

# LAMBETH PALACE LIBRARY

## *Some Items of Methodist Interest from the Fulham Papers*

by John A. Vickers

The Library at Lambeth Palace, London, England, dates from 1610 as a public institution. Earlier archbishops had their own personal libraries, but these were dispersed or sold at the time of their death, and it was not until the beginning of the Seventeenth Century that the foundations of the present collection were laid down. Archbishop Bancroft, "a greate gatherer together of bookes," bequeathed his collection to the see of Canterbury and the Library was established by his successor, Archbishop Abbott, with the approval and support of King James I. It is open daily to students, except for Sundays, and its collection is of particular value for the study of Anglicanism. Besides the printed books, there is a wealth of manuscript material, which is continually being enriched by purchases made by the Friends of Lambeth Palace Library, a body formed in 1964.<sup>1</sup>

Of particular interest to American students is the section of the Fulham Papers referring to the American colonies prior to the War of Independence. For nearly two centuries, the British territories in the New World were treated for ecclesiastical purposes as part of the Diocese of London. A considerable volume of correspondence between the Bishop of London and the colonial clergy, together with related material, was transferred to Lambeth a few years ago from Fulham Palace, and this material has been cataloged by Professor W. W. Manross of Philadelphia, with the aid of generous American grants. This catalog has now been printed,<sup>2</sup> and the papers themselves have been bound and also microfilmed.<sup>3</sup> The collection also covers the British Caribbean islands, but the rest of this paper will be concerned with items which relate to the early days of Methodism on the American mainland.

We may begin appropriately enough with John Wesley in Georgia, before the Methodist Movement had begun. Wesley was not the first chaplain appointed to Oglethorpe's new colony, but was preceded by the Rev. Samuel Quincey.<sup>4</sup> It is interesting to have firsthand evi-

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<sup>1</sup> Enquiries regarding both the use of the library and membership of the Friends of Lambeth Palace Library (which is open to both individuals and institutions) should be addressed to The Librarian, Mr. E. G. W. Bill, M.A., Lambeth Palace Library, London S.E.1. New readers are asked to provide a letter of introduction from a person or institution of recognized standing and special permission is required for access to some categories of manuscripts.

<sup>2</sup> William W. Manross, *The Fulham Papers in Lambeth Palace Library (American Colonial Section Calendar and Indexes)*. Oxford University Press, 1965. L6, 6s.

<sup>3</sup> Obtainable through World Microfilm Ltd., 62 Queen's Grove, London N.W.8, at \$300. Sections relating to individual states or countries are also available.

<sup>4</sup> Born in Massachusetts, Quincey was educated in Dissenting Academies in London and later at Cambridge. Beginning as an Independent preacher in London, he turned Presbyterian and then Anglican. See L. F. Church, *Oglethorpe: A Study of Philanthropy in England and Georgia*, 1932, pp. 193f.

dence that Quincey, too, found the settlers in Georgia difficult to please and that he left under a cloud. Wesley, appointed to succeed him, gave history an opportunity of repeating itself.

When he left Georgia, Quincey visited Charleston, where he called on the Rev. Alexander Garden, the Bishop of London's Commissary in South Carolina. Garden wrote a letter for him to take to the Bishop when he went on to England, and this throws light on the conditions in which Wesley was already struggling to put his high church principles into practice.

*Letter from Alexander Garden to Bishop Gibson, Charlestown,  
June 4, 1736 (Fulham Papers, X. 28-31)*

This comes by the hands of the Reverd. Mr. Quincy, late Missionary in Georgia, and now returning to England. Some Complaints have been made to the Trustees of that Colony of his Behaviour there; but on the strictest Enquiry he is not to know by whom, nor consequently to have any other Means of Vindication than the general Testimony of the People. I have been informed of his Behaviour there from time to time, and by good hands; and since the Report of those Complaints, have made the best Enquiries I can at this Distance into it; and upon the whole I am of Opinion, for ought has yet appeared to me to the contrary, that those Complaints (one Particular of them only excepted, viz. his marrying an English Man to an Indian Woman unbaptized; which he was importuned to do by the principal Magistrate and people of Georgia, & which he acknowledges was an Error) are frivolous and groundless: and that in all other Respects, except the Particular mentioned, his Behaviour has been becoming his Character and Station.

