

A thesis submitted to the  
Faculty of Arts  
of the  
University of Birmingham  
for the degree of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

*E. Dorothy Graham*

**AUTHOR'S NOTE**

When reading this thesis it is as well to remember that it was written 25 years ago and that styles of presentation and type have changed over time. Further information has been gleaned resulting in some of the original observations and comments needing to be up-dated. In addition there are several important points to be noted.

1. The Wesley Historical Society Library is now located in The Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History, Oxford Westminster Institute of Education, Oxford Brookes University, Harcourt Hill, Oxford OX2 9AT.  
[ [www.wesleyhistoricalsociety.org.uk](http://www.wesleyhistoricalsociety.org.uk) ]
2. More information relating to some of the female travelling preachers has come to light, so the original Biographical and Additional Biographical Appendix is no longer included within the thesis. Readers are advised to follow the web-link to *Chosen by God: A list of the Female Travelling Preachers of Early Primitive Methodism* (Graham, E. Dorothy, 2010, Wesley Historical Society, Evesham) which is given after the Appendices.

E. Dorothy Graham  
April 2013

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A thesis submitted to the  
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University of Birmingham  
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**SYNOPSIS**

Present day Methodists are often surprised to learn that ‘women in the Ministry’ is not a twentieth century phenomenon; that the Bible Christians and Primitive Methodists had the flexibility and foresight to make valuable use of female preaching talents.

This research has concentrated on the women travelling preachers of Primitive Methodism, starting from the premise that there were doubtless far more than was immediately apparent; searching them out; looking at their life and work; their value and influence within the context of the movement itself and in relation to the strata of society to which it chiefly appealed.

I have sought to weigh the contemporary arguments about the merits and demerits of female preaching; to look at the gradual decline and ultimate demise of the female itinerant; to see if an explanation for their disappearance could be found in the prevailing social conditions or if the answer lay within Primitive Methodism itself.

As Primitive Methodism moved from enthusiastic evangelism towards consolidation so its emphasis shifted and its attitudes developed and changed. The female travelling preachers played a vital, though often little acknowledged, role in the Connexional evolution and it is this role which I have tried to explore and evaluate.

(200 words)

(Total number of words approximately 100,000)

## **PREFACE**

It should be pointed out that as far as possible I have purposely tried not to rely on H.B. Kendall: *The Origin and History of the Primitive Methodist Church* 2 volumes (n.d. ? 1904) which has been the basis of much of the research into Primitive Methodism, but to seek out other material from extant records and also from the *Primitive Methodist Magazine* in particular in order to confirm or supplement Kendall's work.

It would be impossible to mention all the people who, over the years, have shown interest and given me encouragement in this project. Staff in Record Offices and Libraries who have tried to trace the almost untraceable, especially those in the John Rylands Library, Manchester and members of the Wesley Historical Society who have answered my queries with patience and good humour. I am grateful to Norfolk Record Office for permission to include copies of local records. Special thanks must be expressed to the Rev. William Leary, the Connexional Archivist of the Methodist Church, who has dealt graciously and helpfully with much questioning and whose work 'The Ministers of Primitive Methodism' has been of inestimable value.

This work would never have been finished, indeed would probably have been given up long ago, but for the invaluable advice and encouragement of Dr. D. Hugh McLeod, who has endured with great forbearance time-consuming discussions which prodded me into continuing. How he put up with me I will never know, but his trouble has been sincerely appreciated.

To all my family and friends many thanks are due for 'living' with 'my women' for so long, and especially to Linda for her librarianship expertise and advice and to Ian for reproducing Kendall's photographs so competently.

Last, but by no means least I would like to thank Mrs. Sue Bowen who managed to cope admirably with my handwriting and inexpert typing.

## ABBREVIATIONS

BC	Bible Christians
<b>HMGB</b>	<i>A History of Methodism in Great Britain</i> , ed. Davies, R. George, A.R., Rupp, G. 3 volumes (1965, 1978, 1983)
<b>JWL</b>	John Wesley, <i>Letters</i> (Standard edition, 8 volumes, ed. Telford, J. 1931)
<b>JWJ</b>	John Wesley, <i>Journal</i> (Standard edition, 8 volumes, ed. Curnock, N. 1909-1916)
MARC	Methodist Archives and Research Centre, John Rylands Library, Manchester
MNC	Methodist New Connexion
PM	Primitive Methodist
<b>PMM</b>	<i>Primitive Methodist Magazine</i>
<b>PM Mins</b>	<i>Minutes of the Primitive Methodist Conference</i>
<b>PMQR</b>	<i>Primitive Methodist Quarterly Review</i> formerly <i>Christian Ambassador</i>
RO	Record Office
UM	United Methodist
WHS	Wesley Historical Society
<b>WHS Proc.</b>	<i>Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society</i>
WM	Wesleyan Methodism
WMHS	World Methodist Historical Society

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## **FRONTISPIECE**

Preachers are distinguished by the name of Travelling or Local. The one labours more at large: the other is in a more limited way.

The business of the preachers is -

1. To be the servant of all for Jesus' sake. To preach the word. To be instant in season, out of season; to reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. To endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. To teach publicly and from house to house etc. 'Giving no offence in anything that the ministry be not blamed etc.' - 2 Cor. vi 3-10.

2. To attend to the visitation of the classes, and renewing of the tickets.- To publish and hold love-feasts, and attend to all the ordinances.- To assist the Stewards and Leaders in their offices.- To attend to every part of discipline and management 'Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily the care of all the churches.'- 2 Cor. xi 28.

3. To turn as many to righteousness as they can; and therefore after fulfilling their appointments on the plan, to be at liberty to preach to any people whatever. 'Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass.' - Isa. xxxii 20.

4. All members, at all times, to be at liberty to hear what preachers they think proper, and where they think proper; excepting only that no one acting as a public character, shall on any account, be at liberty to disappoint a congregation.

Hugh Bourne: *The History of the Primitive Methodists*  
(*Primitive Methodist Magazine* 1821 and 1822;  
then as a booklet 1823)



## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### THE SACRED FIRE

The sacred fire doth burn within  
The breasts of either sex the same;  
The holy soul that's freed from sin,  
Desires that all may catch the flame.

This only is the moving cause,  
Induc'd us women to proclaim,  
'The Lamb of God.' For whose applause,  
We bear contempt-and suffer pain.

If we had fear'd the frowns of men,  
Or thought their observations just,  
Long since we had believ'd it vain,  
And hid out talent in the dust.

Knowing our labours have been blessed,  
(However plain our words have been)  
We are determin'd not to rest;  
But strive to save poor souls from sin<sup>(1)</sup>.

It is perhaps stating the obvious to say that women have always played a significant role in religion. So we find that the Graeco-Roman world had its sacred women, probably the most famous being the vestal virgins at Rome, while in the Greek and Egyptian cults priestesses were evident too. However, within Judaism things were very different. It has generally been maintained that the Jewish and indeed Middle Eastern attitude was that women were subservient to men; that they were chiefly the means by which the male ensured the continuity of his name and family - so much so that it was considered a shame and a sign of God's displeasure for a couple to be childless. <sup>(2)</sup> Hence, for example, the slaves of Leah and Rachel were given to Jacob in order to produce sons <sup>(3)</sup>. So, here and elsewhere one gets the impression of women being regarded almost like property - they rank second after property in the tenth commandment after 'house' and David was to be punished by having his wives taken away.<sup>(4)</sup> In worship they were not allowed beyond the Women's Court of the Temple and were not required to obey the Law strictly, while in the courts of law their evidence was inadmissible. It is likely that the monotheistic nature of Judaism laid stress on the importance of men and so although women were allowed to be prophetesses they were not permitted entry to the priesthood.

John H. Otwell sought to redress the balance in his book *And Sarah Laughed* by showing how women were held in high regard in ancient Israel and how they played a significant role in the

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<sup>1</sup> *The Female Preachers' Plea* (written originally by the wife of W. O'Bryan); *Primitive Methodist Magazine* (hereinafter cited as *PMM*) (1821) pp. 190-192 cf. *Mattishall Circuit Plan* (1837).

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 16:2; I Samuel 1.1-11.

<sup>3</sup> Genesis 29:31-30:24.

<sup>4</sup> Exodus 20:17; II Samuel 12:11; Ruth 4:5,10.

Old Testament history. From his study of over seven hundred Scriptural passages he concludes that the status of women was high and that when circumstances demanded and women of ability were available they were active in a variety of capacities regardless of their sex.<sup>(5)</sup> Certainly there were some women who carved out for themselves a place in Old Testament history, women such as Sarah, Ruth and perhaps more particularly Deborah.<sup>(6)</sup> There seems to have been a special affinity between the thought of Deborah and her story and the Primitive Methodists because in biographical accounts, memoirs and obituaries one frequently comes across the phrase 'she was a mother in Israel' to describe an ordinary devoted caring Church member. Deborah was called 'a mother in Israel' which presumably indicates that she was a mother to her people. The Old Testament writers had a high conception of the place of a mother, in spite of the apparent relegation of women to a subordinate position. The fifth commandment says 'Honour your father and your mother'<sup>(7)</sup> and we are told that when a son inherited on his father's death it was his mother not his wife who became the head of his household and in the Book of Ruth it was Naomi who was regarded as the head of the family when all the men died. So to be designated 'a mother in Israel' was indeed a compliment and undoubtedly felt by the Primitive Methodists to be a fitting tribute to the many women who were the backbone of the Connexion. Hugh Bourne made good use of the phrase, both in his Diary and in his pamphlet on the *Ministry of Women*,<sup>(8)</sup> It has been suggested that because women were thus regarded as 'mothers' that may help to explain why the male members of Primitive Methodism were willing to allow them a larger public field than other women enjoyed in the English society of that time.<sup>(9)</sup> Whether this is so or not it is impossible to gauge, but it is nevertheless a beautiful and evocative phrase which most women would have been proud to have received as an accolade on their efforts for their God and their Church.

It is an indisputable fact that Jesus accepted women during his earthly ministry. They were the recipients of his healings and his teaching just as much as were the men.<sup>(10)</sup> It is perhaps even more significant that a small group of women were among those disciples who followed Jesus closely. <sup>(11)</sup> The very fact that many women are mentioned by name, in Luke's Gospel especially, surely indicated that, not only were they readily accepted by Jesus himself, but also that their reputation and service was remembered and highly regarded in the early church. Then it is also significant that women played an important part in the Resurrection stories - they prepared his body for burial; they were the first to discover the empty tomb; they met the Risen Lord and the angels and took the news to the disciples.<sup>(12)</sup> Yet, in spite of all this there were no women numbered among the Apostles. They had fulfilled all the requirements for an apostle (Acts of the Apostles 1:21-22). It seems then that Jesus did not specifically appoint women to be disciples or apostles even though his attitude otherwise towards them was very enlightened. This point has been used by many opponents of women's preaching, but it seems to me that in the climate of the day Jesus, and later the early church, were merely being circumspect The

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<sup>5</sup> cf. Otwell, John H., *And Sarah Laughed: The Status of Women in the Old Testament* (Philadelphia 1977)

<sup>6</sup> Judges 5 especially v.7.

<sup>7</sup> Exodus 20:12.

<sup>8</sup> Reproduced in Walford: *Memoirs of the Life and Labours of the late venerable Hugh Bourne* (ed W. Ancliff, 2 vols. 1855) vol. I pp. 172-177.

<sup>9</sup> Werner J.S. 'Getting into Liberty: The background and early history of the Primitive Methodist Connexion (PhD thesis, Wisconsin 1982) p. 388 -published under same title (1984).

<sup>10</sup> cf. Mark 5:21ff; 7:24ff; John 4:1ff; Luke 10:38ff; 7:36ff; Mark 14:3ff) 4.

<sup>11</sup> cf. Luke 8:1-3; 15:40ff; 23:49,55)

<sup>12</sup> cf. Mark 15:47; Matthew 27:61; Luke 23:55; Mark 16:3; Matthew 28:1ff. Luke 24:2; John 20:1; Mark 16:5; Matthew 28:9; Luke 24:4; Mark 16:7; Matthew 28:8; Luke 24:8; John 20:18.

development and spread of Christianity could not be endangered by any hint of controversy or by the chance of arousing unnecessary antagonism. So, unless the matter was fundamental to Christian doctrine or a deliberate sin it was deemed wiser to bow to the prevailing custom “‘All things are lawful,” but not all are helpful. “All things are lawful,” but not all things build up.’<sup>(13)</sup> Such a thesis would also help to shed light on the Pauline passages which are usually cited in this matter and which we shall find used by both the opponents and champions of women’s preaching to suit their own particular stance.<sup>(14)</sup> It was quite evident that women played a large part in the early church; that the ministry of the home was regarded as very important; that they exercised spiritual gifts<sup>(15)</sup> and in particular the gift of prophecy.<sup>(16)</sup> This point never seems to have been contested and in fact the early church appears to have interpreted Paul’s words as allowing women to prophesy and there is evidence that women did indeed exercise their prophetic gifts publicly in the second century. Harnack says that:

‘At Hierapolis and in Phrygia the prophetic daughters of Philip enjoyed esteem; Papias among others listened to their instructions.’<sup>(17)</sup>

Tertullian wrote:

‘It is not permitted for a woman to speak in the Church, nor yet to teach, nor to anoint, nor to make the offering, not to claim for herself any office performed by men or any ‘priestly ministry’.’<sup>(18)</sup>

The Council of Nicea in 325 appeared to rule against any likelihood of women becoming priests, but again it is necessary to remember that Christianity had just become the official religion of the Empire and that it was important not to cause any undue antagonism. The Paris Synod of 829 insisted that it was “an intolerable abuse” for women to serve at the altar or administer the sacrament. Does the very fact that this is laid down imply that in some instances women had been officiating in priestly functions? An interesting thought! The fourth century Apostolic Constitutions forbade women to teach in public (III 6. 1-2) and continued:

‘If in the foregoing constitution we have not permitted them to teach, how will anyone allow them, contrary to nature, to perform the office of priest? For this is one of the ignorant practices of the Gentile atheists, to ordain women priests to female deities, not one of the works of Christ’.(III 9:4) <sup>(19)</sup>

When we turn to look at the role of women in the English Church we find that although during the seventh century the English Church developed chiefly through the work of monks and although there were probably no foundations exclusively for women at that time there were double monasteries which catered for both sexes. These English foundations became renowned for their devoutness and their scholarship. Most of the double monasteries were presided over by an abbess such as Hilda at Whitby, Queen Ethelthryth at Ely, Mildburg at Much Wenlock

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<sup>13</sup> I Corinthians 10:23 cf. I Corinthians 6:12.

<sup>14</sup> See Chapter 3.

<sup>15</sup> Luke 2:36ff; Acts 9:36ff; 16:14ff; 18:26; 21:9; Romans 16:1; Philippians 4:2f; II John.

<sup>16</sup> Acts 21:9.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Bacon F.D., *Women in the Church* (1946) p. 109.

<sup>18</sup> On the veiling of virgins 9.1 quoted in *Man, Woman and Priesthood* ed. Peter Moore (1978) p. 75.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Bacon, op. cit., p. 12.

and Mildthryth at Minster-in-Thanel. Unfortunately the Danish invasions in the ninth century put an end to these double monasteries and the influence of women in the development of English monasticism declined considerably. There was one order in the twelfth century which had double houses. This order, the Gilbertines, was the only one to originate in Britain and its houses were mainly in Lincolnshire and the surrounding counties where they ministered to the local rural communities and provided hospitals for lepers and homes for orphans. Evidence shows that they appealed to the lower social classes. Here perhaps we can see some similarities to the later Primitive Methodism which also accepted women, worked chiefly in the rural environments and was attractive to the poorer classes of the society of its time.

The struggle of the Poor Clares or the Minoreesses, founded in the thirteenth century, to carry out their religious resolves in face of the Church bureaucracy showed just as much strength of will as the women of Primitive Methodism needed to pursue their chosen course, not so much within their own denomination, but in face of general social and religious hostility. The Poor Clares had five thriving houses in Britain before the Dissolution of the Monasteries, so obviously they maintained their cause against all the odds.

From just these few examples it can be seen that women had their place in the religious life of England and its Church, but it is not till the seventeenth century that we get any real hint of women preaching publicly, though it is possible that a number of the Lollard women engaged in some such activity<sup>(20)</sup> as did the radical preachers of the Civil War period.<sup>(21)</sup> All this doubtless evolved because of the freer atmosphere engendered by the Reformation which in particular encouraged all people to take a more active part in the Church's ministry. As we saw earlier prophesying had always been permitted to women to a greater or lesser degree and in this more relaxed environment it was but a short step for females engage in public preaching. In the early 1620s it seems that a woman dared to preach in the diocese of Bath and Wells because penances were required from those who attended 'a conventicle where a woman preached'<sup>(22)</sup> Other women preachers were found in different parts of the country where they often held large congregations by their words in spite of flying in the face of all the conventions appertaining at the time,<sup>(23)</sup> but it is necessary now to turn to the period immediately preceding the subject of this research and look at the Society of Friends and their attitude towards women and their preaching.

The Friends or Quakers, because they maintained both sexes equally received Inner Light, insisted that anyone who felt so called should be allowed to preach. So it was that many women within the Quaker movement were able to exercise their gifts, for example, Elizabeth Hooton, Jane Holme, Mary Peisley, Sarah Grubb and Mary Fisher. The first named was the earliest woman preacher of Quakerism and it is likely that she had previously been allowed to exercise her talents among the Baptists. George Fox wrote:

‘...if Christ be in the Female as well as in the Male, is he not the same?  
And may not the Spirit of Christ speak in the Female as well as the  
Male? Is he then to be limited? Who is it that dare limit the Holy One of  
Israel? For the Light is the same in the Male and in the Female, which

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<sup>20</sup> Keith, Thomas, 'Women and The Civil War Sects', *Past and Present* 13 (April 1958): 46, 58.  
<sup>21</sup> Williams, Ethyn Morgan, 'Women Preachers in the Civil War,' *Journal of Modern History*, 1 (1929): 561-69; Thomas, Keith op. cit. 13:42-62.  
<sup>22</sup> cf. *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*, 1,3 (1902): 192-194.  
<sup>23</sup> O'Malley, I.B., *Women in Subjection* (1933) p. 124; for a fuller discussion of this topic see Chilcote, Paul Wesley, 'John Wesley and the Women Preachers of Early Methodism', (1984) Ph.D. thesis - Duke University. pp. 9-24.

cometh from Christ.’<sup>(24)</sup>

and his future wife, Margaret Fell, wrote a spirited apology for female preaching in which she tackles all the usual Scriptural texts and argues for the right of women to take part in all aspects of religious life, including that of preaching under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.<sup>(25)</sup>

In the Society of Friends then there was no restriction on women preaching and right from the earliest times they undertook arduous preaching tours both in this country and abroad. In Fox’s message women found the chance to express their new found freedom and many flocked to him. There was no restriction on anyone who felt the call of the Holy Spirit as Fox did not consider that lack of education was a barrier to preaching. So in Quakerism women were able to find release from a male-dominated society and religion and they were allowed to enjoy equal status with men in preaching the Word of God. For many years female preaching was, on the whole, limited to the Quakers, while the other denominations ignored it as being against scripture and accepted the Pauline injunctions about women keeping silence in the church. <sup>(26)</sup>

Others have dealt with Wesley and the female preachers and with the agonising of Wesleyan Methodism on this subject<sup>(27)</sup> so suffice it here to note that the matter of the ‘call’ to women in that branch of Methodism raised the question whether it was a ‘Quaker’ call or otherwise. By a ‘Quaker call’ I understand it to be meant that women equally with men were permitted to preach ‘by immediate inspiration from heaven.’<sup>(28)</sup> This type of call would appear to imply an occasional and immediate ministry rather than a sustained preaching ministry and certainly this idea would seem to fit in best with John Wesley’s problem when he had to deal with women in his societies who felt the ‘call’ to preach. Often this call came to the women with a powerful intensity, so that they felt unable to deny it. In some cases they were called upon to step into the breach when the appointed preacher failed to arrive and felt that they could not refuse. The women of Wesleyan Methodism were well aware that any public utterance by them was liable to give offence and many took great care to avoid trouble by only engaging in what was virtually preaching, but without it actually being so designated. Thus they exhorted; they prayed publicly; they spoke in band and class meetings; they gave testimonies; they engaged in what the Primitive Methodists later were to call ‘conversation preaching’; and they expounded texts. As we shall see in due course Wesley was forced to bow to the inevitable and allow women to preach ‘in extraordinary cases’. His yardstick for judging their call was their usefulness and whether God owned their ministry.

As the Quakers permitted women to preach the early Methodist were sometimes called Quakers, but Wesley rejected this and pointed out to Thomas Whitehead<sup>(29)</sup> the difference between Quakerism and Methodism and using the Scriptural texts he rejected also the preaching of women to ‘great congregations’, but was happy for them to speak in class and Band meetings. In early Primitive Methodism Hugh Bourne and others were attracted to and influenced by the Society of Friends. Hugh Bourne first came across their teaching when some Quaker writings fell into his hands and affected his thinking so much that for a while he was

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<sup>24</sup> Fox, George: *The Woman Learning in Silence* (1656) p. 81.

<sup>25</sup> Fell, Margaret: *Women Speaking Justified*....(1666).

<sup>26</sup> I Corinthians 14:34; I Timothy 2:12.

<sup>27</sup> Chilcote, P.W., op. cit. Brown, Earl Kent *Women of Mr. Wesley’s Methodism* (New York 1983); Valenze, D.M. ‘Prophetic Sons and daughters: popular religion and social change in England 1790-1850 (Brandeis University PhD 1982) pp. 62-73.

<sup>28</sup> Taft, Zachariah, *Biographical Sketches of Holy Women* vol. I (1825), Preface p. Iv.

<sup>29</sup> Wesley, John, *Letters* vol. II pp. 119-120 (10th Feb. 1748). Hereinafter cited as *JWL* Standard ed. 8 vols. ed. Telford used unless otherwise noted.

undecided whether to become a Methodist or a Quaker. No doubt these musings influenced Hugh Bourne's attitude towards many things which resulted in the 'foundation' of Primitive Methodism, for example, fervent evangelism, the importance of the laity, and the use of women.

The use of women in the ministry of the church was one of the notable features of the first forty or fifty years of the Connexion's history. Of the various branches of Methodism the only other to make such a use of women in the itinerant ministry was the Bible Christian Movement.<sup>(30)</sup> However, at the present time, our brief is to explore the use made of female itinerants in the Primitive Methodist Connexion; and to offer some explanation for the rise and decline of this phenomenon, which was one of the things which set the Connexion apart from the main stream of Methodism. To do this it is necessary to consider the general arguments for the use of female preachers by looking at the writings of Wesley and his followers; Hugh Bourne himself; and Primitive Methodist historians right up to the Deed of Union in 1932.

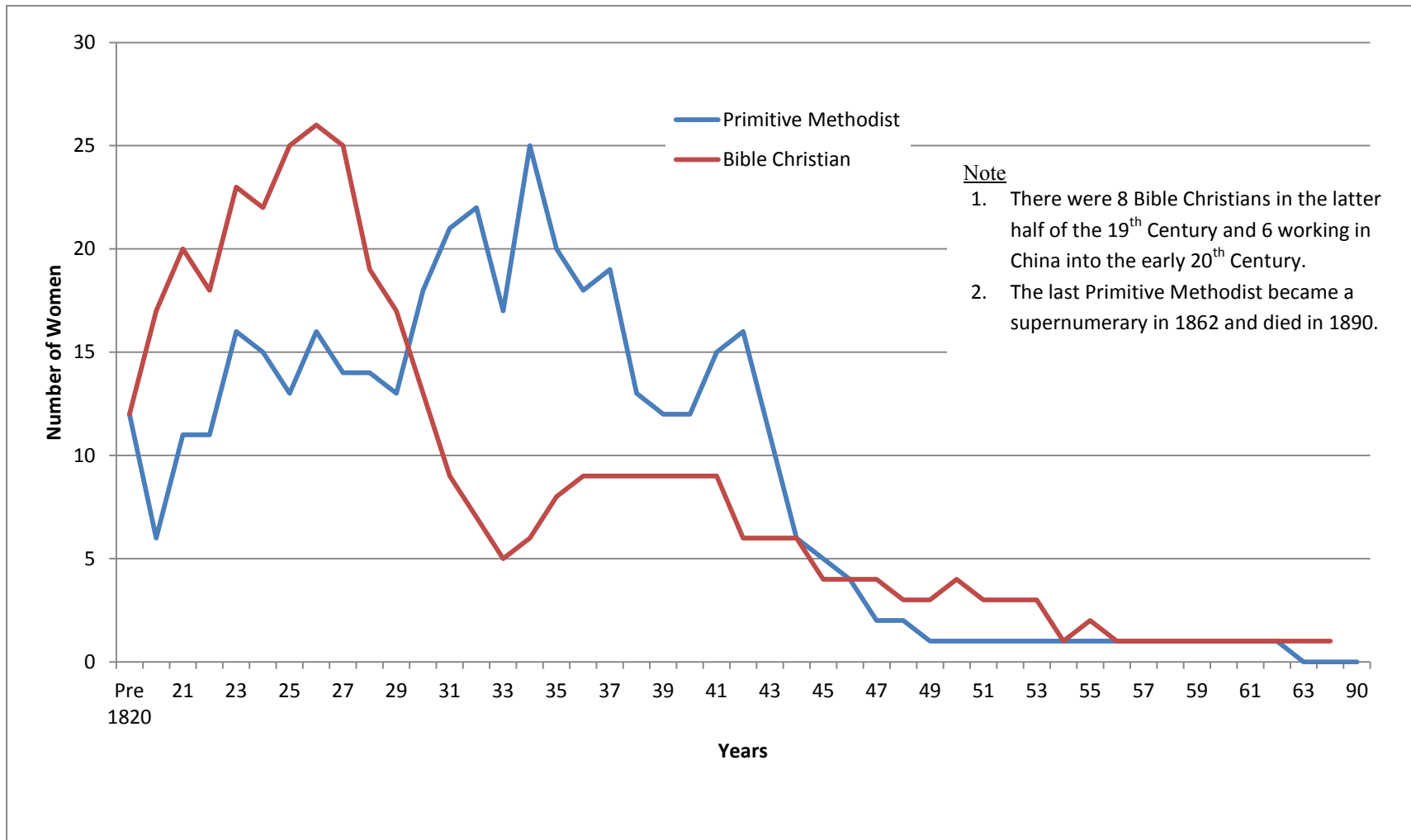
**Table 1: Comparison of Numbers of Primitive Methodist and Bible Christian Female Travelling Preachers**

PRIMITIVE METHODIST		BIBLE CHRISTIAN	
Year	Number	Year	Number
		1817	4
		1818	4
Pre Stations	12	1819	12
1820	6	1820	17
1821	11	1821	20
1822	11	1822	18
1823	16	1823	23
1824	15	1824	22
1825	13	1825	25
1826	16	1826	26
1827	14	1827	25
1828	14	1828	19
1829	13	1829	17
1830	18	1830	13
1831	21	1831	9
1832	22	1832	7
1833	17	1833	5
1834	26	1834	6
1835	20	1835	8
1836	18	1836	9
1837	19	1837	9
1838	13	1838	9
1839	12	1839	9
1840	12	1840	9
1841	15	1841	9
1842	16	1842	6
1843	11	1843	6
1844	6	1844	6
1845	5	1845	4
1846	4	1846	4
1847	3	1847	4
1848	2	1848	3

<sup>30</sup> See Table 1 and Graph 1 of comparison between Primitive Methodist and Bible Christian female travelling preachers.

<b>PRIMITIVE METHODIST</b>		<b>BIBLE CHRISTIAN</b>	
<b>Year</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Number</b>
1849	2	1849	3
1850	1	1850	4
1851	1	1851	3
1852	1	1852	3
1853	1	1853	3
1854	1	1854	1
1855	1	1855	2
1856-62	1	1856-74	1

Graph 1: Comparison of Yearly Totals of Primitive Methodist and Bible Christian Female Travelling Preachers





## CHAPTER TWO: THE ORIGINS OF PRIMITIVE METHODISM: WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO (THE INFLUENCE OF) WOMEN

“A woman’s preaching is like a dog walking on his hind back legs - it is not well done, but one is surprised that it is done at all.”<sup>(31)</sup>

The phenomenon which brought forth Dr. Johnson’s famous comment would have occasioned little surprise and certainly no adverse reaction in early Primitive Methodist circles. The founders of Primitive Methodism were quite happy to regard women as their co-workers in evangelism. This in itself was unusual in the early nineteenth century when in society at large women were not highly regarded outside the confines of the home. We might ask why this was so? Was there anything in the backgrounds of Hugh Bourne and William Clowes which made them so ready to accept the services of women?

Hugh Bourne’s parents were hard-working people of farming stock. Joseph Bourne ran a business as a wheelwright and dealer in timber as well as farming. He was a professed Churchman, but apparently had not been converted as the word was understood by the Primitive Methodists among others, and he profoundly distrusted all religious sects which deviated from the Church of England. Ellen Bourne, a strict member of the Church of England, brought up her family in the fear of God and they all received the rudiments of their education at her hands. Soon, after Hugh’s conversion in 1799 she herself became a Methodist. She was thrilled when both Hugh and his younger brother James became preachers of the Gospel. Just before her death she urged them in the following words:-

“Stand firm and unshaken by the infant cause: fan the holy flame, follow the openings of Divine providence, and when I am no more with you, the God of Abraham will be your guide. And thou, my beloved Hugh, son of my right hand, let not my affliction and death prevent thee from fulfilling thy appointments. Go, my son, preach the Gospel.”<sup>(32)</sup>

Ellen Bourne was instrumental in another way too of directing Hugh Bourne’s life. In 1795 Hugh Bourne had read in the *Arminian Magazine* a religious letter written by a female and dated Bristol, October 22nd 1771, which gave him cause for thought as he did not at this time equate the Arminians with the Methodists. Much about the same time his mother asked Mr. J. Mayer of Burslem, a Methodist, to lend her a religious book to read. He gave her ‘a book as thick as a Bible, containing biographies, treatises, sermons, and tracts bound up together. In it was the *Life of John Fletcher*, sermons by John Wesley, Jane Cooper’s Letters, the autobiographies of two Methodist preachers, Thomas Taylor and John Haime; also Alleine’s *Alarm* and Richard Baxter’s *Call to the Unconverted: a treatise on the Articles and Homilies of the Church of England*. Hugh read this book too and profited greatly especially from a sermon by John Wesley ‘On The Trinity’.

Another influence on Hugh Bourne during this formative religious period was his reading of books about and by Quakers, which greatly impressed him. It seems probable that from these contacts he received his later commitment to open-air preaching and praying which was to manifest itself so effectively in the early evangelistic days of Primitive Methodism. Together with this commitment in engaging in open-air preaching and in using ‘companies of praying

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<sup>31</sup> Boswell’s *Life of Samuel Johnson* (dated 31st July 1763) Everyman ed., i p. 287.

<sup>32</sup> Walford, J., *Memoirs of Life & Labours of the late Ven. Hugh Bourne* (1855-7) (2 vol.) Vol. I p. 7; Wilkinson, J.T., *Hugh Bourne 1772-1852* (1952) p. 15.

labourers', Hugh Bourne could not have failed to have been influenced by the way the Quakers used anyone regardless of sex in the service of God. The Quakers accepted without question the teaching of St. Paul:

‘there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.’<sup>(33)</sup>

Women in the Society of Friends were allowed equal rights with men to take part in services/meetings and in the work of the Kingdom.<sup>(34)</sup> So, although by 1799, Hugh Bourne had more-or-less drifted into being a Methodist he had wide sympathies and was ready to learn from any other religious community. Thus he must have noted the use of women by the Quakers, especially as he himself was quite drawn to that community and at one time the scale were pretty evenly balanced for him between joining the Society of Friends and Methodism.

In 1801 a regular prayer-meeting was established in Harriseahead in the home of Jane Hall who was the only Methodist in the village and it was here where Hugh Bourne first prayed publicly with great blessing. The meeting grew and its influence spread. So once again a woman had an important part to play. This venture at Harriseahead led to ‘a camp-meeting without a name’ being held at Mow Cop on 12th July 1801. In engaging in open-air preaching Hugh Bourne was following in the footsteps of John Wesley and also the Quakers. Yet another point of contact with the Quakers may be found in their principle of seeking to be led by the Spirit of God in all things. Later he was sure that the Spirit of God had led him to choose or accept his preachers, male or female, as co-workers with him in God’s service.

Hugh Bourne’s comment on public preaching is illuminating and although it is applied here in 1803 to his own case I think we can safely assume that it was the yardstick for the admission of preachers to the itinerancy in the early years of Primitive Methodism:

‘The chief qualification for exercising in public I find to be a clean heart; a clean heart stands in stead of much study, and all study is weak without it. The stream of grace descends into a clean heart, flows out again to all around, with force and vigour.’<sup>(35)</sup>

Years later Bourne was to recall a conversation with Nancy Foden of the Magic Methodists in which she said that his very reluctance to preach was a sign of a call to preach and he commented that this thought had been a new one to him and one which made a great impression on him. Many of Hugh Bourne’s female helpers felt that same natural reluctance, for example, Mary Porteous, Lucy Hubbard, and Matilda Archer, and no doubt his own experience helped him and others to encourage young preachers in their work.

The mention of the Magic Methodists and Nancy Foden must detain us for a little while. It was

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<sup>33</sup> Galatians 3: 28b.

<sup>34</sup> Isichei, Elizabeth: *Victorian Quakers* (Oxford 1970) pp. 107-8 ‘...equality of men and women in Quakerism was more apparent than real, but the powers open to women were very large compared with their restricted role in other - or secular - organisations in Victorian England. Their distinctive dress, freedom to preach and pray in public, eminence in philanthropy, reputation for domestic virtues meant Victorian Quakers made a great impression on their contemporaries. In fact the equality of women extended only to their freedom to hold certain offices, of which that of minister was the most important. The ministry gave great power to women of eloquence and strong personality.’

<sup>35</sup> . quoted in Wilkinson op. cit. p. 39.

in 1807 that Hugh Bourne met James Crawfoot, a local preacher in the Chester area, who had retired to the Delamare Forest about 1793 where he established regular prayer meetings at which some of the participants often fell into trances. They were generally known as the Magic Methodists or the Forest Methodists. Hugh Bourne and William Clowes were prevailed upon to visit Crawfoot's house in June 1807 and there they saw Nancy Foden fall into a trance and heard a Mrs. Prescott, a farmer's wife, exhort. So, although Hugh Bourne was not, at this stage, convinced about the work of the Magic Methodists the fact remains that he saw here the use of women in a spiritual context. The eccentric American evangelist, Lorenzo Dow, who visited England and Ireland three times, and who had as his Travelling companion on occasions, Dorothy Ripley, a Quaker preacher, gave impetus to the 'revivalists' to put into reality their long desired wish to hold a camp meeting and so the first was held on Mow Cop on 31st May 1807.

Hugh Bourne continued to have contact both with the Quakers and the Magic Methodists and to hold 'camp meetings'. The Norton Camp Meeting of 22nd and 23rd August 1807 proved to be a milestone in Hugh Bourne's life and, in particular for our purposes, the matter of a female preacher called Mrs. Mary Dunnell from Macclesfield. Mrs. Dunnell had intended to attend the Norton Camp Meeting, but on her way there had been diverted to Tunstall to take the service of the superintendent preacher. This would seem to have been an obvious ploy to prevent her from preaching at the camp meeting. Then just a few weeks later the same female Preacher was forbidden to enter the same pulpit under the pretext of adhering to the Wesleyan Conference ruling (1803) about women preachers. Of this incident Bourne wrote:

'Towards the close of this year, 1807, being at the house of Mr. John Smith, at Tunstall, I found him and Mr. James Steele in trial of mind. The female preacher being again at Tunstall, was shut out of the chapel, under a plea of Conference. They said it was enough to make a secession and they had determined to fit up Mr. Smith's kitchen for a place of worship. I dreaded a secession. I spoke strongly to Mr. James Steele ..... they concluded the kitchen should be for preaching only and no society should ever be formed in it. I then fell in with them and I obtained a licence from the bishop's court, and it was settled for the preachings to be on Friday evenings.'<sup>(36)</sup>

We shall return to Mrs. Dunnell's later involvement with Hugh Bourne and Primitive Methodism. For the moment we wish to look at other influences which made Bourne ready to accept women as colleagues on equal terms with men. For example in his Journal for 3rd April 1808 he records that he had attended Mrs. Fletcher's class at Madeley:

'She spoke much of faith, and seemed to be a woman of great faith herself, but the class was not such as I had expected: we have classes whose religion is deeper, whose faith is stronger, and who are much more given up to God ... Mrs. Fletcher's language is not so well adapted to common People and they look upon her as a person quite out of the common way; they are rather dazzled with her than stirred up to

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<sup>36</sup> Bourne's MSS (Auto), A text, f. 227; Walford, op. cit.; Vol. I. p. 164-5; Kendall, H.B., *The Origins and History of the Primitive Methodist Church* (n.d.), (2 vols.) Vol. I. pp. 102-3; Wilkinson op. cit., pp. 56-7.

limitation.. (37)

It was in June 1808 that Bourne attended the Conference of the Independent Methodists<sup>(38)</sup> at Macclesfield ‘by appointment’. Apparently it was during this Conference that a discussion arose about the ministry of women in the societies and Bourne was asked and ‘agreed to write an answer to the propositions’. To this we shall return in due course.<sup>(39)</sup> A week later Bourne visited the home of one of the leaders of the Quaker Methodist movement, Peter Phillips, and showed him his tract on the ministry of women and agreed that after it had been revised it should be printed. Perhaps an interesting sidelight on the development of Bourne’s thinking about the work in the ministry can be seen at this time. It appears that he was instrumental in persuading Hannah Phillips among others both men and women, that she was called to the work of preaching:

‘I put the question to H(annah) Phillips, whether she was called to the ministry...I found that it was known to her, and I believe that for this, among other things, the Lord sent me to Warrington.’<sup>(40)</sup>

This incident was of great significance in the history of Quaker Methodism.

Burslem Circuit Quarterly Meeting expelled Hugh Bourne on Monday, June 27th, 1808, without giving him a hearing, which he considered ‘not up-right’. His brother, James, was ‘put out’ at the same time. Bourne continued his labours, but he had little intention of starting a new denomination and in fact offered all his converts to other societies. One of these converts was Anna Richardson of Warrington, of whom he wrote:

‘She was indeed to set out for heaven under my ministry. She was well-to-do in the world, and became a mother in Israel.’<sup>(41)</sup>

Mrs. Richardson soon became a preacher, and worked in the Quaker Methodist ministry for many years till her death in 1848.

Hugh Bourne was very conscientious in his pastoral work, writing his own tracts and issuing those of others at camp meetings and on his journeyings. In this respect he helped Hannah Goodwin with ‘spiritual directions’ and wrote a letter to one of his ‘spiritual daughters’, probably Betty Howell, in which we find the words:

‘I feel thankful to God for the great work he has wrought in you, and I am fully satisfied that our Lord Jesus Christ intends you to be extensively useful ..... The spirit of your Father that is in you will speak, and will open the Scriptures as needs be. .... Our conversation was made a great blessing to me; and this also was a further testimony

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<sup>37</sup> Bourne MSS (Jour), 3<sup>rd</sup> Ap. 1808; Wilkinson, op. cit., p. 58.

<sup>38</sup> In the early days of the nineteenth century there were a number of self-governed groups meeting under a variety of names who exchanged preachers. Eventually five of these groups came together in 1808 and took the name of Independent Methodists. For full details see Vickers, James: *The History of Independent Methodism* (Independent Methodist Book Room, 1820, Bolton.) pp 8-14.

<sup>39</sup> See Chapter 3.

<sup>40</sup> Bourne MSS (Jour), 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1808; Wilkinson, op. cit., p. 60 f.n.

<sup>41</sup> Bourne MSS (Auto), A Text, f.223; Wilkinson, op. cit. p. 63. see also Clowes, W., *Journal* (1844) pp 106-7.

that the Lord had called you to bring many to Christ.’<sup>(42)</sup>

The movement continued to move towards a separate denomination in spite of Hugh Bourne and a deeper- understanding grew between him and William Clowes, who had been converted on 20th January, 1805 and who was to be expelled from the Wesleyan Methodist society in 1810. This closer association between the two meant that their labours were increased and the new movement spread into Cheshire and also in the east towards Ramsor. On one of these visits Hugh Bourne met and was greatly impressed by Elizabeth Evans who preached at Wootton:

‘She began at about two o’clock; her voice was low and hoarse at first from having preached so much the week past, but she got well into the power. She appears to be very clear in Scriptural doctrine and very ready in Scripture, and speaks full in the Spirit, and from the little I saw of her she appears to be as fully devoted to God as any woman I ever met with.’<sup>(43)</sup>

Again, it is obvious that Hugh Bourne was quite happy to sit under the ministry of a woman preacher and acknowledge the benefit he received and so it naturally follows that he would be ready to accept their services as travelling preachers when they were offered to him.

Perhaps it might be correct to say that the first woman preacher engaged by the camp meeting community was presented to Hugh Bourne as something of a *fait accompli* for it was on his return from a missionary trip into Cheshire and Lancashire on 19th January 1810 that he found Mary Dunnell working with his brother, James, and William Allcock in the evangelistic work in North Staffordshire. Mrs. Mary Dunnell, as we noted earlier, had been prevented from speaking at the Norton Camp Meeting and then late in 1808 had found the pulpit in Tunstall, which she had previously occupied, closed to her. This so incensed a Mr. John Smith that he fitted up his kitchen for preaching meetings and Mrs. Dunnell was one of his regular preachers, when William Allcock brought her to the Bourne household at Bemersley. At first Hugh was not very happy about this development, but eventually he became convinced of her usefulness and this was an important decision. From then on, 1810, Mary Dunnell worked in Bemersley, Norton and Standley and preached at the Ramsor Camp Meeting on Sunday, 3rd June 1810 and in ‘Further Remarks on Ramsor Camp Meeting’ Walford states:

‘firstly, it was the first camp meeting ever attended by James Crawfoot and Mrs. Dannel and secondly, Mrs. Dannel’s talents were widely different from those of the old man. Volubility of speech and flowery eloquence were the qualifications which raised this female to her pinnacle of fame; and as long as she walked worthy of her vocation she carried an influence that wonderfully told on the public mind and often opened a door for that reception of that gospel which is the power of God unto salvation. Her success in opening fresh places must be acknowledged for when under the superintendency of Hugh Bourne, she scarcely ever failed in such an enterprise and thirdly, the influence of Mrs. Dannel’s preaching at the Ramsor Camp meeting led to an invitation being given to take up a distant station in Derbyshire which

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<sup>42</sup> Walford, op. cit., I pp 203-4; Wilkinson, op. cit., p. 68.

<sup>43</sup> Bourne MSS (Jour) 25th June 1809. See Kendall, op. cit., I, pp 142-3; Wilkinson, op. cit. p. 71. Elizabeth Evans, George Eliot’s aunt by marriage, was the inspiration for Dinah Morris of *Adam Bede*.

the Primitives as yet, had not missioned; ‘and’, says Hugh Bourne, ‘we made arrangements for Mrs. Dannel to go and T shortly followed. She had great success ... some ripe fruit was gathered.’<sup>(44)</sup>

During this period Hugh Bourne seems to have been very favourably impressed both by Mrs. Dunnell and her work. Together they started the new mission in Derbyshire centred round Darley Moor, Osmanton and Rodsley and then Hugh Bourne returned to Ramsor leaving Mary Dunnell to continue the work, which she did with considerable success. When Hugh Bourne revisited the area in November 1810 he found the societies she had established doing well in spite of considerable persecution. The Derbyshire mission of Mary Dunnell and Hugh Bourne was reinforced by the arrival of James Crawfoot, William Clowes, Mrs. James Bourne and her servant in February 1811, but they met with very severe opposition. Then Mrs. Dunnell and Mr. Allcock exchanged appointments for a while and she went to Ramsor till Hugh Bourne relieved her whereupon she returned to Derbyshire. In June 1811 Hugh Bourne again visited the Derbyshire mission and while he was there Mrs. Dunnell apparently became subject to visions. In the course of one of these visions she informed Hugh Bourne that William Clowes, and William Allcock had fallen away and he, very upset, left immediately to go to them. Walford implies that Mary Dunnell acted like this on purpose to get Bourne away so that she could have the Derbyshire mission to herself and he quoted several entries from Bourne’s Journal to substantiate his implication, especially the following:

‘Tuesday 6th August - There are some disagreeable things on foot, in M. Dannel’s society, in Derbyshire ..... Mary Dannel had accomplished (in his absence) her purpose viz. she had stolen, Absalom like, the hearts of the people raised in that mission, had made a secession and set up for herself, as the head of a new community, so that the prospects of the Primitive Methodist Connexion were gloom, indeed, in that quarter.’<sup>(45)</sup>

It appears that the Societies in Derbyshire were not aware of their separation from the Primitive Methodists and that they were regarded to all intents and purposes as “Mrs. Dannel’s people”<sup>(46)</sup> and therefore did not appreciate that it was impossible at that time for the Primitive Methodists to work among them. Hugh Bourne put the record straight and observes in his Journal that:

‘The people are likely to leave them both here at Rodsley and at Hollington’<sup>(47)</sup>

and he was much distressed by Mrs. Dunnell’s actions in that his confidence had been misplaced and indeed betrayed. By the end of 1811 Hugh Bourne had also become concerned about Mrs. Dunnell’s personal life and made considerable efforts to check the marriage registers at Macclesfield and Derby which related to her. Finally the storm broke and in his Journal Hugh Bourne records:

‘so now she appears to have three husbands living at once! This finished the war and the people begin to look to the Lord in earnest’.

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<sup>44</sup> Walford, op. cit., I. p. 275; Wilkinson, *ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>45</sup> Walford, op. cit., I. p. 333.

<sup>46</sup> Walford, *ibid.*, pp 325-6, fn.

<sup>47</sup> Walford, *ibid.*, p. 337

The societies were very annoyed with Hugh Bourne for exposing Mrs. Dunnell and for trying to extricate the community from her clutches, so he left the area for a while and prayed for a satisfactory outcome. The recovery was apparently slow, but by 5 March 1813 he was able to record about the Boyleston Class that:

‘when Mary Dunnell fell away they were down till only four were left, now they are above thirty’.<sup>(48)</sup>

Nothing more is heard of Mrs. Dunnell within Primitive Methodist circles after her exposure and rejection by Hugh Bourne and the Primitive Methodist Connexion historian Kendall sums her up in the following terms:

‘She wrought some good, but in the end the mischief and trouble she wrought out weighed the good and she was not numbered among the first Primitive Methodists’.<sup>(49)</sup>

As a result of Mary Dunnell’s activities the societies in Derbyshire needed as much help as possible and in order to give this Hugh Bourne set up a ‘tract society’ (William Clowes set up a similar one on the Cheshire border with great effect. After his expulsion in 1810 and the consequent withdrawal of a number of other members from the Wesleyans they had united with Bourne’s camp meeting community and the missionary work grew apace). One of the tract visitors was Mary Hawkesley, who is mentioned by Bourne as converting one of Sarah Kirkland’s brothers.<sup>(50)</sup> Mary Hawkesley was the wife of a soldier who was fighting in Spain and she had been reduced to earning a little money by lace-making as her parents had thrown her out because they could not stomach her new found faith. Obviously she was near the starvation line because Hugh Bourne says:

‘I promised to give her some assistance for a quarter of the year.’ (May, 1813)<sup>(51)</sup>

This was a shrewd move on Hugh’s part as he capitalised on her piety and made use of her gifts as a salaried evangelist, working first with the Hulland Tract Mission before becoming a Travelling preacher. She is doubtless the person to whom Bourne refers when he writes:

‘Two of the preachers raised up by these means (Kendall adds note - the visiting and praying companies) were women. And one of them a middle aged woman, laboured considerably as a travelling preacher. The other, a young woman, Sarah Kirkland ... laboured at large as a diligent, laborious travelling preacher, for a number of years with great credit and success. These were the first women preachers who laboured regularly in this connexion.’<sup>(52)</sup>

Perhaps a few words about the Tract Missions would not be inappropriate as it is certain that the visitors who engaged in this work benefited greatly themselves and several others, as well as Mary Hawkesley, became preachers. So, in a way, it could be said that the Tract Missions

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<sup>48</sup> Walford *ibid.*, p. 363.

<sup>49</sup> Kendall *op. cit.*, I p. 92.

<sup>50</sup> Walford, *op. cit.*, I. p. 393; Kendall, *op. cit.*, I. p. 177.

<sup>51</sup> Wilkinson, *op. cit.*, p. 95 fn. 33; Kendall, *op. cit.*, I. p. 178.

<sup>52</sup> Bourne, H. *History of the Primitive Methodists* (Bemersley 1823) p.45; Kendall, *op. cit.*, I. p. 178.

provided a training ground for preachers. The visitors were sent out in pairs and each couple visited a particular area on alternate Sundays, lending a tract to those who were interested and then returning the following fortnight to exchange it for another. Prayer and exhortation were given whenever possible. Each pair took their own provisions with them and were expressly forbidden to accept any hospitality from their hosts, so that the charge of imposing on people could not be levelled at them. It is obvious that this system was Biblically based on Christ's sending out of the disciples (Mark, 6 vv 7-12). Bourne remarks in his *History* that the:

‘labourers in the tract society grew in grace ..... hearts were enlarged, talents improved and faith increased. The improvement was so great that five began to preach and in a short time were admitted on the printed plan as regular local preachers..... one was John Harrison, who after some time became a travelling preacher and laboured successively in Tunstall, Loughborough, Nottingham and Hull circuits.’<sup>(53)</sup>

Now we come to the woman who is always regarded as the first female travelling preacher of the Primitive Methodist Connexion,<sup>(54)</sup> in spite of the fact that her name never appeared on the lists of stations as she had retired from the regular itinerancy in 1820, the year of the first Conference.<sup>(55)</sup> She then continued as a local preacher for a further sixty years. The story of Sarah Kirkland has been covered in detail by many Primitive Methodist historians from Herod, Barfoot, Kendall, Ritson down to present day researchers, <sup>(56)</sup> and as I shall refer to her again later<sup>(57)</sup> I do not intend here to repeat well-known material, but only to note any relevant details and comments. So suffice it to say that the novelty of a young girl, fired with extra-ordinary missionary zeal and enthusiasm, braving countless dangers to proclaim the saving gospel throughout Derbyshire, Staffordshire, Cheshire, Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire captured the imagination of the crowds who were drawn to hear the Primitive Methodist preachers. Her travels were extensive and her impact enormous, many were converted and among them people who later played an important part in the development of Primitive Methodism, for example George Herod.<sup>(58)</sup> Sarah Kirkland worked from 1814-1818 before her marriage, at the age of twenty-four, to fellow travelling preacher John Harrison on 17th August 1818 at Bingham. <sup>(59)</sup> Regarding the marriage John Harrison says:

‘We were joined together not only in the bonds of wedlock but in the

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<sup>53</sup> Bourne, H. *History*, p. 45. John Harrison later became Sarah Kirkland's husband.

<sup>54</sup> Kendall, op. cit. I pp 176-7; *PMM* (1881) pp. 99ff; Herod, *Biographical Sketches* (1855) pp. 305ff; Wilkinson, op. cit. p. 101; Wilkinson, *Life of William Clowes* (1961) p. 38; Walford, op. cit. I p. 413; Ritson, J. *Romance of Primitive Methodism* (1909) p.135.

<sup>55</sup> *PMM* (1881) p. 99.

<sup>56</sup> Herod, op. cit., pp. 305ff; Barfoot in *PMM* (1881) pp. 99ff; Kendall, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 92, 176-177, 194-195, 210, 226-234; Ritson, op. cit., pp. 134-138; Morris, G.M., ‘Primitive Methodism in Nottinghamshire 1815-1932 (PhD thesis Nottingham 1967) pp. 197-8; Valenze, D.M., op. cit. pp. 89-91; Weller, J.C., ‘The Revival of Religion in Nottingham 1780-1850 (BD thesis Nottingham 1957) pp. 103-7; Werner, J.S., op. cit. pp. 207-8, 216ff, 264.

<sup>57</sup> See Chapter 7.

<sup>58</sup> Herod, op. cit. p. 320; *PMM* (1881) pp. 227-8.

<sup>59</sup> The parish registers of Bingham contain the following entry: John Harrison (a preacher of the Primitive Methodists called Ranters) a batchelor, and Sarah Kirkland (a preacher also of the same persuasion) a spinster, both of Bingham, were married in church by banns 17th August 1818. (Nottinghamshire RO). cf. Herod, op. cit. p. 321 where the date is given as 11<sup>th</sup> August 1818.



bonds of love.’

Herod regarded the marriage as ideal and as a supreme example of Paul’s injunctions to husbands and wives. <sup>(60)</sup> After her marriage to John Harrison she continued for nearly two years to labour as a recognised itinerant preacher of the Primitive Methodist Connexion. Barfoot says that this is the only instance in which a female preacher has continued as an itinerant after marriage,<sup>(61)</sup> but he thinks that as both husband and wife were itinerants working in the same community this probably provides the reason. Soon after they were married John became seriously ill, Sarah’s activities were naturally curtailed during her husband’s illness, but by early 1819 they were able to take up their work again. After labouring in Nottingham-shire and Lincolnshire the Harrisons were appointed as missionaries to Hull where they covered an extensive area, sometimes working together, but often independently as John comments in his Journal:

‘We separated, that we might be more useful, and by so doing we succeeded in opening two places each night.’<sup>(62)</sup>

The work load sustained by the Harrisons during these months was indeed formidable,<sup>(63)</sup> but Sarah was now coming to the end of her itinerant ministry because in November 1819 her husband’s health finally failed and Herod writes ‘that she entered into his work’ which probably means that as well as fulfilling her own itinerant duties she undertook as many of John’s as possible. After resting for a while he returned to work too soon and became ill again, Sarah over-exerted her strength in consequence and as she was also expecting a baby they were both forced to retire though they remained in Hull till the first Conference of the Primitive Methodist Connexion which met there on Tuesday, May 2nd 1820, after which they went back to Mercaston. John died suddenly on Sunday, July 22nd 1821 at the age of 25.

Soon after Sarah became a widow the society in Hull asked her to return there, but she remained at Mercaston where she preached as a local preacher. In February 1825 she married William Bembridge, another Primitive Methodist local preacher. Together they continued their local ministry till his death in January 1880 and then Sarah herself died on 4th March of the same year.

Although Sarah Kirkland, the first female travelling preacher, along with Elizabeth Bultitude, the last one, are the two most frequently mentioned by the Primitive Methodist historians and other researchers they were by no means the only women who engaged in preaching in the Connexion as we shall see.

However, before we go on to consider the other women who worked as travelling preachers and who were regularly or officially stationed by the Conference or Annual Meeting mention should be made of the fact that countless other women acted as local preachers before, during and after the period in which the female itinerants were actively engaged in the ministry of the

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<sup>60</sup> Herod, op. cit., p. 321.

<sup>61</sup> In fact there were others: - Jane Holliday (nee Ayre) and her husband William worked in ‘contiguous’ circuits; Jane Ansdale continued after her marriage to William Suddard(s); Mary Porteous was married before she became an itinerant and was allowed to continue to travel by special dispensation; several widows itinerated and a number of travelling preachers’ wives were taken on in a ‘temporary capacity’, presumably as hired local preachers and paid a female itinerant’s stipend. See also Chapter 5 pages 179ff.

<sup>62</sup> *PMM* (1881) p. 292

<sup>63</sup> *PMM* (1881) pp 293; 357-8; Herod, op. cit., pp 368, 384 , 330, 331

Primitive Methodist Connexion. These women gave devoted service to their Church, facing much hardship to proclaim their faith. Primitive Methodism was always happy to accept their ministry, perhaps not only because they were regarded as equal before God, but it is possible that their very sex opened doors to them which would have been closed to the men. However, a detailed study of these women local preachers and their work is beyond our present brief.<sup>(64)</sup>

Evidence has been gathered to show that Methodism was strongest in areas where the Church of England had the weakest hold on the lives, hearts and souls of the people.<sup>(65)</sup> By its very nature the Church of England tended to be regarded as the pillar of the Establishment. The squire and the priest were the fixed points in a changing society. The enclosure of land raised the economic and social status of the parish priest to that of landed gentry and so he became even more divorced from his poorer parishioners. The Church, just because it was the Established Church, had to work within certain prescribed boundaries, i.e. its own parish limits, and therefore it lacked the freedom which Wesleyan Methodism and later sectarian Methodism exploited to the full. So Methodism was able to meet the needs of communities which had been left unfilled by the local parish church. The Established Church with its hierarchy, bureaucracy and great buildings was unable to reach down to the 'common people'. It was into this void that first Wesleyan Methodism came with all its evangelistic fervour for the saving of souls to find success. Perhaps, inevitably with the passage of time and especially after the death of Wesley, Wesleyan Methodism moved into a new phase and itself became more conformist and established so that in 1797 Joseph Entwisle said:

‘the present state of Methodism is very different from what it was fifty years ago.... the Methodists are become a numerous and respectable body....’<sup>(66)</sup>

and as E.P. Thompson and others have argued it became a denomination ‘for’ the poor and not ‘of’ and the message was ‘at’ the poor and not ‘by’ the poor.<sup>(67)</sup> Wesleyan Methodism’s rise in the social and economic scale was due in a large measure to the good it had exercised over its first adherents, urging, not only the necessity for hard and industrious work in the market place but also insisting on the same in chapel affairs. So the chapel became the centre of the community and here in the services and in the class meetings the people learned the ways of

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<sup>64</sup> see also Chapter 5 pages 189ff.

<sup>65</sup> see further Gilbert, A.D., *Religion and Society in Industrial England: Church, Chapel and Social change 1740-1914* (1976) pp. 20-22; Currie R, ‘A Micro-Theory of Methodist Growth’ in the *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* (hereinafter cited as *WHS Proc.*) Vol. xxxvi. Part 3, October 1967, pp. 67-70; Binfield, Clyde, *So Down to Prayers: Studies in English Non-conformity 1780-1920* (1977) p. 21; Sellers, Ian *Nineteenth Century Nonconformity* (1977) pp. 51-52; cf Derry, John, ed. *Cobbett’s England* (1968) pp. 110, 108.

<sup>66</sup> *Memoir of Rev. J. Entwisle* p. 184. See Warner, W.J., *Wesleyan Movement in the Industrial Revolution* (1930) pp. 136ff; Ward, W.R. *Religion and Society in England 1790-1850* (1972) pp. 99-103; Hempton, David, *Methodism and Politics and British Society 1750-1850* (1983) p. 110.

<sup>67</sup> Thompson, E.P., *The Making of the English Working Class* (1968) p. 397; see also Ward, W.R., ‘The religion of the people and the problem of control 1790-1830’ in *Popular Belief and Practice: papers read at the ninth summer and the tenth winter meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, ed. G.J. Cuming and Derek Baker (Cambridge 1972); Stigant, E.P., ‘Methodism and the working Class 1760-1821: A Study in Social and Political Conflict’ (MA thesis, Keele 1968) see especially pp. 38-39; Valenze, D.M., op. cit. see especially pp. 7-9; Sheard, M.R., ‘The Origins and Early Development of Primitive Methodism in Cheshire and South Lancashire 1800-1860’ (PhD thesis, Manchester 1980) pp. 488-509.

organisation, of self-help and self-improvement and of social responsibility. Converts were quickly turned from their former ways and re-educated through the chapel, Sunday School and class meeting, so that many, finding hidden qualities within themselves, were enabled to express their feelings as never before. John Walsh comments that:

‘To the convert the life of the chapel and class-meeting was a world of its own. In many ways it was a narrow world, but it vibrated with life and compassed or touched every human activity. It offered to the lonely and insecure a whole network of intimate social relationships and a communal fraternity and security....’<sup>(68)</sup>

If this was true of Wesleyan Methodism it was equally, or perhaps even more true of Primitive Methodism which now came along to fill the gap left by the changed Wesleyan movement, which although it was still in the early nineteenth century ‘an evangelising body (it) was awakening to another role which was associated with its growing church consciousness. It was beginning to realise that what the evangelist did was only a beginning’ as Dr. J.C. Bowmer expresses it. <sup>(69)</sup> So just as Wesleyan Methodism had flourished where the Church of England was weakest now Primitive Methodism made the greatest advances where Wesleyan Methodism had had minimal impact.

Right from its humble beginnings Primitive Methodism appealed to the working classes. This designation - working classes - is rather all-embracing, covering as it does practically all sociological categories from trades and craftsmen to unskilled workers. Surveys of the occupations of Methodists in the nineteenth century reveal that there were many craftsmen in Methodism and also that the term artisan encompasses a wide variety both in terms of occupation and monetary reward. By the nineteenth century Wesleyan Methodism had developed to the point where it seemed to have lost much of the contact it had had with the lower end of the working classes, particularly with the unskilled workers and even the Primitive Methodists (and the Bible Christians) who prided themselves on being particularly concerned with the poorest element of society:

‘to search out souls in the most abject abodes’<sup>(70)</sup>

on the whole failed to reach the very dregs of humanity and most of its leaders and members came from the semi-skilled grouping.<sup>(71)</sup> Certainly Primitive Methodism touched a lower social

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<sup>68</sup> Walsh, J., ‘Methodism at the end of the eighteenth century’, Chapter 9 in *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, (hereinafter cited as *HMGB*) Vol. 1. (1965) pp. 310-311. (3 vols. published, Vol. 4 in preparation).

<sup>69</sup> Bowmer, J.C., *Pastor and People: A Study of Church Ministry in Wesleyan Methodism from the death of John Wesley (1791) to the death of Jabez Bunting (1858)* (1975) p. 83. See also Turner, John Munsey, *Conflict and Reconciliation: Studies in Methodism and Ecumenism 1740-1982* (1985) pp. 83-84.

<sup>70</sup> *PMM* (1824) p. 25.

<sup>71</sup> For further discussion see: Everitt, A., *The Pattern of Rural Dissent in the Nineteenth Century*. Occasional Papers. Department of English Local Studies, 2nd Series, No 4. (Leicester University Press, 1972); Gilbert, A., op. cit. pp. 60-65; Field, Clive, ‘The Social Structure of English Methodism’, in *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (June 1977) especially pp. 207-209, 205, 216; Inglis K.S., *Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England* (1963) pp. 12-13; Currie, R., op. cit. pp. 70-73; Hempton, D. op. cit. p. 110; for detailed analysis of the occupations of Primitive Methodists in different areas of the country see Leese R., ‘The Impact of Methodism on Black Country Society, 1743-1860’. (PhD. thesis

group than the Wesleyans, but it is not altogether true that all sorts and conditions of men, even the lowest, responded to Primitive Methodism - that field was left for the later Salvation Army to harvest. However, the fact that Primitive Methodism had originated among working men, whereas even Wesleyan Methodism's founder had come from the ranks of the Established Church, gave it an entree into areas largely inaccessible to Anglicanism, Older Dissent or even Wesleyan Methodism. Hobsbawm regarded it as not simply a working class sect, but 'pre-eminently a village labour sect', and comments 'that is why perhaps we find them in greatest force in certain areas of miners and farm labourers.....' (72)

Nigel Scotland, Robert Moore and Robert Colls have each dealt with the effect of Methodism in different parts of the country and in different communities (73) and although there are naturally some differences between the study of agrarian communities in East Anglia and mining ones in the North East, yet I feel a common theme runs through them which it is relevant to consider here and that is that in each of the cases the researchers are dealing with 'village' type communities albeit in very different localities. Taking this idea of 'village' a little further I think it is true to say that when industrialisation and economic pressures forced many to move into urban situations in a number of cases it seemed merely to be a transference of the village to the town. The village mentality went with the family and so just as there had been a tight-knit village community in a rural setting now came into being tight-knit 'village' communities in an urban setting. The women who had been the pivotal point of the family and community in the countryside still kept that role in the city. Although there is little record of philanthropy among the working classes it would most naturally be of the casual type whereby family and friends, in both rural and urban communities, would rally round in times of need to help in practical, emotional and religious ways. Women would be the prime movers in such enterprises. (74)

Women often provided the stabilising core in a changing society and environment. In fact this strata of society could perhaps be said to rather matriarchal with women providing the dominant influence, certainly within the home and family. They were fiercely independent, because they had to be to keep the family unit together; they were self-sufficient, because they had to be, being often in straightened circumstances; they had a great sense of family, because not only had they large families of their own, but their many relations, often in the same or nearby villages, meant that the troubles of one were shared by the many; their life was very circumscribed and restricted, being chiefly a matter of work out of the home and work within

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Manchester 1972) p. 247-248; Moss, R., 'The Origins and Influence in the North Staffordshire Potteries before 1820', (MA thesis, London 1949) p. 109; Horner, J.P., 'Influence of Methodism on the Social Structure and culture of Rural Northumberland from 1820-1914', (MA thesis, Newcastle-upon-Tyne 1971) pp. 143ff; Morris, G.M., 'The Origin and Early Development of Primitive Methodism in Derbyshire, 1810-1870', (MA thesis, Nottingham 1960) p. 112.

<sup>72</sup> Hobsbawm, E.J., *Primitive Rebels* (Manchester 1959) p. 137, 1971 edition, see also Turner, J.M., 'Primitive Methodism from Mow Cop to Peake's Commentary', essay in *From Mow Cop to Peake, 1807-1932* (WHS Yorkshire Branch, Occasional Paper, No. 4, 1982) p. 4; Razzell P.E. and Wainwright R.W., *The Victorian Working Class: Selections from Letters to the Morning Chronicle (1973) p. 231.*

<sup>73</sup> Scotland, Nigel, *Methodism and the Revolt of the Field* (1981); Moore, Robert, *Pitmen, Preachers and Politics: The Effects of Methodism in a Durham Mining Community* (Cambridge 1974); Colls, Robert, *The Collier's Rant* (1977); for a discussion of this aspect in the later Victorian period see McLeod, D. Hugh, *Class and Religion in the late Victorian City* (1974) pp. 70f.

<sup>74</sup> see Prochaska, F.K., *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth Century England* (Oxford 1980) especially p. 42; Tilly, A. Louise and Scott, W. Joan, *Women, Work and Family* (New York, 1978) pp. 143-144.

the home.<sup>(75)</sup> Several scholars point out that married women worked hard in and around the home and that they suffered most with the coming of the factories. ‘Cottage’ industries were transferred to the city tenements and these ultimately led to the rise of ‘home-work’ of all sorts to satisfy their sense of obligation to earn while fulfilling their domestic responsibilities - taking in washing and sewing, caring for children or lodgers. Working class women were not necessarily expected to work outside the house, unless the family finances urgently needed their wages.<sup>(76)</sup> Some women with a little money were able to open shops or cafes or start schools as for example did Mary Porteous and Sarah Kirkland,<sup>(77)</sup> but really these enterprises were still home-based. The home, the family and the extended family networks became very important to the Primitive Methodist evangelists. It was here that they were able to engage in ‘conversation preaching’, to receive hospitality and to get invitations and be passed along the family network to other places and areas so that the word spread rapidly from its modest beginnings. This family network system may well help to explain why often quite small villages became the head of circuits - places like Cwm, Scotter and Shefford - because here the travelling preachers found a warm welcome afforded to them by virtue of an introduction from the extended family. Thus there was ready and waiting the nucleus of a society which would hopefully develop into a church. It was then, to such communities as these that the Primitive Methodist preachers came with their message of the saving Gospel, offering the people an escape from their work-a-day lives. The rapid growth rate of the Primitive Methodist Connexion points to the impact it had on such communities.<sup>(78)</sup> These little chapel communities were important in the life of the Primitive Methodists because here all were equal. There was no barrier of status or sex. The prayer meetings gave opportunity for all to take part and were often the seed-bed from which the preachers, both local and travelling, both male and female, sprang. Women who were all-important in the home, but had little public voice were here given the chance to take full part in the life of the ‘chapel’.

Deborah Valenze maintains that the female preachers emerged from the households and villages which were undergoing dramatic economic and social change and that they attempted to preserve the traditional household arrangements and promote village values.<sup>(79)</sup> From a sociological point of view I am sure this is true and also that the development and widespread use of women preachers defied the conventions of established religion and that the fervent evangelistic worship of the ‘ranters’, both men and women, was rather shocking to the more sedate sections of both church and society, but because early Primitive Methodist source material is very sparse it is difficult to produce concrete evidence to show how great a part the female travelling preachers played in stabilising the economic insecurity felt by the labouring classes at this time. Church records are patchy and tend to be chiefly minutes and accounts, while the extant biographies and memoirs give few useful details to throw light on this area of study, often being concerned mainly with the state of the deceased’s soul and the death-bed scene. However, it is true to say that in many cases it was from these village communities that the female itinerants came. They, then, were of the people; they understood their way of life; they appreciated their struggles against hardship in all its forms; they too faced uncertainty in

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid. pp. 138-139.

<sup>76</sup> Tilly and Scott, op. cit. pp. 49-50, 53-54, 76-77, 124-129; Branca, Patricia, *Women in Europe since 1750* (1978) pp. 32-33; cf. Hall, Catherine, ‘The home turned upside down? The working-class family in cotton textiles 1780-1850’ in Whitelegg Elizabeth, *The Changing Experience of Women* (Oxford 1982) p. 26; Scott Joan and Tilly, Louise, ‘Women’s Work and the Family’ in Whitelegg, op. cit. p. 49, 52.

<sup>77</sup> See Chapter 4 p. 89 and footnotes, also Chapter 6, p. 214.

<sup>78</sup> See Table 2: The Growth of the Primitive Methodist Connexion.

<sup>79</sup> Valenze, Deborah M., op. cit. p. 3.

economic terms; they spoke the same language and perhaps most important of all they could see things from the women's point of view. The founders of Primitive Methodism were quick to recognise, not only the latent ability, but also the drawing potential of such women and were eager to make use of their talents.

**Table 2: The Growth of the Primitive Methodist Connexion**

Year	Conference	Members	Travelling Preachers	Local Preachers	Chapels	Ratio of Travelling Preachers to Members 1:	Women Travelling Preachers	Ratio of Men to Women Travelling Preachers 1:	% of Women to Total	
1820	Hull	7,842	48	277		163	6	7	12.5%	
1821	Tunstall	16,394		NOT REPORTED			11			
1822	Loughborough	25,218	152			166	11	13	7.2%	
1823	Leeds	29,472	202	1435		146	16	12	7.9%	
1824	Halifax	35,507	232			153	15	14	6.5%	
1825	Sunderland	33,582	251			134	13	18	5.2%	
1826	Nottingham	NOT PUBLISHED FOR THESE YEARS BY THE CONNEXION						16	-1	
1827	Manchester;							14	-1	
1828	Tunstall	36,610	204	2209	324	179	14	14	6.9%	
1829	Scotter	33,720	228	2419	403	148	13	17	5.7%	
1830	Hull	*35,733	240	2719	421	149	18	12	7.5%	
1831	Leicester	**37,216	257	2897	451	145	21	11	8.2%	
1832	Bradford	41,307	264	3156	497	156	22	11	8.3%	
1833	Sunderland	48,421	290	3514	552	167	17	16	5.9%	
1834	Birmingham	51,837	339	3758	601	153	26	12	7.7%	
1835	Tunstall	56,649	399	4340	684	142	20	19	5.0%	
1836	Lynn Regis	62,306	429	4890	802	145	18	23	4.2%	
1837	Sheffield	65,277	460	5343	923	142	19	23	4.1%	
1838	Darlaston	67,666	470	6892	939	144	13	35	2.8%	
1839	Bradford	70,396	467	6762	1025	151	12	38	2.6%	
1840	Manchester	73,990	487	6550	1149	152	12	40	2.5%	
1841	Reading	75,967	495	6860	1219	153	15	32	3.0%	
1842	Newcastle on Tyne	79,515	491	7326	1223	162	16	30	3.3%	
1843	Nottingham	85,565	488	7438	1278	175	11	43	2.3%	
1844	Lynn Regis	88,405	485	7508	1293	182	6	80	1.2%	
1845	Hull	87,585	506	7794	1189	173	6	83	1.2%	
1846	Tunstall	87,986	495	7677	1157	178	4	123	0.8%	
1847	Halifax	86,795	502	7840	1421	173	3	166	0.6%	
1848	Leeds	89,401	518	8056	1473	173	2	258	0.4%	
1849	Sunderland	95,557	513	8291	1511	186	2	256	0.4%	
1850	Nottingham	104,762	519	8524	1555	0	1	518	0.19%	
1851	Yarmouth	108,781	551	9077	1662	197	1	550	0.18%	
1852	Sheffield	109,984	560	9350	1723	196	1	559	0.18%	
1853	York	108,933	568	9594	1789	192	1	567	0.18%	
1854	Manchester	107,913	583	9834	1857	185	1	582	0.17%	
1855	Hull	105,858	585	9981	1912	181	1	584	0.17%	
1856	Darlaston	108,577	600	10096	1955	181	1	599	0.17%	
1857	Cambridge	110,683	598	10205	2010	185	1	597	0.17%	
1858	Doncaster	116,216	609	10533	2094	191	1	608	0.16%	
1859	Newcastle onTyne.	123,863	610	10838	2166	203	1	609	0.16%	
1860	Tunstall	132,144	675	11384	2267	196	1	674	0.15%	
1861	Derby	135,392	729	11887	2410	186	1	728	0.14%	
1862	Sheffield	141,185	776	12414	2519	182	1	775	0.13%	

Notes: \* includes numbers in the United States, but not in Canada

\*\* United States not included after 1830

SOURCES: *PM Mins;PMM*; Petty, op. cit.pp. 107,194, 214, 250, 314, 404, 485-86, 542-44

supernumerary  
till 1890

So it was then that the first ‘chapels’ of the camp meeting community were to be found in the homes and houses of the villages where a few friends gathered together to pray and praise and to engage in ‘conversation preaching’.<sup>(80)</sup> This cottage religion grew and extended to other like-minded folk who then set up their own groups. So a net-work was formed through friends and relatives along which the early preachers travelled as ‘praying and preaching labourers’. The early women preachers encountered the added burden of simply being women travelling alone, chiefly on foot, with all the attendant problems of trying to maintain credibility and of avoiding any breath of scandal. By the very nature of things because they were itinerants they had no settled home and so often had to rely on the generous hospitality of their hearers. However, while in one sense this was a difficulty it was also an opportunity as then it was possible to engage in private conversation and prayer. Word spread, crowds gathered, many were converted and some became preachers and so the work progressed as invitations were offered which led further afield.<sup>(81)</sup>

It was on 26th July, 1811, at a meeting in Mr. Smith’s kitchen that the new denomination, comprised of the groups led by Hugh Bourne and those formed by William Clowes, faced a financial problem. It was no longer economically possible for Hugh Bourne and the other early leaders to continue to pay the preachers out of their own pockets and this involved the most important question of the relationship between the preacher and the people. If men (and women) were to be set apart specifically for the work of evangelism how should they be supported? If the Bournes and others were finding it difficult to provide for the preachers, how should such provision be organised? After prayerful discussion Hugh Bourne says:

‘It was proposed that the circumstances be mentioned to the people, and what they voluntarily gave should be collected by proper persons, and paid into the hands of a steward, and what fell short should be made out by private subscriptions.

Question 5.- Who shall be appointed Steward? This was put upon James Steele.’<sup>(82)</sup>

and the proposal was ratified on 14th October. Although several preachers still preferred to be independent we learn that James Crawfoot ‘be paid 10s. 6d. a week for the support of his family’ and William Clowes was to receive 14s. -the extra because his house was used as a resting place. On 13th February 1812 the embryo denomination took the name of the Society of the Primitive Methodists’, indicating that they hoped to return to the avowed spirit and practices of primitive Methodism.

