Exploring Methodism's Heritage: The Story of the Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies

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The Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies meets evety five years undet the auspices of the World Methodist Council.

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Preface

It is difficult, if not impossible, to write objectively about events in which one has taken part. When Raymond George, the first British Secretary of the Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies (commonly abbreviated as "the Oxford Institute"), was due to become its warden for the meeting of 1969, he asked me to take over the administrative duties. I have been involved in the Institute, as secretary and later as one of the chairpersons, from that time until August 2002. The pages that follow, therefore, represent an insider's version of the story. It may have looked different to those who were not, as one correspondent put it, "in the engine room."

However that may be, for nearly half a century the Institute has gathered together every four or five years professional theologians and theologically committed pastors and lay persons from many countries in the Methodist world. Over those many years, it has made a significant contribution to an international exploration of the legacy John Wesley's descendants have inherited from him. Nearly a thousand men and women have passed through the Institute in those years, many attending several meetings, and they have carried home with them widened horizons, theological stimulus, and personal friendships. This book attempts to tell the story from the days when the Institute was no more than a twinkle in the eye to its eventual birth in 1958—from its rather mundane early meetings to the significant event it now is.

I am grateful to the many persons who have helped me in this process: Douglas Meeks, who first suggested the idea and helped to improve the first draft; Dow Kirkpatrick, Ted Runyon, Don Treese, Bruce Birch, David Lowes Watson, and Geoffrey Wainwright, who greatly enlarged my understanding; Richard Heitzenrater, Randy Maddox, José Míguez Bonino, Mary Elizabeth Moore, Steve Gunter, Tom Albin, Ted Weber, Jim Fowler, and Tim Macquiban, who gave of

their time to share in consultations on the project; and many others who shared their memories by correspondence. Needless to say, responsibility for the final product is mine alone. I am particularly grateful to Tim Macquiban and Peter Forsaith for allowing me to consult the archives at the Westminster Institute of Education in Oxford; to Joe Hale and George Freeman for allowing me access to the World Methodist Council's archives at Lake Junaluska; and to Linda Greene and Roma Wyatt for their help in my researches there. Matthew Charlton was invaluable in searching for published material not available in British libraries, and John Vickers generously devoted time and professional skill to compiling the index. No manuscript would have seen the light of day, however, without the enthusiastic support of Mary Ann Moman and Hendrik Pieterse and the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, who have committed themselves to publication; or without the patience of my wife, Margaret, who has allowed me time in our retirement, which would otherwise have been hers, in order do the work.

The result is offered to members of the Institute, past and present, and to the wider public, in the hope that it will help a little to illumine the path we tread together.

Brian E. Beck

Chapter 1

BEGINNINGS

IN OCTOBER 1946 AN AMERICAN EX-SERVICEMAN LEFT NEW YORK BY sea with his wife, Marjorie, and his young child for Oxford, England, on a Pilling Fellowship awarded by Drew University for overseas study. Dow Kirkpatrick was twenty-nine. He had graduated from Candler School of Theology at Emory University, had completed five years of gradnate study at Drew University, and had just been released from chaplaincy service in the United States Navy. As Methodists, he and Marjorie joined Wesley Memorial Church in Oxford, where they came to know the newly arrived pastor, Reginald Kissack (known as Rex), and his wife, Elizabeth, who would later become president of the World Federation of Methodist Women. Kissack was seven years older but, like Kirkpatrick, had come to Oxford from service as a chaplain in the armed forces. They had much in common. They were to develop a friendship that would in time lead to the creation of the Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies.

Originally their dream was for something rather different. It was only after ten frustrating years that they modified it; but, having done so, they saw the realization of their hopes in the amazingly short space of a further two years. To understand what they had in mind we need to appreciate the context. There were several factors involved.

In 1945, World War II had finally come to an end, leaving much of the world devastated and exhausted. There was a widespread desire to rebuild and to ensure that such a catastrophe would never occur again. As yet the Cold War had not begun. The United Nations Charter was signed in October and the first meeting of the Assembly was due to be held in 1948, as was the first meeting of the World Council of Churches. In both political and ecclesiastical spheres there was a desire to set in

place structures that would improve understanding and heal divisions. There were similar plans for world Methodism.

Methodists from different parts of the world had been meeting in the Ecumenical Methodist Conference every ten years since 1881. The 1941 meeting had been postponed because of the war, but it was to meet in 1947; and it was planned that in 1951 the movement would be relaunched as the World Methodist Council, meeting every five years and with a permanent structure.

For many years students from overseas had come to the University of Oxford, although provision for them was in some ways inadequate. Oxford, like some other British universities, is structured as a federation of independent colleges. The university provides public lectures and laboratory facilities, conducts examinations, and awards degrees. The colleges provide personal tuition, residence, and general guidance. At the time, less provision was made for overseas students to do formal postgraduate study than is now the case. Most of the colleges were Anglican foundations, and in the 1940s their chapels were not very hospitable to those of other denominations; intercommunion was not permitted. Three other colleges—one Baptist, one Congregational, and one Unitarian—were more welcoming, but did not have full university status. It was difficult for Methodists, especially from outside Britain, to feel fully at home.

Because of the war there were large numbers of overseas students, particularly from the United States, in Oxford in 1946. These students had had to delay their studies until peace came. Many were Methodists, and as official chaplain to Methodist students, Kissack was in touch with them. He developed the dream of creating a permanent center in Oxford that would provide accommodation for Methodist students and their wives, facilities for study, and a warden to give them oversight and advice.

The possibilities of international travel were rapidly improving (although at this stage it was still mostly by sea). So-called "younger" churches in Africa, Asia, and elsewhere were maturing and beginning to develop indigenous leadership. So, demand for such facilities could be expected to increase. The emphasis was to be on theological study, and the students would be mainly ministers or those in training for the ministry.

But this was to be more than the provision of hospitality for those far from home. The essence of the collegiate system at Oxford or Cambridge is that it provides an opportunity for people from diverse backgrounds and interests to mix and build understanding. The Methodist center was to be such a place, in which Methodists from many parts of the world could mingle freely, come to know and understand one another, and begin to develop a common understanding of what it means to be a Methodist. So the study of theology would have as one of its aims the development of Methodist theology.

This was an ambitious scheme that would clearly cost money. Kissack believed he knew how it could be achieved. In 1936, John Telford, an outstanding Methodist scholar who was responsible (among other things) for a standard edition of the collected letters of John Wesley, had died, leaving a bequest to the Ministerial Training Committee of the British Methodist Conference to assist in setting up an institute at the University of Oxford. Unfortunately, Telford's will did not specify precisely what he had in mind. Consequently, there was a delay of two years until the High Court declared a number of specific purposes for which the bequest could be used, including setting up something in Oxford; but the purposes were all linked to the training of ministers of the British Conference. In the years that followed, various proposals were made, but they were either dropped or put on hold because of the war. In 1947, therefore, there appeared to be a reasonably large sum (£30,000 [$120,000]) available and earmarked for Oxford. It was no doubt with an eye to this that Kissack and Kirkpatrick emphasized that most of the beneficiaries of their scheme should be ministers.

Kirkpatrick returned to the United States in 1947 with a commitment to win support for the scheme in the American church. By 1949 he and Kissack wrote an article in *The Christian Advocate* in which they argued for the project.[1] Kissack and other Oxford colleagues, including the veteran Methodist biblical scholar and former president of the British Conference, W. F. Lofthouse, and later the internationally acclaimed mathematician and physicist, Charles Coulson, fought for at least a share of the Telford money. As can be imagined, there were other contenders, and the matter dragged on through committees until the end of 1949.

The problem was essentially twofold: First, the High Court had ruled that the money was to be used for training ministers under the direction of the British Ministerial Training Committee. It was not within the official remit of that committee to provide training for anyone except potential ministers of the British Conference. At that time, ministerial training was envisaged in very limited terms; further training after ordination was not yet seen as a legitimate extension of it. The Kissack-Kirkpatrick scheme was broader on both counts. Second, there was the problem of cost. When endowment for ongoing support was added to the estimates, it was clear that the bequest would be inadequate, and the British Committee could not commit additional funds. The view was taken that a project designed to benefit world Methodism should be sponsored, and paid for at least in part, by the World Methodist Council.

There was another reason for proposing the center in Oxford. Oxford is the university where John and Charles Wesley were educated and where their formative years were spent. It was here that they received their first spiritual awakening as they became aware—through devotional reading and the activities of the Holy Club—of the call of God to holiness of life. In 1726 John Wesley was elected a fellow of Lincoln College in the university. In that capacity he not only had teaching duties when in residence, but he also drew a stipend whether in residence or not. He valued that position and used it to defend his preaching mission, arguing that his ordination as a college fellow did not bind him to ministry in just one parish. However, when Wesley married in 1751 he resigned his fellowship, because the College statutes required that fellows be single.

Oxford was therefore a significant place on the Methodist map, and the supporters of the project believed it was important to promote it. In 1921 American Methodists contributed to the furnishing of rooms in Lincoln College as a memorial to Wesley.

Both in Britain and in the United States attention had tended to focus on John Wesley's experience of a "warmed heart" at Aldersgate Street, London, on 24 May 1738. This had been regarded as the defining moment for later Methodism. The emphasis on the emotional rather than the intellectual content of Methodism, however, stressed

personal experience of divine grace rather than any particular Methodist doctrines. The balance needed to be redressed.

As Coulson later put it, "We have put up memorials to Wesley where he was born, where he preached, and where he died; yet is not the place where he did most of his thinking perhaps even more worthy of a memorial?" Coulson's words rather overstated the case, for much of Wesley's distinctive theology and most of his writing were done after he had, to all intents and purposes, left Oxford. However, there was certainly a case to be made, and the promoters of the scheme felt that a center for study was a more adequate memorial than a shrine for pilgrims to visit.

The year 1951 offered a golden opportunity, because the meeting of the World Methodist Conference was to be in Oxford that year. There was some fear that the enthusiasm of the conference could dissipate in ambitious words unless there was commitment to specific projects. What better way to commemorate both the Oxford meeting of the conference and the two-hundredth anniversary of Wesley's resignation from Lincoln College than by founding a house for international Methodist studies, and so signaling Methodism's return to the academic life of the university? The Oxford center would provide a means to deepen world Methodism's theological grasp of itself and its inheritance.

Unfortunately money once again proved the barrier. A "Committee for the Oxford Memorial" was formed and submitted a proposal to the World Methodist Council in 1951, with an estimate of $450,000 as its cost, including endowment. The council accepted the proposal and appointed a committee of thirty-four persons (mostly British and American, operating in two sections coordinated by Kissack and Kirkpatrick as secretaries) to develop it. Over the next five years, plans were elaborated and refined. A possible site was identified, and architect drawings of a possible house were produced.

In 1952 the General Conference of the then Methodist Church, meeting in San Francisco, endorsed the proposal but declined to commit any money; and the British Conference did the same. Moreover, the project had to compete with another proposal adopted by the Oxford World Methodist Conference, which called on Methodist churches throughout the world to participate in a concerted evangelistic campaign

in 1953. This campaign also required funds and effort and was much more attractive to many Methodists than notions of a center for theological study.

As time passed there began to be signs of a loss of nerve. In a submission to the World Methodist Council Executive Committee in July 1953 it was even conceded that it was not essential to locate the project in Oxford, although it was still argued to be the best place. This abandonment of the whole notion of an Oxford Memorial and the return of Methodism to the university was surely a desperate move. Plans were modified, and in 1954 it was decided to move British Methodism's Westminster College, then exclusively a training college for teachers, out of London to the outskirts of Oxford. The proposal to buy land for the center in the city of Oxford was abandoned, in hopes that room might be found for it on the college's extensive new campus. That, too, failed to materialize when the college's move was completed in 1959.

In the end, no progress was made. At the 1956 World Methodist Council at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina, the Oxford Memorial Committee decided to change direction. The proposal for a permanent center was deferred indefinitely. Instead, the committee proposed a twelve-day annual meeting in Oxford for students and scholars, to meet in 1957 and 1958 at Lincoln College or possibly at Christ Church, where both Wesleys had been undergraduate students. The World Methodist Council agreed. The 1957 meeting, however, was abandoned, probably because there was insufficient time to prepare. Instead, the first meeting took place in July 1958. In echoes of the original proposal and Telford's bequest, the meeting was designated an "institute," and its president, Kissack, was described as "warden."

Thus the Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies was born. Its first report still expressed the hope that a permanent center might be established, but talk of that was soon abandoned, as was the idea of an annual meeting. Some income from the Telford fund was made available as grants to support British participants (a practice that continued until the fund was absorbed into general Ministerial Training funds in 1978); but the capital was never used for the Institute or any other major project. It is one of the ironic twists of history, however, that

in 1997 the Institute entered into a formal agreement with a much-changed and enlarged Westminster College to provide support for the Institute's activities (though not to meet on its campus). And in another twist, after a number of meetings at Lincoln College and other colleges subsequently, the Institute returned in 2002 to the original college of second choice, Christ Church.

Preparations

Before the 1958 Institute could meet, a lot of work had to be done in a short period of time. Funds had to be found even for this limited enterprise, speakers had to be recruited, and members had to be enrolled. By 1955 Kissack had been appointed to the Methodist Church in Rome, and detailed arrangements in Britain passed to the British theologian and liturgist, Raymond George, then working in Leeds. He recruited as his assistant Lilian Topping, a staff member and later vice-principal of the deaconess training college at Ilkley. Like Kirkpatrick, George was to attend every Institute from 1958 to 1997. He died in 1998.

Armed with a gift of $500 for expenses—given to him by a leading lay American Methodist, Charles Parlin—Kirkpatrick, by that time pastor of the First Methodist Church Athens, Georgia, went the rounds of the seminaries to enlist support. The first recruit and a lasting supporter until his death in 1997 was William R. Cannon—at that time dean of Candler School of Theology, Emory University, and later to be elected bishop. Others followed. Each institution was asked to make funds available for faculty members to attend.

In other quarters there was some diffidence. In his memoirs, Kirkpatrick recounts comments such as "The British are more theological than we are," to which he would reply, "No, they just handle the English language with such facility it sounds like they know more than they do." In his view, the real reason for this sense of inferiority was that American academics failed to get a hearing on the world Methodist stage, where American speakers tended to be chosen by virtue of their office and their ability to pay their own way. The leading British figures at the time, meanwhile, were also leading academics, so that comparisons tended to be disadvantageous to the American side.[2]

These attitudes were mirrored on the other side of the Atlantic. The report to the British Conference from delegates to the 1951 Oxford World Methodist Conference referred to the poor quality of some of the addresses, "where ecclesiastical status rather than functional fitness seems to determine the choice of speakers." A letter from the British New Testament scholar Vincent Taylor registers his low view of the level of American theological education at the time.[3]

Such stereotyping would take some time to break down, and illustrates one of the reasons why a meeting place for theological discussion was needed. The British and American traditions of Methodism had developed in different ways, and this has been reflected in theological scholarship, as in other things. At that time, scholarship in British Methodism, while not fundamentalist, was generally conservative in stance and deeply suspicious both of more radical continental European writers and of the liberalism of American theology between the wars. Such suspicion, allied to an innate sense (still alive in the 1950s) that the heirs of the British Empire were inherently superior to the rest of the world, was bound to affect attitudes on both sides of the Atlantic. The irony is that in response forms that Kirkpatrick gathered from the Americans after the 1958 Institute, deep anger is expressed that one or two British speakers did not treat them seriously enough to prepare properly. There was one notorious case that equally embarrassed the British, but the incident is revealing. It took some decades for such attitudes to give way to mutual respect.

It was partly to counter this sense of inferiority that Dow Kirkpatrick introduced a practice that lasted until sea travel was discontinued in 1973. Each day during the voyage, the North American group traveling together met on board ship to read and discuss papers on the Institute theme. The 1958 group was billed as a "Methodist Traveling Theological Seminar." In 1969 the papers were published in the *Iliff Review*.[4] As air travel became the regular method of crossing the Atlantic the practice lapsed, but the need it was designed to meet was later felt by those coming to the Institute from the Third World; and in 1992 the Pre-Institute was introduced for their benefit. Reference is made to this in a later chapter.

The First Meeting

On the evening of Saturday, July 19, 1958, the Institute assembled at Lincoln College, set in the heart of the historic city of Oxford. They met in stone buildings arranged in two quadrangles, the chapel, dining hall, and library dating from the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries. A hundred men and eight women are recorded as having been present, plus seven occasional visitors. The intention was that roughly one-third of these would be from the United States, one-third from Britain, and the remainder from the rest of the world. Both in Britain and in the United States a mix was sought of established theologians, pastors working in churches, and those who were still students or had recently qualified for ministry. At this event there were forty-three from Britain and thirty-seven from the United States and Canada. Of the remainder, nineteen came from other parts of Europe, five from Africa, one from Asia, and three from Australia and New Zealand.[5] Apart from the Europeans, these were able to be present because they were already in Britain on study leave.

Each day began with prayers in the chapel. After breakfast, the mornings were used for Bible study, the presentation of a paper, and discussion groups. Afternoons were free. In the evenings there were further presentations before and after dinner. Sessions were held in the college, except for the late-evening presentations and Sunday services, which were at Wesley Memorial Church, a ten-minute walk away. The Institute concluded with a covenant service on Tuesday, July 29.

The theme selected was "Biblical Theology and Methodist Doctrine." There were also less-formal presentations on topics of current concern, including the situations in South Africa and in Germany. Further discussion of the formal papers follows in a later chapter, but the uneven quality of the presentations was registered in the reactions of participants afterwards. Perhaps it was inevitable that the first venture would reveal wide differences in expectations of what such a gathering should produce. The assessments gathered on the American side (still preserved) and subsequent recollections of those who were there are revealing in the light of later debates. Several issues were raised: dissatisfaction with the number of papers and other presentations (twenty-two

in seven-and-a-half working days); the lack of plenary discussion; the unfocused nature of the discussion groups; the absence of African Americans; the "heavy" quality of the Bible studies (lectures rather than group study); the rather general, even superficial, treatment of the central theme; and failure to come to grips with current issues. It was asked, not for the last time, whether Oxford need be the venue for subsequent meetings. One reason for the question was (and still is) the cost both of travel and of accommodation in one of Oxford's ancient colleges (although the charge of US $56, or 20 pouuds sterling, for the conference fee and accommodation seems trivial by today's standards. The 800 pounds asked for the meeting in 2002 represents an increase far beyond the general rate of inflatiou.) Nevertheless, the overwhelming conviction was that the Institute should meet again. It did so in 1962.

Chapter 2

THE DEVELOPING ORGANIZATION

THE 1958 INSTITUTE ENDED WITH THE HOPE THAT IT WOULD continue to meet at regular intervals and that the next meeting should take place in 1962. But it was only after a battle that the hope was realized.

At stake was the relationship of the Institute to the World Methodist Council; and the officers of the time, notably the secretary Elmer T. Clark, took a different view of the relationship from Dow Kirkpatrick. The dispute came to a head over the question whether the modest surplus left from the funding of the 1958 meeting and additional money given for Institute purposes should be regarded as part of the general funds of the World Methodist Council or were restricted for Institute use. Charles Parlin, who had earlier supported Kirkpatrick's work for the Institute, had also made a gift to finance the publication of the 1958 papers. With his agreement, Kirkpatrick wished to use what was left over to meet the expenses of a meeting of the American section of the Institute Committee. Clark had directed that the money should go towards the cost of the *Dictionary of World Methodism*, which was in the course of preparation. He wrote to Kirkpatrick in quite sharp terms in November 1960:

> I do not want it used for any committee to discuss the Oxford Institute. I hope that you will drop this attempt to secure money for that purpose. There are a great many things that you do not understand and cannot take into consideration. . . . I do not think it at all likely that the Oxford Institute ean be held in 1962.

So, was the Institute a direct activity of the World Methodist Council and within its control, or was it an independent venture that the Council encouraged and helped to finance? One can see Clark's point of view. The Institute had come about as a result of the work of a committee

appointed by the Council, and Council letter paper had apparently been used to solicit Institute funds, giving the impression that the Council itself (always short of money) would benefit. In 1960 the Council had other concerns on its agenda, and there was a proposal in the section representing The Methodist Church in the United States that a meeting of the Institute might be held in connection with a world conference on evangelism proposed for 1963. Such a meeting would have had the result of tying the Institute's membership closely to those with evangelism concerns. An alternative suggestion held that the Institute should be linked to the Council's Committee on Theological Education. For their part Kirkpatrick and his colleagues feared that unless the Institute was kept firmly in the control of those with academic experience, it would lose its cutting edge as a forum for specifically theological exchange. Fortunately, after about a year Kirkpatrick's point of view prevailed. In the particular matter of the surplus money, he held the moral high ground anyway, in that it had been given specifically for the Institute.

Changes in the personnel of the World Methodist Council, as well as the wide recognition the Institute has won, have brought about a much happier relationship. As we shall see, the Institute now appoints a committee from its own members, which is formally endorsed by the World Methodist Council, and the Council allocates a grant to the Institute in its annual budget. In other respects, the Institute organizes itself and looks to other agencies in addition to the Council for the funds it needs. Interestingly, a link with world Methodist evangelistic concerns was eventually forged in a different way in 1982, when a working group on evangelism was formed to encourage dialogue between different understandings of mission and evangelism. In 2002 it was agreed that the Institute's report to the World Methodist Council would receive fuller consideration if it were first discussed by the Council's Committee on Theological Education and presented by that Committee to the Council's Executive Committee.

So the Institute met again in 1962, and at three- or four-year intervals thereafter. The format adopted in 1958 for the day-to-day program was continued for the next five meetings. Accommodation, meals, and morning worship took place at Lincoln College, but because of limited

facilities there, the plenary sessions and discussion groups were held at Wesley Memorial Church. Bible study followed immediately after breakfast (or at 5 P.M. in 1973 and 1977), but the main focus of the morning was one of the main presentations, with a response. Afternoons were free. At 5 P.M. and in the later evening there were further papers or presentations on a topic of interest, such as an update on World Methodist Council affairs or on national and international ecumenical dialogues. In the mornings or late afternoons there were discussion groups, randomly selected so as to provide a variety of backgrounds in each group. The evenings closed with prayers.

In 1977, because of new meeting rooms in Lincoln College, the daily walk to the church was abandoned, saving valuable time. Starting in 1973, an optional visit to Stratford-on-Avon was arranged on Saturday afternoons to see a Shakespeare play. On Sunday the Institute worshiped in the morning at Wesley Memorial, with one of its members as preacher, and in the evening at othet local churches. Some members preached at services further afield in the Oxford area. The Institute lasted eleven days and concluded with a covenant service.

A Radical Rethink

This pattern changed in 1982. While the skeleton of daily worship and morning lectures remained, the number of lectures was reduced to six. Bible study was dropped and subject groups were constituted, consisting of those with expertise or special interest in the subject. These groups reported back to plenary sessions in the second week. A contributing factor in this change of pattern was the fact that Lincoln College was no longer available. The Institute moved to Keble College, which offered more space (although it was still necessary to go out of college, to the University's Mathematical Institute, for the plenary sessions). As a consequence, a larger Institute (50 percent bigger than in 1977) became possible and was able to gather a widet range of scholars. Lincoln College, for all its associations with John Wesley, had not been entirely satisfactory. At the time, it offered 150 rooms but could accommodate only 100 people for the main meals; and until 1977 it had no lecture room large enough for the Institute. But the chief reason for the change was a debate

about the Institute's identity and purpose, which revealed wide differences between British and American approaches and highlights a number of factors that continue to influence the Institute twenty years later.

The 1977 Institute ended, as was customary, with an open session at which members could engage in an appraisal of their experience together and make suggestions about the topic to be addressed at the next gathering. A plea was made for a radically different style. The British side resisted this, principally on the grounds that it seemed impractical. A small group was deputed to discuss the proposals and circulate a paper, so that the Institute committee could consider the matter in its planning for 1982—a date chosen out of step with the customary four-year pattern, so as to avoid a clash with the 1981 meeting of the World Methodist Council.

The paper raised the question of accountability. Virtually all participants in the Institute are able to attend because they are sponsored, in part or in whole, by their churches or academic institutions. For whose benefit do they meet? Is it for individual improvement or as a service to the wider Methodist community? World Methodism has no other forum for specifically theological conversation. Should not the Institute function as its theological council? And, if so, ought there not to be greater continuity in subjects addressed and in membership, so that over the years a world community of Methodist scholars is built up, who work together on agreed projects and keep in touch with one another? Therefore, the proposal was that each Institute should stay "in council" for approximately a four-year period: two years before the actual convening of the Institute and two years after. Members in each region should keep in touch over the period; arrange regional meetings to continue the Institute's work; find ways to present its work to the wider church and gain feedback from it; and, after two years, arrange a handover to the delegation appointed for the next Institute as they begin preparation. It was suggested that the Institute might meet in a different city or a different country from Oxford, England.

Although there was at least one representative from Britain in the drafting group behind this proposal, when it was circulated it met with strong resistance from the British. In part, the objections were practical

and perhaps reflecred the fact that some of those behind the proposal were relative newcomers to the Institute, while on the British side there was long experience of the struggle involved in assembling a membership list each time and in the intricacies of negotiating accommodation with an Oxford college. There were strong suspicions that if people were asked to sign up for the Institute too long ahead they would willingly do so, only to drop out nearer the dare. There was a good deal of skepticism about the ability of people to devote the amount of time required for Institute work outside its meetings. But alongside these practical questions were questions of principle. What authority would such a theological council have and who would appoint it? The World Methodist Council is no more than a consultative body, and there was some wariness, in view of the earlier experience, about involving it more deeply in the Institute.

On the one hand, there was anxiety that if members of the Institute were appointed by their churches, they would be selected for their standing in the church rather than for their academic quality. On the other hand, if the Institute committee were to select the members, this would take all ownership away from the churches. In addition, since the original vision was that it would be a hostel for students, the Institute had served to bring together both teachers and learners, theologians and pastors, and the new proposal would make it exclusively a gathering of scholars. Finally, there was concern that the proposed arrangement would tend to limit the scope of the Institute to specifically Methodist studies, to the exclusion of its traditionally broader theological agenda.

Over the next three years modifications of the plan were proposed that attempted to meet some of these objections. Eventually the program already described was worked out for 1982 as an experiment. This changed the character of the Institute in the direction of a workshop for scholars, although pastors and others who were not professional theologians were also included. The resulting Institute met some of the aspirations of those who were looking for the creation of a worldwide academic fellowship, but it fell short of the original plan and was later modified. The 1987 Institute reverted to a larger number of formal presentations in plenary session, and Bible study was reintroduced in the form of a biblical studies working group.

Many of the changes introduced in 1982 have endured. Following on from the 1977 theme "Sanctification and Liberation," the Institute has moved from being a gathering of Methodists discussing general theology to a gathering for the discussion of Methodist history and theology. Working groups (apparently first suggested as early as 1973 but not acted upon) have continued, and have increased in number from five in 1982, to six in 1987 and 1992, and to ten in 1997 and 2002. As resources and communications technology have improved it has been possible to increase the amount of preparation work accomplished by members. The groups can now be seen as one of the strengths of the Institute, giving the opportunity in their smaller compass for real international exchange. Various attempts have been made to feed their work into the wider Institute during its sessions and to create opportunities for dialogue between representatives of different disciplines by creating interdisciplinary groups. These attempts have met with varying success. At times these groups have been used to reflect on plenary lectures, while at other times they have discussed working group papers of common interest. Because these groups have tended to overload the program, they were dropped from the 2002 meeting, although one or two meetings were arranged *ad hoc*.

Also in 1982 the category of "associate of the Institute" was created, offering access to the Institute's written work without attendance at Oxford. In 1987, in a last-minute change of plan, this category was divided into two further categories. "Corresponding members" would receive information and could submit papers for consideration but would not be present. "Plenary participants," called "associate members" by 1992, could attend the plenary sessions but could not take part in the working groups, mainly to keep the Institute within manageable size. The Institute is now more proactive in identifying scholars, who are encouraged to attend, although there is still a disparity between such wish lists and the availability of funds to ensure their presence. The churches still have an important role in sponsoring new members who would otherwise be unknown. There has also been some success in achieving the goal of regional groups that meet in the intervals, although there have been no funds in the central Institute budget for such

purposes. Here, Latin America has led the way, with workshops in San José, Costa Rica, in 1983 and in Piracicaba, Brazil, in 1984.[1] In 2000 a small group met in Bolivia to prepare for the 2002 Institute. There are plans to adopt the practice elsewhere, as funds permit. Finally, in the winter of 1984 the first issue of an occasional publication, *OXFORDnotes*, was produced, carrying news and details of group work. The publication has continued spasmodically and currently reaches about 350 persons. All in all, therefore, the changes of 1982 represent in some sense a re-founding of the Institute and are the basis of its present way of working. To keep in step with the frequency of the World Methodist Council meetings and to take advantage of its five-year budgetary cycle, the Institute has retained the five-year cycle. Some on the 1982 committee wanted to meet again in 1985 for the sake of continuity, but the proposal foundered, partly due to clashes that would have occurred with other world Methodist events already planned. The only major subsequent innovation has been the introduction of the Pre-Institute for Third World members (see chapter 4).

