

## EDUCATION FROM A METHODIST PERSPECTIVE

John Wesley was as much an educator as a preacher. Methodist involvement in education stems from his passion for education, which was rooted in his understanding of the Bible and centuries of Christian tradition that the Church should be engaged in constantly seeking and understanding what is the truth by which we should live. Wesley did not seek to create a distinctive Methodist theological rationale for his views on education but his theological thinking made education so vitally important to him that it was the motivating force behind the entire structure of early Methodism with its classes and societies. For him education at its best was a life-long process guided by the Holy Spirit towards personal and social holiness, and it was the best possible tool for evangelism, for training in godliness, and for the betterment of society.

### *1. A scriptural basis*

The Bible says that all human beings are made in the image of God (Genesis 1: 26-7) and this includes children, who can, like adults, be called to God's service (e.g. I Samuel 3: 1-19). Genesis presents a picture of a humanity that was designed to be the steward of creation (Genesis 1: 26-31) but which has become fatally flawed through turning its back on God. Much of the Old Testament is about how God seeks to recall his people to truly worshipping him so they can have a new heart and a new spirit within them (Ezekiel 36: 26). One vital way of receiving God's grace was perceived to be through how young and old were educated. The Book of Proverbs says the aim of education is to give people wisdom and insight, a sense of what is right and just and fair, the direction they can follow through their lives (Proverbs 1:3-4).

It has been said that this type of education teaches a person 'what to be in love with' – and for centuries the Christian Church has focused on teaching people to love Christ and to recognize the redemptive power of the cross as the chief means of grace. This opens people of all ages to grow in goodness and to be transformed (2 Corinthians 3: 18). Christ, who was judged the greatest of teachers, said: 'I am come that they might have life and have it in all its fullness' (John 10: 10). A Christian education enables individuals, instead of conforming to society, to seek in this world what is good and acceptable and perfect to God (Romans 2:12). They learn to live responsibly towards others and towards the world in which they live, challenging injustice in whatever form that takes.

From an educational viewpoint, those who follow Jesus would assert:

- the value of every individual
- how all are called to be in a relationship with God
- the transforming nature of God's redemptive love
- how all are called to love and care for each other and be active citizens in the Kingdom of God on earth.

A Christian education is one that endorses and embraces this. In the words of the 1999 Methodist Conference Report 'The Essence of Education':

*‘The educated person is one who has most nearly attained the potential which he or she has it within them to become, morally, culturally, and spiritually as well as intellectually and physically....Education is not ultimately about training people to be clever or successful, but about discovering what it is to be the full human beings God intended us to be’.*<sup>i</sup>

## **2. Seeking Perfection**

Wesley’s thinking on the subject of Christian perfection is often held to be his most distinctive theological contribution to Christian theology and education was central to his thinking on this subject. He accepted the view of John Milton and William Law that the purpose of learning was to repair the ruin of humanity’s sinful fall from grace by helping individuals regain a proper knowledge of God. He expressed the role of education as being

- *‘to restore our rational nature to its proper state’*
- *‘to discover every false judgment of our minds’*
- *‘to subdue every wrong passion in our hearts’*
- *‘to turn the bias from self-will, pride, anger, revenge and the love of the world, to resignation, lowliness, meekness, and the love of God’.*<sup>ii</sup>

Wesley therefore saw education as a vitally important channel of God’s grace, a means by which people could be challenged

- to understand both their failings and their potential;
- to appreciate the freedom that comes from giving attention to God and the responsibility that flows from that;
- to grasp the ‘one thing necessary’ (i.e. the need to seek God’s forgiveness and empowering spirit);
- to move towards acquiring Christian perfection through a life dedicated to serving God and other people.

When the 1999 ‘Essence of Education’ Report talked of education as a means of ‘growing in goodness’<sup>iii</sup> it was echoing Methodism’s traditional emphasis on Christian perfection.

