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## BOOK NOTICES

*James Rouquet and his part in Early Methodism*, by A. Barrett Sackett. (Wesley Historical Society Publication No. 8, pp. vi. 30, 30p.)

It is much to be regretted that the "occasional papers" of the Wesley Historical Society, of which this is the eighth, should reach such a limited constituency, because each has solid worth and each is chosen because it makes a distinctive contribution to our understanding of Methodist beginnings. In this present instance, Mr. Sackett has followed up his penetrating study of John Jones with a well-documented account of the career of James Rouquet—so well known to Bristolians of the eighteenth century, and even in that city so totally unknown today.

However, as the author rightly indicates, he played a lively part in the growth of eighteenth-century Methodism. For a short time he was appointed master at Kingswood School at a time when, after three years' existence, its very future seemed in jeopardy. So well did he carry out his task that the school became full, and Wesley in 1753 declared that it was "worth all the labour".

He left to take orders in the Church of England, and was ordained deacon by the Bishop of Gloucester in 1754, but could not settle in the parish to which he was appointed, and in 1755 John Wesley could call him "semi itinerant". Mr. Sackett quite properly suggests that it was through Wesley that he found access to the Countess of Huntingdon's party, and in 1756 he married Sarah Fenwicke, sister of the Countess of Deloraine, with John Wesley a signatory to the marriage-certificate.

He threw himself ardently into humanitarian activities in Bristol, and more especially devoted himself to the care of prisoners and debtors in the city jail of Newgate. Even after he became vicar of West Harptree, in 1765, he did not flag in his social work. Perhaps it was through his instigation that Wesley visited the French prisoners of war at Knowle in 1759, with such beneficent results.

Mr. Sackett gives chapter and verse for Rouquet's other work in almshouses and hospitals, and also after 1766 as a curate of the city church of St. Werbergh. But he is chiefly remembered as one who in his generous conception of churchmanship could find staunch friends among Calvinists, Methodists, Dissenters, and clergy of differing opinions. His friendship with John Wesley was deep and lasting, and when in 1768 Wesley thought he was going to die, he left his manuscripts to him. Certainly Rouquet helped the society in Bristol, even though in the Calvinist dispute which flared up from 1770 onwards he veered towards the Countess of Huntingdon and Rowland Hill, and in the War of American Independence he was a radical, choosing to stand by Caleb Evans rather than John Wesley.

He was only forty-seven years old when he died in 1776, deeply lamented by the entire community of Christian believers in the city of Bristol. This is a fine piece of research on a man who deserves to be remembered as one in Wesley's own tradition who loved God and his fellow man, and in whom faith and works were one. MALDWYN EDWARDS.

*The Industrial Revolution in Shropshire*, by Barrie Trinder. (Phillimore & Co. Ltd., pp. xii. 455, £4 50p.)

This is a large, attractively-produced and generously-illustrated book about an area which is of interest to historians on several counts. To

some it means Coalbrookdale, the world's first cast-iron bridge, and the birth of the Industrial Revolution. For others it is inextricably connected with the ministry of John Fletcher; but any member of the Wesley Historical Society who feels tempted to turn straight to those chapters which deal with Fletcher and local Methodist history is strongly advised against such skipping. Indeed, the present reviewer will be surprised if anyone genuinely interested in history can get past Mr. Trinder's introductory chapters without being "hooked". For this book, with its wealth of vivid detail and its carefully-documented dependence on primary material, demonstrates how fascinating and meaningful local history can be in the hands of an expert. Furthermore, the social, political, economic and industrial kaleidoscope presented here, besides its intrinsic interest even to those for whom Shropshire is no more than "Housman country", provides the necessary setting for an examination of the work of Fletcher and others. Too much local Methodist history has been isolated from such a setting, and thereby distorted. Mr. Trinder has shown us "a yet more excellent way".

The saintly Fletcher is here seen "in the round", and his impact on the neighbourhood is soberly assessed. Although he was absent from the parish for several periods because of ill-health, his influence on it was considerable, and Madeley remained "the Mecca of Methodism" long after his death, when his work was perpetuated by his widow and others. Mr. Trinder has called upon the extensive correspondence of Mary Fletcher and Mary Tooth now at the Methodist Archives Centre to present a picture of the Methodists of Madeley as

an inward-looking, rather timorous people, oppressed by ecclesiastical politics, perplexed by secular events which they did not understand, hoping to be saved by divine intervention in the form of a revival, clinging tenaciously to the memory of John Fletcher, who earned them status and respect among Evangelicals throughout Britain.

