School teaching and missionary collecting was weighted towards younger women, missionary collecting itself spanned all ages. Unspecified 'support of the missions' was also noted.

Obituaries gave prominence to collecting *per se*: other sources may tell a different tale. The account books of the Whitchurch Wesleyan Missionary Society (in the Andover Circuit) from 1835 to 1859 show a rapid decrease in the number of collectors from six in 1838 to two in 1840.⁶⁴ After 1835 offerings at meetings and acts of worship, including Sunday Schools, were always more productive than 'monthly

⁶⁰ Wiltshire and Swindon Archives 1907/148: Sunday School Teachers' Meeting Minute and Record Book.

⁶¹ *ibid.* 'Dismission of Teachers': 'Ann Hancock Dismissed for Improper Language &c. &c January 13th 1850'. 'Eliza Drewett Given up Teaching to attend to her father &c &c May 12th 1850'. 'Jane Boulter . . . went to Service at Mr Smiths at Baynton Aug 10 1854'. 'Jane Miles went to Service at Melksham April 10 1855'. Girls too left to go into service: 'Emily Cook a singer in the Galory . . . at Clifton on Saturday Sept 25 1853'. 'Lydia Strugnell . . . at Bristol July 11 1854'. 'Betsey Brice . . . at Mrs Butler's Tinhead Oct 1 1854'. 'Betsey White . . . at Bath Dec 8 1854'. 'Iscah Bathard Tinhead . . . at London Feb 14 1855'. 'The Above Scholer Returned from London March 4 1855'.

⁶² SRO D/Meth/1/7/1/1, 2, 3, 4: Circuit Schedule Book.

⁶³ Jones, 'The active duties . . . proper to her station: Women and Mission(s) in Wesleyan Methodism 1813-1858', pp. 40-56.

⁶⁴ HAC 96M72/NMC/A5.

receipts' from collectors. By the 1850's the neat round numbers recorded by collectors suggest that they were in effect receiving subscriptions, introduced, together with missionary boxes, in 1838. Overall this source gives less prominence to missionary collecting as such as a means for women to be involved in the support of overseas missions, and provides some wider illustration of what 'support of the missions' might entail.

3. In and out of the house

The 'institutions of Wesleyan Methodism' not only gave Wesleyan women significant opportunities to be 'Angels out of the House', they also brought public discipleship into the house.

'Receiving the preachers'

The story of 'receiving the preachers into her house' is a relatively prominent one in the 'Magazine', standing at around the same level as 'collecting for the missions', but its status as an activity is more complex. Obituaries before 1840 do not on the whole elaborate on the consequences of giving hospitality to the preachers, although 'preaching in her house' is mentioned very occasionally.⁶⁵ The five sample years from 1840 to 1860, on the other hand, yield 24 specific references to preaching and prayer-meetings in houses, with a further 30 references giving no indication beyond 'receiving'.

There would seem to be two factors at work. As already noted, preaching in private houses was crucial where the expansion of Methodist societies, at whatever date, preceded the building of chapels. Hospitality was equally crucial, even when chapels existed, in contexts of large circuits and slow transport.⁶⁶ Formal preaching might move into the chapel, but significant informal and unrecorded conversations could still take place in the home. Our sample from the 'Magazine' includes one explicit, approving account of a woman hostess functioning as a pastoral worker in the 1850's. Mrs Mary Brown of Eagle, Lincolnshire, 'represented that valuable class of Methodists in rural districts who render to Christ the acceptable service of hospitality to his servants . . . Always anxious to render the Minister's visit as useful as possible to the Society, especially to the poorer members, she was wont to acquaint herself beforehand with all cases requiring pastoral attention'.⁶⁷

The relative prominence of reference to 'hospitality to preachers' in the 'Magazine' after 1840 probably has another dimension. 31 of the 54 women in this category were aged over 60 when they died, and 15 were over 80. This story was thus largely, though not entirely, located in the past and treasured as a relic. Writers of

⁶⁵ For example: Ann Watkin 'had had preaching at her house upwards of 20 years'. *MM*, vol. 28 (1805), 281.

⁶⁶ John S. Simon refers to the practice of preachers' taking 'a week out' i.e. needing hospitality as they travelled round the circuit out of reach of the manse – and bewails on pastoral grounds its demise by the date of writing. Simon, *Methodism in Dorset*, pp. 58-66.

⁶⁷ *WMM*, 5th ser., vol. 6 (1860), 1055.

obituaries gave few clues as to their regret or otherwise at a changing situation, other than unstintingly praising the practice of hospitality. Obituaries also emphasised the women's devotion to the preachers/ministers that they received into their homes. Denominational politics, as well as conventional depictions of female character, account for some of this emphasis and for the occasional references (from 1840 onward) to devotion without any mention of hospitality. A particularly sharp comment appears in the eulogy of Mrs Bywater: 'Insinuations and reflections, which had a tendency to lower (the ministers') character, and so to hinder their usefulness, touched, as it were, the very nerve of her soul'.⁶⁸

Family nurture

'Pious domesticity' among Wesleyan women has a distinct trajectory. Its importance by mid-century for women of all denominations is well-known.⁶⁹ Wilson notes references to domestic concerns in 56% of the Wesleyan women's obituaries in her sample years (1850 and 1870). However, it is important to note that Wilson's selection criteria were more restricted than my own and that therefore our figures are not directly comparable.⁷⁰ My own sample includes the shorter 'Recent Deaths' as well as more informative obituaries because of my concern with the image of discipleship being presented to contemporaries as well as the evidence found by historians. Short entries had to be condensed, faith journey and godly deathbeds being considered the essential components, together with (less frequently) the experience of suffering and bereavement, and occasional mention of domestic and/or 'social' discipleship. By my reckoning, in 1845 5% of 'Recent Deaths' and 20% of the longer 'Obituary' category mentioned domestic concerns. This equates to a mere 6% (lower than sick visiting and class leading) across both categories. Comparable figures for 1855 are 16% of 'Recent Deaths' and 39% of longer categories.⁷¹ This equates to 20% overall, compared with 12% sick visitors and 16% Class Leaders. There had been a marked increase in entries mentioning domestic concerns some time between 1850 and 1855, with a serious overdose of Proverbs 31: 27 in evidence from 1850 onward⁷², but the impression is still not overwhelming.

Over time domestic concerns were differently placed in accounts of women's lives. In the very early part of the century there is a sense of a more unified sphere of life, a less protected household: 'the poor' are placed actually in 'the house'. Mr and Mrs Greenwood 'were wont, every Sabbath, to have one or more poor, pious persons

⁶⁸ *WMM*, 3rd ser., vol. 19 (1840), 195.

⁶⁹ A historiography beginning with Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (London: Routledge 1987). Wilson, *Constrained by Zeal*, has a comprehensive bibliography.

⁷⁰ She uses only longer obituaries and includes only women converted after 1825. Wilson, *Constrained by Zeal*, pp. 22-23.

⁷¹ By now subdivided between 'Biographical Sketches', 'Obituary' and 'Memoirs', with little to distinguish the categories.

⁷² 'She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.'

at their table'⁷³ and the poor 'always found an asylum' in the house of Mrs Jane Ellis and her husband.⁷⁴ After about 1825 they are firmly in their own world as subjects of visitation. As late as 1845 domestic, social and religious concerns could be held together in a unified discourse, with good housekeeping standing alongside other expressions of discipleship.⁷⁵

The need to balance different responsibilities was acknowledged throughout the period, typically from Mrs Elizabeth Bissaker in 1805⁷⁶ to Frances Crosby in 1845⁷⁷. Was this a response to the accusation that Methodism encouraged women to neglect their household duties, or a suggestion of equality between the different spheres? Nevertheless, by 1855 the narrative gives more emphasis than in earlier years to bringing up children to join the church and being confined to the domestic sphere in consequence of having a 'retiring' disposition. Mrs Mary Radcliffe, 'after her marriage (to a minister) ... endeavoured to prove herself a 'help meet' for her husband in the important position she was called to occupy. Being of a retiring disposition, however, she shone more in the domestic circle than in the public sphere'.⁷⁸

Gifts and talents

Some women were singled out as having particular gifts to offer to their discipleship. Musical skill and literary achievement were socially acceptable female 'accomplishments', while educating children was a traditional female role. All occur sporadically in accounts. The only musician in the sample, Mrs Witty of Hull, who 'was often required to conduct the singing of the congregation, and generally to take the lead in the services of the female part of the choir of singers', developed her musicianship as well as her discipleship. 'That she might be prepared for this necessary and important duty, she took some pains in the study of musical notes, and in aiding other young females in the knowledge and use of them'.⁷⁹ Phrases such as 'superior mental endowments',⁸⁰ 'a mind highly cultivated',⁸¹ and 'a mind of considerable strength and much ardour',⁸² convey approval, being linked with reference to the use to which that mind was put in God's service. Of the 30 women so

⁷³ *MM*, vol. 28 (1805), 38.

⁷⁴ *MM*, vol. 33 (1810), 33.

⁷⁵ Miss Hannah Wrightson 'diligently perform(ed) every duty, whether religious or domestic'. *WMM*, 4th ser, vol. 1 (1845), 399.

⁷⁶ Her time was 'much taken up' by her family and business, 'nevertheless, she would not rob the Lord of the time due to his worship and service . . . Nor did she make her religious engagements an excuse for the neglect of her family or domestic concerns'. *MM*, vol. 28 (1805), 411.

⁷⁷ Her support of missions and visiting of the poor 'was not at the expense of a single domestic duty . . . by cultivating habits of order, punctuality, and despatch, she was able, while "looking well to the ways of her household" to be present in the different services of the house of prayer'. *WMM*, 4th ser, vol. 1 (1845), 184.

⁷⁸ *WMM*, 5th ser., vol. 1 (1860), 187.

⁷⁹ *WMM*, 3rd ser., vol. 19 (1840), 372-3.

⁸⁰ *MM*, vol. 33 (1810), 918.

⁸¹ *WMM*, 3rd ser., vol. 9 (1830), 149.

⁸² *WMM*, 4th ser., vol. 6 (1850), 644.

praised, two were published both as poets and prose authors⁸³ and two solely as poets⁸⁴, one studied the Bible in the original languages⁸⁵, one ‘acquired some knowledge of the common language of Hindostan’ in order to ‘make herself useful among the female natives, by bringing them into conversation on the subject of religion’⁸⁶, and six were Class Leaders. Two, on the other hand, were implicitly criticised for making insufficient use of their talents.⁸⁷ Even those who achieved ‘usefulness’ are portrayed as struggling against diffidence.⁸⁸ The ‘Magazine’ obituaries also feature ten women who taught in or ‘kept a school’, at least one in every year but one between 1825 and 1860. Half of them also taught in Sunday Schools or led a ‘class of young persons’, and there is occasional evidence of the way that school and society roles could overlap informally. Ragged Schools appear in two accounts (in 1855 and 1860): further evidence from the public narrative of increasing institutionalisation. Outside the scope of this study, but marking its end limit, is the availability of the Westminster Normal College (founded in 1851), enabling the Ladies Committee of 1858 to offer a sound Methodist training to its first agent.

4. Conclusion

What conclusions may safely be drawn from a study such as this? Engagement with the publicly approved narrative, backed by denominational authority, must be undertaken with due caution, but can yield intriguing results. Wesleyan Methodism in the first half of the nineteenth century, while upholding society’s expectations of respectable femininity, yet developed and (sometimes uncomfortably) approved a highly activist public image of women’s discipleship. This was underpinned by a holistic spirituality which supported both individual and organised ‘usefulness’. Its increasing bureaucratisation gave, to women who had the necessary skills, opportunities to develop their powers of organisation and management. Local material gives evidence of more informal structures than those presented in official sources, highlighting the valuable and honoured place still available in appropriate contexts within Wesleyan Methodism to less formally skilled women. The persistence of home-based spirituality in rural and expanding situations is a case in point. *Mutatis mutandis*, mid-nineteenth Methodism still had a place for Susanna Wesley’s kitchen.

MARGARET P. JONES (Salisbury)

⁸³ Mrs Bulmer, *WMM*, 3rd ser. vol. 19 (1840), 807; Miss Eliza Hessel, *WMM*, 5th ser., vol. 6 (1860), 189.

⁸⁴ Mrs Sleigh, *MM*, vol. 30 (1810), 921; Miss Emma Tatham, *WMM*, 5th ser., vol. 1 (1855), 1064.

⁸⁵ Mrs Harriet Hughes, *WMM*, 5th ser., vol. 6 (1860), 958.

⁸⁶ Mrs Elizabeth Priestley, *WMM*, 3rd ser., vol. 14 (1835), 95.

⁸⁷ Mrs Broad, *WMM*, 3rd ser., vol. 9 (1830), 149; Mrs Agar, *WMM* 4th ser., vol. 6 (1850), 1130.

⁸⁸ Adam Clarke’s daughter writes of Mrs Bulmer: ‘True it is, that her mental energy could have laid hold upon mighty objects, and its strength have grasped them tenaciously; but her constitutional timidity was so great, as even to forbid that measure of publicity to which her standing in the church, and her talents for edification, ought to have compelled her to submit’. *WMM*, 3rd ser., vol. 19 (1840), 802-3.

Leeds in 1813 and the origins of the Wesleyan-Methodist Missionary Society¹

Introduction

On 28 July 1813 the People Called Methodists held their annual Conference in Liverpool. Dr Thomas Coke (who was also secretary to the Conference) was appointed ‘General Superintendent of all our Missions’. Previously he had merely been ‘Superintendent of the Irish, Welsh, West-India, Nova-Scotia, and Newfoundland Missions’ but in 1813 an extension of missionary work was signalled in his new title and he was authorised to lead a mission to Ceylon and Java.²

There were at this time four districts of the Connexion in the British Dominions in America: Antigua, with twenty three preachers serving in eleven islands; Bahamas and Bermuda (four preachers), Nova Scotia and New Brunswick (thirteen preachers), and Newfoundland (three preachers). For Asia and South Africa – that is, less grandly, Ceylon, Java and the Cape of Good Hope, all colonies recently captured from the Dutch – seven missionaries were appointed in 1813: three for Ceylon, and one each for Java and the Cape, with two being reserved ‘to travel with Dr Coke’. There were also Methodist members in Gibraltar, Sierra Leone (currently without missionaries) and Besançon (the latter being for English Methodist prisoners of war). Though there was a Missionary Committee and an annual Missionary Collection, foreign missions at this date were in practice being financed largely by and through Dr Coke himself. In 1798 and again, as recently as the Conference of 1811, he had been authorised to visit the home circuits in order to solicit funds privately from individuals.³

The story of Coke’s various attempts to persuade the Conference to put the financing of overseas missions on a secure footing, as well as his own shortcomings in matters of finance, has been told by John Vickers.⁴ The ‘Committee of Finance and Advice’, set up by Conference in 1804, was as much or more for the purpose of constraining expenditure as for raising funds.⁵ Typically, Coke’s proposal for a new mission to the East was sanctioned by the Conference in 1813 only once he had offered to underwrite the initial cost with £6,000 of his own money. Though the

¹ This article is based on a lecture delivered at the Methodist Missionary Society History Project conference in Leeds on 5 – 6 October 2013, subsequently developed for the Wesley Historical Society (Yorkshire) annual general meeting on 15 February 2014. It was published in the *Bulletin* of that society (Spring 2014), and appears here, in a revised form, by permission.