## **3. Life-long learning**

Wesley clearly thought acquiring a good theological understanding guided Christian experience and that, in turn, Christian experience informed and shaped theological understanding. This is not far removed from current learning cycle theory and reinforces the view that learning is a lifelong process. It was Wesley’s commitment to life-long learning and self-knowledge that made him a pioneer in the field of popular education because, as he told one preacher, ‘it cannot be that the people should grow in grace unless they give themselves to reading.’<sup>iv</sup> He drew up a list of recommended reading, set up libraries, acquired a printing press, and produced a vast array of publications, including hymnbooks designed to educate people in ‘the essentials of religion’. When he built his first school at Kingswood, he made provision for adult education and it was his hope that people of all ages would attend classes at the school. The Methodist societies he created have been described as ‘seminars in adult

education'<sup>v</sup> and he prepared for each conference a programme of reading and study that he felt was relevant to the moral, pastoral, and theological issues that had been encountered in the previous year. It is not surprising that one of the first pronouncements of the first Methodist Education Committee in 1837 was that Methodists should encourage 'education which may begin in an infant school and end in Heaven' (i.e. lifelong learning).

Wesley's emphasis on Christians caring for each other by encouraging each other to learn more can still be found in the Methodist Church today. 'Our Calling' says that the Church exists 'to help people to grow and learn as Christians, through mutual support and care'. It sees 'learning and caring' as one of the four key means of the Methodist Church fulfilling its calling to 'respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission'.<sup>vi</sup> The other three are worship, service, and evangelism, but these also demand 'educational input' to be truly dynamic. The challenge for the Church is how best to deliver life-long education in an era when technology has transformed the ways in which learning can be undertaken and in which social networking has immense implications for relationships and communities.

#### ***4. Learning within a community***

For Wesley there was no such thing as 'solitary religion' and this belief is still inherent to Methodism today:

*'Perfect love..... is not something achievable by a isolated individual, as theoretically 'perfect faith' might be, but something that binds the believer to others.'*<sup>vii</sup>

It was by living in community that mutual respect and understanding was best achieved, and a full appreciation of the importance of forgiveness, reconciliation, renewal, and service to others. Wesley's theological rationale for the ministry of the whole people of God and his encouragement of lay leadership still provides the basis for the tradition within Methodism of the shared leadership of worship and preaching and religious teaching. The distinctive Methodist ecclesial concept is the principle of connexionalism and this, in the words of the Conference Report *Called to Love and Praise*, 'witnesses to a mutuality and interdependence which derive from the participation of all Christians through Christ in the very life of God himself'.

Wesley recognized that a person could learn from others in varying ways – by studying the wisdom of previous generations<sup>viii</sup>, by conversation, by following an example, by peer review, and so on. His encouragement of people to convey their personal religious experience to other Christians has resonances with some contemporary approaches to encouraging each individual to 'tell their story' as part of the educational process. If much of this learning from others was 'informal', there was also a place for more formal learning communities, ranging from schools to universities. Wesley's own efforts tended to focus more on schools but, as the 1999 'Essence of Education' Report pointed out, Methodists have subsequently also played a significant part in the early history of technical and vocational education, valuing

inclusiveness and the development of practical skills, and sought to voice a Christian perspective on the ethos and values that should exist in higher education:

*'Methodists... believe there is an urgent social imperative to ensure that every programme is scrutinized, so that spiritual and moral values are taken into consideration.... for individuals and groups of all ages.'*<sup>ix</sup>

What Methodism has perhaps most drawn from Wesley's thinking about learning within formal institutions is the importance of making them real communities that have a 'family' feel to them. Kingswood School was originally designed to have only fifty pupils so it could be an enlarged family in its nature and not an institution, and in the nineteenth century Methodists urged the creation of schools that would provide young people with 'the influences, instructions, and restraints of a well regulated and happy Christian family'.<sup>x</sup> Although there are some notable exceptions, Methodist educational institutions have therefore often tended to be small-scale and, large or small, have retained a focus on trying to be family-like.

Historians have often wrongly focused on Wesley's rules and regulations for schools. The real emphasis was not these (which have in any case largely become outdated) but on the quality of the relationship between teacher and pupil. If the teacher was a person of 'virtue' (of piety and understanding) then this drew the pupils to follow him or her and the result was transformed lives. Education is not just what we teach but how we teach it. Wesley reminded his teachers at Kingswood: 'Beware you be not swallowed up in books. An ounce of love is worth a pound of knowledge'.<sup>xi</sup> This explains why Methodist schools and colleges have therefore constantly promoted the importance of acquiring the right teachers and then fully supporting them and why, until relatively recently, it paid particular attention to providing teacher training colleges. The 'Essence of Education' Report rightly identified that the Methodist Church ought to be vociferously opposing the increased bureaucracy, the obsession with excessive target setting and assessment, and the political interference in schools that is so damaging to the ability of individual teachers to relate well to their pupils.

