The Wesleyan Methodist Conference held in Liverpool in 1912 was described by one wit as the “Jackson Conference” because of the honors paid there to the Rev. George Jackson (1864–1945). Jackson, who had established his reputation as the creator of the Edinburgh Central Hall in the 1890s, had been working in Canada since 1906, first as minister of Sherbourne Street Church, Toronto, and then as Professor of English Bible at Victoria University. At the Liverpool Conference of 1912 Jackson was elected to the Legal Hundred and designated Professor of Homiletics and Pastoral Theology at Didsbury College, Manchester. He also delivered the Fernley Lecture, published as *The Preacher and the Modern Mind* (1912). The juxtaposition of the appointment to Didsbury and the Fernley Lecture brought Jackson fame of a different kind, as he became the center of what has been described as “the chief theological controversy of the 20th century in British Methodism.” The purpose of this article is to sketch the Jackson controversy and to relate it to the use of the “Wesleyan Standard” in 19th and 20th century British Methodism. This is an initial exploration of a large subject, so the treatment will, of necessity, be brief and selective. It is hoped, however, that it will open up a fruitful area of debate about the usefulness or otherwise of Wesley as a theological resource.

*The Preacher and the Modern Mind* was an appeal for passionate, effective, biblical and doctrinal preaching, addressed by an experienced pulpit orator and brilliant communicator “especially to the young preacher, who feels, and is himself seeking to minister to, the necessities of the times.” What made the work controversial was its frank acceptance of the conclusions of mainstream biblical criticism, exemplified for Jackson in Hastings’ *Dictionary of the Bible*. Jackson saw higher criticism as an essential component of the “modern mind,” forming an unavoidable part of the context for contemporary preaching and offering an opportunity for an apologetic freed

2 Jackson, *George Jackson*, chs. 4, 6, 7.
5 Jackson, *PMM*, 91.
from the necessity of defending unedifying stories and incredible miracles. Although committed to a high Christology and to the broad historicity of the New Testament, Jackson was prepared to see "unlawful excrescences" in the miracle stories and to make belief in the Virgin Birth optional. He took a much freer line with the Old Testament, dismissing many of the narratives as "symbolical history" and rejecting the Genesis account of human origins. He called for "the acknowledgement of a much narrower area of certainty than was claimed by the orthodoxy of the past, and for a corresponding simplification of our creed."6

George Jackson was well aware that his beliefs did not command universal assent. He was no stranger to controversy, having engaged in debate with the ultra-conservatives in Toronto,7 and one of the stated aims of The Preacher and the Modern Mind was to draw attention to the widening gulf between the assumptions of the younger generation of preachers and those of the majority of church members.8 It seems unlikely, however, that Jackson was prepared for the storm of opposition that broke out within Wesleyan Methodism as the Connexion came to grips with his Fernley Lecture.

The reception of higher criticism within the British churches has been much studied, and the general conclusion has been that the crucial period of debate stretched from the early 1880s to the early 1890s: from the publication of William Robertson Smith's The Old Testament in the Jewish Church (1881) and The Prophets of Israel (1882), through the debate over Lux Mundi (1889), to the first edition of S. R. Driver's Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament, which appeared in 1891, marking the acceptance of the Graf-Wellhausen hypothesis by a scholar who combined academic respectability with Christian orthodoxy.9 Within Wesleyan Methodism, a cautious endorsement of critical scholarship was offered by W. T. Davison (1846–1935), who held a succession of teaching posts at Richmond and Handsworth between 1881 and 1920. Davison kept the readers of the London Quarterly Review abreast of the latest theories through the 1890s and 1900s, advocating openness to the principle of free enquiry, but opposing, on scholarly grounds, the "advanced" theories of Kuenen, Wellhausen and the Encyclopaedia Biblica.10

The point needs to be made, however, that tacit acceptance of the new ideas by a rising generation of scholars did not indicate the approval of majority opinion in the churches. Many people, both lay and ordained, remained hostile to, or simply unaware of, the critical theories. Even Davison's cautious

