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A table of contents for the *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_whs_01.php

Proceedings

OF THE

Wesley Historical Society

Editor: REV. WESLEY F. SWIFT.

Volume XXX

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EDITORIAL

THIS issue completes our thirtieth volume, and in effect it celebrates the diamond jubilee of the *Proceedings*. The first volume, begun early in 1897, consisted of five parts; and thereafter eight quarterly parts to each volume has been our rule.

A perusal of that first volume is both interesting and instructive. It began, significantly enough, with a twelve-page "List of Local Histories" (a second and shorter list appeared in volume VI), and this is a salutary reminder that one of the functions of the *Proceedings* is to put "working tools" of this kind into the hands of research students, whether they are writing a degree thesis or merely a local centenary brochure. In a sense, of course, every page of the *Proceedings* (except, perhaps, this page!) is a "working tool", but an examination of the thirty volumes shows, we think, that too little attention has been paid to the provision of indexes and similar aids for the man who has no time to waste. A learned society like ours should make its vast accumulation of knowledge readily and easily accessible to all who seek it, and we hope to do more of this kind of thing in the *Proceedings* in the future. Meanwhile, an Index to our thirty volumes has been prepared by Mr. John A. Vickers, and we shall try to make this available in some form or other before long.

It is a pity that the Society has never had sufficient funds to continue the admirable series of occasional *Publications* which was begun in 1896, a year before the first *Proceedings*, by the publishing of John Bennet's "Minutes". Three similar *Publications* followed, the last in 1899, but apart from a few "supplements" to the *Proceedings* fifty years ago nothing of this kind has been attempted since.

The character of our magazine has changed a little during its thirty volumes, for the historical emphasis has shifted, and our interests are different from those of sixty years ago. But there is happily no diminution in the supply of material for our pages, and it is our earnest hope that the study of Methodist history in all its aspects, never more widely or zealously pursued than it is today, will be both fostered and furthered by the continued publication of the *Proceedings* as a primary function of the Wesley Historical Society.

“EPISCOPE” IN METHODISM

“EPISCOPE” is a Greek word translated in EVV as “visitation” or “oversight” and in 1 Timothy iii. 1 as “the office of a bishop”. The corresponding Latin verb is “superintendere”. The intention of this article is to show that Wesley—and, after his death, Methodism—used the word “superintendent” (the anglicized form of the Latin) as the equivalent of “bishop” (the anglicized form of the Greek).

Wesley’s convictions and actions

It was on 2nd September 1784 that Wesley ordained two presbyters for America and also “set apart as superintendent Thomas Coke” (who was already a presbyter in the Anglican Church). He sent Coke to America to ordain Asbury as (a) deacon, (b) elder, (c) superintendent. Asbury and Coke together proceeded to set up the “Methodist Episcopal Church of America”, the Minutes were published in London, and Coke, when attacked, defended himself by saying that he did it all on Mr. Wesley’s instructions. Wesley, in his *Sunday Service of the Methodists*, provided American Methodism with an ordinal containing forms for the ordination of deacons, elders, and “superintendents”. Clearly Wesley was here using the word “superintendent” as equivalent to “bishop”.¹

Let us, however, note in passing that Wesley was not the first to do so. He had certain precedents to follow. It was with Luther’s approval that a series of “Instructions” were drawn up in 1527 with the intention of organizing the Protestant communities. A “superintendent” was set over each group of parishes, each parish having its own pastor. Later, in 1537, when King Christian III of Denmark had deposed and imprisoned his (Roman) bishops, the King nominated seven “superintendents”, and Luther sent Bugenhagen (a presbyter) from Germany who consecrated the superintendents. Shortly afterwards the title “Bishop” was resumed. Similarly in Scotland: Knox’s *First Book of Discipline* (1560), although speaking of a parity of ministers, placed “superintendents” over “dioceses”, “to plant and erect churches, to set order, and appoint ministers”. Such superintendents remained strictly accountable to the General Assembly. This, of course, is not to prove that Wesley and his preachers were aware of *all* these facts, but we shall see reason for believing that Wesley (and presumably Asbury) at least knew of the Scottish precedent.

It will be remembered that after reading Lord King’s *Account of the Primitive Church* in 1746 Wesley says:² “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”. The problem therefore arises: By what right and under what theory did Wesley ordain

¹ For a full discussion see Stevens, *History of Methodism*, vol. 2, Book V, chapter VII.

² *Journal*, iii, p. 232.

Coke (and later Mather) as “superintendent” when he believed bishops and presbyters were (essentially) of one order? The answer would appear to be that he ordained *because* he believed bishops and presbyters to be of one order and that the difference between them was one of *function*. He further believed that God had given him the function of “episcopos” in Methodism. He wrote:

Some obedience I always paid to the bishops in obedience to the laws of the land. But I cannot see that I am under any obligation to obey them further than those laws require.

It is in obedience to those laws that I have never exercised in England the power which I believe God has given me. 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.³

Let us note four points: (i) he deliberately claims for himself the same office towards Methodism as the Anglican bishops have in their Church, or indeed any bishops in any church in Europe; (ii) he claims it on the grounds of “the power which I believe God has given me”, not on the grounds of succession; (iii) he denies the validity of the ground of succession for the Anglican bishops; (iv) he implies that the only validity is God’s calling to the function.

Within three or four years Asbury was being called “Bishop” by the American Methodists. Wesley’s letter to him⁴ is a rebuke to pride, not a denial that “superintendent” equals “bishop”:

[Another] instance of this, of your greatness, has given me great concern. How can you, how dare you, suffer yourself to be called Bishop? I shudder, I start, at the very thought! Men may call me a knave or a fool, a rascal, a scoundrel, and I am content; but they shall never by my consent call me a Bishop! For my sake, for God’s sake, for Christ’s sake put a full end to this! Let the Presbyterians do what they please, but let the Methodists know their calling better.

Why was Wesley so insistent that neither he nor Asbury should be called “Bishop”, and what is the point of that last “curious sentence”, as A. Raymond George calls it?⁵ We have already seen that during the Reformation in Scotland in 1560 superintendents were placed over dioceses. In 1572 the word “bishop” replaces “superintendent”. In 1580 the General Assembly “finds and declares the same pretended office [of Bishop] unlawful”, and Presbyterianism was instituted. I suggest that Wesley was clearly disturbed at the association of “worldly” glory with the word “bishop”, and considered that “superintendent” covered the function and avoided the danger. Further, that he saw in the history of the Reformation in Scotland evidence that when after twelve years “pride” restored the word “bishop”, the “fall” (in the shape of Presbyterianism, against which he was strongly prejudiced) followed only eight years later! And here was Asbury, after only four years, accepting

³ *Letters*, vii, p. 284 (19th August 1785).

⁴ *ibid.*, viii, p. 91.

⁵ *London Quarterly and Holborn Review*, 1951, p. 160.

the word which spoke so plainly of "worldly glory". Let us note in passing that if this interpretation of the sentence is accepted it is further evidence of Wesley's intentions in the use of the word "superintendent", and explains his preference for it rather than "bishop". Wesley would surely have agreed with John Poynt, Bishop of Winchester (1551-3), who is quoted by Strype as saying:⁶

Who knoweth not that the name "Bishop" hath been so abused, that when it is spoken the people understood nothing else but a great lord, that went in a white rochet with a shaven crown, and that carried an oil box with him, wherewith he used once in seven years, riding about, to confirm children. . . . I deny not . . . that the name "Bishop" may be well taken; but because the evilness of the abuse hath marred the goodness of the word, it cannot be denied but that it was not amiss to join for a time another word with it in his place, whereby to restore that abused word to its right signification. And the word "Superintendent" is such a name.

Conceptions of "Episcope" in the Post-Wesley Period

Wesley had carefully arranged in the Deed of Declaration that after his death the ultimate "episcopé" in Methodism should reside in the Conference. Clearly, however, this was impracticable for day-to-day working. The question therefore arose: How is the practical episcopé to be applied in our societies? Broadly speaking, three answers were offered. First, there was the view which is associated with Kilham. He, and others before him, wanted the Society Meeting to hold the power; this, of course, was ultimately a denial of the authority of Conference, and was therefore bound either to fail or to destroy Methodism. The other two views held much ground in common. The fact that Wesley had set apart Alexander Mather as a superintendent who continued to labour in England revealed to his preachers the way his mind was working. Wesley's chief lieutenants asserted that his plan for Methodism was episcopal. For instance, Pawson (President in 1793) wrote in December of that year:⁷

The design of Mr. Wesley will weigh much with many, which now evidently appears to have been this: He foresaw that the Methodists would after his death soon become a distinct people; he was deeply prejudiced against a Presbyterian, and as much in favour of an Episcopalian form of government; in order therefore to preserve all that was valuable in the Church of England among the Methodists, he ordained Mr. Mather and Dr. Coke bishops. These he undoubtedly designed should ordain others. Mr. Mather told us so at the Manchester Conference [1791] but we did not then understand him. I see no way of coming to any good settlement but on the plan I mentioned before. I sincerely wish that Dr. Coke and Mr. Mather may be allowed to be what they are—bishops.

The point of difference between these last two views, which both

⁶ J. Strype, *Ecclesiastical Memorials*, II, ii, p. 141. Professor Norman Sykes in *Old Priest and New Presbyterian*, p. 15, also reproduces a passage from Bishop Jewel's *Works* defending the use of the word "superintendent" by reference to Augustine, Chrysostom, Jerome, Anselm, and Aquinas.

⁷ Smith, *History of Methodism*, vol. 2, pp. 97-8.

accepted the idea of scriptural episcopoi in Methodism, arose over the question of scope. Should the episcopos be responsible for a group of circuits or for only one circuit; should there be only a dozen episcopoi or was there safety in greater numbers? The people called Methodists, deprived of their autocratic ruler, decided in those first seven years after his death the nature of the authority to be exercised among them. We shall see four unsuccessful attempts in this period to institute episcopoi over groups of circuits, viz. the “Halifax Circular”, the Lichfield Plan, and schemes sponsored by Samuel Bradburn in 1795 and by Thomas Coke in 1797.

Wesley died on 2nd March 1791. Four weeks later, on 30th March, William Thompson, John Pawson, Robert Roberts, John Allen, Richard Rodda, Samuel Bradburn, Thomas Tennant, Thomas Hanby and Christopher Hopper met at Halifax and sent out a circular letter addressed to “The Preachers in general and the Assistants in particular”, from which the following is an extract:

There appears to us but two ways: either to appoint another King in Israel; or to be governed by the Conference Plan by forming ourselves into Committees. If you adopt the first, who is the Man? What power is he to be invested with? and what revenue is he to be allowed?—But this is incompatible with the Conference Deed. If the latter we take the Liberty to offer our Thoughts upon the Subject.

1. Fill up the vacant places in the Conference Deed with Preachers, according to their *Seniority in the Work*.
2. Choose a President for *one Year only* according to the enrolled Deed.
3. Appoint a Secretary and Stewards for *one year only*, except for the Preachers' Fund.
4. Appoint a Person from Year to Year to hold a Conference in Ireland.
5. Appoint different Committees, which will take in all the circuits in the three Kingdoms, to manage the Affairs of their respective Districts from one Conference to another.
6. Let these Committees during the time of the Conference appoint their own Presidents for the ensuing year. And let their names be inserted in the Minutes, that they may convene the Committee in case of bad behaviour or Death of a Preacher or any other emergency.⁸

By contrast, laymen at Redruth wished for such radical changes as would have brought chaos at once:⁹

1. That in the forming of classes the Members constituting every class (or a majority of them) shall chuse their leader.
2. That the people in every Society (or a majority of them) shall choose the Society Stewards.
3. That no Preacher shall admit into or expel from the Society any Member without the Consent of a majority of such Society. . . .
6. That no Person be recommended to Conference (or sent out) as a Travelling Preacher without a Certificate from the Stewards assembled at Quarterly Meeting.

⁸ *ibid.*, vol. 2, Appendix E. Italics and capitals as in the source quoted.

⁹ *ibid.*, vol. 2, Appendix F.

We highly disapprove of the Proposal for dividing the Kingdom into Districts conceiving it would be injurious to Methodism.

