

## The Society for Ecumenical Studies

### Called To Love And Praise

The 1999 Methodist Ecclesiology Report - Ecumenical Influences And Implications

A paper for the London Ecclesiology Forum

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#### Ecumenical Influences

I could begin this paper by arguing that all official British Methodist ecclesiology has been ecumenically orientated. There are two senses in which that would be a valid claim. Firstly, and more narrowly, in the sense that British Methodism produced no official ecclesiological statement until after Methodist reunion. There is, of course, the brief ecclesiological statement in the doctrinal clauses of the Deed Of Union of 1932, to the effect that 'Methodism, claims and cherishes its place in the Holy Catholic Church which is the Body of Christ', but only the briefest of short paragraphs is written in support of this claim. However, by this time the exigencies of the international Faith and Order Movement forced Methodism to fuller articulation of its ecclesiology. Conference set up the Faith and Order Committee in 1933 in order to help it give clear responses to the questions then being canvassed. In 1937, the Conference adopted the *Statement on the Nature of the Christian Church*. (1) This was largely the work of the eminent Methodist New Testament scholar, Robert Newton Flew. (2) As might be expected, it was strong on the New Testament basis of ecclesiology. It was also strong on the churchly claims of Methodism, though it said remarkably little about the particularly Methodist insights into the nature of the Church; it did not discuss in any depth the Methodist phenomenon of Connexionalism. It did make some interesting statements about the developing life of the Church, with implications for our understanding of Tradition, even if they were not followed up, at the time, in sufficient detail.

Obviously, the ecclesiological statements made in 1937 were not made in a vacuum. They presupposed the development of Methodism since its origins, as religious society rather than church, in the 18th century. However, the concentration on immediate issues and immediate resources in scholarship was symptomatic of an ongoing tendency that has characterised much Methodist theology in all spheres since the early twentieth century. Methodists have, with some admittedly signal exceptions, tended to sit light to their theological heritage. Usually, some bow will be made towards Wesley, but later theologians, from the 1790s to the early years of the present century, will usually be conspicuously ignored. Methodists seem keener to engage with contemporary thought and, sometimes, the traditions of others, than with their own tradition. One of the strong features of the present draft ecclesiology report is that it engages more even handedly with the Methodist tradition and contemporary questions, ecumenical and otherwise. This makes it all the more useful as an ecumenical document, since it shows Methodism in genuine dialogue with the rest of the Church in the ongoing ecclesiological debate, contributing as well as receiving. Perhaps Methodism is overcoming the ecclesiological and ecumenical shyness of which an Anglican well-wisher, a vicar in an LEP including Methodists, complained in the 1980's: he regretted that Methodists were so slow to share their insights when, in his opinion, they had much of value to offer.

This leads us to the second sense in which Methodist ecclesiology can always be said to have been ecumenical, in that, from the beginning, Methodists have always been anxious to affirm the positive values of other traditions, even when in conflict with them. They have also been anxious to avoid 'un-churching' others. These features can be seen in Wesley, in the early and mid-nineteenth century Wesleyans and later. I explored them in my Epworth Review article of January 1986, *Has Methodism an Ecumenical Vocation?* Methodist thought on these matters is to be found in *ad hoc* statements of the Conference, such as the famous 1820 'Liverpool Minutes' and *obiter dicta* in the writings of the Wesleyan theologians, rather than in fully developed form. Thus we can cite the Liverpool Minutes,

Let us remember, and endeavour to impress upon our people, that we, as a body, do not exist for the purposes of party; and that we are especially bound be the example of our Founder, by the principles on which our

societies are formed ...to avoid a narrow, bigoted and sectarian spirit..., and, as far as we innocently can, to 'please all men for good unto their edification'. Let us, therefore, maintain towards all denominations of Christians, who 'hold the Head', the kind and catholic spirit of primitive Methodism; and, according to the noble maxim of our fathers in the Gospel, 'be the friends of all, the enemies of none'. (3)

The need to articulate a Methodist response to ecumenical questions and developments that have emerged since the late 1930s was one of the key reasons for producing the Report. It was not, of course, the only one. Others were to deepen domestic Methodist understanding of ecclesiology, and to contribute to what one might call 'ecclesiological apologetics', in an age when many seem prepared to search for religion, and are prepared to focus on Jesus, but, nevertheless, have the greatest of difficulty in seeing the relevance of the Church - often, of course, grossly misunderstood - to this quest. (4)

For the time being, the Report remains a draft statement. It was presented to the Methodist Conference of 1995 and debated. It was then, as is usual with such statements, 'commended for study' by the Methodist people. When comments have been received from the Circuits and Districts as part of the reception process, the Report will be brought back to the Conference with a view to its adoption, maybe in a modified form, as an official 'Statement of the Conference'.

