"So completely stripped of all power"? Ecclesial Effectiveness and Missional Vitality amongst the Wesleyan Protestant Methodists.

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Introduction

The Wesleyan Protestant Methodists (hereafter 'WPMs') arose out of the disruption which became know as the 'Leeds Organ Case' in 1827. Constituted as a separate connexion in 1828, they lasted only eight years until their amalgamation with the Wesleyan Methodist Association in 1836, when they numbered less than 4000 members. Their interest for Methodist historians has laid largely in the questions the dispute posed for the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion: Firstly with regard to the constitutionality of its Conference's actions in the Leeds dispute[1], secondly with what the views of the protagonists indicated about the Wesleyan Methodist understanding of the role of the pastoral office at that time[2] and thirdly (and related to the first two areas of interest) in the attitudes towards Jabez Bunting's leadership of Wesleyan Methodism during this, one of a number of divisions in the connexion during the first half of the nineteenth century in which his perceived autocratic control was a factor.[3] In explorations of these concerns the Protestant Methodists have been usually viewed through a Wesleyan Methodist prism, leading to little engagement with the ecclesiastical structures that resulted in their short independent existence other than as an aberration. In most studies of the case, in the

[1] Gregory, Benjamin. *Side Lights on the Conflicts of Methodism During the Second Quarter of the Nineteenth Century, 1827-1852, Taken Chiefly from the Notes of the Rev. Joseph Fowler of the Debates in the Wesleyan Conference*. London: Cassell, 1899, 48-100.
[2] Bowmer, John C. *Pastor and People: A Study of Church and Ministry in Wesleyan Methodism from the Death of John Wesley (1791) to the Death of Jabez Bunting (1858).* London: Epworth Press, 1975, 103-117.
[3] Kent, John. *Jabez Bunting, the Last Wesleyan. a Study in the Methodist Ministry After the Death of John Wesley.* Epworth Press: London, 1955, 38-50.

words of Bowmer, 'it does not fall to our lot to trace the fortunes of the dissentients as the organised themselves as 'The Protestant Methodists'.[4]

This paper endeavours to look at the WPMs not primarily as a deviation from their parent body or as simply one part of the problematic legacy of Jabez Bunting but as an ecclesiological expression of Methodism. The questions it poses relate not to its effects on the parent body but rather to the missional and ecclesiological effectiveness of 'one of the most completely non-ministerial systems of government which could possibly be devised.[5]'

The Leeds Organ Case

The primary focus of this paper is on the WPMs as an ecclesiological grouping rather than the circumstances which led to their emergence: however, the form and ethos of the grouping cannot be understood without a brief outline of the dispute that gave them birth.

Brunswick Wesleyan Chapel, Leeds was opened on 9 September 1825. With accommodation variously estimated at from 2,000 to 3,000, it was claimed at the time of opening to be the largest in the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion. Some of the trustees soon judged that due to the size of the chapel congregational singing needed instrumental support and wished to install an organ. Before 1820 the Wesleyan Conference had set its face against the installation of organs in the chapels of the connexion, making declarations to that effect in 1805, 1808 and 1815.[6] This prohibition was softened somewhat in 1820, with important caveats:

> We think that in some of the larger chapels, where some instrumental music may be deemed expedient in order to guide the congregational singing, organs may be allowed by special consent of the Conference; but every application for such consent shall be

[4]Bowmer, *Pastor and People,* 115.
[5] Kent, *Jabez Bunting,* 49.
[6] Hughes, John T. "The Story of The Leeds " Non-Cons" in *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* vol. xxxv, 1965, 81. The WPMs were known locally as Non – Cons (i.e. Non-Conformists) when they first emerged in Leeds.

> first made at the District Meeting; and **if it obtain their sanction**, [emphasis mine] shall be then referred to a Committee at the Conference, who shall report their opinion as to the propriety of acceding to the request**,** and also as to the restrictions with which the permission to erect an organ ought, in that particular case, to be accompanied.[7]

In 1826 the Leeds societies were divided into East and West circuits with Brunswick chapel in the Leeds East circuit. At a Leaders' meeting on 13 October of that year the Leaders' Meeting adopted resolutions against the erection of an organ. Despite this, and with growing opposition from local preachers, the trustees voted at their next meeting narrowly by a vote of eight to six to proceed with the organ scheme. A Special Leaders' Meeting held in November by a vote of sixty to one adopted the resolution:

> That it was not desirable to place an organ in the chapel. It would deprive the Society of that simplicity of worship which had been so long and so signally owned of God.

