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Proceedings

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A NOTE UPON THE STATE OF THE CHURCH IN NORTH DEVON AT THE TIME OF THE EARLY BIBLE CHRISTIANS

THE deplorably low state of the Church in the Georgian era is so widely accepted as a fact that it is commonly held to need no verification, and in no part of Britain is it thought to have been lower than in North Devon, where the Bible Christian movement began in 1815.¹ So universally accepted is this judgement of the Church of the period that it is with surprise, and at first with incredulity, that one comes upon evidence of spiritual life.

It is inherently improbable that the age was in fact as bad as has been represented, and that, for instance, of the 127 parishes of the Barnstaple archdeaconry in only one or two was there any approach to religious ministry. The clergy were required to read the services of the Book of Common Prayer, including long passages from the Bible, and were thus constantly reminded of the facts of sin and redemption, of the means of grace, and of the hope of glory. Did these repeated words fall almost always on deaf ears? It is well known that Charles Simeon (1759-1836) owed his conversion to the fact that he found himself required, as an undergraduate of King's College, Cambridge, to receive the Holy Communion in chapel. He prepared himself by reading Bishop Wilson's *Short and Plain Instruction for the better understanding of the Lord's Supper*. It is a fair presumption that there were other Simeons reborn to blush unseen in the English countryside. Let us see what can be gleaned of the incumbents of one parish throughout our period.

¹ See *Encyclopædia Britannica* (1950), s.v. "Bible Christian"; *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (1957), p. 170; G. Kitson Clark: *The Making of Victorian England* (1962), p. 3.

The parish of Chittlehampton, in North Devon, has been in most respects similar to hundreds of others—purely agricultural, with no market or industry. In 1717, at the age of 26, Edward Agland was presented by his father, Edward Agland of Barnstaple, patron *hac vice*. He inserted in the parish register a note of his own birth and baptism (at Barnstaple) in 1690. In 1719 he served the then onerous office of churchwarden of his own parish, although as a clergyman he could have claimed exemption. He was ill for three months before his death in 1726. The churchwardens' account for that year includes the item "for Bread and Wine when Our Minister Recd ye Sacramt 1s 7d". This is all we can know of him.

His successor, George Williams, was presented by William Cleveland, mortgagee of the Giffard estate. He served as churchwarden of his parish for three years, and he gave to the church a handsome silver flagon and a curious silver bowl, both inscribed DEO ET ECCLES: DEDICAVIT G. WILLIAMS V^R DE CHITLTON AN: 1743, in which year he died. Much of the existing church plate comes from this despised eighteenth century. Of the 23 parishes of South Molton deanery, nine have chalices and ten have patens of this date. Of the thirteen alms dishes, nine are of the eighteenth century. The small parish of Creacombe, which (until it was swept away by the mistaken munificence of a rector's wealthy wife in 1857) had a tiny church measuring 21 feet by 13, with a chancel 13 feet by 10½, with a Saxon doorway, has a chalice with this inscription:

DRINK YE ALL OF IT: THIS IS MY BLOOD. DEO & ECCLESIAE: VIZ. PAROCHIAE CREACOMB; HUNC CALICEM IN HONORIS & AMORIS $\mu\eta\eta\mu\delta\sigma\upsilon\upsilon\upsilon\upsilon\upsilon$ PERPETUUM AUXIT, OBTULITQ LUDOVICUS SOUTHCOMB DE ROSE ASH. A.D. 1718.

On the companion paten is the inscription: THIS IS MY BODY. In his own parish of Rose Ash, of which the Southcombes were patrons and rectors for nearly three hundred years, Lewis Southcombe gave a chalice inscribed with a crucifix and the words:

HE THAT EATETH MY FLESH AND DRINKETH MY BLOOD HATH ETERNAL LIFE. PRO PECCATIS TUIS & TOTIUS MUNDI. SIC DEUS DILEXIT MUNDUM. THIS IS MY BLOOD OF THE NEW TESTAMENT SHED FOR YOU AND FOR MANY. DEO & ECCLESIAE VIZ. ALTARI ROSE-ASH HANC [sic] CALICEM IN PERPETUAM LAUDIUM [sic], AMORIS SUI, & GRATITUDINIS MEMORIAM HUMILLIME OFFERT RESITUITQ LUDOVICUS SOUTHCOMB JUN^R RECTOR. ANNO REDEMPTIONIS MDCCXVI.

The parish of Kingsnympton, in addition to rare and valuable older plate, has a magnificent silver-gilt chalice, paten, flagon and alms dish of 1756, a thankoffering from James Buller for the recovery of himself, his children, and over eighty of the inhabitants of the parish from the then hazardous inoculation with smallpox, DEO SERVATORI. There is no reason to doubt that George Williams understood sufficiently well the significance of his gift of Communion plate.

When the Giffard estate was sold to Samuel Rolle in 1737 the advowson of Chittlehampton went with it, but it was stated that the

next presentation had been granted away. Thomas Colley was accordingly presented by John Bassett, of the neighbouring Umberleigh. He had been in orders two years. His reply to the bishop's visitation in 1744 shows that he resided on his cure, kept no curate, had divine service twice a Sunday with sermon morning and evening (i.e. afternoon), catechized the children on Sunday evenings in the summer, but once a month in winter, and that he administered the Holy Communion seven times a year. A chance remark of Denys Rolle's agent shows that he had divine service on holy days. His epitaph suggests more than a formal religion.

PER MERITUM CHRISTI VIRTUTUM PRÆMIA SPERANS
 NAMQUE DEI EST DONUM PER JESUM VITA PERENNIS.
 LECTOR, ABI MONITUS, FACIAS HOC MORE MODOQUE ;
 VIVERE SIC DISCAS PACE UT MORIARIS IN ILLA
 QUAM PIUS HIC DOCUIT, FECIT, SENSITQUE MINISTER.

Colley's successor, Peter Beavis, 1762-94, had already been rector of the neighbouring parish of Warkleigh for ten years, and obtained a dispensation to hold Chittlehampton in plurality. At first he lived there, keeping a curate at £40 a year for Warkleigh, but later the curate—the same one for twenty-five years—served Chittlehampton. It was an example of the system of plurality which sometimes served merely to keep the incumbent rich and the curate poor, but it was part of the accepted order of the day. Beavis had more interest in his second parish than as a source of income. He at once instituted monthly Communion, and in 1764 reported forty or fifty communicants each month. He introduced the New Version psalms (i.e. Tate and Brady, 1696), and increased attention was paid to the singing. Throughout the century a great deal was done to re-furnish and beautify the church, and Beavis was interested enough in the work to pay for an alteration in the re-painting of the pulpit. (The zealous Victorians were to sweep away in 1871 every vestige of this Georgian piety.) Jeremiah Milles, dean of Exeter 1762-84, was very impressed by the church in Beavis's time. He noted the new ceiling with its "modern block Cornish", and the new pews (1770), and described in detail the handsome wainscot altar-piece with which the chancel had been beautified (1764).² It is a description of a church in which the parishioners, who bore the cost of improvements out of the church rate which they levied on themselves, were taking great pride.

Henry Bright, the next vicar, 1794-1803, was apparently a man to whom Denys Rolle felt himself to be under some obligation, for in 1797 he was given the rectory of Bicton, in East Devon, as well. Author of a grammar called *The Praxis*, he had been, as he described himself, "late Chaplain of New College, Oxford, and Master of the School belonging to the same". After three years he retired to Oxford, having contracted illnesses "by reason of the laborious

² Milles: Devonshire MSS., vol. ix (Bodleian Library, MSS. Top. Devon., c. 9).

exertion of his duty in Chittlehampton".³ He was 70 years of age when he came to the parish. In his retirement he retained his benefice, as men overtaken by age or infirmity were obliged to do, for there was no provision for a pension until 1871. The parish was cared for by a curate, James Buckingham, a local man. Bright's retention of Bicton is less defensible by modern standards. It was a piece of extra income which the Rolle family was able to give him in order to make his old age a little more comfortable. In population it was a very small parish, and the income was too small to provide a living by itself. Nevertheless he was receiving an income for which he was able to do nothing in return, and this was very common at the time. It was an abuse not confined to the Church, but was to be found also in the Law, in Parliament, in the Army, and in the Universities. Yet there is no reason to assume that the spiritual needs of Henry Bright's parishioners were neglected. A glimpse of how seriously curates undertook the duty for absentee incumbents is given in Professor Owen Chadwick's *Victorian Miniature*.

The last incumbent of this parish to fall within our period is Robert Chichester, 1803-41. He was first cousin to the patron, Lord Rolle. From 1809 onwards he was assisted in the parish by his son Charles, and from 1832 by a curate also. The son died a few months after the father, and they share an epitaph in Atherington church which speaks of their reliance for salvation "on the merits alone of their blessed Saviour, Jesus Christ", and of their testifying their love for Him by feeding the hungry and clothing the naked. A number of their sermons have been preserved,⁴ and the earnestness and sincerity of both men comes through the written word. Robert Chichester notes the sources of his sermons, a number of books being sometimes used in the composition of one sermon. It is a rare chance which has preserved these ephemeral sermons of an obscure and undistinguished clergyman. Let us note first that they condemn formality in religion.

... Another will be enabled to correct the mistake in which he may have lived all his Life long, that to attend the Service of the Church, and sometimes to receive the Holy Sacrament—to fulfill the common duties of Morality—& not to be exceedingly profligate, . . . that such a man loves God & needs not doubt of his Salvation. Dangerous Delusion! Let him diligently peruse the Scriptures, & he will find that the terms of Salvation differ widely from this pagan system. We are to be renewed in the spirit of our *minds*.

