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The relevance of this depressing narrative for twentieth-century Evangelicals is indirect. We are not in the 1662 situation, and the events of that year give us no direct guidance as to the things we should be doing, or refusing to do, today. In 1862, the bicentenary of the ejections was made the occasion for some bitter Anglican-Nonconformist squabbles, but we shall be wise not to emulate that. Equally, we may leave it to others to draw ecumenical morals from the story. The tale seems worth re-telling in 1962, not so much for any new light that it throws on current problems of church relations as for the questions that it forces us to ask ourselves. Is our concern for truth and a good conscience comparable with that shown by the ejected ministers? They were willing to suffer to any lengths rather than compromise their convictions: are we? In every age, the church is rent by clashing convictions, sincerely held; and it will not be strange if we today, like the Puritans in 1662, find ourselves confronted by powerful groups seeking to dragoon us into courses of action which to them seem Christian and necessary, but to us involve a betrayal of principle. It will be a happy thing if we are enabled in such circumstances to maintain a truly Puritan loyalty to biblical truth as we have been given to see it.

METHODISTS AND 1662

The Nonconformist Streak in Wesley

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THE tercentenary celebrations of which we hear so much this year represent a curious double memorial. The Anglicans rejoice, and rightly so, in the anniversary of the Prayer Book. The Free Churchmen recall with mingled pain and pride the sufferings and firm endurance of their forefathers in the Great Ejectment. But how is Methodism involved in this two-pronged remembrance? Since the communion founded by John Wesley did not emerge until the following century, can it be said that the people called Methodists have any interest in 1662 and all that, except as mildly amused spectators? Anglicans, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists and even Unitarians can claim a historical implication in the events leading up to the Act of Uniformity and the results of its enforcement. But where does Methodism stand?

With a shrewd flash of insight John Wesley once told his friend Adam Clarke: 'If I were to write my own life I should begin it before I was born.' That was his typically realistic way of paying tribute to the past. Ancestry has its influence on our make-up, and we cannot easily set aside the family tree of the Wesleys. Samuel and Susannah, the parents of John and his numerous brothers and sisters, were of the established Church, and their loyalty, though not conspicuously adamant, played its part in shaping the outlook of their most illustrious son. But a generation further back on either side of the line brings us to Wesley's grandfathers who were both numbered amongst the ejected ministers of 1662.

In the paternal precedence stands the first John Wesley, a protégé of John Owen, the Puritan divine, and approved by Cromwell's Triers as a pastor in Dorset. He married the daughter of John White, one of the two assessors

at the Westminster Assembly, and a thorn in the flesh to Archbishop Laud because of his protest against Arminian doctrine and undue ceremonialism. In the summer of 1661 this earlier John Wesley was thrust into prison for refusing to adhere to the Book of Common Prayer in his services, and in the following year he was turned out of his living. At the same time his father, Bartholomew, was ejected from a nearby parish and cast in his lot with the persecuted Nonconformists. John did the same and led a hunted life under the harsh restrictions and penalties of the newly-introduced code. 'Often disturbed, several times apprehended, four times imprisoned' — so he records in the diary entrusted after his death to Edmund Calamy, but which unhappily has not survived. His grandson John, however, carefully preserved in his more famous *Journal* the transcript of a conversation he once had with his diocesan, Dr. Gilbert Ironside, Bishop of Bristol. 'What mission had you?' inquired the prelate. 'I had a mission from God and man.' That might have been the reply of the eighteenth-century Wesley. And so might the retort of the bishop: 'You must have it according to law, and the order of the Church of England.'

John Wesley's grandfather on his mother's side was an even more unyielding Nonconformist. Dr. Samuel Annesley was ejected from St. Giles' Cripplegate, where Oliver Cromwell had been married and by whom this 'St. Paul of Nonconformity', as he was dubbed, had been presented. For no less than ten years he was silenced. Thereafter he was able to licence a meeting-house in Little St. Helen's, Bishopsgate Street, and to pursue his ministry. It was here that, on 22 June 1694, the first Nonconformist ordinations after the Ejectment took place, with Dr. Annesley as the prime mover. This was at a time of such tension that even the renowned John Howe refrained from participation for fear of offending the Government. Dr. Williams, founder of the library, was one of the assistants and Calamy was numbered amongst the ordinands. It was a historic occasion in the annals of English Dissent, and Methodism was represented as it were by proxy.

These circumstances go far to explain the strange inconsistency of Wesley in his attitude to the Church of England. Whilst it is clear that he desired to remain within the fold and endeavoured to stave off the departure of his followers, his actions at the critical pressure-points of decision nevertheless revealed a remarkable reversion to type and rendered it virtually inevitable that Methodism would develop independently to the Establishment. It was the Nonconformist streak in Wesley which proved determinative in the long run and which after his death led his people into separation.