² *Minutes* (1813), vol. 3, pp. 363, 389. All such references are to the *Minutes of the Methodist Conferences, from the First, held in London, by the late Rev. John Wesley, A.M. in the year 1744*, vols 1–4 (London, 1813, 1818).

³ *Minutes* (1813), vol. 3, pp. 378–9; (1798), vol. 1, p. 417; (1811), vol. 3, p. 224. In 1798 this was ‘as a substitute for a public collection, on account of the temporal circumstances of our Connexion’

⁴ John Vickers, *Thomas Coke. Apostle of Methodism* (London, 1969).

⁵ *Minutes* (1804), vol. 2, pp. 209–10; John Pritchard, *Methodists and their Missionary Societies, 1760–1900* (Farnham, 2013), p. 19.

leaders of Methodism were in principle in favour of an expansion of the work, both at home and overseas, in practice they were cautious to the point of timidity on account of their shortage of funds. Britain had been at war with the French for the best part of twenty years, and more recently had been fighting the United States also. This latter war in particular hit trade hard in the industrial districts, where Methodism was strong. The year 1812 was one of industrial depression, unemployment, high bread prices and political unrest. These were hardly the circumstances in which to embark on expensive new initiatives. On 30 April 1813 the Missionary Committee in London passed a resolution urging every circuit to form a missionary committee to raise funds.⁶ At first this was not taken up by the Conference and remained no more than a pious aspiration, but it was to bear fruit in the autumn thanks to the initiative of key travelling preachers and laymen in Yorkshire, beginning in Leeds in October 1813.

The strength of Methodism in Yorkshire

Why did Yorkshire supply the first district initiatives with four of the first six district missionary societies – Leeds, Halifax, York/Hull and Sheffield? The answer lies partly in personalities and partly in the strength of Methodism in Yorkshire. This has recently been discussed by John Lenton but the argument is worth revisiting and adding to. In 1813 there were 162,003 members of Methodist societies in Great Britain, 27 per cent of whom were in the five Yorkshire districts of Leeds, Halifax, Sheffield, Whitby, and York/Hull. It was partly in recognition of this importance, that in 1808 the Conference sought a site for a second Connexional school near Leeds once Kingswood had reached fifty boys, and in 1811 it was agreed to establish a Wesleyan Academy at Woodhouse Grove, near Bradford in the Halifax district, to be the Kingswood of the North. This was opened in 1812. The Conference met in 1811 in Sheffield and 1812 in Leeds, again emphasising the importance of the county.⁷

The 43,923 Yorkshire members recorded in 1813 can be contrasted with the 13,809 members who lived in the vast London district, reaching from Dover and Chichester to Bedford and Huntingdon. The two London circuits together contained in total less than six thousand members – little more than the smallest of the Yorkshire districts, Whitby. The Birmingham district, including the Black Country, at under seven thousand was also smaller than any of the Yorkshire districts except Whitby. Even the three north-western districts of Chester, Manchester and Carlisle put together, stretching from the Potteries to the Scottish border, had only 23,169 members, about half the number to be found in Yorkshire. But size was not as important as concentration: though the Newcastle district, which was also early in the missionary field, was slightly smaller than Birmingham, five sixths of its members were concentrated in just five circuits on Tyneside and Wearside. This contrasts with

⁶ T. P. Bunting, *The Life of Jabez Bunting, D.D. with notices of contemporary persons and events* (London, 1887), p. 403; Vickers, *Coke*, pp. 348, 353.

⁷ John Lenton, 'The Importance of Yorkshire Methodism: Members, Money and Minister', in E. Royle (ed.), *Yorkshire Methodism. Essays to commemorate the jubilee year of the Wesley Historical Society (Yorkshire)* (Leeds: 2013), pp. 1–16; *Minutes* (1813), vol. 3, pp. 385–6; (1808), p. 30; (1811); p. 226; (1812), p. 297.

that other provincial focus of the Wesley's activity – Bristol – where a larger membership of 8,092 (still less than the membership of the Halifax, Leeds or York/Hull districts and scarcely more than Sheffield) was scattered over four counties (Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Somerset and Dorset) in sixteen circuits.⁸

The sixth of the counties to have an early Missionary Society, Cornwall, was, of course, one of the strongholds of Methodism. It was an industrial county with an expanding economy but with no really large towns such as were to be found in the Midlands and North, and had 9,405 members in six circuits. So far as the Church of England was concerned it lay at the forgotten end of a long road from the centre of the diocese at Exeter, and its small mining communities, market towns and fishing villages were ready material for the Methodist preachers. But despite the importance in Methodist history of Cornwall and those three tips of Wesley's triangle – London, Bristol and Newcastle – it was Yorkshire above all which was able to claim a position of leadership in early Methodism, situated across Wesley's lines of communication between London through Epworth to Newcastle, and also with a Church of England organisationally too weak to cope with the rapid industrialisation, urbanisation and population growth which characterised the county in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This opportunity made Yorkshire nationally the most important centre for Methodism at the beginning of the nineteenth century.⁹

With their circuit system, travelling preachers and an army of unpaid local preachers, the Methodists were able to outgrow and outbuild the Established Church, filling their seats with congregations drawn from the new urban working classes but, more importantly, filling their pews and building a membership from among the more affluent tradesmen and manufacturers. In Leeds, Methodism was becoming 'the *de facto* established religion', as the new vicar, W. F. Hook famously stated in 1837. Between 1770 and 1840, twenty two Wesleyan chapels were opened in the out-townships of Leeds parish. In the township of Leeds itself the Old Chapel in Boggart's Close was opened in 1751 (rebuilt in 1786 and replaced by St Peter's Chapel in 1834), Woodhouse Chapel opened in 1770 (sixty years before the Church of England built there) and Albion Street opened in 1802 (replaced by Oxford Place in 1835). The Wesleyans were the predominant form of Methodism in Leeds, and they went on to open further chapels: Meadow Lane (1815) and, grandest of all, Brunswick (1825).¹⁰ But if the West Riding Methodists were strong, they were also independently-minded so far as concerned the authority of Conference. In 1784 the Yorkshire-born John Atlay, Wesley's book steward, took the side of the Dewsbury trustees in opposing Wesley's Deed of Declaration on which was based the authority of Conference, and he joined a small secession there.

⁸ *Minutes* (1813), vol. 3, pp. 383–6.

⁹ See Edward Royle, 'Exploring the Evangelical Revival: the Yorkshire example' in J. Allen and R. C. Allen (eds), *Faith of our Fathers. Popular culture and belief in post-Reformation England, Ireland and Wales* (Newcastle, 2009), pp. 75–94.

¹⁰ Nigel Yates, 'The Religious Life of Victorian Leeds', in D. Fraser (ed), *A History of Modern Leeds* (Manchester, 1980), pp. 250–2.

Of more import was the emergence in Leeds of a separate group within the Wesleyan body, known as followers of the Providential Way, who wanted to meet for worship during the Church hour in disregard of the compromise Plan of Pacification worked out in 1795 and in conflict with the Leeds superintendent minister, Joseph Benson, a staunch Church Methodist. This source of tension led, among other things, to a secession from the Leeds Conference in 1797 and the calling of a separate Conference in the nearby Ebenezer Chapel, where Alexander Kilham's New Connexion was born. Then in 1805 James Sigston of Leeds led a small secession, known as the Kirkgate Screamer, sympathetic to William Bramwell's revivalism which had led to a huge expansion in Yorkshire Methodist numbers in the 1790s. Despite opposition from Jabez Bunting, then a rising figure within Wesleyanism, Sigston was readmitted to the Wesleyans in 1807 only to become a leader of the Protestant Methodists twenty years later when a major secession took place over the introduction of an organ into Brunswick Chapel. Leeds was certainly at the centre of a vibrant Methodism in 1813. Some of this energy was expressed in the missionary movement and Sigston was to be one of the first secretaries of the Leeds District Missionary Society in 1813.¹¹

The funding of Methodist missions

In 1812 Conference had asked, 'How can we provide for the very large debt which is now owing by the missionary fund?' The answer was 'an extraordinary Public Collection shall be made in every circuit in the month of January next, at the latest.' This was in addition to the usual annual collection authorised by Conference. Further proposals were made for retrenchment in the West Indies, although a second missionary was authorised for Jamaica 'if Dr Coke and the Missionary Committee shall unitedly deem it proper.'¹²

Retrenchment, though, was not in Dr Coke's mind, which was now turning to India. He had first hoped for a mission to Asia in 1784 and Conference had approved sending someone to Madras in 1800, but the restrictive policy of the East India Company prevented any progress. India, however, was to the forefront of many people's minds in 1813 as a campaign was mounted to get the inclusion of a so-called 'pious clause' when Parliament came to renew the East India Company charter in 1813. The *Methodist Magazine* carried a report of a meeting called at the City of London Tavern on 29 March to promote this objective.¹³ Then, on 10 April the *Leeds Mercury*, edited by the Congregationalist Edward Baines, published a report to the

¹¹ D. Colin Dews, *The Church with a Mission: Oxford Place Methodist Chapel, Leeds* (Leeds, 2010), pp. 6–9, 13–15. J. Baxter, 'The Great Yorkshire Revival,' *A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain*, 7 (1974), pp. 46–76. For Atlay, Benson and Sigston, see John Vickers (ed.), *A Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland* (Peterborough, 2000) and the later, fuller version at <http://www.wesleyhistoricalsociety.org.uk/dmbi/>.

¹² *Minutes* (1812), vol. 3, p. 296.

¹³ 'Christianity in India', *Methodist Magazine*, vol. 36 (May 1813), pp. 198–9. The City of London Tavern was later to be purchased with money from the 1839 Centenary Fund for new headquarters for the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society.

Governor of Madras made in 1807 by the senior Anglican chaplain there, within an editorial urging the necessity of the 'sacred obligation' to diffuse Christianity 'throughout our Indian Territories'. This was to prepare the ground for an article the following week, under the heading 'Propagation of Christianity in India', in which the *Mercury* reported a public meeting in Leeds urging Parliament to amend the East India Company's charter, one of 500 such petitions presented at this time. The charter was duly amended and India was officially opened up to British missionaries, albeit under strict conditions. The Anglicisation (and Anglicanisation) of the sub-continent had begun. However, the first Wesleyan missionaries, appointed by the Conference at the end of July 1813 for work in the East, were not sent to India itself but to the former Dutch colonies of Java (which was returned to the Dutch in 1815 and so falls out of the picture) and Ceylon, which was administered by the East India Company from 1802 until 1815, after which it became a Crown Colony.¹⁴

The urgency to develop and extend the means to finance Methodist missions derived as much from worldly rivalries as from spiritual opportunities. Competition with other denominations, and especially with the Calvinistic Dissenters, helped drive the Arminian mission forward. Religious societies were in vogue in a way that had not been seen since the beginning of the eighteenth century when the SPCK (1699) and the SPG (1701) had been formed: to these societies were now added the Sunday School Society (1785), the Religious Tract Society (1799), the British and Foreign Bible Society (1804) and the British and Foreign Schools Society (1814). All were Evangelical and at least nominally inter-denominational. Beyond these was the first denominational society in support of foreign missions: the Particular Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel among the Heathen (1792), which sent William Carey out to India where he operated from the Danish colony of Serampore. A letter home from Carey in 1795 prompted a group of Independent ministers in London to start a non-denominational society known simply as the Missionary Society (from 1818, the London Missionary Society). And in 1799 the Society for Missions to Africa and the East was founded in Aldersgate Street in the City of London by Evangelical Anglicans. In 1812 it was renamed the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East, or Church Missionary Society for short. Its founders were the same men as were leading the parliamentary campaign to open up India in 1813. Their first overseas mission (employing German Lutheran missionaries) was to Sierra Leone in 1804. A plan was then announced to set up local Church Missionary Associations on the model of those organised by the Bible Society to raise funds to support the expanding work the CMS. The first local Association was to have been in Bristol, but was actually formed in Dewsbury in February 1813, with Bristol following in March.¹⁵

¹⁴ *Minutes* (1800), vol. 2, p. 61; *Leeds Mercury*, 10, 17 April, 10 June 1813; Pritchard, *Methodists and their Missionary Societies*, pp. 23–4.

¹⁵ *Methodist Magazine*, vol. 36 (January 1813), pp. 38–9 and June 1813, p. 239; Eugene Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society, its environment, its men and its work*. 3 vols, (London, 1899), vol. 1, pp. 129–30.

The Methodists, with their extensive missionary operations but no formal society to gather in funds, soon detected the threat presented by all this activity, particularly that posed by the non-denominational Missionary Society of 1795. As early as 1797, John Pawson was writing to Joseph Benson, shortly before he became President of Conference, ‘if we do not take care they will rob us of our glory [and] outdo us in zeal and activity’. Coke became worried when the following year the Missionary Society considered sending a missionary to Jamaica, and by 1809 he was using the threat posed by the Missionary Society to persuade Conference to keep up a full supply of missionaries to the West Indies, lest ‘God will give up that great work to the Calvinists’. There was also a direct threat to Methodist finances, as the Missionary Society set about raising funds for their missions from all evangelicals, which included canvassing in Wesleyan chapels where supporters of missions were glad to contribute, perhaps under the mistaken impression that they were supporting Wesleyan missions.¹⁶

Meanwhile the annual Conference Collection for missions was falling short of the £7,000 a year sought to support the work of Wesleyan missions. In 1803–4 the total sum raised for Methodist missions had been only £2,518 of which Yorkshire provided £577. Compare this sum with the £10,611 1s. 11d. collected by the Baptists in under two months in 1813 when they lost their East India printing office in a fire and launched a national appeal for help.¹⁷ Wesleyans clearly needed to become more efficient at harnessing their own resources. They knew what needed to be done and the potential was certainly there. Methodism had pioneered a system of finance based on the collection of small sums from large numbers of ordinary people. This system had subsequently been adopted by other organisations with considerable success and so, in the words of Jabez Bunting, it was only ‘natural and fair, that the Methodists themselves should take advantage of their own plan’.¹⁸ But what had hitherto been lacking was the courage and vision to act. In a curious kind of way, the man with that vision, Thomas Coke, may also have been an impediment to action. It was too easy to leave matters to him.

Attending the Irish Conference in July 1813, Coke used the opportunity to launch an appeal for the establishment of auxiliary societies across Ireland to raise funds in support of missions.¹⁹ Then at the end of July the London District put a proposal to the British Conference to implement a scheme for circuit committees to raise supplies, but to no avail. The London initiative was led by Robert Smith, secretary of the Missionary Committee, who in October 1812 had received a letter from Coke warning of the activities of the Missionary Society ‘among *our* societies and hearers for the support of *their* missions’.²⁰ This appeal by Smith and Coke was not, however, lost on

¹⁶ Roger H. Martin, ‘Missionary Competition between Evangelical Dissenters and Wesleyan Methodists in the early nineteenth century’, *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, 42 (December 1979), pp. 81–6.

