

# 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](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_whs_01.php)

# Proceedings

OF THE

# Wesley Historical Society

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

---

Volume XXXVII

February 1969

---

## EDITORIAL

IT is difficult to know when one ought to celebrate the anniversary of the Wesley Historical Society. A circular letter dated 20th June 1893, sent by the Rev. Richard Green to prospective members, certainly marked its inception; but it was at the Birmingham Wesleyan Conference of 1894 that the first meeting was held. We celebrated the Jubilee of the former in 1943; it now seems appropriate that we should mark the 75th anniversary of the latter this year, when, by a happy coincidence, the Conference again meets in Birmingham. In the June issue we hope to publish an article reviewing the past twenty-five years of Methodist historical studies.

This year of grace also marks the 300th anniversary of the birth of Susanna Wesley on 20th January 1669. It is neither necessary nor desirable that we repeat what has been written in two recent books and in contemporary journals, so in the June issue a bibliographical article will list the most important books on the subject. This, rather than a general article on Susanna Wesley, will be more appropriate to the *Proceedings*, and will, we feel, be of service to students.

We are pleased to report that the Society's Library, now administered from the Archives, is in excellent shape. The installation of heaters has conquered the damp, and, thanks to a few hard-working members of the London Branch, the place has been cleaned and the books sorted and re-arranged.

In general, the Society prospers, but if there is one desideratum more urgent than any other, it is the need for new members. Not that we are decreasing; we maintain the near-900 mark quite steadily, but no member can be complacent while we number less than a thousand. This has been our target for many years now, but not yet have we been able to hit it. May we appeal to all our members to commend the Society wherever and to whomever they can—friends, acquaintances, libraries, colleges, or even (may we suggest) wives—in an effort to reach that elusive 1,000!

## METHODISM AND TRADE UNIONISM IN THE NOTTINGHAMSHIRE- DERBYSHIRE COALFIELD, 1844-90

### I

THE first trade union in the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire coalfield was formed in 1844 as an offshoot of the Miners' Association of Great Britain and Ireland, which had its strongholds in Northumberland, Durham, Yorkshire and Lancashire. Many of its members came out on strike; and others were locked out. Within a year the union had collapsed.

The leaders of this union were alleged to be "mostly ranter preachers",<sup>1</sup> but there is little evidence for this view. On the other hand there is very strong evidence for Chartist involvement. James Sweet, the Nottingham Chartist leader, was particularly active in the miners' support, and Chartist stockingers, poor though they were, made regular contributions to the miners' strike fund. The Chartist connexion is also indicated by meetings held in the Democratic Chapel, Barker Gate, which had by this time become the Nottingham Chartists' headquarters.<sup>2</sup>

Of course, Chartists and Methodists were not mutually exclusive groups. At least one of the leading Nottinghamshire Chartists, George Harrison of Calverton, was a local preacher. But the evidence for active Methodist participation in the miners' struggle is restricted to Pinxton on the Notts-Derbyshire border. John Hayes, the father of the family, was a member of the union lodge committee, whilst his sons, Matthew and William, active members of the Wharf Wesleyan (later UMFC) chapel, were responsible for the organization of teams of "beggars" who visited non-mining areas on fund-raising expeditions. As Matthew's biographer tells us:

They all felt they were striving for what was right and just, and believed that their fellow working men in other parts of the country, who were in employment, would sympathise and render them assistance. They began with music and singing in the streets, and long journeys were made by companies of ten or twelve, who were sent in different directions, two of each company being selected to officiate as beggars.<sup>3</sup>

The team of which the Hayes brothers were members were threatened with prosecution as vagrants at Grantham when they opened

<sup>1</sup> *Derbyshire Courier*, 6th April 1844, cited by J. E. Williams: *The Derbyshire Miners* (London, 1962), p. 90. One of the leaders of this period—Clarke—may have been Herbert Clarke, a local preacher from South Wingfield.

<sup>2</sup> *Nottingham Review*, various dates in March, April and May 1844; A. R. Griffin: *The Miners of Nottinghamshire*, vol. I (Nottingham, 1956), pp. 7-9 (subsequently cited as *Notts Miners*, I); A. R. Griffin: *The Nottinghamshire Coalfield, 1550-1947* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Nottingham, 1963), vol. I, pp. 187-9 (subsequently cited as *Notts Coalfield*; references are to the typescript as revised for publication).

<sup>3</sup> M. Wheeler: *Life of Matthew Hayes* (Nottingham, 1899), pp. 73-5).

the proceedings with "Would Jesus have the sinner die?", whilst another team who were begging in Sutton-in-Ashfield were committed to the "house of correction" at Southwell.<sup>4</sup>

The idea of begging in this way was derived from the method of raising funds for foreign missions suggested by Dr. Coke.<sup>5</sup> Matthew Hayes, who put forward the idea, became famous in later life as "the colliers' Spurgeon"; his brother William emigrated to America, where he entered the ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

After the dispute the Hayes family were refused employment at Pinxton, and they moved home for a time to Staveley in North Derbyshire, where they were not known to the colliery-owners. Subsequently, Matthew prospered as a colliery official, respected by owners and men alike, but had no further connexion with the trade union movement.

## II

When the next union was formed in the coalfield, in the 1860s, it was almost exclusively Methodist-led.

Among the most active unionists in this period were, as we shall see, the Butterley men. An interesting *Statistical Report on Butterley Company employees and their families living in the Parishes of Aldercar, Langley, Loscoe, Codnor and Eastwood* in September 1856 gives us a good idea of the strength of the Methodist causes in the locality.

The total number of people included in the survey was 1,647, of whom 676 were adults, 392 were children over ten and 579 children below ten years of age. There was only one communicant of the Church of England, 17 others who attended church regularly, and 26 who attended occasionally—making a total of 44. On the other hand, dissenting chapels had 106 members, plus 45 who attended regularly and 150 who attended occasionally—making a total of 301. Further, 282 children attended Sunday school, and it is fair to assume that they went to the same places as their parents.<sup>6</sup>

The parish church was still regarded by some dissenters as the proper place for formal ceremonies, however. Thus Mrs. Pool said: "I shall take all my children to the Church and have them baptized. They have been baptized by the Ranters, but I don't think it's right." But this attitude, common though it may have been, made little difference to the focus of authority in the mining community. The church may have been for many the "right" place for weddings, christenings and burials; but the leading spirits of the community were the local preachers of the Methodist denominations.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *Nottingham Review*, 26th April 1844.

<sup>5</sup> Wheeler, op. cit., p. 73.

<sup>6</sup> The survey also reveals, *inter alia*, that eight families had family prayer; that only 82 families were without a Bible; that there were five couples living together without being married, and that there were 10 illegitimate children.

<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, the survey—which appears to have been done by an adherent of the Church of England—does not distinguish between the "dissenting" congregations, but they were overwhelmingly Methodist. (See the returns for these parishes in the 1851 Census.)

## III

The Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Miners' Association was started in 1863,<sup>8</sup> but did not count for much until 1866, when William Brown came into the district at the invitation of the Derbyshire leaders.

William Brown was a working miner in the Leeds district for twenty-five years, but because of his trade union activities he had to find another occupation, and he set up in business as a greengrocer. He also earned £10 a year as a singer at a Methodist New Connexion chapel. Besides being highly respected, Brown was an eloquent speaker, and he had a great deal of influence among the colliers of the district. In 1863 he accepted an invitation to become the miners' agent for the Leeds and Methley District, for which he was paid 4s. a day, plus 6d. expenses and third class railway fare when the journey exceeded five miles.<sup>9</sup> His services as a speaker were in great demand throughout the Midlands coalfields, and there is no doubt that he was largely responsible for the successes of the Midlands miners' unions in the 1860s and '70s. He spoke with evangelistic fervour: his meetings had, indeed, the flavour of a revivalist campaign. One of his earliest meetings in Nottinghamshire, held at Hucknall Torkard on Sunday, 1st July 1866, was reported by a local paper as follows:

... There was also an open-air service held in the afternoon in connection with the "Miners' Association" which was devotionally and religiously conducted. And the same parties held an interesting meeting at night upon the Green which was very numerous attended, and at which Mr. Brown, from Hunslet, delivered a very humorous and interesting address.

At a meeting held at Eastwood "to consider the propriety of joining the Miners' Association", one of Brown's colleagues, Herbert Clarke of South Wingfield, concluded his address:

... he trusted they would support the association, for union was strength, and by the help of God they would gain another victory in the cause of humanity.

The proceedings closed with a hymn.<sup>11</sup> This was, indeed, the standard practice. For example, at a meeting held at Hucknall in support of men locked out for joining the union, the proceeds opened with a hymn from the *Miners' Hymn Book*, and closed with the Doxology.<sup>12</sup> On another occasion "Courage, brother, do not stumble" was sung.

<sup>8</sup> William Brown said that the union was founded at a meeting held on 23rd December 1865 (*Royal Commission to Enquire into the Organisation and Rules of Trade Unions and other Associations, 8th Report, 1868, Q16402*), and this has been accepted by, e.g., Dr. Williams. However, it is clear from Brown's own evidence that union activities were being carried on earlier in the year; and contemporary evidence clearly establishes 1863 as the date.

<sup>9</sup> See *ibid.*, Q16354 to 16517, for the whole of Brown's evidence.

<sup>10</sup> *Nottingham Review*, 6th July 1866.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, 23rd March 1866.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, 4th January 1867. *The Miners' Hymn Book* was probably published and sold by Brown. This is inferred from Royal Commission's *Report, Q16442*.

The leaders of the Association undoubtedly saw their struggle as a crusade. At a meeting held at Basford in December 1866, Clarke reminded his audience that "the good old Book said the strong should help the weak",<sup>18</sup> whilst another union agent, Richard Bunting of Ilkeston, told the miners on another occasion that the union "was in accordance with the Scripture and hence for the benefit of the men".<sup>14</sup> At about the same time we find Clarke referring to their cause as a just one under God's superintendence, and "they would commit it, and themselves, into His hands, believing in His promise that He would direct their steps."<sup>15</sup> Again, during the extensive lock-out in the winter of 1866-7, we find Brown trusting "that God might help them to stick together in their trial".<sup>16</sup>

A mining engineer, Woodhouse, in evidence before the Royal Commission on Trade Unions, described Brown's style of address as giving out a text and shouting from it. . . . He took a text and preached the same as itinerant preachers do, but in so doing I have no doubt he appealed to their feelings, and working people are very excitable, and when their feelings were up they would say "Let us join the union."<sup>17</sup>

Again, a contemporary newspaper account referred to a union meeting at Church Gresley as "partly religious in character". At this meeting one full-time union agent, Joseph Lee, referred to Christ's sacrifice on the cross, whilst Richard Bunting enlivened the occasion with a poem beginning:

Think what power lies within you,  
For what triumphs you are formed,  
Think! but not alone of living,  
Like the horse from day to day.

