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# Proceedings

OF THE

## Wesley Historical Society

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Volume 57 Part 3

October 2009

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### THE METHODIST REVIVAL FELLOWSHIP 1952 - 1987

*The Wesley Historical Society Lecture for 2009*

On the sweltering afternoon of Tuesday 5 July 1955 Howard Belben rose in the Representative Session of the Methodist Conference, meeting in Manchester, to seek permission for the recently-formed Revival Fellowship to add the word 'Methodist' to its name. A voice raised an objection: was not the whole of Methodism a revival fellowship? How could one association within the Church take out a monopoly on that word? Belben's deft response was to cite the precedent of another group: was not the whole of Methodism a sacramental fellowship? Laughter overwhelmed the objection, and the Methodist Revival Fellowship received the endorsement of the Conference.<sup>1</sup>

The scope of this paper is the history of the MRF from its antecedents in the 1940s through to its merger with Conservative Evangelicals in Methodism (CEIM) at the end of 1986 to form Headway, 'a movement of Methodists committed to prayer for revival and witness to the evangelical faith.'<sup>2</sup> As such it constitutes one strand of an exploration of the fascinating and complex relationship between two constantly evolving phenomena, Methodism and evangelicalism.<sup>3</sup> The story told here will be broadly chronological, but with pauses for analysis and

<sup>1</sup> *Methodist Recorder* [hereafter MR], 7 July 1955, 6; Graham Caink in telephone conversation with author, 5 January 2006. The story does not appear in the only printed history of MRF, A. Skevington Wood's *The Kindled Flame* (Ilkeston: Moorley's, 1987).

<sup>2</sup> *Headline*, March 1987, inside front cover and back cover.

<sup>3</sup> On which see my essay 'British Methodism and Evangelicalism', in William J. Abraham and James E. Kirby (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies* (forthcoming).

reflection. And at the outset I need to place on record my gratitude to senior members of the MRF for their recollections of the early years and for their generous loan of magazines and other material. This has been an invaluable addition to the official records of the Fellowship in the Methodist Archives and Research Centre at the John Rylands University Library of Manchester.

### **Contexts: Society, Church and Methodism after 1945**

Five observations may be made about the context in which the MRF came to birth. First, it began amidst post-war reconstruction: not just the physical rebuilding of shattered towns and cities and the re-establishment of a peace-time economy, but the reshaping of society and international relations.<sup>4</sup> Arguably the war generated a new social consensus and produced a determination to forge a new social order. The Attlee administration - Britain's first majority Labour government - has been described as 'the most competent, effective and honourable reforming administration in modern British history.'<sup>5</sup> It built on the legacy of social policy going back to Lloyd George, took forward the proposals of the Beveridge report and inaugurated the Welfare State. Key industries were nationalized. Overseas, the Indian empire was given independence (1947). Of course there were problems. At home, there was economic exhaustion, continuing austerity and a degree of political tension over the government's reform programme. In Europe, political changes foreshadowed the outbreak of the 'cold war', bringing Britain into ever-closer and controversial alignment with the United States and into opposition, politically and ideologically, to the Soviet Union and its satellites. These broad lines of development continued under the Conservatives after 1951, with the gradual replacement of post-war austerity by the affluence of the 1950s, the era epitomised by Harold Macmillan's slogan: 'You've never had it so good', and the consensus politics of Butskellism.<sup>6</sup> History is always about the interplay of continuity and change, and the 1940s and 1950s inevitably saw both aspects in British politics, economics and social life. In significant ways, though, old patterns of behaviour and old assumptions and values were shifting, and this process naturally had an impact on the churches.

Second, patterns of religious belief and behaviour were in flux. This is contentious territory, following the assertions of Callum Brown in his *The Death of Christian Britain*, but Simon Green and Richard Sykes have offered persuasive correctives to the revisionist case that secularisation began in 1963. Green presents a much more nuanced picture of the

<sup>4</sup> Among recent studies of the period, see Peter Hennessy, *Never Again. Britain 1945-51*, (1992) and David Kynaston, *Austerity Britain 1945-51* (2007).

<sup>5</sup> Adrian Hastings, *A History of English Christianity 1920-1990*, (1991), p403.

<sup>6</sup> Dominic Sandbrook, *Never Had it So Good* (2005).

1950s,<sup>7</sup> while Sykes, in an insightful study of religion in the Black Country from the 1930s to the 1960s, draws out four major factors which he believes affected all the churches in this period and contributed to the erosion of popular religion.<sup>8</sup> First, wartime blackouts and the demands of war work disrupted Sunday routines of church and Sunday school attendance and also undermined the expectation of Sabbath observance. These patterns were not restored after 1945. Second, family life became more child- and home-centred, with leisure focussed on the home rather than the church and parents less inclined to send reluctant children to Sunday school. Third, slum clearance swept away established communities and broke longstanding connections between families and particular local churches, while new housing estates lacked the associational links and expectations of religious practice which characterised settled communities. Fourth, the churches increasingly lost their role as leisure providers to the cinema, the wireless, the motor car and the television. It is worth noting that Sykes observes these factors at work from the 1930s (if not before), and takes them on through the war years and up to the 1960s. They presented churches of all denominations with major challenges.

Third, the British Churches were seeking to grapple with these changes and challenges. At the institutional level, post-war reconstruction was manifested in an extensive programme of church building. Looking beyond bricks and mortar to the evangelistic task of the Church, Bishop Christopher Chavasse headed an influential commission which produced the 1945 report *Towards the Conversion of England*. Although the effectiveness of Chavasse's programme is open to debate - Roger Lloyd calls it 'an ill-starred document' and 'a very damp squib' and Simon Green a 'hapless quest' - it evidenced a confidence on the part of the Established Church that revival was possible.<sup>9</sup> This confidence was shared by the Free Churches - significantly the Baptists set up a Revival Fellowship in the late 1930s, and the Congregationalists followed suit in 1947<sup>10</sup> - and by non-denominational agencies like Youth for Christ. Well before the advent of Billy Graham, evangelists like Tom Rees were drawing crowds and filling halls.<sup>11</sup> There was, therefore, an

<sup>7</sup> S.J.D. Green, 'Was there an English religious revival in the 1950s?', *Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society*, vol. 7, no.9 (Cambridge: URCHS, 2006), pp.517-38.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Sykes, 'Popular Religion in Decline: A Study from the Black Country', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* (Cambridge), 56:2 (April 2005), pp.287-307, esp. pp.294-304.

<sup>9</sup> Green, 'Was there revival?' pp.520; Roger Lloyd, *The Church of England 1900-1965* (1966), pp.473-4. Hastings, *History of English Christianity*, pp.37, is even more scathing.

<sup>10</sup> David M. Thompson, 'The Older Free Churches', in Rupert Davies (ed.), *The Testing of the Churches. 1932-1982* (1982), pp.87-115, at 93.

<sup>11</sup> Jean A. Rees, *His Name was Tom. The Biography of Tom Rees* (1971).

awareness of need and of opportunity in the post-war world. And the Churches were determined to take the opportunity and to address the need.

Fourth, Methodism shared this outlook, undertaking its own programme of, reconstruction and renewal, and looking for signs of revival.<sup>12</sup> The Methodist Church of Great Britain was thirteen years old in 1945, and Connexional policy was still dominated by the task of making Methodist union a reality in local churches and circuits. Charles Ryder Smith, the President of the Wesleyan Conference in 1931, predicted that union would take thirty years to implement on the ground, and his estimate did not seem unrealistic two decades later.<sup>13</sup> Despite Conference commissions and pleas from the Connexional leadership, 'overlapping' circuits and 'redundant' churches continued to sap energy, demoralise members and absorb scarce ministerial resources. Moreover, the bright hopes of 1932 for a new evangelistic 'Forward Movement' in Methodism were soon dashed. The annual statistics of members and Sunday scholars fluctuated somewhat, but the overall tendency was decline. Reflecting on Methodist union's 'coming of age' in September 1953 the *Methodist Recorder* commented gloomily that 'the number of church members has fallen catastrophically since 1932'.<sup>14</sup> It should not be forgotten, however, that the membership in December 1952 stood at more than 740,000, with more than a million children and young people in Sunday schools, guilds, Christian Endeavour groups, Brigades and youth clubs and with growing work among university students.<sup>15</sup> Methodism was still by far the strongest of the English Free Churches.

Moreover, the Connexion also displayed a continuing commitment to evangelism and to innovative approaches to presenting the gospel. The destruction of many church buildings during the war enabled Methodism to amalgamate societies and circuits and to finance new developments in areas of expanding population. Between 1932 and 1953 over £2 million was spent on new buildings, and Methodism claimed more than £1 million from the War Damage Commission.<sup>16</sup> Although the 1939 'Forward Movement' was checked by the outbreak of war, plans for evangelism were developed and bore fruit in the Christian Commando

<sup>12</sup> See my paper 'Renewal, Reunion and Revival: Three British Methodist approaches to 'serving the present age' in the 1950s, given at the 2007 Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies, and available in the online edition of the *Epworth Review*.

<sup>13</sup> '20 Years After', *MR* 14 August 1952, p.7.

<sup>14</sup> 'Coming of Age', *MR* 17 September 1953, p.8.

<sup>15</sup> Minutes of the Methodist Conference thereafter M/C 1953, pp.196-7.

<sup>16</sup> 'Methodist Union: Some Positive Gains 21 Years After', *MR* 17 September 1953, p.9.

Campaigns, led by Colin Roberts.<sup>17</sup> A distinguished committee restated 'a deep conviction that evangelism on a world-wide scale is an obligation resting upon the whole Church' in the report *The Message and Mission of Methodism* (1946) and in 1951 the World Methodist Conference, meeting in Oxford, issued a call to make 1953 a year of world evangelism.<sup>18</sup> Roberts and W.E. Sangster were leaders in this campaign. Methodists used a wide range of approaches, including evangelistic films, house to house visitation, caravan-based evangelists, open air meetings, beach missions, visits from university and theological college student teams, and town-wide campaigns by Cliff College and Donald Soper's Order of Christian Witness in order to commend the gospel.

Evangelism in the 1940s and 1950s was undertaken in a spirit of cautious optimism about the prospects for conversion and church growth. Reports in the Methodist press frequently used the vocabulary of 'advance', mixing the quasi-military metaphors of 'forward movement', 'aggressive evangelism', 'campaign' and 'crusade' with the language of revival. This was not merely journalistic cliché. W.E. Farndale, President of the Conference of 1947, addressing a District convention in Lincolnshire in April 1948 witnessed 60-70 people responding to a call to reconsecration and commented: 'The unexpected has happened again. I am beginning to wonder whether we are at the point of a break-through of spiritual power which is going to lead Methodism into a real revival.'<sup>19</sup> Four years later, the *Methodist Recorder* headlined a report on an address to Bournemouth District Local Preachers by the Revd Greville Lewis: 'Britain is on verge of greatest religious revival, says Connexional Local Preachers' Secretary'. Although Lewis pointed out that his address was much more cautious than the headline suggested, Connexional leaders like Sangster, Roberts and Cecil Pawson were upbeat about the prospects for revival during the year of preparation for the 1953 world campaign.<sup>20</sup>

Fifth, the MRF took shape in a denomination which was proud of its evangelical heritage, but in which the interpretation of evangelicalism was contentious and changing. I have argued elsewhere that Methodism moved in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries from a

<sup>17</sup> Colin A. Roberts (ed.), *These Christian Commando Campaigns. An Interpretation* (1945).

<sup>18</sup> *The Message and Mission of Methodism* (1946), 74; W .E. Sangster, 'The World Methodist Mission: How It Began', *MR* 10 January 1952, p.4.

<sup>19</sup> *MR* 22 April 1948, p.5.

<sup>20</sup> *MR* 21 February 1952, 6; Revd G. Lewis to editor, *MR* 28 February 1952, p.10; *MR* 19 June 1952, p.3 (Pawson); *MR* 17 July 1952, 3-4 (Roberts' presidential address to Conference).

position in the mainstream of British evangelicalism to a more liberal evangelical stance.<sup>21</sup> This was reflected in the acceptance of biblical criticism, a turn away from penal theories of the atonement, and a re-casting of evangelical activism in terms which played down eschatology and emphasised a thisworldly kingdom of God. If this was the broad outlook of the Connexional leadership and the theological colleges, however, it should not be forgotten that there were strong conservative networks in Methodism, centred on Cliff College, *Joyful News* and the Southport Convention, and that traditional evangelicalism was well represented at the grass roots of the Church. Moreover, Methodists shared in the renewal of conservative evangelicalism after the war, a renewal particularly associated with the work of the Inter-Varsity Fellowship among students and young graduates, with Youth for Christ, and with evangelists like Rees.

### Origins and Early Years<sup>22</sup>

That mixture of the old and the new in Methodist evangelicalism, the traditional outlook and affiliations leavened by new influences, may be seen in the founder of the MRF, the Revd John H.J. Barker (1903-76).<sup>23</sup> John Barker came of United Methodist stock; interestingly, because the UMs were probably the least conservative strand of British Methodism. He had personal and family connections with both Methodist and non-denominational evangelical organisations. These included traditional conservative bodies like the Keswick Convention and the British Bible Union (formerly the Wesley Bible Union) and more recent groups like the IVF. As an undergraduate at Leeds University, studying natural sciences, Barker was a founder member of the Evangelical Union in 1924, and as a ministerial student at Victoria Park College from 1927 he was prepared to challenge the prevailing liberal or liberal evangelical theologies held by staff and fellow students. In the 1930s he tried unsuccessfully to set up an organisation of Methodist evangelicals, discovering that potential members were sympathetic, but reluctant to take a public stand. After more than a decade in circuit ministry and three years as an Army chaplain, from 1946 Barker served for two years as a travelling secretary for the IVF. Prompted by a discussion with circuit ministers at the 1946

<sup>21</sup> M. Wellings, 'Evangelicalism in twentieth century Methodism', in Mark Smith (ed.), *British Evangelical Identities Past and Present*, vol. I (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008).

<sup>22</sup> See for this section M. Wellings, 'Renewing Methodist Evangelicalism: The Origins and Development of the Methodist Revival Fellowship', in Kate Cooper and Jeremy Gregory (eds), *Revival and Resurgence in Christian History* [SCH 44] (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2008), pp.286-96.

