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# Proceedings

OF THE

## Wesley Historical Society

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### TENT METHODISM 1814 - 1832

TENT Methodism was one of a number of offshoots that emerged from Wesleyanism soon after John Wesley's death in March 1791. The Methodist New Connexion was the first major secession in 1797 when approximately 5,000 Wesleyans in the north of England seceded. During the second decade of the nineteenth century the Primitive Methodists and the Bible Christians became part of the fragmentation that Wesley himself feared might happen. The fact was that he had the ability to hold Methodism together, a feat that the next generation of leaders were incapable of achieving. Indeed, it is possible to argue that the schisms that occurred were accepted with little obvious regret, even if they were not actually encouraged. One of several other groups that arose, but which lasted for a much shorter time, was the Tent Methodists. Passing reference to their presence in particular localities has been made in works of some of the more recent Methodist church historians<sup>1</sup> but until now there has not been a full study of the significance of the group, partly because it did not become a major national or even a regional body. It is believed, however, that the group's impact was greater than has hitherto been acknowledged.

The story of Tent Methodism is inextricably linked with a few men in particular, of whom the most important was George Pocock. It is, in fact, often the case that the success or failure of an organization, secular or religious, heavily depends upon the motivation of, and competing demands on, the leaders. George Pocock is an excellent example of that truth. He was born in Hungerford early in 1774 and was baptised in the parish church there on 29 May. His father was a Church of England

The principal individual source for material covering the period up to early 1821 is the *Tent Methodists' Magazine, and Register of Events...* 1823 (TMM)

<sup>1</sup> See W. R. Ward, *Religion and Society in England 1790 - 1850*, (1972) p.83; Robert Currie, *Methodism Divided*, (1968) pp. 54-57; D. A. Gowland, *Methodist Secessions*, (1979) pp. 24 & 45; and J. A. Vickers, unpublished PhD thesis, 'Methodism and Society in Central Southern England 1740-1851', University of Southampton, 1987 pp. 273-278.

clergyman although he was never vicar of that town, but there appeared to be no meaningful Christian family life in his childhood. Thirty years later, when both had established their respective careers, George's eldest brother, who had become curate of the parish church in Frome, wrote to George and reminded him that he believed it was a '...miracle of mercy...' that they had left Hungerford as it was a place where '...the name of Christ is seldom used, but for the purposes of blasphemy'<sup>2</sup> George Pocock was married in April 1797 in Frome parish church<sup>3</sup> and had, by then, met Edward Griffith who was a prominent local Methodist, and an important businessman in the town. Griffith regularly visited Pocock's sister when she was dying of a distressing disease, and it was through Griffith's influence and example that George became a Methodist himself. He retained a great friendship and respect for him until Griffith's death in 1816, which occurred when he fell from Pocock's carriage while he was in Bristol supporting tent preachers<sup>4</sup>. In addition to being curate at Frome, George's brother ran a school adjoining the parish church. George may well have assisted in the venture. It was probably that experience which prompted him to set up his own school and move with his wife and their first child to Bristol in 1799 or 1800.

Pocock acquired a boarding school in Church Lane, in the St. Michael's Hill district of Bristol, which became known as Prospect Place Academy<sup>5</sup>. It was an area of Bristol where there were several schools, but Pocock's was clearly a particularly important one as it is specifically marked on *Ashmead's Plan* published in 1828. He had many academic talents, notably mathematics, history and the ability to write acceptable verse, as well as sufficient scientific knowledge to enable him to become an inventor of some importance in later life. There were normally about 50 pupils at the school at any one time and they paid 25 guineas annually in the early years. It was a relatively large and entirely successful academy and it is known that over 2,000 pupils passed through it. It was a venture he retained until his death, following which two of his sons continued to run the school, although for only a few years. The buildings were eventually demolished to allow a road-widening scheme to proceed.

Pocock and his wife joined the membership of Portland Chapel, Bristol, and he became a local preacher. He had earlier declined to

<sup>2</sup> *Tent Methodists' Magazine, and Register of Events ...*, 1823 (TMM) p. 25

<sup>3</sup> Entry no. 1125 in Frome Parish Church marriage register. The ceremony was conducted by George Pocock's brother, and the witnesses were George's sister, Jemima, and Joseph Rose, believed to be a relative of the bride.

<sup>4</sup> For further information about Edward Griffith, see the *Memoir* recorded in monthly parts in TMM, and Stephen Tuck, *Wesleyan Methodism in Frome*, (1837)

<sup>5</sup> The *Mathew's Bristol Directory* series, published annually from 1793, provided information about Bristol schools. A complete set of the directories is held in the Bristol Central Library.

pursue a suggestion that he should undergo training in preparation for ordination as a Church of England clergyman like his father and elder brother. However, he was soon hosting meetings of local preachers early on Sunday mornings when they met for prayer and mutual support before beginning the day's duties<sup>6</sup>. From Wesleyan preaching plans that survive for the second decade of the nineteenth century, it is clear that Pocock undertook a heavy preaching commitment in Bristol, and in Kingswood on occasions, both on Sundays and during the week<sup>7</sup>. He became a trustee of at least three Wesleyan chapels, but not of Portland Chapel itself. His name appears first on the list of the original trustees of the Pill chapel and he financed the whole of the building cost. This turned out to be a very long term commitment as interest was not met regularly, and the loan itself was not repaid until twenty years later, and only then following the intervention of two Bristol circuits that provided the Pill trustees with conditional loans<sup>8</sup>.

In 1814, a number of Wesleyan local preachers led, probably, by Pocock, were concerned that they could not find enough suitable places outside Bristol to fulfil their evangelical ambitions among rural communities. They arranged that Pocock, showing yet another of his talents, should build a large marquee-type structure that would, however, be portable enough to be moved from place to place<sup>9</sup>. Although it was always referred to as a tent or an 'itinerant temple', it was initially capable of holding 500 people and was subsequently enlarged to cater for congregations of 700. Given the denominational cash crisis at the time, caused partly by the chapel building programme<sup>10</sup>, this should have been regarded as a highly acceptable alternative, at least until finances improved. Erecting, dismantling and transporting such a structure must have needed a great deal of skill and physical resource. For five years until 1819 the preaching, firstly with one tent and then a second, continued in addition to the formal preaching plan commitments. The preachers received varying degrees of enthusiasm and opposition from the local hierarchy. Although one Bristol superintendent, Walter Griffith (no relation to Edward Griffith of Frome) showed his support by preaching in the tent on several occasions, others were wary from the start and positively hostile by the end of 1819. Although Bedminster was frequently the place where the tent was first erected each year, the main areas of preaching around

6 K. P. Russell, *Memoirs of the Rev. John Pyer*, (1865) p. 21.

7 Preaching plans for the Bristol and Kingswood circuits 9 March to 1 June 1817, and 19 December 1819 to 26 March 1820, are held in the library of the New Room, Bristol, and show the extent of Pocock's and Pyer's commitments.

8 Letter signed by James Wood and William Phillips to circuit stewards of Bristol South circuit dated 12 June 1833

9 K. P. Russell, *op. cit.* p. 37.

10 See, for example, W. R. Ward, *Religion and Society in England 1790-1850*, (1972) p.98

Bristol were to the north of the city from the river Severn in the west to the edge of the Cotswolds to the east, and as far north as Dursley. Tent preaching began in Dursley in direct response to a specific request from the newly appointed Superintendent, Richard Wintle, because the Wesleyan chapel there was about to undergo extensive repairs that would take several months to complete<sup>11</sup>.

For the start of the 1817 season which began, as usual, just before Easter, the tent had been enlarged, and excursions further afield were undertaken, notably into east Wiltshire and west Berkshire, including Marlborough, Hungerford and Newbury. A history of Swindon, written at the end of the nineteenth century records that Hodson, then a small hamlet just south of Swindon, was the first place in the area to receive a visit from Pocock and the tent. Pocock might have chosen this part of central southern England because of its proximity to his home town. While he was in Marlborough, he met John Gosling, a successful local banker who shared Pocock's interest in education and who subsequently became the main advocate in the Wiltshire circuit. In turn Gosling introduced John Barnett, who soon moved to Bristol to live with the Pockocks for several years. Barnett was to undertake much valuable work, including the management of the arrangements with the tents. Because of the increased time being spent on tent evangelism, Pocock and John Pyer, who was the second most important Tent Methodist having been involved with Pocock since 1814, had asked to have the number of their Wesleyan preaching plan commitments reduced. Their requests appeared to have been ignored despite the fact that Pyer was Secretary to the Local Preachers Meeting, as publication of the next quarterly plan showed that they each had more engagements than any other local preacher. Whether this was a deliberate way of trying to curtail the tent activities cannot be known. If the authorities wished to persuade Pocock and Pyer to relinquish control of the tents, or reduce the tent movements, they were singularly unsuccessful. In June 1818 an ambitious, month-long excursion took place beginning with tent services all day in a field owned by Gosling just outside Marlborough, and followed by visits to many places in west Berkshire and southwards in Hampshire. The tent and several preachers, including other well-respected Wesleyans, then made a boat journey from Southampton to the Isle of Wight where an evangelical campaign took place with, apparently, much success. The progress made, however, was not regarded as being of sufficient importance to justify reference in either of two histories of the Methodist church on the island<sup>12</sup>.

The overall expansion of the work during the first four years led to two significant developments at the end of 1818. Firstly, a second tent

11 *TMM*, op. cit. pp. 79-81.

12 J. B. Dyson, *Methodism in the Isle of Wight*, (1865), and Anon, *Ryde Methodist Church 1883-1983*, nd.

was acquired to double the ability to respond to invitations to preach, and more significantly it was decided that John Pyer should sell his wholesale and retail druggist business in Newbury and become the first full time employee of the group. He was to be paid £100 per annum as a Home Missionary, a much larger sum than most Methodist itinerants were receiving at the time<sup>13</sup>. Pocock could see, though, that he had not obtained the active consistent support of the local hierarchy, and during the annual Wesleyan Conference, which was held in Bristol in 1819, he attempted to obtain an official seal of approval to the evangelical work. He was unsuccessful, and by the end of the year the superintendents in three local circuits were making strenuous and concerted efforts to bring the work under their control<sup>14</sup>.

They failed to gain Pocock's cooperation, and in the early months of 1820 there began a bitter exchange of pamphlets and frequent meetings that ultimately led to the departure from Wesleyanism of three leading local preachers, John Pyer and Samuel Smith as well as George Pocock. The alienation and disaffection was, by April 1820, total and mutual. The charge against Pyer was, superficially, concerned with previous activities in the Newbury circuit and the fact that his class ticket had not been renewed. In fact, it was much more to do with his recent appointment as a full-time paid home missionary without the authority of Conference. Samuel Smith was accused of telling a woman member of a Wesleyan class, who was considering joining the Methodist New Connexion that she should '...search the scriptures...' He should, apparently, have actively dissuaded her from leaving the Wesleyan society. Smith was not expelled but he so objected to the hierarchy's attitude and judgement that he refused to continue his local preaching and his membership. Pocock left because he would not give up control of the tents, or of chapels that he was arranging to build and finance. He had also fallen out with the Portland Chapel authorities in connection with the chapel organ that he owned, controlled and, it is thought, played. If Bristol's Wesleyan authorities thought that the problem would be solved when the three leaders, and other local preachers, had left, they seriously underestimated the dedication, commitment and sheer cussedness of Pocock and Pyer particularly. It is of interest to note that both George Pocock and Samuel Smith strongly objected to women being part of the interrogation and decision-making process - especially, of course, those who voted

13 M. R. Watts, *The Dissenters* Vol.2, (1995) pp. 238-257, and Kenneth D Brown, *An Unsettled Ministry? Some aspects of Nineteenth - Century British Nonconformity.* *Church History* Vol. 56, (1987) p. 218

14 Thomas Wood (Bristol), Charles Greenly (Downend), and Richard Wintle (Dursley).

against them<sup>15</sup>. This perhaps accounts for the fact that, unlike the Primitive Methodists and the Bible Christians, women did not appear to have any preaching or leadership roles in Tent Methodism.

