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Proceedings OF THE Wesley Historical Society

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PREACHERS AND THE PLAN — PATTERNS OF ACTIVITY IN EARLY PRIMITIVE METHODISM

HISTORIANS of Methodism have long recognized the value of preaching plans as an historical source. The Society of Cirplanologists has, from its foundation in 1955, done much to further the study of these documents and the often unique information which they contain.¹ Plans have been used extensively by Methodist historians to locate preaching places and to identify preachers.² Some discussion of plans has suggested that they can also be used as the basis for a study of patterns of activity in Methodism. Work on the Leeds circuit in 1777 has shown something of the respective roles of itinerant and local preachers in the period.³ Similarly, it has been demonstrated that the itinerant preachers on the Grimsby circuit in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, restricted their Sunday activities to only three places in a circuit of about forty places which raises questions about the reasons for the way in which they structured their work.⁴ An analysis of four Primitive Methodist plans for the Lincoln, Louth, Alford

¹ Wesley F. Swift, *How to Write a Local History of Methodism*, revised edition by Thomas Shaw, Leicester 1974, p. 7; William Leary, *Methodist Preaching Plans*, 1977, p. 1.

² For example, F. F. B. [F. F. Bretherton], 'Early Records at St. Just', *Proceedings* xviii, pp. 74-5; G. H. Bancroft Judge, 'Methodism in Whitehaven IV From the Death of Wesley to the Early Years of the Nineteenth Century', xix, p. 56; [Anon], 'Records of the Dales Circuit and of Jacob Rowell', xx, pp. 177-8; Wesley F. Swift, 'Early Methodism in Harewood, near Leeds', *Proceedings* xxvii, p. 129 note and p. 130.

³ Duncan Coomer, 'The Local Preachers in Early Methodism', *Proceedings* xxv, p. 36.

⁴ William Leary, 'Some Guidelines in Lincolnshire Methodism,' in *Methodist Minorities and Methodists in the Majority*, Report of a Conference held by the British Section of the World Methodist Historical Society at Westhill College, Selly Oak, Birmingham, 25th—28th July 1978, p. 12.

and Gainsborough circuits for various dates in the nineteenth century has shown the extent to which the Primitives were dependent on local preachers for Sunday preaching.⁵

The purpose of this paper is to suggest that an analysis of the pattern of preachers' movements and the frequency of services gives much valuable information on the fundamental quality of Methodist activity in the places and at the period covered by the plan which may have more than local implications for Methodist historians. The plan for the Lincoln Primitive Methodist circuit, which covers the period 29th July to 23rd October 1821, provides an illustration of how this analysis can be carried out.⁶

Primitive Methodist preachers had first entered Lincolnshire from Nottinghamshire in 1817 as the connexion's Nottinghamshire circuit expanded eastwards.⁷ Much of this work was sporadic and uncoordinated. William Clowes and John Wedgwood were preaching on the Lincolnshire-Nottinghamshire border in 1817 and during a visit to see Wedgwood Clowes also saw something of the work of John Benton. Like Wedgwood, Benton was a revivalist who was not paid from connexional funds and who had asked not to be placed on any regular preaching plan.⁸ The preacher John Hallsworth was also active in the Lincoln area at this period.⁹ In March 1819 W. Wildbur and a female preacher called Perry were appointed to go to Lincoln by the Nottingham circuit Quarterly Meeting and a chapel was opened in the July of that year, although a society may have been established in the city by November 1818.¹⁰ A number of societies and preaching places had been established in the vicinity of Lincoln by early 1819.¹¹ Lincoln became a circuit in 1820, although it had been known informally as such for some time before when

⁵ James Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society: South Lindsey 1825-1875*, Oxford, 1976, p. 223.

⁶ Lincolnshire Library Service, Local Studies Collection, Lincoln Reference Library, Broadsheet 946, *Lincoln Circuit. The Lord's Day Plan of the Preachers called Primitive Methodists, (Known also by the name of Ranters)*. I am grateful to the staff of Lincolnshire Library Service for their help in my work on this plan, which is quoted by courtesy of Lincolnshire Library Service.

⁷ John Petty, *The History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion, from its Origin to the Conference of 1860, the First Jubilee Year of the Connexion*, revised and enlarged by James Macpherson, London, 1880, pp. 72-4.

⁸ George Herod, *Biographical Sketches of some of those Preachers whose Labours Contributed to the Origination and Early Extension of the Primitive Methodist Connexion*, London, n.d., p. 428.

⁹ *The Primitive Methodist Magazine* [subsequently *P. M. Mag*] 1821, p. 45.

¹⁰ *Lincoln, Rutland and Stamford Mercury*, 9 and 16 July 1819; *P. M. Mag.* 1840, p. 181; William Leary, *Methodism in the City of Lincoln from its Origin in the Eighteenth Century to the present day*, 1969, pp. 33-4.

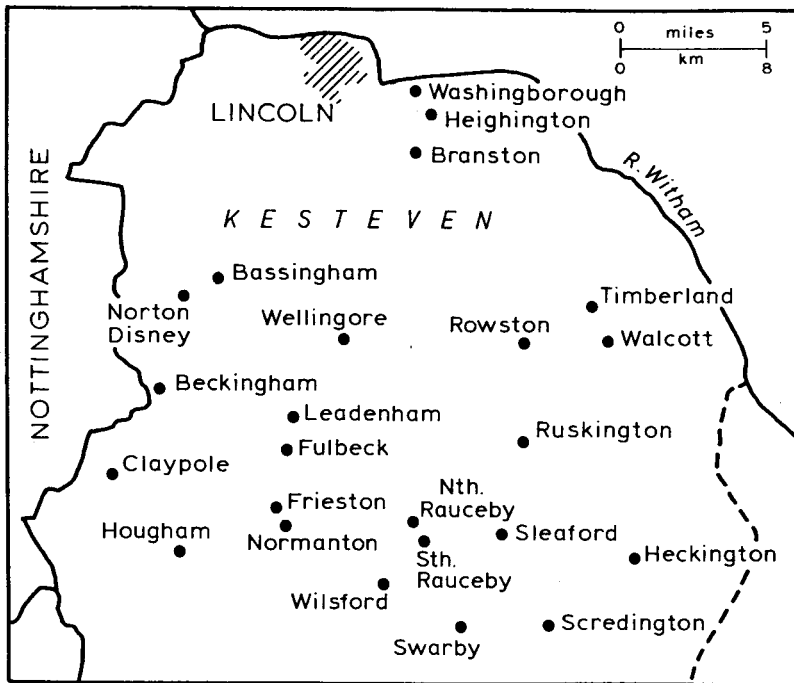
¹¹ H. B. Kendall, *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church*, vol. I, London, [c. 1905], p. 464.

it was still a branch of Nottingham circuit.¹² It had 664 members by 1823.¹³

There were 56 places with Sunday services on the 1821 Lincoln Plan which showed that the circuit extended into north Lincolnshire, including Horncastle and villages in the area, as well as places to the south and west of the city of Lincoln and parts of Nottinghamshire. In addition weeknight services were planned for 69 places, not all of which were named, but were simply described by the title 'Mission'. Four of the named places did not appear on the Sunday plan. The plan listed seven people described as 'Preachers', 26 Local Preachers, two Local Preachers on Trial, 12 Exhorters and a group of what seem to have been exhorters described as 'Co.', together with an un-named person or persons denoted by an asterisk. The seven preachers seem to have been employed full-time and were named as John Hallsworth, J. Saxton, W. Fieldsend, J. Forman, W. Knott, Thomas Muxlow and A. Otter, although the 1821 Annual Meeting of the Connexion only stationed J. Hallsworth, T.

¹² Petty, *History*, pp. 91-2; Kendall, *Origin and History*, vol. 1. pp. 462-3; *P. M. Mag.* 1821, p. 45.

¹³ Kendall, *Origin and History*, vol. I, p. 465.



Places in south Lincolnshire on the 1821 Primitive Methodist preaching plan for the Lincoln circuit.

Saxton, J. Forman and W. Fieldsend (*sic.*) as travelling preachers on the Lincoln circuit. However, William Knott, Thomas Muxlow and A. Otter, who was in fact Ann Otter, carried out a full Sunday and weekday programme of work similar to that of the other four travelling preachers and Knott had become a full travelling preacher by Midsummer 1822, when he was stationed on the Lincoln circuit.¹⁴

There were 23 places on the Sunday plan from the south of the city of Lincoln which will be used, together with Lincoln itself, in this detailed analysis of the plan (see map). This includes one place described as Branston and Branston Moor. Only Lincoln and the village of Wellingore had two Sunday services, which were at 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. in each place. This may reflect the fact that both had chapels by this date.¹⁵ The other places had weekly Sunday services at either 2 p.m. or 6 p.m. except Timberland and Hougham, where the services were at 10 a.m. The preaching places at Norton Disney and Bassingham; Wilsford and Swaby (*sic.*)—in fact probably Swarby; Sleaford and Rauceby; Leadenham and Fulbeck; and Frieston and Normanton were grouped in pairs on the plan. Each place had a service at 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. respectively and together with Scredington, Timberland, Walcott and Rowston, had Sunday services at fortnightly intervals.

The wide area covered by the whole circuit seems to have meant that in practice it was broken down into smaller areas. Five of the seven full-time preachers on the plan took services in south Lincolnshire and one of these, Thomas Muxlow, only appeared in Lincoln. Similarly J. Forman moved out of Lincoln and into south Lincolnshire to preach only at Branston and Branston Moor, which are relatively close to the city. This left W. Fieldsend, Ann Otter and W. Knott carrying the bulk of the work of the full-time preachers in south Lincolnshire. Twenty-seven of the local preachers and exhorters, excluding three who only appeared at engagements in Lincoln and the 'company', had preaching engagements in south Lincolnshire.

Local centres of Primitive Methodism were not served equally in the distribution of preaching engagements between full-time and local preachers. The 1821 plan shows that in the period under examination Walcott, Sleaford and Rauceby were served on Sundays by travelling preachers only. Other places, such as Lincoln, had them for the majority

¹⁴ 'General Minutes . . . 1821', p. 16; '1822 General Minutes . . .', p. 19 in Robert Smith (ed.), *Ministry Records; being rules, regulations and reports, made and published by the Primitive Methodist Connexion I*, 1814-30, Leeds, 1854. The A. Otter on the plan can be identified as Ann Otter from published lists of full-time travelling preachers. There is no comparable evidence for determining how many of the local preachers were women. In the 1818 Nottingham circuit plan women preachers were indicated by the use of their initials only (Kendall, *Origin and History*, vol I, p. 208). It is possible that the exhorter or exhorters indicated by an asterisk may be women.

¹⁵ For Lincoln see footnote 9 above and for Wellingore, Herod, *Biographical Sketches*, p. 364.

of services—10 out of a possible 13 ; while Norton Disney and Bassingham, Hougham and Claypole, Wilsford and Swarby, Beckingham, Leadenham and Fulbeck, together with Frieston and Normanton never had a Sunday service taken by a travelling preacher, although all these places were visited by travelling preachers in the course of their week night duties.