¹⁷ *Leeds Mercury*, 29 May 1813; Lenton, ‘Importance of Yorkshire’, p. 10

¹⁸ *Missionary Magazine*, February 1814, p. 77.

¹⁹ *Minutes of the Methodist Conference in Ireland* (Dublin, 1864), vol. 1, p. 311 (1813).

²⁰ Bunting, *Jabez Bunting*, p. 403; Martin, ‘Missionary Competition’, p. 85; Vickers, *Coke*, p. 353.

George Morley, superintendent of the Leeds circuit, as he made his way home from Conference in 1813, aware of the fresh demands that the new commitments to mission undertaken at that Conference would make on their already stretched resources. Moreover, he was about to experience in Leeds itself the dangers of which Coke had warned. The matter was made even more urgent by the knowledge that annual deficits in the missionary funds had in the past been made up largely through the exertions of Thomas Coke, and he was preparing to depart on the mission to Ceylon.

The Leeds initiative

The Methodists were not the only ones seeking funds at this time and the reality of the competition soon became apparent. On 10 June 1813, the Moravians of Fulneck (between Bradford and Leeds) had announced a meeting to appeal for funds to support their missions overseas, which were deeply in debt. Then, on 11 August, an Auxiliary Missionary Society for the West Riding of Yorkshire was formed at a meeting of friends of the [London] Missionary Society held at Salem Independent Chapel in Leeds where the minister was Edward Parsons, formerly of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion. Two weeks later, on 23 August, another meeting, also at Salem, was called to form the Leeds Branch Missionary Society. Subscriptions were to be at least 1d. a week or a guinea a year, with all ministers whose congregations contributed being enrolled as members. An appeal was made to all ministers and churches in Leeds to unite in a monthly prayer meeting and to support this venture. This was followed on Monday 27 September by a meeting at the Independent Chapel in Halifax to form a Branch Missionary society for the town of Halifax also. The competition for funds was clearly heating up. Moreover, two of the sermons preached in the week of the formation of the Auxiliary Missionary Society in Leeds were delivered by leading Calvinistic Independent preachers in the Methodist Chapel in Albion Street – one by the Rev. Thomas Raffles of Liverpool and the other by the Rev. Alexander Waugh of London, the latter preaching on Luke xv, 1–7 (the parable of the lost sheep). The time had surely come for the Methodists to devote their premises to raising funds for their own cause.²¹

Yet the appeal of the London Missionary Society was seductive, because it was non-denominational and Methodists were accustomed to working with fellow Evangelical Protestants in such societies. In January and again in February 1814 the secretaries of the Auxiliary Missionary Society for the West Riding of Yorkshire felt compelled to inform the *Leeds Mercury* that the Missionary Society, unlike other such societies formed more recently (no names mentioned), was as non-denominational as the Bible Society, and was supported by 'Churchmen, Presbyterians, Independents, Methodists, &c., &c.' alike, and that, for example, their missionary in Demerara, a Mr Wray, was a Methodist in society at Hull.²²

In the same issue of the *Leeds Mercury* in which the Halifax Independents placed the announcement of their meeting to form a branch of the West Riding Auxiliary –

²¹ *Leeds Mercury*, 12 June, 7, 14 August, 4 September 1813.

²² *Leeds Mercury*, 8 January, 5 February 1814.

and immediately above it in the advertisement columns – there appeared another announcement. This was headed ‘Methodist Missions’, in bold capitals, followed by, in smaller type, ‘Among the Negroes in the West-Indies, and at Sierra Leone, in Africa; in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland; at Ceylon, Java and the Cape of Good Hope; among the French Prisoners of War, &c.’ – in other words, the complete list of locations as given in the latest Minutes of Conference. The purpose of this advertisement was to give notice of a public meeting to be held at 2.30 p.m. on Wednesday 6 October 1813 in the Methodist Old Chapel, Leeds to form a society ‘for the Purpose of supporting these very important and expensive Missions, by Weekly, Monthly, Quarterly, or Annual Subscriptions’.²³

There are at least three accounts of the origin of this Leeds Methodist initiative. The first was that given by George Morley, superintendent of the Leeds circuit, in moving the third motion at the meeting. He recalled that the Conference in 1813 had approved the extension of missions to the East but, on account of the exhausted state of the funds, the Conference had agreed to increase the number of missionaries only at the expense of cutting the number of preachers at home. ‘That was an anxious, painful, and important hour’, he recalled, and he returned home resolved to propose to his circuit ‘some extraordinary efforts for the continuance, on their present scale, of our important Missions, and for their further extension’. He discussed this with others, including his fellow preachers, and the idea spread also to Bramley which had until 1811 been part of the Leeds circuit. When the Wakefield circuit preachers – James Buckley and Richard Watson – were asked to assist, they enthusiastically joined in and soon the idea was thrown open ‘for as many Circuits in this District, as shall choose to enrol themselves with us in this Association’.²⁴

The second account comes from James Everett, who had entered into full connexion in 1810 and was one of the preachers in the Bramley circuit in 1813. Nearly twenty years later, in his *The Village Blacksmith; or, piety and usefulness exemplified in a memoir of the life of Samuel Hick*, he gave his version of events which may be seen as largely complementing Morley’s version. Everett recalled that William Scarth had repeatedly remarked to William Dawson [a popular local preacher from Garforth, near Leeds] that: ‘The missionary cause must be taken out of the doctor’s [that is, Coke’s] hands; it must be made a public, a common cause’. The holding of a Dissenters’ public meeting for missions in Leeds prompted Scarth and Charles Turkington to raise the matter at the Liverpool Conference with George Marsden, formerly of the Leeds circuit but stationed in Liverpool in 1812. [We might note, however, that the Conference met on 28 July, two weeks *before* the Dissenters’ meeting.] Whatever the inaccuracies of detail, though, what this account does show is

²³ *Leeds Mercury*, 25 September 1813.

²⁴ *Report of the Principal Speeches delivered at the formation of the Methodist Missionary Society for the Leeds District, October 6th 1813* (Leeds, 1813), pp. 18–20. The speeches by James Wood, George Morley and John Wood are partly reproduced in R. Davies, A. R. George and G. Rupp (eds), *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, vol. 4 (London, 1988), pp. 343–6.

that, while Morley's initiative may have been independent of and earlier than these discussions, he was clearly not alone in his thoughts.²⁵

It may be that Scarth's concerns had actually been stimulated by George Matthewman, a steward in the Leeds society and our third source. In 1842 he recalled receiving in September 1813 a printed note soliciting his support for another missionary society, presumably that launched at Salem on 23 August. He went to see William Scarth and they went together to see their superintendent, George Morley who, according to his own account, was already minded to act and was in the process of consulting others. Scarth was to be one of the four original secretaries of the Leeds district missionary society, along with Jabez Bunting, Richard Watson and James Sigston.²⁶

Morley's plan was initially for the Leeds and Bramley circuits but soon the neighbouring circuits in Wakefield, Bradford and Halifax were drawn in so that it became not only a circuit initiative but an initiative for both the Leeds and Halifax districts. The links between Leeds and Halifax were close. In 1813, James Wood was moved from chairman of the Leeds district to become chairman of the Halifax district when he was appointed governor (that is clerical head) of Woodhouse Grove school. Jabez Bunting, as organised a man as Coke could be disorganised and who had attended to missionary affairs during Coke's absence from Britain in 1804–1805, was moved from Halifax to Leeds. So when Morley consulted with his fellow preachers in Leeds that meant he was talking to Robert Pilter, who had come to Bramley from Colchester in 1811 before moving on to Leeds in 1813; and Jabez Bunting. Bunting's hand can be seen behind what happened next in Leeds and then, shortly afterwards, in Halifax. Letters from Bunting, dated 29 September and 19 November, to Thomas Swale of Halifax (one of the first secretaries of the Halifax District Missionary Society) show Bunting's commitment behind the scenes to the meetings called in both places.²⁷

The Leeds Meetings

And so it was that Morley's expanded plan came to fruition. A preliminary meeting was held on 22 September with James Wood in the chair, at which the resolutions for the public meeting were agreed by members of the Leeds, Bramley and Wakefield circuits, with an invitation to 'Friends in any other Circuits of this District, or its Vicinity' to join them. A further meeting of this committee was held on the afternoon of Tuesday, 5 October and then in the evening at 6.30 the first of several religious services in connection with the event was held at Armley Chapel, preacher James Buckley of Wakefield. This was followed on Wednesday 6 October at 10.30 in the

²⁵ Richard Chew, *James Everett: a biography* (London, 1875), pp. 106–8.

²⁶ Chew, *Everett*, pp. 108–9. For Scarth, see *Dictionary of Methodism*. Richard Watson was only newly-returned to the Wesleyan Ministry after some years with the New Connexion, his recruitment being attributable to the influence of Bunting and Buckley at that critical time in his career.

²⁷ 'Methodist Archives', *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, 43 (September 1981), p. 19. For the stationing of the various ministers, see *Hall's Circuits and Ministers*, ed. T. G. Hartley, enlarged edition (London, [1912]).

morning by a service at Albion Street, preacher Richard Watson of Wakefield; and at the Old Chapel the same evening at 7.00, preacher Richard Reece of Bradford, who was married to George Marsden's sister.²⁸

The missionary meeting itself took place on the afternoon of 6 October with Thomas Thompson, the Hull banker, in the chair. The first motion, approving of the Methodist missionary enterprise as established by John Wesley and Dr Coke, was proposed by James Wood of Woodhouse Grove and seconded by William Warrener from Selby, a Yorkshireman born in Strensall near York who had been one of the first three missionaries to cross the Atlantic with Coke in 1786 and so was a founder of the Antigua mission. The second motion, stating that it was 'highly Expedient to form a Society in this District for the express Purpose of augmenting the *Fund* by which these benevolent Undertakings are supported' was proposed by Charles Atmore, superintendent of the Halifax circuit and a former Leeds district chairman, and seconded by Joseph Dickinson of Leeds. The third motion, that the society was to be called 'The Methodist Missionary Society for the Leeds District' was proposed by George Morley, and seconded by Mr Jackson of Headingley. In all there were eighteen motions with proposers and seconders from across both the Leeds and Halifax districts.²⁹ This illustrates the extent to which this Leeds initiative, begun by the Leeds superintendent, had already spread not only beyond his circuit but beyond his district, encouraged by the two district chairman, both of whom had served recently in both Halifax and Leeds.

The sequel

At the close of the Leeds meeting it was announced that a similar meeting was to be held in Halifax on Wednesday, 10 November for the purpose of establishing a Missionary Society for the Halifax district. This meeting was chaired by Richard Fawcett of Bradford and the speakers included Richard Reece, Richard Watson, James Wood, Charles Atmore and James Buckley. The preacher at the special service on the Tuesday evening was Richard Reece and on the Wednesday evening, Jabez Bunting. On 24 November a branch of the Halifax District Society was formed in Bingley.³⁰

Hull followed on 24 November, probably thanks to Thomas Thompson who chaired the meeting, with Wood, Watson and Bunting as preachers and William Warrener among the speakers. Then, on Christmas day a branch society was formed at Patrington and adjacent villages in Holderness, followed by Beverley and Bridlington in January – the Beverley meeting was chaired by John White, a layman who had spent some time in India and seen for himself the need for missionaries. These local societies were in connexion with what was now called the Hull and York District

²⁸ West Yorkshire Archives Service (Leeds), N/K/7/5, Minute Book. Leeds District Foreign Missions, 1813–1865, pp. 1–3; *Leeds Mercury*, 25 September 1813. For Reece, see R. D. Umlin, *Father Reece. The Old Methodist Minister* (London, 1899; cheap edition, 1901), pp. 22–4.

²⁹ For the complete list, see *Leeds Mercury*, 16 October 1813, and *Methodist Magazine*, vol. 36 (December 1813), pp. 475–7.

³⁰ *Leeds Mercury*, 6, 13, 20 November, 4 December 1813; *Methodist Magazine*, vol. 37 (January 1814), pp. 33–5; July 1814, pp. 273–4.

Missionary Society, for which a further meeting was held in York on 25 March with James Wood in the chair, and Bunting again as the evening preacher; speakers included local men, the former missionary, William Warrener, and the veteran local preacher and bookseller, Robert Spence, who became the first treasurer. He had formerly helped Coke collect missionary funds locally and it was while staying at his house in York that Coke's second wife died in 1812.³¹

Two days after the Hull meeting, on Friday 26 November 1813, a society was formed in Sheffield with the by-now familiar team of supporting ministers: Jabez Bunting preached on the preceding evening, James Wood on the Friday morning and Richard Reece in the evening. The meeting itself, chaired by Thomas Holy, was addressed by, among others, the District Chairman, George Highfield, James Montgomery, hymn-writer and editor of the Sheffield *Iris*, James Wood, Richard Watson, Jabez Bunting, James Buckley and John Braithwaite of Huddersfield, who had also address the Halifax meeting.³²

Newcastle followed on 14 April 1814 with John Ward, junior, of Durham in the chair and Bunting and Watson almost inevitably among the speakers. The meeting also heard from George Smith, a former missionary in Newfoundland now stationed in Sunderland.³³ By the time of the next meeting of Conference in Bristol in 1814, the first six District Missionary Societies had been formed and the practice of setting up such societies was strongly recommended to the whole Connexion.³⁴

Conclusion

The commemoration of the centenary of the Wesleyan-Methodist Missionary Society in 1913 might rightly seem to have been somewhat premature, and yet there is a sense in which 1813 did see the beginnings of that Society. The fifth resolution at the Leeds meeting committed the Leeds District Missionary Society to holding two general meetings a year, the first of which was to be in Wakefield. This was duly held on 7 February and was the occasion for some self-congratulation, not least by Bunting who was able to report that promises of annual subscriptions alone amounted to at least £1,000, chiefly from the three circuits of Leeds, Wakefield and Bramley, and this did not include smaller, weekly donations.³⁵ This level of giving was later to be repeated in the Halifax District where the first Annual Meeting in November 1814 was told that £1,200 had been collected for missions.³⁶ And financial success was not the only achievement to be celebrated at Wakefield. Bunting went on:

³¹ *Hull Packet*, 23 November 1813; 11 January 1814; *York Herald*, 19, 26 March, 30 April 1814; *Methodist Magazine*, vol. 37 (March 1814), pp. 113–18, June 1814, pp. 233–9; Richard Burdekin, *Memoirs of the Life and Character of Mr. Robert Spence*, 2nd. edn (York, 1840) p. 162.

³² *Sheffield Iris*, 30 November 1813; *Methodist Magazine*, vol. 37 (February 1814), pp. 75–7; John Holland and James Everett, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of James Montgomery*, vol. 3 (London, 1855), p.19.

³³ *York Herald*, 30 April 1814; *Methodist Magazine*, vol. 37 (July 1814), pp. 274–8.

³⁴ *Minutes* (1814), vol. 4, pp. 37–8.

