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## THE METHODIST NEW CONNEXION 1797-1907.

### Portrait of a Church.

*The Wesley Historical Society Lecture 1990*

#### I

**T**he Methodist New Connexion was born out of the turmoil in Methodism that followed the death of John Wesley.<sup>1</sup> Those who desired a radical solution to the points at issue - a complete break with the Church of England, for example, and lay representation in Conference and District Meeting, soon found a spokesman in Alexander Kilham, a young itinerant who, like the Wesleys' had been born in Epworth.<sup>2</sup> Throughout the 1790s he published a stream of widely circulated pamphlets<sup>3</sup>, reflecting, in J.M.Turner's words, 'the clichés of the age'<sup>4</sup> and drawing on the rhetoric of Tom Paine and the French Revolution to expound the need for Methodist reform. E.R.Taylor has highlighted what he considers Kilham's great Liberal assertion: 'Ever considering that the cool dispassionate voice of the people is the voice of God'<sup>5</sup> but there was much more in the same vein. At the same time, Kilham looked back to England's libertarian and

- 1 Three modern accounts are: W.R. Ward, *Religion and Society in England, 1790 - 1850* (1972) pp 27-38; D. Hempton, *Methodism and Politics in British Society, 1750-1850* (1984) chapter 3; T.S.A-Macquiban, *Ministerial or Lay Aristocracy* unpublished MA thesis, Bristol 1986.
- 2 The best biography is still [J.Blackwell] *The Life of the Rev Alexander Kilham* (1838).
- 3 Listed, with some omissions, in G. Osborn; *Outlines of Wesleyan Bibliography* (1869) pp 128-9.
- 4 *Conflict and Reconciliation* (1985) p 118.
- 5 *The Progress of Liberty ...* (1795) p 34 quoted in E.R.Taylor, *Methodism and Politics 1791-1851* (1935) p 79.

dissenting traditions, as when he contended that Methodism was far 'from that liberty of conscience which was their privilege as Christians and Britons'.<sup>6</sup>

His campaign found echoes amongst the laymen of the northern industrial towns at a time of acute social tension, but his brash, doctrinaire approach did not endear him to his fellow-itinerants; neither did his exposure of petty abuses among the preachers and his criticisms of John Wesley. Ironically, it was a later reformer, James Everett who likened Kilham to a horsefly 'which invariably passes over the sound part of the animal and instinctively finds its way to a sore spot, upon which it feeds and which it always irritates.'<sup>7</sup> George Eayrs, reared in the New Connexion, was kinder, but made a similar point: '... while a brave, sanguine soldier, he lacked the caution and discrimination essential to a general.'<sup>8</sup>

Matters came to a head following the appearance in the autumn of 1795 of Kilham's most notorious pamphlet, the very title of which was significant: *The Progress of Liberty amongst the people called Methodists*, his response to the compromises embodied in the Plan of Pacification which had commanded general agreement at the Conference that year. The Plan was acceptable only as a first instalment in a thorough-going programme of reform. In his tract, Kilham

claimed that the consent of members should be obtained to the admission and expulsion. of members, and the appointment of class-leaders; that lay preachers should be examined and approved by the Leaders' and Circuit Meetings; that any preacher proposed for the itinerancy should be approved by the Circuit Meeting; that lay delegates should be appointed by the Circuit Meetings to the District Meeting, and by the District Meeting to the Conference of Preachers; with them, "to transact the affairs both spiritual and temporal."<sup>9</sup>

The reaction of the preachers was to close ranks against further concessions to the laity and in April 1796 Kilham's erstwhile ally, Samuel Bradburn, was able to expose the reformer's isolation:

The business of the Lord's Supper is settled. The leading men on each side are agreed, or nearly so. It will not be Messrs Mather, Thompson and Benson against Pawson, Hanby and Taylor etc etc. No! These will be one! And who is to stand against them? Kilham and Company !! Alas ! They know not what they are about — look at their influence and connexions!<sup>10</sup>

Charges were brought against Kilham which skirted round the principle of his proposals and concentrated on his wilder attacks on his colleagues.<sup>11</sup> Bradburn, who in 1791 had been ready to quote the *Rights*

6 *Progress of Liberty* p 17.

7 [J.Everett], *Wesleyan Takings* ... 3rd ed. (1841) i, p 318.

8 W.J.Townsend, H.B. Workman and G.Eayrs, (eds), *A New History of Methodism* (1909), i, p 497.

9 *Ibid*, i, p 492.

10 Bradburn to John Reynolds, 12th April 1796. Methodist Archives, PLP 1.14.9.

11 For detailed accounts of the trial see G. Smith, *History of Wesleyan Methodism*, 5th ed. (1872) ii, pp 61-78: A. Kilham, *An Account of the Trial of Alexander Kilham* ... (1796).

of Man was in 1796 the Secretary of the Conference which expelled Kilham for his slanderous publications and was ready to label him as 'a Paineite and a Leveller'. 'It was a sad price for loyalty to the establishment.'<sup>12</sup>

When the news reached Alnwick, Kilham's circuit, the response was dramatic, as Mrs Kilham described to her husband:

Poor George Ferguson was almost raving. He told Mr E<sup>13</sup> the first preacher that came to his house when he was got to bed, he would load a pistol and go to his bedside and say, were you one that lifted a hand against Mr K and then present the pistol to his head and make him beg pardon or blow his brains out. Amidst our sorrows we had many a hearty laugh at the various scenes that passed in different families. Mr E endeavoured to preach moderation to all that came to him but it was in vain to very many. The Morpeth and Placey (*sic*) friends have determined not to receive the preachers... Mr Hunter<sup>14</sup> read Dr Coke's letter in this chapel, which grieved the people exceedingly. Many went out, others threw open the doors to disturb. Everything at present wears...the face of confusion.<sup>15</sup>

Nationally, however, the social discontent which had fuelled Kilham's campaign was fading. Within Methodism there was widespread support for the balance of power formalized by the Plan of Pacification and distaste for further controversy. Kilham founded a periodical, the *Methodist Monitor* as a new vehicle for his views and embarked upon a whistle-stop tour of northern towns in a race for support. On some his impact was considerable. We have one eye-witness account of him at this period which reminds us that he was an evangelist as well as an agitator:

I was very eager to see him, but both his appearance and his preaching greatly disappointed my expectations. His bodily presence was weak, and his speech contemptible. As I remember, his stature low, his countenance common almost to coarseness, he had a clumsy hobbling sort of walk, as though his toes might stumble against his heels at every step. In preaching, his delivery was slow, his voice weak and faltering and un-harmonious; but there was a solemnity in his look, an earnestness in his manner, a richness in his matter, and an unction accompanied his word, which more than compensated for every natural defect: he commanded attention still as night.<sup>16</sup>

In general his campaign had limited success. It culminated in a last attempt to persuade the Conference of 1797, meeting at Leeds, to accept the principle of lay representation. When this failed, three preachers<sup>17</sup> withdrew and met with Kilham and a handful of laymen in Ebenezer Chapel, Leeds, bought from the Baptists earlier in the year, in anticipation of the separation. On August 9th 1797 they proceeded to

12 J.M. Turner, *Conflict and Reconciliation* (1985) p 119.

13 ie Stephen Eversfield, the junior minister in the Alnwick circuit.

14 ie William Hunter, chairman of the Newcastle District.

15 Mrs Kilham to Alexander Kilham, 20th Aug 1796. Methodist Archives, Sheffield Deposit.

16 *MNC Magazine* 1846 p 13.

17 ie Alexander Cummin, Stephen Eversfield and William Thom.

inaugurate a 'New Itinerancy', the first major secession in the Methodist history, soon to be known as the Methodist New Connexion.

## II

Of the seceding preachers, by far the most important was William Thom (1751-1811), an itinerant of 23 years' standing and a member of the Legal Hundred, a Scot whose Presbyterian background presumably played a part in his surprising decision to join the seceders. He was elected the first President, with Kilham as Secretary. The first Conference could do little more than establish where its support lay and create some makeshift circuits. Question 1 of the first *Minutes* ran as follows:

What places, seeking a redress of grievances, in the connexion, are desirous of supporting a new itinerancy, since that redress cannot be had?