The next step forward came from the members of the community itself when they requested that rules and regulations should be drawn up. After much consideration the Rules were presented to the Quarterly Meeting of 3rd January, 1814, where they were duly amended and then printed and distributed. So the process of organisation and consolidation was set in train and it became necessary for the classes and societies to have purpose-built buildings in which to meet. The first chapels were erected at Tunstall in 1811; at Talke and Rochester in 1813 and at Cloud in 1815. The Derbyshire group of societies, which Mary Dunnell had missioned as we have seen, had built themselves a plain brick chapel as early as 1811 in Boylestone, though at that time, of course, it did not have the denominational name. The first Sunday School was also

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<sup>80</sup> Bourne, H., MSS,(Auto) A text f.70, *PMM* (1824) p. 145 and fn.; Kendall, I. op. cit. p. 31; Wilkinson, op. cit. p. 32.

<sup>81</sup> For example see Chapter 5, p. 156; Chapter 6, pp. 227-229.

<sup>82</sup> Kendall, op. cit. I. p. 131.



started in that village on 27th February, 1814. It is noteworthy that it was from this area that Sarah Kirkland came.

As we have seen from looking at the work of Mary Dunnell, Mary Hawkesley and Sarah Kirkland women were active in the Primitive Methodist movement long before it had set up the wider organisation of the Annual Conference and District Meetings to validate and station the travelling preachers. So although this survey is chiefly concerned with women who were stationed by the Conference it behoves us to acknowledge that many others worked faithfully before the first list appeared in 1820 and were to all intents and purposes travelling preachers. In fact Question 21 at the Preparatory Meeting held at Nottingham in August 1819, asked the question:

‘Shall those who commenced as Travelling Preachers, previous to the year 1816, be now considered as approved travelling preachers?  
Answer:- They shall.’<sup>(83)</sup>

The previous resolution had set four years as being the length of a travelling preacher’s probation. Several women fell into this category as well as those who worked between 1816 and 1820. Women such as Ann Armstrong, Ann Milward, Jane Brown, Ann Carr and Ann Egerton. Of these some continued after 1820 and so we find their names on that first list, for example, Ann Armstrong, Ann Brownsword, Jane Ansdale, Hannah Johnson, and Ann Stanna.

One last interesting point before we turn to the real task in hand of studying the female travelling preachers of the Primitive Methodist Connexion is that apparently on the early plans the women were only indicated by initials. Kendall reproduces part of the Nottingham Circuit Plan for 1818 to show this. He comments that this:

‘gives rise to reflections as to man’s estimate of woman, and to woman’s estimate of herself in those days.....’<sup>(84)</sup>

This estimate can be seen in another instance for those first Minutes set the salary of the ‘Female Travelling Preacher’ at ‘Two pounds a quarter’ whereas single men commanded up to ‘four pounds per quarter, together with his board and lodging’.<sup>(85)</sup> We shall consider the implications of this later, but it seems as if, with the women engaging in the evangelistic work equally with their male counterparts, there was some truth in the saying that ‘all (men) are equal, but some are more equal than others’.<sup>(86)</sup>

The most noticeable characteristics of Primitive Methodism, apart from its evangelistic fervour, were its use of camp meetings as a means of promoting the gospel and its use of female preachers, both itinerants and local. It was these two elements in particular which marked it out from the other denominations and, as we have already seen, the founders and early leaders of the Connexion were only too eager to defy the accepted custom of the more established denominations and to use every means to hand if it would help with the saving of souls and the furtherance of the Kingdom of God. Their watchword might be said to have been similar to St. Paul’s:

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<sup>83</sup> *Minutes of the Primitive Methodist Connexion* (hereinafter cited as *PM Mins*) (1819) p. 6.

<sup>84</sup> Kendall, op. cit., I p. 208. See Fig. 1

<sup>85</sup> *PM Mins*. (1819) pp. 4-5; cf. in the *Minutes* of 1819/20 the figure given is £3.15s.Od. p. 5.

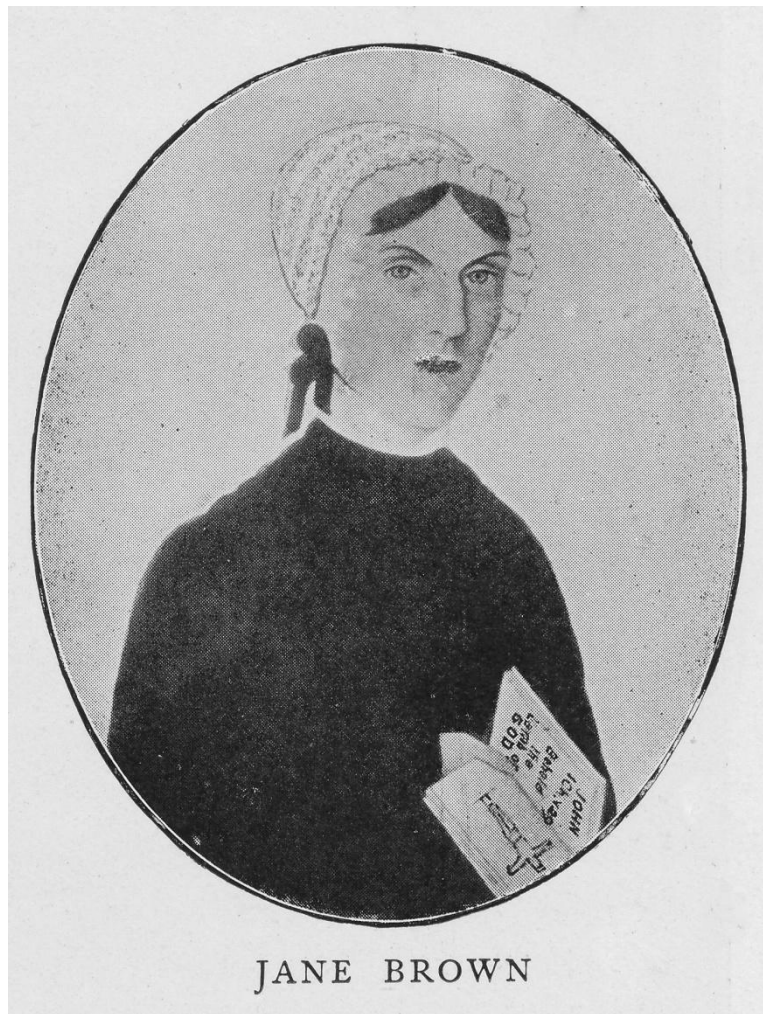
<sup>86</sup> Orwell, G. *Animal Farm* (adapted) Ch. 10.

‘I am made all things to all men that I might by all means save some.  
And this I do for the Gospel’s sake.’<sup>(87)</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> I Corinthians 9:22-23.

Figure 1: Jane Brown



Part of the Nottingham Plan 1818 indicating women preachers by initials:

1818.	FEB.				MARCH.					APRIL.				NAMES.			
PLACES.	1	8	15	22	1	8	15	22	29	5	12	19	26				
Derby 2 and 6	S	K	17	8	27	45	10	9	T	7	36	28	17	19	8	1 H. Bourne	
Willeton 2 Normanton 6	W	A	31	14	36	46	19	37	T	8	17	31	36	8	46	2 W. Clowes	
Nottingham 2½ and 6	1	19	10	S	26	9	T	S	K	15	T	B	L	26	18	10	3 J. Benton
Loughborough 2 and 6	19	M	H	S	K	17	42	9	T	44	42	10	26	H	P	10	4 J. Buxton
																	5 R. Weston
																	6 J. Wedgwood
																	7 W. Warren
																	8 T. Hunt
																	9 J. Harrison
																	10 R. Winfield

### CHAPTER THREE: CASE FOR FEMALE PREACHING

Even today there is much debate about the place of women in the ministry of the Christian Church. There has always been a place for the ministry of women in the life of the churches, but the major argument has been about their place in the regular ordained preaching ministry. The Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Anglican communions exclude women from such office in Britain, but the Free Protestant Churches in this country allow female participation in this field. Methodism finally admitted women to the ordained ministry in 1972 but the matter has been one of considerable debate from the earliest times within the various branches of Methodism.

The movement started by John Wesley had a profound impact on the lives of the men and women of his time and many lay people felt impelled to pass on their new found faith and experience to their families, friends and neighbours. Obviously in the case of the men there was no fundamental objection to this, but when the women wanted to do the same there were reservations. The giving of testimonies and even exhortations was not frowned upon as these mostly took place within the family or in classes, even occasional speaking in services was permitted, but the question of the preaching of a sermon was another matter altogether. From the earliest days women were appointed as class leaders, especially among their own sex.

John Wesley, himself was not adverse to women giving short exhortations, but he would not countenance their actually preaching sermons. In 1761 he declared that:

‘the Methodists do not allow of women preachers’<sup>(88)</sup>

There were, however, women such as Sarah Crosby, Sarah Ryan, Mary Sewell, Grace Walton and Ann Cutler to mention but a few to whom Wesley gave guarded support in their ministry, because their work resulted in the salvation of sinners. In 1780 John Wesley stated definitely that he was not prepared to allow women to preach as a general rule and wrote on the 25th March to George Robinson and sent a message to Grimsby:

‘I desire Mr. Peacock to put a final stop to the preaching of women in his circuit. If it were suffered it would grow, and we know not where it would end.’<sup>(89)</sup>

However, as time went on the matter was to a certain extent taken out of his hands and he was forced to give tacit, if reluctant, approval to women preaching. It seems as if he was prepared to judge each case on its merits, rather than lay down a categorical rule about women preaching.

Zachariah Taft says that in the case of Sarah Mallett, not only Wesley, but also the Wesleyan Conference in Manchester in 1787 actually:

‘designates, authorizes, and so to speak, ordains her as a preacher in his connexion.’<sup>(90)</sup>

and that this, therefore, opened the gateway for the approval of other females who wished to

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<sup>88</sup> *JWL* IV p. 133.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.* II p. 9.

<sup>90</sup> Taft. *Z.*, *Holy Women*, Preface, Vol. I p. iv and p. 84. After the 1787 Conference Wesley wrote to Sarah Mallett: ‘We give the right hand of fellowship to Sarah Mallett, and have no objection to her being a preacher in our connection, so long as she preaches the Methodist doctrines, and attends to our discipline.’ This letter is no longer extant, but Taft adds a footnote to the effect that he had ‘the original document’ in his possession at the time of writing.

preach to be allowed to do so. In fact in 1789 John Wesley gave Sarah Mallett advice on the conduct of her services.

‘It gives me pleasure to hear that prejudice dies away and our preachers behave in a friendly manner..... Never continue the service above an hour at once, singing, preaching, prayer and all. You are not to judge by your own feelings, but by the word of God. Never scream. Never speak above the natural pitch of your voice; it is disgusting to the hearers. It gives them pain, not pleasure. And it is destroying yourself. It is offering God murder for sacrifice.’<sup>(91)</sup>

This letter shows that if Wesley did not actually encourage women preachers and never appointed one as an itinerant in actual fact, several were travelling preachers in all but name.

Two women who were particularly notable for their preaching abilities and who have a bearing on the subject of this study were Mary Bosanquet and Mary Barritt (Barrett). Mary Bosanquet began her ministry when she was living with a family of children and poor people in Leytonstone and continued it after she moved in 1768 to Cross Hall in Yorkshire, where people came from miles to her services, which in time developed so that a sermon was included, though she always refused to preach from the pulpit preferring to stand on the stairs.

In 1771 Mary Bosanquet wrote a long letter to John Wesley about female preaching and her attitude to it and asking his advice. She explained that she and Sarah Ryan had been taking ‘little kind of prayer meetings, etc.’ which had been blessed, but some people had raised objections, based on scriptural injunctions about women keeping silence. Needless to say Mary put a different interpretation on these texts,<sup>(92)</sup> believing them to mean that women should not usurp the position or authority of men and that just as women like Deborah in the Old Testament and Mary and the woman of Samaria in the New Testament ‘ministered’ in certain circumstances, so she had an extra-ordinary call which was why she acted ‘in an extra-ordinary manner’. In his reply Wesley agreed with her:

I think the strength of the cause rests there, in your having an extraordinary call; so I am persuaded has every one of our lay-preachers; otherwise I could not countenance his preaching at all. It is plain to me that the work of God, termed Methodism, is an extraordinary dispensation of HIS providence. Therefore do not wonder, if several things occur therein, which do not fall under the ordinary rules of discipline. St. Paul’s ordinary rule was, “I permit not a woman to speak in the congregation”, yet in extraordinary cases he made a few exceptions; at Corinth in particular.’<sup>(93)</sup>

Evidently some people asked Mary why she did not become an itinerant and were told that that was not her call; others wanted to know why she said she was going to hold a meeting and did not announce that she was going to preach to which she replied because it was less ostentatious, gave her more freedom and caused less offence. To certain people it seemed as if she had a Quaker call and they inquired why she did not join that body to which she answered:

‘though I believe the Quakers have still a good deal of God among them, yet, I think the spirit of the Lord is more at work among the Methodists; and while I see this, though they were to toss me about as a

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<sup>91</sup>. *JWL* VIII p 190

<sup>92</sup> II Timothy 2:12; I Corinthians 14:34; I Corinthians 11:5.

<sup>93</sup> Taft. Z., *Holy Women* Vol. I pp. 21-23; *JWL*, Vol. V p. 257.

football, I would stick to them as a leech. Besides, I do nothing but what Mr. Wesley approves.’<sup>(94)</sup>

After her marriage in 1781 to the Rev. John Fletcher, Vicar of Madeley in Shropshire, Mary carried on with her ministry and regularly preached to mixed congregations. Congregations which, moreover, often included clergymen. In fact John Wesley is said to have recorded:

‘that he heard the sainted Fletcher preach an excellent sermon in the church in the morning and Mrs. Fletcher a ‘more excellent sermon in the schoolroom in the evening.’<sup>(95)</sup>

In a letter to Mary Taft (née Barritt) Mrs. Fletcher wrote of her work, in 1803:

‘Now my breath is very short, and many complaints render me unable to travel; I therefore feel the Lord leads me to apply to what little I can do in my own preaching room, where the congregation increases, and many come from far, and I am, through mercy, at present carried through six or seven meetings, in a week, of different sorts. For some years, I was often led to speak from a text, of late I feel greater approbation in what we call expounding, taking a part or whole of a chapter, and speaking on it. We have lately found the Lord very present, and many souls have been blest..... I do look on the call of women as an extra - not an ordinary call; therefore I strove, and do strive now so to act, not out of custom, but only when I have a clear leading thereto, and this leading may and will differ at different parts of our lives, but to follow the cloud is the thing I aim at, and the soul feels a peace and comfort in so doing, for ‘where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty’.<sup>(96)</sup>

The Conference of 1803, which was held in Manchester, considered the question:

‘Should women be permitted to preach among us?’

and the following resolution was passed:

‘We are of opinion that, in general they ought not. 1. Because a vast majority of our people are opposed to it. 2. Because their preaching does not seem necessary, there being a sufficiency of Preachers, whom God has accredited, to supply all the places in our Connexion with regular preaching. But if any woman among us thinks she has an extraordinary call from God to speak in public (and we are sure it must be an extraordinary call that can authorize it), we are of the opinion she should, in general, address her own sex, and those only. And upon this condition alone should any woman be permitted to preach in any part of our Connexion; and when so permitted, it should be under the following regulations:- 1. They shall not preach in the Circuit in which they reside, until they have received the approbation of the Superintendent

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<sup>94</sup> Taft. Z., *Holy Women* Vol. I p. 25; Moore, H. *The Life of Mrs. Fletcher* (1867 - 17th ed.) p. 125.

<sup>95</sup> Ritson, *Romance of Primitive Methodism* (1909) p. 133.

<sup>96</sup> Taft: op. cit., Vol. I p. 20.

and a Quarterly Meeting. 2. Before they go into any other Circuit to preach, they shall have a written invitation from the Superintendent of such Circuit, and a recommendatory note from the Superintendent of their own Circuit.’<sup>(97)</sup>

This regulation remained in force for more than one hundred years in Wesleyan Methodism, and in actual fact was not repealed till women were officially admitted to the ministry in 1972, but the phrase ‘address only her sex’ was deleted in 1910. An addendum-was also added restricting the women to preaching in neighbourhoods in which there was no special opposition. This was Wesleyan Methodist policy right up to Union in 1932. So it is obvious that any woman who ‘felt a call to preach’ would have needed to have been very determined if she was to carry out her call. Inevitably there were a number of ‘irregular’ preachers who ignored this regulation. One of the most famous was Mary Barritt (Barrett), who, started preaching in her early twenties, and travelled many miles in the north of England and under her ministry a number of later well-known Wesleyan ministers were converted. <sup>(98)</sup> In 1802 she married the Rev. Zachariah Taft, a Wesleyan minister. Her *Memoirs* written in 1827, contain the following dedication:

‘To all those unto whom the Great Head of the Church has made me instrumental of good to their Souls; and to all those Methodist Ministers who have invited me to labour in their respective Circuits and to all those who have taken, or invited me into their houses.....’

and in the Preface she emphasises that:

‘it has always been a rule with me, never to go to any place to labour, without a previous invitation from the travelling preacher, as well as the friends of the circuit I visited. As a member of the methodist connexion, I conceived this to be my bounden duty; more especially, as the superintendent preachers are responsible to the Conference for those whom they employ in any public way in the circuits over which they preside. I do not know that I have ever deviated from this rule, excepting in a few instances, when I have been so sensible of it being my duty, and the will of God, for me to go, that I durst not at the peril of my soul neglect going. This line of conduct however, I confess, has grieved some of my best friends, which hath caused me to weep in secret before the Lord. It hath sometime happened, that a preacher would not consent for any female to exhort sinners to come to the gospel feast - and though I had many friends in his circuit, and some spiritual children whom I could have visited, and the withstanding of whose solicitations gave me considerable pain - yet, I have waited one, and sometime two years before myself and friends could be gratified in this particular.’<sup>(99)</sup>

The second volume of Mary Taft’s *Memoirs* goes up to the end of 1805 and it seems apparent from it that she worked virtually as another itinerant alongside her husband in the circuits to which he was appointed. In fact Joseph Benson was reputed to have written to Taft that

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<sup>97</sup> *Minutes of the Wesleyan Conference* 1803 (1862 ed.) p. 187.

<sup>98</sup> for a description of her preaching see Appendices I & II (Methodist Archives).

<sup>99</sup> Taft. Z., *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Taft* (1827) Part I pp. x, viii-ix.

Conference had been ignorant that he ‘was taking a female to assist him in the ministry.’<sup>(100)</sup>

At first apparently Taft paid at least lip-service to the Conference resolution quoted above for in 1809 he wrote:

‘Ever since I had the honour to call Mrs. T--- by my name, I have laid down one general rule of conduct relative to this subject, that is, never to introduce her as a public character, nor suffer her to preach in any other circuit but at the request or by the consent of the superintendent of that circuit, or suffer her to speak in any of my pulpits while there is opposition from any men in office, if I have known of it. I do not know that I have ever deviated from this rule, except in one instance.’<sup>(101)</sup>

However, Zachariah Taft was a most able apologist for ‘female preaching’. He seems to have believed in it wholeheartedly for its own sake and not simply because of his wife’s talents. He wrote down his *Thoughts on Female Preaching* <sup>(102)</sup> as early as 1803, when having been stationed in Dover he found that his wife’s gifts were not so acceptable as they had been when they were stationed in the North of England, and no doubt he also had in mind the 1803 Conference ruling about women preachers.<sup>(103)</sup> In the course of this article Taft summarises both Old and New Testament examples of the ministry of women. These examples will be dealt with more fully in connection with Primitive Methodism which is the subject of this piece of research, so it is merely mentioned here to show that the thorny question of whether women’s ministry was permitted or not and whether it was Biblically based was not peculiar to the Primitive Methodists. Taft, in common with others who were concerned about this subject, also referred to the view of noted scholars on the relevant Biblical passages.

Then in April 1809 the *Methodist Magazine* contained an article entitled ‘Thoughts on Women’s Preaching’, extracted from Dr. James McKnight and to this Zachariah Taft replied.<sup>(104)</sup> Lawrence Kane, on 11th April 1809, wrote to Taft referring to the same article and arguing from the Bible that female preaching was allowable, but he urged that his opinion should not encourage Taft or his wife to debate the matter with ‘J.B. or anyone else.’<sup>(105)</sup> Later the same year, in July, Robert Harrison wrote to Zachariah Taft and observed that the subject of women preaching was being brought up at the ensuing Conference, but said:

‘have no fear, greater is he who has commissioned women to preach than all opposition.’<sup>(106)</sup>

Taft, again, went into print in 1820 when he produced *The Scripture Doctrine of Women’s*

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<sup>100</sup> See ‘A Famous Lady Preacher’ by Dr. Waller and the Editor, an Article from the Wesleyan *Methodist Magazine* (1907) pp. 538-44. The same day John Pawson wrote to the Church at Dover commending Mrs Taft.

<sup>101</sup> Z. Taft to James Everett, July 1809 (Taft correspondence in Methodist Archives and Research Centre. Hereinafter cited as MARC). See further in the *Methodist Recorder*, Winter Number 1895, p. 68.

<sup>102</sup> Taft Z. *Thoughts of Female Preaching* (Dover 1803) (MARC).

<sup>103</sup> Letter from John Pawson, October 25th 1802. See Appendix III for full text. (MARC).

<sup>104</sup> MSS. Taft, Z. A reply to an article inserted in the *Methodist Magazine* for April 1809 entitled Thoughts on Women’s Preaching extracted from Dr. James McKnight. (MARC)

<sup>105</sup> MSS (photocopy) Letter from Laurence Kane to Z. Taft, Gainsborough April 11th 1809 (MARC).

<sup>106</sup> MSS Letter from Robert Harrison to Z. Taft. Ripon 24<sup>th</sup> July 1809 (MARC).



**Preaching: stated and examined**<sup>(107)</sup> in which he summarised the Biblical examples, mentioned Wesley's attitude and named some women preachers. He was of the opinion that if women preachers were condemned then the Quakers would be condemned wholesale. A letter of 5th July 1823 from the Rev. Gideon Ouseley, the famous Irish evangelist, to Zachariah Taft contains the following remarks:

‘In reference to the propriety of females declaring God’s counsel to sinners for their salvation, I must say I never saw one text of Scripture to oppose it, nor one solid reason ever advanced against it; nor, I think, ever can, till it is proved that souls converted to God by females are less pleasing than those converted by men, or that women ought to speak and write so much and so much only.’<sup>(108)</sup>

The MSS letter has a note appended to it from the Rev. W.L. Doughty, into whose possession it came, and he comments:

‘From the closing paragraph it appears that Z. Taft had solicited Ouseley’s opinion on what has long been a controversial topic in Methodism; the propriety of Female Preaching. The Conference of 1803 had advised strongly against it, and had issued stringent rules for the guidance of those who were not prepared to accept this advice. Taft was a redoubtable protagonist for Women Preachers, of whom his own wife, Mary (née Barritt) was one of the most popular and distinguished.’<sup>(109)</sup>

In addition to these MSS Zachariah Taft wrote two volumes of his **Biographical Sketches of The Lives and public ministry of various Holy Women** (1825 and 1828). In the Preface to the first volume of this work he reiterates the arguments on the topic of female preaching. Taft first notes that the work of women had been largely ignored because he was of the opinion that the majority of Biographers and Magazine Editors were opposed to female preaching, though the Friends or Quakers readily accepted the regular ministry of women. He then goes on to show how Wesley, because of his belief in the efficacy of the work of laymen could not refuse to own the labours of women without falling into the trap of inconsistency, for in his sermon ‘A Caution against Bigotry’ Wesley argued, to quote Taft, that:

‘the conversion of sinners is the work of God, and whoever is the instrument of doing this work, is the servant of God. And we must not forbid such a one.’<sup>(110)</sup>

If a changed life resulted from such a ministry then this was evidence that God had owned the work and it should not be forbidden. Thus it would follow that this should apply equally to women preaching as to men, where such women felt a call to preach the gospel of repentance. So, Wesley was forced to accept the principle of female preaching and his answer to a

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<sup>107</sup> Z. Taft, **The Scripture Doctrine of Women’s Preaching: state and examined by Z. Taft**, (York 1820) espec. p. 16. (MARC).

<sup>108</sup> MSS Letter from the Rev. Gideon Ouseley (1799-1839) famous Irish evangelist to Rev. Z. Taft (1801-1848), (Dublin 5<sup>th</sup> July 1823) (MARC).

<sup>109</sup> Ibid. note attached by Rev. W.L. Doughty.

<sup>110</sup> Taft, Z. op. cit. Vol. I Preface. p. ii: based on Wesley, J. **Fifty-three Sermons** (n.d) pp 533-547 (Sermon 38).

questioner as to why he encouraged ‘certain females in preaching’ was ‘Because God owns them in the conversion of sinners and who am I that I should withstand God.’<sup>(111)</sup>

Taft argues that the women who engaged in preaching were usually those who had closest communion with God and therefore that to say they were wrong in their desire to preach and save others was surely to deny that very communion with God.

One of the objections to female preaching was evidently that it would be improper for a woman to address a mixed company, but Taft demolishes that argument by pointing to the society of the time in which women mixed freely with men, and where the sexes worshipped together. He maintained that England was a country where women were allowed to address mixed companies in ‘theatres, markets, fields and shops’ and argues that if they were thus permitted in the interests of business and trade and to get money, then surely as long as they were pious and properly qualified (he does not explain what he means by this - presumably in a religious sense!) it would be inconceivable not to let them talk ‘upon the subjects which regard the soul and eternity.’<sup>(112)</sup> Arguing from the base of inspiration Taft maintains that women can be as equally inspired as men and that it would be invidious to permit them to speak only to women when what they have to say might just as easily be applicable to the men in the audience. He refers to Wesley’s teaching in his *Notes upon the New Testament* on I Corinthians xiv. 34, 35, where we read:

‘v. 34 Let your women be silent in the churches: for it is not permitted them to speak; but to be in subjection, as the  
v. 35 law also saith. And if they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home: for it is indecent for a woman to speak in the assembly.’

where Wesley comments:

‘verse 34. Let your women be silent in the churches - Unless they are under an extraordinary impulse of the spirit. For, in other cases, it is not permitted them to speak - By way of teaching in public assemblies. But to be in subjection - To the man whose proper office it is to lead and to instruct the congregation.  
‘verse 35. And even if they desire to learn anything - Still they are not to speak in public, but to ask their own husbands at home - That is the place, and those the persons to inquire of.’<sup>(113)</sup>

This comment, backed up by Wesley’s later *Letters* and conduct towards his women helpers, Taft uses to reinforce his argument that women may address mixed companies and as we have already noted maintains that on the whole Wesley ‘fully approved of their conduct’ - that it, the conduct of his ‘female preachers.’<sup>(114)</sup>

Taft is fully convinced that people who deny females the right to preach are not in accord with Wesley’s views and that were he still living at the time when Taft was writing (1825) women would have received ‘that encouragement which they ought to have had’ as Wesley would have

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<sup>111</sup> Taft. op. cit. p. iii.

<sup>112</sup> Taft: *ibid.* p. iv.

<sup>113</sup> Wesley, J. ‘*Notes*’ (original 1753 - quotation from 11<sup>th</sup> ed. 1831) Vol. II p. 120.

<sup>114</sup> Taft, op. cit., Preface. p. iv.

become ‘more and more convinced of the divine authority of such a ministry.’<sup>(115)</sup>

There is a tantalising paragraph in which Taft maintains that he is convinced of the validity of women’s ministry, but as it is not valued and used within Wesleyan Methodism ‘many have left us and joined other communities, where they are eminently useful..... when other doors are thrown wide open, and where there is a large and wide field open for their labours; and where the same doctrines are preached and in great measure, the same discipline enforced.’<sup>(116)</sup> Thus one cannot help wondering, remembering that Taft was writing in 1825, whether he has the Primitive Methodists (and Bible Christians) particularly in mind. We know from evidence<sup>(117)</sup> that women were widely used in both the lay and itinerant ministry of the Primitive Methodist Church from its inception in 1810 onwards and we have definite proof of at least thirteen females being stationed by the Primitive Methodist Conference in that same year of 1825. So it seems that Taft is hinting at a lost opportunity by the Wesleyan Methodists to make full use of the talents of women in the Church and also hinting that after Wesley’s death Methodism had become less flexible and less far-sighted than its revered founder, who, in spite of all his reservations and Anglican prejudices was prepared in this, as in other matters, to be convinced that God was working his purposes out even if in ‘a mysterious way’! Thus other denominations had reaped the benefit of women’s ministry, which might have been kept within Wesleyan Methodism if the Church authorities had perhaps been more far-sighted. Immediately three examples of Wesleyan women who turned to Primitive Methodism to exercise their ministry spring to mind. The first one was the mixed blessing of Mrs. Dunnell, a former Wesleyan evangelist who greatly assisted Hugh Bourne in the early days before causing trouble and finally being expelled from the Connexion, then there was Ann Carr, a Wesleyan local preacher, who joined the Primitive Methodists and then finally seceded along with Sarah Eland and Martha Williams because they were not amenable to the circuit discipline<sup>(118)</sup> and thirdly and most important for this study was Mary Porteous, whose biographer categorically states that she would have remained within the Wesleyan Connexion if it had been possible for her to respond to the call to preach and then to itinerate and thus to exercise her talents within that communion.<sup>(119)</sup> A number of the other early Primitive Methodist female travelling preachers came from Wesleyan backgrounds and it is possible that they would have become itinerants in that Connexion if it had been permitted.

However much Taft might hint at such lost opportunities he was nevertheless a Wesleyan minister himself and however much he appreciated and sympathised with his wife’s (Mary Barritt) ministry he was still not prepared to admit that women had a call to or should be allowed to exercise pastoral office, by which we understand he means that they should not be allowed into the ordained ministry of the Wesleyan Connexion. In these views Taft was ‘a child of his times’ and is undoubtedly expressing the views of the majority of the Methodists of the early nineteenth century.

‘I believe the ordinary call of God to the ministry is to men, and the extraordinary call to females. But in this extraordinary call I do not

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid. Preface. p. v.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid. Preface pp. v. vi.

<sup>117</sup> See Chapter 5.

<sup>118</sup> Dews, D. Colin, ‘Ann Carr (1783-1841) and the Female Revivalists of Leeds: A study in female preachers, secession and Primitive Methodism’. an essay in *From Mow Cop to Peake 1807-1932: essays to commemorate the One hundred and Seventy Fifth Anniversary of the Beginnings of Primitive Methodism* (WHS, Yorkshire Branch Occasional Paper No. 4, May 1982) pp. 18-27.

<sup>119</sup> Lightfoot, J., *The Life and Labours of Mrs. Mary Porteous* (1862) p. 78.

consider any female strictly and fully called to the pastoral office; or to be the regular pastor of the Church of Christ, but I do believe that the Lord calls some females to be fellow labourers with the pastors, or helpers, or as we should call them Local Preachers, and I think we should help, or encourage those women, who thus help us in the Gospel.’<sup>(120)</sup>

Taft then looks at the varied ‘ministry’ of women throughout the Old and New Testaments and particularly in relation to the women who ‘ministered to Jesus’ and concludes that every person has the right to work in the sphere to which they are called, regardless of sex.<sup>(121)</sup> He quotes as the final word of the Preface part of the letter of the Rev. Gideon Ouseley, to which we have already made reference. ‘These words’, observes the Rev. Leslie Church, ‘seem to be a fair statement of Methodist opinion at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century’ and to be ‘in harmony with the general attitude of Wesley in sermons and correspondence.’<sup>(122)</sup>

In the Preface to the second volume of his *Holy Women* Taft remarks that some people have asserted that no one ought to become a minister unless he is filled with an ‘overwhelming conviction that it is his duty’, but he himself although insisting that a call to preach is essential, would not exclude those who have honest questionings about their suitability for the work of the ministry. Taft believes that some members of both sexes have this over-whelming conviction that it is

‘their duty to call sinners to repentance, - that God required it at their hands..... And when it is remembered that no female preaches for hire; but that they have to enter into this field of labour, through much opposition from the counter-workings of their own mind, and the unchristian insinuations and discountenance of hostile spirits; it is not to be wondered at that many, perhaps most of those that have not had the above mentioned overwhelming convictions have shrunk from the cross and buried the talent which God gave them for public usefulness. A few however have in all ages of the Christian church felt such a constraining influence of the love of Christ ..... but at all hazards, and at every expense to come boldly forward.....’<sup>(123)</sup>

He states his own position, - that he believes that all who have experienced the power of the gospel and feel themselves called to the ministry and who have also ‘a proper knowledge of the scriptures’ and can express their beliefs sincerely together with a consciousness of preaching under divine influence and the ability of converting sinners should be acknowledged as ‘the sanctioned heralds of the cross.’

When we look at the lives of some of the Primitive Methodist female travelling preachers we can see that this observation holds true for them too. Thus Mary Porteous fought against her call for two years, Lucy Hubbold was so unsure of her ability that she did not go to her first appointment and Elizabeth Smith experienced doubts. These will be explored in greater depth later. Mary Edwardes and Fanny Hurlle faced opposition from their families when they joined

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<sup>120</sup> Taft, op. cit., Preface p. vi.

<sup>121</sup> for Taft’s development of this point see *ibid.* Preface pp. vii-ix.

<sup>122</sup> Church, L.F., *More about the Early Methodist People* (1949) p. 138.

<sup>123</sup> Taft, Z. op. cit., (Leeds 1828) Vol. II, Preface pp ix-x.

the Primitive Methodists. The question of the actual persecutions faced by the women Primitive Methodist travelling preachers while they were engaged in exercising their ministry will be referred to again, but from these few brief references it can be seen that Zachariah Taft's comment could well be valid and indicates that not only did those women who persevered and persisted with their ministry show a considerable degree of strong-mindedness, but also proved that they were absolutely convinced of their calling to proclaim the Gospel no matter what it cost them.

If one were to study women preachers in Wesleyan Methodism in detail it would become obvious why Wesley was forced to modify his stance and allow that, given 'an extraordinary call', women should be permitted to become local preachers. <sup>(124)</sup> However, that is beyond our present brief, but we must admit that the presence of a considerable number of pious women who regularly acted as class leaders, exhorters and local preachers within Wesleyan Methodism paved the way and provided a well which could be tapped by less rigid movements. Thus the frustrated women preachers of the Wesleyan Methodist Church found that their services were readily accepted by the Primitive Methodists and they were made very welcome in a denomination which made no distinction, particularly in its early days, between men and women and indeed was very ready to exploit the advantages of the novelty of female preaching in attracting crowds to hear the Gospel. As we study the accounts we have of the female travelling preachers we can see evidence of this fact. Right from the very beginning when Sarah Kirkland, regarded as the first travelling woman preacher even though she gave up itinerating before the stations of the Primitive Methodist Connexion started officially, drew great crowds to hear her:

'curiosity to hear a young female hastily drew together a large concourse of people.'<sup>(125)</sup>

Others, like Elizabeth Smith had similar experiences:

'the novelty of a female preacher drew numbers to hear.'<sup>(126)</sup>

As has already been mentioned Hugh Bourne used Mrs. Dunnell in the very early days, but he too like Wesley, was concerned with the arguments about the validity and propriety of women's ministry. The matter was apparently brought to a head in June 1808 when, according to his Journal entry for Sunday, June 12th he was by appointment at Macclesfield, it being the time of the holding the Independent Methodist Conference. He says:

'they ordained Parker; and I found this to be a very solemn ordinance. The controversy about women ministering was brought forward and I agreed to write an answer to the proposition.'<sup>(127)</sup>

So he committed his thoughts on the subject to paper. On showing his manuscript to Peter Phillips, Hugh Bourne was urged to allow it to be printed. He agreed and after revision it was published in the summer of 1808. The tract itself appears to have disappeared and is only extant

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<sup>124</sup> For full treatment of this subject see Brown, Earl Kent, *Women of Mr. Wesley's Methodism* (New York 1983), espec. pp. 15-31, 90-99; see also Chilcote, P.W. op. cit.; Dews D. Colin, 'Ann Carr (1783-1841) and the Female Revivalists' op. cit., pp. 15-18.

<sup>125</sup> *PMM* (1881) p. 164.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.* (1832) pp. 265-8; (1837) p. 179.

<sup>127</sup> Walford, op. cit. I p. 170.

in Walford's *Life of Hugh Bourne*.<sup>(128)</sup> On the whole Hugh Bourne follows earlier apologists of women's preaching, such as Adam Clarke, and argues from Scripture that it is not forbidden. He covers much the same ground which Zachariah Taft covered and which we have already examined. However, Bourne commences his tract by explaining that he is not:

‘accustomed to study this controversy’

for several reasons, but chiefly because he felt any person whose labours were owned by God should be allowed to exercise their ministry

‘without respect to persons’

and because he felt it was more important to press on with God's work than:

‘engage in useless controversy’.<sup>(129)</sup>

Surely from this preamble to the tract we can see where Hugh Bourne stood this matter. If the vehicle of God's work was a woman so be it. The work was more important than the instrument. He certainly held to this opinion by making good use of women preachers, both local and itinerant, right from the very beginning, and passed on his convictions to the Connexion so that we find, to our present knowledge, women being admitted to the itinerancy up till 1842 and Elizabeth Bultitude continued in the itinerancy till 1862 when she retired as a supernumerary to Norwich where she lived until her death in 1890 at the age of eighty-one.

It seems from the tract that Hugh Bourne was trying to answer some ‘propositions about female preaching which had been posed by a friend and so after having stated the Biblical position he goes on to deal with each proposition in turn. The first was: Is the preaching of women authorised by Jesus Christ? and again Bourne follows the standard answers by looking at the Old Testament and the women who ministered to Jesus. However, he goes a step further by maintaining that Jesus personally authorised the woman of Samaria:

‘I believe she was commissioned by the Holy Spirit to preach Jesus, and she did preach him with extraordinary success, and he authorized her ministry, for he joined in with it, and acted accordingly.’<sup>(130)</sup>

and also that a personal commission was given to Mary Magdalene to go to preach to the apostles, presumably a reference to the appearance in the garden after the resurrection, and Hugh Bourne concluded that:

‘Thus our Lord ordained her an apostle to the apostles, a preacher to the preachers, and an evangelist to evangelists.’<sup>(131)</sup>

The second proposition was: Was women's ministry countenanced by any of the apostles? and to this Hugh Bourne gives the standard answer from the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles. He deals similarly with the third one about historical documents and the fourth about scripture prophecy. When he tackles the fifth proposition which was: Is not women's preaching interdicted by apostolic authority? I Cor. xiv.34; I Tim. ii.11. Hugh Bourne feels that it would be:

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<sup>128</sup> See Appendix IV for the full text of this tract taken from Walford, op. cit. I pp. 172-177.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid. I. p. 173.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., I. p. 174.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid. p. 175.

‘harsh to suppose that an apostle interdicted what had been the practice of the church of God in all ages, what had been personally sanctioned by our Lord himself, and what even the same apostle had just been establishing, by giving rules for it. I Cor. xi 5, 6, 7.’<sup>(132)</sup>

He then embarks on a discussion of the role women played in the Corinthian Church, but concludes if women are only permitted to inquire of their husbands those who are married to ungodly husbands are bound for eternal damnation because they obviously cannot learn of the things of God from such men. If this further means that women cannot teach men religion then it is against God’s order because it would mean women could not teach their own sons. Had this always been the case Hugh Bourne says he himself would never have been converted because he owed his own conversion to his pious mother.

Having discussed the true meaning of prophesying Hugh Bourne concludes that in his view Christ had the final word when he said:

‘By their fruits ye shall know them.’

and gives instances where women’s work has been ‘owned’, where the Lord has ‘set his seal to a women’s ministry, by converting sinners to himself.’<sup>(133)</sup> In particular he refers to Mrs. Fletcher’s labours, the fact that her work was approved by Wesley and the benefit he himself had received from hearing her. Then he ends his tract with these words:

‘I think all the objections that can be brought may be confined to this, that the woman is the weaker vessel. But this is so far from making against, that it is strongly in favour of it. See I Cor. 27. And as God chose the ministry of women under darker dispensations, it would be strange if they are incapable of ministering, on account of being weaker vessels, now the gospel shines with a brighter light.’<sup>(134)</sup>

So I think there can be no doubt that Hugh Bourne was perfectly willing to make use of those women who genuinely felt a call to preach whether as local preachers or as travelling preachers. He felt that the opportunities were so great for spreading the Gospel and calling sinners to repentance that any suitable person, regardless of sex should be accepted, nay almost pressed into service. We can find in his Diary many references of this nature:

‘Tues. April 24th (1808)....‘in prayer it was revealed that the Lord had called her (Mrs. Powel) to the ministry.’<sup>(135)</sup>

and

‘Tues. Jan 2nd 1810. ‘Went to Dungeon, in Lancs, Mrs. Gallaway, at that place is a charming Christian and has a call to the ministry.’<sup>(136)</sup>

and

‘Sept. 1811....and the Lord is raising up some women viz. H. Heaton, D. Buxton, S. Scott and S. Mase. E. Salt at Wooton, bids fair to be

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid., I p. 175.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid. p. 177.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid. p. 177.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. p. 207.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid. p. 242.

useful...’<sup>(137)</sup>

and

‘Friday 19th March (1813) I came to Froghall and Esther Kent agreed to take some appointments.’<sup>(138)</sup>

and finally

‘The Derby Circuit was formed on new ground. The work of God went on rapidly in the new circuit, and an additional preacher being wanted, I engaged Sarah Kirkland of Mercaston - agreeing to pay her two guineas a quarter out of my own pocket. She laboured in the Derby Circuit with such success, that the quarter-day insisted on it as their right to pay her salary. That was a matter of indifference to me: but they were desirous to employ her wholly in that circuit, and were afraid if I paid her salary I should take her to labour in the other circuit. She travelled several years, and her conduct was a means of raising the character of female preachers very high. She was the first female preacher taken out to labour permanently as a travelling preacher in the Primitive Methodist Connexion.’<sup>(139)</sup>

If we now turn to look at the Primitive Methodist historians and apologists we can find comments about the remarkable phenomenon of female preaching which give some clues about the novelty and the impact that the use of women in this field had. Thomas Church was writing while there were still three women stationed by the Conference in 1847. He goes over all the Scriptural arguments again and also gives John Wesley’s attitude, then he comments:

‘It may be urged in favour of female preaching, that as Scripture does not specifically condemn their labours, and as many females in the Primitive Methodist Connexion have had numerous converts through their instrumentality, some of whom are now useful travelling preachers amongst us, thus labours of females in the ministry should not be abruptly dispensed with. We may, however, ask our readers whether there are not spheres of usefulness in which females could exercise with more success, and in greater harmony of character with their sex?’<sup>(140)</sup>

Thus it can be seen that by 1847, if, as seems likely Church’s views mirrored those of the majority of the Church, it was already being suggested that more suitable spheres of work than the itinerancy were open to women who wished to work in the Church. This feeling would reflect the decline to be seen in the number of women travelling preachers and the fact that no new women had been stationed by the Connexional Conference since 1842.

The Rev. J. Lightfoot in his Preface to his account of *The Life and Labours of Mary Porteous* is obviously concerned about the attitudes of people to female preaching at the time when he wrote. His work is dated 1862, the year in fact in which the last Primitive Methodist woman travelling preacher, Elizabeth Bultitude, retired and when the practice of having women itinerants was no longer in operation. Thus Lightfoot writes:

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid. p. 335.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid. p. 367.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid. p. 413; see also Wilkinson, *Hugh Bourne* p. 102.

<sup>140</sup> Church, Thomas, *Sketches of PM* (1847) p. 99.



‘In this work.... the question ‘Whether females ought, under any circumstances, to preach the Gospel, or to officiate otherwise in the Church of God, is not considered..... The writer is, however, fully satisfied that some females, like the late Mrs. Fletcher, of Madeley, for instance, have received an extraordinary call to exercise their talents in public teaching, and that much edification to God’s people, and the conversion of many souls have been the happy result. Whether Mrs. Porteous received such a call, let the reader judge, after seriously considering the very striking indications of Providence she received, and which fully satisfied her own mind.’<sup>(141)</sup>

From this extract it would appear that Lightfoot would not categorically deny that women had the right to preach, but he is clearly not happy about the phenomenon being a commonly accepted one and is perhaps even relieved that it was not much in evidence in his day!

H.B. Kendall, the prominent Primitive Methodist Church historian, author of the two volume history of the connexion, in an earlier work under the heading *No Sex in Church Work* wrote:

‘...’All at it; always at it’ was the early watchword. No sex distinctions were recognised when it was a duty to be done or a privilege to be enjoyed. It has been the mission of Primitive Methodism....to give the Churches an object lesson in regard to the value of woman’s work. Some of the most valuable of our early travelling preachers were females.... Besides these women itinerants, a succession of female class leaders and local preachers have from the beginning rendered valuable services in their more restricted spheres. Now, we have our Bible Women and our Sisters of the People and there are indications that woman’s agency will be drawn upon more and more amongst us. By empowering them to do the work who can do it best whatever their sex, we shall simply be returning to the policy of the early days. We led the way in this as in open air preaching, and there is no reason in the nature of things or in our Connexional history why we should now stay our steps or allow ourselves to be out-distanced by others.’<sup>(142)</sup>

It would seem that Kendall was justly proud of the part played by women travelling preachers in the early days of the Connexion and agreed that in the task of proclaiming the Gospel anyone ready, willing and able to undertake it was received with enthusiasm and put to work. However, he does appear to be warning the church that by ignoring the services of women they may be missing great opportunities and taking a retrograde step. It would be interesting to know what Kendall had in mind when he says ‘there are indications that woman’s agency will be drawn upon more and more amongst us’ did he mean in the local church? or was he thinking of the wider church? was he thinking of local preachers, class leaders and Sunday School teachers? or was he keeping his options open about women in the itinerancy?

Henry Woodcock writing in the first years of the present century remarks:

‘None of our early agencies excited so much curiosity, scorn or

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<sup>141</sup> Lightfoot, J., *Life of Mary Porteous* (1862) Preface pp. v-vi.

<sup>142</sup> Kendall, H.B., *Handbook of PM Church Principles, History and Polity* (1898) p. 42.

criticism as female preaching. To those who believed that preaching the Gospel was an exclusively manly function, female preaching was an outrage and an indecency. The great Dr. Johnson said, 'A woman's preaching is like a dog walking on his hind legs; it is not well done, but one surprised that it is done at all.' A clergyman, preaching a funeral sermon said in contempt, 'Balaam was converted by the braying of an ass; Peter by the crowing of a cock; and our lamented friend by the preaching of a woman'.'<sup>(143)</sup>

While Woodcock does not proffer his own views this extract gives some indication of the reactions occasioned by female preaching in the early years of the nineteenth century, perhaps, one might surmise from the more educated strata of society. Reactions of incredulity and scornful amusement.

In 1909 Ritson says:

'one of the most picturesque features of Primitive Methodism was female ministry..... (it) called forth considerable criticism and excited immense curiosity and the report that a woman was to preach at a Camp Meeting ensured a vast audience.'<sup>(144)</sup>

Ritson feels that John Wesley's attitude showed his ability to rise above prejudice, then he commented that at the beginning of the nineteenth century the Wesleyans had become rather 'conservative' towards the use of female preachers and that few were now allowed in their pulpits. With regard to their use in Primitive Methodism Ritson considered that Hugh Bourne showed his open-mindedness and realised the 'immense value of gifted and devoted women in evangelistic work and from their beginning he favoured their employment!' Once again we can see from this that the use of women in this sphere had proved novel and controversial, but it had undoubtedly played an important part in the development and consolidation of Primitive Methodism.

William Beckworth writing in 1910 comments that as Primitive Methodism extended its borders in the early days there was great demand for preachers to hold the places which had been opened.

'Men- aye, and women too- possessing piety and zeal were eagerly sought after and sent into the itinerant ministry. There was no waiting in those days for training and preparation, no question of being married or single, men of over fifty and youths in their teens, alike were pressed into the work, providing they had the true evangelistic spirit, a fair amount of education and the gift of utterance.'<sup>(145)</sup>

and before discussing some of the female preachers he says:

'In the early days of our Church History female preaching was not only permitted, but was popular and effective.'<sup>(146)</sup>

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<sup>143</sup>. Woodcock, H., *Romance of Reality* (n.d. c.1904) p. 65 see also Kendall op. cit. I p. 195 and fn.

<sup>144</sup> Ritson, *Romance of Primitive Methodism* (1909) pp. 133-4.

<sup>145</sup> Beckworth, *A Book of Remembrance* (1910) p. 18.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid. p. 49.

*The Christian Ambassador*, which later became known as *the Primitive Methodist Quarterly Review and Christian Ambassador* had over the years articles which touched on the subject of women's preaching. For example an article on Lorenzo Dow, the American evangelist, says:

‘In England he noticed the efficiency of thirty women preachers - half of the whole number of them belonging to the Primitive Methodists and inferred the propriety of employing such labourers everywhere.’<sup>(147)</sup>

The writer, of an article in 1883, William Dent, bears witness to the great value he placed on the colleague ship of female travelling preachers in the earlier years of his itinerancy. He says one (unnamed) female (probably Jane Ansdale) was ‘the most consistent professor of entire sanctification that he was ever associated with and uncommonly helpful to him in the pursuit of holiness.’ Dent regarded female preaching as an important feature of early Primitive Methodism and says that Hugh Bourne made use of women who had ‘caught the Pentecostal spirit’ and who possessed ‘superior gifts’ and that they met with ‘considerable success in the itinerant as well as in the local ministry.’ Then, with reference to his time of writing (1883), he, rather tantalisingly, says:

‘It is, we think, a favourable sign of the times that of late years female agency has been countenanced by different denominations; and we have no doubt that such agency will, in the future be multiplied to the great advantage of the cause of Christ.’<sup>(148)</sup>

In the 1885 *Quarterly Review* there was a Symposium, consisting of six papers, on ‘The position of woman in the Church’. James Macpherson in the first paper, having covered the Biblical teachings, states his own position which is that women should ‘minister to women’ and he denies ‘the propriety of women preaching publicly to promiscuous congregations’ and feels that there is plenty of work for them to do in other spheres than preaching, such as being employed as deaconess's, as in the early Church, as pastoral visitors and as home visitors to ‘bring the Gospel more generally to the masses who absent themselves habitually from the house of God’.<sup>(149)</sup>

The writer of the second paper, Thomas Greenfield, considers that women's true sphere is in the family, home and family, but then he goes on to deal with their position in the church, under the headings of ‘simple membership’ where both sexes are equal; ‘dispenser of the church's bounty’, as a deacon like the women who ministered to Christ; ‘teacher’, in the home or Sunday School or to other women and children but they may only hint lessons to men, before considering whether they should engage in ‘public prayer’. On balance he decides that this could be permitted as long as the women in question were ‘modest in dress’. However, Greenfield poses a number of pertinent questions when he considers women's right to preach, including:

‘Are females commanded to preach or if not are they forbidden? Must they, may they, can they preach? If they figure in this high office, should it be done under the sanction and at the desire of the Church or at their own option? If their labours result in winning souls to Christ, is

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<sup>147</sup> *Primitive Methodist Quarterly Review and Christian Ambassador* (3rd series) Vol. I (1879) p. 590 (Hereinafter cited as *PMQR*).

<sup>148</sup> *PMQR* (1883). Vol. V. pp. 16-21

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.* (1885) Vol. VII. pp. 223-41. espec. pp. 239-40.

their success a sufficient seal to their ministry?(<sup>150</sup>)

Working on the assumption that the question of ‘the staff of the Gospel Ministry’ is being discussed he asserts that Christ appointed twelve apostles with the power to lay on hands and so provide a succession, but he maintains that there is no record of any women being added to their number. In order to substantiate his argument Greenfield quotes Biblical texts for both sides. The conclusion he reaches is predictable and not very helpful. It does not advance the discussion very far. He feels that female preaching is not expressly forbidden and admits that in some people’s eyes this means that it is permissible, but presumably he is not convinced himself and maintains that:

‘the rule is that men shall do this work. But if all rules have exceptions, this will be liable to be infringed on, and in point of fact it has been.’(<sup>151</sup>)

So one is forced to the conclusion that Thomas Greenfield ends by sitting on the fence - he declines to champion the cause of women’s preaching, but he does not absolutely deny them the right to do it, saying, “Success in winning souls to Christ is the best argument in its favour whoever casts out devils commands our respect”.(<sup>152</sup>)

The writer, Robert Bryant, of the third paper does at least make his own position clear in this matter. Having dealt with the place women have held in the life and work of the church he turns to the vexed question of women preaching. He reviews the previous papers and the New Testament women and then he says that a woman:

‘may prophesy and preach the Word of Truth in the promiscuous congregation provided she is moved and called to it by the Spirit of God. But this privilege is not to be exercised without due regard to times and circumstances, to rule and order, and under the control of rightful authority and with especial reference to the spiritual edification and the comfort of those to whom she ministers.’(<sup>153</sup>)

However, in conclusion Bryant seems to come down on the side of those who were against females exercising a preaching ministry for he writes:

‘that though women may still possess the gift of prophesy and be allowed occasionally to exercise in the Church, yet the full work of the ministry is the exclusive prerogative of man. Whatever may be the gifts, knowledge and piety of a woman, she will not and cannot be equally active and prominent with man as public teacher, administrator and labourer in the Church.’(<sup>154</sup>)

William Bove in the next papers says that though there had been female itinerants in the early days of Primitive Methodism they had:

‘now become extinct as a class through the operation of the law of the

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid. (1885) pp. 241-5. espec. pp. 244-5.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid. (1885) pp. 241-5. espec. pp. 244-5.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.(1885) pp. 241-5. espec. pp. 244-5.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid. p. 434.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid. (1885) p. 434-5.

survival of the fittest and other cognate influences. Divine power of their speech and Christian development is still fragrant in the churches. We are not aware that their reputation as ladies suffered through their addressing promiscuous congregations on political, social and literary subjects and much less on religion.’<sup>(155)</sup>

He feels that there is no ‘impropriety’ in an educated Christian woman preaching to a promiscuous congregation and remarks that early Primitive Methodism was glad to use consecrated service from either sex. Bowe concludes his paper thus:

‘We are very far from favouring the indiscriminate employment of either men or women in the public service of the Church; but when there is consecrated to the service of God lofty intellectual endowments, a heart of impassioned fervour, a sympathetic and pure nature, we are not careful to question concerning the sex.’<sup>(156)</sup>

The fifth paper was presented by Thomas Parsons and he notes the three classes of opinion on the subject of female preaching - that there were those who are against it; those who would admit it under certain conditions and others who would allow it ‘without let or hindrance’. He feels that clergy who denounce female preaching from the pulpit, but allow women to speak to other women in rooms and halls have a very weak case as there is no valid difference. Parsons states his own view very definitely. He would allow such preaching, but under restriction. He maintains that:

‘It is the abuse of it that has rendered it so nauseating of late, and we as a Connexion are not altogether guiltless.’<sup>(157)</sup>

Having Wesley’s use of women in mind and the fact that the Methodist New Connexion and the United Methodist Free Church used women, he agreed with the Wesleyans that women might be used, but under very strict conditions so that only ‘good women’ would be accepted. It is frustrating not to know what Parsons means by the ‘abuse of it’ which had apparently turned people against female preaching so much, but he did comment:

‘No doubt the crass ignorance, the vulgar zeal, the unseemingly boldness exhibited by women preachers of late have pained many pious souls, and have led them to denounce the whole thing. This off-putting of womanhood is one of the calamities connected with recent evangelism.’<sup>(158)</sup>

One wonders if the women had been exploited or if their preaching standard had fallen and become perhaps rather sentimentalised, or, by the standards of the later nineteenth century, come to be regarded as vulgar and unladylike. Thomas Parsons states categorically:

‘Female preaching will never be other than incidental, accessory, unreliable;’<sup>(159)</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid. p. 440.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid. p. 442

<sup>157</sup> Ibid. p. 682.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid. p. 682.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid. p. 682.

and he goes on that while there are plenty of young men offering for the ministry the need for women is less urgent. It is open to speculation what Parsons means when he continues:

‘Our hope is that in the growing intelligence of our congregations will be found a remedy for that which at present, in many instances, is a reproach.’<sup>(160)</sup>

It does seem that Primitive Methodism was, by this time, committed to an educated ministry, but that this was not available to women. Then he urges that female candidates for the plans should be examined as the men were and that they should be under ‘circuit control’ and not have a ‘roving commission’. I wonder if this provides some sort of answer to the ‘abuse’. When women ceased being stationed by the Primitive Methodist Conference in 1862, with the retirement of Elizabeth Bultitude, many women continued as hired local preachers and evangelists. This latter category in particular would probably constitute Parsons’ grounds for the dislike of ‘roving commissions’ and his desire for ‘circuit control’. Presumably these women held special services and missions and in the areas in which they preached they had doubtless, as had the earlier travelling female preachers, provided a novelty attraction, and had drawn away large numbers from the local Primitive Methodist Church, which would not endear them to the established ministry. In 1833 the Silsden Circuit records show some ‘unpleasantness’ connected with Eliza Fletcher, a lady evangelist employed as a hired local preacher who apparently was not amenable to circuit discipline.<sup>(161)</sup> Mary Clarissa Buck, who had been a regularly stationed travelling preacher for eleven years retired in 1847/8 to devote her talents to evangelism and special services and continued in this capacity for the next twenty-five years. It is recorded that wherever she went she drew large congregations.<sup>(162)</sup> In addition records exist for other women evangelists and hired local preachers in this late period such as ‘Miss Bennett of Chester’ for example. Could it be that it was such instances which disturbed the male ministry? Was jealousy raising its ugly head?

The final paper in the Symposium was given by James MacPherson, who had opened the discussion and he maintains that he has not been swayed from his original position by all the arguments put forward in course of the debate. Then he sums up by affirming that preaching is forbidden:

‘to women, not on the ground of mental or moral inferiority, but in consideration of the constitutional difference of the sex, and the consequent different spheres of labour designed by Providence for them.’

and

‘It is said, ‘Success in winning souls to Christ is the best argument in its (female preaching) favour.’ very true. And if in any instance God should qualify a woman for this work and crown her labours with success, it would be an impertinence on the part of any mortal to attempt to justify the ways of God to man.’<sup>(163)</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid. p. 682.

<sup>161</sup> Robson, W.J., ed. *Silsden Primitive Methodism* (1910 Silsden) pp. 75, 78, 81. See also Clowes, *Journal* p. 332; see chapter 5 pp. 181ff of this work for further reference to hired local preachers.

<sup>162</sup> *PMM* (1853) p. 124; p. 305; p. 309; (1854) p. 370; p. 748.

<sup>163</sup> *PMQR* (1885) p. 683.

So he concludes that female preaching is not forbidden, but ..!

It is perhaps significant that all the contributors to the Symposium were ministers and in fact James MacPherson was Principal of the Manchester Theological Institute from 1878-1887.

Finally, in a pamphlet dated 1936, four years after Methodist Union, Thomas Graham remarks that after 1862, when Elizabeth Bultitude retired as a supernumerary, there was no woman in the active ministry and that it was:

‘an open secret that candidates would have been welcomed before Union and only uncertainty in other quarters caused the authorities to discourage two or three promising young women. Women local preachers were always welcome.’<sup>(164)</sup>

One is forced to the conclusion from studying all these documents that the Primitive Methodist Connexion had nothing fundamentally against the use of female itinerants, in theory at least, but that as time went on it was felt that their talents could be better employed other than in the itinerancy, though the Connexion was willing to keep its options open and not categorically ban women from becoming travelling preachers.

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<sup>164</sup> Graham, Thomas, *Now Cop and After: The Story of Primitive Methodism* (1936, 2nd ed) p. 7.

## CHAPTER FOUR: DAY BY DAY REALITY: THE LIFE AND WORK OF EARLY PRIMITIVE METHODIST ITINERANTS

As we have seen Primitive Methodism, in spite of debate both within its own body and elsewhere, was happy to use women preachers from its earliest days. When the Connexion was formally established; the first Conference held and the first Minutes published in 1819-20 we read a series of resolutions which applied to the travelling preachers. Some of them are obviously specifically related to men, some to women, but many would apply to both. This is indeed the case with much of the following material. It would in fact erect a completely artificial barrier if one were to attempt to differentiate between the sexes in such matters as workload, hardships, persecutions, types of preaching, regulations about dress and other more general regulations. So, in looking briefly at the life and work of the early Primitive Methodist itinerants and especially at the Conference Regulations I have regarded directions to the travelling preachers as applicable to both sexes, unless there is definite evidence to the contrary, as for example in the matter of salary. As the years went by many of these regulations were reaffirmed; some were extended; some were adapted and some were altered. Where these related particularly to female itinerants this will be noted, otherwise it is assumed that such regulations applied to the travelling preachers as a body, regardless of sex.

### THE TRAVELLING PREACHER

In the *Primitive Methodist Minutes* of 1819/20 the question is asked:

‘To what age shall the admission of travelling preachers be limited?’

and the answer was given:

‘None shall be taken in above forty five.’<sup>(165)</sup>

The question deals with the admission of travelling preachers and states that they have to be recommended by their own quarter day boards, after being examined by a circuit committee. Following from this we learn that they were to be examined about their conversion and experience; their doctrinal beliefs and how they intended to pass them on and also about their view of the ministry and their call to that ministry. After that the Minutes detail the doctrines held by the Primitive Methodist Connexion:

‘The innocency of Man in his first state, a -The fall of man. b - General redemption by Christ Jesus. c - Repentance. d - Justification of the ungodly by faith. Santification by the Holy Spirit, producing inward and outward holiness. e - The divinity of Jesus Christ. f - The resurrection of the dead. g - The general judgement. h - And eternal rewards and punishments.’<sup>(166)</sup>

The following information was required from the quarter day boards by the Annual Meeting regarding a prospective candidate for the ministry:

‘An account of his age, and station in life; whether he has made any engagements relative to marriage, and whether his circumstances are embarrassed, and if a married man what family; a description of his talents; the time he has been a local preacher, with an account of his usefulness, Christian experience, and conduct in the society; and a

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<sup>165</sup> *PM Mins* (1819/20) p. 4.

<sup>166</sup> *PM Mins* (1819/20) p. 4



statement of the doctrines he holds.’<sup>(167)</sup>

If we are correct in assuming that these regulations were adhered to it would seem that the Travelling preachers of Primitive Methodism were carefully vetted about their lives, doctrines and call to the ministry. It would appear, therefore, that a certain basic standard was required for the travelling preachers so that the greatest possible impact might be made on its hearers by the movement, backed up with authority and so the danger of falling into disrepute would be minimal. The Connexion, itself, was ready to admit in 1826 that its evangelist thrust had necessitated the taking in of ‘unworthy labourers’, but this matter was put right and some thirty travelling preachers left the ministry. However, I feel we are justified in thinking that on the whole Primitive Methodism was careful in the authorizing of its travelling preachers to see that they conformed to this minimal requirement and were really called by God to do his work and not merely taking a job when little else was available because of the current economic climate.<sup>(168)</sup>

Perhaps it would be as well to include here some remarks about ‘propriety’. The Primitive Methodist authorities were well aware that the phenomenon of women preachers was liable to be misrepresented and that it was essential that there should be no cause for any hint of slander or gossip to be levelled at them. Deborah Valenze is at pains to point out that the Wesleyan Methodist authorities were against women preachers because their behaviour, when measured against the polite standards of female etiquette, was an unwelcome blessing. She feels that not only the emotional revivalist fervour, but ‘the late hours of night-time meetings and the exigencies of solitary travel to and from appointments placed women in highly vulnerable situations. Their public display of aggression and passion suggested looseness bordering on licentiousness. They not only appeared improper and indecent but their play for the power of the pulpit overturned the patriarchal assumption of chapel and men.’<sup>(169)</sup> then turning to sectarian Methodism she further maintains that the economic climate led to insecurity in the home with little chance of marriage or a job for female labourers and so women turned to popular evangelism. The upheaval which occurred when these women ‘got religion’ often led to a ‘denial of female decency, dress and to gossip .... this meant they could not participate in village life and made marriage pretty impossible.’<sup>(170)</sup> As I see it her implication is that women turned to popular evangelism and cottage religion as an outlet for their energies and frustrations when faced with the difficult economic times. While I think this is quite possible I do not feel the references she cites altogether back up her contention. I feel she has ignored the rulings of the Primitive Methodist Conference about the validity and testing of a preacher’s call and gives the authorities little credit for their care in ensuring that the itinerants, even the most enthusiastic, should behave correctly and give no cause for concern in respect of either their spiritual or physical lives. Thus in the 1827 *Minutes*:

‘Rules to promote Propriety, and prevent Slander, etc.

10. Q. What regulations are made to preserve strict propriety, and to prevent inconvenience, slander, and confusion?

A. They are as follows. No preacher shall be allowed to take any female alone with him, nor to suffer any female so to

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<sup>167</sup> ibid. p. 5.

<sup>168</sup> Valenze, D.M. , ‘Prophetic Sons and Daughters’, especially pp. 85-86.

<sup>169</sup> Valenze, op. cit. p. 43.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid. p. 85.

accompany him, (his own wife excepted,) in going to or returning from any of his appointments; and the female preachers shall be under a similar regulation.

11. Q. What shall be done if a preacher breaks this rule?

A. He, or She, shall be admonished for the first offence or breach, and laid aside for the second offence or breach. This refers to both travelling and local preachers; and the admonition shall be from the Quarter Day Board, or the Circuit Committee, and shall be delivered verbally, or by letter, or by delegation.'<sup>(171)</sup>

As well as this concern for propriety it might also have been an unconscious influence from the Society of Friends, to which body, as we have seen, Hugh Bourne had been attracted, which accounts for the fact that right from the beginning the *Minutes* contain regulations about dress:

Q. 'In what dress shall our travelling preachers appear in public?

A. In a plain one. The men to wear single breasted coats, single breasted waistcoats, and their hair in its natural form; and not be allowed to wear pantaloons, fashionable trousers, nor white hats; and that our female preachers be patterns of plainness in all their dress.'<sup>(172)</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> *PM Mins* (1827) p. 4.

<sup>172</sup> *PM Mins* (1819 onwards) see (1819) p.5; (1821) p.7 etc.

Figure 2: Mrs Hallam - Formerly Mary Hadfield and Mrs Barkworth – Formerly Mary Ball



We are told that one of the early female preachers was announced to preach at a camp meeting and when she ‘appeared in the procession in semi-Quaker garb-dove-coloured silk bonnet, scuttle shaped - many stood astonished.’<sup>(173)</sup> Mary Elizabeth Anna Moore’s dress was described as ‘that of a Quaker’.<sup>(174)</sup> Often the women preachers wore “a ranter’s cap” which was a white linen bonnet with two white tabs which hung on either side of the face, and a black dress.<sup>(175)</sup> A passing comment in an extract from Elizabeth Bultitude’s journal, which is included in her obituary perhaps indicates that she felt embarrassed because she could not afford better clothes.<sup>(176)</sup> Ritson, writing in 1909, reports that some folk could still remember Elizabeth with ‘her large, round, rubicund face in poke bonnet.’<sup>(177)</sup> Two interesting minutes on the subject of female preachers dress have been found in Record Offices:

‘resolved that Miss Buck go to preach their sermons at Leek providing the (sic) will make her a present of a New Silk Dress. This Minute to be copied (sic) and sent to them - to be black as she is in mourning.’<sup>(178)</sup>

and

‘resolved that T. King speak to E. Quarton respecting her superfluous dress, and the necessity of keeping her promises, and that if she do not improve she go home.’<sup>(179)</sup>

This latter comment is perhaps elucidated in a pamphlet where we read that one Quarterly Meeting resolution says:

‘in our judgement Sister ....does not conform to rule in plainness of dress, with regard to her cap, watch guard and bag, and we request her to conform in future.’<sup>(180)</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Woodcock, H, *Romance of Reality* p. 37.

<sup>174</sup> *PMM* (1868) p. 535.

<sup>175</sup> See Figures 2 & 3 which give some idea of the dress of the female itinerants.

<sup>176</sup> *PMM* (1891) p. 564.

<sup>177</sup> Ritson, *Romance of Primitive Methodism*, p. 152.

<sup>178</sup> Burland Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarter Day Minutes June 1838 - April 1845 (April 27, 1844, resolution 63), Cheshire Record Office.

<sup>179</sup> Quarterly Meeting Minutes Book Preston Brook Primitive Methodist Circuit September 1838 - December 1846 (June 7, 1741~, resolution 35), Cheshire Record Office.

<sup>180</sup> Ridge, F. Morgan, *The Story of a 100 years 1826-1926: being the account of the history of the Primitive Methodists in the Prees Green Circuit* (1926) p.15

Figure 3: Mrs Elizabeth Brownhill - Formerly Elizabeth Johnson & Mrs Sampson Turner (in old age) – Formerly Mary Edwards



As Emma Quarton was pledged by the Preston Brook Circuit and was stationed the Prees Green Circuit at the relevant date it seems certain that the second comment refers to her. She is only listed on the stations for one year, 1841, so it is interesting to speculate if she, like the rich young ruler of the Gospels, went away sadly! That she remained within the Primitive Methodist fold is evident as an obituary written by her survives,<sup>(181)</sup> as well as reports of services being taken by ‘Miss E. Quarton of Nottingham’.<sup>(182)</sup>

Although the travelling preachers were so badly paid they were forbidden to engage in any business to supplement their stipends.<sup>(183)</sup> In fact there is extant a ‘Private Communication’ which apparently lists a number of matters to be dealt with by a disciplinary session of the Annual Meeting (1824?) and among these we find the following:

‘In 1823, a Circuit Steward complained, saying that one travelling preacher’s wife had been setting up a line of business and he had frequently neglected his appointments to assist her.....’<sup>(184)</sup>

However, they were agents for books, pamphlets or tracts produced by the Connexion or for ones duly authorised and they were entitled to 10% on all the books they sold. Should any clear profits arise from the 10% they were to be divided equally amongst all the travelling preachers, both male and female in the circuit within which they had been sold. So here was equality at least.<sup>(185)</sup>

### **THE PREACHERS FUND**

Now, however, a brief glance must be given at three ‘institutions’ or ‘funds’ which were set up very early in the Connexion’s history to help the travelling preachers and to see how these related to the female itinerants in particular. The Annual Meeting of 1823 resolved that the travelling and hired local preachers should form a club or subscription among themselves to raise ‘a fund’.<sup>(186)</sup> The inaugural meeting was held at Hull on 25th August 1823 when the ‘Rules and Regulations of An Institution called the Primitive Methodist Preachers Fund’ were drawn up and three of these regulations are of special interest to the present study, namely that all, whether travelling preachers or hired local preachers who had been travelling preachers before 15th August 1823 were eligible without respect of age; that no one should become a member after the age of forty-five and that the intending member must have travelled for two years before being allowed to become a member. There was apparently no restriction on women at that time or at least it was not spelled out that they were excluded.<sup>(187)</sup> This Friendly fund was designed to benefit those itinerants who joined it and also to assist their widows and children. Eventually in 1840, it was agreed at the yearly meeting held in Manchester to have the rules enrolled ‘that they may the more effectually carry out the purposes for which the society was formed.’ and this was duly done.<sup>(188)</sup> Rule 23 now stated:

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<sup>181</sup> *PMM* (1860) p. 638.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.* (1853) pp 49, 303, 751; (1854) p. 502

<sup>183</sup> *PM Mins* (1822) p. 10.

<sup>184</sup> *Private Communication* p. 2 (MARC)

<sup>185</sup> *PM Mins* (1819/20) p.9.

<sup>186</sup> *PM Mins* (1823) p. 4.

<sup>187</sup> John Hallam, *Book Fund Rules: Rules and Regulations of An Institution called the PM Preachers Fund formed at Hull August 25th 1823* (Hull, 1823). John Hallam papers (MARC).

<sup>188</sup> *Rules of the PM Itinerant Preachers’ Friendly Society, (1840, 1841)* p. 6. WHS Library,

‘No female travelling preacher shall be admitted as a member of the society; nor shall any male travelling preacher be admitted as a member after he is forty years of age; nor shall any travelling preacher who is under twenty-one years of age be admitted, unless the consent of his parents, masters or guardians, be sent in writing to the Yearly Meeting.....’

One can only hazard a guess as to why these restrictions were placed on these three categories of travelling preachers. Presumably under twenty-one was under the age of consent and maybe the meeting felt that it was advisable for travelling preachers to be mature and hopefully committed to the itinerancy before they were to be admitted. In fact the rule quoted above goes on to list other restrictions one of which was that the preachers, as well as being in good health had to have been a ‘regular travelling preacher’ for a least two years. Those over forty might arguably have passed the prime of life and therefore have a diminished life expectancy and thus constitute a higher risk factor. As for the women, not only was the Connexion by 1840, beginning to lose its enthusiasm for female itinerants, but I suppose that officials of the Preachers Friendly Fund took into account that the women might marry and opt out of the system and that could cause administrative problems. Annuities were paid to those who met the qualifications demanded by the membership rules. The names of the husbands of several former female travelling preachers feature on the list of members given when the Society was enrolled in Her Majesty’s High Court of Chancery, 28th January, 1841, notably, Sampson Turner (Mary Edward(e)s), John Ride (Martha Doncaster), Richard Cordingly (Mary Anna Elizabeth Moor(e)), Samuel West (Elizabeth Wheeldon), and then there are at least three whose wives acted as hired local preachers at various times. The list is particularly useful as it gives dates, ages, and information about dependants, thus enabling us to fill in a few more gaps about the female travelling preachers. <sup>(189)</sup>

### **THE CHARITABLE FUND**

The Charitable Fund came into being because of the crisis which faced the Connexion in 1825-1828. It is a well attested fact that, particularly in the early days, anyone with any aptitude for preaching was encouraged, nay at times, almost pressured, into entering the itinerant ministry and so many travelling preachers, who were not suitable for one reason or another and who in later years would not have been admitted, were accepted. The great success and expansion of the work led to an excess of zeal in some circuits for the taking out of too many travelling preachers. This presumably applied to both sexes. However, during the period 1825-1828 there was an increase in membership of only seventy-five in 1825 and returns were not published for the following two years, while a decrease of 1,897 was recorded for 1828. Many circuits were in debt and clearly something had to be done to rectify the situation. The Connexion had grown too fast for its own good and it needed building up, so Hugh Bourne, having sent a warning letter, followed it up with his Private Communication aimed at those preachers who were not pulling their weight. It was to such problems that the Conference regulation of 1826 was addressed when in answer to the question ‘How shall the Connexion be preserved?’ it was decreed that ‘No circuit, already in debt, shall be allowed to run any further in debt; and no circuit not now in debt shall be allowed to run in debt.’

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Southlands College, London. These rules are bound in at the back of the *PM Mins* for 1836-1840.

<sup>189</sup> List of the PM Itinerant Preachers’ Friendly Society and of their wives and Children in *Rules*, op. cit. pp. 47-55.

A Connexional statute was enacted which said ‘It was found necessary for all preachers to be put on beginning to make proof of their ministry!’ The result of this was that within the next year thirty preachers, described as ‘runners-out’, had left the ranks of the ministry. It must be said that they were not all idle or incompetent, some had family responsibilities which they could see little chance of meeting within the itinerancy. It is also certain that the rapid growth of the work in the early period had led to the employment of unsuitable persons and so, although the solution was rather drastic, the Connexion was better for the purging. A table of the women involved in these years does not altogether indicate that the women were involved in this purge. <sup>(190)</sup> Of the fifteen women listed in 1824 five dropped out in 1825, two (and possibly a third) of whom married. In fact as they married male travelling preachers, one could say that they continued their work in another guise. That same year three more were added, so the status quo was virtually maintained. None retired the following year, but three joined the ranks with the addition of two more the next year. In 1828 eight names are missing from the previous year’s list, of these, one married and Jane Holliday and her husband retired and settled in Hull. However, five started work that year, so the total in 1828 was fourteen. In terms of years of service we find that Hannah Johnson did six years; three worked for five; Ann Stanna served for four; Sarah Lacey for two and two only travelled for one year. Thus it seems likely that if any of them were involved in the ‘running-out’ it was only a very small number.

