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Proceedings OF THE Wesley Historical Society

Editor: REV. WESLEY F. SWIFT.

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THE EARLY EXPERIENCE OF FLETCHER OF MADELEY

TYERMAN'S *Wesley's Designated Successor* (1882)—strangely overlooked by Canon Overton when preparing his biographical sketch of Fletcher for the *Dictionary of National Biography*—remains the standard biography. Tyerman used a wealth of materials, both printed and manuscript, including some of Fletcher's voluminous correspondence with his closest friend, Charles Wesley. For these letters he seems to have relied on *Thirteen Original Letters, written by the late Rev. John Fletcher* (1791) and the very much larger *Posthumous Pieces* published in the same year by Melville Horne, which Tyerman quotes simply as *Letters*. Tyerman did not see the original letters, however, most of which are preserved in the Methodist Book-Room, though a few are to be found in the Lamplough Collection, Wesley's Chapel, and the New Room, Bristol. As a result he missed much that would have enriched his work, particularly the letter reproduced below. Apart from this letter, the fifty or so letters which Fletcher wrote to Charles Wesley before 1771 are all in French, which may have been one of the reasons for their neglect.

The Ordination Lists of the Diocese of Bangor contain the following note:

1757. March 13th. Ordination in the said Chappel [i.e. the Royal Chapel at St. James], John William Fletcher, University of Geneva, at Request of Bishop of Hereford.¹

This was in fact his ordination as a priest, after he had been ordained deacon the previous Sunday by the Bishop of Hereford himself. Fletcher hastened straight from his ordination as priest to assist John Wesley in a crowded communion service at Snowfields.

Already Fletcher had been in touch with Charles Wesley, and one

¹ I am indebted for this information to the Rev. Griffith T. Roberts, who quotes it from A. Ivor Pryce's *The Diocese of Bangor during Three Centuries*, p. 110.

letter survives which was written by Fletcher before his ordination, endorsed by Charles Wesley "1754". Fletcher's ordination seems to have fired Wesley's enthusiasm, and led to a warm friendship and a spate of correspondence. Charles seems to have followed the regular pattern of most of his friendships, by asking Fletcher for the story of his spiritual pilgrimage. The result was a first instalment in a six-page letter addressed by Fletcher "To / The Revd. Mr. Wesley / at the Horsefair / Bristol", and endorsed by Charles Wesley "May 10, 1757 / Mr. Fletcher's Experience." The letter itself (as will be seen from the text) was to be followed by a lengthy personal interview, of which we have no record, though it doubtless covered the fuller story of Fletcher's conversion, as recorded by Tyerman, using his diary (from Mrs. Fletcher's account of her husband) and a letter to his brother. About the years before Fletcher's conversion, however, and especially before his coming to England in 1752, Tyerman discovered practically nothing, and as a result his opening chapter consists of a mere five-and-a-half pages. This letter is a valuable supplement to Tyerman's account. Of particular interest is Fletcher's reference to the embryo Holy Club at the University of Geneva. Because of its importance it is here reproduced in full, even though it is available in the *City Road Magazine* for November 1872, and as Appendix I to Marrat's *Fletcher* (1902).

Fletcher himself made no attempt to divide this lengthy letter into paragraphs, but apart from this alteration the original is faithfully followed, even to the erasures. Like those of many eighteenth-century correspondents, his full-stops are often written like commas, and therefore modern practice has been followed in transcribing them.

JOHN FLETCHER TO CHARLES WESLEY

Dear & Revd. Sir,

I am very glad that you and tho[se] that the Lord has committed to your care remember the absent brethren and among them him who by his weakness wants most [to be strengthen'd by (crossed out)] the prayers of all faithful people: may the Lord reward you for that labour of love according to the riches of his mercy! We are not altogether wanting in this important part of Christian fellowship and brotherly love, and I doubt not that by the grace of God, the assistance of your prayers, and the good example you set us, we shall be enabled to abound more and more. O may we strive continually to outdo each other in love and in all the duties and means that conduce to love!

I am not sure whether I shall be in town on Whitsunday. I am afraid I shall be upon the journey on that glorious day. It has been my Lot for these 3 last years notwithstanding my earnest request to be left behind and keep the feast according to my conscience. if you are in London the 26 of this month it will not be too late for me to ask your blessing by word of mouth, and to answer any question you shall think fit to ask me concerning God's dealings with the chief of sinners; in the mean time read over this short account and weep with him that weeps for his unfaithfulness.

I have often heard from my friends, that there never was a Child prouder more passionate and stubborn than me from the cradle. the sin

by which it pleased God to begin the work of conviction was fighting [with (crossed out)] in a great rage one of my brothers: I was no sooner put to bed after it in the evening and left alone but I began to feel the wrath of God abiding on me. the pangs of hell compass'd me round about and I question whether I should not have dropt into hell under that burden that very night if the Lord had not come to my relief. he came and heaven came with him, my proud heart was melted and I began to love and weep much because much was forgiven me. I was about 7 years old when the Lord made this his goodness to pass before me for the first time. I did not know what to make of it nor what power I then receiv'd to conquer the world the flesh & the Devil, and I had almost forgot it when I began to hear your preaching:

I can not remember how long the clear sense of that pardon lasted, only for some months after I find that I often went into a retired place to beg of God to let me die a Martyr [,] a prayer in which I found an unspeakable sweetness:

When I was about ten years of age, I began to give up all and to sell myself under sin being surrounded on every side by temptations & drawn in by bad examples. But the Lord still strove with me. I had frequent returns of repentance and some times fresh assurances of my forgiveness, but without minding it much I sin'd it away as often as I received it:

When I was sixteen the Lord shewd me that it was not possible to serve two masters and that if I would Sin on I should soon have the wages of sin: I began to look about me, to strive in earnest to grow in holiness and for 8 month I think I walk'd as became a Follower of Christ.

About that time I was also convinc'd of the necessity of having a Christian friend and after many useless trials to find one I at last [found (crossed out)] met with 3 students who form'd with me a religious society: we met as often as we could to confess one another our sins [,] to exhort [,] read & pray, and we could [no doubt (crossed out)] perhaps have been what the Methodists were at Oxford; Had not one of us been led away by a Deist and drank so deep of the poison of his arguments that all endeavours to recall him were useless. as he was remarkable for his great parts and made much of, on account of his wit and learning [,] he had such an ascendancy over our companions that I was soon left alone, and happy would I have been still, had not I provok'd the Lord, griev'd and quenched his spirit by a relapse into sin.

The time was come when I was to chuse a way of life. My friends would by all means have me be an Officer and tho' I had often vow'd to the Lord that if he wou'd accept of me I shou'd rejoice to be the least of his ministers, I yielded to their importunities as wanting both gifts and grace to carry me thro' the duty of a Clergyman, which I saw not as they were but as they ought to have been practis'd; And setting out for Germany I spent a year there to learn Highdutch and fortification. The peace was made as I was thus occupi'd² and the body of Engineers into which I was to enter, disbanded, so that I came home disappointed.

All that while I saw from whence I was fallen. Some times I mourn'd, sometimes endeavour'd to divert my thoughts by studying without Interruption: and at all times resolv'd since I did not love God that I should not love the world, fool that I was! as if one who lives

² The Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, 18th October 1748.

in any know [n] sin tho' it should be comitted but once in a year could have any reason to expect mercy from the God of purity because he does many things and avoids many.

Being come home, I was often laught at by my friends for loving so little the diversions of the world. the uneasiness their usage gave me and much more the anguish of my sinsick soul made me resolve to embrace the first opportunity of leaving my country. Soon after I was offered [500£ (crossed out)] to go into Brasilia as Surveior and ingeneer to the king of Portugal. I greedily embrac'd the proposal and was just setting out notwithstanding many checks of conscience when one let fall on my legs a pot of boiling water, and scalded my legs in such a dreadful manner that I lost for a considerable time the use of 'em and was forc'd to stay in Europe. he that will not turn at a check of God's Spirit must turn at the stroke of his rod, or what is worse must run on till he falls down the precipice.