When the 1791 Conference met at Manchester on 26th July the prime mover of the Halifax Circular (William Thompson) was elected President, and many of its proposals became accepted practice. In particular, "Districts" were created, but point No. 6 of the Circular was replaced by:

The Assistant of a Circuit shall have authority to summon the Preachers of his District who are in full connexion on any critical case which according to the best of his judgement merits such an interference. And the said Preachers or as many of them as can attend shall assemble at the place and time appointed by the Assistant aforesaid and shall form a Committee for the purpose of determining concerning the business on which they are called. They shall choose a chairman for the occasion and their decision shall be final until the meeting of the next Conference when the chairman of the Committee shall lay the Minutes of their proceedings before the Conference. Provided nevertheless that nothing shall be done by any Committee contrary to the resolutions of the Conference.

This was amended at the 1792 Conference to read:

All the Preachers of every District respectively who shall be present at the Conference from time to time shall meet together as soon as possible after the stations of the Preachers are finally settled and choose a Chairman for their District out of the present and absent members of the District Committee. The Chairman so chosen shall have authority to call a meeting of the Committee of his District on application of the Preachers or people which appears to him to require it. But he must never individually interfere with any circuit but his own.

There was therefore a reluctance from the beginning to invest the Chairman with any great powers. In the first year any Assistant could call a meeting of the District Committee, and the Chairman was chairman for the occasion only. The practical difficulties of this caused the acceptance the following year of point No. 6 of the Halifax Circular, but the addition was made restricting the Chairman's individual activities to his own circuit. Conference appeared determined to safeguard the authority of the Assistant: even the action of a District Committee, though it may be "justified", is still described as an "interference", but under no circumstances can interference by the Chairman on his own initiative be "justified". The Redruth and similar plans were not even discussed at these two Conferences. We see the Conference steering a middle course between the Charybdis of the babble of many voices and the Scylla of the hierarchy of the few.

The year 1794 saw the production of the Lichfield Plan.¹⁰ On the first two days in April Dr. Coke consulted at Lichfield with Alexander Mather, Thomas Taylor, John Pawson, Samuel Bradburn, James Rogers, Henry Moore and Adam Clarke. Part of the Plan upon which they agreed reads as follows:

¹⁰ *ibid.*, vol. 2, Appendix G.

That there be an order of superintendents appointed by the Conference.

That all the preachers who shall be approved by the Conference shall from time to time be ordained as elders.

That all the preachers when admitted into Full Connexion shall receive their admission by being ordained deacons by the superintendents appointed by the Conference ; provided 1. That no preacher at present on probation or in full connexion shall be under any obligation to submit to ordination. 2. That no preacher shall receive letter of orders till he be ordained elder.

That the superintendents appointed among us by the Conference shall be annually changed if necessary.

That the Connexion be formed into seven or eight general divisions.

That each superintendent shall visit the principal societies in his division at least once a year ; that he shall have authority to execute or see executed all the branches of Methodist discipline and to determine after having consulted the preachers who are with him in all cases of difficulty till the Conference.

That the superintendent of any division where he judge himself inadequate to determine in any given case shall have authority to call in the President to his assistance ; in which case the President shall if possible attend and shall have the ultimate determination of the case until the Conference.

[Summary of] Divisions proposed : 1. London, 2. Bristol, 3. Birmingham, 4. Manchester, 5. Sheffield, 6. Leeds, 7. Newcastle, 8. Scotland & Ireland.

Proposed superintendents : Dr Coke, Dr Mather, Dr Taylor, Dr Pawson, Mr Moore, Mr Hanby, Mr Bradburn.

The whole of the above plan to be laid before the ensuing Conference to be adopted or rejected as they may think fit ; but those present agree to recommend and support it as a thing greatly wanted and likely to be of advantage to the work of God.

Henry Moore's biographer claims his authority for saying that the Conference “ treated [the Lichfield Plan] as tending to create invidious distinctions among brethren and those who attended the meeting were considered as aspirants after honour ”.¹¹ A comparison between the names of those who met at Lichfield and the names of those proposed as “ superintendents ” explains the attitude of Conference. Pawson had written as long ago as 2nd June 1786 : “ Dr. Coke with his well meant zeal drives quite too fast and by that means defeats his own design.”

At the Manchester Conference of 1795, however, a third attempt was made. Kilham's diary for Wednesday, 5th August reads :¹²

In the afternoon as soon as we returned from dinner, Mr Bradburn brought forward a motion for travelling bishops. He used all his rhetoric to recommend this plan and its benefits were held up as highly advantageous to the people . . . After labouring the subject to the utmost of his power when he had done a general clamour took place to “ Down with the bishops ”. We endeavoured to overthrow his scheme by shewing—1. That it would give these men undue power and influence. 2. It

¹¹ Mrs. Richard Smith, *Life of the Rev. Mr. Henry Moore*, p. 127.

¹² *Life of the Rev. Alexander Kilham* (1838), p. 227.

was calculated to create divisions amongst the societies. 3. It would be expensive. A majority being of this opinion the plan was condemned.¹³

If the Conference in two successive years had had to reject schemes for District Superintendents or Travelling Bishops, the following year (1796) it had to deal faithfully with Alexander Kilham, and he was expelled from the Connexion because of his slanders and agitation. The Conference was again steering a middle course between *vox populi vox Dei* and a hierarchy of a few preachers. In what did this middle course consist—or was it so vague as to be undefinable? The answer is to be found in the change which first occurs in the *Minutes* of this Conference. Before this year the first preacher in a circuit is called an "Assistant". In 1796, however, for the first time the phrase "Superintendent of a Circuit" occurs in the *Minutes*. The word "Assistant" is also used in 1796, but from 1797 onwards he is always referred to as "Superintendent". From one point of view this can be described as upholding the *status quo*. The change of title indicated a change brought about by Wesley's death. When there was no "king in Israel" the "Assistant" was such no longer and became "Superintendent" in his own right.¹⁴ It cannot, however, be fully understood without reference to the road which stretches from Luther, through Wesley, avoids the cul-de-sac of the Lichfield Plan, and goes beyond to a distinctive contribution to the doctrine and practice of episcopacy.

The fourth and final attempt to institute bishops of Districts occurred in 1797. The *Memoir of Charles Atmore* for Monday, 7th August reads:

The President [Coke] suggested that we take into consideration the additional powers with which the executive ought to be invested. The President, Messrs Mather and Moore, spoke strongly in favour of what was termed Mr. Wesley's plan which was to appoint twelve Ministers as Bishops; two of whom should be appointed in Scotland, three in Ireland, and seven in England. The plan was strongly objected to; but though there was difference of opinion, no undue warmth of temper was displayed.

Summary of the period 1791 to 1797

Thus we see four attempts to institute "episcopoi" of Districts, all decisively rejected, and further, in 1796 the word "superintendent" replaces "assistant". The conclusion seems irresistible. Wesley was the "episcopos" of Methodism during his lifetime, and the first preacher in each circuit was his "assistant". At his death the "episcopé" was divided between the Conference (as the ultimate authority), the District Meeting (as the interim and co-ordinating

¹³ Early in 1795 Kilham issued a tract addressed "To Methodist Preachers everywhere" and signed "Martin Luther". I have been unable, despite much effort, to trace a full copy of this tract; and the extracts which I have found are both promising and tantalizing. Only one thing is clear to me so far, namely, that the tract is very relevant to this whole study. It is therefore with deep regret that I am unable to take notice of it above.

¹⁴ Wesley lays down rules for "Assistants" in several places, e.g. *Minutes of Conference*, 1749 and 1786.

body) and the first preacher in the circuit (for the actual application). It was proposed on at least four occasions that the “episcopé” should reside in the Chairmen of Districts—in which case the first preacher of each circuit would have become “assistant” to an episcopal chairman. The proposal was rejected, and hence the first preacher in a circuit became “superintendent” by reason of his own function in the circuit where he and he alone was to have the “episcopé”. There was the further advantage of safety in numbers. The number of such “episcopoi” tended against a hierarchy and maintained the brotherhood of the ministry. When one man in three is an “episcopos” the worldly glory attaching to the office is much less than when one in fifty holds it. The resultant emphasis on the *function* of a superintendent, i.e. “episcopé”, has been one of the chief advantages of our polity.

Thus the Methodist use of the word “superintendent” has a significance which is often overlooked today. It really did mean “bishop” to the generation which followed Wesley. Certainly the evidence is not easily found; particularly difficult to discover are contemporary comments on the change of nomenclature which occurred in 1796; probably other and more experienced members of our Society will be more successful than I have been. Yet there are one or two data which can be adduced:

Myles’s *Chronological History of the People called Methodists*, in both the 1803 and the 1813 editions, reads (referring to Wesley’s appointment of “assistants” in 1763):

Mr. Wesley appointed these to ASSIST him in the government of the Societies. . . . They were first called Superintendents, and since Mr. Wesley’s death, as the office is no longer a RELATIVE one, this name has been restored. It resembles that of Pastor, Elder, or Bishop in the Primitive Church, with this difference, the Primitive Bishops held their office for life unless excommunicated; not so the Methodist Superintendents; being Itinerants they are often changed.¹⁵

The assertion that “they were first called ‘Superintendents’” appears to lack corroboration: I am aware of nothing in Wesley’s *Minutes* to support it; but despite that, the passage shows clearly how the office was regarded after Wesley’s death.

It must also be noted that until at least 1825 the Book-Room printed various editions of Wesley’s abridgement of the Book of Common Prayer containing forms for the ordination of deacon, elder and superintendent (modelled closely on the Anglican ordinal) for use in Britain,¹⁶ even though the last of these forms was never used after Wesley’s death.

Finally, it must not be forgotten that as late as 1875 Dr. W. B. Pope could say: “The Superintendent in English Methodism occupies precisely the position of early episcopacy.”¹⁷

¹⁵ 3rd edn., p. 78; 4th edn., p. 90.

¹⁶ I am indebted to a letter from the Rev. Harold Garner in the *Methodist Recorder*, 6th September 1956.

¹⁷ *Compendium of Theology*, vol. III, pp. 358-9 (2nd edn., 1880).

Relevance to our contemporary controversies

It will have been obvious from the beginning of this article that it is not intended to be of merely academic historical interest. What has gone before has been, I trust, factual and historical, but it has a close connexion with two practical contemporary controversies, and what follows is an attempt briefly to indicate the relevance of this study to those questions.

The advocates of the scheme for Separated Chairmen approved at this year's Conference will be able to claim the support of "the majority of the senior Preachers" at the time of Wesley's death (i.e. the signatories to the Lichfield Plan). The opponents of the scheme will be able to claim that it is a complete reversal of Methodist polity as it has existed for one hundred and sixty years. Admittedly we have not yet received the scheme in its entirety: the scope and functions of Separated Chairmen are still to be the subject of a further report to Conference. The crux of the matter is Standing Order 171 (4): "The Chairman must never, at his own instance, intervene in the administration of any circuit other than his own." The powers of Separated Chairmen without the repeal of that order will be much reduced; but to repeal it would be to take the last step in turning our backs upon the distinctive contribution of British Methodism to the doctrine and practice of episcopacy.

It is the basis of the present "conversations" on Church Relations between the Anglican and Methodist Churches that Methodism should take episcopacy into her system. Semi-official Anglican comments have added that we should experiment with it in order to attempt an improvement on the Anglican model. Such an approach by the Anglicans needs to be answered by the simple statement of fact that Methodism already has episcopacy in her system. The Anglican Church has a theoretical successional episcopacy. The Methodist Church has a practical functional episcopacy. We are committed by Wesley to the view that God calls certain men to exercise "episcopé", that it is not a question of succession, or even ordination, but of function. In contrast to the Anglican model, Methodist episcopacy (oversight or superintendence) has the advantages that (i) it is inseparable from real pastoral responsibility for our members; (ii) an episcopus is himself subject to the authority of Conference; (iii) the tendency to pride is effectively dealt with in the "rough and tumble" of circuit life.

It is with a real sense of debt that I gratefully acknowledge the help given me by the Editor in allowing me to study in his library for the facts upon which this article is based, and also his kindly encouragement of one who came to him with nothing but an idea and much ignorance.

VICTOR E. VINE.

[Perhaps it should be stated that neither the Editor nor the Wesley Historical Society are necessarily committed to the implications of the penultimate paragraph on this page.—EDITOR.]

