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# Proceedings

OF THE

## Wesley Historical Society

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### THE DEVELOPMENT OF METHODIST PACIFISM, 1899-1939

**T**HE collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989 has come to symbolise the end of the Cold War, which for decades threatened to engulf the world in a conflict more terrible than any which had gone before. Some writers even believed for a time that the passing of the Cold War might signal the end of the kind of ideological divisions that helped to fuel the long-standing conflict between East and West. The conflicts in the Gulf and former Yugoslavia during the 1990s showed that such hopes were all too premature, while the recent terrorist attacks on America have served as a graphic reminder of the anger and hatred that still threaten to drag the world into war. At the time of writing, Christians from all the main churches in Britain are debating the rights and wrongs of a possible war against a government suspected of building weapons of mass destruction. The complex issues involved make it difficult to identify the correct course of action.

British Methodists have in fact always struggled to define their attitude towards the challenge of war. John Wesley himself was well aware of the horrors of battle, but endorsed the thirty seventh of the Thirty Nine Articles of the Church of England, which declared that 'It is lawful for Christian men at the commandment of their magistrate to bear weapons and serve in wars'.<sup>1</sup> The same was true of his brother Charles. A different position was taken by John Nelson, the uneducated son of a stonemason who devoted his life to evangelism after hearing John Wesley preach in Wiltshire. When Nelson was imprisoned in 1744 for refusing to take the King's shilling, he repeatedly told his inquisitors that 'I shall not fight; for I cannot bow on my knee before the Lord to pray for a man, and get up and kill him when I am done'.<sup>2</sup> A similar division was apparent throughout the nineteenth century. Some Methodist ministers and lay people supported the Quaker-inspired

<sup>1</sup> Useful material on Wesley's views can be found in Briane K. Turley, 'John Wesley and War', *Methodist History*, 29, 2 (1991), pp. 96-111.

<sup>2</sup> *Wesley's Veterans: Lives of Early Methodist Preachers told by themselves*, 7 vols (1909-14), 3 (1912), p. 120.

Peace Society that flourished throughout the century, and signed petitions roundly declaring that 'all war, whether offensive or defensive, is anti-Christian'.<sup>3</sup> Others, though, expressed deep scepticism about the wisdom and practicality of unconditional pacifism. The Wesleyan *Methodist Recorder* published a series of editorials in the 1870s arguing that war was an inescapable part of the human condition that could be supported when fought 'for a just cause, to free the enslaved, to lift up the down-trodden'.<sup>4</sup> In the 1890s, there was general support across all the Methodist churches for British intervention to protect the Armenian Christians from massacre by their Turkish rulers.<sup>5</sup> The rest of this article examines the development of pacifism within British Methodism during the years between 1899 and 1939. It argues that the Boer War and the First World War crystallised divisions between those who believed that war could never be reconciled with Christian principles and others who were convinced that the use of force was sometimes an inescapable necessity. The experience of the horrors of modern warfare played a critical role in encouraging pacifists in the Methodist Church to develop their links both with one another and with like-minded people beyond Methodism.

The outbreak of the Boer War in 1899 created tension within all the main Methodist churches. Most Wesleyan ministers supported the war, reflecting a deep-seated strand of imperialist sentiment evident from the middle of the nineteenth century. The prominent social reformer Hugh Price Hughes, who in the 1880s published numerous articles attacking the militarism of the age, became a fervent supporter of British policy in South Africa during the struggle against the Boers. He rejected the notion that war was incompatible with the teachings of Christ, suggesting that humanity was not yet developed enough to live entirely by 'the ethics of the New Testament'.<sup>6</sup> The two most prominent Wesleyan laymen in British politics, Robert Perks and Henry Fowler, echoed Hughes's sentiments.<sup>7</sup> Others, however, took a different view. One of the most determined Wesleyan critics of the war was Revd Samuel Keeble, author of such radical works of social criticism as *Industrial Day-Dreams*.<sup>8</sup> Keeble was incensed when Joseph Chamberlain,

<sup>3</sup> Peter Brock, *Pacifism in Europe* (Princeton, 1972)

<sup>4</sup> *Methodist Recorder*, January 8, 1878, March 8 1878.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, the editorial in the *Methodist Times*, September 17, 1896, and the comments in *Primitive Methodist Magazine* (1896), 717.

<sup>6</sup> *Methodist Times*, October 12, 1899 (Notes).

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, E.H. Fowler, *The Life of Henry Hartley Fowler, First Viscount Wolverhampton*, (London 1912) pp. 460 ff. Further information about Liberal Imperialists such as Fowler and Perks can be found in H. C. G. Matthew, *The Liberal Imperialists* (1973)

<sup>8</sup> Useful discussions of Keeble's views on a wide range of issues can be found in Michael Edwards, *Samuel Keeble: The Rejected Prophet* (Chester, 1977); Maldwyn Edwards, *S. E. Keeble, Pioneer and Prophet* (London 1949).

one of the main architects of British policy towards South Africa, was invited to speak at Wesley's Chapel in London.<sup>9</sup> Since critics of the war found it difficult to gain a hearing for their views in publications such as the *Methodist Recorder* and *Methodist Times*, Keeble helped to establish a new newspaper, the *Methodist Weekly*, designed to provide critics of the war with a place to express their views. When the *Methodist Weekly* was finally launched in November 1900, it carried numerous articles and letters condemning British policy in southern Africa. The Revd J. Birtwhistle noted that he was 'distressed and perplexed' that so many of his fellow ministers supported the war.<sup>10</sup> The Revd S. Lunn condemned 'the bloodthirsty spirit which is animating so many millions of our countrymen'.<sup>11</sup> The Revd Michael Elliot, from the Liverpool Peace Society, expressed relief at the appearance of a newspaper 'free from the Satanic spirit of war'.<sup>12</sup> The paper also carried attacks on Wesleyan ministers who had publicly suggested that war could improve the moral fibre of the British population.<sup>13</sup> While never attracting a very wide readership, the *Methodist Weekly* at least gave a voice to opponents of the war who were excluded from the established Wesleyan press.

The opposition to the war was even more pronounced among members of the other main Methodist churches. The *Primitive Methodist* newspaper, sensitive to divisions among its readership, usually tried to refrain from direct partisan comment on developments in southern Africa. The *Primitive Methodist World*, by contrast, took a more critical line towards British policy, roundly condemning a 'poor patriotism that sends out regiments to slaughter and be slaughtered while the patriots at home sing "Britons never shall be slaves"'.<sup>14</sup> Senior ministers in the Church, such as Revd. D. Watson, argued that while the Empire could be a source of pride to Britons, they should always remember 'that we have had to wade through rivers of blood to the position we hold'.<sup>15</sup> The Revd John Smith, a former President of Conference, wrote a series of long letters to *The Primitive Methodist World* taking issue with those who supported the war. He argued that British policy was driven by a handful of financiers motivated by a desire to bring about the 'utter destruction of the Boer Republic' so that they could get their hands on the gold reserves there.<sup>16</sup> Many members of the Methodist Free Church echoed his views. Numerous letters appeared in the *Free Methodist* attacking 'the mad and murderous slaughter' in South Africa, and

<sup>9</sup> Maldwyn Edwards, *Methodism and England* (1943), p. 176.

<sup>10</sup> *Methodist Weekly*, January 10, 1900 (letter by Birtwhistle).

<sup>11</sup> *Methodist Weekly*, November 8, 1900 (letter by Lunn).

<sup>12</sup> *Methodist Weekly*, November 15, 1900 (letter by Elliot).

<sup>13</sup> *Methodist Weekly*, June 27, 1901 (Notes); June 13, 1901 (Notes).

<sup>14</sup> *Primitive Methodist World*, 5 October, 1899.

<sup>15</sup> *Primitive Methodist World*, February 1, 1900 (report of a sermon by Watson).

<sup>16</sup> *Primitive Methodist World*, December 28, 1899; January 11, 1900 (letters by Smith).

suggesting that British policy was motivated by selfish economic reasons rather than a desire to improve the welfare of the native population in Boer controlled areas.<sup>17</sup>

Despite the vocal opposition to the Boer War visible in all the main branches of Methodism, few of those who spoke out against the conflict committed themselves at the time to an unconditional pacifism. Most critics instead condemned the conflict in southern Africa because it was not being fought for a just cause. While supporters of British policy such as Hugh Price Hughes argued that the war was being fought to defend the British Empire as a benign force in the world, critics such as Keeble and Smith treated it as a crude struggle for control over material resources. In the years following the end of the Boer War, the Methodist press published numerous attacks on the build-up of armaments, but there were few voices condemning war as such. It was only really with the outbreak of 'total war' in 1914 that large numbers of Methodists began to question in a sustained fashion whether they could ever reconcile the demands of their faith with support for a struggle such as the one taking place against Germany and Austria. The hierarchies of the various Methodist connexions quickly committed themselves to the position that the war against the central powers was a just one. The Wesleyan Extraordinary Committee on Privileges declared in September 1914 that Britain 'only drew its sword when plighted faith and national safety left no alternative',<sup>18</sup> while the 1915 Primitive Conference confirmed that most of its members believed 'the Nation was fighting for the right'. The Methodist press was full of letters from ministers and lay people defending the decision to go to war. Most newspapers were, however, willing to open their pages to those who were not convinced that the war really was, as one minister suggested, 'a war ... against principalities and powers'.<sup>19</sup> One Wesleyan minister argued in a letter to the *Methodist Times* that Christ's 'Kingdom had its birth in non-resistance and can only have its continuation in the same',<sup>20</sup> while another wrote that 'force is no remedy. As followers of the Prince of Peace, we know that war, of itself, can settle nothing'.<sup>21</sup> Expressions of concern about the war were even more pronounced in the Primitive Methodist press. The Revd Ben Spoor argued passionately in the *Primitive Methodist Leader* that 'force will never destroy force',<sup>22</sup> while an anonymous lay contributor bitterly attacked ministers who called on male members of their congregations to enlist in the army.<sup>23</sup> Similar sentiments were expressed in the *United Methodist* newspaper, which catered for

<sup>17</sup> *Free Methodist*, March 22, 1900 (letter by William Redfern).

<sup>18</sup> *Methodist Times*, September 17, 1914 (editorial)

<sup>19</sup> *Methodist Times*, November 12, 1914 (letter by Revd. F. W. Lewis).

<sup>20</sup> *Methodist Times*, October 8, 1914 (letter by Revd. H. B. Turner).

<sup>21</sup> *Methodist Times*, August 20, 1914 (letter by Revd. F. W. Lofthouse).

<sup>22</sup> *Primitive Methodist Leader*, September 17, 1914 (letter by Spoor).

<sup>23</sup> *Primitive Methodist Leader*, September 24, 1917 (letter by 'pax').

members of the United Methodist Church that had been formed in 1907. Methodist critics of the Boer War had focused for the most part on the supposed injustice of that particular conflict. Those who opposed the First World War were more inclined to argue that war itself could never be reconciled with the Christian conscience.