When I was cur'd an Oncle offered me a comission in the dutch Service, upon which I set out for Holland, where I stay'd some months waiting for what he had promised me, till seeing too much of a military life to like it, and tired out by the promises of deceitful men, I resolv'd to go to England. for 6 years [.] I did not know how [.] I had intertaind a secret design of Seeing that Country, and even learn'd a great many words not to be at a loss when I should arrive there, but in this as in many other things I have since seen the finger of God and the unspeakable goodness of his providence.

By this time I was a strict Legalist. I spent part of the day in reading the Scriptures and in prayer, thinking that my repenting added to these duties, would skreen me from the wrath to come. But my eyes were soon open'd to see my hypocrisy. I acknowledged it before God, perceiv'd my danger and resolv'd to give up all mine Idols. but now tho' I was willing God did not give me back the power which I had had so long without using it. then began an horrible struggle between the flesh and the spirit. None but God [and the Devil can (crossed out)] know what I endur'd for 5 month. 3 times I was pardon'd and sinned my pardon away. at last driven to despair by the sin I had comitted against so merciful a God, I resolv'd to make away with myself that he might the sooner be glorified in the torments of so bold an offend'r, but his pity interpos'd [.] he bid me again go in peace [.] and added that blessed word I had so long refused to hear *Sin no more* [.] this was about five years ago and I do not think that I have ever felt a temptation from that time [at least (crossed out)] to that sin which for eight years had so often overcome me.

This enemy being destroy'd an other no less terrible stood against me. I thought myself both meek and patient but the frequent proofs which my calling oblig'd me to make of those Christian virtues shew'd me soon what little share I had of them, and how much anger and piveness lurkt in my heart. for two years I was in the fiery furnace struggling with principalities and powers and what is more with my wicked heart. Satan generally got the better in the day and I at night [.] he made me sin but I obtaind the pardon of my sin generally before I durst go to sleep: How many prayers growns fastings tears sighs watch-nights Did I go thro' and all I vain. Christ alone was to overcome for me, and the reason of it was that I kept to myself all my thoughts and

shund company as much as possible: the Children of God are minish'd from the earth, said I, and it would be a folly to seek for an other:

However I exhorted and reprov'd as I had an opportunity, & four years ago as I was going into the country my performing this duty was the cause of my finding another Christian and of hearing of a body of people among which there is several: The family³ had baited and while they drank tea I went to take a walk and get out of the way of the world: I soon met a poor woman who seem'd to be in distress, and asking her what was the matter I soon saw by her answers that she was a Christian: the pleasure and profit I found in her conversation made me forget that I was upon a journey, and when I return'd to the inn I found I had been left behind. However taking a horse, I overtook the family [before it was dark (crossed out)] and told the reason why I had stay'd behind. ["Don't go"] says a Lady ["talking so to Old women, people will say that we have got a Methodist preacher with us"]: I asked what she meant by a Methodist and when she had told me I said I would be one of them if there was really such a people in England:

The next winter I was no sooner in town but I inquir'd after the Methodists & came to west street and to Hog Lane every Sunday.⁴ I soon could trace all my experience in your preachings. only one thing I could not account for[,] [they (crossed out)] you preach'd forgiveness of Sin, and power over [sin] as being given at the same time. this brought me to examin[e] the point. I [knew] the doctrine of faith out of Scripture and other Books and at last was convinc'd—that tho I had had repentance towards God and tho he had often forgiven my sins and made me taste the powers of the world to come, I was yet a stranger to the merits of him by whom I had receiv'd these benefits: So that it was no wonder if I had fought so long as beating the air, since I fought without him. I was convinc'd of unbelief in God the Son and was brought into bondage thro' fear of death[,] [when (crossed out)] but about 10 weeks after as I was in prayer about one o'clock [at night (crossed out)] in the morning I was enabled to cast my self upon Christ so as to have peace assurance and power over sin.⁵

I have gone and still go thro' many trials since, but of them an other time. I am

Reverend Sir

Your unworthy brother & Servant

JOHN FLETCHER.

London the 10th. May 1757.

FRANK BAKER.

³ i.e. of Thomas Hill of Tern Hall, Shropshire, to whose two sons Fletcher was tutor. This incident took place at St. Albans: see Tyerman's *Fletcher*, p. 14.

⁴ The index to Rocque's *Plan of London and Westminster, 1747*, shows two Hog Lanes, either of which might be possible. One was what is now the northern end of Charing Cross Road, on the west of which stood another "French Church", closely linked with that at West Street which had been taken over by the Methodists. (Cf. John Telford's *Two West End Chapels*, p. 8.) The other Hog Lane was a continuation to Shoreditch of Windmill Hill Row and Worship Street, and off Windmill Hill Row stood Wesley's headquarters, the Foundery Chapel, which might thus have been very loosely referred to as "Hog Lane".

⁵ This was at 1 a.m. in January 1755, though Fletcher's diary leaves it uncertain whether it was Saturday the 25th, Sunday the 26th, or Monday the 27th. (See Tyerman's *Fletcher*, pp. 16-17.)

THE RULE OF WILLIAM O'BRYAN

IT is well known that William O'Bryan separated from the denomination of which, under God, he was the founder, because his brethren were not prepared to acquiesce in his assumption of arbitrary power. There seems to be little doubt that he considered himself in some ways a second Wesley, forgetting that he lived nigh a century later, and at a time when parent Methodism, from which he had himself been excluded by arbitrary action, was increasingly rebelling against what was dubbed "pastoral supremacy". The standard histories do not go into great detail over the causes of the separation; indeed Bourne largely transcribes at this point the story as told in the anonymous *Jubilee Volume*. As early as 1825,² there were indications of unrest; at Conference that year at Mill Pleasant, Stoke Damarel, a Deed for enrolling the chapels was read, by which the sole authority for appointing preachers was lodged in Mr. O'Bryan,³ which led to dissatisfaction. The following Conference, at Cawsand, Cornwall, saw a request, against the wishes of O'Bryan, for an amended form of the Chapel Deed; and in the course of the debate "Mr. O'Bryan candidly expressed his intention of managing the affairs of the Connexion on the principle that, if all the Conference were opposed to his views, his single vote was to determine every case."⁴ Dissatisfaction increasing, the following year he asked those who were dissatisfied with the *status quo* to draw up a paper setting forth how they wished to have connexional affairs managed in the future. A paper was hastily prepared, covering six points, ensuring that Conference, and not O'Bryan, was paramount, and that a Deed Poll be enrolled in Chancery. One provision is interesting:

4. That Mr. O'Bryan take a Circuit, if requested; but that he be allowed to choose on what Circuit he wishes to be stationed.⁵

This meant, of course, that O'Bryan was to be one with his brethren, even if *primus inter pares*.

Agitation still increased, and in 1828 at Ebenezer chapel, Lake, O'Bryan actually relinquished the chair at Conference, William Mason being elected President. It was an unhappy Conference, and the unpleasantness increased during the ensuing year, arising still "out of Mr. O'Bryan's supposing it to be his duty to claim and exercise supreme authority".⁶ Clearly, unless the founder changed his viewpoint radically, a crisis was imminent. For the first time, in that year 1828, O'Bryan's name heads the list of approved preachers; hitherto his name had not appeared in the list; it is significant that until then *he* had approved the others and there was no need for his name to appear, but now Conference, and not O'Bryan, approved.