Pocock's energy and management skills were soon evident in establishing the Tent Methodists as a formal body. The sect's expansion beyond parts of Bristol and south Gloucestershire into Bath, east Wiltshire and west Berkshire, a small area of east London, inner city parts of Manchester, Liverpool, and Birmingham, and one locality in south Wales, all occurred within two years of the spring of 1820. A set of rules was very hurriedly drawn up<sup>16</sup>, and several prominent preachers from Bristol and further afield were prepared to help. By way of example, former Wesleyan local preachers and class leaders including Samuel Bryant, James Roberts, Henry Payne, a Mr Pring, and notably Victory Purdy, all incurred the wrath of the Bristol Wesleyan leaders, and joined the Tent Methodists. Victory Purdy had been a Wesleyan local preacher for forty-nine years, preaching his first sermon in 1777<sup>17</sup>. It was with evident sadness that he felt compelled to return his class ticket and resign his membership. Most importantly, Pithay Chapel, a former Baptist church in the middle of Bristol was bought for £900, fitted out, and became the new sect's headquarters<sup>18</sup>. Several more preaching places were quickly established in the poorer parts of the city centre. In south Gloucestershire, societies were formed in four places in Kingswood as well as at Coalpit Heath, Wotton-under-Edge, Frampton Cotterell, Dursley, and, rather later, at Tetbury. Many more places benefited from the itinerant nature of the preaching activity. Chapels were acquired or newly built in most of those places, financed in the main, or in their entirety, by Pocock.

While the remaining months of 1820 were taken up with consolidating the progress made in previous years around Bristol, and opening new places in central Bristol, including the dock area,

<sup>15</sup> The arguments are set out in great detail in three pamphlets written between March and 19th May 1820; namely

(a) George Pocock, *A Statement of Facts connected with the ejection of Certain Ministers from the Society of the Wesleyan Methodists in the City of Bristol in February and March 1820* (b) Thomas Wood et al, *A Correct Statement of Facts, connected with what Mr George Pocock has termed.....* (c) George Pocock et al. *Facts without a Veil; or a Further Account of the Circumstances .....*

<sup>16</sup> *Rules of the Tent Methodists' or Agrarian Society for Extending Christianity at Home*, issued in 1820. A revised, longer, version was published in 1824.

<sup>17</sup> For further information about Victory Purdy see e.g.

i. Victory Purdy, *The Poetical Miscellanies*, (1825) (published after his death) ii. Victory Purdy, *Thoughts on the case of Local Preachers in the Methodist Connexion* (1820) iii. Anon, *Some Account of the Life, Ministry and Writings of Victory Purdy, the Kingswood Collier*, (1822)

<sup>18</sup> Gordon Hamlin, 'The Pithay Chapel, Bristol,' *Baptist Quarterly* vol. 15, 1953/1954, p. 378, and *Mathew's Bristol Directories*.

geographic expansion began in earnest in 1821. In February and March, both John Pyer and John Barnett went to an existing society at Cwm Dws (now Cwm Dows), the only known presence in Wales. Pyer had a brother who lived at Newport, reasonably close to Cwm Dws, but it is not known whether that accounts for the existence of a Tent Methodist society there. The poverty of the miners, and the dreadful conditions under which they worked, greatly affected Pyer. Of longer term significance was the establishment of a society in Bath. Tent preaching had occurred regularly since 1814, and in 1821 a chapel had been obtained in Corn Street. For reasons that are not apparent, the congregation moved in 1824 to a chapel in Wells Road, further away from the city centre. Services were held twice each Sunday, and the 'Rev Mr Pocock' was shown as the minister<sup>19</sup>, the designation "Rev" being one that he pointedly criticised when used by Wesleyans in 1820.

In Wiltshire, many meeting places were established, mostly in small villages. A detailed analysis of Wiltshire meeting house registrations under the terms of the 1689 Toleration Act has been undertaken by Dr John Chandler, and this has enabled extensive knowledge of Tent Methodist presence to be determined<sup>20</sup>. The sect's meeting places were all located in a narrow band about twelve miles wide from east to west, from Marlborough in the north to Salisbury in the south. A total of twenty-five certificates were issued to Tent Methodists, twelve of them in 1823, representing 13.5% of all dissenter registrations between 1821 to 1825. Seven chapels were acquired, and most of the remainder relate to parts, or the whole, of houses. It was probably not coincidence that the places selected in Wiltshire had no large-scale existing nonconformist presence, but did have very great rural poverty. The sect's influence in the county was enhanced in 1825 when it received into membership six chapels and eight local preachers under the control of a John Pearse Sweetapple, known by the cumbersome name of 'Sweetappleites'. This was described by Jabez Bunting's biographer as a 'feeble' secession<sup>21</sup>, but probably gave Tent Methodism the greatest concentration of presence anywhere in the country.

Geographical expansion also took the sect to a small area of east London. All the Tent Methodist leaders of the time went to meet a Mr Jeffs in September 1820. He, too, was undertaking an independent ministry outside Wesleyanism, particularly in the Spitalfields area, where he established afternoon Sunday Schools and evening services preaching to the parents of the scholars, and had heard about the missionary work in Bristol. Jeffs, one chapel in Webb Square, and two classes, formed the nucleus of the Tent Methodist work. This was soon

<sup>19</sup> Gye's *Bath Directories* 1822 p. 11 and 1824.

<sup>20</sup> J. H. Chandler (ed.), *Wiltshire Dissenters' Meeting House Certificates and Registrations 1689-1852*, (1985).

<sup>21</sup> T. P. Bunting, *The Life of Jabez Bunting DD Vol.2*, (1887) p. 170.



supplemented by several dedicated Wesleyans who felt forced to leave the Christian Community, a Wesleyan group consisting of '...a band of strong, zealous, spiritual men, doing such magnificent work for God and Methodism ...'<sup>22</sup> in the Bethnal Green district. The dispute that prompted a serious disruption in the work was caused by the insistence of Jabez Bunting and Charles Atmore, then both itinerants in the London East circuit, to take full control of the activities. The only Tent Methodist preaching plan that is known to have survived is for the '*Independent or Tent Methodists, London*', for the period from 28 April to 25 August 1822. That plan shows that services were held at fifteen different places, there were twelve preachers, twenty-five prayer leaders, five of whom were also exhorters, and four men were on trial. At some places three services were held each Sunday, and there is evidence of much weekday activity as well<sup>23</sup>. The societies in east London became sufficiently important for John Pyer to make several lengthy visits to provide additional support at the end of 1820 and into the middle of 1821.

The establishment of Tent Methodism's presence in Manchester also followed a specific invitation. Peter Arrivé, whose mother joined the first Methodist class on the island of Guernsey, had been educated at Kingswood School, and was a 'Commission Merchant' in Bristol for a short time before he moved to Manchester. He joined the Wesleyan society at Salford, where he became a local preacher for some years. At Arrivé's request, Pyer, and one other, travelled to Manchester in August 1821 with a tent which was pitched on a piece of waste ground in the Ancoats area, just east of the city centre. Partly because there was little evangelistic work going on in this fast growing industrial district, the various Methodist groups initially assisted the work, as did the local Independents and Baptists, and large congregations were attracted<sup>24</sup>. Official Wesleyan support was sought, but the response was totally obstructive as, '...the Wesleyan Travelling preachers...had unanimously determined to have nothing to do with the Tent, nor would they receive into their society those persons who had been reformed and reclaimed by means of Tent Preaching...'<sup>25</sup>.

Arrivé was, predictably, excluded from the Wesleyans in Salford for giving Pyer his support, but directly as a result of Wesleyan hostility a large Tent Methodist chapel was built in Canal Street in less than four

22 E. C. Rayner, *The Story of the Christian Community 1685-1909*, (1910)p. 50. Also see

G. J. Stevenson, *City Road Chapel, London and its Associations*, (1873) p. 509.

23 *A Plan for the Preachers, Exhorters & Prayer Leaders of the Independent or Tent*

*Methodists, London*. The year 1822 does not appear on the face of the plan, but on the reverse is written, "Mr Lindsey's Plan 1822". The Plan is held in the library of Wesley College, Bristol.

24 K. P. Russell, op. cit. pp. 110-111, and S. Stocks, Jnr., *A Reply to the Rev John Pyer's "Few Plain and Indisputable Testimonies"*, *Canal Street Chapel, Manchester* (1830) p. 4.

25 Letter dated 9 March 1822 from 'Philanthropus', *Imperial Magazine* Vol. 4 1822 p. 365.

months. Encouragement, and financial help, came from several Manchester businessmen including George Hadfield, a leading Congregationalist, local attorney and, later, Liberal MP, William Wood, a Wesleyan class leader and a woollen cloth manufacturer, and Samuel Stocks, a cotton manufacturer and also a Wesleyan. Moral and spiritual support were provided by several local nonconformist ministers, including the Rev. Dr. Thomas Raffles and the Rev. William Roby, leading Independents, and the Rev John Birt, the Baptist minister at York Street chapel. The chapel cost £900 to build, and was opened on 23 December 1821 when 300 people took communion<sup>26</sup>. Pyer spent an increasing amount of time in Manchester and he quickly succeeded in establishing '....a flourishing society...', large congregations, a membership of over 300, and '...a powerful impression...'. Tent Methodism had, apparently, created '...one of the greatest blessings which Manchester had ever witnessed...' and the hope was expressed that many more chapels would be built<sup>27</sup>. In fact, only one other preaching place in Manchester, in Oxford Road south of the city centre, was ever acquired.

John Pyer and George Smith, later to become a leading Congregational minister, formed a society in Liverpool. Pyer had visited the city at least twice while he was at Manchester, and in September 1823 Smith, at the age of only twenty, moved there to begin a ministry that lasted four years. The initial evangelical effort was undertaken using one of the tents, and later a room was taken in Heath Street, Toxteth. Good results seemed to have resulted from Smith's work as it was said that '...he threw himself into this mission with all the ardour of his heart. Such was the success that attended it, that many souls were brought to Christ'<sup>28</sup>.

There was one other place where attempts were made to form a society, but without success. Birmingham had been visited with a tent since 1821 during the journeys undertaken between Bristol and Manchester. Pyer and John Barnett had both spent time there and a chapel was acquired in September 1823 in Rea Street, just south of the city centre. Two difficulties arose which prevented much headway being made. Firstly, the preachers suffered at the hands of people who were intent on disrupting meetings, and secondly, the Lichfield diocesan authorities refused to '...certify any waste ground as a place of Religious Worship, unless there is a Building on it...' <sup>29</sup>. This was a quite different response to that given by the authorities for that part of Wiltshire where Tent Methodism became strong.

<sup>26</sup> K. P. Russell, op.cit. p. 116.

<sup>27</sup> *Imperial Magazine*, op. cit. p. 366.

<sup>28</sup> Obituary of the Rev Dr George Smith, *Congregational Year Book* 1871 p. 346.

<sup>29</sup> Barnett, J P (ed), *Memorials of the late Rev John Barnett of Blaby 'Faithful unto Death'*, (1878) p. 26. J. P. Barnett was John Barnett's son and named John Pyer Barnett in recognition of his father's respect for John Pyer.

Despite much Wesleyan opposition, especially in the initial stages, and practical difficulties associated with moving tents around the country, and the scattered nature of the work, good overall progress was made in the years up to 1825. Preaching resources seem to have been adequate and of good quality, three tents were needed to cope with all the invitations received, and much optimism was expressed about the future. A hymn book was produced containing 1,091 hymns on 555 pages, at least two annual Conferences took place in 1822 and 1823 at Bristol and Manchester, district meetings were held, a second full time Home Missionary was appointed, and a history, written by Pocock and Pyer, was being prepared for publication.

In early 1826, however, steady, if not rapid, decline began. The two most important reasons were probably the decision by Pocock to reduce his involvement, and the decision by John Barnett to join the Baptists. What prompted Pocock to become less committed is not known with certainty. He was the father of at least thirteen children, some of whom, daughters as well as sons, had established their own schools that needed his guiding hand. In addition, he had a school of his own to run, albeit with some family support. Furthermore, he became increasingly interested in a series of inventions concerning the use of kites<sup>30</sup>, and this activity took up an increasing amount of energy and time from 1827, including three weeks at a stretch on a boat in the river Severn. He would also have realised that the group was expanding geographically much beyond his original intentions, and he was not able to control the direction of the evangelistic work as he would wish.

John Barnett's departure was a great loss. He decided to abandon Tent Methodism only two months after agreeing to become the second full-time employee. He, with Samuel Smith, had been in day-to-day charge of the work at Dursley, Wotton-under-Edge, and Tetbury, and he also went frequently to his own home area in Wiltshire. He had calculated that in one year he had preached 219 times and travelled 1,880 miles, mostly on foot. Bearing in mind that at times poor health had curtailed his preaching activities, that on one occasion he was nearly drowned in the Severn, and that he became seriously in debt, he had indeed suffered for the cause<sup>31</sup>. The congregation at Dursley continued for a while, but a formal Notice of Deficiency was eventually announced in May 1829 at a service conducted by Samuel Smith. At that time there remained a substantial debt associated with the construction of the chapel nine years earlier<sup>32</sup>. The Tent Methodist

30 C. Jeffrey Spittal, *Heavenly Impulses; the life of George Pocock*, (1984) and Elizabeth Ralph, 'People Matter 'George Pocock' St. Stephens Review, September 1962.

