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Proceedings OF THE Wesley Historical Society

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

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“WESLEY’S DESIGNATED SUCCESSOR”

[The article which follows, and which takes its title from that of Luke Tyerman’s meticulous biography of John Fletcher of Madeley, is substantially the concluding chapter of *The Eagle and the Dove*, a brief study of some new aspects of Fletcher’s life and ministry (noted on page 63 of the previous issue of these *Proceedings*). The study was a final-year project at Wesley College, Bristol, and copies can be obtained from the author at 46, Copgrove Road, Leeds, LS8 2SP, at £1 each.—P.S.F.]

[It is fitting that this should appear in 1979—the year which marks the 250th anniversary of Fletcher’s birth.—EDITOR.]

IN the Preface to his *Life of Mr. Fletcher*, John Wesley stated : No man in England has had so long an acquaintance with Mr. Fletcher as myself . . . Nor was ours a slight or ordinary acquaintance ; but we were of one heart and of one soul.¹

This statement has always been accepted as the truth about the relationship between John Wesley and the Vicar of Madeley ; but in the course of my study of John Fletcher I have kept stumbling across hints that things were by no means as straightforward as that. I did not set out to prove this thesis : like Topsy, it “just growed”.

Let it be said at the outset that there is no claim that John Wesley was fabricating a story, or deliberately asserting what was untrue. Neither was there some insidious hostility between the two men. But we may well want to conclude that their relationship might best be described as ambivalent.

Chronologically, the first incident was in 1760, when Fletcher went to Madeley, and Wesley wrote to him that “others may do well in a living—you cannot ; it is not your calling.”² However, Fletcher remained his own judge of God’s calling for himself during the next quarter of a century. Wesley was equally consistent, and never really accepted it. Persistently he tried (unsuccessfully) to

¹ *Works*, xi, p. 263. (References in these footnotes to John Wesley’s *Works* are to the 11th edition (15 vols.), 1856.)

² A. C. H. Seymour : *The Life and Times of the Countess of Huntingdon*, i, p. 238.

draw Fletcher into the national life of the Methodists; and that hope may have been behind his "laying a plot" for an itinerant preacher, Samuel Furly, to become Fletcher's curate in 1760, and so release the vicar for other work.³

But during the controversy with the Calvinists, Fletcher was drawn into a wider sphere of action, and it is instructive to see Wesley's encouragement of him at this time. His invitation, in 1773, for Fletcher to become his successor is perhaps a sign that he thought he had succeeded. In 1771 he had published Fletcher's *First Check* despite the author's protests; and, as he continued to sponsor and edit Fletcher's side of the controversy, it might not be unfair to call Fletcher, at this time, Wesley's mouthpiece.⁴

When Wesley asked Fletcher to accept nomination as his successor, Fletcher refused. Undismayed, Wesley tried to get Fletcher to go with him in touring the country and meeting the societies. That too was declined, to Wesley's annoyance. As late as the 1784 Conference, the preachers wished that the vicar of Madeley would "come out among us more".⁵

Such hopes were even reflected in Wesley's memorial sermon for Fletcher; and it seems that John Wesley was unable to understand that the "narrower sphere of action" in Madeley was, for its vicar, a far greater honour than "travelling all over the kingdom five, or six or seven months every year".⁶

But was this just an isolated strand of disagreement—a point of friction in an otherwise harmonious friendship? As we look, we start to see other tensions. In 1765 the disgraced Thomas Maxfield spent several happy weeks helping Fletcher in Madeley; but Wesley thought Maxfield's purposes insidious.⁷ Fletcher's assessment of the whole episode, when he wrote to Charles Wesley, seems quite balanced: "J'ai perdu l'esperance de voir une réunion publique entre votre frère et M—d. Ils ne sont pas faits l'un pour l'autre."⁸

Wesley had not deigned to visit Fletcher in his parish until 1764, and at the beginning of 1766 Fletcher asked Wesley to include Shropshire again in that year's itinerary.⁹ But Wesley failed to make his promised visit.

³ *Letters*, iv, p. 118. (Letter to Samuel Furly, 9th December 1760.)

⁴ W. R. Davies: *John William Fletcher of Madeley as Theologian* (University of Manchester Ph.D. thesis, 1965), author's summary, p. 11.

⁵ L. Tyerman: *Wesley's Designated Successor* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1882), p. 546.

⁶ See J. Wesley's *Sermon on the Death of Mr. Fletcher*, III, 11.

⁷ *Letters*, iv, pp. 208-11. (Letter to "A Friend", [May] 1763.) The discrepancy between the dates of this letter and Maxfield's visit to Madeley needs examination.

⁸ Letter dated 8th August 1765. The manuscript, in French, is in the Methodist Archives, Manchester (folio of "Fletcher Letters", p. 29). The sentences quoted may be translated: "I have lost hope of seeing a public reunion between your brother and M[axfiel]d. They are not made for one another."

⁹ The manuscript of Fletcher's letter is in the Methodist Archives, Manchester (ref. MAW F1 36-2). For Wesley's reply, see *Letters*, v, p. 3.

Then in 1769, Fletcher produced a pamphlet (probably the *Appeal to Matter of Fact and Common Sense*), and asked Charles Wesley to look over it because “votre frère est trop affairé pour corriger avec soin”.¹⁰ This is not the only instance of Fletcher's criticism of Wesley's busyness.

When the *First Check* went to the printer, John Wesley scrutinized it, and apparently said that he “had corrected all the tart expressions in it”,¹¹ and he continued to have Fletcher's controversial writings submitted to him before publication. Yet, years later, he praised the *Checks* for their “purity of language”.¹² There seems some inconsistency here! A parallel is in the Preface to Wesley's *Life of Mr. Fletcher*, where, thanking Mrs. Fletcher and others for their contribution, he writes :

I could easily have altered both hers and their language . . . but I was conscious I could not alter it for the better, and I would not alter it for altering's sake; but judged it fairest to give you *most* of their accounts, *very nearly* in their own words.¹³ [my italics]

The most damning item in this series of somewhat disconnected incidents concerns the journey of “eleven or twelve hundred miles” when Fletcher accompanied Wesley on his tour of the north of England and Scotland.¹⁴ Wesley gives no date for this, but Tyerman, in his *Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley*, states that it was in 1776. When Tyerman came to write his life of Fletcher—*Wesley's Designated Successor*—he seemed much less certain of this.¹⁵ He had good cause to be unsure, since the evidence for the journey having taken place at all is flimsy in the extreme. In his *Journal* John Wesley makes no mention of Fletcher ever being with him in such a way; and his letters make no reference in the way we might expect. Fletcher's letters do not speak of his being away for such a time, apart from the journey in November 1776 when they visited the eastern counties, and possibly even went as far north as Yorkshire. That is the only time we can locate such a journey: from what we know, there is no other time when this spring-till-autumn tour could have taken place. Lastly, there is no mention of Fletcher and Wesley being in Scotland or the North together: in vain we might look for something similar to the legend of their meeting near Towcester in Northamptonshire.¹⁶ The faintest clue is in the similarity between a picture of Fletcher and one of John Wesley in Edinburgh.¹⁷

¹⁰ i.e. “Your brother is too busy to correct [the publication] with care.” The manuscript of this letter, dated 20th May 1769, is at the Garrett Theological Seminary, Evanston, Illinois, U.S.A.

¹¹ From Walter Shirley: *Narrative* (1771).

¹² *Works*, xi, p. 286.

¹³ *ibid.*, xi, p. 263.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, xi, p. 290; Wesley's *Sermon on the Death of Mr. Fletcher*, III, 8.

¹⁵ L. Tyerman: *The Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley*, M.A., iii, p. 213; cf. also *Wesley's Designated Successor*, p. 354.

¹⁶ See *Proceedings*, xxxii, p. 188.

¹⁷ Portrait of John Fletcher as frontispiece to L. Tyerman: *Wesley's Designated Successor*, and dust-jacket of G. Lawton: *Shropshire Saint*. Portrait of John Wesley in *A New History of Methodism* (1909), facing p. 232.

If this tour did not take place, it throws further doubt on to the whole reliability of Wesley's memoir of Fletcher. But, more important, this was the very period when Wesley claimed to have come to know Fletcher so well : their whole acquaintance is focused in this tour. If it never did take place, then how well did John Wesley really know Fletcher ?

