

tral system of Conference, there may be reason to suppose that it really was intended in many cases to reserve to the trustees the powers usually assumed by Conference. With the legal question, however, we have no concern, but can only rejoice that the law has found means, in this instance, to liberate the gospel. This decision, with regard to the Birstal Chapel, is, we hear, "of the last importance to the unity of Methodism, as there are very many chapels whose trustees claim the same independence of action in the selection and nomination of their preachers." The central unity of Methodism is therefore menaced by the spirit of local independence, and we confess to a cordial desire that this unnatural unity may be dissolved.

The Wesleyan is the only great Protestant body which has attempted at all effectively to carry out the Roman Catholic policy of making the poor and unlearned instrumental in their own religious teaching. For this purpose the ecclesiastical machinery devised has been exceedingly skilful; but the very perfection of the machinery has consisted in drawing away living power from the extremities, and concentrating it in an ecclesiastical centre. Without this the Methodist machinery could scarcely go on. Raw, half-instructed, and therefore self-confident theological teachers could not be employed so effectively and universally unless their function were rather purely to transmit force than to originate it — unless they were the joints of a machine, not centres of personal influence. Accordingly the whole skill of the organisation depends on that constant movement of the Wesleyan lay-preachers, by which single centres of influence are prevented from arising, and a mere circulat-