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Proceedings

OF THE

Wesley Historical Society

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

Volume XXXIX

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EDITORIAL

ONE of the most regrettable features of modern publishing is the demise of so many religious journals. This is partly the result of the ecumenical movement. Just as Methodist Union brought to an end the Primitive Methodist quarterly, the *Holborn Review*, so the *London Quarterly* with which it combined merged with the *Church Quarterly* until this fell by the wayside in 1971. The other reason for the loss lies in the field of economics, so we need not elaborate on that. But what this means in terms of "communication" is that our *Proceedings* is now one of the few journals at present in circulation which carry articles on Methodist history. Many readers will remember that we used to print lists of "Articles of Methodist Historical Interest", often culling half a dozen every year from the *London Quarterly and Holborn Review* alone.

We write in this strain for two reasons. The first is confessedly an exercise in blowing one's own trumpet, for it is not (as Wesley says in the preface to the 1780 hymn-book) "inconsistent with modesty" to admit that the *Proceedings* is fulfilling a useful—perhaps a unique—function in the publishing world today. It is an outlet—all too rare these days—for young writers with something to say about Methodism and requiring four or five thousand words in which to say it.

The second reason for writing like this is to say that, because of the conditions just mentioned, we are receiving far more articles than we can use. This is a healthy situation. Gone are the days when we could count our contributors on the fingers of one hand! Of course, the field has widened. The nineteenth century is now history, and very attractive to historians. We have even printed something on the contemporary scene (see vol. xxxvii, p. 154), and it has been suggested that we change our name to the *Methodist Historical Society*; but we shall not rush that one!

So we hope would-be historians will not hesitate to submit their work, even though the prospects of publishing are not bright as once they were; but to gain acceptance, articles should be accurate in detail (check those dates!), readable in style, and useful in that some contribution is offered to the subject under review.

THE DEATH OF WILLIAM SEWARD AT HAY, 22nd October 1740

WILLIAM SEWARD was a member of a family well known in Badsey, near Evesham, in Worcestershire. According to the Rev. P. Braby,¹ he was the business and financial expert of his generation, being employed in the South Sea office of the Treasury, although he never achieved the directorship of the South Sea Company which he desired. In earlier years his religion followed the formal pattern of an upper-class Anglican; he was churchwarden of St. Thomas the Apostle in the City of London. He then came under the influence of Charles Wesley, and, like many who experience a sudden conversion in adult life, he became an extreme and uncompromising evangelical, associating with Whitefield and joining Howell Harris on his preaching tours. According to Mr. A. H. Williams,² he caused great offence to Charles Wesley and the Arminian Methodists by the controversial preface which he wrote for a journal.

The extreme form of evangelism propounded by enthusiasts such as Howell Harris was not universally acceptable in the Welsh marches, where the parish wake with its attendant excesses was still known. J. H. Lloyd³ in his biography of Edward Goff refers to local opposition to the preaching of Thomas Rees, a Congregational minister on the Herefordshire-Radnor border in the eighteenth century, who was shot at through the window of a hall in which he was preaching, and had his open-air meetings disrupted by bulls or unbroken horses being driven in among the listeners. The bells of Gladestry church were rung to drown his voice.

It so happens that however greatly Hay may have suffered later in the century because of absentee vicars, it was particularly well served at this time. Just prior to Seward's death, the vicar was Pryce Davies—also vicar of Talgarth—to whose preaching Howell Harris owed his conversion; and his successor, Henry Gwyllym, who held the rectory of Cusop in plurality in 1740, was an active and faithful parish priest in both livings; so the people of Hay were by no means neglected by their clergy or in particular need of other spiritual help, whatever may have been the case elsewhere in the area.

Idris Davies,⁴ describing a preaching tour in South Wales carried out by Howell Harris and Seward in September 1740, states that on the 10th at Caerleon Seward was struck in the eye by a stone, being so badly hurt that he lost the sight of his eye for a time. On the following day, at Trelleck and Monmouth, they again preached in

¹ P. Braby: "Letters of a Badsey Family, 1735-6" (*Research Papers, Vale of Evesham Historical Society*, iii (1971), p. 66).

² A. H. Williams: *John Wesley in Wales*, p. xxvi.

³ J. H. Lloyd: *The Life of Edward Goff the Philanthropist* (1891), p. 44.

⁴ In *Transactions of the Calvinistic Methodist Historical Society*, xxv (1940), p. 67.

spite of the mayor's inhibition. Again they experienced opposition, and on this occasion Seward was struck in his sound eye by an apple.

Up to now, it has generally been believed that Seward met his death shortly afterwards—on 22nd October 1740—when preaching on Black Lion Green, Hay, having been struck on the head by a stone thrown by an onlooker. However, as far back as 1888, the late Archdeacon Bevan, a meticulous historian, stated in the *Diocesan History of St. David's* that there was no contemporary evidence for such an occurrence. The Archdeacon's statement is as follows :

This [mob] violence is said to have issued in one instance in the death of a Methodist, Mr. William Seward, at Hay from stoning. We can meet with no confirmation of this belief in contemporary writers. Howell Harris, a close friend of Seward's, makes no mention of it. The only mention that we have met with is in some doggerel lines on Seward's tombstone at Cusop which were added to the original inscription some 40 years after his death.⁵

The inscription in question (wrongly dated) reads thus :

Here lyeth the body of William Seward of Badsey in the county of Worcester gentleman, who departed ys life Oct. ye 22nd 1742 [should be 1740] Aged 38. "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" Philipians chap. ye 1st verse ye 21st. If earth be all, why o'er and o'er a beaten path you walk and draw up nothing new; not so our martyred Seraph did when from the verge of Wales he fled.

It will be observed that there is nothing in the inscription to suggest that the martyrdom occurred in Hay.

The whole question has therefore been re-examined objectively, and the *facts* so far as they can be ascertained are as follows :

(1) In 1740 there was no local newspaper to give an account of Seward's death. Obituary notices appeared in two London periodicals as follows :

- (a) *Gentleman's Magazine*, November 1740, p. 571—"Mr. William Seward formerly belonging to the Treasury in the South Sea House, a disciple and close friend of Mr. Whitefield."
- (b) *London Magazine*, 1740, p. 510—"Mr. William Seward, a close friend of Mr. Whitefield. He formerly belong'd to the Treasury in the S. S. House."

The Rev. P. Braby, the present vicar of Badsey, in a private communication to the author, provides additional references :

- (c) Diary of the 1st Earl of Egmont for Monday, 10th November 1740—" . . . that Mr. Seward lost his life in Gloucestershire by a stone cast at him as he was preaching in the fields."
- (d) Letter-books of Henry Newman, secretary of the SPCK—Draft letter to the Rev. Griffith Jones of Llandowror, 11th November 1740: "It has been rumoured here that Mr. Seward met with some insult which drew on him a fever that hastened his end, which I hope is not true and if you have any Account of it that you can rely on please favour me with it."

⁵ W. L. Bevan: *Diocesan History of St. David's* (1888), p. 221 n.

These references are important because they are contemporary. The first two, however, do not suggest any unusual factors in the death; the last two do no more than indicate that Seward's death was indirectly due to an attack upon him while preaching. They certainly do not show that an attack took place at Hay.

(2) Howell Harris, from whom Seward had parted only a short time before, makes no reference in his diary to an untoward death, and indeed expresses no surprise at it. Harris left Trevecka on 16th October after parting from Seward on the previous day, and went to Broadmeadow, near Hay, where there was a local *seiat* (fellowship meeting), returning to Trevecka on the 18th or 19th. He did not hear of Seward's death until the 26th, when the entry in his diary reads:

Heard that my dear Bro. Seward is gone to Heaven . . . Recollecting Bro. Seward's work and simplicity and especially his being buffeted with me with Dung . . . it was more than I could bear, my heart almost broken.