A. A part of the Sheffield society and circuit. Also of Nottingham, Banbury, Burslem, Macclesfield, Chester, Liverpool, Wigan, Bolton, Blackburn, Manchester, Oldham, Huddersfield, Leeds, Epworth, Otley, Ripon, Newcastle, Alnwick &c and several places in those as well as in other circuits.<sup>18</sup>

In some centres, support amongst the trustees was sufficiently strong for a chapel to be alienated. The most important of these were Hockley chapel, Nottingham and Bank chapel, Huddersfield, but in all about a dozen changed hands, some of which were later returned to the Wesleys after litigation. Three more were 'shared' for some years by Old and New Connexions.<sup>19</sup> In all, some 5,000 members found their way into the New Connexion in a year when Wesleyan membership actually rose from 99,519 to 101,682. They formed about 66 societies all north of a line from Stoke-on-Trent to Nottingham and were divided into seven circuits based on Leeds and Huddersfield, Sheffield, Manchester, Liverpool, Nottingham, Hanley and North Shields.

Core support came from the small tradesmen and artisans of the newly industrialised towns, some of whom undoubtedly held radical political views, although firm evidence of this is hard to find.<sup>20</sup> Many had been active in Corresponding Associations to diffuse their opinions during the years 1795-7 and the language of their letters and tracts, with its emphasis on 'rights' and 'liberty' and 'free enquiry' betrays the influence of the popular politics of the time.<sup>21</sup> But there were other elements also, although they are impossible to quantify. In Stockport and Macclesfield some revivalists joined, in the hope of greater freedom and sympathy.<sup>22</sup> In some places, notably Sheffield and North Shields,

18 MNC *Minutes* 1797 p 9.

19 E.A. Rose, 'The First M...N...C....Chapels' in *Proceedings*, xxxvi, pp 7-15.

20 eg J. Baxter, 'The Great Yorkshire Revival 1792-6' in M. Hill (ed), *A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain*, No., 7, (1974) pp 66-7.

21 see, for example, [G. Beaumont], *An Appeal to the Methodists in Stockport Circuit* [1796] p 3.

22 S. Peacock, *Memorials of Mr Gamaliel Swindells* (1833) pp 5-6.

the New Connexion absorbed groups who had already separated. In the Potteries there was an underlying social conflict between the thrusting new potters of Hanley and the more conservative established potters of Burslem who constituted most of the trustees. In the event, the Hanley Wesleyan society was almost extinguished and the entire congregation went over to the New Connexion.<sup>23</sup> At Epworth the Kilham family naturally supported their kinsman and the society was divided while in many areas the New Connexion was a magnet for the discontented and those who had personal grievances against this preacher or that.

Kilham was wide-eyed about the problems his connexion faced:

Perhaps our greatest difficulties may arise from the following considerations:

1. Very few, if any popular preachers, are come out to our help...

2. The rich and great, in many of the societies, are opposed to you...

3. The prejudices of many run high. They talk of the good old way - the old tried ground - the old ship - and positively declare none ever prospered that left the Connexion...

4. Reproach and persecution are manifest from quarters we did not expect.<sup>24</sup>

The tone of official Wesleyan pronouncements was not so much reproachful as of relief and satisfaction that the division had not been more serious:

A division has taken place; but in the gentlest manner we could expect! only three travelling preachers have left us! We shall lose all the turbulent disturbers of our Zion - all who have embraced the sentiments of Paine, and place a great part of their religion in contending for (what they call) liberty.<sup>25</sup>

In similar vein, Dr Coke told the Liverpool Methodists in September 1797 that he foretold the division years before, had indeed prayed for it and that the New Connexion were all republicans.<sup>26</sup>

The constitution of the New Connexion was not settled until the Conference of 1798, when Kilham and Thom's draft proposals were largely accepted. In the interim there were expectations among many of Kilham's supporters that distinctions between ministers and laity would disappear in the new body:

The old hackneyed phrase of 'Preachers and People' should be forever lost and the name of 'Brethren' be substituted. In these transactions, the right of power of Preachers should be absorbed, the exclusive power of Stewards, Leaders &c should also be absorbed, all will then be Brethren, let that body of Brethren delegate its representatives...<sup>27</sup>

Hanley's representatives to the 1798 Conference were chosen by direct election of all the members: 'that the four names be handed to their

23 *New Methodist Magazine* (ie *MNC Magazine*) 1814 pp 397-402.

24 *Methodist Monitor* ii, pp 368-9.

25 *Minutes* (1812 ed) i, p 388.

26 William Thom to Alexander Kilham, Sept 1797. Methodist Archives, Sheffield Deposit.

27 Samuel Heginbottom to Alexander Kilham, 12th May 1798. Methodist Archives.

several classes by class leaders, in order to take the People's sentiments; the majority to decide.'<sup>28</sup>

In Bolton, the local preachers saw no reason why they should not have their share of appointments in the town chapel and Thom had to mediate between them and a disgruntled congregation:

...their trouble has arisen from ye *determination* of ye Local Preachers to preach alternately in Bolton on ye Sundays & send ye travelling Preachers time about (as we say) into ye Country on Sund[ays]. The People oppos'd this plan & would not be satisfied without ye travelling Preachers in Bolton on Sund[ays]...<sup>29</sup>

Such examples of extreme democracy did not last. The constitution adopted in 1798 was one in which preachers and people had separate 'rights', with a Conference composed of equal numbers of each. Delegates to Conference after the earliest years were always elected by the Quarterly Meetings not the membership as a whole and such early MNC preaching plans as have survived<sup>30</sup> show that the local preachers were largely excluded from the central pulpits as they were in the Old Connexion. This general development is foreshadowed in the same letter by Thom quoted above:

I think that ye greatest part of the misunderstanding here [ie Liverpool] has arisen from ye *new state* of things, but when every one shall know his place and duty they will get on better...<sup>31</sup>

It is important to note that apart from the modifications in polity, the key elements of the Wesleyan legacy were all carried over into the New Connexion-Arminian theology, the itinerant system, and the authority of Conference. The New Connexion remained firmly Methodist.

The early death of Alexander Kilham in December 1798 deprived the Connexion of its 'greatest resource'<sup>32</sup> and ensured that Thom's cautious reformism rather than Kilham's libertarianism would become the keynote of the New Connexion:

[Thom] was the Melancthon, as Kilham was the Luther, of reformed Methodism... his calm, steady character consolidated its fellowship; his discourses, addressed rather to the understanding than to the emotions, his orderliness and culture, laid the lines of development which the Connexion never left. For a century afterwards its ministry more frequently resembled that of Thom than the burning evangelism of Kilham.<sup>33</sup>

The change is clearly visible in the contrast between the biting polemic of the *Monitor* and the strictly devotional and improving pages of the early volumes of the *Methodist New Connexion Magazine*, its successor. Political radicalism was very largely replaced by a struggle for survival; of the first 84 ministers, almost half resigned after an average six years'

28 Hanley MNC circuit minutes, April 1798, quoted in *MNC Magazine*, 1900 p 210.

29 William Thom to Alexander Kilham, 17th March 1798, Methodist Archives.

30 e.g. Huddersfield 1805 (Kirklees Archives), Sheffield 1809, Nottingham 1809.

31 William Thom to A. K. loc cit.

32 W.R. Ward, *Religion and Society in England 1790-1850* (1972) p 38.

33 Townsend, Workman, & Eayrs, op.cit i, p 499.

service<sup>34</sup> and it was to be 25 years before membership reached 10,000.

