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MOTIVES, METHODS AND MARGINS IN METHODISM'S AGE OF EXPANSION

The Wesley Historical Society Lecture 1994

This is the first annual lecture of the Wesley Historical Society since the regrettable death of Edward Thompson last year. A man of razor-sharp intellect and passionate convictions, Thompson was not only one of Britain's greatest ever social historians, but also has had a remarkable influence over Methodist historiography, especially in the United States, since the publication of his great work *The Making of the English Working Class* in 1963.¹ In a sense, however, his is a name that will not be regarded with particular fondness by those interested in the history of Methodism as a popular *religious* movement. The ringing phrase 'psychic masturbation' along with his other attempts to get at the heart of Methodist experience through a psycho-sexual treatment of hymns and images created an immense stir at the time and has never been forgotten or indeed forgiven by those who felt that a great religious

¹E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* [revised edition], (1968). Some of Thompson's essays also contain material of interest to historians of Methodism: 'The moral economy of the English crowd in the eighteenth century', *Past and Present*, no. 50 (1971), pp.76-136; 'Anthropology and the discipline of historical context', *Midland History*, vol. 1 no. 3 (1972), pp.41-55; 'Patrician society, plebeian culture', *Journal of Social History*, vol. 7, no. 4 (1974), pp. 382-405. For an example of the influence of Thompson's work on North American scholars see G. W. Olsen (ed.), *Religion and Revolution in Early-Industrial England: The Halévy Thesis and its Critics* (Lanham, 1990).

tradition had been immolated on the altar of the sexual faddism of the 1960s.²

But Thompson was no mere dedicated follower of fashion. In the midst of the controversy surrounding his interpretation of Methodism it is easy to forget that Thompson wrote as he did as a result of asking penetrating questions which seem genuinely to have perplexed him and which still need to be addressed. With a shrewd instinct about the way the historiography was shifting, he stated that 'too much writing on Methodism commences with the assumption that we all know what Methodism was, and gets on with discussing its growth rates or its organisational structures. But we cannot deduce the quality of the Methodist experience from this kind of evidence'.³

It was in attempting to penetrate to the heart of Methodist *experience* - as opposed to its structures, organisation and theology - that stimulated Thompson to ask a number of subsidiary but linked questions. Why did working people, for example, accept 'this passionate Lutheranism' and not the more politically literate and rational faith of the English dissenting tradition which Thompson considered a more appropriate vehicle for working-class interests in the age of the French Revolution? How should one begin to interpret recorded Methodist experiences when they were so often couched in the most high-flown supernaturalistic language about Satan and his demons and described in the most surreal of images?⁴ How can one explain a religion allegedly founded on the principles of a loving sacrifice which nevertheless 'feared love's effective expression, either as sexual love or in any social form which might irritate relations with Authority'? How can the remorseless mechanics of societary discipline be squared with the remarkable outbursts of folk revivalism which seemed to operate on the rawest edge of emotional extremism? How could Methodism *simultaneously* act as the religion of the industrial bourgeoisie *and* wide sections of the proletariat given that both Weber and Tawney had confined themselves to explaining why puritanical forms of religion had appealed almost exclusively to the middling sort with economic aspirations?

In answering these questions and in facing up to the many apparent paradoxes of Methodist experience, Thompson imposed

²Thompson dealt with the early critics of his treatment of Methodism in the Postscript to the Penguin edition of *The Making of the English Working Class*. These included R. Currie and R. M. Hartwell, 'The making of the English working class?', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser. vol. 18, no. 2 (1965).

³E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, p.918.

⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 402-11.

several analytical frameworks; I say 'imposed' because his conceptual apparatus was generally more impressive than his detailed evidence. For convenience he split Methodist history into three epochs: the era of the Wesleyan pastorate, the war years and 'the sober years of ascending respectability and social status'.⁵ It was the middle period, Methodism's great age of rapid expansion, that interested him most. In this period he sought to explain Methodist experience in terms of the psychic disturbances occasioned by war, food shortages and revolutionary political and social changes which he synthesised in the memorable phrase 'the chiliasm of despair'. He meant by that not so much that Methodism was a kind of millenarian sect - like those which came to the fore during the English civil wars and interregnum - but that social and political anomie produced the kind of psychological climate within which a religion like Methodism could flourish.

His second broad conceptual framework had to do with Methodism as an inculcator of work discipline and structured leisure at a time when industrial capitalism was eroding the traditional pattern of labour and popular amusement. 'The argument is thus complete', he wrote, 'the factory system demands a transformation of human nature, the "working paroxysms" of the artisan or the outworker must be methodized until the man is adapted to the discipline of the machine'.⁶ It is here that he quotes with approval D. H. Lawrence's words in *The Rainbow* that the miners 'believe they must alter themselves to fit the pits and the place, rather than alter the pits and the place to fit themselves. It is easier.'⁷ This then, as far as Thompson was concerned, was the essence of Methodism's impact on the workers in the early industrial revolution.

His third main conceptual framework was based on his view of Methodist theology, and in particular its doctrine of grace. Grace, according to Thompson, was maintained primarily through service to the church, cultivation of the soul by means of conversion, penitence and study, and the creation of methodical discipline in every aspect of life. Passion and the workings of the heart were thus to be confined to the religious spheres of dramatic conversions and service to the church and not to the secular world. In this way 'the box-like, blackening chapels stood in the industrial districts like great traps for the human psyche'.⁸ It was in this psychological disorder that Thompson located the sexual repression and womb-imagery of the Methodist hymns. Why then did working people in

⁵Ibid., p. 920.

⁶Ibid., pp. 397-8.

⁷Ibid., p. 398, note 1.

⁸Ibid., p. 404.

such large numbers put up with it? The explanation he offered was a combination of indoctrination through Sunday schools and the desperate search for community in a fragmenting social order. Indeed, anything worthy of admiration in Methodism, and in Thompson's scheme there is very little, was owing to the ability of the English working classes to import some of their traditional compassion and common sense into the 'religious terrorism' of the Methodist experience.⁹

This is not the time or the place to engage in a point-by-point rebuttal of some of Thompson's arguments. The purpose of describing them at some length is to highlight one of the most conceptually fertile attempts to get to the heart of the Methodist experience by answering the basic questions: What is it and why did it grow where and when it did? In answering these questions Thompson put more stress on the *motives* of the faithful, the *methods* of transmission and the various *margins* which Methodism exploited than any of his predecessors. What restricted him was not so much the inappropriateness of his questions as his own ideological convictions that since religious belief is essentially irrational then religion must always be explained in terms of displacement and repression. In short, his Methodism could not be allowed to display agreeable characteristics because no religion of any kind can by definition produce good fruit. It would nevertheless be a misjudgment to ignore Thompson's shrewd questions simply because the answers he supplied were unsatisfactory.

What I wish to do, therefore, is to look more closely at motives, methods and margins in attempting to explain the quite remarkable expansion of Methodism in different parts of the world in the period 1780-1850. I shall begin with some of the implications of Professor Ward's work on the European origins of the great awakening before saying something about Methodist growth in Britain and the United States. I then want to compare those stories with a different and less successful pattern of Methodist growth in Ireland and France in the same period. What accounts for the difference and how can a comparative treatment help to answer some of the questions posed by Thompson in a purely English context? I shall then offer some concluding reflections on the three words that frame my rather contrived alliterative title.

The roots of the great religious revivals of the eighteenth century - from eastern and central Europe to the middle colonies of America - are to be found, according to Professor Ward, in the resistance of

⁹Ibid., pp. 411-40

confessional minorities to the real or perceived threat of assimilation by powerful states and established churches.¹⁰ He locates the seeds of future revival in the eighteenth-century Protestant frame of mind which was a compound of low morale, fear of confessional conflict, eschatological neuroses and pious devotion - all serviced by an astonishing array of devotional publications and popular preachers. The spiritual life of Europe was quite simply breaking free from confessional control at precisely the time when such control was pursued with renewed vigour. As a result the pietism of Halle and Herrnhut was fanned into revivals in various Protestant corners of the Habsburg Empire and was then carried to the British Isles and North America by sweeping population movements and by a remarkable collection of revivalists who knew of each other's labours and who believed themselves part of a worldwide movement of grace. One of the most attractive and important features of Ward's fine study of the Protestant evangelical awakening is the way in which he is able to bring to life the many sturdy individualists who preached revival, without either etherising their religious motivation or piously glossing over their most disagreeable qualities. In terms of religious motivation, therefore, we are presented with personalities with mixed qualities of egocentricity and heroism who experienced grace and preached it in ways that Thompson's models of sexual repression and work discipline cannot begin to encapsulate.

Above all Ward's interpretation is based upon the idea that popular evangelicalism had the capacity to act as a radical and unsettling force in a world order in which the Christianisation of the poor was regarded as the exclusive function of politically manipulated and spiritually pragmatic state churches. There are further radical dimensions to this story which would not surface in an interpretation based on social class alone. The re-emergence in theory and in practice, of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, for example, challenged the notion of a traditional priesthood based on clerical hierarchies and mechanisms of social control.¹¹ In addition, the idea that spiritual enlightenment and instruction were not confined to adult males alone opened up surprisingly

¹⁰This argument is worked out most clearly in W. R. Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (Cambridge, 1992), but Professor Ward's earlier articles on the origins of religious revival still retain their value. Conveniently, these have been collected in one volume entitled *Faith and Faction* (1993). The most important are 'Orthodoxy, Enlightenment and religious revival' and 'Power and Piety: the origins of religious revival in the early eighteenth century'.

¹¹W. R. Ward, 'Pastoral office and the general priesthood in the Great Awakening', *Studies in Church History*, vol. 26 (1989), pp.303-27.

influential roles for women and children in early revivalism. Thus popular Protestantism, for all its carping narrowness and bitter controversies, had the capacity to expand the religious potential of the laity and to have a civilising and humanising effect on its humble adherents.¹²

How does all this relate to Methodist expansion in England in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries? The most conceptually integrated alternative to Thompson's interpretation, and the one based on the best command of the evidence, is once again supplied by Ward.¹³ With all due attention to Methodist theology, organisation and personal motivation, he nevertheless views Methodism's great age of expansion in English society as part of much wider structural changes in the generation overshadowed by the French Revolution. In this period a complex of social tensions caused by population growth, subsistence crises and the commercialisation of agriculture, and further exacerbated by prolonged warfare, sharpened class conflict and undermined the old denominational order. The rising social status of the Anglican clergy and their unprecedented representation on the bench of magistrates cemented the squire and parson alliance at the very time that establishment ideals were most under attack. In such circumstances the Church of England was in no position to resist a dramatic upsurge in undenominational itinerant preaching and cottage-based religion which even the various Methodist connexions struggled hard to keep under control.¹⁴

Methodism thus made its fastest gains in areas least amenable to paternalistic influence including freehold parishes, industrial villages, mining communities, market towns, canal and sea ports and other centres of migratory populations. James Obelkevich's classic local study of South Lindsey is a vivid illustration of how the Church of England's attempt to reinforce an older paternalistic, hierarchic and integrated society was vigorously challenged by more emotionally vibrant and populist forms of religion such as that offered by the Primitive Methodists.¹⁵ The result was a *mixture* of class and cultural conflict which reflected the economic and

¹²See, for example, John Walsh, 'Methodism at the end of the eighteenth century', in R. Davies and E.G. Rupp (eds), *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain* (1965), vol. 1, pp. 277-315.