(3) Seward's own diary for 1740 reads as follows:

Oct. 15th . . . had a most affectionate parting with Br. Harris . . . Came to the Hay and attempted to Discourse a little distance from the Town but after singing and prayer and discoursing a few minutes the Minr. of the parish and sevl. Justices of ye Peace with many other Clergyinen came and demanded my silence and stirred up the people against us.⁶

It will be noted that Seward was well enough to write up his diary after this incident, though this is the last entry.

(4) Poole, an historian by no means opposed to Dissenting preachers, in describing the life of Howell Harris, says:

A Mr. Seward whose mortal remains lie buried in Cusop churchyard accompanied him on many of his itineraries . . . these two evangelists were mobbed nearly to death at Newport, Pontypool, Usk and Monmouth.

It is significant that having specifically referred to mobbing in four places, he does not record that the death at Hay was due to a similar cause.

(5) It has been suggested that Seward expressed a wish that no legal action should be taken against his assailant. It is, however, inconceivable that the local justices would ignore a possible case of murder or at the very least of manslaughter, especially when the victim had some social standing and when they had been called out shortly before to ban Seward's meetings. In any case, it is certain that Seward's family would have taken action had an assault occurred with fatal results. There is no mention of such an action in the records either of the Brecon Quarter Sessions or of the Court of Great Sessions.

(6) The highly-coloured accounts of Seward's martyrdom all date from the mid-nineteenth century onwards—over one hundred years after Seward's death—a most unsatisfactory guarantee of accuracy.

⁶ *Proceedings*, xxxiv, pp. 19-20.

⁷ E. Poole: *A People's History of Brecon* (1867), p. 106.

The writer has discussed these points with four acknowledged experts on the subject—Mr. A. H. Williams of Cardiff, a former editor of *Bathafarn*, the Rev. Gomer M. Roberts of Llandybie, Miss Hilda Lofthouse, the librarian of Chetham's Library, Manchester, and the Rev. P. Braby, vicar of Badsey, to whom he is indebted for some of the information mentioned above; but no satisfactory resolution of the difficulties has been found.

Unfortunately medical evidence is completely lacking. Indeed, it is not even clear who was doctor or surgeon-apothecary in Hay at the time. It is known that in 1727 a certain Dr. Smith practised, in 1730 John Jones, and Edward Wellington in 1759. The first medical register for Wales was not compiled until 1780. In any case, even if the doctor were known, the likelihood of his having kept a case-book which might still come to light is remote in the extreme.

In view of the suggestions made in (1)(d) above, it may well be that Seward's death in the Hay area was a delayed action resulting from the known injuries which he had received at Caerleon and Monmouth. Moreover, Mr. Braby has informed the author privately that in his opinion Seward could not have lived much longer in any event, bearing in mind the pace at which he was living—in a constant state of nervous excitement and with very little sleep. This might well account for Howell Harris's lack of surprise at his death.

Another unexplained mystery is why Seward was not buried in Hay churchyard, but in Cusop—a parish not even in the same diocese. This cannot be because of objections to the burial of dissenters in Hay, because they were regularly buried there, nor could it be that the rector of Cusop was more sympathetic to Seward than the vicar of Hay, since they were one and the same person. The answer must almost certainly be geographical. Either Seward's death occurred at one of the inns on the Herefordshire side of the border or he was possibly staying with his friends of the connexion at Broadmeadow.

What actually was the cause of Seward's death must therefore be a matter of conjecture, and romantic feelings must not be allowed to intrude. It may be that Seward tried to hold another meeting in defiance of the vicar, possibly arranging it on the Herefordshire bank of the Dulas brook to circumvent the inhibition; stones may or may not have been thrown as at Caerleon and Monmouth. On the other hand, his death at Hay may have been partly or wholly the result of his earlier injuries, and with the passage of time accounts of the two incidents may well have been combined. Unless further diaries are unearthed, it is unlikely that the truth will ever be discovered, but the fact remains that no known *contemporary* account bears out the circumstantial stories of martyrdom dating from at least a hundred years afterwards.

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HUMOROUS VERSES BY SAMUEL WESLEY

IN a copy of the first edition of Thomas Coryat's *Crudities Hastily gobbled up in five moneths travells in France, Savoy, etc.*, published in 1611, and formerly in the collection of the late Dr. Elmer T. Clark, there appears an early poetic effusion of Samuel Wesley the elder.

"*E Libris Samuelis Westly E Coll. Exon. Oxon. Dec. '86*" is written down the inside edge of the first of two old fly-leaves bound in the volume, and the verses occupy three of the four sides of paper, the fourth being blank.

The origin of the verses was no doubt suggested in part by the contents of the volume, which is, in the words of Messrs. Blackwell's catalogue, where it was offered for sale in 1947 (and by whose courtesy the verses were first transcribed),

as singular a book of travel as was ever written in any language. The peregrination extended over a distance of nearly 2,000 miles, and more than half this distance was accomplished in one pair of shoes, which were only once mended, and on his return were hung up in Odcombe [Somerset] Church, where they remained in "undisturbed dignity" for nearly a century.

Prefaced to the record of the journeyings is a collection of poems, in mock commendation of the author, written by the leading literary men of the day, and showing us the contemporary sense of humour. Apparently Samuel Wesley, who came into possession of the volume in 1686 at the age of twenty-four, decided to write some verses himself—concerning the travels not of Coryat, but of his friend John Dunton, an eccentric bookseller who the previous year had published Wesley's book of poems, *Maggots*.

John Dunton (1659-1735) had been apprenticed to a bookseller as a youth, and, coming of Dissenting Whig stock, had joined the Whig apprentices in the struggle leading to the Glorious Revolution. It was at this time that the young Samuel Wesley met him, and the two became fast friends, although by now Wesley had shed his family's nonconformity. Consequently when, in 1682, Dunton married Elizabeth,¹ the daughter of the celebrated Dr. Annesley, Wesley was invited to his friend's wedding—and met the Annesley family. What resulted is well known. It is one of the curious chances of history that if Samuel Wesley had not struck up this strange friendship, John Wesley would in all probability never have been "son to Susanna".

Dunton then set up in business in 1685 at the sign of the Raven,

¹ The *Encyclopædia Britannica* (9th edn.—Dunton does not figure in the latest edition) states that Dunton married a sister of Samuel Wesley, and a previous bookseller's announcement stuck in the volume repeats this assertion. It was, however, not his sister, but his sister-in-law; cf. J. S. Simon: *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*, p. 55.

near the Royal Exchange, but his wife managed the business (how like her younger sister!) while her husband was left to his own devices, rambling and writing. In 1686, as a result of the Monmouth rising, he prudently visited New England, and after eight months there went to Holland; both are referred to in the verses. On his return to Britain he opened a shop in the Poultry, where he published with Samuel Wesley the *Athenian Mercury*—a forerunner of *Notes and Queries*. This was discontinued in 1696, after six years. He wrote many curious books, now forgotten apart from his *Life and Errors*. His wife predeceased him, and he married (unhappily) a second time, dying in the same year (1735) as his friend and brother-in-law.

This prudent voyage to America and Holland is the subject of Wesley's verses. But the poet does not only have in mind Dunton's travels and Coryat's strange adventures; he remembers also another journey—the *Pilgrim's Progress*, and so comes to write the verses under the name of John Bunyan (who, assuming them to have been composed at the time of the journey in 1686), was still alive.

The verses have been printed as far as possible as written; but for the most part they are written in a very small script, scribbled fairly closely together, with very many false starts, erasures, corrections, interlinear insertions, etc., so that at times it is difficult to decipher the words, and at the top corner of the second page a word or so is lost. Page two of the fly-leaves has two columns, and this has occasioned some confusion in the order of the verses, so that there still remains a little doubt on that score. It is in fact a rough draft, as Wesley admits in the last verse but two:

Nor had I time to lick it or adorn it,
For 'twas just hammer'd out in one shower.

