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Proceedings

OF THE

Wesley Historical Society

Editor: REV. JOHN C. BOWMER, M.A., B.D., Ph.D.

Volume XLII

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“NEARER WHILE WE SING” 1780 - 1980

[Bracketed numbers refer to the *Methodist Hymn-Book*, 1933. With very few exceptions, all the hymns quoted are to be found in John Wesley's *Collection* of 1780.]

I

THE publication which Methodists all over the world are being encouraged to celebrate in 1980, with—in Britain—timely aid from Norman Goldhawk, Oliver Beckerlegge and others (including this Society), is a handy little volume, duodecimo like all its predecessors, containing just over 500 pages and 525 hymns, together with a famous Preface and an equally famous Table of Contents. Affectionately designated as the “Large Hymnbook” by John's devoted followers in 1780, it has been known as such by Methodists ever since. The *Collection*, of course, underwent various minor alterations and additions both before and after John Wesley's death in 1791: the facsimile issued by the Wesleyan Methodist Conference in 1904 is in fact the third corrected edition of 1782. John had amended his brother's text here and there at his discretion, dropping for instance a stanza from “Depth of mercy” (358),¹ and changing personal pronouns in “Talk with us, Lord” from singular to plural. Most of the verbal alterations made after Wesley's death are of small significance: a possible exception, perhaps, is the cutting out of a section-heading “For Believers brought to the Birth” and the inclusion of its thirty-eight hymns under “Mourners convinced of Sin”. This is one of the few editorial changes which may well have theological interest, as the meaning of regeneration as distinct from justification was one of the niceties of terminology on which the brothers differed. Wesley's book, enlarged and supplemented in subsequent editions, remained substantially intact for 120 years,

¹ I my Master have denied,
I afresh have crucified,
Oft profaned His hallowed name,
Put Him to an open shame.

until in 1904 the Wesleyan Methodist Conference, looking the twentieth century in the face, compiled and published a new hymn-book designed to hear and answer new calls and opportunities, and dropping the time-honoured title of *Wesley's Hymns* whilst still in fact retaining 457 of them. This publication may be seen as marking an important stage in the long process of assimilation by which the authentic hymnody of Methodism is becoming an integral part of the whole devotional apparatus of the western Church. The process continues. But the hopes expressed by John Wesley in his preface to the hymn-book of 1777 "for the use of Christians of every denomination" remain sadly unfulfilled while hymns such as "Author of faith, eternal Word", "Let Him to whom we now belong" and "Behold the servant of the Lord" are not yet in general use. We who now thankfully recall hymns which "speak the language of our souls" must do so with a due sense of responsibility to our brethren in Christ.

The close association throughout Methodist history of spiritual experience with the singing of hymns can be paralleled only in the records of the Bohemian Brethren and Moravians.² The evidence for both the Wesleys' blessed addiction to it is very strong, and very significant. It needs no recounting here, but has lessons for us today on an occasion of pious remembrance: without it no true understanding would be possible either of Charles the evangelist, experiential theologian and compulsive writer of verse, or of John the single-minded and saintly religious genius and leader of men. Hymns were the life-blood of the societies. "Every meeting began and ended with singing and prayer"—so speaks Wesley in 1781, recalling 1738. It could hardly be otherwise, since long before Aldersgate Street, and before Charles had written a line, John himself had found in hymn-singing "a devotional exercise hardly less indispensable than prayer itself". From the Holy Club in Oxford to the last hours at City Road it was the praise of God, "While life and thought and being last", that claimed all his "soul and body's powers". He had included Watts's great paraphrase in his first hymn-book at Charlestown in 1737,³ and it was on his lips at the end.

In one sense the book cannot be said to be fully representative of the total Methodist contribution to the hymnody of Christendom. We do not find in it the great festival hymns of the Church. "Let earth and heaven combine", "Glory be to God on high", "Christ the Lord is risen today" and the rest were added in later editions. John passed them by because his mind was upon the needs of his scattered societies, rather than on public worship in the parish church. But all the great ruling insights of Methodism stand out clearly, for him who runs to sing. The selection of 1780 was made

² For a full account of the influence of Moravian hymnody on the Methodist movement, see J. L. Nuelsen: *John Wesley and the German Hymn*, translated by T. Parry, S. Moore and A. Holbrook (1971).

³ Facsimiles of this uniquely important book were published in 1882 and (by this Society) in 1964.

from at least thirty—i.e. about half—of the total number of hymn-books issued by one or other or both the brothers between 1739 and 1780. The two biggest contributions come from Charles's two volumes of *Hymns and Sacred Poems* of 1749 (143 hymns) and 1742 (102 hymns); 99 hymns were taken from his enormous two-volume series of biblical paraphrases published in 1762.

Wesley gives no indication of his share in the authorship of his 525 beyond the information that "but a small number is of [his] own composing". Dr. J. L. Nuelsen⁴ gives the figures as 486 by Charles Wesley and 27 by John; of the remaining 12, seven are by Isaac Watts, two by Henry More, and one each by the two Samuel Wesleys and George Herbert. (The last named is an interesting example of John Wesley's practice of freely adapting other writers' verse to suit his own practical ends whether metrical or didactic.) The scholars are left with the question he was simply not concerned to answer. Apart from the great German hymns which had so moved him at Herrnhut and on the voyage to Savannah, 33 of which he had rendered into noble and memorable English poetry for the sake of his converts, his exact personal share in the authorship of the book must remain a matter of speculation. Dr. Bett's conclusions in 1913,⁵ based on internal literary evidence, were challenged again in these *Proceedings* as lately as 1977 by Dr. E. M. Hodgson. The problem, after all, belongs only in a secondary way to what must be primarily an expression of grateful thanks for an outstanding means of grace. More important is our knowledge that John Wesley shares our commemorative honours not only as editor and publisher, but as a religious poet of rare distinction. Who shall say that "Jesu, Thy boundless love to me", "Now I have found the ground . . ." and "Jesu, Thy blood and righteousness" have had less influence upon English Christian devotion than the greatest of Charles's passionate hymns of faith and penitence? John included 17 of the translations he had made in Georgia in the *Collection* of 1780; and these hymns are of great significance in Methodist history, testifying as they do to the deep and lasting influence of Moravian piety not only—in spite of later misunderstandings—upon Wesley's own mind and heart, but on the growth of the Methodist movement in the following two centuries. From the beginning John's translations and Charles's original hymns had done more than edify and warm the hearts of their converts: they had been the means of teaching them the basic truths of theology, "serving them as prayer-book, school book and catechism".⁶

Such are the sources, authors and formal contents of this famous book. Designed expressly "for the use of the people called Methodists", it has religious value which oversteps all denominational limits, and places them in the devotional armoury of the holy

⁴ Nuelsen, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

⁵ See *The Hymns of Methodism in their literary relations*, Appendix IV.

⁶ Nuelsen, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

Catholic Church. As Dr. J. E. Rattenbury said fifty years ago, the hymns are "for all centuries, and perhaps for eternity".⁷

II

ABOUT the same time—in November 1932—came another appraisal which became famous: more concrete than Rattenbury's, and certainly among the most significant ever offered. In a lively paper read to the Cambridge University Methodist Society, Bernard Manning, then senior tutor of Jesus College and a devout churchman of the English Dissent, categorically ranked "this little book" with the Book of Psalms, the English Book of Common Prayer and the Canon of the Mass. Manning's strong support for the generally-accepted judgement on the hymns as Methodism's greatest contribution to the common heritage of Christendom has long been quoted with approval by Methodist eulogists. Like him, they disregard mere literary flaws and endearing archaisms—the "feeble worms rushing in to take the kingdom by storm"; the naïve approaches to the Almighty ("Saviour, art Thou pacified?")—and are well content to be playfully rebuked by a non-Methodist for paying too little regard to their heritage. But his mention of Psalter, Prayer-book and Divine Liturgy invites a closer look. The common aim of these great instruments of Christian devotion is to make men aware of the holiness of God; and further, to mediate the grace by which alone their souls may share this holiness and live. For centuries they have done just this for millions. And when we turn from them to Wesley's hymns we find the same recurring thought: God, the all-holy, "wills that I should holy be" (565).⁸ John spent his whole life in the pursuit of perfect holiness, and his life's vocation was avowedly to make holy the common life of his countrymen. He recommends his *Collection of Hymns* as a means to this end: "to raise or quicken the spirit of devotion . . . kindling and increasing his love to God and man". In its 29 sections we may find many hymns which by statement of revealed truth, by interpretation of scripture, or by plain pastoral advice, abundantly justify the large claims made for them by grateful modern readers of our own day, and by Wesley himself.

There is at first sight nothing very unusual—beyond felicity of language—in Wesley's claim that his collection contains "all the important truths of our most holy religion". A great many hymnals, after all, do just this, in some formal theological sequence. The distinctive merits of Wesley's book lie rather in its arrangement of these truths "according to the experience of real Christians". These words take us to the heart of Wesley's gospel—

. . . the living faith,
Which whosoe'er receives,
The witness in himself he hath (363).