It must not be supposed, however, that this movement away from the Church of England was an afterthought or that only late in life did Wesley begin to contemplate it. At the first Conference in 1744 the pertinent question was put: 'Do you not entail a schism in the Church?' The hope was somewhat ingenuously expressed that the majority of Methodists would remain in the church, unless they were thrust out, and an undertaking given that all would be done to prevent an exodus. 'But we cannot with good conscience neglect the present opportunity of saving souls while we live' — so the statement concludes in ringing tones — 'for fear of consequences which may possibly or probably happen after we are dead.' As A. W. Harrison points out, Wesley never swerved from these governing conclusions. Whilst he conscientiously strove to prevent needless division, the demands of the divine mission were recognized as the overriding factor.

It was not until 1787, however, that the final step was taken which cast the die. When in that year the Methodist preaching-places were licensed under the Toleration Acts the point was tacitly conceded that the disciples of John Wesley were in fact Dissenters. Hitherto Wesley had stoutly resisted this appeal for protection, but after a protracted consultation with his legal adviser 'on that execrable act called the Conventicle Act' (those are

his own words in the *Journal*) he decided to licence all his chapels and preachers. He still insisted, however, that the Methodists were members of the Church of England and in some cases the benefits of the Acts were withheld because of the resultant confusion. Wesley appealed both to William Wilberforce and the Bishop of Lincoln to sort out a dilemma that was really of his own devising.

Long before this date, of course, the pursuit of his God-given mission had led Wesley into ecclesiastical irregularities which could hardly be ignored. He had itinerated from parish to parish without seeking leave either from the diocesan or the incumbent. He had enlisted an army of lay preachers who preached the Word of God without any kind of accredited permission from the church. He himself proclaimed the gospel in unconsecrated buildings and even in the open-air. His prophet soul saw no impropriety in these practices, and they were demanded by the exigencies of the evangelistic situation. Wesley was simply acting in conformity to his own maxim: 'Church or no Church, we must save souls.' But if we are discussing his procedure strictly within the context of church order — and that is the issue at stake as we recall 1662 — then from the Anglican viewpoint Wesley was a rebel. It was this deviation which increasingly grieved Charles Wesley and caused him gradually to withdraw from the good fight. It may be said that whereas in John the Nonconformity of his grandfathers eventually prevailed, in Charles the conservatism of his father gained the ascendancy.

It was the question of ordination which brought the matter to a head. If a lenient and enlightened Establishment could perhaps close its eyes to Wesley's other misdemeanours, this was too serious and central to be overlooked. When on 1 September 1784 Wesley laid hands on Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey to set them apart as deacons for the pressing work in America, he took a step which immediately placed him in justifiable jeopardy from the authorities. From the standpoint of Anglican canon law he had acted *ultra vires*. When Charles heard what had happened he recalled the epigrammatic comment of Lord Chief Justice Mansfield that 'ordination is separation', and this appeared to epitomize the significance of the move.

John's defence before the agitated Charles makes it clear that, theologically speaking, his mind had been settled on this issue thirty years previously. 'I firmly believe that I am a Scriptural *episcopos* as much as any man in England or in Europe; for the uninterrupted succession I know to be a fable, which no man ever did or can prove.' As early as 1746 he had read Lord Chancellor King's *Account of the Primitive Church*. This illuminating comment appears in his *Journal*: 'In spite of the vehement prejudice of my education, I was ready to believe that this was a fair and impartial draught; but, if so, it would follow that Bishops and Presbyters are (essentially) of one order; and that originally every Christian congregation was a church independent of all others.' The other treatise which had moulded his attitude towards episcopacy was Edward Stillingfleet's *Irenicum*. E. W. Thompson, who has looked into this whole issue of Wesley's ordinations more closely and discerningly than any previous enquirer, thinks that Stillingfleet's influence was the most telling. It is relevant to notice that the *Irenicum* was published in 1656 when the controversies between Presbyterians, Independents and Episcopalians were brewing up into the storm that broke at the Restoration. Canon J. H. Overton refers to this as a juvenile work (Stillingfleet was only twenty-four) and hints, though without providing the evidence, that after reaching the episcopal bench himself the author recanted. It is possible that he reconsidered some injudicious expressions here and there, but he could hardly have repudiated the main theme without withdrawing the book from circulation. It was here that Wesley's views were confirmed and crystallized. 'I think he has unanswerably proved that neither Christ nor His Apostles prescribed any particular form of Church

government, and that the divine right of episcopacy was never heard of in the Primitive Church.'

This conviction that in the New Testament 'bishop' and 'presbyter' are only different names for the same person (held by many scholars from Jerome to Lightfoot, Hatch and Schlatter in more recent times) induced Wesley not only to ordain Whatcoat and Vasey as deacons and then as elders, but also to consecrate Thomas Coke as superintendent for the American Church. Wesley was careful to avoid the term bishop, but the Methodist Episcopal Church of America carries his intention in its title. This dramatic revolutionary decision paved the way for a series of ordinations by Wesley, first for Scotland in 1785 and then for England in 1788 when Alexander Mather was separated. Such calculated intrusion into the province of Anglicanism marks the dispersion of Wesley's last scruples on the issue of episcopacy. Here he stands unmistakeably with his predecessors in 1662.

