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# Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society

*Editors*

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Volume 58 Part 2

May 2011

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*Cover Illustration:*

*Oil on canvas John Wesley preaching in the Chapel of Ease, Old Cripplegate in the presence of Dr Johnson, Wesley's sister Mrs Martha Hall and others.  
After Francis Hayman. Courtesy of the Trustees of Dr Johnson's House*

## **The Wesley Deaconess Order in the Transvaal, 1894-1953**

### ***Beginnings***

The first Europeans to land in South Africa in the fifteenth century were Portuguese traders who formed no colonies. It was not until 1652 that a colony was established at the Cape. This colony was planted by the Dutch East India Company, which was solely interested in trading and colonisation. These colonists were Dutch Calvinists, who soon formed the *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk* (NGK) in the colony. Prior to 1824, this was part of the Dutch Mother Church and was fully interracial in its worship. In 1857, some objectors began the move that led to the separation of the two racial groups for worship. The NGK opposition to the great trek of 1835-43 brought about the formation of the *Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk* amongst the *Voortekkers* in the Transvaal. In 1855 each of these churches formed segregated 'black only' offshoots of their mission work.

When the British came into the Cape, the two colonising groups clashed over culture, slavery and land use. These clashes, leading as they did to various breakaway settlements of Afrikaners and the setting up of rival republics, eventually led to a war between the British and the Boer. Methodism first came into this situation in 1806 by virtue of some zealous British soldiers. Some parts of England were still disapproving of Methodism and 'troublesome' Methodist local preachers were often conscripted into the army, which thereby proved a ready channel for the dissemination of Methodist preaching.

The first Wesleyan Methodist minister, the Revd Barnabas Shaw, arrived in 1816 and started work in the west of the country. In 1820, the Revd William Shaw came to work among the native peoples of South-Eastern Africa.<sup>1</sup> Remarkably, only a hundred years later the census shows the Methodist Church as having the largest membership of any denomination in South Africa.<sup>2</sup>

### ***Women's ministry in the Transvaal***

It was into this situation that, in 1894, the first Wesley Deaconess set out for foreign mission. Sister Evelyn Oates was not sent by the Order, nor was she an agent of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, she appears to have volunteered for work in South Africa. With support from the Order she set sail for Durban on 17 March of that year. Although she spent some months in Durban and reported on the terrible conditions she encountered there, she made her real connection with the Methodist Church in

<sup>1</sup> William Eveleigh, *The Story of a Century* (Cape Town: Methodist Publishing House and Book Depot, 1923), p. iii.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid* p. 58.

Johannesburg, found good support from the people there and was able to write home that she was sure that there would be work for another deaconess soon.

The Transvaal was a self-governing republic under British oversight and since the 1885 gold strike, had seen a huge influx of 'uitlanders' into the minefields. Many of these immigrants were English speaking and the Methodist Church was attempting to serve their spiritual and social needs as well as reaching out to the local native population. This was the situation into which Sister Evelyn came when she arrived in Johannesburg. The local church had raised £20 to furnish what Sister Evelyn describes as her 'Deaconess doll's house',<sup>3</sup> a three roomed brick and iron structure just below the principal church in the town. Stephenson Cottage, as it was to be known, had



*Sister Evelyn Oates*

been occupied for some time by a local deaconess who had died in service and had stood empty until Sister Evelyn arrived. She intended that this small place should be a proper Deaconess House, a focal point for those in need as well as the weary amongst the ministers and doctors of the area. It is clear that her work involved her with those within the church as much as those beyond. In 1896, while Sister Evelyn was on a visit to Australia, an explosion demolished the church where she had been working with the native people. By the time she returned, the rebuilding work was almost complete and she was able to take part in the reopening service with the help of Zulu and Dutch interpreters.

In the same year a second deaconess, Sister Miriam Scrivens was sent out to work in the area. She was set to work in Fordsburg, a mining community about fifteen minutes train ride from Johannesburg, but now a comfortable suburb. At the time she arrived, Fordsburg was in the throes of a typhoid epidemic but she threw herself into the task of nursing and visiting the families affected by the disease. One of her major concerns was for the children of the miners who died from the disease. Mostly immigrants, their wives and families were left destitute. Miriam wrote of her longing for a children's home such as she had left in London. Despite the difficulties faced by the people, uncertainty of work and the struggle to survive, Sister Miriam was able to establish both a Women's Meeting and a Society Class in Fordsburg.

With so much sickness Sister Evelyn established a Convalescent Home where more than a hundred received care in the first year. It must have been hard to finance this project. As Evelyn wrote in a letter home: 'The charge is two guineas per week, but a

<sup>3</sup> *Highways and Hedges* (The Magazine of The Methodist Children's Homes), London, October 1895.

large number of the patients have contributed nothing being both friendless and penniless.<sup>4</sup> Both Sisters found themselves with so much work that they wrote to the Order that there was sufficient to occupy six. They attended to the sick in the community, nursing young men and women who had come out with the gold rush. Many of them died and the Sisters attended the funerals, often finding themselves the only mourners. They had become involved in search work and received letters from all over the world seeking news of missing loved ones. This became a major commitment. Sister Evelyn had about fourteen callers at the cottage each day, many before nine in the morning. Despite all these calls on her time, she continued taking services in the churches, especially in those serving the local African people. The work was not without danger and Sister Evelyn wrote, in a letter home, about the murder of a minister; she herself was burgled twice. On one occasion she had to flee in the night as drink-maddened men besieged her door.<sup>5</sup>

### *The coming of the war*

In 1889, after five years on station, Sister Evelyn returned to England to attend Convocation<sup>6</sup> and take a furlough, but by autumn there was news of the coming war with the Boers and she set off to return. Sister Miriam had to leave Johannesburg and they met in Durban as Kruger's Boers were driving south into Natal. For the next twelve months they were devoted to relief work. A Transvaal Refugees Committee had been set up in Durban and, at first, both worked with the Committee. Sister Miriam was called upon to move to Cape Town where she worked not only with the wounded soldiers, but in visiting the Boer women in the concentration camps. In Durban Sister Evelyn had been asked to manage a convalescence home set up by the Committee to respond to the needs of the many refugees.

In 1900, after Boer defeats at Mafeking, Bloemfontein and Pretoria, Sister Evelyn returned to Johannesburg. The Transvaal was still under martial law and many of the people were homeless, but she found herself plunged back into the work. Her cottage had been looted and all her books as well as her portable organ had been taken, but she set about putting things to rights, helping to set up homes for the destitute and running centres to feed and clothe those in need. The war continued for a further two years as guerilla warfare, made working the mines difficult and creating an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty amongst all the immigrants. In 1902 the organ was found in pieces in Maraisburg and returned to her.

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<sup>4</sup> Oosthuizen, CM. 1990. *Conquerors Through Christ* (Port Shepstone: The Deaconess Order of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa), p. 20.

<sup>5</sup> *Highways and Hedges*, October 1898.

<sup>6</sup> Convocation was the annual meeting of the Wesley Deaconess Order as it is today for the Methodist Diaconal Order.

Sister Evelyn's report from her return tells how the Refugee Aid Committee was working in Johannesburg. Each incoming train was met by two members of the Committee, while their offices were open all day. Furnished houses were available to house people for the first 48 hours (longer if necessary), houses that had been looted were cleaned and there were 36 cottages of three rooms and a kitchen for those who needed housing for several weeks before they could return home. They also provided a men's shelter and a doctor was available each day for the sick. Sister Evelyn herself was in charge of all maternity work and provision of care in that area.

The Methodist Churches in the area had not been closed during the war, even the Sunday School had continued, but much of the work done by the Deaconesses had to be stopped. There was suspicion about English contact with African peoples and the immigrant population were either refugees or scattered and afraid. Sister Miriam could not return to Fordsburg until 1902 when peace was established, and she found that the young people of her classes had run wild in her absence, The Mother's Meeting had ceased and her room had been robbed of all her possessions, but she soon set about restarting the work.

The war demonstrated the flexibility of the deaconesses, and their independence. Clearly they were not simply circuit deaconesses under the authority of the superintendent. Although they were responsible to the Revd Amos Burnet, sub-Warden and Chair of the District, they seemed to operate as free agents responding to need wherever they found it. Although it would have been impossible to do anything without the support of the local churches, most of their work was the result of their own initiatives and they continued to develop skills to fit the situation around them.

### *The renewal*

In September 1902 the Wesley Deaconess Magazine *Flying Leaves* had a tiny advert on the page which listed the stations of the Deaconesses. Under the Transvaal and Swaziland District, it simply read: 'Pretoria, Wanted'. The churches there had made a request and the Order hoped to find a volunteer. By May 1903 Sister Nellie Cooper was in post. Her arrival highlighted a misunderstanding in the local church. Pretoria insisted that they should pay Sister Nellie directly while the Wesley Deaconess Institute<sup>7</sup> was adamant that they should receive the payment via the Revd Amos Burnet. The Institute's Minutes do not record a resolution. The misunderstanding demonstrates a problem in their concept of a deaconess. There had been locally employed 'deaconesses' in the District in the past and it was in this role that they viewed Sister Nellie. The Order and its deaconesses had quite a different understanding.

Sister Nellie's work was certainly not that of a local deaconess as she preached each Sunday, led the Sunday School in the principal church besides visiting and taking

<sup>7</sup> The Institute was the body responsible for the payment of a stipend and expenses for the Wesley Deaconess Order.

services in the hospital and the women's prison. By early 1904 she was glad to take a rest at a Convocation gathering at Sister Evelyn's convalescent home 'Beulah', leaving her Young Women's Class to do some visiting in her absence.



*Sister Miriam Scrivens*

Sister Miriam had taken a furlough in 1903 and returned at the beginning of 1904 to a very welcome surprise. The local Society had built her a three room cottage, she had previously lived in a single room. Her comment is interesting: 'There are many advantages to having a cottage the people come to a Deaconess more freely when she is alone . . . and I am hoping that my little house will be made a blessing to many'.<sup>8</sup> This cottage and Sister Evelyn's Stephenson Cottage are listed in the 1906 *Flying Leaves* as Deaconess Houses, two of only a handful in the world.<sup>9</sup> This recognised the work that was done within them in the offering of spiritual care and support, especially to the ministers.

The community to which Sister Miriam returned struggled with poverty and disease, as the work in the mines was not regular and many of the young men who had come out to make their fortunes were in severe distress. In the middle of the year bubonic plague swept through the minefields and she found herself struggling with nursing in addition to her already heavy load. By October that year the plague had passed and she was involved, as were the other two Deaconesses, with a mission led by Gipsy Jones. Each of the Deaconesses writes of the event as it affected them in their own area. Sisters Miriam and Nellie reported the heavy involvement of the Dutch Reformed Church and that it had been most successful with converts, although Sister Miriam recorded 100 converts in her own church. All of them were glad that the two peoples could work together in this way so soon after the war. Sadly there is almost no detail about Sister Miriam's work after the beginning of 1905, only a brief account of a break-in at her cottage which drew out the comment 'the men are getting desperate as there is no work'.<sup>10</sup> In 1907 it was reported that she had come to Cape Town for a rest and that the doctor strongly advised her to return to England because of her poor health.<sup>11</sup> She returned to active work a year later and died in England in 1924.

<sup>8</sup> *Flying Leaves*, (The Wesley Deaconess Institute, Ilkley, Yorkshire), January 1904.