⁷ J. E. Rattenbury: *Wesley's Legacy to the World*, p. 256.

⁸ It is surely significant that in one of the greatest of them all—"Author of faith, eternal Word" (362)—John Wesley inserted in verse 4 the word "holiness" in place of Charles's original "happiness".

Hence his emphasis on the word "believers", describing, under nine heads, the successive chapters in the Christian's life from the moment of conversion up to his passage to glory: as has often been said, this is Wesley's "metrical *Pilgrim's Progress*". "All the truths", indeed; not in orthodox formulation (he hated orthodoxy!), but in the "weakest believer's" heart (420). Thus the Cross itself becomes the sinner's "central point of bliss" (319)—"all my hope and all my plea" (456): the mystery, the amazing love is only credible because "it found out *me*" (371). So in "Thou Shepherd of Israel"—a hymn added to the *Collection* after Wesley's death—Calvary is "that happiest place" where the believer, be he Charles himself or the "poor black" he was accompanying to the gallows, "suffers and triumphs" with his Lord, in what has been aptly described as "this triumphant appropriation of the Cross".⁹

Wesley adds the claim that these hymns not only present the important truths, but "prove them by Scripture". This might be misunderstood, did we not find that again and again both doctrine and scripture are themselves being proved in the crucible of the singer's faith. Thus in an early (1740) hymn on the Beatitudes, "Jesus, if still the same Thou art" (349),¹⁰ after praying for the blessedness promised to the poor in spirit, the mourners, the souls hungry for righteousness, Charles must have realized—in verse 4—that he was in reality sharing the experience Paul had described in Romans viii: the Holy Spirit was in fact praying for and in him. Similarly, most if not all of the scores of hymns based upon passages of scripture become in effect expressions of the believing singer's personal experience: this, one cannot but conclude, is at least part of what John Wesley meant by "*scriptural* holiness". Abraham's sacrifice, the veil upon the face of Moses, Elijah on Horeb, Jacob at Peniel; prophets, psalmists, historians, theologians and apostles, and the acts and very words of the Lord Himself—none of it is merely a record of past history. The sacred book, unsealed by the Spirit (305), interprets the past in the present, and becomes "the record of Thy will" for me (310). "Touch *me*, and make the leper clean . . .", "Bid *me* stretch out my withered hand . . .", "Lame at the pool I still am found": thus holy scripture comes alive, and the Lord is *present* with them as He promised. In a perfect little hymn based on Numbers vi, Charles sings of "the joys of holiness" (378), meaning nothing less than the mystical union that is between Christ and His disciple. And the Canon of the Mass says no more than that.

Whilst some of these hymns obviously reflect, as they were bound to do, the religious tensions, polemics, misunderstandings of the age they were written in, their truest perspective—like that of Hebrew Psalter, English Prayer-book and Catholic Liturgy—is apocalyptic and eternal. What, then, is their bearing upon the crises which face mankind today and tomorrow? On the two main issues now ruling

⁹ T. S. Gregory: *According to your faith* (1966), p. 73.

¹⁰ This is one of the hymns confidently ascribed by Henry Bett to John.

the thought and action of the whole Church—her mission to the contemporary world and her unity in Christ—they speak to the heart of our need. The two issues are, of course, but one. As to the first, Wesley's mission to the world, preached even more eloquently in his actions than by his doctrines,¹¹ was nothing but a call to holiness; and holiness is the living Christ. Nowhere was this ever more clearly stated than in the stanzas he took from two of Charles's paraphrases—Jeremiah xlv and xxxi (547). The entire life of a Christian, his "every sacred moment" (390), is a sustained prayer that the will of God, already fulfilled for all by Christ, may be "fulfilled again—in me". These Methodist "believers" "knew and felt" (387) the enlivening presence of Christ in their hearts, and like St. Peter could only describe it as a "joy unspeakable" (745); but there was no trace of self-indulgence in the experience. It must find outlet—as the section "For Believers Working" abundantly shows—in "outward works" and "acts of faith and love" (386) which, in the most profound and literal sense, he recognized as the acts of the Lord Himself. The hymn "Holy Lamb, who Thee confess" (598), in the section on "the Society praying", was rightly described by Dr. Rattenbury as the best summary in the English language of what is meant by the *Imitation of Christ*. The lines "O let me commend my Saviour to you"¹² (311) and "To serve the present age" (578) have remained for these 200 years as watchwords of that activist Christian belief which is Methodism's *raison d'être*. In his Reith Lectures, Dr. Edward Norman maintained with some justice that today Christian apologists seem in some danger of confounding the charity of Christ with humanist idealism. Wesley's uncompromising hymns of service prove that for his part he never held or taught any other theory of the "nature" or the "rights" of man, or the "brotherhood" of man, than the human Brotherhood of Jesus (134), the Saviour of men. Peace on earth must be His peace. "Jesus exalted on high" (902) is in the end not only the best, but the only dynamic for all the social striving of men and nations.

On the call to re-affirm, and make visible, the unity of the Church, the Methodist hymns bear witness no less clearly to a crucial religious issue of our time. The societies where they were sung were, in fact, *ecclesiolae in ecclesia*. Confessing the Church's faith, accepting with joy the mission of holiness, they realized the unity which is Christ. John Wesley's lifelong witness to "the inwardness of catholicity", as Dr. Scott Lidgett claimed at the Methodist Uniting Conference in 1932, is unique in Christian history. The authentic "Voice of Methodism" had one motive only—to summon all men everywhere to a life of prayer. The faith and charity so movingly expressed in these hymns shows no hint of a sectarian concern; and it is this universality which speaks so commandingly to our present

¹¹ J. E. Rattenbury: *The Evangelical Doctrines of Charles Wesley's Hymns*, p. 306.

¹² The present association of this line with three others from another stanza, rather more pertinent than Charles's original cento, was made at the writer's suggestion by an editorial sub-committee in 1933.

condition. It shows itself in some unexpected places,¹³ recalling “real Christians” of every name to the divine oblation which “perfects all our souls in one” (723).

One the Father is with Thee:
 Knit us in like unity;
 Make us, O uniting Son,
 One, as Thou and He are one.¹⁴

In this communion of saints we are all—denominations and fellow-believers alike—to “build each other up” (717) in the “bond of perfectness” (721). The *Collection* ends, as of course, in heaven (“Go on! we’ll meet you there”). For “the holy to the holiest leads” (818), and “all the servants of our King, in earth and heaven, are one” (824).

In the final analysis the secret of the Wesleys’ achievement in these hymns lies in the depth of their inspired understanding of the love of God to man—an understanding not merely conceptual, but intuitive, passionate and personally felt: John had described it as “the experimental knowledge of God”.¹⁵ And the words of the Pilgrim song, which Charles had written thirty years earlier, were true of the whole evangelical revival:

That palace of our glorious King,
 We find it nearer while we sing. (610)

A large hymn-book indeed! for its horizons are in eternity.

A. S. GREGORY.

[The Rev. Arthur S. Gregory, M.A. (Oxon) is a retired Methodist minister who has written widely on Methodist hymnody. He is the author of that detailed study of the *Methodist Hymn-Book* entitled *Praises with Understanding* (Epworth Press). He is now the only surviving member of the Hymn- and Tune-Book Committees of 1930-3.]

¹³ The superintendent of a city mission recently told the writer in conversation that among his youth group’s favourite hymns is

Arise, my soul, arise,
 Shake off thy guilty fears . . .
 My God is reconciled . . . (368).

¹⁴ A stanza omitted from M.H.B. 720.

¹⁵ Writing in his journal on 13th October 1778 (*Works* (ed. T. Jackson), iv, p. 131).

We gratefully acknowledge receipt of copies of the following periodicals, some on a reciprocal basis with our own *Proceedings*.

The Local Historian, Vol. 14, Nos. 2 and 3.

The Baptist Quarterly, July 1980.

The Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society, Vol. 2, Nos. 5 and 6, May and October 1980.

The Congregational Historical Circle Magazine, May 1980.

Methodist History, April and July 1980.

The Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research, Vol. 53, No. 127, May 1980.

Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society, Vol. xvii, No. 2, July 1980.

The Journal of the Friends’ Historical Society, Vol. 54, No. 3, 1978.

THE ANNUAL MEETING AND LECTURE

THERE was a good attendance at Wisewood church, Sheffield, on Monday, 30th June, for the Annual Meeting, Tea and Lecture. The minister of the church (the Rev. Kenneth R. Brown) and his friends not only provided an excellent tea on behalf of our Treasurer and his wife, but made special arrangements for the Lecture, including an exhibition and a commemorative brochure.

Business Meeting

The Rev. W. Russell Shearer was elected to the chair in the absence of our President. The accounts presented by Mr. Rowland C. Swift, which showed an excess of income over expenditure of £616 84p. at the time of audit, were adopted. The full accounts are printed opposite.

The Librarian reported on the work being done at Southlands College in the way of accessions and re-binding. The officers of the Society are aware that much remains to be done to make the Library both useful to our members and attractive to visitors, and there are hopes of improving it considerably by the time the Residential Conference meets there at Easter 1981; but time is a commodity in short supply.

