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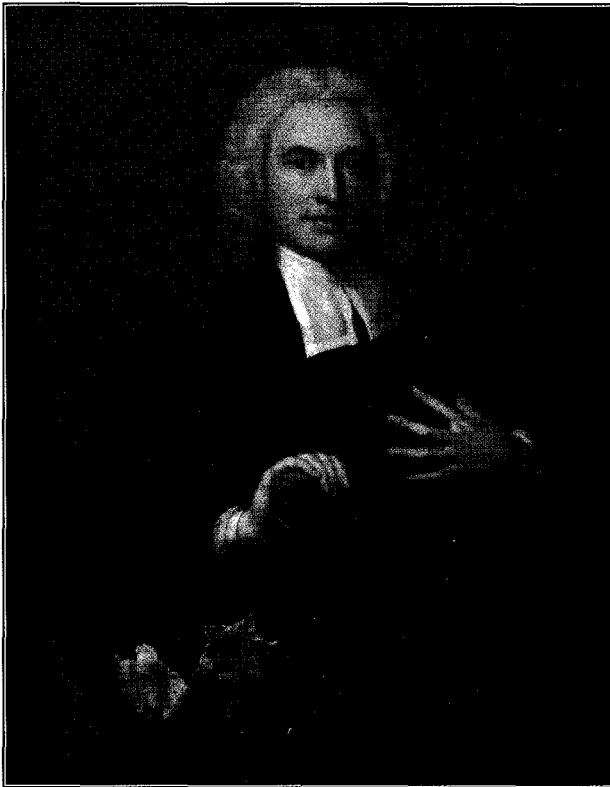
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Proceedings of the
Wesley Historical Society



Volume 58 Part 3

October 2011

THE WESLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

was founded in 1893 to promote the study of the history and literature of early Methodism. Over the years the range of its interests has been enlarged to include the history of all sections of the Methodist Church which were united in 1932, other Wesleyan and Methodist Connexions and United Churches which include former Wesleyan or Methodist denominations.

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Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society

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Cover Illustration:

Charles Wesley

Oil on canvas. Often known as the 'Lily Portrait', the artist is unknown, but it may date from around Charles' ordination in 1735.

Courtesy of the Trustees of Epworth Old Rectory where it now hangs.

WHITEFIELD, WESLEY AND WALES

The Wesley Historical Society Lecture 2011

The title of this paper reflects the historian's predilection for alliteration, especially the alliterative three. In all fairness, it should probably read 'Whitefield, Wesley and Wesley', since Charles Wesley was by no means a stranger to Wales, although he was seldom to be found in the country at the same time as his brother John, apart from such special occasions as Charles's marriage to Sarah Gwynne of Garth in Breconshire. By varying their visits in this way, between them, they clocked up quite a large number of 'Welsh miles', as they were frequently called in consideration of their particularly challenging nature which made them more difficult to traverse than the ordinary mile. The single reference to 'Wesley' in the title therefore conflates the two Wesley brothers to a considerable extent.

As counterparts to the three Englishmen actually represented in the title, it should be noted that there were three main leaders of Methodism in Wales: Daniel Rowland, Howel Harris and William Williams, Pantycelyn: the great preacher, the great organiser, the great hymn writer, as they have often been designated. Of the three, it was Harris who was the major link with the leaders in England. Unlike Rowland, he was not ordained and had no parish for which to care, so he was far more free to travel across the border. He also seems to have placed a far greater emphasis on the need to forge links with evangelical movements in other countries, corresponding with Scottish revivalists as well as with Whitefield and the Wesleys. It was he who had the keenest vision of the revival as an international phenomenon, whereas Rowland and Williams seemed to have had a more acute sense of being called to minister to Wales. Without Harris, therefore, it is very likely that the Welsh and English movements would not have been so closely allied during the early period of the evangelical revival.

From the outset, all these revival leaders had a good deal in common. They shared a similar emphasis on the importance of conversion, on the pressing need for a 'new birth'. They used similar methods to bring together their followers in society meetings and cherished a shared belief in the vital importance of fellowship to sustain the members in their faith. They were also all committed to remaining within the Church of England. Methodist leaders in England and Wales found common cause in all these issues and in the first flush of the revival these elements seemed to bind them irrevocably. To the outside eye, as well, they seemed to bear a striking resemblance, so much so that the Welsh evangelicals were soon afforded the nickname 'Methodist' as well. Howel Harris may have objected to the name as having been 'put on us to our shame' by their enemies and as being more appropriate to the Wesleys and their

followers,¹ but to little avail as its usage spread among members of the Welsh movement in addition to their opponents.

Moreover, in addition to the principles and goals which united them, there seemed to be a genuine sense of friendship between some of these men. They had usually written to each other before actually meeting and had already formed a sense of common purpose. It seemed that providence dictated that they were meant to work together and support each other: why else had they gone through such similar experiences so close together? Their writings during the period between 1738 and 1741 in particular demonstrate this mutual appreciation. Harris made contact with George Whitefield first and regarded him thereafter as an elder brother and adviser, but he also felt a strong sense of connection to both Wesleys when he came to know them. Harris said that he felt his soul knit with John Wesley;² Charles Wesley described Harris as 'a man after my own heart', his 'second self'³ and John Wesley and Daniel Rowland found their 'hearts were knit together in love'.⁴

Visits to Wales by Whitefield and the Wesleys and visits to England by Harris were for the same purpose: to help one another and strengthen each other's hands. John Wesley realised that there was great potential and much work to be done in Wales, when he crossed the Severn for the first time in October 1739. Upon his return to Bristol he wrote in his diary:

I have seen no part of England so pleasant for sixty or seventy miles together as those parts of Wales I have been in. And most of the inhabitants are indeed ripe for the gospel. I mean (if the expression appear strange) they are earnestly desirous of being instructed in it, and as utterly ignorant of it they are as any Creek or Cherokee Indians. I do not mean they are ignorant of the name of Christ. Many of them can say both the Lord's Prayer and the Belief. Nay, and some all the Catechism. But take them out of the road of what they have learned by rote, and they know no more (nine in ten of those with whom I conversed) either of gospel salvation or of that faith whereby alone we can be saved than Chicali or Tomochachi. [Native Americans Wesley had met in Georgia]. Now what spirit is he of, who would rather these poor creatures should perish of lack of knowledge than that they should be saved, even by the exhortations of Howell Harris or an itinerant preacher?⁵

One or other of the leaders might be called upon to visit the other country in order to help settle internal disputes and it was perhaps easier at times for a sympathetic outsider to act as mediator and peacemaker. George Whitefield was appointed Moderator of the Welsh Association, for instance, in order to avoid the problem of having to appoint either Harris or Rowland. In many ways, Harris was better suited to lead the Association, but it would have been highly problematic to have a layman in

¹ National Library of Wales, Calvinistic Methodist Archive (CMA), Diaries of Howel Harris, 7 September 1742, 16 February 1763, 18 May 1763, 3 December 1763.

² *Journal of the Historical Society of the Presbyterian Church of Wales*, 19 (1934), 259 (Trevecka Letter 212, Howel Harris to John Wesley, 1 February 1740).

³ Thomas Jackson, *Life of Charles Wesley*, vol. 1 (London: Wesleyan Methodist Conference Office, 1841), p. 239. Charles Wesley to Howel Harris, 6 November 1740.

⁴ A. H. Williams, *John Wesley in Wales, 1739-1790* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1971), p. 11.

⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

that role. There was already substantial opposition to the work of the Methodist lay preachers; this enmity would surely increase substantially if the movement was perceived to have a layman at its head. But, although Harris was at times a source of tension in his own country, he often acted as mediator in England. Howel Harris first visited London in the company of George Whitefield but he was invited again in May 1740 when he spent most of the time in Charles Wesley's company. He was of great assistance to Charles in countering some of the more marked Moravian tendencies in the Fetter Lane Society which were causing concern. The Moravians, although quite small in number, had a remarkable influence within the eighteenth-century Evangelical Revival. The remains of the Protestant Church of Moravia, they had sought shelter on the lands of the somewhat eccentric aristocrat Count Nikolaus Zinzendorf at Herrnhut in Saxony. From there, they had embarked on missionary journeys and established themselves in many areas, including London.⁶ By 1740, controversy arose regarding the Moravian doctrine of stillness. This was the notion that faith was a gift granted by God which one could not win or effectively strive for; rather, one had to wait passively to receive the gift. This was completely contrary to Harris's own experience, which he recounted to the Society in order to argue against 'stillness'. He explained that he had been drawn to take the sacrament whilst still 'dead in sin', an experience which had begun what he called a 'fight of faith' against fears, doubts and darkness until he was at last 'brought through fire and water into a wealthy place'.⁷ Wesley revelled in his words and proclaimed:

O what a flame was kindled! Never man spake, in my hearing, as this man spake. What a nursing-father God has sent us! He has indeed learned of the good shepherd to carry the lambs in his bosom. Such love, such power, such simplicity was irresistible. He is indeed a man of thunder and of consolation.⁸

The Moravians and Methodists soon divided into separate societies, with the Fetter Lane Society becoming the Moravian stronghold and the Wesleys concentrating their efforts on the Foundery.⁹ Harris, it must be said, consistently refused to disown the Moravians and maintained contacts with them for the rest of his life, fuelling rumours that he was being drawn towards some of their less orthodox beliefs. He was later to

⁶ See W. R. Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 116-59; Colin Podmore, *The Moravian Church in England 1728-1760* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); J. C. S. Mason, *The Moravian Church and the Missionary Awakening in England, 1760-1800* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2001). For Moravian influences in Wales, see R. T. Jenkins, *The Moravian Brethren in North Wales* (London: Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, 1938).

⁷ Diaries of Howel Harris, 7-8 May 1740; S. T. Kimbrough and Kenneth F. C. Newport (eds), *The Manuscript Journal of the Reverend Charles Wesley, MA* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008), p. 253.

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 254.

⁹ Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys* (Leicester: Apollos, 2004), pp. 119-21; Gareth Lloyd, *Charles Wesley and the Struggle for Methodist Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 45-50; Kenneth J. Collins, 'Wesley's life and ministry', in Randy L. Maddox and Jason E. Vickers (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 48-50.

suggest to Lady Huntingdon that it was his attachment to the Moravians which had been at the root of the opposition to him within the Welsh movement.¹⁰

From 1740 on, however, Harris's time in London would be largely taken up by Whitefield's Tabernacle society, where he was called to take charge in Whitefield's absences in America and as doctrinal differences came to separate the Methodist revival into two separate factions. Although they could agree on many crucial questions, they could not agree on possibly the most fundamental matter of all and their unity foundered over matters of doctrine. From the start, the Welsh Methodists had naturally inclined towards Calvinism, with its five points: total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace and the perseverance of the saints.¹¹ As with many emerging movements, they only gradually came to codify their beliefs, and for the first few years there was considerable fluidity in the general evangelical movement and remarkable optimism about the prospect of collaboration. However, by the early 1740s, they were reaching a more rigid definition of their various standpoints. The publication of John Wesley's sermon *Free Grace* in April 1739, along with his brother Charles's hymn on universal redemption, confirmed the differences. George Whitefield, in America when *Free Grace* appeared, finally published his response in March 1741 and declared his resolution to preach against the Wesleys and their beliefs.¹² In the meantime, Harris had once more visited Charles Wesley and the Foundery Society in London, in June 1741, but with a very different response than to his previous visit. After Harris spoke for half an hour on the theme of irresistible grace, Charles asked the members if they wished to let him continue, at which they cried out 'No!' 'Christ died for all'. Harris was silenced by Charles giving out the hymn,

Praise God from who pure blessings flow
Whose bowels yearn on all below,
Who would not have one sinner lost,
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.¹³

Charles Wesley noted in his diary: 'I acknowledged the grace given to our dear brother Harris and excused his estrangement from me through the wickedness of his counsellors'.¹⁴ There was a certain element of truth in this explanation of their estrangement, since there was a substantial amount of gossip amongst their respective

¹⁰ Diaries of Howel Harris, 4 November 1763.

