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EARLY METHODISM AND THE HUGUENOTS

THE year 1985, the tercentenary of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, has been celebrated as Huguenot Heritage Year. There has been something both moving and exciting in the way in which one of the blackest dates in Huguenot history has provided the occasion for so many splendid reminders of the faith and courage of the French protestants, and of the astounding range of their achievements as refugees in the countries to which many thousands of them were forced to flee, not least England.¹ The very word "refugee" is an anglicised French word which came into common use as the result of the flight to our country in the reign of Louis XIV of between 40,000 and 50,000 Huguenots, their settlement being largely confined to the south of the country, in particular London, where up to 30,000 made their homes. Other considerable settlements occurred at places such as Bristol, Canterbury and Norwich, and there were also some substantial Huguenot communities in Ireland.

The social and economic importance of the Huguenots in England is well known. What is less clear is the scale and character of their impact upon the religious and ecclesiastical life of the country, though it is not difficult to surmise what some elements in it were. As living witnesses to the bigotry and intolerance of a repressive Catholic regime they helped to strengthen anti-Catholic feeling. As refugees who had chosen exile in order to preserve the integrity of their faith they set an example to English protestants of courage and commit-

¹ Two major publications on the Huguenots in 1985 were Dr. Robin Gwynn's refreshingly readable and scholarly *Huguenot Heritage* and *The Quiet Conquest*, a superb illustrated catalogue compiled by Tessa Murdoch to accompany the exhibition on the Huguenots which was on show at the Museum of London for several months. Among publications of more local interest may be mentioned Ronald Mayo: *The Huguenots in Bristol* (Bristol Branch of the Historical Association) (1985), and Trevor Bevis: *Strangers in the Fens* (1983), which describes Walloon and Huguenot communities and their churches in the eastern counties, including that at Sandtoft near Epworth (available from the author at 150 Burrowmoor Road, March, Cambs.)

ment in matters of religion. As puritans they embodied the protestant ethic in their personal lives and professional activities. As lovers of the Word they encouraged a high view of preaching and may well have exercised some influence on the evolution of auditory churches. As Presbyterians they demonstrated the strengths of a disciplined church system and the participation of the laity in the pastoral and administrative life of the church. And as those who through suffering had learned the virtues of compassion they exercised a lively social concern and set an impressive standard in Christian philanthropy. For those with eyes to see, there was much to be learned from the Huguenots, especially in those places where they were most numerous and above all in the capital itself.

A major question was whether they would exercise their religion within the mainstream of the protestant establishment.² London already had two older French churches one of which, on Threadneedle Street, had rejected conformity, while the other, at the Savoy, had been founded after the Restoration as a conforming congregation, accepting oversight by the Bishop of London, episcopal ordination for its ministers, and the use of the Book of Common Prayer in a French translation. Despite involving the sacrifice of certain Huguenot convictions, conformity had practical advantages, social as well as religious, and a number of Huguenot congregations in London and elsewhere opted for it, on the model of the Savoy church. It ought to be pointed out that these congregations, while technically Anglican, retained for many years a strongly French character, not only through worshipping in that language but also through clinging to a number of Reformed practices and disciplines not normal in the Church of England. Nevertheless, despite the attractions of conformity and the blandishments of the establishment, many Huguenots in England followed the lead of the Threadneedle Street church and maintained a nonconformist position, pursuing as far as was possible in their new situation their familiar Calvinistic modes of worship and church government. In London the churches in the eastern suburbs, especially Spitalfields, were virtually all nonconformist, while those in the western suburbs and Westminster were more or less equally divided between conformity and nonconformity. Those which chose nonconformity were anxious to distance themselves from English dissenters, who might have seemed to be their natural allies, largely to avoid any suspicion of disloyalty to a government which had been generous to them, and to rebut charges of republican sentiment. Thus even the nonconformist Huguenot chapels displayed the royal coat of arms as proudly as any parish church.

