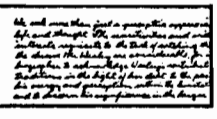
OXFORD Notes

NEWSLETTER OF THE OXFORD INSTITUTE OF METHODIST THEOLOGICAL STUDIES

Volume I | Winter 1984 | Number 1

comments



The Seventh Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies, while carrying on the great tradition of the first six Institutes, committed itself to measures that could (1) continue the work of the Institute in the interim between the last and the next Institute, which is now scheduled for summer 1987 at Oxford. It is with great pleasure that we send the first Oxford Notes, a publication which intends to serve these two objectives.

Oxford Notes is meant to be a medium for sharing information in (a) definition of research problems and research project proposals, (b) research results, (c) new publications (books, monographs and articles) and helpfully selected and annotated bibliography, (d) announcements of scholarly meetings and their results, (e) communication between scholarly Methodist and Wesleyan societies, (f) communication between Institute Working Groups.

We are pleased to announced that the Editor of Oxford Notes will be Prof. Richard Heitzenrater, and Associate Editors will be Reverend Kenneth H. Thompson and Mr. Ted Campbell. For at least the next three years we shall try to work at the Oxford Notes objectives through the five Working Groups of the Seventh Institute. The Convenors of those Working Groups have agreed to stimulate continuing scholarly work within the Groups. Your contributions to Oxford Notes can be sent to the Convenor of your Group for coordination with contributions of other colleagues in your Group. Of course, your contributions can also be sent at any time directly to the Editor or Associate Editors.

It will be immediately clear to all that the success of Oxford Notes will depend on the interest, initiative, and contributions of the membership of the Oxford Institute. We hereby solicit those signs of support.

Non-members of the Seventh Institute who wish to receive Oxford Notes may do so by paying the Associate Member fee of $15 which should be directed to Prof. M. Douglas Meeks, 475 E. Lockwood, St. Louis, MO 63119, USA.

M. Douglas Meeks
Brian E. Beck
Co-Chairpersons, Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies

books

RECENT & FORTHCOMING RESOURCES IN WESLEY & METHODIST STUDIES

Compiled by Rex D. Matthews

The fact that Oxford University Press has now withdrawn from its agreement to publish the complete series of The Oxford Edition of the Works of John Wesley, under the general editorship of Frank Baker, is now well known. The series was originally projected in 34 volumes; of these Oxford has published 3 volumes:

Vol. 11: The Appeals, ed. Gerald Cragg (1975);
Vol. 25: Letters I 1721-1739, ed. Frank Baker (1980);
Vol. 26: Letters II, 1740-1755, ed. Frank Baker (1982).

(continued on next page)

(continued from p. 1)

Oxford will publish one additional volume in the series, Vol. 7: A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People called Methodists, to be available in February 1984.

Abingdon Press has now agreed to continue the project by publishing the four volumes of Wesley's Sermons, edited by Albert Outler (the first volume appearing in May 1984), and the first volume of Journal and Diaries, edited by Reginald Ward and Richard Heitzenrater. The entire project has been renamed The Bicentennial Edition of Wesley's Works and continues under Frank Baker's general editorship.

Abingdon Press has also brought out a one-volume edition of John Wesley's Fifty-Three Sermons. It is in fact a reprint of the text of Sugden's edition of the Sermons, with the omission of Sugden's footnotes (paper, $17.95).

Abingdon has also announced the publication of a two-volume work by Richard P. Heitzenrater, The Elusive Mr. Wesley. The first volume, John Wesley His Own Biographer, is due out in March 1984 (paper, $9.75). Volume two, John Wesley as Seen by his Contemporaries and Biographers, is due out in April 1984 (paper, $9.75).

Epworth Press publications are now being distributed in England through SCM Press. SCM has just concluded an agreement with Fortress Press for distribution of SCM publications in this country. This means that several Epworth titles of particular importance for Wesley and Methodist studies are now available in the U.S. through Fortress Press, including three Wesley items:

- John Wesley's Forty-Four Sermons (paper, $10.95);
- Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament, one volume edition (paper, $14.50);
- A Plain Account of Christian Perfection (paper, $4.95).

Rupert Davies' Methodism (rev. ed., paper, $7.50) is also available from Fortress.