¹ A *Jubilee Memorial of Incidents in the Rise and Progress of the Bible Christian Connexion*, 2nd edn. (1866); F. W. Bourne: *The Bible Christians, their Origin and History* (1905).

² *Jubilee Volume*, p. 97.

³ *ibid.*, p. 98.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 100.

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 103; Bourne, *op. cit.*, p. 182. The proposals were not printed in the *Minutes of Conference*.

⁶ *Jubilee Volume*, p. 106.

The disruption took place the following year, 1829. Conference was again held at Lake, and the agitation having spread through all the societies, a number of influential friends gathered on 23rd July, the day before Conference was due to assemble; some had been summoned by O'Bryan, and others came for the love they bore to the Connexion. During the year O'Bryan had issued a pamphlet⁷ complaining of the treatment he had received at the hands of the Financial Committee; and a reply had been issued. When the meeting went against O'Bryan's wishes, he interrupted: "I will do no more business with you; I adjourn this Conference to Liskeard next Monday";⁸ and left the Conference, and Andrew Cory was chosen President. With that action O'Bryan had left the Connexion.

This sketch, necessarily scanty, is an outline of the events leading up to the disruption, but it will be noticed that the grounds of unrest are always couched in general terms; and many must have wondered, in more recent days, what precisely they meant. There have come into the writer's possession recently a handful of original letters which give examples, and it may be worth while transcribing them in full. They all are addressed to William Bailey (1795, 1818-73), one of the most colourful of the early Bible Christian preachers.⁹

WILLIAM O'BRYAN TO WILLIAM BAILEY

Millpleasant, Augt. 27th. 1823.

My dear Brother,

I have appointed the quarterly meeting for Canworthywater Circuit to be on Monday the 6 day of October and wish you to write me where it is to be, at Canworthywater, or at any other place. When you make your next plan put the names in full that I may know who they are, and the men from the women.

When I was at Midsummer qy. Meeting friend Bailey the wheelwright, near Helskit Bridge, was saying that in some time to come he should want to buy a horse. I intend to sell mine, if he thinks it will suit him, he might speak about it at the quarterly meeting; tell of it to him if you please, and when you write me where the qy. meeting is to be you may say on your letter if he thinks anything of it?

My love to all friends,

Yours affectionately,

W. O'BRYAN.

On the back is Bailey's Bookroom account—interesting reading, as it lists "20 Minutes of Conference, 2d . . . 3s 4d"—and other examples of contemporary prices. It will be noted that whilst Bailey was superintendent of the circuit, with two preachers under him, it was O'Bryan who fixed the date of the Quarterly Meeting—rather as if the President, or a Separated Chairman, were to do so today!

Millpleasant, Sat. Sept. 11th 1824.

My dear Brother,

The cause of my writing you at this time is to know if you have

⁷ Does a copy exist?

⁸ *Jubilee Volume*, p. 110; Bourne, op. cit., p. 191; *Min. Conf.*, 1829, p. 3.

⁹ For an example of his preaching style, cf. Bourne, op. cit., pp. 222 ff.

received the parcel of Books sent by Mary O'Bryan. Mary wrote that you wanted Books. I could not conceive how this could be that you could be in want and a large parcel was sent by Mary unless she had forgot to take them out of the vessel. James Thorne went from here by the packet last Wednesday week, and took a letter with him to Portsmouth for her, to which I have received no answer. I have been thinking if the letter be missed. I suppose he left it at Mrs Aldridge's at Portsmouth to go to St Helen's by our friend who keeps the market boat. I wish you to write immediately by post and say if you have received the parcel or not. If you have it will be satisfaction to me to know it; if you have not, it is time for us to enquire about it.

I hope you are getting on well. I shall expect a good account after quarterly meeting, write me particulars; and if there [are] any new preachers or exhorters, any converted, or any who have died in the faith. I wish you to keep an account of all these things. Write me how Mary O'B is received; and if she has been made useful?

John Mayne is here laid up ill. I suppose he was not careful enough of himself while in Somerset. Beware of overexerting yourself; take nourishing things or you may ruin your health. Do not go out by night after preaching.

Give my love to all the friends, Mary Billing and my dear Mary when you see them.

Your's affectionately,

W. O'BRYAN.

There are postscripts dealing with news of success from one or two preachers, and an exhortation to publish the quarterly fast.

Millpleasant, 11 Decr. 1824.

My dear Brother,

Since I wrote the other Letter by M. Billing I have recd, a letter from Kent. W. Strongman I find is gone home, and Rd. Vickery from Sheerness Circuit is gone to Chatham Circuit by my order for a little while that they might not be deserted. Yesterday I recd. a letter from Sheerness Circuit desiring Rd. may return. So I think after quarterly meeting you may go to Chatham. You can go from Portsmouth *by Van* for about 7/- or 8/- and from London to Kent by Water for about 2/- but Mary and I walked from Canterbury to Hartlip in a day.

If Leah¹⁰ had gone by Waggon as I wrote she would have been dry; but being on the Coach she got wet and ill. Always follow good advice. We must travel as cheap as possible, and live as cheap as possible till we get out of debt. Before you go you should make up all your accounts, and leave a list of Subscribers for Books, Collectors for Missy. fund etc., and wait further word—it may be for you to go to Brighton and Andw.¹¹ go to Kent; but get all things ready against I send next. You may make up, and settle with M. O'Bryan.

Yours affy.

W. O'BRYAN.

In these two letters we see the autocrat moving the ministers about as he pleases, and demanding details of the internal life of each circuit. Is there a suggestion, too, that he regarded his daughter Mary (who

¹⁰ Who is this? No woman preacher in the *Minutes* bears this Christian name.

¹¹ i.e. Andrew Cory (1818-33), then at Brighton.

with Mary Billing was stationed under Bailey in the Isle of Wight) as in some sense his deputy?

But the most explicit evidence appears in a letter of Edward Hocken, who commenced to travel in 1825, was Secretary in 1836, but whose name disappears in 1838.

EDWARD HOCKEN TO WILLIAM BAILEY

Wilton, March 5th 1828

Dear Bro. Bailey,

I shall proceed to answer your kind letter without any apology only the contents are to be kept Secret, and first as to the Connexion. I am fully perswaded there are many good people with us and the Lord has wrought A great work and if more care had been taken in taking out Preachers more might have been done. As to the temporal state it is bad; the people are in general poor, that I admitt, but I fear they have not been taught their Duty; for instance, the Quarterage in this Circuit at Michaelmas did not amount to *Sixpence* A member, at Christmas not full *Seven pence* (but then they can indulge in the fashions of Life). This is low work and unless we can increase our income it will be bad. I want time and oppertunity to see how much a member through the whole Connexn., Secondly as to the Traveling Preachers my knowledge does not reach far beyond Cornwall, but I believe as far as my knowledge reaches they are *Closely* united, never more so since I knew them. They begin to *see* and *feel too* and are determined to stand together, and in the Lord too, I am fully aware that there are many Holy men that are as pillars in those parts, men who are truly Devoted to God. I do not know of but one that has gone out of the way, that is Wm. Metherell¹² he is suspended. I do not know if I have a right to state all, but I suppose I may nearly, it's as follows: In his way down to the last Conference he called to see A woman in this Circuit that bears A bad *name*; she said he courted her &c. It got in the publick talk that he was with her, tho not criminally, and her name being up, it made A noise (shee having had two Base Children and &c). He was brought up and silenced but demanded Another meeting in his District were he was again stopt, but not meerly for that offence, but in the Exeter District last year he was *unwell*, should you think the fruits of sin. How far W.O'B. was right in winking at it I leave you to judge for he knew it and went up about it. "Oh, Bailey, let thee and me take care to keep *off from bad girls*".

