

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for the *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_whs_01.php

PROVERBS AND PROVERBIAL ECHOES IN JOHN WESLEY'S LETTERS

(Concluded)

IV.

This subject well repays study from the literary angle. Wesley probably read literature upon proverbs, but there is no record. He would certainly know and perhaps possess George Herbert's *Outlandish Proverbs*, known in its second and enlarged edition as *Jacula Prudentium*, and John Ray's *English Proverbs* (1st Edition 1670). He admired both of these authors, and may have gathered some of his proverbs from them. Of course many colloquial proverbs are learned in general conversation, and in general reading.

Apart from Collections of Proverbs, there would seem to be two chief immediate sources. The first is Shakespeare, and the other is the writings of 17th Century Divines, chiefly their sermons. In Shakespeare, whom Wesley had studied and annotated, the use of proverbs reached dizzy heights, and a good many of the proverbs we find in the *Letters* are found in Shakespeare.

The sermons of the 17th Century were often flowery and heavily spiced with proverbs. In *Letters* VII, 171, he uses the phrase 'Great bodies usually move slowly.' This proverb occurs in Bishop Hall's *Contemplations* which Wesley probably read to Sophy Hopkey; he certainly read some of Hall's works with her.

Thomas Adams is another example. He is called by Southey 'the prose Shakespeare of Puritan Theologians.' His *Works*, full of learning, nevertheless abound in stories, anecdotes, aphorisms and puns. In one place (III, 12) Wesley writes 'The devil tempts other men; but an idle man tempts the devil; an idle man's brain is the devil's shop where he is continually working mischief.' There are two proverbs here. The first about the idle man was common. The second is 'an idle brain is the devil's shop' and this is given by Adams as "The slothful person is the devil's shop wherein he worketh engines of destruction." In another letter (IV, 200) he writes, 'There is need of a lady's hand as well as a lion's heart.' Adams uses this, which is only a part of the proverb, in one of his sermons. In both these instances Wesley's form is much nearer to Adams than, for example, Ray's *Collection*.

The name of Thomas Fuller may be added. John's grandmother, on his father's side, was Fuller's niece. His *Worthies* contains much information about proverbs used in the various English counties. Samuel Wesley's library would probably contain Fuller's *Works*.

In a letter to Samuel Furlly on the subject of Style, Wesley indicates that his conversations with Oxford prisoners and townfolk made him realise that "if we think with the wise we must speak with the vulgar." That would make a good definition of a proverb, and his resort to them is one example of his contempt of reputation.

Chesterfield, Swift and others regarded this as a mark of low taste and low company. There is irony, however, in the fact that Swift, whom he recommends for his pure style, very likely confirmed Wesley in his own vulgar style, for the *Polite Conversations* contains many proverbs, although used to satirize society talk. Telford's footnote on II, 200 gives these *Conversations* as a reference. But it should be added that 'Who so blind as he that will not see' is an old proverb.

Wesley's *Letters* provide a wealth of illustration, so far as the 18th Century is concerned, for the literary history of proverbs. This source has not been drawn upon, it would seem. The Oxford *Dictionary of English Proverbs*, a fine work on historical lines, has very few, if any references to these *Letters*. As there is no Index of Authors, it is hard to be absolutely certain. There are references to Wesley's *Journals*, *Sermons*, etc., on pages 77, 94, 96, 97, 211, 527 and 534. The first is the famous 'Cleanliness is next to godliness.'

Keeping to the Oxford Dictionary, then, we may notice some proverbs which occur in the *Letters* at a date earlier than the earliest illustration given there. This list is not exhaustive.

1. 'How carefully would he have drawn the line,' etc. This allusion to the proverb 'One must draw the line somewhere' occurs in 1750 (III, 48). The O D.E.P. quotes no illustration before Blackmore in 1887.
2. In *Letters* III, 370, occurs the phrase 'hanging out false colours.' Is this Wesley's rendering of the Scotch 'Kythe in your own colours that folk may ken you' or of the proverb 'To sail under false colours'? In either case Wesley's use is considerably earlier than

- the earliest examples in the Dictionary.
3. 'Two must go to a quarrel, and I declare I will not be one.' Wesley uses this proverb in 1765 (IV, 293). The earliest example of its use in the O.D.E.P. is in Kingsley, 1859.
 4. 'Grey heads stand upon green shoulders,' so Wesley wrote to Blackwell on May 6th, 1766 (V, 10). The Dictionary gives only one example of its use, and that is dated 1814.
 5. In a letter to Hopper in 1768 (V, 85) Wesley wrote 'What must be, must be.' The only reference in O.D.E.P. is dated 1841.
 6. 'No man is a good judge in his own cause' (VI, 186). A slightly different version is given in the O.D.E.P. with the earliest illustration dated 1845. Wesley's use of this proverb antedates this by 75 years