### ***5. Every Child Matters***

Wesley thought the hallmark of a good parent and a good teacher was to recognize the immense moral responsibility entailed in educating the young. He inherited that belief from his mother who said the following of her role:

*'I cannot but look upon every soul you leave under my care as a talent committed to me under a trust by the great Lord of all the families, both of heaven and earth'.*

The importance of this for Methodist education cannot be overstated because it ties in with Wesley's preaching that salvation was for all without exception. He strongly opposed those who believed only a few people were destined to become recipients of God's grace. Wesley wrote that no person, however sinful, was 'wholly void of the grace of God' and all were open to hear Christ's call and receive his forgiveness. It has been the constant cry of Methodists that:

*'All need to be saved;*

*All can be saved;  
All can know that they are saved;  
All can be saved to the uttermost'.<sup>xii</sup>*

Understandably Wesley's Arminian emphasis on 'salvation for all' led to 'education for all' and Methodist education has always loudly proclaimed every boy and girl, every woman and man, matters to God. None should be deprived of the opportunity to truly develop their talents. Encouraging parents and churches and schools to provide the best educational environment for children has been a constant feature within Methodism. When the first Methodist training college for teachers was created at Westminster in 1851, the President of Conference told the first recruits they should never regard any child as inferior simply because they came from a less privileged background:

*'Is a child less rational, less capable of intellectual and moral improvement, of living an orderly, creditable, and useful life in society, of serving God and ensuring blissful immortality because his parents are poor?'<sup>xiii</sup>*

The 'Essence of Education' Report in 1999 had as its first guiding principle that 'access to education should be the life-long birthright of every human being' and talked of education for every child being both 'a basic human need' and 'a fundamental human right'. This traditional Methodist emphasis on the importance of every child fits in easily with the growing emphasis on this by the government (since the 2003 Green Paper 'Every Child Matters') and by other denominations (most recently the Church of England's 2010 'Going For Growth' Report).

Recent decades have seen a marked decline in Methodist higher education, but there are still sixty-five Methodist primary schools working within the state system and fourteen independent schools that are self-supporting institutions. Their importance was recognised in the Methodist Conference 2002 Report on 'Schools with a religious character' and, in 2010, the Conference specifically endorsed its commitment to the maintained schools 'as part of the wider Children and Youth agenda' and promised to continue working with ecumenical partners 'to open new schools when desired'. This commitment was endorsed by the creation of a Schools Coordinator and the Maintained Schools Committee (to go alongside the Board of Management for Methodist Independent Schools).

The maintained and independent schools represent by far the largest single contact the Church has not only with children and young people but also parents. It is therefore very sad that some of them currently feel the Methodist Church is paying insufficient attention to their significant role and that some feel insufficiently supported and others are drifting away from any real contact with Methodism. If the main challenge is to find ways of reaching out to those children who are not in a Christian school, there remains an equally important task to engage more fully in supporting the few schools that we do possess and which give us a voice in education as far as the government is concerned.

The 2006 joint Methodist/Anglican resource 'Every Child Matters: All Precious in God's Sight', which focused specifically on how Methodist schools might respond to the government's Green Paper, talks of 'flexible programmes recognizing and

meeting the individual's changing needs from a Christian perspective'.<sup>xiv</sup> It says it is vital Methodist schools encourage each child to achieve his or her 'highest potential' and have 'a vision of children developing lives that reflect Christian values and teaching as we nurture personal faith and spiritual growth'.<sup>xv</sup> It asks them to pose the question: 'Do the children believe they are precious in God's sight?'.<sup>xvi</sup> Government emphases in education change and so its recent focus on 'Every Child Matters' may become yesterday's mantra, but for Methodists this is not a slogan that goes in or out of fashion.