The next piece of evidence comes from the time of Fletcher's marriage in 1781. John Wesley's own matrimonial experience hardly qualified him for marriage-guidance, yet Fletcher sought his advice. To judge from his later comments, Wesley would have been enthusiastic--his only reservation being to regret the demise of the Christian community at Cross Hall.¹⁸ But if it is true that Mary Bosanquet was the one person in England to whom Wesley was happy to see Fletcher married, then his response at the time was strange. Fletcher quoted John Wesley's curious reply to his request for advice in a letter to his wife-to-be :

"I see no reason why you should not continue a *correspondence*." The question was, may we not converse or correspond as persons designed for each other . . . Thou seest, my dearest, that if Mr. W. says little, he is *not* against it . . .¹⁹

It is also odd that Wesley's (somewhat restrained) letter of congratulation was not written for nearly a fortnight after the event.²⁰

Wesley's appeal to Fletcher in January 1773 about the succession has as its climax : "Thou art the man!"²¹ The biblical allusion of this quotation is unlikely to have escaped Fletcher : it is the crux of the prophet Nathan's denunciation of King David, which we might think a strange choice in the circumstances.

Fletcher never actually accepted Wesley's nomination, so it was perhaps as well that, because of his early death, the issue never arose. But why did Wesley want Fletcher to succeed him ?

Luke Tyerman's massively-detailed biography of Fletcher remains the most meticulous study, even if it fails to capture the spirit of its subject. Its title—*Wesley's Designated Successor*—points to the author's great theme of Fletcher's place as Wesley's right-hand man. If this theme is to be challenged, this is the centre of the matter. Tyerman rightly singles out Fletcher's immense godliness as being his main qualification ; and Fletcher was the obvious candidate in that respect. In other ways, too, there was much to recommend him. He was an ordained clergyman—essential at that stage of Methodist history—and an outstanding preacher; young, and still healthy. The Calvinistic controversy was in full spate, and Fletcher's learning and lucidity were fully in evidence.

So, with his own health apparently failing, John Wesley cast

¹⁸ See *Works*, xi, p. 318.

¹⁹ The manuscript of this letter, dated 11th September 1781, is in the Methodist Archives, Manchester (ref. MAW F1 36—3).

²⁰ *Letters*, vii, p. 93 (letter dated 24th November 1781).

²¹ *ibid.*, vi, p. 11.

around for an heir, and his choice may have been a desperate one, for the spectacle of Fletcher attempting to lead the Methodists is difficult to visualize. Fletcher had consistently refused to itinerate, yet itinerancy remained an intrinsic feature of Methodism: to this day the President of the Methodists must tour the Connexion. Then, one of Wesley's chief criticisms of Fletcher²² was his inability to discipline others. Can we credit Fletcher's capacity to head such a highly organized body as the early Methodists?

Perhaps Fletcher's main lack was that, basically, he was not of leadership potential. His preaching could stir a crowd, and his example inspired many; but the continued direction and control of an organization was not for him. Possibly Wesley failed to recognize that. Maybe he hoped to train him into it. Maybe he considered Fletcher's outstanding sanctity to be ample compensation.

Here we may have the key to the relationship between these two men. John Wesley had the genius of a leader, whatever we may now think of his methods. Fletcher was no leader, yet neither was he a follower. He would go his own way, acknowledging only the sovereign authority of God in Christ. It may be that with that Wesley could not cope. He was used to those who bowed to his authority, as he was also to those who refused to do so. Someone who accepted his oversight but resisted his autocracy Wesley must have found difficult to deal with.

The best that can be said is that theirs was an ambivalent relationship. Of course they were “of one heart and of one soul”²³ in their basic commitment to Christ; but unity in faith does not equal harmony in everything. Between them there was always some degree of reserve, and at times almost opposition. Only their unity of faith kept them on good terms with each other.

There can be no doubt that Fletcher held John Wesley in extremely high regard as a “father in God”. So his letters are not written to a comrade-in-arms, but to a senior officer. That is why in 1766 he could request a visit from the man God had raised up to superintend the Revival. Fletcher's peacemaking at the 1784 Conference was on the basis of father and children,²⁴ but he did not expect a father to be a dictator—rather to have a primacy among equals.

Charles Wesley's relationship with his brother, and with Fletcher, throws an interesting light on all this. Like Fletcher, Charles would go his own way, and not bow to his brother's autocracy. And between Fletcher and Charles was a very different Christian fellowship from that between Fletcher and John. There is a deep Christian companionship revealed in the frank and open letters between Fletcher and Charles Wesley. Fletcher could be indignant: “Your

²² *Journal*, vi, pp. 225-6. See also *Proceedings*, xxxi, p. 179 (letter to Richard Rodda, 23rd September 1785).

²³ *Works*, xi, p. 283.

²⁴ L. Tyerman: *Wesley's Designated Successor*, p. 545.

brother is in Scotland, and you are in the land of forgetfulness";²⁶ or even sarcastic: "I thank you for your kind intention of seeing Madeley once in your life".²⁶ Occasionally there was even a touch of humour: "I shall answer [your question] with a smile, as I suppose you asked it".²⁷ Here was a brotherly affection.

A detective who proves means and opportunity for a crime must still find the motive. Evidence that Fletcher and John Wesley were not always in complete harmony has been presented; but why should John Wesley wish to make it appear differently when he preached his memorial sermon and wrote Fletcher's *Life*? For the moment this must still remain an open question, partly for lack of overwhelming evidence; but to be dealt with adequately it needs further investigation and a lengthy analysis. The comments on some of Fletcher's letters, in Wesley's cipher, for instance, need to be decoded and assessed. It may in the end be concluded that Fletcher and Wesley were sufficiently graceful to absorb such differences; but it may be otherwise. When John Wesley wrote his *Life of Mr. Fletcher*, the memory of an old man may have played tricks, or its truthfulness may be more akin to the straightforwardness of Mark Antony when he went "to bury Cæsar, not to praise him".²⁸

We end where we began, in asserting the ambivalence of Fletcher's relationship with John Wesley. "Ils ne sont pas faits l'un pour l'autre" might well be a good assessment! Wesley's autocracy was unassailable, but Fletcher's response (and they were both stubborn men) was to withhold differing opinion and to go his own way. One of the few people who could have changed the unacceptable face of John Wesley was content instead to stay inside his sentry-box.²⁹

PETER S. FORSAITH.

[After training at Wesley College, Bristol, the Rev. Peter Forsaith is now a Methodist minister in the Leeds Richmond Hill circuit. He was educated at Kent College, Canterbury.]

^{26, 26, 27} The manuscripts of these three letters are in the Methodist Archives, Manchester: (²⁶) dated 31st May [1772] (folio of "Fletcher Letters", p. 44); (²⁶) dated 20th February 1774 (ref. MAW F1 36—1); (²⁷) dated 9th September 1763 (folio of "Fletcher Letters", p. 69).

²⁸ Shakespeare's *Julius Cæsar*, Act III, scene 2.

²⁹ See letter from John Fletcher to James Ireland, dated 13th September 1784 (*Fletcher's Works*, viii, p. 325).

We gratefully acknowledge having received copies of the following periodicals, some of which come to us on a reciprocal basis with our own *Proceedings*.

The Baptist Quarterly, October 1979.

The Local Historian, Vol. 13, Nos. 6 and 7.

The Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society, Vol. 2, No. 3, April 1979.

Methodist History, July and October 1979.

Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society, September 1979.
Cirplan, Michaelmas 1979.

PHILIP DODDRIDGE AND THE OXFORD METHODISTS

THE can be no doubt that the year 1991 will prove to be an interesting one for "the people called Methodists". The bicentenary of John Wesley's death will provide yet another excuse—if one is ever required—to remember with gratitude to God the exploits of such a man. By the same token, 1979 possesses a significance not to be ignored. John Wesley himself reminds us, in his *Short History of Methodism*, that it was in November 1729 that the activities of the Holy Club began in earnest.¹ It could therefore be argued that this year is the 250th anniversary of the beginning of Methodism—a fact of immense significance far beyond the confines of the Methodist tradition. [For further light on the Holy Club, see Mr. John Vickers's note on pp. 90-1.—EDITOR.]