31 J. P. Barnett (ed), op.cit., pp. 33-34.

32 David Evans, *As Mad as a Hatter! Puritans and Whitefieldites in the History of Dursley and Cam*, (1982) p. 120, and Indenture relating to Hill Road Chapel, Dursley, and Endorsement to the *Notice of Deficiency of Income and for the Sale of the Chapel*, 2 May 1829. The latter two documents are held in the County Record Office, Gloucester.

society at Tetbury was not established until 1823, rather later than elsewhere, and the timing of the construction of the first Wesleyan chapel, which was opened in February 1827, suggests that the nucleus of the membership might have been former Tent Methodists.

The society and chapel at Frampton Cotterell became controlled by the Wesleyans, probably in 1827, with several at least of the former Tent Methodists taking on chapel responsibilities<sup>33</sup>. The societies in the Kingswood area continued to be active considerably longer than those further away from Bristol. John Pyer, then based in Manchester, returned to Bristol for a brother's funeral and commented on large congregations in Kingswood in early 1827. A funeral service of a highly regarded local preacher and class leader was held in April 1827, and was attended by twelve local Tent Methodist preachers among a congregation of 2,000<sup>34</sup>. It is also known that George Pocock and one of his daughters still frequently visited the so-called 'Colliers Temple' in Kingswood to preach. Finally, by 1832 the last of the Tent Methodist chapels had been disposed of, those at Hanham and Staple Hill by auction, and the Pithay 'flagship' chapel in central Bristol to a group of Welsh Baptists<sup>35</sup>.

No information is available about the cessation of the work at Cwm Dws in south Wales, or at Cheltenham where it is just possible that a society was formed in 1821. Certainly, John Pyer visited the town at the end of February at the invitation of a Mr Rose, and commented that a month's visit with a tent was needed. There is, though, no evidence that a tent was taken to Cheltenham, or any reference to Tent Methodist work in local histories<sup>36</sup>. At Bath, entries in the Gye's and Keene's Directories cease after 1824, but it has not been possible to discover what use was made of the Wells Road chapel premises. It must be supposed that Tent Methodist work had failed by the end of 1825.

The indications are that the Tent Methodist chapels and congregations in Wiltshire were dispersed in a variety of ways. They were still registering places for worship in November 1825, but there were, by then, also signs of decline. John Sweetapple, described in a letter to Jabez Bunting as '...a very useful preacher indeed whose labours God has abundantly blest (?) - wishes very much to join the Methodists

<sup>33</sup> Indenture between fourteen Trustees of the Tent Methodist Chapel and thirteen Wesleyan Trustees 12 April 1832, and *Stewards Account Book for Frampton Cotterell Chapel* from fourth quarter of 1831 until 1833.

<sup>34</sup> K. P. Russell, op. cit. p. 128 and Anon, *Memoir of the life and character of Samuel Bryant, a Kingswood Collier*, (1842)

<sup>35</sup> *Mathew's Bristol Directory* for 1832 and J. G. Fuller, *Memoir of Rev. Thomas Roberts M A and the History of King Street Church*, (1827) p. 24.

<sup>36</sup> G. H. Bancroft Judge, *The origin and progress of Wesleyan Methodism in Cheltenham and district*, (1912) and Dorothy Myatt, *The Development of Methodism in Cheltenham*, Wesley Historical Society, Bristol Branch, 1996.

and to become a Travelling Preacher<sup>37</sup>. He did not become an itinerant, but it would appear that six chapels, eight local preachers, and 217 members did join the Wesleyans. A Tent Methodist meeting place in Salisbury was taken over by the New Jerusalem in the Revelations sect in December 1825, and it is possible that another one, in Fisherton Anger, went the same way. Whether the congregation moved, too, is not known, although the Salisbury Wesleyan circuit membership showed a useful percentage increase between 1826 and 1827 after four years of no growth. The society at Marlborough had been one of the earliest to have been established and lasted until about the end of 1828. Then, most of the remaining members might have united with the Wesleyans, judging by a 20% increase in the Hungerford circuit's membership in one year. Tent Methodist work in the county had certainly finished by the end of 1828, as indicated by a return of dissenter meeting places in 1829 which showed no remaining Tent Methodist congregations, and by a letter from the Bath Wesleyan superintendent in which he felt able to tell Jabez Bunting that '...all is peace in the West of England'<sup>38</sup>.

Very little information is available that is useful in understanding the decline in east London, but some pointers may help to explain the demise. There is circumstantial evidence that one of the earliest Tent Methodist preaching places was taken over by the Primitive Methodists. The foundation stone of a Sunday school building in Cooper's Gardens was laid by Pyer in November 1820, and in 1823 the first permanent Primitive Methodist presence in London began when two missionaries took over '...a small chapel in Cooper's Gardens, near Shoreditch Church...'<sup>39</sup>. Being an existing building it could have been the one established by the Tent Methodists only two or three years before. A revival of the work of the Christian Community might have led to some who left in 1821 reverting to their former roles. The establishment of the Christian Instruction Society that, effectively, took over the work of the Home Missionary Society in London, may also partly account for the cessation of the activity as three tents were acquired in 1826 that could have been the Tent Methodist ones. Pyer became the first paid employee of the Christian Instruction Society in London in 1830, but that is probably quite coincidental to the closure of Tent Methodist activity several years earlier.

In Manchester, a serious dispute arose with the respective arguments set out in an exchange of pamphlets. Samuel Stocks had provided much of the finance to meet the cost of the land and buildings at Ancoats, and was a trustee and the Treasurer of the Building Fund. His cotton

<sup>37</sup> Letter dated 19 July 1825 written by Harry Noyes to Jabez Bunting.

<sup>38</sup> W. R. Ward (ed), *The Early Correspondence of Jabez Bunting 1820-1829*. (1972) p. 193. Joseph Sutcliffe to Bunting 26 December 1828.

<sup>39</sup> John Petty, *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion from its Origin to the Conference of 1860*, (1864), p. 157.

manufacturing business suffered financial problems, and he sought the repayment of various sums he said were due to him. He also fell out with Pyer personally, blaming him for the '... great difficulty in raising an adequate congregation...'<sup>40</sup>, which, no doubt, resulted in a shortfall in income to meet the many financial obligations that were increased when a gallery was added to the chapel, a Sunday School room was built, and a house was constructed for Pyer's occupation. Two Congregational ministers, the Rev John Ely and the Rev R S McCall, preached at the service marking the re-opening of the chapel in June 1826, and within eighteen months, Pyer who, by this time, was permanently based in Manchester, had a '...determination to place the Church at Canal Street on a Congregational foundation'<sup>41</sup>. Stocks attempted to prevent the chapel becoming Congregational, insisting that the trust deed would not allow the change, but he succeeded only in delaying, not overturning, the transfer. Despite the fact that sixty three members voted in favour, four abstained, and none voted against joining the Congregational denomination, it is likely that a few declined to do so. About this time the Wesleyans were building a chapel in a nearby street of this rapidly expanding district, and '...for quite a while the Chapel attracted large congregations, and the Sunday School overflowed with young people...'<sup>42</sup>. The initial impetus might have been helped by the attraction of some former Tent Methodists. Pyer left Manchester in January 1830 and moved to London to take up his appointment as the 'City Missionary and General Agent for the London Christian Instruction Society'.

In Liverpool, too, the minister, George Smith, and his congregation, this time without any apparent rancour, joined the Congregationalists. He had been guided by the Rev Dr Thomas Raffles, an eminent Congregational minister who was Secretary of the Lancashire Congregational Union for thirty-seven years and held office as Chairman of the Congregational Union. The service that formally brought the membership into the Congregational denomination was held in October 1827, and Smith himself was ordained as a Congregational minister at a separate service, conducted by Thomas Raffles on 16 November 1827<sup>43</sup>. In the cases of both the Manchester and Liverpool societies, the Tent Methodists had become isolated from their colleagues elsewhere, and the friendship and support from Congregational ministers encouraged them to join a community of similarly minded nonconformists.

40 S. Stocks Jnr. op. cit. p. 4. The other side of the argument is contained in John Pyer's *Six Letters to a Trustee of Canal Street Chapel, Manchester*, (1830).

41 K. P. Russell, op.cit. p. 135.

42 Anon, *Souvenir brochure of the Opening and Dedication of the New Methodist Chapel at Ancoats*: Saturday 30 May 1964 p. 5.

43 *Congregational Magazine* 1828 p. 390.

Pocock himself had attempted to rejoin the Wesleys with the remaining chapels in about 1830, but the associated debt burden apparently caused the Bristol authorities to refuse the request. Several years later, after the last of the chapels were off Pocock's hands, he was re-admitted, despite some reluctance even then. He was in the company of the national hierarchy at the time of the 1838 Wesleyan Conference that was, once again, held in Bristol. Although he was over 60 years of age, he resumed his preaching commitment in the Bristol North circuit. George Pocock died of bronchitis on 9 November 1843 at the age of 69, and Rev John Smith the 3rd conducted the funeral service at Portland Chapel five days later<sup>44</sup>. The long term harbouring of grudges is, regrettably, the most likely reason why no reference of any sort was included in the *Wesleyan Magazine* to his contribution to Methodism. He had little time for people in authority that he did not respect, but the Wesleys were deprived of the benefits of his talents, energy, and commitment to evangelical work for fifteen years. In addition, he took with him to Tent Methodism many others. The totality of the resources lost to Wesleyanism was substantial, and would have been ill afforded.

Despite the absence of any significant statistics regarding overall membership numbers, it is useful to attempt to estimate what they might have been. It can only be a tentative assessment, but there are fragments of information that can be used. As a starting point, it is reasonable to assume that at the end of 1820 a figure of at least 700 would have been achieved. The figure would have grown significantly in each of the next five years and could have reached 1,500 at the end of 1821, and then have risen by 500 a year to reach 3,500 by end of December 1825. There were, though, only small reductions in the recorded membership figures of the various relevant Wesleyan circuits between 1819 and 1825. In several parts of the country it is probable that those attracted to Tent Methodism had no existing affiliation to any denomination.

If the Tent Methodist estimates are anything like accurate, they would compare favourably with the progress made by the Methodist New Connexion, the Primitive Methodists, and the Bible Christians in their early years. The Methodist New Connexion began with about 5,000 members but numbers fell, and did not rise above 5,000 again until 1806, nine years after formation. The Primitive Methodists did not record their annual membership figures for the first few years but after eight years the total was 7,842, of which one half was believed to have been added in the previous year. After the first seven years, then, membership would have been approximately 4,000. The Bible Christians recorded their early membership statistics quarterly but after five years the total figure was 3,118. One can only speculate about what might have happened if rapid decline had not set in to the Tent Methodist work. An

<sup>44</sup> *Portland Chapel Register of Burials*, entry no. 1470, 14 November 1843. (at Bristol Record Office)

important difference, though, between the Tent Methodists and the other Methodist offshoots, was that they did not have the regional concentration that undoubtedly assisted in the growth of the Bible Christians and Primitive Methodists.

So much for the historical facts that are presently understood. There would be more to learn if material known to have been published, is ever found. In particular, while an 1823 *Tent Methodist Magazine* provided much valuable information, there was also a *Tent Methodist Magazine* published monthly in 1824, and a *History of the Tent* was written at about the same time<sup>45</sup>. Neither has been discovered. In addition, no circuit or district minutes seem to have survived, and only one preaching plan, that for London between April and August 1822, has been traced.

One of the important features of the sect was that although it lasted only eighteen years, many members made valuable contributions in other dissenting denominations afterwards. Pocock himself returned to Wesleyanism, and John Pyer and George Smith (not, of course, the Dr George Smith who wrote the *History of Wesleyan Methodism*) both became Congregational ministers, serving with distinction for many years. Smith was an outstanding minister in the east end of London, and later became General Secretary of the Congregational Union of England and Wales<sup>46</sup>. John Barnett became a Baptist pastor, ministering in that denomination's Leicestershire churches for fifty more years<sup>47</sup>. Others, including Samuel Smith and Henry Payne, another trustee of the Dursley Tent Methodist chapel, went to North America<sup>48</sup>. Hence the sub-title of the PhD thesis, from which this paper is derived, 'one soweth and another reapeth'<sup>49</sup>.