During the 1830s numbers grew more rapidly, largely as a consequence of Wesleyan troubles. National negotiations with the newly-formed Wesleyan Association broke down but MNC leaders became adept at fishing in troubled waters. Their biggest catch was at Dudley and Stourbridge in the Black Country, where in 1834 some 1500 discontented Wesleyans joined the New Connexion in preference to the Wesleyan Methodist Association, bringing Wesley Chapel, Dudley with them. There were many similar accessions countrywide, ranging from 60 in Guernsey to 600 in Gateshead. As a result the New Connexion gained a foothold in areas where they had previously been unrepresented (Cornwall and Shropshire are examples) while their failing cause in London was given a temporary boost.<sup>35</sup>

The pattern was repeated in the 1850s when some isolated groups of Wesleyan Reformers were induced to join the MNC, but for most, the New Connexion's constitution gave too much authority to Conference and perhaps by then seemed rather old-fashioned. Nevertheless the MNC continued to absorb batches of Wesleyan dissidents for a further thirty years or so, although in diminishing numbers. The most interesting of these groups were the Teetotal Wesleyans who joined the New Connexion in 1860. Over the period 1809 to 1889 at least 68 distinct groups (some, of course very small) joined the MNC.<sup>36</sup>

But, in a fissiparous age, the New Connexion itself did not escape splits in its own ranks. In 1841, the charismatic minister Joseph Barker, who had once been a Wesleyan, was expelled for unorthodoxy, in particular for refusing to administer Infant Baptism. Many in the circuits saw only a popular and widely known minister being harshly treated by an unfeeling Conference and detected a parallel to the treatment meted out to Alexander Kilham. A damaging secession followed in which chapels were lost and prosperous circuits wrecked, some never to recover. It was a time of economic recession and the connexional funds were put under great pressure. In total, the Connexion lost 21 per cent of its membership and the effects were still being felt when the Jubilee was celebrated in 1847 so that less than half of an expected £20,000 was raised and plans for a theological college had to be postponed. Barker himself continued his theological pilgrimage through Unitarianism to Freethought and finally returned to orthodoxy in the form of Primitive Methodism, but his bewildered followers mostly became Unitarians, where they survived at all.<sup>37</sup>

34 Ibid, p 501.

35 E. A. Rose, 'The MNC In London' in *Proceedings*, xxxviii, p 179.

36 The total is based on a close examination of the various issues of the *MNC Magazine* over the period. For the Teetotal Wesleyans, see *Proceedings*, xxxiii, pp 63-70.

37 H. McLachlan, 'The Christian Brethren Movement' in *Transactions Unitarian Historical Society*, vol 2 (1921) pp 65-92.

During the 1830s, when the New Connexion had high hopes of attracting disaffected Wesleyans to its ranks, a propaganda cartoon was produced, under the title 'Emblems of the Polity of Methodism'<sup>38</sup>. On the left of the picture the polity of Wesleyan Methodism is symbolised by three well-fed ministers (all in gown and bands) crushing the life out of a sorry-looking layman, while on the right an emaciated Primitive Methodist preacher carries on his back two laymen who are belabouring him with a stick. In sharp contrast to 'Priestly Tyranny' on the one hand and 'Lay Despotism' on the other, is the 'Equal Rights' polity of the Methodist New Connexion represented in the centre by minister and layman standing arm-in-arm under the words 'We be Brethren'.

The New Connexion's claim was not achieved quickly. As we have seen, the MNC Conference was, from the beginning, composed of equal numbers of ministers and laity. This arrangement did not, in itself, guarantee partnership or 'democracy', as a shrewd Wesleyan critic pointed out:

...the election of a lay delegate is in many instances, a mere mockery... Here a preacher can send whom he pleases; there some lordling, whose circumstances place him a little above his brethren, whose anger or resentment is dreaded equally by preacher and people, and whose ambition therefore must be gratified — can thrust himself into the *house*, just as easily as the owner of some corrupt borough could formerly secure the election of his nominee...<sup>39</sup>

This criticism had substance in the early years when ministers had to struggle for recognition. The point was delicately put by Samuel Hulme, describing the period immediately after 1797: 'Here and there, individuals and even societies, manifested a qualified respect for ministers...such evils are incident to a passage from absolute rule to constitutional freedom.'<sup>40</sup> But ministerial status rose from the 1820s under the leadership of Thomas Allin (1784-1866). The Presidency of Conference was a ministerial prerogative from the beginning but his functions ended when Conference closed. Between Conferences power lay with the small Annual Committee and especially with its Secretary, often a layman. In 1822 Allin combined the offices for the first time and continued as the leading member of the Annual Committee for many years.

Ordination by the imposition of hands came in 1839, when H.O. Crofts was set apart as a missionary for Canada<sup>41</sup> and the ceremony was introduced for Ireland in 1841, when it was thought that it 'would give increasing acceptability both to our ministers and our community in

38 *Proceedings*, xxxviii, p 159.

39 G. Turner, *The Wesleyan Economy founded upon the Principles of the New Testament* (1835) p 26.

40 S. Hulme, *Thomas Allin, A Memoir* (1881) p 23.

41 *MNC Magazine* 1839 p 359.



this country'.<sup>42</sup> For the home work, the first explicit mention of laying on of hands was in 1855<sup>43</sup> after which it became accepted practice.<sup>44</sup> The New Connexion thus became the only non-Wesleyan body to ordain in this way.

The seal was set upon this process of rising ministerial status and selfconsciousness by the opening of Ranmoor College, Sheffield in April 1864. The long-delayed project of an institution for the training of ministers was at last made possible by the gift of £5,000 under the will of Thomas Firth, the Sheffield steel manufacturer and a site was secured in the elegant and elevated surroundings of western Sheffield, close to the Firths' family villas.<sup>45</sup> The New Connexion's claim to lay and ministerial partnership could be said to have become a reality by mid-century; the minister had a recognised status and was *ex-officio* chairman of all church meetings yet did not have an exclusive right to celebrate the sacraments. In 1897 W.J. Townsend roundly declared that 'In the history of the Connexion there has been an entire absence of jealousy or rivalry between these two constituent elements in the Denomination.'<sup>46</sup>

In the passage cited above, Townsend went on to blame 'an over satisfaction with a well-balanced and comprehensive system of government' for the relatively limited growth of the MNC. In the sphere of overseas missions, however, the Connexion had a creditable record. Until 1837 Ireland constituted the Connexion's only Mission Field. This had begun with a nucleus of Wesleyans in the Lisburn area, who had seceded in 1798. Work was then commenced in Canada and later a small mission was established in Adelaide and Melbourne, Australia. A new and more significant phase began in 1859 when William N. Hall and John Innocent, both products of Scotland Street chapel, Sheffield, left England to launch a mission in China. They established work in Tientsin which, despite setbacks during the Boxer rebellion had almost 4,000 members by 1907.<sup>47</sup>

### III

We turn now to some of the more prominent ministers and laymen associated with the New Connexion, many of whom achieved recognition in the wider world. Amongst the ministers, pre-eminent was William Cooke (1806-84) who, after a successful reorganisation of the ailing MNC mission in Ireland was sent to Newcastle-upon-Tyne to repair the ravages caused by Joseph Barker's secession. Cooke got the better of Barker in a notable and widely-reported ten day debate in 1845

42 Irish MNC *Minutes*, 1840., res 16.

43 *MNC Magazine*, 1855 p 375.

44 W. Baggaly, *A Digest of the Minutes, Institutions ... of the M.N.C.*, 1st ed 1862 p 197.

45 E.A. Rose, 'Ranmoor College 1864-1919' in *Preachers All*, Yorks W.H.S., (1987) pp 11-17.

46 G. Packer (ed), *The Centenary of the M..N..C.. 1797-1897* [1897] p 64.

47 J. Hedley, *Our Mission in North China* [1907].

and regained control of local chapels alienated by Barker's supporters. This triumph established Cooke as the leading figure of his denomination and launched him on a long career of theological authorship. He wrote over sixty works, mostly popular and apologetic in purpose, of which the most important was *Christian Theology* which ran into five editions. In all, his works sold half a million copies.<sup>48</sup> A throat affliction caused his withdrawal from the normal ministry and from 1849 he lived in London. He was Editor and Book Steward until 1870 and President three times (1843, 1859 and 1869). From 1849 until the opening of Ranmoor College selected ministerial students lodged at his home, where they received both practical and theological guidance in their studies. Among these students was William Booth, later to found the Salvation Army, who spent some months with Cooke in 1854. Features of Cooke's methods were later to be reproduced in Booth's training schemes for his officers.<sup>49</sup> Booth served in the New Connexion ministry until 1861 when he resigned following a Conference decision to insist that he follow a conventional circuit ministry.

A sharp contrast is provided by George Beaumont (1763-1841), one of the first ministers. He never lost his early Radical views and published a string of pamphlets in the Napoleonic period in which he defended Luddites and attacked rack-rent landlords, the aristocracy and the evils of war.<sup>50</sup> It was with Beaumont in mind that the MNC Conference of 1813 passed a resolution highly disapproving 'of our Ministers writing or disseminating works of a political nature'<sup>51</sup> and after the publication of a further pamphlet, Beaumont resigned in 1814. Thus the so-called 'Tom Paine Methodists' ejected one of the few real Paineites in their ranks. His congregation at Ebenezer chapel, Norwich gave him their support and he continued as minister to this now independent chapel. He augmented his income by dealing in secondhand books and remained in Norwich until his death.<sup>52</sup>

Charles Shaw (1832-1906) was another exceptional New Connexion minister. Born in Tunstall, he spent part of his childhood in the workhouse and part working on the pot-banks. He came to faith through the agency of the local MNC Sunday School and Mutual Improvement Society and entered the ministry in 1853. In his first circuit, Oldham, he married a mill-owner's daughter and later forsook the ministry for cotton-spinning. He retained his Radical views nonetheless and contributed leaders to the strongly Liberal *Oldham Express*. In later life he re-entered the ministry and served in the Isle of Man. In 1903 he published *When I Was a Child*, in which he gave a vivid account of his experiences in the workhouse and in the pottery trade.