The year 1729 was also an important one in the life and ministry of Dr. Philip Doddridge, whose activities during the early years of the Methodist movement provide several items of historical interest, especially in connexion with certain members of the Holy Club. At a time when mutual suspicion tended to prejudice any improvement in the relationships between the Church of England and Dissent, Philip Doddridge was being prepared in John Jennings's academy at Kibworth Harcourt to contribute towards the easing of tensions. A blend of Jennings's "sentiments of catholicism", Richard Baxter's "moderate" Calvinism² and an "amiable disposition" produced in the young Doddridge a rather exceptional kind of dissenter. Indeed, as the Rev. A. Kingsley Lloyd wrote in these *Proceedings* in 1951, "Philip Doddridge was a nonconformist with a difference",³ whose "nonconformity sat very lightly upon him" but for the one question of subscribing to man-made doctrinal standards. For that reason he remained a convinced dissenter, even when he showed little taste for the combative qualities of early eighteenth-century Dissent. It was in December 1729 that Doddridge moved to Northampton from Market Harborough, to become pastor of Castle Hill church and to set up his own ministerial academy there.

Several years before Doddridge met any of the Methodist leaders, he was engaged in those very pursuits which later characterized the

¹ Wesley's *Works* (4th edn., ed. T. Jackson, 1840-2), viii, p. 334. John Wesley was invited to take over the leadership of the Holy Club by Charles, who was in fact the founder of the group. See F. C. Gill: *Charles Wesley, the first Methodist* (1964).

² See Geoffrey F. Nuttall: *Richard Baxter and Philip Doddridge: A study in a tradition* (Dr. Williams's Library Lecture, 1951). Following Baxter's "moderate" Calvinism, Doddridge rejected certain features of orthodox "high" Calvinism, viz. limited atonement, irresistible grace, etc., whilst still retaining unconditional election and final perseverance. He declined to speak of irresistible grace chiefly on account of its deterministic connotations. Even the high Calvinist John Owen preferred to speak of efficacious grace—a term Doddridge always employed. (See Owen's *Works* (ed. Goold, 1852), x, p. 134.)

³ *Proceedings*, xxviii, pp. 50-2.

Methodist Revival. Within months of his settlement at Northampton, he published a pamphlet concerned to promote a revival of "personal religion". In *Free Thoughts on the most probable means of Reviving the Dissenting Interest*, Doddridge pleads for preaching that should be "evangelical, experimental, plain and affectionate", in contrast to the rather arid, excessively doctrinal and moralistic discourses frequently heard, even in dissenting pulpits. Another example serves to illustrate Doddridge's essentially "Methodist" outlook—again from the year 1729. While John Wesley was conducting the devotional exercises of the Holy Club in Oxford, Philip Doddridge was preaching his sermon *Christ's Invitation to Thirsty Souls*⁴ in Northampton. However, the sermon was not published until 1748, by which time the Holy Club had been dispersed and Methodism had become a nationwide phenomenon. When George Whitefield, whom Doddridge had met in 1739, read a copy of the sermon, he wrote to its author:

Dear Sir, I must thank you for your sermon. It contains the very life of preaching, I mean sweet invitations to close with Christ. I do not wonder you are dubbed a Methodist on account of it.⁵

In addition to Whitefield's fascinating suggestion that Doddridge was now regarded, at least in the eyes of some, as a Methodist, the sermon in question provides us with yet another link with the Oxford Holy Club. It was dedicated to James Hervey,⁶ who in 1743 had become the rector of Weston Favell, a mile or so from Northampton. According to Wesley, Hervey joined the Holy Club in 1732, about two years before Whitefield. After leaving Oxford, he spent some time in Devon, before moving to Weston Favell. The close proximity of their respective ministries brought Doddridge and Hervey frequent opportunities of fellowship. The friendship was evidently a deep one, judging by the dedication of Doddridge's sermon. It has the hallmark of the author's noble-minded catholicity: alongside the sentiments of gentlemanly respect is the affirmation of an evangelical bond, far outweighing the significance of any differences over churchmanship.

Before we return to Doddridge's acquaintance with George Whitefield and the Wesleys, reference should be made to another member of the Holy Club. Doddridge's first knowledge of Oxford Methodism appears to be as early as 1737—two years before his meeting with Whitefield. According to John Wesley's account, Benjamin Ingham joined the Holy Club a short time before Hervey. He later accompanied the Wesleys on their mission to Georgia, returning to England in 1737. On 10th September of that year, Doddridge met Ingham, and his diary provides an interesting account of their meeting:

⁴ Doddridge's *Works* (ed. Williams and Parsons, 1802-5), iv, pp. 199-224.

⁵ *ibid.*, ii, pp. 585-607.

⁶ Whitefield's *Works* (ed. J. Gillies, 1771), ii, pp. 214-16.

⁷ Hervey was born at Hardingstone, near Northampton, in 1714—the same year as that of the birth of Whitefield. See L. Tyerman: *The Oxford Methodists* (1873), pp. 201-333.

. . . He told me also that God was beginning His work not only at Oxford, where it was advanced, but likewise in many other parts; and indeed expressed such a sense of divine things in his own heart, such dependence upon the Spirit, such deep and experimental religion, that it was almost unparalleled . . . I must say, I hardly know any conversation or any occurrence, that has brought my soul nearer to God, or has made me more fit for my everlasting rest.⁸

It was inevitable that Whitefield's preaching excursions would bring him into contact with Doddridge. In his *Journal* for 23rd May 1739, Whitefield recorded: "Reached Northampton about five in the evening, and was most courteously received by Dr. Doddridge, master of the Academy there . . ."⁹ That same evening, the evangelist preached on the Racecourse, to a large congregation, preaching to an even larger gathering the following morning. On his birthday, 26th June 1739, Doddridge revealed in the following *Diary* entry his growing interest in the religious developments of the day. He thanked God

. . . for adding to me the friendship of some excellent persons, among whom I must mention Mr. Whitefield . . . , and giving to me the prosperity of the Gospel in some remarkable instances, both at home and abroad. These things impress my heart. Oh, may they melt it more and more!¹⁰

Doddridge was, by the early 1740s, clearly committed to the revival movement. Things were otherwise with his friend and mentor, Isaac Watts.¹¹ The older man's extreme caution was typical of the dissenters' general attitude to the Methodists. When Watts learned that on 28th July 1743 Doddridge had actually taken part in one of Whitefield's services in London, heavy censure was inevitable. Writing to Doddridge, Watts declared his mind:

I am sorry that since your departure I have had many questions asked me about your preaching or praying at the Tabernacle, and of sinking the character of a minister, and especially of a tutor among the Dissenters, so low thereby.¹²

The storm became a hurricane when, in October of the same year, Whitefield preached for Doddridge at Castle Hill, Northampton. On this occasion the windows behind the pulpit were removed to enable the large concourse of people to hear. Nathaniel Neal, one of the board of trustees supporting Doddridge's academy, expressed the board's disapproval: "I now find myself obliged to apprise you of the very great uneasiness which your conduct herein has occasioned them."¹³

The situation was further aggravated when some dissenting

⁸ Doddridge's *Correspondence and Diary* (ed. J. D. Humphreys, 1829-31), v, p. 386. Humphreys incorrectly assumes the "clergyman" to have been John Wesley, who was still in Georgia at the time. For Ingham, see Tyerman: *The Oxford Methodists*, pp. 57-154.

⁹ Whitefield's *Journal* (ed. I. Murray, 1960), p. 273.

¹⁰ Doddridge's *Correspondence*, v, p. 401.

¹¹ See A. P. Davis: *Isaac Watts* (1943), p. 45 f.

¹² Doddridge's *Correspondence*, iv, p. 269.

¹³ *ibid.*, iv, p. 274.

ministers in the west of England, formerly Doddridge's students, had openly associated with the Methodists. After receiving complaints about these developments, Neal wrote again to Doddridge :

There are letters shown about town from several ministers in the west, which make heavy complaints of the disorders occasioned by Whitefield and Wesley in those parts. . . . These letters likewise mention that some ministers there who were your pupils, have given them countenance; and you can hardly conceive the disrespect this has occasioned several ministers and other persons in town to speak of you with.¹⁴

Doddridge did his best to pour oil on troubled waters; after all, his academy depended upon the support of the Coward trustees. He dare not alienate them. After wisely stating that he was "not so zealously attached" to Whitefield as to "celebrate him as one of the greatest men of the age" or as the "pillar that bears up the whole interest of religion among us", he made it plain that he saw no grounds on which to suspect the judgement of the ministers in question—Risdon Darracott of Wellington and Benjamin Fawcett of Taunton. At a time when many dissenters were leaning towards Arianism, Doddridge summed up his position thus: "I am sure I see no danger that any of my pupils will prove Methodists: I wish many of them may not run into the contrary extreme."¹⁵

Doddridge did not meet John Wesley until 1745. In his *Journal* for 9th September of that year, Wesley states that he

left London, and the next morning called on Dr. Doddridge, at Northampton. It was about the hour when he was accustomed to expound a portion of Scripture to the young gentlemen under his care. He desired me to take his place.¹⁶

As with George Whitefield—who asked Doddridge to revise his *Journal*¹⁷—Doddridge's friendship with John Wesley was to prove a fruitful one. In 1746, Wesley consulted Doddridge about a reading list for his preachers. Doddridge's reply provides a comprehensive and, one would imagine, formidable course of reading. Reflecting what was then regarded as his own "liberal" approach to ministerial education, Doddridge declares to Wesley:

I dare say, Sir, you will not by any means imagine that I mean to recommend the particular notions of all the writers I have here mentioned. . . . But I think that in order to *defend the truth*, it is very proper that a young minister should know the chief strength of error . . .¹⁸

Doddridge also encouraged a "sacred criticism" of the Scriptures, and in the most adroit manner rebuked some of the "extravagant reveries" of certain Methodist preachers, which had "filled the minds of so many, and brought so great a dishonour on the work of God".¹⁹ Although Doddridge sought to rectify certain features of the Methodist behaviour—surely the very disorders that Wesley himself took pains to discourage—yet he made it clear that the new

¹⁴ *ibid.*, iv, p. 289.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, iv, p. 293.