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6 Jackson, PMM, 143, 172, 147, 23.
7 Jackson, George Jackson, 30–2.
8 Jackson, PMM, 13.
9 See, for example, W. B. Glover, Evangelical Nonconformists and Higher Criticism in the Nineteenth Century (London, 1954).
welcome of higher criticism went much further than many within Wesleyan Methodism were prepared to go, and opposition was such that he became the subject of a formal, though unsuccessful, heresy charge in the early 1890s.\textsuperscript{11} The formidable Benjamin Gregory (1820–1900), Connexional Editor until 1893, ensured that the new theories received an unsympathetic treatment in the pages of the \textit{Wesleyan Methodist Magazine}. F. J. Sharr's Fernley Lecture of 1891, \textit{The Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures}, held to a conservative position, while William Spiers, later a protagonist in the Jackson controversy, defended traditional views in \textit{The Age and Authorship of the Pentateuch}, and savaged the critics' "crude and ill-digested theories" in \textit{The Christ of the Higher Critics} (1897).\textsuperscript{12} Although by 1912 Davison was an influential Past President of the Conference, and Principal of Richmond College, and although Connexional publications were more open to new ideas, conservative forces were still very strong within Wesleyanism, and \textit{The Preacher and the Modern Mind} forced traditionalists to confront the views which were increasingly gaining ground among the younger preachers.

Opposition to Jackson began early in 1913, with pamphlets by W. Shepherd Allen and the Rev. George Armstrong Bennetts. An article in the \textit{British Weekly} in May, claiming inaccurately that Jackson had described Genesis 1–11 as "antiquarian lumber," raised the temperature of the debate, and an attempt was made at the subsequent Conference, held in Plymouth, to censure the Fernley Lecture. Although the conservatives suffered a humiliating defeat in both sessions of Conference, the opposition continued, taking shape at the end of the year as the "Wesley Bible Union" was formally constituted. Spiers was the W.B.U.'s first Secretary and Shepherd Allen its Vice-President, while G. A. Bennetts was a member of the committee.\textsuperscript{13}

The Jackson controversy was the catalyst for the formation of the W.B.U. and George Jackson himself remained the object of special loathing among Wesleyan fundamentalists in this period,\textsuperscript{14} but the conservative campaign against perceived Modernism within the Connexion soon acquired other targets. J. H. Moulton's Fernley Lecture of 1913, \textit{Religions and Religion}, was denounced by Bennetts as "an extremely dangerous book" because of its acceptance of higher criticism and evolution. A symposium edited by Davison, and published under the title \textit{The Chief Corner-Stone} (1914), warranted three condemnatory articles in the W.B.U.'s \textit{Journal} as Spiers, Bennetts and Harold Morton vied with one another for the most

\textsuperscript{11} Howard, "W. T. Davison," 31.
\textsuperscript{13} Bebbington, "Persecution of George Jackson," 422–3; \textit{Journal of the Wesley Bible Union} (Gloucester), January 1914, cover [hereafter \textit{JWBU}].
\textsuperscript{14} \textit{JWBU}, Oct. 1914, 119; June 1915, 139–42, 150–2.
opprobrious epithets to apply to it. The robust views of the Rev. Dr. Frank Ballard, Connexional Christian Evidence Missioner, and Fernley Lecturer in 1916, attracted equally robust criticism, and the W.B.U. also rebuked two Connexional institutions: Dr. John Scott Lidgett, in mild terms, for allowing Modernists access to the columns of the Methodist Times, and Samuel Chadwick, with venom born of disappointment, for refusing to rally Cliff College and Joyful News to the fundamentalist cause.  

The closing years of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century were marked by controversies over biblical criticism and Modernism in many British denominations. Much of the rhetoric provoked by The Preacher and the Modern Mind found echoes in the debates around the near-contemporary development of Liberal Evangelicalism in the Church of England, and parallels may be drawn between the W.B.U. and fundamentalist groups in other branches of the church.  

