

THE FREE CHURCH ARMY
CHAPLAIN
1830-1930

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The study traces the efforts of English Nonconformists to provide chaplains for their adherents in the British Army. Unrecognised by the War Office, and opposed by the Church of England, the Wesleyan Methodists persisted in providing an unpaid civilian ministry until, by stages, they secured partial recognition in 1862 and 1881. The respect earned by volunteer Wesleyan civilian chaplains, who accompanied the troops on most colonial and imperial expeditions in the last quarter of the century, culminating in the Boer War, prompted the War Office in 1903 to offer them a number of commissioned chaplaincies. The Wesleyans declined the offer. Although they had earlier, and after anguished debate, accepted State payment of chaplains, they were not prepared to accept military control of them.

In the Great War, Wesleyan chaplains were nevertheless obliged to accept temporary commissions. Congregationalists, Baptists, Primitive and United Methodists, through a United Board, provided another stream of chaplains. With the political help of Lloyd George, both sets of Nonconformists secured equitable treatment at the hands of the Church of England and, through an Interdenominational Committee, gained positions of considerable influence over chaplaincy policy. In the field, remarkably for the age, they joined with Presbyterians and Roman Catholics in a single chain of command. By 1918, over 500 Wesleyan and United Board commissioned chaplains were engaged.

After the war, as the price of retaining their newly won standing and influence, both the Wesleyans and the United Board denominations accepted permanent commissions for their chaplains and their absorption within a unified Chaplains Department. Acceptability was secured through willingness to compromise on voluntarism and conformity to the State.

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Rule's voluminous correspondence I found in the Methodist Archives at John Rylands University Library, Deansgate, Manchester, where I read it by permission of Miss Alison Peacock, the Methodist Church Archivist.

Most Methodist Forces Board papers, however, are still in an attic room at Westminster Central Hall. A full record of Wesleyan chaplaincy work from

1856, including the manuscript minutes of the Army and Navy Committee or Board from 1896, and of the Primitive Methodist Army Committee from 1914, are to be found there. Equally useful is a full set of the minutes of the Interdenominational Advisory Committee from its inception in 1916. There is also a good deal of important miscellaneous correspondence. I am especially indebted to the retiring Secretary of the Methodist Forces Board, Revd C.R. Wolsey Gilbert, for permission to use this material, and to him and his secretary, Miss Joan Garwood, for much other help and encouragement.

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instructing me in many aspects of mid-Victorian Roman Catholicism. He also allowed me to read the relevant chapters in his forthcoming book on Bishop Grant. Though not central to my work, this has enabled interesting parallels to be drawn and comparisons to be made with Wesleyan strivings of the period.

What Free Church army chaplains actually did and thought, as opposed to their recognition, status and organisation, proved harder to reconstruct at this distance. The printed reports of individual chaplains are dutiful, sometimes instructive and occasionally revealing. There are fortunately several privately or generally published records of value - pre-eminently the books of Revd O.S. Watkins, the first Deputy Chaplain General to be drawn from the Free Churches. Private manuscript sources are rarer. There are very few at the Imperial War Museum, but I was fortunate to be given a personal reminiscence of the youthful Leslie Weatherhead as chaplain by an old soldier still alive; and I have been allowed by his daughter, Mrs Marian Robinson, to read the Revd A.C. Gray's record of his ministry, written for his family, which includes his Great War experiences as a United Board chaplain in France and Italy.

My final acknowledgement is reserved for my supervisor, Dr Clyde Binfield, whose encouragement, guidance and friendship have been invaluable. It was no easy task to turn a retired civil servant, trained in pith and precision, into an expansive, questing amateur academic. I sense that he has succeeded but others must judge.

ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations have been used in footnotes for the most frequently used sources

BP War Office Precedent Books and miscellaneous papers at the Royal Army Chaplains' Department, Bagshot Park

DNB Dictionary of National Biography

I Minutes of the Interdenominational Advisory Committee on Army Chaplaincy Services

MAM Methodist Archives Manchester (in the John Rylands University Library)

P Presbyterian Church of England Soldiers and Sailors' Committee reports

R Reports of the Wesleyan Army and Navy Committee
or Board

UB United Navy and Army Board of the Four
Denominations (Baptist, Congregational,
Primitive Methodist, United Methodist)

W Wesleyan Army and Navy Committee or Board
minutes

WO War Office Clergy General records at the
Public Records Office

Meetings are indicated by the month and year following the initial
letter. e.g. UB 11/18

The reports indicated by R are contained within the annual reports of
the Wesleyan Home Mission and Contingent Fund, or later in the annual
Conference Agenda.

INTRODUCTION

The generic name for the religious bodies with which this study is concerned was for much of the period "Nonconformist". By the time of the Great War, however, when Nonconformist army chaplains were not merely accepted but welcomed in great numbers, the more modern term "Free Church" was becoming common, and it has been used for the sake of familiarity in the title. I hope it will not cause offence that I have taken "English" for granted.

The denominational names of the period have been retained. The study embraces the Wesleyan Methodists, the Primitive Methodists, the United Methodists and their predecessors, the Presbyterian Church of England and its predecessors, the Baptists and the Congregationalists. These, with the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists were in due course the authorised providers of Free Church army chaplains. There is passing reference to bodies such as the Unitarians, Moravians and the Salvation Army which sought, but did not readily obtain, the right to supply army chaplains in the Great War.

Although not the focus of the study, considerable reference is necessary to the chaplaincy arrangements of those earlier in the field: pre-eminently the Church of England, but also the Church of Scotland,

other Scottish and Irish Presbyterians, and the Roman Catholics. These were by stages competitors and comparators. I have made brief reference in Chapter 1 to the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to provide a sense of development and a firm base for the study proper which begins around 1830 in Chapter 2.

In a period of colonial, imperial and international wars, and of missionary endeavour, the study cannot be confined to England. But it is confined to the chaplains from churches whose denominational boundaries were drawn at home. It is also mainly confined to the army, though there is reference to the origins of chaplaincies in the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force. It was the army which first offered the challenge of service and was the main initial focus of resistance to what the churches sought to provide. What was won for the army was in time very largely translated.

The study may be read in its own terms. It is the only detailed account of the development of the Free Church army chaplaincies which goes beyond 1903, or which looks wider than Wesleyan Methodism. It ends around 1930 because about then the arrangements for army chaplaincies assumed their present-day characteristics.

The additional aim of the study is to illustrate a number of broad themes to do with Nonconformity in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Those who have written on such subjects appear to have made little reference, if any, to army chaplaincies. These wider themes include the extension of religious liberty by wearing away at the

Anglican establishment - or at least at its exclusiveness; the retreating or (according to taste) the developing Nonconformist Conscience in matters of state patronage and voluntaryism; the Wesleyan endorsement of imperial expansion; the blurring of missionary endeavour and colonial aggrandisement; the growing influence of Nonconformists on political or public affairs from 1906; and their growing conformity to the State, if not to the Church, which was accelerated by the Great War. At a different level, the study provides evidence of the Wesleyans' growing proficiency at dealing with the military bureaucracy, Civil Service and ministers, and of the War Office's adjustment of its organisation to handle Nonconformists. Army chaplaincies offer early examples of interdenominational cooperation across a wide range of churches, and the first example of sustained joint action by Nonconformists. (As this extended to four Churches, and was run by J. H. Shakespeare who was at the very same time publicly advocating a closer form of Free Church union, its neglect in assessments of his life and work is particularly surprising).

The favoured position of Roman Catholics, compared with Nonconformists, in the mid-nineteenth century army is noteworthy, as are the parallels between Catholics and Wesleyans on issues such as ecclesiastical authority over their chaplains. Both are explored. Those whose main interest lies in British military history may be surprised at the presence and impact of Wesleyan civilian chaplains in very nearly all the colonial wars at the end of the nineteenth century, in the Boer War and in India. Those concerned with the history of

evangelical mission will be less surprised by the nature of the Nonconformist chaplains' work in the mid-century peace-time army.

The right of all soldiers to worship freely in their own way did not, formally speaking, exist in the British Army until a General Order of 1839. The Order did not find its way into Queen's Regulations until 1844, and its extension to Wesleyans was officially questioned. The Chaplains Department consisted of Anglican ministers who, except for a short period, held commissioned rank. By stages, but particularly from 1858, Presbyterian and Roman Catholic commissioned chaplains - Chaplains to the Forces - were also appointed. These Churches, with the Church of England, became the "recognised Churches" in the army. The complement of commissioned chaplains was supplemented by "officiating clergy", civilian priests and ministers who conducted services in their own churches for men of their own denominations and were paid either set fees or head money according to attendance. As the Sunday morning Church Parade was compulsory and the number of commissioned chaplains was kept low for reasons of economy, officiating clergy were numerous. Head money was much prized.

From all these forms of recognition the Nonconformist churches, with one exception, were excluded. The exception was the small English Presbyterian Church. As the War Office did not differentiate between forms of Presbyterianism, they too were recognised and provided officiating ministers, although they were denied commissioned chaplaincies until the Great War. The Wesleyan Methodists were the only body among the excluded Nonconformists to provide a ministry to the

soldiers, notwithstanding this lack of recognition. They did so by using circuit ministers for the widely dispersed army and made a few full-time appointments at principal military stations which were funded as part of the Church's Home Mission work. One can trace this unpaid voluntary service to soldiers back to John Wesley's own concern for them as a rejected part of society. Like his, it was an evangelical mission, reflecting a conservative form of patriotism and very much in contrast to some Old Dissenters' support of the Peace Society. Yet the intrusion of the Wesleyans was resisted by the War Office, and the Horse Guards, on the principle that what was not recognised was unauthorised. It was much resented by the Chaplain General and the Anglican chaplains who were accused of using *their position to limit and hinder it*. The Wesleyan's champion, W. H. Rule, fought exclusion and privilege with the nineteenth century weapons of influence in high places, pugnacity and righteous indignation - and won through. His correspondence of the time is the basis of this part of the study.

Limited recognition was achieved in 1862. It allowed all Nonconformist soldiers to attest to their faith in the returns of the army as "Other Protestants". They could thereby attend their own services by right, instead of by favour, but that was the extent of the change. Wesleyans were not specifically identified as a recognised church. The appointment of commissioned chaplains and of officiating clergy and the payment of head money continued to be confined to the three recognised churches.

Though Rule and the Wesleyan Army Committee would have accepted head money, it should be said that at this time the Conference would have refused state money in this form on principle had it been offered. Nor was there any desire for commissioned chaplains because of the feared loss of the Church's authority over such ministers. The Wesleyans' moral strength in dealing with the army in Rule's day had been the voluntary and free service which they provided. This continued for another twenty years until the increasingly influential Army Committee was given permission to negotiate for head money. In 1881 the War Office gave way. They also now allowed Wesleyans their own column in the army returns. Rule, long retired, lived to see this more complete recognition of the rights of the Wesleyan soldier.

From 1881 onwards there is a noticeable change in Wesleyan relations with the army. Hitherto they had been outsiders pushing in. The army struggle had appeared as an aspect of Nonconformist assertiveness, ostensibly in the interests of religious freedom, in practice an attempt to encroach on Anglican exclusiveness. Now, the Wesleyan chaplains started to win respect for their Church in the army. Wesleyans supported the various colonial and imperial expeditions of the 'seventies, 'eighties and 'nineties, sending out ministers or appointing missionaries to act as chaplains on nearly every occasion. The Wesleyan Missionary Society indeed became formally, if incongruously, a part of the Army Committee in 1878. The chaplains on these campaigns received increasingly favourable forms of official recognition, while remaining civilian ministers. This overseas service however meant a total change

of role, from a static, largely conventional ministry in peace-time to one involving close involvement with the men in bloody, disease-ridden campaigns in Africa and India. A new professionalism emerged in the ranks of the Wesleyan chaplains; and the forty Wesleyan chaplains who served in the Boer War, drawn from Colonial Conferences as well as from the home country and the missionary field, won the army's particular respect. But they were still civilians and uncommissioned.

Wesleyan wealth too was mobilised for the soldiers in this period. Between 1875 and 1893, 27 Wesleyan institutes and homes for soldiers and sailors were built across the Empire. Open to all troops, in an age when there were few other organised facilities for men off-duty, this was in itself a remarkable voluntary contribution to the soldiers' welfare. The institutes were a base for the Wesleyans' religious and social work, including temperance, then a wide-spread and much encouraged movement in the army. Fund raising for the Wesleyan institutes attracted Royal patronage and the support of high level military officers. Wesleyan chaplains were represented on the great state occasions - the old Queen's Jubilee and Funeral, her son's Coronation and her grandson's. The Army Committee Secretary, Allen, was made an Honorary Chaplain to the Army, and later an MVO. The Wesleyans had seemingly arrived.

The provision of the institutes and the chaplains' widespread military service abroad, culminating in the Boer War, led the War Office in 1903 to offer the Wesleyans five commissioned chaplaincies. The number was seen as fair and the significance of the gesture recognised.

The Wesleyan Conference however refused the offer, on the grounds that their authority over ministers serving the army should not be compromised. According to one's perspective, it was an opportunity missed, or principle maintained. The study compares War Office and denominational papers to set out precisely the sticking points on each side.

There was another marked change of gear about 1906. The War Office ushered in a number of interdenominational committees and the Wesleyan occupancy of the stage began to be challenged. Baptists and Congregationalists had never been strong in the army and their Unions had not copied the Wesleyans by making special provision for their soldiers. From 1903 their men were allowed to attest as Baptists or Congregationalists and the two Unions began to name ministers to serve local troops. The English Presbyterians who had been recognised from the start had exercised an influence way beyond their denominational strength through meeting the religious needs of Scottish and Irish Presbyterian troops posted in England. They now looked to a new joint Presbyterian Advisory Committee, set up by the War Office, to increase their stake. Most churches were represented on two other War Office Committees, one to advise on chaplaincy arrangements for the new Territorial Force, the other to advise on Moral and Spiritual issues in the army. The second was less remarkable for what it did than for what it was. Membership ranged from Roman Catholics to Jews and reflected, on the Nonconformist side, a number of their emerging public figures. A survey by this Committee revealed for the first time a shift in the army's general view of the function of a chaplain, away from religious

duties towards welfare. The War Office meanwhile set up a new Chaplains Branch with specific arrangements for dealing with non-Anglican chaplains.

The Great War altered the whole dimension and nature of Free Church army chaplaincies. Their chaplains on active service were given temporary commissions without argument. The Wesleyans sank their principles for the duration of the War and the English Presbyterians rejoiced in at last achieving their goal. At the very start of the War, the Baptists and the Congregationalists (together with the Primitive and United Methodists) were allowed to establish the United Board for the nomination of their ministers as chaplains. They quickly rivalled the Wesleyans in the number of chaplains in the field and through their joint secretary, J. H. Shakespeare, a friend of Lloyd George, outclassed them in access to high places. Compared with the pre-War complement of 117 commissioned chaplains, none of whom were English Nonconformists, the number of chaplains in service reached 3474 by the end of the War, including 256 Wesleyan; and 251 United Board. These numbers added to the status of the churches' Army Committees and made membership of the Interdenominational Advisory Committee on Chaplaincy Services of first importance as a source of influence previously unattainable by Nonconformists.

The study pays particular attention to the formation of this Committee and to its work. The Anglicans were perceived to have taken advantage of their separate chaplaincy organisation in France to increase their share of appointments and promotions. The establishment

of this Committee was a political response of Lloyd George's in favour of the Nonconformists on becoming Secretary of State War in 1916. Strong leadership by Lord Derby in the early days satisfied the demands of the Nonconformists and their Presbyterian and Roman Catholic allies. They achieved thenceforth an equitable division of appointments, promotions and senior posts; and moreover a direct say in all future chaplaincy issues. As the War proceeded, the ageing band of church officials on the Committee found a cohesion and a unity of purpose in which religious divisions figured but were not predominant. This spirit allowed them after the War to return to a complement of 150 commissioned chaplains, agree on the division of this derisively small number among them, and re-establish a unified Chaplains Department with the Wesleyans and the United Board now full participants.

Almost nothing has been written of the role of Nonconformist chaplains as a group in the Great War. The limited view now possible with surviving material indicates that there were few opportunities for what they would perhaps have been best at, the set-piece service and the strong well-crafted address. Instead, it was "a word with the men", hut meetings, make-shift services, burials under fire, letter writing for the wounded and dying and soul-destroying, mainly minor assistance with streams of wounded men passing through clearing stations. There was no training for a job which might at times be simply to act as an extra pair of hands on activities allied to fighting, or dying, or recreation. The morale qualities of a liturgy dependent on simple hymn singing should not be underestimated before a battle, but it did not lead to the hoped for religious revival, still less the denting of religious

indifference or ignorance on the part of most soldiers. In terms of this study, however, it is clear that the presence of Wesleyan and United Board chaplains in every theatre of the war, their strong separate organisations, and their notably good leadership particularly in France and Italy, justified the attempts of the committee-men at home to insist on a place for Nonconformist chaplains in the War.

In the Great War, then, the Free Churches received full recognition of their chaplains in terms of their service, their status and their share of an expanded complement. On one view it was the culmination of a long struggle in keeping with other struggles for religious rights and recognition. On another it was no more than the expression of the rightful place of Free Churchmen in a civilian society which, through the Volunteer Army and then conscription, had taken up arms. Either way it implied a change of sides, a degree of conformity, a taste of Establishment. And there was no going back. The Wesleyans decided after long debate to accept commissions. The others did so without a moment's hesitation. The temporary gentlemen of the war assumed substantive rank. The fact will serve as a symbol of both unity and conformity.

CHAPTER 1

BEGINNINGS

*It was observed abroad that no race of mortals
had so little sense of religion as the English Soldier*

Dean Swift, quoted by G. M. Trevelyan

CHAPTER 1

The Civil War

It is not at all fanciful to seek the origins of Dissenting army chaplaincies in the Parliamentary armies of the Civil War.¹ Presbyterian and Independent ministers served as chaplains in the Army raised by the Earl of Essex in 1642, and also in Manchester's Army and in the New Model Army formed in 1645. The establishment of 1648 provided that such chaplains should be paid six shillings and eightpence a day (but eight shillings for service in Scotland), and should be commissioned (by the Commander-in-Chief). They were never many - except initially in Essex's Army. After the Battle of Edgehill most went home. Others in due course took their place. Only in the later overseas campaigns were chaplains in notably short supply.

Early chaplaincy appointments were in the hands of Regimental Colonels, who made their selection according to their own

1. Based on C. H. Firth, Cromwell's Army, (London 1902). But see also Oskar Teichman, 'Cromwell's Chaplains: Royal Army Chaplains' Department Journal, March 1952, p 257.

religious taste. Richard Baxter was the choice in 1643 for Cromwell's regiment. Chaplains thus were involved in the religious debates which became a focus of political division. In the New Model, when it was first organised, chaplains were appointed to the staff, not to regiments, and numbered only five, leading to the complaint that sectaries among officers and troops had things too much their own way. Fluctuating service and regimental appointments were in the Tudor and Stuart tradition. Staff appointments interestingly anticipated a late eighteenth century reform, which survives. Pay and commissions were nineteenth century issues for Nonconformists.

Involvement in debate among religiously literate troops given to singing psalms on the battle field was however not the only function of the Cromwellian chaplain unfamiliar to later centuries. Particularly between 1642 and 1647, the chaplains also wrote narrative reports of the battles for publication, giving them some claim to being the first war correspondents. The nature of the Civil War was such that the chaplain was able to use religion not just as a spur to personal valour or a solace for suffering but as a root cause of the conflict and hence as the touchstone of loyalty. John Vicars, a master at Christ's Hospital, writing his account of the Battle of Edgehill, illustrates the point:

.....eminently pious and learned pastors rode up
and down the army through the thickest dangers and in
much personal hazard, most faithfully and courageously
exhorting and encouraging the soldiers to fight valiantly
and not to fly, but now, if ever, to stand to it and fight
for their religion and laws.²

The restoration of the Church of England to episcopacy in 1662, and

2. Quoted by *Firth op cit*, p 200.

its supremacy as the established national church, ensured that for nearly two hundred years only Anglicans were appointed chaplains in the English army. Cromwell's chaplains became the only English Dissenting or Nonconformist ministers to serve as commissioned army chaplains until the Great War.

The Scottish Presbyterians fared better. The Covenant Army in the Civil War had an elaborate ecclesiastical structure of ministers, elders, deacons and regimental Kirk sessions under a Presbytery of the Army. Nothing of this Presbyterian sort survived, but the Scottish regiments raised after Union were free to appoint Presbyterian chaplains. Service in England and abroad however led to the appointment of some Episcopalian, so that by 1796 of twenty three chaplains in Scottish line regiments 13 had no connection with the Church of Scotland and 5 of the remainder were parish ministers.³

The inheritors of Cromwell's religious following, the English Congregationalists and Baptists, took little interest in the army until Edwardian times. It is among the Wesleyan Methodists that one finds modern English Nonconformity's first concern for soldiers.

Wesley

Watkins attributes this to Wesley himself:

There was no class of the community to which John Wesley was more drawn or of which he records with greater pleasure stirrings of spiritual awakening than the soldiery.⁴

3. A. C. Dow, Ministers to the Soldiers of Scotland (Edinburgh, 1962) pp 86 and 248. The significance of 1796 is explained below.

4. O. S. Watkins, Soldiers and Preachers Too (London 1906), p 1.

Watkins' book is subtitled, "The romantic story of Methodism in the British Army..." and there is a touch of romanticism in this assessment. One of Wesley's biographers, Tyerman, puts the claim more prosaically: "...from the first soldiers excited Wesley's sympathy."⁵

The eighteenth century army was widely dispersed. It was natural that Wesley on his preaching journeys in England and Ireland should regularly encounter soldiers and become familiar with their state. He was also well supplied (as his Journal records) with news of the army in the Low Country and Germany through letters from his followers there. Drawn from the lowest ranks in society, officered harshly and expected to behave without compassion, the soldiers Wesley knew were plain, crude fighting men. This offended him deeply. "Vice and profaneness in every shape reign among them without control", Wesley wrote.

My soul has been pained... at the senseless, shameless wickedness, the ignorant profaneness... the continual cursing and swearing, the wanton blasphemy of the soldiers in general.⁶

Wesley responded by seeking out soldiers whenever he could and by positioning himself near garrisons when he preached in the open air. In 1743, he wrote a six page tract for them, "A Word in Season, or Advice to a Soldier".⁷ His followers raised a fund to supply Bibles. It became the Naval and Military Bible Society, the first Bible Society to be formed. Two effects begin to be apparent. One is the number of

5. Tyerman, Life and Times of John Wesley (London 1870), vol 1, p 432.

6. Journal of the Revd John Wesley AM edited by Nehemiah Curnock (London 1900) vol 3, p 216. Similar quotations are in Watkins, op cit pp 6 and 7.

7. Tyerman, op cit, vol 1, p 432.

occasions recorded in the Journal on which soldiers protect Wesley from the mob. This was particularly common and necessary in Ireland, where the mainly Protestant soldiery were his natural defenders against unruly and incited Catholic crowds. It is therefore in his Irish journeys that soldiers, their state and their response to his preaching, receive most mention in the Journal. The other effect - to be echoed many times in this account - is the Army's appreciation of the the result of the religious life on the soldier's behaviour and performance. As it was put to Wesley by Colonel Gallatin in Canterbury:

No men fight like those who fear God. I had rather command 500 such than any regiment in His Majesty's Army.⁸

Here and there Societies and classes were formed composed wholly or mainly of soldiers. The Journal's first record of a visit by Wesley to a soldier's Society (in Westminster) was in 1738.⁹ Some itinerant Methodist preachers were press-ganged. The early annals of Methodism begin to be peopled by individual soldiers who seek to exercise an influence among their fellows by open preaching which the Army, perhaps surprisingly, tolerated. John Haines' letters from the Low Country are quoted approvingly in the Journal. He wrote to Wesley, for example, from Assche:

I began to speak openly at a small distance from the camp... We sung a hymn which drew 200 soldiers together and they all behaved decently. After I had prayed, I began to exhort them; and though it rained hard few went away... many say that I am mad; and others have endeavoured to incense the Field Marshall [Cumberland] against me. I have been sent for and examined several times... many of the officers have come to hear themselves, often 9 or 10.¹⁰

8. *Journal*, vol 4, p 149.

9. *Ibid*, vol 2, p 93.

10. *Ibid*, 1 May 1744, vol 3, p 152.

Watkins calculates that more than one fourth of those accounted worthy to have their biographies included in the "Lives of the Early Methodist Preachers" were ex-soldiers.¹¹

In 1745 Wesley found himself in Newcastle-upon-Tyne where Cumberland's army was assembled to repel the Young Pretender's invasion. In a letter to Alderman Matthew Ridley, seeking support for permission to preach to the Army, Wesley set out his mission to soldiers.¹² The number of Methodist preachers and followers in the Army enabled him to claim convincingly that his concern for soldiers was not designed to make cowards of them but in fact to make them more effective fighters:

Did those who feared God behave as cowards at Fontenoy? Did John Haime, the dragoon, betray any cowardice before or after his horse sunk under him? Or did William Clement when he received the first ball in his left, and the second in his right arm? Or John Evans, when the cannon ball took off both his legs?.....

Nor was it Wesley's intention to fill soldiers' heads with peculiar whims and notions. He was constrained only by

the fear of God, the love of my country and the regard I have for his Majesty King George.

This conservative patriot was later to offer to raise a Methodist militia regiment in 1759.¹³ His patriotism indeed added to his Christian concern for the men:

For can it be expected that God should be on their side who are daily affronting him to his face?

11. Watkins, op cit, p 15. 12. Journal, vol 3, p 216.
13. Tyerman, op cit, vol 2, p 234.

Responsibility for the spiritual care of the men lay with chaplains. Wesley was critical of their efforts. In the same letter to Alderman Ridley he asked -

Is there no man to care for these souls? Doubtless there are some who ought so to do. But many of them, if I am rightly informed, receive large pay and do just nothing. I would to God it were in my power to any degree to supply their lack of service. I am ready to do what in me lies... And I desire no pay at all for doing this, unless what my Lord shall give at his appearing.

Duncan Wright, a Wesleyan itinerant preacher, who had been a soldier, wrote:

Were the chaplains men of real piety and courage much might be done in the army; but the chaplaincy is generally a kind of sinecure and the care of souls is left to any worthless wretch that will do it at an easy rate.¹⁴

Reform of Army Chaplaincies

Wright's strictures were fair. Regimental chaplaincies were the perquisite of regimental colonels who sold them, as an income-bearing investment, to the clergy. In return for his 6s 8d a day, the purchaser accepted an obligation to attend to the religious needs of the regiment which, as expressed in the Articles of War of 1717-18, were to be satisfied by "diligent frequenting of Divine Service." By degrees, however, most chaplains treated their chaplaincy as a sinecure and appointed a deputy. Some excuse can be offered:

As the troops in Garrisons were ministered to by the Garrison Chaplains and the men on billet by the Parochial Clergy there was left little duty for the Regimental Chaplain to perform in time of peace.¹⁵

14. Quoted by Watkins, op cit, p 7.

15. C. N. Clode, The Military Forces of the Crown (London 1869), vol 11, p 370. Garrison chaplains were appointed by the Crown.

But not even the curates appointed to deputise were dutiful in attendance when it came to overseas service. In a century which saw many overseas expeditions, most were poorly provided with spiritual leadership. The lowest point was reached in 1795. Sir Ralph Abercromby, preparing to leave for the West Indies with a considerable force, found that not a single chaplain or deputy presented himself,

the chaplains relying on some promise made or implied when they purchased their commissions that personal service would never be demanded of them, provided they assented to the usual deduction from their pay to remunerate a deputy....¹⁶

The failure to find a single chaplain for the Abercromby expedition led to radical reform. By Royal Warrant of 23 September 1796, a Chaplain General was appointed to execute the changes. All regimental chaplains not reporting for duty by Christmas Day were to be compulsorily retired on 4s a day - and all except two duly retired. The appointment of deputies and the sale of commissions by those who did not retire were forbidden. Regimental colonels in post were to be compensated for the loss of the saleable perquisite of the chaplaincy, but even so the reform led to considerable savings - nearly £14,000 a year and capital savings of £130,000. It has to be said that this, rather than the proper provision of chaplaincies, appears to have been the objective of the reform. A limited establishment of chaplains was created at the rate of one for each brigade to serve as army appointments. But the pay - 10 shillings a day - was so low that few came forward. Expeditions still left with very few chaplains. The duties of religious observance at home were mainly to be met by the casual employment of neighbouring clergymen or by attendance of

16. Seventeenth Report of the Commissioners of the Military Enquiry, 1808, p 25.

the regiment at the local parish church. Financial abuse was ended, but religious practice was as much neglected after 1796 as before.¹⁷

Religious toleration in the Army

All recruits to the Army in the eighteenth century had to sign a certificate before a Magistrate which began

I [X] do make Oath that I am a Protestant..
and that I have no Rupture, nor was ever troubled by Fits,
that I am in no Ways disabled by lameness...¹⁸

Nonconformist private men could honestly swear to their religious health in these simple terms and were not hindered on this account from serving in the army. The conscientious Nonconformist - or Presbyterian - seeking a commission might be impeded by the more elaborate religious declaration required by the Test Act of 1689, though he would be saved in practice from doing so by the annual Indemnity Act.¹⁹ In fact, the real impediment for English Nonconformists seeking an army career was the means to purchase a commission - and the lack of call for their

17. Ibid, generally. The reform incidentally was the origin of the term "to the Forces", implying service to the Army as a whole. The Chaplain General was commissioned as "Chaplain General of our Land Forces" and in the London Gazette he appeared as "Chaplain General to the Forces". (Note by A. S. White, Ministry of Defence Librarian, 26 June 1953).

18. Regulations and Instructions for Carrying out the Recruiting Service, 1796.

19. See J. R. Western, 'Roman Catholics holding Military Commissions in 1798', English Historical Review, July 1955

services.²⁰ There are records however of officers participating in Methodist services or protecting Methodist private men from molestation.

How many Methodists or Dissenters served in the eighteenth century army is not known. To the regiment they were simply Protestants, and if indeed the religious observances required by military law were fulfilled like all soldiers they would attend the Anglican service, usually in the local parish church when serving at home.

References in War Office Letter Books show that the requirement to declare oneself a Protestant on enlistment did not in practice exclude Roman Catholics provided they outwardly conformed. Roman Catholics were allowed to take commissions in Irish regiments from 1793 by Act of Parliament (though not to serve on the staff). They were permitted to join the Militia or Fencible regiments in Great Britain from 1798, and in Ireland from 1802. In 1799, the Protestant declaration in the recruitment oath for soldiers was removed.

This marked the beginning of the recognition of religious minorities in the army, but it did not extend to the right to worship, despite (for example) this General Order issued in Edinburgh in 1798, granting commanding officers in Scotland permission to allow

Non-commissioned officers and men to attend Divine
Worship in Churches, Chapels and Meeting Houses of

20. See D. L. Wykes, Religious Dissent and the Penal Laws: an explanation of Business Success, *History*, vol 75, no. 243. February 1990, p 59.

that persuasion to which they belong when an opportunity shall offer.²¹

English regiments regularly served in Scotland though those most likely to benefit would be the Scottish regiments with their mixture of Presbyterians, Episcopalians and Roman Catholics; and how commanding officers would respond to an Order which after all was not mandatory would vary. The Order Book of the Gordon Highlanders for 1809 shows one response:

Officers and men who profess the Catholic religion will attend all Church parades in future but, previous to the service commencing, they will be indulged by being allowed to fall out if they wish but the Commanding Officer cannot see the propriety of their doing so.²²

Neither Catholics nor Dissenters then had the right of access to non-Anglican worship. According to an Irish member speaking on 11 March 1811 in the debate on the Mutiny Bill, there was

for the common people of Ireland... an objection almost insurmountable to enlisting in the Army, arising from the knowledge that they might be compelled to attend Protestant worship.

21. Dow, op cit, p 260.

22. Ibid. p 261.

His amendment to remove this compulsion was opposed on behalf of the Government on the grounds that

if the Catholic soldier was to be especially exempted every class of dissenter in the Army would conceive themselves equally entitled to exemption.²³

In the debate on the same measure in the Upper House, an amendment by Earl Stanhope giving this right of exemption to both classes of dissenters was twice negatived. His more elaborate amendment read:

That Roman Catholics and other Dissenters should be permitted to attend divine worship according to such rites as their consciences suggested and not be compelled to attend at divine service according to the rites of the Established Church.²⁴

Resisting Earl Stanhope, Lord Liverpool said that

as far back as 1802 the strictest orders had been issued by the ...Commander-in-Chief of the Forces that no compulsion... should in any case be resorted to and such since that period had been the uniform practice in the Army.²⁵

Although the Mutiny Act (1811) passed into law unamended in this respect, steps were taken in that year to build into the General Regulations and Orders of the Army the protection of Roman Catholics' rights to attend their own place of worship which Lord Liverpool had claimed - against examples to the contrary, it should be said - had been the practice since 1802. To the "Regulations respecting the Attendance of Regiments at Places appointed for Divine Worship" was added this Regulation:

23. Parliamentary Debates, vol xix, p 350.

24. Ibid pp 384 to 387.

25. Ibid

Commanding Officers of Regiments are to be particularly attentive that no Soldier professing the Roman Catholic religion shall be subject to any punishment for not attending the Divine Worship of the Church of England, and that every such soldier be at full liberty to attend the Worship of Almighty God according to the forms prescribed by his Religion when Military Duty does not interfere.²⁶

Why were Dissenters and Methodists not accorded the same rights?²⁷

1811 was nearly twenty years before religious disabilities generally were to be removed and was a time of rigidly conservative government. Compared with the practical advantage of stimulating enlistment in Ireland during a continental war, and pacifying substantial numbers of Irish already under military discipline, there was little cause to improve the rights of the generally non-enlisting classes of Dissent for the sake of the handful of their number under arms. One can detect too in the phrase "every class of dissenter" anxiety about the number of sects which would have to be accommodated. Finally, there would be distrust of the influence on the men of the preaching of unknown ministers, unschooled in either the universities or the conservative theology of the Catholics, and some of them doubtless imbued with notions of the Enlightenment.

Something of this apprehension may be seen in the prohibition against the circulation of tracts among soldiers, other than by chaplains, in May 1811, and in the closing section of a Circular Letter

26. General Regulations and Orders of the Army, 1811, p 83.
(Issued by the Adjutant General's Office 12 August 1811).

27. The normally reliable Clode says that they were, from 1802: op cit pp 384, 385. But as his references are the Parliamentary Debates just quoted, and the General Order of 1811, he is mistaken.

addressed by the Adjutant General of the Army, Lt. General Calvert, to General Officers Commanding to accompany the General Regulations and Orders of 1811. After saying that it is the Commander-in-Chief's command that Divine Service shall be performed each Sunday, he adds that

His Royal Highness desires that the Service may close with a short practical Sermon suited to the Habits and Understandings of the Soldiers. To this last part of the Service the Commander-in-Chief attaches much importance, as being in conformity to the Custom of the Established Church, and more than ever required at this time, which is peculiarly marked by the Exertions and Interference of Sectaries of various Descriptions.²⁸

Methodist devotions

As the example of John Haimes has shown, Methodist devotional life in the army was not dependent on chaplains, nor formally proclaimed toleration, nor did it require recognition. But it did need protection. Those in the army and navy who had heard or wished to receive the Methodists' message sought each other out, formed class meetings, sang hymns, prayed together and read the scriptures. The reaction of the authorities to such behaviour on HMS Victory is recorded:

There was a set of men on board the Victory, Lord Nelson's ship, and these men never wanted swearing at. The dogs were the best seamen on board. They used to meet together and sing hymns, and nobody dare molest them. The commander would not have suffered it.²⁹

This was doubtless respect for the work ethic - "no men fight like those who fear God" - not regard for religious liberty. But protection of

28. General Regulations and Orders of the Army, 1811, p 329.

29. G. Taylor, The Sea Chaplains (London, 1978), p 383. He attributes the quotation to an article in the Gentlemen's Magazine of the time.

this kind was not exceptional. The Methodist Society in Gibraltar in 1769 numbered 32 and their three leaders were soldiers. A Garrison Order by General Lord Cornwallis of 9 June read:

Whereas divers soldiers and inhabitants assemble themselves every evening to pray, it is the governor's positive order that no person whatsoever molest them, nor go into their meeting to behave indecently there.³⁰

The Society at Gibraltar illustrates many aspects of the relationship between the army and Methodism in the colonies in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. There was opposition from unruly mobs against which Lord Cornwallis's Garrison Order was some protection. There was opposition of an organised kind, by petition to the Governor to stop the meetings, on the ground that private religious gatherings attended by soldiers were liable to be seditious. Such a petition, in 1793, when the Wesleyan Society comprised 120 soldiers of the 46th and 61st regiments, was rejected by the Governor, General O'Hara, with the words,

Let them alone. I wish there were twenty for one of them. We should have fewer court martials.³¹

But there was also opposition based on the infringement of military discipline. Soldiers in Gibraltar caught attending a Methodist meeting in 1803 contrary to regimental orders were court-martialled "for unsoldierlike conduct". Two non-commissioned officers were reduced to

30. W. H. Rule, Wesleyan Methodism in the British Army (London, 1883). p 14.

31. Rule, op cit, pp 14 and 15. Watkins, op cit, p 54.

the ranks and received two hundred lashes each. The ferocity of this sentence however led to representations to the War Office by William Wilberforce and others of influence at home. It marked the end of serious physical punishment for unapproved religious observance in the army.

A form of pragmatic tolerance was evident in the Peninsular War, despite Wellington's dislike of Methodism and his wish to discourage it. His religious views were described by Sir Charles Oman in a well-known passage:

[Wellington] was a sincere believer in Christianity as presented by the Church of England, but he had not been the least affected by recent evangelical developments and his belief was of the rather dry and official sort; any officer who took to public preaching and the forming of religious societies was two or three degrees less distasteful to him than an officer who was foul-mouthed in his language and condemned holy things.³²

Wellington was concerned at the inability of the War Office to supply him with chaplains. The reforms of 1796 had not succeeded in encouraging the clergy to serve the army. The smallness of the chaplains' pay and the length of required service (which precluded preferment at home) meant that very few men came forward. Nor was there any improvement when chaplains' pay was increased in 1806 to equal that of a Major of Infantry. Most expeditions in 1807 and 1808 left without

32. Oman, Wellington's Army (Oxford 1902) p 342

chaplains.³³ Nor was there much change when commissions for chaplains were introduced in 1813. Wellington had precisely two chaplains during the Peninsular War, but one of these never left Lisbon. The rest applied for leave of absence immediately upon arrival. (Symons, who conducted Sir John Moore's funeral and earned immortality of a sort, appears to have been attached to a different expedition). The one reliable chaplain, Samuel Briscall, stayed close to Wellington throughout and was described by his chief as "an excellent young man".

G. R. Gleig, a future Chaplain General, but serving in the Peninsular War as an ensign, says of Briscall in his biography of Wellington that

The Duke in his despatches speaks favourably of him, especially on the ground that he kept down Methodism in the Army.

Gleig adds cautiously - he was to be accused later of prejudice against Methodists himself -

I believe he did more than this...though I and many more never saw him but once and then could not hear a word he said.³⁴

Wellington's despatch of 6 February 1811 to the Adjutant General to the Forces, Lt. General Calvert, gives an impression of the informal religious meetings he disliked and makes their occurrence his reason for

33. Clode, op cit, pp 376, 377

34. G.R. Gleig, edited by his daughter Mary E. Gleig, Reminiscences of the Duke of Wellington (Edinburgh and London 1904) p 129. Audibility and elocution were necessary attributes of the chaplain in the days of massive Church Parades in the open air.

seeking chaplains.

It has...come to my knowledge that Methodism is spreading very fast in the Army. There are two, if not three Methodist meetings in this town, of which one is in the Guards. The men meet in the evening and sing psalms; and I believe a Sergeant (Stephens) now and then gives them a sermon... The meetings likewise prevail in other parts of the Army. In the 9th Regiment there is one at which two officers attend...and the Commanding Officer of the Regiment has not yet been able to prevail upon them to discontinue the practice.

He concludes:

The meeting of soldiers in their cantonments to sing psalms or hear a sermon read by one of their comrades is, in the abstract, perfectly innocent; it is a better way of spending their time than many others to which they are addicted. But it may become otherwise... Official religious instruction is the proper remedy. A "respectable" clergyman is wanted...³⁵

Even if the question had been formally raised, there could have been no chance of recognising Methodism in the Army with attitudes such as Wellington's in command. And the shadow of Wellington lay over the British Army until his death.

Post-War Years

The shadow of the Treasury lay over the chaplaincy service with equally depressing effect. In particular, with the return of the

35. The despatch is quoted in two articles in the Royal Army Chaplains Department Journal: J.C. Jones, 'Sidelights of the Peninsular War on Religion and the Chaplains Department', July 1928, p 24; and T.J. Edwards 'Religious Life in Wellington's Peninsular Army,' January 1934.

the bulk of the Army to Britain parochial clergy were increasingly used to provide religious services against casual but certified payment. The number of full-time commissioned chaplains was gradually diminished. The 1809 establishment of 15 looked positively generous by 1833 when the Army List showed just nine commissioned chaplains, or by 1844 when it showed just five: a Principal Chaplain - the post of Chaplain General had been abolished in 1830 as an economy - and four Chaplains posted to Malta, Chatham, Trinidad and Mauritius. Gleig, who was appointed Principal Chaplain in 1844 at the instance of the Duke of Wellington showed himself to be his own man. He wrote at length about the impossibility of providing adequately for the spiritual needs of the soldiers, with which he equated their moral welfare, if provision rested on the attendance of large numbers of unruly undisciplined men at parish churches, and then only if the weather were fine.³⁶

The five chaplains in the Army List were of course Anglicans. The Act of Union, 1707, provided "forever" for three Church of Scotland chaplains at Edinburgh Castle, Stirling and Dumbarton (though the last location changed). These men were commissioned, but received nominal salaries and presumably served also as parish ministers.³⁷ Otherwise, Scots Presbyterian soldiers too were dependent on unpaid parish ministers, whereas before the reforms of 1796, as has been noted, the Church of Scotland had supplied a number of regimental chaplains.

36. Moral Discipline of the Army, Quarterly Review, LXXVII, September 1845. (The article is unattributed but is clearly Gleig's from the content).

37. Ibid.

The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland protested in 1806, 1812 and 1827 about the poor provision of chaplains. On the last occasion, although the motion was lost in the Assembly, the intention had been to address the King

praying him to take measures for securing to Protestant Officers and Soldiers the same protection which is afforded to their fellow soldiers in communion with the Church of Rome.³⁸

The impression that Roman Catholic soldiers in the year of Catholic Emancipation were already better protected than those of the national Church of Scotland is startling and probably unjustified. What gave rise to the bitterness of feeling was the injustice to the Church of Scotland's standing as a national Church by the insistence of the Chaplain General of the day, Robert Hodgson, that English troops stationed in Scotland should be served by paid Episcopalian clergy. Palmerston, Secretary at War, had argued against this view. He considered that

allowances for Divine Services to the troops shall be given exclusively by the Church Established by Law in country where it is performed.

But in November 1827 the Treasury came down against Palmerston:

... upon further consideration [the Lords Commissioners of H.M. Treasury] are of opinion that Divine Service to English regiments stationed in Scotland should be performed by clergymen of the Church of England wherever it may be practicable to engage clergymen of that Establishment to perform the Service.³⁹

38. Dow, op cit, p 262, 263

39. Quoted by A. C. E. Jarvis, Chaplain General, writing on his predecessors, Royal Army Chaplains' Department Journal, January 1931, pp 445 et seq.

This decision, which was promulgated in 1828, had far reaching consequences, such was the army's reverence for precedent. In 1835, an Irish Presbyterian minister was allowed payment for his services to a Scottish regiment stationed in Galway. As Lord Howick, Secretary at War, put it:

[Because of 1828] it is impossible to deny that Scotch regiments when out of Scotland should have similar indulgences and should be attended by Presbyterian clergymen in connection with the Church of Scotland wherever they may be found.⁴⁰

Through this back-door Irish Presbyterian ministers, provided they were in good standing with the Church of Scotland, secured recognition by the army and received payment ahead of their fellow Presbyterian ministers in Scotland. The recognition and payment of English Presbyterian ministers was in due course secured by the same route.

But the 1828 decision had an even greater consequence. In February 1836 the Treasury decided

that it was incumbent upon the Government to adopt the same principle in other cases which had been already admitted with respect to Episcopalians in Scotland and Presbyterians in Ireland, and without departing from the course already pursued they could not refuse to act upon the same principles in other cases in which it shall upon a review of circumstances appear to be just that religious services rendered to the troops by the clergymen of other denominations should be remunerated by the public.⁴¹

Although cases were to be decided individually, in this way Church of Scotland ministers in Scotland and Roman Catholic priests in the British

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid.

Isles might secure payment for their services to the troops. Understandably perhaps, Lord Howick, Secretary at War, thought it best to avoid calling public attention to his decision and no general regulation was issued. Commissioned chaplains, such as they were, remained exclusively Anglican (save for the three statutory Church of Scotland appointments). But the main burden of chaplaincy work fell to the local parish ministry against casual payment, and now Presbyterians and Roman Catholics throughout the British Isles might also apply to receive payments of the kind enjoyed by Anglican parish clergy since the reform of 1796, when the army used their services.

Once again Dissent and Methodism were excluded. The prejudice was deep-seated. William Dakins, assistant since 1810 to three Chaplains General - a man therefore of long experience - stated that Dissenting and Methodist ministers were even excluded from hospitals when the wounded specifically asked for them:

At York Hospital, Chelsea, to which all the severely wounded came... the men sometimes sent for a priest but... I agreed to admit no Catholic priest unless his attendance was requested by a soldier ... With regard to Dissenters and Methodists an attempt was made but immediately repulsed. As a general principle, the services of a Catholic priest are not denied but the interference of a sectarian is not permitted.⁴²

That was written in 1824 and referred to war-time practice. Dakins, in a minute to Lord Howick in 1836, recommended that Nonconformist ministers (whom he called "Teachers") "should not be excluded from the

42. Ibid.

hospitals when a man applies for spiritual aid and requests that he may be sent for"⁴³. For his time Dakins was liberal in outlook, or at least a pragmatist, but unfortunately uninfluential. It was nevertheless in his time as Principal Chaplain (1830-44) that what appeared to be a beacon of light for soldiers of all religious persuasions appeared. In 1839, General Lord Hill, Commander-in-Chief of the British Army (and the nephew of a notable *evangelical* minister, Rowland Hill), issued the following General Order:

Commanding officers of Regiments are to be particularly attentive that no soldier, being a Roman Catholic, or of any religious persuasion differing from the Established Church, is to be compelled to attend Divine Worship of the Church of England but that every soldier is to be at full liberty to attend the worship of Almighty God according to the forms prescribed by his own religion when military duty does not interfere.

This General Order became part of the Queen's Regulations in 1844.

At face value, the Order of 1839 appears to rush ahead of the gradual enlargements of religious liberty just described. The War Office draftsmen had taken the General Order of 1811 relating to Roman Catholics and adapted it to extend the right to freedom of worship (subject to military duty) seemingly to all. For Presbyterians, both Irish and Scottish, for Scottish Episcopalians and for Roman Catholics, the Order was evidently a formal statement confirming and endorsing what a series of decisions and developments had provided. It gave much satisfaction on that account, not least to the Church of Scotland. But

43. WO 4, 347, p 203.

should it be read as extending freedom of worship to Dissenting and Methodist soldiers? Experience was to suggest otherwise.

Meanwhile, despite the covert decision of 1836 to pay some Presbyterian and Roman Catholic ministers and priests for their services to soldiers, the primacy of the Church of England in chaplaincy provision was little dented. A high degree of primacy was of course justified. In default of reliable statistics one can take the evidence of Gleig, a knowledgeable insider, in 1845:

The English Army is essentially a Protestant one... Out of a total force of 130,000 men, about 30,000 are Roman Catholics and of the remaining three quarters only one sixth in part, if so many, belong to the Scotch Kirk and to all the sects of the Protestant Dissenters put together.⁴⁴

The Treasury's drive for economy in the chaplaincy services in the 'thirties and 'forties nevertheless kept payments to the Church of England low. In 1830, as already noted, the Chaplain General was removed and not replaced. In the same year it was decided to create no more commissioned chaplaincies. The accounts of the Chaplains Department for 1833-34 showed that the nine commissioned chaplains cost just £3802. This was a poor display of primacy. If it was evident at all it was in the payments to local clergy. They received typically "a guinea a sermon". Special allowances might be paid for hospital visiting or more permanent and substantial attendance. In all,

44. G. R. Gleig, 'The Moral Discipline of the Army', Quarterly Review 1845. Vol LXXVI, p 370.

these payments in 1833-4 amounted to £2979 in Great Britain and £2557 in Ireland. Troops in Nova Scotia, Canada, the West Indies and other isolated garrisons were also served by local clergy or by special temporary appointments at a cost of £3600 in that year. It was some share of this expenditure, modest though it was, which non-Anglicans were to expect after 1836.

The Scottish Presbyterians already had a small share, in the three chaplaincies guaranteed to them under the Act of Union. The Roman Catholics had obtained from Sir John Hobhouse in his brief period as Secretary at War (1832-33) authority for payment to a priest in Chatham and to four priests in Ireland for hospital services. Dakins, writing in the time of Hobhouse's successor, plainly regarded this decision as aberrant:

The present Secretary at War has I think most judiciously withheld his consent to pay Catholic priests.⁴⁵

Certainly the only precedent available to Hobhouse was the payment to Roman Catholic priests for services to immigrant soldiers in the British Army during the Napoleonic Wars, but this had been a short-term arrangement.⁴⁶ The payment to Father Meany of Chatham, authorised by Hobhouse in 1833, was a landmark.

After the decision of 1836 it was followed, if not by a flood, by a steady trickle. The accounts for 1839-40, for example, show payments to Roman Catholic priests at Chatham, Plymouth, Portsmouth,

45. WO 4, 347, p 95.

46. WO 4, 347, p 112.

Dublin, six elsewhere in Ireland, Trinidad and Zante (the Ionian Islands). Payments to Presbyterians were made at Dublin, Cork, Glasgow, Paisley, Edinburgh and Stirling.⁴⁷ The trickle continued until by 1857-58, on the eve of the major reforms which followed the Crimean War, payments to Anglican parish clergy in Great Britain, Ireland and abroad were £9692, against £2387 for Presbyterians and £3864 for Roman Catholics. But £12,363 went to Anglican commissioned or permanent chaplains as against £2581 for Presbyterians and Roman Catholics combined.⁴⁸ It was at the provision of commissioned chaplaincies that the reforms of 1858 were to be directed; though, as will be evident in the next chapter, again to the exclusion of Dissent and Methodism, even though the Wesleyans by then were beginning to provide a formal ministry to the troops.

47. WO 4, 347, p 334.

48. Divine Service (Army), Return for the Year 1858, War Office, 18 April 1859.

CHAPTER 2

THE EARLY WESLEYAN EXPERIENCE

*...an enterprise of great labour, delicacy
and responsibility.*

W. H. Rule on Wesleyan army work.

*Brother Rule's wisdom is pure but
not peaceable.*

District Synod Report.

CHAPTER 2

Rule in Gibraltar

The sentencing of two soldiers to be flogged for attending a Wesleyan service in Gibraltar in 1803, and the outcry at home, prompted the Wesleyan Missionary society to appoint a minister to the church there. Though founded by soldiers - Sergeant Ince who originated the first galleries to be blasted inside the Rock in 1782 during the Great Siege was an early leader¹ - soldiers were now effectively prevented from joining. The first minister, James M'Mullen, caught "a pestilence" on the voyage out in 1804 and died after preaching one sermon. The second minister, William Griffith, arrived in 1808 and built the first chapel, which was opened in 1811. The third, William Barber, spoke Spanish and attracted a number of Spanish refugees to the Society before he too died of a "pestilence". William Harris Rule was the fourth minister. He arrived in 1832.

1. Mural tablet in the Methodist Church, Gibraltar.

Rule is the acknowledged authority on the origins of Wesleyan Methodism in the British Army.² But he is much more. "The little doctor" transformed the Wesleyans' view of the army. Hitherto, continuing the tradition established in Wesley's time, Wesleyans had sought through preaching to redeem the soldier's spiritual state, and individual Methodist soldiers had attempted to preach and to practise their religion as openly as they dared. Rule claimed the right of Wesleyan soldiers to be ministered to by Wesleyan ministers. He asserted the right of Wesleyan soldiers to attest to their religion and to be allowed to attend their own services. He challenged the exclusive right of the Church of England to provide chaplains; and when this right was extended to Presbyterians and to Roman Catholics he claimed it for the Wesleyans. In a not unimportant way Rule's army ministry was part of the nineteenth century struggle to end the exclusive powers and privileges of the Established Church and extend religious liberty.

But by degrees of course, and with many retreats; and with his own church authorities not always in the van. At Gibraltar he found an established chapel, soldiers once more the main part of the congregation and use of part of the graveyard sanctioned. (But only after a scandal the previous year, 1831, when the Garrison Chaplain had refused to read the burial service over a child who had been baptised a Methodist). The Governor, General Houston, told Rule he would be recognised as entitled

2. The copy of his book, Wesleyan Methodism in the British Army which I read at Bagshot Park had belonged to Watkins and is annotated by him in such a way as to reveal his use of it in writing his own book, Soldiers and Preachers Too. Rule's covers the period 1839 to 1863 ("the period from dark intolerance to happy recognition"). Watkins' retells this period and moves on to about 1903.

to public protection, and his flock also so long as they deserved it. Rule was given the daily ration issued by the Commissariat to a Civil Officer. But Rule had no military status. Nor did the soldiers in his congregation have any acknowledged right to worship. As Rule put it fifty years later:

In those early days there was no general recognition in the Army of Protestantism; for the exception made in favour of some Scotch regiments, while they were in Scotland was no more than local.³

The position of Scottish Presbyterians abroad was illustrated in Gibraltar in 1839. Rule records that the Highland Regiment, stationed there, were marched to the Church of England garrison church for church parade but refused to enter it. Their spokesman said to their commanding officer, somewhat prosaically,

Sir, we were ordered to march to this church and we are come. But we were not commanded to go into it, and we do not wish to go in, but desire to remain outside.

They were marched back to their quarters. The following Sunday, Rule allowed the Scots soldiers to use his Providence Chapel for their parade service, which was taken by one of their number who was a licentiate of the University of Edinburgh.⁴

Lord Hill's General Order, published the same year, was seen by Rule as a notable advance, and merits repetition on that account:

Commanding Officers of Regiments are to be particularly attentive that no soldier, being a Roman Catholic, or of any religious persuasion differing from the Established

3. W. H. Rule, Wesleyan Methodism in the British Army (London 1883), p 31.

4. Rule, op cit, p 32.

Church, is to be compelled to attend Divine Worship of the Church of England but that every soldier is to be at full liberty to attend the worship of Almighty God according to the forms prescribed by his own religion when military duty does not interfere.

Rule made immediate use of this General Order to secure the release of two Wesleyan soldiers arrested in Gibraltar. One, the Garrison Chaplain's clerk, was stripped of his corporal's stripes for hypocrisy when found to be a Wesleyan. The other, who spoke up for him, was charged with insolence. Rule appealed to the Governor but was refused the right to interfere in a military matter. As the Governor would not intervene, Rule appealed to the Commander-in-Chief. The fast mail-boat bound for England was detained in harbour while depositions by Rule and the Governor were prepared.

Lord Hill's response expressed disapproval of the arrests and the men were released. He wrote:

The intent and meaning of the General Order...[required] carefully abstaining in conformity with its spirit and letter from every measure that might violate the rights of conscience.⁵

Rule's first challenge to authority, like so many later, had a mixed result: release for the men, but the corporal's future blighted. He bought himself out of the army and became a teacher in Rule's mission school. Rule offered further provocations. When the Governor declined to publish the General Order, Rule read it out in church. Then, without authority, he visited the barracks to seek out Wesleyans to persuade them to return themselves as such. But the result was a happy one.

5. Rule, op cit, p 28.

Hauled before the Governor for trespass, Rule submitted himself at once to the Governor's authority. Meeting personally for the first time, the two men found they got on.

[The Governor] expressed his intentions to have Wesleyans marched to Divine Service on Sunday mornings. From that moment our relations became as cordial as ever and Wesleyan soldiers were regularly marched to our church.⁶

It was an achievement to be much vaunted in later years. But it is important to stress that the agreement "to march" Wesleyans to their own church was a voluntary one on the part of the Governor, in the spirit of the General Order, but not in consequence of it. The Order gave a right, but it conferred no authority on anyone, still less instructed anyone, to bring it about. As already noted the General Order did not find its way into Queen's Regulations until 1844 when of course it assumed a stronger degree of authority. It then attracted little attention except among Presbyterians and Roman Catholics, for whom it confirmed rights won piecemeal over the preceding years. Did it apply at all to churches not recognised, such as the Wesleyans? Rule assumed it did, and Lord Hill's response appeared to confirm this intention. On this assumption Rule and the Wesleyans proceeded.

Rule as Missionary, Circuit Minister and in the Book Room

Even before settling the rights of Wesleyan soldiers in Gibraltar satisfactorily, Rule was beginning to turn elsewhere. As the report of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society for 1835 puts it,

The mind of Mr Rule appears to have been for some time

6. Rule, op cit, p 30.

specially drawn to the religious state of Spain itself...⁷. Rule was a Wesleyan convert. His father was a Scottish ships doctor, but was living in Cornwall when his son was born. The family attended the parish church. Leaving home abruptly at 16 after a dispute with his father, the young Rule made a precarious living as a drawer and painter of portraits in Falmouth, and later in Kent, where he taught briefly in a village school. He offered himself to the Wesleyan Methodist ministry on conversion with a view to missionary service. His stationing in Gibraltar followed two years as a missionary in the West Indies; and he had visited Gibraltar earlier when returning from a mission to the Druze in the Lebanon which had been cut short in Malta. It was hardly surprising therefore that he should think it in line with his calling to venture into Spain on a number of hazardous missionary journeys and establish a mission station in Cadiz.

Though the detail is outside the scope of this study, it is relevant to note that Rule's experiences in Malta, Gibraltar and Spain bred in him what today would be regarded as a form of extreme anti-Catholicism. His doctoral study some years later, on the Spanish Inquisition, confirmed it. He found the Maltese islanders and the Spanish peasants under a social and political yoke which he attributed largely to the hold of their Church over them. Many of the Spaniards who attended his Spanish services in Gibraltar were political refugees. Mrs Rule set up schools for their children. There was one illuminating incident in 1839 when the black-coated Rule led a procession of four hundred Spanish children through the winding streets of Gibraltar to celebrate the first

7. p 11.

centenary of John Wesley's "strangely warmed heart".⁸

The hiatus in Rule's work for soldiers was also due to circuit stationings on his return to England in 1842. He bore circuit work with diminishing patience. To be subjected to the whims and pettiness of Lincolnshire shopkeepers and farmers before roads and railways offered the means of escape must have been trying even for one with a less tempestuous temperament and fewer exciting achievements in the mission field than Rule. After a particularly explosive spell in Kent, Rule was taken into the Wesleyan Book Room in 1850 where his undoubted intellectual strengths were profitably used as an editor.

From these labours, Rule was twice deflected by the interests of soldiers. In 1848 he succeeded in securing the passage of the following resolution at the Wesleyan Methodist Conference:

Religious privileges of Soldiers. Resolved, that a letter be sent to Superintendent Ministers stationed in those towns where there are Garrisons or Military Detachments, informing them of the Standing Regulations of the Army, which allows the attendance of Soldiers at Divine Service in the places of worship of their own denomination - and urging these Ministers respectively to take suitable measures for gathering into our congregations such soldiers and non-commissioned officers as desire the benefit of our ministry, in conformity with the intention of Her Majesty's

8. W. H. Rule, Recollection of my life (London 1886) p 75. This book says little of army work because it had been covered in his own earlier book. But Recollections is full of Spain, which remained a life-long interest. Rule's entry in the Dictionary of National Biography supplies an account of his prodigious academic and theological work.

Regulations for maintaining the religious privileges of this class of our fellow subjects.⁹

There was no response. Soldiers in peace-time, and perhaps especially the men of the unreformed army, were an unappealing prospect, even for evangelical ministers. And any minister minded to respond would be more dutifully respectful to a local military commander who declined to march his men to the Wesleyan chapel than Rule would have been.¹⁰

That was Rule's first intervention. The Crimean War (1854-56) led Rule - still in the Book Room - to propose to the Wesleyan Missionary Committee that a minister be sent to serve the Wesleyan troops there. Peter Batchelor, a missionary in Mysore returning home, was diverted to the Crimea and had the distinction of being the first Wesleyan minister "on active service". He had no status beyond being granted free passage on the instructions of Lord Panmure, Secretary of State for War, and quarters and rations were found for him out of charity by the Anglican chaplain in Scutari. Rule comments, not altogether kindly, -

The change from the exhaustion of an Indian mission to the horrid grandeur of a campaign was too violent for our impoverished chaplain to sustain. Happily for him the war ended soon after his landing and he returned forthwith without fairly coming into use.¹¹

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9. Minutes of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference, 1848, p 111. It is interesting that the Wesleyans here and hereafter adopted the army convention of disregarding the religious rights of officers.
 10. Rule, Wesleyan Methodism in the British Army, p 33.
 11. Rule, op cit, pp 33-4. To be completely fair to Batchelor it should be added that the 1854 Wesleyan Methodist Missionary report records that he was given leave of absence from the District for the recovery of his health. Though the sail to and from India was regarded as good for one's health - and Roman Catholic priests were to be regularly put on troop ship duties forty years on for this express reason - hospital duties in Scutari would be unlikely to assist Batchelor's recovery.

Rule and Aldershot

The British failure of arms in the Crimea led to the construction at Aldershot of a Grand School of War. The Aldershot Camp quickly became Rule's sphere of operation. It was also the pretext for an authoritative statement on the Wesleyan approach to the army by the Home Mission committee in which Rule's influence is evident from the correct use of military terms. It deserves to be set out in full.

ALDERSHOTT CAMP. - The British army is itself a class. Separated almost entirely from the associations of civil society, the soldier occupies a position of his own. Ordinarily, he is under extremely demoralising influences, which the utmost efforts of discipline are insufficient to counteract; but the constant neighbourhood of vice, when the grace of God possesses the soldier's heart generally constrains him to present a decision and earnestness of demeanour which is worthy of the highest admiration. The lukewarm inevitably fall away; but the man who has fully consecrated himself to his way boldly advocates his master's cause and pursues his way steadfastly through evil report and good report. Towards this class of men, many of whom are Wesleyans, we have an imperative duty to discharge, and, agreeable to directions long ago issued by the Conference, should provide for having them "paraded", as the phrase is, at Divine worship every Lord's-day morning in towns which are military stations.

Besides these, there are multitudes in the army, of various ranks who have been baptized by our Ministers, taught in our schools, and assembled in our congregations, during their childhood and youth. Many of them cherish the remembrance of their early lessons, and of the example, prayers, and instructions of their parents. Many of them, unsupported by the continuance of such example and instructions, have sunk into the depths of ungodliness. Yet, if the care of these souls devolves on any, - and unquestionably it is the duty of some to care for them most especially, - it must devolve on us. Salutary regulations of the army require every soldier to attend Divine worship once on the Lord's-day, and also provide that every soldier shall be free to worship Almighty God according to the forms of his own religion. This can be carried out in most of our English towns.

But there are now military stations in England where there are no towns; and one such engaged the attention of the last Conference. From fifteen to twenty thousand men are encamped near the little hamlet of Aldershott, in

the heart of a barren and hitherto uninhabited tract of land. There is no place of worship near. The pious soldier cannot find within many miles a congregation of devout worshippers, nor hear a Methodist sermon. He has been hitherto cut off from communion with his brethren, and, for want of some common centre, has not even had the means of ascertaining who, in other divisions of the camp, or even in his own are like-minded with himself. As a first measure, however, the Rev. Peter Batchelor has taken lodgings at Farnham, the nearest town, whence he visits the camp, meets and prays with the Wesleyans whom he finds and is assiduously preparing for the assemblage of a stated congregation which is likely to be large. The Ministers resident in London are appointed by the Conference to watch over this mission to Aldershott; a sub-committee is formed in order to expedite the work; and we doubt not that on an appeal being made to those whose Christian liberality has never yet failed, means will quickly be found to erect a place of worship in the close vicinity of the camp. The maintenance of the Minister must mainly depend on the Home Mission Fund: and reports of his labours from time to time will no doubt justify the expenditure.¹²

While the occasion is taken to urge circuit ministers again to secure the attendance of Wesleyan soldiers at local churches, the most important part of the statement is the intention to make provision for a minister to work among the soldiers at the new camp at Aldershot where there were no nearby churches and in due course for a church to be built. But would the military authorities allow the soldiers to attend?

Though Batchelor had been given charge of Aldershot, Rule had been down on a visit. Recalling lessons well learnt in Gibraltar, he called first on the commanding officer, General William Knollys, and secured

11. R 1856: extract from report to Conference, p 32.

the General's permission to visit soldiers in the tented camp¹³.

He then wrote to Knollys on 17 March 1856:

There are in the Camp at Aldershot several Wesleyan Methodists Desires have been intimated to us that we should preach to them on the Lord's Day... All that we should venture to ask would be permission to send a minister on Sundays to hold a service..... I am able to assure you that the most scrupulous care will be taken not only to observe the general regulations but to place our proceedings under the direct cognizance of the Officer Commanding.....

This was a most punctilious approach. But it will be noticed that agreement would have led to the Wesleyan minister preaching within the camp. Knollys replied briefly on 30 April, doubtless after having taken advice of the War Office:

It is not thought advisable to allow a precedent to be established for any forms of divine worship or for other officiating minister, than those provided by authority, and the regulations of the Army.¹⁴

Faced with such a comprehensive refusal Rule looked about him. He had a means of access to high places. As he puts it himself,

As I had a private channel of access to the Secretary of State for War, I was enabled to engage his Lordship's attention to the subject and received from him through my friend the Hon Arthur Kinnaird the valuable suggestion that a site for the erection of a Church of our own be obtained by purchase outside the camp¹⁵

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13. William Knollys (1797-1883). Son of a General of the same name. Professional soldier. Spain 1813, Paris in army of occupation, 1815. Governor of Guernsey 1854. Commandant, Aldershot 1855-1860. Vice President, Council of Military Education 1861-62. Treasurer and Comptroller of Prince of Wales' household 1862-77. Black Rod 1877-83. Full General 1866, KCB 1867 (Boase).
 14. Rule, op cit, pp 35-38 for the full exchange.
 15. Ibid, p 38.

Kinnaird and Lord Panmure, the Secretary of State, were both Free Church of Scotland men.¹⁶ (One wonders if the same "private channel of access" had been used to secure Batchelor's brief presence at Scutari.)

Kinnaird's letter to Rule of 16 July 1856 reads in part

I saw Lord Panmure yesterday and have great pleasure in telling you that though he cannot actually grant you a site within the Camp, yet he will have much satisfaction in seeing you in its close vicinity and be ready to support you to allow the Wesleyan soldiers to frequent your services.¹⁷

The course of action suggested was however risky. A church built near the camp and remote from civilian habitation, required the attendance of soldiers to justify the cost and that depended on General Knollys agreeing to march them. Kinnaird had told Rule on 2 July that he did not think he could get Lord Panmure "to authorise the troops being marched to your chapel. Every facility will be given, but no order to that effect".¹⁸ Sensing a risk, the Wesleyan Conference of 1856 did not sanction the building of the church; but neither did it disapprove of it, leaving the cost to public subscription.

16. Arthur Kinnaird (1814-1887), banker and philanthropist. There was "no more familiar figure at the May Meetings". MP for Perth 1837-39 and (taking over from Lord Panmure) 1852-78 when succeeded brother as Baron Kinnaird. (DNB)

Fox Maule, 2nd Baron Panmure, 11th Earl of Dalhousie (1801-74). MP for Perthshire 1835-37, Elgin Burghs 1837-41, Perth 1841-52, when succeeded as Lord Panmure. Secretary at War 1846-52 and Secretary of State for War 1855-58. Much criticised for performance of Army in the Crimean War. Succeeded as Lord Dalhousie, 1860. (DNB) It was Fox Maule's motion, rejected by the House of Commons, which led to the Disruption of the Church of Scotland in 1843.

17. MAM PLP 64.47.2.

18. MAM PLP 64.47.1

Reporting the decision of Conference, Rule again wrote to General Knollys on 6 September.

May I beg to inform you that the Wesleyan Conference has sanctioned the appointment of the Rev Peter Batchelor to reside in the neighbourhood of Aldershott and that measures are in progress for the purchase of ground and the erection (for the present) of a temporary church in the vicinity of the camp for the accommodation of members of our communion to whom he will be ready to minister.

We hope to be very soon able to receive the first congregation and would now respectfully request the usual arrangements may be made for marching to the morning service those who desire to worship there. Where there are places of worship sufficiently near the barracks we have been much indebted to Officers Commanding, both in England and the Colonies, for their readiness in causing them to be marched on Sundays. There is no such place near Aldershott, but considering the large number of soldiers in the Camp we have determined to erect one, and maintain a minister at our own cost. This will be a free offering, made with the single desire of taking our share in the discharge of a common duty to the British Army...

No reply is recorded. But Rule writes

I gratefully record the goodness of Lord Panmure who wrote a note to the General asking him to facilitate my operations. I do not know in what terms my request was conveyed but I do know that it could not imply that soldiers were to be marched ...for Lord Panmure distinctly professed himself unable to sanction anything of the sort.¹⁹

"Marching" was a local decision and Rule had correctly addressed that request to General Knollys. (His exaggeration about practice in England and the Colonies is a typically grand Rule touch). The iron church, erected on a site near the South Camp with phenomenal speed, was

19. Rule, op cit, p 42.

opened on 10 July 1857. The President of the Conference himself preached at the opening and a friendly bandsman provided music. Rule, who had now been appointed to Aldershot in place of Batchelor, conducted the services on the following Sunday, though few attended. Then a sudden break-through, recorded by Rule in this letter to Charles Prest of 21 July 1857:

Our position here is most satisfactorily settled without a question and in a most agreeable manner. The Assistant Adjutant General wrote a General Order last week for the attendance of our men... On Saturday the Order issued. On Sunday morning [18 July] those who desired were marched in good order. Of Royal Engineers, Rifles and 20th Infantry, there were more than twenty..... Officers came with them and came in and joined with the greatest propriety and attention in the service.... We had an excellent voluntary attendance in the evening. A sacramental service at noon was one of the best I ever had the privilege of conducting.....²⁰

The same letter records a further acknowledgement of the Wesleyans' new presence:

Her Majesty was so interested in the appearance of a new church, suddenly sprung up, that she drove around with the Court on Friday evening last and drew up to survey the exterior.....

Rule's energies now came to be exercised in several directions. He developed a close and friendly relationship with the Assistant Adjutant General, Colonel Stewart Woodhouse, who taught him the principles of military discipline. These Rule had to understand and reckon with if he was to have any success in the Camp, given his unrecognised status. He was accorded authority to work within the Camp and to visit the sick in hospital. Though short in stature and formal in manner, his services

20. MAM PIP 93.22.3

and preaching appealed to the men. His report to the Home Mission Committee in 1858, only a year after the opening of the Iron Church, records 400 to 500 Wesleyans in the Camp out of around 20,000 troops.

Success on this scale, not unnaturally perhaps, aroused the concern of the Anglican Chaplains to the Forces in the Camp. When the Senior Chaplain complained at Rule's visiting the camp hospitals, General Knollys ignored the complaint. The Anglicans appealed to the Commander-in-Chief, who forbade the visits. "I am dumb. I can say nothing", Woodhouse is reported to have remarked when he handed Rule the order instructing him to stay away from the hospitals. Rule himself then appealed to the Commander-in-Chief direct, on behalf of himself and his fellow Wesleyan ministers elsewhere against "the denial to many thousands of Wesleyan soldiers of a right which we had believed to be guaranteed to them". He received resounding satisfaction. The Commander-in-Chief, HRH the Duke of Cambridge, withdrew the prohibition, though naturally in terms which nominally preserved ^{the} discretion of local commanders:

The question as to the admission of ministers other than those of the Church of England, Presbyterians and Roman Catholics generally to military hospitals has been reconsidered.... His Royal Highness, being desirous of upholding the spirit of Christian Charity and toleration which marks the Regulations of the Army, has requested General Officers and other officers in command at military stations to exercise their discretion as to the admission of Dissenting Ministers to the Military Hospitals under such Regulations as they deem proper....²¹

Thus a significant concession was turned by the Commander-in-Chief into a right, and one to be enjoyed in all military hospitals. Rule joyfully

21. Rule, op cit, pp 61-66. The actual letters exchanged are at MAM PLP 93.21.42.

communicated the result to other ministers concerned.

In another way Rule's work in Aldershot was for the wider church. The Wesleyan presence at Aldershot had a strategic importance. Not only was Aldershot three times larger than the largest garrison - Dublin, - its training functions meant that troops were constantly passing through.

Whenever a regiment leaves containing men who have returned themselves as Wesleyans, due information is given to the Superintendent Minister of the Circuit in the garrison to which they are transferred; and occasion is thus found for having them marched, on Sunday mornings, to their own place of worship; and this may easily lead to an explicit and habitual recognition of the Wesleyan services for the garrison by the Commandant of the District. The opportunity to be thus gained for gathering in the members of Wesleyan families who are serving in the Army is of incalculable value. During the year, such transfers have been made to Birmingham, Canterbury, Chatham, Preston, Yarmouth, Newcastle, Portsmouth and Gibraltar.²²

His letters of commendation were short and to the point:

I have the pleasure of commending to you a Wesleyan Recruit, named William Barker of the 50th Regiment, Parkhurst.

Occasionally he added

I hope he will be faithful as a Wesleyan.²³

Rule as Corresponding Chaplain

At the request of the Home Mission Committee Rule prepared a printed circular letter which was issued to all circuit ministers in garrison towns on 11 October 1858 advising them of the procedure to be

22. R 1858.

23. MAM PFP 93.21.52

followed to secure the marching of Wesleyans to local churches. It also covered hospital visiting, setting up schools and Bible classes and the manner of noting the arrival and departure of Wesleyan soldiers so that the identity of known Wesleyans could be received and passed on. The circular, signed by Rule, concluded

Whenever you desire information and advice I shall be careful to answer your letters as promptly as possible and either give you, or endeavour to obtain for you, all possible assistance.²⁴

The circular marked the start of Rule's additional function as "Corresponding Chaplain", which, he said, brought him "six more years of sharp work". The correspondence concerned all subjects but much of it in the early years was occasioned by the reluctance of Commanding Officers to have their men marched to Wesleyan services. This letter of 9 April 1858, to a circuit minister named Samuel Simpson, will serve as an example of many advising ministers how to identify Wesleyan soldiers to the satisfaction of the military and how to handle Commanding Officers.