Baker Book House has confirmed plans to reissue their reprint of the 14-volume edition of Wesley's Works, edited by Thomas Jackson. This set should be available once more in early 1984, though no firm publication date, or price, has yet been set.

The Cokesbury Bookstore chain has entered into an agreement with Baker Book House for a special reprinting of their two-volume edition of Wesley's Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament, to be sold exclusively through Cokesbury (cloth, $14.95).

Unfortunately Baker Book House's recent reprint of Charles Wesley's Journal is now out of print, and they have no plans for a reissue of this work.

The University Press of America has reprinted George C. Cell, The Rediscovery of John Wesley (paper, $13.75), and also Robert Chiles, Theological Transition in American Methodism (paper, $11.00). U.P.A. is giving serious consideration to reprints of two other important studies of Wesley: William R. Cannon, The Theology of John Wesley and Ole E. Borgen, John Wesley on the Sacraments. It would not be inappropriate for interested persons to contact U.P.A. with expressions of gratitude for the works they have already reprinted and of encouragement to proceed with the reprints under consideration. Their address is: 4720 Boston Way, Lanham, MD 20706 (Attn: Jed Lyons, Editor).

Word Books has published The John Wesley Reader, compiled by Al Bryant, with a foreword by Charles Allen; selections are "arranged in sequence for daily devotional readings" ($14.95).

Zondervan published A Contemporary Wesleyan Theology, edited by Charles W. Carter, et al. (two volumes; cloth, $39.95 per set). Contributors include: Gilbert W. Stafford, Richard S. Taylor, Timothy L. Smith, Albert Truesdale, Eugene E. Carpenter, Charles W. Carter, Ralph

(continued on p. 4)

working groups

IV. EVANGELISM
David Watson, Convenor

Not to beat about the bush, the closing session of the group at Oxford was highly confronting, and the agreement to enter into a continuing relationship after the Institute was reached tenuously, albeit unanimously.

In many ways, the confrontation was an explosion on a delayed fuse. The membership of the group was representative of a field which has become a minefield. Marked disagreements were therefore to be expected, and for most of the Institute these emerged in the context of our common Methodist heritage, rendering the dialogue circumspect and collegial. The purpose of the group, however, was to examine evangelism in the context not only of Methodism, but of the global mission of the church; and had there not been a degree of confrontation at some point in the two weeks, it would have signified the circumvention of our task. Polemics are ineluctably the stuff of evangelism (cf. I Corinthians), because all of the theological, social, cultural and personal differences which constitute people's Christian discipleship come sharply into focus at the point of sharing the gospel with others.

This is why evangelists find themselves constantly divided over questions which seem to be peripheral, but which in fact represent weighty issues in the history of Christian thought and action. It is possible to avoid these confrontations, of course, by plumbing the depths of various ancillary disciplines, or by choosing to study fields of mission rather than enter into them. But such procrastinations are patently anachronistic in a church whose global task has now come sharply into focus, and it was a welcome dimension of the Institute that they were remarkably absent from working and plenary sessions both. The polarities of world mission and evangelism could not have been more clearly stated than in the papers of Wesley Ariarajah and Alan Walker, and within the group the differences were even more particular. There was Latin American discomfort, for example, with the perceived absence of historical specificity in Wesley Ariarajah's presentation. There was African resentment of the perceived insensitivity in Alan Walker's address to the work of indigenous churches. There were questions raised from Northern Ireland about the perceived triumphalism of North American church growth, and from North America about the perceived blindness in Europe to the pitfalls of secularization--a discussion which held promise at one point in plenary session, but which evaporated in semantic imprecision.

On reflection, two factors emerge as encouraging for the continuing work of the group. The first is the agreement of the members that confrontations of this nature are a necessary first step if some debilitating issues in the outreach of the world church are to be resolved. Given the present reality of world evangelism, as opposed to what it ought to be, this seems altogether unavoidable. That the confrontations occurred more towards the conclusion of the Institute than during the earlier working sessions is an indication of precisely this need to continue the work. Secondly the common Methodist heritage of the group, and the Institute as a whole, provided a diversity of perspective which is difficult to find at other denominational gatherings, still less at interdenominational gatherings, which tend by and large to be self-selective. The particular format of the Institute has the potential for a distinctive contribution to world evangelism.