What helped to make the Jackson controversy distinctively Wesleyan, however, was the appeal to Wesley’s example and teaching, and particularly to the expression of that teaching in the authorized formularies of the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion. In its polemic and in the disciplinary charges which it sought to bring against Jackson, Ballard and others in the late 1910s, the W.B.U. constantly cited the Wesleyan doctrinal standards, described in the Model Deed as the first four volumes of Wesley’s published Sermons and his Notes on the New Testament.  

The campaign began with G. A. Bennetts’ John Wesley versus Modernism (1913), which accused Jackson of teaching “Modernist doctrines . . . in a very pronounced form,” and asserted that “it is impossible to express the direct opposite of these doctrines more positively and clearly than it is set forth in those [Wesleyan] Standards.” Bennetts gave a summary of Jackson’s views, followed by a collection of quotations from Wesley’s works, focusing particularly on the authority of Scripture and on the authority of Christ. This set the tone for a stream and pamphlets and articles, some reasonable, many vitriolic, but all making essentially the same case. In the opinion of the W.B.U., before the onset of Modernism, Wesleyan Methodism had possessed a doctrinal uniformity, safeguarded by “the Standards.” Theologically, these Standards supplied a definition of orthodoxy to which ministers and Local Preachers were morally bound, and which could be enforced by Connexional authority. Pastorally and evangelically, they ensured that the same message was preached in every Methodist pulpit across the Connexion. By endorsing the Fernley Lecture of 1912, it was claimed, the Conference had ushered in

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"Throttled by a dead hand"?

W.B.U., July 1914, 103 (Moulton); Oct. 1914, 122-39 (The Chief Corner-Stone); Apr. 1915, 85, 161-2 (Lidgett); Aug. 1915, 176; Sept. 1915, 211-15 (Chadwick); Sept. 1916, 200 (Ballard).


G. A. Bennetts, John Wesley versus Modernism (Gloucester, 1913), 3, 5, 6-19.
an era of doctrinal chaos, approved teaching which contradicted the Standards, and allowed preachers to set aside their solemn pledge of loyalty to the Wesleyan formularies. Modernist teaching in an evangelical church, asserted the W.B.U., was false, divisive and dishonest.18

It is clear that Wesleyan fundamentalists saw Wesley’s works, especially the *Sermons* and the *Notes on the New Testament*, as vital weapons in the battle against Modernism. While the position of these documents in the Model Deed is not in doubt, however, it may be asked how far Wesley had been employed as a theological resource in the 19th century. Was the development of Methodist theology in the period before the Modernist controversy guided by the Standards? In appealing to Wesley, was the W.B.U. invoking a living theological paradigm, or merely a useful disciplinary tool?

These issues will be addressed selectively and descriptively by examining the work of four Wesleyan theologians from the 19th century, seeking to show how they handled Wesley’s teaching in their own systems. It is recognized that this is only a sampling of a wide field of material, but the intention is to see how far Wesley set the theological agenda for his successors. The four scholars to be discussed are John Hannah, William Burt Pope, J. Robinson Gregory and John Shaw Banks.

John Hannah (1792–1867) was the first Tutor appointed to the newly-created Theological Institution in 1834, and he served as Theological Tutor until his official retirement shortly before his death, working first at City Road, then at Hoxton, and finally at Didsbury from 1842 onwards. Hannah was a third generation Methodist, accepted as a probationer by the Conference of 1813, and he retained a lifelong sympathy for the “Church Methodism” of his boyhood.20

