Church, Episcopacy and Ecumenism: Debates about order, authority and ambiguity in the Anglican-Methodist Conversations

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Conversations exploring unity between the Church of England and the Methodist Church of Great Britain began in 1956 and continued until 1972. It was apt to title these as 'Conversations', both as an exercise in expectation-management and as an appropriate description of these wide-ranging discussions over a series of study weekends which articulated a process of negotiation surrounded by extensive pamphleteering, comment in the religious press and organising into pressure groups by partisans either enthused or apprehensive about the ultimate outcome. Indeed, it was this surrounding sound and fury, evident to a much greater extent than in earlier similar ecumenical discussions in England, that was one of the key novelties of the Anglican-Methodist Conversations. For the main parameters and talking points of the actual negotiations had long been well-established. What animated the activists was the extent to which these came closer than ever before to actually achieving a visible unity between the negotiating Churches.

Humans may find that theology, the process of speaking of God, is complicated by the ineffable nature of the divine. Humans have not usually had the same problem when it comes to speaking of the nature of those human organisations known as Churches established to communicate that divinity to humanity. Views on the nature, structures, and role of authority in these bodies have often been contrastingly precise, if not positively prescriptive. Definitional wrangles over the nature of Church order have been major factors in schism over the centuries, as well as barriers to the ecumenism that gathered force in the nineteenth century. This ecumenism came to a pitch in the era of the twentieth-century world wars, peaking in the immediate aftermath of 1945, though many of the approaches and ideas which shaped it developed much earlier. Accordingly, post-war ecumenical dialogues ran along well-worn lines, and this revealed the depth of those challenges faced by ecumenists who were impatient for visible unity.

Reunion may have been the will of God, as so many well-meaning enthusiasts proclaimed, but that divine imperative did not make it easier to achieve. Indeed, even the most enthusiastic were well-aware of institutional barriers that had emerged historically and the real obstacles they posed to ecumenical advances. These were not simply matters of culture, property, finance, or due diligence. Such considerations certainly applied in the post-war years to processes of building trust and organisational convergence between Churches over everything from congregational culture to transferability of pension rights. Organisational rationalism, which was very much the flavour of the period more widely, could still fall foul of such issues. These were the sort of challenges that complicated – and sometimes undermined – the parallel enthusiasm for industrial mergers, often driven on a top-down basis by technocratically inclined national governments, that occurred in the 1950s and 1960s.

Yet mergers between Churches had additional layers of complexity that made them even more difficult to achieve than the technocratic efforts of the Macmillan or Wilson governments to pick national champions. Not least, there was an awareness of all serving and communicating the same God but having, over time, developed different understandings of

what ‘Church’ meant. If the divine imperative to overcome these past differences existed, as was so often proclaimed, why had the Churches nonetheless fallen into schism and developed along historically distinct pathways? Trying to unravel these processes and find the point of divergence in the past was thus one of the starting points for ecumenical dialogue.

This issue was complicated in England by the peculiarities of its religious environment.[1] Churches are transnational bodies, as all parties in the ecumenical dialogues in England in the twentieth century were acutely aware. However, negotiations tended to focus on local unity at a national level, often with limited cognizance being taken of parallel discussions taking place elsewhere. Thus, for instance, the Anglicans and Methodists in conversation in England in the 1950s and 1960s seem to have paid scant attention to the dialogue between their sister Churches in the USA which had commenced in 1942.[2] This was probably only in part because of the unambiguous view – albeit privately expressed – of the secretary of the Protestant Episcopal Church’s Unity Commission that re-ordaining Methodists apostolically ‘would be one indispensable but not the sole constitutive basis for intercommunion’.[3] Beneath the grandiloquent language of ‘Church’ there was always the largely unspoken issue of the relationship of Churches within and to a particular nation. Indeed, the initial leader of the Anglican side of the Conversations made clear that he felt that the issues in the USA were very different.[4]

From Disunity towards Ecumenism

The Protestant Churches which began tentative conversations about their relationships with each other in England around the time of the Great War may have shared certain historic and theological roots in the Reformation. By the twentieth century their separation into distinct bodies was nevertheless of longstanding. The conflicts between partisans of different ecclesiological positions over which should emerge dominant in the post-Reformation Church of England had been resolved not by the divine will but by the State during the seventeenth century. The fundamental split of the various Protestant Free Churches from the Church of England occurred as a rationalisation of the latter by the State in 1662 whereby non-Episcopalian elements were deliberately excluded. This was compounded and formalised when, following the ‘Glorious Revolution’ of 1688-89, attempts at what was called ‘Comprehension’ – the creation of a Church of England able to embrace a broad spectrum of doctrines about theology and Church order – foundered on the impact that ‘bringing in so great a body as the Presbyterians’ would have on both Church and State.[5]

This constitutional and legal framework continued to shape the environment in which twentieth-century ecumenism operated. As the Methodist lawyer Henry Woodhouse noted in 1964, ‘Fundamentally, the Church of England is the English people engaged in Christian worship and service. It is the sacred counterpart of the secular state’. Indeed, in law other Churches did not exist as Churches but simply as voluntary bodies, making unity with Methodism legally preposterous![6]

This did not make it unfeasible. However, reunion with an Established Church could not effectively be contemplated without direct State involvement and sponsorship. Until the 1820s the State was positively opposed to such moves. Thereafter the State continued to attempt to police the Church of England. For instance, the 1865 Clerical Subscription Act,

requiring assent to the Thirty Nine Articles, the three-fold ordering of the ministry into bishops, priests and deacons, and the *Book of Common Prayer* remains on the statute book and was clearly a potential barrier to a united ministry with Nonconformity.[7] Accordingly, it was only as the State's interest in maintaining a nexus between Church, State and nation waned by the end of the nineteenth century that it became increasingly possible for the Churches themselves to explore ecumenical possibilities.[8]

By then, those Dissenters who had been excluded from the Church of England in the later seventeenth century had been supplemented by the Methodists who emerged as a group with links to the Church of England through the eighteenth-century ministry of John Wesley. Following Wesley's death in 1791, this group became more distinct from the Church of England. During the Conversations, the distinguished Methodist historian E. Gordon Rupp and his Anglican opposite number and former mentor Norman Sykes attributed this partly to Anglican hostility to lay preaching and itinerancy, while possibly under-emphasizing the role of the State.[9] Wesley's death was also swiftly followed by internal schism in Methodism itself. This process itself illustrated the pre-eminence of organisational issues and authority in causing such divisions. Doctrine and theology were much less significant in these than disputes over the respective roles and authority of ministers and laity.[10] Simultaneously, though for varying reasons, similar processes of schism were also marked in the early nineteenth century in other English-speaking Protestant Churches.[11]

By the later Victorian period all parts of a still divided Methodism generally identified more with the rest of what was by then known as Nonconformity than it did with its Anglican origins. Leading Methodists were, for instance, involved in the creation of the National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches in 1896, which emerged not so much as an ecumenical move but as a body to co-ordinate – not very effectively – the interests and evangelical efforts of the denominations involved.[12] A significant motive was thus the rationalising one of increasing efficacy and influence. Nonetheless, reinforcing a sense of commonalty and inter-communion between the various Free Churches was a significant ecumenical outcome.

Various other developments in the late nineteenth century proved favourable to a growing interest in Church unity. Denominational differences over Church order became less sharp as biblical criticism undermined illusions that a particular Church order or practice was uniquely sanctioned by the New Testament. Missionary activity beyond England's shores reinforced awareness of the Churches as international institutions trying to make sense of their message in very different settings. In Methodism and Anglicanism respectively, this internationalism was expressed through the emergence of conferences held every ten years bringing together their various elements from around the world: first with the establishment of the Lambeth Conference in 1867, followed by the Methodist equivalent in 1881. Within England itself the disappearance of Nonconformist civil disabilities, and the declining willingness of the State to enforce these, cleared the way for greater inter-denominational co-operation.

These developments were reinforced by the impact of the Great War, not least on the various branches of Methodism. Intra-Methodist discussions had already led to the union of three smaller groups into the United Methodist Church in 1907. Both the creation of this body and the negotiations which began from January 1918 about further union with its larger counterparts, the Primitive and Wesleyan Methodists, were fraught with difficulty. These

problems were partly about supposedly rational considerations. T.B. Stephenson had argued at the 1901 Methodist Ecumenical Conference that everything possible had been done to eliminate wasteful competition among Methodists by interdenominational fellowship, and further progress could only be achieved by union.[13] This was, however, easier said than done. In gathered churches with overlapping networks, deciding which places of worship to merge to achieve efficiency gains is never an easy task, with the result that procrastination too often becomes the default position. Mergers of circuits and rationalisation of chapel provision consequent on the Methodist union eventually achieved in 1932 accordingly continued well into the 1960s.[14] Blithe assumptions about potential gains from rationalisation were falsified by the lengthy process and the administrative and cultural challenges it involved.

However, if rationalisation had been the main issue more would have been achieved – for instance, in the moves to create Free Church 'parishes' – before 1914.[15] Even when negotiations did get under way, debate about how to fulfil the efficiency gains suggested by Stephenson was largely overshadowed by the issues that mattered most to the principal actors, the leading figures in the respective denominations. Thus, the biggest stumbling blocks in the negotiations revolved around doctrines of the ministry, lay presidency at communion and the statement of the doctrine of the merged body. All of these, not least the last, involved repeated redrafting to find a formulation that was acceptable to all parties. Whatever the imperative for union, the fundamental challenge was to establish a framework and statement of the nature of the newly created body sufficiently broad to avoid conflict with sincerely held beliefs about the nature and purpose of Christianity and Methodism on which even enthusiastic supporters such as the eminent Primitive Methodist Bible scholar A. S. Peake were unwilling to compromise.[16]

Ecumenical negotiations with the Church of England posed all these challenges and more. Nonetheless, initial discussions with a range of Free Churches were opened in January 1914. An attempt to be inclusive was marked by framing these discussions in terms of 'In what direction should we look for Christian unity as being hopeful?' Their interim report in February 1916 made clear that faith and doctrine was just such a hopeful direction. The second report, published in March 1918, reflected that the question of order and the ministry was far more fraught with difficulties, particularly around episcopacy. The leading Wesleyan, John Scott Lidgett recognised that episcopacy had value 'not on the score of antiquity and prevalence', though these were facets often emphasized by Anglicans, 'but as an effective instrument for the administration of the Church'. The report acknowledged that episcopacy was a condition of unity. It qualified this by suggesting that the ancient practice of election of bishops by clergy and people, as opposed to the system of royal appointment which had obtained since the Reformation (and often before), should be revived.[17] A variant on such processes was, after all, soon to be introduced in Wales when the Anglican Church was disestablished there in 1920.

That same year Peake spoke for many ecumenists when, against the backdrop of the slaughter of the Great War, he urged, 'The world is yearning for Unity. It is tired and weary of strife.'[18] Lidgett invoked the League of Nations, then being envisaged to resolve future international conflict, as a model for mutual recognition between the Churches.[19] With the Church of England at the time, even measures of mutual recognition such as pulpit exchanges, let alone inter-communion, did not exist. This lack of regular contact ensured that, whatever the enthusiasms of denominational leaders, mutual suspicions ran deep at grassroots level.