No form has to be filled up, nor can any but the men themselves strictly speaking, make the application. They had better send in their names to Orderly Rooms, in the normal way, and the Order will then of course, be given for them to fall out and be marched to their own place of worship on Sunday Mornings. Evening goes for nothing in the Army, but in the morning every soldier not on duty must worship somewhere, or, in military phrase, be "on Church Parade".

Rule suggests that getting other soldiers to encourage applications would be sensible and adds important advice on protocol.

24. Rule, op cit, pp 57 et seq. There is a copy of the circular letter at MAM PLP 93.22.9.

I would further and especially suggest that you should at once call on the Commanding Officers...[to] mention that there are men under their command who wish to worship as Wesleyans and that proper accommodation will be provided for them.

He ends on a note which brings one back to nineteenth-century church politics:

I cannot think that when you and [the Commanding Officers] get face to face...they will feel themselves at liberty to interpose any difficulty, but will perhaps thank you for your attention, and encourage what they now seem to dislike, perhaps not knowing who will minister to their men and what will be their influence on them. The loyalty of our Church, and its freedom from all such political principles as are inconsistent with military discipline may assure their confidence, and nothing so easily as personal communication can dispel a very pardonable distrust. Unfortunately Wesleyan Methodism is confounded, in their apprehension, with Dissent and it is only by perseverance... that false impressions can be removed.²⁵

One of Rule's mottos was that "even one Sunday lost is equivalent with the loss of many men". As well as stirring up the ministers with camps or garrisons in the locality, Rule was concerned that local churches should put themselves out to accommodate the soldiers who came. He wrote to the minister at Hounslow, for example, on 14 October 1861:

You will not bristle up, I know, and tell me that I have taken an unwarrantable liberty in presuming to speak a word about Local Preachers...

A corporal of the 5th Lancers came over from Hounslow to be married on Saturday last and in talking of their present position as Wesleyans observed that the other Sunday they had a local Preacher there who could scarcely read his text.....

Hounslow is an important military station. It is one of a class in the neighbourhood of London. These stations, as regards Methodism, are generally weak. On Sunday mornings when some very incompetent layman stands up to officiate a company of men, intelligent, ungodly for the most part, yet very accessible by suitable ministrations, and... an officer with them... are in the congregation and contribute to give the congregation character.

Now is it possible.... to make this fact a matter of practical consideration in preparing the plan?²⁶

One does not know how this letter was received but Rule's directness was in time to tell against him; and after his death, as is the way, to be told about him.

The Home Mission Committee

Those to whom Rule was immediately responsible were the Aldershot Committee, the group of London ministers who had overseen the erection of the church outside the South Camp and raised the money for it. The Aldershot Committee was responsible to the Home Mission Committee, which was set up in 1856, and whose influential secretary from 1856 to 1875 was a future President of the Conference, Charles Prest.²⁷

The Home Mission Committee had two objectives, described in their fifth report of 1860 as

the sustentation of our ministry in those parts of the Kingdom where local contributions are insufficient for the purpose; and the extension of our evangelical labour among our country men in the large towns and in rural districts.

26. MAM PLP 93.21.43.

27. Charles Prest (1806-1875), a Cornishman. President of the Conference 1862.

The Committee appointed ministers to Home Mission stations and maintained them. It was a proseletysing body, often supporting work of a special or pioneering nature which required to be funded outside the circuit system. Army matters were handled by the Committee as a contingency - its full title was the Committee of the Home Mission and Contingent Fund. Rule's stipend and allowances were paid by the Committee as, in due course, were the stipends and allowances of other ministers "appointed to work wholly or mainly among soldiers". It was the Home Mission Committee which had appointed Rule "Corresponding Chaplain".

These details of church administration are necessary to an understanding of the nature of Wesleyan work among the army and of the organisation which Rule's enthusiasm drove. From virtually the start of Wesleyan Home Mission work, the army was part of it, albeit a very small part. As such, army work was done free, the cost being borne as part of Home Mission. The Wesleyans' voluntary offering of chaplaincy work to the army was their great moral strength in the ensuing claims for recognition. Moreover, army work benefitted from the honoured place of the Home Mission Committee within the Church, and from the respect in which Charles Prest was held. Only rarely did the Conference question the work among soldiers, though in the early years the scandalous reputation of most soldiers aroused doubts. The close partnership between Prest and Rule, the cautious statesman and the somewhat intemperate enthusiast, was the foundation of success in the first few years of Wesleyan army work. Their correspondence, though it began with a seemingly unfavourable development, can be used to trace this success.

Presbyterian and Roman Catholic Advancement

On 14 June 1858, W. W. F. Hume, who sat for Co. Wicklow, asked the Secretary of State for War, now Major General Peel, whether the Government contemplated the appointment of Presbyterian military chaplains in the chief garrison towns of the United Kingdom.²⁸ General Peel replied as follows:

It is the intention of the Government to appoint additional Presbyterian and Roman Catholic Assistant Chaplains, in order to put the Roman Catholic and Presbyterian soldiers, in proportion to their numbers, on an equal footing in this respect with the rest of the Army. They would be stationed wherever their services were most required, and of course they would be liable to be removed whenever a different distribution of the troops should render it necessary. At present, where there were no chaplains, the soldiers attended service at the place of worship of the denomination to which they belonged. Hitherto these services had been paid for on different scales, but for the future it was intended that they should all be paid for on the same footing.²⁹

Rule wrote to Prest on 15 June:

You saw what General Peel said in the House of Commons last night (Monday)? After consulting with some of our brethren I have desired the secretary to summon the Aldershot Committee for Friday, 3 o'clock. We shall then consider an address to be presented by deputation (if the committee so determine) to General Peel laying out the whole case before him. It occurs to me that the Committee of Privileges (Parliamentary)

28. Jonathan Peel (1799-1879), brother of Sir Robert Peel, soldier, politician and patron of the turf. Military career by purchase culminated in Lt. General in 1863 but too young to fight at Waterloo and rejected as too old for Crimea. MP for Norwich 1826-31 and Huntingdon 1831-61. Secretary of State for War 1858-59 and 1866-67. (DNB)

29. Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, 14 June 1858, Col 2014

should be there to meet the Aldershot Committee as our application must not be local. If you think with me, will you call them for the same time?³⁰

The concern behind Rule's letter to Prest is concisely stated in his report to the Home Mission Committee of 1858:

[The government's decision] at least doubles the number of Romish Chaplains and certainly doubles their pay, and almost entirely adds a new set of Presbyterian chaplains.

But Rule was less concerned at the gains of the other churches than that the Wesleyans should seize the occasion to secure what they deserved.

To be precise, he thought:

that application should be made... for permission to officiate in the Churches within the Camp, and for the appointment by the Commander-in-Chief of as many Wesleyan Chaplains both at home and abroad as may be found necessary..... to minister to our brethren.³¹

With or without authority - the Aldershot Committee had predictably decided against a fuss - Rule wrote to the Secretary of State on 24 August 1858. He first rehearsed the familiar General Order of 1839, now long part of Queen's Regulations. He then described the nature of the Wesleyans' work for soldiers, emphasising its voluntary nature, and sought assistance. He continued:

Now that the claims of other denominations are explicitly allowed... it is very strongly felt that the largest of all religious bodies in England save

30. MAM PLP 93.27.8

31. R 1858, p 24.

the Church of England.... cannot in justice be passed over.

May I therefore bespeak your favourable consideration of an application for the appointment of a Wesleyan Chaplaincy at this Camp (Aldershot) and for any application for Head-money which may come in regular form from Wesleyan ministers elsewhere.

The reply came on 2 September 1858, from J. R. Godley, the Assistant Under-secretary for War:

...I have to acquaint you that Chaplains to the Forces are only appointed from among the clergy of the Established Churches of England, Scotland and Ireland; and that General Peel is unable to accede to your application.

This was an unfortunate mis-statement of the facts. As Rule was quick to point out to Godley,

numerous appointments have long been made from among the priests of a third communion which is not.... one of the Established Churches.

Godley wrote again on 15 September, this time with a good deal less haughtiness and addressing Rule's letter, which had not been about Chaplains to the Forces - that is, commissioned chaplains. General Peel had asked him to say that

recent regulations do not affect the system which has always prevailed of paying for their services to troops only the clergy of the Church of England and of the Presbyterian and Roman Catholic Churches.... and to express to you his regret that it is not in his power to break through the established rules of

the service.³²

Rule's requests for a chaplaincy at Aldershot and head-money for the services of circuit minister elsewhere was modest enough compared with the new scale of provision now announced for the Church of England, the Presbyterians and the Roman Catholics. As Rule had shown in Gibraltar and Aldershot, with sufficient persistence the army would allow a Wesleyan ministry to the troops to be undertaken as a concession. Rule wanted it by right; and he wanted it to be paid for. But the nature of Godley's reply is not without interest. The changes announced by Peel were of degree not substance - "the system which has always prevailed" continues. "To break through the rules", which cutting in the Wesleyans would have required, was beyond Peel's power to grant. Precedent and authorisation always ruled at the War Office.

How Presbyterians and Roman Catholics came to be recognised churches has been traced in the previous chapter. Underlying their success in achieving recognition was quite simply the limited acceptability of Anglican chaplains in those substantial sections of the British Army which were raised in Scotland and Ireland. Whereas in this period sailors for the Royal Navy were still drawn mainly from England, the

32. The exchange is in Rule, op cit pp 54 and 55

John Robert Godley (1814-61). Irish land-owner and colonialist. Proposed to relieve Irish distress by supporting mass emigration to Canada, but could not raise government backing. Planned Canterbury, New Zealand, and for three years helped to administer and develop the town on the spot. On return to Ireland became Commissioner for Income Tax. Served at the War Office under Panmure, Peel and Herbert.

army was British. Regiments were raised locally throughout the British Isles even before they were given local names by later reforms. The Wesleyans however were a much smaller proportion of the army than any of the recognized churches and had no regional strength to compare with Irish Catholics or Scottish Presbyterians. It might appear inconsistent that the War Office should regard Presbyterians as one Church, whether Scottish, Irish or English, and whether established or free, but stop short of recognizing the leading English Nonconformist Church. But the Presbyterian Churches recognized were all "in communion with" the established Church of Scotland, or individual ministers were "recognized" by her. Wesleyans were neither. Moreover, whatever their size in the country, they were seen as one of the Dissenting sects, always a source of misunderstanding and suspicion in the War Office and the army.

All that said, there remains a considerable element of surprise (which was no doubt a part of Rule's reaction to Peel's statement) that Roman Catholic advance of the size announced in 1858 - a body of chaplains commensurate with the number of Catholic soldiers - should have come so soon after the eruption of anti-Catholic feeling on the re-establishment of the English hierarchy in 1851. The achievement was due in very large measure to Thomas Grant, Bishop of Southwark.

All our really successful negotiations with the Government in his time for military chaplains, and for navy chaplains, for mitigating oppressive laws... have been directly or indirectly owing to his tact and wisdom.³³

33. Ullathorne, Bishop of Birmingham, quoted in Gillow's Biographical Dictionary of English Catholics, vol III, p 8. There is a biography of Grant by Grace Ramsey, Thomas Grant, First Bishop of Southwark (London 1874) and a forthcoming biography by Revd. Michael Clifton to be called The Quiet Negotiator (December 1990).

Born in France in 1816, the son of an Irish sergeant in a Scottish regiment which fought at Waterloo, Thomas Grant was trained for the priesthood in Rome, becoming successively secretary to Cardinal Acton and Rector of the English College. As agent for the English bishops he played a part behind the scenes in securing agreement to the restoration of the hierarchy and was rewarded by the new Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Wiseman, with the Bishopric of Southwark in 1851 at the age of thirty-five.

Grant was appointed to negotiate on chaplaincies by the Bishop's Council of 1853. The way had been carefully prepared, as part of the wider resolution of the question of how to establish relations with the Government, given their total unwillingness to deal with Wiseman direct. Father Mahé, an army chaplain, appears to have acted as go-between, carrying messages between Lord John Russell and Clarendon (successive Foreign Secretaries) and Ullathorne, the most revered of the old English bishops. Mahé also visited Rome and spoke to the Pope. From all this activity Grant emerged as the bishop whom the Government would expect to communicate with and consult on a wide range of matters. Though he earned Wiseman's resentment on this account, it is clear from the papers on chaplaincies that Grant kept Wiseman informed and did his best to interest him in the important detail.³⁴

Through Grant, the major hurdle of establishing reliable

34. See a confidential letter from Ullathorne to Grant, dated 7 April 1853, Southwark Diocesan Archives. It records Mahé's negotiations and Ullathorne's reply to the government. The letter also assures Grant of the propriety of his acting for the Bishops in this way and acknowledges Grant's reluctance to do so.

communications between the Government and the Hierarchy was surmounted. The Government's need to do so on military matters was two-fold. First, Roman Catholic numbers in the army had continued to grow. By 1854, before the Crimean War, they provided a third of the army. Payments to their clergy for army work had reached £2700, three times that for the Presbyterians (though still well below the Anglicans' £18,500).³⁵ Some means of dealing centrally with the Church on rates of payment and appointments was becoming necessary. Secondly, the determined efforts of the War Office from the mid-forties to improve soldiers' social conditions and welfare included the provision of schooling for soldiers and soldiers' children. The new army schools were to be available for use on Sundays for religious services for all three recognised churches. The post of Chaplain General was revived in 1846 and G. R. Gleig, on appointment, was given the task of inspecting the work of the chaplains and the work of the army schools. These were sensitive issues for Roman Catholics and an authoritative source of advice was needed.

It was however the Crimean War which tested Grant in his new role and established him firmly in the eyes of the Government as one with whom they could do business and who could deliver. He secured the appointment of eight priests to serve as "Assistant Chaplains" in the war - uncommissioned and temporary, but under military orders and paid. He also secured the appointment of ten nuns from his diocese to join

35. Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, 3rd series Cxxxii col 316 et seq (3 March 1854). For Lucas, who initiated the debate, see Edward Lucas, The Life of Frederick Lucas MP (London 1886). Frederick Lucas was the founder of The Tablet and MP for Meath 1852-55, a Quaker by birth and a barrister. He developed an enmity for Archbishop Cullen of Dublin which seems to have upset his mental balance and in which the underprovision of chaplaincy services for Catholic soldiers was a central part.

Miss Nightingale's nursing party. Manning had some part in both arrangements. The letter agreeing to place the nuns under Miss Nightingale's authority went from Grant to the Duke of Newcastle but the first draft was Manning's.³⁶ When the arrangements for the priests were finalised Grant was in Rome and Manning took charge.³⁷ What is quite clear is that the Catholic chaplains in the Crimea saw Grant as their superior³⁸ and that it was Grant alone who negotiated, after the War, the terms of appointment of the first permanent commissioned Catholic chaplains, announced in 1858.

Three parallels with later Wesleyan experiences may be drawn. The first is that the reputation earned by chaplains in the field, and observed by military commanders on the spot, was worth much more than advocacy at home when it came to securing official recognition. That was the Catholics' experience after the Crimean War; it was to be the Wesleyans' also, particularly in and following the Boer War. Had Batchelor been one of half-a-dozen Wesleyan ministers in the Crimea, the path to recognition might have been smoother.

The second is that shared experience of hardship (which Batchelor missed because of the briefness of his stay at Scutari) creates ties of

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36. The draft letter is dated 24 October and is in the Southwark Diocesan Archives, clearly showing Grant's skill as an administrator in his emendations.
37. Clifton, op cit. However the first two appointments were agreed by letter from Sidney Herbert, Secretary at War, to Grant on 28 October 1854 - Southwark Diocesan Archives.
38. The Chaplains, two of whom died of cholera, corresponded regularly with Grant by way of report. Their letters are in the Southwark Diocesan Archives.

mutual respect and understanding which again help recognition.

The sharing of hardships and of a great task brought clergy of different denominations together in friendly co-operation. Mr Whyatt watched by the dying Father Canty only a few weeks before his own death.²³

This has many parallels in Wesleyan experience in the Boer War and the Great War.

The third and most substantial shared experience relates to the potential conflict between ecclesiastical and military authority inherent in commissioned chaplaincy appointments. Is a commissioned chaplain first an officer and second a minister or priest? Or is the Church his master, ahead of the Secretary of State? The strength of derived authority in Methodist polity made this question of first importance for them as for Roman Catholics.

The position of the Chaplain General as the superior military officer of all chaplains, and yet in Anglican Orders, was of great

39. D. H. Simpson, Henry Press Wright, British Columbia Historical Quarterly, vol XIX, nos 3 and 4 (1955). Wright, who later became Archdeacon of British Columbia, was the first chaplain to be posted to the Crimea: the only one of seven commissioned Anglican chaplains fit and able to be sent. He left for Canada in 1875, disappointed at not succeeding Gleig as Chaplain General. Wright's England's Duty to England's Army (1853) is an enlightened charter of social reform for the Army and was perhaps responsible for excluding him from consideration although the stated reason was the wish to appoint a bishop. In a letter to the Times of 29 October 1857 he wrote

"Should we ever have another war in the Crimea (which God forbid) and [the critics] will join the Chaplains' Department of our Army they will find the thermometer at 7 degrees below zero an effectual cooler of all theological disputes, and a dripping bell tent peculiarly calculated to put a damper on all unkind feeling."

concern to Grant. Within a framework in which all chaplains took precedence by rank and were at the disposal of the Secretary of State - a unified Chaplains Department, in other words - Grant secured the concession that, while Anglicans and Presbyterians would send quarterly reports of their charges to the Chaplain General, Roman Catholics would send their reports to the Secretary of State via their Commanding Officers. Gleig tried to persuade Grant that he needed the reports as a matter of strict routine and that he was not to have "any Spirituality". But the concession stood.⁴⁰

The more fundamental question of authority was resolved in the following terms:

[It is] to be distinctly understood that while the selection of [Roman Catholic] Chaplains will be left to their Spiritual Superiors, the right of rejecting any gentleman so recommended is reserved to the Secretary of State for War who alone recommends them for Appointment ...

...

If it should unfortunately be found necessary to recall the Licence of any Roman Catholic Chaplain the fact must be communicated to the Secretary of State.

The Secretary of State for War has the right to cancel Commissions granted to Roman Catholic and other Chaplains when he shall see occasion.⁴¹

In agreeing to this form of words, Grant was prepared to trust his Church's authority over the chaplain to avoid conflicts between his priestly duties and his obligations as an officer, so that the

40. Clergy General No 55 of 7 March 1857, para 6; memorandum by Grant dated 2 November 1858, Southwark Diocesan Archives.

41. Clergy RC General No 219 of 18 January 1859.

overriding authority of the Secretary of State need never be invoked. The Southwark records show that only one Roman Catholic chaplain was threatened with court martial - this was in the 1890s - and that he was prevailed upon to resign his commission by his bishop and so avoided the risk of dismissal by the Secretary of State.⁴²

The Licence mentioned in the General Order was of central importance. Without it the chaplain could not perform his priestly duties. As we shall see, in 1920 at the eleventh hour the War Office suggested a binding agreement between the minister and the President of the Conference to provide the Wesleyan Church with a hold over their chaplains. The concern of both Churches was to make it impossible for men to continue to function as chaplains against their Church's wishes because they still held their commissions.

But the word "Licence" was a convenient term for an elaborate series of authorisations needed by the chaplain. Grant secured from Rome in 1859 special faculties for priests to act as military chaplains and the right to issue them himself. But the chaplain also required faculties from his own diocesan bishop and from the bishop of the diocese where his military station was located. General Peel would have preferred one central Roman Catholic chaplaincy authority⁴³ and it was part of Grant's skill of operation that outwardly he functioned as such so far as the War Office was concerned, settling internal Church difficulties and

42. He was accused of neglecting his hospital duties in Egypt because of drunkenness and was not supported in his pleas of innocence by his Senior Chaplain.

43. Grant to Wiseman of 23 July 1858, Southwark Diocesan Archives.

arguments out of sight. He was also generally regarded by chaplains in the field as their superior although an Episcopal Superior for military chaplains was not appointed until 1903 and a Bishopric for the Forces until 1917. The formal powers of bishops were occasionally used. The most important occasion was in 1863 when Cardinal Cullen, the Archbishop of Dublin, refused faculties to any chaplain not nominated by himself. As a result, from this date English Roman Catholic chaplains did not serve in Ireland.⁴⁴

At the conclusion of Grant's negotiations with the War Office, nineteen Roman Catholic commissioned chaplains were named by Royal Warrant of 5 November 1858 (the date causing some comment). Four were existing Acting Chaplains; the rest new appointments. That they should all be commissioned, rather than Assistant Chaplains as the statement of 18 June 1858 had indicated, was an early concession of Peel's, apparently on legal advice.⁴⁵ Four classes of commissioned chaplains were introduced by the Warrant of 5 November based on seniority, with differential rates of pay, common to all three recognised Churches.⁴⁶ Common rates of pay for Officiating Clergy had been published on 30 June 1858. These had the effect of doubling the rates previously enjoyed by

44. Clifton, op cit.

45. Grant to Wiseman of 23 July 1858, Southwark Diocesan Archives.

46. Clergy General No 217 (Circular 362). Even in the Crimean War Roman Catholics received £150 a year against 16 shillings a day for Anglicans and Presbyterians "in consequence of the different scales of living". (Parliamentary Debates, 3rd series, vol cxxxvii, col 9: 2 March 1855). From 1858 celibacy no longer carried a financial penalty.

Roman Catholics.⁴⁷

The Presbyterian advance was both more modest and less surprising. They too had sent Assistant Chaplains to the Crimea and through the national Church of Scotland had both an Established and a Protestant place in the scheme of things. But they had a smaller claim based on numbers of soldiers than the Roman Catholics and emerged with six commissioned chaplains. They benefited however from the common scales of allowances for Officiating Ministers.

The 1858 changes were even more far reaching. Taken with a decision in 1856 at the end of the Crimean War to increase the complement of full-time chaplains and lessen the reliance on Officiating Clergy, the 1858 reforms introduced for the first time what could be called a professional chaplaincy service. Officers' pay, commissioned status, progression through promotion from one class to another, and pensions allowed clergymen to make their entire career as military chaplains. The Chaplain General's inspectorial powers (which Gleig exercised vigorously) ensured that Anglicans, whose numbers were also increased, took their duties with the same seriousness as the others.⁴⁸

The increased status and numbers of chaplains can be seen as of a piece with the social reform of the army which was intensified after the

47. Clergy General No 141 (Circular 283). Differential pay for officiating clergy had ranged from 10/- a year per man for Anglicans, to 7/6d for Presbyterians and 5/- for Roman Catholics (WO, 20/9/54).

48. See for example Gleig's Hints and Instructions to Military Chaplains, issued in March 1857.

War. The War killed the notion that "the greater the rascal the better the soldier". Education and skills training, barracks, hospitals, schools were as much part of the changes associated with Sidney Herbert as the more familiar medical reforms. To the Victorian mind the association of religion with education and welfare was close. The chaplain's role was no longer confined to the Church Parade, though this was built up as a major occasion. It extended to the barracks school-room, week-night meetings for men and their wives, prison visiting and hospital visiting. The reading-room, temperance and self-improvement became increasingly features of army life.

Respect for precedent and the recentness of their activities in Aldershot may make it unsurprising that the Wesleyans had no part in the 1858 reforms. But, given the common equation of morality and religion, it is very surprising that their voluntary work among soldiers was to be seriously impeded, and then briefly halted, in the years that followed. This was after all a period when widespread voluntary work among soldiers by the well-intentioned of all kinds attempted to make up for long years of neglect of an unchristianised segment of society.⁴⁹ The Wesleyans alone however sought to emulate the recognised churches by providing chaplains, and by claiming rights of worship for the men and so came into conflict with what was authorised.

Continuing work in Aldershot

Faced with the War Office's refusal to recognise them, there was

49. See O. Anderson, 'The Growth of Christian Militarism in mid-Victorian England' English Historical Review, 1971, p 46. (This contains a rare discussion of W. H. Rule and the army work of Wesleyans).

nothing for the Wesleyans but to pursue their labours in Aldershot and elsewhere as before. They would observe the immediate effect of the 1858 changes. Compared with the 20 chaplains in the Army List for that year, 1859 shows 64. And the upward movement continued. By the first quarter of 1866, for example, there were 82. Anglicans predominated - 60 - but there were 16 Roman Catholics and 6 Presbyterians. 14 of the Roman Catholics and 4 of the Presbyterians were 4th class chaplains, indicating absence of service before 1858 or even more recent appointment; the remaining 2 Roman Catholics and 2 Presbyterians were 3rd class. All 1st and 2nd class chaplains and all the old undifferentiated class of 1847, numbering 17 in all, were Anglicans. In short, the establishment of chaplains increased four-fold between 1858 and 1866, three quarters of the total and all senior chaplains were Anglican, and all but 4 of the 22 non-Anglicans owed their appointment to the changes introduced in 1858 from which the Wesleyans gained nothing. On top of this were the higher payments for Roman Catholic and Presbyterian Officiating Clergy, a service which Wesleyan circuit ministers, when permitted to perform it, performed free.

Understandably the written records of 1859 show determination rather than triumph.

Two services in succession on Sunday mornings now, and each are good. Battles with refractory Colonels in the country,

reports Rule in a letter to Prest on 28 February.⁵⁰ A fortnight later on 12 March, he writes a letter to Prest of vehement indignation:

50. PLP MAM 93.22.18

A letter has just come from General Peel refusing my application for a room in the camp for one service on Sundays. This refusal is contrary to the spirit of military law and to the feeling of all around me. It is clear grievance which we cannot pass without resistance...

The disappointment was perhaps the greater because Rule had already reported to Prest that the Assistant Adjutant General was "warmly in favour" and that General Knollys was "fully in favour" of the use of a school room. Rule had added that he did not see how General Peel could refuse. Even so, his indignation over the denial of a school-room must have struck Prest as out of proportion:

It is now a fact that the Secretary for War denies to a considerable body of Wesleyan soldiers the access of their minister for the performance of worship according to the letter of the Queen's Regulations. The moment is therefore come to break silence and to declare ourselves aggrieved before the country. We shall have many friends.⁵¹

So incensed was Rule by this refusal that on 14 March (he told Prest) he:

ran up to town, on the scent for an interview with General Peel, if possible, in order to interpose between him and the influence of the Office. But our constant friend Mr Kinnaird volunteered to take him in hand...⁵²

The matter of the school-room however was not resolved in Rule's favour. The serious point of principle was that, whereas the new school-rooms were widely used for religious services, the War Office would not allow

51. P L P M A M 93.22.12 and 20.

52. P L P M A M 93.22.21

them, or any premises within the Camp, to be used for a religious service or religious instruction conducted by a minister of an unrecognised church. Small though the issue of a school-room seems, the concession would have been a substantial one if it had been granted. The President of Wesleyan Conference, to whom Rule also appealed, declined to put the issue to the Committee of Privileges. Principle or no, the Wesleyan Church authorities clearly wanted a more convincing disability as a pretext for remonstrance than an Aldershot school-room.

When responsibility lay with those in charge of the Camp Rule had more success, as he reported to Prest on 6 April 1859:

Now that we have a large number of men, deaths begin to occur amongst them and will become more frequent.

My first death - strange to say - did not occur until March 21st. It was a Dragoon Guard and the Colonel called on me as a matter of course to bury him. Of course one of the chaplains flew off to Head-Quarters to prevent the trespass on their consecrated ground but found no sympathy. We made a momentary compromise and we buried the corpse, but sent in at once, by advice of the authority to whom appeal was made, an application for ground for Wesleyans and this has been forwarded with due support by the General commanding.

Then last Friday a Rifleman died as I was at his bedside. Instantly I requested the General's authority to bury my dead without molestation and the Senior Chaplain had a written order to give me the keys of the church and of the burial ground for the purpose. So I read the service in the church, conducted the procession to the grave with every circumstance of external propriety and thus received a public recognition which Secretary M. G. Peel, if deliberately asked for it, would have deliberately refused. But the entire feeling of the camp is with me and we black coats must fain shake hands and refrain from quarrelling over the dead to the scandal of the living.

And on 8 April he was able to tell Prest that "Order is come to give us ground for burial in Camp."⁵³

One should perhaps emphasise that this was no simple battle for burial rights of a kind not uncommonly fought in nineteenth-century church-yards. The significance of this success was that Rule had secured the right to conduct a religious service (the burial service) within the Camp, indeed in the Garrison Church. Rule was correct to suppose that General Peel would not have permitted the intrusion had he been asked.

There was a sharp debate at the Wesleyan Conference in 1859 on the designation "Wesleyan soldier". The point arose in connection with the Army practice of requiring soldiers to declare their religion - Church of England, Presbyterian or Roman Catholic, the three columns in the army return. If the Wesleyan campaign for recognition was to succeed - or even, in the meantime, if Wesleyan soldiers were to be identified and "marched" - they too required a designation. Some members of the Conference objected to the application of "Wesleyan",

this honoured name, to the red-coated drunkards,
whose very presence in our towns is pestilential.

There were also objections on the ground that "Wesleyan" should be reserved for the few soldiers who would be members of a Wesleyan Society or class meeting. Rule argued conversely that:

the law of the Army, which is the law of the land,
requires that, whether they be good or bad, they
should be distinguished by a name and we cannot
refuse them our own.⁵⁴

53. PLP MAM 93.22.23, 24.

54. Rule, op cit, p 69.

And he prevailed. The Conference in 1860 instructed Districts to make returns of soldiers declaring themselves as Wesleyans, distinguishing church members from the rest.⁵⁵

The Army Committee

Rule himself had no criticism of the Home Mission Committee for deciding to leave it to him to question General Peel's 1858 statement or take no action on the hindrances put in his way, and that of circuit ministers, in gaining free access to the soldiers.⁵⁶ The War Office, he thought, would have responded badly to a move by a committee avowedly concerned to proselytise. Similar reasoning lay behind the decision of the 1859 Conference to set up an Army Committee. It was established:

for counsel and direction relative to Wesleyans in
the Army

and its membership for many years was to consist of

the President and Secretary of the Conference with
those members of the Home Mission Committee of
management who reside in London, with the addition
of Dr Rule.⁵⁷

Prest doubled as secretary of the Army Committee and the Home Mission Committee. The reports of the Army Committee, and the reports of individual ministers on army matters, appear from 1859 as part of the annual reports of the Home Mission and Contingent Fund. In all

55. Minutes of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference, 1860. The instruction took the form of a new Standing Order.

56. Rule, op cit, 75.

57. Minutes of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference, 1859.

essentials there was continuity. But there was now also a means, hitherto only available in the out-dated Aldershot Committee, to concentrate on army affairs.

In a letter to Prest of 26 November 1859, Rule considers his role of Corresponding Chaplain in relation to the new Committee:

As to form: it seems to me that I should receive from the secretary of the Army Committee any communication which the Committee desires me to act upon, and that I should in like manner lay my communications before the Committee through him. He, I suppose, is the officer of the Committee and I, in conjunction with him, the internuncius between the Conference and the Committee on the one hand and the Army and the country on the other.⁵⁸

Prest perhaps found this a little heavy. His reply, of 28 November, agrees briefly on the "form" of communicating. However, sensing too strong a note of authority in Rule's dealing with the "brethren" in the circuits, he suggests sending the draft circular letter which Rule had prepared only to Rochester and Plymouth

to see how the thing is taken there, and thus we shall feel our way to further correspondence and more extensive communication.

It went eventually to seventy "principal military stations", an indication both of the dispersal of the mid-century army and of the extent of the Wesleyans' voluntary service. At this stage, Rule was the

58. MAM PLP 93.22.34. Prest's reply, next quoted, is written on the reverse.

only full-time minister serving the army and C. H. Kelly, also appointed to Aldershot, the only full-time assistant. (The Wesleyan Missionary Society report for 1859 however notes that Revd Benjamin Broadley, Kurrachee, and Revd Daniel Pearson, Barrackpore, have been "appointed to labour for the Spiritual benefit of Methodist soldiers in these places respectively". But they were not the Army Committee's responsibility.)

The remainder of Rule's letter of 26 November is on a different matter and one of altogether different importance. It relates to head-money.

We must be very careful in this first action of the Army Committee in regard to ministers and trustees, or we shall stir up jealousies. Trustees have a claim on ministers for bringing in troops to fill up space in churches. Ministers have a claim on the State for their services to these troops. We want to keep each class in its own place, and to satisfy each that it has its due and that a new engine of Conference government is not quietly got up to manage them. An important part of our duty... will be to confer with some of the parties most likely to be interested and to prepare for ourselves a feeling of sympathy and confidence before the Army question is fully launched upon the London Conference...

Rule personally had no difficulty with the principle of head-money, that is payment by the State for conducting a religious service according to the number of soldiers (or sailors, or marines) present. His letter to General Peel of 24 August 1858 had sought "his favourable consideration... for any applications for head-money from Wesleyan ministers". This letter to Prest plainly assumes that if the matter is played fairly between trustees and ministers - that is on a practical level - there will be nothing to prevent the request for head-money

featuring strongly in any formal Wesleyan approach to the War Office on disabilities when, in the Home Mission Committee's phrase, such an approach was judged "seasonable".

Rule was to be proved completely wrong. The Memorial drawn up and presented to the Secretary of State in February 1860 sought an official return of Wesleyans in the army but did not ask for head-money. Payment for services dropped from view for twenty years in the official transactions between the Army Committee and the War Office. As Rule put it tersely, "Many of our people would have objected to State help."

Wesleyan Memorial

The first formal statement of Wesleyan disabilities in the army of February 1860 concentrated on the right of Wesleyan soldiers to attest to their religion and sought unfettered attendance at the services voluntarily provided by the Church. It is a major document in the pursuit of religious liberty in England and is given in full.⁵⁹

To the Right Honourable Sidney Herbert, Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for War, the Memorial of the Committee appointed by the Wesleyan Methodist Conference for counsel and direction on affairs relating to Wesleyans in the Army.

Sheweth that the recognition, by Her Majesty's Government, of members of the Church of England, of Presbyterians, and Roman Catholics in the British Army, professedly to the exclusion of all others, but practically to the exclusion of Wesleyans alone, presses heavily on large numbers of Wesleyans throughout the Service.

That while members of the three recognised communions are provided with the means of public worship and

59. Rule, op cit, p 81.

religious instruction, and while both ministers and members of the principal Dissenting denominations avail themselves of the provisions ostensibly made for the Church of Scotland, by accepting the designation of Presbyterian, the Wesleyans alone, who cannot be thus designated, are not only excluded from all such provision for them by the help of voluntary contributions, but are unjustly and untruly counted under one or other of the three names before-said. Nor is this all; for not only is their name suppressed, but they are also made to suffer injury of an intolerance which Her Majesty's Regulations do not justify, and which decisions of the highest authority have discountenanced.

Your memorialists also beg to represent that so long as there is no official return of Wesleyans in the Army, it will be impossible for them to enjoy perfect freedom of worship, or to be fully protected from intolerance; and they regret to be compelled to say that in many Regiments the denial of recognition gives occasion to the exercise of undue influences which counteract the intention of Her Majesty, that every Soldier shall be free to worship Almighty God according to the forms prescribed by his own religion.

Your memorialists therefore earnestly and respectfully pray you to take such measures as shall enable Wesleyans serving in the Army to be at once returned under their proper religious designation, and effectually protected against the oppressive consequences of the system hitherto prevailing.

S. D. Waddy - President of Conference
Charles Prest - Secretary of Army Committee

It will be noted that as well as not asking for head-money the Memorial does not seek recognition for Wesleyans of the kind given to Anglicans, Presbyterians and Roman Catholics, who "are provided with the means of public worship and religious instruction", that is, at public expense. The Memorial asks only that Wesleyans, who are provided with religious ministrations "by means of voluntary contributions" should be allowed to enjoy them; and incidentally, should not be counted as

Presbyterians for the purpose of head-money which is denied to the Wesleyan minister actually providing the service. The Memorial in short is an expression of pure voluntaryism. It seeks an official return of Wesleyans to guarantee their freedom of worship, and to protect them from intolerance, not in order to gain a share of the spoils.

The curious and slightly disapproving reference in the Memorial to "the ministers and members of the principal Dissenting denominations who avail themselves of the provisions made ostensibly for the Church of Scotland", is explained in a note on the Memorial, written by Rule (see below). The intention was to remind the Secretary of State that some non-Presbyterian ministers (that is Congregational and Baptist) drew head-money for providing services to Presbyterian troops. It is probable also that the few Baptists and Congregationalists in the army returned themselves as Presbyterians though there could be no complaint about that.

The Memorial was presented in person to Sidney Herbert, Secretary of State for War, on 21 February 1860.⁶⁰ The party consisted

60. Sidney Herbert (1810-1861), later Lord Herbert of Lea. MP for S. Wiltshire 1834-60. Maiden speech supporting exclusion of Dissenters from the Universities, but illustrated "the gradual tendency of thinking minds to liberalise their political opinions". 1841, Secretary of the Admiralty under Peel. Secretary at War 1845-46 and 1852-55. Secretary of State for War 1859-61, devoting himself to the reform of the Army: reorganisation of the Medical Department, the Militia and Sandhurst, in particular. Went to Upper House 1860 to preserve his strength but died following year. (C. Knight, The English Cyclopaedia, Dir III, 7 v). Friend of Florence Nightingale and Manning. High Churchman. Wife converted to Rome after his death and had long spiritual correspondence with Cardinal Vaughan who found a likeness in her to his mother. (Norman, The English Catholic Church in the Nineteenth Century (Oxford 1984, pp 348-9).

of the President of the Conference, Dr Waddy, Prest, Rule and Revd W. Arthur of the Privileges Committee. From the Church's point of view, it was therefore a major occasion. Sidney Herbert, a close colleague and friend of Gladstone, was favourably regarded by Rule. He described him as "one of the best friends the British Army ever had". It seems fairly clear that it was this view of Herbert, rather than the continuing vexations - by now the stuff of life - which prompted the Wesleyans to move when they did.

The favour shown us by the Government, while it aggravated the traditional opposition of the Clerical Party, encouraged my brethren to move without waiting for seasonable opportunity.⁶¹

Rule left behind, at Herbert's request, a note supporting certain statements in the Memorial. The note appears as an appendix to his book. The note uses the 1851 census to show that the Methodists, taken together, were the second largest religious body in England and Wales (2.5m compared with 5.2m Anglicans and 2.1m Congregationalists and Baptists combined). The Presbyterians at 80,000 and the Roman Catholics at 253,000 were "also rans". The census was based on church attendance on a particular Sunday in March 1851 - evidently one in which many Irish immigrants, by then numbering over 500,000, were not at mass.⁶² Rule then goes on to show why an official return of Wesleyans is

61. Rule, op cit, p 80. It is clear from a letter of Rule's to Prest of 30 June 1860, however, that Herbert too would not sanction his use of a school-room, Rule's normal test of favour. (MAM PLP 93.22.43). But by this date Herbert would be leaving much of his work to others because of ill-health.

62. Norman, op cit, p 206.

required. Wesleyan Church attendance figures at certain named camps were an incomplete record of adherents, because of the distance the men had to march, coupled with the limited available seating in civilian chapels. Rule names the non-Presbyterian dissenting ministers who receive head-money for serving Presbyterians and repeats the Memorial's assumption that Wesleyans count towards Presbyterian claims for head-money. The note sets out the 1859 complement of (commissioned) chaplains by denomination to show that there were 6 Presbyterians and 16 Roman Catholics and forty two Anglicans but no Wesleyans. Rule gives the grants to 'Officiating Clergy' in 1859 as:

| | |
|-------------------|---------|
| Church of England | £30,440 |
| Roman Catholic | £ 6,375 |
| Presbyterian | £ 4,493 |
| Wesleyan | Nothing |

There is then a reference to certain un-named Regiments which prohibit Wesleyans from attending their own form of worship. The note concludes with a recital of "injury and intolerance which decisions of the highest authority have discountenanced".⁶³

Court of Enquiry

Perhaps it was this last section of the note, with its reference to continuing injury and past redress, which prompted the well-meaning Herbert to ask Rule

to inform him of the next case of persecution...so that he might call on the Commander-in-Chief to make it the subject of enquiry.⁶⁴

63. Rule, op cit, pp 121 et seq.

64. Ibid, p 82.

Rule responded to this offer and Herbert set up an enquiry. It eclipsed the Memorial. The Wesleyans received no satisfaction from the enquiry itself and the reaction of those whom Rule had sought to arraign, military and chaplains, made it seem likely that the Wesleyans would lose the gains already made. It was a most unfortunate turn of events for which Rule was blamed.

Some of my friends thought I had gone too far and that the step I had taken would greatly irritate.⁶⁵

Rule perhaps should have realised that Herbert's goodwill could not prevent a military white-wash, even if Rule had a case that would withstand formal presentation of evidence and cross-examination which in the end proved doubtful.

On 12 March 1860 he wrote to Prest:

On Wednesday I shall have a stiff battle to fight. The Duke of Cambridge directs a court of enquiry to be held here concerning the Wesleyans. General Knollys has appointed the day, Wednesday, and I cannot spoil the affair by suggesting a delay.

My complaint is that we suffer perpetual vexations in consequence of our false position. They say: "Bring your complaints". So I must bring up one General of Brigade, two Regimental Commanding Officers and our Chaplain and fight them in detail next Wednesday.

That will be a critical day for Methodism in the Army. Perhaps you will remember me in prayer.⁶⁶

65. Ibid, p 91.

66. MAM PLP 93.22.38.

Rule brought four cases. In the first one, two Lance Corporals had told Kelly that they had been arrested for attending a Wesleyan meeting. The Sergeant-major who arrested them was a Roman Catholic. In court the men denied their story, though according to Rule it was confirmed by a Lance Sergeant. Rule was compelled to agree that the complaint was based on an exaggeration. In the second case, it was more or less established that some bandsmen had been regularly transferred from the Wesleyan service to the Church of England service at the instigation of a junior chaplain. The evident pettiness of the complaint would not impress the court. At the conclusion of these two cases, Rule told Prest

I begin to understand my duties as Wesleyan
Prosecutor General very well.

Rule was in danger of enjoying the occasion he had feared.

The third case was more substantial, but was probably no more than an example of the paternalistic role assumed by many Regimental Colonels of the time. (It is also reminiscent of the Marquess of Downshire who assured Rule that all the Downshire Militia Regiment, in Aldershot to be embodied, must belong to the Church of Ireland because they were his tenants). The Colonel in question, of the 18th Hussars, had for some time followed the custom of asking his men if they were Roman Catholic or Protestant. If the latter, they were marked "Church of England". Should any protest, he set a chaplain to examine him in the beliefs of the sect he claimed. Understandably few were prepared to undergo this test, though Rule claimed to have discovered that 38 of them were

Wesleyans. The same Colonel had an avowed Wesleyan as his schoolmaster. He was made to stand outside while his charges were at their Anglican devotions, with the result that he could not attend his own.

The fourth case concerned the 5th Dragoon Guards, and was little more than a concerned, and perhaps over-zealous, Anglican beating Rule at his own game. The Dragoons arrived at Aldershot from Manchester with 137 declared Wesleyans in their number. "Because Dr Rule had been much among them" this number rose to 268. General Lawrenson, the new Inspector of Cavalry, set his officers to work as he could not believe this outcome. He also arranged a special Anglican service in the Barracks, which were nearer than Rule's church. Lawrenson swung the numbers back to 178 Wesleyans and 167 Church of England.

Having considered the Record of Proceedings, on 26 March 1860 the Duke of Cambridge, Commander-in-Chief, and Herbert, Secretary of State, concluded that "Dr Rule had no good reason for complaint".

Rule was inclined to underline the word "good" when commenting on the verdict. But in fact he had been worsted. There was one favourable outcome, namely that the Commander-in-Chief:

gave such instructions to the Commanding Officer of one of the Regiments as must, if generally followed, almost certainly protect every soldier from interference with his freedom in regard to Divine Worship.

The Commanding Officer was Colonel Knox of the 18th Hussars. He spoke to Rule after the hearing "in a most gentlemanly manner". If Rule was

right to suppose that the instructions to Knox would be generally followed, then perhaps the whole enquiry was worthwhile. But that was Rule's only consolation.⁶⁷

The expected reaction to the enquiry by the "Clerical Party" was at first mild, not to say petty, though Rule described it in a letter to Prest as "strong".

On 14th inst. a letter from Mr Sidney Herbert to General Knollys pronounced that Mr Kelly should be excluded from the Camp as they perceived that he was there without authority.⁶⁸

Knollys, who had originally authorised Kelly's presence in the Camp without reference, sorted this out, himself visiting the Secretary of State and the Commander-in-Chief in person to say that no occasion had been given for the exclusion. Authority was at once given. The Anglican Chaplains had a short-lived triumph. Rule wrote to Prest on 4 May 1860:

You will be glad to hear that the Commander-in-Chief sanctions my having an assistant for the Wesleyans in camp. So that is the last effort of Anglican intolerance, like those which preceded, turned to our advantage.⁶⁹

67. The inquiry and Rule's view of the outcome can be followed in his letters in MAM PLP 93.22.39, 40 and 43; and in Rule, op cit, pp 41 and 42.

68. MAM PLP 93.22.40, dated 25 April 1860.

69. MAM PLP 93.22.41. See also C. H. Kelly, Memories (London 1910) pp 125 et seq

Changes

1860 and 1861 saw four changes among those whom Rule had grown used to working with. Each change in its own way made it easier for opponents to undermine the Wesleyans' position which, so long as they remained unrecognised, was tenuous. The first and probably the most grievous in terms of what the Wesleyans hoped to achieve was the Secretary of State, Sidney Herbert. Soon after accepting the Memorial with apparent sympathy he fell ill. He moved to the House of Lords as Lord Herbert of Lea to conserve his strength but died shortly afterwards. No reply was ever received to the Memorial. Herbert was succeeded in September 1861 by Sir George Cornwall Lewis.⁷⁰

In May 1860, General Knollys left Aldershot to become shortly Comptroller of the Prince of Wales' Household. Though Rule must often have tried him sorely, they had been together virtually since the Aldershot Camp was opened. Knollys had seen at first hand the good Rule had sought to do and the opposition he had encountered. And Knollys had helped Rule significantly, as Rule recorded in a letter of farewell dated 30 May 1860.

When I took the liberty of waiting on you, on my first visit to the Camp, without any kind of introduction, you received me courteously, and when afterwards I came to occupy a new and anomolous position in relation to the Camp, resting my claim on a provision of the Queen's

70. George Cornwall Lewis (1806-1863), Barrister, Poor Law Commissioner 1839-47. MP for Hereford 1847-52, Radnor 1852-63. First Secretary, Treasury 1850-52, Chancellor of the Exchequer 1855-58, Secretary of State Home Department 1858-61, Secretary of State for War 1861-63. Edited Edinburgh Review 1852-1855. Author of numerous works on antiquaries, history and political philosophy. No orator, but a master of ministerial briefs and widely respected. (DNB)

Regulations which had not before been so fully carried into practice, you not only surrendered an objection which you had very naturally entertained [a reference presumably to marching Wesleyan troops] but from that moment proceeded towards myself and the cause I represent with unreserved cordiality.

Rule records the General's help over "the provision of a burial-place for our dead", free access to men in hospital, and his "active support with the Heads of the Army" not least when Kelly was excluded from the Camp and the General "went beyond the ordinary limit of official correspondence and by personal communication... obtained the authority required". On the Court of Enquiry.

....which I fear occasioned you some dissatisfaction, as it placed me in the posture of a complainant after having received so much consideration... you gave me such a court as I might myself have chosen if I had had the power of selection. I had no reason to regret that occurrence on its own account but must confess that the thought of causing you even a shadow of annoyance is painful...⁷¹

The town which had sprung up around the Camp gave General Knollys a farewell banquet, using Rule's good offices to secure the General's acceptance to attend. Rule said grace. Much later, in 1883, Rule was to send Knollys, by then Black Rod, a copy of his book on Wesleyan Methodism in the British Army. Allowing for all the social distancing between Wesleyan minister and soldier-courtier, and the formal style of Victorian letter-writing, it is clear from these final exchanges - Knollys died the same year - that they shared a genuine regard for each

71. MAM PLP 93.21.41. The letter is of course a draft.

other. Knollys was succeeded at Aldershot by Sir John Pennefather.⁷²

Sabin, the Anglican Senior Chaplain at Aldershot also moved on.⁷³ Of him, Rule says simply, "Although antagonists we could be friends", a reminder perhaps that in days when one fought for religious principle the wounds delivered and received were not always personally intended.⁷⁴ Sabin's departure was certainly a loss by comparison with his successor. This man, Huleatt, told Rule at their first meeting that he (Rule) had too great a footing in the Camp where he ought to have none. He, Huleatt, would do his utmost to live Rule down, work him down and pray him down. Rule commented -

Mr Huleatt no doubt took his orders from Mr Chaplain General Gleig⁷⁵

The fourth loss was Kelly himself, who moved to a full-time

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72. The 1883 exchanges are in Rule's Recollections of my life (London 1886).
John Lysaght Pennefather (1800-1872), 3rd son of a Tipperary parson, professional soldier. Hero of the Crimean War; Alma and Inkerman. Governor of Malta 1855-60, Commandant Aldershot 1860-65. Full General 1868. KCB 1855, GCB 1867. (Boase)
73. Sabin's first chaplaincy appointment had been at Scutari in the Crimean War. He figures in Miss Nightingale's correspondence, not altogether kindly: "He is ill and gone home. He is no loss to me, tho' he was the best of the Chaplains". (S. M. Goldie, Florence Nightingale in the Crimean War (Manchester 1987) p 144). Aldershot was his second posting. Conceivably it was Sabin who found Batchelor quarters at Scutari.
74. Rule, Wesleyan Methodism in the British Army (London 1883) p 78. (There is a letter in Kelly's correspondence at MAM, written after he suffered a heart attack in 1910, in which he records receiving in London fresh violets and primroses from a vicar in Devon who had once told Kelly that he would rather plunge his hand into a burning furnace than receive Holy Communion from him).
75. Idem, p 95.

appointment at Chatham. In view of what was to follow, the loss to Rule at Aldershot was slight compared with the advantage of having so able a man as Kelly at hand in what was to prove a trouble-spot. At first, however, the work at Chatham got off to a good start. Rule (who was nominally in charge of both Aldershot and Chatham, with Kelly now as assistant at Chatham) reported to Prest that he had introduced Kelly at head-quarters in Chatham on 29 August 1861 and saw the way clear "to satisfactory relations with the authorities there". He wrote again to Prest on 15 October 1861 -

All goes beautifully at Chatham where I was on Sunday. On Sunday morning we had our first attendance of Marines and a good turn-out it was. I saw the Colonel Commandant of that Corps and we are to get head-money.⁷⁶

Meanwhile, the work in Aldershot was continuing normally. Rule's letter to Prest on 29 August 1861, reporting on Kelly's favourable reception at Chatham, continued -

Here too the horizon gets clear again A solemn funeral in camp and everything ordered for me with the utmost decorum and respectfulness.

Funerals were something of a touchstone. They involved the use of the Garrison Church, required the key to the cemetery, and a grave dug in the right place - all the responsibility of the Anglican chaplains. Huleatt predictably had started out by refusing to have a grave dug for the Wesleyans, and then having it dug in the Anglican section. On this occasion the Wesleyans used the Presbyterian chapel in the camp.

76. MAM PLP 93.22.48 and 51. The under-lining is Rule's. Did it make a difference that the head-money was given as due, and not sought? Its receipt was referred to openly in the Army Committee reports.

Pennefather, who was a stickler for rules, instructed Huleatt that there should be no further interference of this kind.⁷⁷

A final push for Recognition

Still no response had come to the Memorial; and Herbert's illness, retirement, death and replacement were ceasing to be satisfactory explanations. Rule wrote to Prest on 12 September 1861, eighteen months after the Memorial had been presented,

Although nothing appears in the Court Circular for the Secretary of State for War it seems to me hardly likely that he can still be out of town...

The scheme of letting us down, which began months ago, steadily advances, and now I get a note to say we are to deal with Commanding Officers of Regiments and our service is to be discontinued from Divisional Orders.

We must therefore push wherever Sir Cornwallis Lewis may be, and resist this new indignity.⁷⁸

The "indignity" was not a small one. In a camp the size of Aldershot, announcing Wesleyan services in Divisional Orders was essential, as they were the only universally received form of communication. Obliging Rule to deal with Commanding Officers of Regiments, instead of the Division, was down-grading. Chaplains served Divisions, not Regiments. The change was designed to hinder, humiliate and discriminate. And events were to suggest that it was deliberate

77. The incident is most fully set out in Kelly, op cit, p 128. Kelly and the Church of Scotland chaplain, Francis Cannon, were close friends. Cannon had served in the Crimea where he was both chaplain and war correspondent. Kelly became guardian of Cannon's children after his death.

78. MAM PLP 93.22.49.

and centrally conceived.

A week later, on 19 September, having made no progress locally, Rule wrote to the Secretary of State:

...In July 1857, a Church which had been erected at our own cost for the free use of Wesleyan Troops at Aldershot, with the full approval of the Secretary of State for War, was opened and the men were marched to their first service under the sanction of a Divisional Order. Such an Order was repeated weekly without intermission until 14th inst when it was suddenly withdrawn. No reason whatever has been assigned to me for this measure.... I therefore beg to appeal to you against it, as a mark of unmerited disfavour towards a numerous and most loyal portion of the British Army.

The only origin of such an Order which I can possibly conjecture is that, as Wesleyans are said not to be recognised in the Army, some persons who desire that this lack of recognition be made very manifest must have advised this means to be taken. The effect produced is a feeling of deep dissatisfaction, and a most lively sense of wrong...

We have not complained of serving without pay; but that now, after insertion in Garrison Orders of Divine Worship for Wesleyans has had the sanction of military usage for not less than 22 years [- a reference here to Gibraltar -], this very protection should be withdrawn at the principal military station in the Empire excites reasonable alarm.

I hasten to bring this matter to your knowledge, confident that, as a member of Her Majesty's Government, you will not give sanction to a measure which, however otherwise intended, is in its effect replete with injury and contempt.

Rule's command of language and polemical style really demanded a better subject - and a less rubbery target. Sir Edward Lugard, Under Secretary of State at the War Office, replied on 12 October advising Rule to address his complaint

to the Commander-in-Chief. He went on:

Sir George Lewis is the less disposed to interfere as he has every reason to believe that the troops of the Wesleyan persuasion have received every consideration from the Military Authorities at Aldershot.

He then continued in a vein which elevated the complaint to one of main principle.

....Although the Queen's Regulations permit soldiers to attend the Services prescribed by their own religious bodies, whatever these may be, three denominations only are distinctly recognised, and for these Chaplains are appointed and parades ordered. If exception has hitherto been made at the camp in favour of any other Religious body the act was in spirit if not in letter in contravention of those Regulations and if continued would have doubtless led to great inconvenience by giving rise to similar claims on the part of every dissenting body.⁷⁹

Rule took this reply in surprisingly good part. He wrote to Prest on 15 October:

I have just received an answer from Sir Geo C Lewis, through Sir Edward Lugard, one of the Under Secretaries of State, not encouraging as to the particular question of Divisional Orders, but very courteous and written in a very good spirit. It throws us back to the main questions of recognition.⁸⁰

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79. The exchange of letters is in Rule, op cit, pp 96 to 98. Edward Lugard (1810-98). Entered Army 1829, professional soldier in India and Afghanistan. Promoted Major General 1858 for services in the capture of Lucknow. Lt General 1865. Secretary for military correspondence in the War Department 1859 and Permanent Under Secretary for War 1861-71; then President of the Army Purchase Commission to 1882. GCB 1867 Privy Counsellor 1871.
80. MAM PLP 93.22.51.

His good humoured reception of Lugard's letter was perhaps because he saw it as a means of getting the War Office back to the unanswered Memorial in order finally to settle the question of recognition. To Lugard he wrote:

....This local question, however, is now so entirely dependent on the solution of the greater question as to what is due to the Members and Ministers of the Wesleyan Church, which occupies a position in the Community entirely distinct from that of every Dissenting Body, and numbers far above the largest of them, that I must leave others to bring its claims to the consideration of the Government.⁸¹

The same deputation which had waited on Sidney Herbert in February 1860 now waited on his successor on 15 November 1861, with the addition of Dr Jobson, one of the secretaries of the Committee of Privileges. Compared with Herbert's reception, the deputation was received coldly.⁸² A statement was prepared for the meeting - drafted by Rule, but put forward in Prest's name - which covered six points:

- 1) There were large numbers of Wesleyans in the Army who were served by Circuit Ministers and others appointed full-time. All these Ministers were unpaid, but that was not a subject of complaint.
- 2) The readiness of many Commanding Officers to support the work of these ministers "so far as existing usages allowed" was gratefully acknowledged. But these usages increasingly fell short of the exercise of full religious liberty.

81. Rule, op cit, p 99.

82. R 1864. Lewis was also cool and correct towards the Roman Catholics, but Grant could look to Lugard for a sympathetic hearing and good deal of personal warmth. There were also a few Roman Catholic officials in the War Office who on occasion supplied Grant with information and advice beyond the call of their official duties. (See Clifton, op cit)

- 3) For several years, several thousand soldiers had declared themselves to be Wesleyan; but were entered as Presbyterians or Church of England. The existence of Wesleyans was virtually denied in public Army documents.
- 4) Wesleyan Army congregations, unlike all others were obliged to march out of camp or barracks to Divine Worship, without regard to the distance, because their ministers alone were denied the use of Government buildings.
- 5) Commanding Officers were unsure whether they had the power to grant Wesleyan ministers even necessary facilities for their work.
- 6) While "fully aware that Ministers of Religion who did not receive commissions as Chaplains to the Forces could not be recognised as such", some form of recognition or protection for other ministers was required.

The statement concluded with three requests:

That returns be made in Regimental statistics and other official documents of the number of those soldiers who describe themselves as Wesleyan.

That access to Wesleyans in Camps and Barracks for the purpose of Divine Worship, Religious Instruction and Pastoral Care be given to Wesleyan ministers.

That Wesleyans have protection for themselves and for their ministers against the control and interference of ministers of other Churches.

This statement now overtook the finely worded Memorial. It was not provocative, or tendentious, and the three outcomes it sought were reasonable. But according to Rule the deputation also uttered a threat:

We were instructed to give very respectful expressions to the hope that, by favourable consideration of these requests, further

public action, which the Conference and Committee were most anxious to avoid, might not be necessary; but it would be unavoidable unless her Majesty's Government should remove the alleged causes of complaint.⁸³

This was a significant step. Army work was now evidently seen by the leaders of the denominations as of such importance that they were prepared to use public action, albeit of some unstated form, to secure recognition of it by the Government.

Perhaps the threat was uttered too respectfully. Sir George Lewis, the Secretary of State wrote to Prest on 3 January 1862 (but only when he was reminded) to say that he had come to the conclusion

That the practical difficulties in the way of making the proposed alterations are such as to render it advisable to adhere to the existing arrangements in regard to the recognised denominations.⁸⁴

At this point those who seemingly sought to discomfort the Wesleyans and undermine their work took the offensive. Rule was quite clear that he saw the hand of Gleig, the Chaplain General, in this; and certainly the Chaplain General's position of influence at the War Office and his command of Chaplains in the field make this plausible. Rule was also certain that all that had befallen the Wesleyans since the court of enquiry, and all that was now happening, was attributable to what had come out then.

83. Rule, op cit, p 103. The statement just summarised is on the preceding pages.

84. Ibid, p 104.

After the judicial discovery of clerical interference the Chaplain General and his more attached subordinates were most of them aroused to open hostility which was directed against myself more than any other person; but our own chaplains and circuit ministers in the garrison towns... had to bear their share of annoyance.⁸⁵

The attempted exclusion of Kelly from Aldershot was certainly down to the Anglican chaplains at Aldershot. Rule, now claimed, in a letter to Prest, that he had been told

The exact scheme for getting us out of Orders at Aldershot... was worked out by the Chaplains and their Chief....⁸⁶

and this restriction was now by degrees applied to Wesleyan services elsewhere.

But for what now occurred in Aldershot and Chatham one must look elsewhere. This was more than petty hindrance and "vexatious behaviour". The most probable explanation is that the War Office had taken a considered decision to adhere to three recognised churches and restriction of Wesleyan privileges was the consequence. The War Office would have occasion to review this policy when faced with the Memorial of February 1860 - Herbert would not have allowed it simply to be buried - and again when faced with the deputation and statement of November 1861. Their reason for deciding to confine recognition to the three churches might well have been the assumption that what they gave the Wesleyan Methodists today they would have to give to the Congregationalists and Baptists tomorrow; and after them, who else?

85. Ibid, pp 92 and 93.

86. MAM PLP 93.22.54 (The PS).

(Lugard's letter of 12 October 1861 ends on precisely this note).

Though the Wesleyans were not looking for payment, their demands of November 1861 were not free of cost. It did not require much official cynicism to assume that the Wesleyans would move on from recognition to demanding payment. When the War Office reached a decision to confirm their policy of confining recognition to the three Churches, it would be only logical to strip the Wesleyans of the privileges which belonged to recognition and had therefore been improperly granted - in Lugard's words again, "in spirit if not in letter in contravention of [Queen's] Regulations"; and to do so at Chatham and Aldershot where these privileges were most manifest and indeed, as Wesleyan statistics were revealing, where over three fifths of declared Wesleyans were stationed.

On 3 March 1862, General Eyre, in command at Chatham told Kelly he had withdrawn permission for Wesleyan troops to be marched to their own service in the town. Though the Vicar of Chatham, offended by the weekly parade of Wesleyan soldiers through the town, had tried to get the lease of the Hall they used terminated, there is no suggestion that he, rather than the War Office, moved the General to action. The War Office certainly instructed the Colonel Commandant of the Royal Marines to end the payment of head-money to the Wesleyan chaplain; but the Colonel refused to end the marching of Wesleyan Marines as (he said) his men valued the services. In Aldershot, on 21 April, General Pennefather sent for Rule and expressed his regrets that he was no longer permitted to recognise officially the word "Wesleyan" in any public document, return or report. That would affect the fall-out of troops for Wesleyan services. For this reason, or because of the removal of services from

Divisional Orders, or from a sense of general hostility, numbers of soldiers at service in Aldershot fell off.

These moves of course prompted Rule to send letters of protest to the War Office. They were unanswered. As early as 27 March he had invoked Lord Shaftesbury's help, briefing him for a meeting with de Grey, and receiving from him the same day this note:

I have seen Lord de Grey, I do not think you will have any more trouble. He quite concurred in my views. If there be any more interference with your Religious Liberty let me hear of it.⁸⁷

Rule was not reassured. And he was not impressed by the seeming indifference of the denomination, whose leaders had authorised a reference to 'public action' during the meeting with the Secretary of State the previous November but had then done nothing to substantiate it. He wrote to Prest on 22 May 1862:

Advantage is now fully taken of the forbearance and silence. The Wesleyans under General Eyre's command are taken from the Hall and sent to Brompton and Rochester [distant Wesleyan Churches] - worried - mortified - much reduced in number. Instructions are come from the War Office to Colonel Lemon, Commandant of the Marines, that the allowance

87. Lord Shaftesbury's letter is copied by Rule on to the back of a letter to Prest also dated 27 March 1862. It is at MAM PLP 93.22.52.

Lord de Grey and Ripon, 1st Marquess of Ripon (1827-1909). Son of Viscount Goderich, Prime Minister, who was created 1st Earl of Ripon. Succeeded father and uncle, Earl de Grey, in 1859. Under Secretary of State for War 1859-61, for India 1861-63, Secretary 1866, Lord President of the Council 1868-73. A High Anglican and Freemason who converted to Rome 1874. Viceroy of India 1880-84, First Lord 1886, Colonial Secretary 1892-95, Lord Privy Seal 1905-08.

granted to the Wesleyan minister is to be discontinued....

I have written twice to the War Office to remonstrate against the Chatham proceeding but get no answer. I have engaged Lord Shaftesbury to use influence and he is indignant at the persecution, but I fear now that nothing good will come.

Our silence is interpreted as weakness, or someone of our brethren is betraying us. Now the persecution is open. It comes from the Government itself and our resources are in the country and in God.

We have no fresh stir as yet, but I believe Sir John and his staff, while they manifest personal kindness, are afraid to move an inch for us, lest they should be censured for going against orders.

Nothing but Parliament now or, in the reverse of Methodism, Religious Liberty will be crushed in the Army and Popery, with its imitations, rampant.⁸⁸

This is the letter of a distraught man, flailing about him, and with a strong sense of having been deserted. It is worth pausing to remember that Rule, at this time 60, saw his services to the Wesleyan soldier as his life. He remarked once, in a private letter to Prest about some personal matter.

I have raised a new Department of Methodism. I am tugging at an enterprise of great labour, delicacy and responsibility.⁸⁹

He was uniquely able to see what had been gained for the Wesleyan soldier since Gibraltar in 1838, pretty well all of it the fruit of his own labours, or his inspiration. Though Spain and a mission to

88. MAM PLP 93.22.54.

89. MAM PLP 93.22.28

Spaniards were abiding interests, the army work had given him the taste of achievement which he needed for peace of mind. And this success was now under threat, with the denomination apparently holding back.

Relief - indeed triumph - was at hand, though Rule when he wrote his despairing letter of 22 May 1862 could not have known it. Prest had written to the Secretary of State on 1 May. His letter has sadly not survived. If it had turned the Secretary of State away from the policies being pursued in Chatham and Aldershot it deserved to survive. One imagines however that the slow speed of policy making and implementation at the War Office would not allow for that, as Prest was called to the War Office on 30 May. More probably, the advice from Chatham and Aldershot was that the new policy was an embarrassment and that General Eyre in particular had gone too far. Lewis would know from de Grey that Lord Shaftesbury and the evangelicals were stirring. One expects that Lewis would be briefed to know that Prest was no mere ecclesiastical bureaucrat, but now the President-Elect of the Wesleyan Conference. Consideration of his letter would perhaps settle finally the new policy revealed at the War Office meeting now called.

Prest, Rule and two others (one assumes Dr Waddy and Dr Jobson) were present. De Grey and Lugard, who received the deputation, said that the War Office were thinking of instituting a Fourth Column in the official returns of the army for those who were neither Church of England, nor Presbyterian, nor Roman Catholic. The Fourth Column would embrace all others, not Wesleyans alone, thereby providing protection and

recognition to Wesleyans but avoiding a series of concessions to one Dissenting Body after another. As frequently happens when a major change of direction is unexpectedly conceded, the meeting became absorbed in consequential detail. How was the Fourth Column to be headed? Lugard wondered about "Nonconformist". Two present agreed. One demurred. Rule was silent. Rule then took it upon himself to write to Lugard after the meeting, on 31 May, suggesting "Other Protestants" as the title of the Fourth Column.

"Nonconformist" like "Dissenter" naturally falls into a hostile position towards the Church of England, whereas the normal Wesleyan cares not for the Church and State controversy, regarding it as political not religious.⁹⁰

The evident concern to avoid possible Anglican antagonism could only have helped.

But still there was no commitment to the change and anxiety grew as time passed.

...Nothing yet from the War Office and I begin to think our first intelligence will come in the shape of a "Circular to the Army at Home",

wrote Rule to Prest on 9 June.⁹¹ On the War Office proposal itself Rule seems to have had no doubts. Even though it did not provide recognition for Wesleyans specifically, there would be a return in which Wesleyans would be seen as the major constituent. The Fourth Column, as part of an official War Office return, gave authority and protection for

90. Rule, *op cit*, pp 111 to 114; and R 1862.

91. MAM PLP 93.22.55.

religious ministrations to those within it. It also meant that Presbyterians and others who had claimed head-money for Wesleyan soldiers would no longer be able to do so. These limited results seem to have been enough to satisfy the Wesleyans, indeed to see the concession as a triumph.

But still there was no confirmation from the War Office. Then this letter from Rule to Prest dated 13 June:

....The delay is I think explained. On Wednesday (11th) I was transacting business here at Head Quarters and in conversation the Assistant Adjutant General mentioned that he had received a private letter from the Adjutant General, Sir James Yorke Scarlett, asking his opinion as to the propriety of a fourth column. The AAG gave his opinion favourably, on the ground of "fair play", and followed it up by urging that there should be a settlement of our relations with the Army as "the present state of things was embarrassing". On his going to the letter he found it dated May 21st.... No doubt the AG, acting for the Commander-in-Chief, is collecting and reporting the opinion of military authorities. Deliberation... and consultation at intervals of time... must consume time and certainly, this removes a strong sense of mistrust which I both felt and expressed.³²

The War Office eventually pronounced on 17 June. Lugard wrote to Prest to say that it had been decided by the Secretary of State, with the concurrence of the Commander-in-Chief,

that Wesleyan Soldiers should be marched to the Lecture Hall, at Chatham, on Sundays, provided it be not too distant from the Barracks...

He continued.....

And with respect to the practice complained of in returning as Episcopalians or Presbyterians, Soldiers in Hospital belonging to the Wesleyan persuasion I am to acquaint you that Sir George Lewis has intimated his opinion to the General Commanding-in-Chief that Wesleyan Soldiers ought not to be classified under any of these denominations into which the Army is at present divided; but that a fourth class should be formed, under the title of "Other Protestants" to include all men who are neither Episcopalians, Roman Catholics or Presbyterians - this class to be borne on the monthly Regimental Returns rendered to the Horse Guards, and the name of their denomination placed over the beds of such patients in Hospital as may belong to that class. In this suggestion his Royal Highness has signified his concurrence, and orders have been issued for carrying both arrangements into effect accordingly.

Sir George Lewis trusts that this decision will be regarded by you as a satisfactory termination of the complaints which you have brought under his notice.²³

This was a very curious way of communicating a major change of direction. The proviso in the first sentence was perhaps intended as a kindness to General Eyre, although the Hall in Chatham was no great distance. The insistent references to hospitals in the main part of the letter however are most puzzling. Denoting the religious denominations of hospital patients had not figured in either of the Wesleyans' written statements of complaint. Conceivably Prest introduced it as an additional point in his missing letter of 1 May; or Rule may have mentioned it at the meeting at the War Office on 30 May. (His 1862 report from Aldershot does say that "The field of usefulness in the Hospitals was considerably narrowed"). But even if such references to hospitals had been made, to promote them to bear the whole weight of

the War Office's change of direction is totally to distort the basis of the Wesleyans' case. Who was Lugard's letter intended to convince? It is perhaps a reminder that official letters "for the record" are often written for a wider audience than the one which receives them. In this case, when casting around for a pretext for conceding the Wesleyans' case, perhaps someone recalled the Duke of Cambridge's own readiness in 1859 to agree to admit Wesleyan ministers to military hospitals because this upheld "the spirit of Christian Charity and toleration which marks the Regulations of the Army". Here, it seems, the need to identify the religion of the sick on grounds of charity was made to stand as the reason for recognising "Other Protestants" throughout the Army.

Prest replied to Lugard on 27 June, the day after the Army Committee met. He expressed satisfaction

with the Order which removes the annoying restriction upon attendance of Wesleyan soldiers for worship at the place which has been provided at Chatham.

Significantly, he makes no reference whatever to hospitals in the rest of his reply, but says straight-forwardly:

The Committee expresses its satisfaction that it has been determined to discontinue the classification by which Wesleyans in the Army were ranked under one of three denominations hitherto recognised, and to add a fourth class under the title "Other Protestants"; and the Committee entertains the confidence that the Orders issued in consequence of this decision will remove the grievance heretofore complained of.⁹⁴

94. Ibid.

Rule would have the added satisfaction that the title for the Fourth Column was the one he had suggested to Lugard. He was told too by a War Office source that the Duke of Cambridge, the Commander-in-chief, had been heard to enquire whether Dr Rule was now well satisfied. His personal part in the struggle was clearly recognised there as in the denomination.

The Church's response, as with anything bearing Prest's stamp, was distinctly undemonstrative. The 1862 Report of the Home Mission Committee, after quoting the exchange of letters between Lugard and Prest and explaining what had led up to them, says simply that the War Office decision

removes what had been acted on as an exclusive regulation and officially recognises our services to Wesleyan Soldiers.

CHAPTER 3

WESLEYAN RECOGNITION

What a lovely subject a converted soldier is!
Wesleyan member in Malta

For we are no longer outsiders but recognised.
Rule

*The public character and organisation of the
Wesleyans...secures that the ministers appointed
... will discharge their duties efficiently and in strict
accordance with the rules of the Service*
Charles Prest

CHAPTER 3

New Relations with Army and Church

Although it was 1863 before arrangements could be made to introduce the Fourth Column throughout the army - and Rule's correspondence finds a new cause for impatience - the work immediately revived. At Chatham Wesleyan soldiers again marched to the Hall through the town. Head-money for the Wesleyan marines was re-started. At Aldershot

the feeling of depression passed away, the classes revived, and means of grace have been attended with tokens of Divine Presence and heart awakening power. Many have been converted.¹

These last words are a reminder of how Prest and Rule saw the army work. This was now and throughout the 'sixties a peace-time army. Allowing for the disciplinary commitments of army life and a good deal of movement on the part of those served, the missionary work among soldiers and their

1. R 1862.

families was no different in essentials from such work among pottery workers in Stoke or woolcombers in Bradford. The appeal of the pulpit, the purpose of the sermon to convert, the earnestness of the Class Meeting were identical. So too (as will be evident) was the pietistic language, natural to the writer, expected by the reader, in which the results of this work were described.

The difference lay in the minister's accommodation to the military life, his understanding of the protocol to be followed, his willingness to accept the obligation to defer. Rule had learnt these with evident difficulty. He now wished to pass them on. Considering that recognition would require many more Wesleyan full-time appointments, he proposed that

before anyone goes to any of these places he should spend at least a few weeks at Aldershot and get not only hints and observations but regular instruction. He must get a thorough insight into the principles and forms of military administration.

He added:

For we are no longer outsiders but recognised.²

The sense of this today would be obvious. The 1860 Conference had recorded its intention to make more full-time appointments for work among soldiers and had taken the Army Committee's advice on locations. The establishment of Chatham (1861), effectively under Kelly, has been recorded. Shorncliffe

2. MAM PLP 93.22.57 dated 1 July 1862.

followed in 1862. Portsmouth in 1863. These new appointments were the first of those Rule had in mind. As it happened, by the time he was to leave Aldershot in 1865, there would be only two Wesleyan full-time appointments in England who were not, or had not been, Rule's assistants and had not therefore had the benefit of his instruction. But others not still in post had failed. Rule's letter just quoted does not reveal his self-importance (as Prest may assumed) but his clear perception that recognition had consequences for the professionalism of the Wesleyan ministry to soldiers. He was to write later to Prest, on 27 November 1863,

The issue of our experiments up to this time is

3 chaplains effective and at work

2 chaplains at work but not quite up to the mark

4 utter failures and gone.³

Rule does not say who is in each category, though it is not difficult, using the correspondence, to complete the identification. The marks of failure and success are of more importance. An earlier letter in 1863 gives several clues.⁴

Brunyate began awkwardly. His first letter to the AAG was written in a style which betrayed incapacity and his personal communications did not raise him nor conciliate the General and his staff...

3. MAM PLP 93.22.84.

4. MAM PLP 93.22.78 dated 18 August. 'AAG' is Assistant Adjutant General, the principal administrative officer in each Camp or Garrison.