The Secretary reported that the Charity Commissioners were now willing to accept an application for registration from the Society, but had stipulated that before registration considerable alteration would have to be made in our Constitution. The Executive Committee was authorized to prepare a fresh draft of the Constitution incorporating these additions and alterations to be printed in the *Proceedings* before the matter is considered again at the next Annual Meeting.

The meeting regretfully accepted Dr. Bowmer's resignation from his offices as President of the Society and editor of the *Proceedings*. Dr. Bowmer has served the Society faithfully and well for thirty years, and, as the chairman said, brought distinction to it. The Rev. A. Raymond George was then unanimously appointed President of the Society, and Mr. E. A. Rose to the office of Editor. Mrs. E. Dorothy Graham was appointed as Assistant Secretary for 1980-1. The remaining officers were re-appointed.

Mr. William Leary was warmly welcomed to the meeting and thanked for the three Exhibitions that, despite his recent illness, he had been able to arrange in Sheffield.

The Annual Lecture

Mr. Barrie Trinder, the Tutor for Historical Studies on the education staff of the Shropshire County Council, who lectured on "Methodism in its industrial setting, 1750-1850", outlined the beginnings and development of Methodism against the background of newly-developing industrial communities, and made special use of the evidence available from John Fletcher's Madeley. He suggested that the pattern of Methodist growth in the area might be used as a model against which developments in other non-urban industrial areas might be measured. Early Methodism in such districts had particular characteristics—a close association with the working context, the cottage meeting as the basis of Methodist worship with a chapel as a "regional" centre, and the revival as a central experience—which distinguished it from the Methodism of great cities, market-towns, or agricultural districts.

The Rev. Michael S. Edwards, who presided, suggested that Wesley's reference to the "swiftly improving country" around St. Austell may have been a mark of his awareness of the industrial scene. If we are to evaluate

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF METHODIST HISTORICAL LITERATURE, 1978

THIS Bibliography differs in a number of important respects from the four which have been published previously in these *Proceedings*—most notably in its length. In an attempt to reduce the considerable amount of time spent in preparing these annual lists, new and more stringent criteria are now being applied in the selection of references. Henceforth, the following categories of material which have been noted in the past will no longer be included: items relating to Methodism in Northern Ireland or in the Irish Republic; unpublished works other than university theses; re-issues, whether photographic or otherwise, of out-of-print titles; chapel and circuit histories of less than fifty pages in length; general articles and leaflets of less than five pages unless of obvious significance. These cuts are regretted, but, since they largely affect works of a fairly ephemeral nature, it is hoped that the overall value of the Bibliography will not be diminished unduly. The space saved by these omissions has also made it possible to increase the bibliographical detail in respect of those items which have been recorded.

The compiler is always pleased to hear of significant contributions to the literature which are worthy of mention in the series. He can be contacted at the John Rylands University Library of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PP.

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CLIVE D. FIELD.

We have received two very useful offprints, for which we thank the respective authors. The first is from *History of Education*, volume 8 (1979), No. 3, and consists of an article by Dr. David Hempton, entitled "Wesleyan Methodism and Educational Politics in Early Nineteenth-century England". Dr. Hempton will be known to our readers as the author of the article "*The Watchman* and 'Religious Politics' in the 1830s", which appeared in our May 1979 issue. He is now at the Department of Modern History, Queen's University, Belfast. The other offprint comes from the pen of our North-East Branch Secretary, Mr. Geoffrey E. Milburn. It consists of two studies on "Methodism and Society in Sunderland in the early Nineteenth Century" which appeared in *Antiquities of Sunderland*, volumes xxvi and xxvii. The former deals with "Wesleyanism in Sunderland: 1791-1851", and the latter is entitled "A Sunderland Diary, 1841-43", being an account of John Young, chemist and member of the Wesleyan Methodist Association.

Also reaching the Editor's desk is a copy of the first *Bulletin* of the newly-formed Cumbria Religious History Society. As the title indicates, the interests of this Society extend to all churches in the county: nevertheless this bulletin contains one article devoted to Methodism, namely "Carlisle Wesleyans, the Central Chapel and G. Bramwell Evens", by Mr. John Burgess, who is the Society's secretary as well as being secretary of our own Cumbria Branch. Another useful article is "Sources for Non-anglican Church History in the County Record Office", by Jeremy Godwin.

A catalogue of the Cheshunt College Archives, by Dr. C. Edwin Welch, one of our members, is to be published early in 1981 by the List and Index Society, c/o The Public Record Office, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 4DU. The collection includes Lady Huntingdon's correspondence with John Wesley and many other Methodists. The probable cost will be around £9.

THE LAVINGTON CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 111)

As has been already indicated, charges of sexual immorality were a favourite and popular form of slander; and the correspondence provides a number of examples. In 1750 we find William Newton, vicar of Sithney from 1737 to 1780, writing to Archdeacon Sleech (who obviously acted as Lavington's agent), making such an allegation. The credence—or lack of it—that we can give to his charges is sufficiently suggested by the fact that it was presumably he who is mentioned in Charles Wesley's *Journal* for 20th July 1746, when he speaks of preaching in the village:

Near one hundred of the fiercest rioters were present, who a few months since had cruelly beat the sincere hearers, not sparing the women and children. They were hired by the pious Minister for that purpose.

WILLIAM NEWTON TO ARCHDEACON SLEECH²⁴

Rev'd. Sir,

Being informed that Mr. Wm. Thomas who is sworn Father of a Child (as appears from the Copy of the Affidavit on the other side) has turned himself into your Court, in order (if possible) to compromise matters by Commutation, and to avoid being made a Publick Example.

I thought it my duty to let you know, that this Mr. Thomas is one of our²⁵ most zealous and rigid Methodists, and having a good estate in my Parish, keeps a Conventicle in his own house for them in downright defiance. I therefore hope that such Punishment will be inflicted on him, as his Hypocritical life & conversation deserve.

I am

Your most humble Sert. to command

WM. NEWTON.

Sithney Vicarage

Mar. 18. 1750

P.S. I am appointed
one of the D. of Portland's
Domestick Chaplains in
the room of Mr. Birchett deceas'd.

Cornwall } The Voluntary Deposition of Ann Tregear of The Parish
to Witt } of Crowan in the said County single woman, taken before
 } me one of his Majesty's Justices of the Peae in and for the
 } said County the 6th of March 1750.

Who saith, that about ten days since she was deliver'd of a base male-Child, which was begot on her body by Willm. Thomas of the Parish of Sithney in the said County, who by Persuasions & promises of Marriage prevailed on her; and about a year and a half ago, and several times

²⁴ Sleech was a scholar of King's College, Cambridge, in 1729, became Archdeacon of Cornwall c. 1741, and in March 1746/7 canon of Exeter, where he died in 1788. R. Polwhele (*Traditions and Recollections* (1826), i, p. 154 f.) says he was "a venerable archdeacon", and that "at his visitations he used to be in pain for him whilst he read his charges from scraps of paper, some of which had slipped from their places".

²⁵ "the" crossed out and "our" substituted.

afterwards had carnal knowledge of her Body; and that the said Willm. Thomas is the true and only Father of such child.

The sign of
ANN O. TREGEAR.

Sworn before me
THOS. GLYNN.

[Endorsed :] Mr. Thomas, a Methodist, / guilty of Bastardy. / He afterwards confess'd it in the Spir- / itual Court, & was enjoin'd / Penance.

If William Thomas was in fact a Methodist (is it he to whom Wesley refers in his letter of 21st September 1764 to Thomas Rankin?), it is most unlikely, in view of the puritanical nature of early Methodist living, to which some letters in the correspondence bear witness, that he was indeed the father of the child. There could well have been two men of the same name—a very Cornish name—in the parish.

A similar charge to bastardy was extra-marital relationships, and Thomas Salmon of Whitchurch (south-east of Tavistock) tells tales, a little confused, of a young supposed Methodist whose young wife gave birth soon after the marriage, and a preacher who cohabited with a woman not his wife. The postscript gives his name as Richard Lucas, who was certainly “one of Mr. Wesley’s preachers”. We know little of him, actually; he is mentioned in a letter of Wesley to his wife (see *Proceedings*, xxvii, p. 61) as travelling with Wesley from Chester; Myles (*Chronological History*, 1798) says he began to itinerate in 1754—three years after the date of this letter—and that he died in 1774; but he disappears from the *Minutes* after 1765, when he was stationed in London (Hall’s *Circuits and Ministers* erroneously prints his name as Robert Lucas). Atmore’s *Methodist Memorial* (1801, p. 246) contains a brief paragraph on Lucas, giving the date of his death mistakenly as “about 1768”; but the character of his life there summarized belies Salmon’s libel. In any case, 1751-4 was the very period when all Wesley’s helpers were being very carefully examined in view of the scandal caused by James Wheatley, and it is most unlikely that Lucas would have escaped detection had he been guilty.

THOMAS SALMON TO ?