JOHN FLESHER AND THE BEMERSLEY BOOK-ROOM

THE Primitive Methodist Conference of 1842 superannuated Hugh Bourne from his position as Editor, having already in 1838 replaced James Bourne as Book Steward. The new Editor was John Flesher, who had already been named by the 1838 Conference as Bourne's deputy when illness threatened to incapacitate him. As might be expected, Flesher did not find the atmosphere of the Bemersley Book-Room altogether congenial. From the beginning he had troubles with the Book Committee, which consisted of the displaced brothers Bourne, their Tunstall friend John Hancock, John Hallam the Book Steward, and himself, together with the superintendent preacher of the Tunstall circuit. Actually the dispossessed Hugh Bourne this year filled that position, and he does not seem to have called in the preacher next in seniority, Richard Jukes. The Committee had power to nullify any editorial policy, and took care to exercise this power against the upstart from outside the Tunstall circle, even though Hallam himself sided with Flesher. Though Hallam proved an ally in the editorial department, however, Flesher quickly realized that his business methods completely unfitted him for the office of Book Steward. The position was even worse in the case of John Hancock, Primitive Methodism's leading layman apart from James Bourne, for Hancock seemed to be misappropriating the connexional funds which Hallam was incompetent to safeguard. Flesher was also shocked to discover the low estimate held locally of James Bourne, and to realize more fully the tension between Tunstall and the Bournes on the one hand and Hull and Clowes on the other. Altogether he found himself in a very uncomfortable situation, as is revealed by a document which H. B. Kendall, who used it for his *History of the Primitive Methodist Church* (ii, pp. 380-4), endorsed thus:

Next to the Memoranda Books of Wm. Clowes (that came thro W. Bywater and G. Shaw to me) this document is the most important original one that has passed thro' my hands. It throws a flood of light on the reasons the Book Room was removed to London. It is less than the truth to say that this document is worth its weight in gold, & by far the most valuable of Mrs. McKechnie's documents. H. B. KENDALL.¹

In spite of its historical value, Kendall felt it unwise to use more than a few sentences of the document in his *History*. A century has now passed by, and there is little danger of doing violence to any personal feelings by its publication *in extenso*. The document, on fourteen octavo pages sewn into a little book, is in the Hartley Victoria College Library, where I copied it many years ago, though I felt hesitant about publishing it at the time. This year, however, our present Book Steward has told the story of the various Methodist

¹ Colin Campbell McKechnie was the Connexional Editor from 1876 to 1887. He prepared a revised edition of William Antliff's *Life of Hugh Bourne*, using additional material, but not Flesher's "Memorandums".

Book-Rooms, and it seems right to make this document available both to him and to Methodist students generally, for only thus can we appreciate fully the reasons for the removal of the Primitive Methodist Book-Room from the home and the control of James Bourne of Bemersley. I am deeply grateful to the Rev. John T. Wilkinson, the present Principal of the College, for checking my transcript and for making a number of valuable suggestions.

Memorandums of certain things which transpired at Bemersley and the neighbourhood beginning on Sept 10/1842. JOHN FLESHER.

Sept ["15" added later] Having had a Book committee meeting I have felt my my [sic] mind much tried with J. Hancock's apparent advocacy of the admission of articles in the Magazine which are hardly common sense, alledging that "the former editor had so many friends that if too great a departure was made from his style many of our supporters whose support ought to be continued would be dissatisfied, and therefore the present editor must keep as near to the old style as possible". I replied that the conference had appointed me to be editor under no such expectation as that which J. Hancock had expressed—that I would not be pledged to gratify it, but should seek such improvement as my abilities were master of, and that if I were opposed by the committee, I should make notes of its proceedings, and lay the same with my views before the conference. J. Hallam supported me, and hence many articles were sanctioned for appearance in the Magazine, which I had reason to believe would otherwise have been ejected. Indeed, Bro. Hallam excepted, the members of the committee are not prepared to sanction intellectual articles, as they have not power to appreciate their worth, and have therefore not taste sufficient to afford pleasure while they are read. My situation as editor is difficult not from this source alone, but also from the awfully imperfect style in which most of the original articles are written. I have already repented often that ever I accepted the editor's office.

JOHN FLESHER.

John Hancock was a leading layman in the Tunstall circuit, and the "Corresponding Member" of the General Committee from at least 1831 (when he shared the position with James Bourne, later replacing him) until his death on 2nd January 1843. He was an engraver by trade, though he became interested in pottery manufacture, and seems to have entangled James Bourne in pottery speculations. His connexional influence may be seen in the fact that he was one of the seven laymen chosen as "Deed Poll members" of the Conference.²

Flesher seems a little unkind to Hugh Bourne in particular, who was indeed a scholar. Nevertheless it is true to say that Bourne's scholarship was mainly along the lines of practical religion, and that his style was homespun.³

Sep. 17 This day in conversation with Brother John Hallam I learnt that He had without confederal or other connexional sanction lent five hundred pounds (or some such sum) belonging the Book Room to Mr Hancock on a note. I was astonished and told him that his having

² See Kendall's *History*, ii, p. 5; *Proceedings*, xxvii, p. 142.

³ See J. T. Wilkinson's *Hugh Bourne*, especially pp. 189-98.

done so was hazardous, and if known by the Brethren generally would be disapproved of. I mean by God's help not to give Hallam any quiet till he have called in the money.

JOHN FLESHER.

17 This day Brother Hallam told me that he and I were appointed to value the property to be given by J. Hancock in Mortgage for the £900 lent by the last yearly meeting of the Preachers' Friendly Society⁴—and wished me to say when I would accompany him to Tunstall to do so. I told him I would hasten my work and avail myself of the first opportunity of accompanying him. I suggested that if he had the money we need not be in haste. He said he had not, but had let J. Hancock have it and had a note from him to testify the same. He moreover asked me what I thought of his letting Mr Hancock have the 100£ which had been placed in his hands to be forwarded to the Bank of England. I told him that as the Yearly meeting had directed that it should be sent to the Bank, he ought to send it, and I would not be responsible for giving other advice than that the direction of the yearly meeting should be complied with.

JOHN FLESHER.

Sept. 23. This day Brother John Hallam & I have been down to Tunstall to value the houses to be given in Mortgage to the Treasurer of the Preacher's friendly Society for the money which he received in loan from the last yearly meeting: but finding that a considerable of those houses were only just begun to be built, I refused to put a value on the property, urging that were I to do so I could not give a good account of my conduct to my Brethren the preachers. Brother J Hallam took the same view of the case and we advised Mr Hancock to hasten on the building that we might execute the work to which we had been appointed by the last yearly meeting. He said he would attend to our wish. During our further conversation it was stated by Bro. Hallam that as we had no security for the money if anything should happen Mr Hancock he ought to get the buildings finished as soon as possible, that the deeds might be completed. I then ascertained that the note which Brother Hallam had received when he let J. Hancock have the 900£ was merely on blank paper as a simple testimony that J. Hancock had received the money. The whole of the interview has given me much concern, and I fear that J. Hancock is in real difficulty. I have given utterance to these views to J. Hallam, on our way to Bemersley, and have advised him to make sure of the money which he had lent J. Hancock without connexional sanction.

Entered on the 24th. JOHN FLESHER.

Sept 28 J. Hancock has this day treated me some what differently from what has been usual, has given hints that I and Holliday⁵ are suspicious of his having the preacher's fund money, and wished to know whether we thought he was the man to defraud the fund. He talked queerly of Holliday's sinking his circuits and other things in such an irrelevant manner as to convince me that he was cherishing bitter thoughts about both me and my friend. I retaliated his remarks with unequivocal voice and language, and told him that in the care which Holliday & I took concerning the fund money we only did what we were compelled to do by law, and that we were both of that temperament that we should not

⁴ The Primitive Methodist Itinerant Preachers' Friendly Society, instituted in 1823 as the "Primitive Methodist Preachers' Fund", and enrolled in the High Court of Chancery on 28th January 1841.

⁵ Thomas Holliday, the Secretary of the Primitive Methodist Itinerant Preachers' Friendly Society. (Flesher himself became Secretary in 1843.)

finch whatever might be thought of us. My remarks made deep impression and he finally became kinder than when we first met. After all he talks so prospectively of his affairs, and when pushed to assign a good reason for the affluence of his affairs he never succeeds in doing so. On this account I fear that he has already too much of the connexion's money : and I shall not feel clear before God unless I use every prudent effort personally, and by pressing Bro : Hallam to get it out of his hands. Indeed as a connexion we have no business to have our money in business, especially the fund money has no right to be there ; and God being my helper I will exert myself to free the connexion from the trammels under which it has, in this respect, laboured for years, and is awfully labouring even now.

JOHN FLESHER.

Nov. 28. ["1843" added later] This day I have been at Hanley and have conversed with Brother Burndred,⁶ Bagley,⁷ and others at the . . .⁸ Shop, and find to my sorrow that the piety of J.B [ourne] . is reckoned little or nothing of. His general character is that of a selfish man, who uses crafty means of amassing wealth. Instance Burndred wanted him to borrow 100£ to help the trustees of Hanley chapel, James Bourne being one. He J. Bourne knew of 100£ to lend, instead of borrowing it for the chapel, borrowed it in his own name and gave a promissory note for it, leaving the trustees of the Chapel still to groan under their difficulties. Also he had applied to a person to lend him a thousand pounds. The person asked Burndred if he would lend him that sum were he applied to and were able. Burndred replied no. Also Burndred a few days since fell in with a gentleman who had been at a Bank which refused to cash J. Bourne's Bills—he asked Burndred whether he knew if J. Bourne's circumstances were in difficulty. Burndred replied he knew little about them. . . .⁹ alluded to his conduct, and said if I stopped long enough in the country I should find that J. Bourne's charracter [sic] was at a very low ebb among religious folks—particularly those of our own connexion and the Weslyans. These things pained me much.

JOHN FLESHER.

1842 Decemb. 9 This afternoon we have had a general committee meeting. Brother Hugh Bourne in moving the rescinding of a last week's motion which had conceded travelling expenses conditionally to Hull circuit for removals from other circuits to its missionary stations, made some unpleasant allusions to the circuit, saying that he never understood the movements of that circuit, and that if it had wrongfully received travelling expenses for preachers removing from other circuits to its missions it must in common justice refund the money &c.

Hull was by far the largest circuit in the Connexion, reporting to the 1843 Conference a membership of 4,530 (against Tunstall's 860), the next highest being that of Scotter (also in the Hull District) with 1,880. Much of the home missionary work of the Connexion was sponsored by the Hull circuit, and the 1842 Stations credit it with missions in the following places: Patrington, Scarborough, Brigg, "Isle of White", Portsmouth, Southampton, London, Brighton,

⁶ Thomas Burndred, a preacher who came under Clowes's influence in the very early years of the movement. (See W. Clowes, *Journals*, 1844, pp. 103-4.)

⁷ George Bagley, the junior itinerant preacher in the Tunstall circuit, who died in the work in 1860.

⁸ Here follows a shorthand character.