The District Meeting then consider the application, and after careful scrutiny decided by thirteen votes to seven that 'it was not desirable to grant the required permission to place an organ in Brunswick Chapel.'

Benjamin Gregory, whose account of the whole affair is amongst the most comprehensive and balanced, wrote that after the Leaders' Meeting decision '... four of the Brunswick Trustees were not in the mood of "believers waiting", but determined to carry their point, despite the District Meeting, and the plain English of the Organ-Law.'[8] They thus sent their application to the 1827 Wesleyan Conference, meeting in Manchester under the presidency of John Stephens. With Stephens in support the conference, seeming in contravention of its own resolution of seven years previous, overturned the District Meeting's decision and gave the trustees

[7] Wesleyan Methodist Church. *Minutes of Several Conversations Held at the ... Yearly Conference of the People Called Methodists*. London: Wesleyan Conference Office, vol. v, 1825, 145.
[8] Gregory, *Side Lights, 52.*

permission to install the organ. Following the conference various attempts were made to appeal to the trustees not to proceed with the installation and to meet with the local preachers and leaders presided over by the incoming Superintendent Edward Grindrod but he refused to interfere in a matter on which the Conference had given judgement on. Schism became inevitable once a local preacher Matthew Johnson began calling together the preachers of the two Leeds circuits in meetings 'as contrary to the Methodist law as was the application to the Conference by the Brunswick trustees.'[9]

'A Distinct Christian Community'

The expulsion of Johnson and James Sigston from the society following a Special District Meeting attended by Jabez Bunting in a previously unknown capacity as 'Official Advisor to the President' led to the loss of around one thousand members and after an unsuccessful appeal to the following year's Conference under the presidency of Jabez Bunting, a meeting was held at a former Baptist meeting house Stone Chapel on 27 August 1828 where the following resolution was passed unanimously:

> That the decision of the Conference should be solemnly PROTESTED against; and as the individuals concerned have now no prospect of redress for past injuries, nor any security against their repetition from that body, that they form themselves into a distinct Christian Community - retaining the Doctrines and Form of Worship, and influenced by the motives of the original Founder of Methodism, the Rev. John Wesley, under the denomination of the 'Wesleyan Protestant Methodists' [10]

[9] Ibid.55.

[10] Wesleyan Protestant Methodists. *The Rules of the Societies of the Wesleyan Protestant Methodists: First Established in Leeds, August 27th, 1828*. Leeds: Printed by A. Pickard, 1829, 4.

This founding resolution is the measure against which the resulting denomination's endeavours will be gauged in this paper and it contains several important ecclesiological emphases.

Firstly, the desire for security against repetition of 'past injuries' shaped the subsequent polity of the WPMs with regard to leadership since the perception of those injuries was that they had been inflicted upon lay leaders and preachers by ordained Wesleyan itinerants, whether the Superintendent, the Special District Meeting or the Conference. There was thus to be no place for ordination in the new body and (initially at least) no itineracy.

Secondly, whilst an all-embracing definition of 'the motives of the original Founder of Methodism' will not be attempted here it must surely include an evangelistic component in fidelity to Wesley's description of the early aim of him and Charles 'to convince those who would hear what true Christianity was, and to persuade them to embrace it.'[11] Thus with regard to Wesley's evangelistic motives, this begs the question with regard to their anti-clericalism as to whether the circumstances of their emergence foster a missional vitality arising from the greater power and influence vested in local lay leadership, rather than having as a primary purpose of their discipline, as Kent has argued, simply to 'destroy the power of the Wesleyan ministry'[12] Did WPM localist polity enabled effective mechanisms for the establishment of new congregations or was the new grouping "so completely stripped of all power" by its structures, in the words of Wesleyan critic Rev Daniel Issacs[13], that any possibility of connexional coherence and prospect of a resulting missional strategy were lost.