Garden says that he has heard from Oglethorpe that because he has not had any opportunity of enquiring into the case personally, he has referred it to "Mr. Wesley" (presumably Charles Wesley, acting as Oglethorpe's secretary), and Wesley has reported that the people in general speak highly of Quincey, apart from complaints of his having been absent for some time in New England, apparently because of the state of his health. According to Leslie F. Church, Charles Wesley reported that Quincey had "miserably neglected" the people of Savannah.<sup>5</sup> But in his favor is the fact that he subsequently served acceptably as minister of several parishes in South Carolina, including Charleston itself.<sup>6</sup>

A mere eighteen months after this, Garden found himself writing to the Bishop again, in similar circumstances, but this time on behalf of Quincey's successor. Perhaps because Wesley was immeasurably the greater of the two, or perhaps because he had greater reserves of stubbornness and ability to offend, the charges brought against him were at once far more detailed and more mali-

<sup>5</sup> Church, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

cious. The opening paragraph of Garden's letter deals with matters raised by the Bishop in a letter of August 10th (such were the delays incurred through the remoteness of his jurisdiction over the colonists); and we give only the remainder of the letter, dealing with the charges against Wesley.

*Letter from Alexander Garden to Bishop Gibson, Charlestown,  
December 22, 1737 (Fulham Papers, X. 48-9)*

Your Lordship will receive this at the Hands of Mr. John Wesley Missionary in the new Colony of Georgia; who returns home to answer some Complaints sent against him to your Lordship & the Trustees, by some Persons there. This sudden event indeed surprizes me; for no one cou'd be more approv'd, better liked, or better reported of, by all the People of Georgia, than this very Gentleman was, 'till lately, that he presumed to repell the chief Magistrate's Niece from the holy Communion; which has brought down such a Storm of Resentment upon him, as I wish he may be well able to weather. The chief Magistrate is now his Enemy, & so, of course, he is quite naught: a Setter forth of strange Doctrine, a Jesuit, a spiritual Tyrant, a Mover of Sedition, &c. A grand Jury is summoned (two thirds of it having their daily Bread from the Store, or in Effect the chief Magistrate's hand, who has the sole Direction of the Store) and they make the following Presentments—They present *John Wesley* Clerk, for not having sufficiently declared himself of the Church of England since he arrived there:—For refusing to christen otherwise than by Dipping; (*except as in the Rubrick excepted:*)—For saying that he was *ordinary* in Georgia: For refusing to bury an Anabaptist;<sup>7</sup> (*when he was at 100 [200?] miles Distance & knew nothing of the Matter:*)—For reading the *Litany* at 6, & not at 10 of the clock, on Litany-Days:—But above all, for repelling Mrs. Williamson (*the chief Magistrate's Niece*) from the holy Communion; & for speaking and writing to her (*on matters, he assures me, of his Duty as her Pastor*) contrary to the Commands of her Husband. And all these they present the s<sup>d</sup>. *John Wesley* for, as severally contrary to the Peace of our Sovereign Lord the King, his Crown & Dignity.—The main Stress or Burthen or the whole lies in the last Presentment, (the others being rather by way of Apparatus, or to accumulate the Accusation;) & chiefly on the latter part, viz. *for speaking & writing to Mrs. W. contrary to the Commands of her Husband;*—insinuating, as if Mr. Wesley endeavoured to seduce the s<sup>d</sup>. Mrs. W. from her Husband; & w<sup>ch</sup>. the s<sup>d</sup>. Mrs. W., in her Affidavit, seems also to insinuate. This is the main Point of Accusation, & ag<sup>t</sup> which, considering the Affidavit of the Party, the accused must naturally be reduced to some Distress in making his Defence.

I shall not presume, my Lord, to form any positive Judgment on the Case, w<sup>ch</sup>. without a judicial Enquiry, & hearing all that both

<sup>7</sup> Nathaniel Polhill (Church, *op. cit.*, p. 210). Church gives three further points on which Wesley was indicted by the Grand Jury and adds that twelve out of the forty-four members of the Jury submitted a minority report exonerating Wesley on each count.

Parties can offer, would be rash & unjust to do. But if I may offer my present Sentiments upon it, from the best Information I have rec<sup>d</sup> about it, I cannot but say, that as to the Particulars relating to Mrs. *Williamson*, however Mr. *Wesley* may not be acquitted of some Imprudence & unguarded Conduct, yet I verily believe him innocent of anything criminal either in Fact or Intention, & as to the other Matters, they are all either impertinent, false, or frivolous.

This Gentleman has met with full as hard usage as did his Predecessor Mr. *Quincy*, and it will be Pitty if any more Clergymen be sent thither, 'till your Lordship's authority be first regularly extended to that Colony, that they may not be obliged to cross the Seas on every complaint made against them.

