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# Proceedings

OF THE

## Wesley Historical Society

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

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### JOHN BENNET AND EARLY METHODIST POLITY

JOHN BENNET, the Methodist preacher who with Charles Wesley's connivance stole John Wesley's bride, was also one of the architects of early Methodist connexionalism. Greatly admiring the Quakers, he took cuttings from the polity of the Society of Friends and tried to graft them on to the stock of the Methodist Society. The Friends had their Monthly Meetings for individual societies, Quarterly Meetings for regional groups, and a Yearly Meeting for the whole country. From 1744 Wesley held his own annual Conference, possibly with some indirect Quaker influence via Bennet. After some initial setbacks, the Quarterly Meeting idea was successfully transplanted, and here Bennet was undoubtedly horticulturist-in-chief.<sup>1</sup> Monthly Meetings never took on, though Bennet himself had been conducting them regularly in his own "round" from 1743.<sup>2</sup>

Fresh evidence of Bennet's eagerness to develop Methodist polity along Quaker lines is furnished by a document in Drew University, here reproduced by kind permission of the librarian, Dr. Arthur E. Jones, jun. This is an address—perhaps it would be more appropriate to use the Quaker term "epistle"—endorsed by Bennet: "To the Stewards at Birstol, May 4th 1749." Like many of his contemporaries, Bennet was unable to decide how to spell the name of the West Riding home of his preaching colleague John Nelson. On successive days in 1743 his diary records it as "Burstal" and "Burstol"; on the same day in 1747 we find both "Burstall" and

<sup>1</sup> See *London Quarterly Review*, January 1949, pp. 28-37.

<sup>2</sup> The first reference appears in an early fragment of his diary, in the Methodist Archives, London, under the date 2nd May: "We had a Monthly Meeting. Seemed very free, and John Wood and Jos. Lingard were chosen as Stewards over the Men for the Year following. Jane Bagshaw and Mary Dayne over the Women. And agreed that in our Private Meetings the Scriptures should be read." For other examples see 1st July and 1st August 1743, 7th July, 1st and 4th August 1744, and 1st April and 4th November 1747.

the more usual "Birstal"; and on other occasions, as here, the form "Birstol".<sup>8</sup>

The location is placed beyond dispute by the fact that on 4th May 1749 Bennet was in Birstall doing some recruiting work for the cause of Quarterly Meetings. On 18th April he had attended William Grimshaw's pioneer Quarterly Meeting at Todmorden Edge, now six months old. Two days later he conducted his own Quarterly Meeting at Woodley, Cheshire. On 1st May he was present at a similar gathering in Leeds, but noted: "The Business of the Day was not so transacted as I could have wished." And so to Birstall, where he preached on the 2nd and attended the Quarterly Meeting on the 4th. His diary gives no details of the procedure at the meeting, but the Drew document would seem to imply that the agenda included an exhortation on Methodist polity and discipline by Bennet. This probably entailed the formal reading of the manuscript, which may then have been left with one of the local stewards.

It seems likely that the document which Bennet prepared for the Birstall gathering was only a transcript of one that he had already used elsewhere and would use at other places—one element in his general scheme to mould Methodism in the image of the Society of Friends. It formed a part of the background material envisaged in the resolution passed at the following Conference, which really launched this experiment upon the Methodists at large:

Q[uestion] 9. But some of them know not the nature of Quarterly Meetings. How shall we help them?

A[nswer]. Desire John Bennet, 1. To send us up his plan. 2. To go himself as soon as may be to Newcastle and Wednesbury, and teach them the nature and method of these meetings.<sup>4</sup>

A few months later Bennet was indeed in Newcastle, but one suspects that his hasty marriage to Grace Murray and the tangled web of negotiations and controversy of which this formed the central feature distracted his mind somewhat from Methodist polity, just as it caused him to neglect his diary. Nevertheless this document seems to have held more than local significance, and therefore merits close study.

It was pointed out some years ago by the Rev. Frederick Hunter and myself that in preparing his brief on behalf of Quarterly Meetings for the 1749 Conference Bennet copied into his letter-book the four folio pages of the Friends' *Epistle from the Yearly Meeting for 1747*.<sup>5</sup> It was with some excitement that I detected echoes of this in the document prepared for Birstall, which on careful collation proved to be no more than a digest of the closing exhortations of the

<sup>8</sup> Diary, 27th and 28th April 1743; 17th December 1747; 25th December 1744; 2nd and 4th May 1749.

<sup>4</sup> Wesley Historical Society *Publication* 1, p. 65; cf. *London Quarterly Review*, 1949, pp. 34-6.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 33-4.

*Epistle*, with some interesting variations, omissions and additions. Indeed only one sentence in Bennet's manuscript is completely original—that which opens section III, addressed to the leaders of Methodist classes and bands. Here and there the ideas are slightly re-phrased, but for the most part Bennet's address is a word-for-word reproduction of the passages selected from his original. The more important variations should be mentioned here. The "we" of the *Epistle* is replaced by Bennet's "I". Simplicity of dress and speech is urged upon Methodists in imitation (apparently) of primitive Christianity rather than of primitive Quakerism as in the *Epistle*—a following of "the ancients" rather than of "ancient Friends". Bennet carefully omits the whole section on Divine Worship, with its exhortation "to wait in Awfull Silence for the Manifestations of the Divine Life". Similarly, where the *Epistle* urged "the frequent reading of the Holy Scriptures" in family devotions, Bennet excises the alternative "or such other books as tend to inculcate the precepts of a pious and virtuous life", firmly replacing it with "family prayer". Another of his additions is the reference to catechizing children, though the following admonition from Solomon reproduces the *Epistle*. Even the closing salutation is an exact quotation apart from the "I".

Bennet's address is written on one side only of a foolscap sheet, and reads as follows:

To the Stewards.

Brethren.

1st. The Original Purpose and Design of these our Quarterly and Monthly Meetings was the Exercise of a Prudent & Christian Care of the Churches in General, that Peace and good Order may be maintain'd, and that all of Us might adorn our Profession of Godliness with good Works. It behoveth us in all such Assemblies, to have our Minds Seasoned with a Sense of the Weight of the Work we are engaged in, and to exert Ourselves with an holy Zeal for the Cause of God, and the Promotion of his Truth, carefully watching ag [ains] t an exalted Spirit, which w'd strive for Mastery & Dominion; Labouring in Love and Meekness of Wisdom to be helpfull one unto another. *Let Nothing be done thro' Strife, or vain Glory.*

Phil. 2. 3

II. I also tenderly remind You of that Xtian Simplicity and Self-Denial found amongst the Antients. Their Plainness of Speech & Apparel was remarkable; and the Scorn & Derision they patiently underwent upon those Acc [oun] ts did demonstrate that their Practice therein proceeded not from an Affectation of Singularity but was purely Conscientious: But Alas, how are many degenerated in these respects, and by a mean Compliance wth. the Customs & Fashions of this present evil World under the mistaken Notion of rendering themselves more agreeable to others, are become contemptible. A Departure from the Primitive Plainness in Speech & Apparell has opened a Door to the Practice of such Pleasures, Follies, & Corruptions as they were redeemed from & conscientiously forsook.