More important however than the ecclesiastical issue of conformity was the question whether the Huguenots could retain in England the vitality and integrity of the faith which they had chosen exile to pre-

² Gwynn, *op. cit.*, has much of interest on the Huguenot churches in England, especially in Chapter 6.

serve. Inevitably zeal declined with the passage of the years and as the memories of the "desert" period of persecution faded. Yet many Huguenots must have felt a strong desire to be true to their heritage, a longing for a renewal of the commitment and courage of the first exiles and for a revival of zeal to combat the rising tides of formality and scepticism which were a feature of the age. For some, membership of one of the Religious Societies then proliferating in London and elsewhere was a way of seeking this renewal. Another way, though only a small number chose to follow it, was to become associated with the French Prophets or Camisards, that exotic and intense group of Huguenots from the Cevennes who, having attempted to hold out against Louis XIV's forces, had finally sought refuge in England early in the eighteenth century.³ Other possibilities were to seek spiritual enrichment through mysticism or Moravianism.⁴ And some Huguenots, following one or more of these routes, were to be led towards Methodism.

The relationship between early Methodism and the Huguenots has never been fully explored, though certain aspects of it are familiar enough.⁵ It is common knowledge that Mary Vazeille whom John Wesley married in 1751 was the widow of Anthony Vazeille, a moderately prosperous Huguenot merchant of the City of London with a house on Threadneedle Street and another in Wandsworth where, incidentally, a Huguenot burial ground still survives. Mary herself is said to have been of Flemish descent.⁶ The notorious incompatibility between her and Wesley was not to be a feature of his other associations with men and women of Huguenot descent, some of whom were to be his staunchest supporters and closest friends. While in America, as well as having his first hymn book (*Psalms and Hymns*, 1737) published by a Huguenot printer, Lewis Timothy (Louis Thimothée) in Charleston,⁷ Wesley befriended and helped a young French refugee doctor, John Reinier, and did much to help him rehabilitate himself in his profession.⁸ One senses a close attachment between Wesley and Reinier but this friendship pales into insignificance

³ Hillel Swartz: *The French Prophets : The History of a Millenarian Group in Eighteenth Century England* (1980). See also Ronald Knox : *Enthusiasm* (1950), especially Chapter XV.

⁴ Pierre Poiret (1646-1719), a Huguenot preacher who worked mainly in Germany and Holland, was one of the foremost popularisers of mysticism. His writings were well known to Wesley.

⁵ Over sixty years ago T. E. Brigden wrote in *Proceedings*, xiii, p.99, that "more might be written of our [i.e. Methodism's] debt to the French Protestants", but his suggestion does not appear to have been taken up. The Revd. G. H. Sully, a Methodist of Huguenot ancestry, submitted a dissertation (Leeds M.A., 1954) on the Huguenots in England but confined his study to their relations with the Church of England from the sixteenth century to the accession of William and Mary.

⁶ *Proceedings*, xvi, p.47.

⁷ *Proceedings*, xiii, pp. 97-99.

⁸ *Journal*, i, pp. 175-6, 180, 214, 217, 318, 371. Georgia was in part founded as a refuge for protestant exiles from the Continent, and there was a Huguenot community near Savannah visited by Wesley.

when compared with that between Wesley and the young Charles Delamotte, who had accompanied him to America.⁹ Indeed one might ask whether any other colleague of Wesley's was more close and loyal to him at any time during the whole of his life than was Delamotte during the Georgia episode. The Delamotte family (sugar importers with a business on the north bank of the Thames just below London Bridge and a house at Blendon near Bexley in Kent) were in due course to become one of the first families to offer hospitality and a place of retreat to the Wesleys, and to other revival preachers such as Whitefield; and Charles' brother William (though ending up in Moravianism) was one of those most instrumental in giving Methodism an early foothold in the University of Cambridge.¹⁰ Another Huguenot with interesting Methodist associations was James Rouquet (1730-76) of Bristol, a man of direct Huguenot descent who was recruited by Wesley to be a master at Kingswood School in the early 1750s, and a preacher to the Methodist societies.¹¹ He later became ordained and exercised an influential evangelical ministry in Bristol, preserving links with Wesley, though his tendency towards Calvinism and political radicalism in his later years created something of a gulf between the two. Then there was Mary Bosanquet (1739-1815), a member of one of the most illustrious and wealthy Huguenot families in London who were closely involved in city finance and the Bank of England, of which her brother Samuel was a director. Rebelling against the comfortable and worldly life style in which she was reared, and being much impressed, it is said, by memories of the simple, generous, abstemious lives of an earlier generation of Huguenot exiles (her grandparents in particular), she turned to Methodism and was ultimately obliged to leave home because of this allegiance. Mary's story is well enough known thereafter, and reveals how the talents of a remarkable women, somewhat stifled within her own family and church, could blossom within the fellowship and structures of early Methodism. We are led on naturally from Mary to mention her husband John Fletcher, a Swiss protestant but from the same religious stable as the French protestants; and with him another Swiss clergyman, Vincent Perronet. Both are sufficiently well known to require no further account here, and the influential roles they played in the development of eighteenth century Methodism are clearly recognised in the very phrases which are so generally attached to their names—"Wesley's designated successor" (Fletcher) and "the archbishop of Methodism" (Perronet). Nor ought we to forget here the work which Perronet's children did for Methodism.

