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Proceedings

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SIGNIFICANT INROADS INTO 'SATAN'S SEAT' Early Methodism in Bradford: 1740-1760

Introduction

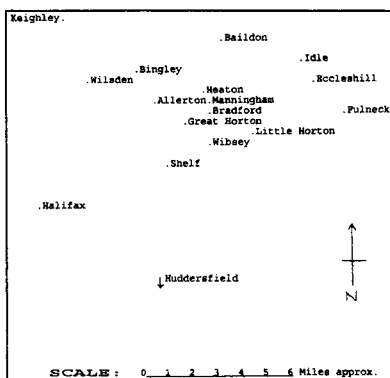
Bradford by the mid-eighteenth century was beginning to emerge as an important industrial centre. Woollen manufacture, a trade which had begun in the Aire Valley in the medieval period, had become, by 1750, the economic basis of the town.¹ The improvement of roads such as that from Leeds to Halifax via Great Horton, which was turnpiked in 1734, and Bowling Lane, providing a route to Huddersfield in 1740, and the extension of the Leeds -Liverpool Canal to Thackley in 1744, provided cheap and convenient transport links necessary for economic growth. With the building of the Bowling and Low Moor Iron Works in the reign of George III, and the erection of the textile mills at Whetley and Manningham in the Victorian period, Bradford became 'Worstedopolis', the undisputed wool capital of the world. This rapid industrialisation brought about a significant rise in the town's population as labourers began to drift in from the surrounding rural districts, and from Ireland, in search of employment. By 1750 Bradford had grown from being nothing more than a village to a town of about 8,000 people. This industrial expansion provided the socio-economic context for the development of local religious dissent.

Several ministers in the vicinity of Bradford, had been ejected from their livings in 1662 due to their refusal to give their 'unfeigned assent and consent to all and everything contained and prescribed in and by the book intituled "The Book of Common Prayer"'. Such dissenters included Jonas Waterhouse the vicar of Bradford; Joseph Dawson of

¹ J. James, *The History and Topography of Bradford*, (Bradford: C. Stanfield, 1841).

Thornton, Thomas Sharp of Addle and Oliver Heywood of Coley near Halifax.² Heywood had established Presbyterianism in various parts of Yorkshire, including Bingley and Northowram. Due to the evangelistic efforts of itinerants such as William Mitchel, David Crosley and John Moore, Baptist groups were commenced at Heaton and Windhill (Shipley) from about 1689.³ Later Baptist causes, both Particular and Arminian, were founded by John Fawcett and the Taylor brothers, Daniel and John. The origins of Congregationalism in Bradford date from 1780 when Joseph Cockin, minister at Thornton, established an Independent group in the town, which later became the celebrated Horton Lane Chapel. The Quakers were present in Bradford as early as the period of the interregnum. In 1659 the magistrates and ministers of Bradford and other 'populous Places and Parts adjacent' had sent a 'humble Petition' to 'his most Serene Highness Richard, Lord Protector of England...' on account of the fact that 'for a long time' they had been 'miserably perplexed and much dissettled [*sic*] by that unruly Sect of People called Quakers...'⁴

Benjamin Ingham, and the Moravian Brethren, were active in the West Riding throughout the 1740s. Missionaries such as Richard Viney, Peter Böhler, and John Toeltschig established and maintained Moravian centres at Smith House in Lightcliffe near Halifax and at Fulneck in Pudsey. As early as 1741 the Moravians had organised



*Places associated with
Methodism in the Bradford
Area: 1740-1760*

- 2 E. Calamy, *Account of the Ministers...ejected by the Act for Uniformity*, (1702) and *A Continuation of the Account*, (1727).
- 3 See F. Overend, *History of the Ebenezer Baptist Church Bacup*, (1912) and S. R. Valentine, *The Origins and Development of the Baptist Faith in Bradford*, Unpublished MA thesis, University of Leeds, 1994. The Baptists had first appeared in Bradford as early as 1655 when a small group met at Horton.
- 4 *A Petition drawn up by Certain Justices, Ministers and dignitaries against the Quakers of Yorkshire, 1659*, ms. W. Yorkshire Archives, Wakefield.

preaching places in Bradford: at Wibsey, Chapel Fold, Great Horton, Little Horton and a small group at Upper Heaton.⁵ The Ecclesiastical Returns of 1735 and 1743 reveal that Roman Catholics also had a significant number of adherents in Bradford.⁶ The Visitation Returns of 1743 indicate that in the parish of Bradford there were 'some what above Two thousand families...' of these 'a sixth part are Dissenters of three sorts, Presbyterians, Quakers, and Anabaptists'.⁷

Nelson, Bennet and Darney: Early Pioneers

This dissenting presence in Bradford provided the seed-bed for the emergence of Methodism within the town. John Wesley had visited the north of England in May-June and November 1742, and on several occasions in 1743, but made his first visit to Bradford in May 1744, preaching at Little Horton Hall and Sticker Lane.⁸ Brother Charles visited the town with Rev. Charles Graves in the autumn of 1742 and on his way to Newcastle in May 1743. Another visit was made by Charles in September 1744.⁹ However, as with the commencement of the Wesleyan societies in other localities, John Wesley reaped where others had sown. One of the earliest pioneers of Methodism in Bradford was the stonemason preacher, John Nelson. Following his conversion in London and return to his native Yorkshire in 1741, Nelson, for about two or three years, worked with the Moravians until, on studying the scriptures, he came to the conclusion that the Brethren were 'fallen people', and 'boars from the German wood'.¹⁰ 'Hewing stone in the day time, and preaching every night' Nelson commenced holding cottage-meetings in his home at Birstall and itinerated throughout the West Riding. Other early pioneering work was undertaken by David Taylor until, as Nelson argued, 'the Germans got to him and made him deny the law of God'. The aggressive evangelism undertaken by Nelson, Taylor and others, had apparently made a significant impression on the

⁵ 'A Succinct & Faithful Account of the Rise...of the Unitas Fratrum 1757', English ms. 898. J. N. Libbey bequest, John Rylands Library, Manchester.

⁶ M. V. Sweeney, 'Roman Catholicism in Yorkshire' in F. S. Popham, (ed.) *A History of Christianity in Yorkshire*, (1954), pp. 110-124.

⁷ S. L. Ollard & P. C. Walker, (eds.) *Archbishop Herring's Visitation Returns, 1743*, Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series, 5 Vols., Wakefield, 1928-33.

⁸ N. Curnock, *The Journal of John Wesley*, (1938), 17 May 1744, hereafter cited as *JWJ*. In May 1742 Wesley visited Halifax, Birstall, Dewsbury, Leeds and Sheffield. Further visits were made in November of the same year and February-April, July and October 1743.

⁹ T. Jackson, *The Life of Charles Wesley*, (1841), vol. 2, p. 117.

¹⁰ *The Journal of John Nelson*, (York: J. Kendrew, 1802), p. 53.

town of Bradford, for Benjamin Kennet, the local vicar, in his answers to the questions of enquiry made by Archbishop Herring complained: 'There are also Teachers called Methodists, who sometimes come amongst us, and draw great numbers after them, but the times and places of their Meeting are uncertain'.

The story of John Nelson's imprisonment at Bradford is well known. In May 1744, the preacher states in his *Journal* how he was arrested, at the order of Rev. Coleby, vicar of Birstall, and finding that 'no bail was to be taken for a Methodist (so called)' was impressed as a soldier.¹¹ He was taken to Bradford and placed in the dungeon which, apparently 'stunk worse than a hog-stye or soil house by reason of the blood and filth which sunk from the butchers who kill over it...'. While imprisoned at Bradford a prayer meeting was held at the dungeon door by a group of local Methodists. 'About ten', that night, as Nelson records, 'several of the people came to the dungeon door and brought me some candles, and put me some meat and water in through the hole of the door. When I had eaten and drank, I gave God thanks; and we sang hymns almost all night, they without and I within'. Nelson informs us that 'a man who lives at Bradford... though he was an enemy to the Methodists', upon discovering 'the ill savour of the place', offered ten pounds as bail and himself as prisoner for Nelson's release, but all to no avail. According to W. W. Stamp, using the testimonies provided by relatives of those concerned, and the evidence of local traditions, this person who willingly offered to take Nelson's place was James Eastwood, a local innkeeper. Stamp also informs us that the group that prayed so fervently at the dungeon door included Nelson's brother, Joseph, Hannah Schofield, Martha Cowling of Birstall, John Murgatroyd of Gildersome and Betty Firth of Great Horton.¹²

Another preacher active in the Bradford area from 1744 was John Bennet. Previously associated with Benjamin Ingham and David Taylor, Bennet had joined with the Methodists in April 1743. By that date Bennet had already established (or regulated) several societies which, when later developed were incorporated into Wesley's organisation and became known as 'John Bennet's Round'.¹³ Bennet, a reliable diarist, records how, as early as August 1744, he had gone to Birstall where on meeting Viney, and Nelson newly released from

¹¹ *Nelson's Journal*, op.cit., p. 96f.

¹² W. W. Stamp, *Historical Notices of Wesleyan Methodism in Bradford and its Vicinity*, (1841), p. 14.

¹³ See S. R. Valentine, 'John Bennet: "Servant of Jesus Christ in the Worke of the Gospel"' *Methodist History*, April 1992, vol. XXX, pp. 159-165.

the army: 'I was at Heaton. Spoke from 1 John 5.4'.¹⁴ This is possibly the first known reference to the existence of a Methodist society at the tiny hamlet of Heaton, two miles west of Bradford. On 4 September the same year, after preaching at Little Gomersal, Bennet again visited Heaton and exhorted the small group of converts at that place. Bennet's diary provides further references, and unique insights, to the emerging Methodist groups in Bradford. On 27 September 1744, Bennet visited the society at Little Horton and then rode on to 'Bradforth' and 'dined at George Rendars, sang a Hymn after Dinner and parted'. Five days later, on 2 October, Bennet writes in his Journal how, having now parted company with Viney, he preached at Heaton but: 'I found great Deadness among the people'. The Journal then describes visits to Manningham and Bradford on 6 October, and Shelf and Great Horton the next day before riding to Birstall.¹⁵

William Grimshaw, the perpetual curate of Haworth, and his assistants, the so-called 'Grimshaw's men', such as Jonathan Maskew, Thomas Colbeck, Thomas Mitchell, Paul Greenwood and others, preached occasionally in Bradford. According to local tradition Grimshaw, not being permitted to preach in the parish Church, spoke at various locations in the open air, 'his particular arena being a spot afterwards occupied as a coal-staith in Well Street'.¹⁶ William Darney, the person responsible for bringing about Grimshaw's evangelical conversion, despite his 'oddities, waywardness, and erratic doctrinal tendencies', had undertaken considerable itinerant labours in the northern counties, preaching at Bradford and Manningham in 1744.¹⁷ In his poem, *Progress of the Gospel*, Darney condemned the town as immoral and decadent, proclaiming:

On Bradford likewise, look Thou down,
Where Satan keeps his seat;
Come by Thy power; Lord! him dethrone,
For Thou art very great.

