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DR. COKE AND BRITISH METHODISM

FORTY years ago a Methodist missionary historian observed that "John and Charles Wesley have so held the admiration and the reverence of their followers that there is no small danger of these forgetting the great gift given by God to the Church in Thomas Coke".¹ This warning, particularly relevant in the year of the 150th anniversary of Coke's death, has been heeded by our Society, which has arranged appropriate recognition in the choice of Coke as the subject for this year's annual lecture. Meanwhile, the briefest introduction to some of the more important aspects of Coke's life and work may be of value to those not well acquainted with his full and varied career.²

Coke really entered the Methodist arena on 13th August 1776. John Wesley had preached at Taunton, and was spending the night with the vicar of nearby Kingston. It was in his "large old parsonage . . . just fit for a contemplative man" that there occurred, in Professor Gordon Rupp's happy phrase, "a fateful conjunction of evangelical planets". "Here", wrote Wesley in his *Journal*, "I found a clergyman, Dr. Coke, late Gentleman Commoner of Jesus College in Oxford, who came twenty miles on purpose. I had much conversation with him; and a union then began which I trust shall never end."

Coke was then twenty-eight years old. Born on 9th October 1747, he was the son of Bartholomew Coke, a respected apothecary of Brecon. Though, in common with most of his contemporaries, he was not unaffected by the moral and spiritual enervation of Oxford, on leaving the university he determined to take holy orders. After three years in his native town, where he followed his father in a career of distinguished civic service and like him became chief magistrate, he was ordained deacon in 1770 with a curacy at Road in Somerset. Moving to South Petherton in the same county, he became

¹ G. G. Findlay and W. W. Holdsworth: *The History of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society*, ii, p. 11.

² This article is concerned with Coke's work in Britain and overseas; for Coke and America, see above, pp. 104-8.

friendly with the vicar of Kingston, who introduced him to the writings of John Wesley and to Fletcher's recently-published *Checks to Antinomianism*. It was the reading of these which led Coke to seek the meeting with Wesley in 1776.

Much to Coke's disappointment, Wesley did not invite him to join him, but, having encouraged him, sent him back to continue his work at South Petherton. There he transformed the parish into what was in effect a Methodist circuit, and was rewarded by dismissal from his curacy—an event which was marked by the ringing of the church bells and the provision, by his enemies, of hogsheads of cider for the villagers to celebrate his departure. By August 1777 Wesley, when riding again to Taunton, had with him Dr. Coke, "who has bid adieu to his honourable name, and determined to cast in his lot with us." Thomas Coke, "a man of small stature, ruddy complexion, brilliant eyes, long hair, feminine but musical voice, and gowned as an English clergyman",⁸ had brought his gifts, his zeal and his considerable wealth to the office of an itinerant Methodist preacher.

Soon he was to occupy a place in Methodism second only to that of Wesley himself. From the Conference of 1778, when his name first appeared in the *Minutes*, his influence quickly grew, and by 1781 he was a member, with Fletcher and four others, of a special committee charged to deal with difficulties which arose during Conference. Fletcher was then in poor health, and the illness of "Wesley's designated successor", who died in 1785, was in no small measure responsible for Coke's rise to prominence. Coke brought to Methodism a courage and an optimism which were just the qualities needed at that time. Not only was he a fervent preacher, but he was also an energetic right-hand man, upon whom Wesley could implicitly rely, and who was able to relieve the ageing Wesley of much of the administrative work connected with the growing number of Methodist societies and preaching-houses. In particular, Coke had a legal training, with an Oxford Doctorate of Civil Law, gained in 1775, which was to prove invaluable in the period of the development of Methodist organization as the eventual separation from the Established Church became increasingly inevitable.

Thus he was much involved in the protracted problem of the new chapel at Birstall, where the trustees refused to accept the normal Methodist provision for the appointment of preachers by the Conference alone, and he was appointed by the Conference of 1783 to "visit the societies throughout England" with a view to having all the Methodist preaching-houses "settled on the Conference plan". Largely as a result of the Birstall difficulties, Wesley, by the legal Deed of Declaration lodged in the Court of Chancery, provided, in 1784, for the continuance of Methodism through a Conference of one hundred specified men. Coke's guidance played a vital part in the taking of this important step. He had a large share in drawing up

⁸ Richard Pyke: *The Dawn of American Methodism*, p. 107.

the deed, though he differed from Wesley in that he wished to include every preacher in full connexion as a member of the Conference; the conception of the "Legal Hundred" was Wesley's alone.

The year 1784 was a significant one for Coke. It saw his much-discussed "setting-apart" as Superintendent for Methodist work in America and his first visit to that country. Earlier in the same year he had published his first major plan for overseas missionary work, which was to become his absorbing passion, and to which he was now beginning to devote himself in real earnest. He spent much of the next few years abroad and in Ireland, and was indeed absent from England when Wesley died in 1791.

It was partly because of his many overseas interests that he was not appointed Wesley's successor as the sole leader of Methodism. Henceforward there was to be an annually-elected President of the Conference, but Coke did not hold this office until 1797; he served for a second term in 1805. He was, however, elected to the newly-created post of Secretary of the Conference—a position he held, with four brief breaks (during two of which he was President), until his death.

Also Coke was, to some extent, distrusted. He was the only clergyman of the Established Church who was active as a Methodist itinerant, and on the relationship of Methodism to the Establishment he held strong views which were not universally acceptable. He was also suspected of being ambitious. Perhaps this element in his character has been unduly stressed. Although Charles Wesley had his doubts about Coke, his brother believed him to be "as free from ambition as from covetousness". Rather did Coke possess an ebullience and a tendency to indiscretion which sometimes served him ill, not least in his dealings with the Establishment, particularly as he seemed, in a modern phrase, to want "to take episcopacy into his system". In America, to Wesley's displeasure, he assumed the title of "Bishop", and his secret suggestion to Bishop White of Philadelphia in 1791 that it might be possible to reunite American Methodism with Anglicanism by the laying-on of bishops' hands on the Methodist preachers in America seemed to depend upon his receiving episcopal office. Again, not long before his death, he intimated to Lord Liverpool that he would be willing to return to the Anglican fold if the Prince Regent could appoint him as a bishop in India!

This same talent for indiscretion was evidenced in his private plan to solve the problem of the administration of the Lord's Supper in Methodism by the episcopal ordination of a number of preachers. He explained to the Bishop of London that "a very large part of our Society have imbibed a deep prejudice against receiving the Lord's Supper from the hands of immoral clergymen." Coke's proposals were brought before the Archbishop of Canterbury, who, in rejecting them, took great exception to his infelicitous choice of words. Earlier, in 1794, he had been the prime mover of the secret meeting at Lichfield of eight leading preachers who proposed to solve

the difficulties of Methodism by establishing an episcopal form of government. In the years following Wesley's death a major problem in the Methodist societies concerned relations with the Establishment, and especially the question of whether Methodist preachers not episcopally ordained should be allowed to administer the Holy Communion. This matter was largely dealt with by the 1795 Plan of Pacification, the acceptance of which by those who shared Coke's ecclesiastical views was due principally to his efforts.

In spite of his preoccupation with overseas missionary work, Coke laboured hard to guide Methodism in Britain in the formative decades after 1791. Nor was he simply concerned with administration and church government. Coke was always an evangelist, both at home and abroad. He was the virtual founder of Home Missions with plans for work in "the most destitute parts of England"—areas including, for example, Rutland and the Derbyshire Peak, which were not likely to be reached by ordinary circuit action, and to eight of which preachers were appointed by the Conference of 1806. He was greatly concerned to establish work in the more distant parts of the British Isles, and the Highlands and the Channel Islands were listed in his 1786 missionary appeal. Himself a Welshman, he was sensitive to the needs of the Principality, and persuaded the Conference of 1800 to send two men to preach there in the Welsh language; this work was most successful, and by 1803 a Welsh District—the North Wales District—was formed.