⁹ On Delamotte see Wesley's *Journal*, esp. i and ii *passim*; Whitefield's *Journal* (Banner of Truth, 1960) pp. 155, 157, 202-3, 205-7, 291, 325; and John Naylor: *Charles Delamotte: John Wesley's Companion* (1938).

¹⁰ On William Delamotte see John Walsh: "The Cambridge Methodists" in Peter Brooks (ed.): *Christian Spirituality: Essays in Honour of Gordon Rupp* (1975), Chapter xi. For an insight into William see also Wesley's *Journal*, ii, pp. 109-111.

¹¹ A. Barrett Sackett: *James Rouquet and his Part in Early Methodism* (1972). See also *Proceedings*, xix, pp. 88-9.

One is bound to ask whether any general conclusions may be drawn from this catalogue of associations. It is not surprising that apart from Rouquet the contacts were largely London based. London had, as we have seen, an enormous community of French exiles and their descendants, many of them virtual Anglicans and some active in the Religious Societies, and it was natural that John Wesley should be acquainted with at least certain of them and understandable that some deeper associations would develop. There were strong grounds for a mutual attraction between Wesley and the earnest, respectable Huguenot families of London, based in part on a shared puritan upbringing and a community of interest in religious and social matters. Is it too fanciful also to think that there were qualities in Wesley's own character—his natural taste and courtesy, his fineness of manner, the tension in his make-up between reason and emotion, his love of frankness and directness in personal relations—for which one can well imagine counterparts in those of French (and Swiss) upbringing?¹² It is interesting also that it was to the young that Wesley especially appealed, maybe touching an idealism which their more worldly-wise parents had lost. Another point of interest is that all these contacts centre round the Church of England. Indeed in two cases (those of John Fletcher and James Rouquet) it was by becoming Methodist preachers that they were led to ordination in that Church; Vincent Perronet already was the incumbent of a parish (Shoreham) when Wesley met him.

All those Huguenots (and Swiss) with whom Wesley had the closest links and who threw in their lot with him may be assumed to have abandoned their native Calvinism, especially the decrees concerning predestination. John Fletcher indeed was to be one of Wesley's stoutest defenders against his Calvinist critics. An interesting question (no doubt difficult to answer) is whether there was a general move away from hardline Calvinism among Huguenots as the eighteenth century advanced. Contemporary developments among their nearest English counterparts, the Presbyterians, would suggest that this was the case. As the older positions dissolved, some Huguenots no doubt progressed towards Unitarianism, Deism and scepticism; some towards pietism and mysticism; and some towards evangelical Arminianism. Nevertheless some obviously remained loyal to Calvinism (such as the popular London preacher William Romaine) or were drawn back to it after excursions in other directions (such as James Rouquet of Bristol), both of course being ordained clergymen in the Church of England.

