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Proceedings

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THOMAS RANKIN AND THE AMERICAN COLONISTS

THE morality of war troubled the consciences of many Methodists during the American Revolution. As Wesley's general assistant in America, Thomas Rankin strove manfully to be a peacemaker in the early years of the conflict, but by 1777 he had no other choice but to seek the protection of the British forces.

Thomas Rankin was born in Dunbar, East Lothian, in 1738. He was greatly influenced by the preaching of George Whitefield, and after a brief sojourn as a merchant's factor in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1757, he began to think seriously of preaching the Gospel. John Wesley sent him to Sussex as a lay preacher in 1762. He was appointed to the Methodist circuit in Cornwall in 1764, and transferred in 1772 to Yorkshire. He demonstrated considerable ability as evangelist and administrator. When Captain Thomas Webb appealed in 1772 for someone to direct and organize the inchoate American mission, Wesley sent Thomas Rankin.¹

He arrived in Philadelphia in June 1773, unsure that he had made the right decision, "and wishing myself in Great Britain again". He was immediately struck by the fervour of black Methodist converts in Philadelphia and New York City, but the departures from the rules of Wesley's societies in England distressed him. He wrote:

Had the Preachers and People continued entire Methodists from the beginning of the work in America, we should have seen many more converted to God: and much more life among the people.²

¹ "A short Account of Mr. Thomas Rankin: in a Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley" (*Arminian Magazine*, ii (1779), pp. 182-98. The unpublished journal of Thomas Rankin in the library of Garrett Theological Seminary, Evanston, Illinois, is a transcript of a lost original prepared by Rankin about 1804. Two additional fragments of the journal exist: one is in the Methodist Archives, London, and the other in the library of Drew Theological Seminary, Madison, New Jersey.

² Letter from Rankin to the Stewards, Leaders and Society in York, 24th June 1773. (Methodist Archives, London.)

In July 1773, Thomas Rankin presided at the first Methodist conference held in the American colonies. Rankin spoke plainly of the perils of discord and laxity, and insisted on the establishment of Wesleyan discipline. The conference agreed that the authority of Wesley and the British Conference should extend to the preachers and people in America as in Great Britain and Ireland, and that the doctrine and discipline of the Methodists be adopted in full. They further determined that no Methodist preacher would administer the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, but would earnestly exhort the people to attend the services of the Church of England.³

Some stirrings of separation had already come to the surface in Maryland and Virginia. Robert Strawbridge, the Irish-born local preacher who began Methodist work in Maryland in 1762, had always administered the ordinances himself. Richard Boardman and Francis Asbury yielded on the issue at quarterly meetings in Maryland in 1772, but only for the sake of peace. At the General Conference of 1773, an exception was made for Strawbridge, but the people in Maryland and Virginia were to be instructed on the need to attend their parish church.⁴

"We are not dissenters, but a religious society in communion with the Church of England," Virginia Methodists declared in a petition to the Legislature in 1776, but the controversy over the administration of the sacraments remained an undercurrent in the Maryland and Virginia societies.⁵

The publication of John Wesley's *Thoughts on Slavery* in 1774 marked the beginning of an effort to urge American Methodists to free their slaves. Rankin found this effort particularly congenial.⁶

Rankin saw the worsening relations between Great Britain and America and the impending threat of violence as a warning to sinners

³ *Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury* (ed. Elmer T. Clark) (London and Nashville, 1958), i, p. 85; *Journal of Joseph Pilmoor, Methodist Itinerant, 1769-1774* (ed. F. E. Maser and H. T. Maag) (Philadelphia, 1969), p. 210.

⁴ Gordon Pratt Baker (ed.): *Those Incredible Methodists: A History of the Baltimore Conference of the United Methodist Church* (Baltimore, 1972), p. 11.

⁵ Petition, signed by George Shadford on behalf of the Methodist societies in Virginia, 29th October 1776 (Virginia State Library, Richmond, Virginia); G. P. Baker, op. cit., pp. 52-4.

⁶ The Quaker Anthony Benezet of Philadelphia wrote to Granville Sharp on 14th May 1772, that "My friend John Wesley promises he will consult with thee about the expediency of some weekly publication in the newspapers, on the origin, nature, and dreadful effects of the slave trade." The first American edition of Wesley's *Thoughts on Slavery* appeared at Philadelphia in 1774, and Benezet discussed its probable effect in a letter to Wesley dated 23rd May 1774. Rankin's sermon at the Forks chapel on 20th July 1775 is the earliest recorded sermon on the immorality of slavery by an American Methodist, but it is far from certain that this was the first sermon preached on the subject. A statement by one of the first American-born preachers is suggestive. Speaking of a death that occurred between November 1773 and May 1774, William Watters wrote: "He was taken away before there was much, if any, talk amongst us about the impropriety of holding our fellow-creatures in slavery, and of course left all his poor blacks in bondage."

to repent. This idea was common to a number of evangelical clergymen in the American colonies. "From the first of my coming here, it has always been impressed on my mind, that God has a controversy with the inhabitants of the British Colonies," he wrote in 1774. To Rankin the crying sin of America was slavery. In a sermon preached in Maryland in 1775 he explained his conviction:

I endeavoured to open up and enforce the cause of all our misery. I told them that the sins of Great Britain and her Colonies cried aloud for vengeance and in a peculiar manner the dreadful sin of buying and selling the souls and bodies of the poor Africans.

On more than one occasion he told members of the Continental Congress "what a farce it was for them to contend for liberty when they themselves keep some hundreds of thousands of poor blacks in most cruel bondage". His concern for the abolition of slavery made Rankin a critic of American society.

When the Methodists met in Philadelphia for their annual conference in May 1775, the conduct of the Christian in war-time was uppermost in their minds. Once again Thomas Rankin presided, and he noted in his journal:

We all came unanimously to this conclusion, to follow the advice that Mr. Wesley and his brother had given us; and leave the event to God. We were decidedly of the opinion that we durst not countenance our people in taking up arms, either on one side or the other.⁸

Rankin realized the difficulty of the situation in which the American Methodists were placed. He confided to his journal in August 1775:

I cannot, I dare not countenance the measures taken to oppose Great Britain: and yet at the same time I would do nothing to hurt the inhabitants of America. How difficult to stand in such a situation; and not to be blamed by violent men on both sides?⁹

His conscience led him to compose his own appeal for peace. On Christmas Eve 1775 he finished a letter to Lord Dartmouth:

For several months this lay upon my mind, and now I have delivered my soul. I longed from my heart for something to be done to put a period to the effusion of human blood; and if possible to heal our public distractions.¹⁰

Rankin spent the winter of 1775-6 in Philadelphia. He formed close friendships with Anthony Benezet, Israel Pemberton, and other Philadelphia Quakers, who undoubtedly strengthened his anti-slavery and anti-war convictions. He left the city in March 1776 to begin a preaching tour of the eastern shore of Maryland. Rankin was at pains to explain the Methodist position on war:

I took occasion now, in the public congregation (as well as in the forenoon) to let the people know that it was from a principle of conscience alone, that the people called Methodists do not take up arms; as others

⁷ Thomas Rankin's journal, 2nd October 1774, 20th July 1775, and 26th August 1775.

⁸ *ibid.*, 16th May 1775.

⁹ *ibid.*, 26th August 1775.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, 24th December 1775.

had done; and therefore, if we are called to suffer on this account we will suffer for conscience sake.¹¹

From the eastern shore, Rankin went to Baltimore, then to Frederick, Maryland, and across the Potomac to Leesburg, Virginia, for the quarterly conference. He met with Methodist societies in Loudoun and Fairfax counties, and finally reached the town of Alexandria, where he preached in the court-house to a large number of soldiers. He wrote in his journal:

Here I met my friend, the Reverend Mr. [David] Griffith, who had accepted the office of chaplain to this battalion, who were newly raised. He has left his parish in Loudoun County, but I wish he may have made a change for the better.

He again preached in the court-house on Sunday.

The Colonel, with many of the officers and soldiers, were present and I endeavoured to be clear of all their blood.

Rankin and his congregation then attended the morning service at Christ Church, Alexandria, where Griffith preached.¹²

Parson Griffith had recently published a sermon on passive obedience, from Romans xiii. He argued that no man was obliged to obey every command of his lawful ruler, and that free British subjects need not submit to the deprivation of their rights. "While they do not aim at innovation," he continued, "the colonists cannot be charged with resisting the ordinances of God."¹³ William Watters recalled a sermon preached in the parish church in Alexandria from the same text, in which the parson attacked the Methodists as "a set of Tories, sent here by the English ministry to preach up passive obedience and non-resistance."¹⁴

There can be little doubt that Rankin's pacifism alienated many friends of the Methodist movement. In August 1776, while Rankin was attending a quarterly conference in Queen Anne's County on Maryland's eastern shore, he received warning that a company of militia were on their way to arrest the preachers. He insisted on continuing with the meeting. The militiamen listened to the preaching and joined in the prayer—and left without hindering the conference.¹⁵

As early as January 1777, some of the preachers sent by Wesley from England made preparations to go home. Martin Rodda and

¹¹ *ibid.*, 31st March 1776.

¹² *ibid.*, 4th May 1776.

¹³ David Griffith: *Passive Obedience Considered: In A Sermon Preached at Williamsburg, December 31st, 1775* (Williamsburg, 1776), p. 22.

¹⁴ William Watters: *A Short Account of the Christian Experience and Ministerial Labours, of William Watters* (Alexandria, Virginia, 1806), pp. 48-51. The same point was made by Philip Mazzei, when he interrupted a Methodist preacher in Virginia about the same time. "I spoke of Lord Dartmouth, who had been made secretary of state, because of his close friendship with the head of the Methodists, so that he might send his satellites to the colonies to preach the doctrine which we had heard"—Howard R. Marraro (trans.): *Memoirs of the Life and Peregrinations of the Florentine, Philip Mazzei, 1730-1816* (New York, 1942), pp. 216-17.

¹⁵ Rankin's journal, 27th August 1776.