In view of all this, the reading is occasionally doubtful; a [?] has been put at the end of lines where some doubt as to a word exists. Abbreviations are frequently employed, and have been regularly expanded; thus

y ^e = the	y ⁿ = then	y ^w = thou (and sometimes you)	
y ^{ee} = thee	y ^t = that	y ^m = them	y ^u = you
y ^r = your	s ^{ll} = shall	w ^{ch} = which	w th = with
w ⁿ = when	w ^{re} = where	o ^r = our	w ^{se} = whose
w ^t = what	ō = not	y ^{wt} = thou'lt (i.e. thou wilt)	

and a line over a letter sometimes signifies omission, e.g. fr̄o for "from"; others are ag^t for "against" and 2ce, 3ce and 1 for "twice", "thrice" and "one"; & has also been expanded to "and". In one stanza—the second from the end—some correction is necessary: in the second line there are two syllables extra, and "each and" (inserted above the line) should presumably be suppressed. In the last line of the same stanza two syllables are missing. It would appear that Wesley noticed he was the two syllables short, and by accident added them to the wrong line.

Needless to say, there is little poetic merit in the verses; only once or twice does he achieve any real poetic feeling (e.g. in the stanzas beginning "Beauteous he was . . ." and "Smooth lay the sea . . ."). The polysyllabic rhymes (a customary trick in humorous poetry—cf. Byron and W. S. Gilbert) offer the greatest interest, as foreshadowing the occasional strange rhymes coined by his son.

Realized as explained above, the verses run as follows:

From Bedford Town, by my high birth notorious,
Lo I am come, Dear John, with staff and Wallet
And Budget eke to sing thy prayes glorious,
Stuff'd full with many a precious book and ballet.²

For how can I sit still and con old rogueries
When I, poor sheep, stuck in Abaddon's³ brambles, [?]
Whilst thou art acting a new Pilgrim's progress,
And choaking fame with thy renowned rambles?

For London then I jogg'd, where thee and I
Are for our pretty parts so much esteem'd;
But by the way under an oak full high
I fell asleep and thus behold I dreamed.⁴

Methought I saw you stow'd in Graves-end Barge
With wife and children on the shore attending,
Who for thy voy'ge wept tears so big and large
That its beginning almost prov'd thy ending.

Now down the stream thy boat went jogging, in which
Thou viewdst the City's dredfull arms undaunted,
Rolling by thy dear plum-cake Walls and Greenwich,
Like Quixot fam'd in Miller's Boat enchanted.

In search of Fame which Time nor can nor will bury,
Thou with the Thames to sea didst aim thy motion,
Which kissing thy old walls, O glorious Tilbury,
Dives in the bosom of her Father ocean.

Next to the Downs our pious pilgrim stagger'd,
Where what befall's so strange and wondrous rare-O,
That he that thinks to write it, Friend,'s a braggard,
Unless he write like thee, or I, or Maro.⁵

Lo, in my dream I saw where you were rideing
To thy impending Fate a perfect Stranger,
Feeding in peace the Haddock and the Whiteing,
And never dreaming of thy brooding danger.

Hobgoblins, Satyrs, fearfull Sprights and Dragons
Perke up their Heads above the waves like Porposes,
Raw heads, Gins, traps, fowl fiends as Pope and pagans, [?]
Cream'd on the sea as thick as gendring Tortoises.

March on, o Dunton John, with might and main then,
For know John Bunyan of thy worth has scribled;
Nor shall these rueful Rhimes be spent in vain then,
Which in thy prayes daintily down dribbled.

² ballad.

³ The Devil (cf. Revelation ix. 11).

⁴ A reminiscence of the opening words of *Pilgrim's Progress*.

⁵ i.e. Virgil (Publius Virgilius Maro).

[Gian] t Despair with grievous Crabtree Cudgel [?]

Thy heart was thro thy shoulders bluntly stabbing,
Rebukeing thee right sore, that thou couldst budge ill,
Tho 'twere to spew from Hamock or from cabin.

But worst of all—the huge fowl feend Apollyon
Trode water there breast-high, as far's the navel,
And ramping ore the ship as if he'd swallow one
Just made thee bid adieu to Life and Travel. [?]

Wings like a Bat he had, enough to fright one,
Tho arm'd with club, and courage of Alcides,⁶
Cover'd with scales also much like a Tryton,⁷

Tho skin was thicker than a Dragon's hide is !
Fire balls he spew'd till the sea round him glared
As light as Thames at Coronation clutter,⁸
Or if great things with small may be compared
Like squib or cracker hizzing in a gutter.

A Horn he had woud shake the ship and toss her out
Of sea and all, tho Remoras bid her tarry ;⁹ [?]

A Nose likewise like that of the Rhinocerot,
An elbow eke like to a Dromedary.

With Elbow, Nose and Horn he toss'd thy Carvel
As erst my Bed when me he would recover
When my poor Spows he thumpt, that 'twas a marvel
He had not slain us both, over and over.

Now the sick sea kickt, yawn'd and foamed and rumbled,
Striving to throw such dreadfull Inmates from it,
Poor Amphytrite's¹⁰ Guts and Garbage grumbled,
Retching, while Neptune held her Head to vomit.

So in my dream I saw, as he approached
Altho for fear I stuck like rue or onion,
I stood and cry'd, as nearer he encroached,
" If you John Dunton take, take too John Bunyan.

" Nor shall you find me easily digestive,
Ime a tough bit as ere your feendness tasted ;
I'll make you turn me out tho nere so costive,
Nor will I tarry till one crum be wasted.

" Yet more I tell thee, when I pass thy Gullet
My tools will choke thee, if I chance to get across ;
For Lo ! I've stufft my Budget—alias mallet—¹¹
With Tinker's Brass and Similes and Metaphors."

For the poor Devil that nere before was us'd thus,
He knew not how to manage his behaviour ;
He curst and swore that he'd not be abus'd thus,
Tho I snept out he fear'd me by his Savour.

He stampt, he star'd, he laught, he cry'd, he whistled,
He tore his Beard, he bit his Nayls and Thumb, too ;
He screech'd, he yeld, he roar'd, he belcht, he fizzled,
Then shook his Tayl and told me what 'twould come to.

⁶ A name for Hercules, as the grandson of Alcæus. ⁷ Half man, half fish.

⁸ A reference to the recent accession of James II.

⁹ The word is unclear ; a remora is a sucking fish.

¹⁰ Goddess of the sea, mother of Triton. ¹¹ Probably a mistake for *wallet*.

" I'll swear (said he) by my Infernall Dungeon,
 I'll smite thee thro, and spill thy soul like Buttermilk;
 I'll mawl thy tinker's hide; I'll . . . I'll . . ."

Rage or the Ryme here stopt him, guess you whether;
 Yet still he gapet, and for the fight prepareing,
 Had eat the ship, and thee and I together,
 As easily as whales a shole of Herring:

Hee'd gulpt us down as glib as Eggs or Oysters,
 Had not the sky all on the sudden cleared,
 And eke the sea was bright, but now so boystrous,
 On whose bright edg a golden Youth appeared.

Beauteous He was, yet awfull, dredfull comly;
 He scar'd, and yet he pleas'd as much as maybe;
 So Sprawling Lover, be she nere so homely,
 Dreads and admires his charming, killing Lady;

With Rays around his venerable Visage
 Brighter than those on sign of neighbring Tavern,
 And blith and bonny in the Flowr of his age
 He frights the feends to their Infernall cavern.

Down sunk the little fry of sucking Devils
 Without a stroke—but now the wars begin hard,
 For gruff Apollyon, who far more uncivil is,
 Made th' Angel glad to draw his flaming whiniard.¹²

Against whose hungry Edg was no resisting,
 So much was the poor Devil now astonisht,
 The Angel held him fast, for all his twisting,
 And warned him once, twice, thrice, and then he vanisht.

