

**“BLEST BE THE DEAR UNITING LOVE”:
GEORGE JACKSON (1864-1945)
AND THE TRANSATLANTIC CONNECTIONS OF METHODISM
IN CANADA, THE USA AND GREAT BRITAIN¹**

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Historians of the early years of the Evangelical Revival, like George Rawlyk, Reg Ward and Mark Noll, have taught us to recognise the web of contacts and correspondence linking Europe, Great Britain and North America in the mid-eighteenth century, contacts which helped to disseminate the stories and methodology of the Revival.² Scholars and students have not paid as much attention to the later history of those connections, and this paper suggests that this is a topic whose significance we might profitably consider.

The paper offers a case study of a man, a book and a reaction. The man is George Jackson (1864-1945), a minister of the British Wesleyan Methodist Connexion. The book is *The Preacher and the Modern Mind*, the published version of a lecture Jackson gave to the Wesleyan Conference in Liverpool, England, in July, 1912. The reaction has been described as a rare example of organised Fundamentalism among British Methodists, spawning one of the very few groups in Great Britain which fits George Marsden’s definition of a Fundamentalist: “an Evangelical who is angry about something.”³ And Jackson’s opponents in the Wesley Bible Union were certainly very angry indeed.⁴ At first sight this controversy within British Methodism looks very insular, but further investigation reveals that George Jackson’s formation as a preacher and theologian, his reputation as an advocate of “modern thought” and the reactions to *The Preacher and the Modern Mind* all owed a good deal

¹ A version of this paper was presented to the Wesleyan Studies Group at the American Academy of Religion in Montreal in 2009, and I am grateful to members of the Group for their insightful comments.

² See, for example, Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism* (Leicester: IVP, 2004); Keith Robbins (ed.), *Protestant Evangelicalism: Britain, Ireland, Germany and America, c. 1750 – c. 1950* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990); Mark A. Noll, David W. Bebbington and George A. Rawlyk (eds.), *Evangelicalism* (New York: OUP, 1994).

³ D. W. Bebbington, “The Persecution of George Jackson: A British Fundamentalist Controversy,” in W. J. Sheils (ed.), *Persecution and Toleration: Studies in Church History*, vol. 21 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), 421-433; George M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 1; Martin Wellings, “Methodist Fundamentalism Before and After the First World War,” in David Bebbington and David Ceri Jones (eds.), *Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism: The Experience of the United Kingdom during the Twentieth Century* (forthcoming).

⁴ See Martin Wellings, “The Wesley Bible Union,” *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* [hereafter *PWHS*] 53.5 (May, 2002).

to the interplay between British, American and Canadian Methodism in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century.

The Making of the Preacher

George Jackson was born in Grimsby, Lincolnshire, a fishing port on the east coast of England, in 1864.⁵ His parents kept a bookseller and stationer’s shop, so Jackson grew up surrounded by the paraphernalia of scholarship and authorship. When he was twelve years old his father died, but despite the challenge of looking after eight children under fifteen, Eliza Jackson was able to keep her second son in school, where George made the most of his educational opportunities.⁶ He was an omnivorous reader, passed his examinations with flying colours, and at seventeen and a half took a job as a teacher in a boys’ boarding school at Redruth, in Cornwall.

The Jacksons were committed Methodists, sending their children to the local Wesleyan Day-school, and attending Grimsby’s Victoria Street Chapel. In Redruth George soon became a Local Preacher: later legend claimed that the Superintendent Minister asked him to take two services because the established Local Preachers had gone on strike. Setting aside this unconventional beginning, Jackson went through the regular process of accreditation and was then offered as a candidate for the Wesleyan Methodist ministry. He was accepted by the Conference, and was sent in 1885 to train at Richmond College, London, where he remained for two years.⁷