<sup>23</sup> John Barker offers autobiographical comments in 'Fifty Years a Conservative Evangelical', *CEIM Newsletter* no.9 (Summer 1973), pp.8-12; compare 'Evangelicals in Methodism', *Life of Faith*, 22 April 1972, p.7.

Fellowship of the Kingdom conference, Barker convened an exploratory meeting in Oxford later that year, followed by a residential gathering at Caterham in July 1948. Twenty people, mostly Methodist ministers or theological college students, met for four days of IVF-style addresses, 'Bible readings' and devotional talks. Significantly, three sessions were devoted to the subject of revival and plenty of time was given to 'united prayer'. Barker later reflected that 'We speedily saw that a call for orthodoxy and a mere return to the Bible was insufficient. There was too much dead orthodoxy in some areas, and too much of what we might call bibliolatry. We were led to define revival and put revival, prayer and preparation for revival as our priorities, and also the 'Four Alls' of classical Methodism.'<sup>24</sup> This gathering gave rise to 'The Aldersgate Fellowship', which was succeeded in January 1952 by 'The Revival Fellowship'. A circular letter sent out at the beginning of the year invited support, and by the end of 1952 the Fellowship claimed over a hundred members.<sup>25</sup>

The MRF was undeniably conservative in its theology, taking for granted a traditional interpretation of Methodist doctrine, drawing on the IVF basis of faith and recruiting members with a background in various conservative evangelical organisations.<sup>26</sup> It placed its emphasis, however, firmly on prayer for revival, and this gave the Fellowship a different tone from other groups, whether evangelistic, apologetic or militant. By eschewing polemics and Connexional politics, and by concentrating on prayer and revival, the MRF was able to establish itself and secure a degree of Connexional recognition.

The MRF grew slowly through the 1950s. The membership more than doubled in the first two years, from 102 in December 1952 to 251 by the end of 1954. In October 1955 the committee decided to 'go all out to increase our membership', hoping to win a public endorsement from Sangster in a letter to all Methodist ministers. Barker told the AGM in November 1957 that membership was 'steadily increasing', but that quality was more important than quantity. A year later circulation of the newsletter had reached almost 700. The suggestion of introducing a lapel badge, however, was firmly vetoed: 'The chairman stated that the best badge to wear is a "radiant face because of a revived heart."<sup>27</sup>

With expanding membership came a need for greater organisation. Secretarial assistance was bought in for Robin Catlin, the Honorary Secretary, from the autumn of 1956; three years later a new assistant was found who could supply her own typewriter and 'Multilith Duplicating

<sup>24</sup> *Sound of Revival* [hereafter *SoR*], September 1976, p.10.

<sup>25</sup> David Lawrence, letter to author, 20 Feb 2006; circular letter (undated), probably spring 1952; Quarterly Newsletter, Dec 1952, lent by Ron Taylor.

<sup>26</sup> See Wellings, 'Renewing Methodist Evangelicalism', p.294, for analysis of members and affiliations.

<sup>27</sup> Committee and AGM minutes, MRF archives [JRULM], 18-19 Dec 1954; 11 Oct 1955; 2 Nov 1957; 28-29 April 1958; 31 Oct-4 Nov 1957 (badge).

Machine', offering an annual saving of £80 on production of the quarterly newsletter.<sup>28</sup> The idea of appointing a deputation secretary to work full-time for the Fellowship was canvassed, but finance remained an obstacle. A set subscription was initially resisted, and the Fellowship relied on donations. The introduction of a subscription in November 1956 led to a drop in income; the treasurer reminded the committee in April 1957 that 'we must be continually relying on the Lord to supply the need for His work'; the committee agreed to make it a matter for prayer, but suggested meanwhile that a review of Sangster's recent book *You can be a Millionaire* might be printed in the newsletter. Perhaps this worked: provision was made eighteen months later for members to covenant their gifts to the Fellowship by arrangement with the Inspector of Taxes.<sup>29</sup> Having operated since the early 1950s with a group of half a dozen regional representatives, at the turn of the decade the Fellowship decided to create a larger network of ministerial and lay secretaries in every Methodist district.<sup>30</sup> By 1962 the membership had reached 1100 and the secretary needed an envelope addressing machine.<sup>31</sup>

Throughout this first decade the MRF remained true to its founding vision. The Fellowship's first organised activity was a prayer conference in April 1953. This became an annual event, moving in 1956 from April to November, and to a permanent home at The Hayes, Swanwick. The prayer conference was the hub of the MRF's programme, drawing about a hundred members by the end of the decade for an event which blended Bible studies, addresses on revival and sessions of corporate prayer. Meanwhile the quarterly newsletter carried news, prayer requests, book reviews and addresses with a revival theme.

### Billy Graham and 'fundamentalism'

As the only organised conservative evangelical body within the Methodist Church, the MRF inevitably found itself drawn into areas beyond its carefully defined immediate concerns. On the positive side, the Fellowship could offer a network of support for isolated evangelicals or become a clearing-house for ministers in search of suitable appointments.<sup>32</sup> More problematically, it could also become the de facto Methodist voice in pan-evangelical consultations, supplying trusted representatives to groups like the Evangelical Alliance. More difficult still was the temptation to engage in Connexional debates. In the 1950s this

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 15 June 1956; 13-16 April 1959.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-16 April 1959 (deputation secretary); 13 April 1955, 15 June 1956, 2 Nov 1956, 23 April 1957 (subs); 13-16 April 1959 (covenants).

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 2 Nov 1957, 13-16 April 1959. The archive includes a whole file of letters about the district secretaries' scheme, 1960-61.

<sup>31</sup> Newsletter, Jan 1962, p.2. (1100 members); Jan 1961, p.15 (addressing machine).

<sup>32</sup> See, for instance, Barker's address to the 1957 AGM, referring to 'a dozen' letters asking for his recommendations of 'thoroughly evangelical ministers' - who were then not invited by the respective circuits!

dilemma arose over Billy Graham and the vexed question of 'fundamentalism'.

As the Revival Fellowship was taking shape and establishing itself, and drawing encouragement from news of revival elsewhere in the world, the ministry of the most successful and high profile global evangelist, Billy Graham, was coming under critical scrutiny in Britain. Graham was in Britain in 1954-5, conducting a 'Greater London Crusade' at Harringay from March to May 1954, leading an 'All Scotland Crusade' in Glasgow in March and April 1955, returning to London for a week at Wembley Stadium in the late spring and then speaking at the University mission in Cambridge in autumn 1955.<sup>33</sup> His visits focussed debate around what was labelled 'fundamentalism', provoking letters in the religious and secular press and generating articles and books. Although the most prominent protagonists in this debate were Anglicans, the issue touched Methodism as well. Dr Sangster gave his support to Billy Graham, as - perhaps surprisingly - did Leslie Weatherhead, while Donald Soper hit the headlines by describing the American evangelist's book *Peace with God* as 'intellectual rubbish' and 'emotional escapism' and dismissing Graham's understanding of the gospel as 'spiritual fascism'. Further fuel was added to the fire when Bryan Reed, the General Secretary of the Methodist Youth Department, reflecting on 'Youth and the Billy Graham Campaign', expressed anxiety lest, Methodist young people should be drawn into 'narrow fundamentalist groups', citing the IVF as an example.<sup>34</sup>

MRF leaders joined in the controversy, defending Graham and challenging the critics of 'fundamentalism'. Among the correspondents in the course of eight months of debate in the columns of the *Methodist Recorder* were J. Harrison Stringer, John Barker, Roland Lamb, Frank Ockenden and a youthful Keith Lewis.<sup>35</sup> Meanwhile the June 1954 issue of the Revival Fellowship *Newsletter* enthused: 'Praise God for the way in which evangelicals have nailed their colours to the mast in the M.R. controversy and for new hope which is spreading among us.' Stringer's article, 'Fundamentalism: An Apologia', developing points made in his letter to the *Recorder*, 'as published in the December 1954 Newsletter and then reprinted with little alteration on the front page of *Joyful News* two years later.'<sup>36</sup>

The Graham campaign was clearly an encouragement to the MRF in

<sup>33</sup> John Pollock, *The Billy Graham Story* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), pp.76-83; Frank Colquhoun, *Harringay Story*, (1955).

<sup>34</sup> Kenneth Hylson-Smith, *Evangelicals in the Church of England 1734-1984* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 189), 298-302; Colquhoun, *Harringay Story*, p.45; John Travell, *Doctor of Souls. Leslie D. Weatherhead 1893-1976* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1999), pp. 05-06; 'The President and Billy Graham', *MR*, 4 March 1954, ~13; Bryan H. Reed, 'Youth and the Billy Graham Campaign', *MR*, 11 March 1954, p.12.

<sup>35</sup> *MR*, 18 March 1954, p.13 (Stringer), 25 March 1954, p.11 (Barker) and p.12 (Lewis); 15 April 1954, p.11 (Lamb); 22 April 1954, p.13 (Ockenden).

<sup>36</sup> *Newsletter*, December 1954 pp3-6; *Joyful News*, 1 November 1956, pp.1-2.

several ways. The sheer impact and success of Harringay was a tremendous tonic to all conservative evangelicals - a vindication of their beliefs and their approach to evangelism, and a rebuke to sneering liberalism, epitomised by Donald Soper. It raised the profile of evangelism, even among those who disapproved of Billy Graham's message and methods. It demonstrated the growing strength of conservative scholarship, so that, for instance, John Barker was able to accuse Soper of showing 'ignorance and a closed mind' in his criticism of the IVF.<sup>37</sup> For MRF, 1954-55 raised the prospect of revival, not only with the Greater London Crusade, but also with a spiritual awakening in the Hebrides. Recognition that this was a false dawn led to much heart searching and to reflection on the spiritual well-being of the Church.<sup>38</sup> This may have prompted Barker to undertake a centenary edition of William Arthur's spiritual classic *The Tongue of Fire, or, the True Power of Christianity* in 1956.

### The Problem of Unity

At the same time as the leaders of the MRF were engaged in defending Billy Graham and defining fundamentalism, discussions were going on within the Fellowship about the MRF's doctrinal basis. Although the 1948 Caterham gathering took its doctrinal position from the IVF, the MRF's aims and basis were much more general and inclusive, committing members simply to pray for revival. When the leadership considered the question of a 'stricter basis of belief for the committee' in June 1956 it acknowledged that 'there are many who earnestly desire revival and share the ideals of the MRF, but who are unable to subscribe to a very conservative view of the Bible, and we welcome such into membership.'<sup>39</sup> A stricter statement was adopted for the committee, however, comprising a conservative gloss on the 'four "alls" of Methodism'. This development was perhaps a reflection of the growing influence of the new Chairman of the Fellowship, the Revd and Hon. Roland Lamb, who succeeded John Barker in autumn 1958. Lamb's vision for the MRF was to move beyond prayer for revival to holiness of life and, crucially, to 'an uncompromising stand upon the Scriptures.'<sup>40</sup> This agenda took the MRF into a series of bruising controversies in the 1960s.

In this period, three issues challenged prayer for revival as the dominant concern of the MRF. First, the Fellowship was caught up in the controversies surrounding the Anglican-Methodist 'Conversations'. Ecumenical relationships among the British Churches had a long and complicated history, but by the late 1950s the Church of England and the

<sup>37</sup> 'The Inter-Varsity Fellowship', Barker to editor, *MR*, 21 Oct 1954, p.13.

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, editorial in Newsletter, March 1956, p1, and R.J .O. Catlin, 'The Aftermath of Crusades', *ibid.*, pp5-6.

<sup>39</sup> Minutes, 15 June 1956.

<sup>40</sup> 'R.H.L.L.', 'My Vision for the MRF', *Newsletter*, July 1959, p5.

Methodist Church were engaged in formal discussions which issued in the report *Conversations between the Church of England and the Methodist Church*, published in 1963. This report envisaged a two-stage process for the reconciliation of the denominations, leading eventually to a single united Church.<sup>41</sup>

It is not necessary to explore the 'Conversations' debate in detail here, save to note that it preoccupied Methodists and Anglicans for most of the decade. Adrian Hastings' comment on the period is tart, but telling: 'Methodism in the 1960s, while awaiting union, had little history, except for an unprecedented rate of numerical decline. At the end it was left with only a smack in the face.'<sup>42</sup> For our purposes, we need to recognise that the MRF leadership became heavily involved in the debate, publishing a detailed critique of the 1963 Report and scheme, *Towards a United Church*, and spending a good deal of time trying to work out what evangelical Methodists should do in the event of Anglican-Methodist reunion. In an open letter to the President and Vice-President of the Conference in September 1964 the MRF General Committee described the scheme as 'retrograde and schismatic'.<sup>43</sup> Key issues for MRF were the relationship between Scripture and tradition as authorities in the Church, the implications of ministerial priesthood and the historic episcopate for an evangelical understanding of justification by grace through faith, and the toleration of a breadth of opinion and practice in the Church of England which included Anglo Catholicism and 'South Bank' theology. Within the Fellowship itself, however, opinions varied. Howard Belben broadly supported the scheme, but this was a minority view.<sup>44</sup> Some were attracted by the advocates of a 'continuing Methodist Church', organised through the National Liaison Committee and the Voice of Methodism Association, but the stricter evangelicals increasingly expressed concern that nostalgic loyalty to the denomination was masking fundamental differences of theology: Lamb suspected the VMA of 'treating Scripture as authoritative when it suits them, ignoring it when it doesn't', while Skevington Wood reported that the VMA 'envisaged. . . a new Methodism which doctrinally would be no better than the old.'<sup>45</sup> Others therefore favoured secession to local independent evangelical congregations, and there was anguished debate in MRF meetings and publications on the biblical justification for schism. Still others hoped for a new nationwide evangelical denomination. MRF was drawn into a flurry of correspondence and a bewildering series of meetings, ranging

<sup>41</sup> See the brief account in J.M. Turner, *Modern Methodism in England 1932-1998* (Peterborough: {1998})pp.63-66, and a longer account in George Thompson Brake, *Policy and Politics in British Methodism 1932-1982* (1984), ch 3.

<sup>42</sup> Hastings, *History of English Christianity*, p.549.

<sup>43</sup> 'An Open Letter', *Towards a United Church* (Braintree: MRF, 1964), p.13.