George Shadford expressed this intention to Francis Asbury, who urged them to consult Rankin. At the annual conference in May 1777, Rankin proposed that five younger men—all but one native Americans—take his place as general assistant, if any or all of the old preachers should be called to Great Britain before the next annual conference. It was an emotional parting of friends, as it was generally understood that several British preachers would be returning to England before the year was out.¹⁶

Rankin himself had determined to go home at least by February 1777, and possibly even earlier. Captain William Douglass, of Leesburg, Virginia, tried in July of that year to persuade him to continue as general assistant—even offering him a house and land as an inducement. Rankin declined this generous offer with thanks, but told Captain Douglass: “No estate or plantation in America should ever induce me to separate myself from Mr. Wesley and my brethren in Great Britain and Ireland.”¹⁷

Since Rankin had no intention of remaining in America, his views on military service are suspect. A recent writer saw possible “strong overtones of British loyalty” in his insistence that Methodists did not take up arms “from a principle of conscience”.¹⁸

Although the 1775 Conference had agreed that “we durst not countenance our people in taking up arms, either on one side or the other”, Methodist opinion was far from unanimous on this issue. John Littlejohn felt that military service was “lawfull under our oppression by Great Britain”, and that “those who were willing to defend their rights, enjoyed more of the power of Religion, than any others I had met with on this side of Rapahanock”.¹⁹

Resistance to military service was widespread in the American colonies in 1777, and evidently rose from a variety of motives. Virginia counties could not make their quotas for either militia or regular units, although the state was swarming with recruiting officers.²⁰ A Patriot leader in Baltimore County, Maryland, reported not only resistance to paying fines for failure to turn out with the militia, but mob action to prevent the authorities from seizing property to pay these fines.²¹ On the eastern shore of Maryland, Loyalists raised the King’s standard, and sought to fan the grievances of reluctant militiamen into an armed insurrection. Troops from Maryland and Virginia finally pacified the district in the early spring

¹⁶ *ibid.*, 20th May 1777; *Journal . . . of Francis Asbury*, i, p. 228; Watters, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

¹⁷ Rankin’s journal, 6th February 1777 and 24th July 1777.

¹⁸ G. P. Baker, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

¹⁹ John Littlejohn’s journal, 5th May 1777 and 6th July 1777. (Typescript in Lake Junaluska Archives.) Littlejohn was a native of Penrith, Cumberland, and came to Maryland about 1765 in the employ of Jeremiah Aderton of Whitehaven.

²⁰ Journal of Dr. Robert Honyman, 4th March 1777. (Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.)

²¹ Letter from Samuel Baxter to the Council of Safety, 3rd January 1777. (*Archives of Maryland* (Baltimore, 1881-), xvi, pp. 11-12.)

of 1777. Brigadier-General William Smallwood, who commanded these troops, believed that the abortive rising was politically motivated, but he found that "Religion is urged as the Principal motive in every Instance". Smallwood was convinced that the greater number made "Religion a Cloak", but that "there are some Exceptions wherein Ignorant men from their Religious Attachments have been deluded".²²

John Littlejohn's journal is a principal witness for the Methodist conscientious objectors. He had doubted the sincerity of those who refused to fight, but he was convinced by August 1777 that "many are conscientious in this thing, and who are real friends to their country".²³

Littlejohn's experience in Harford County, Maryland, later the same month, confirmed this opinion. Members of the Methodist society there readily suffered imprisonment and flogging rather than serve with the militia, when the British army was landing in their own county. A young mother, whose husband had been taken forcibly to the camp, was "rejoicing that he patiently suffered for conscience sake". Although the law allowed a drafted man to provide a substitute, many Methodists "could not from principle do it themselves", and were arrested in consequence. Littlejohn testified that those who fled into the woods to escape the militia were equally "opposed to fighting", and not politically inspired.²⁴

This evidence is limited to a single county in Maryland, at a time when Methodism extended from New York to North Carolina. There are indications that others shared the same opinion. Jesse Lee marched with the North Carolina militia, although he could not in good conscience fight or kill a man, and settled his scruples by doing non-combatant duty as a teamster.²⁵ When the Maryland authorities proposed a loyalty oath, engaging the individual to defend his state by force of arms, William Lux reported from Baltimore that "Several good People have refused, every one of the Methodists, & all the Quakers, their objection is the compulsion to bear Arms."²⁶

Events in the summer of 1777 brought Rankin and his fellow-Methodists to the test perhaps sooner than they had anticipated. Sir William Howe's campaign against Philadelphia involved the transfer of the main British army in America from New York City by sea to Chesapeake Bay and their landing at the head of the bay on 24th August 1777 to move overland from Philadelphia. When

²² Letter from William Smallwood to the Council of Safety, 14th March 1777 (ibid., xvi, p. 175).

²³ Littlejohn's journal, 21st August 1777. ²⁴ ibid., 24th-30th August 1777.

²⁵ Minton Thrift: *Memoir of the Rev. Jesse Lee with Extracts from his Journals* (New York, 1823), pp. 26-7; cf. Peter Brock: *Pacifism in the United States from the Colonial Era to the First World War* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1968), pp. 283-4.

²⁶ Letter from William Lux to Governor Thomas Johnson, 3rd March 1778. (Maryland Hall of Records, Annapolis.)

the British fleet appeared, Thomas Rankin and his companion Martin Rodda had just completed a tour of the eastern shore, "where the Lord is doing a great work". The fleet was lying off Baltimore when they crossed the Chesapeake, and they found the townspeople in a panic. They arrived at Perry Hall, the home of Harry Dorsey Gough, north-east of Baltimore, on 21st August. Rodda returned to the eastern shore almost immediately, but Rankin remained with the Goughs until early September.²⁷

When the British troops began landing, Rankin recalled, . . . the alarme this gave to all the Country soon reached the place where I was, and Mean time our Friends in Different places were hunted by armed men and Dragged to the nearest place of Rendezvouse where the Rebel Militia were gathered. They remained fast and determined not to Joyn them.²⁸

According to Littlejohn, the situation was much the same in Harford County, as we have seen. Some mustering officers there treated the Methodists kindly, but others "seem to take pleasure in making sport of them and trying to force 'em by stripes to obey".²⁹ Rankin heard that

some of them on the Eastern Shore of Maryland were dragged by Horses over stones and Stumps of trees till Death put a period to their sufferings.³⁰

When he crossed Chesapeake Bay to the eastern shore, Martin Rodda found himself in the eye of a tempest. The greater number of Loyalists implicated in the rising earlier that year were still at large when the fleet made its appearance offshore. In the disaffected region of Somerset and Worcester Counties, small groups of armed men assembled and declared for the King. In other counties individuals slipped off and joined the King's forces. Orders came for the militia to march, but many were reluctant to muster. The rector of an Anglican parish on the eastern shore, the Rev. John Patterson, was accused of dissuading them from their duty. The authorities were not prepared to make too nice a distinction among Loyalists, conscientious objectors, and ordinary cowards, but lumped them all together as Tories.³¹

Rodda learned, according to Rankin, that the oppression and cruelties used to their friends had moved some of our Brethren to Joyn with many others who were determined to oppose force to force.

A large number of militia assembled at a place called Tinicom's Old Field in the upper part of Queen Anne's County, near the Maryland-Delaware boundary, "with a determination to oppose the lawful authority of this State by force". Whether they intended to join

²⁷ Littlejohn's journal, 21st August 1777.

²⁸ Letter from Rankin to an unnamed correspondent, 17th September 1777. (Methodist Archives, London.)

²⁹ Littlejohn's journal, 30th August 1777.

³⁰ Letter from Rankin to an unnamed correspondent, 17th September 1777.

³¹ Letter from William Paca to Governor Thomas Johnson, 6th September 1777. (*Archives of Maryland*, xvi, p. 364.)

Howe's army or simply evade military service is uncertain. Martin Rodda and his assistant, George Green, rode to Tinicom's Old Field and heard a proclamation by General Howe read to the assembled men, promising amnesty and protection to anyone who renewed his allegiance to the Crown. Rodda met with the Methodists in the group, "gave them the best advice he could and left them". The next day, the Maryland authorities apprehended Rodda and Green in Caroline County. Rodda admitted that he had been at the Old Field, "where a number of People were collected, some of whom were armed". He understood that they were "determined not to March, tho' called on for that purpose by authority".⁸²

The local militia commandant sent Rodda and Green, under guard, to General Mordecai Gist, who was the senior officer on the eastern shore. General Gist examined them, without finding any conclusive evidence, and released them on parole. He sent the evidence against Rodda to Maryland Governor Johnson, and dismissed him with a promise to await the Governor's pleasure. There are two versions of Rodda's next step. Rankin understood that the boat in which he was crossing Chesapeake Bay was overhauled by HMS *Richmond*; Littlejohn was informed that Rodda eluded pursuit for several days and signalled from the shore to the warship. Safe on board, Rodda sent Green to warn Rankin and the other preachers of their danger.⁸⁸

Rankin had some intimations of the impending storm already. On Sunday, 7th September 1777, he and Littlejohn dined at Perry Hall with the Goughs and a number of others, including John Sterrett of Baltimore. The conversation turned on the conduct of Robert Alexander, a former member of the Continental Congress, who had entertained Sir William Howe and his staff at his country estate and gone off with the British army, leaving his wife and children in Maryland. Sterrett roundly condemned the man. Rankin thought he alluded to Mrs. Alexander, who had applied to Sir William for protection for her family and servants from marauding soldiers. He warmly defended her. Sterrett insisted that no one could be neutral, and if any were, they should be driven from Maryland. Rankin protested, but Sterrett flew into a passion. He called Rankin a scoundrel Tory, and reminded the company that Mr. Wesley had ever employed his tongue and pen against America and that all Methodist preachers were tools of the British Government! Littlejohn thought Sterrett would strike Rankin, who continued to be calm and polite, but he stormed out of the house.

Rankin and Littlejohn rode together to the Forks chapel, where Littlejohn preached. They spent some time in prayer, and as they

⁸² Letter from Rankin to an unnamed correspondent, 17th September 1777.

⁸⁸ Letter from Lt.-Col. Griffin Fauntleroy to General Mordecai Gist, 4th September 1777; Affidavits sworn to before Gist, 4th September 1777 (Maryland Hall of Records, Annapolis); Letter from General Mordecai Gist to Governor Thomas Johnson, 18th September 1777 (*Archives of Maryland*, xvi, p. 378); Littlejohn's journal, 11th October 1777; Jesse Lee: *A Short History of the Methodists in the United States of America* (Baltimore, 1810), p. 138.

were leaving, Rankin told Littlejohn his spirit was at peace. They passed that night at Aquila Galloway's house on the shore of Chesapeake Bay in Baltimore County. Green found Rankin there after dark, told him of all that had happened on the eastern shore, and warned him of his own danger. Rankin wrote to Asbury and Shadford during the night to warn them, and before daybreak he rowed out to the British fleet.³⁴

Rankin was on board HMS *Eagle* on 17th September, but the ship's log gives no clue to the duration of his stay.³⁵ Ambrose Serle, secretary to Admiral Lord Howe, attended a service in the parish church at Newcastle, Delaware, read by the rector, the Rev. Æneas Ross, during which "One of Mr. Wesley's Preachers mounted the Pulpit and gave us a long and full Prayer for the King and a Blessing on his Arms."³⁶

Rankin spent the autumn and winter of 1777-8 in Philadelphia, after Howe had captured that city. He sailed for England in March 1778 from the Delaware. Throughout his life he retained his affection for Americans, and took a deep interest in the development of the Methodist work in the United States.³⁷

He was listed as a supernumerary in the London circuit when he wrote to one of his old friends in Harford County, Maryland, in 1784.³⁸ A later letter, written on his return from the Manchester Conference in 1787 (in which year he was ordained by John Wesley), expressed interest in the development of what was to be the Cokesbury Academy.³⁹ In 1796 he began to transcribe his journal, and this experience awakened memories of his days in America.⁴⁰ Still residing in London, he continued to preach and to lead a class until shortly before his death in 1810.⁴¹ RICHARD K. MACMASTER.

