



THE
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Bulletin



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THE WESLEY FELLOWSHIP WAS FOUNDED IN 1985
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EDITORIAL NOTES

Members of the Fellowship will be aware that, due to the Editor unexpectedly finding himself a patient in hospital from January to March 2012, this is the first issue of the *Wesley Fellowship Bulletin* published since October 2011 (and the only one to be issued this year). Apologies are extended to anyone adversely affected by this hiatus - and the Editor is certainly grateful to other members of the Executive for their support and for sending out, earlier this year, a brief newsletter to members explaining the

situation, together with a copy of Mr Paul Taylor's excellent and newly published *John Newton: Evangelical Spirituality and Social Concern* (the Wesley Fellowship's 'Occasional Paper' No. 21, issued to members for the year 2012). The Editor also needs to put on record his praise of God's grace for answered prayer - and his gratitude to family, friends and all those around the world who kept him in their prayers during this time.

**REPORT ON THE WESLEY FELLOWSHIP RESIDENTIAL
HOLIDAY/CONFERENCE 29 OCTOBER – 2 NOVEMBER 2012**

The conference theme was '**MR WESLEY: HIS PREACHERS & PREACHING – THEN AND SINCE**'. The originally announced location of Rhos-on-Sea had been chosen partly because of its association with the early ministry of the twentieth-century Methodist preacher W.E. Sangster - and the programme plan was to include: ' **blessings for the soul**' (through daily devotions, preaching and a communion service - led by **Rev Doug Atherton**); '**stimulation for the mind**'(through two papers on the life and ministry of Sangster, delivered by **Rev Dr Andrew J. Cheatle**); and '**care for the body**' (by providing some time to relax at the seaside). To this end, from the afternoon of Monday 29 October to Friday morning 2 November 2012, about twenty-five WF members and friends gathered this autumn for the seventh residential Wesley Fellowship conference - held this year for the first time in Wales.

As it turned out, **the actual venue was Beth Eden Christian Guest House, situated on Llandudno's west shore**, with lovely panoramic views towards Conwy and the mountains of Snowdonia and out across the Irish Sea towards the Isle of Anglesey. Delegates praised the Lord for the week's **uplifting ministry, the warm fellowship, the pleasant accommodation, the good food**, and the invigorating cool, **mainly sunny, weather**. The unexpected closure of the originally booked conference venue at Rhos-on-Sea had necessitated some urgent changes to the plans. Fortunately, with Mr Alistair Barclay's knowledge of North Wales and the kind help of the management at Beth Eden, we

were able to transfer bookings already made to the new venue in Llandudno. However, the numbers involved completely filled all the available rooms at the smaller Guest House and so prevented the WF from continuing to advertise the event - even for 'day visitors', because the room available for the meetings at Beth Eden was smaller than that at the original venue. We were all **blessed by the preaching of the Rev. Doug Atherton** (currently One Mission Society UK 'Minister at Large', based in South Wales). He delivered an outstanding series of clear and challenging expository sermons through the week (and in doing so certainly satisfied John Wesley's stated benchmark for his preachers - to steadily 'insist on those two points, "Christ dying for us" and "Christ reigning in us"'¹). Doug's sermons also reminded us of the truth of William Edwin Sangster's Bible based affirmation that 'the heart of the Gospel is a meeting of God and man, and preaching provides the best medium for that meeting'.² In the power of the Spirit, and using texts such as Dan. 1; Ps. 137; Heb. 5: 1-10; and 1Pet. 2: 1-10, Doug was able to impress on our hearts the evangelistic 'propaganda value' for the gospel when Christians demonstrate 'distinctively different' lives for Christ. From the Word, he elucidated in turn the essential characteristics of a Christian '**pilgrim life**', '**priestly life**', and '**holy life**', showing how each God-given disposition can enable us to be more effective ambassadors for Christ. He challenged us to see that, with God's grace, such insights can help us discern when to stand firm on Christ-like essentials, so becoming '**distinctly foreign**' at key moments in our lives in the twenty-first century world with its regulations, distractions and temptations (not unlike Daniel needed to do, when he was exiled 'by the waters of Babylon' and confronted with discriminatory laws). Indicative of the effectiveness of Doug's ministry during the Llandudno Conference, a Facebook entry from one of the 'day visitors' read: 'This morning's devotion's at The Wesley Fellowship (held at

¹ See John Wesley's letter to Charles Perronet, 28 December, 1774.