Coke had particularly close associations with Ireland, where he was held in great affection, and from whence he received good financial support for his own work overseas. He early deputized for Wesley as President of the Irish Conference, and in the years following Wesley's death he regularly occupied the presidential chair except when absent abroad. He made frequent visits to Ireland, and was almost exclusively responsible for the links between English and Irish Methodism. He had a great concern to evangelize the distressed peasantry of the west and south, and organized and financed work among them in their own language.

The multiplicity of Coke's interests was immense. He even found time for literary activity, and wrote, with Moore, a life of Wesley, and a commentary on the Bible, which evoked from Dr. Adam Clarke a charge of plagiarism. Yet without doubt his most important and most original writings were his brief missionary pamphlets of 1784 and 1786, *A Plan of the Society for the Establishment of Missions amongst the Heathen* and *An Address to the Pious and Benevolent proposing an Annual Subscription for the Support of Missionaries*. Though these were the first schemes of their kind ever published, they raised little initial interest, and even Wesley, though he signified his approval of missionary work in principle, could not support so vague and general a scheme. But Coke, the invincible optimist, was not easily deterred. He was the incarnation of that missionary spirit which was to translate the Arminian passion of

Methodism into world evangelism, and it was to the preaching of the gospel overseas that he was to devote the rest of his life. This was the work for which he must always be remembered, and which he was prepared to finance by using his travels and contacts personally to solicit subscriptions, sometimes even from door to door. To these he added the whole of his own large fortune, plus that of his two wives, one of whom he met in the course of one of his begging excursions. The taking of collections for foreign missions and the submitting of accounts to Coke were authorized by the Conference of 1800, but at a time of considerable apathy, and even opposition, there was little real missionary organization, and so much depended on Coke's leadership and zeal. He was the General Superintendent of Missions and, from 1804, the president of a committee of finance and advice, which, in a sense, limited his benevolently dictatorial powers. The real organization of a missionary work which he, almost alone, had established within Methodism was only precipitated by his death.

The very extent of his missionary activity was considerable. Apart from the main centres of operation, he was always trying to open up new work. Thus in 1796 he inaugurated a mission in the Foulah country of Sierra Leone, and when it failed he immediately resolved to make a second attempt. In 1804, at the request of the Methodist soldiers in the garrison, he sent a preacher, who unfortunately died, to Gibraltar. As with the work at home, Coke's rôle in all this was far more than that of an administrator. He himself was actively engaged, and some of his escapades were remarkable by any standards, as when he visited Paris at the height of the French Revolution, and, having purchased for £120 a church seating two thousand people, preached there to a congregation of thirty-six; this forlorn enterprise concluded in an invitation to have tea with a nun, who insisted on paying his expenses!

Unquestionably his greatest missionary work was in the West Indies. An account of this is a history in itself. For most of his life, foreign missions, for Coke, meant the West Indies. He was so keen to get the right men to labour there that other fields, such as Nova Scotia, suffered at West Indian expense. It was in 1786 en route to Nova Scotia that he made his famous landing at Antigua, when his ship was blown off course. He made four visits to the West Indies, and by the time of his death Methodist work, in spite of vicissitudes, had spread to most of the islands. Coke attempted some organization of the work, and kept in close touch with the West Indian missionaries. On a number of occasions he interceded with the British Government to alleviate the persecution of the Methodist people there, and he even visited Holland in an abortive attempt to petition the Stadtholder for religious liberty for the people of St. Eustatius.

Coke's last visit to the West Indies was in 1793, after which really intensive missionary work on his part was curtailed. Yet he constantly retained a burning desire to be employed, and his great

ambition was to evangelize India and the East. The revision of the East India Company's charter in 1813 made possible his last great adventure. The Liverpool Conference of that year, in spite of some initial opposition, finally authorized Coke to undertake a mission to Ceylon and Java with six men, plus one for the Cape of Good Hope. Coke spent the night before this decision was made on his knees in prayer. He was now "dead to Europe and alive to India"; he gave £6,000 to pay for the expedition and devoted himself to preparations, including the learning of Portuguese. At the end of 1813 the buoyant, 66-year-old doctor left England for the last time, but his dreams were to be unfulfilled; on 3rd May 1814 Thomas Coke died aboard the *Cabalva* in the middle of the Indian Ocean.

Of Dr. Coke, enthusiast and visionary, scholar and evangelist, no easy assessment is possible. He had his defects, but these were often only the extension of qualities which were invaluable to one called to a position of leadership at such a point in the history of Methodism. His real work has often been little known and less appreciated, but it is doubtful whether the Methodist Church owes more to any man save Wesley himself. Thomas Coke, a man of many valiant parts, was perhaps, as Dr. H. B. Workman indicates,⁴ the last real Methodist apostle.

N. KEITH HURT.

⁴ Townsend, Workman and Eayrs: *A New History of Methodism*, i, p. 71.

THE ANNUAL LECTURE

in connexion with the Sheffield Conference, 1964,

WILL BE DELIVERED IN THE

Millhouses Methodist Church,

On Wednesday, 8th July, at 7-30 p.m.,

BY

Mr. JOHN A. VICKERS, B.A.

Subject: "THOMAS COKE, APOSTLE OF METHODISM."

The chair will be taken by the REV. G. THACKRAY EDDY, M.A., B.D.

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

Mrs. Herbert Ibberson kindly invites members of the Society to **Tea** in the schoolroom at **4-30 p.m.** It is essential that all those who desire to accept this invitation should send their names to the Rev. Eddie Greetham, 20, Hartington Road, Sheffield, 7, not later than Monday, July 6th.

Buses 17, 24 and 61 from the City Centre go to Millhouses. Book to Springfield Road (fare 8d.). The spire of the church is visible from this bus stop.

Members are invited to visit the **Exhibition** arranged by the Society at the Central Library, Surrey Street.

CHURCH METHODISTS IN IRELAND

Statistical Evidence

THE recent article by Mr. F. Jeffery on the Church Methodists in Ireland and their connexion with the Established Church¹ prompts me to add some further evidence, mainly of a statistical nature. The extent of the split with the Primitive Wesleyans, already referred to in his article, is shown in the following table.

TABLE I

Circuits which increased or showed a decrease of less than 33 per cent from 1814 to 1818	Circuits which showed a decrease of more than 33 per cent from 1814 to 1818
Dublin Drogheda Wicklow Waterford Carlow Cork Bandon Limerick Milltown Aughrim Sligo Boyle Ballyconnell Monaghan Ballinamallard Londonderry Belfast Carrickfergus Lisburn Cookstown Armagh Lurgan	Oldcastle Longford Newtownbarry Skibbereen Mallow Mountrath Manorhamilton Ballyshannon Brookborough Coleraine Newry Tandragee Dungannon Charlemont Roscrea Cloughjordan Athlone Castlebar Ballina Clones Cavan Enniskillen Strabane Newtown Stewart Stranorlar Downpatrick

The circuits listed in the Irish *Minutes of Conference* for 1814 and 1818 are taken because these dates cover the two years before the division in 1816 and allow for its effect to be felt completely two years later. During this time the decline in numbers was one-third, so those circuits showing a decrease of more than this proportion may be judged to have had particularly strong affections for their connexion with the Established Church. These are shown as black crosses on Map No. 1 (p. 137), and they occur mainly in the west of Ulster and the central rural parts of Ireland, where, as Mr. Jeffery says, "tensions between the Roman Catholic and Protestant communities made it seem a grievous wrong to break with the Established Church". Three of the seven circuits which showed an increase during the period are in or near Belfast, where tension would

¹ *Proceedings*, xxxiv, pp. 73-5.

be considerably less, and the remaining circuits are near the east coast or in larger urban communities.