## ***6. The Five Key Features of Wesleyan Education***

When it came to educating the young, Wesley accepted the view of the philosopher John Locke that if children could be "caught" while young and impressionable, the next generation would be an improvement on the present. He produced guidelines for parents on how to educate their children, promoted the creation of Sunday schools, encouraged people to educate girls as well as boys, created orphanages that were noted for their emphasis on learning, and founded not only day schools in Bristol, Newcastle and London but a model boarding school at Kingswood. The best school was one which combined academic rigour with 'a spark of heavenly fire, a taste of God, a seed of grace'.<sup>xvii</sup> It combined learning and knowledge with wisdom and 'vital piety' (i.e. a commitment to worship and to social outreach).<sup>xviii</sup>

It is worth examining five key features of the education that Wesley sought to provide for not only the young but also adults and how these still influence Methodist educational thinking:

### ***a. Education should promote self-discipline.***

The fact that every child matters is not an invitation to permit children to do whatever they wish. Wesley learned from his mother that the first goal in educating the young is to teach them self-control:

*'Self-will is the root of all sin and misery, so whatever cherishes this in children insures there after wretchedness and irreligion; whatever checks and mortifies it promotes their future happiness and piety.'*

In this context imposed discipline was a means to an end and Wesley took his lead from her in saying it had to be proportionate to the fault:

*'From the moment we see any evil roots springing up, it is our business immediately to check their growth, if we cannot root them out. As far as this can be done by mildness, softness, and gentleness, certainly it should be done.... [If] these methods will not avail....then we must correct with kind severity.'*

Wesley used to ask pupils at Kingswood to ask themselves whether they were humble and teachable or whether they were stubborn and self-willed. He asked his teachers to take a strong interest in what the children did outside the classroom and in particular how they interacted with each other so as to avoid 'not only rudeness and ill manners, but many sins that children would easily teach each other'.

It is not surprising that Methodist education has therefore traditionally encouraged self-discipline within its educational institutions and encouraged young people to have a humble self-confidence based on proper self-regard and self-respect. Much of Wesley's promotion of adult education was similarly centred round encouraging people to recognize their failings and become more self-disciplined by getting into the right habits. Put into modern day phraseology, he worked on the premise:

*'Watch your thoughts; they become words.  
Watch your words; they become actions.  
Watch your actions; they become habits.  
Watch your habits; they become character.  
Watch your character; it becomes your destiny.'*<sup>xix</sup>

#### ***b. Education should promote understanding and wisdom***

Wesley wanted Methodists to study and reflect on their faith. His was a thinking person's religion, which was of the mind as well as the heart. Questioning was an integral feature of the learning process as he understood it – if anyone doubts that, look at the number of questions he encouraged society members to ask of themselves and of each other. Wesley was therefore critical of the rote learning common in most schools of his day:

*'Beware of that common, but accursed, way of making children parrots.... Labour that, as far as possible, they may understand every single sentence which they read.... and question them continually on every point.... By this means they will learn to think as they read: they will grow wiser and better every day.'*<sup>xx</sup>

In this context, it is important to note that Wesley's understanding of 'searching the scriptures' as a means of grace demanded intellectual vigour, criticality and knowledge. Nor was he afraid of engaging in searching for truth outside the scriptures. He created a curriculum at Kingswood that was unusually broad for its time and it demonstrated that he thought Christians should not be afraid of taking on board new scientific discoveries. At a time when many saw science as the handmaiden of rationalists out to encourage atheism, Wesley supported scientific research and encouraged his followers to study science, believing that, rightly understood, it would serve the Christian cause. In 1782 he wrote:

*'How small a part of this great work of God is man able to understand! But it is our duty to contemplate what he has wrought, and to understand as much of it as we are able.'*

Wesley wanted people to take a joyful interest in the sheer wonder of this world and to be thankful for it. Henry Rack entitled his well-known biography of Wesley 'the reasonable enthusiast' and there is no doubt that Wesley's belief that all truth is in some way a revelation of God and his emphasis on rational enquiry has been a very significant influence on Methodist education. It has been the basis for the encouragement of what that great Methodist headmaster of Kingswood School, A.B. Sackett, called 'intellectual curiosity'. Curiosity about ourselves and the world in

which we are set is a key element in what it means to become the full human beings that God intended us to be.