To render the work of the group at Oxford constructive, therefore, we must give priority between now and the next Institute in 1987 to the following issues:

1. The content of the evangelistic message. This is the nub of the false dichotomy between evangelism and social action in the world mission of the church. To some extent, the dichotomy is being resolved through the social outreach of radical evangelicalism on the one hand and the renewed liturgical

(continued on p. 4)

(continued from p. 3)
emphases of conciliar evangelization on the other. But in the field of evangelistic studies, little attention has yet been given to the theological issue of what we proclaim as the gospel.

2. The global significance of Wesley's catholicity of grace. To engage in the basic evangelistic exercise of contextualization is to view Wesley's theology in its proper perspective. He appropriated the Christian tradition in the particular context of eighteenth-century England. But if his concept of grace, prevenient, justifying and sanctifying, is viewed in the light of our contemporary global consciousness, there are profound implications for evangelistic strategy. This merits further study, not least because the subject is attracting authors from other wings of the church. See, for example, John Walsh, Evangelization and Justice: New Insights for Christian Ministry (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1982), which studies the implications of James Fowler's work in faith development from a global perspective, and then draws important inferences for evangelism.

3. Particularity, Universality and Eschatology. The plenary discussion which followed Wesley Ariarajah's presentation indicated that the most important contributions to this area of study are likely to come from a dialogue between Asia and Latin America, and from particular case studies rather than the theological and cultural issues of interreligious dialogue. Put differently, the tension between eschatological promise and global development (cf. Wesley's essay, Thoughts Upon God's Sovereignty) has far more potential if attention can be directed to what is actually happening in these two contexts, rather than further reflection.

4. The evangelistic significance of ecclesiolae in ecclesia. As Alan Walker's summary made clear, the proliferation of ecclesiolae worldwide must be regarded as a gracious initiative of the Holy Spirit. That this phenomenon appears in many cultural forms renders it all the more creditable, as does its manifestation in the early Methodist class meeting. It has yet to be studied in depth from an evangelistic perspective, however, as opposed to the ecclesiological, spiritual and sociological attention it has already received. The African church seems to offer particular insights in this regard, through strategies which are refreshingly spontaneous. We need to know more.

To facilitate the ongoing work of the group in these areas of study, members are invited to submit synopses of their own work, and any other research in the field of which they are aware, for inclusion in future issues of this newsletter. The circulation of occasional papers is also possible on a more limited basis, and this will probably prove desirable as we approach the 1987 Institute. We did agree at the conclusion of the last Institute to begin a bibliography, building on the records which Howard Snyder collated for us during the working sessions. This can still be done; though to date, I have received only one further contribution--and an excellent one--from Helmut Mohr. Perhaps our respective professional resources provide us with sufficient information in this regard. If so, we may wish to shelve this particular project; though I am still willing to catalogue whatever is submitted.

David Lowes Watson
Perkins School of Theology
S.M.U., Dallas, TX 75275

* *

(continued from p. 2)
Earle, Charles R. Wilson, R. Larry Shelton, Wilber T. Dayton, and David L. Smith, among others.

The Francis Asbury Publishing Co. (now a subsidiary of Zondervan), has reprinted Harald Lindström's Wesley and Sanctification, with a new foreword by Timothy L. Smith (paper, $8.95).

Garland Publishing Co. is planning an extensive series of reprints of 19th-century primary source works concerning the Holiness and Pentecostal movements, under the editorship of Donald W. Dayton. Contact the publisher or Don for more details.

This list is far from complete but is made available on the principle that some good news is better than none!

working groups

III. BAPTISM, EUCHARIST, AND MINISTRY
Geoffrey Wainwright, Convenor

The considerable attention attracted by the Lima text at the Vancouver Assembly of the WCC is a matter of public record. Many people have testified to the moving power of "The Lima Liturgy" in the eucharist presided over by the Archbishop of Canterbury at Vancouver.

WCC publications include Ecumenical Perspectives on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, a volume of theological essays edited by Max Thurian, and a compilation by Thurian and myself of historical and contemporary liturgical materials under the title Baptism and Eucharist: Ecumenical Convergence in Celebration. My own recent book The Ecumenical Moment (Eerdmans, 1983), contains several chapters relevant to our themes.

"Reception" of the Lima text continues apace. In the USA, the National Council of Churches is devoting its October 1983 meeting to the matter. Such Pastors' Schools as those of Curg Starkey in Missouri and of the North Carolina Conferences here at Duke are devoting seminars to the Lima text. I have myself participated also in conferences arranged at the district and local church level. Societas Liturgica, the international and ecumenical body of worship scholars, has decided to devote its next congress, at Boston in 1985, to the Lima text.