Despite the affectionate comments on his old tutor in W. B. Pope’s *Memoir* of Hannah, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Pope was not unduly impressed by Hannah’s intellectual abilities. As a theologian, Hannah was largely self-taught, having entered the ministry with no specific training and with little background in theological or classical learning. According to Pope, Hannah’s Greek was adequate, but he always struggled with Hebrew, and he remained very conscious of the deficiencies of his early education. Moreover, “his mind was never versatile, and never remarkable for agility . . . his intellectual habit was that of an intense, and it may be ponderous, concentration of his thought upon the subject before him until it was exhausted.”21

19The debate about the number of Standard Sermons—44 or 53—was noted in JWBU, Apr. 1914, 34.
Once appointed to the Institution, Hannah set to work to produce a course of lectures for the students. There were no approved or authorized textbooks: Wesley’s works were extensive, but unsystematic, while Richard Watson’s *Institutes* were unsuitable because of their blend of diverse contexts. Hannah framed a three-year course, devoting immense labor to his lectures. Although the course developed in detail over Hannah’s long tenure of the tutorship, the structure remained largely the same, and on retirement, Hannah began to revise his material for publication. He died before the revision was complete, but one volume of lectures was issued in 1872, under the title *Introductory Lectures on the Study of Christian Theology, with Outlines of Lectures on the Doctrines of Christianity.*

In Pope’s judgment, “Dr. Hannah gave the tone to our collegiate theology as a thoroughly Methodist theologian: that is to say, his entire system was pervaded by a Methodist tone and colouring. He was never an extensive reader; but all his reading was guided by a regulative principle that declines any other name than that of Methodistic.” His emphases were: “the Person of Christ; the Atonement; and the circle of the things which accompany salvation, from justification by faith to the consummation of holiness.” This said, however, the sixty-four outlines given in the *Introductory Lectures* focused more on the Being of God than on the work of Christ. The first forty-one lectures concerned the Trinity, the attributes of God, the deity of Christ and the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Human beings appeared in lecture forty-two, and the story of salvation was then traced through the Edenic state (43), the Fall (44, 45), Redemption (46–49), Repentance (50), Faith in Christ (51), Justification by Faith (52), the Witness of the Spirit (53), Regeneration (54, 55), the Witness of our spirit (56), Sanctification (57, 58), Perseverance (59), and the Last Things (60–64).

Hannah’s use of “the venerated Wesley” in his lecture outlines took several forms. In various places, the *Notes on the New Testament* were used as an exegetical resource: for instance, Lecture 21, “Divine Attributes ascribed to our Lord: Omnipotence, Omnipresence, Omniscience,” quoted Wesley on John 3:13 as a proof-text, and the same note was quoted again in Lecture 48, “The Provision of Redemption more particularly considered.” A definition of repentance in Lecture 50 drew on Wesley’s note on Matthew 3:8, while a discussion of the possibility of a pre-Mosaic creation in Lecture 38 (“The More Conspicuous Works of God: Creation”) closed the debate by quoting Bengel and Wesley on Mark 10:6. The preface to the *Sermons* was used in the fourth preliminary lecture, “The Proper Method of Proceeding,” to underline the importance of Scripture as the primary source for theology. Material from the sermons was used for exposition and illustration particularly in the lectures on repentance, faith, justification, the witness of the Spirit.

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Methodist History

and regeneration: key subjects in "the circle of the things which accompany salvation." Elsewhere, sermons were recommended for further reading: on "The Omnipresence of God" (Lecture 9), on the "Extraordinary Gifts" of the Holy Spirit (Lecture 35), on Angels (Lectures 39 and 40), and on "The General Judgment" (Lecture 62, commending Wesley’s sermon "The Great Assize").

Wesley’s works were not the only sources used by John Hannah. Mention has already been made of Bengel, and Hannah cited other biblical and textual critics, including Tischendorf, Griesbach, and Lachmann. Among Methodist theologians other than Wesley, Adam Clarke, Richard Watson, Jabez Bunting, John Fletcher, and Richard Treffry were all quoted, Watson fairly extensively. Hannah also drew on Paley, Waterland, the “incomparable” Hooker, and especially John Pearson (1613–86), whose classic Exposition of the Creed (1659) featured in many of the lectures, either as illustration or as recommended further reading. Given the balance of the Introductory Lectures, with their emphasis on the fundamental doctrines of the Trinity and the Person of Christ, this heavy reliance on the most influential popular dogmatists is perhaps not surprising. Nor is it remarkable that Wesley, whose works took Trinitarian theology for granted, was used less extensively than Pope’s description of Hannah as a “thoroughly Methodist theologian” might imply.