¹⁶ Wesley's *Works* (4th edn.), i, p. 489; *Journal*, iii, p. 206.

¹⁷ Whitefield's *Works*, ii, pp. 214-16.

¹⁸ Doddridge's *Correspondence*, iv, p. 492.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, iv, p. 491.

movement had his support. After reading Wesley's *Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, Doddridge communicated his opinion of it:

I have been reading (I will not pretend to tell you with what strong emotion) the fourth edition of your *Farther Appeals*, concerning which I shall only say, that I have written upon the title page, "How forcible are right words!"²⁰

With the exception of the lesser-known hymn-writer Robert Seagrave,²¹ Doddridge's writings were well received by the Methodists. Writing to Risdon Darracott, with an obvious reference to Doddridge's "best-seller" *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul* (1745),²² Whitefield said: "I rejoice in the success of the Doctor's books, and pray the Lord earnestly to bless all his labours more and more. . . ."²³ When writing to the Rev. William Baddiley, domestic chaplain to the Countess of Huntingdon, Whitefield warmly applauded Doddridge's magnum opus, the *Family Expositor*: "I am like-minded with you in respect of Dr. Doddridge's Commentary. He is a glorious writer."²⁴ John Wesley studied the *Expositor* during the preparation of his own *Notes upon the New Testament* (1754). In the Preface he wrote: "I am indebted for some useful observations to . . . the *Family Expositor* of the late pious and learned Dr. Doddridge".²⁵ An interesting example is given by Dr. Stanley Frost of Wesley's preference for a reading of Doddridge's, on homiletical grounds, and in defiance of other and better authorities.²⁶

Doddridge will continue to be remembered chiefly as a hymn-writer. There is, unfortunately, no evidence that he ever saw any of Charles Wesley's hymns. However, the two men did meet. There clearly was an affinity between them, judging by Charles's words: "We had the satisfaction of two hours' conference . . . with that loving, mild, judicious Christian, Dr. Doddridge."²⁷ Doddridge's hymns possess that same spirituality found in the hymns of Charles Wesley. "O happy day that fixed my choice"²⁸ is shot through with Methodist experience. The theology of the "warm heart" is nowhere better expressed than in the last verse of "My gracious Lord, I own Thy right . . .":

²⁰ Henry Moore: *Life of John Wesley* (1824), ii, p. 101.

²¹ For Seagrave (1693-1760), see *Dictionary of National Biography*. He wrote in defence of Whitefield in 1739. When Doddridge published a reply to Henry Dodwell's *Christianity Not Founded on Argument* (1742) (see Doddridge's *Works*, i, pp. 467-590), Seagrave wrongly thought that Doddridge was denying the need of the Holy Spirit for saving faith.

²² Doddridge's *Works*, i, pp. 209-466.

²³ Whitefield's *Works*, ii, p. 346.

²⁴ L. Tyerman: *The Life and Times of the Rev. George Whitefield* (1877), ii, p. 260.

²⁵ op. cit. (1754), Preface, p. v.

²⁶ *Proceedings*, xxvii, pp. 5-6.

²⁷ Charles Wesley's *Journal*, 15th August 1749; extract given in John Wesley's *Journal*, iii, p. 425 n. Unlike John Wesley, both Charles and Doddridge were happily married.

²⁸ *Methodist Hymn-Book* (1933), No. 744; *Congregational Praise* (1951), No. 373. Doddridge did not write the chorus sometimes appended to this hymn (see *Proceedings*, xli, pp. 167, 191, 192).

His work my hoary age shall bless,
When youthful vigour is no more,
And my last hour of life confess
His love hath animating power.²⁹

If the "warm heart" was the essential feature of the early Methodist experience, with its emphasis on assurance, the preaching of a "felt Christ" and the desire for "inward holiness", then it is hardly surprising to find Philip Doddridge very much "at home" within the infant Methodist movement. True, his "catholicity" brought him acquaintance with other Anglican clergy³⁰—even bishops who were acutely embarrassed at the activities of Whitefield and the Wesleys. One becomes increasingly aware, however, that Doddridge's own fervent desire for vital godliness and the work of evangelism produced a very special bond between himself and the Methodist Anglicans. Denominational barriers were of little consequence to him when bringing men to Christ was the grand obsession of the heralds of God's grace. Even the doctrinal controversy between the two great evangelists was never a source of embarrassment to Doddridge, whose Baxterian evangelicalism was a *via media* between Whitefield's Calvinism and Wesley's Arminianism.

Doddridge's influence was still felt after his death in 1751. George Whitefield was in America when he received news of this event. Characteristically, he wrote to a friend: "Dr. Doddridge I find is gone; Lord Jesus, prepare me to follow after!"³¹ On receiving a portrait of the "late worthy Dr. Doddridge", in 1754, Hervey wrote:

I hope, when I view it . . . that it will address me with the Apostle's admonition, "Be ye not slothful, but followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises."³²

In his *Journal* nine years later, John Wesley records visiting a certain Dr. Gifford, whom he found "as friendly and courteous as Dr. Doddridge himself".³³ Although never a member of the Holy Club, the venerable Samuel Walker of Truro, when writing to Darracott, confessed: "I have not your warm heart. Doddridge was not my tutor. Dear man! I love him more since I have known you."³⁴ Perhaps, after all, it was not very surprising that Doddridge should have been "dubbed a Methodist". That sermon, preached in the eventful year of 1729, was to prove typical of Doddridge—the scholarly saint, the "nonconformist with a difference". ALAN C. CLIFFORD.

[The Rev. Alan C. Clifford, B.A., M.Litt. is the minister of Great Ellingham Baptist church, Norfolk.]

²⁹ *Congregational Praise*, No. 437; *Primitive Methodist Hymnal*, No. 351.

³⁰ See Geoffrey F. Nuttall: "Chandler, Doddridge and the Archbishop: a study in eighteenth-century ecumenism", in *Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society*, i (1973), pp. 41-56. ³¹ Whitefield's *Works*, ii, p. 249.

³² James Hervey's *Works* (1797), v, p. 369.

³³ Wesley's *Works*, iii, p. 149; *Journal*, v, p. 42.

³⁴ Charles Stanford: *Philip Doddridge* (1880), p. 105. For Walker and Darracott, see G. C. B. Davies: *The Early Cornish Evangelicals (1735-1760)* (1951), pp. 171-3. Also for Walker, see J. C. Ryle: *Christian Leaders of the Eighteenth Century* (1978), pp. 306-37. (Ryle also deals with Hervey's life, as well as with other Methodist leaders.)