The introduction of conscription at the start of 1916 was a critical moment in the development of pacifism within the various Methodist churches, since it was no longer possible for young men simply to follow the dictates of their conscience by declining to enlist.<sup>24</sup> The Military Service Act allowed individuals to claim exemption on grounds of conscience, but the tribunal system established to hear individual cases was in practice notoriously biased and unfair.<sup>25</sup> Many tribunals refused to grant appellants exemption from combatant service, or only offered them the option of serving in a non-combatant role, which failed to meet the demands of those who did not want to carry out any work that might be construed as helping the war effort. The whole issue of the conscientious objectors (COs) created sharp division within Methodism, not least because many of those who sought exemption from military service were themselves Methodists. All the main connexions were pledged to respect the right of individual conscience, and a good deal of concern about the situation of COs was voiced at the 1916 conferences of the Primitive Methodist and United Methodist churches.<sup>26</sup> The Methodist press nevertheless carried numerous sharp attacks on men who refused to serve their country, printing sharply-worded letters that cast doubt on their courage and the honesty of their convictions.<sup>27</sup> The Wesleyan hierarchy stubbornly declined to express concern about the plight of those who were punished for refusing to serve in the armed forces. The introduction of conscription inevitably placed strain on the loyalties of Methodists who were committed to victory on the battlefield but also believed in the liberty of individual conscience.

Samuel Keeble had repeatedly denied that he was a pacifist during

<sup>24</sup> On the introduction of conscription and its consequences, see John Rae, *Conscience and Politics* (1970).

<sup>25</sup> For a particularly critical account of the tribunal system, see David Boulton, *Objection Overruled* (1967).

<sup>26</sup> For details of a formal resolution passed by the PM Conference of 1916, denouncing the 'deliberate savagery and brutality' of the tribunals, see the *Minutes of the Primitive Methodist Conference* (1916). For a frank account of the stark disagreement on the issue at the United Methodist Conference in the same year, see *United Methodist*, July 27, 1916 (report on Conference proceedings).

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, *Primitive Methodist Leader*, 17 August, 1916 (letter by John Whittaker).

the Boer War and its aftermath,<sup>28</sup> and he was still apparently reluctant to commit himself to such a position in the weeks following the outbreak of war in 1914.<sup>29</sup> By the first half of 1916, though, his position had changed. In the spring of 1916, he played a leading role in drafting an 'Address to the Methodist People' which denounced war in the most sweeping terms.<sup>30</sup> The signatories of the Manifesto committed themselves to the view that force could never be the correct Christian response in the face of violence, and declared that their faith required them to 'be killed rather than kill', that is renouncing the use of force even in self-defence. The Manifesto was circulated to all Wesleyan ministers, many of whom responded with angry accusations that the public expression of such sentiments could undermine the national war effort.<sup>31</sup> Keeble also played a leading role in the formation of the Peace Fellowship of the Wesleyan Church in the summer of 1916.<sup>32</sup> Similar fellowships were subsequently established in the Primitive Methodist and United Methodist churches as well. While the members of these organisations were not necessarily united in their beliefs, most were agreed that war could under no circumstances be reconciled with the Christian conscience. They needed considerable courage to hold such a position given the bellicose rhetoric that was increasingly the staple of British public life. It could even be difficult to express pacifist views in front of a Methodist audience. One critic who opposed a resolution at the 1917 Wesleyan Conference calling for the war to be continued until the enemy had been 'utterly vanquished' was repeatedly heckled and jeered from the floor.<sup>33</sup> Numerous letters and articles were published in the Methodist press denouncing 'Quakerism'.<sup>34</sup> Although most Methodists who supported the war grudgingly accepted the right of their fellow members to take a different view, those who declared their 'pacifist principles' were in practice often treated with scant courtesy.

The position was of course particularly urgent for those facing conscription. Whilst the destruction of official documents relating to tribunal hearings makes it difficult to draw firm conclusions, it seems

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, Keeble's lecture in Manchester in 1904 which accepted war as a necessary evil. Methodist Archives and Research Centre (MARC), Methodist Peace Fellowship file, 'The Early History of Methodist Pacifist Witness' (by Keeble).

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, Keeble's letter to the *Methodist Times*, 5 November, 1914

<sup>30</sup> A brief history recounting the circumstances surrounding the circulation of the Manifesto can be found in Keeble, 'The Early History of Methodist Pacifist Witness'.

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, the various letters in the *Methodist Recorder*, April 27, 1916.

<sup>32</sup> Keeble, 'The Early History of Methodist Pacifist Witness'.

<sup>33</sup> *Methodist Times*, July 26, 1917 (report on Conference proceedings).

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, the article by Revd James Lewis on 'Quakerism in Wesleyan Methodism', in *Methodist Recorder*, May 18, 1916.

that members of the Methodist churches who sought conscientious objector status broadly fell into two overlapping groups. One young Wesleyan CO from Bedminster spoke for many when he wrote that 'War cannot be justified by Christ's gospel; therefore, as a follower of Christ, I cannot allow even the State to come between God and myself'.<sup>35</sup> Others, however, refused to fight on the grounds that they did not accept the justice of the particular conflict between the triple entente and the central powers, which they condemned as an imperialist war fought to safeguard the economic interests of financiers and industrialists. The boundary between these two groups was sometimes unclear. Samuel Keeble, although committed to an unconditional pacifism by the start of 1916, was also convinced that the war was imperialist in character. Jim Simmons, a Primitive Methodist local preacher who became a prominent opponent of the war, blamed the 'war profiteers' and 'armament sharks' for the carnage on the Western Front.<sup>36</sup> Wilfred Wellock, an Independent Methodist from Lancashire, published the *New Crusader* journal that articulated a distinctive fusion of Christian pacifist and socialist principles.<sup>37</sup> Many Methodist pacifists had close links with radical secular groups like the No Conscription Front and the Independent Labour Party, while Wellock and Simmons themselves both went on to become Labour MPs in the inter-war years. Although most Methodist COs refused to fight on the grounds that participation in armed conflict was incompatible with their Christian principles, a significant proportion were convinced that radical social and political change alone could prevent war from taking place in the future.

Methodist COs who were willing to accept some alternative to military service were generally granted exemption by the tribunals. The same was not always true of those who sought absolute exemption, and refused to accept any work that might help the war effort. Conscientious objectors who belonged to one of the Methodist churches sometimes had particular problems convincing tribunals of their sincerity since a majority of their co-religionists were happy to support the war.<sup>38</sup> The questionnaire which appellants had to fill in when seeking to overturn a local tribunal decision tacitly assumed that men seeking exemption on grounds of conscience would normally belong to a sect such as the Quakers whose members were well-known for

<sup>35</sup> *Methodist Times*, January 27, 1916 (letter by G.T. Thorne).

<sup>36</sup> The best guide to Simmons' views can be found in his autobiography, Jim Simmons, *Soap Box Evangelist* (Chichester, 1972).

<sup>37</sup> For a brief discussion of Wellock's career, see Martin Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain, 1914-1945* (Oxford, 1980), pp. 50-1.

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, the comments by the chair of one tribunal chairman to a Wesleyan CO that he could not be granted exemption because it was 'not part of the creed of the Wesleyans that fighting is a wicked thing'; *Methodist Times*, March 2, 1916 (letter by Owen Rattenbury).



refusing to serve in the armed forces.<sup>39</sup> Some Methodist ministers were happy to speak before the tribunals in support of members of their congregation, even if they were not themselves pacifists, while representatives from groups such as the Wesleyan Peace Fellowship also offered advice and support to COs seeking exemption from military service. Those who refused to abide by the tribunal's decision could face a hard fate. Many were imprisoned under harsh conditions, surrounded by guards and fellow-inmates who had little sympathy for men widely regarded as 'shirkers'. One Wesleyan CO left prison in 1918 on a stretcher, doomed to be an invalid for the rest of his life, while the body of another young conscientious objector who died in Dartmoor was stoned by locals as it was taken to the station for transport home.<sup>40</sup> Nor were Methodist COs always treated with much kindness in their own churches and chapels. While records suggest that the rights and wrongs of the war were seldom discussed in much detail in local circuits, the issue of conscientious objection often aroused local passions, leading to ostracism and, in some cases, destruction of property.<sup>41</sup> One Primitive Methodist minister may not have been exaggerating so much when he said that it was sometimes easier to face the battlefield than the sneers of the community.

The First World War marked a critical moment in the emergence of a strong pacifist strand within the main branches of Methodism, as the horrors of total war convinced many Methodists that violence and slaughter on such a scale could never be reconciled with Christian beliefs. The end of hostilities in 1918 reduced the acerbity of debate on such subjects as the status of conscientious objectors, and hopes ran high that the conclusion of the 'war to end all wars' meant that the world would never again witness such destruction. The establishment of the League of Nations in 1919 was greeted with particular enthusiasm. The annual Conferences of all the Methodist churches routinely passed resolutions in support of the League and collective security, while the Methodist press carried numerous articles arguing that peace would only be assured when there was general acceptance of the 'idea of the human race as one family'.<sup>42</sup> In actual fact, though, the widespread support within Methodism for the League concealed important divisions. Pacifists such as Keeble believed that the League should mobilise public opinion to deter aggression, rather than making use of economic sanctions or military force. Others, such as Rev. A.W. Harrison, were convinced that the League could only establish

<sup>39</sup> Copies of the questionnaire, along with details of the cases of a number of Methodists who appealed to the Middlesex Appeal Tribunal, can be found in Public Record Office, MH 47/66.

<sup>40</sup> *Methodist Times*, March 20, 1919 (Notes); *Primitive Methodist Leader*, November 6, 1919 (article on Fellowship of Freedom and Peace).

<sup>41</sup> Robert Moore, *Preachers and Politics* (Cambridge, 1972), p.p. 199-200.

<sup>42</sup> *Methodist Times*, February 20, 1919 (Notes).

international order if it was allowed to call on member nations to use armed force.<sup>43</sup> Throughout the 1920s, these differences were largely concealed by a somewhat inchoate consensus that collective security represented the best way of placing 'the international relations of the world upon a basis in accordance with Christ's teachings'.<sup>44</sup> Differences about the meaning of 'collective security' itself were largely glossed over. It was only in the turbulent decade leading up to the outbreak of the Second World War that grave tensions once again began to emerge within Methodism over questions of peace and war. The rise of Nazism, and the emergence of the 'axis' between Berlin, Rome and Tokyo, raised the critical question of how Britain was going to respond in the face of such a profound challenge to international order.

