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# Proceedings OF THE Wesley Historical Society

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Volume XLVI

October 1987

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## EARLY METHODIST VISIONS OF THE TRINITY

(continued from page 44)

**N**EXT can be considered some precedents for Trinitarian visions and possible literary sources for the Methodist examples. Those with a specialised knowledge of the history of mysticism could probably throw more light on this matter, but here are some examples.

Dante, at the end of the *Paradiso* has a vision of the Trinity in the form of three circles appearing in "deep light". The first is reflected in the second as by a rainbow and the third is like a flame breathed equally from both.<sup>22</sup> For Dante this appears to be the form taken by the Beatific Vision though the recipients of other Trinitarian visions do not appear to give it this special status.

Blessed Henry Suso discusses "the very highest flight of a soul experienced in the ways of God" which includes complex ideas about the Trinity of three Persons in Unity and the soul's relationship to the Trinity in its "very highest flight". Although Suso maintains the orthodox distinction between the Persons, one has the impression that he inclines rather heavily to emphasise Unity as the highest state (one might say for God as well as the soul) :

In this simple and modeless contemplation the spirit takes no note of the permanent distinction of the Persons, viewed as separate. For, as Christian doctrine teaches, it is not the Person of the Father, taken by itself, which proclaims bliss, nor the Person of the Son, taken by itself, nor the Person of the Holy Ghost, taken by itself ; but it is the three Persons, indwelling in the Unity of the essence, that is the bliss.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> *Paradiso* XXXIII 115-20 ; cf. ET. by Sisson (Manchester, 1980), pp. 454f. I owe this reference to Dr. Bauckham who points out that the image is thought to have come from Joachim of Fiore.

<sup>23</sup> *Life of Blessed Henry Suso* (ET., T.F. Knox) (ed. London, 1913), ch. LVI especially pp. 243f.

The Methodist experiences are not merely less sophisticated than this, they also seem to suggest a "very highest flight" which is characterised by recognising the three Persons (even though in unity) rather than the "Unity of the Essence". Suso's thinking both on God and on the relationship of the soul to God is coloured by the Neoplatonic tradition as is the case with the other great German mystics of the fourteenth century. It is a continuing matter for dispute among commentators on their work to establish how far they have fallen into the temptation of aspiring to an undifferentiated absorption into the All rather than preserving an ultimate distinction between the soul and God.

It is perhaps the relationship between the believer and God rather than the nature of the vision of God as such which really interests these mystics, though it is in the process of exploring this relationship that Trinitarian concerns emerge. Zaehner has remarked that :

just as Christ's death and resurrection are a physical enactment of the spiritual reality of the mystical experience, and beyond it of the Beatific Vision, so is the mystical experience itself the image of the life of God in His Trinity.

He gives some examples from Muslim mystics to show that "where there is love there must be trinity as well as unity" and adds a remarkable passage from Ruysbroeck about the relationship between the Father and the Son through the Person of the Spirit as love. Ruysbroeck concludes :

But in the spirit, above himself and one with the Spirit of God, man understands and savours this wonder without wonderment, and tastes and sees without measure as God does, the riches which are God, in the unity of the living depths where man possesses Him according to the manner of His uncreated being.<sup>24</sup>

It is doubtful whether Charles Perronet or John Appleton would have felt they were claiming an experience of the internal relationships of the Godhead, though Appleton felt the Spirit moving within him.

In Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of the Divine Love* her first "showing" or "revelation" was of Christ's "precious crowning with thorns ; and therewith was comprehended and specified the Trinity, with the Incarnation, and unity between God and man's soul". In the same "shewing" "suddenly the Trinity fulfilled my heart most of joy . . . for where Jesus appeareth, the Blessed Trinity is understood, as to my sight".<sup>25</sup> Dame Julian's piety is very Christocentric as the rest of the

<sup>24</sup> R. C. Zaehner : *Mysticism Sacred and Profane* (Oxford, 1957) p. 197. Cp. Meister Eckhart : who speaks of an "agent in the soul". "In this agent the eternal Father is ceaselessly begetting his eternal Son and the agent is parturient with God's Offspring and is itself the Son, by the Father's unique power". (Raymond Blackney : *Meister Eckhart*, (New York, 1957), p. 209 quoted by G. H. Tavard : *The Vision of the Trinity*, (Washington D.C., 1981), p. 98. I am grateful to Dr. Bauckham for introducing me to this book.

<sup>25</sup> Julian of Norwich : *Revelations of the Divine Love* (ET. G. Warrack) (London, 1901) ch. I and IV.

book shows. Even in this passage it is not clear how far she believed she “saw” the Trinity as three Persons ; indeed it is difficult to say whether the Trinitarian reference is the result of reflection or some kind of “intellectual” vision.

It does seem to be the case that the highest flights of vision or sense of God in a number of mystics tend to be of God as unitary ; and that much of the content concerns the mystic’s sense of being so absorbed with the sense of God’s presence and love that the boundaries between the self and the divine Being tend to dissolve. But the Methodist placing of the special Trinitarian experience appears to be at the very highest point of communion with God ; and the Trinity is viewed as distinct and beyond the viewer.

Trinitarian visions in the post-medieval period are more mixed in this respect. St. Ignatius Loyola

had a great devotion to the Blessed Trinity and so used to pray daily to each of the three Persons distinctly, the Three-in-One, but as he did the like also to the Blessed Trinity, the One-in-Three, the fourfold prayer to the Trinity of Persons raised a difficulty in his mind . . . One day, as he knelt on the steps of the monastery [of the Dominicans in Manresa] reciting the little office of our Lady, he was transported in mind so that, as it were, he saw the Most Holy Trinity under the image of three keys [of a musical instrument] and that with so many tears and sobs that he could not regain control of himself . . . so full was he of joy and consolation that for the rest of his life he experienced a great feeling of devotion whenever he prayed to the Most Holy Trinity.<sup>26</sup>

A rather similar experience occurs in the life of St Teresa of Avila :

Once when I was reciting the psalm [actually the Athanasian Creed] “whosoever will be saved” I was shown so clearly how it was possible that there was one God alone and Three Persons, that I was both amazed and greatly comforted. This greatly helped me to increase my knowledge of God’s greatness and of His marvels ; and now when I think of the Most Holy Trinity or hear it spoken of, I seem to understand how it can be ; which is a great joy to me.<sup>27</sup>

William James noted these incidents as examples of revelations of theological or metaphysical truths and Ignatius himself remarked that a single hour of meditation at Manresa had taught him more truths about heavenly things than all the teachings of all the doctors put together

<sup>26</sup> Quoted from St. Ignatius’s third-person autobiographical account by J. Broderick, *St Ignatius Loyola : The Pilgrim Years* (London, 1956) pp. 105f. Broderick notes that this image of the “keys” is unique in mystical literature and reflects St. Ignatius’s deep feeling for music. Sounded together in an appropriate manner they would produce “a chord, a perfect harmony”, *op. cit.*, 106n. Charles Perronet’s experience also was preceded by praying to each of the Persons separately.

<sup>27</sup> *Life of St Teresa* ch. 39 ad fin. (*ed. cit.*, p. 305).

could have done.<sup>28</sup> In St Teresa's case (significantly touched off by reciting the Athanasian Creed) it was also a matter of understanding being given of a puzzling doctrine. Both saints were conscious at the time of their lay status and lack of theological knowledge. Is it also significant that both came from Spain where there was a substantial presence of 'unitarian' Moors and Jews? The significance of unitarianism as a stimulus to Methodist Trinitarian visions will be discussed later. At the same time the saints clearly derived considerable spiritual comfort and joy from their experiences.

A Trinitarian pattern has also been claimed for St John of the Cross in his *Spiritual Canticle*.<sup>29</sup> Later Catholic examples can be found in France or French-speaking lands. So Claudine Moine (b. 1618) writes :

One day, on the eve or feast of the Holy Trinity, I obtained a great and extraordinary light, and most unexpectedly

which she described in conventional Trinitarian terms. Later she writes :

For about two years henceforth I had as it were a continued view of this adorable mystery. My soul was always in the presence of the most Holy Trinity, unceasingly seeing how the Father begat His Son, and the Father and Son together produce the Holy Spirit, this being the eternal occupation of God : to know himself and to love himself . . . I had a special devotion to this great and profound mystery.<sup>30</sup>

Mary of the Incarnation (1599-1672), an Ursuline at Quebec, included in her "sixth stage of prayer" a close union with the Three Persons :

In one moment my eyes were closed and my spirit was raised and absorbed in the sight of the most holy and august Trinity in a manner that I cannot express . . . all the faculties of my soul were halted and they received the impression that was given them of this sacred mystery. This impression was without form or shape, more clear and intelligible than any light. It made me know that my soul was in the truth and which, in a moment, made me see the divine exchange that the three divine Persons have together . . . Then it understood the mutual love of the Father and the Son producing the Holy Spirit . . . Seeing the distinction I knew the unity of essence among the three divine Persons.

These experiences continued and deepened in the later stages of her spiritual ascent (thirteen in all). "She saw herself within each of the three Persons, participating in its divine life". In her highest stage,

<sup>28</sup> William James : *Varieties of Religious Experience* (ed. London, 1943), p. 401 quotes these examples though using a less vivid version of the Ignatius story from an early biographer.

<sup>29</sup> G. H. Tavad op. cit., pp. 106 -12 (from whom this and the following examples are drawn).

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, p. 104 qu. C. Moine : *Ma Vie Secrète* (ed. Paris, 1968), pp. 350f.

however, she emphasised the "Spirit of the Incarnate Word".<sup>31</sup>

Finally, it appears that St Thérèse of Lisieux (1873 - 97) had a Trinitarian experience (though she does not describe it directly in these terms) on Trinity Sunday 1895 which she saw in terms of "merciful Love" and composed an act of self-offering to it addressed to "the Blessed Trinity and at the same time to God the Father who has given her his only Son as Saviour and Spouse".<sup>32</sup>

George Tavard, who discusses these three examples in the course of his searching and original analysis of the sources of Trinitarian theology, observes that none of these mystics were especially noted for a direct Trinitarian emphasis in their spirituality. (Claudine Moine emphasised Christ and the eucharistic presence; Mary of the Incarnation emphasised the Incarnation; Thérèse, the child Jesus.) No doubt it is of some significance that two of them had their Trinitarian experiences at the time of the feast of the Trinity. But it is perhaps not entirely clear that direct perception of God in three Persons is seen by these mystics as the very highest point of their spiritual experience.

Material on the Protestant side is much more sparse, but it would be worth exploring Jakob Böhme's experiences, particularly since he had an important influence on eighteenth century English spirituality. (Awareness of his writings has already been noted in Perronet.) Although Böhme's theosophical visions are marked by a neoplatonic striving for a return to the divine Unity, this is achieved through a consciousness of differentiation and procession so as to explain the emergence of the material from the spiritual. In one characteristic vision he describes how

In one quarter of an hour I saw and knew more than if I had been many years together at a university. For I saw and knew the being of all things, the Byss and the Abyss, and the eternal generation of the Holy Trinity, the descent and original of the world and of all creatures through the divine wisdom.<sup>33</sup>

Here, certainly, knowledge rather than edification seems to be the predominant concern. (Böhme, it should be remembered, was influenced by the Paracelsian tradition and claimed an inward knowledge of the workings of nature which would enable him, for example, to use its healing powers.)