What, then, are the ecumenical influences in the Report? First, it is important to look at the composition of the working party that drafted it. Twenty members and former members of the main Faith and Order Committee volunteered their services; and, in view of the range of expertise likely to be needed, it was decided to accept their offer and constitute a rather larger working party than normal. There was a considerable age range on the Working Party, from research student to recently retired supernumerary minister. This provided a wide generational perspective. Several Methodist ecumenists were involved, amongst them the Convenor, Neil Richardson, Principal of Wesley College, Bristol, and a member of the English RC-Methodist dialogue; Peter Whittaker, member of the Connexional Ecumenical Committee, with a wide range of local and BCC experience; Susan Harman Moore, who

represented British Methodism at Santiago and is a Reformation scholar now teaching at King's College, London; John Munsey Turner, former tutor at the ecumenical Theological College, Queen's Birmingham; and myself. Several papers were produced on historical and contemporary Methodist ecumenism, attempting to monitor both Methodist contributions to ecumenism, and challenges posed by others to Methodism. John Munsey Turner was particularly prolific in producing relevant historical studies and several of us owe him a debt of gratitude for making us aware of many aspects of our past tradition of which we had only previously been very partially aware. (5) Ecumenical influences were not, of course, limited to those relayed through our ecumenical specialists. They also came through those with wider doctrinal interests. There were some lively and fruitful debates when we came to look at the impact of current Trinitarian theology on ecclesiology, and one can clearly discern the influence of Colin Gunton and John Zizioulas at one remove. (6) Their thinking, along with that of others, very clearly lies behind much that is said in the Trinitarian section (2.1.1), and especially behind the statement (2.1.9) that 'we cannot have an adequate ecclesiology without a proper Trinitarian doctrine, since the Church is called to mirror, at a finite level, the reality that God is in eternity'.

Account was taken of the dialogues and *Baptism, Eucharist & Ministry* (BEM, the Lima Statement). Particular emphasis was placed on the recent work on *koinonia*, where some very useful distinctions were adduced that should help the general debate. Interestingly - another example of Methodist ecumenical shyness? - nothing was said directly in this context about the fact that *koinonia* was the implicitly key concept in Methodist ecclesiology long before it became a fashionable emphasis in ecumenical ecclesiology. (7) A key reason for its resonating with Methodism is that in its current form it represents a re-reading, in the light of the experience and theology of others, of our own tradition. Perhaps its re-appropriation, enriched by the insights of others, represents a prime example of that 're-traditioning' for which the draft 'Called to be One' Report has asked. The gains of ecumenical thinking about *koinonia* are creatively transposed, as it were, into the key of traditional Methodist theologising. Thus, we are told that '*Koinonia* denotes both what Christians share and that sharing *is at the heart of the Christian faith*' (3.1.8). The universal emphasis on ontology is complemented by the Methodist experiential one. This point is reinforced in the next paragraph (3.1.9), where it is stated that '*Koinonia*, then, is

fundamentally an experience, belonging to the whole people of God, not an abstract concept.' In the search for inclusivity within this concept, the position of those Christian communities, such as the Society of Friends and the Salvation Army, which do not practice the Gospel sacraments that are seen as normative in Methodism, is considered. (8) Methodism would probably wish, in accordance with its historic stance, to maintain a balance between affirming the necessity of structures and sacraments to fully organic *koinonia*, while not denying the very real existence of Christian *koinonia* in bodies that seem to sit extremely light to them. It might be argued, though, particularly by churches in the 'Catholic' tradition, that more should have been said about the importance of *koinonia* across time, and the structures that safeguard and enhance it. There is room also for a debate with the 'Catholic' tradition on the significance of the resurfacing of an emphasis on *koinonia* in Methodism that predates its resurfacing in the Catholic tradition through Möhler and his successors. Jean Tillard, in *Chair de l'Eglise, Chair du Christ*, sees *koinonia* ecclesiology as fundamental to the 'Great Tradition' of the Early Church. (9) What is the significance then, for Catholics, with their emphasis on mutual recognition of 'sister churches' of its emergence in Methodism? Does it mean that Methodism can be seen as a 'sister church'? (10)