Smooth lay the Sea without a blast or billow,
 In easy Curle fan'd by a gentle motion,
 Smooth as a Syren's or a Nereid's pillow,
 Or the calm pallace of old Father Ocean.

Then to the Ship approacht the bright, sweet Singer,
 And softly onward in her voy'ge he jog'd her;
 Methought he jog'd but with his little finger,
 So soft and fair you'd think he'd scarce have wag'd her.

'Twixt Earth and Heavn he hung like Roterdamus,¹⁸
 With ease he hung, for angels are not heavy;

" O man by Fate belov'd! O pilgrim famous,
 Just one word more, he cry's, before I leave ye.

" Go on, says he, for greater things prepared,
 Patience or I will succor still provide thee;
 Go on my charge, he cry'd, and be not scared
 With all the troubles which must yet betide thee.

" The Light of thy most comely countenances
 Are doom'd to shine on the Sun-burnt American,
 And, more than all the Heroes of Romances,
 Scatter their cloudy griefs like any Hurricane.

" The Heavens shall smile and laugh at thy returning
 To thy lov'd wife, unmawl'd by Shark or Haddock,

¹² A dagger or short sword.¹⁸ i.e. Erasmus; the reference is obscure.

- To cheer thy friends, for thy sad absence mourning,
As welcom as to your new country Madoc.¹⁴ [?]
- "From Ship and Sea and Sergants more devouring,
To the Myn-Heer's No-Landt thou'lt next be jogging;¹⁵
And on som chimney Top shalt 'scape a scouring
When Hood breaks in, in spight of Hogan-Mogan.¹⁴
- "A Book you shall compose, which each notcht prentice
Shall stretch to buy, altho he nere so cribb'd is ;
Nay, ev'ry Master too, whateres his rent is,
That dwells 'twixt London-stone and the Antipodes.
- "And wisely too, for fear least Authors vary
About thy deeds, and work thy Fame displeasure,
Shal thy own Fist write thy own commentary,
Like great Tom Coriat, or scarce greater Cesar.
- "A word to th' wise ! I doubt not thy complying
To Fate's behests, therefore no more hereof I say ;
Thus act, or those who are inclin'd to Lyeing
Will conjure thee up from Death and make thee prophesy."
The Angel bow'd, tho he methought was still grim
With the late fight, tho grim, yet he was mannerly ;
The Angel bow'd (so did likewise the Pilgrim,
Tho he for fear could hardly go, or stand or lie).
- And now the flameing Youth unfolds each feather,
With full intent heavn's gawdy gates to knock at ;
Away he leaps, hop, stride and jump together,
So ore Bowsteeples-vane leaps a Sky-rocket.
- Whilst he athwart the clouds danc'd the canary,
I cry'd in haste, "O stay, dear Youth, I prythee ;
If thou hast any bowells, stay, and carry
An Honest Bookseller and Tinker wi' thee."
- Just as the loss of him my heart was killing,
When all in vain were all my loud Beseeches,
I woke, and found my courteous Tears distilling
Had drown'd my face and Hands and coat and breeches.
- My dream I pen'd, like to the little Hornet
(Bee I shoud ha' bin) that sucks from each and every flower ;¹⁶
Nor had I time to lick it or adorn it,
For 'twas just hammer'd out in one shower.
- We'll print 'em, John, my Fancys stick like Burs,
If them thy Buyers will but well remember,
And prove in each tough tempest comforters
From New Year's Day to th' 30th of December.
- March on, o Dunton John, with might and main then,
And know John Bunyan in thy prais has scribbled ;
Nor shall those ruefull Rymes be spent in vain then
Which in thy praises daintily down dribbled.

OLIVER A. BECKERLEGGE,
FRANK BAKER.

¹⁴ The allusions here are now lost.

¹⁵ A reference to Dunton's trip to Holland.

¹⁶ The words "each and" are superfluous to the metre, and should be suppressed.

THE DECLINE OF THE CLASS-MEETING AND THE PROBLEM OF CHURCH-MEMBERSHIP IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY WESLEYANISM

I

THE origin of the Methodist class-meeting is probably too well-known to require extended discussion here.¹ Despite its origin as a fund-raising expedient (and it long retained this as a subsidiary part of its character), Wesley quickly saw its pastoral potentiality, and in his later years frequently insisted that it was vital to the health of the Methodist societies. Fairly early in the nineteenth century it became apparent that the "class" was to be the sole survivor of that hierarchy of intimate groups within the society ("bands", "select bands" and so forth) through which Wesley had sought to stimulate and channel aspirations to various degrees of Christian holiness. Of all these groups it might be said that they were in trouble almost from the start.² Wesley had frequently to purge them and insist on their necessity, just as he had to insist on the necessity of preaching perfection.³ It is evident that some Methodists already, for a variety of religious and social reasons, resisted not simply discipline in general but also the type of discipline which implied that Methodism was a kind of perfectionist sect.

The class-meeting, however, survived the demise of the still-more-demanding groups like the bands, and remained the basic unit not only for Methodist fellowship but also as the normal basis for membership. Nevertheless, there was a steady stream of writings on the institution during the nineteenth century, explaining and increasingly defending it, in a way which suggests a growing unease and sense of defence against criticism.

Two related problems became explicit: the unpopularity of the class as an institution; and the problem of the relationship between class-membership and membership of the church. The meeting was traditionally conceived to be for the weekly exchange of religious experiences with a view to mutual edification, under the guidance

¹ For a useful discussion of the origins and characteristics of the class and various types of band see Frank Baker in *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, vol. I (1965), vii. 3.

² In view of criticisms of the class, it is fair to recall that it also received some glowing testimonies. An early preacher found the Methodists "in class" "lived as the Christians of old, having all things common" (*Lives of Early Methodist Preachers*, 4th edn. (1871), vi. p. 258). In general see also Leslie F. Church: *The Early Methodist People* (London, 1948), chapter 4.

³ See *Journal* (Standard edn.), iv, p. 350 on members who are not class-members; in v, p. 84 he writes that those who find no good in the class should give it a trial, since their dislike may be "natural" or even "diabolical", and they should set an example to others.

of the leader. It was not seen, however, by its admirers, merely as one of several means of grace, but rather as the essential and central means of grace by which the Wesleyan sense of being a holy community was expressed and built up. As such, it was intimately connected with the whole local polity of Methodism, and so might seem impossible to separate from the question of the basis of membership of the Wesleyan body.⁴

II

Some of the specific criticisms put forward after the middle of the nineteenth century have a long history behind them.⁵ It was said that the meeting was dull; the "experiences" repetitious; the leaders inadequate; people who find it difficult to speak in public are forced to do so on every occasion. Occasionally the complaint was made of the difficulty of mixing different social classes and different types of people in one meeting.⁶

What lay behind these dissatisfactions? Groups of this kind flourish best if their members share an intensity of—and continuing interest in—a common pattern of religious experience.⁷ Unless the "experience" is maintained, unless indeed it is progressive and becoming more sophisticated, boredom and loss of interest is always liable to set in. From this point of view it is not surprising that in the course of the nineteenth century the institution should have become jaded and unpopular. Yet this means, in part, that the class was the victim of a narrow view of religious experience and of inadequate leadership. Ideally, the skilful leader would have led his class on from dwelling on the moment of conversion to a more progressive view of the religious life; and from dwelling on a succession of stereotyped "experiences" to an application of Christian principles to a wider range of life and experience. Lacking a confessional based on a more or less developed moral theology (though non-Methodists often mistakenly regarded the class in this light),⁸ Methodism tended to suffer from the common Protestant imprecision in pastoral care and from unskilled pastoral labour, aggravating the problems of group psychology which were observed by (for example)

⁴ L. H. Wiseman in *Thoughts on the Class Meeting* (London, 1854), pp. 7ff. emphasized the importance of cultivating communal Christianity. A Conference report of 1889 (*Minutes*, 1889, pp. 404ff.) emphasized the way in which the class was an inextricable part of the whole Methodist polity.

