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Proceedings OF THE Wesley Historical Society

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Volume XLV

May 1986

HUGH PRICE HUGHES AND THE WEST LONDON MISSION

1: London and Methodism.

We have in this district unparalleled wealth ; and all the resources of civilization, art and sciences are placed at the disposal of the wealthy. Whatever may be possible in a socialized state, it is inconceivable that the masses of mankind can ever have such treasure and leisure and pleasure as are now enjoyed by the privileged classes in West London. But are these privileged classes in West London happy? Are they satisfied? No one who knows London can doubt for a moment that West London is by far the most dissatisfied and the most unhappy quarter of the metropolis.¹

The early history of the West London Mission is in many ways bound up with the name of Hugh Price Hughes, and rightly so, for he provided the driving force and enthusiasm that was necessary to launch such an ambitious project in its early years. This is not where the story begins however because for many years prior to the opening of the Mission in October 1887, it had been considered of prime importance that a large chapel be opened in central London. As early as June 1868 at the annual meeting of the Metropolitan Chapel Building Fund committee, which existed solely to make funds available for the building of chapels in London, reference was made to the wish of the late Rev. John Scott that there be a chapel at Westminster. Indeed, the report of the meeting spells it out in some detail.

They all knew how anxious he was that there should be a suitable chapel erected at Westminster . . . he must say that there was no part of London which needed the erection of a large chapel more than that particular neighbourhood ; nor was there any part of London with which he was acquainted more likely to readily furnish a congregation, and to fill such a chapel.²

¹ Hugh Price Hughes, *Essential Christianity*, (London, 1894), p. 7.

² *Methodist Recorder* (hereafter *M.R.*) 19th June, 1868.

Scott had largely been responsible for the opening in 1851 of Westminster College for the training of men and women teachers, and it was proposed that the new chapel be a part of that college. In January 1869 it was decided to go ahead with the building of the new chapel, and an appeal was made for fund raising on a national level, with the *Methodist Recorder* giving justifications as to the position of this grand venture:

Westminster is a locality where the lowest and the highest grades of society are found in immediate proximity . . . It is a matter of public importance that our Church should be better represented than it is in Westminster. Not that we want a grand cathedral there . . . Nothing of the kind . . . the futility of attempting to set up a Methodist cathedral under the shadow of Westminster Abbey is too apparent to need a word of argument. What is wanted for a just representation of Methodism in that neighbourhood is a thoroughly good, substantial comfortable Methodist Chapel, with good powerful preaching, good hearty congregational singing, good lively prayer meetings, good class-rooms, well occupied from night to night, good workers in all those various forms of benevolence which cluster around an earnest united working Church. This is the sort of attraction which we are desirous to see presented in Westminster to senators and any other persons of distinction who might happen to pass that way.³

In other words, the Methodists not only wanted to tackle the all too evident problems of West London, they also wanted a show-piece chapel in the heart of London, possibly the most important city in the world. They wanted a presence in Westminster on a par with the Anglicans and Roman Catholics; and one senses a certain sensitivity on the idea of a Methodist cathedral being set up. Yet this seems to be exactly what they were planning.

The money was collected and the chapel was built, but it was never the success that had been hoped. It had seating for 1,500 people, and yet by 1877 its membership had risen to its peak of 585, and by 1887, when it was closed down, membership had dropped to 444. By the standards of the day, this was a failure. Charles Mansford wrote an assessment of its failure in the *Methodist Times* in early 1885:

Out of its 1,500 sittings a due proportion was set apart for the students, a large number was apportioned to the children, an unusually large number was reserved for the poor, and the rest were offered at varying rates to suit the means of artisans—shopkeepers, professional men and Members of Parliament. The Westminster Chapel was in fact to be a Methodist Metropolitan centre . . . The fact is that the scheme included so many discordant elements that it was not possible they should ever blend harmoniously together. It was too vast and incongruous. The belt of low class Sunday traders which crowd all the approaches to the Chapel has effectually excluded the more respectable classes which inhabit Victoria Street or the West-end squares.⁴

Mansford went on to suggest some points that must be taken into con-

³ *M.R.*, 22nd January, 1869.

⁴ *Methodist Times* (hereafter *M.T.*) 22nd January, 1885.

sideration if this type of project was to succeed in the future. He argued firstly that church services must be adapted to the character of the congregation. Methodists had assumed that the type of service that seemed to work in other parts of the country could be successfully transplanted into West London. He argued that to encourage people to come to Church in Westminster, old styles of worship must be forgotten and a new type of service adopted. He went on to state that if deserted chapels were to be utilized and maintained then they must be mission stations and treated as such. This would mean that the separate circuit and itinerant systems would not meet the necessities of the case. At this period Methodist ministers moved stations every three years, and Mansford argued that this could not allow the level of continuity that was demanded by a central city mission.

Lastly he stated that for a mission of this type to work it must be relieved of all financial anxieties.

The Methodist Church's attempt to open a mission in the West of London had failed on its first attempt. However, even as the Scott Memorial Chapel was closing its doors in 1886, plans were well in hand for a second attempt to establish a Methodist presence in West London under the leadership of Hugh Price Hughes, to which we must now turn.

2: Hugh Price Hughes and the Origins of the Mission

There is an irritating tendency on the part of some excellent, well-fed, well-housed, and well-clothed persons; who have never been really hungry since they were born, to talk about 'taking the Gospel' to the starving and the destitute, while they ostentatiously refuse to trouble themselves in the least about economic and social questions. . . . There can be no doubt that Socialists have a very strong case against those privileged persons of the middle and upper classes who are always talking about "the Gospel" and "the dear Lord", but who do nothing whatever to secure employment for the unemployed, and food for the starving.⁵

The main driving force and inspiration behind the setting up of the West London Mission was Hugh Price Hughes. A man of force and passion, of intensity and intellect, he was arguably the most controversial figure in Wesleyan Methodism at this time. In January 1885, Hughes set up the *Methodist Times*, a weekly newspaper which he edited throughout the whole of his life, dedicated to putting forward liberal, new ideas and questioning old methods. It was from this platform that he made his opinions about a Mission in London known to a national audience. In March 1885 he complained from the pages of the *Methodist Times* that Methodism had had huge chapels, which were once crowded, in all the major cities in the country, but they were now empty

⁵ Hugh Price Hughes, *Essential Christianity*, (London 1894), pp. 151-2.

because the services and methods of work have not been adapted to their new human environment . . . these are not to the taste of the working classes. They want a lively service. They love the simple mission hymns with hearty choruses. They know nothing about the long theological terms of Puritan theology, and they like a short, vigorous sermon in which a spade is called a spade. As for pews, they hate them, but they enjoy a collection at any service.⁶

In order to understand Hughes more fully it is important to have some knowledge of his background, both family and in terms of training for the Methodist ministry. He was born in Carmarthen, son of John Hughes, whose father, Hugh Hughes, had been a Wesleyan minister of some note. Hugh Price Hughes's mother was the granddaughter of a Jewish banker from Haverfordwest, who became a Christian. Hughes began his preaching career at the age of fourteen, and entered Richmond College to train for the Wesleyan Methodist ministry at the age of seventeen. An event that occurred in Hughes's last year at Richmond is useful in illustrating the sort of character he was, and how he seemed to attract controversy to himself.

In his last year at college Hughes came into collision with Dr. Osborn. The Conference had endorsed Dr. Osborn's scheme for sending from Richmond all the students who were designated for home work, thus making it a college of missionary students only. Hughes was the Chairman, during his last year, of the College Foreign Missionary Meeting. He disagreed strongly with Dr. Osborn's proposal, and actually had the courage to question its wisdom in Osborn's presence. It was unheard of that a 'mere boy' should call in question the decisions of the Conference. The matter was brought up as a question of discipline in the May District Synod by Dr. Osborn, who was in the Chair. He brought an indictment against Hughes for his presumption and urged that he should be punished by the addition of two years to his probation, and Hughes was only saved by the pleading of the Assistant Tutor from Richmond, Dr. Moulton. This incident was typical of much of Hughes's early ministry, questioning the decisions of his elders, taking uncompromising stands on principles, stirring up controversy, and, as will be seen, Dr. Osborn later became an opponent of Hughes on other issues. Hughes soon became a sort of *enfant terrible* in the eyes of established Wesleyanism, and a new leader and hero for those young Methodists with liberal political ideals who longed to see change.