<sup>44</sup> MARC DDX 57, John Job, report to ecumenical sub-committee, January 1966.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 'MRF and the Liaison Committee. A chronological review by Rev. Hon. Roland Lamb, MA', 8 October 1965, quoting letter to Wood, 6 Oct 1964 and letter from Wood, 23 July 1965.

from representation on the NLC to confidential discussions with leading Anglican Evangelicals.<sup>46</sup>

This issue shaded into the second preoccupation of the 1960s: the place of evangelicals in the mainstream, or so-called 'mixed' denominations. The post-war decades were encouraging years for conservative evangelicals. After a long period of liberal evangelical ascendancy in the English Free Churches and the eclipse of traditional evangelicalism in the Church of England, conservative evangelical numbers, influence and confidence grew in the years after 1945. The organisation, commitment and scholarship of the IVF were important in building anew cadre of conservative leaders. A recovered emphasis on evangelism played a part in the renaissance, as did the swing from liberal theology to biblical orthodoxy. Liberal evangelicalism increasingly seemed out of touch and out of date. The Billy Graham crusade was both a cause and an effect of this change; another was the National Evangelical Anglican Congress at Keele in 1967.<sup>47</sup>

For some within the evangelical movement, growing numbers encouraged hopes of increasing influence within the denominations. This was particularly true of many evangelicals in the Church of England. For others - notably the Reformed wing of the movement, associated with Martyn Lloyd-Jones - the true strength of evangelicalism would only be realised and its vocation fulfilled if evangelicals left 'mixed' denominations for doctrinally pure congregations. Official toleration of radical theology and advocacy of ecumenism, including moves towards a rapprochement with Roman Catholicism, sharpened this conviction. Addressing the National Assembly of Evangelicals in October 1966, Lloyd-Jones appealed to evangelicals to withdraw from the denominations: an appeal which was promptly disavowed from the chair by John Stott.<sup>48</sup>

MRF was affected by this dilemma. On the one hand, the Fellowship was growing in membership and expanding its activities. Moreover, it provided the only organisational expression of conservative evangelicalism in the Methodist Church. On the other hand, some MRF members were disenchanted by the Connexion's ecumenical policy, its toleration of a broad spectrum of theological opinions and its indifference to evangelical doctrinal, ethical and spiritual shibboleths. The 'Conversations' debate exacerbated this situation, because for several years in the mid-1960s MRF leaders and members were encouraged to

<sup>46</sup> See large file of papers at MARC (ref. DDX 57). In January 1965 Job, Howard Marshall and Wilbert Putman met John Wenham, Roger Beckwith and James Packer 'to discuss Christian unity with particular reference to the Anglican-Methodist Conversations'.

<sup>47</sup> D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain. A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (1989) ch. 8.

<sup>48</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, p.267. Among other accounts of this celebrated incident, its interpretation and its consequences, see Iain H. Murray, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones: *The Fight of Faith, 1939-1981* (Edinburgh: 1990), pp.522-28 and Timothy Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: A Global Ministry* (Leicester: IVP, 2001), pp.65-71.

focus on the criteria which might justify secession and critically to assess the present state of Methodism. They were, moreover, in close contact with other evangelicals who were more than ready to point out the weaknesses and inconsistencies of their position, either from the standpoint of well-entrenched Anglican Evangelicalism or from that of FIEC independents. Some Methodists were persuaded by Lloyd-Jones' argument that it was sinful for evangelicals to be in separate denominations. Others decided that acceptance of the 'Conversations' report signalled an abandonment of evangelical orthodoxy. Still others were led to question the effectiveness and biblical justification of a connexional ecclesiology. These pressures were not new in the 1960s, but they became more acute, and more destructive. In November 1966 John Job wrote to Roland Lamb supporting Stott's position against Lloyd-Jones and regretting Lamb's 'disengagement and withdrawal'. Lamb, deeply dissatisfied with Connexional policy and increasingly dubious about connexionalism, had already handed over as Chairman to Robin Catlin and felt 'little heart to remain in Methodism.' By March 1967 Catlin was finding his own local situation in Chelmsford 'increasingly difficult' and had joined the FIEC as a personal member. At the MRF's spring committee he resigned as Chairman, and by the summer of 1967 both Lamb and Catlin had left Methodism. Catlin's successor, Ron Taylor, explained to the 1967 AGM that these two former Chairmen had 'reached the conclusion that Independency is the Scriptural Pattern, and that this provides the best safeguard for the purity of doctrine.'<sup>49</sup>

Such high-profile departures were inevitably damaging to the MRF. Skevington Wood reported in July 1967 that it was being taken for granted that the Fellowship was inclined to follow Lamb and Catlin into secession.<sup>50</sup> Taylor, in defending the conscientious decisions of his predecessors, rebutted the suggestion of 'one Chairman of District' that Lamb and Catlin had 'Got off the bus before coming to the stop,'<sup>51</sup> but the autumn of 1967 saw several moves to steady the Fellowship. John Barker was brought back as editor of *Sound of Revival*; Donald English penned a typically persuasive appeal for evangelical unity; and the 1967 Prayer Conference focussed on 'the "four alls"' of Methodism.<sup>52</sup> In retrospect, some members of the Fellowship regretted that it had become so involved in denominational politics, suggesting that the debate over the 'Conversations' distracted attention from the MRF's proper focus on

<sup>49</sup> MARC DDX 57, Job to Lamb, 1 Nov 1966; Lamb to Catlin, 7 Feb 1966; Catlin to Job, 27 March 1967; *SoR*, Oct 1967, p1; *SoR* Jan 1968, p5. The reason given for Catlin's resignation in *SoR* was ill health. Compare Roland Lamb's account of his resignation in his 'Revival and Reformation', in *The Challenge of the Reformation for Today* (1968), p.52, identifying the Conference's departure from its own doctrinal standards.

<sup>50</sup> MARC DDX 57, Wood to Job, 5 July 1967, reporting a conversation with Brian O'Gorman at a conference [pre-ordination retreat?] for ordinands.

<sup>51</sup> *SoR*, Jan 1968, p5.

<sup>52</sup> *SoR*, Oct 1967, p.1; Donald English, 'The Conversations: how shall we decide?', *ibid.*, pp.8-9.

prayer for revival.<sup>53</sup> It should not be assumed, however, that the MRF became completely absorbed in issues of ecumenism and secession. The pattern of annual prayer conferences, local and regional meetings, publications and the promotion of interest in revivals, historical and contemporary, continued through this troubled period. Membership continued to grow, reaching 1552 in April 1965. This included 222 ministers and 1330 lay people.<sup>54</sup>

The third divisive issue of the 1960s was the emergence of charismatic renewal. Phenomena traditionally associated with the Pentecostal churches - particularly glossolalia, or speaking in tongues - began to appear in various denominations during this decade. The term 'charismatic', denoting gifts of grace, was first applied to the movement in 1962. Its relationship to an older evangelicalism was complex and contentious, but the charismatic experience, style and influence spread across the Churches.<sup>55</sup>

An emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit in revival was common currency in the MRF from its inception. As has already been noted, John Barker warned against 'dead orthodoxy' and 'bibliolatry' in the 1940s, and it is significant that he persuaded the Epworth Press to publish his centenary edition of William Arthur's *The Tongue of Fire* in 1956. The MRF shared the exuberant spirituality of Cliff College and inherited the holiness teaching of the Wesleys and nineteenth century Methodism. The Fellowship, therefore, might have been expected to respond sympathetically to charismatic teaching.

In an article entitled 'God's Remedy for a Powerless Church', published in *Sound of Revival* in January 1961, Charles Clarke reflected on the failure of highly organised campaigns of evangelism to transform the nation. In Clarke's view, the missing ingredient was 'the miracle-working power of the Holy Spirit'. Although the tenor of the article was very similar to Barker's 'Our Supreme Need - the Holy Ghost', published in July 1961, Clarke was an advocate of charismatic renewal as well as a student of revival history. Addressing the MRF conference in 1963, Clarke described the renewal movement in California associated with Fr Dennis Bennett; by 1969 he was producing a newsletter 'for Methodists interested in Charismatic Renewal'.<sup>56</sup>

MRF reactions to the renewal movement ranged from cautious inquiry to enthusiastic advocacy. Roland Lamb represented the cautious

<sup>53</sup> Wood, *Kindled Flame*, p.23, notes that the failure of the 'Conversations' allowed the MRF 'with some relief' to concentrate on its original function of witness to revival; the departure of Lamb and Catlin is not mentioned in Wood's account.

<sup>54</sup> SoR, July 1965, inside back cover. The overall Connexional statistics recorded that Methodism claimed 4438 ministers (including students and 1030 supernumeraries) and 701,306 lay members in the year 1964-5 (MIC, 1965, p.95).

<sup>55</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism* pp.229-33.

<sup>56</sup> SoR January 1961, pp.10-15; SoR July 1961, pp.4- 7; Charles J. Clarke, *The Pattern of Revival* (1964). SoR Autumn 1984, p.3 carries an obituary tribute to Clarke; compare M/C 1985 p.63.

approach, as did Ron Taylor, then editor of *Sound of Revival*. Clarke was an enthusiast, and his appointment to the MRF committee in 1963 suggests that his views were shared by others in the Fellowship. MRF did not take a 'party line' on charismatic gifts, but continued to hold within its membership supporters of the movement and those who were more wary of it. This left the charismatics free to form their own network, associated with the magazine *Dunamis*.<sup>57</sup>

Revisiting Adrian Hastings' claim that 'Methodism in the 1960s, while awaiting union, had little history', it may be suggested that the 1960s both promised and threatened much: organic union with the Church of England; an evangelical secession; an outpouring of the Spirit as a prelude to revival; an era of divine judgment on apostate denominations. The outcomes were far less dramatic. The 'Conversations' ground to a halt, with insufficient majorities in the Church of England's Convocations; most evangelicals stayed in their denominations; charismatic renewal presaged neither revival nor eschaton. The decade ended with the Churches weaker in numbers and influence, and displaying greater diversity in theology, morality and styles of worship and ministry .

### Making Headway

During the 1970s three significant developments affected the position of the MRF . The first was a sea-change in Methodism's attitude towards diversity within the denomination. For much of its history, whatever the reality of differences and divisions, Methodism had prized unity, cherishing 'our doctrines' and 'our discipline', deploring partisan organisations and emphasising the connectedness of the Connexion. A series of changes in the 1960s made this position increasingly problematic. The liberal evangelical consensus forged in the early twentieth century and slowly modified in the inter-war years was battered by conservative resurgence, the challenge of biblical orthodoxy and a new wave of radical theology epitomised in the public mind by John Robinson and expressed in Methodism by John Vincent and the Alliance of Radical Methodists. Faced by these competing and irreconcilable pressures, the Connexional leadership turned to an endorsement of pluralism and an acceptance of difference. Rupert Davies sought to be a 'theological reconciler' in his Presidential address in 1970, and he sought to organise gatherings of representative Methodists who took opposing views of the 'Conversations'.<sup>58</sup> At the same time, Leslie

<sup>57</sup> Lamb, 'Thinking Aloud', *SoR* January 1964, pp.2-7; *ibid.* back cover lists committee including Clarke; editorials in *SoR* January 1964, p11 (fullness of the Spirit); October 1965, f.2 (speaking in tongues); April 1966, p.1 (FGBMFI). On *Dunamis*, see William Parkes in John A.Vickers (ed.) *A Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland* (2000), p.100.

<sup>58</sup> Brian Hoare, 'Headway Chairman's Address', *Headline*, March 1987, p.3; MRF archive, file CJO, Rupert Davies to Donald English, 17 Sept 1970.

Davison, General Secretary of the Home Mission Department, offered financial support for theological consultations organised by self-confessed 'radicals', 'liberals' and 'evangelicals'.<sup>59</sup> A new era of dialogue opened up, in which the MRF could play a part as a recognised and respected evangelical voice.

The second development was the creation of a new organisation for Methodist evangelicals, Conservative Evangelicals in Methodism (CEIM). A key figure from the evangelical constituency in the explorations of the early 1970s was Donald English, a rising star not only in the world of evangelicalism but also on the Connexional stage.<sup>60</sup> English made an influential and widely reported speech opposing the Anglican-Methodist scheme in the 1970 Conference, and was then invited by Rupert Davies to choose a team of evangelicals to meet advocates of the scheme in Bristol at the turn of the year.<sup>61</sup> Ever the strategist, English brought together Davies' agenda for reconciliation and Leslie Davison's willingness to fund a theological consultation to create a proposal for a preliminary meeting of conservative evangelicals 'to consider our present position, to discuss possible lines of action, and to share in fellowship together'.<sup>62</sup> This meeting, initially planned for forty people, but later expanded, took place at Cliff College in November 1970 and laid the foundations of CEIM. The letters responding to invitations to the Cliff gathering revealed a continuing haemorrhage of Methodist evangelicals into other denominations, including American Free Methodism which established a strong presence in North Lancashire. Among the departures were MRF stalwarts like Frank Ockenden and another former Chairman of the Fellowship, Ron Taylor.<sup>63</sup>

The third development in this period was the growing influence of evangelical or charismatic styles of worship across the denominations, including Methodism. This gathered momentum over the next decade and a half, as, powered by the explosion in Christian publishing and disseminated by events like Greenbelt (from 1974) and Spring Harvest (from 1979), contemporary worship songs gave many congregations an evangelical 'feel', regardless of their explicit theology.<sup>64</sup>

The history of evangelicals in Methodism in the 1970s and 1980s, then, was one of growing strength, influence and confidence within an increasingly pluralist denomination. The evangelical constituency, however, became more diffuse. CEIM emphasised study and scholarship,

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., Leslie Davison to Donald English, 28 July 1970. The money for this idea came from Lord Rank.

<sup>60</sup> Brian Hoare and Ian Randall, *More than a Methodist. The Life and Ministry of Donald English* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003), 98-99.

<sup>61</sup> MRF archive, file Cl 0, Davies to English, 17 Sept 1970.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., duplicated letter of invitation, 10 Sept 1970.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., including several letters to and from Ockenden; Ron Taylor to English, 2 Oct 1970; and also, 'An Evangelical Methodist Statement' on the overtures of the Free Methodists.

<sup>64</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, pp.240-42.

and sought to organise evangelicals to play an active part in the denominational structures. For the charismatics, *Dunamis* offered an outlet. But what of MRF?

MRF held its own in these years, sustaining a membership in excess of a thousand and maintaining its programme of annual prayer conferences, regional meetings and publications.<sup>65</sup> The creation of CEIM perhaps helped to resolve or reduce the tension between evangelical representation and prayer for revival in the life of MRF.