¹⁴ John Bennet's Journal, 12 August 1744, Bennet Box, Methodist Archives, John Rylands Library, Deansgate, Manchester, hereafter cited as *JB*.

¹⁵ Stamp incorrectly states that the Great Horton society was commenced in 1747 due partly to the fervour of Murgatroyd.

¹⁶ W. W. Stamp, *Methodism in Bradford*, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

¹⁷ J. Norton Dickons, *Kirkgate Chapel, Bradford, and its Associations with Methodism*, (1903), p. 5.

With alacrity the Scottish pedlar wrote:

At Bradford dale and Thornton Town,
And Places all around;
And at Lingbob sometimes at Noon,
The gospel trump we sound.¹⁸

Organisation of converts and cells

Due to the effectual preaching of Wesley and his lay-assistants, to use Darney's description of Bradford, Methodism had made significant inroads into 'Satan's Seat'. Societies began when one individual person was converted and, eager to share his or her new found faith, met with other 'serious persons' in their own home. At Manningham for example a society met in the home of Hannah Stead.¹⁹ The Little Horton group met in the home of John Murgatroyd, 'one of the most cheerful men who ever lived'.²⁰ Members of the Great Horton group included Nathaniel Dracup, 'a steady moral young man' from Idle.²¹ The Wibsey Moor society included Betty Firth, afterwards married to Thomas Worsnop, who at the time of Nelson's incarceration had been a member of the local Presbyterian Church. Firth had moved to the Wibsey Moor district in 1745 and lived as the housekeeper of her uncle, Matthew Sugden. Though not a Methodist, Sugden allowed Nelson to preach in his house every other week, and on at least one occasion, John Wesley. Sugden's house was owned by Edward Leeds, a local magistrate, who on hearing of his tenant's deviancy, threatened to evict him. Sugden blamed his niece, but requested the landlord to hear the preacher for himself. He did so and although 'in no respect whatever a religious man, was so pleased with what he saw and heard, as to befriend the mason-preacher ever after'.²²

Bradford became a regular stopping place for Wesley while on his way to Newcastle. The entries in *Wesley Journal*, and the accounts

¹⁸ W. Darney, 'The Progress of the Gospel in divers places in Great Britain...', in *A Collection of Hymns, by William Darney, in Four Parts*, (Leeds: J. Lister, 1751). 'Lingbob' was the early name for Wilsden Hill.

¹⁹ Stamp incorrectly states that this Society was founded by Grimshaw in 1749, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

²⁰ Nelson attended Murgatroyd's wedding to Deborah North in September 1747. Information gained from Joseph Hill, Murgatroyd's grandson, and a local preacher in Bramley, see W. W. Stamp, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

²¹ Stamp, *ibid.*, p. 14.

²² Stamp, *ibid.*, p. 18.

provided by some of the assistant preachers, provide insights into the organisation, internal discipline and steady growth of nascent religious groups. In April 1745 Wesley preached at Little Horton and then in Bradford. On this occasion Wesley laments: 'I could not but observe how God has made void all their labour who "make void the law through faith"'. It was a matter of great disappointment to him how 'out of their large societies in these towns, how small a remnant is left! In Horton, scarce ten persons out of four-score; in Bradford, not one soul'.²³ Thomas Mitchell, sometime after his conversion in 1746 when Charles Wesley convinced him that 'we might know our sins forgiven in this life', states how 'Mr. John Wesley came to Bradforth', and 'joined several of us together in a Class, which met about a mile from the town'. Mitchell however informs the reader of his *Account*: 'But all of them fell back and left me alone; yet afterward some of them returned'.²⁴ Wesley, possibly referring to the occasion mentioned by Mitchell, states in his *Journal* how, in 1746, after visiting Leeds where 'a great mob followed and threw whatever came to hand', he travelled, three days later, to Birstall, Skircoat Green near Halifax, and then in the evening 'preached to a quiet congregation at Bradford'.²⁵

There is an unfortunate gap in Bennet's diaries from October 1744 to December 1746. His itinerant labours during that time are therefore a matter of speculation. With the resumption of the diary however we see visits to the societies in the Bradford area. In December 1747 Bennet visited 'Balden' [Baildon] where, after exhorting from Psalm 66, he 'divided the People and put y^m into 2 Classes' [21 December]. The same day he visited Little Horton and finding 'a great deadness in speaking' he desired the Band to meet at 6 in the morning'. Accordingly they met at the appointed time and Bennet 'upon enquiry...found one Hindrance if not the main'. Bennet, in the entry for 22 December states:

The man and his family where we preached lived in sin. The man was in Band, and a Leader of a Class - I sent for him, and spoke plain but he co'd scarce bear it, began to excuse himself, until he condemned himself out of his own mouth. Thus God bring all hidden things to light & will make manifest the secrets of every Heart.

²³ JWJ, 25 April 1745.

²⁴ 'A Short Account of the Life of Mr. Thomas Mitchell', *Arminian Magazine*, 3 (1780), p. 315.

²⁵ Wesley visited Leeds on 21 February, Bradford on 24 February 1746, JWJ.

On leaving Little Horton Bennet called in at Sticker Lane, before going on to Pudsey. The next day, after visiting Birstall, Bennet visited the society at Heaton. 'I thought this people', remarked Bennet, 'were much quickened from what they were when I was wth [th]em last'.²⁶

From the pages of Bennet's manuscript diary we gain an interesting glimpse into the characters that made up the early Methodist society meeting at Sticker Lane. Bennet states how, in April 1748, he

went to Sticker Lane and spent some time with a few serious souls, greatly to my satisfaction. I sent a messenger for Esq^r Booth, the Conjuror to desire he wo'd come & speak to me, and accordingly he came. I was informed that he was turn'd back to his former Practice, altho' he had burn't his Books. At first he was a little strange & I found his Spⁱ oppose me, notwithstanding I spoke hard words unto him, and he bore me wth much Patience. I asked him several questions touching his soul and he gave me answer. Indeed he did not conceal his faults but readily confessed he had given way to y^e Enemy and he was sure y' if he died in the condition he was in, he sho'd be damn'd. He was allured, and enticed, by some neighbouring Gentlemen to pursue his old Devilish way. He told me that God had not utterly forsaken him.²⁷

Other visits were made by the Wesley brothers to the Bradford area in April and May 1747, and August 1748.²⁸ Charles Wesley visited Bradford in January 1747. On 23 August 1748 John Wesley preached 'at Baildon, and in the evening at Bradford; where none behaved indecently but the curate of the parish'. On the following day he preached to the society at Eccleshill.²⁹

On 1 May 1748 Bennet, after travelling to Baildon with Thomas Colbeck, went to Ecclesall and 'spent sometime wth y^e society'. Bennet states how at this place he had found that 'the enemy had got an advantage over y^m. I separated a man from y^e Society for sins which I chuse to conceal'. This particular diary entry informs us that the Methodist preachers, while visiting Ecclesall, were entertained by James Kitson 'a man of substance' who 'hath built a House for preach^a near unto his own House entirely for y^e Methodists'. It is of interest to note that in 1747 the first class meeting was held at Lingbob, Wilsden, when Thomas Lee preached there.³⁰

²⁶ *JB*, 23 December 1747.

²⁷ *JB*, 25 April 1748.

²⁸ *JWJ*, 27 April 1747 Wesley visited Wibsey Moor and 23 August 1748.

²⁹ *JWJ*, 24 August 1748.

³⁰ W. Grimshaw, *Old Society Book*, Local Studies Department, Keighley Library, Ref.BK15.1/3/1a.

In 1749 a group of Methodist converts began to meet for worship at a farm house called 'the Oaks', the home of John Pickard, at Allerton, a small village about three miles west of Bradford. Members included James and Isaac Duckworth, Sarah Duckworth, Mary Haigh, and John and Mary Clayton of Daisy Hill, all converts of William Grimshaw. The Claytons were the parents of Isaac Clayton, 'a man of considerable originality of thought... a good mathematician and astronomer', who for thirty years was an itinerant preacher dying at Bradford in 1833.³¹

On 3 October 1749 Bennet married the widow, Grace Murray, a woman apparently already engaged to John Wesley, thus causing an emotional furore that was to rock the northern societies.³² Bennet, in the troubled period leading up to his secession from Methodism, provides informative glimpses into the Bradford Methodist society. The diary describes visits that he made to the house at Wibsey Moor where he preached despite 'the loudest Cracks of thunder y^t I ever heard, and violent rain' and journeys to Shelf, Bradford, Great Horton and Wibsey.³³ While travelling from Keighley to Birstall in 1750, Bennet and his wife, despite her belief that 'they wo'd not receive us', called in at George Rendars 'and were rec^d wth uncommon freedom'.³⁴ Bennet refers to two women 'Mrs Coats & Mrs Ellison', possibly two members of the Methodist society in Bradford who 'invited us both to their Houses'. The next day, after visiting Birstall and sensing hostility, Bennet and his wife returned to Heaton.³⁵ A few days later the unflinching Bennet visited the area again calling in at Wibsey Moor.

Anglicanism and Opposition

Although not experiencing riots as ferocious or as extensive as those faced by Wesley in Staffordshire, Walsall and Wednesbury in October 1743, the Methodists of the Bradford district did face some serious opposition. Mention has already been made to Nelson's arrest and incarceration in 1744. The Methodist preachers appeared to many as a new generation of Levellers. They looked 'alarmingly like the harbingers of a second and perhaps a more proletarian

³¹ Stamp, *ibid.*, p. 29.

³² *JBj*, 3 October 1749.

³³ Bennet visited Wibsey on 6 May; Shelf, Bradford, Great Horton and Wibsey during the period 24-25 June 1749, *JBj*.

³⁴ *JBj*, January 30 1750.

³⁵ *JBj*, 31 January 1750.

puritan revolution'.³⁶ Clergymen, saw them as schismatics, a threat to their own position, as pastor of a parish. Others were driven by an understandable fear of Jacobitism, particularly during the 1740s. Neighbouring clergymen such as Rev. Thomas Coleby of Birstall were openly hostile to the Methodists. Thomas Mitchell told how 'one evening, while William Darney was preaching, the Curate of Guiseley came at the head of a large mob, who threw eggs in his face, pulled him down, dragged him out of the house on the ground, and stamped upon him. The curate himself then thought it was enough, and bade them let him alone and go their way'.³⁷ At Yeadon in May 1749 the persecution was so fierce that the 'Brethren...could not assemble themselves together either in publick or private without hazarding their lives'.³⁸

The Methodists of Bradford remained relatively unscathed by the mob partly because of the inability, or reluctance, of the local clergyman to act. On one occasion, Benjamin Kennet, the vicar of Bradford complained to the Archbishop of York about the irregular preaching practices of the early Methodists expressing a wish for measures to be taken to put them down. The Archbishop however replied: 'Oh, let those mad fellows alone', thus preventing the frustrated clergyman from gaining official support for appropriate sanction.