On Tuesday, 10th March, 1885, there was the inaugural meeting of the London Wesleyan Mission Committee, which was a body specifically set up to co-ordinate and plan a strategy for a new Wesleyan Mission in London. At the meeting it was proposed to raise £25,000 (£8,077 of which was promised at the meeting itself). Their purpose was

⁶ *M.T.* 5th March, 1885.

in order to bring the densely populated and necessitous localities of London more distinctly within the scope of evangelistic and home mission effort, certain districts, the spiritual needs of which cannot be provided for by the circuits to which they belong, shall be detached from such circuits, and constituted special ground for Home Mission Work.⁷

In his editorial of the same issue of the *Methodist Times* in which this report appeared, Hughes wrote forcefully about the need to rescind the itinerancy. He argued that it would be impossible for Methodism to put forward her whole strength in dealing with vast masses of people so long as she was compelled to wear the 'straight-waist-coat' of the three year itinerancy system then practised. He stated that the neglected parts of London could never be evangelized on that principle. Whoever had to undertake the great task of leading the mission must be freed from "that arbitrary yoke".

The very next week in his editorial, Hughes was busy putting forward conditions for the success of the proposed Wesleyan London Mission:

In the first place, this enterprise must be carried out on a large and unprecedented scale, or it will be worse than useless. To open small Mission Halls in different parts of London would be simply to waste the money, and what is much more valuable, the enthusiasm of our people . . . We must have at least one large central building to accommodate, say, 2,000 persons, in order to attract workers, stimulate enthusiasm, and generate the energy necessary to carry on such a work. Out of this centre the smaller Mission Halls may grow . . . The second condition of success is what Mr. Bunting called, 'a free hand' for those who offer the work . . . The committee, instructed we hope very unmistakably by the Methodist people, must say what is to be done, but they must not hamper the men who fight the battle. The officers must be allowed to conduct the campaign in their own way . . . A third condition of success is the voluntary and unpaid co-operation of wealthy, educated, refined ladies and gentlemen, willing to give their lives to the service of the poor . . . The fourth condition of success is that there shall be no attempt to narrow the work to mere evangelistic services . . . We have to deal, not with disembodied spirits but with living men and women, whose bodies and minds cannot be separated from their souls. It is impossible to deal effectually with the spiritual destitution of London, unless you also deal with its physical and mental destitution.⁸

Hughes would not let the pressure or the barrage of opinion about the Mission drop. On 9th April 1885 he came back to the subject again, insisting that the most prudent as well as the boldest step to take was to establish at once one first-class mission. He estimated it would cost approximately £10,000 down and a guaranteed income, apart from capital donations, of £1,000 a year for some years. He calculated that the workers' houses ought to be nearly self-supporting and if the work were energetically carried on, a very considerable income

⁷ *M.T.* 12th March, 1885.

⁸ *M.T.* 19th March, 1885.

would come in, not only from ordinary contributions of the congregation, but from the many Methodists all over the country who would come from time to time to see the good work. Finally he urged that as philanthropic work developed, much larger expenses would become necessary which might be sustained from separate funds, and developed as they succeeded.

It is difficult to overestimate the novelty and radical nature of what Hughes was suggesting for the Wesleyan Church. To free ministers from the itinerancy would have come in for a great deal of opposition by itself, but for it to be linked with social work on such a large projected scale, and to give the leaders of the Mission a free hand in the running of the enterprise, was a brave set of proposals indeed. The London Wesleyan Mission Committee met in early July 1885 and suggested a rather cautious set of proposals, which Hughes did not hide his disappointment over in the pages of the *Methodist Times*. Indeed, many members of the committee were of the opinion that their initial arrangements had fallen short of the mark at which the committee had aimed. They had shied away from Hughes's radical proposals at the last minute. However, the annual Conference of that year was much more encouraging, and Hughes reported with great satisfaction on 13th August:

The Policy we have constantly advocated commanded the approval of the great majority both of ministers and laymen. Scarcely anyone could be found to defend the existing arrangements, except those who are responsible for them . . . The only difficulty is to find a minister both able and willing to carry out the larger project. If the committee can only lay their hand upon such a man, our best hopes may yet be realized. We confess that we do not at present know anyone both qualified and ready for this great undertaking. Until the man is found nothing can be done.⁹

One is forced to wonder whether Hughes was employing false modesty here or whether he really had no idea who should be called to lead this new missionary enterprise. The latter would be remarkable considering that Hughes himself was a member of the London Wesleyan Mission Committee and would presumably have been a party to all discussions that took place.

Not only this, but Hughes was also to be taken by surprise at the proposed site of the Mission when it was eventually announced. He had always favoured opening a Mission in East London, where he felt there to be the most need. In fact in November 1885 the *Methodist Times* suggested a spot for the new Mission in Bermondsey. However, in February 1886 the London Wesleyan Mission meeting announced that the Mission was to be opened in the West End, and asked Hughes whether he would be willing to lead it.

⁹ *M.T.* 19th March, 1885.

The Committee . . . are of the opinion that under existing circumstances the larger method of work should be attempted first in the West End . . . This is an unexpected decision. But in the West End is the largest and most appalling Methodist wilderness in the Kingdom . . . In this vast area are found not only the upper classes, but thousands of young men and young women in the great business houses, multitudes of working men, and more fallen girls and fallen children than in any other part of the world . . . Here then, as soon as possible, a large Mission Centre is to be established, and at the January meeting of the General Committee the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes was requested to take charge of it. This particular proposal took him completely by surprise, and he asked for more time to consider his answer. The more he reflected upon the peculiar features of the West End of London the more he realized the importance of aggressive evangelism in the midst of it. But he was led, as he believes by God, to the unforeseen conclusion that he ought to seek the co-operation of the Rev. Mark Guy Pearse.¹⁰

The question that needs to be asked is, how was it that Hughes was chosen to lead the Mission? He was an extremely controversial figure and had already laid down conditions for the success of the Mission, so why did the Committee choose him? Answers are difficult to come by, but perhaps some suggestions can be made. Hughes never put himself forward as a candidate for leading the Mission in the *Methodist Times*, but his interest in it was obvious from the editorials he wrote, and the strong views which he expressed about it. It presumably became clear to the Committee that anybody else they asked to lead the Mission would have a very difficult task with Hughes constantly speaking out in the press and on the London Wesleyan Mission Committee itself about how he felt the Mission ought to be run. Secondly, for the three years prior to the opening of the Mission it is important to note that Hughes was actually stationed at Brixton. Already exercising ministry in London gave him credentials for speaking out about the Mission in the *Methodist Times* and elsewhere which would not look as if he were pushing himself forward as a candidate to lead it.

Hughes immediately threw himself with characteristic vigour into the work of raising funds for the setting up of the West London Mission. The Conference of 1885 had declared that £50,000 would be needed, and Hughes declared from the pages of the *Methodist Times* that this would mean that some of Methodism's richest people would be enabled to place at the disposal of the Mission the thousands of pounds which at that time Methodism encouraged them to give to work which the West London Mission could undertake more easily and successfully. However, the course of the Mission was not to be unopposed. The attack came from two main sources: firstly, that of Hinde Street and Queen Street Methodist Churches, which combined to send a petition to Conference in 1886 against the opening of the West End Mission, mainly because they feared a large Mission

¹⁰ *M.T.* 18th February, 1886.

Church would injure the two circuits which they represented. Even Hughes had to admit that their opposition at Conference that year created a division of opinion in every part of the country. The second attack came from Dr. Osborn, who seems to have become a determined opponent of Hughes ever since the missionary controversy at Richmond. His main argument against the Mission at the Conference of 1886 seems to have been that in his judgement Hughes was not a suitable man to superintend the Mission. That Conference was a testing time for Hughes, and his relief afterwards that the opposition had not succeeded was clear ; he argued that the real question before the Conference was, should British Methodism be adapted to the changing circumstances of modern society ? He believed that if the opposition to the West End Mission had prevailed, the 'friends of progress' would have been discouraged and frustrated all over the country. Stagnation would have become, for a time at least, the order of the day. It would have gone out to all the world that in less than a century since the death of Wesley, British Methodism had become so rigid and stereotyped that it was incapable of adequately meeting the needs of living men. He went on :

We should have compelled the young, the ardent, the enterprising, to seek in other communions the large and varied sphere of Christian activity which our antiquated intolerance denied them. We should have presented to the eyes of Christendom the spectacle of the most conspicuous religious failure of modern times . . . Dr. Osborn gave as one of his principal objections to the enterprise the well known fact that Mr. Hughes is not in his judgement a suitable man to superintend the Mission. Many members of the Conference resented that somewhat personal argument, but we think Dr. Osborn was perfectly justified in using it, and that his manly candour was most gratifying.¹¹

By the end of January 1887 there had been provincial meetings at Birmingham and Newcastle to raise money for the Mission ; by the end of March, Manchester and Nottingham had followed, and Hughes seemed to be everywhere, raising money, challenging people to give more. A meeting at Exeter Hall in April of 1887 raised £3,000, bringing the then total to £20,000. His speech on that occasion was typical of many such fund-raising efforts :

Small missions will not do. We must have Centres ; and we shall have a powerful Centre in St. James's Hall as soon as you furnish us with the money, and from that centre we shall go forward. The time has come when the Methodists of this country must give money for aggressive work on a much larger scale. There are Methodists in England who are rolling in wealth, and who ought to be willing to give £50,000 to start the London Mission (cheers).¹²

The person whom Hughes chose to help in the work of the Mission was Mark Guy Pearse, a Cornishman, well known within Wesleyan

¹¹ *M.T.* 5th August, 1886.