It is a just remark a *Worthy Man* made, "That a revolting from the Form of Godliness is often attended with the Loss of the Power of it."<sup>6</sup>

III. It is your Duty to inculcate into the Minds of the Leaders when assembled the necessity of these Practices, in order that they may instill them into the Minds of the Brethren in their several Classes & Bands. For although Virtue passes not by lineal Succession, nor Piety by Inheritance, yet we trust that the Almighty will have a Special & gracious regard to such Endeavours.

IV. Let every Leader faithfully Discharge his Duty, being Examples in Meetings in their Families, in their Employment, Diligently & humbly watching over their Hearts. Add to this their frequent reading of the holy Scriptures, using family Prayer, daily inculcating the Precepts of a Pious & virtuous Life on every tender Mind.

Such endeavours will be attended with the blessing of the most High.

Lastly, let me desire You to urge upon the Brethren That important Duty of Catechising Children, so much neglected of late Pro. 22. 6 amongst Us, Tho' Solomon hath said, *Train up a Child in the Way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.*

I Salute You in Brotherly Love, and in the fellowship of our Lord Jesus Christ. To him be Glory now & for ever. *Amen.*

J. BENNET.

We have noted that Bennet's much-practised, much-publicized Methodist Monthly Meetings did not catch on. Nor (we suspect) are modern Methodists unduly distressed that one of the lesser by-products of John Wesley's broken heart is that the three Ms failed to become familiar initials. We must also sadly acknowledge that neither the original recital of this address nor any hypothetical use on later occasions seems to have had the desired effect upon the Birstall stewards, for Bennet's diary for Thursday, 1st February 1750, records:

Being the Quarterly Meeting at Burstol I assisted the Stewards &c in regulateing the affairs of the Society. But Alas! They all seem'd confus'd, and no regular Order was observed.—Oh! wt. need of Discipline.

Within a few years a dissatisfied Bennet left the Methodist societies to sort out their own administrative difficulties, forsaking the complexities of Methodist connexionalism for the more restricted problems of an Independent congregation.<sup>7</sup> FRANK BAKER.

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<sup>6</sup> Bennet adds the phrase "a *Worthy Man* made", and adds the quotation marks. The *Epistle* does not treat this as a quotation, and Bennet seems strangely to have missed its source, but in fact it is a clear echo of 2 Timothy iii. 5.

<sup>7</sup> See Tyerman's *Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A.*, ii, pp. 24-5.

## CHARLES WESLEY AND THE AMERICAN LOYALISTS

[This is the second of two articles on Charles Wesley and America. The first, "Charles Wesley and the American War of Independence", appeared in *Proceedings*, xxxiv, pp. 159-64.—EDITOR.]

ONE of the more immediate results of the Peace signed between the United States and Great Britain in 1783 was the throwing up into sharp relief of the problem of the Loyalists. Britain was in no position to bargain from strength with the Americans, and it appeared to many that the British Government had forsaken the interests of those who had been loyal to their King and "parent state" throughout the war. With this view Charles Wesley agreed, and apart from his obviously biased adverse comments on the British negotiators, draws salutary attention to a problem which, in our own day, is still very much with us: that problem of countless thousands who for various reasons have become awkward in the world of international politics on account of their beliefs and loyalties. Thus the refugee question was as much a concern in the 1780s as it is in the mid-twentieth century.

Charles Wesley was appalled by the apparently callous treatment of the Loyalists by the Government—drawing much of his information from Joseph Galloway, who had testified before the House of Commons in 1779 on the state of the Loyalists in America, and who had already supplied Charles with material for his poem "The American War", as well as for the "Hymns on Patriotism . . .". At the end of the latter volume, Wesley has a group of seven poems specifically dealing with the fate of the Loyalists. The last poem of this group, "The Testimony of the American Loyalists / 1783", gathers up all the themes of national and international dishonour about which he had written extensively over the previous five or six years. The opening stanza of the poem gives expression to the hopeless position of the refugee, in whatever country or century he lives:

Outcasts of men, by all forsook,  
To whom shall we for succour look ?  
To whom our griefs declare ?  
Will high or low incline their ear,  
Or with humane compassion hear  
The cry of sad despair ?<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the war the position of the Loyalists had become steadily worse. At first the majority condemned the objectionable acts of the British Parliament, but strongly opposed separation from the Empire. Before April 1775 few efforts were made to suppress the Loyalists, but following the skirmish at Lexington, when war

<sup>1</sup> "Hymns on Patriotism . . .", p. 1 (new series), ll. 1-6. "The Testimony of the American Loyalists / 1783" begins a new pagination in the MS. volume. From Wesley's own dating it was obviously written later than the other poems, but, presumably on the grounds of theme, it has been bound with them.

seemed to be inevitable, measures against them increased in severity.

The Loyalists contributed about 60,000 men to the royal colours, organizing themselves in militia companies under commissions from the Crown. Colonel Rankin, whom Wesley mentions at some length, was an officer of this kind in York County, Pennsylvania, and acted as a Loyalist spy under the code name of "Mr. Alexander". In September 1781 Rankin made a curious but intriguing proposal to attack Philadelphia, enlisting the support of the Loyalists. At a council of war the British commanders were divided in their opinions on the project, and the whole idea was dropped. But Wesley must have believed that this was part of some mysterious plot to deny the Loyalists their proper participation in the war, and that this denial was due to the sympathy of the commanders towards the "Rebels". In a poem entitled "Loyalty Rewarded", Wesley comments:

Who has not heard of Rankin's proffer  
To bring the rebel Congress over,  
At Little York to take them napping  
Without a mother's son escaping . . .

And in answer to the injunction that no blood should be spilled in the expedition, Wesley invents the following dialogue between Rankin and Sir Henry Clinton, who had replaced Howe as Commander-in-Chief of the British army:

Rankin replies, ["If none is slain,  
My work is to begin again;  
I cannot save them all I own [']":  
"Then let the *Gentlemen* alone,  
"That still our Faction's brave upholders  
"May keep their heads upon their shoulders".<sup>2</sup>

It did seem as if the Loyalists were being rejected and persecuted by both sides. As early as 1775 persecution by the Americans had begun when all who refused to take the oath of allegiance to the new Government by Congress were denied rights of citizenship—in curious contradiction to the principles of freedom of speech and action for which the revolutionaries were professing to fight. In many cases Loyalists were forbidden to pursue professions or to acquire or dispose of property. Nearly all states eventually enacted legislation banishing those who refused to swear allegiance and confiscating their property. This measure was based on the advice of Thomas Paine, whose pamphlet *Common Sense*, published in January 1776, contained the proposal that one way to finance the rebellion was to confiscate the property of those remaining loyal to the King; and at least one-third of the population, including most of the wealthy people, were Loyalists during the Revolution. On 24th June 1776 Congress declared the property of all Loyalists subject to seizure, and late the following year advised states to sell the estates of those who had lost their citizenship rights and to invest the proceeds in continental certificates. About £10,000,000 was probably involved,

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 91, 92, ll. 1-4, 15-20.

since this was the figure claimed from the commission set up by the British Government after the war to inquire into compensations. The example of Rankin is probably typical, and Wesley's comments might be applied in more general terms to the Loyalists as a whole:

Rankin withdraws—not unpursued  
By men that thirsted for his blood,  
The rebels, as fierce savages  
His wealth and ample fortune seize:  
Proscrib'd he flies, of all bereft,  
With only a good conscience left.