48 Townsend, Workman and Eayrs (eds) op.cit. i, 526.

49 For Cooke, see S. Hulme, *Memoir of William Cooke* (1886).

50 Beaumont's pamphlets are listed in K. Rowe, *Methodist Union Catalog*.. vol 1 (1975).

51 MNC Minutes, 1813 p 23.

52 H. Walklett, *The Swift Witness* (1985), duplicated typescript.

Chapter 5 of Arnold Bennet's *Clayhanger* (1910) detailing the early life of Darius Clayhanger, is lifted, without acknowledgement, from the book.<sup>53</sup>

From the earliest days of the Connexion, laymen exercised wide influence. It was inevitable that they were almost always self-made businessmen and some of their firms are still household names. At the centre of the Connexion's power base in Hanley was the Ridgway family, the 'Radical Saints of Shelton,' potters to the Queen and instrumental in the building and successive enlargements of Bethesda Chapel, the 2,000 seater 'cathedral' of the MNC which is now empty and forlorn.<sup>54</sup> John Ridgway (1785-1860) was appointed Deputy Lieutenant of the county in 1853, first Mayor of Hanley in 1856 and declined a knighthood on the grounds that it would have made him less approachable.

Comparable in wealth and social standing, although politically more conservative and less influential in connexional affairs, was Mark Firth (1819-1880) perhaps the only member of the MNC to have an entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. His fortune came from one of Sheffield's most prosperous steel companies, with the contract for forging all the Royal Navy's 80-ton guns.<sup>55</sup> Firth Park and Firth College (later Sheffield University) were only two of his benefactions to his native city. In 1862 he laid the foundation stone of Ranmoor College, which had been made possible by his father's generosity, and for many years he served as the College treasurer.

To turn from Mark Firth to Joseph Love (1796-1875) is a transition from Andrew Undershaft to Joseph Rank! Joseph Love was a pit-boy who ultimately became a millionaire colliery proprietor and financed chapels across the Durham coalfield.<sup>56</sup> His generosity to the Connexion was unstinted and without parallel - in 1873 alone his public gifts to the MNC amounted to £14,000. Yet he remains an ambiguous figure whose relations with his pit-men were often strained, never more seriously than during a long and bitter strike in 1863-4.<sup>57</sup>

Other industrialists whose concerns achieved nationwide recognition were John Mackintosh (1868-1920), the Halifax toffee manufacturer with a brother in the New Connexion ministry<sup>58</sup> and Joseph Hepworth (1834-1911) from Leeds, a pioneer of ready-made mens' clothing who established an extensive network of shops.<sup>59</sup> Noteworthy also were several provincial newspaper editor-proprietors, the earliest and most outspoken of whom was Charles Sutton (1765-1829) of Nottingham, a

53 *Proceedings*, xl, pp 51-3.

54 J.H.Y. Briggs, 'The Radical Saints of Shelton..' in D.J. Jeremy (ed), *Business and Religion in Britain* (1988) pp 47-71.

55 A.C. Marshall and H. Newbould, *The History of Firths 1842-1918*, 2nd ed. (1925).

56 G.E. Milburn has a short biography in *Proceedings*, xlv, pp 79-80.

57 R. Fynes, *The Miners of Northumberland and Durham*, (1873) chapter XL.

58 G.W. Crutchley, *John Mackintosh, A Biography* (1921).

59 *MNC Magazine* 1894 pp 239 ff.

Methodist convert from Old Dissent. In 1808 he founded the *Nottingham Review*, a consistently radical newspaper. In 1815 he served eighteen months imprisonment for sympathising with the Luddites but his incarceration did little to alter his views. The tradition continued under his son Richard who advocated annual parliaments, manhood suffrage and the secret ballot.<sup>60</sup>

Both the Suttons were prominent in connexional affairs, as were John Cunliffe, who founded the *Bolton Guardian* in 1859 and Alfred Ramsden, editor of the *Halifax Courier* from 1882.<sup>61</sup>

Finally mention can be made of Richard Watson (1781-1833) who spent the years 1803-11 in the New Connexion ministry before returning to the Wesleyans where he became President of Conference in 1826 and one of their leading apologists.

#### IV

In conclusion we shall try to describe the ethos of the Methodist New Connexion: the distinctive flavour that marked it off from the other Methodist bodies.

1. *It was small.* The highest recorded membership was in 1907 when the total was just under 40,000. There were never more than 200 ministers and over most of its history, considerably fewer. It was a Methodism in miniature with Conference, magazines, bookroom, college, overseas missions and insurance company - but no boarding schools and no central bureaucracy. 'Divisional Secretaries' were all ministers working in their spare time or in retirement. In consequence, there was always a strong 'family feeling' throughout the Connexion.

2. *It was urban.* It has not been generally recognised that throughout its existence the MNC was the most urban of all the Methodist bodies. In 1901, only 12 per cent of New Connexion chapels could be considered rural, compared to c37 per cent for the UMFC, 50 per cent for the Wesleyans, 70 per cent for the Primitive Methodists and 81 per cent for the Bible Christians.<sup>62</sup> This is reflected in the average size of chapels. In 1905 the average MNC chapel seated 360, the average UMFC chapel seated 315, the average Wesleyan chapel seated 261 and the average Bible Christian 250.<sup>63</sup> Yet the Connexion was weak in the large cities. It was a constant struggle to maintain a respectable presence in London<sup>64</sup>, but even in the large Northern cities it was not strong. It was

60 M.I. Thomis, *Politics and Society in Nottingham 1785-1835* (1969) pp 136, 194. D. Fraser, 'The Nottingham Press, 1800-50' in *Transactions Thorton Society* vol 67 (1963) p 48-60.

61 For Cunliffe, see *MNC Magazine* 1869 pp 164ff; there is a short account of Alfred Ramsden in D. Whiteley, *Illustrious Local Preachers*, (Bradford, 1891) pp 215-222.

62 Rough figures based upon the MNC Return of Trust Estates (1901) compared the circuits as printed in the respective *Minutes* of the other bodies.

63 Calculations based on figures for accommodation in the printed proposals for Methodist Union (1905) p 13 and Wesleyan Returns of Accommodation 1901.

64 E.A. Rose, 'The M... N... C... in London 1797-1907' in *Proceedings*, xxxviii, pp 177-187.

in the medium-sized industrial towns, especially of the North, that the MNC flourished and was most at home - such places as Halifax, Huddersfield, Batley, Ashton-under-Lyne and Hanley, where the central chapels were often considered as 'Mayor's Nests' and could rival the Wesleys in size and splendour.

3. *It was middle-class in tone.* Generalisations about the class structure of religious bodies are notoriously difficult to substantiate, but such evidence as there is suggests that most MNC congregations had at least a top layer of lower middle-class members who set the tone of their worship and activities. There were humble chapels in the Durham pit villages and in the colliery district around Barnsley, West Yorkshire but they were hardly typical of the Connexion as a whole. The response to declining town centres was usually a move to the suburbs rather than the establishment of a central mission for the poor. To some extent this was a matter of resources - but it remains significant that the most urban of Methodist bodies did not establish a single central mission.

4. *It had intellectual pretensions.* In 1799, the first number of the *Methodist New Connexion Magazine* declared that 'Some of our friends are blameable, in that they do not sufficiently exert their rational and intellectual faculties' ...our readers will discover...that we would not have them merely children in understanding...' <sup>65</sup> This emphasis on the importance of education and study remained an important, if not a dominant element in the Connexion's life. The Conference of 1801 urged every church to establish a circulating library. That at Manchester has been the subject of a scholarly paper and found to be impressive in range and size. <sup>66</sup> For its size the Connexion produced more than its share of theologians: William Cooke, Abraham Scott, Thomas Allin, James Stacey, W.J. Townsend and E.W. Hirst. Shortage of money rather than opposition to the principle delayed the establishment of a theological college; even so the New Connexion was the first non-Wesleyan body to set up an institution for training ministers.

