

**“The Ecstatic and the Bilious”:**

**To be a Methodist in Nineteenth Century Provincial  
England.**

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## Abstract

The history and impact of Methodism during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have been debated by academics. Its role in the lives of ordinary people has not, however, been fully explored and comparative studies are few and far between. This thesis sets out, therefore, to examine Methodist significance for those closely associated with it. It teases out similarities and differences for urban and rural dwellers. Simultaneously this allows for comment in relation to the development of Methodism itself and also the wider secularisation debate. The nineteenth century is the focus.

The agricultural Wolds of Yorkshire's East Riding and the Black Country of the industrial Midlands are the chosen areas. Both Wesleyan and Primitive Methodism are scrutinized with their distinctive contributions acknowledged. Extensive archival research has made this possible and a spatial approach has been adopted to add fresh insight. Primarily a work of cultural history, much is gleaned from sociologists, theologians and geographers. Particular attention is given to four Victorian novelists. A spatial and Methodist analysis of works by Eliot, Bennett, Hocking and Thorneycroft Fowler contribute to the study.

Methodism was ubiquitous and unique: the novels imply and the history confirms. It created communities within communities in both rural and urban settings and the implications for members were profound. Methodist use of space emphasises this. Methodists migrated knowing that something familiar awaited them. Identities were forged and respectability, with both positive and negative connotations, became a possibility for urban Methodists. It is argued that an analysis of how both outdoor and indoor space was used is essential to an understanding of Methodist fortunes over time. Sacralisation, the turning of space into religious place, is important here but so, too, is desacralisation. As chapel usage changed, there were implications, more widely, for secularisation.

## Dedication and Acknowledgements

I have deferred it too long, and would gladly see it completed.

*Middlemarch*<sup>1</sup>

This work is dedicated to four women and a group of anonymous men. They walked the lanes of Dartmoor and the streets of Okehampton to worship God. Thus was their devotion to Methodist chapels shown.

Elizabeth Hucker (1870-1954)

Edith French (1887-1974)

Edith Allin (1901-1996)

Eleanor Timms (1906-1986)

In **1863**, the farm labourers from Southcott in Devon had ‘built their chapel by moonlight.’<sup>2</sup>

Attention is drawn to the contribution made by three academic institutions. The University of Hull’s degree in Economic and Social History was followed by the award of a three-year research scholarship. This was a wholly positive experience and thanks are due to the likes of Professor John Saville for whetting an interest in all things related to nineteenth century social history. The current thesis would not have been attempted without this initial foray into academia. More recently, it was Newman University’s MA in Victorian Studies which enabled an interest in Methodism to be linked with the revelation that space and place are important for the historian. Much is owed, therefore, to Dr Ian Cawood whose guidance and enthusiasm have continued to be of benefit with his move to the University of Stirling.

In Devon, Eleanor, accompanied by Alfred, made her way from farm to chapel to play the harmonium and worship. Edith walked with Ernest along pavements towards a hoped-for fine sermon. At the same time, Jayne’s family was criss-crossing the municipal parks of industrial Widnes to sing in choirs and praise God. We owe so much to these people but, here, it is Jayne herself who deserves recognition. To her, and to our Stephen for his unwavering faith and technical advice, THANK YOU! A surreptitious wink is directed towards

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<sup>1</sup> Casaubon to Dorothea in George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972, originally published 1871), 518.

<sup>2</sup> “The Chapel that was Built by Moonlight,” *The Western Times & Gazette*, March 19, 1965.

Brian John (1926-1974) and Pearl Elizabeth (1931-2020): parents and people of the fourth dimension.<sup>3</sup> He gave only two pieces of remembered advice. Of lesser importance was the notion that history cannot be studied in isolation. Heed has been taken. She would have done anything to assist in the avoidance of a Casaubon scenario while stating that she was 'lost in wonder, love and praise.'<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Discussed throughout this thesis.

<sup>4</sup> The final line of the hymn *Love Divine, All Loves Excelling* by Charles Wesley (1747).

## Introduction

### Setting Out

...it was easy for the traveller to conceive that town and country had  
no pulse in common...

*Felix Holt: The Radical*<sup>5</sup>

### Context, Contention and Content

#### Context

With its title taken, in part, from George Eliot's *Adam Bede*, this thesis is patently not a history of Methodism *per se*.<sup>6</sup> Instead, at times using a spatial approach, it is an analysis of Methodist lived experience, in two contrasting regions, during the nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup> Attention will be given to recent developments in sociology, geography, and theology but historians have also continued to move debates forward. This is particularly true for the previously taken-for-granted secularisation thesis with its paradigm of decline. Dates, for example, have moved into the twentieth century and definitions of religion have broadened.<sup>8</sup> Comment will be offered in relation to this but there are other priorities. The Methodist contribution to, and as, community will be explored. So too will its role in identity formation and the garnering of respectability. By archival research into Methodist culture in both the Black Country and the Wolds of the East Riding, certain conclusions are reached in relation to the difference, if any, between the urban and rural experience. How this

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<sup>5</sup> George Eliot, *Felix Holt: the Radical* (London: Penguin Books, 1995, originally published 1866), 7.

<sup>6</sup> George Eliot, *Adam Bede* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1976, originally published 1859), 23: 'He knew but two types of Methodist – the ecstatic and the bilious.'

<sup>7</sup> Sandy Calder, *The Origins of Primitive Methodism* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2016), 25. Here Calder states 'historians have continued to focus on religions as organisations.' David M. Thompson, "The Churches and Society in Nineteenth-Century England: A Rural Perspective," in *Studies in Church History*, Vol.8, ed. G.J. Cuming and Derek Baker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 267-276. Here Thompson emphasises that research interest has focused on the town and not the countryside.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Rectenwald, *Nineteenth Century British Secularism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016). Callum Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain* (London: Routledge, 2001).

experience was transmitted to a wider audience will be examined through an analysis of the works of those Victorian novelists who filled their pages with Methodism.