<sup>9</sup> Ronald J Aitchison, *The Overseas Mission of the Wesley Deaconess Order: Theological Aberration or Inspiration?* (Potchefstroom Universiteit vir Christelike Hoër Onderwys, 2003), p.124.

<sup>10</sup> *Flying Leaves*, December 1904.

<sup>11</sup> *Flying Leaves*, January 1908.

### *Johannesburg*

Despite the projects she took up, Sister Evelyn kept the convalescent home in good heart and undertook considerable evangelistic work in the city. She had set up a mission group and led them in hymn singing and preaching each week outside the post office in the Market Square. Once a quarter she preached a 'Native Service' in the main church to congregations of 850 to 900, mostly men. In June 1905 she returned to England for her second furlough and was welcomed at Convocation enthusiastically. Her return to the Transvaal in October of that year draws the comment in *Flying Leaves* that she was in delicate health. The photograph which accompanies this comment shows a painfully thin, grey-haired woman with a stern expression which is in stark contrast to the description a Mr G. W. Stewart gave of the woman he met in 1896: 'Slim, and of small stature blessed with beautiful features, a lovely smile, very quick and active'.<sup>12</sup> Nine years had clearly taken a terrible toll on her.

Her return coincided with the setting up of a training college for 'native girls' at the school complex at Kilnerton, Pretoria. Kilnerton was established as a training college for Methodist ministers and evangelists in 1886 and by 1905 was much expanded, going through many changes owing to its multi-racial character. The apartheid regime attacked and then closed it, but it has since been re-opened as John Wesley College.

Sister Evelyn was asked to become principal of the new girl's college which was intended as a school for the daughters of ministers and evangelists in the Johannesburg area. She arrived with a friend, the daughter of the Revd Amos Burnet, Chairman of the Transvaal and Swaziland District, to find there was no furniture and the carpenters were still at work on the buildings. Her own furniture arrived by bullock cart at eight that evening but she and Miss Burnet spent an uneasy night in the part finished building disturbed by noises from the ground floor. Some days later the first nine students arrived from Johannesburg to be followed by a further twenty from the country areas. Sister Evelyn had only two twenty year old helpers, Miss Burnet and an un-named black girl and she was unsure how much help these two inexperienced young women would be able to offer. Despite such an inauspicious start, the school took off and was to remain a part of the Institute until the government closed it in 1962.

In the autumn of 1907 one of the students in the male college became ill with tuberculosis and Sister Evelyn had him brought to a room in her own premises where she could nurse him herself. She had nursed people through typhoid, bubonic plague and a host of other diseases, but she was now in weak health herself and she contracted TB which meant leaving the school and entering a nursing home in Johannesburg before being sent home to England in 1908. This was recorded as a temporary absence from her post, but she remained on the sick list for a further two years until she was retired from ill-health. She survived for a further seventeen years, and died on 13 August 1937.

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<sup>12</sup> Aitchison, 2003. p.126



1907 brought about the break in the work of the Wesley Deaconesses in the Transvaal. They were not to return until the 1920s. There were deaconesses throughout that interval, but they were locally employed deaconesses. As I said when speaking of Sister Nellie Cooper, there was an initial misunderstanding in Pretoria as to the status of the Wesley Deaconesses, but their subsequent history suggests that that was quickly cleared up. Unfortunately this did not affect the understanding of the position of the locally employed deaconesses. The Wesley Deaconesses were funded by the local churches, but had a great deal of autonomy; they preached (at a time when women were not permitted to do so); they set up projects on their own initiative; they acted as counsellors and confidantes to the ministers and professional people in their area, all with the support of the local church, but not at its behest. The locally employed women were seen as congregational functionaries and untrained social work assistants.

Johannesburg replaced Sister Evelyn with a locally employed Sister, Emma Ollerenshaw, who struggled on for some years on her own until she resigned in 1917, complaining that the demands put upon her were unreasonable. Only then did the Deaconess Society<sup>13</sup> offer her a new set of conditions. All the menial tasks were swept away and she was asked to assist the minister in the spiritual care of the congregation, care for the sick and needy in the city and act as she saw fit. These conditions sound much more like the work done by the Wesley Deaconesses.

The local sisters had been treated as menials and this seems to have come out of the perception of them as 'servants'. The Wesley Deaconesses were seen as 'servants of the church' and compared to Phoebe of Cenchrea, a woman of substance, not a scullery maid. It is difficult to see exactly where the Wesley Deaconesses acquired their authority as the Church still did not accept women in such roles. It seems likely that Methodism was doing, as it so often does, living with a reality at odds with its stated understanding. The deaconesses were consecrated (set apart), trained and qualified, and were understood to be following a calling. All of this seemed to empower them to act as 'one who had authority' (Matt. 7: 29). It took until 1944 for the Methodist Church of South Africa to reach this understanding for themselves.

### *Towards a South African order*

The Johannesburg Deaconess Society made several attempts to find a second person to work with Sister Ollerenshaw but no one lasted long until, in 1921, the Wesley Deaconess Order stationed Sister Donna Levy in Johannesburg to work at Central Hall. In 1924, Sister Emma Joan Ollerenshaw retired and, on the recommendation of General Smuts, she was awarded the M.B.E., receiving it when she returned home to England. The Society placed an advertisement in *The Methodist Churchman* from which they employed Annie D'urban as deaconess to replace Sister Ollerenshaw.<sup>14</sup> There was still

<sup>13</sup> The church in Johannesburg had created a Deaconess Society to fund the work and act as employer.

<sup>14</sup> Oosthuizen, 1990, p 27.

a distinction here in how the women were regarded. The new deaconess, Sister Annie, was employed by the local Society for a specific job. The Wesley Deaconesses were trained, consecrated and sent to minister where the Order felt they were needed. However, despite the local Sisters lack of training, the two sets of women were probably doing very similar work.

During the years leading up to the Second World War, Johannesburg Central Hall was staffed by a succession of locally employed deaconesses, usually working alongside a Wesley Deaconess. Sister Dorothy Teare was the last of this group of Wesley Deaconesses. In 1935 the Society found itself unable to fund two deaconesses any longer and Sister Dorothy returned home for a spell, leaving Sister Annie on her own. Whatever the funding position the work again proved too much for one person, and Sister Annie had to retire in 1937 suffering from a nervous breakdown.

One of the churches in the Cape Town circuit, Sydney Street, employed a locally appointed deaconess during the 1920s. Sister Annie Wells came to Cape Town to take up this post and carried on some form of deaconess work after marrying. Finally, it is worth noting that the Metropolitan church in Pietermaritzburg employed a succession of 'Sisters' before the First World War, but there is little information about their work. None of these sisters can be seen as the seeds of a South African Order as, despite the use of the term 'Deaconess', there was no intention to set them apart; they remained employees.

### *After the Second World War*

With the changes in expectations and the broadening of the scope of the work of women during the war, the 1943 Conference approved the training of suitable women to serve the Methodist Church of South Africa as Deaconesses. The resolution included the intent to form an Order in 1944. As with so many things in the Methodist Church, theory took quite some time to catch up with practice, and the constitution of the South African Order was not adopted until 1953. Despite this lack of commitment from the church a start was made; women continued to be trained at Ilkley, and Deaconesses were ordained in the intervening nine years. Somewhat more sadly the first three had to be ordained in Britain as the South African Church had not yet decided on a process. These three, Mary Caley, Unez Smuts and Yvonne von Hagen were still understood as members of the Wesley Deaconess Order stationed in South Africa until they were able to transfer to the new South African Order

Revd E. W. Grant was appointed Warden for the South African Order in 1954 and the first Convocation was held at Queenstown. The first ordination in South Africa took place at Queenstown, that of Sister Beryl Alexander, who had trained at Ilkley. Unez Smuts, a South African Deaconess who had been ordained in Britain in 1951 wrote that

the whole Order took part in the service.<sup>15</sup> At that time there were three South Africans and Sister Winifred Woods, who was on loan from the British Order. Sister Unez's article quotes the Annual Report of the Order, in order to answer the question: 'What do we do?'

That work covers a wide field. It includes teaching and preaching; training of Sunday School teachers and other workers; pastoral work in town and country (complete pastoral charge of congregations having been undertaken in some cases with excellent results); hospital visitation; founding and leadership of new branches of the Women's Auxiliary; specialised work among University students and pupils in Girls' High Schools; youth work in Churches and Youth Camps; personal interviews and evangelistic work.<sup>16</sup>

The way should have been open for the effective establishment of a Deaconess Order, but it was slow to grow. Sister Winifred Woods left Johannesburg for home in 1956 to be replaced by Sister Constance Oosthuizen who had just completed her training at Ilkley. For some time this was to remain the pattern: young women went to Ilkley and trained for two years before returning home for ordination. At first recruitment was steady and between 1956 and 1961 the South African Order grew to nine deaconesses. Perhaps the church got cold feet, or perhaps the leadership lost faith in what it had started, because in 1961 the Church stopped recruiting for the Deaconess Order. Oousthuizen suggests that there were problems in finding suitable stations for the deaconesses and certainly, for such a widely scattered church, this rapid growth would have offered problems.<sup>17</sup> The Deaconess Order would have suffered from the difficulty that it was comparatively unknown as, apart from the three large centres at Cape Town, Johannesburg and Pietersmaritzburg, there had been no deaconess presence.

The Deaconess Society which was no longer responsible for the deaconesses noticed that there had been a considerable change in the character of the work, 'conforming more to the pastoral and preaching work of the ministers'<sup>18</sup>. The Society saw themselves as no longer having the services of a deaconess. The situation was such that Sister Ursula Zerst, who had served only three years, resigned as there was no longer an appointment for her. By 1969 there were only four deaconesses in the Order. Several had left because of marriage, this still being the rule at that time. Sister Gwen Thomas married in 1969 and should have left the Order, but she applied successfully to the church for permission to continue. It was followed shortly by a decision of Conference to permit deaconesses to remain within the Order after marriage. Sister Gwen was still serving in 1990. It should be noted that the first black deaconess, Sister Mavis Mbilini came into the Order in 1974.

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<sup>15</sup> *Wesley Deaconess Magazine* (London, December, 1954), pp. 12-13.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Constance M. Oosthuizen, *Conquerors through Christ* (Port Shepstone: The Deaconess Order of the Church of Southern Africa, 1990), p. 55.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

With changes in the Wesley Deaconess Order, including the loss of Ilkley as the Deaconess Institute, the South African Deaconesses no longer went to Britain for training preferring a process of 'In Service' training. In 1975 Sister Constance Oosthuizen was accepted for the Presbyterian Ministry and in 1977 was appointed Warden of the Order, a post she was to hold for twenty-six years. South Africa's own Deaconess Order had become a reality and was developing, but perhaps not with the vigour expected. Women were being accepted into the Ministry of Word and Sacrament (Presbyterate) in the early 1970s, and the social demographics of the country were a long way from the early days of the twentieth century. There was poor acceptance of their ministry with few churches offering stations for deaconesses so the development was very slow.

### *Some theological considerations*

In Constance Oosthuizen's book there are a few pages describing the ministry of some of the deaconesses. Typically there are no names attached, but one item made a connection for me and gave me the title for this section. Whoever the deaconess was, she did not mean that to be taken too literally; she was not referring to serving individuals, but of serving personally.