It has been argued that Nonconformity was strongest where Anglicanism was weakest.³⁹ As Archbishop Herring's Visitation Returns for 1743 indicate, there was 'a Mother Church, & three Parochial Chappels, (viz.) Hayworth, Wibsey, and Thornton' in the Bradford area.⁴⁰ The parish Church, already an ancient structure by the reign of George III, had galleries erected by the end of the century due to the large number of attenders.⁴¹ However, one parish Church was inadequate to meet the needs of a growing urban population. Methodism, with its field preaching and its system of Class and Band meetings, had the flexibility to reach the rapidly expanding industrial towns of the West Riding. It was only in the mid-nineteenth century, with the adoption of the 'Ten Chapel

³⁶ J. D. Walsh, 'Methodism and the Mob' in *Studies in Church History*, VIII, 1977, p. 218.

³⁷ T. Mitchell, *Autobiography*, op.cit. p. 317.

³⁸ *JB*, 3 May 1749.

³⁹ A. D. Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England*, (1976), passim.

⁴⁰ S. L. Ollard & P. C. Walker, (eds.) *Archbishop Herring's Visitation Returns, 1743*, op. cit.

⁴¹ A. E. Simpson, *A Short History of Bradford Cathedral*, (1963), p. 9.

Movement', that the Church of England gained lost ground in Bradford.

The Cock-pit and later developments

On his tour of the north in May 1755 Wesley could state with satisfaction how Bradford was 'now as quiet as Birstall'... 'Such a change had God wrought in the hearts of the people since John Nelson was in the dungeon here'.⁴² The following year, the second floor of a large building in 'Turles Green', was taken by the Methodist society.⁴³ This building, known locally as 'the Cock-pit', had been the original meeting place of the Baptists. As Henry Dowson, a later minister of Westgate Baptist Chapel, on gaining possession of the premises, remarked: 'The good people exulted greatly that they had dispossessed Satan of a portion of his dominions and raised the Standard of the Cross in the midst'.⁴⁴ This structure, not only provided a place of worship for the Baptists and Methodists, but, at other times, it also served as the gathering place for the followers of Joanna Southcott, Baron Swedenborg and Prophet Wroe who, every Sunday afternoon walked from Dudley Hill in procession with twelve virgins dressed in white and with long white falls. On 15 May 1757 John Wesley states how he stood on the steps of this meeting place and preached to the crowd which had gathered on 'the plain adjoining it' exhorting his hearers to 'follow after Charity'. Measuring twenty-one yards by eight yards this building served as a meeting place for the Methodists until the floor gave way and a new Chapel, octagonal in design, was built on Horton Road and opened in 1766. A local poet, writing about the Methodists' use of the Cock-pit composed the following lines which appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine* 1798:

O, wondrous pile, who can thy use relate?
 At once to God and mammon consecrate!
 Here Christ is preach'd, and saving faith is taught,
 Here goods are sold, and merchandise is bought.
 Strange union! So the Temple once was made
 The house of praying, and the house of trade
 - The Synagogue of Satan!

⁴² *JWJ*, 28 May 1755.

⁴³ Norton Dickons, *op.cit.*, p. 30.

⁴⁴ H. Dowson, *The Centenary: A History of the First Baptist Church, Bradford, from its Commencement in 1753*, (1853), p. 120.

In October 1756 Charles Wesley 'set out in hard rain for Bradford' and preached on the theme: 'O Lord, revive thy work'. The younger Wesley brother informs us that 'Many dissenters were present' on that occasion 'some of them, I believe, were reached; for I spake in irresistible love, and warned them to flee from the wrath to come'.⁴⁵ The next morning, after preaching, Wesley states how he 'gathered into the fold a wandering sheep, whom John Whitford's pride and folly had scattered'.⁴⁶ Wesley informs us that this 'wandering sheep' had, after 'having lost her first love...married an unconverted man; whereupon the society gave her up for lost'. It gave the younger Wesley brother much satisfaction to 'find her miserable in prosperity, and restless to recover her only happiness'. It was Wesley's belief that he had been 'sent to Bradford' to save this particular 'lost sheep' for as he remarks: 'Last night at the love-feast she recovered her shield'. Later that day Wesley states how the 'preaching-house was filled with those that came from far' including 'a girl of fourteen, who had walked from Birstal' and after the meeting 'seemed carried under the word, as out of the body'. The congregation was so taken up with praise that, as Wesley remarks, 'Near two hours more we rejoiced at a primitive love-feast'. The next day Wesley 'rode with faithful Thomas Colbeck to Keighley.'

John Wesley made further visits to the Bradford area. On 21 May 1757 he undertook his first visit to Bingley. Two years later, on 24 July, he visited the town and preached at 'the door of the house, as it could not contain one-half of the congregation'. Despite the reports of such large congregations Wesley informs the reader of his *Journal* that the Methodist society at Bradford had been divided, mainly due to the Calvinistic views held by certain members. On 25 July Wesley states how he 'talked with most of those whom Edward Hales had torn from their brethren'. Hales, a young man from Wakefield, had preached to one such splinter group. Wesley records how: 'Just as he was coming to widen the breach it pleased God to take him to himself. The wanderers were now willing to return, and I received them again, I trust forever'.

After 1760 the Methodists of Bradford were troubled by what Wesley called 'an Anabaptist teacher' who 'perplexed and unsettled the minds of many'.⁴⁷ This was probably a reference to William

⁴⁵ T. Jackson, *The Life of the Rev. Charles Wesley MA*, op.cit., vol. 2, p. 117.

⁴⁶ John Whitford, one of Wesley's itinerants from 1745, seceded from Methodism in 1754 and settled at Bolton, see L. Tyerman, *The Life and Times of John Wesley*, (6th ed. 1890), vol. 2, pp. 57, 187.

⁴⁷ *JWJ*, 15 July 1761.

Crabtree, minister of the Westgate Baptist Church, and his anti-Arminian rhetoric. Three years later Wesley, reflecting on the town of Bradford, could write with satisfaction: 'This was a place of contention for many years; but since the contentious have quitted us, all is peace'.⁴⁸ In 1766 the Bradford Methodists 'built a preaching-house, fifty-four feet square, the largest octagon we have in England...'.⁴⁹ In 1769 Bradford became the head of a Circuit. Wesley paid his last visit to Bradford on 2 May 1788, remarking in his *Journal* how 'the congregation...was as large as ever I remember..., and as deeply attentive as ever'.

Conclusion

Methodism in Bradford was characterised by steady and significant growth throughout the nineteenth century. Taking advantage of the civil and religious rights gained by dissenters generally, the Methodists erected substantial chapels at various localities in the town. The Kirkgate Chapel was built in 1811, the Eastbrook Chapel in 1825, the White Abbey Chapel in 1838 and the St. John's Wesleyan Chapel, a neo-gothic structure with an impressive tower and steeple, was opened for worship in 1879. According to the Religious Census 1851, Wesleyan Methodism, the largest Nonconformist group in Bradford, had twelve places of worship with 9,785 attenders at the three Sunday services on the day of the survey.⁵⁰ The other Methodist groups, including the Methodist New Connexion, the Primitive Methodists, the Wesleyan Association and the Wesleyan Reformers, collectively had a further twelve chapels with 6,852 attenders. These figures presented a serious challenge to the Established Church which similarly had twelve places of worship with 10,155 worshippers. The survey carried out by the *Bradford Observer*, thirty years later in 1881, revealed that the Wesleyan Methodists, still retaining their position as the largest Nonconformist organisation, had increased their number of churches to twenty-three and attendance had risen to 12,706.⁵¹ The other

⁴⁸ *JWJ*, 27 June 1764.

⁴⁹ *JWJ*, 27 July 1766.

⁵⁰ Congregationalism, the second largest Nonconformist body in Bradford, had six places of worship with 5,803 attendants, see *Religious Census 1851*, (Shannon, Ireland, British Parliamentary Papers, vol. 10, 1852-53).

⁵¹ The editor of the *Bradford Observer* carried out a survey of religious attendance in Bradford on two Sundays viz., December 11 and 18, see *The Statistics of the Attendance at Religious Services in the Borough of Bradford*, (Bradford: W. Byles & Son, 1881).

Methodist groups, now including the United Methodist Free Churches, had also grown, with twenty-eight places of worship and 11,841 attendants. Anglicanism, according to the same census, consisted of thirty-five Churches with 16,758 attenders. The Wesleyan Conference, meeting in Bradford in 1878, gave tangible evidence of the circuit's importance within the Methodist fold.

The early history of Wesleyan Methodism in Bradford provides the ecclesiastical historian with a paradigm of Methodist origins and development in an industrial-urban context. In contemporary sociological terms⁵² the Methodists of that town had developed from the so called 'sect type' of religious organisation, consisting of members mainly drawn from one socio-economic group: in this case artisans and labourers who would meet together in barns, garrets, cellars and the open air. These groups, organised under the usual class and band Meetings, would be supervised by 'lay helpers' or Assistants who would be expected (as laid down by the first Methodist Conference of 1744) to 'feed and guide, to teach and govern the flock' and, in the absence of a minister, to 'expound every morning and evening' and meet with the societies etc., every week.⁵³ Such groups, the members of which were characterized by a belief that only their own rites and beliefs were valid, later developed into the institutionalised-sect with its own specialised buildings in which adherents could be regulated. During the reign of Victoria the Methodists of Bradford continued to develop into the Church-type of religious community with its fully trained ministry and its predominantly consolidationist, rather than a conversionist, stance. Despite experiencing a decline in membership, as suffered by other religious bodies locally and nationally in the twentieth century, Methodism in Bradford continued to grow into the Denominational-type of religious organisation characterised by greater tolerance of other Church movements and a more committed ecumenical involvement.

SIMON ROSS VALENTINE

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⁵² See R. Currie, A. Gilbert & L. Horsley, *Churches and Churchgoers: Patterns of Church Growth in the British Isles since 1700*, (1977), *passim*.

⁵³ Bennet's copy of the Minutes of the Conferences of 1744, 1745, 1747 and 1748, WHS, (1896), vol. 1, pp. 6ff.

THOSE "MAD METHODIST MAGAZINES": Religious periodicals and Methodist influence in the Victorian Prelude

How customs and opinions change their place!
Religion now, is scarcely in disgrace:
Her outward signs at least will even raise
Your credit high in these convenient days.
Fashion, herself, the cause of virtue pleads,
Becomes chief patroness of pious deeds,
And lets us e'en pursue without restraint,
What once had stamped us *puritan* and *saint*.¹

Though they might easily be attributed to a Victorian poet, the words of Jane Taylor were actually written in 1816, twenty-one years before Victoria ascended the throne and long before the term 'Victorian' came to be associated with prudishness, repression, and a sense of moral duty. Traditionally, the conservative social and cultural milieu that we associate with Victorianism was thought to originate after Queen Victoria came to the throne and to be a product of her austere personality and influence. A number of scholars, however, argue that Victorian era beliefs and mores were already widely held in the early nineteenth century and that they did not arise solely as a result of the moral influence of the monarchy. Rather, they represented a reaction against earlier social and political forces such as industrialization and the French revolution and were an outgrowth of the evangelical revival spearheaded by John Wesley and the Methodists in the eighteenth century.