If we are right in assuming that a Dictionary of Proverbs on historical lines is more fittingly illustrated by examples from literature proper, rather than by references to collections of proverbs, then Wesley's *Letters* would often prove useful. The following are examples of how many of Wesley's references might be used. 'He has all his eyes about him' is given in O.D.E.P., illustrated only by a reference to Ray's *Complete Collection*. Wesley alludes to this proverb in a letter dated 1756 (III, 207). The proverb 'when a dog is drowning everyone offers him a drink' is noted in O.D.E.P. as being given in George Herbert's *Outlandish Proverbs*, and this is the sole illustration. In one of Wesley's *Letters*, dated October 29th, 1786, he renders it 'Do not cast water upon a drowning man.' The proverb 'We keep the staff in our own hands' has already been referred to (VI, 54). It is given in the imperative mood in the O.D.E.P. where it is illustrated solely by reference to Ramsay's *Scotch Proverbs*.

The value of the *Letters* for the literary history of proverbs, is seen further in the following examples of big gaps in the O.D.E.P.'s historical arrangement, which the *Letters* could fill. One example is given from each volume

1. O.D.E.P. p.540. 'To set one's face like a flint' This is illustrated from Bunyan (1688) and Kingsley (1859). Wesley used it in 1739 (I, 281).
2. O.D.E.P. p.549. The proverb 'to turn Turk' is illustrated by references to Shakespeare (1600) and

- Fonesca (1629). Wesley used this proverb in 1748 (II, 310).
3. O.D.E.P. p.514. 'To give one a cast of his office.' This has no illustration after 1666. Wesley used it to Bishop Lavington in 1750 (III, 269).
 4. O.D.E.P. p.495. 'At daggers drawing.' This is illustrated from works dated 1553 and 1668. The *Letters* afford an example written in 1765 (IV, 291).
 5. O.D.E.P. p.52. 'As plenty as blackberries.' After Shakespeare the only other reference is to Carlyle in 1841. Wesley used this exactly as in Shakespeare's version, in answer to a call for an additional preacher in 1766 (V, 33).
 6. O.D.E.P. p.197. 'I have shot my bolt.' The two illustrations of this proverb are Stanihurst 1557 and the *Daily Express* 1901. This big gap could be bridged by Wesley's 'The gentleman.....seems now to have shot his last bolt,' occurring, incidentally, in a letter to the press, in 1776 (VI, 202).
 7. O.D.E.P. p.522. 'To hide one's light (candle) under a bushel' is illustrated from Tyndale about 1526 and Lytton about 1873. Wesley frequently quoted this New Testament proverb in his letters, e.g. in 1786 (VII, 323).
 8. O.D.E.P. p.57. 'Athanasius contra mundum.' Hooker, 1597, and Stanley, 1861, are used for this proverb. Wesley used it in two letters, in 1738 (I, 367) and again in 1791 (VIII, 265).

V.

Another aspect of this study, of wider bearing than either the origin, practical use, or literary history of the proverbs Wesley uses, is his own literary use of them, his free association, and their extensive influence upon his idiom. His renderings are often very free, and he frequently uses a proverb in a different way from its customary meaning. Some examples will make these points clear. In one place (I, 353) he writes 'Fair words have stole away your heart,' and a few days later 'fair and friendly.' There are numerous proverbs which begin 'Fair words,' whilst the latter would seem to allude to "all are not friends that speak us fair.'

In II, 6, Wesley uses the phrase 'Common fame,' in the sense of general report. This truncated quotation is significant of the doubt which attaches to the thing itself,

PROCEEDINGS

for the proverb has two contradictory forms, i.e. 'Common fame is a liar' and 'Common fame is seldom to blame.'

A letter written in 1782 (VII, 142) gives the phrase 'pity melts the mind to love' in quotation marks. If this is strictly a quotation, it would be interesting to know where it comes from, as the true form of the proverb is 'Pity is akin to love.'

An example possibly of common-speech form occurs in VI, 252. and elsewhere, i.e. 'Stark, staring mad.' There is no proverb which runs thus, but there is the form 'Horn mad.' Shakespeare has 'Stark mad.' Ray gives 'There's a difference between staring and start blind (or mad)', so that phrases which originally meant different degrees of mental derangement, have been put together to indicate absolute madness.

In one letter (VI, 82) John avows his belief in the ghostly origin of the strange noises at Epworth Rectory. He refers to Charles's scepticism in the words "Don't you think the disturbances in my father's house were a Cock Lane story?" No. 33, Cock Lane, Smithfield, was the scene of a famous ghost-laying, in 1762, in which Samuel Johnson and other celebrities had taken part. William Parsons, along with his wife and daughter, had excited London by their accounts of the ghost's crime-detecting powers. Johnson wrote an account for the *Gentleman's Magazine*. It seems very likely that Wesley's phrase here is moulded upon the proverb 'a cock and bull story.'