³⁵ *Methodist Magazine*, vol. 37 (May 1814), pp. 193–7.

³⁶ *Leeds Mercury*, 3 December 1814.

The circulation of the Leeds Resolutions and other papers, appeared to have produced a great effect in various parts of the kingdom, and to have communicated such an additional impulse to Missionary exertions among us, as would by God's blessing, produce consequences of the utmost importance to this great cause.

The initiative taken in the Leeds district had, within a few months, been extended throughout the West and East Ridings, as well as to the Newcastle and Cornwall districts, transforming missionary finances. This was largely the work of a small group of preachers, led by Jabez Bunting and Richard Watson, committed to overseas missions and the work started by Dr Coke, who constituted themselves as a kind of travelling circus to spread the message of missionary organisation from Leeds and Halifax to Hull, York and Sheffield, to Newcastle and Redruth.³⁷

But the further significance of this group lay beyond this activity, for the same men who participated in the events of 1813 in Leeds were in the next few years to play the same part on the wider Methodist stage, transforming their provincial initiative into a national one. Between 1814 and 1821 James Wood, James Buckley, George Marsden, Richard Watson, Charles Atmore, Jabez Bunting and George Morley were all to go on to serve in one of the two London circuits. Only Richard Reece, who was President of Conference in 1816, remained in the North. He had been in London (West) circuit before moving to Bradford in 1813; in 1815 he was stationed in Manchester where he remained during his presidential year, returning to Yorkshire and Leeds in 1818.

Of the rest, James Wood was appointed 'General Treasurer of all our Missions' in 1814 and James Buckley became one of the two secretaries of the General Missionary Committee; the following year's treasurers were Wood and Thomas Thompson, while Buckley was again one of the secretaries. In 1816, with Richard Reece, as President and Bunting as secretary of the Conference, and Marsden and Watson secretaries of the Missionary Committee and Thompson and Wood its treasurers, the central importance of the men of Yorkshire in 1813 was clear. Although the presence of these preachers in London was partly a result of the policy of moving itinerants around every two years, and of the tendency of the Conference to suck some of the best men into the capital, this cluster of travelling preachers, whose careers when in Yorkshire show them to have been committed to the cause of missions overseas, ensured that the Leeds initiative was not only successful in itself but also helped shape national policy as the Conference moved towards making the project fully Connexional between 1813 and 1818. The Committee of Examination and Finance membership appointed at the Sheffield Conference in 1817 not only included Bunting, Reece and Buckley on the Executive, but also eight men from West Yorkshire – though admittedly this may have been in part because the next Conference was to meet in Leeds; and it was Watson who drafted the proposal put to the 1817 Conference which was finally endorsed the following year by the Leeds Conference. In 1818, the General Missionary Committee

³⁷ Bunting's speech, *Methodist Magazine*, vol. 37 (May 1814), p. 193.

of the new General Wesleyan-Methodist Missionary Society included sixteen provincial representatives, half of whom were from the Yorkshire districts. With Thompson and Marsden as the first treasurers, and Bunting and Watson as two of the three secretaries, the dominance of the men of 1813 was complete.³⁸

The new approach to missionary finance adopted in Leeds in 1813 proved to be providentially timely. With Coke's departure from England and from this life, the first stage of hand-to-mouth support for the missionary endeavours of the Wesleyans was over. The significance of 1813 became apparent at the meeting of the Conference in Bristol in 1814, where it was reported that: 'The zeal and liberality of our people, during the past year, in behalf of our Missions, have been unprecedented; and we have considerably increased the number of our Missionaries' – indeed three extra were assigned to Newfoundland, two to Demerara, one to Montreal and two to New South Wales. Though stationing details in 1814 and 1815 suggest not all these were sent immediately, a further sixteen were authorised in 1815 – four to the West Indies, four to the British Provinces in North America, two to Newfoundland and six to Ceylon and the East.³⁹ The determined action of George Morley in 1813, backed by Bunting, Buckley, Watson, Reece and others, and endorsed by the Conference in 1814, can therefore truly be said to have marked a new stage in the history of Methodist missions – a development which culminated in 1818 in the formation of the General Wesleyan-Methodist Missionary Society.

EDWARD ROYLE (York)

³⁸ *Minutes* (1812), vol. 3, p. 263; (1814), vol. 4, p. 38; (1815), p. 126; (1816), pp. 229, 234; (1817), pp. 332–6; (1818), pp. 447–56; *Hall's Circuits*, p. xiv. For the various individuals, see *Dictionary of Methodism*.

³⁹ *Minutes*, vol. 4, (1814), pp. 38, 44; (1815), p. 127.

The Context of Methodist Missions: Global Evangelicalism in the Nineteenth Century

On 19 October 1812 Napoleon began his retreat from Moscow. The French emperor had overextended himself in an attempt to bring Russia under his sway. Prussia and Austria soon moved towards joining Russia in a grand coalition to put down the troubler of Europe. Britain, meanwhile, had long been fighting Napoleon by sea and land. In 1805 Nelson had won the battle of Trafalgar, consolidating British dominance on the oceans. On 21 June 1813 Wellington routed the French at the battle of Vittoria, bringing a triumphant conclusion to the Peninsular War, and early in October he first set foot in France. By that point it was clear that the emperor's days were numbered. A victorious Britain would soon be able to turn her energies into fresh channels. That was the mood in which the first local branch of the Methodist Missionary Society was formed in Leeds on 6 October. John Wood, a layman from Wakefield, declared at the inaugural meeting that 'missionary exertions may be regarded as a system of warfare, in which Christians are opposed to Paganism'. As their countrymen were fighting 'the Tyrant of the Continent', so Christians were enlisted against 'the Tyrant of the World'.¹ The impetus of the armed struggle against Napoleon's France would be carried over into the overseas missionary project of Methodism.

A second factor, however, swayed the first Methodist public meeting in support of missions. Earlier in 1813, parliament, urged on by William Wilberforce, the Evangelical Anglican who had led the long campaign against the slave trade, opened India to missionaries. The East India Company had prohibited missionaries from working in the vast swathes of the sub-continent it controlled for fear of religious disturbances, but when its charter came up for renewal Wilberforce seized the opportunity to alter the document so as to allow evangelism to take place. Richard Watson, who was to become secretary of the Methodist Missionary Society from 1816 to 1827 and from 1832 to 1833, pointed out in his address to the public on behalf of the venture started in Leeds that the parliamentary decision 'opened a more effectual door for the introduction of the Gospel among sixty millions of British subjects'.² The appeal of the sub-continent proved irresistible to Thomas Coke, already well into his sixties but long the zealous advocate of Methodist initiatives outside the United Kingdom. Coke had carefully nurtured missionary enterprise in the West Indies, but he had dearly hoped since the 1780s to see a Methodist presence in the East Indies. At the 1813 Conference, against stiff opposition from more cautious voices fearful of the

¹ James Nichols, *A Report of the Principal Speeches delivered on the Sixth Day of October 1813, at the Formation of the Methodist Missionary Society for the Leeds District*, 5th edn (London: Simpkin and Marshall, 1840), pp. 28-9, quoted by Bernard Semmel, *The Methodist Revolution* (London: Heinemann, 1974), p. 161.

² Richard Watson, 'Address to the Public, by the General Committee of the Methodist Missionary Society for the Leeds District', in *The First Report of the Methodist Missionary Society for the Leeds District, MDCCCXIV* (Leeds: J. Nichols, 1814), pp. 16-18, quoted by *ibid.*, p. 162.

expense of overseas work, Coke successfully pleaded to be sent out to establish Methodism in Sri Lanka. He was to depart with six younger colleagues before the end of the year, but died on board ship before reaching his destination. It was to support this new enterprise that the Leeds Missionary Society was founded. There was a vision of immense possibilities for the gospel among the inhabitants of the East.

A third reason for the meeting of 6 October 1813, however, is the one to which we should give most attention. Twelve months before, Coke had been collecting for missions in North Shields and had discovered to his dismay that the prosperous Methodists of the north-east were being formed into small committees to raise funds for missionary work by another agency.³ This was the grandly titled body 'The Missionary Society', soon to be called the London Missionary Society. It had been founded in 1795, three years after the creation of the first modern missionary society by the Baptists, to combine all other Christians in a single organisation for the spread of the gospel. Initially it drew support from all the Evangelical denominations, Churchmen as well as Dissenters, but after the launch of the Church Missionary Society in 1799, the broader body lost most of its support from the Church of England. Nevertheless the Missionary Society still aspired to represent all sections of the Evangelical community, including Methodists. In 1813 its supporters preached in a Methodist chapel in Leeds in order to take a collection for its efforts abroad. A number of Methodists were alarmed: as in the north-east, Methodist money was being diverted to a society dominated by Calvinist Dissenters. Jabez Bunting, the young but immensely capable Methodist preacher who was to dominate Wesleyan counsels for much of the next forty years, then stationed in the Leeds circuit, was one of those who wanted to ensure that local resources were used for connexional purposes. It was Bunting who, though thirty-first in the list of speakers, planned the public meeting of 6 October.⁴ The meeting was interrupted at one point by the local secretary of the Missionary Society who urged that all Christians should see themselves as one body in missionary enterprise. It was Bunting who rose to reply that, although the cause was one, it was undertaken by different societies.⁵ The Methodist Missionary Society was set up in some sense as a rival of the existing interdenominational body with the same aim.

The rivalry, however should not blind us to the significance of the previous willingness of well-to-do Methodists to give generously to a body structured on pan-Evangelical lines. Although the Missionary Society's committee was dominated by Congregationalists, Methodists saw its aims as theirs. They were united in spreading the gospel. It was a juncture when denominational barriers were low, a period that

³ G. G. Findlay and W. W. Holdsworth, *The History of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society*, 5 vols (London: Epworth Press, 1921-24), vol. 1, pp. 37-8.

⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 43-5.

⁵ John Telford, *A Short History of Wesleyan Foreign Missions* (London: Charles H. Kelly, n.d. [1906?]), pp. 55-6.

Reg Ward labelled the age of ‘Catholic christianity’.⁶ The Almighty, Evangelicals in general believed, designed the conversion of the whole world in preparation for the coming of the millennium. With so grand a vision on the horizon, denominational differences seemed trivial. That attitude had been the animating spirit of the Missionary Society in 1795.⁷ Even though denominations subsequently became better organised and their missionary ventures distinct, much of the same temper remained in succeeding years. Thus William Wilberforce, though a loyal Churchman, was a speaker at four annual meetings of the Methodist Missionary Society between 1819 and 1829.⁸ From 1818 onwards the secretaries of the four main missionary agencies met regularly, at first quarterly and then monthly, to discuss matters of common concern.⁹ There was a strong sense that the missionary enterprise was one, a part of an international movement with an Evangelical identity. Similar sentiments were powerful in America, where missionary stirrings were evident from the same period. There too denominational particularity did not eclipse Evangelical unity. Despite the increasing importance of denominations in the era moulded by Jabez Bunting and his contemporaries, the reality of the nineteenth century was that Evangelicals formed a self-aware international force.

Yet the phenomenon of global Evangelicalism is neglected in much of the historical literature. The very success of the movement in so many countries, largely through the missionary venture, has led historians to concentrate on its individual national slices to the exclusion of the grander whole. Evangelicalism made a significant impact in at least five sectors of the world. It flourished in the British Isles, though much less in Catholic southern Ireland than elsewhere in the islands. Evangelicals moulded the United States, as much on its advancing western frontier as on its populated eastern seaboard. Other lands of extensive British settlement – Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the Cape being the chief – were home to sizeable Evangelical communities. Although Evangelicalism found the European continent much less congenial soil, there was some penetration into many lands, with an enduring legacy in, for example, Sweden. And there was the missionary enterprise itself that carried the gospel to other parts of the world, enjoying astonishing success in places such as the Polynesian islands and reaching unexpected regions such as the borders of Siberia and Mongolia. There is a natural tendency for historians, who cannot achieve omniscience, to concentrate on only one of these five dimensions of the Evangelical world, and often on only a single national unit within it. Thus a recently translated book by R. Tudur Jones, in many ways a profoundly illuminating analysis of Welsh Christianity at the end of the century, suffers from treating the

⁶ W. R. Ward, ‘The Baptists and the Transformation of the Church, 1780-1830’, *Baptist Quarterly*, new series, 25 (1973-74), p. 171. Its nature is expounded in W. R. Ward, *Religion and Society in England, 1790-1850* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1972), chap. 1.

⁷ Roger H. Martin, *Evangelicals United: Ecumenical Stirrings in Pre-Victorian Britain, 1795-1830* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1983), chap. 3.

⁸ Semmel, *Methodist Revolution*, p. 168.

⁹ N. Allen Birtwhistle, ‘Methodist Missions’, in Rupert Davies *et al.* (eds), *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, 4 vols (London: Epworth Press, 1965-88), vol. 3, p. 42.

nation's 'Evangelical Accord' in an exclusively Welsh context. Most of the features of the Welsh experience could be paralleled in other lands, but Tudur Jones commonly attributes developments in the principality to unique features of national life rather than to factors that were also impinging on Evangelicals elsewhere.¹⁰ The religious history of England, America and other countries has often suffered from a similar failure to locate Evangelical bodies within the broader international perspective in which they saw themselves. By concentrating on particular territories for investigation, the historiography has done a disservice to the common features of the global Evangelical movement.

An equally distorting effect has been produced by the tendency of historians to write solely about individual denominations. Institutional histories inevitably concentrate on particular confessional groups; and personal allegiance very reasonably leads many church historians to research only their own ecclesiastical body. The nineteenth-century Evangelical mosaic, however, contained a bewildering variety of denominational families. Again they may be divided into a number of main categories. First there was an Evangelical presence within the Anglican communion, which, though it was also home to High and Broad Churchmen, contained many whose loyalty was to the preaching of the gospel that they shared with other denominations. Then there were the Reformed Churches, most of them Presbyterian, which dominated Scotland and had strong representation in other parts of the world. The Congregationalists were like the Presbyterians in inheriting Calvinist teachings but unlike them in asserting the independence of the local church from any external authority. Baptists were similar to Congregationalists, though often more populist and practising believer's baptism by immersion. Methodists, Arminian in theology like their founder John Wesley, were undoubtedly the most enterprising of nineteenth-century Evangelical groupings, growing immensely during its hundred years. There were also Moravians, Quakers with an Evangelical standpoint, Brethren and many others on the sectarian fringe of Evangelicalism. Faced with this immense diversity, historians may be excused for preferring to write about a single confessional grouping. Again, however, there can be detrimental consequences for our understanding of the past. Much of the writing on Scotland, for example, has dwelt on the Presbyterian experience to the exclusion of other denominations. Since over 80% of churchgoers held some Presbyterian allegiance, the concentration is understandable, but it has had the effect of artificially insulating Scottish Christianity from its Evangelical context. Interactions with thought and practice from other sectors of the Evangelical world have been neglected.¹¹ The denominational differences, real and fascinating though they are, must not blind us to the centrality in nineteenth-century experience of Evangelical identity.