¹² *M.T.* 7th April, 1887.

circles and beyond for his devotional writings. It is reported that when Hughes first proposed to him the idea of working with him in West London, Pearse wrote back saying. "My Dear Hughes,— wherever you go there is no room and no need for anyone else . . ." ¹³ However, Hughes managed to persuade him to enter into the work in West London.

We have seen reference to the fact that the building eventually settled on to house the main central work of the Mission was St. James's Hall, and this raises an interesting point. For some time the London Wesleyan Mission Committee had contemplated taking Her Majesty's Theatre as a base for operations for the West London Mission, but the rent asked for the building was enormous and it was felt that the locality was too remote from the main stream of West London life. It was finally decided that they ought to go for St. James's Hall as the centre for the Mission. This hall was never owned by the Methodist Church, but was rented for use on Sunday evenings, separate arrangements having to be made with the owners if the hall was wanted during the week. It is difficult to ascertain exactly what the hall was used for during the week by its owners. Gregory Mantle writes :

It is significant that the whole of the activities of the West London Mission are outside the walls of church or chapel . . . The romantic work of the West London Mission has been done in buildings where the people have been accustomed to meet for recreative, social or political purposes, and where, consequently, they have no antecedent prejudice to overcome when they are asked to worship in them. ¹⁴

By September 1887 plans were well under way for the opening of the West London Mission in October and the scheme was gaining interest from outsiders as well as Wesleyans. Material on what outsiders thought of the style and work of the mission is not easily come by, and so we reproduce at some length the report of the *Daily News* on the West London Mission printed in the *Methodist Times* :

. . . These Missions are not new, but they are new to Wesleyanism, which has of late been somewhat brought down from the clouds by the revelations of social horrors revealed by 'The Bitter Cry' and the secular press, and the social clamours that have on all hands been breaking out for higher and purer life here as well as hereafter. The activity of the High Church clergy, and the big drums and trombones of the Salvation Army, have also undoubtedly had their influence in awakening the Methodists out of the smug respectability and drowsy torpor into which it has been evident to observers this body has long been in danger of permanently settling down. . . Mr. Pearse will continue his literary work ; but . . . will take the morning service in St. James's Hall, and the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes at night . . . there will be some sort of service in the afternoon . . . At these afternoon meetings it is hoped that arrangements may be made for a series of addresses by Christian laymen prominent in the world

¹³ J. Gregory Mantle, *Hugh Price Hughes* (London 1902) p. 110.

¹⁴ *ibid.* pp. 113 and 114.

of science or literature, or politics, or influential in any other way that may give them weight and authority with the masses . . . St. James's Hall is to be the central point of the Mission, but it will be only one point. Throughout the area already described, other smaller buildings will be secured as opportunity may present, and we are informed that negotiations are already on foot for one or two. The only one actually secured, however, is Wardour Hall, in Wardour Street, and this it is intended to make to a great extent a centre of social influence among the large working population in that neighbourhood . . . For the purpose viewed here and for the general work of the Mission three bands are being arranged for. There will be a fife and drum band for the lads, an orchestral band for use in connection with the services in the place . . . and there will also be a brass band, which it is intended shall be of a first-rate character, and which shall in the summer-time lead preaching expeditions to Hyde Park or Trafalgar Square, or any other open air locality suitable for a service . . . There are many of us who may contemplate the big drum method of propagating ideas with a deal of heart-sinking and dismay, but the new Methodist propagandism evidently does not intend to pay much heed to heart-sinking . . . Mr. Heath Mills has been entrusted with the management of this part of the business, and it is hoped and expected that he will turn out something highly respectable.¹⁵

The last comment about the various bands that were widely used in the work of the Mission adds to the idea that what was being provided was as much entertainment as religion in many ways.

The grand opening of the Wesleyan West London Mission was on Friday, 21st October 1887 and the celebrations and services were spread over a three day period. Hugh Price Hughes could hardly conceal his delight at the success of the opening meetings :

Those unbelieving Methodists who say that we cannot get an audience in West Central London were deliciously refuted last Saturday night. St. James's Hall was crammed to the ceiling, with at least 3,000 persons, while hundreds were turned away from the doors . . . An experienced eye had only to look at that grand sea of faces in St. James's Hall to realize that they did not belong to chapel goers. There were masses of young men from the West End houses, well known habitués of West End clubs, keen-eyed journalists, men about town, and a motley host, such as a plain Methodist preacher had seldom or never before addressed in London. And yet nothing could have exceeded the devoutness and the evident earnestness with which that audience listened to a simple statement of present, free and full salvation. Not a few accepted that salvation on the spot.¹⁶

It was estimated that the morning service at St. James's was attended by about 2,000 people, the afternoon by about 2,500 and that the evening service was full to overflowing.

¹⁵ *M.T.* 8th September, 1887.

¹⁶ *M.T.* 27th October, 1887.

3: The Continuing Work of the Mission

It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of the London Mission. It is the hope of British Methodism. Some very distinguished personages, who are not Methodists, believe that it is the hope of evangelical Christianity in this country. It is a determined and unconcealed attempt to adapt the methods of Christian worship and Christian work to a new era. It is a declaration of war against superfluous red tape, mechanical routine, and every kind of laziness. It is a demand for elbow room and sanctified common sense. It is an extension of Christian teaching and practice into regions of life that have been too long left to the world and to the devil.¹⁷

The initial excitement and success of the opening of the Mission was quickly built upon. In late January 1888 it was decided that Wardour Hall should be opened for Sunday services, these being led by Josiah Nix, an evangelist working for the Mission. He went out on to the streets with helpers to hold an open air service, which was followed by a service in Wardour Hall. He met with the workers between eight and nine o'clock in the Hall for a prayer meeting, then at ten o'clock, led by Mr. Nix, the out-door band of workers proceeded to Broad Street, where they held their out-door service. Regular reports of how the work of the mission was progressing were printed in the *Methodist Times*. For example for 31st January, 1889 we find:

Last Friday Mr. Pearse had an encouraging congregation at the noon service. At night we had the best attended ordinary Friday evening gathering we have yet known. The floor of the Hall was well filled from end to end. There was the usual multitude of written requests for prayer and praise. Cases of conversion, of restoration to health, and of employment found for those out of work formed the staple of the requests for praise. The congregation was delighted to have Mr. Pearse present as well as Mr. Hughes . . . The Sunday services were well attended . . . At night the Hall was crammed to the ceiling and hundreds were turned away. It is very distressing to watch them leave. The very class we want. What can we do?¹⁸

There can be little doubt that one of the main causes of the success of the West London Mission was the enthusiasm and vigour of the Sunday services which Hugh Price Hughes conducted. Before coming to the Mission he had an extraordinary reputation for his platform speaking, and yet assessments as to his preaching vary.

John Bamford Slack writes, "The Sunday evening services at St. James's Hall have always been a wonder to me. For a dozen years I have heard him preach there, and every sermon has been alive with some new idea and impulse, fresh, vitalizing, helpful and inspiring".¹⁹ Whereas Frederick Atkins writes, "I do not think anyone would say that Mr. Hughes was a great preacher. He had but little imagination or idealism, and most of his sermons were topical rather than

¹⁷ *M.T.* 26th April, 1888.

¹⁸ *M.T.* 31st January, 1889.