It is difficult to assess why such centres as Sleaford and Rauceby and Walcott were singled out for the attention of the travelling preachers. This could at least be partly explained as a matter of convenience in that it fitted the planned movements of the preachers to have the services grouped in this way. On all Sundays except two, after a preacher had been to Walcott for a 2 p.m. service, he moved on to Rowston which was within walking distance. Some Sundays he took a 10 a.m. service in nearby Timberland before moving on to Walcott, so supplying Timberland with a travelling preacher on the three Sundays out of six on which it had services in the quarter. Sleaford and Rauceby were planned as a pair so that preaching at 2 p.m. at Sleaford was always followed by a 6 p.m. service at Rauceby. These places had no particular importance as centres of Primitive Methodism which might explain their close relationship with the travelling preachers. They stand out on the plan because of this relationship rather than for other reasons. The 1821 plan is, in fact, the only reference that exists to Walcott as a centre of Primitive Methodist activity. It is the first reference to Sleaford, which did not, despite the fact that it was a market town, develop in any significant way as a Primitive Methodist centre until 1835, when the travelling preacher Joseph Middleton opened a room for worship there. The superintendent minister lived in the town before 1843, but it did not give its name to a circuit until then.¹⁶ Rauceby had been visited by Primitive Methodists as early as 1820 and had a chapel by 1834, but beyond this it did not have any remarkable importance as a centre of Primitive Methodism.¹⁷

If Rauceby had not been included in the number of places entirely served by travelling preachers, it might be argued that weaker centres which subsequently vanished at least for a time, like Sleaford, or Walcott which vanished permanently, were given the attention of full-time ministers. However, Lincoln, the head town of the circuit with its chapel and greater prestige, status and strength, had Sunday services twice daily at 2 p.m. and 6 p.m., and was served by two travelling preachers, J. Forman and Thomas Muxlow, for every Sunday of the quarter except three. These developments in early Primitive Methodist work, which do not follow any pattern dictated by demography or even accord with subsequent development within Primitive Methodism, reflect the unstructured growth of the connexion at this stage, when

¹⁶ *P. M. Mag.* 1837, p. 104 ; 'Various Regulations . . . , 1842', p. 16 and '1843 General Minutes . . . ', p. 6 in Smith (ed), *Minutary Records* III, 1841-50, Leeds, 1852.

¹⁷ *P. M. Mag.* 1835, p. 189 ; 1821, p. 46.

spiritual imperatives seemed to outweigh worldly considerations. This led to places like Walcott or Rowston being covered by the travelling preachers rather than places which were important because of the size of their population, or their role as a local administrative or marketing centre. The emphasis the plan gives to villages and village chapels also indicates their great importance in the early development of Primitive Methodism.¹⁸

A similar pattern of unstructured growth, which gave greater emphasis to spiritual imperatives than to any structures imposed by circuit or connexional authorities, can also be seen lying behind other parts of the plan. William Fieldsend's journal covers his movements and work on one Sunday of the 1821 plan. On Sunday 12th August he was planned at Balderton, Nottinghamshire at 2 p.m. and Newark, Nottinghamshire at 6 p.m., but his diary shows him to have been in the village of Coddington, Nottinghamshire about two miles outside Newark in the morning, and then at Balderton, which was about two miles away, in the afternoon. There was a love feast at Balderton, although this did not appear on the plan as such, but simply as a renewal of tickets. Fieldsend's description of this contrasts with the evening meeting he attended at Newark in accordance with the plan when he simply noted, 'In the evening spoke at Newark'.¹⁹ The Balderton meeting

was a love-feast indeed. The power of God came down and all were bathed in tears. I think I never felt my soul so humbled before God. One cried aloud for mercy, two more were in deep distress. The effect of this glorious meeting will be seen in eternity. Glory to God.²⁰

These activities show that the plan was not the final source of authority for either the type or even the location of all activities within Primitive Methodism at this period. The Coddington meeting does not occur in it; the Balderton ticket renewal became a love feast at which strong emotions were outpoured; while the Newark meeting, also for ticket renewal and also part of the routine round of the travelling preacher's work, assumes no great importance in his estimation. Thus the preaching plan, at this period, only represents a very rough framework within which the value of any particular place is measured by what was accomplished in terms of Primitive Methodist spirituality.

Such a view of connexional life, which placed great stress on spiritual success, would also tend to blur the distinctions between full-time and local preachers so that the vagaries of planning, which emphasised what in secular terms might seem relatively unimportant places, counted for very little in an atmosphere where the spirit seemed to flow dramatically and perhaps unpredictably. This relaxed attitude to the relative value of the ministrations of full or part-time preachers was well suited to a

¹⁸ Kendall, *Origin and History*, vol. I, p. 532.

¹⁹ *P. M. Mag.* 1822, p. 94.

²⁰ *P. M. Mag.* 1822, p. 94.

situation in which local preachers took the bulk of Sunday preaching engagements. On the 13 Sundays which appear on the plan, 27 local

Table: *Local Preachers' Engagements, Lincoln Circuit, August – October 1821*

Preachers	Branston & Branston Moor	Washingborough & Heighington	Wellgore	Scredington	Heckington	Ruskington	Timberland	Rowston	Norton Disney & Bassingham	Hougham & Claypole	Wilsford & Swarby	Beckingham	Leadenham & Fulbeck	Fricston & Normanton	TOTAL
J. Metham	1	1	1												3
J. Vickers	1	1													2
W. Harrison			1		2	2			1	2	1		2	2	13
T. Scott	2	1	1												4
J. Wood									1	2		1			4
T. Joynes									1	2		1			4
E. Swinton	1	1													2
M. Needham										2		1			3
W. Sharp									1	2		1			4
T. Isott	1	1	1												3
T. Pepperdine			2		1	1					1	1	1	2	9
C. Hare			1						1	1		1	3		7
J. Hall	1	1	1												3
M. Cotham						1								1	2
-Cheadle										1					1
T. Dance	1	1						1							3
W. Nelson	1														1
W. Yates		1													1
M. Nelson	1	1	1											1	4
A. Brothwell				2	1	1	1	1			2				8
M. Hollsworth		1			1	1						2			5
H. Hoff			1						1	1					3
J. Baildham					1										1
G. Vickers			1												1
A. Smith				1		1					1				3
M. Allen						1									1
J. Harrison					1	2					1	3		1	8
TOTAL PREACHERS	9	10	10	2	6	8	1	2	6	8	5	8	3	5	103

preachers and exhorters fulfilled a total of 83 engagements in south Lincolnshire, although this figure does not allow for double preaching by an individual at a particular place on any Sunday, or those places which have a double heading on the plan, where one preacher moved from one to the other to fulfil an engagement. All the places which were joined in pairs on the plan, except Branston and Branston Moor, had two services. Wellingore, which was on its own, had services at 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. The table of local preachers' engagements analyses the work of local preachers on the Lincoln circuit from the August to October 1821 plan, both in terms of the amount of contact each local centre had with individual local preachers and also in terms of the number of preaching engagements undertaken by each local preacher or exhorter. Thus, Branston and Branston Moor were visited by nine different local preachers and J. Metham's work as a local preacher took him out to three different centres in south Lincolnshire—Branston and Branston Moor, Washingborough and Heighington, and Wellingore. Local preachers in south Lincolnshire undertook 83 engagements compared with the 35 Sunday appointments filled by full-time preachers in the area.

However, while showing the amount of contact which places within the area had with preachers and the number of times individual preachers visited a particular place, the table underestimates the actual number of services taken by local preachers because it does not allow for double engagements by one person on one Sunday at one place.

The experience of each preaching place on the 1821 plan also varied in terms of the preachers they received. The tendency for full-time preachers to be at a limited number of places on Sundays has already been noted. Places like Scredington, where the six fortnightly Sunday afternoon meetings were attended alternately by full-time and local preachers, were provided for in a different way from Hougham and Claypole, where the whole of the provision for Sunday services was by local preachers. In addition, the variety of contact which a place had with local preachers, as measured by the number of different people who preached there, varied a great deal. Washingborough and Heighington had 13 Sunday services attended by as many as ten different local preachers, a full-time preacher, and the company, as well as a prayer meeting on one Sunday. The Primitive Methodists in these places therefore had an extremely varied religious life measured in terms of the number of preachers who took services there. Similarly, Branston and Branston Moor were visited by nine local preachers, one of whom went twice, during the Sundays on the plan. They were also visited twice by the travelling preacher, J. Forman. Washingborough, Heighington and Branston were early centres of Primitive Methodist activity where the connexion's preachers had met with some degree of success in 1819 and 1820. It is probable that the W. Knott, who appears on the 1821 plan as a full-time preacher, was one of the early converts made by J. Hallsworth during his first missionary efforts in Heighington, which

produced two local preachers.²¹ These vigorous centres, with their varied spiritual life, contrast with the places which received greater attention from the full-time preachers.

The distribution of engagements among the local preachers who appear on the 1821 plan provides further evidence for the relatively unstructured state of the connexion at this stage of its development, or at least, the lack of weight given to secular status as opposed to spiritual worth in this formative period. It was usual for Methodist preaching plans which did not show preachers' names in alphabetical order to give some sort of rank to them in terms of their seniority.²² Preachers' names on the 1821 plan were not listed in alphabetical order, but the presence of the full-time preachers' names at the head of the list, again not in alphabetical order, suggests that some sort of ranking according to status was being employed. However, this order does not seem to accord with any special status enjoyed by preachers in terms of the number of engagements they undertook. Thus it was possible for a local preacher on trial, such as A. Brothwell, to undertake a total of eight engagements over the whole circuit, one more than the two preachers who headed the list of local preachers and above the average for the whole list of local preachers. This also considerably exceeded those of some of the experienced local preachers such as M. Cotham, who took three, and—Chedale who took two. Brothwell was one of a minority of preachers who had eight or more engagements. Such a situation fitted a stage in the connexion's development when ideas of status and position within it were not yet fully developed. It also represented the tradition of "free gospelism" which had been part of the ideology of the connexion's formative period when divine inspiration was seen as the criterion for leadership in religious life.²³

The links between the head town, Lincoln, and the other places in the circuit were weak measured in terms of the flow of preachers between them. Only three local preachers occupied the pulpit at Lincoln in the period of the 1821 plan and none of these was active in south Lincolnshire, while only one of the two full-time preachers who preached in Lincoln, J. Forman, visited any of the south Lincolnshire preaching places. These were Branston and Branston Moor, and Washingbrough and Heighington, which were near to the city. In view of the great distance which needed to be covered to reach all parts of the circuit, the spiritual fare of the country places would tend to reflect local conditions. Their lives would be shaped more from within themselves than from outside. This weakened the connexion's institutions and, despite the efforts of such leaders as Bourne and Clowes to impose order on the connexion as a whole, became a factor in the period of crisis which developed in the connexion between 1824 and 1828.²⁴

²¹ *P. M. Mag.* 1821, pp. 31-2; 1840, p. 6; 1821, p. 45.

²² Leary, *Methodist Preaching Plans*, p. 12.

²³ See, for example, John T. Wilkinson, *Hugh Bourne 1772-1852*, p. 79.

²⁴ Kendall, *Origin and History*, vol I, p. 434.