Four observations may be made about the Wesleyan Methodism of George Jackson’s youth, and about the Church which received him as a candidate for its ministry. First, the Connexion was numerically strong, but prone to bouts of insecurity. The Wesleyans were the largest of the English Free Churches, with 413,163 members in 1885, an increase of 2,797 on the previous year. With well over 1,000 ministers, 14,700 Local Preachers and 24,300 Society classes, the Connexion was a real power in the land.⁸ However, the quarterly monitoring of membership figures could provoke anxiety; the Wesleyans remained conscious of their lowly status *vis-à-vis* the Established Church of England; and there was nervousness about the spread of Romanism, ritualism and rationalism among the population. Moreover, the Connexion was still living with the aftermath of the so-called Reform agitation of 1849-1857. This bitter struggle tore the Connexion apart, cost the Wesleyans an estimated 100,000 members and blighted the movement’s energies for a quarter

⁵ This section draws on Annie Jackson, *George Jackson: A Commemorative Volume* (London: Epworth, 1949), 1-4.

⁶ At the time of the 1881 census, the family had a governess and a servant, so their financial circumstances, if straitened, were not desperate.

⁷ Jackson, *George Jackson*, 5-7; Frank H. Cumbers (ed.), *Richmond College 1843-1943* (London: Epworth, 1944), 174.

⁸ *Minutes of Conference 1885* (London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1885), 151-153.

of a century.⁹ The Church therefore faced the challenges and opportunities of mission both to the expanding British Empire overseas and to an increasingly urbanized population at home with diminished resources and a senior leadership traumatised by the battles over Reform.

Second, the Connexion was instinctively conservative, but straws in the wind indicated that change was on its way. John Wesley's 1784 Deed of Declaration vested absolute authority in his Connexion in the one hundred named preachers of the Legal Conference, the so-called "Legal Hundred," and by the mid-nineteenth century this self-perpetuating group had resolved to replenish its numbers when necessary by alternating between election and seniority. The Legal Conference, therefore, had an inbuilt bias towards the most long-serving of the preachers. Many of the respected voices in the Conference which accepted George Jackson as a candidate in 1885 were young men of the 1830s and 1840s: William Arthur, Ebenezer Jenkins, James Harrison Rigg, Benjamin Gregory, Benjamin Hellier, and Charles Garrett. The most senior member of all, George Osborn, entered the ministry in 1828 and had been a member of the Hundred since 1849, when he had been the most hard-line opponent of the Reformers.¹⁰ However, in the 1870s, the Conference had overruled Osborn and agreed to admit lay representatives for the first time.¹¹ In January, 1885, Hugh Price Hughes, the rising star of a more progressive Methodism, launched *The Methodist Times*, a weekly newspaper subtitled "a journal of religious and social movement." The Conference of that year saw the establishment of the London Mission, an expression of what Hughes called the "Forward Movement" in Methodism.¹² The same Conference marked Osborn's retirement as Theological Tutor at Richmond.¹³ New approaches to urban mission were being attempted. New voices and new leaders were emerging.

Third, the Connexion was traditionally evangelical in its theology, but a conversation was beginning between Wesleyan Arminianism and modern thought. In the mid-nineteenth century the Wesleyans stood four-square with the Evangelical Alliance, lamented Darwin's *Origin of Species*, denounced radical biblical criticism as rationalist in ideology and destructive in its consequences, and defended traditional beliefs about eternal punishment against

⁹ Provoked by personal rivalries within the Wesleyan elite, the Reform movement gathered up a variety of national and local disputes about the shape and direction of the Connexion. For a contemporary account, see Benjamin Gregory, *Side Lights on the Conflicts of Methodism 1827-1852* (London: Cassell, 1898); more recent studies include Robert Currie, *Methodism Divided* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968) and sections of the second and third volumes of Rupert Davies, A. Raymond George and Gordon Rupp, eds., *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain* (London: Epworth, 1978, 1983).

¹⁰ *Minutes of Conference 1885*, 2-4, lists the Legal Conference.

¹¹ Martin Wellings, "Making Haste Slowly: The Campaign for Lay Representation in the Wesleyan Conference 1871-1878," *PWHS* 53.2 (May, 2001).

¹² Christopher Oldstone-Moore, *Hugh Price Hughes: Founder of a New Methodism, Conscience of a New Nonconformity* (Cardiff: U Wales P, 1999), 122-126, 135-143.