¹⁹ J. Bamford Slack, *Hugh Price Hughes As We Knew Him* (London 1902) p. 64.

expository. But he was a great driving force, and his dominant individuality, his strenuous enthusiasm and his alert mind and dextrous wit made him the prince of platform speakers."²⁰ Whatever arguments can be made against Hughes's preaching in terms of theological content, his oratory was certainly vivid and forceful and reads with a surprising freshness and clarity even today:

... whenever you hear a member of Parliament, or politician, or journalist, or anybody else, saying that slavery is necessary, that lust is necessary, that pauperism is necessary, that ignorance is necessary, or that war is necessary, you can, with your Bible in your hand, shout aloud: "Thank God, that's a lie! It may take us a little time to rid the world of these social plagues, but we must have no compromise, no treaty with the devil."²¹

Hughes was also blatant and uncompromising in his preaching about specific political issues from the pulpit. A brief glance at some of the titles of his addresses will illustrate this. 'The Christian Possibilities of the New County Council', 'The Deadly Militarism of Lord Wolseley', 'Arbitration vs. War', and 'John Bright'.

Hughes's social and political views were well known and frequently expounded by him:

Our laws have hitherto been made and enforced by the privileged classes; and are a most imperfect reflection of the absolute justice of God. So far short do they fall of that Justice which the unsophisticated and the unconventional instinctively crave, that nothing is more characteristic of our time than a deep and widespread sense of injustice. . . . No one who lives and moves among the masses of the people can be ignorant of the fact that the immense majority believe that they are the victims of social wrong, that their lot is a much harder one than it need be and that the existing arrangements of society are wholly unsatisfactory.²²

It was this style of oratory that drew people in their thousands to St. James's Hall every Sunday evening; indeed the Hall was never large enough to hold all the people who turned up to listen. On Sunday 7th April Hughes even went to the lengths of asking regular members of the congregation to stay away the following Sunday in order to give strangers the opportunity to 'hear the gospel'. It was estimated that between 700 and 1,000 people stayed away, late comers were allowed in, and the Hall was still full; so it was decided to carry on the experiment once a month. Inquiry rooms were always available at St. James's for anybody who wanted to make a commitment of some kind after the service and they were usually put in contact with a local class meeting. This is where the strongly ecumenical aspect of the Mission was most evident. Hughes would often invite any visiting clergy who happened to be in the congregation, of whatever denomination, to help counsel people in the inquiry rooms after the service.

²⁰ Frederick Atkins, *Hugh Price Hughes As We Knew Him* (London 1902) p. 86.

²¹ Hugh Price Hughes, *Social Christianity* (London 1890) p. 233.

²² Hugh Price Hughes, *Essential Christianity* (London 1894), p. 263.

Indeed the congregation at the Mission seems to have been of a mixed denominational content, which fact Hughes used to explain why the numbers from the Mission who were actually members of the Methodist Church were kept artificially low. Whether this is true or not the membership figures of the Mission present an extraordinary success story in themselves. In the 1888 *Minutes* the membership of the Mission is listed as 123. In 1889 it is 483, in 1890 827, in 1891 1,002, and in 1901 it peaked at 1,685. As for the actual social makeup of the congregation of the Mission, Charles Booth in *Life and Labour in London*, points to something that is only hinted at in Hughes's own writing, namely that the people who were served by the social work of the Mission during the week were largely not the people who attended the Sunday services. The social work seems to have served the destitute population surrounding the Mission while the congregations were drawn from a large area to a more lively form of service than could be found elsewhere. He states that those who attended the services were of altogether a better class, and that the social work bore little relation to the spread of that Gospel with the preaching of which it was supposed to be connected. He states: "The influence of the Gospel is over those who *work* and only to a very small extent over those for whom they work. The workers, whose lives the Gospel really reaches are mostly of an altogether different class from those they serve."²³ We know from Dorothea Price Hughes's biography of her father that particular rows within the Hall were set aside for various professions such as soldiers and policemen. The work that the Mission took on grew rapidly because of the demand, and Cleveland and Princes' Halls had to be added to the Mission's programme. As an example, the programme for the week beginning Thursday, 29th January 1891, is typical:

Thursday, January 29th, Wardour Hall 8.30, The Sisters; Cleveland Hall, dinner to soldiers.

Friday, January 30th, Princes' Hall 8 o'clock, Mr Hughes; Wardour and Cleveland Halls, Bands of Hope, 6.30.

Saturday, January 31st, Princes' Hall 8.00, Vocal and Instrumental Concert; Prayer Meetings; Wardour Hall, 8.30 Mr. Nix; Cleveland Hall, 8 o'clock, Mr. Taylor.

Sunday, February 1st, St. James's Hall, 11 o'clock, Mr. Sarjeant; Conference 3.30, Dr. Lunn. Military band commences to play at 3 o'clock; 7 o'clock, Mr Morcom Taylor. Orchestral Band plays from 6.30. Princes' Hall, 7 o'clock, Mr. Sarjeant. Choir sings from 6.40. Wardour Hall, 8a.m. and 7p.m., Mr. Nix. Outdoor Services at 10a.m, 3.30p.m and 7p.m. Cleveland Hall, 11 o'clock, Mr. Taylor; 7 o'clock, Mr Asando. Outdoor Services 10a.m. and 6p.m.

Monday, February 2nd, Praise Meeting, Wardour Hall, 8.30, Mr. Nix; Cleveland Hall, 8 o'clock, Mr. Taylor.

Tuesday, February 3rd, Wardour Hall, 8.30, Temperance Meeting; Cleveland Hall, 8 o'clock, Lantern Lecture.

²³ Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London, Third Series: Religious Influences*, vol. 2 (London 1902), p. 195.

Wednesday, February 4th, Wardour Hall, 8.30, Mr. Nix ; Cleveland Hall, 8 o'clock, Mr. Taylor.²⁴

As can easily be imagined, to keep up a programme of this scope needed huge resources both financial and human. Hughes was never averse to taking an idea from another Christian tradition that seemed to work, and adapting it for his own uses. This attitude led to the founding of the Sisterhood of the People, which frightened many Methodists who thought that it showed a tendency towards Roman Catholicism. Hughes, however, could see no reason why women should not devote themselves to religious work as well as men. Only there must be no vows ; his sisters were to live in the world, and the head of the Sisterhood was his own wife, Katherine. The contribution to the work of the Mission by the Sisterhood was immense. At the peak of their strength there were twenty three Sisters working in various pastoral roles, completely voluntarily. The members of the Sisterhood were all refined, well educated ladies, reflecting the so called 'Florence Nightingale' mentality that Hughes had towards lay voluntary workers:

The more cultured, the more refined, the more privileged we are in all respects, the better are we qualified for every kind of service among the underprivileged and the degraded . . . I appeal, therefore, most earnestly and most specially to the young, the amiable, the innocent, the most attractive of both sexes to give themselves up wholly and at once, as young Isaiah did, to the service of God.²⁵

Male voluntary workers were also enlisted in the work of the Mission. In December 1887 the Mission leased a large house in Greek Street, Soho, furnishing accommodation for young men who wanted to work for the Mission, at least in the evenings. The scope of the social work carried out by the Sisters and other lay workers connected with the West London Mission was daunting. In December 1887 a Christmas party was held for young people who could not go home for Christmas, and over seventy sat down to dinner. Josiah Nix in the pages of the *Methodist Times* regularly asked if readers wanted labourers, porters, painters, carpenters and tailors, because he could supply them. A daily crèche was opened by the Sisters at Lincoln House in 1889. In the same year Sister Mary opened a Servants' Registry Office at Lincoln House to assist 'lonely and friendless' girls to obtain suitable situations. In April that year the first Quarterly Tea of the 'Excelsior and Star Help-Myself Temperance Society' took place, where more than ninety people signed the pledge. Mr. Nix and Mr. Piper ran a Coffee Bar at Cleveland Hall. Each Hall had a lawyer who attended one evening a week to give legal advice. The Mission even had a Medical officer, Dr. Howard Barrett, who attended at Lincoln House one day a week for the purpose of 'seeing and prescribing for, or otherwise treating all who came'. During the winter he was available two

²⁴ *M.T.* 29th January, 1891.

²⁵ Hugh Price Hughes, *Essential Christianity* (London 1894), p. 227.

days a week. In February 1891 a dedication service was held for the Cleveland Hall Food Depot which was a gathering and distribution point for gifts of food for the hungry.