[We are grateful for this article from the pen of the Rev. Richard K. MacMaster, of Bridgewater, Virginia. We anticipate that with the approach of the bicentenary of the War of American Independence there will be renewed interest among Methodist historians in the subject of relationships between the colonists—loyalist and otherwise—and the Methodist missionaries.—EDITOR.]

³⁴ Littlejohn's journal, 7th September 1777; Letter from Rankin to an unnamed correspondent, 17th September 1777; *Journal . . . of Francis Asbury*, i, p. 249.

³⁵ The log of HMS *Eagle* (Public Record Office, London) does not mention Rankin by name.

³⁶ Edward H. Tatum, jun. (ed.): *The American Journal of Ambrose Serle, Secretary to Lord Howe, 1776-1778* (San Marino, California, 1940), pp. 259-60. Asbury (*Journal*, loc. cit.) understood that Rankin had prayed publicly for the King.

³⁷ Rankin arrived in Philadelphia in November 1777, and sailed for England in March 1778. (*Arminian Magazine*, ii (1779), pp. 197-8.)

³⁸ Letter from Rankin to Henry Watters, 30th August 1784. (This letter and those referred to below are in Drew Seminary Library, Madison, New Jersey.)

³⁹ Letter from Rankin to Henry Watters, 7th August 1787.

⁴⁰ Letter from Rankin to Nelson Reed, 29th July 1796.

⁴¹ See note by Rev. Kenneth B. Garlick in *Proceedings*, xxxviii, pp. 30-1.

METHODIST TRACT-VISITING SOCIETIES IN THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY

IT has generally been considered that in the sphere of Primitive Methodist evangelism the pre-eminently distinctive feature was the camp-meeting; and it has always been something of an embarrassment to PM historians that one of the two "founding fathers" of the connexion showed a marked lack of interest in the early camp-meeting movement.¹ William Clowes was castigated by Hugh Bourne for being unaware in September 1808 that four camp-meetings had already been held that year.² Yet Clowes had not been inactive in that time: his attention had been devoted almost entirely to two other enterprises. One was the "Association for the Suppression of Sabbath Breaking", which collapsed in the face of concerted opposition from the officials of the Burslem circuit in 1808, and the other was the work of the "Burslem Tract Society".³

The exact origins of this society are obscure. It clearly was not an auxiliary of the Religious Tract Society,⁴ since at one stage it seriously considered publishing its own literature, which auxiliaries of the RTS were not permitted to do.⁵ Probably the most that can with certainty be said about it is that it was an evangelistic enterprise supported predominantly by Methodists, functioning around the years 1807-8; but its precise relationship to the Methodist circuit is hard to define.⁶ The Methodist authorities at that time were aware of the value of tract-distribution societies: in July 1808, Conference, in considering "whether any further measure can be adopted by us for the spread of religion", requested the Book Committee in London to draw up a scheme for a connexional religious tract society,⁷ and in 1811 the Wesleyan superintendents were recommended to form committees in their circuits "for the purpose of disseminating Religious Tracts throughout the land".⁸ It is possible that such directives were an official acknowledgement of private enterprise which had already seen the potential in tract-distribution, though there is evidence of Methodist initiative in tract-distribution as early as 1745,⁹ and William Myles claimed that Dr. Coke had started a "Religious Tract Society" in 1794 with the approval of Conference,

¹ Clowes attended only seven out of twenty-three camp-meetings held from 1807 to 1811. After the first two, he attended none for over a year.

² Hugh Bourne's MS. autobiography (1844), folio 70.

³ *The Journals of William Clowes* (London, 1844), pp. 47-52.

⁴ An un denominational venture started in 1799. See *Proceedings of the First Twenty Years of the Religious Tract Society* (London, 1820), p. 154. The nearest "auxiliary" was Manchester, formed in 1811.

⁵ Bourne's MS. journal, 21st October 1808; RTS, op. cit., p. 3.

⁶ That Clowes formed classes in his tract society "district" does not necessarily imply official circuit support; cf. Hugh Bourne at Harrisehead.

⁷ *Minutes*, iii, p. 33 (1808, Q. 24).

⁸ *ibid.*, iii, p. 223 (1811, Q. 15).

⁹ John Wesley's *Journal*, iii, p. 228.

had added to the number of tracts written by Wesley, and had "promoted subscriptions from opulent persons in order to defray the expense attending the institution".¹⁰ It seems likely, however, that the society Myles had in mind was that instituted by Wesley himself in January 1782 "to distribute religious tracts among the poor",¹¹ which was endorsed by Coke in October 1783.¹² There is no record of a later separate project by Coke in the *Minutes of Conference*, nor any reference to it in the *Arminian Magazine* in 1794 or 1795. Moreover, there is little indication of the success of Wesley's scheme. However, if Coke *did* promote tract-distribution, this could account for the existence of the society at Burslem, since he certainly visited the area.¹³

According to Myles, Coke's scheme became "one of the standing means of promoting the cause of God", and as a result "similar societies are established in some of the larger societies in the United Kingdom".¹⁴ Clearly the Burslem society was only one of many operating in different parts of the country in the first decades of the century. In 1813, about the time that he was organizing a tract society at Hulland in Derbyshire, Hugh Bourne came across an account of what he described as a "Church of England Tract Society" at Ashbourne, and ordered some tracts from it for his own Derbyshire scheme.¹⁵ In April 1818, the Primitive Methodists formed "The New Testament and Religious Tract Society" at Tunstall,¹⁶ and in March 1822 a similar society was begun in nearby Congleton;¹⁷ whilst in December 1820 the Wesleyans had begun the "Maidstone Tract Society".¹⁸ But these are just examples of a much larger number, many of which have disappeared without trace.¹⁹

One tract society would probably lead to another, and organizers

¹⁰ William Myles: *A Chronological History of the People Called Methodists*, 4th edn. (London, 1813), p. 60.

¹¹ John Wesley's *Journal*, vi, p. 343. See also L. Tyerman: *The Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A.*, iii, p. 369. The rules of this society are outlined in the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1847, p. 270. (See also *Proceedings*, xii, pp. 136-8.) Wesley gave no directions as to the manner of distribution.

¹² The Rev. Richard Green seems to have regarded the tract society as a joint venture by Wesley and Coke. (Green: *The Works of John and Charles Wesley: A Bibliography* (London, 1906), p. 17, No. 363; *John Wesley, Evangelist* (London, 1905), p. 505.) He does not, however, cite evidence for this.

¹³ Bourne records having heard him speak at Congleton in 1803. (MS. journal, 13th March 1803.)

¹⁴ Myles, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

¹⁵ Bourne's MS. journal, 23rd April 1813.

¹⁶ *PM Magazine*, 1822, pp. 280-1.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, 1822, p. 155.

¹⁸ *Wesleyan Magazine*, 1821, pp. 366-8—"On the Utility of Disseminating Religious Tracts with some account of the Method Successfully Adopted for that Purpose in the Maidstone Circuit", by the Rev. James Gill.

¹⁹ Edmund Grindrod: *A Compendium of the Laws and Regulations of Wesleyan Methodism*, 3rd edn. (London, 1848), p. 271: "Tract societies were established by our people in many of our cities and large towns, and now they exist, and are in useful operation, in most village societies throughout the Con-
nexion."

would borrow ideas from successful enterprises. In March 1808, for instance, Bourne wrote in his journal:

Saturday. I set off for Drayton and took 120 sermons and some small tracts for J^o. Whitaker to visit with.²⁰

This sort of recommendation helps to explain the similarity between the organization of the Burslem Tract Society and the later ones.

The early *Proceedings of the Religious Tract Society* gives the impression of a haphazard approach to distribution: tracts were slipped into the pocket of a Manchester factory-worker or dropped along the pathway of a turnpike road.²¹ Methodists adopted similar methods of random distribution from time to time,²² but the rules of their tract societies show that a much more systematic approach was frequently adopted.

In the first place, distribution was centrally directed. Bourne probably made the arrangements at first at Hulland,²³ but elsewhere this was the work of a committee, each with a treasurer and librarian, or "keeper of tracts", who was expected to keep a record of the circulation.²⁴ The neighbourhood was divided into districts, and teams of distributors allocated to one particular area.²⁵ These districts varied in size according to whether they were in the town or in the country: in Congleton "visiting companies" were generally allotted two streets, whereas in the Burslem society Clowes and his partner James Nixon were given a fairly wide area around Alsager Heath and Lawton salt works in Cheshire.²⁶

The visiting was done systematically from house to house, and the teams were instructed to carry their own provisions, so as to avoid possible misunderstanding about their intent.²⁷ The tracts were always loaned, not given—partly for reasons of economy (stress was laid upon keeping the material clean and in good order for the same reason),²⁸ partly because it was felt that lending was "the most likely means of securing a reading",²⁹ and partly to enable hopeful visits to be more easily followed up when tracts were exchanged. The length of time between the visits varied: a week at Maidstone, a fortnight

²⁰ Bourne's MS. journal, 12th March 1808. John Whitaker was a Shropshire revivalist with whom Bourne associated for a time.

²¹ RTS, op. cit., pp. 184, 245.

²² Bourne, for instance, slipped three copies of *Rules for Holy Living* through broken panes in the windows of Broughton church. (MS journal, 12th February 1810.)

²³ Hugh Bourne: *History of the Primitive Methodists* (1823), pp. 43-5.

²⁴ See *PM Magazine*, 1822, p. 156 (Congleton); *Wesleyan Magazine*, 1821, p. 366 (Maidstone); Grindrod, op. cit., p. 272.

²⁵ Clowes's *Journal*, p. 61; Bourne's MS. journal, 6th March 1808. He was assigned to Norton with a man named Enoch.

²⁶ Clowes's *Journal*, loc. cit.; *PM Magazine*, 1822, p. 157. Also see *Wesleyan Magazine*, 1821, p. 367: Maidstone was divided into thirty districts, the surrounding parishes into five or six each.

²⁷ According to Bourne, this was the custom in tract societies. See Bourne's *PM History*, p. 44; Clowes's *Journal*, p. 60.

²⁸ *Wesleyan Magazine*, 1821, p. 366; *PM Magazine*, 1822, p. 157.

