

WESLEY
AND
METHODIST
STUDIES



THE
PENNSYLVANIA
STATE
UNIVERSITY
PRESS

VOL. 10, NO. 2
2018

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**THE MANCHESTER WESLEY RESEARCH CENTRE
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Wesley and Methodist Studies (WMS) publishes peer-reviewed scholarly essays that examine the life and work of John and Charles Wesley, their contemporaries (proponents or opponents) in the eighteenth-century Evangelical Revival, their historical and theological antecedents, their successors in the Wesleyan tradition, and studies of the Wesleyan and Evangelical traditions today. Its primary historical scope is the eighteenth century to the present; however, WMS will publish essays that explore the historical and theological antecedents of the Wesleys (including work on Samuel and Susanna Wesley), Methodism, and the Evangelical Revival. WMS is a collaborative project of the Manchester Wesley Research Centre and The Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History, Oxford Brookes University, and is published biannually by Penn State University Press. WMS Website: www.mwrc.ac.uk/wesley-and-methodist-studies.

SUBMISSION INFORMATION

All submissions should be sent to the editors using the journal's online submission and peer review system: <http://www.editorialmanager.com/wms/>. Detailed guidelines for submission are available for download from the menu in Editorial Manager.

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

Wesley and Methodist Studies is published biannually by the Penn State University Press, 820 N. University Dr., USB 1-C, University Park, PA 16802. Subscriptions, claims, and changes of address should be directed to our subscription agent, the Johns Hopkins University Press, P.O. Box 19966, Baltimore, MD 21211, phone 1-800-548-1784 (outside USA and Canada: 410-516-6987), jrnlcirc@press.jhu.edu. Subscribers are requested to notify the Press and their local postmaster immediately of change of address. All correspondence of a business nature, including permissions and advertising, should be addressed to Penn State University Press, journals@psu.edu.

The Penn State University Press is a member of the Association of University Presses. This journal is indexed in the ATLA Religion Database® (ATLA RDB®), a product of the American Theological Library Association, 300 S. Wacker Dr., Suite 2100, Chicago, IL 60606, USA. Email: atla@atla.com, www: <http://www.atla.com>; and in Scopus, the largest abstract and citation database of peer-reviewed literature (<https://www.elsevier.com/solutions/scopus>).

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JOHN WESLEY, HETERODOXY, AND DISSENT

G. M. DITCHFIELD



ABSTRACT

While John Wesley's opposition to Calvinism is well known, he also devoted much of his later life to counteracting what he regarded as serious threats to Christian orthodoxy, namely the denial of original sin and the rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity. As a result he became involved in controversy with several leading Protestant Dissenters, including John Taylor of Norwich and Joseph Priestley. This article examines the relationship, sometimes friendly but more frequently uneasy, between Wesley and his followers and the Dissenting denominations. When prominent ministers among those denominations promulgated heterodox teaching over original sin and the Trinity, Wesley responded with a degree of vehemence that emphasized and indeed widened the differences between Methodism and the older Dissent, and hence shaped the identity of Wesleyan Methodism in the early nineteenth century.

Keywords: Calvinist, Calvinism, heterodoxy, Methodism, predestination, Trinity

I

On 5 April 1768, during one of his tours of Lancashire and Cheshire, John Wesley recorded in his *Journal*:

About noon I preached at Warrington; I am afraid, not to the taste of some of my hearers, as my subject led me to speak strongly and

This article is a revised version of the John Wesley Lecture given at Lincoln College, Oxford, on 23 May 2017. I am grateful for the invitation to give the lecture, to Lincoln College for generous hospitality, and to Peter Forsaith, William Gibson, Geordan Hammond, and David Wykes for their encouragement and advice.

‘PETALS ON A WET, BLACK BOUGH’

*The Established Church, Methodism, and Dissent
in the Diocese of Llandaff in 1763*

JOHN MORGAN-GUY



ABSTRACT

Focusing on the replies of the clergy to the queries of Bishop John Ewer in his 1763 Primary Visitation of his diocese of Llandaff, this article explores the strength and weakness of Dissent that they reveal, and the attitude of the clergy of the Established Church toward it. It reveals their understanding of Wesleyan and Calvinistic Methodism, and concludes that with few exceptions at this date, they did not regard it as a matter of deep concern.

Keywords: Visitation, clergy, Llandaff, Methodism, Dissent

When William Miles, prebendary of Salisbury and vicar of Llanblethian with Cowbridge for fifteen years, sat down in the early summer of 1763, took up his pen, and prepared to respond to his bishop's questions as to the current spiritual condition of his diocese, ghosts of the past stood at his elbow. The first of his replies has gained some notoriety. Bishop John Ewer's enquiry was for information on the numerical strength and the denomination of Dissenters.¹ Miles focused upon the meeting house at Aberthin, a mile and a half north-east of Cowbridge itself, and its congregation. 'Methodists of all trades

An earlier version of this article was given as a lecture in the Prebendal House at Llandaff Cathedral in 1991.

1. Ewer asked, 'what number of families have you in your parish? Of these how many are dissenters? And of what sort or denomination are they? Is there any licenced or other Meeting House of dissenters in your parish? Who teaches in such Meeting House?'