The Mission published a yearly report of its progress which was also printed in the *Methodist Times*, and by 1891 the array of work was formidable. There was a Social Hour for young men and women on Sunday evenings after the service. There was the Food Depot and Dispensary at Cleveland Hall, in addition to Coffee Concerts, Wednesday Lantern Talks. There was also the Regent's Park Open Air Meeting every week, the 'Help-Myself' Society, the Band and Choral Society, the Penny Bank, Society Classes, My Society Bible-classes, Wednesday Work House Teas and a Girls' Club. There was also work amongst soldiers, cab-men and policemen, a convalescent home at Bisley, District Nursing, a Dispensary and a Creche.

It is clear that social work on this scale in addition to the evangelistic work of the Mission was extremely expensive. It was Hughes's intention that the work be completely self-supporting after a short period of support. However, on 3rd October 1889 in the editorial of the *Methodist Times* we read :

Another year has rolled round, and the Treasurer, Mr. Percy W. Bunting, informs us that he has been obliged to borrow £1,300 from the General Fund of the London Mission to meet the current expenses of the summer months, when few subscriptions come in ; and that there are also some outstanding liabilities which will raise the deficiency on the year to £1,500. This is £500 less than the deficiency twelve months ago, notwithstanding the great and special outlay incurred in connection with Cleveland Hall. We are contemplating a very important Fourteen Days' Mission in Princes' Hall, Piccadilly, from November 18th to December 2nd. In order to repay the loan and meet the expenses of this special mission to the residents of West Central London Mr. Percy W. Bunting needs £2,000. As we began two year ago with nothing—having neither a building nor a solitary church member, heavy initial expenses were inevitable. But we furnish today satisfactory evidence that these are growing rapidly less, and in a year or two the Mission will be locally self supporting, and we shall need no special appeal at the Anniversary.²⁶

This, however, was not to be, and the financial burden of constantly trying new schemes of social work at the Mission meant that the Anniversary appeal became an annual event. In October 1891, for example, the appeal was for £5,000, and in 1897 it was for £4,000.

These sums would have been even greater if not for the fact that the Mission had a small group of subscribers who gave extremely large amounts of money, people such as Mr. R.W. Perks and Lady Henry Somerset, a personal friend of Hughes. Not only this but the *Methodist Times* printed a list of contributors to the work of the Mission every week. In spite of this, it was a great achievement that Hughes could say in 1897 that the work of the Mission Church was entirely

²⁶ *M.T.* 3rd October, 1889.

self-supporting, and that all money donated by outsiders was devoted exclusively to work among the 'Unreached Majority'.

However, the strenuous money-raising efforts, the editing of a weekly newspaper, the preaching appointments and meetings, the national ecumenical efforts, the work of the West London Mission, and all the other duties with which he was involved were taking a heavy toll on Hugh Price Hughes. In 1901 it became clear that his labours were affecting his health. During the United Mission of the Evangelical Free Churches in Manchester which he was taking part in, his nervous system suffered a complete collapse, from which he never entirely recovered. After a long rest, however, he returned in September 1902 to his work in the West London Mission. However, on the afternoon of 18th November, 1902 he attended a meeting of the Christian Conference at Sion College. Whilst returning home he collapsed, and in about an hour, surrounded by family and friends, he died at the age of fifty-five. His passing was a terrible blow both to the West London Mission and to Methodism as a whole. A national, public response can be found in the *Times* obituary:

Mr. Hughes was certainly one of the half dozen most popular preachers and platform speakers in England. His eloquence was remarkable, his enthusiasm overwhelming; and if his style was a little too vehement and his adjectives too uniformly superlative, that is only to say that he had the Celtic defects of his Celtic qualities. Among the many expert beggars developed by the necessities of the clerical life, Hugh Price Hughes stood out pre-eminent. He is said to have raised at least £250,000 in one way or another for Wesleyan work . . . Mr. Hughes's position in the Wesleyan Church was for a long time that of an 'enfant terrible'—in the eyes, at least, of the Conservative section of Conference. But the tone of Conference gradually became liberalised, and Mr. Hughes, if he did not change any of his views, learned not to press them with a total scorn for compromise.²⁷

A Methodist response can be found in James Rigg's comment in the *Methodist Times* :

But I always regretted that he had invested his personal interest and energies so largely in a public journal, deeply coloured by ideas more or less political, and not always maturely considered . . . His power of assimilating ideas was remarkable. Too rapid and pressed with work to be often profound or always accurate, his power of following subtle thought and of using all he knew, and all that he was ever learning, for his work as a public speaker or a popular writer was altogether remarkable.²⁸

Lastly, from the minutes of the West London Mission Quarterly Meeting we find a personal note of loss :

The members of this Quarterly Meeting desire to record their deep sorrow and regret at the immense loss they have sustained in the death of the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes and to express their profound appreciation of his services to the West London Mission and the cause of God . . . His broad

²⁷ *M.T.* 20th November, 1902.

²⁸ *ibid.*

outlook, his wide sympathies, his tender hearted kindness in private life have endeared him to all who were privileged to work with him personally . . . They not only feel that his place can never be filled but that the spirit and force of his work will live on in the future, and will enable them and the numerous band of workers belonging to this mission to face 'the changes that are sure to come' with courage and hope, and pass on to others the vigorous impulse and the inspiration which by the blessing of God they have received at the hands of their leader so recently taken from them. This was passed by all standing in solemn silence.²⁹

4: Conclusion

One might have thought that the death of so dominant a character within the Mission as Hugh Price Hughes would have been a shattering blow. However, this does not seem to have been the case. Indeed, a strong argument for the overall success of the Mission can be made from the fact that the Mission did carry on after Hughes had died. The Mission had grown so large by Hughes's death that large areas of the work had had to do without his personal oversight. At the time of his death there were three halls in the Mission, each with its own staff and preachers, and so the work could not be completely dependent upon Hughes. The membership figures did start to drop, but not drastically; indeed in 1903 and 1904 figures rose on the previous year, and had only dropped to 1,213 by 1906. Problems soon arose when the owners of St. James's Hall decided that they wanted to use the Hall for other purposes and withdrew its use for the Mission. The Mission found a new home at Hinde Street Methodist Church, which is ironic considering that it was Hinde Street that petitioned Conference against the setting up of the Mission at all in 1886.

An assessment of the success of the Mission is extremely difficult to attempt. For example, what criteria of success do we use? Do we use Hughes's own desires and aspirations for the Mission, or others? Have we enough evidence about, for example, the social make-up of the congregation at the Mission to be able to come to conclusions about how successful it was at reaching a particular audience? Obviously Booth's evidence about the discrepancy between the social make-up of the congregations and the recipients of the social work of the Mission is invaluable here. It is clear that the social work that the Mission engaged in did reach the poor that it was intended for. What would be very interesting to know is how far the individual Halls in the Mission differed from each other in character and style of service. One would assume that this must have been the case, and there are hints that the outdoor work of Josiah Nix at Wardour Hall was very different from that of the style of Hughes and Pearse at St.

²⁹ West London Mission, Quarterly Meeting Minutes 19th December, 1902 (G.L.C. Archives).

James's Hall. However, the evidence is not sufficient to make any firm statements. The West London Mission is still at work, and is perhaps the only Methodist Church in this country which operates such a wide scale programme of social work. Perhaps that is proof enough that the Mission has been a success, at least in some way.

If we ask how far the style of the Mission was innovative and copied by others, Booth would answer "not at all", except in the scale of the social work undertaken and the use of music to such a large degree. The West London Mission had been preceded in East London and was to be followed in North, Central and South London. The style of the work perhaps was not innovative in itself, but the scale and scope of it was. This was partly because of Hughes's extraordinary ability to marshal huge resources by his enthusiasm. As to the relationship of the Mission with other Churches in London, Booth states that they were good with few feelings of rivalry or jealousy between the Churches. Obviously as far as Wesleyan policy was concerned the Mission was extremely important with at least elements of its style being imitated in North Central and South London. Perhaps it should be wise to end with the words of Hughes himself on the work of the Mission:

If London is to be Christianized we must address ourselves to the work of promoting the wholesome housing of the people. We must wage war against the one-room system . . . and we must provide for the sexes to be brought up separately. Hours of labour must be reduced to reasonable limits, the sweating system must be abolished, the means of pure recreation must be supplied, facilities for thrift must be increased, the drink traffic must be vigorously restrained and a system of national insurance must be established in order to prevent one in every four adults from dying dependent on public charity . . . Whoever desired to see London evangelized must be careful to attend to his duties as a citizen, as well as to his duties as a member of the Christian Church . . . All men must be honoured as men, and less regard must be paid to rank and wealth, and more to character. We believe that all we have sketched is included in the whole problem of the evangelization of this great city, and that to neglect any part of this programme will be to retard the progress of the Gospel of CHRIST.³⁰

Appendix

Ministerial staff of the West London Mission between 1887 and 1902.