Then Brunyate got mixed up with the Circuit and completely lost his distinctive position. The military services, meddled with by we know not whom, became contemptible. Nor is there, at this time, any right apprehension in the Dover Circuit of the true position of the minister at Shorncliffe, as singly and exclusively appointed to the Camp, and responsible to the Army Committee, and in the right of the military authorities.

As a result of this confusion

General Dalzell does not appear to have understood that Mr Brunyate differed in his position from Circuit ministers.

In short, Brunyate failed at Shorncliffe in 1862 because he did not know how to communicate with the local military commanders and because the local circuit sought to share his ministry, and he permitted it. Rule contrasts him with Jutson, appointed in 1863 to Portsmouth:

Jutson did well He kept himself in communication with me, took advice on every point, and received drafts for all his letters - confidentially, of course, between ourselves, - and, by his very amiable manner gained general esteem.⁵

Portsmouth was a circuit town too. Immediately after the 1860 Conference, when it was assumed that the Portsmouth appointment would be quickly made and ahead of Shorncliffe, Rule addressed Prest on its importance as a precedent:

...as this first appointment of a chaplain in a circuit town and in dependence for [church] accommodation on the Trustees is the precedent that others will follow, we must look fully into it and not leave it to the mercy of people in Committee who are not prepared to appreciate all its bearings.

5. Ibid.

Rule saw the division of responsibilities between the chaplain, the circuit and the Army Committee as follows:

While acting always in harmony with the circuit ministers, it will be necessary to avoid any such mingling of duties as will bring them into his work, or interfere with his direct and sole responsibility to us and ours to the Government.... But if the Trustees give him the use of their premises for the troops and also give up the benefit of the Head-money, they will certainly be entitled to claim some share of his labours...⁶

The delay in establishing the chaplaincy at Portsmouth was perhaps worth-while in that no trouble with the circuit trustees or ministers arose and another appointment like Chatham, involving troops, marines (with head-money), and in due course sailors, was successfully launched.

Rule was evidently anxious about Brunyate's successor, Webster, for an interestingly different reason. Webster had been posted to Shorncliffe from Gibraltar. Rule writes

...I know him to be capable of good service, and able to be accurate and diligent in what he does. I also know that his residence in Gibraltar has not made him familiar with the niceties of military discipline and correspondence and the posture of Sir W Codrington [Governor of Gibraltar] and others towards us there has kept him so constantly under a sense of wrong, and led him into such a habit of complaint that it will cost him no little effort to unlearn, and throw himself freely into amicable relations in spite of frequent provocations to the contrary.

6. MAM PLP 93.22.42, dated 16 June 1860.

On this point I have had free conversation with him, but he will have to learn it practically, just as Kelly has done, and as Jutson is doing.⁷

There could be no better teacher, one feels, than Rule who had himself railed against provocation in his time (and was still capable of doing so) but had learnt also the fruits of cooperation and compliance, and the art of deference when dealing with military commanders.

Rule understood the nature of military discipline.

The following passage, taken from the preface of Rule's book, Wesleyan Methodism in the British Army, may have been written in reflective mood at the time of publication (1883), rather than at the time when much of the rest of the book was evidently written (about 1865), but it is the essence of what he had learnt and wished to pass on to the new full-time Wesleyan chaplains.

We should all have a distinct idea of the constitution and discipline of the Army.... Unquestioning obedience in those who serve, and entire responsibility in those who command ... Yet no officer can be with impunity a tyrant; no private soldier without redress a slave. Everyone must obey; none can shun his duty..... For all that is done authority must be had. Without authority none may presume to intrude into the Service.... The discipline must always be just, and it is essentially moral; it subdues the stubborn and brings down the proud The Captain and the Chaplain, each according to the law of his own profession, must be submissive The writer of these lines, after nine years of stern probation as an unbidden volunteer, but constantly keeping himself in communication with the Authorities concerned, as well as with the humblest subjects of his own spiritual charge, can testify as a Christian Minister, subject to God above all, he has found at once the advantage and the necessity

7. MAM PLP 93.22.78 dated 18 August 1863.

of careful self-adaptation to this admirable system of Authority and order by which he and his troublers were controlled alike.

Relations with the Chaplain General

Recognition also raised the question of what should now be the Wesleyan chaplain's relationship with the Chaplain General. Here Rule began with a distrust of the individual.

[We] must be awake to the fact that friend Gleig will not be indifferent to the erection of another religious section in the Army, that like the Romanist corresponds with the War Office without going through him.⁸

But Rule recognised Gleig's official position as Head of a Department of the Army, operating from the War Office. Hitherto the Wesleyan ministers working among soldiers, had not been part of the official machine. Would Wesleyans now be like the Roman Catholics who

are excused from a direct communication with the Chaplain General, their reports etc being sent to Officers Commanding, and by them to him?

Or would they be like the Presbyterian chaplains, who communicate directly with the Chaplain General? Rule wisely adds:

Doubtless this will be, at some time, a subject of serious consideration with the Secretary of State and if we can approach the subject without any declared difference of opinion between them and us the settlement will be so much more easy.⁹

For the first two years in any case Rule reported to

8. MAM PLP 93.22.59, dated 6 September 1862.

9. MAM PLP 93.22.62, dated 7 January 1863.

the Chaplain General.¹⁰ Thereafter, the view was taken that Wesleyan ministers need not report to the Chaplain General because they were civilians. Presbyterian and Roman Catholic commissioned chaplains were military officers, junior in rank to the Chaplain General, and it was their relationship to him as his junior officers which made reporting an issue for them. In 1867, the subordination of Presbyterian ministers to an episcopally ordained Chaplain General led to a remonstrance in the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and "spiritual superintendence" of both Irish and Scottish Presbyterian chaplains passed to committees of the two Churches.¹¹ Roman Catholic chaplains had reported to commanding officers instead of the Chaplain General since 1857. For the Wesleyan ministers, though inclined increasingly to call themselves "chaplains", the Secretary of the Army Committee remained their formal means of communication with the Horse Guards, as with the War Office. Special arrangements were made in 1862, at the request of the War Office, to ensure that Rule understood he was no longer to write direct.

Did Gleig merit Rule's distrust? Rule and the Wesleyans certainly endured much "vexatious behaviour" on the part of the Anglican chaplains. It would be unfair to say that Rule invited it, though he was certainly active in securing concessions from the military, publicising them and building on them. He, and later Wesleyan commentators including Watkins, were also inclined

10. C. H. Kelly, Memories (London 1910), p 122.

11. The Church in the Army and Navy, Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine no. DCXXIX (March 1868) vol CIII, p 268, and Journal of the Royal Army Chaplains' Department V (January 1935) no. 39, p 21.

to turn these successes into battle honours, with the incidental effect of heightening the impression of confrontation. Gleig's personal involvement in local disputes must be questionable, although it was part of his strength as Chaplain General that he insisted on knowing what was going on. If (as has been suggested earlier) the attempt to remove Wesleyan privileges in Aldershot and Chatham in 1861 was the consequence of a War Office decision, Gleig at the centre cannot escape blame since his advice would be bound to be sought. But there is no specific evidence that he was involved in the decision, let alone responsible for it.

Leaving aside Rule, there are three other witnesses to Gleig's opposition to Wesleyans. Kelly, a contemporary observer, but level-headed to the point of not mentioning the Chatham incidents of 1861 in his memoirs, saw Gleig very clearly as an enemy.

[Gleig] was of the old school of parsons - high, dry and bitterly opposed to Nonconformists. He took a special dislike against me and declared he would prevent me ever having access to soldiers.¹²

Watkins cannot count as a witness as he merely followed Rule's account, and even on occasion used Rule's own words:

[After the Court of inquiry of 1860] the enmity of the Chaplain General was yet further aggravated and the hostility of himself and his more attached subordinates became more open.¹³

12. C. H. Kelly Memories, p 122.

13. O. S. Watkins, Soldiers and Preachers Too (London 1906), p 92.

But it was these words which prompted a later Chaplain General to come to Gleig's defence. A. C. E. Jarvis, writing in the 1930s with the advantage of Gleig's papers in front of him, had no doubt that Rule and Watkins were mistaken:

I regard it as my duty to place on record that having been through all [Gleig's] papers and minutes of this period and throughout his service I cannot possibly understand it. Such a spirit was entirely alien to Gleig; in all that I have seen the contrary is apparent... All this trouble over Wesleyan ministers may have been a reflection on the general condition into which the Church of England chaplains had drifted.¹⁴

It should be said that Jarvis's long study of his predecessors is a serious work of research based on their papers. If the study has a fault, however, it is that Jarvis makes no attempt to judge events from the standpoint of the period of the particular Chaplain General he is describing, but very much from the 1920s and 1930s. When Jarvis became Chaplain General in 1922 he had known Wesleyan chaplains as colleagues in the Great War and he had the best of them, including Watkins, within the re-unified Chaplains Department which he headed. Indeed (as will be noted in Chapter 9), he partly owed his appointment as Chaplain General to the Wesleyans who supported him against a Church of Scotland nomination, a state of affairs which Gleig would have found

14. A. C. E. Jarvis, My Predecessors in Office, Journal of the Royal Army Chaplains Department vol IV (July 1933) no. 36, p 344.

incomprehensible. Equally bizarre to Jarvis would be the notion that Gleig, whom he revered, would behave badly to Wesleyans. The furthest Jarvis could go was to blame the local chaplains.

But despite Jarvis, the third witness is Gleig himself. His War was the Peninsular. He shared his master Wellington's dislike of the practice of Methodism in the army and, like Wellington, he saw the answer in the provision of sufficient Anglican chaplains of quality who would win the men from the temptations of the sectarians. Gleig's long period as Chaplain General, from 1846 to 1875, saw the achievement of increased numbers of Anglican chaplains and the introduction of a professional and effective service. He must in consequence rank as the greatest Chaplain General of the century, with a real concern for the soldier, his education and his welfare. But he was still a man formed in the Napoleonic Wars. Just fifty when appointed, he was eighty when he retired. To his own flock, he was a conservative disciplinarian, requiring regular "reports of routine", publishing detailed "Hints and Instructions" as to how they should behave, harrying ritualists, and even on one occasion objecting to Bishop Grant through the Secretary of State to a Roman Catholic chaplain's proposed use of incense.¹⁵ While there may be nothing in his papers which showed him expressly opposing particular Wesleyan activities or ambitions, there is equally nothing in any of Jarvis's full quotations from Gleig's correspondence and minutes, nor in Gleig's published articles, nor in his known actions which in any way betrays sympathy with or even an understanding of religious practice as it concerned the

15. Clifton, The Quiet Negotiator (to be published December 1990).

soldier outside the three churches recognised by the army.

In 1868, for example, having justified at length the position of the three recognised churches, he writes

Between one sect of Nonconformists and another the shades of difference are so minute that more than the amount of casuistry appertaining to laymen.... is needed to discover where the differences lie. And in the ranks themselves, Dissenters are.... few in number... To appoint chaplains for these, or even to take account of them at all when estimating for the cost of Divine Service, would be clearly impossible.¹⁶

This, it should be remembered, was written five years after the first full return of "Other Protestants" had been made when they numbered (excluding the Militia) not less than 5500.

Although the son of the Episcopal Bishop of Brechin, and so knowing what it was to be in a minority and unestablished, Gleig was ordained by the Archbishop of Canterbury and was a strong upholder of Establishment north and south of the border. Jarvis quotes a letter from Gleig to the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1846 without apparently noticing what it reveals of Gleig's attitude to Dissent:

The respect which I entertain for the Established Church of Scotland, as contradistinguished from sects which, using the same forms, are as yet unconnected with her...¹⁷

16. The Church in the Army and Navy, Blackwoods Edinburgh Magazine, No. DCXXIX (March 1868) vol CIII, p 267.

17. Quoted by Jarvis, op cit, vol IV (July 1931) no. 32, p 35.

Finally, in his farewell message to the Army in 1875, when the voluntary work of the Wesleyans was well developed and gaining official acceptance, he makes not the smallest reference to them. By contrast, addressing his Anglican brethren he writes at length about Presbyterian and Roman Catholic chaplains, and refers to

the brotherly feeling which prevails among you, [proving] that good and earnest men may conscientiously differ on many points, without breaking the very bond of peace and of all virtue, the noblest of all Christian gifts, charity.¹⁸

Gleig was no friend of Nonconformists and he did not conceal it. In his day, people held strong views of this kind honourably. Christian history is seen by some as the story "of the differences and quarrels of good men" and Jarvis may even be thought to do Gleig's memory a disservice by discounting his opposition to the Wesleyans out of concern for the softer prejudices of the 1930s. Gleig's strongly held opinion was that it was the duty of the Established Churches to provide for Protestants within the Army. This would be bound to colour his advice within the War Office and, it must be assumed, his attitude to those among his chaplains who from time to time carried their own dislike of Wesleyans into acts of pettiness and obstruction.

18. Quoted by Jarvis, op cit vol V (January 1935), no. 39, p 20.

The first fruits of recognition

The essential change in 1862 when the Fourth Column for "Other Protestants" was introduced was that Protestant soldiers who were neither Anglican nor Presbyterian could officially declare themselves and in consequence have the right to have their religious views respected. By General Order of 7 July 1864 each recruit was permitted to attest to his religion and have it recorded against his signature.

Even before the Memorial of 1860 was submitted to Sidney Herbert seeking such rights for Wesleyan Soldiers, the Conference of that year approved a new standing order.

The Chairmen of Districts are directed to enquire of the Superintendants of Circuits in which troops are marched to Divine Service in our chapels the average number of non-commissioned officers and men in attendance, distinguishing the number of members in Society. The returns given are to be recorded in District minutes. If there be no military attendance in the District, a note to that effect shall be inserted.¹⁹

The first returns in consequence of this Standing Order were modest: 2087, including 141 members in 1861; 2657, and 234 in 1862. The second year's returns came from 14 Districts and showed that before the Fourth Column was effective (in 1863) Wesleyan strength was notable only in London (which included Aldershot), Kent (Chatham), Portsmouth and Devonport. These places produced 2335 of those returned in 1862 and 214 of the members. Of course these places were also where the army or

19. Minutes of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference for 1860.

marines were concentrated and where the Wesleyans placed their first "appointments for the army". But the inference is that before the Fourth Column, and the official recognition which this gave, Wesleyans away from the main centres were less willing to declare themselves by attending Wesleyan services where these church counts were made.

In 1863, these counts showed 3064 Wesleyan soldiers in Great Britain and 1345 in Ireland, of whom 236 were members. 1179 members of Militia were also reported. The returns again came from 14 Districts. But this was the first year of the Fourth Column when soldiers could openly declare themselves. By 1866 the church returns were showing 7418 (including the Militia).²⁰

That these Church returns - based on average Sunday morning attendances - were broadly reliable can be seen by looking at the army's returns of "Other Protestants". These of course were based on the men's declaration and would include such Congregationalists and Baptists who decided no longer to return themselves as Presbyterians. The army return of "Other Protestants" for 1864, a year after the Fourth Column was effectively introduced, shows 5290.²¹ There continues to be a broad correspondence between army and church returns down the years and is the statistical basis of the assumption that Wesleyans constituted the bulk of declared "Other Protestants" until they were allowed to declare

20. Ibid for 1862 (which includes the 1861 figures), 1863, 1866.

21. Parliamentary Papers, House of Commons, 1864. This figure excludes the Militia, but includes Ireland.

themselves in their own right after 1881. It is important however to emphasise that neither Church nor official figures of religious affiliation can be accepted as totally reliable because only the committed, or those who cared sufficiently, would say anything other than "Church of England". On the official figures about 3 per cent of the army outside India can be said to be "Other Protestants" in this period. The assumption that in truth Wesleyans counted for 4 or 5 per cent fairly consistently throughout the second half of the century, but perhaps for rather less in these early days before many full-time chaplaincy appointments had been made, is probably equally fair.

Further consequences of recognition were that certain privileges were granted or restored. On 24 January 1863, Rule told Prest he had been given

ready permission by Field Marshal the Commander in Chief..... "to use the military churches of Aldershot for the purpose of churching women of the Wesleyan persuasion"....Now this is really a step forward. ²²

The underlining celebrates the second authorised use by Wesleyans of Garrison Churches within the Camp, the first being for burial services.

Then, a week later he told Prest he had had this memorandum from Head Quarters:

Authority having been received from the Horse Guards for the insertion in Divisional Orders of the hours for Divine Service of "Other Protestants" whose Ministers are

22. MAM PLP 93.22.64. The concession applied to all military stations - see R 1864.

recognised, Dr Rule is requested to state the hours at which Wesleyan soldiers will be required to attend Divine Service tomorrow and to notify all changes in future.

He added:

Need I say more than God be praised?²³

But all was still not plain sailing. Barred from writing himself to the War Office, Rule had to bear more grievances without the relief of complaint than he was used to. Exasperated by Sir John Pennefather's inability to see the need to put the location of "Other Protestants'" services in Divisional Orders (because this would not be in accordance with instructions), Rule comments

I think Sir John would let the whole Division go topsy turvey rather than quit his ground of pure unreasoning obedience.²⁴

Prest does not take the hint to pursue that grievance, but he does take up Rule's continuing lack of a school-room or other premises for voluntary meetings on weekday evenings and for religious instruction. Rule cannot however forbear from advising Prest how to go about it:

It is suggested by the Authority here [he writes ingenuously] that as the Duke of Cambridge has somehow been advised that he "sees no reason" for altering this and as therefore our General cannot ask him again to alter it, it would be desirable for you to speak - not write - of it and to mention the subject incidentally when you are next at the War Office on other business.

23. MAM PLP 93.22.65.

24. MAM PLP 93.22.67, dated 20 February 1863.

It was not simply an Aldershot disability.

Shorncliffe and Portsmouth had both asked for the use of school-rooms for the religious instruction of adults in the evenings and had been refused because the Regulations did not allow it.

Chaplains, Scripture Readers and fanatics have free course among our people while we are publicly shut out. Someone meant that it be so....

This was an old disability, and one which Rule had eventually overcome - how is not clear, as all the references in correspondence are to refusal - only to have his use of the room stopped "in the year of troubles, 1861". But the disability surely could not survive long after recognition, whatever reverence was owed to precedents set by the Commander-in-Chief. Nor did it. Lugard wrote to Prest in February 1864 to permit

the temporary appropriation of rooms or buildings without expense to the public.

and Rule joyfully passed on the message to the other stations. Shorncliffe Wesleyans were given the occupation of an entire hut on weekdays and Sundays. At Aldershot, Rule acquired a room in a central position in the Camp for week-day evening use, with one restriction which Rule describes in characteristic vein.

Sir John prohibits women going to our meetings in camp, for which I am savage with him, but I will not contend, but get over that restriction by an easy movement in due time.

There were some skills of a lower order, which he did not presumably teach the apprentice chaplain.²⁵

25. MAM PLP 93.22.79, 80, 86, 87, 89, 90; and R 1864.

With recognition achieved in the army, Rule turned his attention, as Corresponding Chaplain, to the Militia. At the request of the Army Committee he sent a circular letter to circuit ministers in county towns in February 1863.

Hitherto the Wesleyans have not been taken to their own Church, but paraded for the Church of England and thereby led to think that when attired as Militiamen their religious rights were held in abeyance. But we may henceforth preserve them from this injury....

There were 93 militia Regiments in England and Wales - 80,000 men. All newly enrolled and enlisted men spent not less than 28 days at their headquarters on joining. Once a year the whole Regiment was assembled for training for not less than 21 days. This meant that for seven Sundays in the year of enlistment, and for three Sundays in each subsequent year of their four year service, there would be Church parades. This was the target Rule was aiming for.

The response was poor: 11 Militia Regiments only marched Wesleyan in the first year. He wrote again to circuit ministers in February 1864. On 20 April 1864 the Marquess of Hartington, then Under Secretary of State, wrote at the request of the Wesleyan Army Committee to all Officers Commanding Militia Regiments reminding them that

the Articles of the Queen's Regulations respecting the attendance of Soldiers of the Army at Divine Worship are to be considered applicable to disembodied regiments of Militia.

As has just been noted numbers of Wesleyans in the Militia were henceforth regularly shown in the statistics provided as part of

the Army Committee's annual report.²⁶

Another initiative of Rule's in 1863 was to secure access for Wesleyan ministers to military prisons. He observed that under the Prison Ministers Act, 1863, magistrates were now empowered to permit ministers other than Church of England ministers to visit Borough and County Prisons. Though the Act did not apply to military prisons, Rule sought permission to visit Wesleyan Soldiers imprisoned at Aldershot "and for the exemption of such prisoners from other visitations". Earl de Grey and Ripon, now Secretary of State, agreed on 19 October 1863, on condition that Rule performed the same duties as the commissioned chaplain would have performed. Rule gave this undertaking. He advised Chatham, Gosport and the Curragh of the concession.²⁷

One should not suppose that recognition through the Fourth Column removed the competitiveness of the "Clerical Party". There was an incident in 1863 which Rule plainly enjoyed telling. He caught the Principal Anglican Chaplain at Aldershot, not only "slyly" visiting a Wesleyan soldier's wife in the Hospital, but

last Sunday week after no doubt much blarney -
for he and she are both Irish - he reconciled
her to the Church of England, with
confession of sin for having been separated
from it.

26. Rs 1863 and 1864; and Rule, Wesleyan Methodism in the British Army (London 1885), pp 117 et seq

27. R 1864 and Rule, op cit, p 120.

I reported him for interference.²⁸

1863 also saw Rule in a fit of depression about the progress of his work at Aldershot. It was perhaps the first sign that he needed to move on. The Anglicans now had seven chaplains ranged against him (as perceived it), instead of the previous three. In addition three or four Scripture Readers were now "at work with our best men", but under the direction of the Anglican chaplains. (This must have been particularly galling for Rule as he had been a member of the Committee which had set up Scripture Readers to work inter-denominationally). He had at this point no room for his weekday use in the Camp, and his own church, serving the South Camp, seemed increasingly inadequate to serve the soldiers in the North Camp.

Rule decided that his best remedy "will be to concentrate every energy on the work". He would seek an effective assistant to lodge in the North Camp and would obtain permission to erect a temporary church and school-room to serve that side of the Camp. He told Prest on 6 May:

I have laid the project of a temporary Church at North Camp before Sir John Pennefather who enters well into it..... the establishment of a congregation there will entirely break the whole plan of the enemy.... If I get an energetic helper in Curnock, and a post at that end, I shall beat them out.

Nehemiah Curnock (the later editor of Wesley's Journal) he succeeded in acquiring as his assistant. He also secured the

28. MAM PLP 93.22.66, dated 4 February 1863.

Commander-in-Chief's approval for the second church. By 18 August he was reporting to Prest that

ground for the proposed temporary Church at the North Camp can be got on very advantageous terms but the difficulty now is one of arrangement,

that is, essentially, how to raise the money for the land and the structure. Rule had hopes of John Wilmer Pocock, a local builder who

had himself considered whether he could buy, build and let, as we thought of, and as I afterwards proposed to him, but did not feel that he could just now lay out from £500 to £1000 as the case might be. He thinks some other person might. I have some one here in dim prospect but should prefer [it to be] one of our London friends.

Pocock however persuaded the secretary of the Aldershot Building Company to sell Rule the land at a fifth of the price "for the building of a Church", an interesting insight into the mixture of commercial and philanthropic motives which underlay Victorian church building.²⁹

The church was in due course built and opened after Rule's time. The use of the school-room, secured as already noted, in 1864, provided some relief meanwhile.

Rule's spirits revived. So did his interest in the world outside Aldershot. He wrote to Prest on 10 November 1863 -

There is a movement in Ireland for head money. Some of them are hot. One of them in Dublin has got a form to fill up and, of course, his form will come back empty. Now should anything be said at the War Office it would

29. MAM PLP 93.22.69, 72, 74, 76, 77; R 1863.

be as well that they should know that we have not advised these applications although we think that we deserve for circuit ministers head money as much as others. But it would be something of a delusion for one who does the full work of a chaplain to take head money. If we have anything it should be a salary, or a grant-in-aid.³⁰

The Irish Wesleyan Methodist Conference maintained full-time appointments in Dublin, the largest military establishment outside England, and at the Curragh. The Irish Methodists benefitted fully from the recognition give to Wesleyans in England in 1862. The minister at the Curragh catered for 1000 Wesleyans, nine-tenths of them (he said) of English birth, with three services each Sunday.

Letters from various parts of the British Empire bear constant testimony to the fidelity and usefulness of many who have been converted to God at the Curragh through our ministry.³¹

Even in these early days the ministry to Wesleyan troops abroad was beginning to cause concern. Rule did not think highly of the Missionary Society's ability to deal with the military and considered that such concerns should fall to the Army Committee even though it operated under the aegis of Home Missions. He wrote to Prest on 27 November 1853,

I have this day a letter from Barrackpore. The Major General Commanding in Calcutta will not acknowledge our services. Appeal has been made to Sir Hugh Rose, as C-in-C, and he has referred it to the Horse Guards, where the answer is a blank. Now this destroys our position in India and the Missionary Secretaries..... do not apprehend the right for which we are contending successfully in

30. MAM PLP 93.22.83.

31. R 1863

England. I fear they will make nothing of Mr Pearson's appeal. Ought we not to bring the case of India into the Army Committee? ³²

Not for the first time Rule was anticipating events, though it was not until 1878 that the Army Committee was made to serve both the Home and Overseas Missionary Committees. Fifteen years of muddle ensued. Rule tried again, in October 1864, insisting that the Army Committee should appoint the chaplain in Mauritius, a growing army and naval posting Station in the Indian Ocean.

My own strong feeling is that he should be one of our own. He should go out direct and fresh. He should not have had any false experience which is worse than utter ignorance. He should not be a feeble missionary who would be assuredly worthless, as other Mission House men have been. He should get his military information and instructions from here.³³

Peter Batchelor's performance at Scutari and Aldershot was evidently fresh in Rule's memory.

Rule's retirement

The time was approaching for Rule to leave Aldershot. His going was perhaps hastened by a dispute with Kelly which Rule described in a letter to Prest of 29 October 1864.

A question has arisen with Mr Kelly. He objects to advice with [from?] me, except by courtesy. Now I have to give responsible advice to brethren all over the country, which constitutes no small part of my constant duty, but if I am to be communicated with or not my assistance is worthless and my position untenable..... May I beg for a special meeting of the Army Committee to look at the whole matter, and if possible define what I am to do.

32. MAM PLP 93.22.84.

33. MAM PLP 93.22.91.

Prest replied at once. His letter was meticulously replete with references to the many relevant resolutions and decisions of the Army Committee bearing on Rule's duties. Apparently taking Kelly's side, he concludes:

Now it appears to me that there is no need for an appeal to the Army Committee..... The object of the correspondence contemplated [between Rule and ministers in the field] is to advise and inform, not to direct authoritively. The resolution [of appointment] shows this and was advisedly drawn up to prevent mistake Hitherto the information has been sought and the advice acted upon. We must not claim more.

Rule replied, with some dignity, on 1 November:

There can be no doubt as to my duty.... I have not done more, nor claimed more. I have never assumed anything like direction which is of course totally different from advice

To Prest's comment that he was bound

in friendship to say that the use of the title "Corresponding Chaplain" gives offence to many and does not occur in any of our official documents,

Rule replied that if a better term could be found, "let me have it".³⁴

The rights and wrongs of this dispute do not matter at this distance. Kelly, to be fair to him, was not as small minded as his complaint makes him appear, and Rule was a man of natural authority. The exchange was an unnecessary diversion. It is not perhaps surprising to find this letter to the President of the

34. MAM PLP 93.22.92 and 95. Rule was formally speaking "Minister appointed to correspond with ministers relative to Wesleyans in the Army".

Conference among Prest's correspondence dated 4 January 1865:

Dr Rule is anxious that I should call a special meeting of the Army Committee to indicate his destination at the next Conference I may and should say that I have intimated to Dr Rule that we cannot hope to arrange with the Conference for him, as we did three years ago [that is, to stay at Aldershot]. I imagine however that he will urge this.

I know moreover that his removal from Aldershot would help us there and not hinder us. He is not popular either with the General, the staff officers (whom he fidgets), or with the Soldiers.....

Dr Rule might go to Portsmouth.³⁵

And so he did in 1865, briefly, and then to Croydon before a happily long retirement. He was 63 when he left Aldershot and effectively concluded his work with the army.

It is an inescapable question whether the Wesleyans would have taken up Army work as soon, or as effectively, without Rule's ministry.³⁶ Rule came to it by accident. He went to Gibraltar as a missionary. Encountering there the denial of religious liberty in the army - the phrase is heavy but inevitable - he learnt the essential lesson that the army could not be taken by evangelical fervour or by defiance. But its citadel could be entered, if not won, by observing protocol and gaining the local commander's respect and support. This lesson he applied at Aldershot, twenty years later. The Crimean interlude

35. MAM PLP 85.6.48.

36. Kelly had no doubt: "When the Almighty intended religious liberty to be secured in the British Army he made William Harris Rule precisely the man he was. Practically Dr Rule was not appointed to the Army work; he initiated it". Memories (London 1910) p 111. The chapter includes a warm but perceptive appreciation of Rule's character and personality.

apart, no other Wesleyan had seemingly regarded the Army as "a field of usefulness" in the meantime. It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that what was immediately gained at Aldershot was down to Rule personally and that these gains became the basis of Wesleyan work elsewhere with the army, spread by Rule's indefatigable services as "Corresponding Chaplain". Rule's correspondence with Prest however reveals his need for personal support throughout his seven years at Aldershot. His elation and depression, his righteous anger and his misjudgments, all needed to be earthed; and the meticulous and rather impersonal Prest fulfilled that need, as he also provided the means of official Church sanction and support when the issues became too weighty for Rule to shoulder alone. It was, as remarked earlier, a partnership. And when the older partner had passed his usefulness and was causing annoyance in the work, the other despatched him as kindly as he could.

The partnership was also a friendship, and a warm and generous one at least on Rule's side. Only once, however, did Rule allow himself to address Prest as "My dear friend". The usual form was "My dear Mr Prest", or in Prest's year of the Presidency of Conference, "My dear Mr President". The body of the letter was invariably devoted to business. The final paragraph alone contained a personal element. In the early years, Rule uses an elaborate formulation in which he greets Prest and conveys Mrs Rule's greetings to Mrs Prest. The Aldershot air is extolled in the hope of securing a visit (which never materialised). Illnesses are also reported here. Mrs Rule

collapses: a heart attack? A stroke? It is put down finally to the time in Spain. Prest's son Arthur is a cause of much (mysterious) concern. "All join in love and all sincerely wish they could hear anything cheery of Arthur". In the last years, when the friendship is crowned with success in the work, Rule drops formality and ends, "Health and peace to you, my dear friend" and signs himself "Yours affectionately". Few of Prest's letters to Rule have survived, but his dealings generally with Rule show him as withdrawn and correct. Prest was doubtless ever conscious that too warm a regard for Rule would spread to the work and that its success required his statesmanship and reserve as much as Rule's enthusiasm.

Consolidation

Prest continued as Secretary of the Army Committee, and of the Home Mission and Contingent Fund until, in his turn, he retired in 1875. He died in August that year. The task of corresponding with ministers in Garrison Towns passed to Kelly. No doubt he was careful not to overstretch his authority, but the correspondence has not survived. He had become a member of the Army Committee in 1864 alongside Rule, who was removed in 1865. Webster, Rule's successor but one at Aldershot, joined the Army Committee in 1867. After serving as chaplain in Chatham and Sheerness, Kelly transferred to the Guards depot at Chelsea in 1867. Thereafter Kelly moved to circuit work, until taking charge of the newly formed Connexional Sunday School Union in 1875. He twice served as President of the Conference: in 1889 and 1903; and as Book Steward from 1889. He was the first former

Wesleyan chaplain to rise to leadership of the denomination.

From 1863 onwards, when the Fourth Column brought recognition in the furthest garrison and camp, there is an air of consolidation in Wesleyan army work. It cannot simply have been the departure of Rule to the superannuated list which removed the excitement and colour. Indeed, the signs of stolidity preceded it. A phrase in the 1863 Report -

the noiseless but assiduous labour of the Revd
Humphrey Jutson -

captures the feel of the period immediately following recognition. The same Report ³⁷ records "no serious case of interference" with the army work.

The following, from the Curragh gives a picture of the work after recognition in a large camp. To the contemporary reader it would be reassuringly familiar and yet in scale and movement challengingly different:

To provide for the wants of a congregation - numbering at times nearly 1000 souls - to give them pastoral attention, and to care for our sick in three large hospitals are duties that try... the strength of the Minister.... The preaching of the Gospel and the use of our other means of grace, such as class meetings and prayer meetings, have been found happily effective for the conversion and edification of many in this place.

Infants are baptised, the marriage ceremony celebrated, the dead buried - in fact every ecclesiastical duty is performed....

In consequence of the migratory character of the service those who are added to our church... are constantly passing away from us; and as at all military stations, new work is increasingly presented.

37. To save unnecessary footnotes, the years of Reports of the Army Committee are given in the text in this section.

The Reports of the sixties carry a social touch, some familiar, some less so. Reading rooms, the great Victorian social invention, are reported as being opened for Wesleyan soldiers and sailors in 1866 at Aldershot, Chatham and Sheerness (with an extra room at Sheerness for sailors who come ashore and stay all night). Fund-raising at Shorncliffe for the new chapel at Folkestone produces mementos of the Indian mutiny given by the soldiers. The 1868 Report speaks of:

Fenian manifestations in the Army; ... but no shadow of suspicion has attached itself to any Wesleyan in the service

The following reference in the same Report gave no credit to Gleig who was behind it:

The attempt to obtrude Ritualistic practices into Military services has been promptly and severely rebuked by authority..... on pain of dismissal from the service.

In the 1869 Report,

A "Soldiers' Home and Institute" has been provided at Aldershot [and] the cost of the building has been paid.

This was the fore-runner of a major Wesleyan contribution to soldiers' welfare which is discussed in Chapter 6.

Both the 1868 and 1869 Reports speak of the Wesleyan soldiers' ability to maintain their faith aboard troop-ships or when separated far from the care of a Methodist minister; and indeed to propagate it.

Several intelligent young men in more than one regiment in India, compassionating the heathen around them, have commenced the study of the native language in order to speak of Christ and His Salvation....

There are echoes here of Wesley's day, as also in this reference in the 1869 Report to

the testimony of General and other Officers to the steady conduct of Wesleyans and to their value as soldiers.

Though this was still mainly a peace-time army, it held manoeuvres and Wesleyan chaplains took part. This account, from the 1872 Report, will stand as an example of an activity commonly experienced down to the Great War. Its author, Henry Thompson, was briefly at Aldershot.

September 12th 1871

Being appointed to the 3rd Division of the Army Corps, I left for Woolmer Forest near which the troops were encamped.... After some delay and difficulty, I succeeded in reaching the scene of action when I at once reported to the Assistant Adjutant General (Sir Garnet Wolseley)... Immediately after, I met with the Assistant Controller who placed a tent and a pair of blankets at my disposal I waited on Sir Garnet at 4 pm and arranged for two parade-services, one for each brigade, after which I went hunting up some of the godly men I knew who were scattered through the different regiments....

The scene, as the evening rapidly advanced, was one surpassing description the tents looked like thousands of small lanterns on the heather, whilst huge fires threw a crimson tint over the whole and rendered visible the sentinels dotted about, as vigilant as if in the country of an enemy.

The Sunday dawned gloriously and at ten o'clock the Wesleyans of the 1st Brigade were drawn up in a square, where we had an exceedingly interesting service, the greatest reverence and attention being paid throughout. At eleven, the men of the 2nd Brigade..... a good sergeant major kindly undertaking the office of

precentor. The hymns were sung in good Methodistic fashion At four pm I announced a voluntary service by a wood in the rear of the 9th Lancers and at seven we succeeded in getting a meeting of nearly all the members of our Society in the Division in the room of a neighbouring farm-house. Such a time I never experienced..... Every heart seemed filled to overflowing with the love of God....

Wolseley, here fresh from his successes in Canada, was to play no small part on the advance of the Wesleyan cause in the Army, based entirely on his regard for Wesleyan "chaplains". This was probably his first encounter with one. More prosaically one may note the compulsory Sunday morning parade services conducted by the Wesleyan chaplain as by right and in a Methodist fashion, and the voluntary evening services which Wesleyan particularly stressed as truly revealing the religious strength of their following.

There is one other notable feature of the Army Reports of the period following recognition: the inclusion of letters from the soldiers themselves. With the reports from the chaplains, and in equally pietistic language, come the testimonies of those maintaining their faith, learnt in the major camps at home, in India, China, Hong Kong, Japan, Canada or wherever. Though of course heavily selective, they are a reminder of how beneficial the struggle for access to the men could be. The ordinary soldier in this period was as likely as not to have been recruited as a social misfit or to escape poverty, by committing himself to be army for 23 years - virtually all his active life. He was ill-used and ill-fed. Aldershot and the Curragh, and the other major camps, were designed not only to train the men. They

were the beginning, through the provision of barracks, hospitals, schools and proper feeding, of the social reclamation of the men. Religious services and instruction, social activities organised by the chaplains, were likely to be the only non-military civilising influence open to them. The public house or wet canteens were the only alternatives. Wesleyans, combining the evangelical fervour and directness of the time with the ability to demonstrate

a caring concern for individuals, seem to have had a particularly strong influence on at least some men's behaviour and outlook which lasted. This result, which non-Wesleyans also observed, may have been assisted by the Wesleyans' un-official, civilian ministry.

Many testimonies speak - for this class meeting term is what they are - of early Methodist experiences in childhood, falling away, and then a return through attendance at Wesleyan services in the camps. The inspiration of individual chaplains is much evident. Kelly appears to stand out; and it is clear that he continued his ministry through correspondence when men from his charge went abroad. No one letter can sum up the hundreds printed but this comes close.

From a Staff Sergeant - June 1872

The good done in Aldershot is immense, incalculable and unknown, except to that great God whom we serve... I wish I had been stationed in Aldershot in 1868 on my first arrival from Abyssinia, then I might have been sooner convinced of error and sin ... I bless God that it was at the Soldiers Home Prayer-Meeting, at your services, that my mind was indelibly impressed with Gospel truth.... Then again, being brought more immediately in contact with Methodism (I was attached to the name from childhood), old associations and memories were recalled.... I had for nineteen years

been sinning against the light.... every trace of my former self had been blotted out. I could not have sunk much lower... At first timidly and nervously I approached the "throne of grace" I could not rest under this sense of conviction.... At last... I realised Christ had done all - there was nothing for me to do to be saved from present sin.... than to believe on Jesus.... My short experience teaches me that I must watch and pray to avoid entering into temptation My time is pleasantly occupied in attending a night school connected with the Society and other religious services.

Army and Navy Committee

The Navy was added to the Committee's title in 1866, in acknowledgement of the agreement with the Admiralty concluded the previous year. The agreement was especially significant as it made provision for head money for Other Protestants. The Circular (of 31 October 1865) reads in part as follows:

My Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty are pleased to issue the following Regulations, which are to take effect from the 1st of January, 1866:

I Attendance at Divine Service in Port

1. Every facility consistent with the convenience of Her Majesty's service, and the state of the weather, is to be afforded by officers in command, to enable officers, seamen, and others, of the fleet, of the Roman Catholic persuasion, or being Presbyterians, or other Protestants not members of the Church of England, to attend Divine Worship, according to the forms of their religion, in floating chapels, where such are established for that purpose, or in chapels on shore. The crews of the boats which convey them are to consist of men of the same persuasion;..... When possible the boats are to be placed under the orders of an officer of the same persuasion....

2. If the total number of any one of the above denominations in the port should be less than twenty-five, the senior officer will exercise his discretion as to sending them to chapel under these regulations.

II Allowances to officiating Ministers.

1. Allowances will be made to Minister of the following denominations at the principal home ports and Marine headquarters for spiritual attendance to seamen and marines, viz.:

Roman Catholics,
Presbyterians,
Other Protestants not members of
the Church of England.

Allowances when made will be on the following scale:

For from 25 to 100 men, 10s. each per annum.

Additional for 100 to 300 men, 3s. each per annum.

Additional for 301 and upwards, 2s each per annum.

2. Unless there be present in the port or at the headquarters twenty-five men of all ranks and ratings, (including officers,) of any one denomination, the Minister will not be entitled to any capitation allowance.

Prest's letter of 14 December 1865, conveying the terms of the circular to ministers in the field, stressed that every effort should be made to ensure that Wesleyans in the Navy enjoyed their privileges and liberties and that ministers in naval towns should see that they did.³⁸ John Jenkins, a former assistant of Rule's and now at Sheerness, reported 70 seamen at service ashore under the new arrangements on 18 March 1866.

On 31 December 1866, the War Office directed that "the hours of service for Wesleyan Soldiers be notified in orders in common with the services of the Church of England, Presbyterians and Roman Catholics" at stations where ministers were appointed by the Wesleyan Conferences for the benefit of the troops. These appointments now numbered ten:

38. R 1866, Appendix III.

Mauritius, Aldershot, Chelsea, Chatham including Sheerness, Shorncliffe, Portsmouth including Parkhurst, and Dublin including the Curragh.

The direction followed an approach by Prest who appealed for uniformity of practice. He quoted a letter from the Brigade Major at the Chelsea Barracks which had asserted that

the celebration of Divine Service according to the Wesleyan persuasion is a matter of favour.... and not one deemed essential to the Brigade of Guards.

This was perhaps an isolated example of continuing unawareness of recognition, or of a readiness to ignore it. This correspondence between Prest and Lugard for the first time reveals Wesleyan impatience with the limited recognition implied by inclusion in the "Fourth Column - Other Protestants". Prest's letter to Lugard of 29 November 1866 reminded him that Wesleyans

still..... desire the introduction into the returns of their distinctive denomination; especially considering that the Wesleyan Methodist Churches and congregations are more numerous in England than either the Presbyterians or the Roman Catholics; that a large majority of the soldiers in the Fourth Class are known to be Wesleyans; and that the public character and organisation of the Wesleyans.... secures that the

Ministers appointed will discharge their duties efficiently and in strict accordance with the rules of the service.³⁹

There was no comment on this part of Prest's letter.

Despite his long experience, Prest had not learnt the virtue of the short, pointed letter. The example of the War Office's

39. R 1867, Appendix to Army Report, for Prest's letter, Lugard's reply and the War Office direction.

replies to his letters was wasted on him. This passage, though important, is buried. Its main interest here is the reference to the professionalism of the Wesleyan chaplain. His services might be unpaid - and the letter continues to play that card - but he is no amateur. He understands and observes the rules of military service.

The numbers argument was not a strong one. The pertinent statistic was not Wesleyans in the country but the number of Wesleyans actually serving, and that remained small and of course scattered. The 1869 report gives an estimate of 4807 Wesleyan soldiers and seamen at military stations and naval ports in 1867-68; and 2083 in the Militia (in 1868). The figures exclude Wesleyans in the services in India and the Colonies; and a good deal of estimating was necessary because of the movement of troops. Church members numbered 560 in military stations and 59 in the Militia.

Relations between Prest and the Admiralty continued to be relatively easy. An exchange of correspondence set out in the 1869 report secured ready agreement for the time and place of Wesleyan services of worship to be duly notified on board ships in port. The Admiralty also agreed to give directions.

that when a man of good character represents himself as anxious to change his religion under which he is entered, the commanding officer of the ship in which he is serving may permit the change to be made....

Access by Wesleyan ministers to Naval Hospitals and Prisons and on board ship in cases of illness was also agreed. The

appointment of Wesleyan ministers to Naval Ports would be notified by the Admiralty to local commanders. These developments were of course in line with what now happened in the army, except that head money was paid only for sailors and marines. There the Admiralty was ahead. But it should be stressed that the facilities agreed were for services ashore. Ship-board chaplaincies for Nonconformists had to await the conclusion of the Great War (see Chapter 10).

Both the 1872 and 1873 Reports refer to the reorganisation of the army - the Cardwell reforms - and note the improved chaplaincy opportunities which this would afford. 69 military centres were to be formed in Great Britain and Ireland each providing the depot for the infantry regiment to be associated with its locality. The depot would also be used for training the militia battalions. From the army's point of view this would assist recruitment through drawing on local loyalties. From the Wesleyans' point of view it would standardise the association of circuit ministers with a particular regimental headquarters. Hitherto the minister had had to present himself afresh to each commanding officer as a new body of troops came to the garrison and be dependent on his response. Such ministers would need to be "certified and recognised and authorised" by the War Office. As recruitment of soldiers would be local it would make it easier for local ministers to ensure that boys from Wesleyan homes and schools became "declared Wesleyans" from the start. (Difficulties in securing access to the old recruitment centres in York and at the rendezvous in Charing Cross, and the fact that the

ministers who spoke to the men there could do no more than pass on their names to local ministers when the men were posted, had always been seen as a disadvantage). Moreover, a new professionalism, represented by shortened terms of service - six years as a regular, six in the reserve - could be expected to attract more boys from good homes and increase the number of Wesleyans. The reforms also in time affected the spread of Wesleyan chaplaincy services abroad as one regimental battalion would normally serve abroad at any given time. The Navy's new scheme for recruiting boy sailors at age 15, mainly in West Country ports where Methodism was strong, was also seen as an opportunity for increased influence. It is not surprising to find that the church returns of declared Wesleyans had risen to 6828 by 1874 in both services, of whom 614 were church members. The Militia returned 2943, with 69 church members.

The army reforms were recognised by the Conference of 1873 as increasing the opportunities of Wesleyan ministers to work among soldiers.

The Conference is anxious that these opportunities should be zealously embraced.... in all places where troops are quartered or where ships of the Royal Navy are stationed.

In the following year the Conference moved to settle the conflict in obligations between army work and circuit duties.

Ministers who are appointed to labour in the Army and Royal Navy are not to be considered as Ministers of the Circuit where they may be stationed, so as to be claimed for circuit work, unless special arrangements be made in any case with the Army Committee and with the Conference.⁴⁰

40. Minutes of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference, 1873, 1874.

Two other developments began in the seventies which will be more fully treated in the next chapter. The first, already noted in passing, was the foundation of the earliest Wesleyan Soldiers (and Sailors) Homes or Institutes, places where recreational facilities could be provided. The other was the despatch of Wesleyan chaplains on colonial wars, a very different form of service from that in camps and depots at home, or indeed in such places abroad. The second affected the Wesleyans' organisation of army and navy affairs. A Committee drawn exclusively from the Church's Committee for Home Mission was ceasing to be appropriate for overseeing chaplaincy work in an army and navy which were increasingly "far flung". In 1878, on the advice of a special committee which included Rule and Kelly, and two laymen of influence, Sir William M'Arthur and Sir George Hayter Chubb, the composition of the Army and Navy Committee was changed. Hereafter it would comprise the officers of the Home Mission Fund and of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, with about twenty others. Whereas an overseas missionary society is a church's natural agency for work beyond their shores, no tension seems to have been anticipated between a mission to an indigenous population and service to soldiers engaged in wars against them. The association of the imperial mission with the good of those pacified was evidently clear. It is a tension, however, which will require examination later.

Revd Alexander M'Auley had succeeded Prest as Secretary of the Home Mission Fund and the Army and Navy Committee in 1875. From 1879, he became joint Secretary of the reorganised

Committee, with Revd W Morley Punshon representing the Missionary Society. Revd R. W. Allen became Assistant Secretary, a new post.

This was the crucial appointment. Allen had become chaplain at Chatham in 1870 and had served as an additional member of the old Army and Navy Committee since 1871. He moved to Aldershot in 1872. Thus, by his stationings and his Committee membership he was well versed in military matters. He was also an embodiment of the new sort of chaplain, the inheritor of Rule's struggles. In Allen's time at Aldershot the new Wesleyan garrison church planned by Rule had been opened and Rule's old iron church dismantled. The new church stood in the centre of the now developed town. The General Officer Commanding Aldershot, Lieut General Sir F. M. Steele, unveiled the memorial window at the opening and laid the foundation stone of the Wesleyan Day School -important symbols of the changing place of Wesleyanism in the army.

Lest it be thought however that all doors were now opened, or opening, for Wesleyans, Allen's first two years were spent in a major tussle with the War Office. Faced with the increasing cost of army work, Conference authorised an approach to the War Office for seat rents for the pews used by soldiers marched to civilian chapels. The move was very much at the behest of the Chapel Trustees. The approach was still opposed by some who objected to any form of State money, but seat rents were considered less objectionable than head-money. The approach failed; the Secretary of State declined to move beyond the

recognition of 1862.

In 1880, on a change of Government, Allen renewed the approach. The Report of 1881 sets out the result in the usual flat prosaic way, perhaps to show that the negotiators had done their best to get seat rents but had been honoured (or obliged) to accept a somewhat better result:

At the request of the various bodies of trustees, a memorial was presented to the Secretary of State for War for seat rents for troops marched in accordance with Queen's Regulations to Wesleyan chapels. H.M. Government instead of simply meeting this request has been pleased to offer the fullest recognition of our position and remuneration of our services to the Army.

What this last sentence meant was that Wesleyan ministers had become entitled to head-money for their services to Wesleyan soldiers and that Wesleyan soldiers had been given their own column, distinct from "Other Protestants", in the official returns of the army. Each was a very considerable advance. Head-money put Wesleyan circuit ministers on the same footing as Anglicans, Presbyterians and Roman Catholic Officiating Clergy. The Wesleyans' voluntary service would henceforth be paid. Wesleyan ministers with full-time appointments in particular camps and garrisons would receive agreed fixed payments. The army column headed "Other Protestants" remained for Congregationalists and Baptists and others. With their own "Wesleyan" column, Wesleyans became as much a recognised church as the original three - save only that the Wesleyan full-time army ministers remained civilians and were not eligible to be appointed commissioned chaplains. But the Wesleyans did not seek a change of this kind.

The 1882 report spelt out the consequences of the change:

The full recognition of Wesleyan Methodism in the British Army by Her Majesty's Government... is now an accomplished fact and extends to all parts of Her dominions except India.....

For the first time a distinct place is now given to Wesleyan Methodism in the Queen's Regulations for the Army. Wesleyan soldiers are supplied with Wesleyan hymn books as part of their kit and, in the War in Egypt are receiving by legal right, the service of their own minister....

Similar recognition to that given to Wesleyans in the Army has more recently been accorded by the Admiralty to the large body of Wesleyans in the Royal Navy and Corps of Royal Marines. Their religious denomination will now be officially recorded, and *all ships' companies supplied with a due proportion of Methodist Hymn Books.⁴¹

Rule was happily still alive, "venerable and full of years", to witness the recognition, formal and financial, of his Church's service to the army. Indeed, he was to write and publish the record of his own part in the struggle the following year. No doubt he reflected particularly on the official change of mind by the Wesleyan Conference on accepting "State money", which he himself had first proposed nearly 30 years before in 1858. Many Wesleyans continued to doubt the wisdom of this change but satisfied themselves that by directing the head-money and capitation fees to the Trust Funds which provided the Chapels, or to the Home Mission Fund or the Missionary Society which paid the full-time appointments, the Church was merely reimbursing itself for provision made. Neither they, nor Rule, could begin to know what largesse these fees would provide in the ensuing years of Imperial wars and army expansion and how they would fuel the growth of Wesleyan services to soldiers and sailors in this

41. The change in Queen's Regulations was effected by Royal Warrant on 25 June 1881.

CHAPTER 4

WESLEYAN ACCEPTABILITY

We could hear the bullets whizzing over our heads... I did not expect to come out alive, but I left it all to God.

Wesleyan chaplain at
the Battle of Kambula

Whatever the Wesleyan chaplains undertake prospers. Whilst other Sects are busy with preaching about the advantages of incense .. the Wesleyans are hard at work at good things that benefit the soldiers of all Sects.

Field Marshal Lord Wolseley

CHAPTER 4

After the euphoria of recognition in 1881 two tasks faced the Wesleyans. The first was to reach an equivalent settlement in India where a third of the British army was stationed and which was excluded from the terms of the 1881 agreement. The second was to ensure that Wesleyan soldiers took advantage of the right of religious declaration which had been won for them, not least because numbers now determined head money or the security of a fixed capitation grant.

The last quarter of the century was dominated by a series of colonial and imperial wars which offered Wesleyan chaplains a totally different form of service and won for them recognition and status more substantial than the advocacy of committees at home could achieve. Wesleyans also built in this period a network of Soldiers' Homes and Institutes whose names were a litany of Empire. The homes won enormous respect for Wesleyan service to soldiers and confirmed the place of the denomination in the life of the army, even though the

proportion of the army owning the name of Wesleyan remained low. The last twenty five years of the century, in short, was a time of extension and growing acceptability.

India

In a vast country, in which normal missionary work strained the resources of many churches, service to soldiers was a very particular demand. Moreover, large though the army was, it was widely spread and the Wesleyan part of it therefore hard to gather together in sensible numbers. Estimates in 1880 put the Wesleyan strength at three or four thousand out of a force of eighty-thousand. With the exception of Lucknow, Bangalore, Calcutta and Madras, where there were reasonable concentrations of troops, there were no Wesleyan ministers regularly serving the soldiers.¹

A letter in the Methodist Recorder illustrated the consequences.

When [I was] in Chatham, the depot of the heroic and ill-fated 24th Regiment was there. God gave me souls in it. A large draft was sent to join the service companies in Secunderabad. In default of Methodism all were marched to the Church of England - at that time very "high". Some protested and joined the Presbyterians. Fever came, and cholera; our men died untended by their Church, or were disheartened. The regiment returned to England and was quartered at Aldershot. On its arrival I found no Methodists marched to our Service. On asking what this was, the reply saddened me: "Why no-one looked after them in India".²

1. R 1880.

2. Quoted ibid. The writer was R. W. Allen.

In 1888, the Wesleyan Army and Navy Committee attempted to reassure the readers of its Report:

The great question of the oversight of our troops in India generally is receiving careful consideration Until this difficult problem is solved our pastoral organisation of the Army is hopelessly incomplete.

The Wesleyans came at the problem at a good time. Wesleyan stock was rising with the military and naval authorities. They were now a recognised church in both services - and the separate Wesleyan Column applied in India to British army returns. From 1883, the Indian Government had paid a form of head money for services to Wesleyan soldiers. The first Soldiers' and Sailors' Homes in India had opened in 1882. But the head money was small, and the number of ministers who could be spared were few. The Indian Government was a distant, separate, powerful and unknown bureaucracy, and the India Office an untried go-between.

The Wesleyans' own re-organisation of the Army and Navy Committee in 1878 had helped by bringing the Missionary Society into closer involvement with army work. Over the years, from the first two appointments in 1859,³ a number of mission stations and missionaries had started to serve soldiers as well as they could. By 1886, there were perhaps a dozen acting as chaplains. One can see a parallel with the service of circuit ministers at home to the troops in the locality. In the cities of India, such as Bombay (where troops were both stationed and constantly in transit), the

3. Kurrachee and Barrackpore

parallel was close.⁴ But elsewhere, mission work and soldiers' work would not always mix. It was a slow process but by 1896 the Army and Navy Committee Report claimed that Wesleyan troops were served by 72 mission stations in India and Ceylon and that the Wesleyan Missionary Society was now maintaining seven full-time appointments in India for the benefit of Wesleyans in the Army and Navy, (at Secunderabad, Bangalore, Lucknow, Bombay, Poona, Umballa and Rawal Pindi).

The 1896 report however also shows that 47 of the 72 stations were either "visited", or were in the charge of a Lay Agent, or - 23 cases - were served by non-Wesleyan missionaries. Wesleyan soldiers in only 25 places could therefore look for reliable chaplaincy help, yet there were probably only about 400 soldiers fewer in India than at home where by 1896 there would be about 120 circuit and other ministers engaged in army work.

The 1893 report defined the task:

The Army and Navy Committee in conjunction with the authorities of our Church in India is...seeking to obtain from the [Indian] government a more equitable application of its regulations which relate to the provision of places of worship and the ministrations of religion for all British-born subjects of the Crown resident in that Empire; and in respect of which the Wesleyan Methodist Church is at a disadvantage.

"Ministrations of religion" (that is, payments for chaplains' services) were immediately tackled. Since 1883

4. See, for example, the chaplaincy chapters in Revd G. W. Clutterbuck, In India, or Bombay the Beautiful (London, 1899)

- there were no payments earlier - the Indian Government paid head money at the rate of Rs12 a year per man for up to 150 soldiers and Rs3 pew rent. But the relatively small number of Wesleyan soldiers in India, the scattering of garrisons and frequent troop movements rendered this a fluctuating and unreliable source of income. Nevertheless, it amounted to £2243 in 1897, the equivalent to the maintenance of five married and two single missionaries. The Wesleyans however needed much more than the equivalent of seven chaplains for India.⁵

Their request was for consolidated fixed payments in principal military centres at the rate of Rs250 to Rs300 per month. The India Office replied in a letter dated 2 November 1897. It first set out denominational strengths in the four Army commands in India at 1 January 1897:

| | |
|-------------------|--------|
| Church of England | 48,401 |
| Roman Catholic | 13,547 |
| Presbyterian | 6,084 |
| Wesleyans | 3,711 |
| Other Protestants | 495 |
| Jews | 20 |

The Wesleyan proportion was thus just over 5 per cent, against 67 per cent Anglicans, 18 per cent Roman Catholics and 8 per cent Presbyterians. The letter continued

The Government of India have arrived at the conclusion that the numbers of Wesleyan soldiers in India collectively, and at single stations, are not sufficiently large to warrant the expenditure involved in the adoption of the proposals of your Committee.

They offered instead Rs150 per month at nine centres whatever the actual number of Wesleyans in the garrisons, but 8 annas per month would be paid in addition for every Wesleyan above 150. On paper this was no advance on 1883, but it was guaranteed even if numbers fell below 150. The nine centres were

Secunderabad
 Bangalore
 Poona with Kirkee
 Fort William with Dum Dum and Barrackpore
 Lucknow
 Umballa with Dagshai and Soloh
 Rawal Pindi with Murree
 Peshawur with Nowshera and Cherat
 Mhow with Neemuch

The Army and Navy Committee welcomed the concession of a fixed minimum payment for these garrisons. They asked however for Rs200 minimum and secured the support of the Secretary of State for India. With a surprisingly mercenary touch they also asked that ministrations to Presbyterians or Other Protestants in the nine centres should be excluded from the consolidated payment and met instead at the at the old Rs12 annual rate.⁶

The close correspondence between the nine centres where consolidated payments were to be received and the seven "appointments for the benefit of Wesleyan soldiers and sailors" funded by the Missionary Society will be noted. In this way the Missionary Society's subvention would be in part repaid from public funds.

6. W 12/97 and 1/98.

The other concern was with "places of worship". The essential question was whether other denominations could use Anglican Churches for services for their soldiers, or whether the Indian Government would help to meet the cost of building other churches. One would have thought that the Indian Government and the Wesleyans would have had a common preference for the first solution on grounds of economy and expense. That indeed appeared to be the position when the matter was first discussed by the Committee in October 1898. But joint use, when examined by a sub-committee, was considered less favourable.

The sub-committee's report showed that by Regulation the Government of India had directed that provision should be made in all permanent military stations for Divine Service for British-born Protestant or Roman Catholic soldiers, and that the term Protestant should include Wesleyan. By further Regulations (17 June 1898) Cantonment and Station Churches consecrated according to the Anglican rite were to be made available for Wesleyan services. In cases of dispute the matter was to be referred to the Lieutenant Governor of the Province or the Commander in Chief. This however had been changed by fresh Regulations on 20 April 1899, to give the Metropolitan of the Church of England in India the final say.

The sub-committee heard Revd John Brown, a Wesleyan minister in India and one of those appointed by the Missionary

Society to work with soldiers. Brown had submitted a test case to the Governor of Bombay for the use of the station church at Satara for Wesleyan services. The Governor, on the advice of the Bishop of Bombay, had turned down the request and the Metropolitan had declined to intervene.

The essence of the problem appeared to be that under the Regulations the Bishop or the Church of England chaplain fixed the hours when the Garrison or Cantonment Church could be used by Wesleyans, that consent to the arrangement could be withdrawn at any time, and that the final appeal was to the Bishop's Metropolitan.

The Sub-Committee is totally unable to accept Regulations which subordinate the Wesleyan Methodist Church...to the authority of another Church and that one which in the nature of the case must be a party to any dispute which comes up for decision.

The second point at any rate was fair. The first gave no weight to the fact of the Establishment of the Church of England in India and the Established Church's ownership of these Churches. The legal opinion, conveyed to the Wesleyan deputation which attended on the Private Secretary to the Secretary of State for India, was that the effect of consecrating a church according to the Anglican rite was that it became the exclusive property of the Anglican Church. Lord George Hamilton had therefore decided to forward a dispatch to the Governor General of Bombay in Council seeking a return of all military stations in which it may be necessary

to provide additional church accommodation for Presbyterians, Wesleyans and other Nonconformists. In June 1900 the Wesleyans saw the Secretary of State himself and expressed satisfaction at Hamilton's action.

The outcome, announced the following year, was agreement to conjoined use in small stations where conflicting services could more easily be avoided. As an earnest of this, the Secretary of State said that a new Church at Jhansi, though consecrated for Anglican use and largely funded by them would be made available for non-Anglican services. In certain principal stations however the Government of India agreed to meet half the cost of erecting Wesleyan Garrison Churches. The Committee was pleased with this result, but sought to increase the number of stations where separate provision would be made.⁷

It will be clear that, although the Wesleyans in India had to assert themselves to obtain satisfactory payment for their chaplaincy work and to secure provision or use of garrison churches, it was not a battle of basic principles. They faced rather a slow moving bureaucracy, which had a proper respect for precedent, ownership and propriety, but also had a healthy regard for cost. Although India was always a special case, the negotiations just described were typical of what passed for every day business in R. W. Allen's period as Secretary of the Army and Navy Committee. Matters had moved far from attempts to establish basic rights against

7. W 10/98, 6/99, 2/00, 6/00. 6/01, 10/01. The sub-committee's report appears between pp 141 and 142 of the Minute Book.

superior opposition. The task now was to influence decisions of detail from an established position, and to do so reasonably and by demonstrating that in return for financial support of various kinds valuable service to the troops would be provided. There was still a voluntary element in that state payments did not cover total cost and the chaplains, though recognised, were not subject to military discipline. But the Church too had moved far from pure voluntarism. The Church's work for soldiers was also earning respect. The Minutes of the Committee record letters and speeches praising "the services of Methodism" in India. The names mentioned include the Secretary of State for War, St. John Brod rick, Lord George Hamilton and the late Commander of the North East District, General Browne VC.⁸

Attestation

The Wesleyans were fortunate that the separate Wesleyan Column and head money had been conceded at a time when the army was being expanded for a series of Colonial expeditions and for more settled imperial stewardship. The Wesleyans' task of achieving what they regarded as a proper return of their strength in the army should also have been helped by the fact that the men would be returning themselves under a familiar name, "Wesleyan" instead of an army term, "Other Protestants". Even so, although Wesleyan numbers increased substantially, they remained at about 5 per cent of the expanding army. The Army and Navy Committee continued to fret over losing men who enlisted either through carelessness over

attestation when they joined, or by deliberate suppression of their religion for one reason or another.

The fact that most Methodist youths who enlist are careless about religion and some even deliberate rebels...every way increases our responsibility.⁹

In 1892, by direction of Conference, Circuit Superintendents and "Sabbath Schools" were reminded of the importance of ensuring that Methodists who enlisted should correctly record their religious denominations. But the problem still persisted:

Large numbers of Methodists are still enrolled as belonging to some other denomination than their own, either through carelessness or ignorance of the fact that they may continue on enlistment to belong to their own Church....¹⁰

An interesting report from Winchester as early as 1883 underlines the problem and offers a reminder that the sons of an older Dissent were also to be found in the Wesleyan ranks:

The attendance at our nightly service has been good and a deep religious influence has been felt. Many who came are not Wesleyans. Numbers of Wesleyans declare themselves "Protestants" and in the Hampshire Regiment especially large numbers follow the drum and go to the Cathedral... Those who were trained Baptist or Congregational are often the truest to their religious principles. These will not attend the Cathedral services and greatly appreciate and aid us in ours.

Only a small proportion of Wesleyan soldiers and sailors were church members and would have a firm commitment to declaring themselves Wesleyan. The others' allegiance would be through upbringing, Sunday School or Day School. The importance of having ministers in attendance at recruiting depots to claim the less firmly attached was constantly stressed.

9. R 1889.

10. R 1893.

It is a common remark that "the first six weeks of a soldier's life make or mar a man for his whole career..." It is impossible to exaggerate the important issues which are involved in the 6 or 8 weeks' training at the Recruitment Depots. We earnestly commend this vital subject to the care of our ministers appointed to the pastoral charge of depots.¹¹

Some wrong records of a man's religion were blamed on the authorities and their arrangements. In 1897, considering by way of example "the large number of Wesleyans at the (Royal Marines) Walmer depot who are recorded as belonging to other denominations", the Army and Navy Committee decided to urge the War Office to print the religious attestation statement on the first, not the second page, of the soldiers' document. The matter was referred to the Adjutant General in 1900; and Sunday School superintendents were again reminded. But the problem was not to be so easily resolved. It recurred frequently, and indeed it intensified during the Great War. The Wesleyans saw it as an issue because the Church of England, then as now, was assumed by the authorities to be a man's religion unless he took steps to say otherwise. The mistake was never the other way. To the committed Wesleyan this assumption by authority, or carelessness by the men over religious affiliation, was an affront to the right of religious declaration which had been hard won. For the careless, or rebellious, they saw it as too easy an escape from the influences of a Wesleyan upbringing when the temptations of army life were at their strongest. And - not least - it undermined the work of Wesleyan chaplains by

11. Ibid.

denying them the financial support of head money conceded in 1881.

Growth

Some sense of the growth in the numbers of Wesleyan soldiers and sailors in the last quarter of the century is needed as a back-cloth to the service of their chaplains with overseas expeditions and the construction of Soldiers' and Sailors' Homes and Institutes across the Empire. Yet of course all three developments were closely related. As numbers of Wesleyans in the army increased, as the nature of soldiering and chaplaincy work adapted to the overseas campaign, as Wesleyan money was poured into the building of the Homes, so army work moved from the enthusiasm of the few to become the Church's vicarious involvement the growth of Empire.

In 1874, when presumably full advantage had been taken of the 1862 concession - the Fourth Column for "Other Protestants" - there were 6828 declared Wesleyans in the army and navy, of whom 614 were church members. To this should be added 2943 in the Militia (including 66 members).¹² Compared with this "base", the growth in the 'eighties and 'nineties was as startling as its disposition.

12. R 1874.

Number of Declared Wesleyans (Church members in
brackets)¹³

| | | | | |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | 1880 | 1890 | 1898 | 1900 |
| <u>Army</u> | | | | |
| GB Regulars | 4569 | 4685 | 4408 | 4846 |
| \militia | 2972 | 3004 | 4146 | 3551 |
| Ireland | | | | |
| (inc Militia) | 1003 | 1280 | 998 | 815 |
| Colonies | 1287 | | | |
| India | 2376 | 6004 | 7589 | 15015 |
| | <u>12208</u> | <u>14973</u> | <u>17141</u> | <u>24227</u> |
| | (615) | (1058) | (1269) | (1987) |
| <u>Royal Navy</u> | | | | |
| Home stations | N/A | 2540 | 4109 | 4188 |
| Ireland | N/A | 81 | 108 | 105 |
| Foreign | N/A | 1624 | 2774 | 2682 |
| | | <u>4245</u> | <u>6991</u> | <u>6975</u> |
| | | (274) | (310) | (355) |

The figures for 1898 are included to avoid the distortion of the Boer War. In the South African Field Force of 100,000 at 1 January 1900, 9 per cent were reckoned to be Wesleyans. Taking the Royal Navy and Marines alone, the Wesleyan proportion was estimated to be 7 per cent.¹⁴

In 1874, 12 Wesleyan ministers worked full-time among soldiers and sailors in England, Ireland and Malta and about 70 circuit ministers, all without public payment. In 1898, 118 Wesleyan ministers worked among soldiers and sailors in Great Britain, 30 more in Ireland and 45 overseas. Most at home were circuit ministers, acting as Officiating Clergy. The head money they drew, assuming soldiers' attendance was above the 10 minimum, was paid to circuit trustees. But about 30 of the ministers were appointed to work full-time among the

13. Figures taken from the Army and Navy Committee Reports of each year.

14. R 1900; W 12/00

soldiers or sailors:

Home Missions

| | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| London Garrison (2) | Dover Garrison |
| Warley Barracks | Shorncliffe Camp |
| Colchester Camp | Portsmouth Garrison and |
| Hounslow Barracks | Naval Post (2) |
| Aldershot Camp (2) | Netley Hospital |
| Woolwich Garrison | Devonport Garrison and |
| Caterham (The Guards | Naval Post |
| Depot) | Dublin Garrison |
| Chatham Garrison | Curragh Camp |
| and Naval Post | |

Foreign Missions

| | |
|--------------------|-------------|
| Gibraltar | Jhansi |
| Malta Garrison and | Bombay |
| Naval Post | Poona |
| Egypt (Cairo) | Umballa |
| Secunderabad | Rawal Pindi |
| Bangalore | Peshawar |
| Lucknow Garrison | Hong Kong |

The Home Mission and Contingent Fund met the cost of the chaplains in the British stations, the Irish Conference those in Ireland and the Missionary Society those abroad. But from 1881 the War Office and the Admiralty paid fixed grants in lieu of head money towards the cost of Wesleyan chaplains in London, Colchester, Aldershot, Woolwich, Chatham, Shorncliffe, Portsmouth, Netley and Devonport. In 1885, these grants totalled £334. Now, in 1898 these grants totalled £1563. Over and above this, the Home Mission and Contingent Fund paid £3080 for Army and Navy work in the same year.¹⁵

Equivalent figures for the overseas appointments are not available but, as has been noted, the Indian Government's payment towards Wesleyan chaplains and services, on a basis of

15. R 1898 (Ministerial stipends were usually below £200, ignoring allowances).

close to head money, was £2243 in 1897 and would be substantially more when the new fixed rates of payment came into effect in 1898.

The growth in the volume of Wesleyan work among soldiers and shore-based sailors after 1881 is startling, whether measured by men served, chaplains provided or money spent. But claims for it should be kept in proportion. Army and Navy work remained a small part - 7 per cent - of the Church's mission at home where the total Home Mission expenditure in 1898 was £43,000. And those served remained a small part of the country's military and naval forces.

Colonial Wars

What lay behind the figures and gave substance to the Wesleyans' growing reputation for the quality of their army work was their contribution to the military expeditions of this period. This service also resulted in increasingly formal recognition of the status of Wesleyan chaplains by the army, quite beyond the powers of committees to negotiate. It also transformed the chaplains' and the Church's notion of what serving the army meant by introducing ministers to service in the field. The status of a Wesleyan chaplain with an expeditionary force remained as at home, that of a civilian minister paid by his church, not a military man paid by the army. But his position became, by degrees, increasingly official and recognised; and eventually state-paid

during the campaign. Batchelor in the Crimea in 1856 is the bench-mark. He was a missionary returning from India, who interrupted his journey to be given by the Secretary of State for War free passage to the Crimea and permission to be in the camp. It was only with the charitable assistance of the Anglican chaplain at Scutari, however, that Batchelor found himself recognised in General Orders, given quarters and a building for services.

Nearly twenty years later, in 1873, an experienced Wesleyan chaplain, John Laverack, was sent out by the War Office in the troopship Victor Emmanuel, to serve in the Ashanti War, the first of the major colonial expeditions. The Army and Navy Committee reported that "other facilities for his work were readily granted". In fact he was supplied with quarters and rations at the coast where he worked in the base hospitals, but transport was not available for him to accompany the fighting troops up country. He returned on the Victor Emmanuel, now turned into a hospital ship. It seems that Laverack's favourable treatment may have owed something to the army's use of a local Wesleyan missionary's knowledge of the country and language in planning the expedition to Kumasi. Nevertheless it represented an advance, the first Wesleyan minister to be sent out with a military expedition and (when he was awarded the Ashanti Star in 1874) the first to be decorated.¹⁶

To Arthur Male belongs the distinction of being the first

16. R 1874 and 1875; also Watkins, Soldiers and Preachers Too (London 1906) pp 188, 189.

Wesleyan minister to be allowed to accompany an expeditionary force during its fighting campaign, the Afghan War of 1878-9. A missionary at Lucknow, and totally without chaplaincy experience, he was gazetted by the Government in Calcutta as chaplain to the Wesleyan and Presbyterian soldiers of the 1st Peshawar Valley Field Force. (The War Office had first considered using local Wesleyan missionaries as chaplains in the Ashanti War but death and illness made this impracticable). At least in Male's case his service with the fighting troops was directed at an external foe, not the population he had been sent to convert. "Among the native troops" it was noted "he was not able to do much as they consisted of Pathan, Sikh and Gurkha regiments".¹⁷

Male's own account of his chaplaincy work is also the first of a genre.¹⁸ Though reading in places like a boys' adventure story, and much chosen no doubt for Sunday School prizes in Imperial England, it gives the first insight into the nature of the evangelical chaplain's role in a military campaign.

Male first considers it necessary to justify his presence at all.

And how comes it that I, a minister of religion, should be thrown into association with scenes of bloodshed and carnage such as those I have attempted to depict? Simply because the English nation, when it sends its soldiers into the field

17. R 1880.

18. A. H. Male, Scenes through the Battle Smoke (London 1901). The book was republished in 1903 under the title Through Two Campaigns, Afghanistan, Soudan.

credits them with something more than mere physical frames to be kept strong and fighting trim. Tommy Atkins....has a heart also to feel and sympathise. He is a man, not a machine... "We like to know that we've got a parson with us in the field"... said a man to me one day, "We don't like, when we get knocked over, to be buried in a hole like a dog, without a prayer..."

And so the British people, recognizing these deeper needs of her soldier sons...has her Chaplains Department... And there are never wanting men who in this path of duty are found to go forth under her standard, not to fight unless indeed some stern necessity should arise - then they can - but rather to enhearten the men, and keep them in touch with that higher duty which embraces and covers all the lesser but essential duties of the soldier life.¹⁹

Though most of Male's book is an account of the campaign as he saw it -full of heroic deeds and danger - his chaplain's duties are clearly stated. For part of the campaign the Army was in a settled camp at Jellallabad. Here he describes the church parade, much as in English terms: four parties march off, Church of England, Presbyterian, Wesleyan and Roman Catholic, the first with a regimental band, the second with pipes, the other two more matter-of-fact. Wisdom, he says, decrees a service of no more than three quarters of an hour and a simple direct sermon. There are voluntary services at night. His own prescription for them is Bible study and hymn singing. He helps his men build a simple chapel in the rocks (and finds it despoiled on the retreat). He

¹⁹ Male, *op cit*, p 18. To be compared perhaps with Dr J. C. Edghill, writing to the Prince of Wales on 5 January 1885 accepting appointment as Chaplain General: "The only claim I have for the post is an intense desire to do soldiers good and a fervent belief that the religion of Jesus Christ is just what is wanted to make them brave and loyal and worthy of their past heritage".
(WO 32/6217)

conducts camp sing-songs, as an entertainment for the men. Male is constantly in the hospital tents, writing soldiers' letters home, talking and listening; and burying those who die, as often from illness and accident as from wounds. His duties on the march are less clear, beyond burials. But he was not involved in the actual fighting. To Male fell the task of reading the funeral service over the Squadron of the 10th Hussars who perished crossing the double ford of Kabul river at night.²⁰ His major personal heroism appears to have been to survive through sheer determination the long trek back to India through the Khyber Pass, burying those who died in a major outbreak of cholera where they fell, until he too was stricken, to be carried back unconscious on his horse.