The history of Methodism itself has been relatively well rehearsed. It commenced as a response to a seemingly lacklustre Established Church: a Church which, for the eighteenth century, has been described as negligent.<sup>9</sup> Any analysis of its nineteenth century significance must acknowledge the role played by its founder, John Wesley, and the condition of England during these preceding decades.<sup>10</sup> Whether rural or urban, life for the majority was insecure to say the least. Poor housing, inadequate sanitation and potentially dangerous water supplies were commonplace. Famine and disease were familiar to all. Whatever the ramifications caused by the process of industrialisation, poverty had been rife throughout the century. Living and working conditions for vast swathes remained appalling.<sup>11</sup> It was to this world of penury that Wesley addressed himself and commentators have been clear that England and Wales were ripe for his intervention.<sup>12</sup> By the time of his death, in 1791, Methodism had spread and, to an extent, become organised. There were seventy-two thousand members and an estimated half a million adherents.<sup>13</sup>

The development of Methodism during the nineteenth century is the focus here and it was Wesley's demise at the end of the previous century which was of the utmost significance to how events would unfold.<sup>14</sup> He had, inevitably, worked with others but it was his theological thinking, his organizational skills and his ideas about how faith should be practiced which

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<sup>9</sup> Peter Virgin, *The Church in an Age of Negligence: Ecclesiastical Structure and Problems of Church Reform 1700-1840* (London: James Clarke and Co Ltd).

<sup>10</sup> For information relating to the Wesleyan link to Arminianism see Thomas E. Jessop, "The Mid-Nineteenth Century Background," in *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, Vol II, eds. Rupert Davies, A. Raymond George and Gordon Rupp (London: Epworth, 1978), 180. For the implications of salvation being a free choice, available to all, see William Abraham, *Methodism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 6.

<sup>11</sup> For a general account of life in the eighteenth century see, for example, Roy Porter, *The Penguin Social History of Britain: English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990).

<sup>12</sup> David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 16.

<sup>13</sup> William J. Townsend, Herbert B. Workman and George Eays, *A New History of Methodism*, Vol I (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1909), 369. The total number of members in Britain and America was 136,000 with an estimated number of adherents in excess of 800,000.

<sup>14</sup> For information linked to the traditional debate as to Methodist significance see, for example, Edward Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963); Elie Halevy, trans. Edward Watkins, *A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century* (London: E. Benn, 1950, originally published 1925). For a clear explanation as to the historiography see Robert Moore, *Pitmen, Preachers and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 1-27.



had brought about growth.<sup>15</sup> In essence, he had, according to John Kent, been overseeing a shift from Wesleyan Methodism as sect to Wesleyan Methodism as denomination but without supposedly wishing for total separation from the Church of England and without actually clarifying the concept of Wesleyanism itself.<sup>16</sup> He left instruction for one hundred preachers to replace him and take responsibility but there was ambiguity and this immediately shifted any emphasis away from the quest for personal holiness and evangelical zeal towards a focus on church order and discipline.<sup>17</sup> The consequences of this were profound and T.E. Jessop speaks of ‘the jerky movement of events, moods and ideas, in which Methodism and the Methodists lived.’<sup>18</sup> These jerky movements, for Wesleyanism during the first half of the century, related primarily to issues of ministerial control and a lack of lay involvement in the running of the Connexion. This had come about, in part, because of issues related to whether their preachers could administer the Lord’s Supper. The resolution was for them to be ordained by the laying on of hands.<sup>19</sup> These ministers, now given credence, came to exercise even greater control through the yearly Conference but even Wesley’s one hundred was soon to be seen as unwieldy and certain men came to dominate. There was a President of Conference elected each year, but one man in particular came to dominate for an extended period of time. Jabez Bunting’s grip on Wesleyan Methodism from 1815 to the 1840s has been widely commented upon and roundly criticized for shifting the impetus towards conformity, decorum and centralized control.<sup>20</sup> The most notorious manifestation of this criticism came with the so-called Fly Sheets controversy between 1844 and 1849. Four anonymous attacks on Bunting and his associates were made and a badly handled situation meant that Wesleyan Methodism suffered further schism and a sharp

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<sup>15</sup> W.R. Ward, (ed.) *The Early Correspondence of Jabez Bunting, 1820-1829* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1972) 4.

<sup>16</sup> John Kent, “The Wesleyan Methodists to 1849,” in *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, Vol 2, eds. Rupert Davies, A. Raymond George and Gordon Rupp (London: Epworth Press, 1978), 213-275.

<sup>17</sup> Norman P. Goldhawk, “The Methodist People in the Early Victorian Age: Spirituality and Worship,” in *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, Vol 2, eds. Rupert Davies, A. Raymond George and Gordon Rupp (London: Epworth Press, 1978), 113-142. John T. Wilkinson, “The Rise of Other Methodist Traditions,” in *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, Vol 2, eds. Rupert Davies, A. Raymond George and Gordon Rupp (London: Epworth Press, 1978), 276-330.

<sup>18</sup> T.E. Jessop, “The Mid-Nineteenth-Century Background,” in *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, Vol 2, eds. Rupert Davies, A. Raymond George and Gordon Rupp (London: Epworth Press, 1978), 161-212.

<sup>19</sup> A Raymond George, “Ordination,” in *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, Vol 2, eds. Rupert Davies, A. Raymond George and Gordon Rupp (London: Epworth Press, 1978), 143-160.

<sup>20</sup> Kent, “The Wesleyan Methodists to 1849”, 222-223.

decline in members for quite some time before recovery was experienced.<sup>21</sup> W.R. Ward, however, still describes Bunting as 'one of the first-rank churchmen of the nineteenth century.'<sup>22</sup> In part because of his undoubted administrative skills, it cannot be denied that the first fifty years of the century saw Wesleyan Methodism establish itself firmly as a national denomination separate from the Church of England.<sup>23</sup>

The years surrounding the turn of the century also saw secessions from the parent body precisely because of the dissatisfaction with the happenings and emphasis since Wesley's death. The Methodist New Connexion was formed in 1797 with Bible Christianity and Primitive Methodism then coming into being. Each had been encouraged by the expulsion of their leaders from Wesleyanism and each attempted to develop in ways more in keeping with the original eighteenth century fervour. Primitive Methodism, for example, focused on the need for outdoor preaching in the form of camp meetings and came to be by far the largest and most widespread of these newer bodies.<sup>24</sup> Each, in their turn, faced the need to become organized but they did immediately allow for greater participation in decision making by the laity even if they replicated the meetings and the Conference of Wesleyanism. During the second half of the century each of these Methodist denominations continued to strive for growth. Methodism was present in English city, town and village and ubiquity can be asserted. Ups and downs were experienced but success was indicated by the building of more chapels and the replacement and enlarging of others. Missionary zeal meant the widening of horizons to countries all around the world.<sup>25</sup>

For the historian, space is not traditionally seen as a bearer of meaning. It is treated as a neutral dimension in which other types of action are played out.<sup>26</sup> Inevitably, instead, it is viewed as the preserve of the geographer and Nigel Thrift does, indeed, succinctly point out that, 'space is the fundamental stuff of human geography.'<sup>27</sup> So that there can be no doubt

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 224.