Looking back at this episode after twenty years, it is worth drawing attention to some of the underlying factors. One factor that was obvious at the time and is still largely true, is the considerable disparity in the number of participants from the United States and from Britain, and the still greater disparity between those countries and the rest of the world. The fact that the argument was essentially between the British and the Americans is itself revealing, for it reflected the dominance of those countries in the life of the Institute. Two-thirds of its membership were from Great Britain and the United States. It can be difficult for those who are accustomed to the number and size of American theological schools, with all the advantages of scale in terms of faculty numbers and material resources, to appreciate the constraints that apply elsewhere. In 1977, Britain's four Methodist theological schools had fewer than 150 students between them, and only one of these schools had as many as seven faculty members. No faculty member in any school specialized in Methodist studies alone. In the rest of Europe and in Africa and Asia the situation was even worse. Moreover, the smaller the church, the more likely that its limited number of academics would be drawn into many

other aspects of church life, leaving them limited time for research or the writing of papers.

In the United States many faculty members would routinely take membership in professional bodies, such as the American Academy of Religion, and would be subsidized by their institutions for attending these gatherings. However, in most other parts of the world such opportunities were scarce, and there would certainly not be funds to support attendance. It is hardly surprising that the plan proposed in 1977 seemed a natural development for some and an impossible dream for others. Over time, the situation worldwide has improved. However, it is still true that resources for theological education are much greater in the United States than anywhere else. This is reflected in the greater number of Americans able to attend each Institute.

Issues of Inclusiveness

A longstanding problem for the Institute has been to gather adequate numbers of people from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, and the Pacific to counterbalance those from Europe and North America, in order to make the meetings truly representative of world Methodism. In theory, from the beginning the membership was to be one-third American, one-third British, and one-third from the rest of the world. This was difficult to achieve, though, and what has come to be known as the "Third World" was poorly represented. In the early days, one reason for the poor representation was the small number of indigenous scholars working in those areas. Theological education in the 1950s and 1960s was still largely in the hands of missionaries. The situation has changed over the years—more rapidly in some places than in others—but there are still very few scholars outside the United States working exclusively on Wesleyan and Methodist studies.

The major difficulty has been financial. The cost of the eleven-day meeting (now reduced to ten days) in Oxford will be measured differently against the economies of different parts of the world and is affected, often at the last minute, by fluctuations in exchange rates. But by no standard is it cheap. For those in Europe and the United States there has been assistance from seminaries and church funds. The British

Telford Fund, since its merger into general ministerial training funds, has been able to extend its benefits to lay people. And in the United States the United Methodist General Board of Higher Education and Ministry has been unfailingly supportive, and the Robb Foundation made grants in 1982 and 1987. For those coming from elsewhere the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries and the British committees responsible at different times for overseas work have made significant contributions. The World Methodist Council also has made annual allocations from its limited budget. Other foundations have made grants from time to time, notably the Gibbs Trust, in support of the Pre-Institute in 1997 and 2002. As a result, in later years there has been some success in providing bursaries to cover the costs at Oxford and even some travel expenses. But numbers remain low, as funds are limited.

Airfare is costly. For this reason the earlier Institutes were largely confined to those Third World persons who happened to be in Britain for other reasons, usually for purposes of study. Their presence was important, but many lacked the academic experience of the Europeans and Americans, and there were no means for bringing the Third World scholars who should have been present. Even today the representation of Third World countries is small in comparison with the total Institute membership. In fact, with the larger Institutes of 1997 and 2002, although there was a greater number of individuals, the proportion from Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America, and the Pacific fell from 18 percent in 1977 to 16 percent in 2002 (although it reached 20 percent in 1997). The big increase in Institute membership has come from the United States.[2] These figures have to be set alongside the fact that recorded membership of Methodist and Methodist-related churches has risen by 747 percent in Africa since 1956, 466 percent in Asia, 355 percent in the Caribbean, 472 percent in Latin America, and 233 percent in the Pacific. By comparison, in North America membership has risen by less than 5 percent and in Europe has fallen by 46 percent. Europe and North America now represent less than 42 percent of world Methodism, as against more than 50 percent when the Institute began.[3]

In 1984 Brian Beck suggested that to solve the problem the Institute would need to raise its own capital funds. A sum of $250,000 was

proposed. Beck was inspired in this by the example of the Evangelism Committee of the World Methodist Council, which was raising considerable sums for its work, partly for bursaries for students attending its training courses. At the 1987 Institute a small committee was set up, with Bishop William R. Cannon and Dow Kirkpatrick as co-chairs. Promotional literature was commissioned and a consultant engaged. Donald Treese, at the time Associate General Secretary of the Division of Ordained Ministry in the United Methodist General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, coordinated the work and spent much time and energy on it. In the following year it was decided to adopt a program that linked donations to life insurance, whereby a relatively modest annual gift over five years would result in a sevenfold sum becoming available when the insurance was paid. The target figure was raised to $500,000. Fifteen persons were identified whose lives were insured, and all the money raised was contributed to the scheme. By 1992 the target of $525,000 in deferred giving had been reached. Forty-eight individuals, one foundation, one local church, and two general agencies in the United States had contributed to the project.

Because the scheme is linked to life insurance, however, the money will become available only as the insured persons die; thus, the original hope of having substantial sums for Third World bursaries by 1992 or 1997 has not materialized. Looking back, it seems extraordinary that it was not possible to raise the desired amount by more direct giving that would be immediately available. There were at least two reasons: (1) The Institute relied too much on busy scholars and pastors who had attended past Institutes to contact potential donors and arrange fundraising meetings at their own expense. (2) Theological scholarship, vital as it is for the church's life and evangelistic message, does not attract the same scale of generosity as evangelism.

In the meantime, a generous initiative by Dow and Marjorie Kirkpatrick has yielded immediate results. In August 1992 the Kirkpatricks gave $25,000 for a lecture at each Institute "to bring to bear the perspective of the oppressed poor in Latin America on the theme of each Institute." The income is intended to make possible the presence of the lecturer and as many additional participants as the

balance allows, chosen to enhance and fulfill the purpose of the lecture by their presence. The first of these lectures was given in 1997 by José Míguez Bonino, and the second in 2002 by Míguez Bonino's son, Néstor Míguez. Dow and Marjorie Kirkpatrick, and members of their family, were present for the first lecture, but were prevented by ill health from attending the second.

To arrange an international conference lasting ten days, including funding, is not a light matter—particularly when the work is a spare-time activity for busy people. In the early days the Institute relied exclusively on airmail letters, which often took as long as a week to reach their destination. It is a tribute to all involved that the meetings took place at all! The introduction of fax and e-mail technology has transformed the ability of the organizers to consult with one another. But those constraints inevitably shaped the way the Institute has functioned. Committees have been appointed and have influenced major decisions, such as the theme, but have had little involvement in detail. Each time, the real responsibility has rested on the shoulders of three or four persons.

As we have seen, as early as 1951 the World Methodist Council appointed a "committee for the Oxford Memorial" and has continued to appoint a committee for the Institute ever since. That first committee was divided into American and British sections, setting a pattern that continued for some thirty years: a world committee appointed by the Council, with an American and a British committee, each locally appointed and including persons who were not members of the world committee. Increasingly the world committee was selected so as to be denominationally and geographically representative and could include persons without experience of the Institute. Since there were no funds for the committee to meet, except when individuals happened to be together for some reason, it is not surprising that in practice much of the authority lay with the American and British committees, which could be more easily consulted. Even so, negotiations between the two committees were conducted by their convenors. Consequently, the two committees became advisory, and gradually faded from view.

In the United States, the initial convenor was Dow Kirkpatrick, followed later by Theodore Runyon and then M. Douglas Meeks. Their

British counterparts were Raymond George, followed by Brian Beck. By 1982 both committees had been replaced by advisory groups, either selected informally or (as for a time in Britain) officially appointed.

This setup could not last. By 1980, General Secretary of the World Methodist Council Joe Hale had suggested that the world committee be listed as a "special committee"—not directly selected by the Council but approved by it—and that the initiative for nominations should pass to the Institute. This suggestion was readily taken up, but proved more difficult than expected to implement. The 1982 and 1987 Institutes witnessed plenary sessions in which much time and no little passion were devoted to arguments over the names to be proposed. To avoid repetitions of the experience Brian Beck, who had chaired the sessions, suggested that the Institute and the World Methodist Council adopt a constitution for the committee that would specify categories of membership. In 1992, after debate and amendment, the Council adopted a constitution that has introduced some stability in what is understandably a sensitive process.[4] It provides for each outgoing committee to nominate its successor, the membership being divided into specified categories, with suitable provision for subject interests, geographical areas, denominational differences, and gender and age. Provision is also made for nonvoting consultants. There are four chairpersons, one of whom is to be from the United States, as well as a British secretary. The list is to be confirmed by the World Methodist Council Executive (usually meeting shortly afterwards). If names are substituted at that stage they are to be within the categories specified.

Behind the arguments of 1982 and 1987 were three broad concerns, often in tension with oue another. First, it was becoming increasingly important to recognize that if the Institute were to be truly representative of world Methodism, it would no longer do for its administrative structures to give the impression that most of the countries of the world were guests of the Americans and the British. What seemed reasonable in 1958 could not survive in 1982. In earlier Institutes, a warden presided over the proceedings during the ten days, while secretaries took care of the administrative work before, during, and after the meeting. This allowed some recognition of wider leadership. In 1973 the warden

was José Míguez Bonino from Argentina and in 1977 the responsibility fell to an African-American woman, Rena Karefa-Smart, then a member of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. In 1982 this practice was dropped and Brian Beck and Douglas Meeks were listed as chairpersons, with Donald Pickard of Britain as secretary. By 1987 it was clear that this American-British hegemony could not contiuue, so the step was taken to appoint four chairpersons. Beck and Meeks were joined by Nora Quiroga Boots from Bolivia and Bishop Emilio de Carvalho of Angola. Since then, the first three have continued to serve, joined in 1992 and in 2002 by Mercy Amba Oduyoye from Ghana and in 1997 by Lorine Tevi Chan from Fiji. Timothy Macquiban replaced Brian Beck at the end of the Institute of 2002. This has been a fruitful arrangement, and has become increasingly effective as iuternational communications have improved. The British side has continued to appoint secretaries to handle arrangements in Oxford: Chris Wiltsher in 1987; replaced by Donald Pickard again in 1991; Timothy Macquiban in 1992, 1997, and 2002; and Colin Smith, who has now taken over. The group of four chairpersons and the secretary now serve as a recognized executive and are answerable, as they should be, only to the world committee.

The second general concern was another dimension of inclusiveness. In 1973 the American delegation had reserved ten out of thirty-five places for women, but it was the only group to adopt a proportional basis for selection. In 1982 the World Federation of Methodist Women sponsored two members. Up to 1982 the proportion of women in the Institute had varied—eight in 1958, five in 1962, three in 1965 and 1969, and twelve in 1973. Yet, in 1982 there still were only nineteen women members, 13 percent of the total (in the last two Institutes the represeutation has increased to around 20 percent).

This situation was reflected in the administration of the Institute. The 1982 Institute committee had only five women members out of twenty-three. This gender imbalance has continued to give concern. It was not only a matter of committee membership. In 1982 only one plenary lecturer and two group convenors out of sixteen were women, and in 1987 only one lecturer and one group leader out of twenty-three. By 1992 the ratio had improved: four speakers and respondents out of fifteen

and four out of twelve group leaders were women. For many, this ratio was still not adequate, and in 1992 a group of women members of the Institute submitted a memorandum that drew attention to the lack of women in the leadership. In 2002 the total number of women serving as lecturers, respondents, presiding over plenary sessions, or leading groups had risen to fifteen out of a total of forty-six. While men still outnumbered women by a ratio of two to one, the way the Institute program was arranged showed that this issue was receiving serious attention.

In the earlier years the concern over the representation of women in the Institute came largely from women from North America. Even in 1992 the memorandum mentioned above was signed by little more than half of the women present, twelve from the United States, one from Canada, and two from Latin America. None of those from Britain and Ireland or from Africa or Asia signed it. To some extent this reflects the origins and development of the current movement for women's liberation in church and society and the movement's accompanying theologies. In 1977 and later, when these issues first began to be raised, many in the Institute (and not only men) objected that a domestic American issue was being imposed upon an international gathering. Nevertheless, the effect of the women's movement upon the Institute over the years has been to raise awareness in other parts of the world of the underlying issues, however differently they may present themselves in different contexts and however varied the responses and strategies for effecting change may be. At the same time there remains for the Institute a tension between gender balance and geographical representation. Societies and churches are at different stages in the recognition of the gifts of women, and universally women do not have the same opportunities of academic advancement as are available in Europe and North America. Thus, to include scholars from countries in Africa, Asia, or the Pacific region in leadership roles in the Institute is still likely to result in a greater proportion of men.

The third issue that beset the debates of 1982 and 1987 was one of location. The committee sttucture is built upon the presumption of a meeting in Oxford. From 1982 onwards, as Third World voices became stronger, there were repeated calls for the Institute to meet elsewhere. In part this may have been due to the fact that the Institute moved out of

Lincoln College to Keble College in 1982, and then to Somerville College in 1987. Neither college had any Methodist connections, and both in some ways were unsatisfactory in the facilities they were able to provide. (In fact, in 1987 about a third of the members were billered out in another college, St Hugh's.) Thus, there seemed to be less reason to be in Oxford at all. It may be significant that in 2002, when the Institute met in the more spacious surroundings of Christ Church—a college with clear Methodist associations and a portrait of John Wesley on the wall—the call for an alternative venue seemed to have died away.

But a deeper concern for many coming from less prosperous countries was the lifestyle they encountered and its cost. Oxford colleges survive and sustain the cost of centuries-old buildings partly on the basis of out-of-session conference income. To attract business in a competitive market they offer lavish provision. Could not the Institute better identify with the poor—whose cause it was trying to take up in its discussions—by meeting somewhere in the Third World, or even in some less expensive part of Britain? Moreover, was not the emphasis on a British venue just another aspect of a dying colonialist attitude—that things cannot be as good anywhere else? So the case for moving to the Third World was presented. It had obvious implications for committee membership. If the Institute were to meet elsewhere the argument for both a chairperson and a secretary from Britain, as in 1982 and later, would no longer hold. In the end it was agreed to meet in Oxford on the next occasion, provided there was a serious examination of the possibility of meeting elsewhere the time after.

So far the arguments for Oxford have prevailed. The Institute meets there because it was where Methodism began and those who attend can acquire some feel, even after more than 250 years, of the environment in which the Wesley brothers began their spiritual journeys. Could an Institute meeting anywhere else still be called the "Oxford" Institute? Moreover, the patterns of international transportation mean that it would be more expensive to meet elsewhere, even if accommodation costs were cheaper. Local arrangements would inevitably be very different and continuity in the style of the Institute, perhaps the continuity of the Institute itself, could be lost. So, at least, it seemed at the

time. One of the committee's tasks each time is to determine the Institute's next venue, subject to the concurreuce of the World Methodist Council Executive Committee.

Publication

Since 1958 the proceedings of each Institute have been published,[5] though not without difficulty. In 1958 there were those, including Kissack, who argued that all the papers given should be included iu a volume of proceedings for the benefit of a wider public. With hindsight, that was clearly impractical. Some of the papers were uot prepared with publication in mind, and their authors were not able to give the extra time that would be needed to modify them.[6] Other authors were committed to including their contributions in other publications, and the papers that were left were clearly not sufficient, or coherent enough, for a saleable volume. In the end, some of the papers were published in the July 1959 issue of a British Methodist periodical, *The London Quarterly and Holborn Review*. In that form they were sent to all subscribers to the periodical, and additional copies were sent free of charge to members of the Institute and to members of the World Methodist Council. But this was far from satisfactory. There was no easy way to promote sales, and the 1958 proceedings are therefore little known in the United States, or even in Britain. To his own annoyance and to the regret of some others, Kissack's keynote address as warden was omitted.

The next few Institutes fared little better. In 1962, 1965, and 1969 (in 1962 jointly with Epworth Press in Britain), Abiugdon Press in the United States, an imprint of The United Methodist Publishing House, undertook to publish the Institute's papers. But there were recurrent difficulties. It is clear that Abingdon wanted a volume that would sell widely to a general religious public and so recover the costs of production; but proceedings of academic meetings do uot easily meet that requirement. There were difficulties in achieving a coherent presentation of a theme, and Abingdon sought to impose an editorial policy in the translation of biblical references and the transliteration of Greek aud Hebrew words that offended some authors who imagined that academic rather than popular criteria would be applied. There were problems with

distribution that were the reverse of those in 1958: the books were little known outside the United States, and sold poorly even there.[7] Their contents were uneven and some of the chapters had little new to say. But it is difficult at this distance to decide how much their failure was due to this and how much to half-hearted publicity. At all events, Abingdon refused to publish the papers from the 1973 Institute.

As it happened, that decision proved to be a breakthrough. The United Methodist bishops' study for Lent 1975 was to be "The Holy Spirit," precisely the topic of the 1973 Institute. In anticipation of wider interest, the Institute published its proceedings through Discipleship Resources (the publishing arm of the United Methodist General Board of Discipleship) under the *Tidings* imprint. The book sold so well that it required reprints. (Attempts to secure a joint publication with Epworth Press in London fell through.) The success of this volume persuaded Abingdon to take up publication of the Institute papers again, and it has done so since the 1977 Institute. That has been due largely to a change of policy. With the arrival of Robert Feaster as president and publisher, The United Methodist Publishing House decided that the publication of academic works that would contribute to the exploration of the Methodist and Wesleyan traditions was an important service to Methodism, even if success could not be guaranteed in commercial terms. Other senior staff at the time and subsequently have supported this decision. On the initiative of Rex Matthews, The United Methodist Publishing House introduced a new series, called Kingswood Books. The idea received encouragement when it was tested informally in conversations at the 1987 Institute, and the series has been the vehicle for the Institute proceedings ever since. At the same time, closer collaboration with Epworth Press has helped towards wider distribution, although there have often been delays in getting the material edited, printed, and outo the publication list. With the exception of 1982, when group reports were also included, the volumes have usually contained most or all of the plenary papers (sometimes with one or two others in addition), with an introductiou. Some later group reports have appeared in *OXFORDnotes*, and there is now a website for selected papers and reports (http://www.oxford-institute.org).

This chapter has described the organizational development of the Institute since its beginning in 1958 as well as some of the discussions that drove the development. It illustrates the difficulties to be faced in organizing international conferences of this kind, especially if they do not have the benefits of a permanent staff and adequate budget that some large professional academies enjoy. Those difficulties can be illustrated further. Problems have often surrounded the availability of the printed texts of the lectures being given. Because of the cost and the logistical problems of production, this service has usually been restricted to those for whom the English language is a difficulty.

Translation, too, has been problematic. Initially it involved only one or two persons who required translation into German, and this was provided individually. As the membership broadened, more was required. In 1977 electronic equipment was brought from Switzerland and used for translation into Spanish and German; but it was cumbersome and expensive and could not be repeated. In 1982 translation into and from Spanish became an issue. As technology has improved, however, and equipment has become lighter and cheaper, things have improved. By 2002 it was possible to offer modern facilities, at least in the plenary sessions; but some members still feel inhibited by the language barrier from contributing as they would wish in the groups.

The growing size of the Institute (208 in 2002) and the increasing complexity of its program over ten days poses an immense administrative challenge. The work of the British secretary would be impossible without the help of a team of voluuteers, recruited for each meeting mostly from among its members, and too numerous to identify by name. This team has given unstinting help in such matters as registration, the organization of meeting rooms, and attending to the personal requirements of individuals. Although surveys suggest that there are still improvements to be made, the Institute could not function without such teamwork. Advances in electronic mail will hopefully reduce some of the burden, and for 2007 it is planned that the British Methodist Church's Formation in Ministry Office will be able to provide some services connected with registration.

One final development needs to be recorded. In 1997 a formal link was established with the Methodist foundation in Oxford, Westminster College (now the Westminster Institute of Education of Oxford Brookes University), which has provided support services and in other ways has helped to keep costs down. As a location it has been thought too far from the center of Oxford to serve as a venue, but the association has been welcome and helpful.

Chapter 3

THE CLASSICAL AGENDA

THE PRECEDING CHAPTERS HAVE CHARTED THE DEVELOPMENT OF the Oxford Institute as an institution, its migration from one college to another, and some of the organizational difficulties it has encountered on its way. These next chapters attempt to outline the theological story, asking what issues have been addressed and whether we can detect any development. It would be tedious to go through the work of each Institute in detail. The published papers can be consulted, and deserve to be read in their entirety. (Appendices 1 and 2 give outline information about each Institute and bibliographical details.) Nevertheless, we must try to identify the issues that were thought relevant at different times, see how they were addressed, and make some judgment about the quality of the work done. In later chapters we shall look in more detail at some specific topics.

We must recognize an important limitation at the outset. The volumes of Institute proceedings contain most of the papers given in plenary sessions, though often revised in the light of discussion. At times they also contain additional papers. But sometimes a text was not available, or the author or editor judged it unsuitable for the volume. In addition, much of the work—especially in more recent times—has been done in specialist groups, and not all of this work has been preserved. In any case, a significant part of the Institute's work happens in formal and informal discussions, of which there is no documentary record. The publications are indicative of what was offered to the gathering, but cannot be taken to represent a consensus of the members. Only in 1958, and to a more limited extent in 1982 and 1987, was there any attempt to draw up a statement agreed upon by those present.

A Courteous Beginning

Understandably, the initial Institute in 1958 was exploratory. Given that this was the first venture of its kind, the participants were for the most part strangers to one another. It was an occasion for safe, rather than groundbreaking, contributions. Indeed, at this distance in time, many of the contributions strike the reader as rather complacent. Clearly, some of the speakers merely contributed work that was already in progress for other purposes, or offered only summaries of lectures they regularly gave. Perhaps only the minority had devoted major effort to preparation. The evidence is partly in the number of papers omitted from the published record, three having been deemed not ready for publication and two because they were published elsewhere.

The theme selected for the Institute's first meeting is revealing: "Biblical Theology and Methodist Doctrine." As we shall see, all the early Institutes reflected the preoccupations of the wider theological world of the time. Three issues dominated in the 1950s: dialectical theology, particularly associated with the work of Karl Barth; existentialism, represented especially by the German theologian Rudolf Bultmann; and biblical theology, exemplified by the writings of Oscar Cullmann, among many others. In different ways, all three issues represented a reaction against the theological optimism still prevalent in the 1920s and 1930s. There is no easy marriage between the modern world and the Christian message. Attempts to make one were seen simply to result in the dilution of Christianity's distinctiveness. Therefore, biblical theology was an attempt to restate the message in its biblical terms, preserving its original perspectives and emphases. This approach had wide appeal, especially in Britain, where scholars were deeply suspicious of much of the more radical German scholarship of the preceding hundred years. Barth similarly insisted on a biblical starting point and on the absolute distinction between God and the created order. For him, creation needs to be redeemed from its fallen state by the Word of God uttered in Jesus Christ. For Bultmann, the gap between the biblical and modern worlds was too wide. The language and imagery of the Bible were unintelligible to secularized men and women of the twentieth century and needed to be srripped of their mythological dress

("demythologized") in order that the underlying message—how lost human beings could recover their authentic existence—could be heard and embraced. Existentialism was found to provide a language and a set of ideas by which the central message of the Bible could be unlocked and understood. Underlying all this, and reflected in Rex Kissack's unpublished keynote address, was the fact that, in Europe especially, the churches were still struggling to come to terms with unremitting membership decline and lagging confidence in speaking convincingly to the world around them. The 1958 Institute witnessed a significant clash around these issues, focused in the exchange between Franz Hildebrandt and Harold de Wolf. For Hildebrandt, the sole criterion for theology, including Methodist theology, was its conformity to the New Testament. Harold de Wolf vigorously defended the legitimacy of natural theology (discerning truth about God directly from the created world) against the Barthian attack on it.

The other part of the agenda was ecumenical. In the context of the developing ecumenical movement, what had Methodism to say? Did it have a distinctive theological contribution? Could it speak with a united voice? If there was not a clash on the answer to that question, there were at least divergent views. For Hildebrandt, Methodism's characteristic is its fidelity to the New Testament, while, for Kissack, Methodism's uniqueness lay in its stress on the importance of religious experience. Gordon Rupp saw Methodism's characteristic not so much in its doctrines as in its particular history and, in the theological field, not in one particular doctrine but in a particular combination of emphases. That ecumenical concern was prominent when the Institute met again.

The Church

The year 1962 was a time of great ecumenical optimism. The British Methodist Church was in formal union conversations with the Church of England; schemes were being developed for union in Ghana, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, and elsewhere; and in the United States the Consultation on Church Union (COCU) was founded. In the World Council of Churches reconciliation of the churches was still regarded as the central thrust of the ecumenical movement. It seemed important, therefore,

to try to identify what Methodism's contribution to the ecumenical movement could be.

With this in mind, the second Institute, taking place in 1962, convened under the theme "The Doctrine of the Church." Participants subjected various aspects of the question, including ministry, baptism, confirmation, ordination, the Lord's Supper, discipline, and unity, to biblical and historical examination. In the first of the main presentations, Albert Outler identified the fundamental question: Does Methodism have a doctrine of the church?[1] To which his answer, in essence, was no. Methodism began as a movement for mission within the framework of an already existing church and has therefore always had a more clearly defined theology of mission than of the church as an institution. When in the course of time it developed into a church, on both sides of the Atlantic, it tended to adopt prevailing understandings of the church as one competing denomination among others, rather than to develop an ecclesiology of its own. Methodism's future, Outler suggested, lay in something akin to its origins—as a movement within the wider universal church.

The other papers offered little to contradict Outler's view. True, all the contributors to the published volume, with the exception of the distinguished Congregationalist scholar C. H. Dodd, were Methodists, and there were frequent references to Wesley. However, for the most part the papers were content to present what was seen to be the biblical position, rather than to outline a specifically Methodist doctrine of the church.[2] Only the paper on the Lord's Supper by Raymond George really managed to identify a distinctive Methodist contribution, and in doing so touched on two areas that have suffered some neglect at Institutes over the years, namely, liturgy and the hymns of Charles Wesley. In the 1960s, "biblical theology" was still influential, with its assumption that there is a single, coherent theology in Scripture that can be distilled and organized by modern scholars and taken as determinative for contemporary thinking. It had great appeal, for it appeared to offer an objective standard and a common basis that went behind later denominational differences and undercut them. By 1962, biblical scholars were already beginning to question that assumption. C. K. Barrett's paper on the ministry carefully distinguished between the

theology of Paul and that of later New Testament writers, but the other contributors showed little awareness that the assumption of a single biblical theology was on its way out. More significantly, none of the papers attempted any real engagement with alternative doctrines of the church. There was not even an attempt to identify such alternatives, let alone address them. Although the reason for posing the question was to contribute to ecumenical discussion, the dialogue was not with other Christian traditions but within Methodism itself.

We must draw attention to another omission. In the opening address of welcome to the Institute on behalf of the host church, the president of the British Conference, Leslie Davison, challenged the assembled company to break out of their traditional preoccupations and find ways of communicating the gospel to the contemporary world. In the final contribution, called "The Church and Modern Man," Thomas Trotter did look at the problem and some contemporary approaches, but offered little to point the way forward. To be fair to other contributors, the program had been arranged and papers prepared before it was known what Davison would say. However, the comparative neglect of the wider world is an interesting commentary on theologians of a movement that had its origins in mission, at a time when a major preoccupation of the wider theological world was whether the gospel could be made credible to their contemporaries. It offers some justification for a comment made by David Lowes Watson at the seventh Institute twenty years later: "If it is not tempered by the realities of defining the gospel as a communicable message . . . then theology, lacking a proper accountability, becomes ecclesially introspective and intellectually self-indulgent." Trotter himself had made a similar commenr: "Any theology today done without reference to the apologetic imperative is likely to be mere dilettantism."[3]

What of Jesus Christ?

The same criticism cannot be made of the third Institute in 1965. Its topic was "The Finality of Christ," picking up the theme of a World Council of Churches' study.[4] For the first and only time in its history the Institute invited speakers from outside the Christian tradition. The analytical philosopher and atheistic humanist A. J. Ayer, author of

Language, Truth and Logic, in which he had argued that religious language lacked any objective reference, gave an unpublished paper on the autonomy of ethics. While Ayer had narrowed the original topic for the paper significantly, it was debared vigorously. Two speakers from the Buddhist and Sikh traditions made contributions that were published alongside one from a Jewish writer, who had not been present at the meeting. Apart from Ayer's, it is hard to know to what extent these contributions provoked actual dialogue. Their papers were largely statements of alternative religious positions rather than attempts to engage directly with Christian claims. In any case, it is a pity that there was no Muslim contribution (a speaker had been invited but for some reason did not come). It would have been an important counterbalance to the Jewish one, for both share the same origins with the Christian tradition, though viewing those origins differently.

The main focus of the Institute was on a series of presentations that reflected different Christian approaches to the question: In what sense is Jesus Christ "final" and what does that claim actually mean? The quality of the published papers was markedly higher than in the previous Institutes, and by all accounts that was true also of the discussions. One reason was that the organizers succeeded in attracting major exponents of different points of view to present their cases rather than rely on critics to summarize and comment on them. Major scholars included John B. Cobb, Jr., a leading exponent of process theology, and Carl Michalson, a significant exponent of an existentialist position (who, sadly, was killed in an aircraft crash soon afterwards). Both were vigorously opposed by an Anglican, David Jenkins, who later became well known and controversial as bishop of Durham in England. Their unscripted debate, referred to in Dow Kirkpatrick's summary chapter in the volume, was still being talked about four years later.