The Tent Methodist leaders were effectively expelled over matters of disagreement where mainstream Methodism came, in due course, to accept the situations they had previously argued against. The same could equally be said of other offshoots, including the Methodist New Connexion. Indeed, the book to mark the centenary of the Methodist New Connexion in 1897 includes the following sentence; '...if the concessions already made in Wesleyan Methodism could have been conceded a hundred years ago, no secession would have taken place, and English Methodism might not have had any divisions in it today...'<sup>50</sup> It is relevant to finish by acknowledging and

45 Both these books are referred to in the biography of John Pyer, written by Kate P. Russell, a daughter, in 1865.

46 *Congregational Year Book* 1871 pp. 346-349 contains an obituary of the Rev George Smith.

47 *Baptist Handbook* 1878, pp. 330-334 contains an obituary of John Barnett. Reference is also made in the biography of John Barnett, edited by J. P. Barnett.

48 Samuel Smith is known to have emigrated to Canada, and a Henry Payne, another trustee of the Dursley Tent Methodist Chapel, emigrated to the United States of America.

49 St. John's Gospel, Chapter 4 and verse 37.

50 T. D. Crothers *et al* (eds.), *The Centenary of the Methodist New Connexion 1797 - 1897*, (1897), p. 64.



recognising that the study of Tent Methodism has identified further evangelising contributions made by those whose work has not, hitherto, been widely recognised. Rupert Davies referred to Tent Methodism by saying that its later history '....is wrapped in obscurity...' and that 'the little-chronicled Tent Methodists ...do not rate a mention in either the old or the new official histories of Methodism...'<sup>51</sup>. One of the aims of this paper, and the thesis from which the content has been derived, has been to remedy that 'obscurity' by drawing attention to the spiritual concern the group showed for people, especially those who suffered particularly harshly in an era when poverty was widespread and, to many people, inevitable.

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<sup>51</sup> Rupert E. Davies, *Methodism in Bedminster*, Wesley Historical Society, Bristol Branch, October 1991, pp. 4 - 5.

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Dr Dorothy Graham has retired after a long period of service as Connexional Archives Liaison Officer. She has been replaced by Mrs Angela Kenny, a former Head of Records and Information Management for Shell International, who worships at the Methodist/URC church at Harrow. Her address is 33 Harrow View, Harrow, Middlesex HA1 1RE. email: ackennyx@aol.com

*Inner Light and Warmed Heart* by Peter W. Gentry is a 36 page study of the contrasts and similarities between the Quakers and the early Methodists, including a chapter on the situation in the United States, and an epilogue on William Law. Copies are available from the author at 14 Milton Road, Weston-super-Mare, Somerset, BS23 2SB, price £2.00, post free.

## THE WESLEY BIBLE UNION

SPECIALISTS in the history of the early twentieth century have debated long and hard over the origins of the First World War, assessing a range of political, economic, ideological and social factors which contributed to Europe's descent into conflict in August 1914. Although the causes adduced for the war are many and various, no historian, to the best of the present writer's knowledge, has picked up the contribution alleged to have been made by a single book, *The Preacher and the Modern Mind*, being the forty-second Fernley Lecture, delivered by the Revd George Jackson, B.A., at the 1912 Wesleyan Methodist Conference. In the opinion of the Wesley Bible Union, Jackson's Fernley Lecture, or, more precisely, The Wesleyan Conference's refusal to censure *The Preacher and the Modern Mind*, was directly responsible for the outbreak of the First World War, on the grounds that Wesleyan Methodism was the most wonderful work of the Holy Spirit in human history to date, and that the lecture represented a departure from Methodist teaching so serious that its endorsement by Conference could only be accompanied by a cataclysm of stupendous proportions.<sup>1</sup> It should be added in fairness that this direct ascription of the World War to Jackson may represent an extreme position even within the W.B.U., but it helps to give the flavour of the movement which forms the subject of this paper. Breadth of outlook and balanced judgment were not conspicuous features of the Union's members and publications, least of all where George Jackson and his Fernley Lecture were concerned. It was controversy over *The Preacher and the Modern Mind* which gave birth to the Bible Union, so it is necessary to sketch the theological context and the salient features of the lecture before turning attention to the genesis and subsequent development of the W.B.U.<sup>2</sup>

George Jackson was neither an original, nor an especially provocative theologian, and his Fernley Lecture simply reflected an approach to modern thought which had increasingly gained ground in the British churches since the last decades of the nineteenth century. In the field of biblical criticism, the theories of Kuenen, Wellhausen and the leading higher critics, substantially diluted by the cautious scholarship of S. R. Driver, William Robertson Smith and Herbert Ryle, had won general acceptance in academic circles through the 1890s, helping to shape the outlook and teaching of younger scholars like A. S. Peake. Orthodoxy no longer required the ascription of the entire Pentateuch to Moses, the Psalms to David and the book of Isaiah to a single hand, while a kenotic

1 *Journal of the Wesley Bible Union* (Gloucester), October 1914, pp. 119-20 (hereafter JWBU).

2 On the whole controversy, see D. W. Bebbington, 'The Persecution of George Jackson: A British Fundamentalist Controversy', in W. J. Sheils (ed.), *Persecution and Toleration* (Oxford 1984).

Christology was called into play to explain New Testament references at odds with critical conclusions. Christian apologists had accommodated to theories of evolution; if not the pure Darwinian mode, then to modified forms allowing greater scope for divine intervention. Broader theologies were flourishing, ranging from debates over conditional immortality and eternal punishment in the late nineteenth century to the iconoclasm of the Congregationalist R. J. Campbell's *The New Theology of 1907*.<sup>3</sup>

The trend towards broader theology, the assimilation of evolution and the adoption of moderate biblical criticism crossed the boundaries of denomination and churchmanship in the two or three decades before the First World War. Developments affecting the Protestant churches in general inevitably touched Wesleyan Methodism, despite the Wesleyan reputation for theological self-sufficiency.<sup>4</sup> Driver's *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (1891) was applauded for its 'sober and fearless criticism' by the *London Quarterly*, in January 1892. W. T. Davison, a regular contributor to the *London Quarterly*, carried the standard for the most moderate of the new theories through the 1890s and early 1900s as tutor at Richmond and Handsworth, and, according to W. F. Howard, Davison was 'the scholar who bore the brunt of introducing the newer methods of biblical study to the Church of our fathers'.<sup>5</sup> In the field of Christianity and science, after years in which the Wesleyan periodicals' approach to evolution was uniformly hostile, W. H. Dallinger argued strongly for the acceptance of natural selection and paid tribute to 'the splendid genius and ceaseless research of Darwin' in his oft-reprinted Fernley Lecture of 1887. *The Creator and what we may know of the Method of Creation*. Dallinger's scientific ability was recognised the year after his Fernley Lecture when Conference gave him permission to be a minister without pastoral charge in order to work full-time on research.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile the reshaping of Wesleyan theology in this period was associated especially with the name of John Scott Lidgett, whose doctrinal reformulation was driven by 'the truth of the supreme and universal Fatherhood of God'.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, W. B. Glover, *Evangelical Nonconformists and Higher Criticism in the Nineteenth Century* (1954); M. Wellings, 'Aspects of late nineteenth century Anglican Evangelicalism: the response to ritualism, Darwinism and theological liberalism', Oxford D. Phil. thesis 1989; Ian Sellers, 'A. S. Peake Reconsidered', *Epworth Review* 24, 4 (October 1997), p. 85<sup>4</sup> J. S. Lidgett, *My Guided Life* (1936), p. 144.

<sup>4</sup> J. S. Lidgett, *My Guided Life*, (1936), p. 144.

<sup>5</sup> *London Quarterly Review*, January 1892, p. 354; W. F. Howard, 'William Theophilus Davison. A Memoir', in W.T. Davison *Mystics and Poets* (1936), p. 30.

<sup>6</sup> W. H. Dallinger, *The Creator and What we may know of the Method of Creation* (1887), pp. 67, 70 A biographical sketch was added to the 'cheap edition' of 1912 (pp. ix-xi)

<sup>7</sup> Lidgett, *Guided Life*, p. 154.

It should be noted, however, that theological conservatism remained strong within Wesleyan Methodism, as within most branches of British Christianity. Davison was very cautious advocate of higher criticism, repudiating the 'advanced' theories of Wellhausen, but even so, doctrinal charges were brought against him, albeit unsuccessfully, in the early 1890s.<sup>8</sup> Dallinger's invitation to give the Fernley Lecture was originally issued for 1880, but his endorsement of evolution led to its last-minute withdrawal at the insistence of the redoubtable Dr George Osborn.<sup>9</sup> Under Benjamin Gregory's editorship, the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* stood firmly against the new criticism, and the works of Lidgett and J. Agar Beet were subject to varying degrees of official hostility. Conservatism, largely among an older generation of scholars and preachers, was complemented by traditionalism within the denomination as a whole, often expressed in a simple lack of awareness of the existence, details or implications of new ideas as much as in informed opposition to them. What was perceived as a widening gap between the best modern scholarship and the assumptions of ordinary church members, Sunday School teachers and lay leaders was a source of growing concern in some quarters, and this concern was expressed in Jackson's Fernley Lecture.

George Jackson made his reputation in the ministry in Edinburgh, where he was sent in 1888 at the age of twenty-three. Over the next eighteen years, Jackson saw the Edinburgh Methodist Mission develop from nothing to a membership of more than 650, based from 1901 in its own premises at Tollcross. Jackson raised the £50,000 needed to build the Central Hall, and his preaching filled the church, not least by tackling the contentious and perplexing issues posed by modern thought through a frank acceptance of moderate biblical criticism. This brought him some 'unwelcome notoriety' in conservative circles, but he pursued the same approach in Canada from 1906, first as minister of Sherbourne Street Church, Toronto, and then as Professor of English Bible at Victoria University. His Fernley Lecture of 1912, given in the year he was elected to the Legal Hundred and designated Professor of Homiletics and Pastoral Theology at Didsbury, followed through themes which had been prominent and controversial in his ministry for at least twenty years.<sup>10</sup>

The key to the lecture was in the title: *The Preacher and the Modern Mind*. In its published form, the lecture was addressed, not to scholars or philosophers, but to Methodist preachers about to be ordained: 'to the preacher, and especially to the young preacher, who feels, and is himself seeking to minister to, "the necessities of the times."' <sup>11</sup> For Jackson, the

<sup>8</sup> Howard, 'Davison', p. 31

<sup>9</sup> Lidgett, *Guided Life*, p. 88.

<sup>10</sup> Annie Jackson, *George Jackson. A Commemorative Volume* (1949), chs 4-6. Quotation on p. 18.

<sup>11</sup> G. Jackson, *The Preacher and the Modern Mind* (1913<sup>3</sup>), p. vii (hereafter *PMM*).

'modern mind' was partly the mind of the modern society, raising questions of ethics and apologetics for the Church to answer, and partly the mind of modern biblical and theological scholarship, offering resources to the preacher to meet those contemporary questions. Arguing that 'our whole mental background is rapidly changing,'<sup>12</sup> Jackson called for passionate, spiritual and effective preaching which took seriously the conclusions of mainstream biblical criticism and faced the challenge of modern thought honestly. Jackson had no time for timid conservatism: 'Intellectual fear on God's behalf is stupid impiety.'<sup>13</sup> While taking a stand for doctrinal preaching, and by no means endorsing every theory of the higher critics, Jackson took for granted 'the definite abandonment of the older views of biblical inspiration and infallibility',<sup>14</sup> dispensed with many Old Testament miracles,<sup>15</sup> accepted that stories like the Sinai narratives had acquired many 'poetic accessories',<sup>16</sup> made the Virgin Birth an open question,<sup>17</sup> and dismissed 'once familiar explanations of the Atonement, with their crude analogies drawn from the police-court, and even from the pawnshop'.<sup>18</sup>

It is difficult to tell precisely when and how the opposition to Jackson's lecture and to his designation to the chair at Didsbury began. *The Preacher and the Modern Mind* was published in July 1912, and a second edition appeared in October of the same year. The first public attack on the lecture seems to have been a pamphlet, *A Brief Review of the Fernley Lecture, delivered by the Rev. George Jackson, B.A., at the Conference held in Liverpool, in July 1912*, written by William Shepherd Allen (1831-1915) and advertised in the *Methodist Recorder* of 6 March 1913.<sup>19</sup> Allen, a Staffordshire landowner and former M.P., made what the Recorder called 'a serious and most unfortunate blunder' in his pamphlet by ascribing to Jackson, and denouncing for 'supercilious insolence' a 'most offensive passage' in *The Preacher and the Modern Mind* which was in fact a direct and acknowledged quotation from John Wesley himself.<sup>20</sup> So rapid and complete was the withdrawal of the pamphlet that no extant copy of the first edition has yet been discovered. At this stage a controversy about fidelity to Methodist doctrine was already running in the *Recorder*, but with J. Agar Beet, not Jackson, as the focus of debate.