¹³W. R. Ward, *Religion and Society in England 1790-1850* (1972). The main themes are expressed in a more accessible form in 'Revival and class conflict in early nineteenth-century Britain', in *Faith and Faction*, pp. 285-98.

¹⁴See D. M. Valenze, *Prophetic Sons and Daughters* (Princeton, 1985); D. W. Lovegrove, *Established Church, Sectarian People: Itinerancy and the Transformation of English Dissent, 1780-1830* (Cambridge, 1988).

¹⁵J. Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society: South Lindsey, 1825-1875* (Oxford, 1976).

social structure of the area and led to the growth of an agricultural trade unionism almost entirely under Methodist leadership.¹⁶

From this perspective Methodism was a form of popular religion peculiarly well adapted to the kind of economic, social and political transformations that were changing the face of English society and inexorably loosening the control of the Established Church at the end of the eighteenth century. Religious associations eroded the Church of England, therefore, not primarily by political means, which for long had been the fear of the Church's most ardent defenders, but through the cottage prayer meetings and itinerant preaching of a vigorously mobilised laity. In that respect, at least, Methodism, in its fundamentally religious challenge to the religious structures of England's confessional state, may be seen more as an expression of social radicalism than as a reinforcement of ancien régime control.¹⁷ Its alternative structure of voluntary religious societies organised into a connexional system posed the same kind of threat to the Church of England as the corresponding societies posed to the British state.¹⁸ As Alan Gilbert has stated in his most recent contribution to this old debate:

The labourers, artisans and tradespeople, the school teachers and other minor professionals, and even (albeit to a much lesser extent) the merchant and manufacturing groups who became Methodists in early industrial England, were the kinds of people who, in matters of politics, industrial relations or social status, often found themselves at odds, in one way or another, with the norms, values and institutions of the ruling classes. ... Not only were the social groups from which the movement drew the bulk of its members already predisposed towards radical or independent politics, but the very act of becoming a Methodist was often interpreted by non-Methodist neighbours and local civil authorities as one of social defiance.¹⁹

As long as the State and the Established Church were prepared to acquiesce in a limited toleration for religious enthusiasts - which

¹⁶N. Scotland, *Methodism and the Revolt of the Field* (Gloucester, 1981). See also R. Moore, *Pit-Men, Preachers and Politics: The Effects of Methodism in a Durham Mining Community* (Cambridge, 1974).

¹⁷For rather different interpretations of Methodism's contribution or otherwise to England's 'ancien régime' see J. C. D. Clark, *English Society 1688-1832* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 235-47 and David Hempton, 'John Wesley and England's "Ancien Régime"' in S. Mews (ed.), *Modern Religious Rebels* (1993), pp. 36-55.

¹⁸W. R. Ward, 'The Evangelical Revival in eighteenth-century Britain', in S. Gilley and W. J. Sheils (eds), *A History of Religion in Britain* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 252-72.

¹⁹Alan D. Gilbert, 'Religion and political stability in early industrial England', in P. O'Brien and R. Quinault (eds), *The Industrial Revolution and British Society* (Cambridge, 1993), p.89.

for all practical purposes hinged on the right to engage in itinerant preaching²⁰ - and as long as the Methodist leadership was prepared to propagandise its own membership on behalf of the established order, the 'social defiance' alluded to by Gilbert was generally kept within acceptable boundaries.²¹

Equally important in terms of social order was the capacity of Wesleyan Methodism, and subsequently its off-shoots, to separate from the Established Church and then from the main connexion in a relatively ordered and disciplined fashion. But the key here is not so much the libertarian sentiments of the sects (that much at least can be conceded to Thompson), as the profound impact of legal and institutional frameworks in helping both to articulate grievances and to manage their consequences. Popular evangelicalism did not create the free-born Englishman, nor did it singlehandedly create the English capacity for disciplined protest, but through Methodism and the connexional system it offered a vibrant religious vehicle for both to operate outside the confines of the Established Church without seriously destabilising the British state in the era of the French Revolution. Moreover, it was in this period, from 1780-1830, that the growth rates of Methodist membership reached their most spectacular, and from year to year their most volatile, levels in the history of Methodism in England.²² The most convincing explanation for that pattern is not that Methodism offered a convenient religious vehicle for counter-revolutionary forces, but that it supplied the means by which England's confessional state was eroded from within at the same time as it was challenged from without by pressure from Roman Catholics in Ireland.²³ Ironically, it was when the Methodist leadership self-consciously acted as agents of social control in the Peterloo years from 1817-20 that Methodist expansion sustained its most serious check before the crippling internal disputes of the late 1840s and early 1850s.²⁴ Nevertheless, the extent to which Methodism had refash-

²⁰David Hempton, 'Methodism and the Law, 1740-1820', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, vol. 70, no. 3 (1988), pp. 93-107.

²¹All the major surviving collections of Methodist correspondence from the period 1790-1820 and the private minutes of the Committee of Privileges after 1803 testify to the efforts made to keep Methodists loyal to the established order. See David Hempton, *Methodism and Politics in British Society 1750-1850* (1984), pp. 55-115.

²²R. Currie, A. Gilbert and L. Horsley, *Churches and Churchgoers: Patterns of Church Growth in the British Isles since 1700* (Oxford, 1977), pp. 40-42.

²³Thomas Bartlett, *The Fall and the Rise of the Irish Nation: the Catholic Question 1690-1830* (Dublin, 1992).

²⁴See the revealing graph of Methodist membership growth rates in Currie, Gilbert and Horsley, *Churches and Churchgoers*, p.41. The best interpretation of Methodism in the troubled districts of the north of England in these years remains Ward, *Religion and Society*.

ioned the religious landscape in England in the period of the industrial revolution was made clear by the religious census of 1851 when the total number of Anglican attendants was just over half the total number, and the number of Methodist attendants outstripped all the other Nonconformist denominations.²⁵

An even more dramatic transformation of the old denominational landscape took place in the United States in the period 1776-1850. In 1776 Methodists accounted for only 2.5% of religious adherents, comfortably behind the established colonial denominations, whereas by 1850 the Methodist share was 34.2% which was almost double the proportion of Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Episcopalians put together.²⁶ In a period of remarkable demographic expansion, Methodist growth rates considerably outstripped those of the population as a whole.²⁷ By the 1840s a veritable army of over 10,000 itinerant and lay preachers were servicing the fastest growing religious movement between the American Revolution and the Civil War.²⁸

In the most recent history of Christianity in the United States Mark Noll states that 'the Protestant churches that flourished most decisively in the first half of the nineteenth century were the Baptists and the Methodists, the two bodies that succeeded in joining most efficiently a democratic appeal with effective leadership'.²⁹ Similarly, Nathan Hatch in an important book calls this period of Methodist expansion the democratisation of American Christianity which 'has less to do with the specifics of polity and governance and more to do with the incarnation of the church into popular culture'.³⁰ The popular religious movements of the early republic, in their refusal to defer to the clergy and learned theologians and in their willingness to take the religious experiences of ordinary people at face value, articulated a profoundly democratic spirit. The rise of a popular religious culture of print, the place of origin of which shifted from eastern seaboard cities to west of the Alleghenies, combined with the perceived utility of disseminating stories of personal religious experience for the benefit of others further contributed to the notion that the religion of the people did not depend on clerical mediation.

²⁵D. M. Thompson, *Nonconformity in the Nineteenth Century* (1972), pp. 147-55.

²⁶Mark A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids, 1992), p. 153.

²⁷J. C. Deming and M. S. Hamilton, 'Methodist revivalism in France, Canada and the United States' in G. A. Rawlyk and M. A. Noll (eds), *Amazing Grace: Evangelicalism in Australia, Britain, Canada and the United States* (Grand Rapids, 1993), pp. 124-53.

²⁸Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, 1989).

²⁹Noll, *A History of Christianity*, p. 153.

³⁰Hatch, *op cit.* p. 9.

The style of religious communication and worship also changed. There was a move away from refined sermons of doctrinal exposition to populist addresses utilising humour, sarcasm and popular wisdom. Similarly, the content and expression of religious hymns, ballads and verse became more accessible to popular taste. 'Better than any other source, popular poems and songs capture the force of the early republic's populism', states Hatch, 'they translate theological concepts into language of the marketplace, personalize theological abstractions, deflate the pretension of privileged church leaders, and instill hope and confidence in popular collective action.'³¹ The most common themes are anticlericalism, anti-Calvinism, anti-formalism, anti-confessionalism and anti-élitism. Empowerment was from God, knowledge was from the scriptures, salvation was available to all and the spirit was manifested not in structures and ecclesiastical order, but in freedom and heart religion. There were, of course, raw edges to populist religious enthusiasm. Frenetic revivalism, apocalypticism and sectarian fragmentation were all in evidence as an energetic lay leadership of both men and women struggled free from the control of traditional religious structures. Methodism, with a relatively coherent Wesleyan theology and with its distinctive combination of ecclesiastical authoritarianism and connexional discipline, was in a good position to accommodate popular enthusiasm without capitulating to its most bizarre manifestations. The paradox at the heart of Methodism in the United States in this period is of the creation of an authoritarian religious structure empowered by the authority of the people - an egalitarian spiritual message that did not result in democratic ecclesiastical structures. Methodism in the United States after the Revolution was therefore a form of popular religion that successfully attacked social, ecclesiastical and professional élites rather than a genuine movement of political or ecclesiastical democracy. How then is the remarkable growth of Methodism to be explained?

In a rapidly expanding society with fluid and inadequate structures of institutional control there was virtually unlimited social space, without hardened distinctions whether of social class or religious denomination, within which dynamic new religious movements could take root.³² Methodism, by appealing both to the authenticity of religious experience and to the disciplines of class and church membership, offered an attractive combination of indi-

³¹Ibid., p. 227.

³²Deming and Hamilton, 'Methodist Revivalism', pp. 127-32

vidual assurance and corporate responsibility for those experiencing the fearful exhilaration of rapid social change. In the words of Richard Carwardine, Methodism, within a generation, became the largest religious denomination within the United States due to the 'appeal of an Arminian theology whose individualistic, democratic, and optimistic emphases found a positive response in an expanding society where traditional patterns of authority and deference were succumbing to egalitarian challenge'.³³ The parallels with England, and indeed Wales where evangelical nonconformity flourished in the expanding crevices of an industrial frontier society, are striking.

In both England and the United States Methodism not only grew faster than the total population, but its growth resulted in a dramatic reconfiguration of the old denominational order. The pattern in Ireland and France in the same period was rather different. Methodism in Ireland took root initially in southern market towns along the routes of Wesley's preaching tours, but it then began to develop more strongly in the north of the country and in two quite specific areas in the southern and southwestern border counties of the province of Ulster.³⁴ The reasons given for Methodist growth by the preachers who produced it are the familiar Methodist cocktail of itinerant preaching, cell groups, love feasts, hymn-singing, the spiritual influence of women, and manifold special providences which played a vitally important role in persuading Methodists that God was indeed clearing the paths before them.³⁵ The Methodist emphases on conversion and free association brought new features to the Irish religious landscape which until then had been dominated by churches - Roman Catholic, Church of Ireland and Presbyterian - ministering to pre-assigned communities.³⁶ But such explanations of themselves do not do justice to the peculiar geographical and chronological pattern of Methodist expansion in

³³Richard Carwardine, *Trans-Atlantic Revivalism: Popular Evangelicalism in Britain and America, 1790-1865* (Westport, Connecticut, 1978), p. 10.