**Table 3: Women who left or joined the Itinerancy between 1824 and 1828**

1824	1825	1826	1827	1828
Elizabeth Allen				
Mary Allen				
Mary Birks				
Elizabeth Clifford				
Martha Doncaster	married			
Mary Edwards	married			
Hannah Farr				
Jane Holliday				She & husband retired & became local preachers
Adelaide Hovey				
Elizabeth Johnson				married
Hannah Johnson				
Sarah Spittal				
Ann Stanna				
Hannah Whitehouse				
Sarah Woolfitt	married?			
	?Jane Ayre			
	Sarah Lacey			x
	Ruth Watkins			
		Ann Lowden		
		Mary Porteous		
		Sarah Welch		
			Margaret Cutler	

<sup>190</sup> See Table 3.



			Sarah Priestman	Sarah Price Ann Scoltock Elizabeth Smith Ann Tinsley Ann Wilson
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In order to ensure that such a crisis did not recur and to preserve the quality and integrity of the ministry and to maintain the dynamic growth of the Connexion the Annual Meeting adopted a policy of the labourer being worthy of his hire (Luke 10:7). Inevitably some worthy travelling preachers were bound to suffer as it was ordained that none should receive more than the circuit could afford so that the circuit would not be ‘run-out’. However, the Annual Meeting was well aware of the attendant problems that faced the preachers:

‘It is manifest, that several of our useful industrious preachers have come short of their salaries, not by their own fault, but by being put into run-out circuits, where they have had to labour for their own salaries and allowances, and for the salaries and allowances of the preachers who had gone before them, and who had run the circuits out. Now this has been very distressing in respect of several useful preachers; and it calls for the sympathy of all. It is true, they have borne it patiently, and have not fainted; although it is evident they have suffered very much, both in their minds and in their circumstances. And to alleviate, in some degree, these distresses, it is appointed to raise a charitable fund, as follows:

1. Every quarter-day board that can afford it, is earnestly requested to subscribe quarterly a sum, not less than five shillings.
2. Every travelling preacher who can afford it, is requested to subscribe something quarterly, towards assisting his suffering brethren.

.....

5. The disposal of the proceeds of this fund will be, in the first place, to make up the deficiencies of salaries, to those preachers, in whose hands the circuits have manifestly improved, and who have come short of their salaries not by their own fault, during the last twelve months; if there be any overplus it will be applied, as far as it will go, to equalizing the children; but it will in all cases be confined to those travelling preachers in whose hands the circuits have manifestly improved, and to those only and to further assist, if there should still be such short comings.’<sup>(191)</sup>

As can be seen from this extract to a large extent the preachers were responsible for raising their own salaries and they were encouraged to improve their circuits, not only ‘for the work’s sake’, but also with the carrot of obtaining their full salaries. For example, Elizabeth Smith when she started to travel was appointed to open a mission in Radnorshire. Nothing having been mentioned about a salary, perhaps with supreme faith (or foolhardiness) she did not ask about it, however, as she set off she was told she would have to raise her own salary of two guineas a

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<sup>191</sup> *PM Mins* (1828) pp. 4-5.

quarter.<sup>(192)</sup> Again, when she was missioning in the Brinkworth area money was so short that she often went to bed hungry rather than embarrass the circuit.<sup>(193)</sup> Several Minutes preserved in Record Offices provide other instances of the financial straits in which circuits found them-selves. Those in which women were involved include the Durham Circuit in 1846 when Eleanor Brown was ‘given liberty to collect to meet our present deficiency’<sup>(194)</sup> and again in 1847 it was recorded ‘that Sister Brown have liberty according to her request to solicit private subscriptions towards her deficiency in salary being £1.1s.0d’<sup>(195)</sup> Deficiencies in salaries are also shown for Matilda Archer (1839, 1840) in the Ludlow Circuit; for Sarah Price (1828) in Redruth; for Mary Gribble (1835) and Ann Woodward (1835, 1836, 1837) in St. Austell.<sup>(196)</sup> Mary Porteous ‘begged’ on behalf of the North Shields Circuit.<sup>(197)</sup> Matters were so bad in the Cambridge Circuit that at one stage the travelling preachers were withdrawn and so the circuit disappeared from the stations for several years till it could meet its financial obligations.<sup>(198)</sup>

With regard to the preachers the ‘big stick’ was virtually wielded by the resolution that any preacher being convicted of running out a circuit would be ‘fined at the discretion of the Annual Meeting.’<sup>(199)</sup> Perhaps this helps to explain the fines imposed and recorded in the Quarterly Meeting Minutes of the Redruth Circuit ‘that Sarah Price for neglect of opportunity forfeit according to Rule.’ and in the corresponding Accounts ‘Fines - Bekerleg - Price - Moorish 4s.6d’.<sup>(200)</sup>

Some idea of the progress of the Charitable Fund can be gleaned from the 1829 *Minutes* where we read that the Fund has ‘£24.16s.5d.’ and that the claimant should send in an account of the state the circuit was in when he was stationed there; proof that it has improved; and a note about the deficiency of his salary. These being considered the money would be remitted as soon as possible ‘while the money lasts.’<sup>(201)</sup> After this date there are many references both of contributor to and payment from the Fund. For example, in 1832 twenty women itinerants are listed among the contributors to the Relief Fund for Industrious Preachers in Distressed Circuits and recipients included:

Preacher	Circuit	Deficiencies	Payments
A. Scoltock	Whitby	£15. 0. 0.	£3. 15. 0.
E. James	Haverfordwest	£ 6. 0. 0.	£1. 10. 0.

Payment was made at the rate of five shillings in the pound.<sup>(202)</sup> The last year for which a

<sup>192</sup> *PMM* (1837) p. 98; Kendall op. cit. II p. 282. The date of the incident was September 1826.

<sup>193</sup> *PMM* (1837) p. 179.

<sup>194</sup> Minute Book for the Durham Circuit, 1841-1848 (September 19<sup>th</sup>, 1846, (8)) (Durham R.O.)

<sup>195</sup> Ibid. (June 19<sup>th</sup> 1847) (11)).

<sup>196</sup> Ludlow Primitive Methodist Circuit Accounts 1836-1844 (December 23rd 1839; March 22nd 1840; June 22nd 1840; September 21st 1840) (Shropshire R.O.); Redruth Circuit Quarterly Accounts, 1828-1830 (September 1st 1828); St. Austell Circuit Minute Book (June 8th 1835, September 7th 1835, December 7th 1835, September 5th 1836, December 5th 1836, March 6th 1837, June 1837) (Cornwall R.O.)

<sup>197</sup> Lightfoot, *Life of Mary Porteous*, p. 132f, Woodcock, op. cit. p. 39

<sup>198</sup> *PM Mins* (1834, 1835, 1836) missing from the Stations of the Preachers cf. Tice, Frank, *The Story of Methodism in Cambridge* (1966) p. 72.

<sup>199</sup> *PM Mins* (1828) p. 6.

<sup>200</sup> op. cit. (September 1st, 1828).

<sup>201</sup> *PM Mins.* (1829) p. 6.

<sup>202</sup> *PM Mins* (1832) pp. 9-11.

detailed account of this Fund is given is 1837, after that merely the totals received and disbursed are recorded.<sup>(203)</sup> So in 1837 it can be seen that twelve circuits needed help on behalf of nineteen preachers, one of whom was Lydia Cockerill when she was deficient in her salary in the Barnstaple Circuit and sixteen women contributed in that year. <sup>(204)</sup>

It seems that given their limited resources the Annual Meeting, the travelling preachers, circuits and the ordinary members tried to act as honourably as they could towards their fellow itinerants. Although the recommended salaries were so low, a single man £3. 15s.; a married man £7. 16s. ; a female £2. (1819) plus expenses, with increases in 1823, and 1831, as can be seen many of the circuits were unable to raise even this small amount in spite of all the efforts by the preachers to develop the work in order to finance the preacher and the mission. It must be remembered that most of the congregations consisted of workers who earned only about the same wages as the itinerants' salaries were <sup>(205)</sup> and so they could ill afford even a modest contribution towards their travelling preachers' upkeep, not to mention their allowances. The Annual Meeting salary rates were after all only recommendations.

The Charitable Fund appears to have helped both male and female travelling preachers equally when their salaries were deficient, but it should be remembered that the salaries of the women were less in the first place and so it might have been assumed that circuits would have found it easier to pay their female itinerant. This does not appear to have made much difference to those circuits which were financially embarrassed. Certainly some circuits liked to have female travelling preachers <sup>(206)</sup> and some circuits were prepared to go to considerable lengths to obtain a favoured female itinerant, as illustrated by the following extract:

‘The method of securing travelling preachers in the far-off days was by no means simple. Some minutes in the Circuit books reveal a strange mixture of piety and worldly cunning, when some coveted worker was sought after. Women were in great demand because they drew large congregations and accepted smaller salaries. It was thought quite right to pay a woman less for her services than a man, even when her work was more effective and remunerative..... In 1837 an attempt was made to secure a popular female preacher from the Burland Circuit. If she could not be secured it was possible to get a young man from Presteign. The Circuit decided to try for the woman first, even at the risk of paying the difference between her salary and that of the young man. But this munificent offer was not to be made unless the Burland Circuit objected to forego the services of such a popular preacher.

Four minutes were passed at the June Quarterly Meeting that year to secure a successful issue for these difficult negotiations:

1. That if the way be clear with the woman, brother Nixon get her, if he can, instead of the man -if not we receive him according to the offer of the Burland Circuit.
2. That if any objection be made on account of the difference of salary between the man and the woman this circuit will pay the difference.

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<sup>203</sup> Ibid. (1838) p. 19.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid. (1837) pp. 21, 15-17.

<sup>205</sup> Petty, op. cit. p. 265, where he says that agricultural labourers in the Brinkworth mission only earned six or seven shillings a week, i.e. between £3. 18s. and £4. 11s. per quarter. cf. Ritson, op. cit. pp. 208-210.

<sup>206</sup> See Chapter 5 pages 154ff and Tables 10 and 11.

3. That if Burland give up the woman without name the salary then this circuit offer to pay the young man's travelling expenses from Presteign to Burland.
4. That James Nixon go to Burland about this.  
How the negotiations ended is not stated.'<sup>(207)</sup>

By means of the Charitable Fund then Primitive Methodism tried to alleviate the financial problems of its itinerants, especially when the problem was not of their own making.

In addition to these measures discipline was tightened up and the system of Circuit and ministers' pledges was instituted, by which the circuit which 'took out' a travelling preacher engaged to be responsible for him or her during the probationary period until the person in question was admitted to the Annual list of travelling preachers. The preacher had to give a personal pledge to conduct him or herself creditably and that if, for any reason, it became necessary to leave the ministry to do so 'quietly and peaceably.'<sup>(208)</sup>

### **THE CONTINGENT FUND**

As early as the Preparatory Meeting of 1819 and the following first Annual Meeting of 1820 consideration was given to the question of what could be done to help travelling preachers who fell sick and it was directed that they should apply for medical aid and then present the bill to their Quarter Day Board. The board would then decide whether it could help to defray the cost. Further, circuits were recommended to consider the advisability of setting up a fund for maintaining sick preachers. The problem was highlighted because of the illness of John Harrison, Sarah Kirkland's husband. The Nottingham circuit committee raised a fund to assist him and they hoped to be able to pay him up to, but not more than, nine shillings a week.<sup>(209)</sup>

The following year it was decided to tackle the problem connexionally rather than leave it to the individual circuits and so the Annual Meeting agreed that each travelling preacher should subscribe half-a-crown a quarter and also solicit a penny per year from each member. It was further proposed that the fund would be at the disposal of the Annual Meeting; that no one could be a member until he or she had travelled for one year and that 'all matters relative to this fund be brought from the respective quarter day boards through the district meetings to the Annual Meeting. These proposals to continue in force for one year only.'<sup>(210)</sup> As two preachers were urgently in need of support circuits were recommended to take action immediately. Evidently after this initial venture the Annual Meeting decided that matters should be put on a more permanent footing and so we find that both the travelling and hired local preachers were recommended to make provision, by their own subscriptions, for themselves and their families, perhaps by the use of a savings bank regularly. This new recommendation was meant to supersede the one of 1821 and so the subscription of half-a-crown paid by some preachers was to be returned in order that they could 'commence a provision on a proper and equitable footing.'<sup>(211)</sup> Circuits were urged to continue with the idea of raising a penny per member to

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<sup>207</sup> Langham, James P., *The Tunstall Book: a souvenir of a Hundred years of Grace, 1810-1910* (n.d.) p. 49

<sup>208</sup> *PM Mins* (1828) pp. 28-29. See also *Consolidated Minutes* (1836) p. 33. 'This rule refers to females as well as males'. The *Minutes* each year contain a list of preachers' pledged by their circuits e.g. (1837) pp. 1-2.

<sup>209</sup> *PM Mins* (1820) p. 6; (1819) p 4.

<sup>210</sup> *PM Mins* (1821) p. 14.

<sup>211</sup> *PM Mins* (1822) p. 14. This presumably led to the setting up of the PM Itinerants Friendly Fund. See pages 79-80 of this chapter.

assist the travelling and hired local preachers who fell upon hard times. It was also hoped to be able to come to the assistance of superannuated preachers and their widows and any children under the age of ten. A committee was set up to deal with this Contingent Fund as it was named and regulations were laid down for the administration of it. So if a preacher was ill for a month and the circuit authorities felt he or she was in need then application duly verified, should be made to the committee and, if the treasurer had 'money in hand, the committee may assist the case.' The payment was not to exceed £10. The first recipient was A.T. Woodnorth, of Tunstall and he was to:

'have nine shillings a week from April 13, 1822 when his illness so greatly increased, that his wife was obliged to leave off work to attend on him.'<sup>(212)</sup>

The last phrase in this minute raises the intriguing question of whether his wife was also a travelling preacher or if she was in a secular occupation and perhaps thereby to some extent subsidised her husband's preaching endeavours. Unfortunately, it is not possible to follow up this idea of wives helping to support their husbands and thereby supplementing their meagre salary from the Connexion as firm evidence is lacking. However, it is a fact that, certainly in the early days, before the Connexion was firmly established some preachers travelled for a while and then went back to their occupations, presumably to save up some more money before setting off again to proclaim the gospel as full-time itinerants. Also when the preachers gave up itinerancy they often followed some trade or engaged in some useful occupation. Thus Sarah Kirkland ran a small dairy farm<sup>(213)</sup> and Mary Porteous, at various times ran a school for young girls; took in needlework; opened a pastry shop and a temperance coffee-house.<sup>(214)</sup> Several of the men did likewise. While Elizabeth Smith was engaged in the Hampshire and Berkshire mission (1831) she frequently used her expertise as a dressmaker to help those in need by altering and fitting clothes. Doubtless she regarded this as part of her Christian service, but, although it is extremely unlikely that she was paid or indeed would have accepted any money, the fact remains that she could have supported her husband later if forced so to do.

However, to return to the Contingent Fund itself. It is beyond dispute that the work of the Primitive Methodist itinerancy was extremely hard. Many preachers fell victim to sickness and ill-health, often brought about by the conditions in which they worked.

By 1823 all travelling preachers and hired local preachers who became ill had their salaries paid by the circuit in which they were stationed for the quarter following the start of their illness, after which they were referred to the Contingent Fund from whence they would receive help. This fund would look after the sick travelling preacher till the next Annual Meeting. However, it seems probably that only those circuits which participated in subscribing to the fund could recommend their preachers to it. Each participating circuit was required to subscribe one penny per member annually. The means of raising the levy was to be left to the discretion of the circuit quarter day board.<sup>(215)</sup>

The *Minutes* of the following year spell out the regulations in detail, though the original broad out-line is the same, however rule 5 states:

'That a married travelling preacher have fourteen shillings a week when

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<sup>212</sup> Ibid. p. 14-15.

<sup>213</sup> *PMM* (1881) p. 421.

<sup>214</sup> Lightfoot, J., *Life and Labour of Mrs. Mary Porteous* (1862) pp. 131, 137.

<sup>215</sup> *PMMins* (1823) pp. 3, 4.

sick, and that a single one have ten shillings a week. And that a female travelling preacher have six shillings a week'.<sup>(216)</sup>

and 13 and 14 say:

'That no preacher shall have the benefit from the contingent fund until (sic) he has travelled two years'

'That the preachers shall only receive support from the contingent fund for twelve months at one time.'<sup>(217)</sup>

There were slight variations in 1829 when money was paid out after two weeks illness instead of four and an additional two shillings were given in place of payment of doctors bills. Some indication of the financial straits of the Connexion is shown by the comment that only sick preachers could be relieved that year as the fund was so low.<sup>(218)</sup> In 1831 the Conference changed the name of the Contingent Fund to The Circuits-assistant-sick-travelling-preachers-fund as it was 'raised to assist circuits in the cases of travelling preachers sickness.'

The very fact that the Connexion was concerned enough about the health of its travelling preachers and the financial difficulties in which both they and their circuits could find themselves in the event of illness to try to raise a fund to alleviate the situation, even if only to a modest degree, shows a caring ministry to the ministry, especially when it is remembered that the people who made up the congregations were, on the whole, from the poorer sections of society.

*Minutes* regarding salaries show that in this respect there was not equality of the sexes for a single man was allowed up to £3.15.0d. a quarter plus board and lodging; while a married man received 12/- a week (£7.16.0d. a quarter) plus a small expense allowance. Then 15d. a week was allowed for each child under eight years old. The female travelling preachers were only granted £2.0s.0d. a quarter. Later this princely sum was raised to £2.2s.0d. (1823) and then to £2.10s.0d. (1831), after they had travelled for two years, while the men's continued to rise more steeply.<sup>(219)</sup>

Each travelling preacher was required to keep a journal and to present it to the circuit committee either monthly or otherwise as the circuit committee quarter day directed. Failure to comply with this regulation would result in the offender losing his/her right to speak or vote at the circuit or branch quarter day meeting.<sup>(220)</sup> (A rule in 1824 denied women the privilege of speaking or voting, unless specially called upon.<sup>(221)</sup> There is no indication about whether this applied only to lay women or also to the female travelling preachers.) Unfortunately, only a few extracts from such journals appear to have survived and these are to be found mainly in the pages of the connexional magazine. The extracts which we can study often give merely the barest details of their journeyings, the effect of services and their own personal soul-searchings. Ann Brownsword's Journal entry is perhaps typical:

'Sunday, February 12, 1820, I was at Macclesfield Sister Elizabeth Dakin preached at half past two. It was a good time, and I trust good

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid. (1824) p. 9.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid. (1824) p. 10.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid. (1829) pp. 3-4.

<sup>219</sup> See *PM Mins.* (1823) p. 2, (1831) p. 2 cf. (1819) pp. 4-5, (1819/20) p. 5.

<sup>220</sup> *PM Mins.* (1819/20) pp. 6-7; (1821) pp. 6-7.

<sup>221</sup> *PM Mins.* (1824) p. 4.

was done in the name of the Lord. At six in the evening, I stood up to speak to a large congregation. I never was so tried since I set out for the kingdom of heaven. But the Lord took away the fear of man. -He gave me great liberty in speaking; and it was a glorious time to our souls.

Monday 13. After visiting from house to house, I preached at Macclesfield, to a large congregation.

It was a refreshing time, and three souls found peace with God.

Tuesday 14. visited from house to house, and at night preached at Whitning Croft. The Lord sent his power among us, and we prayed till He set one soul at liberty, and one backslider was recovered. Bless the Lord for it.

Wednesday 15. At two o'clock I preached at Gawsorth, and at seven at Macclesfield. Sinners were crying out for mercy;-believers were praising the Lord. It was a glorious time;-three souls were brought into liberty, and one backslider was recovered. There is great work at Macclesfield: they are joining classes almost every meeting, and believers are alive to God!'<sup>(222)</sup>

In the main the other Journal entries tend to follow a very similar, rather stereotyped format, but just occasionally some give a few details which bring the whole thing to life, for example:

‘Wednesday, 15. (March, 1820). I preached at Hampton Heath, out of doors to a well-behaved congregation. It was very dark, but we had some lanterns hung up.\* It was a solemn time.....’

Ann Brownsword.

\*Editorial footnote: On some occasions, lanterns are tied to sticks and held aloft in different parts of the congregation. This method is excellent.<sup>(223)</sup>

and

‘Wednesday, 21 (February, 1821) - At Barton..... Five or six young men had come nearly four miles intending to pull me down. But while I looked steadfastly on them, and spoke a few words, one of them turned as pale as death and began to tremble and observed, that if what I said was true, he did not know where to hide his head; but he intended to persecute no more.’

Ann Stanna <sup>224</sup>

and

‘Sunday, May 12 (1822) - Spoke at Tunstall. I had a hard time and was tempted never to speak again; but God, who is ever nigh, delivered me from the power of temptation.....’

Mary Edwards <sup>225</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> *PMM* (1819/20) p. 233.

<sup>223</sup> *PMM* (1819/20) p. 256.

<sup>224</sup> *PMM* (1822) p.112

<sup>225</sup> *PMM* (1822) p.258

and

‘Wednesday 16 (1822) - I preached at Red Lake... There was a young woman who had been at service, and was going home, and who, hearing that a woman was going to preach, came to the preaching house, and drank tea with me. She heard me preach: and after preaching and prayer meeting were concluded, the people requested her and me to stop all night. after supper I noticed her bonnet on the table, which was very dressy. I made a remark upon it. We slept together. I asked her if she ever prayed or saw herself a sinner. She replied ‘Not till to-night. I will take the bunch off my bonnet if you will give me the liberty to speak with you.’ I said, By all means.’.....

S. (Sarah) Spittle<sup>226</sup>

### **THE CIRCUIT PLAN**

From the few Primitive Methodist circuit plans I have been able to study in detail which contain the names of female itinerants it would not be realistic to dogmatize about the celebration of the sacraments. At first glance it would seem as if only the men were authorized to conduct Holy Communion services, but a closer examination shows that on occasions local preachers did so. ThLIs one is forced to the conclusion that there was no hard and fast rule about it. This is borne out by the Conference regulation which states in reply to the question:

‘To whom shall the Sacrament be administered?’

that it shall be given:

‘To all our societies who request it.’

and that it shall be administered:

‘By those persons whom the quarter board may judge proper.’<sup>(227)</sup>

This lack of emphasis on what was, in the Established Church and in Wesleyan Methodism, the prerogative of the ordained ministry is no doubt an illustration of the anti-clerical stance of the Primitive Methodists. Many scholars have pointed out that the emphasis in the courts of the connexion was on the laity.<sup>(228)</sup> The representation of lay to clerical members was a two to one ratio in Conference, District meetings and all committees, so this apparent low-key view of Holy Communion would seem to bear out the anti-clerical attitude. An attitude, doubtless fostered by the excesses of some of the clergy and the wealth and influence of the Church when compared with the situation of the majority of the people. So I feel the fewer number of Sacrament services found in Primitive Methodism are evidence of this reaction and point to the Connexion as being primarily lay-orientated. The celebration of the Holy Communion, as an institution was obviously considered of no great importance, as the frequency with which it appears on the circuit plans is notable for its absence. I am also of the opinion that the Lovefeast took the place of the Lord’s Supper in the early years of the Connexion’s history. If we consider that service it appears that its celebration was shared among the travelling preachers and the local preachers. So we find that in the four quarters of 1828/9 in Grimsby of the twenty-seven

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<sup>226</sup> *PMM* (1923) pp. 43-4

<sup>227</sup> *PM Mins.* (1819/20) p. 11

<sup>228</sup> Wearmouth, R.F., *Methodism & the Working Class Movements 1800-50.* (1937) p. 20. Wearmouth, R.F., *Methodism & the Struggle of the Working Class 1850-1900* (1954) p. 120. Taylor, E.R., *Methodism & Politics, 1791-1851* (1935) p. 107. c.f. *PM Mins* (various dates) for e.g. (1819/20) p. 10; (1821) p. 3.



lovefeasts celebrated nine were taken by the female itinerant, ten by her male colleagues and eight by the local preachers; in the same circuit for the same quarters in 1835/6 forty-four services were taken - eight by the woman travelling preacher, thirteen by one or other of the two male itinerants and nineteen by local preachers. The same pattern emerges in the North Walsham Circuit in 1836 where Elizabeth Bultitude had seven lovefeasts and her two male colleagues thirteen between them with local preachers taking five. However, in the Bolton circuit (1835) and the Shefford area (1835/6) no local preachers took these services. So it could be that the practice differed from circuit to circuit or with the passage of time. It cannot be argued that local preachers were used because the itinerants were not available as the evidence does not bear out such a contention. Lovefeasts could have easily been arranged for a particular church which desired such a service when an itinerant was planned there. It seems that Primitive Methodism was being true to its profession of the priesthood of all believers in using its lay folk in this way. However, one must admit that there may have been other factors, which it is impossible for us now to determine, which affected the use of local preachers.

To date I have only found one instance of a female travelling preacher conducting a Sacrament and that is Jane Woolford, who was appointed to take the service at North Morton at 5.00 p.m. on October 4th 1835 in the Shefford Circuit. It seems likely that the celebration of the sacrament varied from area to area and from circuit to circuit and also that its frequency increased as time passed. It is impossible to compare areas and circuits with any degree of exactitude as the number of preaching places and services varied in each circuit and sometimes from quarterly plan to quarterly plan within a circuit. (see Table 4). Another factor which exacerbates the problem is that the number of travelling preachers sometimes varies too and also the fact that on occasion local preachers were allowed to celebrate the sacrament.

I have studied closely two areas of which I have been able to get several consecutive plans - Grimsby and Shefford - on which female itinerants feature. With regard to the Grimsby set there are two groupings consisting of seven in the late 1820s and six in the mid 1830s. The women involved in the first group are Mary Bu(i)rks; Elizabeth Allen; Ann Tinsley and Mary Allen and from analysis it is apparent that the females worked equally with their male colleagues. The later group all cover the ministry of Mary Ball in the Grimsby Circuit where she was the second of three ministers. Again the same pattern of workload is revealed, but the overall number of lovefeasts had increased, many of which, as we have seen, were taken by local preachers. However, on the 1826 plan there were twenty-three preaching places; in 1829 there were sixteen and in 18~5/6 twenty-seven, so it is not easy to make a categorical statement about the incidence of the lovefeast.

The set of plans for the Shefford Circuit also covers the Branch Circuits of Andover, Mitcheldever, Farringdon, Wallingford and the Romsey and Reading Missions. This obviously makes comparison with the Grimsby set more difficult. The plans cover the ministry of Ann Haines; Fanny Hurl; Jane Woolford; Ann Go(o)dwin; Hannah Day and Mary Gribble.

However, if we compare the same four quarters in the Grimsby and Andover Circuits we can make a few observations (see Table 4) Grimsby had, it seems, more lovefeasts than sacraments, whereas Andover had an equal number of lovefeasts and sacraments. Grimsby had considerably more lovefeasts than Andover and considerably less sacraments. The workloads between the male and female itinerants and between the circuits show little variation, but this is only to be expected as there is only a certain amount that can possibly be done in a day!

Perhaps one significant point is that there are only two instances of lovefeasts being taken by local preachers in the Shefford set of plans compared with the many we noted in Grimsby. I

wonder if this combined with the rather more numerous celebration of the sacrament, indicates varying attitudes towards the ministry in different parts of the country.

FIGURE 4: Grimsby Circuit Plan 1835

**GRIMSBY CIRCUIT.**

## PRIMITIVE METHODIST PREACHERS' PLAN.

1835.

*"But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry." II. Tim., 4c. 6v.*

Places and Hours of Service.	SUNDAY PLAN.												Names and Residences.	WEEK-DAY PLAN.											
	JAN.	FEBRUARY.			MARCH.			APRIL.			Places.	Days.		JAN.	FEB.			MARCH.			AP.				
GRIMSBY - 2	18	25	1	8	15	22	1	8	15	22	29	5	12	1 W. WORELL, Grimsby	Grimsby	M.	3	*1	8	3	*1	8			
GRIMSBY - 0	2c	3	7	1s	3	2	1	1	2y	9	3	2	1	2 J. TOMLINSON, Grimsby	Class	T.	3	1	2	3	1	2			
Caistor - 2	30	10	3c	18	14	20	12	27	3	20	1y	21	1	4 E. LINGARD, Thoresby	Swallow	W.	3	T1	2	3	1	2			
Caistor - 6	30	10	3c	18	14	20	12	27	3	20	1y	21	1	5 W. HOLT, Villa	Caistor	Th.	3	T1	2	3	1	2			
Walesby - 2	28	1	1c	30	1	3	8	2y	3	1	3	1	3	6 G. NORRIS, Yarborough	South Kelsey	F.	3	T1	2	3	1	2			
Binbrook - 6	1L	8	1c	15	2	11	3	8	2y	23	31	29	1	7 J. HOLLAND, Grimsby	Irby	M.	3	3	T1	2	3	yl	2		
Fulstow - 10	2c	3	7	1s	3	2	1	1	2y	9	3	2	1	10 J. KEET, Caistor	Laceby	T.	3	1	2	3	1	2			
Fulstow - 6	6	21c	34	23	19	4	31	11	17	15	24	7y	12	11 J. COOK, Thoresby	Keelby	W.	2	3	T1	2	3	1	2		
Tetney - 2	21c	3	7	1s	3	2	1	1	2y	9	3	2	1	12 G. SHAW, Grimsby	Inningham	Th.	2	3	T1	2	3	1	2		
Tetney - 6	16	23c	6	3	4	24	5	23	7	15	1y	13	13 J. STOTHARD, Grimsby	Great Coates	F.	2	3	T1	2	3	1	2			
North Coates 2	6	2c	31	p	24	32	23	4	21	3	26	1y	13	14 R. LEWIS, Gunerby	Holton	M.	2	T3	1	p	3	1			
Thoresby - 2	18	p	31	p	24	32	23	4	21	3	26	1y	13	15 C. FRODO, Thoresby	Thoresby	T.	2	T3	*1	3	*1				
Thoresby - 6	11	23c	15	1	21	34	3y	19	6	25	7	14	16 J. HEWSON, Tetney	North Coates	W.	2	T3	1	2	3	1				
Laceby - 2	27	5	26L	20	18	34	18	34	18	34	18	34	17 J. CHEESMAN, Tetney	Fulstow	Th.	2	T3	1	2	3	1				
Laceby - 6	3	33	2c	36	25	26	7	15	1y	12	17	13	9	18 J. BARKER, Grimsby	Tetney	F.	2	T3	1	2	3	1			
Keelby - 2	3	20	2c	14	25	27	7	15	1y	12	17	13	9	19 T. OVERTON, Irby Top	Barnoldby	M.	p	2	T3	1	2	3	1		
Swallow - 2	25c	9	26	12	13y	27	13	20	27	13	20	27	13	20 T. HURTON, Fulstow	Binbrook	T.	1	2	T3	1	2	3	1		
Irby - 6	25	9	26	12	13	20	27	13	20	27	13	20	27	21 A. CLARK, Rasen Moor	Walesby	W.	1	2	T3	1	2	3	1		
Wold Newton 2	J.W.	15c	11	33	23	31	4	18	26	14	22	30	8	22 P. BRIDGEMAN, Fulstow	Osgodby	Th.	1	2	T3	1	2	3	1		
Wold Newton 6	8	17	18	14	19	18	4	18	26	14	22	30	8	23 G. BODLEY, Tetney	Feldingworth	F.	1	2	T3	1	2	3	1		
Ashby - 2	16	7c	36	19	4	6	18	26	14	22	30	8	24 R. SURFLET, Tetney	Middle Rasen	M.	1	2	3	p	2	3				
Barnoldby - 2	8	17	18	14	19	18	4	18	26	14	22	30	8	25 A. CHEESMAN, Tetney	Market Rasen	T.	1	2	3	p	2	3			
Barnoldby - 6	36	13c	19	33	25	12	18	26	14	22	30	8	26 W. SMITH, Middle Rasen	Stanton	W.	1	2	3	p	2	3				
Beelsby - 2	33	13c	19	36	25	12	18	26	14	22	30	8	27 S. BRIDGEMAN, Osgodby	Rothwell	Th.	1	2	3	p	2	3				
Beelsby - 6	36	14	17	18	15	8	13	20	27	13	20	27	13	28 J. WRIGHT, Osgodby	Beelsby	F.	1	2	3	p	2	3			
Croxby - 2	14c	J.W.	17	18	15y	8	13	20	27	13	20	27	13	29 R. WRIGHT, Barnoldby	Grimsby	M.	3	1	2	3	1	2	3		
Inningham 2	26c	12	13	9	1y	25	13	20	27	13	20	27	13	30 L. LOVEFAST—T, Tickets—	Class	T.	3	1	2	3	1	2	3		
Great Coates 6	26c	12	13	9	1y	25	13	20	27	13	20	27	13	S. SACRAMENT—p, Prayer	Ashby	W.	3	1	2	3	1	2	3		
Holton - 2	4c	21	7	8y	13	26	13	20	27	13	20	27	13	Meeting—C, Quarterly Col-	Wold Newton	Th.	2	1	2	3	1	2	3		
Market Rasen 4	1c	2	3	28	2y	3	10	17	24	31	7	14	21	lection—L, Leader's Meeting	Grimsby	F.	3	c1	12	3	1	2	3		
Middle Rasen 2	1c	10	2	1	31	30	2y	3	10	17	24	31	7	—y, Yearly Collection.											
Middle Rasen 6	22	1c	10	2	1	31	30	2y	3	10	17	24	31	Quarterly Meeting at											
Osgodby - 6	35c	22	1s	29	30	33	3y	10	17	24	31	7	14	Grimsby, March 9th. Preach-											
Rothwell - 2	28c	10	9	10	20y	30	3y	10	17	24	31	7	14	ers to meet at 10 o'clock, and											
Stanton - 6	14c	28	29	10	2p	9	J.W.	10	8	29	35	20	3y	general business to commence											
South Kelsey 1y	30	8c	10	22	30	10y	3y	10	17	24	31	7	14	at 2.											

**THE SHIP SAFETY, BOUND FOR CANAAN. 11s.**

<p>Come all my dear brethren who've entered on board, And widders'd free pardon by faith in the Lord; Tho' toss'd on the ocean, dont fear he hath said, " 'Tis but of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid."</p> <p>The wind and the tide may beat hard on each side, But if Christ speaks a calm, the proud waves soon subside; We outlive all dangers, no fears can evade, For the Lord he protects us, so be not afraid.</p>	<p>The perils of sea, the rocks, waves, and wind, The clouds, storms, and tempest, may prove most unkind; But Christ still upholds us, on him help is laid, And ever stands ready, so be not afraid.</p> <p>With darkness surrounded, by terror distress, Quite fearful and weak, when such dangers infest; With toiling and rowing, strength almost decay'd, The promise still stands, it is I, be not afraid.</p>	<p>Christ then as our pilot, our compass his word, All storms we defy, while we sail with the Lord, No foes need attack us, they cannot invade, While the Lord says, I am here, come be not afraid.</p> <p>* * * Be it observed that the rule respecting preachers attending to their appointments, &amp;c. and the rule requiring the society rules to be read to the classes, shall remain in force, although they may not appear on the future printed plans.</p>
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FIGURE 5: Andover Branch (Shefford Circuit) Plan 1835

Andover Branch Sunday Plan.												
Places and time of Meeting	April			May			June			July		
	19	26	3	10	17	24	31	7	14	21	28	5
*Andover 2	34	1c	50	7	28	10	15	12	3	45	4	2a
*Lower Clatford 10½	34	1c	50	7	28	10	15	12	3	45	22	8
Stoke Bourne 10	2	4	48	9	20	1c	49	11	43	28	12	18
*Up Hurstbourne 1½	2L	4	48	9	20	1c	49	11	43	15	12	18
*Dunley 10 *Binley 6	14		15c	4	10		23		3	48	36	32
*Dunley 1 *Binley 6		18			1c		35		4	48	11	
*Ashmansworth 5	32	2c	18	26	48	12	35	14	49	15	1L	23
*Facombe 10½	33	2	35	26	48	12	33	3e	49	14	26	2
*Combe 6	33	23	35	32	24	18	36	3e	35	14	26	2
Lincoln 9½ *Vernham 1½	49		3L	31		30		12	26		2e	15
*Vernham 10 Lincolnholt 2½		20		18		21		35	13		14	
*Littledown 5	49	20	3e	18	31	21	30	12	32	13	2	14
*Tangley 10½ *Upton 5	11	10		12	14	21	2a	4	19		1	30
*Tangley 2 *Upton 5				1c								
*Stockbridge 9½	45	5	2c	50	41	7	34	11	16	27	10	1a
*Broughton 1	45	5	29	50	3L	7	17	34	11	2e	27	10
*King Sumbourne 2	47	7	2c	44	38	22	39	46	43	5	28	29
*Ashley 5	47	7	2c	44	38	22	39	46	43	5	28	29
Wherwell 2 Chilbolton 5	1s	42	43	22	45	11	10	2	7	29	3e	47
Abbott's Ann 2	9	39	41	17	34	3e	5	40	44	20	22	9
*Upper Clatford 6	9	1L	41	17	34	3e	5	8	40	44	20	22
*Longstock 9	17	11	46	3e	5	47	9	10	8	3	50	27
*Leckford 2	17	11	46	3e	5	47	9	10	8	3e	50	27
Upper Collingbourne 10	3e	15	19		2	30	14	31	1	26	33	13
*Lower Collingbourne 2	3	15	19	cm	2s	30	14	31	1c	26	33	13
*Ludgershall 1½	21	13	1s		15	5	20	50	14	11	40	26
Wilton 10 *Marton 2	20	3e	40		21	2r	26	13	15	1c	14	30
*Charlton 2	10	8	28	35	27	9c	18	20	7	25	50	34
Woodhouse 10.	10	12	28	35	27	9c	18	20	7	25	50	34
Ragged Appleshaw 10	30	13	26		40	5e	20	21	14	18	15	26
Clanville 4	30	14	21		40	13	31	21	5e	18	15	20
Upper Wallop 10	31	27	21	29	50	16	7	28	2e	10	34	20
West Tytherley 5	22		29		3e		17	38		25		16
Greatly 1	31	27	21	29	50	16	7	28	30	10	34	20
Longparish 10	1	42	43	22	45	11	10	2	7	29	3	44
Chute 9½	21	14	26		15	13	31	50	5	11	40	26
Bourne 1	35	12	14	P	26	15	P	R	3	25	1	14

Andover Branch Week-Night Plan.												
Places and Days	April		May			June			July			
	20	27	4	11	18	25	1	8	15	22	29	
King Sumbourne M	1s	2t	3				p	2		3	1	
Broughton T	1	2t	3				p	2		3	1	
West Tytherley W	1	2t	3				p	2		3	1	
Stockbridge Th	1	2t	3				p	2		3	1	
Longstock F	1s	2t	3				1	2		3	1	
Wherwell M	1t	2	3			27	2			3		
Leckford T	1t	2s	3			22	2			3		
Lower Clatford W	1t	2	3			8	2			3		
Andover Th	1.	2	3			1	2			3		
Upper Clatford F	1t	2	3			1	2			3		
U Collingbourne M	3	1t	2			p	1			2	3	
Ludgershall T	3	1t	2			3	1			2	3	
L Collingbourne W	3	1t	2			3	1			2	3	
Wilton Th	3	1t	2			3	1			2	3	
Oxenwood F	3	1t	2			3	1			2	3	
Coombe M	3t	1	2			3	1			2		
Facombe T	3t	1	2			3	1			2		
Ashmansworth W	3t	1s	2			3	1			2		
Bourne Th	3t	1	2			3	1			2		
Binley F	3t	1	2			3	1			2		
Vernham M	2	3t	1s			p	3			1	2	
Littledown T	2	3t	1s			2	3			1	2	
Upton W	2	3t	1			2	3			1	2	
Tangley Th	2	3t	1			2	3			1	2	
Pentton F	2	3t	1			2	3			1	2	
Smannal M	2t	3	1			2	3			1		
Stoke Bourne T	2t	3	1s			2	3			1		
Hurstbourne T. W	2t	3	1			2	3			1		
Tangley Th	2t	3	1			2	3			1		
Pentton F	2t	3	1			2	3			1		

Preachers' names	12 Jane Farr	On Trial.	Exhorters.	42 W Holdway
1 H Heys	13 J Allen	23 M Ormond	33 J Waite	43 J Holdway
2 W Thorn	14 J Bray	24 W Holloway	34 G Watts	44 J Bye
3 F Hurlie	15 J Page	25 W Andrews	35 C Siney	45 G Gannister
4 J Farr, sen.	16 T Turton	26 D Ballard	Prayer Leaders.	46 R Vokes
5 A Heady	17 W Newman	27 R Mitchener	36 J Farr, jun.	47 C Bye
6 G Winkworth	81 P Lambden.	28 J Hawkins	37 E Davis	S C Preachers.
7 S Andrews	19 J Baidon	29 C Cooper	38 G Noble	48 T Herra
8 J Noyes	20 B Allen	30 W Rieves	39 H Dobbs	49 T Day
9 H Rolfe	21 J Ralph	31 J Taylor	40 S Bolph	A. Preacher.
10 W Blackstone	22 W Stephens	32 J Ormond	41 B Pike	50 T Skort.
11 J Keel			M B Preachers.	

NOTICES.

1. A Camp Meeting will be held, May 10th, on Fare-Mill Down, near Collingbourne, to be attended by Nos. 1, 2, 10, 13, 14, 15, 20, & 21.
2. A Union Camp Meeting will be held, May 31st on Newton Down, near Barten Stacey, to be attended by Nos. 1, 2, 3, E. Bishop and J. Ride.
3. On *Whit Monday*, in the open air, there will be a Prayer Meeting at Stoke Bourne, when a number of praying people are expected to attend and commence at 12 o'clock.
4. The next Quarterly Meeting will be held at Wherwell, June 1st, to commence at 12 o'clock.
5. A Missionary Meeting will be held at Wherwell, June 1st, to commence at 7 o'clock, Speakers Nos. 1, 2, 3, J. Ride and E. Bishop.

**Table 4: Analysis of the Grimsby and Andover Circuit Plans**

Quarters	Grimsby 1828/9				Grimsby 1835/6				Andover 1835/6			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
No. of itinerants	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
No. of preaching places	17	14	15	14	26	28	28	27	36	39	41	37
No. of services per Sunday	15/11*	13/11*	14/11*	14/10*	av.24	29/21*	29/21*	29/22*	37	39	41	37
No. of services taken per quarter	33(33)	32(32)	32(28)	31(32)	30 (28)	30 (27)	25 (23)	27 (25)	25 (25)	26 (23)	29 (28)	31 (28)
Total no. of lovefeasts	8	6	7	6	6	16	12	11	11	7	5	5
Total no of sacraments	4	3	2	2	2	4	8	5	8	10	5	5
No. of weekday services	65	65	65	65	65	64	55 (63)	64 (64)	(61) 60 (65)	(57)+ 64 (64)++	(65) 62 (65)	(56) 65 (64)

- Notes
1. Figures in brackets indicate variations for male itinerants.
  2. Fourth quarter (1835/6) is for 14 dates as it includes Christmas Day.
  - \* indicates alternate Sunday appointments.
  - \*\* in addition each itinerant was involved in Missionary and/or Camp Meetings.
  - + includes 6 sacraments.
  - ++ includes 1 sacrament.

The final point which can be assessed from the circuit plans and from the Journal extracts available is the distances covered on a Sunday preaching schedule. Thus we find that Ann Brownsword, on Sunday, December 18th 1819 preached at Norley at 10.00 a.m.; at Kingsley (lovefeast) at 1.00 p.m. and at Crowton at 6.30 p.m.<sup>(229)</sup> These villages are each about two and a half miles apart. Ann Stanna, on 6th February, 1820, preached three times at villages which were three and three quarters and three miles apart respectively,<sup>(230)</sup> and a fortnight later the three villages at which she conducted services were three miles from each other.<sup>(231)</sup> Mary Bu(i)rks travelled the same distance between her three appointments in the Grimsby area on 2nd July 1826 and on the 9th the three services were each one and a half miles apart. Similar distances can be deduced from the circuit plans for Elizabeth Bultitude (North Walsham, 1836), Ann Haines (Shefford, 1835) and Fanny Hurlle (Andover, 1835) for example. A Committee was set up in 1824 by the Annual Meeting to investigate the matter of 'Long Preaching' and it recommended that for preaching services:

‘the most suitable lengths to be one hour, one hour and quarter, and one hour and a half, as the case may be, with three exceptions wherein long preaching was not improper.’<sup>(232)</sup>

So, assuming a service of one and a half hours and perhaps half an hour for conversation afterwards, then a journey of between one and a half and three and a half miles, most probably on foot, it is obvious that Sunday would have been a very busy and tiring day with little time for rest or refreshment. In each case we are only reckoning the distances from the first appointment to the last one and are not taking into account the travelling to the first service or home after the last one, which could most probably increase the total mileage, depending on their base or hospitality.

One last thing about the sacraments - in this case that of baptism, about which there appear to be no conference regulations - I have looked at Primitive Methodist Baptismal Registers in a number of Record Offices, but, so far, I have found no record of any baptisms being performed by any of the female itinerants.

It is important to realise that in addition to the heavy workloads we have been considering that each travelling preacher was expected to visit thirty families per week,<sup>(233)</sup> exhorting, praying and engaging in conversation.

From all the evidence then it seems that although the women were expected to share equally in the ordinary Sunday services, including lovefeasts, and in the weekday meetings, plus camp and missionary meetings the sacraments were apparently the prerogative of the men. One wonders whether this was, in spite of the Primitive Methodists anti-clerical attitude an almost subconscious harking back to Wesleyanism and the Church of England or whether even by the mid 1830s the Connexion was moving toward conformity with these denominations. It would be interesting to know whether the women were happy about it or whether they felt slighted. In the twentieth century this question of the celebration of the sacraments was one of the reasons for women wanting ordination.

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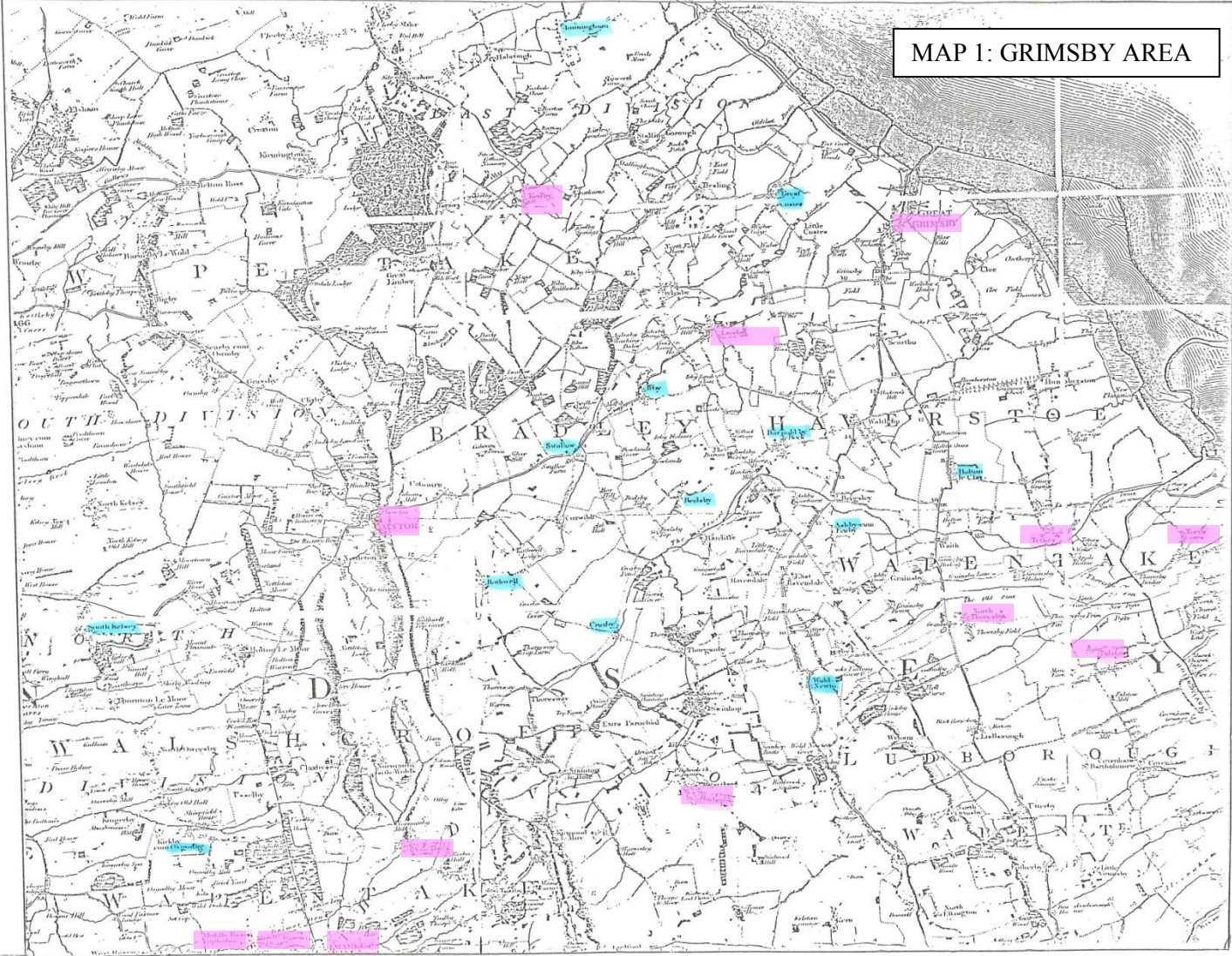
<sup>229</sup> *PMM* (1819/20) p. 236.

<sup>230</sup> *PMM* (1819/20) p. 250.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 251.

<sup>232</sup> *PM Mins.* (1825); p. 5 (1828) pp. 36-40.

<sup>233</sup> *PM Mins.* (1824, small minutes) p. 6.



MAP 1: GRIMSBY AREA

Scale: 0 1 2 3

GRIMSBY AREA (Map of 1831)

Mary Ball's Sunday appointments (January - April 1835)

The rest of the Grimsby Circuit

2/3 inch : 1 mile

MAP 2: ANDOVER AREA



Scale:  
2/3 inch : 1 mile

ANDOVER AREA (Map of 1865)

● Fanny Hurle's Sunday Appointments  
(April - July 1835)  
○ The rest of the Andover Branch of the Shefford Circuit



### ‘ADVICE’ TO TRAVELLING PREACHERS

In May 1822 at the Annual Meeting held in Loughborough the Book Committee was directed ‘to prepare and publish Advice to Travelling Preachers it being thought that something of the kind was much wanted, and would be serviceable to the Connexion.’<sup>(234)</sup>

This directive was welcomed by many of the older travelling preachers who felt that some such advice would have assisted them greatly in their early ministry. The Connexion realised that the expertise accumulated by these ‘elder statesmen’ would be of great value to others, and particularly to the younger travelling preachers. One is very conscious that there was no formalised ‘ministerial training’ at this time and so perhaps this was in some way an attempt to rectify that and also, and this was doubtless of even greater importance to the minds of the Annual Meeting, to try to ensure that the Connexion’s evangelistic endeavours would not be wasted by lack of care in the building up of the societies in both physical and spiritual terms. The Annual Meeting expressed its desires and its concern in the following terms:

Many of our travelling preachers possess a fund or treasure of practical knowledge, collected from observation and experience. They have seen the work of God set on foot, and reviving, and increasing. They have seen new societies raised up, and have assisted in arranging and organising them, and have witnessed their progress from quarter to quarter, and from year to year.... they have observed what means were usually crowned with the greatest success; and have had opportunities of ascertaining the best methods of proceeding... Their treasure of wisdom and knowledge, has kept increasing, enlarging and improving; .... they have found themselves to be ALWAYS LEARNERS.

During some part of their arduous course, they have had to go upon new ground, to form entirely new societies, and to raise up a new race of preachers, leaders, and pious praying labourers. Here much depended upon their skill and experience...

It is evident that a preacher, by continued labours, in a successful manner, must unavoidably acquire a large increase of practical knowledge, and must be able to give useful information on almost every subject; and it is equally evident, if such information was communicated to a preacher at his first going out, it would be of great advantage to him; and it is also plain, that it would be useful to the most experienced in stirring up their pure minds in way of remembrance.’<sup>(235)</sup>

The work was put in hand and in particular ‘a travelling preacher from Hull’ (Hugh Bourne) contributed notes on conducting meetings.<sup>(236)</sup> The third chapter of this ‘Advice to Travelling Preachers’ gives very detailed and very practical hints on preparing oneself for ‘public speaking in meetings for Business’. It is regarded as essential to be completely familiar with even the smallest matters in the whole of one’s circuit; to have a working knowledge of the entire Connexion; to be conversant with the history of the Connexion; to be scrupulous in matters of

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<sup>234</sup> *PMM* (1823) p. 4.

<sup>235</sup> *PMM* (1823) p. 45.

<sup>236</sup> *PMM* (1823) pp. 27-8; 55-57.

discipline and orderly and courteous in debate and in guiding a meeting to the proper conclusion.<sup>(237)</sup> Preachers are urged to study systematically in order to get the best results. By tracing the derivation of words connected with ‘the Ministry’ the writer seeks to impress upon the travelling preacher that:

‘Ministry, is a service of serving’<sup>(238)</sup>

This is followed up by the quoting of a letter from ‘W.C.’ (William Clowes?), which is intended to point out the nature; manner; variety and extent of that service. The letter urges the intending travelling preacher to

‘consider well the state of your mind; the sacrifice to be made; the trials to be endured; your call to this ministry, and your success in the work.’<sup>(239)</sup>

Then each of these points is expanded and no punches are pulled. It is spelled out very plainly that the work of the ministry is not to be undertaken lightly; that the sacrifices involved are many; that the trials will be great; that pastoral work will be extensive and that there will be no built-in guarantee that souls will be saved. However, if, in spite of careful consideration of all these things, the preacher is convinced of his/her call to preach then:

‘if the preacher lives in the spirit of the gospel, he will feel a satisfaction in his work, which will reconcile him to the cross, and to having fellowship with his Master in sufferings. He will be enabled to finish his course with joy, and go home with goodly spoil. He will then shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever. This is your reward; this is your crown of rejoicing in the day of God. So live, brother, so preach, and so die, and you will live forever. Farewell.’<sup>(240)</sup>

Apparently in June 1820 the Tunstall Circuit Quarter Day Board instructed a Circuit Committee to draw up ‘Instructions to the Travelling Preachers’ and these were re-issued in 1823 and then made available to a wider public through publication in the Magazine. In broad outline these instructions bade the travelling preachers to be well acquainted with the situations of the local preachers; to encourage them, to pray for them; to oversee their appointments; to vett proposed local preachers and in all things to support their work. Explicit instructions are given about ‘the art of plan making’. These are very sensible and practical involving detailed knowledge of the preachers, the churches, the circuit as a whole and the needs of the congregations. Notes are given about studying the classes of each Society e and determining its spiritual state and on the procedure for dealing with complaints. The value of ‘visiting and teaching from house to house’ was emphasised and hints were also given about the best use of the preachers’ time throughout the day so that he/she might benefit personally and also build up the society and the circuit as well.<sup>(241)</sup>

The 1824 *Magazine* contains a lengthy paper under the same heading by Nathaniel West. His aim, he states, is to help young travelling preachers who are starting out in their ministry. He

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<sup>237</sup> Ibid. pp. 79-82

<sup>238</sup> Ibid. pp. 101-2.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid. p. 121

<sup>240</sup> Ibid. p. 124.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid. pp 146-9; 195-7.

well remembers how much he would have appreciated a little guidance when he himself was in that position. I suppose in a very vague way this together with the previous ‘Advice’ might be described as the rudiments of ministerial training before the establishment of any such tuition. It was around forty years later that any sort of organised college training was given to ministerial candidates.

However, to return to Nathaniel West’s article on ‘Advice to Travelling Preachers’. He addresses his article to ‘Dear Brother’ as a fulfilment of a promise to write to him about ‘the important duties of the sacred office you hold’, which is ‘that of a preacher of the Everlasting Gospel.’ His first recommendation is for close study of the Bible, seeking to understand its truths as revealed by the Holy Spirit to his heart. Then he urges his reader ‘to strive to possess the mighty power of God, so that your word may be in demonstration of the Spirit and power,’ and to be so filled with the power that as a preacher he should be free from ‘deadness and formality’, which West feels must be ‘tiresome’ to a congregation.<sup>(242)</sup> Then he turns to the subject of books and advises to the use of a good introduction to the Bible and the acquiring of a Bible with margin references. If the young preacher must have a Bible commentary, although for his own part West feels that ‘the scriptures have suffered more injury from commentators than from their real and avowed enemies’ and that the Bible itself read with the Holy Spirit’s prompting is to be preferred, then one by Joseph Benson or Scott is to be chosen. Of course ‘Mr. Wesley’s *Testament with Notes* and Brown’s *Concordance*’ are indispensable. Books on preaching and ‘real divinity’ as well as certain biographies are listed as suitable reading matter. In particular the young preacher is told to be careful not to rely too heavily on other people’s ideas, commentaries or sermons, but to use his own judgement guided by the Holy Spirit. Finally in this section a list of helpful texts is given for the young man to meditate upon, so that he may ever be conscious of ‘his duty to God’ and seek to do his will.<sup>(243)</sup> Self-denial is advocated as character building and a show of humility will not only be following in Christ’s footsteps, but will also:

‘enable you to search out for souls in the most abject abodes of the miserable; clothed with humility you will not be ashamed to traverse through the most wretched garrets, alleys, lanes and cottages in search of souls. You will be thankful to preach in the poorest house to the smallest company of people, and after that, (if need be), to endure insults, hunger, cold, and hardships, even to lying out of doors; ....’<sup>(244)</sup>

This was perhaps important as a contact between the preachers and those to whom their message was directed - one who practised humility and came from the same class as the potential converts stood a better chance of ‘saving them’. Then the sin of pride was to be guarded against and ‘whatever gifts the Lord had graciously given you’ must be cultivated. In this ‘Advice’ West explicitly emphasises what we have already and will again note about the Primitive Methodists’ concern for the proprieties of conduct. Both the young preacher’s public and private conduct must be above reproach:

‘Beware of what company you keep; especially of the female-kind. You are young and unmarried, therefore, mind, beware and watch; for if you once lose your character, you lose your all! In a word, let your whole behaviour in the moral sense, shine before men so as they may be

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<sup>242</sup> *PMM* (1824) p. 5-6.

<sup>243</sup> *PMM* (1824) p. 25-7.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.* p. 49-51.

able, with truth, to witness how holily, justly, and unblameably you behaved yourself among them that believe.’<sup>(245)</sup>

His advice ‘On Preaching’ was both spiritual and very practical, so that the hearers might be convicted of sin, converted, counselled and cared for:

‘Always strive to be at your appointments in time to take tea..... Keep a solemn, grave, yet cheerful, deportment..... Begin divine service exactly at the appointed time. If you practice this, the people will see you are an exact preacher, and will endeavour to be there in time likewise. Endeavour to let your language be as the oracles of God..... Let it be evident to all who hear you, that the Spirit of the Lord God is upon you, because the Lord hath anointed you to preach the gospel. If you see a need of a prayer-meeting, or think or see that the people have got any good under the sermon, it would be well for you to hold one..... Always after you preach (sabbaths excepted) either hold a class meeting, society meeting, or prayer meeting, you will then have an opportunity of doing good to those souls who are in distress for salvation; and if any get converted, or find peace with God, take down their names, and their residence, and go to them next day, and see if the good they have gotten is of a real kind, or if you think they are really converted to God.’<sup>(246)</sup>

Visiting is considered of prime importance in evangelism and again West gives practical hints of how to do this effectively and of how to keep records both of the visits and families visited. He kept faith with the Conference visiting regulation by insisting that five families a day should be visited.<sup>(247)</sup> The young preacher is exhorted to practice discipline, in his own life and in the life of the church and in all things to be sincere;<sup>(248)</sup> to bear trials courageously; and to strive always to be useful in God’s service. The section on ‘Spending your Time’ is very specific and can be compared with John Wesley’s advice to his preachers.<sup>(249)</sup> It is designed to build up the preacher’s own spiritual life as well as to further the cause of evangelism and the consolidation of the members of the society:

‘Always rise early.... You should be up as soon as the first person in the house gets out of bed. It will be always well to observe this, and if there be a family or servants, then you are ready to pray with them before they go to work. After you rise and your private prayer is over, get to your bible and read two chapters in the Old Testament and one in the New, and form your ideas on the general contents of each chapter; if you do not see any light at the first reading, read them over again..... After breakfast, and family prayer, get to your Journal, and write your remarks, and arrange your accounts, and whatever else you have to do by way of writing. Also read a page or two in some book that will treat of using exertion in the cause of God, or excite you to more fervent prayer, or exemplary holiness. After dinner go a visiting, and don’t be

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<sup>245</sup> Ibid. p. 52.

<sup>246</sup> *PMM* (1824) pp. 53-4.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid. p. 73. *PM Mins.* (various dates from 1824 onwards)

<sup>248</sup> *PMM* (1824) pp. 97-9; 121-2.

<sup>249</sup> *Wesleyan Methodist Mins* (1744) p. 16.

idle, nor in too great a hurry back. When tea is over, prepare for preaching by retiring to yourself and pouring your soul to God. Read the chapter in which your text is set down, arranging your ideas as well as you can ..... Don't preach too long; rather give place for prayer after the sermon; and don't be in a hurry to conclude if there be signs of any good being done. After family prayer at night retire to rest.'<sup>(250)</sup>

It was essential that any conversation in company in which the preacher might engage should be directed to 'serious' subjects. This was part and parcel of the 'conversation ministry' advocated by Hugh Bourne and practised by all the early Primitive Methodists, both preachers and ordinary members. Evidently West considered that the process was well-known and so disposes of it in six lines, but the Editor of the *Magazine* in a lengthy footnote explains it fully.<sup>(251)</sup>

Frequently on Primitive Methodist plans one finds the letter 'T' beside a service and this indicated that 'the (membership) tickets would be renewed on that date. There were two kinds of tickets - Probationary and Complete. The Probationary ticket was given to an enquirer who wished to join the society and who was, therefore, 'on trial' for a quarter before admitted or rejected as a member. The Complete or Full tickets were given to approved members each quarter. The 'ticket service' was not to be a mere formality - it was to be an occasion for dedication and joy and for the preacher to show pastoral concern for his members by enquiring 'how they have gone on for the quarter that is past.' The rules of the Connexion, while requiring that each member should:

'give one penny per week, if they can afford it, or more if they choose, and also what they can afford at the quarterly renewal of their tickets; towards carrying on the work of God.'<sup>(252)</sup>

did not in practice insist on such payment as a condition of membership or the receiving of a ticket. It was recognised that many of the converts would find great hardship in affording even so little and in Primitive Methodism's 'hunger for souls' monetary matters always, at least in its early days, took a back seat, so very often 'the money concern (was left) to the generosity of the believers.'<sup>(253)</sup> Another initial, 'C' found on the circuit plans relates to the quarterly collections. It was through these quarterly collections that the Primitive Methodists were enabled to raise money 'to carry on the cause of God.' West pointed out to his young friend that by studying scripture he would learn how to proceed in the matter of collections and recommends that the case be presented to the people and then left to their generosity - all things being done in the faith that God would prosper the cause. The final two topics dealt with by Nathaniel West in, what might well be called an early manual of ministerial training, are death and glory. The message of which is that if the preacher is faithful to God and his calling then he will die triumphantly and receive 'the reward of everlasting glory.'<sup>(254)</sup>

### **PREACHING AND PRAYING**

The process by which a Primitive Methodist member became a preacher might have been speedy in those early days, but it was thorough and usually followed. When a likely candidate appeared he or she was often asked to lead a prayer in the local society and was then 'put on the

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<sup>250</sup> *PMM* (1824) pp. 122-3.

<sup>251</sup> *PMM* (1824) p. 145 & fn.; cf. Kendall I p. 31.

<sup>252</sup> *PM Mins* (1819/20) p. 13.

<sup>253</sup> *PMM* (1824) pp. 146-7.

<sup>254</sup> *PMM* (1824) pp. 169-171

plan' - first as a prayer leader and then as an exhorter (i.e. authorised to speak, but not to preach), and then they became a local preacher, often making the transition within twelve months. If the preacher achieved good results then the local society felt justified in recommending him or her as a travelling preacher. The cottage meetings had been good preparation for the itinerancy. It was felt that the 'best preparation for preaching was in preaching.'<sup>(255)</sup> Although many of these raw recruits were diffident at first as time went by and they gained more experience they became good and acceptable preachers:

'they often struck hearts that others had failed to touch, and drew many to hear them who would not listen to more experienced teachers.'<sup>(256)</sup>

As already noted Conference regulations stated that no one should be admitted as a travelling preacher who was over the age of forty-five. From the twenty biographies found we can see that in fact many of the women were quite young<sup>(257)</sup> and there is no reason to believe that it was otherwise with the men. Certainly there were a number of so-called 'boy-preachers' who made a big impact on their congregations. Woodcock lists forty and 'a host of others' who began to preach between the ages of eleven and seventeen and who actually went on to become travelling preachers. At first, naturally enough, these youngsters were hesitant in preaching, but as their confidence grew so did their influence. Many indeed reached high office in the Connexion. None of the women achieved any posts of seniority and indeed I have found no record of any of them ever even becoming a Superintendent Minister.<sup>(258)</sup> This latter fact may explain why no women are listed among the ministerial delegates to the Conference if a 1845 Rule on Electing Conference Delegates had been obeyed in practice before it was actually formulated:

'8. No travelling Preacher shall be eligible to attend a Conference as a District Delegate, who shall not have travelled eighteen years successively, been a Superintendent of Circuits, Branches, or Missions, for twelve of these years, and who shall not be a Superintendent at the time of election.'<sup>(259)</sup>

The only one who could possibly have qualified on the grounds of length of service would have been Elizabeth Bultitude, with twenty-nine years to her credit, but as she was never a Superintendent the question never arose. Sarah Price and Mary Bu(i)rks travelled for fourteen years and at least five others for eleven years each, so one might have thought that they would be in the running for the office of Superintendent Minister. No explanation is ever put forward as to why these women were not made Superintendents. A Historical Account of the Travelling Preachers' which includes Elizabeth Bultitude's account has two relevant questions, but provides no real answer:

'Has he been a Superintendent? Answer. No'

'Is he capable of being a Superintendent? Answer. No.'

At the time of this report Elizabeth was thirty-nine years old and had travelled for sixteen years

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<sup>255</sup> Woodcock. op. cit. p.31.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid. p. 33.

<sup>257</sup> See Chapter 5.

<sup>258</sup> Julia S. Werner says that there is a 1824 *PM Minute* which says women were not allowed to become Superintendents; but I have been unable to find it. op. cit. p. 351.

<sup>259</sup> *PM Mins* (1845) p. 17.

and in all other respects her account was very favourable.<sup>(260)</sup> So we can only speculate whether there was something in her make-up which made her unsuitable for that office or whether, as the year was 1849, the powers -that-be in that Circuit and Primitive Methodism as a whole were becoming less enthusiastic about female itinerants - she and Elenor Brown were the only ones left and Elenor went to Australia later that year.

Few of these early preachers, taking into account both their age and backgrounds, had had the advantages of much education. Some came from middle-class families and had attended school, but most were drawn from the industrial classes, from the pits or agriculture. Education was not regarded as a necessity, but a thirst for knowledge and a willingness to work was. So, as we have already said, many of the early preachers 'learnt on the job' and studied with whatever books they could obtain to improve themselves, often working late into the evening and early in the morning, so as not to use the day-light hours when they could be engaged in 'conversation evangelism', family visiting and meetings. Many of the homes in which they stayed were poor and conditions cramped so that probably early morning and late evening would be the only quiet times for study when the family was in bed.

We have already noted the doctrines which were laid down in the 1819/20 *Minutes* by the Conference.<sup>(261)</sup> Woodcock makes the point that the first Primitive Methodists followed the identical doctrines which Wesley set out and that they were studied, understood and expanded with suitable Scriptural quotations and experimental anecdotes and observations. He mentions that at that time 'Hyper-calvinism' was rife and that this pernicious doctrine had to be counteracted by preaching 'a full, free and present salvation', which gospel spoke to the peoples' misery and guilt and was the cause of many receiving the message with joy. <sup>(262)</sup>

It is difficult to draw any real conclusions from the texts used for sermons, except to say that they were ones which one would have expected for evangelical mission as all are capable of that type of interpretation. (Appendices V and VI). I have not studied actual sermons by the male travelling preachers as that was outside by present brief and unfortunately there is little information about the actual content of the women's sermons. The only complete one we have, and a comparatively short one at that, is a Missionary Speech by Elizabeth Smith, which was sent to the *Magazine* of 1830 (see Appendix VII). It was 'Approved by the Circuit Committee', but the Editor of the *Magazine* was not greatly impressed as he did not feel that it furthered the 'kingdom of Christ' or dealt with things which were familiar to her hearers and to which they might relate with benefit. However, the fact that it was 'approved' would surely suggest that it was a good example of what went down well in the Brinkworth Circuit at very least. It is by no means certain that this could be described as a typical example of a missionary sermon, but nevertheless it is interesting to have and shows the regard in which Elizabeth was held by her Circuit Committee and also something of her style and command of language, as indeed do the extracts from her letters and journals given in her biography as well as the poems she wrote (Appendix VIII). I find Deborah Valenze's comment that Elizabeth Smith's literary style 'was rather limited, even after the scrupulous editing of her husband' rather puzzling in view of this evidence.<sup>(263)</sup>

A close examination of Elizabeth Smith's speech would seem to suggest that it is almost over-literary in style with its reference to Africa, Asia, America and Europe; to 'infidels' in

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<sup>260</sup> Fakenham Circuit Records 1849 (Norfolk R.O.)

<sup>261</sup> See page 55.

<sup>262</sup> Woodcock, op. cit. pp. 66-70.

<sup>263</sup> Valenze op. cit. p. 138. Elizabeth Smith married Thomas Russell in 1833

England:

‘.....who have the poison of the asp, the subtlety of the serpent, the ravaging of the dog, the un-cleanness of the swine, the cruelty of the tiger, the fierceness of the lion, and the pride and malice of Satan.’<sup>(264)</sup>

Then building up to a climax of the Christian hope of liberty ‘from the bondage of corruption’.<sup>(265)</sup>

The style is very rhetorical and well calculated for judicious audience participation with ‘Halleluia’, ‘Amen’ and ‘Praise the Lord’. The speech is uncompromising in its attitude, almost condemnatory, towards those who did not think as the Primitive Methodists did. As a speech on a missionary occasion it is obviously designed to be a call to evangelism, both at home and abroad. It is worthwhile bearing in mind that this ‘Missionary Speech’ was originally delivered (or preached) and not meant to be read. One cannot therefore help marvelling, especially if one reads it aloud, at the impact it would have had on its hearers.

It would be interesting to compare such a speech/sermon with ones on a similar occasion, which were delivered by other preachers, both contemporaneously and at different periods in history - to compare and evaluate their content, style and impact. For example could there be a parallel with Martin Luther King, who was well-educated, but often spoke to less educated audiences and yet used literary turns of phrase and quoted from well-known figures with great effect?

Evangelistic ‘hot-gospel’ sermons often rely fairly heavily on catch phrases which are recognised, and are taken up by the hearers, so the emotion of the meeting is heightened and the people are moved to commitment of themselves to God and to the mission of evangelism to all mankind. This aspect can certainly be seen in this speech of Elizabeth Smith.

With regard to the ‘Missionary Speech’ discussed above, certainly we know that Elizabeth and Thomas were both in the Brinkworth Circuit in December 1829 as she had been stationed there by the 1828 Conference and he had gone there the following year, but I cannot see that he would have edited it to any great extent. As for the poem, while it cannot be said to be great poetry it is at least sincere and was written before Elizabeth knew Thomas Russell, or at any rate before she knew him well, and before she worked with him. It could well be that in fact Elizabeth had better opportunities than many of the other itinerants, as not only had she been a dresser to an actress, but had lived in London with a Colonel’s family and at times with their relations in a vicarage in Buckingham-shire. So, while these circumstances may have been regretted later by Elizabeth herself and other Primitive Methodists, I think there is little doubt that these experiences did broaden her horizons and show her different aspects of the world from those she would have encountered had she remained in her home town of Ludlow.

However, in the main, apart from perhaps special sermons like the foregoing it would seem reasonable to say that the Primitive Methodist preachers seem deliberately to have avoided using difficult language or theological phrases and usually took their illustrations from and alluded to things which were familiar to their hearers. Their language was plain, down to earth and easily understood by all. In his little book *The Jubilee of English Camp Meetings* William Garner reinforces many of the conclusions at which we have already arrived, but which are worthy of note. So he points out that the truths of Christianity should be taught ‘in the simple and unpolished language of the masses’ and that this is ‘one reason why the common people

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<sup>264</sup> Appendix VII.

<sup>265</sup> Romans 8 vv 21-22.



hear them gladly.’ In his opinion ‘Plain truths, clothed in common words, illustrated by familiar comparisons, and delivered in an earnest manner, will come down upon the rustic heart of stone like a heavy hammer, wielded by a powerful arm.’<sup>(266)</sup>

However it is obvious that two strands of Methodist ‘emphases’ were well to the fore in Primitive Methodist preaching, as indeed they were in all the Methodist bodies (except the Calvinistic Methodists, of course) - those of assurance and perfection. Wesley had been totally committed to these doctrines, both from his study and from his own experience in his own life and in the lives of others.

‘All men need to be saved.  
All men can be saved.  
All men can know that they are saved.  
All men can be saved to the uttermost.’<sup>(267)</sup>

The Methodist emphases of Assurance and Christian Perfection, which can be expressed like this were fundamental tenets of Arminian Methodism. These doctrines as proclaimed by the Primitive Methodists to the poorer classes would surely bring comfort, assuring them that there was a better world than the one in which they were currently living if only they would listen to the saving message of the preachers. It also told them that the Gospel message of salvation was for all no matter what their class or condition, so as all men were equal in the sight of God, faith conferred status on people of no worldly status. One of the appeals of Methodism was this levelling of the barriers within the chapel community. The knowledge that all were equally sinners and equally could be saved restored a person’s self-respect and gave him or her a sense of worth, perhaps not felt in the work-a-day world outside the chapel fellowship. The preachers set out to bring their hearers to ‘perfection’. There were several stages on this road - first the sinners-needed to be ‘convicted’ (convinced) of their sins; then they passed through the process of ‘mourning’ (sorrowing) for those sins; the realisation that God through Christ had forgiven them their sins brought them ‘into liberty’ when they sought and found salvation from those sins and, after that, the ‘saved’ moved on to sanctification (perfection). So the preaching of the Primitive Methodists brought comfort and hope for the present and the future; a sense of status and a feeling that a person was valued for him or herself. This feeling of worth was heightened by the-fact that, as we have seen, the Primitive Methodist community - preachers and members alike-always made a point of talking unhurriedly and intimately with enquirers in a ‘conversation ministry’, which spoke to the hearts and minds of men and women who needed someone with whom to share their experiences - both spiritual and physical. The Primitive Methodists ‘made time’ for the people and by sharing their hopes and fears, sorrows and joys, by showing a loving care and concern for the whole man - body and soul - they spread the Gospel by word of mouth, by report, as much as by formal preaching services. Invitations to other towns, villages and areas were given following upon reports brought back by travellers and traders. For example, Sarah Kirkland went to Ambaston at the invitation of Robert Winfield then she was asked by some of the hearers to go on from there to Chaddesden and while there she received a further request to go to Derby. Similarly, a woman, having heard Elizabeth Smith preach at Shefford invited her to visit her own village Market Illsley which led to the Primitive Methodist missionaries going further afield. These are just two instances of the way the Connexion’s influence reached out through conversation and invitation.