<sup>22</sup> W.R. Ward (ed.), *Early Victorian Methodism: The Correspondence of Jabez Bunting, 1830-1858* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), viii.

<sup>23</sup> Kent, "The Wesleyan Methodists to 1849", 227.

<sup>24</sup> Wilkinson, "The Rise of Other Methodist Traditions", 304.

<sup>25</sup> Kent, "The Wesleyan Methodists to 1849", 227. John Pritchard, *Methodists and their Missionary Societies, 1760-1900* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013).

<sup>26</sup> Simon Gunn, "Introduction," in *Identities in Space: Contested Terrains in the Western City Since 1850*, eds. Simon Gunn and Robert Morris (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 2.

<sup>27</sup> Nigel Thrift, "Space: The Fundamental Stuff of Geography," in *Key Concepts in Geography*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, eds. Nicholas Clifford, Sarah Holloway, Stephen Rice and Gill Valentine (London: Sage Publications, 2009), 85.

about the demarcation, Courtney Campell offers the reminder that ‘time, one might add, is the stuff of history.’<sup>28</sup> It is when the concepts start to merge, when the relationship between history and geography is seen as ‘an intertwined narrative’ that spatial history becomes possible.<sup>29</sup> By considering Methodist use of space, new approaches to the secularisation debate emerge.

Secularisation has become a fulcrum around which lively discussion has been generated. The original argument was promulgated by Wilson and Berger. Writing in the 1960s, they explained, in sociological terms, the decline of religion in Britain. The social and cultural impact of industrialisation and urbanisation served to weaken traditional religious beliefs, at least amongst the working classes. For them, secularisation was a feature of the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>30</sup> Historical studies were undertaken which tended to support this thinking. In his study of Sheffield, Edward Wickham suggested that the churches failed to attract the working classes.<sup>31</sup> The same conclusion was reached by Kenneth Inglis. For him, too, the lower attendance in urban areas was due to working class non-attendance.<sup>32</sup> In sociological terms, ‘modernisation’ took away the certainty of religious belief and interfered with the transmission of any such belief from one generation to another.<sup>33</sup> Chambers refers to the ‘juggernaut [of] modernity [which] crushes religion.’<sup>34</sup>

Other works showed the situation to be less straightforward. Kitson Clark emphasised the Victorian revival of religion.<sup>35</sup> Alan Gilbert conceded that, in the long run, industrialisation contributed to secularisation, but he, too, stressed the role of religious revivals during the century, and pointed out that church growth was a trend for much of the time.<sup>36</sup> The work of

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<sup>28</sup> Courtney Campbell, “Space, Place and Scale: Human Geography and Spatial History in Past and Present,” *Past and Present*, 239, no.1 (2018): e23. <https://academic.oup.com/past/article-abstract/239/1/e23/2957256>.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Brian Wilson, *Religion in a Secular Society* (London: Pelican, 1966); Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy* (New York: Anchor Books, 1990, originally published 1967).

<sup>31</sup> Edward Wickham, *Church and People in an Industrial City* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1964).

<sup>32</sup> Kenneth Inglis, *Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963).

<sup>33</sup> Steve Bruce, “Secularisation, Church and Popular Religion,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 62 (2011): 543-560.

<sup>34</sup> Paul Chambers, *Religion, Secularization and Social Change in Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005), 5.

<sup>35</sup> George Kitson Clark, *The Making of Victorian England* (London: Methuen & Co LTD, 1965), 147.

<sup>36</sup> Alan Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England* (London: Longman, 1976).

Stephen Yeo, Jeffrey Cox and Elizabeth Roberts questioned the assumption that the working classes were simply alienated from religion and the churches.<sup>37</sup> The sociologist, Stephen Hunt, takes a compromise position: the secularisation thesis needs to be treated with a certain amount of caution but it is still the best theoretical framework for understanding social and religious change.<sup>38</sup>

While some historians began to see the creep of secularisation in far more nuanced terms, the opening years of the twenty-first century saw the real challenge from developments within cultural history. This enabled the date of secularisation to be moved into the twentieth century.<sup>39</sup> To large extent, the counterweight to traditional views is an emphasis on the part played by popular religion in the lives of the people, where popular religion refers to the appropriation and reinterpretation of orthodox religious belief within local culture. In this, Callum Brown has acted as both a focus and catalyst for further study.<sup>40</sup> By introducing his concept of 'discursive Christianity,' he asserts that nineteenth century Britain was Christian because of the way Christianity infused public culture and ethics thus helping to form identities.<sup>41</sup> He suggests that the Victorians subscribed to 'protocols' or rituals related to this Christian public culture.<sup>42</sup> He is clear that the existing secularisation theory relied on nineteenth century ideas as to what it meant to be religious and he uses this to dismiss the traditional view which linked urbanisation to working class alienation. It is he who pushes secularisation in Britain forwards to the 1960s.

Brown's general argument receives support from historians who have carried out research on the links between church and society. Peter Hillis, for example, when writing about the experience in Aberdeen and Glasgow, in looking at matters relating to attendance and

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<sup>37</sup> Stephen Yeo, *Religion and Voluntary Organisations in Crisis* (London: Croom Helm, 1976); Jeffrey Cox, *English Churches in a Secular Society: Lambeth, 1870-1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982); Elizabeth Roberts, *Working Class Barrow and Lancaster 1890-1930* (Lancaster: Lancaster University Press, 1976).

<sup>38</sup> Stephen Hunt, *Religion in Western Society* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 14.

<sup>39</sup> Peter Burke, *What is Cultural History?* (London: Polity Press, 2004).