The Introductory Lectures formed only a part of Hannah’s course, and therefore the picture of his theology which may be extracted from them may be inaccurate in important respects. Certainly the balance of the lectures seems to differ from the impression given by Pope. It may be agreed, however, that the shape of Hannah’s system was not derived from Wesley, nor were his works used extensively as authoritative sources, in the sense of dogmatic proofs.

John Hannah’s biographer, William Burt Pope (1822–1903), published his own monumental work, A Compendium of Christian Theology: being analytical Outlines of a Course of Theological Study, Biblical, Dogmatic, Historical in 1875, with a revised and enlarged edition appearing in 1879–80. Like Hannah, Pope came from a staunchly Methodist family, and after his acceptance for the Wesleyan ministry in 1840 he was enrolled at Hoxton. He arrived at the Institution with a working knowledge of Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and German, to which he added Arabic in his first year, and he continued to lay the foundations for a theological career of immense erudition.

Pope succeeded Hannah as Theological Tutor at Didsbury in 1867, remaining in post until a breakdown in health compelled him to retire in 1886. Didsbury was “an almost ideal appointment” for an introspective and absent-

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24 Hannah, Introductory Lectures, 205, 326, 335, 286, 101–2, 149, 270, 296, 387.
25 Hannah, Introductory Lectures, 195 (Tischendorf), 178 (Clarke), 332 (Watson), 338 (Bunting), 181 (Treffry), 317 (Fletcher), 118 (Paley), 231 (Waterland), 168 (Hooker).
minded scholar, whose mystical profundity sometimes baffled his students, but whose spirituality made a powerful and lasting impression.27

In its revised edition, Pope’s *Compendium* ran to three large volumes, with chapters on the Rule of Faith, God, God and the Creature, Sin, the Mediatorial Ministry, the Administration of Redemption, and Eschatology. It may be seen, therefore, that the structure of Pope’s work differed in important respects from the credal pattern adopted by Hannah. Pope began with revelation rather than God, and framed the bulk of the work around the theme of redemption. Detailed discussion of the Person of Christ, for example, was reserved for the second volume, following the exposition of the doctrine of Sin, while ecclesiology featured simply as one aspect of the chapter on the Administration of Redemption.

In his preliminary discussion of “Theology in the Church,” Pope set out a description of “Methodist Theology” in these terms: “Catholic in the best sense, holding the Doctrinal Articles of the English Church, including the three Creeds, and therefore maintaining the general doctrine of the Reformation. It is Arminian as opposed to Calvinism, but in no other sense. Its peculiarities are many, touching chiefly the nature and extent of personal salvation; and with regard to these its standards are certain writings of John Wesley and other authoritative documents.”28 It may be noted that Pope limited the application of the “Wesleyan Standard” to the “peculiarities” of Methodist teaching, and that he was extremely vague in defining what the standard was, making no attempt to specify what “other authoritative documents” stood alongside “certain writings of John Wesley.” This approach seems far removed from the legalistic spirit of the W.B.U.

Such a substantial work by one described by his biographer as “the defender of the deposit of truth committed to his own Church”29 might have been expected to make extensive use of the foundation documents of Methodism. In fact, the *Compendium*’s General Index listed only four references to Wesley and nine to “Methodist theology.” These references, moreover, tended to be as much descriptive as authoritative. Pope took the historical dimension of his title seriously, and concluded each doctrinal section with a review of the development of that particular doctrine in the history of the church. Every specific reference to Wesley appeared in one of those historical sections of the *Compendium*. Thus, quite extensive quotations from Wesley featured in the discussions of sin, justification, sanctification and assurance, showing the place of Methodist theology in relation to Patristic, Medieval, Tridentine, Lutheran, Reformed, and Arminian teaching.