He assured the men that "if they would do this, all prejudice would fly away, and they would very soon emancipate themselves from their present thralldom."<sup>18</sup>

To take another example, in June 1867 the Association leaders organized a camp-meeting in a field near the Primitive Methodist chapel at Cotmanhay, near Ilkeston. In the afternoon and evening Jonas Hooper of Church Gresley, William Brown, and Joseph Severn of Ilkeston delivered "stirring addresses" to large congregations. Collections were taken for the children of locked-out miners.<sup>19</sup>

#### IV

It is not the purpose of this article to trace the fortunes of the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Miners' Association. It is sufficient for us to note that the Association virtually collapsed during the depression years 1868-70, but was then resuscitated.

The period 1871-3 was particularly favourable to the trade union movement in the mining industry. There was, indeed, a "coal

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, 28th December 1866.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, 19th October 1866.

<sup>15</sup> *loc. cit.*

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, 8th February 1867.

<sup>17</sup> *Royal Commission . . . 6th Report*, Q11909 and 11990, cited by Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

<sup>18</sup> *Nottingham Review*, 26th April 1867.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, 14th June 1867.

famine" caused by a rapid increase in the demand for coal (associated with the Franco-Prussian War, among other factors), whilst supply remained relatively static. Coal prices rose steeply, there were exceptionally good profits to be made, and therefore the owners were prepared to make concessions so as to keep their pits in production.

The Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Miners' Association had new leaders at the top, although many of the old branch officials re-emerged.

As we noted above, the Butterley men took an active part in the events of this period. Again they were led in the main by local preachers, and we find, for example, a letter to the General Manager of the Company ending thus:

It is also the sincere wish of the contractors and miners in general that the same feeling which has existed may evermore be continued, namely the welfare of each other, as in the sight of Him that will be the Judge of all the Earth, and most certainly will do right.<sup>20</sup>

Again, when the eleven leaders of the Butterley men were refused further employment at the conclusion of a dispute in 1874, some 1,100 employees signed a petition pleading that they should be re-employed

... and that the men may be dealt with in harmony with the golden rule "As ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them" and your petitioners will ever pray . . .<sup>21</sup>

The Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Miners' Association suffered a series of severe defeats in 1875, and lock-out pay drained the funds. The Association was seriously weakened, and it had become moribund by the end of the decade, although some residual activity remained at colliery level. There is a clear link between this Association and the two separate county associations (one for Nottinghamshire and one for Derbyshire) which replaced it.

This may be illustrated by referring to a camp-meeting organized by the old Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire association in a field near the New Inn, Codnor, in September 1875.

Here, services were held in the morning and afternoon with Mr. Joseph Hancock . . . and Mr. E. Smith of Pinxton officiating. In the evening, Mr. S. Swift of Heage took the pulpit in the nearby Free Methodist Chapel.<sup>22</sup>

Joseph Hancock and E. Smith remained active in the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire association to the end, and they were similarly active in the Nottinghamshire Miners' Association which was formed in 1881. Both were local preachers in the United Methodist Free Churches. Joseph Hancock's son, J. G. Hancock, became a paid official of the NMA in 1893, having been "brought up to the

<sup>20</sup> Letter dated 27th December 1871 (in the Butterley Company's archives).

<sup>21</sup> J. E. Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-7; also *Notts Miners* I, p. 18.

<sup>22</sup> *Notts Miners* I, p. 21.

work", as he used to say, and held office until 1937. He was also a Liberal-Labour miners' Member of Parliament for some years. His brother, W. G. Hancock, was a prominent branch official of the Nottinghamshire association.

One of Hancock's friends, a Codnor Methodist named William Hardy, played a leading role in the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire association, and subsequently became the president of the NMA. His brother John, though never so prominent in the movement as William, was also active in both associations.<sup>23</sup> Another well-known local preacher, Joseph Hopkin, who became the NMA's first agent (i.e. full-time official), had previously been active in the South Yorkshire and North Derbyshire Miners' Association.<sup>24</sup>

All these people—the Hancocks, the Hardys, Hopkin, and many more—were sober, respectable men. They might tell locked-out men to "stand by each other, truthful to one another and trusting in God", as did John Hardy in 1875,<sup>25</sup> but they did not possess the evangelistic enthusiasm of William Brown and the agents who had worked under his leadership in the 1860s. There was, indeed, an enormous difference between the emotional climates of the two periods. In the '60s Brown and his colleagues were out to make converts—to bring their congregations to the point of decision. True, in the '70s camp-meetings were still occasionally held; but, these apart, meetings were clearly secular and not quasi-religious,<sup>26</sup> as Brown's had been. Judging by the preachers, even the camp-meetings would be decorous affairs in this later period.

Of course, speeches in the 1870s were still interlarded with biblical allusions. Miners—those of them at least who belonged to the union—were still characterized as latter-day "children of Jerusalem", looking to God for deliverance. Biblical allusions, indeed, were still heard on trade union platforms half a century later, but the atmosphere in which they were uttered was markedly different.

It may be urged that there were still some fiery leaders in the 1880s. The Nottinghamshire Miners' Association certainly had one—William Bailey, its second agent. Bailey was a well-known Primitive Methodist local preacher who "had tried to bring God to many people around there, and to show them the blessings of religion."<sup>27</sup> He was also an active and radical member of the Liberal Party who played a leading part in the agitation for greater working-class representation on public bodies and in Parliament. In 1892 he was elected president of the Labour Electoral Association.

Whilst it is true that Bailey's meetings were often lively affairs, they were certainly not "quasi-religious" in character. He saved his preaching for the pulpit.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>26</sup> The expression is Woodhouse's—see *Royal Commission . . . 6th Report*, Q11909.

<sup>27</sup> *Notts Miners I*, p. 113.



## V

In considering the connexion between Methodism and the miners' unions of the Nottinghamshire-Derbyshire coalfield, we may, then, distinguish three phases. In the first phase (1844), active Methodists played no more than a peripheral role, and Methodist societies held aloof.<sup>28</sup> In the second phase (1865-8), the union campaign, under William Brown's leadership, was conducted like a religious revival. Methodists—of MNC, UMFC and PM affiliations—were at the centre of the agitation, evangelizing, and organizing the converted. Their trade union work can fairly be regarded as an extension of their work for the Church, and quite inseparable from it.

The third phase starts in the 1870s. Whilst Methodists were still at the centre of the agitation, they were now quite clearly playing out two separate roles. There was no longer a charismatic figure like William Brown to turn the union movement into an evangelistic mission. Brown still came into the district occasionally by invitation, but even *his* speeches had changed in tone. Significantly, in seconding a motion at the 1875 Demonstration which demanded that working men in country districts should be given the vote, Brown confessed that he had made no special study of politics, having been more concerned with getting better wages and conditions for miners.<sup>29</sup>

The new miners' leaders were very much concerned with politics—demanding a statutory eight-hour day and the abolition of coal tax and royalty rents and the like.<sup>30</sup> Many of them joined the Liberal Party, and some, like William Bailey, were elected to local councils, school boards, and other public bodies. The vigorous retail co-operative societies being formed in mining villages also provided openings for useful social work.

In the 1840s, it seems, the internal affairs of the Church, including controversies over organization and doctrine, absorbed the energies of many of the natural leaders of the men. In the 1860s, on the other hand, the struggle to establish the miners' rights took the place of doctrinal and organizational controversy. The colliery-owners were now the schismatics to be confounded. The Methodist causes<sup>31</sup> and the miners' association were seen by many as opposite sides of the same coin. To change the metaphor, to a man like William Brown, the Association was one aspect of the Church Militant. Thus, there was nothing wrong with holding a meeting in support of the union on a Sunday, because the meeting was a service: "the better the day, the better the purpose", as one of Brown's supporting speakers said at such a meeting in 1867.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>28</sup> It should be remembered that colliery-owners gave financial support to chapels (many of which were built by them), and that colliery officials were often members of Methodist congregations. See *Notts Coalfield* I, pp. 100-21.

<sup>29</sup> *Notts Miners* I, pp. 19-20.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>31</sup> Excluding, it seems, most Wesleyan chapels. The one at Hucknall, for example, was regarded as the "butties'" (i.e. sub-contractors') chapel.

<sup>32</sup> *Nottingham Review*, 26th April 1867.

By the 1870s, and still more in the '80s, this had changed. The change can best be explained by contrasting William Brown with William Bailey. Both were largely self-educated, both were emotional, intelligent, articulate and eloquent. But Bailey's outlook was far wider than Brown's, and he had a much greater range of interests. He acted as election agent for a Liberal Parliamentary candidate, and subsequently for radical candidates at local council elections; he sat on councils himself; he campaigned for greater working-class influence in the Liberal Party and for the adoption of working men as Liberal candidates; he took an active part in political controversy (for example, over the Irish Home Rule question); he engaged in controversy on fundamental issues with some other Trade Union leaders (principally Henry Broadhurst, M.P.), and he had far more to do with administration than Brown had. It is doubtless true that Bailey saw these various activities as complementary to his sincerely-held religious beliefs, but it would have been impossible for him to encompass all these within the framework of an evangelistic crusade.

Again, it is probably true to say that, with "Billy Brown's Union", the organization failed to keep pace with the evangelism, and many "converts" slid back at the first check to their aspirations.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, under Bailey's leadership, the Nottinghamshire Miners' Association was very much concerned with organization—with consolidating increases in membership. And even the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire association of the 1870s had about it a look of permanence which it had lacked ten years earlier, for much the same reason.

But this does not detract from the value of Brown's services to mining trade unionism. It is not too fanciful to say that he prepared the ground and sowed the seed for those who followed.

A. R. GRIFFIN.

[Dr. A. R. Griffin, B.A. is Special Lecturer in Industrial History and Industrial Relations in the University of Nottingham.]

<sup>38</sup> In his evidence presented to the Royal Commission on Trade Unions, Brown tones down very considerably the part he played as a propagandist. The reason for this is that trade union leaders feared that restrictive legislation might follow as a result of the Royal Commission's report, and they therefore decided to stress the "friendly society" function performed by their organizations, and their abhorrence of strikes except as a last resort.

---

The Methodist Conference, 1969, will meet in Birmingham, and the Wesley Historical Society's Annual Lecture will be delivered in Four Oaks Methodist church, Sutton Coldfield, on Thursday, 10th July, at 7-30 p.m. This year's lecturer is the Rev. Dr. William Strawson, whose subject will be "Methodist Theology, 1850-1950". The chair will be taken by Mr. Gerald Botteley, T.D.

The lecture will as usual be preceded by the annual business meeting, and the presence of those members who are attending Conference, and of others within reach, will be sincerely appreciated.