¹¹ See D. Densil Morgan, *Wales and the Word: Historical Perspectives on Welsh Identity and Religion* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008).

¹² George Whitefield, *A letter to the Reverend Mr John Wesley: in answer to his sermon, entitled, Free-Grace* (London: James Hutton, 1741); Arnold Dallimore, *George Whitefield: The Life and Times of the Great Evangelist of the 18th Century Revival*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1980), pp. 27-62; Collins, 'Wesley's life and ministry', pp. 52-3. See also Alan P. F. Sell, *The Great Debate: Calvinism, Arminianism and Salvation* (Worthing: Walter, 1982).

¹³ Kimborough and Newport (eds), *The Manuscript Journal of Charles Wesley*, pp. 315-7; Geoffrey Wainwright, 'Charles Wesley and Calvinism', in Kenneth F. C. Newport and Ted A. Campbell (eds), *Charles Wesley: Life, Literature and Legacy* (London: Epworth Press, 2007), pp. 193-4.

¹⁴ Kimborough and Newport (eds), *The Manuscript Journal of Charles Wesley*, p. 317.

supporters which contributed to the deterioration of relations. Harris, Whitefield and the Wesleys usually managed to achieve far greater accord and amity when they met face to face. When absent from each other, they invariably encountered a constant bombardment of stories about what one side had said or done which fed the dispute. Harris was well aware that whenever he met with the Wesleys there would be gossip and, invariably, a spate of letters reporting rumours that he was changing sides and altering his beliefs.¹⁵ He also received fevered reports of sermons and statements by the Wesleys, such as Frank Pugh's account of Charles Wesley at the Foundery in 1742:

I never had so much rome to Suspect ye truth of Mr Charls Wesleye before . . . he Sed things there which I cd Prove to his face that was wrong & after that he gave an Exhortation & Called ye Predestinarians falls Deluders, teling his followers . . . if they wd go to hear Any others he Shd have no hopes of Ever Seeing them in glory . . . indeed I never heard so much of craftiness & ye wisdom of ye Serpent in my Life as Last night.¹⁶

Harris's letter in response urged Pugh to behave tenderly to all and to have faith that God would rectify their dear brother Charles Wesley.¹⁷ Although the leaders usually tried to rise above this chatter, it had a debilitating effect. Harris urged Whitefield in 1742 not to credit all the rumours he heard about the Wesleys: 'Believe not every Brother: I have heard many things even now here [in London] that I found to be false'.¹⁸ Harris was to reiterate this advice to his future wife, Anne Williams, in a letter from London in 1744, who had heard reports that Harris had married another woman while in London. Harris wrote to say how grieved he was that she should believe this complete fabrication and reminded her that, unfortunately, 'all that all Methodists say is not to be credited'.¹⁹

Even after the division regarding doctrine Harris especially sought to gloss over the differences and emphasise the similarities, insisting that: 'Though they in the Foundery and the Moravians are in errors, yet they love God and set Christ as the foundation, and give glory to God all in the best light they have'.²⁰ Despite referring to Wesley's opposition to election as 'a hellish infection',²¹ he insisted that the major division should be between believers and unbelievers and that all those who went by

¹⁵ For instance, both Mrs Godwin and Mary Raven wrote to him from London in considerable distress having been told by Joseph Humphreys that Harris had openly declared union with John Wesley and having heard that the Foundery members were reporting the same, leading to ill feeling in the Calvinistic Tabernacle society. CMA, Trevecka Letters 395, Mrs J. Godwin to Howel Harris, 15 October 1741; 396, Mary Raven to Howel Harris, 17 October 1741.

¹⁶ Trevecka Letter 571, Francis Pugh to Howel Harris, 3 July 1742.

¹⁷ Trevecka Letter 575, Howel Harris to Francis Pugh, 20 July 1742.

¹⁸ Trevecka Letter 638, Howel Harris to George Whitefield, 11 September 1742.

¹⁹ Trevecka Letter 1121, Howel Harris to Anne Williams, 21 February 1744.

²⁰ Diaries of Howel Harris, 3 October 1742.

²¹ Luke Tyerman, *The Life of the Rev. George Whitefield*, vol. I (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1877), p. 471 (Trevecka Letter 283, Howel Harris to George Whitefield, 27 October 1740).

the name of 'Christian' should have common cause.²² Several of his letters in the 1740s contain exhortations to avoid what he termed 'bigotry' and a 'party spirit'.²³ With more optimism than accuracy, he suggested that the difference between the Calvinists and the Wesleys lay more in words than in meaning.²⁴ Until 1741 he continued to express hopes that the Wesleys might be persuaded to change their stance,²⁵ but thereafter he concentrated more on attempting to promote unity despite their differences. He regularly suggested to Whitefield that the gulf between them could be bridged and that friendly relations should be maintained. His letters to the two brothers remained cordial in tone, offering news of the progress of revival in Wales and avoiding overly controversial topics, confident, as he wrote to John Wesley in February 1742, that:

I trust our Dear Lord will help us for his Glory's Sake and for the Church's Sake, so to behave to each other in Love and forbearance that shan't give the Enemy Room to blaspheme or the weak ones to take occasion to behave spiteful, or angry, or unbrotherly, towards each other. I trust we are of the same Seed, and shall at last stand before the same throne for ever. Let us then not quarrell, tho' we cant see alike. . . . I have often felt since I saw you some Coolness to you, and for want of being enough in the Love of God, and of hearing from you, hearing Various Reports, have been Staggered; but still I feel there remains, I hope, a Spark of Solid Love in the Bottom.²⁶

The understanding between John Wesley and Howel Harris led one historian of the Welsh movement, R. T. Jenkins, to the following somewhat controversial conclusion:

In cold blood . . . one comes to see that Daniel Rowland is an extremely important man in the history of the Methodist connexion. . . . But Rowland was an uninteresting *man* compared with Harris (or, for that part, with Pantycelyn or Peter Williams). I do not know who owns that definition of a man's 'greatness', 'the maximum of salient features', but that to me is a great man. I happened to say once that Harris was the greatest Welshman of his age. There was disagreement – fair enough, of course. But I noticed each time that the basis of the criticism was the inability to distinguish between a man's personality and the sum total of his work. 'No', one good friend said to me, 'not Howel Harris but Griffith Jones'; thinking of the undeniable greatness of Griffith Jones's work; but I was thinking of the strange, enchanting complex humanity of Howel Harris. It is the same with English Methodism: gather together all the good you know about George Whitefield, yet as a man he cannot hold a candle to the man John Wesley.

²² For instance, Trevecka Letters 480, Howel Harris to Society in London, 12 February 1742; 854, Howel Harris to William McCulloch, 15 April 1743. See Eryn M. White, 'The Eighteenth-century Evangelical Revival and Welsh Identity', in Mark Smith (ed.), *British Evangelical Identities: Past and Present, Volume 1* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008), pp. 85-96.

²³ For instance, Trevecka Letters 277, Howel Harris to John Church, 12 October 1740; 447, Howel Harris to John Powell, 19 December 1741.

²⁴ For instance, Trevecka Letter 394, Howel Harris to Samuel Blackden, 14 October 1741.

²⁵ For instance, Trevecka Letter 272, Howel Harris to John Lewis, 4 October 1740, in which Harris expresses his conviction that God will bring John Wesley to accept election.

²⁶ Trevecka Letter 490, Howel Harris to John Wesley, 28 February 1742.

And it is no accident that Wesley and Harris, the two great *men*, understood each other, over time and through much difference and disagreement, better than any other two men in the history of the two revivals.²⁷

It is true that Harris and Wesley never broke off relations in the way that Harris and Whitefield eventually did. Harris was effectively expelled from the Calvinistic Methodist movement in 1750 because of concerns about the orthodoxy of his beliefs, as well as tensions arising from his controlling presence in the movement and rumours about his relationship with Mrs Sidney Griffith, his so-called prophetess.²⁸ Whitefield, along with his colleagues in Wales, spurned Harris, who retreated to his home at Trefeca where he set up a co-operative community of believers known as the Trefeca Family.²⁹ Even after his reconciliation with his former friends in 1763, the other Welsh Methodists always considered Harris's time in the wilderness to have been largely wasted and never came to appreciate his work with the Family. William Williams, Pantycelyn, in his elegy to Harris even questioned why on earth he would want to set up what might be regarded as a monastery, when Henry VIII had gone to so much trouble to dismantle them all.³⁰ Wesley, by way of contrast, visited Trefeca and was very impressed by what he saw there, describing it as 'a kind of little paradise'.³¹ During these years of exile, Harris attended the Wesleyan Conference in 1759 and 1760 and would do so again in 1763 and 1767, expressing his readiness to attend whenever he was invited.³² Harris's insistence on maintaining contact with other groups affected by revival spoke well of his sense of loyalty towards those who had shown comradeship towards him in a difficult time, but did not always endear him to his colleagues, including Howell Davies, who was based in Pembrokeshire. Davies resented the incursions of Wesley and his preachers into what he considered his domain, but Harris rebuked him for considering that he had a monopoly in the area. His response to criticism of Wesley in the Association in Wales was to insist: 'I would not come among them in that narrow spirit of making people heretics'.³³ After his years of separation, he felt somewhat detached from all the separate streams of revival activity and could comment: 'I see an excellency in all these dividing parties owing to

²⁷ R. T. Jenkins, *Ymyl y Ddalen* (Wrexham, 1957), p. 103 (the italics are the author's own).

²⁸ For the division, see Geraint Tudur, *Howell Harris: From Conversion to Separation, 1735-1750* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000); Eryn M. White, "'A Breach in God's House": The Division in Welsh Calvinistic Methodism, 1750-63', in Nigel Yates (ed.), *Bishop Burgess and his World: Culture, Religion and Society in Britain, Europe and North America in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), pp. 85-102.

²⁹ For the Family, see Alun Wyn Owen, 'A study of Howell Harris and the Trevecka "family" (1752-1760), based upon the Trevecka letters and diaries and other Methodist archives at the National Library of Wales' (unpublished MA thesis, University of Wales, 1957); K. Monica Davies, 'Teulu Trefeca', in Gomer M. Roberts (ed.), *Hanes Methodistiaeth Galfinaidd Cymru, cyfrol 1: Y Deffroad Mawr* (Caernarfon: Llyfrfa'r Methodistiaid Calfinaidd, 1973), pp. 356-77.

³⁰ William Williams, *Marwnad Er Coffadwriaeth am Mr. Howell Harries* (Aberhonddu, 1773), p. 6.

³¹ Williams, *John Wesley in Wales*, pp. 63-4.

³² Diaries of Howell Harris, 20 April 1763; Griffith T. Roberts, *Howell Harris* (London: Epworth Press, 1951), pp. 75-6.