The *Recorder* turned its full attention to Jackson and the Fernley

<sup>12</sup> *PMM*, p. 4

<sup>13</sup> *PMM*, p. 10

<sup>14</sup> *PMM*, p. 94.

<sup>15</sup> *PMM*, pp. 144-53.

<sup>16</sup> *PMM*, p. 115.

<sup>17</sup> *PMM*, pp. 168-72.

<sup>18</sup> *PMM*, p. 44.

<sup>19</sup> *Methodist Recorder*, 6 March 1913, p. 1 (hereafter *MR*).

<sup>20</sup> *MR*, 13 March 1913, p. 3; 27 March 1913, p. 6.

Lecture on 5 June 1913, prompted by reports in other newspapers. 'We have been aware for some time, declared the *Recorder*, 'that a section within the borders of our own church has been opposing any further proceeding with the designation made last Conference. We have not allowed the matter to be discussed in our columns hitherto, because we did not wish to assist in the introduction of a matter into the Synods that would have complicated many grave issues and served few ends. But since other papers have opened the matter, and it is bound, now, to come to discussion, and the Synods are over, little is to be gained by silence.'<sup>21</sup>

This self-censorship was broken following two reports in the *British Weekly* of 29 May. One rehearsed an article from the *Toronto Globe* giving an account of an address delivered by Jackson to the Men's Bible Class at Sherbourne Street Church, in which he allegedly described the first eleven chapters of Genesis as 'antiquarian lumber' and suggested, 'Why not throw them out?'. The second report picked up a debate in the Halifax and Bradford Synod on a resolution asking Conference to reconsider Jackson's appointment to Didsbury in the light of his published lecture. After a long, but good-tempered debate, the Synod decided not to vote on the resolution.<sup>22</sup>

With the controversy in the public domain, the two months leading up to the Wesleyan Conference in Plymouth at the end of July clarified the terms of debate. It became clear that the *Toronto Globe* report had seriously distorted Jackson's address, ascribing to him opinions he had placed in the mouth of an imaginary opponent in order to refute them. It was asked why the *Globe's* hasty retraction of its article had not also been widely reported in the British press, and malicious motives were alleged. Some correspondents, including Beet and John Shaw Banks, criticised aspects of the Fernley Lecture. Others suggested that the tone of *The Preacher and the Modern Mind* and Jackson's reputation for controversy made him unsuitable for the Didsbury chair. Still others advanced the case that Jackson's published opinions were at odds with the doctrinal standards of Wesleyan Methodism.<sup>23</sup> This latter argument was to become the principal charge levelled by the Wesley Bible Union, a charge which connected the Jackson case to wider issues of doctrinal subscription and which arguably condemned the conservatives to defeat. Those who were willing to consider withdrawing Jackson's designation on pragmatic grounds were not prepared to endorse what was seen as a heresy hunt, nor to commit themselves to an interpretation of the standards which ruled out any accommodation whatsoever with modern thought.

At the Plymouth Conference two debates were held on the Jackson

<sup>21</sup> *MR* 5 June 1913, p. 3.

<sup>22</sup> *British Weekly*, 29 May 1913, p. 226 (hereafter *BW*).

<sup>23</sup> *BW*, 5 June 1913, p. 242; *MR*, 12 June 1913, p. 6; 19 June 1913, p. 5.

case. In the Representative Session, a motion was brought forward asking the Pastoral Session to reconsider Jackson's designation. After lengthy discussion, when it was proposed not to make any further recommendations to the Pastoral Session, only seven people voted against the resolution. '(T)hus,' reported the Revd T. J. Price in the *British Weekly*, 'a great occasion came to a great and brotherly issue.' The following week, however, in the Pastoral Session, the Revd George Armstrong Bennetts laid a formal doctrinal charge against Jackson, on the grounds that 'the doctrines contained in the Fernley Lecture of 1912 are at variance with the standards of Wesleyan Methodism in many respects, but especially in the following:- (1) the Authority of Holy Scriptures and (2) the Person and Authority of Jesus Christ'. A committee of enquiry brought in a qualified exoneration of the book 'as a whole', while regretting some of its specific statements. Bennetts, 'an overwrought brother', lamented this conclusion: "'It is a calamity," he cried, "that a man who can express these views in a flippant and unguarded method should be sent to teach our young ministry.'" Once again, however, the Conference voted decisively against the critics, accepting the committee's report by 336 votes to 27<sup>24</sup>.

Jackson's opponents were not prepared to let matters rest after Conference. Bennetts published a pamphlet, *John Wesley versus Modernism*, seeking to demonstrate through extensive quotation the incompatibility of Jackson's teaching with that of the Wesleyan standards, as defined by Wesley's *Sermons* and his *Notes on the New Testament*. Arrangements were set in train, moreover, to organise the conservative forces into a new pressure group, the Wesley Bible Union, which came into being towards the end of 1913.<sup>25</sup> The committee, twenty-four strong, comprising eight ministers and sixteen lay people, included folk who had already played a prominent part in the controversy: W. Shepherd Allen, the first Vice-President, Bennetts, and J. W. Laycock of Keighley, who had moved the critical resolution in the Halifax and Bradford Synod. The first President, Sir William Smith (1843 - 1916), was a Nottinghamshire miller and former President of the L.P.M.A.A. (1904), knighted in the Birthday Honours of 1913. Lay members of the committee were drawn mostly from the Midlands and North of England, and from the West Country, and five were Justices of the Peace. Passing references to W.B.U. stalwarts in other contexts in the ecclesiastical press give an unmistakable impression of seniority: Laycock was 'the "Grand Old Man" of Keighley Methodism', Allen was active a generation ago', Smith 'is getting on in life now'.<sup>26</sup> Among the ministers, the oldest, the Revd William Spiers, was born in 1846. A

<sup>24</sup> *BW*, 24 July 1913, p. 412; 31 July 1913, p. 436.

<sup>25</sup> *JWBU*, January 1914: inside back cover lists the committee.

<sup>26</sup> *BW*, 5 June 1913, p. 245 (Smith); *MR*, 2 January 1913, p. 10 (Laycock); 13 March 1913, p. 3 (Allen).

further five were born during the 1850s. Only two, Edwin Bell and Harold Morton, had entered the ministry since 1890. The Union, therefore, was not only traditionalist in outlook, but also distinctly elderly in leadership.

The W.B.U. set itself two tasks. The first was 'to protect and maintain by constitutional methods the doctrinal standards of Methodism'; The second was to combat the perceived spread of Modernism in the Church, fulfilling the duty to contend earnestly for the faith.<sup>27</sup> These interconnected aims were advanced largely through three methods: propaganda, apologetics and prosecution, and these may be considered in turn.

First, the Union sought to draw attention to what it regarded as false teaching, raising awareness of the drift away from the Wesleyan standards in Methodist pulpits, publications and other media. The main vehicle for propaganda was the Union's *Journal*, founded in 1914, initially as a quarterly, then as a monthly periodical. Through the *Journal* the members of the W.B.U. were fed a constant stream of splenetic reports about the latest Modernist utterances and excoriating reviews of Methodist publications. The number for April 1914, for example, drew attention to an address given at a meeting of Methodist ministers in Manchester at which the speaker asserted that the doctrine of the infallibility of Scripture was no longer tenable.<sup>28</sup> In October of the same year, three articles were devoted to reviewing *The Chief Corner-Stone*, a volume of 'essays towards an exposition of the Christian Faith for today' edited by W. T. Davison and with contributions by G. G. Findlay, the Moultons, W. W. Holdsworth, Lidgett, Banks, Herbert Workman, Frederic Platt, H. B. Workman, Harry Bisseker, Maldwyn Hughes and Luke Wiseman. The first article, by Spiers, was contemptuous of 'these invertebrate Essays' and wondered why they had been published at all. The title of the second article, by Harold Morton, spoke for itself: 'The Chief Corner-Stone: An Attempt to lull Methodists into False Security'. Bennetts completed the trio with a piece entitled 'The Fog-Land of Modernism', suggesting that the book 'will lead the readers who follow its guidance into a land of will-o'-the-wisps and quagmires.'<sup>29</sup> Two years later, the monthly 'W.B.U. Notes' turned their attention to 'Modernism in the *Methodist Recorder*', accused the *Recorder* and the *Methodist Times* of 'intense hostility to the old truth', and attacked articles in other Connexional publications by Beet and Eric Waterhouse.<sup>30</sup> Bennetts and Morton offered four articles denouncing the 1916 Fernley Lecture, Frank Ballard's *Christian Reality in Modern Light*.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup> *JWBU*, April 1914, p. 68.

<sup>28</sup> *JWBU*, April 1914, p. 37.

<sup>29</sup> *JWBU*, October 1914, pp. 122-39.

<sup>30</sup> *JWBU*, March 1916, p. 58; June 1916, p. 131; November 1916, pp. 248-50;

<sup>31</sup> *JWBU*, September 1916, pp. 200-7; October 1916, pp. 217-21; November 1916, pp. 261-4; December 1916, pp. 279-84.



Examples could be multiplied year by year, but the tenor of the material remained steady, with variation only in the tone, which ranged from lofty contempt via bitter disappointment to shrill indignation.

News reports in the *Journal* indicate that the W.B.U. managed to organise some public meetings to promote its cause, although what was termed 'aggressive work' was always hampered by a lack of funds, and perhaps also by a lack of enthusiasm for controversy on the part of the Union's subscribers. The other avenue for drawing attention to conservative grievances was that offered by the constitutional mechanisms of the Connexion, principally the Synods and the Conference. Memorials were brought to Conference deploring the doctrinal confusion fostered by the toleration of opinions contrary to the standards.<sup>32</sup> At the May Synods, when ministers were required to reaffirm their loyalty to the doctrines and discipline of the Connexion, conservatives could take the opportunity to question the honesty of Modernist preachers. This use of procedure was seldom effective: in one celebrated incident, Spiers attempted to make his point in the Third London Synod by refusing to answer 'Yes' to the doctrinal question, on the grounds that others had answered in the affirmative while holding very different doctrines to his own, thus forcing him to reply 'No'. The Revd Joseph Dixon, presiding in the absence of the Chairman, Dr Scott Lidgett, was perplexed by this logic and the matter was left unresolved until Lidgett returned from a London County Council meeting. According to Eric Waterhouse, Lidgett gave short shrift to the scrupulous Spiers: 'the doctor would have none of it. "It is frivolous. Put him down as saying 'yes'".'<sup>33</sup>

The second, and more positive, strand of the W.B.U.'s policy was to defend traditional beliefs and to witness to what it regarded as historic Methodist emphases. From the early issues of the *Journal*, space was devoted to apologetic works refuting the teaching of the higher critics. Articles appeared on the allegedly fallacious methods and assumptions of the Modernists, and on the testimony of geology and archaeology to the accuracy of Scripture.<sup>34</sup> These well-worn themes of conservative polemic may be found in the publications of other groups in this period, but what made W.B.U. uniquely Wesleyan was that material was also published on the theology and spirituality of Methodism. The most sustained example of this was a series of articles on 'Messages that made the Revival' by Harold Morton, published in the *Journal* between 1915 and 1917. Morton's articles offered an outline of Wesley's teaching, copiously illustrated from the *Sermons* and *Notes*, and missing no opportunity to use Wesley as a weapon against Biblical criticism,

<sup>32</sup> For instance, by the Tonbridge Circuit. *JWBU* Sept. 1916 p193

<sup>33</sup> Eric S. Waterhouse, 'The Public Servant', in R. E. Davies (ed.), *John Scott Lidgett. A symposium* (1957), p.165.

<sup>34</sup> *JWBU* January 1914, pp. 22-5 (Geology versus Evolution) and pp. 29-32 (Errors of the Higher] Critics).