MISSIONARY COMPETITION BETWEEN EVANGELICAL DISSENTERS AND WESLEYAN METHODISTS IN THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY

A Footnote to the Founding of the Methodist Missionary Society

THE purpose of this article is to take a fresh look at an old question regarding Wesleyan Methodist involvement in foreign missions. Why did the Wesleyan Methodists, one of the first evangelical denominations to undertake overseas missions in the mid-eighteenth century, wait until 1818, long after the evangelical Baptists, Independents and Anglicans had established their respective societies, to found a missionary society of their own?¹ As we shall see, the answer to this question tells us a great deal about the complex relationship that existed at this time between a growing missionary consciousness within the Wesleyan camp and the Connexion's sometimes uneasy association with other evangelical denominations that also had an eye to foreign missions.²

Wesleyan resistance to forming a central missionary organization during Wesley's lifetime was largely due to Wesley himself. Though no enemy to foreign missions, Wesley preferred to concentrate the resources of his connexion on the harvest at home, and on several occasions opposed expanding Wesleyan missions beyond the stations already existing in Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, and the West Indies.³

After John Wesley's death in 1791, the superintendency of the Wesleyan mission as it then existed fell almost entirely into the hands of Thomas Coke, who jealously guarded his prerogatives and resisted sharing administrative responsibilities with others in the Connexion. Many historians argue that Coke's autocratic rule over Wesleyan missions, which extended well into the nineteenth century, also served to delay the establishment of a denominationwide

¹ Most of the major evangelical foreign missionary societies were founded before 1800. They included the Baptist Missionary Society (1792) (the first foreign missionary organization to be founded by an evangelical denomination), the London Missionary Society (1795), which was a union of Independents, Calvinistic Methodists, members of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion and Scottish and English Presbyterians, and the Church Missionary Society (1799), which was patronized almost exclusively by Anglicans.

² MS. materials I have used include the minutes and correspondence of the Methodist Missionary Society and the London Missionary Society, both deposited in the archives of the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London, and the Pawson Letters from the Methodist Church Archives recently deposited in the John Rylands Library, Manchester. I would like to thank Dr. J. D. Walsh of Jesus College, Oxford, for reading the manuscript of this article and making several valuable suggestions.

³ cf. J. D. Walsh: "Methodism at the end of the Eighteenth Century", in R. E. Davies and E. G. Rupp (eds.): *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, I (London, 1965), p. 300.

missionary society.⁴ Why then did a small group of Wesleyans in the city of Leeds choose 1813 as the year in which to found the first of several provincial organizations which were eventually to comprise the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society established in 1818?

In this article I do not seek to set out in full all of the reasons for the establishment of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society.⁵ Rather, I wish to draw attention to only one factor—not sufficiently stressed by most Methodist historians—which at least helps to account for the sudden burst of energy on the part of the Wesleyans around 1813 to found their own missionary society.⁶ Simply stated, the Wesleyans were forced into this decision by an aggressive fund-raising policy of the Calvinistic-dominated London Missionary Society which threatened not only to capitalize on the financial resources of all evangelical denominations, but indeed to dominate the entire foreign mission field through the development of a national organization vastly superior to anything then in existence. A closer examination of the LMS and its relationship with the Wesleyans would therefore appear to be a useful exercise.

The London Missionary Society was founded in 1795 by a group of Calvinistic Methodists, Independents and Scottish Presbyterians who envisioned a society that would systematically harness the resources of all British evangelicals—Baptists, Anglicans and Wesleyans included—to convert the heathen to Christianity on a grand scale.⁷ After the creation of LMS auxiliaries led by cadres of dedicated and well-organized fund-raisers in almost every major town and in many villages by the second decade of the nineteenth century, the Wesleyans, who lacked a formal organization, and even the Baptists, whose still small missionary organization was founded in 1792, felt uncomfortable—perhaps even threatened—under the shadow of what seemed to them an increasingly ambitious Calvinistic organization.

At first, the London Missionary Society was very circumspect in its relationship with the Wesleyans. One of the Society's first acts in 1795 was to assure Coke that its purpose was "to act as brethren towards missionaries from other denominations".⁸ Indeed, LMS directors like John Eyre, editor of the *Evangelical Magazine*—a publication closely associated with the LMS—could be found preaching in Wesley's City Road Chapel in 1798 about the need for co-

⁴ cf. B. Semmel: *The Methodist Revolution* (New York, 1973), p. 158. Coke, who was not a talented administrator, was assisted by several committees, including the Committee of Finance and Advice which was appointed in 1804 when the mission faced financial collapse. For all practical purposes, however, Coke continued to run the mission on his own authority.

⁵ cf. *ibid.*, pp. 155 f., 167-9.

⁶ See especially John A. Vickers: *Thomas Coke* (London, 1969), pp. 300 f., 353 f.; G. G. Findlay and W. W. Holdsworth: *The History of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society* (London, 1921), i, pp. 37 ff.

⁷ See R. H. Martin: "The Pan-Evangelical Impulse in Britain, 1795-1830: With special reference to four London societies" (Unpublished Oxford University D.Phil. thesis, 1974), pp. 63 ff.

⁸ London Missionary Society Minutes, 29th September 1795.

operation between Arminians and Calvinists. This sermon led at least one prominent Wesleyan naïvely to believe that after almost half a century of controversy, the Calvinists were now willing "to acknowledge us as brothers, to love and esteem us, and to strengthen not weaken our hands".⁹ And as late as 1806 there was still a great deal of goodwill between Wesleyan itinerants on missionary fund-raising expeditions and their counterparts from the LMS, who, as one Stamford Wesleyan told Coke, not only avoided competition but also "lent us their assistance on the Lord's day".¹⁰ This period of goodwill, however, was not destined to last very long.

Although the London Missionary Society had promised co-operation with the Wesleyans, its early successes in establishing missionary stations around the world was of no small concern to the Connexion. As John Pawson told Joseph Benson in 1797,

I was a good deal struck in reading the *Evangelical Magazine* the other day, to see how the different body of Dissenters are uniting in order to send Missionaries almost over all the world, and also into the dark parts of this nation.

Pawson went on to predict that "if we do not take great care they will rob us of our glory [and] outdo us in zeal and activity".¹¹

Pawson's prediction was to prove accurate. As early as 1798, the LMS was considering a mission to the West Indies, long a mission-preserve of the Wesleyans, and no appeal on the part of Coke could persuade the directors of the LMS that direct competition in this area with the Connexion's mission might be redundant and counter-productive.¹² By the second decade of the nineteenth century the expansionist policy of the LMS had greatly alarmed the Wesleyans. In November 1809 and then again in January 1810, Coke was prophesying doom—warning his brethren that "if we do not keep up a full supply of missionaries [in the West Indies], God will give up that great work to the Calvinists".¹³ Even on the home

⁹ Methodist Archives, Pawson Letters: J. Pawson to J. Benson, 9th April 1798. The title of Eyre's sermon was "Union and Friendly Intercourse Recommended Among Such of the Various Denominations of Calvinists, and Members of the Late Mr. Wesley's Societies as Agree in the Essential Truths of the Gospel".

¹⁰ Methodist Missionary Society Home Correspondence, Box 1: R. C. Brackenbury to T. Coke, 19th August 1806.

¹¹ Methodist Archives, Pawson Letters: J. Pawson to J. Benson, 25th November 1797.

¹² London Missionary Society Home Office Extra (B1, F1, JD): T. Coke to Directors of the LMS, 26th February 1798; LMS Minutes, same date. Christopher Sundius, a noted Wesleyan layman and a director of the LMS at this time, was among those who debated whether or not to establish an LMS mission in Jamaica. (We do not know whether he opposed or favoured the mission.) According to Mr. Vickers, Coke was inclined to take a less cordial view of the LMS after the above-mentioned episode. See Vickers, op. cit., p. 302. Nevertheless, Wesleyan representatives still attended LMS anniversaries in London each May, as did Coke in 1798 and 1808, John Pawson and Thomas Rankin in 1799, and Jabez Bunting in 1805.

¹³ MMS Home Correspondence, Box 1: T. Coke to R. Johnson, 15th November 1809 and 1st January 1810; cf. Vickers, op. cit., pp. 300, 302.

front, Coke was anxious that his denomination's plan to send a mission to France might be eclipsed by the LMS, which had recently introduced French into the curriculum of its missionary academy at Gosport, run by the Independent minister David Bogue. "Oh let us send Christianity in the form of Methodism, to France," Coke wrote to George Highfield, because "Bogue's youngsters will supplant us, if we do not make haste."¹⁴

What finally provoked the Wesleyans to take action against these incursions, however, was the aggressiveness with which London Missionary Society fund-raisers were beginning to take missionary collections in Wesleyan chapels. It should be pointed out that the LMS saw nothing wrong in this activity. The name of their society was simply "The Missionary Society", and almost all of its directors believed, as I have argued elsewhere,¹⁵ that their organization was indeed *the* missionary society for all evangelicals who wished to patronize it, the Wesleyans included.¹⁶ Consequently, by the second decade of the nineteenth century, the Wesleyans faced the spectre of losing financial support to the Calvinists at a time when their own mission needed every penny it could scrape together to survive. Writing in 1810, two Wesleyan itinerants on a fund-raising tour for the Connexion complained to Robert Smith, the secretary of their Missionary Committee in London, that "the Calvinists dog us from place to place and they aim to lead astray all they can".¹⁷ Two years later, Coke reported to Smith that

The London Missionary Society are forming committees of two or three of our friends, to raise annual subscriptions among *our* societies and hearers for the support of *their* mission. This they have been doing for some time by the means of their friends *only* . . . But they are *now* endeavouring to enlist our friends in the work . . . A Rev. Mr. Collinson [sic] has already been here and at Newcastle, and, I believe, at Bristol, and all over the kingdom, to preach in *our* Chapels as well as other places for the *Calvinist* missions.¹⁸

And in 1813, George Banwell of Chichester was writing to Smith about John Hunt, the Congregationalist brother of Leigh Hunt and a director of the LMS, who for the purposes of fund-raising "went and hired one of the houses which was offered us". Banwell went on to complain that Hunt

¹⁴ ibid., Box 1 : T. Coke to G. Highfield, 26th December 1811.