As this reception and discussion takes place, the WCC Faith and Order Commission is intergrating it already into the wider study: "Towards the Common Expression of the Apostolic Faith Today." Another tributary to that project is the previous study on "How does the Church teach authoritatively today?" These facts could be of some importance as we set about shaping the next OIMTS, since the theme of Authority figured prominently among the suggestions made in 1982.

The next meeting of the World Methodist Council and Congress will take place in Kenya in 1986. The ancillary consulation to be organized by the committee on worship and liturgy will likely take Church membership as its subject. This would link both with our treatment of Lima in the OIMTS group and with the current concentration of the WMC/Roman Catholic bilateral dialogue on Ecclesiology.

I should welcome news from other members of Group III for circulation in the OIMTS newsletter. Please note my change of address to: Prof. Geoffrey Wainwright, The Divinity School, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina 27706, USA.

A report follows from Jerry Moede concerning the Church, Ministry, and Sacraments groups at the Atlanta consultation of August 1983:

TO THOSE WHO ATTENDED THE BICENTENNIAL CONSULTATION
AUGUST 17-20

Dear Friends,

With the appearance of the Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry (BEM) document of the World Council of Churches, a promising moment has been reached in the ecumenical movement. What will be Methodism's reaction and contribution to the theological convergence taking place? The workgroup "Ecumenism and Methodism" discussed this document in some detail. Because of the timeliness of our meeting, and its importance for the future, the group asked for (and was given) permission to send our thinking to all of you who attended the consultaton. Although we did not have time to debate every word of what we enclose, the points we are making on these three subjects were drafted there and reviewed; they received the general approval of the members of our group.

Introduction

In our discussion we have recognized the need to reaffirm Wesley's holding together of mission and unity, and the constitutional commitment of

United Methodism to the visible unity of the church. This commitment has implications for Methodism's continuing theological task, and thus for this consultation of theologians. This commitment needs to be the context, during the bicentennial of American Methodism, for reflection on and action in behalf of the unity of Christ's Church.

In responding to growing agreement on baptism, eucharist and ministry through BEM, COCU, and the bilateral conversations, and in making the observations and recommendations we attach [omitted in this report], we affirm as an ecumenical goal the preparation of a genuinely universal Council, and of the conciliar fellowship in each place such a Council will presuppose.

We believe this vision of conciliar fellowship, combining as it does unity and mission, as suggested at the WCC at Uppsala in 1968, developed at Nairobi in 1975 and affirmed at Vancouver in 1983, is an appropriate context in which those of us in the Wesleyan tradition can both make our contribution and in turn receive enrichment.

Our workgroup had as its sub-title, "Issues in Ministry, Sacraments and Order." Its focus, as has been mentioned, was the WCC Faith and Order document on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (BEM, the Lima text), which is now before the churches for response and reception.

For several members of the group these considerations of BEM represented significant follow-up, in the American United Methodist context, on discussions initiated at the 1982 Oxford Institute (in the workgroup on "Ecclesiology, Sacraments and Ministry"). For others, particularly those named to the UM Task Force to develop an official response to BEM, our deliberations represented significant preparation. Three members of the workgroup made special contributions by preparing papers related to the three sections of the document. These papers will be of importance to the Task Force as well.

In considering the BEM document the group kept in mind two specific questions recommended in the text:

What guidance can our church find in BEM for the further development of our own understanding of baptism, eucharist and ministry; and

What suggestions can our church make to the WCC Faith and Order Commission relative to the continuing ecumenical debate on these subjects.

We can report, not without surprise and puzzlement, the presence of a remarkable unanimity among us on the kind of perspectives and standpoints that are characteristic of United Methodist theology, and therefore also on the kinds of responses we as United Methodists must make to the BEM document. One reason for this harmonious atmosphere may be the composition of the group--all of us people more or less involved in the ecumenical movement and committed to its objectives. But another reason might well be what can be identified as a broadening theological consensus among those involved in the recovery of the Wesleyan spirit in theology. We find, in fact, that the more we learn of the Wesleyan tradition the more we are able to learn from--and contribute to--the contemporary developments in ecumenical ecclesiology and theology.