Darwinism and modern theology. Despite the polemical purpose, the articles were sufficiently well received beyond the narrow circle of the W.B.U. to achieve publication in book form by the Epworth Press in 1920. The Foreword, by Dinsdale Young, underscored the positive message of the Wesleyan conservatives: the health of the contemporary Church, they claimed, depended on a recovery of the doctrine, spirituality and discipline of early Methodism.<sup>35</sup>

In a less systematic way, W.B.U. material often appealed to Methodist traditions and ethical norms. There was, for example, a strong commitment to the doctrine of entire sanctification, which could lift the *Journal* from the polemical spite to spiritual vision; thus, in a note on post-war reconstruction, published in 1917, the editors wrote, 'We would urge every individual even now this instant as he reads to cast himself upon Christ for full salvation.'<sup>36</sup> Our aim,' declared the *Journal* in March 1916, 'is to spread Scriptural holiness through the earth by the same doctrines, and the same manifestation of the doctrines in the daily life, as made the Methodist revival and did so much for the restoration of Apostolic Christianity.'<sup>37</sup>

The third element in the W.B.U.'s policy was to seek to bring doctrinal charges against alleged Modernists. The strategy of prosecution, first deployed against Jackson in 1913, was later used against a number of other ministers, including Ballard and S. T. Bosward. Although further investigation of the specific cases is yet to be undertaken, it is clear that this policy proved uniformly unsuccessful, and laid the Union open to accusations of fomenting controversy and disrupting the harmony of the Connexion. It may be suggested, moreover, that the W.B.U.'s persistent attempts to use the doctrinal standards against mainstream modern scholarship encouraged to move to redefine the scope of the standards to give the Connexion greater theological latitude. Frank Ballard, second only to George Jackson in the W.B.U.'s demonology warned the Conference of 1915 that 'We are in danger of our Standards being a yoke that enslaves us... It is possible to be throttled by a dead hand, even though that hand be the hand of John Wesley.'<sup>38</sup> Two years later a committee on Unity of Doctrine was set up, and its report recommended that ministers should be required to give assent to 'the general system of evangelical truth' in the standards. Although the 1919 Conference removed the word 'general', it also passed a resolution declaring that the foundation documents 'were not intended to impose a system of formal or speculative theology on our preachers'. By pressing issue of the standards, therefore, the W.B.U. engineered precisely the opposite result to the one it desired. Instead of securing strict adherence to the

<sup>35</sup> Dinsdale T. Young, 'Foreword', in H. C. Morton, *Messages that made the Revival* (1920).

<sup>36</sup> *JWBU* September 1917, p. 208.

<sup>37</sup> *JWBU* March 1916, p. 71.

<sup>38</sup> *JWBU* August 1915, p. 171.

letter of Wesley's Sermons and Notes, the controversy pushed the Wesleyan Connexion towards a much more open understanding of its doctrinal traditions, which in turn contributed to the successful outcome of negotiations for Methodist Union.<sup>39</sup>

From the beginning of the Jackson controversy in 1913 until the aftermath of the report on the Unity of Doctrine in 1919-20, the Wesley Bible Union fought vigorously within the Connexion to establish and to maintain its interpretation of the Wesleyan standards against the advocates of 'modern thought'. With the official endorsement of the broader reading of the foundation texts came an increasing impatience with the W.B.U. on the part of the Connexion, and a greater willingness on the part of the Union to separate itself from the Wesleyan Church. In 1920 Bennetts and Morton were threatened with charges of unbrotherly conduct, and Ballard's exoneration by a committee of enquiry in the same year drove Morton to resign from the ministry, although Conference voted to make him a supernumerary.<sup>40</sup> Through the 1920s the W.B.U. retained an uneasy position with Methodism, sustaining its campaign against doctrinal laxity by opposing the scheme for Methodist Union on the grounds that the proposed theological basis was ambiguous. Just before the Uniting Conference of 1932 Morton penned a characteristically vitriolic open letter to Russell Maltby about the 'reign of terror Methodism' which had destroyed the Church's message and prospects, and shortly after Union he resigned his status as a supernumerary minister.<sup>41</sup> It is tempting to speculate that the letter of regret from Lidgett and Robert Bond, the Secretary of Conference, may have been tinged with relief.

Despite its fervent Wesleyanism and its origins in a Connexional controversy, the W.B.U. had always acknowledged affinities with non-Methodist bodies and numbered among its members Methodists who were heavily involved in other elements of what Hensley Henson called 'the Protestant underworld'.<sup>42</sup> The process of disengagement from the Connexion through the 1920s went hand in hand with a realignment

<sup>39</sup> Bebbington 'Persecution of George Jackson', p.424; John Kent, *The Age of Disunity* (1966), pp.20-22.

<sup>40</sup> E. Morton and D. Dewar, *A Voice crying in the Wilderness. A Memoir of Harold Christopherson Morton* (1937), pp.39, 41.

<sup>41</sup> Morton and Dewar, *Morton*, pp.60-4, 68-70.

<sup>42</sup> For instance, Daniel Hone, who became a member of the W.B.U. committee in 1916, had a background in militant Protestantism, having been a co-founder with John Kensit of the Protestant Defence Brigade in the 1890s. On Hone, see *JWBU*, May 1916, p.105 and compare *The Churchman's Magazine*, September 1895, pp. 257-8. *MR*, 1 May 1913, p. 6 indicates continuing Protestant militancy. Morton's biography was published by the ultra-Protestant firm Thynne's, and J. A. Kensit was a prominent member of the B.B.U. by 1941: *British Bible Union Minutes*, 8 April 1941 (archive held by the Prophetic Witness Movement International). For the 'Protestant underworld', see H. H. Henson, *Retrospect of an Unimportant Life* (1943), 2, p.147.

which took the W.B.U. firmly into the sphere of undenominational ultra-conservative societies. By 1932 the Union had changed its name to the British Bible Union, and the *Journal* had become the *Fundamentalist*, although the cover of the magazine retained its picture of Wesley until the end of 1949.<sup>43</sup> The Union's independent existence continued until December 1955, when a crisis of finance and leadership compelled amalgamation with the Bible Testimony Fellowship. A subsequent merger combined the B.T.F. with the Advent Testimony and Preparation Movement, forming the society now known as the Prophetic Witness Movement International.

Four final observations may be made. First, although the early records of the W.B.U. have not survived, the available sources do indicate that active support for the Union was fairly slender. The stalwarts, like Bennetts and Morton, blamed apathy and indifference for this, but it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the Union's splenetic approach alienated many potential allies. Significant in this respect was the Union's failure to make common cause with Samuel Chadwick and the powerful Wesleyan Holiness tradition, despite Bennetts' and Morton's advocacy of entire sanctification.<sup>44</sup> In important ways the W.B.U. marginalised itself by adopting the mindset of a persecuted minority, continuing to manifest the impression given by Bennetts at the 1913 Conference: 'He feels he is almost alone, and that men shun him'. This 'mistake of an overwrought brother' became self-fulfilling.<sup>45</sup>

Second, as noted already, the W.B.U.'s tactics proved self-defeating. The determination to bring doctrinal charges prompted the Connexion to dispose of the rusty sword of subscription before it could do real damage. Moreover, the Union helped to brand what was later to become conservative evangelicalism in Methodism with an anti-intellectual, persecuting image which endured into the period after 1932.<sup>46</sup> In some respects, the W.B.U. did for conservative theology what the V.M.A. did for principled opposition to Anglican-Methodist Union.

Third, the Union exemplified one strand of Methodism's relationship with the wider world of English Nonconformity and Evangelical Protestantism. Alongside the involvement of individual Methodists in Free Church Congresses and Councils and in various proto-ecumenical bodies may be placed contacts with ultra-conservative groups like the Victoria Institute, the Adventist movement, and the Protestant Truth Society.

43 B.B.U. Minutes, 23 November 1949

44 Bebbington, 'Persecution of George Jackson', pp. 428-9

45 BW 31 July 1913, p.436.

46 Robert J. Kitching, 'The conservative-evangelical influence in Methodism, 1900-76', Birmingham M.A. diss., 1976. I am very grateful to the Revd Bob Kitching for the loan of this unpublished dissertation, and of letters upon which his research was based.

Fourth there is scope for further investigation into the link between the controversy and its context. It has already been seen that George Jackson's theology was neither original nor extreme, so it may be asked why this particular expression of 'modern thought' provoked such a reaction. It has been suggested that some changes among the senior figures at Conference meant that the affair was allowed to develop, rather than being discreetly managed behind the scenes.<sup>47</sup> If so, this approach revealed the tactical and numerical weakness of the ultra-conservatives. As the controversy grew, two other elements of the overall context were drawn into the debate: anxiety over declining membership figures and a whole range of issues provoked by the First World War.<sup>48</sup> Modernist theology and membership decline were linked as cause and effect by conservative polemicists, and the War was a propaganda bonus to opponents of scholarship 'made in Germany'.

Turning in conclusion to the themes of this conference, reunion was not on the W.B.U.'s agenda, other than as a threat to the doctrinal integrity of the Church. The Union's self-perception was that it was a society committed to revival through the maintenance of traditional orthodoxy in the Wesleyan Connexion. Its history, however, was one of continual retreat and increasing marginalisation as it slipped from albeit unsuccessful engagement in connexional affairs to the infighting of the fundamentalist ghetto. As a response to contemporary challenges at the turn of one century, the story of the Wesley Bible Union may serve as a salutary warning to those who face issues of revival, retreat and reunion at the turn of the next.

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<sup>47</sup> Bebbington 'Persecution of George Jackson', p.430, suggest that the key change was the death of H. J. Pope and the subsequent growing influence of Scott Lidgett.  
<sup>48</sup> *JWBU*, January 1915, pp.11-15 (the War); May 1915, pp. 102-3 (membership).

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*Tracing Nonconformist Ancestors* by Michael Gandy (64pp. £3.99) is part of a new series of Pocket Guides to Family History, published by the Public Record Office. It is divided into three sections: 1 Records Common to Nonconformists, ie registers etc, 2 Notes on the Main Denominations, which curiously include the Muggletonians but not the Countess of Hunting on's Connexion, and 3 Anglican and State Records which relate to Nonconformists. The emphasis is on material at the P.R.O., rather than local church records. There is a helpful bibliography. The cover depicts Mrs Horton and Miss Parker, Primitive Methodist evangelists, photographed in Great Yarmouth in 1887.

## 'RUNNING AFTER STRANGE WOMEN'

### An insight into John Wesley's troubled marriage from a newly discovered manuscript written by his wife.

FEW figures from early Methodist history have received a worse press than John Wesley's wife Mary. Her contemporaries viewed her with almost unanimous hostility and this negative picture was carried over into works of denominational history. As early as November 1752, less than two years after the couple married, Wesley's friend Vincent Perronet was remarking on her 'angry, bitter spirit',<sup>1</sup> while in a recent biography of John Wesley, Henry Rack described his subject's wife as 'a woman of a naturally jealous and possessive temperament which easily spilled over into a state of mental instability, tinged with sexual jealousy.'<sup>2</sup>

It is evident that Mary was a troubled woman and that her marriage to John Wesley was nothing less than a complete disaster for both parties. Methodist sources attribute most of the blame to Mary's emotional and mental fragility, while acknowledging that John was in certain respects a poor husband.<sup>3</sup> Vincent Perronet, who knew John better than most, stated that 'the unhappy lady is most to be pitied, though the gentleman's case is mournful enough.'<sup>4</sup> A root cause of Mary's dissatisfaction was her husband's refusal to allow restrictions on his freedom of action. He once famously stated that he could not understand a preacher travelling one mile less as a married man than he did as a bachelor.<sup>5</sup> If Mary had believed this to be an exaggeration, she would have soon realised her mistake.

John's relationships with other women represented another area of concern for his jealous partner. His affectionate letters to a number of female Methodists such as Sarah Ryan and Mrs Lefevre aroused Mary to fury and provoked a succession of temporary separations.<sup>6</sup> The unhappy couple's final parting occurred in 1778, three years before Mary died.<sup>7</sup>

- 1 Quoted by Luke Tyerman, *The Life and Times of John Wesley* (1872), 2: p.108.
- 2 Henry Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism*, (1989) p.267.
- 3 'No doubt, there were faults on his side as well as on the side of his twitting wife.' Tyerman, *The Life and Times of John Wesley*, 2: p.109.
- 4 Quoted by Tyerman op.cit. 2: p. 108.
- 5 Quoted by John Telford, *The Life of John Wesley* (1886), reprint as a new and revised edition (1929), p. 254.
- 6 See for example the letter of John Wesley to Sarah Ryan, 27 January 1758. John Wesley, *The Letters of John Wesley* (henceforth known as JWL), ed. John Telford (1931; reprint 1960), 4: p.4.
- 7 Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, p. 266.

This unhappy relationship has been covered in varying degrees of detail by Wesley's biographers, albeit with a certain air of distaste.<sup>8</sup> What is however missing from the picture is Mary's own story, except when reported second-hand and often from a hostile viewpoint. As far as is known, there are only two surviving manuscripts letters by Mary Wesley,<sup>9</sup> and no other autograph document,<sup>10</sup> with exception of the manuscript published here. This is surprising as Thomas Jackson in 1841 referred to the survival of 'scores of documents in her handwriting... which attest the violence of her temper, and would warrant the conclusion that there was in her a certain degree of mental unsoundness.'<sup>11</sup> We can detect from this statement a possible reason why the majority of these manuscripts have apparently vanished<sup>12</sup> - no Victorian biographer would have felt comfortable with such material, either for what it indicated of Mary's instability or the extent of her husband's contribution to the marital breakdown.

