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Proceedings

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CONVERGING AND DIVERGING LINES : ASPECTS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN METHODISM AND RATIONAL DISSENT

THE WESLEY HISTORICAL LECTURE 2001

THIS is a story, concerning five people, which stretches from 1615 to 1900. They come from a variety of backgrounds. One was the son of a tailor; another was the son of a clergyman; a third was the son of a businessman; a fourth was the son of a farmer; and the fifth was the son of a cloth and wine merchant. The story unfolds in the West of England, in Shropshire and West Worcestershire and Manchester, Liverpool and Warrington, but also in the Eastern Counties under the broad skies and flying clouds of Norfolk and Lincolnshire.

Of the five people, two pairs, in different centuries, were contemporaries but as far as we know they never met nor corresponded. Only two of the five knew each other well. The first person to appear in our story never went to university, although his writings were extensively read by subsequent generations of university men, and the whole of the unfolding story is interwoven with colleges and universities: the Warrington Academy; Lincoln College and the University of Oxford; Harris Manchester College; Richmond College and the University of London; and the University of Manchester. To these could be added Edinburgh and Leyden and Berlin.

This lecture could be sub-titled 'A study of influence' and the influence I want to trace is that of Richard Baxter who on the one hand influenced Methodism in the person of John Wesley and on the other hand influenced the English Presbyterians - the Rational Dissenters, one of whom was Dr Thomas Percival. Wesley and Percival were contemporaries, as were the next generation of James Martineau and Jabez Bunting; Martineau following in the tradition of Percival and the

English Presbyterians who by now were Unitarians, and Bunting stepping into Wesley's shoes and indeed occupying his chair four times as President of the Wesleyan Conference.

I have no doubt that one could easily trace the influence of Baxter through Wesley to Bunting on the Methodist side, and also trace the influence of Baxter through Percival and the Warrington Academy to Martineau. But what interests me more is that a great Baxterian influence on Martineau comes through Wesley, and one of the great influences on Bunting comes not only through Wesley but through Percival in whose home Bunting lived for four years. Thus one of the influences on Bunting the Methodist comes through Percival the Unitarian and one of the great influences on Martineau the Unitarian comes through Wesley the Methodist. Others, like Dr McLachlan¹ have told the story from this point onwards and have shown the conflicts and disagreements between members of the two movements. But I want briefly to look at five good people over a period of 300 years and the things which united them rather than divided them.

Richard Baxter

Richard Baxter (1615-91) exerted an influence in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries comparable to that of Coleridge on the nineteenth century. Baxter's influence flowed into many diverging channels. He stands out as one of the most prominent teachers of his time who promoted a branch of scholarship directed at showing the reasonableness of Christianity. In that sense he was a forerunner of Locke, who taught the third Earl of Shaftesbury, who in turn influenced Kant.² Two streams into which Baxter's influence flowed are those of Methodism and English Presbyterianism which later and almost entirely moved into Unitarianism.

Richard Baxter was born in Rowton in Shropshire at the home of his grandfather. His father had become an addicted gambler who had lost his freehold property and plunged the whole family into debt. However, through his study of scripture, a sudden and dramatic change came over Baxter senior which resulted in him mending his ways; an incident which made a lasting impression on his son.

Baxter's education was a kind of Open University of the seventeenth century. He was to a large extent self-taught, with a series of masters making an input from time to time. One of the least conscientious was Richard Wickstead who totally neglected his

¹ Herbert McLachlan, *The Methodist Unitarian Movement*. (Manchester, 1919)

² Johan F. Dalman, *Guds tilltal i det sköna: the theological aesthetics of the third Earl of Shaftesbury*. (Uppsala. 1989).

pupil but nevertheless did get him access to the fine library of Ludlow Castle. Years later when asked by Anthony Wood whether he was at Oxford or Cambridge, he replied 'As to myself, my faults are no disgrace to any university; for I was of none. I have little, but what I have I had out of books, and inconsiderable help of country tutors.'

After a brief attempt at being a courtier he was invited by a friend to be head of a newly established school at Dudley. He was thus ordained by the Bishop of Worcester and given a licence to teach. It was not long before he became priest-in-charge of Kidderminster. The effect of Baxter at Kidderminster is part of the saintly tradition of the Christian Church. When Baxter went there it is said that the number of good people could be counted on two hands. But he had not been there long before a passing traveller noted that from every house came prayer and praise.

Baxter worked hard to build bridges between the Presbyterians, Episcopalians and the Independents, and got local ministers to co-operate with one another. He set out 'ten directions' to his congregations which give us a good idea of what he was trying to achieve at Kidderminster. Here are four of them;

1. Labour to be men of knowledge and sound understanding, let the Bible be much in your hands and hearts.
3. Let all your Knowledge turn into Affection and Practice; keep open the passage between your heads, and your hearts, that every Truth may go to the quick.
5. Beware of extremes in the controverted points of Religion. As for separation, the mischief of it lies not in the bare error of judgement, but in the unchristian and church-dissolving divisions and alienation which thence follow.
6. Above all see that you be followers of Peace and Unitie, both in the Church and among yourselves.³

In the early part of the Civil War he served as a chaplain preaching at Alcester on the day of the Battle of Edgehill (1642). On leaving the army in 1647 he wrote perhaps his greatest book *The Saints Everlasting Rest* (1650). Ten years later he played a prominent part in the return of Charles II but turned down the post of Bishop of Hereford on the grounds that he was unhappy with the episcopacy. After the St Bartholomew Act, which cast him out of the Church of England, he effectively became a Presbyterian.

He spent the last ten years of his life in London and was a friend of Dr Annesley, the father of Susanna Wesley, and frequent visitor at his home in Spitalfields. From Baxter our lines diverge into Methodism and English Presbyterianism. His major gift to both these movements was his strong emphasis on the catholic (meaning inclusive) nature of the Church.

³ Geoffrey Nuttall, *Richard Baxter* (1965) p.45

Although only a few years separated Baxter's death in London and Wesley's birth in Lincolnshire, they lived in different centuries. The uncertainty of the Civil War and successive changes of the monarch were to give way to a new confidence symbolised by the building of Queen Anne houses, the opening of new schools and academies, by foreign exploration and by Britain positioning herself to dominate the world for the next two centuries. And yet it is strange how ideas propounded in one period can find fertile soil and come to fruition in a later and very different age. Many of the best insights of the seventeenth century, English-Presbyterian spirituality flourished in eighteenth-century Methodism. Wesley became familiar with Baxter's ideas in two ways, firstly through his mother, and secondly by reading and abridging Baxter's works.

During his time in London Baxter became a close friend of Dr Samuel Annesley, a leading Dissenting Minister. Annesley had been removed from office in 1662, but unlike many of his fellow Dissenters the wealth he had inherited had enabled him to live without a stipend. His grandfather had been a peer of the realm, and his uncle, the Earl of Anglesey, was a Privy Councillor. Samuel Annesley deserves a place in English history, if for no other reason than by virtue of the fact that his youngest child was Susanna Wesley. She had spent her childhood at the centre of London Dissent in the old house in Spital Yard, where she had grown up amid the religious debates on free will and predestination which took place around her father's dining room table. In her later correspondence with her son, John, she acknowledges that Baxter had his faults but nevertheless quotes him with approval, especially his advice to put Christ at the centre of one's life.⁴ There is also more than a strong hint that her own educational approach to children owed much to Baxter. Through his wide reading, Wesley came into direct contact with Baxter's ideas.

John Wesley

Although Wesley is always associated with Lincoln College, as a student he came to Christ Church, Oxford. His student days were not a particularly happy period of his life, although he did receive a good education at Christ Church, and indeed went on to win a fellowship at Lincoln College. In those days the head of the College would ask one of the Fellows to take on the duties of Tutorial Fellow and be responsible for the teaching of all the undergraduates in all the subjects. This was a post that Wesley himself filled for several years. The other Fellows had stipends and rooms in College and were thus free to follow their own interests providing that they did not marry, whereon they were obliged

⁴ Susanna Wesley, *The Complete Writings*, ed. Charles Wallace Jr. (Oxford, 1997) p. 166.

to resign their fellowships. John Wesley was undoubtedly one of the cleverest men of the eighteenth century and this, combined with his astonishing energy, enabled him not only to teach students, but to read extensively, to preach well thought-out sermons to the University of Oxford, and to hold his own in discussions with Bishop Butler, the leading philosopher of the day, and Dr Samuel Johnson, the outstanding man of letters.

The freedom and security that John Wesley enjoyed as a Fellow of Lincoln College played an important part in the development of early Methodism. Among his wide scholarly interests was a detailed study of Baxter's writings. Wesley himself avidly read and abridged many of Baxter's works. At the second Methodist Conference he uses Baxter's treatise on Justification as a guide to be studied by all those attending the Conference.

Baxter and Wesley both believed justification is not something that takes place once and for all, but is focussed on two points; the present and in the future. Final justification occurs at the final judgement, where the believer's faithfulness and good works will be taken into account, but only as secondary conditions, for faith is the ultimate foundation of both events of justification; and indeed the central pillar of both justifications rests not upon what we think or say or do, but upon what God has done for us through Christ.

Baxter and Wesley also held similar views of grace, which lined them up together against the Calvinist position of predestination, in that both men insisted on the universality of 'common grace' which enables an individual to respond to God's offer of saving grace and thereby makes the individual personally responsible. There were many other issues where the views of the two men seem to coincide. Wesley appears to have been influenced by Baxter's theories of education and by Baxter's detailed notes on the guidance of ministers. One of the most important ideas that Wesley appears to take from Baxter is that of the catholic (meaning comprehensive) Church.