‘Anglican clergy’, wrote a Wesleyan minister in 1918, ‘never will meet us on equal terms … we are interlopers in their parishes’.[20]

There were legal difficulties in establishing inter-communion for a Church established by law. Parliamentary unwillingness to countenance changes to the liturgy was made clear during the Prayer Book debates in 1927-28.[21] In other words, the State continued to be a factor in ecumenical relations. The Church Assembly created in 1919 did not prove a successful vehicle for asserting the spiritual autonomy of the Church of England. It was not until after it was replaced by the General Synod in 1970 that it became easier for the Church of England to resolve such issues. Nevertheless, by 1919, many leading Anglicans were willing to contemplate inter-communion with Nonconformists. Such moves, however, were met with threats of schism from the Anglo-Catholic wing of the Church.[22]

Pulpit exchanges should have been easier. Nonetheless, an Anglican committee in 1919 restated opposition, primarily from the same quarter. Bertram Pollock, bishop of Norwich, in August 1919 suggested as a solution that pulpit exchanges could take place on the grounds that the visiting preacher assented to the first three elements of the Lambeth Quadrilateral. Some of his fellow Churchmen were also now advocating inter-communion on the same basis. At the time Pollock’s idea proceeded no further, though in 1922 Lidgett was to become the first Nonconformist to preach in Hereford Cathedral.[23] Pollock’s invocation of the Quadrilateral, however, reflected its importance in Anglican thinking during the crescendo of ecumenical discussions that accompanied and immediately followed the Great War.

The Lambeth Appeal and Inter-War Developments

Formulated in 1870 by the American Episcopalian priest, W.R. Huntington, the Quadrilateral was adopted in slightly altered form by the Lambeth Conference in 1888. Writing in the aftermath of a bloody civil war, Huntington proposed a Church of reconciliation that would gather together Christ’s scattered sheep, to be based upon agreement around scripture, the creeds, the sacraments of baptism and communion, and the historic episcopacy. These four elements were for Huntington the ‘Quadrilateral of pure Anglicanism’. Indeed, Huntington argued that ‘Because the English State-Church has muffled these first principles in a cloud of non-essential … she mourns to this day the loss of half her children’.[24]

As the 1916 report suggested and Pollock acknowledged, the first three of these elements were relatively uncontroversial. Nonetheless, when adopted by the 1888 Lambeth Conference they made little headway. The Wesleyan Conference at the time noted that these, especially the last, ‘do not…provide a practical ground for discussion of the subject’.[25] As the ‘Appeal to All Christian People’ from the revived Lambeth Conference in 1920 made clear, the Quadrilateral was, however, the only real practical basis for Anglican engagement in discussions on Church unity. And, while there may have been more Methodists than Anglicans globally (and more Baptists than either),[26] the Church of England’s local significance and preponderance made it central to any ecumenical initiatives in England.

The Appeal trenchantly proclaimed: ‘We believe that the Holy Spirit has called us in a very solemn and special manner to associate ourselves in penitence and prayer with all those who deplore the divisions of Christian people … We believe that God wills fellowship.’ God may indeed have willed this, but the next two paragraphs began to reflect on the institutional

obstacles confronting divine intentions. After noting Anglicanism's relations and inter-communion with historic episcopal Churches, the lack of fellowship and communion with non-Episcopalian Churches is obliquely acknowledged. This 'sin of disunion' was 'contrary to God's will, and we desire frankly to confess our share in the guilt of thus crippling the Body of Christ.' This was an important admission for a Church which historically had tended to see Nonconformists, as their name suggests, as the schismatics. How, then, was this hindrance to be removed? 'The time has come,' the Appeal continued, 'for all the separated groups of Christians to agree in forgetting the things which are behind and reaching out towards the goal of a reunited Catholic Church.' This new unity was to be achieved by a 'rich diversity of life and devotion' and a ministry based on 'the inward call of the Spirit' around the core basis of all four elements of the Quadrilateral. 'May we not reasonably claim that the episcopate is the one means of providing such a ministry?' queried the Appeal.

The reasonableness of this proposition that episcopacy was the one means of achieving a united ministry was questionable. Churches which had conscientiously objected to what they saw as the unscriptural office of bishops since the seventeenth century were thus enjoined to forget this stance for the sake of wider union. It remained a problem for objectors like Franz Hildebrandt when he remonstrated in 1958: 'It is false to Christ and to scripture, and sectarian in spirit, to make Christian unity dependent upon any form of ministry or organisation. Nothing in the New Testament supports such a demand ... A Church's ministry is authenticated by the Gospel it proclaims, not the Gospel by the Ministry that proclaims it'.[27]

An attempt to allay such concerns was made in stating that a bishop's office should be 'exercised in a representative and constitutional manner'. Quite how the 'representative' part of this was to be achieved given the role of Crown nomination to a diocese was obscure. Indeed, as the Establishment sub-committee of the Conversations noted in 1967, appointment by the Crown 'and the absence of potentially disruptive electoral procedures has preserved a unity in many a diocese and province' given the internal doctrinal tensions within the Church of England.[28]

Furthermore, the centrality of 'that grace which is pledged to the members of the whole body in the apostolic rite of the laying-on of hands' to this particular conception of the ministry had been reasserted by the end of the paragraph. As a *quid pro quo*, the Appeal made clear that Anglican bishops and clergy would submit to whatever alternative 'form of commission or recognition' other denominations might require of them. That this was not necessarily going to be seen by either party as a reciprocal arrangement was, however, tacitly encoded by the way in which the Appeal document only explicitly used the important term 'grace' in conjunction with the process of episcopal ordination.

Nonetheless, the Appeal emphasized that such a process did not entail a repudiation of past ministries or the fruits of the Spirit with which they may have been blessed. Episcopal ordination by the laying-on of hands was thus acknowledged as not the only means to exercising an effective ministry in the past. The central problem was how such a ministry might look in the 'new and great endeavour to recover and to manifest to the world the unity of the Body of Christ for which he prayed'.[29]

The Appeal was in many ways the framing document for the ecumenical dialogues over the ensuing decades and at its core lay this question of the nature of ministry and how it was ordained in the imagined united body. Episcopacy *per se* was not necessarily the issue. As

numerous commentators observed in the 1960s, Methodism had long incorporated the functionality of episcopacy. The Methodist Conference, in stationing and exercising spiritual oversight of ministers, embodied a collective episcopacy within British Methodism. Elsewhere, American Methodism had always had bishops. Bishops were also central to the ministry of the Church of South India, in which Anglicans and Methodists, with those of other Reformed traditions, had united in 1947. Such offices could be seen by Methodists as having organisational utility, but this did not mean that they were the *esse* – fundamental to the nature – of the Church.[30]

Many of their Anglican counterparts disagreed: episcopacy in apostolic succession for them was not only the characteristic of most historic Churches – including those Old Catholic Churches with which Anglicanism established inter-communion ties through the Bonn agreement in 1931 – but also very definitely of the *esse* of the Church. The irony that Leo XIII had roundly dismissed the Anglican Church's claim to stand in apostolic succession in the Papal Bull *Apostolicae curae* in 1896 was certainly acknowledged by Anglo-Catholics,[31] but it never seems to have stopped them insisting on it anyway in any ecumenical dialogues with the Free Churches. There was a fundamental, if rarely acknowledged Platonism behind this view: as Sykes put it during the Anglican-Methodist Conversations, 'the historic episcopate which we commend is not intended to be a copy of our own imperfect expression of it, but an ideal'.[32] Accordingly, when the Appeal referred to episcopacy as the one means to a united ministry this acknowledged that this was the one means acceptable to the bulk of Anglican opinion, as figures like Peake were clearly aware.[33]

Methodist (and Free Church) responses were now – in the changed circumstances of the time – much more positive than in 1888. Formal inter-church discussions with the major Nonconformist denominations commenced on 30 November 1921. Many of the themes that re-emerged in the 1950s were first aired then, such as opposition among Congregationalists, Baptists and some Methodists to the credal element of the Quadrilateral, or the question of ecclesiastical relations with the State. The greatest difficulties, predictably, centred on the nature of the ministry. That Nonconformists exercised real ministries was conceded in a 1923 Anglican memorandum. Nonetheless, they were still seen as requiring episcopal laying-on of hands in order to conduct Anglican services, and especially the Eucharist. This was, a further memorandum made clear in 1925, not a matter of spiritual efficacy but of the episcopal authority central to the Anglican vision of the Church as established by the Quadrilateral. The discussions thus reached an impasse and were terminated by mutual agreement.[34] They resumed following the 1930 Lambeth Conference against the backdrop of the Church of South India negotiations.

Progress continued to be limited, even on the issue of inter-communion. To some extent this reflected bodies talking at cross-purposes, not least about what it meant to be a Church, let alone a united one. Consider the differing views on this matter articulated in the 1930s. Methodist reunion in 1932 had led that denomination to rethink such questions, with Conference producing an extensive statement on *The Nature of the Christian Church* in 1937. This emphasized that the Church was the Body of Christ whose mission was to preach the Gospel. The Church's nature is therefore inseparable from its function, indeed 'It might even be said that the Church comes to its unity and fullness of growth through the ministry'. This ministry is seen as based on God's gifts of grace. Although it was conceded as 'highly probable that the laying on of hands was largely practised in the apostolic age … the New

Testament tells us little, and therefore it is difficult to believe that any principle essential to the Church … was involved in that rite'.[35] In any case, Wesleyans, who had since 1836 practised the laying-on of hands as ordination into the whole Church rather than just Methodism, did not have any problem with the rite itself, except the insistence that episcopacy in apostolic succession was central to it.[36] Wesley's view that the New Testament acknowledges no distinction between the offices that have come to be known as bishops and presbyters was cited in 1937 as the basis for his decision – having failed to persuade the Bishop of London to do so – to ordain on his own authority.[37]

The archbishop of York, William Temple, who was taking a leading role on the Anglican side of these conversations, had two years earlier suggested that the fundamental barrier to reunion was not the nature of the ministry, but the doctrine of the Church. However, as both the Methodists' 1937 statement and Temple's own comments testified, the two were intimately intertwined. In reiterating in 1935 why inter-communion between the Church of England and Nonconformity could not occur, Temple stressed that until all ministers were episcopally ordained, open communion according to the Anglican rite was impossible. Mutual recognition of ministries, he argued, would not heal schism or create a united Church, for there would be no unified authority to direct that Church and no single system of ministry.[38]

Achieving agreement on the logic of unity was reasonably easy: witness the preliminary statement of the *Outline of a Reunion Scheme for the Church of England and the Evangelical Free Churches of England* published in February 1938 that, 'As there is one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of us all, so there must be one Body, one Fellowship of the people of God'. It was over the nature of that one Body wherein dissension lay. The uniformity of Church order, which Temple had already made clear he regarded as essential to be a Church at all, was demurred by the Methodist Conference in 1939. Indeed, Temple's private complaint to Archbishop Lang of Canterbury in 1932 that Nonconformists cared more for co-operation than unity was partially borne out by Conference's suggestion that 'each of the uniting communions might at first be recognised as semi-autonomous within the united Church'.[39]

Nonetheless, Methodism in 1939 returned a nuanced response to *Outline*. It was made clear that Methodism could not accept a view that episcopacy and apostolic succession were indispensable to the constitution of the Church. Such unbiblical tenets were,[40] however, neatly sidestepped in *Outline* by the studied ambiguity of the declaration on page 15 that 'the acceptance of Episcopal ordination … neither affirms nor excludes the view that Apostolic Succession determines the validity of the Ministry and Sacraments'. Conference in 1939 was reassured by the recognition in *Outline* that authority was to be conciliar, rather than episcopal. As far as entry to the ministry was concerned, it was also reassured by the insistence in *Outline* that 'Presbyters should be associated with the bishop in the ceremony of ordination and the laity should have a share in the process by which a candidate is approved for ordination'. Similarly, that this process was not to be seen as a repudiation of past ministries was welcomed. The Methodist response to *Outline* instead merely quibbled about the lack of emphasis on evangelism and the role of the laity.[41]

