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Proceedings OF THE Wesley Historical Society

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SAINTS OF THE SOIL

Early Methodism in Agricultural Areas

The Wesley Historical Society Lecture 1992

FOR the purposes of this paper 'early' refers to the period up to the middle of the nineteenth century, and the agricultural areas are mainly in Nottinghamshire, Dorset, and Lincolnshire. Consequently most of the material relates to Wesleyan and Primitive Methodists.

Throughout my period England was predominantly rural, but was constantly changing in occupation and settlement patterns. In 1750 85 per cent of the people lived in communities of fewer than 5,000 souls, and in 1801 75 per cent were still outside towns of that size. The census of 1851 showed that just over half the English people lived in towns of 10,000 or more.¹ However, other changes should be noted: the spread of industries, such as mining and textiles, into small rural settlements, and the development of a network of roads, canals, and railways that not only connected towns, but also affected the character of the villages on and near the routes. Purely, or largely, agricultural areas were often becoming more isolated from the growing proportion of the country that was being rapidly transformed. By the early nineteenth century most Wesleyan circuits were centred on a town, and most of the Sunday preaching by the itinerant preachers was in the town chapels. From this time it was often left to the Primitive Methodists and the Bible Christians to evangelise and develop societies in the more isolated agricultural regions, frequently basing a circuit or branch on a village, although we must always remember that Wesleyans were still active in rural development.

One of the greatest problems in tracing the roots of Methodism is that of identifying Methodists. Their status was often ambiguous to contemporaries and I suspect this may have been particularly true of the villages, where numbers were very small and where the Anglican priest who was

¹ H. D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast* (1989), p. 2.

responsible for making returns for visitations was often an absentee. For example, the episcopal visitation for the diocese of York of 1743 reveals that almost half of the parishes that completed returns lacked resident clergy. However in the county of York, with a relatively large number of towns, only about a quarter had a non-resident. North Nottinghamshire, a rural region in the same diocese with only one small borough, had over a half in that category. About one third of Devon's parishes at that time had absentees.² Clergy may have been vague or inaccurate out of ignorance or in self-defence. In the returns to the Archbishop of York from 55 North Nottinghamshire parishes in 1764 only two specifically recorded Methodists. In one of these, the large parish of Misterton, with no priest resident in the main village, the curate recorded that there were 11 dissenting families, consisting of 10 Baptists and one Quaker, but in the question about chapels he not only described the Baptists', but one which he said had been erected about two years earlier by the Methodists. The people were not named as dissenters, but their chapel, which had actually been open for at least *eight* years and not two, was so described. Thirty years later the incumbent in Eakring in Central Nottinghamshire published an open letter to his parishioners exhorting them to attend church, and made this comment:

If you acknowledge, as I have no doubt you will, that all I have been recommending is your duty as Christians; be not discouraged from it because it is not commonly practised, and that to begin, in some instances, may expose you to ridicule, and you may be called Methodists or Culemites.³

Further confusion may arise from the occasional practice of registering Methodist meetings under the term 'Independent', but that was not confined to rural locations.

An intriguing question is how Methodism first became established in villages. Often the answer has been lost, and where it has survived it takes many forms. It was rarely the result of a visit from John Wesley, who was much more likely to visit towns than villages. In Nottinghamshire he rode to the county town more than two dozen times and to Newark at least seven times but in the more remote north merely twice to Retford and once to Worksop. Only four villages in the north of the county ever heard him and they all happened to form part of a circular preaching route on a Sunday from Epworth. Misterton, a large village just inside Nottinghamshire, had 17 visits from 1749. Often the place he did visit already had a local society. New societies were formed where a group of local people felt that normal church life was inadequate and where contact was made

² B. J. Biggs, 'Methodism in a Rural Society: North Nottinghamshire 1740-1851 (Nottingham University PhD thesis, 1975) pp. 68-69; A Warne, *Church and Society in Eighteenth Century Devon* (1969), pp. 38-39.

³ Biggs PhD, pp. 152-155.

with Methodist people, and ultimately with itinerant preachers. The creation of a meeting could reflect the level of religious enthusiasm of these people as well as the degree of official Anglican life, and the subtle balance between these two factors must have varied enormously between one community and another, and even within the same community over a period of time. The movement spread into North Nottinghamshire in a geographical pattern from Epworth, with the towns being ahead of the general village movement. The 'founding father' in Retford was a Scottish drover turned navy, who helped to excavate the local canal in the 1770s and then stayed on. His initial enthusiasm helped to launch the Methodist cause, but local tradesmen quickly became the administrative and pastoral leaders.⁴

Much further south, in Dorset, Wesley made one or two visits to a small number of communities, mainly towns, scattered across the county, but no fewer than 16 to Shaftesbury. There can be no doubt that he singled out that little town because of his affection for John Haime, a native of the place, who had joined the army rather than face a charge of sheep-stealing. During his travels he had heard Methodist preachers, been converted, and become a lay preacher. Following demobilisation he founded a society in Shaftesbury before being accepted by Wesley for the itinerancy. He later returned to his old home for periods at a time. A secondary factor for Wesley's continued contact with Shaftesbury was its relative accessibility on the turnpike road from Salisbury which might be linked to tours to Bristol or Devon. Methodist enterprise in the county was generally sluggish, but benefited from a remarkable, informal mission in 1793-94 in its coastal area provided by a strangely-assorted trio from the East Midlands, led by Robert Carr Brackenbury, Squire of Raithby in Lincolnshire, and assisted by a young local preacher from South Nottinghamshire called George Smith, a weaver by trade, and Mrs. Pershard, Brackenbury's Methodist housekeeper. Despite all efforts the movement had only gained a foothold in about 40 parishes by 1800.⁵

By the first quarter of the nineteenth century Wesleyan Methodism was well established in most towns and large villages, where second or third generations of the local societies were developing a church identity and respectability and building chapels. Many rural localities, however, had no serving Methodist witness and it was frequently the Primitive Methodists, and in the South West the Bible Christians, who 'missioned' these territories. The first generation of preachers of these Connexions were primarily evangelists, hungry for new converts and ever eager to move into different villages, rather than linger behind to develop a sound, stable congregational life. This sometimes led, as in North Nottinghamshire and South Lincolnshire, to early enterprise petering out and having to be restarted later. More solid success resulted from the Primitive Methodists' Western Mission which sprang from Staffordshire

⁴ B. J. Biggs, *The Story of the Methodists of Retford and District* (1970), pp. 3-7

⁵ B. J. Biggs, *The Wesleys and the Early Dorset Methodists* (1987), pp. 27-34, 38, 44-50, 55.

in 1824 via Somerset and Wiltshire until in 1827 Brinkworth, an obscure village, became head of a new circuit. By then it had already pushed its preaching frontier into the northern tip of Dorset, and within a year the small village of Motcombe, near Shaftesbury, formed a new circuit that immediately established new lines of mission enterprise. One of these extended to Salisbury, but its main thrust was southwards through the heart of Dorset to the coast 40 miles away, which was reached by 1838.

Meanwhile in 1831 a new superintendent, Richard Davies, had arrived in Motcombe and was accommodated in two scantily-furnished rooms at Enmore Green. Partly for financial reasons the Quarterly Meeting made the bold decision to employ a third preacher, so that Davies could be released to mission new places. The strategy worked and the enlarged circuit was freed of debt. As an example of the kind of effort required in this bucolic backwater let us look at the superintendent's schedule for 7th July, 1833. In the morning he preached at Ansty to an attentive crowd, despite the rain. In the early afternoon he moved on to Strickland 'where some young persons in a carriage attempted in vain to disturb the congregation' At 5.00 p.m. he spoke to a large crowd at Helton, and two hours later he preached at Milton Abbas. Having walked 19 miles and preached four sermons in the open air, he was glad to find overnight lodging in an inn.⁶

Another evangelising expedition from Brinkworth penetrated Berkshire where it enjoyed spectacular success. In the depths of the winter of 1830 a travelling missionary, Thomas Russell, rode to Shefford in that county and preached to nearly 200 people. A few weeks later he was joined by a 25-year old Shropshire woman, Elizabeth Smith, who had the virtue, according to a circuit report two years later, of being 'attentive to discipline, a general family visitor, not addicted to long preaching'. By the end of 1831 the Shefford Primitive Methodist Circuit was created with 600 members and seven travelling preachers. Within just over three years its membership had risen to 2,280.⁷

Although living nearly a century after Wesley's early journeys and during the golden age of turnpikes and coaches, the Primitive Methodist preachers usually walked to their country appointments, on bye-ways and bridlepaths. In Southern England agricultural wages had been cut to about 6 shillings per week and many labourers endured wretched conditions. This was the age of the 'Tolpuddle Martyrs'. Time and again a welcome came in a new village from someone who had heard the preacher in a neighbouring place and who issued an invitation. For example, in the winter of 1831-32 Thomas Russell, substituting for a sick colleague, walked 25 miles to preach in a cottage at Sutton Scotney. He started out

⁶ H. B. Kendall, *The History and Origin of the Primitive Methodist Church* (n.d.), vol i, pp. 296-298; J. Petty, *The History of the Primitive Methodists Connexion to 1860*, (1864), pp. 320-321

⁷ W. M. Kilby, *Yonder Country is Ours* (1986), pp. 8, 11, 19, 27.

at 7.00 am. and, despite 'making a few visits on the road' completed his journey in nine hours. Within an hour of his arrival he was preaching in a crowded cottage.

An insight into the Primitive Methodist technique of planting a new rural congregation is afforded by this entry for Monday November 16th 1835 in the journal of the superintendent of the new Reading Circuit, John Ride:

Visited many families at Grazely and Burghfield. At night, preached in a Wheelwright's Shop to a crowded congregation. Here we had no Society so I deemed it expedient to explain its nature and privileges. I then invited all to give in their names who desired to flee from 'the Wrath to come', live Holy lives and get to Heaven. Thirty-two came forward to form themselves into a Society. After this the Lord answered prayer in the conversion of six souls.

Notice the sequence: intensive house visitation, preaching in a village workshop (which combined the elements of a familiar type of environment with the novelty of its use for worship), an immediate challenge to use the occasion to establish a continuing class, and finally the recruitment of even more people who were converted during the proceedings.⁸

Meanwhile in the East Midlands the Nottingham Primitive Methodist Circuit had created a new branch based on Bottesford, just inside the Leicestershire section of the Vale of Belvoir, and appointed a pious, industrious itinerant, Abraham Worsnop, in charge. A convert from the neighbouring village of Barkstone, Robert Parks, was employed as a missionary assistant the following summer (1835), and these men began a fruitful partnership of shared gifts. As the local wags put it 'Parks shoots the birds, and Worsnop comes along and picks them up, so that between them and the Lord they make a good bag.'⁹

As we have seen, the 'pioneering stage' for Methodists in an agricultural community could have been at any time from the first half of the eighteenth century to the early Victorian period. This sometimes brought hostility, but as Henry Rack has recently reminded us, 'local research is still needed to explain local variations in persecution including, perhaps, differences between town and country.'¹⁰

Justice for Methodists was more difficult in an agricultural settlement than in a town, because the magistrates were likely to include squires and parsons who faced villagers who were usually less well-versed in the law than their urban counterparts and more isolated from the advice and support of fellow Methodists. An example is given in Wesley's *Journal* for 1766 when he visited Stalbridge in Dorset and referred to a previous incident:

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 22, 41-42.

⁹ Kendall, *op.cit.*, vol i, pp. 262-263

¹⁰ Rack, *op. cit.*, p. 275.

Sat. 30 August. We rode to Stalbridge, long the seat of war, by a senseless, insolent mob, encouraged by their betters, so called, to outrage their quiet neighbours. For what? Why they were mad; they were Methodists. So, to bring them to their senses, they would beat their brains out. They broke their windows leaving not one whole pane of glass, spoiled their goods, and assaulted their persons with dirt and rotten eggs and stones whenever they appeared in the street. But no magistrate, though they applied to several, would show them either mercy or Justice. At length they wrote to me. I ordered a lawyer to write to the rioters. He did so, but they set him at naught. We then moved the Court of King's Bench. By various artifices they got the trial put off from one assizes to the other for eighteen months. But it fell so much the heavier on themselves when they were found guilty; and from that time, finding there is law for Methodists, they have suffered them to be at peace.

I preached near the main street, without the least disturbance, to a large and attentive congregation.¹¹

The reference to this situation is tantalising, because it gives no dates for the persecution or the trial, and mentions no names. A search of the assize records and contemporary newspapers has proved fruitless. The magistrates were obviously offended by the success of Wesley's prosecution and began a campaign of illegal vindictiveness. The evidence for this has survived in a lawyer's letter buried in the Quarter Sessions Roll of July 1766 and written when the Shaftesbury Methodists applied to register their new chapel:

Since the prosecution carried out by the Protestant Dissenters called Methodists against some persons who Disturbed them at their meeting House at Stalbridge... we are informed the Justices have refused to Lycense these sort of meeting Houses.

Therefore Please to move the Court for a Lycense to be Granted for a new Erected Protestant Dissenting meeting House situate at a place called Parsons Pool in the Parish of Shaston the Holy Trinity.... belonging to Mr. James Higgins and which we apprehend we are by Law entitled to. The Building of this House has Cost near £300.¹²

A note of endorsement below entered the registration at the application of Counsellor Mansfield.

Similar circumstances seem to have existed 30 years later in the village of Fortuneswell in the isolated 'isle' of Portland on the Dorset coast. Hostility and violence were rife for some time until a complaint was brought about an incident in January 1792. Here the magistrates used stalling tactics. The earliest documentary evidence that I have found dates from nearly a year later when George Smith, the youthful associate preacher of Robert Carr Brackenbury, mentioned earlier, was examined on oath before a magistrate. A month later a sworn statement was taken from an eye witness which corroborated the first account. The defendant

¹¹ *Standard Journal*, v, pp. 183-4.