However unpalatable to the sentimentalists still among us, Mr. Trinder's account will appeal to a generation less sweet-toothed than its forebears. He shows that evangelicalism in the area was wider than Methodism in its denominational sense, though at the same time he traces the development of the various nineteenth-century Methodist groups, including the less familiar Winfieldites or Revival Methodists.

Politically and socially, Fletcher himself was a reactionary; and although later on Methodists were among the leaders of reform, all too often there was a gulf between the evangelicals and the aspirations of the working class. (Mr. Trinder is a disciple of E. P. Thompson, but not an uncritical one. He recognizes that there was in many cases a close connexion between the frustration of political hopes and religious revival, but is not so naïve as to assume that the connexion is a simple and invariable one of cause and effect.) The lot of the miner, in particular, was harsh and dangerous, and Mr. Trinder castigates the piety of one nineteenth-century tract "for its utter insensitivity to the situation of the child in an industrial society, and for its profound joylessness". So far had Victorian Christianity moved from the spirit of the Gospels!

When baffled to find something to criticize, any reviewer worth his salt knows that he must descend to minutiae or complain about the index. If really desperate, one may do both! At two points in the text, Melville Horne appears as Melvyn; and on his one fleeting appearance in Madeley George Whitefield is spelled "Whitfield". The sub-headings in the index

could have been more helpfully arranged, but it is otherwise most comprehensive and useful, and worthy of a volume which deserves to be read far beyond the borders of Shropshire. JOHN A. VICKERS.

*Religion and Society in England, 1740-1850*, by W. R. Ward. (Batsford: pp. 339, £4.)

*The Early Correspondence of Jabez Bunting, 1820-1829*, edited by W. R. Ward. (Royal Historical Society. Camden Fourth Series, volume xi (1972): pp. 246. Available to the general public January 1975, £3.)

Professor W. R. Ward of Durham in these two important books opens up new perspectives on the middle period of Methodist history. The first is a complex intertwining of social, economic and political history, with the stress falling on what was happening at "grass roots" level rather than on what transpired in episcopal palaces and conferences, though these are not neglected.

The subject is the generation dominated by the consequences of the French Revolution and early industrialization which altered for ever the terms on which religious establishment could operate, and which raised sharply the problem of the Church's authority. With an enviable use of primary source material—much of it untouched before—Dr. Ward shows the Establishment failing to meet the demands of a new society and Methodism fragmenting under social pressures linked with the economic changes of the period.

Wesleyanism was threatened by radical movements stressing local initiative of which the Sunday schools (long underestimated by historians) could be hotbeds. There followed conservative fears of subversion, popular revivalism, and the post-war fall in prices. Dr. Ward claims that an alliance was formed between the itinerant preachers, aspiring to a full presbyterate, led by Jabez Bunting, and a fairly small but highly influential group of wealthy laymen. When class-division in Wesleyanism became translated into geographical separation—old town-centre chapels and newer suburban areas—the fellowship of the circuits was in danger of breaking under the strain. Thus in Leeds in 1827 there is clear evidence of a class struggle triggered by the division of the circuit and the famous Brunswick organ (now, alas, silent!).

The pressures reached their height in the 1840s, affecting all the churches, not just the Wesleyans; and here Professor Ward begins to uncover what has been something of a mystery—why the smaller Methodist connexions suffered troubles parallel with those in Wesleyanism. Then follow years of comparative prosperity, enabling the connexion to repair its losses—but never again to sustain a rate of growth faster than that of the population.

The argument is exemplified in the editing of the correspondence of Jabez Bunting between 1820 and 1829. This is a first-class piece of meticulously-accurate scholarship, and includes a short but penetrating sketch of the period and of Bunting himself. Dr. Ward has drawn on the four thousand letters in the Methodist Archives written to Bunting from all over Methodism and beyond, and a clear picture of Wesleyanism emerges. Here is a minister on the radicals' execution-list; there is the Duke of Northumberland granting money to a chapel as a consequence of the loyalty of the Wesleyans of Newcastle. Here is a preacher wanting to move south for the sake of his health; there is John Stephens writing

about crushing the Manchester radicals one by one. We see "supers" arguing with fractious local preachers, leading laymen concerned about Mark Robinson's "Church Methodism". Over Leeds Bunting displays *realpolitik*: "The Leeds Noncoms took away from our two circuits about a thousand members who are little missed" (p. 203). The other connexions—"Ranters" and "Kilhamites"—seem threatening rivals, not allies! All this makes absorbing reading.

