



A UNITED METHODIST  
HERITAGE TOUR  
of ENGLAND

by

FRANK BAKER

---

---

UNITED METHODIST HERITAGE TOUR OF ENGLAND

By FRANK BAKER

Div.S.  
287.0942  
B167U

INDEX

	Page
Preface .....	2
Background Of Frank Baker .....	3
CHAPTER I	
Manchester And Epworth .....	4
CHAPTER II	
Birmingham, Asbury's Training Ground .....	8
CHAPTER III	
Oxford And On To Bristol .....	11
CHAPTER IV	
Bristol And On To London .....	17
CHAPTER V	
London, General Headquarters And Early Methodism, Wesley's Chapel .....	21
CHAPTER VI	
History Unfolds .....	25
CHAPTER VII	
Warmed Heart And A Growing Movement .....	26
CHAPTER VIII	
First Generation Methodists .....	27
CHAPTER IX	
May They Rest In Peace .....	29

A VERY ANCIENT PRAYER  
by Travelers

*May it be Thy will,  
O Lord our God,  
and God of our Fathers,  
to conduct us in peace  
to direct our steps in peace  
to uphold us in peace  
and to lead us in life, joy, and peace unto the haven of our desire.  
O deliver us from every enemy, ambush, and hurt by the way,  
and from all afflictions that visit and trouble the world.  
Send a blessing upon the work of our hands.  
Let us obtain grace, loving kindness and mercy in thine eyes  
and in the eyes of all who behold us.  
Hearken to the voice of our supplications  
for Thou art a God who hearkenest unto prayer and supplication.  
Blessed art Thou,  
O Lord,  
who hearkenest unto prayer.*

A VERY ANCIENT PRAYER  
for Travelers

*The Lord bless thee  
And keep thee:  
The Lord make His face to shine upon thee  
And be gracious unto thee;  
The Lord turn his face unto thee,  
And give thee peace.*

The Book of Numbers: 6: 24, 25, 26.

## PREFACE

One of our great church historians is to be found in Dr. Frank Baker. He is gifted not only with a keen mind but a gracious and warm personality. As is the case with men of achievement, his basic Christian humility endears him to all who come to know him.

The content of this booklet represents the text that he wrote for a travel seminar to England and the birthplace of Methodism. These copies were printed so that many would have the opportunity to read and discover the birthplace of Methodism through the words of this master historian.

I consider it a special honor to have worked with Dr. Baker on the Tour to England sponsored by the Baltimore Conference United Methodist Historical Society.

FRANK WANEK  
Minister,  
St. Mark's Church (United Methodist)  
Garrison Boulevard and Liberty Heights Ave.  
Baltimore, Maryland 21207



Wesley's House



## FRANK BAKER

Professor of English Church History

Duke University Divinity School, Durham, N. C.

**Born:** Hull, England, April 4, 1910

**Parents:** Frank Baker (locomotive driver) and Annie Elizabeth Baker

**Married:** Nellie Levitt, Aug. 11, 1937. She is from Hull, also.

**Children:** Margaret, Nov. 21, 1938—Mrs. Alan H. Whitehead, Durham, N. C.  
Enid, Sept. 20, 1942—Mrs. Dyson W. Hickingbotham, Durham, N. C.  
Peter, July 4, 1951—Living with parents in Durham, N. C.

**Came to Duke University:** 1960

**Previous Teaching Experience:** Methodist minister in pastoral work, 1937-59; Doubled as lecturer in charge of religious education at Municipal Training College, Hull, Yorkshire, England, 1958-59; Taught religion in public schools—1959-60; Summer session at Iliff Theological School, Denver, Colo. 1953; Various extra-mural courses in association with Univ. of Hull and Workers' Educational Assoc. Many individual lectures and series of lectures.

**Academic Training:** Hull University College, now Hull University—1928-31, taking B.A. Honours degree—in English—London Univ. Hartley-Victoria College, Manchester, England, for theological training, taking B.D. degree of Manchester University (1931-34) Nottingham Univ., Ph.D. degree, 1952,

**Society Memberships:** Former secretary, Wesley Historical Society (1943-61); Former secretary International Methodist Historical Society, (1944-60), and delegate to World Methodist Council, 1951-56, 1961. Member of various official boards of British Methodist Ch. until seconded by the British Methodist Conference at Duke. Consultant to Commission on Archives and History of the United Meth. Church, 1968-

**Publications:** For list of ten books and about 100 articles in learned journals, see Duke University Publications 1959-60, pp. 2-8; about 200 other articles, mainly on Methodist history, published in various British newspapers, including London TIMES; commissioned to write articles for Encyclopedia Britannica in re. the Wesleys and Methodism (for next revision). Latest publication: *Representative Verses of Charles Wesley*, Epworth Press, London. American Edition published, March 1963, by Abingdon Press. *William Grimshaw* to be published late 1963 by Epworth Press. JOHN WESLEY AND THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, to be published 1969 by Abingdon & Epworth.

**Further special interests:** World Methodism, with primary detail in United Kingdom Methodism—and the Wesleys and Methodist history in general.

**Editorial note on Baker Collection, Duke Library:** Considered the "largest and best collection of Wesley writings in America", the collection also consists of much material relating to British Methodism. The Wesleyana constitute about half the known Wesley publications known to exist, including some 300 first editions and 10 ephemera not listed in any Wesley published biography. Private property of Dr. Baker prior to his coming to Duke, the collection was acquired by the Duke Library in Nov. 1961. Library and Duke Divinity School authorities describe the Baker Collection as "one of the most outstanding collections ever acquired by the Duke Library."

**Tour experience:** While Dr. and Mrs. Baker laboured as minister and minister's wife, in British circuits they frequently served as host and hostess at Methodist Guild Holiday Homes, during which they would lead tours for the holiday-makers to nearby places of interest. They also conducted a tour to Austria and the Passion Play at Oberammergau in 1960.

## CHAPTER I

### MANCHESTER AND EPWORTH

#### A UNITED METHODIST HERITAGE TOUR OF ENGLAND

By FRANK BAKER

For our first look at England we arrive at Manchester Airport. Manchester was originally a Celtic settlement named Mancenion, or "the place of tents." A Roman fort established in A.D. 79 combined with this the element "castra" to make the name "Manchester." Because of its perpetually damp climate Manchester became a textile center as early as 1330, when Flemish manufacturers settled there. In 1500 cotton was introduced, and Manchester gradually became the cotton capital of England, and the woolen industry moved to the West Riding of Yorkshire. The Industrial Revolution of the 18th century transformed the small market town into a great city, and the opening of the Manchester Ship Canal in 1894 increased this growth, as it became the major outlet by sea (54 miles away) for a great area containing the main bulk of British industry. Here was opened in 1929 the first municipal airport in England, and the next largest to London. Manchester was also a pioneer in establishing a central smokeless zone in 1952.

Wesley, followed by his preachers, was especially concerned by the plight of the rising industrial centres, too often bereft of nearby churches and ministers. In 1747 Methodism was established in Manchester, in 1750 the first Methodist chapel built, and about the same time it became the head of a huge and important "round" or circuit covering the whole of Lancashire as well as Derbyshire and industrial Sheffield in Yorkshire. Theological colleges for the three major Methodist denominations were located here, as well as the national headquarters for the Department of Chapel Affairs. Manchester itself now has a population of nearly 700,000, to which should be added that of its sister city, Salford, from which it is separated only by the narrow, dirty, and largely invisible River Irwell; Salford's population in 1961 was 155,000. In fact, however, the suburbs of Manchester merged into the suburbs of many other cities, such as Oldham, Stockport, and Withington, so that the total metropolitan population must be numbered in the million.

From Manchester we drive through some of these neighbouring towns until they are thinned out by the increasingly harsh land flanking the Pennine Chain, the mountainous backbone of England, composed of millstone grit. We shall almost certainly pass through another of England's important industrial cities which early formed a part of Methodism's Manchester Round—Sheffield, famous for its steel, a city of

half a million inhabitants. Thence we come to Bawtry, a tiny market town on the Great North Road which was built by the Romans, now far overshadowed by the Roman camp at Doncaster, an agricultural town of 70,000 population which has become strongly industrialised because of neighboring coalfields. And so through lowlying lands, formerly given over to marshes, to Epworth.

#### EPWORTH—HOME OF THE WESLEYS

As early as 1751, Stephen Whatley's *England's Gazetteer*, after briefly describing Epworth in Lincolnshire as 'the best Town in the Isle of Axholm, . . . a long straggling place', added that it was 'the birthplace of the two Methodist preachers, Messrs. John and Charles Wesley, whose father was rector of this parish'. Its fame ever since has been based on this fact, and it may probably be regarded as the Mecca of the Methodist pilgrim. It is somewhat difficult of access, however, and failing a private car or taxi the most convenient approach is by bus from Doncaster.<sup>1</sup> A tortuous hour's journey takes us through typical fenland, dotted with windmills and scored by drains and dykes. In summer and autumn many of the open fields around Epworth itself are striped with the varied hues of the crops belonging to different owners, a reminder that strip-farming, a relic of feudal days, still persists here.