Though not commissioned or paid, Male messed and was quartered with the officers and was supplied with horse and mule transports. A picture shews him wearing a white topee, tunic, riding breeches, pistol and "Sam Brown" - officers' dress, but with a high clerical collar and no marks of rank.²¹

He seems to have had good relations with his commanding officers, other officers, the doctors and his fellow chaplains. There is no inkling of denominational rivalry. When the Anglican chaplain fell ill and returned to India, Male was appointed Divisional chaplain. On the

20. Kipling's lines describe the incident:

"Gawd 'elp 'em if they blunder,
For their boots'll pull 'em under,
By the ford o'Kabul river in the dark".

21. Male served later in Egypt. There is no indication where the photograph was taken - the book covers both campaigns - but this was also desert attire.

retreat he was the only chaplain. While this is a pleasant contrast to the state of affairs in England, there is another side. Male is completely the army's man. The Afghans are not merely the enemy, but the least of lesser breeds: knavish, treacherous, murderous. Gurkha and Indian soldiers are much admired, but on one occasion he records that he lashed an Indian servant in front of the troops. He had maltreated Male's horse.

Male received a medal and clasp for the march to Kabul, as well as a letter of thanks from his Divisional Commander (Sir Samuel Brown himself, as it happens) "for his faithful and efficient services".²²

The epilogue to Male's book, written presumably twenty years later for publication in 1901, places missionary endeavour firmly in the context of Empire:

India is the fairest jewel in the diadem of our Queen. We hold her, and with her a burden of vast responsibility from the King of Kings, the Ruler of the Earth's Nations. It is for us to see that we make that jewel brighter with the light of Christianity; the fair land fairer still with "the beauty of holiness". Do we accept the charge? Shall we flinch from the duty?²³

Four missionaries were directed by the Missionary Committee to accompany the troops in the Zulu War, 1879, one from each mission district in South Africa. To one of them,

22. R 1880 gives the Church's account of Male's services in Afghanistan. Male's decoration is recorded by Watkins, op cit, p 243.

23. Male, op cit, p 281.

Theophilus Woolmer, fell the distinction of being the first Wesleyan chaplain ever in action (at Kambula) and later in the battle of Ulundi. Another, T H Wilkins, received a medal. A third was T. W. Pocock, the son of Rule's chapel builder at Aldershot. The Wesleyan contribution was acknowledged in a special General Order at the conclusion of the war. The Army and Navy Committee, by now containing representatives of the Missionary Committee, commented:

The appointment of missionaries to accompany the troops in the late Zulu War is amply justified by the valuable service rendered to the [men] in the field and in hospital and by the Christian steadfastness of many of our soldiers in the midst of severe hardship and temptation.

Evidently no conflict with missionary duty was expected.

Watkins records that one mission station provided fifty native troops for the front, "filled with loyalty to the Great White Queen". Woolmer refers to these as "our Edendale Kaffirs" and records their part in the battle of Kambula.

Owen Watkins, the fourth Wesleyan chaplain to be involved, was the father of O. S. Watkins and a missionary in South Africa. He was appointed senior Wesleyan chaplain in the Zulu War by General Order and was in charge of hospital work at the base. He also negotiated with the Government the terms on which the Wesleyan missionaries served. The War Office authorised the provision of "rations and camp equipage etc as the circumstances may necessitate" for the Wesleyan chaplains, but they had to provide their own horses, equip and mount them. The chaplains were not of course paid for their services.²⁴

24. R 1879 and 1880; also Watkins op cit pp 193 to 195.

Woolmer's short account for the Army and Navy Committee at home includes a description of the chaplain's duties before and during battle and is a reminder of the reality of a fight to the death in the middle of the veldt with no prospect of retreat, for the chaplain as for the rest.

I preached twice every Sunday and had a class-meeting in the week, visited the soldiers, gave them tracts and spoke to them about their souls whenever opportunity offered. I also visited the sick... Death was very busy. I buried five men in five days...

On Saturday, about 9 a.m. we saw the Zulus approaching in large bodies. They came steadily on in companies. Our bugles then sounded; the men took up their posts behind the waggons that had been formed into a large laager covering about two acres; the horses were harnessed to the mountain guns; the surgeon got ready his instruments and the black masses of twenty thousand Zulus drew nearer. At about 1 p.m. the order was give, "Cavalry advance".... they drew the Zulu left wing on till they got them within 2600 yards of the laager, when the guns opened upon them with terrible effect... About 3.30 p.m. the Zulus got possession of the cattle kraal, but were driven back by a company of the 13th at the point of the bayonet....

I of course was helping the doctors and ministering to the wants of the wounded and dying. And I am very thankful that I was there. We were under fire for the whole of the time, as we had to attend to the wounded outside the marquees. We could hear the Martini-Henry bullets whizzing over our heads... I did not expect to come out alive, but I left it all with God... Thank you all very much for your prayers.²⁵

A Wesleyan missionary, Henry Cotton, served with the colonial forces in the Basuto native uprisings of 1880 and 1881 and was the first Wesleyan chaplain to be mentioned in despatches. Owen Watkins and George Weavind served in the short campaign of 1881 in which the Transvaal secured independence. Weavind appears to have been used in negotiations with the Boers.²⁶ All things considered, this voluntary service by Wesleyans in the field must have influenced the War Office concessions of 1881 on head money and recognition for Wesleyans in the army.

The Church at home was active in this period in a new role, visiting troop ships before they left England and appointing lay leaders for the voyage. In the 1879 Report, the Army and Navy Committee notes that

Large drafts of men have been called to active service in South Africa and Afghanistan... Arrangements were made by the appointment of class leaders and in other ways to enable the devout soldiers to help their comrades to prepare to meet God.

- a degree of fatalism which was probably not misplaced.

The 1881 Report notes that

during the embarkation of troops for the late war in the Transvaal the names of Wesleyan soldiers were obtained to transmit to South Africa. Every Transport was visited and in nearly every case bands of praying men were organised on board and in some cases class leaders were organised.

The next engagement was in Egypt in 1882 and was noted

26. Watkins, op cit, pp 196, 197.

in the Army and Navy Committee Report of the following year in these terms

Rev A H Male who had ministered to our troops in the Afghan War and Rev Jabez Parkyn of Aldershot were appointed by the Conference for the benefit of Wesleyans in the expeditionary force, and on their appointment being notified the Secretary of State at once gave to them for the occasion the position and maintenance of chaplains...

Thus quietly, if imprecisely, a very significant advance in terms of Wesleyan recognition is marked. For the period of their service Male and Parkyn became fourth class chaplains. Though not commissioned, even temporarily, they wore a captain's uniform, and received a captain's pay and allowances. The change of course followed the agreement in 1881 that Wesleyan ministers at home might qualify for head money. But here in the field, as at home, the Wesleyan chaplains remained civilians.

The second part of Male's book, *Scenes through the Battle Smoke*, records his part in the Egyptian campaign of 1882. He was in England on furlough from Lucknow when approached to serve and he readily agreed. He plainly liked army life, revelling in the military talk and atmosphere aboard the fast ship carrying the General Staff from Liverpool to Alexandria in which he was given passage. Though quartered in the base hospital in Ismailia, his service was mainly in the saddle, tending the wounded and fallen just behind the moving battle-line. But he records being used also to carry despatches on one occasion; and on another he bears the story of a moonlit

cavalry charge to sleeping journalists. His account of thirst and heat, cavalry charges and of the slaughter at the battle of Tel-el-Kebir is graphic. Crude artillery fire on both sides produced fearsome casualties requiring amputations. Part of Male's duties after the battle was to gather up and accompany such casualties by train and boat to the base hospital. Perhaps as compensation, or because he is writing long afterwards, there is however too much glory in Male. It is to O. S. Watkins that one turns for the reality of a chaplain's duties, after a great pitched battle in the desert:

the searching for the wounded and the finding of the dead; the cry in the darkness, and the straining to hear from whence the faint response comes; the burying of the dead from whom at sunrise you had parted, then in the full strength of their manhood, now cold and strangely and suddenly grown old; and afterwards the letters that have to be written... - terrible, horrible work, worse than the hardships of the bivouac and the march, more nerve-destroying than the noise and risk of battle.²⁷

Male, finally exhausted, returned to England in 1883 to circuit work. He received his medal with clasp and the bronze star. Parkyn was similarly honoured. Male died in 1902, aged only 52.

War however continued in Egypt and spread to the Sudan. Male was replaced by Joseph Webster in 1883. Webster was a retired minister over 60 but of considerable experience. (He had been Rule's successor but one at Aldershot in 1866). He served first in the Sudan at the Battles of El Teb and Tamai, earning a medal and star, and then in the base

27. Watkins, op cit, p 200.

hospital in Cairo during a cholera epidemic. He retired eventually at 67. Thomas Barnes served 1884 to 1887 with the Nile Expeditionary Force. William Jackson served in East Sudan. All three, said the Army and Navy Committee Report of 1885 with its careful ambiguity,

"were fully recognised and sustained by the military authorities".

The Report added that there had been no force recently sent on active service to which a Wesleyan minister had not been attached as chaplain.

The 1886 Report names Bechuanaland and Burma as two more expeditions with Wesleyan chaplains. Owen Watkins and Thomas Wainman served in the former. It turned out not to be a military campaign, and Watkins, who knew the Bechuana as a missionary, acted as adviser to the Commander. J. H. Bateson and W. B. Simpson went from England to serve in Upper Burma. This was Bateson's apprenticeship as a chaplain. He was to be a distinguished and influential Secretary of the Wesleyan Army and Navy Board throughout the Great War and the 'twenties.

The 1888 Report notes that "happily all [chaplains'] service with one exception have been in peace". The exception,

Upper Burma where Rev J. H. Bateson has ministered to our troops engaged in pacifying that newly acquired territory... He has founded a Soldiers' Home in the Palace at Mandalay... On disbandment of the force he is recommended to transfer

to the unoccupied garrisons of N.W. India.

This is the point at which Wesleyan chaplaincy work in India began to develop and Watkins attributes the spread of garrison chaplaincies in the Punjab to Bateson's efforts as General Superintendent of the Bombay and Punjab District. In 1891 Bateson became secretary of the Royal Army Temperance Association in India, in which post he came to Lord Roberts' notice. Temperance in the Victorian Army, not least in India, where a quarter of the troops were members of the Association, had strong official support.

The peaceful times recorded in 1888 continued for some years. Two Wesleyan chaplains served in the Ashanti Expeditions of 1895-96. Though unopposed, the expeditions cost many lives through climate-related illness. Dennis Kemp served in the base hospitals. A second Wesleyan chaplain, William Somerville, accompanied the field force to Kumasi and back, dying of the fever he then contracted. He gave the following posthumous account of a remarkable event in the 1896 Army and Navy Committee Report:

Naturally the Sunday spent in Kumasi was the most memorable. The parade services at 7 am made a sight worth seeing; but the combined service conducted by the Church of England chaplain and the Wesleyan chaplain in Palaver Square created in Kumasi and all over the colony a great sensation. "Never did I see such a sight before" said an officer to me "as two ministers, one Church and one Wesleyan, holding service together, and what was more remarkable still, you could not tell one from the other..."

The two chaplains signed hymn books together as a memento for the men to take home, with skulls and other curios (as Somerville noted). The Anglican chaplain was Canon J Taylor Smith, a local missionary, and a noted evangelical who was to become Bishop of Sierra Leone and, from 1901 to 1922, Chaplain General. Equally radical was an agreement by the two chaplains to take a battalion each and minister to all Protestants therein.²⁸

Since the 1882 campaign in Egypt the Wesleyans had kept chaplains in Alexandria and Cairo. For Kitchener's 1898 expedition to Khartoum however, they looked to O. S. Watkins, at that time a young minister serving in Malta as Laverack's assistant. He has written his own account of the campaign.²⁹ Missing the Battle of Atbara by a day, after the long journey from Alexandria, he was nevertheless in time to

28. The two biographies of Bishop Taylor Smith make no mention of these incidents. The campaign however was of importance to the Bishop's career as one of those to die was Prince Henry of Battenburg. Taylor Smith bore a message from the dying Prince to his mother-in-law, Queen Victoria, who made him one of her chaplains. Later, it was on King Edward VII's insistence, because of his mother's regard, that Taylor Smith was made Chaplain General. A later Permanent Under Secretary at the War office, Sir Edward Ward, was also in the Ashanti campaign. E. L. Langsten, Bishop Taylor Smith (London 1939); M. Whitlow, J. Taylor Smith (London 1938) pp 46-52.

29. O. S. Watkins, With Kitchener's Army (London 1899).

bury the dead and tend the wounded assembled from the battle field before the survivors could be shipped back to base hospitals. (It is probably on this experience, a fearful introduction to war for a young chaplain, that the eloquent passage on the chaplain's duties after a desert battle already quoted is based). Watkins' skill as a writer is to show the reader at home what life is like for the soldier and still find room to describe his own work as a chaplain. He avoids both the empty phraseology of the pulpiteer and the false excitement of the adventure writer. He gives an account of the very long journey up the Nile, a summer camp above the fifth cataract as the army groups and and prepares for the long, exhausting march in desert heat to Omdurman in which Watkins participated on foot. In the Battle itself he was just behind the lines, able to follow Kitchener's strategy on the open terrain, but immediately on hand to give encouragement and support to the soldiers and to comfort and tend the wounded as they fell. A more formal duty afterwards was to join three other chaplains in conducting General Gordon's memorial service in Khartoum.³⁰ Kitchener was much criticised by the London press for the slaughter of Sudanese at Omdurman. Watkins, with the authority of a non-combatant eye-witness, defends Kitchener from the charge of unnecessary killing.

30. The others were Father R. Brindle (Roman Catholic), now over 60, without whom (it was said) no Nile campaign could take place, A. W. B. Watson (Church of England) who had survived cholera on an earlier campaign, and J. M. Simms (Presbyterian). Simms was later to act as Principal Chaplain with the British Expeditionary Force in 1914, with Watkins as one of his chaplains (and Kitchener, of course, Secretary of State for War).

There are a number of "snapshots" worth preserving. Of the three other chaplains with the force, it is from the veteran Roman Catholic, Father Brindle, that the inexperienced Watkins seeks advice. The conventional chaplain's duties in standing camps - parade services, hospital duties, organising entertainments - conceal the abiding task which is to win the men's confidence then to be able to help them endure and survive unbelievable privations later on. Though few British soldiers die even in big battles, wounds and enteric fever take a massive toll afterwards and it is here that the chaplain's own endurance is tested, over many weeks and months, as he visits the sick and dying, writes their letters, offers them cheer, buries the dead. Lastly, Watkins describes the haunting loneliness of army cemeteries when a busy army camp, pitched briefly in the desert, closes, the men move on and dust storms start to rub out all trace of human presence, living or dead.

The Army and Navy Committee Report of 1899 records the Church's debt to Watkins:

A foremost place must be given to the faithful and efficient service rendered by the Rev O S Watkins in the campaign which has just opened up the Soudan and the heart of Africa to British civilisation and Christ. It is a satisfaction to know that Mr Watkins won for himself the honourable distinction of being "mentioned in despatches" by Lord Kitchener, but beyond all else that on the march, in hospital, and in action he was a true leader and comrade of all godly men...

Finally before the Boer War, there is one curious but

well documented campaign to record in which a Methodist missionary, Frederick Brown played an important part. He too has told his own story.³¹ "Legation Brown", as he became known, was born an Angli an at Bishop Auckland, but as directed by his school-mastr to the United Free Methodists who trained him in Leeds as a missionary. He went to China in 1882 for the British and Foreign Bible Society, was married in Shanghai Cathedral and after ordination as a Methodist Episcopalian joined their mission in Peking. That was not quite the end of his journey round Methodism as on his return to England in 1916 he ended his ministry as Wesleyan chaplain at the Guards' Depot in Caterham.

Brown was employed not as a chaplain but as Intelligence Officer with the International China Expeditionary Force under General Gaselee. His value to the Force was that he knew the terrain which the Force would have to cross from his missionary travels; and he spoke the language. As the Boxers had destroyed the railways and rolling stock around Peking as part of their anti-European drive, Brown's help was indispensable in planning the movement of the Army which had to travel fast to relieve the besieged legations. Brown can be acquitted of the charge of turning against those whom he was in China to convert, as the Boxers had started to persecute native Chinese Christians and destroy churches. Many Christian Chinese had taken refuge in the legations compound. Brown himself describes these early

31. Revd Frederick Brown FRGS, From Tientsin to Peking (London 1902). The biographical details here are taken from his Thirty One Years of Missionary Work in China (London 1926).

persecutions and records his own narrow escape on the last train from Peking when the North China Conference of his Church in 1900 broke up early. Nevertheless, his association with the non-Chinese is total. Nor does he record even informal chaplaincy work among the troops he is guiding. But he does reveal the unmistakable sang-froid of the hardened campaigner. At the end of the long forced march, and after a hazardous dash through the sluice and water-gate, he breaks through into the British Legation still uncertain whether the relief has come too late:

I had scarcely entered ... when Mrs Stonehouse of the London Mission handed me a cup of tea. Needless to say, I was most grateful.

The Boer War marked the apogee of Wesleyan chaplaincy work. In all, some 40 Wesleyan chaplains served. Many were local ministers or missionaries. Some were colonials: Australian, Canadian and New Zealand detachments fought in the War and brought Wesleyan ministers with them as chaplains. Others were from Britain. They were led by an experienced chaplain, E P Lowry, formerly at Aldershot. Initially, he was given the temporary rank, pay and allowances of a third-class chaplain (equivalent to Major) but was promoted second-class (equivalent to Lt. Colonel) at the end of 1901. At that date no Wesleyan Chaplain had held higher rank.

Since 1882 the army had maintained Wesleyan chaplains in the field by giving them temporarily a rank which determined their status, pay and allowances. The rank was a chaplaincy rank, and chaplaincy ranks had the equivalence to officers'

ranks given in the text. But this practice left Wesleyan chaplains civilians. Despite the terminology, it did not give them even temporary commissions. Thus Lowry, though in pay and status the equivalent of a Lt Colonel, was Mr Lowry.

Lowry came out with the Brigade of Guards and served with them throughout the Boer War. Though nearly 60, he accompanied them during the famous forced march through the Orange Free State in 1900. He completed 1000 miles, on foot, at an average of 40 miles a day. The Guards revered him greatly and presented him with a gold watch and pencil case later that year.³² His own account of his service in South Africa is perhaps too clearly written for an audience at home - exciting but cauterised. He describes work in hospitals and organising recreation for the men. An experiment is tried of a voluntary church parade, but is dropped when attendance at the Anglican service falls from 2000 to 200. Lowry fitted his voluntary congregation into a tent.³³

Wesleyan chaplains other than Lowry were accorded the rank, pay and allowances of fourth-class chaplains (equivalent to Captain), though Thomas Wainman was promoted to third-class later in the War. Among them was O. S. Watkins who had returned to his chaplaincy post at Malta after the Khartoum campaign.

32. W 11/00 and 1/02.

33. With the Guards Brigade (London 1902). Lowry also contributed, with other Wesleyan chaplains, to Chaplains in Khaki (London 1900) edited by "HK". The first chapter (anonymously written) is of an evangelical nature, but the rest is straight description of the War, with little to say of the chaplains' work.

His book on the Boer War records his own experiences, which included the siege of Ladysmith where he was trapped. He was mentioned in despatches four times.

Exciting and well written, Watkins' book³⁴ adds much to one's understanding of the nature of chaplaincy work in a fighting campaign. Chaplains of all churches appear to have worn "a Geneva cross" on an armband, forage caps, Khaki uniforms - khaki was introduced for battle-dress at the beginning of the War - and clerical collars. Relations between chaplains were good. Watkins records that during the siege of Ladysmith the Sisters of the Convent organised and hosted "symposiums" at which chaplains of all faiths met and discussed their work.³⁵ Sieges apart, it was a fast moving campaign with little scope for formal Church parades. Snatched services as occasion offered was the practice. Chaplains were usually deployed with the doctors and stretcher bearers and there were the normal hospital tent duties. Often burials were undertaken by whichever Protestant chaplain was present without regard to denomination. Unlike any previous campaign, Natal, the Cape Colony and the Orange River Colony (forming the South African Conference) had settled local Wesleyan churches and ministers, a source of volunteer chaplains, extra nurses and domestic

34. O. S. Watkins, Chaplains at the Front (London 1901)

35 J. L. Findlay, Fighting Padre (London 1912), p 68 records an occasion in South Africa when four chaplains (2 Anglican, 1 Church of Scotland, 1 Roman Catholic) were billeted together under one roof, with the Wesleyan chaplain next door as he was married (and doubtless local).

succour.³⁶ T. W. Pocock was too old to serve again as a chaplain, but viewed the war as one of these settled Wesleyan ministers. A letter home says he has taken in refugees. He fears treachery among the Dutch in his neighbourhood which another military reverse would provoke and is only 100 miles from a Boer column. The whole of his wife's "Sunday School clan of big boys have gone to the front". There is drought and there are locusts, and he lists deaths from typhoid in the Boer camps.

What will the end be? Will it not be an end indeed?..... We need the prayers of all God fearing people; and the awareness that you are all interceding for us we cannot but prize very highly.³⁷

The enemy here were white men of European stock, amateur soldiers prepared at first at any rate to extend those civilised courtesies of war which always strike the non-participant as bizarre. Watkins tells of occasions when, protected by a white flag and his Geneva cross, he went to bring back English dead and wounded through lines of Boers, still firing at his colleagues; and of cheery conversations with these Boers as he and the Indian labourers waited for a safe moment to return. On occasions, Watkins gathered up and returned the Boer dead, mainly old men and young boys. He

36. See W 11/00: Chaplains who had been missionaries in the rest of South Africa fell under the British Conference.

37. T. W Pocock to Basil Wood-Smith, 10 February 1900 - private information from Dr C. Binfield.

speaks "of one sad Sunday spent among the dead". The military banter and bravado on the troopship going out, as the uniforms were dyed khaki, quickly gives way as Boer successes mount, Britons are taken prisoner, men are lost in hundreds, food runs out, enteric fever rages, guerrilla tactics begin and hard fast campaigning takes over. Almost for the first time in all one has read to date, the chaplain is coping with the relentless cruelty of modern war, without the tunes of glory.

Wesleyan Soldiers and Sailors Homes and Institutes

The development of these Homes and Institutes was the last main Wesleyan contribution to the army and navy in this period. Their origin was the Victorian reading room. The Wesleyans and others opened these at Aldershot in the 'sixties. But Joseph Webster - whose experiences in Gibraltar caused Rule to doubt his fitness for chaplacincy work in England, and whose exploits as a chaplain in Egypt in his late sixties have just been recorded - built by public subscription and opened the first Wesleyan Home at Aldershot in 1869.³⁸ It contained a lecture room, prayer room, reading room, coffee bar and kitchen - modest, yet a refuge from barracks for the soldier at a time when all such provision was voluntary, or did not exist. Its replacement however in 1875 by a much more ambitious project is usually taken as the start of the Wesleyan Homes and Institutes.

38. O. S. Watkins, Soldiers and Preachers Too (London 1906) p 164.

The Homes were at one level part of the Wesleyans concern to claim and hold their own.

It greatly depends as to who has first access to [the recruit], his pastor or the publican, as to where he is first taken - to the canteen or to the sanctuary of the Soldiers' Home what his course will be.³⁹

The Homes were also found to benefit the chaplain in his work:

The garrisons and naval stations in which the best work has been done are those possessing Soldiers and Sailors Homes. [We] are convinced that any provision, even of room in a vestry, which meets the practical homelessness of our soldiers and sailors, wisely worked, cannot fail of most beneficial results.⁴⁰

Most Homes had a few beds, all had recreation facilities and refreshment bars where non-alcoholic drinks were served. The aim was to provide somewhere for soldiers and sailors to go, and stay, in their free time to keep them out of temptation's way. The Homes were also used by chaplains for religious

39. R 1893 ("Canteen" was used for "Bar").

40. R 1887.

activities and for temperance work which comes to be much stressed from about 1893.

What the Wesleyans realised was that to be effective the Homes did not have to be large. The 1892 report, for example, shows that the five beds then available in the London Home had had 1800 occupants over the year, drawn from 60 regiments or corps, all of whom were now serving in India, Malta, Egypt or China. In the same report, the Woolwich Home claimed to exercise "a world-wide influence for Christ". Troops who had stayed there were now serving in Burma, India, Egypt and Sierra Leone. The British Army, whose remarkable mobility for the age made this far flung influence possible, benefitted from the stabilising influence of the Homes:

Our Soldiers and Sailors Homes from Aldershot to Mandalay... have become centres to which men coming home found life and from which many witnesses for temperance, purity and godliness have gone forth...⁴¹

The initial development was between 1875 and 1893 when the twenty-seventh Home for Soldiers and Sailors was opened in Simonstown, South Africa. The full list at that time reads like a gazetteer of Empire - from Poona to Dum Dum, from Gibraltar to St Lucia, from Singapore to the Curragh, from Alexandria to Chatham. The list was to grow later; and Homes were constantly being extended, improved or replaced. In 1896

41. R 1888.

the investment represented £35,000, the Homes' turnover was £12,000 and over 51,000 soldiers and sailors had had beds. In 1900 a standing sub-committee was established to prepare a scheme for more homes, but the minutes of the Army and Navy Committee become infested with detailed consideration of problems arising in the existing Homes. The Home at Poona is out of bounds for two years because of a plague and so becomes insolvent. The Committee is anxious that the Colonial Office, should not approve the Governor's gift of land before the Hong Kong Home's trustees have agreed to the church's terms of *management*. The *completion and repair of the Colombo home* is found on a visit - Allen called on his way back from Australia - to be "entirely inadequate". There was a tremendously long correspondence over the Canadian Conference's desire to take over the Home at Esquimault.⁴²

These examples show the bigger sorts of problems which beset the Committee while attempting to run a world-wide string of Homes from London. In 1900 the Army and Navy Committee reviewed the arrangements. They decided that as a general rule there should be one Board of Trustees constituted by the Conference, not separate bodies of Trustees for each Home. That would produce uniformity of general control. But local Committees of management should actually run the Homes. The Army and Navy Committee would meet each February and March to receive reports and financial statements from the local committees. The same arrangements would

42. R 1895 and 1896; W 11/97, 12/97, 1/98, 6/00, 6/01, 11/10.

apply to garrison churches.

The Committee also decided in 1900 that the Homes should be

- (1) for the free and unreserved use of all members of HM Sea and Land Forces irrespective of Religious Denomination [and be run]
- (2) as places of social use, frequent and entertainment, with the provisos that (a) no alcoholic beverages are to be provided or sold... and (b) all Religious Teaching or Services held or given in them shall be evangelical and therefore in harmony with the standard Doctrine of the Wesleyan Methodist Church as contained in Mr Wesley's Sermons and Notes on the New Testament. ⁴³

Opening the Homes to all soldiers and sailors allowed public funds to be invested in them, particularly through the gift of land. Even so, the Wesleyans had to find large sums themselves. Except where local people raised all they needed, the usual procedure was for the Committee to make a grant and an interest free loan which was to be repaid over a period of years from the proceeds of the Home. Payments could be as small as a £100 grant and a £200 loan (Madras) or as large as £200 and £500 respectively (Hong Kong). Sometimes an existing house was converted (Colombo). Sometimes Homes were given: that at Secunderabad was a gift by an Indian in memory of Queen Victoria. Central fund raising for the Homes began in a modest way. In 1881 a Bazaar in the City of London raised £3000. The grander Royal Naval and Military Bazaar held in favour of the Homes in 1888 raised £6639. The lease on the London Home in Buckingham Palace Road was acquired and the

Home extended with a gift from the Queen's Commemoration Fund (for the Diamond Jubilee). This Fund, which raised over £8,000, disbursed £4400 to other Homes. The Wesleyan Church's Twentieth Century Fund made £20,000 available for the Homes. The Coronation Appeal for the Homes in 1902 raised a further £34,000. This Appeal was expressly designed to enable the Wesleyans to take up offers of land by the War Office, the Admiralty and the India Office for Homes and garrison churches.⁴⁴

One may note this highly successful fund raising as evidence of Wesleyan prosperity at the turn of the century. The fund-raising doubtless benefitted from the patriotic fervour of the time, the high point of Empire and the death of Queen Victoria. But the fund-raising may also be noted as a further sign that the Wesleyans' highly successful work among soldiers and sailors was winning them acceptability in high places. The 1881 bazaar was opened by TRH, the Duke and Duchess of Connaught (and the Lord Mayor of London, Sir William M'Arthur, a Wesleyan layman, was on the Committee). Queen Victoria herself was patron of the 1888 Bazaar and the Prince and Princess of Wales opened it. A bazaar for the Home in Malta the previous year had TRH the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh as patrons and HRH the Princess Louise received gifts of purses. Sir George Hayter Chubb, another prominent and wealthy Wesleyan layman was behind all the fund-raising. In 1902 he established the Soldiers and Sailors Homes Fund to handle the sums raised by the Coronation Appeal and

44. R 1889; W 10/96, 10/97, 11/97, 1/98, 9/98, 10/98, 6/01, 12/01.

persuaded King Edward VII to be its patron. The GOC London District, Major General Sir Henry Trotter spoke or was present at many meetings for this Appeal. The London Home had been opened by the Secretary of State for War, Edward Stanhope in 1890. HRH the Duchess of Teck opened its enlargement in 1895. The foundation stone of a completely rebuilt London Home was laid in 1905 by Field Marshal HRH the Duke of Connaught and the Home -named after the Duke of Connaught - was opened the following year by the Secretary of State for War, R B Haldane.⁴⁵

Perhaps the most important accolade in the long-run was that of the professional soldier. Field Marshal Lord Wolseley, Commander-in-Chief fo the British Army, addressed a forthright and fulsome letter to Revd W H Sarchet, chaplain at Gibraltar, on the impending opening of the Home there in 1898. He wished it "success with all my heart" and continued:

Whatever the Wesleyan Chaplains undertake prospers. Whilst other sects are busy with preaching about the advantages of incense and tawdry ornaments in Protestant Churches and in quarrelling over abstruse questions of consubstantiation and points in which our soldiers take no interest, the Wesleyans are hard at work at good things that benefit the soldiers of all sects.⁴⁶

Less than totally fair, doubtless, but balm for the Wesleyans.

45. These important, if cloying, details come from O. S. Watkins Soldiers and Preachers Too (London 1906), p 173 et seq. His figures for the proceeds of various Appeals differ slightly from those quoted earlier which are based on the Committee's minutes.

46. W 10/98

Lord Wolseley had encountered Wesleyan chaplains in the Ashanti campaign and in Egypt. He was himself a small subscriber through the Royal Tournament Fund to Soldiers Homes and to tents on manoeuvres. He opened the Home at Woolwich in 1890 and delivered "a remarkable testimony" to improvements to Army morale from such provision. His continuing warm regard for the Wesleyans was to be in evidence later in connection with commissioned chaplains.

CHAPTER 5

THE ENGLISH PRESBYTERIAN EXPERIENCE

*...to procure for Presbyterian soldiers the
same privileges as are possessed by Prelates and Papists*
Synod instruction

CHAPTER 5

Beginnings

On 4 May 1836 a Convention of ministers and elders drawn from the Presbyteries of Lancashire and the North-West met in Manchester and formed themselves into a Synod. Their purpose was to comply with the terms of a resolution which the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland had earlier adopted the same year to the effect that, as soon as a Synod was formed in England, the Church of Scotland would recognize it as a branch of the Scottish Church.

The promise, which was a qualified one, was not to be fulfilled. By 1839 the Church of Scotland had concluded that, as an Established Church, it ought not to incorporate members of a Synod within the pale of another Established Church (the Church of

England). That decision might be interpreted as not wanting to legitimise Presbyterian dissent in England lest it give support to Episcopal dissent in Scotland. Independence was thus forced on the English Synod which from 1844 became known as the Synod of the Presbyterian Church in England. The preposition served to emphasise the close relationship which they nevertheless hoped for eventually with the Church of Scotland, but the Great Disruption of 1843, by dividing that Church, provided possible alternative associations for the Synod and for the English Presbyterians which had not joined it. ¹

It is no part of this study to offer an authoritative account of nineteenth-century Presbyterianism in England. When drawing on the records of the Presbyterian Church in England for an account of their work among soldiers, however, it becomes clear that many English Presbyteries, particularly in London and in the north-east, continued to look to the Church of Scotland, and increasingly from 1843 to the Free Church of Scotland, while still others looked to the equally Scottish but more consistently dissenting United Presbyterian Church. The vicissitudes through which the Presbyterians in England had passed since the time of the Civil War, and in

1. Leone Levi, the Historical Introduction (prepared by Professor Campbell) to the Digest of the Actings and Proceedings of the Synod, 1836-1866, (London 1866), pp 6 to 8, See also Gay The Geography of Religion in England, (London 1971) pp 124 to 133.

particular the adoption by many congregations of unitarianism or independency in the eighteenth century, had reduced the number of their churches in England to about 200 by 1800² and intensified the survivors' interest in establishing firm links with orthodox Scottish Presbyterianism, riven though it now was. Presbyterian churches were strongest in areas of Scottish or Irish migration and their ministers were largely drawn from Scotland. As will become clear, the frequent posting of Scottish and certain Irish regiments to English garrisons and camps was a factor used by the Synod and its successor church in the planting of new Presbyterian churches. Serving their co-religionists in this way gave English Presbyterians an importance way beyond their size as a denomination in the provision and development of chaplaincy services for the army.

The Synod of 1839 appointed a Committee to collect information on Presbyterian soldiers and

in the meantime to do what they can to procure for Presbyterian soldiers the same religious privileges as are possessed by Prelatists and Papists.

The Committee reported, and was reappointed, at the Synod of 1840, meeting in Newcastle. Parliamentary petitions were to

2. A. P. F. Sell, Presbyterianism in Eighteenth Century England: the Doctrinal Dimension, Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society, vol 4, no. 6, (May 1990) generally, but particularly p 374.

be prepared. The 1841 Synod, meeting in London, received a report

on Presbyterian soldiers' means of instruction in religion, and opportunities of worshipping the God of their fathers,

and instructed the Committee

to take such measures...in order if possible to have these soldiers placed on an equality in respect of religious opportunities with those of the Episcopal Church and the Church of Rome.

As there was nothing to report at the 1843 Synod and at the 1844 Synod, meeting in Berwick, the Committee was allowed to lapse.³

The Synod would have its eyes on Scotland.

One could describe the non-appointment of the committee in 1844 as something of a false start, but it is perhaps remarkable that what was effectively a new Church should give any time at all to soldiers' affairs in the midst of establishing itself, since there can have been few of its own sons in the army. Whereas early Wesleyan striving was based on hard cases of neglect, obstruction and physical punishment, the Presbyterian concern for religious rights appears to have been one of principle. There is no reference in the English Presbyterians' records to General Hill's General Order of 1839 on freedom of religious observance or to the change in Queen's Regulations of 1844 which (as has been noted) were landmarks in the recognition of Prebyterians and Roman Catholics by the War Office.

3. Leone Levi, op cit, records these resolutions in the years stated

Nevertheless, one assumes that the decision to allow the Synod's ad hoc soldiers' committee to lapse in 1844 indicated satisfaction with the state of affairs represented by these changes. The advantage of being a recognised category in the returns of the army from 1844 - since "Presbyterian" was unqualified by country or church - would not have been viewed by Wesleyans as a lack of equality. It allowed English Presbyterian soldiers (however few they were) to be fallen out to attend their own services on Sundays, conducted by local Presbyterian or Dissenting ministers if Scottish or Irish Presbyterian commissioned chaplains were not available in the camp or garrison. Moreover, from 1836 English Presbyterian ministers were eligible to receive payment for any services they conducted on a regular basis for local troops.

English Presbyterians plainly kept abreast of chaplaincy developments whether a committee was appointed or not. In the year when the Secretary of State announced the intention to appoint Presbyterian chaplains, 1858, the Synod had already agreed to "memorialise the Government" in favour of such an action.⁴ The Committee was revived in 1859, and again in 1865. On this second occasion representations had been received about the withdrawal of Presbyterian soldiers from attendance at the Plymouth Presbyterian Church. The Committee was instructed

4. Ibid.

to watch over this case and, in conjunction with the Irish Presbyterian Church, to take such measures as may seem best calculated to secure the interests of the Presbyterian soldiers quartered in the neighbourhood of our Churches.⁵

The soldiers excluded were evidently Irish. One may read into this incident no more than the reluctance of a local military commander, perhaps newly arrived in England, to accept the propriety of sending troops to what he perhaps regarded as simply a nonconformist church. Once more the Committee lapsed. Since 1859 Scottish Presbyterian commissioned chaplains had been regularly appointed and served Presbyterians in the larger military centres where they were usually posted. The need for the English Synod to concern itself was limited to incidents of this kind.

Soldiers and Sailors Committee

In 1876, the Presbyterian Church of England was *formed*. A few Presbyteries remained outside, looking (as some look still today) to the Church of Scotland. But the new Church was geographically more broadly based than the Synod formed in 1839, and stronger, reflecting both the return of some congregations lost to independency in the previous century and the mid-century expansion of organised religion among the urban middle class. The preposition in the title is again important, revealing a new self-sufficiency. The title as a whole, with its overtones of establishment, preserved a distance between the Presbyterians and the rest of Nonconformity which finds its echoes in the work among

5. Ibid.

soldiers.

The Soldiers and Sailors Committee was established in 1877 on an overture from the Presbytery of Liverpool which noted that "regiments containing a considerable proportion of Presbyterian soldiers are being quartered in districts where there are no Prebyterian ministrations". It remained continuously in being. Its first convenor was Revd John Wright, but from 1880 until his death in 1907 the convenor was the Presbyterian minister at Carlisle, Revd James Christie. As the Wesleyans found, continuity of service and increasing experience in dealing with the War Office on the part of the Committee's convenor worked to the benefit of the Church. The Committee's full original title, - "The Committee on the provision of religious instruction for soldiers and sailors and other government officials", reflected the intention that it should embrace "Prebyterian soldiers and their families in England" and "Presbyterian inmates of Military Schools, and of Convict Prisons and Gaols".⁶

The Committee's first report, received at the Synod of 1878, is an account both of the existing and planned military and naval stations in England and of the kind of religious provision made for Presbyterian soldiers and sailors in them.

The military details are in most cases of such precision and accuracy that one marvels at an England so open that the

6. Synods of the Presbyterian Church of England 1876-1905
(London 1905) p 408.

evangelical clergyman collecting them was not mistaken for the Gentleman Spy. The details of religious provision, some plainly developed over a period, fill the gap left by the earlier Synod Committee's infrequent reports. The following will give some impression of the state of affairs reported.⁷

The Channel Islands at the time were heavily fortified. There is "generally a regiment" stationed on Jersey, "half a regiment and a battery of artillery" on Guernsey, and the same on Alderney. In this unlikely place for Presbyterians there are two local ministers, and a local "missionary", who serve as Acting Chaplains to Presbyterians stationed there, the numbers reflecting the frequent use of Scottish and Irish troops in the garrisons and their continuous maintenance.

By contrast, there was only one Presbyterian minister to serve the three naval and military bases and eight forts at Plymouth, the new military centres at Exeter and Bodmin, the Naval College at Dartmouth and "the great convict prison at Dartmouth where...there are few Presbyterians among the convicts but there are a considerable number among the prison staff".

7. P 1878.

Church of Scotland chaplains are noted as serving the "very considerable number of Presbyterians generally found among the troops at Windsor", at Aldershot, Portsmouth and Gosport, Winchester (Netley the military hospital), Chatham, Dover, Shorncliffe, Warley, Colchester and Shoeburyness. A minister of the Presbyterian Church of Ireland serves at Sheerness. It will be noted that this list includes all the principal military stations of the time and those, for example, where the Wesleyans were making full-time appointments. Yet all these stations were served by Scottish or Irish Presbyterian chaplains. The services of English Prebyterian ministers would not be required here, leaving them to concentrate on smaller stations. This might be conducive to church extension but diminished the English Prebyterians' importance to the army in their own eyes and the War Office's.

In some places, Presbyterian soldiers are marched to Independent (Congregational) churches: Wiltshire (including Salisbury), Weymouth, Christchurch, Chichester, Northampton are mentioned; and Canterbury, where "the settlement of a minister there in connection with our church will lead to a proper arrangement". At Parkhurst, then a military base, a Wesleyan minister acts as chaplain to "all the Protestant Nonconformist soldiers".

The report has a purpose beyond the identification of present and future military and naval establishments, recording

the numbers of soldiers at each and detailing the arrangements for attending to Presbyterian soldiers' spiritual needs. It is also concerned, at a time of considerable church extension, to identify, ostensibly on military grounds, areas of the country ripe for the planting of Presbyterian churches. The sparseness of provision in Devon and Cornwall has already been mentioned and the planting of a church at Dartmouth is recommended. Weymouth is identified by General Rollo, a member of the Committee, as requiring a church and minister. Setting out the profusion of camps and garrisons in Yorkshire, the report remarks pointedly that "the hold of this Church on the county is weak". The Committee observe that "it is somewhat remarkable that our active Presbytery of Newcastle has not even a preaching station at the beautiful seaside town of Tynemouth" which also had a garrison. When reviewing Sussex, the Committee say "something ought to be done for Chichester". It is not primarily the soldiers (attended to by the Congregationalists) that they have in mind. Openly straying from their task they comment, "There is a large number of Scotch farmers and Scotch stewards...who might be gathered into a congregation at this town". There is no provision in the East Midland counties and two ministers only in the West Midlands.

But the report also points to the inadequacy of the effort to serve soldiers made by existing English Presbyterian churches. It notes that only one man would be needed to serve Sandhurst Staff College, the Royal Albert Asylum and Broadmoor Prison "at all of which there are Presbyterians but no provision for their

instruction". The London Presbytery are chided for expecting one Presbyterian minister to serve the very many military establishments in Middlesex (which are all carefully identified and meticulously described). In Lancashire, where there are many ministers, the Presbyteries of Manchester and Liverpool are told to "attend to the wants of our uncared for soldiers".

The report concludes by urging the Synod

to instruct all the ministers of our Church in towns where troops are stationed to apply to the War Office to be recognised as Acting Chaplains to the Forces unless a clergyman of the Presbyterian Church is already discharging the duties.

The report mentions about 10 ministers who "see to the needs" of local troops, but describes about 12 more as "Acting Chaplains". The next report, in 1879, says that the Committee's labours have been

chiefly confined to...the securing of the recognition by the War Office as Acting Chaplains such of our ministers as officiate in the Army.⁸

The term "Acting Chaplain" was to have a different meaning later, but the English Presbyterians used it at this time for local ministers who were recognised by the War Office

8. P 1879.

and in return for head money, conducted the compulsory Church Parade for Presbyterian soldiers usually in the local Presbyterian church; that is, in War Office parlance, "Officiating Clergy". Ministers who "saw to the needs of the troops" would be unpaid. The Committee's task was to convert as many of these as possible to Acting Chaplains.

The distinction between Officiating Clergy, who were local civilian ministers, and Chaplains to the Forces, who were commissioned army officers, is already familiar from previous chapters. But it requires re-emphasis in the case of the English Presbyterians. Many Church of Scotland or Irish Presbyterians ministering to troops in England, and listed in the 1878 Report would be Chaplains to the Forces. But no English Presbyterians were commissioned. This rankled. Unlike the Wesleyans, English Presbyterians would willingly have accepted commissioned chaplaincies, and were indeed shortly to make a formal approach to the War Office in an attempt to secure them. In the meantime they not only called their Officiating Clergy Acting Chaplains but requested the War Office to include them in the Army list, alongside serving officers. The request was refused.⁹ Undaunted, the Committee began to list their Acting Chaplains at the end of their own annual reports using a distinctly misleading form

9. P 1879.

of words:

"Commissions to serve as Acting Chaplains to Presbyterian troops have been granted by the War Office to the following" ¹⁰

In fact, they had simply been authorised to receive head money or capitation fees for their services.

In 1880, Wright, the convenor of the Committee died and all the Committee's papers were (with his private papers) burnt. "Materials for furnishing anything like an adequate statement of the work are wanting". His successor, Christie, began, in brisk Presbyterian fashion by sending the Presbyteries another questionnaire and the 1881 Report was based on the answers.

Four questions were put

1. Have you been appointed an Acting Chaplain by the Secretary of State for War?
2. Do you draw the Capitation Grant?
3. Are the men regularly marched to your Church?
4. Would you report upon your work and could you offer suggestions as to the manner in which this branch of the work of the Church had best be carried on?

The circular was sent to thirty-two places and replies received from all but two. The replies revealed fourteen Acting Chaplains:

10. P 1881.

| | |
|----------|------------|
| Alderney | Liverpool |
| Brighton | Plymouth |
| Carlisle | Preston |
| Chatham | Sheffield |
| Chester | Sunderland |
| Guernsey | Warrington |
| Jersey | York |

This list confirms the impression that English Presbyterian chaplaincy work was at this time confined to the second-order military centres. The War Office after all would not pay for Chaplains to the Forces and Officiating Clergy in the same station. (However, the Presbyterian minister in Aldershot, although not an Acting Chaplain and so unpaid was allowed to have Presbyterians marched to his church if they elected.)

All fourteen Acting Chaplains drew their Capitation fees quarterly when the number of Presbyterians in the garrison reached the minimum of 10, at the rate of 10 shillings a year for the ordinary service. More was paid if numbers required a special Sunday service. (From 1859, rates of pay for the Officiating Clergy of all three recognised churches had been standardised and from time to time were uniformly increased).

Woolwich does not appear in the 1881 list, but is described as being served by Revd William M. Thomson, "a stipendiary chaplain, giving his attention solely to the troops". Although the term is Presbyterian, not official military parlance, Thomson as a "stipendiary chaplain", would

receive a fixed payment from the War Office, as did certain full-time Wesleyan appointments after 1881. How long Thomson had enjoyed his "stipend" is not stated, but he had ministered at Woolwich since 1838 and Presbyterians had been eligible for payment since 1836. Thomson was originally a Church of Scotland minister and his Church was built on land given by the State to the Church of Scotland, though the building was erected by public subscription. When the Woolwich Church joined the Presbyterian Church of England, Thomson was denied use of military facilities for his Sunday School "since the Church, of which you are minister, has separated itself from the Kirk of Scotland." This formality imposed by Establishment did not diminish the regard in which he was held the military authorities. ¹¹ Thomson retired in 1881.

The 1881 Report confirms that Presbyterian troops at Aldershot and London "are under the care of Commissioned Military Chaplains of the Scotch National Church". Ministers of the "Scotch National Church" are said to be serving as Acting Chaplains in Berwick-on-Tweed, Newcastle-on-Tyne, Manchester and Portsmouth. In these cases, the minister would be serving congregations which did not adhere to the Presbyterian Church of England, earning recognition as ministers of the Church of Scotland.

11. Private information from Revd D. Cornick.

There are some other interesting features in the replies to the 1881 questions. The Presbyterian Church at Sheffield had originated twenty-seven years previously on the initiative of the Scots Greys when quartered in the town. Ministers in Birmingham, Derby, Leicester and Sheffield hold weekday services in the barracks which are too distant for Sunday marching. The minister at York is trying to buy a house to open as a soldiers' home and has had War Office financial support. The Acting Chaplain at Plymouth, a recruiting station for sailors and marines, "has been able to save hundreds of soldiers and sailors to the Presbyterian Church who would otherwise have been reckoned Episcopalians". The report also makes a practical point for middle class congregations not quite certain how to handle soldiers:

It is a mistake to treat soldiers officially. I have repeatedly heard how much they respected their Chaplain, who would always take them by the hand and make them feel comfortable in his presence. They like to be spoken to like men, and when a minister earnestly and lovingly preaches the Gospel to them, his services will not fail to be appreciated.

Commissioned Chaplains and other Contrasts with Wesleyans

The first move by English Presbyterians to seek commissioned chaplains was rejected by the War Office on 7 December 1882 in these terms -¹²

I am to inform you that as the main body of Presbyterian soldiers doubtless belong either

12. P 1883.

to the Scotch or Irish Presbyterian Churches, the Secretary of State thinks it right that the commissioned Chaplains of that denomination should be selected from those bodies.

The Presbyterians' eagerness to acquire commissioned chaplaincies is a difference between them and the Wesleyans which touches on the nature of English Dissent and Nonconformity in this period. The Presbyterians in England were a nonconformist church whether they liked it or not. They thus avoided tensions over patronage which rent the Church of Scotland in 1843. But they had none of the inherited attitudes of the rest of English Nonconformity to signs of State or Established Church interference in religious affairs. It was a small matter to them to accept head money, seeing it as a due for services rendered, not a means of binding the Church to the State. If a minister were also a commissioned officer, this did not strike Presbyterians as necessarily obliging him to compromise his duty to the Church.

Where Presbyterians drew the line - and this was done for them by the Church of Scotland (though interestingly on the prompting of the London Presbytery) - was on churchmanship. In 1867 the General Assembly removed Presbyterian chaplains from the control of the episcopalian Chaplain General.¹³

13. [Gleig], The Church in the Army and Navy, Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, No DCXXIX (March 1886) vol CIII p 268.

As with the Roman Catholics, once this issue of principle was settled Presbyterians served as commissioned chaplains or Officiating Clergy without demur.

The Wesleyans had sprung from the Church of England. Though naturally abhorring ritualism (which entered the army chaplaincy service, despite Gleig's efforts to stamp on it, to the benefit, it was said, of the Wesleyans) they had no quarrel with Anglican churchmanship. Wesleyans chaplains used the full liturgy of the Book of Common Prayer for parade services. (The President of the Conference found himself reciting the Litany when he opened Rule's iron church). Ministers wore gown and bands when the military paraded in uniform. Rule wore a surplice for weddings and churchings.¹⁴ Nor on the whole were Wesleyans - in contrast to Old Dissent - active in seeking the disestablishment of the Church of England. The Wesleyans' only objection to the Church of England in the army was its privileged position and the chaplains who defended it from them.

On the other hand Wesleyans were firmly nonconformist in their attitude to receiving State money for religious service. They accepted head money in 1881 with very mixed feelings on the basis that it was a partial reimbursement for provision freely made, some pretending that it was a form of pew rent.

14. C. H. Kelly, Memories (London 1910) p 117.

It took them another forty years to reconcile themselves to allowing their ministers to accept permanent commissions, believing that the State should not be allowed to override even in extremis the minister's total duty to the Church.

The War Office's refusal of commissioned chaplaincies to the English Presbyterians also shows that, while they gained from the army's readiness to accept all Presbyterians as one denomination, they suffered from it too. The War Office's reason for refusing commissioned chaplains for English Presbyterians was the simple one that the bigger Presbyterian Churches could supply the relatively few that were needed. Realising this, the English Presbyterians sought through correspondence with "the three great Presbyterian Churches in Scotland" and with the Presbyterian Church in Ireland to present the War Office with "a united group". They recognised that

it will necessarily take some time however before the matter can be definitely resolved.¹⁵

but whether they reckoned on waiting twenty years must be doubted. A joint Presbyterian advisory committee on chaplaincies at the War Office was not formed until 1907 (see Chapter 6).

Decline and Frustration

From the mid-eighties to the end of the century, there are frequent references to the shortage of work for the

15. P 1885

English Presbyterian Acting Chaplains to do. One reason was that imperial campaigns and colonial wars drew away the Irish and Scottish regiments which might otherwise have served in England and denuded camps and garrisons generally. In 1884 the Committee reported that

Owing to the great demand made on our military strength at present by Ireland, North and South Africa, and other places, the Home Stations, with few exceptions, have been so much reduced that the labours of the Acting Chaplains have been exceptionally light.

The 1887 Report included two similar comments. The first from Portsmouth:

Owing to the absence of all Scotch regiments from Portsmouth, the numbers during the past year have been small...

The second was from Plymouth:

Owing to the departure of the Gordon Highlanders from the station in December 1885 the number of Presbyterian soldiers under my care during the year 1886 was reduced from 427 to 58.

More generally, in the 1889 Report,

with the exception of the great military centres, the number of Presbyterian soldiers under the care of our Acting Chaplains has been generally very

The Boer War again denuded home garrisons during the war and immediately afterwards. Both the 1900 and 1903 reports refer to the paucity of Presbyterian troops quartered at home.

The formation of the new Militia regiments in the 1880s figure little in the Committee's reports and do not appear to have made much demand on Presbyterian chaplains, probably because of the relatively few concentrations of Presbyterians in England. But English Presbyterian ministers were not excluded. The Report of 1884, for example, noted that two Ministers had "served the spiritual wants of the Militia" in camps in Cumberland and Norfolk. The introduction for the regular army of local regiments and depots, which assisted the Wesleyans, intensified the lack of work for Presbyterian Acting Chaplains because it reduced the volume of troop movements which had brought Irish and Scottish regiments to England. There was a litany of regret:

...since the introduction of the territorial system, and of linked battalions, comparatively few Presbyterian soldiers are now found at the military stations in England, except in those rare instances where a Scotch or purely Ulster regiment happens to be quartered for a short time.¹⁶

Except in cases where a Scottish or Ulster regiment is stationed there are generally few Prebysterian non-commissioned officers and men in the different garrison towns.¹⁷

With the exception of Aldershot, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Woolwich and Chatham comparatively few Presbyterians are quartered in other regimental districts.¹⁸

In 1898 13 Chaplains had no reports to offer because their stations were so depleted.

16. P 1883.

17. P 1884.

18. P 1897.

The appointment of Acting Chaplains nevertheless continued to grow from the initial 14 and in the mid-nineties reached 21. There is no record of the actual number of soldiers they served in total as official returns counted Presbyterians in the army as a whole. The English Presbyterians maintained no record of English members or adherents in the stations they served, though individual reports gave total attendances, or any rate when they were encouraging.

Social change may have had some impact on the diminishing work of the Presbyterian Acting Chaplains.

With scarcely an exception the reports of our Acting Chaplains bear testimony to the fact that the number of Presbyterians in the Army is steadily growing less. This is no doubt owing to the circumstances that the superior education and general environment open up the way to callings in civil life which prove more remunerative and attractive than a military career.¹⁹

This can be read with the comment from the Acting Chaplain in Jersey to the effect that

the most intelligent and well-behaved of the NCOs are generally Presbyterians.²⁰

There is some basis for the first comment - perhaps for both. The army fifteen years on was to use the churches to reassure parents that boys from good homes could safely engage on an army career (see Chapter 6).

19. P 1890.

20. P 1885.

If there was less for the Presbyterian Acting Chaplains to do at home, could they not accompany the troops on campaigns abroad? Perhaps because only the Woolwich chaplain was full-time, the Committee does not appear to have sought permission to send English Presbyterian chaplains on the overseas campaigns. Their complaint initially was rather that too few Presbyterian chaplains of any kind were sent:

Your Committee regret still to have to report that...a sufficient number of Presbyterian chaplains are not appointed to minister to troops ordered on foreign service....²¹

One consequence, not without interest given the usual assumptions about Wesleyan and Presbyterian recognition in the army, was the case of

a Presbyterian soldier who suffered imprisonment at Cairo for several months for disobeying military orders in refusing to attend the Wesleyan Methodist chaplain's services in that city.

His offence of course was disobedience to the military orders, but

had a Presbyterian chaplain been stationed in Cairo.... the difficulty would not have arisen.²²

The refusal to appoint English Presbyterian chaplains abroad persisted even in the Boer War. The Presbyterian chaplain at Woolwich, now Revd John Cairns, was keen to go.

21. P 1886.

22. Ibid.

[I] volunteered for the front, passed the doctor, was recommended by the GOC and expected daily to start, when the last order came that there were enough chaplains at the front. I have the wounded Cameronians here and they tell me they had no chaplains.²³

The campaign for commissioned chaplaincies continued.

The Committee was again rebuffed in 1894:

In reply, I am to acquaint you that, as the main body of Presbyterian soldiers doubtless belong either to the Scotch or Irish Presbyterian Churches Mr Campbell-Bannerman considers that Commissioned Chaplains should be selected from those bodies...²⁴

Aware doubtless that moves were afoot to offer the Wesleyans commissioned chaplaincies, the Committee commented in 1902

During the past year frequent application has been made to the War Office to appoint Commissioned Chaplains... but without success, the invariable reply being that Chaplaincies should go the Presbyterian denominations represented by the greatest numbers of men in the Service.

The Committee, feeling the impropriety of being meddlesome, waits for the opportunity of making a successful application.

They were in fact to wait until the outbreak of the Great War.

In 1891 the Committee's title had been changed in an attempt to refocus its work. It became the Committee for the

23. P 1900.

24. P 1894.

Oversight of Soldiers and Sailors. Their role passed from religious instruction to shepherding and caring. Unhappily, at the point of change the long serving and experienced convenor, James Christie, fell ill. There was as a result no report in 1891. He was still ill in 1892. Coupled with the lack of Presbyterian soldiers stationed in England, this led to a sense of lassitude in the affairs of the Committee.

In July 1897 on the initiative of the South London Presbytery, the London members of the Committee were formed into a "strong executive" who were to meet monthly. The executive were based in London because of the concentration of military stations in the region. Christie, far away in Carlisle, was made a joint convenor, first with Mr Alex Thomson, then from 1902 with Revd John More. The executive were given direct access to the Home Mission Committee and saw all War Office and Admiralty correspondence on chaplains. Though the reports speak of this change as conducive to efficiency, it is hard to trace any direct or immediate result.²⁵

After a start in keeping with Presbyterian concern for the religious rights of soldiers, and using the opportunity of serving their co-religionists from Ulster and Scotland to extend their own supply of churches, the English Presbyterians suffered from about 1880 onwards from a lack of much call for

25. P 1898; and Synods of the Presbyterian Church of England 1876-1905 p 408.

the services of their Acting Chaplains, matched all too predictably by an earnest desire to be up and doing. Still, they could take pride in what they had accomplished.

Dignified in tone, this assessment of their work in the Report of 1896 reveals justifiable satisfaction as well as a degree of frustration:

When it is remembered that so far as the Metropolis is concerned commissioned chaplains of the Scottish Establishment hold the field; that in several garrison towns Ministers more or less directly in communion with the Established Church of Scotland are recognised by the War Office as officiating to Presbyterian troops; and further that the Synod's Committee is entirely without funds wherewith to erect Presbyterian institutes or mass and display Presbyterian soldiers at some commanding function, in a central or imposing edifice, it is pleasing to know that so many of our Ministers hold the honourable post of Army chaplain, that they faithfully and unostentatiously do their duty and that their services invariably meet with a cordial and generous response from officers, NCOs and men.

CHAPTER 6

EDWARDIAN PEACE

Protestant Nonconformists are everywhere in the British Army but they are nowhere numerous. . . . The fact is that Protestant Nonconformity flourishes in classes which do not enlist and can rarely afford to take commissions as combatants.

War Office minute

CHAPTER 6

The Wesleyan attitude to Commissioned Chaplains

The extension of Wesleyan chaplaincy work in the latter part of the nineteenth century prompted the Army and Navy Committee to review the directions it had been following. A specially appointed committee reported in 1891. One proposal was predictable. The Committee re-emphasised the importance of Wesleyans registering as such on joining the army, or - a new touch in the wake of colonial campaigns - on entering military orphanages. Acknowledging the mobility of the modern army and navy in the area of colonial expansion, the report urged

a complete correspondence between [Wesleyan] Home and Foreign stations in order that in the swift and constant changes incident to the Naval and Military services the fruit of much patient toil may be husbanded for common good.

The report confirmed the necessity of separating ministers appointed to the principal garrisons and naval stations from circuit work. This had been the usual practice since 1874, but circuits had encroached and the recommendation was much welcomed by chaplains. The report's first recommendation, however, was that Wesleyan ministers should not be

commissioned as chaplains.'

This recommendation on commissions became Conference policy. Behind it lay the familiar concern that the Church's authority over commissioned chaplains would be compromised by their subjection to military discipline. There was also doubtless a suspicion of the officers' mess as a source of temptation to the worldly life; certainly a dislike of uniforms; and perhaps even a residual hesitation to cross another Establishment threshold into closer conformity. For whatever combination of reasons, the civilian status of Wesleyan chaplains was not a disability their church wished to remove.

The Boer War prompted second thoughts. First, all 40 Wesleyan chaplains had been made by the army "temporary chaplains" - not temporarily commissioned, that is, but temporarily appointed on conditions that gave them an equivalence to officer rank for pay. Secondly, the distinction with which these men served - and their number - raised a question in the army and in the church whether some Wesleyan chaplains should not be made Chaplains to the Forces.

Two District Synod resolutions in 1901 looked for a change. That from Cardiff and Swansea simply asserted that

the time has now come for Wesleyan ministers appointed to work in the Army to receive the same recognition and status as the ministers of other churches...

1. Rs 1891 and 1893. The Standing Order of the Conference on the separation of Army and Navy ministers from circuit work is in the Minutes of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference, 1898, p 318, para 27 (5).

The other resolution, from Halifax and Bradford, recognised more clearly that Conference policy had to change first:

the time has now come when the Conference should empower the Army and Navy Committee to take such steps as will secure the appointment of Ministers of the Wesleyan Methodist Church as chaplains by Royal Commission to HM Sea and Land Forces.²

At least one Wesleyan chaplain who had served in the Boer War - O. S. Watkins - took the view that church opposition to commissioned chaplains was mistaken in the light of his experience in South Africa.

Up to the present all Wesleyan chaplains going on active service have been given rank and pay merely on the authority of a "War Office Letter". The result has been that the chaplain's position is hard to define, and he may find himself treated either as a military officer or a civilian, according to the convenience of the General under whom he is serving, or as the Chief of Staff may see fit to interpret his credentials.

Moreover, at the end of a campaign,

when officers are rewarded for their services, and chaplains amongst them, receiving special promotion and such honours as the "Distinguished Service Order", no reward of any sort is given to Wesleyan chaplains. During the South African War three at least of the Wesleyan chaplains should have been so rewarded;...the only reason that could be given for passing over the Wesleyans being that they were not eligible as civilians.³

Watkins offered his own solution: a temporary commission. This, he

2. W 6/01.

3. O. S. Watkins, Soldiers and Preachers Too (London 1906) p 214.

said, would not affect fundamentally the decision of the Conference on the question of commissions, but in a practical way would clarify the status of the Wesleyan chaplain on active service and would entitle him afterwards to be considered for an honour. He was ready with a precedent (of a sort), the temporary commission give to the secretary of the Army and Navy Committee, R. W. Allen (who incidentally had never seen active service) when he accompanied the Imperial Representative Corps to the inauguration of the Australian Commonwealth in 1901.

On his own responsibility, Allen himself had begun to test the water a year earlier. His reasoning appears to have been that if the army authorities were prepared to commission some Wesleyan chaplains, it ought to be possible to work out terms that would be acceptable to the church. At the end of a private letter to the Commander-in-Chief, Lord Wolseley, dated 4 October 1900, he wrote

Your Lordship was good enough to request me to submit for your consideration the question of the position of at least some of our acting chaplains in South Africa... in relation to the status and opportunities for larger usefulness of our Church in the Army.

The question was: whether these ministers should be continued in their appointment as acting chaplains for duty at such garrisons as Aldershot and London and those your Lordship indicated in South Africa, or whether the case would be better met by commissioned Wesleyan chaplains being constituted.⁴

4. WO 32/6441. (This is also the source of all the War Office references in this Section except where stated). Garnet Joseph Wolseley, 1st Visct Wolseley (1833-1913). Prof'l soldier. Served Burmese War 1853, Crimean War 1854, Indian Mutiny 1857, China 1860, Canada 1861, Red River Expedition 1873 (KCB and thanks of Parliament), Natal 1874. Cyprus High Commission 1875. Zulu Wars 1879. Quarter Master General at House Guards 1880. Egypt 1882 (Baron, 1882). Adjutant General 1882. Nile expedition to relieve Gordon 1884. G in C Ireland 1890. Succeeded HRH Duke of Cambridge as C-in-C of Brit Army 1895-1902.

Lord Wolseley, on receiving this letter, minuted to the Military Secretary on 5 October 1900.

I think the time has come when we should in our large camps add a Wesleyan Chaplain to the Roman Catholic and the Protestant chaplains we already have there. I am given to understand that those under the heading "Other Protestants"... usually attend Divine Worship with the Wesleyans. Of the latter we may therefore safely assume there are about 13000 in the Army against nearly 16000 Presbyterians, the number of Roman Catholics being about twice that amount. No denomination that I know of have more earnest chaplains working amongst our soldiers than the Wesleyans. They establish Houses and Recreation Rooms which are usually well filled through need. I do not wish to draw comparisons between the various sects into which the Protestants are divided but none look after our soldiers better than the Wesleyans.

Lord Wolseley's wishes were not precisely clear, as Sir Edward Ward, Assistant Under Secretary, indicated in his reply of 11 October:

I am not quite sure if you urge the appointment of more acting Wesleyan chaplains or the creation of a regular establishment similar to the RC and Church of England establishment of Chaplains... I think your minutes... have generally indicated that you are not in favour of increasing establishments.... I quite share your view as to the excellent work of the Wesleyans.

Although the last sentence was evidently an afterthought (from its position either side of Ward's signature), other minuting shows that Ward's regard for Wesleyan work was genuine enough. But as the reference to establishments indicated, there was a question of expense. Advising Ward, A. C. Fleming had minuted:

At the large stations like Aldershot, Woolwich, London etc there are one or more Wesleyan clergymen permanently employed and paid by the War Office with salaries of £150 to £250 a year; elsewhere the local Wesleyan minister attends to the Wesleyan troops, receiving either capitation pay or a small fixed payment.....⁵ We may therefore assume that the proposal is to commission some of those who already give their whole time to the troops. The chief objection is this. Actuarially considered, an extra chaplain's commission means an ultimate addition, for pay and pension, of over £500 a year on an average to the Army Estimates. We should of course save the £150 or £250 a year pay at present.

Fleming raised another difficulty - the disposition of Wesleyans in the army.

[The Commander-in-Chief's] comparison between the numerical strengths of the Wesleyans and the Presbyterians is rather deceptive. Apart from the fact that the latter denominations are entitled to whatever favour is due to a national State Church by law established, they are gathered together into compact homogeneous units. A Scotch regiment is Presbyterian, just as an Irish regiment is usually Roman Catholic. But there are no Wesleyans or other Methodist regiments, even in Wales. Protestant Nonconformists are everywhere in the Army but they are nowhere numerous.

To this minute of Fleming's we owe also the following observation, explaining why it was so difficult to establish a thorough-going chaplaincy service for Nonconformists before the Volunteer Army of the

5. These arrangements were the continuing fruits of the 1881 agreement. When the War Office paid fixed amounts to Wesleyan ministers working full-time among soldiers they called them "Acting Chaplains". The same term was used for Anglican, Roman Catholic and Presbyterian full-time chaplains if they were uncommissioned and therefore civilians. In these Churches however Acting Chaplains were awaiting the opportunity to become commissioned.

Great War or conscription:

The fact is that Protestant Nonconformity flourishes in classes which do not enlist and can rarely afford to take commissions as combatants

Wolseley's reply to Ward, dated 13 October 1900, showed that he had heeded the reference to establishments, though he remained anxious to recognise the Wesleyans' zeal:

After long experience in the Army I feel that all who have had to live with our troops either abroad in the field or at home in camps or quarters owe much to the earnest zeal of the Wesleyan ministers. They seem to get at our men and to understand their minds and mode of life better than the ministers of all our other churches. I am therefore strongly in favour of having at least one paid Wesleyan minister on our Establishment of paid Army Chaplains. I would have him stationed at Aldershot....

Ward then put the matter to his Permanent Under Secretary, Sir R. H. Knox. Ward's minute of 24 October sets the Wesleyan case in an historical context - albeit rather broad brush - and also in terms of the army's debt to the denomination. He is driven to a manifestly more generous conclusion than Lord Wolseley had felt able to propose when reminded of the need to keep a tight rein on the establishment:

I think, in view of the C in C's minute that the time has come for taking the case of the Wesleyans into careful consideration. For many years there were no Army chaplains except those of the Church of England. Then, after the Crimean War, Presbyterian and Roman Catholic Chaplains were commissioned.

Adequate provision was thus made for English Churchmen, for Scotchmen and for Irishmen. There

remains the great and increasingly important body of English Dissenters. At last in 1881, the Wesleyans as the largest English Nonconformist Church - other Protestant Dissenters number only about 1% of the Army - were so far recognised that their ministers were allowed to receive capitation pay for troops attending their ministrations, and a few acting chaplains with small fixed salaries of about £120 to £200, for which they have to give their whole time to the troops, have from time to time been appointed. (They earn no pension, but may receive a gratuity after 15 years' service.) Wesleyan Acting Chaplains also accompanied the Egyptian expeditions and the South African Field Force.

Broadly speaking then, at most of our larger military stations there are one or more Wesleyan ministers engaged solely in ministering to the troops with no real status and earning neither increase of pay nor pension for length of service. In some cases the amounts we pay are so small that the Wesleyan body subsidise the acting chaplains. The Wesleyans have devoted very large sums to the building of Churches, Institutes and Homes for the soldier.

It may be doubted therefore whether the State deals sufficiently generously with this energetic and liberal body. In proportion to their declared numbers in the Army they would be entitled to about five commissioned chaplains, but commissioned rank had always been denied them on the ground of expense...

I have consulted Sir Ralph Thompson [the former Permanent Under Secretary] who knew more of the subject than any living man and he agreed with me that for our large camps at Aldershot, Salisbury Plain and the Curragh, and at Malta, Gibraltar and Egypt, the main stations of the future South African garrison, a commissioned Wesleyan Chaplain should be appointed.

I submit for approval that authority be obtained for the appointment of 8 commissioned chaplains.

The figure "8" is added in manuscript. Ward plainly reflected before entering it in his typed minute. It was generous. At the time there were 85 commissioned chaplains, 62 of them Church of England, 8

Church of Scotland and other (non-English) Presbyterians and 15 Roman Catholics. Ignoring three Church of England chaplains who served at Sandhurst, the Duke of York's School and Chelsea Hospital, the average number of troops per chaplain came out at 2500 for the Anglicans, 2250 for the Presbyterians and 2650 for Roman Catholics. 13,000 Wesleyan soldiers - a War Office figure in the minuting - would require about 5 Wesleyan chaplains on these comparative figures. But the averages were themselves an unreliable guide since

very many of our troops are ministered to by local civilian clergy, costing £34,000 a year and...since we are not allowed by the Irish RC Bishops to send RC chaplains to Ireland, but are compelled to employ the local priests exclusively.

In the result it was agreed to offer 5 commissioned chaplains. The papers show that Knox recommended 5 in place of 8 and that the Secretary of State, St John Brodrick, would have gone to 7. But the Treasury sanction was limited to 5.

This outcome was reached in November 1900, but the death of Queen Victoria shortly afterwards appears to have caused a hiatus. For whatever reason, it was not until February 1902, as the Coronation of King Edward VII approached, that the Wesleyan Army and Navy Committee addressed the question on the first of several occasions, and it was not until nearly a year later, in January 1903, that Ward, now Permanent Under Secretary, met R. W. Allen to discuss the War Office proposal.

That the Wesleyans were known to have difficulties over who would control the chaplains is indicated in a terse War Office briefing note before the meeting:

The difficulties... are entirely created by the Wesleyan body. W.O. offered to commission as Army Officers five Wesleyan clergymen. The W. authorities want to keep them, even when commissioned, under their control.

The solution to the Wesleyan reluctance to lose authority over the chaplains was developed during ^{the} conversation between Ward and Allen. It was to treat the commissions as temporary - O. S. Watkins' idea and doubtless discussed by Allen and Watkins, who was on hand as chaplain to the London Garrison, and as minute secretary to the Army and Navy Committee. In detail, an agreed Memorandum of Ward's and Allen's conversation proposed:

That the Conference place [five Ministers] at the disposal of the Secretary of State for War for service in the Army in the principal Garrisons or camps of the Empire...(India excepted), and in time of war or in any other emergency.

That the appointment of these Ministers to the several stations rest with the Secretary of State on the nomination of the Conference.

That... the Ministers so selected shall be placed at the disposal of the Secretary of State for a minimum term of five years and that this term may be extended...

That the Ministers so appointed receive temporary Commissions as Chaplains, their names... being printed under the Chaplains' Department in the Army List.

That the appointments so made carry with them the privileges, Pay, Allowances etc of the rank which the Ministers severally have assigned to them, the

question of rank being decided in each case by the Secretary of State on its merits, but except in cases where the Chaplain has more than ten years commissioned service, or as a reward for distinguished service in the field, the rank not to exceed that of Fourth Class chaplain.

The last section of the Memorandum of discussion was however the critical one for both parties:

It is distinctly understood that the Ministers so placed at the disposal of the Secretary of State shall be subject in all things to the Regulations and Discipline of the Army; they will however, at the same time, in no sense be removed from the supervision of their Church as to moral conduct, doctrine, and pastoral devotion and duty.

Within the War Office, the views recorded in the Memorandum were approved by the new Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshal Lord Roberts, on 14 January 1903. The Secretary of State's agreement was recorded on 12 February 1903. The formal offer of 5 chaplains with temporary commissions was conveyed to Allen by Ward by letter dated 6 March 1903.

The Memorandum proved equally acceptable to the Wesleyan Army and Navy Committee. At their February meeting they adopted a resolution which declared that

having heard the report of the Secretary of his interview with the Under Secretary for War, and being of opinion that the suggestions contained therein would, if adopted, secure for our ministers serving in the Army adequate recognition and facilities for the discharge of their duties, and would in no sense detach them from the disciplinary oversight and control of their Church, it was resolved that the Conference be recommended

to place a certain number of ministers at the disposal of the Secretary of State for War...

The resolution then repeated or summarised the terms of appointment set out in the Memorandum, though in the critical paragraph on discipline, through oversight, or by intention, the Wesleyans referred to the chaplains' appointments being

subject in all things to the Regulations and Discipline of their office;...

whereas the War Office Memorandum had referred to them being

subject in all things to the Regulations and Discipline of the Army;...

The Wesleyan resolution concluded this critical paragraph using precisely the same comfortable words as the Memorandum,

they will however at the same time in so sense be removed from the disciplinary control of their Church as to moral conduct, doctrine and pastoral efficiency.

Changing this single word, intentionally or otherwise, signalled the Wesleyans' continuing uncertainty about accepting military authority over the chaplains.