Secondly, the impression left by a perusal of these sermons is that the preacher's one desire is the eternal salvation of those committed to their charge. Here is the conclusion of one "On the Universal Judgement" (Revelation xx. 11-12):

This is all I shall presume to say to you. The right hand and the left, Heaven and Hell are before you. May God direct your Choice! May

³ *Gentleman's Magazine*, February 1803.

⁴ At Hall, Bishops Tawton.

his Justice alarm your fears! May his Goodness lead you to repentance, in and through the intercession of his most dearly beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

And in the great decisive day
When God the nations shall survey,
May it before the world appear
That some were born for glory here.

This is the last verse of a hymn by Philip Doddridge, No. 736 in the 1831 Supplement to Wesley's Hymns, but it must not be assumed that Robert Chichester had any liking for Methodism. He was not a controversialist, but he does warn his hearers against "enthusiasm", and against listening to unauthorized teachers who may lead them into the divisions which the Gospel forbids.

Thirdly, these sermons are the expression of a personal religion. One concludes thus :

We will then trust to none besides. No other Saviour will we have.
None but Christ, None but Christ. Amen.

And another :

The Hopes of every human being, then, rest, entirely, on the powerful mediation of Jesus Christ, our Advocate and Intercessor. God grant He may not intercede for any of us, whether rich or poor in vain. May the God & Father of our Lord Jesus Christ be graciously pleased to receive his Petitions & to grant his requests! And thou that sittest at the right hand of God have mercy upon us! Forgive us our sins—pardon our Iniquities.—Present us to thy Father clothed in thy Righteousness only, & receive us into Heaven, that where Thou art, we may be also!

This sermon, preached in altered form on three texts—Hebrews vii. 25, Revelation i. 18, and Hebrews v. 9—on nine occasions between 1811 and 1829, is marked as being taken from "Cooper, Vol 1st". It adds greatly to the significance of these sermons that they were all based upon books which were assuredly in many another clerical library also. The clergy were bidden by the highest authority not to rely on their own resources. Wrote Bishop Bull :

We minister to souls. Souls! Methinks in that one word there is a sermon. Immortal Souls! Precious Souls! One whereof is more worth than all the world besides, the price of the blood of the Son of God.

He goes on to say of preaching :

This is a noble part of the Pastor's duty, but difficult . . . Younger Divines should not at first trust to their own compositions.⁵

Despite what seems to us nowadays to be too strait a limitation, Robert Chichester's sermons were fresh, personal, and earnest. In them he sought to declare the whole counsel of God, and many another's would have been like them.

⁵ A *Companion for the Candidates of Holy Orders*, by George Bull, Lord Bishop of St. David's (1705-10), included in *The Clergyman's Instructor, or a Collection of Tracts on the Ministerial Duties* (Oxford, 1807).

His son Charles, a B.D., and a Fellow of Exeter College, Oxford, was a man of much greater ability. He marked one of his early sermons *totum meum*, and soon came to rely very little on sources. His was the driving force behind the establishment of a school in 1815, to be held on Sundays and holy days, on Dr. Bell's system, which had as one of its objects to inculcate

the necessity of a firm adherence to the doctrines and practices of our pure and Apostolical Church in this age of Schism and Infidelity.

Whereas the older man's sermons reflect *Ecclesia Anglicana* in its untroubled ascendancy, the younger man is worried by the prospect of Roman Catholic emancipation and by the spread of "enthusiasm". He refers incidentally to pastoral visitation, and is distressed that after four years no one in the parish should have asked him for instruction about the Holy Communion, which he pleads, he says in vain, both old and young to frequent. He is supremely confident in the Church:

You have a liturgy, in which it would be difficult for prejudice to find fault. You have the word, that word by which we must all hereafter stand or fall, constantly and faithfully preached by the clergy. You have the Sacraments ordained by Christ Himself rightly and duly administered. These advantages you enjoy, thanks be to God! without interruption or impediment.

He found, it seems, little response, and the impatience which the country clergyman so easily feels sometimes finds expression. His standards were perhaps high, otherwise he would hardly have been disappointed when his people failed to read such books as a translation of Josephus's *History of the Jews*, which, amongst others, he had put in the village library for their edification. Yet he himself would now be regarded as one of the scandals of his age. He never resided on his fellowship after his ordination. He was instituted as a prebendary of Exeter in 1817, but did not attend at the election of successive bishops. He became rector of West Worlington in 1822, but never officiated there, employing the rector of East Worlington as his curate. His fellowship and his living supplied him with the means of exercising his ministry in his father's parish. The parish was thus well served.

One swallow does not make a summer, and one must not build too much upon the evidence of one parish. And yet it is impressive. Of the seven clergymen considered above, all of them brought to the parish merely by their connexion with the patron, something is known which indicates in each of them more than a formal discharge of his duties, and where their own writings have survived, there is evidence of a deep desire for the salvation of their parishioners.

There is no indication in John Wesley's *Journal* that the clergy of Devon fell below the high standard which he commended in general.⁶ He was much impressed by the reverence of divine service

⁶ Sermon CVIII—"Of Attending the Church Service".

in Exeter Cathedral⁷ and at Plymouth.⁸ It is true that he declared one sermon to be meaningless and another inaudible,⁹ but he noted others as "useful",¹⁰ "thundering",¹¹ or "an excellent practical sermon".¹² Twenty years after Wesley's death William O'Bryan was not on the whole favourably impressed by the clergy, but noted that his parents thought highly of two curates, one of whom wanted to send him to college with a view to ordination.¹³ Some were fond of hunting (the hare, not the fox), which O'Bryan had abhorred from his youth.¹⁴ Some encouraged wrestling, which he called "the service of sin and Satan".¹⁵ Some, compared with the clergy of America, were idle.¹⁶ Daniel Evans, the evangelical curate of Shebbear, was a Calvinist, and it is significant that the decision to build a chapel was taken in his time. O'Bryan nowhere accuses the clergy of being intemperate, the nearest to this accusation being

A neighbouring parson's sons were hunters to my knowledge; also card players by report. The eldest liked liquor; he died not many years after he was ordained.¹⁷

The separation of the Bible Christians from Wesleyan Methodism does not here concern us. Both began to spread through North Devon at the same time. The rise of the one and the spread of the other are not to be explained, if we are to judge by contemporary records, by the low state of the Church. The quarrel was with the good clergy as well as with the bad. It was a matter of doctrine. O'Bryan's strongest words are against the Prayer Book, and especially its baptismal service, which is a "lying" service in its declaration that the child is "now regenerate". The Catechism is false in its teaching that the infant has been made "the child of God". An outsider is inclined to say that the Bible Christians from the outset made explicit what was always implicit in the teaching of Wesley, who "held to baptism in infancy, yet would not at all allow that infants could be regenerated".¹⁸ J. H. B. ANDREWS.

[The Rev. J. H. B. Andrews, M.B.E., M.A. (Oxon), is vicar of Chittlehampton, North Devon, Prebendary of Exeter Cathedral, Proctor in Convocation, member of the Church Assembly; sometime school chaplain, curate and lecturer of Leeds Parish Church.]

⁷ 29th August 1762 (*Journal*, iv, p. 526); 18th August 1782 (*ibid.*, vi, p. 365).

⁸ 1st September 1776 (*ibid.*, vi, p. 125).

⁹ At an unnamed church in Exeter, 28th August 1743 (*ibid.*, iii, p. 87).

¹⁰ Plymouth, 28th June 1747 (*ibid.*, iii, p. 304), and Exeter Cathedral (*ibid.*, iv, p. 526).

¹¹ Plymouth, 28th June 1747 (*ibid.*, iii, p. 304).

¹² Cullompton, 21st September 1755 (*ibid.*, iv, p. 136).

¹³ S. L. Thorne: *William O'Bryan, Founder of the Bible Christians*, p. 42. This was not published until 1878, and the "original documents" from which it was "chiefly" taken have not been preserved.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 47.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 14.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 49.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 42.

¹⁸ John Baillie: *Baptism and Conversion* (1964), p. 84.

THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETIES, 1678-1738

(Continued from page 20)

WE must now try to summarize the situation as it existed among the religious societies in the first quarter of the eighteenth century. Lengthy reference has been made to the society founded by John Wesley's father in his Lincolnshire parish, and it has been noted how that society was adapted to meet the needs of a rural community. By the kindness of the Rev. Albert Barff, vicar of St. Giles Cripplegate in London, J. Wickham Legg in his *English Church Life* has made available to us the "Orders and Rules" of the religious society which met in this church in 1718. These may be taken as representing the best type of religious society existing at this period.

Before turning to the rules, we glance at the list of names together with the occupations of the members who comprised this particular society. The names and occupations are arranged under three headings:

<i>Masters</i>	<i>Journeymen</i>	<i>Apprentices</i>
Joiner	Clockmaker	Ironmonger
Perfumer	Druggist	Plumber
Leather Dresser	Distiller	Glover
Tailor	Silkman	Jeweller
Peruke-maker	Button seller	Cook
Barber	Needle-maker	Schoolmaster
Cooper	Turner	Plasterer
Shoemaker		

The occupations point, as previously, to the lower middle classes, with an almost equal distribution of masters and men in membership—the same classes indeed from which Wesley gained his strongest following. However, it is with the rules that we are most concerned, since it is the rules which indicate the ideals towards which the society is striving.