Finally, there is the possibility of precedents in the French Quietists of the seventeenth century who certainly had some influence on early Methodists. But their influence as well as that of Böhme raises the

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 105f. qu. Marie de l'Incarnation: *Autobiographie. Relation de 1654* (Solesmes, 1976) pp. 53f.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, p. 102 qu. St Thérèse: *Manuscrits Autobiographiques* (Lisieux, 1957), pp. 211, 319f.

<sup>33</sup> Quoted in James *op. cit.*, p. 402n.

question of "sources" in an acute form. There are really two questions at issue here. One is whether precedents can be found for the Methodist visions. The other is whether, even supposing the Methodists knew about them (which is very open to question in most of the examples cited so far), they actually were influenced by them.

The whole question of the extent of the knowledge and pursuit of mystical piety in the eighteenth century deserves more investigation than it has so far received, particularly in England. So far as our present knowledge goes, it seems that the chief influences are the theological tradition as represented by Böhme (though for some probably chiefly mediated through William Law's later writings); and French Quietism especially through Madame Guyon. To these must indeed be added the perennial attraction of A Kempis's *Imitation of Christ*. Readers include High Churchmen, Quakers, Methodists, Lutheran and Reformed Pietists and the Moravians. One particularly interesting figure (who was something of a middleman between some of these groups) was the Manchester poet and shorthand inventor John Byrom. His circle was perhaps unusual for its interest not only in Böhme and the Quietists but also in some of the medieval Germans and even in St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa.<sup>34</sup>

What about Methodist knowledge of these writings? John Wesley's own spiritual reading has been exhaustively analysed though the conclusions to be drawn about the effects on his theology will no doubt continue to be debated. Despite Wesley's well-known revulsion against the mystics in the years immediately before his conversion, he later recommended some of their writings, including the Quietists, however selectively. The whole notion of "Christian Perfection" and at least some of the ways in which Wesley understood it seem to be considerably influenced from start to finish by Catholic ideas (much more so than some Methodist writers have wished to admit).

Madame Guyon gives the customary mystics' warning against excessive reliance on visions. "Visions are the inferior powers of the soul, and cannot produce true union—therefore the soul must not dwell or rely on them, or be retarded by them—they are but favours and gifts, 'tis the Giver alone must be our object and aim".<sup>35</sup> She aspired to a spiritual sense and communion with God which should be without words or

<sup>34</sup> John Byrom: *Journals and Papers* (ed. H. Talon) (London, 1950) e.g. pp. 156f., (conversations with William Law); p. 214 (reference to St. John of the Cross by Dr. Cheyne); *Poetical Works* (Chetham Soc. N.S. XXXV, 1895) II (2) p. 591 and n. (St. Teresa by Byrom himself). For some of the complex ways in which Behmenism and Quietism influenced the Pietists and Moravians see F. E. Stoeffler: *German Pietism in the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden, 1973) especially ch. V; for popular Quietism O. Chadwick in P. Brooks (ed): *Christian Spirituality* (London, 1975) p. 216; and for Böhme and mysticism in the English Revival, John Walsh in the same volume especially pp. 280ff.

<sup>35</sup> *Life* (ET. T. D. Brooke) (Bristol, 1806), Pt. I ch. IX p. 74

images. So far as any sense of the Trinity is concerned, though she spoke sometimes of Christ, sometimes of the Spirit and often of God in an undifferentiated manner, she was perhaps most concerned with the question of the kind of unity which can be achieved between the believer and God—a wordless, visionless sense of union with God. It would therefore be rather surprising if she were to have had a vision of the Persons of the Trinity as distinct. One passage where she does reflect on this subject tends to confirm the suspicion that her instinct was to try to go beyond it. She describes how she achieved a kind of wordless communion with her confessor Father La Combe. She then goes on :

It was in this that I comprehended the ineffable commerce of the most Holy Trinity to all the blessed ; and how God, who communicates himself to them, forms in them a flux and reflux of his own divine communications . . . It requires us to be very pure to receive God thus uninterruptedly, and to flow back into himself in that same purity . . . This is what fixes us in the divine unity in which we are one in him from whom all is derived.<sup>36</sup>

There is an experimental parallel here to Methodist descriptions of the experience of “perfect love” which is probably not accidental. It is not quite clear whether, like Eckhart and Tauler, she is claiming to experience the same quality of communion as is experienced in the Godhead ; but for our present purpose it is noticeable that the focus of interest does not really seem to be in contemplation of the separate Persons of the Trinity.

It is difficult to say how far literature of this type affected the Methodist rank and file. The biographies show that a significant number of them had various kinds of pious upbringing but the most obvious literary influences appear to be on the one hand popular Anglican devotional manuals such as *The Whole Duty of Man* and the various *Week's Preparation* manuals for Holy Communion ; on the other, a number of the old “practical” Puritan works such as Alleine's *Alarm*, Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted* and Bunyan's *Grace Abounding*—works showing the way to evangelical conversion.<sup>37</sup> To this one would have to add Wesley's publications including his abridgements of some mystical writings. There is indeed direct evidence of general “Quietist” influences in the recurring outbreaks of “stillness”, often due to Moravian influence and continuing long after the Methodists had broken with the Moravian societies in the early 1740s.<sup>38</sup> It is tantalising (yet may be significant) that Methodist accounts of mystical experiences very seldom give any indication of what (if any) religious literature may have influenced

<sup>36</sup> op. cit., Pt. II ch. XIII, p. 293.

<sup>37</sup> *Lives of the Early Methodist Preachers* passim ; John Walsh “Origins of the Evangelical Revival” in G. V. Bennett and J. D. Walsh (eds.) : *Essays in Modern English Church History* (London, 1966) pp. 142, 144, 159.

<sup>38</sup> “Stillness” consisted in neglecting the means of grace for fear of salvation by “works” and waiting in silence for a direct visitation from God. Though in this form clearly related to an extreme solifidianism within the Lutheran tradition I believe that some “stillness” cases were also influenced by Catholic Quietist spirituality.



them. Charles Perronet was one of the few cases of a man who directly refers to such writings and showed himself able to discuss some of the issues involved. One clue to a plausible "trigger" may perhaps be found in the vision of a Manchester woman who saw Christ crucified while reading a passion hymn by Charles Wesley.<sup>39</sup> (This was one of those vividly physical hymns which later fell out of favour.) It is equally likely that Methodists were influenced by other people's visions; but, as often happens in these matters, it is just as likely that the visions were generated by circumstances, personal need and accidents of psychological makeup.

There is, however, one literary source which can be shown to have had some importance for the particular case of Trinitarian visions. This was the *Life* of the seventeenth century Marquis De Renty. The book was a favourite with John Wesley both before and after his "evangelical conversion" as an example of Christian Perfection in action. In 1741 he published an abridged version of the *Life* and some Methodists certainly read it. The key passage for our present concern is De Renty's claim that "I bear with me an experimental verity and plenitude of the presence of the ever blessed Trinity which exalts me to a simple view of God".<sup>40</sup> Wesley certainly thought this resembled the Methodist experiences and recognised in them what he had read in De Renty so many years before. But this recognition was not confined to Wesley himself. In the anonymous experience in 1790 quoted earlier, the writer comments: "I understand now better than ever De Renty's language when he says 'he carries about with him an experimental verity and plenitude of the Holy Trinity'".<sup>41</sup> This seems to imply that the writer was already familiar with the idea before he had had his vision; and the reference in the same account to the "beatific vision" also suggests some acquaintance with mystical piety.

It is possible to suggest that in this case a knowledge of De Renty's story may at least have influenced the way in which the writer interpreted his experience. The same may be true of the other cases where Wesley himself invoked the comparison, at least if his correspondents were already aware of it. (The main point in Wesley's publication of the book was to give an example of Christian Perfection with which of course his correspondents were much concerned.) It has to be added that once such cases occurred and knowledge of them had begun to circulate, there was a certain stimulus for more to take place. (The first to appear in print was in the *Arminian Magazine* of 1780 so this cannot actually have caused the trickle of cases to begin.)

<sup>39</sup> Recorded in John Wesley's *Journal*, iii p. 374.

<sup>40</sup> *Journal* vii p. 143; *Letters* viii p. 83 and note; Sermon on the Trinity (Sermon I.V in *Works* VI, para. 17).

<sup>41</sup> Letter of Mr — to John Wesley (19.11.1790) in *Arm. Mag.* 1790 p. 247.

It would indeed be too simple an explanation to suppose that the rather sudden appearance of such experiences in the later 1770s was simply the result of publicity plus conscious or unconscious imitation, important though such factors often were in the spread of revivalist phenomena. There were good reasons, external to the special dynamics of Methodist piety, which made it particularly likely and appropriate for mystical experiences of a Trinitarian kind to begin to occur in the 1770s. This was the threat of anti-Trinitarian and outright Unitarian ideas.

Evangelicals of all kinds were not prone to speculation about theological matters unless these were directly connected with salvation theology. It is true that the doctrine of the Trinity was not only a prime point of orthodoxy but also intimately involved in the work of salvation for the atoning work of Christ and the sanctifying work of the Spirit seemed ultimately to depend on their divine status in the Godhead. But it seems to be the case that many Evangelicals instinctively concentrated on the Person of Christ as the emotional centre of their faith. The Moravians indeed took this to almost pathological extremes. A sense of the Holy Spirit was also strong, particularly when the process of sanctification after conversion was in mind. This was especially marked (as one would expect) among Methodists seeking for perfection. One can already see signs of a belief in the special relationship between perfection as a "second blessing" and the work of the Holy Spirit which would become much more marked in nineteenth century perfectionist groups. Evangelicals were certainly orthodox on the Trinity but to speak even "experimentally" of the Three-in-One and still more to have visions of this nature seems to demand some special explanation in terms of a stimulus external to their own spiritual economy.

This stimulus was in fact present in some degree throughout the eighteenth century. Doubts about the Trinity and outright anti-Trinitarianism were common and well-publicised in this period.<sup>42</sup> There was a fairly concentrated literary controversy on the matter in the 1690s and early 1700s and, as is well-known, the old Presbyterians in the course of the eighteenth century mostly developed anti-Trinitarian views of various kinds. A number of Anglicans shared these views but there were also those who were not really anti-Trinitarians yet nevertheless passed lightly over the doctrine. This was partly because it was seen as an incomprehensible mystery ; partly rather an embarrassment in a "reasonable" age ; but perhaps above all because it did not seem to be very obviously connected with the moral teaching of Christianity which so many preachers were anxious to emphasise. Even John Wesley, while insisting on the necessity of belief in the doctrine as a fact

<sup>42</sup> See, for example, the discussion in R. N. Stromberg : *Religious Liberalism in Eighteenth Century England* (Oxford, 1954), ch. 4 ; J. H. Colligan : *The Arian Movement in England* (Manchester, 1913).

integrally connected with the process of salvation, did not insist on particular formulations of it ; not even on the use of the terms "Trinity" and "Person".<sup>43</sup> This being the case, it is not surprising that one reaction from threatened and outraged orthodoxy should have been the appearance of apparently direct and "experimental" evidence in favour of the doctrine. There is an important sense in which all the experimental claims to personal conversion and to the even more controversial supernatural phenomena which early Methodists claimed were, from one point of view, a standing and conscious challenge to the rationalising and desupernaturalising tendencies of the century. They were evidence to support neglected evangelical beliefs as well. The extreme case was Wesley's notorious defence of belief in demons and witches which he saw as being among the supernatural phenomena supporting belief in the possibility of intervention from the spiritual world into the material world.<sup>44</sup> The attitude expressed in that outburst runs through the rest of the revivalist experiences and the whole thought-world of which they were part. The stories of strange events which punctuate the *Journal* and *Arminian Magazine* should not be dismissed as embarrassing superstitious and at best peripheral to Wesley's "real" message : they are an integral part of his world-view and perfectly consistent with it.