³³ Diaries of Howell Harris, 3 August 1763.

my being out of the prejudice to and for, and against all the parties, and my growing up a little to the heart and temper of Christ.’³⁴

It is quite clear that the Welsh Methodists did not side with Whitefield because they preferred him to the Wesleys, but because Whitefield was closer to them over crucial questions of belief than the Wesleys and therefore they had no choice but to form a closer alliance with him. Given the theological division of 1741, it might be expected that Whitefield would be a far more obvious presence in Wales than the Wesleys, but his lengthy visits to America prevented this. In truth, Whitefield’s impact on the Welsh revival can sometimes be exaggerated. Although at times he played a useful advisory and mediatory role, the Welsh movement was not able to rely on him for regular guidance so had to develop independently to a considerable extent. In one sense, the connection to Whitefield could be said to have proved problematic, since it meant that Harris felt a certain obligation to assist in England during Whitefield’s prolonged absence, causing occasional tension between him and his fellow Methodists in Wales, who felt he might be more profitably engaged back home. Thomas Price of Watford complained in August 1741 that Harris had departed for another country and left them in Wales ‘like fatherless Children’, suggesting that the talents God had granted Harris were best suited for the purpose of offering aid to ‘ye Ignorant Welchmen’.³⁵ In October 1742, Daniel Rowland wrote to Harris in London chiding him for his absence on Whitefield’s business:

Don’t you hear all the Brethren in Wales crying out loudly, Help! Help! Help! Brother Harris! Thou bold Champion, where art thou? What! In London now, in the Day of Battle! What? Has not London Champions enough to fight for her? Where are the great Wesleys, Cennick, etc? Must poor Wales afford an Assistant to England? Oh poor Wales! ’Tis thy Ingratitude altogether has been the Cause of all this. Good Lord, pity poor Wales. Send our dear Brother among us with thy Power, and in the Fulness of thy Blessing, and let the Devil tremble before him!³⁶

With the separation in English Methodism, it became rather more awkward for the Welsh Methodists to invite the Wesleys to cross the border, but there was still interaction between the two sides. Some difficulty arose by 1746 when a Wesleyan society was established in Neath in south Wales following a visit by John Wesley, leading to an inevitable element of competition with the existing Calvinistic Methodist society in the vicinity. The upshot was a summit meeting between Wesleyans and Calvinists at Bristol in January 1747, which Harris attended with twelve colleagues and John Wesley with four. It was agreed that henceforth if one side already had a society in any given market town, the other could only establish a society at the other end of the town, with a further stipulation that in south Wales they should maintain a distance of at least one mile from each other. They also agreed not to believe without

³⁴ Diaries of Howel Harris, 6 March 1763.

³⁵ Trevecka Letter 363, Thomas Price to Howel Harris, 8 August 1741.

³⁶ John Lewis (ed.), *Account of the Most Remarkable Particulars relating to the Present Progress of the Gospel*, vol. 2, no. i (1743), 3-7 (Trevecka Letter 705, Daniel Rowland to Howel Harris, 20 October 1742).

question any 'evil reports' of the other group, with Harris and Wesley especially acknowledging the importance of defending each other's good name.³⁷ They were, after all, all 'Methodists' in the eyes of the world and therefore linked in common perception.

It has sometimes been suggested in the past that from 1741 onwards John Wesley largely passed through Wales *en route* to Ireland as if through enemy territory. However, A. H. Williams has demonstrated that this is something of a misrepresentation.³⁸ Williams's analysis shows that Wesley travelled through Wales on six occasions, both for the outward and return journey from Ireland, mostly via Holyhead. On three additional occasions he made the outward journey through Wales but returned via Liverpool or Bristol and three times he made the return journey through Wales having sailed from Bristol or Liverpool in the first instance. Some of those trips were quite brief, as in August 1756, when he landed at Holyhead on Thursday night and reached Chester on Saturday. This was one of the few occasions when Wesley did not have any preaching engagements scheduled on the way, so he was able to take note of some of the sights along the northern coast, remarking that the situation of Bangor was 'delightful beyond expression', that the country between Bangor and Penmaen-mawr was 'far pleasanter than any garden. Mountains of every shape and size, vales clothed with grass or corn, woods and smaller tufts of trees were continually varying on the one hand, as was the sea prospect on the other'. Conway Castle he described as 'the noblest ruin I ever saw'.³⁹ The final stretch of the journey, between Holywell and Chester, was through 'one of the pleasantest countries in the world'. He spent the Friday night of that journey at Plas Bach, near Conway, the home of William Roberts, a Calvinistic Methodist. Since Roberts and his family spoke no English and Wesley no Welsh, there was not a great deal of conversation, although they were able to pray together and Wesley felt assured that 'God spoke to their hearts'.⁴⁰ Even without a more formal speaking engagement, Wesley did speak early the next morning to a number of neighbours who gathered to meet him.

Even after the theological divisions between the two different branches of Methodism had become entrenched, therefore, Wesley was still received by the Calvinistic Methodists in Wales and still made a number of visits to the country. In addition to the Irish trips, Wesley visited Wales thirty-five times from 1739 onwards. These visits were more frequent in the early years of the revival, before the Bristol Association of 1747, but tended to be restricted to Monmouthshire, Glamorgan and Breconshire. Later on, the visits were fewer, but over a wider geographic area, including trips further west. In the early years, it made perfect sense that most of the journeys were to destinations fairly accessible from Bristol, which was something of a Methodist stronghold. The early connections the Wesleys formed within the country tended to be within the south-east, so that they were invited to make return visits to the Cardiff Society, to the Jones family of Fonmon, in Glamorgan, to Edward Phillips,

³⁷ Trevecka MS 2978, 22 January 1747.

³⁸ Williams, *John Wesley in Wales*, pp. 130-31.

³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 54.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. 55.

rector of Maesmynys, near BUILT in Breconshire, and, as a result, to Garth, the home of Marmaduke Gwynne and his family. It was the need to travel to Ireland which drew Wesley as far as Anglesey, but even without that he covered a good deal of ground, visiting various places in the south, including Llanelli, Carmarthen, Llandeilo, Llandovery, Cardigan, Lampeter, Tregaron, Tenby and Laugharne, as well as Llanidloes, Welshpool, Newtown, Machynlleth, Dolgellau and Llanrwst further north.

It does appear, therefore, that not all of Wesley's trips to Wales were simply a matter of rushing through as quickly as possible to catch the boat to Ireland. Nor did it seem as if the experience of travelling through Wales was akin to creeping through enemy territory, fearful of hostility. Wesley often mentioned the civility with which he was treated and the respect he was shown. In truth, it was often the case that it was the Welsh Methodists who seemed to have to pass through parts of the country watchful for attack, as Howel Harris suggested in a letter to John Wesley in 1740 when he declared that he was about to head for a preaching tour in north Wales which was 'as going into a lion's mouth, but I hope the angel of the Lord goes before me'.⁴¹ Wesley evidently did not experience the same level of opposition in Wales as Harris and his compatriots did. Wesley was perhaps not so well-known and possibly, as an occasional visitor, was not considered such a constant threat as the Welsh leaders. He also had the protection of his position as an ordained clergyman, something which Harris and the lay preachers lacked. Many of the complaints about Harris in particular arose from the perception that he was presuming to set himself up to preach without the legitimacy of holy orders. Conversely, the fact that he was not ordained left him far more free to travel, but it also meant that he was in an ambiguous position and vulnerable to criticism. At one point, Harris wrote to request an old clerical gown of George Whitefield which Daniel Rowland and David Jenkins (another Methodist-inclined clergyman) could use when preaching in north Wales, because, he said, 'there is so much opposition and so much veneration of the gown'.⁴² Whitefield duly sent the gown,⁴³ but there is no mention of whether it proved to quieten the hostile hoards in north Wales. It is worth noting that clerical gowns were perhaps not readily available in rural Wales where many of the curates would not have been particularly well turned out as a result of their rather meagre salaries – 'as ragged as a Welsh curate' was almost a proverbial saying in the eighteenth century after all.⁴⁴

Harris did not have the protection of a clerical gown of any sorts and frequently found himself a target for the general hostility towards the Methodists. In addition to

⁴¹ *Journal of the Historical Society of the Presbyterian Church of Wales*, 19 (1934), 259 (Trevecka Letter 212, Howel Harris to John Wesley, 1 February 1740).

⁴² Trevecka Letter 471, Howel Harris to John Cennick, 4 February 1742.

⁴³ Trevecka Letter 592, Howel Harris to George Whitefield, 9 August 1742.

⁴⁴ Geraint H. Jenkins, *The Foundations of Modern Wales: Wales 1640-1780* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 180, 345; Eryn M. White, 'A "Poor, Benighted Church"?' Church and Society in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Wales', in R. R. Davies and Geraint H. Jenkins (eds), *From Medieval to Modern Wales: Historical Essays in Honour of Kenneth O. Morgan and Ralph A. Griffiths* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), pp. 123-4; Sir Glanmor Williams, William Jacob, Nigel Yates and Frances Knight, *The Welsh Church from Reformation to Disestablishment, 1603-1920* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), pp. 106-15.

the request for a gown, he also wrote to friends in London asking for a peruke box small enough to fit in the pocket of a greatcoat.⁴⁵ The probable reason for this was the many indignities suffered by his wig at the hands of the crowd. It had been violently snatched from his head in many places in Wales, so, with this handy little box, at the first sign of trouble, the wig could be safely stowed away whilst Harris made his escape. These ingenious plans were not a sign of cowardice on Harris's part, but the almost inevitable outcome of his experiences. He had good cause to consider that going to north Wales in particular was akin to laying his head in a lion's mouth. Harris had nearly been torn to pieces by an angry mob in Bala in 1741 and the same year had, literally, had to run for his life after being shot at whilst preaching in the town of Machynlleth. It was no wonder that he did not venture north for another seven years and then only after having made careful arrangements for his family's future following what seemed his inevitable murder. He steeled himself to face martyrdom and seemed rather surprised to find himself alive, if exhausted by the demands of preaching, at the end of his visit.⁴⁶

Wesley was occasionally accosted by drunkards and hostile members of the gentry, but suffered far less persecution than the Welsh Methodists in Wales. He was, as has already been seen, an admirer of the Welsh landscape before the influence of Romanticism made it fashionable to be so. He did, however, experience some of the trials and tribulations which faced travellers through eighteenth-century Wales, some caused by the very landscape he praised, which made it so difficult to cross the country. In order to reach Wales from Bristol in those days it was necessary to take one of the two boat crossings, either the Old Passage to Chepstow, or the New Passage to near Caldicot. River crossings and ferries were often a hindrance to itinerant preachers, with Charles Wesley expressing 'praise and thanksgiving' when he landed safely on his first visit in 1740.⁴⁷ Harris was frequently forced to seek donations from supporters in order to fund his ferry trips around the country and, since he often took advantage of the opportunity to preach to the ferrymen, he may not have been universally popular on Welsh boats. Having been detained in November 1742 on the Gloucestershire side of the New Passage by 'contrary winds', he took advantage of the delay to exhort the other passengers, who were something of a captive audience at the local inn.⁴⁸ Wesley frequently faced additional problems with the crossing to Ireland and was occasionally frustrated by being detained at Holyhead because the boatmen refused to venture through inclement weather. On one occasion at least, this afforded him the opportunity to have breakfast with Mr Holloway, a customs official, and his wife. Here he heard the story of Mrs Holloway's conversion which occurred after the cat sitting beside her was killed by lightning whilst she herself was merely scorched

⁴⁵ Trevecka Letter 994, Howel Harris to John Syms, 6 October 1743.