The first thing to be observed from a comparison of the Orders and the Rules of the Cripplegate society in 1718 is that the basis of membership and the aims of the society remain substantially the same as those given by Dr. Horneck forty years before. The societies had changed but little either in character or in their objective. Membership was still limited to communicating members of the Church of England. Women were still excluded, but apprentices were now admitted. Meetings were still on a weekly basis, and their form remained unchanged, viz. "A Discourse on Spiritual Subjects, The Readings of God's Holy Word, Praying to Almighty God, and the Praising of His Name together". The chief aim of the societies, as at the beginning, was the promotion of practical holiness, and none were admitted into their membership unless they subscribed to this objective.

Yet the passing of the years had necessitated certain changes,

chiefly to be discerned within the organization. The most important of these changes is in respect of ministerial oversight. Horneck's rules insisted that the societies should choose a minister of the Church of England to direct them: none were admitted as members without his consent. In the rules of the Cripplegate society there is only one reference to the position of the minister, and this is in Rule 17, which runs:

That the Major part of the Society shall have power to make a new order . . . if it be approved of by a pious and learned Minister of the Church of England: (nominated by the whole Society).

Quite clearly societies had found it increasingly difficult to obtain suitable ministers for the office of spiritual director. Rule 17 suggests that he now functioned solely in an advisory capacity, and that it was by no means certain that he would be the priest of the parish in which the society met.

Admission into the societies was gained by those who gave notice to the stewards, who in turn acquainted the whole society. Inquiry was then made into their religious purposes and manner of life, and if these were satisfactory they were admitted to subscribe their names. Every member of the society was made responsible for each other's conversation, and, according to Rule 12, if any were found that walked disorderly such offenders were to be admonished privately; if this proved ineffectual they were to be reprov'd before two or three together; if this proved ineffectual also, they must be brought before the whole society, and if this did not reclaim them they were to be excluded. Similarly any member of the society who absented himself from the meetings for three Sunday nights together was judged to be "disaffected from the Society". One of the stewards was then obliged to visit him (under penalty of a fine); they were to inquire into the reasons for his absence, and if no satisfactory account was given, and he continued to absent himself for four nights more, he was to be excluded.

In the well-nigh complete absence of ministerial oversight, it is obvious that more and more authority should pass into the hands of the laymen, who in their own defence might well be expected to appeal to higher authority still. This certainly seems to have been the case in respect of the Archbishop's letter. The same applies in reference to the last rule of the society at Cripplegate, which reads:

It is likewise ordered by this Society that the Prayers recommended by the twelve Stewards and approved by the Lord Bishop of London, with, "may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ etc.," shall be used by this Society.

This rule is of particular interest also because of the mention of the "twelve Stewards". Elsewhere in these same rules reference is made to "both the Stewards", signifying that only two members were elected by any one society, which had always been the case, though Rule 6 allows the stewards to appoint six collectors to assist

them. Twelve stewards may imply half-a-dozen societies, either belonging to the same parish or to quite different parishes, but in either case connected, whether because they owed allegiance to one parent society, as at Epworth, or because they had the same spiritual director, or because they were in the same diocese. This appears to support the theory that here at least in embryo was the formation of the circuit system which became and still remains the basis of Methodist organization.

Again, comparing the duties of stewards with those given to stewards by Horneck, we find that whereas Horneck's stewards were elected for the express purpose of collecting subscriptions, now the collectors are responsible for this mundane task, whilst the stewards, who formerly only conducted devotions in the absence of the minister, are now promoted to be the real spiritual leaders of the societies. It is the stewards who now preside and conduct devotions, who propose the subject to be discussed on the following Sunday evening, who visit the sick and the disorderly, and who read over the rules "with so much Distinction and Deliberation that each member may have time to examine himself by them, or to speak his mind in anything relating to them". The stewards in fact had become the "class leaders" as we understand this term in contemporary Methodism.

Apart altogether from the devotional life of the society, individual members were expected to press on towards perfection in their own lives, and rules were provided as formerly to encourage this growth in godliness. These rules had grown rather more exacting with the passing of the years. Five had been added to the original twelve, and the rest considerably elaborated. Instead of the simple instruction "Keep close to the Church of England", the rubric now runs: "Partake of the Lord's Supper once a month at least if not prevented by reasonable impediment", and "Keep a private fast once a month especially near our approach to the Lord's Table if we may with convenience." (Quarterly Fast Days were still being observed in Methodism at the end of the last century.)

The reading of good books is especially commended, and selected passages from the Bible which were previously provided for discussion are now set out for private study. It had also become a rule that each member should encourage the catechizing of the "young and Ignorant Persons" in their respective families, according to their stations and abilities, and that they should observe all manner of religious family duties. Great care was to be taken not to give offence to the Christian religion by foolish jesting or talk, to walk circumspectly, and to be very modest and decent in apparel.

One other rule must not be overlooked. It shows that the religious societies, whilst supporting a general "reformation of manners", had learned that it was no business of theirs to do so for its own sake, but only out of a genuine concern for individual men and women:

That every member be ready to do what upon consulting with each other shall be thought advisable towards the punishment of public profaneness but not out of any base end as popular applause or malice to any man, but out of pure Love to God and Charity to men's Souls.

To summarize the situation as it existed at the end of the first quarter of the eighteenth century, and therefore before the preaching of Whitefield and Wesley began to assert its influence, we would say that throughout the reign of Queen Anne and on into that of George I, the religious societies were quietly but none the less effectively continuing their good work and maintaining the ideals laid down by their founder. Their number was steadily increasing throughout the country, where they appear to have been rather more closely allied to the parish churches than in London and Westminster. They were continuing to support all worthy causes and charitable designs, especially schools, whilst they still regarded the pursuit of holiness in their own hearts and lives as the reason for their existence. The changes which had taken place, particularly in their organization, were those which had been forced upon them by the shortage of the right kind of minister to lead them—a shortage which was still acute in Wesley's day, and also by reasons of political expediency. There is certainly no evidence to show that they were becoming disaffected to the Church of England.

It was into this situation that the founder of Methodism entered. Born in 1703 at Epworth, he spent the formative years of his life until 1714 in the atmosphere of a home where a religious society met and flourished, breathing the air of devotion which pervaded the lives of its members. The rules which ordered his own days were the rules which ordered the lives of the members of these societies. When his schooldays were over, and he had taken his degree at Oxford, it is not in the least surprising that with the first sign of spiritual awakening he should look around for the opportunity of joining such a group of earnest souls as those whom he had known in his father's home at Epworth. The Holy Club at Oxford was the answer to his needs.

By no stretch of the imagination could the Holy Club at Oxford be classified as belonging to the type of religious society whose fortunes we have been following, but it will be obvious from the following list of questions which John Wesley drew up when the critics of the Holy Club were most malicious that they had much in common.

1. Whether all Christians are not concerned in that command, "while we have time, let us do good to all men"?
2. Whether we may not try to persuade them to confirm and increase their industry by communicating as often as they can.
3. May we not try to do good to those who are naked or hungry or sick?
4. If they can read may we not give them a Bible, a Common Prayer Book, or a Whole Duty of Man?
5. May we not enforce upon them the necessity of private prayer, and of frequenting Church and Sacraments?

6. May we not do good to those who are in prison ?
7. May we not release such well-disposed persons as remain in prison for small debts ?

In October 1735 the Wesleys went up to London to embark for Georgia. There they stayed with the Rev. John Hutton, a Non-juror, who was much interested in the work of the religious societies and was in fact in charge of one of them which met in his house. John Wesley not only stayed in the Huttons' home : he also preached to the society on "One thing needful". The sermon made a deep impression, and led to the quickening of the society. It was to this house and to this society that Wesley returned when he arrived back from America, and it was here that he established his own first religious society in England, with James Hutton (son of the Rev. John Hutton) as its leading layman.

There is no time or space here to compare the societies which Wesley formed in America with the religious societies in England. We may accept J. S. Simon's judgement at this point, that whilst the former had much in common with the latter, arrangements were made to conform to special existing circumstances, while we ourselves continue to examine the evidence concerning the progress of the religious societies in England.

Richard Morgan, writing to Wesley in Georgia from Oxford in November 1735, tells him :

I read every Sunday night to a cheerful number of Christians at Mr. Fox's. I could say a great deal respecting our meetings, etc, but I am obliged to steal even this time from the Holy Scriptures, in which I find more and more comfort every day.

William Chapman, a student of Pembroke College, writes as follows :

I sit every evening with Mr. Hervey, that great champion of the Lord of Hosts, and read five times a week to a Religious Society in St. Ebb's parish.

James Hutton informs him in 1736 :

Mr. Broughton reads prayers every night to a Religious Society that meet in Wapping Chapel.

In 1736 Howell Harris, who had been converted while partaking of the Lord's Supper on Whit-Sunday 1735, founded several societies in Wales, like those which are described in Woodward's book ; but it is from the *Journal* of George Whitefield that we are able to gain further evidence of the work of the religious societies in England.

Leaving Oxford, where he had been a member of the Holy Club, in May 1735, Whitefield returned to his home in Gloucester, and by means of private conversation became instrumental in awakening several young people, whom he formed into a society. His work among the poor and in the prisons attracted the attention of the Bishop of Bristol, who ordained him on Sunday, 20th June 1736. He immediately began to preach. It is not without significance that

the theme of his first sermon should be "The Necessity and Benefit of Religious Society". The sermon in all probability was the same as that which he preached before the Religious Societies in Bow Church, London.