The following represents comments on the BEM document which we would want to share with the Bicentennial Consultation as a whole, and which we intend to pass on to the Task Force on the UM response to BEM.

I. Baptism

The group was unanimous in acknowledging the great ecclesiological importance of this section of the document. There was general agreement on the significance of the attempt to hold together the objective-sacramental and the subjective-commitmental dimensions of baptism and of the efforts to soften the conflict between pedabaptists and anabaptists, generally.

We are not, however, convinced that the document succeeds in mediating the basic polarity among Christians concerning the divine initiative or act

(continued on p. 8)

RECENT ARTICLES ON THE WESLEYS, WESLEYAN DOCTRINE, AND WESLEYAN THEOLOGY (1980-1984)

By Ted Campbell

The following is a partial list of articles which have appeared in scholarly publications in this decade on the subjects of a) the Wesleys, b) Wesleyan doctrine (the teachings of the Wesleyan communions), and c) Wesleyan theology (critical reflection on the Christian witness of faith with explicit reference to Wesley's theology). I have not included numerous works which have appeared in this decade and which deal, in general, with Methodist history.

Albin, Thomas R., "Charles Wesley's Earliest Evangelical Sermons." Methodist History 21 (October 1982): 60-62.

Baker, Frank, "The Origins, Character, and Influence of John Wesley's Thoughts Upon Slavery." Methodist History 22:2 (January 1984): 75-86.

_____, "Suanna Wesley: Puritan, Parent, Pastor, Protagonist, Pattern." Epworth Review 9:2 (May 1982): 39-46.

_____, "Unfolding John Wesley: A Survey of Twenty Years' Studies in Wesley's Thought." Quarterly Review 1 (Fall 1980: 44-58.

Brockwell, Charles W., "The Discipline and the Recognition of Orders: A Brief Historical Review." Methodist History 19 (April 1982): 179-182.

Chilcote, Paul W., "John Wesley as Revealed in the Journal of Hester Ann Rogers." Methodist History 20 (April 1983): 111-123.

Cook, Albert B., "Two Autobiographical Broadsides by Samuel Wesley." Methodist History (October 1980): 58-60.

Drewery, Benjamin, "Methodist Union: Some Theological Issues." Epworth Review 9:2 (May 1982): 32-38.

Dreyer, Frederick, "Faith and Experience in the Thought of John Wesley." American Historical Review 88 (Fall 1983): 12-30.

Dunlap, E. Dale, "Baptism and the Christian Life: A United Methodist View." Perkins School of Theology Journal 34:2 (Winter 1981): 7-15.

George, A. Raymond, "Foundation Documents of the Faith, Pt. 9: Methodist Statements." Expository Times 91 (June 1980): 260-263.

Hynson, Leon O., "Evangelism and Social Ethics in Wesley's Theology." The AME Zion Quarterly Review 2 (July 1981): 2-18.

_____, "Human Liberty as Divine Right: A Study in the Political Maturation of John Wesley." Journal of Church and State 25 (Winter 1983): 57-85.

Langford, Thomas, "Wesley's Doctrine of the Church, Ministry, and the Sacraments; John Wesley's Doctrine of Justification by Faith; John Wesley's Doctrine of Sanctification." The Bulletin [Committee on Archives and History of the United Methodist Church of Canada] 29 ([1980-1982] 1983): 35-74.

Maser, Frederick E., "Discovery." Methodist History 21 (April 1983): 169-171.

Massa, Mark S., "The Catholic Wesley: A Revisionist Prolegomena." Methodist History 22:1 (October 1983): 38-53.

McEllhenney, John G., "John Wesley and Samuel Johnson: A tale of Three Coincidences." Methodist History 21 (April 1983): 143-155.

Mickle, Jeffrey P., "A Comparison of the Doctrines of Ministry of Francis Asbury and Philip William Otterbein." Methodist History 19 (July 1981): 187-205.

Nausner, Helmut, "Some Notes on Christian Perfection." Quarterly Review 3 (Spring 1983): 71-82.

Ott, Philip W., "John Wesley on Health: A Word for Sensible Regimen." Methodist History 18 (April 1980): 193-204.

Outler, Albert C., "John Wesley's Interests in the Early Fathers of the Church." The Bulletin [Committee on Archives and History of the United Church of Canada] 29 ([1980-1982] 1983): 5-18.