Baxter was always grateful for the fact that Kidderminster, where he had ministered, was without division and separation. He considered it to be a great advantage that the sects and heresies that divided many towns did not tear Kidderminster apart, for in his words, 'we were all, but as one'. Although he had written many books defending infant baptism, when a lady who could not accept infant baptism wrote to him, he replied in a characteristic way which captured his catholic spirit:

There is a Spirit in the Saints that will work by Sympathy, and by closely uniting inclinations, through greater Differences and Impediments than the external act of Baptism; your husband, and you, and I are one in our dear Lord, that if all the self-conceited Dividers in the world should contradict it on the account of Baptism, I could not believe them.⁵

Baxter's view of the Church was that each party 'had some truths and each one had their proper mistakes'. Near the end of his life he wrote to his friend Peter Ince in Wiltshire:

Dear brother, bottom upon Christ and the great fundamentals, Unite in those with men of holiness and righteousness and keep your eye on the glory where we shall be one.⁶

Wesley took up this theme in his great sermon 'The Catholic Spirit', first preached Newcastle in 1749:

Every wise man will allow others the same liberty of thinking which he desires they should allow him; and will no more insist on their embracing his opinion, than he would have them to insist on his embracing theirs. He bears with those who differ from him, and only asks him with whom he desires to unite in love that single question, 'Is thy heart right as my heart is with thy heart..' if thou lovest God and all mankind, I ask no more: 'Give me thine hand.'⁷

It is an idea which finds expression in many of the Wesley hymns:

Love like death hath all destroyed,
Rendered all distinctions void,
Names and sects and parties fall,
Thou, O Christ, art all in all.⁸

In 1757 John Wesley visited Norwich and saw the newly built Octagon Chapel, completed a year earlier by Dr John Taylor. Wesley was greatly impressed and wrote in his Journal, 'I was shown Dr Taylor's new meeting-house, perhaps the most elegant one in all Europe ... How can it be thought that the old coarse gospel should find admission here?' However, within a few years fourteen octagonal Methodist chapels were built. Wesley and Taylor crossed swords on the issue of Original Sin⁹, but in spite of their differences they held in common the fact that they had both come under the influence of Richard Baxter's catholicity, which can be clearly seen in the address which Taylor delivered at the opening of the Octagon Chapel in Norwich.

⁵ Richard Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, ed. M. Sylvester, (1996) appendix iii p. 54

⁶ MS Richard Baxter Manuscripts, I, II. Dr Williams's Library, London

⁷ John Wesley, *Forty Four Sermons*, ed. Edward H Sugden, 2 vols. (1921) II, pp. 139-40

⁸ *Methodist Hymn Book*. (1933) No. 720

⁹ See Geoffrey Eddy's excellent research on John Taylor and his careful analysis of this controversy in *Methodist History*, 38, pp. 71-80 (Jan 2000)

This chapel we have erected and here we intend to worship the living and true God, through the one mediator Jesus Christ; not in opposition to, but in perfect peace and harmony with all our fellow protestants. This edifice is founded upon no party principles or tenets, but is built on purpose and with this very design, to keep ourselves clear from them all; to discharge ourselves from all prejudices and fetters in which any of them may be held: that so we may exercise the public duties of religion upon the most Catholic and charitable foundation according to the rules and spirit of genuine Christianity.¹⁰

That very same year, 1757, Taylor left Norwich to take up the appointment of first Principal of the newly-established Warrington Academy, built by the English Presbyterians on non-sectarian lines laid down by Baxter. The first student to be admitted to this progressive academy was the third figure in our story, Thomas Percival, himself an English Presbyterian moving towards Unitarianism.

Dr Thomas Percival

Wesley was already in his late thirties when Percival was born at Warrington in 1740. He came from a medical family with his grandfather and uncle both being doctors in Warrington. Percival's parents both died when he was three years old and he was thus brought up by Elizabeth, an elder sister. She left the Church of England and took Thomas to the English Presbyterian Church in Warrington, which at that time was moving towards Arianism. In 1750, at the age of 10, his uncle left him a medical library and a substantial income. With this gift he resolved to enter the medical profession. He attended Warrington Grammar School and at the age of 17 enrolled as a student at the Warrington Academy where Dr John Taylor was the Principal, and Priestley, who discovered oxygen, and Gilbert Wakefield were tutors.

Having completed the four-year course at Warrington, and with the ancient universities barred to him, as in good conscience he could not subscribe to the Thirty-nine Articles, he matriculated at the University of Edinburgh to read medicine. Here he became friendly with Hume the philosopher and Robertson the historian. At the age of 21 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society, the youngest person ever to be elected to a Fellowship. Like many Dissenters, he completed his studies at Leyden University and returned to Warrington before moving to Manchester where, having abandoned a plan to move on to London, he spent 40 years as a medical doctor. Among his friends and admirers were Lord Landsdowne, Bishops Watson and Burgess, Dean Tucker, Archdeacon

¹⁰ MS. letter of James Martineau to Rev. Valentine Davis, March 5 1897 - Harris Manchester College Library, Oxford

Paley, Hannah More and Jane Austen, who was greatly influenced by his children's books.

He was a deeply learned man with wide interests. He laid the groundwork for medical ethics through his publication in 1803 and indeed it was he who coined the term 'medical ethics'. He was also greatly interested in community medicine and formed a committee to oversee the installation of proper sanitation in Manchester. He carried out a programme to build public baths for the community and was one of the first to advocate the necessity of legal control over safety in industry, and the need to improve factory conditions for labourers, set out in his lecture to the Manchester Board of Health of 1796.

At his home in Manchester Percival founded the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society and was subsequently elected the President every year, with the exception of one, until his death in 1804. When the students of the Warrington Academy became unruly in 1785, at his instigation the institution was re-founded in Manchester as the Manchester Academy, and he was elected the first President. For many years he taught the medical students within the new academy. Yet through all the years of his growing fame he remained true to Baxter's vision of catholicity, adopted by the English Presbyterians. In writing the foundation documents of the newly-founded Manchester Academy, he ensured that the institution should be based on the catholic principle, that it was to be open to young men of every denomination from whom no test of faith would be required.¹¹

He carried the principle of Catholicism into his home and into his church life. In writing to his friend Archdeacon William Paley of Carlisle, he said:

I am a Dissenter but actuated by the same spirit of Catholicism which you profess; an Establishment I approve; the Church of England, in many respects, I honour; and I should think it my duty instantly to enter communion were your plan (that of a comprehension) carried into execution.¹²

So we see Baxter's catholicity streaming down the English Presbyterians of whom Percival is a good example, and also pouring into Methodism through its influence on John Wesley. But with the advent of the nineteenth century and the rise of denominationalism, accompanied by the funding of church schools and colleges and Sunday schools, as well as denominational newspapers and structures, the two streams diverge, with the exception of one or two pockets like the Rochdale Unitarian Methodists. However, there is a twist in the tale, in that the outstanding leaders of both movements in the nineteenth century, Jabez Bunting in

¹¹ MS. Foundation Documents of the Manchester Academy 1786 written by Thomas Percival

¹² Thomas Percival Bunting, *The Life of Jabez Bunting DD*, Vol. 1 (1859) p. 43

Methodism and James Martineau in Unitarianism, are both indebted to the other denomination.

Jabez Bunting

What many people know about Jabez Bunting is that he completed the separation of the Methodist Church from the Church of England, and that he turned Methodism from being a movement into an independent church with its own structure and organisation. He is occasionally referred to as the second founder of Methodism, and during his working life he controlled the spiritual life of half a million people on the stipend of a curate; £150 a year plus fuel, candles and a house. Others might know that he was four times President of the Wesleyan Conference at regular eight-year intervals, and even today he gets a few votes when the Conference elects a new President. What is not so well known, except by members of the Wesley Historical Society, is that as a teenager he resided in the home of Dr Thomas Percival for four years.

Bunting was the son of a Derbyshire tailor who moved from the sleepy grey stone village of Monyash to Lancashire to find work. Jabez was born in Manchester in 1779, and shortly after his birth his mother, so we are told, took him to Oldham Street Chapel where Wesley blessed him. After attending several local schools, Bunting moved to Thomas Broadhurst's school in 1791 at the age of 12. Here he met Edward Percival, the son of Thomas Percival, and the two boys became great friends. At this stage in his life Bunting wanted to study medicine, so Thomas Percival took Bunting into his home as a medical student for four years, free of charge. Some sixty years later, in writing about this period of his father's life, Bunting's son said 'many of Dr Percival's precise opinions moulded, very perceptibly, those of which Dr Bunting was the expounder and advocate during a long public life'. It is significant when trying to assess the influence of Percival on the younger man that Bunting named a son Thomas Percival Bunting. Percival, at his own expense, made arrangements for Bunting to study medicine abroad, and graduate as a medical doctor. Although Bunting cherished the idea of becoming a doctor, his mother had never forgotten that Wesley's blessing rested on her son and had always treasured the hope that he would become a Methodist Minister. Thus at the age of twenty in 1798 he turned his back on a medical career and began to preach, being received into Full Connexion in Manchester five years later.

Percival was obviously disappointed that Bunting did not pursue a medical career, and yet even though Bunting became a minister in a Church very different to his own denomination, something of that catholic spirit can be seen in Percival's continuing support and encouragement. On 1 May 1801 Percival wrote to Bunting:

My Dear Friend, You are soon to remove from Oldham, and in a new situation may not have what you now enjoy there, - a library to consult for your improvement. Permit me, therefore, to request your acceptance of the enclosed bank-note, for the purchase of such books as may be peculiarly interesting to you, in your present theological pursuits. Assure yourself of my sincere and cordial concern for your welfare; and that I shall always rejoice in any opportunity of promoting your happiness and advancement in life: for I am, with true esteem and attachment, your most affectionate friend,

Thomas Percival.¹³

Bunting was a complex character and he tended to hide his personal life behind the facade of the Church administrator. It is also difficult to trace the sources of influence upon him. Moreover, there is little doubt that with the rise of denominationalism at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the catholic vision of Baxter was being squeezed out of English society. However, Bunting's actions show some signs of the catholic spirit proclaimed by Baxter, Wesley and Percival. In his first circuit of Oldham he planned dinner parties where the local Baptist and Congregational Ministers could join with him and his superintendent to take part in religious fellowship and theological debates free from any sectarianism or the exclusiveness which was to characterise the century. He was prepared to join with William Smith, the Unitarian MP for Norwich, in petitioning a Tory government on the rights of the Dissenters. It is also interesting to note that his most famous sermon was on Justification by Faith, a theme, as we have seen, vigorously taken up by Wesley and Baxter.