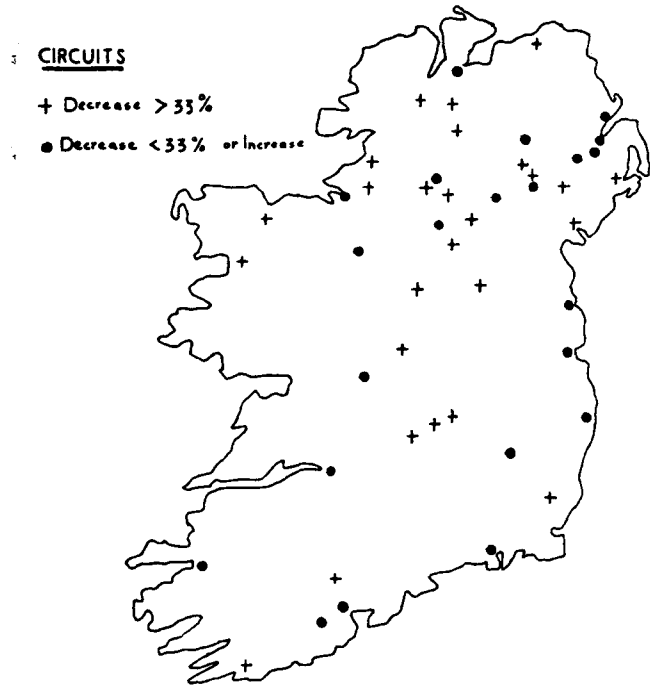
It is clear too from the Conference Report of the Primitive Wesleyan Society that the majority of their 8,095 members in 1818 were to be found in Fermanagh, Cavan and Monaghan, mainly within a forty-mile radius of the town of Clones (Map 2). At Charlemont in northern Armagh there was another large circuit, and the cathedral town of Downpatrick had 500 members. By 1833 the total membership had more than doubled, and now stood at 17,621, divided over 26 circuits. The distribution, however, was still very uneven, with more than 50 per cent in the country districts on or near a line from Ballyshannon through Enniskillen to Cavan. In Dublin and most of the other east and south coast towns listed in 1818 the membership had actually decreased, due perhaps to the broader outlook engendered by closer contact with England and to the larger Protestant communities in which the Methodists found themselves.

TABLE II
PRIMITIVE WESLEYAN SOCIETIES IN 1818 AND 1833

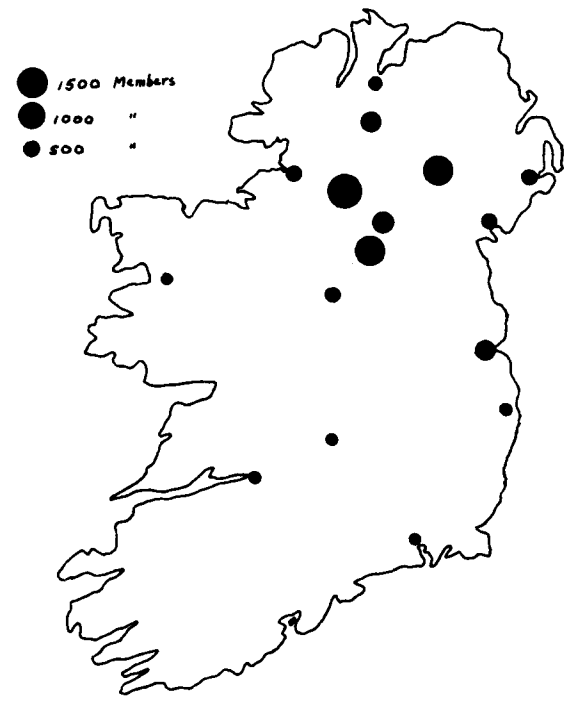
Circuit	Membership		Circuit	Membership	
	1818	1833		1818	1833
Dublin ...	507	348	Newry ...	480	117
Longford ...	457	294	Downpatrick ...	537	433
Limerick ...	160	96	Charlemont ...	1,069	1,600
Roscrea ...	104	100	Cork ...	—	289
Wicklow ...	100	146	Bandon ...	—	57
Waterford ...	71	50	Mallow ...	—	102
Castlebar ...	84	38	Mountrath ...	—	103
Clones ...	638	1,382	Athlone ...	—	220
Cavan ...	904	1,799	Oldcastle ...	—	320
Enniskillen ...	1,767	1,954	Maguiresbridge ...	—	2,412
Ballyshannon ...	500	1,069	Manorhamilton ...	—	526
Londonderry ...	189	89	Belfast ...	—	622
Newtown Stewart...	364	968	Tandragee ...	—	900
			TOTALS ...	8,095	17,621

The strong Presbyterian tradition in North-East Ulster did not extend into Co. Fermanagh, and its influence on Methodism was confined to the region around Belfast. This could have been considerable in an indirect way, for Crookshank records that in 1819 some 40 per cent of the eight hundred leading Methodist families had been, or were, Presbyterian. This leaves 60 per cent still to be accounted for, and it is reasonable to assume that many must have had some connexion with the Established Church.

It is not until the census of 1861 that any definite link between the Established Church and the Wesleyan Church can be shown in Ireland. Until then the Methodists had been classified in the census reports either with the Established Church or as Dissenters, but from 1861 onwards the Methodists appear as a separate church. The



Map 1—Changes during period 1814 to 1818



Map 2—Distribution of Primitive Wesleyan Circuits, 1818

respective percentages of Methodists and Episcopalians in each county are shown in Table III below, and the values plotted on Maps 3 and 4 (opposite) for easy comparison. As the strength of the Established Church was rather more than ten times that of the Methodist Church (see Table IV), this ratio is maintained in the shading of the maps. Co. Fermanagh and Co. Armagh, both settled by the English in the seventeenth century, stand out as the counties in which both churches had their greatest relative strength. Table III and these maps illustrate how the percentage of Methodists falls according to the percentage of Anglicans in each county, with very few exceptions.

TABLE III (Figures based on 1861 Census Report)

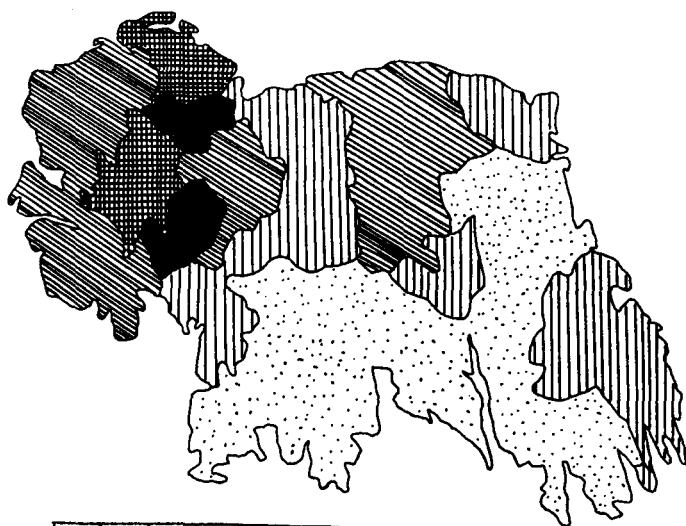
Towns and Counties	Meth. per cent	Est. Ch. per cent	Towns and Counties	Meth. per cent	Est. Ch. per cent
Belfast ...	4.1	24.7	King's Co. ...	.4	10.1
Fermanagh ...	3.3	38.4	Tipperary N. ...	.4	6.7
Armagh ...	3.2	30.9	Dublin Co. ...	.4	18.0
Carrickfergus ...	3.1	19.3	Kildare ...	.4	11.5
Antrim ...	1.6	18.3	Wexford ...	.3	8.9
Tyrone ...	1.6	21.9	Monaghan ...	.3	14.0
Down ...	1.4	20.3	Carlow ...	.3	10.9
Dublin (suburbs) ...	1.2	35.0	Kilkenny City ...	.3	4.3
Waterford City ...	1.1	8.5	Louth ...	.2	6.8
Cork City ...	1.1	13.3	Cork E.R. ...	.2	6.4
Donegal ...	1.0	12.6	Galway Co. ...	.1	2.9
Drogheda ...	1.0	7.0	Mayo ...	.1	2.6
Cavan ...	.9	14.9	Roscommon ...	.1	3.6
Wicklow ...	.8	17.7	Limerick Co. ...	.1	3.3
Limerick City ...	.8	9.5	Tipperary S. ...	.1	3.9
Leitrim ...	.8	9.1	Longford ...	.13	8.6
Dublin City ...	.8	19.4	Meath ...	.1	5.9
Cork W.R. ...	.7	8.2	Westmeath ...	.17	7.0
Galway Town ...	.7	4.9	Kilkenny Co. ...	.07	4.3
Londonderry ...	.6	16.9	Clare ...	.05	2.0
Sligo ...	.6	8.4	Kerry ...	.08	3.1
Queen's Co. ...	.5	10.7	Waterford Co. ...	.05	2.9