According to John 13: 34, Jesus gave a new commandment that we 'Love one another', a commandment to a very personal love, not the much more general and impersonal sense of 'Love your neighbour', but the close involvement of mutual love. Sister Miriam Scrivens expressed her pleasure at being able to offer personal care in her new cottage, to coin a phrase 'I to I care'. Evelyn Oates's home, Stephenson Cottage, had been described as a focal point for all needing help. So often the evangelist tells people 'God loves you'. For many people that is very difficult to believe, but the immediate personal awareness that someone offers love can create a bridge to belief in God's love. That is what the deaconesses were called to: to be examples of the love of God, to offer the good news as an enactment rather than by proclamation. The Methodist Church, institutionally, viewed deaconesses in much the same way that local churches viewed 'sisters' it had authorised the Order to consecrate, and later ordain at Convocation which made the act of setting apart something disconnected from Connexional activity. The President of Conference led the service of Consecration with all the deaconesses present, which meant that the deaconesses were regularly part of a very visible act. It was from this that they saw themselves as having received an authorisation to minister on behalf of the Church.

RONALD AITCHISON

## John Fletcher and his unpublished correspondence with Revd Thomas Beale

John William Fletcher was born in Nyon, Switzerland in 1729 and after migrating to England served as the Vicar of Madeley in Shropshire from 1760 until his death in 1785. Before removing to Madeley, Fletcher encountered the Methodist movement and was befriended by John and Charles Wesley. Following the 1770 Minutes controversy, John Fletcher rose to defend John Wesley against the barrage of Calvinist writings with what became known as his *Checks to Antinomianism* (17715). Fletcher's publications gave him greater prominence within Methodism and the Church of England. Occasionally, Fletcher corresponded with others about the content of the *Checks*. The following two unpublished letters written by Fletcher to the Revd Beale,<sup>1</sup> were written in the height of this controversy. Thomas Beale was appointed perpetual curate at Benjworth, near Evesham in Worcestershire, in 1772.<sup>2</sup>

### Letter I: John Fletcher to Revd Mr Beale, October 1771<sup>3</sup>

Madeley, October 1771

Dear Sir,

Mr. Hatton has just left me after calling in his way home from Studley.<sup>4</sup> I told him that as Mr. Wesley propos'd to reprint my vindication of his minutes, I should be glad to leave out every thing that was exceptionable, and begg'd he would point out what appear'd so to him.<sup>5</sup> He promis'd to give the pamphlet a careful reading, and in the mean time point'd me to you for just and sensible observations. If I had thought my little book would have travel'd so far as Benjworth, I would have solicited them before.

<sup>1</sup> These two letters are not mentioned in Patrick Streiff, *Reluctant Saint?: A Theological Biography of Fletcher of Madeley* (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 2001); Peter Stuart Forsaith, 'The Correspondence of the Revd John W. Fletcher: letters to the Revd Charles Wesley, considered in the context of the Evangelical Revival' (unpublished PhD dissertation, Oxford Brookes University, 2003), pp. 182-183; David Robert Wilson, 'Church and Chapel: Parish Ministry and Methodism in Madeley, c. 1760-1785, with special reference to the ministry of John Fletcher' (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Manchester, 2010), pp. 339-377.

<sup>2</sup> See 'Beale, Thomas 1772-1793', <http://www.theclergydatabase.org.uk/index.html> (accessed 3 March 2011).

<sup>3</sup> Nashville, TN, Upper Room Chapel and Christian Art Museum, The General Board of Discipleship of the United Methodist Church, L/68: John Fletcher to Revd Thomas Beale, 15 October 1771.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Hatton (1736-1807) was rector of Water Upton from 1764 until his death in 1807. He was apparently appointed Vicar of Studley in Warwickshire, though records of his appointment cannot be found. See 'Hatton, Thomas (1758-1807)', <http://www.theclergydatabase.org.uk/index.html> (accessed 28 March 2011); Wilson, 'Church and Chapel: Parish Ministry and Methodism in Madeley', p. 321; Peter S. Forsaith, *Unexamined Labours: The Letters of Revd John Fletcher of Madeley to the leaders of the Evangelical Revival* (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 2008), p. 235.

<sup>5</sup> In a letter to Charles Wesley in September 1771, Fletcher expressed his concern that his letter with corrections to the second edition of the *Vindication* arrived too late. Forsaith, *Unexamined Labours*, p. 281.

The part of the vindication of the 7th Article of the Minutes which respects 'undervaluing ourselves',<sup>6</sup> I have cleared up by some additions.

I stand in need of wisdom meek, impartial wisdom. I must steer my way between the greatest truths I find in the bible, & the dearest friends I have on earth. Direct me dear Sir before you know our club is not so broken but I may still claim your directions as peculiarly connected with you.<sup>7</sup>

Let me observe that the prejudice of religious people ran so high against Mr. W. that the vindication came much more properly from a neuter person, or a friend to both parties, than from himself: & permit me to assure you I would never have undertook it, 1st if Mr. W. had not been out of England, & I had not been persuaded that I took no less the part of practical christianity than his own.

If you will particularly stir up my gratitude use me & my little performance with the utmost plainness be not afraid scandalizare fortiter, so shall you be a Christian Aristarchus<sup>8</sup> to Dear Sir,

Your unworthy Brother,  
J. Fletcher

The errors of the press are many you may guess at them, & not trouble yourself with them as I have already corrected about &c.

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<sup>6</sup> According to the Minutes, it is incorrect to argue that God justifies by faith alone to the exclusion of fearing God or producing good works. Furthermore, to base such an argument upon the confession of biblical characters who were convicted of their own sinfulness was an invalid argument, since such individuals 'undervalue themselves in every respect'. John Fletcher, *The Works of the Reverend John Fletcher*, vol. 2 (9 vols., London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1856-1860), p. 203. In his *Second Check to Antinomianism*, Fletcher makes reference to Beale: 'As one of his correspondents desires him to explain himself a little more upon the article of the Minutes which respects "undervaluing ourselves."' Fletcher, *The Works of the Reverend John Fletcher*, vol. 2, p. 331.

<sup>7</sup> Fletcher's reference to the 'club' may be a reference to the Worcester Association, an association of ministers which met for mutual encouragement. Beale's name does not appear in Fletcher's letter to Charles Wesley on 29 April 1765 as a member of the association. However, both Fletcher and Beale were acquainted with Thomas Hatton whom Fletcher listed as a member. Beale's location at Bengworth points to the probability of his membership in the association sometime after the date of the aforementioned letter. Forsaith, *Unexampled Labours*, p. 207; Peter Stuart Forsaith. 'An Eighteenth Century Worcester Association', *Wesley Historical Society, West Midlands Branch: 'Silver Jubilee Miscellany 1965-1990'* (Warwick, 1990), pp. 44-51.

<sup>8</sup> The Latin phrase may be translated loosely 'Don't be afraid to cause a scandal'. Fletcher made reference to Aristarchus who boldly scandalized the intellectual world with his heliocentric view of the universe. My thanks to Professor Harold Raser and Edwin Woodruff Tait for their clarifications on the translation.

**Letter II: John Fletcher to Revd Mr Beale, 14 November 1771<sup>9</sup>**

Madeley 14th Novr. 1771

My very obliging &amp; dear Brother,

I cannot sufficiently thank you for the condescending manner with which you have communicated to me your observations upon my pamphlet they were well worth my hearty gratitude and a tenfold poslate [?]: I am sorry you took so much pains to save me a double one. A week before Mr. Hatton sent me his corrections, I sent them to London immediatly but they came too late: the book was reprinted. So with my intention to connect my blunders I must lie under their blame. That may be a punishmt for having made them. I pray they may not have any worse effect than that of exposing my shallowness.

It was my design as I think it was my duty to vindicate Mr. Wesley as well as the side of the truth which he guards. I had wrote privately to our friends, I had given to Lady H. that vindication of the minutes,<sup>10</sup> and sent partly the content of the 5th letter to them, and as I saw nothing was weigh'd I thought regard to the truth and an eminent minister of Christ call'd me to appeal to the public.

I did not consider the original when I wrote the word Right in capitals. I question whether the word exousia<sup>11</sup> does not bear it, in the sense I take it: Power Joh: 1.12 seems to me rather stronger. Many have a right to a thing who have not power over it, and many have power over it that have not the full enjoyment of it. Exousia in the Revelation seems to me to take in privilege right power & enjoyment. However it is best no to overdo, we have scriptures enough to maintain the truth without, straining any, should I preside over an other edition Right shall shrink into base italics – the anti Crispian divine shall quite disappear &c. I see that controversy is what Horace says the history of civil wars is, Periculosae plenum opus aloe<sup>12</sup> the worst that in the engagement the blow must be struck with a kind of precipitancy. Of all writings those upon controversial subjects should be brought under the Poets rule Nonum premanetur in annum,<sup>13</sup> but in that time a truth attack'd might be quite borne down.

If you was at all within my reach I would go and teaze you for your criticisms on a manuscript (mega kakon)<sup>14</sup> that I send to London by this post. The subject will

<sup>9</sup> Nashville, TN, Upper Room Chapel and Christian Museum, The General Board of Discipleship of the United Methodist Church, L/69: John Fletcher, to Revd Thomas Beale, 14 November 1771.

<sup>10</sup> See John Fletcher to the Countess of Huntingdon, 7 March 1771, in Forsaith, *Unexampld Labours*, p. 260.

<sup>11</sup> 'Right'.

<sup>12</sup> 'It is a work filled with dangerous hazard'.

<sup>13</sup> 'Let it be kept back from publication until the ninth year'.

<sup>14</sup> 'Great evil'. In a letter to John and Charles Wesley, Fletcher sent the manuscript of the third letter of the *Second Check* which he described as *mega kakon*. Forsaith, *Unexampld Labours*, p. 285. Fletcher's reference to sending the manuscript by the same post enables one to date the letter to the Wesley brothers with greater precision than Dr Forsaith was able to do.

amaze you: but I must not antedate the evil day, and stir up prejudice before I can produce arguments to [?] remove it. I beg however you will not fully condemn me till you have fully heard me. In the mean time pray that my little zeal for what appears to me truth, may grow mellow & sweet instead of sharp & sour. I am so legal, such a friend to Moses that you will permit me to put you and myself in mind of the word nigh, in our mouth & in our heart the word of faith wh we preach. Come my dear friend let us believe as we can, till we do it as we should. The legality I want to follow is to love God with all my heart and you my dear Sir and dear Mr. Shirley, and all the world as myself. pray that my heart may be as legal as my pen in that respect. That the Lord may strengthen you for & bless you in your new sphere of action, is the hearty prayer of My very dear and obliging friend

Your very much obliged and affection tho  
unprofitable friend & servant  
J. Fletcher

### *Conclusion*

Fletcher's discussions with Thomas Hatton and Thomas Beale reflect Fletcher's concern that his polemical writings against hyper-Calvinism depict not merely Wesley's views, but also that of his fellow non-Calvinist clergymen in the Church of England. While Fletcher is often viewed principally as Wesley's vindicator, Fletcher appears, in these letters, to understand his role more broadly as a vindicator of truth, particularly as it comes to expression within the standards of the Church of England.