In leaving Bunting it is worth reminding ourselves that his defence against revivalism and his watchwords in support of Church order were 'to unite sound learning and vital religion', an emphasis found in all five of our case studies: Baxter, and Wesley, Percival and Bunting, and finally in Martineau.

James Martineau

James Martineau was born in Norwich to Unitarian parents in 1805. After his early schooling in the City Grammar School he became a pupil of Lant Carpenter in Bristol. Lant Carpenter was a charismatic man with a vast range of interests which he carried with him into the class room. He was a man of the world who read the daily papers to the pupils around the dinner table and kept them in touch with parliamentary debates. He encouraged his pupils to start their own debating society and to care for the poor from their own funds. He laid great stress on

¹³ *Jabez Bunting* p.121

moral and religious education and introduced his pupils to contemporary biblical criticism.

On leaving school Martineau had a short period as apprentice to an engineer, a Mr Fox of Derby. But the death of a cousin, the influence of Lant Carpenter, and dissatisfaction with his position caused him to enter Manchester College, York, to train for the ministry. Charles Wellbeloved was the Principal of the College; he was a sound scholar, a good theologian and classicist, who wrote books on Roman Britain. Among Wellbeloved's many achievements was that he saved the walls of York when the city council wanted to pull them down in 1819. He also managed to get the College into the University of London, while it was still located at York. Martineau was greatly influenced by Wellbeloved's catholic view of Christianity, which he regularly quoted with approval.

Martineau's first ministerial appointment in 1828 was to the Non-subscribing Presbyterian Church in Dublin, where he witnessed much denominational bitterness between the Protestants and the Catholics of the city. In his 'Biographical Memoranda' he recounts one such event:

In an endowed school connected with the Meeting House, some 40 orphans were lodged, educated and qualified for apprenticeships ... At one election, a boy of very winning appearance, brought by a well-mannered father (the mother was dead), excited a prevailing interest in the members present; but it was suggested that no enquiry had been made respecting the parent's religion. The man was recalled and questioned. The mother had been a Protestant. 'And you?' said the Chairman. 'I'll not be deceiving your honour,' replied the father: 'the boy may follow his mother's road; but I'm bound to be a Catholic.' 'Be gone then this minute' exclaimed the Chairman, with a loud stamp of his foot upon the floor; 'How dare you show your face here? We have nothing to do with you and yours.' On my trying to remonstrate, he lifted his spectacles and looked at me transfixed as a naturalist would look at a Dodo.¹⁴

From Dublin he moved to Liverpool where he stayed until 1857. It is interesting that Gregory in his *Side Lights* records the question being asked at the Wesleyan Conference of 1837; 'Who shall we send to Liverpool to confute the brilliant Martineau?' In London Martineau was Professor and later Principal of Manchester New College. Gladstone referred to Martineau as the most able English thinker of the day. When Dean Stanley tried to persuade Stopford Brooke to remain in the Church of England, because it was constantly broadening its outlook, Broole replied 'But will it widen sufficiently to enable James Martineau to become the Archbishop of Canterbury?'

¹⁴ MS. James Martineau 'Biographical Memoranda', Harris Manchester College Library, Oxford

Martineau's major contributions were to the science and religion debate, where even orthodox Anglicans came to see him as a champion of faith, and also through his beautiful prayers, sermons and liturgies. He was steeped in the Baxterian tradition of catholicity and was totally against sectarianism. He confessed that he owed much more to those outside the denomination than those in it. In the writings and hymns of the Wesleys he found religious companions. He believed that the Wesleys captured the true spirit of religion. He used the Wesley hymns liberally in his own hymnbook, especially the great catholic hymns. He held that the greatest spiritual treasure in Christendom, next to the Bible, was the *Methodist Hymnbook*.

Martineau's catholic belief, that Christ would bring together those of different outlooks, is perhaps best summed up in a hymn of Charles Wesley which Martineau included in both his later hymn books.

Ye different sects who all declare,
Lo! here is Christ, or Christ is there!
Your claim alas! ye cannot prove;
Ye want the genuine mark of love.

To Wesley, as to Martineau, the division of sects was not a matter of doctrine: it was a failure of love. And both writers saw the person and example of Jesus Christ as able to draw all men unto himself.

Join every soul that looks to thee
In bonds of perfect charity,
Greatest of gifts, thy love impart
And make us of one mind and heart.¹⁵

Charles Wesley. 1749

Martineau retired from the Principalship of Manchester College at the age of 80. He then set about writing his large theological works between the ages of 80 and 94. *Faith and Self Surrender* was his last book, completed in his ninety-fifth year. When Gladstone was old and bedridden, he enquired of a friend who called on him how Martineau was doing. His friend replied that Martineau was still climbing Ben Nevis at the age of 90, which depressed Gladstone as he was younger than Martineau.

With Martineau's death in the early days of the twentieth century, our story comes to an end, but not the idea of Baxter's catholicity which, although having had to come to terms with world religions, the scientific revolution and a massive growth of secularisation in the modern world, still lives on.

RALPH WALLER

(Dr. Ralph Waller is the principal of Harris Manchester College)

¹⁵ James Martineau ed., *Hymns for the Christian Church and Home*. Fourteenth edition, (1859) No. 241

ROBERT WINFIELD AND THE REVIVALISTS

THE beginnings of the story of Primitive Methodism's expansion lie in John Benton wilfully disobeying the 'Tunstall non-missioning law' - an agreement not to mission beyond the confines of the Tunstall Circuit - and the subsequent rapid expansion into the East Midlands. This had led by the end of 1816 to two large PM circuits, Tunstall and Nottingham (initially called Derby).

Revivals and rapid expansions often draw in agents who, although initially valuable, prove to be unsuitable in the long term - and this might be the story of Robert Winfield. Born in 1772 at 'Amberston', four miles from Derby (probably the hamlet now called Ambaston, at NGR SK 428326), Winfield was converted in 1797 and joined the Wesleyans at Breaston.¹ By this time he was a fairly well-off weaver, having married the daughter of the master to whom he was apprenticed. When the Methodist New Connexion arose that same year, the Breaston Wesleyans, including Winfield, sided with the New Connexion. His wife was converted soon after. After three years however, Winfield rejoined the Wesleyans, because it was then too difficult a journey from his home in Amberston, to which he had returned, to the MNC chapel at Breaston.

With the Wesleyans Winfield rapidly became a local preacher, and saw considerable success as a popular evangelistic preacher. He served quite contentedly in the Derby Circuit, and seems to have established a preaching place at his home in Amberston. However in 1814 he fell out with the Derby Superintendent - probably Joseph Taylor snr.² - over a question of local preachers submitting to the Superintendent's authority. It happened that about this time William Clowes visited Derby - presumably on the occasion of journeys noted in his Journal, albeit without dates³ - and Winfield heard him preach. Impressed, he invited Clowes to preach at Amberston, which apparently Clowes did, although no record is found in his Journal. This led to a letter from the Wesleyan Superintendent, threatening Winfield with expulsion if that happened again - in spite of it appearing that the preaching place was Winfield's own house!

This letter was as a red flag to a bull, and when a Camp Meeting was announced near by, Winfield went 'on principle'. Being recognised, he was invited to speak - and needed no second invitation. Soon his Superintendent heard, and Winfield was expelled at the next Wesleyan Quarterly Meeting.

¹ James Maughan. 'Memoir of Mr Robert Winfield of Amberston, Derby', *Methodist New Connexion Magazine* 1852, p633. This is the source of all Winfield biographical details unless otherwise noted. Hereafter cited as MO.

² T. Galland Hartley. *Hall's Circuits and Ministers*. (1912), p149.

³ William Clowes. *The Journals of William Clowes*. (1844), p116f (accessed via S. Hatcher's 1980 photocopy reprint). Cited hereafter as CJ.

Undeterred, Winfield continued to preach wherever he had the opportunity, and to form societies from his converts (echoes of William O'Bryan, and the origins of the Bible Christians). Soon he had about 400 people under his oversight. By now however, the Primitive Methodists were becoming established in the area, and Winfield and his societies joined the Primitives. This must have happened about 1814-15 (counting back from Winfield's subsequent separation), for Maughan⁴ notes that...

In the short space of four years many towns and villages ... became the scenes where flourishing societies were organised and chapels erected.

This roughly corresponds with PM historian John Petty,⁵ who notes of Winfield that

His connection with the Primitive Methodists was not long, being only two or three years at most; but during its continuance, he was useful in missionary labours ...

Winfield was recognised as a Travelling Preacher among the Primitive Methodists.⁶ In November to January, 1817-18, he appears on the Derby/Nottingham Plan. Twice, at Nottingham, on 23 November and 4 January he was appointed to take a service of Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.⁷ His usefulness in missionary work is also revealed in that after Primitive Methodist preaching had begun in Leicester in March 1818 it was Winfield who was sent to carry on the work.⁸

There are two accounts of what happened later that year, the Primitive Methodist account, in two (or three) slightly different versions, and Maughan's in the Winfield obituary. On balance the Primitive account seems more likely, although the Winfield version may reveal interesting perceptions of Primitive Methodism in these early days. The Primitive Methodist versions are told first.

In 1818 a deputation came to Nottingham from Hull to 'request ... a missionary for that town', no Primitive Methodist preaching being yet established there.⁹ The suggestion was made that Winfield should go -

4 MO p635

5 John Petty. *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion*. (1864), p84. Hereafter cited as PH.

6 MO p635.

7 Stephen Hatcher (1990) 'The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in early Primitive Methodism'. *Proceedings*, XLVII p223.