Hugh Price Hughes	1887-1902	William A. L. Taylor	1893-1902
Mark Guy Pearse	1887	Charles Ensor Walters	1896-
Henry Lunn	1889	William H. Lax	1897-1902
W. Darlow Sarjeant	1890-1892	J. Gregory Mantle	1901
T. Morcom Taylor	1890-1893	R. Wilson Hopkins	1902-
Arthur J. Sherwell	1892-1894		

PAUL GLASS

[Paul Glass is a third year student for the ministry at Wesley House, Cambridge. The above dissertation formed part of his studies for the Cambridge Tripos.]

³⁰ *M.T.* 1st October, 1891.

METHODIST POCKET BOOKS

WORK recently undertaken on the library at the New Room and a visit paid to Kingswood School have brought to my notice two Methodist publications perhaps little known, for their very purpose gave no good reason for their lasting retention : they were both pocket diaries.

The first, of which a mutilated copy survives in the New Room, was described on the title-page as follows :

THE Methodist POCKET BOOK For the Year of our Lord 1798, CONTAINING Memoirs never before Publish'd, Poetry : Anecdotes, And a variety of useful and Edifying Articles. London. Printed for G. Whitfield, City Road and Sold at the Methodist Chapels in Town & Country./ J. Suffield. Del. et Sculp.No.30 Kirby Street.

A 1813 copy of the *Methodist Pocket Book* has been described by Geoffrey Milburn in a recent issue of *Proceedings*.¹ Our discoveries must have been almost simultaneous. In the New Room copy there appears, opposite the title-page transcribed above, a portrait of John Welsey in an oval bearing the attribution "W. Ridley sculp." The signatures (A - I, K - M) are in "sixes". The A gathering is separately paginated. The B gathering commences with a page headed "Memorandums at the Beginning of the Year 1798" and the second sequence of pagination it initiates continues at the bottom right of each page as far as "Memorandums at the End of the Year 1798" on page 108. Page numbering then resumes (between parentheses) at the top centre of each page as far as page 131 with the last page of all being unnumbered. The page size is 4.5" x 3" and the volume has a limp leather cover. In the New Room copy pages 35-36, 59-62 and 71-72 are missing : also pages 37-48 (the whole of the E gathering) are misbound at the beginning of the diary section.

The Kingswood counterpart of this interesting volume was entitled "THE ARMINIAN LADIES ANNUAL PRESENT or New Pocket Book for the Year 1794." It is in a far better state of preservation. There are again 144 pages - here in the sequence of 142,[2] - and the title page describes it as having been published by J. Bence at No.5 City Road, entered at Stationers' Hall and costing one shilling.

The design of the business section of the *Methodist Pocket Book* has been described by Mr. Milburn. In the New Room copy the diary section is also on the left-hand side of each opening with the right-hand side making provision for a running cash account with columns for Account of Cash/Received/Paid or Lent. In a narrow column to the left of "Account of Cash" there always appears a figure which corresponds with the date of the Monday of the week shown on the page opposite. Sunday spaces are headed with a verse and those for other days with a text.

¹ *Proceedings*, xliv, pp.45-46.

The other contents vary but slightly. In the *Pocket Book* there is an account of Dr. Samuel Annesley, a hymn, verses, "Remarks upon 2 Kings xxi.3" lunar and marketing tables. Commencing on page 109 there are memoirs of William Rod (*sic*), Jonathan Catlow, "a child" (identified as one Lewis Andrews of Saffron Walden) who died at the age of three years and five weeks and Mr. William Minnethorpe.² Then come letters, another hymn and after that an account of "Places of Worship, and the Times of Preaching, Connection of the late Rev. John Wesley" (*sic*) all relative to London and places in the Home Counties. The volume closes with tabulations of Hackney Coach fares from "New-Chapel, City-Road" and to "West-Street Chapel", a list of holidays "kept at the Exchequer, Bank, Stamp-Office, Excise Office, Custom House etc.", transfer days at the Bank and lastly—but by no means of least interest in the secular province—a table showing the value of dollars in English currency.

The *Arminian Ladies Annual Present* commences with a portrait of John Wesley followed by a life of the founder of Methodism. This in turn is succeeded by a collection of verses, hymns and prose pieces. The diary section proper is arranged in the same manner as in the *Pocket Book* with the left-hand side headed "Memorandums and Observations" each with a text for the day. At the end of the volume come more literary extracts either unsigned or subscribed only by initials. Then there is an "Account of Places of Worship and Times of Preaching", a list of Hackney Coach Fares between the principal chapels—dated as valid for 1786 but in those days quite unaffected it would seem by any inflation—lunar tables, a list of public holidays, transfer days at the Bank and finally a "marketing table" or ready-reckoner. Transatlantic exchange rates were not mysteries with which, it seems, the ladies were to concern themselves; for them a simpler guide to prudential housekeeping should suffice. It should also be noted that they were better provided for in the matter of literary contributions.

Both the accountancy and literary features of these two works call for some comment. I do not think it an exaggeration to suggest that both the *Methodist Pocket Book* and the *Arminian Ladies Annual Present* are of greater significance than mere stationery. Their interest as stationery is that they seem to antedate, by about a quarter of a century, the earliest diaries produced for purely commercial purposes. Information from Messrs. Charles Letts and Company (who have a collection of such early diaries) suggests that their first pocket diaries went on sale about 1820. The Worshipful Company of Stationers and Newspaper Makers cannot add to that report. Nevertheless publications which could serve a diaristic purpose had begun to appear during the last quarter of the seventeenth century, at much about the same time as almanacks as we know them were first issued. In fact there were almanacks in which a single opening was allocated to each month and

² Rodd, Catlow and Minnethorpe are all included in C. Atmore: *The Methodist Memorial*, London, 1871. They died in 1760, circa 1763 and 1776 respectively.

in which blank spaces (commonly a recto) could be used for personal memoranda. Almanacks of this kind were indeed known as "blanks" and some could be transported either flat or rolled.³

The literary contents of these two publications may perhaps also be seen as representing an intermediary stage, in terms of popular religious publishing, between works containing selected excerpts arranged for reading on a daily pattern (e.g. Jeremy Taylor's *Golden Grove* of 1655) and the *Annuals* and *Keepsakes* which began to issue from English presses after 1820.⁴ The intended readership was not the same but there is a parallelism of form and intent. Something of the same kind also seems to be embodied in the "small book for the Pocket, entitled, *MAXIMS OF WISDOM, Human and Divine, in the Form of the Book of Proverbs*" compiled by William Myles and advertised in his *Chronological History of the People Called Methodists*, 3rd edn., 1803.

The compiler of the *Methodist Pocket Book* had however one very definite purpose in mind. In a prefatory paragraph it is stated :

it is much to be regretted that a particular Account has not been taken from the beginning of all those faithful servants of God, in our Connection, who have lived the life of Faith and died in full hope of a blessed Immortality. (p.109)

a state of affairs indeed only to be improved with the publication of the *Arminian Magazine* from 1778. If there should exist anywhere yet unknown a full run of the *Methodist Pocket Book* our store of early biographical writing should be substantially enlarged.

That publications of this type were produced for Methodists is perhaps not surprising if we consider their existence in relation to the statement of Maldwyn Edwards that, at the end of the eighteenth century, "the largest single group of lower-class readers was the Wesleyans, who numbered over 56,000 by 1789".⁵ Such a potential market offered extensive commercial possibilities although diaries selling at one shilling were clearly intended only for a minor portion of that market. The *Methodist Pocket Book* for 1798 in the New Room appears from notes inscribed in it touching upon a "new plan" and giving calculations of "rounds", to have been the property of a circuit minister.

It certainly is remarkable that such a piece of ephemera has survived for nearly two hundred years and I should be most grateful to anybody who can enlarge upon my small stock of Methodist bibliog-

³ C. Blagden : 'The Distribution of Almanacks in the Second Half of the Seventeenth Century', *Studies in Bibliography : papers of the Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia*, 11, (1958), pp.107-116.

⁴ The idea came from Germany. During the eighteen-fifties the "Christmas Numbers" issued by popular magazines supplanted them.

⁵ M. Edwards : *After Wesley* p.143. Quoted by R.D. Altick in *The English Common Reader : a Social History of the Mass Reading Public 1800-1900*, Chicago and London, 1957, p.35.

raphical knowledge and tell me more about these publications or any like them they may have seen and studied themselves.