² W.E. Sangster, *Power in Preaching* (London: The Epworth Press, 1958), 20.

Beth Eden and given by Doug Atherton) were inspirational. A further indication of the power of Doug's anointed preaching during the week is that the proprietor of Beth Eden was impressed sufficiently to, there and then, invite him to return to the Guest House next year to lead a series of daily devotions!



Revd Doug Atherton



Beth Eden Guest House



Dr Andrew Cheatle

On the Wednesday, Rev Dr Andrew Cheatle (an ordained Methodist Minister, a Senior Lecturer in Theology at Liverpool Hope University and an acknowledged scholar with expertise in the life and work of William Edwin Sangster), delivered two illustrated and interesting papers, '**William Edwin Sangster – Methodist Preacher**', and '**Dr W.E. Sangster – Heir of John Wesley?!**' The second lecture in particular, with its references to certain sentences on the afterlife³ in Sangster's voluminous

³ For example: in *These Things Abide: Devotional Meditations in Dark Days* (London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, December 1939), p.187, in a Chapter headed 'After Death – What?', W.E. Sangster states: '. . . it is not profane to speculate [when everyday] thousands of souls pass into eternity, many with a minimum of preparation. . . . [that] God has not finished with them in the instant of death'; and (on p. 189), with reference to the Greek word 'μῶραι' in John 14: 2, translated as 'mansions' (first by Tyndale in 1526), Sangster strains the exegesis to breaking point and suggests this word gives to modern ears the impression of a static 'large ornate house', rather than the original First Century meaning of 'stations on a journey', implying 'rest and progress'. This notion of 'progress' and the possibility of a 'continued ministry of grace in the state between death and judgement' is discussed again in his 1942 doctoral thesis, see: W.E. Sangster, *The Path to Perfection: An Examination and Restatement of John Wesley's Doctrine of Christian Perfection* (London: The Epworth Press, first published 1943, reissued 1957), p. 69, although Sangster, with John

writings invoked some keen attention. The concern was little abated even when it was explained that these **particular thoughts on life after death had been published in the context of the Second World War**, when Sangster (with his family) chose to live for nearly five-years in the hastily arranged ‘public air raid shelter’ constructed in the basement of Westminster Methodist Central Hall, offering pastoral support and succour to people facing the issues of indiscriminate destruction and death during the London Blitz. The sentences concerned certainly raised some searching questions, including Dr Herbert McGonigle’s blunt: **‘Was Sangster a Universalist?’** – not surprisingly, in a gathering of conservative evangelicals, this led to **a very lively discussion!** The Wesley Fellowship hopes to be able to publish one of Dr Cheatle’s papers next year.

We were glad to have Mr John Gibby⁴ chair most of our meetings – and he ensured that we had opportunity to lift up our hearts with praise and thanks to the Lord through his inspired prayers and choice of songs - most of which were ‘lyrical raptures’ of Charles Wesley, with their ‘timeless truths’ of God’s grace and Christ’s love, selected from the 1933 *Methodist Hymn Book*. **It was pleasing that, amongst the few ‘day visitors’, we were able to accommodate during the week was Mrs Mair Paton** (who came for a day accompanied by her husband Revd John Paton, from their home now in Bala, Wales). With her fine Welsh voice, she sang some beautiful solo devotional songs during meetings on Wednesday afternoon and evening. Dr Cheatle also delivered his two papers at these meetings, and Bill Graham

Wesley in mind, makes it clear that for ‘Protestant thinking of the eighteenth century’, to accept such ‘progress’ after death, ‘would have been rank heresy’.

⁴ John Gibby and his wife Pim, had recently returned from their latest Mission to Bethlehem and the West Bank (24 Sept. to 16 Oct. 2012). It was good to learn that Pim, following her lengthy illness and treatment, had been able to accompany him on the Mission for the first time in three years. They reported that ‘Our hearts are constantly energised by the Good News of the Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in this outreach into Palestine. Those who we minister to need the love of Jesus, the good seed of the Word of God and the prayer that we can bring to them, in the power of the Holy Spirit.’

(who was in the chair), invited us to sing several more hymns of Charles Wesley, ones that were known to be favourites of Dr Sangster.⁵ **We were grateful to Mrs Audrey Bolton** who led our singing of the hymns and songs during the whole week, using a borrowed electronic keyboard (and all her wonderful skills as a pianist), to do so.