¹² Dorset Record Office: Quarter Sessions Rolls, 15 July 1766 (Shaston).

was bailed for £50 at the Sessions in April 1793. The case was passed over at the Sessions in the summer and again in the autumn. In the following January a plea of 'not guilty' was entered and a lower bail set. By this time another man was similarly charged. In April both men were convicted and fined. John Wesley was now dead, but Brackenbury, himself a JP., was at hand and may have used his influence to ensure that the charges were pressed and finally heard.¹³

Although living in a different century and in many ways a different age the pioneers of Primitive Methodism had to endure many hazards, especially when the success of the cause provoked local alarm. In 1817 Nottingham became the head of the Connexion's second circuit, and Hugh Bourne was appointed superintendent a year later at a time when 30 new village societies were being established in South Nottinghamshire. The main landowner's steward in Shelford proved very hostile, and when Joseph Vickerstaffe opened his home for preaching his cottage was demolished and his family rendered homeless. The house of Henry Fukes then suffered a similar fate. Matthew Woodward then offered - and risked - his house. Fortunately a timely change of estate steward reduced the risk. Meanwhile the society purchased a floating chapel, towed it down the Trent and relocated it in Woodward's garden.¹⁴

By this time Wesleyan Methodism, concentrating on chapel building rather than open-air meetings, was being generally tolerated by society. In an address to Wesleyan ordinands at the Conference of 1834 Rev. Richard Treffry spoke of the discomforts and risks of the itinerancy, but not before dismissing the chance of persecution:

...It must be allowed that a Minister's life, is a life of peril. ...It is true that in this country he is not in danger from the rude attack of lawless and riotous mobs; the arm of violence is not now raised against him; he can generally pass unmolested through the land...¹⁵

His view was blinkered as far as Primitive Methodists were concerned. Only two years earlier a circuit preacher made this entry in his journal: 'Had to preach out of doors in nearly half the places because of opposition by local landlords. Persecution last spring and summer ran awfully high and some of the preachers narrowly escaped with their lives.' And in the very year of that address the Squire of Micheldever, aided by his parish priest, persuaded the local constable to charge two open air preachers 'with leading and heading a riotous mob,' and have them remanded in Winchester Jail. Two weeks later the magistrates acknowledged that the alleged mob had been an orderly congregation and discharged the prisoners. The squire, Sir Thomas Baring M.P., obstructed efforts to find a chapel site for many years.¹⁶

¹³ Biggs, *Dorset Methodists*, pp. 41-42.

¹⁴ Kendall, *op. cit.*, pp. 272-275.

¹⁵ *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1835, p. 16.

¹⁶ Kilby, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-25

Our last example of persecution comes from the agricultural township of Sturminster Newton in the heart of Dorset and dates from about 1840, although reported in 1848:

Sturminster, though a small town, has long been proverbial for its superstition, immorality, and its opposition to the cause of God. Here, our preachers and members have often met with cruel treatment, while worshipping the Lord in the open air. On one occasion an influential tradesman fired a gun over the heads of the congregation; but soon afterwards he accidentally shot himself with the same instrument, and expired.¹⁷

Most violent hostility was outdoors and the acquisition of buildings led to more subtle, and often more personal, kinds of persecution, sometimes relating to the withholding of employment or trade. The country chapel, even if plain and not particularly large, was likely to stand out among neighbouring cottages and farm buildings. Attenders were relatively conspicuous, not only because their destination was obvious, but because they would emerge at the end of a service as a crowd in a lane where crowds were rare. In time the regulars could have been recognised anyway, but newcomers, whether converts or transfers from other places of worship, would have been personally noted. If visits were repeated in a community where there was antipathy towards Methodists then there might be pressure or persecution. This could lead to a kind of polarisation: the nervous and sensitive might never venture into Methodist gatherings at all, and those who did become identified with the chapel were likely to develop a definite commitment to the cause.

The very existence of a chapel often depended upon the nature of a local settlement. There were fewer restrictions in towns where it was relatively easy to hire, if not purchase, a building or land. In agricultural areas success seems to have depended to some degree upon the landowning pattern of the parish, for there is evidence that the prospects were much better in an 'open' village with a number of freeholders than in a 'closed' village with one or two owners. Quite apart from the question of acquiring a site, there was in the 'open' village greater social freedom and easier access to chapel activities. The reluctance of a squire to permit chapel-building was sometimes associated with an even greater reluctance to countenance cottage-building for his work-force. A Lincolnshire writer bluntly observed in 1852 that labourers had been 'driven by proprietors unwilling to augment the poor's-rate, to crowded freehold villages many miles from their place of labour.'¹⁸

Although landed proprietors generally had a negative influence, they were sometimes open to moral pressure from their tenants, for character can conquer prejudice. Let me illustrate this with a story that straddles

¹⁷ *Primitive Methodist Magazine* 1848, pp. 501-502.

¹⁸ A. Everitt, *The Pattern of Rural Dissent in the Nineteenth Century* (1972), pp. 20-22, 70-72; R. W. Ambler, *Ranters, Revivalists and Reformers* (1989), pp. 18-23.

the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Samuel Bennett was born at East Leake in South Nottinghamshire in 1758 where his father was a dairy farmer, who had left the Church of England for the General Baptists. Young Samuel was converted at the age of thirteen. Soon after marriage he became a tenant at will in Tempsford, Bedfordshire, of the squire, Sir Gillis Payne Bt., who owned most of the land and buildings in the parish. At first the young couple travelled 18 miles to the General Baptist Chapel at St. Ives, but as their family grew it became necessary to worship nearer home. There was no suitable place in their village and so they began to attend the neighbouring parish church at Everton, despite their antipathy towards the Calvinist theology of the vicar, John Berridge. In 1794 Bennett met a travelling Methodist preacher and invited him to address a meeting in his farm-house on his next round. A regular link was soon established, but the house became too crowded. The squire was very reluctant to permit the opening of a preaching house, but, in tribute to the earnestness of the appeal and to the way in which his young tenant had developed a run-down farm, he agreed to let Bennett convert a barn into a chapel. Most of the members were poor labourers. When the squire's wife became very ill the Methodist farmer was summoned to talk and pray with her before she died. The widower died a few years later. Soon afterwards their two daughters walked past the chapel and heard singing through its open windows, and as they edged closer, they heard extempore prayers, including some for themselves, for it was a prayer meeting. As they turned away the elder was heard to remark, 'Fanny, did you ever hear people pray so, such poor people too, and without a book.' Next day they sent for Bennett and began a series of conversations which eventually led to their admission to the society. There was urgent need of a larger chapel, but the new squire was hostile. Finally an old man in the village sold them a site.¹⁹

About 30 years later the Primitive Methodists at Linkenholt, on the Hampshire/Berkshire border, found much more positive allies in the leading landowning family, a remarkable circumstance at the beginning of the great decade of reform in the 1830s. A travelling preacher noted in his journal:

At Linkenholt I was struck with the great attention which the most considerable family in the village, the Osmonds, seemed to pay to the word. Mr. Michael Osmond became our first member and gave the first shilling towards helping on the new mission. Afterwards his brothers, Richard and Stephen, joined and became local preachers.' Their sister showed great interest and became very useful. Others also of their family did much good. Michael and Richard Osmond owned virtually the whole of the parish of Linkenholt thus through their influence many of their work people attended the meetings and were converted.²⁰

¹⁹ *W. M. Mag*, 1841, pp. 705-711

²⁰ Kilby, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

The existence of a chapel or other premises set apart for worship was one factor that distinguished the town from the countryside, because urban congregations were able to achieve an identity linked to a building much more quickly. In comparing the nature of Sunday worship other basic considerations are the frequency of ministerial appointments, holy communion, and love-feasts. John Wesley, of course, exhorted Methodists to attend their parish church, especially for communion. This posed more problems in scattered rural communities than in towns. Even in a relatively large and compact village there were difficulties of uncongenial services and absent incumbents. Overworked curates were tempted to gallop to a series of churches and gabble through the minimum sections of the Prayer Book. Inhabitants of the larger towns, and many of the smaller ones, had a real choice. When communion was permitted in a limited number of Methodist preaching houses near the end of the eighteenth century congregations in London and some towns used the Prayer Book or Wesley's abridgement, but few, if any, rural societies followed the liturgy.²¹

I have seen no evidence of widespread Sunday preaching by the itinerants in the rural parts of a circuit. As samples I will quote four Wesleyan country circuits around the year 1820, with views of later circuit plans showing no significant change by 1850. In the Grantham Circuit, spreading into South Lincolnshire and East Leicestershire, only 5 out of 32 villages ever saw an itinerant on a Sunday. In Epworth the total was 6 out of 18, in Retford, Nottinghamshire, it was 5 out of 33, and in the Shaftesbury Circuit, spreading into Dorset and Wiltshire, it was 4 out of 16. The villages that had ministerial appointments were usually near the towns, where the ministers conducted most services, and so actually had congregations that might themselves occasionally have travelled to a town chapel. A corollary of this was that most agricultural communities were denied communion, because the Wesleys, unlike the other Methodist connexions, insisted upon a minister conducting the service. Of my sample circuits, in Grantham 4 out of 32 villages celebrated the Lord's Supper, in Epworth it was 2 out of 16, in Retford only 2 out of 33 and in Shaftesbury 3 out of 16. Love-feasts were sometimes led by a senior local preacher and so there were greater opportunities for small agricultural settlements, but there was considerable local variation. Grantham did relatively well with 10 out of 32, followed by Retford with 7 out of 33, Epworth with 4 out of 16, and Shaftesbury with none at all. A fragmented plan of 1832 for Shaftesbury reveals a footnote key to love-feasts, but no such events on the five-sixths of the document surviving. A complete plan for 1850 marks love-feasts in 2 out of 4 towns, but in none of the villages.

Visits to country places by circuit itinerant preachers were almost entirely confined to week nights and were even then infrequent. The situation was at its worst in the eighteenth century when Wesley resisted

²¹ L. F. Church, *More About the Early Methodist People* (1949), pp. 212, 223.

all efforts to reduce circuit size at a time when the number of preaching places - and the supply of itinerant preachers - was increasing. He rejected such a proposal in the Sarum Circuit in 1790, for example, and wrote to one of its local preachers in no uncertain terms:

Most of our circuits are too small rather than too large. I wish we had no circuit with fewer than three preachers in it, or less than four hundred miles riding in it in four weeks.²²

At about this time it took a preacher six weeks to complete the round of Aylesbury Circuit, and 25 years earlier it had taken a preacher 12 weeks to traverse the 600 miles of the Epworth Circuit.²³ Although ministers visited some of the villages on perhaps two or more weeknights per quarter they were likely to draw fewer hearers than on a Sunday, given the working practices of the day, and had a much slighter influence than they had on urban Methodism. They provided a comparatively weak link with Connexional policy and Conference decisions.

Worship, whether led by an itinerant or local preacher, was a noteworthy event in a village, especially if it was linked to a prayer meeting or love-feast. The Primitive Methodists sometimes preceded the service with a procession, even in winter unless weather conditions were extreme. Pauses on the way to the chapel might have lasted for only a minute or so, in order to enable leaders to speak or pray before marching briskly on.²⁴ Services were sometimes accompanied by less welcome activities. In 1845 the Gainsborough Primitive Methodist Circuit expelled a local preacher, after considering evidence of immorality 'such as going to Public Houses after Preaching on a Sunday Night, etc.' and in the following quarter a local preacher was 'recommended not to sell his Poetry on a Sabbath day, at those places where he goes preaching the Gospel.' The minutes record the sequel in dramatic detail:

That as George Jackson has taken tremendous umbrag (*sic*) at the last resolution and broken out in such violence and has so ...asserted that he will niver (*sic*) preach another sermon for this Society (but that he will preach for the Lord next) and that he has taken the plan that lay before the Chairman and the pen and ink and crossed out his name and will hear no reasoning nor persuasion but says he stands firm in his resolution, we understand this as his resignation.

I am glad to report that Brother George's name appeared again regularly soon afterwards.²⁵

²² Quoted in Biggs, *Dorset Methodists*, p. 36.

²³ E. R. Bates, *The Rise of Methodism in the Vale of Aylesbury* (1972), pp. 2-4; T. Cocking, *A History of Methodism in the Vicinity of Grantham* (1835) p. 128.

²⁴ *P. M. Mag.* 1840 pp. 137-139.

²⁵ Gainsborough P. M. Circuit Quarterly Meeting Minutes 1836-1845 *passim*.

Camp meetings were popular occasions of mass worship and witness by Primitive Methodists during the first half of the nineteenth century. There is space for just one example from the Dorset/Wiltshire border, deep in the heart of an agricultural region. It was held on a Sunday in August 1844 in a field halfway between Motcombe and Shaftesbury. We can catch its flavour from a contemporary report:

One procession, formed by friends at Motcombe, (including the sabbath-school), joined by friends from a distance in their vehicles, sang to the camp-ground, where they were met by a procession composed of friends from Enmore Green and the adjacent villages ...

