

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

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

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

Proceedings

OF THE

Wesley Historical Society

Editor: E. ALAN ROSE, B.A.

Volume 56

May 2008

ALEXANDER'S DAUGHTER

The Childhood of Sarah Kilham

Fifty-nine years after John Wesley was born, the small north-west Lincolnshire town of Epworth, through a seeming irony of Providence, was to see the birth of the principal leader of the first major secession from the movement that he founded. The aim of this article is to review the more or less familiar story of Alexander Kilham, and consequently those of his successive wives Sarah Gray and Hannah Spurr, from the unfamiliar perspective of his young daughter. Alexander was born on 10 July 1762 and baptised at St Andrew's Church on 6 August, the third son of Simon Kilham or Killam (1729-1802), a linen weaver and Methodist convert, and Elizabeth, née Ingham; they had married in 1751. The eldest son was another Simon (1758-1836), the second Richard (born 1760) and the youngest Thomas (?1764-1826).¹ Alexander's actual birthplace cannot be pinpointed with absolute accuracy. There is, however, a tradition in Epworth that the Kilham family home was a former farm, now much changed and called Prospect House, otherwise 79 High Street. This is almost opposite Tottermire Lane and near the end of the long main street from the Market Cross.

Wesley refers to the wholesome effect of the Epworth revival of 1781-2 upon four spinning and weaving factories where young people worked.² Perhaps he included the small sacking manufactory which Simon had set up for his children's sake. Alexander's specialism was

¹ The Epworth parish registers have been transcribed and published in a series of booklets by the Isle of Axholme Family History Society. A Richard Kilham was buried on 24 Feb 1826 aged 62 but the dates do not quite fit. Thomas was baptised on 15 Feb 1765 and buried 19 Oct 1826 aged 62.

² J. Wesley, *Standard Journal*, 6 (1915, repr. 1936), pp 351-3

marketing the product, and he excelled at it.³ He was the last of the brothers to convert,⁴ but the only one whose conversion brought about a dramatic career change. He would remain an effective travelling salesman but the commodity became a spiritual one. He responded to the call progressively in private prayer meetings, public ones and a mission band; then he served as a local preacher and from 1783 as travelling assistant to Squire Robert Carr Brackenbury in Gainsborough and the Channel Islands. Alexander's parents resisted this at first,⁵ but they saw that God's will must be done. It meant sacrifices, not only of his company but also of the considerable business that he had brought to the family firm.⁶

Alexander Kilham's next five years need not detain us long: supplying the Grimsby Circuit full-time, being recommended to Wesley for the itinerancy by his superintendent, and appointed successively to Horncastle (1785), Gainsborough (1786) and Scarborough (1787). Less well-known perhaps is the fact that at Gainsborough in June 1787 he fell ill from overwork and was sent to Hull to rest and recuperate. He apparently recovered, but it was reported to his mentor Squire Brackenbury that he had consumption (tuberculosis); concern must have remained because a year later he enquired of William Warrener, Methodism's first missionary in Antigua, about the suitability of the West Indian climate for 'persons of a consumptive condition'. Despite an encouraging answer he did not pursue this, maybe for domestic reasons;⁷ but one cannot but speculate whether this propensity would play a part in sad events some ten years on.

A credible domestic reason was that Alexander had found a wife. Let us hear in his own words how they met. A friend in the Scarborough Circuit had pointed out Sarah Gray (or Grey) to him.

[He] told me he thought she would make me a proper companion, and supposed she would have no great objection to enter into my line of life. – As he spoke so warmly on this matter,

³ 'An Account of Simon Kilham. By his Son', *The Methodist [MNC] Magazine, or Evangelical Repository* (hereafter *MMER*), 5 (1802), pp 185-7, 378-80, 419-22; here 379. The author is probably Simon junior, the most prominent of the three Kilham sons remaining in Epworth.

⁴ anon. [J. Blackwell], *Life of the Rev. Alexander Kilham* (London and Manchester, 1838), pp 52-6, gives a full picture of his protracted coming to faith. Hereafter cited as Blackwell.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p 62

⁶ 'An Account', pp 378-9

⁷ Blackwell, pp 103-7

and said so much in her favour, I was determined to see her, and laid the matter before the Lord, begging his direction. I accordingly paid her a visit, and finding her disengaged, and that she had no objection either to my person or line of life, an acquaintance began, and our union in a few months was the consequence of it.⁸

The visit was in December and they were married at Pickering Parish Church on Easter Day, 24 March 1788, with Wesley's due permission. Vitally, as Alexander was still within his 4-year period of probation, his bride's independent means enabled him to guarantee that Connexional funds would not be affected.

Sarah was 32, born at Pickering on 9 October 1756 and baptised the next day, the daughter of John Gray, captain of an American merchantman, and Hannah. She had a house in the town and kept it up through Alexander's second year in the circuit. It was there that Sarah junior, whom we shall call Sally during her childhood, came into the world in December 1788. She too was baptised at the Parish Church on 24 May 1789, Alexander probably deferring to his wife and mother-in-law on this occasion, in contrast to a later event at Whitby, and her parents 'solemnly offered up their infant to the Lord to be his for ever'.⁹

So Sally, too young to remember, moved round the North with her parents: the next year to Pocklington and a tiny uncomfortable house in a huge circuit with a six-week preaching round; in 1790 to Whitby, where her brother Samuel was born in March 1791, provoking a dispute between their father and a leading local Methodist who demanded that he should be baptised in the Parish Church and his mother churched there;¹⁰ and then to Newcastle-upon-Tyne, where he died in November from inflammation of the chest: 'the Lord called us to part with our dear little boy', as his father put it.¹¹

⁸ J. Grundell and R. Hall, ed., *The Life of Mr Alexander Kilham, Methodist Preacher...* [by himself], (Nottingham, 1799), pp 38-9. Blackwell (p 109) omits the account of their meeting. Kilham and Blackwell use the spelling 'Grey', her family 'Gray'.

⁹ Blackwell, p 111

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p 122. Kilham won; there is no Anglican baptismal record. His attitude to the Church of England is traceable to an incident back in the Grimsby Circuit. Blackwell (pp 73-7) shows how the incumbent of Skendleby, near Spilsby – ironically, Squire Brackenbury's brother – forced him to declare himself a dissenter under the Toleration Act in order to continue preaching.

¹¹ A. Kilham, *A Short Account of the Life and Death of Mrs Sarah Kilham* (Leeds, 1797), p 7; Blackwell, p 147

Alexander was soon in the public eye more than locally by circulating a pamphlet – the first of many on constitutional issues – defending his retired colleague Joseph Cownley for celebrating the Lord's Supper. The Conference of 1792, shunning a radical image in a revolutionary era, censured him and sent him away to Aberdeen as superintendent.¹² Alexander had a capacity for presenting events in a personally favourable light: nobody wanted to go to Aberdeen, he later wrote, so he consented on condition that he and his family could stay in Newcastle until Sarah had recovered from her next confinement, and Conference agreed. It was another boy, another Samuel; this was a late example of the practice of naming a child after a deceased infant sibling. They moved to Aberdeen in October.¹³

The journey nevertheless proved very trying for Sarah and the baby, but the little girl, now nearly 4, was tougher. Alexander confirmed their safe arrival and warm welcome in a long letter to John Gaulter in Newcastle, describing the work already under way and also making the earliest references so far found to his daughter as a person in her own right: 'Sarah often talks about R—— and asks when she will come in the Coach'.¹⁴

Although Alexander Kilham doubtless enjoyed the opportunity afforded by his Aberdeen appointment to generate a profusion of reformist pamphlets, his satisfaction evidently came to be marred by family problems. Perhaps the writing was literally a diversion. Ten months after arriving in Aberdeen, 'our second Samuel' died of the measles. It was too much for Sarah and she suffered recurrent breakdowns in health, psychological at least in part. There is a sad memento of this in the preachers' account book: Alexander recorded a grant of £2 5s 6d as 'Expences of the Child's funeral & the Dr. in my wife's late affliction'.¹⁵

On compassionate grounds Conference permitted Sarah's husband to

¹² E.A. Rose, 'Kilham, Alexander', in J.A. Vickers, ed., *A Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland* (Peterborough, 2000), p 191. For a fuller analysis of Kilham's reformist campaign against the Methodist leadership, see the same author's 'The Methodist New Connexion 1797-1907: Portrait of a Church', *Proceedings*, 47 (1990), pp 241-53, here 241-4; hereafter Rose (1990).