However, the weeknight activities shown on the 1821 plan show a different pattern from that on Sundays. All places were visited regularly by a full-time preacher and the circuit was divided into an East Part, South Part and Lincoln section. A group of full-time preachers : W. Fieldsend, W. Knott and Ann Otter, worked in the South Part which comprised all the south Lincolnshire preaching places together with Newark and Balderton, Nottinghamshire, but excluding Lincoln, Branston, Branston Moor and Heighington, which were on the Lincoln section of the weeknight plan. All the places which had Sunday preaching except Washingborough, appear on this plan. They had fortnightly meetings except at Lincoln, where there were weekly meetings. There are no places with weeknight services which do not appear on the Sunday service plan, although provision is divided between North and South Rauceby. The pattern which lay behind this regular round of visiting by the full-time preachers, was at least in part based on geographical considerations. For example, on Monday 30th July, Ann Otter was at South Rauceby, on Tuesday at North Rauceby, on Wednesday at Wilsford, Thursday at Swarby, and at Screddington on Friday, where she also preached at 2 p.m. on Sunday afternoon before moving on to Heckington for a 6 p.m. service. William Knott undertook almost exactly the same range of engagements a fortnight later, although he did not preach at Screddington on the Sunday afternoon, but was at Ruskington instead. He then moved on to a round of engagements at Heckington, Sleaford, Walcott, and Timberland. On the weeknight plan each travelling preacher repeated the itinerary of the other at fortnightly intervals.

This well-ordered and tight pattern of weeknight services served the solid inner core of Primitive Methodist membership. It meant that the full-time preachers could be kept in touch with weekly or fortnightly leaders' meetings of preachers, stewards and class leaders. Through these officials or through personal contact they would also be in touch with the weekly class meetings of local societies which were the spiritual heart of Primitive Methodism. As well as supervising an individual's spiritual life, the class meeting encouraged him or her to turn their backs on worldly pastimes and was a means of regulating individual moral conduct.²⁵

Despite the great amount of variety and local freedom which existed around the more highly controlled inner core of Primitive Methodism at this stage of its development, the demands of the regular preaching round as set out on the plan in fact inhibited the missionary initiatives of the full-time preachers. The weekday plan set aside a number of days on each full-time preacher's programme for 'Mission'. Each of the three travelling preachers in the South Part of the Lincoln circuit was committed to spending Tuesdays to Fridays inclusive once a fortnight on missionary work after visiting Normanton on the Monday evening. In

²⁵ 'Minutes of a Meeting held at Nottingham ... 1819 ...', p. 11 in Smith (ed.), *Minutary Records* 1, 1814-1830.

all cases except one, this followed Sunday preaching at Sleaford and Rauceby and was followed by a Sunday without a preaching engagement. The other missionary activity on the plan for this part of the Lincoln circuit was a regular Monday engagement after preaching on Sundays at either Walcott and Rowston or just at Rowston. This was followed by Tuesday at Rowston again. Similarly, a Tuesday was given over to missionary work on the Western Part of the circuit when the travelling preachers were at Beckingham on the Monday preceding and at Leadenham on the following Wednesday. There was also provision for missionary work on the Lincoln section of the circuit, but this seems to have been less directly concerned with the south Lincolnshire area and probably involved work to the north and east of Lincoln.

This tight planning of missionary activity, with the need to fulfil other engagements before and after, would tend to limit its geographical extent and location, as well as the amount of time devoted to it. This is especially true of the single days given over to mission which had a fixed engagement on either side. The four consecutive days of mission work gave greater flexibility, and since the full-time preachers were free on the Sunday following them was a more open-ended commitment. The full-time preachers on the South Part of the plan were more strongly tied to missionary work than those on the Lincoln and East Part. This could reflect the needs of the area as perceived by the compiler of the plan or reflect the amount of time available to the full-time preachers after fulfilling their weeknight obligations. The greater the number of societies needing their attention during the week, the less the time the full-time preachers would have available, so that an increasingly strong organisation inhibited missionary work. The inclusion of it on the circuit plan represents an attempt to continue to give it emphasis, but work within even this sort of restraint represented a move away from the free-ranging initiatives of the connexion's early preachers.

The 1821 plan for preaching on the Lincoln Primitive Methodist circuit is therefore more than an extremely valuable source for the early spread of the connexion in Lincolnshire. Detailed analysis of the nature and extent of the engagements of the preachers on it set against the background of the general development of Primitive Methodism in the area provides insights into the nature of Primitive Methodist religious life at the period and into some of the perceptions of both those who preached and those to whom they delivered their message.

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SOME POCKET BOOKS IN THE METHODIST ARCHIVES

MR. Spittal's article concerning Methodist pocket books in the May 1986 issue of the *Proceedings*¹ has prompted me to look with renewed interest at pamphlet box 25 of the Fletcher/Tooth collection of manuscripts held in the Methodist Archives. The box on re-examination reveals no less than 31 such pocket books and diaries covering the years 1793-1831, the majority in fine condition and all recording events in the lives of their owners, the sisters Mary and Rosamond Tooth.

The pocket books can be divided into six categories according to title ; 24 issues of *The Methodist pocket book* (MPB) for the years 1799, 1801-1802, 1805-1806, 1808-1811, 1815, 1818-1828 and 1831,² the 1803 edition of *Wayland's ladies' annual present or pocket companion* (WLAP), the 1793 and 1804 editions of *The Christian lady's pocket book* (CLPB), the 1807 and 1830 editions of *The evangelical museum or Christian ladies' complete pocket book* (EM) and the 1829 editions of both *A Christian remembrancer* (CR) and *Marshall's new pocket book* (MN).

For all titles format complies in large measure with the descriptions outlined by Spittal and Milburn in earlier issues of this journal.³ A substantial diary section with space for accounting and financial memoranda is therefore inserted between short introductory and concluding information sections. These information sections are devoted in part to what can best be described as regular features such as Hackney coach fares and marketing tables and in part to short articles and anecdotes sometimes biographical, sometimes instructive and didactic and sometimes purely entertaining. As Mr Spittal has pointed out the biographical content can be of particular interest and it is for this reason that the following table of holdings includes details of portraits and biographees.

METHODIST POCKET-BOOK*

Year	Publisher	Portrait	Biographee	Notes
1799	G. Whitfield	Richard Baxter	Richard Baxter	Wanting pp. 9-12 and all after 132
1801	G. Whitfield	Alexander Mather	Peggy Cotes	
1802	Conference Office	—	Mr. Rutherford	Wanting portrait, pp.1-12 and 119-120

¹ C. J. Spittal, "Methodist pocket books". *Proceedings*, xlv, pp. 147-150.

² There are two copies of the *The Methodist pocket book* for the years 1821 and 1825.

³ C. J. Spittal, op. cit ; G. E. Milburn, "Piety, profit and paternalism ; Methodists in business in the North-East of England, c.1760-1920". *Proceedings* xlv, pp. 45-46.

Year	Publisher	Portrait	Biographee	Notes
1805	Conference Office	—	Matthew Watson	Wanting portrait
1806	Conference Office	—	John Fletcher/ John Wesley	Wanting portrait
1808	Conference Office	Richard Rodda	None	
1809	Conference Office	John Barber	None	
1810	Conference Office	Walter Griffith	Hermann Boerhaave	
1811	Conference Office	Thomas Taylor	None	Wanting pp. 9-10
1815	Conference Office	Samuel Bradburn	George Littleton	Lacks covers and all after p. 120
1818	Conference Office	—	James Hay Beattie	Wanting portrait. Rosamond Tooth's copy
1819	T. Cordeux	Richard Watson	James Crichton	
1820	T. Cordeux	Jonathan Edmondson	Hugh Latimer	
1821	T. Cordeux	Samuel Leigh	John Wycliffe	Lacks covers
1821	T. Cordeux	Samuel Leigh	John Wycliffe	Rosamond Tooth's copy
1822	T. Cordeux	George Marsden	None	
1823	T. Cordeux	Sarah Wesley, née Gwynne	None	
1824	T. Cordeux	Mary Fletcher	None	
1825	J. Kershaw	Hannah More	Hannah More	
1825	J. Kershaw	Hannah More	Hannah More	Rosamond Tooth's copy
1826	J. Kershaw	Henry Martyn	Henry Martyn	Also includes topo- graphical views of Lincoln and Winchester cathedrals
1827	J. Kershaw	Lord Teignmouth, John Shore	James Fraser	Also includes views of the Radcliffe Library, Oxford and St. John's College, Cambridge
1828	J. Mason	William McKendree	Edward VI	
1831	J. Mason	Thomas Chalmers	None	Also includes engraving of "The cottager"

CHRISTIAN LADY'S POCKET BOOK

Year	Publisher	Portrait	Biographee	Notes
1793†	J. S. Jordan	—	None	Wanting portrait
1804	pr. by assignment from T. Chapman	Richard Watson, Rowland Hill, Hugh Worthington, Joshua Toulmin	Richard Watson, Rowland Hill, Hugh Worthington, Joshua Toulmin	

WAYLAND'S LADIES ANNUAL PRESENT

1803	pr. for L. B. Secley	None	None	With engraved frontispiece "Fashionable dresses".
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EVANGELICAL MUSEUM

1807	pr. for H. D. Symonds	William Goode	Jeremiah Newell	Also includes 10 topographical views
1830	pr. for Suttaby, Fox & Suttaby	William Marsh	William Marsh	

MARSHALL'S NEW POCKET BOOK

1829	W. Marshall	None	None	Rosamond Tooth's copy
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CHRISTIAN REMEMBRANCER

1829	pr. for Wm. Curry, Jun. & Co. Dublin	None	None	Includes two engravings on missionary subjects
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* Unless otherwise stated all pocket books listed here were published in London and were once the property of Mary Tooth.

† The edition of 1793 was used to record events for the year 1812.

As the above table shows biographical emphasis is on prominent religious figures, although some major historical persons are also included. It is also apparent from the table and from perusal of the contents pages of individual issues that *Wayland's ladies' annual present* and *Marshall's new pocket book* are directed at an audience which differs considerably in outlook from the one sought by the publishers of the other four titles.

It is true that all volumes contain information of general nature as indicated above, but it is also evident that certain features of WLAP and MN find no place in the pocket books which include the words "evangelical", "Christian" or "Methodist" in the title. Instead of a portrait devoted to a religious figure WLAP has a frontispiece entitled "Fashionable dresses" showing three elegant young ladies under the close scrutiny of a young girl. Contents include new songs with popular titles such as "Joys of love and industry", "The wounded hussar" and "The peasant girl" as well as a section devoted to "New country dances", all this in marked contrast to articles entitled "Triumph of the Gospel", "On resignation", "On the crucifixion of our Saviour" and "Subjects for meditation in retirement" found in CLPB,⁴ EM,⁵ MPB,⁶ and CR⁷ respectively.

The same popular tone is also apparent in MN which includes illustrations of Hanover and Chester Terrace, Regent's Park, topographical

⁴ "Triumph of the Gospel", *The Christian lady's pocket book*, (1804) pp. 22-24.

⁵ "On resignation", *The evangelical museum, or Christian ladies' complete pocket book*, (1807) pp. 1-4 [of section following diary.]

⁶ "On the crucifixion of our Saviour", *The Methodist pocket book*, (1808) pp. 121-122.