Thirdly the Conference, and first from some Conversation with W.O'B (before I last wrote you) I was led to conclude that you were dissatisfied with the proceedings of the Conference and were oppose to the steps the preachers had taken and indeed it was that that induced me to write you. But he never intimated his intention of goeing to America. It is impossible for me to state the trials we had to pass through at the Conference. The General Acct was £156. 3s and the Missionary Fund £164. 12s in Debt and W.O'B would not strive to get money to pay it. He said they might wait or the Conference might pay it, but then he claimed the right of stationing all the preachers and of taking out whom he pleased or of sending home whom he thought fit, so if money were wanting then the Conference [must find it?]; but no Conference to Controul him, in fact we were to pay all and he be master with the wip in

¹² Metherell commenced to travel in 1818, and his name disappears in 1828.

one hand and the reins in the other, and go on at the beck of A *POPE!* To this the preachers *one* and *all* objected, and then came on the storm which I can not enter into. At last the Committee was chosen and the Money borrowed and the Debts paid. Then the Book Room Concern came on. W.O'B. found fault with the management tho he himself had allways been consulted; he wished to have the concern in his own hand and not for the Conference to have the Liberty to controul (acct. of which you may see in the last *Circular*), but I suppose you have seen it already; we would not consent to it so he was *paid off*; since that he has done all he can to get the whole into his *Clutches*; So far we have resisted for the general good.

Fourthly the Chapels, which with the view that I have is the worst of all. It is generally thought by the Preachers and people that they are made to him only for his Life and then back to the Connexion; but I am fully aware it's A mistake; they are gone for *Ever* unless some alterations takes place and that can only be done in Enrolling the Conference (tho I never yet hinted my mind to anyone). At present the Chapels are made to him and then to fall to the Connexion after him; *but what Connexion?* Why, those that are Enrolled with him, and as he refuses to Enroll the present *Conference* he may separate and Enroll whom he pleases, possibly his own family, and it's theirs. This is my decided opinion on the features of the old Deed and if he can get the Book Room, if he pleases he may play the same *trick*. We shall prepare the form of A deed to submit to the preachers for their Consideration, but I do not see how we can Enroll without him unless we do separate from him for the above reasons, and unless he alters his maner of proceeding a separation must take place, but if we could be enrolled with him then he might be managed and if he would not submit he might be proceeded against as another preacher, and the Chapels after him would fall to the Connexn. I shall give you but an imperfect view in this paper but must pass on.

Fifthly to W.O'B, and I must plainly tell you he is not A fit person to fill *any* Important office, if he be fit to be a preacher at all. He cares not how much he loads us with Expences, I will instance a few *Trifels*. In the year 1824 his Coals and Candles cost £16. 5s. 4d; the same year he charged for people comeing at his house £45. 17s. od. In 1825 I have but three Quarter which amounts for Coals and Candels £15. 15s. 7d, Comers and Goers at the house £24. 5s. od (mind, this does not include the Preacher in the Circuit). Last year he went to take Missionary Collections at the Portsmouth District and Collected about £9. os. od and Charged about £6 os. od for Expences. Last Qr Meeting he had to come from Torpoint to St Neot, he hired A post horse, gave 4/- a day, came to Liskeard the first day about 17 or 18 miles, slept at A publick house, 3/8 Expences, and St Neot the next day about 5 miles which was 4/- more making 11/8 to travel 23 miles. I objected to it and *Insisted* it should not be entered on the Circuit Book. He did not say much, I suppose ashamed of it, as James Thorne did not Expend but 6/8 in goeing all round the District the whole of last year. I only observe this to show you that his Expences must be curbed or we are ruined, and this makes him uneasy; but this is not all. His word cannot be taken in Conversation; he so speaks that when called on for an Explanation he so turns and twists his Words that no one knows what they are at and I observe he allways leaves A hole to creep out at. This is not upright work, and in particular amongst the Preachers I have reason to think he

represents things in a wrong light. This he did to me in reference to the letter you wrote him and I have reason to believe he has to others: and as long as those things continue to Exist the Lord cannot be pleased. On last Monday week he came to see me and *seemed* to wish things were settled. I urged the necessity of an Enrollment but he seemed to wave that and I told him candidly my thoughts on his proceedings. What Effect it will have on him I do not know. I wish him well. We parted friendly, but as to his words they are wind. I love honesty. One thing I may add, that is if we do separate I do not think that many will go with him as it's getting amongst the members and they seem to stand by the preachers in general and declare against his proceedings. Let us pray the Lord to take the matter into his hands and all will be well.

Do continue to pray for your needy Brother in the Gospel of Christ,

ED. HOCKEN.

OLIVER A. BECKERLEGGE.

The Rev. Robert Haire has written *Jack of Lincoln sails West again* (pp. 79, 2s. 9d. post free from the author at 51, Skepperstone Avenue, Bangor, Co. Down). The booklet is sub-titled "Tales of the Wesleyan Invasion of Ireland", and consists of twelve stories of early Irish Methodism told in popular style. In its pages we meet not only the Wesleys, but also such prominent figures as Thomas Walsh and John Bredin, the "ex-papists"; Adam Averell, Matthias Joyce, and many others. This is both an entertaining and an instructive book.

THE ANNUAL LECTURE

in connexion with the Bradford Conference, 1961,

WILL BE DELIVERED IN

Greenhill Methodist Church, Leeds Road, Bradford, 3,

On Wednesday, 5th July, at 7-30 p.m.,

BY THE

Rev. JOHN C. BOWMER, M.A., B.D.

Subject: "THE LORD'S SUPPER IN METHODISM, 1791-1960."

The chair will be taken by MR. GORDON N. HUNTER, of Leeds.

The Annual Meeting of the Society will be held at the same Church at **5-30 p.m.**

Mrs. Herbert Ibberson kindly invites members of the Society to **Tea** in the schoolroom of Greenhill church at **4-30 p.m.** It is essential that all those who desire to accept this invitation should send their names to the Rev. William H. Potts, 673, Leeds Road, Bradford, 3 (Tel. Bradford 64743) not later than Monday, 3rd July.

Greenhill church may be reached by bus (Thornbury or Stanningley) from the town. Both buses stop at the Conference Hall, and travellers should ask for the Manse Street stop (4d. fare). Those travelling by car will find Greenhill church one mile up the Leeds road.

METHODIST SUNDAY-SCHOOLS IN NOTTINGHAM

(Continued from page 20)

THE first division in Methodism created by the expulsion of the Rev. Alexander Kilham in 1797 created a new situation in the Methodist Sunday-school in Nottingham. The supporters of Kilham gained the use of the chapel, leaving homeless the small minority who were faithful to the "Old Connexion". There were those who wished to divide the Sunday-school, of which Joseph Pearson says: "Several persons . . . wanted to divide the Sunday Schools, but my answer to them was, 'if the old people could not agree, we should set them a better example; as there was no propriety in dividing the children and teachers, in such an unsettled state of the Church'."⁹ Apparently these good counsels prevailed, and although the management of the school passed technically into the hands of the New Connexion, the teachers who adhered to the "Old Body" continued to give their services for several years.

The leading position of the Methodists in Sunday-school work at this time may be readily seen from the following statistics:¹⁰

<i>Denomination</i>	<i>Number of Scholars</i>	
Methodist	900
Church of England	...	400
General Baptist	...	275
Independents	150
Particular Baptist	...	138
	Total ...	<u>1,863</u>

There is conflicting evidence concerning the date on which the Methodist school was transferred from the Exchange to other premises. It is generally accepted that in January 1804 the threat of Napoleonic invasion caused the room used by the school to be converted into an armoury depot for the use of the Volunteers, but other records mention Methodist schools being held in a factory in Broad Marsh¹¹ and a rented room in Hockley. (It is probable that one of these was the room over a mill to which reference has been made.) It is clear, however, that in 1803 the managers of the school found it necessary to seek alternative accommodation, and eventually erected premises in East Street, where a large and successful school was conducted for many years. Shortly after this removal the school came entirely under the control of the New Connexion body, and continues to this day (but in different premises) as the Sunday-school of the Parliament Street Methodist church, thus having the distinction of being the oldest Sunday-school in the city.