J. RUSSELL FRAZIER



## Dr Samuel Johnson, the Wesley family and Methodism

In April 1778 Samuel Johnson, then aged sixty-nine, made the following comment upon the seventy-five year old John Wesley: ‘John Wesley’s conversation is good, but he is never at leisure. He is always obliged to go at a certain hour. This is very disagreeable to a man who loves to fold his legs and have out his talk, as I do’<sup>1</sup>. On another occasion Johnson said: “I hate to meet John Wesley: the dog enchants you with conversation and then breaks away to visit some old woman.”<sup>2</sup> Again, speaking of John Wesley: ‘He can talk well on any subject’.<sup>3</sup> Once more: ‘Whatever might be thought of some Methodist teachers, he said, he could scarcely doubt the sincerity of that man, who travelled nine hundred miles in a month, and preached twelve times a week; for no adequate reward, merely temporal, could be given for such indefatigable labour.’<sup>4</sup> In 1773 during the tour of the Hebrides Johnson, in conversation with Boswell, pointed out that to John Wesley’s ‘merit’, as a veteran ‘soldier of Jesus Christ’, had, he believed, ‘turned many from darkness into light, and from the power of Satan to the living God’.<sup>5</sup>

Dr Samuel Johnson’s opinion of John Wesley highlights the differences between these two outstanding intellectual and scholarly giants of the eighteenth century. The lives of the two men ran parallel for some seventy-five years. Samuel Johnson was born in the new four storey home and shop on the corner of Breadmarket Street and Market Square, Lichfield on the 7 September 1709. He was the eldest child of the bookseller Michael Johnson (1657-1731) and his wife Sarah (nee Ford) (1669-1759).<sup>6</sup> Because it was thought that Samuel would not live, the vicar of St Mary’s Church, Lichfield, was called to the house to baptise the child. The baptism was later entered in the church register.<sup>7</sup> Like the Wesley children, Samuel Johnson was first taught by his mother. The teaching method involved Johnson memorising and reciting passages from the *Book of Common Prayer*.<sup>8</sup> When he was four years of age he was taught by Dame Oliver and at seven went to the strict regime of the Lichfield grammar school where he excelled in Latin under the tutorage of Mr Hawkins.<sup>9</sup> Eventually he became a boarder at the King Edward VI School in Stourbridge.<sup>10</sup> Following an apprenticeship with his father in the bookshop he was entered as a commoner of Pembroke College, Oxford, on 31 October

<sup>1</sup> James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, vol. II, ed. Rodney Shaw (London: The Folio Society, 1991), p. 203.

<sup>2</sup> Robert G. Tuttle Jr, *On Giant Shoulders* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 1984), p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, vol. II, p. 245.

<sup>4</sup> Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, vol. I, p. 384.

<sup>5</sup> James Bowell, *Boswell’s Life of Johnson*, vol. V, ed. George Birkbeck Hill, rev. L. F. Powell (Oxford: Clarendon, 1934), p. 50.

<sup>6</sup> Pat Rogers, ‘Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)’, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> Margaret Lane, *Samuel Johnson and his World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), p. 16

<sup>8</sup> Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, vol. 1, p. 36

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, p. 41.

1728, aged 19.<sup>11</sup> He was forced to leave after only a year because he ran out of money. James Boswell mentions several alumni of Pembroke College, including George Whitefield. Johnson ‘did not think very highly’ of Whitefield.<sup>12</sup> However, they were not students at Pembroke at the same time. Johnson left in 1729 and Whitefield not arrive until 1732.

### *Similarities and differences between Johnson and John Wesley*

Even though these two men were very different characters, the witty Johnson and the serious Wesley, there were similarities between them. Neither Samuel Johnson nor John Wesley was brought up in a home that was particularly affluent. Indeed money was so short in the Wesley home that Samuel Wesley had to borrow money.<sup>13</sup> Samuel Johnson had to leave Pembroke College after only a year because he had no money to pay for his education.<sup>14</sup> Both Wesley and Johnson were brought up very devoutly in Christian homes. Both were very bright and intelligent children. Both were influenced by William Law’s *Serious Call to a Holy Life* (1728),<sup>15</sup> as too were Charles Wesley and George Whitefield. Johnson says: ‘When at Oxford I took up “Law’s Serious Call to a Holy Life”, expecting to find it a dull book, (as such books generally are,) and perhaps to laugh at it. But I found Law quite an overmatch for me; and this was the first occasion of my thinking in earnest of religion, after I became capable of rational inquiry.’<sup>16</sup> Sometime later Mr Henderson asked of Johnson: ‘What do you think, Sir, of William Law?’ Johnson replied ‘William Law, Sir, wrote the best piece of Parennetick Divinity; but William Law was no reasoner.’<sup>17</sup> Both Johnson and the Wesley brothers read widely, but they did not limit their reading to theology or religious philosophy. Both Johnson and Wesley had lively and enquiring minds.<sup>18</sup> Both were deeply religious men, but at opposite ends of the Church of England spectrum. Johnson was a reserved High churchman with a marked tolerance of Roman Catholicism. He disliked Presbyterianism, nonconformity and religious enthusiasm which he famously defined in his dictionary as ‘a vain belief of private revelation; a warm confidence of divine favour or communication’. Wesley on the other hand became an evangelical open-air preacher and a reforming clergyman of the established church.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>13</sup> Henry D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (London: Epworth Press, 2002), p. 49.

<sup>14</sup> Lane, *Samuel Johnson and his World*, pp. 20-21

<sup>15</sup> Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People called Methodists* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), p. 43; *The Journals of Charles Wesley*, (Stoke-on-Trent: Tentmaker Publications, 2002), vol. 1, p. 47; vol. 2, p. 278; Iain H. Murray (ed.), *George Whitefield’s Journals* (London: Banner of Truth, 1960), pp. 45-46.

<sup>16</sup> Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, vol. 1, p. 54.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 512.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, vol. 1, p.126.

A deep passion directed their lives. For John Wesley it was preaching the Christian gospel.<sup>19</sup> For Johnson it was his literary output as an author whose outstanding contribution to English literature includes moralist essays, poetry, literary criticism and sermons. He was a biographer, editor and lexicographer. His dictionary being possibly the best remembered of his output.<sup>20</sup> Wesley was arguably the clergyman who had the greatest evangelical impact on Britain in the eighteenth century and Johnson was the most distinguished 'Man of Letters' of his day. Both founded and edited a significant magazine. Johnson edited *The Rambler* and Wesley the *Arminian Magazine*, later known as the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*. And both produced a dictionary. John Wesley's dictionary was printed in 1753 coming out three years before Dr Johnson's. Wesley's dictionary was entitled *The Complete English Dictionary, Explaining most of those Hard Words, which are found in the Best British writers*, and included the intriguing authorial statement: By a lover of good English and Common Sense. The styles and objects of the two dictionaries were different. The title of Johnson's dictionary spells it out clearly. *A Dictionary of the English Language: in which The Words are deduced from their Originals, and Illustrated in their Different Significations by Examples from the best Writers. To which are prefixed, A History of the Language, and An English Grammar. By Samuel Johnson, A.M. In Two Volumes*. Wesley's dictionary is an alphabetical list of words with a short explanation such as 'Methodist: one that lives according to the method laid down in the Bible'. Johnson's has an alphabetical list of words with an explanation and examples of their use. For example:

To fond: v a (from noun) to fondle, to treat with great indulgence; to caress; to cocker. 'However unjust your jealousy appear, it does not pity, not my anger more: I'll fond it as the forward child of love Dryden's Aurengz. When amidst the fervour of the feast the Tyrian hugs and fonds thee on her breast And with sweet kisses in her arms constrain Thou may'st infuse thy venom in her veins Dryden's AEn. They are allowed to kiss the child at meeting and parting; but a professor, who always stands by, will not suffer them to use any fondling expressions". Gullivers Travels.

### ***Contrasts between Wesley and Johnson***

Their appearances were very different. Johnson from childhood had ailments that had disfigured his face and made him ungainly. Wesley was small in stature, neat and sprightly. Johnson always enjoyed good conversation and convivial company. He founded the Ivy Lane Club, which was also known as the Rambler Club. In the winter of 1748-9 Johnson and nine friends began to meet regularly every Tuesday evening for supper, conversation, and wine, or in Johnson's case lemonade, at the King's Head, a beefsteak house in Ivy Lane, off Paternoster Row.<sup>21</sup> Johnson was also a prominent

<sup>19</sup> Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, p. 344.

<sup>20</sup> Steven Lynn, 'Johnson's critical reception', in Greg Clingham (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to Samuel Johnson* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 240

member of the Club founded by Joshua Reynolds (1764-1784) sometimes known as the Literary Club and sometimes called Johnson's Literary Club. Its main purpose was to have supper and to enjoy good conversation. It was a club for mental intercourse which met weekly at the Turks Head tavern in Gerrard Street, Soho. The membership in addition to Joshua Reynolds included Samuel Johnson, Oliver Goldsmith, Edmund Burke and five other notable persons.<sup>22</sup> Johnson was also a member of the Essex Head Club (1783-1794) which had some 33 members.<sup>23</sup> John Wesley on the other hand was not a clubbable type of person. He was largely committed to preaching the Gospel, organising Methodist societies, caring for the poor, sick, downtrodden and unemployed and opening schools and writing letters, his diary, journal, pamphlets and books. He was constantly on the move especially during the spring, summer and autumn visiting the many Methodist societies. So it is hardly surprising that Wesley, the highly organised and motivated evangelist, did not have much time to spend with the laid-back clubbable conversationalist Samuel Johnson. Yet their paths did cross.

### *Johnson's opinion of the Methodists*

The earliest of Dr Johnson's comments on Methodism relate to their preaching style. On the 30 July 1763, James Boswell, speaking to Dr Johnson about the effect that preaching has on people wrote: 'I talked of the great success which those called Methodists have'. Dr Johnson responded by saying: "Sir, it is owing to their expressing themselves in a plain and familiar manner, which is the only way to do good to the common people, and which clergymen of genius and learning ought to do from a principle of duty, when it is suited to their congregations; a practice, for which they will be praised by men of sense. To insist against drunkenness as a crime, because it debases reason, the noblest faculty of man, would be of no service to the common people: but to tell them that they may die in a fit of drunkenness, and shew [sic] them how dreadful that would be, cannot fail to make a deep impression. Sir, when your Scotch clergy give up their homely manner, religion will soon decay in that country." Boswell then writes 'Let this observation, as Johnson meant it, be ever remembered'.<sup>24</sup>

In 1770 Boswell and Johnson were out of touch with each other. The Revd Dr William Maxwell (1732-1818) of Falkland, Ireland, gave Boswell a *Collectanea* covering the months that Boswell was away.<sup>25</sup> Boswell, quoting the *Collectanea*, tells of the occasion in 1770 when two young women from Staffordshire visited Johnson when Maxwell was present. They wanted to consult Johnson on the subject of Methodism, to which they were inclined. "Come, (said he) you pretty fools, dine with Maxwell and

<sup>21</sup> Boswell, *Life of Samuel Johnson*, vol. 1, p. 126; vol. 2, p. 489

<sup>22</sup> Boswell, *Life of Samuel Johnson*, vol. 1, pp. 296-98, 316-17.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 489-90.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 284-85.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, p. 379.

me at the Mitre, and we will talk over that subject". After dinner he took one of them upon his knee, and fondled her for half an hour together.<sup>26</sup> This incident is illustrated in an 1860 watercolour by Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882) which is now in the Tate collection entitled 'Dr. Johnson at the Mitre'. The picture shows Dr Johnson seated at a table with the two ladies together with the Rev Dr William Maxwell. Was this a warmly friendly cuddle or was it something more than friendship? Today when a man fondles a woman it tends to have sexual overtones. In the *New Oxford English Dictionary* the verb fondle is described as '(to) stroke or caress lovingly or erotically. The example given is 'he had kissed her and fondled her'. The *Oxford English Dictionary* quotes Johnson's *Rambler* from 1757: 'Every day sends out, in quest of pleasure . . . some heir fondled in ignorance'. The Rossetti picture suggests more sexuality than fondness or friendship. Also from the *Collectanea Boswell* quotes:

He (Johnson) observed that the established clergy in general did not preach plain enough; and that polished periods and glittering sentences flew over the heads of the common people, without any impression upon their hearts. Something might be necessary, he observed, to excite the affections of the common people, who were sunk in languor and lethargy, and therefore he supposed that the new concomitants of Methodism might probably produce so desirable an effect. The mind, like the body, he observed, delighted in change and novelty, and even in religion itself, courted new appearances and modifications. Whatever might be thought of some Methodist teachers, he said, he could scarcely doubt the sincerity of that man, who travelled nine hundred miles in a month, and preached twelve times a week; for no adequate reward, merely temporal, could be given for such indefatigable labour.<sup>27</sup>

In 1768 there was a charge brought against six Methodist students at Oxford University. The principal 'was satisfied with their conduct, and had no wish to trouble them'. However the Vice-Principal, who was the tutor of the six students appealed to the Vice-Chancellor as visitor to expel them. The Vice-Chancellor acting as 'visitor', with four assessors met at St Edmund's Hall dining room and after hearing the spurious charges expelled six Methodist students 'for their ignorance'.<sup>28</sup> In 1772 Boswell recorded his conversation with Johnson about the expulsion of six Methodist students from Oxford University. Boswell says: 'I talked of the recent expulsion of six students from the University of Oxford, who were Methodists and would not desist from publicly praying and exhorting.' Johnson replied: 'Sir, that expulsion was extremely just and proper. What have they to do at a University who are not willing to be taught, but will presume to teach?' He continued: 'Where is religion to be learnt but at an University?' 'Sir, they were examined, and found to be mighty ignorant fellows'. Boswell replied: 'But, was it not hard, Sir, to expel them, for I am told they were good beings?' Johnson responded

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, p. 381.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 384.

<sup>28</sup> George Birkbeck Hill, *Dr Johnson, his Friends and his Critics* (London: Smith and Elder, 1878), pp. 51-58.

by saying: 'I believe they might be good beings; but they were not fit to be in the University of Oxford. A cow is a very good animal in the field; but we turn her out of a garden'.<sup>29</sup>

In *The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson* Boswell quotes Johnson as saying on 10 November 1773 that in general: 'missionaries were too sanguine in their accounts of their success among savages, and that much of what they tell is not to be believed'. He owned that the Methodists had done good, had spread religious impressions among the vulgar part of mankind, but, he said, they had great bitterness against other Christians, and that he never could get a Methodist to explain in what he excelled others; that it always ended in the indispensable necessity of hearing one of their preachers.<sup>30</sup>

On 27 March 1775 Johnson went with Thomas Sheridan to see the play 'The Hypocrite' which Isaac Bickerstaffe had adapted from Moliere and Cibbers' play 'Nonjuror', which had fallen out of fashion with the change of attitude towards the Jacobites. In the play Bickerstaffe had changed Dr Wolfe, a Nonjuror to Dr Cantwell, the Methodist, in order to satirise the Methodist movement. After the play Johnson observed: 'I do not think, the character of the Hypocrite justly applicable to the Methodists; but it was very applicable to the nonjurors'.<sup>31</sup>

On 18 May 1776 John Wesley wrote in his Journal: 'I read over Dr Johnson's *Tour to the Western Isles*. It is a very curious book, wrote with admirable sense and, I think, great fidelity - although in some respects he is thought to bear hard on the nation, which I am satisfied he never intended'.<sup>32</sup> Although Johnson disliked Presbyterianism and non-conformists,<sup>33</sup> he had respect for John Wesley. He had less respect for his fellow alumni of Pembroke College, George Whitefield. Boswell quoting Johnson writes: 'He would not allow much merit to Whitefield's oratory'. 'His popularity, Sir, (said he,) is chiefly owing to the peculiarity of his manner. He would be followed by the crowds were he to wear a night-cap in the pulpit, or were to preach from a tree'.<sup>34</sup> In 1779 Johnson wrote: 'Whitefield never drew as much attention as a mountebank does; he did not draw attention by doing better than others, but by doing what was strange'. Johnson, using Philip Astley (1742-1814) the pioneer of the modern circus and passionate horseman to illustrate his point said: 'Were Astley to preach a sermon standing upon his head on a horse's back, he would collect a multitude to hear him; but no wise man would say he made a better sermon for that. I never treated Whitefield's ministry with contempt; I believe he did good'. Johnson then goes on to say that Whitefield 'devoted himself to

<sup>29</sup> Boswell, *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, vol. 2, p. 187.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, vol. 5, pp. 292-93.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 321.

<sup>32</sup> W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater (eds), *The Works of John Wesley, volume 23: Journal and Diaries VI (1776-1786)* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), p. 14.

<sup>33</sup> F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone (eds), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 898.

<sup>34</sup> Boswell, *Life of Samuel Johnson*, vol. 1, p. 357.

the lower classes of mankind, and among them he was of use. But when familiarity and noise claim the praise due to knowledge, art and elegance, we must beat down such pretensions'.<sup>35</sup> During the *Tour of the Hebrides*, Boswell records that: 'We talked of Whitefield. Johnson said he was at the same college with him, and knew him before he began to be better than other people (smiling); that he believed he sincerely meant well, but had a mixture of politicks [sic] and ostentation: whereas Wesley thought of religion only'. Robertson said: 'Whitefield had strong natural eloquence, which, if cultivated, would have done great things'. Johnson replied: 'Why, sir, I take it, he was at the height of what his abilities could do, and was sensible of it. He had the ordinary advantages of education; but he chose to pursue that oratory which is for the mob'. Boswell pointed out that 'He had great effect on the passions'. Johnson then responded by saying: 'Why, sir, I don't think so. He could not represent a succession of pathetick images. He vociferated, and made an impression'.<sup>36</sup>

### ***How often did Johnson and Wesley meet?***

We know from Wesley's *Journal* that Wesley went to see Dr Johnson during his last illness on 18 December 1783. In Wesley's diary for Thursday 18 December 1783 the curt note of his last visit to Dr Johnson says: '2. At Dr Johnson's, dinner, mostly religious talk'.<sup>37</sup> An oil on canvas painting hanging in Dr Johnson's house in Gough Square, London, in the style of Francis Hayman (1708-1776) shows John Wesley preaching at the Chapel of Ease, Old Cripplegate. It is said that in the congregation are Dr Johnson, Oliver Goldsmith, James Boswell, Anna Williams and Martha Hall (Wesley's sister).<sup>38</sup> Wesley is shown with black hair. Other portraits showing Wesley with black hair range from between 1742 and 1765. Martha Hall and her husband Westley separated in 1750 and he died in 1776. As Martha lived in London about that time it suggests that Wesley met Johnson on this occasion somewhere between 1750 and 1765. There is the quotation of Johnson saying: 'I hate to meet John Wesley: the dog enchants you with conversation and then breaks away to visit some old woman.' This suggests that we have evidence that they met on at least three occasions but it is probable that they met more often.

In his *Journal* for Thursday 18 December 1783 Wesley writes: 'I spent two hours with the great man, Dr Johnson, who is sinking into the grave by a gentle decay'.<sup>39</sup> This short note does not tell us the full extent of Johnson's illness. Johnson had suffered a stroke on 17 June 1783, and was suffering from bronchitis, dropsy and rheumatoid arthritis. A few days before Wesley's visit on the 18 December 1783 Johnson had a coronary thrombosis. It is remarkable that Johnson was well enough to have a meal with

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 318.

<sup>36</sup> Boswell, *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, vol. 5, p. 36.

<sup>37</sup> Ward and Heitzenrater (eds), *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 23, pp. 295, 471

<sup>38</sup> *Dr Johnson's House, Gough Square, London: A Guide* (London: Trustees of Dr Johnson's House, 1994), p. 21.

<sup>39</sup> Ward and Heitzenrater (eds), *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 22, pp. 137-46; vol. 23, p. 295.

Wesley and to talk seriously about faith for the best part of two hours. Johnson lingered on for another twelve months and died on 13 December 1784. There is no record of Wesley visiting Dr Johnson during 1784.

### *Johnson, Boswell and Wesley on Ghosts*

On 27 May 1768, Boswell met with Wesley to discuss Elizabeth Hobson's ghost account. In 1778 when Dr Johnson was discussing with Boswell whether ghosts existed or not Johnson cryptically said of John Wesley: 'He can talk well on any subject'. Boswell then asked Johnson: 'Pray Sir, what has he made of his story of a ghost?' Johnson replied: 'Why Sir, he believes it; but not on sufficient authority. He did not take time enough to examine the girl. It was at Newcastle upon Tyne, where the ghost was said to have appeared to a young woman several times, mentioning something about the right to an old house, advising application to be made to an attorney which was done; and, at the same time saying the attorney would do nothing which proved to be the fact. This says (John) is proof that a ghost knows our thoughts.' Now (laughing) it is not necessary to know our thoughts, to tell that an attorney will sometimes do nothing. Charles Wesley, who is a more stationary man, does not believe the story'.<sup>40</sup> Johnson concluded that he was sorry that John Wesley did not take more pains to inquire into the evidence for it.

In 1779 before he left London, Boswell resumed the conversation with Johnson concerning the appearance of the ghost at Newcastle upon Tyne which John Wesley believed but Johnson had ridiculed. Boswell was desirous to examine the question closely, and at the same time wished to be acquainted with John Wesley. Though he differed from Wesley in some points he admired his various talents and loved his pious zeal. Dr Johnson wrote the following letter of introduction for Boswell on 3 May 1779.

'Sir, Mr Boswell, a gentleman who has long been known to me, is desirous of being known to you, and has asked this recommendation, which I give him with great willingness, because I think it very much to be wished that worthy and religious men should be acquainted with each other, I am sir, Your most humble servant, Sam Johnson.'<sup>41</sup>

On 27 May 1779 John Wesley arrived in Edinburgh and James Boswell, with the letter of introduction provided by Samuel Johnson, met with Wesley. Boswell tells us that: 'Mr. Wesley being in the course of his ministry in Edinburgh, I presented this letter to him, and was very politely received. I begged to have it returned to me, which was accordingly done. His state of the evidence as to the ghost did not satisfy me.'<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, vol. 2, p. 245.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 308-9.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, p. 309.



*Johnson, Wesley and plagiarism*

*The New Oxford Dictionary of English* (1998) says that plagiarism is ‘the practice of taking someone else’s work or ideas and passing them off as their own’. From Latin *plagiarius* ‘a kidnapper’. Plagiarism, therefore, is a form of intellectual theft and basic dishonesty. Was John Wesley ever dishonest? Did he use other people’s work and pass it off as his own? Did he paraphrase the work of others without giving full acknowledgement? What was his view on plagiarism? The prophet Jeremiah condemns an early form of plagiarism when he says: ‘Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that steal my words every one from his neighbour.’<sup>43</sup> John Wesley comments on this passage in his *Explanatory Notes On The Old Testament*: ‘That steal - That conspire together what to say to deceive the people, and so steal what they say one from another’.<sup>44</sup> In other words John Wesley argued that plagiarism is wrong. Plagiarism has been a subject of contention for centuries. John Bunyan (1628-1688), was accused of plagiarism when he published *The Pilgrim’s Progress* (1678). In ‘An Advertisement to the Reader’ in *Holy War* (1682) Bunyan wrote:

It came from my own heart, so to my head,  
And thence into my fingers trickled;  
Then to my pen, from whence immediately  
On paper I did dribble it daintily.  
Matter and manner too was all mine own,  
Nor was it unto any mortal known,  
Till I had done it. Nor, did any then,  
By books, by wits, by tongues, or hand or pen  
Add five words to it, or write half a line  
Thereof; the whole and every whit is mine.<sup>45</sup>

Dr Johnson wondered if the uneducated tinker John Bunyan, when writing *Pilgrim’s Progress*, had actually taken *the opening lines* from Dante’s *Inferno*; and he pointed out the similarities with parts of Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*. Later Johnson withdrew his criticism when he realized that there was no known translation of Dante’s *Divine Comedy* at the time Bunyan was writing *Pilgrim’s Progress*. *Commedia*’s most popular translation into English was made by Henry Cary (1772-1884), who also issued *The Inferno*.