⁷ "Subjects for meditation in retirement". *A Christian remembrancer*, (1829) pp. 8-10.

views of Aske Hall, Roslin and Branxholm Castle and Hexham Abbey together with sections entitled "Poetry", "New songs", "Summer drinks" and also "Enigmas", all sources of amusement and entertainment rather than instruction or erudition.

Despite these obvious differences in tone and spirit this particular collection of pocket books is given unity by the annotations and memoranda added by the two Tooth sisters, Mary and Rosamond. Mary Tooth's diaries were used meticulously, although at times intermittently, to record significant as well as everyday events and occurrences in her life. Consequently they provide fascinating insight into the activities of Methodist societies in the Madeley area during the first three decades of the 19th century and also into the social life and customs of this Shropshire community.

The diary notes can be divided into the four main categories of allusions to John and Mary Fletcher, references to prayer meetings and parish duties, notes on everyday community life and financial information relating to household economy.

The long and lasting influence of John Fletcher on the religious community in Madeley can be gauged from entries such as the following taken from 14th August 1801.

'This day 16 years Mr. Fletcher enter'd glory'.⁸

The continuing good work of his widow Mary also receives much attention in numerous references to her activities as leader of prayer and class meetings.

Sunday May 6 1810

'At noon Mrs. Fletcher read 5 more chapters in Job'

Sunday December 1 1811

'This morning Mrs. F. was at the 9 o'clock meeting, but had no society at night'.

These are just two of the many such entries which run through Mary Tooth's diary and which culminate in a reference to Mary Fletcher's last noon meeting in September 1815.

September 24 1815

'Mrs. Fletcher had a noon meeting for the last time this season'.

Only one more brief note is to be found between this and the entries for December 7th-9th 1815 which record the death of Mary Fletcher and Mary Tooth's last cry for help for her companion.⁹

⁸ In all quotations taken from the pocket books original spelling has been maintained.

⁹ Events leading up to the death of Mary Fletcher are described in more detail by Mary Tooth in *A letter to the loving and beloved people of the parish of Madeley, and its vicinity, who have lost a friend to piety in the death of Mrs. Fletcher, widow of the Rev. J. W. Fletcher, or De la Flechere.* Shiffnal, pr. by A. Edmonds, ?1816.

'I went to plead with the Lord that she might yet be restored'.

References to parish life in Madeley continue for the period following the death of Mary Fletcher. Details of place, speaker and time are often given as in the following examples.

F[riday] July 9 1819 'To night we had preaching at the barn by Mr. Holden'.
 T[uesday] July 25 1820 'Mr. Mortimer met the class this morning'.
 F[riday] July 28 1820 'Mr. Wm. Jones preached to night from John 3.15'.
 F[riday] October 6 1820 'To night was the first missionary prayer meeting we have had on Friday'.
 F[riday] October 5 1821 'Mr. Crowther held the missionary meeting'.
 M[onday] December 3 1821 'Mr. Waddy preached from Rev. 21. ver. 25, last clause. There should be no night there'.
 M[onday] November 11 1828 'Mr. Griffith preached at Coalport to night'.

Information of interest to the social historian can also be found in entries which point to the vicissitudes of parish life.

February 13 1808

'To night we had the maloncholy tiding of our dr. Brother B. Smith being killed this morning in his work by a chimney falling on him'.

Less sinister are references to seasonal duties such as the harvesting of the potato crop and a visit from the chimney sweep.

September 22 1801 'Thomas Such swept the chimneys'.

October 22 1812 'To day we took up the potatoes'.

In some of the diaries a close account is also kept of monies spent and received. On many occasions Mary Tooth lists her expenditure as in the week May 3rd-9th 1801.

Account of Cash	Received	Paid or Lent
	L.s.d.	L.s.d.
Sacrament		3
Purple gown & lining		0 18 6
Price for mending shoes		0 1 6
Pamphlets		0 1 3
Medicine by the post		0 0 7
Gave sister		0 10 6

From these details a clear picture can be formed of the life of Mary Tooth, her family, friends and acquaintances. Innermost thoughts and feelings are often expressed and reactions to events described, sometimes poignantly as in the case of Miss Tooth's sadness at the loss of her mother.

February 9 1803 'This morning had the mournful tiding of my dr. kind mothers death. How unexpected was this dismal news to me. Dead & buried before I knew she was sick. O if I was but sure she was happy, that would wipe away all tears & I could even rejoice at being deprived of so indulgent and fond a parent. But I have this comfort the Lord is infinitely more loving than I can conceive & he may have wrought a glorious work & taken her to his bosom'.

Of further interest is the existence on three occasions, 1821, 1825 and 1829, of separate diaries used by each of the two sisters Rosamond and Mary. The pronouncements and movements of one can thus be corroborated by reference to the diary notes of the other.

July 28 1825. Rosamond Tooth. 'My sister had a tooth drawn'.

July 28 1825. Mary Tooth. 'To day Mr. Edwards took out my tooth which occasioned the abcess'.

Perhaps more significant is R. Tooth's reference to her sister's departure for Manchester in 1821.

July 24 1821. 'My sister went to Manchester'.

Entries in Mary Tooth's diary for the period July 24—August 9 1821 show that she did indeed travel to Manchester in order to attend the seventy-eighth Methodist Conference which began there on July 25 1821. For these days Miss Tooth's diaries is full of references to meetings and services attended and ministers and friends encountered.

These pocket books can therefore be considered in their own right not only as items of undoubted bibliographical significance, but also through their manuscript annotations as valuable social and historical documents. They can be used in the Methodist Archives in conjunction with a vast corpus of correspondence, much of which relates to people mentioned in the pocket books,¹⁰ and also with other more substantial diaries in which Mary Tooth describes at greater length her thoughts, feelings and activities, taking her story forward to October 1842, just thirteen months before her death in November 1843.¹¹

JOHN P. TUCK

¹⁰ This correspondence, stored in boxes MAW, Fl.1-7, has been referred to by R. F. Skinner in chapter 10 of *Nonconformity in Shropshire, 1662-1816: a study in the rise and progress of Baptist, Congregational, Presbyterian, Quaker and Methodist societies*, Shrewsbury, 1964 and B. Trinder in *The Industrial Revolution in Shropshire*, 2nd ed, 1981.

¹¹ Mary Tooth's diaries, which cover intermittently the years 1799-1842, are to be found in the Methodist Archives at MAW, Fl.14.

As its title implies, *Revival Cameos* by Peter Gentry (70pp, nd) is a collection of brief biographies of minor evangelical figures. The ten essays include Benjamin Ingham, Victory Purdy, Hester Ann Rogers and the Primitive Methodist, Joseph Spoor. Copies are available from 153 High Street, Pershore, Worcs, WR10 1EQ, price £1.50.

A survey of Methodist ministerial training 1834-1984 was the subject chosen by our librarian, Kenneth Garlick, for the 4th Annual Lecture of the Friends of Wesley's Chapel in May 1985. It is a useful summary which brings up to date the well known Centenary account, *The Story of our Colleges* by Bardsley Brash, published in 1935. Copies of the lecture are £1.00 each from the Chapel.

EARLY METHODIST VISIONS OF THE TRINITY

EIGHTEENTH century Methodists were quite frequently subject to experiences which they believed to be supernatural. Some of these were of a kind familiar in the literature of mysticism—visions, voices, dreams. In common with most other Evangelicals of the period they also detected “particular providences” in fortunate escapes from death or injury as well as in the dreadful deaths of blasphemers and opponents. They believed in demons and witches ; and sometimes they experienced healing in response to prayer. It is very common indeed in the history of individual conversions to find a sense of divine intervention in the form of powerful inward impressions or biblical texts suddenly impressed upon the mind which were invested with an immediate personal application and an assurance of divine challenge or comfort.

In the present paper I shall examine one particular kind of visionary experience which appears to be confined to Methodists alone among the various types of Evangelical in this period.¹ It may be remarked that the evidence for the range of phenomena just described appears also to be much slighter in other branches of the Revival, particularly among Anglican Evangelicals, though “particular providences” are common among all. This may simply be due to the fact that Methodism has left a richer crop of contemporary biographies of rank and file members, though this in turn reflects their importance in the movement. At their social level an openness to supernatural belief is likely to have been more common, though this was shared (even encouraged) by John Wesley himself. But Baptist and Congregationalist sources would probably repay investigation for similar material.²

The apparently visionary experiences contain a variety of subject matter. The most frequent is, I think, a vision of Christ crucified, and this is commonly associated with some crucial phase in a conversion crisis. A typical example is Thomas Taylor:

While I was calling upon the Lord, He appeared in a wonderful manner, as with his vesture dipped in blood. I saw him with the eye of faith, hanging on the cross ; and the sight caused such love to flow into my soul, that I believed that moment, and never since gave up my confidence.³

Another common type is some form of vision of judgement. That subject may also appear in dreams ; and another common type of

¹ I would like to acknowledge the help of Dr. Richard Bauckham for reading the first draft of this paper, suggesting sources for Trinitarian visions and for theological comments. He is not of course responsible for the use I have made of his remarks.

² I hope to develop a more comprehensive survey of early Evangelical supernaturalist experiences at some future date. On healing phenomena see my essay on “Doctors, Demons and Early Methodist Healing” in W. J. Shiels (ed.) *The Church and Healing* (Studies in Church History 19) (Oxford 1982) and other contributions to that volume.

³ *Lives of the Early Methodist Preachers*, ed. Thomas Jackson, London 4th ed. 1872 V, p. 11.

dream is premonitory of the death of relatives or friends, often coupled with warnings to the dreamer to repent before it is too late. (This type of dream is of course common to other periods and cultures.) But there is one type of early Methodist visionary experience which is distinctly rare and seems to occur almost entirely at a rather late period in the history of the eighteenth century Revival. This is a particular vision of the Trinity—a revelation of the separate persons of the Trinity, Three yet One, which is to be distinguished from visions of Christ, or God the Father, or the Holy Spirit alone.

According to John Wesley “Charles Perronet was the first person I was acquainted with ” who was favoured with this experience. The next (he says) was Miss Ritchie ; Miss Roe (later Mrs. Rogers) the third ; and he added that there had only been a few since.⁴ Wesley had indeed been aware of the possibility of such experiences many years before from the seventeenth century example of the Marquis De Renty. The possible influence of this example will be considered later, but so far as can be seen the Perronet was the first for a person with whom Wesley was personally acquainted though not the first among contemporary Methodists. In a letter to Miss Roe in February 1777 Wesley says that Perronet’s papers had recently come into his hands and he quotes a short extract describing the experience.⁵ The document from which this was taken appears to be a letter from Perronet (dated 1772) and by the way in which Wesley refers to it apparently not addressed to himself. This Perronet letter was published in a fuller form in the *Arminian Magazine* for 1779.⁶

Miss Ritchie’s experience is first referred to in a letter by Wesley to her in July 1777.⁷ Miss Roe had evidently had the experience by February 1777 on the evidence of the letter already quoted, and she was still having such experiences in 1782.⁸ We shall see that several similar cases followed in the 1770s and 1780s but there is at least one at a much earlier date. In June 1759 John Manners wrote to Wesley briefly describing a Trinitarian vision—well before the Perronet case.⁹ Wesley appears to have forgotten this example (and it was only published in 1780). It is perhaps fair to assume that it was an isolated case and the weight of the evidence certainly points to this particular type of vision becoming suddenly noticeable from the late 1770s.