Prayers, singing and a short address ended the morning session. By the time the afternoon services were in full swing the 28 vehicles present in the morning had grown to 50, helping to swell the crowd to a total of about 3,000 souls. After the camp meeting love-feasts were held at Motcombe and Enmore Green, presumably with a strict allocation of tickets.²⁶

People flocked to camp meetings for a mixture of motives. Although I do not doubt that religious enthusiasm was the primary force, there was also the attraction of an exciting social event, with speeches, singing, a picnic meal, and the chance to meet other people. Early Methodism made a greater social impact in rural communities because there were fewer alternatives than in towns, especially indoors. The preaching room or chapel was an alternative to the inn and had the added advantage of being suitable for women and children as well as men. Worship offered opportunities for people to exercise their musical talents with voice or instrument and for some to express themselves in prayer, exhortation and sermon. The circuit plan guaranteed a range of preachers of varying styles and gifts, mostly now departed without any record. Some of the more gifted lay preachers developed reputations beyond their home area and preached in other circuits, sometimes on a sustained mission. One of these was Charles Richardson, popularly known as the 'Lincolnshire Thrasher'. He had no formal education, but was an avid reader who received great encouragement from a Wesleyan farmer, and in turn became class leader, Sunday school teacher, steward, and in 1828, at the age of 37, local preacher. Although living a life of Christian discipline, it was noted by a contemporary that 'his own cheerful and happy tones and manners prevented anything like gloom or puritanic harshness,....' A Nottinghamshire listener noted his style of address in a diary:

He is a plain and unpretending countryman, using a strong vernacular speech ... He abounds in figurative language, and striking illustrations, all of which are distinguished by appropriateness and vividness, his good sense charmed me, however, beyond anything else ...²⁷

²⁶ *P. M. Mag*, 1845, p. 28.

²⁷ Biggs PhD, pp. 318-319

It is worth noting that Richardson, like so many others, received his simple education through his association with rural Methodism. Sunday school, prayer meetings, class meetings and services not only provided opportunities to listen, read and learn, but also to participate and lead. Reading in early times was encouraged by circulating Methodist and other magazines and in some places by the creation of a village library. This might have been inspired by a person of education and means, such as the wife of a doctor at Burton in the Bridport Wesleyan Circuit, whose obituary in 1835 noted her 'vigorous and decided mind' which led her to be 'strenuous and persevering in her attempts to promote the temporal and religious good of the people, by establishing and managing a Wesleyan Circulating Library, consisting of several hundred volumes, in connexion with Sunday school ...'²⁸ At Gringley-on-the-Hill in Nottinghamshire the initiative was taken in 1834 by Wesleyan labourers and craftsmen in creating a village library which within seven years listed 'more than 200 volumes of some of the most popular works in the English language.'²⁹

Perhaps the greatest contribution to social life, however, came from the pious, but practical help of many individuals, most of whose names are lost to us. One example, that of Mary Broadway, who died in Gillingham, Dorset, in 1817, must suffice. For 32 years she

laboured to promote the cause of God in the village and neighbourhood. She gave herself to reading, meditation and prayer; frequently held public prayer-meetings at five o'clock in the morning; was much concerned for the rising generation; instituted a Sunday-School; visited and relieved the poor and sick; talked closely and affectionately to them about the salvation of their souls, and was made a great blessing to many ...³⁰

Although Methodism affected the whole spectrum of life in many agricultural communities, its centre was the Sunday preaching service, and each new issue of the Preachers' plan was eagerly scrutinised by more than the preachers themselves. The spirit of this was caught in a long piece of verse printed at the bottom of a Grantham Wesleyan Methodist plan in 1832. We can detect not only a rich mixture of good-humoured concern, but also a hint of some interchange between church and chapel. Let me conclude with extracts from it:

Again the Plan presents itself to view,
Its use is ancient, though its date is new.

* * *

Art thou a hearer? Dost thou reason thus -
'Come, let us see, now, who are planned with us;
'Are any preachers whom we have not heard,

²⁸ *W. M. Mag.* 1836, p. 807

²⁹ *Doncaster Gazette*, 1 Jan 1841.

³⁰ *W. M. Mag.* 1830, p. 440.

'Sent here to minister the gospel word?
 'No - just the same we have from year to year;
 'I wish we had some new ones stationed here!
 Art thou then curious, and fond of choice ?
 Eager to hear some stranger's tuneful voice ?
 And art thou led by novelty to roam
 To other meetings distant from thy home ?
 But ask thy conscience, 'Is this conduct wise ?'
 New things may feast thy fancy - please thy eyes,
 And tickle itching ears; - but truth's refulgent ray
 Beams without novelty, nor knows decay;
 And truth should be thy object of research,
 Where'er thou goest, to chapel, or to church.³¹

BARRY J. BIGGS

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³¹ Grantham W. M. Plan Nov. 1831-April 1832.

The Charles Wesley Society has produced the first of a projected series of facsimile reprints of Charles Wesley's hymns on the Christian Year. *Hymns for the Nativity of our Lord* (1991) reproduces the texts of the 1745 edition and the 1788 edition on facing pages so that variants can be observed easily. There is an introduction and notes by Frank Baker. Copies are available from the Archives and History Center, Drew University, Madison, NJ 07940, USA or from the Editor at £5.00 plus postage.

A joint WMHS/WHS General Conference will be held at Westminster College, Cambridge, July 26-30 1993 on the theme 'Methodism in its Cultural Milieu'. The cost is £150. For registration form and further details write to Rev. Tim Macquiban, Wesley College, College Park Drive, Bristol, BS10 7QD. The number of residential places is limited and early application is advised.

A True and Lively Faith by Alan R. Acheson is a brief account of the Evangelical Revival in the Church of Ireland. By 1878 the Evangelicals were the dominant party in that Church, yet their story is, the author claims, 'virtually unknown'. This booklet explores the theme in a scholarly and concise manner. Copies are available from the author at 15 Leyland Park, Ballycastle, Co Antrim, BT54 6DL. Price £2.00 post free.

THE POSTPONEMENT OF UNITY

A Personal Account

IN the Thirties, that is, in the early years of British ecumenism, I took part in student campaigns from Oxford and Cambridge - one to Streatham in London and one to Oldham in Lancashire. Both were organized by the Student Christian Movement, which was then the nursery and training ground for future ecumenical leaders. It was the time of the Great Depression, and everything we said was heard against the background of mass unemployment and decaying industry. We all preached the same gospel as realistically as we could, and I can well remember the personal pain inflicted on every one of us when after our common preparation for our daunting task we were not allowed to take the Eucharist together. Many of us resolved then and there to end this situation as soon as we could.

After the war, which must surely have shown to those on active and dangerous service the absurdity of our denominational divisions, the Church of England, in the person of Geoffrey Fisher, Temple's successor as Archbishop of Canterbury, took the initiative. His 'Cambridge Sermon' of 1946 invited the Free Churches to enter into communion with the Church of England by 'taking episcopacy into their systems'.

This was widely taken to be a large step forward, and whereas the pre-war discussions had mostly been at 'high level' while ordinary congregations remained in ignorance, a keen desire for unity now began to spread at every level, fanned by news of the creation of the Church of South India and the formation of the World Council of Churches. The British Council of Churches had come into existence in 1942. Local Councils of Churches sprang up and became active, the possibilities of local co-operation were everywhere explored. Perhaps the biggest centres of ecumenism were Bristol (which had founded the first Council of Churches), Birmingham and Manchester, though other cities might lay claim to the title. The South and the Midlands were more vigorously ecumenical than the North; and there were, of course, areas where the word 'unity' had scarcely been heard. But the general scene was of a tide that was steadily coming in.

Shortly after his Cambridge Sermon, Geoffrey Fisher took a further initiative by inviting, first a group of Anglo-Catholics, and then groups of Evangelical Anglicans and Free Churchmen, to examine the contrast (or conflict) between the catholic and protestant traditions, the points at which such a conflict crystallizes, and the possibility of a synthesis and of the co-existence of both traditions within a united Church. The Free Church invitation was sent to Newton Flew, the Methodist. He delayed his answer for a little while, but when *Catholicity*, the work of the Anglo-Catholic group, appeared, he proceeded at once to collect a group of theologians, and guided us to prepare the answers to Geoffrey Fisher's questions.

The Catholicity of Protestantism (edited by Newton Flew and myself) appeared in 1950.¹ We were greatly assisted in the meetings of our group and the editing of the book by the Lutheran learning of Philip Watson, and succeeded in our aim (we are fairly sure) of showing that the picture of protestantism which *Catholicity* had unwisely presented was at many points little better than a caricature, and then that protestantism in fact has as good a claim to catholicity, in the sense of proclaiming the wholeness of the gospel, as those who used the word 'catholic' to describe themselves. In particular, we controverted a remark of T. S. Eliot, one of the authors of *Catholicity*, made elsewhere, that 'the life of protestantism depends on the survival of that against which it protests'; we showed that the essence of protestantism lay not in protesting *against* anything, but (as in the original sense of the word) in protesting, i.e. proclaiming, the Christian Gospel in its fullness.

To the question about the co-existence of catholic and protestant traditions within one Church, we replied that we had already given an affirmative answer by joining in the Church of South India, and that so long as we were not asked to repudiate the reality of the grace of God given to our ministers, or to adhere to one particular doctrine of episcopacy, or to forswear our belief that unity is God's gift, not our construction, we certainly, again, said 'Yes'.

The effect of the book was to inject realism and substantial content into arguments which had so far tended to be based on general goodwill rather than on careful analysis; and perhaps also to persuade some doubtful Anglicans that Free Church theologians were able and willing to state an arguable case with clarity and force.²

Meanwhile a representative group from all the Free Churches had joined with Church of England representatives to draw out the implications of Geoffrey Fisher's proposals, and in *Church Relations in England* cleared the ground for any Free Church that wished to do so to accept in good hope and conscience the invitation of the Church of England to take the matter further. The Methodist Faith and Order Committee wished this invitation to be accepted by Methodism, so long as liberty of interpretation of episcopacy was granted and relations with other Free

¹ It has recently been re-published in the U.S.A by the Greenwood Press, of Westport, Connecticut.

² I have indicated in the text what was in our minds when we wrote the book, and what the book, in our judgment, achieved. But John Kent, writing nearly forty years later, claims to know better than we what we were doing. He says that we were trying 'to rehabilitate Luther (and Calvin) as essentially 'Catholic' in their understanding of the doctrine of the church, in the hope that this would strengthen the hand of the Free Churches in their ecumenical negotiations with the Anglican Church'; and says further: 'The revival of Reformation scholarship in Britain came too late, however, to affect the ecclesiastical conflict'. (*The Unacceptable Face*, 1987 p.31). This interpretation is interesting.

Churches were not disrupted. The Anglican response to this proviso was deemed to be satisfactory. So, under pressure from below, and with confidence in their own position, the leaders of Methodism could not do other than recommend to the Conference of 1955 that the Anglican invitation be accepted. There was scarcely a dissentient vote, and the 'Conversations' began, with George Bell, Bishop of Chichester, as leader of the Anglican delegation of twelve (he died suddenly during the proceedings of the Commission), and Harold Roberts, on whom Newton Flew's mantle had now fallen, as leader of the twelve Methodists (each group was both lay and ministerial). The Commission came fairly soon to the conclusion that intercommunion - the goal set by the Cambridge Sermon - was not satisfactory in itself, but should be regarded only as a first stage on the way to organic union. So it formulated the idea of union in two stages. This was new, and needed the endorsement of the two Churches - which was duly granted in 1958. Geoffrey Fisher, who later rejected the idea of going further than intercommunion, was in the chair of the Lambeth Conference which endorsed the two-stage concept.

Thus encouraged, the Commission produced its full Report in 1963. Reasons were carefully given for the statement that on 'Scripture and Tradition', 'Gospel', 'Church Order and Ministry' and 'the Sacraments' there was sufficient agreement for the churches to proceed on the path now being laid down. And a draft of a 'Service of Reconciliation', which would bring the Churches into a state of intercommunion, was given. Reconciliation was indeed the key work of the whole Report. Not much was said about the second stage of unity, organic union, on the ground that it was too early to be specific, but practical problems which would arise once the first stage was inaugurated were dealt with in a preliminary way.

The British Faith and Order Conference in Nottingham in 1964 showed great enthusiasm for unity, looked with favour on the Anglican-Methodist Scheme, and urged the churches to set the date of Easter 1980 for the consummation of their unity.

But there were also by now the first signs of conflict to come. All the Anglican members of the Commission signed the 1963 Report, but only eight Methodists did so. The dissentients, led by Kingsley Barrett, who held that episcopacy was contrary to New Testament teaching, and to whom any idea of episcopal succession was abhorrent, could not bring themselves to accept the contention of the Methodist majority that episcopacy (which had never been repudiated by Methodism) could be received into the Methodist system without a 'take-over' by the Church of England, or damage to 'the prophetic element in the Methodist concept of the ministry' - though it could never be agreed by Methodists to be indispensable. The majority's view was that it could be 'a focus of unity and continuity', and 'a source of inestimable pastoral worth'.

The story now becomes more complex, and the issues more controversial. I have heard and read so many accounts of subsequent events

which are inaccurate in one or more particulars³ that I feel bound to put the record straight from my personal knowledge.

After discussions throughout both Churches, in which the point of view of the dissentients received as much publicity as that of the majority, the Report of 1963 was debated in 1965 by the Methodist Conference and the Anglican Convocations. It was endorsed in principle by both Churches with overwhelming majorities, and a fresh Commission (of which I was a member) was set up, with the same numbers and again a mixture of laypeople and clergy (there were two women members). Harold Roberts was again the Methodist chairman, and the Bishop of London (Robert Stopford) was the Anglican chairman. The assignment was to work out the numerous details involved, to answer questions that had arisen, to finalize the Service of Reconciliation and to draw up an Ordinal for the future use of both Churches during Stage One.