In November 1929 the main Methodist churches organised a large peace rally at London's Kingsway Hall, at which speakers agreed on the need for Britain to offer maximum support to the League of Nations in Geneva.<sup>45</sup> A few days before the Conference, however, a young Wesleyan Minister, Revd Leslie Weatherhead, published an article in the *Recorder* expressing his fear that a generation which had grown up knowing little 'of the wickedness of war' might not be resolute enough in opposing any future conflict. Looking back to the horrors of the First World War, he argued that 'the very medals awarded for valour mean murder and mutilation, tears and treachery, lust and lies'.<sup>46</sup> Weatherhead's provocative language infuriated many readers of the *Recorder*, and he was subsequently accused by many correspondents of 'slander' against those who had given their lives for their country.<sup>47</sup> While the furore surrounding the article died down after a few weeks, it revealed the continuing existence of deep divisions within Methodism. The subsequent creation of a new united Methodist Church in 1932 took place at a time when the international climate was becoming ever more threatening. The failure of the League of Nations to respond effectively to Japanese aggression in the Far East during the early 1930s aroused great concern in Britain. The East Fulham by-election and the celebrated 'King and Country' debate at the Oxford Union showed that public opinion was increasingly agitated about the prospect of a future war that could prove even more destructive than the conflict of 1914-18. In the spring of 1933, the Revd Henry Carter, Secretary of the Temperance and Social Welfare Department, wrote an article for the *Recorder* in

<sup>43</sup> Harrison's views were set down in his book *Christianity and the League of Nations* (1928).

<sup>44</sup> The words are taken from a special resolution passed by the 1917 Wesleyan Conference.

<sup>45</sup> *Methodist Recorder*, November 14, 1929 (report on Great Peace Rally at Kingsway).

<sup>46</sup> *Methodist Recorder*, November 7, 1929 (Weatherhead, 'War').

<sup>47</sup> *Methodist Recorder*, November 14, 1929 (letters By Revd A. T. Cape, Revd E. Smith); *Methodist Recorder*, November 21, 1929 (letter by Revd F. Brown).

which he argued that 'the abolition of war ... is dependent upon the absolute renunciation of the war-spirit by the Christian because he is a Christian'.<sup>48</sup> He went on to declare that he would 'reason, preach and write' against any future war. Carter's letter quickly became a rallying point for pacifists within the newly-united Methodist Church. The Revd Donald Soper, who had already been involved in a number of initiatives to promote international peace, sent a letter to the *Recorder* claiming that pacifism was 'a direct and simple implication of our Christian faith'. The Revd Leslie Jolie wrote to the paper suggesting that 'The only thing that can end war is a determined refusal to fight'.<sup>49</sup> A few months after his *Recorder* article, Henry Carter played a pivotal role in establishing the Methodist Peace Fellowship, whose founding manifesto declared that war was 'contrary to the spirit, teaching and purpose of Jesus Christ our Lord'. The organisation quickly became the main rallying point for pacifists within the Methodist Church over the following years, attracting the support of some 850 ministers by the late 1930s, as well as a large number of lay people.<sup>50</sup>

The pacifism of members of the Peace Fellowship continued to be based, in Soper's words, on a profound emotional conviction that 'war is absolutely contrary to the spirit and teaching of Jesus Christ'.<sup>51</sup> Few of its members engaged in a sustained manner with the wider intellectual debate about Christian attitudes towards war and peace that took place throughout the 1930s. There was always some disagreement between members of the Fellowship as to whether pacifism was an absolute Christian duty, regardless of practical consequences, or whether a principled refusal to support war in any form could actually help to transform the texture of international politics. Soper observed optimistically that 'pacifism contains a spiritual force strong enough to repel any invader',<sup>52</sup> but his books and articles never really spelled out in detail the way in which this might work in the dangerous international environment of the 1930s. Many members of the Fellowship became active in the wider peace movement that developed in Britain during the 1930s. Soper, for example, played a significant role in the Peace Pledge Union set up by the Anglican minister Dick Sheppard,<sup>53</sup> while Carter accompanied the erstwhile Labour leader George Lansbury on a number of his 'embassies of reconciliation' to central Europe. Both men were determined not only to declare their

<sup>48</sup> *Methodist Recorder*, March 23, 1933. Useful discussions of Carter's life and work can be found in E.C. Urwin, *Henry Carter, C.B.E.* (1955); Maldwyn Edwards, *Methodist Social Reformers* (MARC, MAR 215A.31).

<sup>49</sup> *Methodist Recorder*, March 30, 1933 (letters by Soper, Jolie).

<sup>50</sup> A history of the MPF can be found in Keeble, 'The Early History of Methodist Pacifist Witness'.

<sup>51</sup> Donald Soper, *Question Time on Tower Hill* (1935), p. 38.

<sup>52</sup> Quoted in Michael Pugh, 'Pacifism and Politics in Britain', *Historical Journal*, 23 (1980), p. 645.

<sup>53</sup> On the PPU, see Ceadel, *Pacifism, passim*.

personal detestation of war, but also to support and promote any measures that might make it less likely in the future.

The whole question of the Methodist Church's attitude towards peace and war was a bitterly divisive issue throughout the 1930s. The Peace Fellowship was subject to numerous attacks on the pages of the *Recorder* from those who believed that the renunciation of violence represented an abdication of responsibility. The 1934 Conference witnessed bitter debates on subjects such as the role of Officer Training Corps in schools and the relationship between Methodist chaplains and the War Office. Many delegates felt that Henry Carter was using his position as Secretary of the Temperance and Welfare Department to force his views on Conference, while there was also widespread condemnation of the supposed arrogance displayed by pacifists who refused to accept the will of the majority.<sup>54</sup> Attempts were made to smooth over the divisions at the 1935 Conference by sponsoring a resolution acceptable to both sides, while the 1936 Conference in Newcastle appointed a committee to report back the following year on the whole issue of the Methodist Church's attitude towards peace and war. The Committee recommended that the Methodist Church should continue to treat the whole question as one of individual conscience, a policy that was confirmed by the 1937 Conference.<sup>55</sup> Despite these efforts to smooth over the divisions, however, the pages of the Methodist press continued to be filled with bad-tempered discussions about international developments, particularly in the second half of the 1930s, when the odious character of the fascist regimes in Italy and Germany became increasingly obvious. The *Recorder* carried debates on such subjects as 'Are Armaments Consistent with Christianity', which revealed sharp divisions between the contributors,<sup>56</sup> while critics of the Peace Fellowship repeatedly accused its officials of misusing official resources to further its objectives. Conference's commitment to 'liberty of conscience' helped to prevent a formal split, but it did little to bring the two sides together. Opinion within the Methodist Church, like opinion in Britain generally, was deeply split on how best to respond to storm clouds that gathered over Europe during the 1930s.

It was seen earlier that Methodists have been divided over the proper Christian attitude towards war from the time of Wesley. This article has traced the development of these divisions through the first few decades of the twentieth century, paying particular attention to the way in which pacifist sentiment among British Methodists was crystallised by war and the threat of war. While there was general agreement that all Methodists should work for 'the establishment of a world order based upon righteousness, abiding good-will and peace', there were repeated

<sup>54</sup> *Methodist Recorder*, July 26, 1934 (report on Conference proceedings).

<sup>55</sup> For further details, see the various *Conference Minutes*.

<sup>56</sup> *Methodist Recorder*, February 10, 1938.

disagreements as to whether Christ's injunction to 'turn the other cheek' should be treated as a literal command. Men such as Samuel Keeble, Donald Soper and Henry Carter came to the view that the ethical teachings of Christ meant that the Christian should never take up arms or help others to do so. Nor were they content simply to make a personal commitment to this effect; they also sought to persuade others both within and beyond Methodism to follow their lead. It was for this reason that they frequently infuriated fellow-Methodists who did not agree with their views. The decision of the Methodist Church to commit itself in the 1930s to the principle of 'liberty of conscience' on the subject, which effectively continued the policy of its forebears, implicitly assumed that those who were at odds on the proper Christian attitude towards war would 'agree to differ'. In practice, though, much of the debate that took place in the years between 1900 and 1939 was ill-tempered precisely because the issue aroused such strong emotions on both sides.

The language used by both sides to discuss the problems posed to the Christian conscience by war was decidedly unsophisticated. During the inter-war years, numerous theological and philosophical works appeared discussing the problem of war from a Christian perspective. Writers such as Charles Raven and G.H.C. Macgregor sought to develop a coherent defence of Christian pacifism,<sup>57</sup> while others such as Karl Barth and Reinhold Niebuhr took a different line, arguing that it was not possible to apply the ethical teaching of the Sermon on the Mount uncritically to the complex problems of the real world.<sup>58</sup> Few Methodists who wrote or spoke on the problem of war tried to locate their views within these wider debates. Pacifists such as Soper and Carter effectively argued that the Christian ethic should be treated as an absolute injunction, but their message was normally couched in an emotional rhetoric that at times betrayed a certain lack of clarity about how best to confront the tough realities of international politics. Their critics, by contrast, relied too heavily on the language of 'common sense' and patriotism when seeking to put forward their own views. The debate was as a result usually rather sterile, since both sides were so committed to their position that they were unable to pay proper attention to opposing arguments. Even the briefest glance at the correspondence column of the Methodist press and the minutes of Conference debates shows that the same protagonists appeared time and again in discussions on the subject of war. It has sometimes been argued

<sup>57</sup> Charles Raven, *Is War Obsolete?* (1935); G.H.C. Macgregor, *The New Testament Basis of Pacifism* (New York, 1954)

<sup>58</sup> See, for example, the various writings of Barth collected in Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts* (London, 1976); among Niebuhr's voluminous writings, see *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics* (New York, 1934) and *Beyond Tragedy* (1938).

that Methodism has from its earliest days spoken to the emotions rather than the mind. Such a claim is of course too simplistic, but it is nevertheless true that the debate about peace and war which took place between the outbreak of the Boer War and the Second World War frequently owed too much to emotion and too little to sustained reflection on the difficulty of relating the Christian ethic to the difficulties of everyday life.

MICHAEL HUGHES

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## NOTES AND QUERIES

### 1552 COPY OF THE *COMPENDIUM OF LOGICK* FOUND

When John Wesley was detained by inclement weather at Tan-y-bwch, he made good use of his time by translating the Latin text of Henry Aldrich's *Artis Logicae Compendium*. Students of Methodist history will know that this work went through three editions in 1750, 1756, and 1790. Furthermore, both historians and theologians in the Wesleyan and Methodist traditions will be aware of the importance of this document for young Wesley and his use of it in the Kingswood School and the Methodist Societies.

While doing research in the Bodleian library for my D. Phil. thesis at Oxford University, I came across a copy of *The Compendium of Logick* (1750).. contained in a bound volume entitled 'Pamphlets' (shelf mark 1419 f 1794 [2]), there are eighteen unidentified documents with the word *compendium* in their title. The second one in the volume is Wesley's *Compendium of Logick*. It is a copy of the first edition.

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### MATERIAL REQUIRED

Dr Patricia Batstone is collecting material for a forthcoming history of Honiton Methodism. She would be grateful to hear from anyone with information or documents dated before 1971, when the old church was sold. Material should be addressed to Dr Batstone at 5 Foxglove Close, Dunkeswell, Honiton, EX14 4QE.