¹⁵ Martin, op. cit., pp. 76 ff.

¹⁶ The Missionary Society's name was a cause for concern to a number of Wesleyans, including Richard Watson, who complained about it to Bunting. Apparently Methodists often supported the LMS under the mistaken impression that its fund-raisers represented the Wesleyan mission. (See Findlay and Holdsworth, op. cit., p. 43n.) This low opinion of the LMS was also held by Andrew Fuller, the secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society. See J. C. Marshman: *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman and Ward* (London, 1859), i, p. 395.

¹⁷ MMS Home Correspondence, Box 1 : J. Alexander and J. Eddy to R. Smith, 22nd June 1810.

¹⁸ ibid., Box 1 ; T. Coke to R. Smith, 29th October 1812. The "Rev. Mr. Collinson" referred to is George Collison, divinity tutor at Hackney College and an LMS director from 1803.

is a powerful and bitter enemy to the cause of Methodism [and] in this mission, he watches us as narrowly as a cat does a mouse and says he'll oppose us wherever we go.¹⁹

Perhaps no one was more aware of the need to counter London Missionary Society fund-raising activities than Coke himself. As early as 1812, in response to LMS attempts to obtain financial support among Northumberland Wesleyans, Coke was proposing a nationwide subscription to support his own missionaries.²⁰ One year later, in July 1813, he was on tour in Dublin, this time advocating the formation of auxiliary missionary societies throughout Ireland to raise missionary subscriptions.²¹ Indeed, the formation of a missionary society in England could very well have been on Coke's mind when, on a visit to Leeds in the summer of the same year, he witnessed the alarming success of the West Riding Missionary Society, a newly-established branch of the LMS, which included among its subscribers several prominent Wesleyans.²² But it was principally due to the efforts of Jabez Bunting, at that time Chairman of the Leeds District, that the Methodist Missionary Society finally came into being.

Like Coke, Bunting was concerned about the inroads made by London Missionary Society fund-raisers among fellow-Wesleyans. In September 1813 he wrote to Robert Smith that

it is impossible for me to tell you the strong sensations that some of us felt when we read, in the last *Evangelical Magazine*, that the Dissenters had recently preached and made collections in one of our chapels in Leeds for their Missions, at a time when our own missionary affairs are so awfully embarrassed.²³

One month later, he and his colleagues had established the Methodist Missionary Society of the Leeds District, the sole purpose of which was, significantly, to augment on a more organized basis the missionary fund-raising activities in the Leeds area.²⁴ That this society—the first of several provincial societies to be established between 1813 and 1818—was founded primarily to counteract the LMS cannot be disputed. Responding to the idea of forming a missionary society in Leeds, the chairman of the Sheffield District suggested that this was an excellent way “to counter the influence of the Dissenters”.²⁵ And when, at the founding meeting of the

¹⁹ ibid., Box 1 : G. Banwell to R. Smith, 1st December 1813. It should be noted that LMS fund-raisers were also taking collections in Baptist and Anglican churches.

²⁰ ibid., Box 1 : T. Coke to R. Smith, 29th October 1812.

²¹ See A. Stevens: *The History of Methodism* (17th edn., New York, 1861), iii, p. 334 f. In the spring of 1813, and on Coke's initiative, the Missionary Committee passed resolutions aimed at organizing missionary support in each District. These proposals, however, were not acted upon. See Vickers, op. cit., p. 353.

²² Findlay and Holdsworth, op. cit., p. 38; G. Smith: *History of Wesleyan Methodism* (2nd edn., London, 1862), p. 545 f.

²³ Cited in Findlay and Holdsworth, op. cit., p. 43 f.

²⁴ *Methodist Magazine*, 1813, p. 950.

²⁵ Findlay and Holdsworth, op. cit., p. 42.

Leeds society, William Eccles, Independent minister of the city's White Chapel and a prominent director of the LMS, suggested to the assembled Wesleyans that "the missionary cause is but *one*, and that in which all denominations of Christians are united", Bunting pointedly corrected any misconceptions that might have arisen from Eccles's proclamation by instructing the assembly that

there is no *common* fund in existence, out of which all Missionary establishments may claim and receive pecuniary assistance. The cause is *one*, but it is promoted by *several* distinct societies, each of which has its *distinct* and *separate* fund.²⁶

Bunting was discreetly telling the London Missionary Society to keep its hands off Wesleyan money.

The Leeds Missionary Society, as we have mentioned, was the first of several auxiliaries to be founded at this time. These auxiliaries were principally money-raising agencies created to serve the Methodist mission as it had already existed under Thomas Coke's superintendency.²⁷ As such the auxiliaries did not, like the London Missionary Society, appoint and send out missionaries, but had the duty only of collecting subscriptions. It was not until 1818 that the auxiliaries were united under one central authority located in London and called the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society. It was this organization that finally had the power to co-ordinate the activities of the provincial societies and, with the approval of the annual Conference, to appoint and station missionaries.

ROGER H. MARTIN.

[Dr. Roger H. Martin is Assistant Professor of History at Middlebury College, Middlebury, Vermont, USA.]

²⁶ T. P. Bunting: *The Life of Jabez Bunting* (London, 1887), ii, pp. 50-2; cf. Smith, op. cit., pp. 549-50. (Italics in original.)

²⁷ cf. N. A. Birtwhistle: "Founded in 1786: The Origins of the Methodist Missionary Society", in *Proceedings*, xxx, pp. 25 ff.

The August 1979 issue of the *Journal* of our Lancashire and Cheshire branch was a special "Bunting" number—commemorating the bicentenary of the birth of Dr. Jabez Bunting in Manchester on 13th May 1779. Copies are still available, price 25p. each, and may be obtained from the Secretary of the branch, Mr. E. Alan Rose, 26, Roe Cross Green, Mottram, Hyde, Cheshire.

Also available is the catalogue of the Exhibition held to commemorate the re-opening of Wesley's Chapel on 1st November 1978 and two hundred years of Methodism in Islington and Finsbury (pp. 6), and copies may be obtained from Mr. John S. Ellis at Archway Central Hall, Archway Close, London, N.19 3TD.

A Guide to the Parish and Non-Parochial Registers of Devon and Cornwall, 1538-1837, compiled with an introduction by Hugh Peskett, has been published in the Devon and Cornwall Record Society's Extra Series, volume ii, pp. lxxvi. 258, with 42 maps. Copies, price £5 including postage, are obtainable from the Assistant Secretary, Devon and Cornwall Record Society, 7, The Close, Exeter.

MORE LOCAL HISTORIES

We gladly publish details of the following which have recently arrived on the Editor's desk, and congratulate the authors on their production.

"Noah's Ark": A century before and after—a brief history of the Methodist people of Kirkby-in-Ashfield, by J. Barrie Smith (pp. 64) : copies, price 75p. post free, from the author at Cranwood, 12, Birch Tree Crescent, Kirkby-in-Ashfield, Nottingham, NG17 8BE.

The Rock from which . . .—a history of Methodism in Sutton-in-Ashfield, by J. Barrie Smith (pp. 115) ; copies, price £1 post free, from the author (address as above).

The Church on the move—the story of the beginning of Ewesley Road chapel, Sunderland, 1904-79, by Mrs. Barbara Cowie and the Rev. Eric W. Dykes (pp. 32) : copies from Mr. Dykes at 2, West Mount, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, SR4 8PY.

Methodism in Walton-on-Thames, by the Rev. Leslie F. Skinner (pp. 70) : copies, price £1 20p., from the Rev. Victor Sharples, 42, Sandy Way, Walton-on-Thames, Surrey, KT12 1BN.