On 10th May 1737 we find him at Stonehouse, where he supplied the place of the Rev. Sampson Harris, and was delighted to find that a religious society was already in existence. On 23rd May he was again in Bristol. More religious societies were formed, and the whole city was moved by his teaching concerning the New Birth which comes through the might of the Holy Spirit.

At the end of August Whitefield went up to London, where he once more had close contact with the societies; and before departing for America in January 1738 he preached the last two quarterly sermons for the religious societies. He praised them for keeping up celebrations of Holy Communion in poor parishes (which were presumably without an incumbent), for maintaining monthly lectures, for supporting charity schools, and for organizing singing classes for church services. Whitefield joined one of these singing classes, and we may be sure inspired its members with some of his own enthusiasm and zeal.

John Wesley returned to England in February 1738. He immediately made his way to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Hutton in Great College Street, Westminster. Here he found that their son James Hutton had been active in founding religious societies of a more spiritual type than some of those existing in London. One of these was in Islington, another was in the City—in Nettleton Court, just off Aldersgate Street.

On 17th February John Wesley set off for Oxford, and on 26th March he wrote in his *Journal*:

[I] went in the evening to a society in Oxford, where (as my manner then was at all societies), after using a collect or two and the Lord's Prayer, I expounded a chapter in the New Testament . . .²

On Saturday, 1st April he records the first occasion when he used extempore prayer at a society meeting:

Being at Mr. Fox's Society, my heart was so full that I could not confine myself to the forms of prayer which we were accustomed to use there.³

It was also at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Fox towards the end of April that Wesley was to hear

two living witnesses that God *can* (at least, if He *does* not always) give that faith whereof cometh salvation in a moment, as lightning falling from heaven.⁴

John Wesley was at this time much under the influence of Peter Böhler and the Moravians, and the first society for which he was

² *Journal*, i, p. 447.

³ *ibid.*, i, pp. 448-9.

⁴ *ibid.*, i, p. 457.

responsible after his return to England shows strong traces of their influence. He records the inception of this society in his *Journal* for Monday, 1st May 1738.

Yet it was to no Moravian society that Wesley went on the evening of Wednesday, 24th May, but to one of the old religious societies of the Church of England, and we must try to summarize the debt which Wesley owed to these particular societies when he came to organize his own. This can best be done by saying that whatever influence Wesley owed to the Moravians, and it was considerable, when the choice had to be made it was to the Church of England and the religious societies that he turned, and not to Zinzendorf and the German Pietist movement. DAVID PIKE.

THE ANNUAL LECTURE

in connexion with the Plymouth Conference, 1965,

WILL BE DELIVERED IN THE

Greenbank Methodist Church,

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

BY

Rev. THOMAS SHAW.

Subject: "THE BIBLE CHRISTIANS"—illustrated by coloured slides.

The chair will be taken by ALD. R. G. PAYNTER, M.B.E., J.P.

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

Mrs. Herbert Ibberson-kindly invites members of the Society to **Tea** in the schoolroom at **4-30 p.m.** Mrs. Ibberson's invitation has been extended this year to a number of descendants of the Bible Christian founders whom we shall have the pleasure of meeting. It is essential that all those who desire to accept this invitation should send their names to the Rev. C. Edgar Stephenson, M.A., B.D., 19, Mount Gould Road, Plymouth, not later than Monday, July 5th.

Most buses from Old Town Street go to Mutley Plain. From here Greenbank church is five minutes' walk along Greenbank Road, immediately beyond the hospital.

In addition to the Exhibition of "Early Methodism in Devon and Cornwall" which will be seen in the entrance to the Art Gallery in Tavistock Road, it is hoped to assemble a supplementary collection of Bible Christian exhibits at Greenbank.

We are also informed by the Rev. H. R. Hindley that, for the benefit of representatives and other visitors to Conference, a small exhibition of Wesleyana is being arranged at Wesley chapel, Liskeard, Cornwall. Some old plans and a "Coke" foundation stone are among the exhibits. Liskeard is only 18 miles from Plymouth—day return by rail, 4s. 9d.

THE HISTORIANS OF THE BIBLE CHRISTIANS

THE early years of the Bible Christian movement are well documented because the founder of the community was its first annalist and to some degree its historian. William O'Bryan kept a diary throughout its formative years, and used it as a basis for his account of *The Rise and Progress of the Arminian Bible Christians*, which he serialized in the *Magazine* from the beginning of 1823 until, at least, 1827: unfortunately there are no known surviving copies of the *Magazine* for the years 1828-31. But even in its incomplete form O'Bryan's record deals with the formation of the denomination in detail, and this historic document ought one day to be reprinted from one of the very few surviving copies. O'Bryan was an untiring writer, with an eye for detail, as will be discovered by those who turn to his *Memoirs of my Mother* in the first two volumes of the *Magazine*, and to his *Narrative of Travels in the United States of America*.¹

The only other records contemporary with O'Bryan's account, and indeed for the first fifty years of the denomination's existence, are the *Minutes of Conference* (from 1819), the *Magazine* (from 1822), and the Episcopal Visitation Returns in the Exeter diocese, 1821. Second only in importance to these sources are the writings of James Thorne (1795-1872). He was interested in the Connexion from its beginning, but his writings are, in comparison with O'Bryan's, disappointing. Thorne, the busy organizer of the Bible Christians after O'Bryan's departure in 1829, used his pen frequently in the *Magazine*, but made no attempt to record the denomination's history until its jubilee in 1865, when he chronicled the events of the years 1815-43 in the *Jubilee Memorial Volume*. He was then in his seventies, and was describing events of from fifty to twenty years before. It is an accurate and authoritative account, but his selection of incidents and comments on them cannot but have been coloured by the experiences of the intervening years. He was able to refer to his private diary as he described the early expansion of the denomination, and this diary was also the main source used by John Thorne in his biography of his father, *James Thorne of Shebbear* (1873). Samuel Ley Thorne's contribution to the recorded history of the denomination included the detailed and well-written biographies of his grandfather O'Bryan, his father, *Samuel Thorne, Printer*, and his mother, Mary O'Bryan, *The Maiden Preacher*—all published between 1874 and 1889.

¹ This book, of which the only known copy in this country is at the Bodleian Library, reads like a Methodist version of the American chapters in *Nicholas Nickleby*. On the eve of his embarking at Liverpool, far from the Bible Christian scene, O'Bryan writes of seeing "the Steam Coaches run for Manchester; starting off gently they increased their velocity, and were soon out of sight." His unexpected comment on this is: "Who knows but these late inventions may be designed by the Almighty to facilitate the return of the Jews to their own country. It is said, *They shall be carried in litters, &c.*, Isaiah lxvi, 20."

The fact that so much Bible Christian history was written by the Thornes no doubt explains the incorrect and often-repeated statement that the denomination began at a class-meeting held at their parents' home, Lake Farm, Shebbear, on 9th October 1815, whereas O'Bryan's contemporary record makes it clear that the denomination was officially launched on 1st October, and that the first class was at Shernick Farm, Launcells, on the 3rd. The historic meeting at Lake was the occasion when the movement really took root, and, understandably in view of the later importance of the place, it gradually overshadowed the memory of the lost eight days in the mind of the Thornes.

The Eusebius of the denomination was Frederick William Bourne, whose intimate knowledge of it dated from his entry into its ministry in 1850. Like James Thorne before him, he was too much absorbed in the day-to-day affairs of the denomination to write its history, and it was not until his declining years that he wrote his full-length account, *The Bible Christians: their Origin and History*, in 1905. He wrote the last words of the book triumphantly, like the Venerable Bede, and shortly afterwards laid down his life with his pen. Bourne had the archives of the Connexion, as well as the books of O'Bryan and the Thornes, before him as he wrote, but his account of Bible Christian origins owed more to Thorne's recollections than to O'Bryan's factual account. Unfortunately, owing to increasing illness, Bourne's history becomes less detailed and less valuable in the later period, of which the author himself could have spoken most authoritatively.

George Eayrs in the *New History of Methodism* (1909), and G. G. Hornby in *The Methodist Church: Its Origins, Divisions and Reunion* (1932), were historians from other sections of the United Methodist Church than the Bible Christian, but like Bourne they accepted Thorne's account, and his interpretation also, of Bible Christian history. From the former Bible Christian section of United Methodism Richard Pyke published a popular history of his people soon after the 1907 Union, with the title *The Golden Chain*, and gave our Society's annual lecture on *The Early Bible Christians* in 1941.

No Wesleyan or ex-Wesleyan attempted the task of recording and assessing Bible Christian history, but the line that Wesleyan interpretation would have taken is indicated in the slight but important Memoir of Mrs. Grace Walter in the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1862,³ and the *London Quarterly Review* article reprinted in the *Bible Christian Magazine*, 1887.⁸

A recent article in the *Transactions of the Devonshire Association*⁴ by J. H. B. Andrews is one of the first assessments by Anglican historians of the significance of the Bible Christians. Mr. Andrews plainly sees them as schismatics, and regards them as

³ pp. 501 ff.

⁸ pp. 394 ff.

⁴ xcvi, pp. 147 ff.