⁴⁶ Trevecka Letters 1820, Howel Harris to Joseph Mignon, 20 October 1748; 1821, Howel Harris to Thomas Boddington, 20 October 1748; 1822, Howel Harris to Mary Biggs, 20 October 1748; 1825, Howel Harris to Richard Thomas Bateman, 28 October 1748.

⁴⁷ Kimborough and Newport (eds), *The Manuscript Journal of Charles Wesley*, p. 284.

⁴⁸ Trevecka Letters 2799, Howel Harris to George Whitefield, 16 November 1742; 2802, Howel Harris to John Church, 16 November 1742.

and her clothes escaped without being singed.⁴⁹ The weather proved the cause of several such delays and Wesley soon became familiar with the vagaries of the Welsh climate, claiming to have been caught near Bridgend in 1777 in 'the heaviest rain I ever remember to have seen in Europe'.⁵⁰

The other major difficulty the Wesleys encountered in Wales was the language barrier. The majority of the population spoke little or no English, restricting the influence of preachers from outside Wales. The areas where the Wesleyans gained a foothold early on therefore tended to be those where there was a greater use of English, such as Cardiff and the south-east. It was in the west in particular that John Wesley found himself frustrated by his inability to communicate, which sometimes presented very practical problems, such as the occasion when Wesley and his companions were wondering lost along the Menai straits looking for the ferry and unable to find anyone to understand their request for directions.⁵¹ His brother Charles upon reaching Anglesey in 1748 found himself 'in a strange intricate country' and could get no directions until 'Providence sent me one that understood English'.⁵² More than once, there was also the uncomfortable experience of being given hospitality by a family who could not understand a word that was said. More importantly for John Wesley, there was the frustration of being unable to communicate his message to his hearers. On occasion, a local contact would convey the gist of his words, but this was far from ideal. When Wesley attended church at Llangefnï on Anglesey in 1748 he found himself unable to understand the service, even though he must have had a good idea of what the content would have been. This led him, famously, to bemoan the legacy of the Tower of Babel:

O what a heavy curse was the Confusion of Tongues! And how grievous are the effects of it! All the birds of the air, all the beasts of the field, understand the language of their own species. Man only is a barbarian to man, unintelligible to his own brethren! . . . O that we could declare to them in their own tongue the wonderful works of God!⁵³

He was obviously relieved to find himself in areas like the Gower where he could communicate far more easily in English, because, as he reported: 'Here all the people talk English and are in general the most plain, loving people in Wales. It is therefore no wonder that they receive the word with all readiness of mind'.⁵⁴

The visits to Wales of both Wesleys, however, did not succeed in building up a strong following, probably precisely because of those communication problems. Calvinistic Methodism was the first version of Protestantism which was native to Wales and not introduced from outside which meant that it had all the advantages of being able to use both Welsh and English where appropriate. It was also well-equipped to produce a literature for its members through the medium of Welsh, not

⁴⁹ Williams, *John Wesley in Wales*, pp. 34-5.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 96.

⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 27.

⁵² Kimborough and Newport (eds), *The Manuscript Journal of Charles Wesley*, p. 534.

⁵³ Williams, *John Wesley in Wales*, p. 36.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p. 71.

least through a number of talented hymn writers, most famously William Williams. The Welsh movement quite obviously did not need support from England in order to thrive, since, whilst Calvinistic Methodism declined and practically collapsed in England, it flourished in Wales. It was, however, by no means immune to the influence of Wesleyan Methodism. The very existence of another manifestation of Methodism had a crucial impact on the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist sense of identity. We often, after all, define ourselves by what we are not and Welsh Nonconformists have all too often defined themselves in contrast with other Nonconformist denominations.

John Wesley died in 1791, a year which could be considered to mark an end of an era for Methodists in Wales as well, since the last of three early leaders, William Williams, died in January, having survived his close friend Daniel Rowland by less than three months. A new generation, led by Thomas Charles of Bala, took over the leadership of the movement and eventually came to the difficult decision in 1811 to ordain their own ministers, signifying a final breakaway from the Church to which they had clung for so long. At the time of Wesley's death the Wesleyans remained largely confined to the more anglicised areas of south Wales. From 1800, however, Wesleyan Methodism began to make more substantial inroads into Wales, as a result of a proposal to the Methodist Conference from Thomas Coke, who had been born in Brecon. His arguments that it was essential to make use of the Welsh language in order to convert the Welsh people led to Owen Davies and John Hughes being dispatched to north-east Wales to assist the efforts of Edward Jones of Bathafarn, who had founded a Welsh-speaking Wesleyan cause at Ruthin in 1800. By 1810 sixty chapels had been established in the Welsh language circuit with over 5,000 members, a success which caused some unease among the Calvinistic Methodists.⁵⁵ This was a particular cause for concern for a close ally of Thomas Charles, Thomas Jones of Denbigh. From a moderately affluent background, Jones had received a grammar school education and had been intended for the Church before his conversion to Methodism. A native of Flintshire, he had been based for some time in Ruthin before moving to Denbigh where he acted as pastor of the local societies. This new challenge from the Wesleyans therefore struck very close to home for Jones, who felt impelled to respond by publishing a series of publications defending Calvinistic doctrine, with the encouragement of some of his brethren in the movement.⁵⁶

Jones put forward a defence of doctrines such as election, with constant recourse to biblical references to substantiate his case and resorted to history to claim that Calvinism predated Arminianism and was accepted by the early Protestant reformers

⁵⁵ A. H. Williams, *Welsh Wesleyan Methodism 1800-1858* (Bangor: Llyfyrfa'r Methodistiaid, 1935), p. 45; Glyn Tegai Hughes, 'Welsh-speaking Methodism', in Lionel Madden (ed.), *Methodism in Wales: A Short History of the Welsh Tradition* (Llandudno: Conference Arrangements Committee, Methodist Conference, 2003), pp. 23-8; R. Tudur Jones, *Faith and the Crisis of a Nation: Wales 1890-1914* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), pp. 32-3.

⁵⁶ Idwal Jones (ed.), *Hunangofiant Thomas Jones, Dinbych* (Aberystwyth: Gwasg Aberystwyth, 1937), pp. 48-50.

and martyrs.⁵⁷ Owen Davies responded in *Amddiffyniad i'r Methodistiaid Wesleyaidd* ['Defence of the Wesleyan Methodists'] (1806). Davies had the advantage of having been shown the unpublished page proofs of Jones's work *Ymddyddanion* by one of the compositors, who was a supporter of the Wesleyan cause, thus enabling him to counter Jones's arguments before they had appeared. This leak may have been the major factor prompting Jones to set up his own printing press at Ruthin in 1808, so that he might have greater control over his publications in future. He produced a further volume, *Sylwadau ar Lyfr Mr. Owen Davies* ['Observations on Mr Owen Davies's Book'] (1808) in direct response to his opponent's Arminian apologetic.⁵⁸

The timing of this print war is quite significant since it took place just as the Calvinistic Methodists were moving towards separation from the Church and the forming of their own separate identity. It quite possibly forced them to clarify further what the precise doctrinal position of that new entity would be and the perceived need to compete with Wesleyan Methodism may well have pushed the movement towards a more emphatic Calvinistic stance than it might otherwise have taken. Thomas Jones actually became the spokesperson for a more moderate brand of Calvinism than that favoured by his opponents in the movement, but his death in 1820 removed this moderate influence and may have led to a rather more rigid interpretation of Calvinist doctrine when the denomination produced its Confession of Faith in 1823.

There is no simple answer as to why Calvinistic Methodism succeeded in Wales in a way it did not do in England, but the explanation may well lie in factors relating to the use of the Welsh language at the very time when literacy through the medium of Welsh was growing through the good work of the eighteenth-century charity schools. More people from a greater cross-section of society could read their Bible than ever before. They were in a much stronger position to come to a choice regarding their place of worship and the combination of devout piety and enthusiasm which the Methodist Revival offered seemed to appeal strongly. The Calvinistic emphasis could also prove to be a source of joy by encouraging an awareness of God's special grace to sinners, particularly in the moderate form of the teaching espoused by the early Methodists which did not advocate double predestination but rather emphasised the positive aspect of election. The revival spirit undoubtedly infected other denominations, leading to the remarkable growth of the old Dissenting groups, particularly the Independents and Baptists. By the time of the 1851 religious census, the Wesleyan Methodists had made substantial inroads into Wales. They could muster 53,730 at their services, comprising 13% of the total worshippers, compared with 76,865 for the Baptists, 96,527 for the Independents, over 100,000 for the Anglicans and over 120,000 for the Calvinistic Methodists or 25% of the total number of worshippers.⁵⁹ Yet the Wesleyans never really caught up with the other Nonconformist groups as a result of their rather slow start, even though they remained

⁵⁷ In *Drych Athrawiaethol* ['Doctrinal Mirror'] (1806) and *Ymddyddanion Crefyddol* ['Religious Conversations'] (1807).

⁵⁸ Jonathan Jones, *Cofiant y Parch. Thomas Jones* (Denbigh: Thomas Gee, 1897), pp. 181-2; Frank Price Jones, *Thomas Jones o Ddinbych 1756-1820* (Denbigh: Gwasg Gee, 1956), pp. 30-9.

⁵⁹ John Williams, *Digest of Welsh Historical Statistics*, vol. 2 (Cardiff: Welsh Office, 1985), p. 352.

a significant presence and influence on society and culture. The keen interdenominational competition of the nineteenth century prompted the various Nonconformist groups to publish their own denominational magazines and Sunday school literature. The element of 'keeping up with the Joneses' could be constructive in this context as it helped motivate a great deal of useful activity. It possibly also led to some over-enthusiastic chapel building, with far too many chapels located within scowling distance of each other. John Wesley had realised the potential in 1739 when he described Wales as 'ripe for the gospel'. Ultimately, for reasons of doctrine and language, both he and Whitefield left the Welsh leaders to reap the harvest.

ERYN M. WHITE

Primitive Methodism and the road to Methodist Union (1932) in Wallasey, Cheshire¹

Primitive Methodism in Wallasey

The early history of Primitive Methodism in Wallasey is obscure. It appears to have reached Wallasey via Birkenhead and Liverpool.² A certain Thomas Bateman records that it was a resolution of the March 1821 Quarterly Meeting of the Burland branch which sent John Ride on his mission which embraced the city of Chester, the town of Wrexham, several growing places on Wirral and the growing town of Liverpool.³ In 1837 a seventeen year old convert at Poulton, one of the townships which made up Wallasey, and some of his companions began to hold prayer meetings in the neighbourhood. When these proved successful they looked for a place where they could hold regular services and eventually built a chapel in Liscard in 1838.⁴

The Liverpool Primitive Methodist Circuit had been formed in 1824 and the first preaching place in Birkenhead dates from about 1840/2.⁵ A contemporary writer⁶ records the Primitive Methodists having a chapel in Wallasey by about 1847. This was just forty years after the famous first Camp Meeting at Mow Cop. A plan of the Liverpool Primitive Methodist circuit, dated 1849, records preaching places in Liscard and Wallasey, and other places in Birkenhead and Liverpool.⁷ Efforts to locate a copy of this plan have proved unsuccessful. Whether or not they were 'chapels', that is purpose built preaching places or just rooms in people's homes, is not known; one suspects the latter. It was certainly very common practice for handfuls of people, often lay, to hold services in people's homes. These 'house groups', when they grew large enough, often joined together to establish a purpose built 'chapel'.