But if the Trinity was under question in some quarters throughout the century, was there any reason for the appearance of visions apparently confirming the truth of the doctrine in the 1770s ? A cluster of roughly contemporary events suggests that there was. In 1771, 1773 and 1774, the Feathers Tavern Petition was designed to abolish subscription to the Prayer Book and Articles for the clergy in favour of a simple declaration of belief in the Bible. A parallel agitation aimed to do the same for graduates at Cambridge.<sup>45</sup> The latter movement was partly to relieve Dissenters and the Feathers Tavern petition had some support from clergy who were not necessarily anti-Trinitarian. But it was widely suspected that the impetus behind these moves came from those crypto-Arians and Unitarians among the clergy who wished to relieve their consciences. Defeat of the petitions was indeed followed by the honourable resignation of some Anglican clergymen who became open Unitarians and helped to reinforce those Presbyterians who had reached the same theological position. In 1772 there were proposals to revise the Prayer Book and here, too, the suspicion was that any such revision at this time would be liable to weaken if not to eliminate Trinitarian language (as some individual projects for revision certainly did).<sup>46</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Sermon on the Trinity paras. 2, 4.

<sup>44</sup> *Journal* v p. 265.

<sup>45</sup> R. B. Barlow : *Citizenship and Conscience* (Philadelphia, 1962), pp. 116ff. and ch. 4.

<sup>46</sup> A. E. Peaston : *The Prayer Book Reform Movement in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1940) ; W. J. Grisbrooke : *Anglican Liturgies of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (London, 1958) ; and for an individual example B. Kemp : *Sir Francis Dashwood* (London, 1967) ch. V and appendix.

In 1773 there was an abortive proposal to end the legal obligation under the Toleration Act of 1689 for Dissenting ministers to subscribe to most of the Thirty-Nine Articles ; and such a measure was actually passed in 1779. Whatever the abstract case in justice for this measure, it was one which orthodox Dissenters suspected was desired especially by unorthodox Presbyterians (who were, indeed, the most conspicuous campaigners for it). Orthodox Dissenters, Methodists and the Huntingdonians were among the most vigorous campaigners against the Feathers Tavern Petition ; and though Lady Huntingdon is said to have favoured relief from subscription for Dissenting ministers she was aware that it would help the unorthodox.<sup>47</sup> It may be added that at least one Anglican clergyman—Thomas Scott—owed an important stage in his conversion from Socinianism to orthodox and evangelical belief to reflections induced by the problem of subscription in 1775 ; though this conversion was of an unusually intellectual type for an Evangelical.<sup>48</sup> It is probably not accidental that John Wesley's sermon on the Trinity (a most unusual type of doctrine for him to preach about) was in response to a specific request in Dublin in 1775. (The text was I John 5.7 which had long been suspected because of the uncertain manuscript evidence and was a favourite target for anti-Trinitarians and some orthodox writers as well. Wesley, however, defended its authenticity.)<sup>49</sup>

It seems reasonable to say, therefore, that the 1770s was indeed a decade when anti-Trinitarianism was especially in the public eye ; was particularly threatening ; and was a matter of concentrated agitation in which Evangelicals were strongly involved and committed. It seems, then, to be rather more than an accident that it was in this decade that Charles Perronet's experience (itself in the midst of the Feathers Tavern affair) should have touched off a cluster of similar visions. It was understandable that some Methodists, soon encouraged by Wesley himself, should have been affected by this mode of personal revelation as soon as they became aware of the possibility in 1777. It seems that his knowledge of De Renty's experience and any isolated cases among Methodists (such as that in 1759) were not sufficient by themselves for Wesley to draw attention to the matter at an earlier date.

<sup>47</sup> R. B. Barlow op. cit., V ; A. C. H. Seymour : *Life of Lady Huntingdon* (London, 1844), II, p. 285-9 ; H. W. Clark : *History of English Nonconformity* (London, 1913), II p. 271 notes the suspicions of orthodox Dissenters about the 1779 bill and their opposition to it. A letter of John Fletcher to Wesley in 1775 urges him to continue his work as an evangelistic reformer of the church in view of the suspect associations of the Feathers Tavern group (Wesley, *Journal* viii, p. 531)

<sup>48</sup> Thomas Scott : *The Force of Truth* (3rd ed., London 1795 ; first published 1779) pp. 30f. Walsh mentions other cases (in Bennett and Walsh op. cit., p. 160) but concentrates on the possibility that the subscription controversy may have made some men examine what the Prayer Book and Articles really said and that this led them to Evangelical Calvinism.

<sup>49</sup> Sermon on the Trinity, para. 5.

The stimulus seems to have come below, from the rank and file who shared their experiences with their leader, and it remained a rarity. But the special circumstances of the 1770s appear to offer at least some explanation of why so unusual a type of vision should have occurred at this time. Once it had begun to occur, its apparent link with the doctrine and experience of perfection gave it a basis as an acceptable variety of spiritual experience within the normal Methodist pattern.

It is right to say that the evidence for this interpretation is circumstantial. I have not so far found any direct reference in the contemporary accounts and discussions of this type of vision to the effect that it was experimental evidence for a threatened doctrine. (There is a contrast here with Wesley's references to witchcraft and other unusual phenomena which he openly claimed as answers to scepticism.) Unlike the examples in the lives of St Ignatius and St Teresa where there is an emphasis on these experiences as clarifying perplexing dogmas, the Methodists do not even stress this function, but rather the way in which they can feel a greater intimacy with God. Indeed they sometimes show disquiet about whether there may be something improper about having such visions. Yet even if apologetic purposes were not consciously in mind, it remains difficult to believe that contemporary awareness of threats to the doctrine of the Trinity did not help to create a climate favourable to shaping some exceptional religious experiences in this manner.

Although this is not the place for an extended discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity and the forms of that doctrine implied by the main types of mystical experience, something may be said finally about some of the doctrinal implications of the experiences surveyed here.<sup>50</sup> Some of them (for example the seventeenth century French ones) appear to reflect the image of the Trinity favoured by St Augustine and Richard of St Victor : i.e. as Lover (Father), Beloved (Son) and the Love between them (Spirit). A similar understanding appears to inform the vision of Ruysbroeck (above, p. 58). It is natural that the image of love which plays so large a part in the mystics' experience of communion with God should have dominated their understanding of the relationships within the Trinity. But the visions of the Trinity also appear to fall into two rather different categories. In one (of which Ruysbroeck is again an example) the visionary appears to feel that he has been taken up into the divine circle of love. But in the other type the experience is simply that of viewing that relationship within the Godhead and often thereby coming to a fuller understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity. (Such is the case with St Ignatius and, apparently, the Methodists.) Nor is there any uniformity about the placing of Trinitarian visions in the ladder of ascent towards the fullest vision of God and communion with Him. For

<sup>50</sup> G. H. Tavad ; *op. cit.*, is concerned to emphasise the experimental basis of the doctrine of the Trinity.

some (Dante and, it seems, all the Methodists) it is the ultimate revelation. For others (Suso and perhaps even some of the French cases) it is only a stage on the way to something still higher.

The Methodist examples are, as one would expect, theologically simple, even naïve; just as their language is impoverished compared with that of the great masters of the spiritual life. For the reasons already stated, they were unlikely to indulge in speculations on such a topic and when forced into doctrinal statements they were liable to fall back on simple formulas inherited from the past. Ann Cutler's experience is formulated in terms of this kind.<sup>51</sup> The rest seem not to reflect any particular Trinitarian *doctrine* at all—only the factual statement that the three Persons are distinct yet One. The probable reason for this is that unlike the other mystics described here, the Methodists belonged to a context in which the doctrine of the Trinity was *asserted* (against Unitarian tendencies) rather than explored in doctrinal detail.<sup>52</sup> Wesley himself is a case in point and no doubt he both reflected and helped to determine Methodist attitudes in this matter. In his sermon on the Trinity, as already noted, Wesley explicitly disclaimed any attempt to probe into the way in which the Trinity might be understood or explained: he thought this impossible. He simply asserts it to be a "fact" on the testimony of Scripture. It is a fact which all Christians necessarily believe since it is not only a revealed "fact" but also the necessary basis for fundamental aspects of salvation. He asserts that the Methodists, though often not in a position to realise in doctrinal terms that they are doing so, nevertheless show that they believe the doctrine by their experience of salvation from the Father, by the work of the Son, through the Holy Spirit.<sup>53</sup>

HENRY D. RACK.

[The Rev. Henry D. Rack, M.A., is lecturer in Ecclesiastical History in the University of Manchester.]

<sup>51</sup> "Good Cappadocian doctrine" though also derivable from the New Testament, as Dr. Bauckham comments.

<sup>52</sup> By this it is not meant to imply that there was no doctrinal speculation in the eighteenth century but rather that within Methodism it was sufficient to assert the "fact".

<sup>53</sup> John Wesley Sermon LV in *Works*, VI.

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Well in time for the 1988 celebrations, John Vickers has compiled *Methodism and the Wesleys*; a reader's guide intended for the "ordinary Methodist". Fifty titles are listed, with brief comments and indications of availability. The emphasis is on titles which are in print. This booklet will be of most use to those beginning a study of Methodism but there can be few of our members who would not profit from its clear and unpretentious guidance. Copies are available from the Methodist Publishing House at 35 pence plus postage.

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## METHODIST ARCHIVES AND RESEARCH CENTRE : A progress report

IT is now ten years since the Methodist Archives and Research Centre transferred from London to Manchester. Much has been achieved during this period : a substantial proportion of the stock has been fully catalogued, and a number of handlists and finding aids have been issued. Dr. Homer Calkin has completed a survey of the manuscript collections which will be of great value to scholars who at present do not have immediate access to the detailed catalogues in Manchester.<sup>1</sup> Bibliographical information concerning all eighteenth century printed items has been reported to ESTC (Eighteenth Century Short Title Catalogue), an international computer data base with this country's editorial office at the British Library : literature searches of the most sophisticated kind will now be possible. The Library's staff have cooperated with the staff of the Historical Manuscripts Commission in a survey by subject of the 50,000 letters written by Methodist ministers which are available here. During the decade the total stock, both manuscript and printed, has increased by over fifty per cent.