In at least a dozen places Wesley uses the phrase 'to puzzle the cause.' In VIII, 177. this non-proverbial phrase is coupled with the proverb 'to seek a knot in a bulrush.' Now 'knot' archaically meant puzzle, and he is thus led to emphasize the proverb with the words 'to puzzle the cause.'

There is a reference to Bishop Warburton (IV, 197) in the words 'if the devil owes him a shame.' This seems to be a compound of two proverbs, 'Tell truth and shame the devil,' and 'The devil owed me a good turn.' But why link the devil and a Bishop? May it not be the further proverb 'The devil is a busy bishop in his own diocese'?

An interesting example of association occurs in a letter to *Freeman's Journal* in which Wesley facetiously rejects the editor's charge against him (VII, 7). It runs 'Remark a San Benito Cap, painted with devils; but let him put it on whom it fits. It does not fit me.' San Benito (or Sambenito)

WESLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

was a short yellow linen dress without sleeves, which was worn by persons condemned by the Inquisition. It had devils painted on it apparently, though some accounts say it had a large St. Andrew's Cross painted back and front. There seems to be no cap so named. How does Wesley come to write San Benito Cap?

In six letters Wesley uses the proverb 'who draweth his sword against his prince must throw away the scabbard,' but each time he omits the words 'against his prince.' In one place (V, 270) he twists this proverb into 'seeing they have drawn the sword, I throw away the scabbard.'

VI.

It is hard to resist the conclusion that some of Wesley's most famous sayings go back to his love of proverbs. He delighted to call himself a 'man of one Book' (IV, 299). The full proverb is, of course, 'Cave ab homine unius libri.' Doubtless he used it in its primary sense to indicate that he wished to be an embodiment of Scriptural authority. But George Herbert renders it 'Woe be to him who reads but one book.' In spite of this, Wesley stands by it, proud to be dubbed a Bible bigot.

The even more famous 'The world is my parish' is, at any rate akin to the proverb 'The world is a wide parish.' He seems to allude to this in his letter to Black (VII, 244) in which he curbs him in the words "your present parish is wide enough."

Wesley's best-known saying is probably his death-bed utterance, 'The best of all is, God is with us.' This is a dramatic anticipation of Browning's line 'The best is yet to be.' It calls up the old proverb, used by Shakespeare, 'The best is behind,' (i.e. still to appear). Wesley alludes to this proverb in the words, "And you know there are still greater blessings behind" (VII, 336). Shakespeare, however, quotes a contrary proverb, 'the worst is behind.' The hobnailed philosophy of the multitude is often uncertain. When Wesley thinking with the wise and speaking with the vulgar, resorts to proverbs, he always marshalls them according to his grand doctrine of Sovereign Grace. Even on his death-bed, when his followers feared what was behind, not indeed for him, but for themselves without him, he coined a new Christian proverb as he shouted 'The best of all is, God is with us.' There is no doubt or uncertainty in that.

GEORGE LAWTON.

NEW BOOKS

THE FERNLEY-HARTLEY LECTURE, 1948

Dr. Leslie F. Church: The Early Methodist People.
(Epworth Press, 12/6).

Very many volumes have been written on Methodism, a large proportion of them dealing with the early period; the word People indicates the distinctive purview of this book. The writer attempts, with great success, to rediscover the rank and file of the people influenced by the Wesleys, their co-workers and their successors.

Drawn from differing social groups they are depicted as they lived, abundant details being given of their religious experience, with its effects upon their personal relationships and family life.

The fellowship of the ransomed sinners brought together by Methodist evangelism, the progress from crude and unconventional places of assembly to the chapels, which soon began to dot the land helping at once to promise and to secure the permanence of the movement, are described with a wonderful wealth of detail.

Dr. Church is well acquainted with inaccurate and disproportioned concepts of early Methodist teaching and living, and he has rendered a much needed service by presenting a balanced view illustrated by examples drawn from real life. A good instance of this may be found in the careful assessment of John Wesley's way with children.

This book will commend itself to students, and the better equipped they are the more impressed will they be with the comprehensive but discriminating industry of the author. Has this widespread field of character and incident ever been so thoroughly explored before?

The Bibliography is a remarkable piece of work, and the source of the numerous quotations is shown in each case at the end of the chapter. Members of the W.H.S. will be pleased to see how serviceable our *Proceedings* have been in the preparation of this Lecture.

But let no one think that there is anything dry or technical about this book. It is most readable, and any one who is at all interested in the subject will call it fascinating.

WESLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Literary skill, historical acumen and devotional insight, together with a denominational loyalty, free from narrowness, unite to make this a notable achievement. It is encouraging to learn that a supplementary volume is in an advanced stage of preparation.

F.F.B.

A HUNDRED YEARS OF CHINA METHODISM, by Walter N. Lacy (Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, \$3.50).