In the opening paragraph of John Wesley’s 1770 pamphlet supporting the American cause, *Free Thoughts On The Present State Of Public Affairs In A Letter To A Friend* says: ‘You desire me to give my thoughts freely on the present state of public affairs. But do you consider? I am no politician; politics lie quite out of my province’. Yet in 1775 he caused a political storm by changing his opinion by supporting King George

<sup>43</sup> Jeremiah 23: 30-32.

<sup>44</sup> John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon The Old Testament*, vol. 3 (Bristol: William Pine, 1765), p. 2188.

<sup>45</sup> John Bunyan, *The Holy War* (1682) (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1907).

III and the British Parliament's position on the American war of Independence when he published *A Calm Address To Our America Colonies*. Wesley was accused of being both a plagiarist and being politically inconsistent and a turn-coat. The Calvinist Augustus Toplady satirized Wesley in 1775 in the pamphlet *An Old Fox Tarr'd and Feather'd* where he called him a 'tadpole in Divinity' turned politician. What then was all the fuss about? It was the contents of Wesley's four page pamphlet *The Calm Address To Our American Colonies* which sold 40,000 copies in only a few weeks. A second version was printed and some 100,000 copies in the two versions were sold. A few months earlier Dr Johnson had published his pamphlet *Taxation No Tyranny*. Wesley both used extracts from Johnson's pamphlet and paraphrased it to such an extent that Toplady wrote that the Foundry Wasp has made very free with the Johnsonian hive. Toplady went on to say than in only ten pages there were no fewer than thirty-one borrowed paragraphs. The unsparing hand of the Master of Arts, he wrote, has fleeced the Doctor of Laws.<sup>46</sup> In his letter to his brother, Charles, dated 28 October 1775, John informed him that he was just sending to the press 'a new edition of the *Address*, corrected; (The Calm Address) in which my *change* is accounted for, and two of the questions fully answered. To the third; "Why did not the Parliament tax them before?" Mr Madan answers; 'Because they were wiser; they knew the mischief that would ensue". Dr Johnson is in France.<sup>47</sup> This reference to Johnson seems to answer a question that Charles had probably asked, which was, whether Dr Johnson had been told of the new edition. In this edition Wesley acknowledged his indebtedness to Johnson's *Taxation No Tyranny*. Wesley starts the pamphlet with these words:

To the reader. I was of a different judgment on this head, till I read a tract entitled, *Taxation no Tyranny*. But as soon as I received more light myself, I judged it my duty to impart it to others. I therefore extracted the chief arguments from that treatise, and added an application to those whom it most concerns. I was well aware of the treatment this would bring upon myself; but let it be, so I may in any degree serve my King and country.<sup>48</sup>

In 1776 John Wesley sent with his sister Martha a copy of his *Notes on the Old Testament and Notes on the New Testament* in three volumes, as a gift to Dr Johnson. On 6 February 1776 Samuel Johnson wrote to John Wesley:

Sir,

When I received your Commentary on the Bible, I durst not at first flatter myself that I was to keep it, having so little claim to so valuable a present; and when Mrs Hall informed me of your kindness, was hindered from time to time from returning you those thanks which I now entreat you to accept. I have thanks likewise to return for the addition of your important suffrage to my American question. To have gained such a mind as yours may

<sup>46</sup> Richard P. Heitzenrater, *The Elusive Mr Wesley*, vol. 2 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1984), pp. 116-21

<sup>47</sup> John Telford (ed.), *The Letters of John Wesley*, vol. 6 (London: Epworth Press, 1960), pp. 183, 186.

<sup>48</sup> *The Works of John Wesley A.M.*, vol. 11 (London: John Mason 1830), pp 81-88.

justly confirm me in my opinion. What effect my paper has had upon the public I know not, but I have now no reason to be discouraged. The lecturer was surely in the right who, though he saw his audience slinking away, refused to quit the chair while Plato stayed. – I am, reverend sir, your most humble servant, Sam Johnson.<sup>49</sup>

Hill says of this: ‘The comments in this letter imply that Johnson appreciated Wesley’s support of his pamphlet *Taxation No Tyranny* and did not accuse him of plagiarising it’.

### *Johnson’s connection with other members of the Wesley family.*

Johnson was very friendly with a number of members of John Wesley’s extended family. He was especially drawn to Mrs Martha (‘Patty’) Hall (1706-1791), the sister of John and Charles Wesley. Boswell said of Mrs Martha Hall that she was the sister of the Reverend John Wesley, and ‘resembled him, as I thought, both in figure and manner’.<sup>50</sup> Martha Hall was frequently invited by Johnson to dine with him at Bolt-Court. Martha, like her brothers was stimulated by reading extensively, literary conversation, theological discussion, and arguments on moral and philosophical questions. Her intellectual conversation was greatly valued by Johnson. She was well read and had a retentive memory which allowed her to quote from any book that was being discussed. After the death of her husband, the Revd Westley Hall (1711-1776), Johnson invited her to live in his house. She declined because she said that joining Johnson’s fantasy seraglio (harem) would provoke the jealousy of both Mrs Williams and Mrs Desmoulins, both long time members of the household.<sup>51</sup> Boswell quotes Samuel Johnson who had said: ‘I have often thought that, if I kept a seraglio, the ladies should all wear linen gowns, or cotton - I mean stuffs made of vegetable substances. I would have no silk; you cannot tell when it is clean; it will be very nasty before it is perceived to be so. Linen detects its own dirtiness’.<sup>52</sup> It is hardly surprising that Martha refused to join the Johnson harem having so recently been widowed from Westley Hall who defended polygamy and left her to go off with his mistress to the West Indies.<sup>53</sup>

On Easter day, 15 April 1781, Martha Hall was invited with Mrs Williams, Mrs Desmoulins, Mr Levett and Mr Allen, the printer, to dine with Dr Johnson. During the meal James Boswell said that the subject for debate at the Robinhood Society that evening was to be St Matthew 27: 52: ‘And the graves were opened, and many of the bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection,

<sup>49</sup> George Birkbell Hill *Letters of Samuel Johnson* vol. 1 (New York Harper and Brothers 1892) p 451.

<sup>50</sup> Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, vol. 2, p. 396.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 293.

<sup>52</sup> James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson including A Journal of the Tour to the Hebrides*, vol. 1 (Boston: Carter Hendee, 1831), p. 393.

<sup>53</sup> Frank Baker (ed.), *The Works of John Wesley, volume 26: Letters II (1740-1755)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), p. 269.

and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.’ Only Mrs Hall (Wesley’s sister) asked that they should go to the meeting to hear the discussion. Johnson said that they should not go to the meeting so as not to give countenance to such a meeting. Boswell said that he would go. Martha Hall then pressed Johnson by saying to him: ‘But, Sir, I should like to hear you discuss it’. Johnson was reluctant. Martha Hall persisted and she ‘talked of the resurrection of the human race in general, and maintained that we shall be raised with the same bodies.’ Johnson replied: ‘Nay Madam, we see that it is not to be the same body’. Johnson then illustrated his point by referring to St Paul in 1 Corinthians 15: 37 ‘for the scripture uses the illustration of grain sown, and we know that the grain which grows is not the same with what is sown’.<sup>54</sup> Later Mrs Williams and Mrs Hall were both together striving to answer Johnson. He grew angry, and called out loudly: ‘Nay, when you both speak at once, it is intolerable’. But checking himself, and softening, he said: ‘This one may say, though you *are* ladies’. Then he brightened into gay humour, and addressed them in the words of one of the songs in ‘The Beggars Opera’, “But two at a time there’s no mortals can bear”. Boswell then turning to Johnson exclaimed: “What Sir, (said I) are you going to turn Captain Macheath?” Boswell went on to say: ‘There was something as pleasantly ludicrous in the scene as can be imagined. The contrast between Macheath, Polly and Lucy – and Dr. Samuel Johnson, blind, peevish Mrs Williams, and lean, lanky, preaching Mrs Hall, was quite exquisite’.<sup>55</sup> The contrast that Boswell calls exquisite is the picture in his mind of the dashing young Captain Macheath and the two pretty young girls Polly and Lucy in the Beggar’s Opera and the aged Dr Johnson and the two old ladies with whom he was conversing. Martha Hall and Anna Williams were 75 at the time. Johnson refrained from using the full quotation which Captain Macheath sings in Act 3 scene 1 which is:

One Wife is too much for most Husbands to hear,  
But two at a time there’s no mortal can bear.  
This way, and that way, and which way I will,  
What would comfort the one, t’ other Wife would take ill.<sup>56</sup>

We have another tantalising glimpse of Dr Johnson’s friendship with the Wesley family when on 28 October 1783, Dr Johnson wrote to Charles Wesley’s daughter Sarah (1759-1828), asking her to come to a friendly meeting and asks if she can bring her aunt Hall.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Boswell, *Boswell’s Life of Johnson*, vol. 4, pp. 92-93.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 95.

<sup>56</sup> *The British Drama A Collection of the Most Esteemed Tragedies, Comedies, Operas, And Farces in the English Language* (London: Jones & Co., 1824), p. 665.

<sup>57</sup> *Hyde Collection: Catalog of the Samuel Johnson Collection*, (Cambridge, MS: Harvard Law School, 2006).

Another amusing and interesting insight is recorded *In the Diary of a Lover of Literature* by Thomas Green (1769-1825) written in 1810. Green says that on 28 June 1813, Wesley (Charles Junior) (1757-1834), Dr Hague, and others dined with him.