But how is loyalty regarded  
Or by his Country dear rewarded?  
He loses all, her cause to serve:  
His Country suffers him—to starve . . .<sup>3</sup>

The fortunes of the Loyalists fluctuated as the tide of battle swept back and forth across their particular territory. Some of their misfortunes must be attributed to themselves, for their own loyalty could not always be relied upon. If things went badly, they disappeared, as General Burgoyne discovered to his cost when he advanced on Saratoga; although those who did remain faithful to him were rewarded with homes in Canada. Furthermore, their own political apathy enabled the Revolution to get well under way before they awoke to the situation. Galloway testified in 1779 that he had never heard of any Loyalist Associations opposing the Whigs in any part of Pennsylvania. He went on to say that instead of taking part in colonial politics they withdrew from "the noisy blustering and bellowing patriots".<sup>4</sup>

In Philadelphia, during the British occupation, many of the militia complained of cold treatment by British officers. Galloway, who had his own social axe to grind and is possibly not too reliable a witness, stated that the Loyalists who came into the city "had been plundered of everything in the world".<sup>5</sup>

Punish'd for their Leader [']s sin,  
Scourg'd for madness not their own,  
By infernal arts drawn in,  
Hear the loyal sufferers groan!  
Who shall bid their sufferings cease,  
Who shall give them back their peace?<sup>6</sup>

So comments Wesley on the situation, and it is quite true that the British abandoned the majority of the Loyalists when Philadelphia was evacuated in 1778; yet it is difficult to see what else they could have done. New York was already full of refugees, and it was no easy matter to withdraw only the army. Several unfortunate Loyalist leaders fell victim to the harsh laws of the state which branded Loyalists as traitors with the penalty of death without benefit of

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 92, ll. 27-36.

<sup>4</sup> Claude Halstead Van Tyne: *The Loyalists in the American Revolution* (Peter Smith, New York, 1929), p. 87.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p. 246.

<sup>6</sup> "Hymns on Patriotism . . .", p. 15, ll. 25-30.

clergy. John Roberts was one of these, and was mentioned by Galloway in his examination. Wesley takes up the story in verse:

Witness the venerable man [John Roberts]  
Whose blood with that of thousands slain  
Beneath the altar cries:  
The martyr his reward receives  
But an eternal monument leaves  
Of C [linto]n's cowardice.<sup>7</sup>

An ominous hint of what was to ensue with regard to the Loyalists in general came in October 1781, when Lord Cornwallis, who had conducted a fairly successful campaign in the Carolinas in order to seek out the roots of disaffection, surrendered at Yorktown in Virginia. The calamity struck England a heavy blow, and virtually ended the war. Added to the military disaster was the apparent abandonment of the Loyalists which the Articles of Surrender implied. The tenth article of Cornwallis's surrender terms, which asked that no inhabitant of York or Gloucester who had aided the British should be punished, was refused, and it is with this refusal in mind that Wesley commented on the Yorktown débâcle.

. . . Till headlong and precipitate  
C [ornwalli]s rush'd upon his fate:  
Yielding at once without a stroke,  
And passing, tame, beneath the yoke,  
He beg'd the haughty Foe to spare  
His sutlers and his tools of war,  
But left the Loyalists to feel  
The mercy of those Fiends from Hell . . .<sup>8</sup>

The fate of the Loyalists was more or less sealed at Yorktown, and when, just over a year later, the Preliminary Articles of Peace were signed, it seemed to Wesley that those who had kept faith with their King had been completely forgotten. He believed that Shelburne, the Prime Minister, had failed to enforce some kind of protection for them because he lacked sympathy for their cause:

Of ill-got wealth and power possest,  
Cou'd pity move a patriot's breast,  
Or make a Sh [elburn]e feel?<sup>9</sup>

In fact, Shelburne had done as much as he possibly could for the Loyalists. During the previous ministry under Rockingham, Benjamin Franklin, the American emissary, had proposed that Canada be ceded to America in order that the Loyalists might be resettled there under American rule. This proposal, however, was dropped, and when Shelburne eventually brought the peace negotiations to fruition he had little strength from which to bargain, and the best he could do was to extract some kind of promise from Franklin that each state in America would deal with its own claimants for compensation—which amounted to the states doing nothing whatever about it.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, p. 8 (new series), ll. 49-54.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, p. 11 (new series), ll. 37-8.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p. 101, ll. 55-62.

Wesley's analysis of the political situation may not have been very accurate, but his poems on the fate of the poverty-stricken American refugees who had taken up residence in England are extremely pungent :

So be it then ! if God decrees  
Ordains, or suffers it to be  
For wisest ends unknown,  
The land from which our Fathers came  
Our native soil we see, and claim  
The country for our own.<sup>10</sup>

The poem continues by pointing out the great poverty of the refugees, many of whom had been brought so low from positions of wealth and importance :

We who for all a table spread,  
Are forc'd to beg our bitter bread . . .<sup>11</sup>

It is estimated that 200,000 Loyalists died, became refugees or were exiled during the course of the war. The reward for their loyalty and the compensation for their exile are ironically described by Wesley in the final stanza of his "Testimony of the American Loyalists / 1783":

And if the Patriots still prevail,  
And public faith & justice fail,  
A full reward we have,  
For all our sufferings in their Cause  
While Britain doth our every loss  
Compensate—with a grave!<sup>12</sup>

Wesley may have been wrong in most of his judgements on the necessity for and conduct of the war, which are all coloured by his predominant High Church Toryism and almost fanatic adherence to the person of the King; but he is right in emphasizing the plight of the real sufferers in the struggle. His bitter words put into the mouth of a Loyalist might well apply to those streams of hopeless, miserable and stateless refugees of all races that seem to be the inevitable backwash of international peace-making and diplomacy :

" You that on Britain built your hope,  
" Nor wou'd, like us, your King abjure,  
" Confident now to both look up  
" For succour and protection sure :  
" Where is your King [?], the scoffing croud  
" Exclaim, [?] and where is now your God ? [?]<sup>13</sup>

DONALD S. BAKER.

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<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, p. 73, ll. 1-6.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, p. 74, ll. 19-20.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, p. 12 (new series), ll. 55-60.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, p. 124, ll. 19-24.

## JOHN WESLEY'S CHURCHMANSHIP

[This is the last article in the series CATCHWORDS OF "THE CONVERSATIONS". Previous contributions were: I. "A Converting Ordinance and the Open Table" by John C. Bowmer (March 1964); II. "Apostolic Succession and the Threefold Ministry" by Albert B. Lawson (June 1964); III. "Episcopacy" by Victor E. Vine (September 1964); IV. "The Real Presence and the Lord's Supper" by A. Raymond George (December 1964). Copies of these back numbers are available from our Publishing Manager at 2s. 6d. per copy.—EDITOR.]

*I am an High Churchman, the son of an High Churchman.*

THE LETTERS OF JOHN WESLEY, vi, p. 161.