<sup>40</sup> Callum Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain* (London: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>41</sup> Callum Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London: Routledge, 2009), 8 and 12.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, 29.

involvement, concludes that 'secularisation seems more of a product of the 1960s than industrialisation.'<sup>43</sup>

Brown's contribution is also major because of his ability to generate controversy. The work of Sarah Williams helps to sum this up.<sup>44</sup> She acknowledges his emphasis on mentalities and cultures rather than social structures and institutions but she also criticises him for assuming that Christian discourse is both unitary and dominant.<sup>45</sup> For her, he overlooks the diversity and range of popular religious idioms that coexisted with those propagated by the churches.<sup>46</sup> She sees a web of religiosity which draws on folk and superstitious elements as well as the orthodox.<sup>47</sup> The late Victorian interest in spiritualism and the occult can also be mentioned.<sup>48</sup> The more inclusive the definition of religion, therefore, the less likely that secularisation is seen to be undermining religious belief and practice.<sup>49</sup>

This anthropological approach, which stretches the definition of popular religion, does not escape criticism. Steve Bruce, a sociologist, in pointing to social historians who emphasise the contrast between institutional and popular religion while lauding the latter, does reach the conclusion that a popular religious culture cannot survive without an 'institutional core.'<sup>50</sup> He also criticises those who emphasise popular religion, for not tracking its fortune over time. With this done, he is sure it would be demonstrated that popular religion

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<sup>43</sup> Peter Hillis, "Church and Society in Aberdeen and Glasgow, circa 1800-2000," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 53, no. 4 (2002): 707-734. For a review of Brown's book see Sheridan Gilley, "Review of *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800-2000*," *Reviews in History* (2001).

<http://reviews.history.ac.uk/review/236>. For a critical approach to Brown's twentieth century claims see Clive D. Field, *Secularization in the Long 1960s: Numerating Religion in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

<sup>44</sup> Sarah Williams, *Religious Belief and Popular Culture in Southwark c1880-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>45</sup> Sarah Williams, "Victorian Religion: a Matter of Class or Culture?," *Nineteenth Century Studies*, 17, (2003): 15.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

<sup>47</sup> Richard Sykes, "Popular Religion in Decline: a Study From the Black Country," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 56, (2005): 288.

<sup>48</sup> Tatiana Kontou and Sarah Willburn, eds., *The Ashgate Research Companion to Nineteenth Century Spiritualism and the Occult* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2012).

<sup>49</sup> Andrew Kim, "Critical Theory and the Sociology of Religion: a Reassessment," *Social Compass* 43, no.2 (1996): 267-283.

<sup>50</sup> Steve Bruce, "Secularisation, Church and Popular Religion," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 62, (2011): 543.

declined in tandem with institutional religion.<sup>51</sup> There are historical studies that convey a similar message.<sup>52</sup>

More recently, Dominic Erdozain has criticised these cultural historians for their generic definitions of religion and for the removal of God and the internal workings of the churches from their analyses.<sup>53</sup> The way had been paved by Peter Yalden who detected flaws in the work of both Brown and Williams. He defined secularisation as the process when 'religious institutions, actions and consciousness lose their social significance' and unashamedly looked to the internal dynamics of nonconformity.<sup>54</sup> This, Brown had not done. Yalden and Erdozain unite in condemning Williams for dissolving conventional concepts of religion, thus diluting the specific role of the churches themselves.<sup>55</sup>

Erdozain goes as far as to say that the works of Brown and his associates 'confirm [the] feeling that cultural historians should be feared.'<sup>56</sup> He emphasises that the nineteenth century was the time when engagement with Church came to be personal and voluntarist and he is, therefore, at the forefront of the campaign to have theological categories of analysis brought into the debate. Soteriology is the linchpin of his argument and, by emphasising that Christianity needs to be interpreted through its own traditions, he posits the notion that the 1870s saw the peak of religiosity. The need for salvation of the soteriological type was being removed and, because the churches reduced the spiritual 'quotient' in their own formulae for growth, a major step towards secularity had been taken.<sup>57</sup> For Brown, secularisation happened when evangelical social morality capitulated in the late twentieth century. For Erdozain it occurred when the 'salvation economy' 'became' social morality in the late nineteenth century: when, for example, sin came to be related to intemperance and gambling and when the 'moral seriousness' of evangelical religion

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 547.

<sup>52</sup> Frances Knight, *The Church in the Nineteenth Century* (London & New York: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2008); John Kent, *The Age of Disunity* (London: Epworth Press, 1966), 1-30.

<sup>53</sup> Dominic Erdozain, *The Problem of Pleasure: Sport, Recreation and the Crisis of Victorian Religion* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010).

<sup>54</sup> Peter Yalden, "Association, Community and the Origins of Secularisation: English and Welsh Nonconformity c.1850-1930," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 55, (2004): 293.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 297; Erdozain, *The Problem of Pleasure*, 15.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 31.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 2-10.

became the 'common sense' of the British.<sup>58</sup> It is argued here that there was a change to the tone and methods used by the churches as the nineteenth century progressed and that it happened slowly and possibly imperceptibly. Erdozain's remark that, 'in the long run, the cure proved as deadly as the disease' is pertinent and Methodist activity is analysed here to test such sentiments.<sup>59</sup>

With redemption giving way to sympathy, there are other theological considerations. Erdozain points to historians treating theological concepts as pawns rather than genuine players.<sup>60</sup> For example, he criticises the concentration on rites of passage and also notices perceptively that the only one missing from any analysis is communion: the one directly linked to worship.<sup>61</sup> David Bebbington describes justification by faith alone as the 'motor of evangelical expansion.'<sup>62</sup> The implications of this motor losing control or power are obvious. All of this has implications for secularisation.

Pointing towards what needs to be teased out by further analysis, the work of Grace Davie is very useful. As a revisionist, and as someone who held to the importance of religious belief and practice outside of organised religion, she coined the phrase 'believing without belonging.'<sup>63</sup> This has been accepted by many as a neat summation as to what was happening. She talks of 'cultural transmission' in relation to the persistence of religion.<sup>64</sup> Erdozain does not miss the opportunity to reply with 'belonging without believing.'<sup>65</sup> There is friction between these two sentiments and, by using a spatial approach, the inevitability of 'neither belonging nor believing' becomes a possibility.

The need for spatial history was emphasised by Michel Foucault, who asserted the primacy of space for contemporary analysis of social and cultural processes.<sup>66</sup> Much of the theory is

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>60</sup> Dominic Erdozain, "The Secularisation of Sin in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 62, (2011) 64.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 64.