This book of Methodist history should be full of interest to British missionaries eager to know the facts about the other branch of Methodism in China. Yet, in some 300 pages that only the briefest references amounting in all to less than two pages should be made to the considerable British effort, shows how much British and American Methodists have still to learn about one another's work. A parallel and equally informing book could be written from the British angle, but it is doubtful if anywhere could be found a man of Mr. Lacy's erudition and diligence to do the task.

Happily it is neither American nor British Methodism that now matters, but the Methodist Church of China in which both streams are merging. Of this Mr. Lacy gives more than a hint, here and there.

It is natural enough that problems have been common. It is interesting to note how similar have been the solutions and frustrations. Mr. Lacy brings out the fact that these Chinese Methodist leaders agree with those of our branch in a desire for one united Methodist Church in China working meanwhile in the fullest co-operation and sympathy with other Church communions.

The other important and fundamental fact is this, that the Chinese leaders to whom the decision was left voted unanimously for ecumenical Methodism and their share in it, as a sister Methodist Church, with those of other lands. Yet apparently their minds are not negative to an ultimate unification of all Church and Christian effort everywhere.

Mr. Lacy is to be congratulated on producing so illuminating and worth-while a book of Methodist history.

H. B. Rattenbury.

EARLY DAYS OF CORNISH METHODISM

4. THE LOST UNITY OF CORNISH METHODISM

The imposing unity which the Methodist Societies preserved on the whole almost to the close of the eighteenth century was lost in a melancholy series of divisions which took place in the half-century following the death of John Wesley.

This break-up was due at least partly to the changed circumstances of Methodism, and also to a certain loss of vitality of spirit and flexibility of working.

This loss of early zeal, lamented in contemporary pamphlets, and the consequent impatience of missionary-minded evangelists, together with the existence of Conference-favouring adherents and a party with ultra-democratic leanings, gave rise to incompatible blocks of opinion within the Connexion issuing at last in a series of offshoots and divisions.

The smaller local Cornish divisions up to 1838 are of interest and will be described. The Bible Christians (1815) of course formed by far the most important secondary Connexion in Cornwall, but their story is a well-known one and need not be repeated here.

Redruth and Truro were the centres of two minor divisions in the first years of the new century. The prime mover in the Redruth secessions was Dr. William Boase, a prominent surgeon and apothecary in the town, a convert of Wesley who had been a local preacher for many years.¹ His name appears among those appended to a radical manifesto appearing in 1791, proposing widespread modifications of Methodist polity.² Rejection of these proposals doubtless caused dissatisfaction. The *Minutes of Conference, 1803*, note divisions as having occurred at Redruth the year previously, which fixes the date of the rise thereof as 1802.

About 90 of the Redruth Society, with several class

¹ *Family of Boase*, (1893) 42.

Arminian Magazine (Bible Christian), 1823, 79n.

² Smith, *History of Wesleyan Methodism*, (1863-4) ii, 702.

leaders, resigned their tickets of membership and left the Connexion.³

Efforts at reconciliation at the Cornwall District Meeting in June, 1803, proved fruitless. Boase's followers erected a Chapel, called the "Lower House" to distinguish it from the Methodist Chapel at the top of the street, and preaching was opened in other places, of which Crantock was one.⁴

When William O'Bryan, founder of the Bible Christians, travelled in the West in 1815, the people of Boase's Connexion received him kindly and allowed him the use of their Chapel.⁵ Perhaps in this may be traced a general sympathy of view between O'Bryan and the leaders of the Redruth party, especially when Boase's known radical opinions are remembered.

Another such division was led by John Boyle in Truro. Boyle was an itinerant minister admitted on trial in 1790 in the St. Austell circuit, and except for one year (1795) travelled in Cornwall until he was Superintendent of the Penzance Circuit in 1800. The 1802 *Minutes* describe Boyle as having desisted from travelling at his own wish. He opened a schoolroom and Chapel at Porth Kea, and formed societies in the district around Truro.⁶

There is an old Sunday School building in Truro with a tablet on the North Front, "Bible Christians 1810"—before the founding of the Bryanites, so that this building was perhaps the Boyle Chapel before his followers joined the Bible Christians in October, 1817.⁷

The weirdest offshoot of Cornish Methodism was that of the "Shouters" or "Trumpeters" of St. Clement, Truro.

In the second decade of the nineteenth century two eccentric Truro ladies, the Misses Downes, were excluded from the Methodist Connexion on account of their wild behaviour and shoutings. They thereupon set up a small

³ MS. Diary of Rev. R. Treffry, Sen, 68.

⁴ *Arminian Magazine* (Bible Christian) 1823, 79n.

⁵ Thorne: *William O'Bryan* (1888), 95.

Arminian Magazine (B.C.), 1823, 79n, 159

⁶ See articles in *West Briton Newspaper*, 15 May 1913 by Theodore Hawken.