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27Moss, W. B. Pope, 74, 117, 87, 90.
29Moss, W. B. Pope, 13.
It is true that Pope went beyond mere description. Wesley’s doctrine of Original Sin, for instance, was described as “one of the most faithful and stern reflections of the Scripture doctrine that our language contains,” while the Methodist teaching overall was praised as “the only one that is in harmony with all the facts of the case.” On sanctification, Methodism, according to Pope, struck the right balance between the Divine and human aspects, producing a doctrine which, in “the works and whole career of the Wesleys, is marked by its reasonableness and moderation as well as its sublimity.” However, although R. Waddy Moss hailed the Compendium as “the best formulation of Methodist Arminianism into a coherent and well-proportioned system of thought,” Pope achieved this from first principles, rather than by expounding Wesley. This might perhaps be accounted for partly by Pope’s determination to offer his students a comprehensive intellectual training which could encompass the whole of Scriptural, systematic, evangelical, and catholic theology. The sheer scope of the Compendium made an undue concentration on Wesleyanism impossible and undesirable. Wesleyan emphases had to find their place within the broad scheme of Christian theology.

The officiating minister at Pope’s funeral in July 1903 was the President of the Conference, the Rev. Dr. John Shaw Banks. 1903 also witnessed the publication of the eighth edition of Banks’ A Manual of Christian Doctrine. Hannah’s Introductory Lectures were based on material used at Hoxton and Didsbury from the 1840s to the 1860s, Pope’s Compendium on the course at Didsbury in the 1870s and 1880s, and Banks’ Manual on his lectures at Headingley College, Leeds, where he was Theological Tutor from 1880 until 1910. A contributor to The Chief Corner-Stone, Banks’ essay on “The Incarnate Son and His Atoning Work” drew the ire of the W.B.U. for apparently tolerating disbelief in the Virgin Birth.

The Manual of Christian Doctrine was far more compact than Pope’s Compendium, being a single volume of some three hundred pages. It was structured around two main sections: Part First, on “Doctrines presupposed in Redemption” (Divine Existence, Divine Revelation, Divine Nature and Attributes, Creation and Providence, Actual and Original Sin), and Part Second, on “Doctrines of Redemption” (Person of the Redeemer, Doctrine of Atonement, The Experience of Salvation, The Church, The Last Things). Banks was aiming for brevity as well as comprehensiveness, noting that the “considerable changes” introduced for the eighth edition had not appreciably increased the size of the book.

The index to the Manual displayed Banks’ debt to a wide range of theologians, both ancient and modern, from Anselm, Aquinas and “Abailard”

8Pope, Compendium, II, 80–2; III, 99; Moss, W. B. Pope, 112, 77–8.
3Moss, W. B. Pope, 123.
[sic] via Harnack, Hermann and Hodge to Watson and Westcott. Many of the names listed were referred to only once or twice, but six received ten or more entries in the index. The three quoted most frequently were Wesley, Augustine, and the voluminous Puritan divine, John Owen (1616–83), each of whom occurred fourteen times. W. B. Pope achieved thirteen references, B. F. Westcott eleven, and Thomas Jackson (1579–1640) ten. Within the text of the Manual Augustine was used as an historical source, often to illustrate positions with which Banks disagreed; Owen was cited on the Trinity, and on the Person and Work of Christ, Westcott mostly on the exegesis of Johannine material, and Jackson on issues of debate between Roman Catholics and Protestants.

At the outset of the work, Banks devoted one chapter to “General Facts,” including a list of the chief doctrinal standards for each branch of the Christian Church. Under the heading “Wesleyan Church,” the standard was defined as “Wesley’s First 53 Sermons and the Notes on the New Testament.” It remains to be asked, therefore, how Banks employed this acknowledged standard in the Manual.