Phipps, William E., "John Wesley on

(continued on p. 8)

(Campbell, continued from p. 7)

Slavery." Quarterly Review 1 (Summer 1981): 23-31.
Runyon, Theodore, "Carl Michalson as Wesleyan Theologian." Drew Gateway 51:2 (Winter 1980): 1-13.
Starkey, Lycurgus M., "The Holy Spirit and the Wesleyan Witness." Religion in Life 49 (Spring 1980): 72-80.
Stewart, Richard L., "Dialogue with Methodism." One in Christ 18:3 (1982): 223-236.
Sylvest, Edwin E., "Wesley desde el Margen Hispano." Apuntes 1:2 (Summer 1981): 14-19.
Walls, Jerry L., "John Wesley's Critique of Martin Luther." Methodist History 20 (October 1981): 29-41.
Yrigoyen, Charles, Jr., "Mercersburg's Quarrel with Methodism." Methodist History 22:1 (October 1983): 3-19.
See also current issues of the Wesleyan Theological Journal, and the Index to the Wesleyan Theological Journal, Volumes 1-15, 1966-1980, published by the Wesleyan Theological Society, 215 East 43rd Street, Marion, Indiana 46952.

* *

(Wainwright, continued from p. 6)

and the human response or faith in the interpretation of the sacrament of baptism.

As United Methodists we recognize that same polarity in our own history and tradition--conflicting notions concerning agency, significance, and effect incorporated into our explications of the nature of baptism and in our practice of baptizing, as evidenced both in our Discipline and in our baptismal and confirmation liturgies. (Cf. James Logan's paper, "Baptism--the Ecumenical Sacrament and the Wesleyan Tradition," for an excellent analysis of this situation.) On the one hand are the emphases on baptism as "the work of God", "the gift of the Holy Spirit", "incorporation into Christ"; on the other, references to baptism as "a rite of commitment", "implying conversion of heart", "personal commitment being necessary for responsible memberhip in the body of Christ."

In an effort to overcome this ambiguity both in our United Methodist understanding of the sacrament and in the BEM statement, our group feels that more work should be done to establish the proper relationship between the objective and the subjective dimensions of baptism. In our opinion, the proper relationship is one that emphasizes the priority of the objective-sacramental-theocentric dimensions of baptism and the secondary or consequential character of the subjective-confessional-anthropocentric dimensions of baptism. We question, therefore, the BEM document's lack of clarity in describing baptism generally as "both God's gift and our human response", and especially the confusion implied in taking Jesus' baptism under John as paradigmatic of the Christian's baptism into Christ.

From the Wesleyan theological perspective we would want to see the sacrament of baptism explicitly anchored in the doctrine of universal atonement, prevenient grace, and the objective signification. Whenever the subjective or experiential dimensions of baptism are referred to we would want to stress the responsive character of faith and the covenantal or communal nature of the sacramental symbol. United Methodists are clearly more in harmony with the catholic, inclusivistic tradition of divine operatum in baptism than with more exclusivistic traditions which tend to emphasize baptism as the confession of conversion.

On several points our group feels that the BEM statement on baptism challenges United Methodists to come to grips with ecumenical theology and bring their theological interpretations and ecclesiastical administrations into conformity with the evolving ecumenical consensus--even with their own principal theological standpoint.

(1) There is the question of the relationship of baptism and church membership. As seen, BEM interprets baptism as "incorporation into Christ", "entry into the new covenant", "a sign and seal of our common discipleship." Through baptism we are "brought into union with Christ, with each other, and with the church of every time and place"--i.e. into membership of the church universal. Our own baptismal says the same.

There is discrepancy, however, between what United Methodists say concerning church membership in our sacramental ministry on behalf of the universal church of Christ--in our liturgy --and what we say in our denominational polity, in the Book of Discipline, concerning membership in our own organization. The Discipline, for example, calls the children who are baptized members of the universal church of Christ "preparatory members" (whatever that means) of the United Methodist Church. In other words, those who by our ministry are brought into membership of the universl church of Christ are not, by that same ministerial act, brought into membership of the United Methodist Church. Surely the United Methodist Church has no need of being more exclusive in its membership than we consider the body of Christ itself to be.