We worked together unremittingly and harmoniously for two years. Membership of the Commission was an experience of deep unity which we hoped and prayed was a foretaste of the wider unity to come. There were no dubious compromises, no fudging and muddging, but only the sustained intention to deal with difficulties in a way that would be acceptable to all parties.

These difficulties, I have to say, were in part created by the arguments of those who were probably unwilling to be convinced by any argument whatever: but we had to do our best to meet them for the sake of those who were really ready to listen to Scripture and reason. We were not ecclesiastical carpenters (as has sometimes been alleged); we had a high vision of unity which carried us through the intricate discussions in which we sometimes had to engage. But we had to make the structure which we proposed as water-tight as possible because of the nigglers in both churches.

In due course we issued three reports which dealt with theological and practical objections and questions, proposed a Common Ordinal with an explanatory Preface, revised the Service of Reconciliation, set out a detailed plan of the way in which the scheme could be implemented when the Churches accepted it, and made it clear that the goal in view was not uniformity but diversified unity.

It would be invidious of me to select any member of the Commission for special praise, since all made the contributions asked of them with equal patience and skill; but it is worth saying that even James Packer, the Evangelical Anglican who was the one member of the Commission who was not willing to sign the final report, and who subsequently led a substantial part of the Anglican opposition to it, took great pains to

³ This is true even of otherwise so excellent a book as J. M. Turner's *Conflict and Reconciliation: Studies in Methodism and Ecumenism in England 1740-1982* (1985) chapter 10. The best Anglican account is in Owen Chadwick's *Michael Ramsey. A Life* (1990), pp. 333-346.

articulate the theological case for the report as it is set out in its pages. This I know well, as he and I were set the task of drafting large sections of the report together.

A chill descended on the Commission twice: once when it was ruled by the Anglican authorities that a 75 per cent majority would be required in the Convocations (was such a majority possible on a key issue?): and once when the Church of England decided to hold a referendum among all beneficed clergymen, who included a large number of rural incumbents whose knowledge of Methodism was minimal.

When the Commission was dissolved at the conclusion of its work (it would have been better to keep it together for a while longer), the members travelled hither and thither to commend the scheme to their Churches, sometimes addressing denominational gatherings, sometimes Anglican-Methodist ones, always leaving the way open for anyone - yes, anyone - to ask a question or register an objection. Members of the Commission could not, of course, traverse the whole country, but with the help of many supporters (organized as 'Towards Anglican-Methodist Union' - 'TAMU') the whole country was virtually covered. In some areas the Methodist Women's Fellowship and the Anglican Mothers' Union held joint conferences and meetings. Eric Kemp, later Bishop of Chichester and chief architect of the Service of Reconciliation and the Ordinal, spent a great deal of time visiting and trying to convince members of his own Anglo-Catholic group who were unhappy about the whole report or some of its parts.

It can be confidently stated that no Anglican or Methodist anywhere was denied the chance of hearing an exposition of the Scheme; and, of course, the various booklets issued by the Commission, setting out the Scheme and dealing with particular issues, were available to all. The publicity given was wider than had been given to any subject by either of the churches in my lifetime.

Opposition now manifested itself in several forms. In the Church of England the Anglo-Catholics who had not been persuaded by Eric Kemp, led by the Church Union (except that its Secretary was in favour) and Graham Leonard, at that time Bishop of Willesden, declared that the Service of Reconciliation did not amount, as it should have done, to the ordination (some said re-ordination, but this is an inadmissible term) of Methodist ministers, and must be rejected. In fact, they wanted submission, not reconciliation. The Anglican Evangelicals (though not quite to a man), led by James Packer, declared that it *did* amount to ordination, and must be rejected for that reason. Both groups embodied a certain superciliousness towards Methodism, the former implying that Methodist ministers needed to be upgraded, the latter that they could not be trusted to look after their own interests, but must be protected by the Evangelicals.

The strange later alliance of these two groups in Convocation and the General Synod was foreshadowed a few weeks before the decisive vote

by the publication of a book, written by two Anglo-Catholics (E.L. Mascall and Graham Leonard) and two Evangelicals (James Packer and C. O. Buchanan), called *Growing Together*. This misrepresented the Scheme at various points and proposed a regional scheme of unity. Methodists had not been consulted, and could not have countenanced the 'new' scheme, which was completely contrary to Methodist connexionalism, but the book created something of a diversion, no doubt deliberately so.

Geoffrey Fisher, no longer Archbishop of Canterbury, but not wishing to be left out of the picture (after all, he had set the whole matter in motion!), continued to object to the notion of organic union rather than the simple intercommunion which he had suggested, and maintained that since English law would regard the Service of Reconciliation as the ordination of Methodists, then ordination it must be. He pressed his view in pamphlets, and in innumerable letters to the *Times*, to his successor at Canterbury (Michael Ramsey), and to members of the Commission (I received many, including one written in Australia at 5 a.m., Australian time); and by a self-invited visit to the Commission. No doubt his prestige influenced a number of doubters, especially of the unsophisticated sort, against the Scheme.

The referendum among beneficed clergymen was indecisive, and was to some extent vitiated by the absence of an important question: if the Church of England decides against your point of view, will you fall into line with its decision? Perhaps it was assumed that all would do so.

In Methodism, the theological opposition was led by Kingsley Barrett. It was based on New Testament interpretation, and on objection to the acceptance of episcopacy by Methodism as a consequence of union; Barrett also shared the view that the Service of Reconciliation was an ordination.

Members of the 'Voice of Methodism' (an unauthorized title), which the four original Dissentients did not join, remembered Anglican 'oppressions' of the past, and were afraid of 'absorption' by the Church of England. They wished Methodism to remain exactly what they alleged it to be, and declared that episcopacy, and all its consequences, contradicted the protestant doctrine of 'the priesthood of all believers', which they interpreted in a purely individualistic sense.

Unforeseen opposition came to Britain from the World Methodist Council. This Council was, and is, a very useful forum for the exchange of practical ideas, for encouraging evangelism and for reminding all Methodists of their common heritage and task. It has done great service in bringing together theologians from all parts of the world and arranging ministerial exchanges. But it has never succeeded in being truly ecumenical, and in this instance its American leaders (most of its leaders at the time *were* American) were convinced that a 'merger', as they insisted on calling it, would mean the abolition of British Methodism. The few but influential supporters of the Council's view in Britain argued

that a World Methodist Church was the goal that should really be aimed at, not the union of the Churches in any one country.

So there were cross-currents as well as downright support and opposition. When the Anglican dioceses, and first the circuits and then the districts of Methodism, proceeded to record their official votes, the dioceses returned a substantial, but not decisive vote in favour.

Fifty-five per cent of those attending Methodist Circuit Quarterly Meetings voted in favour. This seemed to argue a significant minority in opposition, until it was discovered that the number of those voting in many circuits opposed to the Scheme was far higher than the normal attendance at the Quarterly Meeting; the explanation turned out to be that in these circuits, whereas before this a comparatively small number of people had held circuit offices in plurality, now each office was held by a different individual, an opponent of the Scheme, who thus became a voting member of the Quarterly Meeting. This was an ingenious device; it was not copied in the circuits that were favourable. Thus the 'real' majority in favour, among those who had sustained the life of the circuits through active membership of the Quarterly Meeting was a good deal larger than the fifty-five per cent that was registered. How much larger, no-one can tell. All the District Synods, without exception, voted for the Scheme.

In July 1969 the Anglican Convocations and the Methodist Conference debated the issue, by arrangement, on the same day. The Conference cleared the 75 per cent hurdle (which it had accepted, in view of the Anglican arrangement) with ease; the Convocations, in spite of the support of a big majority of bishops and of both Archbishops, reached only 69 per cent. (If only a very few opponents, or men in the middle, had voted otherwise, the whole course of church history would have been changed!). The Anglo-Catholic/Evangelical alliance had torpedoed the Scheme.

When the shock of this event had been partly absorbed, Archbishop Michael Ramsey and the President of the Conference (at this time, the present author) set up a small Joint Working Group to clarify some issues which were thought to be obscure, with the purpose of bringing the whole matter once again to the churches before all zeal had evaporated. The Working Group reported that the Service of Reconciliation could be interpreted, by those who wished to do so, as 'Conditional Ordination' - a notion which, surely, Anglo-Catholics could accept. The Report was accepted without difficulty by the Conference, and the General Synod (the successor of the Convocations, now installed) agreed to debate the Scheme again. The Conference once again voted overwhelmingly in favour; the Synod failed to reach the 75 per cent majority by a slightly larger margin than the Convocations in 1969. The same Evangelical/Anglo-Catholic alliance came into play, and their voting numbers were once again swollen by those who had been persuaded that the acceptance of the Scheme would 'split the Church of England'. The bishops had once

again come out in favour, and Archbishop Ramsey spoke passionately for acceptance. But all to no avail.

The causes of this double disaster have been vigorously discussed over the years. It was said by some, just after the event, that rejection of the Scheme was the will of God, communicated, it would seem, to the dissentient group, but not to the great body of believers (or their spiritual leaders) in both Churches. (There are, I suppose, Old Testament parallels to this, so that Graham Leonard or Kingsley Barrett emerges as Elijah, and the rest of us as the prophets of Baal). Leaving aside this theological aberration, we must ask how the will of the majority in both Churches came to be overridden.

It has been said in both Churches that the Scheme was imposed from above ('from Westminster', where the headquarters of both Churches are situated), and never received the consent of the Methodist and Anglican people. The narrative of events before the decisive vote which I have given above shows this to be, quite simply, nonsense. Of course there were groups of Anglicans and Methodists in various parts of the country, notably Cornwall and North West England, which, sometimes under the strong influence of their pastors, objected. It does not insult these groups to say that in many cases they were not fully instructed in the Scheme, or were fearful of change - in spite of all efforts at explanation and reassurance. Unanimity throughout Methodism there was not, nor could it be expected; general consent there certainly was.

It has been said that the Scheme contained a fatal flaw, the 'ambiguity' of the Service of Reconciliation, and therefore deserved to be rejected; enough people observed this 'ambiguity', and therefore voted against the Scheme. It is certainly true that the word 'ambiguity' was freely flung about, and may have withdrawn the support of many on moral grounds. But it has to be asked why, in this case, the Church of England accepted the Scheme of Union for North India, which contains virtually the same 'ambiguity' in the Service for the Unification of the Ministries (as will be seen if the two Schemes are carefully compared), and rejected this one.

Once the word 'ambiguity' was thrown into the arena, a suspicion of disingenuity was engendered. This was illogical and unfair, because not all ambiguity is evil, but only the ambiguity which is intended to deceive. In Anglican liturgy, for instance, honourable ambiguity is common, as in the eucharist when the consecrated bread is called the 'Body of Christ' - which worshippers undoubtedly interpret in different ways. In the Anglican-Methodist Scheme it was openly stated that the words said at the laying-on-of-hands in the Service of Reconciliation would be taken by some to mean ordination, and by others, emphatically, not to mean that. The Commission could not alter the fact that some Anglicans regarded Methodist ministers as not ordained and others regarded them as already ordained, and that all Methodists took the latter view with complete conviction. It seemed right, therefore, to leave the issue open, and ask the Holy Spirit to do for each minister what he knew to be

necessary in the reconciliation of the Churches. Thus 'openness' is of course a much better word than the question-begging 'ambiguity'. But undoubtedly the inferior, tendentious word affected the course of events.

But why were Anglicans in Convocation and Synod more influenced, or influenced in greater numbers than Methodists in Conference, by the imputation of 'ambiguity'? There is no reason to think that Methodists are less aware of moral issues than Anglicans. The answer must be that the causes for rejection by the successful Anglican minority lay deeper than anything so far mentioned; and indeed sometimes, since then, some of them have come to the surface.

Chief among them, intermingled, are fear of change and fear of the diminution of authority and prestige. This is not in the least to say that the theological convictions held by some of the opponents, contradicting each other but temporarily allied, were not genuine; but it is to say that while theological objections could be, and were, answered by argument, there was no way of dealing rationally with unconscious, irrational fears which cloaked themselves, all too often, in theological objections, and survived intact when the theological objections were met.

I fear that the time has come to say, quite unequivocally, that it was not that the Scheme failed, but that people and institutions failed the Scheme - the Scheme asked for, understood and approved by the two communities which desired to be drawn together into one. This is a sad and reluctant verdict, but it stands.

The fusion of the Congregational Church and the Presbyterian Church of England into the United Reformed Church in 1972 rekindled the hope of unity among disappointed Anglicans and Methodists. I cannot speak with the same inside knowledge of the discussions that led to the proposal of 'Covenanting for Unity'. No member of the earlier commission was chosen for the Methodist team, now led by Kenneth Greet. But the reader may perhaps need to be reminded that after an unofficial conference of interested people in Oxford in 1973 'talks about talks' were held by all the denominations (not just Anglicans and Methodists), leading to the formulation and discussion of Ten Propositions; and that then after an interval definite proposals were made to all the Churches that they should covenant together to accept each other, and each others' ministries, receive the historic episcopacy (in the case of those who did not yet possess it), and work together towards 'visible unity' in due course.

The plan for covenanting had certain advantages over the Anglican-Methodist Scheme. It included Churches which had not responded to the earlier Anglican initiative - the United Reformed Church, the Moravian Church, and the Churches of Christ (which were united with the U.R.C. during the time of discussions on the Covenant), as well as the Church of England and the Methodist Church. The Roman Catholic Church in England, though it looked with a kindly eye on the proceedings, was not

able to participate; nor were more than a few of the Baptist Churches (each of which had to decide for itself). But this was certainly an important advance. The notion of 'covenant' was precious to those of the Independent and Presbyterian traditions, and in a different sense, to Methodists; it was an imaginative way of cementing spiritual commitment. The Church of England also had softened its attitude towards those not episcopally confirmed, and had enacted Canon B 15 A, which welcomed communicants from other Churches to its eucharists (though with the provision that they could eventually be asked whether they wished to be episcopally confirmed). So now it was to receive, within the Covenant (the phrase that governed all the provisions), all those in good standing as members of their Churches.