Several questions may be raised about such a phenomenon. As regards content : what exactly did the visionaries “see” ? Then, what kind of vision was this in terms of the usual types of visionary experience ?

⁴ In 1788 : *Letters* viii, p. 38. Perronet was the son of Wesley’s friend Vincent Perronet, the Vicar of Shoreham. Charles was a Methodist itinerant for a time (see *DNB* under Vincent Perronet).

⁵ *Letters* vi, pp. 252f.

⁶ *Arminian Magazine* 1779 pp. 203f.

⁷ *Letters* vi, p. 266.

⁸ Letter to John Wesley in *Arm. Mag.* 1790, p. 441.

⁹ *Arm. Mag.* 1780, p. 275.

Three have generally been distinguished in analyses of mysticism and among the mystics themselves : St. Teresa of Avila, for example, has a clear perception of these different types. They are : “external”—appearances as external objects ; “imaginary” or “imaginative”—images within the mind ; and “intellectual”—a presence sensed and recognised to be that of a particular person (such as Christ) yet without any visible form.¹⁰ One may further ask what kind of psychological and religious circumstances appear to have produced or helped to condition these visions and what role they played in Methodist piety. There are also questions about literary sources which may have helped to inspire them and how they are related to the earlier history of mysticism. It needs to be asked how far Methodists were aware of earlier precedents and how far they simply derived them from their own experience and spiritual resources. Most of these questions are indeed relevant to the whole range of early Methodist mystical experience but there is one further question especially relevant to the Trinitarian type. Given that various kinds of supernatural and mystical experience occurred in Methodism from the beginning, why should the Trinitarian type apparently begin or at least become noticeable only in the late 1770s ? Finally, it can be asked what particular kind of Trinitarian theology appears to be implied by these experiences ?

The question of content is difficult. Mystical experience is notoriously hard to describe or even to define, and it is often evident that those who possess it are struggling for words to express the almost inexpressible. Often they feel that they are using similitudes rather than direct description. Non-visual experiences offer even more difficulties of this kind. It must be observed, too, that visionary experiences are not of the essence of mysticism. They may help but also mislead ; and some of the greatest mystics as well as the wisest commentators on them, well aware of this, have cautioned against excessive emphasis upon such manifestations.¹¹ In the commonest types of Methodist vision—those of the crucified Jesus and the judgement—the descriptions are usually simply pictorial and appear not to have made the subject feel that he was at a loss to find words to describe the almost indescribable (see, for example, Thomas Taylor’s vision quoted above). These visions appear to conform to those in the “imaginative” category—they are said to be presented to the “eyes of the mind” or the “eye of faith” in Methodist accounts. The Trinitarian visions are more difficult than this, possibly because of the subject ; possibly because of the overwhelming sense of glory. Unfortunately most of them are in any case only briefly described and leave the exact visual content unclear. For example, Ann Cutler said she renewed her covenant daily with the Persons of the Trinity : “I have union with the Trinity thus. I see the Son through the Spirit, I find the

¹⁰ *Life of St Teresa* (ET. J. M. Cohen) (Penguin 1957) for example in ch. 27, especially 187f. For the three-fold classification see, for example, A. Farges, *Mystical Phenomena* (ET. London 1926) pp. 328—44 ; A. Poulain, *Des Grâces D’Oraison* (8th ed., Paris 1931) p. 313.

¹¹ See, for example, the remarks in W. R. Inge, *Christian Mysticism* (7th ed. London 1933) pp. 16, 218f.

Father through the Son, and God is my all in all".¹² It might be questioned whether this is a "visionary" experience at all—yet the sense of the separate while also united Persons in Trinity make it quite distinct from the usual run of Methodist spiritual experience.

The fullest account is that of Charles Perronet already referred to and here there seems to be no doubt that it was a vision, in some sense visual but also hard to describe and perhaps on the borderline between the imaginative and intellectual type. Perronet was certainly aware of the difficulties of language here and indeed says the experience was "above all description". He asks whether the appearance was "glorious" and replies that "It was all divine, it was all glory. I had no conception of it. It was God." "Body and soul were penetrated through with the rays of Deity". Yet he also says that he "*beheld* the distinct persons of the Godhead and worshipped one undivided Jehovah and each Person separately". At other times he had "communion" with the Persons separately. Perronet certainly had some knowledge of mystical writings and was able to reflect not only on the different types of mystical experience but also on the theological teaching about the vision of God implied by them. Thus he says that "the manifestations of the Patriarchs were outward and therefore admitted of being described". "But what I relate was not outward; it was not any external vision". Nor was it, apparently, an "imaginative" vision. "It was not an impression upon my mind but different from all". "While the soul is under the power of faith, the person of Christ is often presented to the imagination. But that I experienced was not this; rather I suppose it was a similitude of what is given in Eternity. But still only a simulation, for while we are in the body, all the operations of God's spirit are wrought upon our body and spirit, inseparably enjoined." Nor was it "lightness" more than "darkness". Aware of the mystical tradition, Perronet discusses the conceptions of communion with God put forward by Böhme, Law and Arndt and distinguishes his own views from theirs. He cannot "stoop" to less than union by which the Three are One; nor does he believe that through the grace of Christ he partakes of the divine nature in some measure as God exists in himself. Our redemption is by being united with Christ not as the Father and Son are united but as the branch to the vine. In manner not unlike Böhme he speculates that the "creation is hieroglyphical, portraying the Creator. All that which affects the outward senses is emblematic of some attribute of God and a vehicle to convey communion with him. So that through the creatures the Creator was conveyed, and man made to centre in God".¹³

It seems as though Perronet was shying away from that tendency which goes back to the Neoplatonic tradition in mysticism and had appeared more recently in the Quietists. This was an apparent inclination to see the highest spiritual experience as involving the virtual absorption of the human personality in the divine essence; or at least

¹² William Bramwell, *Short Account of the Life and Death of Ann Cutler* (Sheffield, 1796) p. 18.

¹³ *Arm. Mag.* 1779 p. 204.

a danger of appearing to do so. And for that matter a tendency to see the highest vision of God in unitary rather than Trinitarian terms. Perronet appears to avoid both tendencies. Nor, it seems, was he claiming any form of the beatific vision; this, too, seems consciously to be avoided. One Methodist Trinitarian visionary does actually approach such an idea. An anonymous correspondent of John Wesley in 1790 describes how, apparently during a communion service, "the curtain of future glory was drawn aside to give me a view of heaven and the blessed inhabitants of it When this amazing prospect was shut up, immediately the Father, Son and Holy Ghost encompassed about me. I felt surrounded with Deity . . . swallowed up, I would almost say, in the beatific vision". Soon after, he had another experience of this and since then (he says) "I have dwelt in the suburbs of heaven; my fellowship has been, in a peculiar manner, with God the Father".¹⁴

As regards the psychological aspects one may no doubt invoke the range of explanations which have been offered for visionary experiences in general. The small number of cases under consideration here make generalisation hazardous. For example, it may be an accident that there are more women than men, though the men tend to be more articulate and cognizant of mystical literature. There is a fairly clear relationship between the experiences and Methodist beliefs and patterns of religious behaviour. Visionary and dream experiences in general in early Methodism almost always seem to be related very closely to some particular stage or crisis in the spiritual development of the individual, and one function of the vision was to resolve some problem in that process by convincing the recipient "experimentally" of doubts about it. (This is often recognised by the visionary). Few of those who had these experiences seem to have been what one might term temperamentally or habitually visionary in their spirituality, however vivid their spiritual life was in other respects. But a considerable number seem to have had such experiences once or twice in the process of resolving problems (some were even avowedly rather averse to rapturous religion in general). The vision of Christ crucified seems to have had the function of convincing the visionary that Christ had indeed died for their sins, and an assurance of faith and salvation quickly followed. The judgement visions usually convinced them of their risk of hell or that their names were (literally in some cases) "written in the book of life".¹⁵ Though they do not appear to reflect consciously on the exact function of such experiences, Methodists would probably have agreed with the great mystics who have seen such visions as God-given aids to spiritual progress. As Inge remarked: "As a rule, visions were regarded as special rewards bestowed by the goodness of God on the struggling saint, and especially on the beginner, to refresh him and strengthen him in the hour of need"; but they should not induce them artificially, nor desire

¹⁴ *Arm. Mag.* 1790 p. 247.

¹⁵ See the Taylor example (note 2) for the crucified Jesus; and for judgement visions the life of James Rogers and of John Nelson in *Lives of the Early Methodist Preachers* V p. 275f.; I, p. 2.

them, nor feel pride in them.¹⁶ The Wesleys, with some hesitations, were inclined to take this line on the various convulsory and ecstatic phenomena which accompanied some of their preaching.¹⁷

The Trinitarian visions follow this general rule of being related to difficulties of crises in spiritual progress, in fact to a very specific problem—that of Christian Perfection. Some elements in this highly controversial doctrine may be mentioned as relevant to the present study. Wesley saw perfection as something which could be the subject of a sudden gift, a gradual growth or a combination of the two. He tried to distinguish between a perfection attainable on earth and one which is not: some, he said, pitched the claim too high and others too low. Resolution of these and other paradoxes in the doctrine is aided by a recognition of the fact that Wesley apparently operated with a limited definition of “sin” as “the voluntary transgression of a known law” at least so far as perfection obtainable on earth is concerned. Related to this is the fact that the experimental content of “perfection” both in Wesley’s teaching and in the descriptions given of their feelings by early Methodists appears in essence to be an unbroken sense of their communion with Christ—a free flow of love between oneself and him in which there is no conscious interruption (i.e. no sense of known sin). The experience also includes love to one’s fellow men both in attitude and action.¹⁸

Whatever may be thought of the theological and moral problems raised by such a doctrine, it does help to explain the significance and context of the Methodist Trinitarian visions. Wesley himself makes it clear by implication, for he had evidently thought at first that those “perfected in love” always had such experiences. Even when he discovered this was not true it seems clear that only those involved in the perfectionist quest were subject to such visions. So, writing to Hannah Ball in June 1777 he says “I have lately made diligent inquiry into the experiences of many that are perfected in love. And I find a very few of them who have had a clear revelation of the several Persons of the ever-blessed Trinity. It therefore appears that this is by no means essential to Christian Perfection. All that is necessarily implied therein is humble, gentle, patient love . . .”.¹⁹ Ten years later, writing to Lady Maxwell (another of this select company of Trinitarian visionaries) he gives further details of his inquiry into the perfected and remarks “formerly I thought this was the experience of all those that were perfected in love,

¹⁶ W. R. Inge op. cit., pp. 16, 218.

¹⁷ John Wesley, *Journal* ii, pp. 84, 202.

¹⁸ Among the more useful discussions of the doctrine are H. Lindström, *Wesley and Sanctification* (Stockholm 1946) and Colin Williams, *John Wesley’s Theology Today* (London 1960) ch. X; see also Wesley’s *Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (1760). For the point about the definition of sin see Williams pp. 126f., 179. A typical individual case is of a woman who said: “From that moment I have felt nothing but love in my heart; no sin of any kind . . . I never find any cloud between God and me; I walk in the light continually. I do “rejoice evermore” and “pray without ceasing” . . . I have a continual witness in myself, that whatever I do I do it to his glory” (John Wesley, *Journal* iv, p. 367f.).