### **Ecumenical Implications**

The 'ecumenical concern' of Methodism might be held to derive ultimately from its Arminian heritage. As far as its expression in the Report is concerned, it is openly acknowledged in several places, and forms an 'undercurrent' in others. The definition of catholicity as deriving from the all-embracing love of God (paragraph 2.4.4.), the emphasis on Trinitarian theology ( section 2.1.) and, in particular (2.1.9), on the Church's 'mirroring' of that life, the stress on diversity of ecclesial life and shape in the New Testament ( 2.3.), the emphasis on *koinonia* and the stress on the dynamic, communitarian nature of the search for holiness (4.3.1.), all imply it. The stress in the historical section on the societary origins of Methodism is also important, since it has helped to form the consciousness of the Methodist people and make it clear to them that their way of living the Christian life, though valid, is but one amongst other authentic paths; from it flows a strong sense of a need for Methodism to be complemented by the witness of others. From it, paradoxically as it might seem,

derives, at least in part, the Methodist emphasis on avoiding distortion and imbalance in an over sectarian attitude to the practices of others. As Joseph Entwistle put it in a Centenary Sermon in 1839, Methodism seeks to maintain a 'catholic balance', avoiding the extremes of 'bigotry' or 'latitudinarianism.' (11) Translated into modern ecumenical terms, one might say that Entwistle's sermon points towards a flexible approach in which Methodism insists on the appropriateness of 'connexionalism' as an ecclesiological principle (which we shall shortly explore), while accepting that real *koinonia* has been lived and expressed otherwise. It is interesting in this context to note the repeated insistence of Methodist scholars on the diversity of churchly life in the New Testament, as witness to the legitimacy and even desirability of variety of styles of ecclesial life. This emphasis is there in pre-critical scholars such as Rigg and Gregory, as well as our present Jimmy Dunn. (12)

The core section of the Report, from the point of view of the future of Methodist ecumenical dialogue, is that on the Connexional Principle (4.6). The principle is held to 'enshrine a vital truth about the nature of the Church. It witnesses to a mutuality and interdependence which derive from the participation of all Christians through Christ in the very life of God himself' (4.6.2). The Methodist understanding of authority and Church government are held to derive from it (4.6.6). It is claimed to be implicit in the itinerant practice of the apostles and the links they established between their Churches. Its historical origins in its present, eponymous form under Wesley, are described. The Report acknowledges that 'this principle has not always come to expression in a complete or balanced way in Methodist structures and practice' (4.6.1), notwithstanding which the principle is regarded as fundamental. It should perhaps be noted that there has been some criticism within Methodism of the way in which the theology of Connexionalism was handled in the Report. It has been argued that the modern understanding is not that of Wesley. However, this criticism can be handled by arguing that it is, nevertheless, a legitimate development from that of Wesley. Wesley aimed to establish structures of *koinonia* for the mutual edification of his societies. He stressed their disciplinary function more than would modern Methodists, but we believe he would understand the desire for universal fellowship and mutual enrichment that underlies the modern understanding of Connexionalism.

Methodism 'commends the principle to other churches, at the same time acknowledging that Connexionalism is compatible with the patterns of ministry treasured by other traditions' (4.6.8). This paragraph goes on to say that Methodism has already, in many joint ventures with the URC, begun to share connexional structures with them, while adopting the URC tradition of lay eldership, with its affinities with the traditional role of the Methodist Class Leader.

The importance of Connexionalism for the general debate on the nature and structures of *episkope* is acknowledged. The early Wesleyans certainly regarded it as establishing a series of interlocking structures of corporate *episkope*, focussed on the collegiate *episkope* of the presbyterate in the Annual Conference. American Methodist practice is referred to as showing that individualised *episkope* by bishops and the corporate *episkope* of the Conferences can be complementary. British Methodism, in 1982, accepted that the adoption of the 'historic episcopate' would not violate historic Methodist standards, provided it were subject to the authority of the Conference. (13) British Methodism in its Lima response spoke of 'awaiting the moment for the recovery of the sign of the episcopal succession'; and it is accepted that episcopacy can be a valuable sign, but not the only one, of continuity and faithfulness to the Apostolic Tradition.