There is reference to a farm house society of over seventy years standing in Poulton.⁸ This could be one of the two preaching places mentioned in the plan of 1849. The church at Seacombe is described as one with a promising future. The first 'church' was erected in 1868, and the next school/church taken over in 1907. Apparently this was not a new building but one rented from the Salvation Army. The

¹ An earlier version of this chapter appeared in Peter Sidney Richards, 'Methodism in Wallasey' (unpublished PhD thesis: Greenwich School of Theology, 1999), chapter 7.

² Until Local Government re-organisation in 1974, Wallasey was in Cheshire. Since then it has been part of Merseyside.

³ H. B. Kendall, *History of Primitive Methodism*, vol. 2 (London: Edwin Dalton, 1906), p. 266.

⁴ John Clarke, *Primitive Methodist Magazine* (1844), 7-8; John Michael Sheard 'The origins and early development of Primitive Methodism in Cheshire and South Lancashire', (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 1980). Strangely, though, he makes no references to Wallasey. My thanks to Henry D. Rack for this information.

⁵ Kendall, *History of Primitive Methodism*, vol. 2, p. 270.

⁶ William Williams Mortimer, *The History of the Hundred of Wirral and a sketch of the County of Chester compiled from the earliest authentic records* (Manchester: E. J. Morton, 1972), p. 302.

⁷ Kendall, *History of Primitive Methodism*, vol. 2, p. 270.

⁸ Anon, 'Primitive Methodism on Merseyside', in *The Handbook to the 104th Primitive Methodist Conference* (Liverpool, 1923), p. 18.

statements in this anonymous publication are difficult to reconcile with other documentary evidence; they cannot be regarded as a reliable source of information. By the early twentieth century, however, buildings had been leased for a Primitive Methodist Chapel in Wallasey. A document exists, dated 13 August 1906, between William McCollum and others and General Booth [of Salvation Army fame, and of course, originally a Methodist], giving the legal terms of the lease.⁹ The property belonging to the Salvation Army was in Brighton Street, Seacombe, in Cheshire [at this time Wallasey was an Urban District, and Seacombe one of its townships]. Efforts to find out more about these premises have been unsuccessful. The records held by the Salvation Army have not survived; many were lost during World War Two, but it is probably safe to say that the Salvation Army needed more spacious accommodation.

The occupations of the Primitive Methodists who signed this indenture are worthy of note: an engineer, a labourer, a decorator, a mariner, a dairyman, a (river) pilot, two watermen, a ship's chandler, an ironmonger and an insurance agent. The latter was a Benjamin Swanwick, a member of a family of locally noted Methodists. Analysis of these occupations allows some inferences to be made: it is commonly supposed that Primitive Methodists were usually drawn from the less well-off and less educated members of society. An engineer could be anything; if, however he was a highly educated professional engineer this fact would probably have been recorded; a mariner, too, for the same reason, was probably an unskilled deckhand. The dairymen, the decorator and the two watermen, probably connected with Wallasey's ferries, were at best semi-skilled workmen. The chandler and ironmonger probably kept shops, and like the insurance agent, were numerate and literate. They may well have acquired these skills by attending evening classes which had recently been established in Wallasey.¹⁰ These occupations reflect proximity to a port. Primitive Methodism 'did certainly appeal to the lower stratum of the population',¹¹ and they had good representation among artisans, small craftsmen and other manual workers.¹² This sample of occupations is too small to be used to draw satisfactory conclusions, but in general bears out commonly received opinion.

The Salvation Army profited from the terms of the lease: initially it was for ten years and renewably annually. The rent was £60 a year, roughly equivalent to a year's wages for the average man. The lessees, in addition, had to pay rates, insurance and 'other extras'. There were also a number of other provisions detailed in the indenture.

⁹ Richards, 'Methodism in Wallasey', vol. 2, p. LI.

¹⁰ Peter S. Richards, 'From Evening Institutes to Technical College: Three quarters of a century of Further Education in Wallasey', (unpublished MEd thesis, University of Liverpool, 1983), pp. 48-87; *idem.*, 'The Establishment of evening classes in Wallasey: the work of the local Technical Instruction Committee from 1882 to the early years of the twentieth century' *Journal of Educational History and Administration*, vol. XIX, no. 1 (January, 1987), 19-25.

¹¹ John Munsey Turner, *Conflict and Reconciliation: Studies in Methodism and Ecumenism in England, 1740-1982*, (London: Epworth Press, 1985) p. 59.

¹² E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin, 1972), p.48.

Later these premises became the offices of the *Wallasey and Wirral Chronicle*. When the premises were demolished in 1957, a car showroom was built on the site.¹³ It is an interesting comment on the relationship between the 'Prims' and the Wesleyans that each had churches on the same road directly opposite one another! The difficulty with interpreting the statements of 'Primitive Methodism on Merseyside' arises here again. The Seacombe church is described in 1923 as one with a future.¹⁴ The first church had been erected in 1868 and the church referred to in 1923 as 'erected' was actually taken over in 1907. In 1923 it was claimed to have a membership of 300 and nearly 600 scholars and 'the main building is being anticipated'.¹⁵

After World War One it was decided to open a new Primitive Methodist Chapel in Wallasey. Rent, which may have increased, was being paid on the premises and legal restrictions prevented much alteration to the buildings. A site was obtained in Poulton Road, Seacombe, on the corner of Norwood Road. The stone-laying ceremony was held on Saturday 21 May 1927. Very appropriately the opening hymn was 'The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord'. The main address was given by the Revd H. J. Taylor; he had entered the Primitive Methodist Ministry in 1881, and became its President in 1922. The Mayor, John McMillan, also gave an address. The actual foundation stone was laid by Charles Wass, who was to become Vice-President of the Primitive Methodist Church in 1930. In addition, seventeen others laid foundation stones and seven others memorial stones. The Swanwick family, mother, father, son and daughter, were again prominent in this work. Building went on apace, and the church was opened for worship on the 4 April 1928 – the Wednesday of Holy Week that year. The door was opened at 3.00 p.m. by Mrs B. Swanwick, and at 3.25 p.m. the dedication service started. The preacher was the Revd J. H. Saxton of Middlesbrough; he had entered the Primitive Methodist ministry in 1885 and was President of the Primitive Methodist Conference in the last year of his life. He preached again at the thanksgiving service in the evening.¹⁶

By all accounts it was a flourishing church. The choir was able to perform Stainer's 'Crucifixion' on the Good Friday following the opening. Conversations with elderly members revealed that before World War Two there was considerable activity.¹⁷ Mr Swanwick, who became an Alderman, claimed that the Sunday school with over 600 scholars was the largest nonconformist Sunday school in Wallasey. Sunday School Treats were fairly local: Barnston and Bidston Hill, local beauty spots on the Wirral, were the usual venues. There were many week night activities. On Mondays the Regnal League took place. On Tuesday the junior and senior sections of the Christian Endeavour met, while on Wednesdays the Band of Hope met, although

¹³ E. C. Woods & P. C. Brown, *The Rise and Progress of Wallasey*, (Wallasey: Wallasey Libraries, 1960), p. 93.

¹⁴ Anon, 'Primitive Methodism on Merseyside', p. 19.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 19

¹⁶ Handbills of stone-laying ceremony and opening service. Richards, 'Methodism in Wallasey', vol. 2, appendix LII & LIII.

¹⁷ Conversations with the late Jack & Margaret Green (at various points in the 1970s), members of Poulton Primitive Methodist Church and, when it closed, Oxton Road Methodist Church.

by the 1920s & 1930s the Methodists were no more than nominal teetotallers in most cases. On Thursdays choir practice was held; the choir won a local shield the first time it entered the competition and won it on a number of further occasions. It also won the 'Big Choir Competition' held in the Tower Ballroom, New Brighton, on at least two occasions.

The church was usually full on Sunday evenings with chairs down the aisles. It was, of course, the only Primitive Methodist church in Wallasey and thus drew from a wide catchment area. Worshippers had to be present early in order to be sure of a seat. On Sunday mornings the worshippers almost filled the Church. It was also for a time the headquarters of the 1st Wallasey Company of the Boys' Brigade. Presumably during World War Two the numbers of worshippers declined with so many being called up for service in the forces; quite a number of Wallasey people, including some Methodists, were killed in Wallasey itself.

Methodist Union, 1932: the Wallasey Case

Methodist Union in Wallasey significantly impacted the Primitive Methodists and their single congregation. Wallasey was atypical in that there were eight Wesleyan Methodist churches in the town, although some of them were small missions. There had been a United Methodist Church in Wallasey, but information on it is very scanty and it appears to have closed sometime before 1932. Wallasey had so many Methodist Churches because people wanted a church near their homes. Public transport was limited, especially on Sundays and few people had their own cars. Thus the Poulton Road Primitive Methodist church was very much in a minority. No evidence has come to light that there was much opposition to Methodist 'Union', except for the vote of ten in favour and five against by the trustees of Egerton Street Mission.¹⁸ The Poulton Road Primitive Methodist Church was apparently a fairly healthy and prosperous church; it could be accurately described as the 'Cathedral of Primitive Methodism' in the area and the churches in the Wallasey Wesleyan Methodist circuit would not be adding a 'lame duck' to their number. No evidence has come to light of any ill-feeling on the part of Wallasey 'Prims' at having to contribute to the expenses of the Wallasey Methodist Circuit. Any increase in expenditure would be minimal, since financial or other contributions would no longer have to be made to the Birkenhead and Wallasey Primitive Methodist Circuit as it had been superseded.

Another benefit for the Primitive Methodist Church in Wallasey was that it would no longer be part of a widely scattered circuit, but a member of a more compact one. This must be seen in the context as a positive advantage as there were few cars on the roads at the time. In fact Methodist Union apparently caused little debate or excitement in Wallasey. The first reference to Methodist Union in the *Wallasey News*, a local paper noted for its fair coverage of religious matters, did not occur until 17 September 1932 when the Revd Roger Davies, of the Episcopal Methodist Church of America came to New Brighton Wesleyan Methodist Church to give a talk on

¹⁸ Liverpool Record Office, 'Minutes of Leaders' Meeting', 17 March 1932.

'Temperance'.¹⁹ It was at the time of Prohibition in the United States, which was finally repealed in 1933. The Chairman at this meeting was the resident minister at New Brighton and the Superintendent of the Wallasey Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, the Revd W. J. Hartley; in the course of the 'chairman's remarks' he referred to the forthcoming celebration of Methodist Union and urged everyone present to come to a 'great meeting' on Monday 3 October 1932 when the Mayor would be present.²⁰

By all events these celebrations were a success. There was a united Methodist sacramental service in the Manor Road Church, the largest Methodist Church in Wallasey, on Sunday 2 October 1932 and the next day the united celebration was held in the Town Hall. So many people came to this event that an overflow meeting had to be held in the Seacombe Methodist Church, in Brighton Street, which was just opposite the Town Hall. The meeting started with a short act of praise conducted by the Revd J. A. Goodman, the resident minister at Seacombe Methodist Church; the singing was led by H. Boothroyd and W. B. Macawley, a local architect and organist at Manor Road Methodist Church, presided at the organ. The Mayor, who took the chair, and the Mayoress, Alderman and Mrs D. P. Charlesworth were present and their speech was quoted verbatim in the *Wallasey News*. Speeches, too, were made by the Rector of Wallasey, the Revd Canon D. C. White and the Revd A. J. Lawson of Rake Lane Congregational Church who represented the Free Churches. Their speeches, too, were quoted verbatim by the newspaper.²¹

The Revd W. J. Hartley, the Superintendent Minister, spoke on barriers, 'which separated the several sections of Wallasey Methodism, being broken down. Their feuds were forgotten and as a united family dwelt beneath the one roof'.²² Again the local paper quoted this speech verbatim. The Revd Ralph C. Noble, Birkenhead and Wallasey Primitive Methodist Circuit, said: 'They were taking part in a historic event, which would take its place in the ecclesiastical calendar of England'.²³ As if to reiterate, Hartley said 'the main work was just beginning'.²⁴

In 1932 most of the different branches of Methodism were united to form 'The Methodist Church'. Poulton Road Primitive Methodist Church joined all the other Wesleyan Methodist Churches in Wallasey. Nobody has been traced who could really say how this uniting process occurred. It was an unusual situation: one Primitive Methodist Church and eight Wesleyan Methodist Churches came together. There wasn't much room for debate: the Primitive Methodists in Wallasey were very much in the minority. Nationwide there was opposition to Methodist Union; there was some ill-feeling and many large churches throughout the land were struggling to survive with small congregations. In fact, as war became inevitable, it was suggested that Hitler's bombers might perform a service for the organisation of Methodist Union

¹⁹ *Wallasey News* (17 September 1932).