¹⁹ *Letters* vi, p. 265.

I am now clearly convinced that it is not". He adds, that it was a "wonderful instance of divine mercy" that Lady Maxwell "should have so much larger a taste of the powers of the world to come" at a time when she was "encumbered with the affairs of this world"—thus he recognised one of the functions of such revelations in the spiritual life.²⁰

The suggestion is, then, that this is an extraordinary blessing and not simply one of the usual accompaniments of "perfection". But when it does occur it appears to be associated with the perfected or at least with those in the process of aspiring after and achieving this gift. This certainly seems to be true of all those recorded in the *Arminian Magazine*. Thus John Appleton explains how he was seeking for perfection and how "one day it was impressed upon my mind that the Holy Ghost was come upon me ; and while the Lord thus spake . . . I then was filled, as I apprehended, with the Holy Ghost, after I had believed". After a period of conflict "at a time of public prayer, I thought my mind was on a sudden enlightened to see three Persons, which it was revealed to me were the Holy Trinity. I saw them all joined together and become as one. I saw one (the Holy Spirit) with a seal in his hand, which he impressed on my heart. My heart was now filled with such happiness and glory as tongue can not express ; which gave me to believe that I was sealed by the Spirit to the day of redemption". Later, he experienced a sense of the Spirit moving through him and believed that it left "the image of God in his bosom".²¹ Here the Trinitarian experience appears to be part of the subjective process by which Appleton was assured that he had been perfected.

[to be continued]

HENRY D. RACK

²⁰ *Letters* vii, p. 392.

²¹ *Am. Mag.* 1790, p. 636.

An Old Local Preacher Remembers by J. Douglas Tearle (1986) is a brief account of the experiences of a local preacher in the early years of this century, as recalled eighty years later. Mr. Tearle began to preach in 1906 in the Luton (Chapel Street) Wesleyan circuit. The booklet is 90p post free from Mrs. D. G. Chapman, 41 Lawn Gardens, Luton, Beds LU1 3UN.

Bygone Reeth by Margaret Batty, 83pp, 1985, is divided neatly into two equal halves : an outline history of Reeth in Swaledale from 1066 to 1900 followed by an account of Methodism in Reeth 1760-1900. In a village where at least a third of the adult population in 1851 attended the Wesleyan chapel, it is not easy to separate chapel and community throughout the nineteenth century. This is a splendid history, full of satisfying detail and good stories. Copies are £2.00 plus postage from the author at 16 Hillside Crescent, Edinburgh, EH7 5EB.

A NEW WESLEY LETTER

AN original letter recently came to light in the minister's safe at Otford Methodist Church (Sevenoaks circuit) to which it was presented in December 1953. It is not in Telford's Standard Edition; it will be included by Dr. Frank Baker in the appropriate volume of the Oxford/Bicentennial Edition of Wesley's Works. It is addressed "To Miss Dale at the Orphan house Newcastle upon Tyne", and is one of a series written to her. Telford included many of them and recorded that some were known to have been given away by her great-nephew, Thomas Dale, who was Dean of Rochester in Kent in 1870. Presumably this letter was one such, as it was presented to Otford Church by the daughter of a former Canon of Rochester. It is now deposited with the Connexional Archives, Manchester.

The letters to Miss Margaret (Peggy) Dale fall into a period of four years (June 1st 1765 to November 17th 1769) with a lone letter in 1773 approving her marriage. She was one of three sisters, with a younger brother, orphaned by their father's death when they were young. They lived with their aunt, Miss Margaret Lewen, who was herself one of Wesley's correspondents and benefactors. It was she who introduced him to Peggy, then aged 20, in March 1765.¹ The girls had their own means and at the time of the letters were living at the Orphan House in Newcastle.

The letters show Wesley in his role as spiritual director to a young Christian, whom he described in 1767 as "one of the holiest young women that I have any knowledge of."² None the less his enthusiasms were from time to time tempered with warnings and implied criticisms. His relationship was that of one nursing a young disciple in the faith, spiritually "wooing" her to progress in the path of perfection. To this end he spontaneously used affectionate expressions, sometimes embarrassing to modern readers;³ but such language moderated itself when he felt that the desired progress was not being made. Such was apparently the background of the letter of September 17th, 1769, which reads :-

JOHN WESLEY TO PEGGY DALE

Bristol
Sept. 17. 1769

"My Dear Sister

It is a great satisfaction to me to hear, That you are not yet weary or faint in your mind : And that you do overcome tho not without fighting, nor sometimes without difficulty. Keep your

¹ *Letters* iv. pp. 247 ; 304-5

² *ibid.*, v. p. 49

³ e.g. *ibid.*, v. p. 62

eye continually fixt on your Mark, thro Christ in you the hope of Glory, to *be* good & to *do* good, in as high a degree as possibly you can. Omit nothing wch it is in your power to do for Him, or for any soul that he has made ; knowing, everyone shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour : Knowing that a cup of cold Water given for his sake shall in no wise lose its reward. As to visiting ye sick & afflicted, says our dear Friend in London, "I know not how to find them out." Blessed be God, you *do* know where to find them, & how to lay up treasure in Heaven thereby. O do not on any account whatever, give up that invaluable privilege ! Were there no other consideration but this, Why shd you cut short your own reward ? Therefore be Zealous : Be active : Be immovable in every work of the Lord ! And (if that can be) you will be still more near to, My Dear Peggy,

Your Affectionate Brother,
J. Wesley"

I do not remember it. But *if* I promised the Rooms to James Oddie, he must havè them."

Addressed on reverse :- "To
Miss Dale
At the Orphanhouse
Newcastle upon Tyne"

The postmark is part of a "Bishop" mark, B for Bristol ; the seal (chipped but in fair condition) bears John Wesley's 'NUNCIA PACIS', 'the messenger of peace', a dove with a branch in its bill, no. 14 in Dr. Baker's catalogue of Wesley's seals.

The letter was the last but one in the 1765-69 series and it lacked much of the spiritual glow of the earlier correspondence. There was perceptible reticence in the opening expression, "it is a great satisfaction to me to hear . . ." ; and the exhortation "to *be* good and to *do* good" fell short of the earlier exuberance, "that life and death, all is yours seeing you are Christ's : all is good, all is blessing. You have only to rest upon Him the whole weight of your soul . . . Take out of His fulness grace upon grace."⁴ Nor did he recall her to what he had offered in an earlier letter, the privilege of "the witness of sanctification . . . which everyone that is sanctified may claim."⁵ Indeed she may have come within his qualifying remark in the same letter, that "many who achieved the witness do not retain it, or at least constantly." Perhaps some coolness had arisen between them because of her close association with Sarah Ryan ;⁶ the latter had at first been "an unspeakable blessing" to him, but their relations had deteriorated because of her extreme claims for sanctification.⁷

⁴ *ibid.*, iv. p. 319

⁵ *ibid.*, v. p. 78

⁶ *ibid.*, v. p. 9

⁷ Sarah Ryan correspondence, *passim* in *Letters* volumes iv and v from Jan. 20th 1758 to Jun. 28th 1766.

To complete Peggy Dale's story, she continued faithfully in prayer and service. She married in 1773 Edward Avison, an organist and member of a distinguished musical family well-known to the Wesleys. Unhappily, owing to ill-health, the marriage was a short one. Both died in 1777.⁸

It must always be a source of wonder that John Wesley found the time to write so many intensely individualistic letters in the course of his continual travels and many concerns. Those to Peggy Dale came from a range of places in Ireland as well as in England.

It may be briefly noted that the Orphan House played a varied role in Newcastle Methodism. It provided accommodation for the Dale sisters and was temporarily available for preachers and occasional visitors.⁹ It also presented Wesley with problems. He wrote indignantly to James Oddie, his assistant in Newcastle, to protect the rights of the Dale sisters against those who "envy the rooms of these poor girls and want at all hazards to thrust them out."¹⁰ Oddie is mentioned in the postscript to the Otford letter—"I do not remember it. But *if* I promised the Rooms to James Oddie, he must have them." This may suggest that Peggy had some responsibility for the use of "the Rooms".

Appreciation is expressed to Dr. Frank Baker for his valuable aid in identifying this letter.

F. L. CLARK

[Mr. F. L. Clark B.A. is a retired local government officer and a local preacher.]

⁸ *ibid.*, v. p. 156. In a letter of Dec. 17th 1768, Wesley writes that being so busy, "I have no time for Handel or Avison now."

⁹ *ibid.*, v. p. 49

¹⁰ *ibid.*, v. p. 81

Two reprints by the Banner of Truth Trust should be of interest to members of this Society :

George Whitfield's Letters, 1734-1742 (£7.95) : a facsimile reprint of Volume One of Whitefield's Works, 1771, with a supplement of additional letters, editorial notes and an index of correspondents. Covering the important early years of the Evangelical Revival, the volume illustrates the circumstances of the first field preaching, the earliest disagreements between Calvinistic and Arminian Methodists and many other aspects of the movement.

The Autobiography of William Jay, 1854. : A native of Wiltshire, Jay became an outstanding nonconformist preacher in London and Bath between 1789 and 1853. A man of catholic sympathies, he wrote a series of 'reminiscences of distinguished contemporaries', which included John Wesley and Lady Maxwell. The volume contains a selection of his letters.

J.A.V.

NEWS FROM OUR BRANCHES

THE logo on the new *Bulletin* of the WHS (Irish Branch) tells us that the branch was founded in 1926. It has long been an association of WHS members living in Ireland, but now, as elsewhere, it is possible to be a member of the branch whether or not one belongs to the parent society. £5 per annum covers the dual membership and £3 the branch membership alone. The first two bulletins are full of good things including articles on Methodist history in some of which the writers describe how they located, and then made use of, the material available. This concern for adequate research is seen in a series just begun on "The use of the WHS (IB) Resources", the central collection of which is to be found at Aldersgate House, Belfast.

Lectures given to our branches, sometimes later published or printed in the journals, continue to add to the accumulation of material from which future historians will be happy to quarry. This year the **London and Home Counties** branch journal contains a number of substantial articles on Methodism and Slavery, the London Mission, Susanna Wesley, Dr. John Whitehead, Richard Blair and (of current importance) the significance of 24th May 1738 (officially described as the date of the conversion of the Wesleys) and of the events that followed it. The significance of these events is still a matter of debate among Wesley students, as the contributions of the Rev. Leslie Wollen, Dr. Ken Hall and Dr. John Vickers make plain. Reading their articles reminded me of the day when Dr. Wilbert Howard went into the library at Handsworth College and found Dr. Bett and Dr. Rattenbury in separate alcoves, and said, "May I introduce you, gentlemen". If our journals are used at times for informed debate that will be a good thing.

The **East Midlands** journal reflects the current surge of interest in family history, in this case the Methodist family history of the Wales, Jacques and Marfleets. The Rev. Cyril Davey lectured to the branch on Thomas Coke as Dr. John Vickers also did to a joint meeting of **Bristol and Plymouth and Exeter** members. **Bristol** has published lectures on "Methodism in the Environs of Old Market Street", "The Circuits North of the Avon", "John Wesley, grandfather of John Wesley" and "Thomas Coke". **Plymouth and Exeter** journal contains an account of the Bible Christian China missionaries, T. G. Vanstone and Samuel T. Thorne and an informative article on "Chapels in Official Records".