Paragraph 4.6.11 also refers to the work of the fourth session of the Roman Catholic-Methodist international dialogue (14). It mentions Methodist openness to the possibility of receiving the Petrine ministry, if it can be shown to be essential to the unity of the Church. It states 'Methodists could not accept all aspects of papal ministry as it is currently exercised, but would be more open to a universal primacy understood as a ministry of service and unity rather than as a seat of authority'. At about the same time as the report was presented to the Conference, *Ut Unum Sint* was published. In it the present pope (John Paul II) hints at his desire for a more collaborative style for the future of this ministry. He openly invites leaders of other churches to consult with him on its form. He talks of the importance of mutual enrichment of the churches, and, in the closely related letter *Orientalis Lumen*, cites the same text as Benjamin Gregory when speaking of it, Romans 1.12. (15) Clearly, there is an important dialogue on the relationship of Connexionalism and Petrine

ministry waiting to happen. The appearance of *Called To be One* in February 1996 provides further points for dialogue. The Free Churches in general are called to explore with the Church of England what it means by describing itself as 'episcopally led and synodically governed'. The Free Churches of the independent tradition are challenged to examine their bonds of communion between each other and their understanding of the relationship between the local church and the Universal Church. (16) In all of these debates, Connexionalism might have a reconciling part to play.

### **Remaining work**

No one expects, in light of the pace of current ecumenical and ecclesiological development, that another fifty plus years will elapse before the production of another ecclesiology report in the Methodist tradition. Hopefully, by then, it will be the product of a church in wider communion with the rest of the Church of God. One hopes, however, that what is of permanent value in this Report will be assimilated into the general stream of Tradition and be appropriately assimilated within and outside British Methodism. It is, however, already clear that there are questions raised in the Report upon which further work is already needed.

So I wish then to conclude this paper with a short survey of those questions. They are the understanding of the local church and the relationship of the particular 'priesthood' exercised by presbyteral ministers to that of the whole body of the faithful.

The theology of the local church is not fully developed, partly because Methodists have difficulty in separating out the spiralling staircase of belongings, of which they are intimately aware and, saying which, they would identify as 'local'. Most today would probably nominate their local congregation. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, many might have identified the intimate fellowship of the class meeting as being so fundamental to their Christian formation and their experience of *koinonia* that they would see it as 'fully church, but not the whole of the Church', to borrow

Jean Tillard's phrase. Many Local Preachers, and still some rural Methodists, might see the Circuit as the 'local' church.

From the point of view of Connexionalism, Methodists can challenge certain theologies of the local church that have circulated, at least in the 'independent' tradition. However, to do so now would be largely fruitless. There seems to be a growing consensus within those traditions that have emphasised the 'local church', whether as diocese or gathered congregation, that the full catholicity of the local church necessarily implies its openness in relationship to the rest of the Universal Church. Jean Tillard emphasises this point especially strongly, and his statement, made in respect of the Church of Ephesus - 'L'Eglise d'Ephèse a tout de l'Eglise, mais n'est pas toute l'Eglise' - is a good starting point for reflection. (17) Methodism has indicated in this report that it sees the importance of the principle of subsidiarity and a proper balance between independence and interdependence, but it should not dodge the pastoral necessity of strengthening the 'catholic sense' of 'local churches', whether defined as classes, societies or circuits, by developing a full theology of them. At one level, there must be appropriation of the insight of the 'independent' tradition into the covenantal nature of communities, freely gathering in response to the word (but also necessarily then relating themselves to the rest of the Church). These insights have been fruitfully connected by Colin Gunton with Trinitarian theology. (18) At another level, there must be dialogue with the Catholic and Orthodox tradition, with its dual emphases on inculturation and bonds of communion. These points have been strikingly illuminated by Jean Tillard in his magisterial *L'Eglise Locale*. Tillard emphasises the local church(es) as the Church that is rooted in the specific cultural history of its place, assimilating them fruitfully into the life in Christ. He also emphasises the local church as the manifestation in each time and place of the one Pentecostally constituted original church of Jerusalem, which is the one true mother church of Christendom. Methodism might fruitfully note the resemblances between Tillard's theology of the local church as the manifestation of the *ephapax* of the Pentecostal community in a particular time and place, and the classical Wesleyan emphasis on the Wesleyan Revival as a revival of primitive church life alongside the revival of primitive doctrine. (19) In both cases it is a matter of the Spirit's re-creation of the original community in its catholic integrity. Rigg talks interestingly of the early Methodists 'instinctively' bonding themselves