We have considered so far Wesley's closest contacts with men and women of French protestant descent, those whose allegiance and

¹² All this despite Wesley's professed contempt for French as a language! (see *Journal*, iv, pp. 188-9). On frankness in speech see for instance George Lawton: *Shropshire Saint* (1960) pp. 8-9 (on Fletcher) and Wesley's *Journal*, ii, p. 103 for an outspoken assessment of Wesley by Charles Delamotte.

support meant most to him. Outside this inner circle there was a wider range of associations, less significant in individual terms but nevertheless of general interest and importance to early Methodism. In the post-Aldersgate period Wesley's journal and diary show him and his group engaged in an endless round of preaching, prayer, pious conversation, hymn-singing and tea-drinking, as they visited societies and groups in all parts of the capital "from Wapping to Westminster", as Wesley graphically put it in his open letter to Perronet (1748) published as *A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists*.¹³ A good many of the older Religious Societies were in areas of heavy Huguenot concentration, such as the Savoy and Soho in the west of London, and Spitalfields, Whitechapel and Wapping in the east. Wesley obviously met many Huguenots during these visits, and we find their names in his diary as contacts and hosts—Dubart, Dobrée, Vertue, Motte, Cossart, Duthoit, Andray, Thacquier, Frecquer, Voniel, Vandome, Aspernel, Vandrelst, Standex, Mazine and Garnault. At the home of the last named, Daniel Garnault, Wesley actually stayed for several days in July 1740 in order to get sufficient peace to prepare part of his journal for publication. Some of these French folk were in due course to join Wesley's new Methodist Society at its base at the Moorfields Foundry, itself only some fifteen or twenty minutes' walk from Spitalfields where by far the greatest concentration of Huguenots was to be found. Wesley's own lists of the Society's members contain a noticeable scattering of French names, constituting perhaps a tenth of the total for the early 1740s.¹⁴ Some of the French were class leaders—Frances and Jane Belbin, Susan Debonair of Bethnal Green (who was later to be the second person interred in the burial ground behind Wesley's City Road chapel), Anne Groce, Thomas Royale, Elizabeth Vandome (whose death in 1769 Wesley reverently recorded in his journal) and Sarah Clavel, Wesley's housekeeper at the Foundry.¹⁵ Some intriguing references in Wesley's diary for the latter part of 1740 seem to indicate that a number of "spinnners" were members of the Society and this may well be an allusion to textile workers of Spitalfields, many of whom were Huguenots.¹⁶ Later in the eighteenth century Melchior Seymour Teulon, a distinguished Huguenot hatter, some of whose descendants were to become well known architects, was an active Methodist serving as a house-steward at the Foundry and as class leader there and at the City Road Chapel.¹⁷

In Bristol also, in the early period of Methodism, we find Wesley benefitting from interest and support among some of the Huguenot

¹³ *Works* (1872 edn.), viii, pp. 248-268.

¹⁴ The original lists are in the Methodist Archives, Colman Collection vol. ii. Some selections can be found in G. J. Stevenson: *City Road Chapel and its Associations* (1872), pp. 29, 33-39. In August 1742, the total number in the London Methodist Society was 742, and there were about 70 French names in Wesley's lists.

¹⁵ On Sarah Clavel see *Proceedings*, xiv, p. 27.

¹⁶ *Journal*, ii, pp. 403-6.

¹⁷ On Teulon see Stevenson, *op. cit.* pp. 419ff.

community. As in London, though on a smaller scale, French names appear among the network of family connexions which Wesley was building up—Fancourt, Deschamps, Marine, Somerel, Deffel, Purnel, Panou and Labu.¹⁸ Much practical assistance came in particular from John Deschamps, a stuff maker. He and his wife were among the first members of the Society which met at the New Room, and Deschamps accompanied the Wesleys on some of their journeyings in the Bristol region. The effervescence of the revival is nicely conveyed in a small entry in Wesley's diary relating to a journey from Bristol to Wells in August 1739: "6(a.m.) Set out with Charles, Deschamps, and Giles—singing, conversed, lost the way!"¹⁹ They eventually reached Wells and got lost again in the afternoon, but continued singing and finally arrived back at Deschamps' house by 11 p.m. after an eventful day. References to singing are also found in entries relating to meetings with the Delamottes, and it would appear that the Huguenots and the Methodists enjoyed a common love of lively religious music.