WILLIAM O'BRYAN
(1778 - 1868)
Photograph taken late in his life

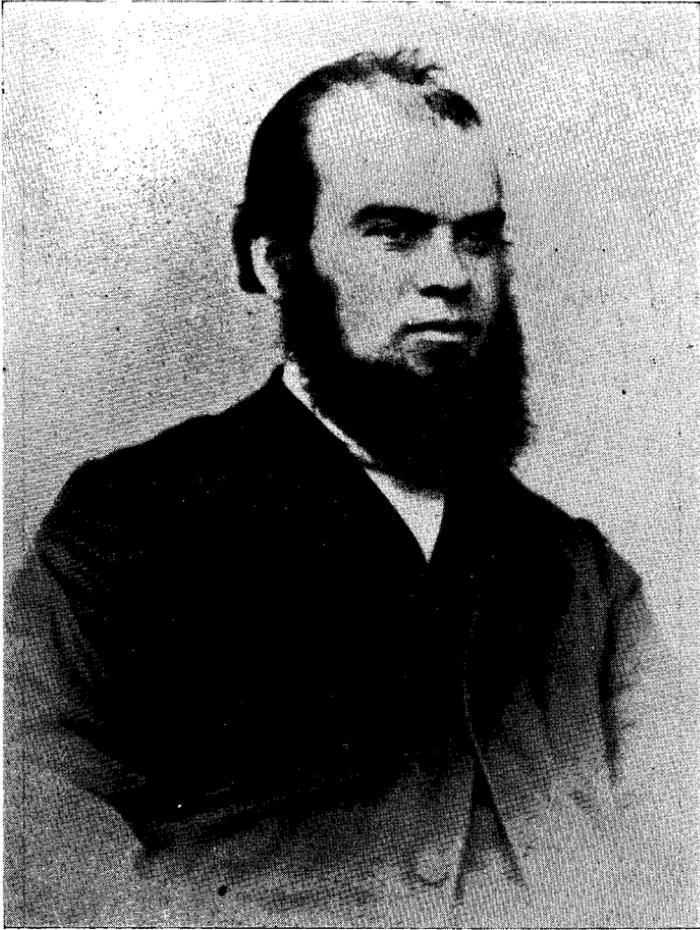


SAMUEL THORNE, PRINTER
(1798 - 1873)



MARY THORNE
(1807-83)

Daughter of William O'Bryan and Wife of Samuel Thorne, Printer



SAMUEL LEY THORNE
(1830-92)

Bible Christian Minister; Biographer of his parents and his grandfather

latter-day Montanists with a superior disregard for Church order and sacraments.⁵ Before any Methodist historian rushes in to take up the cudgels he should reflect that Rupert E. Davies in his *Methodism*⁶ has traced the spiritual ancestry of Methodism itself to the Montanists. Whether or not such a spiritual identification is justifiable, and in whatever respects it is allowable, there can be no doubt that Bible Christian history, along with that of the Primitive Methodists, enables us to isolate and inspect the charismatic tradition in Methodism.

THOMAS SHAW.

⁵ Summarized, but without the Montanist reference, in *The Preacher's Quarterly*, March 1965.

⁶ Penguin edn., pp. 13 ff.

Miss Sandra Judson, one of our members, has presented to the Archives Library a copy of the Bibliography which she submitted for the University of London Diploma in Librarianship under the title *Biographical and Descriptive Works on the Rev. John Wesley*. Although the writer has confined herself to London libraries, this is a most comprehensive work, listing 2,172 items. It is well indexed, and will for many years to come be a useful work of reference to all students of Wesley and early Methodism who use the Archives and Research Centre. We are grateful to Miss Judson for placing her work at the disposal of students in this way.

The Handbook of the Methodist Conference, Plymouth, 1965 is now on sale, and readers may obtain copies from the Rev. R. Keith Parsons, The Manse, Northlew, Okehampton, Devon, price 2s. 6d. plus 7d. postage.

Not since 1929, when seventeen days on the Riviera cost less than £16, has a Conference handbook come from Plymouth—a city changed beyond recognition from that of 36 years ago. This year's production, with its cover picture of the bridge over the Tamar, is as attractive as the city. As such handbooks go, this one follows traditional lines, and it contains some commendable historical articles. In Methodist studies much has happened since 1929, and both Devon and Cornwall now have a local historical branch. Furthermore, as this year marks the 150th anniversary of the beginnings of the Bible Christian Connexion, there was conceivably no lack of appropriate subjects and relevant material. Fifteen pages are allotted to the history of Methodism in the West Country—Mr. Paul Bolitho writes on "Wesley and the West", the Rev. Thomas Shaw on "The Church of the Bible Christians", Dr. Oliver A. Beckerlegge on "Methodism's Other Branches", and Mr. Douglas Cock on "Methodist Schools of the West"—and the whole section is excellently illustrated.

The Rev. Amos S. Cresswell has written *The Story of Cliff*—a useful account of Methodism's famous training college for evangelists which brings to light much information about the origin of the college that many who are familiar with its present work and the enthusiasm of its Whitsuntide gatherings will undoubtedly read for the first time. Interwoven is the story of *Joyful News* from its first appearance under the editorship of Thomas Champness on 22nd February 1883 to its final issue at the end of 1963. There are biographies too of each of the college's Principals. The booklet of 36 pages may be obtained, price 2s. 6d. plus 3d. postage, from the Joyful News Bookroom, Cliff College, Calver, Sheffield.

THOMAS COKE

Miscellaneous Notes

DURING the past twelve months some reparation has been made for the years of neglect to which the name and career of Thomas Coke have been subjected. The various tributes that have been paid to his memory have reminded us how many-sided was his contribution to the development of Methodism as a church and a world communion. The present article is not intended as a further tribute, but merely as a series of footnotes to what has been written—an essay in pedantry that is justifiable only on the assumption that devotion does not preclude accuracy.

(1) **Date of Birth**

The Rev. N. Keith Hurt (*Proceedings*, xxxiv, p. 129), following Crowther, Etheridge and other biographers, gives this as 9th October 1747. Other writers, headed by Coke's official biographer, Samuel Drew, incline to 9th September. This reflects an apparent contradiction in the primary sources. The baptismal entry in the register at St. Mary's Church, Brecon, is clearly dated 5th October 1747. This would be decisive for the earlier date were it not that Coke himself wrote in his *Journal* for 9th October 1792 (1816 edn., p. 184): "This is my birthday. I am now forty-five . . ." That Coke remembered the day but mistook the month of his own birth is inherently improbable. The more natural explanation is the simple one, i.e. that in observing his birthday on 9th October he was allowing for the adjustment of the calendar in 1752. His date of birth was therefore neither 9th September nor 9th October, but 28th September (O.S.), which became 9th October (N.S.) after 1752.

(2) **His Doctorate**

The degree which Coke obtained in 1775, during his curacy at South Petherton, was that of Doctor of Civil Law, not Doctor of Laws. It is true that he frequently described himself as LL.D., even on the title-pages of his publications, and was regularly so described by others. In fact, Oxford had no power to confer a doctorate in Canon Law (see *Proceedings*, xi, p. 144). Nevertheless, at that time, the terms LL.D. and D.C.L. appear to have been interchangeable in popular usage. Coke's sponsor on this occasion was no less a person than the Prime Minister, Lord North, who wrote on 8th June 1775 supporting Coke's request that he might "be allowed to accumulate the Degrees of Bachelor and Doctor in Civil Law, paying Fees for both Degrees but doing exercise for that of Doctor only" (Letter to Convocation; copy among the Deaville Walker papers, MMS Archives).

(3) **His first Curacy**

There is very little evidence that Coke's first parish was at Rode (*Proceedings*, xxxiv, p. 129: the spelling "Road" is an eighteenth-century variant). Jonathan Crowther's statement "He became curate of Rodd near Bath" (*Life of Coke*, p. 103) is echoed in the memorial sermons of Coke's friends and fellow-preachers Samuel Warren and Samuel Woolmer, and by later biographers. But Coke himself never mentions this curacy, and it has left no mark in the parish records for the period. Coke was ordained deacon on Trinity Sunday 1770, and had definitely taken up residence in South Petherton by 14th July 1771. In 1770 there was a curate named John Martin at Rode. Of Coke's movements during the period we have no more than hints, but the fact that he became Bailiff of Brecon in September 1770 suggests that most of his time would be spent

in his native town. Sutcliffe was probably near the mark when he wrote that Coke "preached occasionally for his friends, and at Road, near Frome". (Coke's *Journals*, 1816 edn., p. 7.)

(4) Visits to the West Indies

In his article on "Thomas Coke and the West Indies" (*Methodist History*, October 1964), W. Thomas Smith reaches the tentative conclusion that Coke probably paid a fifth visit to the West Indies on his way to attend the General Conference of 1800 at Baltimore. That this was his intention is clear from his letter to Ezekiel Cooper, dated 18th December 1798, quoted by Dr. Smith. But there is little doubt that this plan was never executed, and that in spite of the various assertions of his biographers, Coke paid no further visit to the Caribbean after his fourth tour in 1792-3.

No doubt through the pressure of his other commitments, Coke did not leave England for America until February 1800. From the heading of a letter written to Henry Dundas on 10th February of that year (the original of which may be seen at the Methodist Archives Centre in London), we learn that he was at that time aboard ship and waiting to sail from Falmouth Roads. This corrects the statement of Dr. Frank Baker in a footnote to the *Letters of Francis Asbury*, p. 185 (based on Drew's *Life of Coke*, 1817, p. 305), that Coke set out in 1799.

