

RICHARD TERRY AND HULL METHODISM: IN THE LIGHT OF A HITHERTO UNKNOWN WESLEY LETTER.

The discovery of a new Wesley letter is always an interesting event. The particular one which we are about to describe has several points of especial interest. By the kind co-operation of Mr. H. Duffield of Leeds, the present owner, we are able to describe it in detail, and to reproduce a facsimile of the letter itself.

It is written on the right half of one side of a sheet of laid paper measuring $12\frac{1}{2}$ " x $8\frac{1}{4}$ ", folded several times to make an envelope measuring $4\frac{1}{2}$ " x $3\frac{1}{4}$ ". It is addressed

"To
M^r Rich^d Terry
in
Hull"

and over the address, in the top right-hand corner, is scrawled a large "3". The back of the envelope bears a stamped postmark "LEEDS", and Wesley's well-known monogram seal, with the motto "Believe, Love, Obey." The paper bears a circular watermark showing the letters "G R" surrounded by leaves, underneath which is the papermaker's name "I Nind." This will certainly be the same "Mr. Nind" to whom Wesley was anxious to remit £50 in May, 1774. (*Standard Letters*, vi, 80, 87.) The paper with which Mr. Nind supplied Wesley, both for printing and correspondence, was usually like this, of very good quality, costing about 14/- or 15/- a ream.

The letter itself reads thus:—

Leeds
April 30, 1774

My Dear Brother

The teaching School in a preaching house does it so much hurt, & keep's it so dirty, in spite of all the care which

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can be taken, that we have made it a rule for several years, "Let no School be taught in any Preaching house." But I commend your Design, if you had a proper place. And a Master might easily be procured.

If we live till July, I shall willingly accept of your kind invitation. I am, with love to S. Terry,

Your Affectionate Brother
J. Wesley.

To the present writer this letter opens up new fields of thought, both fascinating and tantalising because it is difficult, maybe impossible, to be certain about several points. Where, for instance, is there any other mention of this apparently well-established "rule"—"Let no School be taught in any Preaching house." It does not appear to be an official ruling which had gone through the Conference, since it does not appear in the *Large Minutes* of 1772, although in those same *Minutes* Wesley does give the following general advice to his assistants:—"Every where insist on decency and cleanliness. Tell them cleanliness is next to godliness."¹ Had there been many previous examples of day schools being held in Methodist premises which were also used for Sunday Services? Examination of scores of standard books on early Methodism has brought little information. Rev. J. Wesley Bready, in his *England Before and after Wesley*, page 268, says "The first preaching-house in Halifax was also used 'as a day school,' which was taught by a local preacher," but J. U. Walker's *History of Wesleyan Methodism in Halifax* represents the facts as indicating that Titus Knight, the converted collier who later became a minister, actually "commenced a preparatory school for education" in "the room adjoining the chapel," which was opened in 1752 (see pages 72, 87). A writer in *Proceedings* iii, 102 says that through the labours of Nathaniel Dracup "a school-chapel, the first Wesleyan school in the Bradford district, was erected in 1766, at a place called Old Todley, near where the Four Ashes Inn now stands." This is confirmed by the *Rambles round Horton* of the antiquary William Cudworth, who shows

1. *Works*, 1771-4, xv, 310. Incidentally, the compilers of books of quotations seem to have gone astray in tracing this saying to Wesley's sermon *On Dress*, where he says, using quotation marks, "cleanliness is, indeed, next to godliness." Stevenson's *Book of Quotations* says that Wesley quotes the phrase, giving "no indication as to its source," not realising that Wesley is quoting himself!

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(pages 182, 211-3) that what he calls "a little school-house, with burial ground attached," was built in 1766 and used "as a day and Sunday school and preaching-room" until 1814, though whether it was so used from the beginning is very doubtful. This information, meagre though it is, shows that Yorkshire was a fruitful ground for experiments in education. Mr. Bready also reminds us that both West Street Chapel and the Foundery ran schools, and the same appears to have been true of the Orphan House at Newcastle. The rise of free schools on Methodist premises is shrouded in obscurity.

Mr. A. H. Body, in his *John Wesley and Education*, says :

As early as 1784 a free school for forty boys was established in Whitefriars Street, Dublin, and from this humble beginning sprang the chain of Methodist day schools, opened in the most needy districts, which during the early part of the last century rendered such sterling work educationally.

This letter of John Wesley's surely proves, however, that he had had unfortunate experiences with similar schools long before this date. Certainly Richard Terry's *suggestion*, apparently for a free school financed by himself, and to be held in the Manor Alley Chapel, Hull, antedates the one mentioned by Mr. Body by ten years. It seems possible that the natural interest attaching to the phenomenal rise of Sunday Schools, largely under Methodist influence, has caused the gradual development of free schools out of the "Charity Schools" to be overshadowed. It would be interesting to know if anything came of Richard Terry's scheme, of which Wesley approved in principle. The Hull Central Reference Library, however, can throw no light on the question.