It is clear therefore that the document that is published here is important for its rare insight into John Wesley's troubled marriage from his wife's standpoint. Before turning to the transcript, we must first consider its provenance and authenticity.

The document was found within a scrapbook entitled 'Early Methodist Volume' which in 1977 was deposited on permanent loan by the Methodist Church of Great Britain at the John Rylands University Library of Manchester.<sup>13</sup> The scrapbook contained 153 loosely inserted eighteenth-century letters and miscellaneous papers. Many of the letters were written to Charles Wesley by a wide cross-section of lay correspondents but a few could not be identified when the volume was put together in the late nineteenth century. These were typically described in the list of contents as 'anonymous letters' and the Mary Wesley item fell into that category.

As part of a conservation project, the contents of the scrapbook were removed in October 2001 and placed in acid free containers. It was at

<sup>8</sup> 'Perhaps more than enough has been already said. It must be remembered, however, that John Wesley's marriage affected and tinted thirty years of his public life.' Tyerman op.cit 2: p.114.

<sup>9</sup> Mary Wesley to John Wesley, ALS, 31 May 1774, Reference DDWF 11/1, Methodist Church Archives (hereafter MCA), John Rylands University Library of Manchester (hereafter JRULM). This letter is published in Tyerman, *The Life and Times of John Wesley*, 2: pp. 112-112. Mary Wesley to 'Sister Ryne (?)', ALS, 12 November 1757, Reference D6/1/454), Wesley College, Bristol.

<sup>10</sup> One possible exception would be her will of 1781, which referred to in Methodist printed sources and should be extant in the records of the relevant probate court.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Jackson, *The Life of Rev. Charles Wesley* (1841), 1: p. 571.

<sup>12</sup> The Mary Wesley letter at Wesley College in Bristol (reference D6/1/454) was annotated by Thomas Jackson, indicating that this was one of the 'scores of documents' that he referred to in his biography of Charles Wesley. It may be a coincidence that the contents of this solitary item are not controversial.

<sup>13</sup> It forms part of the Connexional Archives.

this time that the fragment was identified and its significance quickly became apparent.

The document deposited at the Rylands is not signed and is at several points difficult to read. There can however be no doubt it was written by John's wife. A comparison with the handwriting of the two extant Mary Wesley letters<sup>14</sup> reveals a similarity between the three scripts although the legibility varies considerably. Conclusive proof is provided by internal evidence such as the reference to the author's brother-in-law 'C. Wesley.' The identification is however rendered complicated by an apparent contradiction that needs to be resolved. Reference is made in the document to Mary's daughter Jane Matthews giving birth to a daughter called Jane in February 1760. This clashed to some extent with information from Methodist biographical sources concerning Mary's children by her first marriage to Anthony Vazeille. According to the Methodist minister William Stamp, Mary's daughter Jane Vazeille married the prominent Newcastle layman William Smith on 7 March 1769.<sup>15</sup> There is no specific mention in any known nineteenth-century published work to an earlier marriage,<sup>16</sup> although Wesley does refer in passing to John and Jenny Matthews in a letter of April 1761.<sup>17</sup> The picture is rendered more complex still by a manuscript written by E. Perronet that refers to Miss Vazeille marrying John Matthews in 1767.<sup>18</sup>

The puzzle is solved by reference to the International Genealogical Index, which produced an entry for the marriage of John Matthews and Jane Vazeille on 24 July 1757 at St Luke, Old Street in Finsbury, London. They also recorded the marriage at the same church of William Smith and Jane Matthews on 7 March 1767. Despite the confusion of dates and identity of groom it is clear that Jane Matthews and Jane Vazeille was the same person. Jane's first husband John Matthews died on 28 December 1764, which event was recorded in John Wesley's *Journal*.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, instead of casting doubt on the authenticity of the document, this reference confirms the authorship by providing clarification of a matter that had previously been the subject of confusion in Methodist historical works.

Having concluded that this is a genuine manuscript of Mary Wesley, written in her own hand, all that remains before presenting a transcript

- 14 Mary Wesley to John Wesley, ALS, 31 May 1774, Reference DDWF 11/1, MCA  
Mary Wesley to 'Sister Ryne (/), ALS, 12 November 1757, Reference D6/1/454,  
Wesley College Bristol.
- 15 William W. Stamp *The Orphan House of Wesley with Notices of Early Methodism in  
Newcastle-upon-Tyne* (1863), p. 119.
- 16 See for example, Stevenson, *City Road Chapel, London, and its Associations*, (1872), p.  
472 and p. 475.
- 17 JW to Mary Wesley, 24 April 1761. JW 4: p. 153.
- 18 John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. W. Reginald Ward and Richard P.  
Heitzenrater (Nashville: Abingdon Press 1992), 21: p. 487n.
- 19 Entry for 28 December 1764. *Ibid.*, p. 497.



of its contents, is a note concerning its physical appearance, document type and the rules observed in its transcription.

The manuscript consists of a single sheet folded to create one blank page and three pages of handwriting. The holes left by bindings are visible on the fold. The sheet's dimensions are 15.8 cm by 12.5 cm. There is no watermark although faintly visible is the impress of printed lines, words and a title written in red. It appears therefore that the sheet has been torn from a small printed book of a style commonly associated with an almanac or diary.

It is important to consider if the manuscript represents a diary fragment or was written with another purpose in mind. The chronological arrangement and the probability that the sheet was removed from a printed pocket book supports the notion that it formed part of a diary or journal. Against this should be set the fact that there are considerable gaps between the date entries and, what is perhaps of more importance, all the entries appear to have been written at the same time as there is no significant break in handwriting style. If the document were a diary, this would represent an argument in favour of the reliability of Mary's version of events, albeit written from her particular viewpoint. On the other hand, if this manuscript represents part of Mary's vendetta against her husband then its accuracy would be undermined. It is known that in about 1775 Mary intended to publish papers that were damaging to John's reputation.<sup>20</sup> It is possible that this document was part of the dossier that she prepared as part of her campaign. That would not necessarily disprove her account, but it would be a factor in any consideration of its reliability.

The transcript's spelling, punctuation and paragraph division is accurately reproduced from the original, although some words have been placed in square brackets and the capitalisation altered to avoid unnecessary confusion.

Here then is an account by Mary Wesley of life with her husband, which will be followed by some concluding comments concerning what it tells us of the most troubled relationship of John Wesley's life:

#### Document reference EMV, 149

Feb 12 1760 My daughter Jane Matthwes was delivd of a daughter & was bap the 20 I stod Godmother & Mrs Richards & Mr Greenwood<sup>21</sup> Godfather. Mr Jo Wesley baptizd her by ye nam of Jane.

(The rest of this page is blank as is the one following).

<sup>19</sup> Entry for 28 December 1764. *Ibid.*, p. 497.

<sup>20</sup> Sally Wesley to anon, ALS, (c.1820), Reference DDWes 1/58, MCA. See also Tyerman, *John Wesley*, 2: p. 110 and Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, p. 267.

<sup>21</sup> This may be a reference to the prominent London layman Charles Greenwood, a close friend of the Wesleys and one of the first trustees of London's City Road Chapel, Stevenson, *City Road Chapel*, pp. 361-362..

Nov 3 (1760) left Bristol<sup>22</sup> and Sunday ye 9. I recivd the Sacrament after being expell that ordnance by my Husband & his Br C. Wesley between 3 & 4 years - But as this was don only to make the people think my husband & I whare united, when there was no such thing. I was convinced this was trifling with God & my own soul, so I recived but 3 time sin<sup>23</sup> (since).

December ye 11 & 12 (1760) Mr Ws running after strange women He did not stay to meet ye interscion (intercession) - but went away with Betty Disine<sup>24</sup> to dine at ye oth (other) end of ye town,<sup>25</sup> but was seen soon to get into a coach togethe<sup>26</sup> ye 13 at 11o clock. He came home I being in great grife seeing he had no regard to truth? nor his caractor, I cod not help speaking to him in a loving mannor to desist from runing after strange women for your caractor is at stake ys he resented hily (highly).

The events described in the above transcript are in broad agreement with what we know of Mary's complaints concerning her husband, although the detail gives rise to interesting questions. Her statement that she was denied communion by the Wesley brothers in about 1756 coincides with a major disagreement that took place at that time over John's correspondence with Mrs Lefevre.<sup>27</sup> The sacramental reference does however raise a difficulty of interpretation. For Mary to be excluded from the Lord's Table for any length of time by her own husband would have been highly controversial and there is no indication in his letters or journal that this took place. John would certainly have remembered the storm that broke over his head during the Sophia Hopkey affair,<sup>28</sup> which was the last occasion that personal relationships had intruded into his leadership of public worship. In fact

22 Although not explicitly stated, one can assume that Mary's destination was London. John Wesley's journal records that he also left Bristol on 3 November and it is probable therefore that they travelled together. John arrived in the capital on November 8 and remained there for two weeks. *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Ward and Heitzenrater, 21: p. 285.

23 An alternative reading of the ending of this paragraph would be 'so I received but 3 times in'.

24 'Betty Desine' was probably Elizabeth Designe, who was presumably a relation, perhaps a sister of John Wesley's correspondent the Bristol Methodist Susanna Designe. The family were originally from the Isle of Ely and were of French extraction. John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Frank Baker (Oxford: (1982), 26: p. 64n and information provided by Thomas Albin.

25 John visited Dover and Canterbury in the first week of December but was certainly back in London by the 9th and remained there until the New Year. *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Ward and Heitzenrater, 21: p. 290 and JWL, 4: p. 118.

26 It is clear from the context that the rest of this paragraph refers to events of the next day 13 December.

27 Tyerman, *John Wesley*, 2: p. 109.

28 Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 2: pp. 124-132.

it appears from the rest of the paragraph that Mary herself took the decision to stay away and that John was keen that she should receive communion if only for the sake of appearance.

The charge that John was seen climbing into the carriage with Betty Designe and stayed away all night is more likely to be based on truth. His 'running after strange women' was, as we have seen, one of his wife's constant complaints and is supported by other authorities. A particularly close friend was Sarah Ryan, housekeeper of the Bristol New Room. The correspondence between John and Sarah was a particular bone of contention for Mary and even Tyerman, who had little regard for Wesley's wife, described the tone of his letters as 'supremely foolish.'<sup>29</sup> Nothing is known of Betty Designe, but some aspects of Sarah Ryan's life could certainly be labelled 'strange;' she had enjoyed in Rack's words 'a spectacular career as a sinner' and the legality of her broken marriage to a sailor was highly doubtful.<sup>30</sup> For additional evidence of John's susceptibility to the delights of potentially dangerous female company, one should turn to the following words written in 1791 by the preacher John Pawson: 'his greatest weakness was his extreme fondness of the company of agreeable young women. Not that there was anything criminal in this. But in him it was an inexcusable weakness. He let himself down in the esteem of those who knew him the best exceedingly, and often he grieved them beyond measure'<sup>31</sup>

It is most unlikely that there was anything immoral in such relationships, but the fact remains that in this aspect of his personal life John Wesley was playing with fire. It is strange that a man who was extremely careful with his reputation in some respects, such as the finances of Methodism,<sup>32</sup> should have been so careless or naive in this regard. Mary may have been as insecure and unstable as Methodist sources suggest, but it is difficult not to feel some measure of sympathy for her. At the very least John had some strange notions of marital responsibility. It is a loss to Methodist scholarship that more of her papers have not survived as these would have cast light on one of the most revealing yet least understood relationships of John Wesley's life.

(I am grateful to John Lenton and the Methodist Church Archives and History Committee for permission to reproduce this text. Also invaluable in the writing of this article was the contribution made by Page A. Thomas and Wanda Smith of the Center for Methodist Studies at Bridwell Library, Perkins School of Theology).

GARETH LLOYD

(Gareth Lloyd is responsible for the Methodist Archives, Manchester)

<sup>29</sup> Tyerman, *John Wesley*, 2: p. 109.

<sup>30</sup> Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, p. 268 and *A Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland*, ed. John A Vickers (Peterborough: (2000), p. 304.

<sup>31</sup> Transcribed by Henry Rack. "Wesley Observed," *Proceedings* 49, Part 1 (February 1993), p. 17.

<sup>32</sup> Wesley arranged for the appointment of society stewards from a very early date to take responsibility for local finances. He was thus able to avoid the charge of growing rich by his leadership of the movement.

## **Methodist Archives: Manuscript Accessions February 2001 - February 2002**

Rev. John Banks's research collection of documents relating to the Bolton family of Oxfordshire.