²⁹ *Wesleyan Magazine*, loc. cit.

in Derbyshire and at Congleton, a month "or oftener if it be necessary" at Tunstall; but the important point was that the tracts were changed regularly to ensure a wide circulation "at a comparatively small expence [sic]".³⁰

The Burslem Tract Society sent its distributors out in pairs, and the "Primitives" also seem to have favoured this system, probably for its scriptural precedent.³¹ At Lambeth in 1817, the visitors for the Religious Tract Society also visited from house to house in small groups.³² But at Maidstone it appears that distributors might have been sent out singly to visit as many as fifty or sixty houses.³³ The Primitive Methodists generally stipulated between ten and twenty visits as a target, which may have been a more realistic approach, since distribution was generally done on Sunday mornings—"the most advantageous time as the families are then generally at home together"³⁴—but was not expected to interfere with attendance at the means of grace.³⁵

Provision was made in all the societies for periodic general meetings: monthly at Maidstone, quarterly at Congleton and possibly also at Burslem.³⁶ It was obviously desirable that the management committee should meet regularly,³⁷ but the larger meeting was a means of encouraging the members. For example, at Maidstone, Gill wrote:

The Distributors meet monthly with the committee and relate the success of the preceding month, which excites peculiar interest, and imparts increasing life and vigour to all engaged.³⁸

Financing their operations could have been the most serious problem faced by the tract societies. Bourne explained that "when a tract society is established it is customary to make weekly subscriptions to purchase tracts".³⁹ These were costly, and the Religious Tract Society asked its members to give a penny a week, or a shilling a quarter.⁴⁰ The "Primitives" were less ambitious, or less affluent, and the Tunstall society stipulated a minimum of a penny a month.⁴¹

The tract societies were a conscious attempt to reach the "un-churched masses"—those whose "lives are vicious and profligate

³⁰ Only one type of tract was distributed in a district at a time, and then passed on to another area, thus promoting variety and reducing cost. *Wesleyan Magazine*, 1821, p. 366; *PM Magazine*, 1822, p. 157; Bourne's *PM History*, p. 44.

³¹ e.g. Rule 6 of the Congleton society: "That they in general go out as the Lord sent his disciples, by two and two before his face." See *PM Magazine*, 1822, p. 156; Bourne's *PM History*, p. 44.

³² RTS, op. cit., p. 346.

³⁴ *ibid.*, 1821, p. 367.

³³ *Wesleyan Magazine*, 1821, p. 366.

³⁵ *PM Magazine*, 1822, p. 156.

³⁶ Bourne in his MS. journal records going to the "Tract Meeting" on Monday, 7th March and Monday, 27th June 1808.

³⁷ e.g. The rules of the Tunstall society laid down that the management committee should meet "the first Monday in every month at eight o'clock . . ." See *PM Magazine*, 1822, p. 280.

³⁸ *Wesleyan Magazine*, 1821, p. 367.

³⁹ Bourne's *PM History*, p. 44.

⁴⁰ RTS, op. cit., p. 3—"Hints on the Constitution of Auxiliary Tract Societies".

⁴¹ *PM Magazine*, 1822, p. 280. The Wesleyan society at Maidstone collected its contributions quarterly, but there is no record of the amount expected from each member. (*Wesleyan Magazine*, 1821, p. 367.)

and who never attend any place of worship".⁴² The Tunstall society explained its aims clearly :

To attempt the reformation of the thoughtless or ignorant Poor, in places where they are not favoured with the Means of Grace ; by distributing Testaments, Sermons and Religious Tracts, from house to house, as occasion may require, instructing them as we are able in the doctrine of Salvation by Faith, beseeching them in Christ's stead to repent and turn from Sin and Satan to the living God.⁴³

The other tract societies were not quite so explicit, though they could all have subscribed to that statement. Sunday was the most favoured day for distribution, not simply because people were at home then, but also because it afforded opportunity to reprove and instruct ignorant Sabbath-breakers.⁴⁴ They might even be "prayed over"! Clowes and Nixon knelt to pray on the slightest pretext in the houses they visited—with varying results :

Some would perhaps kneel with us, but others would stand staring upon us with amazement ; others would proceed as if nothing was going on, sweeping the house, stirring the fire, eating their dinners or cooking them.

But these things we did not suffer to chill our zeal or damp our ardour.⁴⁵

Discussion of the tracts and the delivery of a short homily or "exhortation" was regarded as a significant part of the tract-distributor's work, though it is possible that the "Primitives" emphasized this feature rather more than their Wesleyan counterparts.⁴⁶

The exponents of tract-distribution claimed considerable success. Bourne for instance found house-to-house visiting a trial, but persisted because he regarded it as "a seed time which sometime or other will spring up in a glorious harvest",⁴⁷ and wrote in his journal in March 1808 : "The tract work is also bringing great things to pass."⁴⁸ At Lawton Heath Clowes and Nixon roused sufficient interest to start prayer-meetings—though such progress did not come easily! At one house "the master rushed forward and tore the tracts out of our hands, and dashed them to the ground",⁴⁹ and the prayer-meetings were subject to rowdy interruptions.⁵⁰ But an important breakthrough was achieved when an "officer of the salt works" was converted and opened his house for preaching. Regular services were started, a congregation raised, and a society formed.⁵¹ Bourne claimed a similar success in Derbyshire in 1813, and in 1821 the Wesleyans at Maidstone reported that a "spirit of religious enquiry" had been roused by the tract work :

⁴² *Wesleyan Magazine*, 1821, p. 365.

⁴³ *PM Magazine*, 1822, p. 280.

⁴⁴ See RTS, *op. cit.*, p. 346, where a woman had been caught mangling!

⁴⁵ *Clowes's Journal*, p. 61.

⁴⁶ This could be inferred from the fact that the Wesleyans at Maidstone may well have made twice the number of visits per person as the Primitives in Derbyshire or Congleton—suggesting that for the former such discussions were ancillary, and delivery the primary function. (*Wesleyan Magazine*, 1821, pp. 366-7).

⁴⁷ Bourne's MS. journal, 6th March 1808.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, 7th March 1808.

⁴⁹ *Clowes's Journal*, p. 63. Shortly afterwards the man fell off a ladder and became a cripple. Clowes saw this as retribution.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 63.

⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 64.

Our congregations have been considerably increased in the town and country places . . . and perhaps seven or eight who received their first impressions by reading the Tracts, are truly converted to God.⁵²

It is unlikely that the success of any tract society was sustained. There were natural limits even to the dedication of the distributors, and any one area must have had its saturation-point for this sort of evangelism. Thus the tract society at Tunstall had completely disappeared by 1835, when an engraver named John Rowley "formed a design for visiting Tunstall and its vicinity on Sabbath days with tracts". A tract-visiting society was soon operating again, and it was reported that "since its operation numbers have been brought to the Lord".⁵³ James Gill, in 1821, lamented a similar decline among many of the Wesleyan tract societies formed after the Conference initiative of 1811. Possibly prompted by his article, the Wesleyan Conference, which had been thoroughly alarmed by a drop of nearly 5,000 in membership the previous year, once again recommended its preachers and circuits to adopt the regular and systematic circulation of religious tracts.⁵⁴ Thus urged, the societies returned to their paper barrage with fresh vigour, as the Conference noted with satisfaction in 1822, when it decided to set up a General Tract Committee to assist the local groups.⁵⁵ In that same year, Hugh Bourne also reminded his connexion again that "the religious Tract Visiting Societies are valuable institutions and are calculated to promote piety both in the visitors and the visited".⁵⁶

House-to-house distribution of religious tracts was a technique widely adopted in the early nineteenth century, and by this means attempts were made to evangelize the working classes. Moreover, a pattern had emerged for this work by 1808 which was closely adhered to by later groups. It is not clear whether this model was created or evolved: there is little or no evidence to link it with the early work of the Religious Tract Society itself, and on the other hand it had emerged before the first official encouragement to tract societies from the Wesleyan Conference. What *is* clear is that both Wesleyan and Primitive Methodists placed great store on this method of outreach, and it is interesting to note that they favoured it in times of crisis. It was the expedient most favoured after the alarming drop in membership discovered by the Wesleyan Conference of 1850,⁵⁷ and when the Tunstall tract society was formed in 1818 the

⁵² *Wesleyan Magazine*, 1821, p. 367; cf. also Bourne's *PM History*, p. 45.

⁵³ *PM Magazine* (New Series), vi (1836), p. 372: "Some Account of the Late John Rowley", by Thomas Batty.

⁵⁴ *Minutes*, v, p. 252 (1821, Q. XXIV—6).

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, v, p. 341 (1822, Q. XXII): "We have heard with much satisfaction of the successful exertions of our Societies in various parts of the kingdom, in distributing religious tracts, especially among those who are either destitute of the ordinary means of scriptural instruction, or neglect to improve those means." See also Grindrod, *op. cit.*, pp. 272-3: "Outline of the Plan of Local Tract Societies".

⁵⁶ *PM Magazine*, 1822, p. 281.

⁵⁷ *Minutes*, v, p. 126 (1820) shows a decrease of 4,688. (An apparent decrease in the *Minutes* for 1808 is a printing error. See *ibid.*, ii, p. 397; cf. *ibid.*, iii, pp. 25, 87.)

circuit was going through a particularly difficult phase. Significantly recovery came in 1819, though Bourne credited this solely to his camp-meeting system.⁵⁸ Despite Bourne's claims, however, it seems reasonable to conclude that the importance of tract societies in the church life of the early nineteenth century has been underestimated.

MICHAEL SHEARD.

[Mr. Michael R. Sheard, B.A. is a student at Hartley Victoria College, Manchester, who is preparing a thesis on "Primitive Methodism in Cheshire" for the degree of Ph.D.]

⁵⁸ *PM Magazine*, i (1819), p. 227: "On the Progress of the Tunstall Circuit".

THE ANNUAL LECTURE

in connexion with the Newcastle upon Tyne Conference, 1973,

WILL BE DELIVERED IN

St. John's Methodist Church, Sunderland,

On Monday, 2nd July, at 7-30 p.m.,

BY

Mr. FREDERICK JEFFERY, O.B.E., B.A., A.K.C.

Subject:

"METHODISM IN THE IRISH RELIGIOUS SITUATION".

The chair will be taken by MR. F. O. BRETHERTON.

The Annual Meeting of the Society will be held at the same church at **5-30 p.m.**

Mr. and Mrs. Rowland C. Swift kindly invite members of the Society to **Tea** in the schoolroom at **4-30 p.m.** It is desirable that all those who intend to be present at the Tea should send their names to the Rev. A. T. Pepper, 25, Thornhill Terrace, Sunderland, SR2 7JL (Tel. 0783 73831), not later than Friday, 29th June.