¹³ Kilham, pp 7-8; Blackwell, p 173

¹⁴ John Rylands University Library of Manchester, Methodist Archives and Research Centre (MARC): MAM PLP 64.36.8, AK to J. Gaulter, 12 Nov 1792. 'R——' represents a name indecipherably superimposed on another. In references to their correspondence the various Kilhams are cited thus: AK, Alexander; HK, Hannah; SiK, Simon senior; SK, Sarah junior; SK(S), Sarah senior; TK, Thomas.

¹⁵ H.R. Bowes, 'Alexander Kilham's Cash Book', *Proceedings*, 50 (1996), p 184

stay in Aberdeen for a third year, but circuit engagements continued to make their claims. She encouraged him heroically, but for her unspoken feelings we must read between the lines of a comment by little Sally which she relayed to him: 'she says, I must be father and mother to her, since her father stays so long away'. Miscarriage followed miscarriage.¹⁶ Alexander courted controversy and his frequent disputes could have done nothing for Sarah's peace of mind either. In 1795 they were to be transferred to Alnwick. About to leave her Scottish friends and with another rare reference to Sally, she wrote to Alexander, 'I hope the Lord will give me and the child strength to prosecute the journey'. They sailed to Shields for Alnwick, and she rallied.¹⁷

But it did not last long. Alexander's feeling of being surrounded by a host of foes – and on any foes within we can only speculate, but surely he was not impervious to his wife's troubled state – was exacerbated by the publication of *The Progress of Liberty amongst the People called Methodists*, which Rose calls 'his most strident pamphlet'.¹⁸ For the fateful Conference of 1796 Sarah rode with him and Sally to the circuit boundary and was thrown from her horse, severely spraining her ankle. 'Under the protection of a good and gracious providence, I and my dear Sally got safe to Alnwick last night... in a return chaise', she wrote. She was too lame to leave the house. 'Sally is well and gives her love'.¹⁹ Sally was now 7½ years old, quite capable of remembering such a dramatic incident, and there was worse to come. Yet in later life, in such of her own writings and accounts of her as have survived, there is never a word about this, and indeed very little about her mother. We may well surmise that it was just too painful to recall.

Riled by Alexander's personal attacks even more than his proposals for the democratization of Methodism's governmental structures at all levels, Conference expelled him. Sarah felt the turbulence in faraway Alnwick. One expulsion led to another: mother and daughter had to leave their Alnwick home. This was a logical outcome, but Alexander clearly felt that it had been done harshly. Fortunately there were offers of hospitality from friends, and Sarah and Sally moved successively to Newcastle, Sunderland, Pickering (doubtless to her mother's), Leeds and various places in what is now Greater Manchester. Meanwhile Alexander was producing his *Methodist Monitor*, campaigning and preaching in the

¹⁶ Kilham, pp 8-10; Blackwell, pp 179, 216-17

¹⁷ Kilham, p 13

¹⁸ Rose (2000)

¹⁹ MARC: Sheffield Deposit, Box 324 (2), under Eversfield, SK(S) to AK, 15 and 21 July 1796 (references hereafter to this source begin with the box number); Kilham, p 15

North of England wherever he was welcome, and seeing his family at intervals.²⁰ In November he wrote from Liverpool that he had heard his wife was very poorly; ever since he had left Salford she had been confined to her room.²¹

Enervated by her nomadic life, in mid-January 1797 Sarah suffered the start of her final breakdown, characterized by violent headaches and stomach upsets leading to inability to eat. A pathetic bill from the doctor survives: embrocations for her head, a 'stomachic mixture' and injections of bark,²² i.e. quinine, used to treat fever. For five weeks she wasted away until the end came on 23 February, at the house of William Heginbottom in Ashton-under-Lyne. She was 40 years old. Alexander preached at her funeral and on related themes at morning and evening services on the same Sunday.²³ With his travelling campaign in full swing, what was to become of 8-year-old Sally? On hearing the sad news, both his mother-in-law and his father had sent letters of sympathy, alluding also to their grandchild. Hannah Gray had written:

My whole thoughts are taken up by thinking of you and my dear little Salley. I do assure you I and the rest of my family and many friends do feel much for you and I could wish if it is agreeable to you to send little Salley to my house, she should have every necessary comfort I could make her, but you being her father has [sic] the only right to do as you think the best.²⁴

In fact Alexander had already exercised this right. He had written to his father, Simon Kilham, who fortunately had failed to fulfil his own prediction some 30 months earlier that he would 'see [his son's] face no more on this side of the grave',²⁵ asking if Sally might stay with him until the 1797 Conference. Simon, now 67 and since 1785 a widower, replied from Epworth on 28 February:

I say bring her, she shall be as welcome as ever thou was for I long to see her. When thou sends I will meet thee at Doncaster with thy horse & another to bring her on & I think as we shall be all strange to her thou had better come on with us to my house

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp 16-20; Blackwell, pp 292-3, 303-7

²¹ MARC: MAM P.L.P. 64.36.7, AK to W. Franklin, 22 Nov 1796

²² Among correspondence in Box 324 (1)

²³ Kilham, pp 18-22. The respective texts were Rev 14:13, 2 Sam 12:21-23 and Heb 9:27.

²⁴ Box 324 (2), Hannah Gray to AK, 7 Mar 1797

²⁵ Blackwell, p 196

& stay all night with her & next morning go on to Thorne for a few days & then come back & thou will see how she settles with us, for Beckey [his housekeeper?] will do the best she can for her & she is very well qualified, I think, as any body I know of for the same, and she will be glad to see her at our house, she shall want for nothing we can do for her.

He was sorry that he had not known how ill her mother was or he would have come over to Leeds one last time to see her; 'but it is all over now so let thy little lass come, let her go nowhere else'.²⁶ Simon's kindly thoughtfulness shines through.

So Alexander took Sally with him to Barnsley, where he preached in the Independent chapel, met his father and brother at Doncaster and handed her over. But he was made of sterner stuff than his father. He stuck to his plan to proceed immediately to Thorne and preach in that area for a week before visiting Epworth, where on 1 April he completed his short biography of Sarah, with the three sermons appended. In this he tried, and forty years later Blackwell tried harder still, to refute the criticism that Sarah's tragic end was the result of his opposition to the Wesleyan preachers; but if that had been so, he argued, the direct cause had been his expulsion – and her subsequent eviction – by Conference. He stressed that during her troubles he had travelled only at her insistence.²⁷ We need not be judgmental, for even today anyone with a job to do and a sick spouse to support will empathize with Alexander in his dilemma. To be sure, his response to his father's suggestion about staying with Sally overnight shows a high degree of tough-mindedness. In recent months, however, the child had grown used to care by strangers, and perhaps she was already building upon an inherited resilience of character which would stand her in good stead in later years.