The devotions on the Thursday evening were a memorable end to a wonderful week of fellowship at Beth Eden and took the form of a communion service, led by Doug Atherton, in which **Mr Paul Taylor ministered to us** with a moving account of the scapegoat as described in Leviticus, and so helped us draw close to our God through the power of the Spirit, and worship our risen Saviour for His sacrificial love for each of us at Calvary.

REPORT ON WESLEY FELLOWSHIP MEETING HELD IN BIRMINGHAM IN OCTOBER 2011

The autumn 2011 meeting of the WF took place at Zion Church of the Nazarene, Brearley Street, Handsworth, Birmingham, on Saturday 29 October 2011. The **Rev. David A. Hull**, MLitt, BTh (Cantab.), had very kindly stepped in at short notice to speak and preach at the meeting. Disappointingly, the numbers attending were not great (little more than twenty) but those who were fortunate enough to be present were appreciative of the remarkably interesting paper entitled '**Wrestling for a Blessing: Personal Experience in the Hymns of Charles Wesley**'. The Wesley Fellowship have plans to publish this lecture during 2013. In the afternoon session, Mr Hull preached a powerful sermon entitled '**A Sermon for those "Convinced of Backsliding"**'. A

⁵ Paul Sangster, in his *Doctor Sangster* (London: The Epworth Press, 1962) p. 297, tells us that his father's favourite hymns of Charles Wesley included: 'Saviour from sin, I wait to prove/That Jesus is Thy healing name'; 'Thou Shepherd of Israel, and mine,/The joy and desire of my heart'; and, for Sangster, the greatest 'spiritual poem' of all, but rarely sung, 'Come, O Thou Traveller unknown,/Whom still I hold, but cannot see!'

fuller account of this meeting has been prepared by WF member Mr Denis Haywood and this has been placed on the Wesley Fellowship website. It will be of interest to members to note that at the time of this autumn 2011 meeting, Mr Hull held the post of Chaplain at Shebbear College, a Methodist school in North Devon founded in 1829. However, since then, he has taken up a new post as Head of Boarding at the prestigious King's College School, Cambridge - founded in 1441 by King Henry VI to educate the sixteen Choristers who sing at the services in the magnificent **King's College Chapel of the University of Cambridge**. The Choristers have a worldwide audience each year when they sing at the famous **Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols** service – which, since 1928 has been broadcast live almost every year by **BBC Radio on Christmas Eve** to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Although there are nowadays other pupils, including girls, the boarding programme, for which David Hull is responsible, is open only to boys - the Choristers are full boarders while other boys return home for the weekend. Perhaps we might get a glimpse of David on TV this year - we must keep our brother in our prayers as he serves the Lord in such an influential position.

REPORT ON THE WESLEY FELLOWSHIP SPRING 2012 MEETING
Wesley Fellowship member Denis Haywood reports that this meeting was held at Zion Church of the Nazarene, Handsworth, Birmingham, on Saturday 31 March 2012. The speaker and preacher was **Rev. Doug Atherton**, who was then the UK Executive Director of One Mission Society (OMS) and had his office based in Manchester. The meeting was very much enjoyed by all present but due to the reported illness of a number of members (who were prayed for) the numbers present at the meeting were disappointingly low – little more than twenty. The title of the paper was **'The Wesleys and World Mission'** and Doug first outlined the history of OMS (originally known as the Oriental Missionary Society), which was founded at the beginning of the twentieth century in Japan (leading to the organisation of the Japan Holiness Church). The original vision came from **American missionaries Charles and Lettie Cowman** (the latter known for her volumes of daily readings entitled *Streams in the Desert*, begun in 1925). Manchester born Lizzie Pearce was in 1908 the first UK

missionary to work with OMS. Doug explained in his lecture the connection between the Mission and the teaching of the Wesleys, which had led to the early nineteenth century Methodist world missionary outreach. In the afternoon, using as his text Matthew 5: 6, Doug preached a stirring sermon which made clear that the **Christian life needs to be based on daily seeking of God's righteousness**, and such hunger and thirsting is a necessary pre-requisite, through the power of the Spirit, to growing in Christ.

FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE WESLEY FELLOWSHIP

Please note that there will be no spring meeting of the Wesley Fellowship in 2013. The next meeting planned by the Wesley Fellowship Executive is for (DV) Saturday 14 September 2013 at Zion Church of the Nazarene, Brearley Street, Handsworth, Birmingham, B21 0JJ. **Please put this date in your diary and plan to be there and invite friends. The Executive hope that the attendance will be bigger than at recent meetings. This - and the future of the Wesley Fellowship itself – needs to be a matter of prayer for us all! Details of the programme will be announced later but it will probably take the usual form of a morning lecture and an afternoon sermon. Doors open from 10.30am, ready for a formal and prompt start at 11.00am. The meeting is planned to end by about 3.00pm.** Drinks will be provided at the beginning of the day and at lunch time – but please bring your own packed lunch.

MWRC Annual Lectures

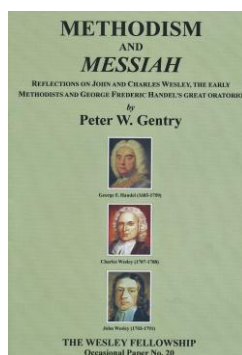
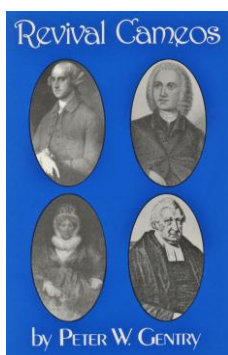
The 2013 Manchester Wesley Research Centre Annual Lecture will be given by Professor David Bebbington, M.A., Ph.D., F.R.Hist.S, of the University of Stirling. The lecture will be on Tuesday 18th June at 5pm on the campus of Nazarene Theological College, Dene Road, Didsbury, Manchester, M20 2GU.

THE LATE REV. DR PETER WALLACE GENTRY, 1925-2012

Most members (having, hopefully, received John Gibby's brief but eloquent tribute last February) will now be aware of the sad passing at the beginning of this year of our esteemed and much-

loved Wesley Fellowship member, the Rev. Dr Peter W. Gentry. He was aged 86, and, following a short illness in hospital (near his home at Weston-super-Mare), he was suddenly ‘promoted to Glory’, to be with his Lord, on the afternoon of Thursday 5 January 2012. The burial service (attended by just the family) took place in the morning of 19 January 2012 at Keynsham, near Bristol. This was followed in the afternoon by a well-attended service of thanksgiving and celebration for the life of Dr Gentry, held at the Weston-super-Mare Church of the Nazarene (where the Wesley Fellowship was represented by various members, including Secretary/Treasurer Alistair Barclay, Tony & Mary Tamburello, and John & Pim Gibby). Dr Gentry had been an active and valued member of the Wesley Fellowship from the 1980s, and his presence as a friend and colleague has already been greatly missed by the Fellowship. **Peter Gentry was a truly saintly person, and was recognised internationally as a wonderfully gifted servant of the Lord – not least in his ministry of preaching and writing.** Many WF members will have pleasant memories of Peter Gentry attending and taking part in Wesley Fellowship meetings over the last quarter-of-a-century. Despite reaching his eighties, and typical of his willingness to lend support in a time of need, he unhesitatingly stepped into the situation that arose when Mrs Valerie Barclay, our very much lamented and still sorely missed WF Secretary, died suddenly on Thursday 29 October 2009, just days before a joint residential conference of the Wesley Fellowship & League of Prayer was due to begin at the Hayes Christian Conference Centre on the following Wednesday. With some key members of the Executive incapacitated through illness or bereavement, the need was significant and urgent. Dr Gentry (with his wife Frances) made the special effort required in order for them to travel to and attend the Conference - and Peter gladly chaired some of the meetings, led an edifying and soul-stirring Love Feast, and even penned a wonderfully crafted report that captured the mood and events of the conference that was subsequently published in the WF *Bulletin*. Similarly, on **seeing the need for a WF ‘Occasional**

Paper' to be published in 2011, Peter took up the challenge and began researching and writing a new paper on links between the composer Handel and John and Charles Wesley. True to his word, and within twelve months of the 2009 conference, Peter (accompanied by his wife Frances, neither of whom were by then finding long-distance car journeys easy), travelled to Birmingham in November 2010, where **he delivered his intriguing lecture to an enthralled gathering of the WF**, leaving those present with delightful memories of the occasion that will not be easily forgotten - *and* the Executive with a manuscript for publication.