To reach the church from Newcastle, take train to Sunderland (about 19p. single), then walk to St. John's (about 15 minutes) via Fawcett Street, Burdon Road, and Ryhope Road, turn right at Christ Church, proceed along Mowbray Road (otherwise "The Cloisters"), and turn left at Ashbrooke Road, at which point the spire of St. John's will be seen on the right. *Alternatively*, take a bus to Christ Church (from John Street, Sunderland), and proceed as above. *Alternatively*, proceed by car from Newcastle via Bolden and the Wearmouth Bridge; follow the A19 through the town to Burdon Road, Ryhope Road and Christ Church, as above. For those bemused by these directions it is hoped to provide a map showing the route, a copy of which can be obtained from the Wesley Historical Society stand in the Conference Hall, or by early application to the General Secretary.

The Society's Exhibition

will be found at Newcastle Central Library, Princess Square. There will also be exhibitions of Wesleyana at the Laing Art Gallery, Higham Place, Newcastle, at the Gateshead Central Library and the Shipley Art Gallery, Prince Consort Road, Gateshead, and a display in the Conference Hall.

TWO ANTI-METHODIST PUBLICATIONS

[The mention of "Anti-Methodist Publications" will cause Wesley scholars to think back to the list compiled by the late Rev. Richard Green, published in 1902 and dedicated "To the members of the Wesley Historical Society and all other students of Methodist history". The first of the two items described below (and now reprinted) figures as No. 379 in Mr. Green's catalogue, but the second is not included. In both cases, however, we are grateful to our contributors for adding to our comprehension in this field.—EDITOR.]

The Methodist, by Evan Lloyd, introduced by Raymond Bentman.¹

The publications of the Augustan Reprint Society will be known to Wesley Historical Society members interested in the eighteenth-century background to Methodism, although only rarely does the Society re-issue works as directly relevant as this to the subject. Lloyd was a Welsh clergyman who lived from 1734 to 1776, notable for his friendship with John Wilkes and David Garrick, and for a handful of satirical poems. Of these, only *The Methodist* is much remembered.

Deeply-committed Methodists may feel that this one poem would also have been better forgotten, for it is a strong satire, directed principally against Whitefield, the "*Magus, that Sorcerer*" who in the poem becomes Satan's agent. Other Methodists are named in passing, all in terms of strong disapprobation. There is also a lengthy attack on an apparently unidentifiable clerical sinner—who may or may not be a Methodist—called Libidinoso—which raises the query, whether Lloyd thought he was attacking the Methodists in particular or all forms of corruption throughout the Church. "The Methodist" of the title need not be any particular individual, but could well be the devil himself, who, like the satirist's Methodist, deceives by ostensible goodness which in reality leads to social and religious chaos. This was a common enough manner of attacking all who claimed especial grace, and always had been: indeed, the early Methodists themselves were never completely free from the fear that the devil might by insidious means draw them into pride and self-deceit. Lloyd's specific purpose in writing is not in any case clear enough for categorical judgements; many of his complaints are conventional—about plebeian preachers, over-zealous converts, and doctrines which

. . . make Thee
A *Tyrant-God* of Cruelty!
As if thy *right Hand* did contain
Only an Universe of Pain.

The very word "Methodist" may, in Lloyd's usage, mean no more than "enthusiast"—and if so, the poem's application is removed from the narrow and specific field to a wider and more philosophical one, in keeping with the lengthy description which begins the poem

¹ Published by the Augustan Reprint Society, William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, Los Angeles: pp. xii. 54.

of the delicate natural balance between virtue and vice. The student of early Methodism will find much of interest in the poem—which has not, it seems, previously been reprinted in the present century—assuming that he is prepared to accept the boisterous and bawdy tone of the satire.

However, the same cannot be said of the Introduction by Mr. Bentman, who appears to believe that one can write about Methodism with a minimum of factual knowledge and very little common sense. There are so many points in the Introduction which deserve criticism that it will be better to confine remarks here to matters of specifically Methodist interest, although Mr. Bentman's literary and historical analysis cannot but exercise the credulity of his readers.

“The Preface to one anti-Methodist satire even takes pains to exclude ‘rational Dissenters’ from its target,” says Mr. Bentman, without naming the particular satire in mind. Has Mr. Bentman any real idea of how many satirical attacks on the Methodists there were? Does he really think that *one* example from a total running actually into hundreds proves very much? Certainly it does not, if he fails to give its name and date. Is Lloyd “implacably bigoted” in his attack on the Methodists? Is he not rather highly conventional? Adequate examination of A. M. Lyles's *Methodism Mocked* (1960)—to which Mr. Bentman briefly refers in his notes to the Introduction—would have shown this, supposing that Mr. Bentman could not examine original sources. Is it true that, apart from Jacobitism, Methodism was the only significant threat to social and religious order in the eighteenth century? Should not Mr. Bentman, if he is to introduce eighteenth-century pamphlets, be aware of the perennial fear of harvest riots, turnpike riots and the like, to say nothing of the fear of a French invasion which persisted long after the Jacobite threat had faded? Most surprisingly, Mr. Bentman believes that “the assault on Methodists . . . is actually not a continuation of anti-Dissenter satire”, merely because “there are essential differences between the Dissenters of the Restoration and the Methodists of the late eighteenth century”. The Dissenters of the Restoration “were reminders of the civil war, regicide, the chaos that religious division could bring”. Mr. Bentman should pay more heed to the reality of anti-Methodist satire, which relies heavily upon seventeenth-century conventions, and, if no one actually accused the Methodists of intended civil disturbance, points to them as agents of deep and dangerous undercurrents at work, potentially drawing society into disruption and decay. On a more prosaic level, Mr. Bentman should have consulted so accessible a collection as Pinto and Rodway: *The Common Muse* (Penguin edition, 1965), where he could have found with little difficulty several ballads written against friars, Puritans, and Quakers, accusing them of sins more or less the same as those which later satirists pretended to discern in the Methodists. Besides, a cursory examination of the *Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature* would have shown that *Hudibras*

remained sufficiently popular in the eighteenth century for Butler's satiric conventions at least to continue in use against schismatic—or supposedly schismatic—religious groups.

There are two points which serious Wesleyans will find particularly exceptionable: one, the assumption Mr. Bentman makes that the growth of Methodism in the eighteenth century took place because Wesley recognized how society as a whole was changing; the other, that Wesley "actually did" sell "Powders, Draughts, and Pills". Should Mr. Bentman ever feel so inclined, he can assure himself from so *commonplace* a source as Wesley's *Journal* that if the revival went into the newly-developing industrial areas, it was not John Wesley who took it there. That Methodism *became* a socio-political force of national importance in the nineteenth century cannot be doubted; but to suggest that "the Methodist open-air services were needed because new industrial areas had sprung up where there were no churches", and that "lay preachers were necessary because of population shifts" and "also because of the increase in population made possible by new agricultural and manufacturing methods" in the eighteenth century is to betray a lack of understanding and care which might well be surprising in a sixth-form pupil.

To be told that Wesley sold (quack) medicines comes as scarcely a shock after all this; it is a great pity that Mr. Bentman fails to reveal his source of information. Wesley knew that some—perhaps many—of his travelling preachers sold pills and balsams of their own making, and everyone with much interest in Wesley knows the importance of his *Primitive Physick*; but Wesley also knew that this practice amongst the preachers was inherently harmful, and the Conference at least twice—in 1768 with a general admonition to them not to peddle in goods of any kind, and in 1770 with a specific direction against those who sold medicines—took steps to prevent it. That Wesley helped individuals to make up draughts cannot be doubted, but Mr. Bentman's statement is a little too bald in the form in which it is printed.

Of Mr. Bentman's other judgements—of Lloyd as a satirist, and his literary significance—nothing need be said here, except that he seems at times so anxious to see good in his subject that he runs into what we may call "enthusiasm". It is pleasant to be able to fill a gap in the collection of Wesleyana even with so ephemeral a tract as Lloyd's, and since the reprint itself is a beautifully-produced facsimile of the British Museum's copy, it is worth having. The pity is that a more adequate introduction could not have been written, by someone who did not imagine that he could "mug up" the Methodist background from one secondary source and pass it off as an academic preface. Methodist history merits serious treatment—even if that treatment be hostile—and should not be made the subject of mere dilettante scribblings.

NICHOLAS LYONS.

An Anti-Methodist Epilogue

An early and hitherto unnoticed piece of anti-Methodist satire is to be found as the Epilogue to Thomas Cooke's play *The Mournful Nuptials; or, Love the Cure of All Woes*, published in 1739,² but not acted on the London stage until 19th December 1743.³ Cooke appears given to superfluities in this piece, as the anti-Methodism of the Epilogue has nothing at all to do with the play it follows. There is also a lengthy Preface consisting of a discourse on satire, where the author invokes various classical authorities and ridicules the whole machinery of stage censorship, ending with a puff for a new paper which, it is promised, will examine the present state of dramatic entertainments; and the last scene of the play involves an unnecessarily satirical treatment of the judicial courts, which only serves to diffuse and complicate the tone of the close of the play. All this and the tragedy as well!

The year 1739 witnessed a great surge of anti-Methodist writing, as can be seen from Richard Green's bibliography of *Anti-Methodist Publications issued during the Eighteenth Century* (1902), which omits this item. Most of the attacks in this year are directed against Whitefield, but Cooke includes Wesley too. It is the year when the Methodist leaders first started preaching in the fields in violation of the Conventicle Act, and Cooke begins the Epilogue by attempting to draw some sort of analogy between the schisms in the contemporary theatrical world and those which the evangelists were seen to be creating among the people of the country. He goes on to emphasize indirectly the appeal which the movement already held for the working classes:

As great the difference in the church is seen,
Where *WESLEY* is, and *WHITEFIELD* Harlequin :
For them the shuttle's left by lazy weavers ;
And butchers drop their marrow-bones and cleavers ;
And, while the weaver's wife forsakes the loom,
SUSAN leaves half unmop'd the dining-room :
These are the dregs, the rubbish, of mankind,
Sightless themselves, and guided by the blind,
Strangers to virtue as unknown to schools :
As ev'ry like its like, fools cherish fools. (ll. 7-16)

The author's conservatism is further underlined when he contrasts Wesley and Whitefield with three solid Church of England preachers, all in London at the time of writing: William Berriman at St. Andrew Undershaft, John Denne at St. Mary's, Lambeth, and Richard Terrick (later to become bishop of London) at the Rolls Chapel.

In contrast to these men, Whitefield is seen as creating a great deal of trouble :

² London : For T. Cooper, 1739.

³ This was the second edition of the play—though with very few changes—entitled *Love the Cause and Cure of Grief; or, The Innocent Murderer* (London : For R. Francklin, 1744).

While we behold the just and prudent train
 In the fair temples which the laws ordain,
 Where *BERRIMAN*, or *DENNE*, or *TERRICK* preach
 What well becomes the good and wise to teach,
 The rabble herd (to novelty and fear
 Eternal slaves) to *Kennington** repair :
 'Tis there the human hogs on offal feed,
 And cripples lean upon a broken reed.

* WHITEFIELD frequently preached in *Kennington* Common.