³⁴D. Hempton and M. Hill, *Evangelical Protestantism in Ulster Society 1740-1890* (1992); D. Hempton, 'Methodism in Irish Society, 1770-1830', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series, 36 (1986), pp. 117-42.

³⁵William Arthur, *The Life of Gideon Ouseley* (1876); W. G. Campbell, 'The Apostle of Kerry', *The Life of the Rev. Charles Graham* (Dublin, 1868); F. J. Cole, *The Cavalry Preachers* (Belfast, 1945); C. H. Crookshank, *A Methodist Pioneer: The Life and Labours of John Smith* (London, 1881); A. Stewart and G. Revington, *Memoir of the Life and Labours of the Rev. Adam Averell* (Dublin, 1848). An even more revealing picture emerges from the letters of early itinerants and missionaries which are unfortunately dispersed between the Northern Ireland Public Record Office, the School of Oriental and African Studies (Methodist missions) and the John Rylands Library.

³⁶D. Miller, 'Presbyterianism and "modernization" in Ulster', *Past and Present*, no. 80 (1978), pp. 66-90.

Ireland. Growth was particularly rapid in the changing and expanding economy of southern Ulster in which a rough sectarian equilibrium between Protestants and Catholics led to increased competition for land, employment, and ultimately, social and political power. These were also old centres of predominantly English settlement. Ward's statement that one of the reasons for the break-neck expansion of American Methodism was that it offered the English in America 'a way of affirming their Englishness without being Anglican' has an obvious application to the English settlements of southern Ulster.³⁷ Thus in this part of Ireland a powerful mixture of economic competition, cultural and religious conflict, and ethnicity all played their part in the remarkable growth of Methodism at the turn of the century.

The chronology of Methodist growth is as important as its geography. The main growth spurt comes in the period 1770-1830 after which date the pace of growth slowed quite dramatically due to population migration, political conflict and structural changes within the Methodist community itself. But the growth of Irish Methodism is also more volatile than that of English Methodism in the same period. A chart of annual growth rates shows intense pulses of revivalism at roughly twenty-year intervals, including a particularly dramatic surge in the years immediately after the Rebellion of the United Irishmen in 1798. As in England and the United States, there seems to be no very clear link between Methodist expansion and economic indices, and growth slows down after 1830 despite the increase of clerical manpower and the provision of more elaborate buildings.

In many accounts of Methodist growth in the British Isles the so called endogenous and exogenous features are usually kept quite separate even when both are alluded to, but it is increasingly clear that there is a symbiotic relationship between the two. In Ireland, for example, there is a correlation between the religious ideals of evangelical Arminianism and the cultural ideals of an expanding society, and between notions of religious *and* social improvement. In frequent displays of popular enlightenment chauvinism, Methodists expressed their sense of superiority over those allegedly enslaved to Romish superstition and to the spiritual mediocrity of the Established Church. More prosaically, the cheapness and flexibility of the Methodist system was well adapted to a society undergoing profound social changes, and the connexional system facilitated the transfer of resources from wealthier urban congregations

³⁷Ward, 'The Evangelical Revival in eighteenth-century Britain', p. 268.

to sustain pioneer work in poorer rural areas.

As the class membership lists for southern Ulster make clear, Methodism grew spectacularly quickly in one of the last frontiers of the European Reformation at a time of acute sectarian competition. This both opened up space for its growth and development in the short term and ultimately closed it down in the long term as Irish Protestants became more nervous about eroding their homogeneity through denominational fragmentation. This is essentially why a large proportion of Irish Methodists stayed within the Established Church and why Irish Methodism could find little growing space within areas controlled by the Roman Catholic and Presbyterian churches.

Methodist growth in France, though on a much smaller scale, has some interesting parallels with the pattern in Ireland. In the second quarter of the nineteenth century Methodism grew almost exclusively in the department of the Gard, the region with the strongest concentration of French Protestants.³⁸ Although Protestants comprised almost a third of the Gard's population the proportion was even higher in the cantons to the west and north of the city of Nîmes and higher still in the Garrigues and the hills of the Cevennes. Although primarily an agricultural region, the economic and social structure of the Gard was affected by major changes in the structure of its textile production and by the growth of mining and metallurgical industries. Demographic mobility further added to the capacity for social conflict, but despite these changes Gardois society was divided less by economic issues than by matters of religion. James Deming has shown that 'though the Reformed community of the Gard experienced the same social and economic stresses that placed the *social question* at the forefront of public debate, religious identification continued to unite the Protestant merchant, artisan, peasant and landlord, against the menace from the Catholic majority'.³⁹

The existence of old Moravian settlements in the Gard, a tradition of illuminism sustained through isolation and persecution, and the decline of Calvinism within the French Reformed Church all seemed to indicate that this region would yield significant fruit to the Methodist missionaries who fetched up there in the years after

³⁸I am indebted to Dr James C. Deming for allowing me to read his doctoral dissertation entitled 'Protestantism and Society in France: Revivalism and the French Reformed Church in the Department of the Gard, 1815-1848', University of Notre Dame (1989). See also James L. Osen, 'The theological revival of the French Reformed Church, 1830-1852', *Church History*, vol. 37 (1968), pp. 36-49.

³⁹Deming, 'Protestantism and Society', p. 53.

the Napoleonic Wars. Motivated in part by English chauvinist zeal to redeem the French from their secular excesses, and perhaps even from their residual Roman Catholicism, Methodist missionaries contributed valiantly to a spiritual awakening within Gardois Protestantism in the period from the mid-1830s to the mid-1850s. But when the dust settled 'four decades of Methodist preaching in France yielded a stagnant church of only 1200 members by 1857'.⁴⁰ Why were the gains so modest? As in Ireland there was an initial desire to proselytise French Catholics, but this was never a practicable proposition. Many within the Reformed Church had no desire to antagonise French Catholics or to renew ancient hostilities. Moreover, as Methodism in France moved from a societary renewal movement with missionary support towards a more settled denomination, it created all sorts of tensions with the Reformed Church. As separatism bred denominational competition it soon became obvious that the religious market was simply not large enough to accommodate new forms of Protestantism. A powerful combination of government restriction, French Reformed opposition and popular antipathy further eroded the available space for French Methodism. In a cultural sense the French Reformed Church was as much of a religious establishment as the Irish episcopal church or indeed the Irish Presbyterian Church in its cultural heartland of north-eastern Ulster. As one French Reformed pastor put it 'he did not want to see French Protestantism fracture into small sects without strength or means of existence'.⁴¹ In short, voluntarism and revivalism threatened the cultural homogeneity of French Protestantism which had been built up over centuries of determined opposition to Catholic assimilation and state persecution. The price of adopting Methodism was simply too high to pay. Methodism thus made a profound impact on the religious vitality of the Reformed Church, but it was able to carve out only a very small niche for its own particular brand of religious enthusiasm.

Mark Noll in his survey of evangelical religion in North Atlantic societies in the age of revolution has written that 'it was the presence of social crisis - compounded of political, intellectual, and often military upheaval - that created the circumstances in which evangelicalism rose to cultural influence'.⁴² Put another way, evangelical religion seemed to thrive in the expanding crevices and margins of societies undergoing profound change of one sort or another. In England, and more particularly the United States, in the peri-

⁴⁰Deming and Hamilton, 'Methodist Revivalism', p. 139.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 147.

⁴²Noll, 'Revolution and the rise of Evangelical social influence', pp. 113-36.

od after 1780 the social, cultural and political space for Methodist expansion seemed almost unlimited. In England a complex of changes eroded both the social and cultural foundations of the confessional state and, crucially, its powers of religious coercion. In the United States a more flexible, demographically mobile and pluralistic society offered immense potential for any religion which could combine an egalitarian appeal with an efficient organisational structure. In both England and the United States the margins which Methodism was able to exploit were expanding, but the reverse was the case in Ireland and France where the crevices were old ones left over from the Reformation and from the settlement patterns of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These crevices were temporarily widened in south Ulster and in the Gard region largely as a result of new social tensions grafted on to old confessional conflicts, but the sheer weight of inherited cultural hegemonies soon closed them up. The available space, if anything, narrowed, and Methodism emerged as no more than the religion of an exotic minority.

So far the analysis has concentrated on a comparative treatment of Methodist expansion in different parts of the North Atlantic world in the age of revolution. What is lacking in this, as in almost all historical accounts of Methodism, is some kind of investigation of the religious motives both of those who propagated it and those who committed themselves to it. There is no lack of interest in the careers of the great leaders of the Methodist revival, but this has not filtered down to those energetic foot-soldiers of Methodist expansion, the itinerant and local preachers, and still less to the great mass of the laity.⁴³ E. P. Thompson to his credit was intrigued by the conversion narratives of the Methodist faithful, but his conceptual framework was limited by his own presuppositions about the nature of religious experience. 'We may see here in its lurid figurative expression', he writes of one conversion narrative, 'the psychic ordeal in which the character structure of the rebellious preindustrial labourer or artisan was violently recast into that of the submissive industrial worker.'⁴⁴ In essence, this is what Thompson meant by the 'transforming power of the cross' which serves as his chapter

⁴³Examples of good recent biographies of revival leaders include Henry Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (1989) and Harry S. Stout, *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, 1991), but little attention has been paid to the lower tiers of preachers in the period 1770-1830. For an indication of what can be done see Kenneth D. Brown, *A Social History of the Nonconformist Ministry in England and Wales 1800-1930* (Oxford, 1988). The forthcoming *Dictionary of Evangelical Biography* edited by Donald Lewis will offer some help, but more remains to be done.

⁴⁴Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, p. 404.

title on popular religion in *The Making of the English Working Class*.

It has to be admitted at the outset that the investigation of religious experience and motivation is fraught with difficulties. If Marxist historians have tended to promote notions of displacement and repression, historians with religious convictions have too readily assumed that there is a pure and consistent essence of religious experience regardless of time, place and culture. The problem is compounded by the fact that most narratives of religious experience are based on language borrowed either from the scriptures or from other forms of religious literature, including the spiritual biographies of predecessors. Many employ language rich in symbol and imagery drawn mostly from the Bible or from nature and choose the most highly coloured and dramatic forms of expression. Recorded conversions, as with later public testimonies, were designed not only to reinforce the commitment of the recorder, but were also constructed with a wider audience in mind. The better the story, the more dramatic the effect.