THE statement, which is often quoted as evidence that John Wesley remained a strong Oxford High Churchman throughout his life—"I am an High Churchman, the son of an High Churchman"—occurs twice in John Wesley's letters in June 1775. In that month Wesley wrote to the Earl of Dartmouth, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, and to Lord North, the Prime Minister, letters in which he protested against the policy of using force against the American colonists. (The Battle of Bunker's Hill took place on 17th June 1775, two days after Wesley's letter to Lord North was written.) In the letter to Lord North Wesley said:

I do not intend to enter upon the question whether the Americans are in the right or in the wrong. Here all my prejudices are against the Americans; for I am an High Churchman, the son of an High Churchman, bred up from my childhood in the highest notions of passive obedience and non-resistance. And yet, in spite of all my long-rooted prejudices, I cannot avoid thinking, if I think at all, these, an oppressed people, asked for nothing more than their legal rights.<sup>1</sup>

Here, Wesley's reference to his High Church upbringing comes in as part of a political argument. If he, as a High Churchman, could nevertheless feel that the Americans were only asking for their legal rights, surely that implied that they had a case to be answered? Wesley was not talking about ecclesiastical opinions in the ordinary sense, but about the disastrous theory of passive obedience to monarchy which foundered in England in terms of its results: men who believed in the theory of Divine Right found themselves committed in advance to the policies of such kings as Charles I, Charles II and James II; in Wesley's own lifetime George III's American policy provided a final, destructive test of the theory.<sup>2</sup>

In any case, however, Wesley's use of the term "High Churchmanship" depended less upon its exact meaning (if it could be satisfactorily defined) than upon the kind of point that he was

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, vi, p. 161.

<sup>2</sup> I sometimes think that the theory of passive obedience survives today only in the Church: one catches an echo of the tradition in the present Archbishop of York's recent pathetic appeal that no one should criticize the Church in public.

anxious to make. By 1777, for instance, he had changed his mind about the American colonists; he regarded them as rebels, and wanted to encourage support for the flagging cause of George III. This might be described as the natural line for a High Churchman to adopt in the circumstances, but when Wesley wanted to appeal to English Dissenters to show their loyalty to the King, he invoked High Churchmanship in quite a different fashion:

Do you imagine that there are no High Churchmen left? Did they all die with Dr. Sacheverell? Alas, how little do you know of mankind! Were the present restraint taken off you would see them swarming on every side and gnashing upon you with their teeth. There would hardly need a nod from that sacred person whom you revile, or at least lightly esteem. Were he to stand neuter, in what a condition would you be within one twelve months! If other Bonners and Gardiners did not arise, other Lauds and Sheldon would, who would either rule over you with a rod of iron, or drive you out of the land . . . Dare not again to open your lips against your Sovereign—lest he fall upon you? No; but lest he cease to defend you.<sup>3</sup>

This passage combines opposing themes. One moment Wesley was himself striking a High Church attitude, talking of the "sacred person" of the monarch and enjoining non-resistance; at the next he was warning the Dissenters against the hostility of High Churchmen. Here again "High Churchmanship" was a political term, a bogey with which to frighten the Dissenters. It was not in the interest of Wesley's argument to remind his readers that he was himself "an High Churchman, the son of an High Churchman", etc. Nor need one suppose that Wesley would have been gnashing his teeth upon the Dissenters himself if it had not been for the restraining hand of George III.

Politically then, with all respect to J. H. Rigg and others who liked to feel that Wesley was cured of his High Churchmanship at Aldersgate Street, it would make sense to say that Wesley remained a High Churchman all his life inasmuch as he never changed his basic political attitudes. (On the whole, people are more conservative about their political opinions than about their religious opinions.) Indeed, I think it is only in terms of his High Church politics that one can give a rational defence of Wesley's otherwise astonishing change of front towards the American colonists. Obviously, such political attitudes have little relevance to a modern democracy, in which resistance to the declared policy of the State is formalized in the concept of Her Majesty's Opposition. That such resistance may be proper even when the State is at war may be seen by reference to the Nonconformist opposition to the Boer War—opposition which continued throughout the conflict; and to the late Hugh Gaitskell's opposition to the Suez adventure even after fighting had started in Egypt.

Politics was not the only sphere in which Wesley retained some

<sup>3</sup> *A Calm Address to the Inhabitants of England* (1777). (*Works* (3rd edn.), xi, p. 138.)

traces of High Anglicanism. What happened at Aldersgate Street did not make him into a *Calvinistic* Methodist: it was not an accident that he showed no great concern over the expulsion, in 1768, of the six Calvinistic Methodist students from St. Edmund's Hall, Oxford. He shared the doubts of the authorities about their "Anglicanism", and said in his *Journal* that Dr. Nowell's defence of the expulsion had cleared the Church of England from the charge of predestination.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, his High Churchmanship does not seem to have affected very profoundly his attitude to either the Eucharist or the Doctrine of Ordination.

On the question of the Eucharist, I should be content to agree with Mr. Parris in his recent book, *John Wesley's Doctrine of the Sacraments* (1963), when he says that

the attempt to link Wesley with any other than a moderate Calvinist, or classical Anglican, view of the Supper, in the direction of a more Catholic interpretation cannot be sustained from the evidence, particularly when Wesley's more formal statements other than in the (Brevint) hymns are given their full weight.<sup>5</sup>

What Wesley held in theory is in any case less important than what he did, and it might reasonably be argued that if Wesley had regarded "frequent communion" as a spiritual necessity for the health of growing souls, he would have been obliged to order the structure of early Methodism accordingly. He must, after all, have been well aware that the normal member of the Societies communicated infrequently; the frequency with which he himself celebrated only underlined the infrequency with which the eighteenth-century Methodist communicated. If Wesley had believed that the sacramental life was fundamental to the growing Christian he would have had to act more decisively than he ever did; he could not have relied, as he did in the 1760s and 1770s, on the assumption that the majority of Methodists were still *so* Anglican that they received the Eucharist from their parish priests. Even when Wesley himself ordained, he ordained so few of the itinerants in England that the step can have made little difference to the provision of the Sacraments there. As for the doctrine of ordination itself, it is obvious that no man who thought of himself as deeply committed to a "High Church" position could have embarked on the ordinations of the 1780s.

It is facts like these—and the ordinations are facts, though many commentators shy away from them—that make it difficult to sum up Wesley's doctrine of the Church successfully. A recent attempt was made by the American Methodist scholar, Dr. Albert Outler, who told the Oxford Institute of Methodist Theology in 1962 that

significantly, and at every point, Wesley defined the church as *act*, as mission, as the enterprise of saving souls and maturing souls in the Christian life. This vision of the church as mission was to be realised

<sup>4</sup> *Journal*, v, p. 293.

<sup>5</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 92 f.

and implemented within the Anglican perspective of the church as form and institution.<sup>6</sup>

At first sight one would agree, but it would not be difficult to suggest a quite different picture. If all that is meant is that Anglicanism provided Wesley with the assumption that the Church, even as mission, must have institutions, the point is valid, but not important. The eighteenth-century institutions, however, are surprisingly *un-Anglican*. The local preacher, for instance, did not strike contemporary Anglicans as an Anglican institution. The idea of a two-year itinerancy differed radically from the conception of the becalmed Anglican parish priest. Similarly, the idea of societies, distinct but "in connexion", did not resemble the isolationism of the parochial system, any more than it really resembled the "religious societies" of the late seventeenth century. There is no serious reason to suppose that the Conference was modelled on Convocation, which did not even exist from a practical point of view during Wesley's active Methodist life. And the ordinations could not be called *Anglican*. One might, in fact, alter Outler's formulation to read: "This vision of the church as act, as mission [and here Outler is obviously right] was to be realised and implemented within the Anglican perspective of *doctrine*, but through such forms and institutions as the mission might seem divinely led to devise." The purpose of Methodist institutions, in Wesley's eyes, was to safeguard the transmission of right doctrine from one generation to another; that is, the institutions did more than Outler implies. They acted, in fact, as a "High Churchman" might think of ecclesiastical institutions as acting, though Wesley did not attach any positive importance to the possession of the historic episcopate.