Banks’ first use of Wesleyan material was for illustrative purposes, on similar lines to the more detailed historical excursuses in the Compendium. Having listed a range of confessional documents, Banks approached key theological topics by quoting an assortment of definitions from these standard texts, and Wesley’s works were one such source. Thus, when discussing repentance and faith, Banks set Wesley’s definition of saving faith alongside passages from Melanchthon, the Helvetic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism, while the section on justification juxtaposed Wesley with the decrees of the Council of Trent, the Apology for the Augsburg Confession, the Thirty-Nine Articles, and the Westminster Confession.

A second use was to employ Wesley to exemplify the position Banks himself wished to advocate, much as Augustine often came to stand for the opposite point of view. In the section on Original Sin, for example, Augustine’s understanding of total depravity was rejected, while the approved Arminian teaching that redemption was coeval with the Fall was summed up in a quotation from Wesley’s sermon “Working out our own Salvation.” In a similar way, Wesley and Richard Watson were enlisted as allies by Banks in a disagreement with Dr. Pope about the relationship between justification, regeneration and adoption. On sanctification, Banks argued in defense of Wesley’s careful and nuanced teaching against J. B. Mozley’s critique of perfectionism.

Despite this Wesleyan loyalty, a third use was to make Wesley a silent partner in a critical dialogue, which was where Banks moved beyond Hannah

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33 Banks, Manual, 16.
Neither of the older theologians challenged Wesley's teaching directly, but Banks was prepared to differ, albeit mildly, from the founder of Methodism. Thus, Wesley's approach to the controversial doctrine of imputed righteousness in Sermon 20 attracted this comment from Banks: "It need only be remarked that the language thus explained is a round-about way of saying what might be said far more clearly and simply." Wesley's insistence on a direct witness of the Spirit to the fact of sanctification also attracted criticism: "[N]either the reasons he gives nor the quotations in support from Scripture are quite convincing." It might be suggested that Banks was less deferential to Wesley than his predecessors, and that he was prepared to voice open dissent, although he did so within a framework of loyalty to Wesleyan theology.

The final work to be considered in this paper, J. Robinson Gregory's *The Theological Student. A Handbook of Elementary Theology*, differed from the other books discussed in several respects. Its author, although an experienced Wesleyan minister, never occupied a post in the Theological Institution, and he wrote for "young students" of theology who might later aspire to be ministers or Local Preachers. The work, therefore, published in a series of "Books for Bible Students," was designed for beginners in theology, and came complete with an "Explanatory Index of theological and other terms" and 190 detailed "Questions for Self-Examination" to help readers grasp the contents of the book. Published in the early 1890s, it reached a second edition in 1895, and was in its fourteenth thousand by 1903.

The *Theological Student* moved briskly through seventeen chapters, following a broadly credal outline: Introductory, Preliminary Assumptions, The Rule of Faith, God (five chapters, including Father, Son and Holy Spirit), The Nature of Man, Sin, Moral Inability, Redemption, Salvation, The Church, The Lord's Day, The Last Things, The Second Advent. Gregory's main concern was to encourage his readers to develop a Scriptural theology, and to that end he claimed that *The Theological Student* contained 1100 Bible references, most of which had to be checked by the reader. References to Wesley were few and far between: one quotation from the *Notes* on Christ's eternal Sonship, a recommendation of Wesley on Original Sin as "the best book" on the subject, occasional allusions to hymns, and a mention of Wesley's study of Christian Perfection. Clearly, Gregory did not believe that his purpose would be served by extensive use of non-biblical sources, although a range of materials were suggested for further reading.