Spontaneous song was only one outward expression of the bubbling excitement of the early stages of the Methodist revival, a response to an awakened awareness of the power of the Spirit breaking into the mundane, rational world. A more disturbing response was religious enthusiasm, from which the Huguenots were not exempted. It can be argued that it was the presence in England since 1706 of a small but influential group of French Prophets which had both challenged the comfortable faith of many Christians, Huguenots and others, and had encouraged their expectation of strange and inexplicable happenings under divine inspiration. The Prophets in fact constitute an interesting link between the Huguenots and Methodism. They were active in places such as London and Bristol, they permeated some of the Religious Societies, made links with the Moravians, and in due course also with emerging Methodism. Some writers, wishing to defend Wesley as far as they could whilst also criticising the excesses of his followers, have blamed the Prophets for actually introducing enthusiasm into early Methodism.²⁰ This is over-simplified, but there is no doubt that there were interesting connexions between the two movements. Contemporaries commented on their similarity, and Wesley was certainly intrigued by the Prophets, while also being anxious to distance his movement from them. The most recent historian of the Prophets draws these conclusions:

The interplay between the last prophets and the first London evangelicals argues for a recognisable kinship, if not sibling rivalry . . . Both the French Prophets and the Methodists valued the tension between the closed and

¹⁸ See *Journal* ii, *passim*. On Deschamps see *Proceedings*, iv, pp. 92-7, xix, pp. 161, 164. Charles Wesley has a snide comment on the feigned "enthusiasm" of Deschamps' daughter Jenny (a girl of twelve) in August 1740 (see *Proceedings*, iv, p. 94).

¹⁹ *Journal*, ii, pp. 265-6.

²⁰ See for instance G. H. Curteis: *Dissent in its Relation to the Church of England* (1872), pp. 367-375 (1911 edition quoted here).

the open, the rational and irrational, in order to transcend the limits of a purely intellectual or merely habitual religion. Both partook of the eighteenth century undercurrent of resurgent emotionalism, not so much as a retreat from reason as another and more crucial step towards unbounded faith.²¹

It is not hard to imagine that some French protestants, either through association with the Prophets or through having been influenced by their example, would become as a result susceptible to the urgent warnings and appeals of early Methodist preaching, and more open to the attractions of membership of Wesley's movement. That movement however was, under Wesley's leadership, developing in ways which the Prophetic movement could never have done, building up structures to channel and employ the spiritual momentum generated by the enthusiasm of the revival, and establishing centres for the worship and community life of the Methodist societies. The first such centre was the Foundery; but within four years Wesley had also acquired for his purposes in London two redundant Huguenot chapels, a highly interesting development which deserves consideration.²²

To Wesley the Foundery, with its all too obvious secular associations, was unsuited for liturgical worship and the celebration of the Sacrament, though he was fully prepared to use it for preaching services on the simple Methodist pattern, as well as for a wide range of other activities related to the communal life and social concerns of Methodism.²³ The tensions and difficulties resulting from these scruples need not be recounted here in detail, but they led to a growing realisation by Wesley that he needed a suitable building in which he could read the Church Prayers and administer the Sacrament to his Methodist members. The value of such a building was made clear when, in the late summer of 1741, Wesley accepted the offer of Dr. Deleznot, the pastor of a Huguenot congregation in Great Hermitage Street, Wapping, to make his chapel available to the Methodist Society.²⁴ Wesley seized the opportunity to hold a series of services spread over several Sundays, at which prayers were read from the Book of Common Prayer and the Sacrament was administered (according to Church rites of course) to the entire Methodist Society by Wesley himself, some two hundred communicating at a time. Wesley tells us that he talked "severally" to one such group during the week before the service, and presumably did the same for them all.²⁵ Apart from the spiritual instruction there was no doubt a lot of explaining done by Wesley on these occasions. The Anglican Methodists would need convincing of the propriety of celebrating the

²¹ Swartz op. cit. pp. 287-288.

²² Towards the end of his life Wesley made some very interesting comments on these developments in a letter to the *Dublin Chronicle* in 1789 (see *Letters*, viii, pp. 139-143).