## A TANGLED WEB: THE GILBERTS OF CORNWALL AND THE GILBERTS OF ANTIGUA

JOHN Wesley wrote the following in his journal at Bristol on 19 April 1763: ‘...I paid the last office of love to Nicholas Gilbert, who was a good man and an excellent preacher, and likely to have been of great use. But God saw it best to snatch him hence by a fever in the dawn of his usefulness.’ In a footnote to this passage, Nehemiah Curnock, the editor of the early twentieth century edition of Wesley’s journals, refers the reader to an account by F. F. Bretherton and ultimately to Luke Tyerman’s triple-decker Victorian biography of John Wesley. Both sources agree that Nicholas Gilbert was the son of the Antiguan Methodist Nathaniel Gilbert (sometimes referred to by historians as Nathaniel Gilbert III),<sup>1</sup> a man best remembered for introducing Wesleyan Methodism into the Western Hemisphere. This father-and-son link has recently been accepted accepted by Samuel Rogal in his biographical dictionary.<sup>2</sup> In the new edition of Wesley’s journals, W. Reginald Ward also follows Curnock, but he hedges a bit ‘Nicholas Gilbert, *said to be a son of Nathaniel Gilbert of Antigua, became an itinerant in 1744 ...*’<sup>3</sup>

There are similar uncertainties surrounding Nathaniel Gilbert and his Antiguan-born brother Francis. In three of his journal entries, John Wesley refers to his visits to ‘Mr Gilbert’s’ in Wandsworth (the entries dated 17 January and 29 November 1758 and 13-15 February 1759).<sup>4</sup>

Curnock provides a long explanatory note that begins by talking briefly about Nathaniel Gilbert of Antigua but then unexpectedly shifts to Francis Gilbert, who then takes centre stage. Francis ‘through gaiety and misfortune [in Antigua], was reduced to poverty. He sought concealment in England ...,’ where he soon became a Methodist member. When he sent his brother Nathaniel one of John Wesley’s publications, Nathaniel altered his opinion of Wesley. After two years Francis returned to Antigua’. Curnock continues: ‘He invited John Fletcher to accompany him as missionary to the Africans, but he declined, doubting

1 *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A. M.*, Nehemiah Curnock, 8 vols. (1909-16), V, p. 10 and n. 2; L[uke] Tyerman, *The Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A., Founder of the Methodists*, 3 vols. (New York, 1872), II, p. 299; Francis Fletcher Bretherton, *Early Methodism in and around Chester. 1749-1812* (Chester, 1903), p. 82.

2 Samuel J. Rogal, *A Biographical Dictionary of 18th Century Methodism*, 10 vols. (Lewiston, New York, 1997-99), II, p. 194

3 Wesley, *Journal and Diaries*, ed. W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, 6 vols to date (Nashville, 1988- ), IV, p. 283 n. 14 (emphasis added).

4 Wesley, *Journal*, IV, pp 247-8, 292, 299

his fitness for such work. Nathaniel Gilbert himself became an evangelist. His brother joined him.<sup>5</sup> Francis's two years in England (c1757-59) and his encounters with John Wesley are obviously crucial events in Curnock's account, but it is not entirely clear if Francis was the 'Mr. Gilbert' of Wandsworth or if Nathaniel was also in England around this time. In the new edition of the journals, Ward follows Curnock's interpretation on this matter but with a slight variation that will be discussed below.<sup>6</sup>

To complete the triangle of confusion, many writers are in a quandary when trying to specify whether Francis or Nicholas was the protagonist in certain episodes. This can be seen in John Telford's annotation of two letters written by John Wesley in early 1759. In one, addressed to the Countess of Huntingdon on 10 March, Wesley writes 'I designed to have spent but one night with [the Rev. John Berridge of Everton]; but Mr. Gilbert's mistake (who sent him word I would be at Everton on Friday) obliged me to stay there another day, or multitudes of people would have been disappointed.'<sup>7</sup> In the other, dated three weeks earlier, Wesley writes to Samuel Furley of Bristol: 'I will desire Mr. Gilbert to see whether the four volumes of the [*Christian*] *Library* which you mention can be spared. And if they can, if they are not necessary for the making up of sets, they will be sent with the last *Journal* and the *Pilgrim's Progress*.'<sup>8</sup> In both cases, Telford confidently identifies 'Mr. Gilbert' as Nicholas Gilbert.

Telford almost certainly erred in making at least one of these identifications. In fact, many of the foregoing conclusions offered by historians and editors on Nicholas, Nathaniel and Francis Gilbert are either misleading or wrong. Since there continue to be questions about the relationships among the various Gilberts who became prominent in early Methodism, it seems appropriate to re-examine the relevant primary sources. It turns out to be relatively easy to determine the putative relationship between Nicholas Gilbert and Nathaniel Gilbert and to resolve the confusion surrounding Nathaniel and Francis in the late 1750s. Trying to reconcile the numerous perplexing statements about Francis and Nicholas is more difficult. While an examination of the evidence does not lead to absolute certainties regarding these two men, it does suggest some guidelines for researchers in this field.

One of the most helpful documents on the relationship between Nicholas and Nathaniel is 'A short Acct. Of Gods Dealings with a Sin[n]er from his Infancy,' an autobiographical sketch written by

5 *Ibid.*, pp 247-8 n. 6.

6 Wesley, *Journal and Diaries*, IV, pp. 134 and n. 29; 172 and n. 82; 177.

7 *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley. A.M.*, ed. John Telford, 8 vols. (1931), IV, p 58.

8 *Ibid.*, p.51.



Nicholas Gilbert in 1760.<sup>9</sup> Nicholas gives no indication in this manuscript that he had any links to Nathaniel Gilbert or the West Indies. Instead, he begins by discussing some of the trials of his childhood. Although he resolved at one point 'to leave the company of the wild unthinking boys with whom I was brought up,' he found that 'my evil would not be restrained, but anger, prid[e], and vanity captivated my whole soul, and preyed upon me continual[l]y.' The location of these events is suggested when he states that he first heard of Methodists in Cornwall in 1742.<sup>10</sup> He decided to hear them preach in 1744, and soon thereafter he became a member. Two years later, he started exhorting his neighbours and then speaking from the scriptures two or three times a week, an indication that he was acting as a local preacher in fact, if not in name. He states that his formal itinerancy began in 1749.

Although the date of Nicholas's birth is not known, he recalls in his autobiographical sketch that he was about nineteen years old when he first became drawn to the Methodists in 1744. He would thus have been born in about 1724/25 and would have died before reaching the age of forty. The exact birth date of Nathaniel Gilbert III is likewise unknown, but recent reference works suggest 1721.<sup>11</sup> The two men obviously could not have been father and son. Could they have been brothers, the sons of Nathaniel Gilbert II of Antigua? While the chronologies of their lives would allow for the possibility, such a conclusion is undermined not only by Nicholas's Cornish childhood but also by extensive genealogical work on the Antiguan Gilberts undertaken and published towards the end of the nineteenth century. The Gilbert family tree does not contain any son of Nathaniel who somehow made his way to Cornwall or, indeed, any male named Nicholas in any generation.<sup>12</sup> There is, in short, no evidence from either side of the Atlantic suggesting that Nicholas Gilbert was related to the Gilberts of Antigua.

The second pairing, Nathaniel and Francis (1724/5-1779), figures prominently in the momentous visit to England of 1757-59, a visit that resulted in the establishment of Wesleyan Methodism in the Western Hemisphere. Curnock's annotations to John Wesley's journal do not

<sup>9</sup> John Rylands University Library of Manchester, Methodist Archives and Research Centre [hereafter MARC], Early Methodist Volume (Black Folio), p. 63.

<sup>10</sup> For context, see Francis Truscott, 'Origin of Methodism in Cornwall,' *Methodist Magazine*, (1820), pp. 538-42, especially the anecdote on Redruth (p. 541).

<sup>11</sup> Lesley G. Anderson and Frank Baker, 'Gilbert, Nathaniel,' in *The Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography 1730-1860*, ed. Donald M. Lewis, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1995), I, p. 439; John A. Vickers, 'Gilbert, Nathaniel (c.1721-1774)' in *A Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland*, ed. Vickers (Peterborough, 2000), pp. 241-2.

<sup>12</sup> Vere Langford Oliver, *The History of the Island of Antigua*, 3 vols. (1894-99), II, pp 12-13.

clearly indicate if Nathaniel was in England during this period. Instead, Curnock states, among other things, that during Francis's two years in England, he sent a copy of Wesley's *Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* to Nathaniel in Antigua. Yet sharp-eyed readers might note that all three relevant journal entries referring to Mr. Gilbert's house in Wandsworth are indexed in Curnock under 'Gilbert, Nathaniel.'<sup>13</sup> The simplest way for readers to reconcile this material is to conclude that 'Mr. Gilbert's house' belonged to Nathaniel, a resident of Antigua, but it was occupied for two years by Francis, a follower of John Wesley. After trying unsuccessfully to get John Fletcher to join him, Francis rejoined his brother in Antigua in 1759. It is apparent, however, that Curnock has confused Francis with Nathaniel. A large secondary literature on this subject agrees that it was Nathaniel who was in England for two years, Nathaniel who invited Fletcher to go to Antigua,<sup>14</sup> and Nathaniel who brought Wesleyan Methodism to the New World when he returned to Antigua in 1759. For his part, Francis had probably settled in England in the late 1740s and apparently did not set foot in Antigua again until 1763.<sup>15</sup>

It was obviously unwise of Ward to follow Curnock's interpretation of these events for the new edition of John Wesley's journal. Thus, while Francis was: 'taking refuge in England in disgrace,' according to Ward, he converted to Methodism and sent Nathaniel one of John Wesley's publications. Ward continues: 'When Francis returned to Antigua two years later in 1759, the pair became evangelists and pioneered Methodist work in the West Indies.' Yet Ward apparently felt a need to acknowledge the secondary literature that places Nathaniel in England in the late 1750s. Ward's concession to these narratives can be found in an annotation to the Wesley journal entry for 29 November 1758. The note identifies 'Mr. Gilbert, a gentleman, lately come from Antigua' as Nathaniel Gilbert. With this, Ward can imply that during Francis's two-year stay in England, he sent Methodist writings to his brother in Antigua and as a result, Nathaniel visited him. Readers would conclude

<sup>13</sup> Wesley, *Journal*, IV, pp. 247-8 n. 6; VIII, p. 396. In n. 6, Curnock commits another obvious error. He states that Francis Gilbert was a member of a Madeley class with Mary Fletcher. Since Mary went to Madeley only after she married John Fletcher in 1781 and Francis Gilbert died in 1779, they could not have been members of a Madeley class at the same time.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Southey, *The Life of Wesley and the Rise and Progress of Methodism*, ed. Maurice H. Fitzgerald, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1925 [1st ed., 1820]), II, p. 267.