<sup>62</sup> David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: a History From the 1730s to the 1980s* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 21.

<sup>63</sup> Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain Since 1945: Believing Without Belonging* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

<sup>64</sup> Grace Davie, *Religion in Modern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>65</sup> Erdozain, "The secularisation of Sin," 85.

<sup>66</sup> Simon Gunn, "Introduction," in *Identities in Space: Contested Terrains in the Western City since 1850*, eds. Simon Gunn and Robert Morris (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 1.

elicited from the work of Henri Lefebvre. He was interested in how people move within and around space. Crucial to this, for him, is the turning of space into place: that is, the naturalising of physical spaces by people through patterns, behaviour and communications. He introduces the idea of 'spatial practice,' by which he is referring to how we move within and around space.<sup>67</sup>

Edward Soja speaks of this as the move from temporality to spatiality.<sup>68</sup> With first and second space relating to the public and the private, he uses 'third space' as the term to explain space which is, at one and the same time, both real and imagined.<sup>69</sup> For nineteenth century Methodism this is significant. Interrogation of real and imagined (symbolic) space enables understanding of how the streets and public areas were used by the Methodists and, crucially, what this means. Edward Relph, a geographer, urges a more human-centred and empathetic understanding of 'the lived experience of place' and it is this that the historian can provide.<sup>70</sup> The historian also remembers that spatiality and temporality need to work together. It is Gunn who points out that they are not mutually exclusive terms.<sup>71</sup>

The study of indoor space in addition to outdoor space, and changes to its use over time has, to large extent, been ignored. Anthony Steinhoff has investigated the role of churches in Strasbourg in broadening and diversifying the city's municipal life.<sup>72</sup> This is useful here but only in as much as it prompts analysis of the reverse situation: what was happening to religion while the churches were being used for concerts and exhibitions rather than for religious worship?

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<sup>67</sup> Henry Lefebvre, trans. Nicholson-Smith, D. *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 40. Here he gives a full explanation of his two forms of spatial practice: representations of space and representational space.

<sup>68</sup> Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 84.

<sup>69</sup> Edward Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell Publishes Ltd, 1996) 56. For discussion related to cultural history and the imagination see Peter Burke, *What is Cultural History?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), 65.

<sup>70</sup> Edward Relph, (1976) *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion Limited, 1976). See also Philip Hubbard "Space/Place," in *Cultural Geography: a Critical Dictionary*, ed. David Atkinson (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005) 43. Here Hubbard calls for an analytical shift in the focus of geographers from social space to lived-in space.

<sup>71</sup> Gunn, "Identities in Space", 10.

<sup>72</sup> Anthony Steinhoff, (2004) "Religion as Urban Culture: a View from Strasbourg, 1870-1914," *Journal of Urban History*, 30, no. 2 (2004): 152-188.



Gunn's work as an historian is important specifically because he also considers the importance of the geographical and sociological dimensions. To him the city centre is a stage for the display of social identity and difference through 'ritualised performances.'<sup>73</sup> He also sees the meaning of events as multiple, depending on who viewed them and in what capacity; as participant or spectator.<sup>74</sup> This spatial perspective is tested here in relation to Methodism, and Gunn is particularly useful in explaining how processional culture developed from the 1860s and how civic pride and culture took shape.<sup>75</sup>

Thinking spatially can specifically enhance understanding of secularisation. Veronica Della Dora, a geographer, takes for granted that the twenty first century is a post secular age but acknowledges that, just as there are multiple forms of belief and non-belief, there are also hidden layers of religious subconsciousness.<sup>76</sup> She writes of nuanced engagements with sacred spaces and this is an important development when dealing with Methodism and its significance to the nineteenth century.<sup>77</sup> The historian can benefit from Della Dora's mention of the fluidity of boundaries between the sacred and secular and also the complex coexistences and intersections between the two. Multiple forms of belief and non-belief can cohabit or be in competition contemporaneously.

Depth can be added by combining the approaches of cultural historians with those of the theologian and geographer. The impact of religion on the ordinary lives of the people can be analysed while the role and significance of the churches themselves is given credence. Hitherto, historians have been tied to linear models of secularisation and the work of sociologists again comes to the fore in calling for a more sophisticated approach. This is made sense of by utilising Demerath's concept of sacralisation. He explains this as 'the process by which the secular becomes sacred.'<sup>78</sup> In this way he is breaking away from Mircea Eliade's belief that sacred space had to be the product of a theophanic event or needed to

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<sup>73</sup> Simon Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class: Ritual and Authority in the English Industrial City 1840-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 69.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, 106.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, 22M

<sup>76</sup> Veronica Della Dora, "Infra Secular Geographies: Making, Unmaking and Remaking Sacred Space," *Progress in Human Geography* 43, no.1 (2018) 44.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, 45.

<sup>78</sup> James A. Beckford and Nicholas J. Demerath, eds., *The SAGE Handbook of the Sociology of Religion* (London: SAGE Publications, 2007), 57.

be an interruption or detached territory.<sup>79</sup> Olsen backs this up by denying that a site needs to be either wholly sacred or wholly worldly.<sup>80</sup> Demerath argues that sacralisation is dialectically linked to secularisation and is crucial to an understanding of the larger context in which secularisation often operates.<sup>81</sup> Here he is building on the work of Durkheim, who envisioned a waxing and waning of sacred commitments as part of the natural rhythm of social change.<sup>82</sup> The term is highly appropriate as it immediately indicates how church and chapel could come to have dominion over streets, parks and even fields with their parades and gatherings attached, for example, to Sunday School celebrations. An immediate connection to work hinted at by Brown but carried forward by Gunn can be made.<sup>83</sup> They both focus on ritual and this prompts the study of religious practice in outdoor spaces. The link between the sacred and the profane is made.

What is less straightforward is Demerath's assumption that the opposite of sacralisation is, in all circumstances, secularisation. In identifying eight paradoxes of secularisation and sacralisation, those that are most convincing relate to national and sweeping changes.<sup>84</sup> At the local level the changes are more subtle. After all, the streets are fundamentally secular places only borrowed by the churches at certain times. Della Dora believes scholars focus on the making of sacred space rather than its demise.<sup>85</sup>

Desacralisation, defined here as 'the retreat or dilution of the sacred' is introduced, therefore, as an apposite concept. In theoretical terminology it is the return of religious place to secular space without the need for grandiose statements about the decline of religion *per se*. Eliade had briefly used this terminology in relation to the 'unmaking' of

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<sup>79</sup> Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: the Nature of Religion* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1959), 26. Sacred and profane are words which originally had a primarily spatial meaning. See Sarah Hamilton and Andrew Spicer, *Defining the Holy: Sacred Space in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 2.