Well organised rather than exuberant, the Connexion's elite saw themselves as closer to the Wesleys than to the more charismatic brands of Methodism, but in the end, union came first with the United Methodist Free Churches and the Bible Christians. <sup>67</sup> In 1907 the three came together as the United Methodist Church and so, after 110 years, the MNC ceased to exist as a separate church. Its traditions have been absorbed into a larger Methodism and its heartlands have been devastated by economic decline yet it deserves to be remembered as a distinctive member of the Methodist family and the Holy Catholic Church.

E.A. ROSE

65 *Methodist Magazine* (ie *MNC Magazine*), 1799, p iii.

66 P. Kaufman, *Libraries and Their Users* (1969) pp 102-114.

67 W.J. Townsend, *The Story of Methodist Union* (n.d. c1906) pp 219-254.

# WESLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY — FINANCIAL STATEMENTS, 1989

## Income and Expenditure Account for the Year ended 31st December 1989

INCOME.		£
Subscriptions (Note 1) ... ..	3,109	
Donations ... ..	41	
Irish Branch ... ..	296	
Sales of <i>Proceedings</i> (back numbers)	159	
„ other Publications, etc. ...	87	
Library—Tickets, Donations, Sales	40	
Grant from Southlands College ...	500	
Annual Lecture Collection ( $\frac{1}{3}$ -share)	54	
Advertisements ... ..	74	
Bank Interest ... ..	247	
War Stock Dividend ... ..	8	
	<u>4,615</u>	
EXPENDITURE.		£
<i>Proceedings</i> and distribution	2,574	
Library ... ..	1,303	
Annual Lecture ... ..	62	
World Methodist Historical Soc.	62	
Administration Expenses	423	
Insurances ... ..	13	
Advertising " ... ..	77	
Subscriptions ... ..	5	
	<u>4,519</u>	
Excess of Income over Expenditure		<u>£96</u>

## Balance Sheet as at 31st December 1989

ASSETS EMPLOYED (Note 2)		£
3 $\frac{1}{2}$ % War Stock (at cost) (Note 3)		225
Current Assets—		£
Sundry Debtors ... ..	599	
Income Tax recoverable	380	
National Savings Bank...	1,379	
Trustee Savings Bank ...	1,418	
Midland Bank (Deposit A/c)	1,604	
„ (Current A/c)	328	
Cash in hand ... ..	138	
	<u>5,846</u>	
Current Liabilities—		
Sundry Creditors ... ..	117	
Subscript'ns paid in advance	4,180	
	<u>4,297</u>	
Net Current Assets ... ..	1,549	
	<u>£1,774</u>	
REPRESENTED BY		
Balance at 1st January 1989	1,462	
Add Excess Income over Expenditure	96	
	<u>1,558</u>	
Conference Fund Surplus ...	216	
(Signed) RALPH WILKINSON,	<u>£1,774</u>	
<i>Honorary Treasurer.</i>		

## Notes to the Accounts

1—SUBSCRIPTIONS	£	£
Unexpired Subscriptions at 1st January 1989 (estimated)—		
Ordinary Members ...	1,975	
Life Members ...	400	
	<u>2,375</u>	
Received during year* ...		4,804
Income Tax recoverable ...		110
		<u>7,289</u>
Less Unexpired Subscriptions at 31st Dec. (estimated)—		
Ordinary Members ...	3,830	
Life Members ...	350	
	<u>4,180</u>	
		<u>£3,109</u>

\*No account has been taken of subscriptions in arrears at 31st December 1988, whether or not recovered since, but any previous arrears received during the year are included in the above figures.

### 2—ASSETS EMPLOYED

The Library and stocks of Publications have not been valued, and are not included in these financial statements.

### 3—WAR STOCK

Market value at Balance Sheet date ... £75

**AUDITOR'S REPORT**—I have audited the financial statements in accordance with approved auditing standards. The amount of subscriptions paid in advance by members includes estimates based upon a reasonable interpretation of the available data. No account has been taken of possible arrears of subscriptions. Other assets and liabilities have been independently verified.

Subject to the matters mentioned above, in my opinion the financial statements give a true and fair view on an historical cost basis of the state of affairs of the Society as at 31st December 1989, and of its surplus for the year then ended.

Barron & Barron,  
Bathurst House, 86, Micklegate, York, 18th June 1990.

(Signed) W. B. TAYLOR,  
Chartered Accountant.

## ANNUAL MEETING AND LECTURE

The ex-United Methodist Church, Trinity, Four Elms Road, Cardiff was a happy choice for the Annual Wesley Historical Society Lecture as the Lecturer Mr. E. Alan Rose, B.A. took for his subject 'The Methodist New Connexion: Portrait of a Church.' Ably chaired by Mr. R.F.S. Thorne, J.P., C. Eng., F.S.A., well-known for his knowledge of another ex-United Methodist Church, the Bible Christians, Mr. Rose dealt with the origins, development, ethos and some of the personalities of the Methodist New Connexion. The lecture is printed in full in this issue.

A splendid members' tea, was prepared by the church's catering committee and generously donated by Dr. and Mrs. J. Gibbs. The Rev. Philip Blackburn expressed the Society's thanks to all concerned.

At the Annual Meeting, presided over by the Rev. A. Raymond George, the Minutes of last year's meeting were signed; seven members who had died were remembered in prayer. The Executive Committee was re-elected and reports received. The Treasurer presented the accounts (see page 254), which were accepted, and Mr. Wilkinson reported that the appeal for the special edition of the *Proceedings* in honour of Frank Baker's 80th birthday had raised just over £1000 and so the cost of an 80-84 page issue would be covered.

Considerable attention was paid to library matters, especially the negotiations with Cambridge University Library about the possibility of moving the WHS Library there and the sub-committee was re-appointed with power to act in the best interests of the Society. Prior to receiving Mr. A.A. Taberer's report on publishing matters the President congratulated him on celebrating his 80th birthday and it was stated that, having joined the Society in 1948, he was now the longest serving member of the Executive. The Rev. William Leary reported on the two exhibitions staged by the Glamorgan Archives Service. The Rev. T.S.A. Macquiban gave details about the forthcoming WHS/WMHS Conference to be held from April 2nd-5th 1991 at Westminster College, Oxford with the theme of 'Methodism and Society'. For full details and a booking form contact Mr. Macquiban, Wesley College, Henbury Road, Westbury-on-Trym, Bristol BS10 7QD. Mr. R.F.S. Thorne reported that the North Lancashire Methodist History Society has linked up with the WHS and that other branches were thriving and producing useful publications. It was agreed that the Treasurer be appointed as the Society's representative on the Archives and History Committee.

E. DOROTHY GRAHAM

## NEWS FROM OUR BRANCHES 1990

SEVERAL of our branches were formed in the 1960s so in recent years they have celebrated their 'quarter century'. While respecting age, we give a warm welcome to a branch that celebrated only its fifth birthday in June this year. This is the **North Lancashire District Methodist History Group**, which has readily accepted the invitation to be associated with the Wesley Historical Society as our eighteenth branch. The secretary's name and address is given below and a complete run of their bulletin (1-10) has been given to us. The bulletin contains the usual wide variety of articles we find in more seasoned journals and lists 150 items in the branch library.

I am glad to receive the branch journals as they appear and I congratulate my fellow branch editors on the interest they maintain. In any one issue the contents might include a scholarly piece by a nationally-known historian on a local subject, a painstaking account of the excellence of the tea provided at the last but one church visited on a chapel pilgrimage and a page or two of homely reminiscence by a member of a former Primitive Methodist chapel. As a mix, this is admirable and I am constantly surprised at the variations on this simple theme. However, the information in our journals is not very accessible; an article on a Victorian Methodist layman in a northern pit village may be of great interest to his great grandson in Sussex, say, but how is he to discover that it has been published?

Thanks to the enterprise of the librarian of the New Room, Bristol, a catalogue of articles in the various branch journals has been started. Mr. Jeffrey Spittal has indexed all articles from 1986 onwards and those in the Bristol bulletin from its inception. Enquiries about this index, which is on cards, can be made to Mr. Spittal by telephone (0454) 773158 or by post to 162 Church Road, Frampton Cotterell, Bristol, BS17 2ND. The New Room does not have complete runs of all journals and time is limited! So here is a worthwhile project for each branch — consult Mr. Spittal about subject headings and prepare an index of your journal. Make two sets of cards and send one set to the New Room.