Reverend Sir,

After having made all imaginable inquiry, with proper privacy, Which I have been the longer in doing, that I might be as particular as possible, I can’t find that any one has been Presented to, or done Pennance, by order of the Court of Totnes for Antenuptial Fornication, at Tavistock, for more than twenty three Years. The Apparitor assures me, he never serv’d but two Processes of that kind, and those soon after his coming into his Office, whilst Mr. Beard was Vicar.

Some of the Circumstances You mention are exactly Applicable to a Methodist in the Town, who about seven Years since married the Person’s daughter at whose House their Meetings have been always held, & his Son, an Inhabitant of Plymouth, is one of their Preachers; The Girl who was very Young had Child soon after Marriage, but I can’t

learn that any other Notice was taken of it by Mr. Brown, than a Private Admonition, which, from his particular relation of the Fact to Mr. Hedges, I make no doubt he gave them, nor can I hear that the Young Fellow who married the Girl has been styled by them a Teacher.

They seem in general to have been strangers to most of the Ceremonies at the Love Feasts, and only to have heard of there being such things in London, and at other places; tho' the strictest of them, of the Younger part at least have certainly been many of them guilty of Ante-Nuptial Fornication: However as several weak, but well-meaning People have attended their meetings, I have, I believe, been rightly inform'd of their Behaviour at them; their times being employ'd in singing Hymns, an extempory [sic] Prayer by one of their greatest Adepts in Methodism, and when there has been no Profess'd Preacher, a Sermon of Whitfield read to them.

Their Society is at present dissolved, and Methodism is certainly at a very low Ebb with us, if not entirely at an end.

There is a person of Tavistock, bred a Barber, who about four Years since quitted his Employ, and now calls himself a Preacher for Mr. Wesley; the Man before his turning Methodist had a very good Character, and seem'd a devout religious man, but since his Intimacy with Mr. Wesley has liv'd with a Woman, whom, on his Cohabiting with her, he declar'd his intention of Marrying, but he hath not as yet thought fit so to do, neither is there at present any talk of it. As his Ministry calls him frequently, now almost wholly abroad, he hath given up all his worldly Concerns, at least the Management of them to his Missresses Brother, occasionally a Churchman, then a Methodist, and now a Dissenter.

If I can at any time be of Service to the Person for whom You solicit this Information or to Yourself, be pleas'd to lay Your Commands on

Whitchurch Decr. 17th. 1751

Reverend Sir,

The names of the Persons I at first imagin'd had been prosecuted are John Barnet, and Mary Kinsman, and Mr. Wesley's Friend the Barber Richard Lucas.

Your obliged
and obedt. humble Servant

THO: SALMON.

Mr. Hedges desires me to pay his Compliments to You and Mrs. Baker, to which we beg leave to add ours with those of the approaching Season.

A similar—but worse—letter was the scurrilous account written by Thomas Morrison, vicar of Torrington, to Lavington. This letter bears all the marks of crude exaggeration, and, as the Rev. Thomas Shaw says in his catalogue to the 1961 exhibition, "It is significant that, while the story relates to Marhamchurch, it was the vicar of a town some distance away who reported it to the bishop". It is also confused: Morrison speaks of Hacker's daughter's sins being expiated, but a couple of lines later refers to her as "the old woman"—presumably he meant Hacker's wife, rather than his daughter.

The kindest thing that can be said about such stories and these

letters is that, without question, in a time of such emotional fervour as the Revival, it was certain that some impostors would arise calling themselves "Methodists", whether deliberately to discredit the Methodists or not, and that incumbents looking for stories would not inquire too deeply into their credentials.

THOMAS MORRISON TO BISHOP LAVINGTON

Torrington, Nov: 3, 1749.

My Lord,

I have lately seen the Gentleman from whom I first Heard the story of Degory Hacker of Marhamchurch, that he can recollect no other particulars of it, than what I have already communicated, when²⁶ I had the Honour last of being with your Lordship neither will his Business call him into that Country till about Lady Day next, at which Time He will take care to inform himself of ye minutest circumstances of it, if your Lordship should then have any Curiosity to hear more of it — However He confirms everything which I have already mention'd to your Lordship, and says that ye story was told to Him at ye General Court which He Held in that parish Degory Hacker Himself being present and acknowledging the truth of ye²⁷ following Relation, viz. — That an Itinerant preacher of ye Sect of ye Methodists came into that Country, and in his Sermon assur'd his Hearers, that ye World would be at an end on such a Day, to which Prophecy the old Man giving full Credit Let down his Hedges turn'd his cattle into his Growing Corn, and made no preparation for any sillage for the ensuing year, as being wholly taken up in fixing himself for ye Day of Judgment, the expectation of which as it gave the old man and his wife²⁸ no little anxiety, one morning an apprentice who liv'd in ye family inform'd him that He had a Vision in ye night which told him that if He would submit to it His Sins repented [?] by Scourging, and that He Himself was ye person Deputed by ye Vision to inflict this Discipline upon him — with which proposal the Old Man after some Little Hesitation complied, and accordingly the apprentice gave him forty Stripes save one with a Bundle of Willow-Rods, and the old Man acknowledg'd to this Gentleman, that ye executioner did not spare him, but applied the Scourging Heartily; and now after the old Man's Sins [being] thus expiated, the next night the same apprentice had a Second Vision which inform'd him that his Daughter's Sins were to be expiated by Fire and Water, upon which a Great Kettle was set over, and the Water Heated to as great a Degree as the old Woman could bear, but whether ye Lustration was perform'd upon ye same part to which the Willows were applied, my Friend could not inform me — He told me besides, that he was inform'd, at ye same time (but not in ye presence of ye Old Man himself, and therefore less Credit is to be given to that than to ye other parts of ye story) that ye same apprentice was caught be ye Old Man a Little time after, in a very Indecent Posture with his Daughter, and upon ye old Man's asking what He was doing, He should give that shocking answer which I mention'd to your Lordship — My friend informs me, that the old Woman has been some time Dead, but Degory and the Daughter are still living, and what is something surprizing, is still as Rigid a Methodist as [ever] though he has suffer'd so much by Listening to the delusions of these Wretches, and has now outliv'd ye Day

²⁶ "when" written twice and the first time crossed out.

²⁷ "it" written after "of" and crossed out.

²⁸ "family" written before "wife" and crossed out.

of Judgment by at least three years. I am sorry I am not able to give your Lordship a more perfect account and am with ye Highest Respect
your Lordship's most Dutiful
and most obedient H: Servant

T. MORRISON.

Another fragment in the correspondence lists the offences of certain supposed Methodists :

2. Reed one of his principal Followers now in the Spiritual Court for double Bastardy.

Shepherd.²⁹ It was commonly said at St. Ives ran away from Bristol on account of Sodomitical practices.

Houghton is suspected of having been burnt in the hand for stealing Linen.

[Vertical note at side of above :] Mr. Morgan of Michel, & of ye Methodists.

At times the bishop's correspondents owned themselves unable to give chapter and verse for their accusations. Gossip was going the rounds, but when it came to a question of sworn statements and the like, none was forthcoming. The writer was clearly quite happy to report unsubstantiated tittle-tattle, if only it served to discredit the despised sect. Such a letter was that written by John Lavington, an Exeter incumbent (was he a relative of the bishop?). The Thomas Adams who also figures in the letter was an early "fringe Methodist" preacher, who was concerned in applications for a licence under the Conventicle Act,³⁰ and who ended his life as the senior preacher in the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion.

JOHN LAVINGTON TO BISHOP LAVINGTON

Exon, Jan. 1 1749-50

This is to certify all whome it may concern that on or near the seventh of September 1746 As I was about to administer the Lord's Supper (before I had begun the administration) I observ'd among the communicants one Mr. Thomas Adams a vagrant Methodist preacher, and as He was a stranger to Me & I knew little or nothing either of his principles or moral conduct so I sent my clark to Him to desire He wd withdraw till I could get proper satisfaction as to those particulars, but He refus'd to comply with my request and said He wd continue where He was whereupon I proceeded to administer but in the distribution of the Elements I carefully past him by - He sat still during the administration but as soon as ever the last word was out of my mouth He stood up & said Dear man what's the reason you refus'd to give me the signs of my Lord's body & blood and added my God will scourge you for this or He is no true God.

The next morning He came to my House with an octavo manuscript which He said contain'd the revelations He had had from Heaven and

²⁹ William Shepherd (mistakenly named "Rev. William Shepherd" in Smith's *History of Wesleyan Methodism* (3 vols., 1859-64)), figures as Wesley's travelling companion frequently between 1743 and 1747, chiefly in West Cornwall, but also in the North-East of England. He later settled in Banbury, and at the end of Wesley's life occasionally was useful in London. Nothing seems to be known of Reed or Houghton.

³⁰ See *Proceedings*, xi, p. 103.

said He was come with a particular Message from the Lord to Me & then reads the following passage

Go & tell Mr. Lavington I will scourge Him for not letting the despised Methodists into his pulpit & for not giving you the signs of my body & blood – with much more of a like import too tedious to mention
This I aver to be fact
JOHN LAVINGTON.