<sup>80</sup> Elizabeth Olsen, Peter Hopkins, Rachel Paine, Giselle Vincent (2013) "Rethorizing the Post Secular Present: Embodiment, Spatial Transcendence, and Challenges to Authenticity Among Young Christians in Glasgow, Scotland," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 103, no.6 (2013): 1424.

<sup>81</sup> Beckford and Demerath, *The SAGE handbook*, 60.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, p.59. Also, Emile Durkheim, trans. J. Swain, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1912).

<sup>83</sup> Simon Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class: Ritual and Authority in the English Industrial City 1840-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).

<sup>84</sup> Beckford and Demerath, *The SAGE Handbook*, 67.

<sup>85</sup> della Dora, "Infra Secular Geographies," 50.

sacred space but he did not explore its implications.<sup>86</sup> Similarly, sacred space has been of interest to historians of the early modern period but only passing reference is made to desacralisation.<sup>87</sup>

By defining and exploring both concepts, connections to secularisation become clear. Furthermore, the true significance of church and chapel on the streets begins to emerge and changing fortunes over time become apparent. It is useful to consider that a sacred space exists or does not exist because of the users' performances and the meanings that are ascribed to them. Della Dora's plea as a geographer is for sacred space to be approached 'not as a static thing, nor as a disembodied set of practices and discourses, but as an assemblage, always made and remade.'<sup>88</sup> This is accounted for here as the subtleties related to the use of both outdoor and indoor space are discussed.

Use of desacralisation in the context of the street is given added weight by considering how secularisation as a concept is employed by historians. Knight, for example, when speaking at the *macro* level, states that the opposite of secularisation is revival on a grand scale. Here secularisation is not explaining events at the *micro*, local level. Use of a different term to clarify what was happening in individual towns would be beneficial, therefore.

Desacralisation can be used to imply the ebb and flow of church and chapel influence within the urban setting with its role in rural society also being explored. Even Rectenwald, writing in 2016, grapples with the thought that the secular and the religious are not necessarily antimonies. Sacralisation and desacralisation allow for contiguous activity.<sup>89</sup>

Demerath's own view is that secularisation converges with sacralisation to form a stream of constantly shifting conceptions and locations of the sacred.<sup>90</sup> He speaks of the two

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<sup>86</sup> Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 50. Also Karel Dobbelaere, "Secularization; a Multi-Dimensional Concept," *Current Sociology* 29, no. 2 (1981): 150. Here Dobbelaere discusses how, as religious institutions lose their domination, they look to other ways to market themselves. Sophie Gilliat-Ray is a professor of Islamic Studies who has written about sacralisation, but not desacralisation, of public spaces in the twenty-first century. See Sophie Gilliat-Ray, "Sacralising Sacred Space in Public Institutions: A Case Study of the Prayer Space at the Millennium Dome," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 20, no. 3 (2005): 357-372.

<sup>87</sup> Christian Grosse, "Places of Sanctification: the Liturgical Sacrality of Genevan Reformed Churches, 1535-66," in *Sacred Space in Early Modern Europe*, eds. William Coster and Andrew Spicer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 60-80. Also, Hamilton and Spicer, *Defining the Holy*.

<sup>88</sup> Della Dora, "Infra Secular Geographies," 65.

<sup>89</sup> Rectenwald, *Nineteenth Century British Secularism*, 5.

<sup>90</sup> Beckford and Demerath, *The SAGE Handbook*, 60.

tendencies oscillating and even playing off each other.<sup>91</sup> It is this oscillation at local level that is better served by the concept of desacralisation: it allows for analysis of the short-term variations as well as the long-term trends and of the local rather than the national context. The activities connected to Methodism, from worship and rites of passage to special services and entertainments, are ideal for unravelling the theories which turn space into place and, indeed, place back into space.<sup>92</sup>

Sacralisation and desacralisation also help to clarify how the churches attempted to dominate the urban scene and then stave off decline. Chambers, in dealing with contemporary South Wales, speaks of the churches as 'mute monuments to the secularisation of Welsh society.'<sup>93</sup> He is clear as to the role of religion in shaping a distinctive Welsh identity but makes the mistake of assuming that secularisation came about relatively rapidly.<sup>94</sup> He does not fully analyse what was happening in the nineteenth century in order to explain the twenty first century happenings. In essence, Chambers calls for investigation into the linkages between religious institutions and their surrounding populations. He feels it should be possible to demonstrate empirically how bodies of believers relate to their surrounding populations and vice versa.<sup>95</sup> Stripping away sociological theory and concentrating on the two concepts can suffice.

It was de Certeau who first attempted to analyse what was happening when people were 'walking in the city.'<sup>96</sup> In linguistic terms he speaks of an urban 'text' with people writing without being able to read. His importance is in stimulating the 'reading' by others of what was going on. The most direct critique of his work comes from Robert Morris who questions the notion that all organised walking by the people is about protest. In calling for a 'fuller

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid, 67.

<sup>92</sup> Michel de Certeau, trans. Steven Rendall, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (London: University of California Press, 1988) 103.

<sup>93</sup> Paul Chambers, *Religion, Secularisation and Social Change in Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005), 1.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid, 41.

<sup>96</sup> de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 91.

and richer cartography' of the uses of space and by citing the crowds walking to sports fixtures, Morris is urging others to think more about ritual and relate it to religion.<sup>97</sup>

Again, it is sociologists who make the link between sacralisation and the use of ritual in urban space. Initially, ritual was understood as an act internal to the group that celebrates it but, more recently, it has been understood to convey a message to an outside public.<sup>98</sup> The possibility of these two dimensions working in tandem has implications for the secularisation debate. To the end of the century there were still huge numbers walking the streets to their chapels as well as, on occasion, worshipping *en plein air*. The study of these Methodists as they made their way from home to church is one thing, but it is analysis of the actual use being made of both the outdoors and the chapels themselves that is a priority here because it reveals so much about what being a Methodist meant to its people.