Wesley's churchmanship, in fact, was dominated by a concern for the safe transmission of sound doctrine.<sup>7</sup> At first sight it would seem simple to transfer this anxiety to the modern controversy and to judge the Majority Report in similar terms. Franz Hildebrandt has tried to do this in his Epworth Pamphlet *Reunion and Reformation* (1964) in which he says that "the constant test of every ministry is faithfulness to the Gospel".<sup>8</sup> Hildebrandt, however, has too narrow a conception of what the Gospel is; he permits himself the wild assertion that the real scandal of the Church

is the absence of the Gospel from our pulpits, the uncertain sound of the trumpet at the moment of battle, the chaos of conflicting voices which makes it impossible for men to hear what the Spirit says to the Churches.<sup>9</sup>

He would therefore delay Reunion until there was a common agreement on the definition of the Gospel—it could never be more

<sup>6</sup> *The Doctrine of the Church*, ed. Dow Kirkpatrick (1964), p. 29.

<sup>7</sup> For further discussion of this point, see my essay in *Anglican-Methodist Relations* (1961), edited by W. Pickering.

<sup>8</sup> p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> p. 11.

than that, after all, since one cannot legislate for a subjective conformity as well. Here Hildebrandt goes far beyond Wesley's position, and his appeal to the Reformation is quite unconvincing. The historical result of the Reformation was the failure of the Lutherans, the Calvinists and the Zwinglians to stay together: this was the tragedy, not the glory, of the sixteenth century, and it is this tragedy which Hildebrandt would compel us to elaborate even further. The Protestant divisions of the sixteenth century offer a commentary on the Reformers' definition of the Gospel to which Hildebrandt seems only too faithful.

As for John Wesley, perhaps the real value of his often-criticized assertion that he had never ceased to be a member of the Church of England lay in the fact that he was refusing to withdraw from communion with many who did not accept his definition of the Gospel, whether they were High Churchmen or whether they were Anglican Evangelicals. In the present instance, I don't think that in order to remain loyal to Wesley's *Sermons* and to his *Notes upon the New Testament* (if indeed they bind us at all in matters of church policy, and I don't think that they do), we are obliged to maintain that either a strong Anglican Evangelical like Dr. Packer or a strong Anglo-Catholic like Dr. Mascall is so far from preaching the Gospel that we cannot share with them a single church-form. To limit our association with them to some kind of federation (as Dr. Hildebrandt suggests) would be self-indulgence: federation avoids the plain statement that either Dr. Packer or Dr. Mascall is not a Christian, but does not compel us to treat them *as Christians*. Wesley might have been a Confederate, but never a Federalist; he would have preferred Lincoln to Jefferson Davies, and we can go further without any true disloyalty. After all, Wesley may have been the son of a High Churchman, but—and here, like St. Paul, I speak after the manner of men—he was a better man than his father.

JOHN H. S. KENT.

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The Epworth Press has published *Inside the Free Churches*, by G. Thompson Brake (pp. 155, 8s. 6d.). If it is a good thing to see ourselves as others see us, it is an interesting thing to see ourselves through the eyes of such an one as Mr. Brake, who has been a Methodist and a Baptist minister and is now a Methodist layman. He speaks with inside knowledge of two of the denominations which he analyses. This is not a history book, and the historical references are few. Mr. Brake does not say "History is bunk", but he quotes with approval the words of a Roman Catholic archbishop who said in 1889, "We should live in our age . . . it will not do to understand the thirteenth century better than the nineteenth century." Wise words indeed, though of course they do not absolve us from the study of our own Methodist origins so that we may the better understand our present situation.

THOMAS SHAW.

## THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETIES, 1678-1738

THE term "Religious Societies" is one which is capable of exact definition; and the definition is important, since they have often been confused, not only with the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and with the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, of which they were the parent body, but also with the Society for the Reformation of Manners, with which they were closely associated.

The "Religious Societies" were societies of young men, members of the Church of England, which came into existence about the year 1678, through the influence of Dr. Anthony Horneck, Prebendary of Westminster and preacher at the Savoy Chapel. Dr. Woodward wrote a full account of these societies under the title *Account of the Rise and Progress of the Religious Societies*, which was published in 1798. This was the source from which Dr. J. S. Simon obtained the information for the first of his famous five volumes. The weakness of Dr. Simon's book lies in the fact that this was the only information which he had concerning these societies, and because of this he underestimates the influence which they had upon the Methodist societies; indeed he tacitly assumes that after the end of the seventeenth century the "Religious Societies" virtually faded away. So absorbed does he become with the story of his hero and the rise of Methodism that he scarcely makes mention of the "Religious Societies" in the rest of the book, and when he does, it is to compare them adversely with the new societies which Wesley and Whitefield were bringing into existence.

Dr. Simon's book was published over forty years ago, and information which has come to light since that time goes to show not only that the religious societies continued to flourish until the time of Wesley's conversion in 1738, but also that he owed a great deal more to their organization and to their influence than either he or his biographers have been willing to admit.

To begin, it does not appear to be widely known that the Rev. Samuel Wesley, illustrious father of John and Charles, founded a religious society at Epworth in 1701, just two years before the birth of John, and that this society flourished there for a number of years. Of Samuel Wesley's interest in the religious societies we know from a letter written in 1699 and published by Adam Clarke in *Memoirs of the Wesley Family*, but it is to the SPCK Archives that we are indebted for the full account of the Epworth society.

In his usual clear and methodical style, the rector of Epworth tells us that for some years he had had an earnest desire to see a religious society formed among his people, but when he considered their great ignorance, carelessness of soul, and notorious vices, despaired of the possibility. It was only when he received a copy of the third edition of Dr. Woodward's *Account of the Religious Societies* from the SPCK and read of the formation of such a society at Old Rumney

in Kent,<sup>1</sup> among people whose character was so much like that of his own, that he resolved at least to make the attempt.

The first meeting of the society was held in the rectory on 7th February 1701. Eight persons, of the more sober and sensible young men among his singers, were present, beside the rector himself. The rules of the society were distinctly read over and carefully explained. When the members were asked to make any objection to them, only one was expressed. It concerned the order for prayers in the family, mornings and evenings. This was not an objection to the order, but the members pointed out that their affairs of husbandry would often make it impossible for them to keep this rule in the mornings, but that they would be willing to adhere to it whenever possible. The order was accordingly amended.