After his Epworth interlude, Alexander said good-bye to his daughter and returned to Leeds via the East and North Ridings.²⁸ We may assume that old Simon was still living on the family farm mentioned earlier, half a mile north-west of the Old Rectory, probably joined by his eldest son and namesake, himself a widower with four young children and several more to come from a second marriage.²⁹ So Sally had no shortage of Epworth cousins, and it was this uncle with whom she kept in touch in later life. Simon and his father were both paying land tax in 1795, and by

²⁶ Box 324 (3), SiK to AK, 28 Feb 1797; spelling corrected

²⁷ Kilham, p 26; Blackwell, pp 216-17, 310-12

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p 316

²⁹ Isle of Axholme Family History Society, Epworth Parish Registers transcripts

1800 they had been joined in the assessments by the other two brothers, Richard and Thomas, a clockmaker.³⁰ This suggests a modest prospering of the family fortunes.

On 9 May, about a month after Alexander's departure from Epworth, his father sent him a letter partly on New Connexion business and partly on personal matters in which Sally figures prominently. She and Rebecca send thanks for their presents. She is very content and happy and keeps as 'close' to her reading, writing, knitting and sewing as they can expect. There is also a hint that Alexander has been sounding Simon out on remarriage: he is at liberty to marry again, only let him do the Lord's will. Then follows something unique: a short note from Sally herself, sandwiched between her grandfather's news and views, in a bold but somewhat irregular hand:

Honrd and dear Father I received your kind advice And am glad to hear from you and that you are in health let me hear from you again as soon as you can. Sarah Kilham.³¹

The salutation seems to show a mixture of formality and affection in child-parent relations at a time when the pendulum was starting to swing back to the deference of two centuries earlier.³² What the letter does not reveal is much of Sally herself. The child is mother of the woman.

This was the period when Sally had her only protracted experience of Epworth Methodism, for she stayed at her grandfather's until April 1798. She would have known the earliest chapel there, described as 'lately erected' in 1772.³³ She would also have been a somewhat uncomprehending witness to the local impact of Methodism's first significant schism. E.A. Rose provides an account of the separation: Alexander's failure to persuade the 1797 Conference to accept lay representation; the inauguration of the 'New Itinerancy' at Ebenezer Chapel, Leeds, by himself as Secretary, three other preachers – William Thom, elected first President, the loyal Stephen Eversfield from Alnwick, and Alexander Cummin – and a small group of laymen; and the defection of some 5,000 members (5%) from the Wesleyans.³⁴ The Kilham family at

³⁰ Lincolnshire Archives: LQS, Land Tax, Manley 1795, 1800; Tonge 2/99

³¹ Box 324 (3), SiK to AK, 9 May 1797

³² L. Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800*, rev. edn. (London, 1979, repr. 1990), p 260

³³ F. Baker, 'The Beginnings of Methodism in Lincolnshire', *Journal of the Lincolnshire Methodist Historical Society*, 4 (1988), no 1, pp 4-19, here 10. He notes that Myles, *Chronological History of the People called Methodists* (1813), gives a 1758 date.

³⁴ Rose (1990), pp 243-6

Epworth naturally supported their famous – or notorious – kinsman.³⁵ Like her father in his day, but now in a highly politicized atmosphere, Sally was witness to a succession of preachers enjoying the hospitality of the Kilhams.³⁶

Meanwhile, in Sheffield, events were unfolding which would bring about a formative force in Sally's life and a defining influence on her career. The founding Conference of the MNC on 9 August 1797 named Sheffield first in the list of places where they had supporters,³⁷ and appointed Alexander there. On the same day Hannah Spurr, nearly 23, wrote in her occasional journal about the schismatics of whom she had just heard:

Who are these poor Kilhamites (as they are called), so despised by some, and pitied by others? They are immortal souls – they are not contemptible – not beneath our notice! Oh, God, direct me!³⁸

As the future Hannah Kilham has been the subject of a substantial modern biography – Mora Dickson's *The Powerful Bond* (1980) – details here will be sparing, except in so far as they relate to her stepdaughter.

Briefly to sketch Hannah's childhood and youth: she was born on 12 August 1774, the seventh child of Peter and Hannah Spurr, 'respectable tradespeople'. Baptised on 14 September 1774 at St Peter's Church (which was to become Sheffield Cathedral in 1914), she was to attend a day school at the vicarage, Broom Hall, where the formidable James Wilkinson held sway.³⁹ When she was about 12 her mother died. Under the supervision of a non-resident married sister she took charge of her family for two years until her father's death, when they were dispersed. For another two years she was sent to a boarding school at Chesterfield, where she was rather too bright for the master's comfort.

Back in Sheffield, Hannah spent the rest of her teens torn between

³⁵ 'An Account', p 420 (Simon senior); C. Atkinson, 'Obituary: Mr Simon Kilham', *Methodist New Connexion Magazine and Evangelical Repository* (hereafter *MNCM*), 40 (1837), pp 232-4, here 233 (Simon junior)

³⁶ Blackwell, p 50; G. Wall, 'Reminiscences of the Kilham Family', *MNCM*, 52 (1849), pp 126-9, here 126

³⁷ Rose (1990), p 244: 'A part of the Sheffield society and circuit'.

³⁸ S. Biller, ed., *Memoir of the Late Hannah Kilham, Chiefly Compiled from her Journal* (London, 1837), p 24

³⁹ M. Dickson, *The Powerful Bond: Hannah Kilham 1774-1832* (London, 1980), p 15

hedonism and spirituality.⁴⁰ About 1794 she became involved with the Methodists of Norfolk Street Chapel. Despite strong opposition by some of her family, she came into membership in 1796,⁴¹ when a great revival was in train under the ministry of William Bramwell. That same year, on 2 July, she wrote: 'This morning I have given myself to God'.⁴² But Norfolk Street did not retain her much longer; she was among the lost gemstones commemorated by the Superintendent, James Wood, at the end of his short summary of membership – there is no detailed list – for 1797:

In August, 1797, a dreadful division of the Sheffield Society was effected by artful men, and a loss in town and country sustained of about 1,200 members. Where will these be found when the Lord shall make up his jewels?⁴³

For on 18 August Hannah had finally disregarded her friends' objections and attended Scotland Street Chapel, which Alexander had taken over from the ailing Methodist rebel Thomas Bryant. He had preached on Ps 91:4, 'His truth shall be thy shield and buckler', and Hannah, never prone to excitement, recorded: 'The presence of God was, I believe, generally felt in the meeting. My soul was calm and happy'.⁴⁴ They were married in Sheffield Parish Church on 12 April 1798, the witnesses including Peter and Sarah Spurr, Hannah's siblings, and Sally joined them from Epworth.⁴⁵

Although we have no contemporary accounts of Hannah's and Sally's first meeting or early life together, comments by Sally (Sarah) in adulthood suggest that they bonded very quickly. She described Hannah as 'my precious mother' and 'my beloved mother', and herself as 'her daughter'.⁴⁶ The extended Epworth family encouraged this. Writing to Alexander on 21 May, mainly to oppose the principle and practice of a paid ministry ('hireling priests'), his brother Thomas added:

⁴⁰ Biller, ed., pp 1-3, 478; Dickson, p 16

⁴¹ Biller, ed., p 479; Sheffield Archives (SA): NR 349, Sheffield Methodist Circuit, Roll of Members 1792-1807, 'An Account of Sheffield Circuit 1796'. She could not have 'officially joined' in 1794 (Dickson, p 21, misinterpreting an imprecise comment by Biller); no other Hannah Spurr figures, and she herself appears at no other date.