In the absence of any journal of this voyage, we are unable to construct a detailed itinerary, but we know from the *Journal of Francis Asbury* (ii, p. 231) that Coke was in America before the end of April, and was in Baltimore for the General Conference which opened on 6th May (not 20th May, as stated by Dr. Smith). This scarcely leaves time for even a fleeting visit to the West Indies under eighteenth-century conditions of travel. The fact that Coke makes no mention of any fifth visit in his three-volume *History of the West Indies* (1808-11) is virtually decisive.

(5) The Ordination of John Baxter

Dec. 25 [1786].—This day we landed in *Antigua*, and in going up the town of *St. John's* we met brother *Baxter* in his band, going to perform divine service . . . (Coke's *Journal*, 1816 edn., p. 83).

This dramatic arrival of Coke in the West Indies has often been described. Almost every account assumes that, when they encountered each other in the street on that memorable Christmas morning, Coke and Baxter were strangers, and goes on to describe how Baxter was ordained shortly afterwards. Neither statement is true. During his first visit to America two years before, Coke had intended to return home via the West Indies, but this part of his plans was thwarted. He therefore summoned Baxter to meet him in Baltimore just before he sailed for England; and at the Conference which met there on 1st June 1785, Baxter was ordained along with several American preachers. The evidence for this is in a passage from Coke's *Journal* which is missing from the English editions but appears in the version printed in the Philadelphia edition of the *Arminian Magazine* (vol. i, 1789). It is worth noting that Baxter's name is missing from the list of those chosen for ordination by the Christmas Conference, held in Baltimore six months previously; the presumption is that Wesley had himself instructed and authorized Coke to ordain Baxter. The ordination at Baltimore explains, none the less, why Baxter is listed as an elder in the American *Minutes* of 1785, and also why he was in clerical attire ("in his band") when he met Coke on Christmas morning 1786.

(6) **Mission to Paris, 1791**

The brief account in *Proceedings*, xxxiv, p. 133 of Coke's visit to Paris contains several inaccuracies. It appears to be based on Crowther's account (*Life of Coke*, p. 310); but the latter is both more picturesque and less reliable than Drew's version (*Life of Coke*, pp. 239 ff.), which is based, at least in part, on an unpublished journal of Coke.

The main facts are as follows. On arriving in Paris, Coke rented a room near the river, and at the same time entered into negotiations for the purchase of a disused church for a sum of £120. It was in the former that the two Methodist services were held, at the first of which Jean de Queteville, Coke's companion, preached to a congregation of thirty-six. Coke himself, the following day, had only six hearers. This marked lack of success was enough to prompt even Thomas Coke to second thoughts about the mission. Through the intervention of Miss Mary Freeman Shepperd, whose acquaintance he had already made in London, he was able to withdraw from the purchase of the church. Miss Shepperd was not herself a nun, but had taken refuge in a convent, where she entertained the two Methodist preachers to breakfast. (For Miss Freeman, an unusual if not eccentric character, see: Everett, *Adam Clarke Portrayed*, ii, p. 35 f.; Etheridge, *Life of Adam Clarke*, pp. 371 ff.)

JOHN A. VICKERS.

[Mr. John A. Vickers, B.A., B.D. is head of the Department of Religious Education at the Municipal Grammar School, Wolverhampton. In 1964 he was WHS lecturer on "Thomas Coke and World Methodism".]

Religion at Oxford and Cambridge, by V. H. H. Green (SCM Press, pp. 392, 14 illustrations, 42s.) is another competent study of the eighteenth-century religious scene by the Chaplain of Wesley's own college at Oxford. Dr. Green has recently given us an excellent one-volume study of our Founder (see *Proceedings*, xxxiv, p. 191), and this essay will help to fill in the background against which Wesley lived and moved and had his being in Oxford. *The Prayer Book Tradition in the Free Churches*, by A. E. Peaston (James Clarke & Co. Ltd., pp. xiv. 202, 18s. 6d.) devotes a chapter to the Methodists without saying much that will be new to readers of the *Proceedings*; but the rest of the book, dealing with the Anglican and the Dissenting traditions (Methodism is grouped in the former) is a worthwhile study. *Irish Methodism* (Epworth House, Belfast, pp. 104, 6s.) is by one of our members, Mr. Fred Jeffery. This paper-back is an excellent introduction to the "Traditions, Theology and Influence" of one of the most vigorous sections of our beloved Church, and it is splendidly produced by our Belfast bookroom. *Studies in the Puritan Tradition* (pp. 40, 5s.) is a composite book by Dr. Geoffrey F. Nuttall, George Yule and Roger Thomas, and is published as a joint supplement to the *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society* and the *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society*. *The Sociology of Cornish Methodism*, by John C. C. Probert (pp. 48, 2s. 6d.) the eighth Occasional Paper of the Cornish Methodist Historical Association, is a piece of very careful investigation; copies are obtainable from the Secretary of our Cornish Branch. *Miss Hannah Ball, a Lady of High Wycombe*, by Ina De Bord McQuaid (Vantage Press, pp. 160, 14 illustrations, \$3.75) is a new study of this famous pioneer in Sunday schools, and prints the correspondence in both directions, between Miss Ball and John Wesley. EDITOR.

THE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE BIBLE CHRISTIANS

THE following is an attempt at a bibliography of all the works known to have been written by Bible Christian authors, or to have been published by the Bible Christian Book-Room, or to be official Bible Christian publications. Very few are by other than Bible Christian authors, and in most cases they will be self-evident; but these are distinguished by the note "non-BC" after their name.

In many cases no copies have come to light, and they are known only through advertisements or references in other works; in these cases the present writer would be glad to hear of such works, and would welcome the opportunity to acquire any of them. Where there is no indication of date or place of publication, or no indication of ownership, it is clear that no copy has been traced. Remoteness from the British Museum has made it impossible for the present writer to add some details that might otherwise have been discovered. Bible Christian material is at present found in five main collections: (i) at the Archives and Research Centre at the Methodist Book-Room in London, based chiefly on the collection given to the Connexion by the late Rev. L. H. Court (indicated by the letter A in the following list); (ii) the collection of Dr. Glyn Court of Ilfracombe, a nephew of the Rev. L. H. Court (C); (iii) the collection of the Rev. Thomas Shaw of Redruth (S); (iv) that of Mrs. E. Jewell of Bude (J); (v) the author's own collection (B). The letter L before the name of a publisher stands for "London".

It is always a difficult task to divide books into classes when so many could with equal validity be included in more than one. In the following lists all missionary biographies are included in the Biography section and not the Missionary; and as far as possible local histories have been separated from general Bible Christian histories (again the dividing line was sometimes difficult to draw). No attempt has been made to include articles in BC magazines, etc. or in the weekly papers; but main articles in journals such as our own *Proceedings* have been listed.

I. Official

The Minutes of Conference, 1819-1907, published annually. The *Minutes of 1819 and 1820* are normally found in the second edition, published in 1825. The titles vary from year to year.

- A (complete set)
- B (1819-44, 1851, 1856, 1863-82, 1887, 1889-1901)
- J (1896, 1906-7)
- S (some prior to 1880, 1883-1907)
- Rev. Bryan H. Reed (complete set)

The Arminian Magazine, 1822-7. Vol. i published by Eyre, Launceston; vol. ii by S. Thorne, Stoke Damarel.

- A (1823-4, 1826-7) J (1823-5)
- B (1823-4) S (1823)

The Bible Christian Magazine, 1832-1907.

- A (complete set)
- B (1833 and many later)
- J (many)
- S (many up to 1864, 1864-1907)

- Class Tickets**, 1816-1907. A (few)
B (many—see *Proceedings*, xxxii, pp. 48-9)
- The Juvenile Gleaner, or Youth's Magazine** (Shebbear : S. Thorne), 1827[?]-? S (1834)
- The Child's Magazine** (Shebbear : S. Thorne), [dates?] S (Aug. 1838, "No. 68")
- Youth's Penny Miscellany**, by 1849-68? A ; B (1866-8)
- Youth's Miscellany**, by 1884.
- Young People's Magazine**, by c. 1894.
- The Rules of Society . . . for . . . Arminian Bible Christians [by William O'Bryan], with a Preface** (Launceston, 1818). B
- Digest of the Rules, Regulations and Usages . . . of the Bible Christians.**
1st edn., 1838. C Marrow, Plymouth
2nd edn., 1856
3rd edn., 1863.
4th edn., 1872. B
5th edn., 1882. B J
6th edn., 1892. A B S
7th edn., 1902. B S
- Rules of the Bible Christian Societies** (Plymouth : S. Thorne, n.d.). B
- Bible Christian Connexion—Members' Rules** (L : Bible Christian Bookroom, 1879). C
ditto ditto 1886 B
ditto ditto 1889 B
ditto ditto 1903 B S
- A Class Book ; Containing Directions for Class Leaders . . . and the Rules of the Bible Christian Societies** (Bible Christian Book Committee, 1866). S
- Annual Reports of the Missionary Society**, 1822?-1907. (Printed at Shebbear, 1822?-1836? ; in later years normally bound with the *Minutes*.)
A (complete set) B (1836 and some later)
S (1849 and many later)
- Rules and Regulations of the Bible Christian Itinerant Preachers' Annuitant Society** (Shebbear : S. Thorne, 1846). B
- Bible Christian Preachers' Annuitant Society Report**, ?-1907. (In later years, normally bound with the *Minutes*.) B (1890-1901) S (1887-1907)
- Connexional Balance Sheet**, ?-1907. (In later years, normally bound with the *Minutes*.) B (1890-1901) S (1887-1907)
- President's Circular**, by 1887-1907. (Normally bound with the *Minutes*.) B S
- Bible Christians' Calendar**, 1860 (Shebbear, Nov. 1859).
- The Young Local Preachers' Guide**, by T. W. Garland (Shebbear : S. Thorne, 1860). A
- Book of Services for the Use of the Bible Christian Church** (L : Bible Christian Bookroom, 1897). R. A. Baldwin, Gillingham
2nd edn., Feb. 1903 Rev. Brian J. N. Galliers
Didsbury College, Bristol
- Rules and Regulations** (Canadian Bible Christian Bookroom, 1876). A
- Tabular Record of Deceased Ministers (to date)**, published as an appendix to *Minutes*, 1887. A B S

II. Histories

ANDREWS, J. H. B. :

The Rise of the Bible Christians (in *Transactions of the Devonshire Association*).