⁹ *Memoirs of Joseph Pearson*, by Henry Fish.

¹⁰ *Nottingham Journal*, 9th October 1802.

¹¹ *Nottingham Review*, 4th March 1859.

The remnant of members who had kept faithful to the old connexion rapidly grew in numbers, and were soon in a position to erect a chapel in Halifax Place. They then decided to institute schools of their own, and about the end of 1803 rooms on the west side of Boot Lane (now Milton Street) were rented and a considerable sum expended in fitting them up for school purposes. In 1805 there were 415 scholars, and the expenditure for the year was over £37.

At the commencement of the nineteenth century many Methodist Sunday-schools were established in the villages near Nottingham, which comprised the Wesleyan and New Connexion circuits of those days. Their history does not come within the scope of this brief outline, except that the establishment of these village schools was frequently due to the efforts of the teachers in the town schools. As an example of the need for this work, the Methodist New Connexion school at New Radford may be cited. It was commenced in the year 1800, and at that time was the only village school (New Radford now forms part of the City of Nottingham) within a circuit of several miles, and children from places as far distant as Arnold (5 miles), Basford (2 miles) and Bilborough (3 miles) regularly attended.¹²

The rapid development of Sunday-schools in the town of Nottingham and the leading position of the Methodists in this work is revealed by the following statistics :

	<i>Denomination</i>		<i>Schools</i>	<i>Teachers</i>	<i>Scholars</i>
Year 1811	Old Methodist	...	19	305	2,259
	New Methodist	...	11	237	1,645
	General Baptist	...	15	200	1,837
	Particular Baptist	...	4	62	539
	Independent	...	7	123	1,645
Year 1813	Old Methodist	...	27	487	3,530
	New Methodist	...	13	287	1,859
	General Baptist	...	23	342	2,479
	Particular Baptist	...	6	74	832
	Independent	...	10	165	1,573
Year 1815	Old Methodist	...	37	754	5,040
	New Methodist	...	14	284	1,927
	General Baptist	...	26	405	2,625
	Particular Baptist	...	7	107	991
	Independent	...	11	177	1,770

The Methodists, therefore, retained their lead over the other non-conformist bodies in both the size and scope of their Sunday-school work. Another feature which emerges from the statistics is the large number of teachers, lending support to the view that even in the first decades of the nineteenth century most Christian men and women who possessed some education felt and accepted the call to Sunday-school work.

Mention must here be made of the establishment of the Nottingham Sunday School Union on 23rd April 1810 with the following objects :

¹² MNC Jubilee Memorial Volume (Nottingham circuit).

1st. To promote the increase of Sunday Schools by introducing them into those places where there are none, and increasing their number in those places where they are not proportionate to the population of poor children.

2nd. To suggest improved methods of governing and instructing the children.

3rd. To increase each others zeal and direct that zeal to proper objects.

4th. To assist each other, and further the work by mutual prayer.¹³

It would be difficult to over-estimate the value of the work begun in 1810 and continued to the present day by the Nottingham Sunday School Union. Methodists took a full share in the work, and all Methodist schools were members of the Union. In the early days of the movement the Union was instrumental in establishing many new schools in the town and neighbouring villages as well as in raising the standard of teaching in existing schools.

With the commencement of a Primitive Methodist society in Nottingham during 1816 another school was begun which soon grew to considerable proportions. In 1824 the Primitive Methodists opened an adult Sunday-school which four years later had no fewer than 222 adult scholars on the books. In this work they followed that Methodist pioneer William Singleton, who with Samuel Fox, a Quaker, founded in Nottingham what is generally regarded as having been the first adult school. Early on Sunday mornings men and women could be found laboriously spelling out the words of Scripture, or, when it was finally decided that writing was a suitable occupation for the Sabbath, copying texts.

During the years which followed, the Methodist schools continued to grow and multiply. Halifax Place chapel, the circuit chapel of the "old" Methodism, opened branch schools in various parts of the town. A glance at the following figures will quickly show the organization and devoted service entailed to maintain six schools in the year 1829:

Halifax Place, lower room	...	157	scholars
" " upper room	...	204	"
Wool-alley	...	233	"
St. Anns Street	...	206	"
New Sneinton	...	221	"
Kingston Place	...	64	"
Total	...	1,085	¹⁴

For the year 1853 there exists a record of the numerical strength of the nonconformist Sunday-schools in Nottingham. At that time eight out of a total of nineteen nonconformist schools were conducted by the Methodists, and the actual figures are not without interest after the passing of a hundred years:¹⁵

¹³ Pamphlet in Nottingham Reference Library (1810).

¹⁴ *History of Nottingham Sunday School Union*, by W. B. Carter.

¹⁵ *Nottingham Review*, 13th April 1855.

<i>Chapel</i>	<i>Children</i>		<i>Teachers</i>		<i>Vols. in Library</i>	<i>Adult Class</i>	<i>Infant Class</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>			
Broad Street (Wesleyan)	165	280	28	37	462	40	80
Canaan (PM)...	115	117	17	29	170	108	155
East Street (MNC) ...	146	197	29	39	800	72	8
East Street Branch (MNC)	63	98	18	17	221	—	—
Halifax Place (Wesleyan)	115	116	21	36	400	41	—
Hockley (PM) ...	100	147	15	22	136	16	—
Kent Street (Wesl. Assoc.)	30	90	18	10	105	—	—
Shakespeare Street (WR)	65	76	10	16	—	40	36

It will be seen that the opening of village schools and the increasing number of schools conducted by other denominations was having its effect in reducing the number of scholars in the large town schools, but nevertheless Methodism still retained its premier place in the movement.

The Nottingham Sunday School Union report covering the year 1865 not only provides interesting reading but also throws some light on the character of the work at that time. Included is a detailed report on a visitation of each school in the town made by W. B. Carter, an officer of the Union, which reflects the changing pattern of Sunday-school work from primarily educational to entirely religious instruction. Eleven Methodist schools of the various denominations were visited (four Wesleyan, two PM, three MNC, one "Wesleyan Free Church", and one UMFC), among which instruction in writing was given on Sundays in two cases only. Seven of the remaining schools had weeknight classes for writing; one new school intended weeknight writing classes in the winter months, and the other school made no provision for this type of instruction. Reference is made in the body of the report to the "numerous" day schools and evening schools "now teaching that art".

Modern problems in connexion with Sunday-school work were even then in the mind of the compiler of the report, as in each instance he made inquiries as to (a) the existence of teachers' improvement meetings; (b) the method adopted in influencing parents; and (c) any link connecting school with church. Of the eleven Methodist schools, five had a teachers' training class, only four made some attempt to influence parents (in one case by means of tea meetings!), but all had special classes with the objective of retaining the older scholars and training them as teachers. Individual teaching still persisted as to sole method in four schools, individual and collective teaching in five, leaving only two schools where collective instruction was the normal practice. Seven schools attempted some kind of auxiliary organization in the form of "penny banks" or sick clubs.

In 1865 the eleven Methodist schools had a total of 556 teachers and 3,446 scholars. Later figures are available but do not afford a fair comparison, owing to the extension of the borough and the inclusion of a number of schools previously listed in the "country" returns. It is clear, however, that Methodism retained its lead in

Sunday-school work. In later years the size of the schools at the town chapels declined markedly, but the decrease is more than offset by substantial increases in the numbers of scholars on the books of new suburban schools commenced to meet the needs of the outward drift of population.