⁵ *Journal*, v, p. 84.

⁶ So J. H. Rigg: *The Methodist Class Meeting* (1865), p. 5; S. W. Christophers: *Class Meetings in Relation to the Design and Success of Methodism* (1873).

⁷ Thomas Jackson in *Recollections* (London, 1874), pp. 494ff. thought that the class depended on religious experience, and that interest in it declined as Methodists became "worldly".

⁸ There is a long history of such charges: e.g. Bishop Lavington: *The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared* (1749-51, ed. R. Polwhele (1833), pp. 156ff.); *Lives of Early Methodist Preachers*, iii, p. 70; *Memorial of Thomas Bush* (1841) (quoted by L. F. Church, *op. cit.*, p. 157), who observed that "the one is a private confession made to a priest, the other is conversation among fellow-Christians".

Joseph Barker as he looked back on his early Methodist experiences.⁹ His account is, unfortunately, too long to be quoted here, but he noted the tendency for members to follow the tone of the first contributors; the premium set on cheerful and victorious experiences; and adverse valuation of those who did not have these. He also thought poorly of the quality of leadership. Some recognition of these problems, together with an assertion of the need for classes and bands, may be seen in Joseph Entwisle's reflections while in Macclesfield in 1802-4.¹⁰ He thought the people needed discipline, and that more suffered from omission of duties than from commission of sins. Leaders should question the people on their duties and practice rather than confine attention to the state of their minds.

The problems of the class arose partly as a result of a growing and increasingly hereditary group becoming more of a comprehensive "church" and less of an intensive society; hence the demand for meetings which were less intensive and introspective—even, in the end, less specifically religious. As part of a hierarchy of organization and leadership the class was, moreover, affected by the kind of social tensions which erupted in the Wesleyan schisms, though there were already signs of this in Wesley's day. In 1771¹¹ Wesley laid down the law on the limited duties of class-leaders in relation to other Methodist officials in a way which shows that, like Anglican Evangelicals who used lay helpers, it was difficult to limit the functions and subordinate the authority of such leaders to the hierarchy. If the religious success and popularity of the class depended in the last resort on the intensity of religious interest and satisfaction to be found in its activities, then it was always liable to suffer by competition from other popular and perhaps less "official" means of grace. This seems to have happened with those informal prayer-meetings which form part of the pre-history of Primitive Methodism:¹² here, amongst other things, there was freer scope for the unconventional gifts of the laity and of the charismatic.

A further source of social tension, again aggravated by the decline of the authority of a common, shared experience, was the mixture of social classes in the class already referred to. It was possible in early and even in later Methodism to find in the class not only a mixture of social classes but a reversal of their roles as leader and led which obtained in the world outside. If part of Wesley's unique authority in Methodism was based on his status as an Anglican priest over people who were his natural inferiors, and trustees were

⁹ *Life of Joseph Barker, written by Himself* (1880), pp. 42, 44-52: though a critical ex-Wesleyan, Barker did not lack appreciation of the movement. More hostile and ironical was the Methodist turned Unitarian, J. Nightingale, in *Portraiture of Methodism* (1807), pp. 177ff., 190ff., on classes and bands.

¹⁰ *Memoir of the Revd. Joseph Entwisle by his Son* (Bristol, 1848), pp. 233f.

¹¹ *Journal*, v, pp. 404-6.

¹² See W. R. Ward: *Popular Religion and the Problem of Control* in "Studies in Church History", VIII (1972) (ed. G. J. Cumming and D. Baker), p. 240. There was a parallel tension between revivalists and more conventional preachers.

sometimes drawn from the higher ranks in the society, it was sometimes the case in the world of the class-meeting that the leader, chosen for his spiritual gifts, could be exercising a certain pastoral authority over those higher in the social scale than himself.¹³ In the more intense phase of a new religious movement, some degree of overcoming social distinctions of this kind is possible; in the later stages it begins to create difficulties. And it is becoming increasingly evident in recent research that at least some of the reasons for the splits in nineteenth-century Wesleyanism had a secular foundation in social and political tension.

The remedies suggested for the problems of the class-meeting were broadly of two kinds. Those who wished to keep to the basic pattern and intention of the past suggested various practical ways of cultivating adequate leadership, discouraging the repetitious bore, and encouraging the timid.¹⁴ On this view the necessity of the weekly meeting for the maintenance and extension of experimental religion was still in mind. But there was another view. It seems that no one went so far as to say that the whole meeting should be abandoned; rather it was suggested that it should change its character and perhaps should not be regarded as more than one among several means of grace. The class itself should have a more varied programme: for example, a monthly rotation between an experience meeting, a more general devotional fellowship, a Bible class.¹⁵ Here, again, there is evidence for a less personalized and exacting form of religious exercise. Conservatives felt, with justice, that none of these modifications was really in line with the original purpose of the class, and when they were used, pains were taken to stress that the new devices were to secure the old end of eliciting personal spiritual conversation.¹⁶ It may be added that the new suggestions also pointed to the need for a better-informed lay leadership—indeed, there was a trend towards ministerially-led classes by the end of the century.¹⁷

III

The other major problem about the class-meeting was the connexion between class-membership and church-membership, for

¹³ For example Mather as a preacher superintending his former employer (*Lives of Early Methodist Preachers*, ii, p. 166); and a "stuff maker" leading a class including a "gentleman" (L. F. Church: *More about the Early Methodist People* (London, 1949), p. 2).

¹⁴ Wiseman (op. cit., pp. 18ff.) recognized the danger of "revival" and "conversion" being looked for instead of (practical) "fruits".

¹⁵ For examples of these programmes see F. Friend: *The Methodist Class, the Methodist Church* (Newcastle, 1889); Sister Katherine's Class at the West Central London Mission (Second Annual Report, 1889). Bible classes were competing with more traditional meetings by then.

¹⁶ See the discussion by R. Currie in *Methodism Divided* (London, 1968), pp. 125-31.

¹⁷ I have unfortunately mislaid the authority for this statement, though I believe it to be correct by the end of the nineteenth century.

traditionally the latter was based on the former.¹⁸ What, then, was to be done about people who had ceased to attend the class?—should they be expelled from membership? And what about those who were faithful church-members in all but name but who refused to join a class and therefore could not be admitted to membership? This difficulty, too, goes back to the eighteenth century. The situation was in one respect simpler for Wesley. Since he did not regard Methodism as a “church” but as a “society”, he felt free to lay down his own rules: Methodists could (at least in theory) perfectly well be members of existing churches as well as of the Methodist organization; expulsion from the latter did not entail questions of “church-membership”. As Methodism, despite Wesley’s disclaimers, became more and more like an independent church, this attitude was unrealistic; but in any case Wesley was early faced with problems which in essence were very similar to those encountered in the nineteenth century about church- and class-membership. In eighteenth-century terms the question was of the relationship between membership of the “society” and of the “class”: could a person be a member of the local Methodist society without regularly attending his class? Wesley clearly thought not: he frequently asserted that those who would not meet regularly in class were not to be regarded as in the society.¹⁹

Difficulties of this kind reflect not only problems of leadership and control (sometimes aggravated by social factors), but also tension between different ideals of what Methodism’s religious purpose should be. Recent discussion in the light of nineteenth- and twentieth-century experience has produced a fair amount of comment on the transition of the Methodist movement from “sect” and “society” to “church”.²⁰ Whilst modern arguments on this theme are much coloured by sociological analysis since the time of Troeltsch’s celebrated discussion, the idea of Methodism being in transit from society to church already occurred in nineteenth-

¹⁸ It will become clear in what follows that much of the later nineteenth-century controversy over class- and church-membership turned on a disagreement about this very proposition. See the brief but interesting discussion in John C. Bowmer: *The Lord’s Supper in Methodism* (London, 1961), pp. 26-9. He appears to agree with those contemporaries who denied the link to be absolute: it will be seen that I incline to the opposite view.