And within the Covenant the ministers of the covenanting churches were to be brought together and reconciled to one another without any Service of Reconciliation, while all subsequent ordinations would be carried out by bishops of the covenanting churches acting together.

But there were disadvantages also. Even those Anglo-Catholics, such as Eric Kemp, who had supported the Anglican-Methodist Scheme, did not believe that the covenanting proposals safeguarded 'Catholic Order' in the way that the Service of Reconciliation had done; and the U.R.C., still perhaps fearful of prelacy, insisted on the insertion of a clause that entitled it to name only one bishop for consecration at the outset, while the rest of their 'Moderators' were to retain their own title until their term of office had expired.

At the same time from the Anglo-Catholic point of view a very large disadvantage lay in the fact that the Free Churches would present, for recognition and reconciliation, women as well as men ordained ministers.

Moreover the unity envisaged for the future was a 'visible', not an 'organic' one, and this offered a much mistier prospect for the future than the promise of Stage 2 in the Anglican-Methodist Scheme. A majority of only 66 per cent was required in each Church for the approval of the Proposals - a distinct additional advantage. This was attained, not very easily, by the United Reformed Church (including now the Churches of Christ), very easily by the Moravians and the Methodists. The Methodists did not, however, show the same enthusiasm as in 1969 and 1971; they had 'been through all this before', and had recorded their definite vote twice. They had no wish to change it, but they did not believe that they were being offered so much by the covenant as by the Anglican-Methodist Scheme, and they voted for it on the principle that half a loaf is better than no bread - a principle that does not inspire wild enthusiasm.

But the Church of England, voting in the three houses of the General Synod, could not raise 66 per cent either in the House of Clergy or in the total of all votes cast. The bishops voted in favour, and so did the House of Laity, by substantial majorities. But the Proposals, of course, fell through by the vote of the clergy. It was observed that the Covenanting

Proposals had attracted less support in the Synod than the Anglican-Methodist Scheme.

Again we must ask why this happened. Certain theological reasons have already been hinted at. Anglo-Catholics were not satisfied with the way in which Free Church ministers were to be accepted; Graham Leonard, now Bishop of London, had helped to draw up the relevant clauses, but voted against the Proposals. There was also the Anglo-Catholic fear that covenanting with the Free Churches would prevent rapprochement with Rome. Evangelicals on the whole supported the plan, but many Anglicans of many schools of thought may well have wondered whether the U.R.C., in view of its stipulation about its Moderators, was really serious in its acceptance of episcopacy. The matter of ordained women ministers was the greatest stumbling block of all - to some, even though careful provision had been made to satisfy the consciences of any bishops who did not wish to recognize women ministers or ordain any. Perhaps some opponents of women's ordination were offended by the further provision that no-one with their point of view should be subsequently appointed to the episcopate (for obvious reasons).

It is, however, doubtful whether all these minority opinions, taken together, really account for the rejection of the Proposals, which was effectively carried out by the clergy. It seems very likely that the underlying causes for the rejections in 1969 and 1971 operated again.

And here it is perhaps appropriate for me to repeat, briefly, what I have argued in *The Church of England Observed*: that it is virtually impossible for the Church of England in its established, institutional form to enter into union with another Church. It will continue, please God, to produce great ecumenists with the stature of William Temple, Michael Ramsey, Oliver Tomkins and many others, and to allow a great number of gifted laypeople and clergy at local, diocesan and national levels to work closely with other denominations in the fields of theology, spirituality and social justice. But when it comes to a question of structural union which would change the status of clergy, and probably of the church itself, the way will always be blocked by the use of constitutional procedure. It is not only the *fact* of establishment, with the powers and privileges that this still confers, which brings this about; it is even more the type of habitual thinking and feeling which has built itself into the personalities of those who take these powers and privileges for granted, and issue in the almost automatic response: *we* know best what is good for everyone. I have called this 'the establishment attitude.'

So the third disaster happened. Since then we have been picking up the pieces, not entirely without success. But it is a long and toilsome process, even though, or perhaps because, the Church of Rome has now joined in the search for unity.

RUPERT E. DAVIES

(The Rev. Dr. Rupert E. Davies was a member of the Anglican-Methodist Unity Commission 1965-69)

SUSANNA WESLEY AND HER EDITORS¹

(This paper was given at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Society of Church History, Windsor, Ontario, on June 1st 1988)

I

SUSANNA Wesley (1669-1742), the mother of John and Charles and probably seventeen other children,² has gathered her own share of biography, anecdote and comment; her influence upon her sons and upon the Methodist revival has been examined in some detail by both scholars and popular writers.³ From John himself or from his most reliable early biographer, Adam Clarke, we know much about her life. We know that she may have been responsible for John's use of lay preachers, for she urged him to hear the unordained Thomas Maxfield before judging his fitness to preach, and John heeded his mother's advice. We know of her defiance of the wishes of her absent husband Samuel when she allowed up to 200 parishioners to attend family prayers in Epworth rectory kitchen, so possible providing an early model of a class meeting for her eight year old son John. Many years later he would allow woman preachers also. We know of her strict but humane rules for bringing up the children and for educating them, for – with some reluctance – she wrote them down for John.⁴ We know that after a childhood immersed in learning and religious discussion, she spent the next fifty years in isolation in one of the most desolate parts of England. We know of her piety and her struggle with poverty and ill health, of her father Samuel Annesley, the 'St. Paul of the Nonconformists', and her childhood decision to leave Dissent and join the established church. There has been much conjecture too about the force of her personality on her sons, particularly on John, but it is certain that she had a powerful influence on his theology.

¹ I am grateful for financial assistance from the H. R. MacMillan Fund, Vancouver, and from the Fellowship of the Maple Leaf, London. I am also most grateful for the advice, encouragement and warm hospitality of Dr. Frank Baker and Mrs. Ellen Baker during a two weeks' stay in their home at Duke University in 1987.

² The number usually quoted is 19, but Baker's latest word is that we can "regard nineteen as at least a possibility, eighteen as perhaps more likely, and seventeen as a certain minimum." Frank Baker, "Investigating Wesley Family Traditions," *Methodist History*, 26 (3) April 1988: p.162.

³ Only four years ago, an extract from Susanna's methods in education was used quite inappropriately by a writer alongside his account of possible child abuse at the Island Pond Community in Vermont. (John W. Donohue, "Spare the Rod", *American*, July 28 1984: p. 24.)

⁴ *Journal of John Wesley*, August 1st 1742. She was influenced largely by John Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) both for his ideas and his tone in writing. Her reluctance to give these ideas is shown in her letter to John, February 21 1731/2. See *John Wesley, Letters I, 1721-1739*, ed Frank Baker, (1980), p. 327:16-25. Oxford Edition of Wesley's Works, vol 25

II

All this, and much more has been available to readers in various forms throughout the nineteenth century, because her first editor, son John, published extracts of her letters in his *Journal* and in his *Arminian Magazine*.⁵ After his death, first John Whitehead in the 1790s and then Adam Clarke in the 1820s used John's version of his mother's letters and added others, rather heavily edited. Parts of her devotional journal, and some religious conversations with her children were also included. By 1852, a short-lived publication, *The Wesley Banner*, had printed further portions of her journal, and the *Methodist Magazine* (later the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*) issued more of her letters. Susanna's two nineteenth century biographers, John Kirk and Eliza Clarke drew on these sources. Other nineteenth-century recorders of the Wesley family, notably George Stevenson and Luke Tyerman reproduced selections from these and newly found letters, and as I shall discuss later, were particularly handy with their editorial pencils. The best twentieth-century biography, John Newton's *Susanna Wesley and the Puritan tradition in Methodism*,⁶ incorporated newly discovered correspondence between Susanna and the non-juring Suffragan Bishop of Thetford, George Hickers.⁷ Newton also draws on her manuscript journal and the holograph letters housed at Wesley College, Bristol, but oddly enough, not on the larger Methodist Archives collection of letters now in John Rylands Library, Manchester.

Since 1980 we have at least acquired an accurate record of her correspondence with John thanks to Frank Baker's critical edition of his *Letters*. This includes over thirty letters from Susanna to John, and his letters to her. Although this is invaluable, even here some parts of lengthy letters have had to be excluded for lack of space.⁸ Susanna's other letters and papers have not yet been published in full, but Charles Wallace of Willamette University, Salem, Oregon, is close to the end of ten years' work on a critical edition.⁹ The works include part of a commentary on the decalogue, an exposition on the creed, and a dialogue on natural and revealed religion, as well as an anonymous pamphlet defending Arminianism against the Calvinistic views of Whitefield and the Countess of Huntingdon.¹⁰

⁵ Six Letters are in *Arminian Magazine* I (1778) 29-38, 78-84. Some other sources are: John Whitehead, *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley*, 2 vols. (London: Couchman, 1793-96); Adam Clarke, *Memoirs of the Wesley Family* (London: Kershaw, 1823); John Kirk, *The Mother of the Wesleys: a biography* (London: Tressider, 1864); Eliza Clarke, *Susanna Wesley* (Boston: Roberts, 1876); G. J. Stevenson, *Memorials of the Wesley Family* (London: Partridge, 1876); Luke Tyerman, *Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley...* 3 vols. (New York: Harper, 1872).

⁶ John A. Newton, *Susanna Wesley and the Puritan Tradition in Methodism*, (1968)

⁷ *Manchester Guardian*, July 2 and 3, 1953. Also in *Proceedings* XXIX (1953): 50ff

⁸ For example, Baker has had to cut three quarters of her lengthy letter of Nov. 10th 1725 on the nature of zeal. (*Letters*, I: p. 184).

⁹ Charles Wallace, Personal Communication. April 1988.

My own interest in Susanna came from a talk I gave in 1986 to a varied group of older women in Vancouver. My childhood experiences had rather put me off Susanna Wesley, for in my position as the daughter of a Methodist Minister growing up in post-war England, she was still held up to me as a rather formidable model of piety and hard work! All those children - and she educated them all herself! Having talked to my colleague, Dr. Gerald Hobbs who grew up in rural Ontario at about the same time, I sense that in his Canadian childhood, the hagiographical glow was even a little brighter. While the Catholic children in the neighbourhood worshipped Mary, he tells me, little Methodists worshipped Susanna, particularly on May 24th.

I suppose it was the good mother/good teacher/saintly woman roles that were stressed in my childhood, and I quite rightly assumed that my Vancouver audience would appreciate those qualities. There was certainly enough documentation for a substantial talk. But when I studied the printed sources available to me (at the time mostly Adam Clarke and Luke Tyerman), I was also struck by hints at what was missing. When they quoted letters, the phrase 'from a letter' kept turning up. What had they left out? We know Luke Tyerman left out matters of what he calls 'painful family interest,' a statement which in its self is rather tantalizing. A woman who could write to her son on the question of his ordination, 'tis an unhappiness almost peculiar to our family that your father and I seldom think alike,' seems to have a remarkable degree of honesty and an excellent style, and I wanted to read more.

As we know, even without admissions of what they left out, the average nineteenth-century editors were not noted for their faithfulness to a text, nor did they usually indicate when they had not quoted an item in full. Susanna's editors were men, writing about a woman at the time when women had a domesticated and rather sentimental role in society. Thus they would be more selective. Moreover, they were men of similar evangelical and non-conformist views and they were anxious to promote their hero, John Wesley.¹² Had we ever seen the more than a fraction of the evidence for the real Susanna, and did this evidence exist?

III

My first discovery was the Hickes correspondence which had come to light in 1953. It illuminates a quarrel with her husband Samuel and shows the non-pious, unedited Susanna, and once again the strength of her writing. Here she asks for the advice of her friend, Lady Yarborough.

¹⁰ *Some Remarks on a letter from the Reverend Mr. Whitefield to the Reverend Mr. Wesley in a letter from a Gentlewoman to her Friend*, London, n.p. (John Wesley), 1741. This was only attributed to Susanna in the 1920s.

¹¹ Baker, *Letters*, I p.160: 19-21.

¹² For a succinct account of "editorial malpractice" in the Wesley letters, see Baker, *Letters*, I: pp.120-123.

Early in 1701-2 Samuel had left home after taking an oath never to return to their home or her bed until she 'begged God's pardon and his for not saying Amen to the prayer for the King (William of Orange)'. She writes:

This Madam is my unhappy case. I've unsuccessfully represented to him the unlawfulness and unreasonableness of his Oath; that the Man in that case has no more power over his own body than the woman over her's; that since I'm willing to let him quietly enjoy his opinions, he ought not to deprive me of my little liberty of conscience...

In a second letter she is realistic. She wants him back, but fears he will not come because he plans to go to sea as a chaplain.

I'm more easy in the thoughts of parting because I think we are not likely to live happily together. I have six very little children, which though he tells me he will take good care of, yet if anything should befall him at sea we should be in no very good condition...

Neither is she without political sense, for on Lady Yarborough's advice she writes to George Hickeys saying that Samuel wants to refer the whole issue to the Archbishop of York and the Bishop of Lincoln, but she says,

I very well know before such Judges I'm sure to be condemned without a fair hearing; nor can I see any reason I have to ask either God Almighty's or his pardon for acting according to the best knowledge I have of things of that nature.