TABLE IV

Year	ESTABLISHED CHURCH			METHODIST CHURCH		
	South	North	All Ireland	South	North	All Ireland
1861	372,723	320,643	693,366	17,480	27,919	45,399
1881	317,576	321,998	639,574	17,660	31,179	48,839

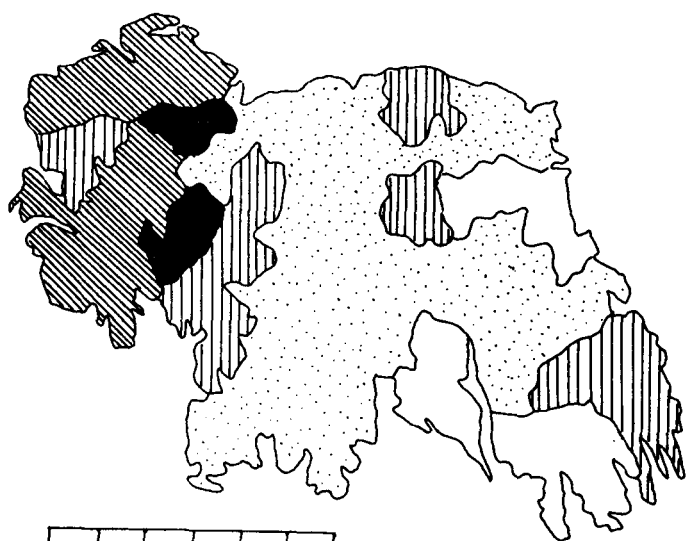
South—26 Counties (Eire) ; North—6 Counties (Ulster).

The high rate of emigration, started by the Great Famine, continued during the twenty years after 1861. By 1881 the Church of Ireland, now disestablished, had lost over 50,000 members, mainly from the south, whilst in the north there was a slight increase (see Table IV). The Methodists, now a united body, actually increased, and do not appear to have lost as many from emigration as the other denominations. These figures would need further examination if internal movements between south and north are considered. The



Over 30%
20 - 29.9 %
10 - 19.9 %
5 - 9.9 %
1 - 4.9 %
Under 1.0%

Map 4—Distribution of Church of Ireland, 1861



Over 3.0%
2.0 - 2.9 %
1.0 - 1.9 %
.50 - .99 %
.10 - .49 %
Under .10 %

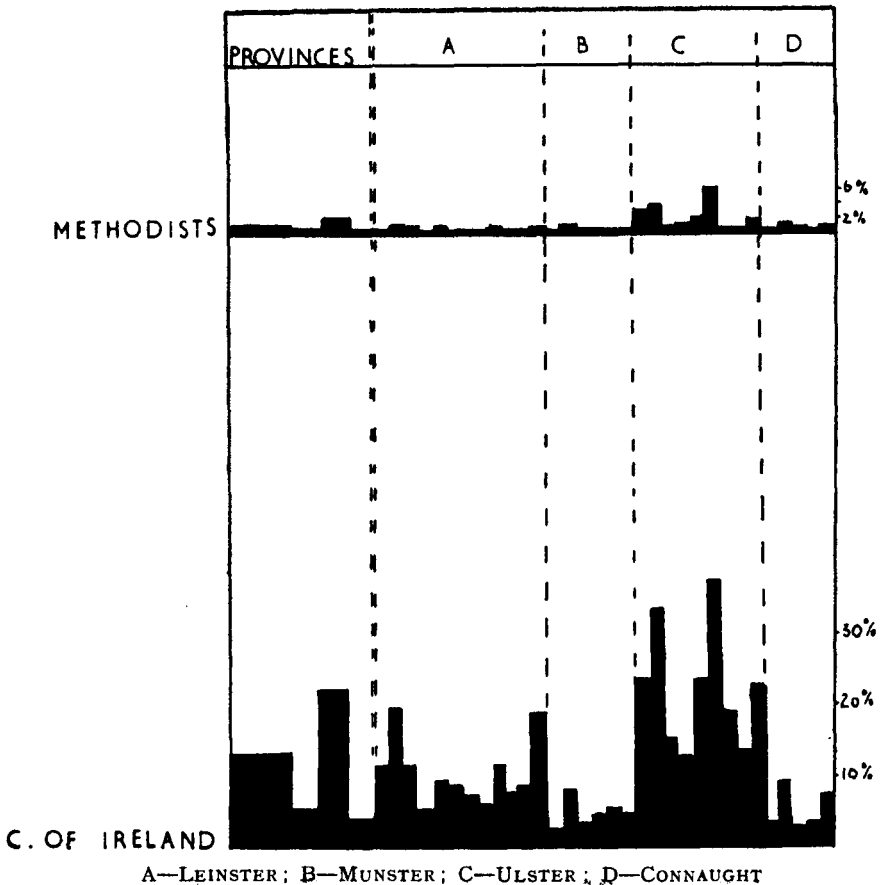
Map 3—Distribution of Methodists, 1861

additional numbers provided by counting some of the Primitive Wesleyans as Methodists for the first time also make it hard to be exact.

The close link between the churches is still apparent, as the final diagram illustrates. Wherever the Church of Ireland is strong—as in Dublin, Wicklow, Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh and Tyrone, there is a strong Methodist element. Where it is weak—as in Clare, Galway and Mayo, the Methodists also are present in very small numbers.

After 1881, the growth of Belfast and the concentration in that city of Methodists from the rural areas alters the pattern which we have illustrated, and a new era begins. J. HENRY COOKE.

Diagram showing the proportion per cent of the total inhabitants of each County and Province in Ireland belonging to the Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in the year 1881



APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION AND THE THREEFOLD MINISTRY

The uninterrupted succession I know to be a fable.

THE LETTERS OF JOHN WESLEY, vii, p. 284.

"THE uninterrupted succession I know to be a fable"¹ is no doubt the most popular quotation of John Wesley on the subject of the Apostolic Succession when under discussion in connexion with the *Report on the Conversations between the Church of England and the Methodist Church*.

It is, however, not the only mention of the doctrine by Wesley, and certainly not the earliest. The others need careful consideration. Apostolic Succession can be briefly defined thus: The derivation of holy orders by unbroken chain of transmission from the apostles through bishops—the assumed succession of a ministry so ordained to apostolic powers and privileges.

The first statement by Wesley rejecting the idea was made in 1759, though it could safely be assumed that he no longer held it to be true after 1745. Before the latter date, no priest could have been a more loyal supporter of this teaching. The same applies to the system of a threefold ministry of bishops, priests and deacons, and this he held to the end of his life, with certain modifications. Being "thrown back" on Cyprian during his homeward voyage from America in 1738, he must have read once again the emphasis laid by that saint and scholar on the unbroken succession which was necessary to give efficacy to all religious exercises.² To all this, Wesley cries out: "Stand thou in the good old paths!" Moreover, he was familiar with the learned divines of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. It was William Law, whose influence over Wesley was by no means inconsiderable, who wrote:

. . . if the succession be once broke, people must either go into the Ministry of their own accord, or be sent by such as have no more Power to send others, than to go themselves . . . if there be no *Uninterrupted Succession*, then there are no Authorised Ministers from Christ; if no such Ministers, then no Christian sacraments, then no Christian Covenant, whereof the Sacraments are the stated and visible seals.³

William Beveridge would go further and say "that there is no salvation in the Church except under such a ministry".⁴ Jeremy Taylor, G. Hickes, C. Wheatly and Bishop Potter (who ordained Wesley) all lend their support, and sincerely held the view that Scripture upheld the necessity of it.