We may in some measure be grateful for Epworth's seclusion and conservatism, for they have preserved this little market town much as it was during the years 1694 to 1735 when the Rev. Samuel Wesley and his wondrous wife Susanna were raising their brood of poets and saints. Its population remains about 2,000, and the centre of its life is still the old market-place, where the traveller will probably alight. Here he will see the stone cross from whose steps John Wesley preached on many occasions—though the cross itself has been moved from its original position nearer the centre. It was here that Wesley preached on Sunday, 4th July, 1790, the last of his scores of visits, as an old man of 87, recording in his *Journal*:

'As soon as the afternoon service ended, I began in the market-place to press the awful question, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" on such a congregation as was never seen at Epworth before.'

Methodists of modern days have followed Wesley's example, and it is good to know that during the Christian Commando Campaign in 1946 forty young people knelt by that market cross in token of their surrender to the call of Christ, on a day which could hardly have been more appropriate—24th May, the anniversary of Wesley's own conversion.

<sup>1</sup> Two-hourly service run by the Lincolnshire Road Car Co., Scunthorpe (Tel. Scunthorpe 2233).

At the opposite side of the market-place from the cross is the Red Lion Inn, where Wesley lodged on his first visit to Epworth after his father's death, and on later occasions. At the end of the lane past the Red Lion is the Old Rectory, standing in spacious grounds, the entrance being round the corner on the left, on the main road to Owston Ferry.

This historic building, the boyhood home of John and Charles Wesley, continued to serve as the rectory for the parish of Epworth until 1954. It was bought by the World Methodist Council and carefully restored to what seemed to have been its appearance when Samuel Wesley rebuilt his home after its destruction by fire in 1709. On that occasion little Jackie Wesley was trapped in his bedroom, dragged a chest to the window, and was rescued by two stalwart villagers, one mounted on the shoulders of the other. Of the original three-storied thatched rectory (built of timber and plaster, and rebuilt after a fire in 1702) all that remains seems to be the old fire-place and main chimney-stack, and perhaps some of the beams. One of the few personal relics rescued was a singed scrap of paper blown from the burning house—the manuscript of Samuel Wesley's well-known hymn, 'Behold the Saviour of mankind'.

The modern restoration left almost untouched the large attic known as 'Jeffrey's Chamber', the reputed centre of the strange disturbances of 1716-17, which have been ascribed to a poltergeist. One great gain was the opening up of the kitchen and the room adjoining, where Susanna Wesley both educated her children and held services for the parishioners—much to her husband's disquiet.

The Old Rectory continues to be a home, and the Warden and his wife are able to entertain occasional paying guests for limited periods, as well as small groups for conferences or retreats. Arrangements must be made in advance. The building is open for visitors on weekdays from 10 a.m. to noon, and from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m., and at other times by previous arrangement with the Warden, The Old Rectory, Epworth, Lincolnshire. (Telephone, Epworth 268).

#### ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH

Retracing our steps to the market-place, we next veer right along the narrow cobbled streets, past the National School on the right, into the lime-shaded pathway leading up to St. Andrew's Church, which dates from the 13th century. Among the church's treasures are the old octagonal font in which most of the Wesley children were baptized, and two beautifully carved 16th-century chairs, kept within the chancel rails. The more ornate chair is said to have belonged to Susanna Wesley.

A massive old door with a central iron boss opens off the chancel into the vestry. In the safe here are locked away other treasures, including the parish registers, only fragments from 1538 to 1601, and then com-

plete volumes from 1710 onwards, the records for the intervening period having been lost in the rectory fire. The 1710 register is too late to record the baptism of any of the Wesley children, though there are entries of the baptisms of some of John Wesley's nephews and nieces, the children of Richard and Susanna Ellison, between 1724 and 1734; of the marriage of his sister Mary to their father's protégé John White-lamb; and of the burial on 28th April, 1735, of the old rector. Many of the entries during 1727 to 1729 were made by John Wesley himself, who was serving at the time as his father's curate. This volume, covering the years 1710 to 1782, has suffered severely from its damp sojourn in the parish chest, however, so that it cannot be handled by visitors. Another precious relic locked away in the safe is a beautiful little silver chalice inscribed *Epworthiae/In Insula de Axholm/A.D. 1706*—almost certainly the vessel from which John Wesley took his first communion at the age of eight or nine. Most probably this was shortly after the great occasion on 15th July, 1712, when Bishop Wake held a Confirmation at Epworth, laying hands on 800 persons, one of whom was surely young John Wesley.

The simple Communion Table used by Samuel Wesley was sold during the restoration of 1868, but was eventually secured by the Methodists of Epworth, and is still used for its original purpose in the Wesley Memorial Church. The original pulpit was also removed during the 1868 restoration, but its present whereabouts is unknown, though it is supposed to have been taken to America.

#### SAMUEL WESLEY'S TOMBSTONE

In the graveyard, in a quiet corner near the south chancel door, is the tombstone of Samuel Wesley, on which are two rough pieces of ironstone marking the place where John Wesley stood to preach.<sup>2</sup>

It will be remembered that in 1742, a few weeks before Wesley hastened to London to find his mother 'on the borders of eternity', he had returned to Epworth for the first time since his father's death. The Epworth curate, however, refused him permission to preach in the church. As the people left the service on Sunday, 6th June, Wesley's travelling companion stood in the churchyard announcing that 'Mr. Wesley, not being permitted to preach in the church, designs to preach here at six o'clock'. In his *Journal* Wesley recorded:

'Accordingly at six I came, and found such a congregation as I believe Epworth never saw before. I stood near the east end of the church, upon my father's tombstone, and cried, "The kingdom of heaven is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost".'

<sup>2</sup> Not 'John Wesley's footprints', as local tradition is apt to assert. The ornamental railings surrounding the tombstone were added in 1872; originally the stones rested on low brickwork, as do some of the adjoining memorials.

For over a week he remained in the area, preaching and forming societies in the neighbouring villages, and returning every evening to preach from his father's tomb. From this period he gave a surprisingly large proportion of his time to Lincolnshire—which became one of the chief strongholds of Methodism—especially to his native town, to which he referred warmly in 1784, as 'Epworth, which I still love beyond most places of the world'.

#### WESLEY MEMORIAL CHURCH

Turning right into the High Street on leaving the church, the visitor soon reaches on the left the beautiful set of buildings erected in 1889 by modern Methodists from all over the world as a tribute to their founders—the Wesley Memorial Church. In the manse on the left lives the superintendent minister, a very busy man with oversight of about forty churches in the wide Epworth and Crowle Circuit. The dignified beauty of the church's exterior, with its slender spire, is matched by the quiet reverence of the interior. Over the oak communion screen shines a stained glass window depicting Christ commissioning his disciples, surmounted by a glass medallion of the Wesley brothers. The Communion Table itself was formerly used by the Wesleys in the parish church. The pair of oak salvers on the table were made from a beam which formerly supported the church bells, and were presented by the rector and churchwardens in 1938. The decorative oak font is happily dedicated to the mother of the Wesleys. In the western transept is a memorial tablet to her most famous son. The church itself is his chief memorial, however, and as such should command the generosity of those spiritual sons of Wesley who realize that its upkeep is far more than the Methodists of Epworth can accomplish unaided.

Back to the Great North Road we pass through Robin Hood country to Nottingham, the major centre of the lace and hosiery industry in the world, a city of 300,000 inhabitants. This again was originally a Roman settlement, which the Saxons called "Snotengaham." From Nottingham, after a *very* full day, we continue to Birmingham, the great metal-working centre of England, with a population of over a million, second only to London in England, and exceeded only by Glasgow in the British Isles.

### CHAPTER II

#### BIRMINGHAM, ASBURY'S TRAINING GROUND

John Wesley passed through Birmingham as early as 1738, two months before his 'warmed heart' experience, but it was not until five years later that Methodist preaching commenced there. The first tiny society was formed by Charles Wesley on 26th June, 1743, and the

early years were very hard going. When Charles Wesley preached in the Bull Ring the following February not only did the mob pelt him with stones and dirt from the cobbled streets, and with turnips from the gutter, but the bells of nearby St. Martin's were set ringing to drown his voice. At the time Birmingham was a market-town of about 25,000 inhabitants. It increased threefold during the following fifty years, but did not become the manufacturing and commercial capital of the Midlands until well on into the 19th century. Until St. Philip's Church (later the Cathedral) was built in 1715, there was only one parish church, and even in 1743 St. Philip's was still practically in the country, its tower (modelled on that of St. Paul's Cathedral) being an outstanding landmark visible for miles around.

During the early years of persecution the few staunch Methodist worshippers graduated from the open-air to a garret, and thence to a lowly lean-to building in Steel House Lane. About 1761 they hired a disused theatre off Moor Street, and to this playhouse-preaching house came Thomas Rankin in March, 1773, to receive his last instructions from Wesley before setting out as a missionary to America. Like most of the early Methodist buildings in Birmingham, this old preaching-house has disappeared. Its site was at the junction of Albert Street and Fazeley Street.

With an expanding population a larger chapel was necessary, and in 1782 Wesley preached his last sermon in the converted playhouse, on the following Sunday opening a new chapel in Cherry Street. This was quickly followed by one in Bradford Street in 1786 and another in Belmont Row in 1788. Of these only a rather decrepit Belmont Row now remains.