Mrs. Rylands originally intended the John Rylands Library to be a good provincial reference library with a strong, theological bias, emphasising nonconformity : she was guided in her aims by the Baptist minister and bibliophile, Samuel Gosnell Green. It is interesting to note how close are some of the connections between Mrs. Rylands, her Library, and some of the material recently received by the Methodist Archives. From Miss E. Elaine Austin, of Bromley, has come a collection of the correspondence and other papers of the Wesleyan Methodist minister, Rev. G. Beesley Austin (1881-1936) who, when stationed in Manchester, was associated with William Carnelly, chairman and managing director of the firm of Rylands and Son. The collection donated by Canon Alan Wilkinson of the papers brought together by his father, Rev. Dr. J. T. Wilkinson, for his historical research includes much material associated with Professor A. S. Peake. While many of the items are concerned with administrative and other work at Hartley (Victoria) College, a not insignificant portion relates to Peake's activities as Rylands Professor of Biblical Exegesis, as a forceful member for nearly thirty years of the Book Committee of the John Rylands Library, and to his period as Chairman of the Governors of the Library from 1927 to 1929. A handlist of the Wilkinson Collection is in active preparation, but technical difficulties with our computer facilities have somewhat delayed its completion.

<sup>1</sup> Calkin (H.L.) Catalog of Methodist archival and manuscript collections. Part 6. *World Methodist Historical Society*.

The knowledge of the acquisition of the Wilkinson Collection has prompted a number of people to donate further related items. Peake himself presented the manuscripts of his "Introductory lectures on the Old Testament" and "Lectures on Isaiah XL-LXVI" to Dr. Lansdell Wardle at Hartley Victoria College, and, in turn, K. L. Wardle, his son, gave them to the Methodist Archives; and from the widow of Dr. J. Y. Muckle came the draft manuscript of Peake's "Commentary on the Epistle to the Colossians". Another manuscript draft (with typescript) received was Peake's contribution on theology to the series *When peace comes*.

It would be extremely difficult to gain agreement on the subject of what is the most important single item received by the Methodist Archives over the last five years, but undoubtedly some would draw attention to the Inghamite Committee Minute Book covering the years 1755 to 1760, which was returned to this country by Miss Ruth Stedman of Farringdon Independent Church, Brantford, Ontario. This quarto manuscript of over one hundred leaves contains a substantial amount of information concerning the religious and social life of the Craven District of West Yorkshire and North East Lancashire. The local historian will find the list of names of much interest, and the record of marriages will be of concern to the genealogist. The cirplanologist will note the details of the planning of Inghamite preachers. But it is the discussion of religious and administrative matters which will be of most value to the research scholar, and the question of whether the doors should be locked before or at the commencement of the love feast is but the first example to be minuted.

Items relating to Robert Dall and members of his family, 1779-1862, have been purchased together with two letters from John Wesley to Dall, dated 11th October 1766 and 5th August 1768, brief but hitherto not recorded in the Standard *Letters*. Through the good offices of Dr. C. J. Wright of the Department of Manuscripts, British Library Reference Division, an anonymous donation was made of the manuscript diary, 1820-1, and commonplace books of Leonard Sedgwick. Another diary received, that of John H. Sanders, is remarkable in being an absolutely complete record of his ministry from 1895 to 1963. It will be well known that the surviving archives of Richmond College are in Manchester, and two useful additions are the minute book of the Home Committee, 1909 to 1947, and the 1862 manuscript of *The anchorite's note book, or college conceits*, a weekly journal.

A substantial number of manuscript sermons have been received including those of James Allen of Middlesbrough, 1862-3, and Frank Ebenezer Watts, 1900-38. Further letters of Jabez Bunting and Jonathan Crowther have been added. One John Wesley letter addressed to his nephew, Charles Wesley, and dated, from Bristol, September 8th



1781, has already been printed.<sup>2</sup> A collection of about 75 Methodist letters has been acquired; many of these are from distinguished nineteenth century ministers, and the collection was largely formed by Alfred Beresford. Archival collections of the papers of Dr. Vincent Taylor and Dr. Marcus Ward will prove to be a rewarding study for the historian of twentieth century theology. Ten manuscript notebooks written by Henry Ryan when a student at Hartley College, 1904 to 1906, complement a manuscript scrapbook entitled *Our year: being some account of the careers of those at Handsworth College, 1911 to 1914*.

Primitive Methodist records have not been preserved systematically, at least so it would appear from the extant nineteenth century material, and therefore it was with some excitement that twelve boxes of this source material were discovered in a builders' yard in East Anglia. Although a certain amount of conservation work was fortunately undertaken at once by the record office responsible for despatching this collection to Manchester, the condition of some of the documents still gives cause for concern and will occupy the attention of the Library's Conservation Unit for some time to come. A handlist of this collection is available.

Substantial collections of archival material have been deposited by the Division of Social Responsibility and the Local Preachers Mutual Aid Association. Also received are the Minutes and other papers of the Old Richmond Association. To add significantly to his previous donations, Professor L. S. Hearnshaw has presented the sermon notebooks, 1836-98, of Rev. John Hearnshaw, the Wesleyan Methodist minister who died in 1909.

Apart from Miss E. Elaine Austin, a debt of gratitude is owed by the Methodist Archives to another resident of Bromley, the late Dr. Harold K. Moulton, whose substantial bequest, the Moulton Collection, has now been fully catalogued and handlisted. William Fiddian Moulton, first headmaster of the Leys School, Cambridge, is represented by his letters to his son, William Fiddian Moulton the younger, together with a group of some fifty letters addressed to him by such correspondents as Gladstone, Sayce, Westcott and Hort. Of the five hundred letters addressed to James Hope Moulton, the biblical scholar, no less than 230 come from Rendel Harris, and there are also many from the German scholars, Deissmann and Thumb. It will be recalled that at one time Rendel Harris was on the staff of the John Rylands Library and was present at the death of J. H. Moulton when both were travelling back from Egypt.<sup>3</sup> The correspondence between Moulton and Henry Scott, over one hundred items, is largely concerned with the grammar of New Testament Greek and the publication of J. H. Moulton's work on this subject.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters* vii, p. 81.

<sup>3</sup> For Rendel Harris's moving account of the death of his friend, see *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, vol. 4, 1917, pp. 24-25.

Also included in the bequest are over two hundred printed books which come from the personal library of the Moulton family.

What of the future? It cannot be denied that in recent years the Methodist Archives has not escaped the effects of the government-inspired financial cuts which have hard hit all British Universities, and even at the best of times the Methodist Archives was seriously understaffed as compared with similar establishments in Canada and the United States. Nevertheless, the future is considerably brighter than was once feared. Negotiations have been completed between the Methodist Church and Manchester University in order to guarantee a securer future for the Methodist Archives. From the autumn of 1987, for the first time since the collection was transferred from London to Manchester, a member of the academically related library staff will be dedicated full time to Methodist Archives related work. It is hoped that this will coincide with a notable expansion and promotion of activities at the Deansgate Building of the Library.

D. W. RILEY

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*Yonder Country is Ours : the origins of Primitive Methodism in parts of Berkshire and Hampshire* by W. M. Kilby, 1987, pp. 75.

This is an enlarged edition of a booklet first published several years ago, telling the story of the early Primitive Methodist missions in the rural south, with heroic figures like John Ride, Thomas Russell and Elizabeth Smith as its chief figures. A number of portraits, photographs of early chapels etc. are reproduced and early sources, especially from the connexional *Magazine*, are tapped.

Available from the author at 16 Victoria Road, Finsbury Park, London N4, at £3.00 post free.

J.A.V.

*According to Plan : 60 years of memories, reflections and digressions of a Methodist Local Preacher 1926-1986* by Cyril G. Rackett (published by the author at 8 Eldon Avenue, Barton-on-Sea, New Milton, Hants BH25 7LL, £3.50 plus 45p)

Fellow preachers and fellow Methodists will find these reminiscences of great interest, though the author's denominational spectrum is much wider than a single denomination. Born in the Isle of Wight and living all his life in southern England, he is well away from the Methodist heartlands. Nevertheless, part of the value of this book is that it reflects the typical experience of what the author himself would be first to call a rank-and-file Methodist.

Sixty years as a local preacher and over forty as a teacher furnish a rich harvest, offered with engaging frankness, but without malice. The result is a record of a changing world (not least ecumenically) of the kind that will be increasingly fascinating and valuable because it includes so many of the everyday details that are often lost through being taken for granted.

JOHN A. VICKERS

## CUTHBERT AND WESLEY

I expect little good will be done here, for we begin at the wrong end. Religion must not go from the greatest to the least or the power would appear to be of men.<sup>1</sup>

**T**HUS John Wesley, after preaching on 26th May 1764 to a “very elegant congregation” in Haddington near Edinburgh. The expression is of course not untypical of him. Yet one cannot help wondering whether, on this occasion, Wesley’s evident concern to base the Christianisation of Britain on genuinely popular foundations rather than on upper class patronage was not in some way influenced by the fact that two days earlier he had crossed the wet sands at low tide to visit Holy Island. It was from the monastery and episcopal centre established here by Aidan in 635 that there had flowed an inspired campaign, spear-headed first by Aidan himself, and later by his disciples, to take Gospel teaching and the effective ministry of the Church to the ordinary folk of Northumbria recently “converted” from Teutonic paganism to the Christian faith by a power that certainly was of men—the fiat of the Northumbrian king and his nobles.

In this sustained evangelical mission the role played by Cuthbert (634-87) was, after that of Aidan, of the highest importance. On the 1300th anniversary of Cuthbert’s death it is worth while taking stock of this remarkable man, and reflecting how his Christian experience and his methods of work might be compared with those which we find in Wesley eleven centuries later.

It has to be admitted that in his journal entry on Holy Island Wesley seems almost deliberately to avoid any mention of Aidan or Cuthbert, simply noting the place was “once the famous seat of a bishop”, and appearing to think (mistakenly) that the Norman priory church whose ruins he examined and which replaced the early Anglo-Saxon buildings had still served as a cathedral. Dark age and medieval history were not Wesley’s forte! But had he not read Bede’s history of the English church and people, or his life of Cuthbert, both of which had been published in several editions between the sixteenth century and the early eighteenth? The latest and most accessible to Wesley of those was a set of Bede’s historical works edited by John Smith, a canon of Durham, and published in Cambridge in 1722. There is no mention of these works in the *Journal* nor in such analyses of Wesley’s reading as that found in appendix one of V. H. H. Green’s *Young Mr Wesley* (1961), but it is by no means impossible that he knew them.

What would Wesley have found had he read them? Undoubtedly much to offend him in terms of dark age credulity, unnatural asceticism,

<sup>1</sup> *Journal* v, pp. 70-71.

and the Cuthbert cult. But a sympathetic reading might have shown him that behind the image of Cuthbert the cult-figure and wonder-worker there can be glimpsed a pioneer evangelist of remarkable stature, whose love of Christ was warm, deep and personal; and whose desire to make Christianity real and vital to the folk of Northumbria was inspired by as genuine a missionary vocation as that of any of the leaders of the eighteenth century revival.