The recording of religious experience in Methodism's age of expansion deserves a much fuller treatment than is possible here. All I wish to do in the short space available is to highlight some common themes from the recorded experiences of the Irish itinerant preachers and make some connections with similar materials from other locations. The most striking feature of the Irish accounts is the space devoted to direct 'supernatural' interventions, not only in the drama of religious conversion, but also in the manifold special providences which protected the faithful from the evil intentions of the rich, the powerful and the lewd. This sense of direct divine interest in the affairs of the world helps explain the pietist enthusiasm for keeping spiritual journals and for maintaining historical records as authentic accounts of God's dealings with the community of faith.⁴⁵ The most complete collection of materials relating to the life of an itinerant preacher in this period is that of the Irish rural revivalist Gideon Ouseley whose stated ambition was to preach to every human settlement in Ireland.⁴⁶ His career as an itin-

⁴⁵W. R. Ward, 'The Renewed Unity of the Brethren: ancient church, new sect or interconfessional movement?', in *Faith and Faction*, p. 124.

⁴⁶The collection is located in the Northern Ireland Public Record Office and contains transcriptions of Ouseley's letters, reproductions of his journal and records of interviews conducted by his nephew shortly before Ouseley's death. See David Hempton, 'Gideon Ouseley: rural revivalist, 1791-1839,' *Studies in Church History*, vol. 25 (1989), pp. 203-14.

erant preacher stretching over some fifty years was rooted in a profoundly painful conversion experience during which he described himself as 'harassed, perplexed and hopeless'. His resultant release from fear and despair acted as the main psychological motor for his preaching career and was appealed to in virtually every sermon. It supplied him with an unshakeable faith in his status as God's messenger both to save the lost and to proclaim judgment against the wicked. He also jealously protected his right of private judgment and freedom of action even to the extent of refusing to sign Wesley's larger Minutes as mere human compositions. He was remorselessly anticlerical which manifested itself in an unremitting anticatholicism, and, on occasions, anti-episcopalianism. Above all he never doubted that a supernatural presence guided his every movement in every day.

The experiences of Ouseley and the Irish itinerants closely match those of Methodist preachers in the United States in the same period. 'An unprecedented wave of religious leaders in the last quarter of the eighteenth century', states Hatch,⁴⁷ expressed their openness to a variety of signs and wonders, in short, an admission of increased supernatural involvement in everyday life. Scores of preachers' journals ... indicated a ready acceptance to consider dreams and visions as inspired by God, normal manifestations of divine guidance and instruction.⁴⁷ The same is true of the Canadian revivalists brought to life in the work of George Rawlyk, including the intriguingly named Freeborn Garrettson who brought religious revivalism to Nova Scotia in the 1780s.⁴⁸ Apart from the traditional conversion experiences, what is striking about these accounts is their sense of emotional ecstasy; 'the enmity of my heart was slain, and the plan of salvation was open to me. I saw a beauty in the perfections of the Deity, and felt that power of faith and love that I had been a stranger to. My soul was exceeding happy that I seemed as if I wanted to take wings and fly to heaven'.⁴⁹ Whatever psychological mechanisms are at work in these intense conversion experiences, mere repression or displaced sexuality do not seem to offer persuasive explanations. What is not in dispute is that such experiences, operating as a great chain letter of evangelistic transmission, lie at the very heart of Methodism's age of expansion. They not only require a more subtle psychological treatment than has frequently been the case, but they need to be rooted in the specific cultural settings that conditioned their expression.

⁴⁷Hatch, *op.cit.* p. 10.

⁴⁸George A. Rawlyk, *Wrapped up in God: a study of several Canadian revivals and revivalists* (Burlington, Ontario, 1988); *Ravished by the Spirit* (Kingston and Montreal, 1984).

⁴⁹Rawlyk, *Wrapped up in God*, p. 58.

It is time to attempt some broad conclusions from this short excursion into the territory marked out by Thompson. In his valiant efforts to bring together Methodist experience and methods and to locate them in the social landscape of industrialising England, Thompson was asking the right kind of questions, but he was predisposed by his Marxist assumptions and Weberian methods to give ideologically slanted answers based on selected evidence from selected regions of a selected country. In particular, his inability to conceive of a popular religion that was in any sense a radical expression of popular sentiment against educated and clerical elites restricted the scope of his historical imagination and resulted in the kind of 'condescension of posterity' he so vigorously opposed in his treatment of the English working class.

The tide of Methodist historiography is slowly changing away from explanations based on social change alone, which was the intellectual fashion of the 1970s and 1980s towards a more sensitive approach to the analysis of religious motivation and to a new awareness of the importance of the *supply* side of the equation of Methodist growth.⁵⁰ Recent local studies show that the intensity of religious investment in terms of human resources matters as much to the spread of Methodism as does the right kind of economic and social climate. There is need for care here. My intention is not to shift the debate from one kind of incomplete explanation in favour of another, equally incomplete. Similarly, in one's search for a convincing framework for understanding religious motivation in Methodism's age of expansion, the argument is not for some kind of decontextualised spiritual illuminism which no historian should tolerate, but for a sensitive exploration of religious experience and motivation within the mental and social landscape of populations in different parts of the world in the period 1750-1850. It is as pointless arguing that Methodism is a hermetically sealed creed of essentially identical characteristics wherever it appeared in the world in its great age of expansion as it is foolish not to accept that in its distinctive Arminian theology, organisational structure and religious rituals, Methodism offered a peculiarly attractive and distinctive form of religion to expanding societies breaking free from old patterns of confessional control.

Whatever one says about religious motivation, and the essence of Methodism, international comparisons of Methodist growth convincingly demonstrate that some kinds of societies were more

⁵⁰See, for example W. R. Ward (ed.). *Parson and Parish in Eighteenth-Century Surrey: Replies to Bishops' Visitations*, Surrey Record Society, vol. XXXIV (Castle Arch, Guildford, 1994), pp. vii-xxii; and the forthcoming book by Frederick Dreyer entitled *The Genesis of Methodism*, McGill/Queen's University Press (1995?).

receptive to this kind of religion than others. For a religion which itself chipped away at conventional boundary lines of clericalism, gender, age and education, the most conducive environments were those interstitial and marginal areas where traditional hierarchical structures were either absent or perceived to be antithetical to new interests. From the Kingswood collieries to the American frontier and from the border counties of southern Ulster to the Welsh valleys, Methodism offered individual assurance and community disciplines. As Noll has written of the great awakening in the age of revolution, 'Evangelicalism was at its most effective in revolutionary situations because, with unusual force, it communicated enduring personal stability in the face of disorder, long-lasting eagerness for discipline, and a nearly inexhaustible hope that the personal dignity affirmed by the gospel could be communicated to the community as a whole'.⁵¹ Here is a more optimistic fusion of motivation, discipline and community than was offered by Thompson and one that does justice to a wider range of sympathy, evidence and geographical location than was available to Thompson some thirty years ago.

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⁵¹Noll, 'Revolution and the rise of Evangelical social influence', p. 130.

William Leary has updated his *Ministers Who Have Died* to the 1993 *Minutes* but has added the last stations and/or date of superannuation and in the same cover has included all who resigned after 1968 except those who were re-instated. He has also produced a list of Wesleyan Presidents 1791-1932 with the voting and added a list of those who received votes but never made the Presidential Chair. A further volume, entitled *These Sixty Years*, is a list of Presidents and Vice-Presidents 1932-92, together with all votes and here again are the Presidential and Vice-Presidential votes of those who so far have not been elected. A fourth book is a 'Hall's Circuits and Ministers' from 1981-1993, which updates his typescript volume of 'Circuits and Ministers' 1924-80. Anyone wishing to have copies of any or all of these four works must write to the author, who will advise about cost and availability. All are produced in typescript in A4 format.

Francis Asbury by John Vickers is the first of a new series of short biographies - 'People called Methodists' - produced by the Methodist Publishing House in the same format as the successful series on the Wesley family. This is an excellent introduction to a pioneer about whom British Methodists know too little. It is available from MPH at £2.35 plus postage. We look forward to other titles in this series.

A METHODIST ARTIST REDISCOVERED

H. E. Tidmarsh 1855-1939

Working in the Seminar Room of the John Rylands Library some months ago it was enjoyable to stretch the legs from time to time in order to enjoy a set of seven water colours (part of the late E.S. Lamplough's collection) which hang on the walls there. They all depict Epworth - the village, the church and the rectory - and are carefully captioned by the artist, H.E. Tidmarsh, who painted them in 1914.

My interest in these paintings was the greater through having had the good fortune to visit, on the eve of its closure, an exhibition of Tidmarsh's paintings of London streets and churches, at the Museum of London in 1992. This exhibition, part of the very extensive collection of water colours, sketches and drawings donated to the Guildhall Library by the artist a few years before his death, was a revelation. There was a real sense of gratitude (shared by many other visitors I am sure) at the 'discovery' of a water colourist of great skill and charm who seemed to have become largely forgotten, and surprise at learning from the captions that he was a lifelong Methodist and a local preacher.

It may help at this point to set out a brief biographical outline of our subject before enlarging on some aspects of his life and work.¹ Henry Edward Tidmarsh was born in Islington (London) on 7 February 1855, one of five children of Joseph Tidmarsh, who with his father and brother William, founded a London firm of carpenters and blind-makers. Henry's paternal grandfather was Charles Tidmarsh of Icomb (or Icomb), Gloucestershire, a carpenter who had migrated to London in 1828. The Tidmarsh family prospered in London, and Henry was brought up in a comfortable and staunchly Wesleyan family home at 11 Upper Hornsey Rise (now

¹I would like to thank Ralph Hyde of the Guildhall Library, London; Jean Dibben; and Christina Lawson of Woodbrooke, Selly Oak; for their kindness and help while I was writing this article; and John Tidmarsh for supplying the illustrations. Ralph Hyde's book (*The Streets of London* 1993), referred to in the text has been an invaluable source. Originally published by the Red Scorpion Company, it is now available only from the Guildhall Library, Aldermanbury, London EC2P 2EJ, at a price of £20, plus p.&p.

Hillrise Road), Holloway. A love of music, and skill in craftsmanship, were Tidmarsh family traits. At a private school in Islington Henry's artistic talents blossomed and at around the age of 18 he enrolled at the national Art Training School, South Kensington (now the Royal College of Art). He declined his father's offer of a position in the family firm in order to pursue a career as an artist which was in due course to involve much travelling, but due to an extended bachelorhood his base remained the parental home until 1902. An early commission was to paint murals for new gas company offices in Sheffield and he was to return to this art-form from time to time, while concentrating particularly on drawing and painting topographical scenes in monochrome wash or full water colour. Much of this work was carried out at first for popular journals such as the *Graphic*, the *Illustrated Evening News* and *Cassell's Magazine*. which took him throughout Britain and the continent for his material. A major commission from Cassell's was to illustrate W.A. Shaw's *Manchester Old and New* (3 vols. 1896). From the 1880s he began to record London's streets and buildings, mainly in colour; street scenes, peopled with characters from all walks of life, were to be a dominant feature of his topographical work. Over a good many years he painted a series of views of English cathedrals. Tidmarsh was a frequent exhibitor at the Royal Academy and other art shows, usually framing his own pictures with considerable skill and delicacy of decoration.