- BECKERLEGGE, O. A. :
 Women Itinerant Preachers (*Proceedings*, xxx (1956), pp. 182-4).
 The Northern Bible Christians (*Proceedings*, xxxi (1957), pp. 39-43).
 Non-Wesleyan Class Tickets (*Proceedings*, xxxii (1959), pp. 34-7, 48-9).
 The Rule of William O'Bryan (*Proceedings*, xxxiii (1961), pp. 30-5).
 The First Bible Christian Hymn-Book (*Proceedings*, xxxiv (1963), p. 34-6).
- BOURNE, F. W. :
 The Bible Christians, their Origin and History (L : BC Bookroom, 1905 ; also appeared in parts). A B C J S
- BOWMER, J. C. :
 Some Non-Wesleyan Service Books (*Proceedings*, xxxii (1960), pp. 145, 149).
 The Bible Christian Service Book (*Proceedings*, xxxiii (1961), pp. 1-3).
- COURT, L. H. :
 The Romance of a Country Circuit (L : Hooks, 1921). A B C S
 Some Dartmoor Saints and Shrines (L : Morgan & Scott, n.d., c. 1927). A B C J S
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OLIVER A. BECKERLEGGE.

(To be continued)

BOOK NOTICES

John Wesley's First Hymn-book: A Facsimile with Additional Material, edited by Frank Baker and George Walton Williams. (Charleston: The Dalcho Historical Society. London: The Wesley Historical Society.)

John Wesley, who continues to dominate evangelical thought, exerts his influence in the *methods* which he chose and perfected for the spread of evangelical religion. Chief among his methods was hymn-singing. In the light of subsequent development, the *Charlestown Collection* assumes hitherto unrecognized importance. (p. xxiii.)

Dr. Robert Stevenson is probably right; although, in fact, its cardinal importance has received due recognition through the years from the Wesley Historical Society. In 1923 (*Proceedings*, xiv, pp. 3-5) Mr. J. T. Lightwood contributed an article on "The Two Existing Copies . . ."; and reference was made in the same issue to Mr. E. S. Lamplough's happy purchase of one of them at Sotheby's. In 1958 (*Proceedings*, xxxi, pp. 186-93) Dr. Frank Baker gave a detailed account of the various sources used by John Wesley for his compilation. Now the Society has co-operated with the Dalcho Historical Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church of South Carolina to produce a very pleasing facsimile of the English copy in the Methodist Archives, together with a valuable apparatus of comment and documentation which includes a reprint of Dr. Baker's 1958 article.

It will soon be a century since Dr. George Osborn reprinted the volume; and the joint editors of the present publication, together with the collaborators whose help they acknowledge, have rendered notable service in making it available again. The book is to be had for 17s. 6d. plus 9d. postage from Mr. Alfred A. Taberer, 7, Portland Road, Leicester, who has supervised the printing. Exact scholarship may, of course, be taken for granted. Methodist historians—expert bibliographers and others no less—will appreciate the fully-documented appendix contributed by Dr. George Walton Williams. This contains not only a detailed study of the book's eighteenth-century typography with lists of errors and variants, but also a fascinating account of how the two known copies came to be discovered—in London in 1878, in New York in 1899.

The *Charlestown Collection* is of unique importance in hymnology. Among many hymns of intrinsic interest are to be found, for instance, five translations by John Wesley—from Zinzendorf, Freylinghausen, C. F. Richter and Ernst Lange (of these, two were not printed again after 1739). Here too, among thirty-five hymns by Watts, are two alternative paraphrases of Psalm xc, to compare with "O God, our help". Here are splendid examples of the poetry of both Samuel Wesleys; and a beautiful translation of the *Veni, Sancte Spiritus, Et emitte* by the Roman Catholic John Austin, whose *Devotions* Wesley had taken with him to Georgia. We are again reminded that this is the first Anglican hymnal as well as the first Methodist. For though the leaders of the English Reformation had from the first intended to use hymns in divine worship, for two centuries the Church of England had done little or nothing about it. John Wesley was forwarding the cause of congregational singing before Charles had written a hymn.

The real reason, however, for welcoming this facsimile is convincingly given in a valuable essay by Dr. Robert Stevenson contained in his *Paterns of Protestant Church Music*, and here reprinted with his kind

permission and that of Duke University Press. It is, in brief, that this little book of seventy hymns does in fact throw its own ray of light upon the religious instincts of Wesley himself—of Wesley who “long before Aldersgate”, as Dr. Stevenson says, “was a singing man”; who in Georgia was already shaping, from whatever source lay to hand, the tools for his coming apostolic labours; who, like Luther and the Moravians, knew from the first that vocal corporate worship and personal holiness belong together; and who in 1780 in the “Large Hymn-book” was to provide for the multitude of his children many of the very same hymns he had chosen for his little flock in Georgia before the revival began. The hymn-writer of Methodism, everyone knows, was to be Charles. But in 1737 Charles had left for England. The *Charlestown Collection* is John’s alone.

ARTHUR S. GREGORY.

The Wesleys in Cornwall, edited by John Pearce. (D. Bradford Barton, Truro, pp. 172, 25s.)

The full significance of Methodism in English history can perhaps be studied best in those areas in which it became outstandingly a major factor in religious, social and cultural life. Cornwall clearly has been one of these, and the foundation record for the history of Methodist influence must be John Wesley’s own account in the *Journal* of his repeated visits. For many years a collection of the relevant parts has been out of print and scarce, and some new edition was wanted. This has now been supplied by Mr. John Pearce.

Mr. Pearce prints the *Journal* relating to Cornwall, and adds for good measure the accounts of their own journeys by Charles Wesley and John Nelson. That alone would be most acceptable in this well-presented volume, illustrated unsparingly with carefully-chosen photographs of less usual or quite new subjects and a considerable number of attractive line drawings by R. D. Penhallurick. But it is a good deal more than a reprinting. Mr. Pearce gives an introduction sketching the society in the far south-west in which Wesley planted and cultivated, and indicates his own personal approach to what has been, in some ways, a labour of local piety. His own roots were in the deep Methodism of St. Just and its neighbourhood. He says “two women, my grandmother and my great-great-grandmother, link me with John Wesley”, and in that line memory passed from mind to mind, still living. So he inherits a rich fund of tradition and story, which, though inevitably without precision of documentary evidence, gives a robust and authentic ring to the telling of Methodist influence among a vigorous and independent people. Perhaps a chief virtue of the book is that it brings now, before it is too late, what must be the last generation of handed-down memory to mingle with the history that always in future must be based upon the written word. The mutual enrichment of tradition and record comes out in the introduction and in the very numerous and generous footnotes. Older work of scholars and writers is brought to bear upon page after page, and new research has added a good deal that is fresh, e.g. in the activities of the Rev. Walter Borlase, who was decidedly not a lover of the Wesleys and their work.

Altogether the book is a useful provision for students, a pleasure for anyone to read, and an excellent contribution from local studies to the wider history of Methodism. At 25s. it is exceedingly good value.

F. L. HARRIS.

The Survival of Methodism, by J. Brazier Green. (The Camborne Printing Co. Ltd., 3s. 6d.)

With his fluent pen, the late Mr. Brazier Green could not possibly be dull, and many of the chapters of his book make easy and informative reading. Nevertheless, the gravamen of the argument lies in the last three chapters, and his actual prescription for union in the last chapter itself. Here it is that one must part company with the author. His proposal is that Methodism should not be involved in the "dust and tears" of the present negotiations, but at once become a society within the Church of England in the same sense that the Society of Jesus is within the Church of Rome.

Mr. Brazier Green probably knew that it was this conception of Methodism which was held by John and Charles Wesley; and they spoke of their followers as the "Society of people called Methodists". Nevertheless, the long series of irregular actions and the tempo of events forced Methodism outside the established Church, so that, in fact, within six years of the founder's death it had become a separate communion. This process has only been accelerated by the passage of time, and now British Methodism not only bears the four marks of an historic Church, but is able, because of its world associations with other Methodist Churches, to know that in these negotiations it can never deal with the Anglican Church as those who would forfeit their past. We cannot enter a second time into our mother's womb. The only possible basis in negotiation is of two great Churches who believe that by their union they can each bring their separate gifts to the making of a Church that will be greater still.

MALDWYN EDWARDS.

Pity my Simplicity. The Evangelical Revival and the Religious Education of Children, 1738-1800, by Paul Sangster. (Epworth Press, pp. 200, 30s.)

The Evangelicals of the eighteenth century could hardly be hailed as contributing significantly to the development of educational theory, despite their earnest concern to train the young in the ways of righteousness. For this reason, no doubt, their efforts have not been examined seriously, and we are thus indebted to Mr. Sangster for filling the gap. It would be easy to present a caricature by attempting to judge a former age by the standards of our own. Mr. Sangster avoids this pitfall without on the other hand allowing sentiment to blind him to realities.