¹⁹ *Letters* (Standard edn.), iv, p. 273; this was at Bristol, where he said they were not of the society unless meeting in class, and were to be put out if failing to meet three times successively. In 1776 (*Letters*, vi, p. 208) at Newcastle they lost class-tickets for non-attendance (defined as less than seven and later twelve times a quarter). In 1779 (*Letters*, vi, p. 366) he expelled those not giving class-money. In 1782 (*Letters*, vii, p. 154) he bluntly said that those who will not meet in class can no longer stay with us.

²⁰ See, for example, J. M. Turner: “From Society to Church” (*London Quarterly and Holborn Review*, April 1963); J. H. Chamberlayne: “Methodism—Society or Church?” (*ibid.*, April 1964), and “From Sect to Church in British Methodism” (*British Journal of Sociology*, 1964); Currie, *op. cit.*, chapter 4. Bernard E. Jones in “Society and Church in Wesleyan Methodism, 1878-93” in *Proceedings*, xxxvi, pp. 134-8, notes that “Wesleyan Methodist Church” first appeared on class-tickets in 1893.

century Wesleyanism,²¹ and some elements in the process were already in operation in Wesley's day. That is to say, one may take "church" to mean a body which has its own independent and self-sufficient life and organization, in no way dependent on another body for part of its life. From this point of view, Methodism had already developed a long way towards a "church" situation in Wesley's lifetime, and fairly rapidly consolidated its independence after his death, notwithstanding the persistence of a "special relationship" with the Establishment in some Wesleyan eyes.

But when Methodists began to speak about developing from a society into a church they were also referring (consciously or unconsciously) to something more subtle. Early Methodism could be regarded as a society for the propagation of Christian holiness on a particular doctrinal basis, through a body whose structure and methods were in the last resort determined by the exigencies of this fundamental purpose, and not by some *a priori* notion of what a real "church's" structure and ministry "must" be (unlike the original basis of some of the older Dissenting bodies). Refusing to regard Methodism as a "church", Wesley did not feel called upon to develop the new theory of the Church which his practice might have seemed to suggest. Later Methodism clearly was a church (or rather group of churches) in the sense already described—a self-sufficient organization. But, as has often been pointed out, it did retain some important characteristics of a religious society conscious of a special mission, organizing its membership and life with this in view. Its independence of the Establishment and its increasing size and age forced certain problems on Wesleyanism which could be characterized in terms of the "society to church" formula. More important than the problem of providing for an independent body was the actual nature of that body and the religious ideals for which it was now prepared to stand. It was this question, and not merely the dignity of a self-sufficient "church" which was at stake in controversies such as those on membership. A religious society pursuing holiness within a wider church could insist on membership as membership of the society, defined in terms of the class-meeting. Failure to attend class meant failure to conform to the objects of the society; expulsion was natural and proper and not excommunication from the "church" as the whole community of the faithful. But a church (it came to be felt) should be for all sorts and conditions of men, providing for varied religious and even social needs by various means. Moreover, if simply adherence to Christianity is to be the basis of membership for a church, one cannot insist that attendance at one particular and ecumenically parochial means of grace—the class-meeting—should be the criterion of one's Christianity, especially when the class-meeting was disliked for other reasons. The decline of effective participation in the class as the criterion of

²¹ For a clear example see John Willis: *The Class and the Congregation of Wesleyan Methodism* (1869); also T. Hughes: *Condition of Membership in the Christian Church* (1868, 2nd edn. 1873), Part II, chapter 7.

Methodist membership, despite the long persistence of it as the formal basis, is an indication of the fact that the original Methodist purpose of a holiness society had been absorbed into a wider, less intense, more conventional view of what Christianity and a Christian church ought to be.

The formula "society to church" is, therefore, rather one way of describing what happened than an explanation of its happening. A better understanding of the situation would require an assessment of the way in which, in any religious group, adherents and the children of adherents after the first generation adjust themselves on the one hand to the model their group proposes for religion; and on the other hand to the aspirations felt as members of society at large, particularly as the social status of some of the members begins to rise and the social possibilities open to their peers in society at large begin to expand. This was what happened to English nonconformists in the nineteenth century, and pressure for conformity to Wesleyan standards was affected in two ways as a result. It was weakened in favour of the standards of the world outside; and the Wesleyan standards themselves were lowered both by changing the character of the "holiness" required by making it more social and less narrowly a matter of "religious experience"; and by allowing the organ through which the holiness society had operated—the class-meeting—to cease to be the central means of church-fellowship or the effective basis of church-membership.²²

This view of what happened to Wesleyanism may now be illustrated by looking at the controversy over class-membership and church-membership in the later nineteenth century. Without denying the value of the class and the necessity to maintain it, critics argued that Methodism now in fact included large numbers of people who were members in all but name, but who, by the existing rules, could not be regarded as full members and hold office. On the other hand, there were members who had been enrolled in classes yet who did little for the church, and did not attend their classes regularly.²³ The controversy over class- and church-membership

²² I have discussed various aspects of this change, including the subject of the present article, in an essay on "Wesleyan Methodism 1849-1902" which will appear in volume III of the *History of Methodism in Great Britain*. See also Currie, *op. cit.*, chapter 4.

²³ For statements of the traditional view of the importance of classes to Methodism see, for example, Edmund Grindrod: *The Duties, Qualifications and Encouragements of Class Leaders* (London, 1831), and Benjamin Gregory: *Scriptural Church Principles* (London, 1888), Part II, pp. 259-62. For examples of the failure to attract the whole membership, see, in addition to the eighteenth-century examples (above, note 19), B. Gregory: *Sidelights on the Conflicts of Methodism* (popular edn., 1899), p. 427 (Conference of 1848). In 1806 in Sunderland there was a group of Wesleyans known as "half-brethren" (i.e. effective members in all but name except that they did not meet in class). It was felt that they added an influence and "temporal ability" to the society (*Life and Ministry of the Revd. William Bramwell, by Members of his Family* (1848), p. 81). Finance was a consideration here: faithful non-members often gave money outside the class, whilst some thought that class-money detracted from the spiritual tone of the class.

was made more aggressively public by Thomas Hughes in *The Condition of Membership in the Christian Church viewed in connection with the Class Meeting System in the Methodist Body* (1868).²⁴ Hughes argued that church-membership should not be linked with class-membership and allowed only on the basis thereof, though the class was needed for deepening Christian experience.

Two solutions to the problem were suggested. One was that the old discipline should be revived in all its rigour and the letter of the law enforced, it being argued that this must be accompanied by a revivification of the class itself on the lines already discussed.²⁵ The opposition argued that one should recognize changing times and tastes and change the basis of membership. Logically, some said, what was required was church-membership on the basis of whatever is regarded as constituting a man a Christian—probably a credal and communicant basis. It was urged that the great Jabez Bunting himself had foreseen that the Lord's Supper would one day be the mark of membership.²⁶ A possible compromise might be based on the traditional practice of giving communion tickets to non-class members: this could be regularized to make two classes of membership ("class" and "communicant").

The Conference of 1873 discussed the question of "the recognition, if any, which is to be given to the members of the Methodist community who are not members of society class", and in 1874 it was said that a committee on "The Status of Communicants" had made recommendations which were to go before the Ministerial Session of the District Meetings and then to another related committee on "The Pastoral Oversight of the Young".²⁷ In 1875 the "Pastoral Oversight of the Young" committee's report was adopted, but this did not really deal with membership; and, significantly, it was reported that the "Status of Communicants" recommendations had produced "very great diversity of opinion", and therefore no new

²⁴ 2nd. edn., 1873. An earlier example was J. Bate: *The Usual Objections to the Methodist Class Meeting Answered* (Diss, 1849), who in a new edition (*Objections to the Class Meeting Answered* (London, 1866), pp. 17ff.) thought the proposals for membership based on baptism and the Lord's Supper would risk replacing quality by quantity. Hughes was expelled from the Connexion, but was defended by P. Prescott (*A Letter on the Case of the Revd. Thomas Hughes* (Bristol, 1881)), who claimed that no less an authority than W. B. Pope (*Compendium*, iii, p. 279) had maintained that the class-meeting does not impose a new condition of membership in the Christian Church. The confusion of mind that existed on the matter may be seen in Thomas Jackson's *Recollections* (pp. 494ff.), when he denied that attendance at the class was a condition of church-membership: admission is by baptism, and a ticket would admit non-class members. Yet he recognized that those who were merely baptized were not generally accepted as "members".