C. J. SPITTAL

[Mr C.J. Spittal is librarian of the New Room, Bristol.]

LOCAL HISTORIES

Two Hundred Years of Halifax Methodist Circuit (24pp) by Mrs Eve Chapman. Copies, price 30p plus post, from F. H. Parker, 28 Rodwell Road, Halifax, West Yorks.

Methodism in Buxton (40pp) by John T. Leach. Copies, price £1.50 plus postage, from the author at 5 Heath Park Road, Buxton, Derbyshire, SK17 6NY.

A History of Stephen Hill Methodist Church (Sheffield) 1886-1986 (38pp) by Barbara Greatorex. Copies, from Rev M. Wildgust.

Bushey and Oxhey: 100 Years of Methodism 1886-1986. (30pp) by Christopher Jordan. Copies, price £1.65 post free, from the author at 67 Homefield Road, Bushey, Watford, Herts. WD2 3AP.

Methodism in Tewitfield by Ian J. Dent. Copies, price £1 each, from the author at 42 King's Drive, Carnforth, Lancs LA5 9AG.

Bainbridge (Bainbridge Memorial Methodist Church, Newcastle upon Tyne) (32pp) by Norman F. Moore.

Fifty Years . . . celebrating the Jubilee of the Heaton and Wallsend Circuit, 1885 (32pp) by Norman F. Moore. Each booklet is 75p post free from Mr Moore at 3 Martello Gardens, Cochrane Park, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE7 7LD.

Hazel Grove Methodist Church 1786-1986 (40pp) by George W. Dolbey. Copies, price £1.50, from the author at 17 Rutland Road, Hazel Grove, Stockport, Cheshire.

The Church in the Woods (Woodcote, Reading) 1886-1986 (24pp) by Dudley Coates. Copies, price £1 from the author at Walnut Tree Cottage, Crays Pond, Reading, RG8 7QQ.

Methodism in Lymm 1786-1986 (14pp) by Ian Sellers, M. Jackson and G. Thomas. Copies, price £1.25 post free, from Mrs C. Brentford, 26 Mayfield View, Lymm, Warrington, Cheshire.

See How we Grow! (Menston Methodist Sunday School, Ilkley) (72pp) by Pat and Ivan Reid, 1983. Copies, price £1.20 plus postage, from Dr I. W. Reid, 69 Cleasby Road, Ilkley, Menston, Ilkley, LS29 6LW.

Antrobus Methodist Church : A Short History 1936-1986 (7pp) by Max Bleasdale. Copies, price 50p post free, from R. Pitchfork, Repton, Grappenhall Lane, Appleton Thorn, Warrington, Cheshire.

Southfield Methodist Church 1786-1986 (8pp) by Peter Facer. Copies, price 85p post free, from Miss J. Markin, 11 Gertrude Street, Nelson, Lancs, BB9 8RS.

BOOK NOTICES

Wiltshire Dissenters' Meeting House Certificates and Registrations, 1689-1852, edited by John Harris Chandler. (Devizes : Wiltshire Record Society Publications Vol. XL (1985) : pp. xxxvii + 226, £15.00.) Copies are obtainable from M. J. Lansdown, 53 Clarendon Road, Trowbridge, Wilts, BA14 7BS.

This handsomely printed volume reproduces, in a chronologically arranged calendared form, details of 1,795 certifications and/or registrations of Protestant Nonconformist meeting places and houses in Wiltshire made to the county quarter sessions or, increasingly, to successive Bishops of Salisbury and Gloucester and Bristol under the provisions of section 19 of the Toleration Act of 1689 (1 Wm. & M., c.18) which, with amendments enacted by 52 Geo.III, c.155 of 1812, remained on the statute book until the passage through Parliament of 15 & 16 Vict., c.36 in 1852 transferred responsibility in these matters to the office of the Registrar General. Dr Chandler is to be warmly congratulated for the meticulousness of his research on the original texts preserved in the Wiltshire Record Office (in 97.2% of cases) and three other public archives and for the professionalism of his editorial method, and he has placed us still further in his debt by prefacing the documents with a lucidly written, twenty-five page introductory essay which constitutes an admirable guide to their origin, completeness (estimated to be in the region of 95-99%) and content, but which perhaps is rather less successful in relating them to other studies of the registration system (the failure to mention Albert George Cumberland's 1957 University of London Ph.D. thesis in this regard is particularly surprising) or to alternative sources of information for the early history of Wiltshire Dissent such as the Compton Census of 1676, the episcopal visitation queries of 1783, the 1829 returns of sectaries and the ecclesiastical census of 1851. An appendix listing Wiltshire registrations under the short-lived Declaration of Indulgence of 1672 and a trilogy of indexes by denominations, occupations and persons/places, neatly round off an excellent piece of scholarship.

The first specifically Methodist document is dated 13th July 1756, and is for "a house or edifice lately erected adjoining the dwellinghouse of John Silby" at Bradford on Avon. Of the 1,479 certifications and registrations occurring between then and the end of the series in May 1852, the vast majority (92.0%) of them after 1790, some 560 (or 37.9%) can be definitely or tentatively identified as Methodist either from internal evidence or by reference to standard secondary authorities like William Tonks's *Victory in the Villages* (Aberdare : printed by William Wilcox, 1907), the balance comprising 373 Independent, 213 Baptist, 41 belonging to other denominations, and 292 of uncertain affiliation. The Wesleyan Methodists apparently accounted for 352 of these, they being especially active in the 1810s and 1820s, "evangelising a great tract of country from Warminster and Bradford on Avon in the west, through Devizes and the Vale of Pewsey to the Marlborough-Swindon area in the east, with a second centre of activity around Salisbury and the south-east corner", yet after 1825 they yielded ground to the Primitive Methodists (181 meetings) who "from bases in Brinkworth, Chippenham, Wootton Bassett and Salisbury tackled the remainder of Wiltshire, the northern clayland villages and the north-east, the Savernake-Chute eastern fringe, the valleys west of Salisbury, and a foray into the industrial west", whilst additional competition came from the Independent or Tent Methodists who established themselves in 27 places in 1821-25 and 1840-42 under the

patronage of the Wesleyan William Sanger, gentleman of Church Street, Salisbury.

The chief disadvantage of these records is that there existed no procedure for deregistration, so that it is impossible to tell in many instances for just how long a society survived in any particular place. That said, however, they do provide invaluable information about the premises and local leadership of the Methodist movement during its formative and most volatile phase, and it is remarkable that no fewer than 74.1% of all the Methodist licences in Wiltshire seem to have been granted for private houses or similar accommodation of an equally temporary nature, which might otherwise have often completely escaped the historian's notice. It is very much to be hoped that readers of these *Proceedings* will be spurred on by Dr Chandler's impressive achievement, as by that of his predecessors Barbara Donaldson for Staffordshire (*Collections for a History of Staffordshire*, edited by the Staffordshire Record Society, Fourth Series, Vol. III, 1960) and Arthur Willis for the Diocese of Winchester (*A Hampshire Miscellany*, Lyminge: Arthur J. Willis, 1963-67, pp. 109-200), to investigate the potential of the registration data for their own individual areas.

CLIVE D. FIELD

This Side of Heaven by Arnold D. Hunt. (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House. 1985. pp. xiii, 449, A\$ 22.95.)

Dr Hunt's book is in reality a history of Methodism in South Australia. It is the most comprehensive history to have been written on the subject, and this attractive volume is produced at what must be considered a most reasonable price. It makes for easy reading in the first instance because the typesetting is first class, but the material content is in every way the record of a lively movement of the people who composed the Methodism of the three denominations prior to union in 1900.

The book contains details of church building, the pioneering people, many of whom came from England, the numerical and geographical growth, the activities of the people in their several societies, decisions of Conference, vivid biographies of leading Methodists, the impact of the church on the state and the state's recognition of the church. Packed with detail, nowhere is the book tedious. Whilst South Australian Methodism developed its own characteristics, there is clearly the distinguishing mark of the English Methodists and one might almost suppose at times that this is the record of one aspect of English Methodism. An illustrated page of Class Tickets compares favourably with the Australasian ticket.

Whilst the book has tremendous value to the Methodist historian and will surely be a standard work for years to come, it is a book for the wider reader whose background knowledge of Methodism is only elementary, and the chapter on "The Methodist Way of Life" explains so clearly the place of the class meeting, the Sunday worship, the weekday events, including the love feast, the quarterly fast, and the like.