A letter to James Hutton dated 27th November 1738 reveals that he believes

¹ *Letters*, vii, pp. 284-5 (to Charles Wesley).

² *Epistolæ*, lxvi, 7.

³ *Second Letter to the Bishop of Bangor*, pp. 95, 100.

⁴ Sermon on Acts ii. 47 (*Works*, i, p. 59).

bishops, priests and deacons to be of divine appointment . . . and the Primitive Church may, thus far, at least, be revered as faithfully delivering down for two or three hundred years the discipline which they received from the Apostles, and the [Apostles] from Christ.⁵

To his brother-in-law Westley Hall, a letter of 30th December 1745 defends as scriptural

'That the validity of our ministry depends on a succession supposed to be from the Apostles, and a commission derived from the Pope of Rome and his successors or dependants. [He continues:] We believe it would not be right for us to administer either baptism or the Lord's Supper unless we had a commission so to do from those bishops whom we apprehend to be in a succession from the Apostles. And yet we allow these bishops are the successors of those who were dependent on the Bishop of Rome . . . But we would be glad to know on what reasons you believe this to be inconsistent with the Word of God.⁶ We believe that the threefold order of ministers (which you seem to mean by Papal hierarchy and prelacy) is not only authorized by its apostolic institution, but also by the written word.

A change took place in his view of Uninterrupted Succession after his reading of Peter King's *Account of the Primitive Church* in 1746 and Edward Stillingfleet's *Irenicum*⁷ sometime between 1746 and 1755. King has little to say about the Succession, but his book is important because it caused Wesley to believe that a bishop and a presbyter were equal in order, but different in degree and function. Thus later he can say that he is as real a bishop as the Archbishop of Canterbury.⁸ There are Anglicans who would agree that the two orders were scripturally identical, but they would not approve of Wesley's exercising a bishop's functions. Nor does King support him here, for no bishop ever gave him permission to do a bishop's work. Stillingfleet, however, exerted a more important influence over him by saying that in the Early Church there was no fixed form of government and that no type of government is binding for ever. Of the Uninterrupted Succession, Stillingfleet says:

The Church did not own Episcopacy as a Divine Institution, but Ecclesiastical; and those who seem to speak most of it, do mean no more . . . Come we therefore to Rome, and here the succession is as muddy as the *Tiber* itself . . . Certainly if the Line of Succession fail us here, when we most need it, we have little cause to pin our Faith upon it as to the certainty of any particular form of church-government settled in the Apostles' time.⁹

⁵ *Letters*, i, p. 274.

⁶ *ibid.*, ii, pp. 54-7. Cf. Charles Wesley's "Prayer for the Bishops":
The Worthy Successors of those
Who first adorned the Sacred Line,
Bold let them stand before their foes,
And dare assert their Right Divine.

⁷ A detailed summary of both these works is to be found in my book *John Wesley and the Christian Ministry*.

⁸ *Letters*, vii, p. 262 (to Barnabas Thomas, 25th March 1785).

⁹ *Irenicum* (2nd edn., 1661), p. 321. It should be remembered that Stillingfleet recanted of his view later in life.

Wesley's first statement of rejection of the Uninterrupted Succession was not with reference to the Anglican Church, but the Roman. He is replying in the *London Chronicle* on 19th February 1759 to an article entitled "Caveat against the Methodists"—a lengthy statement of the Roman Catholic doctrine of the divine right of episcopacy. He says:

The Church has "a perpetual succession of pastors and teachers divinely supported and divinely assisted". And there has never been wanting in the Reformed Churches such a succession of pastors and teachers, men both divinely appointed and divinely assisted; for they convert sinners to God—a work none can do unless God Himself doth appoint them thereto and assist them therein; therefore every part of this character is applicable to them. . . . Now for your "farther proof". "The true ministers came down by succession from the Apostles." So do the Protestant ministers if the Romish do; and English in particular; as even one of yourselves, F. Courayer¹⁰ has irrefragably proved . . . But to turn the tables: I said, if, the Romish bishops came down by *uninterrupted* succession from the Apostles. I never could see it proved; and I am persuaded I never shall. But unless that is proved, your own pastors, on your principles, are no pastors at all.¹¹

It was in 1785 that he wrote to his brother:

. . . the *uninterrupted succession* I know to be a fable, which no man ever did or can prove. But this does in no wise interfere with my remaining in the Church of England, from which I have no more desire to separate than I had fifty years ago.¹²

Note that in each case Wesley refers to the *uninterrupted* succession. He does not refer to succession as such, nor are there grounds to believe that he denied that there was a succession of some kind. What he objected to was the idea that one must be able to trace one's spiritual pedigree down an unbroken line to the Bishop of Rome and thus to the apostles. He could never see it proved or be satisfied that there was no break in the continuity. He was not alone in this dissatisfaction. Chillingworth had earlier stated: "I am fully persuaded there hath been no such succession." Hoadly had averred: "It hath not pleased God in His Providence to keep up any proof of the least probability, or of any moral possibility, of regular, uninterrupted succession, but there is a great appearance, and humanly speaking, a certainty to the contrary."

The succession as it had been described would no doubt appear to Wesley to be too mechanical, and to limit free grace: "None but God can give men authority to preach his word."¹³

Dr. J. E. Rattenbury seems to be the only writer who has tried

¹⁰ Courayer (1681-1776) was a Roman Catholic professor who wrote a defence of Anglican orders in 1723, and had to take refuge in England in 1728.

¹¹ *Letters*, iv, pp. 135 ff.

¹² *ibid.*, vii, pp. 284-5. There are many Anglicans who would adopt the same position. Cf. also *ibid.*, iii, p. 182 (July 1756): "As to my own judgement, I still believe 'the Episcopal form of Church Government to be both Scriptural and apostolical', I mean, well agreeing with the practice and writings of the Apostles. But that it is prescribed in Scripture, I do not believe."

¹³ *Notes upon the New Testament*, at Matthew x. 5.

to qualify Wesley's changed view. His objection must have been to episcopal succession as such. The fact that he later conferred orders on others showed that he believed that orders could only be conferred by those who possessed them.¹⁴ This is not quite the same as Hockin's assertion¹⁵ that Wesley believed "the Apostolical Succession throughout his life, as running in the Episcopate and during the *latter* [italics mine] portion of his life, as running in the priesthood also." Wesley never declared any belief in any kind of succession after 1745. It is only by the fact that he provided ordination services to three orders for his lay-preachers that he consciously, or unknowingly, began a succession of his own. It is to be noted that in these services of ordination to the office of Deacon, Elder and Superintendent he follows closely the Anglican pattern, but emphasizes the functions of the two latter and incorporates his belief that presbyter equals bishop, *in ordine*—that the latter was but a presiding elder.¹⁶ This is sufficient proof of his continuing preference for a threefold ministry. His prayers (written after his change of views) confirm this:

Bless all Bishops, Priests and Deacons with apostolic graces . . . Give to the clergy . . . whether they be Bishops, Priests, or Deacons, grace, as good shepherds, to feed the flock committed to their care . . . Be gracious unto all Priests and Deacons, and give them rightly to divide the word of truth . . .¹⁷

The new Wesleyan succession was but short-lived. Wesley's principles and prayer-book were set aside at his death. Until 1836 a few unauthorized ordinations took place, and occasionally men destined for overseas were recipients of formal ordination. Those who were in favour of remaining in the Established Church were against ordination, whilst those who urged separation saw little importance in the rite. Benjamin Gregory¹⁸ attempts to prove that "laying-on of hands" could also mean "the lifting up of the hands", and proceeds to explain that the raising of the hands in Conference to denote acceptance of a man into "Full Connexion" was the same as ordination. The distinction between previously-ordained and unordained men was dropped, and again Gregory uses his ingenuity in describing this as a "levelling up rather than a levelling down".¹⁹ However, in 1836, ordination by imposition of hands was introduced. Jabez Bunting was then the President of Conference, and he conducted the ordination of thirty young men, assisted by the ex-President, the Secretary of Conference and three senior

¹⁴ *Methodism and World Problems*, p. 60.