From Fisher's 1946 Sermon to *Church Relations in England*

The onset of the Second World War, and the frosty response the Free Churches collectively delivered to *Outline* in 1941, prevented any immediate further developments. With the end of hostilities, in 1946 Geoffrey Fisher, who had recently succeeded as archbishop of Canterbury after Temple's short tenure of that office, invited Nonconformity to resume the talks. Before they could respond, Fisher set out a new approach to these in his celebrated Cambridge sermon of 3 November 1946. This sought to avoid the concentration on uniformity of ecclesiastical government that the Methodist Conference had criticised in 1939. Echoing Methodism's call for autonomous growing together in 1939, Fisher envisaged that 'while the folds remain distinct, there should be a movement towards a free and unfettered exchange of life in worship and sacrament'.[42] This inter-communion would be facilitated by seeing the Church, as agreed at the international and ecumenical Faith and Order conference at Lausanne in 1927, as constituted historically by the episcopacy, presbyters and laity. Having been represented at Lausanne and accepted this declaration, Fisher's message was that the English Free Churches should now facilitate the growing together he sketched out by taking episcopacy into their own systems.[43] This would have the effect of making the various denominations more similar organisationally. Fisher's concluding remarks make clear that he saw this as a means whereby the uniting bodies could find a means 'to grow to full communion with each other before we start to write a constitution'.[44]

Fisher thus retained the Lambeth Quadrilateral intact and the ecumenical initiative, whilst placing the onus on the Free Churches to grow towards the Church of England based upon commitments they had already made. Methodism reiterated many points from 1939 in responding positively to Fisher's call. Talks with various Free Churches began in 1947 and led to publication of *Church Relations in England* in 1950. This demonstrated that matters of doctrine were not what divided the various denominations. Despite some differences over the desirability of credal formulations, fundamental agreement was reached over matters of faith. It was also recognised that differences over the sacraments were within as much as between churches. In such circumstances *Church Relations* was able to cite with approval the Anglican agreement with the Old Catholics that 'Intercommunion does not require from either Communion the acceptance of all doctrinal opinion, sacramental devotion, or liturgical practice characteristic of the other, but implies that each believes the other to hold all the essentials of the Christian faith'.[45]

The difficulties, as usual, were over Church order and ministry. As one sympathetic Anglican reviewer, J.P. Hickinbotham, noted, *Church Relations* demonstrated that some had an emphasis on the Church being constituted by 'means of grace … whatever its outward form and order', while others 'start from the belief that the Church is an outwardly and historically continuous society, the necessary marks of this continuity being a particular form of ministry'. Accordingly, while the former group – largely Nonconformists but also containing many evangelical Anglicans - saw no real barriers to inter-communion, this remained difficult to achieve while there was not agreement among all parties 'that the Sacraments of all the Churches concerned are administered by those whom they can recognise as duly qualified to do so'.[46]

Other points that then preponderant High Anglicans might have been inclined to insist on, such as episcopal confirmation, were conceded because too many historic exceptions were acknowledged. Similarly, it was agreed that under this scheme the Free Churches would be able to maintain inter-communion with non-episcopal Churches. Not only was this a long-

standing condition for Nonconformists anyway, but it was already a feature of Anglican Church relations with Lutherans.[47] Accordingly, the most controversial aspect of the scheme was the proposal that movement towards unity should be phased, with progress centred on adoption by the Free Churches of an episcopate consecrated by apostolic succession as a necessary condition of inter-communion. This built upon the recent efforts of Anglo-Catholics like the bishop of Oxford, Kenneth Kirk, to argue that priesthood could only be legitimately exercised by those who had been so ordained.[48] This was not, as his son-in-law Eric Kemp subsequently clarified, because Anglo-Catholics believed that bishops could give grace, 'but that the Holy Spirit comes upon the ordinand in response to the prayer of the Church uttered by the bishop who is authorised to pray'.[49] Sykes' observation in 1948 that Anglicans were much less particular about episcopal ordination and the apostolic succession in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries seemingly had little impact on this core stipulation of *Church Relations*.[50]

Fisher had tried to shift the debate towards the promotion of co-operation and inter-communion. However, the effect of *Church Relations* was a return to an insistence that progress on that front required a united ministry and Church that all could agree on. The main difference was that a phased approach had now also been mooted. This invited Nonconformists to adopt episcopacy as a means gradually to achieve inter-communion and create a united ministry and Church. This brought into stark relief the practical difficulties of Fisher's idea of growing together. As was later noted, 'On this plan, full inter-communion would only be achieved when all Methodist ministers had been episcopally ordained (some fifty years, perhaps)'.[51] This and the concomitant creation of two classes of ministry proved unattractive. *Church Relations*, Hickinbotham noted, had accordingly put forward as an alternative the idea that such difficulties could 'be avoided if some satisfactory form of further commissioning for existing ministers could be worked out'.[52]

Most Nonconformists were not attracted to the idea of adopting episcopacy without clarity on further steps to unity. When the Convocations of Canterbury and York agreed in 1953 to set up a commission to explore the next steps in this ecumenical odyssey only Methodism responded positively. On the proposal of its Faith and Order Committee a resolution was approved by Conference to resume talks, subject to Church of England assurances:

a) That the Church of England acknowledges that our divisions are within the Christian body which is throughout in a state of schism;

b) That the same liberty of interpretation of the nature of episcopacy and of priesthood would be accorded to the Methodist Church as prevails in the Church of England;

c) That the Methodist Church would be free to preserve the relations of inter-communion and fellowship with other non-episcopal Churches which it now enjoys.[53]

The first condition shows that the 1920 Lambeth Appeal still had not buried lingering fears of Anglican disdain at 'schismatics'. It is unclear whether the third was made in the knowledge that Anglicans had similar issues in their relations with Old Catholics and Orthodox Churches. It certainly demonstrated that *Church Relations* had not provided complete reassurance that inter-communion with non-episcopal Churches was agreed with the Church of England. Nor did the equivocal response, conceding the idea only in principle but not necessarily in practice. With many High Anglicans then refusing inter-communion with the

Church of South India on the grounds that many of its clergy had not been – in their eyes – validly ordained (episcopally through apostolic succession), this equivocation was only to be expected. Even after relations with South India were resolved in 1955, 400 clergy in the York Convocation continued to express their doubts about the legitimacy of its faith, order, and sacraments.[54]

This Anglo-Catholic recalcitrance was not lost on Methodists dubious about negotiations. Noting the way in which a minority of Anglo-Catholic bishops had successfully stymied progress on South India at Lambeth 1948, Kingsley Barrett - an eminent New Testament scholar from a United Methodist background – mordantly observed the way in which the Anglo-Catholics' principal organisation, the Church Union 'finds deadly perils to catholicity lurking' in all ecumenical schemes. Barrett went on in this 1951 lecture to point out that Nonconformists had to resist the Anglo-Catholic tendency 'to act as if their interpretation of Episcopacy were the only one in the Church of England, and to make acceptance of it the indispensable condition of Reunion or Inter-Communion'[55] Indeed, the Methodists' second condition was as important to Evangelicals within the Church of England itself – who often had a purely functional view of the office of bishop – as it was to Methodists.[56]

The First Phase of the Conversations 1956-1958

The Methodists' cautious response was met by an Anglican suggestion that the term 'schism' should be avoided. Discussion, instead, was to be seen as taking place within the Body of Christ. This ambiguous setting enabled agreement that 'conversations … exploratory in character and unrestricted in scope' should commence in July 1956.[57] George Bell, bishop of Chichester and one of the key figures in the wartime creation of the World Council of Churches, was appointed to chair the Anglican side. His Methodist co-chair was Harold Roberts, principal of Richmond College and soon to become President of the Methodist Conference in 1957. Both felt that these negotiations, the first between the Anglicans and a single Free Church, held more potential than previous efforts, with Roberts noting 'The existing differences between Methodism….and the Baptists and Congregationalists … are such as to make joint negotiations quite impracticable'.[58]

The Conversations teams were each twelve strong. They were not particularly seasoned in ecumenical work in contrast to the continuity of personnel throughout much of the inter-war years. Only four of the Anglicans and one Methodist had been directly involved with *Church Relations*.[59] Both sides had only a limited negotiating brief: on the Anglican side they were merely to negotiate 'on the basis of the report on *Church Relations in England* … and to prepare proposals to put before the Convocations'.[60]

Bell was tasked with finding three laypersons, two other bishops and five clergy. Fisher's prejudices showed in this letter of appointment, not least in commenting 'The Evangelicals have not got any particularly good people in Convocation'.[61] Bell, fresh from working with figures like Kirk and Eric Kemp on resolving Anglican relations with South India, was under no illusions about the challenge, noting 'It will take some time to achieve results, even of a preliminary character'.[62] Fisher's tendency to agree who should be on the team with Leslie Weatherhead, then the President of the Methodist Conference, behind Bell's back may not have entirely helped. Sykes, who Bell initially sought unsuccessfully to include because of

his expertise on eighteenth-century Church history, was put on the negotiating team with the Orthodox instead, while Herbert Hodges – an expert on Orthodoxy[63] – was appointed as the lay academic to the Anglican-Methodist Conversations. A disgruntled Sykes commented:

> [T]he episode confirms my impression that it is useless to waste one's time on contemporary Anglican issues, when they are treated in this way. Of your commission, Oxford, Kemp, du Toit and Riley are there simply as Anglo-Catholics and without any knowledge of Anglican-Methodist history. Liverpool, Greenslade and Taylor are there as Evangelicals.[64]

This was not entirely fair. As Bell pointed out in response on 23 February 1956, Hodges had published on Anglican-Methodist relations and he and Greenslade were former Methodists. Additionally, Stanley Greenslade was a colleague of the leading Methodist dissentient, Kingsley Barrett, in the Divinity School at Durham until succeeding to the Dixie Chair at Cambridge in 1958, while Kemp's expert contributions to revision of canon law in Canterbury province were clearly highly valued by Fisher. Expertise on relevant English church history was nonetheless conspicuously absent. Bell was sufficiently alarmed by the contrast between the scholarly team Weatherhead had approved for Methodism and the skills of his own side that he importuned Fisher: 'We shall look foolish if the Methodist experts … find no-one on our side who can deal with real assurance and knowledge, with the origins [of the present situation].'[65]

While Sykes, Bell and Fisher were debating the Anglican team in February 1956 – with Sykes eventually added to it the following month – John Lawrence went on BBC radio to set the scene for the Conversations. Lawrence was the editor of the *Christian Frontier Newsletter* and one of the figures Bell had unsuccessfully canvassed to include.[66] He pointed out that the main problem in the Conversations would be the lack of mutual recognition of the ministry. Associated problems would make it difficult to comply with the Methodist demand that they retain inter-communion with Nonconformity. No less of a problem was continuing Anglican disdain for and ignorance of Methodist folk in the parishes. In particular, Lawrence suggested that Anglo-Catholicism would pose the latter with a culture shock.[67]

In response, Bell drew attention to Wesley's sacramentalism.[68] Anglo-Catholics were nonetheless frequently disdainful of those, like the Methodist Sacramental Fellowship founded in 1931, who had sought to revive such traditions.[69] Moreover, large numbers of Methodists, particularly those from Primitive or United backgrounds, would no doubt have felt exactly the culture shock Lawrence spoke of. Awareness of this had even been expressed in the joint report from the Convocations of Canterbury and York in 1955, which had established the basis for the Church of England entering the Conversations. This noted 'For many Methodists, the Catholic vocabulary is strange, and even suspect. They regard clericalism as historically a great evil in the Church of God, and have striven to set up safeguards against it.'[70]

This joint report also set up some safeguards of its own, particularly the stipulation that 'before steps were taken to extend the episcopate to a Free Church, the Church of England would need to be assured that the office of a priest … would be safeguarded in its ordinal and practice'.[71] Methodist commentators like Barrett at the time envisaged a whole slew of other potential problems for the established Church, including a need for primary legislation.[72] As his fellow Methodist, J.S.M. Hooper, pointed out to Bell – scarred from his experiences on

the Faith and Order Committee's deliberations with Anglicans over the founding of the Church of North India – episcopal ordination was nonetheless always the fundamental stumbling block which engendered the 'fog of suspicion and ambiguity that besets so much thinking and writing about Church relations in which Anglicanism is involved'.[73] Indeed, the problem was not episcopacy *per se*, which as Bell responded had been a *sine qua non* for Anglicans since the Lambeth Appeal, but the Anglo-Catholic interpretation of it which all too easily struck non-Anglicans as expressing 'a view of the ministry and of the mind of God with regard to it for which he can find no basis in the New Testament, and very little outside it'.[74]