8 PH p75.

9 PH p83. Hugh Bourne's biographer John Walford (John Walford, *Memoirs of the Life and Labour of the Late Venerable Hugh Bourne*. (1856 IIp55(1999 edition); hereafter cited as WB; all references to vol. II) gives a different account: that Primitive Methodist preaching had already reached Hull, and the 1818 request was to have a Primitive Methodist preacher *stationed* there. The difference is real, but hardly matters here; I prefer Petty.

but he did not. Two different reasons for this can be found. Petty¹⁰ declares.....

Mr. K Winfield was appointed to this station; but Mr. Hugh Boume had preferred several charges against him, and his mind was unsettled. Instead of going to Hull according to arrangements, he went into Leicestershire, made a division....

In contrast Walford, who appears to be quoting from Bourne's Journal,¹¹ makes no reference to any charges.

... R Winfield was fixed on; but as it was distant from his house in Derbyshire it was put to his option to go or not to go. On a full consideration he agreed to go, and we appointed him accordingly. He, however, instead of taking up the appointment, left the Connexion, made a split ...

Is this Bourne (or perhaps Walford) being defensive about his own part, and Petty is right? Or is Petty victim of some misunderstanding? On balance, I favour Petty's account.

Maughan's account is much simpler - and makes no mention of Hull, or of causing a schism.¹² He points to uncertainty as to who was 'steering the vessel' in these early days - and as a consequence Robert Winfield simply left. This could be consistent with what we learn of Winfield's character, but does not explain the effect on the Prims. Yet just that sort of uncertainty might well have been perceived among the local societies in the early days of Primitive Methodism.

Whatever way, Robert Winfield did not go to Hull. The consequence for Primitive Methodism was enormous. In place of Winfield, William Clowes went - and his ministry in Hull was the foundation of the great north eastern power base of Primitive Methodism. We must doubt whether Winfield would have even dreamt of what Clowes achieved.¹³

At about the same time, or possibly earlier in 1818, the decision was made to separate a third PM circuit to be called Loughborough, from the vast Nottingham Circuit. It included Leicester, Coventry and places in Northamptonshire. However it was also the area into which Winfield went - to cause disaster among the PM societies. It is not without

¹⁰ PH p83

¹¹ WB p55

¹² MO p635

¹³ Clowes' account of how he got to Hull (CJ pp139-40) is the third PM version of the story. However his 'Journal' is the least reliable source, compiled several years after the events. While it may reveal that Clowes was aware of the Hull possibilities, it adds nothing to the story of the Revivalists: Bourne makes no mention of Winfield.

significance that when the next wave of Primitive Methodist expansionism occurred in 1819 it was the Tunstall, Nottingham and Hull Circuits that were to be the chief centres¹⁴ - but not apparently Loughborough. It seems that the circuit might have been too weakened by the Winfield schism to contribute.

It remains an open question in what capacity Robert Winfield went to Leicestershire. Walford suggests that he had already left the Connexion - but that seems difficult to equate with the fact that he caused a schism within the Connexion. Was he actually stationed in the newly created Loughborough Circuit?

This is before the first Conference, and thus the publication of annual stations.¹⁵ It seems most likely that Winfield must have had some status within the infant PM societies in Leicestershire in order to be able to divide them.

But divide them he did. It is hard to be clear about the extent of the schism. Walford says that he made it at Barwell, a village north east of Hinckley, probably accurately in the light of John Britain (see below). Petty more generally refers to Leicestershire, implying that other societies were involved, and this is supported by Kendall¹⁶ who suggests that Winfield almost destroyed the work and abstracted several thousands. However, he probably exaggerated; the Loughborough Circuit did survive, albeit weakened. Maughan notes that 'one or two' went with him - possibly ministers or leaders from among those whom Winfield had gathered before joining the Primitives.

From this point the schism's growth becomes of no importance to the Primitive Methodist historians. Petty though does give a cameo of the movement.¹⁷

He and his followers were called "Revivalists." They sang the same hymns and tunes as the Primitive Methodists, preached the same doctrines, and greatly resembled them in their mode of worship. Several zealous preachers were raised up among them; they visited divers counties in a short period, and met with considerable success in the conversion of sinners.

Charles Hulbert's 1826 *The Religions of Britain*,¹⁸ is an independent source, which as well as echoing the similarity to the Prims, observes

¹⁴ H. B. Kendall. 'The Primitive Methodist Church and the Independent Methodist Churches' in W.J.Townsend, H. B.Workman & G. Eayrs *A New History of Methodism*. (1909) I p579.

¹⁵ Therefore Winfield is not in William Leary's *Directory of Primitive Methodist Ministers and their Circuits*, (1990) or Supplement, (1993).

¹⁶ H. B. Kendall. *Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, (1905) I p249.

¹⁷ PH p83.

¹⁸ Charles Hulbert. *The Religions of Britain - or a view of its various Christian Denominations*, (1826) p288, quoted by Barrie S.Trinder, 'Notes and Queries No.1169', *Proceedings*, XXXVI, p92.

that they were ... '... distinguished by extraordinary zeal and by encouraging field and female preaching.'

Maughan quantifies the success that Petty noted. He records that Winfield endeavoured to travel to places where Methodism was unknown - still possible in the early nineteenth century - and visited twenty counties and 250 different towns and villages. Out of this grew twelve circuits and some twenty chapels. Some four to five thousand members were enrolled and 30 male and female preachers called out by Winfield.

Hulbert indicated that ...

They have societies in various parts of the kingdom, particularly in Shropshire, Staffordshire Leicestershire, etc. Their first Conference was held in Northampton in 1821 and in 1823 they had 13 circuits, 25 travelling preachers and 71 local preachers.

Six Conferences were held, probably annually, and Robert Winfield was twice elected President.

By the 1821 Conference John Britain had become a Revivalist minister. He later became a Primitive Methodist minister, and therefore his obituary,¹⁹ by his son Obadiah Oldham Britain, appears in the *Primitive Methodist Magazine* (the name is spelt with two Ts in the *Primitive Methodist Minutes of Conference* and therefore in Leary). It forms a further brief but valuable source for the Revivalists - whom O. O. Britain always calls 'the United Revivalists', the only source so to do.

John Britain was born in Birmingham on May 29 1797. Converted at the age of thirteen, he began to preach in March 1811: most probably, with the Wesleyans. Later Britain came to the notice of the Revivalists. Whether this implies that he had moved to the East Midlands, or whether the Revivalists had some work in Birmingham is unclear. The former might be possible as both his parents died when he was sixteen/seventeen, but it also seems likely that Winfield would have sought to preach in Birmingham. Whatever way, in March 1820 John Britain²⁰

was taken out as a travelling preacher by the United Revivalist community, and went to Hinckley for Mr. Winfield, where there was a good opening, and many souls were saved. He next removed to Northampton, and afterwards back to Hinckley, where my beloved mother was very helpful, both in preaching and class leading. From Hinckley he removed to Coventry ...

¹⁹ Obadiah Oldham Britain, 'Connexional Biography', *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, (1868) p165ff (March). Hereafter cited as BO.

²⁰ BOp165.

The extract is informative. Hinckley is of course close to Barwell where Walford says that Winfield began his schism. It is just possible that the visit to Northampton was for the 1821 Conference, especially as there is a lot of ministry to be fitted into a short time. But it is also possible that Britain was there long enough to get married, as Mrs Britain only appears after Northampton. His wife's ministry was consistent with the 1826 description. Coventry is interesting. It had appeared on the first Loughborough PM plan, and the size - and relative wealth - of the Revivalist society, as the next extract²¹ will show, might reflect a wholesale movement from Primitive Methodism into Revivalist.

... and found ninety members, six local preachers, and £20 collected towards a new chapel, At this place he laboured eight months;

However it would seem that already the infant Connexion was struggling, for the eight months Britain spent in Coventry were his last as a Revivalist minister.²²

..... then he resigned the itinerancy with the Revivalist community, and received honourable credentials. At the Primitive Methodist Conference at Leeds in 1823, my father, with six preachers and the Coventry society, were received into full connexion and united with the Welton branch of the Loughborough Circuit.

This move reflects a gracious response from the Primitive Methodist Conference. All six local preachers transferred, and Britain became a PM minister stationed in the Welton branch. Leary does not show him until 1824, which is when he appears in the PM *Minutes of Conference*, stationed in the Loughborough Circuit (its Welton Branch would not have been distinguished). The 1823 *Minutes* has no reference to the acceptance, but personal references in the obituary make it clear that Britain was in the Welton branch from 1823. The incorporation of the Coventry Revivalist society into the Welton (not Coventry) branch is circumstantial evidence that there was no PM society in Coventry by 1823. It would be interesting to know what happened to the £20 - and whether it had anything to do with the graciousness!

However, things were not well with the Revivalist movement. Maughan's assessment of Winfield's failings will come later, but in this context he notes²³ that '.... he who had been so qualified to build the house was less qualified to govern the family.' Maughan records that many of the preachers called out lacked sufficient qualities to guide.

²¹ Idem.

²² BO pl66.

²³ MO p636

indeed some are described as looking for gain, and others²⁴ '...involved those circuits in difficulties and then ruined them.'

How general this observation applied is hard to assess; it might reflect a retrospective, perhaps prejudiced, judgement of Winfield carried into the obituary. The only other Winfieldite preacher so far identified is John Britain — and he does not meet the description.

It would appear that the debts mostly arose from building chapels - a common cause of despair across the branches of Methodism - but the resources of the Revivalists were inadequate to cope. Maughan implies that Winfield subsidised the movement from his own pocket until his funds were exhausted. This led to him being unable to travel - and without its 'Wesley' roaming the movement, Maughan²⁵ tells how the local work fell to the sole responsibility of '... young men who were wanting in experience or ... men who were destitute of ministerial graces.' The situation was a declining spiral. Some preachers left, others were driven away because they were unpaid, and the Revivalist cause was coming apart at the seams.