They agreed to hold their meetings every Saturday evening, in order to prepare for the Lord's Day, and Samuel Wesley began to make a practice of preaching one sermon on the Sunday which was to be the subject of discussion in the society on the following Saturday evening. Within a matter of months the rector was able to report that most of the members had made considerable progress since they began to meet together, especially in piety and humility. Waxing enthusiastic, he declares :

they forbear Public Houses, unless when their necessary occasions call them thither, are much more careful of their lives and conversations, communicate monthly with great devotion, and appear to be more

<sup>1</sup> *Account of the formation of a Religious Society in Old Rumsey, by the Minister*—"When I first came to my parish, about ten years ago, I found to my great grief, the people very ignorant and irreligious, the place of Divine Worship indecently kept, and the public Service neither understood, nor attended. The ministration of the Lord's Supper, was supported by the piety of only three or four communicants and the Divine ordinance, of singing psalms, almost laid aside. Now, whilst I considered, by what means I might redress this general neglect of Religion; I was of opinion that the setting up of such a Religious Society as I had known in London would be very proper, but I feared it would be impracticable in the Country, especially where there appeared to be no disposition toward it. So that at first I began to teach three or four youths the skill of singing Psalms, orderly and according to rules withal, minding them of the indispensable duty of the spiritual fervency of their hearers, in this heavenly exercise: Which greatly tended through the Grace of God, to awaken their affections towards religion, and to give them a savor and Relish for it, The improvement of these in singing Psalms, being soon observed by others; many young men desired to be admitted to the same instruction, which being granted and the number of them increasing daily; I began to show them the unacceptableness of their psalmody to God, yea the odiousness of it to God's infinite purity, except their hearts and lives were upright before him. Whereupon after sundry exhortations, and serious deliberation, they readily submitted to the rules of a Religious Society, and they have been careful observers of them: By whose means, a general reviving of piety, and a solemn observance of the ordinances of God, have been produced among us. So that a considerable number of young men are carefully catechised, and by many pious books given to them, encouraged to fear God betimes; and by them many prudent ways are made use of to promote an effectual Reformation of Manners. And to the joy of all pious souls, our Shepherds, Ploughmen, and other labourers at their work, perfume the air with the melodious singing of Psalms, to the praise of the Great Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier of men."

zealous for the Glory of God, and the welfare of their own souls and others, and often declare that they find much more comfort in this way of living than ever they have expected, and long all the week for their meeting, and love one another, and their minister better than ever . . .

That Wesley was not blind to the shortcomings of his flock is evinced by the fact that they did not increase in knowledge as they increased in piety. This he realized would be a much slower process, and he looked forward to the time when they would be able to get a "charity school" erected, which he thought would go a long way towards "securing two generations".

Before long thirty or forty others were seeking admission into the society. Wisely, the founder-members refused to admit them until they were well assured of the seriousness of their intentions. Moreover they made a rule not to admit more than twelve into the society, and as others pressed to join, they separated two of their number to form the nucleus and to become the leaders of the new society. By this means two or three new societies were formed, but only the parent society was allowed to make decisions affecting all the societies. How long these societies flourished we have no means of knowing; but Samuel Wesley was in Lincoln Castle for debt in 1705, and it may be that they did not survive his imprisonment there. We do know from John Wesley's *Journal* that in the absence of her husband in 1712, Susanna Wesley began to gather together the members of her family with relatives and friends on Sunday evenings in her kitchen, where she conducted family prayers, read some of the best and most awakening sermons that they had, and, though she was not, as she put it, either a man or a minister, she discoursed with these neighbours freely and affectionately.

Writing to her husband to give him an account of these services, Mrs. Wesley says:

We banish all temporal concerns from our Society. None is suffered to mingle any discourse about them with our reading or singing. We keep close to the business of the day, and when it is over, all go home.

These Sunday evening gatherings could not by any stretch of the imagination be classified as the meetings of a religious society, if only for the reason that at this stage women were not permitted even to attend—let alone conduct—meetings of the religious societies; yet such exercises had all the necessary ingredients—prayers, hymn-singing, and discussion on a subject of practical divinity (we can be sure it was practical if Mrs. Wesley introduced it).

That the women were not always content to receive instruction from their menfolk at home, as Samuel Wesley thought they should, is shown by the existence of a religious society for women at Wolverhampton. This society, a writer informs the SPCK, had been started at their own request, and numbered in 1714 over eighty females. This, however, appears to have been the exception to the rule, and no details of its organization are available. All that we know is that this was one of many requests received by the SPCK

from the religious societies for suitable literature which might form the basis for discussion in their meetings. The other evidence which we have leads us to suppose that the religious societies continued to be composed of men only, and usually young men, and that no rule concerning numbers seems to have been in practice except at Epworth. A society at St. Neots in 1710 had seventy members and was daily increasing in numbers. Another "Society of Young Men" in the parish of Moses Hodges at Warwick in 1713 continued still in a flourishing condition.

In other towns and cities during these unsettled years difficulties of a political character were being encountered in the formation of these societies. The cry "No Popery!" was once again heard in the land, and once again, as in the reign of James II, the religious societies were being regarded with some suspicion by the hierarchy of Church and State. In 1718 the Archbishop of Canterbury felt constrained to send a letter to the religious societies, asking them to curb their Romanizing tendencies. The letter is addressed to a Mr. Deacon, with instructions that it should be communicated to the Visiting Stewards of the Religious Societies in and around London. In it the Archbishop exhorts the members of the religious societies to

study to be quiet and to mind their own business, to pursue the things which make for peace, and wherein to edify one another. To be earnest in prayer, in reading, and in meditation, constant in their Communion with the Church Established, dutiful and obedient to those who are in authority over them, honest and diligent in their several places and callings, charitable to all men.

That the religious societies were anxious to show themselves to be, now as formerly, loyal members of the Church of England, and were sensible of the goodwill of the Archbishop, is shown by the tone of the letter which was sent in reply. Two or three inferences can be drawn from this correspondence. The first is that, since the Archbishop's letter is addressed to the "visiting steward", it must be regarded that the laymen, and not the local incumbents, were the real leaders of the societies in London and Westminster at this time. This does not appear to have been true of the Provinces, but it is difficult to escape this conclusion as far as the capital is concerned. In the second place, the term "visiting steward" would seem to imply some sort of central organization with oversight of these city societies which transcended parish boundaries.

That the religious societies did survive the strictures laid upon them by the Archbishop is revealed by the fact that the SPCK continued to receive requests for their publications, together with information about the state of existing societies and the formation of new ones.

John Disney of Lincoln, under date 13th February 1717, writes in answer to the Society's circular letter, and thanks them for the packet of books which they had forwarded to him, observing that the Religious Society there lose no opportunity of doing good, having

by their own and other private subscriptions a tolerable good trust to dispose of yearly . . .

Edward Gregory of Wooton Edge, Gloucestershire (3rd September 1722) "thanks the Society for the care that has been taken about the hymns and Catechisms which were safely come to his hand", and says

that some poor of his parish, but all adult persons, out of a pious disposition, have desired him to direct them in a method of establishing a weekly Society, for Religious purposes. That in compliance to so good a design he met them last Friday Evening at the vestry of his church and presented them with some rules to proceed by, and promised to assist them with good books to read and peruse at their meetings.

Robert Cartwright at Wolverhampton, Staffordshire (2nd May 1730) likewise desires a packet of books, and gives an account of a religious society in that town in number about 120.

William Mason at Hull, Yorks (26th August 1732) desires to be informed what method was in use in London to raise contributions for the "Salzburg Exiles", signifying that the religious society there had built a house for twenty "Charity Children".

Most interesting also is a letter from Edward Belke at London, dated 8th September 1735, desiring that some ministers be consulted what may be the most likely method to form religious societies in every parish in Kent.

On Tuesday, 28th March 1738, a letter was received from Lady Elizabeth Hastings at Ledstone in Yorkshire enclosing two papers giving an account of two religious societies at Nottingham and Derby, and requesting books to be sent.

Finally, two letters from George Whitefield. The first, written from Gibraltar and dated 2nd March, is addressed to Dr. Halesworth, telling him that there are two religious societies of soldiers, one belonging to Dissenters and the other to the Church of England. The second, written from Bristol on 24th February 1739, intimates that there is "a Society of Young men" who meet twice a week in the neighbourhood, and have raised subscriptions to support a school of "some children", but as the society is in its infancy, would be "glad if the gentleman would make them a small present of some books". This is the last reference in the SPCK Archives to the Religious Societies as such.