The book contains 140 illustrations and outline maps to show the area covered by the text. On page 9 is printed the whole of the Hymn: "And are we yet alive . . ." with the note that this "was sung for nearly two hundred

years at the beginning of Conference . . . ” and adds that it is omitted from the Australian Hymn Book and that “it is now destined for oblivion”—one of the casualties, no doubt, of the union of the Australian Churches.

From 1959 to 1972 Dr Hunt was Vice-Principal and then Principal of Wesley Theological College, and in 1973 became head of the Department of History and Religious Studies at the Salisbury College. He was President of the Methodist Conference in South Australia in 1970. The book can be supplied by Dr Hunt himself from 13 Alfreda Street, Brighton 5048, South Australia.

WILLIAM LEARY

Mission 200 1786-1986 is an attractive and informative booklet of sixty-four pages which records 200 years of Methodist Missionary activity, with special reference to the part played by the Leeds District. It is good to see that the pioneers of 1813 are still full of missionary vigour. Copies £1.25 post free and can be obtained from Mr R. N. Lindup, 40 Brunswick Road, Pudsey, Leeds LS28 7NA.

The Last Dissenter by F. M. Leventhal (Clarendon Press 1985) is a study of the life and times of H. N. Brailsford (1873-1958), the Radical journalist and writer, whose father was the Rev. Edward J. Brailsford (1841-1921), Wesleyan minister, author and hymnwriter. His sister Mabel became an accomplished writer and produced a life of Susanna Wesley (1938) and a study of John and Charles Wesley (1954). In the first chapter, Leventhal paints an unflattering picture of Brailsford senior and the family tensions which led his son to exchange dissenting religion for dissenting politics.

Southern University Press, Dallas, Texas, have reissued in paperback *Wesley's Christology* by John Deschner, first published in 1960 and reviewed by Franz Hildebrandt in *Proceedings*, xxxiii, pp 122-4. In a new eleven page foreword, the author indicates how far he has now moved from his former Barthian stance. The new edition costs \$12.95.

The Methodist Heritage (55pp) consists of a series of four ‘Principal’s Lectures’ delivered at Southlands College in the Spring Term, 1984. There is space here merely to list the subjects and the lecturers, but this will be sufficient to indicate the high quality of the contents :

‘The Theology of the Wesleys’ (John Newton) ; ‘The Hymns of Charles Wesley’ (Michael Townsend) ; ‘A Methodist Theology of Social Action’ (Brian Duckworth) and ‘Methodists and Literature’ (Douglas Milbank). The booklet is admirably produced and represents excellent value at £1.00 plus postage from The Bursar, Southlands College, Wimbledon Parkside, London, SW19 5NN.

NOTES AND QUERIES

1392. WESLEY IN WALES—A JOURNAL QUERY

On 4th August 1747, Wesley set out from Bristol to Ireland. The first day he arrived at Builth, preaching at an evening service. He set out early in the morning on Wednesday 5th August on horseback, riding “over the rough mountains of Radnorshire and Montgomeryshire into Merionethshire”. He does not state where he stayed that night, but on Thursday 6th August, between three and four in the afternoon, he and his companions arrived in Caernarvon. Nor do we know for certain along which (poor) roads he travelled.

There is one peculiar textual problem which makes those roads of some importance. In the first edition of 1754 he wrote :

In the evening I was surprised with one of the finest prospects, in its kind, that I ever saw in my life. We rode in a green vale, shaded with rows of trees, which made an arbour for several miles. The river laboured along on our right hand, through broken rocks of every size, shape, and colour. On the other side of the river the mountain rose to an immense height, almost perpendicular. And yet the tall straight oaks stood, rank above rank, from the bottom to the very top ; only here and there, where the mountain was not so steep, were interposed pastures or fields of corn. At a distance, as far as the eye could reach, as it were by way of contrast,

A mountain huge upheared,
Its broad, bare back,

with vast rugged rocks hanging over its brow, that seemed to nod,
portending ruin.

The same text was repeated in 1788. In 1774, however, in volume XXIX of Wesley's *Works*, a different reading (and therefore different scenery) is introduced : the river “laboured along on our left hand”! Which did Wesley mean? Normally Wesley's first editions are freshest and truest, in spite of his occasional errors of fact, and the many errors introduced by printers—which were especially serious in the 32 volumes of his *Works*, which even omitted one complete *Journal* extract. Therefore the natural assumption would be that the 1754 and 1788 editions were correct, and the 1774 reading a printer's error. The only likely proof to the contrary would be if Wesley had inserted an erratum reading “left hand” in those supplementary sheets added after the *Works* were printed, based largely on Wesley's own copies, which he had corrected by hand. Wesley's own volume XXIX does exist, and does contain corrections, but not on page 50, in this passage. Nor does it occur in his errata. Nor does this argument have force if used in the opposite direction, that the *absence* of any correction of “left hand” forms an indirect proof of its authenticity, for he missed hundreds of errors where the text seemed to run smoothly—and even where it didn't. And “left hand” runs just as smoothly as “right hand”—unless one is able to visualise the scenery accurately.

Indeed this kind of visualisation is almost the only way—apart from the discovery of some new document—in which the problem of “right hand/left hand” may be settled. The mental picture created by Wesley is so vivid that some may well have recognised the setting. The Rev. David Young (*Methodism in Wales*, 1893, pp. 279-80) pinpointed the zig-zag route picked out

by Wesley's "guide and interpreter" as *via* Llanidloes, Machynlleth and the River Dyfi to Dolgellau. (This diagnosis has been confirmed by W. H. Williams in *John Wesley in Wales* [1971], p. 27.) And roads were indeed available, though in poor shape until improved by turnpike trusts during the following generation. The mountain seems to have been Cader Idris, south of Dolgellau, rising to 2927 feet. The present major road, the A470, runs to the right of the river Dyfi on its way to Dinas Mawddy—which (at least from a distance of four thousand miles) seems a likely stretch for Wesley's "finest prospect"—though a short section of an older road lies to the left of the river. But because Cader Idris is surely to the left here, it seems that the altered reading of 1774 is the correct one, that the river *was* to the left of the road and farther left still was the mountain. Thus, perhaps, it should stand, until some more convincing reading of the topographical setting is brought forward to show that Wesley's original text was more accurate than the one altered later (by accident or design?) in his *Works*. Jackson and Curnock follow the *Works*, reading "left hand". Williams has "right hand", following the first edition. The Oxford/Bicentennial edition remains puzzled, but tending towards "left hand". Perhaps some reader of *Proceedings* can put us out of our textual misery!

FRANK BAKER

1393. A PLAQUE AT TODMORDEN EDGE

On 9th May 1985, the Mayor of Calderdale unveiled a plaque on Todmorden Edge South, where the first quarterly meeting in Methodism was held. The building dates from 1697 and is now a farm guest house. The wording on the plaque runs: "Todmorden Edge South—venue of the first Methodist quarterly meeting on October 18 1748, convened by the Rev. William Grimshaw, vicar of Haworth". The plaque was erected largely as a result of the efforts of the Rev. Brian Bullick, superintendent of the Todmorden circuit.

EDITOR

1394. THE WESLEY FELLOWSHIP

We extend a warm welcome to a recently formed group which has issued the following statement of purpose: "The Wesley Fellowship is a fellowship of Christians committed to the teaching and spirit of the Wesleys. It is especially concerned to encourage its contemporary expression. The Fellowship invites the widest participation in developing practical, devotional, and theological aims." It is an *inter-Church* fellowship united in the Evangelical Wesleyan Arminian expression of the Faith. Regular meetings are planned and a publishing programme has begun with a lecture by A. Skevington Wood on John Wesley's teaching on perfect love. The annual subscription is £4.00 (£2.00 for students) and should be sent to the Treasurer, Rev. Dr William Parkes, The Manse, Gunn Street, Biddulph, Stoke on Trent ST8 6AY.

EDITOR

1395. FEMALE FREE METHODIST LOCAL PREACHERS

Both the Bible Christians and the Primitive Methodists, at least in their early years, had no objections to females becoming either local preachers or itinerants. The United Methodist Free Churches followed the Wesleyan position and had no females in their ministry, but what was their attitude towards female local preachers? The Jubilee history of Cross Hills Ebenezer (1903) reproduces the Cross Hills UMFC plan for October to January 1857-8. Standing no. 10 amongst the preachers was Ann Marchbank of New Road ; in this four month period she was planned for fourteen Sunday appointments and one wecknight service. How common were female local preachers within Free Methodism?

D. C. DEWS