WORKS OF GRACE AND PROVIDENCE

The Structure of John Wesley's Theology

HOWARD A. SNYDER



ABSTRACT

John Wesley often referred to God's providence in his *Explanatory Notes upon the Old Testament* and *Concise History of England*. Examining these two sources primarily, this article shows the importance of providence in Wesley's theology. It concludes that Wesley closely interrelated providence and grace, that he recognized the complexity of causes in events, and that he sought to balance divine sovereignty and human freedom. Wesley grounded providence primarily in God's wisdom rather than in divine 'decrees'. Thus providence occupied the place in Wesley's theology that predestination did in Calvinism. Providence laced with grace is the larger structure of Wesley's theology.

Keywords: providence, grace, wisdom, predestination, history

Shortly after Donald Trump narrowly won the US presidential election, the pastor of a 'successful' church in the Wesleyan tradition wrote,

Whether or not we happen to like or agree with Donald Trump, the Lord has given us the leader we have—just as he's given us the president before him, and the one before him, and the one before him. So we can rejoice, not so much in any human leader, but in the God who raises up leaders.

To many Christians, this sounds self-evidently true. What this pastor was referring to, without using the word, is God's *providence*. Providence was a major

A version of this article was presented as the thirteenth annual Manchester Wesley Research Centre Lecture, Nazarene Theological College, Manchester, UK, June 2017.

SCHISM AND THE SPIRIT IN HUGH BOURNE'S THEOLOGY

JAMES E. PEDLAR



ABSTRACT

It is normally argued that theological issues were not at stake in the separation of the Primitive Methodist Connexion from Wesleyan Methodism. While it is true that the flashpoint issues were methodological, there were underlying theological differences that contributed to the schism. Primitive Methodist co-founder Hugh Bourne had a pneumatocentric theology that prioritized the personal work of the Holy Spirit over the Spirit's work through the community. His Spirit-centred perspective led the Primitive Methodists to a more participatory and egalitarian understanding of the church, but offered little reason to resist separation from Wesleyan Methodism when conflict arose. Keywords: Hugh Bourne, Primitive Methodism, Holy Spirit, church, schism

The Primitive Methodist Connexion was founded near the beginning of a fractious era of British Methodist history. For seven decades following Wesley's death, Methodism in Britain splintered into a variety of ecclesial bodies, most of which were eventually reunited. Several significant studies of these divisions were written during the height of mid-twentieth-century ecumenical fervour:¹

1. See, for example, John Kent, *Jabez Bunting, the Last Wesleyan: A Study in the Methodist Ministry After the Death of John Wesley* (London: Epworth Press, 1955); Reginald Kissack, *Church or No Church? A Study of the Development of the Concept of Church in British Methodism* (London: Epworth Press, 1964); John Kent, *The Age of Disunity* (London: Epworth Press, 1966); Robert Currie, *Methodism Divided: A Study in the Sociology of Ecumenicalism* (London: Faber, 1968); John C. Bowmer, *Pastor and People: A Study of Church and Ministry in Wesleyan Methodism from the Death of John Wesley (1791) to the Death of Jabez Bunting (1858)* (London: Epworth Press, 1975).

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The MWRC supports the research of scholars studying the Methodist, Wesleyan, and Evangelical traditions, particularly from MWRC partner institutions. Each year visiting research fellows are welcomed for short periods of intensive research in Manchester. The MWRC helps facilitate access to the world-renowned Methodist Archives and Research Centre at The John Rylands Library in Manchester. It also has its own specialist library with research space for visiting research fellows and PhD students studying at MWRC partner institutions. The Centre hosts student-led research colloquiums, an annual lecture by a leading scholar in Wesleyan Studies, and occasional international conferences. For more information about the Centre and upcoming events, go to: www.mwrc.ac.uk or contact the Centre's Director, Dr Geordan Hammond: ghammond@nazarene.ac.uk.

The Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History

The Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History is a research centre of Oxford Brookes University that embodies the relationship between the university and the trustees of the former Westminster College, Oxford. The Centre is home to important resources, including the Wesley Historical Society Library and a number of archive and art collections, including the Methodist Collection of Modern Art. The Routledge Methodist Studies series of monograph research publications is also edited from the Centre. The Centre offers a small number of visiting research fellowships each year to enable scholars to come to Oxford to use its resources. The Centre also has a number of research students working in the broad field of religious history and culture. It also sponsors lectures, conferences, and other research activity. For more information go to: <https://www.brookes.ac.uk/hpc/research/oxford-centre-for-methodism-and-church-history/> or contact the Centre's Director, Professor William Gibson: wgibson@brookes.ac.uk.

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The Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History, Oxford Brookes University, and the Manchester Wesley Research Centre have worked in partnership for several years. In 2012, the centres established a biannual seminar series that has now extended to include the Wesley Study Centre, St John's College, Durham University; Wesley House, Cambridge; Cliff College; and The Queen's Foundation, Birmingham. The seminars provide an opportunity for established and emerging scholars of Methodist Studies to present the findings of their research. We conceive of Methodist Studies broadly and aim to provide opportunities for students of history, theology, literature, art, material culture, and other fields related to Methodism. For further information, visit: www.mwrc.ac.uk/methodist-studies-seminars/.