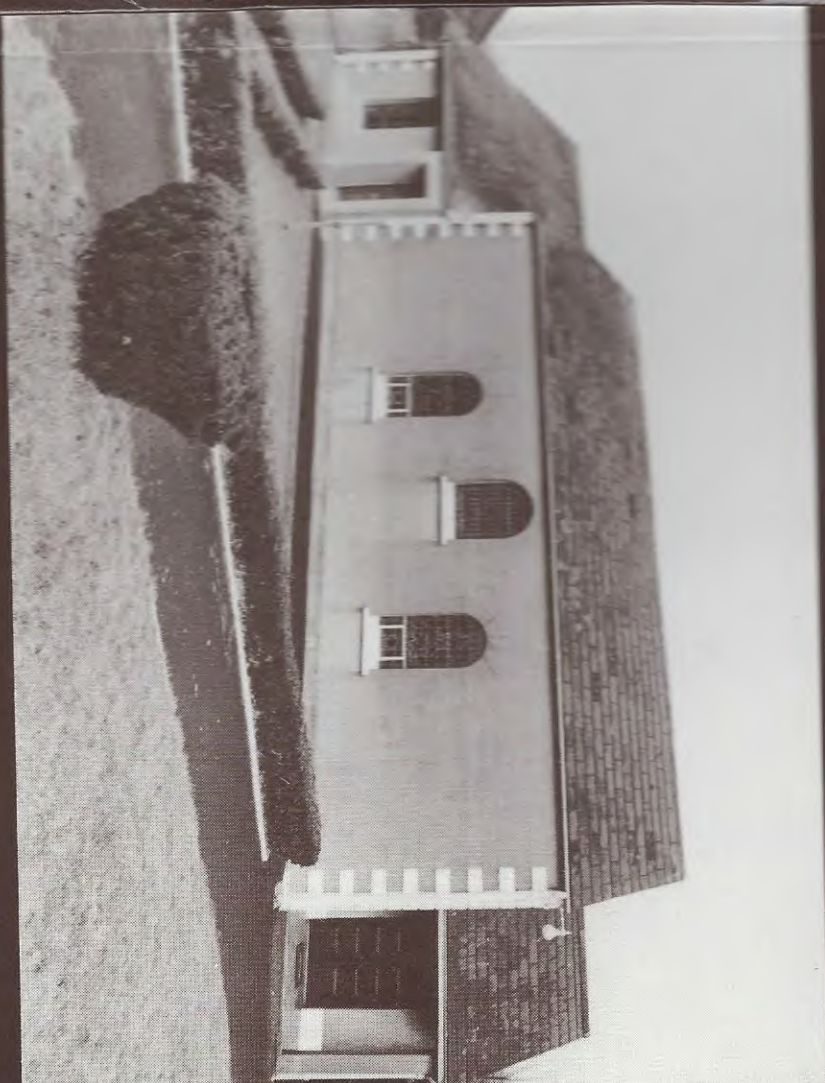


A Tale of Two Churches



A TALE OF TWO CHURCHES by Isobel Law

**Two Centuries of Methodism at Priesthill:
1786 — 1986**

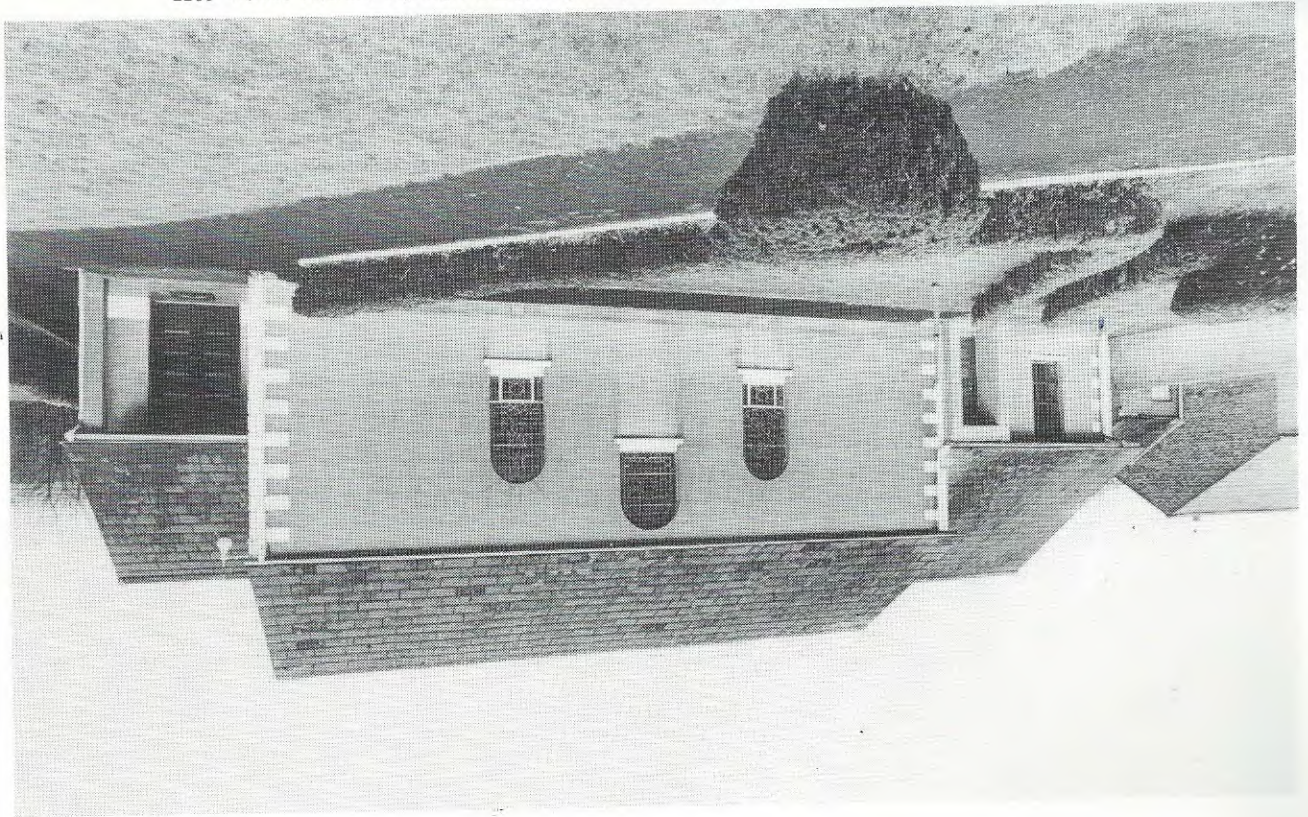
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Isobel Law

With all good wishes
for your research.

Isobel Law
3/4/2010



(Cover Photograph): Church with vestry, which was dedicated at Harvest Sunday morning service, 1977.

Foreword

"A TALE OF TWO CHURCHES" has been prepared to mark two centuries of Methodist witness in the Priesthill area. It is a story of devotion and dedication; of courage and commitment on the part of our forebears whose efforts were blessed richly by God and resulted in remarkable changes in individual lives as well as the community as a whole.

In reading through this record I could not help but feel encouraged by what was accomplished for God's Kingdom through faithfulness. This was expressed in a variety of ways, but in whatever form it was marked by a deep and developing spirituality. I also had a sharp awareness of the price paid by those who had covenanted together to pray for, and plead with God for an outpouring of His blessing. History shows that revival came after fifty years of persistent praying. I caught the excitement of those years when there were over two hundred and fifty children in the Sunday School and the teaching staff numbered between thirty and forty. It was also interesting to note, from the record of the minutes, that the church at one stage had a Day School. Most of all I was conscious of the debt we owe to those spiritual giants of the past who have left us a great inheritance and whose wish it must be that we continue the work which they began. This is a history of opportunities which were not only seized, but were created and used.

Behind every book of this nature there lies an unbelievable amount of painstaking work. The heaviest burden has been carried by Mrs. Isobel Law who has given her time, talents, and expertise with willing and lavish generosity. As a Church we express our very deep appreciation for her thorough research; for the diligent care in the selection of material; and for her calm and persistent endurance to complete in time what could only be described as a very big undertaking. We also take the opportunity of offering our thanks to the many others who have helped in any way in the production of this book. It will give all who read it a great deal of pleasure.

May, 1986

DAVID MULLAN (Minister)



Priesthill Leaders' Board in 1986:

*Front: Minister, Rev. David Mullan; Dr. Helen Fullerton and Mr. Joseph Kennedy (Society Stewards).
Centre (from left): Mr. George Megarry, Miss Patricia Campbell, Miss Margaret Megarry, Mrs. Gwen Milten,
Mrs. Helen McKendry, Mrs. Eileen Graham.
Back (from left): Mr. Ronald Campbell, Mr. Sydney McCready, Mr. Jack Collins, Mr. William Fullerton,
Mr. Donald McCready, Mr. Will Stafford, Mr. Robert Wilson, Mr. Michael McCarthy.
(Mr. Eric Martin was unable to be present)*