⁴² Biller, ed., p 4

⁴³ SA: NR 349, referring to Mal 3:17

⁴⁴ Biller, ed., p 26

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp 42-3, 46; SA: PR 138/106 (marriage register)

⁴⁶ Biller, ed., pp i, 59, 128, 365

You will desire Salley to give me a few lines to let me know how she goes on with her learning and whether she improves in writing or not and to be very diligent in business and to obey her mother in all things.⁴⁷

It is then no surprise that certain later writers referred to Sarah as the daughter of Alexander and Hannah Kilham.⁴⁸

As MNC secretary, on top of his considerable travelling, it fell to Alexander to bear the brunt of organizing the 1798 Conference. For the first time, his burden appeared to be too much for him, and the normally imperturbable Hannah became alarmed. They moved to his new station in Nottingham; the chapel was in Goosegate, Hockley, near the corner of Belward Street.⁴⁹ In September an uncharacteristic new note appeared in his writing: 'I am just harassed out of my life by preaching, travelling and want of rest'. He tried to rally – 'my mind is comfortable and happy' – but we are not convinced, and neither in fact was he: 'Rest seems desirable; but I must not have it in this world'.⁵⁰ Did he sense that he would soon have it in the next?

Hannah had no doubt that Alexander's 'uncommon exertions' hastened his death. In the autumn he made a preaching tour to rainy Wales, accompanied by his wife and daughter as far as Merthyr Tydfil. He rode on to Brecon through frost and deep snow. Hannah, full of forebodings, wrote to him the next day with unusual feeling: 'I do not know that ever I found it so hard to part from you as yesterday'. She would pray for him every night at 6 o'clock. Then she made a comment about Sally which in the light of later events is revealing not only of the little girl's intellectual ability but also of her stepmother's perspicacity: 'Our dear Child is well. I have observed toda[y with] satisfaction that the powers of her mind are strong'.⁵¹

Alexander's physical strain was combined with mental stress when a critic resurrected the old charge that he had caused his first wife's death and added that he had done much to ruin her successor. He wrote once again to refute this ten days before he died. Hannah later recalled

⁴⁷ Box 324 (3), TK to AK, 21 May 1798; spelling corrected

⁴⁸ J. Benson, *Quaker Pioneers in Russia* (London, 1902), p 94; editorial comment by R.E. Leader in T.A. Ward, *Peeps into the Past* (London and Sheffield, 1909), p 196, possibly based on Benson

⁴⁹ For a brief history, see R.C. Swift, 'Hockley Chapel, Nottingham', *Proceedings*, 42 (1980), p 123.

⁵⁰ Blackwell, pp 369, 379-80

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp 381-2; Box 324 (3), HK to AK, 5 Nov 1798 (text in brackets missing and conjectured); 'Extract of a Letter from Mrs Kilham to Mrs Heaps', *MMER*, 2 (1799), pp 329-33, here 331

speaking to him on his deathbed about the great happiness he had given her, though for such a short time. She also remembered Sally saying to the servant two days before the end that 'she had never heard him pray so' (fervently?) before. Alexander asked Hannah to safeguard for Sally the inheritance from his first wife, and she promised to bring his dear child with her to heaven; 'I told him my heart was fast bound to hers'.⁵² Alexander died on 20 December 1798, aged 36, at the preachers' house in Hockley. His body was interred in the chapel wall. Sally was barely 10 years old; Hannah was 24, married for eight months and eight days, and nearly six months pregnant.

She wrote to tell Alexander's mother-in-law Hannah Gray about his death and also to enquire about the allowance that he had irregularly sent to the old lady. The reply survives, addressed to 'My Dear Daughter', with condolences, thanks and several references to Sally: '...be pleased to let me know if my Dear child is to continue with you... my family is exceeding well satisfied that dear little Salley is with such a mother as they are exceeding anxious of her welfare and yours also'. She ended by inviting them to visit in the summer.⁵³ The letter does not convey the same sense of urgency as the one to Alexander following the death of her daughter, and she was no doubt grateful for young Hannah's commitment to the little girl.

Hannah's own daughter and only child, Mary, was born on 3 April 1799. Then, according to her stepdaughter, she 'took charge of the female part of a Methodist day school' in Nottingham.⁵⁴ Hannah referred to it in a letter written to an acquaintance the day after Mary's birth:

Our friends in this place are engaged in forming a day-school, on a plan designed to promote the cultivation of religious principles. A committee of our friends are conducting the business relative to the formation of the school; but we shall be able to give a more perfect account of this, I hope, shortly.⁵⁵

This requires more research, however, as an authority on the history of education in Nottingham maintains that no day schools were founded between 1788 and 1810.⁵⁶ Yet if the scheme had fallen through, Sarah would hardly have been led to present it as an accomplished fact.

⁵² Biller, ed., pp 54, 59; Blackwell, pp 384, 386-92

⁵³ Box 324 (2), Hannah Gray to HK, 27 Jan 1799

⁵⁴ Biller, ed., p 60

⁵⁵ 'Extract of a Letter', pp 332-3

⁵⁶ S.D. Chapman, 'The Evangelical Revival and Education in Nottingham', *Transactions of the Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire*, 66 (1962), pp 35-66, here 37

In June 1800 Hannah took Sally and Mary to stay with her father-in-law at Epworth. He was 70 now and ailing after a stroke. The younger Simon had assumed his father's various mantles, including charge of the sacking business and hospitality to the preachers. When in 1803 the New Connexion finally had to quit the old chapel and met first in an old barn and then in Simon Kilham's house, this must have been either with the younger Simon's blessing or in his own house,⁵⁷ since the older Simon had died early in the previous year. In 1803-04 the first MNC chapel at Epworth, Providence in Church Street, was built and opened, on land given by Simon the younger who had also helped considerably with the costs.⁵⁸ He is described as a taciturn man, a 'practical Christian' if not very energetic.⁵⁹

The middle uncle, Richard, remains the most shadowy, but along with one of the Simons he was among the five pro-MNC trustees of the shared chapel.⁶⁰ He had a numerous family – eight children appear in the parish registers of baptisms – and early in the new century is believed to have taken on a farm on the north-western outskirts of Epworth; the former farmhouse is now known as Croft Ends.⁶¹ Thomas, Sally's youngest uncle, clock and watchmaker, comes across from correspondence as humourless and opinionated, not above lecturing his eminent brother. Old Simon once wrote to Alexander that Thomas 'has begun to preach & some like to hear him'.⁶² This was scarcely a ringing endorsement. Yet he seems to have been a conscientious worker for the cause and to have lived out his faith: when a probationary minister was severely disabled in a coach accident, he took him into his home, taught him clock-making and helped him to open a small shop in Thorne.⁶³ A Sunday school where local tradesmen learned to read and write was held in Thomas's shop.⁶⁴

The summer 1800 visit to Epworth marked a critical point in Hannah Kilham's life and, through her influence, in Sally's too. For several months Hannah had been feeling dissatisfied with her spiritual life and her experience of Methodism. It sounds from her memoirs as if the constant stress of her husband's last year – followed surely by the strain

⁵⁷ W. Seaton, 'Methodism in the Thorne Circuit', *MNCM*, 36 (1833), pp 277-80, here 279; E.A. Rose, 'The First Methodist New Connexion Chapels', *Proceedings*, 36 (1967), pp 7-15, here 14

⁵⁸ Wall, p 126

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*; Atkinson, p 233

⁶⁰ Box 324 (3), SiK to AK, 9 May 1797

⁶¹ Information from Mr Stanley Johnson

⁶² Box 324 (3), SiK to AK, 28 Feb 1797; TK to AK, 27 Feb and especially 21 May 1798

⁶³ Wall, pp 126-7

⁶⁴ C. Ella, *Historic Epworth* (Oxford, 1994), p 57

of coping with widowhood – had left her longing for harmony and peace, both in her own mind and in the life of the Church. She continued to value the compassionate tradition in Methodism, but otherwise found it wanting.

It is unclear where Hannah had her first contact with Quakers, but if it was in 1799 or early 1800 it must have been in Nottingham. In her uncharacteristically restless state she went to the Quaker meeting at Epworth and had something of an ecstatic experience. Back in her room, reflecting on John 3:17, she recorded: 'The words sank into my soul: a light shone on them, of such as I had never before been sensible'.⁶⁵ The Christian context of her future life and ministry was to be the Society of Friends, as it was for many years to be Sally's.