together under the influence of the Spirit, a point which could be developed in association with the Johannine theology of the 'anointing of the Spirit' (1 John 2. 20 and 27). In both cases ministry is seen as essentially ministry of communion, linking the local church with the other local churches in time as well as in space. Benjamin Gregory emphasises the role of the ministry of the apostles in bringing communities into connexion with each other. (20) Methodists should also appreciate the missiological emphasis in Tillard's understanding of the local church. The bishop has the responsibility for relating it to the rest of the Church and monitoring its fidelity to the integrity of Tradition. However, the local faithful have the responsibility, as Tillard puts it, of 'speaking back' to the bishop with their local concerns and insights, and also with the concerns of the non-Christian community within which they witness (21) More work also needs to be done on the eschatological nature of the local church, as experiencing already in its worship and fellowship the foretaste of the age to come, a truth to which P.T. Forsyth pointed graphically, if rather epigrammatically, in his ecclesiology. (22) Arguably, from the Methodist point of view, this is the specific Wesleyan contribution to the theology of the local church, rather than any theory about subsidiarity or local autonomy. Such an emphasis would fit what is elsewhere in the Report very properly said about the nature of Methodist worship. The theme can be very adequately illustrated from Wesley's hymns. To take but one example from the hymns on Christian fellowship, as found in the 1904 edition of the Wesleyan Hymn Book:

By faith we are come  
To our permanent home;  
By hope we the rapture improve:  
By love we still rise,  
And look down from the skies,  
For the heaven of heavens is love. (23)

More work also needs to be done on the relationship of the ministry to the priesthood of all the faithful. Their proper relationship has always been a concern of Methodism, and is also a concern of the other major Christian traditions today. The section of the Report dealing with this, 4.5, is marked by an unexceptionable account of the doctrine of the royal priesthood as it

emerges in the New Testament, but with a degree of timidity in tackling the questions posed by later developments within the Tradition. It is rightly anxious to protect the Reformation insight of the direct access of every Christian through Christ to the Father, and it is in this sense that we must understand the statement in 4.5.11, that the minister is 'neither more nor less a priest than any other Christian'. However, the questions raised in ecumenical dialogue as to whether there is a sense in which one can talk of a particular priesthood of the ministry, albeit one that is based on that of Christ and the total royal priesthood of the faithful, must be tackled. I believe the resources for doing so are contained within the Report, within Methodist dialogue statements and other strands of the Methodist tradition. The Report talks of the lifelong commitment involved in ordination, and its irrepeatability (4.5.11). It associates this with the particular nature of ministerial commitment, which is capable of development in 'representative' terms, already familiar to the Methodist tradition, and in 'iconic' terms, not familiar to our tradition, yet not incompatible with elements in it. The international RC-Methodist dialogue talks of the 'fundamentally pastoral nature of ministry'.(24) The Methodist Statement on Ordination of 1974 talked of a desire to transcend the dichotomy between theologies of ministry that are primarily ontological (this, of course, gives a point of departure for a possible Methodist reception of the 'iconic' concept of presbyteral ministry) and those that are functional. (25)

The key reconciling concept is the old Wesleyan one of the 'Pastoral Office'.(26) It needs to be re-received today in a context that no longer threatens the concept of lay participation in the government of the Church, much less the concept of the ministry of the whole people of God, which, of course, ordained ministry exists to 'subserve'. The concept of the Pastoral Office can be seen as complementary to that in the Catholic tradition of the 'sacrificing priesthood'. It is my contention that they are both legitimate developments from the theology of ministry contained in John 21.15-24 and I Peter 5.1-11. The pastor, who is exhorted to be under-shepherd to Christ, is to be assimilated to His pattern of willingness to 'lay down his life for the sheep'. This is one more reason why the presbyter's eucharistic presidency is

fitting and congruent with his or her whole calling. The pastoral ministry is a special calling within the Church and, therefore, it is quite appropriate that ARCIC should talk of ministerial priesthood as 'belonging to another realm of the gifts of the Spirit' (27) It is a gift to the Church and not just from the Church, a point stressed in the 1937 Statement. (28) However, the traditional Methodist emphasis should be safeguarded that the ministry of presbyters is always to be seen in the context of the total ministry of the whole people of God. We need a more nuanced understanding of the relationship of 'ministerial' and 'lay' priesthood than has yet been obtained.