[11] Wesley, John. 'A plain account of the people called Methodists' in The *Works of the Rev. John Wesley Vol. viii*. London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1872 .249.
[12] Kent, *Jabez Bunting,* 47.
[13] See below.

Primary Sources

The key primary source for the development of the WPMs following the Leeds organ case is the Wesleyan Protestant Methodist Magazine (hereafter '*Magazine'*) which was published in between 1829 and 1833 in Leeds and then from 1834 to 1835 in London. A full run of the magazines is held in the UK in the Wesley Historical Society (WHS) Library, Oxford[14] and in the USA by Duke Divinity School Library.[15] A handful of local records are extant, most notably in the collection of the WHS Yorkshire Branch in the University of Huddersfield which includes circuit plans from the Leeds,[16] Barnsley,[17]and Sheffield[18] circuits. For this paper the *Magazine* will be the primary source, containing as it does the only extant record of the development of thinking at a connexional level within the WPMs. Brief reference will also be made to the critique of Daniel Isaac (1788-1834) of the office of missionary as it developed within the WPMs. Isaac was appointed to the Leeds Wesleyan circuit in 1829 in the aftermath of the controversy over the Brunswick organ, which led to him publishing a detailed series of critiques of the WPMs in three 'Letters' in 1830, the first of which offered a critique of the WPMs emerging polity. [19]

The Polity of the WPMs[20]

The Local Church

The ruling body of each local congregation was the Leaders' Meeting which was composed of elders, preachers, leaders, society and poor stewards, and trustees. Local leadership between

[14] No cat. nos. allocated.
[15] DDSL cat. no. BX8278.L44 W475 v1-6.
[16] Cat. nos. WHS 62,63,1693.
[17] Cat. nos. WHS 1687, 1688, 257.
[18] Cat. no. WHS 1689.
[19] Isaac, Daniel *The Rules of the Protestant Methodists, brought to the test of Holy Scripture: in a letter addressed to the private members of that community*. Leeds: Henry Spink, 1830.
[20] Hughes, John T. "The Story of The Leeds " Non-Cons" in *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* vol. xxxix, 1973, 74-76 provides a clear and helpful summary of the WPMs polity to which I am heavily indebted for this section.

Leaders meetings lay in the hands of Elders, who were elected for one year at the December Circuit Quarterly Meeting and were eligible for immediate re-election up to a maximum of three years after which they had to stand down for at least a year. The Leeds circuit's example of seven elders being 'a proper number'[21] was included in the Rules. Elders had to be preachers and had functions both at local society and circuit level. Locally, they renewed the tickets at the quarterly visitation of the classes and dealt with personal disputes among the members of society. In the circuit they were responsible for the preachers' plans and the fulfilment of appointments.

Also elected by the Circuit Quarterly Meeting were Elder-Leaders. These were class-leaders who were not preachers and were responsible for general discipline in their classes, gave advice to the elders, and invited their assistance if required. Where there was no elected elder, the elder-leaders were authorized to take charge, and preside at meetings. They assisted in the distribution of the bread and wine at the Lord's Supper. Each local church was also to have, 'if practicable' two Society Stewards, to be elected by the Leaders Meeting.[22]

The Circuit

The Circuit Quarterly Meeting was composed of all the preachers[23] belonging to the circuit, with the stewards, leaders, and trustees. It met in the months of March, June, September and December. The meeting was empowered to hear any appeals against decisions of the subordinate jurisdictions at local congregational level as well as any matters relating to improper appropriation of funds in the circuit. Inquiry had to be made into the spiritual state of the societies.

[21] Wesleyan Protestant Methodists, *Rules,* 12.
[22] Ibid.
[23] However, only the preachers on full plan were allowed to vote.

From amongst the elders of the local societies the Circuit Quarterly Meeting appointed a Presiding Elder who was chairman of the Quarterly, Preachers' and Leaders' Meetings. Before any action in important matters, such as discipline, could be initiated, application had to be made to the Presiding Elder, who made all arrangements for the Leaders' Meeting to hear the case, if a hearing became necessary. Where there was no Leaders' Meeting, he could, at the request of the leader, attend the accused person's class, thereby constituting it a valid tribunal. There was a right of appeal to the Circuit Quarterly Meeting, whose decision was final. It seems to have been the case, then, that the key role of leadership in the local society amongst the WPMs was that of the Presiding Elder.