## A NOTE ON THE HISTORY AND DOCTRINE OF THE BURNHAM SOCIETY

IN his recent account of seventeenth-century discussions of eternal torment, Dr. D. P. Walker has shown how frequently Origenist ideas lay behind the objections made to the doctrine of Hell.<sup>1</sup> For the most part the element of Origen's system adopted is that of the ἀποκατάστασις τῶν πάντων, but some, such as Joseph Glanvill and Henry More, went further and advocated the doctrine of the pre-existence of souls.<sup>2</sup> Those who found the speculativeness of Origen's system attractive looked also to other exponents of esoteric doctrine, notably Jacob Boehme, and groups such as the Philadelphians could be advocates of a system containing Origenist and Boehmenist elements.<sup>3</sup> Both Boehme and Origen emphasize a pre-cosmic fall. Origen maintains that all souls were originally the same, and, as a result of a pre-cosmic fall, not only suffering and evil are to be accounted for, but also the hierarchy of being.<sup>4</sup> Boehme's doctrine holds that the fall of the angels brought about a material "chaos", which was then reconstructed as the world in which man was placed, according to the Genesis creation narratives, and in which he fell, as a result of a perverted use of his freedom submitting to the attraction of the devil.<sup>5</sup>

In the eighteenth century William Law is, perhaps, the most notable continuator of these traditions,<sup>6</sup> but they are also strongly upheld by the members of the Burnham Society. In view of the importance of some of those who were associated with the society, some account of its history and doctrine may be of value.

\* \* \*

The society was founded in 1773 at Burnham-on-Sea in Somerset as a local benefit society and for the study of "philosophy and polemical divinity" and "debate on the difference of religious opinions in brotherly love". The founder appears to have been Richard Locke, a native of Burnham, to whom we owe most of our information about the society.<sup>7</sup> The inspiration of the society was the college

<sup>1</sup> *The Decline of Hell* (London, 1964). In the index Dr. Walker lists twenty-one divines who were concerned to promote or attack Origenist ideas.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 134 f., 146 f. Cf. also Basil Willey's discussion of Glanvill (*The Seventeenth-Century Background* (London, 1953), pp. 170 ff.) and C. E. Whiting: *Studies in English Puritanism from the Restoration to the Revolution, 1660-1688* (London, 1931), pp. 294, 318.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the teaching of Mrs. Lead (Walker, *op. cit.*, pp. 218-30).

<sup>4</sup> e.g. Origen: *De Principiis*, I, v. 3. As Daniélou puts it (*Origen* (London, 1955), p. 206), for Origen "essence was determined by liberty".

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Boehme: *Aurora*, iv. 15; xvii. 2; *Mysterium Magnum*, xvii. 34.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. S. Hobhouse (ed.): *Selected Mystical Writings of William Law* (London, 1938), pp. 310-12.

<sup>7</sup> The basic source of information concerning the Burnham Society is in [R. Locke]: *The Pre-existence of souls and universal restitution considered as Scripture doctrines, extracted from the minutes and correspondence of the Burnham Society* (Taunton, 1798). There is a convenient short account in

founded at Trevecka by Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, with which at least one member of the society—John Henderson—had been associated for a time. The membership of the society increased at one point to 500, with the result that contributions to its discussions had to be limited to five-minute speeches, though many contributors provided written material in addition. As a result of disagreements in the society, it eventually ceased to be a forum for theological debate, and by 1798, when Locke published his extracts from the minutes and correspondence, it had ceased to be anything but a local benefit society.

Despite the large membership, the names of only a few of the participants have been recorded. Robert Hindmarsh,<sup>8</sup> the son of James Hindmarsh, one of Wesley's preachers, belonged for three years, before leaving to devote himself to the establishment of Swedenborgianism. A son of the Rev. William Chapman, of Bath, one of the lesser-known members of the Holy Club, was a member; John Fletcher of Madeley, who also had associations with Trevecka, contributed to the society's debates from time to time, and Wesley himself was in the habit of preaching in its rooms at Burnham.<sup>9</sup> Another contributor to the discussions was the Rev. Sir George Stonhouse, a member of the Holy Club and vicar of Islington from 1738 to 1741. In 1761 he published a work advocating universal restitution<sup>10</sup>—a position he had upheld in the Holy Club debates at Oxford. This gave much pain to Wesley, but he refrained from answering it because of the length of time it would take up.<sup>11</sup> Sir

F. M. Ward: *Supplement to Collinson's History of Somerset* (1939), pp. 16-19, which also prints the Burnham Society song, which is mainly concerned with its functions as a benefit club. Locke was also interested in schemes for the drainage of Sedgemoor, and some of his plans have been preserved amongst the records of Burnham parish church—but not, unfortunately, anything relating to the society.

<sup>8</sup> *Pre-existence*, p. 39, where it is stated that James Hindmarsh was a member, but this must be an error, as he is referred to as "High Priest of the society of Swedenborgers". Cf. article in *Dictionary of National Biography*.

<sup>9</sup> *Pre-existence*, p. iv. There are a few minor references to Locke in Wesley's *Journal*, e.g. (Standard edition) vi, p. 210; vii, pp. 115, 117, 248. The Burnham Society's opinion of Wesley is found in *Pre-existence*, p. 39. They applauded his piety, but were critical of his literal acceptance of biblical incidents, such as the sun standing still for Joshua, which they found hard to accept in one fully acquainted with Copernicanism. Wesley's habit of praying before preaching to keep off rain is ascribed to the same literalism and characterized as a "hobbyhysical error".

<sup>10</sup> Stonhouse's work was entitled *Universal Restitution a Scripture Doctrine*.

<sup>11</sup> Stonhouse was also the author of a Syriac grammar, and travelled widely to consult Syriac New Testament manuscripts. He also spent twelve years with Zinzendorf in Germany. For biographical details cf. *Pre-existence*, pp. 44-5; J. Nichols: *History and Antiquities of Canonbury-house in Islington* (1788), p. 52 (in his *Bibliotheca Topographica Britannica*, II (1790)). The note on Stonhouse in *Proceedings*, vii, pp. 44-6, points out that George Stonhouse has frequently been confused with the Rev. Sir James Stonhouse, M.D., rector of Great and Little Cheverell, but it fails to make clear that both Stonhouses, who were third cousins, held baronetcies. The *DNB* article on James Stonhouse wrongly attributes to him the authorship of *Universal Restitution*. The spelling of the surname varies between Stonhouse and Stonehouse.

Richard Hill, one of the champions of Calvinistic Methodism, is known to have been a member. A letter printed by Locke and signed J\*\*\* M\*\*\*N probably refers to John Mason, Assistant in Devon.<sup>12</sup>

The most extraordinary member of the society known to us is John Henderson. He was the son of Richard Henderson, one of Wesley's best preachers, who, after a period of itineration, opened a boarding-school at Hanham, near Bristol, and later ran a hospital for the insane in the same place.<sup>13</sup> John was born in 1757, when his father was in Ireland, and was eventually sent to Kingswood. Such was his proficiency, however, that at the age of twelve he was appointed to teach Greek in the Trevecka college, which he did for two years before returning to teach in his father's school at Hanham. In 1781 he went up to Pembroke College, Oxford, where he was renowned for his vast learning and curious mode of life. Cottle believed him to be fluent in Persian, Arabic, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Saxon, French, Spanish, Italian and German.<sup>14</sup> His favourite subjects were, however, "metaphysics, theology, medicine and chymistry", and he also engaged in occult speculation.<sup>15</sup> The *Arminian Magazine* noted that "his library was well stored with the magical and astrological books" of the seventeenth century, and he was known as a devotee of Boehme and Swedenborg.<sup>16</sup> He informed Priestley that he believed in "spirits, magic and witchcraft"; and Agutter, in his funeral sermon, added that Henderson also maintained a belief in "judicial astrology and the philosopher's stone".<sup>17</sup> A correspondent of the *Gentleman's Magazine* signing himself "Oxonienensis", recorded of his way of life at Oxford:

It is well known that he frequently dipped his sheets in cold water, and suffered himself to be pumped upon naked before he went into his bed. . . . I have also been told that he has taken large quantities of mercury to prove its effects. . . . Musk he took in immoderate potions. . . . His dress (and in particular his shoe-buckles) was singular.<sup>18</sup>

Henderson died prematurely in 1789 without having produced any major work. Wesley commented that "with as great talents as most men in England, [he] had lived two-and-thirty years, and done just nothing."<sup>19</sup>

\* \* \*

The only discussion of the society which survives is that printed by Locke in 1798 on the topics of the pre-existence of souls and universal restitution. The general thesis examined is laid down as "What has man been heretofore? What is he at present? and what

<sup>12</sup> Cf. John Wesley's *Letters* (Standard edition), v, pp. 99, 202.

<sup>13</sup> L. Tyerman: *Wesley's Designated Successor* (London, 1882), p. 45.

<sup>14</sup> J. Cottle: *Poems . . . with a monody to Jn. Henderson; and a sketch of his character* (Bristol, 1795), p. 112.

<sup>15</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, lvi (1786), p. 678.

<sup>16</sup> *Arminian Magazine*, xvi (1793), p. 143.

<sup>17</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, lix (1789), pp. 151, 288.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, lvi (1786), p. 557.

<sup>19</sup> *Journal*, vii, p. 477. Tyerman (*op. cit.*, pp. 147-8) notes a report that Henderson's manuscripts were accidentally burned by a servant.

will he be hereafter?"<sup>20</sup> The doctrine advocated is basically an Origenist one. Angels, it is argued, form a hierarchy in the spiritual world on the principles of the great chain of being, but some of these have fallen and have been allowed by God to assume a human form in order that they may be redeemed.

A piece of matter, compounded of the four elements, was united to a fallen angel, and with the addition of the Creator's breath, or spirit, became man in God's image, possessed of a living soul.<sup>21</sup>

The society was also acquainted with Swedenborg's views on angels, though members confessed to finding difficulty in separating "the whimsical from the excellent things" in his writings.<sup>22</sup> Swedenborg's doctrine has affinities with the Origenist and Boehmenist traditions, though he argues that "angels as to form are in every respect men", rather than suggesting that man is a fallen angel.<sup>23</sup> The picture of man as formed of matter, a fallen angel and the Creator's breath is elaborated by the notion that the soul (i.e. the fallen angel), when united to a body, assumes a trinitarian form. Thus man, as well as the properly human soul constituted by the fallen angel, possesses a "vegetative" and a "sensitive" soul.

The vegetative soul is produced out of the substance of the parents as a branch grows out of a tree, which is called trauduction.

The sensitive soul is propagated as a seed (not created) by the agency of bodily organs, and can in no wise differ from its parent body.

The human soul (considered as intellect) is a fallen spirit that feels a desire of being restored to happiness in another state, and to that end unites its will, in thought, to two other wills preparatory thereto.<sup>24</sup>

Because the co-existence of all these three elements is necessary to constitute a man, at death, when the first two elements are annihilated, the idea of man ceases until such time as the properly human soul is reunited to the "vegetative" and "sensitive" elements.

Some parallels may be discovered here with the nineteenth-century supporters of the conditional immortality theory. They likewise maintained a tripartite anthropology and stressed the resurrection of the body as the necessary completion of man.<sup>25</sup> Likewise both the Burnham Society and the conditionalists look for support to Pauline anthropology.<sup>26</sup> The particular tripartite scheme adopted by the

<sup>20</sup> *Pre-existence*, p. 5.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 38-9.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. E. Swedenborg: *Heaven and Hell*, para. 75. Signe Toksvig suggests that Swedenborg may have come across Boehmenist works during 1733-4, when he was in Leipzig and Dresden, but he was already familiar with the works of the Cambridge Platonists, which had strong links with Origenism, from his stay in England. Swedenborg, nevertheless, always maintained that he had never read Boehme. He was, however, familiar with Origen, and adopted similar principles of scriptural interpretation. (S. Toksvig: *Emanuel Swedenborg, Scientist and Mystic* (London, 1949), pp. 83, 203-4, 234).