The truth is, major differences emerged among all the speakers. Since the work of Rudolf Bultmann and other Continental European scholars in the 1930s, the English-speaking world had slowly begun to recognize that it is not possible to speak with absolute certainty of the details of the life and work of Jesus of Nazareth as a historical figure. It was a lively topic of controversy in the 1960s, with some prominent biblical scholars

and many theologians in other disciplines still unwilling to concede the point. How can we claim finality (whatever that might mean) for Jesus if we know little or nothing in detail about him? At the Institute, D.T. Niles insisted that it is the human being, Jesus, not the Christ-experience or the Christ-revelation, that is final. Not only do Christians believe different things from others, they also believe in a different way. The coordinates of Christian faith are not the relation of the finite to the infinite or the temporal to the eternal but the particnlar to the universal. Jesus is the one to whom all human beings have to respond. "If in any real measure it is not possible to get within hearing and seeing distance of the man Jesus, then talk about the finality of Christ is simply futile."[5] Later, Niles seemed to weaken this position by claiming thar Jesus may encounter people without being identified by his name.

At the other end of the spectrum, Carl Michalson insisted on the encounter here and now with the presence of God given in the Word of Christ, which sets people free for a new age of responsibility for the world. Finality resides not in the person of Jesus but in the *eschaton* he proclaims—that is, "finality" refers not to some future event in world history but to a decisive and transforming personal encounter with God in the present. So one can speak of the finality of the *message* of Jesus but not of his *person*. The Resurrection is important, not as a past event but as a sign of the victory already achieved by his word. Behind this argument we can see the struggle to find a basis for Christian claims that does not depend upon the historical verifiability of the gospel story. Clearly, Jesus of Nazareth is important for Michalson, but it is not the past that matters but the encounter with God *now*. History is to be defined—not in terms of objective facts but in terms of one's experience and development. However, like Niles, Michalson was also taking a positive view of those who do not profess Christian allegiance—for whom the gospel comes as clarification and fulfillment and not as contradiction. "When we hold out faith to men . . . we do so to confirm and strengthen them in what they could indeed already in some sense have."[6]

Jenkins took a different view. Rather than confine the Christian message to personal life-transforming encounter, he insisted on the importance of the New Testament witness to the cosmic significance of

Christ. "Jesus is of universal significance because he is the Christ of the God of the whole earth."[7] He was prepared to be skeptical about much of the contents of the Gospels, but he also criticized Michalson, accusing him of so misusing language that debate with him was impossible. For Jenkins, the reality of the Resurrection (that is, the disciples' conviction that Jesus was alive) is crucial:

> The basis of the gospel lies in the actual life and death of Jesus understood against the Jewish expectations of God emerging from their experience of their history, with the defining dimension of this understanding provided by the discovery of the disciples that the crucified servant of the kingdom of God was in fact powerfully alive. If the disciples' discovery that Jesus was alive as a continuing power and presence central to their relationship with God was not a real discovery of an objective fact but only an interpretation which they put upon the facts, then we have no grounds for further language about Jesus. . . . It may be that the resurrection is and can only be myth and symbol. But in that case Christianity is untrue.[8]

In other words, Christianity cannot be rescued from the possibility of falsification.

As Kirkpatrick noted in his concluding chapter, there was little agreement among the participants, except that Christ is crucial to Christianity.[9] In his oral summing up, Rupert Davies remarked that it was a mistake not to have attempted at the outset to define the term *finality*, thus allowing many different understandings of the term in the discussions.[10] It is easy to miss a crucial point that lay behind the differences in perspective. Although Niles was deeply indebted to the Western theological tradition, the world he was seeking to address on behalf of the Christian faith is the world of Eastern religions, including the faiths represented by two speakers at the Institute. The other speakers were addressing issues raised within a European-American debate, about how Christianity can be made credible to secularized Western society. The 1962 Institute is only one occasion on which we shall have to note how Western the Institute's basic agenda has been.

In the decades since 1965 the relationship of Christian belief to other religious faith-systems has moved more center stage in Europe and

America, as the configuration of societies in Western countries has changed. With the emergence of "postmodernism," which assumes that no *one* worldview can aspire to universal dominance, it has become harder to address the question in the way it was done in 1965. But central theological questions never go away; they merely go underground for a time. It is interesting that a later Institute, under the influence of another theologian from Sri Lanka, would return to the issue, albeit in other terms, by drawing attention to Wesley's doctrine of prevenient grace in its application to people of other faiths.[11]

Is God Dead?

The contrast between "Western" and "Eastern" concerns was equally evident when the Institute met again in 1969. The theological landscape was changing. Some of the concerns reflected in previous Institutes were beginning to disappear and other issues were coming into view. Many different factors—social, political, and theological—led to this development. In the United States, the Civil Rights movement, the emergence of Black Power, and the student-led protest against the Vietnam War formed the background for the question whether God was to be identified with the status quo or with the struggle for change. According to some biblical scholars, the truth underlying the Gospels' presentation of Jesus was that he was the leader of a Zealot-style revolutionary movement. Theologically, there was the influence of Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who insisted on an opposition between the gospel of Jesus Christ and "religion." Alongside this theological trend was growing disillusionment with the "God of the gaps." Progressively the natural sciences had explained what previously had been mysterious and attributed to divine intervention; so the need for God as an explanation of things was reduced to a vanishing point. In Britain especially, analytical philosophy exercised great influence. Exponents like A. J. Ayer argued that religious language, because it was not empirically verifiable, had no objective reference and strictly was meaningless. There was thus no evidence for a God "out there." In the light of all that, analytic philosophers wanted to know, what need was there for the notion of God at all? Do not belief in God and calls for humility and dependence upon God undermine human

initiative and self-reliance? Has not humanity "come of age," as Bonhoeffer had claimed? In 1962, John A. T. Robinson's bestseller *Honest to God* had opened up many of those questions to popular awareness. By 1969, particularly in the United States, the question of the "death of God" was dominating debate. The phrase is not new; one can find it already in the nineteenth century in the work of Friedrich Nietzsche. But it became a major discussion point in the late 1960s with the publication of such works as Thomas J. J. Altizer's *Gospel of Christian Atheism*. If it was no longer possible for people to believe in God, then is a form of Christianity without God possible? Could Christianity be re-expressed as being with and for Jesus in the life of the world?

Given this cultural and theological milieu, a hint of defiance characterized the title of the fourth Institute: "The Living God." However, it would be a mistake to imagine that the theme represented stonewall opposition to the questions raised. Clearly, most of the participants were affected by the prevailing issues and were looking for ways to respond to them. To be sure, no one wanted to affirm that God was dead. But there were sharp differences between those who sought to re-express traditional trinitarian theology and rehabilitate traditional philosophical arguments for God and those who were content to affirm the centrality of Jesus Christ for faith and action. As Lawrence Meredith claimed in a staged debate on the last evening: "The Christian gospel can be appropriately understood without the concept of a transcendent God," because real Christianity involved simply a commitment to freedom and love. Some of the published papers represent powerful statements of Christian commitment to radical change.

But it is clear that this was largely a Western preoccupation. Two contributions from Asian speakers presuppose a quite different background. For them, the "living God" is not problematic. Rather, the pertinent question was this: Where can God be discerned in the political, cultural, and social changes sweeping over Asia, and how can Christianity contribute positively to them? Differences existed even among the Western representatives. One German member dismissed the whole Institute as a British and American affair! It was evident, too, that the Americans had little understanding of the philosophical questions that

were troubling the British, while for the British the ferment in American society was something they only read of in the newspapers. Again the issue is the different contexts participants bring with them to the Institute and the extent to which these can be shared.

Behind the differences, however, lay a dilemma that everyone shared. If Christianity frequently has accommodated itself to the status quo and lent it a measure of authority, then how does the Institute ensure that, in reacting against this tendency by aligning itself with movements of protest, Christianity does not simply become captive to these movements in turn? The alert reader of the 1969 papers will notice a further, remarkable point. There is no mention of Wesley or of the Methodist tradition. All except one of the contribntors were Methodists; but for the purposes of this debate confessional identity was not significant. As in 1962 and 1965, these were Methodist theologians discussing theology, not theologians discussing Methodist theology.

The Holy Spirit

If the 1969 Institute was to some extent an attempt to address the issues raised by the wider world, both in philosophy and practice, then the next meeting, in 1973, turned back to more domestic issues by adopting the theme "The Holy Spirit." The primary impulse for doing so was the evident growth of Pentecostal churches and the emergence of the Charismatic Movement within the traditional churches. Thus, much of the discussion centered on defining a Christian understanding of the Spirit. It was clear that the process was bound to raise wider questions. Before too long the fundamental issue had emerged: Should the Holy Spirit be seen, along the lines of the New Testament, as active only in the church or could it also be recognized in other faiths or in movements for liberation and social change? So central was this issue that it was selected for the set-piece debate that customarily concluded the Institute: "The Spirit can be discerned where the Name is not named." There was common ground in recognizing the work of God in many such religious and political movements, but disagreement as to whether it was legitimate when speaking of the Holy Spirit to go beyond the parameters set by the biblical tradition. The biblical tradition raised questions of its

own, though. Is the work of the Spirit to be seen in the imparting of "gifts" (*charismata*), snch as speaking in tongues, which can be received only through faith in Jesus Christ; or, rather, does the Spirit enhance and bring to maturity all that is genuinely human? Some biblical authority could be invoked for either position.

The papers offered at the Institute addressed various aspects of all this: the Spirit of God in the natural world (disappointingly, largely an exposition of a traditional African worldview, with little engagement with the Christian tradition); the Holy Spirit and people of other faiths, cultures, and ideologies; the Holy Spirit and liberation movements; the Holy Spirit and the human spirit, together with discussions of church and ministry; Incarnation and Trinity; a study of the Pentecostal movement; and an attempt to restate the Wesleyan doctrine of sanctification. Four of the ten contributors were non-Methodists. Interestingly, common ground emerged between the Methodist and Orthodox positions in the recognition of the importance of the experience of the Spirit. Several of papers illustrated once agaiu the way in which Methodists, when setting out a theological position, resort to biblical exposition.

There were soine straws in the wind. As in 1969, the questions posed by liberation movements were beginning to be raised. Two speakers (to the consternation of most of the rest) raised the question of the appropriate gender for references to the Spirit. Issues of language awareness and gender were still in their infancy in the Institute. The issues surrounding interfaith dialogue, which had emerged as early as 1965, again were addressed, but still principally in terms of Christian attitudes to people of other faiths rather than in terms of the specific questions those faiths might pose to Christian doctrines. Similarly, although there was a paper and a film about Pentecostalism, and the Charismatic Movement was discussed, with varying degrees of sympathy being expressed towards it, there was no face-to-face encounter with a representative of that tradition. Dialogue appears easier when the other party is not in the room! But in one respect the dialogue was face to face. Hycel Taylor offered an evening of music and poetry under the title "Spirit and Soul: The Black Experience," which drew all members into firsthand experience of the worship of the Black churches.[12] James H.

Cone was to cover some of the same ground in 1977 in his lecture "Sanctification and Liberation in the Black Religious Tradition."

The first five Institutes, up to 1973, thus show a growing maturity as the members, many of whom were by now old hands, began to work to higher academic standards and take their work with increasing seriousness. As we have seen, they reflected the preoccupations of the wider Christian world, although predominantly this meant Britain and the United States. However, they all shared one common feature: they approached theology from the standpoint of its classical subject divisions—church, Christ, God, and Holy Spirit. They were gatherings of Methodists addressing general theological questions. In a sense, each stated a topic that was then followed by a question mark: what shall we say about this? All this was to change after 1973.

Chapter 4

ENTER JOHN WESLEY

THE SIXTH INSTITUTE, IN 1977, MARKED A SIGNIFICANT DEPARTURE from the style so far established. It was the first to proceed, not by putting down a general question mark against a topic, but by setting out a thesis for debate. As the decade of the 1970s progressed, it was clear that *liberation* was the emerging theological issue. Books such as Gustavo Gutiérrez's *A Theology of Liberation*, James H. Cone's *A Black Theology of Liberation*, and Rosemary Radford Ruether's *Religion and Sexism* were raising the same question, albeit in different contexts. Given the experience of injustice and oppression—a daily feature of the lives of the poor in Latin America, Black people in the United States, and many women everywhere—what does Christianity have to say?

This was not a matter of shifting the spotlight from one traditional theological topic to another, but of questioning the way theologians go about their work. Already in 1973, the question had been asked: Is theology *studied* or *done*? In other words, is theology primarily an academic discipline that explores, debates, and clarifies the Christian tradition? Or is it a wrestling with concrete human situations in a struggle to understand, in the light of all the available resources, where God is at work in the world, what kind of being God is, and, in consequence, what human response is demanded? To be sure, "academic" theology can, and usually does, have practical consequences. It informs preaching through the books that preachers read and it influences everyday attitudes to ethical and political problems. But one of the complaints of liberation theologians is that academic theology tends to legitimate the political status quo, however unjust it may be. For them, the purpose of theology is to illuminate the contemporary situation, and the test of its truth is whether it brings about change. The starting point

is not tradition, created out of the experience of bygone ages, but contemporary experience—specifically, the experience of the victims of injustice. As Rebecca Chopp would express it at the ninth Institute, "The definition of theology shifts from mastering a closed system of doctrine to constructing open spaces for living."[1] In the Latin American context it was discovered that a Marxist analysis of the origins of poverty and oppression in structures of economic power offered essential insights on which theology needed to draw in seeking understanding and appropriate response. However, for European and North American theologians, who were predominantly male, white, and untouched by the experience of oppression, these concerus seemed peripheral and even a betrayal of the faith to secular movements. Moreover, in a Europe divided by the Iron Curtain and a United States dominated by fear of communism, sympathetic references to Karl Marx caused alarm.

It is not surprising, therefore, that early planning for the 1977 Institute focused on the general question of theological method as the appropriate topic. What is the starting point for theology? How is Scripture to be used? What weight should be given to denominational traditions or to sociopolitical analysis? It is probably due more to the appointment of Theodore Runyon as Dow Kirkpatrick's successor than to any other factor that the topic eventually adopted was "Sanctification and Liberation: Liberation Theologies iu the Light of the Wesleyan Tradition." The reasons for the shift are best illustrated by some passages from the unpublished summary that Runyon gave on the last morning of the Institute, when all the talking had been done.

> Our starting point was . . . the dissatisfaction of the Latin American theologians with what they perceive to be the predominant way in which Euro-American theology is done, namely, as an academic exercise that takes place within the university in discourse with the various intellectual currents found in middle-class society but notably unaffected by the needs of most of the world's peoples. . . . What is needed . . . is to develop a theology in which salvation is a historical process moving towards a divine goal understood not as the uegation of human history but as its culmination and fulfillment. If we ask, where previously in the history of the church has such a *transformationist* theology come to the fore, the answer would seem to be in Methodism, or, more specifically, in the Wesleyan doctrine of sanctification. . . . The distinctive Wesleyan formulation of the doctrine combines a strong emphasis on forensic justification . . . with the insistence that justification is not itself the end but rather has as its *telos*, its purpose, a historical process of transformation leading to the new creation.
>
> It [is] not a matter of special pleading for Wesley and Wesleyanism but the result of a happy discovery that coming to Wesley with new eyes, with a new hermeneutic provided by Latin American liberation theology, the greater relevance of the Wesleyan solution suddenly leapt to the fore.

Here was a new approach to the work of the Institute. It was asking not simply what traditions Methodists share or how they react to contemporary theological debates (to which the answet might be, not very differently from some other Protestant groups). Rather it wanted to know what positive contribution we Methodists can make to a particular debate, and what that debate enables us to discover about ourselves. These issues involve the question of theological method but give it a much more specific and positive focus.

This shift of emphasis was not universally welcomed. At the planning stage some members of the world committee expressed concern that more traditional theological aspects of rhe topic, such as liberation from sin and guilt, important to Wesley, were not going to be expressed.

As the Institute proceeded it soon became evident that there were two approaches to the subject. The hisrorians raised questions about the actual effect of Wesley's doctrine of sanctification on the subsequent Methodist traditions. Did it, as Elie Halévy asserted, save England from a French-style revolution, and was that to be welcomed or deplored? John Kent cast considerable doubt on the influence of the doctrine, showing how rapidly much of nineteenth-century British Methodism became middle class and polirically conservative; and when it eventually began to support social reform, it did so for other reasons. Timothy Smith showed that much of the nineteenth-century movement in the United States linking holiness and pressure for the abolition of slavery,

for women's rights, and for other social reforms had Presbyterian and Congregationalist roots. Methodism was deeply divided over the issue of slavery. Such historical work is important, because Methodists especially seem to be prey to the temptation to be triumphalist about their past and to claim too much for it.

But there was another approach. To quote Runyon's summary again:

> When we approach the past as theologians, we do so looking not so much for causal connections—interesting though they may be to the professional historian—as for those analogies and structures of interrelationships in the past that provide us alternative vantage points from which to see our own situation anew.

As Runyon was later to point out in his introduction to the published collection of Institute papers, this represented a new phase in Wesley scholarship; but in being a response to cultural and theological changes, it was not unlike earlier phases. After World War I and the rise of the Social Gospel, it became important to show that Wesley and Methodism represented more than an individualistic revivalism encouraging retreat from the world. After World War II it was necessary to show, in the context of the rise of Dialectical Theology and Neoorthodoxy, that Methodistm did indeed have a theology in the mainstream of the Reformation tradition and was not merely a superficial and subjective movement concentrating on religious feeling.[2]

It was not difficult for members of the Institute to point out the limitations of this appeal to Wesley's theology. José Míguez Bonino drew attention to the fact that the focus of Wesley's theology was the salvation of the individual rather than the transformation of society, although Wesley did expect individual salvation to have social consequences. Wesley lacked the conceptual framework, which did not develop until the next century, to think in terms of social structures and forces. Yet, in practice, he placed great emphasis on responding to the needs of the poor and campaigned for specific reforms. Míguez Bonino concluded, "He did not find a theology worthy of his practice."[3] Similarly, from a more traditional British standpoint, Rupert Davies stressed that Wesley was concerned with the life of the individual and with personal relationships within the

existing social and political order, not with its replacement by something new. His contribution is interesting for its tone, for he writes as one commenting on liberation theologies from afar, rather than as one engaging (as he was in the Institute) with theologians who were actually present. An important paper (not delivered at the Institute) by Thomas W. Madron was added to the published proceedings. In it, he explored in some detail Wesley's attitude to economic issues, stressing the ethical and theological roots of his views on such matters as the causes of poverty, inherited wealth, business ethics, and the relief of poverty.

The historical importance of Wesley's exposition of the doctrine of sanctification and his lasting contribution to it was that he succeeded in combining a strong affirmation of God's free grace in rhe justification of the sinner with the insistence that justification was only the beginning of a process of growth in holiness, or perfect love, to which every justified person is called and which is made possible by the Holy Spirit. Divine grace and human freedom were held together without denying either. Yet as Runyon admitted in his summary:

> On the *theological* level we have not succeeded as much as some of us had hoped in demonstrating the structural parallels between Wesley's thought and theologies of liberation. What we have seen clearly is that historically Methodism is capable of two quite different interpretations.

In fact, there was so little consensus on the notion of sanctification that an extra session was devoted to exploring it.

There were other voices in the debates. One of the values of the sixth Institute, as Runyon went on to point out in his final summing up, was that it gave the opportunity for face-ro-face encounters between representatives of different parts of the world, who held different theological convictions. Most participants belonged to the major denominations that use the word *Methodist* in their name. But for the first time in the history of the Institute other denominarions were represented, such as the Church of the Nazarene, which shares a common background in John Wesley and the eighteenth-century movement he originated but prefer to identify themselves in other ways. Yet it has to be said that the

debate was essentially between Western Europe and the American continent, North and South, with the majority of participants coming from Britain and the United States. The discussion of women's liberation was substantially in terms of the experience of American women. In another unpublished paper, Dayalan Niles from Sri Lanka discussed the theology of his father D. T. Niles, but without specific reference to the issues being raised in the Institute as a whole. Kwesi Dickson brought an African perspective, but gave his attention primarily to the effects of colonialism. Detailed attention was not given to the emerging theology of Black liberation in South Africa under apartheid, nor was there any exploration of the implications of liberation for the East Germans, whose presence was secured only at the last minute because of the reluctance of their Communist government to allow them to travel.

Thus, it cannot be said that the Institute sessions gave equal weight to all aspects of its agenda. Roman Catholic observer Cuthbert Rand observed that little attention was given to the practicalities of economics or politics. The exception was an informal session at which the rector of Lincoln College, Lord Trend, who had been secretary to the Cabinet and Britain's most senior civil servant, spoke on political freedom and the British Constitution. He was challenged by John Karefa-Smart from Sierra Leone, who had been a member of his country's delegation negotiating independence from British colonial rule. The Latin American perspective was well represented by José Míguez Bonino and in unpublished Bible studies given by Dorothy Valenzuela. Dow Kirkpatrick, by that time on assignment as a North American living part of his time in Peru, sought, in true liberation style, to bring the discussion to the question of *praxis* by asking whether and on what terms there could be liberation for the rich. James Cone, in a powerful presentation that unwittingly linked the Institute with the 1973 Institute on the Holy Spirit, effectively dispelled the notion that there was an unbridgeable gap between "political" liberation and "spiritual" transformation. Cone showed that in the Black tradition of worship, congregations in their experience of the Spirit entered into a freedom and new identity that were theirs by God's grace and that anticipated, and motivated them to struggle for, the freedom and dignity in society for which they longed.

But while there were women present who were able to contribute to discussions from the perspective of women's liberation, not least the warden Rena Karefa-Smart, there was no formal presentation from that standpoint. This omission was only partly rectified by the inclusion in the published volume of a chapter on John Wesley and women. As the above quotation from Runyon indicates, Latin American voices tended to drive the debate.

Clearly, more work needed to be done. Runyon himself made a contribution to it in the published introduction to the Institute proceedings through a careful comparison between Wesley and Marx, noting, in spite of the obvious differences between them, a common emphasis on humanity finding its fulfillment in purposeful work. This distinguished Wesley both from those Reformers who, in their insistence on the grace of God, deprived human endeavor of all significance, and from the mystics, who sought withdrawal from the world and society.

But there were other issues. At various points much was made of rhe appeal, both by Wesley and by liberation theologians, to experience as a basis for theology. Was that comparison justified or were the areas of experience qualitatively different? Both Wesley and liberation theologians appeal to Scripture, but in different ways. It was also clear that more work needed to be done on Wesley himself, if his contribution to modern thought were to be adequately assessed.

Broadening the Inquiry

The seventh Institute, which took place in 1982 and was treated as the silver jubilee with a celebration dinner, took up the issue. In retrospect, this Institute, even more than the 1977 gathering, was to be pivotal in the story of the Institute as a whole. Albert Outler's view at the time that the 1982 Institute was a possible landmark occasion has been justified by subsequent developments.[4] A serious attempt was being made to identify the significance Wesley has, and should have, for the Methodist and other denominations that look back to him. The theme for the 1982 gathering was "The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions." As nored earlier, a new pattern was followed, in which much of the work was done in specialist subject groups with only six major plenary

presentations—one to provide the keynote address and the others to deal with aspects of each group subject. Each group reported to the plenary in the second week and the reports were included in the published volume. Each report included in some form an agenda for future work.

In one form or another most of those group subjects—Wesley studies, salvation and justice, evangelism, ecumenical relationships—have established themselves since then as regular components of the Institute's ongoing program. These will be discussed in more detail in later chapters. The fifth group, on Wesleyan spirituality and faith development, was in a rather different category in that it focused on the work of one particular scholar, James Fowler, who, in his plenary address, correlated John Wesley's life story with the stages of faith development that can be seen to form a pattern in the experience of believers of all sorts. There were hints of surprise that the topic had been included and it provoked considerable interest as a psychological study of Wesley's own spiritual development. However, it also raised questions about the relationship between faith seen as a general description of a person's response to life (which might not be explicitly religious) and faith as a response to salvation offered in Christ, which could entail not merely development but a radical change in life perspective.

One of the sharpest disagreements centered on the understanding of evangelism. It is indicative of the depth of disagreement that the report of the group, presented to the plenary by Alan Walker, then director of World Evangelism for the World Methodist Council, was felt by many of its members to be so unrepresentative that David Lowes Watson, one of the group's convenors, wrote a further summary for the book. A fundamental divide existed between two groups. Ou the one hand, there were those who viewed the evangelization of all the peoples of the world and their conversion to faith in Christ as the primary and essential task of the church in every age, regardless of context. On the other hand, there were those who saw in the Gospels an imperative for witnessing to the kingdom of God in the struggle for freedom and social justice or who argued—iuvoking, as Wesley Ariarajah did in his paper, John Wesley's doctrine of the prevenient grace of God at work in all humankind—that one should enter into dialogue with people of other faiths and respect their integrity.

For many the 1982 Institute has proved decisive in two particular ways. First, it gave new impetus to a critical study of John Wesley himself. In a paper that has had considerable influence, and which we discuss in more detail in chapter 7, Albert Outler drew attention to the phases through which Wesleyan studies have passed. He then called for the pursuit of a "third phase." In this phase, the entire corpus of Wesley's work would be critically considered on the basis of a proper scientific edition of the texts in which Wesley would be exhibited in his own historical context and against the background of the resources he used. All this needs to happen, said Outler, before we are ready to move forward to consider his significance for today—"back to Wesley and his sources, and then forward."[5]

The effect of this call is difficult to exaggerate. The evidence is in the number of scholarly works on Wesley and the Wesleyan movement that have been published since 1982, as well as in the development by Abingdon Press of a special imprint, Kingswood Books, to carry them. Even in Britain, which was still at that time suffering some disillusionment about Wesley, the effect has been noticeable.

One direct result was an initiative to relaunch the project to publish a critical edition of Wesley's works. Some thirty volumes had been planned for publication through Oxford University Press, but in 1982 the publisher decided to abandon the project after four volumes. The Institute adopted a resolution calling for the project to continue, and in time this led to its being taken up by Abingdon Press.[6]

Second, the Institute widened appreciation of the potential of Wesley studies for the Third World. In an important paper titled "Wesley as Read by the Poor," Mexican theologian Elsa Tamez stressed that Latin American Methodists cannot ignore Wesley. Wesley's significance, she argued, lay in the correlation between the way he responded to his context and the way we respond to ours. We recognize the limitations of Wesley's approach to social problems, in that he was unaware of their structural aspects. Yet we can learn from his recognition of the importance both of life as God's gift and intention for human beings and of rebirth and the struggle for holiness for full life to be achieved.

This was not the first occasion on which the Institute had heard the voice of a Latin American theologian. José Míguez Bonino read a paper on Wesley at the 1977 Institute. Bonino's paper was in some ways theologically more substantial than Tamez's. However, Tamez's contribution and the discussion that followed helped some Western interpreters to realize for the first time that Wesley could be positively significant in a Latin American context. Wesley offered a theological approach that combined elements of Catholic and Protestant theology that could equip Christians to address the social and economic contexts in those countries. This was another factor that helped to open up a fresh approach to Wesley for those who had become tired of what in Outler's scheme was a "phase-one" style of emphasis on Wesley as a cult hero.[7]

Nevertheless, Latin American representatives at the Institute felt that they were being marginalized. The work of other specialist groups appeared to take little account of their emphases, and the oral presentation on the last day—while intended as a comment on some of the issues raised by the Institute's discussions rather than a formal summary—failed to refer to them. This led to vigorous protests from the floor.[8] The omission was partly corrected later in the published retrospect; but it still illustrated the fact that thinking in the Institute was largely dominated by First World rather than Third World perspectives. Of course, one could argue that if contextual theology is to be taken seriously, each region must be free to do theology in the light of its own context—and the contexts of Europe and North America differ from those in various parts of the Third World. To this, one could legitimately reply that Third World contexts include the dominating political and economic influence of the First World and that First World theologians ought to pay more attention to it. Whatever position one takes in this debate, it is surely the case that there ought to be room for all the world's voices to be heard and given equal weight in an Institute that sets out to be an international forum.

The retrospect included in the 1982 volume surveyed some of the issues raised and pointed to some of the gaps. One was the neglect of biblical studies—surprising, in view of the fact that Wesley was *homo unius libri* (a man of one book).[9] The other was that, with the exception of Geoffrey Wainwright's paper on Methodism's place in the ecumenical

movement,[10] the study of the future of the Methodist theological traditions turned out to be a study of John Wesley himself and his potential for today. In effect the papers were a study of the original Wesleyan tradition, with the various traditions that developed after his death being ignored or treated negatively as manifestations of decline and distortion. Incidentally, this attitude to the Methodist past is strikingly similar to many Protestant evaluations of general church history between the immediate postbiblical era and the Reformation. These omissions were to be rectified in 1987.

The Institute in Dialogue

In 1987 the Institute changed venue once again, from Keble College to Somerville College for accommodation, with some participants being housed at St. Hugh's College. The plenary sessions were held in the lecture room of the University Museum of Natural History. Although none of these locations had any connection with Methodism, all three were symbolic of the issues the Institute had to face.

Somerville and St. Hugh's were both founded in the nineteenth century as colleges exclusively for women, at a time when women were battling for admission to the University and for equal status in all respects with male students. It was a long-drawn-out struggle, resolved to the last detail only in 1977. Every day, members of the Institute took their meals surrounded by the portraits of distinguished women scholars who had been engaged in that fight, while in the plenary sessions and working groups the contemporary issues of feminist theology were discussed along with other expressions of liberation theology. Little remains on record of these discussions, but occasional references make it plain that at times the confrontation was sharp.[11]

The Museum contains a significant collection of fossil skeletons, and it was necessary to pass through these each day to reach the lecture room. As might be expected, this provoked a series of jokes about Methodists (and Institute members) as dinosaurs struggling to survive. On a more serious note, the Museum was the location of the famous debate in 1860 between Bishop Samuel Wilberforce and T. H. Huxley on the merits of Charles Darwin's theories of evolution. The debate

culminated in Wilberforce's ill-judged question to Huxley whether it was through his grandmother or his grandfather that he claimed to be descended from the apes and Huxley's withering reply.[12] This was an encounter between the "old world" and the "new world" that left permanent scars on the relations between science and religion. Albert Outler's keynote address began with a reminder of the massive cultural dislocation that now goes under the name of *postmodernism*, as the background against which Methodism has to consider its future. "Our expectations of the human future can no longer be projected by the simple extrapolation of any of our various familiar 'pasts,' labeled as 'our traditions.'"[13] The question addressed in 1982 about the future of the Methodist traditions was taking on a new dimension.