¹⁰ R. Tudur Jones, *Faith and the Crisis of a Nation: Wales, 1890-1914*, ed. Robert Pope (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), p. 16.

¹¹ E.g. A. C. Cheyne, *Transforming the Kirk: Victorian Scotland's Religious Revolution* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1983), which points to liberalising influences from elsewhere (p. 72), but among external Evangelical influences only Moody and Sankey receive attention.

This paper seeks to redress the balance by drawing attention to the common features of Evangelical religion that transcended the internal fissures within the global movement, whether national or denominational. It explores the context of Methodist missions. It may begin with the characteristics that together formed the defining marks of Evangelicalism, the first being devotion to the Bible. Elizabeth Rose, the wife of an American Methodist minister of the Troy Conference, who died in 1862 at the age of thirty-one in Lebanon, New York, showed this quality while in the last stages of pulmonary consumption. 'She was a great lover of the Bible', according to her obituarist, 'making it her constant companion and reading it in family worship, either sitting or lying in bed, even when unable to speak above a whisper'.¹² Another Methodist woman, though this time writing in England eleven years later, explained her conviction that 'it cannot be amiss to refer to the Bible as the highest authority on all subjects on which it professes to speak authoritatively, to seek its thoughts as the basis of our own, and to endeavour to appropriate its teaching for the guidance of our lives'.¹³ The same sense that the Bible was the decisive authority in matters of faith and practice became widespread even among the Quakers, who had traditionally downplayed the role of the scriptures relative to the inward light, when they were affected by the rise of Evangelicalism in their ranks. 'We reverently lay our hand on the Testaments, Old and New', ran a leading article in the *Friend*, the British journal of Evangelical Quakerism in 1852; 'and by them we stand'.¹⁴ When, towards the end of the century, the Evangelical Alliance organised a series of meetings in and around London to bear witness to the 'cardinal truths of the Gospel', the first was on scripture, covering its inspiration, its authority and its sufficiency.¹⁵ The family Bible on the parlour table was the most obvious outward symbol of Christian allegiance in Evangelical homes in every continent. The scriptures formed one of the bonds that held the global Evangelical movement together.

The doctrine of the cross was another. For an agent of the American Missionary Association, an abolitionist Congregational body, who was working in Illinois in 1858, the 'great vital points' of the faith included 'that Christ has made an all-sufficient atonement'.¹⁶ The emphasis on the death of Christ as the source of salvation was universal in the Evangelical movement. The reputed words on his deathbed of an English Wesleyan, William Johnston, in the previous year showed a comparable doctrinal stress, clearly appropriated as the basis of a personal faith. 'I look to the Crucified', he declared, '– I rest in the atonement – Glory be to Jesus!'¹⁷ Phrases associated with the death of Christ became Evangelical shibboleths. Thus a Methodist soldier who was on guard at Gibraltar, when challenged by an officer for the

¹² *Christian Advocate and Journal* (New York), 4 September 1862, p. 286.

¹³ M. A. Y., 'Bible Thoughts about Women', *Wesleyan Sunday School Magazine*, 1873-74, p. 121, quoted by Linda Wilson, *Constrained by Zeal: Female Spirituality amongst Nonconformists, 1825-1875* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2000), p. 52.

¹⁴ *Friend* (London), 2nd month 1852, p. 29.

¹⁵ *Freeman* (London), 6 January 1888, p. 13.

¹⁶ *American Missionary* (New York), July 1858, p. 159.

¹⁷ *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* (London), March 1860, p. 283.

watchword, came out with the phrase most prominent in his mind, 'The precious blood of Christ'. What the officer thought is not recorded, but a fellow-soldier is said to have found the Saviour as a result of overhearing the words.¹⁸ In an editorial on 'The Cleansing Blood', the leading American Methodist newspaper the *Christian Advocate* pointed out in 1872 that the cross was central to behaviour as well as to teaching. 'As the sacrifice of Christ lies at the foundation of all Christian doctrine', it contended, 'so is its application essential to all Christian purity and life.'¹⁹ The atonement brought peace to the saved and a challenge to the sinner. First and foremost, the immensely influential English Baptist preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon told his students, they should preach 'Christ and him crucified'.²⁰ It was a priority every Evangelical shared.

A further common feature of Evangelicalism was a belief in conversion. It was a fundamental premise of Evangelicals that many who went by the name of Christian were not true believers. Thus William Oakley, who long served with the Church Missionary Society in Sri Lanka, found many English families in the island who showed no regard for religion. They needed to have a change of direction that set them for the first time on the highroad of salvation. Oakley therefore 'sought the conversion of nominal Christians'.²¹ A commonly used synonym for conversion was being born again or regenerated. Thus a correspondent of the *Friend* insisted that the right of children of Quakers to membership of the Society of Friends must not be allowed to obscure their personal need of grace. 'May we, then, individually be willing to examine', it urged, '...whether we know for ourselves, what it is to be regenerated'.²² Another theological term associated with the experience was justification, often limited to the divine forgiveness of a sinner on his first trusting Jesus for salvation. For William Taylor, a globe-trotting American Methodist evangelist who was eventually appointed Bishop of Africa, when God sees individuals surrender, he acquits them. 'That part of the transaction', according to Taylor, 'is called justification by faith'.²³ The nature of conversion, however, might be formulated in different ways. For many, especially the more respectable worshippers, it might be understood as a gradual process of which the subject might be unconscious until it was complete; but for others, especially the more red-hot evangelists, it was necessarily experienced as a sudden event. Thus Reginald Radcliffe, a leading English revivalist, insisted in 1860 'that conversion is an instantaneous work'.²⁴ Yet what the movement did agree on was that conversion, whether slow or fast, conscious or unconscious, was the essential opening of the spiritual life. Without it, a person was not a Christian at all.

¹⁸ *Christian Advocate and Journal*, 4 March 1858, p. 33.

¹⁹ *Christian Advocate* (New York), 3 October 1872, p. 316.

²⁰ C. H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to my Students* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1954), p. 337.

²¹ 'The Rev. William Oakley', *Brief Sketches: C. M. S. Workers*, Vol. II (n.d., n.p.), p. 7.

²² *Friend*, 7th month 1852, p. 129.

²³ *William Taylor of California, Bishop of Africa: An Autobiography*, revised C. G. Moore (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1897), p. 204.

²⁴ *Christian* (London), 21 January 1860, p. 21.

A final characteristic of all Evangelicals was activism. Those who had read in their Bibles about the urgency of salvation, who felt gratitude for the work of Christ on the cross and who believed that they themselves had been converted were highly motivated for the task of conveying the gospel to others. The result was a whirl of evangelistic efforts. 'Piety in these days', announced the *Presbyterian Home Missionary* of New York in 1884, 'shows itself more in work than in reflection and meditation.'²⁵ Ministers were particularly devoted to activity: 'work, work, work', said William Morley Punshon, a prominent mid-century Wesleyan minister who served in Canada as well as Britain, 'is the *lex vitae* of a Methodist preacher in either hemisphere'.²⁶ Even retirement did not put an end to the pertinacity of ministers in proclaiming the good news. Samuel Howe, an American Methodist who was superannuated from the ministry in 1830, nevertheless continued to preach, turning railroad cars into his pulpit. 'He would arise and occupy the two or three minutes of stopping, so as often to move the passengers to tears on the subject of their souls' salvation.'²⁷ Local evangelism spilled over into both world mission and social concern, with the same impetus to incessant endeavour driving a William Carey in India and a Lord Shaftesbury in England. Friedrich Tholuck, perhaps the leading scholar identified with the German *Erweckungsbewegung*, or awakening, was a passionate supporter of missions. In 1847, on returning from the founding of the Evangelical Alliance in England, he commended the example of what he had witnessed to his German co-religionists, urging them 'to give to their Christianity a more practical form, a more vigorous impulse, and to enter on a course of more active usefulness'.²⁸ It was a recognition that Evangelicalism had no time for idleness. Bible, cross, conversion and activism – these were the key features of the movement, whatever the religious body, whatever the national allegiance.

The common Evangelical ethos, however, was also apparent in many other aspects of the movement. The trajectory of its theology, for example, illustrates the way in which Evangelicalism, though internally diverse, was being forged into a single entity. At the start of the period there was a considerable gulf between the Arminianism of the Methodists, together with a few others, and the Calvinism of most Evangelical groupings. Arminians believed that all might be saved by exercising their freewill; Calvinists held that God chose a particular number for salvation. The type of moderate Calvinism held by those who had been influenced by the Evangelical awakening, however, had abandoned 'double predestination', the high Calvinist view that the Almighty condemned individuals to perdition. Theologians such as the Congregationalists of the New England school and the English Baptist Andrew Fuller taught, on the contrary, that sinners were responsible for the loss of their own souls. The tendency to a lowered version of the Reformed tradition went further, with the

²⁵ *Presbyterian Home Missionary* (New York), March 1884, p. 51.

²⁶ F. W. Macdonald, *The Life of William Morley Punshon, LL.D.* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1881), p. 316.

²⁷ *Christian Advocate and Journal*, 18 March 1858, p. 44.

²⁸ *Evangelical Christendom* (London), August 1847, p. 241.

American revivalist Charles Finney, for example, according a much larger role to human ability in conversion. The distance between Calvinists and Arminians steadily narrowed until, in the last third of the century, there were signs that it had virtually disappeared. Dwight L. Moody, the hugely popular American evangelist from the 1870s, was able to frame his gospel messages so that they were acceptable to both parties.²⁹ In 1890 a commentator in southern Africa, noting that ‘Christian Churches are now converging in doctrine’, saw no difference of substance between the teachings of Wesleyans and Presbyterians.³⁰ Nine years later the National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches in England and Wales issued a catechism that was equally endorsed by theologians from Methodism and from the denominations with a Reformed inheritance.³¹ The most obvious theological division in the ranks of the movement had been largely healed.

There was a similar convergence in the area of spirituality, which was moulded by the same doctrinal traditions. The American Methodist *Christian Advocate* set out in 1858 what it saw as a main contrast between the denominations. The Methodists, it claimed, taught feeling first, and thinking afterwards. ‘*Methodism addresses the heart*’ and so differed from ‘the more ratiocinative Congregationalism or Presbyterianism’.³² Methodists, furthermore, looked for entire sanctification, a sudden leap into holiness after conversion, whereas those with a Reformed background expected advances in the Christian life to be gradual, the result of sustained struggle. There was therefore a definite difference between denominational forms of spirituality that did not entirely disappear. As the century wore on, however, there was more interaction between them. In national organisations, leaders of the various bodies co-operated with each other; in remote places, union churches brought people upholding different approaches together in single congregations. Methodists started singing the hymns of the Congregationalist Isaac Watts and everybody else started singing the hymns of Charles Wesley. So the area of common ground in spirituality increased. Many Methodists became more reflective in matters of faith, so that they insisted more on thinking; and their distinctive quest for entire sanctification gradually faded, so that they emphasised the need for steady effort instead.³³ There was in any case a great deal of shared devotional practice. Prayer was a priority for all, whether in private or in public. The weekly prayer meeting, remarked an American handbook on the subject published in 1878, had been ceasing to be a ‘spiritual refrigerator’ as it steadily grew in importance ‘in the estimation of Christians of all denominations’.³⁴

²⁹ D. W. Bebbington, ‘Moody as a Transatlantic Evangelical’, in Timothy George (ed.), *Mr Moody and the Evangelical Tradition* (London: T. & T. Clark International, 2004), pp. 82-3.

³⁰ *Christian Express* (Lovedale, South Africa), 1 November 1890, pp. 163-4.

³¹ *An Evangelical Free Church Catechism for Use in Home and School* (London: National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches, 1899).

³² *Christian Advocate and Journal*, 18 March 1858, p. 41.

³³ D. W. Bebbington, *Holiness in Nineteenth-Century England* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2000), chaps 2 and 3.

³⁴ L. O. Thompson, *The Prayer-Meeting and its Improvement* [1878], 5th edn (Chicago: F. H. Revell, 1881), p. x.

Likewise anticipation of heaven was a remarkably prominent theme across the confessional boundaries. Especially as death approached, there was, at least down to the 1870s, an eagerness to talk openly about the glory land that was in prospect for the believer.³⁵ By the end of the century there was a high degree of union of soul among Evangelicals.

The unity extended beyond the soul to the mind. The intellectual orientation of most Evangelicals during the nineteenth century was moulded by the legacy of the Enlightenment. Reason, to a striking extent, was their lodestar. This characteristic has been obscured in some of the older literature by a stress on the undoubted repudiation by nineteenth-century Evangelicals of rationalist thinking. Thus a leading article in the *Record*, the Evangelical Anglican newspaper, at the opening of 1863 roundly condemned ‘the vagaries of Prussian or German rationalism’. But what it was rejecting was the abuse of reason, not reason itself. It commended ‘the good sense of LOCKE’, so appealing to the mastermind of the English Enlightenment, and also ‘the “Common Sense” of REID’, the leading Christian philosopher of the Scottish Enlightenment.³⁶ Thomas Reid’s principle that there are matters, such as the existence of God, which, because they are beyond doubt, are the common property of all human minds was almost universally endorsed by nineteenth-century Evangelicals.³⁷ They also embraced other values derived from the Enlightenment. Happiness loomed large in their vocabulary, at least in the earlier part of the century. Thus in 1828 Adam Clarke, perhaps the most intellectual of Wesleyan ministers, published a sermon entitled ‘Genuine Happiness the Privilege of Every Real Christian’, once more citing Locke, amongst others.³⁸ Again, there was a fundamental conviction that the gospel was on the side of the civilisation that the Enlightenment aspired to diffuse throughout society. John Mackenzie, a prominent Congregational missionary in Botswana, declared at his ordination in 1858 that preachers of the gospel must teach ‘the arts of civilized life’.³⁹ Reason, happiness, civilisation – these Enlightenment principles were the secure property of Evangelicals.

Hence there were several ways in which Evangelicals were aligned with modernising facets of Enlightenment thought. They echoed the typical optimism of the later years of the age of reason in their version of the Christian hope. They confidently expected that, as a result of the advance of the missions of their day, the whole world would turn to Christ. The church, according to John Angell James, the Congregational minister at Carr’s Lane, Birmingham, was ‘assured of increase, triumph, and universal dominion’.⁴⁰ This was the postmillennial understanding of the

³⁵ Wilson, *Constrained by Zeal*, pp. 59-63.

³⁶ *Record* (London), 2 January 1863.

³⁷ M. A. Noll, ‘Common Sense Traditions and American Evangelical Thought’, *American Quarterly*, 37 (1985), pp. 220-5.

³⁸ Adam Clarke, *Discourses on Various Subjects relative to the Being and Attributes of God and his Works in Creation, Providence and Grace*, 3 vols (London: J. and T. Clarke, 1828-30), vol. 1, sermon 11.

³⁹ A. J. Dachs (ed.), *Papers of John Mackenzie* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1975), p. 72.