The modern debate over the influence of religion, and particularly Methodism, in the pre-Victorian era was begun by F. Guizot and W. E. H. Lecky in 1870s and continued more earnestly in the early twentieth century by Elie Halevy.² The heart of Halevy's thesis was that the conservative ideology of John Wesley and the influence of Methodists in working class areas reduced the probability that a revolution similar to that which occurred in France would take place

¹ Jane Taylor, *Essays in Rhyme on Manners and Morals* (London, 1816), p. 145.

² F. Guizot, *A Popular History of England*, 4 vols. (Boston, 1876); W. E. H. Lecky, *A History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, 8 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, 1878); Elie Halevy, "La Naissance du Methodisme en Angleterre," *Revue de Paris* (1 and 15 August 1906).

in England. Halevy's thesis was accepted and utilized by many scholars including Bernard Semmel, E. P. Thompson, and the Hammonds. In *Victorian Prelude: A History of English Manners, 1700-1830*, Maurice Quinlan widened the debate when he accepted the Halevy thesis and went on to suggest that the Methodist and Evangelical revivals not only helped avert Revolution but that they also spawned a socially conservative era decades before Victoria came to the throne. Similar ideas were presented by Harold Perkin and Ford K. Brown.³ More recently, Halevy's thesis has been reassessed by a number of scholars including David Hempton and Ian Christie. They argue that Methodism was just one of many potentially calming influences present in England during the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars.

The theory that England was already living and thinking Victorian before Victoria's coronation is supported in a number of contemporary sources. Certain words, expressions, and phrases were expunged from Thomas Bowdler's 1818 *Family Shakespeare*, for example, because they were deemed inappropriate: the word 'wench' was replaced with 'girl', and the expression 'with hearts in their bellies', which contained the offensive word 'belly', was replaced by 'with hearts no bigger than pin-heads'.⁴ In some cases, Bowdler excised large sections of the original text. In *Henry IV, Part II*, a tavern scene was deleted because of the 'low-life characters and vulgar language'.⁵ A number of previously popular sports also began to assume a Victorian character in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Bear and bull baiting declined, and wrestling, football, and shooting the long bow were replaced by pigeon fanciers, canary breeders, and tulip growers.⁶ Novels written in the Victorian prelude, such as Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), depict a formality and seriousness which had not been present in eighteenth-century works like Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, there was a marked increase in religious fervour in the early 1800s. In 1811, an unnamed author in *The Christian Observer*, a popular periodical,

³ Harold Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society* (London: Ark, 1985); Ford K. Brown, *Fathers of the Victorians: The Age of Wilberforce* (Cambridge: University Press, 1961).

⁴ Thomas Bowdler, ed. *The Family Shakespeare*, (London, 1847), cited in Quinlan, p. 247. The first edition of Shakespeare's expurgated plays was probably printed in 1807 and had been edited by Bowdler's brother John or his sister Henrietta.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 245.

⁶ R. Guest, *A Compendious History of the Cotton Manufacture*, p. 38. Cited in Quinlan, p. 264.

wrote that the Christian world had dramatically changed and improved in a matter of only ten years: 'If one could suppose some calm, calculating Christian Observer to open his eyes, after a ten years' sleep, on the passing scene, would he not find himself in a new creation?'"

The intangible, yet very real forces that caused an early eruption of Victorian values and morality were numerous. One important factor was the French revolution; both the fear that such a revolution might occur in England and a disdain for the outcome of French revolutionary fervour led the English to adopt a more conservative political and social stance. Another social influence arose from the development of popular education which served to teach respect for governmental and social institutions. Halevy, as we have already noted, argued that religion - and specifically the Methodist revival - was the catalyst that led to changes in the tenor of society. A related factor, largely overlooked by Halevy and others, was the dramatic increase in the circulation of conservative religious periodicals. The leading publication among these periodicals was *The Methodist Magazine*. Wesley started the magazine in 1778 and it unexpectedly became a crucial element in the communications web that the Methodists created throughout England. By the early nineteenth century it was the most widely read publication of its kind in England. Because of its popularity and influence, *The Methodist Magazine*, along with similar religious periodicals, played an important role in the birth of Victorianism and the quelling of revolutionary fervour in England.

The first issues of Wesley's magazine included biographies of famous Christians or supporters of Wesley, accounts of miracles and the deaths of those who 'died well', articles in defence of Christian theology, and poetry. These departments were representative of many late eighteenth and early nineteenth century periodicals. In emulation of other magazines in his era, Wesley insisted that *The Arminian Magazine*, as his publication was known until 1798 when the name was changed to *The Methodist Magazine*, would 'contain no news, no politics, no personal invectives, nothing offensive to either religion, decency, good nature, or good manners'.⁸ Wesley was true to his word except with regard to political commentary; *The Arminian Magazine* was dripping with Tory dogma and support for the monarchy. The price of Wesley's publication was an economical

⁷ Preface, *The Christian Observer*, vol. X (1811).

⁸ Tyerman, citing Wesley's 'Proposal', p. 281.

sixpence, half the price of most eighteenth-century religious periodicals.

Few changes were made in the format of the magazine during the eighteenth century. In 1804, however, Joseph Benson was appointed to direct the Methodist press and oversee the magazine; Benson was a popular itinerant who had figured largely in the Conference hierarchy and was a key player in the Bristol Dispute of 1794-95. He approached his new position at the press with the same energy he had used to influence Conference decisions and propagate the gospel. A new format was immediately announced for the magazine 'with a view to the edification of the many thousands of families and individuals, especially among the rising generation, that are in the habit of regularly perusing our periodical work'.⁹ 'Truth', Benson asserted, 'shall guard our entrance, religion conduct our pens, modesty and decency direct our steps, and the present and future felicity of our readers be our invariable aim'.¹⁰ With these lofty goals in mind, the newly appointed editor took out both pen and knife, discarding out of date magazine departments and renaming or revising others. His reformatted magazine included 'Divinity', devoted exclusively to sermons, 'The Word of God Illustrated', where unique and even bizarre stories were recounted, 'Physico or Natural Theology', in which some aspect of nature was related to the Christian faith, 'The Providence of God Asserted', where the terrible deaths of unrepentant sinners were related, and 'The Grace of God Manifested', a section detailing God's dealings with faithful Christians.

The titles and contents of the departments that Benson established for the magazine are instructive of the philosophical and political leanings of late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Methodism. Like their founder and the rules that he laid down for his societies, Methodists were morally and socially conservative and articles in the magazine were designed to reflect and inculcate these underlying tenets. Many of the teachings and beliefs that were printed in the magazine would eventually be associated with what we consider to be Victorian ideals. The most prominent among these were presented in articles which inveighed against unchristian amusements, entertainments, and activities. The theatre, the ballroom, the card table, the race course, and the cockpit were all denounced. In one article alone readers were told to abhor cards,

⁹ Benson, *The Methodist Magazine* (October 1803). Taken from a document at the John Rylands University Library of Manchester, PLP 7.12.31.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

dancing, Punchinello, blind fiddlers, and Madame Catalani - a famous Italian singer at the time.¹¹ Shakespeare was belived to be dangerous for young minds, and sermons against the stage were considered excellent copy. The arguments elicited against the stage pointed to a lack of morals and the fact that 'God's name' was regularly taken in vain. Other amusements that were under attack included bull and bear baiting. An 1808 article read as follows: 'It was mentioned a few years ago in a newspaper, that a certain nobleman had just established a bear-garden in the vicinity of the metropolis, with a view to revive the almost exploded inhumanity of baiting bears: and as a refinement of the ancient system, in order to render the poor animals more defenceless....the teeth of the bears were all drawn out! Are we', asked the author of the article, 'to hail these men and brothers, nay, as fellow-christians, who can take such delight in such spectacles as these?'¹² Readers were told to avoid snuff and smoking as they led to liquor consumption, recreational shooting which was a waste of time and dangerous, drinking liquor except for medicinal purposes, unnecessary attendance at taverns which was a waste of time and money, and immodest clothes which would lead others to have illicit thoughts. In accordance with the last named vice, Methodists were enjoined to cover their necks as well as their elbows.

Conservative Christian thought was a natural feature of the magazine and articles focusing on the matters of conduct were largely evangelical in tenor. Profaners of the Sabbath were regularly condemned, and stories often related how such evil doers met untimely deaths. In one article, a boy who chose to play football on Sunday seriously injured his ankle. In another, a fictional account of a Christian family's Sabbath was highly praised: the children were seated obediently around their father, appropriately named 'Mr. Christian', who read the Bible to them and then spent the afternoon quietly answering their question about God.¹³ Other articles warned preachers not to hire carriages on Sunday, while still others provided further instructions for the proper behaviour of Christians on the Sabbath. On the way to church, 'you will not be talking about the weather, the markets, or the trade, or traducing the character of your neighbours.'¹⁴

¹¹ *The Methodist Magazine*, 1808, p. 500.

¹² *The Methodist Magazine*, 1809, p. 549.

¹³ *The Methodist Magazine*, 1816, p. 803.

¹⁴ *The Methodist Magazine*, 1820, p. 612-613.

The Victorian preoccupation with death and dying was abundantly evident in the pages of the early nineteenth-century *Methodist Magazine*. Not one edition passed without an account of some horrible death of a sinner, or a glorious passing of a saint. The deaths of two butchers, who were portrayed as sinful and godless, were vividly described in an 1811 issue. When the cart in which they were riding hit a mound of dirt at a dangerous speed, one fell off and under the wheel where he was 'crushed flat', making 'a loud report resembling the bursting of a bladder'. His companion was thrown against one of the wheels and 'his brains were dashed out and scattered on the spot.'¹⁵ By contrast, the deaths of saints were described as wonderful and miraculous. Christians were calm, prepared, and full of moving prose in the face of death. The final moments of one Methodist woman were described in this way: 'In her last moments she found the God, whom she served, was with her. A little before she died, she told an old friend, that her confidence in God had been increasing all day. Sometime after, she said to [a] servant who stepped in to see her; 'God is a good companion' and immediately fell asleep in Jesus.'¹⁶ Those who were working for Methodists, or helping others, were often miraculously protected from certain death. One article reported the 'wonderful preservation' of a man who was painting the spire of a church and fell more than thirty feet but was miraculously saved and lived on for another fifty years.

Many articles in the pre-Victorian magazine reveal that, in an age of machine breakers and riots, the Methodist hierarchy was urging moral conservatism and support for the government. The king was highly praised, the efforts against Napoleon were supported, and the magazine declared the willingness of Methodists to serve in the armed forces; they objected only to drilling of the militia on Sunday. Lord Nelson's final words - 'England expects every man to do his duty' - were held up as a motto for Methodists and were declared in the magazine to mean nothing less than loyalty to the king and obedience to God.¹⁷ The Duke of Wellington, as representative of English authority and power, was highly praised after Waterloo and was supported in his efforts as a peacemaker. In relating the history of the mutiny on the *Bounty*, the magazine took Captain Bligh's part and published his story under the title, 'An Account of the Voyages

¹⁵ *The Methodist Magazine*, 1811, p. 69.

¹⁶ *The Methodist Magazine*, 1810, pp. 199-200.