It is not in the almost fruitless search for early monuments of Methodism in Birmingham itself, however, that the pilgrim comes here, nor yet to see the monument of modern Methodism, the great Central Hall in Corporation Street, erected in 1903. Rather is it because Birmingham is the natural rail centre for the 'Black Country' generally, from which Francis Asbury went forth to become America's 'Prophet of the Long Road'.

#### WEST BROMWICH, BIRTHPLACE OF FRANCIS ASBURY

Francis Asbury was born in August 1745 in a cottage near old Hamstead bridge, near the present Hamstead and Great Barr railway station. Like most of the scenes familiar to him in childhood, his birthplace has been swept away. The tiny four-roomed cottage in which he spent most of his childhood, however, has been preserved as by a miracle, taken over by the Corporation of West Bromwich. We are thus able to imagine Asbury's devout mother as in later years he would picture her, 'by a large window poring over a book hours together'.

We can imagine him, also, copying Elizabeth Asbury's studious example, and 'prying into the Bible by twinkling firelight', until she would rebuke him with the words, 'Frank, you will spoil your eyes'. Although a modern grate now hides the steps into the broad chimney up which the sweep's boy would climb, inside the cupboards on either side can still be seen the built-in wooden seats which flanked the open hearth, seats upon which young Frank himself sat for long hours studying the Scriptures. He was an apt scholar, reading his Bible at six, and 'greatly delighting in the historical part of it'. His parents sent him to school at Snails Green, about a mile away along the road leading north from Great Barr to Walsall, paying a shilling a week for his tuition. His master here eventually so terrorized the little 'Methodist parson', as he was already nicknamed, that at thirteen he was taken away and sent into service for a few unhappy months before being apprenticed at Forge Mill. From this mill the newly-arrived Mr. Foxall had apparently sought out the Methodist services that were already being held in the little cottage.

After some breaking-in by his mother at her fortnightly women's meetings, Francis himself began to conduct the services in his own home, and also in the home of his great friend Edward Hand of Sutton Coldfield. It is well known how from these humble beginnings he became a local preacher, as 'a youth not quite out of his 'teens, with a voice like the roaring of a lion' (as a contemporary expressed it). In 1766 he was accepted as an itinerant preacher, was admitted into 'Full Connexion' in 1768, and in 1771 offered himself for America. Yet in spite of his unique importance in American Methodism, particularly after his ordination in 1784, he never forgot his old Staffordshire haunts. He kept in constant and tender touch with his ageing parents, who were eventually laid to rest in the churchyard of Great Barr parish church—a mile and a half north of Great Barr itself.

#### STRATFORD UPON AVON—HOME OF SHAKESPEARE

From the birthplace of a famous American we travel to that of perhaps the most famous Englishman, William Shakespeare. We approach by way of Warwick, an ancient county town famous for its cattle, originally erected in 915 A.D., but rebuilt during the 14th century. Although Stratford-on-Avon is also a very ancient town, its chief claim to fame is that here William Shakespeare was born in 1564. Among many places of interest which if time permitted one would wish to visit are the birthplace of his wife, Ann Hathaway, at nearby Shottery, Holy Trinity Church, where he was buried, the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, and several other places. Americans have a special meeting-place in Harvard House, where lived Katharine Rogers, later to become the mother of John Harvard, founder of the famous University, to which the restored 1596 house was presented in 1909.

### CHAPTER III OXFORD AND ON TO BRISTOL

Continuing south for nearly 40 miles we come to one of the most beautiful cities in England, Oxford, whose first mention is in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle of 912 A.D., as the "ford for oxen." The University may have developed from the monastic schools of St. Frideswide's priory, but no-one knows. It is first mentioned in the 12th century, and gradually the number of colleges grew, each of them with a great measure of independence, with Heads, Fellows, and Undergraduates.

The Oxford in which John and Charles Wesley spent about twenty of the most formative years of their lives, in which George Whitefield was a poor servitor at Pembroke College and Thomas Coke a lordly gentleman commoner at Jesus College, was not much different from the Oxford familiar to Samuel Wesley senior, the future rector of Epworth, who was entered at Exeter College in 1683 as a *pauper scholaris*, and left during the famous trial of the seven bishops in 1688. It is probably best seen through the eyes of a contemporary of the Wesley's Thomas Salmon:

'The whole Town, including the Suburbs, is a Mile in length from East to West, and almost as much in Breadth from North to South . . . The Gates on the East and North are still left standing, tho' the Walls are almost intirely demolished, as well as the Fortifications erected by the Royalists in the Time of the Civil Wars: The Castle also, which stands at the West End of the Town, no longer deserves that Name, the Ruins whereof now serve for the County Gaol, as the North Gate (which has obtained the Name of *Bocardo*) does for the Town Gaol. . . .

'The principal Street of this City runs from East to West, almost the Length of the Town, but under different Names: The East End goes by the Name of *High-Street*, the Middle of it is called the *Old Butcher-Row*,<sup>3</sup> and the West End *Castle-Street*: The East End forms a very spacious Street, clean and well paved, and illuminated with [very primitive oil] lamps in the Winter: It is adorned with the Front of three fine Colleges, viz. *University*, *Queen's*, and *All-Souls*, the University Church of *St. Mary's* and the new beautiful Church of *All-Saints*,<sup>4</sup> but the private Houses are meanly built, and very much diminish the Beauty of it. I do not remember six Houses in this fine Street built either with Brick or Stone. . . . Another Thing, which takes off much from its Beauty, is the Butcher-Market, held here every *Wednesday* and *Saturday*. . . . Another great Nuisance is

<sup>3</sup> Now Queen Street.

<sup>4</sup> Erected 1706-8 by Dean Aldrich.

the Dirt, which People bring out of their Houses, and lay in the Middle of the Street in Heaps every Morning.<sup>5</sup>

Our picture then must be of a fair-sized city in which ugliness jostled beauty, and learning struggled with industry and dirt, just as there was a traditional and sometimes bitter rivalry leading to blood-thirsty battles between Town and Gown. There were one or two broad streets, but for the most part they were narrow and paved with coarse cobbles, and down the centre ran a 'kennel' or gutter overflowing with all kinds of refuse.

#### OXFORD UNIVERSITY

The university itself was (and is) quite different in its operation from most modern universities, which usually consist of a central university block together with separate buildings appropriated to the various departments of learning, and also halls of residence. Oxford and Cambridge universities, however, consist of a number of colleges which are complete educational units in themselves, each with chapel, hall, and library, but incorporated to form a university, and linked by one or two communal buildings such as (in the case of Oxford) the Bodleian Library, the Sheldonian Theatre, and the University Church of St. Mary the Virgin.

#### LINCOLN COLLEGE

The Methodist visitor to Oxford will almost certainly wish to start his pilgrimage from John Wesley's Rooms in Lincoln College, the headquarters of the 'Holy Club', the foreshadowing of the Methodist Revival. Wesley's own estimate of the importance of his Oxford training may be gathered from the fact that to the end of his days—even in his will—he spoke of himself as 'Sometime Fellow of Lincoln College', and in 1772 wrote to his brother Charles:

'I often cry out, "Vitae me redde priori".<sup>6</sup> Let me be again an Oxford Methodist! I am often in doubt whether it would not be best for me to resume all my Oxford rules, great and small. I did then walk closely with God and redeem the time. But what I have been doing these thirty years?'

#### JOHN WESLEY'S ROOMS

Walking down High Street ["The High"] from Carfax [from "quatre voies," "four roads"] Oxford's traffic hub, the first turning on the left is Turl Street ["The Turl"], which contains three colleges, the first on the right being Lincoln. It has long been thought that Wesley lived in

<sup>5</sup> *The Foreigner's Companion*, 1748.

<sup>6</sup> 'Give me back my former life!'

the block separating the two quadrangles, and in 1926 a bronze bust (copied from one in the National Portrait Gallery, supposed to be by Roubillac) was placed outside near one of the windows as tribute. Present on the occasion was Bishop J. W. Hamilton, who was largely responsible for an appeal to American Methodism whereby Wesley's supposed rooms in Lincoln were beautifully restored. The recent researches of V. H. H. Green, himself a Fellow of Lincoln, show that Wesley occupied two sets of rooms (one over the main entrance), but neither of them the traditional rooms. No matter; the important thing is the realisation that in this building he lived, that in rooms like these Oxford Methodism developed.