Wesley full of life and spirit, and anecdote remembered Dr Johnson's calling at his father's, house and introducing himself in these words: "I understand, Sir, your boys are skilled in music; pray let me hear them." As soon as they began, Doctor snatched up a book which lay on the window-seat, and was soon absorbed in reading and rolling. As soon as the noise ceased, waking as if from a trance, the Doctor said: "Young gentlemen, I am much obliged to you" and walked off. 'Wesley imitated his manner and growl most happily.'<sup>58</sup>

### **Conclusion**

There are two other links between Wesley family members, Methodism and Dr Johnson's household and his biographer. In a letter written by Charles Wesley junior (1757-1825) addressed to My Dear harmonic friend in c. 1814 he sent an overture he had composed many years earlier for Euphemia Boswell.<sup>59</sup> In the Houghton Library, part of the Harvard College Library, there is a collection of Boswell family papers and amongst them is a letter written by Euphemia Boswell, the daughter of James Boswell, to Charles Wesley Junior of around the same date. In the Southern Methodist University, Bridwell Library, is a letter written to Sarah Wesley (1726-1822) (widow of Revd Charles Wesley) from Mary Freeman Shepherd (1731-1815). She ends the letter: 'I breathe Vendetta Ultionem to that she fiend Boswell and her male associate in malice, Sam Belial' She is referring to Euphemia Boswell and Samuel Wesley, Sarah's son.<sup>60</sup>

Dr Johnson had a black freed Jamaican slave, Francis Barber, (1735-1801) as a man servant. He eventually became Johnson's butler or secretary and was more like a son to Johnson, who eventually made him his residual heir. In 1773 Barber married a white English woman (Elizabeth Ball c.1755-1816) They had four children. The third was a boy, named after Dr Johnson, Samuel Barber (1786-1828). After Dr Johnson's death the family, as requested by Dr Johnson, moved to Lichfield in Staffordshire. When Samuel Barber was fourteen he was servant to a Mr Hickman a surgeon in Burslem in the Potteries, a position Samuel held with distinction for many years. Like Dr Johnson and his own family he attended the Anglican Church. He did not like the dissenters, especially the Methodists, who he regarded as being wolves in sheep's clothing, and as the false prophets spoken of in Matthew 7: 15. Samuel Barber was caught up in the 1805-06 religious revival in Burslem. Samuel was converted and when Hugh Bourne, William Clowes and others were expelled by the Wesleyans, Samuel Barber joined them. In 1809, he was put on the preachers' plan as a local preacher and continued as a preacher

<sup>58</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine* (May 1838), pp. 468-469.

<sup>59</sup> John Telford, *Sayings and Portraits of Charles Wesley* (London: Epworth Press, 1927), pp. 158-159.

<sup>60</sup> Southern Methodist University, Bridwell Library, Charles Wesley Family Materials, Mart Freeman Shepherd to Sarah Wesley, 14 December 14 (1797 or 1809).

until his early death at the age of forty-two. Samuel Barber was the first English black Methodist preacher in this country.<sup>61</sup>

Whilst we cannot be certain how many times Dr Johnson and John Wesley met, we can see how the lives of these two formidable men of the eighteenth century and their families and households intertwined. We know that Dr Johnson disliked the enthusiasm of the Methodists, but he esteemed John Wesley better than George Whitefield. Both families have left a lasting worldwide imprint. Johnson by his dictionary which continues to influence the English language today and John Wesley by his founding of the Methodist Church which is a major worldwide Christian denomination, while Charles Wesley, with his deeply held faith expressed clearly in the hymns that people of all strata of society can sing and understand, still has a powerful influence on global Christianity.

DONALD H. RYAN

**WESLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL LECTURE  
SATURDAY 25 JUNE 2011  
THE GLADSTONE LIBRARY, HAWARDEN, FLINTSHIRE**

The Annual Lecture and AGM of the Wesley Historical Society for 2011 will be held at The Gladstone Library at St Deiniol's, Hawarden, Flintshire CH5 3DF on Saturday 25 June. The Annual Lecture will be given by Dr Eryn White, Senior Lecturer in History at the University of Aberystwyth on the subject 'Wesley, Whitefield and Wales'. Specializing in the history of religion, education and society in eighteenth-century Wales, Dr White is the author of *The Welsh Bible* (2007) and co-author of *Calendar of the Trevecka Letters* (2003). Her lecture will focus on the impact of Wesley and Whitefield on Wales. By the time of the Religious Census of 1851, Calvinistic Methodism had become the largest Nonconformist denomination in Wales, with Wesleyan Methodism in fourth place after the Welsh Independents and the Baptists. Both John Wesley and George Whitefield had links with the leaders of Welsh Methodism in the early years of the Revival and both visited the country on several occasions. On the occasion of his first visit, Wesley commented that Wales was 'ripe for the gospel'. Yet Wesleyan Methodism struggled to reap the harvest of the Revival. In the year of the bicentenary of the founding of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Church in 1811, it is worth examining again how the Calvinistic and Wesleyan groups competed in Wales and why it was the Calvinistic Methodists who proved most influential.

The Gladstone Library, founded in 1894 by William Gladstone (1809-98) in the north Wales village of Hawarden is the only national library in the UK commemorating

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<sup>61</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine* (Derby Richardson and Handforth, 1829), pp. 81-90; (April, 1829), pp. 119-28.

a British Prime minister and is recognised as Britain's finest residential library. It includes Gladstone's vast personal library, much of which he transported to the site from his home by cart and wheelbarrow, supplemented in the century since his death by numerous acquisitions including a particularly extensive collection of books on religious history. Our meetings will take place in the chapel and as accommodation will be limited for this event we are requesting that those interested in attending reserve places in advance, by contacting the General Secretary by 1 May 2011, which will also assist catering provision. It will also be possible for anyone who wishes to stay overnight in the comfortable residential accommodation at the library to book overnight accommodation on the Friday and/or the Saturday at attractive group rates, with plenty of opportunities to view the permanent Gladstone Exhibition and the Library. Bookings for overnight accommodation should be made directly with the Library as soon as possible making it clear that you will be attending the WHS event [The Gladstone Library, St Deiniol's, Church Lane, Hawarden, Flintshire CH5 3DF].

For both residential and day visitors on arrival tea and coffee will be available for purchase from 10.30 am. After opening devotions at 11.00 a.m., the Revd Donald H. Ryan will introduce the morning's programme with a twentieth-century perspective on Methodism in Wales and at 11.30 a.m. Mr E. Alan Rose will speak about the history of Methodism in Cheshire and the Welsh borders. At 12 noon there will be a break for lunch, which may be purchased in the Cafeteria, and opportunities to view the exhibition and library. There will be no charge for the day's programme but an offering will be taken at the Annual Lecture to cover expenses. The Annual General Meeting chaired by the Revd Dr John A. Newton will begin at 12.45 pm, to conclude no later than 2.15 pm. The Annual Lecture, chaired by Mr Lionel Madden will begin at 2.30 pm, to conclude no later than 4.00 pm. Further details of the meeting will be available on the Wesley Historical Society website [[www.wesleyhistoricalsociety.org.uk](http://www.wesleyhistoricalsociety.org.uk)] and of the venue on the Library website [[www.st-deiniols.com/](http://www.st-deiniols.com/)]. Further enquiries about the Annual Lecture should be addressed to Dr John A. Hargreaves, 7 Haugh Shaw Road, Halifax. HX1 3AH (Tel. 01422 250780; E-mail: [johnahargreaves@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:johnahargreaves@blueyonder.co.uk)).

JOHN A. HARGREAVES

## BOOK REVIEWS

*The Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies*, edited by William J. Abraham and James E. Kirby. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. xvii + 761. Hardback, £85.00. ISBN 0199212996).

*T&T Clark Companion to Methodism*, edited by Charles Yrigoyen Jr. (London: T&T Clark, 2010, pp. x + 602. Hardback, £85.00. ISBN 9780567032935).

In many respects these are companion volumes, and stand alongside the recently published *Cambridge Companion to John Wesley* (2010), reviewed in an earlier number of the *Proceedings* (vol. 57, part 6 (October, 2010), pp. 27-68). These kind of encyclopaedic companion volumes seem to be in vogue by publishers, especially academic presses, at the present time. Both volumes are very large and comprehensive in their coverage, but they are unfortunately priced at a forbidding high level, probably ensuring that they will only be found in university libraries. This is a great shame since both volumes under review here are outstanding in their coverage, and allow readers to get a full grasp of the current state of scholarship within the discipline that has come to be known as Wesley and Methodist studies.

No reviewer is likely to be foolhardy enough to comment on the whole of these two volumes, the present one included! *The Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies* is split into six sections, and contains forty-two chapters dealing with the history, ecclesiastical structures, worship, spirituality, theology and ethics of Methodism from the eighteenth century right down to the present day. Most readers of this journal will, no doubt, be most interested in the Methodist history section. Of the eleven chapters, many cover familiar ground. J. C. D. Clark provides a helpful contextual chapter which helpfully summarises the major current historiographical trends. Richard Heitzenrater writes about the founding brothers themselves, while John Wigger, borrowing heavily from his new biography of Francis Asbury, introduces American Methodism. Perhaps the standout chapter in this section is that contributed by David Hempton which looks at the Methodist people in the light of the four most important developments in Methodist history of the past quarter of a century: the stress on its international dimensions, its symbiotic relationship with modernity, its reliance on women and the importance of lived religion in understanding the appeal of the movement. This will be familiar material to those who've read his *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (2005) of course. Chapters on African-America and Latin American Methodism, as well as sections on Methodism and Pentecostalism and the more recent global resurgence of Methodism help shift the focus of this section of the book decisively away from the customary Anglo-American approach. Yet despite all this, for this writer the approach of the history section was overwhelmingly Wesleyan Methodist orientated. A greater sense of other Methodist narratives, particularly in the eighteenth century, would have been welcome.



The *T&T Clark Companion to Methodism* is an altogether more accessible volume, but its scope is no less ambitious. Containing half the number of chapters of the *Oxford Handbook*, Charles Yrigoyen Jr has collected a body of leading Methodist scholars who write twenty-one broad brush chapters on different facets of the Methodist family. So while there is not the same kind of detailed treatment of topics offered by the *Oxford Handbook*, the more general approach makes the volume more useable for newcomers, especially undergraduate students perhaps, to the study of Methodism. There is no opening chapter dealing with the historical context of Methodism, or with the leading historiographical trends, perhaps a significant weakness. Richard Heitzenrater produces an introductory chapter to the Wesley brothers, which has the very real benefits of summarising the state of current research and pointing out areas where future research might yet be done. Chapters by Randy Maddox and Ted Campbell helpfully introduce students to the intricacies of Methodist theology. The main body of the book then contains a series of geographical studies, looking at Methodism in various quarters of the globe. The chapters on Methodism in northern and central Europe and another on Russia and the Baltic open genuinely new windows, at least for this reviewer. The final section of the book looks at Methodist theology and spirituality, looking at evangelism, worship and the sacraments. Practical theology is dealt with in a chapter on Methodist social ethics. The book closes with a couple of chapters which look forward. Methodism and Ecumenism is inevitably overshadowed by the failed plans for Anglican and Methodist reunion in the 1970s, but doesn't get bogged down with the issue. The main essays are concluded by a valuable overview of the main Methodist archives, a real boon for students just beginning to enter the world of Methodist studies. The one big advantage of Yrigoyen's volume is the inclusion of a 'Methodism A to Z'. This is invaluable, and a real help to those who sometimes find it bewildering navigating the plethora of Methodist denominations, groups and individuals.

Few readers are likely to splash out and buy both these volumes, so some guidance over which might be the best purchase might be helpful. For newcomers to Methodist studies, Yrigoyen's companion is undoubtedly the wiser investment. Its broad-brushed approach, guide to the sources and invaluable A to Z of Methodism make it well worth the price. The *Oxford Handbook* is also a handsome volume, certainly the most attractively produced of the two books, but might be more relevant to those who already have some familiarity with the subject. Having said this anybody interested in the history and theology of Methodism would be well served with either, or if particularly well-heeled, both of these volumes, on their bookshelves. However, one wonders what the famously parsimonious John Wesley would have made of the eye-watering price tag of each of these two volumes!

DAVID CERI JONES

*'Unexampled Labours': Letters of the Revd John Fletcher to leaders in the Evangelical Revival*, edited with an introduction by Peter S. Forsaith. (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 2008, pp. 384. Paperback. £25.00. ISBN 978-0-7162-0605-7).