Continuity and discontinuity, consensus and disagreement were therefore inescapable in 1987. The formal agenda was framed by four factors. The first was a desire to carry further the exploration, begun in 1982, into what understanding of the Christian faith the Methodist and other Wesleyan traditions might offer to the wider world. To what extent could they speak with one voice? Second, in 1982 the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, meeting in Lima, Peru, had launched a study project focused on the Nicene Creed, under the title *Towards the Common Expression of the Apostolic Faith Today*, and had invited member churches to respond. This was the basis for the Institute theme, "The Significance of Methodist Teaching and Practice for Confessing the Apostolic Faith."[14] Third, at its 1986 meeting in Nairobi the World Methodist Council had adopted the Jerusalem Statement, a two-page document inviting member churches to "discover and reaffirm the essentials of the Christian faith," referring in particular to biblical authority, the doctrines of the Apostles' and Nicene creeds, and the Chalcedonian formula, as well as the distinctive emphases Methodism has inherited from John Wesley.[15] Finally, The United Methodist Church, itself a connection with global dimensions, was engaged in its own search for unity and consensus by seeking to revise the doctrinal statement in its *Book of Discipline*. Selections from the draft document were published early in 1987 and were generating considerable debate.[16]

The Institute therefore had a broad and complex agenda, focused around the three questions Wesley asked at the first conference in 1744: What to teach? How to teach? What to do? These questions were explored in addresses to plenary sessions. They also received particular emphasis in six working groups: Current Biblical Criticism and Methodist Teaching, Wesley Studies, Methodist Teaching and Social and Economic Issues of the Nineteenth Century, Methodist Economic and Social Teachings and the Challenge of Liberation Theology, Methodist Evangelism and Doctrine, and Contemporary Methodist Theology and Doctrinal Consensus. For the first time, a fully developed prospectus for each group was circulated beforehand. For the historian this presents a difficulty, for there is no single comprehensive account of what was done. The published volume contains most of the plenary lectures and one of the papers given to the group on Methodist evangelism and doctrine; but the lectures were not designed to touch on the whole range of topics covered by the groups. The work of five of the six groups was subsequently reported in successive issues of *OXFORDnotes*, and copies of many of the papers presented to the groups are preserved. However, much of what was done lives on only in the memories of those who took part.

The broad agenda did not produce much in the way of substantive answers, either in the plenary sessions or in most of the groups. The group on contemporary Methodist theology and doctrinal consensus came closest, with specific recommendations on the World Council of Churches' study. Some comments were also made in an interdisciplinary group on The United Methodist Church's draft statement. What seems to have preoccupied the members was what "doctrinal consensus" implied and whether it was possible to achieve it. Can such consensus be imposed or must we wait until it emerges? If it depends upon reception by the people of God—what Gillian Evans called "a consent of believing mind and heart, as it were a warm embrace, and an exercise of judgement"[17]—then how does that differ from deciding theological questions by majority vote? Where would biblical authority or Methodist tradition feature in such a process?

There was widespread strong resistance to the notion that one family of churches or one particular theological approach could impose a partic-

ular definition of Methodism on everyone else. For example, the churches in Britain, Ireland, and the United States—with their relatively longer history—have no monopoly on what Methodism is by which the rest of the world may be judged and perhaps found wanting. Nor can tradition or personal conversion or the experience of the oppressed be laid down as the mandatory starting point and exclusive perspective for all (although there were vigorous advocates for each of these). Methodism worldwide today is irreducibly diverse. Indeed, in his contribution, José Míguez Bonino[18] challenged the very notion of "consensus," particularly in relation to social issues. A consensus statement implies the resolution of conflict, a position with which all can agree. That is often possible and desirable, but some issues call for a prophetic voice—an outright protest that will divide rather than unite the church.

One example of the clash between starting points occurred in relation to Geoffrey Wainwright's discussion of Methodism's response to the World Council of Churches' study. At two points he attacked the tendency, at the time much more common in the United States than elsewhere, to substitute for the traditional formula "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" alternatives such as "Creator, Christ, and Spirit" or "Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer." The motive behind such changes was of course to avoid language that seemed to imply that the Trinity was male in gender. Not only did many women find male imagery a hindrance in worship, such imagery also seemed to legitimize a whole culture of male domination, evident in biblical societies and in the life and theology of the church ever since. Wainwright recognized the motivation for the changes but protested that the changes undermined the doctrine of the Trinity as traditionally understood, either reducing the Persons to functions or implying that Christ and the Spirit are creatures. "Father," he insisted, quoting the World Council text, is more than an image of God; as used by Jesus, it is God's *name*. To abandon the word would isolate Methodists from the wider church.[19] His position did not go unchallenged, but the controversy illustrates how starting from received tradition or from contemporary experience can lead to conflicting theological positions, and how each may seek to impose its views on the other as the only morally or intellectually credible position.

Not surprisingly, M. Douglas Meeks concluded in his final reflections that there was no consensus in the Institute except a refusal to be dominated. Yet in rereading the records after an interval of fifteen years, one is struck by certain underlying features. The most obvious feature is the existence of an acknowledged family relationship between participants who were so sharply divided on some issues. Apart from invited ecumenical contributors and observers, all the participants regarded themselves as "Methodist" or "Wesleyan," and acknowledged a shared ancestry in John Wesley's eighteenth-century movement. If the differences were apparent, what held the family together was tantalizingly elusive, yet real. For all the intermarriages with other Christian traditions along the way, the family retains something of its genetic inheritance, difficult as it is to define.

One strand of that common inheritance might be a readiness to respond (at least at the intellectual and emotional levels) to the situation of the poor. Meeks used his closing address to introduce the theme of inclusiveness in God's economy, developed more fully in his later publication *God the Economist*.[20] "If we follow the biblical poetic images, (1) home is where everyone always knows your name, (2) home is where you can always expect to be confronted, forgiven, put under obligation, (3) home is where there is always a place for you at the table, and (4) home is where you can always count on what is on the table being shared. . . . God has gone and will go to all lengths in order to create a home for God's creatures."[21] Rarely had a thesis been articulated with such passion at the Institute. If development can be traced in the collective thinking of the Institute (one cannot speak here of the churches), then the emergence into prominence and general acceptance of the poor and powerless as a theological issue would be one evidence of it. It is not surprising that it became the central theme in 1992.

It is also important to note that, in spite of strident voices being raised in the discussions, or perhaps, rather, *because* they were able to be raised and were listened to, the eighth Institute was declared by many to have been "the best ever." Because a core of its membership (nearly 40 percent) consisted of those who had attended previous meetings, the Institute was perhaps able to move beyond the distant courtesies of those

barely acquainted with one another and thus "on best behavior." Disagreements could be voiced and debated in an inclusive atmosphere. Yet some still felt marginalized. Participants from the Third World submitted a memorandum urging the need for Third World members to meet for two days in advance of the rest, and for some focus on Third World issues to be built into the Institute program as a matter of policy. Participants from Latin America were predominant in the group, raising as their chief concern the continued visibility of the issues of liberation theology. However, the group also included members from Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean, who had other theological concerns. Coming in ones and twos from a widely diverse range of countries, some not at ease with the English language, it was easy for members of this group to feel at a disadvantage over against the larger contingents from Europe and North America, many of whom already knew oue another. A meeting prior to the Institute would enable them to get to know one another and to explore in a way that took greater account of their own contexts some of the issues that were due to be debated later. Recall that in the early years of the Institute the American members had held a similar advance meeting on shipboard to prepare to participate in the wider gathering. The first Third World Consultation, or "Pre-Institute," for just those purposes was held in 1992.[22]

Chapter 5

POVERTY AND GLOBALIZATION

If there is a significant difference between the Institutes reviewed in this chapter and those in the last, it is that the global division between rich and poor, powerful and powerless, already addressed in earlier meetings, now comes to the fore. By 1992 the world had changed significantly. The destruction of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the final collapse of the Soviet Union in the same year, and the consequent easing of East-West tension had produced a widespread sense of optimism for a better future for the world. If anyone attending the Institute that year had expected that optimism to be reflected in its discussions, however, they were soon to be disabused. The year 1992 also marked the five-hundredth anniversary of Columbus's expedition to the "New World," which opened up Latin America and the Caribbean to Western conquest and exploitation. An attempt was made to draw attention to it by arranging for a public lecture for which Gustavo Gutiérrez was invited; but he and a number of other Latin American theologians who were approached were unavailable. The Third World Consultation that preceded the main Institute produced a statement ablaze with anger at the continued suffering of the poor of the world. For the poor, the triumph of capitalism with the ending of the Cold War represented the global imposition of an "economy of death"[1] and a fresh form of colouial domination of the South by the North. The document referred to crippling international debt, environmental damage, the destruction of traditional cultures, the plight of migrants, the devastation caused by the drug trade, and the consequent effect of all these on the lives of the poor, especially women and children. It called upon the Institute and the churches represented there to listen to the voices of the poor, learn from their insight into the meaning of the gospel and the

signs of God's activity among them, and live in solidarity with them. Quotations from the statement were taken up in an act of worship when it was presented.[2]

Thus, from the outset the ninth Institute approached its theme, "Good News to the Poor in the Wesleyan Tradition," from two directions. Some approached the theme from the direction of John Wesley's theology and practice and his influence on the subsequent history of his movement, while others chose the contemporary experience of poverty, voiced by different groups within the Institute itself, as their vantage point. The papers delivered to the plenary illustrated the two approaches. Some, such as Richard Heitzenrater's discussion of the reasons for Wesley's commitment to the poor and Donald Dayton's treatment of subsequent developments in the Methodist and other churches, were more exclusively historical. Others, like Victorio Araya-Guillén's paper on "The 500th Anniversary of the European Invasion of Abya-Yala," focused on the destructive effects of colonialism, past and present, and the dominance of capitalism. Yet others, including Theodore Jennings's powerful keynote address and Rebecca Chopp's treatment of the themes of sin and grace from the standpoint of a feminist theologian in the hegemouic culture of the United States, combined the two approaches.

The addresses[3] exhibit a remarkable degree of consistency and present to the reader a prophetic call to rethink theology and practice in the light of the experience of the poor. The published record included an essay by S. T. Kimbrough, Jr., titled "Charles Wesley and the Poor." While not given at the Institute but considered in one of the working groups, Kimbrough's contribution represented a welcome broadening of attention to include the one whose hymns influenced the average early Methodist far more than his brother's writings. Douglas Meeks's introduction, the reports of the subject groups,[4] and individual recollections indicate that the papers generated widespread debate and some dissent on certain issues, leaving many questions to be examined in greater depth. Traces of this can be seen within the pages of the book itself.

It is clear that there was general consensus that the theme of "God's preferential option for the poor"[5] was central to John Wesley's own

thinking and living, and can be traced in various ways in the subsequent history of the Methodist and other Wesleyan movements. That subsequent history also demonstrates that this concern was frequently displaced by other concerns, particularly because of "upward social mobility," which Wesley recognized in his own time as both a danger to the Methodist people and an inevitable consequence of their disciplined living. But the preferential option repeatedly reemerged in protest movements distanced from the official church. Dayton instanced a series of such movements, including the Primitive Methodists in Britain and the Black churches and the Free Methodists in North America, and he argued that the Salvation Army and the Chilean Pentecostalist movement should be included in the list. But a wide range of questions surrounded the definition of poverty. What was the balance of importance for Wesley between spiritual and material poverty? To what extent was his main concern with the poor of the Methodist societies rather than with the poor in society at large? How should we identify poverty today? Is it enough to distinguish between poverty defined as "sheer lack of physical necessities required for health and well-being" and *relative poverty* defined as "the lack of enough material resources to be able to participate in the life of society"?[6] Does an adequate definition require reference also to powerlessness? If the latter is the case, it opens up the idea of poverty to include various experiences of domination or oppression in different contexts, such as those felt by women in the First World, who in other respects would be regarded as belonging to the affluent and oppressive West.[7]

Any consideration of poverty (however defined) and its roots in economic, political, and social systems calls for a reconsideration of the concept of sin, as Chopp and others argued. An appropriate understanding of sin starts not from the deliberate action of the individual in relation to God or neighbor ("a voluntary transgression of a known law," as Wesley often held[8]) but from the effects of human behavior, individual or corporate. For Chopp, sin is "the depravation and deprivation of the flourishing of existence through concrete historical structures of politics, language and subjectivity,"[9] or, for Araya-Guillén, "the denial of God by the annihilation of human life."[10] That in turn raises questions

about the nature of the gospel. Can it be good news unless it promises life? Is it to be offered *to* the poor or to be learned *from* them as they challenge the churches to turn away from the idolatry of materialist values to solidarity with the marginalized? There is no disputing that historically the poor have often taken the gospel to heart and found freedom in it in ways that more affluent people have been unable to do; and they have sometimes done so in spite of their social "betters." David Lowes Watson argued that we fail the gospel unless we preach Christ in all his offices, not only as the mediator of forgiveness but also as prophet and potentate who calls for reform and obedience.

As one might expect, these issues were raised with much passion, for the plight of the majority living in the Third World needs to be identified and addressed. However, some at the Institute felt that little was being offered by way of concrete alternatives to the global economic system that was being deplored, and that some of the claims lacked thorough theological grounding. One can detect a curious parallel between John Wesley and the Institute itself. It is now a commonplace that Wesley was unaware (typical for his time) of the structural causes of poverty and relied too much on individual action to remove it. In different ways, both Jennings and Dayton argued that one reason for later Methodism's failure consistently to apply the preference for the poor was because Wesley failed to develop a proper theological grounding for his practice. It could be argued that calls in the Institute for the churches to act in relation to world poverty amounted to no more than a corporate version of the individual response that would leave the overall structures unchanged and that the theological analysis needed to be taken further than it was. There were also some very generalized references to the witness of Scripture to God's preference for the poor, when, as the biblical studies group pointed out, there were also texts that pointed the other way. In a major paper, Itumeleng Mosala, deploying the question, "in whose interest was the text written?," argued that the Exodus story, often appealed to by liberation theologies, was in fact much more ambiguous—it focused not on the poor but on the action of a ruling elite. It owed its origin to the efforts of the court of Solomon to justify its own program of colonization and enslavement of

the Canaanite peoples by appeal to God's election of Israel and promise to give them the land.

Therefore, the ninth Institute was perhaps significant more for the issues it brought into prominence than for the solutions it offered. Indeed, even within its own membership there was some experience of domination by a majority over a minority. One member from Asia certainly felt so and in subsequent correspondence with the organizers complained that the Institute had concentrated too exclusively upon Latin American experience and had not reflected enough on the Asian context. In Asia the theological issues were not only poverty and colonialism but also the overwhelming presence of other faiths, amongst which Christians were often a powerless minority. "What is most relevant for Asian Christians is not only the political and economic issue, that is the North/South question, but also the religious and spiritual dimension of our Christian witness, that is, the East/West question. . . . In this respect, we regard liberation theology as a part and continuation of Western theology." Whether or not his was a lone Asian voice, it demonstrates yet again the difficulty of making the Institute fully inclusive.

In a memorable concluding session, Rowan Williams, at that time bishop of Monmouth, after a period as Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Oxford University, and since 2002 Archbishop of Canterbury, brought many of these issues to a head.[11] He had been present as observer and rapporteur throughout the ten days. While they were discussing issues of global poverty, he asked, had members of the Institute noticed the poor on the streets of Oxford? In a reference to the debate (referred to in chapter 2) about whether the Institute should continue to meet in Oxford, he asked whether members could guarantee to take greater notice of the poverty surrounding them if they met elsewhere. Theologians, he insisted, were prone to dealing in abstractions. The debates had lacked the hard-headed realism of economists. We have a responsibility to be specific and precise, a comment echoed in the paper submitted to the Institute Committee by a group of mainly North American women at the Institute. The paper noted that little concrete attention had been given to the question, "Who are the poor?" In consequence, the particular needs of poor women and children had been ignored.

One of the realities, even for what Williams described as "Northern liberals" like himself, is powerlessness in the face of the impersonal forces of global capitalism, an "erosion of moral responsibility." The responsibility of the churches, he suggested, as one of the few international organizations not primarily driven by money, is to keep alive the awareness of other forms of community in shared responsibility, and at the same time to stress the achieveability of small-scale goals. This is a challenge to the churches' own structures and way of life as much as to its external witness and ministry. The Wesleyan tradition, with its emphasis on learning and growth—what the Church Fathers called "the enlargement of the heart"—has particular resources for rising to this challenge. This led Williams to the heart of the gospel, which is not about us, what we do in response to poverty, still less about what we feel about it; rather, the gospel is about God's action for all, already begun in Christ. Referring to Charles Wesley's hymn, "Since the Son Hath Made Me Free," which "contains the entire gamut of classical Christian theology,"[12] and quoting the words "Heavenly Adam, life divine, change my nature into thine," Williams described "the whole Christian project" to be what the Fathers referred to as deification—"to stand where Christ stands," oriented towards God and the world, incorporated into the divine life and God's giving to the world. Focused preeminently in the Eucharist, the gospel is God's gift that makes us simultaneously capable of being both givers and receivers. It is the generosity of God that makes poverty a blasphemy. Williams closed his presentation with the last verse of another, better-known, Charles Wesley hymn, "And Can It Be?," which he described as "the greatest hymn in the English language." The audience was so moved by this address that they rose to join in singing the hymn, but, in retrospect, one wonders whether some of his more critical remarks were forgotten in the euphoria. The same charge of lack of specificity and hardheadedness could be made about some of the discussions in more recent Institutes.

The Trinity

In view of Williams's remarks about giving and receiving it was appropriate that the tenth Institute in 1997 should open with a stress on gift

and gifting. It was a central theme in Douglas Meeks's keynote address. The topic for the eleven days, "Trinity, Community and Power: Mapping Trajectories in Wesleyan Theology," had been selected in 1992. It was felt that a study of the doctrine of the Trinity would enable a wide range of contemporary concerns to be considered and would show them to be related theologically to one another. For this, recourse was made to the ways in which the doctrine had been developed and expounded in the Eastern rather than the Western tradition of the church. In the West, the primary emphasis over the centuries has tended to be on the unity of the Godhead, with most attention being given to the Father and the Son, the Spirit being comparatively ignored. On the other hand, the Eastern theologians, especially the Cappadocian Fathers, had begun from the threeness and had explored their relationships. Thus the Trinity can be seen as a model of personhood in community. Each Person is involved in the work of the other two (the technical term is *perichoresis*). The entire Trinity is engaged in the work of creation and redemption. The "open Trinity"—each Person open to the others and all three together open to the world in love—thus defines the relationships and the forms of power to which human beings, created in God's image, are called and by which we are to be measured. John Wesley himself had been indebted to the Eastern tradition in his thinking, and with his emphasis on the Spirit and the outgoing grace of God had offered a fully trinitarian interpretation of the gospel, while refusing speculation on whar he termed the "how" of God's being. The invitation to the Institute made reference to the lines in one of Charles Wesley's hymns, "You, whom he ordained to be Transcripts of the Trinity."[13] The Trinity was seen, therefore, as offering scope for issues of world community, liberation, race and gender relations, ecumenism, sanctification, and personal devotion to be studied in the light of the doctrine of God. The doctrine also provided a counterbalance to prevailing ideas of individualism, autonomy, and the use of power to dominate.

No doubt one reason for the selection of this theme was the publication in 1989 of Douglas Meeks's work on the Trinity, *God the Economist*, referred to in the last chapter, and it was appropriate that he should give the keynote address. However, trinitarian themes had been

widely explored by theologians in recent years and had formed the basis of the World Council of Churches' Canberra Statement in 1991, *The Unity of the Church as Koinonia: Gift and Calling*.

Fully to appreciate how these themes were dealt with in plenary session, it is necessary to read the published volume of addresses. In various ways they explore the themes outlined here. Meeks set the tone by referring to the worldwide effects of poverty on children, to which the United Methodist bishops had recently drawn attention. The survival of children and the revival of the churches alike depend on a recovery of gracious and reciprocal giving as the basis of human community, for which the Trinity is both the model and the source. Wesley, with his stress on the Father's gift of justification through the Son and sanctification in the Spirit, had well understood this. The contemporary church, unitarian in all but name, was impoverished by its lack of a trinitarian understanding of God. Ted Campbell surveyed the historical evidence for trinitarian doctrine in the main Methodist and other Wesleyan traditions. Jürgen Moltmann stressed the importance of *perichoresis*, the mutual indwelling and shared activity of the Persons in the Trinity, for a right understanding and ordering of human society. Frances Young illusrrated Wesley's debt to the (probably) fourth-century Syrian writer now known as "Pseudo-Macarius," but identified in Wesley's time with St. Macarius of Egypt. Both Wesley and Macarius drew strongly on the Trinity, not as doctrine for doctrine's sake but to undergird the life of holiness. Philip Wogaman addressed the relation between the doctrine and modern dilemmas in the use of power, while Roberta Bondi explored the concept of "fatherhood" in relation to prayer and spirituality, sensitive both to its difficulty and to the need to reform our ideas of fatherhood by reference to Jesus. José Míguez Bonino discussed the doctrine in relation to liberation theology, stressing its importance as guaranteeing the priority of God's action in the work of transformation and as holding together diverse elements of evangelization, service, conversion, and the struggle for justice.

The working groups seem to have found the theme more difficult. Ten groups were organized (an increase on previous occasions), each with the remit to work in the light of trinitarian doctrine.[14] An analysis of the

papers submitted to those groups and such reports of their work as survive suggest that it was easier for many of them to address issues of power and community than the Trinity. Over a third of the group papers did not address the Institute theme at all but dealt only with topics related to the particular discipline of the group. No one, however, could be present for ten days in the Institute and not engage with the central issue.

It might have been thought that with the theme "Trinity" the Institute was returning to the style of its predecessors before 1977, when some of the classic doctrinal concepts—God, Christ, Holy Spirit, Church—were explored. Indeed, in 1997 there were some calls for a return to the Spirit as the theme for 2002. But the Trinity was dealt with in a way that would hardly have been possible in the 1960s and 1970s, when the subject would almost inevitably have been treated in an abstract way. Even ten years before, in 1987, Geoffrey Wainwright's criticism of the tendency to substitute "Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier" for "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" showed how widely the Persons of the Trinity were being seen in functional rather than relational terms. *Relationship*, however, was the key to the Institute of 1997. To be sure, speakers were careful to speak of the economic rather than the immanent Trinity—that is, of God as revealed in the work of creation and redemption, not God as known only to God. Yet it was recognized that if revelatiou genuinely reveals God, then what we know by revelation could not be contradicted by that inner life of God that is not disclosed to us. But God-as-inclusive-relationship reaches out in creating the universe and its populations and in drawing that creation into reconciled relationship with itself and with God. So, individual and corporate salvation—wholeness of spirit, mind, and body, and of communities in their economic, political, and social relationships, locally and internationally; the peace of human beings with one another, their fellow creatures, and their environment—all come within the gracious embrace of the inclusive Trinity, the depth of whose reconciling love is revealed to us on the Cross. That is the vision that members of the tenth Institute were invited to take away from Oxford. Incidentally, this approach made it possible to give more attention than pteviously to issues of personal spirituality, as illustrated by Roberta Bondi's paper and the inclusion of a group on spirituality and discipleship.

But some voices challenged the growing consensus. Were we trying to hang all our pet concerns on one doctrine? Why had we opted for the Eastern tradition rather than the more monarchical, hierarchical style of the Western expressions of the doctrine? Was it only because it supported our preferred emphasis on the nonhierarchical, the inclusive, and the nonaggressive? And what of that strand in the Eastern tradition, largely neglected in the discussions, that insists that the Father is the source of Godhead within the Trinity? It is on that ground that the Eastern churches resist the Western version of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, which speaks of the Spirit proceeding from the Father *and the Son* (the *filioque* clause). Those questions received no answer at the Institute, but they are examples of the general issue of selectivity when the tradition upon which we draw is not uniform.

Disappointments remained. It could still be asked, as on previous occasions, how far the Institute was globally inclusive. To be sure, the delivery by Míguez Bonino of the first Dow and Marjorie Kirkpatrick lecture was an important event. As noted earlier, the lecture is designed to reflect the perspective of the Third World. As in 1992 a contingent of Third World representatives met prior to the main Institute and were able to present to the main gathering a statement of faith, set in an act of worship. The following sentences give its flavor. After drawing attention to the worldwide suffering caused by globalization, they affirmed:

> We do not accept the logic of alienation, for we are created to be images of the Trinity; we believe in community and hospitality. We refuse the logic of patriarchal power, for we are created to be images of the Trinity; we claim the subverting power of love. . . . We reject the status of powerless victims, for we claim the transforming power of the Trinity; we believe in the power of people to create life-giving alternatives. . . . We reject the interpretation of Genesis as mandate to exploit and dominate, for God requires of us justice and compassion; we believe that we are an integral part of the groaning creation.

However, the published volume contains no contributions from Africa, Asia, or the Pacific. The perspectives are those of Europe and North and South America. The solitary African address to the plenary was not printed; some present felt that the presentation was not wholly

representative of current African theological work. Yet the discussion that followed revealed how difficult it was for most participants to deal with material from a different cultural background. The discussion tended to focus, rather defensively, on what the Christian gospel brought *to* Africa. As the printed closing reflections suggested, analogies could have been drawn between some traditional African ideas and Christian concepts, in the way that early Christian apologists had drawn analogies with the Greek philosophical and religious traditions. There were no contributions to the plenary from Asia or the Pacific. The eleventh Institute would do better in this respect.

New Creation

The eleventh Institute met in August 2002. The college was Christ Church, a more spacious environment than any of the previous venues and one steeped in history. It was founded initially in the sixteenth century by Cardinal Wolsey and linked to the twelfth-century cathedral, which serves as its chapel. The significance for Methodists particularly lies in the fact that both John and Charles Wesley studied there as undergraduates. The Institute theme was "New Creation," and it proved to be immensely wide ranging.

The invitation to the Institute emphasized that the theme called for consideration of both the "old" creation and the hope of the "new." It pointed out the many ways in which the theme could be developed: biblical and historical study, the mission of the church, personal transformation through the work of the Spirit, renewal of the church, the possibilities of a new social and political order for the world, and the stewardship of the environment. There was scope for a critique of the present and an envisioning of the future, for stress on new creation as the gift of God's grace and as the call to human responsibility. As on previous occasions, much of the work was done in subject groups; but this time there was some attempt to foster interaction by combining hitherto separate topics, such as ecumenism and evangelism. Also, a new topic—theological ethics and the technological challenge—was introduced to encourage consideration of the many biomedical and environmental issues raised by technology. Two events lay in the background to

much of the reflection on this theme: a recent study of John Wesley by Theodore Runyon,[15] to which reference was frequently made, and the experience of the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington D.C. on 11 September 2001.[16]

Inevitably, reflection on the present as the manifestation of the old creation concentrated on the experience of globalization, in its cultural, political, economic, and technological aspects. Once again, there was a Third World Pre-Institute, which was able to examine the theme from a wide range of perspectives and report later to the full Institute. The report generated some surprise. Even more so than on past occasions it focused on an act of worship and included some affirmations. Some were expecting there to be stronger expressions of anger and frustration at the ways in which globalization impacts Third World nations. Those feelings were expressed in the Pre-Institute itself; but the members chose for their report to emphasize the possibilities of God's grace to make all things new.

Five continents were represented in the persons of the speakers in the plenary sessions. In this the Institute succeeded in being more widely representative than its predecessors; and the point was noted also in relation to the selection of persons to preside over the sessions and to respond to the speakers. J. C. Park explored the relationship between Confucian sage learning and Wesley's quest for holiness, an issue important both for interreligious dialogue in Korea and for "the dialogue within" every Korean Christian who is in touch with traditional Korean culture. The subject tested many Institute members' knowledge of Confucianism and much else besides, for the lecture was very broadly based in current philosophy and theology. In an exercise in applied theology, Mvume Dandala illustrated how the church in South Africa is trying to express the relationship between redemption and the wider creation in practical terms. Nestor Míguez gave the second Kirkpatrick lecture, including an analysis of the impact of globalization upon the poor, and showed how a number of biblical passages dealing with the creation theme imply a critique of the claims of imperial power.

Other papers had a more historical cast. In the keynote address Randy Maddox outlined the development of John Wesley's thought in

terms of the personal, social, and environmental aspects of new creation. The personal aspect was always primary, but in the 1770s Wesley began to explore its social and political dimensions, and in the last decade of his life moved on to the cosmic implications, including animals and the physical environment. In each of these aspects Wesley stressed new creation as a process of grace, beginning in the present and calling for active human response. Maddox concluded by exploring briefly the implications of all this in the very different context of the twenty-first-century church. Russell Richey drew on the history of early American Methodism to illustrate how the movement was seen in a variety of ways in new creation terms. In a more contemporary vein Mary Elizabeth Moore, drawing on biblical exegesis, called for a fuller understanding of repentance, reconciliation, and reparation than the legalistic interpretation sometimes given to them. Using Martin Luther King, Jr.'s work for civil rights as a basis, Josiah Young pointed out that although leadership—"the drum-major instinct"—could be used negatively in the service of oppression, it could also be used positively in resistance to oppression, with the hope of resurrection at the coming of Christ for those who suffer martyrdom in consequence. Manfred Marquardt considered the relationship of the apparently contrasting terms *globalization* and *kingdom of God*.