Professor Ward's books follow soon after Harold Perkin's *Making of Modern English Society, 1780-1880*, which fills out the evidence put before us here. A new picture is emerging of what popular religion was really like in this period, and of what it achieved in helping to create a viable class-society. It is a pity that Dr. Ward fails to come to grips with Perkin's theory of the role of Methodism in society, and makes it somewhat difficult for the reader to see the issues clearly. This is especially so in the section on "orange" politics. In this controversial approach some may catch a whiff of economic determinism. There is a somewhat hard attitude to Bunting and his allies apparent also, and a case could be made out for a pre-dating of the "high Wesleyan" view of the ministry. The importance of the books lies in their perspective, which is refreshingly different from older Anglican-orientated church history, in which dissenters are peripheral and in which the Oxford Movement, the Hampden case, Mr. Gorham and all the rest dominate the scene. Professor Ward points the way to a new style of approaching Victorian church history, but one would have wished for more dialogue with others who are ploughing the same field.

J. MUNSEY TURNER.

*Methodism in Germany: its Expansion and Problems of Church Development, 1830-1968*, by Karl Zehrer. (Dissertation at University of Halle, 1971: pp. 168.)

The following summary has been provided by the author:

The existence and effectiveness of a minority church are portrayed, showing the circumstances under which such a church can exist, the conditions which are favourable to its existence, and those which impede or even endanger it. In this way guide-lines are offered to the Evangelical Methodist Church, which has resulted from the integration of the Methodist Church in Germany and the Evangelical Community (Evangelische Gemeinschaft). Members of other churches who are interested in new church structures are provided with information about the way of life and service of a church which indeed originated from another tradition than their own, but which has never denied its unity of faith with the old church and with the churches of the Reformation. The dissertation is to be understood as a contribution to the continuing dialogue between the churches.

The first section deals with the history of German Methodism until 1925—a subject often written about—and proves that the rise of the Methodist Church in Germany cannot be viewed—as it has usually been, entirely as a reaction against the rationalism of the German "Evangelical"<sup>1</sup> churches. Nor was the separation of the Methodists from the German "Evangelical" churches primarily the result of insults, pressure and the persecution of the Methodists by the members of the "Evangelical" churches. On the contrary, it has always been the aim of the episcopal

<sup>1</sup> "Evangelische Kirchen" refers to the state church in Germany—not to be confused with the term "evangelical" as used in English.

Methodists to found independent churches. The Wesleyan Methodists in Germany adhered to this policy from about 1860 onwards. The resultant church, persecuted and despised by state and state church alike, had a unique task and opportunity in relation to the labour movement which arose at the same time and was suffering the same fate—an opportunity which was never seized.

The second section deals firstly with the history of the German Methodist Church from 1925 to 1968. Here it is shown that long before 1925 the Methodist Church had begun to adapt itself to the German "Evangelical" churches, and from 1925 onwards this process was sanctioned by the Central Conferences which were introduced in that year. This process led to the development of a German Methodist Church which differed from its Anglo-Saxon counterpart. The differences are particularly marked in respect of the public status of the church, lay participation in the work, Sunday-school work, church instruction to children, administration of deaconess work, church music, form of service and liturgy, and—not least—in the area of finance. The Methodist Church in Germany did not feel able to conform to the practice of confirmation in the "Evangelical" churches. It adhered firmly to the principle of the individual's voluntary confirmation of the baptismal vow at an age when he was capable of measuring the importance of his decision. Thus it was unavoidable that churches grew up with a hard core of members who were remote from most people. But it also ensured a 60 to 80 per cent attendance at services by church-members, many of whom were active in some way or other in the work of the church and also supported it financially by free-will offerings without any subsidy from outside.