At the sixth Conference - probably 1826 or '27 - it was realised that the Revivalist movement could not continue. Winfield recommended that the remaining societies should seek association with the Methodist New Connexion. Agreeing this, an approach was made to the MNC Superintendent at Nottingham (the place of the Revivalists' Conference?) to bring the matter to the next MNC Conference. For reasons not understood even at the time of Winfield's obituary, it did not happen that year. The delay precipitated the final break up of the community. Many societies returned to the Primitives; some went to the Wesleyans; some into Independency; a few into the New Connexion.

Robert Winfield was superintendent of the London Circuit as the break up occurred. This is the only intimation of a circuit beyond the Midlands. They had one rented chapel. When the whole of the final quarter's funds was needed to pay the chapel rent, Winfield was left with not enough to pay for his lodgings. Eventually friends helped him out, and he started to walk home to Amberston. After resting to recover with his daughter in Northampton - where once there must have been a Revivalist cause (the first Conference was there) - he arrived home to an angry wife (so Maughan!) for there was no money on the farm either! (Significantly the weaving business had gone, replaced by farming; industrialisation had overtaken the hand loom weaver.)

Life was hard for the Winfields. Many debts emerged, often not of Robert Winfield's origin, but for which he was surety, yet they staggered through, avoiding debtor's prison. For a long while they were not

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Ibid

formally part of any church, the Wesleyan preaching place in Amberston having lapsed, and Winfield not having the financial security to allow him to refund it.

However when the New Connexion separated a Derby Circuit from Nottingham, new opportunities arose. A society was established at Wilne, south east of Ambaston (NGR SK 449308), and here the Winfields rejoined the MNC. Soon after his financial affairs were resolved, Winfield returned to preaching as a local preacher in the Derby MNC Circuit. At some stage they moved back to Breaston. There Robert Winfield died on Tuesday 17 September 1850.

Maughan's obituary²⁶ includes a very objective evaluation of Winfield.

Possessed with an ardent zeal for the glory of God, full of sympathy for the perishing souls of his fellow creatures, and justly entitled in temperament to the appellation of enthusiast, he laboured almost incessantly to bring sinners to Christ. Had there been united with these qualities an average amount of intelligence and prudence, combined with a greater degree of respect for the opinions of others, there can be no doubt that Brother Winfield would have occupied till the latest hour of his life a distinguished position in the Church of Christ. The lack however of these qualities was painfully manifest in the latter period of his life.

Primitive Methodism's John Petty echoed that opinion, more gently, twelve years later.²⁷

.... Mr. Winfield lacked prudence and perseverance. His looseness in discipline, and his inattention to important matters connected with the societies, proved his utter unfitness for the onerous position he had chosen to occupy. His incapacity was soon apparent. His societies one after another declined,

The proof was in the eating.

What seems to have been the last Revivalist circuit was at Dawley, on the Shropshire coalfield: within Telford today. B. Trinder²⁸ has told the story of this circuit. The movement came to the area in 1821, probably through the preaching of Winfield, as he had Shropshire friends who were reputed to have given him Fletcher of Madeley's silver shoe buckles.²⁹ However, by 1829 - two or three years after the sixth and final Conference - they were on their own. The decision was made to apply for membership of the Methodist New Connexion, and in due course

²⁶ MO p635.

²⁷ PH p84.

²⁸ Barrie Trinder. *The Methodist New Connexion in Madeley and Dawley*, Wesley Historical Society: West Midlands Branch. *Occasional Publications*: No.1. (1967).

²⁹ MO p637.

Resolution 1 of the 1829 MNC Conference³⁰ admitted the circuit to the MNC under the name Dawley Green. The minister they were then sent was William Cooke, on Trial having travelled two years.³¹ Though there only one year, it was a very good choice: Cooke went on to become President of the MNC three times, and Irish MNC President once³², and is the first of the 'more prominent' MNC ministers picked out by Rose.³³

Between 1821 and 1829 the Dawley Revivalists had built two chapels, and ten societies with 122 members and sixteen local preachers entered the MNC. Twelve months later Cooke had consolidated the Circuit to seven societies, nineteen local preachers and 163 members.³⁴ Leading *lay* people were Benjamin Tranter, a Mining Agent, and William Hearnor, a tailor, and also a Mr. Woodruff and a Mrs. Ford, who was a preacher. No names of Winfieldite ministers in the circuit have survived, and it is possible that the circuit had no minister. However, the retrospective statistics in the 1829 MNC *Minutes of Conference* do include one 'Circuit Preacher'. That might have been anticipatory, or reflect someone unidentified. An intriguing thought is that whereas the Revivalists tolerated female ministers, the MNC would not - but it is a purely speculative line of thought. Trinder also speculates that the geographical division of interests in the Shropshire coalfield - Revivalists south of the Holyhead Road (A5), Primitive Methodists to the north (Wrockwardine Wood Circuit, in which John Britain served as a PM minister, 1831-2) - might have been the result of a 'tacit agreement'.

Final assessments need to be made. Maughan's and Petty's evaluations of Winfield's character agree, and that character hamstrung the infant movement - although John Britain might have made an excellent leader. The impact of the schism on the Loughborough PM Circuit does seem to have been hard, but in spite of Winfield's enthusiasm, the movement rapidly waned. Its geographical extent seems to have been very small: sections of the north and east Midlands, and London are all we have evidence for. The Primitive Methodists seem to have been surprisingly tolerant of the Revivalists: welcoming them back so readily at Coventry. and maybe working a tacit area agreement on the Shropshire coalfield, perhaps it was because of their smallness, and perhaps also because their waning was very apparent. The MNC were also tolerant and welcoming in the West Midlands, but the failure of the Nottingham Superintendent to act after the sixth Conference was ambiguous.

³⁰ Methodist New Connexion. *Minutes of Conference*. 1829, p37. Cited hereafter as NM with year.

³¹ NM 1829 p5.

³² Oliver Beckerlegge. *United Methodist Ministers and their Circuits*, (1968) p54. Cited hereafter as BU.

³³ Alan Rose. 'The Methodist New Connexion 1797-1907', *Proceedings* XLVII, p249.

³⁴ NM 1830 p6.

In one respect however the schism was unusual, for it maintained a paid ministry. In many of the schisms that afflicted the Primitive Methodists the schismatics resorted to an unpaid ministry style, in the pattern of the Independent Methodists, into which camp they generally moved. This can be noted in the Original Methodists of Nottinghamshire in 1838,³⁵ in a schism in the Oswestry area of Shropshire in 1843³⁶ and the Christian Lay Churches of Sunderland in 1877.³⁷ Perhaps the Revivalists might have been longer lasting if they had gone down that route.

Much valuable information is contained in Maughan's obituary. What is surprising about it is that it was not published until two years had passed from Winfield's death. When Winfield died Maughan had been his minister in the Derby MNC Circuit, and had preached two (or one, twice) sermons 'improving' Winfield's death - memorial sermons today. By the publication of the obituary Maughan had moved to London. Subsequently he emigrated to South Australia to the MNC work there, and there died.³⁸ So presumably it was in Australia that the Minutes of the Revivalists' Conference 'now before the writer' and Winfield's two volume journal³⁹ perished.

COLIN C SHORT

(Colin Short is a minister in the Penzance circuit)

³⁵ William Parkes. 'The Original Methodists, Primitive Methodist Reformers', *Proceedings* XXXV, 57. Donald Grundy. 'A History of the Original Methodists', *Proceedings* XXXV, 116, 149, 170, 189, XXXVI, 22, 49, 80, 115, 143, 181, 192.

³⁶ James Vickers, *History of Independent Methodism*. (1920) p184.

³⁷ Geoffrey Milburn, *The Christian Lay Churches*. (1977).

³⁸ BO p158.

³⁹ M0 pp636f.

WHS LIBRARY

Please note that between January 1 and February 15 2002, access to the WHS Library (at the Wesley and Methodist Studies Centre, Oxford Brookes University) will be strictly by prior appointment only.

The Revd Thomas Shaw 1916-2001

Thomas Shaw, born in Manchester in 1916, nurtured in Levenshulme Methodist Church, trained in office work, having felt the call to preach at 16 years, went in 1938 for ministerial training to Handsworth (Birmingham), then Headingley, (Leeds) Colleges. When a probationer minister in Port Isaac, his landlady enthused in him an interest in Cornish Methodist history, further developed on marrying Joan, a seventh generation Cornish Methodist, in 1945. They served in nine circuits, seven being in Cornwall, retiring in 1981.

Tom was proud to be one of Mr. Wesley's preachers, disciplined, meticulous, conscientious. His calling, fulfilled faithfully without seeking praise, had such a priority that his historical researches, ably assisted by Joan, were undertaken late at night. For over 50 years he was committed passionately, but in quiet humility, to ensuring that Methodism's role as a major influence in Cornwall's religious, cultural, political and social life was recorded. A founder member of the Cornish Methodist Historical Association (1960), he served as joint secretary, then *Journal* editor, and, latterly, President. The development of Gwennap Pit Visitor Centre, the establishment of the museum at Carharrack Methodist Church, and the current plans for purpose-built premises at Busveal, owe much to his enthusiasm. He worked closely with appropriate bodies to ensure the acquisition and cataloguing of Cornish Methodist records and references, and placed his entire collection of files - the 'Shaw Collection' - in the Courtney Library of the Royal Institution of Cornwall Museum. As well as writing about Cornish Methodist personalities, churches and circuits, Tom wrote *The Bible Christians 1815-1907* (the Wesley Historical Society Lecture at the 1965 Plymouth Conference); the definitive *A History of Cornish Methodism* (1967); *John Wesley and Methodism - a guide for schools*, still in use; revised Wesley Swift's booklet *How to write a local History of Methodism* and contributed to *A Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland* (2000). In 1961 he was made a Bard as 'Ystoryor Methodysyeth' - 'Historian of Methodism' - and, later, Assistant Chaplain, of the Cornish Gorsedd. During his time as the Wesley Historical Society General Secretary (1961-81), many local branches were formed, the W.H.S. Library was moved from Wesley's Chapel to the Archives Centre and then to Southlands College, and several History Conferences convened. Alongside the administration work, he dealt, carefully and promptly, with a constant stream of inquiries, from at home and abroad. Tom was afterwards the Local Branches Secretary, was secretary of the British Section of the World Methodist Historical Society and a Trustee of the New Room, Bristol. Keenly ecumenical, he was secretary for the Cornwall Council of Churches. After a period of declining physical health, he died on Wesley Day, 2001 - appropriately, for he enjoyed dressing up as John Wesley to give many, particularly Cornish schoolchildren, a visual glimpse of the heritage he sought to maintain as the visionary pioneer and recognised authority.