<sup>15</sup> MARC, DDP 1/34, Eulogy for Mr. Gilbert (July 1779), states: 'He had been a member of Mr. Wesley's society about 30 years...' [Gareth Lloyd, ed.], *Catalogue of the Early Preachers Collection* ([Manchester], 1995), p. 29, probably errs when he concludes that this anonymous document is a tribute to Nicholas, who had died sixteen years earlier.

that Nathaniel's visit must have been relatively brief since he was back in Antigua when Francis arrived in 1759. Still, Ward's account, like Curnock's, remains astonishingly vague on many of these matters and contains erroneous statements and implications. Francis was not in England for merely two years in the late 1750s, for example, and he did not return to Antigua in 1759. To sum up, Nehemiah Curnock's garbled account in a standard reference work published in 1913 served to disseminate many misconceptions regarding the Nathaniel and Francis Gilbert for eighty years, and Reginald Ward's similarly confused account published in 1992 will probably lead unwitting scholars astray on these matters well into the twenty-first century. The confusion between Francis and Nicholas is much more difficult to unravel. While information on Francis's activities during the 1750s and early 1760s is fragmentary and open to conflicting interpretations,<sup>16</sup> Nicholas's autobiographical sketch furnishes a comprehensive summary of his career during that same period. Consequently, it is perhaps best to start with a discussion of some of the salient facts in Nicholas's life and then to compare them with what little is known about Francis.

Nicholas's narrative states that his itinerancy began in 1749. William Hill, in his *Arrangement*, asserts that it commenced five years earlier. Perhaps Hill assumed that Gilbert was accepted into the ranks of the preachers in the same year that he was converted (1744), a progression of events that would have been extraordinarily rapid and possibly unprecedented. Many others (including Bretherton, Curnock, Ward, and Kenneth Garlick) have simply repeated Hill's mistake.<sup>17</sup> A listing of circuit appointments would have helped to clarify the issue, but Hill does not furnish any for Gilbert. Kenneth Garlick lists only Cornwall (1755), London (1758), and Bristol (1762) Gilbert himself furnishes a complete list of his preaching assignments from 1749, when he began in the Wiltshire Circuit, until the time he was writing his autobiographical

<sup>16</sup> Frank Baker invokes the authority of Francis Gilbert's 'biography' to disprove a statement made by Vere Oliver, the historian of Antigua: Baker, 'The Origins of Methodism in the West Indies. The Story of the Gilbert Family', *London Quarterly and Holborn Review*, (1960), 'p. 17 n. 8. Yet Baker provides no further information on this biography (no author, no title, no date). Intensive searches have failed to locate a copy, and it has apparently never been cited by any other historian.

<sup>17</sup> William Hill, *An Alphabetical Arrangement of all the Wesleyan-Methodist Preachers and Missionaries* (3rd ed.; 1827), p. 161; Bretherton, *Early Methodism*, 82; Rogal, *Biographical Dictionary*, II, p. 194; Kenneth Garlick, comp., *Mr Wesley's Preachers: An Alphabetical arrangement of Wesleyan Methodist Preachers and Missionaries, and the stations to which they were appointed 1739-1818* (1977), p. 22.

sketch in Bristol in August 1760. Gilbert states that he was assigned to Ireland from June 1751 to May 1756.<sup>18</sup> He makes no mention of the 1755 Cornwall assignment that Garlick includes in his brief list, and that entry must now be regarded as erroneous. Moreover, the second circuit that Garlick mentions 'London (1758)' - is only partially correct. The following is Gilbert's summary of his preaching assignments around that time:

Aug.-Sept. 1758	Bristol
Sept. 1758-Feb. 1759	Norwich, Colchester, London
Feb-May 1759	Bristol
May-Sept. 1759	London

It is possible to identify only a few of Gilbert's preaching assignments after August 1760. In September 1760, he wrote from Redruth that he was preaching in Cornwall and said he might be in Bristol soon after Christmas.<sup>19</sup> He had been in Bristol from about October 1759 to August 1760, and John Wesley was clearly impressed with the results. He wrote in his journal on 5 October 1760 'I perceived by the liveliness of the people [in Bristol], that Mr. Gilbert's labour had not been in vain.'<sup>20</sup> It is thus not unlikely that Gilbert returned to Bristol 'after Christmas' with Wesley's blessing. His whereabouts in 1761 and 1762 are mostly obscure, but the fact that he died in Bristol in early 1763 suggests that he may have spent a substantial amount of the time in that town. Garlick's third and final circuit assignment for Nicholas - 'Bristol (1762)' - may well be correct.

What light does this evidence shed on the 'Mr. Gilbert' referred to in the two letters (quoted above) that John Wesley wrote in early 1759? In the one sent to the Countess of Huntingdon, Wesley was writing from Norwich in March 1759 on Mr. Gilbert's role in scheduling events at Everton. Since Nicholas Gilbert was stationed in Bristol at the time, it seems highly likely that Francis was the Gilbert in question. The other letter, written in February from London, suggests that 'Mr. Gilbert' was in London with Wesley and assisted with Methodist publications. Nicholas was in the Metropolis but was departing for Bristol in that very month and could have been the 'Mr. Gilbert' to whom Wesley was

<sup>18</sup> This is consistent with George Smith's statement that the 1753 Leeds Conference appointed (in fact, reappointed) Nicholas to Ireland: *History of Wesleyan Methodism*, 3 vols. (5th ed.; n.d.), I, pp. 260, 262.

<sup>19</sup> MARC, DDPr 1/33, Nicholas Gilbert to Charles Wesley, Redruth, 24 Sept. 1760.

<sup>20</sup> Wesley, *Journal*, IV, p. 415; see also n. 30 below. Wesley may have regarded Nicholas's success at Bristol as the true beginning of his 'usefulness' which was then cut short by his death only a few years later

referring (as Telford concludes). There are two reasons to doubt that identification, however. First, Nicholas's writing ability suggests that his schooling was not extensive (perhaps the result of spending too much time with 'wild unthinking boys' and that he would probably not have been a good candidate to carry out secretarial or administrative functions for the Wesleys. By contrast, Francis was well educated and even had some medical training. A second reason is simply that any time there is a specific identification of a 'Mr. Gilbert' who was involved with publications, it turns out to be Francis. Charles Wesley wrote to his wife from London in March 1760 about his busy schedule: 'I have not time to answer your letters, much less N. and F. Gilbert's, and S. Ryan's. My love to them, and all our friends.' Sarah Ryan and Nicholas Gilbert were obviously in Bristol at that time, and both were corresponding with Charles Wesley. So too was F. Gilbert, that is, Francis Gilbert. Other letters from Charles Wesley to his wife refer to Francis Gilbert's involvement with Methodist publications around that time. On one occasion, Charles asked his wife to get one hundred copies of a particular hymn from his Bristol study and to give them to Francis Gilbert so he could bring them to London. Two days later Charles wrote again asking his wife also to give Francis one hundred copies of another hymn.<sup>21</sup>

John Wesley did use Francis as an itinerant, but the evidence on the subject is sketchy in the extreme. While there were many 'lively' people left in the wake of Nicholas's preaching, the same could not be said for Francis, at least not in England. Frank Baker states that Francis was first appointed by the Conference of 1758,<sup>22</sup> but for many years, he remained uncomfortable in the pulpit. He wrote that a change occurred only when he returned to Antigua in 1763: 'Preaching was almost always a burden to me. But now it is my pleasure to preach Jesus.... It has been a greater cross to me to stand up before a few simple people in London, than I find it to speak before a St. John's [Antigua] congregation.'<sup>23</sup> Baker says that Francis was preaching in the Wiltshire Round in 1763 or 1764.<sup>24</sup> Since he was in Antigua from April 1763 to April 1764 and then in Kendal by early 1765, his preaching in Wiltshire may have occurred during the intervening months, that is, from about April to December

<sup>21</sup> *The Journal of the Rev. Charles Wesley, M.A.*, ed. Thomas Jackson, 2 vols. (1849), II, pp. 227, 230, 258; Frank Baker, 'Charles Wesley's Letters,' in *Charles Wesley, Poet Theologian*, ed S. T. Kimbrough, Jr. (Nashville, 1992), p. 78.

<sup>22</sup> This is probably the London assignment that Garlick says went to Nicholas Gilbert.

<sup>23</sup> Francis Gilbert to John Wesley, Antigua, 18 June 1763, in *Arminian Magazine*, (1782), p. 385.

<sup>24</sup> Frank Baker, 'Francis Gilbert and Methodist Ordination,' *Proceedings*, 27 (1949-50), pp. 146-8; *idem*; 'Origins of Methodism in the West Indies,' pp. 14-5.

1764. It was probably during that period that Francis appointed John Mason to be a class leader in Portsmouth, an appointment made at some point before the Conference of 1764.<sup>25</sup> While references to Francis's work as an itinerant preacher are fragmentary,<sup>26</sup> there is firm evidence of only one formal Methodist position he held in this period in 1765, he was appointed secretary to the Preachers' Fund. Baker says that there is no indication that Francis served as an itinerant after 1765. In short, during the late 1750s and early 1760s, it was Francis who had an apparently brief and lacklustre itinerancy that was notable chiefly for the various administrative tasks he carried out for the Wesleys. It was Nicholas who was the acclaimed preacher, especially in the West Country.

Another issue involving Nicholas and Francis has caused confusion of a different sort. In the early 1760s, Nicholas was drawn into the controversy over a possible separation from the Church of England. This was triggered when three Methodist preachers took it upon themselves to administer the sacrament in Norwich in 1760. Nicholas received a letter from London dated 6 March 1760, bemoaning the prospect of a break with the Anglican Church. The writer then poses a dramatic question: 'Now consider and speak your mind. Will you take me for your father, brother, friend, or will you not?' Curnock identifies the author of the letter as John Wesley, but this is almost certainly wrong.<sup>27</sup> A manuscript copy indicates that the author is Charles Wesley, and this attribution has been accepted by Thomas Jackson, Frank Baker, and others.<sup>28</sup> Two of the three preachers at Norwich (Paul Greenwood and John Murlin) had served in Ireland with Nicholas, and this might have raised questions in Charles Wesley's mind about Nicholas's views on the nettlesome question of separation. Charles had fewer doubts about Francis and wrote to his wife Sarah in April 1760 that Francis was even considering Anglican ordination.<sup>29</sup>

Examination of the Nicholas-Nathaniel-Francis triangle thus suggests

<sup>25</sup> Thomas Jackson, [ed.], *The Lives of Early Methodist Preachers*, 6 vols. (3rd ed.; 1865-66), III, p 211.

<sup>26</sup> In 1760, he writes that he would vote in Conference against giving lay preachers the power to ordain, and in 1761, he states that he had been in Leeds and Sheffield, but he does not indicate if he preached there; see MARC, DDWes 2/54, Francis Gilbert to Charles Wesley, Bristol, 15 March 1760; DDP1 1/32, same to same, London, 7 Nov. 1761.

<sup>27</sup> Wesley, *Journal*, IV, p. 415 n. 3.

<sup>28</sup> MARC, DDWes 4/92, [Charles Wesley] to Nicholas Gilbert, London, 6 March 1760; Thomas Jackson, *The Life of the Rev. Charles Wesley, M.A.*, 2 vols. (1841), II, pp 182-3; Frank Baker, *Charles Wesley. as Revealed by His Letters* (1948), p. 100.