PREFACE

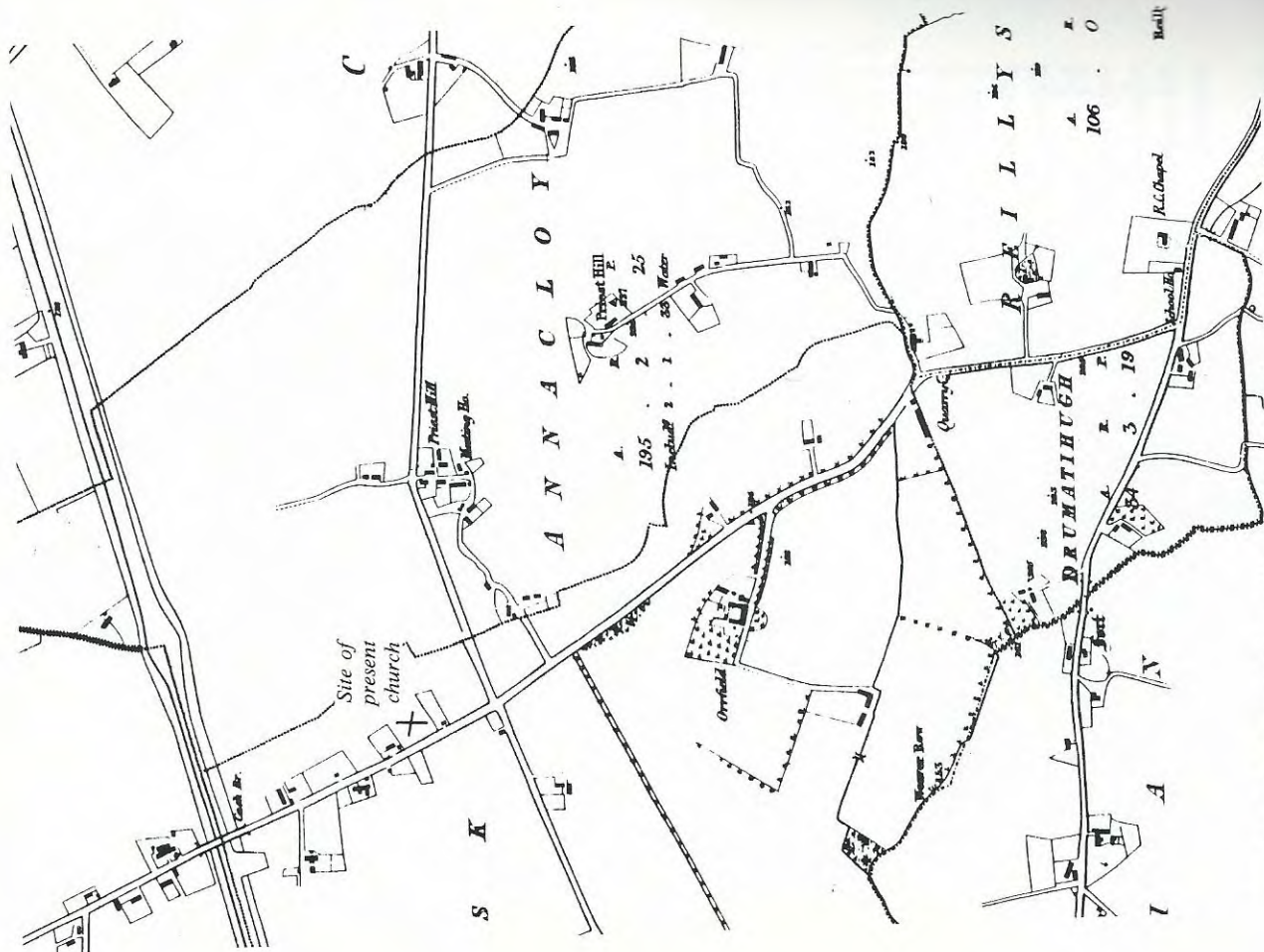
A Methodist society has been in existence at Priesthill for two centuries, a period which spans the reigns of nine monarchs, beginning with George III. This narrative sets out to portray the sequence of events which led to the opening of the first preaching-house on Puddledock (now Aghnatrisk) Road in April 1786, and of Zion chapel (our present church) about six hundred yards away at Kesh Road, on Christmas Eve 1838. The history of the congregation is well documented as, in addition to local minutes dating from 1838, we are most fortunate in having the following first-hand accounts of people who were closely associated with the work of God at Priesthill in the early days:

- The Life of Patrick Cunningham* (an autobiography) (1806)
Memoir of Rev. John McClure, by Rev. William McClure (1847)
Life and Labours of Rev. William McClure, by Rev. D. Savage (1872)
Irish Methodist Reminiscences, being mainly memorials of the life and labours of Rev. S. Nicholson, by Rev. Edward Thomas (1889)
All for Jesus: Memorials of James Carlisle, by Rev. Edward Thomas (1891)
The Earnest Minister, A memoir of Rev. Thomas Carlisle, by Rev. Dr. William Cooke (1871)

These books are invaluable. Writing in appreciation of them Rev. Robert Nelson, who was brought up in the neighbouring Broomhedge congregation, beautifully expressed it: "They bring ever closer to many of us the spiritual quality of that 'springtime'. For springtime it indeed was, and we have entered into the harvest of that sowing."

It is due to the vision and influence of two very gracious and much-loved ladies that the present history has been written. I refer to the late Miss Edith Stewart, and the late Mrs. Deirdre Fee. It was Miss Stewart's wish that Rev. John Fee would undertake the task and he had begun work on it whilst at Broomhedge Manse, but his heavy work commitment impeded progress. At the time of Miss Stewart's death Mrs. Fee planted the idea in my mind and encouraged me to record what history was known. Thus, when it was realized that an important anniversary in the life of the congregation was approaching, research commenced with the welcome and willing assistance of Mrs. Hazel McCready and Mrs. Norma Stafford. It has indeed been good to obey the injunction of Deuteronomy 32, verse 7: "Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations; ask thy father, and he will show thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee." We trust that these findings will be an inspiration and blessing.

Isobel Law



Based upon the Ordnance Survey Map of 1835, with the Sanction of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Crown Copyright Reserved.
 (We have indicated site of present church)

Chapter 1

Introduction to the District

In the days of my childhood I often heard my parents and others speak of going to Zion. They were, of course, referring to Priesthill (Zion) Methodist Church. This lovely name is not used frequently nowadays but it was given to the church when it was opened in 1838. The minutes of a circuit meeting of 14th January 1839 state that the meeting was held at Zion.

The church is situated on the Kesh Road in the rural district of Maze. In one of Sir William Petty's maps the Maze is marked as 'Bally-maes', meaning 'the place of the plain', and it is indeed an accurate description. A former resident of Kilwarlin, writing anonymously in 1866 about the Maze stated: "There is a long straight road, extending from Reilly's Trench to the Racecourse, known as the Long Cash, that is 'the long pathway'; and this is precisely what it was till 1775, when the present road was constructed." Part of this Long Cash is the Kesh Road.

"But why Priesthill?" some visiting preachers and other friends have asked. The answer lies in the fact that the name is carried forward from the first preaching-house at Priesthill on Aghnatrisk Road. An Ordnance Survey Map of 1835 indicates this last-named building; it has been incorrectly designated 'Meeting House' by the person(s) who prepared the map. Not far away there is a spot marked 'Priesthill' and it is approached from Trench Road. Local tradition has been that a priest lived there, and in Volume II of his work 'An Historical Account of the Diocese of Down and Connor', Rev. James O'Lavery tells of a resident priest at nearby Reilly's Trench, Most Rev. Dr. Francis Stuart, a Franciscan friar, who was consecrated Bishop of Down and Connor in 1740. Due to being an adherent of the Pretender to the British Throne he was forced to leave in 1742 and went to live near Lisburn. Between 1742 and 1745 the chapel at Reilly's Trench (described by Rev. O'Lavery as being of "considerable antiquity") was burnt down by Royalists. After this the members are said to have worshipped under a tree near the site.

It is interesting to note that when the first Priesthill preaching-house was erected in 1786 there were very few places of worship in the vicinity.* The parish church at Hillsborough had recently been restored by the Earl of Hillsborough in 1772, and there were parish churches at Moira and Magheragall; there was a Society of Friends Meeting House in Hillsborough; the first Moravian Church had been built at Kilwarlin in 1755; and local Presbyterians would have to travel to Anahilt or Lisburn. In 1838 when Zion chapel was built there were two additions to the foregoing: the Roman Catholic chapel had been rebuilt at Reilly's Trench in 1805, and a Presbyterian Church had been erected at Hillsborough in 1833.

For some years prior to 1786 the effect of what has been termed 'the Methodist Revival' was being experienced locally, and meetings were held regularly in homes and barns in the neighbourhood and surrounding area. For a fuller understanding of Methodism perhaps we might pause and reflect on how this evangelical revival started.

Chapter 2

The Methodist Revival, or Evangelical Awakening of the Eighteenth Century

In a sermon broadcast via Radio Eireann on Conference Sunday (16th June 1985) Rev. Hamilton Skillen, President of our Church in Ireland, said: "Church history has been dotted with moments which came alive because someone discovered something that the Church had lost. The Church is infamous for losing its priceless doctrines. It is when we rediscover what has been lost that we enter into new periods of reformation. . . ."

Such a moment of reawakening occurred in England in the late 1730s when a mighty outpouring of God's Holy Spirit came down and commenced to influence thousands of souls. At that time the religious climate in these islands was extremely bleak. The nation may have had a high reputation for its military prowess, its philosophy, poetry, and literature, but irreligion, vice and depravity were prevalent throughout the community. Moreover, the vast majority of clergy did not preach justification by faith or believe that religion should be a vital, living experience of receiving Christ and knowing that He dwelt within. It was in these conditions that God raised up three young ordained clergymen of the Church of England to proclaim His message to all who would listen. Their names were John and Charles Wesley, and George Whitefield.

The Wesleys' father, Rev. Samuel Wesley, was rector of Epworth in Lincolnshire. Their paternal grandfather had been a Dissenting minister, as also had their maternal grandfather, Dr. Samuel Annesley. Their mother was a resolute lady of strong, moral convictions, who certainly believed the proverb 'Spare the rod and spoil the child'. Although both parents were convinced Anglicans there was a strong puritanical influence in the home environment at Epworth, and the children were taught to seek holiness and a wholehearted devotion to God.

George Whitefield's father kept a hostelry in Gloucester, The Bell Inn, but he died when George, the youngest of several children, was only two

*The parish churches at St. James's, St. John's, Kilwarlin, and Broomhedge were opened in 1841, 1840 and 1848 respectively. The Presbyterian Church at Maze was opened in 1859.

years old. Their mother retained the Inn, and as George grew up it became evident that he possessed a beautiful, strong speaking voice, and for a while his passion was for the stage. The Church was in his blood too, however, as several of his ancestors had been clergymen, and George eventually went up to Oxford with a view to ordination. He entered the University as a servitor, whereby he received his education as payment for waiting on the wealthier undergraduates.

It was at Oxford in 1733 that the Wesley brothers and George Whitefield first met. At this juncture John was Fellow of Lincoln College, and Charles was Junior Tutor to Christ Church; George had just completed his first year at Pembroke College. A few years earlier, in 1729, Charles had started a religious society which was nicknamed the 'Holy Club'. He had been concerned about the state of religion at Oxford as, apart from general apathy, false doctrines and infidelity were creeping in. The Vice-Chancellor had issued a circular urging tutors to inform their pupils of their Christian duty, and to recommend frequent and careful reading of the scriptures. Charles thereupon decided to follow the directives to the letter and commenced attending the weekly sacrament, encouraging students to accompany him. They also met each evening to study the Greek New Testament. John joined the group and soon emerged as leader, serving as tutor to his brother and little circle of friends. Their activities extended to visiting the sick and dying, preaching in the prisons, and helping financially with the education of the prisoners' children. By 1733 they were known not only as the Holy Club but other names such as "Enthusiasts" and "Methodists". George Whitefield was aware of the existence of this society and he longed to join but was too shy to approach. He knew they sought to save their souls by being good and doing good, and he also desired to be on the heavenward way. When he first met with Charles Wesley on that October day in 1733 Charles gave him a warm invitation to the next meeting of the group. So began a friendship and fellowship with the Wesleys that was to have far-reaching effects.