Despite the suspicions Methodist dissentients came to express about him, Roberts was no less clear about the stumbling block this approach to episcopacy posed. In an interview during the run-up to the commencement to the Conversations he emphasized that Methodism could only accept episcopacy on a functional, not an apostolic basis.[75] A year later in a paper drafted for the Conversations he set out his position even more starkly: 'Methodism cannot admit that episcopacy is indispensable … or that without episcopacy there is no Church. It would be further constrained to declare that it cannot conceive of a higher ministry than that of the Word and Sacraments and would affirm that the distinction between bishop and minister is that of function'.[76]

The secretary of the Church Assembly Overseas Council wrote to Bell in April 1956 enthusing about the value of the talks in the mission field, long a key stimulus for ecumenism.[77] Bell himself approached these negotiations with his characteristic energy and determination, making clear to his team that he sought an interim report in time for the next Lambeth Conference in 1958,[78] a timeline that alarmed less ecumenical colleagues like Lionel du Toit.[79] On the eve of the Conversations, he privately set out what he saw as the way forward. This emphasized that to realise full inter-communion, 'unification of the ministry would be necessary'. The issue was how to achieve this. Bell suggested that 'This would be affirmed by a service of mutual authorisation' beginning with 'a Preface acknowledging that the ministries concerned are ordained ministries of the Universal Church' and including a prayer that God will supply each minister involved with 'whatever he may need' by way of grace. The idea that a united ministry is created by a uniting service was not a new one. Bell was, however, aware of the problem of how such a service would be interpreted. It was necessary, he suggested, to make it clear that it did not express a repudiation of Methodist order. Instead, Methodists should be seen rather as 'seeking admission to the full heritage of the other Church', a formulation which nonetheless made clear which Church Bell thought had the fuller heritage.[80]

On 28 June 1956 the Conversations opened at Selwyn College, Cambridge and proceeded on a twice-yearly basis at various Oxbridge locations.[81] Very rapidly Hooper's stumbling block emerged as a key theme. Following the initial meeting the first flurry of position papers all focused on episcopacy. Harold Riley's relatively emollient contribution noted that the Methodist superintendent is *primus inter pares* without the authority, *pastor pastorum*, wielded by a bishop.[82] Kemp's 'Apostolic Succession' was a more thoroughgoing defence of the Anglo-Catholic position. Emphasizing the role of episcopacy in the early Church as a safeguard against heresy, and therefore its fundamental role in his conception of what Church is, Kemp stressed that the absence of apostolic succession in the Church of South India needed to be exceptional. However, he sought to balance this hard-line by suggesting that

Methodists should also point out defects in Anglican orders and life. For Kemp, this mutual pointing of fingers seemed a 'sounder and more Christian way than to try and devise a formula which will be interpreted by each of us in a different sense'.[83] This was, as Kemp was no doubt aware, a false equivalent. There were, as Tom Jessop pointed out, plenty of non-theological characteristics which Methodists felt were particular to their witness, such as simplicity, spontaneity, and hymn-singing,[84] but these did not touch upon the essence of ministry. Methodists often felt Anglican ministry was deficient, not least in the preaching of the Word. A later joint paper for the Conversations by the Methodist Eric Baker and the Anglican Stanley Greenslade indeed argued that addressing such deficiencies was part of the means to unity.[85] These were, however, deficiencies of practice and not of order. Methodists did not believe that Anglicans needed to be re-ordained to be better preachers, while Kemp – and even more du Toit – did believe that Methodists needed to be re-ordained into the apostolic succession.

Behind this issue was an existential difference in conceptions of whether to be a Church is about its functions or its order. As Barrett later put it, Anglo-Catholics appeared to hold that the Holy Spirit was immanent within the Church rather than transcendent over it and working through it.[86] The distinction was more subtle than that, as Kemp's observations above on grace and ordination bear witness. Nonetheless, because so many on the Anglican side could not divorce their conception of the Church from the exercise of episcopacy, discussion focused on the latter rather than more fundamental issues of ecclesiology. Indeed, the second meeting of the Conversations appears to have been dominated by Kemp's paper and Rupp's robust attack both on its historicity and the 'mystique' of episcopacy it expressed. Indeed, the very doctrine of episcopacy, Rupp argued, was 'full of ambiguities'.[87]

The following meeting in June 1957 was similarly shaped by Roberts' aforementioned paper on this perennial subject. The gap between the two sides on episcopacy was spelt out by Roberts in a letter to Bell in preparation for this meeting. In contrast to the position largely held among the Anglicans, Roberts noted that 'It is doubtful … whether the suggestion that the acceptance of Episcopacy would be a "recovery" is likely to make a widespread appeal to Methodism. I think myself that we have to stress that Episcopacy expresses what we already hold – the continuity of the Church with the Church of the Apostles'.[88] He thus claimed that the only succession from the apostles that mattered was one of faith and doctrine, rather than the Anglo-Catholic insistence of the laying-on of hands.

The minutes of that meeting note, 'It was agreed that episcopacy, though not necessarily in its English form, is necessary for the enrichment of church life, and should therefore be sought in any scheme of Church union'. With that as a starting point, Bell sought to sketch out a way forward. Commencing with recognition of the validity of Methodist orders, Bell argued that the way to unity lay through the following two-element route which avoided the long transition period seen in South India:

1) Episcopal ordination in Methodism allowing intercommunion with Methodist ministers who had been episcopally ordained, while pulpit exchanges could occur with those who had not;

2) Unification of the ministries by a Service of Reconciliation which, to address Kemp's point about mutual deficiencies, would include a prayer referencing respectively the historic episcopate and Methodist holiness. It would also

> commission all the assembled clergy anew into the united Church by a laying-on of hands by a bishop from the other Church.[89]

Sykes was by no means so optimistic. Immediately following this third conference he wrote to Bell, 'I came away last evening with the grave doubt as to whether I ought not to resign membership, as a token of my admiration and sympathy for the Methodists and dissent from the rigid position of our own group'. To him, this was already making a sham of Bell's Service of Reconciliation idea:

> We are asking [Methodism] to accept an episcopacy not simply in order to conform to the rule or form, but in order to give their ministry what it does not possess, and in return not to realise that Anglicans think that the commission to be given by Methodists neither conveys nor symbolises anything. I do not think there is the slightest chance of Methodism accepting so unilateral a proposal.[90]

Sykes stressed that the Service of Reconciliation had to be based upon genuine mutuality. Ever the ecclesiastical diplomat, Bell reassured Sykes on the importance of mutuality, while noting the centrality of the issue of 'in what form can an expression of mutuality be made?'[91] At this point, Bell does not even seem to have been clear as to how to get to the ordination of Methodist bishops.[92] Accordingly, it is not surprising that a key member of his team, H.J. Carpenter (who had become bishop of Oxford in 1955 following Kirk's death), suggested cutting the Service of Reconciliation from the draft papers sent to the Methodists in anticipation of the fourth meeting of the Conversations.[93] When Roberts did see it he seems to spotted exactly the problem Sykes identified, suggesting that the draft might be 'modified in such a way as will not leave the impression that the Church of England is making demands on Methodism whereas Methodism is not bringing anything to the Church of England'.[94]

Around the same time one of Roberts' team, Leslie Davison, suggested a way for Methodists to engage with the historic episcopate. While dubious of a mechanistic insistence on apostolic succession, Davison accepted that episcopacy had been an important device for countering the gnostic challenge in the Early Church. Episcopacy could thus be accepted as of the *bene esse*, though not the *esse* of the Church. Methodism, he argued, could 'make a substantial contribution to the reunion of Christendom and to the development of her own inheritance if these necessary functions now dispersed were brought together in the office of a consecrated person, called of God, and authorised by the Church and standing in the Apostolic Succession'. Episcopacy 'freed from the secular forces' of the State, 'could be restored to its original spiritual purpose'. As with Bell, the problem was how to get there. Davison recognised that any suggestion that the Service of Reconciliation was a reordination of Methodists had to be avoided.[95] One of the other papers submitted to the Conversations at this time suggested that the way to achieve this was by adopting the studied ambiguity used in recent ecumenical projects in India and Ceylon by a refusal to specify in which ways previous ministries may have been defective.[96]

Davison's reading of the common ground on episcopacy was reflected in the approach taken in the *Interim Statement* published in the summer of 1958.[97] Bell had achieved his self-imposed deadline. Roberts wrote to him following the publication of *Interim Statement* noting the predictable opposition of Barrett but optimistic about the prospects of success.[98] Bell, who had suffered a stroke at the latest Conversations meeting in April, was not to live to see this. Perhaps if Bell had not died that October Roberts' optimism would have been

rewarded. Bell's place as leader of the Anglican team was taken by the less dynamic Carpenter.[99]

The Conversations 1958-1963

The issue of the Fisher approach to growing together had not altogether gone away. A report for the 1958 Lambeth Conference – giving the example of Beirut where six or seven Catholic bishops presided over different rites – suggested that a similar approach might be a means to achieve inter-communion with the Free Churches.[100] As late as 1964 Oliver Tomkins, the bishop of Bristol, asked 'Should we not be much more likely to get union, at least of a sort, if we thought in terms of federation between existing bodies instead of holding out for a doctrinaire concept of one Church'.[101] Many of those Methodists who responded to the *Interim Statement* by endorsing Barrett's opposition to it seem to have felt the same way, echoing his complaint to Conference in 1958 that Roberts' team had exceeded their brief by allowing the Conversations to move beyond inter-communion.[102] Barrett's 1958 Conference speech ended by arguing that while some Anglican participants in the Conversations, such as Greenslade, advocated immediate inter-communion, there was no way forward as long as the Church of England in general refused to grasp that 'full validity and regularity of Churchmanship are not dependent upon Episcopalian legalism'. [103] Many also wrote to Roberts opposing episcopacy.[104] Nonetheless, the response of those Barrett canvassed was sufficiently mixed for him to decide not to follow up his Conference speech the following year with a multi-signature letter of dissent in the *Methodist Recorder*.[105]

Meanwhile, Roberts sought to manage Barrett's opposition by bringing him into the Conversations. Barrett missed the eighth meeting in December 1959, which discussed the absence of an official Methodist doctrine of communion and the fraught issues of lay officiation at Methodist communion and Methodist use of non-alcoholic wine.[106] Barrett's first attendance was at the following meeting in April 1960, where the discussions on the sacraments were concluded with a review of the respective Churches' positions on baptism.[107] Interestingly, the concern about efficient use of resources that had exercised Free Church ecumenists in the late nineteenth century had little role in the Conversations. Nor, correspondingly, did the Conversations feature much in the inquiry under Leslie Paul into the 'inadequate and wasteful' deployment of clergy set up by the Church Assembly in July 1960.[108]

Instead, in the Conversations the key issues remained episcopacy and the Service of Reconciliation. The former clearly was a major stumbling-block: in the run-up to the eleventh meeting in March 1961, at which it was agreed to publish in 1963, Riley noted 'I don't see that any Report will help much unless either Methodists can show Anglicans that the episcopal ministry is a thing indifferent, or else Anglicans can show Methodists that it is needed for theological reasons (and neither of these seem to have happened yet)'.[109] Riley overlooked that Roberts and a number of his colleagues were prepared to accept episcopacy for pragmatic reasons.