Incidentally, George Hickeys supported her decision of conscience and advised her to hold firm, and Samuel did come back after a few months. Nine months later John Wesley was born. These letters, taken as a whole, show a side of her nature which had not been seen before. She is more than merely a model of piety and good motherhood; she also ranks with - dare I say - liberated women. Next, as a part of a sabbatical visit to England, I was able to spend some time with her letters, concentrating particularly on those at John Rylands Library, Manchester, which were to people other than John. Since then I have collated some of them against the nineteenth-century published versions when they existed, and have also closely compared some of Baker's John/Susanna correspondence in the same way. What has emerged from this preliminary work shows that my hunches about the editors were right. For various reasons of narrow interest, religious zeal, over-sensitivity to tender consciences, or plain carelessness, some letters were not published at all. Others were published in heavily edited versions. Some of the holographs have had words obliterated or physically cut out. On occasion, subtle changes of language alter her style. A reductionism has taken place - not on any grand scale, but a significant image has been created which gives only part of the picture of a very complex woman.

IV

What are the barriers to understanding when we try to get a picture of Susanna Wesley from her *own* writing? The letters and journal compliment each other in forming a picture of her character, so both are worth considering, though in this paper I shall be concentrating on the letters.

First, we have to recognise that propriety is a hallmark of her devotional journal, which is a model of discretion when she speaks of others. Her self-imposed rule to 'be very cautious in speaking of these three sorts of persons. viz: the innocent, the dead and the absent,' may have virtue, but leaves little scope for biographers; no personal names appear, only a dash or initials. Her journal is her confessional and companion where she works out her knowledge of herself and of God.

Her letters, on the other hand, are usually less reflective and more certain in tone, as they are written for a specific purpose. Here, one can feel her strength; she is prepared to discuss any subject: health, faith, family finances, behaviour, theology and practical divinity, with a precision of style, scrupulous accuracy, and fine command of language. People are discussed more freely, but occasionally she asks John to keep matters confidential, or to burn a letter, 'for I would not that any know my thoughts...' ¹³The letters also demonstrate her wide reading and sound learning which were most unusual for a woman of her day. ¹⁴

A typical example of propriety combined with accuracy can be cited from her rules for educating her children which she had given John ten years earlier in 1732, and which he published in his *Journal*. Notice that there are two unnamed offenders here, each termed 'one.' The first is her husband Samuel.

It had been observed that cowardice and fear of punishment often led children into lying, till they get a custom of it, which they cannot leave. To prevent this a law was made, that whoever was charged with a fault, of which they were guilty, if they would ingenuously confess it, and promise to amend, should not be beaten. This rule prevented a great deal of lying, and would have done more, if one in the family (father Samuel) would have observed it. But he could not be prevailed on, and therefore was often imposed on by false colours and equivocations; which none would have used (Except one), had they been kindly dealt with. And some in spite of all, would always speak truth plainly. ¹⁵

¹³ Baker, *Letters I*, p. 364:22.

¹⁴ This is discussed in detail in Charles Wallace, Jr. "Some Stated Employment of Your Mind": Reading as a Means of Grace and a Measure of Freedom for an 18th-Century Woman." Paper. Conference on British Studies, Portland, Or. October 1987. Published with similar title in *Church History* 58 (1989): pp. 354-66.

¹⁵ *JWJ*, August 1st 1742.

The second 'one' is an unnamed child. Her phrase, 'none would have used (except one)', is not just a way of concealing a name, but a measure of the precision and scrupulous regard for truth with which she always writes.

So much for the tone of Susanna's original writing. Her first editor was John, who for some years in the 1720s copied all significant letters he received into Letter Books. Baker considers these to be almost *literatim* transcriptions, for omissions were often noted by a dash, or by summaries of the subject matter,¹⁶ as 'Of my fathers borrowing money for my brother Charles, detained by brother Sam.' or 'A receipt the viscosity or sharpness of the blood.' or 'On zeal.' However, even in the Letter Book, John occasionally uses a cipher, particularly when he wants to hide information about family debt, hunger or poverty. In a rather bitter letter of April 16th, 1726, which he transcribes, Susanna writes to warn him not to expect too much when he comes home from Oxford:

...for what the world calls joy lives not within these walls. But if your heart be right, and you can rejoice in God whether you have or have not anything else to rejoice in; if he be the pleasure of your mind, so that you can feel delight in each perception of his presence, though encompassed with (poverty, reproach, and) shame, then you may spend a few months in Wroot as happily as in any place of the world...¹⁷

John places the words 'poverty and reproach' in cipher, but not the word 'shame.' Only in the last few years has work by Heitzenrater decoded this cipher and revealed Susanna's frankness in such matters¹⁸

When it came to publishing these letters in the *Arminian Magazine* more than 50 years later though, John introduced an editorial view which carries some significance of its own. Baker notes that '...he treated his originals with very great freedom reversing the order of phrases, substituting one word for another, omitting words and passages without warning and even adding phrases.'¹⁹ In attempting to reconstruct some of these letters, Baker admits they cause real problems.²⁰ Certainly there is a lot missing from them too. As might be expected from letters published to edify the 'people called Methodists', family problems are cut out. One such centres on Ursula, wife of Susanna's eldest son, Samuel, who had an aversion to eighteen year old Charles. Susanna opens a letter to John with a paragraph showing some humour and good judgement about Charles' recent visit to their family:

¹⁶ Baker, *Letters*, I: p. 129

¹⁷ Baker, *Letters* I: p. 198, 11-18

¹⁸ Baker, *Letters* I: p. 149, n2.

¹⁹ Baker, *Letters* I: p. 129.

²⁰ For example see Susanna's letter to John of Jan 31 1726/27 and Baker's notes (*Letters* I: p. 211.)

Whether Charles have given occasion for her contemptuous usage or no I can't determine; but his time of bondage is now near expired, and if it be'n't his own fault his future life may be easier... 'Tis well your sister had ever been civil to you, and would have you also so to her. But never put it in the power of that woman to hurt you; stand upon your guard, and converse with caution...²¹

Most of the rest of this letter is published by John, for it contains Susanna's well-considered views on humility in reply to John's point-by-point comment on Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living and Holy Dying*.

In the *Arminian Magazine* of 1778²² John publishes what seems to be a complete letter in which Susanna seems only to write warmly on the advisability of removing all sins, particularly sexual ones, if we are to enter the kingdom of heaven. However, this passage is actually the conclusion of some very personal, particularised advice on his own relationship with a woman, Sally Kirkham (alias Varanese). Of course he can hardly publish that, but the specific context is lost to later readers, and it raises the question of whether she would have been so dogmatic if she had been considering the subject generally. From John we hear nothing of her religious doubts either, but earlier in the same letter, 54-year-old Susanna, sounds decidedly downhearted. Family isolation and Samuel's improvidence, to say nothing of two fires in which they had lost most of their belongings, meant there was no money and no opportunity for the seven highly educated daughters to make their way in the world. This is what John transcribed:

...I often revolve the state of my family and the wants of my children over in my mind. And though one short reflection on the sins of my youth and the great imperfection of my present state solves all the difficulty of Providence relating to myself, yet when I behold them struggling with misfortunes of various kinds, some without sufficiency of bread, in the most literal sense, all destitute of the conveniences or comforts of life it puts me upon the expostulation of David, 'Lo I have sinned, and I have done wickedly, but those sheep, what have they done?'²³

Neither do we hear from John of Susanna's frequent sickness which she often mentions in her letters. 'The very ill health I have had this two or three last months makes me much indisposed to write', is a typical comment²⁴

V

Having looked at barriers to understanding the real Susanna created by her own rectitude and John's editorial hand, we can consider now what else has been missing over the years. Of course there must still be

²¹ Baker, *Letters* I, p. 172: 3-7

²² *Arminian Magazine*, 1778, pp. 38-39

²³ Baker, *Letters* I, pp. 209-10

²⁴ Baker, *Letters*, I, p. 228:11-12.

correspondence in private hands that may yet come to light (after all, the Hickeys papers only surfaced in 1953) but there are also one or two letters never published because they had no strictly religious interest. One of these is a letter to a nearby clergyman and friend, Joseph Hoole, and is entirely a philosophical discussion on John Locke's idea of personal identity. It offers an important clue to the philosophical and abstract thinking which seems her natural bent and also suggests she may have had more intellectual life in her isolation at Epworth than has been assumed. She has no hesitation in arguing with the two men:

To the Reverend Mr. Hoole.

October 12 1716.

Reverend Sir,

Permit me to interrupt your better thoughts a few minutes while you read this which I send humbly to entreat you be pleased so to recollect the argument we were discoursing the other day concerning Mr. Locke's notion of *personal identity*. Since I cannot on second thoughts entirely agree with you any more than I can with him, your notion seeming to me attended by as ill if not the same consequences as his.

Mr. Locke supposes *personal identity* consists in *self-consciousness*. You are pleased to define it rather a *capacity of self-consciousness*. Now with great deference and submission to two superior minds, I think neither of these notions comes fully up to the matter under debate...

After a substantial discussion of the argument, she politely defers to Hoole's opinion:

You know Mr. Locke to be sure better than I do and can remember the consequences of his hypothesis, therefore I shall only desire you would please to compare his notions and yours together and then see whether the same consequences do not belong to both. I hope you will pardon this trouble and I take the liberty of professing myself with much sincerity,

Rev Sir,

Your obliged and most obedient servant,

Susanna Wesley

I humbly desire you'd please to favour me once more with the sight of a last volume of Clarendon's history if you have it by you. My humble service attends Mrs Smith.

I doubt [suspect] Mr. Locke leaves out the word *immaterial* in his definition of person, but my Master has taken him from me. I desire you please to see whether he has or not.²⁵

It is interesting to ponder why Samuel had removed the book from his wife. Did he just want it himself, or was she spending too much time in speculative philosophy?

(to be continued)

ELIZABETH HART

(Elizabeth Hart is librarian at the Vancouver School of Theology)

²⁵ This letter is transcribed verbatim from a written transcription of the holograph with the annotation "sent a copy of the above to Mr. Wesley, 5th October 1779." Probably her reference is to Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding*, Ch.27, sect.10. "Of identity and diversity."

Annual Meeting and Lecture

THE Society's Annual Meeting (held during the Newcastle upon Tyne Conference) took place on Monday 29th June at West Avenue Methodist Church, Gosforth. A splendid members' tea was prepared by ladies of the church and donated by the North East Branch of our Society - both of whom were thanked warmly by our President, the Rev. A. Raymond George.

The President chaired the Annual Meeting which followed. Sympathy was expressed to the Secretary, Dr. Dorothy Graham, for a family bereavement which had prevented her from attending the meeting. Twelve members of the Society who had died during the preceding year were remembered in prayer. The Officers of the society were re-appointed, though the meeting was informed that Mrs. Vivienne Vickers wished to relinquish the post of Registrar and would do so when a successor could be found. Reports were received. The President commended the Charles Wesley House Appeal.

The Accounts were presented by the Treasurer who informed the meeting of a newly established 'WHS Conference Fund,' and gave notice of a possible increase in subscription rates from the beginning of 1994. The Editor spoke of the value of the reviews in the *Proceedings*. There was a brief discussion on the projected Centenary anthology of articles from the *Proceedings*; further action on this was to be left to the Executive. The Librarian was unable to be present but warm thanks were expressed for her sterling work under adverse conditions at Southlands. Plans for the removal of the library to Westminster College, Oxford are well advanced. An initiative by the College to launch a money-raising campaign on behalf of the Library was very gratefully acknowledged. The 1992 Conference at Westminster College Cambridge (with lectures in the Wesley Church) was commended, and early application advised. The meeting was informed that this year's historical exhibition at Conference had been prepared and mounted by the Record Offices of Durham, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear. Finally, the President thanked the Rev. Edwin Thompson for seeing to the local arrangements for this meeting.

Following the Annual Meeting the members merged with a substantial audience gathering in the church at West Avenue to hear the 1992 WHS Lecture by Dr. Barry Biggs on the subject 'Saints of the Soil: Methodism in the Rural Community'. The Rev. A. Raymond George introduced the Chairman, the Rev. Edwin Thompson, who shared the leading of worship with the minister of West Avenue, the Rev. Brian Dann. The Lecture is printed in this issue of *Proceedings*.

G.E.M.

Since the above was written, our Library has been moved to Westminster College, Oxford and awaits re-shelving. Information about access to the books will be given in our next issue; meanwhile postal inquiries may be addressed to the Assistant Librarian, Wesley Historical Society Library, Westminster College, North Hinksey, Oxford, OX2 9AT.

WESLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY — FINANCIAL STATEMENTS, 1991

Income and Expenditure Account for the Year ended 31st December 1991

INCOME.	£
Subscriptions (Note 1)	4,245
Donations	32
Irish Branch	351
Sales of <i>Proceedings</i> (back numbers)	285
" other Publications, etc. ...	73
Library—Tickets, Donations, Sales	243
Annual Lecture Collection ($\frac{1}{2}$ -share)	22
Advertisements	80
Bank Interest	150
War Stock Dividend	8
	5,489
EXPENDITURE.	£
<i>Proceedings</i> and distribution	2,801
Other Printing	195
Library	1,652
Annual Lecture	40
World Methodist Historical Soc.	60
Administration Expenses	456
Insurances	30
Advertising	40
Subscriptions	5
	5,279
Excess of Income over Expenditure	£210

Balance Sheet as at 31st December 1991

ASSETS EMPLOYED (Note 2)	£
3½% War Stock (at cost) (Note 3)	225
Current Assets—	£
Sundry Debtors	963
Income Tax recoverable	880
Leeds & Holbeck Bld. Soc.	1,500
National Savings Bank...	160
Trustee Savings Bank ...	1,356
Midland Bank (Deposit A/c)	25
" (Current A/c)	2,526
Cash in hand	163
	7,573
Current Liabilities—	£
Sundry Creditors	313
Subscriber's paid in advance	4,466
	4,779
Net Current Assets	2,794
	£3,019
REPRESENTED BY	£
Balance at 1st January 1991 ...	1,944
Add Excess Income over Expenditure	210
	2,154
Conference Fund Surplus	865
(Signed) RALPH WILKINSON, <i>Honorary Treasurer.</i>	£3,019

Notes to the Accounts

1—SUBSCRIPTIONS	£	£
Unexpired Subscriptions at 1st January 1991—		
Ordinary Members ...	1,888	
Life Members (estimated)	300	
	2,188	
Received during year*		6,123
Income Tax recoverable		400
		8,711
<i>Less</i> Unexpired Subscriptions at 31st December—		
Ordinary Members ...	4,191	
Life Members (estimated)	275	
	4,466	
		£4,245

*No account has been taken of subscriptions in arrears at 31st December 1990, whether or not recovered since, but any previous arrears recovered during the year are included in the above figures.