It will be seen at once that much more could be said about Wesley's influence on the development of 19th century Methodist theology. In particu-
lar, the role of the Wesleyan ethos, expressed in Methodist values, traditions and spirituality, in shaping the theologians themselves should not be forgotten: Hannah and Pope were cradle Methodists, while Gregory came from a great Wesleyan dynasty. There is more to the assessment of the “Wesleyan Standard” than explicit and conscious reference to Wesley’s works. Scott Lidgett recalled the “almost entirely self-enclosed” theological outlook of mid-19th century Wesleyanism, with its focus on “the exposition and enforcement of [our] doctrines” before Methodist systematics open up with the work of Pope and W. F. Moulton (1835–98). That said, however, it is noteworthy how little some of the leading Methodist theologians of the mid- and late 19th century used Wesley as a theological resource. Hannah, the oldest, used Wesley the most, although the subject-matter of the Introductory Lectures meant that Bishop Pearson featured more prominently than Wesley as an authority. Pope’s massive Compendium treated Wesley as an historical example, rather than a seminal theologian, as did Banks in his Manual. Gregory’s students would only come to Wesley’s works after ploughing through a mass of Biblical references. The overall impression from the works surveyed here is that Wesley was not setting a theological agenda and was not appealed to as a dogmatic authority.

If this impression is accurate, it may be seen why the Wesleyan Connexion found the W.B.U.’s rediscovery of Wesley as a theological authority in the mid-1910s difficult to handle. In the pages of the W.B.U.’s monthly Journal, in pamphlets, in letters and in disciplinary charges, catenae of Wesley quotations were used to demonstrate that an acceptance of Biblical criticism and modern theology was not compatible with the doctrinal Standards of Wesleyan Methodism. Wesley’s support was enlisted for biblical infallibility, the historicity of Genesis 1–11, and the reality of eternal punishment, and against Darwinian evolution, kenotic Christology, and all forms of higher criticism. It was argued that those who ignored the plain teaching of the Standards were immoral and dishonest, and that they should leave the Connexion.

The W.B.U.’s case was met in two ways. The first was a flat denial of its validity, seen in the total failure of its disciplinary actions in Conference. The second was a move to change the terms of debate by redefining the role of the Standards in the Connexion. Frank Ballard warned the Conference of 1915 that “We are in danger of our Standards being a yoke that enslaves us: Unless we are careful we shall be throttled by them. It is possible to be throttled by a dead hand, even though that hand be the hand of John Welsey.” In 1917 a committee on Unity of Doctrine was established, which reported two years

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*Lidgett, Guided Life, 144–5.
*H. C. Morton, Messages that made the Revival (London, 1920), 21, 29, 102, 28–33; Bennetts, Wesley versus Modernism, 17–19.
*JWBU, Aug. 1915, 171.
later with a recommendation that ministers should be required to give assent to "the general system of evangelical truth" in the Standards. Whilst Conference dropped the word "general," the Connexion was clearly moving in the direction of latitude, and away from a legalistic interpretation of Wesley's *Sermons* and *Notes*, a point borne out by the resolution of the same Conference that the foundation documents "were not intended to impose a system of formal or speculative theology on our preachers." This phrase proved invaluable in the negotiations for Methodist Union in the 1920s, providing a good Wesleyan pedigree for a statement sensitive to the views of those other Methodist traditions which were anxious not to be tied to a rigid and antiquated Wesleyan Standard.43

Ronald Knox, a far defter polemicist against Modernism in the 1910s than Bennett's and the humorless fundamentalists of the W.B.U., made the typically mischievous comment that Wesley was "not a good advertisement for reading on horse-back;"44 thus epitomizing a highly negative assessment of Wesley as a theologian. Without endorsing such a subversive opinion, in the light of the material reviewed here, it may be asked wherein Wesley's value as a theological resource lies. 19th century theologians agreed that he was not a systematician. Early 20th century attempts to use the "Wesleyan Standard" juridically ultimately proved unworkable. Where, then, is Wesley's value to be found? Is there a way forward which uses the Wesleyan tradition without running the risk of being "throttled by a dead hand"?

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