⁹ Another shorthand character, apparently representing a name.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

	<i>Facing Page</i>
The former Bridge Street Chapel, Glasgow	8
John Cennick, aged 35	34
The Moravian Burial-Ground at Chelsea, London	38
The Reverend F. F. Bretherton, B.A. (President of the Wesley Historical Society from 1941 to 1956)	102
John Nelson and John Downes at Trewint	110
The Sunderland Theological Institution	118
Commemorative Plaque at Haverfordwest	118
John Wesley preaching to Cornish "tinnerns" at Trewint	134
James Bourne (1781-1860)	140

CONTRIBUTORS AND ARTICLES

	PAGE
REV. FRANK BAKER, B.A., B.D., Ph.D.:	
John Cennick: A Handlist of his Writings 40, 50, 86,	104
John Wesley and Thomas Hanson, the "Brown-Bread Preacher"	127
*James Bourne (1781-1860) and the Bemersley Book-Room	138
John Flesher and the Bemersley Book-Room	171
The Annual Meeting and Lecture (1955)	65
The Annual Meeting and Lecture (1956)	154
REV. OLIVER A. BECKERLEGGE, M.A., Ph.D.:	
*Early Glasgow Chapels	7
Women Itinerant Preachers	182
Notes and Queries: (966)	95
REV. N. ALLEN BIRTWHISTLE, M.A., B.Sc.:	
Founded in 1786: The Origins of the Methodist Missionary Society	25
REV. JOHN C. BOWMER, M.A., B.D.:	
Notes and Queries: (956) 46, (976)	188
REV. FRANCIS F. BRETHERTON, B.A.:	
*The Sunderland Theological Institution	117
REV. W. LAMPLOUGH DOUGHTY, B.A., B.D.:	
Joseph Benson at the Book Room, 1808	59
Life of a Methodist Minister in Inverness in 1808-9	98
REV. A. RAYMOND GEORGE, M.A., B.D.:	
Notes and Queries: (975)	188
REV. A. WESLEY HILL, B.A., M.B., B.Ch.:	
Was John Wesley a Methodist?	82
Notes and Queries: (974)	159
REV. R. ERNEST KER, M.A.:	
Loyola and the Wesley Hymns	62
REV. REGINALD KISSACK, M.A., B.D.:	
Notes and Queries: (970)	136
REV. EDWARD LANGTON, D.D.:	
James Crawfoot: The Forest Mystic	12
REV. GEORGE LAWTON:	
John Fletcher's Pulpit Prayers	2
John Wesley and Proverbs: A Concluding Essay	73, 108
Notes and Queries: (958)	47

	PAGE
REV. WILLIAM LEARY:	
John Cennick, 1718-55: A Bi-centenary Appreciation	39
REV. GEORGE H. LOCKETT:	
Notes and Queries: (952) 24, (960)	70
MISS IRENE LONGSTAFF:	
The Archives of the Methodist Missionary Society	90
REV. FREDERICK PILKINGTON:	
Notes and Queries: (961)	70
REV. GRIFFITH T. ROBERTS, M.A., B.D.:	
Notes and Queries: (962)	71
REV. THOMAS SHAW:	
The Stratton Mission (1811-18) and Bible Christian Origins	120
Notes and Queries: (969)	136
REV. J. BERNARD SHELDON:	
" Hill's Arrangement "	134
Notes and Queries: (965)	72
REV. MORGAN SLADE, M.A.:	
The First Bible Christian Hymn-Book	179
MR. STANLEY SOWTON:	
*A Trewint Picture	97
Trewint: A Rejoinder	185
REV. CHARLES E. SURMAN, B.A.:	
Notes and Queries: (972)	159
REV. WESLEY F. SWIFT:	
Some Notes on Scottish Methodism	16
The Moravian Burial-Ground at Chelsea, London	38
" Feed the Lambs " at Haverfordwest: A New Wesley Letter...	132
Notes and Queries: (954) 24, (957) 47, (959) 70, (964) 72, (967) 95, (968) 96, (977)	188
REV. JOHN H. VERNEY:	
Notes and Queries: (963)	71
MR. JOHN A. VICKERS, B.A.:	
Notes on Wesley's Visits to Taunton: September 1743 and September 1755	186
REV. VICTOR E. VINE:	
" Episcopé " in Methodism	162
REV. THOMAS E. WARNER, D.D.:	
Dr. Leslie's Domain, Tanderagee	114
Notes and Queries: (971)	136
REV. HERBERT W. WHITE:	
Trewint	151
Notes and Queries: (953)	24
REV. JAMES K. WHITEHEAD, B.A.:	
Notes and Queries: (955)	46
REV. A. JOHN WIFFEN, B.A.:	
Notes and Queries: (973)	159

BOOK NOTICES

by

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GENERAL INDEX

If more than one mention is made of a person or place in the same article, the first reference only is given. * denotes an illustrated article.

- ABBOTT, MRS., OF THURLBY GRANGE**, 100
Abraham, Charles J., 140
Account of the Primitive Church (King), 162
Adams, C., 88
Allen, John, 165
Alphabetical Arrangement (Hill), 134
Anderson, O. G. R., 20
 Anglican-Methodist Conversations, 170
Antigua, 26
Antliff, Rev. Samuel, 118
Antliff, Rev. Samuel R., 159
Antrim, 37
Archives of the Methodist Missionary Society, 90
 Architecture, Early Methodist, 136
Armagh, 37
Armitage, Rev. George, 119
Armstrong, Rev. George, 119
Asbury, Bishop Francis, 162
Asclepiades, 82
Assistant, 168
Ayr, 17

BAGLEY, REV. GEORGE, 174
Baldwin, Rev. Arthur, 91
Ball, Hannah, 133
Ballinderry, 57
Ballymena, 37
Ballymenagh, 58
Ballymore, 136
Ballynahone, 55
Banff, 16, 20
Banwell, Rev. George, 123
 Baptism in Scotland, 18
Barham, John Foster, 70
Barking, 37
Barritt, Rev. John, 100
Barritt, Rev. John W., 21
Barton, 174
Bateman, Thomas, 150
Bath, 46, 56
Beaker, Ann, of Littleton, 104
Bearn, 122
Beckly, William, 125
Bedford, 174
Bemersley Book-Room, 138
Benson, Rev. Joseph, at the Book-Room, 59
Bible Christian Hymn-Book, The First, 179
 Bible Christian Origins, 120
Bidding Prayer, 2
Biddulph, 150
Bideford, 53, 121
Black Torrington, 126
Blackwell, Ebenezer, 74
Bladworth, Jonathan, 20
Blisland, 182
Böhler, Peter, 38
Book of Common Prayer, Wesley's
 Abridgement of, 169
Book-Room, 154, 157
Bourne, Hugh, 13, 138, 171
Bourne, Hugh, Life of (Antliff), 171

Bourne, James, 171
Bourne, James (1781-1860) and the Bemersley Book-Room, 138
Bourne, Sarah, 149
Brackenburg, R. C., 131
Bradburn, Rev. Samuel, 165
Bradford, 134
Bradford (Devon), 122
Bradford, Richmond-Shearbridge, 153
Bradworthy, 122
Brayshill, 122
 **Bretherton, Francis Fletcher*, 101
 Bretherton Memorial Fund, 154
Bridgeruic, 121
Brigg, 174
Brighton, 174
Brinn, 12
Bristol, 52, 105
Brougham of Burslem (printer), 140
Brown, Dr. John, 82
Bude, 122
Bugenhagen, 162
Bull, Bessie A. and M., 183
Bunting, Rev. Dr. Jabez, 28, 68
Burndred, Rev. Thomas, 174
Burslem, 138
Bywater, W., 171

CAMBORNE, 136
Camelford Circuit, 126
Campbell, William, 21
Canterbury, 174
Cardinham, 121
Carey, William, 26
Caries, George, 70
Carkeek, Annie E., 183
Cartwright, Peter, 93
 **Cennick, John, 1718-55: A Bi-centenary Appreciation*, 30
Cennick, John, 39, 50, 70; *Letters of*, 71;
 A Handlist of his Writings, 40, 50,
 86, 104
Ceylon, 91
Chelsea, Moravian Burial-Ground, 30
Chester, 12; *Wesley Window at*, 159
Childerplay, 176
Chronological Catalogue of all the Travelling Preachers (1795), 134
Chronological History of the People called Methodists, 169
Church, Rev. Thomas, 175
 "Cirplanology", 89, 184
Clarke, Rev. Dr. Adam, 120, 166
Clarke, Rev. John, 27
Clawton, 122
Clowes, William, 13, 139, 171
Clowesites, 177
Coke, Rev. Dr. Thomas, 26, 90, 130, 162,
 188
Colan, 120
Cole, Rev. Thomas, 106
Colne, 129
Committee of Privileges, 126
Congregational Insurance Company Ltd., 159

- Constitutions and Canons Ecclesiastical*, 1603, 2
 Cookbury, 122
 Costin, Eva, 183
Crawfoot, James: the Forest Mystic, 12, 138
 Crowther, Jonathan, 16
 Croydon, Shirley, 153
 Cudworth, W., 106

 DEANE, JOSEPH, 37
 Delamere Forest, 12
 Denovan, Alexander, 10
 Dobson, George, 128
Dr. Leslie's Domain, Tanderagee, 114
 Donegal, 37
 Doudney, D. A. (printer), 176
 Doughty family, 137
 Down, 37
 Downes, John, 151
 Drumagren, 58
 Dublin, 36, 54, 105; Big Booter Lane, 37;
 Skinner's Alley Baptist Church, 36
 Dumbarton, 21
 Dunwell, Joseph, 91
 Dymond, Rev. and Mrs. F. J., 183

 EAST DEREHAM, 115
 Eaton, Rev. John, 106
 Eaysr Essay Prize-winners, 1950-55, 95
 Edinburgh, Nicolson Square, 19
 Edwards, Lillie, 182
 Edwards, Rev. Jonathan, 88
 Elgin, 16
 Elmfield House, York, 118
 Englesea Brook, 149
 "Episcopé" in *Methodism*, 162
 Epworth Rectory, 72
Epworth Witness, The, 178
 Exeter, 54; Riot at, 105
 Evans, David, 129

 FALMOUTH, 70
 Farley, Felix (printer), 42, 53, 105
 Fellowships in Methodist History, 188
 Findlay, Rev. Dr. G. G., 28
First Book of Discipline (1560), 162
 Flesher, Rev. John, 146, 171
Fletcher, John, Pulpit Prayers of, 2;
 Works of, 59; Sermon Notes of, 2
 Forest Methodists, 12
 Foster, William, 70
 Fowler, J. (printer), 140
 Fulneck, 37

 GAMBOLD, JOHN, 133
 Gay, Elizabeth, 183
 George, Rev. Silas L., 118
 Gibson, Thomas, 118
 Gilbert, Nathaniel, 26
 Giles, Eliza, 182
 **Glasgow Chapels, Early*, 7
 Glasgow, Anderston, 8; Barrack Street,
 9; Bridge Street, 7; Bridgeton Mission,
 10; Calton, 8; Canon Street, 9;
 Charlotte Street, 10; East Clyde
 Street, 8; East Regent Street, 9; Great
 Hamilton Street, 8; Green Street, 8;
 Greenhead Hall, 10; John Street, 7;
 Lesser City Hall, 9; Low Green Street,
 10; Maryhill Mission, 10; Radnor
 Street, 10; Robson Street, 10; St.
 James, 8; St. Thomas, 8; Sauchiehall
 Street, 7; Spreull's Court, 9; Stock-
 well Street, 7; Suffolk Street, 10;
 Tradeston, 7
 Glenlevy, 58
 Gloonen, 58
 Glossop, 15
 Gloucester (Barton Street), 178
 Godwin, Rev. Edward, 106
 Golden Hill, 177
 Goodman, John, 122
 Grace before Meat, 41
 Grandin, Lilian M., 183
 Green, John, 133
 Griffiths, V., 55, 88
 Grogun, 57

 HABERECHT, GOTTLIEB, 70
 Hagley, 90
 Halifax, 28; "Circular," 165
 Hallam, Rev. John, 145, 171
Hall's Arrangement, 95
 Hammet, Rev. William, 27
 Hamsteels, 47
 Hanby, Rev. Thomas, 165
 Hancock, John, 140, 171
Handbook for the M.N.C. (1899), 95, 135
Handbook of the U.M.F.C., 95, 135
 Handsworth College, 178
 Hanley, 174
 Harland, Rev. William, 175
 Harper, Rev. John, 72
 Harris, Catherine, 182
 Harris, Howell, 35
 Hart, John (printer), 42, 52, 86
 Hartley, Sir William P., 118
 Hassé, Bishop, 107
 Hastings, 182
 Haswell, Rev. J. P., 135
 Hatfield House Lane, 96
 Haverfordwest, 56; *Plaque at, 133
Haverfordwest, "Feed the Lambs" at:
 A New Wesley Letter, 132
 Hayfield (Derbys), 150
 Hazard, S., 88
 Heslop, John, 129
 Highley, Joshua, 132
 Hill, James, 20
Hill's Arrangement, 95, 134
 Hogg, Reynold, 43
 Holdsworth, Rev. W. W., 28
 Holliday, Rev. Thomas, 146, 173
 Holsworthy, 121
 Hopper, Christopher, 165
 Horbury, 127
 Horncastle, 98
 Horton, Rev. Samuel, 118
 Howe, Kate, 183
 Hudson, James, 128
 Hughes, Rev. John, 153
 Hull, 28; P.M. Circuit, 174
 Humphries, Joseph, 42
 Hutchinson, John (printer), 141
 Hutton, James, 36, 38
 Hutton, Rev. J. E., 107
 Hymns of John Cennick, 41