⁴⁰ J. A. James, *The Church in Earnest* [1848] (London: Hamilton, Adams, 1861), p. 356.

future, so called because it postulated that the second advent of Christ would not take place until after ('post'-) the arrival of the millennium predicted in the book of Revelation. In that coming era, Satan would be bound and so his malignant influence would be prevented from damaging the progress of the gospel and its values. 'When Christ shall reign spiritually on earth', rhapsodised an American co-religionist, W. H. Johnstone, in 1857, 'then covetousness shall cease, the wealth, and influence, and power, and glory of the Universe will be given to Zion, millions will be saved...and the kingdoms of this world [will] become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ'.⁴¹ This postmillennialism was the general stance of nineteenth-century Evangelicals, though over time the theological content of their beliefs about the future tended to become vaguer. Already in 1850 the idea of the coming millennium was being subordinated to a more this-worldly ideal in a book called *The Theory of Human Progression*.⁴² As the century went on, most Evangelicals continued to suppose that the world was getting better, but did not know very clearly why. As heirs of the Enlightenment, they were as much advocates of the idea of progress as their secular-minded contemporaries.

Equally, for much of the century, Evangelicals were as forward as any other school of thought in endorsing science. Their belief in reason underlay a devotion to what they called the 'Baconian rules of inductive reasoning', the principles of empirical investigation attributed to Francis Bacon whereby the natural world could be made to yield up its secrets.⁴³ Likewise postmillennialism encouraged Evangelicals to see the 'unimagined ways in which science has become auxiliary to the social improvement of mankind' as signs of the advance towards the glorious times to come.⁴⁴ Scientific notes regularly appeared in religious magazines, for there was a conviction that there was a harmony between God's revelation in his word and in his work. 'It is truly', declared the Scottish theologian Thomas Chalmers in 1816, 'a most Christian exercise to extract a sentiment of piety from the works and appearances of nature'.⁴⁵ Chalmers, like many others, deployed scientific discoveries to defend the Christian religion, defining the field as natural theology. In particular, the adaptation of living things to their purpose seemed firm evidence of an intelligent Creator. Popular lecturers such as Thomas Cooper, once an infidel champion, dwelt on the theme of design in the universe.⁴⁶ Charles Darwin's case that evolution rather than design explained the adaptation did not end the discussion, for Evangelical apologists began to take broader ground, arguing that the Almighty used natural processes to achieve his ends.⁴⁷ After

⁴¹ *American Missionary*, December 1857, pp. 282-3.

⁴² *Baptist Magazine* (London), October 1850, pp. 614-22.

⁴³ *Christian Observer* (London), September 1854, p. 625.

⁴⁴ *Evangelical Christendom*, January 1847, p. 2.

⁴⁵ Thomas Chalmers, *Discourses on the Christian Revelation viewed in Connexion with the Modern Astronomy with Others of a Kindred Character* (Edinburgh: Sutherland and Knox, 1848), p. 21.

⁴⁶ Timothy Larsen, *Contested Christianity: The Political and Social Contexts of Victorian Theology* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2004), pp. 118-19.

⁴⁷ J. R. Moore, *The Post-Darwinian Controversies: A Study of the Protestant Struggle to Come to Terms with Darwin in Great Britain and America, 1870-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

Darwin there was an awareness that science was not automatically an ally in the battle of belief, but as yet there were only the beginnings of the twentieth-century sense that science was likely to be ranged in the ranks of the enemy. The predominant attitude among nineteenth-century Evangelicals was that the records of scientific endeavour served as an invaluable apologetic armoury.

There was also an alliance between Evangelical religion and commercial enterprise. The rule-governed universe seemed to be one where the Almighty had arranged that trade would generate prosperity. The development of systems of exchange was another symptom of progress towards the millennium. Hence it was natural for spokesmen for missions to argue that they should go hand in hand not only with civilisation but also with trade. In the peroration of a celebrated speech at Cambridge in 1857, the Scottish explorer-missionary David Livingstone announced that he was returning to Africa to 'make an open path for commerce and Christianity'.⁴⁸ There was an undoubted congruence between the teaching of Evangelicals and the qualities needed in the burgeoning market economy – integrity, diligence, self-reliance. It should not, however, be supposed that Evangelical religion closed its eyes to a ruthless pursuit of profit. On the contrary, it developed elaborate bodies of thinking about commercial ethics, condemning, as did the American New School Presbyterian Albert Barnes in 1841, 'the insatiable love of gain'.⁴⁹ When any of its adherents failed in business, it was a matter of shame and, in the case of gathered churches, of ecclesiastical discipline. Thus Sir Samuel Morton Peto, the immensely rich railway entrepreneur and founder of Bloomsbury Baptist Chapel in central London, was censured by his own church when, in 1867, he became bankrupt even though it was a result of a bank failure entirely beyond his control.⁵⁰ Nevertheless Evangelicals did not see economic affairs as a worldly intrusion into the spiritual sphere. Large churches increasingly operated as commercial ventures, organising systematic giving, listing donations and using proper bookkeeping methods. The deacons at the King's Weigh House, a Congregational church in London, discussed in 1860 the introduction of a regular 'statement of the Income and Expenditures of the various Societies in connexion with the Church'.⁵¹ Prosperity founded on efficiency seemed as natural a goal in the church as in business. Evangelical congregations of all lands and every denomination, at least in the big cities, seemed wholly identified with modernity in its economic dimension.

If Evangelicals were generally in favour of the cluster of forces usually associated with the modernising inheritance of the Enlightenment – reason, optimism,

⁴⁸ A. C. Ross, *David Livingstone: Mission and Empire* (London: Hambledon and London, 2002), p. 121.

⁴⁹ Albert Barnes, 'Vindication of Revivals and their Influence on this Country', *American National Preacher*, 15 (January 1841), p. 23, quoted by R. W. Pointer, 'Philadelphia Presbyterians, Capitalism and the Morality of Economic success', in M. A. Noll (ed.), *God and Mammon: Protestants, Money and the Market, 1790-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 182.

⁵⁰ Faith and Brian Bowers, 'Bloomsbury Chapel and Mercantile Morality', *Baptist Quarterly*, 30 (1984), pp. 210-20.

⁵¹ C. D. Cashdollar, *A Spiritual Home: Life in British and American Reformed Congregations, 1830-1915* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), p. 157.

science and commerce – they also knew what they were against. The Bible taught them that their grand enemy was sin, conversion was away from sin and it was sin that had brought about the need for the atonement. So hostility to sin was rooted in their key characteristics. Accordingly they not only denounced wrongdoing from the pulpit but also took action against it in public. The typical way in which Evangelicals engaged with the ills of society was to organise campaigns against whatever they regarded as wickedness. The best method of rousing Evangelical audiences against British colonial slavery, the leading agitator in the cause discovered in the early 1830s, was to denounce it as ‘criminal before God’.⁵² Already at the beginning of the century William Wilberforce had led efforts to reform manners by enforcing laws against blasphemy and sabbath-breaking and to induce parliament to prohibit the slave trade, a measure achieved in 1807. Subsequently other issues were taken up when the Evangelical public decided a wrong could be put down. The temperance movement was transformed into a Christian campaign when it was concluded that strong drink was the cause of personal ruin for thousands. Because alcohol was so dangerous, some Evangelicals decided that its sale was an outright sin. Thus A.C. Dixon, an energetic Baptist minister, was horrified to discover on moving to Baltimore, NJ, in 1882, that liquor dealers were listed on the membership roll.⁵³ Broader campaigning against public evils that was to issue in the social gospel movement towards the end of the century was at first less a diversion from Evangelical priorities than an addition to them. The social gospel, too, should be understood primarily as an effort to combat what sensitive Christian consciences had diagnosed as the sinful features of the urban-industrial society that was spreading round the world. At a Methodist ordination service in Melbourne in 1891, for instance, the ex-president of Conference charged the candidates that the work of the ministry should include not only preaching, pastoral work and administration, but also social philanthropy. ‘You will...take a leading part’, he told the young men before him, ‘in movements for checking intemperance, gambling and impurity’.⁵⁴ Such mass mobilisations against sin were another standard feature that united nineteenth-century Evangelicals.

They also agreed, however, that there was another enemy to be resisted. The Roman Catholic Church was a redoubtable rival for the souls of the world, with Irish folk carrying their faith to the uttermost parts of the earth. A young Free Church of Scotland minister named Robert Taylor sent from Edinburgh to Sydney in 1845 was dismayed to find himself on board the outward vessel with a party of priests. Having unsuccessfully tried to start a disputation with them in Latin, he noticed with a critical eye that they were devoting a very large proportion of the Lord’s Day to playing chess. ‘The Pope’, he concluded, ‘has evidently marked Australia as his own’.⁵⁵ Rome appeared to grow sterner as the century wore on. The Syllabus of Errors of

⁵² George Stephen, *Anti-Slavery Recollections in a Series of Letters addressed to Mrs Beecher Stowe* [1854] (London: Cass, 1971), p. 248.

⁵³ Helen C. A. Dixon, *A. C. Dixon: A Romance of Preaching* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1931), p. 88.

⁵⁴ *Spectator and Methodist Chronicle* (Melbourne), 20 March 1891, p. 280.

⁵⁵ *Home and Foreign Missionary Record of the Free Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh), January 1846, p. 277.

1864, anathematising modern trends, alarmed Protestants because it seemed to assert even higher papal claims over the temporal allegiance of Catholics than in the past. In the following year the leading Baptist newspaper in the United States commented that ‘the moral pestilence of Romanism’ was ‘directly at variance with the spirit of our political institutions’.⁵⁶ What was more, Catholic teaching appeared to have infiltrated into the Anglican communion. The Oxford Movement of the 1830s was perceived by Evangelicals as an attempt to reverse the Reformation and so to ‘unprotestantise’ the Church of England. The ritualists who were inspired by the ideals of John Henry Newman, Edward Pusey and John Keble to introduce elaborate ceremonial into their services constituted a Trojan horse. ‘Ritualism’, declared one of their most eloquent opponents, J. C. Ryle, subsequently bishop of Liverpool, ‘is nothing but Romanism in the bud, and Romanism is Ritualism in flower.’⁵⁷ The efforts of likeminded Anglicans, enjoying the sympathy of the whole range of Evangelical opinion, to resist the rising tide of ritualism occupied a great deal of their energies during the later nineteenth century. Evangelicals throughout the world were resolute opponents of the Roman Catholic Church and of those who imitated its practice.

How did such a high degree of consensus emerge about what Evangelicals endorsed and what they rejected? There were chiefly three mechanisms at work. First, there was the printed word. Evangelicals used the press, in the words of the report of the Church Missionary Society in 1801, ‘as a most powerful auxiliary in their grand design’.⁵⁸ The Bible itself was naturally the book most printed. The interdenominational British and Foreign Bible Society, founded in 1804, calculated that already, only thirteen years later, it had issued 1,808,261 Bibles, Testaments and scripture portions. In that period the society had printed copies in as many as nineteen languages.⁵⁹ The cause was immensely popular, with humble folk devising imaginative money-raising schemes. Thus at Witchampton, Dorset, £2 came in 1867 from ‘the parrot of a worthy woman, who had taught it to ask for Contributions with a tin Collecting-box attached to its cage’.⁶⁰ The society had many imitators abroad. A book called *Bible Stories*, originally published in 1832 for educational use by the German and Foreign School Society of Calw, Württemberg, was translated from German into English, Danish, Bohemian, Hungarian, Wendish, Polish, Canarese, Tamil, Bengali, Hindustani and Chinese.⁶¹ Small tracts circulated in enormous numbers. The Religious Tract Society, established in 1799, even before the British and Foreign Bible Society, and equally representative of Evangelicalism as a whole, specialised in issuing these telling leaflets. By the middle of the century it was

⁵⁶ *Examiner and Chronicle* (New York), 11 May 1865.

⁵⁷ J. C. Ryle, *Bishops and Clergy of Other Days* (London: William Hunt and Co., 1868), p. 2.

⁵⁸ *Proceedings of the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East*, 1 (1801-05), p. 80.

⁵⁹ William Canton, *A History of the British and Foreign Bible Society*, 5 vols (London: John Murray, 1904-10), Vol. 1, p. 318.

⁶⁰ Leslie Howsam, *Cheap Bibles: Nineteenth-Century Publishing and the British and Foreign Bible Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 183.

⁶¹ *Evangelical Christendom*, May 1847, p. 147.

publishing in 110 languages and 4,363 titles appeared on its list.⁶² By that time, however, the Religious Tract Society had ventured beyond tracts themselves to publish books, many of them reissued by the American Sunday School Union, that related faith to every sphere of knowledge. Geography, agriculture, political economy, natural science and many other subjects were covered in its 'monthly series' of volumes, which always touched on the atonement. Here was a publishing venture that aimed to create a Christian mind amongst a mass audience. The Religious Tract Society was also responsible for publishing weekly periodicals, *Leisure Hour* and *Sunday at Home*, and later *The Boys' Own Paper* and *The Girls' Own Paper*, which reached a huge readership.⁶³ Its transatlantic sister organisation, the American Tract Society, proudly claimed that in the year 1849-50 its publications, which, in order to maximise the statistical impact, it calculated in pages, amounted to 280,697,500.⁶⁴ Similar publishing ventures were set up in other lands, with China, for example, having thirty Christian presses by the early years of the twentieth century.⁶⁵ The vast resulting body of literature helped ensure that Evangelicals thought alike across national and denominational boundaries.

Institutions were a second agency by which Evangelical solidarity was fostered. The nineteenth century was the age of the rise of benevolent associations. In America the chief bodies existing by mid-century, apart from the publishing societies, were the missionary organisations, of which the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, founded in 1810, was most prominent, the home missions, the Sunday School Union, the Education Society and the Seaman's Friend Society.⁶⁶ The British equivalents had their headquarters in the Exeter Hall in London's Strand, where each year the May Meetings, the annual rallies of each organisation, were held. Many of them, including all the leading missionary societies, belonged to particular denominations, but the co-ordination of their annual meetings and the regular exchange of speakers between them remained signs throughout the century that they were a part of a unitary Evangelical venture. Furthermore, they were aware of being integrated in an international network that bound them together. Seamen's missions, for example, regularly exchanged news, copied methods and lent personnel.⁶⁷ In Wellington, New Zealand, it was agreed in 1848 to establish a Bible Society, a Tract and Book Society and a monthly periodical on British models.⁶⁸ A handbook on Sunday school techniques published in London in 1871 recommended an American plan for issuing library books, even urging readers to 'Use *Geist's* adhesive

⁶² R. H. Martin, *Evangelicals United: Ecumenical Stirrings in Pre-Victorian Britain, 1795-1830* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1983), p. 156.

⁶³ Aileen Fyfe, *Science and Salvation: Evangelical Popular Science Publishing in Victorian Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), pp. 76, 108, 177-81.

⁶⁴ Adams, *Evangelism*, p. 299.

⁶⁵ J. H. Ritson, *Christian Literature in the Mission Field* (Edinburgh: Continuation Committee of the World Missionary Conference, 1910, 1915), pp. 44-8.

⁶⁶ Evans, *Evangelism*, pp. 287-303.