Returning to Nottingham, on 18 August 1800 Hannah wrote to the class-leaders' meeting of Hockley Chapel to resign her office. She gave her reasons: she disapproved of the established ministry, of complaisant rather than challenging preaching, and of singing and praying because it was customary rather than sincere and spontaneous. She was also critical of her own past insincerity.⁶⁶ Moving back to Sheffield a year later, she attended the Friends' meetings but was in no rush to join them. In any case they had their probationary procedures. It was not until early 1803 that Balby Monthly Meeting – the district executive of local Preparative Meetings in South Yorkshire – received and shortly afterwards granted her application for membership.⁶⁷

Hannah had returned with the two children to Sheffield perhaps because the atmosphere in Nottingham was now strained and perhaps because she had been offered work there. In any event, she took up teaching in a day school run by a friend.⁶⁸ Tragedy struck again in January 1802 when her little daughter Mary fell victim to a scarlet fever epidemic and died. Sally, 13, was now her last close link with Alexander

⁶⁵ Biller, ed., p 76

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp 77-8; Dickson, p 60 (q.v., pp 52-62, for a full account of Hannah's 'spiritual struggles'); A. Twells, "'Let us begin well at home": Class, Ethnicity and Christian Motherhood in the Writing of Hannah Kilham, 1774-1832', in E.J. Yeo, ed., *Radical Femininity* (Manchester, 1998), pp 25-51, here 31-2

⁶⁷ Biller, ed., p 90. Balby (now in Doncaster) was the initial setting, but the rotation of meetings at this time comprised Doncaster, Sheffield and Thorne. By a strange coincidence, the original small group at Balby in the 1650s included brothers John and Thomas Killam. George Fox reputedly preached in the orchard at John's farm. John, his wife Margaret and Thomas joined Fox as travelling preachers (R. Hoare, *Balby Beginnings: the Launching of Quakerism* (Sheffield, 2002), especially pp 27-8, 47, 111). I have read somewhere that Alexander Kilham had Quaker ancestors.

⁶⁸ Biller, ed., p 87; no details available

– as we saw, her kindly father-in-law Simon Kilham also died about this time – but though they were to regard each other as mother and daughter, according to Dickson outward expressions of affection were made very difficult for Hannah by this final blow.⁶⁹ A bond of love had formed, never to be broken, but it had an abstract quality that would help to inure Sarah later to physical separation and independence.

The subsequent story of Sarah as a Quaker and Congregationalist is told more appropriately elsewhere,⁷⁰ but her career was so extraordinary that it calls for a brief outline here. In 1806 Hannah opened a Quaker day school which by 1812 had developed a boarding side. Sarah helped to run it, eventually taking charge in Hannah's absence. Meanwhile the Russian Emperor Alexander I had commissioned the Quaker businessman and philanthropist William Allen to recruit someone to set up and manage a model school for poor girls in St Petersburg. Fired by her stepmother's pedagogical and missionary enthusiasm and empowered by the courage and energy which Hannah shared with Alexander, Sarah volunteered, sailing to the Russian capital in 1820.

The upshot was that Sarah spent nearly all the rest of her life there as the school principal, adding voluntary work for the Bible Society and public duties in hospital management. She came back to England for a year in 1830-31 to bid a final farewell to Hannah, off to Sierra Leone, and liaise with John Blackwell on her father's biography. Again in St Petersburg, she married William Biller in 1832, a union lasting some six years until his death. In the meantime she had published her *Memoir of the Late Hannah Kilham*. About 1850 she suffered an attack of apoplexy, probably thrombosis, and returned to England, where she died in 1852. Though she was not a major actor on the stage of history, she deserves to be remembered. We should celebrate our minor heroes too.

JOHN DUNSTAN

(Dr John Dunstan served for many years as Deputy Director of Birmingham University's Centre for Russian and East European Studies, specializing in education. He has been a local preacher in the Sheffield Ecclesall circuit.)

⁶⁹ Dickson, pp 60-1

⁷⁰ In my forthcoming monograph *The Female from Sheffield: Sarah Biller of St Petersburg*. Two sources sparked off this research: R.C. Scott, *Quakers in Russia* (London, 1964), pp 92-4, and E.A. Rose, 'Sarah Kilham and Hannah Kilham', *Proceedings*, 39 (1974), pp 185-6.

A NEW WESLEY LETTER

A letter from John Wesley, apparently previously unknown, was sold at auction by Bonhams of London in 2007. It had been part of a Victorian autograph collection. A scanned image of the manuscript was posted by the then owner on the ebay website prior to the sale. It appears to be damaged and incomplete. It reads as follows:

London
Feb. 13. 1773

Dear Tommy

*This week we have two subscribers
[in] the Bedford Circuit. I do not despair
[of] finding two more before Midsummer.*

*If they have preaching on Sunday
[now] at Towcester it is as much as they
[can] reasonably require: Nay, it is more
[th]an they could expect if they suffer that
[po]r creature Flyn to preach among them.*

*Two or three years since there was
[a] glorious increase in the Bedfordshire
[Cir]cuit. So there may be again before the
[con]ference. Perhaps the hour is at hand. I am
[your affectionate] friend and brother,*

J. Wesley

London, 13 Feb. 1773- Wesley's private diary for 1773 does not appear to have survived and his published *Journal* has little to say about how he spent the winter of 1772/3. It seems likely, however, that when this letter was written, on Saturday 13 February, he had been resident in London since returning from a visit to the Bedfordshire Circuit on 19 December.¹

¹ W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, eds. *The Works of John Wesley*, Bicentennial Edition, (Oxford and Nashville, 1980), Vol.22, p.359.

Dear Tommy - The recipient of the letter was, almost certainly, Thomas Hanson, one of Wesley's preachers who, between the conferences of 1772 and 1773, was stationed as Assistant on the Bedfordshire Circuit with William Ashman and John M'Evoy as his junior colleagues. Hanson was born at Horbury in Yorkshire in 1734 and became an itinerant preacher in 1760. He continued in the itinerancy until he settled at Wakefield as a supernumerary in 1785 and died in 1804.² Wesley was very familiar with Hanson's circuit. He had been visiting the society in Bedford since 1753 and making an annual week long tour of the Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire societies each autumn since at least 1766. In the twelve months prior to the writing of this letter he had, in fact, been in the circuit at least three times.³

We have two subscribers - The purpose of the subscriptions, and the reason for Wesley himself being involved in securing them, is unclear. It seems unlikely that they can have been for any local purpose, and there were certainly no building projects in the circuit at this period. The date is too early for this to be an example of Wesley's fundraising for the New Chapel in City Road, or for it to have any connection with the launch of the *Arminian Magazine*. So to what end can these subscriptions have been sought? Two passing references in the *Journal* at about this time raise interesting possibilities. Under 31 December 1772, Wesley wrote:

'Being greatly embarrassed by the necessities of the poor, we spread all our wants before God in solemn prayer'⁴

Did Wesley supplement those prayers with an appeal for subscriptions to provide additional funds for poor relief in the capital? If he did, there would have been little point directing it to the membership of the Bedfordshire Circuit who were themselves overwhelmingly drawn from the poorest sections of society. A circuit membership list for 1781 reveals a community that was disproportionately plebeian, not only in relation to the population as a whole, but also to Methodism in other parts of England.⁵ Within the bounds of the circuit, however, there were a small number of wealthy sympathisers and patrons who, while not attending

² Kenneth B. Garlick, *Mr Wesley's Preachers. An alphabetical arrangement of Wesleyan Methodist Preachers and Missionaries, and the stations to which they were appointed 1739-1818.* (1977) p.24.