What about the promoter of this scheme, the recipient of Wesley's letter? Here we are on surer ground, and the information gained necessitates the compiling of a new chapter in the history of Hull Methodism. For much of this information the writer is indebted to the Chief Librarian of the Hull Reference Library, Mr. James G. Sleight, and grateful acknowledgment of his generous help is here made.

In his interesting *Early Chapters of Hull Methodism*, Mr. W. H. Thompson has a few references to Richard Terry, and the book also contains a photograph of Terry's house. His full importance to the early Methodist cause in Hull has, however, been obscured by the hand of time. The general impression which he has left in the pages of Methodist history is well summed up by the *Methodist Conference Handbook*, Hull, 1938, which describes him on page 101 as

“a public-spirited citizen of Hull, of Methodist habits and sympathies, if not a full adherent. His house, which was at the corner of Beverley Road and Clough Road, is now in ruins, but part of the grounds are still vacant, and there is a tree there, known until recent years by the older folks as ‘Wesley’s tree.’”

It is also stated that Wesley preached at Newland in 1786, and in the grounds of Terry’s house there in 1789. We cannot but agree with Mr. W. H. Thompson, however, in believing that General Perronet Thompson’s reminiscence of “Mr. Wesley preaching on the grass plot of Mr. Terry’s house at Newland,” “very likely” in 1789, should be amended to 1786 in view of Wesley’s express statement that on June 17th, 1786, he “preached about four at Newland.” His text was Ephesians ii. 8, “For by grace ye are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.” (*Standard Journal* vii. 70.)

It will be seen, however, that Terry’s associations with Hull Methodism were much closer and lasting than has hitherto been suspected. This new Wesley letter proves that they started long before that 1786 visit. A brief sketch of his career and relations with the Methodist cause in Hull will be of interest.

In 1774 he was forty years of age, already a man of substance, making his mark as a Baltic merchant, and well-known in Hull trade circles. Wesley’s letter, addressed simply “To Mr. Richd Terry in Hull” would be delivered at his offices in High Street. One addressed “Newland, near Hull” would have been unhesitatingly delivered at “Newland Hall,” “Newland Park,” or “Terry’s House,” as his mansion was variously called.

In 1771 Hull had been made the head of a Methodist Circuit, and in the same year a new chapel was erected in Manor Alley. To make room for it the old “Tower of Henry VIII” in which the Methodists had previously worshipped was pulled down. It seems very likely that Richard Terry’s support was enlisted in raising funds for this new chapel. When erected, it bore the inscription, “This preaching-house was built by the people called Methodists, 1771, *pro bono publico*.” John Wesley, visiting Hull on June 24th, 1772, described it as “extremely well-finished, and upon the whole one of the prettiest preaching houses in England.” Probably on this visit Wesley and Terry met—perhaps the Methodists proudly introduced Terry to Wesley as one of their latest acquisitions. At any rate it seems certain from the tone of Wesley’s letter that they had met at some time

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previous to their correspondence. Wesley's next visit to Hull after June, 1772, was July, 1774, for which visit Terry had offered hospitality.

Wesley was supposed to look upon the house of Mr. Snowden in High Street, as his Hull "home" ² but he was also quite ready to avail himself of Terry's offer. He reaffirms this in a letter addressed "To Mrs. Terry, at Newland, Near Hull," and dated April 11th, 1780—"If I should come near the eastern coast, I should be glad to spend a little time with you." This letter closes, "I am, with love to Brother Terry, dear sister, Yours affectionately." ³ It seems reasonable to assume, therefore, as Wesley did "live till July" that at least, some part of his visit to Hull on July 7-8, 1774 was spent with Mr. and Mrs. Terry. The summer of 1781 would also see him in their company. More than that we cannot affirm with absolute certainty.

The next certain date is June 17th, 1786, when Wesley preached at Newland, at that time "a pleasant villiage 1½ miles from Hull, where several imposing mansions had been built by Hull Merchants." ⁴ A few weeks after this well-known visit, on July 30th, Wesley wrote to Terry from the Bristol Conference, expressing grave disapproval of a scheme for sectionalising the Hull Circuit, so that the preachers could concentrate more on particular churches and neighbourhoods. ⁵ It seems obvious from this that Terry was more than a mere outsider, offering occasional financial help to the Methodist cause.

Richard Terry did not take a great part in public life, and one wonders whether the little he did was not prompted by his associations with Methodism, as was the case with so many philanthropists in the late eighteenth century. He showed real interest in the poor. According to an account of 1794,

The poor of the town of Hull are carefully and comfortably maintained in a spacious building appropriated for that

2. See the account of Hull Methodism given in *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* for 1837, pages 885-889; also *Early Chapters in Hull Methodism*, p. 23.