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<sup>266</sup> Garner, William, *The Jubilee of English Camp Meetings* (1857) p. 109.

<sup>267</sup> Lewis, G.P., *An Approach to Christian Doctrine* (1954) p. 123. see also Wesley’s *Sermons* on ‘The Witness of the Spirit’; ‘Christian Perfection’ ‘Salvation by Faith’ (Nos. 10, 40 and 1 in *Fifty-three Sermons*. First series (n.d.))

The Cottage prayer meetings were another characteristic feature of this intimate conversation evangelism - meetings where even the poorest, youngest or shyest person could take part and perhaps, even more important, feel a part of a living vital faith/organism. The Preface to the *Large Hymn Book* by Hugh Bourne contains some observations on Prayer Meetings. While these may have been intended for more formal prayer meetings held after a service (though it was recommended that they should then last for about twenty minutes) I feel sure that the broad outline would have been the same for cottage prayer meetings:

- ‘1. Open with singing for about 4, 5, or 6 minutes
2. Spend 4, 5, or 6 minutes in prayer, ending with the Lord’s prayer.
3. Sing about 2, 3, or 4 minutes.
4. Let the members of the society pray in quick succession, for about 2, 3 or 4 minutes each; with singing a verse or two, occasionally, to vary the exercises.
5. In praying with mourners or in other particular cases, the exercises may be lengthened. But, in general, long exercises, in public, are injurious, and should be carefully avoided.....
6. If exhortations be given, they may be from 2 or 3, to 6 or 8 minutes each.
7. Conclude in an hour, or an hour and a quarter.
8. On suitable occasions, prayer may again commence, and especially if there be souls in distress.
9. This outline may be judiciously varied in any point as circumstances may require.’<sup>(268)</sup>

On the whole the outline laid down for the conduct of class meetings was similar to that for prayer meetings, with the addition of the leader speaking for a few minutes of his own experience, one or two minutes spent in conversation with each member, with care being taken to avoid lengthy speeches, and then the class book would be ‘settled’.

This sharing in fellowship in prayer meetings and class meetings was a good practising ground for embryo leaders and preachers as noted earlier<sup>(269)</sup> and as it will be seen a number of women came into the Primitive Methodist ministry by this route.<sup>(270)</sup>

### **WORDS AND MUSIC**

One notable phenomenon of Primitive Methodism, in addition to that of female preaching, which marked it off from other denominations was that of camp meetings. It was their insistence on the validity of this type of evangelism which caused the Wesleyan authorities to look askance at Hugh Bourne and William Clowes, and was one of the factors which eventually led them to expel them from Wesleyan Methodism. To the Primitive Methodists the camp meetings were an essential tool of evangelism attracting large crowds of people who would never darken the doors of a chapel and meaning that the gospel of salvation would then be taken back to the homes of the people.<sup>(271)</sup> Hugh Bourne set down strict rules for the conduct of camp

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<sup>268</sup> Bourne, Hugh, *Large Hymn Book for the use of the Primitive Methodists* (Bemersley 1825), Preface pp. viii-ix.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid., Preface pp. xi-x.

<sup>270</sup> see this chapter and chapter 5.

<sup>271</sup> Garner, William, op. cit. pp. 123-4; 143; 159.

meetings<sup>(272)</sup> as he was determined that the excesses of the American Camp Meetings which had so affronted the Wesleyans <sup>(273)</sup> should not occur at Primitive Methodist meetings. It is interesting to speculate if the Wesleyans had appreciated this whether their attitude might have been more tolerant and liberal and one wonders what John Wesley and George Whitefield, those two great open-air preachers would have had to say upon this matter. George Whitefield first started open-air preaching on 17th February 1739 at Bristol and he continued to do this to the end of his life. When John Wesley found that Anglican pulpits were closed to him because of his evangelistic preaching he finally reluctantly acceded to Whitefield's request and went out into the open-air. <sup>(274)</sup> At the first Wesleyan Conference in 1744, held at the Foundery the question was asked:

Q. 'Is field-preaching then unlawful.'

A. 'We conceive not. We do not know that it is contrary to any law, either of God or man.

Q. 'Have we not used it too sparingly?

A. 'It seems we have: 1. Because our call is, To save that which is lost. Now we cannot expect such to seek us: therefore we should go and seek them. 2. Because we are particularly called, by going into the highways and hedges (which none else will) to compel them to come in. 3. Because that reason against it is not good, "The house will hold all that come." The house may hold all that come to the house, but not all that would come to the field.'<sup>(275)</sup>

Having once taken the irrevocable step and becoming increasingly convinced of its usefulness Wesley engaged in open-air preaching throughout his ministry. So it seems highly likely that if Wesley's attitude to female preaching was more open-minded than that of his successors then perhaps his attitude to camp meetings would have been similarly enlightened - especially if 'all things (were) done decently and in order'.<sup>(276)</sup>

One might have assumed that the camp meeting phenomenon was one which would have died out after the first flush of evangelism, but this was not so. In 1826 Elizabeth Bultitude made strenuous efforts to get to one being held on Mousehold Heath which resulted in her conversion. The sets of 1835/6 plans which were studied earlier show evidence of camp meetings still being held - Grimsby Circuit on June 7th; August 16th and 23rd; and the Andover Branch of the Shefford Circuit on May 10th; May 31st (in addition to these of their own the Circuit held eight others). As can be seen the camp meetings were held in the summer months for very obvious practical reasons, and often they were timed to provide an alternative to the Wake Weeks, when by tradition the local inhabitants indulged in excesses of every kind. (Wakes were the local parish yearly feasts). The first *Magazine* reads:

'Camp Meetings at wakes have a peculiar beauty and propriety, Wakes are seasons of much leisure; and Camp Meetings, by their diversity are well calculated to fill up that leisure.'<sup>(277)</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> Appendix IX.

<sup>273</sup> *WM Minutes*, (1807); Kendall I op. cit. p. 77.

<sup>274</sup> Wesley, John, *Journal* (Standard Ed.) Vol. 2 p. 156ff. espec. 167 (March 1739)

<sup>275</sup> *WM Mins* (1744) p. 10.

<sup>276</sup> I Corinthians 14: 40

<sup>277</sup> *PMM* (1819/20) p. 8; Garner, op. cit. pp 52-53; 59; Petty, *History*. p. 18.

It is obvious that many folk went to the camp meetings out of curiosity just to see what was happening, but as Oliver Goldsmith put it in *The Deserted Village*:

‘Fools, who came to scoff, remained to pray.’<sup>(278)</sup>

Garner quotes a poem/hymn which is very apt:

“Tis curiosity  
Oft brings them in the way,  
Only the man to see,  
And hear what he can say;  
But how the sinner starts to find  
The preacher knows his inmost mind.

Thus, where the gospel’s preached,  
And sinners come to hear,  
The hearts of some are reached  
Before they are aware:  
The word directly speaks to them,  
And seems to point them out by name.”<sup>(279)</sup>

The Primitive Methodist faithful, however, went with joy to express their faith. Garner describes the style of preaching at camp meetings under five heads.<sup>(280)</sup> Each of these are points which have been noted earlier, but it is interesting to have a direct comment from one who doubtless was involved in the camp meeting assemblies in one way or another. So he emphasises that (i) the preaching was plain - as many people who attended camp meetings would have had little education and some might never even have heard the gospel preached or studied the Scriptures it was only common sense to speak to them in terms which they could understand.

‘Plain people require plain truths in plain language.’<sup>(281)</sup>

Adapting one’s language, especially in preaching to suit not only one’s congregation, but to the particular service, indoors or outdoors, was regarded

as evidence of the practical common sense or wisdom deemed to be the hallmark of the early Primitive Methodist preachers.<sup>(282)</sup> Then (ii) the preaching was simple - many of the hearers would not be mature Christians and therefore they needed to be instructed in the first elements of Christianity and so the preacher must needs pitch his/her address to their level:

‘Simplicity, under the governance of discretion, is the order of the day.’<sup>(283)</sup>

(iii) it was condensed - as preachers at camp meetings were restricted to fifteen or twenty minutes, which must have been a sore trial to those who were accustomed to long preaching, so

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278 Goldsmith 180  
279 Garner, op. cit. p. 119.  
280 Ibid. p. 124ff.  
281 Garner, op. cit. p. 125.  
282 See page 101.  
283 Garner, op. cit. p. 129.

the preacher had to be clear and concise in both content and presentation in order to make the best of his/her given time. (iv) the preaching was to be energetic - a large attentive crowd would often inspire a preacher in the proclaiming of the gospel and then many might be moved to seek salvation, and (v) the preaching would be direct -

‘The preacher talks to the people concerning their own state, and character, and interests. They feel he is speaking to themselves. The thunders of a broken law seem to say to them individually, “Thou art the man.” The pains of death get hold on the sinner, and the terrors of hell make him afraid. The wonderful story of the cross is seen and contemplated in a light which was never before perceived. The invitations of the Gospel are listened to with astonishment and delight. A clear sense of guilt and danger produces unutterable mental distress, and extorts the exclamation, “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Then follows the important inquiry, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” The trembling penitent is directed there and then to Jesus Christ for pardon and salvation. W; th his heart he believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth he makes confession unto salvation, and is saved.’<sup>(284)</sup>

Table 5 contains a few examples of the type of texts used at camp meetings and from these it can be seen that the main themes were ‘Christ and Him Crucified’, ‘Salvation’, and ‘Judgement’. Popular preachers soon gathered a large crowd as did a female who provided novelty so that the people pushed forward to catch a glimpse of her. There was a danger that camp meetings might rely too much on the preaching and ignore the praying services which had been the main element of the original Primitive Methodist camp meetings. Experience had shown that where this had been allowed to happen, as at Tunstall from the middle of 1818 to the close of 1819, the circuit had been greatly injured, but on the situation being rectified a revival had ensued.<sup>(285)</sup> So the praying services were regarded as a vital part of any camp meeting. Not only did the praying services enhance the devotional aspect of the assembly, by asking for God’s blessing on the preaching of the Word, but they gave opportunity for many people to participate. As these praying services were often led by the members themselves valuable experience was thus gained so that many were later able to play a part in the Connexion as exhorters, class leaders, local preachers or even as travelling preachers. It is a fact that many Primitive Methodist societies, both at home and abroad, owed their origin to the work of the laity. This was especially true of the societies in Canada, America and Australia where the experience of the English camp meetings helped the newly arrived immigrants to organise their own services. Hugh Bourne had, therefore, been undoubtedly correct in laying great stress on what he called ‘praying bands’ and felt that they did more good than the preaching. Again these almost impromptu outdoor prayer meetings were something in which all people could share, regardless of their status, and many of the curious were impressed and some converted. The merest hint that a woman was beginning to pray drew crowds:

‘If a female began to pray, she became the synosure of all eyes, and the subject of criticisms, both pleasant and painful, and the people almost fell over each other in their eagerness. They were not anxious to hear

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<sup>284</sup> Ibid. pp. 131-2.

<sup>285</sup> *PMM* (1819/20) pp. 228-9.

the most fervent prayers, but just to see a sight that could not be seen elsewhere.'<sup>(286)</sup>

**Table 5: Camp Meeting Texts: a selection**

NAME	DATE	PLACE	REFERENCE (Biblical)	TEXT (A.V.)
Sister Simpson	June 1818	Barlestone	Luke 16	(Judgement)
Sister Simpson	June ? 1818	Barlestone	(Acts 13:14)	Behold ye despisers, and wonder and perish etc.
Brother Brobson	May 9th 1819	Barlestone	Luke 14:22	And yet there is room.
?	July 30th 1820	Loughborough	Acts 17:6	(These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also.)
Francis Misson	August 22 <sup>nd</sup> 1824	Shrewsbury	2 Chronicles 33:11-15	(Manassah's change of heart (summary of vv))
William Paddison	July 31 <sup>st</sup> 1825	Wrine Hill	John 14:13	And whatever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do
a woman (?Elizabeth Johnson)	1825	Partington	Matthew 25:1-13	The Parable of the Ten Virgins
Hugh Bourne	1826	Gawsthorpe, Macclesfield	John 3 :3	(Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.)
Francis N. Jersey	July 9 <sup>th</sup> 1826	Dunkenfield, Cheshire	Psalms 46:2	Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee forever.
William Wood	July 9 <sup>th</sup> 1826	Dunkenfield, Cheshire	(Hebrews 2:3)	How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation!
James Sneat	September 9 <sup>th</sup> 1827	Langworth, Mansfield	Matthew 5:12	And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain and when he was set, his disciples came unto him and he opened his mouth and taught them.
Thomas Russell	July 4th 1829	Wanbro'	Luke 17:32	Remember Lot's wife.
John Stamp	July 7th 1837	Orby, Louth	(Nehemiah 2:20)	The God of heaven, he will prosper us: so we his servants will arise and build.
Ann Lonsdale (Mrs.Longmires)	1855	?	Luke 12:20	But God said unto him. Then fool, This night thy soul shall be required of thee
Thomas Russell	1858	Portodown	Acts 17:30-31	(Judgement)

Note () indicates not given in source

Sheer curiosity certainly attracted many to the Primitive Methodist camp meetings, which were seen - and probably intended, in the best sense of the word - to be good entertainment value. I cannot help feeling that the Primitives had an inborn sense of theatre. Their camp meetings were designed to appeal to people - they were social occasions with opportunity for audience participation. There was a variety of preaching stands and styles from which to choose; different praying bands to listen to and to join; rousing hymns and songs to enjoy. All were welcome - attendance was not restricted to the ticketed membership - if people came, for

whatever reason, and were converted then the Primitive Methodists rejoiced - if people came and just enjoyed the experience who was to know what influence the Holy Spirit might have set to work in their hearts. The whole atmosphere of a camp meeting was lively, friendly and quick-moving - in fact the very apotheosis of the formal established church services of organised religion, so no wonder the crowds came. They were social occasions in which people came together to participate or not as they wished; to meet and chat to friends. Nothing was banned if it might assist the work of the Spirit. Hugh Bourne made up his first hymn book under the title: *General Collection of Hymns and Spiritual Songs for Camp Meetings, Revivals etc.* This book was an adaptation of the hymn book which Lorenzo Dow printed and circulated in England in 1807, *A Collection of Spiritual Songs used at Camp Meetings in the Great Revival in the United States of America*, Bourne used twenty-two of these hymns and the remainder included some by Isaac Watts and John Newton. Many of these hymns were sung to popular tunes. <sup>(287)</sup>

Basically however, many of the Primitive Methodist hymns, especially the missioning ones were either the songs of the people or owed a not inconsiderable debt to them - yet another point of contact with the masses. - E.W. Broome reported that Rowland Hill said:

‘He did not see any reason why the devil should have all the good tunes.’<sup>(288)</sup>

and this comment could well have been applied to the Primitive Methodists for their hymns were designed to appeal to the people - catchy, lively, toe-tapping tunes with simple telling words to strike a chord in the hearts and minds of the ordinary hearer. Adaptability was the name of the game, to coin a phrase - words and tunes could be altered to fit a particular circumstance so that the hymn became apposite. For example the Hymn ‘See how the Scriptures are fulfilling’ with the chorus ‘Save poor sinners, save poor sinners, save poor sinners from their sins’ has a footnote:

‘This chorus admits of variety, as ‘Save backsliders etc.’ - ‘whole families,’ ‘our children,’ - ‘our parents,’ - ‘our neighbours’ etc.’<sup>(289)</sup>

The value which the Primitive Methodists placed on hymn singing to attract crowds when they entered towns and villages on missions and also at camp meetings and the way in which they used them - both words and tunes - to teach their converts;<sup>(290)</sup> to encourage and sustain them in the way of salvation makes it necessary for us to look at this aspect of the Connexion’s life carefully. In the *‘Large Hymn Book for the use of the Primitive Methodists’* by Hugh Bourne (1825) there are numerous hymns listed under the headings of ‘On the spread of the Gospel’ and ‘Exhortation etc.’ all of which could well have been used at ‘enterings’ or ‘openings’.<sup>(291)</sup> However, Thomas Russell records that he used two in particular and these are to be found in *A Collection of Hymns for Camp Meetings, Revivals etc. for the use of the Primitive Methodists* by Hugh Bourne (1827) (commonly known as the *Small Book*).

‘Wandering pilgrims, mourning Christians,

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<sup>287</sup> e.g. ‘And soon the reaping will come’.... to the tune ‘Rule Britannia’ (Russell, T., *Autobiography* (n.d.) p. 84).

<sup>288</sup> Broome, E.W., *‘Rev. Rowland Hill’* (1881) vii.

<sup>289</sup> Bourne, *Small Hymn Book*. 25. cf. Wallingford Branch Plan (January-April 1835).

<sup>290</sup> Hall, Ebenezer, *The Earnest Preacher: Memoir of the Rev. Joseph Spoor* (1870) p. 16.

<sup>291</sup> *Large Hymn Book* for example 393; 394; 396; 16. (I have only noted ones by PM writers here and elsewhere in this chapter).

Weak and tempted lambs of Christ,  
 Who endure great tribulation,  
 And with griefs are much distressed,  
 Christ hath sent me to invite you  
 To a rich and costly feast;  
 Let not shame nor pride prevent you,  
 Come, the rich provision taste.

I am bound for the kingdom;  
 Will you go to glory with me  
 To sing Hallelujah!  
 To God and the Lamb?’<sup>(292)</sup>

‘Come, O come, thou vilest sinner,  
 Christ is waiting to receive  
 Weak and wounded, sick and sore;  
 Jesu’s balm can cure more.  
 Hallelujah, Hallelujah to the Lamb.’<sup>(293)</sup>

In both hymn books a number of hymns are entitled ‘For Camp Meetings’ and these were obviously intended specifically for use on those occasions, actually using the words ‘camp meetings’ and asking for God’s presence; praising and thanking God for blessings received and expressing confidence that the Lord who had saved them would be with them always, even when the crowds had gone their separate ways.<sup>(294)</sup> An interesting hymn which is not to be found in either of these books is quoted by William Garner (see Appendix X). This hymn compares the ministry of Jesus with that of the Primitive Methodists and celebrates the rise and success of camp meetings and points to the equality of all in the sight of Christ. The fifth verse is of particular interest as it reflects the attitude of the opponents of camp meetings and is perhaps a dig at the Wesleyans who had forbidden camp meetings at the Liverpool Conference of 1807.

**Table 6: Primitive Methodist Hymns and Biblical References: a selection from Large Hymn Book**

Hymn number	Book	Chapter/verse	Book	Chapter/verse
6	Deuteronomy	33:28-9		
9	Exodus	19:20		
28	Psalms	103:13		
75	Acts	14:22	Revelation	7:16-17
127	Matthew	5:3-10		
160	Luke	18:10		
191	Galatians	2:20		
199	Genesis	45:28		
227	Hebrews	11:8		
246	Proverbs	3:13	Malachi	4:2

<sup>292</sup> Sung by Thomas Russell on entering HOE BENHAM on Sunday, April 18th 1830 (Russell, op. cit. p. 31) (S.B. 36)

<sup>293</sup> Sung by Russell on entering Hurstbourn Tarrant (commonly called Up Husbourn) on Sunday, April 17th, 1831 (Russell op. cit. p. 64) (S.B. 14)

<sup>294</sup> Bourne, *Small Hymn Book*: 54, 80; 10; *Large Hymn Book*: 503; 501.



256	Hebrews	12:24		
258	Daniel	3		
263	Revelation	7:9		
269	I Thessalonians	5:17		
279	Ezekiel	34:11-17		
282	Genesis	6		
299	Isaiah	43:2		
304	Ezekiel	34:11-12		
339	Psalms	77:20		
350	Revelation	14:13		
373	Numbers	10:29		
410	Isaiah	25:6		

Detailed study of both the *Small* and *Large Hymn Books* casts a number of fascinating, if tantalising sidelights on the Primitive Methodist ethos. It has been argued that many of the hymns reflect both the agricultural and the social backgrounds of the members of the Connexion and that references to ‘reapers’ and ‘harvest’ etc. indicate the former and the apparent hankering for ‘the great banquet’ and the ‘costly feast’ etc. the latter in contrast with the poverty of their everyday lives.<sup>(295)</sup> While this may appear to be so I feel that this argument leaves several things out of account. As I read the Primitive Methodist hymns such phrases do not give me that impression. Primarily I feel that they relate to the Bible and that many of the ideas and, at times, the actual words and phrases are purely and simply Biblically based. Jesus himself used the ideas and words ‘reapers’, ‘harvest’, ‘fields’, and ‘labourers’ and so on frequently and he tells the parable of the Great Supper and the Marriage Feast and this last phrase is also familiar from *Revelation*<sup>(296)</sup> and therefore I would argue that it is important to take into account the ‘Bible soaked’ culture of Primitive Methodism, to appreciate that often people struggled to learn to read so that they could read the Bible rather than anything else and that therefore many phrases, words and even stories became almost second nature. Thus it stands to reason that much of their ‘literature’ reflects, unconsciously or sub-consciously if not consciously, Biblical phraseology and imagery. So we find that much of the traditional imagery is used - ‘glory’, ‘perfume’, ‘vineyard’, ‘jewels’, ‘land of milk and honey’, ‘dew of heaven’, ‘vale of woe’, ‘Canaan’s shore’ and countless others.<sup>(297)</sup> It is interesting in perusing the hymns to check Biblical allusions, some are quite familiar, such as those noted above and also mention of ‘sheep’ and ‘Shepherd’, ‘streams and water’,<sup>(298)</sup> but there are others which to modern eyes seem a little obscure and unusual, for example there are several which make use of the stories of Noah, Abel, Enoch, Abraham, Lot’s wife, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Daniel and Job among others.<sup>(299)</sup> This would seem to reinforce the argument that the Primitive Methodists knew their Bibles and perhaps held to fairly fundamentalist interpretations using a variety of passages to make their points. I feel this is also borne out by some of the texts used in their sermons,

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<sup>295</sup> Werner, J. S., op. cit. pp. 366-367.

<sup>296</sup> Matthew 13 espec. vv 30, 39; John 4:36-7; - reapers; Matthew 9:37-8; Luke 10:2; John 4 espec. v. 35; Mark 4:29 (harvest); Matthew 20:1-16 (labourers); Luke 14:12-24; Matthew 22:2-10; Revelation 19:9, 17. (supper/feast).

<sup>297</sup> Bourne, *Large Hymn Book*: 3,6;160;193;227;235;318;338;339; *Small Hymn Book*: 23; 30;50;61.

<sup>298</sup> Bourne, *Large Hymn Book* 80;82;530;508;306;6;75;299;347;366;186;279;304~sheep); 262(stream/water): *Small Hymn Book*: 11;15;32;35;36;46;61.

<sup>299</sup> Bourne, *Large Hymn Book*: 192;282;256;527;227;6;199;9;195;338;339;466;258;281; 521;524;261;160;225;343; *Small Hymn Book*: 115. See also Table 8.

many-of which were obviously evangelistic in some form or another, but others are ones which would not be chosen very often today.<sup>(300)</sup>

Again, many of the hymns echo the hymns of Wesley - and Watts - and I think that the same thing is true - that the Primitive Methodists were so brought up in the hymn-singing ethos of these writers that their own compositions seem full of familiar sounding words and phrases. I would doubt if one could accuse them of definite plagiarism, but that it is simply that they were incorporating familiar apt phrases into their own hymns, (see Table 7) in some cases adapting them for their own special purposes, for example for camp meetings or missionings. Another example of changing words to suit circumstances is the following:

**HYMN SUNG by Russell in prison at Abingdon in May 1830**

(Russell. op. cit. p. 41; cf. Large Hymn Book, No. 22.)

I. Nor exile I, nor prison fear,  
Love makes my courage great;  
I find a Saviour everywhere,  
His grace in every state.

Nor <u>prison</u> walls, nor <u>straw bed cells</u> ,	castle/dungeons deep
Exclude his quickening beams;	
<u>Here</u> I can sit, and sing, and weep,	There
And dwell on heavenly themes.	

A Saviour <u>succours me in toils</u> ,	doubles all my joys
And sweetens all my pains;	
His strength in my defence employs,	
Consoles me and sustains.	

I fear no ill, resent no wrong,  
Nor feel a passion move,  
When malice whets her sland'rous tongue,  
Such patience is in love.

**Table 7: Comparison of Primitive Methodist Hymns with Wesley and Watts**

1.	Time is swiftly rolling on We shall soon have run our race; Lo! Another year is gone, Yet we <u>see each other's face</u> (1)	1.	And are we yet alive <u>And see each other's face</u> (1) <u>Glory and praise</u> to Jesus give (4) For his redeeming grace!
2.	Multitudes from earth have fled <u>Since we last assembled here;</u> (2) They are number'd with the dead, But <u>we in The house appear.</u> (3)	2.	Preserved by power divine ) To full salvation here, ) (5) Again in Jesu's praise we join, And <u>in his sight appear.</u> (3)
3.	Author of our length'd days, Three in one, and One in Three Take the <u>glory and the praise.</u> (4)	3.	What troubles have we seen, What conflicts have we passed, Fightings without, and fears within,
	For 'tis only due to thee.		<u>Since we assembled last!</u> (2)

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<sup>300</sup> See this chapter and Appendices V and VI.

4. While permitted here to stay, )  
 Let thy praises fill every tongue; ) (5)  
 And when call'd from earth away, )  
 May we join the heavenly throng.

William Sanders and Hugh Bourne

1. To thee, Great source of light,  
 My thankful voice I'll raise )  
 And all powers unite ) (3)  
 To celebrate thy praise )  
And, till my voice is lost in death. (1)  
May praise employ my every breath.(2)

William Sanders and Hugh Bourne

4. But out of all the Lord  
 Hath brought us by his love;  
 And still he doth his help afford,  
 And hides our life above.

Charles Wesley, 1707-88

1. I'll praise my maker while I've breath (3)  
And when my voice is lost in death, (1)  
Praise shall employ my nobler powers:(2)  
 My days of praise shall ne'er be past,  
 While life, and thought, and being last,)(3)  
 Or immortality endures.

Isaac Watts, 1674-1748

Bourne, *Large Book* 505 & *Methodist Hymn Book* 709 (1933 ed.) and *Hymns and Psalms* 707 (1983)  
 Bourne, *L.H.B.* 202 & *M.H.B.* 428 and *H.& P* 439

	<b>Further Comparisons</b>	
<b>Large Hymn Book</b>	<b>Methodist Hymn Book</b>	<b>Hymns and Psalms</b>
163	550	536
155	110	528
310	371	216
436	204	193
107 especially	117, 924, 387, 386	106, 457, 740, 745

So, in view of all the evidence I have collected, by careful reading of both the *Large* and *Small Hymn Books*, I would maintain that it is dangerous to place too much emphasis on the agricultural and sociological allusions in hymns by Primitive Methodist writers. In my opinion there are only a few hymns which bear out such a view and those are mainly in the *Small Book*, which was primarily designed for 'camp meetings and revivals'<sup>(301)</sup> and I feel these are also capable of Biblical interpretations. Most of the agricultural allusions are therefore very general ones and do not seem to be particularly related to the agricultural background of the Primitive Methodist members any more than reference to 'gloom of Hellish night' and pictures of hell<sup>(302)</sup> could be said to refer to mineworkers or phrases such as 'stormy banks', 'rivers of delight', 'healthful shore' or 'Tho' Jordan's waves around me roll, Fearless I'd launch away' originated with the fishermen.<sup>(303)</sup> There is, in fact, just one hymn which deals with ships and sailing in any detail and even that refers to Noah's Ark (Genesis 6) and to Fair Havens (Act 27 v. 8).<sup>(304)</sup> One is therefore forced to the conclusion that the Primitive Methodists, being steeped

<sup>301</sup> Bourne: *Small Hymn Book* 14, 15, 24, 26, 55, 99.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid. 95, 26, 79.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid. 21, 125.

<sup>304</sup> Bourne, *Large Hymn Book* 335.

in Biblical language and in the hymns of Wesley and others, reflected this in their own compositions. Certainly agricultural and sociological elements are to be found, but it is artificial, to my mind, to over-emphasise them. Even the great sense of community which the Primitive Methodists undoubtedly had and in which they rejoiced<sup>(305)</sup> has its roots in Scripture, particularly in the early church as seen in the *Acts of the Apostles*.<sup>(306)</sup>

The final comment on Primitive Methodist hymns and hymn-singing can, I think, be safely left with William Garner who wrote:

‘We are quite aware that many of the favourite hymns of the Primitive Methodist Church, would be found materially below the standard, were they tested rigidly by the acknowledged rules of sacred poetry. Nor have the tunes in which those hymns have been sung, been invariably chosen with good taste, or sung with scientific accuracy..... we believe that many of our popular hymns and tunes are admirably adapted to Camp-meeting services.

In processioning the streets and lanes of cities, towns, and villages, it has often been found that stirring hymns and lively tunes have been followed by immediate and grand effects.....

On the Camp-ground, the simple vocal music has produced the same softening and subduing effects. New hymns and popular tunes have not only captivated the ears of large assemblies, but have also vastly contributed to peaceful behaviour, and have fixed attention to the Word of God.’<sup>(307)</sup>

If camp meetings were open-air gregarious occasions held mainly in the summer, then perhaps the equivalent for the winter was the indoor love-feast, though this cannot be categorically ascertained as circuit plans only very marginally indicate a lessening in numbers of love-feasts in the summer months, but yet again there may be a geographical variable to be considered here.

A love-feast held in a chapel building, often in an evening, was naturally a more formal setting, but roughly the components were similar with sermon, exhortation, prayer and hymns. The important thing was that they were all kept short to provide maximum impact and then part of the service was the sharing in fellowship of the bread and water after the blessing. It was a fellowship meal where all were welcome; where all were equal; where all shared their personal experience of saving grace.<sup>(308)</sup> Sometimes the love-feast turned into a prayer meeting. Non-members were readily accepted to join in for up to three love-feasts, but after that they were required to state their intention of becoming members of the chapel community or of withdrawing. I am sure that for most of the Primitive Methodists in the early days these love-feasts took the place of the more formal service of Holy Communion. Again, I wonder if

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<sup>305</sup> Bourne, *Small Hymn Book*. 23; *Large Hymn Book*. 366, 373; 231.

<sup>306</sup> Acts 3:14. 4:32.

<sup>307</sup> Garner, op. cit. p. 112-3. One of the most stirring hymns which was used for open-air services was ‘Hark! the gospel news is sounding:’ which was called ‘The Primitive Methodist Grand March’. (Kendall, op. cit. vol. II, p. 11). This hymn by the young travelling preacher, William Sanders, was the instrument whereby many were converted. Another Primitive Methodist hymn writer was Richard Jukes and his hymn ‘My heart is fixed, eternal God,’ was also still included in the 1933 Methodist Hymn Book, but both have been omitted from the new *Hymns and Psalms* (1983).

<sup>308</sup> See Appendix XI.

this might have been an example of a built-in resistance to the ‘sacrament’ because of Primitive Methodism’s well-known anti-clerical stance. Love-feasts could be celebrated by all, together in fellowship, but there was an underlying feeling that ‘a minister, a priest’ was required to officiate at the ‘sacrament’. The Conference Regulation of 1819/20 leaves the whole question open as we saw earlier.<sup>(309)</sup> If this supposition is correct it may go some way to providing an explanation as to why there was apparently so little emphasis placed on the sacrament of Holy Communion in early Primitive Methodism.

One final thing remains to be said briefly about Primitive Methodist public worship. Preaching services usually opened with singing and prayers culminating in the Lord’s Prayer. Then a short hymn was followed by a sermon lasting between twenty and thirty minutes - longer ones were not encouraged.<sup>(310)</sup> The preacher was advised:

‘so fully (to) get into faith, as to preach the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven (1 Peter 1 v. 11) In order to (do?) this he should keep clear of all improprieties, all reflections on individuals or societies, and all other unprofitable things; using only “Sound speech that cannot be condemned.” (Titus 2 v. 8) and, as far as wisdom is given to him, preaching a pure gospel, and nothing but the gospel.’<sup>(311)</sup>

The service would be brought to its conclusion in around an hour or an hour and a quarter with the singing of a hymn and the saying of a prayer.

## CONCLUSION

The day by day reality of the lives and work of the early Primitive Methodist itinerants was harsh, exacting, at times dangerous, never boring, often tiring, but very rewarding. It demanded total commitment of body, soul and spirit to the cause of saving souls. Primitive Methodism set out to fill the religious and spiritual gap left by the Established Church and the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion - to speak to and for the working classes; to appeal to the villagers and cottagers; to go into their homes on equal terms; to communicate with them in their own language and because they were of the people they were more readily accepted by their hearers. They were convinced that they were called by God to do His work. Woodcock remarked that:

‘His choicest instruments in all ages have not been men of any particular class or condition, He has always found men when He needed them to do his work and He has often found them among the poor and lowly.’

and

‘some of the methods of our pioneers were new, strange, startling, sensational, which stirred the popular mind and moved the popular heart as it had never been moved before, but it was men and not their

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<sup>309</sup> See pages 74-75. For a discussion of the later developments in Primitive Methodism regarding the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper see Bowmer, J.C., ‘Some Non-Wesleyan Service Books’ in *WHS Proc.* vol. XXXII, Part 7 (September 1960) pp. 151-152; Bowmer, J.C., *The Lord’s Supper in Methodism 1791-1960* (1961) pp. 41-42, Baker, Frank, *Methodism and the Lovefeast* (1957) pp. 44, 52-54

<sup>310</sup> *PM Mins* (1825) p. 5. (1828) pp. 36-40.

<sup>311</sup> Bourne, *Large Hymn Book* op. cit. Preface pp vii-viii.

methods, that made ‘the cause’ grow.’<sup>(312)</sup>

In 1847 Thomas Church wrote:

‘Primitive Methodism regards as its preachers those who are regularly and exclusively devoted to the ministry. In the induction of preacher to the ministerial office we have no ceremony or “laying on of hands”. We hold with Milton, “That as for ordination, it is but the laying on of hands an outward sign or symbol of admission. It creates nothing, it confers nothing, it is the inward call of God that makes the minister. It is but an orderly form of receiving a man already fitted, and appointing him to a particular charge”.’<sup>(313)</sup>

He further insisted that:

‘Satisfactory evidence of a scriptural conversation to God and of a Divine call has been and is still regarded as indispensable in a Primitive Methodist preacher..... ‘Few beyond such as have a passion for soul-saving will enter the Primitive Methodist ministry’.’<sup>(314)</sup>

This seems to say it all.

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<sup>312</sup> Woodcock, op. cit. p. 27.

<sup>313</sup> Church, T., op. cit. p. 58.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid. p. 57-58.

## CHAPTER FIVE: WOMEN: CHOSEN BY GOD

In the *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* in 1953 the Rev. Wesley Swift wrote with reference to The Primitive Methodist "Female Preachers":

‘We have been able to identify more than forty women itinerants, but the full total must be considerably more <sup>315</sup>

This comment provided the starting point for this inquiry. Mr. Swift was indeed correct and the number is now nearer a hundred with no doubt more still to be traced. The chief difficulty is that although in the *Minutes of the Primitive Methodist Connexion* we can find the list of the stations to which the travelling preachers were appointed by the Conference each year these stations vary from year to year as to whether they list the itinerants by Christian name or merely by initial. In the latter case it is usually impossible from this source alone to tell which are male and which are female. However, by looking at the accounts of the various funds published in the Minutes one can occasionally find out the sex behind the initial. For example, to take a few at random: ‘A. Go(o)dwin was pledged’<sup>316</sup> and she is found to be ‘Ann’;<sup>317</sup> ‘M. Bugden’ also pledged<sup>318</sup> is Mary;<sup>319</sup> ‘E. Brown’<sup>320</sup> turns out to be Elenor<sup>321</sup> and ‘S. Willis’<sup>322</sup> rejoiced in the name of Sophia.<sup>323</sup> Another source of information is, of course, the *Primitive Methodist Magazine*. By very detailed reading of this publication from its first issue in 1819/20 sometimes there are to be found isolated references to services taken or chapels opened by ‘Miss’ or ‘Sister-----’, then further checking might reveal a female itinerant hiding behind the apparent male initials of the stations. It is by such means as these, plus delving into local church and circuit records, that the number of known itinerants has been more than doubled.

Graph II NUMBER OF FEMALES ENTERING THE ITINERACY EACH YEAR



### A SCORE OF ITINERANTS

Of the ninety women traced, so far, it has been possible only to find biographies, memoirs or obituaries of twenty. These records vary in length, in the information they give of the personal lives of the people and in many cases the account seems to fit into a preconceived religious

<sup>315</sup> **WHS Proc.** Vol. xxix (1953) p79.

<sup>316</sup> **PM Mins** (1832) p.4

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.* (1838) p16.

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.* (1833) p2

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.* (1841) p22

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid.* (1839) p1.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.* (1847) p30.

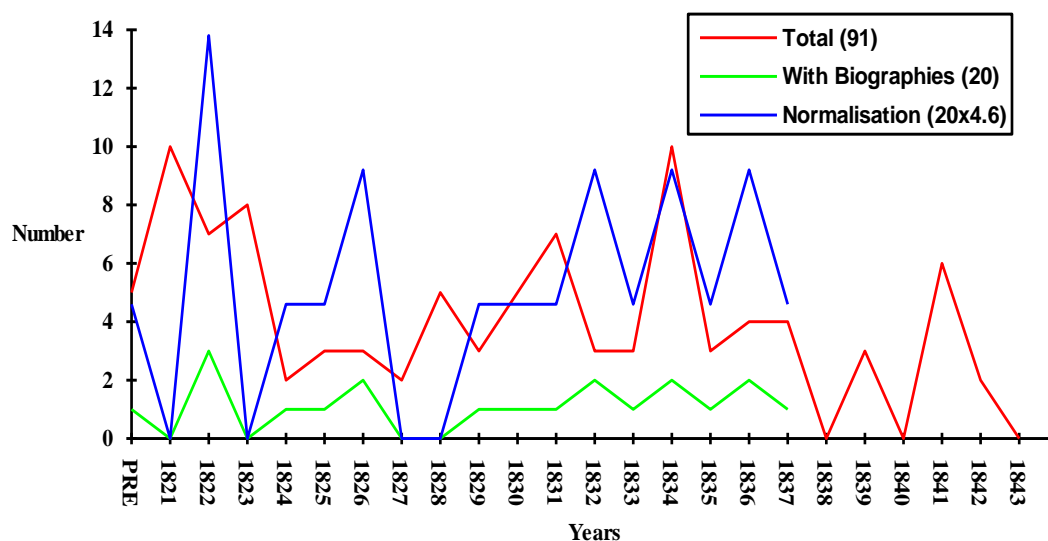
<sup>322</sup> *Ibid.* (1841) p4.

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.* (1846) p.22

framework concentrating on their spiritual state and inner feelings rather than recording dates, names and places which would be of inestimable value to researchers. However, one can draw a few conclusions from these twenty ladies, though one would hesitate to say that this sample group, being less than a quarter of the number of known women, could be regarded as in any way typical of the whole.

The twenty women were all born before 1816 and thus fall into the early period of the Primitive Methodist Connexion's history and they all became members of that denomination between 1811 and 1834, soon becoming local preachers and quickly going on to be travelling preachers. Sarah Kirkland, as noted in an earlier chapter, usually regarded as the first woman travelling preacher of the Connexion, though in fact she ceased itinerating before the stations actually started, commenced her work in 1816 (or 1814) and the latest of the group to start was Matilda Archer in 1837. Of the rest three started in 1822; one in 1824, one in 1825; two in 1826; one in 1829; one in 1830; one in 1831; two in 1832; one in 1833; two in 1834; one in 1835 and two in 1836. This would indicate a fairly wide spread. One can compare a graph of this sub-group superimposed upon a graph of the years of entry of the total group of ninety-one by the expedient of normalising the sub-group by the factor of 4.6. Thus we find that in five of the years the intake was the same; in seven the graph was lower and in 1821, 1827 and 1834 the real intake was higher than this sub-group, if typical and reliable, would indicate. As can be seen no real pattern emerges and reluctantly I feel that one would not be justified in trying to draw any useful conclusions from the exercise. (Graph II).

Graph III FEMALES ITINERANTS BY YEAR OF ENTRY



By an analysis of their birthplaces, apart from three who came from Wiltshire/ Dorset and who incidentally all started preaching later in the period under consideration, and Matilda Archer, also a later starter, who was born in London but moved to Birmingham at an early age, all the rest came from the early centres of Primitive Methodism in the North Midlands or further north. The biographies give little about their family backgrounds, except that they are usually described as poor, but industrious. Some had farming backgrounds and one is tempted to consider the strata of the society of the day to which the Primitive Methodists appealed most. When one realises that many of the heads of circuits were based on small, often fairly insignificant villages, such as Ramsor, Scotter and Cwm with its Rose Cottage Branch, it is perhaps not so surprising that little emphasis is placed on either their family backgrounds as such or their upbringing. Other research, as already noted, has looked at the social implications



and appeal of Methodism in its different branches<sup>324</sup> and that is not under consideration in this particular work. Suffice it to say that I feel it is not without significance that many of these female itinerants came from the sort of backgrounds and families to which Primitive Methodism would make an appeal and that the apparent readiness of the early leaders to make use of all and every instrument which came to hand to help further their cause and promote the gospel in which they so fervently believed aided the entrance of so many young women into the ranks of the itinerant ministry.

Education is hardly mentioned in the biographies, except in the cases of Elizabeth Smith and Lucy Hubbard, who we are told had the benefit of some schooling, another three had some little education which was apparently supplemented by 'self-improvement', as also, I think we may safely assume was the case with most of the others - at least to the extent of being able to read the Bible and write a little. Again one must remember that education was by no means generally available, particularly among the working classes and so perhaps it is understandable that little mention is made of it. In rural areas there might also have been even less opportunity to acquire more formal education than in the towns. As would doubtless be inevitable at that time several of the girls had to go into service of some sort or into other occupations in order to supplement the family incomes.

It is not surprising that on the whole the religious backgrounds of the group tended to be Wesleyan or Anglican, though a few came from the Presbyterian and Independent traditions. One cannot help wondering whether in the cases where no information is given if the families were not attached to any particular branch of the Christian faith, though the family backgrounds seem to indicate quite strong religious and moral convictions. About half of the group of the twenty were converted by Primitive Methodist missions held in their home locality. This is perhaps a pointer to the efficacy of the missionary enterprise of the early Primitive Methodists, especially up to the 1830s. Sunday School attendance seems to have been a major influence in the lives of seven of the group, but Mary Ball was apparently the only one to attend a Primitive Methodist Sunday School. This was probably because Primitive Methodism started as early as 1814 in Belper, her home town, where, after a mission was held and a society formed, a wealthy textile manufacturer, named Mr. Strutt sold them the land on which to build a chapel at the nominal cost of 1/- a yard.<sup>325</sup> As Mary was born on April 11th 1810, attended Sunday School and was converted in 1820, becoming a member of the society the same year, a local preacher in 1825 and a travelling preacher in 1832 it certainly looks as if she was a product of one of the earliest Primitive Methodist missions in the sense of belonging to the Connexion from her youth.

Perhaps, rather surprisingly, it is only recorded that two had to face family persecution because of their decision not only to throw in their lot with the Primitive Methodists but to become travelling preachers. Whether this indicates that the families were similarly influenced and therefore amenable or sympathetic towards such developments or whether they were not interested in religion of any sort or whether the 'girls' were of such convinced and determined religious fortitude that they overcame all opposition from family and friends it is impossible to determine, though, looking at their work within the itinerancy and their reaction to persecution when it occurred, one could argue that with the deeply held conviction that God was on their side they felt able to 'face lions' and achieve the apparent impossible! It is perhaps significant

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<sup>324</sup> For example, Valenze, D.M., op. cit.; Okelkevich, J., op. cit.; Scotland, N. op. cit.; Currie, R., etc. op. cit.; Thompson, E.P., op. cit.; Everitt, A., op. cit.; Gilbert, A., op. cit.; see Chapter 2 of this work for further discussion of this topic.

<sup>325</sup> Stevenson, G.J., *Methodist Worthies* (1884) 6 vols. Vol.1. I p. 77f; Kendall, *History*, Vol. I pp. 192-193

that the two cases of definite recorded persecution, Mary Edward(e)s and Fanny Hurle, came from families of pronounced Church of England adherence, who might understandably be upset at a member of their respectable family becoming attached to a non-conformist denomination and, to add insult to injury, to one of the 'enthusiastic' type, especially the despised 'Ranters'.

In view of the missionary nature of the Primitive Methodist Connexion it is interesting to note that, as has already been observed, very soon after becoming members anyone of either sex, possessing any public speaking ability was pressed into service as an exhorter, and local preacher and often went on to the itinerancy.<sup>326</sup> The next question which arises is how did they come to this position? What constituted their 'call' to preach and to become travelling preachers? It was certainly not a task to be undertaken lightly. There were many considerations to be taken into account, for example it was an arduous, if not actually hazardous or even dangerous commitment. They would need to be fully convinced that it was God's will for them; that they did the work in God's name; that He who had provided the motivation would also supply the means and strength necessary to fulfil their task. So it can be seen that considerable physical and spiritual strength was required, to say nothing of unquestioning faith in their God and an all consuming passion for the redemption of souls which was a great characteristic of the early Primitive Methodists, both the preachers and the ordinary church members. From careful perusal of the scanty material we have available in their obituaries, extracts from letters and diaries we can easily see that the women were often filled with doubts about their own faith and their capacity to fulfil their calling. For example Mary Porteous kept her 'call' a secret for two years before she felt convinced in her own mind, reinforced by the Primitive Methodist leaders' encouragement, that she must preach and enter the itinerant ministry,<sup>(327)</sup> and again Elizabeth Smith experienced doubts, especially after facing attacks by two clergymen who abhorred the idea of a woman preaching,<sup>(328)</sup> while Lucy Hubbard was so diffident of her ability that she did not go to her first appointment, then, feeling ashamed she took the next one, but:

'the cross of preaching felt so heavy and the responsibility so great, that I concluded I should never be able to meet the day of judgement in a case so important; I therefore returned my plan.'<sup>(329)</sup>

However, in a short time she felt compelled to try again and this time with success. Thus in most cases the private call to preach was confirmed by the Church authorities in some guise or another, either by personal approach or through the various meetings. Often the circumstances in which the female found herself in the local church demanded that someone should take the lead in exhorting or preaching and no doubt feeling with St. Paul that 'necessity was laid upon'<sup>(330)</sup> her she filled the gap. Then the leaders urged her to become a local preacher or even just 'put her on the plan' and thus presented with a 'fait accompli' the lady in question felt it was indeed the will of God and accordingly became a local preacher and then often a travelling preacher. This is certainly how the matter went with such as Elizabeth Allen, Elizabeth Smith, Rebecca Tims, Lucy Hubbard and Mary Clarissa Buck.<sup>(331)</sup> In addition to the three instances given above others felt reluctance to accept their call, mainly through a sense of inadequacy. Sarah Kirkland found the idea 'oppressive' and Matilda Archer was described as

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<sup>326</sup> See Chapter 4.

<sup>327</sup> Lightfoot, J., *The Life and Labours of Mrs. Mary Porteous* pp. 73, 79, 90ff.

<sup>328</sup> *PMM* (1837) p. 177 and see also p. 178.

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.* (1861) p. 201.

<sup>330</sup> I Corinthians 9:16.

<sup>331</sup> *PMM* (1850) pp. 258-259; (1837) p. 97; (1866) p. 426; (1861) p. 201; (1877) p. 112.

‘reluctant’.<sup>(332)</sup> When one looks at the tender ages of most of this group of female itinerants it is perhaps not surprising that they felt a certain diffidence in preaching to crowds, some of whom would, without doubt, be hostile to Primitive Methodism itself without the added complication of being one of the so-called weaker sex. For apart from Mary Porteous and Fanny Hurle, who were in their forties, the oldest of the group was twenty-six and the youngest fifteen when they commenced preaching. Thus their average age was about nineteen and three-quarters. One can well imagine that it was, at times, quite an ordeal to stand up and preach. Again, looking at the obituaries, as previously noted, it is stated definitely that as Rebecca Tims had a ‘talent for public speaking’ the circuit authorities took the initiative and put her name on the plan<sup>(333)</sup> and it is also said that as Fanny Hurle had ‘a strong love for the souls of mankind, and, a moderate share of scholastic intelligence, with a good share of common sense’ the people appointed her to preach.<sup>(334)</sup>

From the obituaries we have it can be seen that five of the women remained single and of those three served in the ministry for many years - Elizabeth Bultitude for twenty-nine years, Mary Burks for thirteen or fourteen years and Mary Clarissa Buck for eleven years on the stations and then for another twenty-five years as a ‘special preacher’. Jane Aycliffe died at the age of twenty-two after one year’s service and Lucy Hubbard, after three years, retired through ill-health. Six women married their male colleagues and so to all intents and purposes carried on their ministry although no longer stationed in their own right. Four local preachers became the husbands of female itinerants, although we are not told the profession of the remainder I think we may safely assume that, at the very least, they were active members of the Primitive Methodist Church. Two of the women were married twice and two were second wives. After marriage or retirement from the active itinerancy the females reverted to the status of local preachers and in many cases became class leaders as well in the places where they located. These places, except for Fanny Hurle (Frome Circuit) and Martha Doncaster (Australia) were mainly in the North Midlands and further north, thus bearing out the pattern of their places of birth and concentration in the early centres of Primitive Methodism.

I do not think it is possible to draw any inference from the last illnesses of the women as the only ones for whom it would be relevant would be those who were unmarried or who retired through ill-health in the first place, marrying later. Thus Mary Burks retired with a bladder complaint; Mary Porteous, had an unspecified illness at the time of retirement, but later she had three strokes and bronchitis; Elizabeth Bultitude had already retired as a supernumerary at the age of fifty-three in 1862 and then continued to the ripe old age of eighty-one when she died on 14th August 1890, following a long and painful illness; it is likely that Fanny Hurle retired through ill-health before she married John Parker; Lucy Hubbard had to give up the regular itinerancy after three years and then she worked for a while as a hired local preacher before her voice gave under the strain and she had to retire permanently; Mary Clarissa Buck, having worked for eleven years felt called to concentrate on special services and this sphere of work was also intended to ease the strain on her health, though when one considers the miles she travelled to fulfil her ‘special’ engagements one is inclined to wonder if this desired object was achieved.<sup>(335)</sup>

Again it is difficult to judge whether their labours as travelling preachers materially affected the length of life of the women we have been considering, for the only one who died in the active work was Jane Aycliffe. One might conjecture that those who died in their thirties

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<sup>332</sup> Ibid ( 1881) p. 163; (1851) p. 644.

<sup>333</sup> *PMM* (1866) p. 426.

<sup>334</sup> *PMM* (1858) p. 462.

<sup>335</sup> See this Chapter.

perhaps suffered in health through the rigours they endured during their time in the itinerancy, but this would be mere conjecture.

Finally, in looking at this sample group we might comment that in those cases for which we have information about the offspring, on the whole the families tended to be on the large size, though perhaps this is typical of the period, rather than special to the Primitive Methodists. The eleven ladies had fifty-one children. It is worth remarking that of Elizabeth Johnson's seven sons three became Mayors of Walsall, thus showing that Primitive Methodists took their part in the civic life of the communities in which they lived - they are described as 'Primitive Methodist Mayors'.<sup>(336)</sup>

While these twenty obituaries provide much interesting information they are very formal and stereo-typed and leave out many details which would bring their subjects to life as real people. No doubt the accounts had to conform to certain standards before they were accepted for publication in the *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, not only in length, but also in content. It was intended that memoirs so included would be used to inspire the readers to greater efforts in their own lives and in the Church and this probably accounts for some of the stress laid upon their spiritual pilgrimage and the happy death-bed scenes. Nevertheless it is certainly true that these early Primitive Methodist female travelling preachers were indeed remarkable women.

#### **ANOTHER TWELVE**

There remain, according to present evidence, sixty-nine women about whom we have varying amounts of information. However, apart from pin-pointing certain things there, I feel that with no degree of confidence can one draw any conclusions or perhaps even go so far as to indicate trends or make assumptions. It is too vague and generalisations would be too sweeping and circumstantial to be of much value.

There is a group of twelve women of whom we know rather more than the rest so it is to these that we next turn our attention, followed by a brief comment on the remaining fifty-seven. Two women who were missionaries in America merit a little more attention and then I propose to deal with some women who do not fit into any specific category, the hired local preachers and evangelists and the numbers of female local preachers who were used by the Primitive Methodist Connexion.

Working on this basis and following the same general pattern used to deal with the twenty already covered first I intend to look at the twelve mentioned above. In the case of Sister S. Perry and Ann Armstrong there is a possibility, though only conjecture, that the obituaries of Suzannah Barber and Ann Blackburn may be of these two itinerants and if this is indeed the case then we have a little more information than would otherwise be the case (and they could then be transferred to join the twenty previously considered). It would appear that both the ladies were born in the latter half of the eighteenth century; that both were born in Nottinghamshire, one of the earliest areas missioned by the Primitive Methodists and that they were converted in the early years of the movement; that they in common with the earlier group soon became local preachers and went on to become travelling preachers, though only working for a few years - Suzannah for one and Ann for about two years. Suzannah Barber<sup>(337)</sup> lived to the ripe old age of seventy-five, dying on 27th June 1851, while Ann Blackburn died at the early age of thirty on 12th August 1827.<sup>(338)</sup> There is no record of Ann Armstrong (or Ann Blackburn) having to face persecution during her short ministry. However, the obituary of Mrs. Barber tells us that she was imprisoned with W. Taylor at Huddersfield, where she is credited

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<sup>336</sup> Kendall II op. cit. p. 278; Ritson, op. cit. p. 145.

<sup>337</sup> *PMM* (1851) p. 643.

<sup>338</sup> *PMM* (1829) pp. 42-46.

with being one of the first to mission that town. Unfortunately, her obituary is rather vague about the dates of her ministry, so it is difficult to verify the details but Miss Perry was imprisoned at Huddersfield, according to the Primitive Methodist historians, with William Taylor and it seems highly likely that Suzannah Barber was S. Perry.<sup>(339)</sup> It is not recorded if Ann Blackburn became a local preacher after her marriage, but Suzannah Barber did. No details are given for either woman of illnesses or offspring. Neither are we told anything about their husbands, beyond the fact that Mr. Barber died in 1834. Suzannah was apparently a Wesleyan Methodist before she joined the Primitive Methodist cause.

The next three women in this group all came from Bronington-in-Flint, which in itself is remarkable as it is only a small village near Whitchurch. One can only assume that the first Primitive Methodists soon penetrated that area held missions and made converts. Certainly in the very early history of Primitive Methodist when Hugh Bourne was beginning his work he had contacts in Cheshire and in the Delamere Forest area and people like James Steele, Mrs. Dunnell, James Crawford and his own brother James Bourne along with early converts such as Thomas Brownsword, his brother and sister were active there and no doubt their work and news of their activities spread westward. Thus Bronington-in-Flint obviously soon became a breeding ground for potential travelling preachers, but nevertheless it is surely remarkable that three of the first women travelling preachers should have been from there.

Ann Stanna seems to have started her ministry in 1819/20; Sarah Spittal(le) in 1822 and Sarah Welch in 1826. Apart from a few references in Hugh Bourne's Diary about Ann Stanna and her work in 1820<sup>(340)</sup> all we know of her is contained in the extracts from her Journal which were printed in the *Primitive Methodist Magazine* of 1819/20 and 1822. From these extracts we gather she undertook a gruelling schedule of preaching, usually three times on a Sunday, at villages often several miles apart, services every weeknight to say nothing of house to house visiting. Her congregations always appear to have been large, often containing people who came to mock or persecute her, but then stayed to praise God. Two incidents in particular are recorded, one at Lichfield during the weekend of February 18-19th 1819 and soon afterwards at Barnton.<sup>(341)</sup>

One or two references are made to her health and in 1825 the Contingent Fund paid out £5 for her thirty-five weeks illness. In 1823 and 1824 Ann was stationed at Darlaston, Ramsor, Shrewsbury and Oakengates for six months at each station and it is interesting to note that she shared the work in each of these stations with a female colleague. Thus it seems that these circuits at least were happy to 'employ' female travelling preachers.<sup>(342)</sup> There may have been several reasons for this. Some circuits liked having female preachers because they were a novelty and drew large congregations to hear them and this would help the spread of Primitive Methodism and also their stipends were less than those of the men, being merely £2 in 1819, increased in 1823 to £2.2s.0d a quarter with board and lodging whereas even the single men were more expensive at £4.0s.0d plus board and lodging also there would not be the additional expense of allowances for a wife and children.<sup>(343)</sup> All these things could be of importance to an impoverished circuit or to one where the work was just starting to make an impact. One might wonder if the chance of interruption or persecution might be less likely if the 'ranter' was a woman than if he was a man and thus the local church would not have to face disruption from

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<sup>339</sup> W. Taylor and 'another' were imprisoned at Huddersfield for preaching in the market-place on Sunday, July 16th 1820 - see Petty, op. cit. p. 125; Kendall, op. cit. I pp. 492-493.

<sup>340</sup> Walford, op. cit. II p. 71, 89.

<sup>341</sup> *PMM* (1822) p. 112, see also (1819/20) pp. 234, 250-251; (1822) pp. 111-113.

<sup>342</sup> See Table 8.

<sup>343</sup> *PM Mins* (1819) pp. 4-5; (1823) p. 2.

**Table 8: Comparison of Number of Female Itinerants in the Shropshire/Cheshire Area with the rest of the Connexion**

Table 8: Comparison of Number of Female Itinerants in the Shropshire/Cheshire Area with the rest of the Connexion

	1821	1822	1823	1824	1825	1826	1827	1828	1829	1830	1831	1832	1833	1834	1835	1836	1837	1838	1839	1840	1841	1842	1843	1844	1845
Shropshire/Cheshire	1	3	7	8	5	6	3	3	1	1	6	8	3	5	3	3	3	4	2	3	5	3	3	2	1
Rest of connexion	10	8	12	9	10	13	12	15	14	19	19	14	14	24	19	15	18	9	11	9	1	13	8	5	4
Total of stations	11	11	19	17	15	19	15	18	15	20	25	22	17	29	23	18	21	13	13	12	17	16	11	7	5
Actual total of women	11	11	16	15	12	15	13	14	13	17	21	20	17	26	20	18	19	13	12	12	16	16	11	6	5
% of women in Shropshire/Cheshire area	9	27.3	38.8	47	33.3	31.6	20	16.6	6.6	5	24	36.4	17.6	17.2	13	16.16	14.3	30.8	15.4	25	29.4	18.7	27.3	28.6	20

Notes:

1. \* these numbers include half years

2. % derived from the \* totals

**Table 9: Number of female itinerants in Chester/Shropshire areas compared with male itinerants (omitting Chester & Oswestry which had no females, but 52 & 48 males respectively)**

	1821	1822	1823	1824	1825	1826	1827	1828	1829	1830	1831	1832	1833	1834	1835	1836	1837	1838	1839	1840	1841	1842	1843	1844	1845
Tunstall [1]	1 (6)	3 (12)	2 (4)	0 (8)	2 (9)	3 (4)	1 (2)	1 (1)	1 (3)	0 (3)	0 (4)	1 (3)	1 (1)	0 (3)	0 (3)	0 (3)	0 (3)	0 (5)	0 (3)	0 (3)	0 (3)	0 (4)	0 (2)	0 (3)	0 (2)
Burland			1 (6)	0 (7)	1 (6)	0 (4)	0 (3)	0 (2)	0 (1)	0 (3)	0 (2)	0 (2)	0 (2)	0 (3)	0 (4)	1 (4)	1 (4)	1 (3)	1 (4)	1 (4)	1 (5)	1 (4)	1 (4)	1 (4)	1 (4)
Ramsor			3 (1)	1 (1)	1 (4)	0 (1)	0 (1)	0 (2)	0 (1)	0 (1)	0 (1)	1 (2)	0 (2)	0 (1)	0 (3)	0 (3)	1 (3)	1 (1)	0 (2)	0 (2)	1 (1)	0 (1)	0 (2)	0 (2)	0 (2)
Oakengates			1 (6)	3 (7)	0 (8)	0 (5)	0 (3)																		
Hopton Bank/Ludlow				0 (3)	0 (4)	1 (4)	1 (5)	0 (2)	0 (3)	0 (5)	1 (5)	1 (1)	1 (1)	1 (1)	1 (3) [2]	1 (4)	1 (6)	1 (4)	1 (4)	1 (4)	0 (4)	1 (4)	0 (1)	0 (2)	0 (3)
Shrewsbury				2 (3)	1 (4)	1 (4)	0 (3)	0 (2)	0 (4)	0 (4)	1 (3)	0 (4)	0 (3)	0 (3)	0 (2)	0 (5)	0 (6)	0 (4)	0 (2)	0 (2)	0 (3)	0 (3)	0 (2)	0 (2)	0 (2)
Preston on the Hill/Brook				2 (2)	1 (2)	0 (3)	1 (3)	0 (3)	0 (3)	1 (2)	1 (3)	1 (3)	1 (4)	1 (4)	0 (6)	0 (4)	0 (4)	0 (4)	0 (3)	0 (4)	1 (5)	0 (2)	0 (2)	0 (2)	0 (2)
Prees						2 (3)	0 (3)	0 (1)	0 (1)	0 (6)	0 (5)	0 (5)	0 (2)	1 (3)	1 (3)	0 (2)	0 (3)	0 (2)	0 (2)	0 (2)	1 (3)	1 (1)	0 (2)	1 (2)	0 (1)
Cwm						0 (3)	0 (2)	0 (1)	0 (2)	0 (2)	0 (5)	0 (5)	0 (4)	1 (5)	1 (6)	1 (6)	0 (8)	0 (7)	0 (8)	0 (5)	1 (4)	0 (2)	0 (2)	0 (2)	0 (2)
Wrockwardine Wood								1 (2)	0 (2)	0 (2)	1 (3)	0 (3)	0 (2)	0 (2)	0 (2)	0 (3)	0 (4)	0 (2)	0 (3)	1 (5)	0 (6)	0 (3)	1 (3)	0 (4)	0 (3)
Presteign								1 (3)	0 (3)	0 (4)	1 (3)	2 (2)	0 (3)	0 (3)	0 (3)	0 (2)	0 (3)	0 (2)	0 (2)	0 (2)	0 (2)	0 (2)	0 (2)	0 (2)	0 (2)
Bishops Castle												2 (1)	0 (1)	0 (2)	0 (2)	0 (5)	0 (7)	0 (3)	0 (3)	0 (2)	0 (2)	0 (2)	1 (1)	0 (2)	1 (2)
Macclesfield/Congleton														0 (2)	1 (1)	0 (3)	0 (2)	0 (2)	0 (2)	0 (2)	0 (2)	0 (1)	0 (1)	0 (1)	0 (2)

No women stationed in area after 1845

**Chosen by God : the Female Itinerants of Early Primitive Methodism : E. Dorothy Graham**

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Totals	1 (6)	3 (12)	7 (17)	8 (31)	6 (38)	6 (32)	3 (25)	3 (19)	1 (23)	1 (33)	6 (34)	8 (31)	3 (27)	5 (31)	3 (30)	3 (43)	3 (53)	4 (39)	2 (39)	3 (37)	5 (40)	3 (29)	3 (26)	2 (30)	1 (28)
%	16.6	25	41.1	25.8	13.2	18.8	12	15.8	4.3	3	17.6	2.8	11	16	7.5	7	5.7	10	5	8	12.5	10.3	11.5	6.6	3.6

Notes

1. Tunstall is included because in the early days it is a 'blanket' term for many places which later had stations of their own.
2. In 1832 Hopton Bank under that name or Ludlow and from 1836 it continues as Ludlow
3. Macclesfield and Congleton was one circuit till 1838 when they separated.
4. Half years are counted as whole years for both sexes.
5. There were also several hired local preachers who are not included.
6. Branches of circuits have been ignored and also Much Wenlock (1841-46 only).

the hearers or perhaps even worse from the civil authorities - the custodians of law and order or the Anglican clergy or local squire. Ann worked for four years before she 'disappears' from the stations, so far without trace. Perhaps ill-health or marriage forced her early retirement.

Sarah Spittal(le), from the same village, worked for seven years, commencing in 1822, again, apart from extracts from her Journal in the *Primitive Methodist Magazine* of 1823<sup>(344)</sup> we know little of her work. She seems to have spent the early part of her ministry in the Shrewsbury area before going into Lancashire and then she had one year (1827) in Frome prior to returning to Shropshire from whence she disappears.<sup>(345)</sup> Like Ann Stanna she mentions the draw of a female preacher and that she frequently spoke to large congregations. She engaged not only in the usual Sunday services and weekday activities and visiting, but in addition she took part in camp meetings and organised class and prayer meetings.

The last female preacher, of whom there is a record, to come from Bronington is Sarah Welch about whom nothing is known except that the obituary of her father refers to his daughter Sarah, 'who was once a travelling preacher and is now a local preacher.'<sup>(346)</sup> However, one or two more bits of information can be deduced. The stations reveal that she too worked in the Shropshire area. Therefore it does indeed look as if this part of the country was particularly happy to have females as their travelling preachers. Another travelling preacher, Elizabeth Smith, mentions in a letter of 29th April 1827 to a friend that she had seen Sarah Welsh (sic) who was passing through Ludlow on her way to Hopton Bank and comments that she is

'able to take her appointments again'.<sup>(347)</sup>

In view of the fact that Sarah Welch 'retired' in 1828 and her father's Obituary refers to her as a local preacher and Elizabeth's comment about her health it seems likely that Sarah retired through ill-health. We do not know whether she married or not.

Next, in this group, we turn to the three ladies who married their male counter-parts and this presumably accounts for their disappearance off the stations. The earliest one was Jane Ansdale, who started her ministry in 1821, whereas Elizabeth Wheeldon and Ann Go(o)dwin started in 1830/31 and 1832 respectively. Jane Ansdale seems to have made a great impression on Primitive Methodist historians for her missionary enterprise, especially in the Weardale branch of the Hull-Circuit, where she worked alongside her male colleagues, Nathaniel West, Lazenby, Spaven (not mentioned on the stations) and Evans<sup>(348)</sup> and later with Joseph Smith and especially Thomas Batty.<sup>(349)</sup>

There are one or two interesting aspects to the story of Jane Ansdale. She evidently made a great impact in Weardale in several ways, for example J.D. Muschamp was converted by her and provided a preaching place for the Primitive Methodists and William Dent, who later became a travelling preacher and who was often a severe critic, left an account of Jane and her work showing he was much impressed by her.

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<sup>344</sup> *PMM* (1823) pp. 43-44.

<sup>345</sup> Michael Sheard suggests that 'Sarah Cutler who does not appear in the Minutes, was said to have served in Oldham in 1826, but this may be Sarah Spittle under a married name as she was stationed there by Conference in 1825.' 'The Origins and Early Development of Primitive Methodism in Cheshire and South Lancashire 1800-1860.' (PhD Manchester 1980) p. 683. However as she was stationed at Burton-on-Trent (1826); Frome (1827) and Wrockwardine Wood (1828) in her own name of Sarah Spittle this seems unlikely.

<sup>346</sup> *PMM* (1837) p. 389.

<sup>347</sup> *Ibid.* (1837) p. 41.

<sup>348</sup> *PMM* (1822/3) p. 127.

<sup>349</sup> *Ibid.* (1822/3) p. 161.



‘The preacher’s appearance, her voice, delivery and manner (so becoming her sex), her praying and singing, all combined to win attention and make the happiest impression; and the subject of her discourse and her mode of treating it, were alike interesting and profitable.....Even her giving out of the hymns so distinct, emphatic, and sweetly solemn, affected me most happily. And her subsequent ministrations were equally effective. Much of the fruit that sprang up in Weardale and the adjoining Dales, undoubtedly was the harvest of Jane Ansdale’s sowing.’<sup>(350)</sup>

We are also informed that a man returning home told his parents about her and in consequence the Primitive Methodists were invited to Hexham, so the spread of the Connexion was assured in the North East. Obviously in Jane Ansdale we have a female who worked equally with her male colleagues, who drew considerable congregations and had widespread influence in the spread of Primitive Methodism.

It is likely that the Jane Ansdale on the stations of 1821 and the J Ansdale who we are told worked in Hull Circuit for six years from 1823 must be the same person. However, the 1823 stations list a Jane Suddard at Hull in that year. William Dent states that Jane married William Suddards and J.W. Fawcett also says that this was the case, the marriage taking place about 1823.<sup>(351)</sup> Both sources imply that the two worked together in the Hull circuit till 1829 after which they went to America. It seems that William Suddards was not happy with his lot as a Primitive Methodist travelling preacher - he did not regard 14/- a week as sufficient salary - and so he left the Connexion and emigrated to the United States, going first to New York, where apparently he was in 1853, and then on to Philadelphia. In which city, in 1868 we find he was both a Doctor of Divinity and Rector of Grace Church, an Episcopal Church.<sup>(352)</sup> E. Barrass’ Journal tells us that:

‘Sabbath, April 17th....Philadelphia....in the afternoon we waited upon the Rev. W. Suddards, to whom we had some letters of introduction. ‘Monday, 18th..... Mr. Suddards rendered us good service....’<sup>(353)</sup>

So obviously the Suddards kept up their Primitive Methodist connections even after their departure to America and the missionaries were quite ready to make use of all sources of help to further their cause.

However, to go back to Jane herself. If, as the indications suggest, Jane continued to work as a travelling preacher after her marriage this is especially interesting as there are few who continued in their own right after marriage. In fact this was not permitted by a ruling of the 1827 Conference, except in very special circumstances.<sup>(354)</sup>

The travelling preacher known as Elizabeth Wheeldon had in fact itinerated in her maiden name as Elizabeth Hunt, for one year before her marriage on 18th June 1822 to Richard Wheeldon of Belper. When her husband died in 1826<sup>(355)</sup> Elizabeth returned to the itinerancy and now as Elizabeth Wheeldon re-started her ministry in the Darlaston Circuit unofficially in June 1830, but was then officially stationed there by the Conference in 1831, dividing her time

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<sup>350</sup> *PMM* (1882) p. 525-6; Ritson, p. 143.

<sup>351</sup> *PMM* (1882) p. 525-6; Fawcett, J.W., *Memorials of Early Primitive Methodism in the County of Durham 1820-1829* (Durham 1908) p. 25.

<sup>352</sup> Fawcett, op. cit. p. 25.

<sup>353</sup> *PMM* (1853) p. 505.

<sup>354</sup> See also Chapter 6 p. 212 and Chapter 8.

<sup>355</sup> *PMM* (1827) pp.82-94 for his obituary, but especially p. 94.

that year between Darlaston and Wrockwardine Wood. Here again, we have another example indicating that these circuits liked to have female travelling preachers, as we saw earlier in these cases of Ann Stanna, Sarah Spittle and Sarah Welch. In 1832 Elizabeth moved to the Shefford Circuit and here she evidently met with considerable success in extending the scope of Primitive Methodist work, especially in the Wallingford area where she was instrumental in the building of a chapel and manse. Remembrance of her work continued long after her disappearance from the stations. This disappearance was caused by her marriage to the Rev Samuel West, one of her colleagues, sometime either late in 1834 or early in 1835. Thereafter the *Magazine* contains many references to services taken, chapels opened and other special occasions at which ‘Sister West’ officiated. It is therefore quite evident that although Elizabeth had given up the itinerancy in her own right when she married she in fact continued it as a minister’s wife very much as she had done before her marriage. According to the ‘list of members of the *Primitive Methodist Itinerant Preachers’ Friendly Society* and of their wives and children’, the date of which seems to be around 1840, we see that the Wests had no children at that time, that Samuel was thirty-five years old and his wife’s age is given as forty-four.<sup>(356)</sup> In a report which looks back to the commencement of the Connexion’s work in Dorchester in 1832 there is an account of the severe persecution faced bravely by Elizabeth and the comment that eventually the cause there flourished.<sup>(357)</sup> Apart from mentioning that he married:

‘Mrs. E. Wheeldon who was also a zealous travelling preacher’

and that she died:

‘after four months of affliction’

Samuel West’s biography gives no details of his wife.<sup>(358)</sup> We can deduce that she died sometime between 1842 and 1844.

The third member of this group who married travelling preachers was Ann Go(o)dwin. She itinerated for the longest time in her own right - eleven years - before marrying Henry Green, also a travelling preacher. Ann Godwin worked mainly in the Brinkworth District which covered Berkshire and Wiltshire. Unfortunately there is little information about her ministry apart from notes in the accounts of the *Circuit Assistant Sick Travelling Preacher Fund* which indicate that she was not in good health in 1836, 1838, and 1839. We are not told when Ann married Henry Green, but she had disappeared from the stations in 1844 and, having left England on May 24th 1846, she arrived with her husband in New Zealand on September 1st 1846, so I think we can assume that the marriage took place between 1843 and 1846, probably 1844/5. Henry Green was the first appointed missionary to Wellington where he and his wife arrived in May 1847. During their ministry there Ann started a day school and a little chapel was built, unfortunately both were destroyed, along with the Wesleyan and Independent chapels in an earthquake in October 1848. It was replaced by a ‘plain weather-board building’. The Greens left Wellington in 1857 - apparently Henry Green’s health had failed - and they went to New South Wales, Australia, for a while before returning home and being stationed in Gravesend in 1861.<sup>(359)</sup> We have no record of Ann’s death, but she was left a widow when Henry Green died on 25th December 1882. Thus it seems likely that as she started itinerating in 1832 and was still alive in 1882 Ann probably lived well on into her seventies, living in the south of England which was where Henry located as a supernumerary. Henry’s Obituary

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<sup>356</sup> *PMMins* (1840), bound at the back of the *PM Mins*, Vol. 1836-1840 (WHS Library) p. 49.

<sup>357</sup> *PMM* (1840) p. 313.

<sup>358</sup> *PMM* (1867) p. 285-92.

<sup>359</sup> Petty, op. cit. p. 481-482; 539; Kendall, op. cit. II p. 442. See also *PMM* (1848) p. 56, 250, 567, 635.

contains the information that Ann lost her sight through her missionary labours. <sup>(360)</sup>

There seems little one can deduce from the information available on these three apart from the fact that they all married travelling preachers and continued their own ministry as minister's wives, that two went abroad - one to the United States and the other as a missionary to New Zealand and then Australia.

If we now look at Ann Brownsword, the sister of Thomas, and Hannah Farr we can merely say that both were early Primitive Methodist itinerants. Ann started her work in 1819 when Hugh Bourne reports that he was surprised at the effectiveness and appeal of Ann Brownsword's ministry, but he soon realised the advantages of her work and 'spoke to her concerning going out at large'.<sup>(361)</sup> *The Primitive Methodist Magazine* contains extracts from Ann's Journal<sup>(362)</sup> which agree with Hugh Bourne's diary about the area where Ann was to work, North Staffordshire and Cheshire.