Wesley would surely have warmed to Cuthbert's humility and simplicity, and to his "pleasant and kindly disposition" (Bede's words).<sup>2</sup> He would have read with particular interest the account of how Cuthbert read through the whole of the gospel of St. John with the dying Boisil, prior of Melrose, dealing "only with the simple things of the 'faith which worketh by love' and not deep matters of dispute".<sup>3</sup> And the stories of Cuthbert's preaching tours, often on foot, seeking out not only those who needed him but those who needed him most, would have seemed a strange pre-figuring of the itinerant preaching of the Methodist revival. In Bede's account:

He used mainly to visit and preach in the villages that lay far distant among high and inaccessible mountains which others feared to visit and whose barbarity and squalor daunted other teachers . . . It would sometimes be a week, sometimes two or three, and occasionally an entire month before he returned home, after staying in the mountains to guide the peasants heavenward by his teachings and virtuous example.<sup>4</sup>

It may well be that Bede is here alluding to evangelical work among the native British communities surviving in the remoter parts of Northumbria after the Anglo-Saxon conquest. If so Cuthbert (who was Anglian) was crossing deep divides of nationality, language and hostility to demonstrate the love of God, and win hearts and minds to the Christian allegiance; *mutatis mutandis* Wesley himself was to do much the same among the squalid, raw, wild and ostracised industrial communities of Georgian England.

In some ways Cuthbert even reminds us of post-Wesley evangelicalism. There is an account of an incident in one of his pastoral tours that reads almost like a Primitive Methodist or American-style camp meeting.<sup>5</sup> We discover also that Cuthbert was a teetotaler, and disapproved of the practice of travelling by chariot on Sundays, much as our Victorian

<sup>2</sup> Bertram Colgrave (trans. and ed.) *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert*, C.U.P. paperback edition, 1985, p. 193. This splendid volume contains in Latin and English the early lives of Cuthbert by an anonymous monk of Lindisfarne and by Bede, with copious introductory material and annotation. Bede's life of the saint is also available in D. H. Farmer (ed.) *The Age of Bede*, Penguin, 1983, a volume which in an earlier format was titled *Lives of the Saints*.

<sup>3</sup> Colgrave, op. cit., p. 183.

<sup>4</sup> Bede, *A History of the English Church and People* (trans. Leo Sherley-Price), Penguin, 1968 edition, p. 260.

<sup>5</sup> Colgrave, op. cit., pp. 257-9.

forebears signed the pledge and refused to travel on Sabbath trains!<sup>6</sup> Cuthbert is here reflecting the puritan practices of the Irish Christianity in which he had been reared, a type of puritanism readily recognisable by those familiar with Methodist history as is the evangelical impulse behind Cuthbert's itinerant preaching.

While it would be absurd to claim him as a proto-Methodist it is by no means absurd to recognise in him convictions and traits which are part of our own tradition and our own experience. One distinct gain from this is that Cuthbert is (in part at least) released from that remote seventh century and from the myths and legends which have so formidably surrounded him, and is allowed to become a man for all ages, a saint with a real attractiveness for us today.

GEOFFREY MILBURN.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp. 175, 245.

## LOCAL HISTORIES

*St Margaret's Methodist Church, Luton, 1937-1987* (12pp.) : copies, price £1.00 post free, from Mrs. June Govan, 7 Sundon Road, Streatley, Luton, LU3 3PL.

*150 Glorious Years : Handbook of the 150th Celebration of the Leamington Methodist Circuit, 1837-1987*, edited by Paul Bolitho (32pp.) : copies, price £1.50, from Rev. T. H. Beardsall, 48 Warwick Place, Leamington Spa, Warks, CV32 5DF.

*The Pocklington Methodist Circuit 1786-1986* by C. J. Solomon (34 pp.) : copies, price £1.75 post free, from the author at Dolman House, West Green, Pocklington, York, YO4 2NJ.

*One small corner : the story of a Fen-edge Chapel and its background* (Little Hale, Lincs), by Donald S. Taylor (44pp.) : copies, price £2 plus postage, from Miss M. Priestley, 23 Chapel Lane, Little Hale, Lincs.

*Unto the Hills : The Story of Methodism in Lumbutts, Todmorden, 1837-1987* compiled by Ralph Wilkinson (56pp.) : copies from the author at 87 York Street, Dunnington, York, YO1 5QW, price £1.80 post free.

*Methodism and its Beginnings in Monmouth* by Wyndham E. Bold : copies, price £2 post free from Mrs. Nancy Crewe, 18 Justins Hill, Wyesham, Monmouth, Gwent, NP5 3TD.

*Tickhill Methodist Church : 150th Anniversary 1987* by K. J. Kimberley (35pp.) : copies price £1.50 plus postage from the author at 118 Doncaster Road, Tickhill, Doncaster, DN11 9JE.

*Our Methodist Heritage* (Skelmanthorpe Methodist Church) by Tom Wainright (28pp.) : copies price £1.75 plus postage from the author at 9 Radcliffe Street, Skelmanthorpe, Huddersfield, HD8 9AF.

## THE ANNUAL MEETING AND LECTURE

THIS year local members of the Wesley Historical Society entertained the Society to tea at Purbrook Methodist Church, Portsmouth and about thirty enjoyed the opportunity of meeting together for fellowship as well as an excellent meal. With a widely scattered membership such a chance is eagerly seized.

### Annual Meeting

Twenty-four members were able to attend the Annual Meeting. The President, the Rev. A. Raymond George, took the chair. Sixteen members who had died since the last meeting were remembered and Mr. George offered prayers of thanksgiving for their lives of work and witness.

The officers were all thanked and reappointed with the following alterations—the Rev. Thomas Shaw had signified his desire to retire as Local Branches Secretary and he was replaced by Mr. Roger F. S. Thorne, and Mr. John Lenton, the Secretary of the World Methodist Historical Society (British Section) was invited to join the Executive Committee. Warm tribute was paid to Mr. Shaw for his unstinting service to the Society, as General Secretary and then as Local Branches Secretary for over twenty-seven years.

Three members of the Executive Committee were congratulated on obtaining University higher degrees—the General Secretary, Mrs. E. D. Graham (Ph.D. Birmingham); the Rev. T. S. A-Macquiban (M.A. Bristol) and Mr. J. A. Vickers (Ph.D. Southampton).

Encouraging reports were received from all areas of the Society's work and interest. The Registrar reported that, following the review of membership, numbers were now realistic. The Treasurer, unable to attend, submitted his report and accounts (page 79) explaining that the use of a commercial printer and the producing of additional issues of the *Proceedings* accounted for the deficit shown. This should not recur. On the recommendation of the Executive Committee the Annual Meeting agreed that the subscription rates should be raised. The new rates are shown on the inside front cover and apply from January 1st, 1988. The Publishing Manager drew attention to the recent publication of *The Labourer's Hire* by A. Kingsley Lloyd (£1.50), *The Lavington Correspondence* (£1.00) and *Man of One Book: A Study of John Wesley's Reading* by William Leary (£1.50).

The Library continues to grow and develop and more use is being made of it now that Mrs. Banks is regularly present on Wednesdays. It was emphasised that WHS members would be especially welcome to avail themselves of its unique collection of Wesleyana; that the production of valid Library tickets was essential and that offers of voluntary help would be appreciated.

The Conference Secretary, the Rev. T. S. A-Macquiban gave details of the WHS/WMHS Conference planned for April 5-8th 1988 at Heworth Croft, York (College of Ripon and York St. John) on the theme of Methodists and Society. Full details and booking forms are available from Mr. Macquiban.

Next year's Annual Lecture will be given by the Rev. John Munsey Turner, M.A., B.D. on "Victorian Values—or whatever happened to Wesley's Scriptural holiness".

### Annual Lecture

It was a privilege to welcome the Wesley Historical Society's 1985 Lecturer, the Rev. Dr. John A. Newton, to take the chair for this year's Annual Lecture. Dr. Newton, in introducing the Lecturer, the Rev. William Leary, paid tribute to his dedicated work as the Connexional Archivist and to his researches into many aspects of Methodist history.

Mr. Leary commenced his survey of Wesley's reading by remarking that although Wesley considered himself to be "*homo unius libri*, a man of one book" it would be a mistake to suppose that that was the extent of his reading. The reverse was rather the truth and this Mr. Leary amply illustrated from both Wesley's own reading lists and from his published works. It was amazing to realise the extent and scope of John's reading and interests and fascinating to hear his comments on a variety of subjects and writers. It became quite obvious that Wesley did not suffer fools gladly and was scathing of anything which he considered smacked of humbug. Mr. Leary divided his lecture into a survey of Wesley's reading in the early years, his interest in history and topography, natural philosophy, theology and divinity and finally he dealt with the many facets of Wesley's interest which defy easy classification. As an introduction to Wesley's reading and as a preparation for the 250th celebrations in 1988, Mr. Leary's Lecture is to be commended to a wider audience than was able to be present at Purbrook to hear this most interesting and informative lecture. Copies of the Lecture are available from Mr. A. A. Taberer, North Lodge, Bunbury, Cheshire or from Mr. Leary himself. (Price £1.50 + 24p postage.)

E. DOROTHY GRAHAM

In *Blackbirds and Budgerigars*, Norman Wallwork gives a concise and lively history of Methodist liturgical dress before surveying the confusions of the present and stating his recommendations for improvement. For £1.25 one can learn of W. H. Rule's addiction to the surplice and why Alexander Kilham wore gown and bands. Copies are available from the Rev. C. N. R. Wallwork, The Birches, Crosthwaite Road, Keswick, Cumbria, CA12 5PG.

The Baptist Historical Society has published *Faith, Heritage and Witness*, a modest collection of essays in honour of Dr. Morris West, the retiring President of Bristol Baptist College. It includes a piece by Gordon Rupp: "The Old Man Luther", possibly his last published work. Copies can be obtained from the Society at 4 Southampton Row, London, WC1B 4AB, no price stated.

Recent reprints include *From Ploughtail to Parliament*, An Autobiography by Joseph Arch, Century Hutchinson, £5.95 paperback; *John Wesley on the Sacraments* by Ole E. Borgen, Francis Asbury Press, \$12.95 softcover and *Methodism and Politics in British Society 1750-1850* by David Hempton, Hutchinson, £8.95 paperback.

## WESLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY — FINANCIAL STATEMENTS, 1986

Income and Expenditure Account for the Year ended 31st December 1986	Balance Sheet as at 31st December 1986	Notes to the Accounts
<b>INCOME.</b>	<b>ASSETS EMPLOYED (Note 2)</b>	<b>1—SUBSCRIPTIONS</b>
£	£	£      £
Subscriptions (Note 1) ... .. 2,900	Investments—	Unexpired Subscriptions at 1st
Donations ... .. 322	3½% War Stock (at cost) (Note 3) 225	January 1986 (estimated)—
Irish Branch ... .. 206	Current Assets—	Ordinary Members ... 1,146
Sales of <i>Proceedings</i> (back numbers) 20	Sundry Debtors ... 387	Life Members ... 550
“ other Publications, etc. ... 129	Income Tax recoverable 100	1,696
Annual Lecture Collection ... 21	National Savings Bank... 1,960	Received during year* ... 3,357
Library—Tickets, Donations, Sales 213	Trustee Savings Bank ... 1,526	Income Tax recoverable ... 97
W.M.H.S. Newsletter ... 36	Midland Bank (Deposit A/c) 1,186	5,150
Advertisements ... 80	“ (Current A/c) 78	<b>Less Unexpired Subscriptions</b>
Bank Interest ... 371	Cash in hand—Treasurer 5	at 31st Dec. (estimated)—
War Stock Dividend ... 8	5,242	Ordinary Members ... 1,750
4,306	Current Liabilities—	Life Members ... 500
<b>EXPENDITURE.</b>	Sundry Creditors ... 938	2,250
£	Subscript'ns paid in advance 2,250	£2,900
<i>Proceedings</i> and distribution 3,459	3,188	
Other Printing ... 155	Net Current Assets ... .. 2,054	
Library ... 273	£2,279	
Lecturer's Honorarium, etc. 33	<b>REPRESENTED BY</b>	
World Methodist Historical Soc. 25	Accumulated Funds—	
Administration Expenses 549	Balance at 1st January 1986 ... 2,543	
Insurances ... 21	<i>Deduct Excess of Expenditure over</i>	
Advertising ... 55	Income for the year ... 264	
4,570	(Signed) RALPH WILKINSON,	
Excess of Expenditure over Income £264	Honorary Treasurer. £2,279	
		<b>2—ASSETS EMPLOYED</b>
		The Library and stocks of Publications have not been valued, and are not included in these financial statements.
		<b>3—WAR STOCK</b>
		Market value at Balance Sheet date ... £78

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

Subject to the matters mentioned above, in my opinion the financial statements give a true and fair view on an historical cost basis of the state of affairs of the Society as at 31st December 1986, and of its deficit for the year then ended.