His Wesleyan allegiance led on to his recruitment as a Sunday School teacher and local preacher. He was a staunch teetotaler, and also pacifist, vegetarian and Socialist, being for many years a member of the Independent Labour Party. His social and political convictions and sympathies are evident in some of his art. He married his first cousin Ellen (Nellie) Louisa Tidmarsh in 1902; the couple had no children. They settled first in Barnet, but after a period in Icomb during World War One returned to London and a new home on Church Crescent, Muswell Hill. Here Nellie died 2 October 1932 and Harry (as he was generally known) on the 19 March 1939.²

Book Illustrator

Tidmarsh tended to speak of himself as a 'book illustrator', as for instance, in his entry in the *Local Preachers' Who's Who* (1934), probably because that was the side of his work through which he earned most money, though the phrase itself does scant justice to

²Information drawn from Hyde *op.cit.* and obituaries.

his many-sided talents and the range of his artistic output. Nevertheless in endeavouring to assess Henry Tidmarsh both as an artist and as a man, his work as an illustrator does in fact make a very good starting point, and we are fortunate in having the three large volumes of *Manchester Old and New* as a case-study.

He must have been delighted to win this major commission from Cassell's, not only for the kudos and remuneration which it would bring but also for the tremendous scope and interest of the assignment itself. The text of the work was provided by William Arthur Shaw (a product of Owens' College, Manchester and Berkeley Fellow of that College) who was beginning to make his name as an archivist and editor of state papers. In *Manchester Old and New* he unbuttoned himself to celebrate Manchester - 'the leading modern mercantile municipality, one that has led the way in, and epitomised in her history, the commercial revolution of the modern world'.³ Beginning in Roman times he quickly presses on to provide graphic surveys of the city's economic and social progress in the modern period, always with a keen awareness of people and their social setting. Henry Tidmarsh obviously relished the job of accompanying Shaw's colourful, if somewhat complacent and uncritical, text with vivid visual material, and in such profusion - 40 full page illustrations, and well over 300 smaller ones.⁴ Indeed there are few of the book's 400 pages which do not contain evidences of his work, revealing Manchester as it was before the tides of twentieth century development and demolition. Simply to browse through the pictures is sufficient to bring acute pangs of nostalgia into the heart of anyone with a feeling for old Manchester. (It is interesting that Shaw, writing one hundred years ago, expressed similar emotions: 'Today the city is entirely and satisfactorily modern, and has correspondingly become the despair of the antiquary'.⁵)

The artist's pertinacity in seeking out his subject matter is very impressive. He seems to have got everywhere and to have been able to win the trust and cooperation of those whose assistance was needful. For the Mancunians' side it ought to be said that W.A. Shaw acknowledged 'the unfailing courtesy with which he (Tidmarsh) had been everywhere received',⁶ but it seems certain that this warm-heartedness was in part at least a response to the artist's straightforward, sincere and gentle manner which is attested to by those who knew him. This opened doors into places which

³Author's note to vol. i, p.vi.

⁴Over 150 of Tidmarsh's originals are in the ownership of the Manchester City Art Gallery.

⁵Shaw vol i, p.22.

⁶Shaw vol. i, p.vi.

Tidmarsh wished to include in his survey (the Alice ward of the Manchester Infirmary; the chemical laboratory at the Grammar School, viewed from behind the teacher's bench; a velvet-teen-cutting workshop at Platt's works, Warrington, for instance) or to gain access to the upper windows of buildings from which panoramic views could be painted.

The city's major public buildings (outside and within), its churches and chapels, its commerce and its street scenes were all painted extensively as one would expect. The romance of a great Victorian city, and its vigorous social life, are strongly conveyed in all this. But Tidmarsh was anxious to show also the earthier side of things - the hard manual work on which the life of the city depended, the masses of ordinary people who thronged its streets, the cheek by jowl proximity of wealth and poverty, of culture and ugliness. So we find very unromantic views included in his survey - workmen drawing coke from the furnaces at the Rochdale Road Gasworks, a slum view entitled 'Among the lapsed masses, Long Millgate', road repairs in Princess Street, a dark scene of crowded mills and smoky chimneys seen from London Road Station, the river Irwell in all its murky horror and a corporation cleansing cart about its nocturnal duties.

Social realism in artistic journalism was a familiar feature of the pictorial weeklies for which Tidmarsh worked,⁷ but in his case (judging from his Manchester work) it seems also to represent his own outlook and convictions. Ralph Hyde suggests the possibility that Tidmarsh's experiences in Manchester confirmed him in his Socialist inclinations, and it may well be that his membership of the Independent Labour Party dated from this time. The ILP had been born in Bradford early in 1893, with Keir Hardie as a principal inspirer. Manchester quickly became one of its strongest centres due in large part to the journalistic activities in that city of Robert Blatchford, editor of the Socialist newspaper the *Clarion*, and author of one of the most influential Socialist tracts ever written, *Merrie England*, which appeared first in the *Clarion* before being published separately in 1893. 'A year before its issue there were not 500 Socialists in Lancashire; twelve months afterwards there were 50,000,' wrote A.M. Thompson.⁸ Their Socialism was not, of course, revolutionary Marxism, but that peculiarly British compound made up from the teachings of Ruskin and Morris, the ethics of Jesus, working class commonsense, and a longing (in the

⁷Simon House *Dictionary of British Book Illustrators and Caricaturists 1800-1914* (1978) pp.74ff. and 152f.

⁸R. Blatchford *Merrie England* Journeymen Press edition, (1977), foreword; quoting from the preface to Thompson's biography of Blatchford.

hearts of the common people) for fair play in social and economic matters.

Although *Manchester Old and New* was published in 1896 the text and illustrations were completed at least two years before. This means that H.E. Tidmarsh was working in Manchester while the impact of the ideas of Blatchford and the ILP were at their height in the city and it is safe to conclude that he was very receptive to them. Some of his Manchester illustrations help to support this. One even includes a *Clarion* poster announcing a coal workers' strike. This might be no more than faithful 'graphic journalism' but carries extra significance in that the poster is attached to the wall of the cathedral, and is part of a drawing showing three poor sales-folk all peddling their wares literally 'Under the Cathedral Walls', which is his own title. The context for the illustration is a long account of the cathedral (formerly Manchester parish church) accompanied by fine drawings of its venerable structure and of an array of religious worthies and dignitaries. The sharp contrast between all this and 'Under the Cathedral Walls' seems to be deliberately intended. In a later drawing Tidmarsh shows a cartload of boys from a Ragged School arriving for a day out at Boggart Hole Clough, a popular open air spot on the outskirts of northern Manchester, but well within view of the mill chimneys of Blackley. That Tidmarsh should have noted this incident at all and thought it worthy of reproducing is itself indicative both of his observant eye and his eagerness to show glimpses of the life of the disadvantaged folk of Manchester. An additional point of interest however is that Boggart Hole Clough was at that very time a popular and frequently used venue for large open-air gatherings organised by the ILP, a fact of which the artist cannot have been unaware.⁹

Without stretching conjecture too far it does seem reasonable to conclude that Tidmarsh was imparting a social and political 'message' into some of his illustrations, if in a somewhat oblique fashion. Cassell's of course would not have tolerated blatant Socialism in his work for *Manchester Old and New* but it is not difficult to detect where his sympathies lie. His vignettes of poor folk for instance represent much sensitivity and even love. And while in most of the illustrations he appears content to present the rich diversity and social mix of city life, ironic and indeed poignant contrasts are frequently to be found in the scenes he portrays. So, for instance in a picture of the bookstalls in the Shudehill Market a top-hatted gentleman stands lost in a volume he has just purchased while poor bare-footed children scrabble on the ground in front of

⁹Ian McLean *Keir Hardie* (1975), pp.68-9.

him in search of some pickings; an idyllic view of Alderley Edge is found not far from an equally broad but very different landscape showing the Crumpsall Workhouse viewed from Harpurhey cemetery; and an interior view of St. John's Deansgate has a single figure in the church - a poor woman washing the floor.

Tidmarsh's coverage of churches and chapels is particularly thorough. In addition to the cathedral he has illustrations of sixteen parish churches, and over twenty nonconformist chapels, plus a synagogue and one or two Roman Catholic churches. A good number of these are no longer standing so that his portrayals, often including streetscape settings, are of special interest. For instance St. James, a fine classical church, is shown surrounded by later warehouses, with a turbaned oriental talking shop with a rotund Mancunian businessman in the foreground. There are a number of fine interior views of churches and chapels which may in some cases be unique or rare survivals - the old Cross Street Unitarian Chapel for instance in volume 3, and in volume 2 a full-page plate of the inside of a packed Wesleyan Central Hall on Oldham Street, with a Saturday night gathering in full swing.¹⁰

This last example, together with many other illustrations in *Manchester Old and New* has the appearance of having been drawn on the spot. This gives them the freshness and immediacy of sketches, while at the same time the artist's skill is such that all essential detail is faithfully portrayed. All illustrations in the three Manchester volumes are in black and white, some being line drawings, but the majority painted in monochrome wash with the addition of a certain amount of body colour (opaque white) to add effect to the picture where necessary. Tidmarsh was able to use this technique to considerable effect both for buildings and people and it is his skill in setting finely drawn buildings against a busy foreground full of human activity which gives his work its undeniable impact and interest. We ought not to overlook in all this the difficulties of drawing or painting in the open air where Tidmarsh had to endure the vagaries of the weather, the bustle of the streets, and the curiosity of onlookers. There is a nice memory of him at work in this way in London: 'sketching in Cheapside with his sketch-board slung round his neck and his paint box on a tray in front of him, while cart horses and motor buses sprayed him with mud as they rumbled past him in the rain!'¹¹ Manchester weather no doubt posed its own particular problems in this respect. A different kind of open-air hazard in Manchester was presented by a suspicious

¹⁰The illustration is reproduced in *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain* ed. R. Davies, A.R. George, G. Rupp, vol. iv, (1988), p.594.

¹¹Hyde, p.7.

jeweller who resented Henry Tidmarsh sketching in the street outside his shop. When the artist refused to go away a policeman was called and he was (briefly) arrested!¹²

Despite Henry Tidmarsh's Wesleyan allegiance, he does not appear to have done illustrative work for Methodist publications. None of the many illustrations, for instance, in the large volume entitled *Wesley His Own Biographer*, published by the Wesleyan Book Room in 1891, are by him, though other known illustrators for the weeklies such as Charles Tressider, Walter Osborne, T.E. Macklin, E Prater and Alfred Quinton are represented, the latter identifiable by his monogram.¹³ Nor was he employed for the pictures in *The Pageantry of Methodist Union* (1936). In these two volumes the illustrations (other than photographs) are reproduced as engravings. For *Manchester Old and New* Tidmarsh's drawings were reproduced by new photographic line-block and half-tone techniques which cut out the engraving process, with beneficial results.

Water Colour Painter

It does not seem too far from the truth to conclude that Henry Tidmarsh illustrated books and magazines for money, but painted water colours for the sheer love of it. If a purchaser could be found, well and good, but the bulk of his painting seems to have been done as a response to his own delight in scenery, architecture and townscape, to his love of travel, and above all to the consuming desire in the second half of his life to paint the streets, buildings, churches and people of London itself. Pictures that were painted for pleasure were given away with equal generosity, some to individual friends and relatives, others to institutions, especially to the Guildhall Library (Corporation of London) which became the recipient of 176 paintings of London in 1932. Yet at his death in 1939 the Tidmarsh home at Muswell Hill was discovered to be filled with hundreds more drawings and paintings many of which were subsequently donated to other institutions including the National Library of Wales and the Central Library, Islington which received 189 continental sketches.