<sup>24</sup> *Pre-existence*, p. 10.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. J. B. Heard: *The Tripartite Nature of Man* (London, 1866); E. White: *Life in Christ* (3rd edn., London, 1878).

<sup>26</sup> *Pre-existence*, p. 13. Cf. White, *op. cit.*; Heard, *op. cit.*

Burnham Society gave its protagonists the advantage of being able to assert both a creationist and a traducianist theory of the soul. It should be recognized that the driving-force behind the adoption of this type of anthropology—or should one say angelology?—is the problem of evil, as it was for Origen, and the advocacy of pre-existence is thought to produce a more satisfactory theodicy.

The first section of the discussion ends with a letter from John Henderson, in which he gives general support to the conclusions already arrived at, but adds further details. He suggests, for instance, that the number of men is dependent upon the number of angels wishing to be united to mortal bodies, which follows from a strict Origenist understanding. Animals, Henderson argues, were originally immortal, but lost this quality at the fall; but when man is restored to his "angelic" state, the higher animals will occupy the place which he vacates in the scale of being.<sup>27</sup>

The subsequent discussion considers some of the consequences of the doctrine of pre-existence. In order to counter the objection that, if the theory were true, infants would be born with fully-developed minds, it is maintained that they possess "vegetative" and "sensitive" souls in full, but an intellectual fallen spirit only in a seminal state. If the infant dies, therefore, before the intellectual fallen spirit bears fruit, there must be the offer of another trial, possibly in another state, for it must be remembered that, in terms of the theory, the reason for the incarnation of the fallen spirits is that they may be purged and redeemed. Fletcher of Madeley is quoted, perhaps a little unfairly, as giving some support to this position, for, he maintained, man as redeemed possesses a double righteousness—that of Christ and that made actual in his own life by sincere obedience through faith. In order that infants dying before maturity may possess this double righteousness, he has to suppose that the actualizing of righteousness through sincere obedience must occur in another state.<sup>28</sup> The protagonists of pre-existence maintained that it strengthened the Christian argument against Deism, in that it explained evil in terms of a pre-cosmic abuse of liberty, and thus obviated any necessity for a doctrine of divine decrees. Moreover, the doctrine equated existence in this world with an angelic purgatory, so it was able to look forward to a universal restoration, thereby doing away with Deist objections to the doctrine of eternal punishment.

But what is the place of Christ in this scheme? Although this life is the equivalent of an angelic purgatory, it can only be effectually so through the intervention of Christ, otherwise it would be

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, p. 18. This would appear to be an expression of that "temporalizing of the chain of being" which Lovejoy has shown to be a characteristic of eighteenth-century thought. (Cf. *The Great Chain of Being* (Harper Torchbooks edn., New York, 1960), pp. 242 ff.)

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, p. 21. Cf. Fletcher's arguments on the degrees of justification summarized in R. E. Davies and E. G. Rupp (ed.): *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, I (London, 1965), pp. 178-9.

possible for the fallen spirits to restore themselves by their own efforts. Christ effected a universal redemption by His death on the cross, and faith in this redemption is produced by the preaching of the gospel. It is this faith which is the cause of a man's union with Christ, and knowledge of that union produces love, obedience and eternal life.<sup>29</sup> But actual knowledge of Christ, although very desirable, is not strictly necessary, for the doctrine is held in conjunction with a strong Logos theology, which sees Christ as the light which lightens every man, which in Christian theology is expressed in various terms—reason, wisdom, grace, love, virtue, righteousness.

When the discussion moves more particularly to universal restoration, the usual arguments are adduced in favour of translating *αἰώνιος* as "pertaining to the age" rather than as "eternal". The discussion refers back to the debate on the topic in the Holy Club at Oxford between 1729 and 1735, where the Wesleys, Morgan and one or two others supported the importance of good works, Whitefield and James Hervey took a Calvinist line, Delamotte, Hall, Hutchins and Ingham "trimmed and became Moravians", and Stonhouse stood out for universal restitution.<sup>30</sup> The latter part of the pamphlet contains a summary of Stonhouse's views in question-and-answer form. Stonhouse apparently left the copyright of his works to the Society when he died in 1793, but the project of publishing a collected edition appears to have come to nothing, and Locke perhaps provides this summary in lieu of this.<sup>31</sup> On the topic of universal restoration there is little that is worthy of note, but he anticipates the attitude of many nineteenth-century divines to spiritualism by condemning "animal magnetism" as "witchcraft revived". He also shows himself strongly opposed to the slave trade.

As a postscript to the discussion, Locke notes the reactions of two people who had seen his account in manuscript—a clergyman who was an enthusiast for the mystical writers, and a young supporter of Toplady. In the course of this he criticizes Law for distorting Boehme's teaching, but concludes that since Law can be thought to support both pre-existence and universal restitution he ought not to be too severely condemned.<sup>32</sup>

The significance of the Burnham Society lies not so much in the esoteric theology which it propounded, but in its witness to the continuing interest in the Origenist tradition during the eighteenth century and to the extent to which Wesley and Fletcher and men of similar standing were involved with those who advocated such views. Moreover the interest of many of the members in Boehme shows the continuing influence of his works in the latter part of the eighteenth century. This may have the effect of undermining Hutin's suggestion that the revival of interest in Boehmenism in England in the

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, p. 43. The information presumably derives from Stonhouse.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 58-9.



early nineteenth century was the result of the spread of post-Kantian German philosophy rather than a recrudescence of a continuing interest in Boehme.<sup>83</sup> GEOFFREY ROWELL.

[The Rev. Dr. Geoffrey Rowell, M.A. holds a Hastings Rashdall studentship and assistant chaplaincy at New College, Oxford. His Ph.D. thesis was entitled "Death and the Future Life in the religious thought of Nineteenth-century England".]

<sup>83</sup> Serge Hutin : *Les Disciples anglais de Jacob Boehme* (Paris, 1960), p. 172. Wellek would probably also be opposed to Hutin, for he notes how Coleridge and Wordsworth had already developed ideas similar to those of the German Romantics even before Coleridge had read Schelling, and he ascribes this to a common background of the tradition of Neo-Platonism, mysticism such as that of Boehme, and pietism. (*Confrontations* (Princeton, 1965), p. 12.)

### MORE LOCAL HISTORIES

We acknowledge, with many thanks, the following handbooks and brochures which have been sent to us recently. We are always glad to have such evidence of the work of local historians, and they constitute a valuable addition to our Library. (See also foot of page 30.)

*The Story of the First 100 Years* (pp. 24)—Quex Road church, Kilburn : copies from Mr. Leonard S. Jones, 50, Heber Road, London, N.W.2 ; no price stated.

Lanchester (Co. Durham) centenary (pp. 36) : copies, price 5s., from Mr. E. Surtees, 4, West View, Lanchester, Co. Durham.

Doncaster, Balby Road, centenary (pp. 16) : copies, price 1s., from the Rev. Maurice H. Wright, 4, Bainbridge Road, Doncaster, Yorks.

Henlow (Herts), opening of new chapel (pp. 36) : copies from the author, Mrs. Julia Ann Harris, 5, Grosvenor Road, Baldock, Herts ; no price stated.

Lytham St. Annes, Park Street, centenary (pp. 16) : copies from the Rev. Alan Whittle, 4, The Serpentine, Lytham St. Annes, Lancs ; no price stated.

Richmond (Surrey), Kew Road, centenary (pp. 32) : copies from the Rev. Francis V. Burns, 38, Old Deer Park Gardens, Richmond, Surrey ; no price stated.

Sutton Bonnington centenary (pp. 24) : copies from Mr. Keith E. Crawford, Sutton Bonnington, Notts ; no price stated.

Seahouses (Northumberland) centenary (pp. 16) : copies from the Rev. Kenneth Alton, 37, Main Street, Seahouses, Northumberland ; no price stated.

*The Story of Methodism in Totley* (pp. 40), by John Dunstan—now out of print.

Arnold, Nottingham, opening of new chapel, brochure (pp. 8) and order of service (pp. 8) : copies from Mr. N. K. Abbott, 36, Rolleston Drive, Arnold, Nottingham ; no price stated.

Manaccan (Cornwall) centenary (pp. 12) : copies from the Rev. Thomas Shaw, The Manse, St. Keverne, Helston, Cornwall ; no price stated.

*Through Six Reigns* (pp. 62)—centenary of Victoria Avenue church, Newport (Mon) : copies from Mr. David Hughes, 37, The Moorings, Newport, Mon ; no price stated.

## “METHODISM DIVIDED”

IT is difficult to know how to be fair to Dr. Currie. His book<sup>1</sup> does not strike one so much as a work of history as a polemic against Anglican-Methodist union. One cannot deny Dr. Currie the right to oppose these proposals publicly, nor can one deny him the right to try and show that history is on the side of the argument. There have always been those in Methodism, and indeed in Wesleyan Methodism, who felt that somehow a magnificent re-creation of primitive Christianity in all its communistic, Spirit-filled glory had been changed into a set of institutions which reflected all too faithfully the social order which environed it. And if one is not content to say that the glory has departed, but determined to find a man or a group of men to make responsible for the change, the result is bound to resemble *Methodism Divided*.

Although he does not seem entirely aware of it, Dr. Currie's book stands in a tradition of Methodist historical writing which may be traced back at any rate as far as Elie Halévy, for whom Jabez Bunting was already the evil genius of Wesleyan Methodism. (The tradition goes back much farther, but I am thinking here of serious attempts to write the history of Methodism, not of books and pamphlets which were themselves part of the denomination's nineteenth-century history and growth.) Dr. Currie's approach perhaps resembles more closely that of Mr. E. R. Taylor's *Methodism and Politics* (1935), because, like Mr. Taylor, Dr. Currie sees his villain as perverting the "natural" line of Wesleyan Methodist development. Dr. Currie sees the issues more in social terms than in strictly political ones—the tendency of both Halévy and Taylor. He begins from the thesis that "the chapel is the central fact of Methodism" (p. 44), and explains the division of 1849 as the outcome of a struggle between the conflicting claims of an essentially lay chapel society on the one hand and of the Wesleyan ministry on the other. Dr. Currie regards Jabez Bunting (and not John Wesley) as the creator of this authoritarian ministerial caste, which he developed after 1800 when the Connexion seemed almost in danger of collapse under the weak leadership of Coke. Dr. Currie attacks Bunting very much in the style of Mr. E. P. Thompson in his excursus on Methodism in *The Making of the English Working-Class* (1963).