At the time of writing, the papers and reports of group work of the 2002 Institute have not yet been published, and it is premature to attempt a full assessment. But by the end of the Institute it was clear that a wide range of issues had been opened up but none fully explored and that many questions remained. How pedantic, for example, in a study of this kind, should one be about the use of the actual term *new creation*? There are only six occurrences of it in John Wesley's writings; yet it is clear that the essence of the idea runs throughout his theology, with its emphasis on the transformation that God works through the Holy Spirit and the way in which that transformation affects all relationships in community. The same could be said of the biblical material. The term is far less common than the idea. Even so, why was it that obvious texts such as 2 Cor. 5:17 were not explored in more detail? Much was made of passages in the Book of Revelation that point to the future. How far

do these passages point to a fulfilment within time and how far beyond it? And how do optimistic anticipations of God's end for the created universe match with scientific predictions of a final cooling-off of the cosmos? How far is globalization in its various aspects to be seen as a benefit, or even potential benefit, and how far are we compelled to regard it as a curse for the way it divides rich from poor and imposes on many ancient cultures a global uniformity?

At the end of the ten days many participants were inclined to sum up the overall mood as pessimistic, in view of the scale of the global problems. What can be done to change things? What should be the role of the church in that context? In fact, some felt that too little work had been done on the church, with most of the attention being given to the personal and the global. "Is there a church-shaped hole?" asked Mary Tanner, Anglican observer. One answer may be the one given by Mvume Dandala. The church can involve itself in local and small-scale attempts not only to bring new creation practices into being, restoring the link between human beings and their animal and natural environment, but also change attitudes in the process. In other words, the churches can pursue the sort of small-scale goal that Rowan Williams may have had in mind in 1992. But there is no denying that the forces of globalization are strong, widespread, and difficult to confront. The Institute failed, as perhaps was inevitable, to offer specific solutions to economic problems or the ethical dilemmas relating to new technology. Few theologians are equipped to deal with such matters. However, they were challenged in the closing session to become engaged, as Wesley would have been engaged, in practical as well as theoretical ways of meeting these challenges.

That challenge does not address the pessimism. The Institute's theme was "new creation." Did it pay too much attention to the old creation? While there needs to be realism as we look to the future, engagement in the issues quickly loses energy if it is not driven by hope, anchored in the Creator, who brings life out of death. It is theology's task to draw the contours of that hope. The rapporteurs did touch on these questions in the final session, but perhaps the Pre-Institute came closest to positive affirmation.

What, finally, of John Wesley? Not all the plenary addresses or all the group discussions succeeded in making a link between Wesley and the specific subject being treated. Should they have done so? Toward the end of the Institute the same question was asked in different contexts a number of times. Are there specifically Methodist ways of responding to all these issues? Is there a Methodist way of doing systematic theology, a Methodist apologetic, a Methodist spirituality, a Methodist tradition of political theology, a Methodist exegesis of Scripture? These questions lie at the heart of the Institute's existence and have been implicit throughout the story we have been telling. To some aspects of them we turn in the following chapters.

Chapter 6

The Place of the Bible

In the preface to the first volume of his published sermons John Wesley declared himself to be "a man of one book."[1] It is clear from everything he wrote that this did not mean that he restricted his reading to the Bible or that he took no account of other influences. Closer study of his writings reveals a broad basis for his thought in Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience—in what is nowadays often referred to as "the Wesleyan quadrilateral."[2] However, for Wesley Scripture was always primary and it has retained its primacy—officially if not always in practice—in the churches that have derived from him. One would therefore expect biblical study to be a major component in the work of the Institute. In fact, the role of Scripture has proved to be problematic, and the reasons for that are not peculiar to the Institute.

The early Institutes began the working sessions of each day with Bible study in the form of plenary lectures on biblical passages considered to be relevant to the general theme.[3] The study in 1977 took a different style, with a more meditative approach to selected passages, led by Dorothy Valenzuela and drawing on Latin American experience. In addition, many of the other papers presented during that period treated the topic assigned in terms of a review of biblical material with more general comments based on that review.

But there were problems. At the time there were wide disparities in the curriculum of ministerial education between Europe and the United States and these were reflected in the competence of many of those attending the Institute. There is an anecdote from 1969 of the German members coming equipped for the Bible study sessions with their Greek Testaments and photocopies of the Hebrew text of Exodus while an American member was wandering around trying to

find someone to lend him an English Bible. The Institute thus posed a problem for professional biblical scholars. How much technical knowledge could be taken for granted? Could the text be studied in the original languages or only in translation? These difficulties were accentuated when papers were offered for publication. In chapter 2 we have already noted the difficulties some contributors had with Abingdon Press over the printing of Greek quotations or their transliteration into English characters.

A more fundamental problem was, and has continued to be, the integration of the biblical material with the wider agenda. The formal Bible studies increasingly were felt to be an isolated capsule with no connections to what followed in the rest of the day, neither serving devotional need nor materially contributing to later discussions; and that feeling was shared by at least one of the presenters. In 1982, therefore, the Bible studies were dropped and replaced by a series of biblical meditations in the daily worship, based on a World Council of Churches' study booklet, *Images of Life*. For many, this was going too far. So, in 1987 a biblical studies group was introduced, to take its place alongside the other specialist groups that were introduced in 1982. It was not done without some misgiving. To quote from the correspondence of the time:

> It is felt that this group would be most likely to cordon itself off by scholarly methodologies and would have the greatest difficulty making a contribution to the overall task of the Institute. There is no doubt that we need to make an intentional effort to assure the participation of more biblical scholars, but it is thought that they should be divided among the groups in order to provide a greater biblical presence throughout the Institute's work.

In the end, however, a separate group was created in which biblical specialists could meet on equal terms and the difficulties about language and background knowledge could be avoided. There has been a marked gain in this development in that it has been possible to give greater attention to the Old Testament, whereas most of the work in earlier Institutes was on the New. Members of the group have also welcomed a forum in which they openly could relate biblical interpretation to confessional concerns, which, for some, is more difficult in their professional setting.

But the problem of integration with the rest of the Institute's work has remained. All the subject groups in the Institute are asked each time to focus on the Institute theme as it applies to their particular subject area; but in practice some groups regularly find this easier than others. In the view of one scholar, who has attended all the sessions of the biblical studies group over the years, the group was most successful in relating its work to the general theme in 1992 (on poverty) and 2002 (on new creation). However, the group had difficulty with the 1997 theme on the Trinity; and in 1987, when the theme was the significance of Methodist teaching and practice for confessing the apostolic faith, they were "all at sea" and spent much of their time on hermeneutics. That is not surprising, given the theme that year; but the difficulties with the Trinity are harder to account for.

As with other subject groups, particularly Wesley studies, efforts have been made over the years at cross-fertilization by the introduction of interdisciplinary groups, in which specialists from different areas were brought together either for general discussion or to share papers. Biblical studies have been included in this process. It has had greater success with some subject groups than with others and has gone some way toward ensuring that the Institute remains a single community and is not fragmented into a series of specialist mini-institutes.[4] But it has hardly addressed the central problem, namely, how to relate the general work of the Institute to the Bible. Remarkably, since 1973 there has not been a plenary session offering a systematic presentation and overview of relevant biblical material to form a background to the rest of the Institute's work, although C. K. Barrett's lecture on justification in 1987 came close. It is not clear why this has been so. It may be that those with biblical interests (including the present writer) did not press the case hard enough at the planning stage. Alternatively, it may be that the planners assumed the biblical background could be taken for granted, which was surely overoptimistic, as there are many exegetical questions still unresolved. There may have been, as the quotation above suggests, fears that any such presentation would be too esoteric, concerning itself exclusively with historical context and meaning and offering no pointers to ways in which the material might be appropriated today. In some years there was not an

obvious biblical theme to be dealt with; but liberation and sanctification (1977), good news to the poor (1992), the Trinity (1997), and new creation (2002) were obvious candidates for such treatment.

The ninth Institute in 1992 is a good example. The call issued beforehand took as its starting point Luke 4:18–19, in which Jesus quotes verses from Isaiah in his sermon at Nazareth. There are numerous references to the poor in the Bible and considerable debate about their precise meaning. Had these references been treated in the Institute, it might have restrained some of the more sweeping claims about the biblical witness made in subsequent discussions. It may have been the planners' expectation that Itumeleng Mosala's contribution would serve that purpose. As it turned out, his paper, stimulating though it was and raising important issues, focused on the interpretation of Exodus 1–2. In 2002 two of the lectures included some biblical exegesis, but there was no systematic presentation of the new creation theme. At the conclusion of the Institute, some participants observed with some surprise that neither in the plenary nor in the group sessions had much attention been given to 2 Cor. 5:17, which is one of only two places in the Bible where the term "new creation" actually appears. Nor had anyone called attention to Second Isaiah, where the idea of new creation is explored.

Interpreting the Bible

At the heart of the difficulties lies a deeper issue. Given that all the churches in the Wesleyan tradition acknowledge the authority of the Bible, what role should it play, and how does that relate to the authority ascribed to John Wesley? These are large questions, and each church in the Wesleyan tradition will develop its own answers. But it may be illuminating to look at them from the point of view of the experience of the Institute.

The title of the first Institute, "Biblical Theology and Methodist Doctrine," is indicative of its time. By 1958 the methods and assumptions of the historical-critical method of biblical study were well established in the scholarly world and widely, though not universally, accepted in the churches. The Bible was seen as a collection of historical documents, to be interpreted in the light of their context. To be sure, there were differences between the biblical books, but these were secondary to

a fundamental unity in their perception of God and God's redemptive action in history. God's salvific work brought into being a people whose story finds its culmination in the death and resurrection of Jesus and its subsequent development in the life of the Christian church. For these scholars, a clear demarcation existed between the Hebraic world of the Bible and the various cultures—Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Greek, Roman—among which at various periods Israel and the church were set. One could meaningfully speak of a coherent biblical theology; and as the Bible was authoritative for the church this theology could be regarded as normative. In order to grasp this theology one had to set aside all inherited denominational prejudices and allow the biblical text to speak for itself. Granted, there was vigorous debate in the scholarly world as to how objective and free of presuppositions exegesis could be. However, in the wider church the notion of a normative biblical theology to supplant traditional positions was very attractive because it seemed to hold out the hope of transcending denominational divisions and advancing Christian unity. It also seemed to point the way to a richer and more substantial theology to counter the shallow and overoptimistic moralism prevalent in many churches. It is interesting to quote from notes taken of the discussions among the U.S. delegation on board ship in 1958 on their way to Oxford:

> The resources of biblical theology provide in our day the only way to a recovery of the full gospel and not merely an attenuated personal or social gospel. As biblical thinking was central to Wesley's confrontation of the eighteenth century ethos, so must it be for our attempt to speak to the condition of the modern world. Not only is our involvement in the contemporary world challenging us to revitalize our doctrinal concerns, but also the universal Church of Christ through the ecumenical movement is forcing us to become aware of and to formulate the theological foundations of traditional Methodist emphases on religious experience and action.

Behind the 1958 theme, therefore, lay the assumption of two theological schemes—the one biblical, the other Methodist, to be set alongside each other, with the latter always to be judged and corrected by the former. Of course Wesley had based himself on the Scriptures, but he

had lacked the methods and insights of the historical-critical method; therefore, his exegesis of texts must be subjected to the same scrutiny as any other and could not be regarded as normative for the present day.

As the 1960s and 1970s progressed, the assumptions of a unitary biblical theology began to break down and the wide diversities within the biblical tradition between different writings and different layers of tradition were given more weight. The cultural interpenetration between Israel and its neighbors also gained wider recognition. In the New Testament period the distinction between Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism, with a corresponding distinction between types of Christianity, was seen to be an oversimplification. It was also more widely accepted that the missionary and apologetic task of the church today could not be fulfilled merely by imposing on twentieth-century culture the perceptions of the world and categories of thought that belonged to the first century or earlier. In spite of this, many of the papers up to and including 1973 present biblical material in a synthetic way, with only limited regard for the diversity of the material.

More fundamentally, biblical scholars began to acknowledge that the ideal of a purely objective, prejudice-free reading of Scripture, or any other text, is unattainable. Striving for that ideal had indeed brought some notable rewards. Considerable ecumenical consensus was achieved over the interpretation of some hitherto disputed passages. But it has come to be recognized that readers are as much influenced by their context as were the writers by theirs, and an element in that context is the conditioning they receive by being nurtured in a particular denominational tradition. This is a more far-reaching change than the decline in the notion of a single normative biblical theology and has opened up a wide-ranging debate on the nature of biblical interpretation. In this debate, the historical-critical method has to fight its corner against competitors such as structuralism and "reader response" theory. Some scholars have argued that we cannot know what the text originally meant or was intended to mean. If pushed to its extreme, that position would imply that there cannot be such a thing as *mis*-interpretation, for every interpretation would be valid for that interpreter and there would be no external criterion by which another could judge it invalid. Most scholars

would not go that far, but would hope that in offering to the public a particular interpretation from a particular context they are illuminating the text for others, whose context and presuppositions may be different. There are now many different "readings" of Scripture on offer—liberationist, Black, feminist, Asian, Marxist, and so on. These readings may or may not draw on traditional historical-critical methods, but they are avowedly readings from a particular perspective. Since 1977 these perspectives have been represented in the papers and discussions of the Institute. The biblical studies group has seen many examples.

A Methodist Reading?

The question naturally arises: Can there be a *Methodist*, or *Wesleyan*, reading of Scripture?[5] What other reason can there be for a group of Methodists to consider biblical texts on, say, the "new creation," unless there is some possibility that they will read those texts differently from Presbyterians or Roman Catholics? Or is it still the hope, as it was at the beginning, that recourse to biblical texts would somehow impose a discipline on other subject groups? Biblical specialists and those who work in other branches of theology still regard one another with some suspicion, with biblical scholars criticizing the use others make of the Bible as selecting "proof-texts," and their rivals looking on the professional study of the Bible as obscurantist.

The question whether there can or ought to be a distinctive Methodist exegesis of Scripture was addressed by Walter Klaiber in a paper for the biblical studies group in 1987.[6] He drew attention to the way in which Methodists, because of their tradition, may have a deeper, distinctive insight into the meaning of certain texts, and cited as examples the understanding of salvation as a personal reality for each individual, Wesley's characteristic combination of indicative and imperative as illuminating texts about salvation, and Methodist connectionalism as helping to understand the relationship of local churches in Paul's letters. Klaiber acknowledged that Methodist traditional understandings might be challenged by the biblical text itself or by the insights brought to it by other traditions. He then discussed the "Wesleyan quadrilateral" in the use of Scripture; but at the end of a careful discussion he remained

doubtful whether a clearly distinguishable Methodist interpretation was either possible or wise.

Other scholars, particularly from Britain, who have commented on the Institute, have been dismissive of the possibility of a "Methodist reading." One has to admit that it is hard to see any obvious denominational affiliation in much of the work published by biblical scholars worldwide, even when those scholars have strong church links or, for that matter, why there should be in most of the work they do. But there are sensitive areas, particularly in relation to certain theological themes, such as election and perfection. It is often possible to recognize denominational influences in the way these are handled. The 1987 Institute provides an interesting case in point. In this Institute, the internationally distinguished Methodist New Testament scholar C. K. Barrett gave a paper on Righteousness and Justification. In the paper, he assessed Wesley's teaching against the theology of the Pauline letters, drew some unfavorable comparisons with Luther, and made some observations on the consequences for Christian life, theology, and the church. It was an important statement. However, some participants would have felt that the influence of Lutheran scholarship apparent in much of Barrett's work generally had led him to concentrate too exclusively on justification and that more needed to be said about the implications of the noun *righteousness* in Paul for Wesley's understanding of sanctification.

The question of a Wesleyan or Methodist reading of Scripture therefore remains an unresolved issue for a future Institute to address. It will not be easy, given the fluid state of current biblical studies and the many competing approaches to the text that are now on offer. But we might venture a small step in the direction of an answer by making some rather obvious and basic points against the background of the present situation, which has moved on somewhat from when Klaiber addressed the question in 1987. We should acknowledge at the outset that some of the points that follow would be equally true for other Christian traditions.

The first point is that a Methodist reading will approach the text *as sacred Scripture*. In contrast to the way in which it is studied in many scholarly circles, a Methodist reading would not treat Scripture merely as a historical phenomenon, of interest simply as an artifact (or collection of

artifacts) of a bygone culture or as part of the study of the history of religions or as a specimen of literary creativity. Those are legitimate avenues of inquiry and contribute to our overall understanding; but they cannot exhaust the task. For Methodists the Bible is the text through which God is communicated to us. We do not merely observe the text; we are addressed by it. In the final analysis, understanding is a gift of the Holy Spirit, and a key to its interpretation is the corporate experience of the church, which through the centuries has preserved it for use. Whatever may be the precise understanding of the process by which it comes about, a Methodist reading presumes that the Bible is a source of revelation.

Second, it follows that it is impossible to read the text as a Methodist adequately without engagement with its theological and ethical content. The problems inherent in reading a theological message "into" or "out of" the text (eisegesis versus exegesis) cannot be avoided. Yet it is worthwhile to remember that, unlike what was expected of the Biblical Theology movement, Methodists do not claim that their reading excludes all other possibilities. It is offered not as *the* reading, universally valid and excluding all others, but rather as a legitimate insight into the potential of the text for the Methodist community, and possibly for others, for the present time. Behind the notion of "readings" is the recognition that those who accept the Scriptures as sacred text may find them speaking in different ways to different communities in different contexts. The ecumenical and exegetical challenge arises when different readings appear to conflict.

Third, we may revert to Klaiber's observation that all interpretation of the text takes place within a given community—whether a community of scholars or a community of believers—sharing a common history or an experience of oppression. Given the influence of the tradition to which he or she belongs, a Methodist interpreter likely will take a particular interest in those texts that tend to support that tradition, interpreting these in a way that confirms that support, while finding texts problematic that call that tradition into question. It is not a matter of coming to the text with a deliberately closed mind but of acknowledging the influence the tradition is likely to have.

Fourth, a Methodist reading will not be exclusive. Wesley himself

read the Scriptures in a particular personal and social context. Those who had no inkling of the kind of inner struggle through which he and many others of his time passed found it hard to see in the scriptural text the message of gracious release that was so apparent to him. Methodists across the world today read the Bible in a wide variety of personal and social contexts. A Methodist reading may thus be complemented by other readings—liberal, feminist, Confucian, and so on. The Methodist tradition becomes part of the complex context in which the particular interpreter operates. One can therefore reasonably speak of *a* Methodist reading, but one cannot point to anything that would qualify as *the* Methodist interpretation.[7]

The final feature of a Methodist reading will surely derive from Wesley's own practice. It has often been observed in Institute discussions that Wesley's interest in theology is essentially in its application to Christian living. He had little time for questions he considered "speculative." The preface to the sermons quoted thus far makes the point: "I abstain from all nice and philosophical speculations. . . . I want to know one thing—the way to heaven."[8] The *Notes* on the Old and New Testaments illustrate the same concern. The center of Wesley's thought is soteriological; it concerns sin and salvation. So the test of the reading of Scripture is whether it issues in an obedient response. Again, this is not to disparage the use of Scripture in wider theological debate. Rather, it is to emphasize that a characteristically *Methodist* reading will concentrate on those issues that are of importance for the church and individual Christians in their response to the grace of God and in their responsible living in and for the world. The matter is well summed up in some lines from one of Charles Wesley's hymns:

> Come, divine Interpreter,
> Bring me eyes thy book to read,
> Ears the mystic words to hear,
> Words which did from thee proceed,
> Words that endless bliss impart,
> Kept in an obedient heart.[9]

Chapter 7

Ecumenism and Wesleyanism

In a paper given to the seventh Institute in 1982, and often quoted since, Geoffrey Wainwright drew attention to the distinction, attributed to Bonhoeffer, between diachronic and synchronic approaches to ecumenism, characterizing the European and American attitudes respectively.[1] Europeans begin from the memory of a unity once given and now lost through various schisms and look for its recovery, while in the United States the current experience of a multiplicity of competing denominations tends to encourage an acceptance of diversity and the search for distinctiveness. It is hard to say to what extent this is true of Continental European Methodists, who form tiny minorities in relation to other churches and for whom a distinctive image is correspondingly impottant. However, it is true that, at least in Britain, much greater emphasis has been placed on union schemes, particularly between Methodists and Anglicans. In early nineteenth-century England, links between Methodist societies and Anglican parish churches were still quite strong in places. In the twentieth century, Britain—especially England—was noted internationally for the development of local ecumenical partnerships, in which congregations of different denominational affiliation share buildings, worship, and, sometimes, pastoral oversight. The British Methodist Conference regularly authorizes and appoints ministers of other denominations in local churches and regards them for all purposes during the time of the appointment as having the status of Methodist ministers. This has fostered a climate of ecumenical thinking. Moreover, churches originating from British overseas expansion and missionary activity have entered into union churches in north and south India, and in Zambia and Australia. In Britain, two unity schemes—one bilateral, the other

broader—came within a hair's breadth of adoption in 1972 and 1982. For these and other reasons the British have tended to play down the search for a Methodist brand image, and in the early years of the Institute were somewhat dismissive of the American interest in Wesley as a theologian. One of the achievements of the Institute since 1982 has been the rekindled interest in Britain in the theological significance of John Wesley and an awareness of the importance for the contemporary church of studying him. We will return to this issue shortly, but for the moment let us look at the ecumenical dimension of the Institute's work.

The corollary of the distinction we have just noted is the ambiguity of the word *ecumenical*. It was only in 1951 that the World Methodist Council adopted its present title. Prior to that it was known as the "Oecumenical Methodist Conference"; and for some in world Methodist circles the word *ecumenical* still implies primarily the relationship between the different Methodist churches in the world. The inauguration in 1948 of the World Council of Churches as the main international expression of the wider ecumenical movement was a major factor in changing this perception.

That wider movement formed the explicit background against which the Institute was conceived. The Institute's first meeting in 1958 declared, "The project . . . was designed not for sectarian ends, but to give an opportunity for representatives of world Methodism to consider how, as a world communion, we might play a worthier part in the thinking and action of the Universal Church."[2] As we have already seen, the Institute has responded to initiatives from the World Council of Churches and its Faith and Order Commission, notably in 1982 ("Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry") and 1987 ("Toward the Common Expression of the Apostolic Faith Today"). The 1991 Canberra Statement, "The Unity of the Church as *Koinonia*: Gift and Calling," was certainly in the background of the 1997 Institute on the Trinity. Some of the Institute's contributors, such as Raymond George, Rupert Davies, Geoffrey Wainwright, Albert Outler, Peter Stephens, and William Cannon, have also contributed significantly to the wider ecumenical scene. These and other Institute members have also taken part in the various formal dialogues held by the World Methodist Council with the Roman Catholic Church and other world communions.

The Institute has also from time to time invited speakers from other Christian traditions. Major papers have been given by C. H. Dodd (1962), David Jenkins (1965), Ian Ramsey (1969), S. J. Samartha, John Meyendorff and W. J. Hollenweger (1973), Günther Gassmann and Adrian Hastings (1987), and Jürgen Moltmann (1997). In addition, there have been other contributors to less formal sessions. Ecumenical observers, often officially appointed by their churches, also have played an important part.[3] They have made a valuable contribution in helping members see themselves as others see them. Perhaps it would have been salutary if, on occasion, they had been more critical; as guests they may have been too courteous. On the other hand, they have often expressed some envy that there is no comparable institution in their own communion and have encouraged Institute members to feel that the enterprise is worthwhile. The World Council of Churches' Günther Gassmann remarked in 1987 that this was exactly what world communions ought to be doing. Perhaps the most memorable of such ecumenical contributions has been the one by Rowan Williams, referred to in chapter 5.

But ambivalence has marked this ecumenical dimension. The program of each Institute has included a session for reports on union schemes and other conversations around the world. These have had only moderate success. Because of the time required for reporting and the particularity of the different contexts for the various conversations there has been little opportunity or inclination for debate. The 2002 session particularly was notable for its poor attendance.[4] While a few members remain committed to the practical demands of ecumenical dialogue and negotiation, the interests of the majority have clearly lain elsewhere. In some parts of the world there is little realistic prospect of ecumenical cooperation, while in other parts there is cooperation but little interest in uniting denominations. For some people, the church is understood as the company of those who are faithful to Jesus and is not identified with denominational structures.[5] For many others, the call to engage in the "kingdom issues" of justice, liberation, and working alongside the poor, in collaboration with anyone willing to be a fellow traveler, has far greater urgency than

formal interchurch relationships. For them, concentration on such domestic issues would be a betrayal of that calling.

Thus, although in 1982, 1997, and 2002 there were working groups specifically devoted to ecclesiology, it is not a subject in which the Institute overall has shown much interest. It is perhaps significant that it was precisely the absence of reference to the church that caught the attention of the Anglican observer Mary Tanner in her review of the working-group reports in 2002.[6] Albert Outler's judgment in 1962[7] that Methodism lacks a doctrine of the church would seem to be borne out. On the other hand, a plausible claim could be made that there is an *implied* ecclesiology, if only a negative one, in the decision to give priority to other issues. The point here, it must be stressed, is the *doctrine* of the church. Over the years, there has been plenty of discussion of the *practice* of the church, both in terms of mission and of the nurturing of discipleship.

In 1982, and again in 1987, Geoffrey Wainwright did address the question of Methodism's relationship to the wider ecumenical movement. His 1982 lecture has already been mentioned. He began by stressing the point just made: "There is no preaching and living of the gospel without at least an implicit ecclesiological claim being made."[8] After an extensive review of different ways of relating Methodism to the wider Christian community he took up a conclusion that Albert Outler had reached in an earlier publication. Stressing that separate denominational existence could only be seen as provisional, he looked forward to

> a united Christian community . . . in which the distinctive witness of divers denominations, functioning as "orders," "societies," or "movements" under their own self-appointed heads, will be conserved within a wider catholic perimeter, organized constitutionally on some collegial and conciliar pattern.[9]

That view is some distance away from what was in the minds of some, at least of the British, attending the first Institutes. In these early years there was talk of separate denominations needing to die in order to rise again in a fully united church. It is also far from the way in which some churches think of themselves as more or less complete in them-

selves, the sole guardians of the true Christian tradition—an attitude Wainwright gently exposed to ridicule at the beginning of his 1982 address. In 1987, using the World Council of Churches' study *Towards the Common Expression of the Apostolic Faith Today* as a context, Wainwright underlined the view of Methodism as part, not the whole, of the church, by reviewing what Methodism might learn from the wider church, as well as what it might give to it.[10] To what extent his views are representative is not clear, as the issue has not been fully tested in Institute debates over the years.

The Methodist Family

In terms of the narrower understanding of ecumenism as the relationship of churches in the Methodist tradition, the Institute has made strenuous efforts to be more geographically inclusive. Recall the original intention in the 1950s to create a forum in which Methodists from around the world could share insights and experiences and learn from one another. We have already drawn attention to how difficult it is to achieve this. In the early years, especially, there were relatively few Methodist scholars outside the United States and Great Britain who could be invited to participate. Then there is the perennial problem of finding the money to enable them to attend. Even in 2002 the number of members from any one region outside Europe and North America was very limited. Moreover, on a number of occasions thus far we have pointed out the Institute's failure to give adequate attention to the concerns of these members. Those from Latin America have been more successful than most in getting a hearing, and the Institute has dealt with the issues of poverty and power that they have voiced. But it has been harder for Westernized members to enter into the cultural and interfaith issues raised in the various countries of Asia, Africa, and the Pacific. Conversely, in some group work, members from those countries have found it hard to enter into discussions centered upon Western issues.

The Institute has also tried to broaden its coverage of the wider Methodist family. Since 1977 representatives of the Church of the Nazarene, the Wesleyan Church, the Free Methodist Church, and other churches that trace their origins and inspiration back to John Wesley

have been included in the Institute and have contributed significant papers. With a few notable exceptions the Institute has been less successful in attracting representatives of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Church Zion, and the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. In a far-reaching survey of attitudes to the poor in the post-Wesleyan period, Donald Dayton argued in 1992 that the Salvation Army and Chilean Pentecostalists should also be included in the family.[11] This point was taken up in some of the group discussion but has so far not borne fruit.

The general broadening of the constituency has created some conceptual problems. How should it be described? Some churches retain the word *Methodist* or *Wesleyan* in their titles and thereby advertise their origins. Others, such as the Church of the Nazarene, do not. In Britain the term *Wesleyan* would commonly be regarded as a historically restricted title, referring to one of the three denominations that united in 1932 to form the Methodist Church. It has become common in the Institute to refer to "the Methodist and Wesleyan" traditions, neither term being wholly satisfactory on its own. The phrase is cumbersome and is often, as many times in these pages, reduced to "Methodist" for economy.

What of Wesley Himself?

At the heart of all this lies the question: What significance does John Wesley have for the churches that derive their existence, immediately or more remotely, from the eighteenth-century movement he led, and what significance ought he to have?[12] The significance officially accorded to Wesley in the various churches differs widely. Many include reference to some of his writings in their title deeds. In Britain and many of the churches derived from British Methodism, the *Forty-four Sermons* and the *Notes on the New Testament* are cited among the Doctrinal Standards. The United Methodist Church includes also the *Articles of Religion* and the *General Rules*. But since its union with the Evangelical United Brethren in 1968, The United Methodist Church has also included Philip Otterbein and Jacob Albright among its founding figures. For some the reference to Wesley's writings is simply a historical legacy—an embarrassment, even—while for others it is a test of orthodoxy and a

source of renewal for essential emphases in the life of the church and the individual. The differences would be even greater if one were to examine attitudes in the pew. In some places, May 24th, or the Sunday nearest to it, is observed enthusiastically in commemoration of Wesley's experience at Aldersgate Street; in other places, it is ignored. Some would regard the attention given to John Wesley as backward looking and irrelevant, while others consider it a mark of identity within the Christian family.