With such an abundant output it is strange that Henry Tidmarsh remained, as an artist, in some obscurity. An exhibition of his London paintings at the Guildhall Art Gallery in 1934 inspired the *Times* reviewer to conclude that 'There can be few pictures, be they oil or water-colour, which for accuracy of representation, quality of

¹²From the reminiscences of Henry Tidmarsh by his niece Dorothy Hallett. Copies made available to me by Ralph Hyde and Jean Dibben.

¹³House, p.510ff.

colouring, and sensitiveness to the relationship between bricks or stone and the effect of light or shadow, can compare with these'.¹⁴ Yet despite this, Tidmarsh's reputation was not sustained, and recent dictionaries of British artists have offered him the briefest of entries, or omitted him altogether. Thus it was that the 1992 exhibition of his paintings of London came as such a revelation both in this country and in the U.S.A. where it was first shown in Missouri, in the undercroft of St. Mary Aldermanbury, a Wren church rebuilt on the campus of Westminster College, Fulton, after being severely damaged in World War II. And just as *Manchester Old and New* provides us with material to assess Tidmarsh as an illustrator, so the splendid book based on the exhibition (*The Streets of London 1880-1928: Evocative Watercolours by H.E. Tidmarsh* (1993) introduced and captioned by Ralph Hyde of the Guildhall Library) gives us a 'source-book' for the appreciation of Tidmarsh as a water-colour painter. Apart from some excellent monochrome 'wash-drawings' of the Guildhall Library and Museum, of the Royal Naval College, Greenwich, and of some of the graves at Bunhill Fields, virtually all the illustrations in this volume are in colour, very faithfully reproduced. The book's title is slightly misleading in that the paintings in the book are not only of London's streets, but also of churches (especially those designed by Wren) and of wide, exhilarating panoramic views, usually including the Thames. A particularly valuable feature of Ralph Hyde's editorial work is the inclusion of appropriate sections of large-scale ordnance survey plans, approximating in date to the pictures to which they are adjoined and showing the location of the buildings included in them.

In the introduction there are a few non-London pictures - views of Switzerland and Italy, and of two English cathedrals - reminding us of Tidmarsh's extensive painting travels both at home and abroad, from the 1880s onwards. There is a pleasant reference to these in the diary of Helen McKenny, daughter of the Rev John McKenny the minister of Wesley's Chapel, London, 1885-88, and a friend of Henry Tidmarsh:

September 14 (1887): At tea-time our artist friend Henry Tidmarsh dropped in looking much improved. Travel does make people entertaining! He has been 10 months on the continent, roaming about. He was in Mentone during the earthquake - there for a fortnight - and actually made sketches of the ruins while people were screaming with fright around. He met Mr Spurgeon who was most friendly and went to his rooms.... At Rome he saw a good deal of the Salvation Army work which is wonderfully successful there.¹⁵

¹⁴Hyde, pp.12-13.

¹⁵*A City Road Diary* by Helen McKenny, ed. A. Binney and J.A. Vickers, (1978), pp.72-3.

A year or so earlier Helen's diary records a visit by Tidmarsh to City Road to make sketches of Wesley's House and Chapel for the *Graphic*. Some time before this he had printed some topographical views of the outskirts of London but the city itself did not yet engage his interest in a major way. However from the mid-1890s, with his Manchester experience behind him, he began in earnest to record the topography of London in a series of watercolour paintings that are rich in interest, marvellously authentic, and deeply satisfying as works of art.

These paintings include some of the most satisfying representations of churches I have ever seen. Of particular interest to Methodist readers is the very attractive painting of Wesley's Chapel and House (c.1900), and a group of broader panoramic views around Westminster which include the newly built Methodist Central Hall. One such view was in fact painted from the dome of the Central Hall, but by a feat of imagination Tidmarsh contrived to include the dome in the left foreground, as though the artist had been suspended in space somewhere beyond it!

These are highly finished pictures, obviously based on very careful drawings, and painted in the studio. But here and there in *The Streets of London* are quickly painted sketches, done in the open air, in some cases as preliminaries to the more finished pictures that would grow from them. These, and Tidmarsh's small experimental sketches of a variety of horse drawn vehicles, are reminiscent of the methods of John Constable when painting the Stour valley a century or more earlier, and prompt the thought that Henry Tidmarsh might almost be considered as the Constable of the English urban scene, at least with regard to his London paintings.

In these pictures Tidmarsh was not deliberately depicting the social life and character of the capital as he had done for Manchester. Rather, in these London paintings, he portrays the buildings he himself loved, and which formed an unforgettable part of the architectural character of the city. The pictures do not therefore carry the same sense of being social documents as do the illustrations for *Manchester Old and New*. Their principal purpose is to represent as faithfully as possible the buildings of London rather than the people of London. But being the person he was, Tidmarsh nevertheless fills in the foregrounds of most of the paintings with human activity appropriate to the setting, whether it be a couple of professional men chatting in a quiet ecclesiastical backwater, or the roar and bustle of the crowds in a principal city thoroughfare. His ability to convey a sense of life and movement, of pressing crowds and the rush of traffic, is extraordinary. Yet the people in his pictures do not remain anonymous. They include genuine characters

of very specific class and social station and one could almost write a curriculum vitae for many of them. The artist seems to have found each of them unique and interesting, and his responses are sensitive and affectionate, perhaps most of all to children. In the foreground of one picture showing St. Bride's Fleet Street from the quietness of Bride Lane, there stand two errand boys, and a girl holding up her doll, posing so that the artist could include them in his painting which he was obviously very happy to do.

Works of reference on British artists show that Tidmarsh had watercolour paintings hung at a variety of exhibitions between 1880 and 1918, twenty at the Royal Academy, six at the Royal Institute of Painters in Watercolours, four at the Dudley Gallery, three at the Royal Society of British Artists and one each at shows in Manchester and Birmingham. His R.A. paintings were (from 1896) primarily of London. It is interesting that one of the sources for this information shows another R.A. exhibitor, W.H.Y. Titcomb (1858-1930) submitting pictures for display in the period 1887-1893 from the Tidmarsh family address - 11 Upper Hornsey Rise, Holloway.* It was during this period that Titcomb exhibited his fine and well known painting of Primitive Methodists within the chapel at St. Ives where he was then living, and one is tempted to wonder whether his association with the Tidmarsh family had prompted this choice of a Methodist subject. Whether he lodged for part of the year with the Tidmarshes, or simply used their home as a convenient base for London exhibition purposes, is not clear.

Faith and Conscience

A streak of stubbornness in matters of principle ran through the Tidmarsh family. Henry's grandfather Charles, according to family tradition, lost his post as an estate carpenter in Icomb because of his persistent allegiance to Wesleyanism. The family's removal to London did nothing to lessen this allegiance, and the young Henry was reared, with his brothers and sisters, in an orderly Wesleyan regime of Sunday School, chapel attendance, teetotalism, sabbatarianism and all the usual disciplines of a devout evangelical family. The strictness of the regime was tempered however by certain middle class comforts, by kindness and a sense of fun within the family and by the Tidmarshes' love of music and appreciation of beauty in craftsmanship and art.

Henry Tidmarsh's character shows an interesting mixture of those various elements, with additions peculiar to himself. He was

*A. Graves *The Royal Academy of Arts A complete dictionary of contributors and their work 1769-1904*, 4 vols. (1905/1970), entry under Titcomb.

convinced of the value of Sunday Schools and taught in them for many years. From 1889 he was a local preacher and was enthusiastic enough to preach the Gospel on the steps of the old Archway Methodist Chapel after service on a Sunday evening. He also remained all his life a teetotaler. However, to these predictable commitments he added some surprising new ones, including vegetarianism, pacifism and socialism, surprising and even shocking other members of his family by the stubborn determination with which he was prepared to uphold them.

This was particularly so with regard to pacifism, as revealed by the reminiscences of his niece Dorothy Hallett:

I was staying at Hornsey Rise doing the housekeeping at the beginning of the war and Uncle Henry expressed such strong opposition to the war at breakfast that I could hardly stay in the room. Then when we were walking along St. John's Road together we met the wounded soldiers from the big workhouse turned into a hospital, and he said they were sent out in their bright blue suits, white shirts and red ties and khaki caps "to advertise war". I was so angry I turned round and left him... soon after he and Aunt Nellie went to Icomb and stayed there for the duration .

Before the return to Icomb, Henry and Nellie spent several months early in 1915, at Woodbrooke, the Quaker adult college at Selly Oak. Nellie herself wrote an account of this episode, part of which reads as follows:

All went well until the terrible war broke out, and then indeed our beautiful England seemed to become a wilderness and we ourselves lonely wanderers, and the waters of Marah were bitter indeed. Then at last came Cambridge and the Peace Conference, and we found delightful fellowship, and then it was that the star of Woodbrooke loomed as a tiny gleam on the distant horizon.¹⁷

At Woodbrooke the pair shared fully in the life of the college community and attended the usual teaching programme, sitting at the feet of Rendel Harris, H.G. Wood, R.A. Aytoun and other lecturers on a variety of Biblical, theological, philosophical and historical themes. There seems to be no evidence that Henry Tidmarsh produced any paintings at Selly Oak, but without doubt he and his wife saw Woodbrooke, especially within the context of the Great War, as an oasis in the desert, and found much mental and spiritu-

¹⁷Information from the Woodbrooke Archives provided by Christina Lawson, the librarian. It was a photograph loaned by Jean Dibben which provided the clue to the Tidmarshes' stay at Woodbrooke.

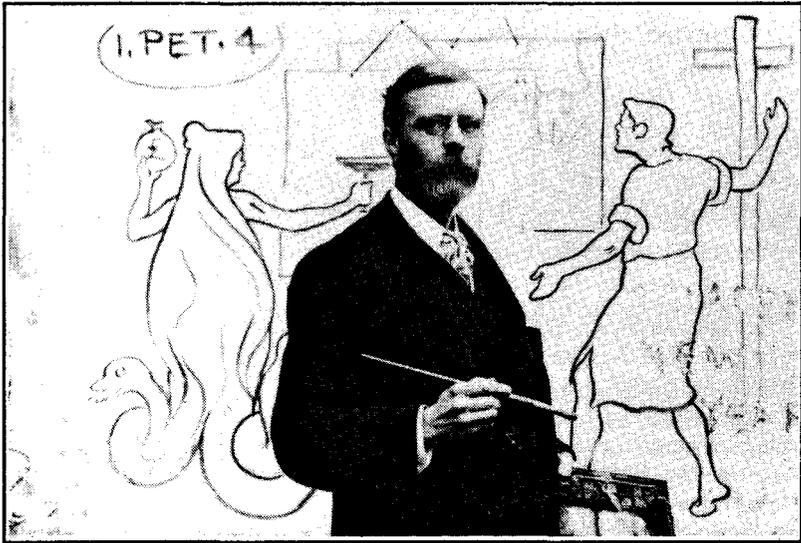
al refreshment there. 'Thank God for Woodbrooke' wrote Nellie at the end of their stay. Their admiration for the Society of Friends was much strengthened by this experience and it is not surprising that both Nellie's and Henry's funeral services (in 1932 and 1939), though conducted by the Archway Methodist minister, took place in the Muswell Hill Quaker Meeting House which (while remaining Methodists) they had frequently attended in their latter years.