²³ J. C. Bowmer: *The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in Early Methodism*, (1951) esp. Chapter 6 on Wesley's attitudes to celebrating the Sacrament in Methodist buildings.

²⁴ *Journal*, ii, p. 484.

²⁵ *Journal*, ii, p. 503.

Sacrament in an unconsecrated building, and the non-Anglicans (including nonconforming Huguenots) of the necessity for them to worship according to the liturgy of the established Church. The more radical might have asked why the old Foundery, becoming hallowed by many precious associations, could not have served just as well.

Wesley no doubt had cogent arguments to put forward to them all. Evangelical necessity and his desire to minister to his own people were the strongest, but he could obviously justify his decision to use the Wapping chapel on other practical grounds. For the Methodists in the capital to be seen worshipping from the Prayer Book, and receiving Church communion, was a valuable declaration of their association with the establishment. To maintain decorum and acceptability that worship should take place in a regular place of worship. True, the Wapping chapel was not consecrated, but the Huguenots in general had many links with the Church, and even the nonconformists among them enjoyed a special place within national religious life, halfway between the Church of England and the dissenters.²⁶ A Huguenot chapel therefore was, if a compromise, strategically very useful. It could also be an excellent bridgehead from which the Church of England (represented by Wesley in this case) could attempt to make inroads into the strongholds of nonconformity in London and endeavour to win back to the fold of Anglicanism those who were currently rejecting its ministrations, and who were perhaps also deterred by the unattractive face of religious officialdom.

Within three years of the remarkable Wapping experiment Wesley was able to give permanence to what it represented by acquiring first in 1743 the tenancy of the Huguenot chapel (La Tremblade) on West Street, Seven Dials, and a year or so later that of another Huguenot chapel (L'Église de l'Hôpital) on the corner of Grey Eagle Street and Black Eagle Street, Spitalfields.²⁷ These two buildings were to serve Methodism in the west and east ends of London until 1798 and 1819 respectively, and they played a central role in the development both of Wesley's strategy in the capital and of the more general processes

²⁶ On the question of consecration Wesley's view (at least as stated in 1764) was that the performance of public (i.e. Anglican) worship was sufficient in itself to consecrate a building (*Journal*, v, p.92).

²⁷ On West Street see *Journal*, iii, pp. 78 *et seq.* and general accounts such as J. S. Simon: *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies* (1923), Chapter 9. The first *Journal* reference to the Spitalfields church is in March 1750 (iii, p. 455) and Curnock (iii, p. 496 n.) assumes this to have been the year in which Wesley acquired it. This is mistaken. The building is shown as a Methodist chapel on the superb map drawn by Rocque (himself a Huguenot refugee) in the mid-1740s, which is available in book format with full index to places and streets as *The A-Z of Georgian London* (1981) published by Harry Margary, and other references give the date of Wesley's acquisition as 1744, e.g. E. C. Rayner: *The Story of the Christian Community* (1909), p. 20. Dr. J. C. Bowmer has a short article on the two chapels (*Proceedings*, xxvii, pp. 25-6) and makes some valuable comments but appears to assume both had belonged to conformist Huguenot congregations, which is not the case. An interesting article describing the West Street chapel, with illustrations, can be found in *Proceedings*, xvi, pp. 137-141.