Cornsay Colliery: Portrait of a Durham Mining Village, by T. T. Ayer (pp. 68), also a supplement listing the inhabitants of the village in 1890, 1910, 1920, and 1935 : copies of the main booklet (price £1 50p. plus 17p. postage) and supplement (price 40p. plus 11p. postage) from the author at 2, Mitchell Street, Annfield Plain, Stanley, Co. Durham.

Methodism in Maidenhead, 1829-1979, by Peter Hardiment (pp. 112), published by Barracuda Books Ltd., Radcliffe Hall, Radcliffe, Buckingham, price £6 95p. (stiff covers).

Catherine Holme remembers its Source and Trust—centenary brochure of Catherine Holme chapel, near Appleby-in-Westmorland, by the Rev. David F. Clarke (pp. 16) : copies, price 30p., from the author at 7, Malmesbury Road, Coventry, CV6 2HX.

A Centenary Souvenir—Scawby Brook, by the Rev. Dr. Oliver A. Beckerlegge (pp. 8) : copies, price 20p., from the author at Wesley Manse, Wrawby Road, Brigg, Lincs, DN20 8DL.

St. Dunstan's Church, Bedminster Down, by Jack F. House (pp. 48) : copies, price 50p. plus postage, from the author at 11, Southfield Court, Westbury-on-Trym, Bristol, BS9 3BL.

St. Francis' Church, Ashton Gate, by Jack F. House (pp. 32) : copies, price 50p. post free, from the author (address as above).

The Story of Methodism in Sevenoaks from 1746, by the Rev. William D. Horton (pp. 34) : copies, price 50p., from the author at 6, The Drive, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN13 3AE.

St. Margaret's Church, Whitley Bay, 1878-1978—centenary brochure (pp. 28) : copies, price 25p., from Miss M. Carey, 62, St. George's Road, Cullercoats, North Shields, Tyne and Wear.

Newlyn Towners, Fishermen and Methodists, 1800-1978—an outline history by Ben Batten (pp. 48) : copies, price £1 60p. plus 21p. postage, from the author at Sea Crest, 49, New Road, Newlyn West, Penzance, Cornwall.

Various Churches in Newcastle upon Tyne Brunswick Central Circuit, by Miss N. Humphrey (pp. 20) : copies, price 50p. plus postage, from the author at 45, Alwinton Terrace, Gosforth, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE3 1UD.

BOOK NOTICES

John Wesley, by Stanley Ayling. (Collins, 1979 : pp. 350, £7 50p.)

It is a tribute to the stature of Wesley, even in a reductionist age like ours, that a professional historian, who has already taken George III and the Elder Pitt as his biographical subjects, should now turn to the founder of Methodism as one of the major figures of eighteenth-century England. Mr. Ayling brings to his task a lively mind and a practised hand. He has succeeded in presenting familiar material (for he draws on few new sources) with admirable freshness in a most attractive and often witty style. We are almost persuaded that yet another study of Wesley was genuinely necessary.

It is an unusually human Wesley that we meet in these highly readable pages. His portrait is painted with a realistic brush, and one gains the impression of being introduced to the man he probably was. There is no attempt to obscure either the indecision of Wesley's youth or the inflexibility of his later years. He emerges as one whose judgement was exposed on occasion as being more than minimally suspect, and whose credulity, particularly in relation to reports of religious phenomena, bordered on the naïve. Mr. Ayling effectively challenges the common assumption that when the anti-Methodist violence subsided after the first turbulent decade, the incidence of psychological disturbance similarly declined.

Considerable if not disproportionate attention is paid to John Wesley's relationships with women, from his Oxford days onwards. An entire chapter is allocated to his marriage, and Molly Vazeille is treated with much more sympathy than is usually accorded to her. The increasing differences between John and his brother Charles are underlined to such an extent that it is even suggested that a permanent breach might have ensued. On the other hand, Mr. Ayling is careful to record Wesley's positive qualities. On page 321 he writes :

His faith was matched by his courage, his single-mindedness by his tireless energy. His sense of mission, his hunger to save souls, defied alike the rebuffs of detractors and the passage of years. He combined to an unusual degree strength of mind, force of character and power of will.

Some of the author's own assessments are open to question. Was Wesley so lacking in humour as is apparently assumed? Can he be dismissed as dictatorial without taking into account the affection of the "people called Methodists" for their father in God? And are the strictures against the regimen of Kingswood School altogether justifiable when we consider the educational standards of the period? More seriously, one gains the impression that a secular historian finds it hard to appreciate either the nature of Wesley's spiritual experience or the evangelical doctrine which underlies it. We miss the profound theological insight of a Martin Schmidt—but then that is not the kind of book Mr. Ayling set out to write.

A. SKEVINGTON WOOD.

John Wesley and his World, by John Pudney. (Thames & Hudson : pp. 128, £4 50p.)

Ecclesiastes xii. 12 could well apply to books about John Wesley, for certainly where he is concerned "of making many books there is no end"—and still they come! [See also Dr. Skevington Wood's review of Stanley Ayling's *John Wesley* above.] Recently to hand is a profusely-illustrated volume by John Pudney. It tells the story of Wesley's life in a style which is eminently readable, although the bulk of the narrative falls excessively

on the earlier period of his life, leaving but a small proportion of the book for later years. The illustrations, with two exceptions, are excellent, and go a long way towards helping the reader to realize the world in which Wesley lived. The two exceptions are (a) the portrait of a lady appearing on page 6 is not that of Susanna Wesley (see *Proceedings*, xxxvii, pp. 59, 132.—Our friends at the New Room, Bristol, by whose courtesy the picture is reproduced, should have known better!) and (b) the ticket on page 67 is not a Methodist class-ticket.

There are a few slips: on page 26, Jack Capon was the village school-master, and not, as far as I know, a clergyman; on page 60, the "Conversion Hymn" is inaccurately quoted; on page 120, Christ Church, Oxford should not be referred to as "Christ Church College"; and there is considerable confusion, both in the text and in the index, over a person variously referred to as "John Hervey" (pp. 78, 126), "James Harvey" (pp. 33, 34, 126) and "James Hervey" (p. 124); although the eighteenth-century spelling of this person's name varied between "Hervey" and "Harvey", the generally-accepted version is now "James Hervey". We note with interest a letter from John Wesley to Hervey (p. 79) which is not in Telford's Standard edition of John Wesley's *Letters*.

On the whole, then, this is a commendable introduction to the life and world of John Wesley, and, as book prices go today, it is a bargain at £4 50p.

JOHN C. BOWMER.

My Providential Way: A Biography of Francis Brotherton Westbrook, by G. E. Radford, with a Foreword by the Rev. Norman P. Goldhawk. (Privately published: pp. [vi.] 149, no price stated.)

The Rev. Francis B. Westbrook, B.A., Mus.D., a member of our Society for many years, and our lecturer at the Bristol Conference of 1974, died on 19th September 1975 in the seventy-third year of his age and the fiftieth of his ministry. He left a journal extending to fourteen volumes, together with a large collection of other material, tabulated with meticulous care; and Mrs. Betty Radford, a close friend, is not so much the author of a memorial biography as the presenter and annotator of Dr. Westbrook's autobiography, with the assistance of Mrs. Westbrook and several friends.

In these pages we learn something of the struggle and poignancy of the early days, of his love for his family, his call to our ministry, his college days at Didsbury, and his service as a circuit minister, coupled with his devotion to music and his achievements both as performer and composer. Inevitably in such a situation, he often felt intense frustration at his inability to use his gifts to the full. Only within three years of his death did he attain a position in which he would have wished to spend half a lifetime—the Principalship of the Williams School of Church Music at Harpenden. We also read his assessments of many of his contemporaries in the musical and connexional fields. A man of many idiosyncrasies—writing up his journal, for instance, in various coloured inks corresponding to the liturgical seasons—Francis Westbrook is nevertheless shown to have been an essentially lovable character—"the friend of all and the enemy of none".

There is a 12-page section of well-printed illustrations, but the text ought to have received attention from an expert copy-preparer and typographer. Some well-known names are misspelt, and more careful proof-reading could have eliminated many "literals". Nevertheless, all who read this book will appreciate its devotion to the memory of a departed friend whose gifts have enriched twentieth-century Methodism in so unique a fashion.

ALFRED A. TABERER.