As a consequence we are provided with an admirably objective study which succeeds in conveying a considerable amount of information without ever degenerating into dullness. After a glance at the Evangelicals as a body, the author proceeds to deal with the method, medium and matter of their teaching, and finally assesses its fruit. He rightly recognizes that the doctrine of original sin underlies their whole approach. The chief weapon in the Evangelical armoury when dealing with the young was the fear of hell. Hence "attendance on death-beds seems almost a means of grace" (p. 15). Yet the grim fact remains that in the age of the Wesleys the mortality rate even in childhood afforded some justification for this emphasis, and in any case it may have been more realistic than our modern evasions.

One does not necessarily accept all Mr. Sangster's judgements. He tends to underestimate the theological acumen of the Evangelicals and the incidence of thorough-going Calvinism. There are some confusing slips: John Scott in place of Thomas on pages 44 and 77, and a mythical Robert Cecil sometimes supplanting the genuine Richard. A. SKEVINGTON WOOD.

NOTES AND QUERIES

1135. THE FIRST METHODIST NEW CONNEXION HYMN-BOOK.

In his recent Note (*Proceedings*, xxxiv, p. 176), Dr. Beckerlegge describes a bewildering number of early Methodist New Connexion hymn-books. There is, however, yet another to add, a fragment of which is preserved in number 3 of Hobill's "New Connexion" volumes in the library of Hartley Victoria College, Manchester. It is entitled *Select Hymns, Odes and Anthems; sung in The Methodist Chapels, in the New Itinerancy, in Sheffield, Nottingham, Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool Etc.* The date is 1797; the imprint, "Sheffield; Printed by J. White, for W. Wright, Coalpit-Lane"; the price, twopence. The cover of this copy is endorsed in ink at the foot: "Elizabeth Calvert's Hymn Book 1814".

The second page contains an advertisement for new books: "The following neat and cheap Editions, just published, may be had of W. Wright, bookseller." The list includes "Hymn Book for Prayer Meetings, 1s 6d" and "Large Hymn Book, (pocket size,) with 179 Sacramental and Festival Hymns, sheep, 2s 6d, calf, 3s., clasp'd 3s 6d." Thus it seems certain that both the book "for Prayer-Meetings" and the "Large Hymn-book with supplement" were published late in 1797 together with this even smaller twopenny hymn-book.

The first twenty pages contain twenty complete hymns and the first verse of Hymn XXI. The remaining pages are missing, and until a perfect copy turns up there is no means of ascertaining the size of the complete book. It was obviously intended as a supplement to Wesley's 1780 hymn-book, and most of the hymns are now forgotten; but some are worthy of comment. Hymn XI, headed "The Wheat and Tares", is "This is the field—the world below", which appeared in subsequent Primitive Methodist and Bible Christian collections. Hymn XIII is a version of "Jerusalem! my happy home", although it contains only six verses. Hymn XIX is "From all that dwell below the skies", still sung often today. Hymn XVII is headed "A.K.", and is presumably the work of Kilham himself. The first verse reads:

Fear not, ye trembling souls, fear not,
The day of liberty draws near;
Your cares and toils shall be forgot,
When Christ with all the Saints appear:
O rest secure in his embrace,
And you shall soon behold his face.

In general, the language of the hymns is restrained—the New Connexion were not an exuberant community; but the last verse of Hymn VI gives a picture of the difficulties endured by these early reformers:

We little flock, by all contemn'd,
O'erlooked, unknown, despis'd, condemn'd,
With names traduc'd and lives abhorr'd,
We suffer with our murder'd Lord;
Yet, still the flames ascend the higher,
We'll burn triumphant in the fire.

E. A. ROSE.

1136. PRIMITIVE METHODISTS IN CORNWALL.

Mr. John Probert, of 1, Penventon Terrace, Redruth, Cornwall, is compiling a history of Primitive Methodists in Cornwall, and would be glad of any help that members could give him in his researches. EDITOR.

1137. ACADEMIC THESES ON METHODIST HISTORY.

In addition to the list printed in *Proceedings*, xxxiv, p. 99, the following theses have come to our notice:

- "The Origins and Influence of Methodism in North Staffordshire Potteries before 1820"—Reginald Moss (London M.A., 1949). Microfilm copy in the Horace Birks Reference Library, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent.
- "The Wesleyan Doctrine of Sin and Salvation"—Donal J. Dorr (St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, D.D., 1964). Copy in the Methodist Archives, London.
- "Thomas Coke and the Origins of World Methodism"—John A. Vickers (Birmingham B.D., 1964).
- "Augustus Montague Toplady—a critical account, with special reference to Hymnology"—George Lawton (Nottingham B.D., 1964).
- "Bibliography of Biographical and Descriptive Works on the Rev. John Wesley"—Sandra Judson (London University Diploma in Librarianship, 1963). Copy in the Methodist Archives, London. EDITOR.

1138. METHODISM AND THE HISTORY OF ENGLAND.

The study of history constantly involves re-assessments and re-interpretations. This is clearly so in the case of the influence of Methodism on English history. For some time now a good deal of detailed research has been done on the history of the early and middle years of the nineteenth century, which is of great significance for historians of Methodism, but which appears to have remained largely unnoticed by them.

Two notable surveys summarize much of the detail. G. Kitson Clark, *The Making of Victorian England* (1962), investigates the "blind" forces like the rise of population and the progress of the Industrial Revolution and "purposive" forces such as religion and political radicalism, behind the middle years of the Victorian period. Asa Briggs, *The Age of Improvement* (1957), is another clear and balanced general history. On Methodism in particular Prof. E. J. Hobsbawm has recently produced several articles of great importance. In *History Today* (February 1957) he writes of "Methodism and the Threat of Revolution", and repeats the argument in *Labouring Men* (1964). Also in *Primitive Rebels* (1959) there is an interesting article on "Labour Sects" (pp. 126-50). Dr. Hobsbawm seeks to explode the hoary myth—which first appears at least as early as F. D. Maurice and receives its enthronement in Methodist tradition through Elie Halévy—that it was Methodism which saved England from revolution. Hobsbawm's analysis of Primitive Methodism is most illuminating. His thesis is expounded in a weighty volume by E. J. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963). Thompson maintains that Methodism was in the first twenty years of the nineteenth century the "chiliasm of despair", the refuge of working men whose radicalism had not succeeded; and he attempts to show that "revival" nearly always followed intense radical activity and disappointment. Only a great deal of detailed local research could substantiate or refute Thompson, but no one concerned with the history of nineteenth-century Methodism can ignore his chapter "The Transforming Power of the Cross" (pp. 350-401), and some pious Methodists would be given a salutary shock to read it. [See also Dr. John Kent's review of Thompson's book in *Proceedings*, xxxiv, p. 188.—EDITOR.]

J. MUNSEY TURNER.

1139. WHO WERE THE GOSPEL PILGRIMS?

Among the archives of the East Anglian Branch of the Wesley Historical Society is an unusually interesting plan, which I have been able to inspect through the kindness of the branch's secretary, Mr. W. A. Green. It measures 9 inches across by $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches down, and unfortunately the top right-hand corner is missing. The heading, however, is clear: "The Gospel Pilgrims' Plan". No place is named in the heading, but five preaching-places are listed: Antingham, Tunstead, Ruston, Marsham and Cobourg Street, whilst the Quarter-board is at a sixth place, Banningham. These are all small villages around Norwich. Services are at 10 and 2, and the places are supplied weekly, alternating between morning and afternoon.

Two notices are printed in heavy type beneath the appointments:

1. Any preacher neglecting an appointment without giving sufficient reason next quarter-day, will be struck off the plan.
2. No person allowed to preach in any of our places, except he is well known to belong to some religious body.

The plan as printed is for thirteen weeks, from 24th October 1847 to 17th January 1848, but the months and dates have been crossed out in ink and altered to run from 23rd April to 16th July 1848. Underneath, faint writing suggests that the plan may have been used for January to April as well. Thirteen out of fifty-two appointments at the first four places have also been altered in ink. Appointments at Cobourg Street are crossed out completely. Fourteen preachers are listed, with no distinction between them; only surnames are given. Thus we have an "interpolated palimpsest". A plan of one quarter is altered so as to serve for two later ones in turn.

The question remains: Who were these Gospel Pilgrims? The fact of this plan being among a series of Primitive Methodist ones suggests that they might be a local secession from the PMs. Certainly, Norfolk was a PM stronghold, and the tone of the "notices" suggests the "Primitives". Yet the Gospel Pilgrims are not found in any of the standard PM histories. We can deduce little from the plan itself save straitened circumstances, and these were common enough during the "hungry forties".

Can any reader supply more information?

E. A. ROSE.

We very much regret that a report of the Lincolnshire Branch was omitted from the "News of our Branches" section of the March issue. Readers who may have feared this omission meant that the branch had become extinct will be relieved to know that it very much flourishes, under the guidance of its energetic secretary, Mr. William Leary. It held a most successful Spring Meeting on 22nd May, the eve of Aldersgate Sunday, in the picturesque village of Heighington, where Methodism is celebrating its 150th anniversary. Full details of membership will be given, along with other items of Branch news and interest, in the September issue.

We are pleased to report also that at a meeting held in Wesley's Chapel on 29th May, arrangements were made to start a London Branch. Provincials on hearing these tidings may well comment: "Not before time!"

EDITOR.