#### THE METHODIST'S

John Wesley was elected a Fellow of Lincoln on 17th March, 1726, six months after his ordination as deacon. He was twenty-two years old. On the foundation of Lincoln were twelve Fellows in addition to the Rector, and the small emolument attached to the Fellowship was sufficient to render a man of Wesley's simple tastes financially independent. This Fellowship, indeed, was of real importance in the rise of Methodism, for it freed Wesley from the circumscribing duties of a parochial ministry, while at the same time giving him (as he at any rate believed) the right to preach in *any* parish. For three years his residence at Lincoln alternated with spells of service as his father's curate at Epworth or Wroot. In the interval his brother Charles, his Junior by five years, had become serious-minded, applying himself both to his studies and to his devotions. During the early months of 1729 Charles gathered around him a tiny group of likeminded undergraduates, and soon they were laughingly pointed out as 'Methodists'. When John Wesley returned in November, 1729, he became the natural leader of the group, and these rooms of his their headquarters. Under his guidance the members not only studied the Latin and Greek classics and the Greek New Testament, but the teaching and practices of the Early Church, and the claims of personal religion. This led not only to their taking Holy Communion every week, but also to works of mercy in the Oxford prisons and workhouses. Soon the nicknames flew thick and fast—'Bible Moths', 'Sacramentarians', 'The Enthusiasts', 'The Holy Club', and many others. Christ Church and Merton were full of gibing students, but the focus of Oxford's scorn was Lincoln, for was not the chief Methodist a Fellow there? Already Lincoln had a reputation for careful learning in an age of levity, but Methodism strongly reinforced this reputation. One of the senior Fellows, Richard Hutchins, later to become Rector of the college, also threw in his lot with the little group, as did his more famous pupil James Hervey, author of *Meditations among the Tombs* and other sentimental best-sellers of the day.



## LINCOLN CHAPEL

Lincoln chapel is much as it was in Wesley's time, and the square pulpit from which he regularly preached is still preserved. The library which he used has been transformed into living rooms, though the fittings were incorporated in the new library. In the College Register, Matriculation Register, Buttery Books, and other documents, may be seen entries relating to Wesley, including his resignation from his Fellowship on 1st June, 1751.

## DR. THOMAS COKE

Farther along the Turl on the left is Jesus College, since its foundation in 1571 by Dr. Hugh Price of Brecon a predominantly Welsh college. Its chief claim to popular regard is a huge silver punch bowl capable of holding ten gallons, presented in 1732. Methodist interest, however, focuses on the college's association with Dr. Thomas Coke (1747-1814), the first Bishop of American Methodism, the Father of Methodist Missions and, like the college founder, a son of Brecon. Coke matriculated at Jesus in 1764, as a gentleman commoner, took his B.A. degree in 1768 (when he left Oxford), and his M.A. in 1770. In 1775, shortly before he met Wesley and threw in his lot with Methodism, he was awarded the Doctorate of Civil Law.

## SAMUEL WESLEY

On the opposite side of the Turl is Exeter College. Here it was that young Samuel Wesley, having thrown off the yoke of the Dissenters, began the University education that was long reserved for Churchmen. He 'footed it' from London in August 1683 with forty-five shillings in his pocket, working his passage at Exeter as a servitor. One of the expedients by which he preserved his financial equilibrium—as in later years he was to secure the living of Epworth—was by writing verse. Here he penned his first and strangest volume—*Maggots; or, Poems on Several Subjects, never before Handled. By a Schollar*. Strangely enough, his undergraduate days heralded those of his more famous sons, being distinguished by errands of mercy to the prisoners in the Castle. Not that he neglected his studies, for when in the Revolution year of 1688 he obtained his degree, he was the only student of Exeter to do so. At least one of the Oxford Methodists also belonged to Exeter—Thomas Broughton, later (1743-1777) the Secretary of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, in which capacity he supervised missions in India and Georgia, as well as publishing Bibles, books and tracts.

## THE LIBRARY

Between Exeter and Lincoln Colleges runs Brasenose Lane, with its central 'kennel' or gutter so typical of Wesley's day. Radcliffe Square,

at the other end, shows both 'kennel' and the cobble paving which formed the main street surfaces in the 18th century—trying for thinly-shod feet, but very hard-wearing. Radcliffe Camera, the great library building in the centre, was not there during Wesley's residence, but the Bodleian Library on the left was. Here Wesley studied long after he had forsaken the life of an Oxford don.

## THE UNIVERSITY CHURCH

At the south side of Radcliffe Square is the Church of St. Mary the Virgin, where in ancient times degrees were conferred, and which has remained the University Church. It was here about the time of his ordination in 1725 that John Wesley made his first convert, young Robin Griffiths, son of the vicar of Broadway. And from St. Mary's Pulpit<sup>7</sup> sounded forth in trumpet tones the distinctive message of the Methodist revival, to the consternation of University dignitaries accustomed to the cold official sermons normally dealing with some recondite point of morals or philosophy. Seven times John Wesley was called upon to preach the University Sermon, until 24th August, 1744, he shut himself out from further invitation by lashing Oxford officialdom in a sermon on 'Scriptural Christianity'.

On this occasion, at any rate, Wesley must have been conscious of a spiritual link through nearly two centuries with Archbishop Cranmer, who here in St. Mary's had boldly withdrawn his recantation of the Protestant faith, and had gone to the stake smiling. Wesley could still see, as we can, the marks in the pillar opposite the pulpit where the scaffold was erected for Cranmer's expected submission. Charles Wesley also preached the University Sermon on at least two occasions, his utterance in 1742 being the famous 'Awake, thou that sleepest' sermon, which passed through fifty editions.

## GEORGE WHITEFIELD

Not only was St. Mary's the centre of Methodism's declaration of its evangelical principles. It was also the focus of its sacramental witness. George Whitefield tells how the statutory Communion service here at the beginning of each term was so neglected 'that very few masters, and no undergraduates but the Methodists, attended upon it'. He himself had watched them 'go through a ridiculing crowd to receive the holy Eucharist at St. Mary's'—and had secretly envied them. At length, in 1734, Whitefield was sought out by Charles Wesley, to whom he had sent a message by 'a poor aged apple-woman' about an attempted suicide in one of the workhouses. The apple-woman providentially disobeyed his instructions about not mentioning his name, and so Charles Wesley sent Whitefield an invitation to breakfast at Christ Church the following morning. The conversation, and the evangelical books loaned

<sup>7</sup> The present pulpit dates only from 1827.

to him, confirmed Whitefield's desire to link himself with the despised Methodists. His public witness to this fact was at the University Church:

'I had no sooner received the sacrament publicly on a week-day at St. Mary's, but I was set up as a mark for all the polite students that knew me to shoot at.'

To strengthen him in this hour of trial, however, Charles Wesley accompanied Whitefield from St. Mary's back to his rooms in Pembroke College. We can still follow in the trembling but triumphant Whitefield's footsteps, for the pair would almost certainly march back along the High to Carfax, and then down St. Aldate's on the left to where on the right Pembroke stands behind St. Aldate's Church. Most pilgrims to Pembroke seek the rooms of Dr. Samuel Johnson, who lived over the gateway tower from 1728 to 1731. Whitefield joined what Johnson called the "nest of singing birds" the following year. In 1736 he was ordained, and quickly commenced his great work as a freelance Methodist evangelist in Great Britain and America. Pembroke chapel was built during Whitefield's first year there, and he would be present at its consecration by Dr. Potter, the Bishop of Oxford.

#### CHRIST CHURCH

From Pembroke (where Whitefield's rooms are unidentified) we cross St. Aldate's to Christ Church, where each of the three Wesley brothers commenced his Oxford career—Samuel (1711-14), John (1720-26), and Charles (1726-35). The visitor entering under the famous Tom Tower into the spacious quadrangle cannot but be struck by the fact that everything about Christ Church seems to be on a lavish scale. Although we cannot point out the rooms occupied by any of the Wesley brothers, the magnificence of the surroundings will prove partial atonement. In the 18th century Christ Church had a high repute not only as the architectural showplace of the university, but as its chief centre of learning. Among many other things the pilgrim should see the great dining hall, with its carved oak roof and its huge fireplace facing each other across the centre, and its magnificent collection of historical portraits. Just inside the doorway, numbered (perhaps symbolically) '1', is the portrait by Romney of John Wesley.

William Morgan, one of the first three Oxford Methodists, was also a Christ Church undergraduate, as was John Gambold, the member of the Holy Club and who later became a Moravian bishop.

#### JOHN AND CHARLES WESLEY ORDAINED

Linked inseparably with the college itself is the Cathedral, which also serves as the college chapel. In this beautiful Norman shrine the Wesley brothers worshipped regularly, and all the Oxford Methodists

made it a rule to receive Holy Communion here every Sunday when they were not able to receive at their own colleges. In this cathedral John Wesley was ordained by Bishop Potter for his tremendous spiritual task, as Deacon on 19th September, 1725, and as Priest on 22nd September, 1728. Here also Charles Wesley was ordained Deacon by Bishop Potter, on 21st September 1735, in order that he might sail to Georgia as a clergyman, being ordained Priest a week later by the Bishop of London.

#### CHAPTER IV BRISTOL AND ON TO LONDON

We leave the city of dreaming spires for another of England's industrial centres, and another famous seaport—Bristol. When John Wesley first rode into Bristol one Saturday evening towards the end of March, 1739, he emerged with his weary horse from the forest of Kingswood to see nestling snugly among gentle hills a city of fewer than 40,000 inhabitants—a city of masts, and steeples, and great conical glass-factories. Though computed to be about one-tenth the size of London, it had about one-seventh the amount of London's trade, and indeed was the third largest city in the kingdom. Its importance in the growth of Methodism can hardly be over-estimated. During a ministry which entailed constant travel John Wesley spent more time here than in any other place except London, the equivalent of over six years, usually in spells of a week or a fortnight at a time. Between 1749 and 1771 it was the home and headquarters of his brother Charles. Many of the characteristic features and figures of Methodism originated here, and Bristol proved the natural starting-point for Methodist preaching, not only in the West of England, but also in the Western hemisphere.