We need also to bear in mind the possibility that the Catholic tradition became somewhat distorted when too close a parallel was made between the priestly ministry of the New Covenant and that of the Old. As J. Agar Beet pointed out long ago, there is a different relationship between the people of God and the priesthood in the Old Covenant, when the Spirit only rested upon isolated, specially endowed individuals, and priests were set aside from a particular tribe, and the relationship of ministers and people in the New Covenant, where 'all the Lord's people are prophets'. (29) It can be argued that the emerging typological theology of ministerial priesthood from Clement to Cyprian was not balanced by a recognition of the way in which the Old Covenant is not just fulfilled but transcended in the New. There is also a vital difference between the understanding of sacrifice in the Covenants. In the Old Covenant, sacrifices of limited efficacy were offered on behalf of the people of God; now presbyters and bishops preside at the pleading of the 'memorial of thine abundant kindness', where the emphasis on sacrifice as such, while legitimate, is, in a sense, 'swallowed up' in the celebration of those who are now 'sons and daughters', no longer servants, of those who have already tasted of the eschatological powers of the age to come. Presbyters or bishops preside over the celebration of the whole Body in virtue of their 'connecting' function rather than in virtue of any priestly function which is separate from that of the entire people that Christ has gained for Himself. At the same time it is clear, and I have already mentioned the teaching of the 1937 Report on this, that ministry, while always exercised in and with the Church, is also a gift to it. Jean Tillard stresses this as a reason for emphasising the differing nature of presbyteral and episcopal priesthood, while showing his recognition of the point of classical Methodist theology by actually regretting that the term 'concelebration' has become confined to multiple presbyteral

presidency at the Eucharist, rather than being applied to the joint celebration of presbyters and people. Somehow we have not yet found, and the 1995 Report certainly does not find, an adequate way of expressing the paradox, so that the distinctive emphases of the 'Deed of Union' and the 'catholic' tradition are held in tension, the one emphasising the common priesthood shared in Christ, and the other the distinctive elements of presbyteral and episcopal ministry. Perhaps a fruitful relevant *theologoumenon* for reflection can be found in Tillard:

Il est évident que, dogmatiquement, sur le plan de la finalité, le ministre demeure second, face à la vire du sacerdoce baptismale. Il n'existe que pour elle et jamais sans elle. (30)

Linked to this issue comes the whole issue of apostolicity which will also require further work. The traditional Methodist emphasis on the importance of the apostolic Gospel as prior to any structure of apostolic ministry is reiterated, albeit with testimony to the value of the 'sign of the episcopal succession' ( 2,4.6). Apostolicity lies in faithfulness to a whole bundle of characteristics, including 'communion in prayer, love, joy and suffering, service to the sick and needy, unity among the local churches and sharing the gifts that the Lord has given to each' (2.4.7, quoting BEM M34). Careful consideration now needs to be given within ecumenical dialogue, of the extent to which apostolicity can be recognised as inhering in churches that display the characteristics of apostolic missionary activity, teaching and *koinonia*, even where they lack the sign of continuity in ministerial succession. Benjamin Gregory, commenting on Acts 8, argued that the Samaritan mission of that chapter showed the apostles as 'recognising' and 'connecting' churches which they recognised as already possessing authentic Christian *koinonia*. (31) It might be argued that Paul similarly 'recognised' the Church of Rome, in writing to it as he did before his visit, and, apparently before any connection being established with Peter.

I want, finally, to express the hope that this Report can be received by our sister churches, that they can recognise within it an ecclesiology that is fundamentally convergent with that of the Great Tradition of the Universal Church, while being very properly marked with the particular contextual experience of the 'people called Methodists'. The Report itself expresses the hope that 'Methodism will be able to

contribute some of the riches of its own distinctive history to the Universal Church' (5.4). It also recognises the need to do more work on the characteristics required for the unity of the Church (3.1.11). The Report is a faithful statement of the current position of the British Methodist people on their ecumenical pilgrimage. Much remains yet to be learnt and received from and with ecumenical partners. Our partners should not be dismayed at any apparent disparity between their position and ours. We intend to seek convergent paths.

## References

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5. For an overview of influences on Methodist ecclesiology and ecumenism, see Turner, J.M.: *Conflict and Reconciliation*, Epworth, 1985.
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7. See especially the many hymns an fellowship which have been part of Methodist hymn books since 1780, e.g. in *Hymns and Psalms*, 1983, nos 752-763.
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11. Entwistle J: *Centenary Sermon*, Tadcastle, 1839.
12. See my article in *One in Christ*, 1994, no 2, pp. 161-175: *A Methodist Contribution to Ecclesiology*. See also Dunn, J: *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*, SCM 1977, for a treatment by a modern biblical scholar.
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17. Tillard, *L'Eglise Locale*, Paris, 1995, p 77.
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