¹³ *Minutes 1885*, 185-186. Cumbers, *Richmond College*, 70, includes Jackson's tribute to Beet as a tutor and his relief at avoiding Dr Osborn.

the alternative theology of the “larger hope.” This outlook was sustained in Wesleyan periodicals, publications and colleges to the end of the century and beyond, but other voices also began to gain a hearing. During the 1880s the science of W. H. Dallinger and the biblical scholarship of J. A. Beet, W. F. Moulton and W. T. Davison softened the tone of Wesleyan evangelicalism; Beet and Davison were Jackson’s tutors at Richmond.¹⁴

Fourth, the Connexion was intellectually and ecclesiastically self-sufficient, but also aware of belonging to a worldwide Methodist family. John Scott Lidgett, ten years older than Jackson and born into the Wesleyan elite, held that Wesleyan theology was inward-looking and out of touch with developments elsewhere.¹⁵ This may be unfair, but, as evangelical Arminians, Wesleyans stood slightly apart from fellow-evangelicals in the Reformed tradition, treating Calvinists with a mixture of bewilderment, suspicion and sympathetic condescension.¹⁶ British Methodists, however, were certainly conscious of the worldwide Methodist community. Leading British ministers visited the United States and Canada, and received degrees from North American universities. Delegates and fraternal addresses were exchanged between the Wesleyan Conference and the Methodist Episcopal Church. North American publications were readily available in Britain and the periodical press regularly featured articles on American and Canadian topics. And in 1881, London played host to the first Methodist Ecumenical Conference, responding to an initiative of the 1876 General Conference of the MEC.¹⁷

The British perception of American Methodism in the early 1880s was wholly positive, if slightly patronizing. Methodists in Britain and North America were seen as believers united in their fidelity to the orthodoxy of the “old paths.” As a candidate for the Wesleyan ministry, however, George Jackson praised a book by an American Congregationalist divine which questioned those “old paths.” This was Theodore Munger’s volume of sermons *The Freedom of Faith*, published in 1883.¹⁸

The Freedom of Faith was an instant best-seller, going through eight editions in a year. British enthusiasts for Munger’s apologia for “New Theology” included Queen Victoria, as well as George Jackson. As Jackson ruefully recalled, the Connexional candidates’ committee did not share this opinion. The book presented a theology in tune with modern thought: experiential, non-dogmatic, open to science and critical scholarship, reinterpreting traditional doctrines and presenting them suggestively and allusively

¹⁴ Martin Wellings, *Evangelicals in Methodism: Mainstream, Marginalised or Misunderstood?* (Ilkerton: Moorley’s, 2005), 18-27; Jackson, *George Jackson*, 8.

¹⁵ J. Scott Lidgett, *My Guided Life* (London: Methuen, 1936), 144.

¹⁶ See, for example, W. O. Simpson, “Chatauqua Lectures and Lecturers: vii,” *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* (London), (July, 1880): 543-549, on lectures by Dr. Curry and Dr. Hodge. (The speakers may be identified as Dr. Daniel Curry, of the MEC, and Dr. A. A. Hodge).

¹⁷ *Report of the Proceedings of the First Oecumenical Methodist Conference* (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1881), v-xvi.

¹⁸ George Jackson, “The Freedom of Faith,” *A Parson’s Log* (London: Epworth, 1927), 130.

rather than in the propositional language of the older orthodoxy.¹⁹

Jackson, it should be noted, was never a theological radical. It may be suggested that Munger's sermons spoke to him because of their openness to new ideas, their commitment to follow truth, and their emphasis on faith as a living experience of Christ, rather than fidelity to a received body of doctrine. Reflecting on his experience as a candidate some forty years later, Jackson quoted approvingly the classic text of liberal evangelicalism: "ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."²⁰