Connexional concerns did continue to impinge upon the life of the Fellowship, however, and two may be mentioned in particular. First, the topic of human sexuality loomed large on the Church's agenda in the 1970s and 1980s, becoming increasingly divisive towards the end of the period. A working party appointed in 1976 reported to the Methodist Conference in 1979, but the Conference sent the report back for further consideration. The 1980 report discussed the sexual nature of human beings, different approaches to formulating moral guidance, heterosexual relationships and marriage, homosexuality and biblical teaching, giving alternative modern and 'conservative' viewpoints. It would be difficult to find clearer evidence of the pluralism of the contemporary Church. The 1980 report was commended for discussion at local level. Harold Ward, reflecting on the Conference in *Sound of Revival*, praised the 'high quality' of debate and the 'caring spirit' of the speakers, and encouraged MRF members to read the document thoroughly, with the guidance of a briefing paper produced by MRF, CEIM and the Holy Spirit Renewal Group. For the rest of the period MRF continued to keep abreast of the sexuality debate, informing its members of developments and voicing evangelical concerns about a departure from perceived biblical standards.<sup>66</sup>

The other issue worth mentioning here is that of inter-faith dialogue. The subject of 'multi-faith worship' was raised in the Conference of 1984, leading to a report in 1985 which identified questions rather than offering answers. This attracted less comment from MRF than might have been expected: Stephen Mosedale's editorial in the combined *Sound of Revival* and CEIM *Newsletter* had more to say about the Conference's disapproval of freemasonry, noting that 'we can only rejoice in the fact that the chief reason given for its conclusion that Methodists ought not to become masons is that there is a danger that Christian faith will be compromised by pseudo religious rituals or by syncretism, . . . something which perhaps we thought Methodism was all in favour of!'<sup>67</sup> Keith Lewis, however, giving his Chairman's address to the MRF AGM in November 1985, 'attacked the wave of syncretism . . . and universalism in

<sup>65</sup> Wood, *Kindled Flame*, p.8 (membership).

<sup>66</sup> *Agenda of Conference 1980*, pp.111-42; *SoR*, Autumn 1980, p.3.

<sup>67</sup> *Agenda of Conference 1985*, pp.635-38; *SoR* Autumn 1985, p.3. Compare *SoR*, Summer 1986, pp.3-4 on improvements in policy of MCOF with regard to evangelism.

the Church, singling out One World Week, the World Council of Churches and the Overseas Division Prayer Manual for particular criticism.<sup>68</sup>

From the very beginning, CEIM and MRF shared a great deal of common ground. With roots in Methodist evangelicalism and many members in common, an obvious argument could be made for merging the two organisations. A proposal was brought to the MRF Annual General Meeting in 1983 that this should be explored, and from spring 1984 the CEIM *Newsletter* combined with *Sound of Revival*.<sup>69</sup> Progress thereafter was steady, although not hurried, and not without misgivings. John Barker's widow Dorothy, for example, expressed the view that MRF members might struggle with the intellectual tenor of the CEIM magazine, and that the spiritual help offered by *Sound of Revival* was still needed.<sup>70</sup> The MRF AGM in 1984, however, approved a statement of shared aims, explaining that the lengthy list of eight points, reflecting 'the interests of both fellowships', reminded members that 'MRF "prayers" needed their CEIM "thinkers" and vice-versa.'<sup>71</sup> A year later the merger scheme was agreed, with plans for a first AGM of the new organisation in November 1986 and a formal launch on 1 January 1987. At first the name 'The Aldersgate Movement' was chosen, but the possibility of confusion with existing Connexional bodies led to a change to 'Headway', with the subtitle 'a movement of Methodists for prayer, revival and witness to the evangelical faith.'<sup>72</sup> And thus a 'new movement of Methodist Evangelicals' was born.<sup>73</sup>

How influential and significant was the MRF? Numerically it remained small, recruiting a tiny fraction of Methodism's ministers and members. In terms of denominational influence, only with the advent of doctrinal pluralism in the 1970s did it become acceptable for evangelicals to be recruited to Connexional appointments and committees, and here Donald English blazed the trail. MRF provided Methodist representatives for a number of pan-evangelical bodies, like the Evangelical Alliance,<sup>74</sup> but it was always a small player on the wider evangelical stage. The particular achievement of the MRF was to provide a supportive network for Methodist evangelicals, one which enabled many of them to continue within the denomination, and to do so by expounding the evangelicalism of the 'warmed heart' and the 'tongue offire'. The evangelical movement has taken different shapes in different periods and different contexts. In mid-twentieth century British Methodism, arguably the best and most effective expression of

<sup>68</sup> *SoR*, Spring 1986, p.14.

<sup>69</sup> *SoR*, Spring 1984, pp.4-5.

<sup>70</sup> *SoR*, Summer 1984, p.4.

<sup>71</sup> *SoR*, Spring 1985, p.14.

<sup>72</sup> *SoR*, Spring 1986, p.14.

<sup>73</sup> *Headline*, March 1987, cover.

<sup>74</sup> E.g. MRF affiliated to the Evangelical Alliance in 1963: Wood, *Kindled Flame*, p.16.

traditional evangelicalism was a form drawing on revival, and this the MRF succeeded in providing. To the extent that this emphasis is no longer as readily apparent in the successor-organisations, Headway and Methodist Evangelicals Together, it may be wondered whether the cultural chameleon of evangelicalism has changed yet again.

MARTIN WELLINGS

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## **MORE MARXISM THAN METHODISM: HUGH CLEGG AT KINGSWOOD SCHOOL, BATH (1932-39)**

One cannot have any worth-while picture of the future unless one realizes how much we have lost by the decay of Christianity (George Orwell 1944).<sup>1</sup>

The cardinal virtue was no longer to love one's country. It was to feel compassion for one's fellow man and women (Noel Annan 1990).<sup>2</sup>

### **Introduction**

**H**ugh Clegg was one of the two founding fathers of British academic Industrial Relations (IR) and a major trade union historian.<sup>3</sup> Born 22 May 1920, the son of Mabel and Herbert Clegg, the latter a Wesleyan Methodist minister<sup>4</sup>, he was sent to Kingswood School, Bath in 1932, where by 1935 he had declared himself an atheist and Communist. Even though he held firmly to the former

<sup>1</sup> As I Please', Tribune, 1 March 1944, Orwell, S. & Angus, I. (eds) *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, Volume 3, Penguin

<sup>2</sup> *Our Age*.....

<sup>3</sup> Ackers, P., 'Collective Bargaining as Industrial Democracy: Hugh Clegg and the Political Foundations of British Industrial Relations Pluralism', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 45:1, March 2007, pp. 77-101; Brown, W., 'Clegg, Hugh Armstrong', in M. Poole & M. Warner (eds.) *The IEBM Handbook of Human Resource Management*, International Thomson Business Press, 1998, pp.847-52.

<sup>4</sup> Herbert H. Clegg's stations were: 1902 Matlock; 1905 Brigg and 1908 Gainsborough (both Lincolnshire); 1911 Birmingham, Belmont Row; 1913 N. Cornwall Mission; 1917 Truro; 1920 London, Ealing; 1924 London, Finsbury Park; 1927 Glasgow, St John's; 1930 Cardiff, Roath Road, 1934 Leigh; 1937 Tunbridge Wells; 1943 retirement. Hills Arrangement.

position and never returned to religious faith, Clegg can still be regarded like the slightly younger EP Thompson at the same school - as a distinctively Methodist contribution to Annan's 'intellectual aristocracy'.<sup>5</sup> Arguably, Clegg's Methodist upbringing shaped many aspects of his adult character, provided the platform from which he leapt across the theological and political divide to Communism, and remained there in the background as he rowed away from strong political commitment in the post-war years. For all these reasons, it is worth exploring how an education within the citadel of the Wesleyan ministers' school, during the crisis decade of the 1930s, led to such a remarkable personal transformation.

Clegg has been described by one obituarist as 'the most influential academic of the Wilson and Callaghan years'<sup>6</sup> and in a modest, pragmatic way he was a central figure in the post-war social democratic consensus and its breakdown. Following service in the army ranks and marriage, he returned to Oxford and in 1947 gained a First Class Honours in PPE at Magdalen College. At about this time his Party membership lapsed and he grew increasingly close to the revisionist social democracy of Anthony Crosland and Hugh Gaitskell, though he never joined the Labour Party. After spells as a Politics Tutor and Lecturer and then a post-graduate researcher under Norman Chester and GDH Cole at Nuffield College, in 1949 he was appointed a Fellow in the fledgling field of Industrial Relations. There, with Allan Flanders and others he formed the influential 'Oxford School' of IR. Over the next 30 years he became a key figure in the rapid growth of this new field, as a presence on numerous public enquiries, including the 1965 Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers Associations, a major policy influence at the National Board for Prices and Incomes, and, in 1967, a founding Professor of IR at Warwick University. He died on 8 December 1995.

In 1932 at the age of 12, Clegg first became a boarder at Kingswood. Until then he had attended local council schools and his Cardiff High School for Boys report at 11 years and 7 months showed steady if unspectacular academic work.<sup>7</sup> 'Progress quite satisfactory' was the comment of his Form Master, while the House Master could only add, 'Fair'. His work was adjudged 'Good' in English Literature, Literature and Algebra, 'Fairly good' in Geometry and 'Very good' in Arithmetic; but only 'Fair' in Geography, Latin and Art ('might work harder') and 'Satisfactory' in History. In short, he was still very ordinary at several of subjects in which he would later excel. A family bequest gave Herbert

<sup>5</sup> See Binfield, C. 'Victorian Values and Industrious Connexions', *Proceedings* 55:4, February 2006, pp.141-167. Annan, *Our Age*, mentions Clegg, p348

<sup>6</sup> *Glasgow Herald* 4 Jan 1996

<sup>7</sup> Kingswood: Personal File. My thanks to David Brown for helping me unearth this material in the school's Wesley Centre archives, the main source of primary material for this article.

and Mabel the opportunity to send him away to a fee-paying, boarding school in contrast to his older siblings, Margaret, Arthur and Geoffrey. The transition seems to have been initially difficult, as Clegg recalled. 'Probably nothing is so important to newcomers to a boarding school as the formation of friendships. Thrown into this strange environment without the support of parents and siblings, friendships are the most important means to make the new life tolerable.'<sup>8</sup> This article is the story of how this nervous outsider became a confident pillar of the school establishment, while developing highly deviant political beliefs. But first it is important to understand what sort of school Kingswood had become when Clegg arrived.

### Kingswood School

Kingswood was a unique Wesleyan Methodist boarding school for the sons of ministers, founded by John Wesley in 1748. Strict religious discipline, spiced with regimes of extreme brutality, relentless time economy - including a distaste for holidays - Dickensian austerity in food and accommodation and a narrow if slowly expanding curriculum had characterised the school, until, in 1928 it had entered into a new liberal and intellectual regime under the visionary headmastership of AB Sackett.<sup>9</sup> In 1795 the Wesleyan Methodist Conference dedicated the school exclusively to the education of preachers' sons and in 1852 Kingswood moved to a new purpose-built site outside Bath, while remaining 'a rough, cruel place'.<sup>10</sup> By the late nineteenth century Kingswood had begun the transition towards a more mainstream public school ethos, with broader educational ambitions, competitive sport, houses, school plays and so on. Yet even on the advent of the Great War, 'The boys' welfare was ignored', while the first post-war head was 'the embodiment of fear'<sup>11</sup>, and 'Corporal punishment took place almost daily'.<sup>12</sup> In 1922 the Methodist Conference opened the school to fee-

<sup>8</sup> Clegg, *Autobiography*, p.3.

<sup>9</sup> The following account rests heavily on Best, G.M. *Continuity and Change: A History of Kingswood School, 1748-1998*, Kingswood School, 1998, especially Chapter 16 and 17, which covers the early Sackett era until the school move to Uppingham for the duration of the war, shortly after Clegg's departure. This is an excellent official school history which draws on the memoirs of former pupils and the other secondary source listed below. Best is remarkably candid about the brutality and austerity of past regimes, with sectional titles such as 'The Cruel Years' - a tribute to the Methodist historical honesty. Other published sources consulted directly were: Anonymous, *Kingswood: A Tribute* (a collection from: the Kingswood Magazine ); Garforth, F. *Travelling along with Methodism: A personal retrospective*, Christygate, Whitby 1990; Ives, A.G., *Kingswood School in Wesley's Day and Since*, (1970) Walsh, J. (ed) *A.B. Sackett: A Memoir*, (1979) especially, Chapter 11, Davies, RE. '1928-1946', by the former Kingswood Chaplain; and Sackett, A.B. 'Ernest Parfitt Aust: An Appreciation', Kingswood Old Boys Association, (1973)

<sup>10</sup> Best, *Continuity and Change*, p.85.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid* p.134.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid* p.142.

paying children of lay Methodists and others and Kingswood joined the Headmasters Conference. By now this was a mainstream public school in terms of its formal curriculum and infrastructure, though it remained dominated by minister's sons like Clegg.<sup>13</sup> It took the leadership of Sackett to pull the ethos of the school into the modern educational era.