The Connexion

Although the first edition of the Rules refers in passing to the holding of the Yearly Meeting[24] and the first was held in September 1829, in effect during the WPMs first two years of existence no connexional structure was officially acknowledged at all. Regulations for the Yearly Meeting's composition were not codified until the adoption of revised rules at the second Yearly Meeting in September 1830.

The presiding elders were ex-officio members of the Yearly Meeting; one preacher from each circuit was elected by the Preachers' Meeting, and one member, not a local preacher, by each Circuit Quarterly Meeting. Circuits exceeding 1000 members could appoint two additional preachers and two other persons by the same rule.

As has already been noted, the polity of the WPMs had no place for ordination although trans-local ministries did develop from 1830 as will be outlined below.

[24] Wesleyan Protestant Methodists, *Rules,* 11, 21.

Dolan[25] has explored the reasons why the emergence of the WPMs didn't result in a merger with already existing Independent Methodist congregations anywhere but in a few places. He concludes that rather than responding with a purely congregational polity in response to perceived interference in local chapel affairs the Protestant Methodists 'effectively made each circuit an independent entity and the primary unit of the denomination…the aim being to replace Wesleyan centralised government with a democratic form of government at a local level.'[26] If then circuits were the primary unit of the denomination their role in the Wesleys' motive of convincing those 'who would hear what true Christianity was', and to persuading them to embrace it needs further scrutiny.

In the beginning there was Leeds. Following the disruption, a flurry of pamphlets followed on either side of the case and by the event of the first Yearly Meeting in September 1829 six more circuits were confirmed in the reporting of membership figures. Wesleyans at Barnsley, Preston, York and Newark sought the support of WPMs within a couple of months of the fissure at Leeds and local preachers were sent to advise them. By the beginning of 1829 congregations had been set up in all four towns[27] and a similar request for support led to a society emerging at Wallsend on Tyneside in July 1829.[28] Following the rejection of a circuit address to the Wesleyan Conference of 1828 in support of the Leeds Organ complainants resentment in the London South circuit finally resulted in a breach with the Wesleyan connexion in August 1829[29]: this appears to be the only early WPM circuit formed without direct contact with any Leeds preachers first.

[25] Dolan, John. *The Independent Methodists: A History*. Cambridge: James Clarke, 2005, 83-86.
[26] Ibid 85.
[27] Wesleyan Protestant Methodists. *The Wesleyan Protestant Methodist Magazine* vol. I, Leeds, 1829. 28-29.
[28] Ibid. 382.
[29] ibid. 311-313.

The first membership figures for the WPM recorded a total of 2480 with 1553 of these being in Leeds with the proviso that due to the speed of events still developing in London 'it would be impossible to state the number in the Metropolis with accuracy'[30] Whilst the first year of existence of the WPMs had been devoted to securing dissident Wesleyans to the new body one of the acts of the assembled societies was to widen their focus. It was resolved at the 1829 Yearly Meeting that 'the time has now arrived when we should employ missionaries in promoting the work of God amongst us.'

The (brief) Missionary Era

For the selection of such people a Missionary Committee was appointed, was made up of the elders of the Leeds circuit along with at least twice as many more members elected by the Yearly Meeting. If expenses were incurred, missionaries could be appointed only on application from the Circuit or Leaders' Meeting. Missionaries who were so paid were to become the officers to be employed by the WPM connexionally, receiving salaries from the general treasurer of the Missionary Committee. Only preachers fully-accredited on the plan and approved by the Local Preachers' and Circuit Quarterly Meetings could be so employed. They had the status of elder in the circuits to which they were appointed, but although they shared in the duties and privileges, as theirs was not a settled ministry they were not eligible for the office of presiding elder, so could not preside at meetings. Their work was to be under the strict direction of the local elders. Up to three missionaries were to be appointed by the Missionary Committee to attend the Yearly Meeting.