Art and religion

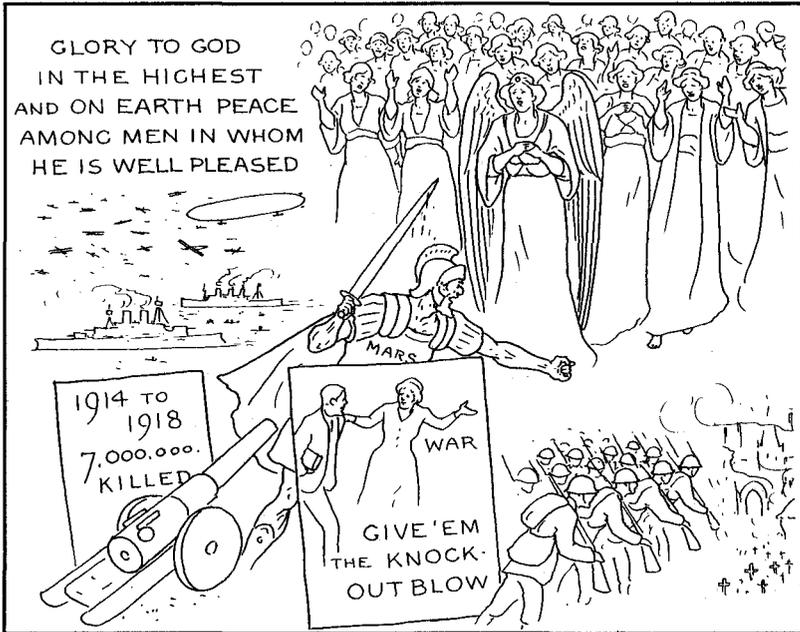
Art was as much Tidmarsh's hobby as his profession, and wherever possible he used his artistic skills in connection with his church commitments, believing strongly in the value of graphic representation as a teaching aid. His niece, Dorothy Hallett, recalls him 'sitting at the Sunday dinner table with a large pad, water and black paint, hastily finishing the pictures which illustrated his Sunday lessons. I also remember larger work on a blackboard with which he illustrated talks to the whole large Sunday School. He actually worked on these as he talked....that certainly kept the attention'.

In two of the Methodist churches with which he was most associated, High Barnet and Archway, he painted murals, though sadly in neither case have they survived. A photograph however shows part of one of the High Barnet frescoes, which were on the theme of the life and teaching of Jesus.¹⁸ This particular section, drawn in bold outline, depicts the Christian's call to renounce the temptations of the flesh, on the basis of the fourth chapter of the first epistle of Peter. It seems that Tidmarsh had long wanted to decorate the Sunday School walls at Archway in some similar fashion but the walls of the old underground school were 'of impossible brick and hands off to decorators'. In the mid-1930s the Archway church was rebuilt as a Central Hall and Tidmarsh now had his opportunity, and began by decorating the walls of the intermediate school-room with a series of sixteen panels on the theme of discipleship, with additional paintings between the windows of a selected group of great disciples through the ages - Paul, Augustine, Francis, Fox, Bunyan, Wesley and Booth. A contemporary account describes him at work, 'in an upper room, mounted on a trestle between ladders, engaged in decorating the frieze of that particular room with Biblical scenes and incidents'. The beginners' room was later decorated with fourteen panels on the life of Christ. It is regrettable that

¹⁸Hyde, p.viii., and reproduced in this article from a copy supplied by John Tidmarsh.



Henry Tidmarsh at work on one of his sepia frescoes at High Barnet Methodist Church.



One of Henry Tidmarsh's 'Gospel Narrative Cards' intended for publication for use in Sunday Schools. He wrote of them: 'A picture that suggests many things is often better than a highly finished product'.

these no longer exist. The surviving photograph of the Barnet frescoes (see illustration) indicates a bold and challenging presentation of the Social Gospel, as one would expect from someone with Henry Tidmarsh's convictions.

What have survived however are sets of 'Gospel Narrative Cards' prepared by Tidmarsh with an eye to publication as teaching aids for Sunday Schools (see illustration).¹⁹

Each card consists of outline drawings illustrating an incident or passage from the Gospels of St. Mark and St. Luke, with the essential text printed above or below the illustrations which were intended to be coloured in by the children using them. Tidmarsh was not reluctant to impart to these cards (which he is said to have regarded very seriously) his own Christian Socialist and pacifist views. These are illustrated very vividly on a card which contrasts a choir of angels singing 'Glory to God in the highest and peace among men' with the God Mars, in Roman military uniform hailing a company of modern troops going into battle. Two other vignettes within the picture show first 'War', dressed as a woman, urging a man to recruit and help to 'Give 'em a knock-out blow'; and second the stark figure of the 7,000,000 deaths in the 1914-18 conflict. This is strong meat, and reveals as clearly as anything else in Henry Tidmarsh's output the depth and strength of his convictions, and the quite outspoken manner with which he was prepared to express them and teach them.

There are without doubt some puzzling (but fascinating) contradictions within the person of Henry Tidmarsh: the quiet man of childlike faith who at the same time held and openly taught very radical views on politics and war; the neat, demure artist who with his younger relatives would cycle down Hampstead Lane with his hands off the handle bars and his feet on them, and encourage them to do the same (to the subsequent outrage of their parents!); the fine topographical painter who was also so fascinated by people that wherever possible he brought them into his paintings. 'The most interesting relative I had' says Dorothy Hallett. And certainly a very interesting Methodist whose life and work it is good to have had restored to our knowledge and appreciation.

GEOFFREY E. MILBURN

(Geoffrey Milburn taught History and Victorian Studies at Sunderland Polytechnic (now the University of Sunderland). He is editor, with Margaret Batty, of the forthcoming book on the history of Methodist local preaching due for publication in 1996.)

¹⁹Ibid, p.11.

Annual Meeting and Lecture

This was held at the Convent of the Little Sisters of the Poor, formerly Wesley College, Headingley, Leeds, on Monday 27 June 1994. The Yorkshire Branch of the WHS hosted the members' Tea, which was prepared by the Little Sisters and our appreciation and thanks were expressed by our President, the Rev A. Raymond George. As a former Principal of Wesley College, it was appropriate that Raymond George was again able to take the chair at the ensuing Annual Meeting, one of the best-attended of recent years. In addition to routine matters, there was a lively debate on a proposal to change the name of the society to the 'Methodist Historical Society'. In the event, the proposal was narrowly defeated. An encouraging report was given of the Society's Library, now well established in its new home at Westminster College, Oxford. It was agreed to launch an appeal for £10,000 to match funds being provided by the College for an extension to the library building.

The Conference Secretary, the Rev Colin Smith, reported that the next WHS Conference would be held in Manchester in 1996 in the former Hartley-Victoria College. The Society would be supporting the 1995 ADH-SCL conference in Birmingham (see the Calendar below), at which Dr Dorothy Graham would be one of the speakers. Colin Dews and Peter Forsaith were thanked for their work in mounting the historical exhibition at Oxford Place. Following the Annual Meeting members had an opportunity to enjoy the sunshine in the Convent gardens before gathering in the chapel to hear the 1994 WHS Lecture by Professor David Hempton. The Rev A. Raymond George introduced the chairman, Dr Edward Royle and thanked the convent authorities for their gracious hospitality. The Lecture is printed in this issue of *Proceedings*.

E.A.R.

Calendar

May 9-11 1995. The Wesley Fellowship Celebration Conference at Cliff College, Sheffield. Cost: £45 full board. Further information and booking form from Paul Taylor, Cherry Tree Cottage, Glaston Park, Glaston, Oakham, LE15 9BW, Tel: 0572 821351.

July 28-30 1995. The Association of Denominational Historical Societies and Cognate Libraries Conference at Westhill College, Birmingham. Cost: £95 full board. Theme: 'Protestant Nonconformists, "Strangers" and the West Midlands'. Further information from the Rev Professor Alan P.F. Sell, The United Theological College, Aberystwyth, SY23 2LT. Tel: 0970 624574.

WESLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY — FINANCIAL STATEMENTS, 1993

Income and Expenditure Account for the Year ended 31st December 1993	Balance Sheet as at 31st December 1993	Notes to the Accounts
INCOME.	ASSETS EMPLOYED (Note 2)	1—SUBSCRIPTIONS
£	£	£ £
Subscriptions (Note 1) 4,210	£200 3½% War Stock (at cost) (Note 3) 225	Unexpired Subscriptions at 1st January 1993—
Donations 94	Current Assets—	Ordinary Members ... 3,789
Irish Branch 535	Sundry Debtors ... 843	Life Members (estimated) 250
Sales of <i>Proceedings</i> (back numbers) 38	Income Tax recoverable 1,134	4,039
„ other Publications, etc. ... 281	Leeds & Holbeck Bld. Soc. 1,412	Received during year* 5,750
Library—Tickets, Donations, Sales 9	T.S.B.—Registrar ... 2,256	Income Tax recoverable 100
Annual Lecture Collection (½-share) 35	„ —Conference Sec. 1,688	9,889
Advertisements 96	Midland Bank (Current A/c) 2,157	Less Unexpired Subscriptions at 31st December—
Bank Interest 93	Cash in hand—Treasurer 62	Ordinary Members ... 5,454
War Stock Dividend 8	„ „ —Librarian 200	Life Members (estimated) 225
5,399	9,752	5,679
EXPENDITURE.	Current Liabilities—	£4,210
£	Sundry Creditors ... 682	
<i>Proceedings</i> and distribution 3,143	Subscript'ns paid in advance 5,679	
Other Printing 479	6,361	
Library 873	Net Current Assets 3,391	
Annual Lecture 40	£3,616	
World Methodist Historical Soc. 66	REPRESENTED BY	
Administration Expenses 647	Balance at 1st January 1993 ... 2,016	
Insurances 35	Less Excess Expenditure over Income 88	
Advertising 159	1,928	
Subscriptions and Donations 45	Conference Fund Surplus ... 1,688	
5,487	(Signed) RALPH WILKINSON, £3,616	
Excess of Expenditure over Income £88	<i>Honorary Treasurer.</i>	
		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 ... £78

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 1993, and of its overall surplus for the year then ended.

Barron & Barron,
Bathurst House, 86, Micklegate, York, 16th May 1994.

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

BOOK REVIEWS

Faith and Faction by W.R. Ward (Epworth Press, 1993, pp.11, 404, £25.00. ISBN: 0 7162 0490 8)

This collection of twenty-two papers, dating from the past two decades and reprinted from a variety of periodicals, brings together a wealth of material not readily accessible. Its portmanteau title reflects the diversity of subject matter; but no one familiar with Professor Ward's books will be surprised that the underlying and unifying theme is the interaction of secular and religious movements. Ecclesiastical history (which the author puckishly declares to have more claim than political economy to being 'the dismal science') has never been more firmly set in its political and cultural context. Nor has parochialism ever been less in evidence than here. 'Some light may be cast on this dark matter [of nineteenth-century secularization and its effect on the Church's mission] by both lengthening and broadening the historical perspective in which it is discussed.' (p.50) And having said as much, that is just what the author does for us again and again on a number of topics.