Roberts and Carpenter's joint memorandum at the eleventh meeting agreed that the time for organic union was not yet ripe. Yet this proved the germ of a two-stage scheme for unity. The first stage of this, which would allow for inter-communion immediately, was a unification of

the ministries. This, however, would only be possible once Methodism was considered by all Anglicans to possess a 'fully constituted apostolic ministry'. Although the possibility of serious division within Methodism was foreseen, the memorandum ended by suggesting that 'without denying the spiritual realities of its former ministries, the Methodist ministry may be constituted on an episcopal basis that conformed to the ordinal in the *Book of Common Prayer*'. It was presumed that something like a twenty-year transition phase would then be required to reach Stage 2.[110]

Subsequently Roberts sought to justify this position to Barrett. There was, he pointed out, no possibility of reunion without acceptance of the Lambeth Quadrilateral and Methodism had already agreed to episcopacy in South India.[111] This was hardly likely to persuade Barrett, who regarded the Anglican conception of the priesthood as a corrupting inheritance from pagan Rome (whereas the only true priest is Christ), disliked the conformity required by the *Book of Common Prayer* and felt Methodist witness had been swallowed up in South India.[112]

Barrett and another Methodist dissentient, Norman Snaith, professed their zeal for unity, but recorded that they could not support this approach at the twelfth meeting in September 1961.[113] Provision in the ensuing report for the dissent expressed by four Methodist members of the Conversations was agreed at the fourteenth meeting in April 1962.[114] Barrett's ringing critique of a process which would see 'The more scriptural Church order … swallowed up by the less' was read at the fifteenth and final meeting of the Conversations.[115]

Meanwhile, planning for the major elements of the report began to take shape, with the outline agreed at the twelfth meeting. Eric Baker, in his role as Secretary of the Methodist Conference, produced a paper on the mechanisms for appointing Methodist bishops and developing liaison between Anglican dioceses and Methodist districts. It is not clear what social impact he thought that the latter might have at the level of individual places of worship as he concluded that the emerging scheme would have little effect on the Methodist laity, except by bringing to an end the already vanishing practice of lay presidency at communion, a practice which had been regularly and critically raised by Anglicans throughout the Conversations.[116]

Focus was instead on the ministry, with Kemp and Hodges deputed to prepare the Service of Reconciliation at the thirteenth meeting in January 1962. Kemp, who effectively took on this task, was in no doubt that what he saw as the unsatisfactory arrangements in South India had to be avoided. Instead, along the lines of the subsequent North India scheme, it was made clear that 'unification will be once for all at the beginning and that then Episcopal Ordination will have to be the rule for the future'.[117]

If episcopal ordination had to be the rule in future, then was the Service of Reconciliation Kemp drafted effectively a re-ordination of the Methodist ministry? Kemp's liturgy was intended to shroud such issues in ambiguity. As he later put it: 'The basic principle of the Service of Reconciliation is that we place ourselves in the hands of God and ask him to give to each of us what He alone knows we need'. To aid this process, Kemp sought to borrow from each Church's traditions, insisting that this was why the laying-on of hands was such a feature.[118] In practice, however, it was not how God interpreted the Service but how it was interpreted by those who were to participate in it that mattered. Baker pointed out in October 1962 that Methodists could interpret the rite in their own way. The analogy he used at the

Methodist training college of Wesley House in Cambridge was of conducting a baptism when you know that the parents have a different understanding of the rite from you, an analogy that would probably have alarmed Kemp. Against the backdrop of the final phases of Macmillan's first attempt to take Britain into the European Economic Community, Baker roundly declared himself in favour of both efforts to achieve a greater unity. Nonetheless, some of his audience were clearly unconvinced that what would result, from the Conversations at least, was unity rather than absorption.[119]

Ambiguity, Liturgy and Law 1963-1965

Nor did the Service's ambiguity satisfy all. J.I. Packer's thoughtful response, even after several further revisions, was that: 'ambiguity in theological statements is only vicious when it either misleads by concealing from view differences which ought to be exposed or … issues which, for the sake of the Gospel, need to be unambiguously resolved'. He accepted that 'Ambiguity is pardonable and unavoidable, for one can never say anything, in theology or any other field, that does not leave some questions still open'. Yet, for him, the Service left too many issues unresolved, while its real intentions were nonetheless discernible in the insistence on a superfluous laying-on of hands.[120] This was denounced in Barrett's dissenting note as taking a 'mechanical and almost magical view of ordination'.[121] Even more explicitly, another Methodist dissentient, Tom Jessop, later denounced laying-on of hands as a sleight of hand to achieve re-ordination while pretending that this was not the case.[122] Kemp may have sought a fundamental ambiguity in his liturgy, but for these evangelicals it lay only on the surface of his text.

For Packer it was ironic that this concealed but palpable stress on ordination into the apostolic succession should appear in 1963 around the time the Anglican monk Gabriel Hebert, in his final published work, demonstrated the shaky foundations on which it rested in the history of the Early Church.[123] Packer and fellow Anglican Evangelicals, such as the wealthy layman Gervase Duffield – who founded Marcham Manor Press deliberately to issue a series of pamphlets against these proposals – seemingly saw the Conversations *Report* issued on 26 February 1963 as part of their wider battle within the Church of England against the Anglo-Catholics. Writing to Barrett to offer common cause, Duffield represented himself as part of a rising generation of Evangelicals and launched into a diatribe against the rigidity of the still powerful though declining Anglo-Catholics who 'rely very much on older men who live in the days of the bitter battles of the 1920s'.[124] Kemp was already well aware of this hostility, not least from observing the extreme sectarianism of student evangelical bodies in his role as an Oxford college chaplain.[125] The acquiescence of the Evangelicals on the Conversations – according to Michael Skinner, tutor at Wesley House Cambridge, 'Apparently half were prepared to acquiesce in the Report, though they did not particularly like it, while the other half wanted to do something but did not know what' – was clearly not shared by all their brethren.[126]

Methodist dissentients also noted the 'studiously ambiguous' nature of the *Report*.[127] The Plymouth solicitor David Foot Nash expressed, among other concerns, the view of the Congregational minister Erik Routley that a united Church could entrench conservative complacency, to the detriment of mission.[128] He even paid 50 guineas for Counsel's opinion that the Service of Reconciliation was an ordination of the Methodist ministry. Barrett – who

fulminated 'I am prepared to admit my ministry is defective, but the deficiencies are due to my sinfulness and are not to be remedied by a Bishop's hands' – was clear that this was the case anyway.[129] Moreover, it was claimed that Kemp effectively admitted this at a diocesan conference. However, Foot Nash had not wasted his money, as W.S. Wigglesworth also advised that primary legislation would be required to change the 1932 Methodist Deed of Union, not least those parts specifying the unitary nature of the Methodist ministry.[130]

Nonetheless, others of Barrett's correspondents presciently predicted that the Methodist ministry were overwhelmingly willing to accept the scheme. Some readily embraced the *Report*, arguing that 'Methodist bishops would help us to recover true Episcopacy, and rid us of that Prelacy which we all heartily detest'. The general tone was a readiness to accept this, like Baker, as a means to a more vital national Church.[131] A. Kingsley Lloyd, the Secretary of the Methodist Connexional Funds office who became joint chair in September 1963 with Robin Woods, the Dean of Windsor, of the new campaign group Towards Anglican Methodist Unity (TAMU), noted that this involved bridging a chasm, but that he felt they were being 'led to realise a vision of the Church as something far greater and more comprehensive than we had ever dreamed.'[132]

Roberts tried to sketch out that vision a little more in his own publication endorsing the *Report*. He envisaged completion of Stage 1 by 1967/68, during which time Methodist bishops responsible to Conference would be appointed. Before Stage 2 there were then a number of issues to address including: relations with the rest of Nonconformity; aspirations to change the Establishment by promoting the spiritual self-government of the Church, as outlined in the *Report*; and a range of pastoral, social and liturgical issues. There was, accordingly, no blueprint for Stage 2.[133] Indeed, Kemp in 1964 noted that he could not speculate how long it would take to get to Stage 2.[134]

Legal entanglements with the State were clearly a complicating factor. Woodhouse, TAMU's legal adviser, pointed out that primary legislation would be required for Methodism to establish the legality even of Stage 1, given the impact of the doctrinal clause of the Deed of Union. The Church of England's multiple breaches of the mass of legislation governing it accrued since Tudor times, which included legal prohibition on an Anglican minister conducting a non-Anglican service, implied a similar need for corrective legislation. Indeed, Woodhouse suggested that even the Service of Reconciliation was illegal under the 1662 Act of Uniformity. Another problem with the Service was that, if it was indeed interpreted as an act of re-ordination, then Methodist ministers would become subject to this mass of laws. By Autumn 1964 a group to consider these legal implications chaired by the eminent barrister and former Conservative Minister of Health Sir Henry Willink and including Kemp and Wigglesworth had been convened. They concluded that legislation at Stage 1 would be required to protect Methodism from coming into the ambit of this legislation and clarify what Methodist bishops could legally do. A five clause Bill was envisaged which would:

1) Authorise the Service of Reconciliation;
2) Authorise Methodist bishops;
3) Authorise the Stages;
4) Exempt Methodism from ecclesiastical law;

5) Preserve the existing civil status of Methodist ministers at Stage 1.[135]

A further legal point was raised by Graham Leonard, the Anglo-Catholic bishop of Willesden, in October 1964 at a meeting attended by a number of Anglican and Methodist MPs. He pointed out that each Anglican benefice was a separate trust and therefore the law on trusts would also be a factor at Stage 1. He also drew attention to the fact that Roman Catholic priests were not required to be re-ordained when they took Anglican orders. Woodhouse's speech at the same meeting stressed the need for legislation to make it possible for the two Churches to move towards Stage 2 on converging paths. Problematically, given its in-built ambiguity, this meant that 'We should try to remove at the outset sources of friction due to doubts as to what the Service of Reconciliation really means'. At the same time Woodhouse recognised that to satisfy both Methodists and Anglo-Catholics, 'liberty of interpretation was quite fundamental' to the whole design of the Service. He went on to list various other legal complications. These ranged from Lord Radcliffe's verdict in the recent Macmanaway case to the impact of the marriage and burial acts.[136] The Labour MP and Methodist, Jeremy Bray, felt that there would little opposition in Parliament to whatever was proposed. The complications were nonetheless such that Foot Nash suggested that it might be best to leave these to be settled at Stage 2.[137] Woodhouse, however, was clear that most of these had to be addressed even to get to Stage 1 and subsequently emphasized the need to apprise the 1965 Methodist Conference of this.[138]

A number of other implications of the Conversations also came under scrutiny in the aftermath of the *Report*. For instance, Tomkins and Rupert E. Davies, one of the most prominent Methodist supporters of the *Report*, co-edited a series of short books on the subject. Intended to help the laity understand the issues raised and consequences, these covered both liturgical and social issues.[139]

Opponents of the *Report* seem to have taken slightly longer to organise than those trying to work out how to implement it in practice. Nonetheless, in January 1964 the Voice of Methodist Association (VMA), partly formed in response to TAMU, held its inaugural meeting.[140] Snaith was not initially impressed, writing 'The trouble is that they are such a wild lot – known to have been against everything and generally naughty boys.' However, by March 1964 he was suggesting to Barrett that they should both join.[141] The latter had made clear that he could not continue his ministry in the united Church. Nonetheless, he declined the invitation to become Vice-President (or even to join) VMA. They, meanwhile, accepted that their position was unfortunately defined by a negativity not all opponents of the *Report* felt.[142] Skinner, for instance, felt that it, 'though unacceptable, has done untold good in bringing Anglicans and Methodists together'. A more acceptable way forward for him was the alternative of some kind of covenanting arrangements of the kind put forward by the evangelicals of Cliff College.[143] For the time being, however, the *Report* set the tone for the Conversations going forward.