Sackett<sup>14</sup> had lost a leg in the Great War and been at the school under the pre-war authoritarian regime, before gaining a scholarship in History to Merton College, Oxford in 1913. If he was an insider, however, he came to Kingswood *via* the life changing experiences of not only Oxford and war, but of teaching at the Anglican school, Christ's Hospital under the progressive headmaster, William Maxwell Fyffe, having imbibed his educational philosophy of cultivating boys' spirit and imagination. 'Attuned by his experiences to the freer and more democratic mood of the post-war world',<sup>15</sup> Sackett challenged the obsession with discipline, abolished rules of silence, began to listen to boys and improved their physical environment, with curtains, comfortable chairs and paintings on walls, as he recast the school as 'a home for free men with ideals of service'.<sup>16</sup> He paid particular attention to the intellectual development of senior boys destined for Oxbridge and one former teacher recalled that: 'Obstinate and eccentric boys fascinated him'.<sup>17</sup> Indeed he spent hours 'gleefully and provocatively discussing with sixth formers all the literary, historical, ethical and theological issues', appearing to prefer 'the company of open-minded pagans to that of narrow-minded Christians'.<sup>18</sup> Students were allowed great freedom to wander around the Bath

<sup>13</sup> Clerical domination of the student body continued but was diluting as the school expanded. For 1937/8 Sackett, 'Aust', reports 322 students including 220 ministers' son, with 13 from the other Methodist traditions following unity. 180 paid £38 p.a., and 28 sons of clerical widows came free. For 1939 Ives, *Kingswood School*, p. 21, reports 340 boys including about 200 ministers' sons

<sup>14</sup> Walsh, *Sackett*, includes a chapter on his watercolour painting, and argues (p.9): 'in his own life he developed some of the best elements of ~ish society before the First World War, transmuting and transmitting them, in fresh and updated form the inter-war generations. The Georgian poets' intense love of nature informed his prose and painting. In him we see a flowering of the English liberal tradition, made more realistic, perhaps, by the horror .of the First World War, but preserving its essentials - the optimism, the openness of mind, the belief in the uniqueness of the individual and the need for personal freedom. Though breaking with the rigidity of some of his predecessors as Headmaster, he preserved their firmness and their integrity. Though disliking some of the manifestations of his Nonconformist heritage (its tendencies to sentimentality, for example, or to denominational narrowness) he retained the depth of its Christian faith, and did not slide. like many of his generation. into an easy agnosticism.

<sup>15</sup> Ives, *Kingswood School*, p. 207.

<sup>16</sup> Best, *Continuity and Change*, p.157.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid* p.158.

<sup>18</sup> Davies, '1928-1946'. pp.47. 50. He quotes *Sackett*. p.52. 'Christian education is not character training, nor the indoctrination of an ecclesiastical creed. nor Biblical instruction. It is determined by allegiance to Jesus of Nazareth as the living principle and Lord of human life and by what his incarnation implies about the nature of God. and man. and the Universe in which man is set'.

countryside, and Sackett often declared whole day holidays when 'a warm and sunny day was in prospect'.<sup>19</sup> He also increased pastoral care by raising the number of resident staff in his own liberal and intellectual image, such as Clegg's senior housemaster, Douglas Milne; and by deliberately cultivating a stable home for the sons of itinerant ministers with 'an amazing array of extra-curricular activities'.<sup>20</sup> As Ives<sup>21</sup> argues, 'Life at the school became more civilised. . .new boys found...friendly housemasters and matrons welcoming them'. Sackett appointed outstanding Art and Music masters and the school received visits from the cream of the cultural world, such as TS Eliot and the musician, Myra Hess. 'Discussion of all things in heaven and earth was actively promoted, stimulated and guided by the Headmaster'.<sup>22</sup> The Posnett Library was built in 1933 with free access for boys and facilities for the Senior Literary Association to meet, as the Sixth Form expanded to over 70 boys. By the time Clegg entered the school, Sackett's new model Methodist school regime was well-established.

So what sort of Methodist religion and education did Clegg experience while at Kingswood in the 1930s? It is important here to show historical and sociological sensitivity and avoid the portmanteau stereotype of 'a Methodist education'. Wesley's Methodists had divided into numerous Connexions, each with different take on what Wesley's Christianity meant. Even within mainstream Wesleyanism there were many differences over faith and practice, in a religious tradition with a particularly powerful laity. English nonconformity in general has been characterised by huge variations across time - sect to denomination - and across social class space.<sup>23</sup> All these factors were strongly in play in the history of Kingswood, Wesley's own foundation. Clegg arrived in the year that British Methodism completed the transition from eighteenth-century outsider social movement to twentieth-century denominational respectability, with full Methodist unity. As part of that process, rough 'mechanic preachers' had metamorphosed into trained if still mobile ministers and the hot emotions of the poor had given way to a cooler, more rational faith. The ministers and masters that influenced Clegg, notably Sackett and Milne<sup>24</sup>, combined a quiet piety with wider cultural

<sup>19</sup> Davies, '1928-1946', p.42.

<sup>20</sup> Best, *Continuity and Change*, p.167.

<sup>21</sup> Ives, *Kingswood School*, p. 209.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid* p.210.

<sup>23</sup> See Ackers, P. 'West End Chapel, Back Street Bethel: Labour and Capital in the Wigan Churches of Christ c.1845-1945', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 1996, April, 47:2, pp. 298-329; and 'The Churches of Christ as a Labour Sect', Special Note, *Dictionary of Labour Biography*, x. 2000, pp.199-206.

<sup>24</sup> Anon, Kingswood, 'Douglas Milne'. Another historian, he joined the school in 1931, took over the Upper House the following year and 'guided many boys' including Clegg to Oxbridge, 'produced many school plays' and blended scholarship, like Sackett with 'deep religious [Methodist] convictions'. Clegg's historical training at Kingswood seems to have been a major influence on his future academic career.

and aesthetic interests and a strong social conscience consistent with the liberal, Nonconformist Social Gospel<sup>25</sup> For Sackett, 'Christianity combines the sacredness of the individual with the greatest good of society as a whole'<sup>26</sup> These Oxbridge graduates were very different men from the austere religious zealots that Wesley had appointed to his original school.

Kingswood had always represented the Wesleyan hierarchy: the conservative elite of the most bourgeois strand of British Methodism. From early on there were tensions with more radical, working class local Methodists. When the school moved to Bath in 1852, 'the Methodist Church at Kingswood [Bristol] was keen to see the boys leave. Relations between the local community, which was a very radical one, and the rather conservative leadership of the school had been steadily deteriorating for a number of years'.<sup>27</sup> The move from the Bristol coalfield where Whitefield and Wesley's field preaching to the poor began, to a sylvan Bath hillside was itself highly symbolic of the changing social status of the Wesleyan hierarchy. Subsequent building developments were funded by wealthy Methodist manufacturers, as in 1922 by 'the Right Honourable Thomas Ferens, who was the driving force behind Reckitts of Hull (makers of starch)'<sup>28</sup> By the early 1930s the relationship with the local Wesleyan chapel attended by the school was uncomfortable and school religious practice was taken in house. According to Sackett<sup>29</sup>: 'The Bath services are entirely unsuited to boys and make religion and tedium coterminous'. He established a school chapel, separate from the local Wesleyan circuit, with its own broader religious culture and programme of preachers, presided over from 1935 by a school chaplain, Rev. Rupert Davies. The latter encountered 'the senior boys, who were a group of very intelligent people who had mostly lost faith in institutional religion and sometimes in religion itself. His response was to establish in 1939 a Chapel Committee to engage senior boys in the discussion of faith and worship at the school. One past student, David Maland, recalled: "To learn to apply the intellect with equal vigour to religion as one might to history or physics, that was a liberating experience: to be rescued from emotionalism, fundamentalism and premature piety was a saving grace. There were no taboo subjects. It was a Sackett maxim that "all dogma was suspect to growing boys and must make its way by its intrinsic truth".

<sup>25</sup> Thompson, D.M., 'The Emergence of the NonConformist Social Gospel in England', in K.Robbins (ed) *Protestant Evangelicalism: Britain, Ireland; Germany and America, c.1750-19 50*; Essays in honour of W: R. Ward, Blackwells, Ecclesiastical History Society, (1990)

<sup>26</sup> Best, *Continuity and Change*, p.169.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid* p.80.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, p.147.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid* p.169, for Sackett, Maland and Davies quotes and other information. See also: Davies, RE. '1928-1946', pp.56-8.

### School, Politics & Communism

Clegg's formal career at Kingswood proved remarkably successful, both in terms of his academic success and his place in school life, though, as we shall see, this was not so obvious in his first couple of years. He won the Classics Dux Prize in 1934, 1935 and 1936 and the Farmer Senior English Essay Prize in 1938. He became a Prefect then Head of Upper House in 1938-39. He was active in the Junior Scientific and Junior and Senior Literary Associations, acting Redhook in 'Captain Brass Bound' and Ross in *Macbeth*. He took full part in school sports, including Swimming, Cross Country, Cricket and Rugby Union - though he only ever reached the second team in the last two.<sup>30</sup> To cap it all, he gained a scholarship to Oxford.

Yet at the same time, Clegg was becoming an intellectual force as a convinced atheist and Communist from the precocious age of 15. His first step, no doubt in close dialogue with his brother, Arthur - 'his influence on me. . . was considerable at that time and for many years thereafter' - was to reject Christianity.<sup>31</sup> 'In my third year at Kingswood I took a bold step. I decided I was an atheist, and announced this decision to my form-mates and my parents. The reason was quite simple. I began to look critically at what we were taught in our scripture lessons, and at the sermons of the visiting ministers preached from the pulpit in the school chapel, morning and evening every Sunday, and what my father and his ministerial colleagues preached in his church in the holidays; and I could not believe that what I read and what they said was true. The evidence was inadequate.'<sup>32</sup> But scepticism was only the first step towards another kind of faith. 'Atheism led to another heterodox belief- communism. At this time the economic depression of the early 1930s was gradually lifting, but unemployment was still high and the Conservative - dominated government's efforts to reduce it were having painfully little effect. In 1935 there was a General Election, and in accordance with past practice, the school arranged to run a "mock election" with candidates representing the main political parties. . . By this time there was a small group of communists at Kingswood. . . Its senior member was a sixth former called Soper. We commandeered a duplicator and a supply of paper; and wrote and distributed leaflets. We called ourselves, grandiosely, the 'Kingswood School Branch of the Third International.' Apparently; Clegg only became the Communist candidate by default, when Soper fell ill and he was thrust into the limelight.<sup>33</sup>

Thus the 1935 School Election launched Clegg's extra-curricular

<sup>30</sup> Kingswood: Upper House Register

<sup>31</sup> Arthur was already at University and he completed his degree at London School of Economics. He joined the Socialist League before the CPGB. From 1937 to 1939 he was National Organiser of the China Campaign Committee. Clegg, *Autobiography*, p.5.9. See Clegg, A. *New China, New World*, Farleigh(1949)

<sup>32</sup> My emphasis. Clegg. *Autobiography*. p.5.

<sup>33</sup> Clegg *Autobiography*, pp.5-6

political career, standing against Donald Parker (Conservative) and Malcolm Prescott (Labour). According to the latter, Parker was for 'Honest' Stanley Baldwin, Conservative and National Government, but 'I think that Hugh Clegg had the best command of his political philosophy and programme'. Sackett encouraged pupils to take the election seriously. 'A good deal of enthusiasm was generated with party organisation, canvassing, open air meetings and a rash of inspired posters. We each addressed the whole school in the Mouton Hall and there was a full turnout for the poll'. As Prescott recalls: 'Stalin and the USSR were seen by many as signs of hope and fore-runners of a 'new civilisation' as the Webbs styled it'.<sup>34</sup> So Kingswood was drawn into the left wing 'popular front' sub-culture of the time (in the real General Election the Conservatives won by a landslide). According to the contemporary report<sup>35</sup>: 'This high political feeling had as by-products a multitude of posters of literary and artistic merit, and even, in the case of the Communist Party, of poetical pretensions'. The Conservatives narrowly defeated Labour, but 'only just over a third of the electorate voted for the winning candidate, D.K. Parker, while of the other two thirds, the majority would rather have seen any of their opponents succeed than his party, the "National" Conservatives'. Other similar activities belied the supposed 'but few links between this sequestered school and the bustle of the outside world'.

The wider European debate between Communism and National Socialism appears to have been further fired by the boy's direct experience of a bizarre ongoing exchange with a National Socialist (National Politische Erziehungs Anstalt) school in Ilfeld, Germany, which began in 1935 and continued until 1939 and the outbreak of war.<sup>36</sup> Clegg does not seem to have been directly involved, but he did spend his last term being taught German by a teacher of German nationality he described as a 'Nazi'. Malcolm Prescott, the erstwhile school Labour candidate, recollects the first 1935 trip and its rationale.<sup>37</sup> J H (Haydn)

<sup>34</sup> Kingswood Association News: 2005, I, pp.22 (Prescott) & 24; 2004, 2: 12, p.37

<sup>35</sup> 'The Kingswood Elections', Kingswood Magazine, 14:13, December 1935, p. 523.

<sup>36</sup> Ribbentrop's son and Goering's nephews visited Kingswood during this exchange. Ives, *Kingswood School*, p.212 concludes: 'If the episode would soon look pathetic, it was nevertheless all part of a concerted and continuous effort to keep the school in touch with the reality outside its precincts'.

<sup>37</sup> Kingswood: Prescott letter 13.3.05 and report 'Ilfeld 1935'. Kingswood Magazine carried regular reports. In July 1937, p.97, , A point of more topical interest, however, was a Jewish Synagogue which so far has not suffered the same fate as its erstwhile congregation'. Barnes' December 1938 report (pp.260-3) is a surreal instance. 'We left London with more than the usual sense of adventure. . . Everyone seemed determined not to let the political situation spoil the good relations and friendliness which was a distinct feature of the whole visit. . . Politics intruded every now and again...His final speech at Nurnberg left little hope of a peaceful settlement and it seemed almost time to be going home. . . The whole school assembled to shout 'Reil', while drums and fifes played, but the three hearty British cheers rose above it all as we rolled away, laden with sausage and black bread for the fatigues of the journey'.

Barnes, Head of Modern Languages admired German language and culture and was a member of the Oxford Group, a precursor of Moral Rearmament, led by Frank Buchman, which regarded Hitler as a barrier against the spread of atheist Communism. Moreover, while there was a general air of appeasement in British society, pacifist values were particularly strong in the Methodist (and other Nonconformist) Churches and at Kingswood. Barnes had served in the Friends Ambulance Unit during the Great War.<sup>38</sup> According to Prescott, 'Sackett himself, our headmaster, was not under any illusion' about German intentions, but even so it seems to have been a strange error of judgement to sanction an exchange with a specifically Nazi school and to maintain it for four years despite the crude indoctrination the boys were exposed to from the start. The German staff and boys were vetted for sound Aryan background and wore uniforms with swastika arm bands in a school with a strong military atmosphere. The English student volunteers also wore uniforms, without armbands, and had to salute the Nazi flag 'Sieg Heil'. In between climbing mountains, doing cultural tourism and playing competitive sports, they listened to lectures on politics and racial theories or watched the two-and-a half hour film, 'The Triumph of the Will'. In short, they were initiated into the heart of the Nazi experiment. 'Oddly, there was no briefing in advance or debriefing on our return home'. The boys' response seems to have mixed irony with awe: standing 'half amused' in the strange uniforms, yet admiring the 'strong companionship and sense of common purpose in the service of their nation' displayed by the Ilfelders. 'We could not but question what was of comparable or greater value in our own nation'.