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ *Wallasey News* (8 October 1932).

²² *ibid.*

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ *ibid.*

which the church leaders could not achieve.²⁵ It did just that in Wallasey: the one Primitive Methodist Church was destroyed by German bombs in 1941 along with the Egerton Street Mission.²⁶ For some, though, the Union offered an opportunity for good: Dr A. S. Peake had a lofty conception of the Christian society rising up above the comparatively petty differences of denominational customs and usage.²⁷

The Poulton Primitive Methodist Church joined the Wesleyans to form the Wallasey Methodist Circuit, and when it was damaged beyond repair in 1941 its members were scattered among the other churches; there were three quite nearby. It was hoped that this would be just a war-time measure and many of the one-time members of the Poulton Road Church were very disappointed when it was decided that it would not be rebuilt. Instead the money from the War Damage Commission and the sale of the site were used to build a new church at Moreton in 1953, about five or six miles away, where on a recently developed housing estate, there was considerable opportunity for mission.

PETER S. RICHARDS.

²⁵ Gordon Wakefield, 'Methodist Union: Youthful Memories, Adult Assessment', *Epworth Review*, vol. 9, no. 2 (1982), 93.

²⁶ Woods & Brown, *The Rise and Progress of Wallasey*, p.13.

²⁷ Benjamin Drewery, 'Methodist Union: Some Theological Issues', *Epworth Review* vol. 9, no. 2 (1982), 38.

Wesley Historical Society Annual General Meeting and Lecture 2011

The Annual General Meeting and Lecture were held at the Gladstone Memorial Library at Hawarden, Flintshire on Saturday 25 June 2011, with many participants taking advantage of the overnight accommodation available to view the library and exhibitions. The AGM was preceded by introductory talks by the Revd Donald H. Ryan offering a perspective on Welsh Methodism in the twentieth century and by Mr E. Alan Rose exploring the earlier history of Methodism in Cheshire and the Borders. The Revd Donald H. Ryan also chaired the AGM, which elected Professor Edward Royle to succeed the Revd Dr John A. Newton as President of the Wesley Historical Society. In his report the General Secretary, Dr John A. Hargreaves paid tribute to the retiring President, who had served the society with great distinction for sixteen years, for his wise counsel, inspirational leadership and joyful presence at business meetings, public lectures and residential conferences and Dr Newton was presented with an equestrian statuette of John Wesley.

The society is fortunate to have been presided over by such a gifted communicator and talented scholar as the Revd Dr John Newton. His early interests in Puritanism in the Diocese of York, cultivated by leading Reformation scholar Professor A.G. Dickens, enabled him to write illuminatingly of the Puritan tradition in Methodism in a ground breaking biographical study of *Susanna Wesley and the Puritan Tradition in Methodism* first published in 1968 and re-issued in a revised second edition in 2002. The publication of the book was complemented by a bibliographical survey published in the *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* in 1969-70, which also published his Wesley Historical Society Annual Lecture on Susanna's father, the Puritan minister, Dr Samuel Annesley (1620-96) in 1985-86. John Newton's book on Susanna was appropriately dedicated to his wife Rachel, who is well known for her portrayal of Susanna and other Wesley women through dramatic monologues, and who has been a tower of strength to John throughout his ministry and in his role as President.

John has significantly enhanced our understanding of Methodist heritage through his role as warden of the New Room at Bristol, his chairmanship of the Archives and History Committee and his contribution to the Methodist Church Oral History Project. His recorded interview for the project revealed his firm belief that studying 'the history of the church in its different phases' can bring out 'how it has faced challenges to its evangelical and missionary life and therefore press us now, in very different circumstances, to try to face the challenges of our own day'. His contribution to Methodist history has been profound and enlightening, encompassing ecumenism, gender, hymnology, mission, spirituality and theology, but he has also ranged more widely in his study of ecclesiastical history. Most notably he has explored the spirituality of the saintly Bishop Edward King, high church Bishop of Lincoln, who was inspired by John Wesley's mission to the poor. Indeed, his popular classic *The Fruit of the Spirit in the Lives of Great Christians*, the first in a series of reflective aids for preachers, which included Edward King as one of its 'great Christian athletes of

the Spirit', enabled him to share with an even wider readership his love of historical biography and its relevance to hermeneutics and the Christian journey. Moreover, King's association with his native Lincolnshire reinforced John Newton's interest in regions and localities as distinctive expressions of mission and spirituality, which also informed his oversight of the New Room at Bristol and his belief that regional historical societies linked with the Wesley Historical Society are crucial 'to the effectiveness of the historical witness of the society itself.' He has served the society with great distinction, a deep spirituality, an engaging humility and an irrepressible sense of humour and will continue to serve the society in the role of President Emeritus.

Thanks were also expressed to Dr Dorothy Graham, on relinquishing her role as Assistant Librarian and to Mrs Norma Virgoe, who is succeeded as Publications Editor by Professor David Jeremy. Other officers were re-elected, their reports accepted and the society's accounts approved, with an increase in subscription of £2.00 agreed for 2012. The Revd Dr David Hart was thanked for organising a successful residential conference in May at Launde Abbey on the theme of *Memorializing and Remembering: Life Stories in Methodism*, which brought together a wide variety of participants. The editors of the society's *Proceedings*, David Ceri Jones and Ronald Aitchison and the members of the editorial board, especially the Revd Donald Ryan, were congratulated on the re-design of the *Proceedings* and the *Annual Bibliography of Methodist Literature*. Members who had died during the year were remembered, including the distinguished ecclesiastical historian Professor W.R. Ward and reports were received from representatives of the Regional Historical Societies present including members of the recently founded Wesley Historical Society (Wales).

The Annual Lecture was chaired by Dr Lionel Madden formerly of the National Library of Wales who introduced the speaker, Dr Eryn White, Senior Lecturer in Welsh History at the Aberystwyth University, in both English and Welsh. In her lecture entitled 'Wesley, Whitefield and Wales', Dr White observed that by the time of the Religious Census of 1851, Calvinistic Methodism had become the largest Nonconformist denomination in Wales, with Wesleyan Methodism in fourth place after the Welsh Independents and the Baptists. She explained that both John Wesley and George Whitefield had links with the leaders of Welsh Methodism in the early years of the Evangelical Revival and that both visited the country on several occasions. However, while Wesley, on the occasion of his first visit, had commented that Wales was 'ripe for the gospel', Wesleyan Methodism struggled to reap the harvest of the Revival and Dr White examined how the Calvinistic and Wesleyan groups competed in Wales and why it was the Calvinistic Methodists who proved most influential.

The Revd Dr John Newton, President Emeritus of the Wesley Historical Society led the devotions which including the singing of William Williams' 'Guide Me O thou Great Jehovah' and Charles Wesley's 'Love Divine All Love's Excelling' to rousing Welsh tunes, raising the rafters of the chapel at the Gladstone Memorial Library. Next year's Annual General Meeting will be held at The New Room, Bristol, on Saturday

30 June 2012 and will be preceded by guided tours of The New Room and Charles Wesley's house. The Annual Lecture, chaired by Dr Gary Best, Warden of the New Room will be delivered by Professor John Wolffe, of the Open University on the subject of 'Past and Present: Taking the Long View of Methodist and Anglican History' which will compare Methodist and Anglican church growth in the earlier nineteenth century and later twentieth century. For further details please contact the General Secretary, Dr John A. Hargreaves, 7 Haugh Shaw Road, Halifax [johnahargreaves@blueyonder.co.uk].

JOHN A. HARGREAVES

Books received by the Editors

The following items have been received by the editors of the *Proceedings*. Pressure of space means that in most cases it will not be possible to include full reviews of these works in subsequent issues of the journal.

Mark Dalby (ed.), *Victorian Wesleyan Sermons: Preached by Benjamin Cocker of Mirfield and Charles Horsfield of Dewsbury* (Malvern: Aspect Design, 2010).

Charlotte Yeldham, *Maria Spilsbury (1776-1820): Artist and Evangelical* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010).

William H. Willimon, *This we Believe: The Core of Wesleyan Faith and Practice* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2010).

D. Ben Rees, *The Saga of a Revival: Early Welsh Pentecostal Methodism* (Liverpool: Modern Welsh Publications, 2010).

Pauline Webb, *Now Think On . . . : From Edinburgh 1910 to World Mission 2010: Ecumenical Themes and Thoughts* (Warrington: Church in the Marketplace Publications, 2010).

What is Methodism? A Brief Guide (Cumbria Wesley Historical Society, 2010)

Elaine A. Heath and Scott T. Kisker, *Longing for Spring: A New Vision for Wesleyan Community* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2010).

David Avery, *Hester: The Story of Mrs Hester Ann Rogers (nee Roe), an iconic figure from the 18th Century Evangelical Revival* (Warrington: Church in the Marketplace Publications, 2011).

Lindsay Neal, *Whit Walks: History and Challenge* (Warrington: Church in the Marketplace Publications, 2011).

BOOK REVIEWS

Women and the Shaping of British Methodism: Persistent Preachers, 1807-1907, by Jennifer M. Lloyd. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009, pp. x + 305. Hardback, £60. ISBN 978-0-7190-7885-9).

In her retirement, Jennifer Lloyd has completed an impressive study of British Methodist women preachers during the century after Mow Cop. She has been working on this book for many years, and the research she has undertaken is nothing short of prodigious. To give but one example, her list of periodicals ranges from the official connexional magazines to little-used British publications like *Highways and Hedges* and *Flying Leaves* and more cosmopolitan works like the *South Australian Register* and *China's Millions*. Her major achievement is to advance scholarship beyond what is currently available in studies of women preachers in eighteenth century Wesleyanism and nineteenth century Primitive Methodism. By furnishing detailed discussions of many other groups and individuals, some of them quite obscure, she has been able to trace the persistence of women's preaching during the entire century under discussion.

Two of Lloyd's chapters deserve special praise. The third chapter combines existing scholarship with new research to present a fresh picture of female preaching in the generation after Waterloo. Primitive Methodists and Bible Christians take pride of place, of course, but Lloyd also discusses smaller groups like the Leeds Female Revivalists and independent-minded preachers like Ann Mason. In the seventh chapter Lloyd traces the rise of some of the major late nineteenth century Methodist women's organisations. Katherine Price Hughes and Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence were leading figures in this movement, and like them, most of the other women in these groups worked in urban centres and were drawn from the middle or upper classes. This helped to legitimise the process by which many Methodist women assumed more public roles and thereby helped to lay the foundation for the re-emergence of female itinerant preachers.