(ll. 17-24 and note)

The more devastating part of the attack, however, consists of the note which Cooke appended to the names Wesley and Whitefield, and this is worth quoting in full :

* In the reign of GEORGE the *Second* these men pretended to a New Birth, and called themselves and their followers *Methodists* : they were too mean, and ignorant, to be taken notice of but for the concourse of idle low people, whom they drew from their busyness and care of their families. The consequence of their nonsensical doctrine, if put into practice, would have been a total neglect of trade and commerce, and men must have turned out to graze on the common. The discerning part of mankind were divided in their opinions of these people, whether they were only fools, or fools and knaves ; for they raised contributions from their followers for pretended charitys abroad ; the odd stories were told of their prevailing on many weak persons, wives and servants, to advance them money for charitable uses, not regarding how these wives and servants got that money. They were regularly ordained, but were prohibited preaching in the churches ; and they afterwards tumultuously assembled in lanes, fields, commons, and the high-ways. This note is necessary, because it is almost impossible that the names of these men should be known many years hence.

It is significant that the only argument which is put forward in any detail—the economic one—is reserved for the note. The gist of the poem is that the Methodists are schismatic nuisances who are disrupting the social *status quo* by enticing the workers away from their only significant function of serving their masters. It is the note which suggests that the rising mercantilist middle class also has a right to expect obedience from the workers ; if this does not happen, and the working class is tempted by cries of egalitarianism and the significance of even the humblest individual, then commerce and trade will cease. This is particularly interesting in view of the context in which the Epilogue appears, for although *The Mournful Nuptials* underplays the idea of trade, it is a work which in dramatic form relates closely to the plays of Lillo, who chose an apprentice as hero for *The London Merchant* (1730), and an ordinary family whose son made his fortune in trade for *Fatal Curiosity* (1737). Whatever else *The London Merchant* has to offer, it was certainly read during the eighteenth century as a play which teaches the apprentice to obey and trust his master because he is the person most likely to help him avoid the pitfalls of lust and depravity. Cooke chooses farmers for *The Mournful Nuptials*, a play concerned with two families—the Briars, who are poor, and the Freemans, who are

more successful farmers because Mr. Freeman married into money. Thus economic and financial factors have some relevance to the play itself, and this may provide the link, albeit a tangential one, between the play and its satirical Epilogue. The writer's main concern, then, comes out in the note even though he suppressed it in the verse.

As a young man Cooke had some indirect connexion with the Wesleys, for, shortly after his arrival in London in 1722 to begin working on pro-Whig articles for the papers, he wrote a Preface to Samuel Wesley's *Battle of the Sexes*⁴—rather laboured verses “in imitation of *Spencer* [sic], as is much of his [Wesley's] style”, in which he lavished fulsome praise on John Wesley's elder brother, pointing out to the reader some of the singular beauties of the poem lest he should fail to grasp their full value on his own. It would be incorrect, however, to deduce an intimate relationship between Cooke and Samuel Wesley on the basis of this evidence, for when the poem was reprinted in the second edition of Wesley's *Poems* the author prefaced it with the note:

The First Edition of the following Poem was printed more correctly than could have been reasonably expected, since it was published without the Writer's knowledge and a great many undeserved Compliments were passed upon him in the Preface.⁵

Samuel Wesley himself, whilst remaining a close correspondent with his brother, was strongly opposed to some of the actions of the Methodist preachers, and a few days before his death on 6th November 1739 he wrote to his mother of the very concerns which Cooke had raised a few months earlier in his published Epilogue:

They design separation. They are already forbidden all the pulpits in London; and to preach in that diocese is actual schism. In all likelihood, it will come to the same all over England, if the bishops have courage enough. They leave off the liturgy in the fields; and though Mr. Whitefield expresses his value for it, he never once read it to his tatterdemalions on a common. Their societies are sufficient to dissolve all other societies but their own.⁶

Cooke was thus not alone in pointing to “schism” and to the motley collections in the fields.

Later in his career Cooke exhibited an interest in religious discussions, and in 1742 wrote and published an anonymous letter “concerning Persecution for Religion and Freedom of Debate, proving Liberty to be the support of Truth and the natural property of Mankind”;⁷ but, like Dr. Joseph Trapp, another minor tragedian

⁴ *The Battle of the Sexes: A Poem*. London, Printed, and Re-printed in Dublin for William Smith, 1724.

⁵ *Poems on Several Occasions*, by Samuel Wesley, M.A. Cambridge: Printed by J. Bentham, Printer to the University, for J. Brotherton . . . London, 1743.

⁶ Quoted in Luke Tyerman: *The Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley*, M.A. (London, 1870), i, pp. 286-7.

⁷ *Dictionary of National Biography*, xii, p. 96—article on Thomas Cooke, by S. L. Lee.

whose sermons against the Methodists in the same year, 1739, attracted considerable attention and scurrying for pens, Cooke appears to have believed that the true exercise of this freedom should lead all men to the orthodox branch of the Church of England rather than to these tumultuous assemblers who were prohibited from preaching in the pulpits of their own church.

PETER BUCKROYD.

This year's Conference *Handbook* is in every respect an excellent production. It is good "to have and to hold". It will certainly satisfy the historian, for the compilers have drawn to the full on the rich heritage of Northumbria: the very cover design takes us back to the Lindisfarne Gospels. There is an article which ought to give joy to the Northumbria Tourist Board: this is by the late Bishop of Durham, Ian T. Ramsey, whose death was mourned by Methodists as well as by those of his own communion, and who is commemorated in the handbook with an article by the Chairman of the Darlington District. Ex-Vice-President Russell Hindmarsh writes on Methodism in the North-East, and it was a happy thought to include an article on Bede—the 1300th anniversary of whose birth coincides with the visit of the Conference to Tyneside. But these are just examples of the good things in this handbook, which can be obtained for 30p. (post free) from Mr. W. H. Elfert, 3, Brightman Road, North Shields, Northumberland, NE29 0HP. The subtle humour of Andrew Elliot on page 50 will not be lost on the initiated, but the editor of these *Proceedings* can supply the uninitiated with a translation into English "pure and undefiled"!

The Archives and Research Centre has recently acquired the residue of the library of the late Dr. Duncan Coomer, thus greatly enriching its sections on Church History (especially Methodist history), Christian Unity and Liturgiology. Our older members will remember Dr. Coomer as a member of our Society and a highly-respected layman of our Church. At the time of his death in 1952 he had served for some years as our auditor. (See *Proceedings*, xxviii, p. 88.)

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*.

Methodist History, April 1973.

The Journal of the Historical Society of the Presbyterian Church of Wales, March 1973.

Cirplan, Lent 1973.

The Journal of the United Reformed Historical Society, April 1973.

The Baptist Quarterly, April 1973—together with the publication *Association Records of the Particular Baptists of England, Wales and Ireland to 1660*, edited by B. R. White: Part II, The West Country and Ireland.

The Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research, May 1973.

The Bulletin of the Methodist Sacramental Fellowship is printing a series of six articles by Donald Rogers entitled "The New Testament Basis of the Eucharistic Hymns of the Wesleys", the first of which has appeared in the issue dated Lent 1973.

BOOK NOTICES

James Rouquet and his part in Early Methodism, by A. Barrett Sackett. (Wesley Historical Society Publication No. 8, pp. vi. 30, 30p.)

It is much to be regretted that the "occasional papers" of the Wesley Historical Society, of which this is the eighth, should reach such a limited constituency, because each has solid worth and each is chosen because it makes a distinctive contribution to our understanding of Methodist beginnings. In this present instance, Mr. Sackett has followed up his penetrating study of John Jones with a well-documented account of the career of James Rouquet—so well known to Bristolians of the eighteenth century, and even in that city so totally unknown today.

However, as the author rightly indicates, he played a lively part in the growth of eighteenth-century Methodism. For a short time he was appointed master at Kingswood School at a time when, after three years' existence, its very future seemed in jeopardy. So well did he carry out his task that the school became full, and Wesley in 1753 declared that it was "worth all the labour".

He left to take orders in the Church of England, and was ordained deacon by the Bishop of Gloucester in 1754, but could not settle in the parish to which he was appointed, and in 1755 John Wesley could call him "semi itinerant". Mr. Sackett quite properly suggests that it was through Wesley that he found access to the Countess of Huntingdon's party, and in 1756 he married Sarah Fenwicke, sister of the Countess of Deloraine, with John Wesley a signatory to the marriage-certificate.

He threw himself ardently into humanitarian activities in Bristol, and more especially devoted himself to the care of prisoners and debtors in the city jail of Newgate. Even after he became vicar of West Harptree, in 1765, he did not flag in his social work. Perhaps it was through his instigation that Wesley visited the French prisoners of war at Knowle in 1759, with such beneficent results.

Mr. Sackett gives chapter and verse for Rouquet's other work in almshouses and hospitals, and also after 1766 as a curate of the city church of St. Werbergh. But he is chiefly remembered as one who in his generous conception of churchmanship could find staunch friends among Calvinists, Methodists, Dissenters, and clergy of differing opinions. His friendship with John Wesley was deep and lasting, and when in 1768 Wesley thought he was going to die, he left his manuscripts to him. Certainly Rouquet helped the society in Bristol, even though in the Calvinist dispute which flared up from 1770 onwards he veered towards the Countess of Huntingdon and Rowland Hill, and in the War of American Independence he was a radical, choosing to stand by Caleb Evans rather than John Wesley.

He was only forty-seven years old when he died in 1776, deeply lamented by the entire community of Christian believers in the city of Bristol. This is a fine piece of research on a man who deserves to be remembered as one in Wesley's own tradition who loved God and his fellow man, and in whom faith and works were one.

MALDWYN EDWARDS.

The Industrial Revolution in Shropshire, by Barric Trinder. (Phillimore & Co. Ltd., pp. xii. 455, £4 50p.)

This is a large, attractively-produced and generously-illustrated book about an area which is of interest to historians on several counts. To

some it means Coalbrookdale, the world's first cast-iron bridge, and the birth of the Industrial Revolution. For others it is inextricably connected with the ministry of John Fletcher; but any member of the Wesley Historical Society who feels tempted to turn straight to those chapters which deal with Fletcher and local Methodist history is strongly advised against such skipping. Indeed, the present reviewer will be surprised if anyone genuinely interested in history can get past Mr. Trinder's introductory chapters without being "hooked". For this book, with its wealth of vivid detail and its carefully-documented dependence on primary material, demonstrates how fascinating and meaningful local history can be in the hands of an expert. Furthermore, the social, political, economic and industrial kaleidoscope presented here, besides its intrinsic interest even to those for whom Shropshire is no more than "Housman country", provides the necessary setting for an examination of the work of Fletcher and others. Too much local Methodist history has been isolated from such a setting, and thereby distorted. Mr. Trinder has shown us "a yet more excellent way".