While the sociologists, geographers and theologians have usefully theorised, certain historians have continued to add depth and insight to matters relating to secularisation. Among others, David Bebbington and Hugh McLeod acknowledge the huge significance of Nonconformity to any understanding of the nineteenth century. Bebbington is prepared to call it the 'Evangelical Century' and he points to the dominance of faith in the culture of the times.<sup>99</sup> A link to the spatial turn is made when, in the preface to *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, he mentions Edward Gibbon who pointed out that religion is affected by its surroundings while, at the same time, influencing those surroundings.<sup>100</sup> McLeod also emphasises the continued vitality of churches and chapels, particularly in Scotland it has to be said, whatever else the analysis showed.<sup>101</sup>

One indication of religious growth or secularisation is inevitably the detection of changes to the numbers of adherents or attendance figures. Both historians make use of these.

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<sup>97</sup> Robert J. Morris and Richard Trainor, eds., *Urban Governance: Britain and Beyond Since 1750* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000) 689.

<sup>98</sup> Gerd Baumann, "Ritual Implicates 'Others': Rereading Durkheim in a Plural Society," in *Understanding Rituals*, ed. Daniel de Coppet (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) 98.

<sup>99</sup> David Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2005) 11, 149 and 252.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, ix.

<sup>101</sup> Hugh McLeod, *Religion and the Working Class in Nineteenth Century Britain* (London: Macmillan, 1984) 32; Hugh McLeod, *Religion and the People of Western Europe 1789-1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981) 115.

Bebbington points out that between 1841 and 1851 the number of sittings available in Methodist churches and chapels had increased by forty percent.<sup>102</sup> The immediate impression would be one of growth and increased influence. McLeod refers to Horace Mann's Ecclesiastical Census of 1851 and draws much from it while pointing to its limitations. These limitations, linked to reliability and the failure to distinguish between attendances and attenders, had previously been thoroughly explained by David Thompson.<sup>103</sup> The figures can be used both to show the huge numbers who did attend but also the vast numbers who did not. McLeod is also clear about regional variations.<sup>104</sup> Up until 1840, Nonconformist denominations grew at a faster rate than the population. Between 1840 and 1880 the rate of growth was very similar while, after 1880, although still growing numerically, Nonconformity was no longer keeping pace.<sup>105</sup> So, sweeping conclusions about secularisation and reduced influence could be made but insight can be given by introducing an in-depth study of two particular areas.

Bebbington speaks of Evangelism's four main characteristics. Succinctly put, he refers to conversion and activism, the Bible and the cross.<sup>106</sup> Each can be charted in terms of sacralisation and desacralisation. The need for, and style of, conversion tells a great deal. Bebbington shows the importance of revivals and indicates that they were the 'ideal form of Christian activity.' He points to the phenomenon being at the core of Evangelical Protestant identity.<sup>107</sup> If there was a tendency for revival and conversion to alter in intensity, they might also have begun to happen less often in the public gaze. Bebbington refers to the changes which took place in relation to increased organisation and reduced spontaneity.<sup>108</sup>

Changes to activism certainly occurred. The tea meeting taking precedence over prayer meetings has important implications. Bebbington writes separately about the significance of

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<sup>102</sup> David Bebbington, *Victorian Nonconformity* (Bangor: Headstart History, 1992) 24.

<sup>103</sup> David M. Thompson, "The Religious Census of 1851," in *The Census and Social Structure: An Interpretative Guide to 19<sup>th</sup> Century Censuses for England and Wales*, ed. Richard Lawton (Abingdon: Frank Cass, 1978), 252.

<sup>104</sup> McLeod, *Religion and the Working Class*, 13.

<sup>105</sup> Alan D. Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England* (London: Longman, 1976) 30; Bebbington, *Victorian Nonconformity*, 24.

<sup>106</sup> David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (London: Routledge, 2005) 23-36.

<sup>107</sup> David Bebbington, *Victorian Religious Revivals*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) vi.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid*, 95. See "The Wesleyan Doctrine of Conversion," *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, May 1868, 414-426.

Wesleyan missionary work and there is much to be said as to how this obvious sign of evangelism led instead to a proliferation of social activities.<sup>109</sup> Desacralisation was so often inadvertent and Methodism, in attempting to uphold its appeal, might well have been contributing to its own demise. Mention of Biblicism and crucicentrism, and what was happening to both during the nineteenth century, immediately resonates with the thinking of Erdozain. The changes to these had direct links to desacralisation and, therefore, to secularisation.<sup>110</sup> For Methodism, perceived changes to the role and significance of the class meeting can be cited.<sup>111</sup> Bebbington points to an important additional characteristic of Methodist evangelicalism. He refers to fellowship and specifically relates this to the class meeting.<sup>112</sup> So, the class meeting had a unique role both in the development and sustaining of community for Methodists and, because of its content, in the staving off desacralisation.<sup>113</sup>

From around 1870, the part played by organised leisure, and the response of the churches to it, becomes important. Bebbington concludes that evangelicals did much to Christianise entertainment and sport.<sup>114</sup> McLeod is clear that the churches used sport both to attract new members and, crucially, for maintaining the loyalty of existing adherents.<sup>115</sup> Light needs to be shed on the actions of the churches themselves. By offering to host such secular leisure activities, the chapels allowed their space to be desacralised.

Certain key works demonstrate the efficacy of using case studies to bring the spatial turn to bear on the role of Methodism. Harvey, Brace and Bailey are historical geographers writing

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<sup>109</sup> David Bebbington, "The Mid-Victorian Revolution in Wesleyan Methodist Home Missions," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 70, (2019): 77-96.

<sup>110</sup> Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism*, 3.

<sup>111</sup> "The Class Meeting: Is it Fully Answering its Designed End," *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, September 1880, 671-672. "A Plea for the Class Meeting," *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, December 1869, 1083-1089.

<sup>112</sup> David Bebbington, "The Evangelical Quadrilateral: A Response," *Fides et Historia* 47 (2015), 87-96. <https://dspace.stir.ac.uk/bitstream/1893/22422/1/Evangelical%20Quadrilateral%20-%20A%20Response.pdf>

<sup>113</sup> The class meeting remained central to the importance of Wesleyan and Primitive Methodism in both the Black Country and the East Riding Wolds throughout the nineteenth century. It, therefore, continued to contribute to sacralisation. In the last decade of the century there were, however, some comments being made to remind people of the importance of attendance. Darlington Street Chapel Leaders' Meeting Book of Record 1895-1941, 14 December 1899, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>114</sup> Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism*, 239.