Even so, Allen plainly anticipated no trouble from the Committee on receiving the War Office's formal offer on 6 March as he sent Ward the Committee's resolution of February when he acknowledged his letter. But when the Committee met to discuss the formal offer on 21 April Allen's

agreement with Ward started to go to pieces. Ward's letter of 6 March set out the offer in these terms:

Mr Brodrick understands that the Wesleyan Church authorities are anxious that five clergymen of that denomination should be appointed Chaplains to the Forces in certain of the principal garrisons and military camps at home and abroad, and that their names should appear in the Army List, that they should receive temporary commissions from His Majesty, and that their tenure of such commissions should be limited to five years, unless specially extended by the Secretary of State.

The Secretary of State is prepared to give his sanction to the foregoing proposals. The clergymen selected would receive commissions as Fourth Class Chaplains with the pay of that rank during their first year and with the allowances of the rank in addition during the remainder of their employment. They would not ordinarily be eligible for any pension or gratuity on the termination of their engagement.

The Committee found no difficulty with this part of the letter, even the last sentence which has not been part of the Memorandum. (It was doubtless recognized as a natural consequence of a temporary commission.) The letter continued with two more troublesome paragraphs:

It is to be clearly understood that while these Chaplains would remain liable to the supervision of the Governing body of the Wesleyan Church in respect of moral conduct, doctrine and pastoral devotion, they would as commissioned officers in the Army, be subject by law to the Army Act and to all Army Regulations.

It will be necessary to revise as opportunity occurs the allowances hitherto made to Wesleyan Acting Chaplains and Officiating Clergymen with a view to bringing any exceptional Grants into line with the conditions under which the civilian clergy of other denominations are ordinarily remunerated. It is obvious that the preferential treatment hitherto accorded could no longer be

defended in Parliament, when once the Wesleyan Church, by the grant of commissions, has been placed on the same footing as the Anglican, Presbyterian and Roman Catholic Churches.

Whereas the Committee had been ready at its February meeting to recommend the Conference to proceed, they now took fright. They decided to defer a decision and to seek an interview with Ward. The deputation was received on 8 May 1903. No note of the meeting survives but among the War Office records are the Wesleyan memorandum of points to be considered and the War Office briefing notes on it.

On discipline, the Wesleyans asked

Whether if in the opinion of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference any Minister appointed to a Commission should be regarded as disqualified for the duty, either on the ground of moral conduct, doctrinal fidelity or pastoral devotion and efficiency, and so reported to the Secretary of State, his appointment would be cancelled?

The briefing note, in reply, is blunt and unhelpful. Ward's advisers had earlier warned him that on the issue of discipline "the War Office must not commit itself too far". In conversation the answer may have been softened but Ward was advised to say:

The War Office could take no cognizance of mere matters of religious or other opinion, while as regards other matters military law would almost certainly step in, a chaplain being a commissioned officer. He would during the duration on his Commission be practically absolutely lost to the authorities of the Wesleyan Church, and be entirely at War Office disposal. He must have whatever protection his commission can afford him.

On a number of other points the Memorandum and briefing notes suggest that the Wesleyans would be satisfied: age 35 would be the usual maximum on first being commissioned and the Wesleyans' suggested stations (London, Aldershot, Salisbury Plain, Malta and, for the time being, Pretoria) would probably be suitable. They wanted E. P. Lowry and O. S. Watkins to count their service as Acting Chaplains and so be gazetted as 3rd Class, but this was not agreed (as it would not have been on the commissioning of Anglican, Prebyterian or Roman Catholic Acting Chaplains after similar service).

The Wesleyans' second major difficulty was the proposed reduction in capitation fees and other payments to their Acting Chaplains and Officiating Clergy. They asked:

What would the effect of the suggested revision of the Consolidated Grants at present made to the stations now receiving them, but to which Commissioned Chaplains would not be appointed?

All the War Office spokesmen were briefed to say in reply was that

This could not be stated exactly, but some considerable remission and reduction - probably to capitation rates - may be regarded as almost inevitable.

At their meeting in June 1903 the Wesleyan Army and Navy Committee decided to recommend the Conference to refuse the offer of commissioned chaplains. Their refusal was simply noted in the War Office papers, doubtless in some exasperation. The Wesleyans remained concerned at the possibility of a conflict between the Conference's authority over a

minister and the Army's. Yet the words which each side used on this point in the Memorandum of discussion, the Committee's February resolution and in Ward's letter of offer were (except as noted) very nearly identical. It is of course understandable that two men anxious to seek an accommodation should use words which when exposed to others fail to satisfy in every particular. It may be that the Committee's deputation to the War Office in May 1903 realised that it was not going to be able to give in terms the assurances that the Conference would expect on the control of chaplains. It is also probable that those advising Ward had little sympathy with the Wesleyans' anxieties and toughened his brief. It is certainly true that when the question of Wesleyan commissioned chaplains was taken up after the Great War dual authority was the main issue to be resolved and that it did not prove an easy task to resolve it.

The Conference put this construction on the negotiations:

The Conference records its respectful appreciation of the honour conferred upon the Wesleyan Methodist Church by His Majesty's Government in proposing to place a certain number of Chaplains' Commissions at its disposal for its ministers serving in the Army.

The Conference having given the most careful consideration to the various important questions which this offer of His Majesty's Government involves, is of opinion that it will best promote the true efficiency of its work in the Army... by continuing to retain its ministers engaged in Army work in that complete and intimate relation to itself which has hitherto obtained, and which the acceptance of Commissions would necessarily impair...⁶

6. Minutes of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference, 1903, pp 50-51.

It should be noted, however, that Ward, minuting in 1910, put a somewhat different construction on the outcome; and his understanding was doubtless based on his continuing intimacy with Allen:

About eight years ago the War Office obtained power from the Treasury to add five chaplains to the establishment to provide substantive appointments for the Wesleyan Church, carrying the ordinary pay, pension etc. At the last moment the Wesleyan Church declined to accept them. Partly this was because they desired to retain rather more disciplinary hold over commissioned chaplains than the claims of military law and administration could allow, but chiefly because it was pointed out to them that with the grant of commissions the specially favourable financial treatment hitherto accorded them as regards the amounts of grants for Wesleyan ministrations at various stations must cease and such grants must follow the regulations applicable to other Churches.⁷

Both control and finance affected the outcome; and it was unquestionably remiss of the War Office to introduce finance so late in the day, and then be unprepared to offer the deputation even an estimate of the loss the Wesleyans would suffer. Until the paragraph appeared in Ward's letter of 6 March 1903, the only reference to money in the papers - which has survived - is this note of 7 January 1903;

...There is no Wesleyan regiment, in the way that the Gordons are Presbyterian or the Leinsters Roman Catholic. Probably no one regiment has 100 Wesleyans. These small numbers in any other denomination would be marched to the local church or chapel and paid for by captitation rates. But in a good many cases we deal more generously with the Wesleyans. Either we allow an Acting Chaplain or we pay a fixed stipend

7. WO 32/5635

much bigger than capitation rates would produce. They on their side give freely to Soldiers' Homes etc.

Wolseley's - and Ward's - original approach to the question of commissioned Wesleyan chaplains had been governed by the army's debt to the Wesleyans. It ended on the sourer note of the army's generosity to the Wesleyans. Momentum was lost. The talks became too protracted. Lower levels in the War Office crabbed Ward's instincts. The Wesleyans ignored - they certainly never quoted - the Roman Catholics' long experience of military authority over chaplains without loss of effective ecclesiastical control. Sadly, the opportunity to crown the recognition of the Wesleyans' service to the nineteenth-century army passed.

There was however one fruitful outcome. The War Office now agreed to name the Acting Chaplains of all churches in the Army List from 1903 onwards. This provided a further degree of recognition and was a source of satisfaction for both Wesleyans and the English Prebyterians. The latter of course had to dispense with the term "Acting Chaplain" for their Officiating Clergy, but it had *long been an ambition* of theirs to get into the Army List.

R. W. Allen and the Army and Navy Board

If W. H. Rule stands first in the Wesleyan Army pantheon, R. W. Allen stands second. As a young minister he had assisted Charles Frest during his year as President of Conference. His first appointment as chaplain was in 1870, at Chatham, in the steps of Charles Kelly. His second appointment, to Aldershot in 1872, was in the steps of Rule.

Thus Allen may be placed in something of a Wesleyan chaplains' apostolic succession. It was Allen who built the first new-style, extended Soldiers' Home in Aldershot in 1875) and who, as assistant secretary of the Army and Navy Committee, negotiated capitulation fees and head-money and secured recognition of the Wesleyan Church by the War Office in 1881, and by the Admiralty and the India Office subsequently.

While continuing as assistant secretary of the Army and Navy Committee - and effectively as its chief executive, as the joint secretaries were primarily concerned with their Home Mission and Foreign Missionary Committee work - Allen became chaplain to the London Garrison and to the Guards Depot at Caterham in 1883. In 1891 he became sole secretary of the Committee, and in 1901 he gave up his London chaplaincy to become full-time secretary. The Committee's work had grown beyond recognition as a result of the Boer War and the development of Soldiers and Sailors Homes and Institutes. But the Committee had become cumbersome.

In 1903 the Army and Navy Committee became a Board of Management appointed by the Conference on the nomination of the Home Mission Committee. The main part of its membership was to be ten ministers and ten laymen "on the ground of their knowledge of Army and Navy affairs". Its minutes were to be confirmed by the Home Mission Committee, which had twelve members on the Board, and decisions affecting overseas work had to be confirmed by the Foreign Missionary Committee. However, the Mediterranean stations (Gibraltar, Malta and Cairo) were transferred to the Home Mission Committee (and hence to the Board's direct oversight)

and ministers employed exclusively on Army and Navy work in India and China were to be regarded as Home Mission men for financial purposes. The Board therefore became an executive with "entire control of all ministers set apart to labour...in Garrisons or Naval Stations at home or abroad" and with "general oversight" of all Wesleyan work in the Army and Navy. Allen became secretary of the Board and remained there until he retired in 1909.⁸

Thus Allen was at the helm throughout the great expansion of Wesleyan Army and Navy work; full War Office recognition of the Wesleyan Church in 1881, the growth of Soldiers' Homes, the flow of money from capitation fees as the armed forces expanded, the despatch of chaplains on colonial expeditions and to the Boer War, and the army reforms and naval expansion of the early 1900s. As a chaplain in the field (though never abroad) he was more than a church bureaucrat but his long period, as secretary of the Committee or Board enabled him to develop regular and personal dealings with officials, the military and Ministers. He was the first dependable confidant of Whitehall and Westminster produced by the Wesleyans. As such he received, on his own behalf and his Church's, tokens of official esteem.

The first was in 1900 when he was despatched to Australia as one of four chaplains with the Imperial Representative Corps for the inauguration of the Commonwealth. He was given a temporary commission as a chaplain of the 1st Class. (By his Church he was committed "to the Divine Guidance and Guardianship" during his absence "on the important

8. Minutes of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference, 1903, pp 46-48.

duty entrusted to him".) The second mark of distinction came to him in 1901 on his retirement from full-time chaplaincy work when he was awarded by the War Office, "as a special case", a pension of £91.5.0. a year. (Wesleyan chaplains, even those with temporary appointments for the currency of a campaign, were not entitled to Army pensions as they were not established). Thirdly, Allen was at the same time made an Honorary Chaplain to the Forces, 1st Class, Retired, to mark his thirty years service as a chaplain and his work as War Office adviser in Wesleyan matters. He shared this distinction with Dr Theodore Marshall, chaplain to the Edinburgh Garrison, adviser to the War Office on Presbyterian matters and Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland at the time of the award.⁹ Mr Brodrick, Secretary of State for War said he was

glad to hear that arrangements have been made for Mr Allen to continue as Secretary of the Army and Navy Committee of the Wesleyan Church and he would wish to take this opportunity of expressing his appreciation of the service that Committee has rendered to the Army generally and the general interest that the Wesleyan Church takes in the Welfare of the British soldier.¹⁰

Allen's fourth honour came from the King - the MVO fourth class in 1910. Allen represented the Wesleyan Church at King Edward VII's funeral later that year. He had missed Queen Victoria's by his absence in Australia. Allen died in November 1914. The Board's minutes pay tribute to him ahead of Lord Roberts who died in the same month:

9. WO 32/5635, minute of 28 February 1910, recalling the Allen and Marshall precedents in another connection.

10. Letter of 12 September 1901.

..For forty-four years his life was devoted to the moral and spiritual interests of Wesleyans in both arms of the King's Service and for thirty-five years he acted as Secretary of the Board...The result of Mr Allen's persistent efforts was a vast improvement not only in the position of the Wesleyan soldier and sailor, but also in the position of the Wesleyan ministers engaged in religious work on their behalf... Among Government officials and Naval and Military were many of his warmest admirers...''

Inter-church Co-operation

If the nineteenth century can be characterised by the efforts of the Wesleyans to insist that the service of their chaplains should be ever increasingly recognised, and by indifference to the army on the part of the Baptists and Congregationalists, something more recognizably present-day seems to have taken hold about half-way through King Edward VII's reign. It may be summarised as mutual help among the Nonconformists following the entry of the Baptists and Congregationalists on the scene, effective co-operation among the Presbyterians and the re-organisaition of the War Office to cater for the proper administration of non-Anglican chaplains. These developments were accompanied by the establishment of the first interdenominational advisory committees by the War Office.

A few individual Congregational Ministers had always served soldiers returned as Presbyterians when a Presbyterian minister was not available, and had received head-money. These local arrangements worked satisfactorily for the most part, though not everywhere. The

11. R. W. Allen's biographical details in this section are from R 1883; W 11/00, 6/01, 10/01, 1/10, 5/10 and 11/14; and Watkins op cit, pp 108, 118.

Presbyterian Soldiers' and Sailors' Committee were caused "not a little uneasiness" when the Congregational minister in Portland who had served their soldiers and sailors in the area, became a Unitarian. His successor was required to show credentials which "testified to his Evangelical opinions". Even the Wesleyans, with their much bigger complement of chaplains, used a variety of other churches' missionaries to serve their troops in the smaller stations in India. A succession of Baptist Ministers served Wesleyan soldiers and sailors in St Helena until the military establishment was withdrawn. But these arrangements were of convenience, not choice.¹²

In 1903, the Baptist and Congregationalist Unions received War Office recognition, enabling their soldiers to attest to their religion and their ministers to be appointed Officiating Clergymen. There were now seven columns in the War Office returns:

- Church of England
- Presbyterian
- Roman Catholic
- Wesleyan
- Baptist or Congregationalist
- Other Protestant (denomination to be named)
- Jew

The Jews had been recognised in 1889, but only 19 Jewish soldiers attested. The first Jewish chaplain, Rabbi Francis Lyon Cohen, was appointed in 1892¹³

The Wesleyan Army and Navy Committee recorded "their gratification"

12. P 1902; R 1898, p 79; and W 11/06.

13. Jewish Chaplaincy folder, MOD Library. Rabbi Cohen was, in the parlance, an Officiating Clergyman.

at the decision by the War Office to recognise the Baptists and Congregationalists. Two years later the Admiralty agreed to a request that Wesleyan chaplains should serve all Nonconformist sailors ashore at Malta, Gibraltar, Singapore and Hong Kong. The Congregational Year Book of 1908 notes for the first time that the Baptist Union and the Congregational Union act together in securing the appointment of Army and Navy "officiating ministers" and lists forty-six names, twenty-two Baptists and twenty-four Congregationalists.¹⁴

For a first list such a number of Officiating Clergymen was remarkable, but for 1908 it also represented rather limited coverage. In 1903 both Unions approached the Wesleyans for a general arrangement whereby Wesleyan chaplains would provide pastoral oversight for Baptists and Congregationalists in the army and navy. There was a friendly response but no outcome had been reported by the outbreak of the Great War. Meanwhile in 1910 the Wesleyans agreed to serve Primitive Methodist soldiers in camp at Bolden and entered into correspondence with the convenor of the English Presbyterians' Soldiers and Sailors Committee, John Cairns, about the possibility of Presbyterian ministers serving Wesleyan soldiers and sailors, and vice versa.¹⁵

One should not put too heavy a construction on these co-operative developments. There was a high degree of convenience about them. Despite the National Council of Evangelical Free Churches, established in the 1850's, working together was still novel. As for the English

14. W 2/03, 6/05; Congregational Union of England and Wales Year Book 1908.

15. W 4/10, 9/13, 3/14.

Presbyterians, by 1910 they had doubtless realised that consulting together formally with their Scottish and Irish co-religionists in the War Office Presbyterian Advisory Committee (see below) was underlining, rather than relieving, their numerical weakness in the ranks. Though Presbyterians had had surprisingly little contact with the Wesleyans hitherto, Wesleyan coverage, organisation and - one must add - effectiveness made them for Presbyterians, and now for Congregationalists and Baptists, the obvious body to look to for help.

What is absolutely clear is that War Office recognition of the Baptists and Congregationalists did not result from a sudden influx into the army and navy from their ranks. Army statistics were not sound on denominational strengths even when it was possible for a soldier to name his religion. Army records must be regarded as particularly unreliable for the Baptists and Congregationalists who had no central agency looking after the interests of their soldiers, and whose men, until 1868, could only return themselves officially as Anglican or Presbyterian in any case. Although they could declare themselves after 1868 as "Other Protestants" - that is, as non-Anglican and non-Presbyterian - most Congregationalists and Baptists were thought by observers to continue to return themselves as Presbyterians. After 1881, even committed Baptists or Congregationalists might choose to return themselves as Wesleyans or Presbyterians. "Other Protestant" was an academic statement of one's position with no practical consequence unless by chance there were enough men of the same persuasion to march to a local Congregational or Baptist chapel.

For what it is worth, War Office estimates usually take 1 per cent as the Baptist and Congregationalist strength in the early 1900s. As noted already, according to the Indian Government there were precisely 495 of them serving with the British Army in India in 1897, out of 72,000 troops - nearer to one half of one per cent. But for the reasons given, these are minimal figures. There is a War Office minute in 1910 which estimates that "4 per cent [of the army] is made up of Baptists, Congregationalists, Mohametans and Jews", ¹⁶ but, in context, this is a residue and intended to sweep up a number of small categories. (And it perhaps amused the writer to mix Old Dissent with such unlikely companions.) Though the right of Baptist and Congregationalist soldiers to attest under their own names probably accounts for the stationary proportion of Wesleyans in the Edwardian Army at about 5 per cent when one might have expected growth, a figure of even 2 per cent for Baptists and Congregationalists together (say 5000 men) is probably generous.

The Organisation of Chaplaincy Work at the War Office

The addition of Congregationalists, Baptists and Jews to the list of recognised churches or religions, and the increasing scale of chaplaincy work due to the size and reorganisation of the army obliged the War Office to look at its own administrative arrangements and its relations with the churches.

The Chaplain General, an Anglican and a Bishop, held a military appointment. His rank equivalence was Major General. He headed a

16. WD 32/5635, dated 24 February 1910.

Department of the Army, the Chaplains' Department, albeit the smallest one. In military terms he was the superior officer of all chaplains, whatever their church. His ambiguous position in this respect was accepted in 1906 as an aspect of the Establishment and it perhaps helped the Presbyterians and Wesleyans that Bishop Taylor Smith was a noted evangelical. It fell to the War Office to satisfy non-Anglican Churches that their chaplains could fulfil their duties, including their religious obligations, while under the command of one not of their faith.

In practice the Chaplain General handled only the appointment and administration of Anglican chaplains. But this was the major part of the work of the Chaplains' Department as sixty-two of the eighty-four Chaplains to the Forces in post in 1906 were Anglicans. They predominated among Acting Chaplains and Officiating Clergy, who were also administered by the Chaplains' Department (although Officiating Clergy, being local ministers, were appointed by General Officers Commanding each District). Before the Great War, the Chaplain General acted without an advisory committee, taking men as he needed them from Bishops' nominations and using appointments as Acting Chaplain for probation and training. A civil servant acted as his confidential clerk and a chaplain usually served as his assistant. The Chaplain General's power was that he alone advised on total requirements and how to meet them, but the War Office controlled actual numbers through the Establishment of the Chaplains' Department. The Chaplain General's scope therefore to increase numbers generally, or the Anglicans' share, was small. Equally of course the chances of increasing other Churches'

complements - 15 Roman Catholics and 7 Presbyterians in 1906 - were limited by the fixed Establishment.

As has been noted earlier, the arrangements for Roman Catholic chaplains had always allowed them to escape the ecclesiastical authority of the Chaplain General, although in all other respects they were part of the unified Chaplaincy Department he led. The successive Bishops of Southwark had acted as the War Office adviser on Roman Catholic matters, screening the nomination and appointment of chaplains and granting them military faculties. In 1903, Bishop Bourne of Southwark was appointed by the Pope Ecclesiastical Superior of all Roman Catholic chaplains in the British Army. The same year he became pro tempore Archbishop of Westminster. Arnold-Forster, Secretary of State, wrote to him to urge him to continue as Ecclesiastical Superior:

The Secretary of State is aware to what extent Your Grace's handling of the question connected with the ministrations to the troops in South Africa contributed to its eminently satisfactory solution. He is also of opinion that it would be highly desirable that the Army and Navy should be guided by the same policy in matters pertaining to the Catholic Church and this end will be attained by Your Grace's retention of the duty in question...¹⁷

This letter is dated 5 February 1904. In 1906 Archbishop Bourne's appointment as Ecclesiastical Superior was confirmed by the Vatican, though it was not to extend to Ireland, India or South Africa.

The Ecclesiastical Superior's duties were set out in a pronouncement

17. WD 32/5634. The difficulties in South Africa had arisen from the use in some cases of local Roman Catholic priests as chaplains.

of the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith.¹⁸ He was to nominate priests as chaplains and oversee their conduct and behaviour. The chaplains were to derive their authority, as chaplains, exclusively from the Archbishop and were to exercise it only among soldiers and their families in locations approved by him. The statement distinguishes carefully between the Ecclesiastical Superior's authority over chaplains and that of the Bishop of the place where they served. This, not the possibility of conflict between military and ecclesiastical authority, is the burden of the statement. Archbishop Bourne's duties of nomination and oversight were handled for him on a day-to-day basis by Mgr Bidwell. A Roman Catholic chaplain was seconded to the War Office to undertake the administrative work.

The question which now exercised the War Office was how to provide similar reassurance to other churches that ecclesiastical differences and sensitivities could be accommodated within the organisation of the Chaplains' Department under an Anglican Chaplain General. Though in shape quite different, the Presbyterian Chaplains Advisory Committee, set up in 1906, was intended to formalise and strengthen their standing within the War Office. In their case an official of the War Office, not a chaplain, attended to the administrative work (and saw to the Wesleyans as well).

Understandably, given the size of the Chaplains' Department, its administration hitherto had been somewhat makeshift. What was not handled by the Chaplain General fell to the Private Secretary to the

18. A copy, in Italian, is in WO 32/5634.

Civil Member of the Army Council - a junior minister - with clerical support from another Branch of the War Office. In 1908 a separate Chaplains' Branch was set up. It was to administer the Chaplains' Department for all denominations other than the Church of England, and to undertake clerical work, under the control of the Chaplain General, connected with the administration of the Department for the Church of England. The Branch also undertook secretarial duties for the Presbyterian Chaplains Advisory Committee and the new Committee on the Moral and Spiritual Welfare of the Army (see below). It also dealt with grants for garrison churches, army schools and military hospitals.

The Chaplains' Branch was headed by E. V. Fleming, an Assistant Principal. However, immediately following its establishment it was announced that:

...the Secretary of State has decided that this Branch shall in future be under his personal direction and shall be administered through the Permanent Under Secretary.

This form of direct, high level, personal responsibility for the administration of the army's newest and smallest Branch, run by a mere Assistant Principal, was remarkable. It was clearly designed to cater harmoniously for religious susceptibilities, but it led predictably to complaint from within the War Office.

Experience has shown... that this organisation involves in the absence of any intermediate authority undue reference to the Permanent Under Secretary... on points which in the ordinary course would be determined by a Principal... Much of the work has to be conducted by personal communication with the representatives of the various churches and

denominations. In the case of the Church of England there is an officer, the Chaplain General, who receives a salary of £1,000 a year with whom the Church authorities can correspond; the authorities of other religious denominations not unnaturally expect that the more important questions shall be dealt with by an officer of an analogous position. While therefore it has been found inconvenient in practice for the Assistant Principal to undertake these duties, the Permanent Under Secretary and the Assistant Secretary are unable to devote the requisite time to the numerous interviews and negotiations...

Although this plea (in 1913) was heard and a Principal (A. C. Pedley ISO) was promoted to head the Chaplains' Branch (and two others), the Permanent Under Secretary, Sir Edward Ward, retained his personal responsibility for chaplaincy matters, and his successor was to exercise it very influentially in the Great War.¹⁹

The Presbyterian Advisory Committee

The Prebyterian Chaplains' Advisory Committee was set up by the War Office in June 1906. Its Chairman was Lord Balfour of Burleigh and it had four members:

Revd James Christie (Presbyterian Church of England)

Revd P. R. Mackay (United Free Church of Scotland)

Revd William McKeen (Presbyterian Church of Ireland)

Revd Theodore Marshall (Church of Scotland)

The 1907 Army List gives the Committee's terms of reference -

to consider the appointment and distribution of Presbyterian Chaplains and Officiating Clergymen and to make representations thereon to the War Office.

19. WO 32/9322.

The Committee's first secretary was E. V. Fleming, the Assistant Principal in the War Office, who was later to head the Chaplains' Branch.

The appointment of the Committee was a considerable advance. The War Office now had one body to deal with instead of the convenors of four different Army Committees. The Advisory Committee was intended to simplify the nomination, appointment and posting of Presbyterian chaplains and above all to remove the need for War Office adjudication over conflicting bids.

The English Presbyterians had high hopes of the Presbyterian Advisory Committee:

There is every reason to believe that anomalies in appointments will gradually cease to exist, being succeeded by a well ordered plan, by means of which even-handed justice will be done to our own and to sister Presbyterian Churches.²⁰

The 1907 report of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Committee lists the relative position of the four Churches on the formation of the Committee.

6 Commissioned Chaplains (one vacancy)

 3 Church of Scotland

 1 United Free Church of Scotland

 1 Presbyterian Church of Ireland

 (0 Presbyterian Church of England)

20. P 1907.

6 Acting Chaplains -

5 Church of Scotland

1 Presbyterian Church of England

79 Officiating Clergy

about equally divided between the four Churches.

Succeeding reports of the English Presbyterians' Soldiers' and Sailors' Committee certainly show immediate increases in their chaplaincies. How much of the growth was attributable to the existence of the Advisory Committee and how much to John Cairns, the energetic Acting Chaplain from Woolwich who succeeded the late James Christie in 1907 as convenor and as representative on the Advisory Committee, it is impossible to say. Christie had been supported in his last years by a joint convenor who had run the work with a London-based executive. The joint convenorship ended when Cairns was appointed. Already based at Woolwich, he could manage matters single-handedly from the centre. The 1909 report of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Committee shows four Acting Chaplains, in place of the usual one (Woolwich). The Officiating Clergy have gone up from twenty to twenty-five. In addition four Officiating Clergy are shewn for the first time as appointed to ports and a naval prison. Three military and two naval hospitals are also shewn as being served. This higher level of appointments was subsequently maintained.

The English Presbyterians would have preferred to buttress the work of the new Advisory Committee by appointing a single chaplain to superintend all Presbyterian chaplains in the Army. The senior

Presbyterian Chaplain to the Forces at the time, J. M. Simms, was an Ulsterman. Whether he, or Cairns, was in mind is not clear. The Church of Scotland opposed the proposal and it was not revived.²¹

The Soldiers' and Sailors' Committee report of 1912 contains "the pleasing announcement" that the Admiralty had agreed to end the practice of giving preference to the Church of Scotland when appointing officiating ministers to Presbyterian sailors and marines in English ports. Protesting the previous year, the Committee had noted that:

Such regulations should not apply to England where the Church of Scotland is not established and where this Church is better fitted to render the Services required.

A deputation from the Advisory Committee to the Admiralty to secure the appointment of Presbyterian Chaplains on ships of war did not succeed. The first English Presbyterian chaplain in the Royal Navy (George Elmslie Troup) was not appointed until 1915, and then as a (civilian) Officiating Chaplain. He was given a temporary commission as an Acting Chaplain when in due course such provision was made, and became an Honorary Chaplain to the Royal Navy in 1922, by which time he had moved to Scotland and become a Church of Scotland minister.²²

One persistent ambition of the English Presbyterians, which the formation of the Advisory Committee did nothing to resolve, was to

21. P 1908.

22. P 1911, 1912; Taylor, The Sea Chaplains (London 1978) Appendix VII and X.

secure commissioned Army chaplaincies. The 1913 report of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Committee puts the case in the usual measured way.

The Committee is of opinion that the present time is opportune for calling the attention of the Army Council to the fact that our Church renders valuable service throughout England to the Army, and has a very large proportion of ministers who possess the same qualifications in regard to birth and education as the ministers of the Church of Scotland, the United Free Church, and the Presbyterian Church of Ireland, but who have hitherto been disqualified from appointment to a commission solely because they belong to the Presbyterian Church of England; while former ministers of our church, who are now ministers in the Churches of Scotland or Ireland, became qualified for nomination, although they are of English birth and education. The Committee, in view of the liberal treatment already extended to this Church since appointment by the Army Council of the Advisory Committee on Presbyterian Chaplains, is hopeful that, without interfering with the privileges of our Sister Churches, our Church may be freed from the disqualification under which it at present suffers, and be included among the Churches invited to nominate candidates for commissions as Presbyterian chaplains.

Application was duly made to the Army Council. The 1914 report notes that this application had been

forwarded by the Army Council to the Church of Scotland, the United Free Church of Scotland and the Presbyterian Church of Ireland and their replies were being studied by the Committee.

So matters rested until the outbreak of the Great War.

Committee on Spiritual and Moral Welfare

The same year, 1906, in which the Presbyterian Advisory Committee

was established, the War Office set up the Committee on the Spiritual and Moral Welfare of the Army. It was the first interdenominational committee to be established by the War Office and it included prominent laymen. The laymen might be expected to shed a broader light on army matters than the clergymen and ministers who ran the denominational army committees (though they were there as well). According to the Army List the Committee was

Appointed to advise the Army Council in all matters affecting the spiritual and moral welfare of the Army and to consider the best means of ensuring the greater efficiency and organisation of the work of the Chaplains of the different denominations and generally the way in which the work of the various Auxiliary Societies of these religious denominations and also of the philanthropic committees and Recreative Associations can best be coordinated to the advantage of the soldier.

The original membership was as follows

| | |
|------------------|---|
| <u>Chairman</u> | Rt Revd Bishop J. Taylor Smith CVO DD, Chaplain General to the Forces |
| <u>Members</u> | Revd M. Adler Revd R. W. Allen Lt Col A. G. Balfour Rt Revd Bishop Brindle DSO Sir G. Hayter Chubb Bt Gen Sir J. J. H. Gordon KCB J. W. Gulland MP Maj-Gen E. O. Hay CB RA Revd P. R. Mackay DD Revd L. J. Matthews Revd T Murray Revd P. F. Raymond Field Marshall the Rt Hon Earl Roberts VC Sir Albert Spicer Bt MP J. E. K. Studd Lord E. B. Talbot MP MVO DSO Sir C. E. Tritton Bt Sir E. W. D. Ward KCB Rt Revd Bishop Welldon DD |
| <u>Secretary</u> | E. V. Fleming |

Some of these names are of special interest. The MPs were all church laymen. John Gulland, a Scottish Liberal MP, (and from 1915 to 1917 to be a Chief Whip and blamed by Mrs Asquith for her husband's fall) was a member of the United Free Church of Scotland. Sir Albert Spicer, another Liberal MP, who was to preside over the Marconi enquiry, was a Congregationalist. Lord Edmund Talbot was a Roman Catholic. The son of the 14th Duke of Norfolk, he was to be Lord Lieutenant of Ireland 1921-22 and become Viscount Fitzalan of Derwent. Studd was a Baptist and a member of a family noted for their pursuit of organised evangelism. Sir George Hayter Chubb, the locksmith, was a Wesleyan. Bishop Welldon, formerly Bishop of Calcutta, was Dean of Manchester. The Anglican layman - though brought up a Baptist - was Sir Charles Tritton, a bill broker and a noted Temperance man. He was a former Conservative MP. Bishop Brindle represented the Archbishop of Westminster.

Two of the soldiers appear to be present as Scots Presbyterians (Colonel Balfour and General Gordon), the other two as professionals. Field Marshal Roberts was Commander in Chief and Major General Hay was Adjutant General.

Spicer's biographer notes -

It was as a Congregationalist that he was nominated as a member of the Advisory Committee to the Army Council on Spiritual and Moral Welfare of the Army. As in all his interests he worked exceedingly hard,

visiting camps, getting to know the officers and men...²³

Spicer was notably conscientious and active in his philanthropic work. Some members of the Committee were there perhaps more for their experience of the army or chaplaincy work. When Revd J. H. Bateson was approached to join, for example, it was in connection with his knowledge of the army in India. Writing to him on 3 December 1909, Sir Edward Ward said -

...your assistance on this Committee would be of very great value, especially in view of your experience of work among the troops in India...²⁴

Bateson had returned from India in June 1909 to take over the secretaryship of the Wesleyan Army and Navy Board from R. W. Allen. In India, Bateson had worked for the Royal Army Temperance Association, a major focus of recreative and reformatory endeavour in the Edwardian Army. Part of Bateson's first Committee meeting on 26 April 1910, was taken up with discussion, prompted by Field Marshal Lord Roberts, of the work of the Association and in particular of ways of associating "men of good character who were not pledged total abstainers but wished to have the benefits of connection with the Association."²⁵

23. Lancelot Spicer, Albert Spicer, a Man of His Time (London 1938) p 29.

24. Methodist Forces Board papers.

25. Minutes of meeting, *ibid.* Other subjects discussed indicate the Committee's normal business: the Chaplain General's report on his voyage to India by troopship; supply of Bibles; Tidworth Garrison Church. Bishop Taylor Smith was an avid inspector of stations abroad.

Bateson's first meeting was the Committee's ninth. The occasion was remarkable for the start of a scheme of noted social enlightenment which was probably the Committee's main achievement. It occasioned a visit to the Committee by the Secretary of State himself, R. B. Haldane, accompanied by the new Adjutant General, Sir Ian Hamilton. Haldane's address to the Committee has been preserved with the minutes.

The proposed scheme was based on one already run in Scotland by the United Free Church of Scotland convenor and a member of the Committee, Dr P. R. Mackay. Haldane described it like this.

When a recruit enlists and is about to join the depot, Dr Mackay arranges that the recruit is asked, not inquisitorially, but in a friendly spirit, where he comes from, and whether he and his family have been attending the church of any particular minister in the part of Scotland where he lived; if it turns out that there is someone whose ministry he has attended, Dr Mackay communicates with that minister, finds out what he can about the boy, communicates through the local minister with the boy's parents, telling them that their son is being well taken care of and will be well taken care of, and registers the particulars regarding the lad on his list of recruits. When the young soldier goes abroad to India, or overseas elsewhere, Dr Mackay communicates with the chaplain of his denomination of the station to which he goes, asking him in his turn, to look after the lad and to pass him on again in the same manner to his new chaplain, should he be transferred to another station. When the soldier is returning again to this country, it may be at the end of his Colour service, the fact is notified to Dr Mackay, who again communicates with the minister of the parish from which he came, telling him that the man is coming back to his home, with the result that he is looked after on his return, and helped to obtain civilian employment, or at all events is made to feel that he has a succession of friends willing to help him all through his career...

Haldane described the result of this experiment as "remarkable". He listed the achievements as

- a much smaller proportion of desertions
- the soldier has an influence round him constantly which helps him
- it helps the man with "some bad entries" to get a job after the Army
- it looks after the man in difficulty.

Haldane concluded by asking the Committee "whether we can make a beginning in the way of extending this system beyond the limits of Scotland". He noted that "the problem in England and Wales is more complicated than it is in Scotland, where what we may call practically one denomination - Presbyterianism - is general." But he urged the Committee with the full support of the Army Council, to try.

More and more we are realising that the very success of our Army system depends upon the soldier feeling himself not only a good citizen, but an example to his fellow-citizens. The soldier, who used to be looked down upon, has now begun to be looked up to, and anything we can do in the direction of furthering that process is something which will add to the efficiency of our Army and give us more and more of that fine type of men who ... are the admiration of those who meet the best of our soldiers abroad.

The Committee agreed to attempt to extend the scheme to England. It is worth pausing, however, to note that what might nowadays be regarded as an obvious, as well as a desirable, form of social support and

counselling was at this stage in the development of the army a notable advance. It clearly says something about the ordinary work of army chaplains at this time that such closeness to the soldier was unusual. It is also noteworthy as providing a link between the home from which the soldier came and the army. Many soldiers were of course footloose and estranged from home and family. Under this scheme families could be assured of a form of care for their sons, perhaps encouraging a different sort of recruit. Finally, it presages a higher sense of organisation than chaplains had been used to, as a supplement to the conventional organisation of the army, which did not look outside itself, and certainly not to the homes from which its men came.

The scheme was first extended to the Northern Command in England. When Bateson, as Secretary of the Wesleyan Army and Navy Board, attended the inauguration of the scheme in York in November 1911, he described it as "a new scheme for the pastoral oversight of soldiers from the stage of their recruitment until the expiry of their service with the Colours". (The use of the term "pastoral oversight" would usefully categorise the scheme in Nonconformist ears). The Wesleyan Army and Navy Board had this report of the scheme in 1912:

The Board heard with satisfaction of the progress of the new Recruiting scheme. The number of Wesleyans who have been enrolled as entering the Army in the Northern Command shows a great increase upon the numbers previously enlisting; the friends of the soldiers appeared to be most grateful for the interest which the Church, under this scheme, is taking in the moral and spiritual welfare of their soldier-sons; the Chaplains find that the scheme helps them in their pastoral work among the soldiers in the various Depots; and encouraging reports have been received of the way in which some of the young soldiers have been won into membership

with our Church,²⁶

It is evident from this that the Wesleyans were using the scheme to shepherd their own flock and in particular to overcome the old difficulty of identifying their own men at the point of enlistment. As probably the best organised English church body for this purpose they were as well placed as the Scottish Presbyterians to develop the scheme on entry and on leaving the services. As early as 1906 they had started an employment bureau for discharged Methodist soldiers and sailors. When Pateson visited Newcastle-upon-Tyne in May 1912 to address a "meeting of clergymen and employers of labour in that city" he might have been speaking about either scheme.

In June 1913 the Mackay Scheme (as it became known) was extended to Southern Command and a Recruiting Officer was appointed by the Army Council. They were evidently so confident of the benefits of the scheme that they were prepared to help its organisation themselves. By May 1914 the scheme had been adopted in every Command. Wesleyan enthusiasm was maintained. In the same month they asked the War Office for an Office Allowance to meet the extra costs associated with the scheme.

The Mackay Scheme survived the outbreak of war and was not finally wound up until 1922. The Committee on the Spiritual and Moral Welfare of the Army, which had fathered the scheme, was less long lived. It was suspended on the outbreak of the Great War. The Spiritual and Moral

26. W 4/12.

Welfare Committee's importance lay in having demonstrated that inter-church cooperation was achievable in matters to do with the army and that it was possible, through it, to use the churches' individual organisations to a commonly directed end. Its success undoubtedly encouraged the formation of the much more significant Interdenominational Advisory Committee which subsumed its work when it was set up in 1916.

Conditions of the Soldier's Life

To the Committee on Spiritual and Moral Welfare is also owed a remarkable report from all Army Commands on the conditions of the soldier's life at home and abroad. It was prepared in 1907. Its interest in this study is the objective account it gives inter alia of the work of chaplains and the usefulness of Soldiers Homes. Because General Officers Commanding deputed the task of reporting, and often sent their junior officers' reports to the Committee this is an account by those closest to the soldier.²⁷

Wesleyan Homes emerge on the whole well from the report. Discussing four institutes in the London Command, for example, Major General Stopford says

The Wesleyan Soldiers' Home is the only one which is, to any extent, patronised by the NCO's and men belonging to the District, the remainder are superfluous and not in my opinion of advantage to the troops under my command...

27. Ministry of Defence Library.

The Aldershot report (from a Captain in the Royal Welsh Fusiliers)

says

As to the Soldiers' Homes, so far as I can make out, the Wesleyan Home is really the best and the men get more harmless amusements there than in others, and while there is room for religious meetings, there are separate ones for reading and writing, and religion is not forced down their throat.

Many of the reports dwell on unsavoury entertainments and the encouragement of alcohol consumption in institutes run by secular organisations or, under tenancy arrangements, by the army. Royal Army Temperance Association rooms were usually provided within institutes run by the army but (in Aldershot)

the comfort and excellence of the provisions in the coffee shop are now so great that a man really gains nothing by joining the RATA.

Religion in some Soldiers Homes is noted as a deterrent. A Sergeant Major comments that

the only time a man gets any straight talk about morality etc is when he is visited in hospital or detention barracks by a chaplain ... I think the religious element in the Soldiers' Homes keeps many men away.

A Lieutenant notes that

the attendance (at Homes) depends largely on the character of the managers, and if as soon as a man enters the door he is asked to a prayer

meeting he will not go there again...

As to the chaplains themselves, and their services, there are a variety of views. One from Cork was that they should "be selected from men of physical activity and skill in many games". A similar comment suggested that

To gain an influence for good with soldiers they must first gain the respect and affection by comradeship with them in sports, games, hardship etc.

Another suggested more simply "a course in elocution during their probationary period".

There were no comments relating specifically to the chaplains of any denomination but a Colonel did

feel bound to place on record an opinion which I am aware will be strongly controverted and possibly much objected to and that is that the time is fast approaching, if it has not already arrived, when the soldier will not be obliged to attend Divine Service. In the interests of discipline, a parade on a Sunday morning will probably always be necessary, but compulsion to attend will have to cease at the church door.

Overall, the report gives no sense of a shortage of religious facilities or curtailment of religious freedom. There are frequent references to Baptist and Congregational Officiating Ministers, now plainly fully engaged. Such issues have become past history. The

concern rather is with the welfare of the men and the effect of drink, unsavoury entertainment, the inadequacy of sporting facilities, bad lighting, poor barrack-room accommodation and under-employment, on their discipline and well-being. The limited ability of the chaplaincy services as they had developed to meet needs such as these requires no emphasis. The report would be encouraging to the churches in that it commends much that the chaplains were doing or providing in the religious sphere, but its strongly secular note would bring home the marginal place of the chaplains in the life of the army. It would perhaps be comforting that only one voice was raised against the compulsory Church Parade, but significant that the religious service was for the most part seen as the chaplain's main activity. The seeds of the difficulty over the chaplain's role in a fighting army in the Great War can perhaps be found in this segregated view of his function.

Territorial Force

In 1908 the Territorial Force was established. It replaced the old Imperial Yeomanry and the Volunteers. Haldane's aim was to build up a reserve military force through regular training and annual camps. Regiments were to be recruited locally and would carry a local name or association. It was designed to appeal to able bodied men who would remain in civilian occupations and yet be prepared to train in readiness to step into the line if the small regular army in the British Isles had to be sent overseas.

Twenty six Wesleyan ministers acted as chaplains at various territorial Camps of Exercise in 1908. English Presbyterian ministers,

in smaller numbers, also took part. The Wesleyans reported that they had found it impossible to arrange adequately for services in the camps, or discharge other pastoral duties, because, in the absence of a Religious Declaration, religious organisation was not possible. The War Office called a meeting of all the churches in September 1908 where the possibility of setting up a separate Chaplains' Department for the Territorials was discussed but not pursued. The Regulations proposed to allow one chaplain for every unit provided there were 150 men of a particular denomination, or of an agreed combination of denominations.

A special meeting of the Wesleyan Army and Navy Board on 19 April 1909 heard a report from a sub-committee (comprising E. P. Lowry, O. S. Watkins and Col. John Barnsley) and resolved that it would be impossible

for Wesleyan Chaplains to be appointed under the [Territorial Force] Regulations as they now stand for the following reasons

- (a) the 150 minimum strength per unit ... will in almost every case be prohibitive
- (b) there is no Religious Declaration by which the numbers belonging to the Wesleyans or any other Church can be ascertained
- (c) the inadequacy of the allowances... for Chaplains engaged in camp duty
- (d) the triennial removal of our ministers.

These views were reported to the Secretary of State and interim arrangements were made for the chaplaincy duties during the 1909 camping season.²⁸

28. W 9/08, 12/08, 4/09, 5/09.

At the end of 1909 the War Office responded by establishing the Territorial Force Advisory Committee, a further venture into interdenominationalism. Its Nonconformist members, with their religious affiliations, were

| | |
|--|---|
| Congregational | Revd R. J. Wells Sir Albert Spicer Bt MP |
| Baptist | Revd J. H. Shakespeare Sir H B Reid |
| Presbyterian Church of England | Revd J. Cairns Sir Andrew Wingate |
| Calvinistic Methodist Church of Wales | Revd J. E. Davies J. H. Lewis MP |
| Wesleyan Methodist Church | Revd R. W. Allen Col. Sir G. Smith |

For Nonconformists, the nomination of chaplains was to be in the hands of the Wesleyan Army and Navy Board, or the Presbyterian Soldiers and Sailors Committee or the Secretaries of the Baptist or Congregational Unions or the Moderator of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists as appropriate.²⁹

The first meeting of the Territorial Force Advisory Committee was on 2 December 1909. Bateson reported to the Army and Navy Board that although the War Office would not assent to any general Religious Attestation of men entering the Territorial Force, officers commanding units would be asked to secure nominal rolls for all denominations. In no Territorial unit however was the strength of Wesleyans likely to be as high as 150 - that is 15 per cent of one infantry battalion - but the War Office were prepared to consider special arrangements. The

29. BP.

Territorial Sub-committee were asked to nominate 20 chaplains for Great Britain.³⁰

In the result however two Wesleyans were appointed under the 150 rule and two "on special grounds". This compared with 3 English Presbyterians (for the Liverpool Scottish), whose names appear from 1909 in their Committee's record of chaplains, 4 Welsh Calvinistic Methodists (for various South Wales Regiments) and one Baptist or Congregationalist. (One Jewish Chaplain was appointed, also "on special grounds").³¹ These numbers of chaplains demonstrate the advantage of those denominations with regional strength - the English and Welsh Presbyterians - and the disadvantage of those without, even though they may have much bigger overall numbers. The Wesleyan chaplains appointed under the 150 rule were attached to Duchy of Cornwall regiments. Elsewhere Wesleyans could not muster the necessary 150 troops in a unit.

In 1912, a Note on the Strength of Free Churches in the Territorial Force was prepared by the War Office in connection with a deputation on Sunday Shooting (that is, Sunday rifle practice). The Note reports that exact statistics are lacking as members of the Territorial Force did not "attest" their religion on joining "for fear of hurting Nonconformist susceptibilities". (This is a curious comment as the Wesleyans at least had wanted a Religious Declaration and it was the War office which had preferred to arrange for nominal rolls). The Note continues that the

30. W 1/10.

31. BP.

number of Wesleyans in the whole Territorial Force in 1910 was estimated by Bateson, who was to be in the deputation, to be 3,360, that is one and a half per cent of the total Force. If the ratio of Wesleyan to Baptist and Congregationalist which is found in the Regular Army obtained in the Territorial Force, the Note continued, the Baptists, Congregationalists and Wesleyans combined could claim only 2 per cent of the Territorial Force.

The deputation was received by Colonel Seeley, the Secretary of State for War. He did not accept the deputation's case. He noted the small number of Nonconformists in the Territorial Force but did not presume to question their right to protest at Sunday rifle practice. He urged the members of the deputation on patriotic grounds to commend the Territorial Force to their denominations; this they agreed to do.³² The Synod of the Presbyterian Church of England subsequently declared the Army Council's decision not to forbid Sunday rifle practice "a grave national danger".³³

It is perhaps worth stating more fully the case against the use of Sunday for military purposes. It is a quaintly Victorian, and a very tidy view, of the soldiers' life. The Wesleyan Army and Navy Board adopted this report on 11 November 1910.

An impression is abroad that in connection with the Territorial Force certain trainings take place on Sunday and it is understood, particularly, that some members of the Force find it convenient to

32. BP.

33. P 1912.

practise on Rifle Ranges on the Lord's Day.

It is considered that army military training on the Lord's Day prejudices the Force in the minds of many Christian people. In the interests of the Force itself, as well as of the Nation, it is desirable that military training of any sort on the Lord's Day should be officially prohibited.

During the Annual Training of the Territorial Troops a considerable proportion of the units march into Camp on Sunday and leave the following Sunday week, while many men ... arrive and depart on the middle Sunday.

It is respectfully suggested that the present arrangement with regard to some of the units should be made to apply to all, viz that the troops should come up for training on a Saturday and return to their homes that day fortnight, so as to avoid all Sunday travelling and enable them to attend Divine Service either in their own places of worship, or in the Camp....³⁴

The Wesleyan Conference entered the lists in 1911 and the deputation, as noted, was received in 1912. The remonstrance came to nothing. As always, numbers counted and the Free Church presence in the Territorial Force was insignificant. In the Volunteer Army it was to be substantial, but by then other rules prevailed on Sundays.

The Territorial Advisory Committee continued until the outbreak of War when its services were allowed to lapse. Bateson was "commissioned" as a Territorial Force chaplain in September 1911, the minute Secretary of the Army and Navy Board (D. S. Watkins) adding somewhat ambiguously, "this being considered a step in the right direction".

34. W 11/10.

Summing Up

The Great War proved a watershed for the status and acceptability of Free Church Army Chaplains. Some appraisal of the position reached by August 1914 is for this reason desirable, but it should be understood that the approaching War was quite unheralded in the army committee and advisory committee meetings of that year. Desirable though it is, a summing up is therefore somewhat false to the contemporary mood which was still concerned with the minutiae of continuing business within the existing parameters of service.

The pre-war establishment of the Chaplains Department was remarkably small. In 1914 there were just 117 Chaplains to the Forces (excluding the Chaplain General), of whom 16 were Roman Catholics and 7 were Presbyterians; the rest were Anglicans. Judged simply by this, the Nonconformists had still not arrived. But the very smallness of the establishment of commissioned chaplains in relation to the size of the army underlined the importance of other chaplaincy work. Of 36 Acting Chaplains - uncommissioned but recognised by the War Office as full-time chaplains - the Wesleyans had 15 and the English Presbyterians 3, a far higher proportion than their numbers justified. All the Nonconformist churches appeared to be content with their numbers of Officiating Clergy.

The Wesleyans had the added real distinction of holding three of the four Honorary Chaplaincies. R. W. Allen's appointment has been noted. O. S. Watkins and E. P. Lowry were appointed in 1910 as Honorary Chaplains 4th Class. Their citations, as presented by the War Office to

the new King, George V, are a reminder of the experience current in Wesleyan ranks because of service in the Boer War.

i. The Rev E. P. Lowry, who has served with the troops for 18 years as an Acting Chaplain, including the whole of the South African War. He received the Queen's medal with six clasps and the King's medal with two clasps, and was mentioned in despatches.

ii. The Rev Owen S. Watkins, who has served with the troops as an Acting Chaplain for 14 years, including active service in the Soudan for which he received the medal and also the Egyptian medal with clasp, and was mentioned in despatches, and in South Africa (the siege of Ladysmith) for which he received the Queen's South Africa medal with five clasps and was three times mentioned in despatches.

That this was intended as a signal honour for the Wesleyans and in recognition of their lack of commissioned chaplains can be seen from the submission itself:

Besides the commissioned Chaplains to the Forces, belonging to the Church of England, to the Church of Scotland and other Presbyterian Churches, and to the Roman Catholic Church, clergymen of the foregoing Churches and of other Churches are employed in ministering to the troops. Some of these clergymen are solely engaged in Army work and are devoting their lives to it. In two instances the services of such clergymen have, with Royal approval, been recognised by the conferment of the Honorary rank of Chaplain to the Forces, First Class. It is now desired to make definite provision by Warrant for such conferment of rank, more especially as there are several Clergymen of the Wesleyan Church who have rendered meritorious service as Acting Chaplains both in peace and in the field, and as no substantive commissions as Chaplains to the Forces are given to this Church.³⁵

35. WO 5635.

Easily the most professional of the non-Anglicans, the Wesleyans had produced in 1907, and kept up to date, a Manual of Information which set out the duties of all their chaplains, in peace and in war, serving the Army, the Militia, the Royal Navy and the British Army in India. It is both a manual of good practice and a clear statement of the legal basis or authority for the work of Wesleyan chaplains. It was of course the practical success of their chaplains which had won them the respect of several generations of military commanders and administrators, and only their concern for ecclesiastical authority which had denied them a share of commissioned chaplains.

But one must be careful not to overstate their position, or more precisely not to understate the continuing strength of the Church of England in the army. This was due not simply to the Chaplain General's bustle and activity and evangelical appeal. Nor was it due solely to the numerical superiority of the Church of England in all chaplaincy work.

As was to become abundantly clear in big ways and little during the Great War, the Church of England continued to enjoy its effortless pre-eminence in the army through the fact of its Establishment. To that it owed its ownership of the Chaplaincy General and the automatic assumption - as true in 1914 as in 1860 - that the army on parade, in England and the Empire, was Anglican. Its ceremonies were Anglican. The big garrison churches were Anglican. Regimental chapels were in Anglican Cathedrals. The soldiers who followed the drum from the Church Parade found themselves in the Cathedral or in the Parish Church. The

white surplice and the flag-pole stood naturally together, in England, in India, in Africa, throughout the Empire.

In Scotland alone was this not so. But from the trappings of Establishment there. Nonconformists were equally excluded. The fact that this Establishment was Presbyterian was, at this stage, immaterial: it was to matter later.

Roman Catholics of course did not share the advantages of membership of the Establishment, but through their numbers they enjoyed a separate well-acknowledged and well protected position of their own. Their seemingly small complement of commissioned chaplains was due to the Irish Bishops' prohibition of English Catholic chaplains serving in Ireland. The local parish clergy supplied the local need against head money.

Even so, the Wesleyans and the English Presbyterians had recognised status. Few Wesleyans who would have remembered the struggles of 1862 were still alive - though Kelly was one. All Wesleyan Chaplains then serving knew only the honoured status achieved in 1881, and over 30 years or more had developed their own style of army ministry, directed at individuals or groups, rather than the public parade ground ministry of the Established Churches. Style apart it was numbers and disposition of troops which marked out the English Prebyterians and the Wesleyans as poorer relations, and the War, sadly, would set that right.

CHAPTER 7

THE GREAT WAR TO 1916: THE UNITED BOARD

The United Board is

*the working in miniature for a
specific purpose of a partially United
Free Church of England*

J. H. Shakespeare

*a dodge to let the War Office dispose of people it
does not want to be bothered with*

T. R. Glover

CHAPTER 7

Initial Response

The Wesleyans and the Prebyterians responded promptly to the Call of Duty when Great Britain declared war on 4 August 1914. The Emergency Committee of the Wesleyan Army and Navy Board met on 6 August. Its members had previously gathered in a larger Special Committee to discuss the War Office's request for chaplains for active service at home and abroad. They now agreed to submit a list of names (selected by Bateson) to the War Office. As it would include circuit ministers, the Committee recommended that supernumerary ministers should take their place and appointed a committee to consider the financial and other consequences. Dr Scott Lidgett undertook to communicate with the Baptist and Congregational Unions to offer Wesleyan oversight of their soldiers "as has always been the case.... in the field in the past." The Committee also agreed to consider Primitive Methodist names for future lists of

chaplains but told Revd George Standing, who had approached them, that the present list was complete. '

Thus were the first Wesleyan dispositions made. The Board which had met four times a year now met as required, usually bi-monthly, for the duration of the War. They also transacted much more business on each occasion. The agenda is now printed and the written record (tantalisingly at times) offers no account of the discussion on many items. For example, item 8 on 28 September 1914 reads

War Office Decision to Gazette all Acting Chaplains borne on the Army List as Acting Chaplains to the Forces. Rank and Pay.

Under this item the Board would be told that Wesleyan Acting Chaplains would hold temporary commissions for the duration of the War. If there was any discussion of this great issue of principle of eleven years before - or any recognition that temporary commissions had been the proposed compromise solution then - it went unreported. The Wesleyan Methodist Conference in 1915 confirmed "the action of the Home Missionary Committee in accepting temporary commissions for ministers gazetted as Chaplains to the Forces for the period of the War".² The Wesleyan Acting Chaplains' commissions were gazetted on 30 August 1914.

The same meeting of the Board noted the appointment of five (now of course) commissioned chaplains to accompany the Expeditionary Force to France. They were O. S. Watkins (formerly London District),

1. W 8/14.

2. Agenda for the Wesleyan Methodist Conference, 1915, p 10.

A. T. Cape (Shorncliffe), R. Hall (Chatham), A. W. Morrow (Aldershot) and W. H. Sarchett (Portsmouth) - all seasoned and experienced men. A. E. Knott would accompany the Division sent to France from India.³

The English Presbyterians' preparations occurred mainly within the Presbyterian Advisory Committee and therefore nearer the heart of the War Office's own frenetic activity. It was a point of Presbyterian pride that one of their men, J. M. Simms, an Ulsterman, was the senior chaplain in service and as such was chosen to head all the chaplains appointed to accompany the Expeditionary Force. The three English Presbyterian Acting Chaplains, J. Cairns, D. N. Cannon and J. Murray Rodger were now commissioned. Cairns and R. A. Stewart were nominated for service with the Expeditionary Force, but only Stewart was appointed (in December). He was followed soon afterwards by Rodger. Very decently the Soldiers' and Sailors' Committee report makes no comment on the length of time English Presbyterian chaplains had had to wait for their first commission. Now they had three.⁴

Both the Wesleyan Army and Navy Board and the Presbyterian Soldiers' and Sailors' Committee became involved in a host of related activities. As chaplains went to France, so they had to be replaced in the garrisons and camps where they had served. The camps and garrisons themselves, filling up and being extended as Kitchener's Volunteer Army was recruited, needed additional chaplains or officiating clergy. The

3. W 9/14.

4. P 1915.

Territorial Army similarly needed additional chaplains. Each meeting of the Board or Committee reported new chaplaincy appointments. The Presbyterians formed Presbytery Committees to organise the chaplaincy oversight of hospitals and depots using local ministers. Churches opened their doors to provide hospitality and comforts. Billets were visited. Entertainments arranged.

One cannot avoid the conclusion that the great social upheaval represented by the recruitment, movement and training of a large body of men, many of whom were in civilian billets, was seen by the churches as an evangelical opportunity.

In our larger garrisons and military camps and centres the work has been almost overwhelming, but it has been done, done faithfully and prayerfully and well: and heartening as has been the immediate response of the men to the spiritual influences brought upon them, we believe that the happier peaceful days to which we all look forward will reveal the lasting results in yet greater degree in every part of the land.⁵

The Wesleyan Army and Navy Board

heard with much satisfaction of the spiritual movement which is taking place in various garrisons where Connexional Evangelists and others have been conducting missions.

The Board's report for 1915, which covered the period of the War to March 1915, asserted that

There can be no question that the call to arms had afforded a unique opportunity for influencing for good the flower of Britain's

5. P 1915.

young manhood... From all parts of our "far-flung battle-line" comes the encouraging news, not only that the soldiers flock to services and meetings... but that, in large numbers, they have definitely and deliberately surrendered their lives to Christ..... In the ranks of the new army are ministers, many theological students, local preachers, class leaders, Sunday school teachers and guild workers... Some of them enlisted in the Army, not only to serve their country in its hour of need, but to find opportunities for Christian usefulness in its ranks.

Half of the old regular army, it was claimed, were total abstainers: "it was a sober army that took the field". In the new army the push for temperance in the camps was organised by the Wesleyan Temperance Secretary, Revd Henry Carter, contributing in the Nonconformist way to the evangelising activity.⁶

The reality of War took some time to overtake this easy optimism that the emergency would "win for Christ" those whom peace had insulated from the reach of the church. But when reality broke through, in the retreat from Mons, O. S. Watkins was there to experience it and report it first-hand in the pages of the *Methodist Recorder*.⁷

First, however, came the endeavours of the Baptists, Congregationalists, Primitive Methodists and United Methodists to supply chaplains for the Front. As has already been observed, these bodies entered on the War with very little of a chaplaincy tradition. Few of

6. W 9/14, 11/14; R 1915 p 7.

7. Republished as part of Watkins' With French in France and Flanders, (London 1915). Discussed in chapter 9.

their men had joined the army in the previous century² and those that had were usually content to pass for Presbyterians or Wesleyans. None of these denominations had produced a Rule, nor did the Congregationalists or Baptists set up an Army Board when, from 1903 onwards, recognition and involvement in soldiers' matters was offered them by an organising War Office.

There is no indication that the non-Wesleyan Churches had held back because of their increasingly anti-militarist stance in the ten years or so before the Great War. Indeed, it was precisely in this period that Congregational and Baptist involvement with the War Office Committees began. The Primitive Methodists, described by their historian as "the most pronouncedly pacifist denomination" actually sent an "agent" and opened a soldiers' reading room at Aldershot as early as 1885. The Baptists appointed a chaplain to Aldershot in 1894.³ Even so, although a clear distinction can be made between the churches' public stance on issues of war and peace and their work for soldiers in peace-time, had the Nonconformist churches or their leaders opposed British involvement in the Great War, this distinction would plainly have been strained. It is necessary therefore to record how close to this position these

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8. Yet one of them, General Sir Henry Havelock, a Baptist, was perhaps the most celebrated hero of the Indian Mutiny. He had streets, children and (incongruously) public houses named after him. He was noted in his Regiment for his religious observances, and his heroism and death became a factor in reconciling mid-century Christians of all persuasions to the Army. (See O. Anderson, The Growth of Christian Militarism in Mid-Victorian Britain, The English Historical Review, Vol. LXXXVI, No. 338, January 1971).
 9. H. B. Kendall, History of the Primitive Methodist Church (London 1919), pp 115 and 163; D. G. Fountain, E. J. Poole-Connor 1872-1962, (Worthing 1966) pp 72-75. (The term "agent" was used by Primitive Methodists for those engaged in missionary work).

churches came.

Pre-War Anti-Militarism

Although there was an under-current of emotional militarism in Victorian hymns and in uniformed organisations for church youngsters, going back no further than the Boer War the association of some leading Nonconformists with anti-war sentiment was strong. The bulk of Nonconformity held that the Boer War (in D. W. Bebbington's phrase) was "honourable but lamentable". But the vociferousness of those Nonconformists who opposed it totally, and the publicity which attached to them, made opposition appear the dominant strain. What caught the eye was that the revered Baptist, John Clifford, had accepted the presidency of the "Stop the War Committee" in January 1900 and that in December 1901 his peace manifesto attracted the signatures of half the Nonconformist ministers in England and Wales. (Nearly three-fifths of the 5275 signatories were Baptists, Congregationalists or Primitive Methodists; Wesleyans were conspicuously few.)¹⁰

The failure of the peace conference at The Hague in 1907 and naval rearmament by both Britain and Germany led a Quaker MP, J. Allen Baker, to look to Anglo-German church relations as a way of combatting political tensions between the two countries. Clifford was a prominent supporter. He took the first European Baptist Congress to Berlin in 1908 and with other church leaders supported the formation of the Associated Councils of the Churches of the British and German Empires

10. D. W. Bebbington, The Nonconformist Conscience (London 1982) pp 121 et seq.
S. Koss, Nonconformity in Modern British Politics (London 1975) p 32.

for Promoting Friendly Relations. The Archbishop of Canterbury chaired the British section. The Baptist vice-presidents show the breadth of responsible support which the Anglo-German peace movement attracted in the denomination. Apart from Clifford they were J. H. Shakespeare, Secretary of the Union, Sir George McAlpine, the builder, Sir George White MP, recently elected Chairman of the Nonconformist Parliamentary Committee and F. B. Meyer, Secretary of the National Free Church Union. J. H. Rushbrooke, another Baptist, (who had a German wife) edited its magazine, the Peacemaker.''

That anti-militarism was not the preserve of a few enthusiasts is also evident from the Assemblies of the Nonconformist Churches and Unions which in 1912, 1913 and 1914 regularly passed resolutions in favour of peace, United States arbitration in European rivalries, or in opposition to British rearmament in the form of the Naval Estimates. Not all would have accepted the Primitive Methodists' condemnation of "the great (armaments) syndicates whose only object was to add to their already swollen dividends," but a Congregational resolution on Anglo-German understanding catches well the optimistic view that statesmen-like common sense would be bound to prevail over popular jingoism in both countries:

.... it seems incomprehensible that two great Christian Nations so near akin and whose interests are so closely interwoven should for any lengthened period remain estranged.

By December 1913 the stockpiling of armaments was widely condemned by leading Nonconformists. Clifford, in his New Year message for 1914,

11. K. Clements, Baptists and the Outbreak of the First World War, Baptist Quarterly, April 1975.
A. E. Payne J. H. Rushbrooke (London 1954) pp 27-29.

summed up the prevailing mood -

Militarism is for the Dark Ages: it is not fit for our time.¹²

Although the man and woman in the pew could not but be affected by what Marwick calls "a spirit which made war when it came intensely welcome," the Nonconformist press and leadership continued to believe that Great Britain need not be involved even if war came. On the assassination at Sarajevo, the *Primitive Methodist Leader* commented (7 July) -

We have much to give us shame, but happily we are kept from these upheavals.

Three weeks later, on 31 July, (and five days before Great Britain declared war) the *Baptist Times* could still say

It is fortunate... that relations between ourselves and Germany are today friendlier than they have been for many years. With two countries working together for peace, there is still ground for hoping that it might be maintained.

On the same day, *The British Weekly*, the widest read of the Nonconformist weeklies, and having in William Robertson Nicoll the most influential of the editors, advocated for Britain a line of strict neutrality.¹³

12. Kendall, *op cit*, p 163. Peel, *These Hundred Years* (London 1931), p 388. Koss, *op cit*, p 126.

13. A. Marwick, *The Deluge* (London 1965) p 27. Koss, *op cit*, pp 124, 127. Clements, *op cit*.

Having thus striven for disarmament and sought increasingly to foster with the German churches the spirit of international reconciliation and the notion that war with Germany was unthinkable, the position of the Nonconformist leaders, in the Churches and in public life was heavily in question when war came. Their swift conformity to the burst of wild, popular patriotism which hit the country when war was declared owed a very great deal to the German invasion of Belgium and the terrors their invading armies were said to have brought to the civilian population. Silas Hocking had justified his opposition to the Boer War on the grounds "that annexation was stealing and stealing was wicked in nations as well as in individuals".¹⁴ This was what Germany was now seen to have done, and to have torn up an international treaty and to have terrorised civilians in doing so. Belgium was not a convenient pretext for Nonconformist cabinet ministers and religious leaders to conform to the popular mood. It called up a reaction of abhorrence which had been traditionally aroused by atrocities committed against innocent peoples.¹

The British Weekly's turn-round was swift and uncompromising, with a leader on 6 August headed, "United We Stand". It was followed on 1 September by "An Appeal to Young Nonconformists" to join the Volunteer

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14. Quoted by Bebbington, *op cit*, p 124. Hocking, who is remembered as a popular novelist, was a United Methodist Free Church Minister and an active pro-Boer.
 15. See Clements *op cit*; also S. D. Henry, Scottish Baptists and the First World War, Baptist Quarterly, April 1985.

Army, written by Nicoll at the request of the War Office. A leader the same week, "Set down my Name, Sir", carried the same message and was republished as an effective and influential pamphlet.¹⁶ Others were slower to adjust. Clifford was actually caught by the outbreak of war with other church leaders at a peace congress in Constance. Special arrangements were made by the Kaiser's personal pastor for Clifford - now 78 - to return home on 3 August, through what became enemy territory as he journeyed. Clifford told his congregation on 16 August that on the journey he had

drafted a letter to the press in favour of....
British neutrality But when, arriving in
England, he had become acquainted with Germany's
proposals and action he had [decided] to keep the
letter back.¹⁷

Clifford was one of the signatories of the reply by British churchmen to a manifesto from a group of German theologians in September. Many of them had taken part in the peace exchanges. It was a measure of the difference between them that the German manifesto made no reference to Belgium.¹⁸

The message from the Baptist Union to Baptists in the British Empire, adopted at the Council Meeting on 15 September, is notably anti-militaristic, though firmly patriotic. "We contemplate with horror the fate of the world if the arrogance of this brutal militarism were to predominate". It is "a call of God to Britain" to shatter it, but

16. T. H. Darlow, William Robert Nicoll (London 1925) pp 236 et seq.

17. Koss, op cit, pp 128, 129. Payne, op cit, pp 29, 30.

18. Clements, op cit.

Baptists are to pray on behalf of the nation "that it may be itself preserved from that spirit of militarism which it is now combatting". Enemies are to be prayed for, and Germans and Austrians living here are to be respected: there must be no "vengeful spirit". The War is above all an opportunity of service and an occasion to practice "self-denial and simplicity of life". On pacifism, the statement charts a careful course:

We rejoice that many of the young men of our Church have dedicated themselves, with the consent of their parents, to the service of their country.

But it does not tell them, or urge them to go: the contrast with Nicoll's approach is striking.

It is not fanciful to see Clifford's influence in this carefully balanced statement. From his initial hesitation, he became an increasingly warm but never uncritical supporter of the War. His personal and political friendship with Lloyd George was doubtless a factor, but his conviction that Germany was morally in the wrong counted for more. By 1916 he was saying

We were sure of our ground in 1914: we are a thousand times more sure today We know the German mind and that has helped us know our aim. ¹⁹

His route, or Nicoll's, was followed by most Nonconformists, though Nicoll's extreme patriotism jarred with many. They were together on the platform in November when Lloyd George spoke at the City Temple to a massive gathering which pledged Nonconformity to the War. When the

19. Sir J. Marchant, Dr John Clifford (London 1921) p 100.

slaughter of young men began to afflict almost every local church or chapel, however, the War brought theological perplexity and pulpit difficulties. The *Manchester Guardian's* account of the Free Church Council meeting on 10 March 1915 captures more than a passing mood:

The general impression left upon one was that of a body of honest and earnest men, entangled in a mesh of untried circumstances, struggling to find the true and right way out - men who hate war with all their hearts and yet can see no immediate duty but that of pressing the present war to an effective conclusion.²⁰

But that was 1915. The instant patriotism of August and September 1914 was less questioning, because the moral position was more secure. The young men from the churches and chapels were among the thousands who answered the call to join the Volunteer Army.

The English religious world had a ready explanation ... the German failure to act with honour towards Belgium, and her lack of chivalry, was attributed to her impoverished, even pagan, cultural and spiritual life... The nature of the charge laid against Germany made a deep impact on those who had been brought up in a religious home... (on) the young men who attended church or chapel or who still frequented religious gatherings and shared the values and the goals expounded there. '

To these men those churches which were still without chaplains owed a duty.

20. Quoted by S. Mews, Religion and English Society in the First World War. p 60, a sadly unpublished thesis, Cambridge University, 1974. Mews gives a clear and extended account of the predicament faced by the bulk of Nonconformists who were neither pacifists nor jingoists, for whom the War was a profound disappointment, but still a patriotic duty.

21. Mews, op cit, pp 18 and 23.

Formation of the United Board

Ten days after the declaration of War, on 14 August 1914, J. H. Shakespeare, Secretary of the Baptist Union, approached the War Office to request the Union's right to nominate chaplains. On 17 August, the War Office replied

that the exigences of the service only admit of a very limited number of Chaplains being attached for duty to the Expeditionary Force, and that these have necessarily been appointed from among representatives of the denominations most numerously represented in the Army, viz the Church of England, the Roman Catholic, Presbyterian and Wesleyan Churches. It may be possible to arrange with one or the other of the Churches named above for the care of troops of your denomination in the field.²²

Agreement was however given to the recruitment of officiating clergy to serve denominational troops in local camps.

As the number of volunteers for the army continued to flow from Baptist and Congregational churches and homes, as from the rest, the premise on which this reply was based ceased to be valid. The Council of the Baptist Union, meeting on 15 September 1914, heard from Shakespeare that he and R. J. Wells, Secretary of the Congregational Union, "had had an interview with the War Office authorities and the matter would be further considered when he and Wells supplied additional information."²³ By the Council's next meeting (on 17 November) the position had been transformed. Shakespeare reported that about 130 officiating clergymen had been

22. F. C. Spurr, Some Chaplains in Khaki, (London, no date, but 1916 ?) p 24. The letter is also quoted in The Times History of the War, part 100, volume 8 which gives a clear summary of the Nonconformist Churches' contribution to the Great War.

23. Baptist Union Council minutes, Baptist Church House, Didcot.

appointed to Baptists and Congregational troops in camp, the appointment of two Baptists and two Congregationalists as "permanent" chaplains to garrisons and camps had been approved, and a similar number had been appointed for service at the Front. The two Baptists were already with the Expeditionary Force.²⁴

This swift transformation may with confidence be attributed to Lloyd George, though Shakespeare's interviews with War Office officials had been arranged by Percy Illingworth, the Government Chief Whip and a fellow Baptist.²⁵ Grigg records the appointment of nonconformist chaplains as the occasion of Lloyd George's first row with Kitchener, the newly appointed Secretary of State for War.²⁶ In family correspondence Lloyd George uses the same (untranslatable) word:

Row ofnadwy efo K heddiw yuglich Noncon Chaplains.
(Tremendous row with Kitchener today about Non-
conformist Chaplains.) Spoke out savagely. Carried
Cabinet and got my way.²⁷

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24. Revd T.M. Tattersall and Revd E. L. Watson. The first Congregationalist was Revd G. W. Ackroyd.
25. Spurr, op cit, p 25. R. W. Thomson, Ministering to the Forces (London 1964) records that Shakespeare actually visited Kitchener. A note was found afterwards on Kitchener's desk - "Who are these people?"
26. J. Grigg, Lloyd George from Peace to War 1912-1916 (London 1985) p 177.
27. K. O. Morgan, editor, Lloyd George Family Letters (University of Wales 1972), p 173.

Lloyd George gives an extended and instructive account of the incident in his War Memoirs:

(Kitchener's) refusal to appoint Chaplains of what he evidently thought were superfluous and eccentric sects provoked the most angry scenes I have ever witnessed at a Cabinet. The Army only recognised three or four denominations. The others not being on the Army List had no existence for him When he gave way he did it thoroughly he took a piece of paper, started writing, and, turning to me, said "Come now, tell me the names of these sects for which you want padres. Is this list right? Primitive Baptists, Calvinistic Wesleyans, Congregational Methodists...?" It was not intended to cast ridicule: he simply had never heard of these great religious bodies. I gave him the right titles.....²⁸

Cabinet clearance was given on 28 September. There seems then to have been an attempt by the War Office to persuade the Wesleyan Army Board to enter into arrangements for the appointment of joint "Nonconformist" or "Free Church" Chaplains. The aim doubtless was to cut down administration in the War Office. However, the Wesleyan Army Board, on 25 November, endorsed their Secretary's action in insisting that Wesleyan ministers only should have pastoral oversight of Wesleyan soldiers.²⁹

28. D. Lloyd George, War Memoirs (new edition), Vol 1, p 451. Kitchener, a High Anglican and member of the English Church Union in his early army days, was of course surrounded by representatives of these "superfluous and eccentric sects" in Cabinet. Asquith, Prime Minister, and Sir John Simon, Attorney General, were brought up as Congregationalists, Lloyd George, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Percy Illingworth, Chief Whip, were Baptists, Runciman, President of the Board of Trade, was a Wesleyan, and Pease, President of the Board of Education, was a Quaker. T. McKinnon Wood, Secretary of State for Scotland, was another Congregationalist. 126 MPs were Nonconformists (excluding Unitarians) in 1914 according to Koss, op cit, Appendix.