From the details of her services we can see that Ann worked very hard during 1819 and 1820 often preaching three times on a Sunday as well as the usual round of house to house visiting and weekday evening meetings. In 1821 Ann was officially stationed by the first Conference in Tunstall and continued her great work, especially in the Macclesfield and Manchester areas. So it would seem that she, along with Sarah Kirkland was working as a missionary and travelling preacher before the Connexion was fully organised. Ann, therefore, only worked officially for one year before marrying Charles John Abraham of Burslem and reverted to local preacher status. C.J. Abraham was also a local preacher, a steward of the chapel, a local druggist in Burslem and a respected citizen.<sup>(363)</sup>

In 1830 Ann Abraham, presumably Ann Brownsword, was at a love-feast at Pitts Hall (Tunstall Circuit)<sup>(364)</sup> and Hugh Bourne mentions giving £15 to C.J. Abraham towards the debt on the Burslem chapel and that he had previously given him £3,<sup>(365)</sup> but there is no reference to Ann.

Hannah Farr itinerated for five years from 1823-1827 and again her ministry was mainly exercised in the same areas as Ann Stanna, Sarah Spittal, Sarah Welch and Ann Brownsword. Yet more evidence to show that this part of the country favoured women preachers, though one must remember that these women were among the earliest preachers and these places amongst the earliest ones to be missioned by the Primitive Methodists and therefore any conclusions must be treated with caution. There is an interesting report of the effect of one of Hannah's sermons in the *Magazine* which perhaps gives some idea of the expositions of the time, of the attitude towards the frivolities of life and of the concern for the soul and preparation for death. As this extract from the letter to Hannah was approved by the Circuit Committee for publication it must surely indicate the general feeling among the Primitive Methodists on these subjects, but perhaps more particularly it was included in order to point a moral and have a salutary effect on readers urging them to be aware of the uncertainty of life and get their priorities right.<sup>(366)</sup>

It seems likely that Hannah reverted to local preacher status when she left the stations in 1827

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<sup>360</sup> *PMM* (1883) pp. 307-308. From New Zealand I have learnt that the Greens travelled out on the MADRAS and that Ann was proposed as the first 'Secondary school' teacher in New Zealand.

<sup>361</sup> Walford, op. cit. p. 68.

<sup>362</sup> *PMM* (1819/20) pp. 233, 255, 256-7; (1821) p. 19.

<sup>363</sup> Chappell J.W., *In the Power of God*, (Burslem, 1901) p. 19 see also p. 25.

<sup>364</sup> *PMM* (1831) p. 65.

<sup>365</sup> Walford, op. cit. II p. 308.

<sup>366</sup> *PMM* (1827) pp. 266-8; cf. Appendix XII.

as a memoir of 1855 reports that John Riley was converted by a sermon preached by Hannah Farr at Whiston (Staffs) in 1832.<sup>(367)</sup> She probably located in the Stafford Branch, on her retirement.

The E. Brown of the Primitive Methodist stations is found to be a woman Elen(a)or Brown. Although she may have been regarded as a travelling preacher earlier locally, Elenor was officially stationed for the years 1839-1849, that is for eleven years. There are a number of references in the accounts of the *Circuit Assistants Sick Travelling Preachers Fund* to monies being paid for Elenor Brown's illnesses, and in the Durham Circuit records it is noted that 'E. Brown particularly requests a station in the South for the benefit of her health as the medical men tell her she is not likely to get well in this climate.'<sup>(368)</sup> She was also given travelling expenses in 1848 at 4d. per mile<sup>(369)</sup> and a grant in 1849 of £5.0s.0d.<sup>(370)</sup>

*The Report of the Pickering Circuit (March 17th 1845)* contains *The Historical Account of the Travelling Preachers* and it reveals that Eleanor was born in 1811 and that she had travelled for six years having been taken out by the Hull Circuit.<sup>(371)</sup>

The only other piece of information we have about Elenor comes from Thomas Russell who reports:

'Miss Eleanor Brown told me in London,...as she was about to emigrate to Australia in 1849 in the same ship as Messrs. Ride and Wiltshire....'<sup>(372)</sup>

Thus it would seem that her emigration was the immediate cause of Elenor's disappearance from the stations, but I wonder if the Conference grant of 1849 referred to above might be because she retired as a supernumerary as Elizabeth Bultitude did in 1862, or whether it was a grant to help her as a missionary to Australia, though there is no record of her on the Foreign Missions stations.

The last member of this group of twelve itinerants, Sarah Price, who travelled for fourteen years from 1829-42, provides several items of special interest. First, in Truro Record Office there is to be found the report of the St. Austell Circuit for 1830 to the Shrewsbury District Meeting. From this report it is obvious that the Circuit was 'financially embarrassed' and that the preachers were only partly paid. One of these preachers was Sarah Price about whom we also find a 'historical account' which tells us:

'Sarah Price, aged 23. Travelled two years, taken out by Hull Circuit, has travelled in Hull, Redruth, and the St. Austle (sic) Circuits, attentive to discipline, a general family visitor, a peaceable woman, acceptable preaching ability. An excellent voice, good manner, not addicted to long preaching, preaching a full, free present salvation successfull(sic), conduct good'.<sup>(373)</sup>

Secondly, the Minutes of the Quarter Day 22nd February 1830, of the St. Austell Circuit notes under 'Changes of Preachers', item 5,:

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<sup>367</sup> *PMM* (1855) p. 68.

<sup>368</sup> Durham Circuit Quarter Day Mins. May 7th 1847 (Durham R.O.).

<sup>369</sup> *PM Mins* (1849) p. 31.

<sup>370</sup> *PM Mins* (1850) p. 32.

<sup>371</sup> *The Report of the Pickering Circuit (March 17th 1845): The Historical Account of the Travelling Preachers* (North Yorkshire RO, Northallerton).

<sup>372</sup> Russell, T., *Record of Events in Primitive Methodism* (1869) p. 117.

<sup>373</sup> Historical Accounts of the Travelling Preachers: **Report of the St. Austle Circuit 1830 to the Shrewsbury District Meeting** (Cornwall RO, Truro).

‘that Sarah Price be removed according to her request.’<sup>(374)</sup>

Thirdly, also in the Record Office in the Records of the Redruth Circuit there are the Minutes of the General Quarter Day held at Redruth, September 1st, 2nd and 3rd 1828. Under the minutes of the Preachers ‘Meeting at item 11 we find:

‘that Sarah Price for the neglect of opportunity forfeit according to Rule.’

and in, the **Quarterly Meeting Minutes**:

‘1. that Sarah Price have 12/- given her,’

and in the Stationing of Preachers:

‘10. St. Austle - Henson, Beckerleg, Price, Abbey.’<sup>(375)</sup>

Fourthly, the Redruth Accounts of September 1st 1828 contain the following information:

‘Creditor	Sept 1st 1828	
Fines	Beckerleg - Price - Moorish	4.6
Debter	Sept 1st 1828	
S. Price	Sallery	6.4½
Sarah Price	Travelling expenses	1.6
Sarah Price	Lodging	4.0’ <sup>(376)</sup>

These records pose several problems, for example, according to the Primitive Methodist stations Sarah Price started her itinerant ministry in 1829 in the St. Austell Circuit, but according to the Report of the St. Austle (sic) Circuit 1830 she had already travelled in Hull, and Redruth before going to St. Austell. The question cannot be resolved by assuming that the St. Austell and Redruth Circuits were part of the Hull District and that perhaps there was confusion there, because these two Circuits were in fact missions within the Tunstall District.

It is interesting to see that travelling preachers who ‘neglected opportunities’ were fined and perhaps it gives some idea of the importance placed on making full use of missionary opportunities and the fulfilling of their obligations. Rule 26 in 1824 reads:

‘Q. What is the rule if a travelling preacher neglect any appointment which he could or ought to have filled up?

A. He shall forfeit one shilling and sixpence for every appointment so neglected.’

There are many instances of local preachers being disciplined for not being assiduous enough in carrying out their duties. So we also find:

‘Q. What is the rule if a local preacher or exhorter neglect any appointment which he could have filled up?

A. His name shall be put one number lower on the printed plan.’<sup>(377)</sup>

Another point worthy of comment is that it seems possible that the Redruth Circuit was as financially embarrassed as the one at St. Austell. Bearing in mind that a female itinerant’s quarterly salary was only £2.2s.0d. in 1828,<sup>(378)</sup> for Sarah only to have received 6s.4 1/2d. must

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<sup>374</sup> **St. Austle Quarter Day Minutes** (1830) (Cornwall RO).

<sup>375</sup> **Redruth Circuit Quarterly Meeting and Preachers Minutes 1828-30; 1831-1833** (Cornwall RO, Truro).

<sup>376</sup> Redruth Circuit Quarterly Accounts 1828-1830 (Cornwall RO).

<sup>377</sup> *PM Mins (Small)* (1824) p. 7.

<sup>378</sup> *PM Mins* (1823) p. 2, raised to £2.10s.0d. in 1831.

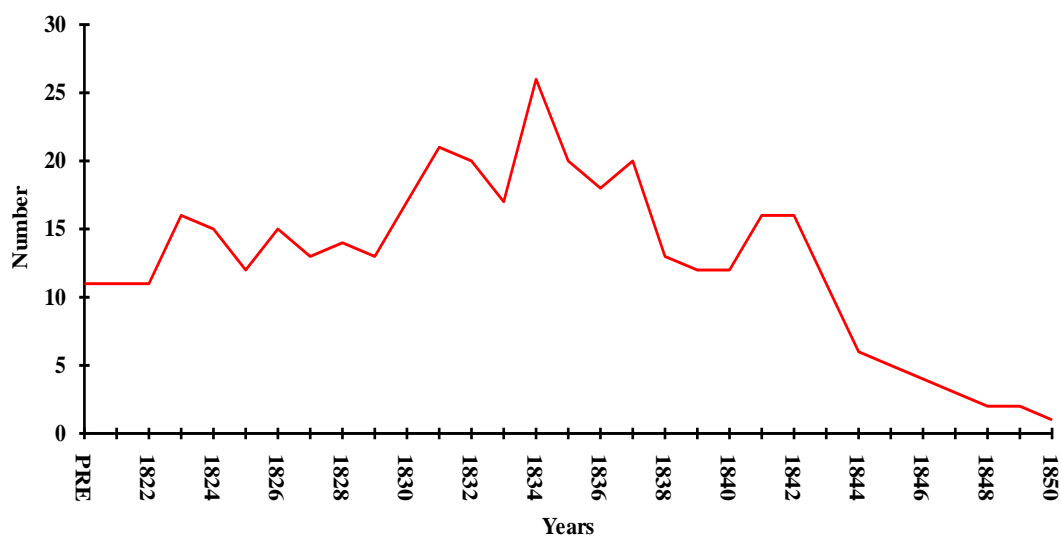
have meant great hardship.

Lastly, travelling preachers and circuits seem to have been able to make representations about the stations to the District Meetings. Thus Sarah asked to move from St. Austell as we have seen and the Minutes of the Circuit also record resolutions objecting to the stationing of a male travelling preacher who had been there only two years previously.

Of these twelve travelling preachers we can deduce the following information: two served for one year each; one for three years; three for four; and six for five, six, seven, eleven, twelve and fourteen years respectively. Therefore their total service comes to seventy-two years making an average of six years. We know that three of them - Jane Ansdale, Elizabeth Wheeldon and Ann Godwin -married male travelling preachers. One other married, Ann Brownsword, as did two more if we accept that Ann Armstrong is Ann Blackburn, and S. Perry is Susannah Barber. One, Ann Godwin, went to New Zealand, another to Australia, another to America and six reverted to local preacher status after leaving the itinerancy. Ten started their ministry between the years 1821-30; two during 1831-40 and looking at the years of their service nine worked between 1821-30; three between 1831-40 and three between 1841-50.

While these statistics are interesting in themselves they really add little to the total picture of the role played by the Primitive Methodist female travelling preachers in the Connexion except to emphasise that women were accepted and used equally with the men wherever the need arose and that this was particularly true in the earlier period of the Connexion's development.

Graph IV: NUMBER OF FEMALE ITINERANTS WORKING EACH YEAR



### THE REMAINDER

It is almost impossible to draw any valid conclusions from the extant material on the remaining female itinerants. Although they can be roughly divided into three groups, consisting of those about whom we have some details, those about whom we know very little and the rest whose names and stations only are known, there is little evidence from which to make other than the most vague generalisations.

No worthwhile argument can be based on this information regarding dates, years of service or the geographical areas in which they ministered. I have tried analysing all these aspects, but have been forced to admit that the meagre details available make any judgement impossible. No clear pattern emerges. The women seem to have worked when and where needed as

required by the Connexion in all parts of the country and their years of service depended on their health and marital status to a large extent. The numbers engaged in the full-time active ministry fell as the century progressed and as the ethos of the Connexion changed. As there are few, if any, personal details known of these women, it is not even possible to give their ages, status, reasons for retirement or disappearance from the stations or of the effectiveness or not of their ministry. However, in light of the observations deduced from studying the thirty-two women mentioned earlier one can hazard a guess that these remaining female travelling preachers were on the whole young, enthusiastic, over-worked and under-paid; that many served only for a few years, often breaking down under the stress and rigours of the Primitive Methodist itinerant ministry; that they were used equally with their male colleagues in circuits in all parts of the country; and that quite probably a number of them became the wives of other Primitive Methodist itinerants and thus continued their ministry, albeit not in their own names.

Of these women 46.43% are named in Minutes and Account Books to be found in various Record Offices I have visited but usually only the name and perhaps the stipend paid is recorded, so apart from confirmation of their stationing by the Primitive Methodist Conference little else can be gleaned.

Then turning to look at the few available Circuit plans on which the names of the women are listed among the travelling preachers little is learned other than that they, regardless of sex, worked equally with the men on the stations.<sup>(379)</sup>

While it can be argued that many women only worked for one year or for a short time (<sup>380</sup>) this was probably true of some men. The arduous and strenuous nature of the work, the hardships and the constant battle against poverty took its toll of both men and women and many were forced to give up the work, not through lack of conviction or dedication, but because of failing health or family commitments.

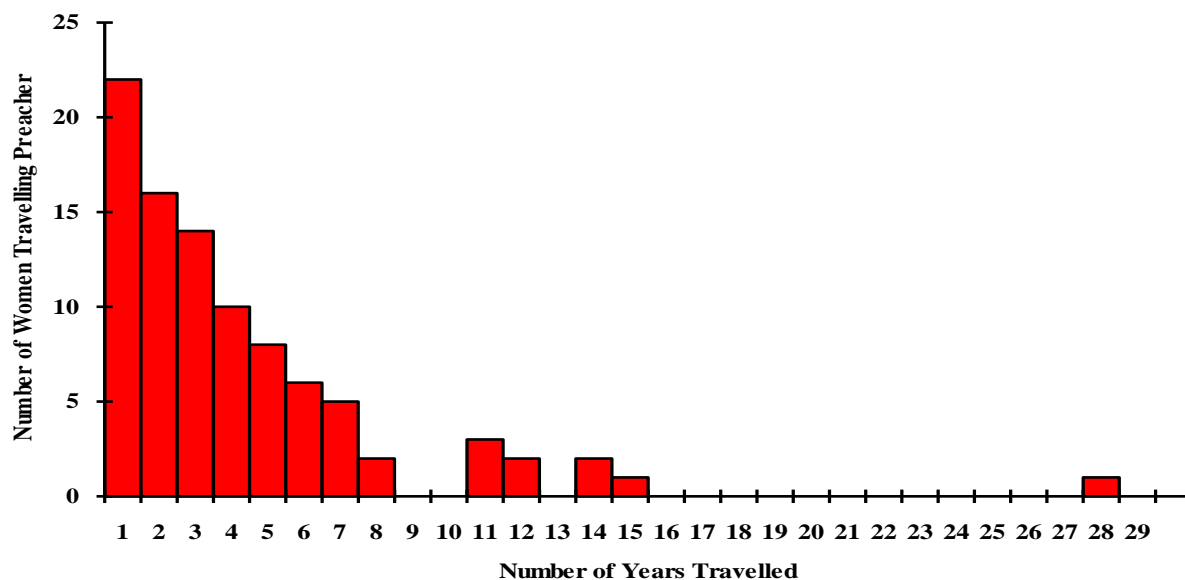
On the whole then it would appear that in the first flush of enthusiasm and mission the women were accepted by the Connexion as itinerants, without let or hindrance. They were ready, they were willing, they were able and so they were accepted, sex notwithstanding. They asked no favours and were given none. The work was more important than the labourer and so all were blessed and used.

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<sup>379</sup> See Figures 4 and Table 4.

<sup>380</sup> See Graph V.

Graph V: LENGTH OF MINISTRY OF THE FEMALE ITINERANTS



## TWO MISSIONARIES

Two women are known to have been missionaries in their own right, namely Ruth Watkins and Anne Wearing. The stories of these two women are rather different. Ruth had worked very successfully as a travelling preacher in the Tunstall Circuit for five years from 1825-1830. In the summer and autumn of 1826 she was in the Frome Branch of the Tunstall Circuit and sent an account of her labours, as recorded in her Journal, to the *Magazine*. From this we can see that Ruth engaged in all the usual activities required of a Primitive Methodist itinerant, that is, preaching services, prayer meetings, lovefeasts and house to house visiting. Many people ‘joined the society’ or ‘gave in their names’.<sup>(381)</sup> The Conference of 1829 decided that as many Primitive Methodist members, including a number of leaders and local preachers had gone to America, the time was ripe to finance and send out a regular mission. The Tunstall and Hull Circuits were the prime movers in this enterprise and at their instigation Conference agreed to make the necessary arrangements. £25 was granted to the Tunstall and £35 to the Hull missions from the General Mission Fund. The missionaries appointed were William Knowles and Ruth Watkins, on behalf of the Tunstall Circuit, and William Summersides and Thomas Morris on behalf of the Hull Circuit.<sup>(382)</sup> Hymn Books, other books and ‘necessaries’ were collected for the great adventure and James Bourne, the Treasurer of the General Mission Fund, went to Liverpool to finalise the sailing arrangements. Hugh Bourne accompanied them to the ship. After a week’s delay the missionaries set sail on June 9th 1829. William Clowes also witnessed their departure and wrote to James Bourne:

‘the Missionaries (cleared the docks) at about five minutes past eleven this morning, with a fair and strong wind. All in good spirits, with exception of Sister Ruth Watkins. She wept, but the rest smiled. They all stretched out their hands, and bid us adieu.’<sup>(383)</sup>

<sup>381</sup> *PMM* (1827) pp. 286-8; 317-18.

<sup>382</sup> *PM Mins* (1829) p. 4; *PMM* (1829) pp. 251; 321-3.

<sup>383</sup> *Ibid.* (see also Clowes, W., *Journal* pp. 291, 293-4.)



Figure 6: The Missionaries; RUTH WATKINS

THE  
**Primitive Methodist Connexion**  
TO THE INHABITANTS OF  
**NEW YORK**  
AND OF THE  
**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**  
IN GENERAL, SEND GREETING.

**Friends and Brethren,**

**THE LORD** having in his Providence raised up the Primitive Methodist Connexion, in Old England, and made it an instrument, in his hands, of turning thousands and ten thousands unto righteousness, and many of its members having emigrated to the United States, it was judged providential to appoint a regular **Mission**. We have accordingly sent over our respected Brother and faithful Minister, the Rev. **WILLIAM KNOWLES**; as also our respected Sister, **RUTH WATKINS**, who has laboured much in the **LORD**. And we trust they will be made useful in the Gospel of our common **LORD**, and will meet with that kindness and respect among you, that you, under similar circumstances, would expect from us.

*Signed in behalf of the Conference of the said Connexion,*

*James Bourne, President.*  
*Hugh Bourne, Secretary.*



RUTH WATKINS

William Knowles was married with no children, as was Thomas Morris, William Summersides was married with a child of two years and nine months and one of nine months and Ruth Watkins was single.<sup>(384)</sup>

The journey was evidently very rough and Ruth and Mrs. Knowles suffered greatly from sea-sickness, but the captain was very considerate to his passengers, even allowing them to take services on board.<sup>(385)</sup> Finally, on Friday, July 31st the missionaries set foot on American soil only to be faced with yet more problems. They found it was necessary to pay a great deal of duty on their precious books and were forced to try to borrow the money in order to get them out of the custom house and they also discovered that furnished accommodation was extremely expensive and had to settle for virtually a cellar in ‘the back part of the city’ and a few sticks of furniture. It is quite evident that they were in considerable financial straits and also obvious that the authorities back in England had had no real idea of the probable cost of the mission and of the attendant problems. One can only imagine that the Primitive Methodists in Britain were fired by a great missionary enthusiasm and a very commendable loving concern for the religious plight of the many immigrants to America, but that they had not done their homework properly and prepared the ground to help ensure the success of the mission. As a result it would be true to say that these first missionaries had a very difficult time and the fortunes of the Primitive Methodist work in America fluctuated from year to year. We can find evidence<sup>(386)</sup> that although the Conference in Britain supplied some money to the American Mission it was not nearly enough and some members felt that the money was being wasted. The truth seems to be that Primitive Methodism in Britain, although it had a world-wide missionary vision, was, in fact, very insular in its financial support of its Foreign Missions, mainly, I suspect, because its own itinerants were poorly paid in the home country and it was not appreciated that costs were different elsewhere and particularly because there would not be the same great family network and hospitality in a strange country which had helped to contain costs in the work at home.<sup>(387)</sup> An interesting item is the expense account of the mission, showing the total (ignoring T. Edwards’) of £312.14s. 8½d being recorded.<sup>(388)</sup>

However, in spite of all these problems the missionaries persevered and they commenced work in earnest on 2nd August with William Knowles and Ruth Watkins preaching in a small meeting house belonging to ‘The Associated Methodists’, but by the following Sunday they had rented a room of their own, where three preaching services were held - William Knowles preaching at ten-thirty, Ruth Watkins at three in the afternoon and Mrs. Knowles at seven in the evening. It appears that open-air preaching, such a feature of British Primitive Methodism, was frowned upon in America, apart from the annual camp-meeting, and William reports that if he engaged in it he would ‘be sure to lose his character’. One can imagine that this would apply even more to a woman! However, this possibility apparently did not deter the missionaries who did what they felt they were guided to do.<sup>(389)</sup>

‘Tuesday 11. Assisted Brother Knowles in holding a meeting out of doors. The congregation was large and attentive....On the Continent of America, our church government takes with the people in general.

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<sup>384</sup> *PMM* (1829) p. 323.

<sup>385</sup> *PMM* (1829) p. 378-383; Acornley, John Holmes, *A History of the Primitive Methodist Church in the U.S.A.* (Fall River, Mass., 1909) pp. 16-18; Fudge, William H., *The view from the Mountain* (1933) pp. 7-9.

<sup>386</sup> *PM Mins* (1829) pp. 4, 12-13; (1830) pp. 3, 14-15; various Regulations p. 3, Petty, op. cit. p. 308ff.

<sup>387</sup> *PMM* (1829) pp. 379-380; Acornley, op. cit. p. 18; Fudge, op. cit. pp. 9-10.

<sup>388</sup> See Figure 7.

<sup>389</sup> *PMM* (1829) p. 380; Acornley, op. cit. p. 20; Fudge, op.c it. p. 10.

....Our portraits have had a good effect in opening our way.  
Brethren pray for us,  
RUTH WATKINS.<sup>390</sup>

Figure 7: Expense Account: Mission, America

**MISSION, AMERICA. Cr.  
Expenditure.**

**William Knowles and Wife, Ruth Watkins' Outfit**

<b>1829</b>	£	s	d
Bedding, Travelling Expenses, Letters, Boxes, Carriage &c	12	2	0
Fare, on board the New York	16	10	0
Cash to Missionaries	38	4	0
Books, Engravings, Portraits, Custom House dues &c	61	18	1½
Sea Stores	11	6	3

**T Edward's Outfit**

<b>1830</b>	£	s	d
Bedding, Travelling Expenses, Letters, Boxes, Carriage &c	7	3	7
Fare, on board the Florida	6	0	0
Cash to T. Edwards	4	0	0
Books, Engravings, Portraits, Custom House dues &c	33	0	0
Sea Stores	4	0	0
	194	3	11½

**MISSION**

	£	s	d
Travelling Expenses to Liverpool of Brothers W. Summersides, and T. Morris, their Wives and Children, accompanied by Br. W. Clowes	16	7	7½
Beds, Blankets, Carriage, Letters &c.	11	5	1
Sea Stores	13	6	6
Cash to Missionaries	32	0	0
Passage to New York	24	15	0
Cash and Bill, drawn by Missionaries when afflicted	31	10	0
Books sent with them	43	19	1½
	172	14	4

Source: *PM Mins* (1830) p. 15.

<sup>390</sup> *PMM* (1829) p. 384.

Ruth Watkins' Journal, extracts from which she sent back to the mother country and which are printed in the *Magazine* give an interesting view of both the countryside and the people of America as seen by a foreigner. She gives a vivid account of a Camp Meeting held in a 'solitary grove' about forty miles from New York.<sup>(391)</sup> We can see a similar reaction to female preaching here as we have already noted in Britain:

'This evening a certain woman who was passing by, enquired what was to be done; and on being informed that a female Methodist was preaching, she poured contempt on it; and said, "I never was at a Methodist meeting in my life. My father is a Methodist; in consequence I quarrelled with him, and left him." A friend pressed her to go in and hear for herself. She complied, and came out apparently deeply convinced of sin.- "Oh! (said she) if these be Methodists, I'll never speak against them again! - I'll now go home, and live peaceably with my father."<sup>(392)</sup>

Great crowds attended her services, but whether this was because she was a woman or because of the Primitive Methodist message or a combination of the two it is not possible to judge, but I incline to the view that the combination of the two was a powerful draw. Unfortunately before long the pressures of the work, no doubt the hardships encountered and the unfamiliar climate all took their toll and so we begin to find more frequent references to ill-health:

Monday 21 (September) - 'Preached at Machaton(sic) Island a great indisposition of body.' Tuesday 22 (September) 'Being very unwell in body.'

Thursday 1 (October) 'Since I last wrote I have been brought very low, by a disease, called here the influenza....'<sup>(393)</sup>

but even so the missionaries continued to press on and considerable progress was made, indeed, so much so that by the end of 1829 Ruth reported:

'We have commenced building a Church; what in England would be called a Chapel. But here all places of worship are called Churches; even a room used for worship is called a church.

Yours in the Lord,

RUTH WATKINS.

(New York, November, 1829)

<sup>(394)</sup>

The Church was opened on Sunday, December 27, 1829 and although 'commodious' was still at times too small, but 'there is room to enlarge'. She makes an interesting observation that when the weather is inclement the people in America 'will not expose themselves, in this respect, so much as they do in England' and so 'the churches are in general almost empty'.<sup>(395)</sup> Although the church had been comparatively cheap to build at \$680 the mission had run into debt by erecting it and the collections on the opening day did not off-set that debt to any great degree. Other preaching places were opened and the people were enthusiastic in the building - many gifts of timber, stone and workmanship being donated.<sup>(396)</sup>

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<sup>391</sup> *PMM* (1830) pp. 124-5.

<sup>392</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 125-6.

<sup>393</sup> *PMM.* (1830) p. 127.

<sup>394</sup> *Ibid.* p. 131.

<sup>395</sup> *Ibid.* p. 238.

<sup>396</sup> *Ibid.* p. 240.

A private letter, part of which was printed in the Connexional *Magazine*, throws fascinating sidelights on the social and economic aspects of life in America at the time that Ruth was writing and helps to highlight the financial plight in which the missionaries found themselves.<sup>(397)</sup> It seems that William Knowles in his zeal for his mission, stretched his resources too much and the people at home began to question his prudence and were unable to supply adequate financial backing and so the infant mission was put in jeopardy. Constant appeals were made to the parent Connexion for funds to maintain the cause, but it became increasingly difficult to find the money needed.<sup>(398)</sup> This coupled with the ill-health of all four missionaries posed many problems, both for those in America and those at home.

One further point of interest is that evidently Ruth sent back to England copies of American religious newspapers, entitled *Christian Advocate and Journal*, and *Zion's Herald*, for 1828. These papers were devoted to religion and morality and were published in New York. No doubt Ruth felt that they would give the people 'back home' some taste of the thinking on these subjects in America.<sup>(399)</sup> By the summer of 1830 more missionaries had been sent to join the original four and one of these was Ruth's brother, Nathaniel, who later went on to open missions in Canada and who in 1831 was stationed in Upper Canada, from whence he sent reports back to England. His reports in the Connexional *Magazine*, while simple in style are adequate, yet a scholar in Canada quotes from a source:

'As we are now situated we have no assurance. Brother Watkins is so illiterate that it is painful to sit under him, and we can make no headway at all.'<sup>(400)</sup>

This makes one wonder either whether the source was prejudiced or whether the Connexional Editor engaged in a little judicious editing before going to print. On the other hand Ruth's reports and letters are quite lucid and her use of English is very competent. There are a number of reports and letters from the American Mission in the *Magazine* of 1831 and some of these are by Ruth Watkins and thus we learn that she did not confine her activities to New York, but also worked in Philadelphia where she was well received. Her place in New York was taken by Sister Anne Wearing. The last of Ruth's letters we find was sent from Philadelphia and covers her ministry from going there on October 2nd 1830 to March 7th 1831, and she ends by saying that:

'The Qr. Board have sent a request to New York for my stay to be prolonged in Philadelphia. But we have not received an answer,'<sup>(401)</sup>

We next hear of her in a note contained in William Summersides' Journal of 1831 in which he says:

'4th Dec. I received a letter from Bro. Nathaniel Watkins.... He says his sister, (Ruth Watkins) is with him. I think she will be very useful there.' (in Albany, New York State)<sup>(402)</sup>

The Conference of 1831 had appointed William Summersides and Ruth Watkins 'to open new

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<sup>397</sup> See Appendix XIV Private Letter.

<sup>398</sup> Ibid. p. 131; *PMM* (1831) p. 171; Petty, op. cit. pp. 309-10; Acornley, op. cit. pp. 21-2; Fudge, op. cit. p. 11.

<sup>399</sup> *PMM* (1830) p. 325.

<sup>400</sup> quoted in Hoover, John, 'The Primitive Methodist Church in Canada 1829-1844' (MA thesis, 1970; University of Western Ontario) p. 87.

<sup>401</sup> *PMM* (1831) p. 282.

<sup>402</sup> Ibid. (1832) p. 180.

missions',<sup>(403)</sup> but exactly where they missioned is not known. It has been assumed that she went to Canada, but proof is lacking. A communication dated New York November 19th 1832 from George Parsons ends with the words 'Sister Ruth Watkins is poorly'.<sup>(404)</sup>

Acornley has the rather frustrating observation that:

'Miss Watkins subsequently married an Episcopal minister and went we know not whither.'<sup>(405)</sup>

The Journal of Anne Wearing is prefaced by the information that:

'This young woman was a member of the Wesleyan Methodists in Devonshire, and a preacher. It was a considerable time after our missionaries first went to New York, that she, with some of her relations came to Liverpool, and embarked for America. At New York she united with our people, and they took her out for a travelling preacher.'<sup>(406)</sup>

Her Journal contains details of her work and her meetings with Ruth Watkins. She ministered both in New York and Philadelphia with success and she was of the opinion that the most important part of the itinerant ministry as far as she was concerned was family visiting,<sup>(407)</sup> although she took services and preached as much as any of the others. Again there are references to struggles against ill-health. The 1831 Conference report for the American Stations reads 'Wearing' at 'Hudson' 'to change occasionally with one of the New York preachers'.<sup>(408)</sup> No more is heard of her after that and here we find a problem. Acornley says the preacher appointed to Hudson was E. Wearing. Then he goes on:

'the above named Mr. Edward Wearing, subsequently returned to England, and for a few years was engaged in the active work of the itinerant ministry, finally he located in Rochdale, where he lived to a ripe old age, and continued as an acceptable local preacher until his death. The writer has often heard him speak of his early missionary labors in America. He was always interested in the progress of the American missions, yet at the same time not over sanguine of their ultimate success.'<sup>(409)</sup>

There is no Edward Wearing on the Stations of the Primitive Methodist Conference, but there is an Anne Wearing. It could be that if there was indeed an Edward and he worked in England that it was as a hired local preacher. Anne might have been similarly employed. On the other hand we find an E. Waring in Burnley (1845), Ramsey (1846) and Oldham (1847) perhaps this provides an answer, though there is no record of his ever being stationed in America.

So in these two women we have examples of the work and lives of the female travelling preachers in the Foreign Mission field, showing that they too were prepared to face daunting odds to proclaim the saving faith in which they so earnestly believed.

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<sup>403</sup> *PM Mins* (1831) p. 8.

<sup>404</sup> *PMM* (1833) p. 137.

<sup>405</sup> Acornley, op. cit. p. 22.

<sup>406</sup> *PMM* (1831) p. 184.

<sup>407</sup> Ibid. p. 184.

<sup>408</sup> *PM Mins* (1831) p. 8.

<sup>409</sup> Acornley, op. cit. p. 22.

### OTHER FEMALE PREACHERS

Lastly we turn very briefly to look at a few ‘problems’ and at the hired local preachers. Strictly speaking these are not within the scope of this work, but it seems necessary to afford them at least a passing glance if only to indicate that there were many women who acted virtually as travelling preachers, but outside the jurisdiction of the stationing machinery of the Primitive Methodist Conference. So we find women such as Eliza Parfet working as a travelling preacher unofficially in the Motcomb Circuit from 31st March to June 30th 1828. Unfortunately she died in the August, so we cannot see whether she would have gone on to be actually stationed by the Conference.<sup>(410)</sup> Then there was Clara Chaffer who was appointed to be a colleague with the Rev. W. Howcroft in the Patrington branch of the Hull Circuit, presumably in 1835, but the unexpected death of her sister meant that she had to become housekeeper to her uncle and so was prevented from becoming an itinerant. In 1836 she married the Rev. Jeremiah Dodson and we are told ‘worked with him in all his stations’.<sup>(411)</sup> So in a sense she, like so many others, became travelling preachers though unacknowledged by the Connexion officially. These are just two examples of women who had received a call to the full-time ministry of the Church, but who, for a variety of reasons were unable to fulfil their calling.

Then there were the many ministers’ wives who worked alongside their husbands and it is probable that a number of these unnamed and unrecognised women had been travelling preachers in their own right, but it is difficult, if not impossible, to prove this theory. However, as one reads reports of missions, letters, extracts from Journals and biographies and obituaries and notes the number of services and the work done by these itinerants’ wives one is very tempted to surmise that ‘she’ had been on the stations herself. This was certainly the case of Martha Ride, until evidence was found that her maiden name had been Martha Doncaster, travelling preacher. The same was true of Mrs. Samuel West who was Elizabeth Wheeldon (née Hunt); Elizabeth Russell (née Smith); Mary Anna Elizabeth Cordingley (née Moor(e)) and Mrs. William Knowles, whose initials are ‘H.M.’ may be another example. In fact the Journal of W Knowles, 1831 contains many references to his wife taking services <sup>(412)</sup> almost more than he seemed to do! - but there is an especially interesting item in it and that is a report from an apparently independent source, namely a local paper, The Eaton Register. Eaton was a large village in Ohio and on 19th May 1831 at twelve o’clock Mrs. Knowles preached in the church with great effect. The letter to the local paper described the scene, her preaching and its impact, together with a comment about women’s preaching.<sup>(413)</sup> The very fact that William Knowles quotes this report about his wife’s ministry seems to point to several things - that he was not embarrassed about women’s preaching and used her gifts, and doubtless those of Ruth Watkins, his female travelling preacher colleague, to promulgate the gospel being very well aware of the novelty aspect and the drawing power of a female preacher and perhaps that he was probably proud of her work and not jealous of her success. Indeed at this period of Primitive Methodist history, I would surmise that the sex of the preacher was immaterial, unless in the case of women and boy preachers it was a positive advantage, and that the proclamation and spreading of the gospel was far more important. Another point is that in spite of the problems encountered by the missionaries to America and in particular the toll the unfamiliar climate took of their health Mrs. Knowles worked amazingly hard and equally so with the men.

The eighth question asked at the First Annual Meeting of the Primitive Methodist Connexion

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<sup>410</sup> *PMM* (1829) pp. 274-6.

<sup>411</sup> *PMM* (1867) p. 167.

<sup>412</sup> *PMM* (1832) pp. 91-96, 135-138.

<sup>413</sup> See Appendix XV.

was:

‘How are the travelling preachers distinguished?’

and the reply was:

‘By the terms travelling preachers, and hired local preachers.’

Next they wanted to know what was the difference between the two categories and it was delineated as follows:

‘Those termed travelling preachers are removable from circuit to circuit by the annual Meeting. Those termed hired local preachers are not so removable. This is the whole difference: in all other respects they are equal and alike.

N.B. Those termed hired local preachers, may remove by agreement of one circuit with another.’<sup>(414)</sup>

These regulations indicate that the use of hired local preachers was a phenomenon built into Primitive Methodism from the very beginning and certainly it was widely used as and when circuits had need, opportunity and money to ‘take out’ an extra preacher even if only for an odd quarter or two. By and large these rules, with slight variations, remained in force and both men and women were thus employed and usually paid at the same rate as the officially stationed travelling preachers.

In 1822 the question was raised about circuits which might need an additional itinerant between the Annual Meetings and permission was given for this need to be supplied by engaging one or more local preachers with the recommendation that ones with ‘chargeable’ families should not be used. If the circuit had no one suitable, but a neighbouring one did then it was allowed to employ that preacher if his own home circuit was agreeable.<sup>(415)</sup>

Just one example is given to show how this system worked:

‘A circuit occasionally engages a local preacher to labour at large for a time, without any prospect of his being permanently employed; and such is called a hired local preacher. Again a circuit takes out a preacher with the intention of his being employed permanently. But neither the one nor the other must be employed until he shall have given a pledge to do no injury, and to retire peaceably from the work when required so to do by the qr. day board or circuit committee.’<sup>(416)</sup>

We find in the *Primitive Methodist Minutes* exact details of how the travelling preachers were to be ‘taken out’ and ‘admitted to the Annual list’. They were to be recommended to their own district meeting by their local circuit quarter day board, which had already satisfied itself of their suitability with regard to conversion, experience, doctrine, views of the ministry and their call to ‘the work’. The recommendation was then passed from the district to the Annual Meeting together with a reasoned statement of their personal circumstances, and how long they had been local preachers or a hired local preacher. From all this it seems evident that hired local preachers were answerable to their own circuits or perhaps the district and not to the Annual Meetings and it could well have been that this freedom was prized by the Primitive Methodist local authorities as it gave them a greater say in the use of man or woman power in their own localities. This would be typical of the independent and decentralised stance and outlook

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<sup>414</sup> *PM Mins* (1819/20) p. 4.

<sup>415</sup> *Ibid.* (1822) pp. 12-13.

<sup>416</sup> *PM Mins* (1832) p. 23



particularly of early Primitive Methodism. I feel that this use of hired local preachers, especially in the case of the women who were used in this capacity after their disappearance from the stations occurred, would recommend itself to local circuits. The women were there and willing to be used, even if the Conference was no longer so keen to employ them officially, so the local circuits happily made use of their talents.

We find women like Hannah Petty who worked long, hard and continuously, just as if she had been itinerant, from 1838-1843 and one cannot help wondering why, after the death of her mother in 1838, she never became an official travelling preacher, unless the suggestion above is valid because, as we have seen, the numbers of the women on the stations was declining by then.<sup>(417)</sup>

In July of that year Hannah went to travel in the Prees Circuit where she ministered for nearly three years ‘in the capacity of a hired local preacher, with general acceptance and considerable success;’<sup>(418)</sup> We are told that ‘her preaching was plain, sound, practical, experimental and scriptural, and was generally profitable to her hearers’. From Prees Hannah moved to Ludlow in July 1841 and we get a similar glowing testimony to her preaching, but also the following comment:

‘She faithfully resisted conformity to the world, cautioning and reproving all in whom she saw a tendency to it. Her conduct in this respect was exemplary, and had a salutary influence upon the female part of the societies.’<sup>(419)</sup>

Although she moved to the Burland Circuit in July 1843 Hannah’s health was by now seriously impaired and she could not ‘discharge with efficiency all the duties of an itinerant preacher’. However, she managed to continue till March 1843 when she was forced to give up travelling. She was looked after by kind friends in the Burland Circuit till her death on 26th January 1844. Miss Mary Clarissa Buck, who was one of the Burland Circuit itinerants, preached a sermon ‘improving’ Hannah’s death ‘to a large assembly at Nantwich.’<sup>(420)</sup> Local records add a few details to the story of Hannah Petty, so we read in the Quarter Day Minutes of September 12th 1842, No. 41:

‘that Sister Petty be wrote (sic) on the subject of comeing (sic) to travel as an hired local preacher.’

and No. 48:

‘that Brother Austin go a missioning about the neighbourhood of Shevington on condition that Sister Petty come in this circuit.’

Then in March and June 1843 we find references to Hannah’s illness and finally No. 73 in March 1844 resolves:

‘that means be used for obtaining the deficiency of Sister Petty’s Funeral expences (sic)’.<sup>(421)</sup>

Other easily recognisable hired local preachers, for example, were Honor Davis;<sup>(422)</sup> Miss

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<sup>417</sup> See Graph IV.

<sup>418</sup> *PMM* (1844) p. 284.

<sup>419</sup> *Ibid.* p. 284.

<sup>420</sup> *Ibid.* p. 286.

<sup>421</sup> **Burland Circuit Quarter Day Minutes June 1838-April 1845** (Cheshire RO).

<sup>422</sup> *PMM* (1857) pp. 260-261.

Sansom (married Edward Haycock);<sup>(423)</sup> Jane Spoor (married Ralph Cook);<sup>(424)</sup> Selina Llewellyn (née Jackson);<sup>(425)</sup> Priscilla Mason (née Powell);<sup>(426)</sup> Mary Bielby (married Matthew Denton);<sup>(427)</sup> Elizabeth Mortimer (née Grayshaw)<sup>(428)</sup> and so one could go on adding to the list of noble women who served their church so faithfully.

Then records in Circuit Account and Minute Books indicate that many circuits were in the habit of ‘taking out’ extra preachers for an odd quarter or two, presumably as the need arose and the circuit in question could afford to pay an extra preacher. So Ann Pugh worked in Bishops Castle in 1837;<sup>(429)</sup> Hannah Summerland in Burton-on-Trent in 1825 and again in 1828; <sup>(430)</sup> Ann Brown at South Shields in 1834;<sup>(431)</sup> and Mary Taphouse (née Thatcher) in the Mitcheldever Circuit in 1835 and 1836/37;<sup>(432)</sup> while the Cambridge Circuit used the services of Sister Bell in 1837-1839 as well as paying three females, Mrs. Jackson, Mrs. Wainwright and Mrs. Bunn, who appear to have been the wives of the stationed itinerants.<sup>(433)</sup> In fact the Minutes of the Preachers’ Meeting on 21st March 1832 resolved:

11. That a Preacher who has a wife that can preach must be obtained.<sup>(434)</sup>

and it seems that Mrs. Jackson was acceptable as her husband became the itinerant. Mrs. Ann Longmires, presumably acted as a hired local preacher as she is not included on the stations, but she certainly worked and travelled extensively, especially in the Lincolnshire area, during 1837, 1838 and 1839. She received the normal salary for a female itinerant of that date plus allowances for board and lodging, travel, including ferries and £1.19s.0d. for one child, a boy, per quarter.<sup>(435)</sup> Unfortunately we have no information about her maiden name, so it is not possible to see if she was a travelling preacher before her first marriage. In August 1844 she

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<sup>423</sup> Ibid. (1852) pp. 645-646; (1880) pp. 183-184.

<sup>424</sup> Ibid. (1853) p. 127; (1870) p. 423; (1875) p. 565; (1880) p. 118; (1883) p. 495; (1884) pp. 157, 283; Hall, E., *The Earnest Preacher: Memoirs of the Rev. Joseph Spoor* (1874) pp. 85-88.

<sup>425</sup> *PMM* (1888) p. 242.

<sup>426</sup> Ibid. (1887) pp. 177-178.

<sup>427</sup> Ibid. (1878) p. 53; (1883) p. 86.

<sup>428</sup> Ibid. (1887) p.692.

<sup>429</sup> **Bishops Castle Circuit Quarter Day Minutes 1830-41** (December 11th 1837, December 10th 1838) (Shropshire RO)

<sup>430</sup> **The account Book for the Burton-on-Trent Circuit .M Connection, Staffs. 1823-1838** (September 13th 1825, December 12th 1825; June 9th 1828) (Burton-on-Trent Library, Local Studies).

<sup>431</sup> **South Shields PM Circuit Quarterly Meeting Minutes 1833-1840** (June 9th 1834) (Tyne & Wear RO)

<sup>432</sup> *PMM* (1846) pp. 386-387; Mitcheldever Circuit Minutes (December 1837).

<sup>433</sup> **Cambridge PM Circuit Quarterly Meeting Minutes 1823-1838** (March 12th 1838, June 11th 1838). **Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1838-1857** (September 10th 1838, December 10th 1838, September 1841, December 1841, March 1842, June 20th 1842, September 19th 1842); Cambridge Circuit Plan (July 28th - October 20th 1839) (Cambridge RO).

<sup>434</sup> **Cambridge PM Circuit Quarterly Meeting Minutes 1823-1838** (Minutes of the Preachers Meeting March 21st 1832) (Cambridge RO).

<sup>435</sup> **Gainsborough PM Circuit Quarterly Meeting Minutes 1836-1845 and Accounts: Accounts** - (June 1st 1838, August 3rd 1838, November 30th 1838, March 1st 1839, June 28th, September 30th 1839, December 20th 1839, March 26th 1840); **Minutes** - (December 1st 1837, November 3rd 1838, March 1st 1839); **Scotter PM Circuit Accounts 1831-1849** (June 3rd 1837, September 1837, December 4th 1837); **Scotter Local Preachers and Quarter Day Minutes 1832-1842** (June 5th 1837, September 4th 1837); Scotter PM Circuit Plan (January 21st - April 15th 1838) (Lincoln RO).

married William Lonsdale, a travelling preacher who had resigned from the itinerancy in 1842 after the death of his first wife, becoming a hired local preacher in Scotter, but he returned to the ministry as a probationer in 1843.<sup>(436)</sup>

It would seem that the practice of taking out women as hired local preachers continued well after the Connexion ceased using women as regular itinerants. Perhaps it was felt that hired local preachers were acceptable because they were more localised and quite often worked in their home circuits. Also if Primitive Methodism was becoming more conformist, settled and respectable perhaps the use of hired local preachers was a way of getting round a phenomenon which was no longer generally acceptable to the church and certainly not allowed by the churches of other denominations and which was liable to misinterpretation and maybe even threatening to an evolving male dominated ministry. So the employment of hired local preachers and also of women evangelists seemed to offer a happy solution of using the female talents without compromising the men's position.

It is impossible even to guess at how many female hired local preachers served the Primitive Methodist Connexion, but the debt owed to them and to the many local preachers is incalculable. It could be argued that in allowing the decline of women within the regular itinerancy Primitive Methodism lost a great opportunity of using the gifts of many talented women, but doubtless most of these continued to serve the church in other capacities - as local preachers, class leaders, Sunday School teachers and so on. As there is no central record of them or their work and as, unfortunately, early Primitive Methodist records in Local Record Offices and Libraries from which such information might be obtained are rather scarce it is only almost by lucky chance if details come to light. Careful perusal of the later issues of the *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, particularly with regard to Chapel and Sunday School Anniversaries certainly give the impression that women were used in these fields - as special preachers for special services. For example, Mary Clarissa Buck was engaged as a hired local preacher before becoming a travelling preacher who worked for eleven years on the stations but then she felt she should resign. This she did and settled in Leicester. The reasons for her resignation were:

‘first, preaching in the way she felt she must preach, if she preached at all, for six, seven times per week, in addition to the long journeys to and from her appointments, was undermining her constitution; and second, as she had now a great many invitations, she felt she should like to be more at liberty to accept that class of work.’<sup>(437)</sup>

Although her resignation was regretted, apparently those who knew her realised that her particular talents lay in preaching ‘special sermons’. Thus from 1847 onwards she travelled hundreds of miles to preach at anniversaries, chapel openings and other special occasions attracting large congregations. Extracts from just two years of the *Primitive Methodist Magazine* will illustrate her work. In the *Magazine* of 1853 there are no fewer than eleven mentions of Miss M.C. Buck having preached on special occasions like chapel openings and anniversaries (Stafford, Nov. 1852; Hull, Jan. 1853; Luton, Feb. 1853; Dunstable, Feb. 1853; London (2), March 1853; Bradwell, Ap. 1853; London (2), Dec. 1852; Middlewich, n.d.).<sup>(438)</sup> From the places visited one can see that although technically Mary had ‘retired’ she had by no means given up preaching and travelling quite considerable distances. In the following year Miss Buck continued her work by visiting nine more places and preaching at least eleven times,

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<sup>436</sup> *PMM* (1863) pp. 577-582.

<sup>437</sup> *PMM* (1877) p. 113.

<sup>438</sup> *PMM* (1853) pp. 124, 181, 305, 306, 309, 433, 475.

again in different parts of the country.<sup>(439)</sup> The accounts of these two years give some insight into the extent and power of Miss Buck's ministry. She is described in these terms:

‘Her sermons were powerful and eloquent, the Divine influence attended the services and the collections were liberal.’<sup>(440)</sup>

and:

‘At night the pews, free seats, aisles, pulpit stairs were crowded and it was thought that hundreds were unable to get in.’<sup>(441)</sup>

and again:

‘We were favoured with some of the best sermons, accompanied by delightful influences and followed by important effects, souls being brought to God.’<sup>(442)</sup>

At Elim Chapel, London;

‘she preached to large congregations from John XIV. 21 and Rev. II.17. The sermons were gifted and powerful’.<sup>(443)</sup>

She is described as having preached:

‘two very eloquent sermons’,

at Bradwell Chapel Anniversary:

‘she preached from Gen.XXII.26 and John V.6 and though this was her third visit to this place, the interest created was equal to that of the former years. The congregations were crowded, that in the evening to overflowing and many returned, not being able to gain admittance.’<sup>(444)</sup>

In the Bishop's Castle Circuit Miss Buck visited three churches and:

‘Thrilling discourses were preached; the collections were usually good.... at Class tea-meeting in a spacious tent erected on the old Castle Green.... Upwards of two hundred persons attended. After the tea an excellent sermon was preached by Miss Buck. The services of this anniversary were of a most animating and spiritual character....’<sup>(445)</sup>

In the Wrockwardine Wood Circuit she preached at Newport Salop in the new Market Hall of the Corn Exchange on 17th June 1860.<sup>(446)</sup> Aug. 12th 1860 saw Miss Buck preaching two sermons at Whissendine (Melton Mowbray Circuit) in a booth on behalf of the Sabbath School connected with the Primitive Methodist Chapel and on the following Sunday she preached on a similar occasion at Cheadle (Ramsor Circuit).<sup>(447)</sup>

Miss Buck continued in the work for twenty-five years, but finally in 1872 after thirty-seven

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<sup>439</sup> *PMM* (1854) pp. 53, 180, 370, 506, 507, 748.

<sup>440</sup> *PMM* (1853) p. 124.

<sup>441</sup> *PMM* (1853) p. 305.

<sup>442</sup> *PMM* (1853) p. 306.

<sup>443</sup> *PMM* (1853) p. 309.

<sup>444</sup> *PMM* (1854) p. 370.

<sup>445</sup> *PMM* (1854) p. 748.

<sup>446</sup> *PMM* (1860) p. 506.

<sup>447</sup> *PMM* (1860) p. 694.

years service to the church she suffered a stroke which left her paralysed down one side.

Mary Buck died on the evening of Wed. July 19th 1876 aged sixty-six and was interred in Leicester cemetery on Sat. July 22nd by the Revs. W. Barratt and S. Roberts.

In addition many references are to be found to a Miss Bennett of Chester, a Mrs. Grice of West Bromwich and a Miss R.A. Wilson of Hull. These are just three examples of many women who were popular preachers for special occasions<sup>(448)</sup> and whose ministry continued well on into the second half of the nineteenth century when the ranks of the itinerancy had been virtually closed to females.

I suspect that the male travelling preachers perhaps rather appreciated these occasional visits because the women would draw large crowds to their services or missions, but then they would move on and the local itinerant would reap the benefit of increased publicity, increased congregations and increased finance, without the embarrassment of having a woman ‘minister’ in the circuit.

There must have been hundreds, nay thousands, of local preachers in the Primitive Methodist Connexion and a good proportion of these would be women. Only by seeking out all the extant local records and circuit plans could one even attempt to guess at the numbers engaged in the local ministry and even this would not give a full or true picture because the records are very incomplete, as we have seen already, and certainly in the case of the circuits very often only the surname and occasionally the initials are given and so we have no real indication of sex, unless information is forthcoming from another source. Obituaries in the *Primitive Methodist Magazine* often indicate whether the deceased had been a local preacher, but again obituaries are only in the *Magazine* if some interested party has submitted a piece to the Editor and the total number of preachers cannot be accurately gauged from this source. However, because there are numerous such obituaries if they are taken as a representative sample of the local preachers in the whole Connexion we can see many pulpits in Primitive Methodism would be filled by the laity at every service. Circuit plans show extensive listings of local preachers, for example the Grimsby and Andover which were analysed earlier<sup>(449)</sup> list twenty-six, plus those ‘on trial’, exhorters and prayer leaders, and nineteen plus respectively, while the Home Branch of Shefford Circuit had fifty-five plus the extras.

One final observation about the numbers of local preachers can be made by looking at the statistics produced at Methodist Union in 1932. The individual Conferences produced statistics for their own branches of Methodism before the Uniting Conference, but apparently only the Wesleyans broke down their local preacher number by sex. Depending on your point of view I suppose one could argue that this indicated a sexist attitude or an enlightened one! However, the information is very interesting to the church historian who is delving into the work of women in the church. The details found are:

	Total Fully Accredited	Total on Trial	Total received on Full Plan	Women Fully Accredited	Women on Trial	Women Received on Full Plan
1931	18,844	1,224	688	598	90	90

<sup>448</sup> *PMM* (1860) pp. 614, 628; (1868) p. 353 - Miss Bennett; (1839) p. 357; (1842) p. 132; (1848) pp. 121, 174; (1853) pp. 558, 561; (1854) pp. 370, 509, 683, 748 - Mrs. Grice; (1853) p. 366; (1854) pp. 506, 508, 615, 748 - Miss R.A. Wilson. See also Garbutt, Jane, *Reminiscences of the Early Day of Primitive Methodism in Hull* (Hull, 1886) pp. 51-52.

<sup>449</sup> See Chapter 4.

1932	18,785	1,323	630	642	117	54	( <sup>450</sup> )
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Then after Union the statistics of the united church are as follows:

1933	34,948	2,351	1,295	1,422	208	110	(451)
1934	34,694	2,243	1,131	1,474	178	101	

These statistics indicate that the percentage of women to men was 3.2% in 1931; 3.42% in 1932; 4.1% in 1933 and 4.3% in 1934. After union the total number of women who were fully accredited local preachers was 1,422 of these 642 had belonged to the Wesleyan tradition in 1932 and this would mean that 780 came from the Primitive Methodist Church and the United Methodist Church. The fact that the combined totals of membership for the two smaller branches fell 116,003 short of the Wesleyan one and yet there were 138 more women surely indicates that in these Churches women were accorded a more significant role in the Preaching ministry of the denomination. If this was true in 1932-33 then one may assume that this had been so throughout the history of these branches, given the information that has been gleaned about earlier years.

In conclusion, from the biographies of twenty women travelling preachers and the information gathered about the rest of the known itinerants it is obvious that they were accepted and used by early Primitive Methodism with gratitude. The work was all important and the labourers, if owned of God in the conversion of sinners were welcomed regardless of sex. The novelty value and drawing power of the women were appreciated by the men in those days of evangelism and mission, then certainly in the later period they were able to capitalise on the phenomenon of female preaching when women were billed as ‘special preachers’ for anniversaries or missions.

It is interesting, but rather fruitless to speculate what would have been the effect on Primitive Methodism if women had never been allowed to itinerate - whether Primitive Methodism would have made such great progress, both geographically and numerically, especially in the small, rural village communities where women and the family network with all its ramifications were so important.

The North Walsham Circuit Plan of 1836 (July 24th - October 16th) contains a ‘New Hymn. Farewell to the old, and welcome to new Preachers’. Sister Symonds is among those who were moving on and Sister Bultitude one of those welcomed. The Hymn concludes

‘May we all from hour to hour,  
In true faith and union strive,  
And may God his Spirit pour,  
And his glorious work revive.’

All were equally welcome as the instruments of God’s blessing - women and men.

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<sup>450</sup> *Wesleyan Methodist Minutes (1932)* p. 250. The total local preacher statistics at the time of the United Conference were: Wesleyan Methodists 18,785, Primitive Methodists 12,896, United Methodists 5,232. See Davey, Cyril J., *The Methodist Story* (1955) p. 165.

<sup>451</sup> *The Methodist Local Preachers’ Who’s Who 1934* p. 612.

FIGURE 8: Photographs: Miss Parrott, MISS M.C. BUCK; Mrs. R. Cook



## CHAPTER SIX: A DETAILED STUDY OF THREE FEMALE ITINERANTS

As Elizabeth Bultitude was the only female itinerant of the Primitive Methodist Connexion to have "died in the work" she is the only one for whom there is an official obituary in the *Primitive Methodist Conference Minutes*.<sup>(452)</sup> The very fact of it appearing in this official publication would mean that it was vetted by the Conference Office. Of necessity it is very brief, as are all in the *Minutes*, because of the constraints laid upon the writer, but perhaps the surprising thing is that the same author wrote her biography, which appeared in the *Primitive Methodist Magazine*<sup>(453)</sup> and yet that is very substantially the same in length and content. One might have expected that N.J. Devonport would have taken the opportunity to expand it to give some interesting details of her life and ministry, especially considering the length of that life and ministry. By contrast the biography of Sarah Kirkland extended to some thirty pages<sup>(454)</sup> and yet there is only the matter of ten or eleven years between the writing of the two. Can any reason be advanced for this apparent imbalance? Both lived to a ripe old age, Sarah being eighty-five and Elizabeth eighty-one at their deaths and both had retired from the active work for many years before - sixty-one and twenty-three years respectively. Could it be that the story of Sarah Kirkland, being primarily concerned with the early evangelical and missionary period of Primitive Methodism's history and the story of her conversion and ministry being such a romantic one it captured the imagination more than did the work of Elizabeth Bultitude in the later period of consolidation, when it was more a case of building on the foundations laid by the early pioneers. This was equally as important, but not so 'newsworthy' and inspiring to the readers of the *Magazine* in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Another point which might help to explain the difference is that Barfoot took the opportunity when he wrote 'Gleanings concerning the late Mrs. Sarah Bembridge, The First Female Travelling Preacher in Primitive Methodism, with Glances at the Early Men and Movements of the Connexion' to recount anything in the history of the Connexion which might be of interest to his readers rather than adhering strictly to the mere biographical details of his subject.

The other eighteen biographies in the *Magazine* tend to follow the pattern of Elizabeth Bultitude's<sup>(455)</sup> with the exception of Elizabeth Smith's, which, like Sarah Kirkland's, is lengthy, around twenty-eight pages.<sup>(456)</sup> Here, again, maybe this is due to her pioneering work, especially in the newly missioned Brinkworth Circuit. Three other factors may have a bearing on the account given of her life. The first being that her obituary was one of the earliest of the female itinerants, the second that it was written by her husband, Thomas Russell, who had also been her colleague before their marriage and perhaps felt justified in and able to give more details than was usual and the third being the existence of some of her writings, extracts from her journal, and letters and poems which were included.

In considering the biographies and memoirs of both men and women in the *Magazine* it needs to be remembered that only a few of the total number of travelling preachers lives' were recorded for posterity by being published within its pages. This was because inclusion chiefly depended on someone, usually a relative, friend or colleague, submitting a manuscript to the Book Room. Conference had directed in 1828 that obituaries should have been sent 'of every member of the Society who dies happy in the Lord'.<sup>(457)</sup> Presumably this edict would cover the

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<sup>452</sup> *PMMins* (1891) pp. 10-12.

<sup>453</sup> *PMM* (1891) pp. 564-565.

<sup>454</sup> *Ibid.* (1881) pp. 99-103, 161-165, 226-230, 289-293, 355-360, 420, 425.

<sup>455</sup> In length the others average about two and a half pages each.

<sup>456</sup> *PMM* (1837) pp. 95-99, 139-143, 176-181, 216-222, 158-260, 336-338.

<sup>457</sup> *PMMins* (1828) pp. 34, 35 cf. (1830) p. 1.



preachers as well as the ordinary church members. Then in 1834 it was ordained that Obituaries of the itinerants who had died in the work should appear in the Minutes.<sup>(458)</sup>

As these biographies and memoirs had a two-fold purpose - the celebration of the life and witness of the deceased and to act as inspiration and encouragement to the readers - it follows fairly naturally, that, in most cases the account was rather hagiographical, presenting an idealised picture of the life and work of the travelling preachers, showing how they battled against all odds, human and spiritual, to bear witness for their Lord and Saviour. With respect to the female itinerants this might possibly be even more true as this phenomenon had great novelty value in attracting crowds to the Primitive Methodist cause and the Connexion was justly proud of its record, even though in later years the women were left by the wayside.<sup>(459)</sup>

Unfortunately, it is not possible to verify how far the pictures given in the biographies are true to life because so little independent material is extant and that which is mainly consists of Circuit Minutes about the organisation and planning of services or lovefeasts, overseeing local preacher discipline, changing circuit staff or of circuit accounts relating to salary and expenses.<sup>(460)</sup>

However, the female travelling preachers were not perfect and their very faults make them seem more real and human than some of their idealized memoirs might lead us to suppose. So we learn that Elizabeth Bultitude regretted she could not dress as well as some of her congregation would have liked<sup>(461)</sup>; Emma Quarton was taken to task for her 'superfluous dress'<sup>(462)</sup> and Mary Clarissa Buck evidently preached rather too lengthy sermons at times<sup>(463)</sup>.

So far only two separate accounts of the lives of women travelling preachers have come to light. The first, by John Lightfoot of Mary Porteous is lengthy, (one hundred and fifty-six pages), whilst the other of Miss Mary Burks, by John Davison consists of sixty small (three by five and a half inch) pages. Lightfoot had been a colleague of Mary Porteous and was instrumental in getting her to become a preacher,<sup>(464)</sup> while Davison who travelled with her in the York Circuit in 1833, published his memoir of Mary Burks three years after her death, making use of letters and memories which some of her friends in the Grimsby Circuit made available to him.<sup>(465)</sup> The one of Mary Porteous was written in 1862 at a time when female travelling preachers were no longer being used. Mary Burks' was written in 1840, while there were still twelve women itinerants on the Primitive Methodist stations. Although biographies of Mary Burks and Elizabeth Smith appear in the same year of 1837 in the *Primitive Methodist Magazine* Mary's is very brief, only two pages, whereas Elizabeth's was lengthy.<sup>(466)</sup> Presumably the difference can be accounted for by the interest of the author.

Lightfoot's account of Mary Porteous is comprehensive and deals with her family, circumstances, soul-searching and ministry in considerable detail, whereas Mary Burks' gives

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<sup>458</sup> Ibid. (1834) pp. 8, 9.

<sup>459</sup> See Chapter 8.

<sup>460</sup> For example **Sunderland P.M. Circuit Committee Book 1831-1842** (September 12th, October 20th 1831) (Tyne and Wear RO); **Minute Book - Fakenham Circuit 1843-1860** **Soham and Watton Union Circuit Minute Book 1836-1857** (March 18th 1839) (Norfolk RO); **Ludlow P.M. Circuit Accounts** (Shropshire RO) *PMM* (1891) p. 569.

<sup>461</sup> **QM Minute Book, Preston Brook Circuit 1838-1846** (June 17th 1841) (Cheshire RO)

<sup>462</sup> **Burland PM Circuit Quarter Day Minutes** (April 27th 1844) (Cheshire RO); Kendall, *The PM Leader*, (December 5th 1907) p. 843.

<sup>463</sup> Lightfoot, *Life of Mrs. Mary Porteous*, pp. 78-79

<sup>464</sup> Davison, J., *The Vessel of Beaten Gold* (Grimsby, 1840), Preface.

<sup>465</sup> *PMM* (1837) pp. 95-99, 130-143, 176-181, 216-222, 258-260, 336-338.

the barest information useful to a researcher into historical facts and concentrates on her spiritual state.

Mary Burks, Mary Porteous and Elizabeth Smith have been chosen as examples because all three worked for a reasonable length of time as travelling preachers - thirteen or fourteen, twelve and five years respectively; the *Primitive Methodist Magazine* biographies are supplemented by independent accounts in the first two cases, while Elizabeth's husband adds extra, even if perhaps understandably biased, material to her *Magazine* obituary and refers to experiences they shared as colleagues and during their marriage in his writings;<sup>(467)</sup> they each worked in different parts of the country - the Lincolnshire area, the North of England, and the South Midlands and Midlands respectively. So a detailed account of their lives provides some sort of picture of the vicissitudes, the problems and the joys of the female travelling preacher of the Primitive Methodist Connexion.

### **MARY BURKS (BIRKS) (1796 - 1837)**

The redoubtable Mary Burks was one of the early female itinerants of the Primitive Methodist Connexion. This remarkable woman seems to have impressed the Primitive Methodist historians because of her unusual height, being over six feet tall and because of her 'exceptional ability and force of character'.<sup>(468)</sup> Mary Burks was born on February 2nd 1796 of poor but industrious parents. She was the eldest of four children and often attended, with her mother, an Independent Chapel, two miles from her home. During her early years Mary was very interested in religion and became especially impressed when her mother had an eight month long serious illness.

When she was fourteen Mrs. Burks managed to get Mary a living-in position with a family not too far from home. She worked hard at her job, but had little time to practise her religion, except privately in her precious spare time when she read her Bible and some religious tracts. The Wesleyan Methodists held a revival in the village where she worked and two young members of the family were converted. Mary was greatly impressed by the change in them and exclaimed with a sigh:

"Oh! that I were like them!"<sup>(469)</sup>

She was deeply affected by the prayers of one of the young men when she heard him praying with his mother. After living there for about a year Mary moved to Hull where she received treatment for a painful tumour on her face. During this time she attended services and constantly examined the state of her soul. She struggled valiantly against spiritual temptation. On a visit home in late 1817 or early 1818 Mary heard a Wesleyan Local Preacher, preach from Revelation 6:17 'For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?' and was filled with a sense of sin. This feeling was intensified after she had attended a watchnight service and a prayer meeting.

Then Mary returned to another position in Hull and after three months she found her home with the Primitive Methodists and experienced a true conversion. Her next step was to feel a call to preach, which call was endorsed by the Hull Circuit:

'Being possessed of a strong constitution and considerable mental power, associated with vigorous and growing piety, it soon became

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<sup>467</sup> see Russell, T., *Autobiography of Thomas Russell* (n.d.) passim; Russell, T., *The Record of Events in Primitive Methodism* (1869) passim.

<sup>468</sup> Kendall, *Handbook* p. 42; Kendall, 'Women Preacher of the Old Days' in *The PM Leader* (December 5th 1807) p. 843; Kendall, *History I* p. 466; Ritson, *Romance* p. 149.

<sup>469</sup> *PMM* (1837) p. 451

apparent to the Primitive Methodist authorities in the Hull circuit that providence designed Mary Burks for a wider sphere of action than she at that time occupied. Accordingly, she was called by God and the church .... to call sinners to repentance; and the seals which the great Head of the Church gave to her able ministry, abundantly established the validity and certainty of that call.’<sup>(470)</sup>

Thus, according to the *Minutes of the Primitive Methodist Conference* we find her name on the stations for the Scotter Circuit in 1822 and in the Lincoln Circuit in 1822, 1823 and 1824. Then the 1826 Conference stationed her at Grimsby for the first six months and Hull for the last six months. A copy of the Grimsby Circuit Plan for both Weekday service and Lord’s Day services contains her name and appointments. In the period July, August and September and the first Monday in October 1826, on the Weekday Plan, Mary worked equally with her male colleague Moses Lupton, in fact, being ‘out’ every weeknight at one of the churches in the Circuit. On the Sunday plan, which covers the same period of fourteen Sundays, Mary was appointed thirty-nine times, making an average of practically three every Sunday. Bearing in mind that only two of the Churches had two services in a day it is obvious that, in addition to a considerable preaching load, quite a lot of travelling must have been involved - for example on 2nd July she took three appointments in three different villages each of which were at least three miles apart and it is a similar story on 1st October, but then villages were only two miles each apart! These itinerants, both male and female, definitely needed a good physical stamina to fulfil their calling. The years 1827 and 1828 found her still in the Hull District, but in 1829 Mary was moved to Lincoln for the first six months returning to Hull for the second six. At the December Quarterly Meeting in 1829 of the Hull Circuit Kendall says that her name was considered as a suitable person to join the American Mission and William Clowes was asked to go to Grimsby to put the proposal to her, but she refused.<sup>(471)</sup> The Louth Circuit was her station in 1830 and in 1831 she stayed in Louth for three months; and then went to Malton for the remaining nine months, where she continued for the following year. Davison includes some letters of Mary Burks in his Memoir and the following extracts will perhaps give a little insight into her life and work;

Malton, August 26th, 1831

‘Since I came into this circuit I have been severely tried, religion is very low.... I have very long journeys to travel, on heavy and irregular roads; and have had to address the congregations frequently in the open air. The demands, therefore, upon my mental and physical strength have been considerable. God, however, has stood by me, and I have seen some FRUIT. Glory to the Lamb! The preachers are much united in love and we are all striving to carry on the good work.’<sup>(472)</sup>

In the following February she was able to report that a ‘revival has broken out at Thornton near Pickering.’<sup>(473)</sup> Her letter of April 2nd also tells that the work was making good progress and indicated that the quarterly meeting wished her to remain in the circuit for another year, but this was not to be, as in a letter of May 28th, we find her plans for moving on ‘the 25th’, together with her report that:

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<sup>470</sup> Davison, *Vessel of Beaten Gold* pp. 8-9.

<sup>471</sup> Clowes, William, *The Journals of William Clowes* (1844) p. 295; Kendall, *History* I p. 466; Kendall in *PM Leader* (December 7th 1907) p. 843; Ritson, op. cit. p. 149. Clowes Journals were reprinted in 1980 by the Rev. Stephen Hatcher.

<sup>472</sup> Davison, op. cit. pp. 30-31.

<sup>473</sup> Ibid. p. 32.

‘The work of the Lord is greatly prospering here: we have had nearly one hundred souls joined to our society, and the most of them truly converted, during the last fifteen weeks; and several other places in the circuit the revival has reached.’<sup>(474)</sup>

Writing from York, in August 1832 Mary mentions the death of her mother some time during the summer and that, in consequence her father wanted her to return home to keep house for him, but that she was uncertain as to what course was the right one for her to take,<sup>(475)</sup> and that the work in York was showing encouraging signs of ‘brightening’<sup>(476)</sup>

The *Primitive Methodist Minutes* of 1832 and 1833 respectively list ‘M. Birks’ as contributing 5/- and 2/6 as the preachers’ subscription to ‘The Relief Fund for preachers in distressed circuits’<sup>(477)</sup>

The name of Mary Burks is down for the Hull station in 1833 and 1834, but it is obvious from the letters contained in Davison’s Memoir that, although she was enjoying considerable success in the Tadcaster section of the Hull Circuit,<sup>(478)</sup> by the spring of 1834 she was beginning to feel seriously unwell. This is borne out by the report of the ‘Circuit Assistant Sick Travelling Preachers Fund’ in the 1835 Minutes where we read:

‘York	M. Burks	25 weeks	£10.0s.0d
York	M. Burks	15 weeks	£6.0s.0d
Hull	M. Burks	-	£0.0s.0d
York	M. Burks	15 weeks	£6.0s.0d’ <sup>(479)</sup>

In a letter to her father written from York on March 27th, 1834 Mary says:

‘the Lord has seen good to lay upon me his afflicting hand, and I have not been able to attend to my labours for the last fortnight. My disorder is a stoppage in the bladder, and like all cases of gravel, it occasions much pain. I am using means, and, I trust, by the blessing of God upon them, they will be rendered efficacious’<sup>(480)</sup>

By May she was hopeful that her ‘disorder’ was responding to treatment and that she would soon be able to resume her duties.<sup>(481)</sup> However, as a letter, dated April 13th 1835 makes clear her state of health was ‘very precarious’ and her disorder had not cleared up, although she was able to take part in a few meetings, praying, exhorting, and leading classes.<sup>(482)</sup> So, by 1836 Mary, had to retire from the active itinerant ministry and returned to East Stockwith in the Scotter Circuit where she lived with her father. Here she acted as a Class Leader and took services<sup>(483)</sup> as a Local Preacher whenever her health permitted. The *Minutes* of 1837 record that the Scotter Circuit was given £12.0.0 for the 30 week illness of M. Burks from the Circuit Assistant Sick Travelling Preachers Fund. <sup>(484)</sup>

Ritson, following Kendall, tells the story that when long journeys proved too much for her, but

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<sup>474</sup> Ibid. p. 36.

<sup>475</sup> Ibid. pp. 37-38 see also *PMM* (1833) p. 38 for obituary of her mother.

<sup>476</sup> Davison, op. cit. p. 40.

<sup>477</sup> *PM Mins* (1832) p. 10; (1833) p. 13.

<sup>478</sup> Ibid. p. 41.

<sup>479</sup> *PM Mins* (1835) pp. 18, 19.

<sup>480</sup> Davison, op. cit. p. 46.

<sup>481</sup> Ibid. p. 47.

<sup>482</sup> Ibid. p. 49.

<sup>483</sup> Ibid. p. 55.

<sup>484</sup> *PM Mins* (1837) p. 19

she was still anxious to take services, she petitioned the Hull Quarterly Meeting in 1828 to buy her an ass to ride to her appointments. They refused, telling her she could borrow a pony from a friend.<sup>(485)</sup>

Mary Burks died on 22nd January 1837 at the age of forty-one and Davison gives an account of her last few weeks in his Memoir, while Kendall reports that John Stamp says she:

‘laboured with much credit to herself and honour to the Connexion and died in full triumph shouting ‘Victory,’”<sup>(486)</sup>

Davison gives ‘a few striking features of character’ of Mary Burks which are perhaps worth summarising briefly:

**1. Intrepidity.**-The external figure of Mary Burks was strong and compact, with an air of resolute determination in her manner; all her movements were of a vigorous and masculine complexion....Her courage and fearlessness in the pulpit....the word of fire....the earnest persuasion and melting pity.... sufficiently demonstrated her character....In private, the faithful rebukes....giving no quarter to sin, showed the elevation and majesty of her spirit

**2. Fidelity.**-The attachment of Mary Burks to her God, to her friends, and to the cause in which she laboured, was unbroken to the last. There was a stability and warmth in her friendships....she would make any sacrifice which was consistent....Simple in her manners, and unassuming in her bearing she quickly secured the good opinion of the people among whom she travelled and laboured....She attended her appointments with scrupulous punctuality, distance - bad roads - tempestuous weather - poor accommodation and occasional indisposition she disregarded....faithful in performing her promises and engagements, and rigid in speaking the truth....In all that concerned the discipline and management of the societies....her conduct usually gave general satisfaction. Bland and courteous in her behaviour, prompt and decisive in her movements, an active family visitor, a preacher of a present, free, and full salvation, and of commanding presence and ability in the pulpit....

**3. Sanctity.**-....Holiness was often her theme in private conversation....and in the pulpit, she preached it with uncommon clearness, pathos, and power,.. She strongly importuned believers to **make haste** to reach the mark of the prize of their high calling in Christ Jesus....<sup>(487)</sup>

With a ‘character reference’ of this nature it can easily be seen why Mary Burks was ranked in the forefront of the early Primitive Methodist pioneers.

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<sup>485</sup> Ritson; op. cit. pp. 149-150cf.; Kendall, *PM Leader* (December 5th 1907) p. 848

<sup>486</sup> Kendall, op. cit. I p. 466.