2—ASSETS EMPLOYED

The Library and stocks of Publications have not been valued, and are not included in these financial statements.

3—WAR STOCK

Market value at Balance Sheet date ... £80

AUDITOR'S REPORT—I have audited the financial statements in accordance with approved auditing standards. The amount of subscriptions paid in advance by members includes estimates based upon a reasonable interpretation of the available data. No account has been taken of possible arrears of subscriptions. Other assets and liabilities have been independently verified.

Subject to the matters mentioned above, in my opinion the financial statements give a true and fair view on an historical cost basis of the state of affairs of the Society as at 31st December 1991, and of its surplus for the year then ended.

Barron & Barron,
Bathurst House, 86, Micklegate, York, 16th June 1992.

(Signed) W. B. TAYLOR,
Chartered Accountant.

BOOK REVIEWS

Anti-Methodist publications of the eighteenth century: a revised bibliography by Clive D. Field (off-print from *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, Volume 73, Number 2, Summer 1991, pp. 159-280. £8.50.)

Published as long ago as 1902, Richard Green's bibliography of anti-Methodist publications has served generations of scholars and will go on doing so reincarnated in Clive Field's revision. During the intervening years, bibliographical skills have become both more sophisticated and more rigorous, and Dr. Field is a practitioner whose professionalism needs no commendation.

In his introduction, Dr. Field surveys the earlier attempts to list the many works published in criticism of, or opposition to, eighteenth-century Methodism, together with recent academic treatment of the subject, including articles in these *Proceedings*. He then explains the relationship between his work and Green's, on which it is based and whose numbering it follows.

In several respects Field is less comprehensive, in that, by deliberate editorial policy and for cogent reasons, some of Green's material is excluded from the revised version. This includes entries that are duplicated in Green (e.g. Green No. 67, which is already listed as No. 23), periodical and newspaper articles (of which Green gives only a meagre and arbitrary sample), two satirical prints (already covered more adequately in a British Museum catalogue) and some items from the no-man's-land between the sympathetic and antagonistic treatment of Methodism. There are even some items like Green's No.128 (*The Methodist; or a new method of reading*) which exclude themselves as having 'absolutely no connection with Methodism'. This culling has reduced Green's 606 titles to 446, while the addition of 154 new interfiled items brings the tally back to 600 in the new catalogue.

More important, however, is the new depth and accuracy of bibliographical detail, based on the holdings at Rylands and elsewhere and on the *Eighteenth-century short title catalogue*. Many of Green's titles are more exactly identified and publication details, including dates, are corrected. The result is a major new research tool, though Green will still have his uses, if only because his additional paragraphs, summarizing a work's contents and indicating the circumstances of its publication, fall victim to Dr. Field's rigorous professionalism.

Faced with such high standards, the cavils can only be minor ones. The only locations given are for copies in the John Rylands Library, though it would certainly have been useful to scholars not based in the Manchester area to have had some indication of the holdings of other major collections. And where, on whatever grounds, an item from Green is excluded (e.g. Green No.474, an 'interlude acted at Richmond' but probably never published) it would have been helpful to have had at least the author and title recorded here.

But these matters are more than outweighed by the wealth of new and more exact detail, supported by the four indexes (*not* 'indices', please, Clive!), covering authors, titles, printers and booksellers, and provincial imprints. My only qualification here relates to the wisdom, or helpfulness, of *inverting* initials used as pseudonyms (e.g. 'A.B.', the author of *An earnest and affectionate address* (Green No.200), which appears both in the catalogue itself and in the index as 'B.A.' If in such a case the pseudonym concealed the identity of an author with those actual initials, there might be some tenuous excuse for the inversion; but in fact, the author of this work, we are told, was Henry Stebbing. It would therefore

surely have been more helpful to treat the initials as one would an acronym and avoid the inversions. If that runs counter to current bibliographical practice, then so much the worse for the latter.

JOHN A. VICKERS

The Nonconformists: In Search of a Lost Culture by James Munson. (SPCK. pp. viii + 360 1991. £17.50. ISBN: 0 281 04495 3)

Dissenting Thought and the Life of the Churches by Alan P. F. Sell. (San Francisco. Mellen Research University Press. pp. xi + 714. 1990. no price stated ISBN: 0 7734 9931 8)

Thirty five years ago Trevor Dearing, Methodist turned Anglo-Catholic, wrote most sympathetically of the two religious traditions to which he owed his formation. Now James Munson, Southern Baptist turned Anglican High Churchman, likewise writes on Nonconformity with a rare understanding and lucidity. His book is really about Nonconformity (especially in its Wesleyan, Primitive, Congregational and Baptist manifestations) in the last decade of the nineteenth and first of the twentieth centuries, though with many a backward and a forward glance. He loves anecdotes, he relishes statistics, and is always on the lookout for significant trends amid a wealth of detail, as well as for myths to be exploded. His last chapter on the Passive Resistance Movement is a distillation of his acclaimed Oxford D. Phil thesis. The other eight concern Nonconformity's impact on late Victorian life (from ordinary members through to merchant princes), its social nature (more urban and suburban than rural and surprisingly male-oriented, he argues), its contribution to culture (self-help, bookishness, the breakthrough into Oxford and Cambridge), the nature of its ministry, its search for dignity (i.e. the proper architectural and liturgical settings for the preached Word), the Free Church Federal Councils, national and local, emigration and Nonconformity's pride in imperial achievement, and the nonconformists 'Peculiar', because so highly selective, Conscience.

It is all a remarkable tour de force, not least in the Passive Resistance chapter where the author has delved into unexplored territory, and come up with some challenging reinterpretations. But not all his themes have been heretofore neglected, and the only fault of this book is that there is so little acknowledgement of others' work to which he surely must be indebted. McLeod is used for the urbanisation question, and Jordan on the Free Church Council movement, but not apparently Semmel on the imperial factor or Brown on the Dissenting ministry or Johnson on culture, while, though Machin, Currie, Bebbington and Kent get a single reference each, Binfield incredibly goes unmentioned. And for Munson Methodism's standard history is still Townsend, Workman and Eayrs - its successor is not referred to. These omissions are curious and give the book, for all its novelties, a slightly dated air.

At the very beginning of his work Munson argues that chapel culture has now declined to a point where vast tracts of the country are left without a single place of Free Church worship (though Nonconformity, as we might point out, and as the recent Marc Europe survey reminds us, has a habit of constantly popping up afresh in new guises). He also states, though he does not elaborate on the theme, that Nonconformity, though marginalised, has the satisfaction of seeing its work by and large accomplished, as its attitudes are now a vital, if unacknowledged, part of the contemporary national outlook. What does he mean? Is the Nanny State (plus Political Correctness) the final belated triumph of Victorian Noncon-

formity? Or should this be seen in the English middle-class guilt complex about affluence and wealth creation, the strongest and strangest contrast between the country of our author's birth and that of his adoption? Whatever our interpretation that Peculiar Conscience has a lot to answer for.

Alan Sell, soon to leave Calgary for the University of Wales at Aberystwyth, is distinguished as much for his industry as for the breadth of his historical/theological (and, most recently ethical) interests and enthusiasms. In this heavy tome we are presented with a selection of his articles which range from Elizabethan Puritanism to Reformed/Methodist/Mennonite dialogue of the present day. There is a certain concentration on Arminian/Arian/Calvinistic relationships in the eighteenth century, on Congregational and Unitarian divines of the Victorian age, on the Nonconformity of the Black Country (Professor Sell originally taught at the College of Education in Walsall) and on the ecumenical concerns which came to the fore when he was Theological Secretary to the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in Geneva.

From a Methodist standpoint it is good to have here reprinted from the *Scottish Journal of Theology* 'An Englishman, an Irishman and a Scotsman' which deals in part and very informatively with W. B. Pope, and also Alan's spirited address to the joint meeting of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the World Methodist Council in 1985. It is instructive to discover what most worries a concerned and sympathetic Reformed scholar about us: our (alleged, of course) top-heavy bureaucracy, our Wesleyolatry and our subjectivism, but we note that as a child and youth he attended a Methodist chapel, and that his testimony is not second-hand. And mercifully, as a recent contribution of his to the *Reformed Quarterly* shows, he is gentler with us than with those of his fellow Reformed who have not taken full cognisance of his ecumenical writings of the late 80s.

Altogether this is a significant collection of essays, biographical, historical and theological, which, as their author trusts, will add flesh to the theses of the half dozen or so books which he has had published between 1977 and 1990.

IAN SELLERS

The Preaching Service - The Glory of the Methodists, A Study of the Piety, Ethos and Development of the Methodist Preaching Service, by Adrian Burdon, (Grove Books Ltd, Bramcote, Nottingham NG9 3DS, 1991 pp. iv + 42, £3.50 ISSN 0951-2667 ISBN 1 85174 171 2)

According to the author his book is a major and ruthless editing of his Manchester MPhil. thesis. The first half of the study covers the eighteenth century and the second half the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. By far the best part of the book is the atmosphere created by an anthology of contemporary accounts of Wesley's out-door preachings and his early indoor preaching services. There are two exceedingly quotable sentences which appear to be original to Mr. Burdon. The first runs, 'while there were better orators than John Wesley there were few who were better preachers' and the second runs, 'The chapels and societies were the fruits of (the preachers') ministr(ies), not accommodations before hand'. Neither of these are original thoughts but they are memorably put.

Unfortunately the work is shot through with contentious assertions that are often badly supported. The Methodist Preaching Service probably did not have

its roots in the open-air revival meeting (p.5); it is not distinctively Methodist to prefer the Preaching Service to the Eucharist (p.5); and where is the evidence that the nineteenth-century Preaching Service arose as a reaction to ritualism in the Established Church? (also p.5). It is not likely that Wesley's own development was influenced by the University Sermons whereas his Preaching Services probably were. (The exact opposite of Mr. Burdon's claim!) Mr. Burdon is not the first to try and trace the style and content of Wesley's open-air preaching. Alas, like the others he fails, for it is, for the most part, hidden from us. If the young Walter Scott is anything to go by, Wesley's open air sermons were mostly arresting anecdotes.

Mr. Burdon cites the Georgia 5 o'clock morning prayers and exposition and the Oxford university sermon but does not follow them through as more than likely antecedents of the later Preaching Service. This oddity is greatly compounded by a wholly unjustifiable conflation of the university sermon service with the Moravian preaching service from which certain items are then removed. Such conjectural phrases as 'a reasonable act to occur', 'it is unlikely that' and 'it would be natural' rather give the game away. The reviewer is challenged over his conclusions in an extensive footnote (p.23) which ignores the reviewer's original thesis in favour of what Mr. Burdon himself acknowledges to be but a summary in a later work. The last paragraph of the footnote is vaguely scurrilous and certainly anachronistic!

The Methodist New Connexion Preaching Service on page 31 should be dated 1823 and not 1832. The *MNC Magazine* reference to James Ogden should refer to c.1820 and not 1920. The Primitive Methodist Hymnbook of 1829 was called *A Collection of Hymns for Camp Meetings* (and not as given). The 1838 Bible Christian preaching service given on page 32 is incorrectly copied from Thomas Shaw in several respects; the most important being that the Sermon follows the verses of a hymn in the middle of the service and most certainly did not come as the very last item in the service! There is no evidence that it was the predominance of Morning Prayer in Wesleyan Methodism that delayed the publication of an official outline for the Preaching Service until 1872. Most Wesleyan chapels never used the Order for Morning Prayer even though a number of town and suburban chapels did.

Mr. Burdon has not provided a page reference for the MNC Preaching Service which he cites on page 33; the outline of a pre-or post-union Preaching Service for 1932 curiously lacks a hymn and a New Testament lesson at its heart and cannot possibly represent the situation in any branch of Methodism either then or at any other time. The admirable work of J. Ernest Rattenbury in summoning the Methodist people to better standards in public worship had already been pioneered by J. H. Rigg and more particularly by Thomas Bowman Stephenson and by his fellow members of the Wesleyan Guild of Divine Service.

We are grateful to Mr. Burdon for supplying us with so much relevant material under one cover but what is provided contains a number of factual errors and several dubious conclusions.

NORMAN WALLWORK

Women Towards Priesthood. Ministerial Politics and Feminist Praxis by Jacqueline Field-Bibb. (Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp387, £35.00. ISBN: 0521 39283 7)

This is a lengthy and interesting survey of the movement towards ordination of women in British Methodism, the Church of England and the Roman

Catholic Church. These are traced separately in the first section, where some 59 pages deal with Methodism and then a somewhat dense second section ('Interpretations') takes an overview linking the three and looking at psychological and theological factors and strategies. The Methodist section begins with women preachers and Wesley, the abrupt apparent ending in the early nineteenth century, the use of women preachers by the Primitive Methodists and Bible Christians and then looks at the gradual movement towards women ministers in modern Methodism.