Exon, Jan. 1 1749-50

My Lord,

This waits on your Lordship with the certificate I promised to send you relating to Mr. Adams. I have endeavour'd to procure others relating to women who after a great profession of Methodism and boasted assurance of salvation have been notorious for Lewdness, But tho' the facts are publicly known yet I cant prevail with any to certify it from an unwillingness to dissoblige the Methodists & bring themselves on the public stage.

My spouse & family join with me in our most respectful compliments to your Lordship, your good Lady & Miss Lavington & our sincerest congratulations on the addition that providence hath made to your Estate. I am with all respect

Your Lordship's
most obedient humble Servant

JOHN LAVINGTON.

[Addressed:] To / The Revnd the Lord / Bishop of Exeter / in Norfolk Street in the Strand / London.

[Endorsed:] Mr. J. Lavington / Methodists.

We have already seen accusations which, if they have any shred of truth in them at all, give evidence of mental instability on the part of the accused or their victims. This is more directly admitted in an affidavit given before J. Snow (presumably a magistrate) by Thomas Lovell of Stoke-Damarel, Devon. Here, mingled with a garbled account—garbled surely because of misunderstanding, hearsay and ignorance—of Methodist practices and rules, we have the account of one Joseph Peters who was reputed to have had a vision in which he was bidden to murder his mother if she refused to join the Methodists. Here again it is significant that the complainant had no personal knowledge: he is “credibly informed”. It will also be noticed that he reported that women had been taken (presumably when in a swoon) to bedchambers and thrown upon beds—and no doubt the reader was invited to draw his own inferences. The accusation that the Methodists “jump about the room” on receiving the Holy Spirit bears an interesting resemblance to R. S. Hawker’s libel on the early Bryanites. This statement is further interesting in its references to the collections for the support of the travelling preachers, for the familiar accusation that men neglected their work in order to attend the preaching, that at Dock (i.e. Devonport) there were as many as eleven classes, and for the indication of the narrow dividing-line between the doctrines of grace and assurance, and antinomianism. The career of James Wheatley (already mentioned) and that of some of the Moravians shows how easily the confusion could occur.

Joseph Cownley, mentioned in the affidavit, was of course one of Wesley's earliest preachers, who graced the ministry for well-nigh half a century—a rare achievement in those early days. Born in Leominster in 1723, he began to itinerate in 1744, and spent three months in Cornwall at the turn of 1746-7. It was about that time, presumably, that he was at Dock. One of the Church's most venerable preachers, he was one of those ordained by Wesley, and himself took part in the ordination of Alexander Kilham. Nothing appears to be known of William Drake.

AFFIDAVIT OF THOMAS LOVELL

The Information of Thomas Lovell of Stoke-damerel in the County of Devon Sailmaker taken before me the 25th day of May A.D. 1747. This Informant on his Oath voluntarily saith that he formerly attended the meetings of those persons who call themselves Methodists being invited so to do by one of their preachers called Cownley and that they divide themselves into different Classes where they meet at private houses: that a husband and wife can't be of the same Class; nor a Father & Daughter, nor father & son, nor a Brother and Sister: that they often pretend to receive the Spirit, & they that receive it (as they say) jump about the room, & ask others if they don't see the Spirit; and that he is credibly informed that one Joseph Peters of the said parish (who is since he followed these people out of his senses but before was a very reasonable person) reported he was in a trance or deep sleep when an angel appeared to Him & told him he should go to his Mother & bring her into the Society of Methodists & if she refused he should kill her; & that he actually attempted to cut her throat, as he is informed; And that the Reader²¹ of each meeting, after they have prayed after their manner & sung psalms collected money from all present for which they account to the preachers who come at times from distant places. That at some Meeting he hath known & been present when woman [sic] have been taken from the Rooms where they met & carried them into Bedchambers & thrown upon Beds where they have lain in fits or swoons, & the preacher has cried at the same time that they should let them alone for the Spirit was entering them. And that he hath known several of them leave their Work & labour by which they & their Family where [sic] to be supported to attend the runnagate preachers, & that in the Yard many of them have drawn Workmen from their Labour to preach to them to the great Hindrance of the King's Works. That he hath frequently himself contributed to their Collection but knows not how the Money is disposed of. That there are now at Dock eleven Leaders of so many different Classes – That he he [sic] hath frequently heard Cownley and Wm. Drake who is also²² one amongst them and several others, assert that after they have received the Spirit they cannot Sin, and if they commit any sin whatever it is only an Error in such, and let them do whatever they please after their adoption howe[ve]r sinfull the Act is they are sure to be saved notwithstanding;

THOMAS LOVELL.

Taken before me
the Day & Year above md.
J. SNOW.

²¹ Presumably this is a mistake for "Leader" on the part of either Lovell or Snow, neither of whom were likely to be familiar with Methodist terminology.

²² "a preacher" written after "also", partly underlined, then crossed out.

Mem.: Joseph Peters upon talking with a Clergyman (either Barlow or Beel) was convinced that his Vision was a diabolical delusion if anything – he received the Sacrt: was well & in his senses for some time, but still followed the Methodists & upon a second Vision he again attempted killing his Mother & actually set the house on fire & was sent away to a Madhouse. Of this I believe Mr. Barlow or Beel can give an Account.

[Endorsed:] Mr. Lovell's Information about Methodists.

The "Mr. Barlow" just mentioned was an incumbent in Dock whom we find a couple of years later writing to the bishop, who had presented him with a copy of his *Enthusiasm*, which had just appeared. It would seem that Barlow had promised to supply his Lordship with Methodist publications to add fuel to the fire: he now lists others which he intends should serve Lavington's purpose, and it will be noticed that they are some of the most significant Methodist publications up till that time. "Hutchens" is a mistake for "Hitchens"; that memoir was very popular, running into at least seventeen editions. The *Life* which Barlow had lent someone would be Wesley's *Life of M. de Renty*—the one other "Life" so far published—and being the life of a Frenchman would to Lavington no doubt have been found useful. It is interesting to note the difficulty which Barlow found in obtaining material: it would not be at all surprising if Methodists declined to supply him with the means wherewith to vilify them!

W. BARLOW TO BISHOP LAVINGTON

My humble Thanks wait on your Lordship for the two Pieces relating to the Methodists you was pleas'd to present Me with, which have given myself and others a very profitable as well as most agreeable Entertainment. I hope the learned Author will oblige the Public with several more of the same kind.

Your Lp. will think it long before you receive the Life I mentioned, and I wish I could now send it; but I find I have lent it to somebody who has not yet had the Civility to return it; and the Methodists either can not or will not supply me with another. I have some few Pieces they brought Me, which I dare say your Lp. has seen; so I don't send them; Their Titles as below.

I am your Lordship's

Mos[t] obedient

Humble Servant

Dock

Sep. 26. 1749.

W. BARLOW.

An Account of the Death of S. Hutchens. This was sent your Lp.

Extract of the Life and Death of Th. Haliburton.

Narrative of the late Work of God at and near Northampton in New Engl.

Character of a Methodist. by John Westley.

Principles of a Methodist. Dto.

Salvation by Faith. Dto.

The Almost Christian. Dto.

Sermon at Oxford, Ap. 4. 1742. By Chs. Westley.

[Endorsed:] Mr. Barlow / Methodists.

Thomas Michel, vicar of Veryan from 1743 to 1773, was another who had read the *Enthusiasm*, and it is interesting to notice that immediately on publication the authorship was known or at least strongly suspected. But what is unexpected and distressing is that the man who could so easily applaud Lavington's buffooneries, and so scorn the Methodists for their "silly and absurd doctrines", was a member of Samuel Walker's Clerical Club. And Walker was of course an Evangelical whose enemies appealed to the bishop for his removal; but "so irreproachable was his conduct", says Balleine, "that not even Lavington, the sworn foe of every Evangelical, could find a handle against him."³³ Perhaps Michel did not join the Club until later. (It was founded about 1750.) That would appear to be the only explanation of an otherwise strange hypocrisy.

THOMAS MICHEL TO BISHOP LAVINGTON

My Lord,

I have with great pleasure read two Pamphlets against the Methodists generally ascribed to your Lordship as their author, for which the Author deserves the thanks of every member of the Church of England, and Sincere Lover & Promoter of real Virtue & rational Religion. The Author has cloath'd the Heads, & Leaders of the Methodists so neatly in their own antick dress, has adorn'd them so genteely with their native plumes, & plac'd them in such a strong point of light, as that even Whitefield himself (if he has not divested himself of part of humane nature) cannot help laughing at Wesley, & Wesley must have such a fit of laughter to see the grotesque figure of his Bror. Whitefield as he cannot resist. . . . The Author has so fully laid open the spiritual Pride, arrogance, & Presumption of ye Methodists, their groundless claims, & Pretensions to inspiration, their sly, & artfull insinuation of Miracles, their silly, & absurd Doctrines, their Blasphemies, & their indelible Marks of Popery, as that every Leader may discern their spot, & that it is not the Spirit of the Children of God. Their folly is made manifest to all that will read these Pamphlets; & if Wesley & Whitefield have any grain of Sense, modesty, or Religious Gift, they must start back with horror at the dismal prospect of the mischief & folly of their doings, & proceed no further.