When I was a member of the long defunct Sheffield Branch, more than thirty years ago, we set up a plaque in Paradise Square commemorating Wesley's preaching there: my memories of that branch were awakened by an article in the **Yorkshire** journal about a Methodist ghost! Elizabeth Bentley, of Bramley, appeared after her death at the bedside of Sarah Roberts and sang a Wesley hymn to an unknown tune. Mrs. Roberts was haunted by the tune and eventually had it written down. It was sung to us at Bramley that day in 1952. Does a copy still exist? The Yorkshire journal also has articles on "Christmas Singing", "Hannah Perry, Class Leader" and "The Halifax Ramsdens". Articles in the **Scottish** journal deal with Wesley's twentieth visit to Scotland and of the "best preachers" which he thought fit to send across the border. The **Cumbria** journal continues its serialisation of articles on "Nonconformity in Furness" and "Methodism in Kirkby Lonsdale". The **Cornish** journal contains features on "Some Class Leaders of West Cornwall" and "George Whitefield in Cornwall". Articles in the **North East** journal include "The Orphan House at Newcastle",

“The Origins of the Wesleyan Methodist Association”, “Methodism in the Hartlepoons” and “Thomas Burt and John Wilson” political and social reformers. It also contains an account of the accidental deaths of two Primitive Methodist preachers in 1830, presented under a tabloid heading, “Death on the Waggonway”. Lectures were given in the **Isle of Man** on John Crook, the “Apostle of Methodism” in the Island and “A Prolegomena to Manx Methodist History”. **Lancashire and Cheshire** members heard an account of “Two Hundred Years of Methodism in Hazel Grove” while the **Lincolnshire** journal carried an article on “Two Hundred Years of Methodism in the Horncastle Circuit”. The latter also contained articles on the UMFC Assemblies held in the county, two eighteenth-century membership books and “Lincolnshire Methodism, the last Fifty Years”.

Local Methodism is represented in the **Shropshire** journal by “Methodism in Ketley Bank” and in the **West Midlands** bulletin by “Methodism in Warwick”—the latter by Paul Bolitho who, like his father, made valuable contributions to Cornish Methodist history many years ago. The statement in the Warwick local preachers’ minutes that “Bro. Green sank” recalls the probably universal practice in Wesleyan Methodism early last century of lowering the names on the list of preachers on the plan of any who were convicted of misdemeanours such as neglecting appointments.

The summer pilgrimages were to Wesley sites in London and Oxford, to Hayes, the Upper Dove Valley (a joint West Midlands and Lancashire and Cheshire event), Weardale, Teesdale, Winterborne Whitechurch, South Petherton, Kirkoswald, Gressenhall and Mattershall. There were Methodist walkabouts in Exeter and Truro, and in the Isle of Man visits were made to chapels in the north of the Island on Wesley day, and in the south in the summer.

Several branches are involved in preparations for Wesley Year. In **Cornwall** the Tourist Board is publishing a “Wesley Trail” booklet which includes a map showing some ninety-eight places associated with the Wesleys. The **Shropshire** branch held a meeting in Grit Methodist Church, a former lead miners’ chapel, in which the old explosives boxes were used for some of the furnishings. The **East Midlands** journal continues its useful county bibliographies of Methodism.

The editor of the **Plymouth and Exeter** journal, Mr. Roger Thorne, reminds us of the place of humour in Methodism, instancing the Rev. J. Russell Pope and others who were adept in that art, and invites members to send in further examples. I can contribute one, for when I visited that branch to speak on “The Pastoral Crook” Mr. Pope introduced me with the words, “I have met a good many crooks in my time and am looking forward to hearing about a pastoral one”.

LOCAL BRANCHES

BRISTOL — 87 members.

Bulletin : Nos. 45, 46, 47 received.

Secretary : Rev. Hubert A. Pitts, B.D., 25, Wynyards Close,
Tewkesbury, Glos., GL20 5QZ.

CORNWALL — 266 members.

Journal : Vol. VII, Nos. 2 and 3 received.

Secretary : Mr. W. E. Walley, Park View, Ponsanooth, Truro, Cornwall
TR3 7JA.

CUMBRIA — 125 members.

Journal : No. 19 received.

Secretary : Mrs Jean Coulthard, 32, Croft Road, Carlisle, CA3 9AG.

EAST ANGLIA — 38 members.

Bulletin received.

Secretary : Rev. Elizabeth J. Bellamy, B.A., 8, St. Andrew's Close, Holt, Norfolk, NR25 6EL.

EAST MIDLANDS — c.60 members.

Journal : Vol. II, Nos. 3 and 4 received.

Secretary : Rev. Sidney Y. Richardson, B.A., B.D., B.Sc., 22, Garton Road, Loughborough, Leics, LE11 3RQ.

ISLE OF MAN — c.25 members.

Newsletter : Nos. 4 and 5 received.

Secretary : Mrs. Thelma Wilson, Westend, 28, Dwghadfayle Road, Port Erin, Isle of Man.

LANCASHIRE AND CHESHIRE — 175 members.

Journal :

Secretary : Mr. E. Alan Rose, B.A., 26, Roe Cross Green, Mottram, Hyde, Cheshire, SK14 6LP.

LINCOLNSHIRE — 108 members.

Journal : Vol. III, No. 9 received.

Secretary : Mr. Harold Jubbs, 3a, Church Road, Upton, Gainsborough, Lincs., DN21 5NR.

LONDON AND HOME COUNTIES — 72 members.

Bulletin : Nos. 33 and 34 received.

Secretary : Mr. Nigel McMurray, 146, New North Road, Islington N1 7BH.

NORTH-EAST — 194 members.

Bulletin : Nos. 46 and 47 received.

Secretary : Mr. Bryan Taylor, 22, Nilverton Avenue, Sunderland, Tyne & Wear, SR2 7TS.

PLYMOUTH AND EXETER — 100 members.

Proceedings : No. 17 received.

Secretary : Mr. R. F. S. Thorne, J.P., 31, St. Mary's Park, Ottery St. Mary, Devon, EX11 1JA.

SCOTLAND

Journal : No. 17 received.

Secretary : Miss A. Peacock, B.A.,

Correspondent : Mr. S. Davis, 81, Abbey Road, Scone, Perth, PH2 6LL.

SHROPSHIRE — 45 members.

Journal :

Secretary : Mr. Barrie S. Trinder, M.A., 20, Garmston Road, Shrewsbury, SY2 6HE.

WEST MIDLANDS — 71 members.

Bulletin : Vol. IV, No. 8 received.

Secretary : Mrs. E. D. Graham, B.A., B.D., 34, Spiceland Road, Northfield, Birmingham, B31 1NJ.

YORKSHIRE — c.250 members.

Bulletin : No. 49 received.

Secretary : Mr. D. Colin Dews, B.Ed., M.Phil., 4, Lynwood Grove,
Leeds, LS12 4AU.

IRELAND — 174 members.

Bulletin : Vol. I, Nos. 1 and 2 received.

Secretary : Mr. John H. Weir, 5, Aberdelghy Gardens, Lambeg,
Lisburn, Co. Antrim, BT27 4QQ.

THOMAS SHAW

LOCAL HISTORIES

"The Night Shall be Filled with Music" : some memories of Christmas singing in the Selby area, compiled by C. R. Moody (24pp) : copies, price £1.00 post free, from the compiler at Green Lodge, Brayton Lane, Brayton, Selby, North Yorks, YO8 9DZ.

Chapel Folk : Marsh Methodist Church, Oxenhope 1836-1986, by D. Colin Dews (24pp) : copies, price £2.00 post free, from Miss C. D. Feather, Kirk-Lynne, Hawksbridge Lane, Oxenhope, Keighley, West Yorkshire.

Hexham Trinity Methodist Church 1887-1987 : The Story So Far! (47pp) : copies from J. H. Bainbridge, Balmoral, Elvaston Park Road, Hexham, Northumberland, NE46 2HT (no price stated).

The Methodists of Penkhull Village, by H. Eva Beech : copies, price £3.00 post free, from Mr. Frank Adams, 20 Franklin Road, Penkhull, Stoke-on-Trent.

Lively Origins (1817-1910) : a history of the first 100 years of Bethel Methodist Church, South Normanton, Derbyshire, by Donald M. Grundy (44pp) : copies, price £1.25 post free, from Mr. Raymond Walker, 17 Mansfield Road, South Normanton, Derbyshire.

This from That : the story of 200 years of Methodism in Newton Aycliffe, Co. Durham, by John Wearmouth (80pp) : copies, price £1.50 post free, from the author at 54 Westmorland Way, Newton Aycliffe, County Durham.

Methodism in Chapel Allerton c.1750-1983, (31pp) : copies, price £1.00 plus postage, from Chapel Allerton Methodist Church, Town Lane, Leeds, LS7.

The Scarecrow Still Stands, Mr Wesley : Chapel Lane Methodist Church, Alnwick, 1786-1986, by T. J. Howells (56pp) : copies, price £2.50 post free, from Miss A. Duckershoff, 35 Cawledge View, Alnwick, Northumberland, NE66 1BH.

Methodism in Redhill 1852-1984, by Michael S. Edwards (32pp) : copies, price 70p post free, from Revd. M. S. Edwards, 118 Carlton Road, Reigate, Surrey.

Methodism in Deal : a short history 1800-1900, by Gwen Sewell (5pp) : copies, price 25p plus postage, from Miss Sewell, 7 St. Andrews Road, Deal, Kent.

BOOK NOTICES

Conflict and Reconciliation : Studies in Methodism and Ecumenism in England 1740-1982 by John Munsey Turner. (Epworth, 1985, pp. 306, £25.00)

This book is the fruit of some thirty years of teaching and research. Its treatment of a period of two and a half centuries is selective and episodic, but the thread on which the author strings his pearls is what the Archbishop of York's Foreword rightly calls, "the story of a love-hate relationship between Methodism and the Church of England". Dr. Habgood adds, shrewdly enough, that it is a story which the author, "to some extent exemplifies in his own person".

After a brief, but useful survey of the "Eighteenth-Century Background", Mr. Turner deals with a subject on which he is an authority, "The Separation of Methodism from the Church of England—The Role of John Wesley". He puts Wesley squarely in the setting of his own age, and of a pluriform Anglican tradition of theology: "Too often Wesley has been torn out of his eighteenth-century context and set alongside Newman or Pusey rather than Hoadly, Butler, Secker, Warburton, Watson and Paley, whose ecclesiology was much closer to that of Wesley than it was to the Tractarians." (p. 14) Hence the author sees Wesley's ordinations as belonging in "a liberal Anglican" tradition, "stemming back to Richard Hooker" and very much alive in the eighteenth century. That is well said, but may not Wesley's views of episcopacy and church order also owe not a little to the tradition of seventeenth-century Puritanism, as embodied in men like Calamy and Baxter? Wesley's own writings and the researches of R. C. Monk would lead one to think so.