During his Richmond years Jackson came to know Hugh Price Hughes, supplying Hughes' pulpit at Brixton Hill and making some influential contacts. A year in Lancashire (1887-1888) strengthened his reputation as a preacher. The great opportunity came, however, when Jackson was chosen to plant a new Methodist church in Edinburgh. Operating first from rented rooms close to Princes Street, Jackson spent eighteen years building the Edinburgh Methodist Mission from nothing to a membership of more than 650, based from 1901 in its own extensive premises at Tollcross.²¹ In addition to diligence and personal charisma, Jackson excelled as a preacher. Eschewing flamboyant rhetoric, he brought breadth of reading, clarity of expression and a willingness to tackle vexed questions of faith and doubt to his preaching. These gifts drew appreciative congregations, and also made Jackson a popular lecturer and eventually a successful columnist and author. His Edinburgh reputation brought invitations to visit the USA and Canada in 1902, when he spoke at Chatauqua and toured Canada.²² He returned to North America in 1903, giving a lecture on the bicentenary of the birth of John Wesley at the Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut. Pressing invitations from Canada in 1905 eventually led Jackson to accept the pastorate of Sherbourne Street Church, Toronto, from September, 1906.²³ He served there for three years, moving in 1909 to a chair at Victoria University. And it was from Toronto that Jackson returned to Britain in 1912 to give his lecture on "The Preacher and the Modern Mind" and to accept designation from the following summer as professor of homiletics and pastoral theology at Didsbury College, Manchester.²⁴ And there he stayed until his retirement in 1928, training students for the Wesleyan ministry and contributing regular columns to the *Methodist Recorder* and to the *Manchester Guardian*.

Expressing the Modern Mind: The Theology of George Jackson

A brief survey of some of Jackson's publications illustrates his consistency in expressing the modern mind. His first book, *First Things First*, subtitled "addresses to young men," was commissioned by Hodder and

¹⁹ Gary Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology I: 1805-1900* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 293-300.

²⁰ Jackson, *Parson's Log*, 130.

²¹ Jackson, *George Jackson*, 10-25.

²² Jackson, 26-27.

²³ Jackson, 30.

²⁴ Jackson, 35-36.

Stoughton on the strength of Jackson’s Edinburgh preaching, and published in 1894, attaining a fifth edition by 1898.²⁵ The sermons are characteristically Jacksonian in style and content: lucidly expressed, closely argued, aptly illustrated, drawing on contemporary events and everyday circumstances, and addressing the questions and issues likely to interest or trouble an audience gathered from the shop and office workers of a late-Victorian city. Indeed, the address on “Bible Difficulties” picks up questions sent in by members of the congregation, and calls on modern scholarship to remove any conflict between Genesis and evolution.²⁶ Jackson defines the core of Christianity as “living by faith in personal union with Jesus Christ.” Christ is presented as the great example and enabler of goodness, as the pattern of “the ideal manly life.”²⁷ Jackson’s readers, like his hearers, are urged to seek the best, to resist the modern idolatry of gluttony, drunkenness, lust and greed, and to be wise in facing or fleeing temptation.²⁸ There is much common sense, practical wisdom and pastoral advice in these sermons, much to encourage Christian commitment and ethical behaviour, but very little explicit doctrine: the volume contains nothing on the atonement, judgement or eschatology, and the Christology is implicit rather than overt. In the sermon entitled “What is it to be a Christian?” Jackson allows even the divinity of Christ to be optional; in “Modern Idolatry” he names sacraments, worship services and scripture itself as possible obstacles between the believer and God.²⁹

First Things First was a volume of British sermons; almost a decade later, a Wesley bicentennial address given at an American university appeared in print as *The Old Methodism and the New* (1903). This work, dedicated “to the memory of Hugh Price Hughes,”³⁰ considers “the ecclesiastical position,” “the doctrines” and “the characteristic spirit” of Methodism, comparing the eighteenth century and the twentieth. Jackson places Methodism firmly with the English Free Churches—“we are Methodists and we are Dissenters”—blaming the intolerance of the Church of England for driving Methodism away from Wesley’s Mother Church.³¹ He deplores the divisions which have produced six competing Connexions in British Methodism, and argues for reunion, praising Canada as an example to follow.³² He claims that “the pith and substance of the Methodist gospel remains unchanged,”³³ but acknowledges that emphases have shifted. According to Jackson, Methodists can

²⁵ Jackson, 129-130.

²⁶ George Jackson, *First Things First* [hereafter *FTF*] (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1894, citing 1898 edition), 213-216.

²⁷ *FTF*, 35-6; 56, 84.

²⁸ *FTF*, 225; 196-197; 106-108.