The saintly Fletcher is here seen "in the round", and his impact on the neighbourhood is soberly assessed. Although he was absent from the parish for several periods because of ill-health, his influence on it was considerable, and Madeley remained "the Mecca of Methodism" long after his death, when his work was perpetuated by his widow and others. Mr. Trinder has called upon the extensive correspondence of Mary Fletcher and Mary Tooth now at the Methodist Archives Centre to present a picture of the Methodists of Madeley as

an inward-looking, rather timorous people, oppressed by ecclesiastical politics, perplexed by secular events which they did not understand, hoping to be saved by divine intervention in the form of a revival, clinging tenaciously to the memory of John Fletcher, who earned them status and respect among Evangelicals throughout Britain.

However unpalatable to the sentimentalists still among us, Mr. Trinder's account will appeal to a generation less sweet-toothed than its forebears. He shows that evangelicalism in the area was wider than Methodism in its denominational sense, though at the same time he traces the development of the various nineteenth-century Methodist groups, including the less familiar Winfieldites or Revival Methodists.

Politically and socially, Fletcher himself was a reactionary; and although later on Methodists were among the leaders of reform, all too often there was a gulf between the evangelicals and the aspirations of the working class. (Mr. Trinder is a disciple of E. P. Thompson, but not an uncritical one. He recognizes that there was in many cases a close connexion between the frustration of political hopes and religious revival, but is not so naïve as to assume that the connexion is a simple and invariable one of cause and effect.) The lot of the miner, in particular, was harsh and dangerous, and Mr. Trinder castigates the piety of one nineteenth-century tract "for its utter insensitivity to the situation of the child in an industrial society, and for its profound joylessness". So far had Victorian Christianity moved from the spirit of the Gospels!

When baffled to find something to criticize, any reviewer worth his salt knows that he must descend to minutiae or complain about the index. If really desperate, one may do both! At two points in the text, Melville Horne appears as Melvyn; and on his one fleeting appearance in Madeley George Whitefield is spelled "Whitfield". The sub-headings in the index

could have been more helpfully arranged, but it is otherwise most comprehensive and useful, and worthy of a volume which deserves to be read far beyond the borders of Shropshire.

JOHN A. VICKERS.

Religion and Society in England, 1740-1850, by W. R. Ward. (Batsford: pp. 339, £4.)

The Early Correspondence of Jabez Bunting, 1820-1829, edited by W. R. Ward. (Royal Historical Society. Camden Fourth Series, volume xi (1972): pp. 246. Available to the general public January 1975, £3.)

Professor W. R. Ward of Durham in these two important books opens up new perspectives on the middle period of Methodist history. The first is a complex intertwining of social, economic and political history, with the stress falling on what was happening at "grass roots" level rather than on what transpired in episcopal palaces and conferences, though these are not neglected.

The subject is the generation dominated by the consequences of the French Revolution and early industrialization which altered for ever the terms on which religious establishment could operate, and which raised sharply the problem of the Church's authority. With an enviable use of primary source material—much of it untouched before—Dr. Ward shows the Establishment failing to meet the demands of a new society and Methodism fragmenting under social pressures linked with the economic changes of the period.

Wesleyanism was threatened by radical movements stressing local initiative of which the Sunday schools (long underestimated by historians) could be hotbeds. There followed conservative fears of subversion, popular revivalism, and the post-war fall in prices. Dr. Ward claims that an alliance was formed between the itinerant preachers, aspiring to a full presbytery, led by Jabez Bunting, and a fairly small but highly influential group of wealthy laymen. When class-division in Wesleyanism became translated into geographical separation—old town-centre chapels and newer suburban areas—the fellowship of the circuits was in danger of breaking under the strain. Thus in Leeds in 1827 there is clear evidence of a class struggle triggered by the division of the circuit and the famous Brunswick organ (now, alas, silent!).

The pressures reached their height in the 1840s, affecting all the churches, not just the Wesleyans; and here Professor Ward begins to uncover what has been something of a mystery—why the smaller Methodist connexions suffered troubles parallel with those in Wesleyanism. Then follow years of comparative prosperity, enabling the connexion to repair its losses—but never again to sustain a rate of growth faster than that of the population.

The argument is exemplified in the editing of the correspondence of Jabez Bunting between 1820 and 1829. This is a first-class piece of meticulously-accurate scholarship, and includes a short but penetrating sketch of the period and of Bunting himself. Dr. Ward has drawn on the four thousand letters in the Methodist Archives written to Bunting from all over Methodism and beyond, and a clear picture of Wesleyanism emerges. Here is a minister on the radicals' execution-list; there is the Duke of Northumberland granting money to a chapel as a consequence of the loyalty of the Wesleyans of Newcastle. Here is a preacher wanting to move south for the sake of his health; there is John Stephens writing

about crushing the Manchester radicals one by one. We see "supers" arguing with fractious local preachers, leading laymen concerned about Mark Robinson's "Church Methodism". Over Leeds Bunting displays *realpolitik*: "The Leeds Noncoms took away from our two circuits about a thousand members who are little missed" (p. 203). The other connexions—"Ranters" and "Kilhamites"—seem threatening rivals, not allies! All this makes absorbing reading.

Professor Ward's books follow soon after Harold Perkin's *Making of Modern English Society, 1780-1880*, which fills out the evidence put before us here. A new picture is emerging of what popular religion was really like in this period, and of what it achieved in helping to create a viable class-society. It is a pity that Dr. Ward fails to come to grips with Perkin's theory of the role of Methodism in society, and makes it somewhat difficult for the reader to see the issues clearly. This is especially so in the section on "orange" politics. In this controversial approach some may catch a whiff of economic determinism. There is a somewhat hard attitude to Bunting and his allies apparent also, and a case could be made out for a pre-dating of the "high Wesleyan" view of the ministry. The importance of the books lies in their perspective, which is refreshingly different from older Anglican-orientated church history, in which dissenters are peripheral and in which the Oxford Movement, the Hampden case, Mr. Gorham and all the rest dominate the scene. Professor Ward points the way to a new style of approaching Victorian church history, but one would have wished for more dialogue with others who are ploughing the same field.

J. MUNSEY TURNER.

Methodism in Germany: its Expansion and Problems of Church Development, 1830-1968, by Karl Zehrer. (Dissertation at University of Halle, 1971: pp. 168.)

The following summary has been provided by the author:

The existence and effectiveness of a minority church are portrayed, showing the circumstances under which such a church can exist, the conditions which are favourable to its existence, and those which impede or even endanger it. In this way guide-lines are offered to the Evangelical Methodist Church, which has resulted from the integration of the Methodist Church in Germany and the Evangelical Community (Evangelische Gemeinschaft). Members of other churches who are interested in new church structures are provided with information about the way of life and service of a church which indeed originated from another tradition than their own, but which has never denied its unity of faith with the old church and with the churches of the Reformation. The dissertation is to be understood as a contribution to the continuing dialogue between the churches.

The first section deals with the history of German Methodism until 1925—a subject often written about—and proves that the rise of the Methodist Church in Germany cannot be viewed—as it has usually been, entirely as a reaction against the rationalism of the German "Evangelical"¹ churches. Nor was the separation of the Methodists from the German "Evangelical" churches primarily the result of insults, pressure and the persecution of the Methodists by the members of the "Evangelical" churches. On the contrary, it has always been the aim of the episcopal

¹ "Evangelische Kirchen" refers to the state church in Germany—not to be confused with the term "evangelical" as used in English.

Methodists to found independent churches. The Wesleyan Methodists in Germany adhered to this policy from about 1860 onwards. The resultant church, persecuted and despised by state and state church alike, had a unique task and opportunity in relation to the labour movement which arose at the same time and was suffering the same fate—an opportunity which was never seized.

The second section deals firstly with the history of the German Methodist Church from 1925 to 1968. Here it is shown that long before 1925 the Methodist Church had begun to adapt itself to the German "Evangelical" churches, and from 1925 onwards this process was sanctioned by the Central Conferences which were introduced in that year. This process led to the development of a German Methodist Church which differed from its Anglo-Saxon counterpart. The differences are particularly marked in respect of the public status of the church, lay participation in the work, Sunday-school work, church instruction to children, administration of deaconess work, church music, form of service and liturgy, and—not least—in the area of finance. The Methodist Church in Germany did not feel able to conform to the practice of confirmation in the "Evangelical" churches. It adhered firmly to the principle of the individual's voluntary confirmation of the baptismal vow at an age when he was capable of measuring the importance of his decision. Thus it was unavoidable that churches grew up with a hard core of members who were remote from most people. But it also ensured a 60 to 80 per cent attendance at services by church-members, many of whom were active in some way or other in the work of the church and also supported it financially by free-will offerings without any subsidy from outside.

Section three deals with the relationship of the Methodist Church to the other churches in Germany. There were no official contacts between the German "Evangelical" churches and the Methodist Church in Germany until after the first world war, through the ecumenical movement, and no co-operation until after the second world war. Yet around 1880 unofficial contacts already existed. Th. Christleib's "Theory of Superfluity"² and the development of the modern "movement of Christian communities"³ can be regarded as results of this. Co-operation between the Methodist Church in Germany and the other evangelical free churches began in 1879 with the formation of the Association of Christian Singers. This was extended in 1902 to youth work, and in 1916 led to the formation of the Central Committee of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany, which paved the way for the foundation of the Association of Evangelical Free Churches in 1926. The Methodist Church in Germany, however, never sought closer union with any of the churches belonging to this Association, except for the Evangelical Community. Contacts with the Catholic Church were not made until after the second world war, particularly in the German Democratic Republic. There were no contacts with other Christian groups.

A short fourth section contains, as results of this survey, reflections on the type of church, the autonomy of the church, planned work, and the call to unity.

² A theory by which, if the state church could be revived, the Anglo-Saxon free churches would be superfluous.

³ Movement of Christian (pietist) communities within the "Evangelische Kirche" (state church).

Chapel, by Kenneth Young. (Eyre Methuen: pp. 238, with 17 illustrations, £3 50p.)

This is a most interesting study of the social and religious elements "inextricably intermingled" (as the author says) in the life of the "chapel". Theology being left out of account, the author quite rightly finds a homogeneity of atmosphere and activity in the life of the chapels of various denominations. The book contains a medley of incident—serious, humorous, quaint and curious—recalled (with degrees of accuracy) by elderly correspondents and culled from the pages of (not always very carefully written) local histories. We cannot, however, take seriously such statements as "the lovefeast was . . . a surrogate Last Supper [which has been] traced to totemism" (p. 108), *IHS* means "In His Service" (p. 126), the New Room was built in 1739 but was not then in Methodist use (p. 174), Swingfield Methodists, in 1910, took regular collections for the London Missionary Society (p. 191), and that a portion of the congregation at the Mint, Exeter, was inebriated at the Watchnight Service in 1895 (p. 159). Nevertheless, the historian of local Methodism will be grateful to Mr. Young for much information supplied, and we think he will enjoy reading the book and studying its well-chosen illustrations. We ourselves enjoyed reading it, and laughed a good deal—perhaps not always in the places intended!