by which Methodism was slowly (and against Wesley's intentions) to develop into a distinct denomination with its own chapels in which the liturgy might be read and the sacrament celebrated. South of the Thames, Wesley acquired also a former dissenting meeting house in Snowsfields in 1743, but the Huguenot chapels had a special importance for him. Before the Huguenots used it West Street had been an episcopal free chapel, and having been consecrated it provided Wesley with a thoroughly respectable base from which to operate in the west end of London, where Anglican loyalties were strongest. It is noteworthy that West Street was to Wesley always "the Chapel"—a term which he very rarely applied to any other of his preaching houses at that time.²⁸ The Spitalfields chapel (which the Methodists left in 1819 for yet another Huguenot building nearby, on the corner of Brick Lane—a building which still stands²⁹) gave Wesley that bridgehead into the east end which he must dearly have wanted. In 1684 Spitalfields, soon to become the home of thousands of Huguenot immigrants, had been described as "a most factious hamlet" with many dissenting conventicles.³⁰ It is pleasant if ironic to recall that Wesley's maternal grandfather, Samuel Annesley, was ministering at that very date to one of those conventicles, Little St. Helen's, off Bishopgate Street, to the south east of Moorfields. And it was in this area that John Wesley's mother grew up.³¹ Dr. Annesley represented the best kind of seventeenth century puritanism. His grandson inherited many of those qualities through his mother, and was now employing them in the same area on behalf of the establishment. But it was a revived, popular, evangelical establishment which Wesley represented, and his work in Spitalfields must have appeared in a very different light from the Anglicanism represented by Hawksmoor's towering new church in Spitalfields (Christ Church) built in the 1720s. Wesley had a special affection for the Spitalfields area and its people, and clung on to his chapel there when there was pressure from his lay officials in 1768 to close it.³² Those whom the chapel served must have included many nonconformist Huguenots, as well as English dissenters and those of no religion at all. It is significant that Wesley introduced liturgical worship cautiously at Spitalfields, so as to accustom the worshippers to it by degrees.³³ He was obviously anxious to

²⁸ See Curnock's comment, *Journal*, viii, p. 381 n. Wesley occasionally called the Snowsfields building a chapel, but when his use for it ceased it reverted to being "a useless, dissenting meeting house"! (*Journal*, v, p.444).

²⁹ On Brick Lane (which has in its history been worshipped in by Huguenots, Methodists, Jews and Moslems), see *Proceedings*, xxxi, photographs between pp. 196 and 197.

³⁰ B. Weinreb and C. Hibbert: *The London Encyclopædia* (1983) article on Spitalfields.

³¹ At the age of twelve, with a maturity beyond her years, Susanna opted to abandon dissent. She represents those thoughtful, moderate presbyterians who were persuaded to accept the Book of Common Prayer and the established Church. (See John Newton: *Susanna Wesley and the Puritan Tradition in Methodism* (1968), esp. Chapters 1 and 2.) Did Wesley see his mother as an example of what he hoped would be the fruit of his own work among the dissenters and nonconformist Huguenots of Spitalfields?

³² *Letters*, v, p.100.

³³ *Ibid.*, viii, p. 141.

draw them back via Methodism into the mainstream of English religion. It was here that Wesley first introduced his Covenant Service in 1755.³⁴ One wonders whether one motive in introducing it here was deliberately to appeal to those covenanting principles which were part of the puritan heritage common to both the French Huguenots and the English dissenters of Spitalfields.

Much more could be written if space allowed of Wesley's associations with the Huguenots, and indeed of wider Methodist-Huguenot links in which Wesley played no direct role. It is hoped nevertheless that enough has been written to indicate something of the scope and interest of John Wesley's French connection, and perhaps to suggest to others possible lines of research for the future. There are a number of problems and questions which arise. In some cases the evidence may not exist for answers to be found, but some suggestions (tentative in the main) have been made here and there in this article as to what conclusions might be drawn from the evidence presented here. It is clear enough that in a number of practical ways Wesley was indebted to the Huguenots—he drew on their loyalty, he enlisted no small number of them into his movement, he used their chapels, and he may well have been inspired by what he knew of their courage under persecution. Can we go further than that?

Let me here fly a kite! It is possible that the most fundamental debt which Wesley owed to the Huguenots in England is that he glimpsed in them a model as to the kind of community into which Methodism might evolve, and the position it might occupy in the English religious spectrum? That is to say, a committed protestant body, holding preaching and the sacraments in high regard, rejoicing in hymnody, loyal to the state, desiring good relations with the established church even if not entirely within it (and, even when professing conformity, sitting loose to some of its regulations), reformed in structure with a dedicated ministry and a high degree of lay participation, thoroughly puritan in personal and social discipline, and with a lively concern for good works and philanthropy. If this were indeed the case Methodists would have good reason for recalling the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes and its aftermath not simply as momentous for the Huguenots, but as events which had a direct bearing on the history of Methodism itself.

G. E. MILBURN

³⁴ *Journal*, iv, p.126.