For a non-Methodist writer this is a considerable achievement soundly based on the sources, including conversations with such survivors of the battles of the 60s as Pauline Webb. There is a useful appendix on Bible Christian women listed in the *Minutes*, a welcome counterpoint to Dorothy Graham's work. The author uses the *Methodist Recorder's* accounts of Conference debates on the issue to good effect. She points out that the strategy of opponents in Methodism (as today in the Church of England) was always one of delay. The advocates of women in the ministry in Methodism included those with links with the Deaconess Order and the Mission House such as W. R. Maltby, W. F. Lofthouse, J. Scott Lidgett and G. E. Hickman Johnson.

Ms Field-Bibb assumes, with other recent writers on the subject, that after 1803 there were no women Wesleyan local preachers until the new regulations of 1910. There are some individual examples which prove this wrong, though women local preachers were certainly rare. An interesting article in the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* of 1897 (p 174) makes the general point: 'women have been and are being put on our plans, and that with the happiest results'(!)

JOHN H. LENTON

Shorter Notices

Unique in Methodism by G. E. Milburn (1990, £1.00, available from the Methodist Publishing House).

On the face of it, a centenary account of the Methodist Chapel Aid Association does not promise to be a riveting read, except perhaps for accountants, but Geoffrey Milburn has succeeded in bringing the story alive in a most attractive way. Founded in 1890, largely at the instigation of Sir William Hartley, as a response to a connexional chapel debt problem, the Association grew rapidly up to 1914 and became one of Primitive Methodism's gifts to a united Methodism. Mr. Milburn has drawn on the Association's archives to chart not only the development of an institution but also the changing context of its work and in so doing he illuminates several aspects of Primitive Methodism's history in the 'unknown twentieth century'. There is also a wealth of biographical information here not easily found elsewhere. Altogether this is a readable and important contribution to our recent history.

Protestant Evangelicalism: Britain, Ireland, Germany and America c1750-c1950: Essays in honour of W. R. Ward by Keith Robbins (ed.). (Basil Blackwell, 1990, pp. xxi, 369. £35.00)

This is a *festschrift* to honour Professor W. Reg Ward, who retired in 1986 from the Chair of Modern History in the University of Durham. Among the fifteen essays gathered here, two at least will be of direct interest to members: Henry Rack's paper on John Bennet, pioneer of Methodism in the North-West, perhaps

the first attempt to see his career as a whole and John Walsh's sensitive study of John Wesley and his concern with the community of goods as described in the early chapters of Acts. The range of topics covered in the other essays testifies to Professor Ward's wide historical interests.

A Methodist Guide to Bristol and the South-West by John Edwards, Peter Gentry and Roger Thorne (Methodist Publishing House, 1991, pp.52 £2.50. ISBN: 0 94655070 0)

The third in the series of WMHS Guides, this booklet covers Bristol and Avon, Somerset, Devon and Dorset. Like the earlier guides it succeeds in giving both historical and contemporary information about the region, attractively arranged and illustrated with photographs and drawings. A sketch map of central Bristol would have been helpful, but there is a useful map of Tolpuddle showing key sites.

A Methodist Guide to Cornwall by Thomas Shaw (Methodist Publishing House, 1991, pp.55, £2.50)

Cornwall is 'different'. It is appropriate, then, that this Guide should differ from the rest of the series. Apart from two small itineraries, we have a gazetteer of Methodist sites from St. Agnes to Zennor which reveals on every page the depth of Tom Shaw's knowledge of his adopted county. It is as much about people as it is about places: the entry for St. Austell introduces us to William Flamank, his daughter Elizabeth, with whom John Wesley played 'peepbo' in his carriage, the Vicar, Parson Hugoe, three generations of Francis Barratts, Adam Clarke, Samuel Drew, J. W. Etheridge and Samuel and Mary Thorne! Word cameos abound so that this is not only a superb guide book but also the perfect bedside book for anyone who loves Cornwall and its Methodism. Only the maps disappoint. Otherwise, this is a small masterpiece which no-one else could have written.

E. A. R.

Brothers in Arms. John Wesley's Early Clerical Associates by Arthur Skevington Wood (WHS Publishing Office 1992, pp. 36, £4.00)

Dr A. S. Wood has made early Anglican Evangelicalism a speciality with his notable biography of Thomas Haweis and *The Inextinguishable Blaze*. Now we have a fine article of meticulous scholarship. We need to know much more about the Anglican Evangelicals. In how many parishes was there any residual Calvinism or was the renewal entirely *de novo*? Did Wesley too easily denigrate parish ministry to his loss? Were there more links than meets the eye between Methodists and Anglo-Calvinists? Did Wesley retain links with his old high church friends? Some of these questions receive tentative answers in Dr. Wood's studies of John Hodges of Wenvoe near Cardiff, Henry Piers of Bexley in Kent, Samuel Taylor of Quinton in Gloucestershire, John Meriton, a non-parochial clergyman 'from the Isle of Man', Charles Manning of Hayes, Middlesex, Richard Thomas Bateman of St. Bartholomew the Great, Smithfields London and most notable Vincent Perronet of Shoreham, Kent. All these men attended early Conferences from 1744 onwards. Save for Meriton they were non-itinerant parish clergymen serving long years in their parishes, faithful priests and preachers, never achieving preferment, though Bateman was a naval chaplain for a time. Perronet 'the Archbishop of the Methodists' Charles Wesley called

him - was notable for many years of support for Methodism, though he never itinerated like Grimshaw and later clerical associates like Richardson, Creighton, Dickinson and Coke. We look forward to the *Dictionary of Evangelical Biography 1730-1860* to which Dr. Wood is contributing. Further light, too, is thrown on the early Evangelicals in Kenneth Hylson-Smith's recent *Evangelicals in the Church of England 1734-1984*. (T. and T. Clark. 1988).

JOHN MUNSEY TURNER

LOCAL HISTORIES

Bronington [Shropshire] Methodist Church Centenary 1891-1991. A Commemorative History. (18pp.) Copies, price £1.50 post free, from Rev. Maurice H. Wright, 84 Station Road, Wem, Shropshire, SY4 5BL.

The Church by the Sea: Queens Parade Methodist Church, Bangor, N. I. 1820-1991 by Rodney Bambrick. (84pp.). Copies, £3.50 post free, from the author, 18 Beverley Hills, Bangor, N. I. BT20 4NA.

A Brief History of Methodism in Ambleside 1842-1992 (19pp). Copies £1.25 post free from Rev. Robert White, Glen Millans, Ambleside, Cumbria LA22 9AG.

Centenary Celebrations, Sparkhill Methodist Church [Birmingham] 1892-1992 (43pp). Copies, £1.50 post free from Mrs. E. R. Ball, 20 Catesby Road, Shirley, Solihull, West Midlands, B90 2PA, cheques payable to 'Sparkhill Methodist Church'.

Longholme [Rawtenstall] Methodist Church ... Celebration of 150th Anniversary 1992... by Kevin Butterworth. (21pp A4). Copies, £2.00 plus post from Rev. Roy Nichols, 11 Alder Avenue, Rawtenstall, Lancs. BB4 7RZ.

A Hundred and Fifty Years of Village Methodism. The story of Shenley [St Albans] Methodist Church 1836-1990. (50pp). Copies, £1.50, from Rev. David Monkton, The Manse, 9 Allandale, St. Albans, AL3 4NG.

Prees [Shropshire] Methodist Church Centenary 1892-1992. A Commemorative History (A4, 34pp). Copies, price £2.00 from Rev. Maurice H. Wright, 84 Station Road, Wem, Shropshire, SY4 5BL.

Foolish Dick and his Chapel: the Story of Porthtowan Methodism, 1796-1992 by Thomas Shaw (Rev ed. 32pp). Copies, price £1.00 plus postage, from Rev. T. Shaw, 14 Lanmoor Estate, Lanner, Redruth, Cornwall, TR16 6HN.

Avowed Intent: A short history of Lune Street Methodist Church, Preston, by A. P. Fothergill. (32pp). Copies, £3.25 post free from 7 Janice Drive, Preston Lancashire, PR2 4YE.

Methodism in Wells [next the Sea]. The Story so Far (12pp). Copies, £1.00 plus postage, from John Pechey, 5 William Road, Fakenham, Norfolk.

Ashley Hay, 1851-1992: An affectionate tribute to a small country chapel in Derbyshire by Joe Gould (26pp). Copies, £1.00 post free from Judy Jones, 'Kind Regards', Market Place, Wirksworth, Derbyshire.

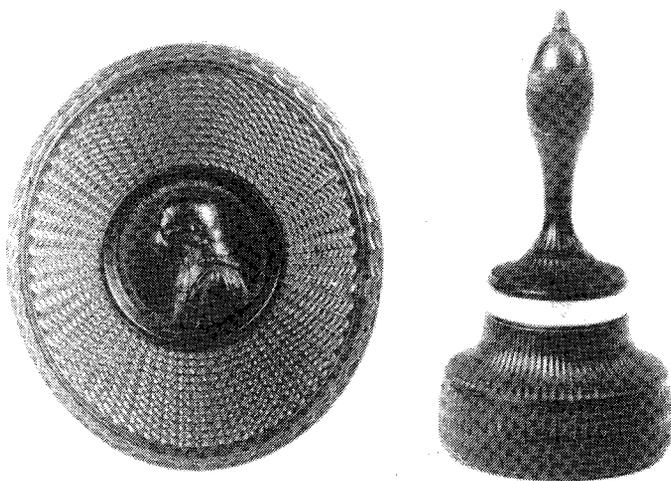
Percy Scott (1910-1991) was Principal of Hartley-Victoria College, Manchester, from 1959 until its closure and remained as Warden after the college buildings passed from Methodist hands. His life and enthusiasms are celebrated in *Percy Scott Remembered* with contributions by former students and members of staff. Copies, price £3.50 post free, are available from the Rev. Robert Davies, 1 St. James' Terrace, Buxton, Derbyshire, SK17 6HS

NOTES AND QUERIES

1457. A WESLEY GAVEL

This lignum vitae maul-shaped gavel came into my possession through a member of the family. In the cavity, disclosed by unscrewing the handle, was a note declaring 'bought at the sale of De Bels Adam, one time Mayor of Liverpool'. The archivist of the Liverpool Record Office informs me that James De Bels Adam was Mayor in 1891-92, a Presbyterian, high in Masonic orders and a fruit broker. He died in 1897.

The inscription on the base reads 'JOHN WESLEY, MA. BORN AT EPWORTH. JUNE 17th 1703. DIED IN LONDON. MARCH 2nd 1791'. It runs around a mould of his head. The silver band on the handle is hallmarked 1876 and 'RR', being the silversmith.



So far, those Wesley historians I have consulted have not been able to satisfy my curiosity about the gavel. Who made it, with all its intricate carving and bas-relief medallion on the base? What was its purpose, to control meetings, to lay foundations stones, as a presentation? The silver band could easily be engraved but this one was not. Are there any others? Why does a Presbyterian and a Mason in Liverpool come to own it, by chance or by design?

DAVID ENSOR

1458. A PLAQUE IN FETTER LANE

On Saturday, May 9th 1992, a plaque was unveiled in New Fetter Lane, London on the wall of Landsec House opposite the statue of John Wilkes, to mark the site of the former Fetter Lane Moravian chapel and the meeting place of the society which preceded it. The plaque reads:

Site of meeting place of the Fetter Lane Society (1738) and Moravian Chapel Congregation established 10th November 1742, Moravian Church Headquarters 1875. Buildings destroyed in Air Raid, 11th May, 1941.

The Methodist Church was represented at the ceremony by the Chairman of the London of the London North-East District, the Rev Ronald Crewes.

EDITOR

1459. REV. SAMUEL COATE

I am seeking information on the latter years of this minister who died in England at an unknown date. From 1794 to 1810 he served in the U. S. and Canada. He turned to his remarkable gift of penmanship to raise money for the Methodist Chapel in Montreal. In 1812 he published in London a 22-page folio titled *Poikilographia, or Various Specimens of Ornamental Penmanship*. He could write the entire Lord's Prayer in a space $\frac{3}{16}$ " square. The book was engraved 'from the originals in possession of the Marquis of Blandford.' Are they still extant? A plagiarized edition of the book appeared c. 1830 under the name of William Jones, and it is assumed that Coate was dead by that date. Coate never returned to Canada, but abandoned his wife (a niece of Barbara Heck) and daughter there. He 'fell into evil company' in England and became dissolute. Rev. William Harvard told friends in Canada that he saw him repent and regain grace before he died. Any leads will be eagerly welcomed.

J. WILLIAM LAMB,
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Joanna M. G. Dawson 1930-1992

Joanna Dawson could trace her Methodist ancestry back to Wesley's day. Originally connected with the old Huddersfield Mission in Queen Street, her father became a farmer in Nidderdale and Joanna followed in his footsteps. As a local preacher in the Pateley Bridge circuit Joanna was very much a part of the life of the dale and she acquired an encyclopaedic knowledge of its chapels and their families which she put to good use when she gave the 1978 WHS lecture at Ilkley on 'The people at the Grass Roots within the Great Haworth Round, 1738-91'. Not surprisingly the church was packed, for such was the popularity of 'our' Joanna that they even came by coach to hear about 'their' family and 'their' chapel. It was local history at its best, based on many years' research.

As a local historian Joanna had an infectious enthusiasm which was an inspiration to others. We give thanks to her life and especially for her many sided contribution to her beloved Methodism.

D.C.D.