²⁵ For criticism of suggestions that the discipline be relaxed, see B. Gregory: *Autobiographical Recollections* (London, 1903), pp. 256ff. and *Scriptural Church Principles*, Part II, pp. 250-62; W. Arthur: *On the Class Meeting or Christian Fellowship* . . . (1888); J. H. Rigg: *The Causes of Decrease* . . . (1865); J. Bate, *op. cit.*

²⁶ T. Hughes: *A Defence and a Plea* (1870), p. 68.

²⁷ *Minutes*, 1874, p. 211.

legislation was proposed.²⁸ The Conference of 1878 said it was "very desirable to adopt some more public and formal mode of admitting new members into society", though it did not lay down very precise regulations at this time.²⁹

In the 1880s there was renewed debate on the main issue of class- and church-membership,³⁰ and in 1889 a Conference committee reported its findings on the question.³¹ It recommended retaining the traditional basis of membership as by membership of the class, pointing out the way in which the class was interwoven with the whole Methodist polity, and how its effectiveness might be recovered. But there was one very significant section of the report, underlining what was alleged to be the traditional practice: that is, the minister was not to insist that failure in class-attendance by itself justified loss of membership. This was in reality to recognize that the old system was being modified to the point where merely nominal class-membership would suffice. Attendance could become more or less optional; the real basis of church-membership would be in terms of a more general commitment to Christianity and the Church.³² In line with this was the increasing stress on the reception of people into "church-membership", for which a special service was at last instituted in 1894.³³ An increased concern was also evident at this time for the baptized children of church-members and for a more broadly-based, less exclusively religious organization for young people in the shape of the Wesley Guild.³⁴

IV

The decline of the class-meeting and the effects of this decline on the question of how to define "church-membership" in Wesleyanism offer an illustration of the relaxation of the original Methodist ideal under the pressure of increase of numbers, the diversifying of religious interest, and the attractions of secular society. The result was to reduce the demands of the Connexion on its supporters from those of a particular pattern of religious experience and behaviour to those of a more conventional and generalized church life.³⁵ Such a process is common enough in the history of religious bodies, and

²⁸ *ibid.*, 1875, pp. 214f., 184f., 187f.

²⁹ *ibid.*, 1878, pp. 186f.

³⁰ For contrasting views see A. J. French: *The World in the Church* . . . (2nd edn., 1889) and F. H. Ballard: *The Church and the World* (1889). French stood for the full traditional rigour; Ballard was influenced by contemporary ideas of a more "social" holiness.

³¹ Report in *Minutes* (1889), pp. 404ff., and French, *op. cit.* The implications of the Conference Report were pointed out by an Australian observer whose own church was undergoing a similar crisis: J. C. Symons: *Wesleyan Methodism and Church Membership* (Melbourne, 1890). There were parallel crises, incidentally, among the New Connexion and Free Methodists (Currie, *op. cit.*, p. 127).

³² See Currie (*op. cit.*, pp. 138ff.), who sees this as part of a change in the Wesleyan ethos to an "ethic of community".

³³ *Minutes*, 1894, pp. 448ff.

³⁴ *ibid.*, 1896, pp. 447ff. for its aims.

³⁵ These matters are discussed in detail in my essay cited above (note 22).

has parallels in other nineteenth-century nonconformist churches. Yet it was particularly significant in changing the peculiar character of Methodism from the condition of a society with some of the marks of a holiness sect to the more conventional and less demanding character of a church.³⁶ In the process, Wesleyanism slowly became less distinctive and more like the rest of Nonconformity.

HENRY D. RACK.

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

³⁶ A Wesleyan at Upwell in the early 1800s (cited in L. F. Church: *The Early Methodist People*, pp. 171f.) thought that when they were allowed to suspend the class-meeting to attend a lovefeast "the real reason is to get rid of class duty, so much easier is it to hear another speaker, than to delineate one's own character".

NEWS FROM OUR BRANCHES

[All dates refer to 1972 unless otherwise stated.]

FOR their spring meeting, the **Bristol** branch took part in the Wesley Day celebrations at the New Room. An address was given by the Rev. E. Ralph Bates on Captain Thomas Webb, whose remains, as already reported in these *Proceedings*, have recently been re-interred.

On Saturday, 21st October, also at the New Room, the autumn meeting was addressed by Mr. A. G. L. Ives, the author of *Kingswood School in Wesley's Day and since*.

Bulletin: No. 12 received.

Secretary: Mr. G. E. Roberts, 21, Ormerod Road, Stoke Bishop, Bristol,
Membership: 79. [BS9 1BA.]

AT their Annual Meeting, held at Redruth on Saturday, 6th May, members of the **Cornish** branch welcomed Dr. Maldwyn Edwards as lecturer. Following the business, he addressed a large gathering on "John Wesley: the Rider and the Road". The Chairman of the Cornwall District (the Rev. R. Hubert Luke) presided. Of additional interest was the small exhibition of Cornish Wesleyana arranged by the Rev. and Mrs. Thomas Shaw and Mr. John Probert, which, staffed by members of the branch, remained open to the public during the following week. The Rev. Sidney O. Dixon, leaving the District in September, was thanked for his services to the branch as one of its secretaries.

Organized by Mr. Bert Cowls, of Helston, a well-attended pilgrimage took place on Saturday, 17th June, when visits were made to a number of chapels, and former sites of Methodist interest, in the Helston and Porthleven circuits; to Trevarno (by kind permission of Mr. M. G. Bickford-Smith), the beautiful grounds of which now contain the large granite trough which once stood in the main street of Helston and is said to have been used by John Wesley as a preaching-stand on at least one of his visits; and to the parish church of Sithney, of which parish the Rev. John Pearce, one of the branch's vice-presidents, is priest-in-charge.

Journal IV. Nos. 1 and 2 received.

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

Mr. C. J. Tromans, M.A., 17, Knight's Meadow, Carnon Downs, Truro.
Membership: 338.

THE **East Anglia** branch held its spring meeting on Saturday, 6th May, at Colchester, where, under the leadership of Alderman L. E. Dansie, members visited the Town Hall, the Castle Museum, and the new Castle Methodist church. The autumn meeting was held at Loddon (Norfolk) as part of the celebration of the bicentenary of John Wesley's first visit. Mr. W. A. Green lectured on "The Richard Reece Diaries, the Norwich years 1788-9."

Bulletin : Nos. 27 and 28 received.

Secretary : Rev. William D. Horton, M.A., 28, The Croft, Sudbury,
[Suffolk.

THE **Lancashire and Cheshire** branch began the year at St. Mary's Methodist church, Handforth, on Saturday, 22nd April, when Dr. John Walsh of Oxford lectured on "Methodism and the Mob". For the summer outing, members crossed the border into Yorkshire to visit Delph, still recognizably the "little village upon the mountains" to which John Wesley came in April 1780.

The autumn meeting took place at the Central Hall, Liverpool, on Saturday, 21st October. The Rev. Reginald Kissack (Chairman of the Liverpool District) gave a talk on "John Wesley, John Newton and Liverpool", and this was followed by the Annual Meeting.

Journal : Vol. II. Nos. 5, 6 and 7 received.

Secretary : Mr. E. A. Rose, 26, Roe Cross Green, Mottram, Hyde,
[Cheshire, SK14 6LP.