THOS MICHEL.

Verian

Sept. 7th 1749.

Edmund Herring, the writer of the next letter, was from 1727 to 1785 vicar of North Petherwin, which he held in plurality with Tresmere, Laneast and North Tamerton. His predecessor in these last three places was John Bennet, who was, with Thomson of St. Gennys, an early Cornish Evangelical and supporter of the Wesleys. (Bennet had been licensed to the perpetual curacy of North Tamer-ton in 1705, Tresmere added 1720, and Laneast added 1731. In July 1749 he clashed with Lavington concerning his itinerant preaching, and he died in 1750. From 1744 until his death both the Wesleys preached with some frequency in his churches.) It

³³ G. R. Balleine: *A History of the Evangelical Party in the Church of England* (1908), p. 95.

would appear, from reading between the lines of Herring's letter, that his antagonism towards the Methodists led to hostile action on the part of his evangelically-trained parishioners. The "oath", which is obviously open to all sorts of sinister interpretations, is possibly a garbled interpretation of the confidentiality of the class and band meetings; we need hardly point out that there was never any such thing as a "Methodist oath". Who Thomson, Ebbot and Upton are, it is now probably impossible to determine, unless by "Thomson" he is referring to George Thomson, the vicar of St. Genny, as being "the leader of the Methodists".

EDMUND HERRING TO ?

I have given Mr. Geare from time to time an account of the Insolent Evasive Behaviour of the Methodists at Tresmeare & their Leader Mr. Thomson who, I think, has subjected himself to the Penalty of ten Pounds, for his more than a Month's Absence not only from Tresmeare, but also from St. Hinny [? Tinhay], as I am informed. A Suit has been Commenced in the Crown Office for such a thing. I am ready to read the 39 Articles, where I shall be appointed, but cannot in Tresmeare Church, being shut out: How far it may be Essential, I know not, & as I am debarred an opportunity of reading Evening Prayers, hope it may be somewhat a matter of Form, & therefore not of any ill Consequence. This morning from my Ground, I observed a Plough going in the Glebe of Tresmeare, which appeared to be Ebbot's, that married Upton's sister; I forbid the servant, who said he had orders to persist in his work notwithstanding: that the Key was to be kept from me till the suit in the Arches was decided: that if they had no success there, they would remove the affair into the King's Bench. This was spoken in a different Tone, more submissively, then [sic] he did, when I did Duty there, & they did not seem to have that great Prospect of completing their views. It gives me no small Concern that my Generous Friends & Benefactors have been occasioned all this Trouble & Expence by such a disorderly & obstinate set of People: which may a good Deal be imputed to what is at the Bottom, & what perhaps ere this you may have seen, the oath imposed by the Methodists on those that are admitted into their Society.

The many favours my Lord has done me, give me almost the assurance to ask another; Tredevit Mills are repairing at a pretty great Expence, & I have been obliged to take down near twenty Trees: In order to keep up the Stock of Timber on the Estate, I am planting Saplings, & not having enough & my Lord's wood not far off, submit it to you, whether I shall incur his displeasure in begging some to fill up the vacancies. I have received a number of Favours from you, Sir, more than I can recount, have applyed to you at all times, upon the most suddain Emergencies, & the most weighty occasions: but can return you no Thanks, my poor slender Fund being exhausted. I shall execute in Thought, what I can neither express in words, nor carry forth into action, & can only make a Tender of those faint acknowledgments, I ventured to offer to my Lord, That your many Generous Instances of your Extensive Goodness towards me, having wormed me into such lively sentiments of Gratitude, as leave those lasting Impressions, that are not to

be [?], & it's uppermost in my wishes & Intentions never may be
Effaced from the memory

of your obedient ever obliged humble servant

Petherwin

EDMUND HERRING.

March 23 1752

You shall swear by the blessed Trinity, & by the Sacrament you now
profess to receive, never to disclose directly or indirectly, by word or
Circumstance, the matter that shall be proposed to you to keep secret,
nor to desist from the Execution thereof, till the rest shall give you leave.

[Endorsed:] Methodist Oath.

OLIVER A. BECKERLEGGE.

(To be continued)

MORE LOCAL HISTORIES

The following are some of the handbooks and brochures which have been
added to our list, and which we are interested to see. We give the prices
where these are stated thereon.

Bradmore: The Village and Methodism 1830-1980—150th anniversary
brochure (pp. 20): copies from Mr. O. H. Randall, 111, Lough-
borough Road, Bradmore, Notts.

Centenary History of Bailgate Methodist Church, Lincoln, by
William Leary (pp. 24): copies from the Rev. David Bannister, 99,
Nettleham Road, Lincoln, LN2 1RU.

A Souvenir of Methodism in Ryther (1780-1980) on the occasion of
the 75th anniversary of the present chapel (pp. 12) and *An Outline
of Methodism in Cawood* (pp. 28), both by C. R. Moody: copies
from Mr. Richard Moody, Lynton, Doncaster Road, Brayton, Selby,
N. Yorks, YO8 9HD.

Methodism in the Western Weald—75th anniversary brochure of
Midhurst Methodist chapel, by Ella M. Breame (pp. 54): copies, price
£1 post free, from the Rev. Peter G. Hayman, Dunford College,
Midhurst, West Sussex, GU29 0EA.

Quay Street Methodist chapel, Newport, Isle of Wight, centenary bro-
chure (pp. 32): copies, price £1 plus postage, from Miss Cicely Martin,
1, Cypress Road, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 1EY.

Seacroft Methodist chapel renovation and new building souvenir pro-
gramme (pp. 12): copies from Mrs. M. E. Whymark, 7, The Oval,
Seacroft, Leeds, LS14 6BA.

Highfield Methodist Church, Wortley, Leeds, 1855-1980 and *A His-
tory of Methodism in Wortley, Leeds, from 1742*, by D. Colin
Dews (pp. 48): copies, price 50p. plus 20p. postage, from the author
at 4, Lynwood Grove, Leeds, LS12 4AU.

Early Methodism in South-East Hampshire, by John A. Vickers
(pp. 20; offprint from the *Portsmouth Archives Review*, Vol. iv
(1979-80)): copies from the author at 87, Marshall Avenue, Bognor
Regis, Sussex, PO21 2TW.

Methodism in the Purley Circuit, by Rowland C. Swift (pp. 92):
copies, price £1 plus postage from the author at By the Wood, Fresh-
field Lane, Danehill, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH17 7HE.
(Proceeds donated to the Association of the Friends of Pastens—the
Limpsfield branch of the National Children's Home.)

BOOK NOTICES

The Works of John Wesley, Vol. 25—*Letters, I. 1721-1739*, edited by Frank Baker. (Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press, pp. xxii. 763, £35.)

The eight volumes of Telford's *Letters of John Wesley* have served us well for fifty years, but it is evident from this first volume of Dr. Frank Baker's edition of the *Letters* that before long Telford can be quietly superannuated along with the still earlier editors—Benson, Jackson, and Eayrs. The volume now published covers the years 1721 to 1739, and will be warmly welcomed on account of its comprehensiveness, its scholarly introduction, and its annotation. Some 558 pages of letters in this volume (most of them "out" letters, though quite often "in" letters of importance are also included,) may be compared with the 338 pages covering the corresponding period in Telford. Unlike Telford, Dr. Baker gives, wherever possible, not only the text of the letter but the full address, salutation, and closing courtesies. His ample footnotes supplement and in many places (on account of new information having become available) re-interpret and correct Telford's notes. In all this Dr. Baker again reveals himself as a master of minutæ.

It would be possible to draw a fairly accurate picture of John Wesley and the beginnings of Methodism from his letters even if no other source of information was available, and in this volume of letters we have a self-portrait, unconsciously drawn, of the young Wesley between the ages of 18 and 36. Almost a third of it consists of correspondence with his family—most of it with his mother and much of it with his father and his elder brother Samuel: one cannot but speculate on what further influence that elder brother might have had on John Wesley and his Methodism had he lived longer.

To his various Oxford correspondents during the period 1726-39 he wrote some 333 letters, to the Cotswold young ladies (1725-34) a total of 511, or over 37% of his total correspondence for the whole period under study. (p. 83)

The one irreparable loss is the lengthy correspondence with Sally Kirkham (1725-36). Taken as a whole, these early letters of John Wesley show him to have been an intensely earnest young man, never greatly attracted by the "frivolities" of Oxford even when he indulged in them. He was temperamentally a perfectionist right down to the measured margin-lining and line-spacing in his letters—a predilection not unrelated to his later espousal of Christian Perfection as "the grand depositum of Methodism". As early as 1726 his concern was to make Robin Griffiths a "whole" rather than a part Christian. He had no use, as Dr. Baker says, for negative virtues. "Aspasia" (Mary Pendarves) gave him the credit for attaining to his own high standards ("You really are in a state to be envied"), but she made it clear that lesser mortals, like herself, could only "aspire to some part of it". Allied to this earnestness and high principle was an innate puritanism and (though not in consequence of that) a rather meagre sense of humour. Despite all this (and we are grateful to Dr. Baker for pointing it out), "Wesley (like most of us) was a bundle of contradictions", though his logical mind was able to present them as a form of consistency.