²⁹ *FTF*, 40-42; 198-199.

³⁰ George Jackson, *The Old Methodism and the New* [hereafter *OMN*] (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1903), 4.

³¹ *OMN*, 17, 20.

³² *OMN*, 21-24. The six competing Methodisms were the Wesleyan Methodists, Methodist New Connexion, Primitive Methodists, Bible Christians, United Methodist Free Church, and Wesleyan Reform Union.

³³ *OMN*, 31.

approach the results of modern biblical criticism with “cautious liberalism” because they hold no rigid theory of inspiration. They believe instead, with Robertson Smith, that inspiration expresses the experience of finding that in the Bible God in Christ draws near to us. The historicity of Genesis and Jonah, and the Davidic authorship of the Psalms, can be left to the judgment of the critics and “the assured results of Biblical scholarship.”³⁴ Modern Methodism recognises greater variety in the experience of conversion,³⁵ expresses a “reverent agnosticism” about eternal punishment,³⁶ but still emphasises the witness of the Spirit.³⁷ For Jackson, the first Methodists neglected theology, politics and social reform for the sake of evangelism.³⁸ He argues that modern Methodism, while still committed to aggressive evangelism, now has “a civic conscience” and concerns itself with ethical and political issues.³⁹ Its theology, however, has remained undeveloped, relying on teachers from other traditions like the Congregationalist R. W. Dale.⁴⁰ Jackson expresses an anxiety that this theological weakness leaves Methodism ill-prepared to deal with a crisis of belief, and prone to panic and eject the questioner in order to solve the controversy. The furore generated by his former tutor J. A. Beet’s very cautious challenge to traditional eschatology may have been in Jackson’s mind;⁴¹ as will be seen later, Jackson’s own career witnessed Methodism struggling to come to terms with “modern thought.”

In *The Old Methodism and the New* Jackson paid tribute to Hugh Price Hughes for stimulating “the revival in our midst of the only kind of evangelism by which England can be won and held for Christ—the evangelism in which zeal and culture, religion and theology, the heart and the intellect, are yoked in one common service, the evangelism of John Wesley and the Apostle Paul.”⁴² Jackson developed this theme in his Fernley Lecture of 1912, *The Preacher and the Modern Mind*.

The Fernley Lecture was established by a Wesleyan benefactor in 1869. The trust deed specified a lecture expounding the doctrines or polity of Wesleyan Methodism, adapted to “the necessities of the times,” to be given at the Conference for the benefit of the representatives and of those about to be ordained to the ministry, and to be developed into a book.⁴³ Jackson took the opportunity to set out his convictions about effective and authentic preaching for the twentieth century, rehearsing arguments made in previous publications and drawing on his own practice and experience.

³⁴ *OMN*, 33-36.

³⁵ *OMN*, 37-39.

³⁶ *OMN*, 47-48.

³⁷ *OMN*, 42-43.

³⁸ *OMN*, 51-54.

³⁹ *OMN*, 55-56.

⁴⁰ *OMN*, 56-57.

⁴¹ David Carter, “Joseph Agar Beet and the Eschatological Crisis,” *PWHS* 51.6 (October, 1998).

⁴² *OMN*, 60.

⁴³ GSW/WL, “Fernley-Hartley Lecture,” in John A. Vickers (ed.), *A Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland* (Peterborough: Epworth, 2000), 119.

The starting point for Jackson is the recognition that “our whole mental background is rapidly changing,” as a result of modern biblical and theological scholarship. The changes summed up in the popular phrase “the modern mind” must be addressed by the Church, not ignored or dismissed.⁴⁴ Jackson argues for preaching which tackles ethical issues and does not take refuge in dogma or sentiment.⁴⁵ He balances this by calling for a proper attention to doctrine: mere morality will not do, nor will sermons that offer no more than a running commentary on the newspapers.⁴⁶ Jackson reviews the progress of biblical criticism and its consequences for preaching, finding the authority of the Bible not in old theories of inspiration or infallibility, but in a message of truth which evokes a response.⁴⁷ The person of Christ remains central, with the humanity of Jesus enhanced by the kenosis, and with the virgin birth left an open question.⁴⁸ The book concludes with a call for clarity and passion in preaching.