Two meetings of the **Lincolnshire** branch were held during the year—one at Broughton, where the Rev. John W. Smith spoke on the life of Parkinson Milson, a Primitive Methodist minister brought up in that village. He was assisted in his talk by one of Milson's direct descendants. The autumn meeting was held at the village of New York, where Mr. David Robinson spoke on Methodism in the Fens, the occasion coinciding with the centenary of New York chapel.

Journal : Vol. II. Parts 3 and 4 received.

Secretary : Mr. William Leary, Brantwood, St. Edward's Drive,
[Sudbrooke, Lincoln, LN2 2QR.

THE summer meeting of the **London** branch was held at Colchester, when 22 members met for a conducted tour of the new Castle church, standing virtually on the same site where Colchester Methodists have met since 1759. The day included a visit to the castle and museum under the expert guidance of Alderman Dansie, followed by tea provided by the ladies.

The branch met at St. Giles-in-the-Fields, Holborn, for the Annual Meeting in October. The rector and rural dean, the Rev. G. C. Taylor, outlined the history of St. Giles's, reminding those present of the strong links with John and Charles Wesley, a special feature of the interior being the old white-painted pulpit (part of the old "three-decker") used regularly by the Wesleys at West Street chapel. After tea, Mr. Fred Adcock of Chelmsford delivered a lecture on Methodist stamps, illustrated with his own valuable collection.

Bulletin : Nos. 12 and 13 received.

Secretary : Mr. J. A. Pendry Morris, 118, Elgar Avenue, Tolworth,
[Surbiton, Surrey.

THE third meeting of the **Manx** Methodist Historical Society was held in April, taking the form of a coach-tour of places of Methodist interest in

the west of the Isle of Man, notably Peel and Crosby, where the party visited the pretty little chapel built by the Rev. Robert Aitken and nearby Eyreton Castle used by him as a boarding-school "on Methodist principles". Some sixty people took tea at Peel School, and the branch welcomed Miss Ann Harrison (archivist to the Manx National Museum), recently appointed as archivist to our Isle of Man District in place of Mrs. E. V. Chapman, who had had to leave the island for health reasons.

On 14th October the branch toured historic chapels in the Laxey area, including Lonan old Wesleyan chapel—said to be the oldest on the island—and the former PM chapel in Old Laxey, now the Salvation Army hall. There was tea, followed by hymn-singing, at Minorca Hill chapel.

Secretary: Miss A. M. McHardy, Zeerust, Clayhead Road, Baldrine,

Membership: No figure supplied. [Isle of Man.]

THOUGH saddened by the death of two of its most active members, Mr. William Tulip and Miss Constance Bretherton, the **North-East** branch has continued its activities. On Saturday, 29th April, at Jesmond, Dr. Erik Routley provided a most stimulating talk on "Charles Wesley—the man and his hymns"; and on Saturday, 14th October, at Ewesley Road, Sunderland, Mrs. Margaret Batty spoke on "Local Preaching in Wesleyanism in the nineteenth century". This talk by one of the branch members was a delightful mixture of scholarship and anecdote.

Two summer outings were held. On Saturday, 3rd June, a party of members trod the footsteps of the Venerable Bede at the Saxon churches of St. Paul, Jarrow, and St. Peter, Monkwearmouth. On Saturday, 24th June, some twenty members paid a visit to Epworth Old Rectory.

Bulletin: Nos. 17 and 18 received.

Secretary: Mr. Geoffrey E. Milburn, M.A., 8, Ashbrooke Mount,

Membership: 103. [Sunderland.]

THE **Plymouth and Exeter** branch was fortunate to have Dr. Maldwyn Edwards as lecturer at the spring meeting on Saturday, 13th May. He spoke on three of the women in John Wesley's life—Susanna, Grace Murray, and Mrs. Vazeille. Friends at the Mint, Exeter, provided hospitality.

A lovely late summer day and a pilgrimage to the Bible Christian chapels of the Chagford circuit made the setting for the autumn meeting on Saturday, 2nd September. Dr. Glyn Court, whose uncle, the Rev. Lewis Court, was once pastor in this circuit, was the guide, and visits were paid to the chapels at Lettaford, Chagford, Whiddon Down and Providence. At Providence burial-ground members inspected the tombstone of the Rev. T. G. Vanstone, a Bible Christian minister once stationed at Chagford, and in his day a pioneer missionary to China. Over an excellent Devon tea, served by the ladies of Providence, the Annual Meeting was held.

Proceedings: Vol. II. Nos. 7, 8 and 9 received.

Occasional Publication: No. 1, *Accounts of Early Methodism in Okehampton*, by the Rev. R. Keith Parsons.

Secretary: Mrs. C. Channon, 79, East Wonford Hill, Exeter.

Membership: 100.

As reported last year, the inaugural meeting of the **Scottish** branch was held on Saturday, 27th May, at the University of Stirling. The first public meeting was held in September at St. John's, Arbroath, celebrating its bicentenary as the oldest octagonal Methodist chapel in Scotland. The Rev. Ernest Moulton of Montrose spoke about early Methodism in North Angus.

We wish our youngest branch well for the future. A bulletin is expected in April 1973.

Secretary: Dr. D. A. Gowland, Department of Modern History,
Membership: Over 30. [The University, Dundee, DD1 4HN.

THE **West Midlands** branch met at Beckminster in March for its spring meeting. Dr. Maldwyn Edwards gave a fine and entertaining address on the life of Dr. Adam Clarke.

For the summer outing the branch visited South Wales. In the footsteps of Howell Harris, Trevecka and Talgarth were visited, and the pilgrimage ended at Brecon, which has close associations with Thomas Coke.

The new Lyndon church centre in Solihull provided hospitality for the autumn meeting, when the branch President (the Rev. Geoffrey Robson) spoke on "Church and society in Birmingham in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries".

During the summer the branch sustained a sad loss by the death of Miss Doreen M. Pooler, M.B.E., who was a most loyal and active member, untiring in her selfless devotion also in circuit and District affairs.

Bulletin: Vol. II. Nos. 4, 5 and 6 received.

Secretary: Mrs. E. D. Graham, B.A., B.D., 34, Spiceland Road,
Membership: 110. [Northfield, Birmingham, B31 1NJ.

THE spring meeting of the **Yorkshire** branch was a tour of the Denby Dale and Clayton West circuit, a conglomerate of most of the traditions of Methodism and of West Yorkshire life—pit, mill, and hill farm. Each place had a tale to tell, though none quite so sensational as the first—Emley Moor, where the speaker was in the chapel the night the TV mast dropped in!

The branch met in October at Farley Hill, Leeds—the second oldest chapel in the Leeds District, dating from 1797. Mr. Colin Dews illustrated his lecture on "Leeds Chapel-building to 1907" with colour-transparencies of every chapel in the old parish of Leeds that still stands and several that don't. Not all are now places of worship, and the laundry and the betting-shop are two not easy to spot (or to explain!). Mr. Dews dealt with the buildings in chronological order, and was able to show four distinctive styles of building, each dominated by a particular architect.

Bulletin: Nos. 20 and 21 received.

Secretary: Rev. W. Stanley Rose, B.D., 45, Main Street, Menston,
Membership: 126. [Ilkley, Yorks, LS29 6NB.

We gratefully acknowledge the following periodicals, which have come to hand since the publication of the list in our last issue. Some of these are received on a reciprocal basis with our own *Proceedings*.

The Local Historian, Vol. 10, No. 5.

Methodist History, January 1973.

The Proceedings of the Huguenot Society of London, Vol. 22, No. 2.

The Baptist Quarterly, January 1973.

Blackmansbury, October and December 1972—continuing the story of W. F. Pocock.

Owing to pressure on our space in this 24-page number, we regret that LOCAL HISTORIES, BOOK NOTICES and NOTES AND QUERIES are held over until June, when we expect to have more pages available.