¹⁷ *The Methodist Magazine*, 1808, p. 319.

and Sufferings of Captain Bligh.¹⁸ Meanwhile, Thomas Paine, though long removed from the British scene, continued to be maligned in the magazine as representative of anarchy and republicanism. He was referred to in an 1818 article as 'worse than an infidel'.¹⁹ Thus, established governments, persons in positions of authority, and conservative political ideology were praised and commended in the pre-Victorian *Methodist Magazine*. The same pro-government emphasis was found in other Evangelical magazines such as *The Christian Observer* and *The Eclectic Review*.

Without a proper distribution network, the conservative influence of the magazine would have been negligible. The Methodists, however, wisely took full advantage of their well-organized itinerant system to send their monthly periodical to the further corners of England and Scotland. Once in the Methodist circuits, local preachers hand-delivered the magazines to subscribers; nonsubscribers could purchase them from a circuit rider or at a Methodist chapel. Unfortunately, there is a paucity of data with regard to year by year circulation figures for early nineteenth century magazines. Some data can be ascertained from a manuscript copy of the The Book Room Committee Minutes which were kept intermittently beginning in the 1790s. Until recently, it was assumed that circulation of *The Methodist Magazine* did not reach twenty thousand until around 1820. New figures, uncovered in The Minutes..., indicate that circulation was already at 14,300 by 1804 and had jumped to 21,500 by 1806. By 1821, circulation was probably running at around 25,000 copies per month. These figures make the magazine the most widely read periodical in pre-Victorian England. Its closest secular competition came from *The Edinburgh Review* and *The Quarterly Review*, each of which printed up to fifteen thousand magazines per month. *The Evangelical Magazine*, Methodism's closest religious competitor, ran 22,000 copies per month in the early 1820s.

Given contemporary population figures for England, these circulation figures alone are nothing short of astounding. But these numbers do not constitute the actual monthly readership. Modern magazines determine readership by multiplying total copies distributed by four or five. This same formula was applied in the early 1800s. Taking the publication figure of 21,500, and applying the four-times circulation formula, we arrive at a total readership for *The Methodist Magazine* in 1806 of 86,000, a number which would

¹⁸ *The Methodist Magazine*, 1816, p. 846.

¹⁹ *The Methodist Magazine*, 1818, p. 287.

represent a large portion of the adult Methodist population in Britain. One scholar argues that sometimes many more than four or five individuals would read one magazine. 'Often', he writes, 'two or more peasant families would unite in the purchase of one copy, which would be read and reread by twenty or more people.'²⁰ To put it in pedestrian terms, the aggressively circulated magazine was often the only ball game in town, and few periodicals could compete with it or its rival, *The Evangelical Magazine*. Hard data on readership is supplemented by correspondence between early nineteenth-century Methodists and non-Methodists which indicates that magazines were regularly being exchanged among friends and acquaintances.

Individuals who were attracted to the pages of the magazine were drawn from all sectors of society. Joseph Benson and other editors purposefully designed many of their articles for a *Reader's Digest* rather than an *Economist* audience. Thus, in the same edition one might find an article on the attributes of God juxtaposed with one entitled 'The Methodist Dog'. In the latter, readers were told that a dog, under the power of God, had been attempting to draw his master to Methodist services by regularly attending himself. The local society was gratified to find that when they changed the place of their meeting, God continued to guide the dog to them. When the dog's master drowned in a ditch, the faithful canine stopped attending. 'Thus,' concluded the author, 'God speakest once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not.'²¹ Articles in the same genre, and designed to find the lowest common denominator in audiences, included accounts of sea serpents on the coast of Scotland and native Americans who spoke Welsh.

The impact of the magazine on its Methodist readers may be assessed by examining correspondence the numerous memoirs published by Methodist preachers and laymen. Many of them explain how they were first encouraged to become more involved in the Methodist movement by reading the magazine. Examples of this influence can be found in Wesley's era as well as Benson's. Joseph Entwisle, wrote in 1788 that 'by reading a letter in *The Arminian Magazine*', he 'was much stirred up to seek perfect conformity to the Divine will.'²² An 1808 letter to the editor called the Methodist periodical 'a most excellent publication...eminently conspicuous in

²⁰ H. F. Mathews, *Methodism and the Education of the People, 1791-1851*, (1949), p. 170.

²¹ *The Methodist Magazine*, 1809, p. 39.

²² Entwisle, *Memoirs of Joseph Entwisle*, p. 30.

the conversion of sinners.²³

Proof of the magazine's potential for influence goes beyond the data compiled from contemporary Methodist sources. An oft-cited example of the magazine's extended readership and influence may be found in the case of the Bronte sisters. These popular Victorian authors were raised in part by an evangelical aunt who kept copies of *The Methodist Magazine* on her shelves. In her novel *Shirley*, Charlotte Bronte alludes to those childhood days when she and her siblings had nothing better to do than sit and look at 'mad Methodist magazines, full of miracles and apparitions, of preternatural warnings, ominous dreams, and frenzied fanaticism.'²⁴ In George Eliot's mid-nineteenth century novel, *Adam Bede*, the magazine is also recalled as a tool used by turn-of-the-century Methodist leaders to influence social attitudes and opinions. When a character is considering how he should deal with Methodist preachers, he first asks himself what impact his actions might have and then decides not to act for fear it will be reported in the magazine. 'If I chose to interfere in this business now,' stated Eliot's cautious character, 'I might get up as pretty a story of hatred and persecution as the Methodists need desire to publish in the next number of their magazine.'²⁵

The broad circulation of *The Methodist Magazine* and other religious periodicals made them important as influencers of the general public. If we accept the dictum, 'you are what you read,' then it follows that the conservative ideologies that these works promoted informed the consciences of many working- and middle-class families. 'Widely read,' states Quinlan, 'these magazines not only guided readers to other literature, but helped them determine their conduct.'²⁶ Francis Mineka, author of a work on early religious periodicals, concurs with Quinlan and states that magazines of the evangelical and Methodist persuasion, 'which had the largest circulation - exerted a strong conservative influence both socially and politically.'²⁷ Contemporaries anticipated the theses of these modern historians. The Rev. Sydney Smith, writing in the January 1808 edition of *The Edinburgh Review*, issued a stern warning concerning *The Methodist* and *Evangelical* magazines. 'Their circulation is so enormous,' he declared, 'and so increasing, they

²³ *The Methodist Magazine*, 1808, p. 265.

²⁴ Charlotte Bronte, *Shirley* (London: Allan Wingate, 1949), p. 379

²⁵ George Eliot, *Adam Bede* (New York: Frank F. Lovell & Co., n.d.), p. 63.

²⁶ Quinlan, p. 185.

²⁷ Mineka, p. 49.

contain the opinions and display the habits of so many human beings, that they cannot but be objects of curiosity and importance. The common and middling classes of people are the purchasers; and the subject is religion, though not that religion certainly which is established by law....This may lead to unpleasant consequences, or it may not; but it carries with it a sort of aspect, which ought to insure to it a serious attention and reflection.²⁸

Evidence related to the content, circulation, and readership of *The Methodist Magazine* suggests that, like the widening circles from a pebble cast into a pond, the conservative ideas contained in the magazine influenced ever widening circles of family, friends, and fellow workers. Not unlike modern periodicals, late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century magazines had the power to manipulate society through the medium of the printed page. *The Methodist Magazine* and similar periodicals were disseminating conservative social and political ideas decades before Victoria came to throne; at the same time, a new conservatism began to pervade English society. The influential periodical press was instrumental in the spread of this new conservatism, and the creation of a Victorian Prelude. Unfortunately, not many scholars have recognized the importance of magazines or their potential impact on society in the pre-Victoria era. The theory that the pre-Victorian periodical press was a vital aspect of Methodist influence sheds new light on the origins of the Victorian Prelude and the Victorian era itself. In addition, it offers previously overlooked support for Halevy's thesis and indicates that his hypothesis should not be relegated to a general list of factors which effected change in late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century England: Methodism and religion were crucial elements, if not the primary catalysts, in the abatement of revolutionary fervour and the commencement of a new morality. Halevy's theory was challenged, in part, because it failed to explain how a small percentage of the English population could have such a wide influence. He and others would have more fully substantiated their ideas if, when considering how the Methodists influenced, they had given more attention to those 'mad' Methodist magazines and the burgeoning periodical press.

MARSH WILKINSON JONES

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²⁸ [Rev. Sydney Smith], review of *Causes of the Increase of Methodism and Dissension*, by Robert Acklem Ingram, *The Edinburgh Review*, (January 1808), p. 342.

LOCAL BRANCHES REPORT 1998

There are seventeen local Societies associated with our Wesley Historical Society, although this name is now inadequate to describe the wide range of interests that come under the umbrella of Methodist history. I had the honour of delivering our Conference Lecture in 1997 on the United Methodists and the detailed preparation for this confirmed what I knew already! Although still within living memory, United Methodist printed and manuscript material is surprisingly scarce or non-existent. Even their Conference *Minutes* were so poorly bound that their bindings are usually falling apart. Relatively few plans for the United Methodist circuits from 1907 to 1932 survive and our Editor, Alan Rose is compiling a list of known copies. He would be delighted to know of any so please send details to him. Our Irish Branch has provided a fascinating listing of their holding of material from the United Methodist Church and its predecessors including letters and portraits.

An important part of the work of local Societies is to make a collection of printed material, especially local chapel histories and local biographies - manuscript records of course should be in the local Record Office. A recently published survey lists thirty-three Methodist libraries not from A to Z but from Aberystwyth to York and five of these belong to our historical Societies, including the WHS library at Oxford. It is a tragedy of our times that the budgets of libraries and record offices are so constrained that these unique collections, which are so essential to the study of Methodist history at any level, can not be exploited or made fully accessible. However this survey does a great service by giving broad details of what is held by the thirty three libraries and is part of an on-going programme of publications by our Westminster College: *Directory of Methodist Libraries. Westminster Wesley Series No. 5. Autumn 1996.* (52 p., A4, spiral bound.) £5 + postage from Director of the Methodist Studies Centre, Westminster College, North Hinksey, Oxford. OX2 9AT.

ROGER F. S. THORNE

1) East Anglia Branch

Secretary: Mr David Elvidge, 14, Avon Road, South Wootton, King's Lynn, Norfolk. PE30 3LS

Newsletter (No 76, 1998) Membership: 50. Subscription: £3. Area: Counties of Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk.

2) Bristol Branch

Secretary: Rev. Ernest Clarke, 81, Shakespeare Road, Dursley, Glos., GL11 4QQ.

Bulletin (Text of lectures and description of visits) (No. 76, 1997)
Membership: 154. Subscription: £2.50. Area: Bristol District, City of Bristol, Counties of Gloucestershire, (East) Somerset, (North) Wiltshire.

3) Cornish Methodist Historical Association

Secretary: Rev. Donald J. Forway, Chy an Ula, Goonvrea Road, St. Agnes, TR5 0UJ.

Journal (Vol. 9, No. 2, 1998) Current Publications: Occasional Publication up to No. 26. Membership: About 250. Subscription: £3. Area: County of Cornwall (But see 14).