<sup>29</sup> MARC, DDCW 7/3, Charles Wesley to Sarah Wesley, London, 11 April 1760. By September, Nicholas Gilbert was also offering himself as a candidate for ordination (see letter cited in n. 19)

three main conclusions. First, Nicholas Gilbert of Cornwall was not related to either Nathaniel or Francis Gilbert, the two Antigua brothers. Second, it was Nathaniel Gilbert who visited his brother in England from 1757 to 1759, converted to Methodism, and then introduced Wesleyan Methodism to Antigua (and the New World). Third, discussions of a popular Mr. Gilbert preaching in the West Country or elsewhere are probably referring to Nicholas Gilbert, while accounts of a Mr. Gilbert involved in administrative tasks for the Wesleys in London, the Home Counties or Bristol are probably referring to Francis. This latter conclusion can be used as a guide when a 'Mr. Gilbert' surfaces in a newly-discovered document or one that has recently been brought to the attention of the scholarly community. A good example is the letter that contains the following passage written by a Bristol woman on 21 May 1762: 'Mr. Gilbert' has brackfasted [*sic*] with us twice and promises to meet with us on Satterday [*sic*] evening. He has preached wonderful of late.' When confronted with this passage, Gareth Lloyd may have relied on a rule of thumb not unlike the one suggested above. Whatever method he used to arrive at his conclusion, Lloyd is almost certainly correct in identifying this 'wonderful preacher' as Nicholas.<sup>30</sup>

Another Gilbert also deserves brief mention in this context. Much has been written in recent years about the role of women in early Methodism. Earl Kent Brown, Paul Chilcote, and Christine Krueger have discussed such major figures as Sarah Crosby and Mary Fletcher and also more obscure preachers like Ann Gilbert (c.1735-1790), a partially-blind evangelist from Gwinear near Redruth in Cornwall.<sup>31</sup> As with most of the early women preachers, little is known about her background. She first heard the Methodists in 1743, became a member in 1760, and began preaching after that time. A travelling preacher heard her on one occasion and left this account. 'I had the pleasure of hearing Mrs. Ann Gilbert preach in the Chapel at Redruth, to about 1400 people. She had a torrent of softening eloquence, which occasioned a

<sup>30</sup> MARC, MAM FI 4/5/6, Elizabeth Johnson to Sarah Ryan, Bristol, 21 May [1762]; Gareth Lloyd, comp., *The Fletcher-Tooth Collection*, 4 vols. to date (Manchester, 1997-), IV, p. 114 and n. 105. Note that this letter furnishes another indication that Nicholas Gilbert was stationed for most (or all) of 1761-63 in Bristol.

<sup>31</sup> Earl Kent Brown, *Women of Mr. Wesley's Methodism* (New York, 1983), pp. 16, 29, 241; Paul Wesley Chilcote, *John Wesley and the Women Preachers of Early Methodism* (Metuchen, New Jersey, 1991), pp 145-6, 186, 267; *idem*, *She Offered them Christ: The Legacy of Women Preachers in early Methodism* (Nashville, 1993), pp. 82, 95; Christine L. Krueger, *The Reader's Repentance: Women Preachers, Women Writers, and Nineteenth-Century Social Discourse* (Chicago, 1992), pp. 54-5. All of these accounts are ultimately based on Gilbert's autobiographical sketch: 'The Experience of Mrs. Ann Gilbert, of Gwinear, in Cornwall' *Arminian Magazine*, (1795), pp. 42-6.

general weeping through the whole congregation. And what is more astonishing she was almost blind, and had been so for many years.'<sup>32</sup>

Ann and Nicholas became acquainted with the Methodists at about the same time in towns located only a few miles from each other. Ann joined the Methodists during 1760, the year in which Nicholas's preaching was winning numerous converts both in Cornwall and Bristol, and she then went on to become a celebrated preacher herself. These may be nothing more than coincidences, and no evidence has surfaced thus far to suggest that Ann and Nicholas were relatives. Yet even if they were not related by blood or marriage, Ann must have known about Nicholas and may actually have heard him preach. Thus, it is not unreasonable to suggest that her own preaching career was inspired at least in part by another famous Cornish Gilbert, the 'good man' and 'excellent preacher' who died 'in the dawn of his usefulness.'

ROBERT GLEN

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<sup>32</sup> Quoted in Z. Taft, *Biographical Sketches of the Live and Public Ministry of Various Holy Women*, 2 vols. (1825-28), I, p. 51



# THE WESLEY DEACONESS ORDER: A Short History

SOON after Thomas Bowman Stephenson started the Children's Home (1869), he realised it was necessary to have well-trained women 'set apart' to care for and teach the children. In 1890 he published *Concerning Sisterhoods* containing his 'essential ideas'

1. There must be vocation though no vow.....
2. There must be discipline without servility... . .
3. There must be association, not excluding freedom....

and outlining places where deaconesses might be used.<sup>1</sup> Stephenson felt that a distinctive dress would not only open up more opportunities, but also be a protection against unwelcome attentions. A sign that the Order was well established came when it adopted the Maltese Cross as its distinctive badge.

The first Training Home, Mewburn House, London, opened in July 1890, but it was 1901/2 before the Wesley Deaconess Order became a Connexional Institution. Stephenson resigned as Principal of the Children's Home in 1900 and became Superintendent Minister of the Ilkley Circuit, but continued his work with the Wesley Deaconesses. In 1902 the headquarters of the Order moved to Ilkley. A large building, formerly a boys' school, was purchased for £4,500 and, after alterations, the 'Wesley Deaconess College' was established. Seventeen students entered College on 30 September 1902, and at the official opening (30 October), the Rev. John Shaw Banks, President of Conference, said 'there is an enormous amount of good work which if it is not done by women will not be done at all, and there is a great deal more work that can better be done by women than by men.'

When Stephenson had to retire on doctor's advice in 1907 the Rev. William Bradfield was appointed. One of his first actions was to try to improve efficiency and raise extra income, but even so for many years lack of finance caused much headache. By 1913 more accommodation was needed, and an appeal launched to provide another thirteen bedrooms by erecting another storey above the College Hall, but the outbreak of the First World War forced its postponement. The Rev. William Russell Maltby followed Bradfield as Warden in 1920 and soon realised that a two year period of training was required and that this meant providing more accommodation and increasing the teaching staff. He also recommended encouraging the admission of paying students who did not necessarily intend to become deaconesses.<sup>2</sup>

As Methodist Union drew nearer the United Methodist Deaconess Order, led by its Warden, the Rev. R. W. Gair, forged close ties with the Wesley

1. Stephenson, T. B. *Concerning Sisterhoods* (1890) pp. 62-70, 72-76

2. Wesley Deaconess Institute Minutes (1911-1931) p.162

Deaconess Order. There were also contacts with the Primitive Methodist Sisters. So deaconesses of the three branches of Methodism were well ahead with their plans for co-operation. The United Methodist Sisters and the Wesley Deaconess Order came together immediately, but the Primitive Methodist Sisters could not join at the same time, as theirs was not a connexional institution. However, in October 1933 twenty-three ex-Primitive Methodist Sisters were recommended for acceptance and were received the next year, into the fellowship of the Order, which truly became the Wesley Deaconess Order of the Methodist Church.<sup>3</sup>

Accommodation at Ilkley was still deemed inadequate as Methodist Union meant that there might be an increase in numbers, but, the gift, (July 1932), of the house next door eased matters slightly. As there had been two Wardens since Union, the 1935 Conference appointed Dr. Maltby for three more years with Mr Gair and the Rev. G. W. Thorn as joint secretaries. Mr. Gair had been the United Methodist Warden since 1922 and had a wide knowledge of his own deaconesses and their appointments and Mr. Thorn knew his Primitive Methodist Sisters so it seemed wise for them and Maltby to continue to work together.

Maltby was convinced of the value of the extended College courses and the supervised practical training, but by December 1937 there was a shortage of deaconesses and additional suitable candidates were needed, so on 6 April 1938 he put forward a proposal to enlarge the College premises. Building work, to be completed by 30 April 1939, started in the autumn, with the official opening arranged for 20 September, but it was cancelled because of the declaration of war. Appropriately the new building was called 'The Maltby Wing'. Maltby's intention was to retire in 1938, but he was persuaded to stay until 1941, when the Rev. W. Harold Beales would become Warden. However, ill-health forced his retirement in 1940. During the war women had done jobs not available before and social conditions had changed greatly, so more opportunities, such as youth and moral welfare work, opened up. This meant that, despite the new wing, yet more accommodation was needed, so when 'Linnburn', a house close to the College, came on the market in 1945 it was bought as a hostel for fifteen extra students.

Beales, having seen the Order through the troubled times of the War and the difficulties of the post-war years, retired in 1952 and the Rev. Thomas M. Morrow succeeded him. Recruitment had fallen so much, that, in September 1960, it was decided that Linnburn should be closed. In December 1962 Mr. Morrow suggested that the Rev. Geoffrey Litherland, be approached to become the next Warden (1964). Mr. Litherland could hardly have anticipated the great upheaval of the next few years: the decreasing number of candidates; the closing of appointments plus the introduction of a third year of specialised training which meant fundamental changes. So from

3. Wesley Deaconess Order Minutes (1932-1947) p.10; Record of Convocation. (April 1934) pp.14,17,18

September 1965 the deaconesses shared lectures with ministerial students at Wesley College, Headingley. When the Ministerial Training Department began to review the future of its theological colleges and the 1966 Conference decided to close Headingley the Order had to face the prospect of selling the Ilkley property. A move to Bristol was considered, but the idea of linking the Order with Handsworth College and Birmingham University was also explored. By the end of 1967 the Order decided to move to Birmingham, where conversations were taking place between Handsworth and the Queen's College (Anglican) about establishing an ecumenical college: if this became a reality the Order could be associated with it. Ilkley College closed on June 14 1968 and the sale of all property was finally completed in October. The College Chapel furniture went on loan to Eastbrook Hall, Bradford, and in 1985 was transferred to Christ Church, Ilkley.

The North Wing of Handsworth College was adapted, property for tutors, houses and the deaconess centre bought, ready for training to commence in September 1968. The proposed amalgamation of Handsworth and Queen's College went ahead with Queen's College site in Edgbaston to be used, so property nearby was required for the deaconess centre. Eventually a scheme for the purchase and adaptation of 7 Pritchatts Road was accepted, in face of considerable opposition from some members of the committee. The official opening of Ilkley House by the President of Conference, the Rev. Rupert E. Davies, was held on 9 March 1971. When the time came to appoint a new Warden, Litherland emphasised that it was not to be regarded as a 'holding operation pending the admission of women to the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments, but that belief in the Diaconate and its real place in the Church was a necessary qualification for the post'. The Rev. Brian J. N. Galliers was appointed.