NOTES AND QUERIES

1324. THE "RISE OF OXFORD METHODISM".

Methodism's addiction to the celebration of centenaries has now reached the point of commemorating a non-event! Oxford has recently been celebrating the 250th anniversary of the "founding of the Holy Club" in November 1729, and it seems that, not content with having restored the wrong "Wesley rooms" at Lincoln College, the "city of dreaming spires" has allowed itself to be "caught napping" again. The facts in brief are that the "Holy Club" never existed except as a nickname, the first known occurrence of which (in case anyone wishes to celebrate it) was in November 1730. One can scarcely "find" a nickname; nor indeed was there any "founding" of what was an informal and largely spontaneous spiritual movement among a (numerically) insignificant minority of Oxford students.

This is not to deny the immense significance of the movement as one tributary of the Evangelical Revival, especially through its influence on the Wesley brothers; but rather to prefer the facts to the popular myth. Latter-day Oxford Methodists would have done better to keep to the phrase preferred by Wesley himself, and to celebrate the first rise of Oxford Methodism.

The facts themselves have been uncovered in fascinating detail by the painstaking work of Dr. Richard P. Heitzenrater. His findings are set out in an article in *Methodist History*,¹ and brought up to date in a report of his lecture at the World Methodist Historical Society Regional Conference in July 1978.² Ironically, his decipherment of the Oxford Diaries recently aroused much interest in the popular press (among which, in this context, we may include the *Methodist Recorder*); though the corrective effects on the traditional account of Oxford Methodism have clearly been negligible so far. (Witness the article by the Rev. Kenneth Garlick in the *Methodist Recorder* of 29th November 1979.) As Dr. Heitzenrater himself says, "the simplistic picture of an organization with a title and a meeting place is difficult to alter in the mind of the public."³ What follows is no more than an attempt to summarize his main findings.

The traditional account of the "Holy Club" has become part of Methodist mythology partly as the result of Wesley's own inaccurate recollections, and partly through the influence on later historians and biographers of Marshall Claxton's much-reproduced painting. The latter embodies and perpetuates several widespread misconceptions: (a) at no time were all those depicted at Oxford together; (b) they rarely met in groups of more than six; (c) there was no single meeting-place; (d) they spent more time in acts of social concern than in either devotions or discussion; (e) they met to engage in discussion rather than to listen to any one man; (f) they were at no time a "club" with clearly-defined rules or membership.

Dr. Heitzenrater's work on the Diaries enables us to see just how informal and fluid the situation was. He writes:

There appear . . . to have been several levels of groups meeting together with various degrees of proximity to the leadership of John Wesley.

¹ R. P. Heitzenrater: "The Oxford Diaries and the First Rise of Methodism", in *Methodist History*, xii, No. 4 (July 1974), pp. 110-35.

² "Oxford Methodism Reconsidered" (a summary of Dr. Heitzenrater's paper), in *Methodist Minorities and Methodists in the Majority* (WMHS (British Section), 1979).

³ Heitzenrater, op. cit., p. 113.

There were the persons meeting directly and regularly with John for study and prayer (although the membership of these groups differed between weekday and weekend meetings). These persons then appear to have gone their separate ways and met with other friends at other times, to form a second level of study groups (such as the one led by Charles). Members of these groups (such as Ingham) then appear to have formed under their guidance yet another level of groups . . . Even though John Wesley was the acknowledged leader of the movement, there was no strict organizational hierarchy . . . And while many persons in the peripheral groups joined with Wesley and the others in their charitable designs, some appear never to have entered into any sort of direct participation with Wesley himself. With this intricate arrangement of groups and varying degrees of direct relationship to John Wesley, complicated by the normal changeover of students in the University setting, it is rather difficult to portray a simple view of the "Holy Club" meeting with its "director", John Wesley.⁴

Those not already familiar with Dr. Heitzenrater's article will find in it detailed treatment of the way in which this movement of the Spirit developed between Wesley's return to Oxford in the autumn of 1729 and his departure for Georgia six years later. Their appetite will be whetted for the even fuller treatment that is promised, as well as for the first volume of the *Journal* in the new Oxford "Wesley". JOHN A. VICKERS.

1325. METHODIST BELLS.

Mr. Christopher F. Stell of the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England), Fortress House, 23, Savile Row, London, W.1, writes:

The note (No. 1321) from the Rev. Thomas Shaw (*Proceedings*, xlii, p. 67) raises the question of the purpose and distribution of chapel bells. It is not necessary to assume that a single bell was used primarily as a call to worship, and in some chapels where a public clock was provided its use to strike the hour may have predominated. Farnley Hill, Leeds, was given a clock and wooden octagonal bellcote in 1828, and Faddiley chapel in Cheshire (erected 1873) still has its clock with bellcote above. At Wardle (Lancashire), the former chapel of 1809 used to be surmounted by a square wooden bellcote; here there was no clock, and perhaps it follows the long tradition of chapel bells established in Lancashire since the early eighteenth century. Further north, Frostrow near Sedbergh has a stone bellcote of 1886 with a single bell, whilst in the south of England Bradfield in Essex (c. 1850) also has a bellcote, and the chapel at Lodders (Dorset), erected in 1827, has a small stone bellcote—the bell from which used, ten years ago, to stand loose outside the front porch.

I do not doubt that other examples of Methodist bells, particularly of the late nineteenth century, could be found, and further inquiry into their use as clock bells, service bells or school bells is desirable. The need for a single bell must have been especially felt in country areas where clocks were scarce and services perhaps uncertain. Of towns and cities such as Bristol, where social pretension rather than need would appear to have been the motive, one of the earliest attempts must have been in Chester, where in 1764 it was proposed to erect a bell on the new Octagon chapel—a proposal which, however, was not carried out. Many of the grand Gothic steeples of the later nineteenth century have the appearance of bell towers, and whilst most will be found entirely empty, I would be surprised

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 127.

if one or two do not contain, if not a peal of bells, at least provision for them should a wealthy donor chance to appear.

[In the *Methodist Recorder* of 9th September 1979, the circuit steward of the Christchurch and Lymington circuit, Mr. Cyril G. Rackett, reports that at Crowle Hill (near Ringwood, Hampshire) Methodist chapel, the congregation is called to worship by the ringing of a bell. Mr. Rackett also recalls that at Hindhead in Surrey (Petersfield and Hazlemere circuit) a bell was rung at service-time, but the chapel is now demolished. This is followed by two instances of Methodist belfries. One is at Copplestone in the Ringsash circuit, and the other at Sticklepath in the Okehampton circuit, but it is not known whether either of these bells is still rung. Can any of our readers supply information ?

An interesting bell came to my notice recently. In the belfry of the parish church of the little Northumberland village of Ancroft, near Berwick on Tweed (only a few miles from the Scottish border) there is said to be a bell dated 1829 which was brought from Wesley's Chapel, London. I visited Ancroft a few months ago and tried to inspect this bell, but the tower was undergoing repairs, and no visitors were allowed. I eagerly await the time when access will be possible and I can report my findings in these Notes. Meanwhile it would be good if someone could examine the records of Wesley's Chapel for any reference to the transfer of this bell.—EDITOR.]

1326. FADDILEY METHODIST CHAPEL.

Faddiley chapel, mentioned by Mr. Stell in the foregoing note, is in the Nantwich circuit, and stands beside the A534 Wrexham-Nantwich road some four miles from the circuit chapel. Sad to relate, the services there have recently been discontinued, and disposal of the contents of the building has begun. The bell, however, was removed some years ago, at a time when extensive roof repairs were being carried out, and the aperture in the bellcote has been filled in with brickwork. Its current whereabouts are not known, but according to present information it was made of copper, and in fact was never in regular use. The clock also seems to have given less than efficient service over the years, and its hands have mostly stood still for a quarter of a century or more.

The village of Faddiley was the home of William Allwood (erroneously spelt "Alwood" in the Standard edition of John Wesley's *Letters*), who was one of the early Methodist preachers—an itinerant from 1756 to 1764—and some of whose descendants are still active in the Nantwich circuit.

ALFRED A. TABERER.

Readers of the *Proceedings* may be interested to learn that the Methodist Study Centre has introduced a correspondence course of study entitled "The Life and Times of John Wesley : A Study of English Church History, 1689-1795". This course will be of value to anyone wishing to acquire a fuller knowledge of the Evangelical Revival and its background, but it is specially suitable for those who offer the subject as their option in the relevant section of the University of London syllabus for the degree of Bachelor of Divinity. The course lasts for one year, starting from 1st July, and registration must reach the Methodist Study Centre, Room 78, 1, Central Buildings, Westminster, London, S.W.1, 9NH by 1st June. The registration fee is £7.