In spite of all these worthy pursuits, however, they were still strangers to the joys of pardon. George was the first to experience the 'new birth'. In the spring of 1735 after much fasting and self-denial he became ill, and it was whilst reading a devotional book on the New Testament that the 'open secret' flashed upon his mind. He realized that Christ had already borne the burden of his sins: all he had to do was to cease struggling and cast himself without reserve into God's almighty hands. He was immediately filled with an unspeakable joy. He states: "I was delivered

"from the burden that had so heavily oppressed me. The spirit of mourning was taken from me, and I knew what it was truly to rejoice in God my Saviour."

Three years later John and Charles were to undergo similar experiences. At the end of 1735 they sailed for America to the newly-founded colony of Georgia to minister to the English settlers and Red Indians, but John returned in two years (Charles some time earlier), both feeling dejected, with a sense of having failed in their mission. John had been impressed by the conduct of some Moravians on the journey to Georgia. They had tried to help him to an understanding of the way of grace through faith, but he said later: "I understood it not at first. I was too learned and too wise so that it seemed foolishness unto me."⁸ Shortly after his return to England he made the acquaintance of a young Moravian minister, Peter Böhler, recently arrived from Germany and shortly to leave for Georgia, and they spent much time in discussion about spiritual matters. This was a providential encounter. Perhaps no one was better suited to help John in his dilemma. For years he had been striving after holiness of life, trying to establish his own righteousness, but Peter Böhler showed him that faith in Christ had to come first, and holiness must follow.

During the early months of 1738 Charles was seriously ill with pleurisy and Böhler held several serious conversations with him also. At the beginning of May their new friend had to leave for America, and on Whit Sunday, 21st May, Charles experienced peace and joy through believing.

We can imagine that John would be feeling despondent that he had not yet received this gift. On the morning of 24th May he awoke early and, according to his usual custom, began reading in the Greek New Testament. The words were from II Peter, 1: "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature." Before going out he opened his Testament again and this time read: "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God" (Mark 12, 34). He attended evensong at St. Paul's, London, and heard the choir sing Psalm 130: "Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord", which echoed the yearnings of his own soul. Later he went to a meeting of a religious society in Aldersgate Street where someone described the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ. He recorded: "I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that He

⁸Journal of John Wesley, Vol. 1, p. 470.

"had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death." In the late evening he went to visit Charles who was still convalescing, to tell him what had happened. Charles wrote: "Towards ten, my brother was brought in triumph by a troop of our friends, and declared 'I believe.' We sang the hymn with great joy and departed with prayer."* The hymn which he refers to had just been written in honour of his own experience, and is now known as the Wesleys' Conversion Hymn. That memorable day was a watershed in the life of John Wesley.

In December 1738 they had a joyful reunion in London with George Whitefield who had just come back from America. In January of that year, as John was returning unexpectedly to England from Georgia, George was leaving to go and minister in that colony. Now he was back to be ordained; he also hoped to raise some money to build an orphanage in Savannah and to return there where he was to be rector. It was three and a half years since John and George had met, and although they had corresponded there was plenty of scope for conversation. During the Christmas season they had much fellowship together, and on the evening of New Year's Day (or rather the early morning of 2nd January) they had a wonderful visitation of the Holy Spirit: it seemed like another Pentecost. It happened at a meeting of a religious society in Fetter Lane, off Fleet Street, attended by the Wesleys and Whitefield, together with four other members of the original Oxford club and about sixty members of the society. John recorded: "About three in the morning, as we were continuing instant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us, insomuch that many cried out for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground. As soon as we were recovered a little from that awe and amazement at the presence of His majesty we broke out with one voice, 'We praise Thee, O God; we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord.'"[†] Soon afterwards a conference was held at Islington church by the seven former members of the Oxford society (all ordained men) and George wrote afterwards that "everything was carried on with great love, meekness and devotion. We parted with a full conviction that God was going to do great things among us."

There had been signs of revival in Bristol under George Whitefield's preaching before his departure to America. In February 1739 he returned to his native west country, preaching en route. He called with Mrs. Susanna Wesley (mother of John and Charles) who was staying at Salisbury; her husband, Rev. Samuel Wesley, had died in 1735. Writing later to her son Samuel she stated: "Mr. Whitefield has been making a

*Journal of Charles Wesley, Vol. I, p. 95.

†Journal of John Wesley, Vol. II, pps 122-125.

"progress through these parts to make a collection for a house in Georgia for orphans . . . He came hither to see me, and we talked about your brothers. I told him I did not like their way of living, wished them in some place of their own, wherein they might regularly preach, etc. He replied I could not conceive the good they did in London; that the greatest part of our clergy were asleep, and that there never was a greater need for itinerant preachers than now."*

On arrival at Bristol George was refused permission to preach in the large church there where so many had crowded to hear him previously. The Wesleys were encountering similar opposition in London, due to their forthright preaching. At Kingswood, a few miles outside Bristol, there were coal mines. The colliers were rough, illiterate, and notoriously wicked men; they lived in shacks near the mines and were disregarded by the clergy. George determined to bring God's Word to these men, and it had to be done in the open air. He commenced as they left the pits and the colliers must have been astonished to see this young clergyman preaching, standing on a hill. He received a good hearing and later they sent a messenger with a request that he would return and preach at an arranged time. Very soon many were converted, and plans were being made to have a school erected for their children.[†]

George Whitefield was a most eloquent preacher with the ability to dramatize his theme, and he could hold the attention of multitudes. When it became known that he was preaching out-of-doors great crowds flocked from Bristol and the surrounding district to hear him. One Sunday afternoon towards the end of March the congregation was estimated at around 23,000. He later described the scene: "The open firmament above me, the prospect of the adjacent fields with the sight of thousands and thousands, some in coaches, some on horseback and some in the trees, and at times all affected and drenched in tears together, to which was added the solemnity of the approaching evening, was almost too much and quite overcame me." Since he was due to return to Georgia soon and feeling the burden of responsibility for the many converts, he wrote to John Wesley in London, entreating him to come to Bristol without delay. He knew John would ensure that those young in the faith would be gathered together for instruction and fellowship.

John Wesley rode into Bristol on Saturday, 31st March, just two days before his friend departed. The following day he accompanied George as

*George J. Stevenson, *Memorials of the Wesley Family*, London, 1876, p. 216.

†The Works of John Wesley, Vol. I, p. 252.

he preached farewell sermons to vast crowds. John wrote in his diary: "I could scarce reconcile myself to this strange way of preaching in the fields, of which he (Whitefield) set me an example on Sunday; having been all my life (till very lately) so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order, that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin if it had not been done in a church."² On the day of Whitefield's departure he wrote: "At four in the afternoon I submitted to be more vile . . . proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation." Like Whitefield, he realized that the then obsolete practice in England of open-air preaching was the only means of reaching the unchurched masses.

Although Wesley's style of preaching was very different from that of Whitefield's — it has been said that at first he used to read his sermons — yet multitudes came and the revival intensified. The converts and enquirers were gathered into societies for spiritual help. They met in private houses, and at these meetings there were unusual, even startling happenings, and Wesley described them in his diary. People would sometimes call out loudly 'with the utmost vehemence' and continue to do so; others would be 'seized with a violent trembling all over' and fall to the ground seemingly unconscious. At first it was said it was the heat of the rooms that caused this, but in a few weeks these extraordinary scenes were being witnessed in the open air as well. In all instances Wesley and others would continue in prayer for those afflicted until they were released from their fears. Wesley, writing to his brother Samuel, said that he did not judge his work by the strange phenomena that occurred in these early days of the revival, but by the change in people's lives. "I will show you him that was a lion till then, now a lamb; him that was who drunkard, and is now exemplarily sober; the whoremonger that was who now abhors the very garment spotted by the flesh. These are my living arguments for what I assert."³ (These phenomena occurred during the Ulster revival of 1859, and the revival in the Maze area in 1851, as will be seen later.) Soon the numbers in the societies were so large that a building needed to be erected, and before Wesley left Bristol in June a foundation stone had been laid for the first Methodist Society Room (or preaching-house), and also a foundation stone for the school at Kingswood for the miners' children.

This was the beginning of the Revival which for years was to spread and grow — a mighty outpouring of God's Holy Spirit upon the people of

²Journal of John Wesley, Vol. II, p. 167.

³ibid., Vol. II, p. 202.

the United Kingdom and far beyond its shores, even to America. For the first three years Wesley worked from two bases, London and Bristol, and then extended his travels to Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Later this triangular journey was developed further and a pattern was established: winter in London; early spring in Bristol; a trip north during late spring and summer months. In 1747 he made his first visit to Ireland and in 1751 he went to Scotland. From then on Ireland and Scotland were visited in alternate years in the summer, and in late summer he would go to Cornwall and other western counties before returning to London. Though not congenial to him he continued the practice of open-air preaching throughout his life, not only to the miners at Kingswood but to those at Newcastle and Cornwall, and to thousands in towns and villages throughout the land. His maxim was: "Go not to those who need you, but to those who need you most." He once wrote to a member of a Methodist society: "I want you to converse more, abundantly more, with the poorest of the people who, if they have not taste, have souls, which you may forward in their way to heaven. . . . Do not confine your conversation to genteel and elegant people. I should like this as well as you do: but I cannot discover a precedent for it in the life of our Lord, or any of His apostles. My dear friend, let you and I walk as He walked."⁴

The after-care of those spiritually awakened was an important element in John's work, and the Methodist societies formed for this purpose were the backbone of his itinerant journeys. The only condition of membership was to have "the desire to flee from the wrath to come." The members had a close fellowship, and the hymns sung were of a personal nature, many containing the first personal pronoun, singular and plural, which had been written by Charles. In a few years the benefit of also meeting in smaller groups was recognised, and the membership was divided into classes consisting of eleven persons under a lay leader; these often were from the same locality, and the class meeting would usually be held in someone's home. Women's classes were separate from men's and were in the care of a female leader. At the class meeting an opportunity would be afforded for giving personal testimony to the power of God, or for confessing sins to one another, and offering prayer. The sick and elderly were visited by the leader and others. These classes proved to be a good training ground for future leaders and closely resembled the Christian Endeavour meetings some of us are familiar with today.

It has already been noted that for a long time before his own conversion John was earnestly trying to lead a holy life. Now, after

⁴The Works of John Wesley, Vol. XII, p. 301.

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experiencing forgiveness and peace with God, he was no less fervent in his pursuit of personal holiness and he urged upon all followers of Jesus Christ the necessity to seek entire sanctification or perfect love, which is the gift of the Holy Spirit, whereby they would be enabled to love God with their whole being and their neighbour as themselves. His constant aim was "to spread scriptural holiness throughout the land."