<sup>487</sup> Davison, op. cit. pp. 14-24.

FIGURE 9: Grimsby Circuit Plan 1826

## GRIMSBY CIRCUIT.

### PRIMITIVE METHODIST PREACHERS' PLAN, 1826.

"Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee."—Psalm lxxxv. 6.

SUNDAY PLAN.										WEEK DAY PLAN.																		
PLACES.	HOURS M. A. E.	OCTOBER			NOVEMBER			DECEMBER			PREACHERS.	PLACES.	Days	OCTOBER			NOV.			DEC.			J.					
		8	15	22	29	5	12	19	26	3				10	17	24	31	9	16	23	30	6		13	20	27	4	11
Grimsby, .....	2 6	3	1	1	2	2	C3	T3	s1	T	7	L2	2	3	3	1	G. W. ARMITAGE.	Grimsby, .....	T									
Ulceby, .....	10		18		16		2		19		1		10		2 M. LUPTON.	Laceby, .....	W											
Caistor, .....	10 6	6	3	9	c1	8	10	4	T3	10	16	14	2	6	3 M. BURKS.	Irby, .....	Th	1	c2		3	T1		2	3			
Usselby, .....	10		2		C3		1		2		3		1	2	4 E. BROWN.	Great Coats, .....	F											
Normanby, .....	2	2			C3		1		T2		3		1	2	5 W. HOLT.	Grimsby, .....	T											
Walesby, .....	6	2			C3		1		T2		3		1	2	6 B. HEMPSTOCK.	Immingham, .....	W											
Tealby, .....	10		L2		C3		1		T2		3		1		7 E. LINGARD.	Haborough, .....	Th	3	c1		2	T3		1	2	3		
Binbrook, .....	6	7	2	8	C3	19	1	17	T2	6	L3	18	1	12	8 A. CLARK.	Ulceby, .....	F											
Tealby, .....	6	12		17		8	19			12	6		8		9 R. POXON.	Grassby, .....	M											
Holton, .....	2	1		5		11	C1			4	3		9		10 D. FLETCHER.	Howsham, .....	T											
Tetney, .....	6	1		5		11	C1			4	3		9		11 G. NORRIS.	Kirmington, .....	W		3	c1		2	T3		1	2		
Tetney, .....	2		11		6		14		7		4		12		12 J. SMITH.	Swallow, .....	Th											
Thoresby, .....	6		11		6		14		7		4		12		13 J. WARD.	Caistor, .....	F											
Ludborough, .....	10			20		C3				2			1		14 J. HOLLAND.	Tealby, .....	M											
Thoresby, .....	2	4		20		C3		9		2	11		1		15 J. WARDALE.	Binbrook, .....	T											
Fulstow, .....	6	4		20		C3		9		s2	11		1		16 W. METCALF.	Ludbrook, .....	W	2	c3		1	T2		3	1	2		
Laceby, .....	2		9		7		18		14		12		13		EXHORTERS.	Mission, .....	Th											
Waltham, .....	6		9		7		18		14		12		13		17 W. SMITH.	Usselby, .....	F											
Irby, .....	2	13		18		4	15			C1	14		5		18 J. BAXTER.	Beelsby, .....	M											
Laceby, .....	6	13		18		4	15			C1	14		5		19 J. KENT.	Waltham, .....	T											
Waltham, .....	2	14		12		5	7			13	4		7		20 * Quarter Day at Tetney, December 18; Preachers' Meeting at Ten o'Clock.	Holton, .....	W	2	c3		1	T2		3	1			
Great Coats, .....	2	15		14		9	5			18	15		15		↳ Letters on Circuit Business to be Addressed (Post Paid) to Mr. J. WARD, LOFT-STREET, GRIMSBY.	Ludborough, .....	Th											
Beelsby, .....	2	16		L4		13	14			15	16		19		S. SACRAMENT.	Fulstow, .....	F											
Swallow, .....	6	16		4		13	14			15	16		19		C. COLLECTION.	Louth, .....	T											
Kirmington, .....	2	19		10		16	6			19	10		18		T. TICKETS.	Thoresby, .....	W	1	c2		3	T1		2	3	1		
Grassby, .....	6	19		10		16	6			19	10		18		L. LOVE-FEAST.	Tetney, .....	Th											
																Mission, .....	F											

N. B. All Persons who wish to become Subscribers for the Large or Small MAGAZINES, are requested to give their names to the Preachers as soon as possible. [SKELTON, PRINTER, GRIMSBY.]

### MRS. MARY PORTEOUS (1783 - 1861)

Mary Porteous, the youngest child of John Thompson, joiner and cabinet maker, was born in Newcastle-on-Tyne in 1783. Her father was a strict Presbyterian, but when Mary was very young he died after a long illness, leaving his wife with five children to support. The struggle for survival occupied all Mrs. Thompson's energies and she neglected her religious duties, but nevertheless instilled deep traits of morality, diligence and hard work in her children. Mary, although so young, was 'impressed with the fear of God'. Due partly to the poverty of the family Mary had to leave school at the age of seven, but each Sunday she went to some place of worship. At the age of eleven she wanted to go to the Wesleyan Orphan House Sunday School, but her mother, being prejudiced against the Methodists, refused to allow this. At the same age Mary went to work in a factory and soon fell victim to a severe fever. When she was fifteen Mary was the only one of the family living at home with her mother where she was working at yarn-spinning, then she realised that she could spin and read at the same time. Finding an old book of her father's she read a sermon on prayer which deeply affected her and she followed that by reading the Assembly's *Larger Catechism*. Her mother, becoming aware of the change in Mary, 'persecuted' her, but she persisted and becoming acquainted with a Presbyterian family accompanied them to their chapel. She persevered in spite of her mother's ill-treatment.<sup>(488)</sup>

In the August or September of 1801 Mary's mother was taken ill and died on the 31st December, leaving Mary alone. Fortunately an elderly woman in the neighbourhood took her in as a servant and virtually became a mother to her. As she, too, was a Presbyterian Mary once again came into close contact with religion and was finally converted at a celebration of the Lord's Supper. Then, having moved to a new situation Mary found her mistress very difficult to please and whilst there she met her future husband. Feeling that marriage could hardly be worse than her present position she married Mr. Porteous, a seaman, on 8th March 1803, but, unhappily, although he attended worship he did not 'enjoy experimental religion' and Mary's faith was badly affected for two years. As it was wartime her husband had to hide to avoid being pressed, so they opened a shop, but as it was unsuccessful they became even more poverty-stricken.<sup>(489)</sup>

The Porteous family then moved to Ballast Hills, near Newcastle-on-Tyne, where they rented part of a house belonging to a Methodist family. Mary was left alone with the children because her husband had returned to sea and she eventually became influenced by this family, although originally strongly prejudiced against Methodists, and she began to go to the Presbyterian chapel again. On her husband's return she rather hesitantly broached the question of family worship and to her surprise he raised no objection. Then the woman in the next room asked her to visit a sick neighbour. Mary agreed, but then had second thoughts:

'Me....pray with anyone! I have no abilities to pray with sick people; and besides, I am a woman, and I cannot think it right for a woman to engage in any public capacity.'<sup>(490)</sup>

but she went. She was still very prejudiced against the Methodists, then hearing that a Mr. McAllum was to preach and being surprised that a Scotsman could be a Methodist preacher she decided to go to hear him at Ebenezer Chapel in the New Road on the following Sunday afternoon. She received much comfort and acknowledged 'that God was among the Methodists.' Thereafter she went to hear him whenever she could.

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<sup>488</sup> Lightfoot, J., *The Life and Labours of Mrs. Mary Porteous* (1862) pp. 9-15.

<sup>489</sup> Lightfoot, op. cit. pp. 16-25.

<sup>490</sup> Ibid. pp. 27-29.

In August 1807 the family moved to North Shields and Mary went to the Wesleyan chapel where she was delighted to hear Mr. McAllum announced as the preacher for the coming Sunday. So she went with her husband and children and joined the society, receiving her first class ticket in December 1807. Soon Mary had to face more difficulties. First, her ability to pray in public was eagerly sought after, and she was frequently asked to visit the sick, but she was not happy about it and often left without praying. Secondly, financial problems beset her at home. Her husband left the sea, bought a small boat and tried rather unsuccessfully to earn a living on the river, often bringing in only six shillings a week, but Mary refused to get into debt even if it meant the family had to go hungry, however, on several occasions gifts arrived at the most opportune moments to provide food or rent.<sup>(491)</sup>

Mr. Porteous took his family to Newcastle and then to Gateshead where Mary joined the small Methodist society. She started a prayer-meeting in her own house and visited the sick, but she felt the need for a deepening of her own spiritual life and met it by reading and praying about Christian perfection and eventually reached 'full salvation'. Although Mary had learned to read a little while at school she could not write, so now she determined to learn so that she could record her Christian experience.<sup>(492)</sup>

In early 1814 there was a religious revival in Gateshead and eleven people, mainly young girls, were converted in Mary's house. She felt a call to form them into a class, but resisted the idea vehemently. However, the very next day her minister and own class leader called to ask her to become the class leader to these same young women. She agreed and the class soon numbered twenty-seven.<sup>(493)</sup>

In order to supplement the family income Mary had started a school and had between twelve and twenty children, but disaster struck in 1816 when her husband's boat was broken in an accident and he became unemployed, A fortnight later she became ill and had to give up the school and then her eldest son, who had been bringing home two shillings a week, from his job as an errand boy was made redundant. Mary was in bed for five months, but once again timely gifts arrived to help the family in their need. During her illness Mary was visited by William Bramwell who convinced her that God had work for her to do. Soon after her recovery Mary was appointed visitor for the Benevolent Society and a Sunday School teacher. <sup>(494)</sup> Mary started to keep a Diary regularly in 1818 and it is concerned mainly with her spiritual state, but there are a few details relevant to our present purposes. On October 27th 1818 she wrote of the death of her daughter, Mary, on 9th June at the age of twelve and a half, the conversion of her son James (14½), and the increase of her class.<sup>(495)</sup>

By this time Mary had become so concerned about the spiritual well-being of men and women that she often spent long hours in prayer, in particular she prayed for the conversion of her husband.

Another family cause for concern was that James had become estranged from religion because of his contact at work and except for his love of music would probably have given up going to chapel altogether. At one stage he even ran away, but finally returned, having had to sell his clothes, and rejoined the chapel. Mary had been so upset at seeing his empty place in the choir at the Wesleyan Chapel that she went to hear the Primitive Methodists in an open-air service, when Jeremiah Gilbert preached, and she enjoyed the experience. She returned to the Wesleyan

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<sup>491</sup> Ibid. pp. 29-32, 34-36.

<sup>492</sup> Ibid. pp. 38-39, 42.

<sup>493</sup> Ibid. pp. 43-44.

<sup>494</sup> *PMM* (1861) pp. 521-522. cf. Lightfoot, op. cit. pp. 45-51.

<sup>495</sup> Ibid. pp. 53-54.



Chapel and if it had been possible for her to preach in that Connexion she would doubtless have continued in membership with that body for which she always had a deep and lasting affection, but it was from the Primitives that she was to receive the external call to preach for which she had been waiting for two years.

One day, although very much against female preachers, Mary received her call to preach. She said it was as if the words had been spoken to her:

‘Why liest thou there as if prayer were in itself sufficient to snatch souls from woe. Go forth, and preach the Gospel.’

Much startled and excited, I exclaimed, ‘Lord, I cannot; thou knowest I have no talents for preaching.’ then it was impressed upon my mind, ‘Who made man’s mouth? Have not I, the Lord?’ Ex.iv.11. But I tremblingly replied, ‘I am a woman; and I never could see it right for a woman to preach.’ Again, with power, it was answered, ‘Woman was the first that brought sin into the world - woman ought not to be the last to proclaim the remedy.’

Thus silenced and confounded, I promised the Lord, at that time, that if this was an inward call to preach his Gospel, I would keep it as a profound secret, and without mentioning what had transpired to anyone, would wait for an outward call, and would enter into the first door that he, in his providence, might open for me.’<sup>(496)</sup>

When the Primitive Methodists came to the North-East Mary went to listen to ‘The Ranters’ and heard Mr. Branfoot preach in Sandgate in Newcastle in 1821. Apparently there had been a boat-race that day and the crowd surrounding the preacher was very rowdy and this annoyed Mary greatly. She returned home in some perturbation, but was soon delighted when Mr. Lightfoot arrived at her door with Mr. Branfoot.<sup>(497)</sup> The next day she collected as many friends as possible to go to hear him preach in Gateshead. Later Mary travelled to North Shields to hear William Clowes and the two Nelsons. During the course of that meeting she felt a strong desire:

‘to mount a form and address the people; but being an Old Methodist, a female and a stranger.... I refrained. I, however, prayed with them, and endeavoured to make myself useful among the penitents; and many were brought into glorious liberty.’<sup>(498)</sup>

After her return home Mary was very much disturbed by the feelings she had experienced and resisted the idea of joining the Primitives. In fact she avoided going to their meetings because of it. Then Mr. John Lightfoot, who had been lodging with Mary, became a travelling preacher and often brought other preachers to the house. One such visitor was Jeremiah Gilbert and on one occasion they invited Mary to join in conversation. Mr. Gilbert told them that Mrs. Suddards (née Jane Ansdale) had been preaching at Shields and that she had attracted great crowds of hearers, then said:

‘Mary, what would you have thought, had this been you?’ I answered, ‘Me, sir! If it had been me, I must have had hold of God with a strong hand of faith, or otherwise I would have sunk in the pulpit,’ He replied,

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<sup>496</sup> Lightfoot, op. cit. p. 73.

<sup>497</sup> Ibid. pp. 74-76; Patterson, *Northern Primitive Methodism* p. 308.

<sup>498</sup> Lightfoot, op. cit. p. 76.

‘Indeed; but if you had hold of God, as you say, we should have had an excellent sermon.’<sup>(499)</sup>

The very next day Mr. Lightfoot told Mary that Mr. Gilbert had arranged for her to preach at Wreckenton in a fortnight’s time. Mary was very perturbed, but felt that this was indeed her external call. Her sermon from Zechariah 12:10 was so well received that she was invited, without prior warning, to preach in the evening in a nearby village, and thus became a Primitive Methodist Local Preacher. She wrote:

‘On January 4 (1824) I took my first appointments on a Primitive Methodist preachers’ plan.’<sup>(500)</sup>

Once again Mary experienced severe domestic troubles, but again God provided for her and her family. She continued to preach almost every week in the villages around Newcastle and Gateshead. Her *Life* at this point is full of her experiences and her inner conflicts about preaching. After a year as a local preacher, in January 1825 Mary became convinced that she should enter the itinerant ministry, but she rebelled against the idea and again waited for her path to be made clear. All her children, except her eight year old daughter Isabella, were provided for by May 1825. In January 1826 her daughter-in-law had a baby and Mary and Isabella went to look after the family. When it came time for them to leave they begged for Isabella to stay to help with the baby, so Mary was now free to become a travelling preacher.

She received an immediate call to go to the Whitby Circuit which was then suffering great difficulty because of the lack of a settled minister and shortage of funds. After consulting with her husband, she agreed to go as soon as possible. However, she was herself in considerable embarrassment as she had not a suitable wardrobe for such an undertaking, but a friend gave her a bundle of clothes which supplied the need, offered to pay her fare to Sunderland and to go with her for part of the journey. When later in the week other friends gave her more essentials she felt that it was indeed God’s will for her to go to Whitby. She received the blessing of her own Newcastle Circuit, but had to forego preaching a farewell sermon to them on the Sunday because she was exhausted with all her preparations. However, on the Monday she insisted on setting off by the afternoon coach to Sunderland with her friend, Mrs. M. Here they spent the night with friends and next morning at 5.00 a.m. Mary set off with the Stockton carrier and reaching there she met the local Primitive Methodists to whom she preached. Finally she arrived at Guisborough where she was warmly welcomed by the minister and his family - Mr. and Mrs. Morris - and other friends.

So it was on the 21st January 1826 that Mary Porteous commenced her work in the extensive Whitby and Guisborough Union Circuit by preaching in the morning and afternoon at Redcar and in the evening at Guisborough. In her diary Mary records how she was worried about her work in the Circuit because of her health, being among strangers, feeling inadequate to be a travelling preacher and the difference in dialect, but she concludes by writing that with God’s help and the kindness of the local people she was:

‘enabled to traverse this rugged circuit. Two hundred and sixty miles I travelled on foot-frequently through deep snow and over high mountains - in eight weeks, and spoke sixty times each round. Thus I concluded my first six months’ labour; and, wonderful to say, felt considerably stronger than I was at its commencement.’<sup>(501)</sup>

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<sup>499</sup> Ibid. pp. 78-79.

<sup>500</sup> Ibid. p. 82, Patterson, op. cit. p. 326.

<sup>501</sup> Lightfoot, op. cit. p. 99.

Her biographer, John Lightfoot, who served with her in that Circuit recalls the enthusiasm with which she was greeted wherever she preached, and how the societies to which she ministered improved both spiritually and financially. At the District Meeting of 1826 Mary was re-stationed at Whitby. She paid a visit to her family who were delighted to see such an improvement in her health. Then followed a happy year in the Whitby Circuit, working with Jeremiah Gilbert as her superintendent minister.

The Conference of 1827 re-stationed her at Whitby to everyone's delight. However, there was a problem to overcome because a Minute of Conference stated that:

'No married female shall be allowed to labour as a travelling preacher in any Circuit except in that circuit, in which her husband resides.'<sup>(502)</sup>

It seemed that Mary must return home, but she asked the Circuit for its ruling:

'as it, in God's hand had called her into the regular work of the ministry, she durst not move without its consent. Under these circumstances the General Committee allowed her to remain considering her's an "extraordinary case".'<sup>(503)</sup>

So Mary continued her work and many were converted under her ministry. At the following District Meeting the Circuit pleaded to have Mary re-stationed at Whitby, but Conference sent her to Ripon. Patterson gives two comments on Mary Porteous' work in the Whitby Circuit:

'From January 1826 until July 1828 the godly Tyneside woman, whose preaching was a delight to even the travelling preachers of that time, exercised her useful ministry in this spacious field.'<sup>(504)</sup>

and

'Crowds attended the ministry of Mrs. Porteous; and her ability as a preacher, her constant fellow-ship with God, and her passion of souls contributed largely to the financial and spiritual improvement of the circuit.'<sup>(505)</sup>

So after two and a half years in the Whitby Circuit Mary moved, in July 1828 to the Ripon Circuit, which covered an even more extensive area. There were then five travelling preachers in the Circuit and Mary was not given any special concessions because she was a woman. She tells us that she was determined to preach Christ, but apart from saying this and that many people were brought to God, unfortunately she left little record of her work in the Circuit. A dream recorded in her diary of July 10th 1829 tells how she was encouraged to continue as a travelling preacher.<sup>(506)</sup> A Minute Book of the Brompton Circuit indicates that they tried to get Mary Porteous to go to the Circuit from Ripon, so obviously favourable reports of her work had spread.<sup>(507)</sup>

At the District Meeting for 1830 Mary was stationed to the Carlisle Circuit. She was very worried because she had been told that the Circuit extended into Scotland, that the Scots would never accept a female preacher and also that the people were very intelligent so she would find it difficult to instruct them. However, she relied on the fact that the Circuit and God had chosen

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<sup>502</sup> *PM Mins* (1827) p. 4; cf. Lightfoot, op. cit. p. 102.

<sup>503</sup> Ibid. p. 102.

<sup>504</sup> Patterson, op. cit. p.23.

<sup>505</sup> Ibid. p. 35.

<sup>506</sup> Lightfoot, op. cit. p. 111.

<sup>507</sup> **Brompton Circuit Minute Book 1822 - 1835** (March 2nd 1830) (North Yorkshire RO)

her to work there and that it was not her choice. Before going to Carlisle she visited her family and her previous Circuit of Whitby where her youngest daughter was now living. On July 10th 1830 Mary arrived at Brampton, near Carlisle and happily was well received so her fears were unfounded. She records an instance of God's goodness in her work. She was appointed 'to open' Wigton and the day before she read John Wesley's account of his visit there and was overcome at the thought of following in his footsteps:

'a poor 'ranter' preacher..., and a woman too.'<sup>(508)</sup>

However, her service at the Market Cross was successful and a home was offered for her stay. She returned to Wigton on September 2nd and also visited nearby villages with great effect. In November she was delighted to find that a society had been formed and was meeting in a large school-room. Yet again, her biographer joined Mary in the same circuit and wrote appreciatively of her ministry. The part of her diary concerned with this period of her life deals mainly with local instances of God's grace towards her and others. There are three obituaries, approved by the Circuit Committee, in the *Primitive Methodist Magazine* which Mary wrote about members and friends in the Carlisle Circuit.<sup>(509)</sup>

In July 1833 Mary Porteous was moved to Hexham in Northumberland, another very extensive Circuit. At this point we have no more extracts from her own diary. Again she was welcomed with much kindness and received strength to continue her arduous labours. Sometime during the summer of 1833 she was delighted to meet some of her Carlisle and Brampton friends at a lovefeast at Haltwhistle. Little is recorded of Mary's work in this Circuit, but she enjoyed meeting 'the Shire (Hexhamshire) Jumpers' - who were apparently an emotional religious sect - as she considered them 'to be a devoted people.'<sup>(510)</sup> She also became firm friends with Mr. and Mrs. R.I. Shafto of Bavington Hall. Towards the end of her time in the Circuit Mary dislocated her shoulder while crossing a brook and her left arm became useless for several months. When she was better friends sent her to convalesce in Shields and Tynemouth, but unfortunately while she was there her eldest daughter was taken seriously ill and so Mary had to look after her instead of recuperating herself. In fact she was not able to return to the active work for a year and her name does not appear on the stations.

She had not been able to save anything during her itinerancy because her salary had only been £2.2s.0d. or £2.10s. a quarter, with £6 for board and lodging.<sup>(511)</sup> She was now living at Mount Pleasant, Newcastle-on-Tyne and had opened a day school for young girls which helped to eke out the money she got from taking in needlework. Her youngest son, Thomas, had finished his apprenticeship and came to work nearby and managed to give her a little. Mary was able to take a few services during the year while she recovered her health and then in 1836 her name was restored to the stations as appointed to the North Shields Circuit. On arrival there she found that the North Shields Chapel was in very severe financial straits and that an extraordinary effort would be needed to restore the funds. So Mary was authorised to undertake a money-raising tour throughout Yorkshire, Lincolnshire and anywhere else which might be deemed feasible. She met with a good response from the Circuits in which she had travelled herself, but, understandably, elsewhere, although people received her kindly, the financial results were poor. She wrote:

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<sup>508</sup> Lightfoot, op. cit. p. 114; Kendall, op. cit. II p. 140; Ritson, op. cit. p. 208

<sup>509</sup> *PMM* (1832) pp 413-417; (1833) pp 290-292.

<sup>510</sup> Lightfoot, op. cit. p. 128; Patterson, op. cit. p. 189.

<sup>511</sup> Lightfoot, op. cit. p. 130; Woodcock, H., *Romance of Reality* p. 160; cf. *PM Mins* (1819) p. 2; (1823) p. 2; (1831) p. 2.

‘Altogether, I have travelled in this route 682 miles. Over 450 of these I rode in various conveyances, and 232 I walked, carrying my luggage with me. This I did frequently amidst wind, and frost, or rain, and in a strange country. But the Lord helped me. I begged my way. It did not cost me one penny for victuals: but it produced such rheumatic pains as I fear I shall never recover from. But I did it for the Lord; and my body and soul are his, and shall be his for ever.’<sup>(512)</sup>

Part of the time Mary Porteous was in the North Shields Circuits she was stationed by herself in Alnwick. The town was prejudiced against Methodist doctrines and female preaching, but by perseverance she was able to overcome these and raise nearly enough funds to maintain herself and her mission in the area. While in Alnwick Mary was able to have contact with friends she had made in 1824 when she was in the Morpeth area before. <sup>(513)</sup>

In July 1838 Mary was stationed in the Sunderland Circuit, which then included the Stockton and Durham Branches. Here again, she was made very welcome, but there is little record of her work and at the following Conference, when Durham and some surrounding villages were made into a separate Circuit she was stationed there. After a year here her health finally failed and she was forced to retire from the active work. The Minute Book of the Durham Circuit in an account of the Preachers’ Meeting, September 19th 1846 records ‘that Mrs. Porteous come on the plan.’<sup>(514)</sup> For the next twenty-one years Mary preached and took special services when she was well enough. At first she lived with her daughter, Isabella near Sunderland and not far from her elder daughter’s home. Then they moved to Easington-lane where they opened a pastry-shop and a temperance coffee-house. When Isabella married, Mary was invited to stay at Bavington Hall, where she remained for six years helping to look after Mrs. Shaftoe’s mother who was an invalid and taking services and Sunday School for the family. During this period Mary wrote many letters to her family and friends. <sup>(515)</sup> After leaving Bavington Hall she went to live with Isabella and her husband, using their home as a base from which she travelled around the county as her health permitted. Her visits were always much appreciated, for example, there was a revival at Malings Rigg in Sunderland and an old Presbyterian Chapel was bought which Mary Porteous opened in 1856. <sup>(516)</sup>

Mary had lost her son, Thomas, while she was still at Bavington Hall. Then her husband died and a little later her son-in-law was killed in a mine accident. Mary herself suffered two strokes, probably in 1857 and 1859, but amazingly recovered enough to visit friends and even to preach. The Doctor warned that a third stroke might well prove fatal as indeed it did and she died on 18th April 1861. Only a short while before her death she took part in a revival service at Gilesgate Moor Chapel, Durham and a few days later preached her last sermon. She was buried in Hallgarth Churchyard, Durham and her funeral sermon was preached by her biographer in Gilesgate Moor Chapel on the evening of May 19th 1861.

The Rev. William Saul wrote of her:

‘In addition to the great temporal privations she experienced, which were sometimes surpassed by still greater mental agonies; the

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<sup>512</sup> Lightfoot, op. cit. p. 133.

<sup>513</sup> Ibid. p. 134 cf. Fawcett, J.W., *Memorials of Early Primitive Methodism in the County of Durham* p. 55.

<sup>514</sup> **Minute Book of Durham PM Circuit** 1841-1848 (Durham RO). No doubt this refers to Mary as a local preacher after she left Bavington Hall to live with Isabella and her husband in the Durham area.

<sup>515</sup> Lightfoot, op. cit. pp. 138-141.

<sup>516</sup> Patterson, op. cit. p. 259.

opprobrium and contempt usually cast upon Christian females who become public teachers of religion, were among the ‘trials of her faith’<sup>(517)</sup>

and he goes on:

‘Her intense solicitude for the salvation of souls was no less manifest in her public than in her private religious instructions. Her sermons were plain and familiar;.... thus bringing the truths she taught down to the level of every understanding.... the more intelligent.... were generally of the opinion that she was worthy to be ranked with the most distinguished female preachers of this or any other age.... her sermons.... rendered her labours extensively and permanently useful. Her style of speech was remarkable for simplicity, purity and precision....

After fourteen years’ exclusive devotion to the regular ministry she retired.... (but).... frequent applications (were) made for her services on special occasions. Up to within the last few years of her life, when her infirmities became oppressive, she preached the word, was instant in season and out of season. Latterly, however, she was scarcely able to take more than an occasional service.’<sup>(518)</sup>

The same writer in the *Primitive Methodist Magazine* says:

‘In connection with a course of well regulated, fully-sustained, and never wearied industry, she always managed to keep out of debt, though she had to earn her own and four or five children their daily bread for many years.... Patience under severe and long continued trials, combined with undoubting confidence in the wisdom and goodness of providential allotments; her habit of prayer, and how she was extricated by its use from her difficulties and dangers again and again; her ceaseless activity in doing good; her efficiency as a public teacher of religion; her comprehensive acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures and the plan of salvation; her success in the conversion of souls;.... are indications of her most prominent characteristics.... few female preachers ever acquired a nobler name, or more distinctive honours. Her perfect naturalness gave a charm to her utterances; her illustrations were manifold and striking, consequently she was listened to with respect and commendation. Her meekness, her honesty, her fervour, her devotedness, and her true womanliness were admirable.’<sup>(519)</sup>

Perhaps the last word on this admirable female itinerant of the Primitive Methodist Connexion can be left with H. B. Kendall:

‘Mary Porteous.... preached sermons that would have done credit to a bishop.’<sup>(520)</sup>

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<sup>517</sup> Lightfoot, op. cit. p. 152.

<sup>518</sup> Lightfoot, op. cit. pp. 155-156.

<sup>519</sup> *PMM* (1862) p. 523.

<sup>520</sup> Kendall, H.B., *Handbook* p. 42f.

FIGURE 10: Photographs: MARY PORTEOUS; Thomas Russell



The Husband of Elizabeth Smith, Thomas Russell

**ELIZABETH RUSSELL (née SMITH) (1805-1836)**

Elizabeth Russell (née Smith) was born on 10th January 1805 in Ludlow, Shropshire. Her father was a wholesale glover, but unfortunately in financial matters Mr. Smith was very inept and many things, both at home and at work, got too much for him and he left, enlisting, as a marine. Soon apparently the family learned of his death. Elizabeth's mother was left with six children, of whom Elizabeth was the youngest. The family seems to have had little interest in religion and as her mother had a violent temper things at home were very difficult, but Elizabeth was taken in by her grandmother Mrs. Powell, who brought her up to be thrifty and hardworking. She was also lucky as she was sent to the national school on weekdays. At the age of seven or eight she fell under the influence of a Miss Brown and as a consequence suffered for quite a while from rather terrifying religious dreams.

In due course Elizabeth was apprenticed to a dressmaker and subsequently became dresser to an actress. The environment in which she now moved drove away all thoughts of religion. At the age of sixteen she went to live in the family of Colonel McDonald, at 36 Bryanstone Square, London where one day she was suspected of stealing a valuable diamond of her mistress's. In great distress she prayed and the next morning the housemaid returned the diamond to Mrs. McDonald. Elizabeth felt that this incident showed God's protection of her. After leaving London she went to the family of the Rev. W.L. Bennett, Vicar of Water Stratford in Buckinghamshire, a relation of her previous employers. <sup>(521)</sup> At this stage Elizabeth's own account of her life ends and apart from a few letters and notes her story is continued by her husband, Thomas Russell, who maintains that at this time she was fighting against her religious conscience, but was unable to hold out.

On the Sunday before Christmas 1824 she read her Bible again and felt distressed at her spiritual state.

On returning home to Ludlow Elizabeth talked to a young woman who was connected with the Primitive Methodists. One of the Primitive Methodist travelling preachers wrote, at this person's request, to Elizabeth and the letter brought her comfort. Finally, at Christmas 1825 she was converted, but this caused problems as the family with whom she was living did not wish to have anything to do with Methodists. Eventually, using the excuse that her health seemed to be failing and her mistress professed to be worried about her children catching consumption she was allowed to leave. Elizabeth returned to Ludlow where she built up a good business as a dressmaker. Having tried various chapels she joined the Primitive Methodists. One evening soon after she joined the society the preacher asked for someone to pray and this Elizabeth did with great effect. After the June Quarterly Meeting 1826 she spoke at Ludlow. In August 1826 she wrote to Sarah Evans in the last paragraph of her letter:

‘... I must tell you I have been called to do some work for the Lord.  
And I must say the Lord seems to bless me in the administration of his  
word.’<sup>(522)</sup>

In September the Quarterly Meeting received a request for a missionary to go to Presteign in Radnorshire, South Wales. Elizabeth was asked by the superintendent preacher to go and agreed. Nothing was said at the time about salary, but Elizabeth trusted God to provide and when the next day she was given directions to her appointment, thirty miles away she was told:

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<sup>521</sup> *PMM* (1837) p. 95-96.

<sup>522</sup> *PMM* (1837) p. 97.



"You must raise your own salary!" She asked what it was, and he replied two guineas for the quarter. "O", said she, "I did not know that I was to have anything."<sup>(523)</sup>

Elizabeth, having walked all day, found herself, when night fell, lost on a dangerous Common full of peat bogs. Finding a ridge she climbed up it and sang "Jesu, lover of my soul." A family, living nearby, heard the singing, rescued her and turned out to be the very people she was seeking. It seemed to all concerned to be providential. Elizabeth worked very hard in Radnorshire and met with considerable success in spite of some opposition. During the first quarter in the Circuit she opened a number of places and formed several societies. Towards the end of the quarter a collection was taken to defray all the expenses of the mission so that no burden should be placed on the Circuit.

The *Primitive Methodist Magazine* contains several letters from Elizabeth in Ludlow to Sarah Evans, in which she makes fleeting references to her work, her health, state of mind and the illness of her grandmother which was preventing her from continuing her work. The letter of 26th March 1827 tells that she is returning to Presteign. On 29th April she wrote:

‘Sister Welsh came to Ludlow on her way to Hopton Bank, I am thankful that she is able to take her appointments again. I went with her to the first appointment and came back.’<sup>(524)</sup>

In June a letter tells us:

‘The first Sunday I came on Pillawell Circuit, I spoke at Little Birch, and at night held a lovefeast.’<sup>(525)</sup>

The following year a letter, headed Darfold, February 5th 1828, says:

‘...On Sunday I was at Presteign and Evenjob. It was a good day...’<sup>(526)</sup>

In particular in her letter of April 9th 1828 Elizabeth tells Sarah that she had been ill and refers to the troubles she had mentioned in her previous letter of March 16th. These were due to being:

‘attacked by two clergymen; and their attack was for a nature to discourage me. And when I was alone the enemy of souls harassed me; and my weak faith sunk, and I began to reason on the work of God in preaching the gospel. These men reprobated the idea of a woman being useful in the work.’<sup>(527)</sup>

Apparently this encounter upset Elizabeth so much that she doubted her faith and her call to preach, but after continued prayer she ‘won through’ and even though she was still attacked she continued her work.

So after her grandmother’s death Elizabeth, as we have seen, ministered in the Ludlow, Pillawell and Presteign Circuits until July 1828 with great success. Persecution led to her becoming very depressed, but being saved from falling over a mountain cliff she felt that God was still with her.

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<sup>523</sup> Ibid. (1837) p. 98; Kendall, op. cit. II p. 282; Kendall, *The PM World* (December 5th 1907) p. 842; Ritson, op. cit. pp 146-147.

<sup>524</sup> *PMM* (1837) p. 139-141, Sarah Welch was also a travelling preacher.

<sup>525</sup> *PMM* p. 142.

<sup>526</sup> Ibid. p. 142.

<sup>527</sup> Ibid. p. 178.

The *Primitive Methodist Magazine* records an incident relating to female preaching:

‘About this time, antinomianism lifted up its head in opposition. One of its preachers spoke one evening against the doctrine of a full, free and present salvation, against the movement of our Connexion, and in particular against female preaching. When she came into the congregation all eyes were fixed on her. She began the meeting and soon the silent tears stole down the cheeks of many present; and the antinomian hung down his head in shame and confusion, and soon stole away out of the congregation.’<sup>(528)</sup>

Again on another occasion apparently the owner of the preaching house tried to extort money from the Primitive Methodists and it was thought that the work in that place (not named) would cease, but luckily another house was offered and the work prospered.<sup>(529)</sup>

In 1828 the Conference stationed her to the Brinkworth Circuit in Wiltshire and on July 6th she started her new work with five male colleagues. Having a missionary zeal she opened Purton Stoke, started a society so successfully that before long a chapel was built. She was, then, appointed to the Stroudwater branch, in Gloucestershire. Conditions were hard and money very short, so not wanting to be a burden to the Circuit she often went supperless to bed. When one of the other preachers became ill Elizabeth was called back to Wiltshire. A missionary meeting was held at Wootton Bassett on Good Friday, 1829 in order to open a new mission in Berkshire. A tribute to her is paid in the Circuit report to the Conference of 1829:

‘Her preaching talents as a female are more than ordinary; her way is perfectly open, and she has been very useful.’<sup>(530)</sup>

This same Conference stationed her future husband, Thomas Russell, to the Brinkworth station and he met her first at Wootton Bassett on July 4th and heard her preach at the camp meeting the following day to about four thousand people. Thomas Russell had been appointed to open a new mission and he asked the March Quarterly Meeting (1830):

‘to allow me to have Miss Smith as a colleague until his (Mr. Ride’s) return (from the District Meeting). They consented and she took the management of the old places. One circumstance reflects great credit on this brave young friend. After preaching to hundreds in a barn at Lambourne, a man who had been graciously moved offered her a donation of 5/-, thinking it would pay her expenses. But she bravely refused it, and thus an impression of independence was made on the minds of the people.’<sup>(531)</sup>

On Sunday April 4th Thomas Russell preached at Ramsbury, encountered great persecution and warned Elizabeth about it, but left her to decide whether to go or not and what happened is an oft repeated incident in Primitive Methodist histories.

‘At Ramsbury she walked up to the Barn where she was to preach singing. A crowd had gathered to throw things, but when the ringleader saw her ‘dressed in the characteristic garb of a Friend’ he was overawed and said ‘None of you shall touch that woman.’<sup>(532)</sup>

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<sup>528</sup> Ibid. p. 178.

<sup>529</sup> Ibid. p. 178.

<sup>530</sup> Ibid. (1837) p. 179.

<sup>531</sup> Ibid. (1832) p. 265; Russell, *Autobiography* p. 26; Russell, *Record* p. 26.

<sup>532</sup> *PMM* (1832) p. 294; (1837) pp. 180-181; Russell, *Autobiography* p. 27; Russell, *Record* p. 28;

One of Elizabeth's colleagues, John Ride, in his Journal says:

'Sunday, April 18th 1830 - Sister Smith commenced her labours on the mission; and the novelty of a female preacher drew numbers to hear. The Lord greatly owned her labours, and many were awakened and brought to God.'<sup>(533)</sup>

Thomas Russell was imprisoned in Abingdon Jail and Elizabeth wrote to him from Shefford, on May 16th 1830 to tell him how the work was progressing.<sup>(534)</sup> She and Mr. Moore continued his work, during his detention and they faced much persecution, but also had much success. Just two incidents give some idea of the problems they encountered:

'One Sabbath morning Miss Smith, with other friends went to Chaddlesworth to have services.... trouble from noisy musicians.... some young men threatened the musicians who retreated to a house and sent a note to the church to the magistrate who with the squire went to the street-meeting. On their arrival Miss Smith was engaged in prayer and as she was kneeling in the conveyance the magistrate took hold of the horse's bridle and inquired whose it was. They took several young men into custody, but one vigorous strong man resisted and the magistrate, squire and two or three gentlemen farmers got the worst of it and finally went back to the church. The magistrate asked the advice of a neighbouring justice who said, 'You started it.' Nothing more was heard about it.'<sup>(535)</sup>

A woman (probably a Mrs. Baker), having heard Elizabeth preach at Shefford invited her to visit her own village and this visit opened the way for the Primitive Methodists to go into other places including Market Illsley, where again they faced great persecution:

'Many were determined that neither she nor any of us should preach there. But Elizabeth ventured, and while standing in the open air, in Broad Street, a man came, and swore he would tear her down. But she kept on.... he turned to the Lord, and found pardon, and afterwards opened his house for preaching, where we soon formed a good society. It got circulated that we used the black art, and black books, and that Miss Smith was a fortune-teller. This brought many out, and led to their awakening and conversion.'<sup>(536)</sup>

The *Primitive Methodist Magazine* for 1830 contains 'A Missionary Speech' by Elizabeth Smith, which was sent to the *Magazine* by W. Towler. Apparently she delivered it at a Missionary Meeting on December 11th 1829 at Broad Town. The Circuit Committee 'approved' it, but the Editor of the *Magazine* does not appear to have been very impressed commenting:

'....excellent in itself,....advise speaker.... to dwell more on historical narrative; to give some account of what she may have seen or known or

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Kendall, op. cit. II p. 331; Ritson, op. cit. pp. 147-148.

<sup>533</sup> *PMM* (1832) pp. 265-8; (1837) pp. 179-180; Church, T., *Gospel Victories* p. 88.

<sup>534</sup> *PMM* (1831) pp. 62-63, (1837) p. 179-180.

<sup>535</sup> Russell, *Autobiography* p. 48, Russell, *Record* p. 52. (an abbreviated version of a lengthy account)

<sup>536</sup> *PMM* (1837) p. 181; Church, op. cit. p. 91.

the conversion of sinners to God, and the enlargement of the Kingdom of Christ.’<sup>(537)</sup>

Elizabeth was re-stationed in the Brinkworth Circuit.

A camp Meeting was held at Shefford on August 22nd 1830 and a Mrs. Wells offered her house as a preaching house. Soon after this there was much persecution and it was threatened to pull down the house, but earnest prayer was made and Elizabeth, rising from her knees, said:

“The Lord God has delivered us.”<sup>(538)</sup>

Russell in his *Autobiography*, under the date of Monday 12th September says:

‘I preached for the first time at Beenham. There the people could scarcely tell what to make of us. They stood at their doors, peeping at us. A few came near, and I preached to them. I then gave out that Sister Smith would preach. This being a new thing, many came out to hear her. The parson’s son fired a gun four or five times to create a disturbance.... But she held her service and the Lord helped.’<sup>(539)</sup>

Here we can see the novelty value of a female preacher and that Elizabeth was once again the victim of persecution. Persecution seemed to be more directed towards the Primitive Methodists as a body than towards the female preachers in particular.

Elizabeth was now concerned to start a mission in Hampshire and opened Faccomb and formed a society there. At Hurstbourne Tarrant her preaching helped a man who was very depressed and this incident led to further invitations in the north of the county.

Towards the end of January 1831 Elizabeth was taken ill and moved to Wiltshire. She wrote a letter saying:

‘I have been for some months worse than poorly. I rested eleven weeks, and started again to take my appointments April 13, 1831, with very little prospect of being able to continue to travel.’<sup>(540)</sup>

Though still far from well she continued to take her appointments and the Quarterly Meeting in June 1831 agreed to her going to Hampshire mission. Russell asked for her help:

‘Having invitations to new places, I applied to Quarter Day for another preacher and they allowed me Miss Smith....I thought we might confine our labours to Hampshire. But Elizabeth had her mind set on Newbury which took us into other places in Berkshire, and our borders were enlarged.’<sup>(541)</sup>

Petty comments that Russell worked hard, but then goes on:

‘It may be questioned, however, whether his excellent and devoted female colleague’ who laboured with him in the gospel’ was not still more successful than he. The novelty of female preaching attracted crowds to hear her; and her modest and good sense,- her clear views of evangelical truth,- her lucid statements, - and her solemn and pathetic appeals to heart and conscience, under the Divine blessing, made deep

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<sup>537</sup> Ibid. (1830) pp. 277-281, see Appendix VII.

<sup>538</sup> Ibid. (1837) pp. 216-217; Russell, *Record* p. 57.

<sup>539</sup> Russell, *Autobiography* p. 55; *Record* p. 61; *PMM* (1837) p. 216; Church, op. cit. p. 86.

<sup>540</sup> *PMM* (1837) p. 217.

<sup>541</sup> Russell, *Autobiography* p. 70; *Record* p. 80.

impressions and rendered her very useful among the peasantry in Hampshire. She received pressing invitations to visit places towards Winchester, Whitchurch, and Basingstoke; but more missionaries were requisite in order to comply with these invitations.’<sup>(542)</sup>

Elizabeth worked extremely hard in this mission, frequently travelling nearly a hundred miles a week, preaching eight to ten times, visiting a number of families each day as well as leading classes.<sup>(543)</sup> While she was preaching at a camp meeting at Little Hungerford on July 7th 1831 a man from Newbury was converted and he opened his home as a preaching place, so a society was formed in Newbury and eventually the Primitive Methodists took over the old room used by Wesley on his visit to the town. Being concerned as always for the work to be self-financing, Elizabeth set a firm financial discipline for the new society which was eminently successful. During this time Elizabeth made use of her expertise as a dressmaker to help those in need.<sup>(544)</sup>

Early in 1832 several letters were received from near Winchester asking for a female to open a mission in that area <sup>(545)</sup> Elizabeth was appointed and was delighted. She wrote in her Journal:

‘February 3, 1832.... I walked from Shefford to Burdley, eighteen miles, to meet Brother Ride, who informed me I was to go on a mission near Winchester. This gave me great pleasure, because I was persuaded the Lord had a work for us to do in that part of the country.’<sup>(546)</sup>

Her entries for the rest of early February 1832 tell of her experience in that area - of persecutions and conversions. Russell also reports on Elizabeth’s endeavours and struggles:

‘At the March Quarter Day we fixed for Miss Smith to spend as much time as possible on the Mitcheldever and Winchester side. She opened some new places, at one of which a number of young men strung up dead rats before her face and waved them at her. But she continued with closed eyes and so got through her service. But one place failed and she blamed me for it. But I said "Being near 40 miles away on another road how could I be there?" "Yes," was the reply, "you would have gone if your heart had been in it." I then replied "I did go.... met persecution". This ended our debate, but not our grief for that village in that wood.’<sup>(547)</sup>

Her influence and the impact she made was evidently considerable as Russell remarks that many months later he was still hearing stories of her ministry there. The young women converts were so influenced that many even went so far as to copy her style of dress and way of praying and working for the good of others.

However, by May it was evident that Elizabeth’s health was declining and her colleagues wished her to rest, but she insisted on continuing. Then in the midsummer she was appointed to the Darlston Circuit. The 1832 Shefford Circuit report following the standard format reads:

‘Elizabeth Smith, aged 27 years, has travelled near six years, taken out by Hopton Bank or Ludlow Circuit, travelled in Hopton Bank or

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<sup>542</sup> Petty, op. cit. p. 279.

<sup>543</sup> *PMM* (1837) p. 219.

<sup>544</sup> Ibid. (1837) p. 219; Russell, *Record* p. 80.

<sup>545</sup> Petty, op. cit. p. 281.

<sup>546</sup> *PMM* (1837) p. 220.

<sup>547</sup> Russell, *Record* p. 86.

Ludlow, Presteign, Pillawell, Brinkworth, and Shefford Circuits - Attentive to discipline, a family visiter (sic), not addicted to long preaching preaches a full, free, and present salvation. The Lord has made her useful in his vineyard as an instrument in his hand in the conversion of souls.’<sup>(548)</sup>

The Shefford Circuit had wanted her to stay another year, but she wished to move to another Circuit. Russell in his *Autobiography* says that it was:

‘after our engagement in August 1831 she resolved to leave the Shefford Circuit at the following Conference that there might be no foolish surmising amongst the people.’<sup>(549)</sup>

So on July 6th 1832 Elizabeth started her ministry in the Darlaston Circuit by preaching the charity sermon for the Darlaston Sunday School. She wrote to the Shefford Circuit from Bilston on August 21st 1832 about the poor state of religion in the Darlaston area when she arrived and the effect that the cholera epidemic was having in turning people to the chapels in Tipton, Wednesbury, Darlaston and Bilston, but she was convinced that:

‘if I am to be useful I shall live, though they die all around.’<sup>(550)</sup>

Elizabeth also contributed ‘some remarks’ on the Cholera outbreak to the *Connexional Magazine* and its effect in the Darlaston Circuit. <sup>(551)</sup>

In January 1833 she became dangerously ill with scarlet fever for three weeks, but recovered, and, maintaining that she felt fitter than ever before, started to take her appointments again. Russell then writes:

‘As Miss Smith and I had corresponded a year and a half with the intention of marriage.... I wrote accordingly and we arranged that on my return we would fulfil this most important engagement. After visiting my friends, and preaching at Middlewich and Manchester, I returned to Darlaston, where Miss Smith was attending her appointments, and I preached for her on Friday night. On Saturday I went to Birmingham. On Sunday Mr. Hayes drove me to Stratford-on-Avon, 22 miles in his conveyance to open their place of worship. We had a good day. Then we returned the same evening and next morning early, it being Easter Monday I walked nine miles to meet Miss Smith and we were married at Tipton and in the afternoon attended our Dudley lovefeast.’<sup>(552)</sup>

The couple parted, Russell returned to the Wallingford mission in the Shefford Circuit on the Saturday, while Elizabeth remained to fulfil her appointments in the Darlaston Circuit before joining him in the middle of May. Elizabeth arrived unexpectedly and took three days to find her husband as he was away missioning, then they preached together. A constable at Dorchester tried to pull Elizabeth down, but one of the congregation, a Baptist, would not let him.<sup>(553)</sup> However, the Russells achieved quite a lot of success in their missionary activities. With reference to their marriage Russell records some details which give a little insight into the

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<sup>548</sup> *PMM* (1837) p. 222.

<sup>549</sup> Russell, *Autobiography* p. 99.

<sup>550</sup> *PMM* (1837) p. 259; (1833) p. 32.

<sup>551</sup> *Ibid.* (1833) pp. 52-63; (1837) p. 260

<sup>552</sup> Russell, *Record* p. 107; *Autobiography* p. 91.

<sup>553</sup> Russell, *Record* p.110.

thinking and attitudes of the early Primitive Methodists:

‘I had sent Mr. Ride (The superintendent minister) intelligence of my marriage and of the new preacher. All was thought to be rapid work.’<sup>(554)</sup>

Apparently the Quarter Day wanted Thomas Russell to stay in the Circuit, but Mr. Ride thought he ought to move, so Russell left the matter with him and the District Meeting with the result that he was stationed at Birmingham. Then he records that:

‘Elizabeth made up our accounts....and we had eight guineas to the good; and with this sum we set off on foot for our new station. The first day we reached Childrey and had a powerfull (sic) meeting, when two souls found salvation; during the next four days we reached Birmingham.

We found Birmingham Circuit was very extensive....<sup>(555)</sup>

The Russells worked for two years in the Birmingham Circuit, but there is a singular lack of information of what they did, unless the following incident relates to this period of their life and work:

‘Nothing daunted her in the work of the ministry especially in street preaching and family visiting. I felt much struck by her earnestness one night, as she stood beside me in the open-air at Stratford-upon-Avon when a gang of strolling play-actors attacked me as I was preaching. She looked up and said, ‘Never mind them, dear, thou hast endured many a worse conflict than this; the Lord will help; preach on and don’t be dismayed!’ Even while the rebels crushed her bonnet down on her head and damaged her clothes, she patiently endured and prayed at the conclusion of the service.’<sup>(556)</sup>

Elizabeth and Thomas were stationed in the Prees Circuit in Shropshire in 1835 and moved to live at Lane End, later called Longton, in July. Elizabeth was able to accept a few preaching engagements. The Longton branch was made into a separate circuit and they went there in 1836, working particularly at Stone. In October 1835 their sixteen month old daughter, Julia, died of small-pox and on Saturday, November 21st Elizabeth felt unwell and grew rapidly worse. Her husband sent for her mother as she was not expected to live, but after eight weeks she was able to get out again and even lead her class. Elizabeth, now expressed a desire to visit her old home in Ludlow and so in February Thomas took her to Newcastle under-Lyme from where she travelled to Ludlow. In his Autobiography Russell tells the rest of the story:

‘They arrived by coach....she could not even reach home, but stopped at Mr. Graham’s....A letter had been sent to me by Mr. Graham, but it was a week on the road. I did not get it, but only heard of it, when I at once set off....On my asking for Old Street the watchman asked, "Are you Mr. Russell." and told me my wife was dead.’<sup>(557)</sup>

The funeral was held on Monday, March 1st 1836 and John Graham, the superintendent preacher, preached her funeral sermon on Sunday, April 10th in the new chapel in Ludlow and throughout the Circuit.

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<sup>554</sup> Ibid. p. 107.

<sup>555</sup> Ibid. p. 118.

<sup>556</sup> Russell, *Autobiography* p. 99; *Record* 107.

<sup>557</sup> Russell, *Autobiography* p. 99

There is no final Character sketch given in her Memoir in the *Magazine*, but Russell says:

‘for six years she had been a great helper to me in religion; was the most strict, laborious and upright of women. She would never allow any time to be wasted in walks of a needless order and would very rarely allow me to walk with her alone before our marriage; and I seldom had her company except in the presence of others and even that not very frequently.’<sup>(558)</sup>

### CONCLUSION

The overall impression gained from the study of the lives and work of Mary Burks, Mary Porteous and Elizabeth Smith is one of sustained devoted service.

Having taken a part in the life of their local chapel their call to the itinerancy came through the Primitive Methodist authorities who felt that their talents and powers should be available to a larger and wider public and so ‘called them out to travel’. During their ministry the three worked equally with their male colleagues, facing persecution on occasions and experiencing all the interest engendered by being a ‘female preacher’ who attracted crowds to hear the Gospel message. It is also evident that the life of the Primitive Methodist itinerant was arduous and that this without doubt contributed to the ill-health experienced by these three women.

Although the three worked in very different parts of the country the general picture given is of Primitive Methodism in its evangelistic phase, extending its borders by missioning and then building on the foundations laid. The women seem to have been especially welcome as leading or at least engaging in the thrust forward into new areas, perhaps particularly in the more rural parts of Lincolnshire, Northumberland, Durham, North Yorkshire, Wiltshire, Berkshire and Hampshire. They were enthusiastically received in village communities to which they often went by invitation - maybe along the extended family network.<sup>(559)</sup>

Unfortunately, by the very nature of the writings about Mary Burks, Mary Porteous and Elizabeth Smith - being inspirational rather than biographical ‘history’ - a rather idealised picture is given of the women battling with little recorded complaint, against all odds - against spiritual and physical attack, against poverty and deprivation; against ill-health and over-work; against equality with the men in work and endeavour and inequality in status and financial reward. An idealised picture of the evangelising zeal of the missionaries and of difficulties overcome might be joyfully portrayed, but Primitive Methodism was at least honest enough to admit that not all the seeds planted bore fruit, though often the blame was attributed to external forces rather than to lack of endeavour on behalf of the missionaries. Both their temporal and spiritual problems were overcome by their faith and trust in God and his providence. God had chosen - God would provide seemed to be their motto.

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<sup>558</sup> Russell, *Record* p. 121.

<sup>559</sup> See Chapter 2.



## **CHAPTER SEVEN: THREE WOMEN: A COMPARISON**

Two of the best known of the Primitive Methodist female itinerants are Sarah Kirkland and Elizabeth Bultitude. Though at either end of the period under consideration they invite a number of interesting points of comparison and divergence. So it seems a useful exercise very briefly to comment on the role played by these two at the two different phases of Primitive Methodist early history and then to consider Elizabeth Allen who falls more into the middle period.

Sarah Kirkland, although she was never actually ‘stationed’ having retired before the Stations began, has always been regarded as one of the foundresses of the Connexion, whereas Elizabeth Bultitude was the last female to be stationed, finally retiring as a supernumerary in 1862 and dying in 1890. Sarah, an early convert, recruited by Hugh Bourne himself in 1811, was soon pressed into service as a preacher in the embryo Connexion, during its period of fervent evangelism and mission. Her story is so well documented by all the Primitive Methodist historians as to need little repetition here. It is a romantic tale of a young girl, converted at seventeen and soon after feeling a call to preach, but fighting it till finally in 1814 she submitted to God’s will and took her first preaching appointment at Sutton-on-the-Hill, where she converted a gipsy lad who thereafter, more or less, constituted himself her bodyguard and publicity agent! The story of her evangelistic travels and missions during the following four years in the North and East Midlands areas is one full of adventure, excitement, not a little danger and considerable success. Details of her adventures and exploits are, to be found in many places.<sup>(560)</sup> The intention here is merely to indicate one or two interesting and perhaps significant points.

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<sup>560</sup>

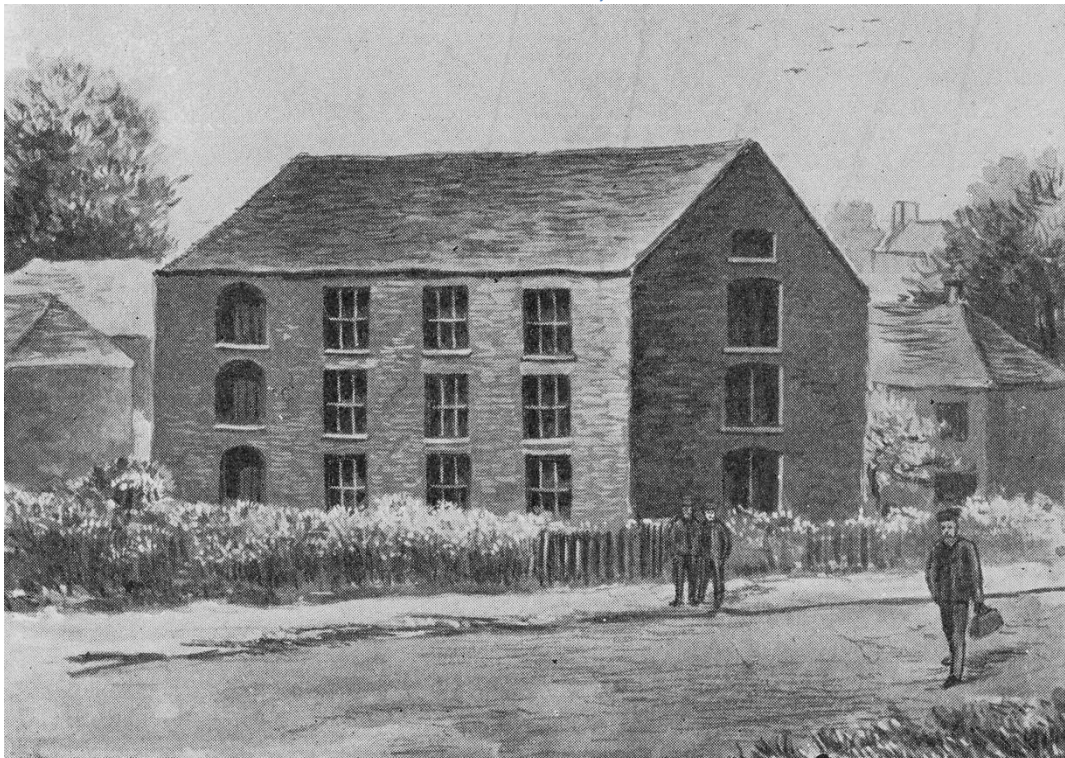
See Chapter 2.

Figure 11: SARAH KIRKLAND (in old age)



SARAH KIRKLAND

Sarah Kirkland Preached Here, Christmas 1815



THE FACTORY, BROAD MARSH, NOTTINGHAM.

First, then it is interesting to observe that she was very young, and a great novelty, presumably because of her age, the fact that she was a woman and most probably attractive. Sarah came from farming stock, from a rural background, she was very effective in preaching and missionary-minded. She travelled greatly in the Staffordshire/Cheshire area when she started, perhaps bearing out the rural family net-work structure where she could easily collect a congregation of friends and relations who would then disseminate the ideas and thus invitations to travel further afield would follow. Sarah travelled on into Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and into the Vale of Belvoir, for example. Persecution was not unknown. It cannot be said with conviction that this was due so much to her being a woman as to the more general 'novelty' of the 'Ranters' doctrines and the techniques they used for putting across their gospel. It was lively, enthusiastic, novel rather anti-clerical and appealed to the lower classes, which were largely untouched by the Anglicans and even by the Wesleyans who had perhaps, at first, seemed to answer their needs but now appeared to have deserted the poorer classes. The Primitive Methodists enthusiastically welcomed the importation of 'camp meetings' from America, where they had proved not only very popular but also effective. These were viewed with askance by the Wesleyans and Anglicans who indeed as time went on forbade their members to attend and even 'excommunicated' those who did. Sarah, along with other early Primitive Methodists, took part in these meetings and Elizabeth Bultitude was herself converted at one in 1826. This shows that it was not a phenomenon which died out very early - there are Minutes in several Record Offices and on Circuit Plans which refer to the holding of Camp Meetings. Sarah Kirkland, therefore, had a short, but very effective ministry and even after her marriage to another itinerant preacher she worked for a while on her own account with her husband, John Harrison, but they retired because of his ill-health and reverted to local preacher status. After his death eventually Sarah married another local preacher, William Bembridge and finished her long life as a local preacher and class leader, as did also Elizabeth Bultitude. There are perhaps just two other points worth noting the first, being that at first Sarah was paid by Hugh Bourne himself, 2 guineas. This payment was later taken over by the Derbyshire Mission. Even towards the end of her ministry in 1862 Elizabeth Bultitude did not receive much more than £2.10s.0d., plus board and lodging. The other point is that, although there is a lengthy obituary of Sarah in the *Primitive Methodist Magazine* <sup>(561)</sup> it is very stereo-typed with glances at 'the early men and movements of the Connexion' and that even though Elizabeth had such a long life her obituary is comparatively short, but of the same type.<sup>(562)</sup> When we turn to Elizabeth Bultitude we find a different figure. She was born fifteen years after Sarah in 1809 in Hardwick in Norfolk. Both were of Wesleyan backgrounds, but there the similarity of background differs. Sarah, as we have seen, came from farming stock and therefore might be considered to be of rather better social standing whereas Elizabeth's family are described as very poor - so much so that she received no schooling. Her father died when she was only thirteen, leaving the family practically destitute. They moved to Norwich in the hope of finding work and are described as often on the verge of starvation.<sup>(563)</sup>

As has already been mentioned there was a point of contact in that Elizabeth attended a camp meeting which was held at Mousehold Heath on May 14th 1826. This was led by Samuel Atterby and we are told that Elizabeth was so determined to go that she went without food on that day in order to attend, whether this was due to necessity, eagerness or choice her journal does not state. She was evidently converted at this Camp Meeting, but delayed joining the Primitive Methodist Connexion till 1829 when a Mr. John Smith arrived in Norwich. He soon decided that Elizabeth was destined to be a preacher and on December 20th 1830 she received

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<sup>561</sup> *PMM* (1881) p. 99-103, 161-165, 226-230, 289-293, 355-360, 420-424.

<sup>562</sup> *PMM* (1891) p. 564-565.

<sup>563</sup> *PMM* (1891) p. 564; *PM Mins* (1891) p. 10.

a 'note to preach' accompanying Mrs. Elizabeth Fuller to her service for the first quarter. By the March Quarterly Meeting 1830 she was an 'exhorter' and preached her trial sermon, becoming 'a preacher on trial' in June 1831. The pressure of preaching on this comparatively new preacher is indicated when one learns that on that first plan she took fourteen Sunday appointments, thirteen on the second, nine on the third, while by the time the fourth one was issued she had become a travelling preacher. So in less than two years Elizabeth had progressed from a mere member to a travelling preacher. It is obvious that Elizabeth, like Sarah had come from a rural though probably not such an affluent, relatively speaking, background. The progress of Primitive Methodism across the countryside can be traced when it is realised that Sarah in 1811 had been working in the Potteries area whereas Elizabeth in 1832 (camp Meeting in 1826) spent most of her ministry in East Anglia. Information is very scarce; even her obituary in the *Primitive Methodist Magazine* of 1891 is very brief compared with many of the others and especially when compared with that of Sarah Kirkland. Can we find the reason for this? After all, there was only ten years between the writing of the two. Was it perhaps that Elizabeth Bultitude was not such a charismatic figure? Had Primitive Methodism passed its period of enthusiastic evangelism and settled down to consolidation and chapel building? We are certainly told that she was a redoubtable figure with:

'Her large round rubicund face in a poke-bonnet; her ejaculatory prayers with their many and fervent repetitions and the peculiarities which were no doubt acquired in her years of travelling. Female travelling preachers required to be extremely circumspect, and even in her later years Elizabeth Bultitude would not allow any man to speak to her in chapel in her own pew: she would request him to go into the next seat.'<sup>(564)</sup>

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<sup>564</sup> Ritson, *Romance of PM* p. 152.

Figure:12 Elizabeth Bultitude and House



It would appear that Elizabeth Bultitude just settled down and did her work as a circuit colleague along with her male counterparts and was accepted as such by both of them and the congregations to which she ministered. Certainly the Minute Books to be found in the Norwich Record Office would seem to bear this out. In these are records of her salary, expenses, being asked to speak to (local) preachers about their appointments, being appointed for special services and anniversaries, being on the plan committee and helping to make it along with her male colleagues. She was evidently a popular preacher as the Minutes often request that 'E. Bultitude be tried for again' at the District Meeting. In the same Record Office there are two *Historical accounts of the Travelling Preachers*. These records were supposed to be filled in and submitted each year, but unfortunately very few of the earlier ones appear to have survived. The historical record was, of course, a standard form issued by the Connexion and merely asks for answers to connexional questions, thus they do not tell us very much about the preacher her/himself. Though occasionally the Circuit added a comment of its own. (see Fig. 13 ).



Perhaps one feminine point comes through in the account of Elizabeth when she remarks in her journal (1847) that at Soham:

‘what money I had would not allow me to dress smart enough for the people.’<sup>(565)</sup>

One can easily sympathise with her when it is remembered that her salary was merely £2.10s.0d per quarter! It makes her seem rather more human than might otherwise be the case!

The *Primitive Methodist Minutes* give specific instructions about the dress ‘of Travelling preachers’. The females were told to:

‘be patterns of plainness in all their dress’<sup>(566)</sup>

and to:

‘be patterns of piety in all their dress’<sup>(567)</sup>

so it looks as if the women did not have much choice - even assuming that there was much to choose from in those days in that station of life! Young women who were influenced by Elizabeth Smith in Brinkworth, we are told, even adopted her ‘style of dress’. I wonder if the reference to Elizabeth feeling that her congregations looked down on her clothes is perhaps another indication of the increasing status and coming ‘respectability’ of Primitive Methodism; that it was now reaching out to a wider audience who were better dressed, more affluent and wished their preachers to keep up a certain standard of appearance. It could also be that Primitive Methodism was now moving from an essentially rural environment to an urban one where perhaps there was more money to spend - by the congregations, if not the preachers - on the more frivolous things of life, rather than having to concentrate on mere subsistence.

Then perhaps there was also the difference in age to which brief reference has already been made. Sarah Kirkland was a young attractive girl with maybe even a certain amount of sex appeal, working at a time when Primitive Methodism was in its first flush of evangelism, whereas Elizabeth Bultitude started later, 1832 compared with 1810, and at a time when women preachers, both itinerant and local were no longer a novelty. So to a certain extent, the things which seemed remarkable about the work and life of Sarah Kirkland were more usual and acceptable during Elizabeth Bultitude’s ministry. Could it also be, that the East Anglican temperament was more phlegmatic and not so excitable, especially after having being used to women preachers for a number of years and therefore she was not regarded as so very unusual as to need special mention.

The most remarkable thing about Elizabeth Bultitude is the length of her service, twenty-nine years, which upsets all the calculations one might have been tempted to deduce from the shorter ministries of the rest of the female itinerants, as very few of the rest even reached double figures! After her twenty-nine years in the active itinerant ministry Elizabeth continued as a local preacher and class leader for about another twenty-eight, though she was quite ill for the last couple of years. Then, having superannuated in 1862 from the Farringdon Circuit she lived as a supernumerary in Norwich, with the handsome pension of £20.0s.0d.<sup>(568)</sup> granted by the Conference, till 1890. It is amazing that there is so little about her work and service and one can only put this down to her being an assiduous, steady circuit minister, rather than a

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<sup>565</sup> *PMM* (1891) p. 565.

<sup>566</sup> *PMMins* (1819) p.5 (182-4 large *Mins*) p. 24. See Figs. 2 and 3.

<sup>567</sup> *Ibid.* (1822) p. 11.

<sup>568</sup> *PM Mins* (1863) p. 73.



charismatic figure.

Having looked briefly at the beginning and the end of the Primitive Methodist 'female' itinerant phenomenon and the work of the female itinerants I want to make a brief mention of Elizabeth Allen who fits more into the centre of the period. Again there are similarities, differences and divergences, but I think there is enough evidence to warrant making a brief special study of her, as one who worked in the middle period of the upsurge of the Primitive Methodist female travelling preacher period. Also she is worthy of note as one who itinerated for a considerable period of time (1825-1834) when so many dropped out after a year or two. One can only guess why - ill-health, the arduous nature of the work and marriage must be some of the reasons. At this time, Sarah Kirkland had disappeared from the immediate scene as an itinerant always remembering that she was never actually stationed - and was working dedicatedly as a local preacher and class leader. Another interesting thing about Elizabeth Allen was that she came from Kirkoswald, near Penrith, thus showing again how far Primitive Methodism had travelled North as well as into East Anglia. She was impressed and converted by the Primitive Methodists when they visited her home village and the surrounding ones, just as Elizabeth Bultitude had been at the camp meeting at Mousehold Heath. So we can compare the two types of 'mission' in this middle period. Camp Meetings and house meetings had been the norm in the time of Sarah Kirkland and they were evidently still used in the late 1820s, though perhaps the ardent fervour and enthusiasm was a little more muted. At first Elizabeth's talents seem to have been used in encouraging converts in the strengthening of their faith, but it soon became obvious that she had a particular calling to public speaking and although we are told she faced opposition in persisting in doing this she quietly, but determinedly overcame it and in 1825 went to Hull as a travelling preacher. We have no indication whether the opposition came from her own family or from outsiders. Again, as with the other two, we can only guess that the opposition may have been more directed to 'the Ranters' than to 'the women'. In various issues of the *Primitive Methodist Magazine* there are a number of accounts of the work that Elizabeth undertook during her ministry (<sup>569</sup>) and the impression gained is that she was used like Sarah Kirkland as an evangelist and missionary to a large extent 'opening new places', but that she also worked equally alongside with her male colleagues with no special favours shown her on account of her sex. In fact, she received some glowing reports from the men as to the effectiveness of her work - both from her ministerial colleagues and the laymen. It does not appear to have been the mere novelty of a woman preacher which gave rise to these comments, but rather to the actual hard and effective work of Elizabeth herself. It seems that similar glowing reports were received from many of the circuits in which Elizabeth worked - Hull, Louth, Hull, Pocklington and in the Preston Brook Circuit.

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<sup>569</sup> *PMM* (1826) p. 105-107; (1833) p. 107; (1835) p. 30, 269. See also (1850) p. 259.

Figure 14: Grimsby Circuit Plan 1828

**LOVE FEASTS.**

Holton, April 20th.  
Great Coats, April 27th.  
Walesby, April 27th.  
Grimsby, June 8th.  
Grassby, June 15th.  
Thoresby, June 15th.

**GRIMSBY CIRCUIT.**

**Primitive Methodist Preachers' Plan,**  
1828.

**SACRAMENTS.**

Grimsby, April 27th.  
Caistor, June 1st.  
Binbrook, June 8th.

**SUNDAY PLAN.**

"Take heed how ye hear."	HOURS	APRIL.			MAY.			JUNE.			J.						
		M.	A.	E.	13	20	27	4	11	18		25	1	8	15	22	29
Grimsby	2 6	2	5	1	2	2	1T	1T	2c	2	3	1	2	2			
Caistor	10 6		2		1T		4		1		2		1				
Grassby	2		2		1T		4		1		2		1				
Tealby	10		1	2		1T		2c		1		2		1			
Binbrook		6	1	4	2	7	1T	11	2c	6	13	2	14	1			
Fulstow	10			1		8		2c		7		1	4				
Thoresby	2			1		8		2c		13		1	4				
Tetney	6			1		4		2c		7		1	4				
Tetney	2	10	16			5		17		11		3	15				
Fulstow	6	10	16			5		17		11		7	15				
Holton	2		7		4	5		8		9		7					
Laceby	9½		3		2	1		2c		14		2					
Irby	2		3		16	13		4		18		8					
Swallow	6		12		16	13		4		18		8					
Laceby	2	9	15		10	8		5		17		3					
Great Coats	2	15	5		9	3		8		10		9					
Waythe	2	17	11		4	16		10		7		8					
Caistor	10 2	11	13		8	14		4		12		6					

**WEEK DAY PLAN.**

"Feed the Flock of Christ."	PLACES.	Days	APRIL.			MAY.			JUNE.			J.					
			14	21	28	6	12	19	26	2	9		16	23	30	7	
Holton	M.		2		1	2c		1T		2		1	2				
Grimsby	T.		2		1	2c		1T		2		1	2				
Keelby	W.		2		1	2c		1T		2		1	2				
Immingham	Th.		2		1	2c		1T		2		1	2				
Swallow	F.		2		1	2c		1T		2		1	2				
Grassby	M.		2		1T	2c		1		2		1	2				
Howsham	T.		2		1T	2c		1		2		1	2				
Caistor	W.		2		1T	2c		1		2		1	2				
Usselby	Th.		2		1T	2c		1		2		1	2				
Walesby	F.		2		1T	2c		1		2		1	2				
Tealby	M.		1		2	1		2		1		2	1				
Binbrook	T.		1		2	1		2		1		2	1				
Thoresby	W.		1		2	1T		2		1		2	1				
Fulstow	Th.		1		2	1T		2		1		2	1				
Tetney	F.		1		2	1T		2		1		2	1				
Great Coats	M.		1		2	1T		2c		1		2	1				
Waythe	T.		1		2	1T		2c		1		2	1				
Beelsby	W.		1		2	1T		2c		1		2	1				
Irby	Th.		1		2	1T		2c		1		2	1				
Laceby	F.		1		2	1T		2		1		2	1				

**PREACHERS.**

- 1 R. Atkinson.
- 2 E. Allen.
- 3 W. Holt.
- 4 B. Hemstock.
- 5 E. Lingard.
- 6 A. Clark.
- 7 G. Norris.
- 8 J. Holland.
- 9 M. Bennington.
- 10 J. Baxter.
- 11 J. Smith.

**EXHORTERS.**

- 12 J. Kent.
- 13 W. Smith.
- 14 C. Mundy.

**PRAYER LEADERS.**

- 15 G. Shaw.
- 16 J. Hewson. J. Dows.
- 17 J. Cook. J. Barker.
- 18 W. Wass. W. Hill.

T Tickets.  
C Collection.  
P Prayer Meeting.

A CAMP-MEETING at Thoresby, June 15th; the following Preachers are expected to attend; viz. 1, 4, 5, 7, 11, 16.—There will be no preaching within four miles of the meeting,

**THE SOLDIERS' HYMN.**

Ye soldiers of Jesus, pray stand to your arms,  
Prepare for the battle, the gospel alarms,  
O! be not faint hearted tho' he roars like a flood,  
He'll not stand before the bright armies of God.

To battle, to battle, the trumpet doth sound,  
The watchmen are crying fair Zion around,  
The signal of victory, hark! hark! from the sky,  
Shout, shout ye brave armies, the watchmen all cry.

King Jesus is riding the white horse before,  
The watchmen close after the trumpets do roar,  
Some shouting, some singing, salvation they cry,  
In the strength of King Jesus, all hell we defy.

Behold the brave armies are now marching home,  
The trumpet is sounding, and bids them to come;  
All Zion's fair armies together shall meet,  
And lay down their armour at Jesus' feet.

Cheer up ye brave soldiers, the time's drawing nigh  
When we shall meet Jesus' bright hosts in the sky;  
Our friends and relations in Jesus so dear,  
Both preachers and people shall then meet us there.

We'll join the bright harpers in anthems divine [shine,  
Whose crowns with bright diamonds the sun do out-  
To the praise of King Jesus we'll raise our harps, for  
Salvation, and glory to Jesus. Amen.

Quarter Day at Thoresby, June 16: Preachers' Meeting to commence at 10 o'Clock, A. M.—Letters on Circuit Business, to be directed (post paid,) to Mr. J. Ward, Grimsby.