Bunting's excesses were so gross that few can have imagined them necessary to rectify the marginal weaknesses of Wesleyan organization misdirected by Coke and his fellow preachers. Nor could they claim that the feebleness of Coke's leadership demanded the vigour of Bunting's tyranny to redress the balance. (p. 37)

(Some would object more strongly than I do to the criticism of Coke, of whom we have still not got a properly critical study,<sup>2</sup> but Currie does not stop to make a very strong case at this point.) He concludes that "Bunting's rule and doctrine established a Wesleyan priesthood in conflict with the Wesleyan people" (p. 42). And so, to sketch in the later development of the book, the people revolted and set up the United Methodist Free Churches, only to be betrayed again and again by ecumenically-minded leaders who persuaded them step by step to return to something very like their former servitude in the present Methodist Church. (Sociologically, the book is weak on this later period: Dr. Currie falls back on a ministerial variation of the "conspiracy version" of history in order to explain the

<sup>1</sup> *Methodism Divided*, by Robert Currie. (Faber & Faber, pp. 348, 63s.)

<sup>2</sup> We understand that Mr. John A. Vickers's Wesley Historical Society Lecture on Dr. Coke is to be published by the Epworth Press later this year.—EDITOR.

lack of widespread opposition to the union movement, whereas, as I myself tried to show in *The Age of Disunity* (1965), it is precisely social change, and not a conspiracy, which explains both the rapid decline of modern Methodism and the comparative ease with which Methodists and Anglicans are coming to live with the idea of organic union.)

Dr. Currie's argument is one-sided: some of *Methodism Divided* reads like a Free Methodist Victorian polemic against the Wesleyan tradition. He exaggerates the extent to which Bunting played the tyrant, and does not attempt to probe into the religious basis of Bunting's attitude—his sense of himself as the conscientious custodian of John Wesley's system. Neither Wesley nor Bunting regarded the local chapel as the central feature of Methodism. Eighteenth-century Wesleyanism developed as a balanced system to which the religious societies (but not chapels) and itinerant ministers (deliberately moved round the Connexion as rapidly as possible) were equally necessary. Just as nineteenth-century Wesleyan reformers were entitled to argue that Wesleyanism should be "reformed", so Jabez Bunting was entitled to regard the stress which they put on the autonomy of the local chapel as a departure from the original system which he ought to resist. Currie—and here he is very like E. P. Thompson—does not approach these problems with the serious desire of the historian to understand both sides in the controversy. It is obvious that he has read what was written against Bunting; it is not obvious in his book (I am not, of course, speaking of his research) that he has read very much of what was written on Bunting's side. He is willing to see the Free Methodist case as the product of social forces, and to justify the demands that it made on the Wesleyan leadership; he ought to have been equally anxious to understand why so many Wesleyans, lay and itinerant, supported Bunting.

He certainly does not grasp the kind of religious institution which John Wesley had formed. The perfected Wesleyan was to live and work in the ordinary world without allowing his relation to God to be corrupted by civil society; he would attain the goal of Christian holiness within the Wesleyan society, but without withdrawing from the world. The itinerant's role was to provide the pastoral criticism of the society's members which was needed if they were not to fall into complacent emptiness. His role required authority—the right to expect obedience—and it was natural for John Wesley to see this authority as inherent in the pastoral office—as a power which he could delegate to his itinerants; Bunting's ministers could regard it as theirs by virtue of their "ordination".

The explanation of Bunting's "policy" is that he tried to maintain this system between 1800 and 1845. It was perhaps inevitable that by the 1840s his conservatism would seem to the laity more concerned with the authority of the ministry than with the holiness of the laity. But one should not fall into the error of thinking of him in purely political terms. His was a religious tragedy, not a political defeat. He did not pervert the natural line of Wesleyan history; he fought to maintain the eighteenth-century Wesleyan system. It was not that he did not appreciate the reformers' dislike of the power of the Wesleyan preachers, but he interpreted it as a wrong-headed—even sinful—refusal to accept the need for a divinely-appointed spiritual director with power to interfere in one's public and private life. In Wesley's system the class-leader was meant to keep relations between the itinerant and the members smooth, but the absolute authority over men's souls which was at the heart of the system was a power which Wesley meant to bequeath to the itinerants. If one takes

seriously what the Wesleyan ministry was trying to do—and I see no sign that Dr. Currie has glimpsed it at all—even the ruthlessness with which the itinerants acted in 1849 makes some sense. It was inevitable that "pastoral prerogative" be defended to the last ditch, for without it there might be some kind of Christianity, but there could not be Wesleyanism. Wesleyanism did not mean mutual spiritual direction, but ministerial spiritual direction. The "Pastorate" could not be reduced to the "preaching ministry" which was all that many of the reformers would tolerate. Bunting would have preferred to see the method vanish before he would have agreed to change it: this is the sense in which he was "the last Wesleyan", for his successors were obliged to change it.

I have more personal sympathy with the emotion which lies at the bottom of Dr. Currie's book than he might suppose. I have my own doubts about the theory of spiritual direction which was embedded in the Wesleyan system. I doubt if any corporate priesthood is capable of the dual task of mastering the doctrine of holiness and of fully understanding human nature, or, to put it simply, I doubt if any man is fit to be the spiritual director of another. What happened in the Wesleyanism of the early nineteenth century hardly proved Bunting's case. But it is time, nevertheless, that this persecution of Bunting should cease. Methodism deserves a more concentrated effort of understanding—a more genuine effort of historical imagination and sympathy—than it has received in the work of either Dr. Currie or Mr. Thompson. The more the pity, as I said when I briefly reviewed Mr. Thompson's book in these pages a few years ago,<sup>3</sup> that theirs is likely to remain the standard picture in the immediate future.

JOHN H. S. KENT.

<sup>3</sup> See *Proceedings*, xxxiv, pp. 188-9.—EDITOR.

We acknowledge, with many thanks, copies of the following publications, which have been placed in the Library:

*Methodist History*, October 1968.

*Cirplan*, Michaelmas 1968.

*The Rundle Adventure Story*, by John Travis (pp. 18).

*John Whiteley, 1806-1869*, by William W. H. Greenslade, M.B.E.—expanded version of a lecture to the Wesley Historical Society of New Zealand, delivered at New Plymouth, November 1968.

*A Roman Catechism, with a Reply Thereto*, by John Wesley; edited, with introductory notes, by Oliver A. Beckerlegge. (The Protestant Truth Society, London, pp. 88, 8s. 6d.)

*History of the Methodist Publishing House—Volume I, From its beginnings to 1870*, by James Penn Pilkington. (Abingdon Press, Nashville, Tennessee, USA, pp. 585, \$7.50.)

*The Diary of Richard Kay, a Lancashire Doctor, 1716-51*. Extracts edited by W. Brockbank and F. Kenworthy. (Manchester University Press, pp. 179.)

*History Today*, January 1969. This issue contains an article entitled "John Wesley and the Age of Reason", by Stuart Andrews.

*Die Kirchen der Welt, Band VI: Methodismus*, edited by Ernst Sommer. (Evangelisches Verlagswerk, Stuttgart, pp. 345, no price stated.) This book is in German, but British contributors include Wilfred Wade, Douglas Thompson, Douglas Blatherwick, Douglas Hubery, Edward Rogers and Max Woodward.

## METHODISTS AND THE RAILWAY

### The Story of Wolverton

**B**EFORE the railway came in 1838, Wolverton had a population of just over four hundred people. Besides building their Grand Central station, the London and Birmingham Railway Company built a large depot there: an engine-station (a very convenient place to change engines—half-way between London and Birmingham), erecting-shops for engines and carriages, engine- and tender-sheds, joiners' shops, an iron foundry, hooping furnaces, iron warehouses, a smithy, turning shops, offices, and a steam engine for driving machinery and pumping water. To supply the necessary labour, the directors "were obliged to collect at Wolverton a population from nearly every part of the country". So much so that by 1851 there were 2,070 people living at Wolverton. The story of this growth does not concern us here, and has been related elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

The growth of population brought with it problems similar to those faced in the new towns today. People having been persuaded to migrate to Wolverton for employment, it was necessary to persuade them to stay there. Thus the L. and B. Railway Company embarked upon a number of social undertakings. They built many houses in close proximity to the workshops (at the time of writing, some of these are being cleared for redevelopment). Other social services they provided included schools, churches and reading-rooms; they also founded the second Technical Institution in England.<sup>2</sup> Although the railway company naturally did much for the Church of England, they were not averse from helping other denominations, and Wesleyan Methodism received much material assistance from this source.

The earliest information available on the start of Methodism in Wolverton is that about 1839 services were first held in what were then known as North Cottages, occupied by railway employees. In a room of one of the cottages services were held and children were taught the Scriptures. (These dwellings have been demolished, and on their site now stand the very powerful steam hammers and rolling mills providing the steel for the railway rolling-stock.) The pioneers of this cause were: Mr. Dibbey, a foreman platelayer, who was a class-leader, Mr. John Rowland, Mr. Grills, a local preacher in Wolverton, and Mr. Grills, another local preacher from Wolverton. These people formed the first society class. Yet another local preacher, Mr. Grimes of Castlethorpe (a village near Wolverton) took great interest in Methodism at Wolverton.

About the year 1840 the railway company built a large room near the canal. It was intended that this should be used by the engineering

<sup>1</sup> P. S. Richards: "The Influence of Railways on the growth of Wolverton, Bucks" (*Records of Buckinghamshire*, vol. xvii (1962), pp. 115-26. This paper is based on a study of the minutes of various committees of the London and Birmingham Railway Company.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 119.

department. As this room was empty, Messrs. Dibbey (Dibbley?) and Grimes went round to get signatures to petition the company for use of this room for services on Sundays and for Sunday-school purposes. The petition was signed by many Methodists who were noted for their aggressive spirit and by many who subsequently became Methodists. At this time there were six members in the society, and their quarterly contribution to the circuit funds was 10s. 6d.<sup>3</sup>

At their meeting on 10th June 1842, the board of directors of the London and Birmingham Railway Company considered this petition, or memorial, from 95 inhabitants of Wolverton, praying for the use of the room as a Wesleyan chapel. It was immediately resolved that the memorialists be permitted to use it for the purpose stated, "so long as their arrangements are not found to interfere with the general object and convenience of the Company".<sup>4</sup>

The company had already shown a sympathetic interest towards the Church of England, having agreed to allow a room in the school to be used for the performance of divine service, and ordered that a return be made showing what interval of time the clerks and other servants of the company had for the purpose of attending divine service.<sup>5</sup>

Wolverton was not the only station along the route of the London and Birmingham line where the company gave material assistance to the church. At Rugby also permission was granted by the board of directors for the use of the waiting-room for the performance of divine service on Sundays.<sup>6</sup>

Meanwhile, from this initial start the cause at Wolverton prospered under the leadership of Mr. John Rowland, an acceptable local preacher and class-leader. A great help to the worshippers was the fact that the railway company allowed them the use of the room rent-free, and also provided a pulpit for the preacher. The other furniture the members of the society themselves had to provide. A certain Mr. Rainbow of Castlethorpe made forms and other items, some of which were in use in 1891.<sup>7</sup>

Mr. John Rowland was the first parish clerk to the Church of St. George the Martyr (the church "founded" by the L. and B. Railway Company). The Rev. George Wright (Weight?) was the first vicar of this parish, and his kind and brotherly spirit is reflected in his amicable relations with the Wesleyan Methodists. He invited the Wesleyan Sunday-school children to the vicarage to sing their Anniversary pieces, and also took the youngsters with his own

<sup>3</sup> *Methodist Recorder*, 7th January 1904. Personal communication to the author by Mr. L. Nicholls of Castlethorpe.