⁷ *Jubilee Memorial Volume of Bible Christian Connexion* (1866) 42.

conventicle in the parish of St. Clement, on the border of Truro, in which their sermons and addresses were punctuated by realistic (?) imitations of the apocalyptic trumpet! Polwhele, the well-known writer on Cornish Methodism, refers to women preachers who imitate the blast of a trumpet, and in 1821 the Vicar of St. Clement wrote in his reply to the Episcopal Questionnaire:—

“ Two very small meeting houses in my parish as they are called; the other of enthusiasts whom they call established by seceders from Methodism—one of Bryanites, ‘ Shouters ’ or ‘ Trumpeters ’: but this consists of very few members chiefly women.”⁸

The ultimate course of the movement housed in this conventicle is unknown, but it probably died out soon after 1821, as there is no further mention in Episcopal Returns.

The Wesleyan Association’s connection with Cornwall seems to have begun with the circulation of stories that the preachers were disaffected, and on their behalf a statement was issued declaring their adherence to Wesleyan Methodism and its principles. “ Never was true old Methodism dearer to us,” wrote Richard Treffry, junior, who was present at the December, 1834, meeting of Cornish ministers, called to discuss Warrenite propaganda.⁹

Events showed the falsity of the view that little trouble would result in the County, for in fact the Wesleyan Association became particularly strong in many parts of Cornwall, and few Circuits remained unaffected.

In 1835 forty members of Polperro Society joined the Association¹⁰—a heavy blow for a village cause—and in Polruan, too, many joined the new denomination. Of Ann West’s Society at Wadebridge all but two seceded,¹¹ and under the leadership of Thomas Pope Rosevear many other North Cornish Societies turned over. Such were St. Tudy, Tintagel, St. Teath, Treligga, and Forrabury.¹²

At Liskeard, services on behalf of the Wesleyan Association were held in the market hall from 1835-7, when shares were issued in August of the later year to build a

⁸ Exeter Diocesan Registry MSS, 242c.

⁹ *Memoirs of R. Treffry, Jun.* (1839) 165.

¹⁰ Couch: *History of Polperro*, (1871), 197.

¹¹ Higgs: *Living Christianity*, (1873), 78.

¹² Maclean: *History of Trigg Minor* (1873-9) in loc.

WESLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Chapel in the town for the new denomination.¹³ We are told that the Helston Society was possibly the most badly hit among Cornish Societies,¹⁴ and that the St. Agnes Round was free from dispute.¹⁵

The agitation reached its peak in 1836, when Dr. Warren accomplished a Cornish tour. Joseph Allen, a Mevagissey Methodist, wrote to Samuel Dunn, "there are still, I fear, many disaffected ones who, notwithstanding, will hail him welcome."¹⁶ During the year 1836, a surviving copy of the manifesto published in June, 1791, by the Redruth delegates of democratic point of view was reprinted by Warren's sympathisers as evidence of their attitude to Conference.¹⁷

Thus accumulates considerable evidence of dissatisfaction with the older Wesleyan Methodism and sympathy with would-be reformers, which resulted in a great weakening of Methodist influence by reason of repeated secessions. These offshoots generally had a short life, their normal course being either amalgamation with other similar-minded communities, or a speedy end through inanition and the growing irrelevancy of their peculiar point of view with the passage of time.

H. MILES BROWN.

JOHN WESLEY'S BRISTOL MEMBERSHIP ROLLS 1770 TO 1786

The New Room, Bristol, possesses three original lists of its first members written by John Wesley himself.

A few years ago the late Mr. J. T. Lightwood gave to the Trustees a portion of a list of members of the United Society dated January 1st, 1741. The fragment of paper, framed, contains sixty-three names of men, including those of John Wesley and his brother Charles. An article on this list was published in *Proceedings*, IV, 92.

¹³ *Maker: Cob and Moorstone*, 1935.

¹⁴ Cunnack MSS.

¹⁵ *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1836, 373

¹⁶ *Memoirs of Joseph Allen*, (1838), 138.

¹⁷ *Memoirs of R. Treffry*, Jun. 202.

PROCEEDINGS

Recently the Membership Roll for 1770-1782 has been given by Mr. Cory Dixon, J.P., of Liverpool. Previous to this a similar Roll covering the years 1783-1786 was returned to the New Room through the kindness of the Trustees of City Road Chapel, London. It formerly belonged to a member of the Hall family who sent it to Wesley's Chapel Museum. These two Rolls give a complete list of Bristol members, year by year, for seventeen years, written by Wesley himself—a record of the highest value, and happily, in a perfect state of preservation. Both are bound in vellum covers, quarto size, with unruled pages which have been creased to form four columns. From seven to eight hundred names are entered yearly, with the occupation and address. The "condition" of each member, whether married, unmarried, or widowed, is indicated by the letters m, u, or w. Against some names are signs which indicate Wesley's opinion of the spiritual state of the member, or denote death or expulsion.