The lack of any mention of individual missionaries in the *Magazine* during 1829-30 and the need for the 1830 Yearly Meeting to state that it 'most fully concurs with the resolution adopted at the general meeting of last year… and cordially recommends the subject to the attentive

[30] ibid. 348.

consideration of the respective quarterly meetings, throughout our connexion'[31] suggests that little if any progress had been made with the missionary scheme. In May 1830 meetings were held in support of Home Missions in Sheffield[32] and Leeds[33] and this practice was also commended to circuits by the 1830 Yearly Meeting.[34]

The account of the proceedings at Leeds in the *Magazine* gives an insight into the missionary thinking of early WPMs. James Sigston stated that in supporting Home Missions the WPMs 'mean the employment of persons whose business it shall be to declare the great truths of divine revelation… and that such persons must be set apart to the great work of spreading abroad the Saviour's name; to persuade them to come and be saved by gospel grace.' George Turton of Sheffield 'thought that it would not be too much to anticipate, that, before… many years instead of there being here and there a Wesleyan Protestant Methodist Society there will be one found in every principal town in the kingdom'[35] Turton commended the work of two preachers currently advising a group in Birmingham and argued that the planting of such new churches required assistance as 'in many cases there might not be more than two or three preachers in one place.' Thus, the vision for missionary work seems to have been one both of seeking the conversion to Christian faith of individuals and the provision of advice and practical help to those wishing to establish a WPM presence in previously uncharted areas. These purposes can, of course, have synergy and to gather converts into newly established societies has a clear Wesleyan pedigree but, in a climate where it was necessary for the WPMs to differentiate themselves not only from their parent body but from the New Connexion, Independent Methodists and the rapidly growing Primitive Methodists one suspects that evangelist and connexional polemicist were not necessarily overlapping skill-sets in a small connexion that

[31] Wesleyan Protestant Methodists. *The Wesleyan Protestant Methodist Magazine* vol. II, Leeds, 1830, 313.
[32] Ibid. 189.
[33] Ibid. 221.
[34] Ibid. 341.
[35] Ibid. 222.

lacked revivalist roots. Kent alleged that 'the task of the Missionary was only too often to do propaganda work for the reformers' cause in the Local Wesleyan Societies'[36] but since the identity of individual missionaries remains unknown it is hard to either sustain or refute this case. The proposal was in any case controversial and so slow to come to fruition as the be ultimately still-born. The address to the Yearly Meeting of 1831 reported of the missionary proposal 'we have not been able, until lately, to carry it into effect.'[37] The reasons for this were at least two-fold.

Firstly, the proposal, far from enabling growth, had led to decline. Formed in October 1829, the Sheffield WPM circuit had grown to be one of the largest in the connexion, behind only Leeds and Barnsley in size and importance. Much of this growth was provided by the merger, two months after the formation of the cause, with the Independent Methodists in Sheffield[38] under the leadership of George Turton. The 1830 Yearly Meeting reported a membership of 480 in the Sheffield circuit, but this fell to 196 the following year due to the former IMs opposition to the idea of missionaries being a paid ministry.[39] Thus following an increase of 1487 members between the Yearly Meetings of 1829 and 1830, the 1831 Meeting heard of a fall of 387 members, largely due to the missionary proposal.

The second stumbling block to the appointment of missionaries was money. Having previously failed to put in place any connexional system to fund the proposal the entreaty to support the work through the holding of missionary meetings does not seem to have been widely supported if the paucity of reports in the *Magazine* is anything to go by and so the 1831 Yearly Meeting returned to the subject with a set of new proposals. From now on the work of 'Home

[36] Kent, *Jabez Bunting,* 49.
[37] Wesleyan Protestant Methodists. *The Wesleyan Protestant Methodist Magazine* vol. III, Leeds, 1831, 319.
[38] Dolan, *The Independent Methodists,* 86. A similar union occurred at Newcastle: Wesleyan Protestant Methodists. *Magazine* vol. II, 1830, 127.
[39] Wesleyan Protestant Methodists. *Magazine* vol. III, 318.

missionaries' as they were now to be designated would be supported not only by missionary meeting collections but by 'class and monies' this being 'the ancient Methodistical system of obtaining funds for the extension of the gospel adopted by the venerable founder of Methodism.'[40] Another significant change proposed was the appointment of the stations of the missionaries by the Yearly Meeting.