Although the book's many strengths dominate the presentation, there are also a variety of weaknesses. More relevant insights from the wider historical context would have strengthened many passages. An especially important group in Lloyd's investigation belonged to the first generation of women after a long global war with France in which large numbers of British men were away from home for extended periods of time. This seems like a conjunction of events worth analysing in order to gain a deeper understanding of the causal factors that shaped Methodism. When Lloyd does present contextual material, it is sometimes tangential in the extreme. Her discussions of philanthropy and missions, for instance, contain long sections overflowing with miscellaneous information on non-Methodist groups and on various worthy causes that seem to have featured little or no public speaking by their female members. At the same time, Lloyd gives the impression that Methodist women did not

accomplish much in the temperance movement before the 1870s, which is not true. They exhorted, testified and lectured on temperance throughout the mid-Victorian period. This topic is undoubtedly more relevant to Lloyd's inquiry than Anglican and Baptist charities, the London Missionary Society, and the countless other non-Methodist institutions and initiatives that she has decided to include. The majority of these discussions, though quite interesting, really seem to belong in a different book.

Problems of selection and organization bedevil many parts of this work. In chapter 2, for example, Lloyd offers judicious summaries of women's preaching in various Methodist connexions, but she does not always proceed chronologically and she intermingles groups that did not favour women's preaching with those that did. In one sequence, she deals with the Arminian Methodists who promoted women's preaching in the 1830s, the Tent Methodists who opposed the practice in the 1820s, and then the Primitive Methodists before about 1820, which was the period in which they began accepting women into the itinerancy (pp. 58-71). There are clearly better ways of handling this material. The section on the Arminians in the 1830s probably belongs in the following chapter on 'The heyday', and an earlier section on Wesleyanism could have been included in the preceding chapter which deals with the Wesleyans. Those changes would have provided space in chapter 2 for a fuller treatment of the Independent Methodists and related groups which Lloyd discusses only in conjunction with the rise of Primitive Methodism (pp. 68-70) and for the inclusion of neglected groups like Robert Winfield's far-flung connexion whose female preachers had achieved remarkable success by the early 1820s.

Lloyd is not always as deft or imaginative as she might have been when dealing with certain other topics. In her introductory chapter on eighteenth century Wesleyan women preachers, she could have done even more to emphasize the numerous ways in which early Methodist women delivered sustained oral discourses before groups of interested hearers. Exhorting, praying aloud in public, testifying at love feasts, addressing Sunday schools, and various other public utterances might have resembled 'preaching' and might have been perceived by auditors as such. This is important because it can help scholars to reconsider bald assertions about the disappearance of women's 'preaching' in various connexions. In some passages, Lloyd almost seems to embrace the idea that the only real 'preachers' were the officially-appointed itinerants. She repeatedly emphasises when and why the numbers of women itinerants declined and disappeared in the middle decades of the nineteenth century only to revive later on. Yet at other times, she notes with particular reference to women local preachers that 'many Primitive Methodist women had always preached' (p. 255), that 'some Wesleyan women had always preached' (p. 256), and that in the 1860s, the Bible Christians had women who were 'already seasoned local preachers and evangelists' (p. 265). When these are added to the ministers' wives who occasionally preached and to the large numbers of women who preached at special services for fund-raising purposes - a phenomenon that occurred on more than five hundred occasions among the Primitive Methodists from 1830 to 1865 (p. 157) - it is clear that too great an emphasis on the numerical fluctuations among the women itinerants can create a misleading picture.

'Missions' and 'missionaries' also cause problems for Lloyd. Surely all of the relevant activities in the British Isles should be discussed together even if some of them were designated as 'missions' by contemporaries. Likewise, although women promoting Methodism overseas might not be called 'missionaries', it would still be useful to have them presented in conjunction with official overseas missionary initiatives. Instead, in chapter 5 Lloyd discusses Serena Thorne's Australian activities in the context of 'Women as revivalists' in Britain, and in chapter 6, she discusses home and overseas 'missions' together. Perhaps as a result, the author does not devote enough space to women's contributions to the spread of Methodism outside the British Isles. There are a few exceptions. Most notable is the extensive treatment of China (pp. 227-35) which should be considered as another high point of the book. By contrast, Lloyd has little to say about the British West Indies, arguably the most important region for Methodist missionary activity during the early decades covered by this study, and she likewise neglects many of the other areas in which British Methodist women were active overseas.

There are various other missteps. Early religious activities of the Wesleys and Whitefield are said to have taken place in the 1830s in two successive paragraphs, and John Wesley is described in the same context as being 'steadfast in his denunciation of slavery', which is surely an exaggeration (pp. 18-19). Lloyd always cites the *Life of the Rev. Alexander Kilham* (1838) as an anonymous work despite the fact that the identity of its author, John Blackwell, has long been known to scholars. Dorothy Ripley is presented as a Quaker (p. 67), but she was raised in a Wesleyan household and later, as an independent transatlantic evangelist, she explicitly eschewed denominational labels. Lloyd describes John Stamp as a Wesleyan although he was really a Primitive Methodist until he formed his own connexion (pp. 89-90). With Stamp, moreover, Lloyd has missed a grand opportunity. She mentions his first wife, who was preaching in the 1830s, but ignores his second wife, Mary Ann Stamp (1818-1902), a woman who achieved considerable fame by preaching the gospel and delivering temperance lectures at least as early as the 1840s. Then, she continued both types of public speaking after her 1854 removal to Australia where she became a member of the United Methodist Free Churches. It is not an exaggeration to say that she ranks as a major exemplar of persistent preaching in two hemispheres.

The introduction, the afterword, and the opening passages of four of the seven main chapters of this book present colourful vignettes of women in the Bible Christian Connexion, a rather small and geographically localized group. Perhaps it was Lloyd's interest in the Bible Christians that sparked her desire to learn more about the achievements of women preachers in other Methodist branches. This suggests another possibility. Perhaps Lloyd might consider publishing a survey of women in the Bible Christian Connexion from 1815 to 1907? Her deep research into the history of the connexion and her wide-ranging contextual knowledge place her in a unique position to write this much-needed study. It would be a welcome companion to the valuable findings she has presented in *Women and the Shaping of British Methodism*.

ROBERT GLEN

Enlightened Evangelicalism: The Life and Thought of John Erskine, by Jonathan M. Yeager. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. xii +321. Hardback, £40.00. ISBN 978-0-19-977255-1).

Much work has been done in recent years on the relationship between eighteenth-century evangelicalism and the Enlightenment. Readers of the *Proceedings* will, of course, be familiar with Henry Rack's portrayal of John Wesley as both a religious enthusiast and a man of Reason. Now Jonathan Yeager has written an intellectual biography of the little known Scottish evangelical John Erskine, arguing that he too championed a form of 'enlightened evangelicalism'. Based in Edinburgh for most of his life, Erskine was the leading evangelical minister in the Church of Scotland for much of the eighteenth century. 'As a Calvinist, an evangelical, and an empiricist', Yeager writes, 'Erskine was teaching that all three belief systems complemented each other' (p. 80).

Erskine was a disciple of John Locke, and in his espousal of Locke's empiricism he became a champion of the Moderate Enlightenment, as opposed to the more radical perspectives of the wider Scottish Enlightenment. Erskine, though, was also a Calvinist immersed in the classics of Puritan divinity. Yet his Calvinism was of a variety that John Wesley struggled to understand. A far cry from the deterministic double predestinarian theology with which Wesley tarred all Calvinists, Erskine's Reformed theology included a commitment to single predestination, a belief in both a limited and an unlimited application of the atonement, which in turn led to a determination to preach the gospel indiscriminately (pp. 74-6; 201). It was a Calvinism shared by Whitefield and his Calvinistic Methodists, and finely attuned to the optimistic spirit of the age. The correlation between Erskine's evangelicalism and his enlightened attitudes are dealt with by Yeager in a chapter analysing five of Erskine's major theological works. In his writings on covenant theology, ecclesiology, faith and the administration of the Lord's Supper, Yeager builds a picture of Erskine as a 'polymath', who drew on disciplines as diverse as theology, philosophy, biblical studies and history, producing 'theological treatises [which] were bold, innovative, rational and consistent with Moderate Enlightenment epistemology, but they were also scriptural and loyal to traditional Calvinism' (p. 111).

Readers of the *Proceedings* will also be especially interested to read Yeager's treatment of Erskine's relationship with John Wesley, and his explanation of the reasons for Wesley's apparent failure in Scotland. Traditionally the strength of Calvinism in the Presbyterian Church of Scotland has been thought to be the main reason for Wesley's lack of success in Scotland, but Yeager argues that it was Erskine's vehement opposition to Wesley, in the aftermath of Wesley's early successful evangelistic incursions into Scotland, that was the real reason. Erskine entered into public dispute with Wesley in his lengthy preface to a new edition of *Aspasio Vindicated* (1764), a response to Wesley's *A Preservative against Unsettled Notions in Religion* (1758), which was itself a response to James Hervey's *Theron and Aspasio* (1755), a spirited defence of the Reformed doctrine of imputed righteousness. In his preface Erskine argued that Wesley had deceived his Scottish Methodist

followers, and was hostile towards many of the key tenets of Presbyterianism. ‘Mr Wesley’ Erskine asserted ‘is by no means so orthodox as they have hitherto imagined’ (p. 117). His polemic, suggests Yeager, was decisive in preventing any further Wesleyan success north of the border. According to Yeager, in Erskine’s opinion ‘the smooth-talking Methodist seemed more like a disreputable salesman than a genuine friend to Protestant religion’ (p. 139).

However, Erskine’s key contribution to the Evangelical Revival lay in his role as a disseminator of literature (p. 165). A supporter of the American revolutionaries, Erskine used his links with trans-Atlantic evangelicals to strategic effect. An early correspondent of Jonathan Edwards, he regularly supplied him with the latest theological literature, and later secured the rights to publish a number of Edwards’ key posthumous works. But those who benefitted from his patronage were scattered around the North Atlantic world, and following the American Revolution he paid particular attention to providing books for the new Republic’s main colleges of divinity. The books they received included the predictable works of Reformed and Puritan divinity, but also the latest volumes from some of the more unorthodox writers of the day, including Joseph Priestley and Theophilus Lindsey. His aim was to ensure that his recipients were familiar with the latest theological literature, so that they would be able to ‘strengthen evangelicalism and spread the gospel message’ (p. 197). Like Whitefield before him, Erskine was a religious entrepreneur in the evangelical cause.

Jonathan Yeager has produced an excellent study of the hitherto little known John Erskine. While the study is based on the author’s doctoral thesis, and at times reads like a typical first book, there’s much here that will repay careful reading and thought. Far from being the preserve of Wesley, eighteenth-century evangelical Calvinists were also moulded by the Enlightenment. In their recasting of aspects of Calvinism, Erskine and others breathed fresh life into Reformed theology, attuning it to the more buoyant spirit of the long eighteenth century.

DAVID CERI JONES

Donald Reasbeck, *Isaac Marsden: A Nineteenth Century Wesleyan Evangelist*, (Doncaster: Hexpress Publications, 2007, pp. 159. Paperback, £5. ISBN 978-1-4276-2905-0).

(Copies available from the author, 31 Old Hexthorpe, Doncaster, DN4 0JD).