Two significant facts emerge from this correspondence: (i) that the religious societies continued to flourish throughout the country, and that during the first forty years of its existence the SPCK looked upon the religious societies as the object of its special care and responsibility; (ii) that after the religious revival which swept over the country following the conversion of Whitefield and Wesley, the correspondence between the SPCK and the religious societies abruptly ceased.

This points to but one conclusion, which is supported by all the facts: that with the coming of Whitefield and Wesley the religious societies became the channel through which the revival flowed until the stream became a torrent and burst the banks of the Establishment which had contained it for the first sixty formative years.

DAVID PIKE.

(To be continued)

[The Rev. David Pike, M.A., B.D. is superintendent minister of the Hull Trinity Methodist circuit. His thesis for the Master of Arts degree at Leeds University was presented under the title "The Religious Societies in the Church of England (1678-1723) and their influence on Early Methodism".]

### The Rev. Robert H. Gallagher, B.A.

THE Wesley Historical Society, Irish Branch, is heavily bereaved by the sudden death on 22nd January of its President, the Rev. Robert H. Gallagher, in his 84th year. President of the Irish Conference (1946-7), District Chairman, connexional officer, trustee and member of boards and committees, his opinions carried weight, and the Church is indebted to him for incessant and devoted service. He entered the ministry in 1908 after training in the Methodist College, Belfast, and graduating in Queen's University. He retired in 1950, but continued in unceasing activity, preaching his last sermon only on the evening before his death.

Methodism was deeply graven on his heart, and the early Methodist preachers were a continual inspiration to him. He was elected Vice-President of the Irish Branch of the Wesley Historical Society in 1954, and last year he succeeded the late Rev. R. Lee Cole as President. He was responsible for the erection of the tablet in Moy church to the memory of John Smith, and for the re-discovery of the graves of John Bredin and John Johnston. He was continually on the search for fuller information about the earlier work and workers. His questing mind produced biographies of Adam Clarke and John Bredin, and his own *My Web of Time*; also the history of his native circuit, Charlemont. He regularly contributed historical articles to the *Irish Christian Advocate*, and was preparing these for publication in book form. By his diligence the photographic album of past Presidents of the Irish Conference is practically completed.

The opening of the New Room in Aldersgate House gave him opportunity to display valuable Wesleyana, and he had a large share in getting the Room properly equipped and its contents arranged and catalogued. He was an informed and enthusiastic Warden, who inspired others by his own keenness. Deep sympathy has been extended to the members of his family, of whom his elder son, the Rev. R. D. E. Gallagher, is Secretary of the Irish Conference.

W. E. MORLEY THOMPSON.

*Nonconformity in Shropshire, 1662-1816* (pp. xvi. 134 with indexes, maps and plates) is an excellently-produced work, giving due attention to Fletcher of Madeley. The material is well documented, and the work will be a useful pattern for anyone engaged on a similar work for his own county. Copies, price 52s. 6d., can be obtained from Messrs. Wilding & Son Ltd., 33, Castle Street, Shrewsbury.

## NEWS FROM OUR BRANCHES

THE **Yorkshire** Branch met at Brunswick chapel, Leeds, on Saturday, 17th October 1964. The Rev. John Banks spoke on "The Leeds Organ Case", and showed original documents from the chapel safe. After tea the Rev. John C. Bowmer (Connexional Archivist) spoke on "Your Archives and You".

*Next Meeting*: Saturday, 29th May, at Scotland Road chapel, Sheffield.

The Branch hopes to join with the North-East Branch in an outing to Yarm, Osmotherley, Hawnby and Great Ayton on Saturday, 12th June.

*Bulletin*: No. 6 received.

*Secretary*: Rev. W. Stanley Rose, 1, York Road, Knaresborough, Yorks.

*Membership*: 88.

THE **North-East** Branch met at Darlington on Saturday, 24th October, when the Rev. Sidney O. Dixon gave a paper on "Early Methodism in the North Riding". Some new light was shed on the mystery of Mr. Adams, alias Mr. Watson, by the present Roman Catholic priest at Osmotherley. It further appears that Roman Catholic services are still being held in the house where Wesley preached in 1745. Colour slides whetted members' appetites for the summer outing to Yarm, Osmotherley, etc.

*Next Meeting*: Saturday, 22nd May, at Newcastle.

Saturday, 12th June—Outing to Yarm, Osmotherley, etc.

*Bulletin*: No further issue received.

*Secretary*: Rev. Harold R. Bowes, 42, Essex Gardens, Gateshead, 9.

*Membership*: 49.

ON Saturday, 3rd October, thirty-five members of the **East Anglia** Branch journeyed to Ashwick Hall, near King's Lynn. The Rev. Stanley M. Spoor's talk was given under the title "'O'er moor and fen': Reminiscences of a Methodist itinerant".

*Next Meeting*: Saturday, 29th May, at Culford School, near Bury St. Edmunds.

*Bulletin*: No. 12 received.

*Secretary*: Mr. W. A. Green, 5, The Avenues, Norwich, Norfolk, NOR.27G.

*Membership*: 103.

THE **South Wales** Branch held its autumn meeting in Trinity chapel, Cardiff, on Tuesday, 24th November. The Secretary gave a talk on "Gleanings from some Chapel Reports".

*Next Meeting*: Saturday, 22nd May, at Trevecca, Breconshire (the Annual Meeting). After a visit to places of Methodist interest, the Rev. Griffith

T. Roberts (Chairman of the Second North Wales District) will speak on "Howell Harries".

*Bulletin*: No. 2 received.

*Secretary*: Rev. W. Islwyn Morgan, 15, King Edward Road, Brynmawr,

*Membership*: 30. Brecon.

THE autumn meeting of the **Plymouth and Exeter** Branch was held at King Street chapel, Plymouth on Saturday, 3rd October. Nearly forty persons attended. Mr. James Dannis of Braunton, Devon spoke on a contract for the "Cob" chapel at Alington in 1835, and Councillor Stanley Goodman on Methodist history and buildings in Plymouth.

*Next Meeting* : Wednesday, 26th May, at St. Thomas's, Exeter.

*Bulletin* : No. 3 received.

*Secretary* : Mr. W. R. West, 8, Redvers Road, Exeter.

*Membership* : 93.

A NEW Branch is added to the list—**Lancashire and Cheshire**. The first meeting was held on Saturday, 3rd October, at the Central Hall, Manchester. The Rev. Dr. John H. S. Kent spoke on "Methodism and the Church of England in the eighteenth century". We cordially welcome this new contribution to these columns, and wish the Branch a flourishing future.

*Next Meeting* : Saturday, 15th May, at the Central Hall, Manchester.

*Journal* : No. 1 received.

*Secretary* : Mr. E. A. Rose, 18, Glenthorne Drive, Ashton-under-Lyne,

*Membership* : 30. Lancs.

THE **Cornish** Branch met at Fore Street chapel, Redruth, on Thursday, 26th November, when Mr. J. C. C. Probert spoke on "The Sociology of Cornish Methodism". This lecture is published as Occasional Paper No. 8, price 2s. 6d. Mr. Paul Bolitho, Borough Librarian of Liskeard, was welcomed as a member of the executive committee, and Mr. G. Pawley White congratulated as Grand Bard of the Cornish Gorsedd.