Peter W. Gentry with two of his publications (from 1985 & 2011)

Peter Gentry was born in Croydon, Surrey, in the summer of 1925, and he witnessed to how he first responded to Christ in 1947 when attending Norbury Methodist Church, a part of the Croydon Circuit. **Peter married Miss Frances P. Bryant at Bathavon, Somerset, in 1953, and our prayers continue for Frances in her bereavement.** In his early career he was an Insurance Assessor, with a growing interest not only in Methodist history, but also in trams and railways. In 1955 he became a local preacher on the Bristol South Methodist Circuit. In 1961 at Leeds, he was ordained as a minister in the Church of the Nazarene, holding, over a period of thirty-four years, successful pastorates in Bath, Stockport, Bristol, Port Glasgow, Weston-super-Mare, and Southampton, before retiring to Weston. Peter

was a member of the editorial board of *The Flame* magazine for some years before he took over as Editor from the aging Rev. Maynard James in 1984.⁶ Peter Gentry remained as Editor of *The Flame* until 1996. Then in 1997 he became Chairman & Secretary of The Flame Trust, a position he held until he died.

If one wants to seek out some of **Peter Gentry's extensive and always interesting writings, a good place to begin would be in the pages of *The Flame*** over the last half-century – indeed, just before he died Dr Gentry had left a series of six newly written articles with Norman Armistead (the present Editor), a number sufficient to not be all published until well into 2013. **IN ADDITION TO SUCH WRITINGS, PETER W. GENTRY'S PUBLISHED WORKS INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:** Peter W. Gentry, *The Tramways of the West of England*, London: Gentry Books, 1952; *The Tramways of the West of England (Second edition.)* [With illustrations, including maps] London: Light Railway Transport League, 1960; *His Touch: a Study of Holiness Teaching in the Miracles of Jesus*, Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1980; *The Wonder of Wesley*, Weston-super-Mare: privately published, 1981. [See editorial note in the *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, Vol. 43, September 1981, p. 17, announcing the publication of this ten-page pamphlet]; *Heritage in the Warmed Heart*, Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 1986; *Revival Cameos*, Pershore: The Flame Office, 1985 (& Evangel Press, 1987); John Edwards, Peter Gentry and Roger Thorne, *A Methodist Guide to Bristol and the South West*, Peterborough: Methodist Publishing House for World Methodist Historical Society British Section, 1991; Peter W Gentry, *Countess of Huntingdon* (People Called Methodists), Peterborough: Foundery Press, 1994; Peter W. Gentry, *Francis Asbury, the Wesley of America: The text of a paper given at a meeting of the Wesley Fellowship held in Zion Holiness Church of the Nazarene, Handsworth, Birmingham, on October 28, 1995.* Ilkeston: The Wesley Fellowship in conjunction with Moorley's Print & Publishing, 1996; *John Fletcher and the*

⁶ *The Flame* is a periodical that has promoted 'Full Salvation' and John Wesley's doctrine of 'Scriptural holiness' since its foundation by Maynard G. James in 1935. See: Paul James, *A Man on Fire: The Story of Maynard James* (Ilkeston: Moorleys Print & Publishing, 1993), 60 and 169-170.

Introduction of the 'Baptism' motif in the Wesleyan Concept of Sanctification (Maynard James Memorial Lectures No. 11), [Cardiff:] Grace Wesleyan Trust, 2000; *Inner Light and Warmed Heart: A Study of the Contrasts and Similarities between the Quakers and the Early Methodists*, Weston-super-Mare: privately published, 2001; Peter W. Gentry and Paul Taylor, *Bold as a Lion: The Life of John Cennick (1718-1755), Moravian Evangelist*, Leicester: Neil Seeds, 2007; Peter W. Gentry, 'Some further thoughts on the Irish Wesleys and the Wellesley connection', in: *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, 57 (2009), 13–16; and Peter W. Gentry, *Methodism and Messiah: Reflections on John and Charles Wesley, the Early Methodists and George Frederic Handel's Great Oratorio* (Wesley Fellowship Occasional Paper No. 20), Sheffield: The Wesley Fellowship, 2011.

BOOK NOTICES

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Herbert Boyd McGonigle. *Christianity or Deism?: John Wesley's Response to John Taylor's Denial of the Doctrine of Original Sin* (Sheffield: The Wesley Fellowship, 2012. pp. vi. + 34. Illus. Paperback. £4.95. ISBN 13: 978-0-86071-665-5).

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