In "Methodism, Catholicism and Patterns of Dissent", we are given an illuminating comparison of Methodism and Roman Catholicism as two kindred "connexional" movements in eighteenth-century England. For all their differences, they shared, *inter alia*, Dissenting status, similar class background, "fasts and feasts" distinct from the Anglican ones, a passion for holiness, and a mission to the poor. The case is well made, and Dr. Eamon Duffy's *Challoner and His Church : A Catholic Bishop in Georgian England* (1981), though not cited here, provides ample material to underpin the Catholic side of the comparison.

In "The Theological Legacy of John Wesley", the author cogently criticizes Wesley's teaching on Christian Perfection, but wrongly claims that, "Wesley . . . in implying that holiness on earth is necessary to reach heaven . . . rules out further progress beyond death" (p. 52). On the contrary, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (1952 edn., p. 85) explicitly asks, "Can those who are perfect grow in grace?" and answers: "Undoubtedly they can; and that not only while they are in the body, but to all eternity."

Two "case studies" of Wesleyan Methodism 1791-1850 and Primitive Methodism 1807-1932 are useful surveys of complex subjects. The latter provides not merely a classic example of development from sect to denomination, but a warm appreciation of a movement which "brought into the union of Methodists in 1932 men and women who combined a simple, almost Quakerly style" with "a deep concern for social justice brought out of the struggles for workers' rights in mining and in the agricultural struggles" (p. 88).

In dealing with twentieth-century ecumenism, and in particular with the Anglican-Methodist Unity Scheme (1955-72), the author is less the judicious historian, more the engaged participant. His judgements are proportionately more open to question. Is it true that lay celebration is "widely canvassed" in

the contemporary Church of England? Is the gibe that "bishops are simply a 'stud farm' for properly accredited clergy", either true or charitable?

The 60 pages of notes to the text reveal the impressive range of the author's reading, but it would have been useful to have a bibliography as well. There are some minor flaws: Hurrell Froude appears four times as "Hurrell Fronde"; F. D. Maurice as "E. D. Maurice"; Sir Ernest Barker as "Baker" (and thus confused with Eric Baker in the Index). Yet these are the fine dust of the balance. They are far outweighed by the strengths of the book, which are many and distinguished. This study places Methodist history in a far richer context than does much denominational historiography. It is alive to political history, to social change, to ecumenical involvements. It is perceptive in indicating areas still ripe for research—for example, the sociology of early Methodism, or the complex inter-relations between Methodism and the Oxford Movement. Last but not least, it has a sensitive regard for spirituality, and argues the strength of Wesley's "Catholic evangelicalism", which Methodism loses at its peril.

JOHN A. NEWTON

Charles Wesley on Sanctification. A Biographical and Theological Study by John R. Tyson. (Francis Asbury Press/Marshall Pickering, 1986, pp. 351, £6.95)

Charles Wesley is still very much the neglected member of the Wesley partnership, treated by the innumerable biographers of his older brother as little more than a walk-on part. Those who feel that it is time he received more attention will welcome this book; but historians may be disappointed that, despite the sub-title, biography is heavily outweighed by theology.

Two welcome features are the use of unpublished as well as published hymns, and the recognition that Charles's thought developed over the years (a dimension that seems lacking in most studies of the hymns).

The strong point of the book lies in its painstaking analysis of the biblical and doctrinal background of the hymns. There is, for example, a detailed treatment of the significance of the phrase "Jesus' blood", one of the most characteristic phrases in Charles's vocabulary. At certain points, the author carefully examines the differences of emphasis and interpretation between the two brothers. On Christian perfection, for example, Charles was more cautious than John, veering away from a static concept of "sinless perfection" towards one of continuing growth in grace and holiness which finds its consummation *beyond* the grave.

Doctrinally, the ground covered is much wider than the term "sanctification" might suggest, since, as the author emphasises and demonstrates, for Charles Wesley "justification" and "sanctification" were inseparable aspects of a single process of salvation. The latter might therefore have been a more appropriate term to use in the title. Attention moves from the doctrine of justification and the sacrificial death of Christ, through holiness and sanctification to the goal of Christian perfection and "the life of God in the soul". The Wesleys' "vision of Christian wholeness" is seen as more Johannine than Pauline (p. 163).

We come close to the heart of Charles's understanding of the gospel when he speaks, in a splendid phrase, of "triumphing in the irresistible force of the

everlasting love". In the author's words (p. 108), "In his theology of redemption, the emphasis was upon the transforming love and joy that flow from a new relationship with God." (p. 108)

We still need a serious, full-length study of Wesley himself, including his relationship with his brother and other leaders of the Revival. But in the meantime, here is a rewarding, if not always exciting, study of his theology for anyone with the patience to grapple with doctrinal and linguistic niceties.

JOHN A. VICKERS

Love Excluding Sin by A. Skevington Wood. (The Wesley Fellowship, n.d., pp. 24, £1.00)

This pamphlet is Occasional Paper No. 1 of the Wesley Fellowship, an inter-denominational body which seeks to make relevant in this age the distinctive teaching and doctrines of the Historic Wesleyan expressions of Faith; Dr. Wood is its President. He has written a straightforward account of "Wesley's doctrine of Sanctification", as the sub-title indicates. The pamphlet first expounds Wesley's positive teaching on this subject which was of cardinal importance and then indicates Wesley's careful negative safeguards, as that Christian perfection is neither absolute nor angelic nor Adamic nor infallible nor unimprovable nor irreversible. On reading this list one might be tempted at first sight to think that the doctrine dies the death of a thousand qualifications, not that Dr. Wood uses that phrase, which belonged originally to another context. On the contrary, he emphasizes the permanent importance of the doctrine, and rightly so, for in my opinion, whatever we may think of Wesley's detailed exposition, it has led to that "optimism of grace" which is such an important part of the whole ethos of Methodism.

The treatment shows Dr. Wood's usual careful scholarship, as is illustrated by 131 end-notes, mostly references to Wesley. Its findings resemble those which may be found in such works as Lindström, but it is useful to have them clearly set out in a short compass.

Four paragraphs accidentally omitted from the booklet are supplied on an erratum sheet. Anyone who does not have that may get one from the author.

A. RAYMOND GEORGE

Church Planting—A study of Westmorland Nonconformity by Alan P. F. Sell. (H. E. Walter, 1986, pp. xvi, 172, £7.50)

As a stranger to Westmorland (I'm glad the name persists), I enjoyed reading this book. Names I never heard of (Applethwaite, Beckfoot, Grayrigg, Fellside, Whygill Head, etc.) endeared themselves to me; other names (Stainmore, Ravenstonedale, Troutbeck, etc.) evoked memories of other interests. But it is not upon pleasurable associations that one must judge a book, especially one that purports to be a "history", and it is as history that Sell's book, lovingly and intelligently written, reads well. He begins by drawing his perimeters. It is not a detailed history of local churches, nor does it deal with any one denomination.

It is, to quote Sell, "an attempt to trace the origins and expansion of nonconformity in one county . . . [it is] narrower in scope than the complete denominational history and wider than the latter in its attempt to consider each member of a family of denominations in roughly equal depths". It is here that Methodism upsets the applecart, for it transcends county boundaries. Circuits with chapels in Westmorland bestraddle Cumberland, Lancashire, Yorkshire (North and West Ridings—see map on p. xv) and perhaps County Durham—the despair of any researcher going the rounds of County Record Offices in search of source material. However, having sorted out the quirks of Methodist divisions and sub-divisions with commendable accuracy, Sell proceeds with his task.

There is not the space here even to outline the history of the various denominations in Westmorland, for that is what the book is all about and for which I commend it to our readers, but I was particularly thrilled with his account of the sufferings of the early Quakers, so often and easily forgotten. I was also glad to see notice of the Inghamites and other smaller bodies.

The line drawings are excellent, and would provide an instant guide to anyone wishing to identify the buildings thus illustrated.

Only one noticeable mis-print have I spotted—the name of the Wesleyan President in 1883-4 was Charles Garrett, not Charles Garnett (p. 69 and index). Incidentally, one wonders if the old Plans of the Brough and Penrith Circuits (p. 70) are known to the Cirplanologists.

JOHN C. BOWMER

The English Baptists of the Eighteenth Century by Raymond Brown. (Baptist Historical Society, 1986, pp. vii, 187, £4.95)

The present volume is the second in the series which, when completed, will form a definitive history of English Baptists from their origins to c.1914. In every respect Principal Brown's book is an admirable successor to Barrie White's seventeenth century study (reviewed in *Proceedings*, xlv, p. 38) and takes the Baptist story through from toleration in 1689 to the formation of the Baptist Union in 1812. Building on the work done in recent years by Drs. Champion, Payne, Toon and Nuttall, the author deals with his subject chronologically, but is not neglectful of any aspect of Baptist development in this period: personalities, theological change, mission (at home and overseas), the continuing Establishment threats to freedom of worship, the growth of Associations and the movement towards a national union, the sociological background to Baptist decline and revival, the Industrial Revolution and the Baptist response thereto, ministerial education and religious geography—all are treated here sensitively and with a wealth of illustrative detail and footnotes. The author's style is attractively plain and holds the reader's attention even when he is dealing with the most unexciting subject matter.

Inevitably the Methodist reader will be chiefly interested in the Arminian (i.e. General) tradition within Baptist church life, and it is here that a word of caution is perhaps necessary. Raymond Brown is very generous to the General Baptists, both in the tone of his writing and in the amount of space allotted to them. After all, a backward glance shows the Generals playing a major (perhaps *the* major) part in Baptist origins, and a forward look reveals their theological emphases winning over majority sentiment in the denomination in the nineteenth century.

But has not their role in the eighteenth century been exaggerated ever since W. T. Whitley's edition of their General Assembly Minutes in his monumental, two-volume work published in 1909 ? In 1700 they had a mere 120 congregations (less than half the Particular Baptist total) which had shrunk by 1800 to about a score of decayed and for the most part Unitarian congregations, plus sixty or so revived, orthodox New Connexion churches, a very small number and an even less significant fraction of total Baptist strength in the country at that time. Less space devoted to the General Baptists would have meant more being available for an evaluation of the work of the two Andrew Giffords who revitalised Particular Baptist witness in the west country in this period.

This consideration apart, Dr. Brown's book remains a very considerable achievement and whets our appetite for the nineteenth century volume which will be from the pen of John Briggs. A final comment on the price : £4.95 for an academic book of 194 pages, with nine excellently reproduced portraits, is for these days astonishingly cheap : congratulations to the Baptist Historical Society on their enterprise.

IAN SELLERS

Correction

In a note in vol. xlv, p. 182, the price of the reprint of the Index to the *Arminian Magazine*, later the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, was incorrectly given as £2.50. The price is, in fact, **£3.00**, plus postage, from Gage Postal Books, P.O. Box 105, Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex, SS0 8EQ.

THE ANNUAL LECTURE
of the
WESLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
 will be held on MONDAY 29th JUNE 1987 at
PURBROOK METHODIST CHURCH,
PORTSMOUTH
 at 7.30 p.m.

The Connexional Archivist of the Methodist Church,
 the REV. WILLIAM LEARY, B.A. will take as his
 subject — JOHN WESLEY : MAN OF ONE BOOK

The chairman for the occasion will be
 the Rev. Dr. John A. Newton, M.A.

The Lecture will be preceded by TEA for members at 5 p.m.
 and the ANNUAL MEETING at 6 p.m.