In his preaching work John had the help of a large band of lay workers. Although the majority did not have the advantage of college training they were well-grounded in the scriptures and preached the truths they believed and felt. He placed them on probation for a year (later extended to four years) and they had to undergo a course of extensive reading. Some of these men were found to be extremely gifted. A few clergymen of the Established Church who were sympathetic towards Methodism gave practical support.

John Wesley had brilliant administrative ability. In the early days of the Revival the societies were grouped into circuits, and an Assistant (one who had oversight) was appointed to each circuit. One such was the vicar of Haworth, who tended the Haworth Methodist circuit. The first Methodist Conference of Helpers (preachers) and those clerics who rendered support was held in 1744, and became an annual event.

George Whitefield and Charles Wesley were also abundant in evangelical labours.

George traversed England, Scotland, Ireland, and part of America for about thirty-three years; much of his ministry was in this latter country and he crossed the Atlantic thirteen times. The Wesleys and he differed on a point of doctrine. George believed in predestination, that is, that some are elected by God to salvation, and some to damnation. The Wesley brothers utterly rejected this. They were convinced that Christ had died for all men, and this message comes through in many of Charles's hymns. Whilst they believed that God provides the initiative in salvation — "No man can come to Christ except the Father draw him" (John 6, v. 44), and that faith itself is a gift of God — this did not lead them to conclude that man had no choice between salvation and damnation, for God "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2, v. 4). Thus in the early days of Methodism there were two camps — those holding Whitefield's view, and those holding the Wesleys' — but Methodist doctrine as we now know it is Wesleyan. Despite their difference of opinion the three men endeavoured to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; there existed between them a strong bond of affection, and they held one another in the highest esteem. George died in

America in 1770, aged fifty-five, and as was his wish, John preached his funeral sermon at the Tabernacle at Moorfields, London. John Wesley never encouraged criticism of George. "Do you think we shall see Mr. Whitefield in heaven?" a man once asked him. "No, sir," John replied, "I fear not. Mr. Whitefield will be so near the Throne and we at such a distance we shall hardly get a sight of him."

Charles made a no less vital contribution to the work. For some years he travelled as a preacher before settling in Bristol to become pastor to the Methodist people there. Later he moved to London. His outstanding talent as a hymnwriter has endowed the Christian Church with wonderful hymns for perhaps all occasions of the Church's year. They embody evangelical doctrines and glad certainty, and quite a few have found their way into the hymnbooks of other denominations.

Throughout their lives the Wesleys were intensely loyal to the Church of England and hoped that the Methodist societies would be accepted as part of that Church. Members of the societies were expected to attend the local parish church each Sunday and receive the sacraments there. Obviously the services at the Methodist preaching-houses were to be held at different times from those at the parish churches. John scrupulously endeavoured to avoid trespassing on Church prerogatives. He adopted secular names for his officers, hence his preachers were *helpers*, not ministers; other labourers were termed *leaders* and *stewards*, not elders and deacons; his buildings were *Society Rooms, preaching-houses*, or *chapels*; and his associated people were *societies*, not churches. In the early days of the Revival he was reproved by the Bishop of Bristol who told him: "You have no business here; you are not commissioned to preach in this diocese: therefore I advise you to go hence." John replied, "My business on earth is to do what good I can; wherever, therefore, I think I can do most good, there must I stay so long as I think so; at present I think I can do most good here, therefore here I stay." Later he wrote to a friend: "I look upon all the world as my parish."

The Christian Church today has much cause to praise God for the Revival of the eighteenth century.

Lurgan, most probably along the same route as that covered by George. He greatly admired the scenery through which he passed, with its views of orchards, and thought this part of Ireland resembled Berkshire. It seems that John also regretted that he hadn't travelled north sooner. From that time onwards, with the exception of two visits to Dublin alone, northern Ireland was always included in his Irish itinerary, and he visited Lisburn and district on at least fourteen occasions, the last being in 1789. He doubtless made many friends in the vicinity during that period of thirty-three years. Amongst the earliest to open their home to the Methodist preachers were Mr. and Mrs. Hans Cumberland, who kept a bakery in the town. They afforded hospitality, and meetings were held at their home. John Wesley was their guest on his first visit. Their son-in-law, William Black, had the honour of entertaining Mr. Wesley in 1767. He later recalled the service held that year at the Linen Hall (where the Post Office now stands):

"Mr. Wesley preached in the area of the Linen Hall from *Today is salvation come to this house*. He afterwards administered the sacrament to about forty or fifty persons, nearly all the Methodists in the counties of Down and Antrim. Whilst I received the sacrament from his hands, I felt Christ precious to my soul, to such a degree as I had never before experienced."^{††} Mr. Black was a Lisburn class leader, and for a time he and thirteen females constituted the society in Lisburn; for two years he was the only man in fellowship with them. Soon he and another began prayer meetings in different parts, classes were formed, and the cause prospered.

At Kilwarlin someone opened their home for preaching in 1765 and a society was established. In 1771 John Wesley visited Kilwarlin. He recorded: "I preached at Kilwarlin, where a few weeks ago Thomas Motte died in peace."^{*} (This preacher had travelled two years only, worn out with excessive toil.)

In the Gayers' home, a beautiful residence at Derrriagh, John also found a welcome and Christian fellowship. Mainly through the generosity of Mrs. Henrietta Gayer, a preaching-house was erected in Market Street in Lisburn around 1772, on the site where the Christian Workers' Union Hall is now situated.

Concerning his visit to Lisburn in June 1778, John Wesley wrote: (Wednesday, 17th June): "At eleven our brethren flocked to Lisburn from all parts, whom I strongly exhorted, in the apostle's words, to 'walk

^{††}Irish Methodist Reminiscences, by Edward Thomas, p. 60.

^{*}Journal of John Wesley, Vol. V, p. 421.

Chapter 3

Methodist Preachers Visit the Neighbourhood

Perhaps the first Methodist preacher to visit our district was George Whitefield. He had made several preaching trips to southern Ireland. His first visit was in 1738, but 1751 was the year in which he decided to travel to the north. In July he arrived in Belfast, and on the way either to or from Lurgan he passed through the Maze and preached. Below is an extract from his letter to a friend:

"Belfast, July 7th, 1751

... Last Monday about noon I left Dublin, but with what concern in respect to many poor weeping souls, cannot well be exprest. On Wednesday evening I came thither, and intended to embark immediately for Scotland, but the people by their importunity prevailed on me to stay. In about an hour's time, thousands were gathered to hear the Word. I preached morning and evening, and since that have preached at Lisburn, Lurgan, the Maize, and Lambag, towns and places adjacent. So many attend, and the prospect of doing good is so promising, that I am grieved I came to the north no sooner. The country round about is like Yorkshire in England, and quite different from most southern parts of Ireland. I am now waiting for a passage to Scotland . . ."

Another young colleague of John Wesley's to come to the neighbourhood was John Cennick, one of the first Methodist lay preachers. Later he left the Methodists and became a minister of the Moravian Church. He travelled to Ireland and conducted evangelical campaigns, reaping a rich harvest. As a result several Moravian churches were founded, amongst which was the first church at Kilwarlin, built by John Cennick in 1755.

The first of John Wesley's twenty-one visits to Ireland was in 1747. He came to Dublin and didn't travel north; in fact, it was not until the sixth trip, in 1756, that he made his initial visit to Ulster. In July of that year he arrived at Lisburn where a Methodist cause had already been established, possibly through the preaching of George Whitefield five years earlier. John preached at the Market House in Lisburn. On 27th July he rode to

worthy of the Lord.' At the love-feast which followed we were greatly comforted, many of the country people declaring with all simplicity, and yet with great propriety both of sentiment and expression, what God had done for their souls."[†]

We are indebted to Dr. Ben Megarry for the following valuable and interesting story, told to him by the late Mr. Jonathan Richey: The latter's grandfather — James Richey — and two other men from Broomhedge — Mr. Anderson and Mr. Bennett — went to hear Mr. Wesley preach at Banbridge. They were all converted and were the means of bringing Methodist preachers to the Broomhedge neighbourhood.

There is a reference to Mrs. Bennett in the year 1778 in C. H. Crookshank's *History of Methodism in Ireland*: "On the Lisburn circuit the preachers persevered in their arduous and self-denying work. Frequently during the winter for want of room they had to preach out-of-doors, sometimes standing in the snow. Such excessive labours brought on an attack of fever which nearly closed the career of Mr. Jeremiah Brettell. He had no pain but slept perpetually. . . . During his illness two deaths from the same complaint took place in the household of Mrs. Bennett of Broomhedge, by whom he was so kindly nursed — her eldest son and a servant maid — and both died happy in the Lord."^{**} Jeremiah Brettell was one of the travelling preachers appointed to Lisburn circuit in 1777.

As a youth George Carlisle of the Maze was convinced of his sin and need of a Saviour whilst listening to John Wesley preach. Soon afterwards he was converted to God and joined the Methodists. He married Mary Bradshaw and their home at Kesh Road was a hallowed place. For more than forty years before George's death a class meeting was held there, and his family grew up to serve the Lord in that locality. We shall have occasion to mention the Carlisle and Bradshaw families later in our story.

Chapter 4

Conversion to God of Patrick Cunningham

On 24th June, 1742, twin boys were born to a couple named Cunningham who lived in Co. Antrim, not far from Lisburn. One of these children was given the name Patrick. Mr. Cunningham, being a well-read person himself, was anxious that his sons should have the advantage of a good education and he spared no necessary expense to further their knowledge. The boys made satisfactory progress and were considered to be clever scholars by all who knew them. Their father was a severe disciplinarian, not only in respect to their studies but also concerning their moral conduct. He would not tolerate bad language, and was careful that they did no harm to their neighbours.

The Cunninghams were strict Roman Catholics, and from an early age the boys were carefully taught the observances and practices of their Church, especially by their mother and grandmother. Patrick had a tender conscience, and if he did anything he knew to be wrong he immediately felt a sense of guilt. He recalls the first time he swore. It happened at a racecourse (probably the Maze). His father's horse was running in a race, and Patrick had placed a bet that it would win. As he saw it coming in first he gave way to great mirth and swore an oath. In a moment he was filled with remorse, and the thought of having won money gave him no pleasure. He noticed others, young and old, who could swear and they didn't seem to care, and was shocked to see aged men drinking, singing, and swearing. He wondered how they could be so happy in their sins since they had so short a time to live.

As he grew older he tried to stifle his conscience. After some time he persuaded himself that the observance of rites and ceremonies would substitute for holiness of living, and this suited his inclinations very well. He became hardened and his desire to do good almost vanished. By indulging in sins they became as chains and he felt led captive by the devil. Drunkenness more than anything else contributed to his rapid progress in iniquity. On one occasion his grandmother reproved him for swearing, and he told her he did not expect to be saved. This was not his opinion but

[†]Journal of John Wesley, Vol. VI, p. 199.