One hundred and seventy-seven years of Methodist Sunday-school work in Nottingham! It is impossible to estimate the value of the devotion, sacrifice and service involved, or the effect upon the lives of the thousands of children and adults who have passed through the schools, but we cannot fail to agree with a distinguished local historian who writes :

. . . it was the Nonconformist chapels which seem to have most captured the imagination of the time. They provided a ceaseless round of educational and social activity centred upon the revived Puritanism of the nineteenth century and in so doing created the mould for the spiritual life of the nascent civic democracy, a mould which has left its marks down to the age of the Welfare State—and, may we not hope, beyond? Such names as Castle Gate, Friar Lane, High Pavement, Mansfield Road, Halifax Place, Broad Street, Derby Road, to mention only some of the leading chapels, continue to stir transmitted memories even among those who are separated from them by a generation or more; and one wonders where the historian of the future will look for similar centres of energising influence in our own day.¹⁶

ROWLAND C. SWIFT.

¹⁶ *Nottingham : A Century of Change*, by J. D. Chambers.

Mr. John A. Vickers has written *The Story of Canterbury Methodism* (pp. 32, 3s. 10d. post free from the author at The Bungalow, Vernon Holme, Harbledown, Canterbury) to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the foundation of Canterbury Methodism. This booklet is a fine example of what a "local history" ought to be, and the author has spared no pains to make it complete and accurate. All branches of Methodism are fully covered; there are some excellent illustrations; and a full list of ministers since the earliest days when the circuit covered the whole of Kent indicates very clearly how neighbouring circuits have been carved from Canterbury through the years. This booklet deserves a wide sale.

We have received from Garrett Biblical Institute, Evanston, Illinois, U.S.A., an off-print of articles by Frederick A. Norwood which appeared in the December 1959 and March 1960 issues of *Church History*. They are entitled "Methodist Historical Studies, 1930-1959", and there are thirty-five pages of descriptive material of 336 books published within the period named, together with ten pages of bibliographical details of the books listed. The survey is extensive if not complete; it covers every aspect of Methodist history, theology, liturgiology and sociology in sections devoted to England, America, and World Methodism; and it includes (as we should expect) most of our own Society's Lectures. This is a most valuable work, and its value would be increased tenfold if it could be re-printed for sale in this country. It is just the kind of thing which every Methodist student (and especially beginners) should have constantly in use.

MATTHEW BRAMBLE, TOM PAINE AND JOHN WESLEY

IF great poets often improve the shining hours of history, versifiers, even the second- and third-rate, no less frequently reveal history as it appears to or is made by wayfaring men. Not the least of the services rendered by the *Proceedings* is in making available a growing treasury of unprofessional pieces many of which illuminate the larger as well as the less important aspects of history.

I

There appeared in the year 1820 a volume of poetry, poor stuff in itself, but interesting because of its Quaker-Methodist-Deist association. It had the cumbrous and unromantic title *Portraits in blank verse of Persons in Public and Private Life, Real and Caricatured with a few Fictitious Ones*. It was published by Baldwin, Chadock & Joy of Paternoster Row and R. W. Dean of Manchester, and cost four shillings. The book came out ostensibly from the hand of "Matthew Bramble", upon whom the volume itself sheds but little light. At the close of the Preface the author states that he had between three and four hundred pages more of miscellaneous religious, moral and facetious poetry ready for publication if the public should approve of the *Portraits*. It seems unlikely that he received encouragement enough to float another volume.

The *Portraits* contain twenty-five poems upon people or human types who were, or had been, in some sense in the public eye. In fact, twenty-eight characters are drawn, for several of the pieces contain two figures within a single frame. Thus, John Wesley and Thomas Paine are shown *vis-à-vis*. Of the figures dealt with, only these two could be called national figures—the rest moved in the proscribed but no less searching beams of local publicity.

The various titles blazon the author's didactic and satirical purpose. At times, the tone is cynical. Upon the cover of the book is inscribed the maxim "If the cap fits, put it on". Inside, with his tongue too obviously in his cheek, the author "begs pardon of all such persons as his cap may fit for introducing them to the world; like the public executioner who always asks forgiveness of the parties (if they are gentlemen) before he puts the law in force".

As at least fourteen of the poems are concerned with Quakers, it seems reasonable to infer that either the author was a Quaker himself or that he had moved amongst them. The name "Matthew Bramble" has no obvious Quaker associations. Of the Quakers mentioned, three are referred to as being "indifferent ones", several are remembered with affection, and one or two with love. Several appear to have stung the author in some way—one or two "bit so hard that their teeth marks are not yet obliterated", he says, and their memory has for him no "saccharine quality".

Portraiture No. 16, entitled "A Philanthropist", depicts Richard

Reynolds (1735-1816), the Quaker proprietor of large ironworks in John Fletcher's parish of Madeley. Reynolds's enterprise in the iron and transport industries is well known. His letters give glimpses of the poverty and wretchedness of the miners and furnacemen, and tell of the looting of grain as it passed through the parish by canal. With the best Quaker concern, he sought to improve conditions. Even after his retirement he gave £500 to help the neighbourhood through a particularly bad food crisis.

In the piece headed "An Exemplary Couple" Matthew Bramble recalls his parents with affection and pride. He writes:

My father if I don't mistake the man
Had much in him of what is aptly called
The milk of human kindness; that is to say
His heart o'erflowed with warmth to serve his friends;
And so expanded was the zeal in him,
So comprehensive his philanthropy
That all mankind might properly be said
To be within the focus of his love.

But Bramble's tone changes to sad indignation as he tells of the avaricious, remorseless men who took advantage of his father's bounty.

All the characters portrayed in the volume, even those which cannot be identified with particular persons, are true to life—"The Overgrown Merchant", "The Human Shark", "The Unfortunate Girl", "The Backbiter", and others of a similar kind, are ever with us. At the same time there is a touch of melodrama in Bramble's presentation of them.

II

Portraiture No. 15 is headed "The Christian Preacher and Infidel Writer Contrasted". Here in one hundred and twenty lines Bramble garlands the memory of John Wesley and desecrates the ignominious bones of Tom Paine's humanism. At the time of writing Wesley had been dead twenty-nine and Paine eleven years. The fact that Tom Paine was the son of a Quaker might account for some of the writer's scorn, but there is discernment in the specific contrasting of Paine and Wesley in a judgement that sees in Wesley and Methodism a major anti-revolutionary force. However little in common the two men had in life, there was similarity in one item of their legacy, namely, that they were both commemorated in their "societies". In 1820, when Bramble was bringing out his volume, "Tom Paine Societies" were a source of concern and challenge to Methodists in some parts of England, for instance in East Anglia.

Bramble introduces his lines upon Wesley with a quotation, perhaps from Young, or some such versifier:

"He who is holy, humble, courteous, mild,
And who, as heaven's vicegerent strives to prove
Himself entitled to the rank he holds
Deserves our admiration and applause."

The actual sketch of Wesley opens thus:

Such was John Wesley ; and a many more
 I trust, have lived, and do live, who deserve
 To be esteemed for their love of truth :
 Pre-eminently so was little John.
 When I contemplate what thou didst for men,
 How soon thou left'st the pallet of repose,
 How studied, preach'd, wrote, and ran up and down,
 To cultivate the Christian Character ;
 How temperate in eating and in drinking,
 And in indulgences of ev'ry sort :
 What an economist thou was of time ;
 What method, regularity and form
 Thou shew'dst in ev'ry action of thy life,
 And all this for the honour of thy God,
 And the advantage of thy fellow-men
 Without a mercenary view in it
 I cannot but applaud thee for thy deeds,
 Admire thy ardour, venerate thy name
 And eulogize thee, as the best of men.