In addition, one of Daniel Issacs's charges against the emerging polity of the WPMs was that it subjugated the role of missionary to the local presiding elder thus leaving them "So completely stripped of all power". Highlighting the fact that in introducing a layer of ministry on top of the purely local lay leadership in the advent of missionaries, Isaac compared the limited function of WPM missionaries to the role of missionaries in the New Testament by citing instances, primarily from Acts and the Pauline letters, of discipline, power and control unavailable to them.[41] Whilst Isaac was writing in defence of the Wesleyan itineracy he represented, the possibility that WPM missionaries were frustrated by their comparative lack of power and status within the local congregation cannot be ruled out.

Itinerancy

Having proposed a system for financing and stationing home missionaries, the WPMs seemingly then forgot about them altogether. The seeds of this development are found in another resolution passed at the 1831 Yearly Meeting commending a move towards presiding elders 'exclusively devoted to the work of the ministry' alongside the home missionary whose role it was to 'endeavour to open new work.' District meetings were charged with consideration, before the next Yearly Meeting, of the idea that 'upon this plan, our societies

[40] Wesleyan Protestant Methodists. *Magazine* vol. III, 315.
[41] Isaac, *The Rules of the Protestant Methodists…*, 13-14.

would enjoy the advantage of an efficient pastoral charge, and a zealous local presbytery, as well as an effective system of itinerancy.' [42]

This development provoked debate in the magazine. In two-part *A Letter to The Wesleyan Protestant Methodists on the Employment of A Stipendary Ministry*[43] it was contended by the anonymous writer that indeed 'Protestant Methodism stands in need of a regular ministry, exclusively devoted to the work of the sanctuary.'[44] The writer was at pains to stress, though, that this was not a hankering after the Wesleyan pastoral office:

> It is not suggested that you should set apart funds or burden yourselves with a compulsory maintenance of ministers. It is only required that, where a church or society, feeling its need of pastoral care, shall be anxious to receive a minister, and to maintain him, your institutions shall be sufficiently open and liberal to allow of such an arrangement. The question of expense then rests with the local church or society, and with the minister.[45]

Two further articles in the following year's magazine *Thoughts on Wesleyan Protestant Methodism*[46] by 'A Friend of Truth and Liberty' argued that Wesleyan itinerancy would 'sooner or later become ruinous' since [it] 'is the great source of patronage in their appointments and excites that lust of power with resides in the hearts of all its members.'[47] Nevertheless the writer too contended for an optional full-time ministry since ' In the present state of things your local ministry will not be so acceptable in every case as that of men devoted

[42] Wesleyan Protestant Methodists. *Magazine* vol. III, 317.
[43] Wesleyan Protestant Methodists. *Magazine* vol. III, 274, 300-307.
[44] Ibid. 265.
[45] Ibid. 302.
[46] Wesleyan Protestant Methodists. *The Wesleyan Protestant Methodist Magazine* vol. IV, Leeds, 1832, 167-170, 203-206.
[47] Ibid. 169.

solely to the work.'[48] Even opponents of the Wesleyan pastoral office Isaac represented were now recognising that his critique of WPM polity had merit.

It was reported in the August 1832 edition of the *Magazine* that the Leeds Quarterly Meeting assembled on 25 June had passed resolutions in support of an 'Itinerant and Pastoral Ministry', with at least one itinerant preacher in every circuit and in larger circuits where two or three proved necessary at least one should be devoted to visiting and catechising children. [49]

The 1832 Yearly Meeting in Leeds adopted the proposal for an itinerant ministry[50] but in declaring that 'It be recommended to those circuits in which there is now no itinerant preacher, to make such arrangements as will enable them to employ one as speedily as possible [and] That the class and ticket money in all our societies shall be appropriated to the support of the said ministry' the meeting removed at a stroke the difference between missionaries and itinerant ministers and diverted the proposed funding scheme for missionaries into new itinerant ministers scheme, thus abandoning the vision of the previous years' meeting of a presiding elder and home missionary in each circuit. No mention of the home missionary scheme is ever found again in the magazine.