(2) There is also the question of the relationship between baptism and confirmation. For some time United Methodists have sought to justify their commitment to infant baptism by pointing to confirmation as the completion of the sacramental sign. The effect has been a weakening of our concept of baptism--infant baptism, specifically, is perceived as only a part of a sacrament, an incomplete rite, and meaningless in itself.

The BEM statement teaches us to see in baptism an "inseparable link" between the universal work of Christ and the personal appropriation of its benefits--i.e. that baptism in the fullest sense of the words "signifies and effects" salvation. Clearly, United Methodists shall have to rethink their concept of the relationship of confirmation and baptism. This will necessitate reconsiderations of the confirmation materials currently in use throughout the church as well.

(3) The group feels that the BEM statement on baptism is in essential harmony with the theological perspectives that inform our supplementary worship resources, and that it is high time, therefore, for the supplemental liturgies not only to be officially recognized in the church, as they are, but that they be given equal status with our traditional services--perhaps even designation as the more appropriate expression in our time of the church's understanding of the sacrament.

We are convinced that the liturgical renewal that has been going on among us in recent decades has brought United Methodist practice into closer touch with our own theological character as a church and into clearer resonance with developing ecumenical understandings.

(4) Finally our group feels that the United Methodist Church can learn from the BEM document something crucial to the clarification of the relationship between baptism and eucharist. United Methodists have often considered the eucharist a more exclusive rite than baptism--the baptized children, for example, have not automatically been admitted to the table. On the other hand the eucharist has at times been designated "open"--in fact, as an ordinance of conversion and inclusion, quite apart from baptism and confirmation. We have thus perpetuated among United Methodists conflicting notions regarding the nature of the eucharist.

The BEM document can help us at this point. It places the eucharist clearly within the context of the believing community, but recommends at the same time that all baptized members of that community participate in the eucharist. United Methodists may rediscover here the continuity and consistency that exists between the sacraments and within the community that celebrates them and learn something essential regarding the responsibility and respectfulness with which we should administer the sacramental signs.

II. The Eucharist

Our sub-group wishes to make some observations regarding the document on Eucharist. For the most part, we agree with it. Bravo! For more than a decade we have already begun to incorporate this ecumenical eucharistic theology into our own liturgical literature, new liturgies, and worship.

We emphasize, as does the document, the theology of grace: God's grace goes before us and leads us; it justifies and sanctifies us by the work of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy

Spirit. Thus we understand the Eucharist in the full context of creation and salvation. We believe however, that more thought needs to be given to the roots (theological and historical) of ordained ministry in the leadership of the eucharistic community in the proclamation of its faith through the eucharistic prayer.

There are some points in the eucharistic section of BEM which we would wish to emphasize to United Methodists. First, the connection between Baptism and Eucharist shows that public invitation to Communion should be limited to those who have been baptized. (John Wesley's belief that Communion is a "converting ordinance" was held in a nation where all persons were presumably baptized as infants. But the sharing in Communion of baptized children should be encouraged.)

We also wish to suggest that changes are needed in our regular sacramental worship, so as to center the church's life on the Eucharist and draw from it new power for mission. Further, other churches have long recognized the relationship between the eschatological nature of the Eucharist and the struggle for social justice. The importance of the Eucharist, in both its eschatological and anamnetic aspects, for the traditional Methodist concern for social justice, should be explored and taught.

Finally, there are some things we would say to ourselves as United Methodists after this discussion of BEM. While "inter-communion" is a goal devoutly sought by some churches, it is already enjoyed in principal by us in relation to many other denominations. Why do we not, therefore, make use of that opportunity for which others long? By joining frequently in common Eucharist, we can strengthen bonds for common mission and service, and smooth the way toward closer unity in church life.

Second, since Scripture reading and preaching are always conjoined with the eucharistic celebration, we warmly recommend the regular use of the ecumenical Lectionary.

Third, if "connexionalism" is intrinsic to the Methodist concept of the Church, persistent effort should be made to establish that connexion as widely as possible through means of mutual recognition and eucharistic unity with other church bodies.

Finally, our churches should move in the instruction of clergy and laity as to the faith and practice of the Eucharist in order that weekly celebrations might become the norm rather than the exception.

III. Ministry

We experience as others have observed, that while there is some measure of agreement in the areas of baptism and eucharist, the discussion of ministry and ordination continues to present more questions and differences than agreements, both within and among the churches. In the face of differences, we find ideas which are helpful and instructive.