Additions and alterations to the list of Branch Secretaries printed in *Proceedings* xlvii, pp 154ff, are as follows:

CUMBRIA: Mr Eddie Leteve, 6 Beech Grove, Houghton, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA3 0NU

EAST ANGLIA: David Elvidge, 14 Avon Road, South Woolton, Kings Lynn, PE30 3LS

NORTH LANCASHIRE: Miss Helen Spencer, 77 Clifton Drive South, Lytham St Annes, FY8 1AT

ROGER F.S. THORNE

## WESLEY'S SERMONS TODAY

*The Works of John Wesley, Volume 3, Sermons III 71-114*, ed. by Albert C. Outler (Abingdon, 1986, pp. xv, 654, \$49.95 ISBN: 0-687-446212-6) *Volume 4, Sermons IV 115-151*, ed. by Albert C. Outler (Abingdon, 1987, pp. xix, 738, \$49.95 ISBN: 0-687-46213-4).

These volumes, handsomely produced, complete the critical edition of Wesley's Sermons on which the late Professor Outler had been working for so long, and form a fitting climax to his outstanding contribution to Wesleyan scholarship.

The 43 sermons in Volume 3 contain several of Wesley's doctrinal expositions, notably 'Of the Church', which Dr. Outler highlights as Wesley's 'first written summary of his ecclesiology'. Again, Sermon 110 is Wesley's defiant utterance on 'Free Grace', which marked the breach with Whitefield, which, in Outler's phrase, 'was never more than partially healed'. Yet most of the sermons in this volume are ethical rather than doctrinal. They reveal Wesley as a searching preacher to the conscience, a pastor constantly committed to the outworking of belief in practice, to 'faith working by love'. Hence we find the sermons on 'The Danger of Riches', 'On Dress', 'On Redeeming the Time' and 'On Visiting the Sick'.



Dr. Outler's editing is meticulous, and all his wide erudition is distilled in the introductions and notes to the sermons. His crisp, authoritative comments are exemplified in the notes to Sermon 71 ('Of Good Angels'). Wesley refers to the human body as, 'this curious machine', and his editor relates the phrase to 'Wesley's body-soul dualism, in the tradition of Descartes'. He tracks down a quotation from the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius, in a piece of detection which is typical of his skill in tracing Wesley's many classical allusions. Again, Outler regularly pinpoints the sources of Wesley's scriptural citations and allusions, many of which Wesley himself fails to identify. He is also helpful to the student in giving cross-references to other sermons of Wesley and to Charles's hymns.

The range of Dr. Outler's historical learning enables him to place Wesley in perspective, within the long tradition of Christian thought. That, of course, was one of the great strengths of his earlier compendium of Wesley's theology, *John Wesley* (1964), published in *A Library of Protestant Thought*. In Sermon 79, 'On Dissipation', for example, Outler comments on a key sentence of Wesley's exposition: 'We are encompassed on all sides with persons and things that tend to draw us from our centre'. Few editors would be capable of the scholarship condensed into Outler's footnote:

This image of the soul centred in God is basic in Wesley's thought; cf. Nos. 84, *The Important Question*, III.7 ('we are unhinged from our proper centre'); and 108, 'On Riches', II.1 ('uncentring from God'). It had been a favourite of his mother (see Moore, *Wesley*, I. 328) and derives from the mystical tradition of Christian Platonism; cf. John Norris, *A Collection of Miscellanies* (1692), pp. 239, 323, 327 (where Plotinus is cited as describing the union of the soul with God as a 'joining of centre to centre'). (p. 118, note 8).

It is an encouragement, however, to lesser mortals to know that on occasion even Homer nods; for the reference to Henry Moore's *Wesley* is mistaken. The intended passage may be Moore, I. 58, which cites Susanna's meditation on the need for man to 'rest in (God) as the centre of his being'.

The 'Introductory Comments' to each sermon are especially valuable, - bibliographically, historically, and theologically. The notable sermon 'On Perfection' (76) of 1784 is given special emphasis in the editor's Introduction, since, 'The single most consistent theme in Wesley's thought over the entire span of his ministry was "holy living" and its cognate goal: perfection.' That claim is substantiated by careful reference to Wesley's use of key texts: '... he had been preaching the doctrine in season and out: eighteen times from Matt. 5:48 between 1740 and 1785, and fifty times from Heb. 6:1 between 1739 and 1785. There are important differences of nuance and emphasis ... but the main outlines of the doctrine remain constant'. (p.70).

*Volume 4, Sermons IV 115-151* contains two series of Wesley's sermons. First, there are the last eighteen of his published sermons, printed in the *Arminian Magazine* from 1789 to 1792. Second, there are seventeen early manuscript sermons, dating from 1725 to 1741, some of which are here published for the first time. The editing is hard to fault, though there are occasionally surprising omissions. For example, when annotating Sermon 124, on 'Human Life a Dream', the editor refers to much classical and eighteenth-century writing, but omits mention of Charles Wesley's New Year hymn, 'Come, let us anew ...', with its haunting lines:

Our life is a dream  
Our time as a stream  
Glides swiftly away,  
And the fugitive moment refuses to stay.

There are a number of special features in this final volume. In addition to the continuing guidance of Dr. Frank Baker as Editor-in-Chief, Dr. Outler has benefitted from the expert knowledge of Wesley's handwriting ('linear, shorthand, and cipher'), which Professor Richard P. Heitzenrater commands. Again, there are 300 pages of appendices and indexes, which will prove invaluable to students of Wesley as preacher and theologian. In Appendix A, Dr. Baker scrutinizes, 'Wesley's Text: Editions, Transmission, Presentation, and Variant Readings'. Dr. Baker's researches show that, 'there are relatively few textual cruces'; that Wesley was an inveterate reviser - of his own writings, as well as of other people's; and that he suffered at the hands of 'some indifferent printers'.

Appendix B (by Professor Heitzenrater) is especially interesting, as containing a rarity, namely, 'two of Wesley's preached sermons for which we have no other texts, published or manuscript, than these transcripts made by two different listeners. These sermons exhibit some features of Wesley's extemporaneous preaching that are not as prevalent in his published sermons, such as the use of anecdotal material.' (p.ix). There is an excellent example of this kind of anecdote in the sermon recorded by George Story, who heard Wesley preach it at Plymouth Dock, on 1st September, 1766. The text was Hosea 14:4 - 'I will heal their backslidings', and Wesley included a vivid account of a Methodist backslider recovered:

In the North of England, a wretched man heard my brother first at Newcastle. He was healed at once and continued so for two years; at length, he was called to preach; he came to me to consult about it, and was much discouraged because he was a tinker. I told him, it was no blame at all. He came to London, but was rejected by the people; from thence he went to Carlisle and then to Newcastle.

He then fell into all manner of wicked ways and wandered into the vales of Cumberland. At a little inn, there were a parcel of lead miners drinking and swearing and they fell of abusing the Methodists, calling them a parcel of damned rogues that went about the country deceiving people; and this man was one of them and [someone] hath found it out. Speak, man, speak. He answered, 'I know you are all a parcel of villians (sic), and I am more a child of the Devil than any of you; and I am afraid that all of you will have a better place in Hell than me.' As I happened to be in those parts and hearing of him, found him out, and gave him in charge to one of our brethren; coming again into those parts, I found him full of faith and full of God. (pp.518-9).

Other appendices bring together 'Sermons Misattributed to Wesley'; sermons abridged by Wesley from other authors; samples from Wesley's sermon registers; the sermons as ordered in this edition, with cross-references, where appropriate, to Thomas Jackson's edition of Wesley's *Works*; and listings of the sermons in both chronological and alphabetical order, for all four volumes.

The book, and the four-volume series, is rounded off with a splendid set of indexes. The Bibliographical Index is by Page A. Thomas, and covers background sources from Wesley's own time and earlier, together with secondary sources from 1800 to 1984. Dr. John Vickers provides the index of Scriptural References and the General Index, and, in the words of the editor, 'Their amplitude and exactness will put all users of these volumes in his heavy debt.' Our debt is also heavy to Dr. Outler himself, for these volumes are the product of the best Anglo-American scholarship. The student of Wesley's preaching has now a superb new set of tools.