The 1999 ‘Essence of Education’ Report rightly described ‘indoctrination’ as being incompatible with ‘integrity’ and embraced the need to engage with both past and present understanding in developing the best possible education for people:

*‘Human beings can, through education, call in aid the skills, intellectual insights, bodies of knowledge, moral understandings and aesthetic visions of those who have journeyed before us. And we relish a vigorous conversation between the classics of human culture and our contemporary experience, theoretical constructs and technical advances’.*<sup>xxi</sup>

### ***c. Education should encourage a life-changing encounter with Christ***

Wesley’s uncompromising confessional approach to education, particularly at school level, sits uncomfortably with the modern age. Few today would accept his view that he would have a Christian school ‘or none at all’ or endorse the text that he used when he opened Kingswood School: ‘Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it’. It smacks of indoctrination in a multi-cultural and secular society. Nevertheless, the Christian faith can only survive if individuals can learn about it – and that means learning about it properly and not at a very superficial level. That is why the Church of England’s 2010 Report ‘Going For Growth’ unashamedly says:

‘The Church, at National, Diocesan, and Parochial level, is called to work towards every child and young person having a life-enhancing encounter with the Christian faith and the person of Jesus Christ’.<sup>xxii</sup>

This is what distinguishes Christian education from other good education and the challenge for all Christians is how to have due regard for the beliefs of others whilst finding appropriate ways of attracting people to seriously study the gospel message in the hope that they will have such an encounter. Entering into dialogue with those of other faiths does not mean that a Christian should not affirm his or her own beliefs passionately because ‘real dialogue consists in the effort of both sides to persuade the other’.<sup>xxiii</sup> Affirmation of the Christian faith is especially required in a culture that is strongly secular and where all religions (but perhaps Christianity in particular) are often paid scant attention. ‘Connect’, the new Methodist five-year strategy for children and youth, says its aim is:

*‘Connecting children and young people with God, the world and each other so they can think as disciples, talk as disciples, and be disciples’.*

It accepts as a basic premise that ‘mission and ministry is for and with children and young people, as well as adults’ and that ‘the call to evangelism comes at whatever age’.<sup>xxiv</sup> The same approach is, of course, required for those adults who have no understanding of what the gospel may offer them.

In considering what forms of confessional education to promote within families, schools and society in general, the Methodist Church has to produce different

responses – what it can expect, for example, from the education provided by Methodist schools will be different from what it can expect from a secular state school. Similarly, what is possible in terms of school worship will be very different from what is possible in a church.

***d. Education should encourage living according to our needs and not our wants***

Wesley advised parents to encourage their children to maintain a simple lifestyle:

*‘Inspire them early with a contempt for finery... [and a love for] plainness and modesty... Likewise, instill into them, as early as possible, a fear and dread of pomp and grandeur, an abhorrence and dread of the love of money, and a conviction that riches cannot bring happiness’.*

He believed all money comes from God, is only lent to us for a short time, and should be used to do good rather than being selfishly squandered. He told adults who thought only of its acquisition for personal use that they should be aware that ultimately wealth was just ‘dung and dross’ and that in seeking what society deemed desirable – a beautiful appearance, fashionable clothes, plenty of possessions, and so on – a person lost sight of what truly matters in life – the quality of relationships. Methodists were told to spend money only on ‘plain necessities of life, not delicacies, not superfluities, just reasonable wants’.

Methodist education has always tried to retain this emphasis. The 2006 Methodist/Anglican resource ‘Every Child Matters: All Precious in God’s Sight’, for example, talks of the importance of developing a ‘well-being’ that is ‘not dependant on lifestyles, friendships, events, or possessions, but rooted in a Christian faith that brings a sense of inner peace, contentment and harmony.’<sup>xxv</sup> It focuses on a Christian education that develops ‘codes of behaviour and a way of living based on Christian values’ and lists the following:

- unconditional love regardless of cost
- joy which comes from inner security
- peace from well-being with God, ourselves and others
- forgiveness without conditions so as to encourage new beginnings
- reconciliation healing relationships
- justice based on equality tempered with mercy
- respect shown to self, other children, adults, animals and the environment.<sup>xxvi</sup>

All these are just as important in considering adult education.