<sup>4</sup> *Minutes of the Board of Directors of the London and Birmingham Railway Company*. Entry dated 10th June 1842.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.* Entry dated 11th June 1841.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.* Entry dated 27th March 1840.

<sup>7</sup> Personal communication from Mr. Nicholls.

Sunday-school scholars for summer excursions to Oxford, Ashridge Park, and Blenheim House. Many times he entertained Wesleyan Sunday-school teachers and choir-members to supper in the vicarage. The society needed money, and 6d. per quarter (collected monthly) was paid for seat rents.

Until 1862 the society had to rely on the leadership of lay persons, with assistance from visiting ministers. By this time, however, the work of the society had grown sufficiently to merit the appointment of a resident minister, and the Rev. T. Tapley Short came to Wolverton. His class in theology for young local preachers was famous. The increased size of the society is reflected in the fact that £5 per quarter was being contributed to the circuit board.<sup>8</sup>

A contemporary account of the society in mid-Victorian times comes down to us. In 1864 the superintendent of the Newport Pagnell circuit reported :

. . . The Circuit contains the Wolverton Station [the name of the society on the plan] where among the numerous artisans employed there is work for one Minister among a class which has always well repaid our attentions. Our work, though arduous and increasing, is comparatively abortive for aggression and progress, simply on account of the infrequency of our preaching and pastoral visits. If impression be made, it fails in fruitfulness, for want of ministerial attention and pastoral care.

Our local agency, though not wanting in earnestness and devotion, is not equal to the emergency; if anything saves the Circuit from the reproach of forty-six years further dependence on the Home Mission fund—it must be under God, the introduction of another Minister. The people generally are poor, but Methodist preaching is popular and they come to hear when we attend them.<sup>9</sup>

Other and graver problems, however, faced this society in Wolverton. In 1869 the London and North Western Railway Company, formed by the amalgamation of the London and Birmingham with other companies, intimated that the old chapel was required for workshops. The Rev. J. Challenor Harrop was the last resident minister to conduct service there, and a local preacher, Mr. C. Inwood of Woburn Sands, preached the last sermon. In 1870 the L. and N.W. Railway Company suggested to the Methodists that they should buy land and erect a chapel in another part of the town. Needless to say, this idea hardly met with universal and unqualified approval! After some negotiation, the railway company erected another chapel, to be used on the same conditions, except that the society had to pay a nominal annual rent. The schoolroom was also built at the same time by the company at a low charge, using skirting from the old chapel. The new chapel was opened in April 1870, having been built in eight weeks, as the old premises had to be vacated as soon as possible. (The railway company needed the room, and possibly it was thought undesirable that a large number of people should enter

<sup>8</sup> *Methodist Recorder*, 7th January 1904.

<sup>9</sup> *Methodist Magazine*, lxxxvii (1864), p. 468.

private property on a Sunday. The opening services were conducted by the Rev. Luke H. Wiseman. The work had been done so fast that the chapel had to be lit with old-fashioned railway-carriage oil-lamps.<sup>10</sup> Soon afterwards the railway company gave to the Wesleyan trustees 10,000 cubic feet of gas for lighting the premises.<sup>11</sup>

At this time there were 222 scholars and 23 teachers in the Sunday school. In 1870 it was decided to have morning service in the chapel, and at the March Quarterly Meeting of the same year 34 members were returned. From 1870 to 1880 there were many seasons of spiritual blessing under the ministry of the Revs. Thomas P. Spencer, John C. Trafford, and George Beebee. A gallery was erected in the chapel in 1883 at a cost of £50. During these years Wolverton was without a resident minister; in 1880 the minister removed to Woburn Sands, and the town, growing rapidly, had no resident minister until 1888. Despite the railway, transport was still a problem for ministers, as they either went on foot or by horse or horse-and-carriage—except, of course, between railway stations. Representations to the Quarterly Meeting and the District Synod were made, asking for the superintendent, then residing at Newport Pagnell, to be transferred to Wolverton and the name of the circuit changed accordingly.<sup>12</sup>

To the delight of the Wolverton Methodists, this change was effected in 1888, when the Rev. John Harris came to reside in Wolverton and the circuit of which he was superintendent was re-named the Newport Pagnell and Wolverton circuit. Five years later it became the Wolverton circuit. Under Mr. Harris's ministry many souls were blessed, and the cause prospered.

In January 1889 a committee met to consider enlarging the chapel on the adjoining available land. Should there be a new chapel, or should the existing one be enlarged? The new superintendent, the Rev. Arthur R. Humphreys, secured from the railway company a fifty-year lease of the site at a nominal rental of £1 per annum. A trust was formed on the lines of the Model Deed. Backed by a body of enthusiastic Methodists, and with the approval of Dr. Henry J. Pope, the secretary of the Connexional Chapel Department in Manchester, who visited Wolverton to see for himself, a scheme for a new chapel was launched. The plans, for what was described as "one of the prettiest chapels in Methodism", were drawn up by Mr. Ewen Harper of Birmingham, and the scheme itself, to cost £2,400, was said to be "the most audacious in the history of chapel-building". After much careful thought and prayer, the decision to go ahead was taken in August 1890. In December of that year the bank account showed a credit balance of £40 18s. 3d. The society worked hard under the leadership of the Rev. A. R. Humphreys to collect the

<sup>10</sup> *Methodist Recorder*, 7th January 1904, and personal communication from Mr. Nicholls.

<sup>11</sup> Information supplied by the late Rev. Thomas P. Mayhew, sometime superintendent of the Wolverton and Bletchley circuit.

<sup>12</sup> D. M. Coleman: *The Newport Pagnell Methodist Church, 1815-1965*, p. 7.



money required. The contract was given to Mr. Burden of Chipping Norton, and during building operations the services were held in a large dining-hall lent by the carriage superintendent, Mr. C. A. Park, who was very interested in the scheme.

Saturday, 2nd April 1892 was a red-letter day. On that date Mr. Park laid the foundation-stone of the new chapel in the presence of Dr. T. B. Stephenson, Dr. H. J. Pope, and the Revs. Nehemiah Curnock, Ebenezer Moulton, A. R. Humphreys and George Davies. Other stones were laid by Messrs. W. Harvey (the oldest representative of Wolverton Methodism), R. Stevens, H. Aldred, G. Williams, C. R. Batteson, G. Copperwheat, G. Holes, Finbrow, Ewen Harper and J. T. Newman (on behalf of the Sunday school). Over £500 was raised in the space of sixteen months. On 11th November 1892 the new chapel was opened by Dr. J. H. Rigg. Presumably this society never had a wealthy member: most were artisans employed in the railway works, and made great sacrifices to pay off the debt. The Rev. Elisha M. Shearn secured connexional aid, and during the course of his three-year ministry £1,000 was raised, and the debt was cleared during the ministry of the Rev. Joseph Bentley. By 1904 there were 200 members in ten society classes, and there were 280 scholars in the Sunday school.<sup>13</sup>

In conclusion, however, it must not be thought that the success of this cause was entirely due to the help given by the railway authorities. It would be wrong, of course, to deny the assistance and encouragement which came from them. Some measure of the local enthusiasm can be gained from the fact that in 1907 the Wolverton Wesleyans re-equipped their schoolroom. The whole of the building was redecorated, re-lighted, and re-seated, and the various members themselves supplied not less than three-quarters of the work involved. It is estimated that 6,674 hours of voluntary work had been put in by 71 keen church-members.<sup>14</sup> Surely the lesson from this is that when church and industry work in harmony the extra resources the Church receives help it in its aims considerably; and, knowing that industry exists to make a profit, presumably they too expected to benefit from the help they had given to the Church. PETER S. RICHARDS.

AUTHOR'S NOTE—I am indebted to the Archivist in charge of British Rail Board's Historical Records for permission to quote from documents in the Board's possession; to Mr. L. Nicholls, who wrote *Historical Notes of Wolverton and District* in a bazaar handbook, 1891; to Mr. F. G. Doubleday, at whose suggestion this paper was written; and to Mr. D. S. Gilbertson, Tutor Librarian, Wallasey College of Further Education, for reading the MS. and giving me his constructive comments. P.S.R.

[Mr. P. S. Richards, M.A., Dip.Ed. is head of the Department of Commerce and Liberal Studies at the Wallasey College of Further Education, and is the author of several papers on Education, Railways, Town Growth and Industrial Location.]

<sup>13</sup> *Methodist Recorder*, 7th January 1904, and personal communication from Mr. Nicholls.

<sup>14</sup> S. F. Markham: *The Nineteen Hundreds in Stony Stratford and Wolverton*, p. 58.

## NEWS FROM OUR BRANCHES

THE summer outing of the **Bristol** Branch was held on Saturday, 1st June 1968, when members visited three chapels (each of eighteenth-century origin) in the Paulton circuit—Bishop Sutton, Clutton, and Paulton. Local co-operation was excellent. Associations with John Wesley, Alexander Mather, John Pawson and Jabez Bunting (who was married at Clutton on 23rd August 1837) were recalled.

The autumn meeting was held at the New Room, Bristol, on Saturday, 26th October, when Dr. Maldwyn Edwards lectured on John Fletcher. It needs scarcely to be said that with such a lecturer and such a subject, the occasion was both inspiring and instructive. Full historical details connected with these meetings appear in the Branch *Bulletins*.

*Bulletin* : Nos. 4 and 5 received.

*Secretary* : Mr. G. E. Roberts, 21, Ormerod Road, Stoke Bishop, Bristol, 9.

*Membership* : 53.

THE Annual Meeting of the **Cornish** Branch was held at Wesley chapel, Camborne, on Monday, 27th May 1968, with Mr. F. L. Harris in the chair. This was followed by a lecture, given by Mr. T. R. Harris, on the life and work of Dr. George Smith of Camborne (1800-68), a prominent industrialist and Wesleyan layman. This lecture is issued as an Occasional Publication of the branch, and can be obtained from the secretary for 2s. 6d. Mr. G. Pawley White, one of the branch's vice-presidents, who is Grand Bard of the Gorsedd of Cornwall, presided.

The autumn meeting was held at Fore Street, Redruth, on Thursday, 3rd October, when Mr. F. L. Harris lectured on "The Methodist Contribution to Elementary Education in Cornwall in the Nineteenth Century". This was arranged in connexion with Exeter University extension lectures. Publication will follow in due course.

*Journal* III. No. 1 has been received, and also Publication No. 13.

*Secretaries* : Rev. Baynard P. Evans, Orchard Meadow, Tremarne Close, Feock, Truro, Cornwall.

Rev. Sidney O. Dixon, The Manse, Mullion, Helston, Cornwall.

*Membership* : 330.