³ 16-17 January 1772 at Luton and Hertford; 12-16 October 1772 in Northamptonshire, possibly including Towcester, and Bedford; 17-18 December 1772 at Luton and Hertford. Ward and Heitzenrater, Vol.22, pp. 304, 349 & 356-57.

⁴ Ward and Heitzenrater, Vol.22, p.357.

⁵ cf. Jonathan Rodell, 'Francis Asbury's First Circuit: Bedfordshire, 1767' in *Methodist History* XLII (2004), p.115.

Methodist meetings themselves, were happy to welcome Wesley himself as a guest in their homes and to make generous gifts to his work.⁶ Men like William Cole, High Sheriff of the County in 1758, who would in 1778 build and later endow the first Methodist chapel in Luton. Was it two of these sympathisers, personal acquaintances of Wesley but socially far above the likes of Tommy Hanson, who had made subscriptions and two more of whom Wesley thought might well do so yet? But if the subscriptions were for winter poor relief then the target of securing them by midsummer seems woefully belated.

Another possibility is suggested by a *Journal* entry under 21 July 1773. Wesley wrote:

'We had our Quarterly Meeting at London, at which I was surprised to find that our income does not yet answer our expense. We are again near two hundred pounds bad.'⁷

Is it possible that Wesley's surprise, that income did 'not yet' meet expenditure, was because he had been making a concerted attempt in the run up to the midsummer quarterly meeting to close that deficit and that the subscriptions in February were part of that effort?

They have preaching on Sunday now at Towcester - Wesley's first recorded visit to the small Northamptonshire market town of Towcester was on 3 March 1760, although as the town lay on Watling Street it seems likely that he had passed through it on many previous occasions.⁸ He found one person 'whose soul God keeps alive', quite possibly Samuel Basford, a young man from Towcester who was converted while on a trip to London.⁹ By 1767 there appears to have been not only a Methodist society in the town but a preaching-room of some kind, Wesley records: 'I preached at Towcester, where though many could not get in, yet all were quiet.'¹⁰ Two years later Francis

⁶ cf. Jonathan Rodell, "'The best house by far in the town': John Wesley's personal circuit" in *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 85 (2003), pp.III-122.

⁷ Ward and Heitzenrater, Vol.22, p.384.

⁸ Ward and Heitzenrater, Vol.21, pp.241-42.

⁹ *Methodist Magazine* 24 (1801), p.476.

¹⁰ 27 October 1767. Ward and Heitzenrater, Vol.22, p.107. According to Myles a chapel was built in the town in 1776, but he is notoriously unreliable and his authority for this claim is unclear. It may be that he too read the existence of a preaching-house into this passage in Wesley's *Journal* and that the figures 1767 were transposed into 1776 at some stage in the publication process. William Myles, *A Chronological History of the people called Methodists, of the connexion of the late Rev. John Wesley, from their rise, in the year 1729, to their last conference, in 1812.* (1813), p.435.

Asbury, then junior minister on the Bedfordshire Circuit, seems to have been based in the town. His two surviving letters from this period were both addressed Towcester, rather than Bedford, and in later life he would describe his appointment for this year as being on the 'Northamptonshire Circuit' although such a circuit did not officially exist until 1779.¹¹ The importance of the Towcester society is underlined by the decision to make it one of the societies in the circuit, probably with Bedford, Northampton and Luton, that enjoyed Sunday preaching; most societies, of course, receiving their visits from the preachers mid-week.

That poor creature Flynn - It has not yet been possible to identify the preacher who attracted Wesley's withering condescension. He may have been a member of the society who stood in on occasions when there was no travelling preacher but he may also have been a preacher from another evangelical connexion. There is evidence which suggests that Calvinistic Methodist preachers may have been active in the town in the 1760s and we know that Moravian preachers were visiting in 1769/70.¹² Indeed, the willingness of Towcester Methodists to attend Moravian preaching had already drawn Wesley's rebuke. Francis Okely, who was minister to the Moravian congregation in Northampton, wrote:

'Towcester has also an auditory of sometimes sixty or seventy people, some of them Methodists and other concerned people from adjacent villages but Mr Parker of Bedford, and Mr John Wesley himself, have in a late visit very much thinned the

¹¹ J.M. Potts, ed., *The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury*, (London and Nashville, 1958), Vol. 3, pp.6-8. Wesley himself seems to have begun to make separate tours of the Northamptonshire and Bedfordshire societies from about 1770. Ward and Heitzenrater, Vol.22, pp.107,213&257.

¹² The obituary of Susannah Spencer, which Wesley published in his Journal under 24 October 1774, records that 'In 1760 Thomas Grover came down and preached several times at Whittlebury and at Towcester.' This otherwise unknown preacher has been identified with Thomas Grove, a protégé of the Countess of Huntingdon, who was expelled from St Edmund Hall, Oxford in 1768 for 'barn preaching' but if it were him the date can hardly be right for Grove was only twelve years old in 1760! What we do know is that Olney, another small town just 10 miles from Towcester, was the base for a preaching circuit of Whitefield's Association from at least 1744 to 1753 when it was given up on the appointment of an evangelical, Moses Browne, to the Anglican living. From 1764 John Newton acted as Browne's curate and at least one of the five students expelled with Grove from St Edmund's Hall spent time at Olney with Newton in preparatory study for university. Ward and Heitzenrater, Vol. 22, pp.432-33. xxx, *The Life and Times of Selina Countess of Huntingdon*, Vol.1, pp.424-45. Edwin Welch, ed., *Two Calvinistic Methodist Chapels 1743-1811* (1975), p.23

auditory of many of this class of people. Our four friends there are a credit to us, which is the more valuable, as one and another of the principal Methodists have given just occasion of offence by their contrary conduct.¹³

Two or three years since there was a glorious increase - The membership figures given in the Minutes of Conference show that three years prior to this letter, in the year between the conferences of 1768 and 1769, when Thomas Hanby and Richard Whatcoat were the preachers, the number of members on the Bedfordshire Circuit had risen from 170 to 260. A full three years later, Thomas Hanson had inherited just fourteen more members when he took charge of the circuit at the conference of 1772. Revival was not to come in his time and he was able to report to the conference of 1773 just eight additional members.

The overall impression Wesley revealed by the letter is of a man with a formidable memory for detail, despite his 69 years, whose control of his small but widely flung connexion rested not so much on charisma so much as an encyclopaedic knowledge of its affairs and close personal oversight of even relatively small matters of business.

JONATHAN RODELL

(The Rev. Jonathan Rodell is a minister in the Dorking and Horsham circuit)

¹³ Anon., *Supplement to the short sketch of the work carried on by the Moravian Church in Northampton issued in 1886 being accounts written by the Rev Francis Okely BA respecting the erection of the chapel in that town in 1769-70.* (Northampton, 1888), p.7.

BOOK REVIEWS

Protestant Nonconformist Texts, vol. 2. The Eighteenth Century, edited by Alan P.F. Sell with David Hall and Ian Sellers. (Ashgate, 2006 pp. xvii+459, £75. ISBN 07546 3853 7)

This is the second of a substantial four-volume collection of extracts from Nonconformist writings stretching from Elizabethan times to the end of the twentieth century. Dr Sell, the series editor, is also the principal editor of this volume. His expert knowledge of the intellectual history of the period is complemented by David Hall's of Quakerism and the late Ian Sellers' of Methodism (and much else). Eighteenth-century Anglicanism has notoriously received a bad press and Dissent (or Nonconformity) not much better in this period. Recent revisionist accounts of the former have not been matched by equal attention to the latter apart, perhaps, from Michael Watts's impressive *The Dissenters*. This volume is therefore particularly welcome. It not only illustrates the main aspects of Nonconformist life and thought but also the changing face and fortunes of the main old and new religious groupings.