It is significant that the membership totals for these years differ little, if at all, from those given by Wesley in his *Journal* references to the Bristol Society in the early years. They suggest that he continued to carry out the regular examination of the Society and the expulsion of members who had ceased to meet of which the *Journal* provides evidence. For instance: Oct. 3rd, 1743, "I employed several days in examining and purging the society, which still consisted (after many were put away) of more than seven hundred persons," and again, Oct. 1st, 1748, "I examined the society the following week, leaving out every careless person, and everyone who wilfully and obstinately refused to meet his brethren weekly. By this means their number was reduced from nine hundred to about seven hundred and thirty." The two Rolls, which began more than twenty years later, show that the "purging" had continued, for the membership remains about the same. On his last visit to Bristol, in September, 1790, Wesley writes, "Monday the 13th and the three following days I met the classes of the society, which contains nine hundred and forty-four members." The total of 1748, when drastic revision is first recorded, is reached again forty-two years later, and as he records the total, Wesley adds the comment: "Still I complain of false musters."

WESLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

1765 to 1768

The 1783 Roll Book was first used in these earlier years, It opens with a set of local "Rules for Membership," followed by several pages of names of members admitted on trial for the years 1765 to 1768, with the names of the leaders with whom they were to meet. Apparently the book was then laid aside until Wesley took it up later. Neither the Rules nor the lists are in his handwriting. The Rules are as follows:

It is proposed

1. That all persons who shall be admitted into this Society shall have their names entered in this Book.
2. That no person shall be admitted without the recommendation of some member of the Society who is acquainted with their character, having first met in class (at least three times) read over and considered the Rules of the Society.
3. That at the expiration of three months if no objection is made to their character they shall be received as regular members of the Society and their names entered in the Register.

As we have often seen the bad consequences of too hastily admitting persons into Society it is requested of the Resident Preacher punctually to observe these Rules.

Bristol. Sept. 19, 1765.

The arrangement of the lists of members thus admitted on trial is similar to that of the members' lists in later years, except that the columns have headings. The following extract indicates its appearance:

	State	Names	m	Occupat :	Residence	Recommended	To meet with
1765	a	Jane Blackwood	m	Sailor's	Old Orchard	Sis. Doyle	Sis. Doyle
	a	Roger Thomas	u	Skinner	Milk St.	Br. Bartlet	Br. Bartlet
1766	a	Ann Smith	u	House Keeper	Room	London Society	Sis. Design

The last name is interesting. Ann Smith came from London to act as housekeeper at the New Room, but four years later she had gone and Mary Maddern had taken her place. It may be noted, too, that class leaders seem to have recruited new members for their classes.

Many of the leaders whose names are in these early pages continued as leaders through the years covered by the two Membership Rolls.

At the other end of the book, collections from the Bristol Societies for five quarters in 1767-68 are entered, including stewards' names and amounts brought in. The first quarter is partly written by Wesley:

Sep. 29, 1767 Bristol Tho. Lewis 22 - 06 - 00
 The remaining Societies are Kingswood, Pill, Pensford, Sutton, Clutton, Paulton and Norton.

PROCEEDINGS

1770 to 1782.

The Roll for these thirteen years consists of 280 pages, the list of members' names filling about eighteen each year. Several pages are given to lists of Band members and persons admitted on trial or excluded from membership. There are three lists of Leaders and three of Stewards. Each members' list is headed "The Society in Bristol," with a date in September, and the year.

The columns in which the lists are arranged give Name, Condition (married, unmarried, etc.), Occupation and Address. The fourth column made by the folding of the page is usually used for names of new members, inserted probably during the year, though with few exceptions the handwriting is Wesley's. It may be assumed that the Bristol preachers were not expected to keep it up to date. The names are in groups of from twelve to sixteen, the groups being numbered consecutively on the left from 1 to 59 or 60, and are arranged according to streets. The list would serve as a guide to systematic visiting. Band members are in similar but smaller groups and unlike the members' list, men and women are in separate groups the first name in each often being that of a Leader.

The occupations of members indicate the different classes of people found in the Society—the toiler in the workshop, the dock labourer, the shopkeeper, the professional man. A few examples are: spinner, rope-maker, soap-boiler, oilman, printer, book-binder, chymist, grocer, linen-draper, merchant, farmer, surgeon, clerk, schoolmistress, housekeeper, gent (for a retired man or a gentlewoman): sometimes the word "old" appears, or "poor", occasionally the age of a member who is very youthful or very old such as Sar Gill 12, Margaret Somerill 92. A name of special interest entered in 1773 is that of "Sar Wesley 15, Charles Street", Charles Wesley's young daughter. There are many names here which are familiar to the Methodist historian: Henry Durbin, William Pine, John Castleman and Letitia his wife, John Hall, Thomas Lewis; also Mary Norman, Elizabeth Johnson, Ann Stafford, Mary Maddern.