4) Cumbria Branch

Secretary: Mr E. A. Leteve, 6, Beech Grove, Houghton, Carlisle. CA3 0NU.

Journal (No. 41, Spring 1998) Membership: 112. Subscription: £3. Area: Cumbria District.

5) Irish Branch

Secretary/Treasurer: Miss E. M. Weir, 5, Aberdelghy Gardens, Lambeg, Lisburn, Co. Antrim. BT27 4QQ

Bulletin: (Vol 3 Part 3, Spring 1998) Membership: 227. Subscription: £5. Area: North and South Ireland

6) Lancashire and Cheshire Branch

Secretary/Editor: Mr E. A. Rose, 26, Roe Cross Green, Mottram, Hyde, Cheshire. SK14 6LP

Area: Liverpool, Manchester & Stockport, Bolton & Rochdale and northern part of Chester & Stoke Districts: Historic counties of Lancashire (except North Lancashire), Cheshire and part of Derbyshire.

7) North Lancashire District Branch

Secretary: Miss Helen Spencer, 77, Clifton Drive, Lytham St Annes. FY8 1BZ

Bulletin: (No 27, January 1998) Membership: 120. Subscription £3. Area: North Lancs Methodist District.

8) Lincolnshire Methodist History Society

Secretary: Miss J. R. Cooling, 25, Frognall, Deeping St. James, Peterborough, PE6 8RR.

Journal (Vol. 5, No. 2, Autumn 1997) Membership: 100. Subscription: £2. Area: Historic County of Lincolnshire.

9) London and Home Counties Branch

Secretary/Treasurer: Mr Nigel McMurray, 89, Costons Avenue, Greenford, UB6 8RN

Journal (No. 57, Spring 1998) Membership: 101. Subscription: £5. Area: The four Methodist London Districts.

10) Manx Methodist Historical Society

Secretary/Editor: Mrs T. Wilson, 28, Droghadfadyle Rd., Port Erin, Isle of Man. IM9 6EN

Newsletter (No. 26 Autumn 1997) Membership: 60. Subscription: £5 (individual). Area: Isle of Man.

11) East Midlands Branch

Secretary/Editor: Rev. S. Y. Richardson, 22, Garton Rd., Loughborough. LE11 2DY

Newsletter (Vol. 5, No. 2, October 1997) Membership: 90. Subscription: £3. Area: Leicester, Loughborough, Derby, Nottingham.

12) West Midlands Branch

Secretary: Dr. E. Dorothy Graham, 34, Spiceland Rd., Northfield, Birmingham. B31 1NJ

Bulletin (Vol. 7, No. 1, Spring 1998) Subscription: £5. Area: Birmingham District.

13) North East Branch

Secretary: Mr B. Taylor, 22, Nilverton Avenue, Sunderland. SR2 7TS

Journal (No. 68, Sept. 1997) Membership: 188. Subscription: £4. Area: Newcastle and Darlington Districts. Counties of North Yorkshire, Durham and Northumberland.

14) Plymouth and Exeter Branch

Secretary/Editor: Rev. Dr David Keep, Heatherdene, Woodbury, Exeter, Devon. EX5 1NR

Journal (Vol. 8, No. 7, Oct. 1997) Membership: 60. Subscription: £1. Area: Plymouth and Exeter District. Counties of (East) Cornwall, Devon, (West) Somerset, (West) Dorset.

15) Scottish Branch

Secretary/Treasurer: Mr G. W. Davis, 6, Gowan Park, Gowan Street, Arbroath, Angus DD11 2BH

Journal (Vol. 28, 1998) Membership: 42. Subscription: £2. Area: Scotland.

16) Shropshire Branch

Secretary: Doreen E. Woodford, Chapel Cottage, 7, King Street, Much Wenlock TF13 6BL

Bulletin: (New Series No.3, December 1997) Membership: 40. Subscription: £5. Area: County of Shropshire.

17) Yorkshire Branch

Secretary: Mr D. C. Dews, 4, Lynwood Grove, Leeds. LS12 4AU

Journal: (No. 71, Sept. 1997) Membership: 120. Subscription: £2.50.

Area: All or part of the Methodist Districts of Darlington, Leeds, Sheffield, West Yorkshire and York & Hull. County of Yorkshire.

Methodist Archives: Manuscript accessions, February 1997 - February 1998

Donald Soper archive, comprising books, lecture notes, sermon notes, tapes, newspaper cuttings, files on Lord Soper's activities, and diaries of tours of Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Canada, Australia and USA 1947-60.

Ms collection of the Rev. E. Benson Perkins, comprising: diaries, sermon registers, folder of World Methodist Council papers, miscellaneous correspondences, photos, lecture notes, and Epworth Old Rectory Management Committee minutes.

Southlands College archives.

Bundles of black and white postcards showing Methodist chapels, Sunday schools and colleges, late-19th/early 20th centuries.

Black and white photograph of interior of Munster Park church, Fulham, c. 1930.

Copy of the 'Letter and Declaration issued by the President of the Conference [re. Wesleyan Reform], with a list of the ministers who have affixed their names to the Declaration, 26 December 1849'.

Bundles of letters from Rev. Dr Rupert E. Davies to Rev. John Munsey Turner, re. to books written by both authors, 1979-91.

Ashburton, Devon, circuit plans, 1845-6, 1877.

Circuit plans for Sheringham & Holt circuit, c. 1928-46.

Parcel of sermon notes, mainly written on back of printed correspondence and leaflets, preached by the Rev. Donald B. Fraser, Exeter.

Folder of xerox letters and press cuttings re. to Rev. W. E. Sangster.

Two volumes of letters of the Methodist artist, Frank O. Salisbury. Purchased in sale.

Xerox copy of an Adam Clarke letter, 6 Feb. 1832.

Ms. letter of John Wesley to Howell Harris, 6 Aug. 1742.

Ms letter of A. A. Erskine to Howell Harris, 29 Sept. 1769.

Ms letter of John Wesley to Francis Wolff, 6 Aug. 1762.

Ms letter of John Wesley to Charles Glascot, 11 May 1764.

BOOK REVIEWS

Queen of the Methodists. The Countess of Huntingdon and the Eighteenth Century Crisis of Faith and Society by Boyd Stanley Schlenther (Durham Academic Press, 1997 pp xiv, 208, £22.95. (ISBN 1 900838 087)

A reliable study of Lady Huntingdon and her connexion has long been one of several serious gaps in the scholarly study of the Evangelical Revival. Popular biographies have not helped much so we have had to fall back on Seymour's *Life and Times* of the Countess, published as long ago as 1839. This work has long been known to be unreliable, though just how unreliable was shown in an appendix to Dr Welch's recent *Spiritual Pilgrim* in 1995. Dr Welch had already done great service by his professional catalogue of Lady Huntingdon's papers at Westminster-Cheshunt College in Cambridge and his edition of the minutes of the Whitefield Connexion and Spa Fields chapel which did belated justice to the English Calvinistic Methodist branch of the Revival. *Spiritual Pilgrim* at last established the study of Lady Huntingdon's life on a solid basis of documented fact and dispelled some persistent false or dubious traditions (e.g. that she was one of the seceders with John Wesley from Fetter Lane).

Now we have the luxury of an equally scholarly and fully-documented account from Dr Schlenther. Despite the risk of two excellent studies appearing so closely together as to compete with one another, in fact they can be welcomed as complementary. The two books were written independently, each offers material not found in the other as well as some significant differences in approach and interpretation. To take one interesting example, Dr Welch claims that the Huntingdons were not regarded as Jacobites but Dr Schlenther gives convincing evidence that Lady Huntingdon herself expressed pro-Jacobite sympathies like others in the two families and among her associates; and indeed that the Earl's early death may have been hastened by anxieties after the 1745 debacle.

Both authors show that the picture of the affluent patroness of revival and builder of chapels in fashionable spas is misleading. The families of the Lady and her husband were plagued for years with lawsuits and shortage of money; and Dr Welch gives much detail on this and other family affairs. The fashionable chapels and the (apparently short-lived and not very successful) drawing-room evangelism of the aristocracy were not really representative of the general character of the Huntingdon Connexion. Its preachers and clientele were not very different, socially speaking, from other types of 'Methodism'. The Countess indeed tried hard to cooperate with all sections of the Revival and to remain within the Church of England - if on her own terms - as long as she could do so while retaining freedom of action. However, the handicap of her status as a lay person and above all as a woman made her authority anomalous for it strained social convention as well as falling foul of the usual 'scriptural' objections to female leadership in

the church. Her status as a peeress, though she exploited it as far as possible, could not compensate for these handicaps.

Dr Welch tended to concentrate on the very necessary task of establishing the documented facts of the Countess's career. He certainly showed the painfulness of her spiritual pilgrimage and her changing attitudes towards other revival groups, notably the Moravians and the Wesley brothers and their followers. He did not conceal the flawed characters of some of her principal helpers or the disappointments she suffered over the Bethesda orphanage inherited from Whitefield and her Trevecca College. It is well-known that she failed in her plan, late in life, to tighten up her connexional organisation, so that only a remnant survived. The rest (and her preachers) fed into evangelical Dissent, along with Whitefield's followers. Indeed it is arguable that the most important part of her legacy lay here - local studies show a number of cases where the seeds of new Independent churches were sown by all too ephemeral Huntingdonian preachers, for the Countess shifted them around even more quickly and perhaps arbitrarily than John Wesley.

On all these matters Dr Welch is, I think, rather kinder and more positive on what was achieved than Dr Schlenker tends to be. He is particularly and rather disturbingly revealing on the shortcomings of some of the Countess's trusted agents - notably William Piercy for Bethesda and Thomas Haweis, who in Schlenker's account emerges even more clearly than usual as one of the more unlovely evangelical leaders - devious and self-seeking and arguably the one who did most to wreck the chances of a substantial connexion surviving the Countess's death.

More important, perhaps, is Dr Schlenker's interesting and penetrating analysis of the Countess's personality and the effect this had on her projects as well as on her own spiritual pilgrimage. He goes so far as to stress 'the primacy, not of piety, but of charismatic leadership' in the evangelical side of the eighteenth-century 'crisis of faith'. What the various groups he describes were engaged in, he argues, was an unending struggle for power, though also, and particularly in Lady Huntingdon's case, a lifelong search for an authentic religious experience to satisfy deep emotional needs. This helps to explain, for example, why there was so much internal strife in her connexion as well as conflicts with other revival groups. It was characteristic of her religious style and tactics to focus on preaching designed to stir up repeated emotional experiences - one conversion crisis was not enough, for the magic moment of religious excitement had constantly to be recreated. She lacked any doctrine, formula or system for progressive religious nurture and consolidation for fear of a moralism of 'works' undermining the Calvinism she had adopted under Whitefield's influence after her early acceptance of the Wesleys' Arminianism and perfectionism. The contrast with John Wesley is very marked here for Wesley not only paid much attention to organisation and instruments for spiritual nurture but did so in terms of a theology which pictured salvation as a process, beginning with justification and conversion but inexorably

proceeding through sanctification to perfection. His system depended on vigorous use of various means of grace as well as the promise of the possibility of an instantaneous gift of perfection and led to suspicions from the Calvinists of salvation by 'works'. Schlenther is well aware of this theological difference and indeed makes interesting suggestions about its practical effects. He contrasts the Countess's acceptance of slavery and her relative lack of interest in organised philanthropy with John Wesley's attitude on both issues and relates the contrast to their respective theologies - a suggestion that deserves further development.