At Wesley's death the inevitable happened. The Deed of Declaration in 1784 had already supplied Methodism with legal status as an independent body. In 1795 the Plan of Pacification completed the secession. It would seem that the liberty of the Spirit made such an expansion essential. The new wine burst the old bottles. The flood of revival could scarcely be contained within the stilted delimitations of Anglican order. Samuel Wesley (the elder brother of John and Charles) although he lived to see only the infancy of Methodism, nevertheless anticipated its direction when he wrote: 'I am not afraid that the Church will excommunicate him (i.e. John) — discipline is at too low an ebb for that — but that he will excommunicate the Church.' Allowing for the extravagance of the expression, this is in fact what occurred. The Methodists were not ejected. Canon Overton was quite right in rebutting such a charge. They were neither thrust out nor did they leaven the whole lump: these were the two possibilities envisaged by Wesley at the first Conference in 1744. They went out of their own accord for conscience's sake in much the same spirit, though under less cruel provocation, as the Nonconformists in 1662. The basic principles which prompted them were remarkably similar: fidelity to the Word of God, flexibility under the leading of the Spirit, liberty in worship and parity in ministry as opposed to the imposition of episcopacy.

There is a deeper sense, however, in which the Methodists did not quit the Anglican fold, for they never really belonged to it. It is interesting to discover that in this realistic verdict both High Churchman and Evangelical Methodist are at one as we compare the statements of Canon Overton and Dr. J. H. Rigg. 'It is a purely modern notion that the Wesleyan movement ever was — or ever was intended to be, except by Wesley — a Church movement,' declared Overton. 'Methodism, therefore, as an organisation was altogether outside the Church of England during Wesley's lifetime', affirmed Rigg. Conversation between the two communions with a view to closer unity would do well to take into full account from the start this fundamental disparity. There is a danger in some quarters that the contemporary representatives of Methodism should display the symptoms of an unhealthy mother-fixation. Such an Oedipus complex is not only enervating and inhibitory, it lacks historical justification and misleads the spokesmen of the Anglican Church by suggesting an affinity which is largely non-existent. The Methodist is eager to demonstrate his oneness in Christ with his Anglican brother across the street. He still retains sufficient adherence to the stand of 1662 to decline oneness in bishops.

Methodists remain to this present 'the friends of all and the enemies of none', as Wesley himself described his people. Whilst firm in their stance on fundamentals, they have no love of controversy for its own sake. They have a charge to keep and would prefer to do God's work rather than merely discuss it. Where the deeper unity of the Spirit already exists, as

indeed it does between all true believers, then the peripheral matters of church order can await a patient resolution without absorbing the interest and energies that should be concentrated on the urgent task of evangelism.

Some words from John Wesley's sermon on 'The Catholic Spirit' may serve to summarize the continuing attitude of Methodism. 'Although, therefore, every follower of Christ is obliged, by the very nature of the Christian institution, to be a member of some particular congregation or other, some Church, as it is usually termed (which implies a particular manner of worshipping God; for "two cannot walk together unless they be agreed"); yet none can be obliged by any power on earth but that of his own conscience to prefer this or that congregation to another, this or that particular manner of worship. . . . I dare not, therefore presume to impose my mode of worship on any other. I believe it is truly primitive and apostolical: but my belief is no rule for another. I ask not, therefore, of him with whom I would unite in love, Are you of my church, of my congregation? Do you receive the same form of church government, and allow the same church officers with me? Do you join in the same form of prayer wherein I worship God? I inquire not, Do you receive the supper of the Lord in the same posture and manner that I do? nor whether, in the administration of baptism, you agree with me in admitting sureties for the baptized; in the manner of administering it; or the age of those to whom it should be administered. Nay, I ask not of you (as clear as I am in my own mind), whether you allow baptism and the Lord's supper at all. Let all these things stand by: we will talk of them, if need be, at a more convenient season; my only question at present is this, "Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?"'

THE CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE TO WORK

By H. F. R. CATHERWOOD, M.A.

In this further article based on discussions in the Graduates' Fellowship Industrial Group the author considers the Protestant attitude to work, how far it is justified by specific Christian teaching, and how far it is mixed with self-interest.

THE essential difference between the Protestant ethic and the preceding Catholic ethic is in its attitude to work. This, in turn, seems to hinge on the difference in their respective attitudes to the natural world around them. The Catholic tends to see the physical world as evil and to him the saint is one who has no part in it. The Catholic saint does not marry and he does not trade. To the Catholic, spirituality comes by physical withdrawal to holy ground — the monastery and the Church — and by external rites. To the Protestant, the evil is within. 'That which cometh out of the man, that defileth' (Mk. 7: 20). The natural resources of the world were created by God and were given to man for his use. 'Let us make man in our image . . . and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth' (Gn. 1: 26). 'And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over . . . every living thing' (Gn. 1: 28). After the fall of man, the conditions are changed, but the objective is the same. 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread' (Gn. 3: 19). The commission which was given to Adam was also given to Noah. 'Be fruitful, and