The book begins with some of the tougher, more intellectual material - that is, philosophy and theology. Then come church, ministry and sacraments; evangelism, revival and mission; church, state and society; and finally nurture, piety and church life. Feelings and individual stories often figure alongside belief and organization. Denominational coverage is also comprehensive. Here is the 'old' Dissent of Presbyterians and General Baptists modulating from traditional orthodoxy to Arianism and Unitarianism, while Congregationalists and some calvinist Baptists often become evangelical. The 'new' Dissent includes various sorts of Methodists, the Moravians and General Baptists of the New Connexion.

Space is also found for the Swedenborgians who were certainly 'new' but not 'evangelical' like the others. Yet they all add to the often fluid variety of Nonconformity by the end of the eighteenth century. Dr Sell is well aware of the highly ambiguous nature of Methodism in this century as a variety of Nonconformity, an ambiguity which in some respects continued long after it separated from the Church of England. But he is surely right to include it in his survey. Evangelicalism disrupted traditional theological and ecclesiastical conventions and it was not only Wesley's and other varieties of Methodism which had ambiguous relationships with the Church of England and Dissent. So did the Moravians and some Swedenborgians.

The solidity of Nonconformist philosophy and theology and the internal debates provoked by the emerging heterodoxy of 'rational' Dissenters are illustrated in detail with generous extracts from Price and Priestley. The more orthodox and Calvinistic are also given their due along with less familiar Quaker writings and persisting 'heart religion' before the Evangelical Revival. Varying attitudes to political and social issues are usefully illustrated and the substantial section on nurture, piety and church life is a reminder that spiritual devotion was not confined to the new evangelicalism, though the 'intense, searching piety' (p.355) of Elizabeth Stringer Rowe (d. 1737) may be too gushing for some tastes.

Readers of these *Proceedings* will be interested to see how John Wesley's theology compares with that of the older as well as newer Dissent. Methodists need to remember that he was a suspect figure to evangelical' as well as 'rational' Dissenters. The oddity of Wesley's position shows up in the editorial comments prefacing illustrations of his theology which deserve extended quotation. Reference is made to the later Methodist summing up of his theology as: 'all need to be saved, all can be saved, all can know that they are saved, and all can be saved to the uttermost'. (This is incorrectly labelled 'The Wesleyan Quadrilateral, for it is really the 'The Four Alls' by W.B. Fitzgerald formulated in 1903: : the labels are explained by John Vickers in his *Dictionary of Methodism*).

On these 'alls' it is commented (pp.106-7): 'The first is unexceptionable; the second is, on Arminian principles, understandable; the third, sometimes known as the witness of the Spirit, is more singular: it is an angry rejection of Calvinism turned inward and/or legalistic, whereby believers would look within or to their "godly walk" for signs of their election, but could never be sure of it.' 'Perfect love is even more singular'. Probably derived from Spanish mysticism, 'this characteristic Wesleyan teaching, an embarrassment to some and an inspiration to others, seemed to work consolingly for a generation faced with unparalleled economic, political, social and international instability - a reminder that expressions of doctrine derive some of their colour from the context in which they are articulated'. On Wesley's celebrated sermon on 'The Use of Money' it is commented that it 'reveals him as the homespun Lincolnshire countryman which for all his sophistication, he ever seemed to be'. Effective within the disciplined Wesleyan world, this teaching 'proved readily adaptable to the needs of an industrial society'. This thought-provoking assessment of Wesley in the context of contemporary Dissent and the wider society is only one of many such insights in an

excellent collection. It can be strongly recommended as an introduction to eighteenth-century Nonconformity in all its variety from the intellectual to the practical; and as a salutary corrective to conventional stereotyping. One's only regret is that the price will probably limit its sale outside libraries.

HENRY D. RACK

Charles Wesley: life, literature & legacy, edited by Kenneth G.C. Newport and Ted A. Campbell. (Epworth Press, 2007; pp.xvii, 573; pb £25.00. ISBN 978 0 7162 0607 1)

In his tercentenary year Charles Wesley is at last receiving the attention so long overdue to him, and not just as hymn-writer extraordinary. This volume of twenty-eight substantial essays stands alongside Gareth Lloyd's study of his role in the 'search for Methodist identity' as outstanding among the current tributes to his role in creating our heritage. The editors are to be congratulated on gathering contributions from scholars on both sides of the Atlantic on so comprehensive a range of topics. The sub-title of what is indeed a treasure trove accurately reflects its contents. Given the underlying unity provided by its main topic, there is remarkably little duplication between different chapters. The chief exception to this is in the overlap between John Lenton's 'Charles Wesley and the preachers' and Richard Heitzenrater's 'Purge the Preachers: the Wesleys and Quality Control'.

A commendably high quality is maintained throughout, though some chapters will inevitably be found more interesting and informative than others, depending on the reader's own interests. Gareth Lloyd kicks off with a judicious survey of earlier biographers, revealing the shortcomings especially of Thomas Jackson in both his biography and his editing of the Journals. (Happily, a much more scholarly and accurate edition of the latter is about to be published by Abingdon Press, and it is a pity that this was not available in time to be used by those contributing to the present volume. This is even more true of Charles's letters.) His willingness to dismiss Frank Baker's treatment of the Grace Murray fiasco as one that reveals 'a sympathy with his subject which seems to stand in the way of objective analysis' is a welcome sign that we are beginning to move beyond the shadow of that Colossus of Methodist history.

It is invidious to single out any of the chapters that follow: the standard is

high and any selection must be a matter of personal choice. I found Henry Rack on 'Charles Wesley and Early Methodism', Geoffrey Wainwright on 'Charles Wesley and Calvinism', Dick Watson on literary aspects of the hymns and Kenneth Newport on the style and content of his preaching of particular interest. It may not be coincidental that the most disappointing chapters are the ones reprinted from other sources. These give the impression of being last-minute stopgaps. Oliver Beckerlegge's account of Wesley's shorthand is of interest only to the specialist. Frank Baker (to whom the volume is appropriately dedicated) writes on what to most readers will be a minor technicality, the 'metamorphoses' through which Charles Wesley's nativity hymns passed during his lifetime. John Newton's account of the relationship between John and Charles is largely based on published material and has been superseded by Gareth Lloyd's more recent use of the invaluable primary material at Manchester.

I am poorly qualified to judge the quality of the academic theology that is the subject of some of the central chapters in the book. Readers must judge for themselves how much real substance they contain. To take one example: Jason Vickers makes a forceful case for Charles Wesley having contributed significantly to the rehabilitation of the doctrine of the Trinity, but I am left wondering whether Charles himself would have been either puzzled or amused by the careful distinction between an 'economic' and an 'immanent' trinity. The note of 'ineffability' which he strikes in his most effective hymns is another matter altogether, but is hardly exclusive to Charles.

Whatever one's preferences or reservations, this is a book to cherish and reread - which means, one to put on one's own shelves and not merely borrow. Page for page, as well as in terms of quality, it is far greater value for money than most ephemeral paperbacks.

JOHN A. VICKERS

The Journals of Thomas Coke, ed. John Vickers. (Kingswood Books, 2005, pp293, £19.99. ISBN 0 687 05421 4.)

Dr Thomas Coke was a key person in the development of early Methodism, both in Britain and in its overseas missions, of which he was always the great advocate and enabler, especially in raising money and providing leadership. He was the link between John Wesley and the Methodist Episcopal Church in America and the work in the West Indies. This edition of Coke's journals gives a vivid picture of the work in both areas; of the preachers, their ministry

and congregations and of their cultural and physical setting. Thomas Coke had a great love of the American landscape and waxed lyrical about the Blue Ridge of mountains, which he preferred 'to any other part of America: it is so like Wales, my native country'.