Box of sermons, college photographs and magazines, collected by the Rev. John Yeoman Muckle, 1908-81.

The diaries of Eliza Weaver Bradburn, daughter of the Rev. Samuel Bradburn. Deposited by Janet Green.

Deposit of miscellaneous Methodist education items (including books for children) by George S. Stewart.

Methodist Church House deposit of Wesley Guild, and Methodist Education & Youth material, including Methodist Youth Department scrap-book re the 'Million half-Crown Fund' & correspondence. 1958-60, and Minute Book of the Education section of the Twentieth Century Fund, 1902 - 1907.

Collection of ms. correspondence of twentieth-century Methodist ministers, Revs. Neville Ward, Frank Cumbers, and Geo. H. Davies, with Rita Newman. Deposited by Mrs Newman.

Miscellaneous printed items relating to the Duxbury family and Methodism in West Yorkshire (local histories, chapel anniversary service notices etc.), and souvenir handbook, 'The Mow Cop Story, 1807 - 1957'. Deposited by Mrs M. Duxbury

PETER B NOCKLES

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### **BOOK REVIEWS**

*'Heart Religion' in the Methodist Tradition and Related Movements*, ed, by Richard B. Steele (The Scarecrow Press Inc., Lanham, Maryland and London 2001, pp.xlv, 317. £85.50 hb. ISBN 0 8108 4057 X.)

This symposium by scholars in the Methodist and Holiness traditions in the United States is Number 12 in a series of Pietist and Wesleyan Studies. It draws richly on John Wesley's theology of Christian experience as 'Faith working by love', and is orientated towards entire sanctification. The authors examine the varied forms 'the religion of the heart' took as it found root in America, exploring German Pietism; the African-American tradition; the Holiness Movement; and the experience

of women in American Methodism. The contributors believe that to add 'orthopraxis' (right conduct) to 'orthodoxy' (right belief) is not enough for the fulness of the life of faith. The Christian also needs 'orthopathy' (right passion or affections) - the experiential element - to complete the whole. Part I consists of historical studies; Part II suggests how genuine 'heart religion' may be reclaimed for the contemporary Church.

Randy Maddox, in 'A Change of Affections', shows how the Moravians led Wesley fundamentally to modify his rational and moralistic Anglicanism, through a faith encounter that gave experience of God's gracious gift of 'new affections'. Yet such 'heart-warming' was, and is, no passing emotional moment, but 'an encounter with God that convinces us *at the core of our being* (my italics) that "Thy nature and Thy name is love."' That reflects Wesley's biblical understanding of the heart as the inmost soul, the centre of the personality, comprehending the affections, but also intimately related to the understanding and the will.

Thomas R. Albin, in 'Inwardly Persuaded: Religion of the Heart in Early British Methodism', draws on John Wesley's writings, Charles's hymns, and memoirs of early Methodists, to show the key importance of fellowship groups - bands, classes, societies - in fostering, and disciplining, 'right affections'. Henry Whelchel Jr., in "'My Chains Fell Off": Heart Religion in the African American Methodist Tradition', shows how 'heart religion' appealed to African-Americans, whose worship was characterized by, 'dynamic preaching, soulful music and frenzied emotion'. The indignities they endured in a slave-owning society led in the nineteenth century to the formation of a series of Black Methodist Churches, in which heart religion did not suppress social action, so that, in the 1960s, these churches helped provide leadership for the Civil Rights Movement.

A. Gregory Schneider ('Heart Religion on the Divide;) and Diane Leclerc ("The Spirit's Cry in the Soul": Heart Religion among American Methodist Women'), show how such religion challenged the prevailing patriarchy in nineteenth-century Church and society. Women, like the outstanding evangelist Phoebe Palmer, took leading roles in the Church and engaged in active ministry to the poor and despised.

Part II - 'Heart Religion Today: Constructive Proposals' - makes positive suggestions on the basis of a Wesleyan theology of Christian experience. The writers are clear that Wesley's 'religion of the heart' is not passing emotion, privatised religious sentiment or irrational enthusiasm. As Les S. Steele insists, Christian affections, 'are not irrational, but reasonable. For Wesley, the affections served as spiritual senses, working with reason to guide knowledge and wisdom'. The affections, as Wesley taught, are to be undergirded by the means of grace - both 'works of mercy' (ministry to human need) and 'works of piety' (prayer, fasting, the sacrament, Bible-reading, fellowship...), Theodore Runyon concludes the volume with a fine study of the criteria for genuine Christian experience, which should have its source in God,

not in subjectivism; be life-transforming and issue in service; be rational (cf. Wesley. 'All irrational religion is false religion'; be sacramental (feelings being physical, yet conveying a spiritual meaning); and be directed to the goal of perfect love.

This is a welcome and thorough study of Wesley's 'religion of the heart', which has been so often caricatured and misunderstood. There are few typographical errors, but it is remarkable that on p.102 'May 28, 1738' should be cited as the date of Wesley's Aldersgate experience.

JOHN A NEWTON

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*The Methodists in Ireland. A Short History* by D. A. L. Cooney, (Columbia Press, Dublin 2000, pp280 £10-99, ISBN 1 85607 335 1)

This new book by the Rev. Dudley Cooney is to be welcomed by historians and Methodists alike. Previous histories of Methodism in Ireland, notably Crookshank (1885 reprinted 1994), completed by Cole (1960), are now very dated, being both uncritical and narrative based. Other attempts such as Jeffery (1964) are slight in comparison with this new book.

This 'short history' of the Methodists in Ireland is written with the intention of informing modern Irish Methodists of their history and to provide information for those of other churches who wish to find out about Methodists in an ecumenical age. It will succeed in both of those aims. It goes further. It begins with a section on the Wesleys and the distinctive Methodist contribution. It has a telling section headed 'the Methodist Connexions', which summarises Irish Methodism in Wesley's day, the peculiarly Irish divisions of the nineteenth century, and Irish Methodism under three jurisdictions from 1922. Dudley Cooney has a useful chapter on structures of Methodism, perceptive about Conference and its relation to the British Conference and a section on smaller groups. He then tackles a number of themes, the lives of the preachers, circuit life, education, social concerns, emigrants and foreign missions. These are very useful in bringing out unusual features of Irish Methodist life and giving a good picture of the changing nature and daily life of Irish Methodism. The contribution to education is well known. Less known have been social concerns such as the Stranger's Friend Society, the help given by Methodists to sufferers during the nineteenth-century famines, and the complexities of Methodist attitudes on moral question such as drinking alcohol, all of which are well brought out. The important part played by Stanley Worrall and Eric Gallagher in the negotiations in the troubles since 1974 are documented here. Following Norman Taggart, Cooney discusses the work of Irish Methodists in World Mission and is particularly interesting on late twentieth-century contributions. The only section missing from the book is the importance of the Irish contribution to the British Methodist Church, which admittedly

may not be strictly relevant to the author's purpose. William Thompson, the 'First President' is mentioned and William Arthur, but the latter only in an Irish context. There is nothing on Myles the historian, Griffith the President or Macdonald, founder of a famous family, or of other Irish Methodist preachers transferred to England, while twentieth-century contributions like those of the Ludlow family are also passed over.

Cooney, who is the current President of the Irish branch of the WHS has written a number of articles on related subjects. He is eminently skilled for this task, bringing assured style and detailed knowledge together. He is particularly good on the challenges facing the Irish Church today. This reviewer was also impressed by the skill with which he sums up the sweep of Methodist history. The occasional slip occurs. John Crook, being born in Lancashire, cannot be 'the first *Irish* preacher to head an Irish Conference' p. 128, though he was the first *Irish based* preacher to do that, and it is 'Seed' not 'Steel' on p152. However these are but very minor blemishes and his grasp of the material remains assured. The brief Appendices include lists of Conferences and Presidents which correct Garlick, though they don't have the Primitive Wesleyans. These Appendices, the notes and the lists of sources will be of help to other historians. General readers will find the comparison with British Methodist history instructive, as did this reviewer .

JOHN H. LENTON

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*Chapels in Essex: chapels and meeting houses in the County of Essex, including Outer London* by Rosalind Kaye. (London, Chellow Dean Press, 1999. pp.72. £7.95. ISBN 0 95 37549 01)

This book conveys a sense that Essex man was decidedly old Dissent, whereas the New Dissent of Methodism, although in part filling existing gaps, was London overspill. The religious expression of this is in the surviving architecture and the text is supported by an excellent selection of illustrations, many in colour. The discerning reader will detect the differing influences of Metropolitan architects, particularly George Baines whose jolly gothic represents 'overspill', regionally based architects such as John Wills of Derby and local ones, notably James Fenton of Chelmsford, the various strands contributing to the rich heritage.

A substantial gazetteer covers the pre-1965 county but distinguishing between the present county and what is now part of Greater London; sensibly grid references are provided and architects when known. It is not as user friendly as may first appear, especially for the urban areas, notably Outer London, where chapel names and street locations would have helped. Further, architectural attributions could have been greater, such as John Wills for Waltham Abbey Wesleyan Methodist (1905) and Messrs Howdill of Leeds for Manor Park Primitive Methodist (1901). There are some slips in the text: it is not 'Weslyan' (p.67) and it is 'C', not 'G' Bell (p. 63) who was the architect of Steeple Bumpstead Congregational Chapel.

A further county study of Nonconformist architecture is most welcome, despite weaknesses.

D. COLIN DEWS

# **The Annual Lecture**

Will be delivered in Springdale Methodist  
Church, Penn, Wolverhampton  
on  
**Monday 1 July 2002 at 7.30pm**

Professor Clyde Binfield, OBE, MA, PhD

## **'Victorian Values and Industrious Connexions'**

Chairman:  
The Revd John Munsey Turner, MA, BD

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

\*Please book with the General Secretary by 15 June.

**Cost £2.50 per head**



**DIRECTIONS TO SPRINGDALE METHODIST CHURCH  
WARSTONE ROAD, PENN, WOLVERHAMPTON**

COMING TO WOLVERHAMPTON BY TRAIN OR BUS

Go to the bus station on the railway station approach road.

COMING TO WOLVERHAMPTON BY THE METRO

Get off at the terminus (St Georges) and cross the road to the Police station then turn right towards the Courts. At the first road turn left and you will see the bus station 100 yards in from of you on the right.

COMING FROM THE CONFERENCE HALL

Go to the the bus stops in Victoria Street opposite Beatties Department Store.

**BUS 514** Springhill. Bus Station - Stand N or opposite Beatties and by the Pizza Hut in Victoria Street. The bus stops outside the church and runs every  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour at teatime and every hour afterwards. Leaves Wolverhampton 1610, 1640, 1710, 1740, 1820. Takes about 25 minutes.

**BUS 261** Dudley. Bus Station - Stand M or opposite Beatties and by Waterstones Book Shop. Ask for Holly Bush Lane. When you get off the bus walk in the direction the bus is going to the T-junction (Warstones Road) turn right and the Church is on your right. Walking time 3 minutes. Bus leaves Wolverhampton every  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour 1615, 1645, 1715, 1745, 1815, 1845. Takes about 18 minutes.

**EITHER BUS 256** Stourbridge, or **BUS 260** Merry Hill Centre. Bus Station - Stand M or opposite Beatties and by Waterstones Book shop. Ask for the Holly Bush Hotel. Cross over the road to the Holly Bush Hotel and walk down Holly Bush Lane to the T-junction (Warstones Road) turn right and the Church is on your right. 5 minutes walk. These buses between them run every 10 minutes until 1800 then every 15 minutes till 1915 then every half hour. Takes about 16 minutes.

**BY CAR FROM WOLVERHAMPTON.** Use the Ring Road to the A449 (South) signed Stourbridge, Kidderminster and/or Penn for  $2\frac{1}{4}$  miles. After Penn Hospital on your left go through the traffic light to the next set of traffic lights and turn right by the Holly Bush Hotel into Holly Bush Lane. Go to the T-junction, turn right into Warstones Road. The Church is on your right. Go past the Church and turn right into Wynchcombe Avenue then immediately right into the car park.

**BY CAR FROM KIDDERMINSTER STOURBRIDGE OR DUDLEY via HIMLEY GO ALONG THE A449 Towards Wolverhampton.** After passing the signs to Wombourne (on your left) continue along the dual carriageway until you see the 'Welcome to Wolverhampton' signs. At the roundabout take the second road off (Warstones Road) for  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile. Pass the Penn Christian Centre (on your right) and you will come to the Church also on your right. Go past the Church and turn right into Wynchcombe Avenue and immediately right into the car park.

NB The bus information is correct at the time of writing.