I. H.

THE ANNUAL MEETING AND LECTURE

The annual tea, meeting and lecture was held at Bramford Road Methodist Church, Ipswich, on Monday 25 June 2001. Devotions were led by the President, Dr John A. Newton. Members who had died during the past year, including the Rev. Thomas Shaw, Mr Alfred Taberer, Mr Alan Cass and Mrs Nellie Baker, widow of Dr Frank Baker, were remembered and tributes were paid to those who had served the Society in various capacities.

The officers and other members of the Executive were re-elected, with the addition of Mr Nicholas Page as Assistant Treasurer and Mr John H. Lenton as Assistant Librarian, each of whom is expected to take over the office next year. The difficulty of replacing Mr. Taberer as long-serving Publishing Manager was stressed and a memo on this is enclosed with this issue of the *Proceedings*.

Mrs. Joyce Banks was thanked for taking the minutes in the absence through indisposition of the General Secretary. The Registrar's report was received in his absence because of a recent operation. The Treasurer's report is printed on p. 105. The Society's finances were reported to be in good shape, despite a slight drop in membership. Subscription rates could therefore remain unchanged, but members were urged to seek out and recruit new members. The Library Appeal Fund remains open for contributions and the programme of rebinding continues. The Editor reported that the backlog of contributions awaiting publication had been reduced. He would welcome more biographical articles. The incorporation of Westminster College into Oxford Brookes University had not affected the administration of the WHS Library, apart from delaying work on the electronic cataloguing. The collection continues to grow, e.g. through the bequest of Alfred Taberer's books. For various reasons, including cost, there was no WHS stand at this year's Conference and the possibility of collaboration with the Methodist Philatelic Society was raised. Arrangements for the residential conference in April 2002 at Regent's Park College, Oxford were in hand. (Details are enclosed.) There were reports from several of the local branches. To mark the tercentenary of John Wesley's birth in 2003, local events being planned include a conference in Manchester on 'the many faces of John Wesley'. Thanks were expressed to the Rev. Elizabeth Bellamy and to the Church for their hospitality.

The annual lecture, by the Rev. Dr. Ralph Waller, took as its title "Converging and Diverging Lines: aspects of the relationship between Methodism and Rational Dissent". It was chaired by the Rev. Dr Stuart J. Burgess and is printed in this issue of the *Proceedings*.

JOHN A. VICKERS
(for General Secretary)

**WESLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2000**

The Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2000 were approved by the 2001 Annual Meeting. The following is a summary of the audited accounts; a copy of the full Report and Accounts, including the Auditor's Certificate, is available on request from the Treasurer.

General Income & Expenditure Account: Year to 31 December 2000

INCOME	2000	1999
Subscriptions	5,688	6,101
Irish Branch	713	713
Sales of Publications	1,404	114
Advertisements	231	163
Bank and Building Society Interest	512	869
Other Income	<u>266</u>	<u>167</u>
	8,814	8,127
 EXPENDITURE		
Proceedings and Distribution	4,112	4,661
Other Printing	588	84
Library	1,257	1,231
Administration	1,662	674
Other Expenditure	<u>307</u>	<u>643</u>
	<u>7,926</u>	<u>7,293</u>
Excess of Income over Expenditure	<u>£ 888</u>	<u>£ 834</u>

Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2000

ASSETS EMPLOYED	2000	1999
Investments	225	225
Current Assets		
Sundry Debtors	2,286	1,542
Bank and Building Socy. Accounts	<u>16,104</u>	<u>14,964</u>
	<u>18,390</u>	<u>16,506</u>
Current Liabilities		
Sundry Creditors	303	125
Subscriptions received in Advance	<u>6,962</u>	<u>6,263</u>
	<u>7,265</u>	<u>6,388</u>
Net Current Assets	<u>11,125</u>	<u>10,118</u>
	<u>£ 11,350</u>	<u>£ 10,343</u>
 REPRESENTED BY		
General Fund (unrestricted)	8,657	7,769
Restricted Funds	<u>2,693</u>	<u>2,574</u>
	<u>£ 11,350</u>	<u>£ 10,343</u>

RALPH WILKINSON

BOOK REVIEWS

Reluctant Saint? A Theological Biography of Fletcher of Madeley. by Patrick Streiff (Epworth Press: Peterborough, 2001. Pp. ix. 406. £19.95, ISBN 07162 0546 7).

This valuable book is an English translation of the author's original German text which appeared in 1984 as *Jean Guillaume de la Fléchère, 1729-1785. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Methodismus* and was reviewed above in *Proceedings* 45 (1985-6) pp91-2 (Subscribers who have kept the files of their *Proceedings* in order are invited to refer to that review!!!) The review concluded: 'This is a notable book, by no means the first notable contribution made by the small Methodism of Switzerland to Methodist history generally. It would be a pity if the large Methodisms of Britain and the United States, having left this field of study open for so long, were not now to arrange for an English version to gain a wider circulation'. Seventeen years on - about the standard time, it seems, for either the British or American connexions to render a service to scholarship - that desideratum has been fulfilled. On the up-side are the facts that the original work, economically produced in a rebarbative format, is now supplemented by a really attractive volume, and that Patrick Streiff, a Swiss Methodist minister trained in Germany, has incorporated the fragments of additional information which have come his way since the original thorough job was done. On the down-side is the fact that the subediting of the SCM Press, through whom Epworth has had a longstanding publishing arrangement, gets no better. The hapless author has a wrong date inflicted on him on p.137, and, still worse, an effort at a late stage to correct the fact that the English equivalent of Fletcher's native Waatland is the French Pays de Vand, has been incompletely carried through, and mangled into an imaginary Pays de Vaud. (On the back cover your reviewer has been given the glory of a chair which has never existed, but that is neither here nor there).

The new edition of the work is subtitled 'a theological biography'. It is in fact an ordinary chronological biography which includes a full study of Fletcher's theology, written, as almost never happens in the field of British Methodist theology, with a professional sensitivity to continental influences upon both the manner and the matter of the hero. The idea of a 'theological biography' is in part a consequence of the fact that unpublished material for Fletcher is thin; ill health drove him abroad for extended periods in later life, and he had the prudence to destroy most of the papers in his own possession before he went. On the other hand most of what he published survives. Dr Streiff makes out a good case that, though an autodidact, Fletcher was a theologian of some note, and perhaps the nearest thing to a systematic theologian which eighteenth-century Methodism produced, uniting Reformation insights with those of the early Enlightenment to good effect. Two questions arise from this, only one of which is within the

author's purview. Was Wesley right to offer to share the leadership of the movement with him, even to hand it over? Fletcher's austere sanctity undoubtedly enabled him to hold a steady course between the antinomians of either the enthusiastic or the predestinarian kind; on the other hand Fletcher's self-abnegating reliance on divine guidance made it difficult for him ever to reach a decision. He was dying before he could even propose to Mary Bosanquet. And had he devoted himself to the itinerant work his theological achievement would have been incomplete. The second question, granted that things worked out as they did, is why a man so venerated by a Wesley whom nineteenth century Wesleyans needed as a premise to an ecclesiological argument, came to be so neglected. Joseph Benson produced a bad edition of his works (as he did of Wesley's works) and there was no more in England till 1877 by which time Thomas Jackson had put Wesley editing on a good footing. Since then there has been total silence. It looks uncommonly as if Fletcher encountered the hostility of the Bunting circle to anyone of literary achievement other than themselves. To that extent they perverted the tradition they claimed to maintain. That is the sort of speculation which Dr Streiff's work, itself now enjoying a well deserved revival, is bound to encourage.

W. R. WARD

Churches, Chapels, and the Parish Communities of Lincolnshire 1660-1900 by R.W. Ambler (History of Lincolnshire Committee, 2000, pp. 274, £25.00 hardback, ISBN 0 902668 17 X, £12.95 paperback, ISBN 0 902668 18 8)

The student of Lincolnshire history is confronted by one of England's largest counties, with a population scattered among more than 600 parishes, including a variety of towns, but with no dominant population or cultural centre. Dr. Ambler's examination successfully encompasses the whole region, producing illustrations from every section. It is based on three chronological divisions: The Restoration, 1689-1830, and 1830-1900, with reference to the Church of England, Dissent, and Roman Catholicism. Methodism is given full treatment in a separate section

The eighteenth century was a period of decline for the Lincolnshire Anglicans, with only about one third of the clergy being resident by the end of the century, partly because many livings were of low value. Almost all parishes had a resident incumbent by 1900, but by then a majority of worshippers in many towns and villages were attending nonconformist chapels. One parish in six had a dissenting meeting by 1700, about half of them Baptist. The 1851 census recorded a slight increase for Baptists, whereas the Quakers had been replaced by Independents in second place, and there was a marked overall decline of Old Dissent by 1900.

Methodism is placed firmly in its social setting. John Wesley frequently revisited his native county, and soon after his death there were 18 meeting-houses and 2,500 members in Societies. The New Connexion developed a

single circuit (Boston), but Primitive Methodism proved to be far more successful and grew into the main alternative to Wesleyanism, despite an initial period of erratic enterprise. Considerable, but patchy, success was achieved by the Wesleyan Reformers, who established circuits centred on most towns and contributed to a 30% membership loss by the Wesleys. The growth rate of total Methodist membership was greater than the population's, reaching a peak of 8% of the population in 1861, but declining to less than 7% in 1900. As Dr. Ambler clearly indicates, chapel attendance was often about three times greater than membership, although he does not specify membership's link to regular class attendance, which for many committed Methodists was not feasible.