When Methodism began its re-structuring exercise the problem was how to integrate the Wesley Deaconess Order into the new Division of Ministries without infringing its own special ethos and integrity. Convocation in 1972 was very concerned about the effect the opening of the Presbyteral Ministry to women would have on the Order, anticipating that a number of deaconesses would wish to candidate. The Division of Ministries produced a study paper on the Order and the diaconate and in January 1976 a working party set up 'to consider the nature of the Order, recruitment, training and ordination of deaconesses', after much discussion, recommended:

- (a) that the Church cease recruitment for the Wesley Deaconess Order from 1978,
- (b) that a committee of the Division consider the present role of the Order and redefine its role for the future
- (c) that the same Committee consider the possibility of a new Order of lay service within the Church.

Convocation discussed these decisions fully and accepted them.<sup>4</sup>

In 1977 Sister Jean Baillie, Associate Warden for the past six years, retired and Sister Yvonne Hunkin was appointed. To Sister Yvonne fell the task of taking the Wesley Deaconess Order forward into the wider Methodist Church Diaconal Order.<sup>5</sup>

E. DOROTHY GRAHAM

4. Wesley Deaconess Order Minutes. Jan 6, 1978, May 22, 1978

5. Wesley Deaconess Order Minutes Oct. 15, 1976, May 16, 1977, *Minutes of Conference* (1977)

(Dr Graham's book on the Order will be launched on 2 December 2002 at Queen's College, Birmingham at 4.30pm).

## LOCAL HISTORIES

*A History of Methodism in Wolstanton* by W. L. Thomas (48pp). Copies £3.30 post free, from Rev. M. Goodhand, 32 Milehouse Lane, Wolstanton, Staffs, ST5 9JT.

*Memories Down the Years* (Sketty, Swansea, Wesley Church) by J. M. Neilson. Copies £7, from the author at 19 Gabalfa Road, Sketty, Swansea SA2 8NF.

*The History of Methodism in Ormskirk* by Mona Duggan (105pp, illus.) Copies £5.60 post free, from the author at 2 Rosemary Lane, Haskayne, Ormskirk L39 7JP.

*The History of Newchurch (in Rossendale) Methodist Church from 1744 til 2001* by Joe Teasdale (32pp, illus.) Copies £3.40 post free, from the author at 8 Belvedere Avenue, Waterfoot, Rossendale BB4 9UG.

'One More Step....' *Westborough Methodist Church, Scarborough* by Joan Bayes (80pp) Copies £6 from the author at 10 Barmoor Close, Scalby, Scarborough, YO13 0BZ.

*Ponteland Methodism 1801-2001*. Copies from Alan Scott, 29 Meadowfield Park, Ponteland, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE20 9XF, no price stated.

*The Story of Truro Methodist Church, Part 1* by Gerald M. Burt (45pp). Copies £3 plus postage, from 16 Chain Walk Drive, Truro TR1 3ST.

*The Story of the Bible Christians in Jersey* by Tom Nicholas (56pp). Copies £5.50 post free, from the author at Maison Binet, Gorey Village Main Road, Grouville, Jersey JE3 9FX.

*Strangely Warmed in Ashfield* by J. Barrie Smith (123pp). Copies £5.90 post free, from the author at 12 Birch Tree Cresvent, Kirkby-in-Ashfield, Nottingham NG17 8BE.

## THE ANNUAL MEETING AND LECTURE

The Wesley Historical Society Tea, Annual Meeting and Lecture was held on 1 July 2002 at Springdale Methodist Church, Penn, Wolverhampton. The opening devotions were led by the President, the Rev. Dr. John A. Newton. Congratulations were extended to the Rev. Dr. Tim Macquiban on his appointment as Principal of Sarum Theological College. During the Annual Meeting twelve members were remembered and tributes paid, especially to Mr David Barton (Member at large 1997-2000) and the Rev. William Leary (Exhibitions Secretary 1968-97), who, with his wife, had for many years looked after the Society's exhibition stand at Conference.

The Executive Committee was appointed with special thanks being recorded to the retiring Treasurer of 18 years, Mr. Ralph Wilkinson. and Librarian, Dr. John A. Vickers (various offices for countless years!). Mr. Nicholas Page becomes the new Treasurer and Mr. John H. Lenton assumes responsibility for the WHS Library. Mr. Peter Forsaith's post will now be known as the Marketing Officer, as he has undertaken to deal with sales and publicity. A new appointment is that of the Rev. Colin C. Short, to be Publications Manager, in order to develop the WHS occasional publications programme.

The usual reports were received with the Treasurer presenting the accounts, (printed on p.\*\*\*), and recommending that the subscription rate remain the same, and the Registrar (the Rev. Donald H. Ryan) reporting that membership numbers had not altered. The General Secretary presented reports from officers unable to be at the meeting, namely, the Editor (Mr. E. A. Rose) who stated that he had a number of scripts in hand; the Local Branches Secretary (Mr. Roger F. S. Thorne), who supplied a list of the branches, their officers and publications - the meeting requested that a written report about the Lancashire and Cheshire Branch be given to the next Annual Meeting; and the Librarian (Dr. John A Vickers) who indicated that accessions were continuing to be received, catalogued and shelved and this needed to be borne in mind when plans for the projected new building were considered and that as work on the electronic catalogue was still on-going he was continuing to maintain the card catalogue - the Rev. John Munsey Turner pointed out that there were people who could not/were not allowed to use computers so a card catalogue was important to them. On behalf of Mr. Forsaith, the Rev. Donald Ryan recommended that there be another sale of back *Proceedings* - agreed. Mrs Sheila Himworth (Conferences Secretary) reported on the conference held at Regent's Park College, Oxford in April; papers given there would be published. She gave notice that the next residential conference would be held in the week after Easter in 2005 at a venue in the north of England on the theme 'Women in Methodism'. All the officers were thanked for their services.

The up-dated constitution, revised by Mr. Ryan, was considered and

received the necessary legal vote. The President expressed the Society's appreciation for all the work involved in this task. The Rev. Donald H. Ryan kindly provided a 'selective' Wesley ceramics exhibition which evoked much interest. Dr. Newton thanked the Church for its hospitality.

The Annual Lecture, chaired by the Rev. John Munsey Turner, was given by Professor J. Clyde G. Binfield. with the title 'Victorian Values and Industrious Connexions'. The full lecture will be published in the February issue of *Proceedings*.

E. DOROTHY GRAHAM

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## THE WESLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND GIFT AID

The Executive Committee considers that, whereas donations to the Society qualify for Gift Aid, members' subscriptions do not. The key factor is whether there is a benefit to the person making the payment. For payments up to £100, the benefit limit is set at 25% of the gift. As will be seen from the annual accounts, the value of *Proceedings* alone is considerably more than 25% of the current subscription. If *Proceedings* were little more than a Newsletter, it might not count as a benefit, but the Executive Committee regards *Proceedings* to be more in the category of a learned journal and trusts that it is valued as such by the members.

For some years, the Society has not claimed repayment of tax from the Inland Revenue in respect of subscriptions. An amount of £1,506, which has been carried forward in the Society's accounts as Income Tax Recoverable, has now been 'written back'. As a result of this 'one-off' transaction, the accounts for 2001 show a small excess of expenditure over Income.

Members of the Executive Committee are conscious that some societies, in all sincerity, interpret the Gift Aid rules differently and will keep the position under review. All members are encouraged to continue to make donations to the Library Appeal; for those living in the United Kingdom, these are still eligible for Gift Aid.

RALPH WILKINSON  
(Treasurer, 1984-2002)

**WESLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2001**

The Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2001 were approved by the 2002 Annual Meeting. The following is a summary of the audited accounts; a copy of the full Report and Accounts, including the Auditor's Certificate, is available on request from the Treasurer.

**General Income & Expenditure Account: Year to 31 December 2001**

INCOME	2001	2000
Subscriptions	5,794	5,688
Irish Branch	713	713
Sales of Publications	531	1,404
Advertisements	164	231
Bank and Building Society Interest	485	512
Other Income	<u>799</u>	<u>266</u>
	8,486	8,814
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
<i>Proceedings</i> and Distribution	4,362	4,112
Other Printing	271	588
Library	1,246	1,257
Administration	878	1,662
Income Tax Recoverable written back	1,506	-
Other Expenditure	<u>426</u>	<u>307</u>
	<u>8,689</u>	<u>7,926</u>
Excess of Income over Expenditure	- <u>£ 203</u>	<u>£ 888</u>

**Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2001**

ASSETS EMPLOYED	2001	2000
Investments	225	225
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Sundry Debtors	238	2,286
Bank and Building Socy. Accounts	<u>17,728</u>	<u>16,104</u>
	<u>17,966</u>	<u>18,390</u>
<b>Current Liabilities</b>		
Sundry Creditors	62	303
Subscriptions received in Advance	<u>6,812</u>	<u>6,962</u>
	<u>6,874</u>	<u>7,265</u>
Net Current Assets	<u>11,092</u>	<u>11,125</u>
	<u>£ 11,317</u>	<u>£ 11,350</u>
<b>REPRESENTED BY</b>		
General Fund (unrestricted)	8,455	8,658
Restricted Funds	<u>2,862</u>	<u>2,692</u>
	<u>£ 11,317</u>	<u>£ 11,350</u>
<b>RALPH WILKINSON</b>		

## REVISED CONSTITUTION OF THE WESLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

From 1893 to 1950 the Society seems to have managed to function without an official written constitution, but this situation was changed at the Annual Meeting held at Ebenezer Methodist Church, Dudley Hill, Bradford 19 July 1950. A proposed constitution was printed in the *Proceedings* in Volume xxvii, pp118-119 and after a section-by-section consideration at the Annual Meeting it was unanimously accepted and came into force in March 1951. It was to be a further 10 years in 1960 before there were any amendments made (volume xxxii, p114). The main amendment was to include a subscription rate for 'Libraries and kindred societies', which had been operated since 1954. A new section was proposed which allowed the Society to 'maintain a library and appoint a librarian'. The nucleus of the Library was bequeathed to the Society by the former President of the Society, Rev. Francis F. Bretherton BA, and was housed in the crypt of Wesley's Chapel, London. It was opened by Mr Frank O. Bretherton, the son of Rev Francis F. Bretherton, of Sunderland on 3 April 1959.

The Constitution was further amended at the 1960 Annual Meeting to revise the subscription rates and to clarify the way the Library should be administered. The next revision of the constitution became necessary when in 1981 the Society applied to become a registered charity. In order to be registered with the Charity Commission, the Constitution had to conform to the Charity Commissioners' requirements (Vol xliii, p1-3). Also the library had been moved from Wesley's Chapel, City Road, London to Southlands College, London in the late 1970s. and the Constitution enshrining the 'Sharing Agreement dated eleventh day of February 1980' agreed with Southlands College. The present change in the constitution recognises the 'Sharing Agreement with Westminster College, Oxford 28th day of July 1982', for the housing of the Library at the Wesley and Methodist Studies Centre at the Westminster Institute of Education, Oxford Brookes University, Oxford. The newly revised constitution widens the scope of the Society's interest in Methodist history to include, in addition to those Methodist sections, which were united in 1932, other Wesleyan and Methodist Connexions. The revision also regularises the relationship between the 'Local Methodist historical societies' or Local Branches and the Society. This revised constitution was circulated to all members with the May 2002 copy of the *Proceedings* and was also sent to and agreed by the Charity Commission and approved section-by-section at the Annual Meeting on the 1 July 2002 by more than the required two thirds vote of the 25 members present at the meeting.

