

## A VARIETY OF THEMES IN AN UNPUBLISHED WESLEY LETTER

UNPUBLISHED John Wesley letters continue to appear, and one of the most interesting that has come to my notice recently is the following to Richard Rodda.

JOHN WESLEY TO RICHARD RODDA

London. Janu. 24. 1782.

Dear Richard,

Nancy Bolton has done more Good in Witney, than all the other Women in ye Society put together. Not one of them is to be compared to her either for Grace or Understanding. Give her all the Employment she can undertake. I know few such Jewels in ye three Kingdoms. You have done exceeding well in changing the Men-leaders. It will much tend to enliven the people. You woud do wisely to give Hannah Ball & her Sister as much Employment as they can possibly attend to. There [are] exceeding few in Wycombe that are like-minded, nor indeed in all the Circuit.

I do not take any thought so long before-hand, concerning stationing ye Preachers. Sufficient for the day is the care thereof. Mr. Atlay tell's me, He has no sets of ye two last Years' Magazine. I am, with Love to S. Rodda, Dear Richard,

Your Affectionate Friend & Brother,

J. WESLEY.

To Mr. Rd. Rodda,  
At Mrs. Haws'  
in High Wycombe.

What wonderful women we meet through Wesley's letters! Nancy Bolton of Witney, it will be remembered, was one of his most regular correspondents, and one who was a thorn in Mrs. Wesley's flesh. There appear to be still a good number of Wesley letters to her unpublished, probably in a collection in private hands. Perhaps there is a reference to these or a similar batch in the letter of James Everett of 30th March 1849, transcribed from the collection of Dr. Beckerlegge:

If the *Bolton letters* are in the hands of either Messrs. Jackson or Marriott, it will be difficult to get them from them. Yet, as men of sense, they ought to know that possession does not always confer title, which their christianity, should either possess them, ought to dictate the propriety of restoring them to their proper owners.

And then there was Hannah Ball of High Wycombe, who commenced a Sunday-school there in 1769, long before Robert Raikes popularized the movement at Gloucester. There seems something almost symbolic in Wesley's commendation of Rodda for "changing the Men-leaders". Presumably the magnificent women class-leaders needed no changing! Incidentally we meet in this letter Hannah Ball's sister, of whom one would like to know more.

Two important points arise from the letter. Wesley avows that he does not try to think out stationing problems as far ahead as six

months before the time for moving. There are probably several "morals" here, but I will not attempt to apply them. And then he quotes Matthew vi. 34, or apparently misquotes it. Yet "care" is so much more appropriate than "evil". Dr. Richard Cameron, who sent me the photostat of this letter (the letter itself he has presented to the Boston University School of Theology), points out that "this is the one place in the New Testament where the Greek *kakia* can mean trouble or care", though he also notes that Wesley's own normal translation was "evil".

The other point is about the circulation of the *Arminian Magazine*. There is very little accurate information to be gained about the actual number printed, but Wesley's Book Steward is the authority here for stating that the sets of the *Arminian Magazine* for 1780 and 1781 were sold out—though there may have been some odd parts available. The purist might like to make another point of Wesley's incorrect use of "two last years". It is surprising, indeed, how much "meat" there can be in one of Wesley's pithy letters.

FRANK BAKER.

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## THE ANNUAL LECTURE

in connexion with the Liverpool Conference, 1960,

WILL BE DELIVERED IN

Princes Avenue Methodist Church, Liverpool, 8,

On Wednesday, 6th July, at 7 p.m.,

BY THE

Rev. GEORGE LAWTON, M.A.

*Subject*: "SHROPSHIRE SAINT: A STUDY IN THE MINISTRY AND SPIRITUALITY OF FLETCHER OF MADELEY."

The chair will be taken by BISHOP FERDINAND SIGG, of Zurich.

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**The Annual Meeting** of the Society will be held at the same Church at 5-30 p.m.

Mrs. Herbert Ibberson kindly invites members of the Society to **Tea** in the schoolroom of Princes Avenue church at 4-30 p.m. It is essential that all those who desire to accept this invitation should send their names to the Rev. Cyril Cornah, 3, Rutland Avenue, Liverpool, 17 (Tel. Sefton Park 2621) not later than Monday, 4th July.

Princes Avenue church is fairly near the Conference Hall. Buses numbered 72, 73, 73A, 73B, 73C, 80, 80A, 80C, 80D, 80E and 87 all pass the church, and may be boarded opposite Lewis's in the city centre or outside the Conference Hall. Those travelling by car should leave the Conference Hall along Myrtle Street, turn right at the Children's Hospital, go along Catharine Street, and cross the traffic lights to Princes Road, which leads into Princes Avenue. The church is on the left of the Boulevard.