*Sermons on Several Occasions by the Reverend John Wesley, M.A.*, Translated into Modern English by James D. Holway (Moorley's Bible and Bookshop Ltd., Ilkeston, 1987, pp. xiv, 510, £5.95). ISBN: 0-86071-276-1.

Dr. James Holway, whose early death was a loss to Methodist scholarship, was concerned that Wesley's sermons should speak more clearly and forcefully to twentieth-century people. He thus produced a modern version of the *Forty-Four Sermons*, which sadly he did not live to see in print.

John Wesley would commend Dr. Holway's pragmatic and experiential approach, for he tells us that, 'Some of the sermons in modern English in the present volume have been preached in recent months, and their message has reached the hearts of the congregation'. Dr. Skevington Wood, in a commendatory Foreword, expresses the hope that, 'Dr. Holway's *paraphrase* will introduce Wesley's sermons to a host of new readers', and "paraphrase" certainly seems a more accurate description than "translation", since Dr. Holway's treatment involves, 'Shortened sentences, modern phraseology and idiom, and reduction in repetitive material'.

How does this approach work out in practice? Part of Wesley's Preface to the sermons reads:

Nothing here appears in an elaborate, elegant, or oratorical dress. If it had been my desire or design to write thus, my leisure would not permit. But, in truth, I, at present, designed nothing less; for I now write, as I generally speak, *ad populum*-to the bulk of mankind, to those who neither relish nor understand the art of speaking..

In Dr. Holway's version, this becomes:

Instead of writing an elaborate theological textbook I have chosen to write in simple English which can be understood by ordinary people.

In Sermon IV, on 'Scriptural Christianity', section I.5 of Wesley reads:

He that thus *loved* God could not but love his brother also; and 'not in word only, but in deed and in truth;' 'If God,' said he, 'so loved us, we ought also to love one another' (1 John iv.11); yea, every soul of man, as 'the mercy of God is over all His works' (Ps. cxlv.9). Agreeably hereto, the affection of this lover of God embraced all mankind for His sake; not excepting those whom he had never seen in the flesh, of those of whom he knew nothing more than that they were, 'the offspring of God,' for whose souls His Son had died; not excepting the 'evil' and 'unthankful,' and least of all his enemies, those who hated, or persecuted, or despitefully used him for his Master's sake. These had a peculiar place, both in his heart and in his prayers. He loved them 'even as Christ loved us.'

In Holway, the passage reads:

The Christians who really love God in this wholehearted way loved their neighbours also. They reasoned that if God loved them they should love others to the same degree (1 Jn 4.11). The words of the Psalmist reminded them that the Lord's compassion is over all that he has made, therefore our love should be directed towards all mankind (Ps 145.9). These early Christians loved the whole of mankind, including those whom they had never seen and knew little about, even the evil and ungrateful, even their enemies who hated and persecuted them. They loved them and prayed for them because Jesus had died for them all.

The purist may object that there is loss here: singular has become plural, some of the nuances of Wesley's prose are lost. Nevertheless, the passage undoubtedly gains in clarity and readability. Moreover, Wesley himself set a precedent for amending and condensing the writings of others. Dr. Holway's work should win more readers for Wesley and the Gospel he proclaimed; and of that, surely, John would approve.

## BOOK REVIEWS

*The Unpublished Poetry of Charles Wesley*, Volume I, edited by S T Kimbrough, Jr., and Oliver A. Beckerlegge. (Kingwood Books, an Imprint of Abingdon Press, Nashville, Tennessee, pp.325, \$15.95. ISBN: 0-687-43310-X)

It is often said that Charles Wesley wrote between 6,000 and 7,000 hymns and other poems. This is now known to be only a conservative estimate, even taking into account George Osborn's 13 volumes of *The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley*, published in 1868, and not reckoning with that mass of material, quantity unknown, of his unpublished works. Now, at last, probably prompted by the magnificent effort to produce a reliable text of John Wesley's Works, a band of scholars has set about the gigantic task of giving to the world all the known unpublished works of Charles Wesley. Their aim has been to include all Charles Wesley's known extant pieces which do not appear in Osborn or in various Wesley publications or major collections of Wesley poetry. Of course, as they say, 'one never knows if something else may be found' and when Osborn includes in part, they publish the whole.

The work begins with an editorial introduction in which we are enlightened as to the editors' methods in dealing with Wesley's shorthand, corrections, additions and abbreviations; in general, accepting what they believe to be his final version of a given text. This short introduction gives some indication of the extent and delicacy of the task which confronted the editors and the way in which they performed it.

After a table of main sources, the work continues with a study, by Philip O. Beale, of the background to section I entitled, 'The American War and other Poems on Patriotism'. This is an excellent statement of Wesley's position in the struggle with the American colonies. While Beale acknowledges that these pieces are 'secondary in importance to his devotional hymns ... they are of far more than academic interest'. They show how Wesley looked upon the Christian life and that 'a religious faith needs to express itself not only in public worship and private devotions but also in social and political terms' (p.39).

The other poems which form the body of the book are contained in sections II to V - Epistles, Courtship and Marriage, Family Hymns and Poems (Nursery, For his children, For his son Samuel, On his son, Samuel) and John Wesley's Marriage.

So we now await the other two volumes which will complete this important, painstaking venture. One can only wonder why it has not been done before - though we know why! It could not have been done until those with the skill (especially to decipher Wesley's shorthand), the patience and 'a nose for hidden sources' come along - and we see that these are now here, working on this useful and commendable project. As a result, we now have all of the extant Wesley unpublished poetry in one collection for the first time, so that 'all Wesley's poetical works (save any which may still come to light) are to be found in Osborn or the present volume which may claim to complete Osborn's work' (p.21).

Even a future study of John Wesley with any claim to completeness, will have to reckon with *The Unpublished Poetry of Charles Wesley*.

JOHN C. BOWMER

*At Satan's Throne: the Story of Methodism in Bath* edited by Bruce Crofts (White Tree Books, Bristol, 1990, pp.261, £9.95 post free, from 54 Bloomfield Avenue, Bath BA2 3AE ISBN: 0 948265 49 3)

*Thy Chartered Freemen: a brief history of the growth of Methodism in the Newbury area* by Joan Booker (Newbury Methodist Church, 1990, pp.63, £3.30 post free, from 7 York Road, Newbury, RG14 7NJ)

In spite of the inexhaustible flow of local brochures, we still lack histories of Methodism in many of its earliest strongholds. Though never quite a 'stronghold', Bath can make the notable claim to have had one of the very earliest societies - preceded only by London, Bristol and Kingswood. Methodism has an unbroken history in the city since 1741, despite early setbacks and fluctuating fortunes. It is one of the virtues of *At Satan's Throne* that it records failures and decline, as well as growth and success (and so dismisses the popular myth of an eighteenth century 'golden age' in which Mr. Wesley and Methodism went hand in hand from strength to strength).

At Bath the classic case of tension and conflict was the dispute surrounding the Rev. Edward Smythe in 1779, which led to Alexander McNab's summary removal from the superintendency. Whether John Wesley's intervention was 'firm' or 'high-handed' depends on one's point of view, though he was probably more at fault than the short account here would suggest, and Charles Wesley's part in the affair is not even hinted at.

The famous encounter between Wesley and Beau Nash is given, without comment, from Wesley's point of view - the only one we have - and I would have welcomed some indication that Nash was not quite the embodiment of debauchery portrayed by a succession of Wesley biographers. Statistics are reproduced from another source on page 92 with no comment on the fact that they include figures for Primitive Methodist, Bible Christians, and Wesleyan Reformers (not to mention Latter Day Saints) *before 1801!* Evidence from the 1851 Religious Census is taken from the published *Report*, apparently without recourse to the original returns for individual places of worship. But it is good to have the figures for other denominations for the purpose of comparison; and a similar local census carried out thirty years later reveals the interesting fact that by 1881 there were more seats available, but fewer worshippers occupying them.

Other items of particular interest are the details of the original New King Street trust (page 43; see *Proceedings*, xlv, pp. 25-35 for fuller details) and the explanation of the comparative failure of the village causes in the 1820s (pp. 63-4).

The book was compiled under considerable difficulty and this shows through from time to time. The bibliography and index, for example, both leave something to be desired, though at the same time they are welcome and commendable features all too often lacking in our local histories. The editor and his collaborators are to be congratulated on achieving publication against the odds. For a closed volume of this size and with so attractive a format, its price is remarkably low.