¹⁵ *John Wesley and Modern Methodism*, pp. 74 ff.

¹⁶ It seems curious that, if presbyter is essentially the same order as bishop, a further ordination of a presbyter is necessary. If a bishop is but a superior presbyter, surely it would be logical to *appoint* to that office without the rite of ordination. A comparison of the ordination services in Wesley's *Sunday Service of the Methodists* with those of the Book of Common Prayer have been given in my book *John Wesley and the Christian Ministry* (Appendix 2).

¹⁷ *Works* (ed. Benson, 1809), ii, pp. 287, 290, 313.

¹⁸ *Scriptural Principles*, p. 126.

¹⁹ *op. cit.*, p. 126.

preachers, none of whom had themselves received what they were proposing to confer on others.²⁰ The candidates were admitted to the "office of Christian Minister". Wesley knew of no ordination simply to "the Christian Ministry" without reference to the orders of Deacon, Priest (Elder) or Bishop (Superintendent). Ordination to the threefold ministry in the Methodist societies had now given way to the single ordination to the ministry in the new Methodist Church.²¹ Yet a new succession had begun—that of the whole company of believers to the next generation of believers. The authority invested in a man (Wesley) or a caste of men (bishops or superintendents) is now spread over the whole church, and still is, in Methodism, exercised, howbeit, by a representative and changing (?) Conference. Whilst the actual act of ordination is, by custom, carried out by the President, or ex-Presidents (assisted by other ministers), it is not their prerogative. They act by request of Conference.

From the beginning of last century to the present time, much has been said in Methodism about Apostolic Succession, mostly by way of anathema,²² and many quotations could be given if space permitted.²³ One of the chief opponents of the succession was Dr. J. H. Rigg:²⁴

The genius of Methodism, as now fully organised into a church, and that of Anglican Episcopacy are mutually repellent and exclusive. In the Church of England, everything depends upon and descends from the bishop or the minister, or, as they say, "the priest". This is not the case in Methodism . . . It would be impossible for the Church of England to admit all Methodist ministers merely as such, to take full pastoral rank and authority in the administration of the sacraments. To do so would be to renounce the dogma of sacerdotal succession, and to admit that the validity of orders has no relation to episcopal authority . . . the Methodist people nor their ministers would endure a word of re-ordination . . .

Speaking of the "high church" party reconciling themselves with nonconformists, he says the latter would have to embrace "Apostolic Succession and sacramental efficacy—in fact embrace that which, in its essentials, is Popery."

²⁰ Henry Moore, now the sole surviving ordinand of Wesley's, was grieved that he had not been asked to share in this service.

²¹ The office of deacon had by now been carried out without ordination by the "stewards" of Methodism. (See Alfred Barrett: *The Ministry and Polity of the Christian Church* (1854), p. 208.) Wesley himself had ordained men to the eldership only twenty-four hours after their ordination to the diaconate. Both the Roman and the Anglican Churches at the present time are exercised in mind over the office and function of "deacon".

²² At the Conference of 1838, a certain John Hartley of Leeds was unfortunately described as being "in the apostolical succession", to which Dr. Bunting replied: "I strongly reprehend the introduction of this expression!"

²³ William F. Slater, in the fifteenth Fernley Lecture (1885) affirms (p. 52): "The practical re-assertion of the true priesthood of every believer has rendered every statement of the traditional theory of 'apostolic succession' and the like, a ludicrous anachronism." Cf. also the fourth Lecture (1873) by Benjamin Gregory: *Origin of the "High Church" and "Broad Church" Principles*, pp. 241-88.

²⁴ *The Churchmanship of John Wesley* (1878), pp. 110-13.

Nor had the position altered by 1931, when a speaker in Sheffield declared:

. . . that there is nothing to be gained, but much to be lost by well meaning attempts to lead us to imitate methods and forms which for ages have been characteristic of those who rest on the idea of historical Apostolical Succession . . . We do not mean what they mean. Let us be true to ourselves and avoid what, after all, is an impossible synthesis. As long as episcopal ordination means what it really does mean, I do not want it . . .

This view leads on to a statement made by the late Dr. R. Newton Flew:²⁵

The sons of the evangelical tradition do not see what additional certitude could be added to their real spiritual inheritance by the acceptance of the doctrine usually known as the Apostolic Succession. For them the Apostolical Succession of the Church is the Evangelical Succession of believers.

The last two quotations show that, in Methodism, another meaning has been attached to Apostolic Succession. In all fairness, it must be pointed out that the term has always strictly referred to a view of the Christian ministry, and therefore should be confined to this.

What of today? In the *Interim Statement of the Conversations between the Church of England and the Methodist Church*, the following hopeful paragraph occurs, though whether it voices a majority viewpoint in our Church is open to question:

While Methodism holds that a mechanical doctrine of unbroken succession by ordination from the Apostles themselves is both historically and theologically vulnerable, it readily assents that the ministry is a gift of God to the Church and that by the second century the Christian community everywhere regarded its episcopally ordained ministry as possessing a commission ultimately derived from that given by the Lord to the Apostles . . . Unity of faith and discipline in ages of controversy and heresy needed a unified ministry which could appeal to the Apostolic Creed, the Apostolic Scriptures and the Apostolic Succession.²⁶

Finally, in any discussion involving succession, the following points need to be carefully borne in mind:

- (i) Wesley objected only to *uninterrupted* succession, commonly known today as the "pipe-line" theory, i.e. from consecrator to consecrated.
- (ii) He shows, intentionally or otherwise, that he believed in some succession by his own Ordinal and ordinations by those who possessed orders themselves.
- (iii) There is another view of succession which is historical rather than sacramental, i.e. from office to office; *cathedra* to *cathedra*; teaching chair to teaching chair. This is a succession not open to any "break". This is a theory which quite possibly would have appealed

²⁵ *Northern Catholicity* (1933), p. 526.

²⁶ p. 35.

to Wesley had he known of it. Today it has many supporters in Anglicanism.²⁷

- (iv) Apostolic Succession is no more an official doctrine of the Church of England today than it was in Wesley's day. However, whenever the historic episcopate is insisted upon, it is difficult to divorce it from some view of succession.
- (v) If Methodism takes the historic episcopate into its system, it will involve authority being once again invested in certain individuals instead of the whole Church.

The ultimate question is whether or not Methodism desires to be linked with the historic Church. Modern Methodism is not tied to Wesley's views, nor has it been for many years, but there is little doubt where his preference would lie.

ALBERT B. LAWSON.

²⁷ See article by J. G. Davies in the *Expository Times*, LXXX, No. 8 (May 1959), pp. 228-30; also H. B. Swete: *Essays on the Early History of the Church and the Ministry* (1918) and O. C. Quick: *The Christian Sacraments* (1927) and *Doctrines of the Creed* (1938).

NEWS FROM OUR BRANCHES

The Lincolnshire Branch

An Exhibition of Wesleyana was held in Lincoln on Saturday, 14th March 1964. The attendance was disappointing, although the weather could perhaps be held partly responsible, for it poured with rain throughout the day. Nevertheless, the committee prepared a large display, consisting of Mr. Laurence Elvin's fine collection of pottery augmented by items from the Connexional Archives. About a dozen other local friends provided books, plans, medallions, pictures, class tickets, etc., and there was an excellent display from the Epworth Old Rectory.