^{**}Vol. I, p. 316.

men of Broomhedge and Hillsborough were engaged in a quarrel (reputedly over turf at a local bog) and they rushed at each other with whatever weapons they could get. Patrick had never before witnessed such rage and clamour. One man was killed on the spot, and several died afterwards of their wounds. For the rest of the week he could find no pleasure in being there, but was obliged to stay on his father's account.

That year when in the harvest fields he experienced a most dreadful thunderstorm.* Enormous hailstones fell, lightning flashed in all directions so that the sky appeared to be ablaze, and the earth seemed to shake with incessant peals of thunder. Patrick was fully convinced that the last day had come. He fell on his knees and implored the Almighty to stop the day of judgement, and vowed he would attend Mass the following Sunday. He thought that a promise to go to Mass was the most effective plea he could make. He states: "People might wonder at my ignorance if they did not consider the Church in which I was brought up. I now began to make it a matter of conscience of going regularly to Mass, for I had been taught to consider it the most religious thing in the world, and would meet with the greatest reward in the world to come. A person one day in my father's barn, where Mass was sometimes celebrated, observed, in his exhortation, that every step of ground we travelled over, going to Mass, would procure us so much land in Heaven." In October he made arrangements to visit a friend's house on a Sunday. Realising afterwards that this engagement would prevent him from attending Mass he was grieved, but would not break his word to his friend. Throughout that Sunday the thought of having broken his covenant with God made him most uneasy, and as the week progressed his feeling of guilt increased. The following Sunday he told the priest about his troubles. Several means were tried to help him overcome his distress, but all to no avail. Patrick had a stepson, James Wright, who lived at Moyrusk, and he went to visit him. He had led James into some evil practices, but he now advised him to flee from sin and told him how he was suffering through breaking the Sabbath. His words of warning made a deep impression on James, and after Patrick had gone he prayed with more earnestness than he had ever done before. He began to realise the evil that was in his heart, and suffered such mental agony that he would roar aloud, no matter how many were in his company, and his groans on such occasions were terrifying. It was soon reported throughout the neighbourhood that he was losing his reason, and that Patrick was the cause of it.

*this occurred on 2nd or 3rd September, 1775. (Letter in *Newsletter* from a reader).

was said to frighten her. Although drunk at the time he felt great mental anguish at his rash words, and would have given anything to recall them. Usually when intoxicated he was happy and had no worries about his eternal future: indeed, when sober if such thoughts came into his mind he would often seek relief at the public house. He did not know that at these times the Holy Spirit of God was speaking to him. Many centuries ago St. Augustine said: "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in Thee." Patrick often experienced the truth of these words.

His brother emigrated to America and Patrick began to think that perhaps if he were married he would be able to lead a better life. He found someone with whom he believed he could be happy, a widow (Mrs. Wright), and they were married in his twenty-fifth year. However, his ways did not improve, and he tells us that for a time he was even more outrageously wicked. Sometimes at the thought of his wrongdoing he trembled and fell on his knees before God. In this manner of sinning and repenting he continued for some years.

Around 1774 the news came of the death of his brother, and he was greatly distressed. He felt that at any moment his life, too, could end. Many good resolutions were made, but these proved of little use when temptations came. Often after sitting up late at cards he could not sleep, worrying about his eternal destiny. He began to have a great desire for religious knowledge, and this caused him to prefer preaching to going to Mass. In July 1775 he heard that John Wesley was coming to preach at Halftown, and he went along to hear him. John however had become seriously ill. He was being cared for in the Gayers' home at Derrriagh, and Mr. Perfect preached in his stead. It was shortly before the Maze races and during his sermon the preacher warned against going to "that barbarous diversion which occasioned the practice of so many crimes, and gave rise to so many calamities, for the end of these things is death." His words made a powerful impression on Patrick and he almost decided not to attend his favourite sport. Then he remembered that his father had some business at the racecourse and would require his assistance, and he felt duty-bound to be there. He resolved to keep sober and peaceable, and not go on Sunday as was his custom. Instead, on the Sunday he attended a Methodist meeting, and on the Monday morning before setting out for the racecourse he went into his own garden to pray.

At that period the races were held bi-annually in July at the Maze, and on alternate years at Downpatrick, and they lasted for several days. On the first day there was confusion and uproar which ended in calamity. The

Hearing that James was no better, Patrick went over to visit him and found his home like a house of mourning. His whole family, even the servant girl, were weeping as if he were dead. Patrick went into the bedroom and found James in bed crying. He tried to comfort him, but "felt very ill qualified for such a task," and after some time they went out to a private place to pray. James began to feel a little better, but his distress soon returned and continued for a few months.

The experiences of these two men are very similar to that of Christian in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. They each felt a great burden and didn't know how to rid themselves of it. Also, when they started to 'flee from the wrath to come' their own families and neighbours called after them to return, some threatened, and some mocked. When Christian met Goodwill he was told: "As to thy burden, be content to bear it until thou comest to the place of deliverance; for there it will fall from thy back of itself."

In January 1776 James made his case known to the Methodists in Broomhedge. At that time they were few in number and very much despised; but he found them a loving people. They often visited him and prayed, and endeavoured to show him God's plan of salvation. He soon desired to become a member of their society, and as they believed him to be earnestly seeking to be saved from sin they gave him the right hand of fellowship. Mr. Bredin, the preacher who had been appointed to the Lisburn circuit, was the person to whom he applied for admission. As James was telling him the state of his mind he had another severe conflict with the enemy of souls. Like the man who dwelt amongst the tombs, as he was coming the devil threw him down. Mr. Bredin prayed and endeavoured to point him to the Lamb of God. It was some time later when he had the joy of knowing his sins forgiven. James's family and friends were dismayed when they heard he had joined the Methodists. His sisters were ashamed of him, and his wife threatened to leave him. When he went to tell Patrick what he had done Patrick was upset and told James that he would be as good a Christian without becoming a Methodist.

The burden on Patrick's mind increased, and he feared that his despondency would end in suicide. His home was at, or near Broughmore, and when at the riverside he would often step back or hold on to the bushes lest he should throw himself into the water. James Wright invited Patrick to a preaching service which was to be held at his

home.* The sermon concerned the doctrine of salvation by faith, and Patrick did not understand: he was still of the opinion that severe penances were the only means whereby he could have deliverance from his sins. Someone invited him to attend a class meeting. He states: "After I had tried it, I was convinced that it was the duty, and privilege, of such as feared God, to speak often one to another. (Mal. 3, v. 16). But though I met in class, I still continued to go to Mass."

In a short time he began to think of leaving his Church, but this caused great struggles within him. He dreaded the sorrow he would bring upon his parents: he had been taught that none could be saved but Roman Catholics. Also, he and his family were indebted to his parents in many ways, and he knew their material help would cease if he left the Church. He prayed that God would point the way out to him, and promised to walk in it, whatever it might cost him. Whilst his mind was in this turmoil he thought he would try the Meeting House and the Established Church. He went first to the Meeting House at Lisburn, and the next Sunday he attended the Parish Church at Hillsborough. By this time he was fully determined to leave the Roman Church. His decision caused a great stir in the district. Those of his Church abhorred him; some of the Protestants called him a turncoat; he was shunned by his parents; and what was an even greater trial, he still bore the weight of his sins.

On 20th March 1776 he made application to Mr. Bredin to be received into membership of the society. He now began to make prayer the chief aim of his life. One night he felt strongly that he should start praying with his own family, and although he felt inadequate, by Divine grace he was enabled to do this each evening. In June of that year he went to Lisburn to hear Rev. Edward Smyth, a Church of Ireland curate who had become a Methodist preacher. As Patrick listened, he found that Mr. Smyth had a message from God for him. He states: "As he (Mr. Smyth) had not been used to extempore preaching, his sermon was a little confused; but this defect was more than compensated by his plainness, faithfulness and zeal. He preached not himself, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and the Gospel from him came not in word only, but in power in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. . . . Under the sermon a ray of heavenly light began to break through the cloud which had so long involved me in darkness. The divine impression was made, went home with me, and that night at family prayer God set my soul at liberty. I was enabled to believe with my heart unto

*Services were begun in the Wrights' home at Moyrusk on 16.2.1776, and continued for many years.

"righteousness, my burden of guilt was removed, and I could exult in the liberty of God's children, saying

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

And boldly, Abba, Father, cry.

I felt a hatred to sin inspired, the love of God shed abroad in my heart, and a flame of holy zeal kindled within. I felt the witness of the Spirit, and a peace that passeth understanding. The light of God's countenance was lifted upon me. . . . I was now ready to think that my troubles were mostly over, but was soon convinced of the contrary. . . . Those who have entered the strait gate of conversion to God should not expect that their subsequent path will be all smooth and pleasant, for it is often through tribulation that believers enter the Kingdom."

In a short time Patrick began to consider that making restitution was the indispensable duty of every Christian, and in consequence he started to recompense anyone he had wronged, even if it had occurred more than twenty years previously. Since at times he appeared to be taking a great deal of trouble over matters which seemed unworthy of notice he became a laughing-stock amongst the neighbours, but he tells us, "This I did not regard, so long as I felt peace in my own conscience."

Hugh Murray of Moira, and Joseph Cherry, "men of good sense and piety" were the leaders of the Methodist class meeting which Patrick attended. After some time they thought the group were able to manage for themselves and Patrick was appointed leader. He felt that at that time he "was unfit for such an office, but as they were in great need they had to appoint such as they could get." He conducted the class for several years until a change of circumstance occurred in the house where the meetings were held, and the preaching had to be discontinued. The class was removed to a place where it was inconvenient for the people to attend, and members began to fall off.

Some time later Patrick and Thomas Carnaghan were appointed to lead a class alternately, and this they continued to do for several years. His colleague, though blind, had a very vigorous and well-informed mind, and was an eloquent and powerful speaker. Patrick believed that he too possessed the gift of exhortation (or preaching), though to a lesser extent than his friend. He was aware of what the apostle Paul said about using

God-given gifts (Romans 12, 6-8), and was mindful to exercise his without attempting to go beyond its limits. When preaching he did not enter into methodical discussions, but addressed the people in a simple straightforward way to show them that they were fallen creatures under guilt and condemnation, and then would declare that there was a remedy for them in Christ Jesus. He believed that "none can pass through the new birth without some painful struggles. Men must feel something of the bitterness of sin, before they can be made happy in the divine favour; they must feel their condemnation, before they can be justified freely through the redemption there is in Christ." In Christian work he warns us to be on guard lest pride steal in, and states: "There is nothing more injurious to the soul than pride, nor anything more insinuating. We have need to watch against temptations, even on our knees, and in every part of Divine worship; for when the sons of God present themselves before the Lord, Satan comes also amongst them." (Job 1, v. 6).