The correspondence in the Fulham Papers furnishes a considerable amount of incidental information about conditions in the British American colonies during the Eighteenth Century. There is, for example, an undated letter from a certain Charles Woodmason of South Carolina (Fulham Papers, X, 254-7), which is largely concerned with affairs in the "Back Country." Woodmason complains that "the poor People, by being neglected by their Superiors & unnoticed by the Clergy are all turned Baptist Methodist or what are called New Lights"; and he describes the violence and "enthusiasm" of these often illiterate sectaries. But this letter must, of course, come from a considerably later date in the Century, and before we proceed we may notice a poignant *cri de coeur* from New England, quite soon after John Wesley had returned home and found his heart "strangely warmed." Though he proceeded to take the whole world as his parish, Wesley did not ever return to America himself, and the first genuinely "Methodist" preaching on the continent was therefore that of George Whitefield. Charles Brockwell, parish priest of Salem, Massachusetts, was deeply disturbed in the summer of 1741 by a rumor that the Wesley brothers were expected to visit New England later in the year, and wrote accordingly to the Bishop of London:

. . . We are here in great straits. Whitefield [sic] & Tennent have considerably injured the Church, before labouring under high discouragements from enemies in power; who have gladly embraced this opportunity of shewing themselves. But now, a more melancholy scene seems to Open upon us, ye Westleys are expected in ye fall, men every way superiour to those have already appeared & therefore (if Enemies) still capable of greater mischief! . . . Believe me, in a young (I may say as yet unsettled) Church much depends upon my deportment in ye critical Junctures, which makes me thus pressingly entreat your Lordship's Direction whether to receive y<sup>m</sup> as Brother Clergymen into my Church or Pulpit, or to reject y<sup>m</sup> as those y<sup>e</sup> are under ye Censure or Displeasure of my Diocesan. Many things pass in Europe we poor Exiles know little of, & therefore 'tis I am enforced to sue your Lordship. . . (Fulham Papers, XXXVI, 273-4).

Whitefield had been in Massachusetts in the fall of 1740 and records two visits to Salem in his Journal. His first sermon there aroused a highly emotional response in his congregation, a circumstance which may well have inspired Brockwell's misgivings. "Salem," Whitefield wrote, "is the first settled and largest town (next to Boston) in all New England; and as far as I could see and hear, rather exceeds it for politeness. I found the inhabitants had been sadly divided about their ministers, and God was pleased, before I knew their circumstances, to direct me to a suitable subject." Returning a few days later, he records that he was "favoured with a visit from the minister belonging to the Church of England."<sup>8</sup> Brockwell's scruples about extending a similar civility towards the Wesleys were never put to the test, since the rumor, no doubt to his great relief, proved false, and we get just one more glimpse of him in a pathetic little postscript to his letter, which reads: "The King's Chapel is now vacant. If your Lordship c<sup>d</sup>. but think me fit for it."

The desultory way in which the colonies were provided with clergy under the Bishop of London's jurisdiction is illustrated by the case of Devereux Jarratt, later the friend of the Methodists in Virginia and North Carolina. The testimonials which he brought with him to London when he came in 1762 in search of Anglican orders are preserved in the Fulham Papers, XXIV. 152. He also had a letter of recommendation from the Commissary of Virginia, William Robinson (Fulham Papers, XIV. 11-12). Robinson explains to Bishop Osbaldiston that he himself had been appointed Commissary by Bishop Sherlock on April 18, 1761, and that although the appointment had been confirmed by Sherlock's successor, Hayter, he had never received any official Commission in Form. Having thus settled his own credentials, he went on to commend Jarratt:

My Lord, the Bearer Mr. Devereux Jarratt waits on your Lordship to be admitted into holy Orders. I have received Letters from three worthy Clergymen in the Neighbourhood where he lived, who, from their intimate acquaintance with him for several years past, bear Testimony to his moral Character, that he is a Person of Piety, Virtue and sound Principles—And from my examination of him, I find him to have a moderate share of Learning.

It is an interesting postscript to these recommendations that the Bishop's records show that although Jarratt was ordained deacon on December 19, 1762 and was licensed nine days later (Fulham Papers, XXXVIII. 18, 97), there is no trace of his being ordained priest. It would appear that he returned to take up his parochial duties in Cumberland parish, Virginia, with deacon's orders only.

Denominational relationships were inevitably more flexible at a

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<sup>8</sup> Whitefield's *Journal*, September 29 and October 4, 1740.

distance of 4,000 miles than they were "back home," and it was not unknown for a congregation to transfer its corporate allegiance to the Established Church. A letter from the four Anglican clergy in Philadelphia, dated December 5, 1772, informs the Bishop of London that the congregation of St. Paul's Church, now that "the former Heats have subsided," have expressed their desire to be "in perfect unity" with the Anglicans. Their constitution had been framed originally in conformity with Anglican principles, and now that they have acknowledged their past mistakes and professed their loyalty to the Church of England, they have been received with open arms. "The having that Church (which is large & well situated) brought into Union with us, will very greatly strengthen the whole Interest of the Church of England in this City and Province."