This is an excellent, well-documented and readable survey in which the author combines a command of statistics with local cases and characters. He frequently displays a penetrating perception of the subtleties of rural society. Although focused on a single county, its insights into the realities of church and community life offer a model to students of religious and social history in a wider context.

BARRY J. BIGGS

The Same Stars Shine, The Great War Diary and Letters of Corporal Ernest Goodridge, edited by E. N. Goodridge & J. A. Goodridge. (Teamprint, Loughborough, 2000. Distributor: Soham Books, 48A High St., Ely, Cambridgeshire CB7 5SH, pp. xviii,190. £15. ISBN 1 871321 09 3).

War diaries, although numerous, are all unique. Ernest Goodridge's diary is no exception. Containing his journal and letters for 1916, it tells the story of a soldier killed in the battle of the Somme at the age of twenty-four. Compiled by the subject's nephew and great nephew, the diary is attractively arranged, with the official records of his battalion and prefaced with a detailed account of his early life. It is, as Ronald Blythe states in the Foreword, 'a profoundly moving *via dolorosa* with the young writer vividly conscious that every step he takes leads, not to destruction, but to God'.

The introduction provides a window into rural chapel life in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. It describes Ernest's birth in 1892, his childhood in the village of Bentley, South Yorkshire, the local Wesleyan chapel where his father was a class leader and where Ernest was baptised, chapel picnics by the river Don, the Band of Hope, Sunday School, and the junior class meeting. Having spent three years at Doncaster Grammar School, Ernest then worked for a brief period as a solicitor's clerk until he enlisted in the King's Royal Rifle Corps in November 1915

A deep spirituality pervades the diary. In a letter to a friend 'Rifleman Goodridge', firmly believing that to fight and sacrifice was for the 'furthering of Christ's kingdom upon Earth', refers to those 'stirring days of death and glory'. He writes how he will soon be 'upon another shore' and in

'the City of God'. Reference is made to the horrors of trench warfare, 'the bright flashes and the bursting shells, the angry spitting of the machine guns', 'whizz-bangs and shrapnel', but also 'the company of comrades'. He finds consolation in the 'Wesleyan soldier's rosary' and in the belief that 'even in the rush and muddle of war, we are still being watched-over by an all-wise father'. Above all else Corporal Goodridge found peace in thinking of his loved ones at home and how 'the same stars shine upon us, the same moon, the same sky smiles upon us.,

Handsomely produced with over two hundred black and white illustrations, and with useful endnotes and appendices containing a list of source materials used, abbreviations, and a biographical index, this book will be of interest, not only to the military historian, but to those who have an interest in Chapel folk and culture just prior to the First World War.

SIMON ROSS VALENTINE

Joseph Odell and 'the Evangelists' Home'. by Colin C. Short. The Eleventh Chapel Aid Lecture. (2001. 73pp. £3.50 post free from Englesea Brook Museum, Englesea Brook, Crewe, CW2 5QW)

In the mid 1880s, Primitive Methodism recorded a decline of membership. By 1896 the Conference pointed out that '75% of our chapels are in villages and that during the last 28 years we have abandoned 516 places and succeeded in opening 216 new ones, Demography is clearly a key factor. The MNC showed a decline at Salem Chapel, Halifax, when the 1881 Census revealed the ageing of the population. This is the background to the work of Joseph Odell (1846-1923), Primitive Methodist minister.

Odell spent four years in New York, founding 'The Odell Temperance Society'. He was deeply influenced by the transatlantic 'holiness' theology and preaching of the time. Another 'model' was the Wesleyan Thomas Champness, whose work in Bolton and Rochdale led in the end to Cliff College in 1903. Odell, who was President of the PM Conference in 1900 and gave the Hartley Lecture on Evangelism in 1903 (analysed by Short) spent from 1885 to 1912 in Birmingham, pioneering the Evangelists' Home. Colin Short has tracked down 50 out of possibly 160 men trained there. The Primitive Methodist Conference, the Circuits and the PM media gave Odell very ambiguous support. Was the reason lack of money (Hartley was not involved!)? or fear of 'Boothism' - clearly Odell thought highly of himself? Was it that the Primitives were beginning to react against the holiness style? Short wisely leaves these questions open. Odell's 'Conference Hall' had 384 members and 1350 'hearers' in 1904, but finally closed in 1915 after Odell's retirement.

Colin Short is meticulous in his use of primary sources, showing Kendall's *Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church* to be lacking in accuracy here - not a unique feature of 'Kendall', indispensable though it is.

Kendall (Vol. I pp 452ff) shows Odell's hero to be John Stamp, whose earlier antics and financial disasters might explain some reluctance to support Odell!

Short's picture of the Birmingham PMs shows them overshadowed by men like R.W. Dale and Luke Wiseman and the Odell story is paralleled by that of Bourne College, Quinton, outlined by Dr. Dorothy Graham in *Protestant Nonconformists and the West Midlands of England* (Keele 1996). Odell tried hard with some success to buck the trend of decline by aggressive evangelism but in the end was a sad old man. This is a fascinating contribution to PM history. We can only ask for more of this kind of link between local and connexional history.

JOHN MUNSEY TURNER

Historical Dictionary of the Holiness Movement edited by William C. Kostlevy (Scarecrow Press 2001, pp. xxvi, 307. £66.05 ISBN 0 8108 3955 5). Obtainable from Shelwing Ltd., 4 Pleydell Gardens, Folkestone, Kent, CT20 2DN.

This is the latest addition to the extensive series of 'Historical Dictionaries of Religions, Philosophies and Movements'. Its largely American focus is more justifiable than in the case of its companion *Dictionary of Methodism*, where the title is slightly misleading for British readers. The Holiness Movement is nothing if not fissiparous, and a high proportion of the entries are on American denominations most of us will never have heard of. Entries on the 'Wesleyan Church' and the 'Wesleyan Methodist Church' have no bearing on British Methodism and that on the 'Primitive Methodist Church' gives only a passing glance at its English origins. All this is no doubt justifiable in terms of the history of the Holiness Movement.

The useful chronology at the beginning of the book takes 1824 as the *terminus a quo*. There are nevertheless entries on John Wesley (but not on Charles and, more surprisingly, not on John Fletcher, saintliness and holiness not being synonymous, perhaps?) as well as on such later figures as William Arthur, the Booths, T. B. Stephenson, Champness, Cook and Chadwick, and, from more recent times, Skevington Wood. Less widely known figures are included, such as the Arminian Methodist Henry Breeden, John Brash and William H. Tindall. Most of these we owe to the British contributors Herbert McGonigle and William Parkes. My main complaint is that the necessarily brief entries do not include guidance on further reading for those who wish to follow them up. The general bibliography at the end is of little value in this respect.

JOHN A. VICKERS

The Autobiography of Rev. Dr. Edwin Dalton, Primitive Methodist minister, 1845-1925 by David Rushton (2001. iv, 111. (I)pp. copies £9.50+p&p, from Rev. David Rushton, 7 The Avenue, Gainsborough, Lincs., DN21 IEP (also available in CD Rom.).

My aunt, proud of her Primitive Methodism and regardless of Methodist Union, made sure that another generation would inherit its heritage and so, as a child, Kendall and Ritson became compulsive reading. It worked. One name much mentioned by her with great respect was Dr. Edwin Dalton, who had laid one of the foundation stones at 'Clowes' where we attended. If she was still alive how my aunt would have enjoyed reading this biography.

Edwin Dalton, born at Sheriff Hutton and educated at Elmfield College, went on to have an outstanding ministry almost totally in the Leeds and York District, also serving the Connexion both as Book Steward and President. In 1895 he began writing his autobiography and on his death, thirty years and four manuscript volumes later, he had completed it until 1895 almost ending with the opening of 'Clowes'. His great grandson has now produced on computer an edited edition of Dalton's manuscript. Dalton wrote for his family and not a wider public, and does not greatly suffer from inhibitions. There is a wealth of personal comments on ministers and laity, and considerable insights into those aspects of ministry normally unrecorded, from having to share a bed with his host's teenage daughters to petty chapel squabbles. In terms of future ecumenical developments, Dalton claims 'that when stationed at Brampton in the Carlisle Circuit he was the first Nonconformist to preach in an English Anglican canonical church and would have so continued until an objection was made to the Bishop.

We are indebted to David Rushton for producing not just an excellent read but one that has potential as an important source for Primitive Methodist local history especially in Yorkshire. The reader is left tantalised and wondering what Dalton could have said about the years post 1895, especially when he held Connexional office.

D COLIN DEWS

THE ANNUAL LECTURE

The Annual Lecture of the Association of Denominational Historical Societies will be delivered on Thursday, 25 October 2001 at 2pm at Dr Williams's Library, 14 Gordon Square, London, WC1H 0AR. The Revd Dr Geraint Tudur will speak on 'Howell Harris: The Wilderness Years'.

LOCAL HISTORIES

From Byker to Heaton: the origins and history of Heaton Methodist Church (Newcastle) by N. F. Moore and W. K. Robinson (32pp). Copies, £2.00 plus postage from 0191 265 5596 or 0191 266 6473.

Huntington (Yorks) Methodist Church 1900-2000 by Joyce Petch (63pp). Copies, £3.50 post free from the author at 5 Broome Close, Huntington, York, YO32 9RH

The History of Worsley Methodist Church by Paul Hassall (72pp, A4). Copies, £9.00 from the author at 183 Greenleach Lane, Worsley, Manchester M28 2RR.

St Mary's Methodist Church, Isles of Scilly 1900-2000 by Len Michell (83pp. A4). Copies, £5.00, post free, from the author at 'Rosehill', St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, TR21 0NE.