29. W 11/14.

In September 1914, the Primitive Methodist Church set up a Special Committee on Army Work which first met on 9 October. It operated under the aegis of the Missionary Committee. The release of Revd George Standing from Leicester 2nd Station was secured "with a view to devoting himself to organising work among soldiers during the period of the War". The employment of other "agents" in this work was sanctioned. The Primitive Methodists also deputed to the War Office, deploying their public figures for the purpose, including their President, Revd A. J. Guttery, Dr John Wilson MP and Sir William Hartley. The deputation sought Acting Chaplains in the main military centres at home and one or two for active service abroad "as great numbers of Primitive Methodists are enlisting in Lord Kitchener's Army". They objected to their men being put down as Wesleyans and sought their own Column in the army returns after "Congregational or Baptist".³⁰

The United Methodists had unsuccessfully approached the War Office and the Admiralty in 1913 for the appointment of chaplains but were turned down because of lack of numbers. They did not form their own Army and Navy Committee on the outbreak of the Great War but (as will appear) worked through the United Board and "for eighteen years" (that is, until the Methodist reunion in 1932) "heartily and without the slightest friction or misunderstanding cooperated in ministering to

30. The minutes of the Primitive Methodist Army Committee are among the Methodist Forces Board papers. The Committee met regularly during the War and until Methodist reunion in 1932. From the beginning, two Primitive Methodist chaplains stand out - George Standing, a post-war Deputy Chaplain General, and Joseph Firth, later Principal Chaplain, Royal Air Force. They were the Primitive Methodists' first army chaplains, Firth going to France and Standing to Aldershot.

their adherents in the Army and then also in the Navy and the Air Forces"³¹

On 11 November the first of three "United Conferences" was held to consider the formation of a body representing the Nonconformist Churches, other than the Wesleyans and Presbyterians, to nominate chaplains and officiating clergymen and to deal with the War Office.³² Shakespeare presided and Wells represented the Congregationalists. The Primitive Methodists were well represented:

| | | |
|----------------------|---|------------------------------|
| Revd Andrew Crombie |) | |
| Revd Henry Hooks |) | United Methodists |
| Revd Henry Smith |) | |
| Revd W. A. Hammond |) | |
| Revd Samuel Horton |) | |
| Revd John Mayles |) | Primitive Methodists |
| Revd George Standing |) | |
| Revd D. Tyler Davies |) | |
| Revd J. E. Hughes |) | Welsh Calvinistic Methodists |
| Revd John Thickers |) | |

It was evident from the proceedings that the Baptists and Congregationalists were somewhat ahead in securing recognition by the War Office: Wells reported that sixty-nine Baptist and seventy-three Congregationalist Officiating Clergymen had been appointed and 4 Chaplains for the Front. Steps had been taken to secure the names of their soldiers and returns to date showed 27,322. Against this, Smith for the United Methodists stated "that after considerable negotiations the only thing they had obtained from the War Office was recognition for

31. Ed by H. Smith, J. E. Swallow, W. Treffrey, The Story of the United Methodist Church (London 1932), p 32.

32. The Minutes of all three "United Conferences" are bound with the Minutes of the Baptist Union Council, Baptist Church House, Didcot.

proper registration". Horton said the Primitive Methodists had secured 2 Chaplains and forty-two Officiating Clergymen, but no columns had been allotted to them in the registration sheets. (They succeeding in gaining more than the United Methodists perhaps because of the deputation). The Primitive Methodists reckoned that 7 thousandths of the army on present returns would be their men. The Welsh Calvinistic Methodists had found

as a matter of practice that their Welsh speaking men were put down..... as Wesleyans and their English speaking men were allotted to the Presbyterians and that as a matter of fact the Government recognised them as Presbyterians and classified them as such.³³

The representatives of the Primitive and United Methodists "expressed themselves personally favourable to unite with the Baptists and Congregationalists in one Army Board" and to bracket their men with Baptists and Congregationalists in the Attestation Form. The representatives of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists undertook "to refer the question to their own Committee with a view to ascertaining whether they would prefer to strengthen their position with the Presbyterians or to come in with us."

The second "United Conference", on 20 November 1914, met without the

33. Denominational strengths in England and Wales in 1914 according to Currie, Gilbert and Horsley, Churches and Churchgoers (Oxford 1977) were Wesleyan Methodists: 471, 488; Primitive Methodists: 204,032; United Methodists: 143,096; Welsh Calvinistic Methodists: 184,843; Congregationalists: 454,071; Baptists 389,718; Prebyterian Church of England 88,166. Some sympathy made be felt for the War Office and recruiting sergeants over the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists who truly owned only the first of these titles. They had left the Church of Wales in 1811 and became the Presbyterian Church of Wales in 1933, though their orthodoxy within the Reformed tradition was questioned by the Church of Scotland (see K. Robbins, Nineteenth Century Britain, pp 84 and 86).

Welsh Calvinistic Methodists. A letter from them said that after consideration they had decided to seek recognition direct from the War Office. At the third "United Conference", on 4 December, a letter from B. B. Cubitt of the War Office was read, in which he intimated

that the Army Council would be glad if the formation of a United Board of the four denominations suggested could be proceeded with and that at the earliest opportunity steps would be taken to carry out the proposed amendment of the Form of Attestation.

The first meeting of the United Army and Navy Board was held at Baptist Church House, 4 Southampton Row, on 14 January 1915. This became their headquarters. Shakespeare was in the chair. He presided at every meeting until his retirement as Secretary of the Baptist Union except when he was ill (briefly in 1916 and for a longer spell towards the end of the War). Wells' name always appeared at the end of the list of attenders, but he was formally Joint Secretary of the Board with Shakespeare, and effectively second in command. He chaired the Board in Shakespeare's absence. He and Shakespeare undertook a good deal of joint negotiations on behalf of the Board with the War Office. All formal correspondence was with Shakespeare and Wells, but the four denominational secretaries - Shakespeare, Wells, Samuel Horton (Primitive Methodist) and Henry Smith (United Methodist) - formed a consultative or Secretaries' committee, and each dealt with issues affecting his own denomination in the country. There was a common fund (though no Board Treasurer was named) and it was the practice to raise funds in the same ratio as they nominated chaplains and officiating clergymen:

1/3 Baptist Union
1/3 Congregational Union
1/3 Primitive and United Methodists who split
their shares equally.

These rules were simple and equitable. If the minutes may be taken as reflecting the spirit of the meetings there was little denominational rivalry and disputes were quickly and effectively settled. Most such disputes were in the country not in the Board, and occurred most often when local ministers disputed the choice of an officiating clergyman. To the War Office, the army in its various manifestations, and to the Wesleyan and Presbyterian Committees, the Board presented a united front. The United Board came to be treated in practice as a separate and single denomination.

The original members of the United Board were:

Revd J. H. Shakespeare (B)
Revd Andrew Crombie (UM)
Revd W. A. Hammond (PM)
Revd Henry Hooks (UM)
Revd Samuel Horton (PM)
Revd John Mayles (PM)
Revd George Standing (PM)
Revd Henry Smith (UM)
Revd Richard J. Wells (C)

Two laymen were admitted at the first meeting - Sir John Horsfall Bt for the Baptist Union and Mr (later Sir) J. Murray Hyslop JP for the Congregational Union. They were not avid attenders. John Hinds MP was later "ordered" to represent the Welsh Baptists and he was more regular.³⁴

34. UB 3/15.

Shakespeare predictably regarded the formation of the United Board as of "great significance". It was "the symbol that our Churches are taking their part" in the War which represented their traditional struggle for "liberty, human advance, the heritage of civilisation, religion itself". The United Board was "the working in miniature for a specific purpose of a partially United Free Church of England". The success of the United Board was "because the Free Churches have given up confusing the military mind with our divisions and have had the wisdom to stand together".³⁵ By contrast, T. R. Glover, the Cambridge classicist and another Baptist, referred to the United Board as

a dodge to let the War Office dispose of people it does want to be bothered with. It has little other spiritual significance.³⁶

Glover was right in the sense that the United Board had a value of convenience for officialdom as it was a source of chaplains which did not multiply four-fold the claims of the contributory churches to fair representation in the field. It was very useful to be able to treat four denominations as one and leave the Board to settle fair shares. But for the four churches it was not a "dodge" to provide the means by which local congregations might send their ministers to serve and succour an increasingly civilian army drawn in part from their ranks. Shakespeare could claim this as a spiritual response and a spiritual opportunity.

35. Shakespeare's Foreword to Spurr, *op cit*, pp 7 and 8; Shakespeare, The Churches at the Crossroads (London 1918) p 91.

36. Writing to T. Tatlow on 19 July 1915, quoted by News, *op cit*.

Nor, to Shakespeare at least, was it unspiritual to demonstrate the practicality of pooling Free Church men and resources to provide at least the opportunity for wider religious outreach. That had been the basis of his earlier national campaign for Free Church unity: "a United Board to supervise a redistribution of resources and to undertake a wide social and evangelistic service".³⁷ Looking ahead from hopes to results, ministers of the four churches served their undivided military congregations, large and small, without a single trace of denominational rivalry or possessiveness so far as this study has revealed. That cannot have been without importance in the achievement after the War of the Free Church Federal Council which Shakespeare had advocated and in the growth of more general religious understanding and cooperation. It is true of course that the formation of the United Board did not make its chaplains better able to reach out to the basic irreligion of the bulk of the men. But this shortcoming was increasingly recognised as afflicting nearly all chaplains in all churches.

A final comment on the formation of the United Board should perhaps be reserved to the Wesleyan Army and Navy Board which was longest in the field and could not but be affected by the claims of the newcomer.

....whilst recognising that [the United Board] will inevitably affect the numbers of men coming under the ministration of our own Wesleyan Chaplains, [the Wesleyan Board] rejoices in this evidence of the increased interest of the Free Churches in the

37. Roger Hayden, Still at the Crossroads - J. H. Shakespeare and Ecumenicism, in Baptists in the Twentieth Century (Baptist Historical Society 1983) p 44. It is surprising that in a long and detailed examination of Shakespeare's ecumenical beliefs and writing there is not a single reference to Shakespeare's part in the foundation or leadership of the United Army and Navy Board.

welfare of the soldier and sailor, believing that the work of God in the Army and the Royal Navy will be strengthened thereby.³⁸

Work and Concerns of the Army and Navy Boards

The first priority was the provision of chaplains, The 1914 complement of 117 Chaplains to the Forces and 36 Acting Chaplains was more substantial and more available than the muster of chaplains before the previous war involving Britain and European nations, the Crimea. There was no difficulty in finding and despatching the 65 chaplains who crossed to France with the British Expeditionary Force under J. M. Simms as Principal Chaplain. But the organisation of the chaplains there was distinctly ad hoc. In the contingency planning for a European War no thought seems to have been given to the work and deployment of chaplains. In early operations, and in the retreat from Mons, chaplains with the troops were attached to field ambulance units as part of the units' standard complement. They were without prayer books, hymn books or transport. The Official History describes Simms not inaptly as "a shepherd without sheep".³⁹

At a conference at General Headquarters on 14 November an important degree of reorganisation took place. Simms, the Presbyterian, was given a Senior Church of England Chaplain (E. G. M. MacPherson) and a Senior Roman Catholic Chaplain (Mgr W. L. Keatinge). O. S. Watkins was recognised as Senior Wesleyan Chaplain. In due course George Standing

38. V 1/15.

39. Brigadier General Sir James Edmunds, Official History of the War: Military Operations in France and Belgium to 1916 (London 1932) pp 135, 136.

became Senior United Board Chaplain. The sheep in this way found more familiar shepherds nearer to hand. In May 1915, Simms moved to GHQ which, while it brought him no nearer the men, gave him a better opportunity to ensure that the role, functions and requirements of chaplains at the front and at base were kept in mind by the General Staff.⁴⁰

For the troops in France, and at home, and in due course in all theatres of war, the War Office laid down an establishment of chaplains designed to settle denominational shares. By establishing complements this also indicated the supply of chaplains required from each denomination or Board. Originally very simple - 3 Church of England chaplains to 1 Roman Catholic and 1 Presbyterian or Wesleyan or (later) United Board per Division - this Divisional complement of 5 grew quickly to 12, later to 14 and eventually to 17, using roughly similar denominational proportions. The number of Divisions also grew rapidly - thirty-seven by May 1915 from the original 8. There were in addition one Church of England chaplain for each general or stationary hospital and one Roman Catholic and one Presbyterian or Nonconformist Chaplain for each group of three hospitals. Even with the modest proportions allotted to the Nonconformists, the demands on their churches were very heavy. By June 1915 the United Board had nominated sixty-six chaplains for service at home and abroad. The Wesleyans had ninety by March 1915, fifty-two of them by the end of 1915 in France alone.⁴¹

40. *Ibid.*, pp 136, 137; W 1/15; UB 9/15.

41. *Ibid.*, pp 135, 137; Agenda for Wesleyan Methodist Conference 1915 and W 1/16; UB 6/15. The United Board shares were 23 Baptists, 25 Congregationalists, 9 Primitive Methodists and 9 United Methodists.

These arrangements meant that the Wesleyans, because they had been the first on the scene, had to give way as new Divisions were formed to make room for United Board chaplains. They did so with good grace, and the War Office could probably have done no better than to allocate a set of the new Divisions to the United Board.⁴² But on the ground this led to complaints from Nonconformist soldiers that they never saw a chaplain of their own church or had an opportunity to attend their own sort of service. The War office favoured joint Nonconformist chaplains but the Wesleyans again rejected the proposal in this form in June 1915. However, a year later, without conceding the principle of denominational chaplains, the Wesleyan Board resolved that

the War Office be asked to appoint to each Division one Chaplain (of the Presbyterian, Wesleyan or United Board) who shall have under his care all the non-Anglican men.⁴³

Both the Wesleyan and United Boards expressed concern over the accuracy of the men's religious attestation. This of course was a familiar problem for the Wesleyans; they had endured it since 1881 and no amount of repeated War Office instructions to recruiting officers had ever satisfied them that justice was done to them. It has to be said that the expectation that even a civilian army would reflect proportionately the denominational strength of the Nonconformists based

42. The Wesleyans had Divisions 1-7, 10, 11, 17-21, 25, 30-37 by March 1915. See W 1/15 and 3/15.

43. W 6/15, 5/16. The underlining notes the essential change. The same resolution was adopted by the United Board: UB 6/16. This very significant change enabled the Wesleyans and United Board to make the most of the additional chaplains they were allowed in June 1916: See Chapter 8.

on church attendance at home was unreal. "C. of E." embraced, as it had always done, the vast number of the non-practising and unchurched as well as the committed. On top of this there was undoubted inertia on the part of recruiting sergeants and a disinclination on the part of the recruit to make a fuss or to stand aside from the majority.

The Wesleyans entered a further protest early in the War; and Lloyd George is reported to have asked Shakespeare for specific instances in which the wishes of recruits had been ignored even before the United Board was formed.⁴⁴ The War Office response was to strike out the entry for religious denomination in the simplified "enlistment for war" form - that is, to drop religious attestation altogether - but note the man's religion in their "small book", which they carried with them at all times, and on their identity disc. The intention was to take the heat out of arguments about total denominational strengths, but still record the man's religious affiliation as part of his identification for Church Parade, hospital and (if need be) burial purposes. The War Office accompanied this change with a letter to Commanding Officers and Recruiting Officers which included this paragraph:

....Whenever, on attestation, for the marking of identity discs or for any other purpose, it is necessary to obtain information as to a soldier's religion, his own statement on the point should be taken without any attempt to influence him and should be acted upon without question.

To cover mistakes already made, the letter added

...In any cases in which men express a desire

44. W 11/14; Spurr *op cit*, p 25.

for the correction of an existing inaccurate record regarding their religious denomination such correction should be at once carried out.⁴⁵

The Wesleyan Board received a copy of their letter "with much gratification".

But the gratification was short-lived. By January 1915, the Wesleyan Board was expressing the view that a simple question and a list of possible Churches to guide the recruit in his answers was the easiest way of establishing a recruit's religion.⁴⁶ The War Office was constrained to complain to Recruiting Officers in February 1915 that the Army Council's instruction just quoted "is being imperfectly observed".⁴⁷ On 23 December 1915 Sir Albert Spicer, Chairman of the Nonconformist group of MPs, wrote at the request of the United Board to H. J. Tennant, a junior War Office Minister, to draw attention

to the fact that Recruiting Officers, although there is no printed question with regard to Religion on the Attestation Form of the New Army, ask recruits to state the denomination of their religion and frequently refuse to accept the denomination named.

Tennant replied on 10 January 1916 that he had "no reason to suppose that this is the usual practice." Nevertheless, as a consequence of this correspondence, Sir Reginald Brade, who succeeded Ward as Permanent Secretary of the War Office in 1914, wrote on 21 January 1916 to Commanding Officers on behalf of the Army Council

45. Gen. No. 2514, dated 23 November, 1914. Copy at BP.

46. W 1/15.

47. Gen. No. 4279. Copy at BP.

to point out that on the attestation papers... there is no printed question as to religion and no question on the subject should be addressed to a recruit at this time.... Whenever it may be necessary to obtain information as to a soldier's religion, as for instance for the completion of his identity disc, his own statement on the point should be taken without any attempt to influence him and should be acted on without question....⁴⁸

A clue to the underlying reason for the Free Churches' obsessive concern with attestation can be deduced from the letter which Shakespeare and Wells then wrote to Hay Morgan QC, the Secretary of the Nonconformist group of MPs, to express the United Board's continuing dissatisfaction with the War Office on this point:

Including the Wesleyans, the Free Churches have sent not fewer than 400,000 men to the War.... The resentment of Nonconformists in the constituencies is very strong that persons should have been base enough to exploit the patriotism of the Free Churches to strike a blow at Free Churchism itself. We must wait for times of peace to deal with this matter adequately but meanwhile we await further action by Mr Tennant.⁴⁹

Understating the number of Nonconformist recruits with the consequence that the number of Anglicans was boosted made it appear that the Free Churches were doing less than their patriotic duty. The War Office's removal of the religious attestation question was said by *The Globe* of 23 October 1915 to be "due to the influence which political Nonconformity brought to bear" to conceal their poor rate of volunteering. Cyril Bardsley, Secretary of the Church Missionary

48. UB 2/16 has the full texts of all three letters.

49. UB 2/16. The letter is dated 24 January 1916.

Society, was heard to assert that 14 per cent of recruits for the Volunteer Army were Free Churchmen, against the Anglicans' seventy-five per cent. Even the 38th (Welsh) Division was said to have sixty-three per cent Anglicans against just over thirty-one per cent Nonconformists.⁵⁰

The position adopted by so many Nonconformists to rearmament before the War was still remembered against them. Nicoll himself recalled it in a bad-tempered letter to J. D. Jones on 22 October 1915:

And what a record the Nonconformists have in this matter! I remember year after year defending the Navy Estimates and being always abused in certain quarters for doing so.... Nonconformity needs to be told very plainly that its place in English life will be lost if it fails to play its part in this War. Many have done nobly, but others have done very ill.

Jones's reply was only modestly assertive:

Let me say that I think you are a little less than just to the Nonconformists..... The so-called Pacifist group is negligible. Most of our Ministers have given their sons quite freely. We have not taken a census as the Church of Scotland did but I don't think we should come far behind.....⁵¹

For Shakespeare, a man with this past himself, but giving his all for the war, patriotism was a sensitive issue. The probability is

50. These three examples are taken from News, *op cit.*

51. Darlow *op cit.*, pp 251, 252. J. D. Jones Three Score Years and Ten (London 1940) p 236 indicates that his friendship with Nicoll was unaffected by this brisk exchange. In Clark, Echoes of the Great War (Oxford 1985) there are two village examples of the assumed doubtful patriotism of Nonconformity, pp 60 and 93.

however that many soldiers' links with Nonconformist Churches and Sunday Schools were just as tenuous when it came to declaring their religion to a recruiting sergeant, with their companions listening, as their companions' links with the Church of England and that they had no strong objection to whatever label they were given. Nor did those noted as Nonconformists necessarily adhere. "Far too many Baptists, Congregationalists and Methodists joined the Parade at the Anglican Church".⁵² The issue was not patriotism but an affiliation which in many cases was not seriously held.

A third activity of the Boards - after the provision of chaplains and agitation over attestation - was the nomination of officiating ministers to serve troops in camps, bases and garrisons at home when they were too small to command full-time chaplains. Though officiating ministers were civilians and without rank or uniform, they were later allowed to wear a badge. For the United Board this was a test of diplomacy. Nominations were in the hands of the Board. The procedure followed was to make nominations on the one third, one third, one third basis, but taking into account local wishes established by local conferences. Where local resentment or doubts remained, the denominational secretary on the Board was told off to deal with them. What was at stake usually was the local church to which the soldiers of all four denominations would be marched on Sundays, and a capitation fee based on soldiers attending each service. In camps the nomination went to the denomination which provided the hut (where this was not the Board itself) and hut expenses were defrayed from the capitation fees. In

52. UB 6/15. There were several similar reports at home (and in India where the War was similarly inactive).

some places the Board was allowed to make more than one nomination.

Nearly 500 United Board officiating ministers had been appointed by the end of 1915.⁵³

Wesleyans and Presbyterians were also busy nominating officiating ministers: the former had made 380 additional appointments by March 1915 and had 486 in place by June 1916 with an additional 186 hospital appointments.⁵⁴ The Presbyterian Church of England had 170 in 1916.⁵⁵

Inevitably there were problems caused by this generous provision. In Norwich, all Nonconformist soldiers were marched willy nilly to the Wesleyans, although two United Board officiating ministers had been appointed. In Gateshead, a joint parade service was held by agreement, conducted by the Wesleyan Minister. Meols Presbyterian Church suddenly lost its usual soldiers from the Cheshire Regiment because the Hoylake Wesleyan minister had been appointed to serve them (but they were retrieved).⁵⁶ The following letter from Lt. Col. J. Hall in Newcastle (Staffs) is understandable if not typical:

I beg to say that at the present time this Battalion I consider does not need any more looking after by any more denominations. We have the Church of England 5 minutes away, a Wesleyan Church 15 minutes away and a Roman Catholic Church thirty-five minutes away, to all of which some go each Sunday - also a YMCA hut in the grounds. I do not propose making any alternatives

53. Baptist Union Council, 16 November 1915.

54. R 1915, R 1916.

55. P 1916.

56. UB 1/15; St Andrews URC Hoylake with Meols Newsletter, October 1984.

at present.⁵⁷

Huts were another preoccupation. It had been customary before the War for tents to be erected for the social recreation of regular and territorial troops at their annual training camps. These tents were used for religious services as well. It was a natural response of the Baptist Union therefore to allot £1000 as early as 20 October 1914 for the erection with the Congregational Union of tents at four large camps.⁵⁸ But the winter and the failure of the War to end by Christmas required something more permanent. The total number of huts erected by the United Board during the War is not certain but they raised over £20,000. The financing and management of the huts are recurrent themes in the minutes. The Primitive Methodists had 8 huts by May 1915. The Percy Illingworth Institute at Aldershot, built by the Baptists for £5000 and named after the Government Chief Whip, who died suddenly in 1915, was opened by Mrs Lloyd George and was the most solid and lasting example. The Congregationalists' biggest hut, also at Aldershot, was named after Cromwell. The Board's principal hut in France was at *Étaqles*. It was built at a shared cost of £900 in 1917.⁵⁹

The English Presbyterians did not erect huts (or soldiers' institutes) but opened their Church Halls for recreational use by locally based troops. This had been the instinctive reaction in the first winter of the War, but the Synod of 1916 instructed each

57. UB 1/15.

58. Baptist Union Home Fund and Finance Committee Minutes, June 1915.

59. Baptist Council Minutes of 18 July 1916; UB 1/17; Primitive Methodist Army Committee minutes, Methodist Forces Board papers.

Presbytery to form a Committee on the Oversight of Soldiers and Sailors to organise services, entertainments and comforts for Presbyterian soldiers who, as in pre-war days, were frequently augmented by Irish and Scots stationed in a local camp or passing through. As the War progressed the sick, wounded and dying in local military hospitals became an added responsibility for the Presbytery Committees.⁶⁰

Wesleyans had pioneered the development of soldiers' homes or institutes. During the first winter of the War they opened over 400 temporary institutes in local churches and retained about 250 throughout the War for troops at home. They also developed 34 semi-permanent huts, known as Camp Homes, at home and 7 more in France, financed by named benefactors and church bodies. The 38 existing permanent homes were extended and improved. The Management Committee for the Soldiers and Sailors Homes and Institutes spared the Board detailed oversight but it is clear that the increased demands from the much bigger Army and Navy rendered them a profitable venture despite Government action to mulct the institutes of a percentage of their gross takings. Revd Richard Hall was appointed General Manager of Camp Homes in May 1915.⁶¹

Disenchantment

It will be evident from this account that all the Nonconformist Churches had thrown themselves into the war effort, but along predictable lines and with no special closeness to the War Office. They were doing what they had been bidden - providing chaplains, huts and comforts for the troops, and the approved providers now included

60. P 1917, P 1918.

61. R 1915, R 1916, R 1918; W 6/15.

all the main church bodies. But none of the Nonconformist Churches (with perhaps the minor exception of the Presbyterian Church of England) had any say in what was asked of them and no means of advising, still less influencing, the direction the War Office chose to take. Arguably, the churches had more influence in the field, through their own men serving as Senior Chaplains; but even Senior Chaplains counted for little among the Staff.

The Anglicans, it should be said, were in much the same position. The Chaplain General, Bishop Taylor Smith, operated without an advisory committee. As an ex colonial Bishop he had little standing among the Diocesans to whom he looked for men. Nor was he well regarded in the Church. The wide-spread dissatisfaction which many felt when the War did not end quickly and reverses and serious casualties began to be suffered, was compounded by the evident failure of chaplains to fan the religious revival among the troops which all churches expected, or even noticeably to affect the morale of the men. It was assumed that numbers and organisation were at fault.

Though quite unintended, the changes now set in train on the Anglican side served to consolidate the standing and expand the numbers of Nonconformist chaplains in the army and move their civilian leaders in the denominational army committees into positions of influence with the War Office. The Anglicans' aim was to strengthen, or to bypass, the Chaplain General. Well described by one of his biographers as "an uncompromising evangelical", the men Bishop Taylor Smith had appointed in the ten years before the War bore his stamp. During the War, he

continued his practice of interviewing all volunteer Anglican chaplains before they were appointed. His needle question was said to be:

What would you say to a man who was fatally wounded but conscious and (had) only ten minutes to live?⁶²

The Anglo Catholic who replied, "Hear his confession and give him absolution" was unlikely to be appointed. The answer which was said to win acceptance was, "Give him a cigarette and take any last message he may have for his family".⁶³ But this hardly squares with another of the Chaplain General's questions, quoted by another biographer, -

Are you a rapid spiritual operator?⁶⁴

Whatever the question, or the favoured answer, the Chaplain General was noted for rejecting Anglo-Catholics. One of them, Father Paul Bull CR, who had been a much decorated chaplain in the Boer War, began an epistolary war against Taylor Smith in the *Church Times*, and the English Church Union, led by the influential Lord Halifax, attacked the eighteenth-century Erastianism which, they said, infected the running of the Chaplaincy Department. The Wesleyan system by which

62. Maurice Whitlow, J. Taylor Smith (London 1938) pp 87 and 97.

63. Wilkinson, The Church of England and the First World War (London 1978) p 126.

64. E. L. Langston, Bishop Taylor Smith (London 1939) p 129. (The questions put by the Chaplain General of the day to would-be Chaplains were often unexpected. Taylor Smith's predecessor, Dr Edgehill, is said to have asked volunteer Chaplains for the Boer War one question only - "When are you prepared to leave?").

the Church is not part of the military machine but approaches the War Office as a free spiritual and independent body which can insist on its rights being respected.

was commended by Bull.⁶⁵

There was broader Anglican criticism of the Chaplain General for failure to supply chaplains to the Front. His poor administration was said to be responsible, though whether this was totally fair is open to doubt. He operated alone, apart from a chaplain and a clerk to assist him at the War Office. He was dependent on the Bishops for the names of suitable chaplains. And the growth of the army, which generated the demand for chaplains, was enormous. Over 400,000 volunteered in September 1914 and well over 100,000 in each of the following four months.⁶⁶ Even so, it was held against him that on 1 September there were nine hundred more volunteer chaplains than could be used. The dissatisfaction rumbled on, coming to a head in June and July 1915.

The Archbishop of Canterbury had asked a question in the House of Lords about the number of Chaplains... The Bishop of London followed with a long critical speech in Convocation on July 6 and 7. He had himself visited the troops in France in the Spring and was in close touch with much that was felt and said. He asked for a private conference between the War Office authorities and certain of the Bishops upon the whole question of religious ministrations to the Army. Without doubt the most important outcome of the discussion... was the appointment of a Bishop for the troops in France, Bishop H. Gwynne, Bishop in Egypt and the Sudan.⁶⁷

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65. See Mews, op cit, who uses this quotation, and Wilkinson, op cit, for fuller accounts of the Anglo-Catholic campaign.
66. Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War, (HMSO London 1922) p 364.
67. G. K. A. Bell, Randall Davidson (Oxford 1938) 2nd Edition, p 761.

This outcome to an extent satisfied Anglo-Catholic critics in that it provided an episcopal head for the Anglican chaplains in France in place of the Presbyterian, Dr Simms. But the aptness of the particular appointment was also clear. Gwynne was already serving in France, on leave from his diocese, as a 4th class chaplain. As well as being in the thick of it himself, he was well connected at home - his brother, H. A. Gwynne, was editor of the Conservative *Morning Post*. Moreover, he was a friend of Taylor Smith (who incidentally had at first rejected him for service as being too old) and of Simms, the two men most likely to be put out by his appointment. They both knew Gwynne to be a pressed man, reluctant to take the job. The Secretary of State for War was responsible for the pressure. When Gwynne was summoned to the War Office to be told of his new post, and protested that he would rather go back to the Sudan, Kitchener told him he had no choice:

Bishop, you are now in uniform and under my orders for the duration of the War. If I order you to go to Timbuctoo that is where you will go.....⁶⁸

The General Order, headed Reorganisation of the Chaplains Department, was issued on 24 August 1915 by Lt General C. F. H. Macready, Adjutant General, the British Army in the Field:

The Rt Revd L. H. Gwynne, Bishop Suffragan in Khartoum TCF, has been appointed to represent the Chaplain General with the Army in the Field, with the rank as a local and temporary Major General.

68. H. C. Jackson, *Pastor on the Nile* (London 1960) p 150. The two men knew one another. Kitchener had been High Commissioner in Egypt before his appointment as Secretary of State and had dined with Gwynne in Cairo as recently as June 1914.

Dr Gwynne's duties will be those of Principal Chaplain, but his sphere of administration will be limited to matters appertaining to the Chaplains' Department connected with the Chaplains and troops of the Church of England. All matters affecting other denominations will remain as heretofore under the control of Dr Simms, the Principal Chaplain. In effect the change means the establishment of a Deputy Chaplain General to do duty as an additional Principal Chaplain, but for Church of England Chaplains and troops only.⁶⁹

The Order's description of Gwynne's duties as Principal Chaplain, like Simms, makes it appear that he and Simms would be of equal rank. But in fact Simms was, and remained for the time being, a Brigadier General. It was this which upset the United Board. They had no criticism of Dr Gwynne's appointment, regarding it (over-simply) as a matter for the Church of England, but his superior rank of Major General rankled. It was not only an injustice to Dr Simms, but a weakening of his position. The appointment "could not fail to create a sense of unfairness." The Wesleyan Board offered no comment. Nor, more surprisingly, did the Presbyterian Committee.⁷⁰

What none of them appeared to realise was that Gwynne's appointment for the first time divided the Chaplains Department of the Army on religious grounds. Hitherto chaplains of all denominations had served in a unified Department. The only differentiations were seniority and rank. Various devices had been adopted to make this practicable: the reporting arrangements of the Roman Catholic chaplains, for example, cut

69. BP

70. UB 9/15.

out the Chaplain General; the War Office's Chaplains Branch handled Anglicans separately from the rest.⁷¹ But Simms' appointment had exemplified the unified Department. In 1914 he was the Senior Chaplain in service and for this sufficient reason was appointed to head the chaplains in the Expeditionary Force even though he was a Presbyterian and most of the chaplains under him were Anglicans.

Seniority of course stood for experience. Simms had joined the Chaplains' Department in 1887, had served with Kitchener in the Sudan and was in the Service Column which had relieved Mafeking. He later served both in the London District and in Aldershot. Gwynne, France apart, had merely performed chaplaincy duties for British troops stationed in Khartoum. In France, perhaps because of his episcopal status and age, he had first been attached to GHQ in Rouen, but he later served in a General Hospital at Boulogne and was a Brigade Chaplain when summoned to see Kitchener in July 1915.⁷² He was used for his episcopal office even before his appointment as Deputy Chaplain General:

The Bishop of Khartoum took the confirmation.
It was all very wonderful.

reported a fellow Brigade Chaplain, Harry Blackburne, in his diary; and again -

Just had a most delightful party for the Officers of the Brigade to meet the Bishop of Khartoum... after tea the Bishop talked..... The Bishop was great, and all loved him and what he said.⁷³

71. See earlier in Chapters 2 and 6.

72. Jackson, *op cit*, pp 141, 144 to 147.

73. H. Blackburne, This Also Happened (London 1932) pp 44, 50.

Gwynne was certainly to live up to those early experiences of him after his appointment as Deputy Chaplain General. The organisation, esprit and numbers of the Anglican chaplains all improved. But even Blackburne who witnessed all this, and welcomed it, regretted the breach it created.

There has been difficulty in this splitting the Chaplains Department into two - Church of England and the other denominations. I wish that out here we could forget our differences and work together. I didn't think like that at first, but now I do.⁷⁴

Conscious of this sort of reaction, Gwynne wrote to Blackburne

As you know, I had intended to go back to my work in the Sudan... but K entirely off his own bat... made me take this job... You know the task has come unsought and undesired by me. Therefore I take it as God's will and, so help me God! I will do it with all the strength of my poor soul.....⁷⁵

The official side of the War Office too regretted the splitting of the Chaplaincy Department and (as will be seen in Chapter 10) went to some trouble to reunify the Department after the War. What it amounted to was that from August 1915 two parallel systems of command operated for chaplains in France. One under Gwynne was confined to the Church of England. The other, under Simms, covered Presbyterians, Wesleyans, United Board - and Roman Catholics. As the War Office saw it, two parallel systems of organisation were likely to be more expensive, and give rein to larger numbers of chaplains, and might lead to religious

74. *Ibid.*, p 67.

75. Jackson, *op cit.*, pp 151, 152.

rivalry between chaplains detrimental to the conduct of the War.

These fears of War Office administrators were to be realised. But for the present the change was generally welcomed. Anglican chaplains in France had been frustrated by lack of numbers. As they saw it, this was the reason for their inability to tackle the unresponsiveness and the traumas of the men. (This message may be clearly discerned in Blackburne's diary). Non-Anglicans had chafed under the assumption that theirs was a marginal contribution, fine in Scottish or Irish regiments, but elsewhere on sufferance. Now each side would be freer to achieve its potential.

Church of England Advisory Committee

In the summer of 1915, at the same time as Gwynne's appointment was being planned and made, the War Office turned in a substantial way to the Church of England for help and advice on the provision of chaplains. One could say they were mistaken to look in one direction only. Their statistics however showed that seventy-five per cent of recruits were "C. of E." and improving the supply, quality and organisation of Anglican chaplains would, it was assumed, address the major part of the problem of the ineffectiveness of chaplains in the field. Moreover, as has been noted, Anglican Bishops, Clergy and laymen were volubly expressing their anxieties about chaplains. Other denominations, though by now well represented among chaplains, appeared to be absorbed in fulfilling the new or extended duties laid upon them.

The Advisory Committee on Church of England Chaplains first met on 15 August 1915. The Marquess of Salisbury was in the Chair. Members were Field Marshall Lord Grenfell, Lord Middleton, the Bishop of Ripon, the Bishop of Winchester and, from the War Office, the Chaplain General, Bishop Taylor Smith, and the Permanent Under Secretary, Sir Reginald Brade. The Committee met throughout the War until 1919, but published only two reports. The Committee were dissolved in 1920.⁷⁶

Their first report was concerned with the situation at home, which they described as "practically a conversion of the younger manhood of the nation into a huge military force." The Committee thought that the proliferation of new military camps and garrisons to accommodate these "armed citizens" required the devolution of the Chaplain General's authority to a newly created rank, Assistant Chaplain Generals (ACGs), to maintain close contacts with local Bishops and parochial clergy. To give the ACGs weight they should be drawn "from amongst clergymen of position in the Church who have had hitherto only a limited experience with the troops." They would be Chaplains 1st Class (ie, the equivalent of full Colonels). The ACGs would also secure proper chaplaincy provision in local military hospitals which was described as "slender".

This significant proposal in terms of the number and status of

76. WO 32/5636. The Bishop of Winchester's acceptance of Kitchener's invitation to be a member is a reminder of Kitchener's pull: "My dear Lord, No call from yourself for assistance should be met by anything but consent. I therefore at once accept....."

Anglican Chaplains at home was accepted⁷⁷, as were two others: that the Bishop's recommendation should be obtained in every case before a chaplain was appointed, and that the Chaplain General's staff should contain "a clergyman of high standing and in close touch with the highest authorities of the Church". The first, which occupies a sizeable place in a short report, reflects current criticism that not the best men had come forward as chaplains and that perhaps Bishops had held many of their best men back. The second was designed to ease relations between the Chaplain General and the hierarchy of the Church of England.

The second report was designed to back up Gwynne's appointment as Deputy Chaplain General and was delayed to secure his advice which he gave to Salisbury and Grenfell on a visit to the Army in France. The report found that even the increase in March 1915 to seven Anglican chaplains per division in place of 3 was too few in the opinion of most authorities whom they consulted. The report attributes this acceptance of the need for growth to a change in the view of commanding officers about the usefulness of chaplains, provided they are the right sort. The report also criticised the organisation of chaplains in France, in particular the gap between chaplains at the Front or at the bases and those at GHQ. The two or three Senior Chaplains so far appointed were an insufficient link. The report finally criticised "a certain want of liberality" in the equipment of Chaplains.

77. The texts of the two reports are in WO 32/5636. A summary of the recommendations and the War Office's response to them is in the War Office record of Recommendations of Committees on Army Matters 1900-1920 in the MOD Library.

The specific recommendations (which again were accepted by the War Office) involved an increase of one hundred and twenty-nine in the number of 4th Class Anglican chaplains in France. More Senior Chaplains were to be appointed with authority to move chaplains as required and with rank equivalent to their authority: in each Army or large base they would be Chaplains 1st Class (and be supplied with cars), in Army Corps they would be Chaplains 2nd Class. Gwynne was to have an assistant (2nd Class) and the Senior Chaplains an assistant each (3rd Class).

However sensible the reforms at home (where the effective isolation of the Chaplain General from the Bishops and local clergy was plainly harmful), the Committee's second report caused an outcry. General Macready, the Adjutant General of the Army in France, wrote to Brade on 14 September 1915, having been privily shown the second report,

.....The general opinion out here among General Commanding is, I think, that there are too many clergy already, and that if greater facilities for locomotion in the way of motors were given it would be possible to reduce the numbers and the work be better done.... a good many parsons are really doing nothing and to send out more would be an absolute waste of men....⁷⁸

But the changes were implemented. When the consequential promotions began, and extra Anglican chaplains arrived, the indignation spread in the summer of 1916 to the non-Anglican churches, in particular their army committees at home. It appeared to them quite simply that the Church of England, having been allowed a separate chaplaincy service in France, were now taking men and resources which should be shared.

78. WO 32/5635.

Simms appears to have sounded the alarm and the Church of Scotland to have rallied the other non-Anglican Churches, including the Roman Catholics. But the Catholics had their own form of disenchantment and again it was to have a bearing on the position of the Nonconformists.

A Roman Catholic Chaplain General?

The Roman Catholic campaign in 1915 to secure a Chaplain General of their own was also fuelled by dissatisfaction with numbers of chaplains and those responsible for their deployment. But it had other causes. From Grant's day to Bourne's, Southwark had had the acknowledged lead on chaplaincy matters. This passed to Westminster with Bourne when he was translated and was taken by Bishop Amigo of Southwark as an example of Bourne's desire to build up Westminster at the expense of Southwark. (If he had known that the move was on the urging of the War Office⁷⁹ Amigo would have assumed it was down to Bourne's influence in those quarters). The more serious signs of aggrandisement, as Amigo saw it, were Bourne's various plans to divide Southwark diocese and then absorb it in Westminster. Bourne's protection of a priest who had seriously mismanaged Southwark diocese's finances rankled. There was also a dispute over the leadership of Womersley Seminary which served both dioceses.

These diversions have been fully set out elsewhere.⁸⁰ What matters here is that the campaign for a Roman Catholic Chaplain General became

79. See the previous chapter.

80. Revd M. Clifton, Amigo: Friend of the Poor (Leominster 1987) pp 37 to 50 gives a balanced account based on Southwark and Westminster Diocesan archives.

part of the wider dispute. The first intimation of the desire for a Roman Catholic Chaplain General however came from the Vatican. It was communicated to Sir Edward Grey, the Foreign Secretary, on 8 August 1915 by Sir Henry Howard, the British Minister to the Holy See, who described the proposed duties of the new post as follows:

The said Chaplain General, who will have no other duties and to whom all Roman Catholic Chaplains to the Navy and the Army will be subject, may be assisted in all matters of real importance by an Ecclesiastical Council composed of three Priests to be named respectively by the Roman Catholic Archbishops of England, Ireland and Scotland, as also by a Council of Laymen....

If he was agreeable to the British Government, the choice of Chaplain General would fall on Mgr William Browne, Vicar General of Southwark.⁸¹

The War Office was averse to change. An internal minute on the same papers described the present arrangements uncritically.

....since 1903 the Ecclesiastical Superior of all commissioned Roman Catholic troops has been Bishop (now Cardinal) Bourne. As a matter of fact the duty has fallen on Mgr Bidwell....

When there is a necessity for a Priest for Army duty, the Chaplains Branch corresponds with Mgr Bidwell asking for a nomination. When this has been received, the Branch issues the necessary orders for the Chaplain being posted.....

These arrangements have worked smoothly, although at the moment there is difficulty in getting sufficient Priests for our purpose.

81. WO 32/5634.

The Foreign Office however suggested a discussion with Mgr Bidwell, who acted as Archbishop Bourne's assistant on chaplaincy matters, when satisfaction would be expressed with the present arrangements but the War Office would show willingness to adopt the new ones. The Foreign Office "would not be embarrassed" if the War Office were to take exception to the title Chaplain General, or to the proposed rank (Major General). Bidwell was seen on 9 September, but the record ends abruptly:

Note - this proposal was dropped after a visit by Cardinal Bourne to the Vatican - 23 December 1915.

It is not hard to detect the influence of Bishop Amigo in the Vatican's proposal for a Chaplain General responsible not to Bourne alone but to the three Archbishops in the British Isles and in the suggestion that the appointment should go to his own Vicar General. Bourne's peremptory ending of the initiative can also be seen as a move in the same episcopal contest. As will be clear later, no one but Bourne knew for some months that the initiative was at an end, if indeed it was.

There were strong practical reasons for change. Demand for chaplains was not met in some places and it was over-supplied in others. A better system of administration was needed. In a letter dated 21 May 1916, Amigo wrote to Brade, Permanent Under Secretary at the War Office:

According to the figures which were given to me lately we have 470 full-time Chaplains. I think that perhaps if you gave us a Chaplain General with authority to post them where wanted this number would

suffice without the Bishops being asked to supply more. The expense would be less and the work would be more effectively done.

You know that I am not blaming you or anybody else at the War Office. At the same time we all wish the soldiers to have the greatest help possible. No Bishop can do the work which is so vast in addition to his own diocese. The Pope asks for a Bishop *ad hoc* and I hope that the wish of His Holiness will be granted.^{e2}

In a subsequent letter from Amigo to Cardinal Gasquet in the Vatican, the War Office's difficulties in meeting this case without offending Cardinal Bourne are made clear.

I had a good talk with my friend [Brade] at the War Office yesterday. I gathered that (1) they had not answered the Vatican of last September because they were given to understand that the Holy See did not intend to proceed in the matter of a Chaplain General; (2) they prefer to work altogether through one channel and thought that this was arranged; (3) they fear to offend Cardinal Bourne by asking for any change; (4) they were considering the question of an advisory committee with a Senior Chaplain like Mgr Keatinge on it; (5) there is objection to the title of Chaplain General; (6) the C. of B. Chaplain General cannot post the Chaplains without consultation with the local Commanding Officers.

He came away from this meeting, Amigo added, "with the idea that mischief had been done" and with the hope that his conversation with Brade had undone some of it. "Cardinal Bourne", evidently the mischief-maker, "thinks himself indispensable and is satisfied with the present state of muddle." Amigo concluded by suggesting that "if Sir Henry

Howard could move on the matter it would be an advantage."⁸³ in fact a year later Mgr William Keatinge, a Southwark priest but an experienced professional army chaplain from a family of such, was appointed *Episcopus Castrensis*, thus avoiding the title Chaplain General, and with duties which did not conflict with operational control in the field.⁸⁴

This last point is important. It is one of the surprising features of this Roman Catholic campaign that never once was Simms' leadership of all non-Anglican chaplains in France, the main theatre of the War, adduced as a reason for the change. Simms was after all an Ulsterman, and a Presbyterian.⁸⁵ Most Roman Catholic chaplains in France were Irish, or of Irish parentage, and many were from the South of Ireland. It would have been perfectly plausible to have advanced the incongruity of Roman Catholic priests serving under Simms as part of the case for a Roman Catholic Chaplain General. Separation after all had been made respectable by the Anglicans as the remedy for the sort of "muddle" which Amigo complained of. This would have seemed a very natural argument in Rome. But it was not advanced.

One can readily understand such reticence in correspondence and conversation with the War Office. Administrators there had not wanted

83. Dated 15 July 1916, Southwark Diocesan Archives.

84. See Chapter 8.

85. After the War he was to become Ulster Unionist MP for North Down (1922 to 1931). Amigo, a Gibraltarian by birth was pronouncedly for a Free Ireland. He was to cause great offence in 1920 by allowing Southwark Cathedral to be used for the Requiem Mass for the Lord Mayor of Cork, Thomas McSwiney, who had died on hunger strike in Brixton Prison. (See Clifton, *op cit*, pp 78-86 for a full account of Amigo's Irish sympathies).

the Anglicans to divide the Chaplains Department. Gwynne's appointment was a political one, by Kitchener, and had still to prove itself. The War Office would not favour further disunion. But, much more than this, for sixty years or so the War Office had kept a wether eye on signs of Irish nationalist sympathies among Roman Catholic chaplains and (intensifying the suspicion) from 1863, the Irish Bishops had not allowed English Roman Catholics to serve as chaplains in Ireland. Now, Irish regiments were serving with distinction in France and Gallipoli. Though their loyalty appeared to be unaffected by the Easter Rising in 1916, this event would be a powerful constraint in official minds on any notion of a separate Roman Catholic chaplaincy service heavily concentrated, as it would be, in Irish regiments.⁸⁶

But nowhere is separation in the field advanced in Amigo's private correspondence with Rome. One concludes that it was simply not a factor. Simms' own character no doubt had something to do with it.

A source of strength to all denominations, full
of kindness, experience and common sense

is the Official History's description of him.⁸⁷ Simms' organisation at GHQ included a Senior Roman Catholic Chaplain to whom Catholic chaplains in the field would first look in practice. And the well established separate reporting arrangements had contributed to a tradition that Roman Catholic chaplains got on with their work in their own way, looking first to their Brigade Commander. Their use of the chaplaincy

86. MacDonagh, The Irish at the Front, with a foreword by John Redmond MP (London 1916) has a chapter on Irish Roman Catholic Chaplains, "For Cross and Crown" p 103.

87. Edmunds, op cit, p 1136.

organisation was for practicalities, postings, leave, promotions - and portable altars. Though they cooperated with non-Catholic Chaplains every day, there was no sense that a command in which several denominations operated together was religiously ecumenical. Roman Catholics did not take part in the united service at Bethune, nor in the conference of chaplains which followed it.⁸⁸ The only reservation about the united command to have emerged in this study was a complaint by an Irish chaplain at being asked to advertise the visit to the Front by the evangelist, Gipsy Smith.⁸⁹ One may perhaps sympathise. Boullier, an Irish Methodist chaplain in France, comments that Gipsy Smith's "very handshake drew one nearer to God."⁹⁰

One consequence of the Roman Catholics' respect for Simms' position was that it was to the Roman Catholics that Simms looked for support when he became concerned at the Anglicans' use of their separate command in France to build up their numbers and dominate chaplaincy work. The "Advisory Committee", which Amigo had mentioned in his letter to Cardinal Gasquet of 15 July 1916 (and dismissed there as likely to do little good) was the chosen political response to the Anglicans' dominance. Contrary to Amigo's expectation, this Interdenominational Committee - the main subject of the next Chapter - was the means by which the non-Anglicans, including the Roman Catholics, obtained an acknowledged secure and equitable share of chaplaincy work for the rest of the War. This success depended in no small measure on cooperation

88. Blackburne, *op cit*, pp 95 and 100.

89. Southwark Diocesan Archives.

90. Boullier, *Jottings by a Gunner Chaplain* (London 1917), p 68.

among all non Anglicans inside and outside the Committee, but not least in the representations leading to its formation. The foundations for this cooperation between Nonconformists and Roman Catholics was laid in Simms' unified command in France.

Were it not for the Roman Catholics associating themselves with us when the Anglicans broke the administrative unity of the Chaplains' Department we could have been left in a sorry plight, under the heel of the Church of England. The Anglicans never dreamt that the outcome of their disruptive agitation would be their complete isolation....⁹¹

91. Simms to Bateson, 1 March 1917, Methodist Forces Board papers (also quoted by Mews, *op cit*).

CHAPTER 8

THE GREAT WAR TO 1918: INTERDENOMINATIONALISM

If today they have obtained full recognition in the Army it is because the Free Churches have given up confusing the military mind with our divisions.....

C H. Prest

CHAPTER 8

Formation of the Interdenominational Advisory Committee

Simms' concern at developments in France was ventilated when, on leave, he visited the Wesleyan Army and Navy Board on 26 June 1916. The minute is discreet:

Counsel was taken with Dr. Simms in regard to some matters affecting chaplaincy work at the Front.¹

Simms had evidently been in touch already with the Roman Catholics. He is recorded as having told an official of the Westminster Diocese in May that "he despaired of the matter being set right unless (Cardinal Bourne) took it up".² Lord Balfour of Burleigh, Chairman of the War Office Presbyterian Advisory Committee, was put in touch with Cardinal Bourne, by the Duke of Norfolk.

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1. W 6/16.
 2. Mews, Religion and English Society in the First World War (unpublished Cambridge PhD thesis, 1974).
 3. Ibid.

The first open move was a letter of 19 June from Dr. J. A. M'Clymont, Convenor of the Church of Scotland Committee on Army and Navy Chaplains, to a number of churches. It was written after "the benefit of a conference with Dr. Simms" and proposed

that the time had come when the War Office should be asked to receive a deputation with reference to the need for increasing the number and improving the position of Chaplains at the Front belonging to the non-Anglican Churches, and that the opportunity should be taken of making a claim on behalf of these Churches to have an official representative in the War Office corresponding to the Chaplain General of the Church of England.⁴

Bateson replied on 20 June accepting the proposal of a deputation, although the ^{Wesleyan} Army and Navy Board did not meet until 26 June when, as already recorded, Simms was present. The minutes in relation to M'Clymont's letter note that:

The Board is in general agreement with the suggestion but is of opinion that the matters of detail will require very careful consideration.

The United Board, meeting on 29 June, considered M'Clymont's letter and also agreed to the deputation.⁵

M'Clymont, on 1 July, reported the result of his earlier letter:

I am glad to say that all the other Protestant non-Anglican Churches have agreed to join in the deputation... The Roman Catholics are taking the matter into consideration but if they do

4. Methodist Forces Board papers.

5. W 6/16 and UB 6/16.

not give a definite reply within a day or two, I think we had better delay no longer in approaching the Secretary of State for War...'⁶

On 5 July M'Clymont wrote to the War Office to request a deputation on 20 July.

The War Office, however, stalled. They had a new Secretary of State, Lloyd George, who took up duty on 6 July, after Asquith's temporary stewardship following Kitchener's death at sea on 15 June. Cubitt of the War Office wrote to M'Clymont on 13 July to say that the Army Council

are already in correspondence with the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief in France and with the Right Hon. Lord Balfour of Burleigh on the subject and that it appears to them that the purpose of the proposed deputation will be better served if the visit is deferred... when it will be more possible to consider definite suggestions.⁷

M'Clymont was not put off. He drafted a letter for representatives of all non-Anglican churches to sign (Bateson signed on 19 July) "in order that Mr. Lloyd George may realise the importance we attach to the matters in question". A deputation was still planned as "we need a radical cure for the evils from which we suffer, not merely an improvement of things in France." To signal that the agitation was serious, Lord Balfour of Burleigh tendered *his resignation as chairman of the War Office Presbyterian Advisory Committee*. He wrote to Lloyd George on 15 July-

6. Methodist Forces Board papers

7. Ibid.

Some years ago Lord Haldane, when Secretary of State for War, appointed an Advisory Committee on Presbyterian Chaplains and asked me to take the Chairmanship... We had our difficulties but things went on the whole smoothly till a new departure was made by the War Office some months ago. Differential treatment as regards the chaplaincy service with the English and Scottish Divisions respectively has been introduced, and I have felt it necessary to make very strong remonstrance against what is a national injustice. So far, I am sorry to say, I have done so without success...

The correspondence is with the War Office; I shall not attempt to recapitulate it; but I have come to the conclusion that it would be better to retire from the position I have held...³

By 18 July the War Office were ready to move. Lloyd George wrote that day to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Cardinal Bourne, the Joint Secretaries of the United Board, Lord Balfour of Burleigh and Revd. J. H. Bateson proposing the formation of what became the Interdenominational Advisory Committee. He said

My attention has been drawn to various matters which affect the provision for the ministration of the troops at the Front, and the conditions affecting the service of Chaplains to the Forces. There is considerable risk of inequalities of treatment being established by reason of the different authorities representing each denomination with which the War Office is at present dealing.

I am anxious to bring these different authorities into closer touch with a view to importing to all information as to the needs of each in matters that are more or less common to the whole service. In order to do this, I am considering a suggestion that has occurred to me that an Interdenominational Committee might be formed to sit at regular intervals at the War Office under the Chairmanship of a member of my staff.

He concluded by asking for cooperation in this scheme and invited nominations for membership.³

8. WO 32/14826

9. Ibid (Bateson's copy is the Methodist Forces Board papers)

There was universal support.¹⁰ Bateson nominated himself promptly and without qualification or comment, but several replies took the occasion to establish or re-state positions. Shakespeare, for the United Board, wanted the inequalities set to right at the start, not negotiated with the Church of England.

The inequalities of treatment have become so serious in the case of the non-Anglican Churches that there would be no hope of the Interdenominational Committee working harmoniously for the welfare of the troops unless these were put right to begin with. We have not to discuss these matters with the Church of England, or to beg these rights from it, but from the War Office and with this as a preliminary settlement we should start on this level.

He nominated himself, with Wells as substitute.

Archbishop Davidson was content, provided the Church of England Advisory Committee remained in place (and he received an assurance that it would). He added

If you think that it would be helpful, I should be very glad to see you on the subject generally... I have been familiar with the problems from the first... Perhaps I could give you information privately which would be of real service to you.

He nominated the Chaplain General, Bishop Taylor Smith, but added, somewhat enigmatically: "I think it would really tend to the simplification of everything if he were on such a Committee."

Cardinal Bourne nominated Mgr. Manuel Bidwell who "for many years past has been my principal assistant in my official capacity as Ecclesiastical

10. WO 32/14826 for the replies.

Superior of all Catholic commissioned Chaplains." Though Bishop Amigo had been dismissive of the proposed Committee, Bourne said he was

satisfied that such a Committee could render real service to the War Office by removing or obviating difficulties that easily arise, without fault on the part of everyone, where there is no opportunity for free and frank discussion.

Lord Balfour said he had to pass on the Secretary of State to the convenors of the Presbyterian Churches' Army Committees as he had no right to speak for them. There was lengthy correspondence with them, and with representatives of the Welsh Churches (on Shakespeare's prompting of Lloyd George "at breakfast") before representation was settled. The Presbyterian Church of England had to fight for its separate place. The Welsh settled for national representation, the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists apart. The Chief Rabbi sought membership but was refused: "the problems which arise in connection with the ministration of Jewish soldiers are of a unique nature and do not come within the scope [of the Committee]".

This correspondence over the formation and composition of the Interdenominational Advisory Committee did not deflect M'Clymont and the English Nonconformists from their desire to express their grievances by deputation. Indeed, as Shakespeare's reply to the invitation of membership indicated, the Committee would only work if these grievances were first remedied, so that it was important to get them on record. Arrangements for a deputation therefore continued.

Cardinal Bourne also sought a prior word with the Secretary of State. Mgr. Bidwell wrote to M'Clymont on 17 July

I presume Mr. Fleming has told you that the Cardinal is to see Mr. Lloyd George himself and put our case before him. His Eminence thinks he can do more in this way than by appointing someone to represent him on your deputation.''

M'Clymont told Bateson he thought this as well "as the same purpose will be served."

By invitation of Shakespeare, those taking part in the deputation conferred over lunch at Baptist Church House on 25 July. Simms was present and spoke particularly about the changes in France as a result of the "Grenfell and Salisbury" report.' It was agreed that the deputation to the Secretary of State the following day would be introduced by the Rt. Hon. T. R. Ferens, MP for Hull (and a Wesleyan) and that M'Clymont, Bateson and Shakespeare would speak. Bateson's pencilled notes allot the subjects as

| | | |
|-------------|---|--|
| Dr. M'C | - | Disabilities and inequalities |
| JHB | - | Hospitals, hospital ships and the general work at home |
| Shakespeare | - | Divisional troops and cooperation |

11. Methodist Forces Board papers.

12. This account of the pre-deputation conference is taken from Methodist Forces Board papers. See also W 9/16. The "Grenfell and Salisbury" report was of course the second report of the Church of England Advisory Committee discussed in the previous chapter.

In essence, the deputation agreed to express the willingness of their churches to work together, seek the right to have chaplains serving hospitals at home, hospital ships and divisional troops, protest at inequalities over promotions and senior appointments arising from the Church of England Advisory Committee's report and ask for the appointment of an official at the War Office who would give all the churches information relative to the demand for, and deployment of their chaplains.

Some differences can be detected. Bateson's scribbled note observes "that Presbyterians and Shakespeare are on the platform, NOT Wesleyans," an early indication, perhaps, that he sensed that Shakespeare, the political friend of Lloyd George and a national Free Church figure, might upstage him. (M'Clymont had already registered the fact of Shakespeare's knowing Lloyd George well). Bateson's main concern was to ensure that he did not lose control over Wesleyan chaplains and troops to others. He therefore opposed the idea of a Chaplain General for non Anglicans favoured by M'Clymont (and wrote to Lloyd George to stress Wesleyan opposition to this idea immediately after the deputation). M'Clymont was for seeking specific redress for the churches' grievances. Shakespeare's view was that they should stress their willingness to work together and leave Lloyd George to come up with a scheme.

The Secretary of State "most courteously" received the deputation on

13. Methodist Forces Board papers.

26 July and told them he sought "impartial treatment" for all churches working with the army. Nor did he disappoint his friends when the Interdenominational Advisory Committee met for business. It resolved their grievances in the first few meetings, provided ground rules for the continuing large growth in the number of chaplains in war-time and helped to relegate denominational suspicions and jealousies to the sidelines.

That Lloyd George saw the Committee as a favour for his Nonconformist friends need not be doubted.

Into the routine of our life there came one day Mr. Lloyd George... [His] visit marked the opening of a large wooden structure for Nonconformist services... At the close of worship the Minister of War - marvellous association of circumstances - talked to us in English, making much of his efforts to end the dominance of the Church of England in the army. He spoke of morale and said rightly enough that one way of destroying it was to sneer at other people's shrines.

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14. M. Watcyn-Williams, From Khaki to Cloth (Caernarvon 1954)
p. 69. Williams was an officer cadet at Rhyl. The encounter was in July or August 1916.

Membership of the Interdenominational Advisory Committee on Chaplaincy Services

The Committee's first meeting was on 18 August 1916. An early attendance list (the fourth meeting on 10 November 1916) shows the following, with their denomination noted:

Lord Derby (in the Chair)
Sir R. H. Brade (Vice Chairman)
The Chaplain General (Church of England)
Dr J. A. M'Clymont (Church of Scotland)
Dr P. B. Mackay (United Free Church of Scotland)
Revd J. Grierson (Presbyterian Church of England)
Mgr M. Bidwell (Roman Catholic)
Revd J. H. Bateson (Wesleyan Methodist)
Revd J. H. Shakespeare (Baptist, United Board)
Revd H. Elvet Lewis (Welsh Calvinistic Methodist)

The Presbyterian Church of Ireland was represented by Dr. W. MacKean until his death in 1917, and then by Revd. D. H. Hanson. Mgr. Bidwell moved from army work on becoming a Bishop in October 1917 and was replaced by Bishop Keatinge (formerly Principal Chaplain, Salonika and by then *Episcopus Castrensis*). Otherwise the church membership during the war was constant.

Lord Derby, Under Secretary of State, and Lloyd George's successor when he became Prime Minister, presided over only the first four meetings

of the Committee but retained the chairmanship until May 1918, when the then Under Secretary of State for War, Mr. Ian Macpherson, was appointed. Derby's chairmanship was a powerful signal as he was highly regarded in the War Office by the military side and the civilian. Sir Reginald Brade, the Vice Chairman, was Permanent Under Secretary of State. "He is the essence of diplomacy and possesses an extraordinarily sound judgement of men and things", said Beaverbrook. "He played a far greater part in the conduct of the war than he will ever get credit for."¹⁵ Again one notes the high level of administrative input to chaplaincy matters ungrudgingly given.

The Chaplains Branch of the War Office provided the Secretary of the Committee. The first was E. M. Daltroff, but when he joined the army in 1917, G. Monks took over. Monks served until 1923, that is for the period when the Committee's work was at its height and throughout the critical debates on the future of the Chaplains Department and its post-war establishment. B. B. Cubitt (later Sir Bertram Cubitt and Permanent Under Secretary, then an Assistant Secretary at the War Office) was appointed in 1917 to deal with matters affecting non-Anglican Protestant chaplains.

Dr. M'Clymont remained convenor of the Church of Scotland's General Assembly's Committee on Army and Navy Chaplains until his death in 1927. As the only other representative of an Established Church, he argued continually against any sign of unjustified Anglican privilege claimed or

15. Politicians and the War pp 326-7, cited by Grigg, Lloyd George: from Peace to War, 1912-1916 (London 1985) p 360.

presumed by the Chaplain General. His persistence tired even his fellow Presbyterians.

The other Presbyterians, holding similar positions as chaplaincy convenors in their own churches, figure very little in the Committee's records. Dr. Mackay was the much respected author of the pre-war scheme for recruitment and time expired soldiers. His recorded contributions to the Committee's discussions show him deploying shrewdness and subtlety in support of M'Clymont's frontal assaults. Elvet Lewis, though a charismatic figure in the pulpit, appears to have been reticent in the Committee.

Not so J. H. Bateson, Secretary of the Wesleyan Army and Navy Board, and J. H. Shakespeare, Secretary of the United Board. With little evidence of personal warmth between them, they acted a good deal in concert, sometimes in support of M'Clymont, more often pursuing their own path. It was their practice to arrange meetings of the non-Anglican Protestant members (as they increasingly called themselves) on the day before the monthly meeting of the Committee. While M'Clymont sometimes presided, he was noticeably their guest. They all got on well with Brade - Shakespeare organised his farewell gift on behalf of the Committee and Bateson and he exchanged warm letters on parting in 1919 ¹⁶ Bateson and Shakespeare also enjoyed good relations with Simms who remained throughout the war Principal Chaplain in France and the senior non-Anglican chaplain in the field. There is an increasing sense in the minutes that Bateson and Shakespeare were conscious of commanding battalions, if not divisions.

16. Preserved in Methodist Forces Board papers

Correction of Inequalities

The first three meetings of the Committee resolved the issue which had given rise to its formation, namely the disproportionate growth in the number of Church of England chaplains in France. All had gone well with the Chaplaincy Service, said Lord Derby at the first meeting, "but certain steps had been taken such as the appointment of Dr. Gwynne, and the increase in the number of Church of England chaplains abroad, with consequential promotions... All the Churches should be placed as far as possible on terms of equality."

The fundamental change proposed by Lord Derby was a new command structure for the non-Anglican command in France under Dr. Simms as Principal Chaplain which mirrored that already set up for the Anglicans under Dr. Gwynne:

- One Assistant Principal Chaplain
for each Army and each Main Base
- One Deputy Principal Chaplain
for each Army Corps
- One Senior Chaplain
for each Division

The posts might be held by any non-Anglican denomination and responsibility would be exercised (for Army, Main base, Corps or Division as appropriate) for all non-Anglican chaplains. Selection would be made by the Principal Chaplain on grounds of administrative ability, not merely seniority. In cases of doubt or dispute, the Interdenominational Committee

would decide.

Lord Derby then addressed the allotment of chaplains to Divisions, where the recent further increase in the number of Anglicans from 7 to 9 in English Divisions had led to the desire in cases where other denominations predominated for a similar rise. The following proposals emerged, the Chaplain General alone questioning the narrow margin of continuing Anglican superiority:

| | English Divisions | Scottish Divisions | South Irish Divisions |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Church of England | 9 | 4 | 5 |
| Roman Catholic | 4 | 4 | 9 |
| Presbyterian | - | 9 | - |
| Presbyterian or Nonconformist | 4 | - | 4 |

With four non-Anglican Protestant chaplains per Division there would be one chaplain attached to each Brigade and one available for Divisional head-quarters. These chaplains would serve all Nonconformists in the Brigade or Division to which they were appointed.

Shakespeare reported to the United Board that the effect of the Headquarters changes would be to require twenty-six more non-Anglican chaplains to be selected by Dr Simms. The Divisional changes would lead to lead to thirty more United Board chaplains, 18 extra for the Wesleyans, thirty for Presbyterians and forty for Roman Catholics.¹⁷

These arrangements were subsequently approved by the military authorities in France. The new Headquarters posts resulted in one Assistant Principal Chaplain post (1st Class, rank of Colonel) for the United Board - Revd. George Standing, an original member of the Board was appointed - three Deputy Principal Chaplains (2nd Class, rank of Lieutenant Colonel) and eight Senior Chaplains (3rd Class, rank of Major).¹⁸ Revd O S Watkins (now made CMG) was appointed the Wesleyan Assistant Principal Chaplain. The Wesleyans also secured 3 Deputy Principal Chaplains and 8 Senior Chaplains.¹⁹

By March 1917, as a result of these and the Divisional changes, and appointments in other theatres of war, there were 205 Wesleyan chaplains on active service, including 113 in France. Four were now chaplains 1st Class, including the veteran E. P. Lowry.²⁰

17. UB 9/16.

18. UB 10/16. The United Board Deputy Principal Chaplains were J. Penry Davey, T.N. Tattershall, F.H. Wheeler

19. R 1917. The Wesleyan Deputy Principal Chaplains were S.H. Hardy, O.J. Letcher, W.H. Sarchet

20. Ibid.

The United Board moved up to 174 chaplains, though not all were in post by the end of 1916. This total included 61 Baptists and 59 Congregationalists (including 5 Welsh Union of Independents), 27 Primitive and 27 United Methodists. The Baptists had 3 Senior Chaplains (Mesopotamia, Egypt and Aldershot), the Congregationalists 2 (Southern Command and Salonika) and the Primitive Methodists 1 (France).²¹

The numbers, ranks and deployment show the swift transformation of the Nonconformists' position arising from the first three meetings of the Interdenominational Advisory Committee. Lord Derby was insistent that all grievances should be settled. But underlying the Anglican and non-Anglican changes was the War Office's determination to provide a well organised and well complemented chaplaincy service for the benefit of the troops.

Correction of Privileges

Non-Anglicans on the Interdenominational Advisory Committee were ever watchful for signs of privilege. The Chaplain General and his Assistant appeared in the Army List; the Committee and its membership did not. When this was corrected, there were objections to the order in which their names appeared. The preference was for an alphabetical order, not one of historical precedence based on chaplaincy service. And when this was adopted, the alphabet was urged for the ordering in the Army List of the names of the accredited representatives of the various denominations.²²

A more persistent engagement occurred over suffixes. M'Clymont from the early days of the Committee argued that the Assistant Chaplain Generals

21. UB 11/16.

22. I 11/16, I 1/17, I 2/17.

in the Home Commands, who were all Anglicans, should retain the suffix "C of E." and that the Chaplain General should adopt it. Otherwise, M'Clymont said, the authority of the Chaplain General and ACGs would appear to extend to all churches. M'Clymont's real objection, however, was to the suffix "Non C. of E." which was imposed on non-Anglican Senior Chaplains and above in France. Why should they be labelled but Anglicans not? He renewed his suggestion as late as January 1918 that the better arrangement would be for the Chaplain General and his subordinates to be labelled positively "C. of E." so that the rest could drop a title which defined them negatively and by reference to the Church of England. The Chaplain General refused to change (and had Mgr. Bidwell's support). Shakespeare and Mackay wished the Chaplain General had acceded but Bateson was recorded as having nothing to add. M'Clymont appeared isolated. A compromise of a very sensible kind was reached in May 1918 when Senior Chaplains and above in France - denominational appointments - were labelled "Chaplain General's Department" or "Principal Chaplains' Department" according to whether they were Gwynne's command or Simms'. But by then a stronger tide of common purpose was flowing.²³

If there is a degree of pettiness in these skirmishes over status, it is only fair to observe that the assumption that Anglican was the norm and that others should therefore be distinguished was only one example of Anglican privilege ingrained in War Office practice. The 1918 New Year

23. I 11 and 12/16; I 12/17; I 1, 4, 5/18

Honours, for example, contained twenty-four DSO's for chaplains in France. All but three went to Anglicans. After enquiry in the Committee, it was announced that **Dr** Simms would be putting forward a supplementary Honours List. The complaint led to the issue of fresh instructions to Commanders of Forces in the Field on procedures for recommending Honours. The new practice was for the Committee to receive details of Honours proposals for Chaplains and discuss them.²⁴

More understandable was the competition in the Committee for senior posts, especially as the War proceeded and individual non-Anglicans' seniority grew with it. An Anglican, Revd A.C.E. Jarvis, was sent from Egypt to act as temporary Principal Chaplain in Mesopotamia early in 1917. Bateson contended that Revd A.E. Knott, a Wesleyan on the Indian Establishment who had travelled to France with the Indian Division in 1914 and was now in Mesopotamia, was well fitted by his experience for the post. Mackay observed that Bateson knew both men and preferred Knott. The Chaplain General knew only Jarvis. Did the War Office oppose a non-Anglican Principal Chaplain in Mesopotamia on principle? The matter was remitted to the General Officer Commanding who confirmed Jarvis' appointment.²⁵

There was similar disagreement at the end of 1917 over the appointment of the Principal Chaplain for duty with British Forces in Italy. The

24. I 12/17; I 1, 2, 3/18.

25. I 1 and 4/17.

General Officer Commanding proposed an Anglican, Revd F.I. Anderson CMG, an Assistant Chaplain General in France. M'Clymont urged the qualifications of Revd W.S. Jaffray CMG, a Presbyterian, who was senior. In the result it was decided at that stage to adopt the dual organisation as in France, but under an Anglican Assistant Chaplain General and a non-Anglican Assistant Principal Chaplain. Jaffray, however, was posted as Principal Chaplain in Salonika in succession to Mgr. Keatinge, a Roman Catholic, an interesting example of the genuineness of the disregard for denomination in the non-Anglican commands. Keatinge became, at this point, *Episcopus Castrensis* for all Roman Catholic military chaplains and his church's representative on the Committee in succession to Bidwell.²⁶

Bateson took the occasion to observe that no Wesleyans had been appointed Principal Chaplain. He had proposed Revd. O. S. Watkins CMG for Salonika if Jaffray had been posted to Italy. In fact, Watkins became

26. I 12/17; I 1/18. After the War, Jaffray became Deputy Chaplain General, the first holder of the post. For the background to Keatinge's appointment as *Episcopus Castrensis*, see Chapter 7.

Principal Chaplain, Italy, when the establishment was changed in June 1918, against a Roman Catholic nomination. It was then Bishop Keatinge's turn to observe that there were no longer any Roman Catholic Principal Chaplains.²⁷

The importance of these examples is not that there were vigorous disagreements but that they were settled amicably and with a mutual give and take. One final example involves Bateson and Shakespeare. The Egyptian Expeditionary Force, with an understandably small complement of chaplains, was organised under an Anglican Principal Chaplain. Because it was alleged that he had moved Wesleyan chaplains without reference to the Senior Wesleyan Chaplain, Bateson proposed a "French solution", that is two separate chaplaincy commands, and for good measure, the same organisation in Mesopotamia and Salonika. Instead, the Committee asked the Principal Chaplain (Egypt) to draw up a different denominational command structure on a unitary basis. Bateson and Shakespeare were asked to report on it; and after discussion with the Principal Chaplain himself on behalf of all the non-Anglicans on the Committee, a "French solution" for all the three commands was amicably adopted.²⁸

The earliest and longest running of M'Clymont's campaigns was for appropriate military rank for the churches' accredited representatives with the War Office. He advanced this in a notice to Daltroff, secretary of

27. I 6 and 7/18; I 7/17; I 4 and 6/18

28. I 7/17; 4, 6/18; UB 4/18

the Committee, on 1 March 1917 as one of the three consequences of Lord Derby's principle that "all Churches should be placed as far as possible on terms of equality in regard to Chaplaincy matters". (The other two were permission to visit the Western Front and grants for the administrative costs of the Churches' chaplaincy work "corresponding in some degree to the provision made in the Chaplains Department for the Church of England").²⁹

Although the ambition of distinctly civilian clergymen-administrators to hold military rank is not without its levity, the principle it represented was important to non-Anglicans. It was represented by M'Clymont in this formal proposition to the Committee in June 1917:

That suitable military rank should be conferred on those entrusted by several Churches with the nomination and care of Chaplains, devoting their whole time to the Chaplaincy Service, and holding essentially the same relation to the Chaplains of their Church as the Chaplain General holds to the Chaplains of the Church of England.