Beyond this, the Countess's problems also included her ambiguous position as a female leader, already noted, while her advantages as a peeress laid her open to flattery and exploitation by her associates. Despite her strong sense of original sin she expected imperfect men to behave well, but she seems in any case to have been a poor judge of character and too hasty in her appointments of leaders in her schemes. All of these weaknesses were aggravated by, if not rooted in, her own unstable character and search for spiritual satisfaction and inner peace. This meant that her highly personal style of leadership and decision-making were continually influenced by her current state of mind and emotions. Having failed to establish a system which could be run by others it is not surprising that her connexion fell apart or that individuals appropriated parts of it after her death.

The contrast with John Wesley is also instructive here. Certainly his, too, was a highly personalised and authoritarian leadership and Dr Schlenther adds further substance to the suggestion by Dr Welch that Wesley was jealous and resentful of Lady Huntingdon's Trevecca project. But Wesley set up a workable structure of authority in his lifetime in the shape of his connexional system and annual Conference, legally enrolled in his last years, which could continue to function after his death. Moreover one has the impression that he had a more able and stable body of leaders to succeed him.

Dr Schlenther is to be congratulated on a compelling study of a complex personality and if he casts an unflattering light on some aspects of the revival of which the Huntingdonians were a part, it may also be said that his work illuminates some of the driving forces which inspired that revival and help to explain why it appealed to many other 'spiritual pilgrims'.

HENRY D. RACK

John Wesley and Marriage., by Bufford W. Coe (Associated University Presses Inc., London, 1996, pp. 177. £27.00. ISBN: 0 934223 39 4).

Dr. Coe's book, which is a welcome addition to Wesley studies, gives a lucid and thorough account of Wesley's understanding of marriage, particularly as evidenced by John's revision of the Anglican Marriage Service in his own *Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America with Other*

Occasional Services (1784). In five chapters, the author examines in detail: the legal context of eighteenth-century marriage; the social setting; the 'causes for matrimony' - i.e. the ends it is intended to fulfil; the choice of a partner; and the nature of married life.

Until the Marriage Act of 1753, marriage in England could be contracted purely privately, 'without any written documentation, without witnesses, without a religious ceremony of any kind' (p. 15). This legal recognition of a private marriage contract was of crucial importance to Wesley in 1749 when, given such a private commitment, he fully expected to marry Grace Murray.

It is clear that Wesley was always strongly attracted to the single life. He confided to his diary that, 'From the time I was Six or Seven years old, if any one spoke to me concerning marrying, I used to say, I thought I never should, "Because I should never find such a Woman as my Father had"'. The child is father of the man, and that childish confession speaks volumes about Wesley's personal make-up. In his *Thoughts on Marriage and a Single Life* (1743), he holds up celibacy as the ideal for every Christian, and was only persuaded to moderate his view after his preachers strongly criticised it in the Conference of 1748. In his *Thoughts on a Single Life* (1764), he accepted that the Pauline injunction, 'It is good for a man not to touch a woman', could not be taken as a universal rule.

In his revision of the Prayer Book marriage service, Wesley removed the ancient custom of the giving away of the bride, possibly, Coe suggests, because he felt it superfluous in view of the fact that in his day, 'parents rarely attended the marriage ceremonies of their children'. The parental role in the agreement of the marriage settlement, in terms of money and property, on the other hand, was vital; as was the need for parental consent to the union. Wesley himself was adamant on the need for parental consent, though he rejected a parent's dictation of the choice of partner. Coe cites a fascinating reference in a 1781 letter of Wesley to Elijah Bush, one of his preachers, in which he warns Bush not to marry without parental consent: 'I told my own mother, when pressing me to marry, "I dare not allow you a positive voice herein; I dare not marry a person because you bid me. But I must allow you a negative voice: I will marry no person if you forbid. I know it would be a sin against God"'. One cannot but reflect on the implications of Wesley's view for his attitude to the tragedy of his sister Hetty, and her enforced marriage to the drunken plumber, William Wright.

Not only parents had indefeasible rights in the matter of a Christian's choice of marriage partner. The Christian community, in Wesley's judgment, was also involved, and the *Large Minutes* required that, if a member of society married an unbeliever, he or she must be expelled. The same *Minutes* insisted that any itinerant preacher taking steps towards marriage, must first consult his brother preachers.

Wesley's view of the 'Holy Estate of Matrimony' was considerably influenced by William Whateley's *Directions for Married Persons* (1617). John maintains the complete spiritual equality of man and woman, and yet insists

that in the married life the wife must be obedient to her husband. Wesley seems always to have been ambivalent in his attitude to marriage, tending to see it, very much in Prayer Book terms, as pre-eminently a remedy for fornication, and certainly likely to limit a Methodist preacher's usefulness in the service of the Kingdom. At this point, as Coe argues, the much more positive Puritan view of marriage, as one of God's richest gifts, seems to have passed him by. Dr. Coe gives no detailed examples of the Puritan theology of marriage, but we look in vain in Wesley's writings for any such warm celebration of married love as his grandfather, Dr. Annesley, proclaimed at the marriage of his daughter Elizabeth in 1682. Annesley stresses the centrality of love, as 'the fundamental article' of marriage, and 'the innocence of pleasure' in married love. Here, he exclaims, 'thou mayest err and yet be innocent; here thou mayest roam, and wander, and lose thyself, and yet not sin; it must be a nonsuch-love'.

By contrast, when Wesley at last married Molly Vazeille, he announced to the London Methodists that he had taken upon himself 'this cross' (!) to stifle gossip. It was not an auspicious beginning, and Dr. Coe argues with great fairness that, if the widow Vazeille was difficult to live with, so too was Mr. Wesley, not least in his total refusal to alter his lifestyle when married. This valuable study leaves one with the sad but clear impression that, in both the theory and practice of marriage, John Wesley was found wanting; and Dr. Coe has dealt faithfully with his subject in showing why.

JOHN A. NEWTON

Hearts Aflame: Prayers of Susanna, John and Charles Wesley ed. Michael McMullen (SPCK 1995 pp. xix + 124, £5.99. ISBN 0 281 04791 X).

This small volume is welcome as a choice selection of early Methodist devotion. It also recognizes the key importance of Susanna, the mother of the Wesleys, not merely in the Christian formation of her children, but in her own right as a mature believer and a discerning spiritual guide. Her letters, prayers and devotional journals reveal a Christian woman who, in the midst of all the pressures and demands of a large family, managed to maintain a calm and poise which were rooted in a life of profound prayer and contemplation.

She prays for a, 'faith in the Lord Jesus, that will enable me to be accurate in the common offices of life, yet at the same time to use the world as though I had not used it'. Her son John faithfully echoes her spirit as he prays,

O teach me to go through all my employments with so truly disengaged a heart that I may see Thee in all things... and that I may never impair that liberty of spirit which is necessary for the love of Thee.

Through the prayers of John and Susanna, as in the hymns of Charles included in this anthology, there runs a consistent note of joy in God and in the living of life to his glory. As Susanna confides to her journal,

I rejoice in Your essential glory and blessedness. I rejoice in my relation to You, that You are my Father, my Lord and my God,

so Charles sings:

Father,
I long my soul to raise and dwell for ever on your praise,
Your praise with glorious joy to tell in ecstasy unspeakable.

These prayers and meditations are an antidote to the hyper-activism which has sometimes characterized the Methodist pattern of the Christian life. Rather, they reveal an impressive union of active service and the life of contemplation. Again, these prayers combine profound theology and intense personal devotion. What Dr. Pauline Webb, in her illuminating Foreword, says of Charles's hymns, may be applied to the whole contents of this volume: 'This poet of Methodism expresses in pristine simplicity both the fundamental doctrines of the whole catholic church and the personal experience of faith which kindled the flames of the Methodist revival.'

Dr. McMullen has modernized these eighteenth-century hymns and prayers to a degree, chiefly by altering on occasion 'thee' and 'thou' to 'you'. In some instances such changes do not jar, but in Charles's hymns the change not infrequently destroys the rhyme, as for example in,

Jesus shall I never be firmly grounded upon *you*? Steadfastly behold
your face, established with abiding grace?

There are also numerous typographical errors, which careful proof-reading should have eliminated. Nevertheless, the quality of the contents of this devotional manual is excellent and Dr. McMullen has performed a valuable service in making them available.

JOHN A. NEWTON

Memoirs of a Primitive Methodist by Henry Green (1855-1932) edited by Winifred Stokes, (A4 format, 44 pp. with maps and illustrations. Durham County Local History Society 1997, £4.00 + 50p by post from D. J. Butler, 3 Briardene, Margery Lane, Durham, DH1 4QU.)

This book is a valuable document. It tells us, as few others have, of the heart and soul of north eastern pit village Methodism. Henry Green's family was one of thousands which made the migration from a rural background

(Norfolk in their case) to northern mining communities, and found through an active chapel commitment and a robust faith the strength and inspiration not only to come to terms with this upheaval but to enrich their new surroundings through their Christian character and service. Henry Green was 16 when he came north and was to live here for over 60 years. The stage on which his life was set was, in economic terms, the south west Durham coalfield, and in religious terms the Crook Primitive Methodist circuit. His diary tells us how these two aspects of his life came together in vivid personal experience, and how each both challenged and enriched the other.

Henry kept diaries, now apparently lost, and in his latter years copied out much of their content into a foolscap book which forms the basis of this published work. Even allowing for the fact that he had the diaries to help him, the clarity of his memory, and the minute detail of his recall, are very remarkable indeed.

In his comments on people in particular we find much insight and appreciation and love. Within the modest confines of the book there is a veritable cavalcade of characters, springing to life before our eyes and always set in relation to the everyday realities of the communities in which they lived. And illuminating the ordinariness of these lives is Christian faith and chapel life. Their faith may have been simple but it was true and strong, and the manner in which it is described disarms our modern critical spirit. The book reminds us strongly of what heartfelt communal religion has meant in the lives of (so-called) ordinary people. At the same time Henry Green was not blind to the hard realities of life, and the ways in which faith and hope could be cruelly tested and sometimes lost altogether.

Winifred Stokes has edited the book conscientiously and there are helpful maps and illustrations. In her preface however, where she briefly describes Primitive Methodism, she seems to confuse the Love Feast and the Sacrament, and also to assume that PM ministers were all 'trained' by the 1870s. What that training was is not specified but it certainly was by no means a college training for all at that time.