Mrs. Booker has an inspiring story to tell of aspirations and heroic exertion by 'rank and file' Methodists faced by difficulties and setbacks, and she tells it well.

Like the Bath history, *Thy Chartered Freemen* is attractively produced and well illustrated. But it is more light-weight, presents a picture of Methodism's 'irresistible message of salvation' spreading 'like a forestfire' through post-1738 England, and perpetrates a number of basic errors, not least by confusing Wesleyan and Primitive Methodism at several points. A praiseworthy attempt to set the story in the context of national and even world history founders on the rock of irrelevance, but is nonetheless to be commended in principle.

JOHN A. VICKERS

*And Are We Yet Alive: A Channel Islands Family Album* by May Morley (St Helier, 1987, pp.100)

The title itself, so evocative to Methodist hearts, determines the note of warmth and thankfulness throughout this appealing book. The sub-title gives the exact description. In essence, it is a series of vignettes from the early nineteenth to the early twentieth century, chosen from the family trees of the author and her husband, George Morley. Episodic treatment necessarily militates against continuity of narrative. The reader must persevere in the process of identification and elucidation! Happily, four admirably clear charts, together with many illustrations, provide immediate help in tracing the various family inter-connections: Morley, Gallienne, de Jersey, Le Messurier. The first-named begins with the Rev. George Morley, secretary of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society and in 1831 President of Conference; the second begins with Matthew Gallienne, born 1789, ushering in the story of the pioneer days of Methodism in France; the third begins with Henri de Jersey, who was host to John Wesley on his visit to Guernsey in 1787; the fourth with Nicholas Le Messurier, closely connected with the early days of Channel Islands' mail services.

It is quite impossible to give in a brief review a semblance of the rich diversity of scene, character and incident, stemming from these forebears. Suffice it to say that it is shot through with warm humanity, poignancy, laughter and tears, gathering in not only Europe but a world stage, frequently finding a simple focus in the family home, 'La Hauteur', St Brelade, Jersey. Amongst these riches, a purely arbitrary choice, one feels so much for Amélie in the happenings at Nîmes on that blazing hot day in 1900! Read it for yourself. It is good to know that May Morley, so charmingly portrayed as a child on top of Jethou (page 97), is continuing her research into the extensive family archives. We await further treasures.

JOHN WALLER

## NOTES AND QUERIES

### 1437. · WESLEYAN CONFERENCE ADMISSION TICKETS

In an article in *Proceedings*, xxxi, pp.53 ff., Wesley Swift described tickets of admission to the Wesleyan Conference, stating that the first dated from the inception of the Representative Session in 1878. In a postscript (Note 1023) in *Proceedings*, xxxii, p.63, he amended that statement, as he had since learned of tickets for 1841 and 1863 and he commented that the ticket for 1841 bore the signature of the President (James Dixon) and not of the retiring President. He wondered how that was managed; for in those days the President was not designated the previous year and until the election on the opening day of Conference no one could be sure who would be chosen.

A paragraph in the *Wesleyan Protestant Methodist Magazine* for 1834, page 145, gives us the answer. It appears in the report on the Wesleyan Conference which had opened in London on July 30th. On Friday, August 1st, 'on re-assembling after breakfast, the tickets of admission were distributed to the brethren. On each ticket was written the name of the individual to whom it was presented, the rest being in print.' Thereupon follows an illustration of a ticket. The account goes on to say: 'Upon one of these tickets of admission being tendered to the Rev. H. Moore, he indignantly refused it, saying "he would have none of their tickets. They might deny him admission at their peril; for he would go into the chapel, and, if anyone interrupted him, he would take legal steps to compel them."'

Evidently the tickets were printed after the election of the President and distributed on the third day of Conference and it would seem, from Henry Moore's reaction, that it was an innovation that year, perhaps on the part of the Secretary, John Hannah. Which answers Wesley Swift's query.

But does it mean that some might have entered and taken part in the previous two days' proceedings (including the election of the President) who had no right to do so? Or does it mean that all qualified to take part (ie all ministers) would have been recognised in any case, and that the innovation was superfluous?

OLIVER A. BECKERLEGGE

1438. JOHN PETTY SOGO

In the course of a Sabbatical project, investigating the connections between my family and Primitive Methodism in Hampshire, I have come across a curious photograph among the many items in the family archive. It is of an African or West Indian man, dressed in a white suit and a felt hat, standing beside a seated European, bearded and wearing a dark jacket, light trousers and light cap. They are against the background of a laurel hedge. Under the standing figure is written "John Petty Sogo". The photograph, which is mounted on a highly ornamented card, was taken by J.C. Dinham, Gainsborough Gallery, 34 Union Street, Torquay, and carries on the back the pencilled reference number 21252. There is no date, but the style is late Victorian. The hand written name, and the place of finding, suggest a Primitive Methodist connection. Does any reader know what it is?

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1439. METHODIST MALFEASANTS

David Barton (Note 1436) has set a fascinating trail to what could ultimately lead to a best seller (at last!) for the Publishing House. If we are willing to cast our net wider, surely the biggest name in fact and mythology is that man of the 'Wild West', John Wesley Hardin. He stands up (or down) there with Billy the Kid and Jesse and Frank James. He was probably the only man about to be hanged who insisted on testifying to the Judge and praising his God-fearing preacher father. Rogue he was, but his notoriety was greatly increased by penny dreadfuls. His parents were from Tipton in south Staffordshire, where his father had been a prominent Primitive Methodist local preacher. Entering America the old man had problems with his Black Country dialect and thus 'Harding' became 'Hardin' on the family documentation. A little of their story appeared in the *Black Country Bugle* some years ago. No doubt there exists somewhere some more definitive work on this American folk hero/villain, so proud of his Methodist background.

WILLIAM PARKES

1440. METHODISM IN SHETLAND

The Rev. Harold R. Bowes, B.D., has written a thesis *Revival and Survival: Methodism's Ebb and Flow in Shetland and Orkney, 1822-1862* in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Theology in the Department of Church History, Aberdeen, which he obtained. As he was at Wesley College,

Headingley, he has deposited one copy in the Library of Wesley College, Bristol. It is a substantial work of xiv, 348 pages. A prologue deals with events before 1822, and an epilogue briefly continues the story from 1862 to 1987. An appendix, 'Fasti of Shetland Methodism, 1822-1988', contains full lists of chapels, ministers, deaconesses, lay agents, pastoral assistants and the like, with brief biographies of many of them, and the names of some local preachers. The work is a model of careful research and of sound scholarship, and the wealth of detail does not impede the flow of the fascinating story of how Methodism, though it did not last long in Orkney, maintained its influence, as it still does, in Shetland. Among the leading characters in the narrative are Adam Clarke, who took a special interest in those islands and Samuel Dunn, who was stationed there.

A. RAYMOND GEORGE

1441. REGISTRATION UNDER THE TOLERATION ACT

John Wesley told Mrs Gallatin in a letter of 19th July 1750:

The Recorder of Chester .. procured a licence for Thomas Sidebotham's house in that county .. Since then we have licensed the house at Leeds, and some others. (*Letters*, ii, pp.432f.)

Hitherto the date of the Cheshire licence, which marked Wesley's acceptance of registration under the Toleration Act, does not seem to have been published. The Register of Meeting Houses in Cheshire Record Office (MF96/6-QDR 7) shows that Thomas Sydebotham's house (in Greenhead in Bredbury, Stockport) was registered as early as 26th October 1745. This is three years before the Bristol New Room licence of 17th October 1748 (J.S.Simon, *John Wesley and the Advance of Methodism* (1925), p.58), and less than a year after Wesley rejected use of the Toleration Act in Part I of the *Farther Appeal*.

It would be interesting to know details of the Leeds registration, and of the others to which Wesley referred in 1750.

C.J. PODMORE

1442. SUSANNA WESLEY MANUSCRIPTS

For a complete edition of Susanna Wesley's 'letters and papers' I am anxious to track down any stray manuscripts members may know of. I have photocopies of everything in the two major collections: Wesley College, Bristol, and Methodist Archives in the John Rylands Library. I also have individual letters or journal fragments from Wesley's Chapel, the Melbourne Public Library, and the Lovely Lane Museum in Baltimore, and am consulting Homer Calkin's check list of Methodist holdings. I would be most grateful for information about other materials I may have missed.

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