Dr. Baker's important Introduction seems to leave no questions unanswered: indeed, he raises and answers questions that some of us would not have thought of. He finds everything of significance in a Wesley letter

—not only its contents, but the stylistic practices of its writer, the varying forms of its salutation and closing courtesies, the form of the paragraphs, the folding, addressing and sealing of the letter, and its postal marks. The present writer once submitted a fragment—the conclusion of a Wesley letter—for Dr. Baker's judgement. It contained little more than an aphorism, and was signed "Dear Sir, Your Affectionate Brother, John Wesley." It had a postmark on the reverse side. From this evidence Dr. Baker assured me that the letter was written before 1774, and that it had been addressed to a fellow-clergyman but not an intimate of John Wesley. Such detective work enriches the whole of the present correspondence, and we shall wait eagerly for the succeeding volumes.

It is unfortunate that this expensive and handsome book should contain any printing errors, but we have noted a few, such as "our" for "out" and "harles" for "Charles". On page 259, the footnote numeral ¹ at the head of the letter should be ⁷. On page 138, note 7, a proof-stage question-mark appears to have been left in the text—"Mar. 24, 1739", whereas the transcript of that letter, on page 614, is headed "Mar. 28, 1739?". One item of cross-referencing, however, seems to the present reader to lead into a cul-de-sac. On page 614 Dr. Baker argues convincingly that the recipient of the letter there under consideration was John Clayton and not James Hervey. This letter (on page 616) contains the often-quoted assertion "I look upon all the world as my parish", accompanied by a footnote which reads "Cf. Whitefield, letter of Nov. 10, 1739 (written at sea), 'The whole world is now my parish.'" On page 698 there is such a letter, "written at sea", but it is dated "Nov. 8, 1739", and it contains no such reference.

At £35 this first of a promised seven volumes of the *Letters* will find a limited number of private purchasers, at least among our members; nevertheless it is essential reading for all interested in Wesley studies, and an invaluable book of reference which, if they cannot afford it themselves, they will want to recommend to their reference libraries.

THOMAS SHAW.

The Origins of Free Methodism in Three Lancashire Towns, by David A. Gowland. (Manchester University Press for the Chetham Society, 1979: pp. 191, £10.)

By happy coincidence or thoughtful management, Dr. Gowland's book was published at almost exactly the time that his father was succeeding to the presidency of the Methodist Conference. Many readers will know that the book had its origin in a doctoral thesis from Manchester University, and in thesis form was in heavy demand by other scholars on inter-library loan. Some of the conclusions were made available in an article in these *Proceedings* some years ago (xxxvi, pp. 93 ff.), but it is gratifying to have the full work published, even though at the same time one must express the now customary regret that inflation has made its price so high.

In the author's own words,

the subject matter of this book concerns the origins and early development of the (Wesleyan Methodist) Association and to a lesser extent of the (Wesleyan) Reform movement within the context of three Lancashire towns—Liverpool, Manchester and Rochdale—each of which played a prominent role in the evolution of Free Methodism.

On the general issues which provoked the troubles in Wesleyanism, Dr. Gowland is marvellously taut and clear. There is perhaps nothing novel here, and we are taken over ground already familiar to many readers:

strained relations between ministry and laity, conflicting attitudes towards central authority and local controls, and the disputed power and functions of institutions and individuals . . .

all of which were "recurrent and widespread features of a body which was shedding the identity of a movement for that of a denomination". Yet if the basic analysis is not new, the treatment of material is constantly illuminating.

Dr. Gowland adopts an admirably objective stance, and interprets the minds and hearts of both the loyal and the dissentient parties with deep insight. And the faults of both are exposed without fear or favour :

Any moderating influence proved ineffectual as the emotive language, extravagant gestures and intransigent attitudes of the hard men on both sides served only to poison relations and allowed for no accommodation short of unconditional surrender.

One's feeling that this period of Methodist history was, despite the sincerity of conviction found on both sides, a sad and depressing episode is reinforced by this book. Such feelings are deepened by the author's judgements on the quality of the leadership of the Wesleyan Association—a church born in so much acrimony. In Manchester the Association leaders were "ill-equipped to mastermind the transition from an internal reform movement to an independent body". In Liverpool the Association soon experienced bitter internal conflicts which "sourred relations and paralysed the organisation". And even in Rochdale, which had "an unusually confident leadership" in an "hospitable social milieu", the Association had "too many leaders for its own good", and "in the absence of strong ministerial leadership or some such guardian angel there was no mechanism to ensure that differences of opinion caused minimal damage".

Much of the fascination and importance of this book obviously lies in the detailed examination of the origins of the Association in three communities in each of which specific local causes of tension played their part in addition to the general grievances common to the wider connexion. (The weight of research lying behind the masterly treatment of all this may be seen in the "select bibliography"—eight-and-a-half pages long—of manuscript materials, pamphlets, newspapers, and older secondary works relating to the localities concerned.) Dr. Gowland is very anxious to attempt to understand the social and political inclinations which motivated the secessionist leaders, and to show how these differed from place to place :

The conflicts in the three towns reflected the heterogeneous character of a dissentient movement that served as a vehicle for a number of causes. The Association embodied several types of protest which ranged from conservative to radical emphases and which expressed varying degrees of revivalist interest, anti-clerical opinion, political influence and social antagonism.

The clearest contrast is between Manchester, where the leaders were "essentially conservative in perspective and programme", and Rochdale, where they were "identified with a rising tide of militant dissent and had a clear perception of radical interests within and without the chapel". There is no space to enlarge on this, except to say that Dr. Gowland demonstrates the subtleties and complexities of interaction between chapel life and the social context in the three towns with admirable clarity and thoroughness. It is very satisfying to read a study of religious history in which ecclesiastical affairs are so painstakingly related to the

external environment, and moreover in which grasp of detail and soundness of judgement are so constantly sustained.

Perhaps some may find the author's coolly objective approach somewhat tantalizing. The book has something of a dying fall, with no over-all attempt to justify one side or the other or to project the future developments of Free Methodism and assess its contribution to the Victorian religious scene. Dr. Gowland is simply concerned to say of the origins of the secessions, "This is how it was"—a tangled and rather messy tale in which religious idealism was inextricably mixed up with all kinds of other motives—some worthy, others dubious or even despicable. The scholarly astringency of this approach is refreshing and to be admired. Yet one cannot help but feel that there is a dimension missing (perhaps deliberately) from this book, namely any account of the ordinary, on-going life in the chapel communities lying, as it were, under the turbulence of the stormy events on the surface. Without that work and witness there would have been no Methodism to endure—of any variety.

GEOFFREY E. MILBURN.

A. B. Sackett: A Memoir, edited by John Walsh. (Epworth Press in association with the Governors of Kingswood School, £2 25p.)

From Wesley's Chair, by Donald English. (Epworth Press, £2.)

A Progress of Pilgrims: Seven Methodists, 1814-1958, by H. Trevor Hughes. (Epworth Press, £1 75p.)

Here are three books we recommend to readers of the *Proceedings* for their rich Wesley content. All are pleasantly readable, well produced, and reasonably priced. The first is attractively illustrated.

The Sackett *Memoir*, written by a group of Mr. Sackett's friends, former colleagues and pupils, is a splendid portrait of a most winsome and dynamic headmaster. Three biographical essays by Warren Derry, Rupert E. Davies and J. W. Gardner sketch his family background, education, sporting attainments, war service (in which he lost a leg and gained a Military Cross), and his thirty-one years as headmaster of John Wesley's school, Kingswood. Eight other friends contribute recollections and impressions of various aspects of his life—as teacher, colleague, Christian communicator, artist and family man. Tribute is paid also to Mrs. Sackett: "Without her there could have been no such life."

Sackett's published output was small: an essay on Christian Education in a symposium edited by his school chaplain, Rupert Davies; three addresses in *Sixth Form Talks* (that on "Salvation" is surely a model of Christian communication); and two Publications of our own Society, *John Jones—First after the Wesleys?* and *James Rouquet and his part in Early Methodism*. It is a matter for regret that these two Methodist studies, which reveal his meticulous scholarship, should have been overlooked by the editor of the *Memoir*, Dr. John Walsh, in what otherwise is a splendidly-organized production.

From Wesley's Chair is a selection of sermons, addresses and lectures given by Dr. Donald English during his year as President of the Methodist Conference. The Methodist content of the book is considerable, as we might expect from one who occupies the Chair of Practical Theology and Methodism at our Wesley College, Bristol. His constant reiteration of the mutual interdependence of faith and works, Word and Sacrament, Catholic and Protestant, evangelical faith and social righteousness, is perhaps his most characteristic and creative contribution to contemporary

Methodist theological debate. His lecture to the World Methodist Council, "The Theology of the Wesleyan Movement", will be of particular interest to members of the Wesley Historical Society.