"pretensions to systematic divinity, but spoke about the most familiar things, and was not afraid to mention hell and damnation. I wanted them not only to see the truth, but also to feel its divine force.

"The class soon grew so large that we had to divide it, and in a little time we had three classes. I now requested Joseph Cherry to come and help me. . . . He could clothe his ideas with a fine diction, and had a graceful delivery; and his discourse received additional advantage, from a gravity and solemnity almost peculiar to himself. But at the time I spoke to him, he had lost some of his zeal . . . he refused to come. . . . At last he consented to come and assist me, and his coming was not in vain. He soon caught the divine flame that was kindled at this place, which consumed his dead formality, and made him a burning, as well as a shining light. . . . The Lord continued to prosper His work among us, our numbers increased, and the people grew in grace; in a little time we had five classes, consisting of about sixty members."

It now became necessary to erect a preaching-house, and this was built on a site close to Thomas Bradshaw's home. It was a simple structure with mud walls and a thatched roof, like many of the homes in the district. The windows were small-paned and leaden, the floor was earthen, and forms were used for seating. The approach from the road was via a narrow lane.

By this time the Earl of Hillsborough had heard many unfavourable reports concerning the revival of religion and the new place of worship which had been built on his estate. One day he came down to see his tenants. He let them know he was much displeased at what they had done, and told them that he understood there was one Cunningham making them all go mad. "When he comes again", he said, "put him over head in the canal, but do not drown him." Patrick records: "One of our people began to pray for him, another desired him to come and hear me himself, and not one of them would promise to give up the cause in which he had embarked. So he went away seemingly dissatisfied, but he never molested them afterwards. The work still continued, and its blessed effects are seen to this day. . . . I consider it the greatest favour, next to my own salvation, which Heaven can bestow on this side of the grave, to be made useful in the vineyard of God."

A Sunday School was opened in the preaching-house, and it was one of the earliest in Ireland. The superintendent was Johnny Woods, and he first met with the children on 15th April 1786. We are told: "He had not a clock or a watch, but he thought upon a plan of making certain marks on the wall, and when the sun's rays came to a well-defined mark, the closing exercises of the school began."

Chapter 5

1786-1798

First Preaching-House; and Division in Irish Methodism

At Priesthill some relatives of the Cunningham family resided. In the year 1784 one of these, a young woman, died very suddenly. Her parents were in deep grief and Patrick thought it was a suitable time to make some religious impression on their minds. He requested Francis Hamilton to assist him in holding a meeting at their home, and it must have been publicised, since Patrick writes: "As this was something new in the midst of a populous neighbourhood, it drew a great many people together, and we gave them an exhortation. The people appeared attentive and serious, and desired us to go again." In this family there was a grandson whom Patrick describes as "a very wild young man." He lent him some religious books and by reading these the young man found the Saviour.

When they had recovered somewhat from their sorrow the relatives would not allow their home to be used for meetings, and difficulty was experienced in finding another house for this purpose. The people in the district were afraid of incurring the displeasure of their landlord, the Earl of Hillsborough, who shortly afterwards became the first Marquis of Downshire. During the previous decade he had restored the beautiful church at Hillsborough at his own expense. After some hesitation Thomas Bradshaw of Puddledock Road allowed his home to be used for meetings, and in a little time he also opened the door of his heart to Christ. Later, his wife and some of his family were converted to God. Patrick relates: "In this place we soon saw the fruits of our labour; several were awakened to a sense of their danger. . . . we joined them in a class, and gave every assistance in our power. Whenever we met together we felt the Divine Presence was with us. . . . There was soon a change observable in the neighbourhood, the most flagrant sinners became honest, sober and peaceable. Instead of dancing, gambling and quarrelling, the worship of God was set up in their houses; instead of blaspheming the name of God, they were singing His praises. . . . From my first entrance amongst them, I endeavoured to give them an exhortation as often as possible. I made no

The services would have been conducted by the travelling preachers appointed to Lisburn circuit, and by local preachers. In those days the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper were not administered in Methodist preaching-houses since it was John Wesley's wish that members of the societies would attend their local parish churches and receive the ordinances there. Speaking of the proper function of his preachers in a sermon delivered about a year and ten months before his death he said: "We received them wholly and solely to preach; not to administer sacraments. And those who imagine these offices to be inseparably joined, are totally ignorant of the constitution of the whole Jewish as well as the Christian church."

When he died in 1791 there were years of upheaval. An expectation was prevalent among Methodists in different parts of the British Isles that some alteration would be made to the rules concerning the receiving of the sacraments. A petition was sent from the stewards and leaders of the Lisburn circuit to the Irish Conference of 1795. They received the following reply:

"Dublin, 13th July 1795

Very Dear Brethren, The Conference desire us to inform you, that they took your affectionate letter into long and serious consideration. They assure you, that it would give them great pleasure, as far as consistent with the glory of God, to serve you in, and indulge you with everything in their power. But when the sense of the Conference was taken by vote, it was the unanimous opinion that: 'It is not expedient to introduce the Administration of the Lord's Supper, by the preachers, into this Kingdom now.' The Conference wish you every blessing of the New Covenant.

Signed on behalf of the Conference,

Thos. Coke, President.

John Crook, Secretary."

An interesting sidelight of this period is given in C. H. Crookshank's *History of Methodism in Ireland*. "During the previous year (i.e. 1795) the Lord's Supper had been administered by Messrs. Sutcliffe and M^rFarland in Cork, and Gordon in Lisburn, and for this breach of discipline they were all three put back on trial. The desire for the ordinances was very strong in these places, especially on the Lisburn circuit."^{*}

At the British Conference of 1795 a 'Plan of General Pacification' was introduced, which authorised the preachers in England, under certain

^{*}Vol. II, p. 110.

circumstances, to administer the sacraments.† Clearly the Irish Conference was beset with difficulties: there were those who wished for a change (some Methodists had never belonged to the Church of Ireland); there were others who did not desire a change but wanted to continue as the revered founder of Methodism had instructed; and there were possibly those who wished for a change but at the same time feared that a break with the Church of Ireland (which was then the Established Church) would be damaging to Ireland's link with Britain in the current unsettled situation. In 1816 when the Irish Conference eventually took the decision to have preaching in Church hours and allow the administration of the Lord's Supper in their own chapels to such only as desired it, there was a substantial schism and the Primitive Wesleyans came into being. However, a careful consideration of the membership returns of both Wesleyan and Primitive churches shows that after the schism there was a period of remarkable church growth. In 1819, for instance, three years after the division, the total membership (from figures reported by both Conferences) shows over 34,000. Both sides were warmly evangelical and committed to vigorous outreach, so that on reflection the schism was not as harmful as was at first envisaged.

Another source of dissatisfaction on the Lisburn circuit was the matter of church government. Only travelling preachers were eligible to attend the District Meetings and the Conference. The dispute seems to have started in 1795 when the superintendent preacher expelled a steward from office. The other stewards and leaders called a meeting and protested. The superintendent was able to prove before a special District Meeting that he had acted according to the rules. Subsequently the stewards and leaders prepared a printed address (dated 2nd April 1798) for circulation amongst the Methodist societies. It contained a complaint that the societies were governed exclusively by preachers, and advocated the principle: "That the Church itself is entitled, either collectively, in the persons of its members, or representatively, by persons chosen out of and by itself, to a voice and influence in all the acts of legislation and government." The upshot of it was that 32 stewards and leaders from the various societies on the circuit were expelled. They were:

Duncan Livingston, Local Preacher

Phelix Cunningham, Steward

William Black, Leader and Trustee

John Whiston, Leader

James Richey, Leader

Nathaniel Dickey, Leader and Trustee

William Balmer, Leader

James Carson, Leader

George Pike, Local Preacher and Trustee

David Patterson, Leader

William Boyce, Local Preacher and Leader

William Woods, Leader

†*ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 109.

John Scandrett, Leader
 Francis Hamilton, Leader
 Patrick Cunningham, Leader
 Timothy Rusk, Trustee
 Hugh Murray, Steward, etc.
 Robert Lilley, Leader
 John Pearce, Leader
 Robert Bailey, Leader
 William Coburne, Leader
 William McDowell, Leader

Joseph Cherry, Leader and Trustee
 Moses Buchannon, Leader
 John Kelly, Steward
 James Wright, Leader
 Thomas Bradshaw, Leader and Trustee
 William Johnston, Trustee
 John McCabrey, Leader
 Thomas McPherson, Leader
 Charles Hall, Leader
 Jeremiah Smith, Leader

Against this expulsion they prepared an appeal to the Conference of 1798, of which the following is an abridged copy.

"Lisburn, July 9th, 1798
 Dear Brethren, We think it our duty to address you. . . . As long as the sun and moon shall endure, we wish real Methodism to flourish and increase. . . . We think that there is not any complaint contained in our address that is not well founded, nor anything contained in the propositions, but what is reasonable and Scriptural. . . . We think that a few of those (brethren) delegated from the whole body, to District Meetings and Conferences, to help to make or revise any law or laws, would not, in the least degree, militate against the dignity (or sanctity) of the preachers. . . . We are determined to persevere in God's good cause until our grievances are redressed."

(Here follows the names of the 32 leaders)

An abbreviated copy of the reply received from Conference is given below:

"Dublin, July 19th, 1798
 Sirs, Your letter has been read in Conference, and we are desired to send you the following answer: The Conference consider the plan of electing, by the votes of the people, and sending to the Conference and District Meetings, and Committee, delegates, is founded on the principles of Jacobinism, principles which we abhor. . . . We are, therefore, determined in the most resolved manner, and with the most unanimous spirit, to reject the plan of delegates in whatever shape or manner it may be proposed: we are ready to receive any complaints from our people, to consider them duly, and redress them as far as they appear to be real grievances; yea, to make every sacrifice which we believe consistent with the prosperity of the work of God, to the satisfaction of their minds. As to you, gentlemen, we consider your late conduct so perfectly opposite to what we believe to be the true spirit of Christianity, that we can, on no

"account, have any further connexion with you, till God, through His grace, has given you repentance.