The Anglican Methodist Unity Commission 1965-1968

After a two-year hiatus the Conversations recommenced in 1965. One bishop was so moved by the endorsement of the *Report* that he proposed 'that the Convocation should rise and sing the Doxology'.[144] Conference in 1965 also gave conditional approval for proceeding to

clarify the arrangements that Stage 1 would entail. The Anglicans fielded a slightly amended team, now led by Robert Stopford, bishop of London. The dissentient Methodists were replaced on a team that now consisted wholly of supporters of the scheme.[145]

Kemp entered this third phase of the Conversations deeply aware of a range of concerns about the Service of Reconciliation. To him, not least because he had represented Anglicanism at their meetings since 1948, the anxieties of the Old Catholics probably weighed most heavily. A difficult meeting with Archbishop Rinkel of Utrecht made plain that he did not think Methodists would be ordained if, at the Service of Reconciliation, they had no intention of receiving priesthood. In these circumstances many Old Catholics were contemplating breaking communion with the Church of England if relations with Methodism moved forward.[146] Superficially, the Orthodox were more accommodating. However, Metropolitan Athenagoras of Thyatira's approval of the Service rested on the unhelpful grounds that, for him, the Methodists laying hands on Anglicans second resembled the way a newly ordained priest is sometimes asked by the bishop to give him his first blessing.[147] Diplomatically, Michael Ramsay, who had succeeded Fisher as archbishop of Canterbury in 1961, advised against disclosing such details of the Metropolitan's letter.[148]

These concerns undoubtedly clouded Kemp's thoughts, but they did not impinge on the renewed Conversations in what was now known as the Anglican-Methodist Unity Commission. The change of name implied these discussions were now moving from the feasibility to the mechanics of unity. Enthusiasts certainly thought so. The veteran Methodist minister, Maldwyn Edwards, in 1966 noted that as unity had in principle been accepted: 'Many of us feel that it is now even more important to strengthen the progress towards unity at the local level' made since the *Report*. He suggested that, to promote devotional and educational work, a Joint Council for Anglican-Methodist Unity (JCAMU) should supersede TAMU.[149] After all, much education work remained to be done, as Edwards noted at the first meeting of this new body in March 1966, which he jointly chaired with Falkner Allison, the bishop of Winchester. Indeed, risks to the scheme – including Leonard's point that Anglo-Catholic support might waver if what was proposed changed – were raised on all sides.[150]

Woodhouse, who was appointed later that year to the Establishment sub-committee of the Unity Commission, was meanwhile still discovering new legal entanglements. The requirement for conformity with the *Book of Common Prayer* may have been addressed by the liturgical variety permissible under the Prayer Book (Alternative and Other Services) Measure 1965. Nonetheless, lay preachers raised a canon law issue, and the fact that Anglicans, unlike Methodism, then had no women exercising this function only further complicated matters. Indeed, it remained unclear how much inter-communion would actually be achieved for the laity at Stage 1.[151] Reassurance only came on these points in a detailed legal opinion by T.A.R. Levett in December 1966.[152]

No less of a legal problem was the sharing of buildings. Experiments with sharing buildings had seemed a rational response to new housing estates since the inter-war years. An early example in practice was the Covenant Church established as a joint Methodist-Congregational experiment in Tynemouth in 1954. Such arrangements seem to have been managed by 'gentleman's agreements',[153] an arrangement that could easily fall foul of the strict regulation of Methodist property under the 1932 Deed of Union if extended to Anglicans. In these circumstances, shared premises would require a separate trust, and this

still might require amendment of ecclesiastical legislation such as the New Housing Areas (Church Buildings) Measure 1954 or the 1949 Marriage Act.[154]

The legal work in sub-committees assumed a growing importance in the discussions, to the point in February 1967 when Woodhouse argued 'that the Commission need to agree among themselves on the actual terms of the bill just as much as on the actual words of the Service of Reconciliation'. This legislation, he felt, had to be concise yet 'The draftsmen must paint with a broad brush, avoiding, as far as possible, specific references to legislation or other legal provisions' which might encourage wrecking parliamentary amendments.[155] Ambiguity was not to be confined to the Service of Reconciliation.

By June, Woodhouse had contacted Sir Harold Kent in the Office of Parliamentary Counsel, enclosing a copy of his draft bill. Kent made various useful amendments. The opening paragraph was changed to make it clear that the decision for unity lay with the Churches and that parliamentary consent was only needed to resolve legal difficulties. That the two Churches remain separate legal entities, especially for purposes of internal discipline, was clarified. Not least, Kent advised that all mention of Stage 2 should be left out so as not to tempt parliament to interfere.[156] Retaining this clause was, however, important for Woodhouse. It sent out a signal that this was a stage to a fuller unity, which was important to Methodists, and to a united Church, which was important to Anglo-Catholics. Moreover, Kent's draft statement that Methodists accepted episcopacy was problematic, not least because of the Deed of Union. Kent's draft also risked allowing relations with Methodism to facilitate growing and hitherto illegal heterogeneity of worship in the Church of England. Further revisions therefore ensued before Kent sent new drafts off to Woods in August.[157]

While the preparation of legislation was proceeding relatively smoothly, such progress was not marked on all fronts. The JCAMU meeting of February 1967, for instance, featured much concern about the scheme creating new forms of disunity in the shape of dissident bodies. The leading Anglican ecumenist, Prebendary Peter Morgan suggested that the way to deal with this was to determine that 'all the key folk of both our churches will be reconciled to each other through the Service of Reconciliation – whether they like it or not'.[158] Concern with that Service was nonetheless growing, not least when a revised version appeared in the Commission's 1967 interim report *Towards Reconciliation*. Fisher's now vocal opposition to a scheme which had far departed from his 1946 vision was simply the noisiest response.[159] Anglo-Catholics like Leonard and the Church Union made clear their concern. While the Anglican Evangelical Colin Buchanan was premature in declaring the scheme now dead, the risk that considerable bodies of clergy in both Churches would remain unreconciled was increasingly palpable. As another Anglican Evangelical, David Paton, pointed out, this raised among other issues, the question of the provision of pastoral oversight for such recalcitrants.[160] For the Old Catholics, Rinkel remained deeply unhappy.[161] So too now was Athenagoras, not least because of the change whereby the Methodists were now to do the laying-on of hands first.[162]

Further revisions followed, resulting in the publication of the final report in two parts, consisting of *The Ordinal* (February 1968) and *The Scheme* (April 1968). An important lexical shift involved using the less loaded term presbyter rather than priest, a move which had been advised at a JCAMU residential conference in June 1967 as a means of mollifying Methodists.[163] This adapted a term used in the Deed of Union, though incompatibility with

that document was still widely claimed in criticism.[164] The distinction between the Methodist stress on an open table at communion for all who love Christ with the *Book of Common Prayer*'s requirement that access was only available to the confirmed was addressed, if not fully resolved. The opening of lay readership to women in the Church of England had meanwhile tackled another issue.[165]

It was additionally hoped that the deliberate ambiguity of the Service of Reconciliation and the liberty of conscience in its interpretation, would produce appreciation that 'what is done at this point has a significance which can and should command the assent of all'. Nonetheless, *The Scheme* accepted that there would be recalcitrants in both Churches.[166] Despite Kemp's efforts, these now included Anglo-Catholics like Leonard, Riley and du Toit. Leonard's case was that the ambiguity now seemed designed, not to leave it up to God, but merely to conceal differences, an approach he found morally indefensible.[167] Woodhouse sympathised, arguing that the offending paragraph 396, which referred to treating Methodist ministers 'as if' they were episcopally ordained, drastically undermined 'the studied ambiguity of the Service', which he and Kent had also incorporated in the draft Bill.[168] As Kent explained in a letter rebutting Fisher, the Bill instead offered 'no "definition" of the basis on which either Church recognises and accepts the ministry of the other'.[169]

While for Anglo-Catholics the Service of Reconciliation had become insufficiently ambiguous, for Packer it remained unnecessary. He asserted:

> [T]o limit full fellowship at the Lord's Table to episcopally commissioned ministers only implies a false view of the Church, as if bishops were essential …That is intolerable. The Report asks the Church of England to be ready to admit into the future united Church those relations with other Christians which Methodists at present enjoy. The proper course would be to accept the Methodist Church in this way now.[170]

Packer was the only member of the Commission to refuse to sign its report. The ground-breaking Keele Congress of Anglican Evangelicals in Summer 1967 had already voiced the almost universal opposition of this growing, youthful, and increasingly assertive element of Anglicanism to the Service of Reconciliation. Instead of the Anglo-Catholic focus on churchmanship, they called for co-operation on new housing estates and, in favouring the South India scheme, suggested the whole trajectory of the Conversations had been a wrong turning.[171]

Up to this point little thought had been given to the risk that the two Churches might grow further apart rather than together during Stage 1. Methodism's move towards the ordination of women, approved in 1971, was to raise this issue. [172] By then, however, even getting to Stage 1 was looking increasingly doubtful following the rejection of *The Scheme* by the Convocations in 1969. It was later suggested that Roberts' opening reassurance to Conference when it passed the scheme on 8 July 1969 that the Service of Reconciliation was not an ordination had hardened Anglican opposition, despite the simultaneous debates and voting.[173] Ironically Rinkel, having changed his mind, regretted this outcome.[174] The archbishops, faced with the dilemma of what to do next, noted that the recently published proposals in *Intercommunion Today* would nonetheless allow some progress on local schemes of unity and sharing in the Eucharist, and reached out to Methodism for further consultation.[175]

Endgame 1969-1972

Arguing instead that the scheme was dead, two Anglican Evangelicals (Packer and Buchanan) and two Anglo-Catholics (Leonard and Eric Mascall) produced the alternative of *Growing into Union* in May 1970. This maintained that ecumenism had to start with agreement on theology and organic processes of growing together at a local level.[176] This was, however, a wholly Anglican proposal without any consultation with Methodism. It drew a stinging rebuke from six leading Methodists – including Roberts and Baker – not least on the grounds that 'When we agreed to take episcopacy into our system, we did not agree to take episcopacy as it now exists in the Church of England, but this is what the plan proposes for the United Church'.[177] In many ways *Growing into Union* thus harked back to Fisher's approach in 1946. The only immediate local scheme was the creation, after some years of planning, of the joint ordinands' training college of Queen's Birmingham in 1970.[178]

Conference's 1970 approval of moving to Stage 1 and the introduction of the General Synod in the Church of England nonetheless gave a further chance to revisit the whole scheme. A Joint Working Group (JWG) was set up under Kemp (by then dean of Worcester) and Davies (the then President of Conference) to explore ways forward for the Conversations. Woodhouse created yet another ginger group to see if they could find a way to increase Anglican support without jeopardising the level of support in Methodism, and then joined the JWG itself in April 1971. At this meeting it became clear that the *Growing into Union* group was regarded as a major obstacle. Kemp did not directly respond to their arguments, but he did point out that mere intercommunion does not provide unity, as the experience of the Free Churches demonstrated. Yet he also realised that his attempts in the Service of Reconciliation to 'recognise that the Methodist ministers have been ordained to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament and confers whatever God knows them to need of episcopal ordination' satisfied the objectors in neither Church.[179] Nor did the report the JWG then published on 27 May 1971 offer any new solutions to this problem. Kemp was later to note that it had little impact on the General Synod and blamed the *Growing into Union* group for the increased defeat the scheme suffered in the vote of 3 May 1972.[180] For the Conversations this proved the end of the road.

Conclusions

In a report for the 1968 Lambeth Conference Alan Wilkinson, the Anglo-Catholic son of a Primitive Methodist minister, drew attention to recent sociological texts critiquing ecumenism as defensive moves by declining institutions.[181] Some disdainful Anglo-Catholic comments about Methodism expressed a similar view.[182] Yet these early sociologists of religion largely misread the Conversations, in which such considerations were almost universally absent. Nor did the Conversations feature the discussion of organisational efficiency which had been so conspicuous in the late nineteenth century. There was, however, a late nineteenth century inheritance – the Lambeth Quadrilateral – which had a defining effect on the arc of the Conversations. This starting point ensured that discussions always came back to the nature of the ministry and the Church. These discussions were bedevilled by *a priori* differences. For Barrett, 'An order of priests within the Church is contrary to the

New Testament'.[183] On the other hand, as the *Report* put it, 'The fact that the Christian faith rests on a series of historical events….and that we live in an historical period different from and later than the events themselves, makes tradition, in the sense of the handing down of the faith from one generation to another, both inevitable and inescapable'.[184]

Attempts to resolve these differences generally rested upon ambiguity. Whether episcopacy was functional or fundamental was one aspect of this, brought into stark relief by the ambiguities of the Service of Reconciliation itself. Ambiguity's role in such settings is to leave a space large enough to incorporate rather than exclude a range of interpretations of the text. This is certainly what Kemp sought to do in his efforts to satisfy all parties. Maybe if he had possessed Bell's authority, as well as using Bell's approach, he would have had more success. As it was, Packer, Leonard and Barrett saw all too clearly through a superficial ambiguity, that concealed rather than embraced, to a clear implication that none of them, for their varying reasons, could stomach. The particular configuration of entrenched party positions in Kemp's own Church, and the way they hardened after 1967, was to ensure the fate of the scheme.