A fascinating enterprise, and perhaps a great tribute to Elizabeth, was that she, along with male colleagues, was sent on special missions to Scotland and Ireland from the Preston Brook Circuit. In Scotland we are merely told that the crowds which wished to hear her were so large that she was obliged to preach out of doors.<sup>(570)</sup> This would certainly be because of the novelty of hearing a woman preacher especially of a young attractive one. The Journal of the male missionary to Ireland, F.N. Jersey, has survived in the *Magazine* of 1832 and he goes into great detail of all the work that Elizabeth did and the effectiveness of her mission - often in the open air.<sup>(571)</sup> The pressure of the work of the mission must have been terrific, for example in fifteen days she spoke eleven times, held four prayer meetings as well as the usual round of visiting. It is interesting to note that the Irish Presbyterian Church was prepared to accept a female preacher and even let her preach on their premises, while the authorities at Bainbridge allowed her to preach in the Linen Hall. After the success of the Irish Mission Elizabeth continued her ministry in English Circuits for another couple of years before being appointed to the Macclesfield Circuit, where again she was very successful and met Mr. John Vernon, a loyal Primitive Methodist, and gave up her single status! However, she continued to take frequent 'special' services and give 'occasional' sermons. Her husband was evidently very happy for Elizabeth to continue her preaching, so I think we may safely assume that, like Sarah Kirkland and Elizabeth Bultitude, Elizabeth Allen (Vernon) continued to exercise her Primitive Methodist ministry as a local preacher and as a class leader, for the rest of her life, till her death on 8th January 1850 at the age of forty-seven.

In summary then it may be observed that Sarah and the two Elizabeths all came from similar rural backgrounds, although from different parts of the country; that their religious backgrounds were similar - Wesleyan in the case of Sarah and Elizabeth Bultitude and possibly so for Elizabeth Allen, though all that is stated is that she came to religion early; that they all started preaching at around twenty years of age; that the two who married chose their partners from within the Primitive Methodist fold; and that these three, differing from many of the other women do not appear to have suffered a great deal from ill-health.

Turning to consider their life in the itinerancy it can be seen that all three received their outward call to preach from the Primitive Methodist authorities who felt that they were indeed called to be 'ministers'; that they became familiar with being a 'novelty' as a woman preacher, both as far as their appearance and their message constituted a draw for the crowds; that they were all engaged in missionary enterprises, more especially Sarah Kirkland in the early thrust of Primitive Methodism and Elizabeth Allen, not only in England, but in the Scottish and Irish Missions, while even Elizabeth Bultitude as late as 1855 was sent to the Brinkworth District which was still engaged in 'opening' new places. As this was, apart from three years in Hinckley, her first and only foray outside East Anglia perhaps indicates that Primitive Methodism still realised and respected the value of women as missionary evangelists, in spite of the fact that by now Elizabeth was around forty-six years old and had been a travelling preacher for twenty-three years. Maybe, in that area at least, a woman was still considered to be a potential 'crowd-puller' just because she was a woman.<sup>(572)</sup>

The outstanding difference which can be noted is that whereas Sarah Kirkland faced persecution there is virtually no mention of any being offered to the other two in the later periods. If Sarah faced persecution, not so much because she was a woman, as because the 'ranter' message was novel and open to ridicule, then perhaps as the years passed two things had happened. One, the Ranters, had toned down their message and the way they put it over, so

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<sup>570</sup> Patterson, W.M., *Northern Primitive Methodism*.

<sup>571</sup> *PMM* (1833) p. 58ff. I have tried to verify these accounts from Ireland itself, but with no result.

<sup>572</sup> See Chapter 8.

that it would be more acceptable and, two, the hearers had become more used to it as the novelty wore off and it not longer seemed so unfamiliar or unusual. Had familiarity bred contempt? Or had Primitive Methodism become more comfortable? Or had men become kinder or merely indifferent?

It would appear, therefore, that not only had there been a shift in emphasis towards consolidation, respectability and conformity within Primitive Methodism, but also that as the novelty had worn off so Primitive Methodism's message and its messengers were tolerated, even if not always welcomed.

## CHAPTER EIGHT: DECLINE OF FEMALE ITINERANT PREACHERS IN PRIMITIVE METHODISM

Several things, as we have shown, can be said without much fear of contradiction regarding the phenomenon of female itinerants in the Primitive Methodist Connexion. First, that right from the outset they were welcomed and greatly used both by God and the founding fathers of Primitive Methodism. There was no barrier of sex in those early days. Second, that there were many more women travelling preachers than is apparent from a cursory glance. Around ninety have now been identified, plus a number who worked as hired local preachers and others who were paid as itinerants and who worked in a local situation for a short time apparently regarded by their circuits as travelling preachers, but never actually stationed officially by the Connexion. Third, the number of female itinerants reached a peak in 1834 when, according to the present evidence, twenty-six were stationed and from that year the numbers declined till only Elizabeth Bultitude was left. It is difficult to be absolutely dogmatic about this as in many cases the stations merely give initials and unless the name can be verified from other sources the itinerant could be of either sex. Certainly, later than this date women were working as hired local preachers and as evangelists (<sup>573</sup>). It would, therefore appear that once the Primitive Methodist movement had become established and organised it became more male-orientated at least in its public image of the itinerancy. It is likely that the Church dignitaries felt that their movement would be more socially acceptable if it became more 'orthodox' and 'respectable' and if this meant shedding their female itinerants then it was a price that they were willing to pay at this point in their development. As the period of consolidation evolved obviously more lay opportunities arose for the women to exercise their talents within local churches and circuits. Ministerial training was another likely factor in the demise of the female itinerant phenomenon. These are the main points we now turn to consider.

### THE STRAIN OF THE ITINERANCY

Looking at the statistics for the length of service(<sup>574</sup>)it can be seen that a number of the women worked for a comparatively short time, that in fact twenty-two served for one year and sixteen for two. This means that a total of thirty-eight or 42% of women retired for some reason or another. Taking a random sample of ninety men who served over a period of two years namely 1837 and 1839, it is found that ten men or 11% gave up the itinerancy while for the women in the same two years the figures are ten out of the nineteen on the stations in 1837 or 52.6%. (<sup>575</sup>) A comparison of the years 1831 and 1832 show that there is a considerable difference in the earlier period when it is found that 5.5% of the men and 19% of the women dropped out. However, in fact there was a net increase of one woman as of the four retirements three were replaced and then the two missionaries were not included at all as the figures were not returned for America by the time the Conference reported the figures for 1832. Another factor to be borne in mind is that some of the women retired because they married and at least one, Jane Woolford, married a travelling preacher so could really be said to have continued her ministry.

From these figures it can perhaps be surmised that in the earlier days and in missionary and evangelistic endeavours the women who retired were replaced by others whereas in the later period this was not quite so evident. With regard to the men the pattern seems to have remained fairly constant with the men being replaced and in fact the numbers increasing as the work

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<sup>573</sup> See Chapter 5.

<sup>574</sup> See Graph V.

<sup>575</sup> If the three women who came on to the stations in 1839 are taken into account then the figure of 36.8% is reached.

progressed and consolidation and the building of chapels developed.

When it is remembered that quite a number of the early preachers were very young when they started preaching, for example Mary Ball and Ann Noble were fifteen, Elizabeth Johnson was only sixteen, while Martha Doncaster and Sarah Brown were seventeen and four more had only reached the age of twenty, it is perhaps not surprising that many of them suffered from ill-health. Bearing in mind the very arduous nature of the itinerancy it is fairly evident that the work must have taken a great toll of their stamina and the strain of the life often proved too much. As it has been shown working conditions were very hard, persecution was by no means unknown, their duties were arduous, the distances they travelled were extensive, especially when it is appreciated that most of the journeyings would be done on foot, hospitality, food and shelter usually depended on the generosity of people who were favourably inclined towards them and it was often of a primitive nature.<sup>(576)</sup> Woodcock paints a very vivid, if a somewhat flowery, picture of the trials and tribulations of the early itinerants and attributes the loss of many preachers to these rigorous conditions.<sup>(577)</sup> That his picture contained an element of truth is borne out by a more sober account given by one of the first historians of the Connexion, the Rev. John Petty, in a sermon to the Ministerial Mutual Improvement Association on May 5th 1863. He had been asked to speak on 'The qualifications for the Christian Ministry required by the times,' and he notes that three natural physical qualifications were needed - 'a strong constitution, a good voice, a fluent utterance'. On the first point he says:

'Primitive Methodist preachers (whose) active duties are confessedly numerous and laborious.... For the efficient and regular performance of these duties much bodily strength is required. ....Scores of men....who entered our ministry strong and healthy, in a few short years were either carried to the grave, or were compelled to relinquish the ministry for a less laborious calling....Our ministry is not, it is true, in some districts at least, so laborious and exhausting as in former years; and in most established circuits such privations and hardships have not to be endured as were frequent in the early days of the Connexion. But still our ministry unquestionably requires a good constitution;'<sup>(578)</sup>

On the necessity for a good voice he remarks that:

'Preaching six or seven times a week, leading classes, conducting other religious services, and praying with thirty or more families weekly, will in time severely test the voice of any man; and unless it be naturally good, it will prematurely fail.'<sup>(579)</sup>

He observes that Methodist preachers had always been characterised with a fluent utterance and then goes on:

'Many of them may have less polish, less accuracy, less elegance and chasteness of expression, than numerous ministers of older denominations; but most of them have always been and still are gifted with a free and fluent utterance, which has largely contributed to their acceptability and success among congregations long accustomed to such a mode of delivery.'<sup>(580)</sup>

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<sup>576</sup> See Chapter 4.

<sup>577</sup> Woodcock, *Romance of Reality*, pp. 248-253.

<sup>578</sup> *PMM* (1863) p~.594-608, espec. 595-6.

<sup>579</sup> *PMM* (1863) p. 594-608, espec. 595-6.

<sup>580</sup> *PMM* (1863) p. 594-608, espec. 595-6.

It would seem to follow that if this was the case with the men it would equally apply to the women. Obituaries and circuit records frequently make mention of the fact that certain preachers had to retire through ill-health; so, for example we find that Lucy Hubbard had to give up because

‘through constant preaching she had seriously impaired her vocal chords.’<sup>(581)</sup>

that Elenor Brown requested a move south from Durham for the benefit of her health;<sup>(582)</sup> that Fanny Buttery’s precarious state of health was the reason for her retirement from the itinerancy.<sup>(583)</sup> The reports of the Contingent Fund, carry many instances of payment being made in respect of illness.<sup>(584)</sup>

The Contingent Fund or the Circuits ‘Assistant Sick Travelling Preachers’ Fund was designed to help both the travelling preacher and the circuit when the itinerant became ill or fell on hard times. Circuits, participating in the scheme were expected to contribute an average of one penny (1d.) per member. When it came to payments to the circuits the men were rated at 14/- if married and 10/- if single, while the women were worth only 6/-.<sup>(585)</sup> Presumably because the women’s salaries were less this is why their circuits received less for their illnesses, in spite of paying the general levy. An example of the payments from the Fund in respect of the illnesses of the female travelling preachers for 1835 gives some idea of this and also of the toll the itinerant life took of the health of the women:

Circuit paid to	On account of the illness of	Weeks/days	£. s. d.
York	M. Burks	25 weeks	10. 0. 0.
York	M. Burks	15 weeks	6. 0. 0.
Hexham	Mary Porteous	18 weeks	7. 4. 0.
Shefford	E. Smith	~	12. 0.
Hull	M. Burks	~	0.0.0.
York	M. Burks	15 weeks	6. 0. 0. <sup>(586)</sup>
and those of 1837 were:			
Hopton Bank	L. Hubbard	10 weeks	4. 0. 0.
Chippenham	S. Harding	6 weeks	1.16. 0.
Kidderminster	M. Crossley	5 weeks	2. 0. 0.
St. Austell	A. Woodward	1 week	0. 8. 0.
Scotter	M. Burks	30 weeks	12. 0. 0.
Ludlow	L. Hubbard	10 weeks	3. 0. 0.

<sup>581</sup> *PMM* (1861) p. 202.

<sup>582</sup> *Minutes Book for Durham Circuit PM Connexion (1841-8)*, May 7th 1847 (Durham RO)

<sup>583</sup> Wrockwardine Wood Circuit Report. Synoptical Report on Preachers 1844 (Shropshire RO).

<sup>584</sup> *PM Mins* (1823, 1830, 1831, 1832, 1833, 1835, 1836, 1837, 1838, 1839, 1840, 1841, 1842, 1843, 1846, 1847, 1848, 1849).

<sup>585</sup> *PMMins* (1823) pp. 3, 4; see also Chapter 4 pages 88-91.

<sup>586</sup> *Ibid.* (1835) pp. 17-18.

Cwm	E. Dyke	3 weeks	1. 4. 0.
Whitby	M. Ball	2 weeks	0. 16. 0.
Barnstable	L. Cockerill	4 weeks	1.12. 0.
Manchester	E. Robotham	2 weeks	0. 16. 0.
Bolton	E. Robothom	2 weeks	0. 16. 0.
Bolton	E. Robothom	2 weeks	0. 16. 0. ( <sup>587</sup> )

According to the stations there were twenty-six women in the active work in 1834 and twenty in 1835, eighteen in 1836 and twenty in 1837. Thus it would appear that just over 11. 5% and 15% of the women suffered sufficiently from ill-health in 1834 and 1835 for their circuits to receive payments from the fund and the matter was worse in the years 1836 and 1837 when the figures were 50% and 45%. These figures perhaps give some indication of the strain the itinerancy put upon the health and stamina of the female travelling preachers. It is of interest, by way of comparison, to note that in 1837 there were four hundred and thirty-four men on the stations and that ninety-three or 21.4% of them are listed in the accounts of the Circuits' Assistant Sick Travelling Preachers' Fund.<sup>(588)</sup> So, it would seem that both sexes succumbed to illness and that, although the figure for the women is higher than that for the men, nevertheless the men obviously suffered considerably from ill-health too. Ill-health, therefore, appears to have been a factor in the decline of the female travelling preacher phenomenon, but it does not explain it. As shown the men also suffered, but when they left the itinerancy they were apparently quickly replaced, whereas it seems that poor health provided a convenient excuse for phasing out the females and thus getting rid of a 'peculiarity' which was becoming rather an embarrassment to a more respectable, conformist looking Connexion.

The history of the Preachers' Fund, started in 1823 when apparently membership was open to both sexes, perhaps provides another example of women being pushed aside for when it was enrolled in the High Court of Chancery of 28th January, 1841, women were specifically excluded.<sup>(589)</sup>

### MARRIAGE

Marriage also provided an excuse for abandoning the female itinerant and no doubt was in the mind of those who framed the *Rules of the Primitive Methodist Preachers' Fund* when they chose to declare women ineligible for membership. There was no real reason why the women who married should not have been replaced or why the women who married their male colleagues should not have continued their ministry in their own right if the will to make use of them had been there. However, be that as it may, the fact remains that the women who married were expected to retire. Thus the *Primitive Methodist Minutes* record a Conference decision which may well have affected the ministry of some of the women travelling preachers:

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<sup>587</sup> Ibid. (1837) pp. 17-20. Any apparent anomalies between the stations and this fund may be explained as the stations go from Midsummer to Midsummer and the accounts of the fund from May to May and also many of the payments were made well in arrears.

<sup>588</sup> *PM Mins* (1837) pp. 17-20; It should be noted that in the case of both sexes the names of some of the itinerants appear on the lists more than once. If the actual number of payments for 1837 calculated the figures are 60% for the women and 50% for the men.

<sup>589</sup> Ibid. (1823) p. 4; *John Hallam Book Fund Rules; Rules of the PM Itinerant Preachers' Friendly Fund* p. 6; see also Chapter 4 and section on the Preacher's Fund.



‘No married female shall be allowed to labour as a travelling preacher (permanently) in any circuit, except that in which her husband resides, (special cases excepted).’<sup>(590)</sup>

This decision was reached in 1827 and I wonder if this might be related to the subject of over-staffing considered earlier. Certainly that was the year in which Jane Holliday retired and she and her husband had been working in ‘contiguous circuits’ before.<sup>(591)</sup> In the very early days Sarah Harrison (Kirkland) and John Harrison worked together, while Jane Ansdale and William Suddards laboured together, both before and after their marriage. However, it was Mary Porteous who really fell foul of this edict when the Conference of 1827 re-stationed her at Whitby, as her husband, a seaman, lived in Gateshead, but she decided to ask for a ruling and it was decided that:

‘as it (the circuit), in God’s hand, had called her into the regular work of the ministry, she durst not move without its consent. Under these circumstances, the General Committee allowed her to remain, considering her’s an "extraordinary case".’<sup>(592)</sup>

The implication of the ruling is that the itinerancy was permissible for unmarried women or widows, but not for those with family responsibilities. Presumably it was considered that married women should stay at home with their husbands and families. It would not be regarded as respectable or appropriate for a married woman to go wandering round the countryside preaching, having to all intents and purposes abandoned her family. Her activities might be liable to misinterpretation. This was a danger of which the Primitive Methodist authorities were well aware and which they took pains to avoid.<sup>(593)</sup> That there was no embargo on widows itinerating is illustrated by the case of Elizabeth Wheeldon, who first worked under her maiden name of Elizabeth Hunt, then retired on her marriage, returned to the ministry after her husband’s death and continued until her second marriage to fellow travelling preacher, Samuel West. Record Offices record payment to Sister/Mrs. E. Bardgett (and allowances for her son) in 1831 and 1832,<sup>(594)</sup> and to Sister/Mrs. Ann Longmires (and her son) in 1837, 1838, 1839, 1840.<sup>(595)</sup> The former was regularly stationed by the Connexion, but Ann Longmires does not appear on the stations. As her maiden name is not known she may, of course, have been stationed before her first marriage. In 1844 she became the second wife of William Lonsdale, a travelling preacher.

The Bible Christian male itinerants were recommended by the Conference, if they intended to marry:

‘to choose their partner from among our sisters, who have dedicated themselves to the service of God, by coming forward as travelling

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<sup>590</sup> *PM Mins* (1827) p. 4; (1832) p. 5 omits ‘as a travelling preacher’ and adds the words in brackets.

<sup>591</sup> Kendall, op. cit. I p. 381; see also *PMM* (1864) pp. 39-43.

<sup>592</sup> Lightfoot, op. cit. p. 102.

<sup>593</sup> See also Chapter 4.

<sup>594</sup> **South Shields Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly Accounts 1831-42** (September 10, 1831, December 10, 1831; March 11, 1832; June 9, 1832), (Tyne and Wear RO).

<sup>595</sup> **Gainsborough Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly Minutes and Accounts 1836-1845** (June 1, 1838; August 31, 1838; November 30, 1838; March 1, 1839; June 28, 1839; September 30, 1839; December 1839; March 26, 1840); **Scotter Primitive Methodist Circuit Accounts 1831-1849** (June 3 1837; September 4, 1837; December 4, 1837), (Lincoln RO).

preachers; and we do agree that those preachers who so marry, shall be entitled to the first support from the connexion.’<sup>(596)</sup>

While there is no such directive in the Minutes it is highly likely that this would also have been encouraged among the Primitive Methodists. Anyway, human nature being what it is and working closely together, sharing the same interests, the same labours, the same zeal and the same fervent faith it would be very unusual if some colleagues did not marry. Obviously from the Connexion’s point of view this was a highly desirable state of affairs as circuits then often got two ministers for the price of one! It is said that one delegate, returning home to his circuit, Derby, was taken to task for not obtaining a single man, who would have commanded a smaller salary, for the station. In his defence he replied that by getting this particular man, John Hirst, he had in fact got two ministers as his wife was a noted preacher too. The following women travelling preachers married within the ministry Martha Doncaster (Mrs. John Ride), Mrs. Elizabeth Wheeldon (Mrs. Samuel West), Mary Anna Elizabeth Moor(e) (Mrs. Richard Cordingley), Elizabeth Smith (Mrs. Thomas Russell), Rebecca Tims (Mrs. William Brining), Elizabeth Starr (Mrs. Thomas Green), Mary Edward(e)s (Mrs. Sampson Turner), Jane Ansdale (Mrs. William Suddards), Jane Ayre (Mrs. William Holliday), Jane Woolford (Mrs. William Harvey) and Ann Godwin (Mrs. Henry Green). These women who married their colleagues to all intents and purposes continued their work, but now as ministers’ wives and quite often travelling preachers wives acted as virtually ‘unpaid curates’ without recognition by the Connexion on the Stations of the Itinerant Preachers. A study of circuit plans and reports in the Connexional Magazine show that they still took a large share in the work of the circuit, thus we find, for example, that Martha Ride was active in the Shefford Circuit while her husband was the superintendent minister there and Elizabeth Wheeldon was similarly employed in her husband, Samuel’s, circuits.

Having looked at two factors which were connected directly with the female travelling preachers themselves - health and marriage - and which could be said to have been related to but not an explanation for the decline of the use of women as itinerants, we now turn to consider developments within the Primitive Methodist Connexion and the changing attitude towards women in both the church and society.

### **MISSION AND CHAPEL BUILDING**

Early Primitive Methodism was essentially a missionary movement with preachers breaking new ground in evangelistic missions in the Midlands, East Anglia, Yorkshire, the North East of England and in Berkshire and Wiltshire particularly. These early missionaries used all available means to attract attention and to pull in the crowds, especially with processioning, hymn singing, camp meetings and the novelty of women preachers. They faced ridicule and persecution, even imprisonment, and they endured privation and poverty. Their message was fierce and their style was passionate as Obelkevich puts it ‘they preached the three R’s, ruin, repentance and redemption and the appropriate style was plain, pithy and practical. Conversion was the aim, as many as possible and as quickly as possible.’<sup>(597)</sup>

Consideration of the stationing of the Primitive Methodist Itinerant Preachers indicates a trend towards the placing of the women in rural or missionary situations particularly later in the 1840s. so it seems that the pioneering spirit of Primitive Methodism still relied upon the novelty value and attraction of the female preacher to present an impact on the area to be ‘opened’.

If we consider the statistics for the South of England, using the classifications of the 1851

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<sup>596</sup> *Bible Christian Minutes* (1820) see *WHS. Proc.* Vol. 29, Part 4 (Dec. 1953) pp.77-78.

<sup>597</sup> Obelkevich, J., *Religion and Rural Society* p. 223.

Religious Census to define that area, an interesting pattern emerges which seems to confirm the theory that Primitive Methodism was most willing to use the female itinerants in missionary and evangelistic situations and in the more rural areas before a great deal of church building was undertaken. So, in 1840, 20.5% of the members were to be found in the South; 24% of all, both sexes, the travelling preachers; 24% of the male travelling preachers, but 40% of the women. In 1843 there were 22% of all the travelling preachers in the same area, 22% of the men and 45.5% of the women. If the figures are extended to look at the use of women in rural areas, in addition to those used in the South, we find that 70% in 1840 and 91% in 1843 were stationed in these circuits.

Therefore such statistics would seem to bear out the contention that women were chiefly used in rural and mission areas in the later period particularly. Perhaps novelty value was still being exploited and there was less pretentious chapel building, with correspondingly less need for administrators and financial expertise to be found in such circuits. Perhaps also it is significant that the 'veteran' missionary, John Ride, was one of the superintendent ministers in the Brinkworth area at the time (1827-1843) and he was well used to 'opening up' new and difficult ground. Certainly his new appointment in 1827 gave him ample opportunity for exercising all his talents and using his missionary zeal along with his colleagues, who included Elizabeth Smith (1828-1831), while his own wife was Martha Doncaster, who had been a travelling preacher in her own right before their marriage.<sup>(598)</sup> During the years in which John Ride was in the Brinkworth District there were a total of ninety stationings of women in that District and its missions.<sup>(599)</sup>

More particularly in his own circuits his women colleagues were Sarah Spittle (Frome, 1827); Elizabeth Smith (Brinkworth, 1828-1831); J. Evans (Brinkworth 1831-1832); Ann Godwin (Shefford, 1832-1833, 1835-1836); Elizabeth Wheeldon (Shefford, 1832-1833); S. Wheeler (Shefford, 1832-1833); Mary Anna Elizabeth Moore (Shefford, 1833); Ann Haynes (Shefford, 1834); Fanny Hurle (Shefford, 1834); Mary Gribble (Shefford, 1835); Jane Woolford (Shefford, 1835-1836); Hannah Day (Shefford, 1836), Mrs. Mary Scribbens (Reading, 1839) and Elizabeth Starr (Reading, 1843). So it would appear that John Ride was very happy to use female travelling preachers in his circuits and from all the accounts extant they certainly justified his confidence in them.

In due course the evangelistic thrust gave way to revivalism as the societies which had been formed as a result of missions needed building up into cohesive 'chapels'. The converts not only needed spiritual food, but also a permanent and often a special place in which to receive that food, so a logical progression ensued from cottages and hired hall to the purpose-built 'Prim' chapel. What Kendall called the 'chapel-building era' followed hard upon the heels of the period of consolidation and development.<sup>(600)</sup> After the great period of evangelism the Connexion from about 1843 concentrated its efforts on consolidation -that is not to say that evangelical revivals did not occur, but the emphasis was on building up the churches and developing a structure of church and connexional government to supersede the 'Districtism' of the previous decade. This, together with the chapel building led to a number of changes within Primitive Methodism. With regard to the buildings the smaller simpler structures now gave way to more elaborate and in some cases more ornate buildings. It is possible that the size and

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<sup>598</sup> For a graphic description of the conditions, missionary endeavours and persecutions in the Brinkworth mission see Petty, *op. cit.* pp. 258-289, 316-369, 438-455.

<sup>599</sup> Women in John Ride's area: 1827 (2); 1828 (3); 1829 (4); 1830 (3); 1831 (4); 1832 (7); 1833 (6); 1834 (10); 1835 (9); 1836 (7); 1837 (7); 1838 (4); 1839 (4); 1840 (3); 1841 (6); 1842 (7); 1843 (4).

<sup>600</sup> Kendall, *op. cit.* II p. 455ff.

ostentation of the building became almost a status symbol. It showed that the Society ‘had arrived’, that it could take its place alongside the established churches. Obviously such developments gave rise to a completely different outlook within the local chapel community. The mere possession of a site and bricks and mortar meant that special office holders were needed to ‘service’ these buildings, so there was a proliferation of offices, of trustees, and of financial and building experts, of astute negotiators who could meet and deal with professional and business men on all aspects and levels of building programmes. Unfortunately, at times, some of these officials became known as ‘debt-reducers’ as they strove to make their properties economically viable. In spite of Primitive Methodism’s avowed emphasis on the importance of the laity it was inevitable that the itinerant would become involved in chapel building, finance and administration and as these were regarded as predominantly male preserves this became yet another factor which acted against the continued use of women travelling preachers.

**Table 10: 1851 Religious Census: England and Wales: Primitive Methodist Chapels: Dates Erected or Appropriated (By Counties) for Religious Use**

<b>Region</b>	<b>Before 1801</b>	<b>1801-11</b>	<b>1811-21</b>	<b>1821-31</b>	<b>1831-41</b>	<b>1841-51</b>	<b>Not Stated</b>
Beds	2	-	-	-	5	7	4
Berks	6	1	1	2	18	13	12
Bucks	3	1	-	1	12	18	1
Camb	1	-	1	-	11	24	2
Ches	7	1	1	18	40	41	27
Corn	1	-	1	11	14	7	4
Cumb	4	-	-	6	4	3	6
Derby	7	-	7	20	32	52	14
Devon	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dorset	2	1	-	7	8	17	8
Durham	5	-	3	18	32	44	11
Essex	6	-	1	-	6	6	5
Glos	3	1	2	4	5	8	7
Here	5	1	1	2	14	27	21
Herts	3	-	-	1	1	5	4
Hunts	1	-	-	-	3	7	-
Kent	4	-	2	2	2	11	5
Lancs	7	1	3	15	39	33	9
Leics	-	3	2	9	12	20	7
Lincs	12	2	5	28	86	54	34
Midx	2	-	-	-	3	5	5
Mon	-	-	1	2	3	16	3
Norfolk	7	4	5	19	81	75	53
N’hants	1	-	-	-	4	8	3
N’Ireland	7	-	1	13	11	17	7
Notts	5	-	1	16	17	26	13
Oxon	4	-	1	3	7	19	7
Rut	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Shrop	8	3	-	11	37	43	59
Som	7	1	2	2	3	11	7
S’ton	6	1	-	-	15	28	8

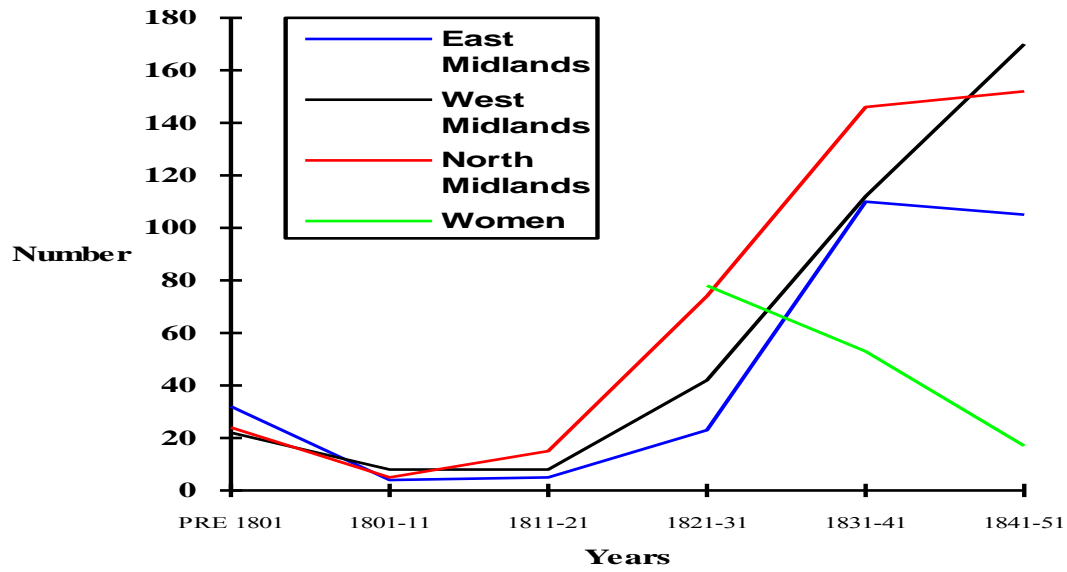
Region	Before 1801	1801-11	1811-21	1821-31	1831-41	1841-51	Not Stated
Staffs	3	1	5	18	35	51	15
Suff	8	-	-	4	23	23	14
Sur	1	-	-	1	-	3	2
Sux	-	1	-	-	-	-	4
Wks	1	1	-	3	6	12	9
West	1	-	-	2	7	2	4
Wilts	14	2	1	6	19	35	18
Wores	2	2	1	3	12	14	6
Yks ER	9	1	5	28	33	33	25
City York	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Yks NR	6	1	4	20	18	30	31
Yks WR	13	-	6	32	79	66	35
N Wales	1	-	1	1	11	13	11
S Wales	2	-	1	3	11	13	7
Summary Totals	188	30	65	332	779	940	527

Table 11: The Number of Women in the Census Areas

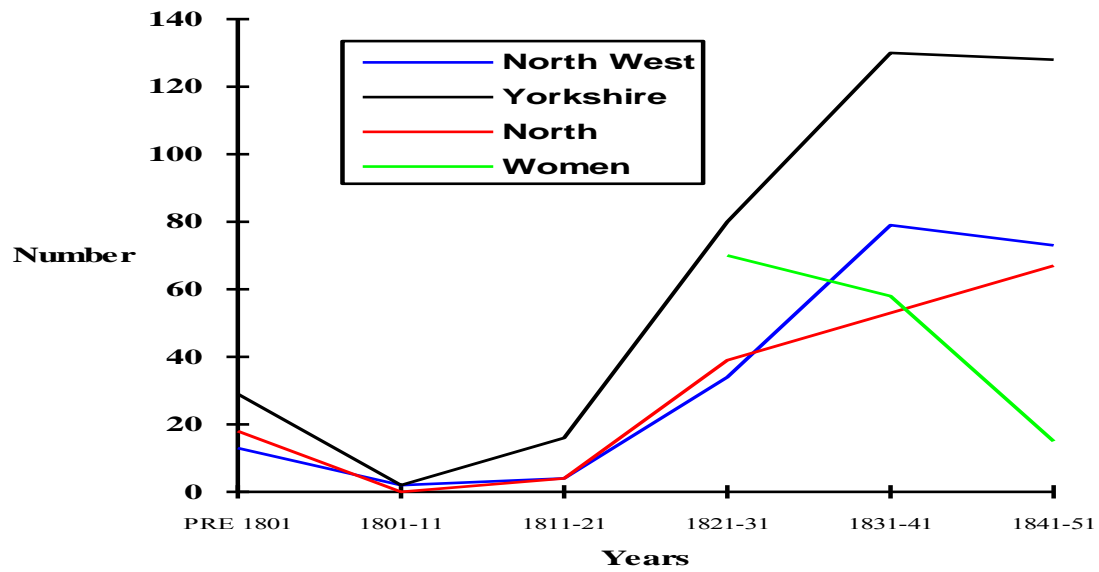
Year	Midlands	North	South	Totals
1821	6	5	0	11
1822	8	3	0	11
1823	10	9	0	19
1824	9	7	0	16
1825	6	5	0	11
1826	11	7	0	18
1827	5	6	2	13
1828	5	6	3	14
1829	3	7	4	14
1830	7	6	3	16
1831	7	9	4	20
1832	6	7	7	20
1833	5	6	6	17
1834	8	9	9	26
1835	8	4	9	21
1836	6	5	7	18
1837	8	4	7	19
1838	4	5	4	13
1839	3	5	4	12
1840	3	5	4	12
1841	4	7	6	17
1842	4	5	7	16
1843	5	2	4	11
1844	2	3	1	6
1845	1	3	1	5
1846	2	1	1	4
1847	2	0	1	3



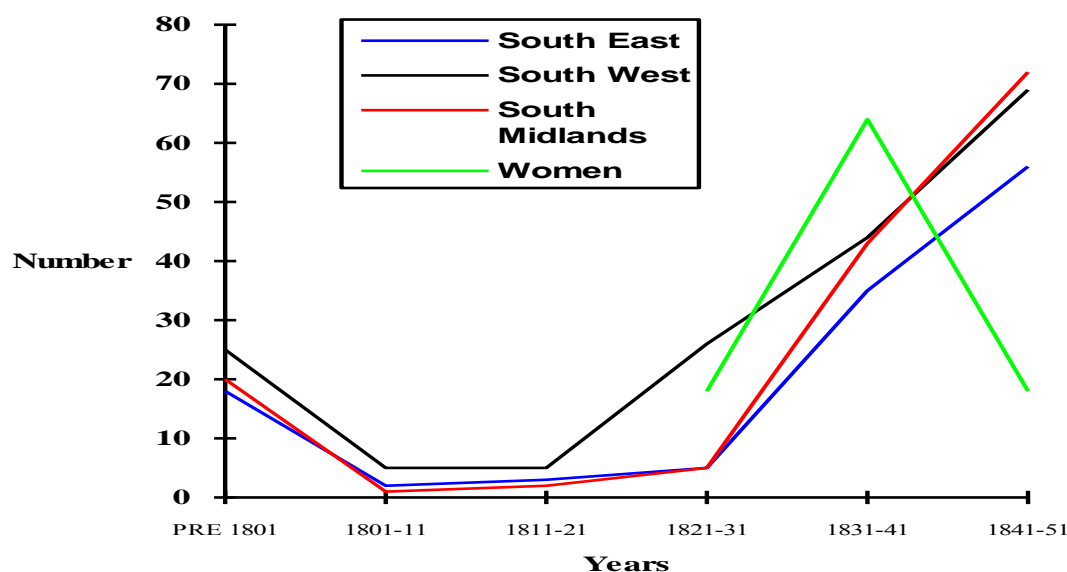
Graph VI: PM Chapels Erected or Appropriated (1851 Religious Census) I Midlands



Graph VII: PM Chapels Erected or Appropriated (1851 Religious Census) II North



Graph VIII: PM Chapels Erected or Appropriated (1851 Religious Census) III South



### COMMENTS ON THE CENSUS GRAPHS

Obviously, as the date of the first Primitive Methodist Chapel building, Boylestone, near Tunstall, was 1811<sup>(601)</sup> all the early information in the graphs relates to ‘chapels appropriated’ to Primitive Methodist use. The Connexion’s records for 1851 state that it had a total of 1662 churches (see Table 2) that year. The 1851 Religious Census for England and Wales gives the total number as 2871, of which 832 were not separate buildings. In Scotland, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands the total was 42, of which 7 were not separate buildings. The grand total therefore was 2913. If the non-separate buildings are subtracted this gives 2074. There is thus a discrepancy of 412 so it seems probable that the Primitive Methodist figures refer only to chapels erected by the Connexion whereas the Census returns are for all places of worship in use by the Primitive Methodists on Sunday, 30th March 1851. The graphs show in diagrammatic form the development of the Connexion in respect of chapel building and/or appropriation for their worship. Several observations can be made, first, the greatest growth in all areas was in the two decades of 1821-1831 and 1831-1841. Secondly, the areas which might be deemed to be the cradle of Primitive Methodism show the steepest rise. Thirdly, that the southern part of England shows the least growth. This was due not only to the strength of the Church of England and Wesleyan Methodism, but also to the presence of the Bible Christians in Devon and Cornwall in particular and in Kent too. Fourthly, it is worth noting that the Isle of Man was missioned very early from the Tunstall and Liverpool Circuits, as also were the Welsh borders. Fifthly, those churches which were listed in the Census as dates ‘not stated’ have been omitted from the graphs. Lastly, when the total number of female travelling preachers is superimposed on the graphs it is perhaps possible to see some correlation between their decline and the chapel building era.

The table extracted from the 1851 Religious Census returns indicates this ‘explosion’ of chapel building in the mid-nineteenth century and the graphs for the different areas of the country show how chapel buildings sprang up in the Midlands, the North and South of England, especially rapidly during the period when the phenomenon of female travelling preachers was

<sup>601</sup> Bourne, *History of the Primitive Methodists*, pp. 30-37; Petty, *History*, p. 48; Kendall, op.cit.I p. 110; cf. Wilkinson, *Hugh Bourne* p. 87-88 and fns. 10 and 11.



on the wane.<sup>(602)</sup> It would seem to be illogical to think that there was no relation between these two facts, but equally illogical to regard this as the whole answer for there are other factors to be taken into account. Nevertheless it seems certain that chapel building per se aided the decline of the female itinerant.

As the century progressed there is a marked change in the contents of the Connexional Magazine, whereas earlier in its history the main themes had been mission and evangelism evidenced by reports of ‘openings’ and ‘missioning’ of new areas now there are more reports of anniversaries - chapel and Sunday School - chapel openings and re-openings and great attention is paid to the donations received and the collections given. Finance for building and maintenance became all important, although it must be said that the stone-laying and opening services were usually made evangelistic occasions. It can be appreciated that men were deemed more suited to this work, though women were warmly welcomed as special preachers for such events.<sup>(603)</sup>

The building of chapels meant that there was now a tangible focus for the ‘life’ of the chapel community. A purpose-built building meant that all the ancillary organisations associated with Primitive Methodism evolved and developed. By providing activities such as Sunday Schools, tract societies, Dorcas societies, mutual improvement societies, sick visiting and missionary collecting the chapel was catering not only for its own members and their families but also for the local neighbourhood. Life in the community tended to centre on the local chapel. Many, both men and women, found there an outlet for their talents. There were more opportunities now within the local chapel for dedicated service. So, from the 1840s it appears that the women continued to exercise their ministry, but rather in a localised than an itinerant situation. It is a fact that there were many local preachers, class leaders, Sunday School teachers, sick visitors and missionary collectors,<sup>(604)</sup> so obviously there were capable women in the Primitive Methodist Connexion who worked assiduously to further the cause in which they so fervently believed, just as the women of earlier years had done. It was merely that the spheres of work had changed. There had been a fundamental change or shift of position by the church and perhaps by the women themselves. Without a doubt suitable women were available, but now their abilities and efforts were channelled elsewhere than into the itinerancy.

### **WOMEN’S STATUS**

It was true that even in the days when female travelling preachers played a large and important role in the spread of the Connexion, when the men welcomed their talents and made good use of them in opening new areas, when they were expected to take their full share in the work with no concessions asked or given on the grounds of sex, yet the women did not have true equality with the men. They were expected to do the same, but to a large extent they were regarded as ‘second class citizens’. A Conference regulation required that women should not speak in meetings unless specifically invited to do so <sup>(605)</sup> it is not stated if this applied to all women, whether preachers or not. They received considerably less salary than the men, as has been

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<sup>602</sup> See Tables 10 and 11 and Graphs VI. VII. VIII.

<sup>603</sup> For example see *PMM* (1854) pp. 53, 180, 270, 506, 507, 748 - services by Miss M.C. Buck; pp. 370, 509, 683, 748 - services by Mrs. E. Grice of West Bromwich; see also Chapter 5.

<sup>604</sup> For example the *PMM* (1862) contains the Biographies of fifteen women, of these eleven were reported to be local preachers; seven class leaders; three Sunday School teachers; three sick visitors and one a missionary collector. Eight of the women held one of these offices; four held two; and three held three. In addition there are one hundred and forty-two Obituaries and forty-three or thirty % of the women engaged in all of the preceding church activities, except that of local preaching.

<sup>605</sup> *PM Mins* (1824) p. 4.

already noted, which was often an added attraction to financially hard-pressed circuits. Although the Conference regulations stated that the sacrament should be administered by those 'whom the meeting shall appoint' in fact I have found only one instance of a woman celebrating the sacrament of Holy Communion and none of Baptism. There are no records of any of the women becoming superintendent ministers and in the few Historical Accounts of the Preachers which relate to women the answers on this question are usually that she is not suitable, though one on Eleanor Brown does go so far as to remark 'not tried'.<sup>(606)</sup> So it would appear that, in spite of Primitive Methodism expecting its female itinerants to fulfil all the day to day tasks of the itinerancy, it was not prepared to accord to them full status and equality with the men, regardless of their usefulness or experience.

As the century progressed the numbers of women in the itinerancy decreased and yet there does not seem to have been a fundamental antipathy to female preaching as such within Primitive Methodism. It seems to have been more against their use in the itinerant ministry and not in the local ministry as local preachers or evangelists. As the obituaries and memoirs in the *Primitive Methodist Magazine* indicate women continued to preach at all times of the Connexion's history and were honoured for their faith and witness and indeed many travelled considerable distances to fulfil their appointments, but apparently the authorities were not willing to let them be 'stationed' officially any more. Does this smack of double standards, in that they were willing to use the women, but not to give them equal status with the men? Was it male chauvinism? Or was it just plain jealousy? Did the men wish to relegate the women to a more respectable role in the church in order to appear more in line with the other denominations? Whereas the women had been very useful in the evangelistic era now that the Connexion had settled down to a more mundane existence did they feel that it would be more appropriate for them to seem to be more conformist and thus hoped to bury their early 'ranter' image? Special occasions or missions, of course, would be ideal opportunities for the women to be used once again to attract the crowds in order to have great anniversaries and perhaps, unworthy thought, help to raise a good collection to assist with the upkeep of the chapel building so that the activities of the chapel community could continue to the mutual benefit of the members and the neighbourhood. Whatever it was there certainly was a change in the attitude of the Connexion towards the use of women in the itinerancy.

Articles in the Primitive Methodist publications give some indication of how women were viewed in light of these developments. So in 1881 we read:

'there must be a large employment of female talent in evangelistic work in all our societies and circuits. Perhaps there never was a time in Primitive Methodism when so many women could be found possessed of leisure and in a position to devote the whole or chief part of their time to evangelistic work; and yet how few are..... In this hour is the fine gold become dim in Primitive Methodism? We remember the time when female labour was a characteristic feature in the evangelistic labours of the Connexion. Why not now?... Some women will not do Christian work, others are kept back by timidity and indecision; such need an encouraging word and a helping hand.... plenty of work for them to do. They make first rate Sunday School teachers and leaders of female classes. They make capital missionary collectors and tract distributors.... best district visitors of the sick and poor. We submit that in connection with every well-organised Church there ought to be a

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<sup>606</sup>

**Report of the Pickering Circuit, March 17th 1845: Historical Account of the Travelling Preachers (North Yorkshire RO)**

vigorously-worked tract society and a weekly mothers' meeting, conducted by the Christian ladies of those churches.'<sup>607</sup>

From this extract it seems fairly obvious that the position of women in the church had altered - from being engaged in evangelistic work equally with men they were now regarded as potentially useful in the local church situation. Then Wilson Barrett, writing in 1888, defined 'Women's Work in the Church' even more specifically and perhaps thereby gives some indication of the changed attitude to women:

'The empire of woman is an empire of softness, of address, and of complacency;' we must therefore look for woman's work in the direction which brings into play those peculiar virtues - her sympathy, her tenderness and compassion, her tact and kindness.'<sup>608</sup>

He argues that the present high social standing of women was due to Christ having raised their status and that now men and women were equal and that there was plenty of work for her to do both in the church and in the world. The ability of women was not in question it was merely a case of 'providential arrangement'. In the list of women he cites as having been remarkably able it is interesting to find Miss Buck alongside Florence Nightingale, Miss Havergal and Mrs. E. Barrett Browning.

However, having admitted the equality of women with men Barrett then goes on to emphasise that the home is 'the woman's primary sphere of action', although he concedes that her interests should not be confined to it. When he touches on the thorny question of women preaching the gospel of Christ he readily welcomes the idea of them preaching it everywhere, but although he would allow them to 'preach it to large and promiscuous assemblies,' if they feel they must he would much rather that they confined their preaching to public prayer meetings, exhorting friends and neighbours and showing 'by example and precept the way of life.' Five ways in which women can 'preach' are presented, with shining examples of its value given as evidence for its efficacy. Thus some women make marvellous class-leaders, especially for catechumen classes; others excellent Sabbath-school teachers; many more can conduct Dorcas Meetings or similar efforts for raising money for the church's work; tract distribution and house to house visiting provides an opening for 'conversation preaching' as Hugh Bourne used to call it and this also is the way in which less well educated, but willing, or shy women could pass on the saving message to their friends and neighbours. Barrett insists that there are fields in which women are of more use than men and that the church needs these talents. There is plenty of work to be done and each one must find his or her own niche and he ends by reminding his readers Miss Buck found hers in preaching the Gospel 'to large congregations throughout the length and breadth of the land.' On the whole it appears that by the late nineteenth century the itinerant ministry of Primitive Methodism was a male preserve to all intents and purposes, but even so it was grudgingly conceded that if, under God, a woman felt she must preach publicly then who were they to gainsay God's spirit. They were not happy about it, but the possibility was admitted. H.B. Kendall, as we saw earlier, pointed out in 1898 that women had played and could still play a very large and vital part in the life of the church and that the Connexion would be losing the initiative if it neglected to make use of the gifts of its women.

So we find that women from having been in the forefront of missions and evangelistic enterprises in the early days were now relegated to the sidelines to work in the local church situations. Although many continued as local preachers, even by 1847 the work of women in

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<sup>607</sup> *PMQR* (3rd series) Vol. III (1881) pp. 695-696.

<sup>608</sup> *PMM* (1888) p. 99.

the itinerant ministry had been called in question and it was said that perhaps there are other 'spheres of usefulness in which females could exercise with more success and in greater harmony with their sex?'<sup>(609)</sup>

However, it is very evident that the growth and development; the changed status and aspirations of both the Connexion and the women; the social conditions in both the the church and the country all affected the role that women played in the life of the Primitive Methodist denomination. As the Connexion strove towards attaining respectability in the eyes of the world and the other denominations the apparent excesses of its earlier years were toned down or abandoned and the female travelling preacher was one of the casualties. By 1874 Primitive Methodism was proud to state that:

'we know that Primitive Methodists are aiming at and rising into true respectability.'<sup>(610)</sup>

but

'....Primitive Methodism has a work to do, and as it succeeds in that work it will rise in society.... But it is to be hoped that our Church will see to it that while she grows in wealth, in social position and respectability, she does not sacrifice upon these altars her simplicity, her spiritual power and influence.'<sup>(611)</sup>

The local opportunities now afforded to women in the local churches would overcome several objections which might be levelled at the itinerant ministry of women. Such objections as that the women had a potentially short working life because they might marry and so have family responsibilities and commitments; that they were the weaker sex and the hardships involved in the itinerancy could damage their health; that there were dangers in a woman travelling alone, both of a physical and a moral nature and that women were not capable of coping with financial and difficult administrative problems connected with church building programmes. It was accepted that women had a vital role to play in the life of the church, but it was apparently no longer to be found in the itinerancy.

As Primitive Methodism changed from being an evangelistic sect into a more orthodox and respectable denomination the novelty value of the female travelling preacher diminished in the eyes of the Connexion. It no longer seemed to the authorities, in particular, though I cannot help feeling that the rank and file of members regretted its passing, fitting that women should engage in the itinerant ministry. As is indicated by Graph IV women continued to be widely used till 1834, thereafter their number gradually declined till only Elizabeth Bultitude was left to labour on alone from 1850-1862.

### **SOCIAL CHANGE**

Factors already considered may have a bearing on this decline, but another important reason must have been the change in social standards and status. Things which had been considered acceptable by both the church and society were no longer so regarded. As the century moved forward social change occurred and this inevitably affected the church. For example, the drift from the land to urban centres. Much of Primitive Methodism had centred on rural areas and small village communities, largely untouched by the other denominations. So places like Scotter in Lincolnshire, Shefford in Berkshire and Cwm in Herefordshire were the heads of large and flourishing circuits. Wearmouth points out that the difficulties experienced in the

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<sup>609</sup> Church, T., *Sketches of Primitive Methodism* p. 99.

<sup>610</sup> *PMM* (1874) pp. 673.

<sup>611</sup> *PMM* (1874) pp. 674.

rural areas accounted for the loss between 1870 and 1896 of five hundred and sixteen village causes and although others were established the net result was a loss of two hundred and eighty village chapels in twenty-six years.<sup>(612)</sup> In fact the *Primitive Methodist Minutes* in 1896 stated that the figures showed that ‘to a much larger extent than was generally thought we are a village church. Nearly 75% of our chapels and a large proportion of our ‘Preaching places’ are in the villages .... The declining population of the villages.... are in fact, creating difficulties with which many of our country circuits are unable to successfully deal’. So it would seem that Primitive Methodism was forced to change some of its emphasis to meet this shift in population as well as to come to terms with the other changes which occurred as it made the transition from sect to denomination. It is likely that this drift from the countryside coincided with a general change in society regarding the status of women. The Victorian ideal of womanhood was beginning to make itself felt - that a woman’s place was in the home, caring for her husband and family, that her power and influence was to be exercised quietly, but nevertheless firmly behind the scenes rather than in the full glare of publicity.<sup>(613)</sup> These standards were, of course, essentially middle-class, whereas early Primitive Methodism had made the most impact upon and drawn its support from the working classes, but now with the period of consolidation and chapel building the Connexion was, albeit unconsciously, allowing middle-class influences to permeate its thinking. So it seemed no longer respectable for women to be itinerant preachers, the awareness that the authorities had always had about the dangers of scandal and impropriety was thus heightened by the prevailing attitudes of other sections of society. It followed, therefore, that although women were still welcomed as local preachers or as special preachers for anniversaries and missions they were not encouraged to enter the regular itinerant ministry. Rather, as we have seen, their enthusiasm and energies, their dedication and desire to pass on their saving faith was directed towards the building up of the local societies. This re-direction had two advantages as far as the Connexion was concerned. First, it built up the local chapel into a force within the community. A strong ‘cause’ made a greater impact and commanded a wider influence. A stable, solid, reliable, respectable and respected chapel, with many activities suited to a variety of needs would provide the focus for the life of the village or neighbourhood. Life revolved round the chapel. Second, it did away with the slightest chance of the women itinerants being the cause of scandal. The Connexion was moving towards being accepted as respectable and in extending its sphere of influence it was felt necessary, at least, to pay lip service to the norms of the more established denominations. Now women were expected to engage in ‘good works’, preferably of the voluntary nature - for it was considered a disgrace for a man not to be able to provide for his wife and family, by this time <sup>(614)</sup> - rather than ‘preach for hire’. In other words, by the very fact

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<sup>612</sup> Wearmouth, R.F., *Methodism and the Struggle of the Working Classes 1850-1900* (Leicester 1954) p. 104.

<sup>613</sup> Branca, Patricia, *Silent Sisterhood: Middle Class Women in the Victorian Home* (1975) pp. 6-7. Hall, Catherine, ‘The Early Formation of Victorian Domestic Ideology in Burman, Sandra, ed. *Fit Work for Women* (1979) pp. 15, 30-31; Hall, Catherine, ‘The butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker: the shop and the family in the Industrial Revolution’ in Whitelegg, Elizabeth etc. *The Changing Experience of Women* (Oxford 1982) pp. 4-6; Hall, Catherine, ‘The home turned upside down? The working-class family in cotton textiles 1780-1850’ in Whitelegg, op. cit. pp. 26-27, especially ‘After mid-century, however stabilization of the pattern of male and female work, the decline of the militant working-class politics, the weight of the most skilled and respectable sections of the male working class in trade union politics and the pervasiveness of domestic ideology with its inflexible notions of male and female all contributed to a ‘near-total absence of women from the public and organised life of the working class between the 1840s and the 1890s’. (quotation from Joyce, P., *Work, Society and Politics: The Culture of the Factory in Later Victorian England* (Brighton 1980)

<sup>614</sup> Branca, Patricia, *Silent Sisterhood*, p. 113.

of Primitive Methodism having itself changed its emphasis the place of women had altered. What might have been acceptable in the first fine flush of evangelism and enthusiasm was now regarded in a different light.

The supposition that the demise of the female travelling preacher might be linked to the jealousy of the men to the success of the women as well as to the changed attitude of what was respectable or not is perhaps reinforced when, on studying Petty's *History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion* it is observed that the work the women did receives little attention. Petty wrote his first edition in 1859, followed by the second in 1864 and then in 1880 James Macpherson revised it and brought it up to date. However, as he states in the Preface that 'with the exception of little more than a few minor typographical corrections, the history, as written by the late Rev. John Petty, is given *verbatim* in this edition' it seems reasonable to assume that Petty was reflecting the attitudes of the period in which he was writing. So we find that the work of Sarah Kirkland which is given considerable space in Bourne's Journals, extensively covered in her obituary in the *Primitive Methodist Magazine* and by Kendall is mentioned almost in passing.<sup>(615)</sup> The longest record about a woman is that of Elizabeth Smith,<sup>(616)</sup> who, in fact, was a colleague of Petty's in the Brinkworth Circuit, and even that is short by comparison with accounts given in her obituary, her husband's writings and in the *Magazine* reports. Then there is no mention of Elizabeth Allen being involved in the mission to Ireland with F.N. Jersey,<sup>(617)</sup> yet F.N. Jersey's Journal in the *Magazine* has at least six named references to her. Jane Ansdale is not credited with much of the work done in Weardale <sup>(618)</sup> and Sister Perry is relegated to 'another' when W. Taylor entered Huddersfield and they were imprisoned.<sup>(619)</sup> Although Ann Godwin worked assiduously in New Zealand she is dismissed as 'wife',<sup>(620)</sup> but an even worse fate befell Ann Brownsword who becomes 'A. Brownsword' and <sup>(621)</sup> male. Have we here a case of male chauvinism or jealousy? Certainly, such a thing happened elsewhere as Ivy Pinchbeck shows when she wrote that male operatives in factories asked for 'the gradual withdrawal of all females from factories' and that one of the reasons for this seemed to be based on the fear of women's competition and that they contended that the 'home, its cares and its employments, is woman's true sphere' and that their work was 'an inversion of the orders of nature and Providence - a return to a state of barbarism, in which the woman does the work, while the man looks idly on.'<sup>(622)</sup>

### MINISTERIAL TRAINING

As Primitive Methodism built its chapels, developed its organisations and activities, became more conformist and respectable so the whole concept of the ministry changed. The status of the travelling preacher was raised. In the early days there was virtually no training for the

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<sup>615</sup> Petty, op. cit. pp. 65, 88 cf. Bourne MSS (Journal) (MARC); Herod, G., *Biographical Sketches* (n.d.) pp.305-336; *PMM* (1881) pp. 99-103, 161-165 226-230, 285<sup>7</sup>-293, 355-360, 420-424; Walford, op. cit. I pp. 393, 413; Kendall, op. cit. I pp. 176-177, 194-195, 201-204, 226-234.

<sup>616</sup> Petty, op. cit. pp. 279-281 cf. *PMM* (1837) pp. 95~00, 139-143, 176-181, 216-222, 258-260, 336-338; Russell, T. *Autobiography*, pp. 26ff; *Record* pp. 26ff. *PMM* (1833) pp. 31-32, 53-54.

<sup>617</sup> Petty, op. cit. pp. 303-306 cf. *PMM* (1832) pp. 58ff.

<sup>618</sup> Petty, op. cit. pp. 186ff. cf. *PMM* (1882) pp. 525-526; Kendall, op. cit. II pp. 87, 143.

<sup>619</sup> Petty, op. cit. p. 125 cf. Church, Thomas, *Gospel Victories: or Missionary Anecdotes* (1851) p. 34f; Kendall, op. cit. I pp. 492-493; *PMM* (1851) pp. 641-642.

<sup>620</sup> Petty, op. cit. p. 481cf. *PMM* (1848) pp.56, 250, 567, 635; Kendall, op. cit. II p. 442.

<sup>621</sup> Petty, op. cit. pp. 101, 111 cf. *PMM* (1819) pp. 229, 233, 236, 255, 256-257; (1821) pp. 14, 19; Walford, op. cit. pp. 83, 308; Kendall, op. cit. I p. 517.

<sup>622</sup> Pinchbeck, Ivy, *Women workers and the Industrial Revolution 1750-1850* (1930) p. 200 where she quotes from Deputation from the Short Time Committee of the West Riding to Peel and Gladstone reprinted in the *Manchester and Salford Advertiser*, January 8th, 15th, 1842.

young preachers - they learned as they worked. Any ministerial training received was very sketchy and patchy in spite of the help given by the extended articles published in the Magazines of 1823 and 1824<sup>(623)</sup> and the encouragement to study in order to further the work. John Wesley had always encouraged his preachers to read and study and as time went on the Primitive Methodists did the same, largely at the instigation of Hugh Bourne. I think it is a mistake to regard the early itinerants as completely illiterate. Hugh Bourne, himself was taught to read and write and do simple arithmetic by his mother. Then he was sent to school at Werrington:

‘I well remember writing ‘1779’ in my copy book as the year of Our Lord, so that I was then only seven years of age.... Here I had to tug at arithmetic and at the grammar and dictionary: and learning the explanation of words in the dictionary took my fancy considerably.’<sup>(624)</sup>

Then later he was sent to a school at Bucknall where he learnt reading, English, grammar, arithmetic, easy measurement and the rudiments of Latin. He continued to study after leaving school - tackling more arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, natural philosophy, history, geography and the Bible and religion in particular.<sup>(625)</sup> In his diary Bourne wrote:

‘Fri. July 14.           ‘Haymaking and studying Greek.’

‘Sat. July 15.           ‘Haymaking: to-day I made great progress in Greek.’<sup>(626)</sup>

and

‘25th Jan. 1817       ‘I have lately made progress in Hebrew;’

24th July 1817       ‘I came home and read in the Greek Testament;’

20th August 1817   ‘This week I have committed to memory the first seven chapters of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Hebrews.’<sup>(627)</sup>

and

‘there is evidence that in later years he gained considerable knowledge of Hebrew, Greek, Latin and French.’<sup>(628)</sup>

Following Hugh Bourne’s example and precepts Primitive Methodism was very strong in its advocacy of self-help and self-education. Bourne, in addition to purchasing and passing on tracts, wrote and published many himself and the preachers were urged to purchase suitable literature from the travelling preachers. A number of travelling preachers who had had the benefit of little formal education did educate themselves to very acceptable standards so that they could more effectively minister to their people. Mary Porteous taught herself to write, whereas before she had only been able to read <sup>(629)</sup> and Mary Buck ‘improved’ herself. Her biographer explains it in these terms:

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<sup>623</sup> See Chapter 4.

<sup>624</sup> **Bourne MSS (Auto)** C Text f.4 (MARC).

<sup>625</sup> **Bourne MSS (Auto)** A and C Texts. (MARC).

<sup>626</sup> **Bourne MSS (Jour.)** 13th Sept. 1809. (MARC).

<sup>627</sup> Ibid. loc. cit.

<sup>628</sup> Wilkinson, *Hugh Bourne* pp. 193-194.

<sup>629</sup> Lightfoot, op. cit. p. 42. Extracts from her writings indicate how well she succeeded cf. *PMM* (1832) pp. 413-417; (1833) pp. 290-292.

‘self-culture became an early habit with her. Yet, as far as we can ascertain, up to the age of nineteen years there was nothing either in her appearance, education or manners of life, which gave indication of superior talents. But finding the world all before her, and but few friends to assist her, she took Providence for her guide, and went to work looking for his blessing. By thinking she learned to think, until she could grapple in a masterly manner with the most difficult subjects in philosophy and theology. By working she learned to work, until that which was difficult to accomplish by an ordinary mind was the merest child’s play to her.’<sup>(630)</sup>

No doubt, by some standards their education was sadly lacking, especially in the finer points of erudition, but the very fact that the preachers were required to keep and present journals ensured that they had the rudiments of good English. The extracts from their journals, articles and sermons, many of which were published in the *Magazine* or read to enquirers and congregations show a considerable grasp of language, even if a little formal in style, and a practical common-sense view of life and its vicissitudes. Most important of all perhaps was the fact that they had a wide experience of the lives and conditions of their congregations and this, coupled with their burning faith and their desire to pass it on, made up for their lack of formal education. In other words they could ‘relate’ or ‘speak’ to their audience because they were ‘of them’ - they had been where they were. Commenting on the preachers and their illiteracy Thomas Church wrote that they were ‘perhaps not the most educated in collegiate terms, but that they were very rich in the experience of saving souls and better able to spread the cause of religion.’<sup>(631)</sup> It was not regarded as peculiar by the travelling preachers themselves or by their hearers that they were not highly educated. After all the preachers’ mission was chiefly to the poorer people who had not had the advantage of much education themselves and who therefore did not see the lack of it - or perhaps even the need for it - in their preachers. Much of the evangelism was carried on in the homes of the people by ‘conversation preaching’ and it was not considered necessary to be highly educated to engage in this type of ‘missioning’ - a burning evangelistic fervour for the saving of souls was more important together with a sound constitution, for the work was exhausting and arduous. It has been said:

‘It is generally known that the early Primitives possessed those peculiar qualifications which the good John Angell James said were needful for a missionary ministry, viz., ‘brains, bowels and bellows,’ i.e. good sense, a loving heart, and lung power. These have been a sine qua non for the work done in the past by our own church.’<sup>(632)</sup>

These three things were desirable. A highly developed sense of what was applicable to a particular situation was eminently useful - ‘wisdom’ in the sense of the qualifications demanded by the apostles in the selection of the deacons, i.e. practical common sense<sup>(633)</sup> - to be able to use practical common sense to meet whatever situation arose. A loving heart which was concerned for men’s souls as well as their physical state, being strong in the belief that a lively faith and a quiet heart would counteract poverty and ignorance was an important asset. A powerful voice was necessary, particularly when faced with large crowds - often noisy and hostile - at camp meetings and other outdoor services. It was no good having a saving message to tell if one had not the voice with which to proclaim it!

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<sup>630</sup> *PMM* (1877) p. 111

<sup>631</sup> Church, Thomas, *Sketches*, pp. 93-98.

<sup>632</sup> *PMM* (1878) p. 351.

<sup>633</sup> *Acts of the Apostles* 6:3



We have seen earlier how the preachers were vetted before they were taken onto the stations. Once the young itinerants were working on probation, which lasted for four years, they were expected to study, in addition to their preaching and visiting, in order to improve themselves in the fields of education, preaching and pastoral care. Eventually the time would come when some were actually expelled from the ranks of the ministry for educational incompetence. So it is obvious that as the century progressed the educational demands of the ministry increased and the education of the congregations likewise increased. As the congregations became more knowledgeable and sophisticated they demanded better educated ministers<sup>634</sup>) and so the need for a more professional approach and a formal programme of ministerial training became evident. Self-help and self-education had been adequate in the early days, especially when taken along with common sense, a loving heart and a pair of strong lungs, but now the educative role of the preachers changed and the preachers themselves had to be more highly educated and it seemed as if college training was required. Many Primitive Methodists feared that such training might mean that the itinerants would lose the common touch, as had previously happened in both the Anglican and Wesleyan communions when at least some part of the gap left had been filled by Primitive Methodism, and that a division would arise between the layman and the minister. Geoffrey Milburn suggests that there was another ‘lurking anxiety’ - that the Primitive ministers might be assuming clerical ambitions as a result of academic training in a theological institution<sup>(635)</sup> and so the worry was that the fundamental character of the ministry would be changed. The main point is, that not only had the Primitive Methodist conception of the ministry changed, but the congregations had changed too. Primitive Methodism, as it moved from fervid evangelism to consolidation, had started to appeal to and imbibe middle-class ideas and standards. Also, as Milburn points out, social and educational developments during the century were producing better informed people who were filled with a thirst for knowledge in many different fields.<sup>(636)</sup> The *Primitive Methodist Magazine* and other Connexional publications have a number of references to this and therefore to the need for a re-thinking of the role of the itinerant. A writer in the *Magazine* of 1864 put it like this:

‘If some of the holy and honoured men who accomplished such wonders during the Connexion’s infancy were living among us, with the acquirements they then possessed, would their zeal and piety atone for their lack of education? Would our intelligent friends willingly sit under their ministry? Do not our people generally require something for thought? Has not the gospel roused their dormant faculties, quickened and directed their intellectual powers, and created a desire for intellectual improvement?’<sup>(637)</sup>

So as Primitive Methodism moved from evangelism to consolidation it obviously became necessary now, not only to cater for its members and their children. <sup>(638)</sup> Primitive Methodism was having to shift its emphasis, as all religions and denominations must need to do as they progress if they are to keep up that progress, in order to cope with the second generation, thus

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<sup>634</sup> *PMM* (1851) Smith, Thomas, ‘The Ministry in relation to the Pulpit’ pp. 21-30 especially pp. 23-24; for a discussion of the role of education in Primitive Methodism see McKeon, Francis J. ‘Primitive Methodism: An Educative Society 1819-1932 with special reference to the work of the early pioneers’ (Institute of Education Library, University of Keele) especially pp. 10-17.

<sup>635</sup> Milburn, G.E., *School for Prophets* (Sunderland 1981) pp. 6-7.

<sup>636</sup> Ibid. p. 7. cf. Booth, Mrs, *Female Teaching* (1861) pp. 25-25. (MARC).

<sup>637</sup> *PMM* (1864) pp. 466-7.

<sup>638</sup> . See Currie, R., Gilbert, A.D., Horsley, H., *Churches & Churchgoers: Patterns of Church Going in the British Isles since 1700* (Oxford, 1977) pp. 71-72, 74.

making necessary the setting up and maintenance of church buildings and organisations. So Sunday Schools proliferated; circuits were reorganised; church architecture became more ambitious; houses were built for their ministers; ministerial salaries were increased and a new hymn book took over from Hugh Bourne's original collection. Hence, along with these developments, it was obvious that there would be a demand from both the ministers themselves and from the congregations for more specialised training and this added to other factors worked towards the change in the role of women in Primitive Methodism. This was another nail in the coffin of the women itinerants as it was not yet considered that females ought to be educated equally with males even in schools and certainly not in the heady realms of higher education. So the setting up, in 1865 of a one year training scheme for ministers at Elmfield College in York and the establishment of a theological college in Sunderland in 1868 further militated against the use of women in the regular ministry. It also appears that an ample supply of young men was coming forward to be trained and so by implication there was no need for women, who could it was felt, therefore better employ their talents elsewhere. Perhaps a comment in *Methodist Worthies* indicates one trend in the evolution of the ministry, where it is stated that Primitive Methodism had established four Theological Institutes or Colleges:

‘(As, however, it was found that more young men were trained in them than were required by the circuits, two of these are discontinued, at least for the present.)’<sup>(639)</sup>

This comment would relate to the period of the 1880s and would reinforce the theory that women were not needed by this time in the itinerancy as they had been at the beginning because of the numbers of men offering for the ministry.

### **CONCLUSION**

It would seem on balance, having weighed all the evidence in order to try to account for the decline and ultimate demise of the female travelling preacher phenomenon that, although a number of the factors discussed before are pertinent the chief prejudice, as the nineteenth century progressed, was towards women engaging in itinerant preaching. It has been demonstrated that local preachers and evangelists were still welcomed and well used in the circuits and for missions. Then apart from the change in the nature, status and attitude of Primitive Methodism itself there was the wider social change in the Victorian age regarding the place and position of women in the home and in society.

Thomas Parsons in one of the Symposium papers remarked that the abuse of female preaching was bringing it into disrepute. Unfortunately, he does not amplify this rather cryptic statement except to say:

‘It is.... a question not so much of right or wrong, but whether the usage is proper or improper. It is not a matter of principle, but of taste, of precedent, of public sentiment and policy.... The standard of propriety is neither permanent, uniform, nor universal. It is determined by conditions which are the very essence of change themselves. Propriety of one age and land becomes the grossest impropriety of another. The impropriety of field preaching, which stands in close relation to our Connexional origin, has become one of the prominent characteristics of the Church of these days. Street processioning and singing which were

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<sup>639</sup> Stevenson, Geo. John, *Recollections of Methodist Worthies* (1881) Vol. I p. 86. Sunderland and Hartley Victoria, (Manchester) Colleges were specifically concerned with ministerial training, whereas Elmsfield and Bourne (Quinton, Birmingham) Colleges were primarily schools.

the peculiarity and shame of the early Primitives, is common now, not only to the Salvation Army, but also to the Episcopalian Church of this country. The two main rubrics of the early church were, 'Let all things be done unto edifying. Let all things be done decently and in order.' If women can preach and promote the order and maturation of the body of Christ, then we see no valid objection to it.<sup>(640)</sup>

So it would appear that what was once regarded as a novelty and a peculiarity of groups like the early Primitive Methodist 'ranters' was now more widely to be found, but that in the changed and more rarified atmosphere of the period it was not considered 'proper'. As Methodism became respectable it did not want women acting outside 'the sphere of their sex' and middle-class values became the accepted standard. Louis Billington, writing particularly with reference to the women preachers in the North Eastern United States, says that many women found the constant opposition daunting and were led to question whether their call to preach was genuine and so desisted, while others reacted the other way and 'became more stringent or eccentric which seemed to confirm the view that women preachers belonged to the lunatic fringe.'<sup>(641)</sup> If this was true for the United States then equally it could be said to be so for Britain and may help to account for the bias against women expressed in the Symposium papers and perhaps even explain why it seemed necessary to set up the Symposium at all.

Olive Anderson writing about the female preachers of the 'second great awakening' in the 1860s says:

'The strong-minded among them...endeavoured to appeal to their hearers' intellect and judgement, while the rest of them exploited the sentimentality which was at the centre of revivalism in this period, and indeed of middle-class religion in general.'<sup>(642)</sup>

J. Edwin Orr notes that the Primitive Methodist Conference of 1862 urged its leaders 'to avoid the employing of Revivalists so-called', that Wesleyan Methodism was also against them and that the Salvation Army was convinced that 'those in power at the time in the governing bodies of the principal Methodist Churches were also opposed to Revivalism.' However, Orr feels that this is only partly correct and that it was not so much that they were against Revivalism per se, but rather against 'Revivalists outside denominational control'; that they were jealous and that the ruling was 'more provoked by Revivalist personalities than Revivalist principles.'<sup>(643)</sup> This attitude by the 'respectable' Methodist bodies would obviously cover the employing of female preachers as well as people like William and Catherine Booth and Dr. and Mrs. Palmer.<sup>(644)</sup> Such evangelists considered that they had a roving commission and often conducted missions

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<sup>640</sup> *PMQR* (1885) p. 681; see also a debate in the *Congregationalist* (1886) on 'Preaching Women' quoted in Thompson, Dale, *Women in English Religion 1700-1925* (New York, 1983) pp. 283-293.

<sup>641</sup> Billington, Louis, 'Female Labourers in the Church: Women preachers in the North East United States 1790-1840 in *The Journal of American Studies* Vol. 19 No. 3 (Dec. 1985) p. 391.

<sup>642</sup> Anderson, Olive, 'Women Preachers in Mid-Victorian Britain' in *The Historical Journal*, XII, 3 (1969) p. 472.

<sup>643</sup> Orr, J. Edwin, *The Second Evangelical Awakening* (1949) pp. 116, 196-197.

<sup>644</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 113-116, 151, 169, 196, 232; The Booths had belonged to the Methodist New Connexion, but William wished to be freer from Connexional restraints to conduct revivals and resigned in 1862. For details of their work see Begbie, Harold, *The Life of William Booth* (1926); Booth-Tucker, *Life of Catherine Booth* (1924) and Sandall, R. *History of the Salvation Army* (1947) 2 vols. Dr. Walter C. Palmer and Phoebe, his wife, came from America to Britain and conducted revivals for several years from 1859. cf. Anderson, op. cit. pp. 480-483.

in places where they had been specially invited, occasionally to the great chagrin of the local minister, though others provided platforms or pulpits for the mission. While many of these 'lady preachers' and their champions insisted, as had done their Primitive Methodist predecessors, that they had a genuine 'call' to preach and that the results they achieved were evidence of that call Anderson observes that:

'it is undoubtedly also true that one of the distinguishing characteristics of the female preaching of this period was its self-consciousness, indeed in certain quarters its explicit self-consciousness.'<sup>(645)</sup>

During the 1860s then there was an upsurge of female preaching, while although it had some common features with the female preaching of early Primitive Methodism, was in others very different. The revivalism of early Primitive Methodism which allowed the use of all, and almost any, means, including female preachers, in order to save souls and the belief that their success proved they were owned by God was carried almost to excess by some of the revivalists of the later nineteenth century. In revivals the laity always play a large part and this fact no doubt encouraged the women, affected by the revivals, to 'take-up' preaching as means of promulgating their new found faith and, as with the earlier Primitive Methodists, the leaders of the revivals were not slow to realise the novelty value in being able to announce that 'a woman was going to preach'. This 'second awakening' had some elements of 'deliberate sensationalism' and, although perhaps counter-productive in the long term, at times the women were purposely used as 'a draw'.<sup>(646)</sup> The desire for personal holiness and the popular belief in the imminence of the second coming both were widely accepted features of popular religion of this period and women played an important role in this - the search for perfection seems to be pre-eminently attractive to women and the scriptural text of Joel 1:28-29 referring to the prophesying of women and to their receiving God's spirit in the last days seemed to indicate the period before the millennium - so the supporters of millennialism often also supported female preaching. It could well be that it was excesses such as these and the over-enthusiastic use, or even exploitation, of women preachers which called forth the negative responses of the Symposium. So Primitive Methodism, having striven towards respectability and compatibility with the more established denominations was not willing to be associated, even by historical implication, with the present wave of female preaching, which seemed to the authorities to smack of sensationalism and might bring their hard won status into question. So to be safe it was preferred to minimise, as far as possible, any more controversial features and these included women preachers, especially in the itinerancy. It also seems, from the comments in the early twentieth century that female local preaching declined too.

When Primitive Methodism neared its centenary celebrations in 1907 there were several articles and a number of letters in *The Primitive Methodist Leader* which looked back rather nostalgically towards the years when Primitive Methodism positively welcomed and made great use of its female talents in the itinerant ministry. From the tone of some of these articles it is evident that not only had women been pushed out of the itinerancy, but that to a large extent they had been excluded from taking an active part in the forth-coming centenary celebrations. The impression given is that the woman's role was chiefly that of 'hostess' or 'caterer' for the special events rather than a leading, active participation in the organising and administering of the celebrations. A number of women, and not a few ministers, rather resented this and felt that the Connexion was the poorer for not making better use of its female resources. H.B. Kendall writing in *The Primitive Methodist Leader* of Thursday, January 24th 1907 looked back at the 'distinctive' methods and agencies used in early Primitive Methodism, which in his opinion

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<sup>645</sup> Anderson, op. cit. p. 474.