#### THE 'NEW ROOM'

Standing outside the 'New Room' on the right of Broadmead, we shall perhaps read the inscriptions on the gateway with some impatience, having caught a glimpse through the railings of the only equestrian statue in the world of John Wesley. In the background on the right we see the preachers' stable, where was carried out Wesley's injunction that every preacher must 'see with his own eyes his horse rubbed, fed, and bedded'.

#### THE FIRST LICENSED METHODIST BUILDING

Wesley set in hand the hasty building of this his first chapel early in 1739, during his first visit to Bristol, preaching in the shell on Sunday, 3rd June. It was built too hastily, however, and in 1748 was pulled down and rebuilt on an enlarged scale, only the side wall nearest to the Horsefair being left standing,

to form the north end of the new chapel. The building was licensed for public worship at the Quarter Sessions on 17th October, 1748, under the provisions of the Toleration Act of 1689, which was intended to protect 'their Majesties' Protestant subjects, dissenting from the Church of England. It was the first Methodist building so to be licensed, since the Methodists did not reckon themselves Dissenters. In effect this was one of the first breaches with the Established Church, and Charles Wesley endorsed the document<sup>8</sup>—'I Protest against this needless useless senseless License'. Disputes over this same question of loyalty to the Anglican Church led to the disuse of the New Room not long after Wesley's death, when it came into the hands of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists, from whom it was bought in 1929 by Edmund S. Lamplough. He had it carefully restored, under the skilled direction of Sir George H. Oatley, and presented it to the Wesleyan Methodist Church.

#### OLDEST METHODIST CHAPEL—SECOND METHODIST CONFERENCE

It is indeed a moving experience to enter this oldest Methodist chapel in the world and to find it much in its original state, and to sense in this bare simplicity the cloud of unseen witnesses, the rare aura of sanctity that clings to many a parish church but rarely to the younger temples of Methodism. Facing the visitor is the double-decker pulpit from which the Wesleys, John Fletcher, Thomas Coke, and a loyal sequence of Methodist preachers proclaimed the Gospel.<sup>9</sup> Below is the almost square communion table from which (in defiance of ecclesiastical law, it must be admitted) they administered the Lord's Supper to hundreds at a time, and occasionally to over a thousand, so that the morning service was protracted far into the afternoon. Somewhere at the north end was the little room where Class Meetings arose in 1742 from Captain Foy's suggestion of groups of members subscribing 1d. a week towards the debt on the building—though Wesley soon saw their immense spiritual possibilities. Probably in the same room was held in 1745 the second Methodist Conference. Seventeen other Bristol Conferences followed in Wesley's lifetime, these later ones all being held in the premises as we now see them. They included momentous occasions such as that in August 1771, when a young ex-blacksmith of 26 offered himself for America. His name was Francis Asbury. The original old clock to the right of the preacher also has its link with America, for apparently Bristol Methodists sent over its fellow<sup>10</sup> to the first Methodist chapel in New York.

<sup>8</sup> Preserved in the Methodist Publishing House, London.

<sup>9</sup> The upper pulpit is actually a reconstruction, though this would never be realized by the uninitiated.

<sup>10</sup> Not an exact replica, as has been erroneously stated.

Perhaps of even greater fascination for many are the living quarters over the church, entered either from the north courtyard (where stands a lifesize bronze statue of Charles Wesley) or from the gallery. Through the lantern light John Wesley could on occasion observe the demeanour of his preachers in the pulpit below, while the preachers themselves as will be observed, spent some of their time in scribbling with a diamond on the windowpanes. At the bare deal dining table in the centre of the Common Room they would sit down to a frugal meal seasoned with rich Methodist fellowship.<sup>11</sup> The rooms around the Common Room are dedicated to leaders who had important connections with the chapel, and contain period furniture and miscellaneous relics, some items being of great historical interest. So far as is known, however, no room was actually associated with any particular individual, except those in the far corner, which seem regularly to have been used by John Wesley himself as study and bedroom, the bedroom having a special desk slope fitted into the window for his use.

John Wesley's Chapel, Broadmead, is open to visitors from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. except on Wednesdays and Sundays. It also provides a centre of administration for the busy Bristol District of the Methodist Church. Not being in regular use for worship, however, except by the Welsh congregation, it has no assured source of income and is mainly dependent upon the generosity of visitors for its upkeep. These are invited to enrol as 'Friends of the New Room' by contributing 5s. per annum. Those who wish to study in greater detail the associations of this shrine would do well to scan the 'Historical Tables' flanking the entrance, copies of which are also obtainable in pamphlet form.

#### ST. JAMES PARISH CHURCH

There is a chance record in Wesley's *Journal* for 1745 that 'All our family were at St. James's, our parish church'. Throughout their Bristol ministry the Wesley brothers regarded St. James's as their spiritual home, and would accompany the New Room family there for Holy Communion whenever possible. In the footsteps of that family—preachers, housekeeper, schoolmaster, maids, children—we leave the New Room by the Horsefair exit, turn left, and then pass up St. James's Churchyard on the right, across Bond Street, and along St. James's Parade. Before entering the church, however, we turn left into the gardens which were formerly the churchyard, to see the memorial to Charles Wesley's children. St. James's itself provides a magnificent example of Norman work, proudly claiming to be the oldest church in Bristol, founded in 1129. The registers, dating from 1559, include some rather quaint records such as the christening on 17th August,

<sup>11</sup> The grandfather clock was not there at the time, though it is of real Methodist interest, having come from the Epworth rectory.

1752, of Charles Wesley's firstborn as 'John Wesley of Charles & of Sarah a Precher in the Horsfaier'.

Retracing our steps from St. James's we follow the route paced on thousands of occasions by Charles Wesley between the New Room and his home. From St. James's Parade we turn into St. James's Barton on the left and up Barton Street. At the top two tall brick houses stand slightly back on the left, on the farther of which is a tablet announcing:

#### CHARLES WESLEY'S HOUSE

'Charles Wesley's House. Open to visitors, Mondays to Fridays 2.30 till 4.30 p.m. Other times by arrangement.'

In this home, consecrated by family prayer and a hymn of dedication on 1st September, 1749, all Charles Wesley's children were born. The firstborn died of smallpox, and Mrs. Charles Wesley herself was so ravaged by the same loathsome disease that when she finally recovered the nineteen years' difference of age between herself and her husband was no longer noticeable. Here the Methodist preachers loved to partake of Mrs. Wesley's hospitality; they would listen while she sang at the harpsichord from Handel's oratorios, and marvel at the playing of those infant prodigies, Charles and Samuel. And in this house—tradition says in the attic at the front—Charles Wesley senior composed many hundreds of his nearly seven thousand hymns.

#### PORTLAND, KINGSWOOD SCHOOL

We would like to visit other centres in this area if time permitted. Captain Thomas Webb, one of the pioneers of Methodism in America, is buried in the vault of Portland Chapel, which he helped to build. Within recent months worship has been discontinued at Portland because of dwindling congregations, and the society has joined forces with that at Victoria, the University Church. In a brickyard down Avon Street, at 4 p.m. on April 2nd 1739, John Wesley deliberately adopted the unconventional method of field-preaching, which was to revolutionise the religious life of Britain. A few miles away the two Wesleys preached to the neglected colliers of Kingswood, and in 1739 founded several schools for them, which in 1748 were replaced by his famous Kingswood School for the sons of preachers; a century later the school was moved to Bath.

#### BATH—AN ANCIENT CITY

Along the road frequently travelled by Wesley we now briefly visit Bath, an ancient city whose famous baths were in fact built by the Romans in A.D. 54, but which reached its peak of fame in John Wesley's day, when most of the charming houses and public buildings were erected. The "Circus" was almost certainly built on the site where

Wesley was preaching in the open air when Beau Nash, 'the King of Bath,' unsuccessfully tried to warn him away from the city.

#### SALISBURY—HOME OF MAGNIFICENT CATHEDRAL

From Bath we travel through another beautiful city on the Avon, Salisbury, the spire of whose magnificent cathedral is the highest in England, 404 feet—not quite as high as the Washington monument, though it was completed in 1320, some 600 years earlier. From Salisbury we retrace our way north through rolling country, where Ancient Britons frequently lived in hilltop communities enclosed within stockade fences, farming on terraces called "linchets," burying their important dead in round and in long barrows.

#### STONEHENGE—THE MYSTERY

And so to one of the great monuments and greatest mysteries of the ancient world—Stonehenge, on Salisbury Plain. If you can, read *Stonehenge Decoded*, by Gerald S. Hawkins of the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory: he proves that each major stone is aligned in a peculiar manner with the sun or the moon, that the aubrey holes were probably an eclipse predictor, and that Stonehenge was a sophisticated astronomical observatory used by three different groups of people beginning about 1900 B.C.

From Stonehenge we journey to London, where there should be a little opportunity to catch our breath, to do some shopping, and to make our individual selections for visiting the many possible places of interest both Methodist, national, and international.