Barron & Barron,  
Bathurst House, 86, Micklegate, York, 4th June 1987.

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



## BOOK NOTICES

*Hymns and the Christian "Myth"* by Lionel Adey (University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver, 1986, pp. 269, £22.45)

Every serious student of hymnody should read this remarkable, scholarly book. Lionel Adey has set himself the task, not of writing yet another history of hymnody nor of describing the circumstances in which hymns were written, but of explaining "what they must have conveyed within the contexts in which they were sung". This task will be continued in a second book. The writer uses the term "Myth" without making a judgement about the historical truth of the central elements of the Christian Faith. He identifies God (Father, Son, Spirit) and the Four Last Things as elements of the "Myth" that are common to all major English denominations, and examines the way in which hymn-writers have treated those elements from New Testament times until early in the present century.

It has often been remarked that, over a period of 2,000 years, hymnody has gradually become more subjective: and Adey has no difficulty in amassing evidence in support of this thesis. The value of this first volume, however, does not lie in the proving of the thesis but in the evidence itself and in Adey's often quite arresting comments upon it. His treatment of "Our God, our help in ages past", pp. 108 ff. is very fine, as is his comparison of "Hark, the herald angels sing" with "O little town of Bethlehem", pp. 115f. One could easily spend half a day evaluating any one of his throw-away remarks, such as "He (Watts) asserts love of the Father but demonstrates it only of the Son", p. 107, or his reference to "the crowd of Victorian hymnists intent upon the consecration of arrested development", p. 173. In a book which tries to cover the hymnody of nineteen centuries, there is an obvious need to be selective, but one could hardly hope for a more intelligent selectiveness than we find. Readers of this journal will want to know how the Wesleys fare, and it is good to be able to report that they, and Watts, receive on the whole very fair and illuminating treatment and, as they deserve, considerable space. Not every reader will agree, however, that Watts's early poems "reveal a regressive personality, conceivably affected by a difficult birth as a first child", p. 107, or of Charles Wesley that "a regressive eroticism supplied much of his creative energy", p. 135, but such questionable attempts to psycho-analyse the long dead should not be allowed to detract from so much in this book that is excellent.

Not surprisingly, since so much ground is covered, there are some errors. In line 4 of the first indented quotation on p. 133, "am" is missing. More seriously, on p. 109 Adey quotes a stanza which he describes as a John Wesley emendation of a Watts psalm paraphrase. It is nothing of the kind; it is in fact an extract from another version, by Watts, of the same psalm. More common in these pages than errors of fact are forthright judgements with which many readers will take issue. Is "Breathe on me, Breath of God" really "the profoundest native English hymn on the Holy Spirit", p. 186? Has Adey correctly interpreted Newman's "double agony", p. 174? Can it be true that "even their most fervent admirers cannot acquit the poet Charles and the editor John of a fixation on the Cross and Blood", p. 125? But it is judgements like these, generally stimulating, occasionally infuriating, frequently revealing, that make this book so enjoyable to read.

In the next volume, Adey proposes to consider several hypotheses including one that "the internalization of the Myth in the hymns of Wesley may represent . . . an upward evolution of Christian consciousness, a sallying forth of the Christian ethic from the monastery or Puritan family to transform the world of unlettered masses into the kingdom of God". This reviewer, for one, will await Adey's conclusions with much interest.

NEIL DIXON

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*Silk Town : Industry and Culture in Macclesfield 1750-1835* by Gail Malmgreen. (Hull University Press, 1985, pp. xii, 259, £8.95)

In Macclesfield the rise of the factory based silk industry went hand in hand with the rise of Methodism. By 1800, Methodism was stronger in both absolute and percentage terms in Macclesfield than anywhere else in Cheshire. The town provided John Wesley with his lawyer and Jabez Bunting with his wife. Thus it is not surprising to find that Methodism bulks large in chapter five of Dr. Malmgreen's book, based on her Ph.D. thesis, which is devoted to the Evangelical Revival and its effects. Her work is firmly based on printed sources and the archives in the Cheshire Record Office and forms an excellent introduction to a complex subject.

Nevertheless, some strands in the story have been overlooked ; notably the Independent Methodists who had such a profound influence on Hugh Bourne. The role played by Methodism in the undenominational Macclesfield Sunday School could have been delineated more clearly and there are one or two slips which betray unfamiliarity with the structure of British Methodism—for instance it is implied (p. 161) that Trustees were responsible for the collection of class money. These are small points and future historians of Macclesfield Methodism will find this section of the book an indispensable point of departure.

E. A. ROSE.

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*The Gospel Pedlar : The Story of John Berridge and the Eighteenth-Century Revival* by Nigel R. Pibworth (Evangelical Press, 1987, pp. 313, £9.95)

Referring to Berridge's epitaph, Luke Tyerman confirmed that it represented "a truthful outline of the history of this remarkable man", but added : "to fill it up would require a volume". Although various brief accounts have appeared—notably those by Berridge's curate, Richard Whittingham, by Bishop J. C. Ryle and by Archbishop Marcus Loane—a worthy full-length biography has been a *desideratum* until now. Mr. Pibworth has filled the gap with a well-researched and sympathetic literary portrait of this highly individualistic evangelical stalwart in the eighteenth century. The available sources are not so numerous or informative as the author would have wished, but he has made good use of what lay to his hand.

Berridge, who was vicar of Everton in Bedfordshire from 1755 until his death in 1793, has too often been dismissed either as a buffoon (his particular brand of humour is not always appreciated) or—quite unjustly, so Pibworth claims—as a scurrilous controversialist. This book seeks to redress the balance, and reveals

a devoted and effective minister of the gospel who excelled both as a communicator and a pastoral counsellor, and whose single-mindedness in fulfilling his vocation is abundantly apparent. He called himself a "riding pedlar" because he travelled on horseback to preach the message of salvation in the open air over a wide area in the Home Counties and East Anglia.

After a spiritual crisis in his own life early in his ministry at Everton, the work of God in Berridge's parish was resuscitated, and in 1758 and more intensely in 1759 was accompanied by unusual phenomena, as described in John Wesley's *Journal*. Mr. Pibworth is cautious in his assessment of these occurrences, and is at pains to point out that they were confined to a limited period. Renewal in the Spirit continued to take place under Berridge's preaching, but the more sensational reactions disappeared.

Wesley, who had at first considered Berridge "to be one of the most simple as well as most sensible men whom it has pleased God to employ in reviving primitive Christianity", was later to revise his evaluation to some extent. As Berridge moved towards a more explicit Calvinistic theology, and Wesley pressed the doctrine of Christian perfection, a wedge was driven between the two men. In 1773 Berridge expounded his views on election in *The Christian World Unmasked*, which drew a reply from John Fletcher in the *Fifth Check to Antinomianism*. Pibworth disagrees with those who have seen Fletcher as producing irrefutable evidence to discredit Berridge. He thinks that Fletcher's whole case rested on a misconception and indeed a distortion of what Berridge taught, which was not to be confused with antinomianism. The controversy of the 1770s needs to be studied afresh, he adds.

The unjustifiable charge levelled against Berridge that he was an inordinate polemicist arises in part from the assumption that he was responsible for some scathing contributions to *The Gospel Magazine* over the signature of 'Old Everton' as well as the notorious satire on Wesley entitled "The Serpent and the Fox". But, as Canon Charles Smyth has shown, the external evidence makes the identification with Berridge most improbable, "for Berridge plainly deplored the controversy and would have been the last man deliberately to inflame it."

When in 1791 Berridge was told that the Countess of Huntingdon had died, he referred to the passing of Whitefield and more recently of the Wesleys. His informant replied that, although some differences of opinion existed between them on earth, no doubt they would be united in heaven. Berridge agreed. "Aye, Aye, that we shall ; for the Lord washed our hearts here, and he will wash our brains there."

A. SKEVINGTON WOOD

*Die Bibel in deutschsprachigen Methodismus mit Thesen zum heutigen Schriftverständnis aus evangelischer-methodistischer Sicht* by Karl Steckel (Christliches Verlagshaus, Stuttgart, 1987, pp. 92)

One of the trials of membership of the Faith and Order Committee is the contrast it affords between the light-hearted profession of devotion to theology on the lips of Methodist officialdom and the scant employment of their pens in the cause, a trial not much eased by the reflection that the committee is quite properly

composed in part of men and women whose contribution to the mind of the church is not of a literary kind. A discipline which might work wonders would be for them each to be required to produce a little book within the field of their special interest, relating how English Methodism has reached its present point. That is what Karl Steckel, one of the editors of the recent history of the German-speaking Methodists, does here for their approach to the Bible, on a scale comfortably in excess of the thirteen pages allowed for this subject in the three volumes of the *History of Methodism in Great Britain*. The denominational approach suffers, of course, from the fact that German Methodists, like the English, have been receivers rather than creators of theological fashions. But *what* they have chosen to receive is a matter of some interest, and their story has not only the interest of constant interchange with the United States, but the excitement of some other features lacking in our own history; in particular Wilhelm Nast was a student friend of David Friedrich Strauss at Tübingen and spent his life resisting that radical's attitude to scripture. Most of the scholars here discussed taught at the Methodist seminaries at Frankfurt and Reutlingen, and were in the main of monumental conservatism, keeping up the attitudes towards inspiration of the old protestant Orthodoxy longer than one would have supposed possible. Even at the beginning of the present century when Schempp and Spörri were prepared unequivocally to welcome historical criticism, they did so under the wing of Adolf Schlatter, the only one of the conservatives of the 'nineties still to be remembered. The Methodist scholars were therefore (in nineteenth-century terms) "positive". And even in the 1960s when the dust raised by Bultmann seemed to be settling, Methodists were strongly represented in a recrudescence of fundamentalist opposition to critical scholarship. What Steckel finally attempts to do is to keep all the possibilities open by advocating a Barthian view of the three-fold form of the Word of God, and seeking to make it actual through Wesley's reliance on tradition, experience and reason. The real proof of this pudding requires a much more substantial volume than the author's *Studiengemeinschaft* format permits; meanwhile, an English counterpart would be very welcome.