G. E. MILBURN

The Conference in America: A History by Russell E. Richey (Nashville, TN, Abingdon Press, 1996, pp 304. ISBN: 0687 021187 1. Available in Britain from Methodist Publishing House, £12.99)

W. L. Doughty wrote *John Wesley: his conferences and his preachers* in 1944, but no-one since has covered the history of conferences in America. Richey argues that conference defined 'religious time, space, belonging, structure'. It was a monastic-like order of (under Asbury) young men, held together by affection, common rules, a shared mission, and, by watchfulness over one another, a quasi-professional society dealing with the reception, training, monitoring, and deployment of the preachers, pooling its resources for the

common cause. When one died it provided memorial and memory. It was the spiritual centre of Methodism, a picture true also of its British parent.

Richey shows that early conferences acted, as in Britain, as agents for 'polity, fraternity and revival'. 'Polity' was considered as they decided whether or not to obey Mr Wesley, or administer sacraments in the absence of British clergymen in America. The 'examined one by one' procedure led to the marking off of the 'fraternity'. As conference developed, so 'revival' was associated with quarterly conferences (in Britain called Quarterly Meetings), 'fraternity' with the annual conferences covering wider areas, and 'polity' with the Quadrennial 'General' Conferences.

Richey explains the significance of 1791 which saw the creation of the General Conference, rather than 1784 and the Christmas Conference in the beginning of American Methodism. The earlier system of 'Baltimore Conferences' was increasingly resented by preachers distanced from Baltimore. 1791 was a key year with Wesley's death and the creation of two powerful Conferences in his stead.

In the nineteenth century dissension over 'polity' issues such as colour and slaveholding led to revival and fraternity declining in importance. The emergence of 'stations' rather than circuits by 1850 separated camp meetings and revival from quarterly conferences which were left with 'business'. The old discipline became less searching. Power shifted to boards, newspapers and colleges, away from conferences. Richey tells of division, reunion, and the slow erasure of racial, linguistic and gender borders. The new ideals in the twentieth century were 'word, order and sacrament', as conference became more professional, more churchly, more complex. Quarterly conferences declined.

One weakness of this book is that it has relatively little space on twentieth-century developments, e.g. how conferences in the 1990s relate to boards and bishops. Richey assumes 'America' means the USA. How about other conferences, not least comparisons with Britain which he attempts for the eighteenth century? The single annual British Conference keeps more power than the many conferences in the USA. Yet this is cavilling at an important book, the first to explore this aspect of Methodist history.

JOHN H. LENTON

***The General Index to Proceedings (Vols 31-50)* (which includes book reviews in vols 26-50), compiled by John A Vickers, has now been published and is available from the Publishing Manager at £6.50 post free. Mr Taberer also has a limited stock of the earlier Index to Vols 1-30, price £3.00 post free.**

NOTES AND QUERIES

1516 A PRIMITIVE METHODIST BAPTISM IN A BIBLE CHRISTIAN CHAPEL

The Baptism Registers for the Durham Bible Christian Mission record several Bible Christian Baptisms performed in Wesleyan and Primitive Methodist chapels when they were being hired or borrowed by chapel-less Bible Christian societies (my *Durham Colliers & West Country Methodists* p140 gives examples of both). However the Bradford (West Riding) Bible Christian Baptism Registers contain the intriguing example of the baptism of the child of a Primitive Methodist minister, in the Bible Christian chapel at Toller Lane, Bradford:

13 July 1887: Baptism of Elsie Margaret Slyfield, daughter of Frederick Albert and Julia Chapman Slyfield, of Dartmouth Devonshire; his occupation: Primitive Methodist Minister; in: the Bible Christian Chapel, Toller Lane, Bradford; by: Samuel Jory (the Bible Christian minister).

The inevitable question is, Why?

According to W. Leary (*Primitive Methodist Ministers and their Circuits* 1990), Slyfield was stationed in Southwark 1885-87 and Dartmouth 1887-90. Most of his circuits appear to be in the Home Mission District, but the nearest he was ever stationed to Bradford was Buckingham. From 1890 he was stationed at Halstead, but there is no record of him after 1891. He did not become a Bible Christian minister.

Several speculations might be entered into.

In the 1880s Primitive Methodism in Bradford town centre was in eclipse after their premises had burnt down (*PM Magazine* 1895 p19); - was Slyfield somehow ministering to the need? But why go to the Bible Christians for Baptism? Bradford town centre Primitive Methodism was not entirely dead. I cannot identify the state of Primitive Methodism outside the town centre; certainly by 1895 there was a Manningham chapel and circuit - and Toller Lane is in Manningham; - was Slyfield involved with the Manningham PM work? But again the 'why with the BCs?' question arises. Slyfield disappears five years later; - is this too far away to be connected?

Can anyone illuminate this?

COLIN SHORT

1517 MORE INFORMATION ON DIANA THOMAS OF KINGTON

Brian Redwood's article on Diana Thomas in Vol 51 part 4 of *Proceedings* is very useful, summarising information in the Hereford area on her, and showing, for example, that she was a milliner. There are also some letters in the Methodist Archives and Research Centre from her to Mary Fletcher and then Mary Tooth, which throw light upon why she *started* preaching, and on the importance of these three women in encouraging women to preach, despite the inhospitable climate of Wesleyan Methodism after 1803.

These letters are in the Fletcher-Tooth Collection, a large one which is being thoroughly calendared by Gareth Lloyd. Two volumes will probably be out by the time this appears, but the first covered only correspondents *in* (ie to Mary Fletcher and Mary Tooth) with the surnames 'A' and 'B'. Thomas is still some distance away! There are six letters catalogued MAM FL 7.3.1-6. The first which survives (7.3.1. of March 1806) is clearly not the beginning of the correspondence. Diana Thomas had written to Mary Fletcher before, not surprising considering Mary Fletcher's fame in Methodism as the widow of John Fletcher, and as a famous Methodist in her own right, who had had a considerable correspondence with John Wesley.

The second letter (7.3.2 dated 18 Jan 1808) shows that Diana had recently stayed at Madeley with Mary Fletcher and her companion Mary Tooth. It refers also to a visit two years previously when Diana had heard 'you expand on the word "Candlestick". While you were speaking I experienced the Lord conveying light into my soul.' It seems that Diana only began to preach after making her visit to Madeley in March 1806, and it is likely that Mary Fletcher encouraged her to preach, as she did with others. There are references to preaching at Aberystwyth at the invitation of the Superintendent ('Mr Jones Bathavarn') and to 'my dear Sister' Mrs Butts of Ledbury. She says 'many times when I presume to stand up for my God and his cause and indeavour(*sic*) to speak to poor sinners I think I shall not be able to'. The sermon on "Candlesticks" is in the Fletcher Tooth papers in the Archives. These two are the only ones to Mary Fletcher from Diana which survive.

There are then four letters to Mary Tooth. The first (7.3.3, 14 Jun 1814) refers to Diana's own recent illness. It also mentions another visit to Madeley when 'I was afraid of your' (Mary Tooth) 'asking me to speak... There are times and places that I can not feel ...commissioned to speak in public, tho' I have no doubt ...the Lord call'd me to the work... Sometimes he will rouse me up and send me out again'. (Remember she was by now 55.) The next (7.3.4, 12 Feb 1816) has the boot on the other foot. Instead of Diana being encouraged by her Madeley friends she now encourages the recently bereaved Mary Tooth. 'You will meet with opposition in your public labours, as some men are much against women exercising in a public way. ...I am now enabled to speak a little in public sometimes, but I

don't now go far from home,' [quote]

The last two letters tell a little about her travels. 7.3.5 (14 Nov 1816) says she had 'lately been at Merthyr Tidvill (*sic*), Cardiff and Caerphilly', a journey much further from her home than might be expected from the previous letter. The last letter 7.3.6 (16 Jan 1818) says she had been ill for six months, and had recently visited a spa.

JOHN H. LENTON

1518 AN UNKNOWN HISTORY OF THE WESLEYAN METHODIST ASSOCIATION?

In *Hall's Packet, or Companion to the Almanacks for 1840* (printed and published in Gainsborough) there is an advertisement for *The Gainsborough Magazine, edited by the Rev T Jackson* (of which no copy appears to have survived). The advert goes on, 'Also by the same Author, price fourpence, "The Origin, Present State, Prospects, Doctrines &c of the Wesleyan Methodist Association."' This presumably slight work appears not to be listed in the printed volumes of the British Museum/British Library catalogue of printed books, is not in either Oliver Beckerlegge's bibliography of the W.M.A., or Clive Field's bibliography in volume 4 of *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, and does not appear in the *handlist of Methodist Tracts and Pamphlets* published by The Methodist Archives & Research Centre at the John Rylands University Library. Can any reader throw any light on this history, or which Rev T. Jackson may have been the author? No Methodist minister of this name appears to have been stationed in Gainsborough at the relevant time, nor have I been able to trace a T. Jackson within the other denominations that were active in the town at that date. Any information would be welcome.

J. S. ENGLISH

1 Dorton Avenue, Gainsborough, Lincs. DN21 1UB

1519 ALL TOGETHER - AGAIN

In my lecture on the United Methodists printed in *Proceedings* (Volume 51 pp. 73-95) there are two omissions. First, Bradford was a sixth place where each of the three uniting denominations had a circuit in 1907. There were also Wesleyan and Primitive circuits and Colin Dews points out that the denominational mixture in Bradford was made richer still, and perhaps unique, by Independent and Wesleyan Reform circuits! Second, Leslie Davison was a third ex-United Methodist minister to become President of the Methodist Conference. He entered the ministry in 1927 and was President in 1962.

ROGER THORNE

THE ANNUAL LECTURE

will be delivered in Emmanuel St John's Methodist/URC Church, St John's Road, Scarborough

on Monday 22 June 1998 at 7.30pm

by **David Carter MA MLitt**

'Joseph Agar Beet and the eschatological controversy, 1897-1905'

Chairman: The Rev Dr John A. Newton CBE MA

The lecture will be preceded by TEA* for members 5pm and the Annual Meeting at 6pm.

** It is essential to book with the General Secretary by 8 June 1998. Cost £1.00 per head.*

Travel Directions

Emmanuel St John's (1994) is situated on the East (right-hand) side of St. John's Road, a one-way street which leads off Falsgrave Road. There is a church car park adjacent to the building.

By public transport: The church is within ten minutes' walking distance of Scarborough rail station. On leaving the station, turn left into Westborough, which soon becomes Falsgrave Road. Just under half a mile after leaving the station, turn right into St. John's Road. Alternatively, there is a regular bus service (No. 7 or 17 to Eastfield via Seamer Road), which passes the station, for the short journey from the town centre. Alight at St. John's Road, Falsgrave.

By car: From the A1, York and the West, enter Scarborough by the A64. At the T-junction at the end of Seamer Road, turn right, then immediately left into St. John's Road.

From Whitby and the North, enter Scarborough by the A171. On meeting the A170, turn left into Falsgrave Road, then shortly left again into St. John's Road.

From Hull and the South, enter Scarborough by the A165. Cross Valley Bridge, then take the second turning left (by the station) into Westborough. In just under half-mile, turn right into St. John's Road.

Conference members: Detailed directions from the Spa to St. John's Church, both on foot and by car, will be available from the Conference Information desk in the Spa.