⁶⁷ Roald Kverndal, *Seaman's Missions: Their Origin and Early Growth* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1986).

⁶⁸ *Evangelical Christendom*, September 1848, p. 293.

tags for backs of books'.⁶⁹ An eagerness to meet the needs of young people was responsible for a large number of international ventures. The Young Men's Christian Association, launched in London in 1844, soon became a flourishing body on other shores. When a visiting Canadian Maritimer attended its annual meeting in the Exeter Hall in 1850, he was impressed that it aimed 'to carry the religion of the Bible into the counting house'. 'An Institution of this kind', he remarked, 'is wanted in Halifax and St. John exceedingly.'⁷⁰ In the following year a YMCA was founded in Montreal and another in Boston. Likewise the Christian Endeavor Society, founded in Portland, Maine, in 1881, and the Boys' Brigade, established in Glasgow two years later, rapidly turned into global movements. Parachurch agencies of various kinds transmitted ideas and enthusiasms from one side of the world to another, welding the movement they served into a single entity.

The third form of linkage between the branches of the Evangelical movement, and the most important one, was through personnel. The nineteenth century was an age of migration, when large numbers moved from the British Isles to other parts of the world. The chief destination was always the United States, with more than half the emigrants from England and Wales choosing America as their promised land in nearly every decade down to the end of the century.⁷¹ Others, however, travelled to the various settler territories within the British Empire, whether Canada, the Cape, Australia or New Zealand. In 1846 the periodical of the Free Church of Scotland found their behaviour perverse. It noted that it had heard from 'the vast colony of New South Wales, where so many of our dear countrymen have been led to resort, in search of the bread that perisheth, leaving behind them the rich stores of Gospel privileges that they enjoyed in their native land'.⁷² Since they had gone out, however, it must send ministers after them. Of the roughly 320 Presbyterian ministers in Australasia in 1871, the Free Church claimed to be 'intimately connected' with at least 300.⁷³ These links maintained a sense of common purpose across the globe. Furthermore, the correspondence of emigrants with relations and friends, often kept up for many years, passed on religious news as well as more secular information. Much of it found its way into Christian periodicals, with journals such as the *Baptist Magazine* peppering its pages with news from abroad. Every issue from September to December 1850, for example, carried the latest information from America.⁷⁴ Christian leaders found their way to other parts of the world, whether on evangelistic tours, official business or rest cures. Thus the extraordinary career of James Thomson, a Scottish promoter of popular education and agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society in Latin America from 1818 to 1830, led to the creation of pockets of

⁶⁹ J. C. Gray, *The Sunday-School World* (London: Elliott Stock, 1871), p. 306.

⁷⁰ *Christian Messenger* (Halifax, NS), 22 March 1850, p. 94.

⁷¹ Dudley Baines, *Migration in a Mature Economy: Emigration and Internal Migration in England and Wales, 1861-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 62-3.

⁷² *Home and Foreign Missionary Record of the Free Church of Scotland*, January 1846, p. 276.

⁷³ *ibid.*, April 1871, p. 75.

⁷⁴ *Baptist Magazine*, September 1850, p. 555; October 1850, p. 625; November 1850, p. 686; December 1846, p. 786.

Protestant presence in several Hispanic countries.⁷⁵ Later in the century the American Methodist William Taylor criss-crossed the globe from California to the Cape in a sustained preaching ministry.⁷⁶ Missionaries to particular regions, who were able to return home for advocacy work more frequently as the century wore on, formed another bond between various parts of the world. The Evangelical movement was united by people as well as by literature and institutions.

The picture of the solidarity of the movement, however, needs to be qualified in a significant way. Towards the end of the century there was a growing theological tension between the more liberal and the more conservative wings. The predominant trend in Evangelical thought from around the middle of the century was in the direction of greater liberalism. Partly this development was a consequence of the legacy of the Enlightenment, with its stress on freedom of enquiry. Many Evangelical bodies were increasingly reluctant to impose tests of orthodoxy on their members. Thus subscription to the Westminster Confession, the traditional standard of Presbyterian belief, was relaxed by the United Presbyterians in 1879 and the other main Scottish denominations in subsequent years.⁷⁷ A larger part of the change, however, derived from an alteration of assumptions. A Romantic idiom increasingly supplanted the inheritance of the Enlightenment. The transformation is evident in altering conceptions of God. There was a shift from the ideal of the Almighty as a ruler presiding over a justly administered government, endorsed by enlightened thought, to that of him as a Father at the head of a kindly managed family favoured by Romantic taste. Many Congregationalists, who were most affected by this development, began to entertain wider hopes about human destiny and, as an American Baptist newspaper complained in 1878, to 'discard the recognized evangelical idea of the atonement'.⁷⁸ At the same time there was a growing acceptance, at least in intellectual circles, of the biblical criticism emerging from Germany and so commonly bound up with the Romantic worldview entrenched in the psyche of that land. The *cause célèbre* was the controversy in the Free Church of Scotland between 1876 and 1881 over the acceptability of German critical methods in the writings of the young scholar William Robertson Smith.⁷⁹ Although the protracted proceedings were eventually resolved by Robertson Smith's dismissal, his views gained ground because of their identification with scholarship. The tendency of the times was towards broader views in accordance with the canons of Romantic feeling and German thought.

There was nevertheless a countervailing trend, equally associated with Romantic opinion, in a theologically conservative direction. A close friend of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the chief fount of the Romantic philosophy of religion in English-speaking lands, was Edward Irving, minister of the Church of Scotland serving in

⁷⁵ D. M. Lewis (ed.), *The Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography, 1730-1860*, 2 vols (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), vol. 2, pp. 1100-1

⁷⁶ *Taylor of California*, revised Moore.

⁷⁷ Cheyne, *Transforming of the Kirk*, chap. 3.

⁷⁸ *Religious Herald* (Richmond, VA), 21 February 1878.

⁷⁹ Cheyne, *Transforming of the Kirk*, chap. 2.

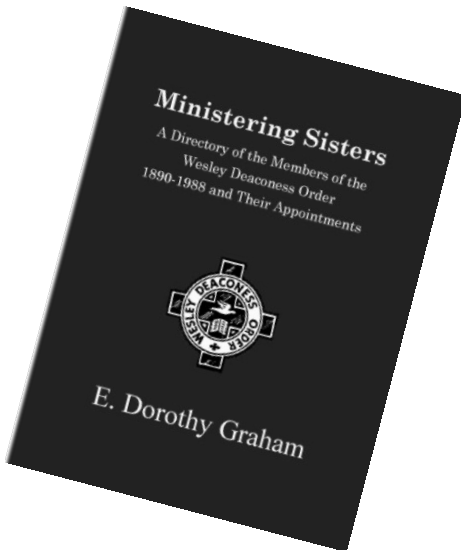
London during the 1820s. Drawing inspiration from Coleridge, Irving struck out on new theological paths. He condemned the mechanistic and commercial methods of the benevolent societies as savouring of the Enlightenment, urged a more spiritual approach to spreading the gospel and recommended that missionaries should go out, like the first apostles, 'destitute of all visible sustenance, and of all human help'.⁸⁰ They would then be compelled to rely on the Almighty for all their needs. This was the faith principle, soon taken up by George Müller, who ran a great orphanage at Bristol on the basis that the Lord would provide for all its needs in answer to prayer, and eventually by Hudson Taylor, the founder of the China Inland Mission in 1865. The ideal became the inspiration of a whole set of undenominational faith missions that imitated it. Another of Edward Irving's innovations, however, was to prove equally fraught with consequences. Disgusted with what he saw as the groundless optimism of the postmillennial school, Irving worked out the elements of a premillennial scheme, holding that the personal second coming of Christ was imminent. His longer-lived contemporary John Nelson Darby, the leader of the exclusive branch of the Brethren movement, elaborated the same teaching in the form of dispensationalism. Although dispensational doctrine was to make far greater headway in later years, it was already being propagated at Moody's Northfield conferences before the end of the nineteenth century. A third novel body of thought that similarly invoked the heightened supernaturalism typical of Romanticism was the holiness revival. Originating in the Methodist doctrine of entire sanctification, the new holiness teaching, as expounded by Phoebe Palmer of New York, differed by stressing the immediate availability of a higher life. Taken up from 1875 by the Keswick Convention, the message was embraced by many Evangelicals around the world, especially within the Anglican communion. Each of these nineteenth-century novelties helped lay the foundations for the Fundamentalism that was to emerge in the following century. Because they stiffened the conservative resistance to the general liberal drift, they contributed to a growing theological polarisation within Evangelicalism. These developments heralded the break-up of the earlier solidarity of the movement.

Down to 1900, however, it was the unity of the movement rather than its divisions that were most striking. Its defining characteristics of Bible, cross, conversion and activism bound it together in every land. Its theology and spirituality showed a bridging of the earlier divide between Calvinist and Arminian. The close identification of Evangelicalism as a whole with the temper of the Enlightenment was evident in its appeal to reason, its postmillennial hope and its engagement with science. The association of the movement with commerce confirmed that it was, in its day, the epitome of modernity. Evangelicals were agreed, too, in what they opposed, seeing sin in society and Romanism in the church as their grand foes. Their common platform across the world was reinforced by a shared literature, linked institutions and an exchange of personnel. Although there was a tendency at the end of the century for

⁸⁰ Edward Irving, *For Missionaries after the Apostolical School: A Series of Orations* (London: for Hamilton, Adams and Co., 1825), p. 18.

a new kind of theological division to emerge along conservative/liberal lines, fragmentation was deferred until later years. It is true that national variations were part of the reality of Evangelical world, for divergent circumstances still ensured differences. Yet, as the Australasian Wesleyans reported to the British Conference in 1858, the differences between them were merely in 'minor details'.⁸¹ Denominational dissimilarities were probably greater than national contrasts, but in this age it was the co-ordinated efforts and common mind of Evangelicals that were most striking. This was the ethos of the Methodist Missionary Society. A Congregational missionary to south Illinois reported in 1857 that he was working in concert with three Old School Presbyterian churches, as many Cumberland Presbyterian churches, a Freewill Baptist church and a few Methodists. 'These', he commented, 'are all the evangelical denominations now attempting to make inroads on the great host of the common enemy.'⁸² It was the unity of the nineteenth-century global Evangelical movement that was of world historical significance.

DAVID W. BEBBINGTON (Stirling University)



A New Publication From The Wesley Historical Society, *Ministering Sisters* will be an invaluable source for Methodist historians.

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⁸¹ *Minutes of the Methodist Conferences*, Vol. 14 (London: John Mason, 1862), p. 148.

⁸² *American Missionary*, July 1857, p. 160.

Wesley Historical Society Annual Meeting and Lecture, Englesea Brook Museum Saturday 4 July 2015: ‘Prims in Print: the changing character of Primitive Methodism as seen through its literature’ by the Revd Dr Stephen Hatcher

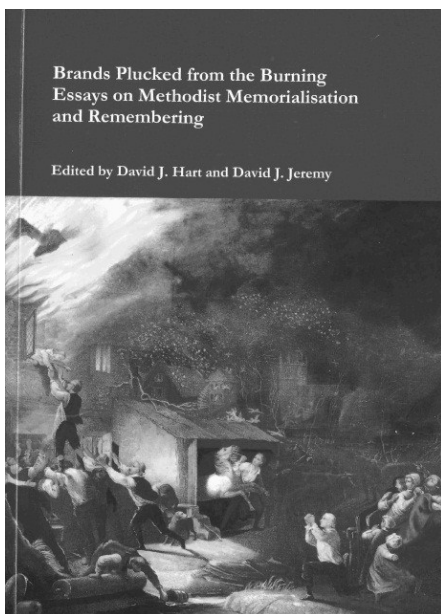
The Annual Meeting on Saturday 4 July 2015 will focus upon the history and influence of Primitive Methodism with opportunities to explore its historic origins and legacy through the Englesea Brook Chapel Museum and its environs. Parking will be available at Englesea Brook and refreshments served from 10.00 am for a modest charge. At 10.30 am there will be a welcome by the Chair of the Chester and Stoke District, the Revd Peter Barber, followed by a guided tour of Englesea Brook Museum led by Dr Jill Barber, Vice-President Designate of the Methodist Church and Director of Englesea Brook, concluding at 12.00. During the lunch break (bring a packed lunch to eat in the picnic areas around the Museum or under cover if the weather is inclement) bibliophiles will have an opportunity to visit the large second-hand bookshop at the Hassall Road Methodist Church, Alsager (10 minutes by car). Others may wish to travel further to visit the evocative site at Mow Cop (20-30 minutes by car). The Wesley Historical Society AGM, to which all are invited, will be held at Englesea Brook from 1.15 to 2.15 pm. There are good public transport links from Crewe, Manchester and Birmingham to Alsager and car share possibilities for access to Hassall Road and Mow Cop.

The Wesley Historical Society Annual Lecture chaired by the Revd Dr Henry Rack will take place at Englesea Brook Chapel from 2.30 pm to 4.00 pm. It will be preceded by a short act of worship during which a collection will be taken to cover expenses and followed by refreshments. For his lecture, the Revd Dr Stephen Hatcher will draw upon a major revision and considerable expansion which he has been undertaking of the Primitive Methodist bibliography that he originally prepared in 1980. An integral part of this process of revision has been to identify through consideration of title, author, publisher and content exactly what characterises a publication of significance to the history of Primitive Methodism. His lecture will summarise his key findings and examine the changes in the literature that is being printed across time and place zones and what this reveals about the character of the Primitive Methodist reading public and the theological, spiritual, social, educational, cultural and political environment in which Primitive Methodists lived. In viewing Primitive Methodism through the perspective of its books he will illuminate the changing character of this most ‘chameleon of denominations’.

The Revd Stephen Hatcher is a Methodist Minister who served in Circuit 1968-96. He was given permission to develop the Englesea Brook project during the years 1996-2008, and is now retired from the stipendiary ministry. He is currently a member of the Methodist Heritage Committee, and Chair the Methodist Heritage Sites Network Forum. He was previously a member of the Archives and History Committee, representing the Primitive Methodist interest. He holds the degree of PhD

from the University of Manchester for a thesis entitled: 'The origin and early expansion of Primitive Methodism in the Hull Circuit, 1819-1851', presented in 1993. He believes that an understanding of our Methodist Heritage can lead to much greater effectiveness in the contemporary mission of the Church today. For further information contact Dr John A. Hargreaves, General Secretary, 7 Haugh Shaw Road, Halifax. HX1 3AH; e-mail: johnahargreaves@blueyonder.co.uk.

A Wesley Historical Society Publication



These essays about British Methodists in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries, explore the process of collective remembering. Three distinct aspects are probed in this volume: how telling life stories shaped identity for the Methodist movement; how remembering lives was both contrived and contested; how historians' techniques have exposed the process of memorialising and remembering in Methodism.

Obtainable from www.Lulu.com at £14.95 plus p&p

BOOK REVIEWS

Randy L. Maddox (ed.), *The Works of John Wesley, volume 12: Doctrinal and Controversial Treatises* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2012). xiv + 490 pp. £37. hardback. ISBN 978-1-4267-4430-3.