A native of Brecon, it was Coke who persuaded the Wesleyan Conference to send two Welsh-speaking ministers into Wales in 1800 to evangelise in the language of the people. Also in 1800 Conference authorised the sending of a missionary to Madras, again at the instigation of Coke, but nothing came of the scheme until much later. Coke died in May 1814 at sea on his way to Asia and declared before that voyage 'I am dead to all things but Asia'. He was as indefatigable as John Wesley in preaching at every opportunity and in using every moment in activity and in study. A favourite passage, on which he fixed his mind on his voyage to Asia was Ephesians 5 v 16: 'redeeming the time'. He had taught himself Portuguese and had translated fifty of 'our hymns' into Portuguese during the voyage.

The editor's admirable notes and introduction help to give a clear picture of the character and ministry of Dr Coke and an understanding of the Journal entries. The Journal should be read after or alongside John Vickers' masterly biography *Thomas Coke: Apostle of Methodism* (1969). Together, they give a balanced view of Coke's contribution to early Methodism and particularly to the growth of the work overseas.

DONALD G KNIGHTON

A Season Highly Profitable: The Travels of an Itinerant Methodist Preacher in Norfolk and Suffolk 1788-9 Ed. Norma Virgoe (48pp + index. WHS East Anglia Branch 2007 £2-85 inc p & p from Mrs. Norma Virgoe, 15 Bridewell Street, Wymondham, Norfolk NR18 OAR.)

Would that more of our branches would publish works like this! Richard Reece (1770-1850) was a young preacher from Cheshire called into the itinerancy in 1787 and sent to the Norwich circuit in 1788. This is a connected narrative based on his Journal for his stay in the circuit for the Methodist year, but using much other material about him and Methodism in the area. His Journal survives in 25 volumes at the Methodist Archives in Manchester. This is only one year, but it can be seen to be of connexional importance, partly because of the presence of women evangelists like Sarah Mallet, recently illuminated by the work of David Hart. Sarah was opposed by Wesley's Assistant that year, John Pool. Reece confided to his Journal that he wanted to be neutral on the question. Wesley visited the area. Reece missioned some

new villages. He describes the hard time Methodist preachers had at the hands of the smugglers in the Yarmouth area.

This good value pamphlet is not just of local significance. Reece was well connected (he later married into the Marsden family) and an able preacher who was to become President in 1816 and 1835. He was the Superintendent of the Wesley's Chapel circuit 1840-1842, when he made significant alterations to Wesley's House. In 1823 he represented the British Conference in America. This early period marks an important formative time in his life and gives a lively picture of the life of the young travelling preacher at the end of Wesley's life. There are useful notes and a map.

JOHN LENTON

NOTES AND QUERIES

1580 EPICTETUS AND RICHARD ALLEINE ?

'That blessed man Richard Alleine' must have had a classical education; but is there any evidence of a link through him between the words of the Methodist covenant and the Stoic Epictetus, who encouraged his students to pray:

Lift up your neck at last like a man escaped from bondage, be bold to look towards God and say,
 'Use me henceforward for whatever Thou wilt;
 I am of one mind with Thee; I am Thine;
 I crave exemption from nothing that seems good in Thy sight;
 where Thou wilt, lead me;
 in what raiment Thou wilt, clothe me;
 Wouldst Thou have me
 to hold office, or remain in private life;
 to remain here or go into exile;
 to be poor or to be rich?
 I will defend all these Thy acts before men;
 I will show what the true nature of each thing is.'

(Epictetus Discourses 2.16.pp. 42-43, Loeb Library translation, as presented in John T. Fitzgerald, *Cracks in an Earthen Vessel* (Atlanta, Georgia 1985), p.83.

PAUL ELLINGWORTH

LOCAL HISTORIES

Sandal Magna Methodist Church Centenary 1906-2006 (22pp). Copies £2.75 post free from Dr I.J.Brown, 95 Manygates Lane, Sandal, Wakefield, West Yorkshire. WF2 7DL .

Walton Methodist Church 150th Anniversary Celebrations 1856-2006 (20pp). £2.50 post free from the church, Shay Lane, Walton, Wakefield, WF2 6LA

From Goole Green to Nether Green...[Sheffield] 1756-2006. (48pp) by Neville Flavell. £4.00 post free from the author at 59 Hallam Grange Road, Sheffield, S10 4BL. Cheques payable to 'Hallam Methodist Church'.

Hilltop Heritage: The Story of Pannal Methodists (104pp) by Rita Corbridge. £7.99 post free from the author, P.O. Box 504, Harrogate, North Yorkshire, HG3 1WN.

Hoylandswaine 'Beathel' Chapel 1807-2007 (121pp) by Cynthia Dillon. £5.00 plus postage from Rev Derek Hinchliffe, 4 Green Hill Grove, Hoylandswaine, Sheffield, S36 7LT.

Beechen Cliff[Bath] Methodist Church 1907-2007 (16pp) by Bruce Crofts. £1.30 post free from Beechen Cliff Church Office, Shakespeare Avenue, Bath, BA2 4RF.

Methodism in Sinnington [Pickering, N. Yorks] [44pp] by Alec C. Taylor. Available from the author at 24 Northway, Pickering, YO18 8NN, no price stated.

The Devil's in the Ducks: The Story of Methodism in Bridlington (104pp) by Ruth McDonald *et al.* 2007. Copies from C.W.Brear, 9 Avenue Court, Westgate, Bridlington, East Yorks, YO16 4QG.

Roots and Branches: the History of Christchurch , Ilkley (80pp) ed.Rita Armitage. 2007. £4.50. from the author, 3 Undercliffe Rise, Ben Rhydding, LS29 8RF

200 Years of Bollington Methodism (68pp) by Jean M. Wright. 2007. £7.50 post free from Bollington Methodist Church, Wellington Road, Bollington, Macclesfield, Cheshire SK10 5JR.

A Story to Tell: 200 years of Methodism in Brighton and Hove. by M. R .Hickman 2007. (148pp). £9 post free from Brighton and Hove Methodist Circuit, Stamford Avenue Methodist Church, Brighton, BN1 6FD.

THE ANNUAL LECTURE

will be delivered in Mount Zion Methodist Church, Ogden, Halifax on

Saturday 28 June 2008 at 2.30pm

by Professor Edward Royle

'When did Methodists stop attending their parish churches?'

Chairman: the Revd Dr Tim Macquiban MA

The optional morning programme will begin with tea/coffee from 10.00 am followed at 10.30 by a welcome to Mount Zion by Irene Cunliffe, the Friends and Heritage Secretary. Dr John A. Hargreaves will then provide a brief history of Methodism at Mount Zion and the Revd Donald H. Ryan will speak about the Hird Collection of Ceramics, which is on permanent display at the centre.

Travel Directions

Mount Zion Methodist Church is situated just off the A629 Halifax to Keighley Road. It is approximately 10 miles from Keighley and from that direction on the A629 after entering Calderdale there is a distinctive brown signpost for Ogden Water. Take the second turn (first turn indicates Halifax Golf Club) on the right into Per Lane and Mount Zion is a few yards on the right (there is on-street parking on Per Lane). Mount Zion is approximately 4 miles from the centre of Halifax. Follow signs for A629 Keighley and look for Morrison's Supermarket (left) and take the first turn left after Morrisons (Raw Lane). Continue along this road (name changes to Whitegate), avoid turning left down the hill into the village of Mixenden) and Mount Zion is about 300 yards on the left.

Halifax is situated close to the M62 (Exit at Junction 24 and follow the A629 signposted Halifax). It has frequent connecting rail services to Manchester, Leeds, York, Birmingham and London. Overnight accommodation is available off the A629 near Halifax at the Travelodge, Gate 9 Dean Clough Office Park (Tel. 0870 1911644). Further enquiries about the Annual Lecture should be addressed to Dr John A. Hargreaves, 7 Haugh Shaw Road, Halifax. HX1 3AH (Tel. 01422 250780).