The Chaplain General was by now a full General. His Assistant Chaplain General at the War Office was a Brigadier General, and all regular and temporary Chaplains to the Forces held equivalent commissioned rank.

29. The notice to Daltroff is appended to a letter to Bateson of 1 March 1917- Methodist Forces Board papers. Grants were conceded according to the Committee minutes for June 1917: £50 for the Church of Scotland and £50 for the United Board. Similar grants were already enjoyed by the Roman Catholics and Wesleyans. M'Clymont in July 1917 asked for an increased grant, antedated to the start of the War and a share for the English and Irish Presbyterians. Visits to the Front are reported in the denominational army committee minutes from time to time.

The only distinction which Bateson, for example, recognised between himself and the Chaplain General was that the Chaplain General posted chaplains. . He shared with the denominational convenors the duties of nomination and ecclesiastical discipline. Neither the Chaplain General nor they exercised military discipline over the chaplains.³⁰

Brade saw matters differently. He observed in July 1917:

That the position of the Chaplain General differs from that of the accredited representatives of the other Churches in that he is an administrative officer appointed by and responsible to the Army Council, whose authority he exercises, whereas they are appointed by and in the interests of their Churches from whom they derive their authority and to whom alone they are responsible".

The other members of the Committee supported M'Clymont - except Bidwell, the Roman Catholic, and Lewis (who was recorded as being "indifferent to the decision"). Shakespeare had left the meeting, perhaps tactfully. He had no ambition for rank and when it was conceded passed it to a serving chaplain.

It was agreed to put the matter to the Secretary of State in the form of an agreed minute:

That as the responsibility of the Chaplain General and his deputies is confined to Chaplains of the Church of England, those entrusted with the nominations and care of the Chaplains of other Churches should, if they desire it, have such honorary rank conferred on

30. Letter from Bateson to A.C. Strange, War Office, dated 23 August 1917, Methodist Forces Board papers.

them by the War Office as will give them a proper military status for the efficient discharge of their respective duties. '1

The Secretary of State's response was delayed until the November 1917 meeting of the Committee when it was recorded that, as the Committee had not been able to make a general recommendation, the War Office would deal with specific requests for military rank put forward by the churches. Claims were duly made for Bateson and M'Clymont. The issue was then overtaken by the decision of the War Office, in May 1918, on the urging of Bateson and Shakespeare, to appoint denominational Principal Chaplains at home for the duration of the War. There would be one each for the Presbyterians, the Roman Catholics, the Wesleyans and the United Board. The Presbyterians would agree among themselves who should be nominated. M'Clymont's name emerged. Bateson was nominated as the Wesleyans' Principal Chaplain.

The appointment of denominational Principal Chaplains was justified in the Army Council's view by the size of the Chaplains Department at this stage of the War and by the administrative burdens which this represented in several theatres of war, and in the Home Commands where there were a great many officiating clergymen to organise as well. Denominational Assistant Principal Chaplains followed in the Home Commands in June 1918. These arrangements belatedly gave non-Anglicans the senior posts at home that the Church of England's Advisory Committee's first report had won for the Established Church in 1915. But to Bateson and M'Clymont the significance of the decision to appoint denominational Principal Chaplains

31. Letter from A. C. Strange, War Office to Bateson, dated 16 August 1917, Methodist Forces Board papers.

was the recognition it gave to the service of those who did not have the historic assertion of rank implicit in the title "Chaplain General". Bateson was prominent in insisting that denominational Principal Chaplains should have, and use, the relative rank of Brigadier General (and at least one letter survives from M'Clymont to Bateson which hails Bateson as such).³⁴ Shakespeare, as noted earlier, passed the honour by. The United Board nominated Revd J. Penry Davey CMG, a serving chaplain, as Principal Chaplain. Davey thereby joined Watkins, by then Principal Chaplain, Italy, as the highest ranking English Nonconformist chaplain on active service.

Other Churches

It has to be recorded that Nonconformists on the Committee were disinclined to support the chaplaincy bids of churches not represented there. Shakespeare opposed Salvation Army chaplains because - as the minutes recorded his objections -

- i it was desirable to confine chaplaincy appointments to recognised churches;
- ii it would be difficult to guarantee the qualification of Salvation Army nominees;
- iii the Salvation Army was concerned more with social than religious questions, and
- iv bodies such as the Church Army were in a similar position.

2. Methodist Forces Board papers.

"Colonel" Unsworth of the Salvation Army visited the Western Front but the General Officer Commanding reported unfavourably on him. "Colonel" Unsworth's proposal that Salvation Army officers might be appointed to Divisions was subsequently refused. The Committee thought the Salvation Army should be encouraged instead to respond to the YMCA's appeal for men to undertake special work in France. Soldiers were later paraded for Salvation Army services in Aldershot "at discretion" and five Salvation Army officers were in due course recognised as chaplains in France despite the Committee's advice.³²

A visit to the Front by a Unitarian minister was grudgingly supported as "it would be harsh to refuse". Field Marshal Haig, however, had fewer compunctions. He declined to sanction the visit because of "the very scattered distribution of the adherents of that Church".³⁴ A formal request in the last months of the War for the appointment of Unitarian chaplains was left with the Chairman, members of the Committee declaring it "unacceptable".³⁵

The United Board were more amenable to the Moravians. After an approach by Bishop Hasse, Shakespeare and Wells interviewed a Moravian minister, L/Cpl Paul Horton, Royal Scots, and agreed to approach the War Office to release him for service as a United Board chaplain. Unfortunately Horton died of wounds before he could be transferred.

32. Methodist Forces Board papers.

33. I 12/16; I 1 and 6/17.

34. I 2 and 3/17.

35. I 6/18.

Revd. G. W. MacLeavey of Bedford was appointed instead in the last months of the War. Approaches to the United Board from the Free Church of England and the Wesleyan Reform Union to appoint chaplains were however rejected.

Dominion Governments provided their own chaplains for their own troops, but the denominations did not always quite match those in the home country. Shakespeare is reported in March 1917 as complaining at an Army Council instruction that Wesleyan chaplains should serve Australian Methodists without chaplains of their own. He reminded the Committee that the United Board represented two other Methodist churches. The instruction, however, had been issued at the request of the Australian government.

Prisoners of War

Chaplains were provided for British troops interned in Switzerland along denominational lines. The Committee in March 1917 agreed to send one Presbyterian and one Wesleyan or United Board chaplain to Switzerland, the Churches to discuss nominations among themselves.³⁷ Anglicans and Roman Catholics would use clergy already in Switzerland, though Bidwell asked whether some of these local clergy might not be commissioned. In October 1917 the time was said not to be ripe to send chaplains to serve British prisoners of war interned in Holland, but a Wesleyan was later sent.

36. UB 4/17, 10/17, 11/17, 9/18.

37. The appointment went to a United Board nominee, Revd. Frank Fairfax, a United Methodist. Two Wesleyan chaplains were themselves prisoners of war; Revd. A. Yeomans Wright was a prisoner of the Turks and Revd. A.F. Pentney M.C. of the Germans. (R 1918)

Labour Battalions

Issues of a different kind arose over the labour battalions raised in China, India and the Colonies. Here the church representatives tended to engage in old-style missionary competition for the right to appoint chaplains. For West Africans, Shakespeare urged that chaplains should be "men who had experience of the native in his own country [if] social dangers of a very obvious kind were to be avoided." The denominations he represented could provide "several such men". He referred later to the strengths of the Baptist church in the West Indies when "imported colonised labour units" from there began to arrive in France.³⁸

A report from France read at the May 1917 meeting, however, put these and similar ambitions aside. For West Indian units, using denominational figures furnished by the Colonial Office, the Commander-in-Chief proposed one Church of England, one Roman Catholic and one Nonconformist chaplain for every 2,000 men. There would be in consequence

6 Church of England

6 Roman Catholic

3 United Board

2 Wesleyans

1 Presbyterian

appointments. Bateson queried the figures but they were agreed. The West Indian units in Egypt would have one Church of England, one Roman Catholic

38. I 12/16; I 1/17.

and one Wesleyan chaplain.³⁹

Denominational strength in China was harder to furnish. In the first contingent of "coolies" sent to France the number professing any form of Christianity was said to be about 4 per 1,100 men. No chaplains would be appointed other than the missionaries who had accompanied them as officers. The Union Government of South Africa would be responsible for appointing chaplains to native labour units raised there and would report the denominations to the War Office. There would be one white chaplain for every 2,000 men and one native chaplain for every 500.⁴⁰ The Indian Government throughout appears to have gone its own way, declining to supply denominational statistics to the Committee and making its own appointments.⁴¹ As the War progressed, and larger numbers of labour units were employed, it became harder for the Committee to keep track of

39. A paper with the Interdenominational Committee minutes shows the pre-War denominational strengths of the West India Regiment as Church of England 512; Baptist and Congregational 226; Wesleyan 142; Presbyterian 64; Moravian 50; Roman Catholics 34. Though not a Nonconformist source, there is rare material on service with West Indians by an Anglican chaplain covering Jamaica, Canada, England and (mainly) France; Carry On; or Pages from a West Indian Padre in the Field (anon, Kingston 1918). See Chapter 9 for unpublished Nonconformist material.

40. I 4/17, 5/17.

41. I 5 and 9/17.

these appointments. At the April 1918 meeting, it was reported that as the labour units in France were now so scattered, chaplaincy services would have to be provided by army chaplains.

Social Issues

References to social issues, which one might have expected to pervade the concerns of the Committee, figure comparatively little. When they do, Bateson is normally in the lead. It was he, for example, who expressed concern about "foul and blasphemous language" used by NCO's, particularly on parade grounds, and a letter issued by the War Office "reprobating" its use in November 1916 was reissued in April 1917.⁴²

In September 1917 the Committee adopted the following resolution on Sunday sports-

..... that the Army Council should forbid the organisation, under official sanction or patronage, of sports or athletic meetings to be held by the troops on Sundays.

Participation by troops in a Sunday regatta at Aldershot was forbidden, but the Army Council said in reply that they preferred to deal with each case on its merits rather than to issue a general instruction.⁴³ In February 1918, Bateson complained of the difficulty of organising church parade for

42. I 3, 4/17.

43. I 9, 11/17.

the Royal Flying Corps on Sundays because the day was used for flying purposes. Bateson complained again in July 1918 of "a tendency to put unnecessary difficulties in the way of proper observance of Sunday" in the army and particularly in the newly created Royal Air Force.

Bateson raised the timing of leave trains. Could they be changed to minimise the likelihood of troops having to stay overnight in London (and be exposed to prostitutes, though the minutes do not choose to be explicit)? It was not found possible to make changes, however, because of "exigencies such as tides and submarines in the Channel over which the War Office had little or no control".⁴⁴ At the suggestion of Bateson, the Committee asked the Chairman to intimate to the Secretary of State that they had the question of 'Maisons Tolerees' under consideration. They asked if it were a fact "that the existence of these institutions [were mentioned] on soldiers' passes or other official documents this practice should be discontinued." The army took the hint and put them out of bounds, but this was very late in the war. The Committee's failure to address the organisation of brothels earlier is very surprising.⁴⁵

The 'Mackay Scheme', promoted by the former Committee on Spiritual and Moral Welfare in the Army, was adopted by the Interdenomenational Committee. (Its author, Dr. P. B. Mackay, was a member). Before the War

44. I 10, 11/17.

45. I 3, 4/18.

the essential nature of the Scheme was to encourage chaplains to look after recruits to the army by seeking out their religious background and ensuring that in the many postings of a career soldiers were passed from chaplain to chaplain. But there was another side to the Scheme: church contacts and agencies were to be used to help the good soldier find employment after his service and this was considered by the Committee to be still in point, especially for those discharged on medical grounds.⁴⁶

The Scheme survived the outbreak of the War but could hardly be a priority. In 1917, the War Office decided to end it. The Wesleyan Army and Navy Board, which had played a prominent part in promoting it, was thanked for its services. The Wesleyan minutes noted:

The Scheme, as it affected recruits, worked most successfully before the War; and the moral and spiritual results were extremely gratifying. Since the War commenced, the greatest pains have been taken, under the Scheme, for the placing of all disabled Wesleyan soldiers discharged from the Army. The care of these men now passes from the Church to the Statutory Committees.⁴⁷

However, Bateson took up the issue at the Interdenominational Advisory Committee in October 1917. The following month the Committee declined to accept Brade's negative report. Shakespeare, Bateson and the Chaplain General argued that a large proportion of men now being discharged were war-damaged or in ill-health and needed the personal interest in their welfare and the individual care which the Scheme could offer. Bidwell, supporting, suggested a committee to adapt the Scheme to demobilisation. Brade agreed to reconsider.

46. For a full account of the early scheme, see Chapter 6.

47. W 4/17.

In the result, the Scheme was retained in the Southern Command, and in the Scottish Command where it had originated, until it was finally wound up on 31 March 1922. By this time the Ministry of Labour was placing ex-soldiers in work (and Mackay himself had died, in 1921). A notably enlightened scheme which had harnessed the voluntary efforts of the churches passed finally into an agency of public welfare.⁴⁸

Purity

It was Shakespeare who raised what was to become perhaps the Committee's biggest war-time contribution to social problems in the army, the fight against venereal disease which accounted for twice as many casualties among the troops as illness contracted in the trenches. In the minutes, the subject is almost always referred to under the heading of Purity. Speaking to the Committee's fifth meeting, in December 1916, Shakespeare mentioned the good work being done in France by a chaplain who was addressing large gatherings of troops at Abbeville and Rouen "on the temptations to which soldiers were subjected under the present conditions." The chaplain's work was much enhanced by the official character given to these gatherings and he appealed for the same official support in a similar campaign for the large camps in the United Kingdom. Shakespeare added that he had consulted the Bishop of London and the Chaplain General and as a result it would be possible to nominate two selected men, one from the Church of England and one from the Free Churches, who could carry out at home the work which was being done at present in France. He asked for War Office support.

48. I 1, 3, 4/18; I 6/20; I 1, 7, 11/21.

At the meeting of the Committee in February 1917, the Chaplain General put forward the following resolution which the Committee accepted:

That we request the Army Council to afford facilities for battalions and other units in certain large centres being paraded on weekdays under the Chairmanship of the Officers Commanding for straight talks by expert speakers on the moral question and that this Committee will undertake to provide suitable speakers.

The Chairman agreed to put the resolution before the Army Council.

Bidwell said that he thought it would be better to leave arrangements for the attendance of Roman Catholic soldiers to local discretion as the appeal to Roman Catholics would be more effective if made by one of their own chaplains.

By the April 1917 meeting, the lectures were being called "special addresses on purity". Three speakers⁴⁹ were recommended, viz.

The Bishop of London

Revd. Joseph Walleth CF

Revd. F. L. Wiseman

By June, the first series of addresses in Aldershot had begun, though Roman Catholics were not taking part. An offer of assistance from the Salvation Army was declined and a Presbyterian speaker, nominated by

49. The Bishop of London, Winnington-Ingram, was a noted patriot and a very effective speaker, not least to groups of men. The extremist terms of his early war sermons have been much criticised, but his visit to France at Easter 1915 was one of the rallying points for chaplains in France. Walleth was the United Board chaplain whose work on 'Purity' in France had been commended by Shakespeare in the Committee. Wiseman acted as Bateson's assistant.

M'Clymont, was also refused. Experts were needed, not sectarian representatives.

The addresses in Aldershot were reported to be a great success, to the extent that Bidwell agreed to join the sub-committee organising them. The London Command was chosen as the next location for the addresses and by stages 'Purity addresses' were given in each Command, reaching the Scottish Command in October 1918. By September 1918, indeed, the Committee was considering whether the lectures should be institutionalised by detailing one or more chaplains in each Command to carry on the work in connection with chaplains and officiating clergymen generally.

Concern about the medical contribution to the lectures was however being raised. The Committee agreed to a joint conference with representatives of the Royal Army Medical Corps. When the meeting took place, the Chaplain General, supported by Shakespeare and Bateson, met the Director General of the Army Medical Service, who agreed to an additional mollifying paragraph in the specimen lecture issued by the Army Medical Department. Shakespeare sought amendments to the lecture itself and stated that the Archbishop of Canterbury, who had been quoted as having approved the specimen lecture, denied that this was so. Although the Committee continued to pursue the point, it is clear that they failed to make much impression on the medical authorities. Their own lectures continued in the Irish Command, and again in France, though demobilisation affected the frequency. The Committee's lectures were put in a handbook and published under the title 'Cornerstone of Reconstruction'. It was issued free to all chaplains.

The Interdenominational Committee: A Summing Up

The Interdenominational Advisory Committee's achievements by 1918 were substantial, and particular. Created to resolve a major set of grievances on the part of the non-Anglicans, the Committee succeeded in doing so largely by the Chairman's fiat. Lord Derby was not prepared to let the Committee fail. The result was a set of agreed arrangements which governed the appointment, deployment and organisation of the largest complement of military chaplains ever known and which impressed all by their fairness. Thereafter, under less pressure, the Committee proceeded to resolve issues themselves, settling most differences amicably and by no means one-sidedly. Indeed, a common purpose began to emerge, particularly on social issues. Though a good deal of pettiness was evident, the matter-of-factness of much Anglican privilege was exposed and by degrees qualified. In relation to the churches not represented, the Committee themselves were in danger of appearing as a new privileged group.

For Nonconformists, the Committee represented a coming of age. Excluded hitherto from all but formal contacts with the War Office as issues arose, they now found themselves in a continuing working relationship, gathering by right all manner of intelligence and information in the Committee, through contact with one another in their preparatory sessions and from officials of the Chaplains Branch. Indeed, because the War Office itself dealt with chaplaincy matters at the highest level, it would only just be unfair to call the Nonconformists a part of the Establishment. They were certainly now accepted and treated with the honour that their churches' broader contribution to the War merited and

were able to speak out in a forum where they would be listened to by right. Bateson and Shakespeare became the pillars of the Committee.

Concerns of the Denominational Committees

The work of the Interdenominational Advisory Committee naturally overshadowed that of the denominational army and navy committees and boards; but they retained two distinctive and continuing roles. It was they who raised the chaplains, interviewing and selecting candidates watching over their interests when on service and putting them back into churches or circuits on their return through the appropriate denominational machinery. They continued to nominate officiating ministers at home who had the responsibility for the most part for the soldiers under training, a critical time for confirming denominational loyalties. The denominational army boards also accounted to their respective church authorities for the chaplaincy work done, and frequently for the denomination's wider War effort. A feature of the United Board of course was that it served four churches as a denominational committee, and had to satisfy four masters, though only the Primitive Methodists had an army committee (which did its own interviewing of candidates).

The Wesleyan and United Boards customarily noted as first business in their monthly or bi-monthly meetings new chaplaincy appointments, those resigning - Temporary Chaplains to the Forces served on yearly renewable contracts, extended to two years in 1917 - deaths in service and invalids. According to the records, the deaths of chaplains killed on active service were usually sustained when accompanying the wounded

from the Front to the advanced dressing stations. There were also deaths from illness and disease. Medical checks were introduced in 1916 and older men barred. Honours, promotions and military appointments were carefully recorded. The honours were usually the DSO or MC, or "mentioned in dispatches". But there was one Order of Serbia 5th Class and Shakespeare was awarded the Protestant Cross of the Belgian Army. The quickening pace of the War is evident from the number of names in the personnel sections of the minutes in 1917 and 1918. All churches, including the Church of England, experienced a spate of resignations in 1917, one year after the 1916 expansion. The appointments of Principal and Assistant Principal Chaplains underline the increasing stake of the Nonconformists in the expanded Chaplains Department. The Wesleyans set up a special subcommittee to select those put forward for these senior posts.⁵⁰

The denominational committees also undertook joint work which fell outside the concern of the Interdenominational Advisory Committee. The Presbyterians, for example, organised a conference with Presbyterian Colonial Chaplains in 1917. The Wesleyans laid claim to serve Australian, Canadian, South African and New Zealand Methodist troops if they were without chaplains of their own. Good relations were established with the Australians in particular.⁵¹ A similar offer of help was made to the Americans when the United States entered the War.⁵²

50. W 11/17. The Primitive Methodist Army Committee minutes show them rejecting two pacifist ministers for appointment as chaplains in October 1917.

51. P 1918; W 9/16, 11/16, 4/17, 6/17, 11/17.

52. W 10/17.

But with the churches at home, one is struck by the how few and unprofitable the contacts were. After many delays, representatives of the Wesleyan and United Boards met in July 1916 to discuss "united action to secure chaplains representing Protestant non-Episcopal Churches on battleships." It was agreed in principle to meet the Presbyterian churches to secure joint action, but nothing further ensued.⁵³ The United Board met the Presbyterians in October 1915 to discuss arrangements to look after each others' troops. The Presbyterians said they would require "to be satisfied as to the ordination and doctrinal position of any Minister concerned."⁴ Things were easier between the Wesleyans and Presbyterians who agreed to maintain their "general understanding" on mutual oversight during the War.⁵⁵ The United Board asked that the Wesleyan chaplain in Gibraltar might be known as "Non-Church of England" or "Wesleyan and United Board" and that his successor be drawn from the United Board. This suggestion was negotiated through the War Office, but turned down flat by the Wesleyans. The Wesleyan Board said they could not

agree to the withdrawal of its Minister, nor to the placing of Wesleyan troops under the care of a representative of another Church.

History was on the side of the Wesleyans but the absence of the slightest undersanding that the War might temporarily require other arrangements is striking.⁵⁶ When the Church of Scotland suggested erecting an Interdenominational Chapel in the Rosyth Dockyard, the Wesleyan Board

53. UB 9/16; W 9/16. The sequel is discussed in Chapter 10.

54. UB 11/15.

55. W 11/15.

56. W 11/16; UB 1/17.

concluded that it was

in the best interests both of the men and of our Church that Wesleyan sailors and marines should be able to worship in their own Church

and later declared that "the Wesleyan Church cannot be a party to the proposal".⁵⁷

Rather more understandable were the Wesleyans' protests at the use of one of their soldiers' institutes for the celebration of Mass by a Roman Catholic chaplain and the War Office's requisition of Church property in Doncaster for a 'wet canteen'.⁵⁸

There were however two striking examples of co-operation, though both were initiated by the War Office. One, already noted, was the sharing by Wesleyans and the United Board of a chaplaincy to British prisoners of war interned in Switzerland.⁵⁹ The other was an agreement over chaplaincy appointments to military hospitals in Great Britain. Eighteen chaplaincies were shared equally between Wesleyans, Presbyterians and United Board (and the latter of course shared their allocation further; two chaplaincies for the Congregationalists, two for the Baptists and one each for the Primitive and United Methodists). The Presbyterian reports remind one how important these and local hospital chaplaincies were when "there are vastly more sick

57. W 10/16, 11/16.

58. W 6/16, 11/17.

59. W 4/17; UB 4/17.

and wounded British soldiers and sailors in England than in France and Flanders."⁶⁰

The Presbyterian reports also provide a reminder that some ministers fought as combatants, by noting the death in action of two officers, Dr. R. A. C. MacMillan, who had served earlier as a chaplain, and R. D. MacRae, who had been commissioned as a combatant throughout.⁶¹ Nor were all minister-combatants officers. Boullier, the Irish Methodist minister who later became a chaplain, records that when he joined up as a reservist gunner

in the very unit to which I am attached at present is a Presbyterian Minister of ten years' standing in the ranks.⁶²

There were also many Nonconformist candidates for the ministry on combatant service. Theological Colleges were denuded by volunteers for Kitchener's Army, though theological students were excluded from call-up when conscription was introduced.⁶³ The Wesleyan Board noted that one of their men accepted for the Wesleyan ministry, Lieutenant H. R. Holcombe, had become "unofficial chaplain" with the 1st Battalion, the British West India Regiment.⁶⁴ A Welsh Presbyterian, caught by the War

60. W 4/17; UB 5/17: P 1917.

61. P 1918 and P 1917 respectively.

62. J.A. Boullier, Jottings by a Gunner Chaplain (London 1917) p. 13. See also the A. C Gray material in Chapter 9.

63. AC1 1096 of 1916; Call-up under the Military Services Acts, 1916.

64. W 2/17.

between university and theological college, has provided a particularly perceptive account of chaplains at work among soldiers from his perspective as a combatant officer.⁶⁵

This study has revealed only two major disagreements within the United Board. The first was over F. C. Spurr's book, *Some Chaplains in Khaki*.⁶⁶ Spurr was a Baptist minister in Reading. Although he subtitled the book "An Account of the Work of the Chaplains of the United Navy and Army Board", Spurr did not serve as chaplain himself. The book is a collection of stories about chaplains at the Front, interleaved by photographs of a great many of them. It has no serious message beyond the evangelistic opportunities afforded by the War. It is naive and simplistic and quite out of tune with the mood after the Somme when it was published. Its most interesting feature is perhaps the photographs of the chaplains, almost all of them studio portraits in their officers' uniforms and Sam Browns, stiff, out of place, newly arrived gentlemen, free of their deacons but distinctly apprehensive of life outside the study.

Apart from the quality of the book, what caused offence in the Board was its Baptist orientation. Shakespeare had both written its foreword and supplied a good deal of (useful) information about the origins of the Board. To the Primitive Methodists who led the questioning, Shakespeare said that it was never intended to be other than a book by Spurr for the

65. M. Watcyn-Williams, From Khaki to Cloth (1949). See Chapter 9

66. (London no date, but c. 1916).

Baptist Publications Department representing the Baptist point of view.⁶⁷
(But this did not explain its subtitle.)

One result was a resolve much later in the War to write an account of the United Board. Shakespeare drafted it and passed the text to John Oxenham, the pseudonym of a well-known author of popular religious books, to re-write. It was to include a list of the United Board institutes, with photographs, and a list of chaplains killed. It appeared towards the end of 1918 in the form of a booklet.⁶⁸

The United Methodists produced their own book, *Stories from the Front.*⁶⁹ It was simpler and altogether better written than Spurr's, but clearly confined to their own men and their work. It too carried studio portraits.

The other dispute, in 1917, arose from the decision of the Council of the Baptist Union to establish what was to be called the Baptist Navy and Army Church. It would include

those serving in His Majesty's forces at home or
abroad who are already members of a Baptist Church
and others who desire to become members on the following
basis: a declaration of repentance towards God, of faith
in our Lord Jesus Christ, and of a desire to follow him
and to do His will.

67. UB 3/16.

68. UB 2/18, 6/18, 7/18, R.W. Thomson, Ministering to the Forces (1964) pp. 16 and 17. The booklet was called 'United Navy, Army and Air Force Board: the story of its origins and work'.

69. (London 1917).

Believers' Baptism was to be postponed until opportunity permitted. Admission to membership would be by application to an Army or Navy chaplain. Ministers of the Church would be the chaplains, Superintendents would be appointed for each of the armies and bases in France and for each other theatre of War. Bateson would be the General Superintendent.⁷⁰

What prompted the Baptists' move was continuing irritation with the army authorities over the correct registration of Nonconformist soldiers' religion. But the other members of the United Board resented what amounted to the undermining of the Board's joint work among soldiers by one of the four churches. They agreed that it was desirable to secure the correct registration of the men, but action to this end should be of a common kind by the four denominations. The proposed scheme was modified and sent to each denomination for comment. but the initiative had been lost and was not pursued.⁷¹

The YMCA

Huts brought the Boards into direct contact with the YMCA which built and manned more huts than any other organisation and as a result grew in size, influence and importance during the War. The troops depended heavily on the YMCA huts for rest and recreation, especially in France. The YMCA used ministers and Christian laymen as hut managers and assistants.

The United Board detected two risks. The first was that Sunday observance might be less than perfect in YMCA huts. (The United Board had Sunday observance problems of its own. It agreed in March 1915 that tobacco should not be sold on Sundays in its huts.) Secondly, the Free

70. Baptist Union Council Minutes, 20 November 1917.

71. UB 7/18.

churches noticed greater Anglican than Nonconformist use of YMCA huts for religious services. Representatives of the YMCA attended a meeting of the Council of the Baptist Union by invitation on 18 July 1916 to appeal for help from the younger ministers in YMCA work.

Two questions were raised viz

- (1) with regard to the way Sunday was observed in
YMCA huts,
- (2) as to the use of YMCA huts for Nonconformist
services

"to which Mr Yapp satisfactorily replied".

The second concern persisted. At a meeting of the United Board Committee - this consisted of the four denominational secretaries - on 29 November 1917 they complained to a representative official of the YMCA that "Free Church Ministers did not seem to have the use of YMCA huts in the same way a Church of England Chaplains." Revd. W. E. Soothill, the representative of the YMCA, said that all chaplains and officiating clergy or ministers, whether Protestant or Catholic, were welcomed in the YMCA huts, and added that the YMCA executive would appreciate a definite association of Free Church ministers with particular YMCA huts, always on the understanding that they must be worked on undenominational lines. Arrangements were made as a result of the meeting to put officiating ministers in touch with YMCA secretaries.

Involvement by Free Church ministers and laymen with the YMCA became

substantial. Although the records still kept by the YMCA may be incomplete, and the details of individuals do not always allow them to be categorised with absolute certainty, the following table shows the religious affiliation of male workers in overseas camps throughout the War and until 1919:

| Denomination | Ministers | Laymen |
|-----------------------|-----------|--------|
| Baptist | 90 | 58 |
| Congregational | 92 | 64 |
| Presbyterian | 48 | 63 |
| Wesleyan Methodist | 12 | 71 |
| United Methodist | 5 | 11 |
| Primitive Methodist | 5 | 9 |
| Calvinistic Methodist | 8 | 4 |

Periods of service varied greatly but were not usually for less than six months. At least two names which would become well known later can be identified - Nathaniel Micklem⁷² and Fred Townley Lord.

72. His experiences are briefly touched on in Micklem, The Box and the Puppets (London 1958) pp. 180-82

The records of service at home with the YMCA show:

| Denomination | Ministers | Laymen |
|-----------------------|-----------|--------|
| Baptist | 47 | 139 |
| Congregational | 66 | 171 |
| Presbyterian | 18 | 56 |
| Wesleyan Methodist | 11 | 95 |
| Primitive Methodist | 3 | 22 |
| United Methodist | 7 | 20 |
| Calvinistic Methodist | 15 | 23 |

The modest involvement of Wesleyan Ministers shown in both tables is probably a reflection of the denomination's greater provision of its own soldiers' homes and institutes. But it may also be a reminder of the stronger chaplaincy tradition in the Wesleyan Church. Several of the Baptist and Congregational Ministers who worked through the YMCA would have had difficulty in donning military uniform and included some who had conscientious objection to the War. ³

73. The records from which both tables are derived are at the YMCA National Headquarters, Waltham Forest. "Presbyterian" includes all so described from any part of Great Britain, but omits Church of Scotland and Scottish United Free Church members. "Ministers" includes theological students, probationers and lay missionaries or missionaries.

There was also some suspicion of the YMCA as an alternative religious influence. It centered on the War Roll Scheme. This too was discussed at the United Board Committee Meeting with the YMCA in November 1917. The scheme encouraged soldiers to sign a card pledging their Christian allegiance. The cards were then assembled by the YMCA and sent to various Church headquarters in England. Well-intentioned as it was, such a scheme operated by a non denominational body carried the risk of changing loyalties and Shakespeare, at the meeting, was particularly anxious "that men filled up the War Roll cards without any influence being brought to bear by one Denomination." There was doubtless also some apprehension that the YMCA was doing the Churches' job for them and showing up their inadequacies. The occasion was taken to secure Nonconformist representation on the War Roll Committee, Shakespeare speaking not only for *the United Board*, but also for the Wesleyans and Presbyterians.

500,000 men signed the War Roll Pledge which simply said

I hereby pledge my allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ
as my Saviour and King and by God's help will help to
fight his battles for the victory of His Kingdom.

There were two clearing houses for handling the pledges: the Church of England Men's Society and the YMCA. Every man who signed received a letter of welcome and was commended to his home clergyman or minister with a request that he would keep in touch with him while the War lasted and

welcome him back when his time of service is completed.⁷⁴ The Free Church National Council handled those marked simply "Nonconformist" or where no local Church was given. Otherwise cards were sent to Churches through denominational channels. The result was that hundreds of personal letters were written and 10,000 families visited.

The house visitation is undoubtedly one of the finest opportunities the Churches have had of getting into sympathetic touch with thousands of people who have been outside their influence A very satisfactory outcome has been the promotion of cordial relations between Anglicans and Free Churchmen.⁷⁵

The Denominational Boards: A Summing Up

The annual reports of the Wesleyan Board to the Conference throughout the War show the well-drilled professionalism of the Board. There is always a table showing the number of the Wesleyans in service in the army and navy. This grew from 26,631 on 1 January 1914 to 237,005 on 31 March 1918, the latter including officers. There is always the number of chaplains on active service by theatre of war. This total had reached 262 by 31 March 1918, including seven Acting Navy Chaplains. There is again always a section headed 'Honours and Distinctions' for Wesleyans chaplains, but in the last two war-time reports there is also a list of the very substantial numbers of awards to Wesleyan soldiers and sailors. It

74. Records at YMCA National Headquarters, Waltham Forest.

75. Free Church National Council Report, 1917-18.

includes, for example, eight Victoria Crosses in 1917 and five in 1918, and in each list several hundred Military Crosses, Military Medals and Distinguished Conduct Medals. In the last three years of the War there was a section headed 'Our Gallant Dead' which totalled 20,706 by 1918. The reader is in no doubt about the patriotic total commitment of the Wesleyans to the War. The reports are addressed to this, and not simply to chaplaincy work, although that is the focus.

The reports also cover progress with huts and permanent homes, noting capital invested and bed occupancy as a measure of usefulness. The section, "Comfort and Distribution Department", speaks for itself. The reports also indicate that the Wesleyans ran an agency seeking information on servicemen reported missing and that they retained their pre-war interest in resettling ex-servicemen, especially now the wounded and disabled.

Whereas most of the Wesleyan reports are crisp and factual, there is one section, headed "Spiritual and Moral Work" which attempts to give some account of the spiritual struggle in which the chaplains are engaged. The 1918 report offers this somewhat despondent summary:

It is too early yet to form an accurate judgement of the effect of the War on those who have returned. It would appear generally that men of our communion who were keen about good things prior to enlistment have returned to their churches with added spiritual vision and power... Some who were indifferent to good things appear to take a greater interest in them; but the majority are indifferent still.

The English Presbyterians retained their pre-war style of operation judging by the reports of the Committee on the Oversight of Soldiers and Sailors - a discursive (but always informative) mixture of fact and opinion, culminating in a list of chaplains and their locations. Two differences emerged. The 1918 report notes that much of the work of oversight in pre-War days have now been successfully devolved to Presbyteries following the Synod's instruction in 1916 to set up local committees. The same report also notes that there are now twenty-nine chaplains in service, a reminder that commissions are now held. But the relatively small number of chaplains compared with other non-Anglicans indicates the continuing domination of chaplaincy work by Scottish Presbyterians. John Cairns, the convenor, was made a chaplain 2nd class, the highest ranking in his Church. The 1917 report continues the pre-war practice of carrying accounts from individual chaplains of their work.

The United Board, serving four churches, reported in various ways to *them and each recorded what it judged necessary* in Assembly reports and Year Books. Here it may be more useful to attempt to assess its style of operation. Any such assessment has to start with the speed and success with which the four denominations came to terms with the military world. Unlike the Wesleyans and the Presbyterians, their ministers were strangers to uniform and uniformity alike, to the military bureaucracy and the military in the field. Faced with privilege, as they saw it, they were used to employing assertion and stridency. But as the Wesleyans had discovered half a century before, a degree of conformity, coupled with an ability to deliver, were surer ways to soften authority and win support. After some blood-letting in the first three meetings of the

Interdenominational Advisory Committee, the United Board joined the other non-Anglican bodies in united commitment to the needs of the War as mediated by the War Office.

It might appear that the United Board was continuing to fight for recognition and against privilege, not by frontal assault, but by infiltration. In fact they were learning to conform. The commissions, the honours, the awards for gallantry, rank and promotions - and seeking after these things - were marks of conformity. They flowed from being committedly on the same side as the rest, and from taking their place in the team. Deaths in action cemented the contribution.

One can see an echo of this in the annals of Shebbear College, a remote Bible Christian (United Methodist) school in Devon. Shebbear was, in more senses than the physical, a school apart before the War. 'Rusty', a scholar who taught Latin especially well "and opened new visions",

was very sad about the War. He said it was more important to send missionaries to China than to send troops to the Front. But at the end of the War we were to see an end really of the Nonconformist traditions... In 1914 we had been a non-conforming school, the essence of dissent, apart. But in the War years the Church, our Church, had joined in the Anglican in official duties. Another official Church. And indeed, astonishingly, here were its parsons, dressed in Sam Browns, leggings and spurs. Things could never be quite the same again, even for Rusty.⁷⁶

76. A. Fairchild, A School Apart: A History of Shebbear College (Old Shebbearian Association, c. 1987/8) pp. 60, 72. (I am indebted to Alan Cash, formerly Sheffield University Librarian, for this reference.)

The second mark of the achievement of the United Board in the Great War was its own interdenominationalism. While the Advisory Committee was simply that, the United Board had to pursue common action in which differences were sunk. It succeeded not least at the local level where such differences were naturally most embedded, and in senior appointments and promotions, where preferment had to be highly selective. It is worth remarking that while the Congregationalists and Baptists dominated the leadership and provided the bulk of the chaplains the two most senior United Board chaplains in the field, Standing and Penry Davey, were Primitive and United Methodists respectively. The two serious disagreements, already discussed, originated outside the Board and were settled when internalised.

The achievements of the Board occurred under Shakespeare's leadership - R. J. Wells, though joint secretary, was here, as in his denomination, a less than imposing public figure⁷⁷. And it occurred when, in his national role, Shakespeare was advocating greater Free Church unity. His Presidential address to the National Council of the Free Church Union in 1916 might be summed up in the phrase he used, "denomenationalism is a decaying idea". The United Board demonstrated what could be achieved by cooperation in action. The establishment of the Free Church Federal Council in 1919 was his other victory

77. J. D. Jones, Three Score Years and Ten (London 1940) pp. 106-8 describes the circumstances of Wells' appointment as Secretary of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, and his own appointment as Honorary Secretary of the Union to "relieve Wells of the more public duties of the Secretarial office" and to "do something to allay the simmering discontent and restore some measure of harmony to our Union proceedings". Wells' ability as an administrator however was unquestioned and from that the United Board undoubtedly profited. He died suddenly in 1923.

Numbers

Figures have been used sparingly in the text. It may be desirable to summarise as a postscript to the chapter, the contributions of all Churches to the Chaplains Department in the Great War in statistical terms in order to set out comparatively the Free Churches' part.

Table 1 ⁷⁸

4 August 1914 Armistice Day 1918

| | | |
|------------------------------|----|------|
| Church of England | 89 | 1985 |
| Presbyterian | 11 | 302 |
| Roman Catholic | 17 | 649 |
| Wesleyan | -- | 256 |
| United Board | -- | 251 |
| Jewish | -- | 16 |
| Welsh Calvinistic Methodists | -- | 10 |
| Salvation Army | -- | 5 |

At the outbreak of War there were, in addition to the commissioned chaplains shown in the table, thirty-six Acting Chaplains, who included 8 Anglicans, 8 Presbyterians, (including 4 English Presbyterians), 4 Roman Catholics and 15 Wesleyans. The churches with commissioned chaplains very often used Acting Chaplains' posts as a form of probationary service

78. These figures can be found in many sources. The source used here as it happens is the Journal of the Royal Army Chaplaincy Department, bound volume for 1922-24.

before the chaplain was commissioned.⁷⁹ As was been noted in Chapter 6, the Wesleyans were allowed more Acting Chaplains than their numbers justified in the pre-War army because, by their own choice, they had no commissioned chaplains.

Although the different Presbyterian Churches were not usually distinguished in War Office statistics, the number of Presbyterian Church of England men can be taken from their own committee reports. They had 25 chaplains by 1916 and 29 by 1918.⁸⁰ The English Synod of the Church of Scotland provided a further two.⁸¹ The Welsh Calvinistic Methodists provided sufficient chaplains to meet their commitment to the Welsh Division, usually about ten.

Turning back to Table 1, the strikingly large contribution of the Wesleyans and the United Board to the 1918 total underlines all that has been said about the Great War marking their coming of age. The Church of England is still the predominant force, the Roman Catholics second, and the Presbyterians third - the recognised churches in short are maintaining their pre-War order and pre-eminence. But the Roman Catholics' former advantage^{due} to the Irish Regiments is now matched by the numbers of Nonconformists in the volunteer and conscript armies, leading to significant numbers of Wesleyan and United Board chaplains.

It is instructive to look at the deployment of chaplains between the various theatres of war at two dates

74. BP

80. P 1916, 1918

81. BP

Table 2^{cc}.

October 1916

| | Home | France | Egypt | Salonika | Hosp Ships ² | East Africa | Others ¹ | Total |
|--------------------|-------|--------|-------|----------|----------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-------|
| Church of England | 4 4 | 644 | 92 | 61 | 29 | 31 ⁴ | 29 | 1360 |
| Presbyterian | 64 | 105 | 20 | 10 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 208 |
| Roman Catholic | 59 | 258 | 47 | 35 | 24 | 14 ⁴ | 20 | 457 |
| Wesleyan | 45 | 78 | 15 | 11 | -- | 5 | 7 | 161 |
| United Board | 35 | 66 | 13 | 8 | 1 | 5 | 6 | 134 |
| Welsh Calvinists | 5 | 5 | 1 | -- | -- | 1 | -- | 12 |
| Jewish | 1 | 4 | 1 | -- | -- | -- | -- | 6 |
| Other ³ | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 3 | -- | 3 |
| | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| | 683 | 1160 | 189 | 125 | 55 | 64 | 65 | 2341 |
| | | | | | - | - | - | ----- |

Notes:

- 1 Imperial Establishment and Indian Establishment.
- 2 Includes Mesopotamia and Bombay base.
- 3 Dutch Reformed Church.
- 4 Includes in each case six locally recruited priests.

Table 3 (1917)

February 1917

| | Home | France | Egypt/ Hosp | Salonika | Hosp Ships ² | East Africa | Others ¹ | Total |
|-------------------|------|--------|----------------|----------|----------------------------|----------------|---------------------|-------|
| Church of England | 630 | 715 | 140 | 100 | 31 | 12 | 16 | 1644 |
| Presbyterian | 66 | 150 | 18 | 18 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 261 |
| Roman Catholic | 55 | 316 | 81 | 49 | 33 | 4 | 12 | 550 |
| Wesleyan | 42 | 105 | 19 | 15 | 5 | 1 | 6 | 193 |
| United Board | 29 | 107 | 19 | 14 | 11 | 2 | 3 | 185 |
| Welsh Calvinists | 5 | 5 | 1 | -- | -- | -- | -- | 11 |
| Jewish | 1 | 5 | 1 | 1 | -- | -- | -- | 8 |
| | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | 828 | 1403 | 279 | 197 | 83 | 20 | 42 | 2852 |
| | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |

Notes:

1 Imperial Establishment and Indian Establishment.

2 Includes Mesopotamia and Bombay base.

Both tables show complements rather than chaplains in post, but the difference between complement and posting for the Nonconformists was never great. There were 174 United Board chaplains in post at the end of 1916, for example. The disparity was greater for the Anglicans and Roman Catholics because their much larger complements imposed a greater strain on their resources. The latter were helped however by the use of local priests for Irish Regiments stationed in Ireland - the Church's own choice - and this accounts for their proportionately smaller number of home chaplaincies. The high proportion of Anglican chaplaincies at home, particularly in February 1917, reflects in part their Advisory Committee's recommendations for chaplaincy organisation at home, which was not copied for non-Anglicans until the later stages of the War. In February 1917 they also claimed virtually all military hospital chaplaincies at home. Anglicans and Roman Catholics had the main chaplaincy presence on hospital ships but the Wesleyans secured one such posting in the last year of the War. The importance of the presence of a priest at the point of death had, since Indian troop-ship days at the height of Empire, led to the deployment of significant numbers of Roman Catholic chaplains, or priests serving as such, on board troop and hospital ships.

The wide dispersal of Wesleyan and United Board chaplains is noteworthy. They were in reasonable numbers in all theatres of the War, and were to be well represented in Italy from mid- 1917.⁸⁴ But, as with other non-Anglican Churches, the French theatre demanded above fifty per cent of their men in 1916 and sixty per cent in 1917.

84. The United Board chaplains in Italy at January 1918 numbered 11, under George Standing, APC - UB 2/18; the Wesleyans had 12 chaplains in Italy, and provided the Principal Chaplain, O. S. Watkins.

The last table speaks for itself:

Table 4 ⁸⁵

Chaplains' Deaths

| | Killed in action or died of wounds | Died later as a result of wounds |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Church of England | 57 | 41 |
| Presbyterian | 6 | 5 |
| Roman Catholic | 21 | 13 |
| Wesleyan | 5 | 5 |
| United Board | 8 | 4 |

In the case of each Church the total represents about 5 per cent of the number of its chaplains in service at Armistice Day 1918.

85. Quoted from official sources by H.W. Blackburne, Trooper to Dean, (London 1955), p. 59. The identity of the Wesleyans is in the annual Reports of the Board. Thomson, op cit, lists the United Board names on p. 16

CHAPTER 9

NONCONFORMIST CHAPLAINS IN THE GREAT WAR

*The wounded were streaming in in car loads...
Over 2000 passed through the Ambulance during the
weekend. It was a joy... to do the little we
did for those who had won glory and fame.*

Wesleyan Chaplain in the Somme

CHAPTER 9

The collection of experiences which follow are all written by or about Nonconformist chaplains. But as they are drawn from different theatres and relate to different periods of the War there is not much other commonality.

The collection is pitifully small. Although the written experiences of Great War chaplains are an established genre, most examples came from the pens of Anglicans. Similarly the target of the well-known critics of chaplains, and the relatively few hero figures, are for the most part Anglicans too. Some redress is needed.

The purpose of attempting it here is however more serious. In a study given over for the most part to recording the attempts by representatives of the Nonconformist Churches to secure an authorised ministry to their men in the Services, what the chaplains made of their

opportunities (and what opportunities they were given) merits a place. Earlier sections have met this need at appropriate points. Slender though the evidence is, it has to be attempted for the War which saw the rich fulfilment of the Churches' ambitions.

Some Early War Experiences of Chaplains

Four Nonconformist chaplains who served in the early part of the War have left their testimonies. The most senior was D. S. Watkins. He had served with Kitchener in the Sudan and throughout the Boer War and his records of these experiences have been drawn on earlier. He became an Acting Chaplain in 1903 when Wesleyans were admitted to this rank and in this capacity served Wesleyan troops in the London District. He was made an Honorary Chaplain to the Forces as a personal mark of distinction in 1910. When the Great War broke out he was commissioned and appointed on 14 August 1914 to No. 14 Field Ambulance which was mobilising in Dublin.

His account¹ consists of articles written at the time for the *Methodist Recorder*. He shields his churchly readers from unpleasantnesses which would become commonplace by the end of the War. His patriotism, though true to the time, seems nowadays gauche. But his record has three compelling virtues. It is told as it happened, not distilled in years following. It covers a stage of the War which is rarely described, when armies covered great distances in advance or retreat. He does not spare the reader the soldiers' hardships which he to a degree was sharing; indeed, the hardship and suffering of the men,

1. D. S. Watkins, With French in France and Flanders (London 1915).

not the glory of the conflict, is the prevailing impression. This, it should be remembered, was quite contrary to the popular mood of easy patriotism in the early months of the War. The honesty of Watkins' record is compelling.

Watkins' story is also useful as an account of what actually a Field Ambulance Unit was and how it functioned. Though the complement of chaplains might be determined as so many per Division, at this stage of the War most chaplains served as a member of a Field Ambulance Unit, with limited opportunities to serve the troops in the Brigade to which the Field Ambulance Unit was attached. Later, chaplains would be appointed additionally to Brigades, still later to those Divisional troops who did not form part of the three Brigades comprising a Division.

No. 14 Field Ambulance consisted of 9 Medical Officers, a Quartermaster, 2 Chaplains and 240 non-commissioned officers and men. The Officer commanding was a Colonel and (as it happened) of an old Irish Methodist family. One Medical Officer was a Methodist local preacher and another - the only volunteer as opposed to regular officers - an Old Leysian. When Watkins conducted his first service in Phoenix Park, Dublin, fifty men and 4 officers attended, an indication of the high Nonconformist element. The other chaplain was an Anglican, D. P. Winnifrith, with whom Watkins seems to have had easy, comradely relations.

In action, a settled position would be established for the Field Ambulance - in effect a field hospital - well to the rear of the fighting line. Commandeered churches without pews were ideal, but large barns or schools were also used. The actual ambulances - enormous carts pulled by horses in the early part of the War - then went forward to collect and bring back the casualties to the Field Ambulance for immediate treatment - the removal of shrapnel, bullets, pain killing or tetanus injections. The badly wounded were made comfortable and sent back to base hospitals immediately from a rail-head. The rest followed when practicable; and thence to hospital in England and convalescence. The most dangerous part of the manoeuvre was moving the casualties to the forward dressing stations near the frontline and then collecting them by ambulance. This involved a slow procession of stretchers, and walking wounded, to the ambulance, which would then proceed to the next collection point. The stretcher parties were normally drawn from Field Ambulance personnel. Field Ambulance doctors and chaplains, would go forward with the stretcher parties, the one to tend the very badly hurt, the other to bury the dead. Indeed, from Watkins' narrative burials in forward positions and just behind the lines, with parties of Pioneers or French peasants digging the graves and standing with bared heads, are the chief "normal" function of the chaplain in a very abnormal life.

The Sunday or Parade service occurs much less frequently and Watkins plainly feels the need to explain this omission to his audience at home. When a service is held, he and Winnifrith usually take part together, the sermon or talk falling to Watkins. Sundays in this part of the War,

however, very frequently fell when the army was in retreat, or in advance, or in battle.

Watkins' story covers the retreat from Mons, which began on the Belgian border the moment No. 14 Field Ambulance arrived at the Front, the battle of Le Cateau where a vain attempt was made at a stand, the further long retreat to a point south of Paris, the battles of the Marne and the Aisne as the French and British Armies counter-attacked and advanced back to the Belgian frontier, and the first entrenchments at Ypres and Arras as stale-mate was reached through exhaustion. Enormous distances were covered and hardships endured from lack of transport, the weather, lack of food, snatched sleep, as well as from bullet and shell. The lumbering ambulance waggons and the need to care for the wounded and ill on the journey put the Field Ambulance Units only just ahead of the fighting units covering the retreat. In the advance, the Ambulance Units had to be well up with the fighting as that was where the casualties were.

Being attached to a Field Ambulance Unit was therefore in no sense to be detached from the action and the suffering when the army was on the move. The usefulness of the chaplain both for his conventional services - "a word with the men" is Watkins' euphemism - and as an extra hand in an emergency is plain from Watkins' narrative. In the advance Watkins often went ahead to secure billets and negotiate a location for the ambulances and field hospital. In the confusion of the retreat to Le Cateau he escorts walking wounded to a railhead to move them fast to safety and in consequence loses contact with No. 14 Field Ambulance *††

several days. His regular job is to maintain contact with the army unit just in front so that the slow moving Field Ambulance knows the direction to take. When the battle line steadies, the No. 14 Field Ambulance takes up a position of relative safety and the chaplains have time to visit the troops in the line and hold conventional services. But there are still burial parties for casualties among the forward troops, the services held in darkness and deafening noise fifty yards behind the front trenches, the service recited from memory, lest a sniper's attention be attracted by light or reflection.

Watkins makes all this vivid without pretending heroism on anyone's part. The account of his own role is modest. Indeed, it is from another source that we learn that he has been mentioned in despatches, and promoted second class Chaplain. His selection as Senior Wesleyan Chaplain in the reorganisation of chaplaincy services in 1915 has been recorded. This moved him to Headquarters but initially, and at his own request, he stayed with No. 14 Field Ambulance. The Watchnight Service as 1915 dawned marked the end of his written record of the War although (as will have been evident already), not the end of his services to the army or his Church.²

2. W 11/14, 1/15, 3/15, 5/15.

One whom Watkins met at Dranoutre where No. 14 Field Ambulance dug in before Ypres was Revd J. A. Boullier of the Irish Methodist Church, who was at the time serving as a gunner, not a chaplain. He too has left his account written from a somewhat different perspective.³

Boullier, a Channel Islander by birth, had served in the Royal Artillery for 5 years before training for the Irish Methodist ministry. Appointed to a circuit near Moy as a probationer only in June 1914, he was called up as a reservist on the outbreak of War and served for 19 months in the Royal Artillery before his application to become a Wesleyan chaplain was approved. He too was involved in the retreat from Mons and in the counter-attack which brought the Expeditionary Force back to the Belgian frontier. There, in the more settled conditions which Watkins recorded, he was asked to take a service by the Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry RSM, who was a Methodist local preacher. (Named later as Sergeant Major Moore, this was a man whom Watkins mentions several times.) Boullier notes that it was only now that most soldiers had the opportunity to attend religious services. An Anglican chaplain, Fitch, asked Boullier to take part in the voluntary evening service. He was introduced as Fitch's Curate, "of which needless to say I was very proud."

Boullier's account takes the War forward. In the Ypres bombardment a fellow gunner is killed and Boullier is asked by the Adjutant to conduct his burial service. Boullier, Moore and Spratt, another Sergeant Major mentioned by Watkins, somehow manage to conduct services

3. J. A. Boullier, Jottings by a Gunner Chaplain, (London 1917).

and prayer meetings in the midst of the fighting, much in the manner of Methodists in the Peninsular War. Boullier is now keeping a diary and recording numbers of soldiers attending services and numbers of "decisions". There is a glimpse of a Wesleyan Chaplain, H. V. Griffiths, at work. He comes over to speak on "Paul's example through Christ". Almost as indefatigable is Boullier's endeavour to convert the Belgians:

On July 11 (1915) I commenced my work amongst the Belgian soldiers. They showed great interest in - though they knew almost nothing of - Protestantism. I sent to England for Bibles in the French language.⁴

Boullier served at Arras before returning to England on 5 March 1916 to become a Chaplain. He was handed his commission by Bateson - the informality is staggering - and went to Dublin to be ordained at Centenary Church, St. Stephen's Green. He received no training whatever as a chaplain. He returned to France after leave in the Channel Islands on 31 March.

Boullier's place in the record is earned by his service in the Battle of the Somme as a member of 91 Field Ambulance. On 30 June, on the eve of the Battle, he and the Anglican chaplain, French, led a joint service at which practically the whole Battalion and most of the officers attended.

The lads were most attentive....During July 1 and 2 we were greatly encouraged by the reports of lads who, having been wounded in action, reached the Field Ambulance. Several had decided for the Master on the night of the meeting.⁵

4. *Ibid*, p 57.

5. *Ibid*, p 71.

Set against the slaughter of those first two days of the Somme, one does not know whether to be thankful that some of the "lads" were fortified for their fate, or to marvel at the perspective of one who was in the thick of it.

For Boullier was not spared the horror. By 9 am on 1 July

the wounded were streaming in in car loads.... Over 2,000 passed through the Ambulance during the weekend. It was... a joy to do the little we did for those who had won glory and fame.⁶

Later, on 13 July, after a respite,

Padre French and I rejoined 91 Field Ambulance. Here again we were busily engaged; but it was work of a different nature. Serious cases were sent to Warloy, dying cases were taken to the dressing station, to a separate room, to pass away.... While Padre French was behind the trenches burying the dead... I spent almost all the night with [an officer of a machine-gun company]. He passed away next morning.⁷

Boullier's account is finally noteworthy for his record of the United Parade Service in the Grande Place, Bethune, on Sunday 6 August 1916 to commemorate the second anniversary of the start of the war. Revd. Harry Blackburne, a distinguished Anglican chaplain who was destined to be a Canon of Windsor, preached. Boullier took part as the Wesleyan representative, along with Revd George Standing, Senior United Board Chaplain, and Revd Herbert Gray, Divisional Presbyterian Chaplain.

6. *Ibid.*, p 72.

7. *Ibid.*, p 73.

250 officers and 4,500 men attended.⁸ Blackburne himself commented

I tried to think that all my pals who had been killed were there.⁹

But he is also recorded by Boullier as remarking that such a gathering would have been unthinkable twelve months before. Though the War had not resulted in the revival in the ranks that many in all churches expected, it had at least brought chaplains of most hues together in the painful and humiliating experience of learning that they served a largely unchurched army. The service was followed a month later by a Chaplains' Conference for all denominations, organised by those who took part in Bethune, including Boullier. Its highlight was what Blackburne called a "bomb-shell":

Let's talk about our divisions and put all the cards on the table. Oh! it was wonderful; we all said just what we thought, but no-one lost his temper, and there was a spirit of real Christianity about it.... I do wish the RCs would have joined; we asked them, but they declined.¹⁰

In an age when simple ecumenicism of this sort is commonplace, it is perhaps necessary to draw attention to the rubicon which had been crossed. It was noted also by Spurr in his unremarkable volume on the

8. *Ibid*, pp 76 to 78. Gray was a United Free Church of Scotland man.

9. H. Blackburne, *This Also Happened* (London 1932) p 95. Blackburne's book, largely in the form of a diary, contains many passing references to Nonconformist chaplains, all generous. He also records seeking out Dr Simms after the Armistice to thank him "for his kindness to me at the beginning of the War when he was my Chief" (p 188).

10. Blackburne, *op cit*, pp 99, 100.

United Board:

Anglican, Presbyterian, United Board, Wesleyan, Catholic - they are dressed alike; for the most part they hold common rank; they confer together, they pray together, they work together. They respect each other. When the War is over and Khaki is discarded in favour of the ordinary clerical costume, they may and probably will ... renew their differences quite openly. But never again can they be *quite* the same men as they were before the War.¹¹

This sense of unity was certainly not evident to the third chaplain whose experiences were recorded in 1915 in a different theatre of war, the Near East. A Baptist Minister, Frederick Humphrey, who dutifully dedicated his book to his Deacons, found "the representatives of the Church of England quite indifferent to the presence of Presbyterians, Wesleyans and Baptists" on board the troopship carrying the 29th Division to the Dardenelles.

To one who had dreamed of Church unity on active service this was a revelation.¹²

Humphrey had another disappointment.

The Minister who enters the Army expecting that he will have the work of addressing large crowds of men.... finds he is chiefly destined to the

11. Spurr, Some Chaplains in Khaki (London, ? 1916), p 10.

12. Frederick Humphrey, The Experiences of a Temporary CE (London 1916) p 8. There is an Anglican account, Creighton, With the Twenty-Ninth Division in Gallipoli (London 1916), which has several references to a Wesleyan chaplain "L_", including one of him conducting a service under shelling (p 96).

quieter and perhaps more arduous task of dealing with individuals.¹³

Left behind in Alexandria, when the 29th Division sailed on to the Dardanelles, he worked as United Board chaplain to all Free Churchmen at the Base Hospital which became filled with the sick and wounded from the action. The strain was "intolerable". But he provides a crisp catalogue of the chaplain's duties:

Visiting the sick, wounded and dying; writing and censoring letters; burying the dead; caring for the social and spiritual life of the men; lending a hand whenever necessary; keep up his own heart and the hearts of others in all possible ways, presenting the Lord Jesus Christ - these are some of (the Chaplain's) duties.

He found that writing a dying man's letter to his instructions meant making up the bulk of it. Certainly he had more success and satisfaction in these unexpected duties for individual soldiers than in formal services. A United Church of England and Free Church Service was banned after one successful experiment; and "simple services" in the wards ended because of Roman Catholic complaints.¹⁴

The fourth witness, R. F. Wearmouth, brings us back to France, but with Kitchener's Army whose divisions in 1915 brought such relief to the

13. *Ibid*, pp 9 and 10.

14. *Ibid*, p 15.

Expeditionary Force of regulars whom Watkins accompanied and among whom Boullier served. Wearmouth is, however, not easy to summarise as much of his record is in the form of a diary. And as he was a historian and writer of some accomplishment one is aware that the "evidence" of even the simplest entry may well have been tidied up.¹⁵

Wearmouth entered the Primitive Methodist Ministry after a period as a regular soldier. Still earlier, he had been a miner. All three experiences he regarded as preparing him for service as a United Board chaplain. He embarked for France on 30 July 1915, the only United Board chaplain in the Division (of 22,000) men, and served there until invalided home almost exactly three years later.¹⁶ Unlike Watkins he had no horse. A bicycle was his normal conveyance, but much of his first fortnight in France he was on foot, marching from the rail-head to the Front with the men. His first service was on 15 August. 50 attended and they had one hymn book.

In this first spell of six months he operated in or near the trenches, close to the men. His duties, other than burials, services and hospital visits are unspecified:

Wednesday, September 15.
Visiting the trenches. Saw more than one hundred men. Had a look through the periscope. Could see the German trenches easily....

15. R. F. Wearmouth, Pages from a Padre's Diary (published privately, no date, but probably c 1950).

16. The minutes of the Primitive Methodist Army Committee show Wearmouth appointed originally to Salisbury Plain after interview by the Committee; and that he sought Home service in August 1916 after his year's engagement, evidently without success. He was also a candidate after the War for a permanent chaplaincy, but was not selected. (Methodist Forces Board papers).

Thursday, October 7.

A whole day in the trenches visiting the lads.....¹⁷

It is not just the absence of a horse (from which Watkins was never separated) and the lack of references to the mess. One senses in this part of Wearmouth's experience a closeness to the men and a sharing of their hardships, more natural perhaps to the boy from the pit village than to the more conventional middle class minister. He speaks elsewhere of the chaplain's job:

(to) grope his way through the intense darkness, live with the lads in the narrow trenches, the flimsy shelters, the battered houses, the destroyed villages, the shelter of the ridges. Although unarmed he sometimes went with them over the top in the fury of the battle, not to fight, but to rescue the fallen, attend the wounded, minister to the dying....¹⁸

After six months and a short home leave, however, Wearmouth found himself in a more conventional chaplaincy posting a Casualty Clearing Station, the forward section of the Field Ambulance Unit. He served in the Casualty Clearing Station throughout the Battle of the Somme, billeted in the attic of a farmhouse.

Friday, 30 June.

On the eve of battle Padre Walker and I cycled to Meaulte and Albert. Passed several miles of convoys. It was one-way traffic.... The firing of our guns

17. Wearmouth, op cit, p 38.

18. Ibid, p 34. Is there embellishment here? Until the Battle of the Somme, chaplains were not supposed to go nearer the Front than the advanced dressing stations, one of the main reasons for the men's disenchantment with their Padres (for which of course Headquarters, not the chaplains, were responsible). The official justification for the rule was that the chaplain could not serve all the Brigade if he was committed to one small sector.

was continuous. It was a weird night, the last for thousands of British lads..... We made a prayer and returned to our duty.

This duty is then described in a daily catalogue.

Saturday, July 1.

Afternoon. The CCS was now full. Men were dying on every hand. One asked me to send a message to his parents telling them his last thoughts were of them. He would meet them again in the skies.

Sunday, July 2.

About twenty-five had died during the night. Padre Walker and I buried most of them in one grave. We buried twenty-eight in the afternoon. Some of the more seriously wounded were put in the moribund tent.... For a long time I was busy providing drinks of water....

Sunday, July 16.

About 20 died during the night. Kept very busy writing for the wounded and supplying drinks of water....

Tuesday, July 18.

Wrote twenty-three letters for the dead and dying...

Saturday, August 12.

Visiting the seriously wounded. When I prayed *with* one man he wept like a child. I have often wept as well.....

Tuesday, September 12.

Total number of letters written since the 1st of July is now 430.¹⁹

So Wearmouth sees out the Somme. He has an operation at Étaples in December, but is back on light duty at the end of January 1917. By March Wearmouth is back in a Casualty Clearing Station.

Sunday, April 15.

15 burials in the local cemetery. As the dead were given insufficient ground I refused to

19. *Ibid*, pp 41 to 43 (extracts)

bury them until they had more ground.

Friday, June 1,
The CCS moved to Etricourt. The 38th CCS were
in the next field and I was Nonconformist
chaplain for both places.

Wednesday, November 21,
The battle of Cambrai began today...eleven
burials, three of them German.

Saturday, November 24 to December 23.
Burials every day except two. In five weeks I
wrote more than 300 letters for the dead and
wounded.

Thursday, March 21 1918.
The big retreat began today... We retired at
midnight after evacuating all the wounded and
burying the dead...

Further retirement...my cycle and box of books
left behind.

The line steadies. He is moved to a Territorial Division.

Whit Sunday, May 19.
Had brigade service near Y.M.C.A. tent. Over 300
attended. Good service at night. Tent full.

Tuesday, May 28.
Lecture to B Coy on "What we are fighting for".

Friday, June 7.
Went to Hebuterne to live in trenches with the
battalion.²⁰

What Wearmouth's record reveals is the all-round experiences of the
chaplain. He is too busy to count "decisions" or to regret Church
disunion, and he takes services when he can. For the most part,
however, it is an individual ministry to the wounded and dying and his
staple function is to bury the dead. But he does not neglect the
living. He runs a canteen for the men in 1917 and until the retreat in

20. *Ibid*, pp 44 to 47 (extracts).

1918, rigs up a cinema and organises a small orchestra - the cinema of course a great novelty. He performed his personal ministry by physical closeness, through being on hand when medical help is spent and a letter to the family at home is the single remaining desire. Some chaplains in these circumstances had felt useless, or under-employed, overcome to the point of doubt by the horror of the carnage and the ceaseless noise and confusion. Wearmouth recognises - and he devotes a chapter to this - that this last letter is a ministry beyond measure as much to the family at home as to the boy he will shortly bury. His book ends with a selection of the appreciative replies he received.

This may be the point at which to offer a glimpse of a Welsh Calvinistic Methodist padre, observed by a young officer in the Royal Welsh Fusiliers in France in 1916 or 1917:

Padre Cynddelw Williams conducted the usual parades on Sunday mornings, preparing for them as conscientiously as if for the City Temple. Yet it was in the voluntary service at night that he really shone... After reading and prayer he conducted a singing festival... the old Welsh hymns sung to the old Welsh tunes... I listened to Cynddelw's preaching regularly for nine months, now in a ruined house, now in an orchard with the apple trees in full bloom, and always he gave the same straightforward message - a Power higher than war, love stronger than death, and victory over sin... When we celebrated his being decorated [Williams won the MC], he assured us without affectation that what we called his courage was simply the gift of strength from God, and when we toasted him it was in tea or water. Under no pretext would he abandon the strict teetotalism

in which he believed...²¹

Near East, 1917, 1918

The bulk of the war-time reminiscences of John Edward Reilly in his wife's memoir of him are from his diary kept at the time.²² The orphaned child of Irish Catholic parents, he had a rough up-bringing in Liverpool and in the Durham coalfield. He underwent a conversion experience as a young man on being released from prison and in course offered himself as a Wesleyan minister. After training, he served as a missionary to European and Eurasian gold-miners near Mysore and then for four years in a West Bromwich circuit.

Although he had served as a chaplain to the Volunteers in India, Reilly's immediate response to the outbreak of the Great War was to address three meetings on behalf of peace. He later joined the ranks of the RAMC. In 1916 he became a chaplain, serving with a reserve Brigade in the Somme, then in Salonika where he was twice mentioned in despatches. His diary record however begins in 1917 in Egypt.

July 1 Sunday. Near Lake Timsah. Took service at 7 a.m. for Battalions. Subject, Caesar and God. Communion at 9 a.m. A boy in A Company gave himself to the Lord again after a relapse of some time. I pray God it may be permanent.²³

21. M. Watcyn-Williams, From Khaki to Cloth (Caernarvon 1949), p 84.

22. Sarah A. Reilly, I Walk with the King (London 1931).

23. Ibid, p 37.

Reilly makes the most of Biblical places. Having arrived at Bela, where (he notes) the Kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fought, he preaches on "Moses' Choice".

Evening at 7 p.m. Service on hill-side near tent, On three sides, white sand with palm grove and village of Bela. On the other side, the Mediterranean. We sang in the gathering darkness "Rock of Ages", "Lead Kindly Light", "I Need Thee every Hour". Big attendance and Sacrament at the close.²⁴

Entries of this kind continue until, in October, as his Division assembles for the battle of Beer Sheba to open the Palestine campaign, there is "a great service" at the Divisional HQ where Reilly reads the lesson and offers prayer. The Bishop of Jerusalem pronounces the blessing. "I was warmly thanked by General Shea for the helpful prayer" When Reilly was killed in a motorcycle accident in 1929, General Shea wrote to his widow of his affection and admiration for Reilly, adding in connection with this service, "I always remember the ring of his voice as he read, and the beauty of the impromptu prayer which he said after".²⁵ Reilly was plainly one of those rare chaplains who attracted men and staff officers alike and could use a momentary opportunity for lasting effect.

He won the MC in the Battle of Beer Sheba. A letter describes his part

My work during the battle was helping to get in the wounded, carrying messages to the front line,

24. *Ibid*, p 38.

25. *Ibid*, pp 42 and 90.

helping messengers to find various units and guiding up supplies.

(It will be noted that Reilly could not avoid being useful, whether it was chaplaincy work or not).

One shell hit a party of stretcher bearers, killing two, wounding one, leaving the fourth badly shaken. I joined him and he pulled himself together working splendidly the rest of the day. It was for this I received the M.C. The other man was recommended for the M.M. but his name was turned down. I informed the C.O. I should never feel satisfied wearing my decoration if my partner did not get one, and on the next list of honours his name appeared.²⁶

The incident is followed by another, recorded in his diary for 7 November

Shrapnel poured into our waddi. The moment we attempted to advance men fell on all sides in fearful states. I got a machine gunner and suggested to the Colonel he might turn the gun on the Mount. He replied, "It's not your business but if you can beat him into it and keep him going you will do good work". I got him and soon we saw our men creeping up the side of the hill... Later I advanced to the Turkish Ambulance and dressed several wounded... I captured six young fat geese but had to abandon them later as no means of cooking.²⁷

His practicality knows no bounds. 14,000 camels, with water had gone astray. On 10 November Reilly uses signalling cable to draw water from a well at Jamaveh but "had to leave off as hands were badly cut and

26. *Ibid*, p 44.

27. *Ibid*, p 46.

bleeding". There was no parade service the next day, Sunday, "as the water question still pressing", but Reilly organised a voluntary united evening service, for fallen officers and men.

Service helpful. Spoke on need of keeping up against reaction to victory, as "grousing" had set in, like Israelites after Red Sea victory, who went three days in the wilderness without water ration.²⁸

After Jerusalem is taken - Reilly's part is with the wounded sent back - the biblical inspiration becomes New Testament. His service for the Brigade on 16 December is just beyond Olivet. "What a picture of strength and beauty. How the Master must have loved it!" There is then "Sacrament in the upper room". The Brigade is relieved and spends Christmas out of the line in an Arab village. Christmas communion is on the Sunday before, two crowded services. On Christmas Day itself he organises a sing-song. The Brigade is back in the fight before the New Year. Exhausted, Reilly is allowed to stay in Jerusalem and conduct parties around the sights.²⁹

Reilly's final war service, from July 1918, is in France with some of the same Battalions he had served in Palestine. The reunion is joyful but the fierce final stages of the War leave no room for formal services. Eventually Reilly goes down after a gas attack and the Armistice is declared before he returns to duty. He describes his service among the Asian 'flu victims, ending in March 1919, as "truly

28. Ibid, p 48.

29. Ibid, p 59.

the most useful part of my whole war service",³⁰

Of all the accounts one has read, Reilly's chaplaincy work probably comes closest to what those in the churches at home hoped a ministry to the troops might be like. He had a personal, direct appeal to the men which was based on his services and his preaching. His sermon subjects and his accounts of attendance underline his conventional approach to his unconventional work. But the drawing power of his personality was strengthened by his direct sharing of the men's experiences in battle including, but going beyond, the caring for the wounded. There are very few references to his fellow officers and there is no litany of burials. One imagines that he would be remembered by many he served in the vicissitudes of later life.

There is a graphic account of the German offensive in France in March 1918, (of which Reilly saw only the final stages) by another Wesleyan chaplain, T. L. B. Westerdale.³¹ It is not used here for two reasons. Continuing an old tradition, Westerdale combined his chaplaincy duties with acting as War Correspondent, in his case for the *Methodist Times*. The manuscript survives because the censors did not pass it. But a war piece prepared for immediate publication had to contain deliberate inaccuracies to have any chance of passing official scrutiny.

30. *Ibid*, p 75.

31. Imperial War Museum, Manuscripts Department.

One just does not know how, to satisfy the appetite for war adventures (and church newspapers were no exception in demanding them), deliberate falsification would go. The main reason for leaving the piece unquoted, however, is that it makes the chaplain an actor in an adventure, giving no additional perspective to his function, though doubtless satisfying the Nonconformist reader that his Church was fully playing its patriotic part.

Mesopotamia 1917, 1918

It may seem perverse, having rejected Westerdale's piece, to choose a novel to illustrate the Nonconformist chaplains' role in this campaign. But Edward Thompson's These Men, Thy Friends is not only a great war novel (though now forgotten) it offers the rare experience of observing a Nonconformist character in a twentieth-century novel. It reveals incidentally a great deal about the army's response to and treatment of Nonconformist chaplains.³²

Though fiction, it is historically accurate in its description of the campaign against the Turks, which drove them up the Tigris from Basra, and culminated in the capture of Baghdad. This was a war of movement, like Palestine, but with periods of trench warfare as the Turkish army regrouped. The realism commended by the critics is the

32. London, 1928. It was described by Sir Philip Gibbs as "a masterpiece", by Compton MacKenzie as "without question the noblest piece of fiction inspired by active service", and by Hugh Walpole as "the finest book in its realism and nobility of spirit of all the English war books".

sacrifice of good men, the folly of the generals and the pointlessness of human suffering on this scale. As a view of chaplains it is likely to be reliable as the author was a Wesleyan chaplain in this campaign.³³ Its particular interest here is that it offers an army view of them. The author speaks through Kenrick, a medical missionary from China serving in the R.A.M.C. - though he is always referred to as "padre". Kenrick's denomination is uncertain though his mission station was run by Anglican "Fathers". He befriends the Nonconformist chaplain, Fletcher, who is a Baptist.

Fletcher's social awkwardness in the mess is compounded by his claims for the superiority of the New Theology which he realises only gradually is as meaningless to the men he is amongst as the orthodoxy he rejects.

Sunday again, and Fletcher did better this time. Before, he had made it clear that, though a Nonconformist, he was a man of culture. Yet there had been a decent modicum of sense and manliness behind the pretentiousness, his hearers felt he knew something of weakness and failure. "That's something" said Hart "at a time when nearly every padre is an ultra damned fool".

The social place of Nonconformity is underlined. Fletcher's school, with its ambition that one of its Old Boys might become President of the Free Church Council, is blamed for the narrowness of his outlook and ambition. The shifting sands of the Nonconformist loyalty is also noted.