This publication has arisen from Peter Forsaith's doctoral research on Fletcher's correspondence with Charles Wesley, to which are added letter to John Wesley, Lady Huntingdon and George Whitefield. The great majority though are between Fletcher and the younger Wesley brother.

The collection includes only letter for which manuscript copies survive. In the words of the editor: 'of the two hundred or so original letters known today, this selection – to Evangelical (Methodist) leaders – comprises a little over half' (p. ix). Before 1872, there was no public indication that half Fletcher's correspondence with Charles was in French. His use of French was, in Dr Forsaith's judgement 'most likely to maintain a fluency in a language they were using in ministry, but possibly for secrecy, or that French was the language of the cultured society' (p. 49). This edition publishes them in the original French, with English translations. The editor also underlines the fact that 'until now the original texts have never been published as a body' (p. 4). This despite them being the primary source for Fletcher's life and times. The editor also includes a helpful biographical sketch of Fletcher's life and ministry.

The two major themes that recur are Fletcher's spiritual trials and his attachment to Charles Wesley as his spiritual guide and mentor. Typical of his doubts and fears is this *cri de Coeur* from Madeley on 19 July 1762, where he tells Charles:

I have for several months been tormented by an unbearable heaviness, I could not sleep day or night and the hours which I should employ with Christ on the mountain I spend like Peter in the Garden. My soul is empty of the power of religion or rather I see more clearly than ever that it has never been so filled, what can be done in such a case? If faith is a communication of this power, participation in new life and the opening up of the spiritual paths and of the soul, it is ridiculous for me to try to believe as to try to resuscitate a corpse (p. 151).

His reliance on Charles' guidance and advice went well beyond matters of spirituality in the narrow sense. When he was considering marriage and had met a woman he thought might make a good wife, he was constrained to tell Charles:

You know that if I was to take a wife I could not do it without your approbation: far from breaking my promise, I would not want even to take or to keep a friend without your consenting: my friend is proposing to come to Madeley in the Spring, I would be very glad to have you here then to judge her with your own eyes, since to tell you the truth I do not have great confidence in mine, and even less in my heart than in my eyes (p. 190).

The editor discerns three key themes in the letters: Fletcher's relations with the Wesley brothers; his relations with women, and the influence on him of the French churches, ever since his birth in French-speaking Switzerland. In editing this collection, Dr Forsaith has built admirably on his doctoral research on Fletcher and has produced a volume which should prove a valuable resource for those engaged in study or research into early eighteenth century Methodism or the eighteenth century Evangelical Revival.

JOHN A. NEWTON

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Catherine Randall, *From a Far Country: Camisards and Huguenots in the Atlantic World* (University of Georgia Press, 2009, pp. 192, £39.95, ISBN 978-0-8203-3390-8).

Catherine Randall's recent work is long overdue. Its purpose is to explore the impact of the Huguenots on religion, in particular, as well as on colonial American society more widely. The Huguenots were surprisingly important in the spread of Anglicanism in New England during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and Randall's work goes some considerable way to confirm that point. In fact, it does far more than simply confirm it; Randall's work establishes quite clearly that the Huguenots and Camisards were far more influential than many historians have previously assumed.

Perhaps the greatest achievement of this work is the way it effectively demonstrates the impact of Huguenots who would have been considered to have assimilated into colonial American society. Her three main case studies, Gabriel Bernon, Ézéchiél Carré and Elie Neau were closely involved with the Anglican Church. Bernon was a faithful Anglican and even Neau, who suffered greatly for many years for his beliefs, became a conformist Huguenot. Yet neither forsook their reformed beliefs; they were overtly assimilated into society, but remained, according to Randall, devout Huguenots beneath nonetheless. This almost 'national' identity came to be expressed through personal piety, rather than in any overtly public way.

Neau, on the other hand, was an example of a Huguenot who retained that overt expression of Huguenot faith, being a French Church pastor in New England, but his example shows us another important aspect of Huguenot religious influence. He was highly respected as a fellow Protestant of the reformed faith, and he maintained good relations with those ministers around him throughout his time in New England. Although he chose to remain distinctively Huguenot, his influence on those around him does not seem to have been much impaired.

There is, nonetheless, one comment which needs to be made: Randall never really seems to define what the difference between the Camisards and the Huguenots actually was, and seems to use the two terms interchangeably at times. Perhaps a better definition of the Camisards would be in order? I would venture to suggest that the Camisards were

a particularly extreme, charismatic sub-culture, but who remained Huguenots. The term 'Huguenot' is notoriously imprecise, and has been used to define all kind of French Protestants. The apparent confusion between the two groups is apparent in Randall's claim that in 1686, 40,000 Camisards were in prison, 2,000 were serving as galley slaves and 200,000 had fled France (p. 36). This seems implausible, given that the Camisards only really came into being later on in the century (the rebellions occurring at the turn of the next century), and the figures are the same as those often given for the Huguenots as a whole. Perhaps it might have been wiser simply to study the Huguenots in the Atlantic World, and explain that some of these may have been influenced by the more charismatic expressions of this same faith which had occurred in the Cévennes? It certainly seems that such an approach would have avoided the apparent confusion.

In summary, though, Randall's work remains an essential read for anyone planning to study the Huguenots or Camisards, especially in an Atlantic context. Her research has clearly opened a debate which should really have come to light sooner; that the impact of immigration on a society does not stop at those immigrants who isolate themselves in immigrant communities, but it is far more wide-reaching. Some may appear to have assimilated into the local culture, but that does not mean that they no longer saw themselves as Huguenots, nor does it mean that Huguenot culture no longer influenced them or the world around them. In order to truly understand the effect which the Huguenot diaspora had on the religious life of the Atlantic World, Huguenots such as Bernon and Neau, and others like them will need to be taken into account, and that applies as much to those in Britain itself as those in the colonies.

CHRISTOPHER S ADAMS

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*The Orphan House of John Wesley* by Geoffrey Fisher, Geoffrey Milburn and Terry Hurst (Wesley Historical Society, North East Branch, 2007, pp. 20. Paperback. £2.50).

*The Orphan House Wesleyan Schools 1858-1956 Newcastle upon Tyne* by Geoffrey Fisher and Terry Hurst (Wesley Historical Society, North East Branch, 2009, pp. 28. Paperback. £3).

*Brunswick Place, 1821-1992: Newcastle upon Tyne* by Geoffrey Fisher and Terry Hurst (Wesley Historical Society, North East Branch, 2009, pp. 20. Paperback. £3).

*Methodism in Newcastle upon Tyne 1742-2010* by Geoffrey Fisher and Terry Hurst (North East Methodist History Society, 2010, pp. 28. Paperback. £3).

This is a series of excellent and carefully researched publications by the North East Methodist History Society. The first publication, *The Orphan House of John Wesley* is an illustrated account of the building which was built in 17423 by John Wesley ‘without’ Pilgrim Street, Edinburgh Road, now Northumberland Street, Newcastle upon Tyne. The opening pages have reproductions of the 23 May 1744 description of the Orphan House by Richard Viney. The professional architectural drawings by Geoffrey Fisher along with his notes develop the information given by Richard Viney (1744) and William Stamp (1863). Geoffrey Milburn gives a helpful sketch of the significance of the Orphan House.

The second in the series is *The Orphan House Wesleyan Schools 1858–1956 Newcastle upon Tyne (revised edition)* This is an interesting overview of the vision of the Wesleyan Trustees to take down the Orphan House and to build a progressive education establishment as an elementary day school for boys and girls from the age of three years. Later the school become the Wesleyan Science and Art School and eventually a branch of the YMCA. This publication is well illustrated with prints of the buildings and architectural drawings and lists.

The third publication is *Brunswick Place, 1821–1992, Newcastle upon Tyne*. This is a testimony of the development, changes and decline of the area known as Brunswick Place. With the noble structure of Brunswick Wesleyan Chapel at its head the vicissitudes of economic and social change in the area are outlined. This publication packs into its twenty pages important outlines of the development and changes to Brunswick Place and Brunswick Methodist Church.

The final publication is *Methodism in Newcastle upon Tyne 1742–2010*. This twenty-eight page publication based on the notes of the late Geoffrey Milburn outlines the significance, development and main sites of both the Wesleyan Methodist, Primitive Methodist and The Free (Liberal) Methodist churches in the city. There is a very helpful time scale of the development of Methodism and Methodist chapels and churches in central Newcastle upon Tyne. Again the publication is well illustrated.

One of the values of the sterling work of the Regional Methodist Historical Societies is their research and the publishing of information about Methodism in their localities. This series by the North East Methodist History Society is an excellent example of this kind of work.

DONALD H RYAN

## NOTES AND QUERIES

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### VISITING FELLOWSHIPS

The Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History offers three Visiting Fellowships, each worth £1,000, for the academic year 2011-12. Candidates, who will normally be expected to be resident on the Harcourt Hill campus, should usually be post-doctoral, although consideration will be given to others, such as those about to submit a doctoral thesis. Preference will be given to research making use of the Centre's collections including the Wesley Historical Society Library. Applicants are invited to submit details of their projected research, including anticipated published outcomes, together with a brief CV (including a list of recent publications) and the names of two academic referees by 30 June 2011 to Prof. W. Gibson, Director, Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History, Oxford Brookes University, Harcourt Hill, Oxford OX2 9AT.

John Lenton, WHS Librarian

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### MARRIAGE RECORDS

I am researching the history of Methodism in a Cumbrian parish, which has led me to study the marriage records for the parish and circuit, seeking to establish whether the local Methodists chose to marry in the parish church or preferred a Methodist chapel (once this became possible). In looking at the statistics and patterns at the parish level, rather than following up individuals, I fear I may well be missing a large number of civil marriages, thus rendering my conclusions as to patterns and preferences invalid. In 1880 the civil marriage rate per thousand in Cumberland as between 290 and 396, while the national rate was only 126. The General Register Office tells me that there is no public access to the civil marriage records, apart from the option to buy certificates for named individuals. Has anybody else encountered or managed to surmount this problem? Can anybody offer me any advice? Please contact Lydia Gray, The Chapel, Hunsonby, Penrith, Cumbria, CA10 1PN. Email: [l.gray1@lancaster.co.uk](mailto:l.gray1@lancaster.co.uk)

## ERRATA

### **Re: Laity in Denominational Leadership.**

Table 1, the far right-hand column should read as follows

average age, 53.2

standard deviation 6.5

median age, 56

missing cases, 1

*The Following Paragraph was missed from the end of the article:*

At the very least a wider range of experience could have been recruited if the position was more clearly defined and if there were a number of VPs simultaneously holding it - but this is a personal view. These conclusions are largely based on evidence at the aggregated level of broad social characteristics. Necessarily it does not do justice to the roles and contributions of individual VPs, especially those sitting on the central advisory committees of the Methodist Church. Hopefully these two articles will attract the effort to tackle a book length study of the topic encompassing both aggregated and individual behaviours.

*The author wishes the following acknowledgment to be noted:*

For access to the Methodist Recorder I am grateful to the staff and resources of the John Rylands University Library, Manchester (Methodist Collection). For biographical information about themselves, or relatives, or others, I am obliged to the following: Rev Michael Cannon; Mrs Jenny Carpenter; Dr Clive Field; Mr J. Bryan Hindmarsh; Mr Philip Leese; Mr John Lenton; Mr Eric W. Lomas; Dr John Vickers; and Mrs Rosemary Wass