W. R. WARD

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*Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting Houses in Central England* by C. F. Stell. (H.M.S.O., 1986, pp. xviii, 276, £45.00.)

Writing a generation ago John Betjeman declared that (Victorian) Nonconformist chapels were "despised by architects, ignored by guide books, too briefly mentioned by directories".<sup>1</sup> Recognition has come at last in the shape of this sumptuous volume and its associated White Paper, published by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England. It is an inventory of Protestant Nonconformist buildings in the Midland counties of Shropshire, Staffordshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Warwickshire, Leicestershire, Rutland, Northamptonshire, Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire. All examples before 1800 are described in detail, often with several illustrations, those dated 1800-50 are described in outline while only select examples from 1850-1914 are featured—there are, for example, no central halls. Most importantly many chapels demolished since about 1940 are included. Of the three Methodist buildings described here in

full detail (Portland chapel and the New Room, Bristol and Epworth Street, Stoke-on-Trent), two have been demolished and the material in this volume is the fullest architectural description available of these lost buildings.

Here for the first time we have displayed the full variety of "vernacular England at prayer", from Salvation Army citadel and Brethren meeting hall to the splendours of the Catholic Apostolics, all recorded with meticulous care—often there is a measured plan, a careful sketch or an informative photograph and for the more prominent examples a concise history of the cause and a bibliography. Here is an eye that misses nothing—the medieval flautist that embellishes a former Wesleyan Mission Room at Milton under Wychwood or the original gable panel of Buxton Wesley lying in the manse garden.

This is an outstanding book, written with authority and passion, beautifully produced with over 500 illustrations. For those unable to buy the complete work, paperback offprints for single counties are available very cheaply.

Mr. Stell's survey is complete for the whole of England and this volume is but the first fruits of that survey. Yet the foreword by Lord Ferrers asserts that "the great bulk of the record prevents its publication as a whole." It would be a major tragedy if publication were restricted to this one volume. Such devotion and scholarship must be made available to the widest possible audience. Every English county now has its Pevsner. Why should it not also have its Stell?

E. A. ROSE

<sup>1</sup> *First and Last Loves* (Grey Arrow ed) p. 102.

Christopher Stell's work in Yorkshire can be sampled in *Calderdale Chapels*, an offprint published by the Halifax Antiquarian Society. It includes measured plans of two eighteenth century Methodist chapels: Heptonstall and Greetland. *Hallelujah!* (CBA, 1985, pp. 61, £2.95 from 112 Kennington Road, London SE11 6RE) is a practical guide to the recording of chapels and meeting houses. There is a very useful bibliography and a summary of legislation relating to Nonconformist places of worship as it stood in 1985. Less satisfactory is a booklet prepared for the 1986 Conference at Stoke-on-Trent, *Now and Then* by Paul Dickinson and Janet Hodgson (Countryside Publications, pp. 48, £2.00). This is a random and lacklustre collection of photographs of some chapels in the Chester and Stoke District. No attempt is made to trace architectural development or highlight significant detail.

E.A.R.

*Saints: Visible, Orderly and Catholic. The Congregational Idea of the Church* by Alan P. F. Sell (World Alliance of Reformed Churches, Geneva, 1986, pp. 173, £5.50, available from the Tavistock Bookroom, 86 Tavistock Place, London, WC1H 9RT)

Congregationalism is usually reckoned to be one of the three main forms of church order (the others being episcopalianism and presbyterianism). Dr. Sell, as a former Congregationalist now in the United Reformed Church, is concerned to show that Congregational values survive in the new church as well as being a contribution to a wider ecumenism. He proceeds by way of a selective historical

survey—selective, that is, because he does not explore all aspects of Congregational polity, but only those that illustrate the three themes of his title. The Congregational way has stood for the ideal of the gathered church of saints as against (for example) churches designed to include the whole of a given population regardless of spiritual condition. Equally important has been the belief that the church is primarily located in the local gathered community of saints rather than in a nationally organised body under a hierarchy of authoritative courts. These principles have been subject to considerable variations in practice. Thus “sainthood” has sometimes been tested by right belief and good conduct, sometimes by evidence of “conversion”. The self-sufficiency of the local church has very often been tempered by the use of wider associations though with carefully restricted powers. The established status of New England Congregationalism in the seventeenth century is a reminder that the tradition is not confined to later “Free Church” ideals. In view of past conflicts between Congregationalists and Presbyterians, it is not surprising that Dr. Sell is at pains to show that Congregationalist ideals were not betrayed by the URC union, though some Congregationalists did refuse to join it. Dr. Sell, though satisfied that the URC does include the Congregationalist marks of a “visible, orderly, Catholic” church, is most concerned that it may be weakest in its emphasis on “visible *saints*”.

This is an instructive book for Methodists to read, as it portrays a church tradition very different in many respects from their own. Yet, as is well known, Methodist “church” ideals are at least as complicated and variable as those of Congregationalism: indeed they have included much that amounts to “congregational” and “visible saints” ideals in tendency. If, as Dr. Sell remarks in passing, there was an oscillation between Reformed and Anabaptist emphases in Congregationalism’s roots, it would not be an exaggeration to say that Methodism’s roots included an oscillation between Anglicanism and Dissent (including—yes! Anabaptism). So, for the history and the contemporary reflections it includes, this little book offers instruction and challenge to other traditions as well.

HENRY D. RACK

*Groundwork of Christian History* by Diarmaid MacCulloch (Epworth Press, 1987, pp. 314, paper back, £8.50)

It takes a brave writer to attempt a history of Christianity (even of Western Christianity, as in this case) in three hundred pages. Diarmaid MacCulloch’s book commands admiration for the boldness with which the job has been tackled, even though one may want to qualify this approval somewhat on other grounds.

The author professes not to believe in “Church History”, meaning, I presume, in a narrowly ecclesiastical sense. What he is attempting here is to study the emergence and progressive development of organised Western Christianity against the context of secular history, and to analyse how successive generations of Christians have formulated their faith, built up their organisations, and tried to obey God within the intellectual, social and political framework of their day. Always there is this deep concern to understand the interaction between sacred and secular, church and world. Several chapters are in fact largely devoted to

aspects of secular life which impinged in crucial ways upon Christian history—the nature of Graeco-Roman civilisation, for instance, (chapter one), the Industrial and French Revolutions (chapter fifteen), early modern science and empirical philosophy (half of chapter fourteen). And throughout the whole book there is an acute awareness of how even the most sincere Christians act not only in response to an inward vision but to outward pressures, challenges and opportunities, making the best of a difficult job and often adopting the world's own standards in the process.

“The world is too much with us,” may well be the verdict of some readers. Mr. MacCulloch's riposte is forthright :

The history of Christianity is frequently sordid and depressing, and very frequently apparently sacred events turn out to have secular causes. Christians will remain beginners in their faith if they do not face up to this. (page 11)

But he does add this :

The miracle of the Church's story is that after all its mistakes, bewildering transformations and entanglements in human bitterness it is still there.

How well does he tell the “Church's Story” ? More by setting out large and significant developments and moulding them into a coherent intellectual pattern, than by attempting to convey all the colour and variety of Church history. Tempting byways are sternly resisted if they lead to developments which in the author's judgement had no lasting impact, or did not add significantly to the overall picture he was anxious to construct. The final selection of themes must have been the result of ruthless self-denial on the author's part, and the result is highly personal, reflecting his own criteria. Readers will no doubt be roused to consider how the book might have been differently done, but they can hardly fail to be impressed by the intelligence and scholarship which Mr. MacCulloch displays.

It may help briefly to outline the structure of the book. One third of it is devoted to the first four centuries, so intent is the author to set out the foundations of Christian life and thought. The dark ages are scamped over in a few pages. Two chapters span the middle ages, the main theme being the rise and subsequent decline of the papacy's dream of universal monarchy, the glory and the decay of medieval Christendom. There follow useful accounts of the Protestant and Catholic Reformations, and the religious strife of the seventeenth century. This leaves eighty pages for the history of Christianity since 1700, and here the author's problems of selection are seen at their most acute. He resolves the problem by taking as the central theme the conflict of faith and reason. It is in this context, incidentally, that the rise of Methodism appears (some three or four pages), but any serious treatment of Methodism after Wesley is impossible within the constraints Mr. MacCulloch has imposed. Only the most impressionistic treatment is possible for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with a few key themes outlined—German philosophy, Darwinian science, biblical criticism, and the Catholic and Protestant (fundamentalist) reactions to these for the nineteenth; ecumenism, Karl Barth, Vatican II and Pentecostalism for the twentieth.

The omissions here are all too clear, and each reader will no doubt make his or her own list. As a north easterner, I cannot but regret the lack of any considered

treatment of the age of Bede, and of the latter's significance as an historian. I also find it disappointing (and surprising in the light of Mr. MacCulloch's known interest in church architecture) that we are told nothing about the sacred buildings of Christendom, nor of the variety of ways in which Christians have fashioned them to suit their own insights and requirements.

On matters of presentation, the book has no illustrations or maps. The chronologies that precede each chapter are useful as far as they go, but are really too slight. And the guide to further reading is brief and arbitrary. A book intended as a "Groundwork" should have offered a fuller and more structured guide to further study than this.

Despite these criticisms, I commend this book. It will not tell you "all you need to know about Church History" but it will stimulate and challenge. Nor should its title lead to the conclusion that it is a textbook for beginners only; all those interested in the Christian story will find pleasure and profit in it. Mr. MacCulloch has offered a fair tribute to the historian's goddess Clio, who (he reminds us) began as a goddess of song and whose devotees "should entertain and delight as well as instruct".

GEOFFREY MILBURN

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*To Those in Need. The Story of Hull Methodist Mission 1847-1946* by James Hogg. (Kingston upon Hull Record Office, 79 Lowgate, Hull HU1 2AA. 1987, pp. 74, £1.25 plus postage.)

At the beginning of 1848 the Wesleyan Methodists of the Hull (West) circuit appointed a Mr. Hampshire as a town missionary "to bring the people to the Chapel, members to the Society and sinners to Christ". The work of Town or Home Missionaries was reviewed by the Conference of 1878 which re-emphasized their role in daily visiting, helping to alleviate affliction and poverty, and keeping a journal in which "remarkable instances of ignorance and social and moral degradation" were noted. By 1887 the four Hull Wesleyan circuits each had their own Town Missionary Committee to oversee this work. As in many other places the older city centre chapels were losing members as the more affluent residents of the area moved to the suburbs and in late 1887 it was decided that the name of the Hull Wesley chapel should be changed to Wesley Hall and the building used as a Home Mission station with a Joyful News Evangelist working from it. The decision of the 1889 Wesleyan Conference to permit Wesleyan Methodist Councils to be set up in large towns where there was more than one circuit and to be concerned with, among other things, "action for evangelistic and aggressive work" allowed the four Hull circuits with their influential lay members to come together and develop mission work in the city.

Mr. Hogg has provided us with a detailed account of the beginnings of this work and its development down to 1946. He writes with commitment and concern of the buildings and personalities who built and sustained the Hull Methodist Mission. This history of their work is a useful addition to our knowledge not only of the ways in which Conference decisions about missionary work were carried out in a large city but also as a reminder of the extent to which they were a response to local developments and how local activity often set the pace for central initiatives.