First we would suggest several areas where we think United Methodism and the Wesleyan Tradition have insights to bring to the Faith and Order discussion.

Our form of episcopacy has the capacity to offer significant and effective leadership in evangelism and mission, as well as giving support to courageous ministries of love and justice.

Second, itinerancy has been basic and helpful in the deployment of ministers; we must share the strengths which we believe it still offers.

United Methodists have significant and authentic practices of ministry by elders (presbyters) in non-parish settings. We must continue to explore appropriate locations for elders and deacons in society as well as in local congregations.

Finally, the ordination of women has given new strength to ordained ministry in the United Methodist Church. We must continue to affirm the effectiveness and authenticity of women's ordination and commend it to others.

We shift now to identify points at which the BEM document must be seriously considered by the United Methodist Church, even in opposition to current understanding and practices.

First, United Methodists have a continuing intellectual rejection of episcopacy as a "third order," even though it seems to exist in the Church de facto. How can we best consider the

three-fold ministry of deacon, presbyter, and bishop so clearly commended by BEM?

Second, though United Methodism has bishops, it has not usually considered episcopal succession of great importance. How do we understand ourselves in the "spirit of apostolic ministry?" Do we agree that succession needs to be seen with the apostolicity of the Church as a whole?

Can we affirm the "sign" of reconciliation suggested in the BEM document, assuming reconciliation of ministries might be made by abjuration, giving a commissioning to a wider, fuller context for ministry?

Finally, much United Methodist theology of ministry has come out of our polity. How can we best understand and receive insights of his document not compatible with or growing out of our present polity?

We move finally to ask what this working group might say to the United Methodist Church.

First, as we understand the inseparability of baptism, eucharist, and ministry, and the importance of confident understanding for effective mission and service, we commend the study of BEM to seminary faculties and students, bishops and pastors. We also commend considering the inclusion of the document as a source for response to the ordination questions in the Board of Ordained Ministry, and in church-wide literature.

Second, the epiklesis in the ordinal prayer is affirmed by BEM. It is included in the 1980 ordinal. We encourage study, use, and evaluation of the 1980 ordinal by bishops, ordinancs and Board of Ministry.

Although the United Methodist tradition is not entirely consistent, the 1980 ordinal strongly recommends that ordination be in the context of the eucharist; we affirm this practice.

Fourth, a discussion of a permanent deacon has arisen out of the BEM and COCU documents, along with a "ministry of bishop." We commend this discussion of a distinctive ministry of deacon and bishop to our own study of ministry.

The uneasiness of many clergy may stem in part from a loss of identity. How can we recover a stronger identity and a wider catholicity in our common understanding of the role of the ordained?

Finally, we commend to seminaries, to bishops, clergy and laity, the urgency for finding a reconciliation among ministries, always combined with a passion for mission and effective addressing of the issues of justice and peace.

* *

WESLEY STUDIES GROUP MINUTES AVAILABLE

The minutes of the Wesley Studies Working Group of the 1982 Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies have been compiled and printed. The minutes have been mailed to all members of the Wesley Studies Working Group. Other copies are available to members of other working groups of the Institute by writing to Oxford Notes, 6005 Bishop Boulevard, Dallas, Texas 75275.

Persons who are not members of the Institute who wish to receive the OXFORDnotes should fill out and send in the following form:

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

_____

Enclose $15 Associate Member fee and return to:

Prof. M. Douglas Meeks
475 E. Lockwood
St. Louis, MO 63119 USA

OXFORDnotes
6005 Bishop Boulevard
Dallas, Texas 75275

organizations

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF RELIGION

The annual meeting of the Academy, December 8-10, 1984, will include a Working Group on Wesleyan Studies. Papers on historical and theological topics are invited, especially in the following categories: (1) the early development of Wesleyan traditions in America, relating to the 1984 bicentennial theme; and (2) the role of authority in Wesley's understanding of theological method and the Christian life. Proposals should be sent to Richard Heitzenrater, Perkins, SMU, Dallas, TX 75275.

WORLD METHODIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A Regional Conference of the WMHS will be held August 6-10, 1984, at Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY. For more information, write to Dr. Melvin E. Dieter, program chairman, at Wilmore, KY 40390.

OXFORDnotes

OXFORDnotes is the Newsletter of the Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies, published at 6005 Bishop Boulevard, Dallas, TX 75275.