A pilgrimage to Epworth on Saturday, 30th May will take place before these notes appear in print. Then on Saturday, 10th October Mr. F. West of Coventry will speak on "Methodism in Wrangle".

Branch Bulletins are available from either the Rev. W. Le Cato Edwards, The Old Rectory, Epworth, or the Secretary at Woodlands, Riseholme, Lincoln.

WILLIAM LEARY.

Osmotherley Old Chapel Restoration Appeal

An old account book relating to the Methodist society at Osmotherley (Yorks) was among the first historical relics to attract the attention of the Wesley Historical Society—see *Proceedings*, iii, p. 89, iv, p. 28, and vii, p. 28, for further notices. The preaching-house itself dates from 1754, and early in 1963 an appeal was launched for its restoration. This was to be done in two stages: (a) re-roofing with pantiles, etc. and (b) provision of dry area outside the north wall, new kitchen and cloak accommodation, and re-decoration. The first stage has been completed, but £500 is still needed to complete the second stage. John Wesley himself was associated with the Osmotherley society, as also were William Shent and John Haime, two of Wesley's valiant preachers. Gifts towards the work of restoring this historic building would be gratefully received, and should be sent to Mr. J. H. Gatenby, Midland Bank, Northallerton, Yorks.

BOOK NOTICES

The Architectural Expression of Methodism: The First Hundred Years, by George W. Dolbey. [The Wesley Historical Society Lectures, No. 29.] (Epworth Press, pp. 195, 50 illus., 35s.)

This book meets a need which we have long felt for an historical account of Methodist building styles. Only the exigencies of space prevented Mr. Dolbey from giving an account of Methodist chapel architecture and arrangement from the totally unself-conscious buildings of early Methodism, through the very self-conscious Classic and neo-Gothic to the present-day hesitant essays in modernity. We are grateful for this descriptive account of "the first hundred years" (1739-1839), and hope that the author will yet be able to complete the survey to the present day.

It is not many years since the writer of a county guide-book dismissed the wayside Methodist chapels as "ugly little brick boxes most of them", and even those who loved these buildings for the sake of those who used them would have had little enthusiasm to challenge the architectural and æsthetic disapproval of them. Much of this has changed since Betjeman came and, like Newton, said "Let there be light!". In his *First and Last Loves* (1952) he taught us to look with discernment on these buildings and discover in many of them an unexpected grace and beauty.

Mr. Dolbey, who has architectural as well as theological qualifications to speak, deals with the relations between theology, worship and church-building; and against this background he describes the evolution of the Methodist place of worship from the house-society, through the preaching-house designedly supplementary to the parish church, to the chapels of a later period which were designed for liturgical as well as auditory functions. He gives an account of the two Wesley-inspired styles—the octagons (1764-76) and the auditory or "City Road-style" chapels. Evidence had already been assembled in Cornwall of a more general adherence to the internal "City Road" arrangement, with the communion-table in an apse behind the pulpit, than had previously been suspected. Mr. Dolbey now shows that this style was followed in the country generally—certainly in the larger urban churches.

Not the least valuable part of this book is the inset of 50 illustrations, to which the reader will want to make continual reference as he reads the text. He may wish that the photographs, drawings and plans could have appeared opposite the relevant text, but he will be thankful nevertheless to have them in their present position. Both the text and the illustrations will help many readers to look with new eyes on the Methodist churches in their own district.

We have one correction: Yarm (p. 105) is in Yorkshire, not in Northumberland; and we have one regret: the fact which we have noted above, i.e. that this book is a Wesley Historical Society Lecture, is not stated in the book itself.

THOMAS SHAW.

[See also NOTES AND QUERIES, No. 1128, on page 152.—EDITOR.]

Samuel Wesley Senior: New Biographical Evidence, by H. A. Beecham, in *Renaissance and Modern Studies* (University of Nottingham).

This is a monograph of first-class importance for the early life of Samuel Wesley, sen., since it is written by a scholar who has come to reliable

judgements by a careful examination of the existing evidence in the light of three letters written by Samuel Wesley, two of which are printed for the first time in this essay.

The work needed to be done, because Luke Tyerman (*Life and Times of the Rev. Samuel Wesley, M.A.*) leant heavily on Adam Clarke (*Memoirs of the Wesley Family*), and when he departed from his main source and offered fresh information of his own, he rarely gave chapter and verse for his conclusions. Although G. J. Stevenson (*Memorials of the Wesley Family*) had access to Wesley papers of Henry Moore, who actually lived until 1844 without making use of them, his main guide, faithfully followed, was Adam Clarke. The fresh evidence available to Miss H. A. Beecham fixes the death of John Wesley, father of Samuel, in the year 1670, and incidentally tells us that he was imprisoned for preaching at a meeting, "and by lying on the cold earth, he contracted a sickness which in ten days cost him his life". This valuable letter, written from South Ormsby on 22nd August 1692, and printed here in full as an appendix, fills in the blanks also about his early years as a clergyman. Now we know that the first curacy was St. Botolph's Aldersgate for twelve months, and then, following six months as a chaplain on a man-of-war, he became curate at Newington Butts in Surrey for a year; and it was here that the first child, Samuel, was born. His marriage to Susanna is now shown to have been on Monday, 12th November 1688—an earlier date than any had hitherto supposed. In these matters of definition of time, it had been known that although Samuel's preferment to Epworth had come on 15th March 1695, he did not actually arrive till 1697. Miss Beecham has now been able to narrow the date still further by showing that it must have been in May or June at the latest.

Undoubtedly the chief interest of this attractive piece of research is the new light it throws on Samuel's written attacks against Dissenters. The author sketches the political background against which the *Letter from a Country Divine* (1703) was published, having been written about twelve years earlier. Neither the substance of the letter nor its publication can be defended. He was biting the hand that fed him, and it came ill from one who had benefited so greatly from two outstanding academies that he should criticize them so severely. Samuel Palmer, in an otherwise reasoned pamphlet, suggested unwarrantably that it was originally written "when he wanted preferment". The great Daniel Defoe joined in the attack with a bludgeon, describing Wesley as a "mercenary renegade". In his reply, *Defence of a Letter*, Samuel was able to dispose of the charge of sycophancy and flattery, but not so easily of the charge of ingratitude. He did not attempt to deny all he had received from Dissent, but only that he had not received "one Radiant Guinea or splendid shilling" since he left them. Indeed, more than once he ingenuously confessed that when a Dissenter distributed "a considerable sum" among ministers, he took his share, paid off debts, and then straightway went to Oxford as a Churchman. Palmer attacked him bitterly on this score, and, as Miss Beecham says, Samuel could only make a weak defence.

She sums up the controversy fairly by saying that Samuel was "an intractable controversialist who would fight without let for his convictions. Lying his way out of difficulty or danger would not have been in character." With more space at her disposal, the author might have shown that the Anglican convert who very early one morning "set out on foot" to Oxford remained throughout his days unflinchingly loyal to the Church and

communicated his love to his sons. Likewise, the *Letter* and its *Defence* only reflected the attitude to Dissenters which he maintained throughout his life. In later years he could rejoice that there was not one Dissenter in his parish.

A final word of gratitude to Miss Beecham for bringing to light, in the South Ormsby letter, the story of how Samuel in his Oxford days of extreme poverty "saw a little boy about 7 or 8 years old lying under a hedge and crying bitterly" because he and his sister, being orphans, were penniless and starving. Samuel pulled out the twopence, all he had in the world, and "gave it to him seeing he was in greater extremity than I was myself". This is a story not hitherto known, which reflects a gentler side of Samuel not always appreciated.