According again to Malcolm Prescott<sup>39</sup> even mainstream Kingswood in this era was a highly socially conscious school, partly because 'ninety percent of the boys in our time were the sons of ministers' or what the headmaster once termed 'intelligent paupers'. These parents were 'very much in touch with the needs of the time' and the Methodist church had welfare centres in the East End of London and other cities. After Methodist union in 1932 sons of ministers from other, more politically radical wings of the movement, such as Primitive Methodism - with its strong labour movement links - joined the school, while the national church developed social policies through its Christian Citizenship Department. Invited college preachers also shared this 'social conscience', with such as Jimmy Butterworth the East End Methodist Clubland. So at this time, Kingswood was a very singular public school, with a distinctive student body and an inspirational, maverick headmaster.

The Germans reciprocated with appreciative cultural tours of Bath and its environs taken as late as May 1939 and colourfully reported by Jungman Rermann Spohr in July 1938, pp. 365-8. The whole episode appears now as one of excessive and misplaced liberal tolerance.

<sup>38</sup> Anon, Kingswood, , J .H. Barnes'.

<sup>39</sup> Kingswood: Prescott letter, 8.8.05

There is ample evidence of this in the monthly Kingswood Magazine. For example at Easter 1938, 'a team of eight Seniors went from Kingswood to spend a week in a little mining village on the border between Monmouthshire and Glamorgan.' Their mission, organised by the local Quaker Educational Settlement, was to stay in 'unemployed homes in the "depressed areas" to fill up gaps caused by sickness or death in work on communal allotments.' The group - which may well have included Clegg - quickly learnt some working class facts of life: that the mining valley was 'under the control of one company', that colliery safety men were forced to drive output, that coal nationalisation was seen as a solution; and that the Means Test hurt families. They also enjoyed the solidarity of darts and sing-songs. 'It was a crowded and memorable week in which we found ourselves awakened to a vivid realisation of the charm of the Welsh people and the culpable indifference of so many of our own class to the conditions under which they were forced to live.'<sup>40</sup> It might have been an induction course for young Communists! Although the school's location on a hillside outside Bath isolated it from the 'depressed areas', these experiences - and the ministries of many of the boys' fathers - gave an immediacy to the otherwise abstract debates about the future of Western Civilisation. The lively Kingswood Peace Unit, with its fortnightly paper, combined debates on the international situation with organising these labour camps amongst the unemployed. In April 1938 it reported a talk by Herr Mitschke on 'Germany and Peace' and others on: 'China and Japan; Force and the Civilian; The Near East Question; The Christian Attitude to Peace; (and) The Individual's Task for Peace.'<sup>41</sup>

### **Clegg's School Writing**

We can gain a deeper sense of Clegg's own thinking at this time from his school writing. Clegg eventually became Senior Secretary to the Senior Literary Association (1938-9), a high status position with substantial intellectual influence among the Sixth Form. The December 1939 report<sup>42</sup> describes an ambitious weekly range of activities, including not only 'purely literary subjects' but also 'papers on the cinema, philosophy, and science'. Clegg, 'the hard-working Senior Secretary is to be congratulated on preparing such an attractive and varied syllabus'. A musical demonstration and debate passed the motion 'that this Association regrets the introduction of Jazz'. The reporter felt 'a real weakness in debate, however, as a political motion "that the Jew has no place in Palestine" illustrated. Members are apt to attack a problem with plenty of native wit but with remarkably little stability.' The Communist poet, Cecil Day Lewis also gave a reading.

<sup>40</sup> Kingswood Magazine, July 1938, pp.211-212, 215-216.

<sup>41</sup> Kingswood Magazine, April 1938, p. 183.

<sup>42</sup> Kingswood Magazine, December 1938, pp. 263-265.

The Senior Literary Association's Journal reveals both the general intellectual mood of the School between 1935 and 1939 and Clegg's own strong political views. Its pages carry handwritten entries by senior boys, written under pseudonyms, which were then commented on by other boys and the Junior and Senior Editors. The contents include a very wide range of poems, short stories, pieces of literary criticism, reports of personal experiences and much else. The tone is often aesthetic, influenced by English Literature and the Classics, but during this time politics bursts into the pages, centred on the big debates between Communism, Fascism and Christianity though the last has a fairly low profile given the religious character of the school. Clegg's own writing makes little or no reference to the religion of his family. There is a strong sense of Spain, Auden and the New Left Book Club overtaking Houseman, though the noisy, committed minority probably eclipsed the silent majority of more conventional opinion. For instance, Frank Garforth, another minister's son, arrived at Kingswood aged 13 in September 1930 and left for Cambridge the summer of 1935, yet his account of school life makes no mention of politics; though this may reflect the intensification of political debate past the decade mid-point with the rise of Hitler and the Communist 'Popular Front'.<sup>43</sup>

We can hear Clegg's own youthful voice, very directly through the piece he wrote under the pseudonym, 'Comus'. All boys wrote under pen names, but it is not obvious why he chose a Classical reference to the Lord of revelry or a poem by John Milton, except that 'Pleb' had already been taken by another fierce Marxist. The first juvenile essay, 'Trees' appeared in the 1935-6 edition and anticipated Clegg's adult simple, workmanlike writing style - as a contemporary observed 'not at all literary'. The writing displays a love of nature through detailed observation of the different tree types and a meditation on the joys of 'tree climbing', probably drawn from the long country walks that 1930s Kingswood was famous for. However, even this apparently innocent piece carries fragments of social and political message. 'Trees. . .are always, even in Lancashire and such capitalist by-products, set off by their landscape', provides us with a glimpse of one of Clegg's school holidays in Lancashire, where his father was Methodist minister in the mining town of Leigh. 'Trees possess wonderful charm and variety. I never noticed their charm until I spent an Easter holiday in Lancashire. In Lancashire there are trees, but o! the horror of them. They are far worse than nothing. Grimy, miserable, a dull dirty green, bedraggled and drooping; they exist, but little more. Then the joy, on leaving Manchester and Stockport in the train to catch sight, over the tops of the houses ahead, before ever the rest of the countryside is visible, of the true, fresh, luscious green of the trees.'

Of equal interest, however, to this romantic revolt against the grime of

<sup>43</sup> Garforth, *Travelling along*, p.71.

industrial society is Clegg's witty comparison between: trees and the English character, which seems to describe and parody Clegg's own emerging adult persona. 'Trees are in many ways the personification of the perfect Englishman. The perfect Englishman is slow and silent'. Are trees different from Englishmen because they are 'sociable' and 'congregate in forest, woods, spinneys and copses'? Not really because: 'The Englishmen lives in cities, towns, villages and hamlets. However, the fact that he happens to live next door to his neighbour does not make the Englishman sociable. It rather makes him more unsociable, at least to that particular person'. Moreover, 'The Englishman has already reached such a stage of perfection that to be uncommon is to be an outcast and to be extraordinary, except to be extraordinarily ordinary is to commit a grave crime'. This characterisation of a cramped, stuffy individualism is worth contrasting with his later paean to Communist solidarity, *May Day*.

If 'Trees' contains idiosyncratic social criticism, the long, rather incomprehensible satirical poem 'The Dictator' in the 1936-7 edition is both more ambitious and much less successful. Written in what one schoolboy critic called 'a very stodgy style' and 'ugly metre', it recalls in style a William Morris medieval yarn and is clearly about populism and idealism gone wrong, as an ordinary man usurps the Lords. 'They appointed me to gain for them full justice and to see, In future that they never are oppressed'. One critic suggested that 'This low-born rat' refers to Hitler and this seems likely given what we know of Clegg's political views, though reference to 'the bad harvest' suggests Stalin encircled by deposed capitalist forces:

'The people, joyed, consented to this plan,  
And all together praised the heav'nsent man  
Who, without war, had made the Lords obey  
The just will of the people in this way  
But, later, when the old scant times returned,  
He lost the glory which he'd so well earned,  
Although he warned that the plenteous age  
Had passed and that they now approached a 'stage  
In which the human race would learn, in need  
A more courageous and more holy creed.

In 1937-8, by contrast, the long essay on 'Freedom' is a fairly straightforward orthodox Stalinist apologetic, which argues that freedom is only possible under full Socialism and that until that historical point is reached virtually any means is permissible to build and defend Communism. Clegg (age 17) begins with a fairly confused yet heterodox opening on free will and determinism, alluding to Calvin, Marx and Freud. In a rather formulaic 1930s existential crisis<sup>44</sup>: 'We must decide

<sup>44</sup>See Cunningham, V. *British Writers of the Thirties*, Oxford University Press, (1988) for echoes in Evelyn Waugh and Edward Upward's fictional trilogy *The Spiral Staircase*.

what the purpose of life is for us, if there is one, and if not, commit suicide'. As a good protestant boy, he doesn't mention the third, even scarier, popular alternative to death and Communism: Roman Catholicism. He refers to John Stuart Mill and defines freedom's object as the pursuit of happiness in classical Utilitarian terms, with the main obstacle being Capitalism, poverty and unemployment. 'If we look at society to day we see that men are not happy and we see they are not free. They are not free because of the bond of poverty, coupled with excessive labour, or the removal of all chance of labour' .

All this 'could be easily remedied by nationalisation' - a Socialist panacea the adult Clegg would challenge head on<sup>45</sup> - but this would be resisted by the ruling class. Thus 'a revolution in a modern state can only succeed if accompanied by a rising of the world forces'. The only alternative to 'chaos' or 'barbarism' is to 'apply knowledge of history' which shows 'that progress has been from one species of society to another', in the schema of the Communist Manifesto: 'we are now in the greatest and last of these inevitable changes, the change to socialism, when there will be no classes, when real freedom and real happiness can begin. Each change has been the result of a revolution which has been carried out by force. . . Society has now been simplified down, in Britain at least, to two classes, the capitalists and the workers'. Midas made the marginal response: 'Comus forgets his own class. Britain's workers number 36 million, her capitalists 2 million, and her bourgeoisie about 7 million' . In an earlier response to the objection that only the proletariat lack freedom, Clegg adds, in a note. 'The rest of society is no happier than the proletariat and the slavery of excessive riches is at least as terrible as that of excessive poverty'.

Clegg asks next: 'How is the revolution to take place?' Capitalism has encouraged 'political democracies' but these are removed as soon as there is 'a danger of the workers using them to bring about socialism' . Any revolution to survive the onslaught of 'the capitalists and their followers, would surely need great restrictions of freedom', but this does not compromise the principle of freedom because 'such measures are merely temporary. Revolution is war and the defence of revolution is war'. We should not confuse means with ends: 'Our aim is to achieve happiness, the means to that end is freedom, and the means to freedom is revolution.' The proof for this lies in the pudding: 'socialism has had twenty years of continued success, the Soviet Union'. The Revolution saw 'the most rigorous discipline in all departments of the ordinary life of the people, an enforcement that approached terrorism', but this was needed to protect the new order against its enemies. Indeed, 'a great measure of freedom to all the people of the Union' had been promised by the new Soviet constitution. 'However, as this constitution was being worked out and put into practice a great plot or series of plots and organisations was

<sup>45</sup> Ackers, 'Collective Bargaining as Industrial Democracy'.

discovered, and a drastic and forceful repression had to be carried out by the elected leaders of the people.. the so-called purge was and is the means to freedom, which still is the aim of the people and the people's leaders. The restrictions of freedom in the Soviet Union are temporary measures against the enemies of the Union. . . When the world revolution is accomplished and its enemies reduced to impotence, there will be complete freedom, or freedom as complete as possible'. There could hardly be a more ringing endorsement of Leninism and the Stalinist purges.

The essay ends by refuting the pacifists on the same lines, for, as we have seen, there was a strong Kingswood Peace group. Not all of Clegg's readers were convinced by his uncompromising defence of Stalinism. Pres found it a 'most interesting and provocative essay', but regarded the conclusions as leading to 'undue utopianism'. Geopolitik pointed to the absence of elections in the USSR, to the liquidation of opponents and banning of the free press. Many others made marginal comments. No doubt all this was like water off a duck's back, for Clegg was set in a political position that he would hold for the next decade or more, right through the war and his subsequent return to Oxford as a student. As Malcolm Prescott recalls, Clegg was 'his own man', both 'able and prickly.'<sup>46</sup>

An earlier 1936-7 entry by Pleb, 'Dies Irae', gives us a better sense of how the apocalyptic intellectual mood of the contemporary far left had permeated the thinking of some senior boys, including Clegg, as they played with big frightening ideas. One of Pleb's prefatory quotes is from Louis Aragon's 'Red Front' poem: 'I am a witness to the crushing of a world out of date' ; and his own preface begins: 'The modern age is a violent one' . The melodramatic writing in the three poems that follow is thick with allusions to Freud, Eliot, but most redolent of Aragon's overwrought surrealist style and full of violent images of 'necessary murder' of the sort Orwell deprecated in Auden's controversial poem, 'Spain 1937'<sup>47</sup> 'The Encircling Gloom' refers to 'a rain of shells' and asks: 'Do we tremble at the dictator's axes?'. One verse goes (in its original format):

'Is there any alleviation of the universal monotony of monochrome  
Which enwraps all worlds unseen and seen in a greyness?

Yes. It is

blood-Red, throbbing

with the passionate intensity of the collective millions,  
dripping from the banner of freedom,

whereon hang the hammer and sickle, black grey- ghosts  
for the realness is the redness of blood'

<sup>46</sup> Kingswood: Prescott letter, 8.8.05.

<sup>47</sup> Cunningham, V. *British Writers of the Thirties*.

The following verse concludes: 'the forge of the future - blood-red. When Revolution comes then life is real and red'; and the next speaks of 'the never-ending sound of guns and death' - odd sentiments for young men living on an idyllic hillside outside Bath. The next poem, 'Tu'ar Goleuni' is also full of 'comrades' and images of war, 'machine-guns', 'the flame of guns', 'scream of shells' and so. 'Spain 1936' (the title directly anticipating Auden) has more of the same brutal phrases including: 'I hear the thunder of the workers' guns'; 'Let thy fury proletariat, sweep the earth'; and 'Fire on the bourgeois, Spanish comrades, Fire!' Such verbal blood-lust is widely criticised in the numerous comments made by other boys. Pleb clearly has some anarchist sympathies but responds to all the criticism by averring that: 'The position of the poet in the modern world should be not in some sentimental dream-land, but on the barricades'.