<sup>646</sup> Ibid. pp. 474-476.

could be restored with advantage. After a very brief reference to camp meetings and open air work which was still being widely and valuably used, he turned to the subject of female preaching which 'seems to have been allowed to fall into a good deal of disrepair and neglect, and yet one thinks, might very profitably be re-opened.' He refers to the well-known women preachers and to the scriptural texts about women 'keeping silence' and in particular he gives two instances which are worthy of mention. First, he tells the story of Miss Buck, who, having been appointed to preach at New Mills, went first to the morning service at the parish church only to hear a pointed sermon on 'It is a shame for a woman to speak in the church.' Perhaps unable to resist a challenge she took the same text for her own sermon on the Monday evening listened to by a large and eager congregation. Then, he recounts how Hugh Bourne was asked in Glasgow why he allowed women to preach in his churches when it conflicted with St. Paul's dictum to which he replied:

'The men have monopolised the preaching for upwards of eighteen centuries, and you must admit that on the whole they have made very badly out; and suppose now you permit the women to try and see if they cannot do better than the men have done. At any rate, God owns them in the converting work, so we had better not interfere with them.'<sup>647</sup>

A telling comment by Kendall is that:

Probably it was mainly due to Hugh Bourne that, from the first, the question of sex was never allowed to interfere with the work of evangelisation. When, however, it came to having an equal share in administration it- was another matter.'<sup>648</sup>

and he also observes that apparently the women were not taking much official part in the centenary celebrations. He suggests that each District could well produce a record of the female pioneers and that they might also:

'seek to organise female-labour for meeting the ever-increasing demand for those social and spiritual ministries which woman is best fitted to render.'<sup>649</sup>

A month later Mr. Jeffs takes up the question of the part women were going to take in the raising of the Centenary Fund. It is apparent that women were regarded primarily as fund-raisers and that he deplors the little use made of the abilities of women in present day Primitive Methodism. The impression gained from his article is that the number of women local preachers was very low and in fact that those named on the circuit plans were older women who no longer took services and that few of the younger women were becoming preachers, class leaders or were even taking part in prayer meetings. He is honest enough to admit that men are chiefly at fault in having 'no desire and no intention to regard a sister, whatever her gifts, as the equal of a brother in the Church;' that although 'a woman might be the better preacher men would rather listen to 'the rawest male local preacher than the most competent woman Christian Endeavour leader; that 'the last thing we have any intention of doing is to confer the denominational franchise on our women; that although women outnumbered men in Church congregations, Christian Endeavour Societies, and as Sunday School teachers, Quarterly Meetings, District Committees and the Conference 'are all assemblies of the 'lords of creation.' And our Connexional Centenary Committee is 100 men to

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<sup>647</sup> Kendall, op. cit. p. 49

<sup>648</sup> Ibid.

<sup>649</sup> Ibid.

0 women.’ Although women have not complained verbally about their exclusion from office they have quite justifiably taken the attitude ‘If men arrogate to themselves all the power and all the responsibility, all the honour and the glory, let men do the work. We will attend to the sewing Meeting, and the tea meeting, which are relegated to us as our proper sphere, but beyond that the men shall have all the discredit of failure as well as the glory of success,’ and he feels that unless they are given an official voice in the Church courts a great opportunity will have been missed by the Connexion. Finally he states that many capable women preachers are more effective, both in open-air meetings and in the chapels, than many men and that they could be just as effective in the Connexional Courts. As a parting shot he comments that:

‘there is no more business-like body in London Primitive Methodism than the London Primitive Methodist Women’s Foreign Missionary Society.’<sup>(650)</sup>

The following week’s issue contained six letters on the subject of ‘Our Women and the Centenary’ and five at least of these were by women. The first, remarked that it was short-sighted not to use women on the Centenary Committees and that the whole question of woman’s place in the Church needed to be considered promptly and generously ‘if our church is to advance victoriously.’ The second, emphasised that it was strange that in such a democratic church women were not given equal place with men. Women had contributed greatly on the mission field and at home, in debt-reducing and tending the young and that in spite of the ‘very tardy appreciation from our - shall we whisper it? - rather envious brethren (the women) will still help....’ The third, states the view that in the matter of women preaching there is great prejudice:

‘Many churches that will allow a coloured man or a converted clown to occupy the pulpit without a question, shut the door against a woman, no matter what her talent may be, and yet, judging by the supreme tests of results, I venture to say that the woman’s work, as far as it have been allowed in this department, will compare favourably with the most successful of our ministers.’<sup>(651)</sup>

Women need to be given their rightful place in the pulpit, the prayer Meeting and in office and the Connexion must go back to its ‘Primitive’ practice to ensure success for the Centenary. The fourth letter agreed that women were not used as extensively as they should have been and that they were excluded from nearly all the principal committees. With the higher education of women and their interest in both the Church and public matters at the present time considering the work done by women in earlier days the writer felt that they ought to be given places on the various Connexional Committees. The attitude of ‘women raise the money and men spend it’ is condemned by the writer of the fifth letter who felt that although the women had done much of the work the credit for it had gone to the men. She is very much against the sop of ‘the statutory woman’ being given a seat on the various committees and insists that women should ‘be represented in fair numbers and elected to such positions, because the men realise the position, power, and ability of woman from three standpoints, viz.: that of spirituality, business ability, and finances.’ As women served Primitive Methodism in the early days so they could do so now if they were allowed to do so. The last letter condemns the male attitude of virtually boycotting women and their service and insists in no uncertain terms that women who had the gift should be allowed to preach:

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<sup>650</sup> Jeffs, H., ‘Our Women and the Centenary’ in *The Primitive Methodist Leader* (Thursday, February 28th, 1907).

<sup>651</sup> *The Primitive Methodist Leader* (March 7th, 1907) p. 147.

‘When the idea of the Centenary camp-meeting was first mooted, one knowledge of man’s exclusiveness it never occurred that woman’s boycott could go so far as to exclude all of them, especially in view of the fact that our sisters had so much to do with the genesis of our church, when their ministry was owned wondered how many women would be asked to speak, and with all one’s by God in the salvation of many souls. I am convinced that our church has lost immeasurably in practically silencing women so far as preaching goes, and will never recover its lost glory until it is realised that in Christ there is neither male nor female.

If a woman has been blessed with the gift of utterance, blended with intelligence and spiritual power, able to look deep into human hearts, her soul longing to tell the ‘old, old story’, why should she be relegated to the sewing meeting and tea meeting only?<sup>(652)</sup>

The extracts from these letters give some idea of how Primitive Methodism had become male-orientated and women had been excluded from all positions of any importance - preaching, offices and administration in the latter half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

It would seem that by 1907 the more intelligent and thinking women of Primitive Methodism were beginning to resent their exclusion from the public offices and spheres of influence, and in pursuit of their claim for equality eagerly looked back to their roots - to the valuable work done by the first women pioneers. They were their inspiration for the continuing struggle to reach real parity with the men.

One further observation needs to be made which is that it was perhaps as Primitive Methodism, not only became more ‘respectable’ and ‘respected’ in the eyes of the other denominations, but moved nearer to them in conforming to accepted standards of churchmanship that the female preachers and the female itinerants in particular became rather an embarrassment. This was to become especially true when conversations were begun with those churches which were opposed historically to women in the ministry. So it was that when the whole question of Methodist Union arose there were no women in the Primitive Methodist itinerant ministry, but Thomas Graham implies that two or three had been discouraged from candidating prior to Union, presumably because it might have proved to be a stumbling block to the unity discussions.<sup>(653)</sup> A similar situation might be said to have arisen in 1907 when the union of the Bible Christians, the Methodist New Connexion and the United Methodist Free Churches occurred and Miss Lillie Edwards, a Bible Christian itinerant, was retired from the ministry ‘in view of the anomalous position Miss Edwards would occupy in the United Church.’<sup>(654)</sup> Again, certainly in more recent years the entry of women into the ordained ministry of the Methodist Church was delayed because of the conversations with the Anglican Church.

So, in conclusion, it seems that the decline of the Primitive Methodist itinerant phenomenon was due more to internal changes in the Connexion itself than to outward social and economic factors. Ill-health and marriage, undoubtedly were factors in this but they do not provide the explanation. As women left the itinerancy, for one reason or another, others must have been ready and willing to take their places if the Connexion had only been ready and willing to

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<sup>652</sup> Ibid.

<sup>653</sup> Graham, Thomas, *Mow Cop and After: The story of Primitive Methodism* (1936) p. 7

<sup>654</sup> President’s Circular, 1907 quoted in Beckerlegge, Oliver A., ‘Women Itinerant Preachers’ in *WHS Proc.*, Vol. 30, Part 8 (December 1956) p. 182.

accept them, but apparently although they were welcomed as local preachers, special preachers and evangelists the ranks of the itinerant ministry were closed to them. Ill-health, marriage and the arduous nature of the work provided convenient excuses for the powers-that-be, who incidentally were always male, to abandon the female travelling preachers. These 'gentlemen' could perhaps pretend that they were being chivalrous in protecting the women from the difficulties and hardships of the itinerancy and yet, by continuing to use them as local preachers and special preachers, they could not be accused of ignoring the talents and abilities of women, which had proved so effective in evangelistic missions.

As the Connexion grew, both with tangible buildings and in spiritual development and outlook, so its attitudes altered. It was perhaps that the conception of the Primitive Methodist ministry had changed rather than that the Connexion had developed an aversion to women preachers. The ministry of women was now seen to be more local than itinerant. The chapels provided a suitable focus for women's work without arousing many of the reservations which might be felt about women itinerating.

Evangelism and mission needed all types of tools. Consolidation and respectability was more selective. So women travelling preachers were dropped and Primitive Methodism, to many minds, was the poorer.



## CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION

Having set out to identify, explore and assess the phenomenon of the female travelling preachers in early Primitive Methodism, it became necessary to look at the nature of Primitive Methodism and its itinerancy; at its geographical progress; its chapel building era and the development of its conception of the ministerial office. As a result one is forced to the conclusion that where women could be found to be especially valuable in promoting the cause they were used equally with the men, but that when it came to other matters they were regarded and treated as second class citizens.

The interesting overall impression, therefore, is that Primitive Methodism was consistent in its attitude to women in the church. From the beginning it had been recognised that they could be chosen by God equally with men to work in and for his Kingdom. This attitude never fundamentally changed -they held to the principle, even if the actual practice was honoured more in the breach as time passed. So women were denied a voice in the church courts, by right, from the early days<sup>(655)</sup> and this was apparently so, right up to the Centenary celebrations,<sup>(656)</sup> yet they were widely used as missionaries and evangelists in evangelistic endeavours when Primitive Methodism was pushing its way in all directions from its cradle on the Derbyshire/Staffordshire borders. Their 'peculiar' ability and appeal was exploited in order to pull the 'unsaved' masses into God's Kingdom, and, in later times at least, hopefully into Primitive Methodism.

In its willingness to use women as preachers, thus defying accepted convention Primitive Methodism showed a mixture of initiative, caring concern for people and worldly cunning. Women's novelty could be used as a draw and then the men could build on the foundations laid. Women could go to and appeal to people the men might not be able to touch and yet because the general temper of the age was against women being in places of real influence and decision making the men's position was not really threatened. The Connexion was proud of its record in allowing women to be preachers alongside the men, yet it was not prepared to give them equal status in positions of power and furthermore as time passed the authorities retreated from this partial equality and eventually dropped women from the itinerancy altogether. No doubt good excuses, in so far as any were needed, were forwarded such as care and concern for the women's welfare; that the high turn-over rate proved it to be uneconomic and impracticable and that the building of local chapels provided plenty of opportunity for service which fitted better with women's role as wife and mother. Hidden below the surface, without doubt, but true nevertheless, were the feelings that women were just not capable of dealing with the administrative and financial problems connected with chapel building; that they would not be able to cope intellectually with a ministerial college education; that such a 'peculiar' phenomenon was a hindrance and indeed a barrier in Primitive Methodism's striving towards respectability and conformity with other denominations. In the early days the means had seemed to justify the ends, but in more enlightened days the means seemed to threaten the new-found status of the Connexion.

On the whole then it would be true to say that rather than discovering any new and far-reaching explanations for the decline and ultimate demise of the Primitive Methodist female itinerant this research has extended knowledge of the numbers involved and of the role played by the women itinerants. It has been proved that there were many more women in the itinerancy than had been positively identified before, and doubtless there are still more to be found; that

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<sup>655</sup> *PM Mins* (1824) p. 4.

<sup>656</sup> Letters: 'Our Women and the Centenary' in *The Primitive Methodist Leader* (March 7th, 1907) p. 147.

women were used primarily in mission and evangelistic situations, even when the women were being phased out; that hired local preachers, local preachers and evangelists continued to be used; that there seems to be a definite link between chapel building and the decline of the phenomenon; that ill-health, the marriage of the women, the demand for a college trained ministry, the growing respectability and increasing conformity of Primitive Methodism to other denominations were all factors which militated against the use of women itinerants.

Had time and the scope of this work permitted I would have like to have explored the following areas. First, to have tracked down more female travelling preachers through Record Offices and other depositories - it is very unlikely that such tracing would add much to the overall picture, but just fill in a few details about the individual women which would have been interesting in itself, but not essential for this present piece of research, so it had to be left aside for the moment. Second, to have, in conjunction with the above, found the Christian names of all the itinerants listed in the *Primitive Methodist Minutes* by initial only to see how many more women are concealed therein. Third, I would have liked to have proved my theory that many more of the female itinerants married their male colleagues and therefore continued their ministry without official recognition. Fourth, to have pursued the subject of hired local preachers and evangelists, particularly in the later period, to see how much they were welcomed by the men to start a mission and then to see if or how they capitalised on the women's initial efforts. Fifth, to have dealt with local preachers and to see how far they had equality with men. Sixth, to have explored the role of women in local church situations more fully and to see if in some instances they were allowed parity with men in administrative positions or whether women were commonly or generally excluded. Lastly, I would have liked to have covered the Bible Christian female itinerant phenomenon and to have compared it with Primitive Methodism to see the similarities and the differences. So, much remains to be done if the work of these early Primitive Methodist female travelling preachers is to be fully and properly recorded and acknowledged.

Undoubtedly, the women were chosen by God for mission and service and their endeavours were blessed.

**APPENDIX I :TRANSCRIPT OF MSS LETTER FROM MR. STOBART,  
HEXHAM, MAY 1827**

Hexham, May 17th 1827

Mr. Taft

Dear Sir

Yours I duly recd. with your Parcel. I was glad to hear from you, and I dare say if you had sent a few more of the Books I could have sold them. I read the Book with pleasure and profit, as I brought past Occurrences to my remembrance and when I contemplate the continued goodness of the Lord to me, and Mine, I would say bless "Lord O my Soul, and All within me bless his holy name." I am not very fit for travelling, Or it would yield me much pleasure, to come over and see you; when we would with joy bow together, to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The time when your dear Wife paid us a Visit first in the year 1793 I remember very well.

Your Brother Barritt was our Superintendent at that time. I don't remember I ever heard him say any thing About his Sister. The Evening she first said a little, I did not know who she was. When I went in to the Chapel, Our friend John Walton from Garrigill, who brought Mrs. Taft was preaching, and seemed very lively - I was previously acquainted with him, in his discourse he mentioned he had brought a Sister with him, who had been a blessing at Garigill and hoped she would be a blessing among us. That she would speak a little after he was done, I was up in the Gallery, and Mrs. T (corrected to Miss Barritt) was below. When she began to give out the Hymn, I stepped towards the Front, that I might see her, but I assure you, I had no prepossession in her favour at that time. A meeting was given out for the morning, and I believe every morning it was continued that week. It was in Winter, and I think it was at Six O'clock. On the next evening, (Tuesday) Miss Barritt held forth again, and, an After Meeting was published, As I had not witnessed any particular revivals, and as I feared she, and some of the friends were in danger of going too far , I did not tarry, but went home. I believe after that time, I not only attended the first, but latter meetings. The Lord appeared to Own her labours very much. Our Society seemed to get much stirred up; some got their evidence brightened of their acceptance with God; and some professed to Obtain Sanctification. From what I saw and heard I began to think this is undoubtedly the work of God, evident good seems done, and people seem all alive. I thought it is now time for me to be looking for a blessing. I felt my heart very hard. I began to call upon God, and felt very strong anxiety that the Lord would give me a new Heart and right Spirit.

The first Saturday night, when all seemed prosperity around, I was like Gideon's fleece, unwatered and dry, my anxiety was great, that that I was much disturbed in my Sleep.

On the Sabbath morning I rose to go to the 7 O'clock prayer Meeting - I think if it would have saved me I could not shed a Tear. After the prayer Meeting was Over, I asked Miss Barritt to meet my Class. She did so and Many felt it good to be there. Towards the close, my heart began to dissolve and Tears to flow. I asked her to go with us to take Breakfast, as I went up the street Tears flowed from my Eyes. When I got home, and Breakfast being Over, she proposed to go up stairs and have prayers. She prayed, and I prayed, and the Lord granted me the desire of my Heart. My language then was, "Lord now lettest thou thy Servant depart in Peace for mine Eyes have seen thy Salvation" I cannot doubt, but the Lord Sanctified my Soul. I went on my way rejoicing. I seemed to get a new commission to preach. All doubt was removed from my Mind, As well As Others, of her being called of God to call Sinners to Repentance and to be a blessing to Saints, and ever since, I have found a pleasure in pious females speaking a Word for God.

My mind has got Satisfied that those passages of holy Writ has been misunderstood, that are brought forth, to set such aside. The Almighty cannot be against what he blessed, and Owns for the Salvation of Sinners, and comfort of Saints. God wrought in a special Manner among us, both in Town and Country through her instrumentally I thought then and I am of the same mind now, that it was a Wonderful day of Visitations.

I had several opportunities of accompanying Miss B. in the Country, where God Owned her labours abundantly and several, as well as myself can bear witness to the same. I am glad you, and Mrs. T. hold on your way, and that God is blessing you, and making you a blessing.

I bless the Lord my Soul is alive Unto him, and I am labouring to be found ready, when so'er my Lord shall call. My Wife Joins me As well As my Son Smith, and Daughters, in love to you. My youngest Son Robt, is serving his time to a Chemist at Durham. He has a year to serve Sept. 27. He attends Preaching and I hope he behaves well - but I doubt he is not yet converted. This my soul longs for. Smith is alive to God. Eleanor meets in class, and Betsy I hope will soon be what I would have her. My Wife is getting on her way.

When convenient, I will be glad of a long Letter from you. I recd one sometime ago from Mrs. Taft, at which I was glad. Please say how your Daughters are, and if they are converted. I think I have wrote twice to Mr. Barritt since I had a Letter from him. Please give our love to him and to Mrs. Barritt.

Bless the Lord, we have had a good Work going on among us, and we have got a good addition to our Society. My Wife's Brother a Tanner at Chester le street, died very suddenly - My Son Smith is principally there, carrying on the concern, in his absence I pay a little attention to his business, otherwise I am out of business. He is here at present, but goes away tomorrow.

(The 'envelope' is addressed:

The Revd Zech Taft  
at the  
Methodist Chapel  
Rippon  
Yorkshire.

and there is a note on it presumably written by Zechariah Taft:

'a good letter from Mr. Stobert Hexham, May 1827 Something here for Mrs. Taft's Journal'

then another comment in the same hand:

'Part of it transcribed for second Edition')<sup>(657)</sup>

APPENDIX II: MSS LETTER FROM MR STOBART TO Z TAFT

Su M<sup>r</sup> To Drury I 34<sup>th</sup>  
104 2 H. Hexham May 17. 1827

Dear Sir,

Yours I delect<sup>d</sup>. with your Parcel. I was glad to hear from you, and I dare say if you had sent a few more of the Books I would have sold them. I read the Book with pleasure and profit, as it brought past Occurrences to my remembrance and when I contemplate the continued goodness of the Lord to me, and mine; I would say "bless the Lord O my soul, and all within me bless his holy name." I am not very fit for travelling, but would yield me much pleasure, to come over and see you; when we would with joy bow together, to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

the time when your dear Wife paid us a Visit first in the year 1793 I remember very well. Your Brother Barrett, was our Superintendent at that time. I dont remember I ever heard him say any thing about his Sister. the Evening she first said a little, I did not know who she was. when I went in to the Chapel, our friend John Walton from Garrigill, who brought Mrs Taft was preaching, and seemed very lively. I was previously acquainted with him, in his discourse he mentioned he had brought a Sister with him, who had been a blessing at Garrigill and hoped she would be a blessing among us. that she would speak a little after he was done.

I was up in the gallery, and <sup>11th Dec 1774</sup> ~~that~~ I was below.  
 when she began to give out the Hymn, I stopped  
 towards the front, that I might see her, but I assure  
 you, I had no prepossession in her favour at that  
 time. A meeting was given out for the morning,  
 and I believe every <sup>morning</sup> it was continued that week.  
 It was in winter, and I think it was six o'clock.  
 On the next evening, (Tuesday) Miss Barrill held  
 forth again, and an after meeting was published,  
 as I had not witnessed any particular revivals,  
 and as I feared she, and some of the friends were  
 in danger of going too far, I did not tarry, but went home.  
 I believe after that time, I not only attended the first,  
 but latter meetings. The Lord appeared to crown her  
 labours. <sup>our</sup> Society seemed to get much stirred up;  
 some got their evidence brightened of their acceptance  
 with God; and some professed to obtain Sanctification.  
 from what I saw and heard, I began to think, this  
 is undoubtedly a work of God, evident good seems done,  
 and people seemed all alive. I thought it is now  
 time for me to be looking for a blessing. I felt  
 my heart very hard. I began to call upon God,  
 and felt strong anxiety, that the Lord would give  
 me a new Heart and right Spirit.  
 When the first Saturday night, when all seemed  
 prosperity around, I was like Gideon's fleece,  
 unwatered and dry, my anxiety was so great, that  
 that I was much disturbed in my sleep.  
 On the Sabbath morning, I rose to go to the 7 o'clock  
 prayer meeting - I think if it would have saved me,  
 I could not shed a Tear. After the prayer meeting

was over, I asked Miss Barrett to meet my <sup>the 21<sup>st</sup> 20<sup>th</sup></sup> ~~clap~~, Many felt it  
 good to be there. towards the close, my heart began to dissolve,  
 and Tears to flow. I asked ~~her~~ <sup>her</sup> to go with us to  
 take Breakfast, and went up the street, Tears flowed from  
 my Eyes. when I got home, and Breakfast being over,  
 she proposed to go up stairs and have prayer, she  
 prayed, and I prayed, and the Lord granted me the  
 desire of my Heart. my language then was,  
 "Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in <sup>peace</sup>  
 for mine Eyes have seen thy Salvation" I think I  
 cannot doubt, but the Lord Sanctified my soul.  
 I went on my way rejoicing. I desired to get a new  
 commission to preach. All doubt was removed from  
 my Mind, as well as others, of her being called of God  
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 and ever since, I have found a pleasure in  
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 My mind has got satisfied that those passages  
 of holy Word has been misunderstood, that are  
 brought forth, to set such ~~words~~ <sup>things</sup> aside. He Almighty  
 cannot be against, what he blesses, and owns for  
 the Salvation of Sinners, and comfort of Saints.  
 God wrought in a special manner among us both  
 in Town & Country, <sup>properly the instrumentality</sup> ~~and in the~~  
~~same manner~~ <sup>and in the same manner</sup> ~~that~~ <sup>that</sup> I thought, ~~that~~  
~~it was a wonderful visitations day.~~  
 I had several opportunities of accompanying Miss B.  
 in the Country, where God owned her labours, and  
 several, as well as myself can bear witness to the same.  
 I am glad you, and will hold on your way, and that  
 God is blessing you, and making you a blessing.  
 I bless the Lord my Soil is alive with them, and I am

labouring to be found ready, when so'er my Lord shall call. My Wife joins me, as well as my Son Smith, and Daughters, in love to you. My youngest Son Robt is serving his time to a Criswell at Durham. he has a year to serve Sept 24. he attends Preaching and hope he behaves well - but I doubt he is not yet converted. then my soul longs for Smith is alive to God. Eleanor meets in class, & Betsey I hope will soon be what I would have her. My Wife is getting on her way.

A good letter from Mr. Robert Haysom  
May 1827. P. 4. v. 1.

The Rev. Geo. H. Taft

at the

Methodist Chapel

Something here

for Mrs. Taft's

Journal

Part of it transmitted for record D. H.

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when convenient, I will be glad of a long Letter from you. I rec'd one sometime ago from Mrs Taft, at which I was glad. Please say how your Daughters are, and if they are converted. I think I have wrote twice to Mr Barritt since I had a Letter from him. Please give our love to him & Mrs Barritt. Praise the Lord, we have had a good work going on among us, and we have got a good addition to our Society. My W. Mother a Traveller at Chesterlestreet, died very suddenly - My Son Smith is principally there, carrying on the concern, in his absence I pay a little attention to his business, otherwise I am out of business. he is here at present, but goes away tomorrow.



### APPENDIX III: COPY OF A LETTER FROM JOHN PAWSON WITH REGARD TO THE PREACHING OF MARY TAFT

Birstal, Oct. 25th 1802

My dear unknown Friends,

It is now about 33 years since I was at Dover or any place in that neighbourhood, so that I may suppose there is no person now living who has any remembrance of me, yet nevertheless I cannot help wishing the prosperity of the work of God among you; it is but too well known that this has been for some considerable time at a very low ebb in Dover. I therefore could not help thinking that it was a kind providence that Mary Barritt was stationed among you, and that by the blessing of God she might be the instrument of reviving this blessed work among you. Perhaps there never was an age in which the Lord so greatly condescended to the curiosity of mankind in order to do them good than in the present. He has been pleased to raise up and send forth all sorts of instruments - men, almost of all description, poor men, rich men, learned and unlearned, yea black as well as white men and if he is pleased to send by a woman also, who shall say unto him. "What doest thou?"

The late Mr. Wesley was very much opposed to women preaching, yet (when) he saw that the Lord owned and blessed the labours of Mrs. Crosby, Mrs. Fletcher and the late Miss Horral he was obliged to allow that the Lord is pleased to go out of his common way sometimes for the good of his poor creatures and therefore he would say nothing against women preaching in extraordinary cases.

As to myself, I have long thought that it is far more difficult to prove that women ought not preach than many imagine. Let anyone seriously consider I Cor. 11:5 "Prophesieth with her head uncovered." Now prophesying there has generally been understood preaching. If then, the women never did preach at all, why did the Lord by the Apostle give these instructions respecting their heads being covered or uncovered.

I have been no great friend to women preaching among us, but when I evidently see that good is done, I dare not forbid it.

I seriously believe Mrs. Taft to be a deeply pious, prudent, modest woman. I believe the Lord hath owned and blest her labours very much, and many, yea very many souls have been brought to the saving knowledge of God by her preaching. Many have come to hear her out of curiosity who would not come to hear a man, and have been awakened and converted to God. I do assure you there is much fruit of her labours in many parts of our Connexion I would therefore advise you by no means to oppose her preaching, but let her have full liberty, and try whether the Lord will not make her an instrument of reviving His work among you.

I am an old man and have been long in the work, and do most seriously believe that if you do not hinder it, God will make Mrs. T. the instrument of great good to you. Take care you do not fight against God. Many will come to hear her everywhere who will not come to hear your preachers. Let these souls have a chance for their lives; do not hinder them.

I am, though unknown, your affectionate friend and brother in Christ,

J. PAWSON

Please give this to your Leaders and Stewards.

My Dear Brethren,

From a pretty long acquaintance with Mrs. T., I most heartily unite with our honoured Father,

Mr. Pawson, is beseeching you not to hinder her exercising her talents among you; for I most assuredly believe that God has called her to declare that glad tidings of salvation to the world and that he has already honoured her in the conversion of multitudes.

Yours affectionately

J. S. PIPE

(JOHN PAWSON 1737-1806, itinerant preacher 1762-1806)

(JOHN S. PIPE itinerant preacher 1790-1835)

(In 1802 John S. Pipe was Pawson's colleague in the Birstall Circuit and Zachariah Taft was stationed in the Canterbury Circuit)<sup>(658)</sup>

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<sup>658</sup> Pamphlet (MARC).

## **APPENDIX IV: REMARKS ON THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN – HUGH BOURNE**

Remarks on the Ministry of Women. - In a conversation at a friend's house, this subject was agitated, and the written propositions of an absent friend were produced; and a person in company promised to write some remarks upon them, which gave rise to the following. (Published in 1808).

### **REMARKS**

Dear Father Berrisford, - Agreeably to my promise, I shall endeavour to give you a few remarks on the subject of women's ministry: though I have not been accustomed to study this controversy for the following reasons, which have been established among a few of us.

1. If persons who exercise in the ministry are of good report, and the Lord owns their labours by turning sinners to righteousness, we do not think it our duty to endeavour to hinder them; but we wish them success in the name of the Lord, without respect to persons.

2. We do not think it right to be the cause of any one's going to hell through a proud and fond desire of establishing our own (perhaps vain) opinions.

3. Instead of stopping to reason about various things, we find it best to be pressing on. 4. In general, instead of engaging in useless controversy, we find it more profitable to continue giving ourselves to God, and spending the time in prayer.

But my friends from time to time have spoken to me on this subject; and from their observations, and from other remarks, I shall endeavour to answer your friend's propositions and objections.

We find in Joel ii. 28: "And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy."

In order to enter more easily into the subject, we must first find out the precise meaning of the word prophesy: and on this head you will find full satisfaction in a sermon on the Christian prophet and his work, by Adam Clarke, which may be had of the methodist preachers, price six-pence. It was first published in the Magazine, for 1800. To this I will add the explanation given by Parkhurst, whose authority ranks very high, and it is as follows:- "NABA-to prophesy. It signifies not only to foretell future events, but also to speak, or utter something in an eminent and extraordinary manner. Thus the noun Nabi is first applied to Abraham, (Gen xx. 7,) as being 'an interpreter of God's will, to whom he freely and familiarly revealed himself.' See Clarke's note; and comp. Psalm cv. 15. And Aaron is ordained Moses' Nabi, prophet or spokesman, to Pharaoh. Exod. vii. I, comp. ch. iv. 6. Nabi is also applied to the musicians or singers appointed by King David. I Chron. xxv. I, 2, 3. So in the New Testament, the words propheteuo to prophesy, prophete-s a prophet, and propheteia prophesy, are applied to those, who, without foretelling things to come, preached the word of God. See 1 Cor. xiv. 3, 4, 5, 6, 24, 29, 32, 37. 1 Thess. v. 20. Yea, St. Paul calls a heathen poet prophete-s a prophet, Titus i. 12."

We here see that a prophet was simply one who was employed in the service of God, and that whether as one that sung the praises of God, or one that preached, exhorted, or instructed the people; and these last were said to preach the gospel. See Heb. iv. 2. 1 Peter iv. 6. Thus Abel, (Luke xi. 50, 51) Abraham, Aaron, and others, are called prophets, though it does not appear that they foretold future events: but as the knowledge of future events was given to those who were eminent in the service of God, the term prophet was, in a secondary sense, applied to them also. And in these later ages of the world, this secondary sense has been used as the primary one; but on this head you will find satisfaction in A. Clarke's sermon.

I shall now endeavour to follow your friend's propositions. The first of which may be

compromised in the following words:- "Is the preaching of women authorized by Jesus Christ?"

Answer. I think it is. I think he authorized Miriam, (Mich vi.4.) Deborah, Huldah, and perhaps many others not recorded; and the gospel was preached in those days, (Heb. iv. 2,) and he is the same God now, and acts in the same way.

But, perhaps, you wish for an example when our Lord was upon earth. Well, besides the Virgin Mary and Elizabeth, you have Anna, the prophetess, who testified of Jesus in the temple; and this I take to be strong preaching. Well, but you say, whom did he authorize personally? Ans. The woman of Samaria. I believe she was commissioned by the Holy Ghost to preach Jesus, and she did preach him with extraordinary success: and he authorized her ministry, for he joined in with it, and acted accordingly.

But, perhaps, you want a personal commission, - very well, then you have Mary Magdalene. She was commissioned by an angel to preach, and then by Jesus Christ himself. It is said of Paul in one place, that he preached Jesus and the resurrection, - so did Mary to the apostles themselves. Thus our Lord ordained her an apostle to the apostles, a preacher to the preachers, and an evangelist to the evangelists.

The second proposition may be stated thus:- "Was women's ministry countenanced by any of the apostles?"

Answer. Philip, the evangelist, had four daughters, virgins, that prophesied-preached. Acts xxi. 9. Secondly, Aquila and Priscilla took Apollos, and expounded to him the way of God. Acts xviii. 26. St. Paul says, "Help those women which laboured with me in the gospel." Phil. iv.3. He there joins them with Clement and his other fellow labourers. He also says, 1 Cor. xi. 5, "Every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered," &c. This is rather decisive. He here lays down rules and regulations for this very thing; and even if any woman who prayed or prophesied would not submit to rule, he did not say let her be stopped, but let her be shorn.

The third proposition is about historical documents, which I think is pretty well answered above. And in Acts, Phœbe is called a deaconess. Now a part of the office of deacons was preaching, as appears by the customs of the churches, and by the example of St. Stephen.

The fourth proposition wants scripture prophesy.

Answer. Joel ii. 28, 29. Acts ii. 17, 18.

The fifth proposition may be stated thus:- "Is not women's preaching interdicted by apostolic authority?" 1 Cor. xiv. 34. 1 Tim ii. 11.

Answer. It is rather harsh to suppose that an apostle interdicted what had been the practice of the church of God in all ages, what had been personally sanctioned by our Lord himself, and what even the same apostle had just been establishing, by giving rules for it. 1 Cor. xi. 5, 6, 7. The question, then, is, "What are we to understand by these scriptures?" I shall not endeavour to give you on this any opinion as my own; for having never studied them very closely, I could not in conscience do it.

\*But I am told that these speak of church discipline, and of establishing church authority; and

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\* Since this was written, some friends have given me nearly the following information, viz:- That they understood that it was the manner of the church at Corinth, and some other places, for one of the congregation to ask or require from the preacher an interpretation, or a further explanation upon what had been spoken, or to controvert what he thought wrong:- and that in the course of time, women also took this authority and freedom, and for this they were reproved

truly, if women must ordain or set apart the men for the ministry, it would be usurping authority, for the greater would be blessed of the less.

I have heard it stated further, that he there says, "If they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home." This they say settles the meaning, for he must be speaking of something that the husbands can inform them of. This well applies to discipline, but if it extends to preaching also, then all who have ungodly husbands are inevitably bound over to eternal damnation, because they are restricted from learning anything from any but their husbands.

If also this must be stretched out so as to exclude women from teaching men from religion, it would reach too far, - it would break the order of God, -it would interdict mothers from teaching their sons; and I believe that I owe my salvation, under God, in a great degree, to a pious mother.

Objection. 1. - I wish to consider prophesying as different to preaching.

Answer. 1. - Preaching Jesus and the resurrection is, in a degree, prophetic. 2. - Prophesying not only includes preaching, but also rises higher, and is greater: for it not only teaches the present generation, but all future generations.

Objection. 2. - But I wish to confine prophesying simply to foretelling future events, and not to be of use to the generation to whom it was delivered.

Answer. 1. - This is contrary to the meaning of the word both in Greek and Hebrew. 2. - It is contrary to plain matter of fact, even confining ourselves to the ministry of women. See Judges iv. 5. 2 Kings xxii. 14. 2 Chron. xxxiv. 22. 1 Sam. ii. Luke ii. 38. John iv. 29. And Matt. xxviii. 1-9 3. - This objection would carry things too far. It would be charging the Holy Ghost with neglect: for if he gave the prophecies only for the use of future generations, they must have been recorded, or else they were given in vain: and neither the prophecies of King Saul, nor of Philip 's daughters are recorded.

Objection. 3. - St. Paul says to Timothy, "The same commit to faithful men.

Answer. If the word there used had been *Anear*, this objection might have had a shadow of an argument, for that word generally signifies a man as distinguished from a woman; but *Pistois Anthropeis* might be literally translated faithful persons, for *Anthropos* is understood to be a name of the species without regard to sex. See Parkhurst on the word. Our Lord lays down another rule, "By their fruits ye shall know them." Now my own eyes have seen the labours of a woman owned in this way, and you have seen many instances wherein the Lord hath set his seal to a woman's ministry, by converting sinners to himself. Now, would it not have been hard to have hindered these persons' salvation?

I had been many years in the methodist society, during which I frequently heard of Mrs. Fletcher's exercising the ministry, before I was favoured with an opportunity of sitting under it, and she had Mr. Wesley's approbation, as appears by this letter to her, and I never heard any person express his disapprobation of it. Now supposing her ministry had been stopped by arbitrary measures, what a loss that part of the country would have sustained.

I think all the objections that can be brought may be confined to this, that the woman is the weaker vessel. But this is so far from making against, that it is strongly in favour of it. See 1 Cor. I. 27. And as God chose the ministry of women under darker dispensations, it would be strange if they are incapable of ministering, on account of being weaker vessels, now the gospel

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by the apostle, and directed if they did not fully understand what was delivered, to ask their husbands at home, for in this way he permitted not a woman to speak in the church. And the husband had now more authority to ask questions, and to require interpretations.

shines with a brighter light.

Your servant and son in Christ.

H.B.

**APPENDIX V BIBLICAL TEXTS USED BY FEMALE ITINERANTS**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>PLACE</b>	<b>REFERENCES (BIBLICAL)</b>	<b>TEXT (A.V.)</b>
Sister SIMPSON	June 1818	Barlestone Camp meeting	Luke 16 Acts 13:41	- Behold ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.
Jane BROWN	Autumn 1818	Canaan St., Nottingham	John 1:29	Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.
Jane ANSDALE	July 15th 1821	Weardale	Malachi 3:16-17	Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.
Ann STANNA	March 11th 1821) February 1822 )	Lichfield	Hebrews 9:27	And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement
Ruth MORTON	c. 1822	?	Proverbs 23:23	Buy the truth and sell it not
Mary PORTEOUS (as a local preacher)	January 4th 1825	Wreckenton	Zechariah 12:20	And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem.
				The spirit of grace and supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as

**Chosen by God : the Female Itinerants of Early Primitive Methodism : E. Dorothy Graham**

NAME	DATE	PLACE	REFERENCES (BIBLICAL)	TEXT (A.V.)
				one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.
			Ephesians3:8	Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;
Ruth WATKINS	c. 1825	Motcombe	Amos 4:12	Prepare to meet thy God.
Hannah WATERHOUSE (Whitehouse?)	May 24th 1825	Partington- green	John 3:7	Marvel not that I said unto thee 'Ye must be born again.'
a woman (Elizabeth Johnson?)	1825	Partington (camp meeting)	Matthew 25:1-13	The Parable of the Ten Virgins
Hannah FARR	December 3rd 1826	Shrewsbury	Job 14:10	But man dieth, and wasted away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?
Elizabeth ALLEN	February 22nd 1834	Ipstone	I John 1:7	The blood of Jesus Christ, his son, cleanseth (us) from all sin
Mary BURKS (last sermon)	January 1st 1837	East Stockwith	Ezekiel 36:26	A new heart also I give you.
Mary PORTEOUS	1838/40	Northallerton	Psalms 5:3	My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord.
Mary C. BUCK	1852	Oldham St.	Zechariah 13:7	Awake O Sword against my shepherd.
	March 20 <sup>th</sup> 1853	London, Elim Chapel	John 14:21	He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he



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NAME	DATE	PLACE	REFERENCES (BIBLICAL)	TEXT (A.V.)
				that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.
	March 20 <sup>th</sup> 1853	London, Elim Chapel	Revelation 2:17	He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.
	April 1853	Bradwell	Genesis 22:26	(there is no such reference - could it be 26:22?)
			John 5:6	When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been a long time in that case, he said unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?
	October 1853	Rehoboth Chapel, Leeds	Genesis 32	Wrestling Jacob
Ann LONSDALE	1855	? (camp meeting)	Luke 12:20	But God said, Thou fool this night thy soul shall be required of thee ....
Elizabeth JOHNSON	?	Manchester	Judges 3:20	I have a message from God unto thee.
(as a local preacher)	August 26th 1860	Willenhall	Matthew 22:14	For many are called, but few are chosen.
Mary C. BUCK	?	New Mills	I Corinthians 14:35	It is a shame for women to speak in the church.
Mary BURKS	?	Hull	Proverbs 5:11	Thou mourn at the last.

**Chosen by God : the Female Itinerants of Early Primitive Methodism : E. Dorothy Graham**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>PLACE</b>	<b>REFERENCES (BIBLICAL)</b>	<b>TEXT (A.V.)</b>
	?	Hull	Ecclesiastes 8:10	I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of the holy.
	?	Hull	Ecclesiastes 8:11	Because sentence against an evil work is executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.
	?	Hull	Ecclesiastes 11:9	Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these (things) God will bring thee into judgement.
Elizabeth ALLEN	?	Hull	Ezekiel 34:29	And I will raise up for them a plant of renown.
Elizabeth ALLEN	?	Hull	Jeremiah 12:5	If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, how then canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?
a female	?	Primrose Bank Brookhampton	Amos 4:12	Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.
a female	?	Cowick, near Snaith	Revelation 6:17	For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?
Sarah KIRKLAND	February 9th 1819	Wellingore	Isaiah 28:16	Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make

<b>NAME</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>PLACE</b>	<b>REFERENCES (BIBLICAL)</b>	<b>TEXT (A.V.)</b>
				haste.
	February 9th 1819	Wellingborough	John 3:16	For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have ever-lasting life.
	April 13th 1819	Lincoln	Luke 24:46-47	And said unto them, thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations beginning at Jerusalem.

**APPENDIX VI BIBLICAL TEXTS USED BY MALE IIINERANTS (excluding those used at Camp Meetings and funerals) a selection**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>PLACE</b>	<b>REFERENCE (Biblical)</b>	<b>TEXT(A.V.)</b>
F.N. Jersey	1821(?)	Westgate, Hull Circuit	Revelation 1:7	Behold, He cometh
Robert Hewson	Feb. 2nd 1824	South Hylton	Job 14:10	But man dieth, and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?
Joseph Peart	Dec. 19th 1824	Pickering	Luke 17:32	Remember Lot's wife
Nathaniel West	Dec. 31st 1824	West Rainton	Psalms 90:12	So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom
Dryden	Feb. 27th 1825	Helton	Romans 1:16	For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth;
W.G. Bellham	Sept. 28th 1825	Lynn	Nehemiah 2:20	The God of heaven he will prosper us, therefore, we his servants, will arise and build.
W.T. (Towler?)	Feb. 19th 1826	Blaenavon	I Corinthians 1:23	But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness;
W.G. Bellham	March 19th 1826	London Road, Lynn	Isaiah 28:16	Therefore thus saith the

NAME	DATE	PLACE	REFERENCE (Biblical)	TEXT(A.V.)
				Lord God, Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.
Bro. Hardwick	July 3rd 1826	London Road, Lynn	Isaiah 33:21	But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby.
James Sneat	July 24th 1827	Mansfield, Woodhouse	Hebrews 7:25	Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make inter-cession for them.
*Hugh Bourne	June 10th 1829	Liverpool	Revelation 21	A new heaven and a new earth
**Thomas Russell	June 5th 1830	Abingdon	Acts 28:15	when the brethen heard of us, they came to meet us.... thanked God, and took courage
***Edward Foizey	Feb. 20th 1831	Alton, Ramson Circuit	Daniel-12:4	many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.

NAME	DATE	PLACE	REFERENCE (Biblical)	TEXT(A.V.)
Thomas Russell	May 3rd 1831	Coombe	Luke 13:5	except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish
Hugh Bourne	Aug. 18th 1831	Middle Acton	John 7:37-9	Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink....
D. Wilson	Sept. 18th 1831	Barlastone	Acts 17:6	These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also;
John Brame	Sept. 18th 1831	Barlastone	Psalms lixxxvi (sic) (?) 86:5	? For thou, Lord, art good and ready to forgive and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.
Thomas Morgan	Jan. 1st 1832	Butler's Bank Prees	II Corinthians 6:14,16	'NATURE and CONSEQUENCES of unequal marriages
Thomas Morgan	Feb. 14th 1832	Little Drayton	Matthew 7:13	Ye are the salt of the earth
John Morton	March 11th 1832	Macclesfield	John 16:24	Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full
John Brame	1832	Greenshorton Welton Circuit	John 3:18	He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

NAME	DATE	PLACE	REFERENCE (Biblical)	TEXT(A.V.)
Thomas Russell	1832	?	Jeremiah 8:20	The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved
Thomas Russell	June 1833	Shefford	Genesis 32:10	I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant;
Thomas Russell	1837	Weymouth	Luke 17:32	Remember Lot's wife
Thomas Russell	Jan./Feb. 1838	Portisham	Matthew 24:20	Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter neither on the sabbath day:
Hugh Bourne	April 21st 1839	London	Revelation 7:9	After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations...
James Bottomley	Oct. 24th 1839	Douglas I.O.M.	Luke 15:2	This man receiveth sinners
Thomas Russell	1849	Yarm	Luke 17:32	Remember Lot's wife
Thomas Russell	1849	Yarm	Revelation 6:8	The pale horse
John Tomkin	Aug. 22nd 1852	Hull	Colossians 1:27	Christ in you, the hope of glory
Henry Higginson	Feb. 28th 1853	Macclesfield	?	on the Resurrection
Thomas Russell	1858	Inniskillen	Lamentations 1:12	Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith

NAME	DATE	PLACE	REFERENCE (Biblical)	TEXT(A.V.)
				the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger

**Notes**

\* when the missionaries left for America

\*\* on leaving prison

\*\*\* lovefeast



## APPENDIX VII: A MISSIONARY SPEECH - ELIZABETH SMITH

'The following speech was delivered at a Missionary Meeting, December 11th, 1829, in the Primitive Methodist Circuit at Broad Town, in the Brinkworth Circuit, by Elizabeth Smith. If it be thought worthy of a place in our Magazine, its insertion will oblige many of our pious readers, as well as

Yours unworthy Servant in the Gospel,

W. Towler

(Mr. Towler was one of Elizabeth Smith's colleagues in the Brinkworth Circuit in 1829)

### THE SPEECH \*

Sir,

In whatever business or work a person may be engaged, it is necessary that he should fully enter into the spirit of that work; and have his mind suitably impressed with a sense of its importance and necessity, as well as to anticipate the advantages which he naturally expects to reap from its accomplishment. - Hence when Nehemiah undertook the repairing of the ruins of Jerusalem, his whole mind was engaged in it; he saw its necessity and felt its burthen; otherwise he would not have had zeal sufficient to carry him through. And if we, who are here assembled to day, do not feel the necessity and importance of Missionary efforts, we cannot properly enter into a Missionary Spirit.

What then will cause us to feel this necessity, and arouse our zeal? -I know of nothing more likely, than a consideration of the general depravity, and wretchedness of mankind. - It is true, many have endeavoured to paint the dignity of human nature, and cry up the moral excellencies of man, and have filled pages and volumes with romantic fictions. - Such writers remind us of the poor spendthrift, who shivering in rags, a prey to want and disease; yet boasts of his noble ancestry, and once affluent fortune. - Poor man who can but pity his case! and disapprove of his thoughtlessness. And is it not so, just so, with the fairest human character that art can display. For after all that can be said of the natural state of man, it is but a wreck of what it once was. And although the imagination be strained for something to dress it in, it is still "Like unto a whited sepulchre, which indeed appeareth beautiful outward, but within, full of dead men's bones, and all uncleanness." Matt. xxiii. 27.

But this will appear more evident, if we consider that ever since Adam fell, sin and death have reigned over the children of men; and the Sovereign of heaven and earth hath declared, "They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." Psal. xiv. 3.

This reign of sin is universal, it reaches, to the ends of the earth. - Hence range the sultry plains of Africa, and there you behold the poor Negro worshipping the devil, and bowing to his blocks of wood, as also adoring the sun, and moon, and stars; and at the same time you may witness scenes of cruelty that would make you shudder.

Visit the fragrant groves of Asia - converse with the sullen Turk, (who seated on his cushion smokes his hours away,) and you may perceive satan enthroned in his heart, and the kingdom of darkness supported by the lies of Mahomed.

Trace the wilds of America, and there you may see thousands of human creatures sunk into a

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\* Though this speech be excellent in itself, we would advise the speaker, in future to dwell on historical narrative; to give some account of what she may have seen or known of the conversation of sinners to God, and the enlargement of the kingdom of Christ.

state lower than the beast. - But stay, come back to Europe - look at Spain, Portugal, and France. - See how Antichrist governs these kingdoms, and, "Babylon, the mother of harlots, hath made them drunk with the wine of the wrath of her fornication." Nor is England exempt from the general contagion. Are there not Atheists, Deists, Arians, Socinians, and every species of infidels in this kingdom? Are there not men and women in England, who have the poison of the asp, the subtlety of the serpent, the ravening of the dog, the uncleanness of the swine, the cruelty of the tiger, the fierceness of the lion, and the pride and malice of Satan. Do not imagine that this is too gloomy a description of human depravity: but look further, consider the misery of the children of men, hear the groans of the wretched prisoner, who loaded with irons in the gloomy dungeon expects to end his miserable life on the scaffold. visit the abode of want. - Approach the bed of affliction. Creation groans beneath the weight of human woe.

But hark! I hear a groan deeper and louder than the rest. Whence comes it? From Calvary! Yes it is the groan of the Son of God! See! See! these dark clouds of sin! they gather round, they pour their floods into his soul! Hear him cry, "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of they waterspouts; all th waves and thy billows are gone over me." Yes, it was our sins that caused the Saviour thus to suffer. And therefore he humbled himself to suffer. God has exalted him to reign. And he shall reign till his enemies become his footstool. - It is his kingdom we are met to spread, the grace which brings salvation, which renews the heart, and restores man to the favour and image of God. O may it spread till Africans, Asiatics, Turks, Americans, Europeans, and all the world shall be able to say, "Halleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." Amen, and Amen.

(Approved by the Circuit Committee),'

*PMM* (1830) pp 277-80

**APPENDIX VIII: VERSES AND MISSIONARY PRAYER – ELIZABETH SMITH**

Verses composed by Elizabeth Smith (Russell) on leaving Radnorshire to go to the Brinkworth Circuit in 1828

1. When Paul upon the shore,  
The Ephesian brethren saw,  
With grief each heart ran o'er,  
While bow'd in silent awe:  
In faith the zealous Paul commends  
to God, the souls of his friends.
2. Their hearts in sacred love,  
To him united were  
The flame came from above,  
Which fill'd each bosom there;  
A love unknown to sense and earth,  
The fruit of faith, of heavenly birth.
3. This love dear friends we feel,  
Though we from you must part,  
We've faithful with you been,  
We'll bear you on our heart:  
Oh do not let our work be vain,  
Perhaps we ne'er may meet again.
4. Your welfare we have sought,  
In heaven we hope to view  
That which on earth is wrought,  
Our joy our crown are you:  
Farewell, my sisters, persevere,  
Farewell, my friends, still walk in fear.

*PMM* (1837) pp 178-9

### THE MISSIONARY'S PRAYER

Great Founder of the mission cause,  
We send our humble cry to thee,  
While suppliant at thy feet we pause,  
And only wait thy grace to see:  
Thy word our hearts with zeal has fir'd,  
Our souls renew'd, our spirits bent;  
That truth, which ages past inspir'd,  
Might be to every creature sent.

CHORUS.- Save all nations, we beseech thee,  
Save all nations from their sins.

Earth's utmost bounds, thy word declares,  
The brightness of thy light shall see;  
Great kings,\* from far, thy sons shall bear,  
And queens\* their nursing ,nothers be:  
We praise thee who Judea mission'd,  
Our eyes thy ripening purpose see;  
Thy gospel servants are commission'd,  
To distant nations now by thee.

CHORUS.- Save all nations, &c.

On Asia's sultry shores they stand,  
The gospel banners high unfold;  
To Greenland's icy coast extend,  
And frozen hearts receive the mould:  
America their labours shar'd,  
With fruits repaid their pleasing toil;  
In Europe they have peace declar'd,  
And publish'd Christ who died for all.

CHORUS.- Save all nations, &c.

Nor is Old England quite forsaken,  
The country dear to British hearts,  
With shouts of joy her shores have shaken,  
Her land is blest in many parts:  
We bless thy name, though missions' Friend,  
For grateful thoughts which now arise;  
Our raptur'd souls with praise ascend,  
We raise our voices to the skies.

CHORUS.- Save all nations, &c.

But here our zeal cannot be ended,  
While parts of England desert lie;  
O, let thy arm be downward bended!  
Lord, send to Berks<sup>‡</sup> a rich supply:

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\* Isaiah xlix. 23.

\* Isaiah xlix. 23.

‡ The short name for Berkshire.

For Hampshire we as suppliants bow,  
Our humble cries besiege thy throne;  
Thy Spirit pour, O, pour it now,  
Answer our anguish'd earnest groan.

CHORUS.- Save all nations, &c.

Let Sinai's dreadful thunders shake,  
Thy pow'rful word poor souls arrest;  
Contrition's tears their sorrows speak,  
And show they long in thee to rest:  
May every grace to faith be added,  
And perfect love each souls possess,  
Thro' blood divine each moment sav'd,  
With endless life in heaven bless.

CHORUS.- Then we'll praise thee when thou bring'st us,  
To surround thy heavenly throne.

(by ELIZABETH SMITH)

## APPENDIX IX: CAMP MEETINGS

Camp Meetings open at 9 o'Clock in the morning, proceed with a variety of services, and close at 4 or 5 in the afternoon. Sometimes they stop an hour for dinner, and sometimes not. All the exercises in all the services must be short, as long exercises are peculiarly injurious at Camp Meetings.

They usually open with a praying service for about 30 minutes. At half-past 9, preaching service. At a quarter past 10, praying service in companies. At a quarter before 11, either a preaching or a reading service. At half-past 11, praying service in companies; and so on, varying the exercises, in order that the attention and energy of the people may keep rising and increasing to the last.

PREACHING Services open with singing and prayer, and close with sermon and discourse. Two preachers should always stand up in each service; and no preacher should, on any account, be allowed to speak for more than twenty minutes in any one service. And a preaching service should scarcely ever be allowed to continue for more than 45 minutes. The preachers should take a clear pure course, and not make references to any preaching that has gone before or that is to follow after. Such references being mostly injurious.

READING services open with singing and prayer. One or two experiences are then read from the Magazines. The readers are allowed to comment a little as they go on. These services promote variety and are often very useful.

PRAYER services should be carefully supported. They are the chief strength of the Camp Meetings and give energy and dignity to the whole. They are held in four different ways:

1. The general praying service at the opening.
2. About a quarter past ten in the forenoon, a praying service should open in companies; but no company should be allowed to fix near the stand. The movements in this service, give variety, energy, and effect to the whole. If the congregation happen to be but small, they should nevertheless go out in companies, because the going out and coming in are a great relief both to body and mind; and are of great service to the people in other respects.
3. When a praying service, in companies, has gone on, with energy, for half an hour, they are usually summoned to the preaching stand. But if the pious praying labourers happen to be engaged with mourners, then the next service must be deferred or put off as the case may require. Nevertheless, if circumstances render preaching necessary, then a permanent company is formed, and fixed at a suitable distance from the stand to pray for mourners: and this company does not break up for preaching. The permanent company is a relief to the whole; and all other services proceed regularly as before.
4. Sometimes, when the work breaks out powerfully under preaching it is found necessary to have a general praying service without going out in companies. In this case it is usual to make a ring or opening, and call up the mourners to be prayed for.

Bourne: *Large Hymn Book*, Preface x-xii.

## APPENDIX X: HYMN SUITABLE FOR CAMP-MEETING OCCASIONS

4-8's & 2-6's

When the Redeemer of mankind  
Began to heal the lame and blind  
The Pharisees withstood:  
His condescension show'd their pride,  
And while they loud against him cried  
He went on doing good.

Thus proud men Camp-meetings withstand;  
Yet they are spreading through the land;  
The gospel still is free;  
Opponents cry, "They must be stopp'd"-  
Good men have persecution dropp'd  
And cordially agree.

The Lord a glorious work began,  
And through America it ran-  
Across the sea it flies:  
The gracious work to us came near:  
And many are converted here,  
We see it with our eyes.

The little cloud increases still  
Which first arose upon MOW-HILL-  
It spreads along the plain:  
Though men attempt to stop its course,  
It overcomes their hostile force,  
And proves their efforts vain.

Sinners at first a tumult made,  
And formalists were sore afraid,  
Because it broke their rules-  
"Twould brand religion with disgrace  
A work begun by men so base,  
Unlearned in the Schools."

Unmov'd these upright souls rejoice,  
And on the plains they raise their voice,  
Salvation to proclaim;  
They preach, Exhort, and sweetly sing,  
While hills, and dales, and forests ring  
With the Creator's praise.

Christians at Camp-Meetings unite,  
And free from bigotry and spite,  
Sectarian standards fall;-  
Here, no respect of person's shewn,  
But all our common Saviour own,  
And Christ is all in all.

Garner, op. cit., p. 175-6

## **APPENDIX XI: LOVE FEASTS**

Lovefeasts usually open with singing and prayer. A piece is then sung by way of asking a blessing; after which the bread and water are served out, the lovefeast collection is made, and a piece sung by way of returning thanks. The preacher makes a few remarks; the people rise in succession, and speak their own experience; and distant comers sometimes say a little about the works of God in other places. But none are allowed to run into useless exhortations drag out to tedious lengths, or to speak unprofitably of others; and above all not to reflect upon or find fault, either with individuals or societies. And it is the preacher's painful duty to stop all who attempt to trespass. He has to preserve the Lovefeast in its clear and pure course, in order that the people may grow into faith, and that the Holy Ghost may descend.

Singing and prayer are occasionally introduced; and the lovefeast finally closes with prayer.

Bourne: *Large Hymn Book*, Preface p. x.



## APPENDIX XII: EXTRACT OF A LETTER TO HANNAH FARR

‘On the 3rd of December, 1826, in Shrewsbury chapel, when you were expiating on death from Job xiv.10, there was a young woman in the concourse, who came for the express purpose of hearing you dispense the words of life, and receive instruction: and her expectations were not disappointed, nor your words suffered to pass without her attention. That part of the subject which seemed to affect her mind, was the serious admonitions which you addressed to young people; the generality of whom, you said, were employing their hours in decorating the body, and indulging their body in the imbecility of pride;- the gaudy trifles of temporising foppery;- accustoming, themselves to the dangerous track of procrastination; and delaying the contemplation of death and eternity to some future period. Who assert that youth is not the time to seek the Lord, and knowingly postpone the important duty, for weeks, months, and years; till they are settled in life;- till their avaricious gluttony for pleasure is satiated, and then reason themselves into the presumptuous persuasion of a death-bed repentance. While death may be at the door; the blooming, and gay, young, healthy, robust, and affecting, as they may appear, none can tell but what their time is near at an end - that death ‘s dread silent dart will shortly impede their progress, and lay them with the clod of the vale.’

Many of these observations deeply affected her mind; the deliberation of which seemed to bring death to her view as a passport from a world of sin and folly, to one of glory and happiness. On her return home she conversed with her mother about the things which she heard; and then apparently sat in silent meditation till she retired to bed . On the day following she was taken with an illness, which terminated her existence in the course of ten days.

Here was a striking instance of the uncertainty of life - a visible omen of the truth of your observations. Thus a young woman (whose conduct was amiable) within the space of three weeks, flourishing and gay, appeared as the rose in bloom, was cut down as the green herb, and concealed in the narrow limits of the tomb: called to cease from the bustle and uninteresting caprice of the world, and to bid adieu to the cajolery of this transitory scene. Her soul was called to take its flight.

O solemn thought:-  
To death was brought  
A girl, we thought  
Would live for years.

But you will be happy to hear that she did not depart without leaving indubitable marks of the divine interposition, and visible indications of happy and gracious change. Her last expressions were, ‘I am going home, I am going home, I am going to my everlasting home - from whence I came. Take me home, I cannot stop any longer, I must go for I am going to my Father in heaven, my everlasting Father.’ Indeed from the first of her illness she had no desire to recover; but said, ‘I am drowned in iniquity and sin: Jesus, forgive me, and take me, for if I live any longer here I shall sin against thee; it is to be lamented that there are too many such sinners as me in the world: Lord, save them.’ A certain person said to her, ‘You will see many a bright day yet.’ She replied, ‘I hope I shall, but not in this world.’

Now let us consider, (nor can I impede the gushing tear while I write) how applicable this discourse was to the state of her mind, how strongly calculated to paint death in all its horrors, and fix the inflexible impressions so forcibly upon her mind. But she is not the only one in the family who was affected: her mother and brethren have been similarly wrought upon, in consequence of her relating some parts of your discourse to them after she went from chapel. And here I am disposed to enquire, Had not God a part in this serious circumstance, so as to direct your mind to that subject which proved to her so interesting, and which was calculated to

animate her desires after the possession of that inheritance which remains, for his people. Seeing she had accomplished as an hireling her days?

How mysterious are the ways of God! knowing this to be the last time of her existence in the house of prayer before she deceased: the means prescribed were solemn, end proposed was answered. The subject treated, was the uncertainty of life, and the impressions which it made were obliterated by death!!

N.B. the family of the deceased, ever since the solemn event have regularly attended the chapel.

Approved by the Circuit Committee

*PMM* (1827) p. 266.

## APPENDIX XIII : THE MISSIONARY'S ASSISTANT

drawn up for the

MISSIONARIES

of

THE PRIMITIVE METHODIST CONNEXION

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### OBSERVATIONS AND REMARKS

The Primitive Methodist Connexion has been an instrument in the hands of the Lord, of turning ten thousands to righteousness. And in this great work and labour of love, the Hull Circuit of the said Connexion, has taken a great and powerful part; has covered a great part of the kingdom with its Missionaries, and its pious labours; and in its wish to extend its pious zeal to the United States of North America, it has fixed on two of its laborious preachers, Brother William Summersides, and Brother Thomas Morris. And Tunstall Circuit, for the same undertaking, appointed Brother William Knowles, and Sister Ruth Watkins. And for the general good the following observations were drawn up:

- I. A travelling preacher who may be chosen, must be well experienced; and must be one who not only possesses, but has diligently cultivated the converting gift; who has a clear knowledge of the mystery of faith, of the doctrine of a full and present salvation, and of the baptism or out-pouring of the Holy Ghost.
- II. He must be proved to have talents for general management, and for the promotion and supporting of every part of the system of discipline, or of proceedings and movements carried on, in and by the said connexion; and which have been so greatly owned by the Lord in the awakening and conversion of ten thousands of souls to the true and living God.

In proceeding to the choice and due appointment of a suitable preacher, the following matters will easily present themselves to the mind:

1. In order to the due opening of his important mission, and for entering on his arduous labours, it will be needful for him to be duly acquainted with the tunes usually attached to the hymns in our small Hymn Book, and that he be able to sing the same. This singing has always been found to be one chief matter in opening new missions.
2. He must be capable of forming classes and societies, appointing leaders, with proper meetings, and all other necessary and usual matters for promoting the welfare of the classes, and the support, stability, and increase of the societies; with every proper facility for enabling them to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.
3. In addition to this he must be fully conversant with the arranging and appointing of preachings, prayer-meetings, camp-meetings, lovefeasts, and all other necessary means of grace.
4. He must be acquainted too, with appointing quarter-day meetings, and all other necessary meetings for carrying on the course of discipline and management.
5. He must understand the management of the pecuniary concerns, and be able to make the necessary arrangements to raise means for the due support and maintenance of the ministry, and for duly meeting all other needful society matters; as also for the due support of chapels and places of worship. If he be deficient in any of these points, it will spread a lameness through all his proceedings.

6. He must have experimental knowledge respecting the raising and supporting of chapels, and other needful places of worship. Without this knowledge he will be liable to run hand-over-head, and do much mischief, and bring on grievous involvements.
7. Such a preacher must be one who is not only possessed of affability, but who has cultivated a good address.
8. A missionary must not only be acquainted with carrying on the work in country places, but also in large towns.
9. He must be capable of guarding against improper lengthiness in preachings, and against troubles and inconveniences that might arise from other exercises improperly lengthy; and also against the unhappy custom of attempting to preach two or more sermons from one text.
10. He must be very attentive to discipline, and that in small things as well as great.
11. He must have a proper firmness, as he will have to separate improper members from the society, and to guard against improper-persons intruding themselves into the ministry.
12. A Missionary must possess the happy art of bringing the talents of the people into action. If he be deficient on this point, he may be induced to over-load the places with preaching; and our unhappily conducted mission has taught us that such over-loading is prejudicial to the cause of God, and to the prosperity of the societies: truly, in that mission we have found it to be every way injurious.
13. A missionary must be able to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, to submit to privations, and go through hardships and difficulties.
14. A missionary for so important an undertaking, should be one who has been employed with success in the work of opening and establishing new missions.

***PM Preachers' Magazine***, (1828) Vol. I, No. 7, pp. 75-77 (MARC).

## APPENDIX XIV: EXTRACT OF A PRIVATE LETTER.

From **R. Watkins.**

"I received your short but welcome epistle, and hope the Lord will enable me to attend to the advice given therein.

"Both me and Brother Knowles have attended, in some measure, to the opening of the scriptures, and bringing the streaming power down upon the people whom we visit. And, glory be to God, I have seen the good effects of it. But it appears here to be altogether a strange thing. A lady informed me that she never heard so much about the mystery of faith, and the opening of the scriptures as of late. The people begin to expect it now whenever we visit them. And I believe, many get their friends together for the very purpose of hearing us talk. But sometimes clouds and darkness overspread my mind, so that it is difficult to rise into faith.

"I am glad to hear of your prosperity in Tunstall circuit. - Give my love to all, and tell them to pray for me.

I believe we shall do well in America. We have found many who were members of our society in Old England. They received us with joy.

"House-rent and wearing apparel are much dearer here than in England, but eatables are somewhat cheaper. I understand New York to be one of the dearest places in the United States; and very much thronged with foreigners coming in every week. I thank God, it has not cost me sixpence for lodging since I landed. This is of some importance in this city. I lodged the greatest part of the time at an English gentleman's house, of the name of Wilcox; and both he and his wife have manifested great kindness to me. I hope God will reward them in this world, and in the world to come.

"Fires are very alarming in New York. I have been informed that there has been no less than three hundred fires, in New York, in one year. We have the alarm of fire almost every night in the week, and sometimes two of a night. It sometimes burns 8, 10, 12, or 15 houses in a night. Sometimes the houses take fire accidentally; but very often (it is thought) they are set on fire for the sake of plunder, and sometimes (it is said) by the tenants themselves: having their goods insured to the full value, if they have not good sale, or if they want money, they will set fire to, and burn all up, and go to the insurance office for the money. The penalty (on conviction) for such a crime is death.

"Another thing worthy of remark, is, they have a method of taking the houses off the foundations, whole, and moving them to another part of the city. This was something new to me.

"I think I never was in a place where there was so much opposition to the Truth. The unitarians are very strong, and the universalists have three or four churches. These are holding what they call debating meetings up and down the city every week. There is a party too, who call themselves free-thinkers. Also a lady who came over from Europe, about two years ago, has bought a church, and established an infidel society. If you preach a gospel sermon out of doors, you are likely to be troubled by some of these.

Yours in Christ,

RUTH WATKINS.

New York,                    )  
November, 1829.            )

*PMM* (1830) pp. 122-123.

## APPENDIX XV: EXTRACT FROM THE JOURNAL OF WILLIAM KNOWLES

1831 (PMM (1832) pp. 94-96)

William Knowles was one of the missionaries to America and this extract gives an independent account of one of his wife's services, sent to the local newspaper.

For the Eaton Register

Sir,-On the 19th instant, in compliance with a notice published in your paper, a female addressed a large and respectable audience, at the public meeting house, in a manner worthy of the highest commendation. So anxious were the people on the occasion, that a vast crowd assembled, and thronged the long vacated seats, at least half an hour before the arrival of the object of their curiosity, as she well may be termed. During this short interval, an awful silence reigned throughout the vast concourse, which added no little to the grandeur and magnificence of the scene. The idea of a person and a female too, being the means of such public curiosity, reminded me of that venerable personage, who some five or six years ago, at the same place, laboured in the ministry from an application of the text, "I have a message from God unto thee."\* And as the mind naturally contrasts and draws a distinction between two objects of comparison, I was forced to accede the point of superiority, in favour of our sister's ministerial service; and must confess, to do her justice, in the language of Agrippa. She almost persuaded me to be a Christian.

But to proceed. In a short time, the profound silence of the congregation was interrupted by the annunciation, "She's coming:" which was audibly heard, though moving in silence, accompanied by a simultaneous turning of heads and glancing of eyes, to catch the first glimpse of this divine messenger of peace. A woman about thirty years of age, of low stature and dark complexion, presented herself, dressed in a plain yellow garb; her hair parted over her forehead, which to one skilled in phrenology, indicated a mind of no ordinary strength. There was something prepossessing in her appearance; not what the world terms beauty, if by that expression, we mean a bound and contracted form, in continual pain-from the tight band and narrow stays, but plain, natural, and dignified, accompanied by a fellow labourer in Christ. She walked amid the pressing crowd, and ascended the sanctuary of holiness, in the presence of near a thousand solicitous spectators, who were anxious to hear what a woman had to say in the church. A profound silence reigned; the young and old were anxious on the occasion; all eyes were fixed on the pulpit; hope and fear triumphed in succession for the stranger, lest female delicacy should prove inadequate to the task of bearing ample testimony of God and his religion. But soon both were dispelled. After a few moments composure. She rose with a gracefulness which Cicero might have envied; and introduced worship by giving out a hymn in a tone of natural and simple eloquence. Never had nature revealed herself in more simple, but yet cogent language, than through the medium of our sister's prayer. She prayed in the language of the Primitive Christians, which was calculated far better to convince the poor sinner of his lost condition, than those dry and cold intreaties, which we daily hear from the pulpit-priest, couched in obscure language, a mere laboured effort of scholastic jargon. Another hymn was sung, in which the accordance of so many voices awakened a melancholy pleasure in each breast previous to her ministerial service.

She then took a text which may be found recorded in the 15th chapter of St. Luke, 13-19 verses inclusive; from which portion of scripture, she spoke in one continued strain of the most

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\* Lorenzo Dow

sublime, natural, and argumentative eloquence.

Her discourse from the two characters spoken of in the text, naturally divided itself into two parts, the former to represent the elder brother, and the latter the younger, or prodigal son, who left his father, and journeyed into a distant country, where he spent his substance, and became extremely indigent.

Her use and application of the parable was remarkably simple and elegant. The elder son, spiritually speaking, was a representative of the Jews and others; but under the character of the younger son, she classed all men in an unregenerated state; and to make the figure more complete, she painted in the most lively colours, the similarity between the sinner coming humbly to Christ, and the prodigal son returning to his natural father. The anxiety which a father would naturally manifest for a dear & absent child, and his embraces at their approach, were most beautifully spiritualized, to give a faint idea of the wonderful regard which Christ has for one immortal soul; and his joy was elegantly alluded to by the tender caresses of the natural father.

In this part of her sermon she was peculiarly eloquent; and from what I can learn from the popular voice, and in my own opinion, she surpassed all who have ever preached in our village, from the same text.

Her description of the garment which the natural father put on his son, as illustrative of that glorious and celestial robe prepared by Christ, for beauty of style was unparalleled, wove in the loom of God; a heavenly garment, whose warp is affection, woof charity. fashioned by the hand of God, stitched with mercy, lined with love, and dipped in the blood of the Lamb. And, "bless God," she exclaimed, "my friends, what makes it more valuable, is, the materials of which it is composed, and the texture of its nature; it will never grow old, nor threadbare, not fringed at the hem. And more than all, blessed be his name, it will fit any person."

She was here interrupted by an overflow of the congregation, which broke forth in acclamations of joy and devotion. In a few minutes she closed her interesting discourse; which, I think, I am safe in saying, had a better influence on the audience than any sermon, to my recollection, ever preached in Eaton.

This fact, while it reflects considerable honour upon the strength of female intellect, if we draw a comparison between our sister and the most brilliant of our brethren, it must unquestionably stop the mouths of our superstitious orthodox friends, who have been interested, from pecuniary motives in construing that portion of scripture to which they always resort, as a prohibition to women preaching the gospel. Eaton, May 22, 1811.

*PMM* (1832) pp. 84-96.

APPENDIX XVI: FANNY HURLE'S PLAN

AN EXAMPLE OF FANNY HURLE'S HANDWRITING OR THAT OF HER SUPERINTENDENT MINISTER

**Primitive Methodist Preachers'**  
*Miss Fanny* PLAN OF THE *Hurle's Plan*  
**SHEFFORD CIRCUIT, 1835.**

NOTICES.

1. No person is allowed to preach amongst us who is not duly authorized.
2. The preachers must strictly attend their *own* appointments, or if they *cannot*, they must give them up, *one week previously*, either into the hands of one of the *Travelling Preachers* or the *Circuit Committee*.
3. Those preachers who *wilfully* neglect their appointments, or do not publish lovefeasts, collections, sacraments, &c. according to Plan, shall sink, for every *such* neglect, one figure on the Plan.
4. Those preachers who change their appointments, and do not produce at the *Quarterly Meeting* a *satisfactory reason* for so doing, shall sink for *such needless change*, as if neglected.
5. The preachers are particularly requested to commence the meetings *punctually* at the time appointed.
6. Those Societies that desire the sacrament to be administered to them, must provide the wine for that purpose.
7. Those who are *Prayer Leaders* on the Plan are allowed to *exhort*, but *not to take texts*.
8. A UNION CAMP MEETING will be held on *Bishopstone Down*, on Sunday, June 28th, by *Shefford and Brinkworth Circuits*, jointly.
9. A CAMP MEETING will be held on *Cold Ash Common*, May 10th, to be attended by Nos. 1, 6, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17, 30, and 58.
10. A MISSIONARY MEETING will be held at *Quick's Green*, May 3rd, to commence at 2 o'clock; Speakers, Nos. 1, 8, 9, 12, and *G. Price*. And *one*, also, at *Wickham*, June 7th, to commence at 5 o'clock; Speakers, Nos. 1, 5, *J. Ride*, *H. Hayes*, *W. Wiltshire*, and *G. Price*.
11. On *Monday, May 4th*, A WATCH-NIGHT PRAYER MEETING will be held by *all our Societies through the Circuit*, to commence at 8, and close before 12 o'clock. The object is an *increase of the converting-gift*, and consequently of the *conversion of souls to God*.
12. The CIRCUIT COMMITTEE is re-elected, and will meet the first *Friday* in every month, at 7 o'clock in the evening.
13. The next GENERAL QUARTERLY MEETING will be held at *Ticbury*, on Monday, June 8th, to commence at 8 o'clock.

REFERENCES.—s Sacrament, —T Tickets,—c Collection,—L Lovefeast, —M Missionary Meeting,—P Prayer Meeting, and where the star is prefixed, the preacher must lead the class.

**STATE OF THE SHEFFORD CIRCUIT, MARCH, 1835.**

Places on the Plan	Members	Chapels	Travelling Preachers	Local preachers	Exhorters	Prayer Leaders	Increase of Members last year	Deaths
250	2028	18	22	124	45	80	358	14

"They shall prosper who fear Thee"

\*\* READING MISSION will be opened, God willing, on Sunday, April 12th. The Societies are desired to make it a matter of prayer.

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**BIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX OF KNOWN  
FEMALE PRIMITIVE METHODIST TRAVELLING PREACHERS**

See web site

<http://www.valevans.com/primitive-methodist-women/index.html>

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