Emphasising the connexional nature of the stationing process for the new scheme the stations for the newly constituted itinerants were listed for the first time in 1833[51]. All but the two most recently established stations, Birmingham and Cornwall, are listed, although both London and York are listed as 'vacant for the present' and for Bristol there is 'one to be sent'. It is impossible to know now whether those men listed were originally missionaries on their stations: the only one whose story is known in any great detail is John Woolstenholme whose

[48] Ibid. 204.
[49] Wesleyan Protestant Methodists. *Magazine* vol. IV, 239-240.
[50] Ibid. 298.
[51] Wesleyan Protestant Methodists. *The Wesleyan Protestant Methodist Magazine* vol. V, Leeds, 1833, 355.

ministry in the Wesleyan Methodist Association (WMA)[52] was outlined in a biography written by James Sigston in 1846[53]. Woolstenholme was recommended by the quarterly meeting of the Manchester WPM circuit for the itinerant ministry in September 1833[54] having resided there and been a part-time preacher for a number of years and was sent back to the circuit as an itinerant at the 1833 Yearly Meeting. It seems likely that if there were any missionaries already serving in circuits they may have been transferred in a similar way to the Itinerancy.

Conclusion: From Missionaries to Maintenance.

In 1836 the Wesleyan Protestant Methodists amalgamated with the WMA[55] which had arisen in Manchester as a result of the 'Warrenite' controversy of 1834-35 over the establishment of a Wesleyan Methodist 'theological institution' under the presidency of Jabez Bunting. James Sigston was President of the WMA in 1839 and George Turton became one of the Association's leading lights, serving on its Connexional Committee for fourteen years, [56] his dream of a Wesleyan Protestant Methodist Society 'in every principal town in the kingdom' now forgotten. as was the WPMs unique polity which did not survive the merger. Whilst with the benefit of hindsight it can be seen that the small size and scattered nature of the WPMs made likely its amalgamation with other dissident Wesleyans sooner or later, the question remains as to whether a different approach to trans-local ministry would have brought about its survival for longer.

The difficulty with sustaining the WPM cause lay with the tension between the greater power and influence vested in local lay leadership and the need to have some wider schemes for the

[52] See below.
[53] Sigston, J. *A Brief Memoir or Mr J Woolstenholme, Wesleyan Methodist Association Minister,* London: WMA Book Room, 1846.
[54] Ibid. 15-16.
[55] Gregory, *Side Lights,*133-187.
[56] http://www.wesleyhistoricalsociety.org.uk/dmbi/index.php?do=app.entry&id=3717.

advancement of new causes and the full-time leadership of existing ones once the initial controversy over perceived Wesleyan heavy-handedness had died down. With the limited financial resources available to the WPMs and the pressure to raise the status of local leadership higher than a part-time lay Presiding Elder could endue it with, once a scheme had been found through the collection of class and monies which would sustain a limited measure of full time paid ministry a choice inevitably had to be made between a focus on full time *pastoral* itineracy and an *evangelistic* missionary (or, to be provocative, in modern parlance between maintenance and mission). The inward-focussed minister 'devoted entirely to the sanctuary' and Sigston's 'persons whose business it shall be to declare the great truths of divine revelation…set apart to the great work of spreading abroad the Saviour's name' could not both be sustained. It would be wrong to suggest that this resulted in no evangelistic endeavour at all: William Ince (1802-1864), was received on trial in 1834 and sent to Burnley where a revival under his ministry resulted in a circuit of 453 members and the need for two extra itinerants to be stationed the following year.[57] Whilst it is intriguing to speculate whether the stationing of three men was a belated return to the earlier idea of a pastor/evangelist team ministry, Burnley was to be the only new circuit begun amongst the WPAs after 1833. Too small to sustain the model of team ministry suggested by the Yearly Meeting in 1831 which might have sustained ecclesiological effectiveness and missional vitality, the Wesleyan Protestant Methodists arguably ultimately achieved neither.

[57] Wesleyan Protestant Methodists. *The Wesleyan Protestant Methodist Magazine* vol. VII, London, 1835, 156.