*Next Meeting* : Thursday, 8th April, at Camborne Wesley.

*Publications* : Occasional Paper No. 8 received.

*Secretary* : Rev. Baynard P. Evans, The Manse, St. Keverne, Helston,

*Membership* : 214. Cornwall.

We acknowledge, with thanks, the receipt of the following journals, etc.

*The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, October 1964.

*The Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, November 1964.

*The Amateur Historian*, Summer and Autumn 1964 and Winter 1965.

*The Baptist Quarterly*, October 1964 and January 1965.

*Methodist History*, July and October 1964 and January 1965.

*The Journal of the Historical Society of the Presbyterian Church of Wales*, September and December 1964 and March 1965.

*Journal and Proceedings of the Australasian Methodist Historical Society*, December 1964.

*Bathafarn* (the Welsh Methodist historical journal), 1964.

*Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*, October 1964.

The following booklets, each in its own way a contribution to local Methodist history, have been received :

Somerset Road, Handsworth Wood, Birmingham (Rev. C. L. Trevenna, 10, Vernon Avenue, Handsworth, Birmingham, 20, no price stated).

Mankinholes (Mr. A. Webster, 2, Mankinhole, Todmorden, Lancs, 2s.).

Ricall (Rev. H. E. Lacy, The Manse, Howden Road, Barlby, Selby, Yorks, 2s.).

New Selson (Derbyshire) (Rev. R. L. Scrase, 4, Cressy Road, Alfreton, Derby, no price given).

Mickley Square (Northumberland) (Rev. Arthur Rowe, Wesley Manse, Prudhoe-on-Tyne, Northumberland, 2s. 6d.).

## BOOK NOTICES

*Charles Wesley—The First Methodist*, by Frederick C. Gill. (Lutterworth Press, pp. 240, 21s.)

This is a pleasant, readable book, but, as the author himself would admit, it is not a portrait in depth. This still means that the general reader will be amply satisfied by a lively account of the main events of Charles Wesley's life, with particularly interesting sections on "The Gwynnes of Garth", "Letters to Sally", and "The Settled Years, 1771-1788". The student, however, will miss the more detailed relationship of the brothers, and the assessment of the contribution of Charles in Bristol as in London in the shepherding and direction of the societies, and extra-Methodist contacts. There will be regret that the author has not showed how in the voluminous works of Charles Wesley there is in his verse the comment on personalities and events in that century such as one may find in his brother's *Journal*. Mr. Gill hints at the dissatisfaction of leading Methodist preachers with Charles's ecclesiastical views as well as with his arrogating the City Road chapel so much for himself. What one still wants to know is whether, on the whole, the brake on John which Charles applied was salutary, and his constant presence in the metropolis beneficial during those late and more unsettled years. There is needed also an examination of the doctrinal emphases of the hymns and the ways in which theologically he agreed and disagreed with his brother. What were the main sources of his thinking, and what the balance between Primitive Church, Anglican, and Reformed writings, and how much did more immediate influence such as parents, brothers and sisters and his own family exercise on his outlook?

Perhaps it is wrong to ask for material the author never intended to supply since it was not within his objective. As a wholly trustworthy account of a brother too long neglected it is warmly to be welcomed. I would myself have thought that the gusty, melancholic, and at times irritable facets of his disposition might have been more strongly emphasized, since they affected at times both his writing and his behaviour. However, there does emerge from these pages a human, likeable and entirely devoted servant of God who was intensely loyal to his brother John but never at the expense of his convictions. They formed a partnership for which no parallel in Christian history can be found. It is a sovereign merit of this book to make us squarely acknowledge our indebtedness to Charles, "the first Methodist".

MALDWYN L. EDWARDS.

*The Church in the Eighteenth Century*, by H. Daniel-Rops. (J. M. Dent & Sons, pp. x. 373, 45s.)

This is the seventh volume of a Catholic series, *History of the Church of Christ*. In the few pages devoted to Methodism (classed as one of the "Churches outside the Church") the author discovers features in Wesley's make-up that appeal to Catholics, and says he was "indubitably made of the stuff from which the Catholic Church fashions her saints". But his knowledge of Methodism is woefully meagre. When a writer thirty-two years after Methodist Union can state that the chief divisions of Methodism are "Wesleyans, Primitive Methodists, Bible Christians and Independent Methodists", and that Methodism can be "classified under two main headings, Episcopalian Methodists and Congregational Methodists", one really wonders just how inaccurate an historian can be!

JOHN C. BOWMER.

## NOTES AND QUERIES

1134. "THE LINCOLNSHIRE THRASHER".

The year 1964 saw the centenary of the death of a very famous Wesleyan local preacher, Charles Richardson—"The Lincolnshire Thrasher".

Mr. Richardson was born in Tetford, a small village in the Lincolnshire wolds, in December 1791, and died in August 1864. His parents, devout Methodists, were poor, and Charles therefore received no education, except for a short winter school, one year, in a nearby village, for which his father paid five shillings! He became a farm labourer, as a corn-thrasher (hence his nickname) in the employ of a local Methodist, William Riggall, under whose influence he was converted at the age of twenty. He soon became a class-leader, but he was well over thirty-five when he became a preacher. The circumstances of his first attempt were rather unusual. At a service in his own chapel at Tetford, the appointed preacher, instead of preaching himself, invited Mr. Richardson into the pulpit. He went up, as having no option, and delivered a very acceptable sermon. This experience confirmed his call to preach, and before long he was famous throughout Lincolnshire as a saintly and effective preacher—so effective, in fact, that in 1835, at the request of his friends, he became a full-time itinerant evangelist.

Although he remained only a local preacher all his life, Mr. Richardson enjoyed a fuller and wider preaching career than did many ministers. His itinerary included, in addition to nearly every town and village in Lincolnshire, visits to Manchester, Sheffield, Leeds, Northampton, Birmingham, Nottingham, Leicester, and London (Wesley's Chapel). His humility is shown by the following quotation from a letter which he wrote to his family, in 1860, after being invited to preach at Wesley's Chapel:

On the Saturday night Mr. Lomas sent to offer me City-Road pulpit the following morning; and your poor old father, having a little of the old Adam left in him, or a little innocent vanity, thought he would climb to the top of the tree just once in his lifetime.

He opened and dedicated at least fifty new chapels, some of which are today the main chapels in their respective circuits.

Wherever Mr. Richardson preached, there were always genuine conversions, and his chapels were invariably full. He was an ardent missionary advocate, and it was not uncommon, when he had preached missionary anniversary sermons in a village of fewer than 300 inhabitants, for a sum of £40 or £50 to be raised for overseas missions.

He was completely dedicated to his task of preaching the Gospel. All his time, energy and reading were devoted to that end. His preaching was always well prepared, and well informed, and his sermons delivered with great power and conviction. In the words of one of his friends, the Rev. Robert Bond:

The paramount object of Mr. Richardson's life, was evidently the diffusion of the glory of God, in the salvation of sinners, and the enlargement of the church. He possessed in an eminent degree what a distinguished infidel once called "a heroic passion for saving souls".

It is good that we should remember the great pace-makers of Methodism, and I believe we can learn from, and be challenged by, the zeal and dedication of men such as Charles Richardson in the proclamation of the Gospel.

JOHN A. HARROD.