The history of Methodism in the nineteenth century is littered with the names of little known, but highly useful preachers who, usually following dramatic religious conversions, maintained the local circuits with almost fanatical zeal. Names such as Abraham Lockwood, the so-called ‘Bishop of Berry Brow’ in Huddersfield; John Preston of Yeadon, ‘the poacher turned preacher’ and Billy Bray, the Cornish miner

and revivalist, are prominent examples of such unsung Methodist worthies. Donald Reasbeck provides us with an informative vignette of another stalwart Methodist evangelist, Isaac Marsden of Doncaster.

Marsden (1807-82), was born at Emley, a hamlet situated between Huddersfield and Barnsley, West Yorkshire, and raised in the nearby village of Skelmanthorpe. Apparently a 'reveller' during his youth, he 'would sneer at virtue, and ridicule and hold up good men to scorn and derision' (p. 10). Despite such antipathy towards religion, in 1834 Marsden underwent a vivid conversion experience. On hearing that a clergyman, Rev. Robert Aitken, was taking the anniversary service at Priory Place Wesleyan Methodist Church, Doncaster, he went along to mimic and mock, but left the service convicted in spirit. During the following weeks Marsden wrestled with doubts and fears until he openly confessed: 'I hate the life of my past sin. Blessed be God for my salvation'. Marsden later wrote how, on that 'memorable day' (11 October 1834) 'I threw down the weapons of my rebellion and began to serve the living God' (p. 17).

Three years after this conversion experience Marsden became a Methodist Local Preacher. Believing 'the work of preaching' to be 'the most sacred calling in the universe', he regularly preached throughout the north of England visiting York, Scarborough, Lincoln, Sheffield, Nottingham and Manchester. As Reasbeck remarks: 'from the time of his acceptance as a local preacher on trial to the end of 1853', Marsden, despite working full time as a weaver, 'had preached 3,370 sermons', an estimate which did not include 'the numerous addresses, speeches and lectures he gave on a variety of subjects' (p. 27). This demanding preaching routine was followed by Marsden throughout the rest of his life.

Marsden's preaching was strident and dramatic, characterised by direct appeals to 'sinners to flee from the wrath to come'. On one occasion, drawing 'a chalk line across a chapel floor', he 'then . . . encouraged all those who wanted to leave a life of sin and move over to a new life in Christ to jump over the line' (p. 88). While some, such as Rev. J. L. Britten, superintendent minister in the Doncaster area, praised Marsden as 'a Boanerges – a son of thunder - a Christianised Jupiter' (p. 123), others were offended at his 'enthusiasm'. Catherine Mumford, complained to William Booth, (soon to become her husband and the founder of the Salvation Army) about the 'roaring and foaming' that occurred in Marsden's meetings. Despite such concerns however, it is believed that Booth was actually converted at one of Marsden's services at Nottingham in 1842, and the two men worked together for a short time in London (p. 82).

Marsden's life presents a 'Methodism of old': the penitent form, the inquiry room, taking the pledge, the distribution of religious tracts, the protracted service and the 'altar call'. He is to be seen as part of the revivalism which, originating in America in the early nineteenth century, made its inroads into Wesleyan Methodism in the 1840's due to the preaching of evangelists such as James Caughey, whom Marsden met on several occasions. Marsden was also part of the Wesleyan Holiness tradition, his preaching emphasizing 'full salvation', both instantaneous and gradual sanctification.

With appendices, including one of Marsden's sermons, a note on his children and Priory Place Chapel, bibliography, index and eleven black and white illustrations, Donald Reasbeck, in producing this biography, is to be thanked for providing another small, but significant, piece to the jigsaw making up a picture of Yorkshire Methodism in the nineteenth century.

SIMON ROSS VALENTINE

Wesley and Methodist Studies, vol. 2. Edited by William Gibson and Geordan Hammond (Manchester: Didsbury Press, 2010, pp. 138, £8, ISBN 978-0-9552507-3-6).

(Subscriptions available from Didsbury Press, Dene Road, Didsbury, Manchester, M20 2GU: didsburypress@nazarene.ac.uk)

Readers of the *Proceedings* will no doubt be interested to learn of the appearance of the second number of the recently launched *Wesley and Methodist Studies*. Building on the auspicious beginnings of the first number (reviewed in *PWHS*, 58 part 1 (February 2011), 53-5), this latest volume includes an equally wide range of contributions.

One of the virtues of *Wesley and Methodist Studies* is that it attempts to be genuinely interdisciplinary, publishing both historical and theological pieces. In the latest issue Peter Nockles contributes an essay on Charles Wesley's anti-Catholicism, while Tim Wooley writes on the historiography of Primitive Methodism and Nicola Morris publishes a closely written study of the membership profile of Irish Methodism. Of the more theological essays, Charles Wesley's doctrine of Christian Perfection receives detailed interrogation at the hands of Joseph W. Cunningham, while early Methodist evangelistic preaching is explored in an essay from Jack Jackson.

The issue also includes a manuscript sermon of Mary Fletcher (née Bosanquet), a good range of book reviews and an update on the recent activities of Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History and the Manchester Wesley Research Centre. The journal is warmly commended to readers of the *Proceedings*.

DAVID CERI JONES

NOTES AND QUERIES

1592

JOHN FLETCHER'S LETTERS TO THOMAS BEALE

Two passages in the two letters from John Fletcher published by J. Russell Frazier in *PWHS* 58 part 2 (May 2011), 72-5 can perhaps be further elucidated. At the end of the earlier letter Fletcher asks Beale to 'use me & my little performance with the utmost plainness be not afraid to scandalizare fortiter, so shall you be a Christian Aristarchus . . .' (p. 73). It is unlikely that Fletcher is referring to the cosmologist Aristarchus of Samos; a much more plausible candidate would be the slightly later grammarian Aristarchus of Samothrace, who was the head of the great library of Alexandria in the early second century BC. In eighteenth century England the classical scholar Richard Bentley was often referred to as Aristarchus (most famously in the fourth book of Pope's *Dunciad*); both were notable editors of Homer, and Fletcher is in effect asking Beale to act as his copy editor. I think the phrase 'scandalizare fortiter' is probably intended to recall Luther's famous advice to Melancthon, 'pecca fortiter' (sin boldly) – an amusingly appropriate reference in the context of antinomianism. The general sense is presumably 'don't pull any punches'.

In Frazier's transcript of the first sentence of the second letter, Fletcher writes that Beale's comments were 'well worth my hearty gratitude and a tenfold poslate [?]: I am sorry you took so much pains to save me a double one'. I scarcely takes a Bentley to suggest the emendation 'postage' for 'poslate'; before 1840 postage was paid by the recipient and charged by the sheet. Probably Beale had economised by 'crossing' his letter, writing a second section of text at right angles across the first; if so, anyone who has tried to read correspondence treated in this way will sympathise with Fletcher.

PETER GRANT

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ANNIVERSARY DATES, 2011-2013

2011

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| 17 Feb 1961 | Rev. Dr Leslie F. Church, Wesleyan Minister & Historian, died. |
| 16 March 1761 | John Wesley's first visit to Shrewsbury. |
| 3 April 1711 | Silas Told - Foundry Charity School head and prison visitor born. |
| 4 April 1861 | <i>Methodist Recorder</i> launched. |
| 5 April 1911 | Rev. Charles H. Kelly, Wesleyan President (Twice), Book Steward died. |
| 8 May 1911 | Rev. Joseph Kirsop, Wesleyan Reform/United Methodist Free Church/United Methodist Minister, UMFC President, died. |

- 30 May 1811 1st Primitive Methodist class ticket issued.
- 2 June 1811 1st Primitive Methodist plan issued.
- June 1761 Rev John Grundell, Methodist New Connexion President and Secretary, born
- 18 July 1861 Rev. William Booth resigned from the Methodist New Connexion ministry which eventually led to the founding of the Salvation Army.
- 26 July 1811 1st Primitive Methodist Circuit Steward James Steele.
- 21 Sept 1811 Rev. George Warren, First Wesleyan Methodist Missionary to Africa, embarked for Sierra Leone.
- 11 Oct 1961 Rev. Dr James Alexander Findlay, Wesleyan Ministerial Colleges tutor, died.
- 12 Nov 1811 Rev. George Warren the first Wesleyan Missionary arrived in Sierra Leone.
- 25 Nov 1961 Rev. Frederick Howell Everson, Wesleyan/Methodist Minister and journalist, died.
- 4 Dec 1961 Rev. Harold Bergoyne Rattenbury, Wesleyan Missionary in China, died.
- 26 Dec 1961 Rev. Wesley Frank Swift, Methodist historian and archivist, died.

2012

- 8 Jan 1812 Woodhouse Grove School, West Yorkshire, for preacher's sons founded.
- 10 Feb 1812 Society of Primitive Methodists founded.
- 24 Feb 1762 Rev Gideon Ouseley, General Missionary in Ireland, born.
- 6 March 1812 1st Wesleyan class meeting in Australia.
- 29 March 1762 John Wesley's first visit to Hereford.
- 6 June 1812 Rev. Dr Frederick Jobson, Methodist architect, born.
- 13 June 1812 Rev. John Hunt, Wesleyan missionary to Fiji, born.
- 10 July 1762 Rev. Alexander Kilham, Wesleyan/Methodist New Connexion, born in Epworth.
- 20 August 1912 Death of General William Booth.
- 16 Sept 1912 Rev. Thomas Cook, 1st Principal of Cliff College, died.
- 25 Sept 1862 Stone laying Ranmoor Methodist New Connexion Ministerial Training College, Sheffield

- 28 July 1862 Rev. Robert Eckett, President, Wesleyan Methodist Association, died.
- 3 October 1912 Westminster Wesleyan/Methodist Central Hall opened.
- 1862 Rev. Dr Arthur Guttery, President Primitive Methodist Conference, died.
- 1862 Methodist New Connexion mission to Australia.
- 1962 Methodist Church of Nigeria became autonomous.
- 1962 Evangelical Methodist Church of Italy became autonomous.

2013

- 3 January 1813 Rev. James Calvert born in Pickering - Missionary to Fiji
- 7 April 1763 Rev. William Grimshaw died at Haworth – Evangelical incumbent of Howarth and Methodist Superintendent of the ‘Great Howarth Round’.
- 8 July 1813 John Ashworth born near Rochdale - UMFC Local Preacher & philanthropist.
- 1913 Wesley Bible Union formed following the controversial Fernley Lecture in 1912 by Rev. Dr George Jackson entitled *The Preacher and the Modern Mind*.
- 18 August 1763 John Wesley’s first visit to Monmouth.
- 20 August 1763 John Wesley’s first visit to Carmarthen.
- 21 August 1763 John Wesley’s first visit to Pembroke.
- 26 Sept 1763 John Byrom of Manchester died – Non-juror, poet & hymn writer, Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge.
- 16 October 1813 Leeds Missionary meeting - foundation of WM Auxiliary Missionary Societies.
- 10 October 1763 John Wesley’s first visit to Hertford.
- 11 October 1763 John Wesley’s first visit to Cambridge.
- 11 October 1863 Rev. James Hope, Moulton, born at Richmond College.
- 6 December 1863 Dr William Antliff born Caunton, Notts – Twice President of the Primitive Methodist Connexion.
- 31 December 1813 Rev. Dr Thomas Coke sailed for India.
- 1963 Anglican/Methodist Conversations Report published.
1963. Autonomy agreed for Sri Lanka Methodist Church.

JOHN H. LENTON
DONALD H. RYAN

We are pleased to welcome the following new members:

Mr Timothy J Carlson LL.B. (Lond)

Grimsby

Miss Alison-Mary Smithson

Tilston, Cheshire