John Wesley's reputation as a theologian has recovered significantly since the time when Mgr Ronald Knox dismissed his writings as a warning about the perils of trying to study on horseback. From the 1960s Albert Outler argued persuasively that Wesley should be taken seriously as a theologian. Outler's thesis was that Wesley might best be characterised as a 'folk theologian', producing work for the burgeoning Methodist movement and in response to particular needs and contexts, rather than setting out to write an abstract work of systematics. In this latest volume in the Wesley Works Project, Randy Maddox provides an edition of four works which he sees as 'foundational treatises on soteriology'. The first, *The Doctrine of Salvation, Faith, and Good Works*, published in 1738, comprises Wesley's extracts from the Church of England's sixteenth-century *Book of Homilies*, and shows Wesley drawing on the authorised texts of the Church to defend the preaching of justification by faith and the experience of assurance against his clerical critics. The second, *An Extract of Aphorisms of Justification*, published in 1745, shows Wesley drastically abridging Richard Baxter's *Aphorisms* (1649), a piece of seventeenth-century polemic against antinomian Calvinism. The third, *An Extract from the Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Assembly* (1753), demonstrates Wesley's common ground with Reformed Protestantism on many points, while again showing his antipathy to dogmatic Calvinism. The fourth, and by far the longest text, taking up more than three hundred pages in this edition, *The Doctrine of Original Sin, according to Scripture, Reason, and Experience* (1757), is Wesley's reply to John Taylor's *Scripture-Doctrine of Original Sin* (1740). Dr John Taylor (1694-1761), a Presbyterian divine and minister of the Norwich congregation from 1733-57, held that a proper reading of Scripture did not support the superstructure of original sin and total depravity constructed by later Christian theology and classically expressed in the Westminster Assembly's *Larger Catechism*. While not dissenting from Taylor's challenge to Calvinist orthodoxy, Wesley took issue with Taylor's moral psychology, arguing that Taylor over-estimated the power of reason to drive right conduct, under-estimated the power of sin in unredeemed human nature and consequently obscured the Gospel offer of healing and renewal. Wesley's response drew heavily on earlier rebuttals, producing what Professor Maddox justly describes as 'a very hybrid piece' (p. 151).

This volume is a fine contribution to the Wesley Works Project. Each of the four texts is carefully edited, with references traced, allusions identified and Wesley's often silent editorial omissions indicated. There is an introduction to each treatise; in the case of *The Doctrine of Original Sin* this is in itself a substantial piece of work, with a helpful summary of Taylor's *Scripture-Doctrine* included. The general introduction to the volume situates Wesley in a tradition of 'practical theology' and indicates the

debates within which Wesley sought to maintain his position against anti-evangelicals, antinomians and rationalists. The footnotes show a thorough acquaintance with the secondary literature and the latest scholarship on the ecclesiastical history of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This is an exemplary piece of careful scholarship, and both editor and publishers are to be warmly congratulated.

MARTIN WELLINGS (Oxford).

Imagining Methodism in 18th-century Britain: Enthusiasm, Belief & the Borders of the Self by Misty G. Anderson (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2012), pp. 296. Hardback, £34.00.

This is a scholarly book for scholars and, as the wording of the title suggests, its writing reflects the scholarly concerns of academic cultural and literary historians of the eighteenth century. That said, this work is an important contribution to that growing volume of writings about Methodism seen as an expression of eighteenth-century British culture and, while it builds on older studies such as Albert Lyle's *Methodism Mocked. The Satiric Reaction to Methodism in the Eighteenth Century*, published by Epworth in 1960, the approach is that of more recent studies such as Henry Abelove's *The Evangelist of Desire* (1990) and Phyllis Mack's *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment. Gender and Emotion in Early Methodism* (2008). The main task of the book is not to examine Methodism as it was but to see how Methodism was represented in a number of key eighteenth-century literary texts, and why it was reacted to in this way. Throughout most of the chapters the emphasis is on the confused and ambiguous relationship between *eros* and *agape* in Methodist writings, sermons, meetings and hymns. The main targets on which the enemies of Methodism focused were the Moravians, George Whitefield, and Charles Wesley's hymns. John Wesley himself was aware of the dangers implicit in the language (and more) to be found here, and so early in the progress of Methodism he broke with the Moravians over their excessive (and suspicious) emotionalism, and viewed some of his brother's ambiguously phrased emotional poetic outbursts about divine love with circumspection.

The opening chapter locates Methodism within the psychological theories of the Enlightenment, and especially the key concept of the 'self' to which Methodist theology subscribed with its emphasis on the 'I' in relation to God. The religion of feeling was compatible with the sensationalist psychology associated with John Locke and the British Enlightenment but at the same time it challenged many of the features of 'modernity' on which Enlightened man prided himself. This paradox was summed up by Henry Rack in 1989 in the title of his biography of John Wesley, *Reasonable Enthusiast*. Enthusiasm (which was often a pseudonym for Methodism) literally means 'filled with God' or 'inspired', a challenge to secularism and rationality – 'a very horrid thing', as Bishop Butler is alleged to have said to Wesley about his

‘pretending to extraordinary revelations and gifts of the Holy Ghost’. Thereby lay the path to Antinomianism and moral anarchy: poets and authors could safely be inspired, but not Methodist labourers and servant girls. So Methodism was an affront to the modernity of the Enlightenment, pushing at the boundaries of what it meant to be a rational, civilised man. It confused gender roles. Its excessive emotionalism was feminine, and brought out the feminine in both sexes. The strength of this book is that it shows a good understanding of the Methodist message, with all its ambiguities, and makes a clear distinction between what Methodism was intended to be, what it might sometimes have slipped into being, what its language invited its critics to believe it was, and how its critics presented it – as a sexually deviant, libidinous, subversive challenge to ‘polite’ society.

The working out of this hostility is then pursued in the next three chapters, where the principal texts examined include Henry Fielding, *The Female Husband* (1746) (‘The New Man’), John Clelland, *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (1748–9), perhaps better known as simply *Fanny Hill* (‘Words made Flesh’), and Samuel Foote’s play *The Minor* (1760), and the rivalry between Foote and George Whitefield, actors both and rivals for audiences in their respective theatres of performance. Hogarth’s anti-Methodist prints are also considered at this point. The book then passes on from satirical and critical representations of Methodism to the language of Methodism itself as expressed in its hymns (‘My Lord, My Love’). This is an excellent chapter for an understanding and appreciation of the poetry and music of Methodism, despite giving the impression (p. 193) that Isaac Watts wrote ‘Hark, the Herald Angels Sing!’ (Another strange and uncharacteristic slip is to refer to Mary Bosanquet as Bosquanet throughout chapter 2 and in the Index, though she is correctly spelt, and un-indexed, elsewhere in the book.)

From the 1770s the tone of anti-Methodist literature started to change and, as Wesley himself noted, the crowd violence and pulpit opposition began to fall away. Whitefield’s death in 1771 removed a major target for the satirists but, moreover, those aspects of Methodism that upheld the values of the modern age now appeared more substantial than those that threatened it. In works such as Tobias Smollett, *The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker* (1771) and Richard Graves, *The Spiritual Quixote; or the Summer’s Ramble of Geoffrey Wildgoose* (1773) the anti-Methodist message is muted and the good points of their Methodist characters are discovered by the end of the novels. Methodism was becoming accepted, even respectable. Wesley’s chapel, opened in 1778, embodied this; and Wesley began to ordain preachers in 1784. Methodism was gaining its own identity and, out in the open for what it was, came to be seen as less of a threat. Through this window on to Methodism we are given a richer view of eighteenth-century culture than that which once saw religion only as an obsolete expression of the human soul in an age of reason and secularity. For this reason Misty Anderson’s contribution to Methodist studies is to be welcomed.

J. R. Wesley Weir, *Through Changing Scenes: Belfast Central Mission – The Story of the First 125 Years, 1889-2014* (Belfast: Belfast Central Mission, 2014), pp. 66 + [2]. Paperback, no charge, but donations to the Mission appreciated.

The story of Methodism's Belfast Central Mission (BCM), headquartered at Grosvenor Hall (now House), has already been told in a book *At Points of Need*, issued to mark its centenary in 1989, and written by Eric Gallagher, BCM's superintendent minister from 1957 to 1979. In this booklet, Wesley Weir (a lifetime member of BCM and its archivist, as well as a noted Irish Methodist genealogist and historian) has brought the account up to date but also mined BCM's extensive archive of 25,000 items to re-examine the first hundred years. In terms of pagination, his work is less than one-third the length of Gallagher's. However, Weir's appears in triple-column A4 format in a smaller font, more reminiscent of a marketing brochure (and somewhat unwieldy to hold), so that the overall word-count is perhaps not significantly less than that of the predecessor volume. The booklet is well written, very attractively designed and printed, with copious illustrations, many of them photographs taken by the celebrated Belfast photographer Alexander Hogg, who was commissioned by BCM to record its activities during the early twentieth century.

Inevitably, at one level, BCM's history follows a pattern common to Methodist central halls in mainland British cities. Its evangelistic and congregational heyday was before the First World War, after which its fortunes have been more mixed, although its social work programmes remain extensive and are undertaken at centres throughout Northern Ireland, not just confined to Belfast. Many of the challenges faced by BCM were the same as those encountered by other Methodist inner-city missions, but there were also some distinctive features in its operating environment, not least the deleterious effects of emigration (briefly discussed on p. 39), the dominance of Presbyterianism and Catholicism (not systematically explored), and 'The Troubles' from the 1960s to 1990s. The last-named are covered in some depth, partly because they are within living memory (and can thus be illuminated through personal testimony), partly because BCM was so directly affected (its premises suffered collateral damage from 34 bomb blasts), and partly because BCM was deeply involved in the peace-making process (especially in Gallagher's time). For earlier periods the narrative sometimes has a more introspective feel, with, for instance, only fleeting glimpses given of relations with non-BCM Methodism in Belfast or in Ireland. It also occasionally lacks a detached perspective, doubtless reflecting its dependence upon BCM-generated sources.

The booklet is divided into seven chapters, which are neither wholly chronological nor wholly thematic, necessitating some overlap and resulting in some fragmentation. To these the current superintendent (Richard Johnston) has appended some thoughts about 'where to next?' Those unfamiliar with the local scene, like the present reviewer, may struggle to keep up with the manifold people, events, and initiatives entering and exiting the stage, despite the inclusion of several cross-references from one chapter to another and of boxed mini-biographies of 11 key figures (albeit

unhelpfully scattered throughout the text). Readability and navigation might have been enhanced by the addition of a timeline, metrics of BCM's key activities, a checklist of its buildings, an index of names, and a better set of endnotes (which are rather minimal). Gallagher's more conventionally-sized book, with its stronger chronological structure and index, is perhaps still a little easier to use (and to shelve). Notwithstanding, Weir has added invaluable new content to document the substantial contribution BCM has made to spiritual and community life in Belfast and Northern Ireland.

CLIVE D. FIELD

Jennifer Woodruff Tait, *The Poisoned Chalice: Eucharistic Grape Juice and Common-Sense Realism in Victorian Methodism* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2011), pp. 208. Hardback £31.33. ISBN 9780 817317195.

This is the story of how grape juice became holy! Both an interesting claim and quite a different approach to that taken by traditional temperance advocates in the United Kingdom. The author was led to this research by the circumstance of her marriage to an Southern Episcopalian whose family, although teetotal saw no problem with wine in the communion cup whilst her United Methodist family perceived it as a totally unacceptable practice. She was confused by the strength of views and quite extreme attitudes regarding usages which she had not thought of in that way.

Woodruff Tait charts the process of change as it unfolded in America from a straightforward temperance principle through a tortuous theological and scientific journey. As she does so she details the cultural mores of the Methodist and Non-conformist churches in Victorian America. This reveals some startling descriptions of prejudice, racial and religious, which affected attitudes to the drive towards use of grape juice alone. None of this movement would have been possible without the development of the pasteurisation process for grape juice developed by Thomas Welch and his son Charles.

One of the sources of this initiative was created by the solid Baconian mindset which provided that interpretation of the Bible should be informed by 'scientific truth'. This belief led to a gathering acceptance that when the Bible refers to wine it cannot be a fermented product but could only been a reference to grape juice itself. She recounts the many and detailed refutations of the possibility that wine, as we use the term, could have been any part of the usage of Jesus. Scientific evidence is offered for the damaging effect alcohol has on the body and the mind and theological refutations of the possibility that Jesus would have used such a substance. Jesus, it was held, always referred to 'pure grape juice'.

Tait's travels into the controversy include evidence of prejudice against Irish Catholics because of their association with whisky and German Lutherans because many taverns and breweries were owned by Germans. She also points to Weber's

work ethic and how employers took a moral stance regarding the lives of their employees demanding a particular cultural and moral behaviour from them.

In all this is a fascinating, sometimes shocking read. The picture presented of a vehement, almost fanatical, belief in the moral and scientific arguments for the holiness of grape juice seem to come from a culture so different from our own that L. P. Hartley's oft quoted statement seems particularly apposite. As an aside: this is the first academic book I have read as an E-book and the failings of this format soon became evident. There is no way to refer to footnotes or end notes, nor to easily flip back to compare statements in one chapter with another. I would never choose to read a textbook or academic text in digital form, despite being perfectly happy with novels in that media.

RONALD AITCHISON

Richard Ratcliffe, *Methodist Records for Family Historians* (Bury: The Family History Partnership, 2014), pp. 32. Paperback, £4.95. ISBN 978-1-906280-44-4.

Philip Thornborrow, *A Methodist in the Family?* (London, Methodist Heritage, 2014), pp. 56. Paperback, £4.99. ISBN 978-1-85852-390-3.

This small book offers a useful potted history of Methodism. The sections on the different splits and divisions within the denomination will be useful to non-Methodist genealogists and even those Methodists, of whom there are many, who have little understanding of that part of our history. Although Ratcliffe offers a fairly extensive list of the sort of papers likely to be useful he is somewhat vague about where they will be found. The list of national archives will be useful, but more guidance regarding circuit and chapel records would help the enquirer. Some of the extracts, although containing interesting illustrations, would be of little help to the family researcher.

Covering a similar field to the Ratcliffe book this provides a more comprehensive list of resources for the serious researcher. In particular there are detailed website addresses with explanations of what will be found there. Again a weakness is in advice regarding where or how to access local records. Although this can vary from area to area, an illustrative search for a typical chapel record would have been useful. Thornborrow is excellent for sources regarding ministers or national figures.

Despite my caveats I would recommend both of these publications to any genealogist looking to work in this field.

RONALD AITCHISON

We are pleased to welcome the following new Member:

Miss Caitriona McCartney BA (Hons)	Littleover, Derby
Rev Christopher J. Collins B Sc FCA DipTheol	Wolverhampton.
Mrs Joyce Wightman	Plymouth

We send our sympathies to the family of the following Member who has died:

Prof Michael F. Collins	Shepshed Loughborough
Rev G. Thackray Eddy MA BD	Hampton Lucy Warwick
Mr Andrew G. Worth	Wembley