The Preacher and the Modern Mind eloquently expressed George Jackson’s ideal for his own practice as a preacher, blending personal spiritual experience, careful preparation, wide reading, fidelity to the great truths of the Gospel and an honest engagement with the best of contemporary scholarship, offered in the service of evangelism and edification. The broad thrust of the book could be characterized as liberal evangelicalism, and in its positive teaching it represented an outlook which was growing in influence in British Methodism in the early twentieth century.⁴⁹ The other side of *The Preacher and the Modern Mind*, however, was a relentless demonstration of the inadequacies, as Jackson perceived them, of various traditional beliefs and an impatience with the intellectual timidity or dishonesty which failed to admit the consequences of modern scholarship. Jackson dismissed old theories of the atonement “with their crude analogies drawn from the police-court and even from the pawn-shop.”⁵⁰ He acknowledged the presence of editing and error in the texts of the gospels, plenty of “poetic accessories” in the narratives of the Old Testament and “symbolical history” embellished by invented or misunderstood miracle stories.⁵¹ Jackson was comfortable and confident in commending to Methodist preachers the historical scholarship represented by Hastings’ *Dictionary of the Bible* and the work of Driver, Sanday, Skinner and Peake.⁵²

⁴⁴ George Jackson, *The Preacher and the Modern Mind* [hereafter *PMM*] (London: CH Kelly, 1912, citing third edition, 1913), 4, 9.

⁴⁵ *PMM*, 37-39.

⁴⁶ *PMM*, 66-72, 79.

⁴⁷ *PMM*, 97.

⁴⁸ *PMM*, 165-169.

⁴⁹ Martin Wellings, “British Methodism and Evangelicalism,” in William J. Abraham and James E. Kirby (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies* (Oxford: OUP, 2009), 161-163.

⁵⁰ *PMM*, 44.

⁵¹ *PMM*, 104-109, 115, 144-149.

⁵² *PMM*, 13, 91, 110, 150. S. R. Driver (1846-1914), William Sanday (1843-1920), John Skinner (1851-1925) and A. S. Peake (1865-1929) were leading biblical scholars; Peake was also a Primitive Methodist.

In the first chapter of *The Preacher and the Modern Mind* Jackson recognized that there was “a wide and perhaps widening gulf” between the Church’s scholarship and its piety, between “the practically unanimous findings of modern biblical scholarship” and “the beliefs . . . which still prevail in our Sunday schools and among the general body of our church members.”⁵³ The reaction to Jackson’s Fernley Lecture confirmed that observation. It provoked pamphlets, a spate of letters in the Methodist press, and debates in the Plymouth Conference of 1913, which was invited to revoke Jackson’s designation to the Didsbury chair and to condemn his teaching on the authority of Scripture and the Person of Christ.⁵⁴

The Canadian Connection

Before considering the controversy of 1913 and its aftermath, we need to explore the depiction of George Jackson as a Methodist modernist, and for this we return to his ministry in North America in the first decade of the twentieth century.

Close ties existed between British and Canadian Methodism, and between Canada and Scotland, in this period. Jackson, as a well-known British preacher and author occupying an influential pulpit in Edinburgh, was invited on several occasions in 1905-1906 to move to Toronto, first to a chair at Victoria University and then to the pastorate at Sherbourne Street Church. He accepted the latter invitation, although only after submitting to the church leadership a copy of *The Old Methodism and the New*, in order to confirm that his theological position would be acceptable to the congregation. The committee agreed; the Jackson family moved to Canada in September, 1906; and George Jackson began a popular and effective ministry at Sherbourne Street. Two years later he was interviewed for appointment as Professor of English Bible at Victoria University, and he assumed this responsibility in 1909.⁵⁵

The Canadian churches, however, were undergoing similar debates about biblical criticism and the reshaping of traditional theology to those taking place in Great Britain and the United States.⁵⁶ After a period of reluctant silence, Jackson entered the fray in defence of George Adam Smith, who was labelled an atheist by a speaker at the Toronto Bible School.⁵⁷ Having declared his hand in a letter to the *Toronto Globe*, Jackson took up the apolo-

⁵³ *PMM*, 13.