In the first two Institutes, and again in 1973, the interaction between Scripture, contemporary ideas, and traditional Methodist theology was discussed vigorously, while in 1965 and 1969 it was largely ignored. However, since 1977 each Institute has focused specifically on John Wesley and the Wesleyan tradition. So the question in what sense Wesley should be seen as important for the contemporary church has been inescapable. Various answers have been offered, but it is not clear that any consensus has been reached.

The preliminary question to be addressed is this: which Wesley? Rex Kissack once claimed that one of the reasons for holding the Institute in Oxford, where John Wesley's initial spiritual awakening and early struggles took place, was to counterbalance a heavy, almost exclusive, emphasis upon Aldersgate. In the 1950s and 1960s, the popular image of Wesley on both sides of the Atlantic was of a man whose development culminated in the turning point of 24 May 1738, when his heart was "strangely warmed," with a consequential emphasis on religious experience as the characteristic feature of Methodism.

The strongest challenge to that caricature was offered at the 1982 Institute by Albert Outler, in a paper to which many Wesley scholars have since looked back as setting the agenda for subsequent work.[13] Outler himself regarded the paper as a major contribution to the subject. He outlined three phases in the study of Wesley. In the first, beginning immediately after his death, Wesley was the concern almost exclusively of Methodist historians, and the picture they developed of him served the interests of their churches. It was selective and uncritical, based on inadequate evidence and presented him as a cult hero. The second phase, in the twentieth century, tended in reaction to focus on particular aspects of Wesley's life and thought and was less interested in his relationship to

contemporary Methodism, leaving "a full generation (or more) of Methodist theologians whose thought has been touched quite lightly by Wesley himself (save for the purposes of occasional incantation)."[14] In contrast, some latched on to selected aspects of Wesley's work in order to give authority to particular movements or positions. The third phase, for which Outler appealed, would be based on a full, critical, edition of Wesley's writings. It would study Wesley in his own context and take full account of the ecumenically wide-ranging theological sources he used for his thinking and the contemporary influences upon him. It would cover the entire corpus of his writings, giving equal weight to his later work *before* moving on to consider his relevance for today. This approach stands in sharp contrast to the practice of appealing to Wesley piecemeal to authorize ideas that have been independently developed or simply quarrying his writings for proof-texts. As Outler put it, "Back to Wesley and his sources, and then forward." Costa Rican scholar Elsa Tamez made a similar point, albeit in less detail, at the same Institute.[15] Drawing attention to the very different context in which Wesley worked from that experienced in Latin America today, she argued against quoting him at random and suggested a relating of relationships: Wesley in relation to his context to be related to us in relation to ours.

Outler's approach has proved to be fruitful and has greatly helped to reinstate Wesley studies in Britain and elsewhere, where traditional and rather hackneyed stereotypes had led to the feeling that he had little to offer to the contemporary church. To concentrate on Wesley, so the argument went, was to look backward and to put a brake on ecumenical progress. What we ought to be doing is to seek common ground with other Christian traditions rather than to emphasize what is peculiar to Methodists. It is still difficult, however, for those who are not professional historians to take full account of Outler's program. The old image of Wesley as the cult hero dies hard and tends to rise again in a new guise, and one gets glimpses of it in Institute presentations and debates. In many areas of thought and practice, as Outler knew better than most, Wesley was not the innovator he is sometimes assumed to be, and though he undoubtedly dominated his movement, he did not work alone.

But even when he is seen in that broader perspective, how should

Wesley function in relation to today's church? Is he no more than a historical figure, the one who happened to set the Methodist movement in motion—the "eponymous hero in the communion of saints,"[16] now to be left behind? The trouble is, Methodists cannot give account of themselves in relation to other Christian traditions without some reference to their origins, so that inevitably they are associated with him. "If we are Methodists, we cannot reject our ties with the tradition that considers John Wesley its founder."[17] "We've got Wesley for better or worse, and we're going to keep him."[18] Is Wesley to be seen as an overbearing parent who will not release his children from conformity to his ideas? There are those who call for such deference; but we cannot ignore the many differences between the world in which he functioned and the one we now face. Some more subtle understanding of the relationship is called for. There have been several suggestions in the course of recent Institutes.

One suggestion, favored by Outler himself, has been to refer to John Wesley as a "mentor"[19]; that is, as someone from whom we may learn and who puts questions to our current ideas and practice. It does not follow from such an understanding that we are thereby always called into line. There may be justifiable reasons for moving beyond the position he adopted. His understanding of biblical inspiration is a case in point. Over the past two centuries, archaeological discoveries and scholarly work have led most theologians to express their understanding of inspiration in terms different from Wesley's. But if Wesley is accorded the status of mentor it ensures that when we differ from him the departure is deliberate and well grounded, and not merely the result of thoughtless drift. Such a concept also has the virtue that it does not give Wesley exclusive influence. There can be other mentors besides, as Outler noted.

The image used in the title of the 1997 Institute was "trajectories," a mathematical term that conjures up the image of a missile launched from the ground and following a flight path that, because of the forces acting on it, is neither dead straight nor random. Our current theological ideas, it might be said, "take off" from Wesley and are controlled to some extent by their point of origin; but they are influenced also by other factors, and so move beyond their starting point to some new position. They never move simply in a straight line.

The merit in both these images is that they legitimize the process of theological interaction with contemporary contexts as well as with the resources of the past. They do not require Methodist theology to stand still or to replicate an eighteenth-century system in all its detail. But is "system" the appropriate word to use of Wesley's thought? It has been common to disregard him when enumerating the constructive theologians of the Christian past precisely because he does not offer a system. Although the collected sermons and other writings deal with some more general themes, the vast bulk of his work is about soteriology—that is, about sin and redemption, faith and holiness, judgment and grace. Moreover, these themes are set out, not in the form of systematic treatises but in more occasional works, sermons, journals, letters, tracts, polemical pamphlets, and minutes of conversations, along with collections of hymns, the majority of which were written by his brother, Charles. Two conclusions may be drawn from this. First, Wesley's theological work was intimately linked to his missional and pastoral vocation. He concentrated on defining the doctrines central to his and his helpers' preaching and pastoral work. In terms of the agenda of the 1744 Conference, the key questions were these: "What to teach? How to teach? What to do?"[20] Second, Wesley's writing was geared to resourcing and responding to the needs of the Methodist people and defending their cause. He was a "folk theologian," or "people's theologian."[21]

Thus, some have suggested that Wesley's guiding influence should be seen principally in terms of his *theological method*.[22] It was a method geared to the needs of ordinary people, not academic debate, engaging not for the sake of comprehensiveness and "academic respectability" with the entire range of theological issues but with those that relate to salvation and employing a variety of media of expression rather than relying exclusively on the printed treatise.[23] It is, in Wesley's own words, "practical divinity."[24] In line with this, many scholars, particularly David Lowes Watson, have argued that fidelity to Wesley's method involves both practice and theory. Thus, theologians who discuss mission must also engage in it. Commitment to the poor means more than theorizing about poverty; it calls also for encounter. Some subject groups have made attempts to implement this method by visiting local projects and

churches. It is difficult, though, for a substantial group of largely prosperous and mainly foreign theologians to descend on the more deprived areas of Oxford without being regarded merely as sightseers.

One can take the suggestion about method a step further. In the last chapter we made reference to the so-called "Wesleyan quadrilateral"[25] of Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. While Wesley never used the term or ever brought those four factors together in the way the term *quadrilateral* implies, the fact is that all four factors influenced his thinking throughout his life—Scripture, of course, playing a decisive role. The United Methodist Church has incorporated the quadrilateral into its official statement, "Our Theological Task."[26] Other churches have not taken this official step; but it has been suggested that the appeal to *experience*, however defined, alongside tradition and reason and in conjunction with Scripture is a distinctively Wesleyan contribution to theological method.[27] For Wesley, "experience" primarily meant personal religious experience. However, in modern times the term has often been broadened to embrace human experience in general—scientific discovery or the collective experience of communities under oppression.

More recently, emphasis has been placed on Wesley's *commitment to the poor* as providing a significant key to his theological approach. The 1992 Institute dealt extensively with this theme, although the papers reveal some disagreement about the extent to which benefit to the poor was a fundamental principle for Wesley's theology.[28] This aspect of Wesley's work has attracted interest especially from Latin American theologians committed to giving voice to the experience of the contemporary poor. Wesley's commitment is more significant in this regard than his ability to diagnose and address the structural causes of poverty, in which he was limited by the perceptions of his time.[29]

What of *particular doctrinal emphases*? Several have been suggested: his particular way of connecting justification and sanctification, effectively combining Catholic and Reformation emphases; his emphasis on the primacy of grace; and his understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit.[30] The 1977 Institute explored the relationship between sanctification and liberation, with the intention of discovering what insights Wesley could offer to contemporary liberation theologies. The implica-

tion of his doctrine of sanctification—that salvation involved the transformation of the human condition and not only the restoration of right relationships with God—has been stressed repeatedly.[31] Alternatively, some have argued that it is not one particular doctrine, or selection of doctrines, but the relation between them all—the "proportion (or analogy) of the faith"[32]—that forms Wesley's significant legacy.

Before ending this survey, it is worth noting some more critical points. For most Methodists the influence of John Wesley may be felt in two ways. One is by deliberate attention to his life and work, in the way we have just been considering. But most churches in the Methodist or broader Wesleyan traditions also carry evidence of his influence in their organization and general ethos. There is truly a *tradition* of ideas and practices carried from generation to generation in the life of the church, although more marked and consistent in some churches than in others. This raises the question of Wesley's status in relation to those who succeeded him. Although there has been a working group since the Institute of 1987 to address the history of the movements after Wesley, there has been some ambivalence of attitude. There has been a pervading tendency to treat nineteenth- and twentieth-century history in terms of its decline from the Wesleyan ideal. In 1992, Donald Dayton traced the loss of identification with the poor and the development of Methodism as a middle-class movement to an ambivalence in Wesley himself.[33] It has been hard to detect the idea of positive development in the discussion.

It is fair to ask whether such concentration on John Wesley alone does justice to a doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church. Of course, the further one goes into the nineteenth century the more one is looking at people and movements whose influence was less on the Methodist and Wesleyan movement as a whole and more on particular segments of it. It may well be the case that as an international body embracing a wide range of traditions, the Institute cannot go beyond John Wesley, since he is the only person all have in common. However, for some of the churches represented, such an apparently exclusive emphasis upon Wesley may represent a distortion.

A similar issue arises over John Wesley's brother, Charles. There have been welcome moves recently, particularly under the influence of S. T.

Kimbrough, Jr., to introduce Charles Wesley into the discussions. The 1992 volume included a paper by Kimbrough, given in another context. In 1997 there was a session to sing Charles's hymns and in 2002 the plenary sessions were regularly introduced by singing his hymns.[34] Theologically, Charles and John were not identical twins, although the main outlines of their thought were similar. In terms of popular Methodism, at least in Britain, the tradition has been more fully absorbed through hymnody than by any other means.[35] The Institute has not engaged in any systematic comparison of the two brothers. A restraining factor, once again, is the fact that the use of Charles's hymns is not shared to any great degree by all the churches (hymns do not easily translate), although such a study might stimulate greater attention, as the Institute has succeeded in doing with the works of John.

To return to John, it is worth noting the extent to which the studies of him, at least in the plenary sessions, have been issue-driven: sanctification and liberation, pluralism, the poor, the Trinity—all themes suggested by aspects of the contemporary situation. In consequence, relatively little attention has been given to some issues that would appear to have been important to Wesley himself or significant for the eventual separation of Methodism at his death: personal piety, Holy Communion, preaching, discipline, the organization of societies, church order, and ministry.[36] However, in the history of the churches represented at the Institute, these issues have been important and often controversial. It is also interesting to note that in 1977 the Roman Catholic Cuthbert Rand felt that the influence of John Wesley was not as strong as he had expected. "As a Catholic I had been inclined to assume that there must be a close parallel between the influence of Wesleyan spirituality and, say, Carmelite spirituality in the Catholic Church, or between John Wesley and St. Francis." Can it be that the sixth Institute and its successors have been more concerned with Wesley's theology than with his spirituality, of which his commitment to the poor, which successive Institutes have addressed, was only one dimension?

So we return to the question: What status should Wesley have in the life of the diverse churches that derive from his movement? Clearly, the Institute can stimulate reflection on this issue by the sharing of points of

view, but it cannot prescribe an answer that will fit all. The constituency "Methodist" and "Wesleyan" is too broad for such uniformity. A danger exists that concentrating on Wesley may blind us to the vast Christian heritage that preceded him, and to which he was himself deeply indebted.[37] Any notion that it "began" with John Wesley could lead Methodism into becoming a sect. It is interesting that in 1987 the observer from the Reformed tradition, Brenda Stephenson, reported back to her sponsoring bodies her surprise that so much attention was paid to Wesley and so relatively little to the Bible. She went on to note that sometimes his "name was no more than a rallying cry, or a way of giving authority to pet theologies." Therein lies the danger with Wesley, as with any other figure from the past whom we wish to treat as authoritative—or, indeed, with the Scriptures. In her treatment of the issue noted above, Elsa Tamez pointed out that the alternative to ignoring Wesley, which she argued was impossible, was often to "force" him to be on our side. But "we cannot attribute to Wesley something that cannot be found in his context regardless of whether this is due to limitations of historical conditions or his particular view of class."[38] The temptation, however, is great—at least for some.

It is perhaps appropriate to return to the distinction with which this chapter began. For some churches in the worldwide fellowship their distinctiveness as Methodists is a matter of great importance, and Wesley is an aid to defining their identity. For other churches, different concerns prevail, whether it be the struggle against oppression and poverty, the battle with a pervasive secularism, witness in the face of the dominance of other faiths, or the call to reconciliation with other Christian traditions for the sake of mission with integrity. When all the churches added together in a country form only a tiny minority within the population, what can be said with one voice to the prevailing culture can seem more important than the articulation of those issues that make each church distinctive. One service the Institute can perform for world Methodism is to enable those priorities to be shared and understood more widely and the various parts of the one family to learn from one another.

Chapter 8

Evangelism, Dialogue, and Liberation

When British Methodists celebrated the centenary of Methodism in 1839 they were looking back—not to 1725, when John Wesley began his serious spiritual reading; or to 1729 and the beginnings of the Holy Club, to which the nickname "Methodist" was first attached (both dates that Wesley himself tended to quote in describing the rise of Methodism[1]); or again, as many would today, to 1738, when on May 24 his "heart was strangely warmed" at the meeting in Aldersgate Street, London. Rather, they looked to 2 April 1739, when Wesley first began preaching in the open air. It is striking evidence that early nineteenth-century Methodism regarded itself essentially as a movement for mission. In fact, Wesley's statement of God's purpose in raising up the Methodist preachers—"to reform the nation, and in particular the church; to spread scriptural holiness over the land"[2]—was repeated, with adaptations, in official statements on both sides of the Atlantic well into the nineteenth century. Mission is in the Methodist genes.

What does mission mean in the contemporary scene? Even Wesley's 1763 statement, quoted above, puts a question mark against some present-day notions, for it speaks of "reforming the nation" and "spreading scriptural holiness," not just of "conversion" or "church membership." The nature of the church's missionary task has provoked some of the sharpest exchanges the Institute has seen.

It is perhaps strange that mission was not a prominent theme in the early meetings of the Institute. Recall that in the early years the Institute was seen by those responsible for the World Methodist Council's program as a possible rival to evangelism. Some even suggested that the

Institute become an adjunct to the Council's evangelism progtam.[3] At the second Institute in 1962, the president of the British Conference, Leslie Davison, called on the Institute to find ways of communicating the gospel to the world; but that call was not taken up.[4] In that period, minds were more preoccupied with the apologetic task of making Christian faith appear credible in the contemporary (read Western) world than with the wider question of the content and practice of the church's mission. A brief discussion of conversion in 1958 concentrated on it as a doctrine.[5] It was not until the seventh Institute, in 1982, that the subject began to take center stage; and, in doing so, it exposed the wide differences on the subject that exist in the Methodist family.

In its 1971 meeting in Denver, Colorado, the World Methodist Council adopted a call to evangelism, inviting all the member churches to engage in "an agreed intense period of worldwide witness and evangelism." (Incidentally, Davison was one of the instigators of that move.) The call was prefaced by the statement, "We believe that the Lord's commission to his church to preach the gospel and make disciples is the supreme business of the church."[6] This was followed up five years later with a further invitation and the appointment of Alan Walker as director of World Evangelism. It eventually led to the setting up of the Evangelism Institute at Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1981. While these initiatives were taken up enthusiastically in many places around the world, they also provoked questions and criticism. The flavor of these is given in some of the responses to a paper David Randolph gave to the fifth Institute in 1973—significantly, not in one of the main sessions but in one of the "lighter" evening sessions. Under the heading "The Evangelical Imperative in the Ecumenical Context," he described both the Denver initiative and the World Council of Churches' consultation on "Salvation Today" in Bangkok, Thailand, from which he had just come. The address and more than two pages of responses to it were subsequently printed.[7] In various ways they raised a number of questions: Is evangelism a matter of special efforts and events or is it central to the ongoing life and witness of the local church? Can there be a global "one-method-fits-all" approach, especially when this seems to focus on mass,

public rallies? Is there not a danger of exporting a Western-style evangelism that will seem alien to other cultures?[8] How is evangelism to be related to involvement in the "kingdom issues" of justice and peace? Is the one the consequence of the other or is social and political engagement in itself an evangelistic witness, a declaration of God's good news? Is evangelism a matter of bringing a message about what is hitherto unknown, or is the Spirit already at work in persons of other faiths? Can there be effective evangelism in the name of the one Lord if it is carried out denominationally rather than ecumenically?

Clearly, these questions are about more than method in evangelism; they go to the nature of the gospel itself. Is there a single message to be delivered—the same for all? Or does such a view inevitably result in the gospel being clothed in the culture to which the evangelist belongs? Are not twentieth- and twenty-first-century Western missionaries as much the agents of globalization as their nineteenth-century predecessors were agents of colonialism? Is the task of evangelism rather to meet others and to listen and learn where Christ through the Spirit is already at work, so that the evangelists become in the encounter the recipients rather than the givers and the gospel truly takes root in the receiving culture? Is it true that evangelism is, as the 1971 call declared, the "supreme business" of the church or does the ministry of Jesus with the outcasts, the sick, and the demon possessed suggest other models for the church's calling? Is the gospel about the personal salvation of individuals, one by one, or is there a message of good news for human beings in their corporate existence as communities of shared experience? And, finally, what of Wesley's insistence that making disciples (in his terms, "awakening," "justification," and "new birth") is only the beginning of a longer process of growth in scriptural holiness, or perfect love, which is to be seen in continuity with it and not as a distinct extra? All these issues were being debated in various quarters, particularly in the United States. There was a serious danger that the Institute might be polarized around these issues. On one side were those who saw themselves as the "practitioners," who were driven by a sense of urgency to reach a world that is waiting for the good news. On the other side were those whom the "practitioners" tended to regard as "mere" academics, who are always raising questions and finding fault but

who are *doing* nothing, or who are half-hearted liberals ready to dilute the message so as to avoid giving offense.

These controversies were not confined to the Methodist family. In 1980 the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches and the Lausanne Committee on World Evangelization (which represents a wide range of generally conservative evangelical groups and individuals) both held world consultations on evangelism within months of each other. They met separately and represented different approaches, even though they exchanged observers.[9] There was not enough common ground or mutual trust to act jointly.

When in 1977 and 1982 the Institute moved its focus to John Wesley's legacy, it called for closer attention to the above questions. The fact that Wesley spent the last fifty years of his life as a traveling preacher and described himself and his helpers as "extraordinary messengers"[10] made such attention inevitable. Therefore, in 1982 a deliberate attempt was made to bring people of widely differing viewpoints together. A grant of $10,000 from the Robb Foundation in the United States helped to make it possible. David Lowes Watson, who convened the working group on evangelism, believed it was imperative that evangelists should be exposed to the rigor of theological analysis, in terms both of method and the content of the message. At the same time, theologians should be challenged to engage in evangelism, since that would in turn inform their theology.[11] It was this combination of theological writing and evangelistic practice that had characterized John Wesley himself. It proved to be a difficult task. Of the groups whose reports were published in the 1982 volume, only the group on evangelism had two reports—one by Alan Walker and the other by Watson himself. Walker's report was challenged in the plenary session as not being representative of the group as a whole. In his report, Watson tried to reflect the diversity of the group and the papers presented to it.

Three additional factors complicated the debate in the Institute. First, in his plenary presentation towards the end of the first week, James Fowler gave an outline of his general theory of faith development and showed how the stages of John Wesley's spiritual biography accorded with it. Some participants felt that it erred in the direction of psycholog-

ical development to the loss of the dimensions of revelation, sin, and grace. Fowler's scheme, they felt, presented conversion only in terms of progress within a particular religious framework and made no allowance for the possibility of a radical shift to Christian faith from some other worldview. Fowler accepted much of these criticisms, but for some his view seemed to undermine the traditional understanding of conversion.[12]

Dialogue

Second, in his plenary lecture, titled "Evangelism and Wesley's Catholicity of Grace,"[13] S. Wesley Ariarajah (responsible for interfaith dialogue at the World Council of Churches) argued that Wesley's understanding of prevenient grace led him to believe in the possibility of ultimate salvation for those who had not heard the gospel of Christ. These people would be judged in the light of their responses to that grace. This understanding, Ariarajah suggested, should transform our attitude to people of other faiths. "Our evangelistic task is set, not in a world which is lost and deprived of God, but one in which God is very much active, and where, moved by God's grace, people already experience the love of God in good measure through Christ and the Holy Spirit." He also drew attention to Wesley's extension of personal holiness to include its social dimension and referred to the more holistic approach of those Latin American theologians who reject the notion of evangelism as seeking only to save souls and who affirmed "the whole gospel for the whole person in the whole community."[14] Other voices and other contexts were thus introduced into what might otherwise have been a controversy exclusively among those who came from the churches of the West.

The relationship of Christianity to other faiths had been discussed in the Institute on previous occasions. In 1965, representatives of Buddhism and Sikhism had contributed to the consideration of the finality of Christ, and a Jewish contribution was added to the published volume. All three appeared under the heading "Non-Christian Views of Christ."[15] However, these papers confined themselves to general statements of the positions adopted by those traditions. Additionally, there is no record of the discussion, if any, that followed the presentation of the papers or any

hint that Christians might have anything to learn from these faiths, other than drawing from them an agenda for apologists to address.

In 1973, Stanley J. Samartha, Ariarajah's predecessor at the World Council of Churches, gave a paper titled "The Holy Spirit and People of Various Faiths, Cultures, and Ideologies." In it, he protested the tradition of seeing the Spirit's operations as confined to the church.[16] He pleaded for dialogue with people of other faiths in the recognition that the Spirit of God is also at work in them; and we must learn to discern the Spirit's work. But Samartha's discussion focused on the Protestant tradition in general and did not suggest a specifically Methodist view. (He regarded the Orthodox tradition as having a more generous view of the Spirit's activity outside the church.) Ariajarah's paper by contrast offered a basis for dialogue in the thinking of John Wesley himself, although Ariarajah was careful to point out that actually engaging in dialogue was not an option that presented itself to Wesley.

Interreligious dialogue has not featured prominently in the Institute's work since Ariarajah's and Samartha's presentations, although the indigenization of the gospel in various cultures has been treated from time to time. In 1997, Gabriel Setiloane gave a lecture on indigenization in relation to Africa, and some papers have been offered in subject groups. In the same year, the systematic theology group found itself asking how Christians can and ought to bear witness to the triune God to people of other faiths. But it was not until 2002 that the Institute as a whole was treated to an example of interfaith dialogue in J. C. Park's "Christian Perfection and Confucian Sage Learning: An Interreligious Dialogue in the Crisis of Life." Back in 1982, talk of dialogue added fuel to the fires of controversy.

Liberation

The third complicating factor in 1982 was the debate with liberation theology. At the 1973 Institute, Richard Tholin offered a review of liberation movements. José Míguez Bonino, who served as warden of the Institute that year, preached a sermon linking the Holy Spirit to the liberation of the oppressed and care for the planet.[17] It was only at the sixth Institute, in 1977, that the Latin American voice was first fully

articulated under the theme "Sanctification and Liberation." The year 1982 saw the number of representatives from that part of the world more than double, from five to twelve—which made their contribution all the stronger and more effective. We described this contribution in chapter 4. In the context of the glaring inequalities of wealth and poverty in those countries and the experience of oppressive military rule, aggravated as the century wore on by the burden of international debt and all the other effects of globalization, the traditional evangelical offer of personal salvation, combined with an otherworldly suspicion of political involvement, seemed to many to be a diversion from the true calling of the church, namely, to witness to the reign of God in liberation from oppression and to work for justice and peace in solidarity with the poor. Others heard this as a betrayal of the gospel, although Mortimer Arias's words, which Ariarajah quoted in his paper, should be noted: "We do not accept the idea that evangelism means only 'saving souls' and seeking exclusively 'a change in the eternal status of the individual.' These concepts are biblically insufficient. *We reject also the reduction of the gospel to a program for service or social development or a mere instrument of sociopolitical programs.*"[18]

Many of these concerns are reflected in Walker's 1982 group report. The emphasis is squarely on "conversion Christianity," but "the message must be contextualized in each society. . . . It must be at once personal and social; especially it must represent good news to the poor."[19] Among the "areas of concern" the report lists are questions about the relation of social, political, and economic realities to the kingdom of God. Issues "for further reflection, study and dialogue" include "how do the themes of poverty and oppression and the actual life of the poor relate to the *content* of the gospel?" There was clearly an attempt in this presentation to embrace both individual and social emphases. Yet some felt that the main emphasis had not really shifted and that the social aspect was receiving only lip service. Moreover, to the Latin Americans, the references to social justice did not cut deep enough to address the causes of poverty. For them, the capitalist and imperialist structures of society were sinful and needed to be changed. Working for a "better deal" within the existing framework could not be enough.

Fifteen years later, at the tenth Institute in 1997, José Míguez Bonino returned to the question of balance.[20] "Is the social, economic, even political concern," he asked, "which is undoubtedly present in the Wesleyan tradition, intrinsic to the evangelical renewal, or is it only a significant, but after all peripheral, side effect of its evangelistic drive?" He argued for a truly holistic understanding of salvation in all its aspects—personal, social, and political—the foundation for which is the Trinity. At the same time, he took issue with some other liberation theologians. To treat the liberating ministty of Jesus merely as an inspiration and example to be followed and his cross and resurrection merely as patterns for our suffering and hope, he averred, is to displace the critical role of God's love incarnate in Jesus Christ as the measure of authentic love. Moreover, it reduces the radical call to conversion from being a "turning" and a "new birth" to being a matter of growth, new awareness, and greater commitment. It was a significant statement, and, looking back, one wishes it could have been made and heard in earlier Institutes. For, without minimizing the real differences that still exist, one can now see that an element at least of the controversy in the 1980s arose from the way in which the different positions were perceived. In order to be heard at all, those who pressed the case for liberation theology had to argue so strongly for social and political commitment against prevailing individualistic conceptions of salvation that they were assumed to have abandoned the ideas of repentance, conversion, and faith altogether.[21] The same might perhaps be said of Black and feminist theologians, although it is important to note James Cone's description of the spirituality underlying the Black experience.[22]

The controversies of 1982 clearly bore some fruit. In 1987 David Lowes Watson was able to record that the work of the group on Methodist evangelism and doctrine

> demonstrated not only the extent to which evangelism had developed in the intervening five years as a viable area of theological discourse, but also the degree to which Wesleyan theology is a rich taproot for such development. . . . There was a clear consensus . . . that there should be open collegial discussion and that theological reflection on evangelism, no less than other areas of ministry and

mission, requires a climate of mutual trust. There are few other contexts, if any, where this could have taken place in such depth, and it was generally felt that the work of the group was an important contribution to the theology and practice of world evangelism, to say nothing of world Methodism.[23]

That was no mean achievement. Correspondence on file for 1986, when details of the assignments for the various working groups were being drafted for inclusion in the official Call for 1987, shows just how sensitive the issues were. It was particularly difficult to spell out the evangelism group's task in a way that did not suggest that the discussions would be "loaded" one way or the other.

Since then, things have moved on. There has continued to be a working group dealing with evangelism at each Institute. In 1992 David Lowes Watson gave a major paper on the content of the gospel,[24] and in 2002 the group combined evangelism with ecumenism. The attempt in Watson's 1982 program to involve theologians in issues of practice has proved difficult. In that year, and again in 1987, the evangelism group made visits to local congregations and projects in Oxford and the nearby town of Swindon. However, these visits have not been continued. The Institute has continued to attract people with a diversity of views, but the discussions no longer have the sharpness of twenty years ago. Both in the United States and in Britain evangelism has been established as an academic subject capable of being studied at doctoral level—and the Institute can claim to have made some contribution to that development. The 1992 working group affirmed the Institute's importance "for the development of theory and practice in global Methodist evangelism and mission."[25] Not the least of its fruits has been the recognition that evangelism has historically often been most effectively carried out by the poor, and that today Western churches have much to receive from the churches of the poor.