THE **East Anglia** Branch held its spring meeting at Long Stratton, Norfolk, on Saturday, 27th April 1968. Miss R. Walker spoke on the struggle to establish Methodism in Ketteringham (near Norwich) in the 1920s. In spite of strong opposition from the local incumbent and others, a wooden chapel was erected and used until 1943, when, renewal of the lease being refused, the building was removed to Long Stratton, where the branch meeting fittingly took place.—The autumn meeting was held on Saturday, 2nd November at Wymondham. The Revs. H. J. Martin and L. H. Sugden presented "A Pictorial Survey of Methodism's East Anglia District".

*Bulletin* : Nos. 19 and 20 received.

*Secretary* : Mr. W. A. Green, 60, Brian Avenue, Norwich, NOR 28 C.

*Membership* : 110.

THE 1968 spring meeting of the **Lancashire and Cheshire** Branch was held at Hartley Victoria College, Manchester, on Saturday, 27th April. The Rev. Henry D. Rack sketched the story of Methodist ministerial training in Manchester; and after tea, members inspected some of the college treasures—Hugh Bourne's journals, James Everett's diaries, and letters of Dr. Adam Clarke.

On Saturday, 15th June, a pilgrimage to the Bourne country was led by Mr. E. A. Rose and Dr. and Mrs. H. Andrews. After a visit to Cloud, the oldest Primitive Methodist chapel in existence, the party were joined by some members of the West Midlands branch, and went on to Bemersley, HARRISEHEAD, Mow Cop and Tunstall. The last call was at the grave of Hugh Bourne at Englesea Brook. "An enjoyable and instructive time."

The Annual Meeting was held at the Central Hall, Oldham Street, Manchester, on Saturday, 26th October. The secretary reported that membership had for the first time reached 100, and there were now 100 items in the Branch Library! After the business meeting, the Rev. Fred C. Gill gave a talk on places associated with John Wesley in the two counties.

*Bulletin*: Nos. 8 and 9 received.

*Secretary*: Mr. E. A. Rose, 18, Glenthorne Drive, Ashton-under-Lyne,

*Membership*: 100. [Lancs.]

MEMBERS of the **Lincolnshire** Branch met at Coningsby at the end of June 1968, when Mr. J. Courtney Marshall gave an excellent account of Methodist origins.—The Annual Meeting took place at St. Giles's Methodist church, Lincoln, on Saturday, 5th October. Mr. Terence R. Leach spoke on Robert Carr Brackenbury; the substance of this lecture will be published in a forthcoming issue of the Branch *Journal*.

*Journal*: Vol. I Parts 10 and 11 received.

*Secretary*: Mr. William Leary, Woodlands, Riseholme, Lincoln.

*Membership*: 114.

THE summer and autumn meetings of the **London** Branch were held at Wesley's Chapel. For the former, members joined the parent Society's gathering on Wednesday, June 20th for the annual Tea and Lecture. Many members took advantage of the kind invitation to tea, and used the interval between tea and lecture to visit that part of the Conference Exhibition which was arranged in the Board Room of the Epworth Press.—On Saturday, 5th October, the Annual Meeting was held in the afternoon. This was followed by tea and an evening lecture by Mr. John A. Vickers on Dr. Coke's relationship with the Church of England.

*Bulletin*: Nos. 6 and 7 received.

*Secretary*: Mr. J. A. Pendry Morris, 118, Elgar Avenue, Tolworth,

*Membership*: 65. [Surbiton, Surrey.]

ON Saturday, 25th May 1968, the **North-East** Branch met at Bethel, North Road, Durham. Miss Janet Smith, of the County Record Office, gave an excellent talk on the preservation of circuit records, bringing with her many interesting exhibits from the County Archives.—The autumn meeting was held on Saturday, 5th October, at Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne. The Rev. Kenneth L. Waights presided, and a paper entitled "Class and Denomination—or, What happened to English Religion from 1790 to 1830?" was read by Dr. W. R. Ward (Professor of History at Durham University).

The newly-appointed Chairman of the Darlington District (the Rev. E. Lincoln Minshull) has accepted co-presidency of the branch.

*Bulletin*: Nos. 10 and 11 received.

*Secretary*: Miss C. M. Bretherton, 6, The Craiglands, Tunstall Road,  
Sunderland, Co. Durham.

*Registrar* (who despatches the *Bulletin* and receives the subscriptions):

Mr. Norman Moore, 3, Martello Gardens, Cochrane Park,

*Membership*: 76. [Newcastle upon Tyne.]

ON Saturday, 17th February 1968, members of the **Plymouth and Exeter** Branch met at The Mint, Exeter, when an address on "Charles Wesley, Hymnographer" was delivered by the Rev. John W. Young.—The autumn meeting was held at North Molton. After visiting the spot where John Wesley preached, members proceeded to the chapel to hear Mr. Richard Huxtable speak on early Methodism in that village. Notes compiled by Sister Joan Mayle are provided in the Branch *Proceedings*.

*Proceedings*: Vol. II, Nos. 1 and 2 received; also Index to Vol. I [a very good idea; other branches, please note!—EDITOR].

*Secretary*: Mr. W. R. West, Warboro, 8, Redvers Road, Exeter.

*Membership*: 100.

ON Saturday, 25th May 1968, about fifty members and friends of the **South Wales** Branch visited the New Room, Bristol, and under the guidance of the warden (the Rev. A. J. Gedye) toured the museum and chapel. After a talk on the New Room by Dr. Maldwyn Edwards, tea was served.

*Bulletin*: None issued since No. 6, previously reported.

*Secretary*: Rev. W. Islwyn Morgan, 15, King Edward Road, Brynmawr, [Brecon].

THE spring meeting of the **West Midlands** Branch was held on Saturday, 16th March 1968. About twenty members joined in a tour of Cradley and the surrounding district under the leadership of Mr. David Eades. The Annual Meeting followed. The *Bulletin* contains historical notes on the places visited.

For the summer pilgrimage, members joined with the Lancashire and Cheshire branch to visit some of the Primitive Methodist sites on the Cheshire—Staffordshire border. [See the Lancashire and Cheshire branch report on the opposite page.—EDITOR.]

ON Saturday, 19th October, the autumn meeting was held at the Central church, Spring Head, Wednesbury, when the speaker was the Rev. J. Leonard Waddy. His subject was topical: "The Wednesbury Riots". An excellent display of Wesleyana was arranged by local Methodists.

*Bulletin*: Vol. I Part 8 received.

*Secretary*: Mrs. E. D. Graham, B.A., B.D., 34, Spiceland Road, [Northfield, Birmingham, 31].

THE spring meeting of the **Yorkshire** Branch took the form of a visit to the North Riding on Saturday, 18th May 1968. The first call was at Yarm, with its old octagonal chapel, opened in 1764—the oldest octagon to have been in continuous use. From Yarm members took the road to Osmotherley, where we have one of the oldest Methodist chapels in the world—opened in 1754, and still in use. After tea a visit was made to the parish church and the little Roman Catholic church, then on to Hawnbly in the Ryedale circuit. Annual Meeting business was dealt with during the tea interval at Osmotherley.

The autumn meeting was held on Saturday, 12th October, at Great Horton, Bradford. The Rev. Kenneth Tibbetts spoke on "Benjamin Ingham and the Sandemanians".

*Bulletin*: Nos. 12 and 13 received.

*Secretary*: Rev. W. Stanley Rose, 1, York Road, Knaresborough, Yorks.  
*Membership*: 105.

## BOOK NOTICES

*Susanna Wesley and the Puritan Tradition in Methodism*, by John A. Newton. (Epworth Press, pp. 216, 35s.)

Humanly speaking, it is astonishing that Wesleyan Methodism ever came into existence, considering it to have been the creation of the fifteenth child of a twenty-fifth child, and that it owed so much to both of them. This book is a reminder of Methodism's debt to Susanna, the youngest of Dr. Annesley's large family, and to the spiritually-disciplined home in which she brought up her own sons and daughters in the traditions of the Church of England and the high Puritanism in which she herself had been nurtured. Long before the rules of the Holy Club had earned for its members the sobriquet "Methodist", Susanna herself had lived by rule. As she wrote to her son Samuel, "I would advise you to throw all your business . . . into a certain *method* . . . I'll tell you by what *rule* I used to observe . . .". This, together with her later acceptance of the Methodist movement and her commendation of lay preaching, justifies her commonly-accepted title "The mother of Methodism". Dr. Newton sees her chief significance as the living link between the Puritanism of the seventeenth century and the Methodism of the eighteenth.

The short title of the book leads us to expect an autobiographical study, but the full title places a limit on the present study. Dr. Newton's thesis is that Susanna was "the central figure in the transmission of the Puritan tradition to the life of Methodism", a contention which he fully proves. The author has made a valuable contribution to eighteenth-century Church history in indicating the course of this particular transmission. Our only regret is that we still lack a definitive life of Susanna Wesley, for so much of the material for it is already contained, or indicated, in this book. Yet even within the limits Dr. Newton has himself set, a portrait of Susanna emerges which is as satisfying and as attractive, and presumably as life-like, as the portrait which forms the frontispiece.

Susanna's father and her husband are given a chapter each in this book, but the delineation of each of them tells us something important about Susanna the daughter and the wife. Chapters II and IV-VIII describe her upbringing, her organization of Epworth rectory, her spirituality, and her (almost certain)<sup>1</sup> authorship of *Some Remarks on a Letter from the Reverend Mr. Whitefield to the Reverend Mr. Wesley, from a Gentlewoman to her Friend*, in which she emerges as a patroness of Methodism.

When we come to the author's claim that Susanna was the link between Puritanism and Methodism, it is necessary to underline certain things that he writes—that she was, at one and the same time, an Anglican, a Puritan, and a Methodist. She did not surrender her Puritanism when, at the age of 13, she left Nonconformity for the Church of England: she is a saint of the universal Church. It is important to note these points, for, when all is said and done, Epworth Rectory and Little Gidding have a common source of origin, whilst Puritanism and Methodism are themselves part of the age-long ascetic movement in the Christian Church—standing within it, and yet over against it, exactly in the way that Dr. Newton (p. 16) sees them in relation to the Church of England. By his treatment of Susanna's evangelical experience, in 1739, Dr. Newton raises in our minds the same kind of questions that her son John's Aldersgate Street experience raises; but can his claim be sustained that when Susanna joined the Methodist

<sup>1</sup> See article by Dr. Frank Baker in *Proceedings*, xxxv, p. 68.—EDITOR.

society late in life she only then recaptured the assurance and joy of the Christian life which her father had known? Is her reported conversation with John (p. 196) really a sufficient basis on which to make such a claim, considering her ill-health (p. 176) and the whole tenor of her past life?

One small correction: John Wesley was baptized plain "John" in 1703. John Benjamin was his infant brother, who was born and died in 1701.

THOMAS SHAW.

*Susanna, Mother of the Wesleys*, by Rebecca Lamar Harmon. (Hodder & Stoughton, pp. 175, 25s.)