#### CHAPTER V

#### LONDON, GENERAL HEADQUARTERS AND EARLY METHODISM WESLEY'S CHAPEL

The pilgrim to Methodist shrines in London will almost certainly make for Wesley's Chapel, the cathedral of British Methodism, opened by Wesley himself in 1778. Here is such a wealth of historical associations that even the 600-page *History* written by G. J. Stevenson in 1872 leaves very much unsaid, particularly as there have been considerable alterations and additions since, including the transformation of Wesley's House into a unique Methodist museum.

#### THE FOUNDARY

Wesley's Chapel, City Road, is most easily reached from Moorgate or Old Street Underground stations, though many 'buses serve the area'. When Wesley began his ministry, this district was on the outskirts of the city, which stretched only from Hyde Park to Whitechapel,

a strip about four miles long and a mile wide. Even with the associated City of Westminster, the Borough of Southwark, and the surrounding villages its population was under a million—against Norwich's 45,000 and Bristol's 40,000. In Wesley's day Moorgate was Bunhill Row. Walking north from the site of the future Underground station one would pass on the right three great open spaces, for the most part waste ground: Moorfields, bounded on the south along London Wall by Bethlehem Hospital, the famous 'Bedlam' for the insane; Middle Moorfields; and Upper Moorfields, almost coterminous with the present Finsbury Square. Could the modern traveller transport himself through time as well as through space to any Sunday during the summer of 1739 he might find himself jostled by huge crowds making for the latest form of public entertainment, a Methodist 'field-preaching'. In April of that year George Whitefield had preached in Upper Moorfields with spectacular results, and at 6.45 a.m. on 17th June John Wesley also preached there to six or seven thousand people on 'Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters'—the first of many occasions, not only in that year but for forty years to come. As winter approached, however, he invited his open-air congregation to join him in the ruins of a building near the north-west corner of Upper Moorfields. This was the old Foundery in which the King's cannon had been cast until, in 1716, it was wrecked by an explosion. Buying and repairing the derelict Foundery, Wesley soon transformed it into the headquarters of London Methodism. It was equipped not only for preaching services and official gatherings such as Methodist Conferences (the first of which was held here in 1744) but to serve as day-school, almshouse, dispensary, publishing house, and home for Wesley and his preachers—a home, too, where Wesley's mother spent her last days.

#### BURIAL GROUND

As the pilgrim walks north from Finsbury Square up Tabernacle Street (Windmill Row in Wesley's time) the site of the Foundery is on the right between Worship Street and Bonhill Street. Continuing up Tabernacle Street, passing on the left a tablet commemorating the Foundery affixed to the rear of the former Epworth Press, we reach the burial-ground at the rear of Wesley's Chapel. The obelisk to Wesley's memory is to the right of the main gate. Just north of Wesley's Chapel formerly stood George Whitefield's first 'Tabernacle', from which the street received its name.

#### PUBLISHING HOUSE

The entrance to Wesley's Chapel is in City Road, conveniently approached down Epworth Street, on the left of which until recently was located the Epworth Press. Tracing its origins to the band-room at the Foundery where Wesley sold his multitudinous publications, the Book Room moved in turn from its headquarters in Wesley's Chapel across

the road to No. 14 City Road (which functioned as 'The Conference Office'), and thence to the huge premises at 25-35 City Road, which include the territory (No. 27), where Dr. Thomas Coke maintained his own publishing house. The publishing headquarters of British Methodism was moved in 1969 to 25 Marylebone Road, and its Book Shop to the Methodist Youth Department in Muswell Hill. Most of this building is now rented out by the Methodist Church, but the basement still houses the Methodist Archives and Research Centre. Here may be found most of the Connexional archives of Methodism, and in the strong rooms are the treasured literary relics of the Wesley's, including the wonderful collection of John Wesley's manuscript shorthand diaries, the raw material for his famous *Journal*. Such amazing historical riches are accumulated here that it would be quite useless to attempt a summary, for which the pilgrim is referred to the 200-page *Catalogue of Wesleyana* published in 1921—though much has been added since. A few of the more interesting items are on display in the Museum here, including the magnificent Botteley collection of Wesley pottery.

#### THE NEW CHAPEL

Turning right along City Road from Epworth Street we come to Wesley's Chapel. Again it is impossible to furnish an adequate description of the treasures and associations of this historic shrine. It also seems unnecessary, for this is one of the places which the pilgrim will not dream of missing. Opened by John Wesley in 1778, 'the New Chapel' took over most of the functions of the old Foundery, which soon returned to its derelict state. Successive alterations have made Wesley's Chapel more commodious without destroying its original appearance. The sanctuary is rich in memorials to great names in Methodism: John and Charles Wesley, John Fletcher, Thomas Coke, Adam Clarke, and a host of others. Fletcher's font, reading-desk, and study chair may be seen. The marble pillars were given at the centenary of Wesley's death in 1891 by Methodist Churches throughout the world, replacing the ship's masts presented to Wesley by George III, which may be seen in the lobby. Some wonderful stained glass windows draw our eyes. Perhaps the feature of chief interest is Wesley's own pulpit, while the lectern and some treasured old forms are relics of the Foundery. More important still, the shrine continues to be a living centre of Methodist worship, fellowship, and service, in which the pilgrim will certainly desire to share.

#### DR. THOMAS COKE

The house adjoining on the south was completed after the chapel itself, and Wesley took up residence there in 1779 at the age of 76. In this house on 14th February, 1784, he held the momentous interview with Dr. Thomas Coke which led to Coke's being ordained as the first 'Superintendent' of American Methodism. Here Wesley in

those early hours of prayer gained spiritual strength for his tremendous labours and responsibilities. In the bedroom he finished his earthly pilgrimage on 2nd March, 1791. Scores of intimate personal relics help us to recapture the neat little figure of the old man, as with quill pen he indites at his bureau or at the quaint reading-chair one of his thousands of straight-to-the-point letters to a host of correspondents, writing with one eye on the clock lest he be late for any of his full round of engagements. Or perhaps he sits reading by the flickering light of his study candle, though he must not remain up too late, for has he not an all-important appointment with God in that tiny prayer-room at 4 a.m.?

The tide of London's population has washed around what was in Wesley's later years the suburban 'New Chapel in City Road', and has now somewhat receded, so that maintaining an effective Methodist witness here involves many problems, particularly financial. Throughout the world, however, are many 'Friends of Wesley's Chapel,' who help to maintain the work and witness of this historic shrine.

#### NONCONFORMIST BURIAL GROUND OF BUNHILL FIELDS

Across the road from Wesley's Chapel is the famous Nonconformist burial-ground of Bunhill Fields, where lie the remains of 100,000 Dissenters, including great names such as John Bunyan, Daniel Defoe, Isaac Watts, and William Blake, while George Fox lies in the Quaker burial-ground nearby. To Bunhill Fields most Methodists come, however, to stand by the grave of the mother of the Wesleys, who died at the Foundery on 23rd July 1742, and was buried by her son John by the side of the left hand path, not far from Bunyan's tomb. Bunhill Fields, after being closed for burials for a hundred years, is now laid out as a garden of rest, though the gravestones of outstanding people like Susanna Wesley remain.

#### SUSANNA WESLEY'S BIRTHPLACE

Turning right along Old Street, and then half a mile south along Shoreditch High Street and Bishopsgate, we turn left into Spital Square, and then down a tiny opening on the right into Spital Yard. At the end is a three-storied house whose old bricks have been refaced. It bears a marker inscribed: 'In this House Susanna Annesley, Mother of John Wesley, was born January 20th 1669'. Here that famous Puritan, Dr. Samuel Annesley, lived after he had been ejected from the living of St. Giles Cripplegate and became the minister of the Meeting House in St. Helen's Place. Susanna, we are told, was the 24th child of her mother and the 25th of her father. Her childhood home was purchased by the Methodist Church, and extensively renovated to serve as the headquarters of the Social and Moral Welfare Section of the Women's Fellowship.

#### GREAT ST. HELEN'S CHURCH

Returning to Bishopsgate and continuing south, on the left, about a quarter of a mile past Liverpool Street Station, hidden away down a narrow passage, stands Great St. Helen's church, one of the focal points of early Methodist preaching and persecution. Originally the church of a priory of Benedictine nuns, it has the unusual feature of a nave divided down the middle in order to separate the nuns from the parishioners, though the actual partition has now been removed. From the old carved oak pulpit John Wesley preached several times in 1738, until on 9th May (before the Aldersgate experience, he it noted), he recorded in his *Journal*:

'I preached at Great St. Helen's, to a very numerous congregation, on "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" My heart was now so enlarged to declare the love of God to all that were oppressed by the devil, that I did not wonder in the least when I was afterwards told, "Sir, you must preach here no more".'

He was not invited again until 1790. Charles Wesley also preached here, and here George Whitefield preached his first sermon in London, in 1736, and also his last before leaving for Georgia in 1737.

#### CHAPTER VI

#### HISTORY UNFOLDS

Taking our directions once more from Wesley's Chapel we go west (left) along Old Street, seeing on our right the peculiar stepped tower, surmounted by a square obelisk with fluted sides, of St. Luke's church, built in 1732. Although the famous type-founder (and acquaintance of Wesley's) William Caslon was buried here, it is more famous as 'our parish church' of Wesley's *Journal*. The Methodists regularly communicated here in the early years of the revival, though Wesley does not appear to have preached in the church until 1778.