Twenty lines farther on, Tom Paine's form begins to materialize in the lines :

Behold the diff'rence 'twixt the christian preacher
 And him who holds forth infidelity :
 Can any one point out the man to me
 Who is made better in a moral sense,
 By want of faith in future destiny,
 Denying all he cannot comprehend,
 And setting up against reveal'd religion
 The Age of Reason and the Rights of Man ?

Bramble waxes warmer with every stroke he makes against that "irreverent, worthless fool, Tom Paine". At last a picture stands out of one who is devil, iconoclast, infidel, blasphemer, traitor and rebel. The poem ends with the contrast between Paine's atheistic materialism and Wesley's emphasis upon man's immortal nature :

So taught not worthless Tom ; he taught, man liv'd
 A pig, and died a pig—a grov'ling, sensual,
 Mercenary thing ; possessing little here,
 And naught hereafter.
 May God impede the increase of such reptiles,
 And in his fiat, influence all the world,
 To live each hour, as they would wish to die.

Wesley would have squirmed to read Bramble's atrocious effusions. In particular, the twelve lines on faith, so Methodist in essence, so banal in form, would have evoked John's most caustic comment :

Christ taught men nought, but what in theory
 All must admire, howe'er defective they
 May be in practice : vice has no footing here ;
 But virtue, in the most extended sense,
 Flows from this source of holiness and love.
 Then why dispute and doubt the christian faith ?
 As well might'st thou gainsay the Deity,

Because, thou canst no more account for him,
 Nor for his works, nor for his hiding place ;
 Nor why, or wherefore, he does this or that,
 Or how he does them, than thou canst make out
 For why he chose t'adopt the means pursued
 To ransom man.

All the same, there is a rough sincerity and force about the portrait as a whole which is arresting, and is an interesting tribute to Wesley, especially if it came from a Quaker pen.

III

This brings us to the question as to whether "Matthew Bramble" is a name or a pseudonym. The British Museum Catalogue under Bramble gives *The Portraits*, dated 1820, stating that Bramble's real name was Andrew Macdonald. When that name is turned up we find it given as the author of *Vimonda*, a tragedy in five acts, written in verse in 1788, and of "those productions which have appeared under the signature of Matthew Bramble, Esq., with other compositions, etc, London 1791".

However, a Quaker scholar named H. W. Atkinson claims that he has proved convincingly that the Catalogue is erroneous in ascribing the *Portraits* to Macdonald. It is true that this author did use the pseudonym "Matthew Bramble", but even on the face of it the *Portraits* are out of character with what is known of the Scottish writer.

Mr. Atkinson set out to trace the genealogies of various "Atkinson" and collateral families, and in so doing he amassed a great amount of biographical material. In 1933 he produced a large volume on the subject, and one which must be a valuable piece of research from the Quaker point of view. Atkinson discovered numerous links between the Quakers and Methodism, and it seems that "Matthew Bramble" is one such link. Atkinson identifies Bramble with Richard Dearman, who was born at Thorne, not far from Epworth, in the year 1766. Dearman left a Memoir in which he says that his father, Nathan Dearman, kept a grocery and drapery business in Thorne for some years, and that John Wesley, when in Thorne, always called upon Nathan. Richard recalls seeing Wesley, whom he calls "the venerable old man", in his boyhood home. According to Richard Dearman, Wesley's headquarters at Thorne were at the home of John Chesters, a local preacher, who was also Richard's schoolmaster. Neither of the Dearmans, nor Chesters, is mentioned in Wesley's *Journal or Letters*.

Young Dearman lived for at least seven years in Nottingham, where he was an apprentice. Some of his poetic effusions appeared in local newspapers, and he had a correspondence with the editor of the *Gentleman's Magazine*. After a spell with his father in Barnsley, he took to the life of a wayfaring man.

Why Richard Dearman (assuming that Atkinson has made out his

case) chose to write over the name "Matthew Bramble" is not clear. It may have been a ruse to gain publicity by fathering his work off upon the author of *Vimonda*. Or again, it may have been simple admiration for the character "Matthew Bramble" in Smollett's *Humphrey Clinker*, although this hardly seems an adequate explanation. One might hazard the guess that Dearman had observed similarities between his own career and that of Smollett's character, who, as Dr. Brewer points out, is "Roderick Random grown old, somewhat cynical by experience of the world, but vastly improved in taste". Setting on one side this matter of taste, Dearman, as reflected in his Memoir and in the *Portraits*, is not unlike the Smollett character—tart and touchy, good-hearted, and somewhat cynical about men, women and religion.

Atkinson, in the volume already referred to, states that the *Portraits* excited much interest at the time of publication. Perhaps they were taken as the posthumous pieces of Andrew Macdonald. Yet neither on that account nor on the score of intrinsic merit can we today understand how they could do any more than cause a mild flutter in certain Quaker dovecots. The Tom Paine societies would see in them no threat to their existence, and Methodists would simply be pleased that a quondam Quaker had avowed such admiration for their founder.

The *Portraits* contain a silhouette of "Matthew Bramble" aged 54 years, showing the profile of a massive head low set on thick shoulders, very like that of Samuel Hick which forms the frontispiece of Everett's *Village Blacksmith*. GEORGE LAWTON.

The *Handbook* of the 1961 Bradford Conference is worthy of the tradition in which it stands. The main historical article, entitled "The Haworth Round", is by Mrs. Evelyne Chapman, one of our own members. The subject is too vast to be crammed into ten pages, including four illustrations, but Mrs. Chapman has fulfilled a difficult task with distinction. William Grimshaw, William Darney, and John Nelson; the octagon chapels at Heptonstall and Bradford; and many other interesting topics, could have filled a handbook. Here, however, is a useful guide to an area which teems with Methodist historical interest. One major grumble: the *Handbook* devotes three pages to the Fernley, Beckly and Peake Conference Lectures, but there is not one single word about the Wesley Historical Society Lecture. What have we done to deserve this scurvy treatment?

The centenary of the Landore Methodist church, Swansea, has occasioned the production of a handbook which contains, in addition to congratulatory messages from connexional dignitaries and a programme of celebrations, six pages giving a brief history of the church through its hundred years. Copies are obtainable (2s. 2d. post free) from the Rev. Fred Russell, 109, Shiloh Road, Brynhyfryd, Swansea, Glam.

On Wesley Day 1961 there was unveiled at Sheephill, Burnopfield, Co. Durham, a memorial to commemorate the visits of John Wesley to that vicinity on several occasions from 6th March 1746 onwards. The cost has been defrayed by the members of the Gateshead (South) circuit, and the memorial tablet is in the care of Haswell Memorial church, Burnopfield.

BOOK NOTICES

The Life of Christian Devotion: Devotional Selections from the Works of William Law, edited by Mary Cooper Robb. (Abingdon Press, pp. 158, \$3).

William Law has been so neglected a writer in recent years that any work which succeeds in introducing him to fresh readers in this the bicentenary year of his death is abundantly worth while. This is the aim of the volume under review, and it is therefore welcome. These selections from Law's works, however, are not in chronological order, but are arranged to illustrate six aspects of the devout life. They they do admirably, but no reader must expect to be able to trace through them the fascinating development of Law's thought, so interesting to Methodists because of the light it sheds on the theological outlook of John Wesley. There is, however, a useful introduction for the benefit of those who make their first acquaintance with Law through this volume, and an equally useful list of his works with their dates and full titles. But what is most needed is a new edition of Law's complete works, and if this book helps to stimulate a demand for this, Mrs. Robb will indeed have put us all in her debt.

ERIC W. BAKER.

The Young Mr. Wesley: A study of John Wesley and Oxford, by V. H. H. Green. (Edward Arnold, pp. 342, 35s.)