Methodist education has traditionally encouraged people to value relationships above things and asked them not just to accept that what society says produces happiness. This is tied in with a belief that people need not accept things the way they are, but can instead generate larger opportunities for good. In more recent years it has also contributed to Methodist schools often being at the forefront of encouraging pupils to recognize the importance of environmental issues if we are to take seriously humanity’s responsibility for the welfare of the world God has created. This demands people consider less what they want and focus more on just what they need. There has

also been some success in raising awareness of development education issues through the World AIMS project, which encourages awareness of world issues and partnership with schools overseas.

*e. Education should encourage a strong work ethic combined with a powerful sense of service to others*

Wesley challenged the pupils at Kingswood to be always diligent because he thought it important that every person should use the gifts and talents that he or she had been given by God. A similar emphasis can be seen in his advice to adults to ‘use every talent which God has lent you’ and to never be ‘unemployed a moment’. This work ethic also reflected the fact that no value was more central to early Methodist education than living out our faith by positive action, by loving our neighbour. Other values, such as justice, forgiveness, self-esteem, mutual self-respect and service, all stemmed from a belief in social holiness. Wesley’s theology was strongly opposed to antinomianism – the practice of moral irresponsibility. Whilst proclaiming that salvation stemmed entirely from faith and not from good works, Wesley was absolutely clear that anyone wishing to find favour with God had to ‘cease from evil and learn to do well’. Justification had to express itself in sanctification, in humble, gentle, and patient love: ‘Let Christ do all. Let him that has done all for you, do all in you’.

Within the framework of a school or a religious society, Christians could be taught to serve the interests of the wider community as a whole:

*‘Do all the good you can  
By all the means you can  
In all the ways you can  
In all the places you can  
At all the times you can  
To all the people you can  
As long as ever you can.’<sup>xxvii</sup>*

Social holiness as a theological concept intertwined personal religious experience with a concern for the general condition of humanity. Consequently in an era when it has been fashionable to focus on human rights, Methodist education has tended unfashionably but correctly still to focus on human responsibilities. James Laney, a former U.S. Ambassador and Chairman of the United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia, wrote that in his experience:

*‘[Methodist schools] were founded so that people educated and empowered within them may be of some value to the world... and can live a more open, sympathetic, and understanding life...[They] send out people who are not only very good at what they do but are also people who care’.<sup>xxviii</sup>*

Wesley believed society would be changed for the better not by government policy but by transforming the lives of individuals, by educating them about the importance of sacrifice and service, teaching them values and vocation and not just personal well-being. Such an approach is, of course, not unique to Methodism. For example, the 2010 ‘Going for Growth’ Report by the Church of England has as one of its guiding

principles that ‘we are called to work towards the establishment of the Kingdom of God here on earth’. However, it is especially central to Methodism. This is Wesley’s description of a truly educated Christian:

*‘He is full of love to his neighbour, of universal love, not confined to one sect or party, not restrained to those who agree with him or his opinions, or in outward modes of worship, or to those who are allied to him by blood or recommended by nearness of place. Neither does he love only those who love him or that are endeared to him by intimacy of acquaintance....[His love] soars above all these scanty bounds, embracing neighbours and strangers, friends and enemies, yea, not only the good and gentle, but also the forward, the evil, and the unthankful. For he loves every soul that God has made, every child of man, of whatever place or nation..... And this universal, disinterested love is productive of.... gentleness, tenderness, sweetness, of humanity, courtesy, and affability’.*

### **7. The Principles behind a Methodist Education**

Arising from the Methodist perspective on education as outlined above there are ten general principles that it is worth enumerating:

1. Education should never be confined to utilitarian purposes: it is about the acquisition of wisdom so that individuals can give a proper direction to their lives in a fast-changing and complex world;
2. Everyone is a child of God and equal in the eyes of God and so every boy and girl, man and woman deserves to have their educational needs met and this requires a diversity of approaches;
3. Education should encourage a questioning approach which avoids indoctrination and searches for the truth through reason, research and debate based on freedom of thought and expression;
4. Education is not just about what we learn as individuals. It is also what we learn together as communities. It is about encouraging mutual respect and understanding, appreciating the importance of forgiveness, reconciliation, and renewal, and respecting cultural diversity;
5. Education should seek to promote our understanding of God and this includes encouraging people to encounter Christ in ways that may change their lives whilst showing sensitivity to the views of those of other or no faith.
6. Education is a vehicle of God’s grace and the state should therefore not be permitted to have a monopoly of education. The Church must offer its own forms of informal and formal education, including maintaining some faith schools that embody the best that a Christian education can offer;
7. Providing the right role models is intrinsic to creating a good education. In this context parental responsibilities are of paramount importance and teaching has to be seen as a vocation carrying huge responsibilities and not just a form of employment;
8. Education is about realizing human potential at every stage of life and is therefore a life-long process. It is about developing character, growing in goodness and aiming for perfection;