Donald H. Ryan 1 July 2002.



**WESLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
THE CONSTITUTION OF THE WESLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
APPROVED BY THE ANNUAL MEETING HELD ON JULY 1st 2002 6pm  
AT SPRINGDALE METHODIST CHURCH, WARSTONES ROAD, PENN,  
WOLVERHAMPTON

**I. - PREAMBLE**

The Wesley Historical Society was founded in 1893 in order to promote the study of the history and literature of early Methodism. Over the years the range of its interests has been enlarged to include the history of all the sections of the Methodist Church, which were united in 1932, and other Wesleyan and Methodist Connexions. In the pursuit of these interests it has published its *Proceedings* periodically, and since 1959 has administered a reference library.

**II - OBJECTS**

The advancement of the education of the public in connexion with the history of Methodism since the eighteenth century (which history is hereinafter referred to as the Special Subject). In furtherance of this object but not further or otherwise the Society shall have the following powers:

- (a) The provision and preservation of books, manuscripts and other documents relating to the Special Subject or some aspect thereof and the provision of facilities for the study or display of the same.
- (b) The promotion of conferences, public lectures or pilgrimages and in particular an Annual Lecture normally to be given at the time of the Methodist Conference by an acknowledged authority on some aspect of the Special Subject. The lecturer shall receive 12 copies of the lecture in the form in which it is published.
- (c) The publication of the *Proceedings* of the Society three times a year or at such other intervals as the Executive Committee may determine and of occasional special Publications. (d) To raise, invite and receive contributions from any person or persons whatsoever by way of subscription, donation or otherwise, providing that the Society shall not undertake any permanent trading activity in raising funds for its purposes.
- (e) To encourage, support and advise local Methodist historical societies and those wishing to form one. To keep in touch with them, report their activities and list their Secretaries in the *Proceedings* through the 'Local Branches Secretary'. The Wesley Historical Society has no financial or other responsibility for these societies.

### III. - GIFTS

The Society shall also be entitled to receive, at its discretion, whether by way of gift or bequest, such books, manuscripts, other historical documents, portraits, pictures, ceramics or articles as shall appear to the General Secretary and the Librarian to relate to the Special Subject or some aspect thereof.

### IV. - LIBRARY

By a Sharing Agreement dated the 28th Day of July, One Thousand Nine Hundred and 92, the Society's Library is housed at The Wesley and Methodist Studies Centre, Westminster Institute of Education, Oxford Brookes University, Oxford, and is available, subject to the Library rules of the Society and the Oxford Brookes University for study by members of the Society, the staff and students of the University, as well as by such members of the public as may be approved by the Society's Librarian.

### V. - MEMBERSHIP

Any person or body may be admitted to membership of the Society, without previous nomination upon making such subscription in respect of annual, or periodical membership as shall have been determined by the Society in Annual Meeting, notice whereof shall have been published in the *Proceedings*.

### VI. - PRIVILEGES OF MEMBERSHIP

All members are entitled to one free copy of the *Proceedings* of the Society as issued, and may purchase extra copies and back numbers, if available, at reduced rates. Subject to editorial approval any member may insert historical notes or queries in the *Proceedings*, and these entries shall be made without charge. All members are entitled to attend the Annual Meeting of the Society and any lecture, conference or pilgrimage organized by the Society.

### VII. - OFFICERS

The Society shall be served by the following honorary Officers appointed at each Annual Meeting, the Annual Meeting having power to appoint from time to time as it shall deem desirable: President, President Emeritus, General Secretary, Registrar, Treasurer, Editor, Librarian, Publishing Manager, Marketing Officer, Conferences Secretary, Local Branches Secretary, and Auditor. The Officers mentioned above, other than the Auditor, along with a 'Member at Large' elected by the Annual Meeting for 3 years and the World Methodist Historical Society (British Section) Secretary constitute an Executive Committee, which shall meet annually prior to the Annual Meeting and at other times as necessary, and the Executive Committee shall be empowered to co-opt not more than two other members annually. Members of the Society may submit nominations for the election of officers to the Society and the 'Member at Large' by giving notice in writing to the General Secretary at least fourteen clear days before the Annual Meeting.

### VIII - ANNUAL MEETING

A meeting open to all members of the Society shall be normally held at the time of the annual Methodist Conference and in the Conference vicinity, and an announcement of such Annual Meeting in the *Proceedings* shall be deemed sufficient notice.

### IX. - SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING

A Special General Meeting may be convened by decision of the Annual Meeting or the Executive Committee to expedite the business of the Society. The Special General Meeting shall have the same powers and require publication of the same notice as the Annual Meeting.

### X. - QUORUM

Twenty Members shall be a quorum at an Annual Meeting or a Special General Meeting.

### XI. - CONSTITUTION

The Constitution may (subject as hereinafter provide) be amended by a two-thirds majority of the members present at an Annual or Special General Meeting provided that fourteen days notice of the amendments intended to be proposed shall have been published in the *Proceedings* or sent by post to every member at his/her or their last recorded address and further provided that nothing herein contained shall authorise any amendment which might cause the Society to cease to be a charity at law. No alteration may be made in the Objects clause, the Dissolution clause or in this clause without the previous permission of the Charity Commission.

### XII. DISSOLUTION OF THE SOCIETY

In the event of the dissolution of the Society that Westminster College Oxford Trust Ltd be the residual legatee with the responsibility for the ongoing maintenance of the Library. Any assets remaining after satisfaction of all the Society's debts and liabilities shall be passed to Westminster College Oxford Trust Ltd to endow the Library. In the event that the Westminster College Oxford Trust Ltd not wishing to receive the library, the library and other assets be given to another charitable institution or institutions having similar objects to the Society.

## BOOK REVIEWS

*"India's Prisoner": a Biography of Edward John Thompson, 1886-1946* by Mary Lago (University of Missouri Press, 2001, pp. xi, 388. ISBN 0 8262 1299 9)

This is a perceptive and sympathetic study of someone who, despite (or even because of) his varied career and considerable achievements, has receded into the background of our collective Methodist consciousness, overshadowed perhaps by his more famous - or notorious - son, the author of *The Making of the English Working Class*. If nothing else, the father's career helps us to understand the son's trenchant criticism of the Methodism against which both reacted without perhaps being aware of the residual influence it exerted on them.

Thompson *père* was himself the son of a Wesleyan missionary. Though born in England during a parental furlough, he spent his first four years in India. His father died, broken in health, within two years of returning to a home circuit in 1892, leaving the family with a hard uphill struggle to make ends meet. Edward was sent to Kingswood School, whose regime he remembered unsympathetically (e.g. in the semi-autobiographical novel *Introducing the Arnisons*) apart from the stimulating influence of Frank Richards, his English teacher in the VI Form. In 1902 the family poverty deprived him of his last year of schooling and of any opportunity of going on to Oxford or Cambridge. Instead, he became a bank clerk in Bethnal Green, escaping from this in 1906 by offering for the ministry. His mother's avowed wish that he might follow in his father's footsteps was fulfilled when he left Richmond in 1910 and was sent out to the mission college at Bankura, Bengal.

The lasting influence of his years in India, expressed in Gandhi's phrase which gives the book its title, is fully and clearly traced in Mary Lago's biography. It introduced him to leading figures such as Nehru, Gandhi and, more problematically, the poet Rabindranath Tagore; and it made him a confirmed advocate of Indian nationalism during the inter-war years. Along with C. F. Andrews he roundly condemned the British massacre of unarmed civilians at Amritsar in 1919. Though he had returned to India after service as a military chaplain in the Middle East during World War I, his increasing disillusionment with the missionary role and policy was brought to ahead by the discovery that long-term irregularities had been covered up in the college accounts. In 1923 he resigned from the ministry and returned home to a career on the periphery of Oxford life and prolific authorship.

The book offers a salutary view of Wesleyanism from the outside, valuable despite the occasional slip (such as equating Kingswood School with the school for colliers' children founded by Wesley in 1739). More important, it delineates the personality of a sensitive, intelligent and deeply sincere man who found himself at odds with the ethos of the Methodism of his day, as well as with much of the Establishment in the declining days of imperialism. His writings, many of them still concerned with India, are usefully surveyed and the disappointments of his career honestly assessed. With less integrity he might have succeeded in adjusting to the limitations of a traditional career as a circuit minister. Instead, he recognised both those limitations and his own and chose a more uncertain path. Following him

through this very readable biography helps us to reassess both the qualities and the weaknesses of Wesleyanism as it approached the climactic year of 1932.

JOHN A. VICKERS

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*Gideon Ouseley, Evangelist and the Irish Methodist Mission*, by N. W. Taggart, (WMHS Publications, More People Called Methodists No 4, 2001. pp. 63. £3.25 post free from 1A School Lane, Emsworth, PO10 7ED, or from Maureen Weir, 5 Aberdelghy Gardens, Lambeg, Lisburn, Co. Antrim, BT27 4QQ).

Gideon Ouseley (1762-1839) has been described as 'one of Ireland's most influential religious figures'. In this brief, yet detailed monograph, Norman Taggart, himself an Irish Methodist minister and one time President of the Methodist Church in Ireland, provides an informative (and critical) study of this pioneer of Irish Methodism.

Born in Dunmore, County Galway, Ouseley, the son of a country gentleman, originally intended entering the Church of Ireland but finding his entry into Trinity College, Dublin, blocked, (due to his insufficient knowledge of Greek) he began to lead a dissolute life of gambling, drinking and revelry. Following a shooting accident, which left him permanently blind in his right eye, Ouseley began to read theological literature and having attended religious meetings organised by Methodist soldiers stationed at Dunmore, he underwent an evangelical conversion experience in 1791.

In a lively, lucid yet scholarly style, Taggart describes how, following a five year period in which Ouseley laboured as a free-lance evangelist, he was appointed by the Irish Methodist Mission, as one of three general missionaries to evangelise the predominantly Irish speaking parts of Ireland. In this capacity Ouseley, at his peak, 'travelled on horseback in excess of 4,000 miles a year, preaching around twenty times a week'. Wherever he went such preaching had a profound effect. As one contemporary account states Ouseley witnessed 'the aged and the young falling prostrate, cut to the heart, and refusing to be comforted until they knew Jesus and the power of his resurrection'.

Taggart discusses various facets of Ouseley's life and character including his anticlericalism, his criticisms of popery, his controversial suggestions for ameliorating the social problems of the day, his pamphlets and publications and his relevance for the Church of today.

This narrative, containing a selective bibliography, relevant endnotes and one illustration, provides a praiseworthy introduction to the life of 'the most flamboyant and successful Irish evangelist' of the first decades of the nineteenth century.

SIMON ROSS VALENTINE