How do we assess this schoolboy writing? Clearly it is also shaped by parts of the school's core curriculum, including deep exposure to the Bible and to the heroic and tragic tales found in the classics. There is also in Pleb's entry a sense of a young man playing with terrible words to the point of self-parody. Clegg's writing - with the exception of 'The Dictator' - is much more prosaic in every sense: stodgy and non hysterical in style; more rational and earnest in his presentation of the Communist case. It is hardly surprising that his new beliefs stood the test of time, while like Auden and Spender, many of the other young rebels quickly threw off such youthful indiscretion. It is interesting to ask how these ideas reached Kingswood. As we have seen, C Day Lewis, another Communist poet in this period, spoke to the school at this time, while Pleb refers to a Left Book Club edition on 'Freud and Marx'. Sackett's extremely liberal educational regime, especially for the older boys, encouraged this mood of intellectual experimentation - however much he decried some of the resulting ideas.

In Clegg's case, however, there was a much closer, more potent influence, his elder brother, Arthur. 'May Day' by Comus from 1938/9 is vivid first-hand reportage and much the best example of this early writing. The essay describes Clegg's trip to the 1938 May Day celebrations in London from the home of his father's ministry in Tunbridge Wells. Although Arthur's name is not mentioned, it describes meeting-up first with his China Campaign Committee. No doubt Clegg had read or seen John Summerfield's 1936 Lawrence and Wishart book of the same name<sup>48</sup>, but his own honest observations and reflections do not ape the Socialist Realism of that fictional account, revealing already Clegg's steady empiricist temper. What his account exposes is a naive

<sup>48</sup> John Summerfield, *May Day*, Lawrence and Wishart, 1936, 2nd Edition. 1984 (and Introduction by A. Croft). See also: Cunningham, V. *British Writers of the Thirties*. Oxford University Press, 1988, and A. Croft, *Red Letter Days: British Fiction in the 1930s*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1990.

religious idealism already underwritten by a critical self awareness.

It is worth repeating in full:

### May Day

The thought was on my mind as soon as I woke and prevented the dullness I should otherwise have felt at that early hour - it was May Day! I dressed quickly and ate a rapid breakfast. not at all troubled by the heavy rain which threatened to flood the festivities. I was determined to stand in the rain all day if need be for I was fulfilled with the enthusiasm which seemed so ridiculous to me when displayed by religious sectors.

The train was slow and the morning still new, but I hardly noticed either. A smartly dressed young man clattered into the carriage, slammed the door and, singling me out (how mistakenly!) as a kindred spirit, said: "Damn awful weather". and then: "of all the bloody days in the week it would rain today". (For it was Sunday). I murmured affirmatives but my thoughts were unsympathetic; and gradually I felt my superiority over him for he probably did not even know what May Day was, and this feeling spread to include the other passengers, the crowds in the stations and finally all the pretty little Kentish towns, which were about to spend another Sunday just like the last and just like the next.

I had an hour to spare in London, which I spent reading the most recent Marxist analysis of the political situation. Despite its lucidity and incisiveness, I felt that it was unreal. The here and now were more important to me than the far away in Germany, Italy, China and Spain.

Then I met the others. We had a hurried meal in some cheap stalls, making appropriate jokes about this being the meal of the workers of the world. Clattering down in a tram to the East End to pick up the Chinese contingent, my enthusiasm waned slightly; and another cup of poisonous tea in a Chinese cafe, where a mongoose ran in and out among the tables, while a crowd of Chinese chattered all around, sufficed to make me thoroughly nervous. The journey to the embankment was an ordeal. I sat on the floor of a dangerously overcrowded charabanc and timidly tried to carry on a conversation with the Chinese, while my elbows and knees constantly joggled with the jolting of the bus. The noise spoilt whatever chance the conversation had of being successful and I relapsed into a still more nervous silence.

The charabanc stopped at the segment of the pavement assigned to us, and we scrambled out. Everyone was busy. Someone came up to sell us Unity badges, and the Chinese all bought them and stuck them in their coats, probably without any knowledge of their significance; someone made a joke; we all laughed and felt suddenly merry and fell to work, assembling banners, tying flags on to poles, searching for string, imploring each other to lend a penknife, a pin, or a hook, and calling and waving to the people we knew or thought we knew in other sections. Finally we were ready, and the marshals assembled us in the road. We noticed the police everywhere, mounted and on foot, uniformed, disciplined and severe, but we were unmoved, rather rejoicing in the thought of potential opposition, (which threatened no serious dangers).

In front of us were the members of the International Brigade invalidated home; behind us was the Czecho Slovakian contingent. A Chinese who had come all the way from Berlin to join in free May Day celebrations came up to shake my hand and fall in. When I thought that this was the solution to the apparent contradiction between the here and now and the far away: we were there from almost everywhere, feeling sympathy for each other in successes and reverses; the threads seemed to go out from us to join the world into a single intricate web of which we were but one link; our badges were the symbols.

At last we were off. We gripped our banners and dragged them against the wind, glad to have some opponent against whom to battle in our enthusiasm. Slowly we marched down the embankment, with frequent stops for the traffic; but we marched proudly. In Victoria Street there were the crowds and we began to shout slogans and to sing. The Internationale went better half a mile ahead where most of the Communist contingents were; but we could all join in the slogans, and we shouted ourselves hoarse for an hour or more until we came to Hyde Park:

"Chamberlain must go!"

"Arms for Spain!"

"Save China - save peace!"

My banner was half torn off its pole, but I held it on with my fingers.

By 4 o'clock we were in Hyde Park. We marched in past the last and longest crowd shouting a final slogan, and straggled up to the meeting. The Chinese hurried off in their excitement to join the crowds, while we dismantled the flags and banners. From a short distance the platforms, each with its knot of listeners, seemed like closely packed socks round which surged and swirled continuous waves of spectators listening now here~ now there, now turning to one of the bands now to the platform.

I heard a speaker decrying the lack of unity in the Left, but I knew at once he was wrong. There might be lack of co-operation between organisations, but here was living unity, here was a mass of hundreds of thousands, friendly, enthusiastic, and, above all, homogenous.

That night back at home, I heard on the wireless news that millions of Germans had been regimented into Hitler's May Day festivities and that everything had been carried out with the most admirable discipline. I laughed in my pride.

Marxism-Leninism was only one side of Clegg's youthful character, however. The 1938 edition of the school magazine, carried another piece of English whimsy about garden cricket. 'The garden was only a grass plot with flower borders, in all perhaps twenty five yards by ten, but it also passed the summer under the varying names of Lords, the Oval, or Old Trafford'. The surrounding windows and flower beds drew the shots. 'But in the days of garden cricket which of us spent nights almost in tears because we had not the slightest talent for the game?' This was at once a passion and incapacity that Clegg would maintain for the rest of his life.

### Clegg & Sackett

Sackett was the third major influence in Clegg's socialisation from child to man after his parents and brother Arthur both because he shaped the entire liberal spirit of Kingswood school, but also because he remained in close contact with Clegg and his parents right up to 1949 when he gained his Nuffield Fellowship. Clegg's Communism was an early source of worry for both Sackett and for Clegg's parents, as their correspondence reveals.<sup>49</sup> On 25 September 1935, Sackett wrote: 'I am very glad to have your letter because I am really rather worried about Hugh. He ought to do very well if only he can come through this stage. I need not say that I regret the ideas he has got as equally erroneous and unhelpful. I do not know whether I make it worse or better for him when I talk to him. I find it extremely difficult to get him to talk frankly, more difficult than I can remember with boys. Help from you there would be really valuable. I have had a few shots to do what I could for him without success, and I wondered each time whether I was at fault'. Nor, at this stage, was Clegg thriving physically. On 18 December Sackett wrote to Herbert: 'The doctor saw your boy this morning and reports that the special exercises for carriage and chest expansion must be continued next term'. Herbert Clegg responded to the first letter on 8 October that 'Hugh is more appreciative of and responsive to your talks with him than he appears to be'. He regretted his own parental negligence, but added: 'As you know he is greatly influenced by an older brother, who during his course of training at the London School of Economics has adopted communistic ideas. His brother tries to be scrupulously fair but Hugh's intense admiration for him makes him want to go all the way with him.' He concludes, as a Methodist accustomed to backsliding after conversion experiences, by hoping that 'the very ardour of Hugh's enthusiasm' will mean that it quickly burns as he gets over 'this phase'.

Three years later, Clegg was on the verge of Oxford. His political phase was far from over, but his integration into the school was complete. Sackett's full reference to Magdalen of 15 November 1938 says: 'H.A. Clegg is a School Prefect and Head of his House, one of six boys given special responsibility. He is an excellent prefect who exerts real and right influence in his House and in the school in general. He has power and drive, decided opinions, and is outstanding among boys I have known for his unswerving adherence to the course he has believed to be right. His danger is that he will overwork. His interests are mainly politics and economics, but he is an officer of the Senior Literary Association. He plays normal games heartily without excelling in any. I believe he will do very well at University and thoroughly recommend him.' The Kingswood Magazine of March 1939<sup>50</sup> congratulated Clegg on his Demyship (scholarship) in Classics at Magdalen College along with five other Oxbridge successes - the historian, E.P. Thompson was to take the

<sup>49</sup> Kingswood: Personal File

<sup>50</sup> Kingswood Magazine, March 1939, p. 304.

Cambridge route in 1942.<sup>51</sup>

Herbert wrote on 16 December to thank the school for Hugh's 'surprise' Oxford success, noting that, 'He told us repeatedly and certainly that he couldn't hope to do anything at the first attempt'. There followed an anxious exchange over the application for a Higher Exhibition from Kent Education Authority. On 28 February 1939 Herbert sent the form and pointed out that he would retire and become a 'supernumerary minister' before Clegg finished Oxford. He also mentioned Clegg's plans for temporary work, including the prospect of a post in Zurich learning German, and asked Sackett permission for Clegg to leave school at the end of that Spring term. Sackett replied on 1 March and was agreeable about the job and plans to leave at Easter. By now he obviously had Clegg much more in his confidence, even if he could not shift his political views. 'He has been talking to me several times about what he should do after this term. The real worry in his mind is that he cannot at school here square his theory of Communism with practice. But how he is going to do that better out of a job is more than I can understand. But he has never once mentioned a job to me.'

On 1 March Mabel took the grant matter in hand, stating bluntly: 'We are very anxious to have the £50 per annum to help towards Hugh's expenses at Oxford. This is due to my husband's health'. The day before Herbert had posted the grant forms, but Mabel wanted to make it clear that ill-health - including 'a sudden and serious haemorrhage' a year ago - leading to 24 weeks away from work and 11 in Guys Hospital was making retirement imminent. Reading between the lines, the Kent grant, saving a term's school fees and Clegg finding a job to support himself were all driven by fears of the family's genteel impoverishment. This urgent matter out of the way, Mabel gave thanks (before turning to her plan for Clegg to work in Zurich as a student teacher): 'I want to thank you for all you and Kingswood School have done for Hugh. He felt it as a great honour to be made the Head Prefect of Upper House and has taken this matter very seriously and disciplined himself in many ways back at home and at school for the sake of the School. It was a very wise gesture on your part.'

It would be easy to surmise that, by this point, Clegg had become a conventional public school boy with a patina of radical ideas. But this does not square with his subsequent behaviour at Oxford and in the Army, as the dialogue with Sackett continued. Rather he appears as a young man of strong and difficult principles who an enlightened and imaginative Headmaster had drawn into the centre of school life without forcing him to compromise these. Beyond the politics Sackett had divined a strong sense of duty and moral purpose. The day Mabel sent her letter, he posted a reference to Kent describing Clegg's 'character' as 'absolutely first rate' and extolling his leadership qualities: 'Generally speaking he has a very great influence in the school'. In this light, he was later

<sup>51</sup> Rule, J, 'Thompson, Edward Palmer (1924-1993), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004-5.

perturbed at Clegg's refusal to take a wartime army commission. He also made the economic case for Herbert and Mabel, pointing out to Kent that Clegg's 'father's income appears higher than it really is'. The next day, 2 March, he wrote back to Mabel about the £50 grant (which was linked a further £50 loan). And this time he balanced his pride in Clegg's character with a continued concern for his beliefs. 'He has been a first-rate head of his House, and of extreme value to the school in general. I only wish he could see clearly the falsities in his Communist position. I hope Oxford may help there, but not if he goes up to Oxford with the intention of proving his theory'. The sermons preached at chapel that last term can hardly have helped disprove Clegg's theory, given other-worldly titles such as: 'What is the purpose of hymns? The meaning of the Atonement. Have we free will? Why does God allow evil? How can I overcome temptation? What is meant in practice by fellowship with God? And How can I learn to pray?'<sup>52</sup>

### Conclusion

I sit in one of the dives  
On Fifty-second Street  
Uncertain and afraid  
As the clever hopes expire  
Of a low dishonest decade<sup>53</sup>

For Auden's slightly older cohort of artistic leftists, the Nazi-Soviet pact of 23 August 1939, followed by the outbreak of World War on 1 September, signalled that the radical dreams of the 'red decade' had already ended in pessimism, defeat and exile. Clegg, by contrast, was an optimistic young Communist at the beginning of a decade of further political commitment and early adult personal development.<sup>54</sup> At the start of his first term at Oxford, Sackett wrote two letters to Clegg himself. On 3 October 1939 he informed him of his award of the school's 'Lamplough Scholarship of £25 for three years'. Clegg obviously wrote giving thanks by return, but the letter has not survived. Sackett's reply of 6 October, written as World War Two began suggests that Clegg had enjoyed a very fruitful time in the temporary job he had chosen, working for Mass Observation. 'Dear Clegg, I am glad you are managing to get up to Magdalen and wish you all happiness there. I am glad the last few months have proved so profitable. It is clear that the War Office will not call you up for a while yet and at least you will have your scholarship to go back to afterwards. It was my salvation during the last war that my scholarship at Merton was still warm for me to go to. All good wishes to you. Yours sincerely, Headmaster'.

<sup>52</sup> Kingswood Magazine, 25:8, March 1939, p. 303.

<sup>53</sup> Auden, W.H. 'September 1, 1939'. See also: Cunningham, *British Writers of the Thirties*, p.385.