The Origin and Life of Woodbine Road Methodist Church. Newcastle upon Tyne 1882-2000. by Robert B. Swift. (76pp). Copies from Rev. T. Hurst, Brunswick Methodist Church, Brunswick Place, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE1 7BJ, no price stated.

Gnosall (Staffs) Methodist Church 1901-2001 by M.Tomkinson (56pp.A4). Copies, £5.00 from the author at (no address supplied)

The Story of Ninety Years: Methodism in the Ipswich Circuit 1909-98 by Elizabeth Watthews and Janet Lumley (70pp). Copies, £5.75 post free, from the Circuit Office, 17 Black Horse Lane, Ipswich IP1 2EF, (cheques payable to the Methodist Church, Ipswich circuit.)

A History of Methodism in the Meon Valley (Hants) by R. J. Kitching (82pp). Copies £4.50 post free, from T.Clymer, 'Bethmeon', Solomons Lane, Shirrell Heath, Southampton, S032 2HU.

Plymouth and Devonport Church and Chapel Rowing Clubs before the 1939-45 War. by Janet and Bridget Cusack. (32pp A4). Copies, £4.00 from the authors at 10 Ranscombe Close, Brixham, South Devon, TQ5 9UR.

The Small Church with the Big Heart (Haggerston Mission, East London) by Connie Rees. Copies, £5.50 post free, from the author at 71 Sish Lane, Stevenage, Herts., SG1 3LS.

NOTES & QUERIES

1547 AN EARLY SERMON COMMEMORATING JOHN WESLEY'S DEATH

In undertaking some research for a Ph.D. thesis, I discovered, in the Liverpool University Library, a printed sermon commemorating the death of John Wesley. On Sunday March 27 1791, less than a month after Wesley's death on March 2 William Hobrow, minister of the gospel (as he described himself), preached the sermon and on April 19 he completed the preface of a printed version for publication. Entitled *Sermon on the Death of Rev J Wesley AM*, it was delivered at the 'New Chapel' in Edmund Street, Liverpool. At that time the Edmund Street Chapel was privately owned. It was taken over by the Methodists in 1793.

In the earlier part of the sermon, the account of Wesley's life and experience up to May 24 1738 follows closely the account in Wesley's *Journal*. The highly detailed and emotional account of the death given later in the sermon must have been obtained at short notice by Hobrow from eyewitnesses. The veneration shown towards Wesley is partly explained in the sermon by the fact that the author stated that he owed his own spiritual awakening nearly 30 years earlier to him and that his move to Liverpool was largely due to a letter from John Wesley written to him on January 16 1786. It is also of note that Hobrow saw the essence of Wesley's theology to have been in the doctrine of perfect love: 'We frequently use as St. John, the phrase(*sic*), PERFECT LOVE, instead of the word PERFECTION.' He also asserted that the doctrines which Wesley taught were no other than the doctrines of the Church of England, and that his teaching was that of the Prayer Book, the Articles, and the Homilies. Hobrow was strongly opposed to Calvinists and Antinomians.

Hobrow does not appear in any known records as a Methodist preacher. It is possible, but by no means certain, that the Edmund Street Chapel was privately owned by him. It is unlikely that he was a dissenting minister because, from the tone of the sermon, he had strong Anglican leanings.

DONALD A. BULLEN

1548 PATTERN-BOOK PRIMITIVES?

Robin Phillips' query (Note 1546) whether Primitive Methodists used a pattern-book for building chapels raises an important question regarding the similarity of many of their chapels. For about thirty years I have been identifying Nonconformist chapel architects and their works, but as yet have to find evidence of Primitive Methodists using a pattern book. Yet the former Redmile (1869) could be equally at home in the industrial West Riding or rural Norfolk. Could it be that local architects knew what design would be acceptable to Primitive Methodist trustees?

Considerably more research is needed on the influences on Primitive Methodist designs, especially in the 1870s when at least in the urban centres chapel architecture, although still distinctive, becomes more bourgeois. There is circumstantial evidence that Joseph Wright (1818-1885) of Hull was influential in the career of another Primitive Methodist architect, Thomas Howdill (1842-1918) of Leeds and there are some design similarities. In this context early in his career in the 1870s Howdill designed a number of large Primitive Methodist chapels in an Italianate design typified by having the school premises below the galleried chapel and with a five bay facade, a pediment being over the centre three bays and with flanking and slightly protruding towers for the gallery stairs. As not all chapels of this design are attributable to Howdill, how this distinctive design emerged remains an open question, although the influence of Wright might be a possibility. To what extent did one architect's design influence those of another?

Similarity of designs need not imply the use of a pattern-book. The gothic chapels of W. J. Morley of Bradford have an almost boring, repetitive quality about them, ranging from Barnard Castle (1894), *via* Bramhope (1896) to Beeston (1902) so that a 'Morley chapel' can usually be recognised simply by looking at the building and without the need for documentary evidence. Perhaps the architectural practice *par excellence* for producing a vast quantity of limited designs was that of John Wills of Derby and London. That both Redmile and Gothan (1870) were by the same, but as yet unidentified architect and one possibly based on Nottingham, must be a possibility.

The nearest the Wesleyans came to having a pattern-book was the advocacy of gothic by the Rev. Frederick J. Jobson, in *Chapel and School Architecture* (1850). In Primitive Methodist terms it may be significant that in 1873 the Book Steward, the Rev. George Lamb, published G. Hodgson Fowler, *A Manual on Chapel Architecture* but having never seen a copy of this forty-page booklet it is not possible to make a judgement, although to date I have yet to discover any chapel by Fowler. Could it be that this is the nearest the Primitive Methodists came to a pattern-book?

D. COLIN DEWS

1549 PATTERN BOOK PRIMITIVES?

From 1985-94 I was the superintendent minister of the Driffield circuit where in 1890 the Primitive Methodists had a circuit with 1,100 members. Three of their chapels were identical; Little Driffield, built in 1878, cost £270, seating for 200; Beswick, built 1888, cost £240, seating for 100, and Sledmere, for which details are unavailable. All three followed the same plan. Little Driffield and Beswick are now closed. There is information about all three chapels in *Primitive Methodism in the Yorkshire Wolds* by Henry Woodcock (1889) but, alas! nothing about either architect or builder.

NEIL GRAHAM

1550 BIBLE QUILTS AND BIBLE BLOCKS

The Quilters Guild of The British Isles has been given a 'Bible Block' coverlet made by a lady who attended the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel in Lower Spennymoor. The lady would have made the coverlet in about 1890. We also know of three other similar coverlets.

The cover is made from biblical texts and hymn music printed in black on different coloured cotton backgrounds. Each rectangle of text varies in size but is about 6" by 8". There are also some picture blocks of biblical scenes printed in black on the coloured background and the texts including music are larger.

Does anyone know why these texts were printed? Were they purchased or given to church members (adults or children) and if so for what purpose?

Where were they printed and how were they distributed? Was this individually or by the yard? There is some information that there may have been a printer in Kent.

If any one can help me with any information or if anyone either owns a quilt or any individual texts I would very much like to see a photograph or perhaps have the opportunity to see the items to photograph them.

I am carrying out research into this coverlet to write an article for the journal of the Quilters Guild. The Quilters Guild of the British Isles is a national educational charity and we are committed to keeping information about the history of patchwork and quilting in the U.K. for research and reference purposes.

MRS RACHEL NICHOLS,
Ashton Grange, Ashton, Chester CH3 8AE

Issue 69 of *Christian History* (Vol xx, no 1) is a special one devoted to the Wesleys. It contains a number of popular articles by American scholars, attractively presented and well illustrated. It can be obtained from Christian History, PO Box 37055, Boone IA 50037-0055, price \$5.

The University of Manchester is hosting an international Conference in June 2003 to mark the tercentenary of the birth of John Wesley. Proposals for short papers are invited on one of the following themes: Wesley the Man, Wesley in Context, Wesley and Theology and the Wesleyan Legacy. Proposals (title and 200 word summary) to Dr Jeremy Gregory, Dept of Religions and Theology, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL.

APPOINTMENT OF A PUBLISHING MANAGER

Alfred Taberer served the Society for so many years with outstanding dedication and skill that his role as Publishing Manager will probably need to be divided between two or more people. The role has two main aspects: editorial and marketing. These could be undertaken by two different people in collaboration though not necessarily in close proximity to each other. (The production of the *Proceedings* will remain in the hands of the Editor.)

(1) Editorial: This involves decisions on what is to be published by the Society and preparation of texts for the printer, i.e. in these days, normally in electronic format. The possession of a PC and some basic competence in word processing is obviously called for.

(2) Marketing: More effective marketing, including publicity, could substantially increase sales of WHS publications. One essential requirement would be room to store stocks while they are being sold, though this would not necessarily be in the home of the person appointed.

Both roles are of importance to the Society and its public profile and both could be interesting and rewarding tasks. If you would like further information, please contact John Vickers, who will be glad to discuss the matter with you. Offers of service should be made to the General Secretary.

The WHS Conference 2002 will be held at Regent's Park College, Oxford, 9-12 April 2002, when the theme will be Methodism and Education. Enquiries to the Conference Secretary, Mrs Sheila Himsworth, 22 Broadway Road, Evesham, WR11 6BQ.

The Chapels Society is shortly to publish Clyde Binfield's *James Cubitt 1836-1912, the contexting of a chapel architect*. This study will be the first to consider Cubitt in the wider context of nineteenth-century practice and patronage. The book will be of 120 pages with 65 illustrations. Members of the WHS are offered this monograph at the special price of £11 post free. The full price is £30, plus postage. Cheques, payable to the Chapels Society, should be sent to the Honorary Editor, Haughley Grange, Stowmarket, Suffolk, IP14 3QT.

Clerihew Corner

The saintly John William Fletcher
was certainly no lecher.
He was such a slow tie-the-knotter
that Mary quite thought he'd forgot her.,