In delineating the international scope of the eighteenth-century revival, Dr. Ward ranges throughout continental Europe and across the Atlantic, with an encyclopaedic knowledge and a depth of perception already familiar from his other writing, making few concessions to his readers. But no one would expect these papers to be easy reading: they are caviare for the general, not pap for the plebs. When Dr. Ward says, 'Of course,' it is time for most of us to duck below the parapet. Whole articles are sometimes concentrated into a sentence or two, leaving the reader to unpack and substantiate the meaning for himself. For example: 'The development of a high [Wesleyan] doctrine of the ministry to support an active central administration, in England, drove together the two causes of religious democracy and local rights. The strains to which American Methodism was subjected tended to drive them apart.' (p.243)

No easy read, then. But again and again we are rewarded with a pregnant comment that demands the rethinking of our preconceptions and interpretations. 'John Wesley, with a fine sense of impartiality, balanced the irritation he gave the bishops by interfering in other men's parishes, by the irritation he gave nonconformists by rebaptizing dissenters' (p.191). The nineteenth-century transformation of the role of the Anglican clergy was 'from the crass amateurism of their past to the professional amateurism of their new status' (p.52). 'Christian Socialism was indeed the politics of a church losing contact with the practical exercise of authority'; while, at the same time, 'Social Christianity... was mostly the politics of religious establishments' (pp.312, 314). And embedded in the scholarship are finely etched thumb-nail sketches: of Zinzendorf 'restoring Christianity as a cheerful religion after the churches had devoted a century to putting the flock through the mangle of [Lutheran] Orthodoxy' (p.146); of Francis Asbury as 'an entrepreneur in religion, a man who perceived a market to be exploited' (p.241); and of Dwight L. Moody, whose 'fatal heart attack

owed more to his twenty stone of modish corpulence, than to the stress of attempting the conversion of the world in his generation' (p.51).

Members of this Society will be particularly interested in the third of Dr. Ward's five sections, dealing specifically with aspects of Methodism; but they should not ignore the evidence presented in many of the other papers that Methodism was no isolated phenomenon. In particular, we have Dr. Ward's Wesley Historical Society lecture of 1979 (regrettably, still not clearly identified as such), which explores the European background to the Methodist revival in Britain. A relatively lightweight paper on 'John Wesley, Traveller' for some reason *follows* one on 'The Legacy of John Wesley' in which, as in the two chapters that follow, post-1791 developments are examined. Political factors affecting the development of Methodism are explored, beginning with the claim that 'The earliest Methodism seems to have been related to the opposition to Walpole' (p.89).

No one takes issue lightly with the quality of scholarship patent throughout this book and only here and there do I find a detail that may be challenged. I am not convinced from my own reading of such contemporary sources as the Pawson correspondence that in the 1790s the Terror in revolutionary France was the main cause of what Dr. Ward calls 'an uncontrollable clamour for separation' from the Established Church and the Plan of Pacification (p.237). Nor would I dismiss Thomas Coke quite so scathingly, as a simpleton who 'never grew up' and 'had no conception of the elaborate logistics of modern missions' (pp.231, 239, 246). And (to descend to trivia) Methodist Union did not take place in 1933 (p. 192). Other typos are very few, the only ones that materially affect the sense being 'subsistence' for 'substance' on p.141 and 'et' for 'est' on p.103. There is a detailed index, marred only by the all-too-common blemish of long strings of undifferentiated page references under such key entries as 'America', 'Methodism' and 'Wesley, John'.

JOHN A. VICKERS

Revival and Religion since 1700: Essays for John Walsh by Jane Garnett and Colin Matthew (eds.) (Hambledon Press, 1993, pp.330, ISBN: 1 85285 093 0)

John Walsh, fellow of Jesus College, Oxford, and member of the Wesley Memorial Church, has been at the forefront of teaching and research in eighteenth and nineteenth century British religious history for over 30 years. Recently retired, his colleagues and former research students have honoured him with the publication of this major series of essays, dealing with such subjects as 'Wesley and the Counter-Reformation' by Eamon Duffy, 'Architects in Connexion : Four Methodist Generations (the Pocock family)' by Clyde Binfield and 'Charity, Custom and Humanity : Changing attitudes towards the poor in Eighteenth-Century England' by Deborah Valenze, as well as essays by Reg Ward, Richard Carwardine and David Thompson on aspects of the Evangelical Revival and Christian Socialism. Such themes illustrate the importance of John Walsh's work in encouraging religious historians to investigate the social context of religious movements and par-

ticularly in seeing the links between Methodist, Anglican and Dissenting elements. The large turnout at the formal launch of the book in the Old Library of Wadham College, Oxford was a tribute to his friendship with and stimulating supervision of, two generations of ecclesiastical historians. In his retirement, we expect to see the fruits of much of his work on Methodist attitudes to poverty and more besides.

T.A. MACQUIBAN

SHORTER NOTICES

Adam Clarke, Methodism's First Old Testament Scholar by Stephen B Dawes (Cornish Methodist Historical Association, 1994. pp36.£1.50.ISBN 0 9509323 7X).

In this significant essay Stephen Dawes sets himself a difficult interpretive task. How did Adam Clarke's O.T. Commentary differ significantly from similar works circulating in his day? Why, when it is undoubtedly 'pre-critical', did Professor Rogerson describe it as 'astonishingly open'? The writer carefully examines Clarke on the Psalms, on Isaiah, on the Pentateuch and what he has to say about the Authorised Version, and then refers to some Methodist reactions to the Commentary. He concludes, daringly, that the work is best described as 'proto-critical' and is the forerunner of Moulton and Peake. It would be interesting to discover from Mr Dawes or someone with his expertise whether Clarke's New Testament Commentary has a similar pioneering feel.

IAN SELLERS

Caleb's Letters by Keith Fielden (privately published, 1993, pp.84, £4.95. ISBN: 0 9521508 0 8. Obtainable from the author at 81 De Bohun Avenue, London, N14 4PZ)

This is a collection of fifty letters written between 1799 and 1814 by Caleb Fielden of Todmorden, West Yorkshire, to his son Joshua, a Wesleyan itinerant. The letters contain much of Methodist interest, especially as regards the Todmorden circuit. There are references to the Cookites and some of those lay-ministerial tensions recently noted by Dr Margaret Batty. The book would be improved by explanatory footnotes, an index and biographical details about Joshua.

D C DEWS

Irish Church Records by James G. Ryan (ed.) (Dublin: Flyleaf Press, 1992, pp.207, Ir£24.00. ISBN: 0 9508466 4 3)

This is rather expensive but well-produced handbook for genealogists, consisting of sections by various authors. It includes an excellent essay on Methodist records by Marion Kelly, the archivist of the Irish WHS. This is thorough, clear (not least on the divisions of Methodism) and illuminating, partly because of the fascinating illustrations, which include a page of a Dublin class list of 1785 in Wesley's own hand. It also has a list of current societies and their District/Circuit reference numbers, a vital finding aid for historians as well as genealogists. There a few minor corrections: 'Armenian' should read 'Arminian'; William Leary is no longer British Connexional Archivist, and other books useful for Irish Methodist genealogy include the various Methodist *Who's Whos*, all of which have some (1933 most) Irish ministers and laymen. Hill's Arrangement comes in many editions and does not include those ministers who left or the earliest preachers, many of whom can be found in Ken Garlick's *Mr Wesley's Preachers* or in R H Gallagher's *Pioneer Preachers of Irish Methodism*.

This reviewer found the general introduction (by Mr Ryan) unsatisfactory. He refers to denominations as 'religions' and assumes that race in Ireland always equals religion, ie Gaelic Irish were always Catholic. Methodists know that while that is usually the case there were many examples of Catholic converts to Methodism, for example Thomas Walsh, Mathias Joyce and John Bredin. The section on the Huguenots was interesting and showed how important they were for Wesley in the eighteenth century. The book as a whole is very useful for those with Irish ancestry.

JOHN H. LENTON

NOTES AND QUERIES

1478. THE RE-DEDICATION OF RAITHBY CHAPEL

On Saturday 28 May 1994 the newly renovated chapel at Raithby by Spilsby was re-dedicated by the President of the Conference, the Rev Brian Beck MA BA.

The superintendent minister of the Spilsby Circuit, the Rev Alan J Robson, began the service by quoting from Wesley's *Journal* - first the entry for 3 July 1788 in which Wesley referred to Raithby as 'an earthly paradise', then that for 5 July 1779 when he recorded, 'The shell of Mr Brackenbury's house was just finished, near which he built a little chapel. It was quickly filled with deeply serious hearers. I was much comforted among them...' Mr Robin Brackenbury then paid a tribute to the late Terence Leach whose researches and enthusiasm did so much to make better known both Raithby and Robert Carr Brackenbury, and also the need for restoration of the chapel. The congregation included Terence Leach's widow, Joyce, and the present owners of Raithby Hall, Mr and Mrs Hunter, who provided tea in the Hall which is now a nursing and residen-

tial home for the elderly.

The renovations cost about £38,000 and were achieved through a grant from English Heritage of 80% of the cost, substantial help from the Property Division of the Methodist Church, and funds raised locally and through an appeal which was launched last year. It is interesting to compare these costs with those of the last renovation of the chapel in 1936 when, we are told, the work cost over £90, including the installation of electric heating and lighting.

The cost of the present renovations (which included re-building the roof and replacing the roof timbers, re-pointing, redecoration, and other refurbishing work) has been largely met, but funds are still needed for the continuing witness in Raithby. A new trust is being formed, and the Rev. Alan Robson is keen to see the chapel used more both for workshop and for other events and tentative plans are already being made. One highlight of these activities will be the annual Brackenbury Memorial Lecture which next year, on Saturday 8 July 1995, will be on a Tennyson theme.

If you are ever near Raithby do go and see the transformation of the chapel, and experience its calming atmosphere; a key to the building is always available on request at the Raithby Hall Nursing Home.

J. S. ENGLISH

1479. PECKHAM AND NUNHEAD METHODISM

For *Peckham and Nunhead Churches*, which will be published next year, I am keen to receive any available information on the United Methodist Free Church in Bellenden Road (foundation stones laid on 18 November 1884); the Primitive Methodist Chapel in Sumner Road (1874); Hatcham Wesleyan Mission in Tustin Street; Waverley Park Methodist New Connexion Church in Ivydale Road (foundation stones laid on 30 November 1895) and the United Methodist Free Church in Hill Street (1854).

JOHN D. BEASLEY

6 Everthorpe Road, Peckham, LONDON SE15 4DA

1480. J. E. RATTENBURY AND THE METHODIST SACRAMENTAL FELLOWSHIP

Dr. Peter Nockles, in his progress report on the Methodist Archives and Research Centre (*Proceedings* 49, p.156) states that Dr. Rattenbury was a founder of the Methodist Sacramental Fellowship. Although Rattenbury was one of the earliest to join the M.S.F. and although he became its second President in 1938, following the untimely death of A. E. Whitham, he was not among the small group including Kingsley Lloyd, Marcus Ward and T.S. and A.S. Gregory who were the originators. I have today (21.4.94) checked this information myself with the sole survivor of the founders - Kingsley Lloyd himself!

NORMAN WALLWORK