Signed on behalf, and by order of the Conference,

T. Coke, President
 A. Hamilton, Junr. Secretary"

It will be noted that the year was 1798, when there was strife and commotion throughout Ireland. Commenting on the dismissal of these men from the societies C. H. Crookshank observes: "Evidently the preachers considered that the views of the delinquents were the result of the spirit of insubordination and lawlessness so prevalent, and therefore should be dealt with in a very summary manner. . . . The dissentients were, in general, devout and conscientious . . . men eminent in piety and zeal."*

Amongst the 32 names are Thomas Bradshaw and Patrick Cunningham, of Priesthill, and also William Black of Lisburn society, who was the only lessee and trustee of the Lisburn Wesleyan preaching-house. Writing about it later, Patrick Cunningham explains: "We had no dispute about the doctrines of the gospel, nor any with the people at large, but only with the preachers. It was not about their moral characters, for we believed most of them to be holy men, and we held them in high estimation. The sole ground of the dispute was, the Government of the Church. The preachers claimed the right of governing the people as they thought proper: on the other hand, we thought the people ought to have some share in the formation of their own laws — in the choice of their own preachers — and in the management of their own property. We requested to have the Sacrament administered by our own preachers; for we thought our Lord's command 'Do this in remembrance of Me' was binding on all Christians — and we knew, that if it were not given amongst ourselves, that many of our people would never take it at all. Many of them could not go for it to those places of worship in which they had been brought up."

This was an unhappy episode in the life of the Lisburn circuit. Upwards of two hundred people left the parent Methodist body, and later, in 1799, joined with what was at first termed 'The New Itinerancy', later to be called 'The New Connexion'. (Connexion in Methodist terms signifies the fellowship between members of a church; their union with other societies on the circuit; links with other circuits; and the union of the corporate body at Conference.) This English division of Methodism

*History of Methodism in Ireland, Vol. II, pp. 146-7.

had come into being in 1797, arising from similar circumstances to those described above.

The Psalmist has said: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity", and we all would concur with this sentiment. We think of another division which occurred in apostolic times, when the contention was so sharp between Paul and Barnabas that they departed asunder, one from the other. Paul took Silas, and Barnabas took John Mark, and so there were two missionary enterprises. Perhaps this Methodist division also worked out for the furtherance of the gospel. It was more than one hundred years later, in 1905, when a happy reunion of the parent Methodist body (Wesleyan) and the New Connexion in Ireland took place. By that time lay representation had been introduced into the Irish Wesleyan Conference and District Meetings (in 1877).

Chapter 6

1798-1838

The Methodist New Connexion; and Opening of Zion Chapel

The expelled leaders, together with those who had voluntarily left the parent Methodist body, "soon painfully felt the inconvenience and loss they were under, in not having a preacher of their own."* At Priesthill the people still had their preaching-house. The ex-members of Lisburn society for a time held meetings in their own houses, and in 1814 Refuge Chapel at Linenhall Street was opened for worship. (This was followed at a later date by Salem chapel.)

A young man lived at Malone, Belfast, named John McClure. In 1798 although only twenty years old, he was already well known in Methodist circles as a local preacher of considerable promise. He possessed many talents including a good singing voice, and had been recommended to the Conference by the Belfast District Meeting as a suitable person to become a travelling preacher. The circuit preachers took a special interest in John and lent him their books. Much kindness was extended to him by Rev. Charles Mayne, who was then stationed at Belfast. He was encouraged to improve himself and this he did, attending school in the evening when his day's work as a weaver was done. Most of the ex-leaders of Lisburn circuit knew John McClure personally, and they soon heard that on more than one occasion he had expressed his sympathy for them and their cause. They met and talked the matter over, and a deputation of two men was sent to Belfast to ask him if he would be willing to come to Hugh Murray's house at Moira and preach for them. On the appointed evening he came and addressed a large congregation assembled in the Murrays' kitchen. He consented to be their preacher, and so began his full-time ministry. This decision was not without difficulty, for his friends in Belfast (with the best motives for they loved him) tried to dissuade him from such a course, but his mind was made up and so he came to Lisburn.

*Memoir of Rev. John McClure, by Rev. William McClure (1847).



Copied from an early 19th Century Map of Lisburn. Note the location of Refuge Chapel.

Rev. William McClure states: "I find, on referring to my father's notes of plans and texts for the years 1799 and 1800, that he preached at that time in Bangor, Ballywoolley, Newtownards, Belfast, Knockbracken, Lisburn, Milltown, Broomhedge, Balmer's Quarry, Kircreeeny, Maze, Moorside, Kilwarlin, Halftown, Magheragall, Moyrusk, Grove, Broughmore, Ballymacash, Hugh Murray's or Cairnban and Priesthill. . . . This was his regular Circuit, but he went beyond it, where God was not savingly known."

Contact had been made with the Methodist New Connexion in England, and at their Conference of 1799 the Irish friends were recognised as members. However, "this was mere recognition, and very little help in money or agents was rendered for many years."* Certainly Mr. McClure and his young wife, whom he married in 1800, found themselves suffering financial hardship. To augment their income they decided in 1802 to take a house at Market Square and open a shop for grocery and hardware. Mrs. McClure attended to the business whilst her husband carried out his other duties. Their son relates: "The time of my parents' sojourn in Lisburn formed evidently the happiest years in their short journey together. Business for some time got on well, friends were very kind, my father's mind was in a comparatively comfortable state about support for his family, and while his labours were most abundant in the Lord's vineyard, seals to his ministry were many."[†]

In 1806 they moved to Belfast, and Mr. McClure continued his work as a travelling preacher. The following is a short extract from his diary concerning the return journey of a preaching trip which extended for more than two months, and covered parts of the counties of Tyrone, Armagh, and Down:

"11th Dec. 1807: At Blackscull; received a letter from Bro. Burke to attend at Priesthill at eleven o'clock on Sabbath for the Lord's Supper. Set off early on Sabbath morning to Priesthill; called on my way at William Coburn's; took breakfast there, thence to Priesthill; had but few people — only three tables — on account of the badness of the roads few women could come. We had a very comfortable meeting. I then went into Lisburn. Mr. Brothers preached. On Monday, 14th, set off early for Belfast; found all the family in health."

A list of ministers who served Priesthill and the surrounding area is appended at the back of this book. In the early days there were no

*Irish Methodist Reminiscences, by Rev. E. Thomas, p. 80.

†Memoir of Rev. John McClure, by Rev. William McClure.

menses, and the preachers would reside in rented accommodation or with members of the congregations.

In 1824 the New Connexion Conference in England selected Ireland as its field of missionary enterprise, and the Conference of 1825 developed the plan and appointed a committee to conduct the business of the Mission. An English preacher was sent to superintend the work of the missionaries. Another important decision was taken in 1828, when it was decided that Ireland should hold its own Conference whilst still having a superintendent of Mission. An English deputation would attend the Conference, and the Irish brethren were entitled to a suitable representation at the English Conference. In Ireland they met in either April or May, and in 1830 we find that the Conference was held in Lisburn, "a beautiful and picturesque town seven miles west of Belfast."* Certainly from the late 1830s onward it was held in Belfast, the venue being Salem, York Street, better known today as the former North Belfast Mission.

In the year 1827 Rev. William Cooke, then aged twenty-one, was sent to Ireland as a supply. He often came to Priesthill and preached, and the following is his description of services at the preaching-house:

"The congregation was systematically arranged into a complete separation of the men and women who sat on humble forms, ranged on opposite sides of 'the house'. The singing was slow and solemn, the usual tunes being *The Old Hundredth*, *Irish*, and *Martyrdom*, the men and the women separately taking their own parts with rustic precision. But those were good days, and afford precious memories still. The humble sanctuary was usually crowded on the Lord's day, and so were the farmers' large kitchens on the week nights."

He also recalls the district and homes which he visited:

"Steam had then done little for manufactures in that neighbourhood, and still less for locomotion. The jaunting car plied between the towns, the thud of the flail was heard in the barn, the hum of the spinning-wheel in the cottage, and the click-clack of the weaver's shuttle was heard all around. The turf burned briskly on the hearth, canopied by a capacious chimney, within the wide area of which the whole family were usually seated at even, when the toils of the day were over, and there many an edifying conversation was held."[†]

*Life of Rev. William McClure, p. 62.

†The Earnest Minister: A Memoir of the Rev. Thomas Carlisle, by Rev. Dr. William Cooke, p. 12.

In 1829 Rev. John Lyons reports:

"In the neighbourhood of Priesthill our prospects are very pleasing: throughout the whole of the winter our chapel was well filled. In a village called Maze, we have formed a new class, but can only give them preaching occasionally. A Mr. Bradbury, who lives near the race course, has kindly opened his house to us. Here we have large congregations, who seem to hear with attention the sacred truths of the gospel. . . . In this part of the country we have lost a sincere friend, Mr. Thomas Jefferson. For many years, the messengers of the gospel always found his house a comfortable home. . . . In the hills of Kilwarlin we have laboured with success. We have gotten another class, and Heaven seems to prosper the old ones."

At the Conference of 1833 Rev. William McClure "was transferred from the Belfast to the Lisburn circuit, taking up his abode at Broomhedge, where was the preacher's house." A chapel with a manse adjoining had been built in Broomhedge, and the chapel was opened in 1830. These buildings are now the schoolroom and sexton's house. The circuit at that time embraced the following areas: Priesthill, Broomhedge, Lisburn, Ballinderry, Stoneyford, Ballyskeagh, Ballymacash, Moyrusk, Englishtown, Moira, Bog, Longstone, Halftown.

The following are extracts from Rev. McClure's diary:

3rd August 1834: "Was in Priesthill . . . examined two classes in the Sunday School in a task I had previously given them; after which I gave them their promised reward. I then gave a short address to all the children, prayed with and dismissed the school. At eleven o'clock I preached to a numerous and deeply attentive congregation, after which I baptised a child, and endeavoured to impress on the minds of all the parents present their duty to their children, and their accountability to God for the proper discharge of that duty; it was a solemn, and I hope, a profitable time. Got home for my dinner at two o'clock."

7th October 1834: "After dinner, set off for Half-town, visiting some of the houses as I passed. The house could scarcely hold the people. Their attention was deep. A very solemn sense of God's presence seemed to rest on all."

15th December 1834: "Planted some strawberries in the morning, and preached at Half-town in the evening."

Evidently strawberries were popular at the Maze and Broomhedge even then. We find that two girls from these areas bore the Christian name of Strawberry.

Below is an extract from a letter sent by Rev. William McClure to the Secretary of the Irish Mission:

“Broomhedge, January 10th, 1835
 . . . The weather has been very unfavourable to the health of great numbers of those poor people who have cold damp hovels to dwell in, very little firing, and bad clothing. As there are great numbers of such people in this neighbourhood, sickness and death have been, and still are, very common. . . .

“My labours during the past month have been severe, owing to the badness of the roads; and the floods of the Lagan river frequently stopping up my direct paths, have caused me a good deal of extra travelling. . . . I have been distributing a good many of our catechisms among the children, whose parents are members or hearers; and I intend when the weather gets milder, to meet those children monthly, to examine them in the catechism and the Scriptures. This I had begun, but when winter came the children could not attend. . . .”