Section three deals with the relationship of the Methodist Church to the other churches in Germany. There were no official contacts between the German "Evangelical" churches and the Methodist Church in Germany until after the first world war, through the ecumenical movement, and no co-operation until after the second world war. Yet around 1880 unofficial contacts already existed. Th. Christleib's "Theory of Superfluity"<sup>2</sup> and the development of the modern "movement of Christian communities"<sup>3</sup> can be regarded as results of this. Co-operation between the Methodist Church in Germany and the other evangelical free churches began in 1879 with the formation of the Association of Christian Singers. This was extended in 1902 to youth work, and in 1916 led to the formation of the Central Committee of Evangelical Free Churches in Germany, which paved the way for the foundation of the Association of Evangelical Free Churches in 1926. The Methodist Church in Germany, however, never sought closer union with any of the churches belonging to this Association, except for the Evangelical Community. Contacts with the Catholic Church were not made until after the second world war, particularly in the German Democratic Republic. There were no contacts with other Christian groups.

A short fourth section contains, as results of this survey, reflections on the type of church, the autonomy of the church, planned work, and the call to unity.

<sup>2</sup> A theory by which, if the state church could be revived, the Anglo-Saxon free churches would be superfluous.

<sup>3</sup> Movement of Christian (pietist) communities within the "Evangelische Kirche" (state church).

*Chapel*, by Kenneth Young. (Eyre Methuen: pp. 238, with 17 illustrations, £3 50p.)

This is a most interesting study of the social and religious elements "inextricably intermingled" (as the author says) in the life of the "chapel". Theology being left out of account, the author quite rightly finds a homogeneity of atmosphere and activity in the life of the chapels of various denominations. The book contains a medley of incident—serious, humorous, quaint and curious—recalled (with degrees of accuracy) by elderly correspondents and culled from the pages of (not always very carefully written) local histories. We cannot, however, take seriously such statements as "the lovefeast was . . . a surrogate Last Supper [which has been] traced to totemism" (p. 108), *IHS* means "In His Service" (p. 126), the New Room was built in 1739 but was not then in Methodist use (p. 174), Swingfield Methodists, in 1910, took regular collections for the London Missionary Society (p. 191), and that a portion of the congregation at the Mint, Exeter, was inebriated at the Watchnight Service in 1895 (p. 159). Nevertheless, the historian of local Methodism will be grateful to Mr. Young for much information supplied, and we think he will enjoy reading the book and studying its well-chosen illustrations. We ourselves enjoyed reading it, and laughed a good deal—perhaps not always in the places intended!

THOMAS SHAW.

*The Prophet Harris*, by Gordon MacKay Haliburton. (Longmans, £3 50p.)

The undisputed founder of Methodism in the Ivory Coast was the Librarian Episcopal catechist William Wade Harris. This paradox illustrates both the breadth of Harris's achievement and the abiding particularity of Ivory Coast Methodism. Much, of course, has been written about Harris already. Now, just before the last direct witnesses to his work are carried away, Dr. Haliburton has given us a careful—perhaps definitive—study worthy of Harris himself. Dr. Haliburton has thoroughly digested previous publications on the subject; he has discovered a great number of new facts; he has set these in their historical and political context; and he has traced both Harris's life and the development of Methodism during the first years of missionary "harvesting". The author writes as an historian, not as a theologian or missionary apologist ("The reality of [Harris's] call from God is not something we can judge" (p. 212)), but his balanced and independent judgements on Harris and his successors, both African and European, have rendered lasting if indirect service to the church in the Ivory Coast and beyond.

PAUL ELLINGWORTH.

We acknowledge, with many thanks, the following handbooks and brochures which have been sent to us recently. Except where a figure is mentioned, prices have not been supplied.

Garforth centenary (pp. 24) : copies from the Rev. Geoffrey J. Warburton, 29, Station Fields, Garforth, Leeds, LS25 1PL.

*Methodism in Laira*, by M. F. Scoble (pp. 34) : copies from the author at 7, Federation Road, Laira, Plymouth.

Middleton-in-Teesdale Bourne chapel centenary (pp. 26) : copies, price 20p., from Mr. H. L. Beadle, Dale House, Forest-in-Teesdale, Barnard Castle, Co. Durham.

*The Story of Methodism in Aberdeen*, by Ernest Wilkinson (pp. 12) : copies from the author at 27, Keith Road, Talbot Woods, Bournemouth, BH3 7DS.