Of course, differences remain. While it is now much less common in the Methodist family to oppose evangelism and social action as irreconcilable alternatives, there are still differences in theory and practice over the question of how they are related. Is social action a consequence of personal conversion, an aspect of obedient discipleship? Or is commit-

ment to working for justice and peace and the relief of need itself an inseparable element in the conversion, part of what one is converted to when accepting Christ? Is the gospel message directed solely to individuals, with the social consequences the result of individual activity? Or is there also a gospel word, in judgment and hope, as in the Old Testament, for communities and nations? In his aforementioned 1992 address, David Lowes Watson urged that in the preaching of the gospel Christ must be presented in all his offices—not only as priest mediating forgiveness but also as prophet calling society to repentance and justice, and as potentate requiring obedience as the response to grace. And what of the possibility of salvation where Christ is not known and confessed? Are we called to dialogue with those of other faiths or to seek their conversion? Are these alternatives mutually exclusive? Within the Institute and wider Methodism, as in the Christian world generally, there is still division on such matters. Yet, there is greater mutual understanding, to which the Institute can justly claim to have contributed.

Chapter 9

Retrospect

What sort of event is the Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies? It has many of the features of an academic conference: lectures, small-group discussion, the reading of papers, published proceedings. It meets in an academic setting, and many of its members hold academic posts in universities and seminaries. But what academic conference would begin and end each day with worship or break into hymn singing at the drop of a hat? What academic conference would make residence a requirement, or last for ten or eleven days, and expect its members to be present for the entire period?

The length of the Institute is in fact part of its secret. It allows members to get to know one another; and there is plenty of evidence that friendships formed at the Institute continue afterwards and form the basis for academic collaboration. Evaluation forms and reminiscences frequently put friendships high in the list of things participants appreciate most. The Institute has been described as a cross between an academic conference and a family reunion. It bears many of the marks of John Wesley's early conferences from 1744 onwards, which were the occasions both for Christian fellowship and for doctrinal discussion, and helped to build a sense of colleagueship among the preachers.

Reactions to the Institute have varied over the years. Some early reactions, as noted earlier in this book, were critical both of the quality of some of the papers and of the value of meeting. The British were, if anything, more critical than others, in part related to doubts about the value of searching for a common Methodist identity. However, their criticisms might also have reflected the sense of rootedness that comes from being on home ground, where the tradition began and where much—like Wesley's chapels in Bristol and London, the rectory at Epworth

where he was born, and the historic city of Oxford itself—can be taken for granted. For many of those living outside Britain, meeting in Oxford was a reconnection with their roots. However, what is noticeable is the fact that in more recent years the British have begun more fully to share in the sense of excitement at being part of a stimulating international gathering. This has much to do with the quality of the papers and the work done in the small groups. Much more so than the Institutes of the 1960s and 1970s, the Institutes in the 1980s and 1990s have been intensive and businesslike.

For this, much of the credit must go to Theodore Runyon and Douglas Meeks. As we have shown, after the pioneering work done by Dow Kirkpatrick and Rex Kissack in founding the Institute, there was in effect a "second founding" in 1977 and 1982, when the focus on Wesley and the present pattern of working groups were established. The proceedings of the Institute since 1962 have always been edited in the United States, first by Kirkpatrick and then by Runyon and Meeks in turn. It is fair to say that in the planning of each meeting, although committee discussion and consultation across the Atlantic have taken place, much of the inspiration for identifying the theme and its breakdown into the subjects for the various papers has been due to these men. For evidence of the reputation that the Institute now enjoys, one need look only at the number of scholars of international standing who are prepared to devote two weeks of their lives every five years to be present.

Another feature of the Institute noted by those who have offered their recollections is that while there have been plenty of occasions of sharp disagreement and some instances of particular groups banding together to press a point of view or to call for particular changes, there has been a striking absence of acrimony and none of the professional rivalries that sometimes afflict academic gatherings. Again, it may be that the length of the Institute and the opportunity to build up relationships has contributed to this.

There is a further aspect. For many academics, perhaps particularly those serving in secular institutions, the Institute has been a setting in which confessional allegiance does not have to be suppressed in the supposed interests of academic disinterestedness. Here their expertise in

a chosen field can be explicitly put to the service of the church. Some biblical scholars especially have felt this. The Institute has helped its members to reclaim the notion that theology is a discipline in the service of the church, which the church needs and acknowledges; it is not merely a branch of religious history or social studies. It is perhaps for this reason that Adrian Hastings's 1987 lecture "Pluralism: The Relationship of Theology to Religious Studies,"[1] while written almost exclusively from a British context, met with a warm response from American members. In the paper, Hastings distinguished the disciplines of theology and religious studies as each legitimate on its own terms and stoutly defended the legitimacy of explicitly *Christian* academic theology, grounded in the belief in the uniqueness of Christ.

The Dream and the Outcome

To what extent, then, has the Institute achieved its founding aims? Recall that Kirkpatrick and Kissack originally hoped to set up a permanent institution. Their dream was for a school to which scholars and students could come for a period of a year or more and, in the course of whatever other study they were pursuing in Oxford, could also share their differing perspectives on Methodism, deepen their understanding of its traditions, and return to their home countries to share what they had learned. The model, in Kissack's mind at least, was that of the colleges in Oxford University, each a residential center for a group of scholars and students. Their hope was not fulfilled in that form. Twenty years later, Douglas Meeks and others hoped that the Institute might become the regular meeting point for an international community of scholars, collaborating on agreed projects in the intervals, and forming a theological resource for world Methodism. In the form originally envisaged that hope, too, remains unfulfilled. The two ideals, while distinct, have features in common. But if neither as originally conceived has fully come to fruition, elements in each have been fulfilled.

The Institute has never been exclusively a gathering of professional theologians. From the first meeting in 1958 its membership has included seminary students and ministers in pastoral appointments. As time has passed the Institute also has come to include lay theologians. We saw

how at the seventh Institute in 1982 a deliberate attempt was made to bring together teachers in the seminaries with those engaged in the practice of evangelism. The Institute has become a place where younger scholars can be encouraged and where those who take an intelligent interest in theological questions but lack the opportunities for academic research can be stimulated by encounter with leading authorities in various fields. Something of the original 1950s vision of an international "school" remains.

It is clear also that some of the Institute's membership each time consists of those who have attended on several previous occasions—and the proportion is increasing. Twenty-nine percent of those who attended in 2002 had attended at least twice before. There is thus the nucleus of the international scholarly community that Meeks and others called for in 1982. That is the case even for those who come from the United States, for the meeting of the Institute in Oxford every five years constitutes the only opportunity for sustained meeting and working together. If in the future progress is made in the holding of regional gatherings between Institutes (see chapter 2), this sense of continuing community would be increased.

At the same time, we must note a downside. The number of those who attend regularly inevitably limits the number of new members who can be admitted, for there is an upper limit on size. Countries that cannot afford to send large numbers have tended to ensure that people take turns to enjoy the privilege. The Institute cannot altogether escape the appearance of being an elite. Moreover, in spite of the number of regular members, the way in which the theme of each Institute in recent years has flowed naturally from the one before, and the fact that the proceedings have always been published, there is little reference back from one Institute to its predecessors. A rapid survey of the footnotes in the successive volumes of proceedings reveals that there were no references back to previous volumes before 1982. The 1982 volume contained eight references and the 1987 volume had none. The 1992 volume had twelve references and the 1997 volume four. The 1977 volume has been the most frequently quoted over the years. The reason for the paucity of references may have to do with the relatively limited circulation of the Institute publications, particularly the early ones.

Certain papers may have been quoted because they had been reprinted by their authors in collections of essays and so came to attention.

There is thus a sense in which each Institute tends to stand on its own, and only a relatively small proportion of the members are aware of the work done previously. A lot of the work takes place in the smaller groups anyway. Some papers submitted to the working groups have been published, one or two by inclusion in the Institute proceedings and others independently by their authors. It would not be a good thing to require all such papers to be of publishable standard, for it is important that those who are still getting established academically should have a sympathetic forum in which to test out their ideas without committing themselves to publication. There is thus only a limited sense in which we can speak of the Institute as a continuing international community.

On a number of occasions we have drawn attention to the way in which certain regional interests have dominated the Institute's agenda. We have also noted the difficulty that members from Europe and North America have had in coming to grips with the issues that most occupy the minds of participants from Africa, Asia, and the Pacific region. Initially, those from Latin America had to push hard to get their voices heard; and it is one of the benefits of the Kirkpatrick lectureship that the continuance of those voices is assured.

Ideally, the Institute should be a forum in which all perspectives are shared and all are enriched by mutual interaction. However, it is sometimes difficult for speakers to detach themselves enough from their context to recognize how parochial their concerns can seem. The American church with its size and diversity is a world in itself, and it is always strongly represented in the Institute membership. There have been times when members from other parts of the world have felt like they were sitting in on a domestic American debate being conducted on foreign soil. Certainly speakers have sometimes assumed that conditions in the United States applied universally. Controversial books that are bestsellers in that country may be unknown elsewhere.

The same criticism could be made also of some British contributions. On the other hand, speakers from Africa and Asia have been more aware of the distinctiveness of their context and sometimes have had to devote

much of their allotted time to explaining it. Other Institute members have felt ill qualified to enter into a debate on the issues. Hopefully, more can be done to address this problem. There is no other forum in world Methodism in which members of the family from widely different contexts can hold sustained and informed theological conversation about the tradition they share but often see so differently. A key to it, as with the Latin American contribution, lies in increasing the numbers, and thereby the confidence, of representatives of the non-Western cultures.

That issue is related to the fact that the route the Institute has chosen since 1977 has been to concentrate on the significance of John Wesley. Partly because of scarce theological resources and partly because of the dominance of more pressing issues, for some participants from Africa, Asia, and the Pacific—even for those in the Methodist tradition—Wesley is of marginal interest. He is a subject to be studied diligently out of denominational loyalty, but he is not a vital resource for current theological work. We have already discussed the place of Wesley in the tradition and there is no need to repeat that discussion. However, we did point out that one of the achievements of the Institute has been to stimulate interest in Wesley's theology and its potential significance for the life of the churches and their ecumenical relations. One of the promising pointers for the future in this regard was J. C. Park's 2002 study of the relationship between Confucian sage learning and Wesley's quest for holiness. It will be interesting to see what questions Africa, Asia, and the Pacific pose for the study of Wesley and the Methodist and Wesleyan traditions over the next twenty years.

A Developing Common Mind?

This leads us to the question: Is the Institute contributing to the development of a world Methodist theology? There is no simple answer to this question. The movement that began with the ministry of John Wesley and his associates has developed along different lines in different parts of the world. There is neither the desire nor the possibility of evolving a theological position that would embrace them all. The differences are not simply related to church structures or ethnic identity; they are also theological. Put simply, there is no single entity that can be

called "world Methodism," although there is a worldwide family of churches that share a Methodist (or Wesleyan) heritage.[2] One of the lessons the Institute has brought home to many is that all theological work is done in particular contexts and cannot be expressed in a contextless, universalized form.

Moreover, the Institute has no authority to speak for the churches that are represented. Its members are not delegates, but are present in an individual capacity. In fact, only the first Institute in 1958 has attempted to speak at all. On that occasion, for the only time, "Findings" were published.[3] One might perhaps look to the reports of working groups, printed in the 1982 volume and sometimes in *OXFORDnotes* for other years, for evidence of a common mind. Occasionally, groups chose to adopt a formal response to a document issued by the World Council of Churches or the World Methodist Council.[4] However, as we saw in chapter 8, in at least one case the adequacy of a group report was strongly contested. There is general evidence of vigorous debate in all the Institutes. The published volumes of Institute proceedings represent the sharing with a wider audience, after some editing, of what the members heard at the time. They do not include the formal responses that were given or how these were received.

We should pause to record here the criticism that speakers were selected because they could be expected to endorse a particular point of view. On that reading, there has been a "party line" in the presentations and those who have opposed it in the discussions have been left without voice in the published record.[5] To be sure, there is a contrast between the third Institute in 1965, when speakers represented clearly divergent schools of thought, and later Institutes, where differences have been less evident. It would be unfair not to acknowledge once more the creative contribution of Kirkpatrick, Runyon, and Meeks in program development. But the planning of each Institute has always followed on from the last and reflected the thinking that emerged there, as well as responding to ecumenical initiatives and other issues in the wider context. That continuity can be seen in the account of the successive Institutes given in chapters 3, 4, and 5. To that extent the themes have reflected some kind of consensus, at least among the majority of Institute members.

However, there has not been any conscious imposition of an "Institute orthodoxy." Indeed, there has been enough controversy at its meetings to show that any such attempt would be doomed to failure. Planners of future Institutes might however wish to reflect on how diversity may be more fully represented in the plenary sessions and published proceedings. There is always a formal response to each plenary address, but rarely, if ever, have these responses revealed sharp dissent. Attempts to continue the tradition of a staged debate between opposing points of view, which were a marked and memorable feature of the first five Institutes, have not succeeded.

At most, then, one could speak only of the *influence* of the Institute on the wider community, exercised in part through its publications and in part through the members themselves carrying to their churches and institutions whatever insights and new perspectives they have acquired. There is good reason to think that, especially in the last twenty-five years, this influence has been considerable. There has been an awakening of interest in John Wesley in academic circles, particularly in the United States, and in Britain a fresh appreciation of his theological potential. The Institute has supported the continuation of the bicentennial edition of Wesley's works and stimulated the translation of the Jackson edition into Spanish.[6] In Latin America and some other parts of the world, the Institute has been instrumental in the discovery of Wesley as more than a name from the past. In turn, the resultant excitement has had an effect on those from the older, established churches. In part, the development of specialist groups in the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature has been inspired by the Institute. We saw also in chapter 8 the influence of the Institute in raising the academic status of evangelism studies. The Institute has thus had an influence on theological education generally.

In The United Methodist Church, the Institute contributed to the development of the statement on "Our Theological Task" for the 1988 *Book of Discipline*.[7] But it remains true that there are many parts of the Methodist world that are unaware of the Institute's existence. For all the improvement in the circulation of Institute publications since 1977, the print runs remain small in relation to the potential readership. It is

thanks to the commitment of Abingdon Press to scholarly publication, regardless of their profitability, that the Institute proceedings see the light of day at all. There is no doubt that this generous policy has widened greatly the circle of those touched by the Institute's work.

Past and Future

The world has changed dramatically during the history of the Institute. Its early meetings were held under the shadow of the Cold War and the threat of the use of nuclear weapons. In those years, securing the attendance of even two East Germans was a hard-won achievement. Today, the possibility of nuclear war remains; but now Islamic militancy and international terrorism have replaced the East-West, Communist-Capitalist conflict. Globalization, with both its benefits of instant communication and the inroads made by a pervasive Western culture and market capitalism has come to dominate minds at the Institute. The intellectual climate has changed too. Now "postmodernism" presents itself as the major apologetic challenge to the Christian churches. The center of church growth has shifted away from the traditional heartlands of the West to the newer nations of Africa and Asia. Ecumenically, the earlier optimism about church unity schemes has given way to proposals that bring churches into communion without the demand to abdicate their separate identities. In the ecumenical movement, newer concerns about justice, peace, and the integrity of creation have been added to the traditional Faith and Order questions.

The Institute has reflected these changes over the years. As Latin American and other liberationist concerns have claimed attention over against the traditional Western theological agenda, the Institute's center of gravity has shifted. In the 1960s *objectivity* was the theological watchword. In the 1990s it has been replaced by *contextuality*. Poverty and powerlessness have moved to center stage and the question "what to do?" has demanded attention alongside "what to teach?"

Above all, as we have seen, there has been a narrowing of the Institute's focus, away from general theological questions to the theological contribution of John Wesley for today. This shift has brought gains. Now Wesley can be seen as a three-dimensional figure within a

particular historical context rather than as a two-dimensional cult hero. Yet the danger of claiming his posthumous endorsement for points of view that he would neither have understood nor, probably, endorsed if he had, remains. Then there is the perpetual danger of ignoring Albert Outler's plea to study Wesley's sources and of falling into the trap of thinking of him as more of an originator than he actually was. There are seventeen centuries of Christian tradition behind Wesley into which few Methodists delve and which many do not even acknowledge. But as Wesley and current concerns have been related to one another, we have seen an enrichment of the discourse of the Institute.

There is potential there for the future, although it will be interesting to see how long it will be before it begins to be felt that that particular seam has been mined to exhaustion. It may be, as suggested above, that Asia, Africa, and the Pacific will introduce new perspectives and fresh vigor into the study of our traditions. But if the Institute family is to be defined as widely as it now is, what else is there beside John Wesley that everyone holds in common? Methodist history began to divide into separate streams even before his death. The Institute may face some interesting program challenges in the years ahead.

The effect of the Institute's focus on John Wesley has been to lift the profile of his theological contribution. In chapter 7 we discussed the issue whether that is a positive contribution to the ecumenical movement or a distraction from it. Chances are it will continue to be debated. According to one former Methodist, now a member of a United Church, the Institute's importance lies in enabling him to keep in touch with developments in the Methodist tradition that he seeks to contribute to his own church, rather than relying on the memory of how things were before the union. At least a church with a clearly defined theological understanding of the gospel of God's grace and its imperatives for Christian obedience is preferable to one that has sold its soul to the prevailing culture and is vague as to its beliefs or has traded them away in an attempt to unite with other churches on the basis of no more than the lowest common denominator. At the same time, we should remember that Wesley himself was an ecumenical figure, loyal to Scripture and the ancient church. It would be a dubious honor to the

memory of one who, however ineffectively, struggled to prevent his followers from separating from the parent church if his successors used his legacy to further the development of an inward-looking, isolationist, and, therefore, ultimately sectarian world denomination.

In fact, one of the dangers of a gathering of over two hundred Methodists in the Institute is that they may get themselves out of proportion. The problems and challenges Methodists face are no different from those confronting the wider church, even if the responses may be differently nuanced. We may delude ourselves into thinking that our responses are more distinctive than they are. The presence of ecumenical observers is vital for this. Many have served the Institute with distinction and have become deeply engaged in its work. In 1987, the Anglican Gillian Evans and the Roman Catholic Michael Jackson had intended to move round the working groups so as to get a flavor of each, but became so engrossed in the work of the first group that they stayed put![8] As suggested earlier, on occasion our observers could perhaps have been more critical. A case could certainly be made for a greater number of observers at each Institute and a more coordinated public response from them than they have sometimes been offered the chance to give.

Nevertheless, the Institute represents a strong resource for the wider church. One of the tasks ahead must be to find more effective ways of disseminating its contribution. An interesting development following the eleventh Institute in 2002 was the discussion of a report of its work in the Theological Education Committee of the World Methodist Council, which led in turn to a discussion of some of its central concerns in the Council's Executive Committee. The more the work of the Institute can be seen, not as the exclusive preserve of professional theologians but as a contribution to the wider church's search for self-understanding and renewal, the more clearly its value will be recognized.

The Institute will face many challenges in the future. We have already noted some of these in the preceding pages. The Institute needs to become more inclusive in its membership, both in terms of the countries and denominations represented and in age and gender. As it grows in size and complexity, the Institute needs to attend to its administrative infrastructure. In addition to the formal link with the Westminster

Institute of Education, noted in chapter 2, administrative help has now been offered by the Formation in Ministry Office of the British church. Key to all this is adequate finance. The various British and American funds that support the Institute alongside the World Methodist Council's budgeted contribution are essential to its survival. As the Endowment Fund gradually matures it will make a difference, but more needs to be done to secure the financial future.

If it is truly to reflect the demography of world Methodism the Institute needs to be more inclusive in terms of its theological concerns. It also needs to secure the wider dissemination of the fruits of its work. To accomplish this, the Internet offers possibilities not dreamed of in 1958. The Institute needs to attend also to what may be termed its "internal inclusiveness." That is, it needs to remain constantly watchful that the sectional interests represented by the various working groups truly interact with one another. As suggested above, in time there may be need to reconsider the direction and focus of its work.

After all has been said about room for improvement and future new directions, it is astonishing how much has been achieved with how little. The Institute has never employed any administrative staff. For most of its life, no more than three or four people at a time have carried the burden of organizing its meetings, fitting the work into the spare time of already busy lives, and relying on volunteers to assist when the time of meeting came. Financially, it operates on a shoestring, without great capital reserves, dependent on grants and fees, and, only recently, on its modest endowments. The wonder, to adapt Dr. Johnson's words, is not that it was not done better but that it was done at all. Certainly, without the financial support it has received from church and other funds and the backing of the World Methodist Council, under whose auspices it operates, it could not have survived. But much is also due to the enthusiasm of its members, who have collectively willed it to continue.

As is natural, with the passing of time the leadership of the Institute will pass to others, who will have to take up these issues. The author of this volume has now stood down from the office of chairperson after an association with the Institute going back to 1969, and is grateful for the invitation to offer this volume as his tribute for all he has received.

The last word, however, must be for the founders and other leaders, who, over the years, have made the Institute what it is today. Any list of names would be selective, but particular tribute must be paid to Dow Kirkpatrick, Rex Kissack, Raymond George, William Cannon, Theodore Runyon, Douglas Meeks, and Nora Boots. Without their leadership there would have been no story to tell.

Appendix 1

Outline of Institute Details

(Papers marked * were printed in the published proceedings; see Appendix 2)

First Institute: *Biblical Theology and Methodist Doctrine*
Lincoln College, July 19–29, 1958
Attendance: 108
Warden: Reginald Kissack
Pre-Conference for U.S. delegation aboard *SS Empress of France* from Montreal
Keynote Speaker: Reginald Kissack
Other Speakers:
Harold DeWolf, "A Theological Evaluation of Natural Theology"*
Charles Coulson, "Some Recent Developments in Science and their Implications to Theology"*
E. Anker Nilsen, "Prevenient Grace"*
Harold Roberts, "The Doctrine of Conversion"*
Mack Stokes, "The Holy Spirit in Biblical Theology"*
William R. Cannon, "Perfection"*
George Claude Baker, Jr., "The Relation of Faith and Order in the New Testament"*
Rupert E. Davies, "The People of God"*
Franz Hildebrandt, "Can the Distinctive Methodist Emphasis Be Said to be Rooted in the New Testament?"*
William Strawson, "Wesley's Doctrine of the Last Things"*
David C. Shipley, "The Development of Theology in American Methodism in the Nineteenth Century"*
E. Gordon Rupp, "The Future of the Methodist Tradition"*

Stanley Hopper, "Communication and Modes of Meaning"
Philip S. Watson, "Justification"
Norman Snaith, "Grace and Faith in the Old Testament"
C. Kingsley Barrett, "*Kerygma* and Response in the New Testament"
A. Raymond George, "Assurance"
Bible Study: A. Marcus Ward, Ernest W. Saunders, *Romans 1–8*

Second Institute: *The Doctrine of the Church*
Lincoln College, July 17-27, 1962
Attendance: 89
Warden: Harold Roberts
Pre-Conference for U.S. Delegation aboard *SS Statendam* from New York
Keynote Speaker: Harold Roberts
Other Speakers:
Albert C. Outler, "Do Methodists Have a Doctrine of the Church?"*
C. H. Dodd, "The Biblical Doctrine of the People of God"*
C. Kingsley Barrett, "The Ministry in the New Testament"*
E. Gordon Rupp, "The Doctrine of the Church at the Reformation"*
Robert E. Cushman, "Baptism and the Family of God"*
Herbert J. Cook, "Confirmation and the Lay Membership of the Church"*
Philip S. Watson, "Ordination and the Ministry of the Church"*
A. Raymond George, "The Lord's Supper"*
Gerald O. McCulloh, "The Discipline of Life in Early Methodism through Preaching and Other Means of Grace"*
Frederic Greeves, "The Unity of the Church"*
F. Thomas Trotter, "The Church and Modern Man"*
John H. S. Kent, "The Church and the World: A Reappraisal of Hugh Price Hughes and the Non-Conformist Conscience"
Bible Study: Rupert E. Davies, Karlfried Froelich, *Ephesians*

Third Institute: *The Finality of Christ*
Lincoln College, July 20–30, 1965
Attendance: 102
Warden: Dow Kirkpatrick
Pre-Conference for U.S. Delegation aboard *Empress of England* from Montreal

Speakers:
D. T. Niles, "The Christian Claim for the Finality of Christ"*
Morna Hooker, "The Christology of the New Testament"*
David E. Jenkins, "Word, Wisdom and Process"*
H. Ratanasara, "Non-Christian Views of Christ—Buddhism"*
Pamela M. Wylam, "Non-Christian Views of Christ—Sikhism"*
J. Robert Nelson, "The Finality of Christ in Perennial Perspective"*
John B. Cobb, Jr., "The Finality of Christ in a Whiteheadian Perspective"*
Carl Michalson, "The Finality of Christ in an Eschatological Perspective"*
A. J. Ayer, "Language, Truth, and Logic"
E. Gordon Rupp, "The Finished Work of Christ in Word and Sacrament"*
Also published: Will Herberg, "Non-Christian Views of Christ—Judaism"*
Dow Kirkpatrick, "Christ and Christianity"*
Bible Study: Rupert E. Davies, *Colossians*

Fourth Institute: *The Living God*
Lincoln College, July 21–31, 1969
Attendance: 106
Warden: A. Raymond George
Pre-Conference for U.S. Delegation aboard *SS France* from New York (papers published in *The Iliff Review* xxvii/1–2 (Winter–Spring 1970)
Speakers:
Theodore Runyon, "Conflicting Theological Models for God"*
David A. Pailin, "Theistic Verification"*
Paul Hessert, "Is 'Living God' a Theological Category?"*
William Strawson, "The Living God in the Living Word"*
Christie H. Rosa, "The Presence of the Living God amidst the Cultural Revolution of a People"*
Emerito P. Nacpil, "Modernization and the Search for a New Image of Man"*
Ian T. Ramsey, "Prayer and Action"*
Thomas W. Ogletree, "The Gospel as Power: Explorations in a Theology of Social Change"*
Rupert E. Davies* (summing up)
Bible Study: John A. Ziesler, *Exodus 3, John 1*

Observers:
William Purdy, Robert Murray (Roman Catholic); F. W. Dillistone (Anglican); John Marsh (Congregational)

Fifth Institute: *The Holy Spirit*
Lincoln College, July 23–August 2, 1973
Attendance: 90
Warden: José Míguez Bonino
Speakers:
Bolaji Idowu, "The Spirit of God in the Natural World"*
Stanley J. Samartha, "The Holy Spirit and People of Various Faiths, Cultures, and Ideologies"*
Richard Tholin, "The Holy Spirit and Liberation Movements: The Response of the Church"*
John Meyendorff, "The Holy Spirit, as God"*
Maurice Wiles, "The Holy Spirit and the Incarnation"*
André Pieters, "The Spirit of God and the Human Spirit"*
Peter Stephens, "The Gifts of the Spirit in the Church"*
Daniel C. Arichea, Jr., "The Holy Spirit and the Ordained Ministry"*
Thomas A. Langford, "The Holy Spirit and Sanctification: Refinding the Lost Image of Creation"*
Walter J. J. Hollenweger, "Charismatic and Pentecostal Churches: A Challenge to the Churches"*
José Míguez Bonino, sermon, "The Spirit Groans"*
Bible Study: Morna D. Hooker, selected passages from the Pauline epistles
Observer: Cheslyn Jones (Anglican)

Sixth Institute: *Sanctification and Liberation*
Lincoln College, July 18–28, 1977
Attendance: 91
Warden: Rena Karefa-Smart
Keynote Speaker: José Míguez Bonino, "Wesley's Doctrine of Sanctification from a Liberationist Perspective"*
Other Speakers:
Rupert E. Davies, "Justification, Sanctification and the Liberation of the Person"*

John Kent, "Methodism and Social Change"*
Timothy L. Smith, "Holiness and Radicalism in Nineteenth-Century America"*
Donald W. Dayton, "Whither Evangelicalism?"*
James H. Cone, "Sanctification and Liberation in the Black Religious Tradition with Special Reference to Black Worship"*
Kwesi A. Dickson, "The Methodist Witness and the African Situation"*
W. Dayalan Niles, "Search for Community: A Preliminary Exploration of the Theology of Daniel T. Niles"
Dow Kirkpatrick, "A Liberating *Pastoral* for the Rich"*
Theodore Runyon, "Wesley and the Theologies of Liberation"*
Also published: Nancy A. Hardesty, "The Wesleyan Movement and Women's Liberation"*; Thomas W. Madron, "John Wesley on Economics"*
Bible Study: Dorothy Valenzuela, selected passages on liberation
Observers: Cuthbert Rand (Roman Catholic), F. W. Dillistone (Anglican)

Seventh Institute: *The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions*
Keble College, July 26–August 6, 1982
Attendance: 145
Keynote Speaker: M. Douglas Meeks, "The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions"*
Other Speakers:
Albert C. Outler, "A New Future for Wesley Studies: An Agenda for 'Phase III'"*
Elsa Tamez, "Wesley as Read by the Poor"*
Geoffrey Wainwright, "Ecclesial Location and Ecumenical Vocation"*
S. Wesley Ariarajah, "Evangelism and Wesley's Catholicity of Grace"*
James W. Fowler, "John Wesley's Development in Faith"*
Brian E. Beck, "A Retrospect"*
Working Groups: (1) Wesley Studies (2) Salvation, Justice, and the Theological Task (3) Ecclesiology and Sacraments in an Ecumenical Context (4) Evangelism in the Wesleyan Traditions (5) Wesleyan Spirituality and Faith Development (all reported in published volume)*
Observers: Cuthbert Rand (Roman Catholic), Mary Tanner (Anglican)