- Inverness in 1808-9, Life of a Methodist Minister in*, 98; Circuit, 16
 Irwin, W. (printer), 176
 Isbell, Digory, 151
 Isle of Wight, 174
- JACKSON, REV. JOHN, 21
 Jacobstow, 123
 Jamaica, Moravianism in, 70
 Johnston, W. (printer), 176
Jordan, Mrs., and her Family, 188
 Jukes, Rev. Richard, 171
 Juvenile Missionary Associations, 28
- KENDALL, REV. H. B., 171
 Kilham, Alexander, and "Episcopé", 164; *Tract to Methodist Preachers Everywhere* (1795), 168
 Kilkhampton, 121
 Kinchin, Charles, 32
 King, Lord, 162
 Kingswood (Glos), 52
 Kingswood, 105; School, 28, 30, 134
 Kippax (Trinity), 178
- LAFFITE, PETER MICHAEL, 106
 Laidlow, A. (printer), 176
 Lake Brook, 177
 Langtree, 123, 179
 Latham, Rev. George, 21
 Launcells, 124
 Launceston, 121
 Law, William, 73
 Lawry, Rev. William, 90
 Lee, Edward, 105
 Leeds, 28; "Old Boggard House", 28
 Leicester, 178
 Leslie, Rev. Dr. H., 114, 136
 Lewis, John, 41, 53, 104
 Lewis, Matthew (printer), 42, 50, 86, 105
 "Lichfield Plan", 166
 Lindheim, 36
 Liverpool, 188
 London, 28, 174; Churches, 158
 Longridge, Michael, 117
 Lovatt, Joseph, 148
 Lowe, James, 13
 Lowestoft, 60
Loyola and the Wesley Hymns, 62, 136
 Lumb, Rev. Matthew, 24
 Luther and "Episcopé", 162
 Luxulyan, 120
 Lyons, Father, 36
- MACCLESFIELD, 60
 McConnell, James, 107
 McFadzen, John, 18
 McKechie, Rev. C. C., 171
 McKenzie, James, 20
 Magic Methodists, 12
 Maidstone, 174
 Major, Mr., of Greetham, 100
 Malmesbury, 52
 Margate, 174
 Marhamchurch, 122
 Marienborn, 36
 Markham, Richard, 117
 Mason, Ann, 180
 Mason, W., 105
 Mather, Rev. Alexander, 163
 Melson, Rev. Robert, 16, 21, 98
 Methodism and the Ecumenical Movement, 181
Methodist?, Was John Wesley a, 82
 Methodist doctrine (medical), 82
 Methodist Episcopal Church of America, 162
Methodist Hymn-Book with New Supplement, 61
 Methodist Hymn-Book, Music of the, 69
Methodist Magazine, A (P.M.), 140
Methodist Memorial, The (1801), 134
Methodist Missionary Society, Origins of, 25
 Meyler, Alderman L. J., 133
 Milton Damerall, 122
Ministers and Probationers, 135
 Missionary Archives, 90; Auxiliaries, 28; Collecting Boxes, 28; *Notices*, 28
 Monaghan, 37
 Montgomery, James, 37
 Moore, Rev. Henry, 166
 Moore, William, 132
 Moravian Church history, 116; in Jamaica, 70; Burial-Ground at Chelsea, 38
 Morgan, John, 43
 Morwenstow, 121
 Mounsey, John, 117
 Mousehole, 15
 Myles's *Chronological History*, 134
- NANCE, JOHN, 152
 Nelson, John, 59, 151
 Newfoundland, 27
 Newlyn East, 120
 Newquay, 120
 Newton, Rev. John, 44
 Newton on Ayr, 18
 Nisbet, J. (printer), 104
 Nixon, James, 177
 Norman, J. (printer), 104
 North Lew, 123
 North Tamerton, 123
 Northern Ireland, 105
- O'BRYAN, CATHERINE, 181
 O'Bryan, Jane, 179
 O'Bryan, William, 120, 179
 Oddie, James, 129
 Okehampton Mission, 123
 Olivers, Rev. Thomas, 127
 Oram, Lily L., 183
 Ordinal, Methodist, 169
 Ordination Certificates, 24
 Osborn, M. C., 135
 Ossett, 127
- PANCRASWEEK, 121, 153
 Patrington, 174
 Pattison, Rev. Richard, 24
 Pawson, Rev. John, 134, 164
 Pembroke, 57
 Pembrokeshire, Wesley in, 133
 Penzance, 136
 Petty, Rev. John, 118
 Philbatch, Milford Haven, 56
 Piper, Ernest J. and Eliza, 183
 Plummer, C. (printer), 104
 Plymouth, 53; Greenbank, 120

- Portsmouth, 174
 Poundstock, 121
 Powell, S. (printer), 42, 52, 86, 105
 Price, Nathaniel, 71
 Priestley, Dr., 59
 Primitive Methodist Book-Room, 138;
 Theological Institution, 117, 159
 Primitive Methodist Preachers' Friendly
 Society, 173
Primitive Physick, 82
 Printing Press (P.M.) at Bemersley, 141
Proverbs, John Wesley and, 73, 108
 Pugh, Rev. Philip, 150
 Pulpit dress, 24
 Pyworthy, 123
- QUAKER METHODIST CHAPEL AT WAR-
 RINGTON, 14
- RAIKES, ROBERT, 133
 Ramsgate, 174
 Reading, 30, 41
 "Redruth Plan", 165
 Renton, 21
 Richardson and Handford of Derby
 (printers), 140
 Ritchie, Elizabeth, 132
 Roberts, Robert, 165
 Roche, John, 107
 Rodda, Rev. Richard, 165
 Rogers, Rev. James, 166
 Rotherham, 134
- SACRAMENT, ADMINISTRATION OF, IN
 SCOTLAND, 17
 St. Breock, 120
 St. Columb Minor, 120
 St. Enoder, 120
 St. Eval, 120
 St. Gennys, 53, 121
 St. Issey, 120
 St. Maby, 120
 St. Neot, 121
 St. Mawgan in Pydar, 120
 St. Merryn, 120
 Scarborough, 174
 Scoles (Yorks), 55
 Scotland, Administration of the Sacra-
 ment in, 17; Baptism in, 18
 Scott, Francis, 127
Scottish Methodism, Some Notes on, 16
 Sellers, Mr., 16
 Separated Chairmen, 170
 Shallcross, Thomas, 70
 Shaw, Rev. George, 171
 Shebbear, 120, 179
 Sheepwash, 122
 Sheerness, 174
 Sheffield, Banner Cross, 29; Carver
 Street, 29
 Sheldon, C. M., 119
 Shepherd, William, 152
 Silsden, 177
 Simmons, Rev. Caleb, 100
 Simpson, John, 106
Small Hymn Book (P.M.), 141
 Smith, B., 132
Socinianism Unscriptural, 60
 Sommerford, Little (Wilts), 52
 Southampton, 174
- Spangenberg, A. G., 35
 Spettigue, Richard, 123
 Squire, Ethel M., 183
 Stanhope, 159
 Stanley, 138
 Steel, James, 140
 Stewart, A. T., 136
 Sticklepath Mission, 126
*Stratton Mission (1811-18) and Bible
 Christian Origins, The*, 120
 Sugden, R., of Halifax (printer), 141
Sunday Service of the Methodists, 162
 **Sunderland Theological Institution, The*,
 117, 159
 "Superintendent", 168
 Surplice fees, 24, 47
 Sutcliffe, William, 122
 Swansea, 1841 Revival at, 46
- TADCASTER, 174
 Taft, Rev. Zachariah, 21
 Tanderagee, 114, 136
 Tarvin, 12
 Tatham, Thomas, 60
 Taunton, 186
 Taylor, Edward, 140
 Taylor, Rev. H. J., 119
 Taylor, Rev. Samuel, 59
 Taylor, Rev. Thomas, 166
 Tennant, Rev. Thomas, 165
 Themison of Laodicea, 82
 Thomas, John, 90
 Thompson, Rev. William, 165
 Thornbury, 125
 Thorne, James, 120, 179
 Thorne, Lois A., 183
 Thorne, Samuel, 179
 Thorne, Samuel T., 183
 Thurdon, 122
 Tithecott, 124
 Tokens, Communion, 18
 Tom, John and Ann, 122
 Tonga, 90
 Trampleasure, Rev. William, 121
 Trapp, H. (printer), 43, 53, 87, 104
 Travis, Rev. James, 119
 Treffry, Rev. Richard, senr., 121
 Tremberth, William and Emily A., 183
 Trenglos, 123
 Trewint, 185
 **Trewint Picture, A*, 97, 151
 Triggs, A., 135
 Tunstall, 138, 171
 Turner, Capt. Joseph, 152
 Tyler & Reade (printers), 176
 Tyrone, 37
 Tytherton, 35
- UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, THE
 STORY OF THE, 135
- Various Regulations* (P.M.), 141
Vindication of the Catholic Faith, 59
- WALCOT, 60
 Walford, John, 146
 Walker, Francis, 152
 Waller, Rev. Dr. D. J., 135
 Warbstow Burrow, 122
 Ward, Rev. Samuel, 16

- Ward, Rev. Valentine, 8, 16
 Warleggan, 121
 Warren, Catherine, 132
 Warrington, Quaker Methodist Chapel at, 14
 Watson, Rev. Richard, 28
 Weardale, 159
 Week St. Mary, 121
 Weiss, John Paul, 36
 Wesley Book-mark, A, 188
 Wesley, Rev. Charles, 70; and Loyola, 62
 Wesley, Rev. Francis Gwynne, 47
 Wesley, Rev. John, and "Episcopé", 162; his ordinations, 162; his silver buckles, 70; and John Cennick, 31; and Thomas Hanson, 127; as a preacher, 22; in Pembrokeshire, 133; at Chester, 12; at Haverfordwest, 133; at St. Austell, 120; at Taunton, 186; LETTERS to Thomas Coke, 27; Catherine Warren, 132; Thomas Hanson, 128
 Wesley, John, and Thomas Hanson, the "Brown-Bread" Preacher, 127
 Wesley, Rev. Samuel, 74
 Wesley, Samuel, 70
 Wesley sisters, 156
 Wesley, Susanna, prayers of, 158
 Wesley Window in Chester Cathedral, 159
 Wesleybobs, 24, 47
 Wesley's Hymns (1780), 179
 Westgate, 159
 West Indies, 26; St. Christophers, 24
 Whitefield, Rev. George, 31
 Whitefield, G., 53
 Whitfield, Glossop, 15
 Whitstone, 125
 Wilkes, Matthew, 88
 Williams, T., 88
 Williams, Thomas, 152
 Williamson, R., 43
 Wiltshire, 35, 105
Women Itinerant Preachers, 182
 Woodford, 125
 YORK, WESLEY CHAPEL, 153

ERRATA

VOL. XXIX.

Page 44, line 4. For "vii. 7, and eight texts" read "vii. 7 and 8, texts . . .".

Page 44, line 36. For "send the form" read "send them from".

VOL. XXX.

Page 26, line 36. For "Carey's scheme" read "Coke's scheme".

[We acknowledge with gratitude the exact and expeditious work of the Rev. Thomas Shaw, of Redruth, in the compilation of this Index.—
 EDITOR.]

Tadcaster, Bedford, Barton, Sheerness, Ramsgate and Margate, Maidstone, and Canterbury, with no fewer than twenty-six itinerant preachers stationed on those missions. The 1843 Conference decided to take this work under the wing of a "General Missionary Committee", though this did not take effect as far as Hull was concerned until 1844. Throughout this time William Clowes was the superintendent of the Hull circuit, though the Stations of 1844 list him (still at the head) as "Supernumerary".¹⁰ Flesher goes on :

He defended his views also on the principles of economy to the conference fund &c. I replied & in the course of my remarks said economy was a good thing, that the argument had opened upon me a flood of light which by God's help I would improve—and that as a servant of the connexion I would press economy not only on the Conference fund, but on the affairs of the Book Room & also on those of the *Printing*.