#### CHARTER HOUSE

Another quarter of a mile brings us to Goswell Road on the left, leading into Aldersgate Street. On our right down Goswell Road are the remains of the famous Charterhouse, originally a Carthusian monastery deriving its name from an oratory in Chartreuse, France. Sacked by Henry VIII, it became a private house until in 1611 its owner was empowered to turn it into an institution and school for eighty old men and forty boys—later increased to sixty. John Wesley was admitted as one of the scholars in 1714. He suffered severe privations because of bullying, for the seniors robbed the juniors. Between the ages of ten and fourteen he ate little else but bread, though he managed

nevertheless to follow out his father's injunction that he should run around the large playground three times every morning. Throughout his life Wesley retained a very warm corner in his affections for the Charterhouse. The 1939-45 war added terrible damage to the ruins of past centuries, but rebuilding is well in hand to make this once more a worthy sanctuary for old gentlemen, though the school itself has been transferred to Godalming. The beautiful chapel over on the right from the gatehouse escaped complete destruction, and the tablet there to the memory of John Wesley remains unscathed. To enter the Charterhouse the pilgrim should turn right into Charterhouse Street, then take the gravel path across Charterhouse Square to the main entrance under the archway, whose panelled gate with its tiny wicket-gate comes from the 15th century.

#### ST. GILES, CRIPPLE GATE

Continuing down Aldersgate Street we pass on the left the greatest concentration of London's war damage. One of the casualties (at the far end of Jewin Street on the left) was St. Giles, Cripplegate, the burial-place of John Foxe and John Milton, and the scene of Oliver Cromwell's marriage, as well as of Samuel Annesley's ejection for Non-conformity in 1662, since he kept a 'conventicle' at a meeting-house in Little St. Helen's, in addition to serving as vicar of St. Giles's.

### CHAPTER VII

#### WARMED HEART AND A GROWING MOVEMENT

##### ALDERGATE STREET

Farther down on the left, just beyond Maidenhead Court, is the probable site of John Wesley's 'warmed heart', a tablet to that effect being placed on Barclays Bank, No. 28. The actual room was apparently in Hall House, which was almost on Aldersgate Street, though the entrance was from Nettleton Court (now built up) lower down the street. It seems a great pity that some slight uncertainty still exists about the actual site of this epochal experience, and that nothing tangible now remains of that little meeting-place in Aldersgate Street. Yet its abiding memorial is the Methodist Church throughout the world, and as we stand here we marvel with Charles Wesley:

'See how great a flame aspires  
Kindled by a spark of grace!'

And with him we breathe a silent prayer for a similar experience:

'Kindle a flame of sacred love  
On the mean altar of *my* heart!'

Happily there is now no doubt about the place where Charles Wesley himself was converted three days earlier than his brother, and where together they sang 'Where shall my wondering soul begin?' In the footsteps of John Wesley and the 'troop of friends' accompanying him

at 10 p.m. on 24th May, 1738, we walk a hundred yards farther down Aldersgate Street, and cross the road to Little Britain, at the corner of which stands St. Botolph's without Aldersgate.<sup>12</sup> Five doors past Cross Key Court on the right, at No. 12, is the approximate site of the house of John Bray, the brazier who nursed Charles Wesley when he was so desperately ill that his hoped-for return to Georgia as a missionary had to be deferred and then cancelled. Not only did Bray nurse Charles' body back to health, but led him along the path of salvation. A plaque has been placed at the site by the City Corporation.

#### ST. PAUL'S

A quarter of a mile due south of Little Britain is St. Paul's, which John Wesley had visited earlier that memorable day, when Dr. Croft's anthem 'Out of the deep have I called unto Thee' echoed his own heart's cry. In the years to follow he and the members of the Fetter Lane Society looked upon St. Paul's as their parish church, just as St. Luke's was for the Foundery Society. Here Wesley regularly took Holy Communion, and here he complained that 'a considerable part of the congregation are asleep, or talking or looking about, not minding a word the preacher says'.

Although the area around Wesley's Chapel may be explored on foot by the more energetic, other places of Methodist interest in London will demand transportation. A few of the more important are noted here, though it is impracticable in each case to note the most suitable bus-routes or underground lines by which they can best be reached. A good map of London should be secured from London Transport, 55 Broadway, Westminster, S.W.1. Available are free maps and leaflets giving bus services and underground services, and a dollar booklet entitled *Visitor's London*, by H. F. Hutchison.

### CHAPTER VIII

#### FIRST GENERATION METHODISTS

##### 'THE CHAPEL', WEST STREET

In West Street, between Piccadilly Circus and St. Martin's Theatre, may still be seen the first consecrated building to belong to Methodism. This was a Huguenot Chapel taken over by Wesley in 1743 in order to administer communion to his followers. Here thousands of London Methodists received the elements in relays from old silver vessels reverently handled by John and Charles Wesley and listened to sermons preached by the Wesley's George Whitefield, and John Fletcher. While many Methodists attended their parish churches for Holy Communion, here they could partake together at the hands of their own beloved ministers, without incurring ecclesiastical censure. And although other

<sup>12</sup> In Little Britain Benjamin Franklin, as a boy of eighteen, lodged at 3s. 6d. a week when he first came to London seeking work.

consecrated buildings were occasionally loaned or sold by friendly Huguenot pastors or trustees, West Street remained *Par excellence* 'The Chapel' to the first generation of Methodists. A tablet below the large arched windows used to draw the attention of the rare passer-by to this oldest surviving building of London Methodism, but vandalism caused its removal. West Street Chapel has passed through many hands this century, and its future remains uncertain.

### THE CATHEDRAL OF EVANGELISM

St. Mary's parish church, Islington, was the scene of one of the most concentrated efforts of early Methodist evangelism. The Rev. George Stonehouse became vicar here in 1738, and in May of that year he opened his house and pulpit to the Wesleys. Wesley preached there once a month that winter, and Stonehouse apparently considered employing Charles Wesley as his curate. His vestry protested, however, so that eventually he signed an agreement 'to refuse the granting his pulpit to Mr. John Wesley, Mr. Charles Wesley, and Mr. George Whitefield'. Barred from the church, Wesley preached in the vicarage, and then, he says, 'the house being too small for the company, I stood in the garden'. At Islington on 5th January, 1739, he held one of the earliest conferences of Methodist leaders, and here on the ensuing 27th April George Whitefield preached his first open-air sermon in London, Charles Wesley being one of his congregation. Although the church itself has gone, what would appear to be Whitefield's tombstone pulpit still remains in the churchyard, at the south-east corner of which is what we believe to be the old vicarage and its now tiny garden. In spite of the rebellion against Stonehouse, St. Mary's Islington, has now been regarded for over a century as the Cathedral of Evangelism.

### SUBSCRIPTION CONCERTS

Marylebone High Street is an area full of Charles Wesley interest. During the first thirty years of Charles Wesley's married life Bristol was his headquarters, but from 1771 until his death in 1788 the family lived at No. 1 Chesterfield Street, Marylebone, then a growing village on the outskirts of the city. Here were held those series of subscription concerts arranged year after year by Charles Wesley in conjunction with his two musical sons. The concerts were attended for the most part by the nobility, as well as by celebrities like Dr. Samuel Johnson, somewhat to the alarm of the rank-and-file Methodists, while even John Wesley was constrained to say, 'I was a little out of my element among lords and ladies. I love plain music and plain company best.' Here also Charles Wesley penned and found the answer to his last prayerful verses:

'In age and feebleness extreme,  
Who shall a helpless worm redeem?  
Jesus, my only hope Thou art,  
Strength of my failing flesh and heart;  
O could I catch a smile from Thee,  
And drop into eternity!'

Unfortunately the four-storied house itself has long disappeared, and the site has been largely overlooked, though it is now hoped to place a memorial tablet there to the world's greatest hymnwriter. It is reached by turning right off Marylebone High Street into New Cavendish Street, left into Marylebone Street, and right into Wheatley Street (formerly Great Chesterfield Street), the site being on the left between Wesley Street and Westmoreland Street.

## CHAPTER IX

### MAY THEY REST IN PEACE

#### CHARLES WESLEY'S GRAVEYARD

Not far away, on the left of Marylebone High Street near Marylebone Road, is the parish church in whose graveyard Charles Wesley, by his own request, was laid. Though he did not appear to realize the fact, in 1688 his parents had been married in this little church.<sup>13</sup> Here were buried Charles Wesley's widow, aged 96, and their two sons Charles and Samuel, Charles having been organist of the church for many years. Their memorials are still to be seen, but the old church itself has had to be pulled down. The bared foundations are to be preserved in gardens which will incorporate the obelisk and tablet to the memory of Charles Wesley and his family.

#### METHODIST MISSION HOUSE

Along Marylebone Road to the left, almost opposite Madame Tussaud's, stands the magnificent Methodist Mission House, the worthy centre for the world-wide family looking to British Methodism as their mother church. This building also houses the new headquarters of Methodism's Epworth Press.

#### NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

From Marylebone we turn to Westminster, a little over two miles farther south, a variety of interesting routes being available. Possibly we shall manage to look in at the National Portrait Gallery in Trafalgar Square, adjoining the National Gallery. The most well-known of the Wesley portraits here is by Romney (not his original) but perhaps even better is the 'preaching portrait' by Nathaniel Hone, R.A., and we should also see the life-size marble bust of Wesley by that great sculptor, Roubiliac.

<sup>13</sup> Its most famous wedding was that of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett from nearby Wimpole Street.



## WESTMINSTER

To most people Westminster stands for the Houses of Parliament and the Abbey, and to the Abbey at any rate lovers of Methodism should turn in the footsteps of their founder. Though Wesley spoke disparagingly of its 'heaps of unmeaning stone and marble' he did admire the wonderful tomb of Joseph Nightingale by Roubiliac off the north transept, and said 'the marble seems to speak, and the statues appear only not alive.'<sup>14</sup> On the south of the south side is the lovely memorial by Adams-Acton to the Wesleys themselves, and halfway along the south cloister is a memorial stone to the children of their elder brother Samuel. Charles had been a scholar at Westminster School, so that it seems fitting that to him rather than to John fell the honour of briefly proclaiming the message of Methodism in this shrine of the nation's great dead. On 3rd September, 1738, Charles records that he 'preached salvation by faith at Westminster Abbey'.

## LITTLE DEAN'S YARD

A walk along the east cloister of the Abbey brings us into Little Dean's Yard, the building with the inscribed gateway facing us being the 'Big School' itself, formerly a part of the monks' dormitory. In Wesley's day it was divided into upper and lower schools by a curtain hung from an iron bar across the centre—over which on Shrove Tuesday the traditional pancake is still flung to be scrambled for by the scholars. Although the famous hammerbeam roof was destroyed during the blitz, the bar itself has survived. Samuel Wesley junior was master at Westminster from 1716-1734, one of his most promising pupils being his youngest brother Charles, a scholar there from 1716 until as Captain of the School in 1726 he gained one of the studentships to Christ Church, Oxford.

Emerging from Dean's Yard by the archway south of the Abbey, another of Westminster's historic buildings faces us. This is the Westminster Central Hall, opened in 1912 as the crowning achievement of the Million Guineas or Twentieth Century Fund. The bound volumes containing the names of all the subscribers may still be inspected there. It is not only the Methodist Church of Westminster, but the administrative headquarters of British Methodism. By special trust the premises can also be used to house great public meetings. In that capacity the Hall has welcomed world-like gatherings of many kinds, perhaps most well known being the inaugural meetings of the United Nations.

The small church to the north of the Abbey is St. Margaret's, the parish church of the House of Commons; its front pew always set apart for the Speaker. Here is supposed to lie the body of Sir Walter Raleigh. And here Charles Wesley and George Whitefield preached from the pulpit once occupied by Latimer.

<sup>14</sup> Nightingale's wife was the eldest sister of the Countess of Huntingdon.

## LET US SING UNTO THE LORD

### *O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing*

O for a thousand tongues to sing  
My great Redeemer's praise,  
The glories of my God and King,  
The triumphs of his grace!

My gracious Master and my God,  
Assist me to proclaim,  
To spread thro' all the earth abroad  
The honors of thy name.

Charles Wesley

### *Arise, my Soul, Arise*

Arise, my soul, arise;  
Shake off thy guilty fears;  
The bleeding sacrifice  
In my behalf appears;  
Before the throne my surety stands,  
Before the throne my surety stands,  
My name is written on his hands.

My God is reconciled;  
His pardoning voice I hear;  
He owns me for his child;  
I can no longer fear;  
With confidence I now draw nigh,  
With confidence I now draw nigh,  
And, "Father, Abba, Father," cry.

Charles Wesley

### *Jesus, Lover of My Soul*

Jesus, lover of my soul,  
Let me to thy bosom fly,  
While the nearer waters roll,  
While the tempest still is high;  
Hide me, O my Savior, hide,  
Till the storm of life is past;  
Safe into the haven guide;  
O receive my soul at last!

Other refuge have I none;  
Hangs my helpless soul on thee;  
Leave, ah! leave me not alone,  
Still support and comfort me.  
All my trust on thee is stayed;  
All my help from thee I bring;  
Cover my defenseless head  
With the shadow of thy wing.

Charles Wesley

### *A Charge to Keep I have*

A charge to keep I have,  
A God to glorify,  
A never-dying soul to save  
And fit it for the sky.

To serve the present age,  
My calling to fulfill;  
O may it all my powers engage  
To do my Master's will!

Arm me with jealous care,  
As in thy sight to live,  
And O, thy servant, Lord, prepare,  
A strict account to give!

Help me to watch and pray,  
And on thyself rely,  
Assured, if I my trust betray,  
I shall forever die.

Charles Wesley

### *Lord, Speak to Me*

Lord, speak to me, that I may speak  
In living echoes of thy tone;  
As thou has sought, so let me seek  
Thine erring children lost and lone.

O use me, Lord, use even me,  
Just as thou wilt, and when, and where;  
Until thy blessed face I see,  
Thy rest, thy joy, thy glory share.

Frances R. Havergal

### *Soldiers of Christ, Arise*

Soldiers of Christ, arise  
And put your armor on,  
Strong in the strength which  
God supplies  
Through his eternal Son;  
Strong in the Lord of hosts,  
And in his mighty power,  
Who in the strength of Jesus trusts  
Is more than conqueror.

Stand, then, in his great might,  
With all his strength endued;  
But take, to arm you for the fight,  
The panoply of God;  
That, having all things done,  
And all your conflicts passed,  
Ye may o'er-come through Christ alone,  
And stand entire at last.

Charles Wesley

*I Want a Principle Within*

I want a principle within  
Of watchful, godly fear,  
A sensibility of sin,  
A pain to feel it near.  
Help me the first approach to feel  
Of pride or wrong desire,  
To catch the wandering of my will,  
And quench the kindling fire.

Almighty God of truth and love,  
To me thy power impart;  
The burden from my soul remove,  
The hardness from my heart.  
O may the least omission pain  
My re-awakened Soul,  
And drive me to that grace again,  
Which makes the wounded whole.

Charles Wesley

*Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*

Love divine, all loves excelling,  
Joy of heaven, to earth come down;  
Fix in us thy humble dwelling;  
All thy faithful mercies crown!  
Jesus, thou art all compassion,  
Pure, unbounded love thou art;  
Visit us with thy salvation;  
Enter every trembling heart.

Finish, then, thy new creation;  
Pure and spotless let us be.  
Let us see thy great salvation  
Perfectly restored in thee;  
Changed from glory into glory,  
Till in heaven we take our place,  
Till we cast our crowns before thee,  
Lost in wonder, love, and praise.

Charles Wesley

*Christ the Lord Is Risen Today*

Christ the Lord is risen today, Alleluia!  
Sons of men and angels say, Alleluia!  
Raise your joys and triumphs high,  
Alleluia!

Sing, ye heavens, and earth reply,  
Alleluia!

Soar we now where Christ has led,  
Alleluia!

Following our exalted Head, Alleluia!  
Made like him, like him we rise,  
Alleluia!

Ours the cross, the grave, the skies,  
Alleluia!

Charles Wesley

*God of Grace and God of Glory*

God of grace and God of glory,  
On thy people pour thy power;  
Crown thine ancient Church's story;  
Bring her bud to glorious flower,  
Grant us wisdom, Grant us courage,  
For the facing of this hour,  
For the facing of this hour.

Set our feet on lofty places;  
Gird our lives that they may be  
Armored with all Christ-like graces  
In the fight to set men free.  
Grant us wisdom, Grant us courage,  
That we fail not man nor thee,  
That we fail not man nor thee.

Harry Emerson Fosdick

*Blest Be the Tie That Binds*

Blest be the tie that binds  
Our hearts in Christian love;  
The fellowship of kindred minds  
Is like to that above.

We share each other's woes,  
Our mutual burdens bear,  
And often for each other flows  
The sympathizing tear.

John Fawcett



Wesley's Tomb

**FOUND IN OLD SAINT PAUL'S CHURCH,  
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND, DATED 1692**

Go placidly amid the noise and haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence. As far as possible without surrender be on good terms with all persons. Speak your truth quietly and clearly; listen to others, even the dull and ignorant; they too have their story.

Avoid loud and aggressive persons, they are vexations to the spirit. If you compare yourself with others, you may become vain and bitter; for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself. Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans.

Keep interested in your own career, however humble; it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time. Exercise caution in your business affairs; for the world is full of trickery. But let this not blind you to what virtue there is; many persons strive for high ideals; and everywhere life is full of heroism.

Be yourself. Especially, do not feign affection. Neither be cynical about love; for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment it is perennial as the grass.

Take kindly the counsel of the years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth. Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune. But do not distress yourself with imaginings. Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness. Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself.

You are a child of the universe, no less than the trees and the stars; you have a right to be here. And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should.

Therefore be at peace with God, whatever you conceive Him to be, and whatever your labors and aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life keep peace with your soul.

With all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world. Be careful. Strive to be happy.