Mrs. Harmon, wife of Bishop Nolan B. Harmon of the American Methodist Church, has written a clear, fresh and sympathetic account of Susanna Wesley. She modestly casts herself in the role of "story-teller" rather than historian, but she has painstakingly sifted the biographical data, notably in her account of Hetty Wesley's tragic love affair. Here she draws on the unpublished researches of that Sherlock Holmes of Methodist historiography, Dr. Frank Baker, who has established convincingly the paternity of Hetty's first child.

The attractiveness of the book, which traverses similar ground to that covered by Dr. Maldwyn Edwards's *Family Circle*, though not in the same depth, is increased by some lively material from the eighteenth-century background, and by a series of pen-and-ink drawings which embellish each chapter-heading. There is little new in the way of interpretation, but the essential Susanna and her profound influence on John and John's Methodism are all lucidly conveyed.

Mrs. Harmon deals only cursorily with Susanna's theology and devotion, and hence perhaps her judgement that "by no stretch of the imagination could Susanna ever have been called a mystic . . . common sense was always dominant, especially in her religion" (p. 19). That verdict begs several important questions, and ignores the real strain of mystical piety in Susanna which Dr. Martin Schmidt's *John Wesley: a Theological Biography* has so fully documented.

Mrs. Harmon's interpretation of Susanna's eighteenth-century use of English is not always persuasive. Susanna's use of "particular" (p. 79) surely signifies not "unseemly", but "odd, singular"! "Kelstein" (pp. 88, 111, 119), which sounds like the name of some Moravian settlement, should be "Kelstern" (a village near Louth, Lincolnshire). "Kezzy" is misspelt on page 114. But these are mostly minor blemishes. Mrs. Harmon remains a good guide both to Susanna and to her fascinating family for the general reader who wants an introduction to them.

JOHN A. NEWTON.

*John Wesley and the coming Comprehensive Church*, by Frederick Hunter. The Wesley Historical Society Lectures, No. 34. (Epworth Press, pp. 112, 15s.)

Within the past decade we have had two important books tracing the influence on John Wesley's churchmanship. In his erudite work on *John Wesley and the Christian Ministry*, Albert B. Lawson dealt fully with the 1784 ordinations, but the reader of this book will be fascinated to see how two scholars dealing with the same data can come to widely different conclusions. In similar fashion, Robert C. Monk, in tracing the sources of Wesley's thinking, heavily emphasized his debt to the Puritans (*John*

*Wesley: his Puritan Heritage*), whilst Frederick Hunter draws much-needed attention to Wesley's enormous debt to the Non-jurors and to wider Catholic sources. The author, in fact, whilst cognisant of previous writing in this field, shows an individual bent of mind, and comes to his own distinctive conclusions.

He desires to show that both before and after his evangelical conversion John Wesley sought the unity and holiness of the catholic and apostolic Church. His method is to trace chronologically the development of his thinking on these subjects through certain definitive periods of his life. He compresses so much disciplined research into such small space that the reader marvels that so much fresh material has been uncovered and so succinctly expressed. In a book with many nuggets of gold one may specially single out the convincing way in which Mr. Hunter has shown John Wesley's indebtedness, through the Non-jurors and Bishop Deacon in particular, to the apostolical constitutions and canons. The author traces the influence of the Moravians on John Wesley following his conversion, and then the effect of Independency and Presbyterianism on his conception of the ministry and the episcopacy. After considering Wesley's readiness to secure ordination for some of his preachers from a Greek Orthodox bishop in the interests of the work, the author deals with the plans of Benson and Fletcher on ordination, before coming to the vexed question of John Wesley's own setting-apart of Coke and Asbury as superintendents. No previous writer has so illumined the word "superintendent" in Wesley's use of this term, nor shown how such a word would be immediately acceptable to Lutherans, to the Scottish Presbyterians, and to French Protestants. Always, as Frederick Hunter clearly argues, Wesley bore in mind the need for unity amongst all Christians with a live Trinitarian faith. This is the justification for the book's title. He wanted a comprehensive Church, animated, as he would say, by a catholic spirit, and springing out of universal love, faith, and unity, and a re-defined episcopacy. It is still "the coming Church", but now more clearly we can see "the shape of things to come".

The author has compressed the reading and research of a lifetime into small compass. But let none judge it by its size. It is a first-class study of Wesley's ecumenicity and the sources of his thinking on the Church. This is really an outstanding contribution to the lengthening list of Wesley Historical Society annual Lectures, and the Society is greatly in the author's debt.

MALDWYN L. EDWARDS.

---

In addition to the "local histories" listed on page 16, the following also have been received. A further list will appear in our next issue.

*A Century of Light*—Centennial Survey of Thames Methodist church, New Zealand, by Hazel P. Harris (pp. 44); no price stated.

Cheshunt College, Cambridge, centenary (pp. 26): copies, price 6s., from the College. Historical section by S. C. Orchard, M.A.

Higher Carnkie (Cornwall), opening of new schoolroom (pp. 8): copies from the Rev. J. Rodney Bickle, 11, Claremont Road, Redruth, Cornwall; no price stated.

New Malden centenary, by C. J. W. Grieveson (pp. 24): copies from the Rev. Ernest R. Richardson, 26, Linkside, New Malden, Surrey; no price stated.

## NOTES AND QUERIES

1192. WESLEY TABLE-CLOTHS.

Note No. 1179 on "A Wesley Table-cloth" (*Proceedings*, xxxvi, p. 159) has produced two interesting replies. The Rev. A. J. Gedye, warden of the New Room, Bristol, writes to say that there is a cloth of similar description at the New Room, and quotes the entry in the register, as made by the late Dr. Frederic Platt:

*The John Wesley Communion Table-cloth.* Apparently hand-woven—the pattern consists of medallion portraits of Wesley with names under each—Rev. J. Wesley A.M. In one top corner of each medallion are herald trumpets, and in the other corner a wine cup, and in the two bottom corners a cross can be seen. Round the cloth is a border of vine leaves, grapes, and the wine cup again.

There is also a note about the donor, etc.:

The cloth is the gift of Miss Mary Hall, Bide-a-wee, Granby, Nottingham (by favour of the Rev. Dr. Ferrier Hulme, in 1930). It was given to Miss Hall's aunt by a Mrs. Thompson Brewster, a member of the Church of England, whose husband, a Nottingham Solicitor, was probably of Methodist ancestry.

The second comment comes from our West Midlands branch, reminding us of an article which appeared in their *Bulletin* in January 1967. This article is reprinted below.

EDITOR.

The Wesley Historical Society Exhibition in Wolverhampton during Conference [1966] included a damask tablecloth which illustrated a passage from the Victorian novel *Concerning Isabel Carnaby*, by Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler, a native of Wolverhampton. In chapter 11 there is a description of "Mrs. Seaton's best tablecloth, a specimen of the finest and most silky looking damask, with an elegant border composed of arum lilies, and an effigy of John Wesley in the centre".

The cloth, owned by Mrs. A. H. Lenton of Sutton Coldfield, is Yorkshire in origin, having been woven in the early years of the nineteenth century at Brompton near Northallerton, by a linen manufacturer named Pattison and his son John. Another one, woven by the Pattisons, was owned by the Yeoman family of Osmotherly. The cloth displayed at the Exhibition was in Yarm, Yorks, during most of the nineteenth century, and then in Thorpe, near Whitby. It has always been in the possession of members or connexions of the same family. It is about 70 inches square, in excellent condition, with the head of John Wesley in the centre and the words "Revd. John Wesley M.A.". The pattern around the portrait consists of grapes, vine leaves and a Communion cup.

The publicity given to this by the Exhibition has resulted in information about other damask tablecloths. Miss Orlow Austen writes from Brede in Sussex describing one in her possession which seems very like the Brompton one. Her great-great-uncle, the Rev. Thomas Dove, was given it by his mother (a North-country woman) when he went to Sierra Leone in 1836. Used both in West Africa and later in Sussex as a Communion cloth, it is now very fragile.

Miss Hood Williams of Lowestoft also possesses a similar cloth which she inherited from her grandfather, the Rev. W. R. Rogers, who was given it when he was in the Black Country. This, added to the fact that Mr. Rogers married a Miss Mary Ann Thorneycroft of Wolverhampton (a relative of Ellen T. Fowler), makes it seem possible that this is the original of the one mentioned in the novel.



Miss F. M. Maycock of the Cambridge Methodist church, Leeds, writes describing a cloth presented to that church. It is about 85 inches square, and bears John Wesley's portrait 49 times in panels, each panel with "Rev. John Wesley, A.M." underneath, and with a border design having two angel trumpeters and two crosses in the corner. The panels all face the same way, and there is no centre-piece to the cloth, but a border design of grapes, vines, chalices and what look like pomegranates. Everything, in fact! No history of this is known, except that it was among the effects of Liversedge Kettlewell of Leeds, whose father, William, had been closely associated with the former Lady Lane chapel in Leeds.

Mrs. Joseph Dowell, now of Cradley Heath, was given, 30 years ago, a cloth about 18 inches square containing 4 panels obviously similar in picture and inscription to the Leeds cloth. The Rev. Joseph Dowell writes "The cloth itself was evidently cut from a damask tablecloth, probably the only piece in a reasonable state of preservation."

MARY LENTON.

1193. REBECCA FREEMAN, née MORGAN.

A letter of Henry Wharton dated 21st February 1850, now in the archives of the Methodist Missionary Society (Gold Coast Inward Correspondence) gives the full name of Thomas Birch Freeman's third wife—a detail I have not found in published writings on Freeman. Wharton writes simply: "You must have heard ere this of Mr Freeman's Marriage to his Maid Servant—Rebecca Morgan—a black Woman". As stated in *Proceedings*, xxxiv, p. 6, the date of this marriage was 8th December 1849. It would be interesting to know how much information about the last Mrs. Freeman has survived in oral tradition or otherwise in Ghana.

PAUL ELLINGWORTH.

1194. OUR BRANCH SOCIETIES.

Just over ten years ago—on 11th October 1958—at the home of the Rev. and Mrs. J. J. Perry in Norwich, the East Anglian branch of the Wesley Historical Society was formed. Since then, ten other branches have sprung up in various parts of the country, though there are still areas not yet covered. The element of spontaneity and the local initiative which have characterized the movement have been both its strength and its weakness. It is perhaps time to take stock, and to ask such questions as: What purposes should a branch serve? Is it more important to cater for existing enthusiasm than to stimulate new interest? Are there ways in which the latter might be more effectively attempted? Is there an ideal format for a branch bulletin, and how should its contents be related to these *Proceedings*? Could we be doing more in the branches towards the urgent task of preserving local church records? Are closer links with other local historical societies, or with extra-mural classes in local history, desirable and possible? Above all, are we too complacent about what has been achieved to plan imaginatively for the future?

JOHN A. VICKERS.

1195. METHODIST CLASS MEETINGS.

Mr. Peter Mackenzie, of 8, Royds Avenue, Morecambe, Lancs, writes:

I am writing a thesis on the class meeting in early Methodism, and am particularly anxious to examine any class-papers prior to 1800. Also of great value would be lists of society-members, sub-divided into classes or bands. I should be very grateful to know the whereabouts of such papers, and should be happy to pay the cost of copying and postage.