Flesher's underlining shows the matter which distressed him most. James Bourne had been removed from the Book Stewardship, but he was still official printer to the Connexion, with a monopoly and little oversight. The memorandum continues :

Having given firm, free, and full utterance to these views I felt delivered from heavy mental darkness under which I have struggled for some days. I took this deliverance as a signal that God approved of my conduct in notifying my purpose : and I now pray that I may not sin against God and the connexion by allowing the latter to loose [sic] hundreds a year through having its printing executed dearer than the printing of any other connexion in the kingdom while all its other establishments are wrought on the severest economy. My firm belief is that J. Bourne in printing alone is gaining hundreds yearly by the connexion which he ought not to have, and I cannot answer to God, I feel I cannot unless I use every prudent means to prevent the continuance of this wrong—a wrong I mean in the connexion to allow it—and in him not to inform the connexion that it is giving away to him yearly hundreds which it might save. I am happy that J. Hallam takes the same views of the case as myself and is maturing plans to effect an alteration. God being my helper I will support him in carrying them out.

JOHN FLESHER.

The Book Steward and Editor had, it seems, already had from William Harland, who was in charge of the London Mission of the Hull circuit, some estimates from London printers, originally prepared for Thomas Church, an able young preacher who eventually left the Connexion. Hallam and Flesher now asked Harland to secure comparative prices for Bourne's work from some London firms, and at the same time secured similar estimates from two Manchester printers.¹¹ The results are summarized in a document written by Hallam, and preserved among his journals at the Hartley Victoria College. It reads as follows:¹²

¹⁰ *General Minutes*, 1843, pp. 19-27; cf. *General Minutes*, 1842, 1844.

¹¹ See Kendall's *History*, ii, p. 384.

¹² The Rev. John T. Wilkinson tells me that this loose sheet cannot now be discovered in the Hartley Victoria archives. He also points out the wisdom of adding a note to the effect that the discrepancies between Bourne's costs and the estimates of his city rivals may at least partly be accounted for (a) by the inherent variability of such estimates and (b) by Bourne's heavy carriage costs and

Difference in price we are now giving for Printing, and that we may have it done for in London.

<i>London.</i>	Name	Prices	Difference	Percentage
	Mr. James Bourne	683 9 2		
	D. A. Doudney	384 12 0	298 17 2	43 $\frac{3}{4}$
	Mr. James Bourne	683 9 2		
	Tyler & Reade	291 10 0	391 19 2	57 $\frac{1}{4}$
	Mr. James Bourne	683 9 2		
	Mr. W. Johnston	283 19 4 $\frac{3}{4}$	399 9 9 $\frac{1}{4}$	58 $\frac{3}{4}$
<i>Manchester</i>				
	Mr. James Bourne	2496 10 0		
	Mr. W. Irwin	1133 8 6 $\frac{1}{2}$	1363 1 5 $\frac{1}{2}$	57 $\frac{6}{8}$
	Mr. James Bourne	1796 12 6		
	Mr. A. Laidlow	755 8 5	1041 4 1	56 $\frac{3}{4}$

["1843" added later] November 25 Today we have had a general & a Book committee at Tunstall—much peace in general business. But there was one draw back, namely this: J. Hancock had applied to J. Bourne for payment for goods, and wished him also to take earthenware as he had agreed, to a certain amount, when J. Hancock rented the premises of him which he (J.H.) occupies as a pots work; but J. Hancock says that J. Bourne will neither pay him for goods which he has received nor take nearly so many goods as he engaged to take yearly when the pot works belonging J.B. were rented. In fact he says J.B. is not a man of his word,—that he would not give a rush for his word, for he had promised him money again & again when he received some from America, and he knew that he had received more than once, and still did not pay him what he ought to have paid long since. He said his conduct was worse than that of men who made no professions of religion whatever—that he was in plain words not fast with a lye, that he had with his evasions of promised payments brought him into difficulties, and that he was then in difficulties to meet payments through him—and that if help did not come he would be fast—that J.B. was apparently determined to make the connexion's money support him &c. I wept to see the afflicted state of Hancock. I also suggested that if he would name the case before Bourne & me I could hit on a plan that I thought would induce Bourne to come forward. I learnt also from this affair that Hancock's having the connexion's money and the fund money is an awful omen. I have uttered my views to Hallam, begged of him to get the connexion's money of Hancock as soon as possible. He said he would have the Book Room money, lent without connexional sanction, by the next Conference. O how awfully dark I feel about these affairs, and yet it would be imprudent to divulge them to my brethren generally, as they could not alter the case. The fact is Hancock has the connexion's money and is unable to pay it. I thank God that Hallam is beginning to see this, though I fear it is too late. It is horrid indeed I am fought about by night and by day. Darkness and tempest hang around the whole affair & I shall be deceived if J. Hancock do not go down under a cloud, as I saw him do at Childerplay.

JOHN FLESHER.

"Childerplay" would seem to be an unidentified place-name.

the uneconomic use of poor equipment. Mr. Wilkinson believes that the figures are rather an argument against amateur printing in the provinces than a conclusive proof of James Bourne's dishonesty.

Flesher was about six years younger than Hancock, however, and there is no evidence of their living in the same counties previously, though Flesher's schoolmaster father *may* have been in Staffordshire before going to Silsden.¹³

The style of writing now changes to a thin clear hand.

1843. November 4. This day I have been at Lake Brook about a mile and a half from Tunstall. In crossing the fields from Golden Hill, I asked two boys if there was a chapel at Lake Brook; they replied Yes, there is Clowes chapel, pointing in the direction where it stands. On reaching the group of houses I asked where Clowes' chapel was. Soon I was told. Having met with one of the principal members I asked why the chapel was called Clowes chapel. He told me it was so called after Wm Clowes, because he was the main person in beginning the Primitive Methodist body in Staffordshire, and that the people at Lake Brook were called Clowesites, as well as at Tunstall and other parts of Staffordshire. I was reminded of a conversation which I had with a person when I first entered Staffordshire to preach Anniversary Sermons, about 12 years ago. On leaving Macclesfield I met a female passenger on the coach whom I questioned as to what sort of religious people and chapels there were at Tunstall. She said there were church people, Methodists, Kilhamites and Clowesites. I asked what she meant by Clowesites. She answered, They worship in Clowes' Chapel. Indeed I find that many people call the Primitive Methodist people at Tunstall and other places in Staffordshire Clowesites, and the chapels where they worship Clowes Chapels. I asked if there were any chapels in Staffordshire called Bourne's Chapels, and any people called Bournites, but was answered by all whom I consulted in the negative. And though I have frequently asked this question I have always been answered in the negative. If the facts of the case be as the people speak of them the history of Primitive Methodism, as published by H. Bourne must be defective, in as much as Clowes is there comparatively hidden, whereas he ought to be brought before the public as one of the founders of the Connexion, if not *the* founder. To say the least of the affair it is deserving of enquiry, and I think a history of the connexion ought to be written which will place the rise of the connexion on a legitimate basis.

JOHN FLESHER.

1843. December 18. This day I have attended a Sabbath missionary meeting in Clowes Chapel at Tunstall. J. Nixon said he had a letter which deserved to be printed in Letters of Gold which he had received about 20 years ago from a man whom he helped to send out—that that man was a good man—a great man—and a mighty converter of sinners—But, continued he, 'Some persons have said that he has of late years become a fallen man—that he should like to know and so would the congregation like to know whether the saying against him was true or false.—that a man was in the chapel who could tell them as he had a 20 years' acquaintance with the person in question and was even then intimately acquainted with him. He then said the person who had been said to be fallen was Wm Clowes and the man who could tell them whether he was fallen or not was Brother John Flesher, whom he called upon to say publicly whether Clowes had lost any of the greatness which he had when they first became acquainted [sic]. I arose to say that years and excessive labours had brought on W. Clowes many bodily infirmities which forbid

¹³ See Kendall's *History*, ii, pp. 116-18.

his attempting to labour so much and so fervently as when he was young and strong, but that his piety, wisdom, and thirst for the salvation of sinners even exceeded those of his younger days—that he was if possible a better man than when I first knew him &c. By a show of hands the people indicated their belief of what I said, and passed the resolution that W. Clowes was a good and great man in Israel &c.¹⁴ The meeting was powerful indeed throughout. J. Hallam gave full utterance to his determination to support the concentration of our Missionary energies.

JOHN FLESHER.

James Nixon (1785-1857) was a potter who linked up with William Clowes in the very early days of the revival. He was effective as a class-leader, and became the pillar of the Tunstall society. He was a member of the General Committee.¹⁵

FRANK BAKER.

¹⁴ For the question of Clowes as a founder of Primitive Methodism see J. T. Wilkinson's *William Clowes*, pp. 88-93; cf. pp. 75-6.

¹⁵ See John Petty's *History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion*, New Edition (1880), pp. 560-1, and J. T. Wilkinson's *William Clowes*, p. 22, etc.

The Kippax (Trinity) Methodist Church, near Leeds (now in the Castleford circuit) has recently celebrated the centenary of the opening of its second chapel (the present building is the third). The Handbook to the celebrations contains a good account of the history of the society, which owes its origin to the frequent visits of the Countess of Huntingdon to her niece, Mrs. Medhurst, at Kippax Hall, where the first Methodists held their services. . . . Handsworth College has just celebrated the seventy-fifth anniversary of its foundation, and many of our members, whether Handsworth men or not, will find interest and pleasure in the commemorative brochure which has been anonymously written (pp. 28, 2s. 6d.). This is primarily a history of the college, but its delightful characterizations of past principals and tutors will stir many memories. Old Handsworthians will delight in the list of the college's distinguished alumni, but others (notably old Richmond men!) will not be misled into thinking that Handsworth has a monopoly of Methodism's giants. This worthy record is greatly enriched by some splendid photographs of the college. . . . A recent Bazaar at the Barton Street Methodist Church, Gloucester, has called forth a handbook which contains a brief history of the sole representative of Primitive Methodism in the city, the society being founded in 1837. . . . The superintendent of the Epworth and Crowle circuit, who is one of our members, is greatly to be commended on the first issue of *The Epworth Witness* (pp. 8, 8d. post free). Now that Epworth is about to come alive again with the opening of the Old Rectory as a centre for retreats and conferences, the circuit is anxious to commend itself to the many visitors who will come to Wesley's birthplace for the first time. It is hoped that this booklet, which is quaintly dedicated to "Methodists of Wesley's World Parish and any other Artists and Dreamers who are out to turn the world upside down", may become a quarterly news letter. Its illustrations are excellent, and it deserves to succeed. . . . *Methodism in and around Leicester*, by J. A. Lainé (pp. 15, 2s.), contains brief notes on Wesley's visits to Leicester and its neighbourhood, and on the work of the Countess of Huntingdon at her Leicestershire home at Donington Park. The last five pages give a splendid summary of the rise and development of the three branches of Methodism in the area, with circuit formations.

THE FIRST BIBLE CHRISTIAN HYMN-BOOK

A MOST important source for the early history of the Bible Christians is the first hymn-book compiled by William O'Bryan and James Thorne in 1823 and published in 1824. Despite exhaustive search, no copy has yet come my way. The earliest hymn-book used by the Bible Christians the writer has been able to discover is that of 1838, a copy of which has been kindly lent him by Mr. Clements of Delabole, North Cornwall. It is a small book, $3\frac{1}{2}$ ins. long by 2 ins. wide, bound in plain brown leather, devoid of ornamentation and lacking a title on the spine. Its covers are secured by a strong brass clasp. It was "printed at Shebbear, North Devon, by Samuel Thorne, Printer, and published by James Thorne, Shebbear, Devon". There is a short preface dated "Langtree, April 3rd, 1838", which is unsigned, but is almost certainly by James Thorne, who was living at Langtree, a few miles north of Shebbear, in that year.

The 1838 book is divided into three sections: the first, modelled on *Wesley's Hymns* of 1780, contains five hundred and seventy-five hymns; the second section thirty-six hymns, under the heading "Miscellaneous", followed by a section containing fourteen "Additional Hymns"; six hundred and twenty-five hymns in all. An examination of this little book inclines the writer to the belief that the contents of the 1824 book can be reconstructed from this book of 1838, which comprises the hymns in the 1824 edition plus the "Additional Hymns" and, possibly, most of the "Miscellaneous" hymns.