It was from St. Mary's Church, Oxford, that Cranmer went to the stake; it was in St. Mary's that Wesley preached in 1744 a sermon which led to his exclusion from that pulpit and from those of the other churches in Oxford; it was the incumbency of St. Mary's that Newman resigned when he was about to leave the Church of England. Oxford rather than Canterbury is perhaps the true centre of the Church of England, and the great turning-points of English church history are linked with Oxford in many ways. Cranmer indeed was a Cambridge man, but the other two were deeply influenced by Oxford. Ronald Knox, who wrote an interesting comparison of them, has himself been described as having what the psychologists call a love-hate relationship towards Oxford. Wesley's denunciations did not amount to hatred; yet the phrase calls attention to an ambiguous relationship which was also true of Wesley. In his early manhood he was deeply influenced by the University; it was his second home; but even after his rejection by it, not only did he retain some links with it, drawing for instance the income of his Fellowship at Lincoln till he resigned it on his marriage, but also he had a nostalgic love for it which he never entirely lost even when the course of his life carried him far from it.

It is therefore entirely fitting that Dr. Green, Fellow and Senior Tutor of Lincoln College, and a distinguished historian, should turn his hand to the study of the most influential of the Fellows of Lincoln. This is very opportune, not only because the chief works on John Wesley's youth are in French and German, but because some new material is available. It is somewhat astonishing that in these days when so many people are casting around for fresh subjects for academic research, Wesley's Oxford Diaries have not been investigated. Curnock made some reference to them in the first volume of the *Standard Journal*, but they remain unpublished; moreover we are informed that the editor of these *Proceedings* has discovered a fifth. It is good to know that under his editorship the first is to be published, together with an abridgement of the rest; but why not the whole? Dr. Green has also had access to the records of his College, which few others could have searched with such skill or such patience.

The result is a most detailed account of Wesley in Oxford and the whole Oxford background, indeed of the domestic affairs of the College. Epworth and the Cotswolds also receive careful treatment, but the account of Georgia and Aldersgate is superficial. Throughout the work we could do with more bibliographical detail and less biographical, more references (though we never doubt that so careful an historian could quickly supply them) and less information about the life of almost every person Wesley met, however casually. The book is not one for the beginner: unless one already had a clear picture of the Wesley family one could hardly see the wood for the trees. But those who know something of Wesley will enjoy the way in which the elaborate detail gives the atmosphere of the period.

The picture that emerges is of a charming and sociable young man who gradually grew more austere; the picture of religion at Oxford is not as black as has been painted; at Christ Church in 1731 the whole College received the sacrament at Whitsuntide.

Dr. Green is not impressed by Wesley's originality as a thinker, and this judgement perhaps calls for some modification. The book is written in a very cool, dry style, reminiscent of the Anglicanism of Wesley's own day; but it acknowledges Wesley's greatness, as every serious writer, whatever his denomination, is bound to do.

A. RAYMOND GEORGE.

John Wesley's Religious Quest, by Thomas Reed Jeffery. (Vantage Press, Inc., New York, pp. 439, \$5.)

For a book of over four hundred pages of closely-printed text, this study adds little to our knowledge of that period in Wesley's life which really needs much deeper exploration than as yet has been given to it. Relying chiefly on Curnock's Standard Edition of the *Journal*, the author records fully and faithfully the course of events leading up to 24th May 1738, and his own comments are most illuminating. But on any subject one looks for evidence that an author is cognizant of the works of the masters, and that is what is noticeably lacking here. There is no evidence that Jeffery knows that Dr. Rattenbury has written on Wesley's conversion, or Dr. Bett on the hymns, or Dr. Towson on the Moravians, or Dr. Eric Baker and Mr. Brazier Green on William Law. Were it not for a single reference in the notes, one could conclude that he had not heard of the Wesley Historical Society!

Jeffery is at his best when dealing with the influence of the Moravians and the mystics in Wesley's religious quest, but, as so often happens with writers who emphasize these elements, Wesley's Anglican heritage, with its non-juring background, is neglected.

There are a few printer's errors—something must have dropped out between lines 25 and 26 on page 260, the mother of the Wesleys always has her name spelt "Susannah", and Charles Wesley's Alma Mater is given as "Christ Church College". An American dictionary would be helpful when it comes to dealing with such words as "ictus" (p. 26), "glozingly" and "brush-off" (p. 237), and "wrathy" (p. 250). The half-dozen or so blank pages at the end should have carried a much-needed index.

One awaits with eagerness the results of recent research into the diaries of John Wesley—our primary source of information on this formative period of his life.

JOHN C. BOWMER.

In our last issue it was wrongly stated that the price of the Register of Circuit Plans published by the Society of Cirplanologists was 2s. 10d. The correct price is 4s. 5d. post free, and the Register can be obtained from Mr. Arnold Whipp, 29, Mather Avenue, Whitefield, Manchester.

NOTES AND QUERIES

1057. EAST ANGLIAN BRANCH.

The Autumn 1960 Meeting—the Rev. John J. Perry presiding—was held on Saturday, October 15th, in the Hethersett church, near Norwich, and was addressed by Mr. R. C. Richardson on “Some aspects of Norfolk Methodism”. The speaker first sketched the history of Methodism in Hethersett. He deplored the dearth of information relative to that part of his subject, for though a Methodist society was established there in the early part of the nineteenth century, available records did not go back beyond 1872. (Yet another reminder of the necessity for preserving documentary evidence!) The present chapel, formerly United Methodist, was erected in 1922, and so constructed that the central aisle coincides with the original footpath to the entrance of the older building. Thus all worshippers entering the church are “treading where the saints have trod”.

Mr. Richardson went on to give recollections of and observations on Norfolk Methodism, pointing out that many of the seemingly peculiar people of bygone days in rural Methodism were only so to those who did not know their mode of life. To the townsman they often appeared uncouth, for their utterances were “earthy” and sometimes embarrassing, but these were characteristics born of long association with the soil and livestock. In past years there had been marked insularity in country Methodism, which often manifested itself in a dictatorial attitude on the part of those in office, who, finding themselves “drest in a little brief authority”, determined to use their opportunity to the utmost! The spirit of independence and non-conformity among the peasantry of previous generations was reflected not least in their religion. They had to fend for themselves, and therefore it was not surprising that their normally fixed ideas should often be crudely expressed, even in their church life, in terms of what they knew and saw in their rather circumscribed sphere. But many of them were gracious souls for whom one thanked God.

A short discussion and business session followed, after which tea was served. The membership totalled sixty. W. A. GREEN.

1058. EXHIBITION OF WESLEYANA AT TRURO.

It was my privilege on May 25th to lecture at the annual meeting of the Cornish Methodist Historical Association (our Cornish Branch) in Truro. The meeting was held in connexion with an Exhibition, “Methodism in the Life of Cornwall, 1743-1961”, in the County Hall, 23rd May to 3rd June. The Exhibition was opened by Sir John Carew Pole, Chairman of the Cornwall County Council. Most of the 150 exhibits were naturally of local interest, but there were some of a more general nature including correspondence to and from Lavington, Bishop of Exeter, generously loaned by the Archbishop of Canterbury from the Lambeth Palace Library. The Exhibition was being well patronized by the general public, and had received good publicity in the Press and on television.

The whole enterprise reflected great credit on our Cornish Branch, which now has a membership of over one hundred and forty, including many Anglicans, some other non-Methodists, and, indeed, some of no church allegiance at all—so well aware are Cornish people of the contribution which Methodism has made to the life of Cornwall. The Exhibition was felt to be one of the most important developments in the history of our Society—whose whole outlook might be transformed if enthusiasts like Messrs. Shaw, Beckerlegge, Evans, and others, could be found in other counties. WESLEY F. SWIFT.