In June 1836 Rev. William Cooke returned to Ireland, this time as superintendent of the Irish Mission. He resided in Belfast, and often visited the circuit. He writes:

1836: “On Sunday, the 17th (*July*) preached at Priesthill in the morning. The congregation good and very attentive. In the evening preached at Lisburn to a large assembly. Both chapels neat and clean.”

It is appropriate to insert here an introduction to the Carlisle family of Maze. Reference has already been made to George, Senr., who in his youthful days found peace with God after hearing John Wesley preach. He married Mary, daughter of Thomas Bradshaw, at whose home the earliest Priesthill class meetings were held. Mary was converted as a child of only nine years. George and Mary resided on a small farm on the Kesh Road, opposite where the Maze School now stands. Their home was much used for Christian work. George was a class leader, and when he died in the late 1820s it was recorded that he had entertained the ministers of the Gospel, and kept a class in his house, for more than forty years. They had several children, and not long after George's death most of the young people contracted fever, of which three died — Thomas, and two

girls, one of whom was named Margaret. At Thomas's death, Margaret requested that Mr. Burke, the preacher, would stand outside the window where she and the other sufferers lay, so that they could hear the funeral sermon. Shortly afterwards she died, on 16th July 1829. She was in her twenties, and had been an earnest Christian worker, and leader of a ‘Juvenile Band’, which would indicate a children's meeting. Her other brothers were James, William, David and George.

James, who made such a valuable contribution to the work in the Sunday School at Priesthill, was born in 1815, and would have been only 14 years old when his much-loved sister Margaret died. The memory of “her loving instructions, holy example, and triumphant death remained with him all through his life.”* It is an interesting fact that as a boy he (and no doubt the other members of the family) attended school at ‘Orrfield’. James committed his life to Christ when he was twenty years old, and afterwards regretted that he had spent so long in halting between two opinions. Like many others, he was too reserved or hesitant to disclose his inner feelings to those who could have helped him. When he did become deeply concerned about his spiritual condition “he read the Word of Life as if for very life, and listened to the Gospel preached with a hungering spirit. The society of God's people had new attractions for him; he would walk behind them on the way from services, stealthily listening to their conversation, expecting therefrom words of help. . . . At length, by faith, he ‘saw his Lord upon the tree’, and was able, by the Holy Spirit to say, ‘He died for me!’ † Now he had liberty and joy in drawing near to God. James's years of indecision had a marked effect on the rest of his life, and in the Sunday School “it gave urgency to his words when he besought the young to beware of procrastination.” †† He placed a high value on having the spiritual legacy of Godly parents, and he regarded their influence as the chief instrument in restraining him from sin, and in keeping his conscience awake to the claims of Christ.

George, Junr., was born on 1st May, 1811, and in the early 1830s we find him as a class leader at Priesthill. Later, “impelled by a conviction of the sinner's danger, and urged by the entreaties of his brethren, he was constrained, contrary to the natural timidity of his disposition, to become an exhorter, and then a local preacher. And from the very commencement of his labours, the grace of God was so manifested in him, that crowds of his own neighbours and relations attended his ministry, many of whom were often melted into tears by the solemnity of his manner, and fervency of his appeals. His preaching continued highly attractive and impressive

*All for Jesus: Memorials of James Carlisle, by Rev. Ed. Thomas, p. 16.
 †ibid., p. 18.

††ibid., p. 14.

“till the close of his ministry. With lofty independence of human praise or blame, and with his eye steadily fixed on the account he must render to the Judge of all on the great day, he went forth . . . beseeching sinners in Christ’s stead to be reconciled to God.”*

In the late 1830s the preaching-house was becoming rather dilapidated. One day after a service the subject was under discussion, and James Hunter suggested that a new building should be erected. At first some of the others thought this an absurdity, but the proposition was heartily endorsed by this devoted young man, George Carlisle. At the Conference in the spring of 1838 George Carlisle was called into the Christian ministry; and according to its request, he was appointed to the Lisburn circuit, under the superintendence of Rev. John Lyons. James Hunter, who lived at Hillsborough, was a member of Priesthill leaders’ board. He is described as “a man of God with great influence in the Downshire Estate Office.” At the Jubilee celebrations in 1888 it was stated by Rev. Edward Thomas that the site upon which Zion chapel stands was given by the Marquis of Downshire. The Marquis also donated ten guineas to the building fund, and a quantity of stones from his quarry. The Deed of Assignment, dated 21st September 1838, is signed by the following:

Bernard Jefferson of Trooperfield	(secretary of Lisburn quarterly meeting)
James Hunter of Hillsborough	(leader in Priesthill society)
George Carlisle	(preacher)
Joseph Watson	(farmer of Annaclloy, from whom the land was transferred)

The sum of £3.5s.7½d. was paid to Joseph Watson, being “consideration money”. The site consisted of road frontage of 63 feet, rear measurement of 63 feet, and depth of 136 feet 6 inches.

The witnesses were: Samuel Jones, Robert Shields and William Shields.

Rev. William McClure records: “Through his (James Hunter’s) influence, access was found to the Marquis of Downshire’s quarries for stones to ornament and strengthen the building. So zealous was he in the laudable work that he had all the carpenter-work finished before the foundation-stone was laid, in order that no time might be lost. In fact, his own business, to a great extent, was suspended for a whole summer.

“Week after week, and month after month he was to be found on the spot, superintending the laying of every stone until it was finished.” Mr. Hunter also collected most of the subscriptions towards the building fund, and the debt was soon cleared.

* *The Irish Christian Monitor*, Memoir of Rev. George Carlisle, by Rev. T. Seymour (1843)

James Carlisle adds: “I remember one day being up at *Zion* when it was almost finished. James Hunter was all alone inside, and was looking round and round with delight. He called me to him and said, ‘I hope while the world stands there will be a house here for God; and that there will always be faithful men to build up a church for God, and point the anxious soul to the Lamb of God. I am an old man now and you are young. I may not live to see this house too small but I hope you will. If so, I have a plan in my mind of how to enlarge it.’ He then made me stand at his side just where the pulpit now is, and pointing to the two centre windows in the back wall said, ‘Break out an aisle from the outside of this window to the outside of that, and run it back into the garden as far as it is needful. When you have to enlarge just tell them that James Hunter left word with you that this was the way to do it.’”* (At first, *Zion* consisted of the portion that is level. The building was extended with tiered seating some years later, in the manner above described.)

Rev. Thomas Seymour states: “And after all that was done by others it must be acknowledged that this neat and substantial church stands as a monument, under the Divine blessing, to the vigorous efforts and untiring industry, of Brother George Carlisle and James Hunter.”

The chapel was completed in readiness for its dedication to the worship of God on Monday, Christmas Eve, 1838. Rev. William Cooke, superintendent of the Irish Mission, performed the opening ceremony. The event was celebrated by holding a tea meeting, and four hundred persons were crowded into the building. Mr. Cooke had a magic lantern; he also possessed a set of slides on Astronomy, and delivered an eloquent address on the starry firmament. No doubt he would also speak of the wonderful Star in the East seen by the wise men.

That year it was a white Christmas. Perhaps we can visualise the friends wending their way home through the snow, discussing the beginning of this new chapter in the life of Priesthill in which they all had the pleasure and privilege of sharing.

* All for Jesus: Memorials of James Carlisle, by Edward Thomas, pp. 106-7.

Great sadness came to the congregation just six months after the opening of Zion. George Carlisle, the young circuit minister who lived amongst them, was stricken by disease and died. Around 1836 he had been afflicted with what was then termed pulmonary consumption. Prayer was made by the Church on his behalf and he recovered. In his first ministerial year (1838-39) he laboured extensively and with great success. At the Conference in the spring of 1839 he was reappointed to Lisburn circuit, but on 27th June he passed Home to be with his Saviour, aged 28 years.

At Priesthill in 1839 there were 93 members and 2 on trial. The Sunday services were held at 11.00 a.m. and 6.00 p.m. and there was a morning Sunday School. A circuit meeting on 14th April 1841 resolved:

“That the Sabbath Schools at all the chapels be dismissed fifteen minutes before eleven o'clock each Sabbath morning.”

On 15th July 1839 it was decided:

“That the Wednesday prior to each quarterly sacrament day be appointed as a day of humiliation, fasting and prayer and that the above be announced from the pulpit the previous Sabbath.”

Love-feasts were also held quarterly. These were a feature of early Methodism, derived from the Moravians. Each person would receive a cup of water and a biscuit or portion of plain cake, thus signifying their fellowship together, and those who felt led would relate their recent experience of God's blessing on their lives. It was resolved on 13th April 1840:

“That hereafter the quarterly love-feast be held at each of the three chapels successively, beginning at Zion on July next, and so on to Salem (Broomhedge) and thence to Lisburn.”

This decision was renewed on 7th July 1845:

“That the love-feast be held turn about in the chapels — and that preaching be not given in the morning to those two in which the love-feast is not, in order that the preachers may be present.”

In 1840 class meetings were being held in homes at the following places: Kesh Bridge, Moss Vale, Gravel Hill, Moss, Corcreeny, Kilwarlin, Mount-pleasant, Clogher, Maze, Hillsborough, Halftown, and in Zion. The names of the members of these classes are recorded in the minute book.

A room was being rented in Hillsborough for preaching during this period, and collections were taken up in the three chapels to defray the

Chapter 7

1838-1888 A Period Marked by Religious Revival

We have already observed that Zion chapel was at first a rectangular building without the elevated wing. As pews had not then been installed the congregation sat on forms, and it seems probable that the preacher would occupy a position opposite the entrance door. A stove was used for heating and it was situated near to where the organ is now. There were four windows on the rear wall, and on dark evenings the chapel was illuminated by candles.

When perusing the records one cannot fail to be conscious of the great devotion and diligence with which these servants of God went about their Master's business. Our source of information for this period is a circuit minute book. The meetings were held in rotation in the chapels at Lisburn, Priesthill and Broomhedge, and some of their resolutions are noted below:

14th January 1839

“That everyone in this meeting engage to use his exertions to bring one or more into the visible church at the next Quarter day and that the leaders impress this on their members.”

14th October 1839

“That as every rational measure for the promotion of religion is necessary we think as one means that preachers and leaders in the neighbourhood on the day of preaching should visit careless members as well as the neighbours at large, as many as convenient, and that this friendly system be followed by visiting the sick and everyone else where needful by leaders and members.”

also

“It is resolved that leaders (*sic*) be particular in recommending the great work of salvation to the minds of his people, that both he and they may know each other's particular state, whether subject to temptation or walking in the way of holiness.”