⁵⁴ Bebbington, “George Jackson”; Wellings, “Wesley Bible Union,” 160-162.

⁵⁵ Jackson, *George Jackson*, 25-37. There are some slight differences in dates and details between Annie Jackson’s account and those given by Neil Semple, *The Lord’s Dominion: The History of Canadian Methodism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s UP, 1996), 270-272, and Gary Redcliffe, “A Pastoral Perspective on the Jackson-Carman Controversy, 1908-1910,” *Toronto Journal of Theology* 8.1 (1992).

⁵⁶ David B. Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith. Canadian Protestant Clergy and the Crisis of Belief 1850-1940* (Toronto: U Toronto P, 1992). There is a glancing reference to the Jackson controversy on 154, with more detail in the endnotes on 289.

⁵⁷ Jackson, *George Jackson*, 31.

getic issues raised by higher criticism in his sermons, and particularly in the Sherbourne Street men’s meeting. He reached a wider local audience by addressing the Toronto YMCA and cast his net further afield in lectures in the United States.⁵⁸

The YMCA meeting, discussing “The First Five Chapters of Genesis,” attracted the attention of Albert Carman, General Superintendent of the Methodist Church of Canada. Carman (1833-1917) was an architect of the 1884 union of Canadian Methodism, an experienced educator and a powerful ecclesiastical statesman.⁵⁹ Raised in a strongly evangelical Wesleyan tradition, Carman sought to navigate the changes in Canadian Church and society while maintaining a commitment to a traditional understanding of biblical inspiration. In 1890, Carman had helped to secure the removal of George Coulson Workman from the theology faculty at Victoria for questioning the place of messianic prediction in the Hebrew prophets.⁶⁰ Nineteen years later Carman took up the cudgels against George Jackson for his views on Genesis. Controversy began in the correspondence columns of the *Globe* in February, 1909, continued in meetings of the Victoria Board of Regents in March, and reached the General Conference in August, 1910.⁶¹ The result seems to have been a compromise, fully satisfactory to neither side. Jackson retained his chair, without censure by the Conference. The Victoria board passed a resolution affirming that “so long as our theological professors maintain their personal vital relation to Christ and Holy Scripture, and adhere to the doctrinal standards of our own church . . . they must be left free to do their own work.”⁶² Jackson still felt inhibited by this decision, and was unsure how far he could count on the support of Chancellor Nathanael Burwash and the Victoria Regents. By the spring of 1912, Jackson was considering resignation, and it is not entirely clear whether the designation to the Didsbury chair by the British Conference was a timely coincidence or a manoeuvre to extricate him from an increasingly uncongenial position.⁶³ It was, in any event, a welcome escape.

The Canadian controversy, however, followed Jackson across the Atlantic. *The Preacher and the Modern Mind* went through two editions in the second half of 1912, and Jackson looked set fair to return to Britain in triumph in the summer of 1913. The first public attack on his book, a pamphlet by William Shepherd Allen, appeared in March, 1913, but was speedily withdrawn, because Allen made the mistake of blaming Jackson for “a most offensive passage” in *The Preacher and the Modern Mind* which was in fact a direct and

⁵⁸ Jackson, 31, 34; Redcliffe, “Jackson-Carman Controversy,” 163.

⁵⁹ “Carman, Albert,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, accessed September 14, 2009.

⁶⁰ Semple, *Lord’s Dominion*, 269-270.

⁶¹ Redcliffe, “Jackson-Carman Controversy,” 163-164. Compare Marguerite Van Die, *An Evangelical Mind. Nathanael Burwash and the Methodist Tradition in Canada, 1839-1918* (Kingston, Montreal, London: McGill-Queen’s UP, 1989), 91-92, 104, 111-112.

⁶² Cited in *Dict. Canadian Biography Online*.