Where there are two or more in a family who are members of Society their names are bracketed together:

(1770)	Will	Webb	m	Clerk	Nr. St. Philip's Church
	Ann		m		
	Ann		u		

The "family" at the New Room is dealt with in this way,

WESLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

the housekeeper's name coming first:

(1775) Mary Maddern	w	Housekr	The Horsefair
Mary	u		Eliz Saundson m
Eliz Murlin	m	Gent	
Maria Floyd	m		
Ruth Henderson	u	Servt	
Sar. Fink	u		

Mary Maddern was housekeeper for twelve years, after which a housekeeper was dispensed with and the preachers' wives took over her duties. Elizabeth Saundson (or Saunderson) came during the year and her name was placed in the last column.

There are many signs or cipher marks which precede or follow names. A clue to those preceding names is contained in the minutes of a Leaders' Meeting held at City Road Chapel, London, in 1808, signed by Dr. Adam Clarke. It requires that class leaders should use the following marks to denote their judgement on the spiritual condition of their members:

?—for questionable, a—for scarcely awakened, a—for awakened, . (one dot) for "received a sense of justification," : (two dots) for the sanctified state. But though these do appear they are used sparingly, and there are other marks not in the City Road list: for example, l' appears fairly frequently in the earlier pages.

So far we have discovered no authentic clue to the meaning of the marks which follow names, but by careful checking one or two points have become fairly clear. A sign which can only be printed by using a capital H appears against the name of a leader. The underlining of a name is a sign that it will disappear next year. It may mean expulsion. If "l'" is added it probably indicates "left". When two curves like a Greek *Epsilon* and a mark of interrogation follow the underlined name (E?) the member has died. For instance :

1770	John	Watts	m	Currier		
	Mary	E?	m			
1771	John	Watts	w	Currier	(he is now a widower)	
1781	Tho	Lewis	H	m	E? Gent	Castle Ditch
	Mary		m	H		
1782	Mary	Lewis	w		Gent	

In 1778 opposite a few of these underlined names with above sign is the word "Dead" in a hand which is not Wesley's. The suggestion may be ventured that when Wesley had met the classes he prepared for the writing of the new Roll by

PROCEEDINGS

going over the previous year's list and underlining and annotating where a change had taken place, or was needed; then he proceeded to copy, guided by his notes.

For the years 1770, 1780, 1782 there are lists of the Leaders, with many of the same names appearing each year. Five Stewards are named for the years 1772, 1781 and 1782—Thomas Lewis, Thomas Roberts and William White for two years of the three, Daniel Wait and others appear only for one year. In different parts of the Roll are lists of members admitted and excluded. On the left of each name is a number which corresponds with the group number in the list of members. Towards the end of the book another writer has entered a list of the names of thirty-five Leaders, with the number of members in each leader's class, for several quarters or years. Wesley over-ran this with his membership roll for 1782 and the last page or two are confused.

The number of members in the Bristol Society during these thirteen years never rose above 809; the yearly average is 750.

1783 to 1786.

The book containing the Roll for these four years is similar to the earlier one; the arrangement of the Roll is the same, and the handwriting is Wesley's. But on the second page of this volume is a note of what may well have been one of the earliest Methodist choir practices. It reads:

Sept. 29th, 1783. The following persons have at my desire undertaken to meet twice every week at ye New Room in learning to sing our tunes

and there follow the names of twenty men (one being crossed out) and ten women.

For these last years the Standard Edition of the *Journal* gives us the entries in Wesley's *Diary* from which we can see exactly how and when the Roll was written. The first year may be quoted as an illustration. On September 13th, 1783, Wesley reached Bristol. On the 17th and two following days he "visited several of the country societies." The next entry in the *Journal* is for the 26th, but the *Diary* shows, day by day, how he was employed. The week beginning the 22nd was largely devoted to pastoral work. On the 22nd he met classes at 6, 9, and 2; next day—classes at the same hours, and at 6.30 p.m. he met the leaders at Sister Johnson's. On the 24th he met three classes. On the 25th, "4. Prayed,

WESLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

writ society; 8. tea, conversed, writ society." In the evening he met the bands. On the 26th, "4. Prayed, writ society: 12, the females, writ society." In the afternoon he went out to Kingswood where again he "writ society." On the 27th, which was the Saturday, two sessions were given to writing the Society Roll, and one to the Bands; he also met the children—at 6.0 a.m. Thus hours of patient work are tersely recorded, and the result is seen in the orderly columns of the 19 pages of our Roll.

A very large proportion of the names here are found in the 1770 Roll; the membership was steady and the Society loyal to Wesley. But there are no marked increases; the average is still 750. The widow, Margaret Somerell, who, on the first page of the 1770 Roll is described as "old," is still living in 1786, and Wesley then gives her age as 99. (In the Bookroom collection of class tickets a few years ago, nearly all the earliest were those of Margaret Somerell, *Proceedings V*, 33-36.) The lists of new members admitted and others excluded are continued. A few of the old Leaders have died and others take their place, amongst them being Nathaniel Gifford.