Eighth Institute: *The Significance of Methodist Teaching and Practice for Confessing the Apostolic Faith*
Somerville and St Hugh's Colleges, July 27–August 6, 1987
Attendance: 176
Introduction: Brian E. Beck, "Prospects for Methodist Teaching and Confessing"*
Keynote Speaker: Albert C. Outler, "Methodists in Search of Consensus"*
Other Speakers:
C. Kingsley Barrett, "Righteousness and Justification"*
José Míguez Bonino, "Reflections on the Church's Authoritative Teaching on Social Questions"*
Mercy Amba Oduyoye, "Teaching Authoritatively amidst Christian Pluralism in Africa"*
John Walsh, "John Wesley and the Poor"
Gillian R. Evans, "Consensus and Reception"* (given in working group)
Günther Gassmann, "Toward the Common Expression of the Apostolic Faith Today"*
Geoffrey Wainwright, "Methodism and the Apostolic Faith"*
Adrian Hastings, "Pluralism: The Relation of Theology to Religious Studies"*
M. Douglas Meeks, "Reflections and Open Tasks"*
Working Groups: (1) Current Biblical Criticism and Methodist Teaching (2) Wesley Studies: What and How Did John Wesley Teach? (3) Methodist Teaching and Social and Economic Issues of the Nineteenth Century (4) Methodist Economic and Social Teachings and the Challenge of Liberation Theology (5) Methodist Evangelism and Doctrine (6) Contemporary Methodist Theology and Doctrinal Consensus; interdisciplinary groups (reported in *OXFORDnotes* 2)
Observers: Günther Gassmann (World Council of Churches), Michael Jackson (Roman Catholic), Gillian Evans (Anglican), Brenda Stephenson (Reformed)

Ninth Institute: *Good News to the Poor in the Wesleyan Tradition*
Somerville College, July 28–August 7, 1992
Attendance: 167

Pre-Conference for Third World persons at Somerville College
Keynote Speaker: Theodore W. Jennings, Jr., "Wesley and the Poor: An Agenda for Wesleyans"*
Other Speakers:
Itumeleng J. Mosala, "Good News for the Poor: A Black African Hermeneutics"
Richard P. Heitzenrater, "The *Imitatio Christi* and the Great Commandment: Virtue and Obligation in Wesley's Ministry with the Poor"*
Rebecca S. Chopp, "Anointed to Preach: Speaking of Sin in the Midst of Grace"*
Donald W. Dayton, "'Good News to the Poor': The Methodist Experience after Wesley"*
David Lowes Watson, "Proclaiming Christ in All His Offices: Priest, Prophet and Potentate"*
Victorio Araya-Guillén, "The 500th Anniversary of the European Invasion of Abya-Yala: An Ethical and Pastoral Reflection from the Third World"*
Also published: S. T. Kimbrough, Jr., "Charles Wesley and the Poor"*
Working Groups: (1) Biblical Studies (2) Wesley Studies (3) Methodist History (4) Social Ethics and Practical Theology (5) Evangelism (6) Systematic and Contemporary Theology; interdisciplinary groups (reported in *OXFORDnotes* 3)
Observers: Francis Frost (Roman Catholic), Rowan Williams (Anglican)

Tenth Institute: *Trinity, Community and Power: Mapping Trajectories in Wesleyan Theology*
Somerville College, August 12–22, 1997
Attendance: 198
Pre-Conference for Third World persons at Somerville College
Keynote Speaker: M. Douglas Meeks, "Trinity, Community, and Power"*
Other Speakers:
J. Philip Wogaman, "The Doctrine of God and Dilemmas of Power"*
Gabriel Setiloane, "The Wesleyan Conversion Experience in Traditional African Practice"
Roberta Bondi, "Praying 'Our Father' and Formation in Love"*

José Míguez Bonino, "Salvation as the Work of the Trinity: An Attempt at a Holistic Understanding from a Latin American Perspective"* (Kirkpatrick Lecture)

Ted A. Campbell, "'Pure, Unbounded Love': Doctrine about God in Historic Wesleyan Communities"*

Jürgen Moltmann, "*Perichoresis:* An Old Magic Word for a New Theology"*

Frances M. Young, "Essence and Energies: Classical Trinitarianism and 'Enthusiasm'"*

Brian E. Beck, "Reflections"*

Working Groups: (1) Biblical Studies (2) Contextual Theology (3) Ecclesiology and *Oikoumene* (4) Evangelism (5) Global Mission and Political Economy (6) History of Wesleyan Traditions (Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries) (7) Practical Theology (8) Spirituality and Discipleship (9) Systematic Theology (10) Wesley Studies; interdisciplinary groups ([1]–[3] reported in *OXFORDnotes* 5/1)

Observer: Francis Frost (Roman Catholic)

Eleventh Institute: *The New Creation*
Christ Church, August 13–22, 2002

Attendance: 208

Pre-Conference for Third World persons at Christ Church

Keynote Speaker: Randy Maddox, "Nurturing the New Creation: Reflections on a Wesleyan Trajectory"

Other Speakers:

Néstor O. Míguez, "The Old Creation in the New, the New Creation in the Old" (Kirkpatrick Lecture)

Russell E. Richey, "Methodism as New Creation: A Historical-Theological Enquiry"

Mary Elizabeth Moore, "New Creation: Repentance, Reparation, and Reconciliation"

Jong Chun Park, "Christian Perfection and Confucian Sage Learning: An Interreligious Dialogue in the Crisis of Life"

Josiah Young, "Those Who Belong to Christ and the 'This-Worldly' Character of the New Creation"

Manfred Marquardt, "The Kingdom of God in a Global Society"

Mvume Dandala, "Methodism's Mission to Ecological Challenges in Africa"

Working Groups: (1) Biblical Studies (2) Wesley Studies and Early Methodism (3) Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Wesleyan Traditions (4) Systematic Theology (5) Christian Mission and Globalization (6) Worship and Spirituality (7) Ecumenism and Evangelism (8) Ecclesiology and Discipleship (9) Practical Theology (10) Ethics, Contemporary Technologies, and the Integrity of Creation

Observers: Joseph Famérée (Roman Catholic), Mary Tanner (Anglican)

Appendix 2

BIBLIOGRAPHY

References in the notes to *Works* are to *The Works of John Wesley*, vols. 1, 3, Bicentennial Edition, *Sermons I, III*, ed. Albert C. Outler (Nashville: Abingdon 1984, 1986), vol. 7, Oxford Edition, *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists*, ed. Franz Hildebrandt and Oliver A Beckerlegge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963).

Archives relating to the Institute are housed at the headquarters of the World Methodist Council at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina, USA, and at the Wesley and Methodist Studies Centre, Oxford Brookes University, Oxford, England.

Listed below are the published proceedings of each Institute. The contents of each volume are listed in Appendix 1.

1958 *The London Quarterly and Holborn Review*. London: Epworth Press (July 1959).

1962 Kirkpatrick, Dow, ed. *The Doctrine of the Church*. Nashville: Abingdon and London: Epworth, 1964.

1965 Kirkpatrick, Dow, ed. *The Finality of Christ*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1966.

1969 Kirkpatrick, Dow, ed. *The Living God*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1971.

1973 Kirkpatrick, Dow, ed. *The Holy Spirit*. Nashville: Tidings, 1974.

1977 Runyon, Theodore, ed. *Sanctification and Liberation: Liberation Theologies in the Light of the Wesleyan Tradition*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1981.

1982 Meeks, M. Douglas, ed. *The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1985.

1987 Meeks, M. Douglas, ed. *What Should Methodists Teach? Wesleyan

Tradition and Modern Diversity. Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1990.

1992 Meeks, M. Douglas, ed. *The Portion of the Poor: Good News to the Poor in the Wesleyan Tradition*. Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1995.

1997 Meeks, M. Douglas, ed. *Trinity, Community, and Power: Mapping Trajectories in Wesleyan Theology*. Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2000.

Also published on an occasional basis and referred to in the text as *OXFORDnotes: OXFORDnotes: Newsletter of the Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies*, vol. 1, nos. 1–6, Winter 1984–Summer 1987; vol. 2, nos. 1–5, Fall 1987–Spring 1991 (ed. Richard P. Heitzenrater); vol. 3, no. 1, Spring 1994; vol. 4, nos. 1–3, 24 May 1996–1 July 1997; vol. 5, nos. 1–2, 2 March 1998–15 September 2000 (ed. Ted A. Campbell).

Appendix 3

COMMITTEE CONSTITUTION

(Adopted in this revised form by the Institute Committee on 18 September 1992 and confirmed by the World Methodist Council Executive Committee in Varna, Hungary, later in the same month)

1. There shall be a committee for the Oxford Institute, which shall be a Special Committee of the World Methodist Council, nominated at the time of the Institute by the outgoing Institute Committee after appropriate consultation within the Institute membership, and confirmed by the Executive Committee of the World Methodist Council at its next meeting thereafter.
2. Any changes in the membership of the Committee shall at all times be governed by this constitution. The World Methodist Council Executive shall be free to substitute names.
3. The Committee shall serve until the next meeting of the Institute and the nomination of its successor.
4. The constitution of the Committee shall be as follows. Those in categories (a) and (b) shall constitute the Officers.
   (a) Four Chairpersons, each of whom shall represent a different region of the world, one of which shall be the United States
   (b) A British Secretary, who shall have particular responsibility for arrangements for the Institute at Oxford
   (c) The Chairperson of the Executive Committee of the World Methodist Council and the General Secretary of the Council *ex officio*
   (d) One person representative of each of the subject areas with which the Institute in the year of nomination is concerned
   (e) Not less than six and not more than twelve other persons who are members of the Institute in the year of nomination,

   or who were members of one of the last two preceding Institutes. In selecting names in this category effort shall be made, so far as is practicable,
   (i) to secure inclusiveness of women and younger theologians,
   (ii) to secure membership of representatives of different traditions which claim the Wesleyan heritage,
   (iii) to guarantee geographical representation.
   No one may be a member of the Committee in this category for more than three successive Institutes.
5. The Committee may co-opt up to five consultants who shall be entitled to attend meetings and may be consulted by post, but have no vote.
6. The Committee shall be responsible for arranging the regular meetings of the Institute. Regional or other additional meetings may also be arranged.
7. The Committee shall be responsible for maintaining, by publications, correspondence or otherwise, such contacts between members of the Institute and other interested persons as may from time to time be determined.
8. The Committee may publish the proceedings of the Institute and other work as may be desirable and financially sustainable.
9. The Committee shall have power to determine charges and all other details necessary for the meeting of the Institute.
10. Accounts of all funds held by the World Methodist Council on behalf of the Committee shall be audited regularly and statements rendered to the Committee by the Treasurer of the World Methodist Council.
11. The Committee shall conduct its business (a) by meetings at the Institute; (b) by such other meetings of available members at the time of a meeting of the WMC Executive Committee as may be desirable; (c) by correspondence. A valid meeting of the Committee shall require the presence of at least two of the Officers.
12. Regular meetings of the Institute shall be held at intervals of not less than four and not more than six years. At each Institute the outgoing and incoming chairpersons shall recommend the venue for the following Institute, which will need to be ratified by two thirds

of the Committee and be confirmed by the Executive Committee of the World Methodist Council.

13. The Committee may delegate any of its powers (except that of varying the venue of the regular meetings of the Institute) to a sub-committee, which shall consist of the Officers, with or without other Committee members.
14. This constitution may be amended by a vote of 75% of the total membership of the Committee and the concurrence of the Executive Committee of the World Methodist Council.

ENDNOTES

Chapter 1: Beginnings

1. *The Christian Advocate* (3 February 1949):14, 27.
2. Dow Kirkpatrick, unpublished memoir.
3. "I am not enthusiastic about these conferences with American Methodists which seem to me a waste of time. Why cannot they read the Bible and study more themselves? I doubt also if their influence on British students and probationers will be healthy. I would rather be in my study and garden during July."
4. *Iliff Review* xxvii/1–2 (Winter–Spring 1970).
5. These are the most accurate figures available. Precise figures of those actually attending meetings (as distinct from those expected to attend) and in what capacity have rarely been preserved. Country of origin is also sometimes difficult to establish, because so many have taken temporary residence in another country for study or missionary service.

Chapter 2: The Developing Organization

1. For the latter, see *OXFORDnotes* 1/2 (Summer 1984):10ff.
2. See endnote 5, chapter 1.
3. Calculated from information kindly supplied by the head office of the World Methodist Council.
4. For the text, see Appendix 3.
5. See Appendix 2 for details.
6. This is acknowledged in the preface to the published papers, *The London Quarterly and Holborn Review* (July 1959): 161.
7. It is perhaps significant that C. H. Dodd's 1962 contribution is not listed in his published bibliography.

Chapter 3: The Classical Agenda

1. Albert C. Outler, "Does Methodism Have a Doctrine of the Church?" in *The Doctrine of the Church*, ed. Dow Kirkpatrick (Nashville:

Abingdon; London: Epworth, 1964), 11 ff. It was quoted with appreciation by Geoffrey Wainwright, "Ecclesial Location and Ecumenical Vocation," in *The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions*, ed. M. Douglas Meeks (Nashville: Abingdon, 1985), 124.

2. Cf. J. Robert Nelson's comment, reviewing the published proceedings: "Some of these excellent papers might as well have been read at institutes bearing other denominational names, for they are concerned with the biblical and Christian doctrine of the Church rather than a private, sectarian form of it." *The Christian Advocate* (30 July 1964): 14.
3. David Lowes Watson, "A Praxis Approach to Evangelism: Reflections on the Realities of Contemporary Evangelical Outreach," in *The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions*, 155; F. Thomas Trotter, "The Church and Modern Man," in *Doctrine of the Church*, 195.
4. *The Finality of Christ in the Age of Universal History*. See W. A. Visser't Hooft, *The New Delhi Report* (London: SCM Press, 1962), 165.
5. D. T. Niles, "The Christian Claim for the Finality of Christ," in *The Finality of Christ*, ed. Dow Kirkpatrick (Nashville: Abingdon, 1966), 14.
6. Carl Michalson, "The Finality of Christ in an Eschatological Perspective," in *Finality of Christ*, 174.
7. David E. Jenkins, "Word, Wisdom and Process," in *Finality of Christ*, 64.
8. Ibid., 61–62.
9. Dow Kirkpatrick, "Christ and Christianity," in *Finality of Christ*, 193.
10. See also Adrian Hastings's vigorous treatment of the issues, "Pluralism: The Relation of Theology to Religious Studies," in *What Should Methodists Teach? Wesleyan Tradition and Modern Diversity*, ed. M. Douglas Meeks (Nashville: Kingswood, 1990), 118ff.
11. S. Wesley Ariarajah, "Evangelism and Wesley's Catholicity of Grace," in *The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions*, 140ff.
12. The session was recorded on tape.

Chapter 4: Enter John Wesley

1. Rebecca S. Chopp, "Anointed to Preach: Speaking of Sin in the Midst of Grace," in *The Portion of the Poor: Good News to the Poor in the Wesleyan Tradition*, ed. M. Douglas Meeks (Nashville: Kingswood, 1995), 101.
2. Theodore Runyon, "Introduction: Wesley and the Theologies of Liberation," in *Sanctification and Liberation: Liberation Theologies in the Light of the Wesleyan Tradition*, ed. Theodore Runyon (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981), 19.
3. José Míguez Bonino, "Wesley's Doctrine of Sanctification from a Liberationist Perspective," in *Sanctification and Liberation*, 57.
4. Albert C. Outler, "A New Future for Wesley Studies: An Agenda for 'Phase III,'" in *The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions*, 52.
5. Ibid., 49.
6. The text is as follows: "The Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies, after careful study and discussion, endorses the fundamental importance of a critical text of John Wesley's writings. The publication of the Wesley corpus is one of the most important contributions we can make to ecumenical Christianity. These texts are important in the history of Christian thought and are essential to a more adequate understanding of John Wesley, of the influences upon his life and thought, of his role in his era and in the Methodist societies, and in the resources he bequeathed to the ensuing Methodist traditions. This publication effort must be completed and to this end we not only offer our endorsement but also commit ourselves to help build that base of support which will move this project to completion" (*The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions*, 59).
7. One positive outcome was a call for a Spanish translation of Wesley's *Works* (*The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions*, 153). The project was completed in 1998.
8. The speaker was British, and 1982 was the year of the war between Britain and Argentina over the Falklands/Malvinas Islands. This must have had some effect upon relationships at the time.
9. John Wesley, "Sermons on Several Occasions Preface," in *Works*, 1:105.
10. Wainwright, "Ecclesial Location and Ecumenical Vocation," in *The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions*, 93ff.
11. M. Douglas Meeks, "Reflections and Open Tasks," in *What Should Methodists Teach?*, 131.

12. "If . . . the question is put to me, would I rather have a miserable ape for a grandfather or a man highly endowed by nature and possessed of great means of influence, and yet who employs these faculties and that influence for the mere purpose of introducing ridicule into a grave scientific discussion—I unhesitatingly affirm my preference for the ape." Quoted in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 2002), 6:179.
13. Albert C. Outler, "Methodists in Search of Consensus," in *What Should Methodists Teach?*, 23. The printed text is a thoroughly rewritten version of the lecture as delivered, although the substance is the same.
14. The cumbersome title was dropped when the papers were published, in favor of *What Should Methodists Teach?*
15. *An Invitation to Discover . . . Reaffirm* (Lake Junaluska: World Methodist Council, n.d.).
16. See the chapter by Richard P. Heitzenrater, "In Search of Continuity and Consensus: The Road to the 1988 Doctrinal Statement," in Thomas A. Langford, ed., *Doctrine and Theology in The United Methodist Church* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1991), 93ff. The work was completed at the 1988 General Conference.
17. G. R. Evans, "Consensus and Reception," in *What Should Methodists Teach?*, 90.
18. José Míguez Bonino, "Reflections on the Church's Authoritative Teaching on Social Questions," in *What Should Methodists Teach?*, 58ff.
19. Geoffrey Wainwright, "Methodism and the Apostolic Faith," in *What Should Methodists Teach?*, 104, 114.
20. M. Douglas Meeks, *God the Economist: The Doctrine of God and Political Economy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989).
21. Meeks, "Reflections and Open Tasks," in *What Should Methodists Teach?*, 135.
22. In describing economic and political divisions, it is more common nowadays to divide the world into "North" and "South," but the older term "Third World" was deliberately adopted by the group and has continued in use. Originally it affirmed neutrality in the conflict between capitalist and communist power blocs during the Cold War.

Chapter 5: Poverty and Globalization

1. The phrase is from Theodore W. Jennings, Jr., "Wesley and the Poor: An Agenda for Wesleyans," in *Portion of the Poor*, 25.
2. See *OXFORDnotes* 3/1 (Spring 1994):1ff.
3. See Appendix 2.
4. See *OXFORDnotes* 3/1 (Spring 1994).
5. The sentiment is Wesley's, though the expression is modern. See Donald W. Dayton, "'Good News to the Poor': The Methodist Experience after Wesley," in *Portion of the Poor*, 66.
6. *OXFORDnotes* 3/1 (Spring 1994):15.
7. The tension surrounding relative degrees of poverty is illustrated by the acid comment at an earlier Institute (1982 or 1987) of Antonia Wladar, superintendent of The United Methodist Church in (then Communist) Hungary: "I have only two dresses, yet she changes hers three times a day and still talks about poverty!"
8. See, for example, Sermon 76 II.9, III.9, in *Works*, 3:79, 85.
9. Chopp, "Anointed to Preach," in *Portion of the Poor*, 104.
10. Victorio Araya-Guillén, "The 500th Anniversary of the European Invasion of Abya-Yala: An Ethical and Pastoral Reflection from the Third World," in *Portion of the Poor*, 142-43.
11. The session was recorded on tape but was never published.
12. John Wesley, "A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists," #379, in *Works*, 7:552. Ironically it has been omitted from the current British Methodist and United Methodist hymnals.
13. Wesley, "A Collection of Hymns" #7, in *Works*, 7:88.
14. See Appendix 1 for details.
15. Theodore Runyon, *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998).
16. Members were reminded, however, that for many in Latin America, September 11 is significant primarily as the anniversary of the beginning of military rule on that continent, with Pinochet's coup in Chile.

Chapter 6: The Place of the Bible

1. John Wesley, "Sermons on Several Occasions Preface," in *Works*, 1:105.
2. For a discussion of the origins and adequacy of this term, see

Thomas A. Langford, ed., *Doctrine and Theology in The United Methodist Church* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1991), 75–88, 154–61, 232–44. In fact, the term's origins are unclear. Outler claimed to have invented it, apparently around 1970, but Peter Doble tells me he heard it from R. Newton Flew in Britain in the 1950s and certainly has it in personal notes dated 1958.

3. See Appendix 1 for details.
4. In 1992 there were some short Bible studies in interdisciplinary groups.
5. The same question was asked of spirituality and systematic theology in 2002.
6. Published in German as "Gibt es eine methodistische Exegese?" *Theologie für die Praxis* 14 (1988):1–13.
7. Note the resistance of the 1987 Institute to any attempt to define (and thereby impose) a Methodist consensus (Meeks, "Reflections and Open Tasks," in *What Should Methodists Teach?*, 132).
8. Wesley, "Sermons on Several Occasions Preface," in *Works*, 1:104–5.
9. From "Short Hymns on Select Passages of the Holy Scriptures (1762)," in G. Osborn, ed., *The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley* (London: Wesleyan-Methodist Conference Office, 1872), 13:219.

Chapter 7: Ecumenism and Wesleyanism

1. Geoffrey Wainwright, "Ecclesial Location and Ecumenical Vocation," in *The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions*, 94.
2. *The London Quarterly and Holborn Review* (July 1959): 162. Cf. Kirkpatrick, *Doctrine of the Church*, 5.
3. See Appendix 1 for details.
4. General weariness may have contributed, but this was the session tired members chose to stay away from.
5. See Chopp, "Anointed to Preach," *Portion of the Poor*, 100.
6. See Chapter 5, page 80.
7. See Chapter 3, page 41.
8. Wainwright, "Ecclesial Location and Ecumenical Vocation," in *The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions*, 94.
9. Ibid., 123, quoting Albert Outler, *That the World May Believe: A Study of Christian Unity* (New York: Joint Commission on Education and

Cultivation, Board of Missions of the Methodist Church, 1966), 54.

10. Wainwright, "Methodism and the Apostolic Faith," in *What Should Methodists Teach?*, 101ff.
11. Dayton, "'Good News to the Poor,'" in *Portion of the Poor*, 94ff.
12. For discussions of this issue, see Outler, "A New Future for Wesley Studies," and Brian E. Beck, "Retrospect," in *The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions*, 17*ff*, 209*ff*; Beck, "Prospects for Methodist Teaching and Confessing," in *What Should Methodists Teach?*, 13ff.
13. Outler, "A New Future for Wesley Studies," in *The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions*, 34. See chapter 4, page 59.
14. Ibid., 39.
15. Tamez, "Wesley as Read by the Poor," in *The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions*, 67.
16. Wainwright, "Ecclesial Location and Ecumenical Vocation," in *The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions*, 109. The phrase derives from Outler.
17. Tamez, "Wesley as Read by the Poor," in *The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions*, 67.
18. Attributed to William R. Cannon; see *What Should Methodists Teach?*, 136.
19. Outler, "A New Future for Wesley Studies," in *The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions*, 50; cf., 56.
20. *Minutes of the Methodist Conferences, from the First, Held in London, by the Late Rev. John Wesley, A. M., in the Year 1744* (London: John Mason, 1862), 1:1.
21. Outler, "A New Future for Wesley Studies," in *The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions*, 47.
22. Outler, "Methodists in Search of Consensus," in *What Should Methodists Teach?*, 35.
23. It was in this spirit that Roberta Bondi made her presentation in the form of a letter to a troubled church. See "Praying 'Our Father' and Formation in Love," in *Trinity, Community, and Power: Mapping Trajectories in Wesleyan Theology*, ed. M. Douglas Meeks (Nashville: Kingswood, 2000), 51.
24. There are references to this throughout *Trinity, Community, and Power*, e.g., 10.

25. See chapter 6, page 82.
26. *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church—2000* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2000), ¶104.
27. *The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions*, 50, 56.
28. Cf. Jennings's and Dayton's papers in *Portion of the Poor*, 19ff, 65ff.
29. See, for example, Tamez, "Wesley as Read by the Poor," in *The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions*, 67ff.
30. Outler, "A New Future for Wesley Studies," in *The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions*, 44; "Methodists in Search of Consensus," in *What Should Methodists Teach?*, 31, 33.
31. Outler, "A New Future for Wesley Studies," in *The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions*, 44.
32. Wainwright, "Ecclesial Location and Ecumenical Vocation," in *The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions*, 121; cf. E. Gordon Rupp, "The Future of the Methodist Tradition," *The London Quarterly and Holborn Review* (July 1959): 265.
33. Dayton, "'Good News to the Poor,'" in *Portion of the Poor*, 65.
34. In 2002 there was also a presentation of Kimbrough's dramatized study *Sweet Singer*.
35. In Britain the tradition has been progressively diluted, but even today hymns from the Wesley brothers represent 21 percent of the hymnal, as compared with 7 percent in The United Methodist Church.
36. In 2002 Russell Richey included Methodist organization in his list of ways in which early American Methodists saw themselves as living under the new creation; but he did not analyze it in detail, focusing on the experience of "conference" as a means of grace rather than on its implied ecclesiology.
37. A comment also made in 2002 by the Anglican observer Mary Tanner.
38. Tamez, "Wesley as Read by the Poor," in *The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions*, 68.

Chapter 8: Evangelism, Dialogue, and Liberation

1. See, for example, John Wesley, *Minutes of the Methodist Conferences*, 1:51; "On Laying the Foundation of the New Chapel," in *Works*, 3:580.

2. Wesley, *Minutes*, 446.
3. See chapter 2, pages 19-20.
4. See chapter 3, page 42.
5. H. Roberts, "The Doctrine of Conversion," *The London Quarterly and Holborn Review* (July 1959): 195.
6. *Proceedings of the Twelfth World Methodist Conference*, ed. Lee F. Tuttle (Nashville and New York: Abingdon; London: Epworth, n.d.), 35, 36.
7. There are no publication details; it was probably circulated privately.
8. There was much discussion at the time about "indigenization" of Christianity and calls for a "moratorium" on the sending of missionaries overseas.
9. Watson, *OXFORDnotes* 2/3 (Fall 1988):1.
10. Wesley, *Minutes*, 30.
11. Watson, "A Praxis Approach to Evangelism," in *The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions*, 154.
12. James W. Fowler, "John Wesley's Development in Faith," in *The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions*, 172ff; see also 202, 217.
13. S. Wesley Ariarajah, "Evangelism and Wesley's Catholicity of Grace," in *The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions*, 138ff.
14. Ibid., 144.
15. *The Finality of Christ*, 71ff.
16. S. J. Samartha, "The Holy Spirit and People of Various Faiths, Cultures, and Ideologies," in *The Holy Spirit*, ed. Dow Kirkpatrick (Nashville: Tidings, 1974), 20ff.
17. Richard Tholin, "The Holy Spirit and Liberation Movements: The Response of the Church"; José Míguez Bonino, "The Spirit Groans," in *The Holy Spirit*, 40, 234.
18. Mortimer Arias, "That the World May Believe," in *Mission Trends No. 3: Third World Theologies*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson and Thomas J. Stanskey (New York: Paulist, 1976), 91; quoted by Ariarajah, "Evangelism and Wesley's Catholicity of Grace," in *The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions*, 145. Italics now added.
19. *The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions*, 150.
20. José Míguez Bonino, "Salvation as the Work of the Trinity: An Attempt at a Holistic Understanding from a Latin American Perspective," in *Trinity, Community, and Power*, 69ff, and especially 70, 78, 82.

21. Members of the Institute may not always have appreciated that the same battles were being fought within the Latin American churches, where inherited patterns of individualistic evangelism still persist.
22. James H. Cone, "Sanctification and Liberation in the Black Religious Tradition," in *Sanctification and Liberation*, 174ff.
23. *OXFORDnotes* 2/3 (Fall 1988): 2.
24. David Lowes Watson, "Proclaiming Christ in All His Offices: Priest, Prophet and Potentate," in *Portion of the Poor*, 113ff.
25. *OXFORDnotes* 3/2 (Spring 1994):17.

Chapter 9: Retrospect

1. Adrian Hastings, "Pluralism: The Relationship of Theology to Religious Studies," in *What Should Methodists Teach?*, 118ff.
2. Compare the resistance in the eighth Institute to the imposition of a consensus (Meeks, "Reflections and Open Tasks," *What Should Methodists Teach?*, 131ff.).
3. *The London Quarterly and Holborn Review* (July 1959): 163ff. The only possible exception is the resolution about the publication of Wesley's works, to which reference was made in chapter 4 (note 6).
4. For the response to *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, see *The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions*, 130*ff.*; *OXFORDnotes* 1/1 (Winter 1984):5ff.; for the response to *Confessing the Apostolic Faith Today*, see *OXFORDnotes* 2/2 (Spring 1988):1ff.
5. Compare Theodore Weber's remark, reviewing the ninth Institute proceedings: "Methodists with a socially more conservative view and agenda are not represented," *Journal of Church and State* 38/2 (Spring 1996):432.
6. Justo L. González, *Obras de Wesley*, 14 vols. (Franklin, Tenn.: Providence House, 1996–1998). See above, chapter 4, note 7.
7. Heitzenrater, "In Search of Continuity and Consensus," in *Doctrine and Theology in The United Methodist Church*, 101.
8. For their evaluation, see *OXFORDnotes* 2/3 (Fall 1988):11.

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Note: An *n* following a page reference indicates additional information to be found in the endnotes.

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