9. Education should promote self-discipline and hard work and a recognition that the more we are given, the more is expected from us. It should equip a person with the right habits and for a life of service to others;
10. Education should be an instrument for reforming and reshaping society not maintaining the status quo. It should encourage people to want to change the world for the better. This includes generating greater environmental responsibility for the welfare of the world God has created.

**G.M. Best**

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- <sup>i</sup> Essence of Education Report Methodist Publishing House 1999 pg 7 and 10
- <sup>ii</sup> Thought on Educating Children 1783 in T. Jackson, The Works of John Wesley, Vol. XIII pg 476-7
- <sup>iii</sup> Essence of Education Report 1999 Methodist Publishing House pg 9
- <sup>iv</sup> Letter to George Holder 8 Nov 1790
- <sup>v</sup> The European Heritage in 'The History of American Methodism' Vol 1 Abingdon Press 1964 pg 24
- <sup>vi</sup> Our Calling Methodist Publishing House 2000
- <sup>vii</sup> John Munsey Turner, 'Modern Methodism in England 1932-98' Epworth 1998 pg 44
- <sup>viii</sup> Michael Oakeshott once famously described education as 'a conversation between the generations'.
- <sup>ix</sup> Essence of Education Methodist Publishing House 1999 pg 39
- <sup>x</sup> See G.M. Best, Shared Aims Board of Management 2003 pg 5
- <sup>xi</sup> Letter contained in Kingswood School Archives
- <sup>xii</sup> Traditional Methodist saying
- <sup>xiii</sup> See G.M. Best, Shared Aims Board of Management 2003 pg 6
- <sup>xiv</sup> Every Child Matters: All Precious in God's Sight Blackburn Diocesan Board of Education and North West Districts of the Methodist Church Aug 2006 pg 7
- <sup>xv</sup> Every Child Matters: All Precious in God's Sight Blackburn Diocesan Board of Education and North West Districts of the Methodist Church Aug 2006 pg 5
- <sup>xvi</sup> Every Child Matters: All Precious in God's Sight Blackburn Diocesan Board of Education and North West Districts of the Methodist Church Aug 2006 pg 28
- <sup>xvii</sup> Hymn XLVII in Hymns For Children 1763 in G. Osborn, The Poetical Works of J. & C. Wesley, Vol. VI pg 416
- <sup>xviii</sup> Hymn XL in Hymns For Children in G. Osborn, The Poetical Works of J. & C. Wesley Vol. VI pg 407-8
- <sup>xix</sup> Source unknown
- <sup>xx</sup> Lessons for Children 1746 in T. Jackson, Works of John Wesley, Vol. VII pg 86-98
- <sup>xxi</sup> Essence of Education Methodist Publishing House 1999 pg 10
- <sup>xxii</sup> Going For Growth Archbishops' Council Education Division 2010 pg 14
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Nichola Jones, Extract from Address to Methodist Conference June 1996
- <sup>xxiv</sup> Connect: Five –Year Strategy for Children and Youth 2010 pg 2
- <sup>xxv</sup> Every Child Matters: All Precious in God's Sight Blackburn Diocesan Board of Education and North West Districts of the Methodist Church Aug 2006 pg 7
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Every Child Matters: All Precious in God's Sight Blackburn Diocesan Board of Education and North West Districts of the Methodist Church Aug 2006 pg 7
- <sup>xxvii</sup> The source of this well-known quotation is unknown and some have speculated that it might have been written after Wesley's death to summarise his approach to social holiness
- <sup>xxviii</sup> From Roots to Fulfilment IAMSCU 2000