Two names marked with the sad sign denoting death attract attention—Elizabeth Bradburn and Elizabeth Murlin, who both died in 1786, while their husbands were stationed as preachers at the New Room. The sign E? is in Wesley's writing. Against it another hand, clear and firm, had written for each of them the word "Dead," and added, opposite Elizabeth Bradburn's name, an exclamation mark. It was not Wesley's hand that made the comment and the symbol of a deep sigh, but Samuel Bradburn's. The handwriting is unmistakable. He had married his Betsy in the face of opposition; Wesley supported him and performed the ceremony, and to comfort him in his sorrow Wesley took Bradburn with him when he left Bristol. There are several other names against which Bradburn has written "Dead," but to no other does he add "!".

Wesley's writing grows shaky in these later years, and is sometimes hard to read. In 1786 he gave three days to meeting the classes and the *Diary* records the hours he spent in writing the Society Roll. It is finished at last and he can say: "on the remaining days of the week transcribed the society, considerably increased since last year; and I hope in grace as well as in number." His last enumeration gave

him joy. He did not again write up the list of members. But in 1789 he made one more entry in the book; with trembling hand he wrote the list of leaders for that year. The task that had been his for seventeen years was done; it must pass to others. But the records of Wesley's pastoral oversight of this one Methodist Society remain a witness to the fidelity with which he cared for the souls of men.

In the preparation of this article I have been greatly indebted to the Rev. E. T. Selby for facilities afforded and helpful advice.

ROSE WITHERS.

NOTES AND QUERIES

873. HUGH BOURNE—Material is being collected by Rev. J. T. Wilkinson, M.A., B.D., 7, Demesne Road, Manchester 16, for a centenary study of Hugh Bourne (1772—1852), one of the founders of the Primitive Methodist Church. He would be grateful to anyone who could afford him the opportunity of examining any manuscript relating to him. Any document entrusted to him would be returned as quickly as possible. The following items are specially wanted: *A Few Plain Facts: Faith and Industry superior to High Popularity*, Anon., c. 1833. *Funeral Sermons* on Bourne by Richard Jukes (preached at Brierley Hill); by William Antliffe (in Liverpool); Geo. Bagley (in Oswestry); and by John Petty. Also *Hugh Bourne and Primitive Methodism* by John Simpson F.F.B.

874. DR. JOHNSON, MRS. THRALE AND JOHN WESLEY—Mr. W. Rayner Batty has interested himself in the matter dealt with in *Notes and Queries* 869. He put it before Professor Pottle of Yale University, a great authority on Boswell and Johnson. The Professor consulted Dr. Herman Liebert of the Yale University Library.

Dr. Liebert agrees that Johnson's letter of March 14th 1748, addressed to Mrs. Thrale, in mentioning "Mr. W." refers to John Wesley. He cannot tell us whether Wesley was a voter in Southwark. He makes the observation that Johnson's solicitation may not have been for his suffrage only; it is at least equally likely, he thinks, that what he desired was that Wesley should

WESLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

recommend Thrale to his followers. Dr. Liebert goes on to say that it is unlikely that Wesley was of much assistance in the election of 1768, for he left London on March 6th on an extended trip to the North of England, not returning until November 11th. It seems possible, moreover, that he failed to receive Johnson's letter of March 3rd before he left London, for it was posted late. But it would have been forwarded to him. It was in the course of this northern tour that he wrote to his sister, "You may always direct to London and your letter will come safe."

Dr. Liebert concludes his remarks by saying that as the Poll closed on March 23rd, 1768, it is difficult to see what help he could have rendered. F.F.B.

875. PRUDHOE-ON-TYNE—An attractive booklet has been published in connection with the recent Jubilee of St. John's Methodist (formerly Wesleyan) Church, Prudhoe-on-Tyne. Miss Enid Lee has brought together in concise form the scattered references to the beginnings of Methodism in the area which was the scene of much pioneer work as Methodism developed in the not far-off city of Newcastle.

The names of Christopher Hopper and Joseph Cownley are prominent in the story of the early days. They were two of Wesley's most valuable preachers, and were widely useful in the north.

Wesley's first visit to Prudhoe was in 1757. The house he preached in was occupied by Mr. Anthony Humble. It is still a good building, now used as Council Offices, and the exact spot where Wesley preached, under a spreading tree, is marked by an inscribed stone.

George Whitefield preached in the same year the opening sermon of a Chapel erected on land sold by Mr. Humble for the nominal sum of 5/-.

Wesley preached in the Chapel when he made three further visits to the place.

The book is enriched by a reproduction of the 1837 plan of the far-flung Gateshead Circuit.

The story is carried down to the present day. Miss Lee has done a sound piece of work which should give encouragement to those who are carrying on the cause to-day.

F.F.B.