THOMAS SHAW.

The Prophet Harris, by Gordon MacKay Haliburton. (Longmans, £3 50p.)

The undisputed founder of Methodism in the Ivory Coast was the Liberian Episcopal catechist William Wade Harris. This paradox illustrates both the breadth of Harris's achievement and the abiding particularity of Ivory Coast Methodism. Much, of course, has been written about Harris already. Now, just before the last direct witnesses to his work are carried away, Dr. Haliburton has given us a careful—perhaps definitive—study worthy of Harris himself. Dr. Haliburton has thoroughly digested previous publications on the subject; he has discovered a great number of new facts; he has set these in their historical and political context; and he has traced both Harris's life and the development of Methodism during the first years of missionary "harvesting". The author writes as an historian, not as a theologian or missionary apologist ("The reality of [Harris's] call from God is not something we can judge" (p. 212)), but his balanced and independent judgements on Harris and his successors, both African and European, have rendered lasting if indirect service to the church in the Ivory Coast and beyond.

PAUL ELLINGWORTH.

We acknowledge, with many thanks, the following handbooks and brochures which have been sent to us recently. Except where a figure is mentioned, prices have not been supplied.

Garforth centenary (pp. 24): copies from the Rev. Geoffrey J. Warburton, 29, Station Fields, Garforth, Leeds, LS25 1PL.

Methodism in Laira, by M. F. Scoble (pp. 34): copies from the author at 7, Federation Road, Laira, Plymouth.

Middleton-in-Teesdale Bourne chapel centenary (pp. 26): copies, price 20p., from Mr. H. L. Beadle, Dale House, Forest-in-Teesdale, Barnard Castle, Co. Durham.

The Story of Methodism in Aberdeen, by Ernest Wilkinson (pp. 12): copies from the author at 27, Keith Road, Talbot Woods, Bournemouth, BH3 7DS.

NOTES AND QUERIES

1242. WALTER CHURCHEY.

Members who share Mr. Temple's desire for further information about this poetical attorney (see *Proceedings*, xxxviii, pp. 152-3) may like to know that he is the subject of an exhaustive and fully-documented article by the Rev. W. Islwyn Morgan appearing in the 1971-2 volume of *Bathafarn*. This sets out pretty well everything we know about him.

One or two comments on Mr. Temple's article may be in place here. There seems to be some geographical confusion in his second paragraph. He has perhaps been misled by the condensed nature of Wesley's language in the *Diary* for 16th August 1788: "2.30 Brecon, at Mr. Chu[rchey's], dinner, letters, prayed . . ." This must have been at Churchey's house, Little Ffordd Fawr, "near the Hay", not the house in Brecon itself, to which Churchey did not move until 1797.

The suggestion that Churchey may have witnessed the incident which led to the death of William Seward cannot possibly be entertained, since this event took place in 1740—seven years before Churchey was born.

Finally, the statement that "Churchey was on familiar terms with the Poet Laureate, Robert Southey" looks suspiciously like a case of popular exaggeration. Mr. Temple tells me that its source is an old book in the County Museum at Brecon called *Old Brecknock Chips* (1886). Failing more reliable evidence, we are probably safe in treating it as no more than a garbled version of the reference in Southey's life of Cowper to the fact that Churchey had corresponded with Cowper about the publication of his poems. (For the references, see the note on page 36 in Mr. Morgan's *Bathafarn* article.) Southey did not, in any case, become Poet Laureate until 1813—some eight years after Churchey's death.

JOHN A. VICKERS.

1243. BERNARD DOWDESWELL: WAS HE KNOWN TO THE WESLEYS?

Bernard Dowdeswell was the youngest son of William Dowdeswell, rector of Kingham (Oxon) from 1680 to 1711. The family was apparently high church, and possibly Jacobite in sympathy. Bernard was baptized at Kingham on 23rd September 1700. He was therefore only eleven years old when his father died, and his eldest brother, another William Dowdeswell, became the new rector. He attended Westminster School, and must therefore have been a pupil there when Samuel Wesley was chief usher. He may also have been a contemporary of Charles Wesley, but the disparity in age would have probably precluded more than a formal acquaintanceship. Bernard Dowdeswell matriculated at Christ Church, Oxford, on 23rd June 1720; on the following day, John Wesley matriculated at Christ Church. Apart from the coincidence of being "freshers" together, the two men had much in common. John Wesley was more than two years younger than Bernard Dowdeswell, but they were both younger sons from country rectories with similar churchmanship, and it is inconceivable that they should not have become well acquainted. Both men graduated in 1724, and took their Master's degree in 1727. By that time, John Wesley had been elected to the Fellowship at Lincoln, but Bernard Dowdeswell remained at Christ Church as a student.¹ Charles Wesley had come up from Westminster School to Christ Church in 1726, so there is the additional probability that Dowdeswell made or renewed his acquaintance.

¹ At Christ Church, "student" is equivalent to "fellow" in other colleges.

Although there were apparently 247 members of Christ Church in 1733, making "The House" the largest college in either university, the numbers were sufficiently small for the Wesleys to have had almost daily contacts with Dowdeswell, who was ordained deacon on 13th June 1731, and priest on 4th June 1732. In 1735 the Rev. Bernard Dowdeswell was one of the proctors. The parallel can be carried one further step. In October 1735 the Wesleys left Oxford and sailed for Georgia; on 10th October 1735 Bernard Dowdeswell also left Oxford to be inducted to the Christ Church living of Westwell in Oxfordshire.

Two years later, on 15th December 1737, Bernard married Theodosia Tomkyns, the eldest sister of Dorothy Tomkyns, who had married Bernard's brother William, the rector of Kingham. There were two children: a son, Bernard, baptized 30th November 1739 and buried 18th December 1740, and a daughter, Dorothy, baptized 21st January 1740/1. Four years later Theodosia Dowdeswell died (3rd March 1744/5), and on 14th April 1746 Bernard Dowdeswell also died. All members of the family were buried at Kingham, including the orphan daughter, Dorothy, who came here to live. We understand from the Visitation Return of 1738 that Bernard Dowdeswell administered communion three times a year, and that he resided constantly upon his cure in the Westwell parsonage house.

My queries are: is there any indication that the Wesleys knew Bernard Dowdeswell? Did Dowdeswell ever appear in the Holy Club? And did John or Charles ever visit Westwell, or more probably Kingham?

R. W. MANN (Kingham Hill School, Oxford).

1244. METHODIST MEETINGS REGISTERED AS "INDEPENDENT".

On recently looking through licence-applications to the Archbishop of York on behalf of North Nottinghamshire congregations, I was surprised to find, for the period December 1771 to March 1772, no fewer than nine meetings—eight houses and one chapel—wishing to be registered as "Independents". In each case there were seven signatures. The common factor, apart from the denominational label, was the first signature: "Thomas Lee, Preacher". In eight cases it has been possible to make a positive identification of some of the names as being Methodist. Although there were over thirty other registrations for this region in the eighteenth century, there is only one other example—1795, and a re-registration of one of the earlier group—of a Methodist society calling itself Independent, with Jasper Robinson making the second signature.

Lee's round was, of course, a very extensive one, and there were other cases for the same period. For example, I have noticed another in 1772 for Swinfleet, Whitgift (Yorks). The following year, Isaac Brown (presumably John Wesley's "Honest Isaac Brown") was adding his name to a similar application in Newark. One of Thomas Lee's later signatures is on a form for Ripponden, Halifax, 1777, which has the phrase "commonly called Independents" crossed out.

Was this a general practice or was it peculiar to a few preachers in a limited area? What was its purpose? According to the 1689 Act, it was not necessary to state any denomination, and some of the other applications in this area did not even refer to Protestant Dissenters. "Independent" is one of the last labels one would expect Methodists to choose!

BARRY J. BIGGS.

1245. JOSEPH SALMON OF NANTWICH.

I have in my possession a copy of the twenty-fourth edition of Charles Wesley's sermon "Awake, Thou that sleepest", published in Nantwich by Taylor & Snellson in 1777. It is introduced by a letter beginning "DEAR READER," and ending "A PENITENT."

A footnote to the Standard edition of Wesley's *Journal* (vi, p. 227) tells how Wesley on 6th April 1779 was entertained at Nantwich by Joseph Wittingham Salmon, and of a letter written by Mr. Salmon to Wesley on 7th July 1777, telling of an inward call (as he believed) to preach. To this Wesley had added the note "What a lovely simplicity! What a pity that such a spirit as his should fall among thieves!"

In the *Journal*, Wesley records how Joseph Salmon's uncle, Matthew Salmon,

was, fifty years ago, one of our little company at Oxford, and was then both in person, in natural temper, and in piety, one of the loveliest young men I knew. Mr. Joseph S[almon] was then unborn, and was for many years without God in the world. But he is now as zealous in the works of God as he was once in the works of the devil.

The footnote referred to above tells how Matthew Salmon became alienated from the Methodists and described the occasion of Charles Wesley's preaching of the sermon at Oxford in 1742 thus:

Mr. Wesley, the Methodist of Christ Church, entertained his audience two hours; and, having insulted and abused all degrees, from the highest to the lowest, was, in a manner, hissed out of the pulpit by the lads.

Could it be, therefore, that Joseph Salmon, remembering his own conversion and his indebtedness to the Wesleys, was the man who undertook the publication of this twenty-fourth edition of the sermon his uncle had despised, and was it an act of family reparation? Could it be, too, that he was the "Penitent" of the address to the reader? He was evidently in Nantwich at the time, and would have been of sufficient substance to pay for the private printing.

J. KINGSLEY SANDERS.

The Fourth Lesson (Darton, Longman & Todd: pp. xxviii. 367, £3 50p.), edited by Christopher Campling, is designed to supply "readings from outside scripture for the weekdays and holy days of a year". It is a companion volume to *The Daily Office* produced by the Joint Liturgical Group. Readers of these *Proceedings* will be pleased to note that passages from Wesley's *Journal* are chosen for Passion Week, part of Holy Week, and the Saturday after Trinity XX. A wide variety of writers contribute to this anthology—Teilhard de Chardin, Evelyn Underhill, Leslie Newbiggin, Julian of Norwich, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, C. S. Lewis, to name but a few.

Encouraging news comes from over the Border, where our Scottish branch have enrolled 75 members. On Wednesday, 12th September, at 7-30 p.m., they are holding a meeting to be addressed by Mr. A. F. Walls of the University of Aberdeen; and on Saturday, 17th November, at 2 p.m., they meet in connexion with special anniversary celebrations at the Crown Terrace church, Aberdeen. On this occasion there will be an exhibition of items drawn from Methodism in the East of Scotland.