As such it is an indication of the importance of the role of the local historian of Methodism not only to chronicle local achievements, but to relate these to the wider context of national developments. The value of this publication would have been enhanced even further if the author had set his account in a firm statistical framework. The growth of the population of Hull is shown by using figures from the national censuses, but the place of the churches in the city and the task which they faced could have been brought into sharper focus by the use of the returns of the 1851 Census of Religious Worship, the report of which is cited as being used by the Rev. Charles Prest, a former Hull minister, to support his case for an increase in the Home Mission Funds. Similarly, the Supplement to the *Nonconformist* of 23rd October 1872 provides a statistical analysis of the position of the religious bodies of Hull.

Mr. Hogg deploys membership and other statistics to support his arguments at several points in the book but their usefulness and value would have been further enhanced if he could have consolidated them in tabular form to give an overall picture of the work he describes with such care. By beginning to measure quantity, local Methodist historians will be in an even stronger position to show the quality of the lives of the congregations with which they are concerned.

R. W. AMBLER

*The Labourer's Hire, The Payment and Deployment of the Early Methodist Preachers (1744-1813)* by A. Kingsley Lloyd. (Wesley Historical Society, 1987, pp. 38, £1.50)

Mr. Kingsley Lloyd's W.H.S. lecture was delivered in 1968, not long after the Epworth Press ceased to publish our lectures as a matter of course, and only in recent years have we found it possible to resume publication in one form or another. This lecture has suffered nothing from the passing of time, and has been well worth waiting for.

Mr. Lloyd deals with a subject which is basic to the development of the Methodist ministry out of Wesley's original order of travelling preachers. Their material maintenance was barely adequate in the early days of Methodism, and only that because these men, engaged by Wesley as he toured the country, were mostly young and mostly celibate. Added to their poverty and chastity was their required obedience to John Wesley. When, however, they became married men with families, many found they could no longer travel, while others faced incredible hardship. John Furz's wife, who died unclothed in bed because she had sold every garment to provide for her young family while her husband was away in distant circuits, was only an extreme case. The preachers themselves were expected to live on the hospitality of the Methodist people as they moved around, they were allowed to accept gifts in kind, but forbidden to accept money. That they ever evolved into a stipendiary ministry was due to the hesitant financial arrangements made by Wesley from time to time, and to the strong advocacy and careful organisation of such as Adam Clarke and Jabez Bunting in the following century. As late as 1753 Wesley, who by then had more than a hundred preachers for whom he was responsible, admitted that he had "barely the first outlines of a plan with regard to temporals".

From 1752 the preachers were granted an allowance of £12 per annum, payable

of course by the circuits and, in due course, a further £12 (hedged with conditions) if their wives were without private means! The terms "salary" and "stipend" used to describe the main source of the minister's income were not, I think, used during Wesley's lifetime, and when they came into use (unofficially?) at a later date they were interpreted in the sense of the original term "allowances". As Dr. Henry Bett used to point out to his students, Methodist ministers have never been paid salaries or stipends for work done, but allowances in advance to enable them to do their work free from financial anxiety.

From 1770 onwards a system was in use whereby the more prosperous circuits could contribute towards the maintenance of, or a proportion of the cost of maintenance of a preacher's wife in a less prosperous circuit, thus giving rise to such entries in the circuit accounts as "Half a wife . . . 18s 6d".

After Wesley's death the Preachers' Annuitant Society was established through the efforts of Dr. Adam Clarke, who was concerned about the "worn out preachers" as well as those still working. Dr. Bunting was a powerful advocate, from the commencement of his ministry, of the preachers' need for financial security. It is more fashionable to criticise Bunting than to praise him, and some of those who do are not perhaps aware of the personal debt they owe to him! The two doctors laid the foundation of the later Wesleyan, and later still Methodist, financial system which freed ministers from what Alfred Barrett, in 1854, described as "the care of procuring a means of temporal subsistence".

Mr. Lloyd's book is the only one in which this subject has been dealt with in any detail. Copies can be obtained from Mr. Taberer.

THOMAS SHAW

## LOCAL HISTORIES

*Hall Royd Methodist Church (Shipley, Bradford) 1887-1987* by Donald P. Raine (26pp.): copies price £1.50 post free, from the author at 41 Marlborough Road, Shipley, West Yorkshire, BD18 3NX.

*Lindwell Methodist Church, Greeland 1837-1987* (32pp.): copies (no price stated) from Rev. J. Trotter, 45 Jepson Lane, Elland, West Yorkshire HX5 0PY.

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**NOTES AND QUERIES**

## 1396. A WESLEY MEDALLION

In the vestry of our Heworth chapel, York, there is a framed medallion in metal of Wesley with the following printed matter on the reverse ; it is obviously as issued :

To the Methodist Connexion at Large.

The want of a new Methodist Chapel in Birmingham correspondent to the size and respectability of the Town has long been felt by the friends of Methodism, a considerable number of whom cannot be accommodated with sittings in the Central Chapel.

Subscriptions for the erection of a commodious place of Worship have already commenced and the profit arising from the sale of this interesting piece will be sacredly appropriated to the same purpose. The purchasers of these medals will be manifesting their liberality at the same time that the piece itself will operate as a memento of our obligation to the labour and learning of the Apostolic Man to whom we are indebted for our richest blessings. It will also remind us we are one Body throughout the World and with these enlarged views no undertaking will be too great for us to accomplish and surely no friend of Methodism will be without one of these impressions in his possession.

The friends in every circuit may be supplied by applying to Jas. Heeley, Manufacturers of fine Steel Toys, St Charles Street, Birmingham.

Price with plain rim 5/6, wrought 5/6. Jany. 1st 1820.

Printed by R. Peart, 38 Bull Street, Birmingham.

From the designation of Messrs. Heeley as "Manufacturers of fine Steel Toys", it is evident that what appears at first sight in its frame to be a brass medallion is in fact a stamped thin steel effigy with brass finish. Are many known still to exist ? How many were issued ?

OLIVER A. BECKERLEGGE.

## 1397. A JABEZ BUNTING COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUE.

Number 30 Myddelton Square, Islington, was the home of Jabez Bunting for the last 25 years of his life, following his appointment as Senior Secretary of the Wesleyan Missionary Society. As a result of representations made by our London Branch, the London borough of Islington agreed to affix to the house one of their commemorative "Historic House" plaques, inscribed : "Dr JABEZ BUNTING, 1779-1858, Leading Wesleyan Methodist. Lived Here 1833-1858".

The plaque was unveiled by the President of the Conference, the Rev. C. Hughes Smith, at a ceremony on Thursday, 20th March 1986. Among those present were ten descendants, one of whom, Mr. Daniel Bunting, had brought Jabez Bunting's baptism certificate of 1779 to add to the comprehensive display of Buntingiana assemblé in the large first floor room by the borough librarian, Mr. Stanley Marshall.

JOHN S. ELLIS.

## 1398. PROTRACTED MEETINGS

In the early years of the Leamington Primitive Methodist circuit (*circa* 1850), the Quarterly Meeting Minutes refer specifically to "protracted meetings" as well as lovefeasts and salvation meetings. Can any readers throw light on this particular type of meeting?

PAUL BOLITHO.

## 1399. A PROTEST AGAINST PROFANITY

The following extract is from *The Lincolnshire Free Press* of 19th September, 1916 :

With one dissentient, the members of the Gainsborough Wesleyan Circuit quarterly meeting on Wednesday passed the following resolution :- "That, having regard to the immense number of Methodist soldiers in our training camps and with the fighting forces, this quarterly meeting urges the Wesleyan Methodist Committee of Privileges to make immediate, and, if necessary, persistent, representations to the war office to put an end to the profane and blasphemous language used towards the sons of our Church—who are largely volunteers and not conscripts—by the non-commissioned officers on drill and parade. The Quarterly Meeting recognises our Methodist soldiers' demand for not only prayers, but the protection of the Church to which they belong, and calls upon the Connexional authorities to use all the power and influence they possess to abolish this growing evil."

Was this protest voiced by other quarterly meetings and was any action taken by the Committee of Privileges ?

NORMAN LEVERITT.

## 1400. THE VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE PRIMITIVE METHODIST CONFERENCE

The office of Vice-President of the Primitive Methodist Conference was created in 1872. The first to be elected was the Rev. Samuel Antliff. The first layman to be elected was Mr. George Charlton in 1876. The next layman to be elected was Thomas Bateman in 1884 and thereafter except for one year the Vice-President was always a layman. The Primitive Methodist constitution permitted either a minister or layman to be President or Vice-President. In 1909 Sir William P. Hartley, the great benefactor of Primitive Methodism, was elected President and that was the sole occasion after 1884 that a minister, the Rev. John Welford, was elected Vice-President.

Despite a search of the Primitive Methodist *Minutes* and the standard histories of the connexion, I can find no references at all for the reason for the office, the mode of election and what duties were involved. None of the other branches of the Methodist family had such an office. In the negotiations for Methodist Union, the Primitive Methodists insisted on the office of Vice-President. The constitution which was agreed was that the President should always be a minister and the Vice-President should be a lay person.

Has any member any information about the Vice-Presidency of the Primitive Methodist Conference ?

KENNETH B. GARLICK..

## 1401. THE MANUSCRIPT COLLECTION AT THE NEW ROOM, BRISTOL.

This collection is built around three collections of letters made by the Rev. Dr. William L. Watkinson (President of the Wesleyan Conference in 1897) in the early years of this century. Added to these are the contents of several autograph and scrapbook albums and some significant gifts of individual items, both letters and journals, making a total of some 1,200 items, of which approximately 150 are of eighteenth century date, the remainder being nineteenth century.

The collection at present contains eighteen letters of John Wesley and his two volume register of the Bristol society 1770-86 and large numbers of letters of important nineteenth century figures—including Adam Clarke (67 letters), Richard Watson (32), Thomas Jackson (30) and Jabez Bunting (66). There are over a hundred letters addressed to Jabez Bunting. As will be recognised, the bulk of the collection is Wesleyan in origin.

The Honorary Archivist will be pleased to supply for further details. The New Room is open daily 10-1 and 2-4 (except Wednesday and Sunday). Bona fide students wishing to use the collection should apply in writing, giving seven days' notice, to:

The Honorary Archivist  
John Wesley's Chapel (The New Room)  
36 The Horsefair  
BRISTOL BS1 3JE

J. B. EDWARDS.

## 1402. 'ENDLESS SONG'

In the short review of Mrs. Elsie W. Cooper's book so named in *Proceedings*, xlv, p. 190, our President Emeritus mentions that the title is taken from the first line of a poem, "My life flows on in endless song", and ventures the query—was this written by Mrs. Cooper herself? This is not so. In Sankey's *Sacred Songs and Solos* this piece appears under the title "How can I keep from singing?"—the line which concludes each of the three stanzas of 8.7.8.7.D. iambic. The tune is by I. D. Sankey himself; but the attribution of the words is "Anonymous", both in "Sankey" and in a volume entitled *Favorite Gospel Songs* published in 1894 by the Hope Publishing Co. of Chicago. One assumes therefore that the piece is American in origin. There is no chorus—though one has somehow a feeling that there ought to have been!

ALFRED A. TABERER.