Miss Beecham has written an essay based on independent research which has resolved a few knotty points in the early career of Samuel Wesley, and has given us, by inference as well as comment, a fresh understanding of the man himself.

MALDWYN L. EDWARDS.

James Hope Moulton. (Epworth Press, pp. 60, 5s.)

So Appointed: An Autobiography, by E. Benson Perkins. (Epworth Press, pp. 204, 21s.)

James Hope Moulton was born in October 1863, and this choice little volume marks the centenary of that event. It is compiled by his son, Harold K. Moulton, who contributes a brief account of his saintly father, so highly honoured and distinguished in and beyond the world of biblical scholarship. His many interests included Zoroastrianism, and he was warmly sympathetic towards social reform. How, from our limited human outlook, this all too short life ended in tragedy is well known. Some of those who knew him best and loved him contribute to this spiritually refreshing and inspiring little book.

The autobiography of E. Benson Perkins will be read with unflagging interest, especially by men of his own generation. He was born in 1881, and his memories of the pre-war world will arouse nostalgic emotion for some of his readers. After reminiscences of Jersey, Handsworth College and Cornwall, there follow those of an outstandingly active and vigorous life: minister of circuits and two city missions (Birmingham and Sheffield); member and official of committees dealing with social welfare, chapel affairs, and war damage to churches. We read how deeply he was engaged in welding into one fellowship of faith and service the Methodists throughout the world and in bringing together representative members of different communions within the Christian Church for consultation and service, which led naturally to sympathy with and service for the ecumenical movement.

Many additions might be made to this list did space permit. We see the author as Chairman of two Districts; President of the Conference in 1948; Moderator of the Free Church Federal Council in 1954; musician; crusader against gambling and alcoholism; a traveller in many lands in carrying out his official duties, always enjoying his experiences and appreciating the beauties of scenes through which he passed. Many familiar names meet us in these pages, with occasional anecdotes.

Readers of this book will be thankful that one so gifted should have consecrated his life to the service of his Lord and his fellow-men.

W. L. DOUGHTY.

NOTES AND QUERIES

1127. THE GILBERT FAMILY: A WEST AFRICAN FOOTNOTE.

Gratitude for Mr. Charles Evans's note (*Proceedings*, xxxiv, p. 49 f.) elucidating the relationships of the dynasty of the Gilberts may permit mention of yet another of this remarkable family. Nathaniel (4) Gilbert—presumably one of the "many children" of Nathaniel (3) Gilbert?—was, like Melville Horne (who, one deduces from Mr. Evans, was his first cousin), a curate of Madeley under Fletcher. When the Sierra Leone Company took over Granville Sharp's project for a Christian colony, free of slavery, in West Africa, and facilitated the transfer thence in 1792 of 1,100 negroes from America via Nova Scotia, Gilbert was appointed the first chaplain. Horne joined him soon afterwards. The choice was significant: not only was the colony of evangelical inspiration, but there was a strong Methodist element among the settlers who had been in contact with Conference from Nova Scotian days. A chaplain too uncompromising in his notions of "regularity" would have been an embarrassment. Further, both Gilbert and Horne had, like several other leading officials of the Company, associations with the slave islands of the West Indies.

Gilbert was the emissary of the Governor, John Clarkson (brother of Thomas Clarkson) to the London directors in the first troubled year of the colony's existence. He appears every now and then in the letters of the unspeakable Mrs. Falconbridge. (A. M. Falconbridge: *Two Voyages to Sierra Leone* (London, 1794).) Within two years, however, both he and Horne had finally left Sierra Leone, though each became involved in the slowly rising tide of missionary affairs.

Horne was an early member of the committee of the society eventually known as the Church Missionary Society, and Gilbert's name regularly appears in its subscription lists. He was now incumbent of Bledlow, near Thame, only five miles from Thomas Scott the commentator (whose son married Gilbert's sister Euphemia and became the progenitor of the Gilbert Scotts). The Society planned a training centre for its West African missionaries, and, after failing to persuade Scott to undertake it, proposed in 1806 to place it at Bledlow, where Gilbert might co-operate in the training with William Dawes, a former governor of Sierra Leone, who lived in the parish. The proposal foundered; by this time Gilbert was a sick man, and he died on 5th October 1807 at the age of 45. (The story of the proposed seminary is told from the CMS archives by E. Hole: *The Early History of the Church Missionary Society* (London, 1896), pp. 116 ff.) Hole also refers (pp. 540 ff.) to the West Indian career of Nathaniel (5) Gilbert!

The Gilbert family thus provides another instance of those numerous and sometimes unexpected links between the earlier evangelical movement and the Christian history of West Africa. It may be recalled that it was in the house of Nathaniel (3) Gilbert on 29th November 1758 that Wesley met the first African (i.e. negro) Christian he had known (see *Journal*, iv, p. 292), and that as late as 1864 the then vicar of Madeley, a great-grandson of the same Nathaniel Gilbert, "testified that he had reason to believe that no child or grandchild of the first West Indian Methodist had passed away without being prepared for the better world, and that almost all of them had been even distinguished among Christians for their earnest devotion to the Divine Redeemer" (Tyerman, ii, p. 299 f.).

A. F. WALLS (University of Nigeria).

1128. "CITY ROAD ARRANGEMENT" AT OLDHAM STREET, MANCHESTER.

In his recently-published Wesley Historical Society Lecture, *The Architectural Expression of Methodism*, page 79, Mr. Dolbey states that he has been unable to ascertain whether the pulpit was originally placed behind or in front of the communion space at Oldham Street chapel, Manchester. The answer is given in the following description of the chapel, taken from *A Manchester Guide*, by Joseph Aston (1804), page 128:

The inside will hold a great number of persons; and it is fitted up in a neat, handsome manner. The pulpit, reading desk, and Clerk's pew are formed like those of the established church. There is also another similarity in the communion table, which is placed in the same situation as in the generality of churches, immediately behind the pulpit . . .

I do not know if this arrangement was ever altered. E. A. ROSE.

1129. JOHN EMORY: INFORMATION WANTED.

Dr. John C. Stephens, jun., Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, U.S.A., writes:

In the *Life of the Rev. John Emory* (New York, 1841), written by his son, there is an account of Mr. Emory's journey to England as emissary to the British Conference in 1820. There is on page 127 the following footnote: "While in London, Mr. Emory, at the request of the book steward, sat for his portrait, which was afterward published in the *British Methodist Magazine*." A likeness of Emory appears as frontispiece to this biography, and is labelled: "Engraved by J. Longacre from a painting by J. Jackson, R.A., taken in England in 1820." I am seeking to discover whether or not this portrait still exists, and if it does, where it is now located.

Emory University has no likeness of Bishop Emory. Another institution also named in honour of him is Emory and Henry, located in Virginia. They have a water-colour portrait, but they do not know where it came from. It is at least possible that it is a later copy of the frontispiece to Mr. Emory's biography.

I am very anxious to discover if the 1820 portrait is still in existence. I shall be most grateful for any information or help anyone can give.

Can any reader help Dr. Stephens?

EDITOR.

The Handbook of the Methodist Conference, Sheffield, 1964, is an attractive and business-like publication. The editor must be congratulated on achieving what must be a major concern of everyone who approaches such a task—to do something a little different! The most original feature of this book is a series of devotions for each day of the Conference. Many of our readers will regret to find that there is no write-up of the history of early Methodism in Sheffield; but perhaps the editor thought it unnecessary to repeat—or impossible to add to—what was written in the *Handbook* to the Sheffield Conference of 1951. At the same time, historical material is not altogether lacking, and most of it is related, quite appropriately, to the Conference itself. Two points we venture to query: is it strictly correct to say (p. 58) that the Conference of 1794 rejected "any form of episcopacy", especially in the sense in which episcopacy is defined earlier in that article; or that in 1795 Methodism "made the final break with the Established Church"? However, these are but minor matters, and we hope the sale of the *Handbook* will not be restricted to those who actually attend the Conference.