The Preface makes it clear that the hymn-book of 1838 was not a new compilation: "To provide them [i.e. suitable words] as helps in the worship of God the following selection was originally made, which has now been improved and enlarged." The improvement seems to have been in the internal structure of the hymns only. The memoirs of early Bible Christian personalities abound in quotations from hymns, unfortunately usually ascribed vaguely to "the poet". Sometimes, however, the number of the hymn in the collection of 1824 is given. I have made some study of these quotations, and have found that the numbers in the 1824 edition coincide with those in the edition of 1838. O'Bryan tells us that at the funeral of his mother "we sang the 552nd hymn of our collection 'Sons of Adoption'." As she died in 1821, the 1824 book could not have been used at her funeral. O'Bryan wrote this account after 1824, but long before 1838, and it is to the 1824 book that he refers. He had no part in the preparation of the 1838 book, for he had broken with the denomination some years earlier and had gone to America. This hymn is also numbered 552 in the book of 1838. O'Bryan also refers to "No. 20 in our collection 'An Ambassador from Heaven'". This is number 20 in the 1838 book also.

The arrangement of the book is interesting. While it mainly follows *Wesley's Hymns* of 1780, what is Part One in Wesley becomes Part Two in the Bible Christian book, Part One in the latter being for "Ministers, Laying of Foundation Stones, Opening of Places of Worship". This might suggest that this section had formed no part of the 1824 book, for the era of chapel-building began in the 'thirties of the last century. Even before 1824, however, the compilers must have been aware of the trend of developments. The need for chapels was urgent from the first, for the occupants of houses used for preaching were experiencing persecution. Chapels were being built long before the 'thirties: for example, at Shebbear in 1815 and at Hicks Mill in 1821.

The first hymn in Part One is Wesley's "Jesus, the word of mercy give", and is a prayer for ministers that they might walk worthily. This is significant. From the beginning accusations of immorality had been levelled at the "Bryanites". Though the allegations were unfounded, the danger was real in such a highly-charged emotional atmosphere. In 1823 three preachers were expelled for improper conduct, and a solemn warning conveyed in the "Address to the Societies". Is it not possible that this influenced the arrangement of the hymn-book of 1824?

The second hymn is headed "For union among ministers", and lacks nothing in directness:

Give them clearer, brighter views,
When they sound the joyful news.

All together firmly join
To attack the monster, sin.

All agree to live in peace,
All unite in prayer and praise.

This hymn might have been inserted to encourage the re-union movement between the followers of O'Bryan and the rest of the denomination after the crisis of 1829, but the rumble of the coming storm was audible as early as 1823, as the journal of Samuel Thorne testifies.

The question whether the "Miscellaneous" hymns formed part of the 1824 book is debatable. The writer has found no numerical references as yet which might assist. In a letter written by Ann Mason, one of the pioneer "female itinerants", to "Samuel Thorne, Ambassador for Christ, Mr. Bird's, Ringsash", dated "Northcott, October 15th, 1819", she says:

while they sang "Then we'll shine and shout and sing" I was sunk down by the might of the power of God.

The line quoted is the first line of the ninth verse of a ten-verse hymn beginning "The Lord into his garden came", numbered 594 in the "Miscellaneous" hymns of the 1838 book. This hymn was a great favourite with the early Bible Christians, especially the last verse, which runs:

So here's my heart and here's my hand,
To meet you in that heav'nly land,
Where we shall part no more.

As it was well known in 1819, it would be surprising were this hymn not included in the 1824 hymn-book. One might say, therefore, that it is probable that at least some, if not all, of the hymns in the "Miscellaneous" section of the 1838 book may have been found in the book of 1824.

In addition to the hymns of the Wesleys, Watts, Doddridge and Newton, the 1838 book contains some hymns of inferior poetic merit, but easy to sing and useful in teaching doctrine. Some of them, doubtless, were in the 1824 book. As there is no index to authors, their authorship is unknown to me. I wonder, however, whether some of them at least were not written by Catherine O'Bryan, wife of William O'Bryan. We know that she had a good education, was one of the most effective woman preachers the Bible Christians—or Methodism, for that matter—produced, was a beautiful singer, and wrote many hymns. According to O'Bryan, number 20, "An Ambassador from Heaven", already referred to, was from her pen. Possibly also she was the author of the hymn "For the union of ministers", for it appears to have been prompted by the coming conflict between her husband, with his desire to perpetuate personal government after the manner of John Wesley, and the more democratic demands of most of the preachers whom he had called into the work.

MORGAN SLADE.

[This article by Mr. Morgan Slade has been in my files for two or three years. Since it was set up in type I have learnt, to my great regret, that Mr. Slade passed away some time ago. Though not a member of our Society, he had many historical interests, and not long before his death he obtained his Master of Arts degree with a thesis on John a Lasco. His funeral took place at the historic Lake chapel, Shebbear, where he was buried among the pioneers of the Bible Christian movement.—EDITOR.]

The "Upper Room", Nashville, U.S.A., has published *The World Methodist Movement*, by Ivan Lee Holt and Elmer T. Clark (pp. 148, obtainable from the Drummond Tract Depot, Stirling, Scotland; no price indicated). The first section, "Methodism and the Ecumenical Movement", purports to be an account of Methodism's relations with other Churches and of the growing affinity between the branches of world Methodism, but turns out to be largely an account of Bishop Holt's extensive world travels, of the sermons he preached and the people he met, and one feels that his pages could have been put to better use. Dr. Clark, however, devotes his space to the development of the World Methodist Council, and his account of the first eight Ecumenical Conferences, though necessarily only the briefest summary of the bulky volumes which record their proceedings, is a valuable summary. It is a pity that the publication of this book was not delayed to include the Ninth Conference at Lake Junaluska. Dr. Clark's section ends with short descriptions of the origin and progress of every Methodist denomination in the world, and the inevitable pages of statistics so dear to our American friends. This is a useful book, though disappointing in its execution.

WOMEN ITINERANT PREACHERS

IN two fascinating articles in *Proceedings*, volumes xxviii and xxix, the Rev. Wesley F. Swift wrote of the work of those women who itinerated among the Primitive Methodists and the Bible Christians; and in the second article (*Proceedings*, xxix, p. 76) told how Catherine Harris's name is continued in the *Bible Christian Minutes* till 1873, and remarked: "thereafter all trace of her is lost, both in the *Minutes* and in the *Bible Christian Magazine*, and we are left to wonder if her name should appear in the 'Alphabetical List' in *Hill's Arrangement*". Through the kindness of the Rev. G. W. Bell, I have ascertained that Catherine Harris died on 9th January 1896 at the age of ninety-one, and prior to her death was living at Medland, in the parish of Temple, in the neighbourhood of Blisland; she was buried in Blisland churchyard. In view of the rather haphazard way in which records of ministers were kept in the middle of last century by the smaller branches of Methodism, it seems to the present writer that Catherine Harris's name was dropped from the *Minutes* simply because there was no other "female preacher" and there seemed to be no point in listing an elderly lady who had long been a supernumerary. I feel confident the name therefore ought to be in the "Alphabetical List" of those "who died in the work".

But the "female preachers" do not completely disappear from Bible Christian Stations with the passing of Catherine Harris's name. In 1890 the list of preachers included the name of Eliza Giles as a "female preacher on trial", and four years later she figured simply as a "female preacher", i.e. she was now in "full connexion". She remained in the ministry till 1898, when she resigned, having served in the Scilly Isles (two years), St. Just (two years), Forest of Dean, being stationed at Mitcheldean (three years) and Dalwood (one year). Nor was she the only woman then to enter the ranks. In 1893 there is a note that "the services of Miss Edwards will be available at Michaelmas", and in the following year the name of Lillie Edwards appeared "on trial". She became a full minister in 1897, and served until 1907, when in view of the Union in that year she ceased to "occupy a place in our regular ministry". The following resolution regarding her appeared in the President's Circular for that year:

In view of the anomalous position that Miss Edwards would occupy in the United Church, the Sub-Committee has entered into an agreement with her that she retire from the ministry, and that she be paid the sum of £135 as a full and satisfactory discharge of all our Connexional liabilities to her. . . . We recommend the Conference to appoint Miss Edwards to the Hastings Mission as a special agent for the ensuing year. We desire to place on record our appreciation of the services of Miss Edwards in our ministry during the past thirteen years. In the discharge of her various duties she has exercised conspicuous ability and has done good work for the Denomination. We hope that she may continue to serve the Church of Christ for many years, believing her to be specially fitted for the duties of preaching and organising Christian work.

During her ministry Miss Edwards served in Sevenoaks (four years), St. Mawes (five years) and Hastings (four years), serving too as a "female special agent" in Hastings, 1907-8; her name thus appears in the first *Minutes* of the United Methodist Church. It is an interesting possibility that there may be still living, as an old lady in her eighties (who shall dare to speculate more precisely as to a lady's age?) one who was once an itinerant female among us.

That year, 1894, was a bumper year. In addition to the name of Lillie Edwards there appeared also "on trial" Lily L. Oram (at London, Jubilee) and Annie E. Carkeek (at Blaenavon); but the following year the former of these resigned, and the latter became a connexional evangelist, joining Eva Costin, who had been employed in that capacity since 1891. Both names disappeared in 1901.

Henceforward there are no more "itinerant females" in England, but the China mission field gave them further scope; and that they were regarded as ministers is borne out by the fact that for one year at least their names appear in the body of the alphabetical list of preachers' names and addresses, and not in the addendum where the "female preachers" generally stood. In 1894 there were four stationed in China: Emily A. Bailey (who later married William Tremberth), Maud M. Cannon (later to marry Frank J. Dymond), Eliza Dunn (later the wife of Ernest J. Piper), and, greatest of all, Lois Anna Thorne. This lady (née Malpas) was the widow of Samuel T. Thorne, and after his early death in 1891 she returned to China in 1894, and served there till 1900, when she came home because of ill-health. Thenceforward her name remained on the *Minutes* in England until in 1905 there appeared (*Minutes*, p. 55) her obituary, placed separately from the others simply because it was received late. She died at Newport, Mon, on 25th November 1904 at the early age of forty-six. Her name should undoubtedly appear in *Hill's Arrangement* as one of those who "died in the work".

The China preachers were later reinforced by Kate (or Katie) Howe in 1896 (for three years), M. Bull in 1897 (for seven years) and Ethel Maud Squire, B.A. and Bessie Alice Bull, both in 1903 (though the latter is listed as dating from 1902). In 1905 Lilian Mary Grandin joined them, and so in 1907 those three names are carried on into the United Church; though there is no doubt that the "female missionaries" were not regarded as ministers after 1907.

It is not clear what Mr. Swift meant (*Proceedings*, xxix, p. 82) when he says "there is no trace of a woman preacher becoming a superintendent". If this means that no woman had a man stationed junior to her in her circuit, it is of course correct. But if it means she was never in charge of a "one-woman circuit", it is not so. For even as early as 1819 (see the facsimile in *Proceedings*, xxix, facing p. 77) Elizabeth Gay is on her own in Dock circuit; and among the later preachers both Eliza Giles and Lillie Edwards served on their own—when still "on trial" they were in "one-woman circuits", but

with the instruction "to labour under the direction of the Superintendent of the District".

So ends the story of the "Itinerant Females", a story that is far nearer to our own day than we imagined. It would be interesting to hear the reminiscences of Methodists still living in Hastings, for example, who remember their female preacher of fifty years ago.

OLIVER A. BECKERLEGGE.

[Dr. Beckerlegge, whose friendship I value and whose scholarship I respect, has a flair for trying to catch me napping! The statement which he quotes meant that no woman was in charge of a circuit as superintendent in the sense in which we normally understand that word. This view is borne out, I think, by the direction which appears in the facsimile to which Dr. Beckerlegge refers: "Our Sisters to change under the direction of the General Superintendent". I therefore plead "not guilty". By his researches into the later history of the Bible Christians, however, Dr. Beckerlegge demonstrates my statement that the last "itinerant female" was accepted in 1861 to be erroneous, though he courteously refrains from rubbing salt into the wound! I was unable to obtain access to the later volumes of Bible Christian *Minutes*, and I did not imagine that after an interval of thirty years "itinerant females" would again make their appearance.—WESLEY F. SWIFT.]

In the current volume of the *Proceedings*, page 89, we gave a cordial welcome to a sister Society rejoicing in the curious but expressive title "Society of Cirplanologists". Since then two issues of the Society's "official organ" have appeared. Unfortunately, these cyclostyled sheets give no indication of the numerical strength or financial stability which the new Society has achieved, but their racy and informative character leaves nothing to be desired. The latest issue, for example, contains a brief one-act play, "According to Plan", which in its down-to-earth liveliness makes our own pages by comparison seem dull and stodgy in the extreme!