The same letter supports a plea by the congregation of St. Paul's that their minister, the Rev. William Stringer, be episcopally ordained. "Excepting that *Radical* Fault of taking upon Him the Ministry of our Church, without its Authority & Ordination, Mr. Stringer's Conduct, in all other Respects since he came here, has indeed been, as his People represent it,—exemplary & praise-worthy. Had that People fallen into the hands of *Methodist* & other Strolling Preachers of the present day, they would have been drawn still further on in their Irregularity, & at last totally lost to our Church . . ." (Fulham Papers, VIII. 50-51; also 48).

We may aptly conclude with some references to Joseph Pilmore and his ambivalent ecclesiastical loyalties. Pilmore, with Richard Boardman, had arrived in America in October 1769, two years before Francis Asbury. After a ministry of four years, he left for England on January 2, 1774, and the *Minutes* of the British Conference of that year list him as one who had "desisted from travelling," though he returned to the British itinerancy two years later and was stationed in various circuits between 1776 and 1784. Finally, in 1785, he returned to America and was ordained by the newly consecrated Bishop Seabury of Connecticut.<sup>9</sup> Thus was fulfilled an ambition Pilmore had cherished for at least a dozen years.

It does not seem to be generally known that Pilmore had been engaged in negotiations with the Anglican clergy of Philadelphia and New York, with a view to his obtaining Anglican orders, as early as the summer of 1773, while he was still active in the Methodist itinerancy. The early months of 1773 were spent by him on a preaching tour in the southern colonies. He then returned north, reaching Baltimore on May 28 and Philadelphia on June 2.<sup>10</sup> His *Journal* records his sense of having completed a very worthwhile tour as a pioneer of the gospel and his joy at the arrival of two new

<sup>9</sup> F. E. Maser and H. T. Maag, eds., *The Journal of Joseph Pilmore*, 1969, pp. 237ff.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 201f.

preachers, Rankin and Shadford, from England, "more Labourers to help us in the great work of the Lord."<sup>11</sup> It does not breathe even a hint of the fact he was already seriously considering abandoning that work for the parochial duties of an Anglican priest!

Back in England a year later, Pilmore presented himself and his credentials to the Bishop of London, and this is no doubt why his name is omitted from the stations for that and the following year. His testimonials included a letter from four Philadelphia clergy, Richard Peters, William Smith, Jacob Duche, and William Stringer, dated July 14, 1774, and addressed to the Bishop of London (Fulham Papers, XXIII. 224-5). Pilmore, they say, "for some years did duty alternately in this City and in New York as one of the Methodist Preachers sent by Mr. John Wesley," and they continue:

It is more than a year since he acquainted our Brethren of New York and ourselves with his Desire to take Orders in the Church, assuring us that it was not a sudden thought, but what he had been earnestly desirous of for a long time from a sincere regard to the service and Constitution of the Church and from a confirmed dissatisfaction at the irregular way in which he was engaged.

They recommend him to the Bishop on the strength of his good character and his abilities as a preacher; but a note added in a different hand records that "This person was rejected." It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Pilmore's failure where Stringer had succeeded less than two years earlier was due to his open association with Wesley. Better an Independent than a Methodist!

Further support for Pilmore's application came from the parishes of Norfolk and Portsmouth in Virginia, where the parishioners not only got up a petition on his behalf, but raised a subscription in order to found a lectureship worth seventy pounds per annum in Virginian currency for him to return to. The rector of Portsmouth, John Braidfoot, lent his support to the scheme in a testimonial which says:

Be it further known, that during his Stay here, he acted as a Methodist preacher, and as far as I can learn, advanced no Doctrines contrary to the Articles of the Church, nor acted against the Same: Saving unto the Twenty Third article [concerning the Church's ministry], which objection, I should think, will be done away by his conforming to the Rules of the Church, & taking the Oaths appointed by Law. And I am the rather induced to say what I have done in his favour, because I found him to be a person of greater Abilities & more rational principles than any in his way I have yet met with.

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 206. Another important piece in this jigsaw is the passage which follows immediately in the *Journal*, in which Pilmore gives vent to his resentment of Wesley's attitude toward him since he came out to America.

Braidfoot added a promise of the use of his church and the two chapels in his parish for Pilmore's afternoon lectures. (Fulham Papers, XXVI. 218-224.)

The fact that, despite all this support, Pilmore was refused ordination by the Bishop of London helps us to understand why a few years later Wesley felt impelled to take matters into his own hands and ordained his own shepherds for the hungry sheep of America.