Some throughout regularly suggested that the search for organic unity through the two-stage process that emerged as the way forward under Bell's guidance early in the Conversations was essentially a wrong turning. One version of this posited that ecumenism was not a response to secularisation, but that it might encourage it. Loudly proclaiming that God sought Christian unity and then conspicuously failing to deliver it while wrangling over points that had no relevance to the man in the street hardly helped to convey the Gospel message or to enhance its clarity. The Methodist evangelical Amos Cresswell lamented:

> The Anglican-Methodists keep
> A watch over each other's sheep
> They forget to give oats
> To the poor pagan goats
> Who die while the Church goes to sleep.[185]

Fisher certainly felt that the Conversations had taken a wrong turning but, if so, this happened when he was still archbishop and long before he chose to attack the scheme. Furthermore, it is doubtful that the approach he sketched out in 1946 would have proved any more fruitful at the time. He had, after all, asked the Free Churches to cash a blank cheque, by taking episcopacy into their systems with no guarantee of how and when they would get anything in return. *Growing into Union* was a more subtle and local version of the same approach. Yet the Church of England needed to go through the moves towards greater spiritual freedom leading up to *Intercommunion Today* and the founding of the General Synod before the kinds of covenanting they envisaged could meaningfully develop. At the time, the attempt at formal union that Bell developed, and the 1961 Roberts/Carpenter paper elaborated, was really the only way forward. More focus on the desideratum of the emerging united Church might have provided this process with more momentum. The God-willed ideal of unity instead succumbed to wrangles about definitions of Church and ministry which Kemp's ambiguities were never large enough to accommodate.

[1] Although the Anglican-Methodist Conversations had implications across the United Kingdom, and indeed the world, they were principally situated within the distinctive religious setting of England.
[2] 'A report to the presiding bishop on the present state of negotiations between the joint commission on approaches to unity of the Protestant Episcopal Church and the Commission on Church Union of the Methodist Church' (1958), Lambeth Palace Library, London [LPL]: LC 1958/14.
[3] Charles Keen to Bell, 7 February 1956, LPL: Bell Papers 174, f.88-90.
[4] Bell to Fisher, 1 March 1956, LPL: Bell Papers 174 f.97.
[5] Gilbert Burnet (abridged by Thomas Stackhouse), *History of His Own Time* (London, 1979), 305; John Coffey, 'Church and State 1550-1750: The Emergence of Dissent' in Robert Pope (ed.), *Companion to Nonconformity* (London, 2013), 65-6.
[6] Henry Woodhouse, 'A Note on the Church of England by a Methodist Lawyer', 28 October 1964, Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History, DAMUC, HW2/1. Woodhouse worked in the Treasury Solicitor's Office and so was able to observe Church-State Relations at close quarters (Woodhouse to Chester Barrett, 1 June 1965, DAMUC: HW2/1).
[7] Henry Woodhouse to Peter Morgan, 14 January 1967 enclosing 'Church-State Relations at Stage II: A Methodist's Observations', 1, DAMUC, HW2/2.
[8] As Robin Woods, Dean of Windsor, observed in his paper on 'The Church, the Crown and Parliament at Stage Two' 22 June 1967, 'while in past ages … the Church assisted in the keeping of law and order' it now had no political value to the state, DAMUC, HW 2/2.
[9] *Conversations between the Church of England and the Methodist Church: An Interim Statement* (London, 1958), 10-12.
[10] John Lander, '"They are a pitiful set of radicals, agitators and slanderers": Methodist Disharmony, 1797-1849' *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* 63/1 (2021), 3-16.
[11] For instance, the emergence of the Brethren or the Churches of Christ.
[12] Alan Turberfield, *John Scott Lidgett: Archbishop of British Methodism* (Peterborough, 2003), 94-5, 221.
[13] Turberfield, *Lidgett*, 199.
[14] Robert Currie, *Methodism Divided: A Study in the Sociology of Ecumenicalism* (London, 1968), 300-1.
[15] See, for instance, Wilfred J. Rowland, *The Free Churches and the People: A Report of the Work of tbe Free Churches of Liverpool* (Liverpool, 1908).
[16] Currie, *Methodism Divided*, chapters 7 and 8.
[17] Turberfield, *Lidgett*, 239-40.
[18] Cited in Currie, *Methodism Divided*, 186.
[19] Turberfield, *Lidgett*, 244.
[20] Cited in Currie, *Methodism Divided*, 176. For reminiscences of similar hostility expressed by his local rector in Lincolnshire in the 1920s, see Eric Kemp, *Shy but not retiring: Memoirs* (London, 2006), 12.
[21] John Maiden, *National Religion and the Prayer Book Controversy 1927-1928* (Woodbridge, 2009).
[22] Turberfield, *Lidgett*, 253.
[23] Turberfield, *Lidgett*, 248, 250.
[24] William Reed Huntington, *The Church-Idea: An Essay in Unity* (New York, 1899 [1870]), 3-4, 125-6.
[25] Turberfield, *Lidgett*, 236.
[26] In 1962 there were 38.5m. Anglicans, 41.5m. Methodists and 55m. Baptists globally: David Foot Nash to Kingsley Barrett, enclosing 'The Methodist Dilemma', 18, DAMUC, KB5/2.
[27] Enclosure on 'Methodists and Anglicans' in Franz Hildebrandt to Kingsley Barrett, 6 October 1958, DAMUC, KB3.
[28] 'Constitutional Issues and Matters of the Establishment', 27 April 1967, 2, DAMUC, HW2/2.
[29] 'The Lambeth Conference: Resolutions Archive from 1920', Resolution 9, https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/127731/1920.pdf.
[30] See, for instance, Maldwyn Edwards to Kingsley Barrett, 10 March 1959, DAMUC, KB3.
[31] Kemp, *Shy but not retiring*, 87.
[32] Norman Sykes to George Bell, 9 December 1956, LPL: Bell Papers 174 f.144.
[33] Turberfield, *Lidgett*, 285
[34] Turberfield, *Lidgett*, chapter 19.

[35] *The Nature of the Christian Church 1937* (republished in *Statements of the Methodist Church on Faith and Order 1933-1983* vol. 1 (Peterborough, 2000), 19 (see https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/reflecting-on-faith/faith-and-order/faith-and-order-statements/).
[36] Kingsley Barrett, 'Ordination in the Methodist Church', Paper for the Faith and Order Committee, January 1960,7-10, DAMUC, KB7/2.
[37] *The Nature*, 25-6.
[38] Turberfield, *Lidgett*, 298.
[39] Turberfield, *Lidgett*, 295; *Statements*, 145.
[40] As Kingsley Barrett pointed out during the Conversations, the doctrine of apostolic succession is unknown in the New Testament: 'Apostolic Succession Again', c. 4 July 1959, DAMUC, KB7/1.
[41] *Statements*, 147.
[42] Cited in Edward Carpenter, *Cantuar: The Archbishops in their Office* (Oxford, 1988), 503.
[43] George Thompson Brake, *Policy and Politics in British Methodism 1932-1982* (London, 1984), 99.
[44] Cited in Eric Kemp, *The Anglican-Methodist Conversations: A Comment from Within* (London, 1964), 6-7.
[45] Cited in J.P. Hickinbotham, 'Church Relations in England', *The Churchman* 65/2 (1951), 72.
[46] Hickinbotham, 'Church Relations', 72-3.
[47] Some Lutheran churches were episcopal, but the lack of this characteristic did not stop the Church of England establishing relations with the Lutheran churches of Latvia and Estonia (1939) or Norway, Denmark and Iceland (1954); see draft undated letter by H.R.T. Brandreth, LPL: LC 216 175H f.21.
[48] K.E. Kirk, *The Apostolic Ministry: Essays on the history and the doctrine of episcopacy* (London, 1948). Kirk was the grandson of a Methodist minister, while his daughter Patricia married Eric Kemp, a central figure in both Anglo-Catholicism and the Anglican-Methodist Conversations.
[49] Kemp, *The Anglican-Methodist Conversations*, 38.
[50] Norman Sykes, *The Church of England and Non-Episcopal Churches in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London, 1948).
[51] *Interim Statement*, 40.
[52] Hickinbotham, 'Church Relations', 70.
[53] Cited in Brake *Policy and Politics*, 103.
[54] Lionel du Toit to Kemp, 17 May 1956, LPL: Kemp Papers MS 3555 f.3.
[55] Kingsley Barrett, 'The Methodist Theory of Episcopacy' (11 September 1951), 1-3, DAMUC, KB7/1.
[56] J.I. Packer, *Fellowship in the Gospel* (Abingdon, 1968), 15.
[57] Methodist Conference Agenda 1956, 12, in *Statements* (1984 edition only), 197.
[58] Roberts to Bell, 1 July 1955, LPL: Bell Papers 174 f.66.
[59] Kemp, *The Anglican-Methodist Conversations*, 13.
[60] Bell to Fisher, 3 February 1956, LPL: Bell Papers 174, f.76.
[61] Fisher to Bell, 17 October 1955, LPL: Bell Papers 174 f.71.
[62] Bell to Fisher, 3 February 1956, LPL: Bell Papers 174 f.74.
[63] H. A. Hodges, *Anglicanism and Orthodoxy: a study in dialectical churchmanship* (London, 1955).
[64] Sykes to Bell, 22 February 1956, LPL: Bell Papers 174 f.84-5..
[65] Bell to Sykes, Bell to Fisher, 23 February 1956, LPL: Bell Papers 174, f.86-7; Kemp, *Shy but not retiring*, 115-17.
[66] Bell to Fisher, 3 February 1956, LPL: Bell Papers 174 f.75.
[67] Script of talk for 'At Home and Abroad', broadcast 24 February 1956, in LPL: Bell Papers 174, f.107.
[68] Bell to Leslie Smith, 19 March 1956, LPL: Bell Papers 174, f.111.
[69] M.A. Halliwell memorandum of attending a meeting of MSF in Oxford on 19 February 1961: 'Generally I got the impression that this movement view its task as a return to the sacramental ideals of John Wesley with their necessarily limited insights, rather than as a forward movement in the Church Universal. One had rather the impression of a club for mutual encouragement for Methodists who would otherwise end up in the Church of England'. LPL: CFR.G 19/2.
[70] *The Report of the Joint Committee of the Convocations on Church Relations in England* (London, 1955), 4.
[71] *Report of the Joint Committee*, 3.
[72] 'Notes on changes which our proposals will involve for the Church of England' (n.d.), 2, DAMUC, KB2.
[73] Hooper to Bell, 3 April 1956, LPL: Bell Papers 174, f.117-18.
[74] Bell to Hooper, 16 April 1956, LPL: Bell Papers 174 f.120; Hooper to Bell, 19 April 1956, LPL: Bell Papers 174 f.122.
[75] *Methodist Recorder*, 3 May 1956.
[76] Roberts, 'Episcopacy and Methodism' (c.1957), LPL: Bell Papers 175 f.141.
[77] J. Gilbert Baker to Bell, c. April 1956, LPL: Bell Papers 174 f.129-30.
[78] Minutes of meeting, 19 March 1956, LPL: Bell Papers 175 f.1.
[79] du Toit to Kemp, 17 May 1956, LPL: Kemp Papers MS 3555 f.4.