<sup>54</sup> See Ackers. 'Collective Bargaining as Industrial Democracy'.

At Kingswood Clegg received an excellent if rather narrow formal education, focused on the classics, embedded in a remarkably rich 'hidden curriculum' of open political and cultural debate, presided over by schoolteacher intellectuals, such as Sackett and Milne. This was advanced Methodist education in the mainstream of twentieth-century protestant Christianity, similar in many respects to that found at the more academic Anglican schools where several of Clegg's masters had also taught. Perhaps the main difference was the stronger contact with the life and social concerns of the working classes, mediated to the boys through their own fathers. Here clerical hegemony among the students was itself a counterweight to the political Conservatism of a school populated by the sons of the comfortable bourgeoisie, who dominated most boarding schools. In earlier generations Kingswood had witnessed many episodes of extreme adolescent religious fervour.<sup>55</sup> Clegg's school generation was not educated in the demotic, emotional, theologically conservative and politically radical religion of the poor that produced so many coal mining labour leaders.<sup>56</sup> Rather, this was a dry and rational religion of the cultured and educated middle classes; a theologically and politically liberal, yet still socially conscious faith.

For Kingswood, at this time, was also school with a deep and explicit sense of moral purpose, which Clegg had merely taken in a different direction. His adult industry recalls John Wesley while Clegg's favourite axiom, 'an ounce of theory is worth a pound of facts' echoes Wesley's 1768 injunction to the then Kingswood Headmaster, 'An ounce of love is worth a pound of knowledge', heard by Clegg many times in the college chapel.<sup>57</sup> This religious milieu developed and shaped Clegg's mind and character, but in the global political and social turmoil of the mid to late 1930's it could not capture a young man's angry, passionate heart. Indeed, at a political level progressive liberalism seemed to represent everything that had failed in the thinking of the previous generation of Sackett, Milne and the Rev. Herbert Clegg. For all this, there was no personal rift between the generations of the sort common in the 1960s social chasm and respectful dialogue continued across the hypothetical barricades. Indeed, there was a strange sense of Clegg's transition to Oxford and world war repeating the pattern of Sackett's early life.

PETER ACKERS

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<sup>55</sup> Kingswood Magazine, 25:8, March 1939, p. 303.

<sup>56</sup> See R. Colls, 'Primitive Methodism in the northern coalfield', in J. Obelkevich, L. Roper and R. Samuel (eds) *Disciplines of faith: studies in religion, politics and patriarchy*, (1987) pp. 323-34.

<sup>57</sup> See Brown, 'Clegg, Hugh Armstrong', p.849. John Wesley's letter of November 7 1768 to Joseph Benson (Kingswood archive) concerns ordering books for the school and, in that context ends: 'Beware you not be swallowed up in books. An ounce of love is worth a pound of knowledge'. Once again, my thanks go to David Brown for unearthing this. See also Best, *Continuity and Change*, p.28.

## ANNUAL MEETING, AND LECTURE, 2009

The Revd Dr Martin Wellings, Superintendent Minister of the Oxford Circuit, delivered the Wesley Historical Society Annual Lecture for 2009 at the Wesley Memorial Church on Saturday 27 June 2009. His subject was 'The Methodist Revival Fellowship 1952-1987' and former members of the MRF with members of the society and friends from as far afield as Cardiff, Cornwall and Fife in Scotland heard a lucid and stimulating survey of the movement's history from its origins until it merged in 1987 with Conservative Evangelicals in Methodism (now Methodist Evangelicals Together).

Formed in 1952, at a time when the British Churches were adjusting to the changes, challenges and opportunities of the post-war world, MRF drew on a well-established tradition of Methodist evangelicalism, and also on a renewed evangelical theology emanating from the Inter-Varsity Fellowship. Its first decade saw steady, if not spectacular, growth, and an engagement with the 'fundamentalist' controversies surrounding the Billy Graham campaigns of 1954-55. In the 1960s much energy was expended on the Anglican-Methodist 'Conversations'. This issue, and the challenge to all evangelicals to leave 'mixed' denominations, cost MRF some prominent members. In the meantime, however, prayer for revival continued and the Fellowship strengthened its organisation and its role as a supportive network for evangelical Methodists. Charismatic renewal grew in this period, and continued through the 1970s. In a self-consciously pluralist denomination, MRF and the newly-formed CEIM (1970) found a place and a voice, debating some of the vexed issues of the time, like inter-faith worship and attitudes to the expression of human sexuality. After several years of close co-operation, the two groups came together at the end of 1986 to launch Headway as a unified organisation for Methodist evangelicals.

Enquiring how influential and significant the MRF was during this period, Dr Wellings observed that numerically it remained small, recruiting a tiny fraction of Methodism's ministers and members. However, in terms of denominational influence, with the advent of doctrinal pluralism in the 1970s after it became acceptable for evangelicals to be recruited to Connexional appointments and committees, with the late Donald English blazing the trail, MRF provided Methodist representatives for a number of pan-evangelical bodies, like the Evangelical Alliance, but it was always a small player on the wider evangelical stage. The particular achievement of the MRF was to provide a supportive network for Methodist evangelicals, one which enabled many of them to continue within the denomination, and to do so by expounding the evangelicalism of the 'warmed heart' and the 'tongue of fire'. Dr Wellings concluded that in mid-twentieth century British Methodism, arguably the best and most effective expression of

traditional evangelicalism was a form drawing on revival, and this the MRF succeeded in providing.

The lecture was chaired by the distinguished Oxford ecclesiastical historian, Dr John Walsh. It was preceded by the AGM chaired by the Revd Dr John Newton at which Dr David Ceri Jones of Aberystwyth University was appointed Editor designate of the society's journal and Deacon Dr Ronnie Aitchison Assistant Editor in succession to Mr E. Alan Rose, who announced that he intends to retire as editor in October 2010. The Revd Donald H. Ryan in addition to his appointments as Registrar and Website Manager was also appointed Administrator in recognition of a range of invaluable administrative functions he has assiduously performed in recent years. He has recently designed a new membership recruitment leaflet which members are invited to obtain copies of for distribution to their own contacts. He will also undertake a full review of the society's constitution reporting to the Executive Committee in April for approval by the AGM next June. One change approved by this year's AGM was to invite the network of regional Methodist historical societies customarily, if inaccurately, described as 'branches' to follow the example of Lincolnshire and re-designate themselves as societies. Mr John Devey now takes up the newly designated role of Hon. Independent Examiner of Accounts and Mr D. Colin Dews joins the Executive Committee as Elected Member.

As in 2008 a supporting programme of activities was offered in the morning and indeed the Friday evening with participants having the option of viewing the society's library at Oxford Brookes University led by Mr John Lenton or joining a guided tour of sites associated with John Wesley led by Dr Peter Forsaith, followed by a presentation on the Oxford Centre for Church History and Methodism.

At the invitation of the Revd Martin Turner, next year's Annual Meeting will take place on Saturday 26 June 2010 at Methodist Central Hall London and will include a guided tour of the building and an introduction to the new Wesley Centre. The Annual Lecture, chaired by the Revd the Lord Griffiths will be delivered by the Revd Robin P. Roddie of the Wesley Historical Society in Ireland on the subject of 'Keeping the Faith: Ireland's Primitive Methodism'.

JOHN A. HARGREAVES

## BOOK REVIEWS

*John Wesley's Preachers: A Social and Statistical Analysis of the British and Irish Preachers who Entered the Methodist Itinerancy Before 1791*, by John Lenton (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2009. Pp. xxviii, 506. Paperback. £34.99. ISBN 978-1-84227-625-9.)

John and Charles Wesley may have been Church of England clergymen, but early Methodism was preponderantly a lay movement. Although John appears in the title of this excellent book, for once he is - relatively - just a bit-player in the story which follows. Its heroes are the itinerant preachers, overwhelmingly laymen at this period (apart from a few more Anglican ministers and, as related in chapter 18, a handful of ordinations after 1784). Working in tandem with a larger contingent of local preachers, in Wesley's lifetime they took the Methodist message to most parts of the British Isles, North America and the West Indies. The contribution of local preachers was celebrated in *Workaday Preachers* (1995), yet - until now - there has been no full modern account of the lay itinerants in Britain, with a consequentially continuing dependence on Thomas Jackson's edition of *The Lives of Early Methodist Preachers* (first printed in 1837-38), which deals with only a minority of them, and that not necessarily representative. The late Frank Baker worked for over fifty years in gathering the raw material for a study of the eighteenth-century itinerants but never published his findings. Fortunately, he passed his files on to John Lenton, encouraging him to develop the research, which he began to do in earnest during the 1990s. The first major output from Lenton's efforts came with his *My Sons in the Gospel*, the Wesley Historical Society lecture for 2000, and the associated availability (on the website of the General Commission on Archives and History of the United Methodist Church) of a database of the early itinerants. Further articles and essays followed in the subsequent decade, which have been consolidated and extended into this truly encyclopaedic volume.

Lenton's database covers the 802 itinerants (some of them 'doubtfuls'), divided into five, decennial cohorts, who entered before John Wesley's death in 1791, and who are named in Appendix 3 and in the web version (although only selected fields are displayed online). This is a larger number than Baker's 677 and than suggested by the official record, for instance the Minutes of Conference, for the reasons given in Appendix 2; it also considerably exceeds those listed in Kenneth Garlick's *Mr Wesley's Preachers* (1977), which had a more limited scope. The last of Wesley's itinerants, John Hickling, did not die until 1858, but the analysis here stops circa 1820, after which the survivors were effectively sidelined in connexional affairs. Women preachers are excluded on the grounds that they did not formally itinerate, although a few must have come close to being what Lenton describes as 'half-itinerants'. This database has been interrogated to provide a variety of charts and tables, the latter congregated in Appendix 1, so as not to disturb the flow of the text.

Some of the statistical discussion is inhibited by missing data and thus inconclusive (as with social class and educational backgrounds), but several striking facts do emerge from the numerical component of the book. In particular, continuity was a problem, with just 47 per cent of itinerants dying in the work (18 per cent actually on circuit), and the remainder leaving after varying intervals, some more than once, albeit rarely from doctrinal causes. Many reverted to local preachers. The mean age of entry to the ministry was 27 (by which time one in eight men were already married) and the average age of death 65; even so, only one fifth travelled 30 years or more, with the mean just over 17. Similarly, the database uncovers fluctuations in the supply of preachers, notably the plateau of the 1750s, when recruitment was low and Charles Wesley's purges were in progress, which stunted Methodist growth. On the other hand, the expansion of the 1790s was underpinned by a strong intake of itinerants during the previous decade.

However, the book is far more than the statistics. At its heart is a corporate analytical and narrative profile of the public and private spheres of the itinerants, tracing them over successive life-cycle stages, from origins to death (chapters 3-9 and 15-20). Included along the way are reassessments of the operation of both circuits and Conference and the establishment of the Preachers' Fund. A long interlude (chapters 10-14) examines the preachers who served outside England, in what is jarringly described as 'the Celtic fringe' or overseas. This is a welcome corrective to the traditional English bias of much Methodist historiography, with the discussion of Ireland and the United States being especially revealing, if a little burdened with general historical context. The disproportionate impact of Irish-born preachers is highlighted, as is the role of other itinerants besides Francis Asbury in creating American Methodism. There are no corresponding chapters on English regions, although Lenton has written elsewhere on the itinerants who laboured in the East and West Midlands and Cumbria (curiously, these articles are not in his bibliography). The text has a consistently strong empirical foundation, being well illustrated with quotations, pen-portraits and human anecdotes. The chapters are fairly short and extensively subdivided, which makes for easy navigation but can result in a degree of repetition. A model index, compiled by John Vickers, will be helpful to readers wishing to use the book to trace information about particular individuals. Some comparison is made with equivalent research on the American pioneer preachers, as by Edwin Schell, but not with Tom Albin's quantification of early British Methodist spirituality or Clive Field's 1994 study of pre-1830 British Methodist membership.

The evidence base derives from a wide range of primary and secondary documentation, manuscript and printed, which is mostly detailed in the footnotes and bibliography. Sometimes, the references look over-truncated and cryptic, and occasionally a source seems not to be given. This can make it difficult to determine whether omissions are more apparent than real. The 'old' Dictionary of National Biography is cited but not the 'new' (2004 and

ongoing); neither is the *British Biographical Index* (third edition, 2008). *The Encyclopedia of World Methodism* (1974) is not mentioned, and Samuel Rogal's ten-volume *A Biographical Dictionary of 18th Century Methodism* (1997-99) makes few appearances. The online version of the *Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland* was launched too late to be used but, being greatly enlarged from the 2000 printed edition which has been consulted, would doubtless have enriched the database at several points. Although 104 preachers left to become Anglican clergy or Dissenting ministers, Lenton is silent about his recourse to the Clergy of the Church of England Database and the Surman Index (the latter newly released online). The potential value of circuit plans is recognized (p.444), but it is unclear how systematically they have been pursued. For these and other reasons, additional detail about Mr Wesley's preachers seems likely to turn up for several generations to come. To that extent, Lenton's book does not constitute the last word on the subject, which he freely acknowledges at the outset (p.9). However, it is a most impressive piece of painstaking scholarship, which offers many fresh insights into early Methodism, reflected in the everyday experiences of the 'circuit riders', rather than through the often distorting lens of John Wesley's writings. Indeed, the volume is arguably as revealing about the influence which, collectively and severally, the brotherhood of preachers came to exercise over Wesley as about the power which he wielded over them.

CLIVE D. FIELD

*Living the Christian Life: selected thoughts of William Grimshaw* by Paul & Faith Cook (Evangelical Press, Darlington, 2008, pp.87(2) bIb. £7.95 ISBN 978-0-85234-691-4)

A brief summary of Grimshaw's life sets the context for the three previously unpublished manuscripts by Grimshaw in the John Rylands University of Manchester Library, namely on the character of a Christian, the believer's golden chain, and experiences gathered from conversions with his and others' souls. Although it is stated that editorial changes have been made to the original text there is no indication what these are or whether there are omissions in the texts. Confidence in the academic scholarship of the book is not helped by a photograph of Haworth Church being dated as 1756! Regrettably, the book has limited utility for the Methodist historian and its *raison d'être* seems to be to provide spiritual uplift to certain groups of Evangelical Christians.

D. COLIN DEWS