⁶³ Redcliffe, “Jackson-Carman Controversy,” 164, noting that Annie Jackson gives different reasons for the departure from Canada.

acknowledged quotation from John Wesley himself.⁶⁴ Concerns were raised in at least one of the May Synods, and the religious press took up the issue at the end of May, with the *British Weekly*, the best-selling Free Church newspaper, reprinting reports from the *Toronto Globe* about Jackson's teaching on Genesis. Unfortunately for Jackson, the *British Weekly* faithfully repeated the *Globe's* mistaken attribution to Jackson of comments he placed in the mouth of an imaginary opponent, describing the first chapters of Genesis as "antiquarian lumber" and asking "Why not throw them out?" It took some time for this error to be identified and corrected.⁶⁵

After all the sound and fury in the press, the 1913 Conference overwhelmingly supported Jackson's appointment and declined to censure *The Preacher and the Modern Mind*.⁶⁶ This was not the end of the controversy, however. Disgruntled conservatives formed the Wesley Bible Union, with the declared aims of defending the doctrinal standards of Methodism and opposing modernism. In print and in the Conference the WBU fought a long and bitter campaign against "modern thought," which although spectacularly unsuccessful, took its toll on the peace of the Connexion and on those figures who became symbolic targets of conservative wrath. George Jackson, inevitably, featured prominently on the WBU's list of modernists. The Union was aware of battles elsewhere, praising ultra-conservative Australasian and American publications and renaming its journal *The Fundamentalist* in 1927.⁶⁷

George Jackson made no claim to original scholarship in biblical or theological studies. He was a pastor, preacher and teacher, with a love of literature, a gift for communication in speaking and writing, and a burning conviction that sound learning could and should be the ally of Christian evangelism. His career and controversies illustrated the shift towards liberal evangelicalism in British and Canadian Methodism, and to that extent his opponents were right to see him as a symbolic figure.

Although Jackson admired the honesty of Theodore Munger's "New Theology," as he admired the equally controversial R. J. Campbell in Great Britain twenty years later,⁶⁸ he remained orthodox on the fundamental doctrines of the creeds. Munger reinforced his commitment to experience and integrity over assent to dogma. In Scotland and in Canada, and to a lesser extent in the USA, Jackson honed his message and found it to be effective.

⁶⁴ "Mr. Shepherd Allen's Pamphlet," *Methodist Recorder* (London), (March 13, 1913), 3.

⁶⁵ "Professor Jackson and the Higher Criticism," *British Weekly* (London), (May 29, 1913), 226.

⁶⁶ Wellings, "Wesley Bible Union," 162.

⁶⁷ See, for example, *Journal of the Wesley Bible Union* (Gloucester) [hereafter *JWBU*], June, 1917, 132, commending *The Biblical Recorder*, an Australian monthly. The American periodical *The Bible Champion*, published by the Bible League of North America, was another favourite: *JWBU* (April, 1914), 38; (July, 1914), 107; (July, 1915), 156-157; (October, 1915), 229; (April, 1916), 81-82. The WBU took great encouragement from the work of Billy Sunday: *JWBU* (April, 1915), 81 and welcomed the publication of *The Fundamentals* (October, 1914), 121.

⁶⁸ *PMM*, 183, 183n.

He also found that his reputation in one country shaped his reception in another. This came to a climax in 1912-1913, when Canadian controversies helped to provoke a Fundamentalist debate in British Methodism.⁶⁹

Scholars have learned to appreciate the transatlantic connections of the age of Jonathan Edwards, the Wesleys and George Whitefield, and they have also explored the mid-twentieth century networks associated with Billy Graham and the post-war renaissance of conservative evangelicalism. The underlying argument of this paper is that the late nineteenth century, an era of greater transatlantic travel and migration, better communications, and the increasing exchange of printed material merits further investigation, particularly among the people called Methodists, conscious and proud of their shared Wesleyan heritage. Charles Wesley may have the last word:

“Blest be the dear, uniting love,
That will not let us part;
Our bodies may far off remove -
We still are one in heart.”⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Canadian evidence continued to be cited against Jackson: see “The Vital Question,” *JWBU* (May, 1917), 110, an article by the conservative Anglican scholar W. H. Griffith Thomas, teaching in Toronto, where “the effect of Mr. Jackson’s teaching is only too evident.”

⁷⁰ Franz Hildebrandt and Oliver A. Beckerlegge (eds.), *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People called Methodists*; volume 7 in *The Works of John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983), 712 (Hymn 520).