Some curious and interesting facts have been brought to light through the researches of the Society's members. The largest circuit plan, for example, covers 1,748 square inches of printed space, whilst the smallest occupies only 52 square inches; the average for the Connexion is 422 square inches, with an average cost of 4.2d. per copy. Financial details appear in only 62 per cent of plans; names of officers of individual societies in 91 per cent; whilst 22 per cent contain no reference to the membership of the constituent societies. The average number of local preachers on "full plan" is 29.77, with 4.73 "on trial".

The significance or utility value of these figures is a little hard to discover, but it is obvious that the collecting of circuit plans, both old and current, is a hobby to which an increasing number of Methodists are addicted, and we are glad to commend again the work of this new Society and to wish it well. Membership is 2s. 6d. per annum, and application should be made to the Secretary, Mr. W. H. Hodgson, Lloyds Bank House, Henleaze, Bristol, who will be glad to answer inquiries.

Devotions for Every Day of the Week (Epworth Press, pp. 16, 1s.) is a reprint of one section from Mr. Frederick C. Gill's anthology, *John Wesley's Prayers*, published six years ago. They are Wesley's abridgement of John Austin's *Devotions*, a book of which he had a high opinion.

TREWINT : A REJOINDER

HOW one welcomes from one of our younger ministers the keen interest and detailed knowledge evidenced in the Rev. Herbert W. White's recent article concerning our Trewint postcards! Constructive criticism is always valuable.

I look forward to the privilege of meeting Mr. White at Trewint some day, and of going into committee with him concerning the Isbell cottage and how best to use its story from yesterday to enrich the life of Methodism today.

When we do meet I shall tell Mr. White that if the challenge ever comes to him to restore some neglected Wesley shrine he will discover that romance and sentiment are valuable assets in such a project, and not by any means to be disregarded as "the historian's pitfall".

I am all for historical accuracy and a legitimate use of imagination. When in so strange and providential a way we found ourselves in touch with the gifted and sympathetic Bristol artist Mr. A. W. Gay, some pains were taken to brief him suitably, leaving him to deal in his own way with the historical material provided.

When I do meet Mr. White I shall suggest that John Nelson would be far too careful of his famous Birstall suit to wear it when on a rough-and-tumble ride-and-tie journey to remote Cornwall. Similarly, I shall inform him that our careful Mr. Gay, when re-creating the scene outside the Trewint cottage, went down to the forecourt of the New Room at Bristol to have a look at Mr. A. G. Walker's superb equestrian statue of John Wesley, and after examining it said to himself: "I'll dispense with saddle-bags, too." By the way, when exactly was the idea born in John Wesley's fertile brain to use his "rough riders" as book-salesmen? Was it before or after John Nelson and John Downes appeared at Trewint? After all, are such details as the colour of a coat and the absence of saddle-bags so very important? To me what matters is the purpose in the hearts of John Wesley's advance agents and the hospitable impulse of Elizabeth Isbell.

When we commissioned Mr. Gay's picture of John Wesley preaching from the stone porch we left our artist to use in his own way his skill and the results of his own research. I cannot imagine that Mr. White would have liked a portrayal of a repulsive rabble such as Hogarth so often depicted. Many of us possess and value the well-known picture by Hatherell showing John Wesley preaching from a market cross to a quite presentable crowd. Probably Mr. Gay decided to be guided by Hatherell rather than by Hogarth. And who shall say whether or not on that particular morning two or three of the "quality" passing by dismounted and joined the tanners and farm hands to hear Mr. Wesley? I notice that all who see this picture for the first time inevitably focus their attention on the preacher proclaiming his Master's message rather than on the crowd who listen.

I shall tell Mr. White when we meet that he must not hold the Trewint trustees responsible for the wording of the epitaph on the Isbell tomb in the Altarnun churchyard. When that long inscription was drafted and carved in East Cornwall it is probable that little if anything was known of Mr. Churchwarden Nance's kindly hospitality in West Cornwall. Alas that the Wesley Historical Society did not then exist, and that no knowledgeable member of it was around to insert in the epitaph on the Isbell tomb the word or two needed to make it one hundred per cent accurate!

STANLEY SOWTON.

NOTES ON WESLEY'S VISITS TO TAUNTON

September 1743 and September 1775

1. 23rd September 1743

"I had designed to preach in the yard of our inn; but before I had named my text, having uttered only two words, 'Jesus Christ', a tradesman of the town (who, it seems, was mayor-elect) made so much noise and uproar that we thought it best to give him the ground. But many of the people followed me up into a large room, where I preached unto them Jesus." (*Journal*, iii, p. 95.)

Aris's *Birmingham Gazette*, 30th January 1744 (quoted in *Proceedings*, iv, p. 12), gives the following:

Extract of a letter from Hardington in Somersetshire, dated January 24th.: "Rev. Mr. Westley, the famous Methodist, came lately to Taunton, dressed in a master's gown and cassock, and at the Three Cups Inn he began to preach to a very numerous auditory in the Court, but had scarce named his text when the Mayor of the Town came in Formality, and ordered the proclamation to be read, which immediately silenced the preacher, and they have not been troubled with any of these impertinences since."

In *Proceedings*, vii, p. 175, an extract from a volume called *The Date Book for Lincoln* reads as follows:

Mr. Westley beginning to preach to a very numerous auditory in the Court of the Three Cups Inn at Taunton, had scarcely named his text when the Mayor came in Formality and ordered the Proclamation to be read, which immediately silenced the preacher.

The source of this extract is the *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1744, p. 51, where the same account is given in the "Historical Chronicle" under the date 24th January.

The question which arises is whether the three accounts refer to the same or to two different incidents. Riggall (*Proceedings*, vii, p. 175) and W. C. Sheldon (viii, p. 51) both assume the latter. Riggall refers us to the *Journal* entry "for a *similar* occurrence", whilst Sheldon comments: "Coming through independent channels, though apparently from a common origin, these notices [i.e. the second and third given above] are mutually confirmatory. Bath on the 25th January is quite consistent with Taunton on the 24th." These conclusions may be challenged, and the following comments offered:

(a) The account in the *Gentleman's Magazine* is clearly an abridged version of that in the *Birmingham Gazette*, and the two cannot therefore be treated as "mutually confirmatory" evidence. (Note the agreement of dating—24th January in each case.)

(b) We are left, therefore, with two accounts—that in the *Journal* and that in the *Birmingham Gazette*. These agree so closely that it is inherently more probable that they refer to the same occasion. This is supported by the following considerations:

(i) Neither refers to any repetition of the incident; in particular, would Wesley have passed over it in the *Journal*?

(ii) The word "lately" in the *Gazette* account can hardly refer to the day on which the letter was written, but might refer back, in those more leisurely times, to the previous September. (Note that the abridged versions of the letter obscure this by omitting the word.)

(iii) The only real discrepancy between the *Journal* and the *Gazette* is in the fact that the one speaks of the mayor-elect, the other of the mayor. But Wesley is clearly not certain about the matter; and, on the other hand, it seems probable that the interval between the event and the writing of the letter might account for such a slip of the pen (the gentleman concerned having in the meantime assumed his office).

(iv) The closing words of the letter make it clear that some definite interval occurred between the event and the letter, and four months does not seem unduly long.

(c) We conclude, *pace* Riggall and Sheldon, that there was only one incident of this nature. The "Three Cups Inn" still stands, but now as the "County Hotel", in East Street. The inn-yard remains, but the stables are now garages.

2. 11th September 1775

"I preached again in the new meeting at Taunton, to such a congregation as, I suppose, was never there before." (*Journal*, vi, p. 78.)

Curnock (*Journal*, note ad loc.) suggests that "the new meeting" was Paul's Meeting, the "great Presbyterian Meeting-house" in which Wesley had preached in the previous month. The word "again" seems to support this, and there is no earlier visit recorded in the *Journal* to which it might more probably refer. But Paul's Meeting was in no sense "new", having been founded in 1662, and the first chapel being built on the present site in 1672. (The present Congregational chapel was built in 1795.) Further, there was in Taunton at this time another Meeting, a secession from Paul's, known as the "New Meeting". If the word "again" be taken as referring to an unrecorded service, there seems no reason why Wesley should not be referring to this.

Details of this "New Meeting" will be found in: Joshua Toulmin, *History of Taunton* (revised by J. Savage, Taunton, 1822), p. 1711; T. G. Crippen, *The Story of Paul's Meeting, Taunton* (a MS. in the Taunton Public Library), Appendix "B"; E. Jeboult, *History of the Town of Taunton* (Taunton, 1873).

The New Meeting began as an "Arian secession from the evangelical Paul's Meeting, led by Thomas Amory", and took place in 1732, when a chapel was built in Tancred Street. (Toulmin's street-map shows its position as on the bend at the northern end of the street, where the Fire Station now stands.) The minister between 1759 and 1792 was the Rev. John Ward, formerly of Witney, Southwark and Yeovil, who, beginning as a Calvinist, gradually became "pronounced Socinian". I have not traced any other details about him, but he does not sound the sort to welcome a high-church Arminian into his pulpit. The society was merged in 1815 with that of the Baptists in Mary Street (so Toulmin), or (according to Jeboult) with the Calvinistic Baptists in Silver Street; since the Mary Street congregation had been growing more and more Unitarian throughout the previous century (it is now a Unitarian cause), the truth is probably that there was a split. The ruinous chapel in Tancred Street was taken down, but the site continued as a burial-ground until about 1863, when, being in a very neglected state, it was "sold for trade purposes". No trace now remains.

In view of the existence of this congregation in Taunton at the time of Wesley's visits, it does not seem likely that he could refer to Paul's Meeting as "the new meeting" except by a definite slip of the pen.

JOHN A. VICKERS.

NOTES AND QUERIES

975. "FELLOWSHIPS IN METHODIST HISTORY."

The recent meeting of the World Methodist Council at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina, took a new step by the inauguration of Fellowships in Methodist History. These Fellowships are an honour conferred by the Council on the recommendation of the International Methodist Historical Society, which itself intends to apply the most stringent standards and to act only on the recommendation of representatives of the country concerned (that is, in our case, the British section of the International Methodist Historical Society). Of the first twelve recipients, four are from our country, namely the Revs. Dr. Frank Baker, Dr. Maldwyn Edwards, Wesley F. Swift and Dr. R. F. Wearmouth. It is very fitting that such recognition should be afforded to two officers and two other members of our Society, whose distinguished work in this field is already well known; and we congratulate them most heartily.

A. RAYMOND GEORGE.

976. A WESLEY BOOK-MARK.

Can any member of the Wesley Historical Society shed light on the date and place of origin of a Wesley book-mark? It is silk, 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ by 1 $\frac{1}{8}$ ins., with a portrait of Wesley for a centre-piece. Above is a cluster of emblems consisting of a crown and five stars on its five points; below the portrait a similar cluster consisting of cross, cup and open Bible. In the triangle which forms the point of the book-mark is the text, quoted in full, Daniel xiii. 3.

JOHN C. BOWMER.

977. A CONTEMPORARY APPRAISAL OF THOMAS COKE.

In Mr. A. Aspinall's recently-published *Mrs. Jordan and her Family* there are several references to contemporary Methodist preachers. Mrs. Jordan, a famous actress and society woman of the early nineteenth century, found Methodist services at times "our only amusement and a sprightly one it is". Here is an extract from a letter to the Duke of Clarence, dated Liverpool, 9th October 1809:

"We went to the Methodist Chapel last night to hear a famous preacher of the name of Coke. The place was crowded beyond imagination. His doctrine was very good and perfectly orthodox as far as faith goes, and he commenced with a prayer for the King, Queen, Prince of Wales, Princess of Wales, and all the royal family, but his manner and delivery were so truly ludicrous that I was forced to pinch myself to keep from laughing. I unfortunately got into a pew with the most sanctified looking set I ever saw. The women Methodists affect to dress something like the Quakers. Mr. Coke told us that he was once nearly drowned at [illegible], but that his faith saved him, for God or Jesus Christ, he does not know which, threw in his way a limb of a lime tree on which he got and rode triumphantly to land. He also told us that he should preach tomorrow and take that opportunity to ordain two young men whom the societies of brethren in London was [sic] going to send out to preach the Gospel to the blacks."

A week later Mrs. Jordan "went to a Methodist sermon" in Chester after going to evening prayers. Compared with the Anglican way of "reading prayers . . . there is certainly more appearance of devotion in the Methodists".

WESLEY F. SWIFT.