[80] Bell 'Position as I see it', June 195, LPL: Bell Papers 174 f.33-4.
[81] Kemp, *Shy but not retiring*, 158.
[82] Harold Riley, 'The Value of Episcopacy', 18 August 1956, DAMUC, KB2.
[83] Kemp, 'Apostolic Succession' c. August 1956, DAMUC, KB2.
[84] Jessop, ''Non-theological factors in our divisions' (n.d.), DAMUC, KB2.
[85] Baker and Greenslade 'Unity and Intercommunion', c.1957, LPL: Bell Papers 175 f.231-35.
[86] 'Apostolic Succession Again' c. 4 July 1959, DAMUC, KB7/1.
[87] Conference, 10-12 December 1956, LPL: Bell Papers 175 f.5; Rupp, 'The Historic Episcopate' c.1956, LPL: Bell Papers 175 f.25; Sykes to Bell, 6 December 1956, Bell Papers 174 f.142.
[88] Roberts to Bell, 13 June 1957. LPL: Bell Papers 174, f.171-2.
[89] Conference, 24-27 June 1957, LPL: Bell Papers 175 f.9; Bell to Susan Lister, 27 June 1957, Bell Papers 174 f.177-9.
[90] Sykes to Bell, 27 June 1957, LPL: Bell Papers 174 f.187-9.
[91] Bell to Sykes, 1 July 1957, LPL: Bell Papers 174 f.190.
[92] Bell to Roberts, 25 October 1957, LPL: Bell Papers 174 f.269.
[93] Carpenter to Bell, 22 October 195, LPL: Bell Papers 174 f.248.
[94] Roberts to Bell, 29 October 1957, LPL: Bell Papers 174 f.271.
[95] Davison, 'Methodism's distinctive marks and the approach to episcopacy' (c.1957), LPL: Bell Papers 175 f.194-210.
[96] 'Unity and Intercommunion: Taking Episcopacy', LPL: Bell Papers 175 f.220-9.
[97] *Interim Statement*, 23-4.
[98] Roberts to Bell, July 1958, LPL: Bell Papers 174 f.337-9.
[99] Kemp, *Shy but not retiring*, 159.
[100], 'The Ecumenical Movement', 8, LPL: LC 1958/8.
[101] Oliver Tomkins, *A Time for Unity* (London, 1964), 77.
[102] J. Brazier Green to Barrett, 14 February 1959, DAMUC, KB3.
[103] Barrett speech to Conference, 8 July 1958, 3-7, DAMUC, KB7/1.
[104] Henry Wigley to Barrett, 12 March 1959, DAMUC, KB3.
[105]: Barrett and E. Benson Perkins to Wigley, June 1959, DAMUC, KB3.
[106] Eighth meeting, 7-9 December 1959, DAMUC, KB2. Told of an illicit joint Anglican-Methodist communion service involving the Vicar of Wimbledon Park in April 1960, the bishop of Southwark, Mervyn Stockwood, remarked that had he known of the use of non-alcoholic wine, 'I should certainly disapprove': Stockwood to John Statterthwaite, 12 April 1960, LPL: CFR.G 19/2 f.4.
[107] Ninth meeting, 4-6 April 1960, DAMUC, KB2.
[108] Commission on the Deployment and Payment of the Clergy *Partners in Ministry* (London, 1967), Preface, 5.
[109] Riley to Kemp, 13 March 1961, LPL: Kemp Papers MS 3555 f.22.
[110] Eleventh meeting, 20-22 March 1961, DAMUC, KB2.
[111] Roberts to Barrett, 9 April 1961, DAMUC, KB5/1.
[112] Barrett memorandum, 6 September 1962, DAMUC, KB5/1.
[113] Twelfth meeting, 25-27 September 1961, DAMUC, KB2.
[114] Fourteenth meeting, 9-11 April 1962, DAMUC, KB2.
[115] Fifteenth meeting, 24-26 September 1962, DAMUC, KB2; *Conversations between the Church of England and the Methodist Church: A Report* (London, 1963), 62.
[116] Eric Baker, 'Some practical problems for Methodism involved in the taking of episcopacy into its system', 2 January 1962, DAMUC, KB2; Kemp, *Anglican-Methodist Conversations*, 29.
[117] Thirteenth meeting, 8-10 January 1962, DAMUC, KB2. See also Kemp, *Shy but not retiring*, 159-60.
[118] Kemp, *Anglican-Methodist Conversations*, 32, 41.
[119] Michael Skinner to Barrett, 11 October 1962, DAMUC, KB5/1.
[120] Packer, *Fellowship*, 30, 35-6.
[121] *Report*, 60.
[122] T.E. Jessop, *Not This Way! A Methodist examination of the union scheme and a plea for integrity* (Abingdon, 1969), 15-16.
[123] Packer, *Fellowship*, 13-14; Gabriel Hebert, *Apostle and Bishop: a study of the Gospel, the ministry and the Church-community* (London, 1963). Methodist dissentients instead tended to emphasise William Telfer's *The Office of a Bishop* (London, 1962) on the same issue.
[124] Packer, *Fellowship*, 35; Duffield to Barrett, 17 February 1963, DAMUC, KB5/2.
[125] Kemp*, Shy but not retiring*, 40.
[126] Skinner to Barrett, 19 July 1963, DAMUC, KB5/2.
[127] Robin McGlashan to Barrett, 6 July 1963, DAMUC, KB5/2.

[128] David Foot Nash 'The Methodist Dilemma', 30, in Foot Nash to Barrett, 22 February 1963, DAMUC, KB5/2. Foot Nash, who was Vice-President of the Methodist Conference in 1963, came from a well-established family of Cornish Methodist lawyers and politicians. His uncle was the inter-war Liberal MP Isaac Foot and his cousin the future leader of the Labour Party, Michael Foot.
[129] 'The need for unity and the types of unity' c. 1963, DAMUC, KB7/1.
[130] Skinner to Barrett, 16 November 1963; A.M. Hey to Barrett, 28 October 1963, DAMUC, KB5/2.
[131] Walter Gill to Barrett, 1 March 1963; J.P. McKew to Barrett, 8 March 1963, DAMUC, KB5/2.
[132] Lloyd to Woodhouse, 3 October 1963, DAMUC, HW2/1.
[133] Harold Roberts, *Anglican-Methodist Conversations* (London, 1963), 27-34; *Report*, 52.
[134] Kemp, *Anglican-Methodist Conversations*, 30.
[135] Woodhouse to Lloyd, 21 January 1964; 'Record of informal discussion on some of the legal problems raised by the Service of Reconciliation', 24 January 1964; Morgan to Woodhouse, 22 April 1964; Legal Group on Conversations, 21 October 1964: DAMUC, HW2/1.
[136] *Re Macmanaway* [1951] A.C. 161.
[137] Discussions on legal implications, 26 October 1964, DAMUC, HW2/1.
[138] Woodhouse to Lloyd, 28 October 1964, DAMUC, HW2/1.
[139] See, for instance, the preface to Kenneth Greet and Martin Reardon, *Social Questions* (Oxford, 1964).
[140] Brake. *Policy and Politics*, 107.
[141] Snaith to Barrett, 1 January 1964; 26 March 1964: DAMUC, KB5/3.
[142]: A. E. Clucas Moore to Barrett, 14 March 1964; 3 April 1964; 4 July 1964; 12 July 1964: DAMUC, KB5/3.
[143] Skinner to Barrett, 17 April 1964, DAMUC, KB5/3.
[144] Morgan to Woodhouse, 27 May 1965, DAMUC, HW2/1.
[145] Kemp, *Shy but not retiring*, 161; Jessop, *Not this Way!* 5.
[146] Memorandum, 6 February 1965, LPL: CFR.G 19/2, f.15; Kemp, *Shy but not retiring*, 77-82, 160.
[147] Metropolitan of Thyatira to Allison, c. April 1965, LPL: CFR.G 19/2 f.20-22.
[148] Ramsay to Winchester, 14 May 1965, LPL: CFR.G 19/2 f.23.
[149] Edwards to Woodhouse, 13 January 1966, DAMUC, HW2/1.
[150] JCAMU Meeting, 18 March 1966, DAMUC, HW2/1.
[151] J.C. Blake to Woodhouse, 13 June 1966; Woodhouse to Blake, 8 November 1966: DAMUC, HW2/1.
[152] Enclosure with J C. Blake to Woodhouse, 9 December 1966, DAMUC, HW2/1.
[153] *An Adventure in Christian Unity* (Bridgenorth Methodist and Congregational Church, 1962), 22-24.
[154] Newsom and Brungate memoranda, 18 July 1966, DAMUC, HW2/2.
[155] Woodhouse to Woods, 11 February 1967; Woodhouse, 'Notes on draft enabling bill', 11 February 1967: DAMUC, HW2/2.
[156] Woodhouse to Kent, 30 June 1967; Kent to Woodhouse, 26 July 1967: DAMUC, HW2/2.
[157] Woodhouse to Kent, 30 July 1967; Kent to Woods, 17 August 1967: DAMUC, HW2/2.
[158] JCAMU meeting, 16 February 1967; Morgan to Woodhouse, 2 May 1967: DAMUC, HW2/2.
[159] Geoffrey Fisher, *Covenant and Reconciliation* (London, 1967); Kemp, *Shy but not retiring*, 163.
[160] JCAMU Meeting, 12 September 196, DAMUC, HW2/2.
[161] Rinkel to Ramsay, 10 July 1967, LPL: LC216 175H f.6.
[162] Kemp, *Shy but not retiring*, 161.
[163] *Report of the Anglican Methodist Unity Commission: Part 2: The Scheme* (London, 1968), 45; JCAMU Meeting, 21-23 June 1967, DAMUC, HW2/2.
[164] *Anglican-Methodist Unity: Report of the Joint Working Group* (London, 1971), 19.
[165] *The Scheme*, 60-9; see also, 'Full Communion with Other Churches, 1968', in *Statements*, 149.
[166] *The Scheme*, 29, 55, 128.
[167] Henry R.T. Brandreth,' Anglican-Methodist Unity: A Review of Attitudes', c. 1969, cited in LPL: CFR.G 192 f.87.
[168] Kemp, *Shy but not retiring*, 162; *The Scheme*, 132; Woodhouse to Woods, 11 April 1968, DAMUC, HW2/2.
[169] Kent draft letter, 27 July 1968, DAMUC, HW2/2.
[170] Cited in Brandreth, 'Anglican-Methodist Unity', f.89.
[171] Andrew Atherstone, 'The Keele Congress of 1967: A Paradigm Shift in Anglican Evangelical Attitudes' *Journal of Anglican Studies* 9/2 (2011), 175-97; P.S. Dawes, 'Keele: Unity and the Future', c.1967, DAMUC, KB7/2.
[172] Brake, *Policy and Politics*, 326-8; *Anglican-Methodist Unity*, 24-5.
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[175] Archbishops' message, 6 August 1969, LPL: CFR.G 19/2 f.83-4; *Intercommunion Today* (London, 1969).
[176] *Growing into Union* (London, 1970).
[177] Cited in Brake, *Policy and Politics*, 135-9.

[178] Andrew Chandler, *Anglicanism, Methodism and Ecumenism: A History of the Queen's and Handsworth Colleges* (London, 2018).
[179] 'Note for the Record', 18 March 1971, DAMUC, HW4l; JWG, 28 April 1971.
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[181] These included *Methodism Divided*: Wilkinson, 'Review of Current Church Union Schemes' (1968), 11, DAMUC: PUB3.
[182] F.H. Mountney to Statterthwaite, 8 August 1967, LPL: CFR.G 19/2 f.32.
[183] 'The need for unity', 3-4.
[184] *Report*, 17.
[185] Cresswell to Barrett, 10 September 1964, DAMUC, KB5/3.