3. *Standard Letters*, vii, 16.

4. Strother's *Journal*, quoted in *Conference Handbook*, 1938.

5. According to *Standard Letters* vii, 337, this is addressed "To Mr. Terry, In Hull," but the letter was undoubtedly intended for Richard Terry. Cf. *Standard Journal*, vii, 193n.

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charitable purpose. The management of all business relative to the poor is vested in a Corporation, entitled, "The Corporation of Governor, Deputy Governor, Assistants, and Guardians, of the poor in Hull." ⁶

The first Hull Directory, of 1791, shows that at that date Terry was one of the "Assistants," but in the appendix, dated 1792, he has been promoted to "Governor for the Poor, Richard Terry, Esq; High Street." By 1794, however, he was once again one of the nineteen assistants, and described as plain "Mr. Richard Terry, Newland." It seems probable that he was really not cut out for public life. Between 1792 and 1794 he took a partner into his business, for the *Universal British Directory* describes the firm at that date as "Terry and Wright, Merchants, High-st." ⁷

In 1798, when the question of national defence was calling for public-spirited men, Joseph Benson compiled a list of subscribers to the George-Yard Methodist Chapel defence fund. These twenty-eight Hull Methodists between them contributed £740-15-0. The first name on the list is that of Richard Terry, who gave £100, whilst another entry shows that Avison Terry gave £50. (For Avison Terry see below.) ⁸ The old man was nearing the end of his days, however, and in 1804 he died, and was buried in St. John's Church.

Mr. Sleight has sent a long extract from *High-Street, Hull, some years ago*, by John Symons, 1862, pages 8off. This merits quotation in its entirety. With regard to Terry's business address, now No. 41, High Street, Mr. Symons says:—

Richard Terry and Sons. This house formerly belonged to the Hildyards, and was next door to the King's Coffee-house . . . It was originally a most magnificent mansion, with a hall open to the roof in several places.

describing the Terry family he continues :

Mr. Richard Terry was one of the earliest and most successful Baltic Merchants in Hull. The founder of this wealthy house was originally a school-master at Gilberdyke, near Howden. The only surviving representative of the once great mercantile family is the venerable Avison Terry, Esq. of Newland, near Hull, the last of a long line, which is likely to end with him. ⁹ The whole family were High Churchmen.

6. *Universal British Directory*. Second edition, Vol. iii, p. 329, without date, but Hull sections compiled 1794, according to a statement in the text.

7. *Op. cit.*: pages 339-358.

8. W.H.S. 12: 124.

9. According to Sheahan's *History of Hull*, 1869, Avison Terry was at that date a grand old man of 93. Although the family apparently died out, their name is still commemorated by a "Terry Street," presumably named after them.

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Piety and benevolence were synonymous of the names of Richard Terry and Sons. Mr. Terry did not take an active part in public life. The only office he ever held was that of Governor of the Poor in 1792; but he devoted himself to religion and charity, contributing most munificently to the churches of St. Mary, St. James, and St. John. In the interior of the last named elegant temple dedicated to God's worship, may be found the "narrow mansion" where sleeps the good Richard Terry, who died the 12th of May, 1804, aged 70 years.

'Midst kindred dust thy sacred ashes rest;
Thy soul has fled, and mingles with the blest.
The bust may perish, and the dome may fall,¹⁰
O'er halls of grandeur death extends his pall:
But, more refulgent, virtue claims the skies,
And spurns the dust where meaner glory dies.

It will be noticed that Mr. Symons stresses Richard Terry's High Church associations. This must not blind us to the fact that he was undoubtedly prominent in Methodist circles as well. In all probability he strove, like John Wesley, to be both a good Churchman and a good Methodist at the same time. His name certainly merits being inscribed boldly in the annals of Hull Methodism.

FRANK BAKER.

THE "RICHMOND" LETTERS OF CHARLES WESLEY.

(Continued)

In this concluding section are found two letters to Mark Davis and one to John Wesley about him. To judge solely by the references in the *Standard Journal* and *Letters* they furnish some new information. They show that Charles, with certain "leading laymen" in London, tried to secure the appointment of Davis to City Road, because he was now in Holy Orders. Charles Wesley stayed in London till Davis had arrived, and then went off to Bristol. Trouble soon arose, however, in London, and John Wesley asked his brother for full information about Charles' own share in the matter, and Charles sent it. Perhaps John used this at the meeting described in his letter to Charles, 22nd February, 1774.

10. As Mr. Sleight points out, the phrase "the dome may fall" was indeed prophetic, for St. John's Church has since been pulled down, to be replaced by the Ferens Art Gallery, a generous gift by one of Hull's most loved citizens—and, until his death a few years ago, a loyal Methodist.