33. Edward J. Thompson, awarded the MC in 1918. After the War, in 1924, he became Lecturer in Bengali at Oriel College, Oxford, and was the author of several other novels. He also wrote a non-fiction account of the same action, With the Leicestershires to Baghdad. Father of E. P. Thompson, the historian.

Fletcher found that in neither the Hyderabad nor the Bangalore Division was there a single officer who acknowledged himself as any kind of Nonconformist. Yet - he had the means of knowing certainly - some had required the heavy incidence of the War and the paltry star of commissioned rank to convert them to conformity.

Other chaplains are not spared. The Anglican Padre Oakes' creed was simple. "He believed in G.H.Q., D.H.Q and B.H.Q." His favourite expression was that "he liked to bury my own dead". He filled his Sunday services sheet and galloped over a wide area "for a ten minutes' gabble here and a fifteen minutes' gabble there". He told Fletcher he would only say "good day" to his people and asked Fletcher to do the same to Anglicans. Except for his "belligerent denominationalism" he had no merits that anyone had ever discovered. But he collects the C.B.E. and the D.S.O.

The first Catholic chaplain was a huge Alsatian, a missionary dropped into the War and without much English. His successor is an old Irish Catholic country priest with a knowledge of horses. Fletcher lets him have his mount. They share a tent and to general amusement send in their services on "the same sheet".

By degrees Fletcher adapts. The helpful Kenrick (who takes services for Fletcher) lets it be known in the mess that Fletcher is "a writer", winning him puzzled respect. Fletcher learns that only "by a watchful economy of his own inner thought such as he had often condemned in Catholic priests" could he avoid scandalising his flock among whom a

Plymouth Brother wields influence. And when New Army reinforcements arrive, the Nonconformist contingent grows. Among them are Methodists who call each other Mister, take tea in each other's tents and discuss Methodist reunion to the fury of their regular army NCOs and Company Commander. Fletcher's defence of them - though he himself considers it "Jesuitical" - is that when the testing time comes these civilian soldiers will do the fighting job as well as the regulars would desire. (And so it proves). The "Fancy Religious Merchant", as Fletcher is known, is learning his way around his curious parish.

The making of Fletcher in the army's eyes, and in his own, is when he volunteers to accompany "the Loamshires" on a long march to engage the Turks at Kut. (The real E. P. Lowry's march with the Guards Division in South Africa comes to mind). At first, however,

Fletcher was not welcomed by the Loamshires. To natural indifference was added an underswell of slight resentment, and contempt for the man who would march with them but would be immune from their pains and dangers.

(A penalty, it will be noted, which the real J. E. Reilly avoided).

When it comes to the battle itself Fletcher is with difficulty persuaded to drop back to the supporting field hospital. "It's not so showy as being with us", says the Colonel, "but it's more helpful really". The field hospital will have its hands full with operations and dressings. Organising the fast transport of the wounded to Base in Basra is Fletcher's life-saving task, and this he performs with brilliance in the fortnight of the battle. But he goes back up the line

whenever he can and is useful there too. Afterwards he is surprised "at his own recollected callousness". He conquered his "funk" by working all out, picking up the wounded where they had fallen, working between the firing lines, guiding the stretcher-parties. In that fortnight Fletcher "got a reputation for being a brave man". One who in the early days confessed he had never met a Baptist "this side of the counter" is carried off wounded with the words, "stick by the old crowd if you can, padre. When I come back I'm going to turn Nonconformist..."

Fletcher has little part in the second half of the novel. When he does it is to stand up for weary men he is marching with against the indifference of passing staff officers. He is reported at the end going "down the line" with dysentery and is said to be dying in Bombay.

The novel confirms and repeats the testimony of actual chaplains' diaries that the work among the wounded and dying was heroic and that sharing the men's hardships and danger was the certain way to win their respect. The fictional convention however offers us a view of the Nonconformist chaplain (in particular) as others saw him: privileged to escape real danger and suffering himself and performing a task of very uncertain value. The novel suggests that he had no following among officers and that his followers among the men were seen as eccentric. The social distancing between the conforming and nonconforming is apparent and the War is said to be helping the shift. R. J. Campbell's liberal theology is of no help in bridging the gap between belief and unbelief among officers, although talking about religion, and the nature of God in relation to the suffering of war, is a frequent occurrence.

The New Theology is a positive hindrance among the chaplain's own following whose religious practice remains evangelistic and personal.³⁴

The young Leslie Weatherhead served in Mesopotamia, initially as an officer in the Carnatic Infantry. He had volunteered when a Wesleyan missionary in Madras and did his officer training in India. He served in Basra, with the 83rd Wallajahabad Light Infantry and later, like the characters in Edward Thompson's novel, sailed and served up the Tigris, but in Weatherhead's case after the fighting. He was asked to become a chaplain in March 1918 and served as such in Mesopotamia from July 1918 to April 1919, when he returned to Madras. Weatherhead's son's memoirs³⁵ may be supplemented by this account from an old soldier.

C of E Ministers would occasionally come and take the Morning Parade service and then go away without offering a word to the men privately. Later my regiment was moved to Nasiriyah, near Ur of the Chaldees. It was then that the Chaplain of the Forces, a young Minister appeared to be our padre. His name was Leslie Weatherhead.

Having an opportunity to talk to Leslie I asked if he would give me some advice as I was only a young Local Preacher who had not received much help. Leslie got a book for me entitled What a Christian Believes and Why? I believe it was written by Todd Osborne.

Leslie was a great help to our Y.M.C.A. Committee. I also have a card of Membership of my Church which asked the Reader to help me and on the back of the card there is a place provided for the helper's signature and Leslie's signature is there.

34. Soldiers' beliefs in the Great War are outside this study, but are surveyed with some authority in The Army and Religion (1919), a report financed by the YMCA and written by many hands from detailed surveys conducted by chaplains. The Bishop of Winchester wrote the introduction.

35. K. Weatherhead, Leslie Weatherhead, a Personal Memoir, (London 1975) pp 37-50.

Leslie promised to give the Address at a Sunday night service at the Y.M.C.A. As far as I remember I understand Leslie informed the Colonel of our Regiment, (a hard tough Canadian) of his decision, whereupon the Colonel said [to] Leslie "Mess is at 7 p.m. and you will be there". As far as I could find out Leslie took the service and the next day he was dismissed for disobeying the Colonel's Order. So we lost that brilliant man from our Regiment. Not long after our Regiment was informed that they were going home. We had been away nearly five years.

The Regiment was sent to Basra and whilst there on Nov. 11th, news was broadcast at 6 p.m. that an Armistice had been signed, and in the Y.M.C.A. Tent I again met Leslie Weatherhead.

When Leslie heard the news he said to those present "in half an hour we will hold a service of Thanksgiving". I was present to hear him and I still remember his Text was "Blessed is the Nation whose God is the Lord".³⁶

A. G. Gray

The experiences of one United Board chaplain in several theatres of the War, hitherto unpublished, illuminate many aspects of life of an ordinary Nonconformist chaplain.³⁷ Arthur George Gray was born in Gibraltar in May 1882. He was the son of Samuel Gray, a soldier in the Royal Engineers. He spent his early life in Jamaica where his father was stationed. When Samuel Gray was discharged he found employment as an old soldier at the Woolwich Arsenal, where young George (as he was called) also found work when he left school. Two short extracts from George Gray's early memoirs give a glimpse of life in Woolwich for a poor, respectable adolescent. For entertainment,

most of us lads in our teens...attended Sunday Schools and Bands of Hope... It was only during my adolescence that Woolwich opened its first free library with the help of the Carnegie Trust.

35. I am indebted to Mr R.F.S. Thorne, a member of the United Reformed Church Historical Society for obtaining this reminiscence of Weatherhead from Mr William Whitehead, now 94, of Stoke, near Plymouth.

37. Used here by permission of his daughter, Mrs Marion Robinson.

And then, when George, who had sung in the Parish Church choir until his voice broke, began to attend the Primitive Methodist Chapel in Robert Street, an evocative if dated picture:

Quite a big bunch of lads used to crowd into the back seats of the gallery while on the other side of the partition sat a group of attractive girls, all trying to be sublimely indifferent to the others.

From such beginnings came a "conversion experience" and a decision to offer himself as a minister. This decision greatly disappointed his employers at the Arsenal, who had found him an unusually promising employee, and did not have a great deal of family support where his father's idleness and drunkenness, the fruits of army life, ground everyone down. George Gray's main anxiety was over leaving his mother. Gray trained at Hartley College, Manchester, from 1906; and in 1913, on leaving, he married and was appointed as a probationer minister to a new circuit in a mining valley in South Wales. Though his memoirs complain of it, the hard practical experience of building up new congregations of working class people with minimal support, and succeeding largely through his sporting prowess and social work among the young men from the pits, was a better training for chaplaincy work than most ministers enjoyed. He gained experience of another valuable kind by having to negotiate and oversee the construction of a chapel from scratch.

When war broke out there was pressure on the young minister to volunteer as an ordinary soldier, to which he eventually succumbed.

The course of the War in 1915 and 1915 affected me considerably, especially when with other

ministers I received a personal communication from the Government asking me to consider my duty and responsibility to the country because of the need for men of my age..... A dozen of the young men at Argoed had decided to join up together and after much tribulation I decided to go with them. I was reluctantly given permission by the Primitive Methodist Church and a supernumerary minister was appointed to take over Blackwood.... It was terrible leaving (Hilda, his wife) as she was having our first baby in the following February (1916), but I could do no other without being ashamed.

George Gray joined the Royal Flying Corps as a motorcyclist, and again shared a common experience:

I refused to sign the form or take the oath at first because I had not been asked to state my religion. "That's all right" said the recruiting officer, "we've put down C. of E." "But I'm not C. of E.", I replied "and must ask for it to be changed to Primitive Methodist". So it was changed.....

Part of his training was at the Curragh, where yet again his experience illustrated so much that the denominational army committees protested about.

While at the Curragh I paraded on Sundays for Church when we were separated by the Regimental Sergeant Major into various groups... The routine was always the same - "Fall in here all Church of England". Then, "Fall in here all Roman Catholics", then Presbyterians, then Wesleyans, and last of all, "Fall in here all Congregationalists, Baptists, United and Primitive Methodists, Mohammedans, Heathens and Atheists". So each came to his appointed place and for two weeks mine was to the cook-house for fatigues, until we complained to the chaplain at the Curragh

who was acting for all us "fancy religions" as the RSM called us.³⁸

Thereafter the "fancy religions" were sent to the camp gymnasium where the YMCA organiser normally took a service. On one occasion Gray was allowed to take the service when the organiser did not turn up. By January 1916, Gray was back in London to be trained as a lorry and bus driver by the London General Bus Company, and was subsequently posted to Dover. His unit's task was to transport the troops deputed to defend Dover from invasion. At no time did Gray's experience in the Royal Flying Corps have anything to do with flying.

He was subsequently moved to Maidstone where, in the summer of 1916, he boxed, played soccer and edited a magazine for the unit with a young Wesleyan solicitor. Hilda and the baby took lodgings near by. This was a plainly idyllic period of the War for Gray and his young wife, the last occasion they were to be together for any length of time until 1919. It was here that Gray was offered the chance of becoming a chaplain.

Since I had enlisted neither I nor Hilda had ever received a single line from the Primitive Methodist Church, their only recognition that I had joined the forces being to stop the payment of the small children's allowance.... All the more surprising therefore when in mid-November I received a short cryptic note from the Revd Joseph E. Gilbert, Chaplain to the Forces, Aldershot and member of the

38. I had a similar experience at the former Bowerham Barracks, Lancaster, in October 1947, except that the fatigue was to wash the NAAFI floor. Plus ca change...

United Board. Gilbert was junior to me at Hartley but as soon as the War broke out he had been appointed a chaplain.... Gilbert wrote to tell me there was to be an increase in the number of United Board chaplains... He proposed to nominate me if I was willing to accept and go overseas at once after appointment... After a couple of days to get used to the idea I wrote thanking Gilbert and saying I would gladly accept the nomination. Early in December (1916) the United Board met and a number of ministers who had been serving in the ranks were recommended for appointment as chaplains, 4th Class, with the acting rank of Captain... About a week before Christmas I had an official letter from the War Office to say that H.M. the King has been pleased to approve my commission as Chaplain to the Forces.... and that I must be prepared to go overseas early in the New Year.

As well as an undercurrent of criticism of the Primitive Methodist Church as a body with little pastoral care for its ministers - the undercurrent was to become a flood when Gray, on demobilisation, was left without a charge and so without income - Gray is plainly upset at receiving no training whatsoever as a chaplain. His only preparation for his new work was to draw an allowance and kit himself out in his "new chaplain's uniform with three stars and badges, plus Sam Brown belt". He crossed "the ditch" from Folkestone in the company of "several other brand new chaplains looking, like me, somewhat lost".

Among the others were several Prims, Swinnerton who had been serving as a Sergeant in the Lancashire Fusiliers, Bunny Woodward of my college year who came from the RAMC and had already served some time in France, George Kendall who was now appointed for a second spell as chaplain, a United Methodist named Checklin and a Congregationalist... We found ourselves all in the same dilemma, we had all been appointed straight from the ranks, and without any other instructions....

From Boulogne each chaplain was posted, "though still without any suggestion of instruction as to duties and behaviour in the operations area". Kendall and Gray were sent to Poperinghe in the Ypres Salient, staying two days in the Officers' Club there "as nobody wanted us". They were then sent to the 38th Division, "Lloyd George's Own", Gray being posted to the 11th South Wales Borderers. He immediately received his first instruction. Meeting a lad who had been in his Sunday School at Blackwood and was now a "runner", he was taken to his first dug-out in the Salient where the Battalion was in the line.

I still hadn't a ghost of an idea how a padre was expected to behave but I hoped I enough gumption not to make a fool of myself. I was soon in trouble as the Colonel wanted to know how I had come into the front line without a steel helmet or gas respirator.... I was sent back to the transport lines to be fitted out... and was told to stay there until the battalion came back to its rest camp.

A few days later he was called to his first Divisional Chaplains' meeting in the original Toc H Club at Poperinghe.

I expected to receive some instruction from Major Morgan but all that was done was to map out the services for the following Sunday... the business being conducted in Welsh,... When the meeting ended I hadn't a glimmer of what had transpired. From the SCF (Senior Chaplain to the Forces) I received a type-written pass giving me complete freedom to go anywhere and see any men I wished in my Brigade.

After the Anglican chaplain with whom he shared a canvass hut was killed "by a whizzbang", Gray moved up into the vacant dug-out in the line and lived with the battalion for a time. The dug-out had

plenty of good top protection and a bed made out of a wooden frame and wire netting. Being on the bank of the canal it was always dripping with water... but I took no harm... I found the doctor a great help though he pulled my leg a good deal. His First Aid Post was always open to me and I was able to help men as they passed through... Only now and then would Jerry suddenly break out into a Straffe.

In this fairly quiet period, normal Sunday services were conducted among the scattered troops in and behind the transport lines. Gray's practice was to work as a team with Kendall, the latter usually preaching, perhaps because of the language problem, and Gray leading the singing or playing whatever instrument was to hand. But Gray was never "very comfortable with the Welsh Division, being the only Padre that did not speak Welsh".

One can see how, in terms of army administration, it would seem all too sensible to post the minister of a Welsh mining chapel to the Welsh Division. Happily, however, early in 1917 Gray was moved to the 41st Division and was attached to the 10th Royal West Kent Regiment. He stayed with them a year. At first they were near St. Omer, in their rest camp, for a period of training, in "comfortable billets in quiet country-side".

I received a most friendly welcome from both officers and men. When I reported to Colonel Wood he told me I was part and parcel of the Regiment and... would receive all the help I needed.

But then they marched to the Salient where, it was clear, a major offensive was being planned. Gray had a billet in a village street with

good access to the whole Brigade. For the offensive (the Battle of the Ridge), Gray took up a position in the Regimental Aid Post to "catch the wounded as they were brought out". A fortnight before Gray had bought two sandbags full of cigarettes with a donation from the Primitive Methodist Psalmody Association of Liverpool

and like Woodbine Willie I toured the lines distributing them to the men who had dug themselves in.

The push was a success, thanks to the technique of mining underneath the German lines and fortifications, laying charges and blowing them up. British casualties were light and when the new line was secured the 41st Division were withdrawn to the haven of St. Omer for more training and what proved an altogether more testing offensive.

Gray mentions no other chaplains in this period but gives pen portraits of two men with whom he spent much of his spare time. One, Captain Dillon, came of a Kent cricketing family, was a criminal barrister in civilian life, and a church organist. He played every piano he could find to entertain his men and was exceedingly popular on this account.

In spite of the fact that he was an Anglo-Catholic he always came to Holy Communion when I conducted it before any great event. He would kneel on the floor of a tent or in a battered billet among the men of his regiment.... His sincere and manly piety made him a kind of mascot even among men who had no use for organised religion.

There, surely, is a hint of what every chaplain hoped to be. The other, Andrews, was RSM of the Royal West Kents, a former school master and not

religious. His passion was Browning. Gray's was R. L. Stevenson. They would quote passages at each other, in Andrews' case from memory. To Andrews' Greek and Latin quotations, Gray offered the Book of Job, "which took him by surprise as he had never read Job, being a Bible book".

Gray had a short leave at home with his wife and growing son (who were living with relatives in Bedfordshire). On his return, the Division moved back to the Front Line for the August 1917 offensive which (Gray writes) hopefully - and in tune with current expectations - would "carry us right through to Berlin". He notices several changes in the tremendous build-up

There were still a large number of mule and horse wagons, but most of the heavy stuff was now being carried in lorries. It was also noticeable that thousands of coloured troops were appearing everywhere, making roads, loading and unloading stores... Railways were being laid in all directions and big naval guns were to be found Tanks....

He is in his padre's billet in the village street, with two other chaplains and ten "stragglers", at this time when the house is destroyed by German shells and the party have to dig themselves out of their reinforced shelter. On the last Sunday of July before the offensive it began to rain. At Gray's service for the 123rd Brigade in a corrugated hut, his words were drummed out by the rain. He let "the lads keep on singing to a tinny piano until we had exhausted the hymn book".

Gray had been ordered to stay behind to work in the Casualty Clearing Station.

I tried to get Walters, the SCF, to change his mind and let me go with the Brigade but he could not change his dispositions... I moved over to the CCS during Monday and reported for duty but was determined to march with the West Kents through the night.... It was fine when the first platoon led the way to the track, the others following at stated intervals. The whole Division was moving and we dropped into a synchronised plan which was timed to the minute... I was going to march with each company until I had to turn back... Through the night I must have had a few words with every man... I walked a bit with RSM Andrews and as usual exchanged our latest jokes and quoted our favourite bits of Browning and Stevenson, and then he went on. The last bit of the overland track I spent with Dillon until we reached the assembly area and guides took the companies over, and then with a "cheerio Dill" and "cheerio Padre", for we didn't shake hands on these occasions, I left him at the head of his platoon. I never saw either of them again for both were killed on the first day of Paschaendale, July 31st 1917.

Gray then returned to his duties at the Casualty Clearing Station "feeling unutterably miserable". For the first two days and nights the Station was crowded with desperately wounded men, on whom the surgeons worked, and the less wounded were patched up and sent to the railhead bound for base hospitals.

Chaplains, RAMC orderlies and YMCA workers saw that everybody had hot food and drink as they passed through.

There was a forward operating theatre where on the third day Gray accompanied the Colonel in the hope of finding 123rd Brigade. But

instead he found the Regimental Aid Post of 122nd Brigade managed by Sayer Ellis, a Wesleyan chaplain. He was

running what he called the Blighty Express, a narrow gauge track on which stretchers were being run back to a loading station for ambulances and Ellis and his batman were supplying hot cocoa while they stopped to be checked.

Later, Gray himself went forward to work in advanced dressing stations on several occasions as the 41st Division was withdrawn, reinforced, and put back into the Battle during August and September. This occurred four times. When the Division was finally withdrawn Gray rejoined them.

I can never forget the sight when I found them in a large field drawn up in straggling lines for checking. Of 123rd Brigade there were only enough men for a battalion, and the 10th Royal West Kents were reduced to a company.

Described perhaps easily in retrospect, Paschaendale was when Gray's apprenticeship as a chaplain ended. He no longer complains at his lack of instruction. He had found a service, through helping the severely hurt, and did not fret that what he could do seemed so little. He also suffered deeply the personal loss of comrades. Faced with letters from Mrs Andrews and Dillon's friends

I tried to find something to say which would bring a gleam of comfort... but just then my own faith was reeling at the sheer horror of Paschaendale.³⁹

39. The Primitive Methodist Army Committee minutes record that Gray sought to relinquish his chaplaincy at this point, as was his entitlement after a year. But, faced with returning to the Royal Flying Corps, he stayed on. (Methodist Forces Board papers).

His spirits were restored when the Division was moved to the coast near Dunkirk to be refitted and retrained. It was back to nearly normal chaplaincy duties.

I held my services on Sundays out on the dunes
with the men sitting at ease and in comfort...

Then, after another brief home leave it was back to France for a final and unexpected chapter in the War.

The 41 st Division entrained near Dunkirk for an unknown destination which turned out to be the Italian Front on the Piave River. Gray acted as cook for his officers' compartment of four. But the journey ended in a march to the Front of 120 miles in six days, when the Division was desrained in Northern Italy. This proved too much for Gray. He became increasingly ill with what was eventually diagnosed as Trench Fever and had to return to hospital in Genoa. He was ill for three months. Upon recovery he was appointed chaplain to the No. 11 General Hospital, where he had been a patient and which was overflowing with casualties and sick soldiers from the Italian Front. This ended Gray's association with the 41st Division who were pulled back to France in March 1918.

Gray seems to have enjoyed his new style of chaplaincy work "determining from the very first to make no distinctions in my visits to the wards". He worked also among West Indians employed as a military labour force in the docks and records the consternation in the hospital when one of these coloured soldiers was admitted with pneumonia. It was decided that under no circumstances should a white woman nurse him.

One of our staff nurses... Miss Rhoda Whyte, the daughter of the famous Scottish preacher, Dr Alexander Whyte, used to play the organ for my services. She volunteered to nurse the patient, not because she was a nurse, but because she was a Christian.

It is only at this point that Gray mentions two chaplains' duties which one had thought commonplace, burials and censoring letters.

Gray's next posting was to the Army Schools at Padua, where officers were trained or retrained in various military skills. Here, apart from conventional chaplaincy duties, Gray ran a hostel for 20 or so young officers undergoing courses in mountain transport. Essentially Gray was catering manager. Whereas, early in the War, beer was an occasion for homily, now he records bringing casks of the stuff from Padua for his "guests".

Late in September 1918, he was sent to less congenial work at a large Casualty Clearing Station near Venice. The final assault on the Austrian positions was about to be mounted but already the Station was full of British and Austrian casualties. The Commanding Officer asked Gray to take charge of the organisation of the Austrian casualties, which he seems to have done on the lines he had learnt in France - separating the dying into a "moribund tent" for comfort rather than treatment, and organising first aid for the rest. He used Austrian prisoners as much as possible for language reasons. He laments the lack of a Roman Catholic chaplain, but whether he buried the dead, whatever their faith, he does not say. This part of the War ended in October but Gray's account of the number of casualties and the work of the surgeons,

shows that it was no token ending. The CO ordered Gray to bed at the end of the emergency with hot milk and rum and the Methodist padre slept for twenty-four hours.

Still Gray's war was not over. His final posting was to Taranto where some 10,000 West Indians were being concentrated for repatriation. They were under canvass and had served in Europe and the Middle East, partly as combat troops and partly as a labour corps. Taranto had been a transit base for the Middle East and troop movements still made the port a busy place. But many of the men had been away for three years or more and the chaplains' work, as the Brigadier explained to Gray and his two Baptist colleagues, was to keep the men occupied and quiet until shipping arrived to take them home. The Baptist chaplains were actually from the West Indies and took responsibility for Church parades, concerts and feeding arrangements. Gray was put in charge of sports. He organised first an inter-regimental cricket series and then a similar football competition. As pitches and playing fields had to be created this was a major and fortunately lengthy process.

Still the shipping did not arrive. Tension arose as the red light attractions of the town began to exceed the diversions organised by the chaplains. When rations were cut, unrest erupted in one battalion and spread to others. Shots were fired and Mills' bombs thrown. It was not known whether the guards would remain loyal. An English battalion, the Royal Warwickshires, arrived at speed from the North of Italy and disarmed the West Indians in the nick of time. Following an enquiry there were court martials and a sergeant was sentenced to death.

He happened to be Baptist and the Senior Chaplain was to appoint, as is normal, a chaplain to spend the night with the sentenced man. I was scared lest I should be selected, for I did not feel equal to such a terrible task, though I should have gone through with it.

The lot fell on one of the chaplains from the West Indies.

To Gray fell the more agreeable task of organising a massive athletics competition, now involving the Warwickshires. Successful though it was, his own account of his chaplains' service ends, as is appropriate, not with the triumphs of the athletics field but with good humoured rivalry on Church Parade. His own parade service for the 3rd Battalion, the West India Regiment, was held at the YMCA with eight hundred men in attendance. The other Nonconformist chaplains had similar numbers in their Battalions. The Church of England paraded in the open air and attracted most white officers and men. But the Anglicans alone had the drums and fife.

Nonconformists never had a drum beat until I put in a request to the CO, pointing out that more than half the Battalion were Nonconformists and asking that we should also be led by a Band. He agreed, and so every Sunday after that we marched smartly to Church with drums beating. Other Battalions soon followed suit; we were as fully "Established" as the C. of E.

Gray was demobilised in February 1919. He handed over to the Senior Chaplain and quietly said goodbye to the officers and men. The Colonel was appreciative of his work and genuinely regretted his going.

The brigadier sent for me before I left to say a few kind words and on leaving him I gave him my

most impressive RFC salute.

Gray's memoirs hold up a mirror in real life to the issues which occupied the committees. The pressure on young ministers to volunteer for combatant service was perhaps the most convincing rejoinder to the pre-war anti-militarism of their seniors; the genuine difficulty of new recruits to attest their religion if not "C. of E." or "R.C."; and once attested, to practise it. Gray exemplifies the effect of the 1916 settlement on chaplaincy numbers; Gray became a chaplain because of the Interdenominational Committee's establishment and its settlement of Nonconformist grievances over chaplaincy numbers. Finally, Gray shows us the reality of the United Board as a virtual denomination which gave him authority and determined his fluctuating parish.

Gray went complaining at being uninstructed, and found out for himself how to serve. He came to France at a good time, in that after the Somme chaplains were allowed in the front line. Then, awkward with the men, without the Welsh language and flung suddenly into unexpected terrain, he plainly reveals (and feels) the supposed uselessness of his calling. Though never nearer the Front than advanced casualty stations, it is his time with the Royal West Kents, in the Battle of the Ridge and then at Paschaendale, that one sees him develop the marks of a good Great War chaplain. He gets to know each man over a period, he trains with them, ministers to them, he marches forward with them, he serves them when they become casualties and pathetically he searches for the remnant as the battle rages and finally ends. It is on this occasion that the war tests his faith.

Interestingly he says little of the formal services he conducts, and then usually in terms which suggest that they were far from the evangelical experience beloved of those at home. Hymns and singing were the staple to keep "the lads" occupied. Only once does he mention taking a service of Holy Communion, and then it is to describe the reverence of an Anglo-Catholic. One can perhaps read into this the barrenness of the Nonconformist service, even as a diversion from the trench life of the transport lines, with its lack of ritual and its dependence on individual performance. But there are times when this is plainly not so - the hospital services in Genoa, the YMCA services in Taranto, the beach services near St. Omer. The use of hymn singing to raise morale before battle is also evident.

The memoirs show how variedly useful a chaplain could be. Gray, if asked, would probably have pointed to his work among the Royal West Kent wounded as the kernel of his service. But we find him at different times playing instruments, editing a unit magazine, organising elaborate sporting competitions, serving as a hospital chaplain, cooking, running a hostel for officers, and creating out of chaos an orderly casualty clearance station for wounded Austrian prisoners.

It is only at Taranto, when the War as it happens is over, that Church rivalry figures in the memoirs. The fight over the fifes and drums is worthy of Rule in Aldershot sixty years before, except that it is accompanied by humour. But the sense of being part of the Establishment, which he also finds at Taranto, is the spirit of 1920.

CHAPTER 10

POST-WAR UNIFICATION

*If we alone stand out we run a grave risk of losing
the influence and position which we have won for
ourselves in.... the Army*

O. S. Watkins

*The Unification Scheme is an example to the
Churches generally as to the possibilities of Union*

Sir Herbert Creedy
Permanent Secretary
The War Office

CHAPTER 10

It is a reminder of the times that the Free Churches were not invited to take part in the National Thanksgiving Service in Westminster Abbey at the end of the War. They held their own service, in the Albert Hall on 16 November 1918, attended by the King and Queen. It was said to be the first occasion on which a reigning sovereign had been present at a Nonconformist service.¹

John Clifford was there and commented:

It was a great and most impressive gathering. It is the beginning of a new day in the relations of the State to "Dissent". It is the lifting to a slight extent of the social stigma.....²

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1. A. Hastings, A History of English Christianity 1920-1935 (London 1986) p 100. (George V, as Duke of Clarence, visited a Wesleyan class-meeting with O. S. Watkins in Malta on one occasion. Watkins' obituary, Methodist Recorder, January 1957).
 2. Sir J. Marchant, Dr John Clifford CH, (London 1924) p235.

The particular part played by Free Church chaplains in lifting the stigma will already be evident, though if the patriotism of Nonconformity were now an established fact it was the great company of officers and men from their churches and chapels, not least the fallen (as Wesleyans had always called them) who had established it in the public consciousness. If anything remained for the moment of pre-War anti-militarism it was not to be found in the leadership or general membership of the Free Churches but - certain well known individuals apart - among the 16500 who had registered as conscientious objectors. These amounted to about one third of one per cent of those who volunteered or were conscripted, and they represented a wide cross-section of political, secular and religious beliefs, though with particular strength among the smaller less known sects.³ It was not that pacifism or the pacific spirit had been laid to rest but it had been put to one side while the patriotic duty was done. The Primitive Methodists exemplified this resolve in the last months of the War:

While this Conference remains convinced that our cause is a righteous one, and must in the end prevail, it is nevertheless convinced that our great sacrifices ought to lead us to seek some other and more Christian way of settling international differences than by the arbitration of the sword.⁴

If one lingers over what was for the Free Churches the high point of identification with the spirit of the nation it is because it was the

3. See M. Ceadel, Pacifism in Britain 1914-1945 (Oxford 1980) pp 39 to 46; D. L. Edwards, Christian England (London 1984) vol III, p 359.

4. Resolution, Primitive Methodist Conference (July) 1918, quoted in the Primitive Methodist Army Committee Minutes (Methodist Forces Board papers).

last occasion when this would be remarkable. The distinctiveness of the Free Churches had started to become blurred. Never again would religious differences be an issue in the national response to crisis. Free Churchmen would henceforth have at least a walk-on part in national religious celebrations.

There was still no sense of conformity in religious matters. Church reunion paid few dividends between the Wars, outside Methodism. The marks of religious difference in ordinary life, in social behaviour and political outlook, however, became steadily less. The most dramatic example perhaps was the meek acceptance of conscription in 1939 compared with the outrage felt and uttered in 1916.

The Great War did not alone cause or even originate this increased social convergence across the religious divide, but the heavy infusion of Nonconformists to the army then made a sizeable contribution. They were not an enlisting class and the sons of prosperous Nonconformists did not usually seek a commission. In the War, as volunteers or conscripts, this social insulation ended.⁵ At a different level, parents and families, whether church or chapel, had a common experience of suffering when the enormous casualty lists were published, especially in 1916 and 1917 when the toll of locally recruited men hit whole communities.

Any lessening of the voluntary spirit or any growth of conformity

5. See, for example, Binfield, Et Virtutem et Musas: Mill High School and the Great War, essay in The Church and War (Oxford 1983), p 351.

with rules made or standards set by others, contributed to this blurring of distinctiveness. In 1903, when the Wesleyans refused commissioned chaplaincies they chose to function according to their own rules and to maintain a distinctive tradition. What would they now decide, at the War's end? If they and the United Board agreed to join the Chaplains' Department on the same terms as others, would it be a re-unified service embracing all churches in a uniform organisation? What strength of representation would the Free Churches receive in the post-War establishment? These were the issues which faced the Free Churches immediately after the War. The answers returned in each case were a spur to conformity, even though the chaplaincy service continued to be built on separate religious denominations and the spiritedness with which each issue was addressed owed much to the world before the War.

Commissions for Wesleyans

The Wesleyan Conference of 1918 established a special committee on Wesleyan Chaplains' Commissions after the War. Bateson was the convenor. O. S. Watkins, a member, writing to Bateson from Headquarters Third Army on 7 June 1918 before his move to Italy, sent his regrets at being unable to get leave to attend the committee and made his own position clear in a comprehensive memorandum and in a covering letter:

I can only say that after nearly twenty-two years' service I hold none strongly than ever that our Church made a very great mistake when, years ago, it declined to permit our chaplains to take permanent rank. I fought the decision at the time, and at the beginning of the War again and again I was met by difficulties which would never have existed if our men had been in line with the chaplains of other Churches.

The Church's chief objection, he said, appeared to be that of discipline, but the War Office had always respected the decisions of ecclesiastical courts. He added:

The only other Church whose strength of discipline could compare with ours is the Roman Catholic. They at one time decided not to take the permanent commission, and adopted a system somewhat similar to ours. After giving that system 10 or 15 years' trial, they are now abandoning it, and are taking the permanent commission. The United Board, I understand, have decided to ask for Commissions at the end of the War. If we alone stand out and refuse it, we run a grave risk of losing the influence and position which we have won for ourselves in nearly sixty years of service to the Army.⁶

The ensuing debate in the committee was, however, vigorous. There were objections to commissions on grounds of ecclesiastical discipline, the effect on the spiritual life of the ministers, the impediment of rank in dealing with the men and the effect on the brotherhood of the ministry of chaplains' superior pay. Nevertheless, with one dissentient voice⁷ in a joint meeting with the Committee of Privileges, it was agreed on 15 January 1919 that "commissions for Wesleyan chaplains be accepted". The minutes continue:

The principal reason for this decision was the fact

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6. Methodist Forces Board papers. Watkins' reference to Roman Catholics is to Cardinal Bourne's decision after the Boer War to accept no more permanent chaplaincies. Bourne had begun to doubt the propriety of priests ranking as officers. The experiment, which had little practical effect because of low turnover and because of the temporary commissions granted during the Great War, was dropped at the end of the War. Bourne told Watkins he was now firmly convinced that the army chaplain had to be commissioned. (See Watkins' "Notes Re Permanent Commissions", a manuscript memorandum with the Methodist Forces Board papers).
 7. Revd. James Lewis, according to a letter of 20 January 1919 from Bateson to E. P. Lowry, Methodist Forces Board papers.

that Commissions will, after the War, be held by the Ministers of all other Churches working in the Army. The Wesleyan Church, at great cost, and with great devotion, has built up its work in the Services, and acquired great influence. The status of the Wesleyan Church cannot be maintained nor the interests of Wesleyan sailors and soldiers be adequately secured and safeguarded, if, while all other Churches have their regularly commissioned chaplains, the Wesleyan Church is not an integral part of the Chaplaincy Department.⁸

The decision however was one of principle. Detail, including the relation of such chaplains to the Conference, "and kindred questions", were remitted to a sub-committee. The first question for the sub-committee was dress.

Before the Great War, the Wesleyan Acting Chaplains had worn ordinary ministerial dress. On active service, Wesleyan chaplains had worn various styles of dress, including khaki in the Boer War and officers' khaki uniforms with badges of rank in the Great War. The correspondence indicates a firm preference among members of the committee for civilian dress, but when Bateson raised the point in the Interdenominational Committee, and privately with the War Office, he was told that officers' uniforms would have to be worn by commissioned chaplains.⁹

There was then the question of which chaplains should be nominated immediately for permanent commissions. This arose now because the War

8. Minutes in Methodist Forces Board papers.

9. The main proponents in the Sub-Committee of civilian dress were Williamson Lamplough and J. A. Sharp, the Book Steward, very much the Wesleyan old guard.

Office intimated its readiness to renew its pre-war offer to the Wesleyans of 5 commissioned chaplaincies. From 20 names selected at a meeting on 11 November 1919 five were put forward when the formal offer was received on 6 February 1920 from the Permanent Under-Secretary, Sir H. J. Creedy.¹⁰

The relationship of Wesleyan chaplains to the Conference had still to be resolved. In the context of the unification debate in the Interdenominational Committee (see later) a Statement on the Relation of Chaplains to the War Office and their Churches had been drawn up for use by all churches and Bateson had played a prominent part in drafting it. He secured the Wesleyan sub-committee's agreement to this document on 8 March. The way ahead seemed to be clear.

The War Office, keen to help Bateson achieve the goal of commissioned rank for Wesleyan chaplains, (and perhaps sensing that he had not quite satisfied his Church) then suggested that all difficulties might be removed by the Church itself drawing up an agreement to be signed by each chaplain nominated to the Chaplains' Department. This suggestion was accepted. It would be quite mistaken to call this church agreement a Licence in the sense of the Roman Catholic faculties for chaplain-priests. It was simply a signed agreement by the chaplain that the Wesleyan Church could be told of any disciplinary offences he committed, including those relating to his moral or religious character,

10. The five were: D. S. Watkins CMG CBE, H. Peverley Dodd, W. H. Sarchet MC OBE, Alfred Sackett OBE, P. M. Brumwell MC. However, Sarchet and Sackett were adjudged too old by the War Office and the Sub-Committee replaced them with H. V. Griffiths and S. H. Keen.

and it has to be read in any case with the general understanding reached between the War Office and the Wesleyans on discipline. But, taken with this general understanding, like the Licence, the agreement indicated to the chaplain before appointment that his right to serve as a chaplain could be ended if he did not remain a dutiful minister.

The general understanding on discipline was derived from the document drawn up by the Interdenominational Committee and already accepted in principle by the Wesleyans. Nevertheless, when he had the final version from the War Office on 5 May 1920, Bateson sought the written agreement of the President of the Conference, Dr W. T. A. Barter, of every member of the Selection Committee (as the sub-committee was now called) and of every member of the Committee of Privileges. He was taking no chances. All accepted. The document, which achieved what had eluded the parties in 1903, read:

1. The Army Authorities are responsible for dealing with Chaplains in their capacity of officers in the Army, and the Church Authorities for dealing with them in their capacity of ministers of the Church.

In the event of a chaplain being charged with an offence against military discipline or regulations, his case will be dealt with by the military authorities in precisely the same way as they would deal with the case of any other officer of the Army against whom a similar charge is preferred.

Conversely, in the event of a chaplain being charged with an offence against the discipline or regulations of his Church, the case will be dealt with by the Church authorities.

2. Should the Army Authorities decide that it is necessary for any reason to terminate the services of a chaplain, their decision will be accepted by the authorities of the Church concerned. It will be for the latter to determine to what extent the circumstances should be regarded as affecting the standing of the individual

concerned as a minister of his Church, and the War Office would be prepared to furnish confidentially information as to these circumstances on definite application being made by the accredited representative of the Church concerned.

3. In the event of the authorities of the Church finding it necessary to inflict any penalty upon the chaplain in respect of an offence against Church discipline or regulations, the Army Council will be at liberty to consider the effect of such penalty upon the individual's position as an officer of the Royal Army Chaplains' Department. Should the effect, in the opinion of the Army Council, be such as to preclude his carrying out the duties of his position as a Chaplain to the Forces he will be required to relinquish his commission, and should he fail to do so the military authorities would be obliged to terminate it on the ground that he is no longer competent to perform the duties which the holding of it entails.¹¹

In retrospect it would have been inconceivable for the Wesleyans to have balked a second time at accepting commissioned chaplaincies. The War Office had already decided not to revive the appointment of civilian Acting Chaplains but employ instead chaplains with temporary commissions (TCF) as the full-time grade below permanently commissioned Chaplains to the Forces (CF). While the Wesleyans might have agreed to TCFs, as they had in the War, under the new regulations their total service would be limited to 7 years, as it was expected that good TCFs would be promoted after a minimum of 3 years to CF.¹² There would have been no scope for civilian chaplains, other than as officiating clergy (soon to be re-named "officiating chaplains"). Full-time chaplaincy services for Nonconformists in the regular army, and perhaps in the Territorials, would presumably have passed to the United Board. What was at stake was

11. Methodist Forces Board papers.

12. Army Order 95/1920.

the sixty years' tradition of Wesleyan service to the army.

There was also a financial argument. The net cost of army work to the Wesleyans in 1913-14 was £3114. It averaged £3500 a year during the War. By 1921-22 it had reached £4636.¹³ Pay for commissioned officers, temporary and commissioned (Watkins calculated in his memorandum) would come to not less than £3000 (though he was evidently assuming more chaplains than were in fact appointed).

Nevertheless J. A. Sharp, the Book Steward, was one who thought paragraph 3 of the understanding with the War Office fell short of giving the Church adequate control over chaplains. When, in consequence, Bateson sought a clarification of the War Office that they would "interpose no difficulty if... the Church Authorities consider any Minister unfitted to minister to the troops" he was asked if this was a reservation and he hastily withdrew.¹⁴

Although one of the Wesleyan glories (as they saw it) had been the voluntary nature of their service to the army, they now recognised that the choice lay between conforming to the rules of military discipline with adequate but not totally certain control over errant ministers, or once more standing to one side. They conformed. The Hull Conference in July 1920 expressed "great satisfaction" with the agreement on commissions.

13. W 10/22.

14. Sharp to Bateson, 10 May; Bateson's reply, 12 May; Bateson to War Office, 29 May; Birkhead, War Office, to Bateson, 14 June, 1920: all in Methodist Forces Board papers.

Unification of the Chaplaincy Department

Unification was debated in the Interdenominational Advisory Committee between September 1919 and March 1920.¹⁵ The initiative came from the War Office and the framework of the debate was a series of memoranda put in by the Permanent Under-Secretary of the War Office, amended to reflect successive discussions in the Committee. The first memorandum, from Sir Reginald Brade, was circulated on 5 September 1919¹⁶ and discussed in the Committee on 11 September.

Brade's memorandum was discursive, arguing the case for unification rather than putting forward proposals for achieving it.

The experience of the War has taught us that the chaplains must be organised more definitely than before on the lines adopted in the other branches and departments of the Military Forces. Before the War the Chaplaincy Services were carried on by a number of Ministers of certain denominations who were scattered, according to needs, over the Military Garrisons of the United Kingdom and abroad.... the chaplains had little or no organisation.... the Army knew its chaplains as individuals administering to its spiritual wants, rather than as members of a definite part of the military machine.... This we have changed during the War and in some form or other we should maintain the organisation we have developed.....

What the War had introduced was the "commands" - the Assistant Chaplain Generals, the Assistant Principal Chaplains - who organised chaplains in their commands, in the latter case irrespective of the

15. Except where stated, references in this section are to the minutes of meetings of the Interdenominational Advisory Committee on the date stated.

16. Copy in Methodist Forces Board papers.

chaplain's religion. Rank existed before the War, but not organisation of this kind outside big garrisons, where in practice it was confined to chaplains of the same religion. Brade continued:

Another departure has been the bifurcation of the Department with the creation of separate staffs in the larger theatres for (a) Church of England Services and (b) other Services. Numbers alone would perhaps have necessitated or at least made advisable some division of this kind. It is a question of whether the more modest establishment required for peace purposes would not make this mere duplication and therefore extravagant....

On the future administration of the Chaplains' Department by the War Office,

We have at present a rather hybrid organisation. In addition to the two Advisory Committees we have a Chaplain General administering the Church of England Chaplaincy Services.... and a civilian branch of the Office administering the others.... here we have, and have had for many years, the bifurcation which, outside the Office, appears never to have been necessary until the late War.

The Interdenominational Advisory Committee fell on this analysis with some zest. The Chaplain General was ready with a scheme in line with it. He proposed

- (i) the Chaplain General, to be administrative head of the Department for all denominations;
- (ii) A Deputy Chaplain General, who would belong to a Church other than that of the Chaplain General
- (iii) A Staff Chaplain belonging to the Church of England.

All these posts would be at the War Office. At each of the Headquarters of the eight Commands in the United Kingdom, he proposed the appointment of an Assistant Chaplain General, five of these appointments going to the Church of England and three to chaplains of denominations other than the Church of England and the denomination to which the Deputy Chaplain General belonged. His final proposal was to amalgamate the two Advisory Committees, that is the Interdenominational Committee and the Church of England Committee.

Bishop Keatinge immediately said that he would be unable to enter into any arrangement of this kind which involved Roman Catholic chaplains coming under the jurisdiction of a Chaplain General belonging to another Church. Bateson, speaking on behalf of the Protestant non-Anglican members, said that, if the Roman Catholics did not enter the scheme, the Presbyterians, Wesleyans and United Board should, between them, have both the Deputy Chaplain General post and three Assistant Chaplain General posts. Moreover, if the Roman Catholics were to be given a Principal Chaplain to head their part of the service the three Protestant non-Anglican denominations would claim similar appointments. He did not object to a single Advisory Committee, provided it performed similar functions to those of the present Interdenominational Advisory Committee. Bateson also asked that the ratio between the number of Church of England chaplains and the aggregate of other Churches' chaplains established during the War should be continued.

On 11 November, Shakespeare wrote to Bateson

to beg you to give the proposed scheme of the

Chaplain General, with our modifications, your warm support. I know there are forces at work in the Church of England to prevent our going further with it. We ought to recognise that the Chaplain General has been fair-minded and is really seeking united action. If this does not go through, I am afraid we shall get nothing. I do earnestly hope we shall present now a critical but a sympathetic attitude on Thursday morning.¹⁷

Keatinge was evidently not completely sure that he had succeeded in keeping Roman Catholics to one side of the re-unified Department. He wrote (on 12 November) to Bishop Amigo of Southwark

I could not go to Lourdes as I have to attend important meetings at the War Office over the reorganisation of the Army Chaplains Department. Brade came forward with a scheme to put it all under the Chaplain General! Practically all the denominations have agreed to join up. I have of course refused to have anything to do with the Scheme and insist on being absolutely independent of any other denomination and to work directly with the W.O.
We are meeting again tomorrow. Pray for me.¹⁸

When the Committee met on 13 November to resume discussion of the Chaplain General's Scheme Bateson intervened to say that he considered the scheme "an excellent one"; and Shakespeare gave it "his unqualified support", adding that "he desired at the same time to thank the Chaplain General for the fair-minded and Christian spirit in which he had approached this questions". Keatinge said that provided Roman Catholic chaplains did not come under the administrative control of clergymen of

17. Methodist Forces Board papers.

18. Southwark Diocesan archives.

any other Church he had no strong feelings as to what other machinery should be devised for dealing with them or what title might be granted to him in this connection. (He was not, in other words, reviving a claim to be called "Chaplain General", but as Episcopus Castrensis he would have to be given a specific position in the arrangements).

The only dissentient note was struck by M'Clymont who, speaking (he said) on behalf of all the Presbyterians, said that they would prefer the Chaplains' Department to be administered by the Adjutant General. He wanted the scheme to say that the Assistant Chaplain General in Scotland should always be a Presbyterian and should act on behalf of the Department in Scotland if the Chaplain General and the Deputy Chaplain General were not Presbyterians. M'Clymont also argued that the Staff Chaplain at the War Office should not necessarily be an Anglican.

There were minor points of interest. Both Bateson and Shakespeare took the occasion to ask for some means of ecclesiastical supervision of chaplains within the administrative structure and for Army Council support for churches withdrawing recognition on "moral or ecclesiastical" grounds from chaplains. Mackay disagreed with M'Clymont on moving the Chaplains' Department to the Adjutant General and Elvet Lewis, accommodating as always, said that Welsh nonconformists would fall in with their fellow nonconformists. Otherwise the Presbyterians lined up behind M'Clymont. Shakespeare had a splendidly principled piece of re-wording to offer. He suggested that the relevant clause should read "Whenever the Chaplain General is of the Church of England, the Deputy Chaplain General shall be of some other Church", not because

he felt it practicable for the Chaplain General to be other than Anglican, "but because he objected on principle to any individual otherwise eligible being formally debarred from holding public office by reason of his religious beliefs".

The Chaplain General in reply opposed the transfer of the administration of the Chaplains' Department to the Adjutant General. It already fell under him for purposes of discipline, but he felt strongly that the Department should remain under the Permanent Under-Secretary. He did not regard the Staff Chaplain as a sticking-point. The appointment was necessary because of the present preponderance of Anglican Chaplains, but if this changed the post could be dispensed with. Nor did he regard the 5 : 3 division of Assistant Chaplain General posts as inviolate. He did not think that the denomination of the Assistant Chaplain General in Scotland need be a formal part of the scheme, but was a question for administrative decision.

A memorandum was then prepared by Brade containing proposals based on the Committee's discussions.¹⁹ It was put to the Interdenominational Advisory Committee on 11 December, where the discussion was largely confined to points of detail. However, Bishop Keatinge said that he thought the Roman Catholic proposals in the memorandum were entirely satisfactory. They envisaged administration within the War Office by a lay official, referring to the Permanent Secretary not the Chaplain General, with Bishop Keatinge in a London chaplaincy to represent his Church at the War Office. Brade proposed a formal understanding outside

19. Copy in Methodist Forces Board papers.

the scheme to meet M'Clymont's concern that the Assistant Chaplain General in Scotland should be a Presbyterian and that a Presbyterian should represent the Department on ceremonial occasions. Brade undertook to finalise a draft scheme for the next meeting.

Unhappily, he then fell ill and had to retire just after Christmas. When the Committee met on 22 January 1920, his successor, Sir Herbert Creedy was in the chair. Their first business was to send Brade a letter, signed by all members of the Committee, in appreciation of his work and regretting his enforced retirement. Shakespeare was deputed to arrange to present Brade with "a tangible token of their esteem". The resumed discussion of the unification scheme at the January meeting did not manage to maintain this equable spirit. The reason was almost certainly a letter from Lord Balfour of Burleigh outside the meeting, regretting in somewhat forcible terms the lack of regard shown for the established status of the Church of Scotland.

The Chaplain General, emphasising the importance of reaching agreement and attempting to meet the objections of the Church of Scotland, proposed that the two Established Churches, the Church of England and the Church of Scotland, should always hold the posts of Chaplain General and Deputy Chaplain General respectively, and that the Assistant Chaplain Generals in the Scottish, Irish and Western Commands should be definitely allotted to the Presbyterians, the Wesleyans and the United Board, respectively. The other Assistant Chaplain Generals should go to the Church of England. These compromise proposals were rejected by Shakespeare who opposed the earmarking of particular posts

to particular churches and by Bateson who was predictably scathing at the idea of allotting Ireland to the Wesleyans. Bateson went on to say that his Board

took the view that the refusal of the Church of Scotland and the Roman Catholics to come into the proposed scheme or organisation had the effect of rendering it impracticable, and in these circumstances they regarded themselves as being free to reconsider their own position in the matter.

The Chairman, intervening no doubt to bring an unhappy discussion to an end, proposed that in view of the doubts and difficulties which had been expressed, the scheme (without the Chaplain General's amendments) should be tried in the first instance for a period of 4 years and he undertook, with agreement, to prepare a fresh draft on this basis. There was still a strong undercurrent of support for Brade's scheme, Mackay, Shakespeare and Keatinge intervening to stress the point.

Creedy's final version of the scheme was discussed by the Interdenominational Advisory Committee on 12 February and 11 March 1920. The discussions were mainly of detail and at a second meeting it was recommended for acceptance. The agreed Unification Scheme²⁰ was as follows:

- (1) The Secretary of the War Office will, as heretofore, be responsible to the Secretary of State for War for the general policy governing the administration of all Army Chaplaincy Services as a part of the military organisation.

20. Methodist Forces Board papers, The Future Administration of the Royal Army Chaplains' Department, dated 12 February 1920.

- (2) He will have the advantage of counsel from the Interdenominational Advisory Committee which will probably need to meet less frequently in future.
- (3) The military administration of the Royal Army Chaplains' Department²¹ at the War Office shall, subject to (1), be under the Chaplain General to the Forces assisted by a Deputy Chaplain General and while necessary, by a Staff Chaplain. When the Chaplain General belongs to the Church of England, the Deputy Chaplain shall belong to one of the other Churches.
- (4) At the Headquarters of each of the 8 Commands at home there shall be an Assistant Chaplain General responsible, under the General Officer Commanding, for the application of War Office policy to the particular circumstances of his Command in all matters affecting the military administration of the Department. An Assistant Chaplain General shall not exercise any supervisory authority outside the limits of his Command.
- (5) Appointments to the higher posts will be made by the Secretary of State on the recommendation of the Secretary of the War Office, after consideration of the personal qualifications of all those who are eligible, due regard being had to the desirability of ensuring that all the Churches shall be adequately represented, if they can furnish suitable qualified chaplains, and to the special circumstances of the post. The normal tenure of office will be 4 years, as in the case of other staff appointments.
- (5a) Each Church (or group of Churches) represented in the Royal Army Chaplains' Department shall, as at present, appoint an accredited representative to act as a nexus between it and the War Office in regard to Chaplaincy Services in the Regular and Territorial Armies, to nominate clergymen of the Church (or Churches) concerned for appointment as chaplains or Officiating Clergymen, and to exercise oversight over them in their religious ministrations to the troops.
- (6) It is understood that the Churches which will join in the scheme, if it proves acceptable, may be grouped for purposes of representation under (i) Church of England, (ii) Presbyterian, (iii) Wesleyan, (iv) United Board of the Baptists, Congregational, Primitive Methodist and United Methodist Churches.

21. The Army Chaplains' Department had become Royal by an Army Order dated 22 February 1919.

The Roman Catholic Church feels itself precluded from participation.

- (7) The scheme shall be tried as an experiment for a period of 4 years as from the question of its continuance being raised 6 months before the date of expiration of that period.
- (8) The question of the relations of the Royal Army Chaplains' Department and the new organisation to (1) Territorial Force Chaplains and (2) the Officiating Clergymen should be explored.

Creedy's paper, in the form of a submission to the Secretary of State concluded:

The Secretary of the War Office in submitting the scheme for the Secretary of State's approval would propose that for the first term of four years the higher organisation of the Royal Army Chaplains' Department would be the Chaplain General (Church of England) at the War Office, the Deputy Chaplain General (Presbyterian) at the War Office, 5 Assistant Chaplain Generals (Church of England) for Aldershot, Irish, Northern, Southern and Western Commands, 1 Assistant Chaplain General (Presbyterian) for the Scottish Command, 1 Assistant Chaplain General (United Board) for the Eastern Command and 1 Assistant Chaplain General (Wesleyan) for the London District.²²

The scheme was of first importance for the English Free Churches. In the War they had gained standing from their numbers of both chaplains and men and they had grown used to being part of a military organisation. Had the Church of England and the Church of Scotland gone their own ways, the handful of Wesleyan and United Board chaplains in

22. The scheme was promulgated as Army Order 393/1920, under the title Administration of the Royal Army Chaplains' Department - Unification Scheme.

the much reduced peace-time army would have been side-lined. As it was, they maintained a claim to the post of Deputy Chaplain General and, with two of the eight Assistant Chaplain General posts theirs, secured a place in the senior military establishment of the Chaplains' Department. When the required numbers of other chaplains came to be addressed, they could claim more than their strict entitlement on grounds of requiring a viable complement. Bateson and Shakespeare owed it to the Chaplain General that the debate from the start was how to create a unified Department, not (as some Anglican voices urged) how to retain a divided Department.

The agreement to continue the Interdenominational Committee also helped to maintain the Free Churches' position. Bateson and Shakespeare were by now positive and creative members of a body which the War Office had grown used to heeding. To have gone back to the pre-War deputations and officer-level approaches by denominational secretaries would have been a considerable stock. Finally, the Scheme consolidated the role of the accredited denominational representatives as the normal link between the War Office and the Churches. Bateson himself drafted paragraph 5(a) which replaced one in which a senior serving Chaplain would have had this role.

Small as would be the Free Churches' chaplaincy numbers in peace-time compared with the Church of England, their stake would be proportionately significant operationally and through the Interdenominational Committee their contribution to policy formulation would be unchanged. Unlike the Catholics, who maintained their presence

in the Committee but kept their chaplains outside the unified Department, the Free Churches' aim was to be part of the system. What repelled the Catholics - being administered militarily by other Churches' chaplains and in turn administering them - attracted the Free Churches. Having fought for recognition and then equality of treatment, they positively sought the fruits of uniformity.

It is a nice question whether the Free Churches would have tempered their enthusiasm had the Roman Catholics joined the unified Department. Though disappointing the War Office, the Catholics may have helped the others achieve re-unification by keeping out. They had served under Simms in France, and Free Church chaplains had served under Keatinge in Salonika. This was not acceptable, the Catholics decided, in peacetime. The Wesleyans had reached a similar conclusion in 1918, but that was in relation to a different scheme.²³ They were not put to the test in 1920.

Numbers

Whilst these debates were going on, demobilisation was returning a great many chaplains to civilian life and the War Office was beginning to address the size of the future establishment of the Chaplains' Department. This in turn depended on the future size of the Army. On 24 April 1922 Bateson was asked to join a Committee, chaired by Sir Bertram Cubitt, Assistant Under-Secretary of State at the War Office, to consider "the establishment of regular chaplains required under peace

23. W 1/18.

conditions".²⁴ Shakespeare was not invited to be a member, but in fact attended the first meeting in Bateson's place. They kept in touch. However, Bateson's main concern appears to have been the number of chaplains he could secure for the Wesleyans. He wrote to Watkins on 27 October 1922 - the Committee had moved fast -

I am glad to say that the Committee recommends that we have 7 regular and temporary chaplains. I fought for 8, but fought in vain. However, it did not do our church any injury that I did my best to secure another appointment.²⁵

Although denominational strengths within the establishment were an important outcome of the Cubitt Committee, setting the establishment and dividing it between regular and temporary chaplains was its first concern. The Committee decided to use the pre-War ratio of chaplains to officers and men of 1 to 1000. This ratio had given 154 chaplains on 1 August 1914, made up of 118 regulars and 36 Acting Chaplains. Now (excluding India, the Colonies and native troops) it gave 150. The 118 regulars before the War, however, had been limited to Anglicans, Presbyterians and Roman Catholics. As already recorded, in 1920 as a measure of justice the War Office had renewed its offer of five commissioned chaplaincies to the Wesleyans. They had also offered five to the United Board. Both offers had been accepted, so that there were 128 regulars already on the establishment. The Committee nevertheless

24. The Cubitt Report: Committee on Establishment of Royal Army Chaplains' Department (1923). The other denominational members were W. S. Jaffray (Presbyterian and Deputy Chaplain General), Keatinge, and Taylor Smith (Chaplain General).

25. Methodist Forces Board papers.

recommended dividing the complement of 150 as to 114 permanent and 36 temporary chaplains, requiring a reduction over time in the existing establishment of regulars of 14.

The Committee then recommended a division of the 114 regular chaplains into the four classes of chaplains and a division of the total establishment of 149 (excluding the Chaplain General) into denominations. The result was²⁶

| Denom'n | %age of the Army on 1.10 1920 | C 1st Class | H 2nd Class | A 3rd Class | P 4th Class | L A I Temp | N S Total |
|---------|--|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| C of E | 72.8 | 10 | 14 | 21 | 35 | 25 | 105 |
| Presb | 6.8 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 12 |
| RC | 14.0 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 20 |
| Wes | 3.9 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 7 |
| Un Bd | 2.5 | 1 | - | 1 | 2 | 1 | 5 |

The Cubitt Committee recommended that the establishment should be reviewed in five years' time. That review, by the Widdows Committee²⁷, "to consider what if any modifications of the present establishment are required", proposed a reduced total of 141 (excluding the Chaplain General). The Wesleyans were left at 7, but the United Board, whose proportionate following in the army had risen to 3.6 per cent, went up to 6. The disbandment of the South Irish regiments incidentally took

26. The following table is from paragraph 12 of the succeeding review (The Widdows report of 1928). The published tables in the Cubitt report for some reason do not combine classes and denominations.

27. Chaired by A. E. Widdows C.B., Report of the Committee appointed to review the Establishment of the Royal Army Chaplains' Department (1928). The denominational representatives were M. E. Aubrey (who had succeeded Shakespeare), D. M. Kay (for M'Clymont), Keatinge, Canon J. G. W. Tucky (Church of England), Watkins (because Bateson was ill throughout) and A. C. E. Jarvis (Chaplain General).

the Roman Catholics down to 11.4 per cent and their complement down to 16. The Free Churches together were thus roughly the same strength in the Department as the Presbyterians and only just below the Roman Catholics. However, to the annoyance of the Presbyterians, the Free Churches had two turns at holding the Deputy Chaplain General's post to their one. Jaffray, the first Deputy Chaplain General, had handed over to Watkins in 1925, and Watkins would hand over to Standing (United Board) in 1929. But despite this double turn, if Free Church numbers continued to rise the advantage of one united Free Church chaplaincy board would be compelling.

Wider Chaplaincy Work

While it was important to move into the years following the Great War to show the accommodation of the Free Churches in the post-War chaplaincy establishment and to record the influence of Bateson and Shakespeare in securing the Free Churches' place in the new scheme of things, the 'twenties were also the start of wider chaplaincy work whose achievements should not be burdened with the concerns of the past. This study therefore includes a brief mention of the new developments and then finally pays tribute to certain personalities whose work forms the bridge.

Both the United Board and the Wesleyan Board took "Air Force" into their titles in 1918, though the Royal Air Force was not established until 1919. The chaplaincy establishment for the RAF provided at home for a Principal Chaplain and two "staff chaplains" for each of the Presbyterians, the Wesleyans and the United Board. Each of these bodies

was represented on an Interdenominational advisory committee.²⁸ Abroad, there was a Presbyterian RAF chaplain in Cairo, a Wesleyan in Palestine and a United Board man in Iraq, "each of whom will have pastoral oversight of all non-Anglican Protestant airmen in his area". The risk of these precedents leading to "Nonconformist chaplains" at home was recognised; and successfully resisted by the Wesleyans.²⁹

The Admiralty (as has been noted periodically) followed the army in allowing Wesleyans to give religious oversight to sailors when ashore, and from 1882 they paid for this provision by fixed or capitation arrangements. But they steadfastly refused to have Free Church chaplains afloat. The first advance was the Admiralty's decision in 1918 to grant temporary commissions as Acting Chaplains to the shore-based Free Church officiating chaplains who were full-time. 8 Wesleyans and 1 Baptist qualified. From 1922 Acting Chaplains were re-designated Temporary Chaplains.³⁰

Several deputations went to the Admiralty in 1918 and 1919 seeking the appointment of Free Church chaplains afloat. These were on the initiative of the Presbyterians and United Board who had more men in the Royal Navy than the Wesleyans - 7.1 per cent against 6.1 per cent. Pateson for the Wesleyans however joined the Admiralty's

28. UB 9/19. The Anglicans had the Chaplain-in-Chief, his deputy and 9 staff chaplains; the Roman Catholics a Principal Chaplain and 3 staff chaplains.

29. W 10/22, 12/22.

30. Names of chaplains are in G. Taylor, The Sea Chaplains (London 1978), Appendix VII; W 9/18.

interdenominational committee, known as a standing committee. In 1920 a Wesleyan Acting Chaplain was appointed to the Atlantic Fleet and another to the Mediterranean Fleet. The United Board secured two similar appointments in the same year, one of them Charles Haig, a later Congregational Provincial Moderator.³¹

The Territorial Army was reorganised after the War. The first camps were held in 1922. That year, as a measure of economy, six chaplains only were allowed at each camp, in England, the Anglicans taking four places and the Roman Catholics and the Wesleyans or the United Board one each. The Wesleyans reported "lamentably small" attendances at the camp services. After much negotiation, a firm establishment was settled for future years. 59 Wesleyan, Presbyterian and United Board chaplains were appointed, without regard to denominational rolls, an outcome which the Wesleyans declared to be satisfactory as it meant there would be at least one Wesleyan chaplain for each division.³²

The 'twenties thus saw the Free Churches secure chaplaincy provision in all three services, and in the Territorial Army where their pre-War experiences had been particularly unhappy. They were also involved in advisory committees for all three services. The army however continued to be the churches' main interest because of its size and importance to their claims and because it set the pattern for what happened elsewhere.

31. UB 5/19; W 11/18; 3/20.

32. I 11/27; W 9/22; 12/22.

The Final Roll Call

The post-War Unified Scheme for the Chaplains Department had been reviewed, as Creedy promised, in 1924. J. H. Shakespeare retired that year before the review with ill-health and took no further part in chaplaincy affairs. He died in 1929 without ever regaining his strength. R. J. Wells had died in 1923. Their successors in the United Board from 1915 were M. E. Aubrey and Sidney Berry, the Secretaries respectively of the Baptist and Congregational Unions. Neither had experience of military matters. Though Berry attended the Interdenominational Committee's April meeting in 1924, which agreed that the scheme should continue, it was up to Bateson to guard Free Church interests.

The only challenge to the continuance of the scheme came from the Church of Scotland. M'Clymont saw in the impending retirement of Bishop Taylor Smith an opportunity to enhance the position of the Church of Scotland which had eluded him in 1920 by making his Church's agreement to continue with the Unified Scheme contingent on securing the succession of a Presbyterian Chaplain General. Since the Anglicans would oppose such a proposal, and the Catholics be indifferent, Bateson's support was critical to M'Clymont. It was refused.³³

Knowing that the Wesleyans were positively in favour of the Anglicans retaining the Chaplain General's post, M'Clymont joined the others when the Interdenominational Committee met in supporting the continuance of the Unified Scheme. But behind the scenes he was angry,

33. The formal exchanges between the Wesleyans and the Church of Scotland (6 & 24 March 1924) are in Methodist Forces Board papers.

as Bateson records in a letter of 4 April to Revd A. C. E. Jarvis,
(Anglican) Assistant Chaplain General, Northern Command;

Sir Herbert Creedy took a strong line as to the utility of the Scheme. We were all asked our opinion - and not a dissentient voice was raised. So I hope there is no ground for fear.

I may say, for your ears alone, that in the "preliminary canter" with the representatives of the non-Anglican Protestant Churches, the representative of the Church of Scotland said some very strong things and uttered a variety of threatenings - particularly aimed at my devoted head! But not a word of any sort, hostile to the Unification Scheme, was uttered at the War Office.³⁴

The unanimity of the meeting is borne out by the minutes of the Interdenominational Committee on 3 April. The agreement was such that Creedy, in the chair, ventured to say that the Unification Scheme was "an example to the Churches generally as to the possibilities of Union". M'Clymont however secured an assurance from him that the Chaplaincy General under the Unified Scheme was not tied to the Church of England.³⁵

Bishop Taylor Smith duly retired in 1925. The Free Churches were by this time totally reconciled to him; and reasonably so, since the 1916

34. Methodist Forces Board papers. Jarvis had written to Bateson in confidence on 28 March with a particularly bitter personal attack on W. S. Jaffray, the (Presbyterian) Deputy Chaplain General who was M'Clymont's candidate for Chaplain General. This letter also is in the Methodist Forces Board papers.

35. It should be recorded that the first non-Anglican Chaplain General was appointed in 1988. But at least he was a Church of Scotland man.

settlement of numbers and the Unified Scheme itself in 1920, owed a great deal to him personally. Always an inveterate traveller in evangelism, he died at sea heading home from Australia in 1938. Jarvis, Bateson's correspondent, duly succeeded, serving until 1931 when he became Archdeacon of Sheffield.³⁶ His studies of his predecessors as Chaplain General, much used in earlier chapters, stopped short of Taylor Smith.

Jaffray's successor as Deputy Chaplain General in 1924 was O. S. Watkins, the first Free Churchman to hold the post, and possibly the most distinguished chaplain of his day. (Indeed Jarvis had half-urged Bateson to push him for Chaplain General as a totally convincing non-Anglican candidate). Watkins' case for a place in the Wesleyan chaplains' pantheon, after Rule and Allen (and ahead of Bateson), will be evident from this study. Apart from his bravery in the field, his easy manner with the men, and his adaptability in action, his administrative skills in France and Italy were marked and led to his post-War preferment.³⁷ Like Rule, his ambition had been to be a missionary - his father of the same name served most of his life as such in South Africa

36. According to Sir John Smyth, In this Sign Conquer (London 1968) p 209 Jarvis was originally a Wesleyan minister, crossing over in 1908.

37. The Vatican protested at Watkins' appointment as Principal Chaplain, Italy, in 1918, but the Pope after meeting him is recorded as having said "You have been like a father to my priests. I think it is a beautiful thing that Christians should thus work together. The whole Army must thus be edified thereby". Watkins was also a favourite of King George V who had the Methodist Recorder delivered during the War to read Watkins' despatches. He made Watkins a personal chaplain. - Watkins' obituary, Methodist Recorder, January 1957.

- and (like Rule) he came to chaplaincy work by default, in Watkins' case because of asthma. His four books on Wesleyan army work and his position as adviser to Allen and Bateson before and after the War confirm his stature. On retirement he served Toc H and as Chaplain to the Old Contemptibles. He died in 1957.

Watkins' successor as Deputy Chaplain General in 1929 was George Standing. Emerging from the shadowy reaches of the Primitive Methodists, and starting out as a chaplain only in 1914, he became the United Board's most successful chaplain in the field. As senior United Board Chaplain in France he won both the MC and the DSO and became Assistant Principal Chaplain in Italy in 1918. He was chosen as the Assistant Chaplain General (Eastern Division) under the unified arrangements in 1926. Standing retired in 1932 and died in 1966.

With the Unified Scheme secured and Free Church chaplaincy numbers sufficient in all three services for an influential role, the middle 'twenties were a time when the now yearly meetings of the Interdenominational Committee, and the only just more frequent meetings of the denominational committees found little of moment to discuss. A Parliamentary threat to the compulsory Church Parade in 1925 stirred the embers. Selling off surplus huts and institutes was an occasion for nostalgia. When the Wesleyan institute at The Curragh passed to the Irish Free State without compensation, however, it was an occasion for protest.³⁸

38. I 11/25, W 6/22.

This quiescence was broken by Methodist Reunion, and the preparations for it. While widely welcomed for its own sake, Methodist Reunion meant of course the dismemberment of the United Board, as the Primitive and United Methodists would join with the Wesleyans. As it happened, United Board adherence in the army in the period 1927 to 1931 rose to 4.09 per cent passing the Wesleyans at 3.99 per cent. Together, the Free Churches had now overhauled the Presbyterians (7.54 per cent) and were approaching the Roman Catholics (12.41 per cent).³⁹ Faced with dismemberment, the knowledge that the United Board had worked harmoniously and with evidence of growing support, it is not surprising to find the Board resolving unanimously that "an endeavour should be made to formulate plans for the establishment of a single Chaplaincy Board to include all Free Church denominations". The Methodist parts of the United Board fully supported this approach and formed part of the deputation to the Wesleyan Board, led by Aubrey, on 23 February 1932 to discuss it. The Wesleyans heard them out, but replied negatively on 21 March. The critical part of the reply read:

The Board regrets its inability to recommend the proposal of the United Board [to the Conference] for an officially recognised Free Church Chaplaincy, both in the matter of one chaplaincy list and in the matter of handing over the pastoral care of its members and adherents to ministers of other Churches, when the services of its own ministers are available.⁴⁰

The United Board met for the last time in its old form on 16 September 1932 and, after a celebratory lunch, in its new reduced form

39. Widdows Report, Review of the Royal Army Chaplains' Department 1932 para 14.

40. R. W. Thomson, Ministering to the Forces, pp 20-25.

of Baptists and Congregationalists only. The last meeting of the old Wesleyan Board was on 19 September. The meeting placed on record "their great appreciation of the services of the Revd J. H. Bateson CBE, Secretary since 1909, 23 years".⁴¹ Bateson was appointed Secretary of the new enlarged Board which met for the first time on 10 October. He retired shortly before he died, in 1935.

Keatinge and Simms both died the previous year, 1934, retaining their membership of the Interdenominational Committee to the last. M'Clymont had died in 1927, still Convenor of the Church of Scotland Committee on Chaplains to which he had been appointed (like Bateson) in 1909. Simms was Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Ireland in 1919; M'Clymont of the Church of Scotland in 1921. Keatinge was made a titular bishop.

Bateson alone was unhonoured by his Church outside the chaplaincy work. He comes across as one devoted to the traditions and standing of his Church in the army, hard-working and resourceful, strong in committee, respected in the denomination, but without the wider vision of a leader. He gloried in the aggrandisement which Methodist Union brought to his charge. In the army alone the Methodists could now claim 10,000 men, in the three services together over 18,000.⁴² There is no indication that he used his position of influence within the denomination to argue against the rejection of the United Board's initiative. Indeed the last ten words of the resolution quoted are

41. W 9/32.

42. Methodist Forces Board minutes, 10/32.

Rateson's personal doctrine, emphasised throughout the War and in the discussion of RAF Chaplaincies afterwards: Wesleyan men should be served only by Wesleyan ministers if they are available.

Divided, the Methodists and United Board continued with their small chaplaincy complements, 7 and 3 respectively were the totals set by the Widdows Report of 1932 (though Aubrey secured a fourth by persistence; having lost Standing, the United Board would otherwise have had no senior chaplain to speak for them). The opportunity was thus lost to create a united and substantial Free Church chaplaincy service to do justice to their growing strength in the ranks - by now greater proportionately than before the Great War - and to wield influence commensurate with these numbers in the formulation of chaplaincy policy now that the old guard had passed on.

This however should not be the last note. The divided Free Church chaplaincy services after all have survived another sixty years, including a second World War. Looking back to 1832 when Rule landed at Gibraltar, the achievements by 1932 were startling: the total acceptability of Free Church chaplains within a unified and professional chaplaincy service, combining without evident strain the disciplines of military organisation with the authority of the churches over their ministers. The specific Wesleyan contribution had been the voluntary supply of civilian ministers prepared to serve as chaplains with the army in the field in the many military campaigns of the last century. This broadened in the Great War to the involvement of all the main Free

Churches in sending chaplains in great numbers to every theatre of the war, though now no longer civilians but temporarily commissioned. Although the early days of struggle for recognition should not be forgotten, because of what they say of the strength of the Establishment, military and church, in the nineteenth century, they should not dominate the record either. But the record must also show the price of recognition - originally the acceptance of state money, but by degrees conformity to rules and regulations of a military authority which were not the churches' to vary. The settlement of 1916, politically engineered by a friend of the Free Churches, opened all doors to them. Their chaplains became fully absorbed within a military organisation, a compromise which was understandable in war-time, but was then accepted afterwards as the price of retaining their standing and influence, and in the case of the Wesleyans, their tradition. In the 'twenties the compromise between the Free Churches and the State was fully worked out. Provided the churches were able to have spiritual oversight of the chaplains and be fully involved in decisions affecting the size and nature of the chaplaincy service, military authority was held not to impede the rightful exercise of ministry. They could be both ministers of the Gospel and officers and gentlemen. Rule would have accepted that.

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