In an opening address to the World Methodist Historical Society, Donald English said: "I am especially concerned about the unwritten recollections retained in the memories of many ageing Methodists needing to be recorded and followed up." (Here he commends the work of Dr. Robert Moore in his *Pitmen, Preachers and Politics*.) This quotation serves to introduce our third recommendation: *A Progress of Pilgrims*, by H. Trevor Hughes, a former principal of our Westminster College, Oxford. Here are seven biographical sketches of (mostly) East Anglian Methodists, ministers and laymen, whose lives span the years 1814 to 1958. Extensive use is made of written and unwritten sources—personal diaries and records and personal recollections and reminiscences. All were born in simple circumstances with few natural opportunities, and yet all made significant contributions to church and community: William Crown (pastor), Joseph Rotherham (translator), John Hughes (poet-preacher; father of Maldwyn and grandfather of Trevor Hughes), David Pilgrim (evangelist), Joseph C. Mantripp (interpreter—whose interpretive role as Primitive Methodist Connexional Editor and hymnologist is widely acknowledged), John Skinner (teacher; headmaster of Culford, unabashed apologist for *Christian* schools and a member of the Methodist Sacramental Fellowship), and Sidney Dye (philanthropist). Such men were among the finest products of the Wesleyan and Primitive Methodism of their period; and what "by the grace of God" they became is even more challenging than what they achieved.

Two pages of Acknowledgements show how carefully Trevor Hughes researched his subjects. They serve as a model for Wesley Historical Society researchers with access to personal diaries, church and local history records, and personal and family reminiscences, much of which remains to be explored, and from which, as Donald English reminds us, we can gain a clearer awareness of our Methodist origins, insights, failures and successes, as well as inspiration for our own personal Christian pilgrimage.

EDWIN THOMPSON.

Sicilian Rebel, by S. V. Ravi, edited by Robert R. R. Brooks. (Cloth-bound, \$8.95 (£4 50p.); Paper covers, \$5.95 (£2 95p.))

This autobiography, distributed free to members of the World Methodist Historical Society, is available from the Commission on Archives and History of the United Methodist Church, P.O. Box 488, Lake Junaluska, N.C., 28745, U.S.A., at the price of £2 95p. for the paper-covered edition plus 75p. postage. Its author was a Sicilian friar who broke with the Roman Church in the face of formidable social, cultural and spiritual influences, espoused several varieties of Protestantism, and founded the first Methodist church in Rome itself. Even when we allow for his colourful and volatile personality, his picture of a Sicilian Church steeped in ignorance, superstition, immorality and violence and allied to the forces of political reaction is a devastating indictment of religious totalitarianism. The story loses nothing in the telling, and makes compulsive reading. Its background is that of Italy's struggle towards nationhood in the mid-nineteenth century, and those of us whose knowledge of the Risorgimento is more sketchy than the editor assumes to be the case among his American readers would have welcomed some editorial information here and there. But the book is otherwise attractively produced, and deserves a wide circulation.

JOHN A. VICKERS.

NOTES AND QUERIES

1332. METHODIST BELLS.

The Rev. David Monkton (Chairman of the Shetland District) writes:

Bells are still in regular use in three of our Shetland churches to call people to worship and to welcome in the New Year—at Lerwick (Adam Clarke Memorial), Scalloway, and Fair Isle. The Fair Isle bell-ringer uses the title "beadle", and the Scalloway bell is used for weeknight as well as for Sunday services. Last year the bell-ringers at Adam Clarke churches in Portrush and Lerwick exchanged Christmas greetings.

At three other churches there are bells which are used less frequently—North Roe, Haroldswick (Unst) and Vidlin. There may possibly be more.

1333. DR. WEARMOUTH CENTENARY.

The Rev. Ralph Lowery writes:

Some of us have noted that the year 1982 will see the centenary of the birth of the Rev. Dr. R. F. Wearmouth, a noted Methodist historian who started working life as a Durham miner. In searching for material and recollections, I have so far not been successful in tracing the whereabouts of Dr. Wearmouth's son—if he is still living. If anyone can help me in this inquiry I shall be grateful to hear, from any source, at 22, Grove Lane, Knottingley, West Yorks, WF11 8ES (Tel. Knottingley 82198).

1334. BATH KING STREET MINUTE-BOOK.

The Rev. E. Ralph Bates, of 3, Hansford Close, Combe Down, Bath, Avon, BA2 5LW, writes:

In researching into the history of Methodism in Bath, I was appalled to discover that the minute-book dealing with the New King Street society in 1779-80 is not in the Bath Archives. This valuable book is referred to by Mr. G. B. Caple in *Proceedings*, i, p. 127; and a pencilled note in the hand of the late Miss Ruth Withers in her copy of this volume now at the New Room, Bristol, tells the story in a sentence. It reads: "This book was given to an American Chaplain in the 1939 war, and so is lost to us."

I insert this note in the hope that it may catch the eye of some American reader who may know of the present whereabouts of this precious volume. If it can be traced, I should be glad to hear of it with a view to procuring either its return to the Bath Archives or at least a micro-film or photo-copy of its contents.

1335. CIRCUIT LIBRARIES.

Mr. J. S. English, of 1, Dorton Avenue, Gainsborough, Lincs, DN21 1UB, writes:

Recently I came across two Lincolnshire plans—Lincoln Wesleyan circuit, March to August 1842, and Brigg Wesleyan circuit, May to October 1849—which listed the contents of their circuit libraries, together with the rules for their operation. The Lincoln library contained 142 titles, whilst 141 titles were listed for Brigg; both included literature and history as well as devotional works. I have not yet had an opportunity to examine plans and other Methodist material deposited in the local Archives Office to try to trace further details of these libraries or any others in Lincolnshire, but hope that such a search may throw some light on their growth, use, and decline. Meanwhile, I wonder how widespread such libraries were, how extensively were they used, and whether any research has been done thereon, especially in relation to other library provision in relevant towns.

I have not seen circuit libraries mentioned in my reading on Methodist or library history, apart from the Methodist book society at Mousehole and the literary society at City Road chapel (see L. F. Church: *More about the Early Methodist People*, pp. 51-2). Any information or reference to such early libraries in circuits would be most welcome.

1336. A WESLEY TABLE-CLOTH.

Miss Nora Humphrey, Archivist of the Newcastle upon Tyne Brunswick circuit, writes:

A white damask table-cloth has been handed to me for safe custody by Mrs. Phyllis Milne, widow of Mr. John L. Milne. The cloth belonged to John's mother, Mrs. Lydia Milne (née Lascelles), of Gosforth, Newcastle, who before her marriage lived in Yorkshire and Lancashire. It is 102 in. in length and 80 in. in breadth, and the centre-piece carries a portrait of "Rev. John Wesley, M.A." in an oval decorative frame, 25 by 23 in., with an inner frame 17 by 16 in. The surrounding design is made up of grapes, vine-leaves in each corner, and a chalice on each of the four sides. A note came with the table-cloth, which is over one hundred years old, thus:

For Jack, as he is a "good" Methodist. This is a relic of Methodism in the days of the early sixteenth century. There were only three table-cloths of this design made, and this is one.

The cloth has now been deposited in the museum at Brunswick chapel, Newcastle upon Tyne.

[See *Proceedings*, xxxvi, p. 159 and xxxvii, p. 31 for accounts of other Wesley table-cloths.—EDITOR.]

A copy of *The Drew Gateway*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (Winter 1978) reached us some few months ago—and a thought-provoking issue it is! It is devoted entirely to "Second Thoughts on John Wesley", by Frederick E. Maser. The first part (pp. 1-28) on "The Unknown John Wesley" singles out for mention five topics—"Wesley's mother and her influence", "Wesley's sexuality", "Wesley's theology", "Reasons for Wesley's success", and "Anomalies of Wesley's preaching". Dr. Maser believes (and one must agree with him) that in spite of the volumes that have been written about Wesley, there are still unexplored corners of the field, and he suggests subjects for further study. In the second part (pp. 29-56) he tackles afresh the perennial question of Wesley's conversion—was it but a passing incident in an ever-developing spiritual life, and as such seldom if ever referred to again, or was it that climactic encounter which we celebrate annually on 24th May? His conclusion is: "The experience at Aldersgate could neither be honestly denied nor diluted. It was the beginning of a new life." He refutes the opinion, held by many eminent scholars, that in later years Wesley never refers to the Aldersgate experience, and so has little patience with those who would minimize its effect.—Copies of *The Gateway* are obtainable, price \$2, from The Drew Gateway, Drew Theological School, Madison, New Jersey, 07940, U.S.A. J.C.B.

Members may wish to note that in connexion with the Norwich Conference 1981 the Wesley Historical Society Annual Meeting and Lecture will be on Monday, 6th July, in the Octagon Chapel, Colegate, Norwich (close to the Conference Hall). Dr. John D. Walsh, of Jesus College, Oxford, will lecture on "John Wesley and the Poor". A fuller notice will appear in our next issue.