<sup>115</sup> Hugh McLeod, "Religion, Politics and Sport in Western Europe," in *Religion, Identity and Conflict in Britain: From the Restoration to the Twentieth Century*, eds. Stewart Brown, Frances Knight, and John Morgan-Guy (Farnham-Burlington: Ashgate, 2013) 203.

about Sunday Schools and processional culture.<sup>116</sup> Paul O’Leary also uses processions to talk of the ‘urban scene’ and ‘urban stage.’<sup>117</sup> Importantly, O’Leary does write about the sacralisation of the streets with outdoor space being ‘captured’ by religious organisations on particular occasions and for specific purposes.<sup>118</sup> Andy Croll introduces the complex relationship between nonconformity and leisure while Peter Yalden deals with the pervasive subsidiary activities that are linked to churches.<sup>119</sup> These studies are useful but they all focus on either Wales or Cornwall which were both areas of nonconformist strength. The comparative methodology certainly remains undeveloped as does investigation into other localities. The geographical works do not consider changes over time and all leave scope for study of the actual activities provided by Methodism and an appraisal of whether sacralisation was aided, or desacralisation inadvertently encouraged.

With secularisation, sacralisation and desacralisation as backdrop, the significance of Methodism for individuals and groups can become the priority. By focusing on its impact, as community and on identity and respectability, Erdozain’s interpretation is extended in a way that leaves nothing for him to fear from this work of cultural history.<sup>120</sup> Indeed, the extensive use of primary source material, for both the East Riding Wolds and the Black Country, means that the symbiotic relationship between what was happening to Methodism as an organisation and the repercussions for its people is emphasised.

For these main themes, there are several studies that serve as stimuli. James Obelkevich and his *Religion and Rural Society: South Lindsey 1825-1875* is a seminal work deserving of first mention.<sup>121</sup> His analysis of Wesleyan and Primitive Methodism is rare in its thoroughness. In relation to community, the primary concern is the shift from the traditional agrarian way of life to a society of classes. Methodism is well-and-truly *in* community, but the appetite is

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<sup>116</sup> David C. Harvey, Catherine Brace and Adrian R. Bailey, “Parading the Cornish Subject: Methodist Sunday Schools in West Cornwall, c1830-1930,” *Journal of Historical Geography*, 33, no.1 (2007): 26.

<sup>117</sup> Paul O’Leary, *Claiming the Streets: Processions and Urban Culture in South Wales c1830-1880* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012), 2-19.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid*, 123-127.

<sup>119</sup> Andy Croll, *Civilizing the Urban: Popular Culture and Public Space in Merthyr c1870-1914* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), 10; Peter Yalden, “Association, Community and the Origins of Secularization: English and Welsh Nonconformity, c1850-1930,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 55 (2004): 293-324.

<sup>120</sup> Erdozain, *The Problem of Pleasure*, 31. See page 6 of this thesis.

<sup>121</sup> James Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society: South Lindsey 1825-1875* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976).



whetted for investigation of Methodism as community. His is an invaluable work of social history giving encouragement to cultural exploration.<sup>122</sup> The close relationship between religion and identity has been a topic of interest, especially to sociologists, ever since it was first explored by Durkheim.<sup>123</sup> Peter Burke's work on both social memory and cultural hybridity has acted as particular impetus to explore the link between Methodism and identity formation.<sup>124</sup> Historians have long been interested in ideas related to respectability. For the nineteenth century and the working classes it is Peter Bailey who sees it carrying 'normative power.'<sup>125</sup> The middle-classes are the focus for F.M.L. Thompson when he argues that the desire to be respectable permeated all aspects of their existence.<sup>126</sup> The drawing of these themes together into a spatial approach has been occasioned by certain texts. Davidoff and Hall's *Family Fortunes* is a useful reference because of its emphasis on gender and separate spheres. A focus on religious use of public and domestic space is encouraged. From this binary position, the concept of third space is then an obvious addition for the study of religion's significance. There is Soja's definition of the real and the imagined which brings together the participant and the onlooker, the adherent and the sceptic.<sup>127</sup> There is then Linda Wilson's third space of the chapel which she speaks of in *Constrained by Zeal: Female Spirituality Amongst Nonconformists 1825-1875*.<sup>128</sup> Here it is explained as somewhere not quite public and not quite private.<sup>129</sup> Although their remits are so vastly different, there is a useful coherence between Soja and Wilson and third space becomes crucial here. Reference is then made to fourth space. An extension to the other three, it becomes the space filled by the presence of God: a deeply personal place. It deserves

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<sup>122</sup> Burke, *What is Cultural History?*. See also Peter Mandler, "The Problem with Cultural History," *Cultural and Social History* 1 (2004): 94-117.

<sup>123</sup> Emile Durkheim, trans. Joseph W. Swain, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1912).

<sup>124</sup> Peter Burke, *Varieties of Cultural History* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1997) 43-59; Peter Burke, *Cultural Hybridity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009).

<sup>125</sup> Peter Bailey, "Will the Real Bill Banks Please Stand Up? Towards a Role Analysis of Mid-Victorian Working-Class Respectability," *Journal of Social History* 12, no. 3 (1979): 336-353 (336).

<sup>126</sup> Francis M.L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society, a Social History of Victorian Britain, 1830-1900* (London: Fontana Press, 1988), 250.

<sup>127</sup> Edward Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1996), 56.

<sup>128</sup> Linda Wilson, *Constrained by Zeal: Female Spirituality Amongst Nonconformists 1825-1875* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2000).

<sup>129</sup> Ibid, 1. Jürgen Habermas speaks of semi-public spaces. See Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992). Third space, therefore, stresses the absolute importance of chapels.

attention and hopefully brings satisfaction to Erdozain's principal gripe: the removal of God from historical investigation. Clarity is provided by bringing to the fore a further body of writing that would be ignored by some historians.<sup>130</sup> Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler, in her novel *The Farringdons*, refers to the people who:

...have entered into the fourth dimension, and have caught glimpses of the ideal which is concealed in all reality.<sup>131</sup>

The ideal for Fowler is belief in God and, in her works of fiction, it is Methodism that enables this fourth space to be filled. Although not using this terminology, there are other novelists who imply the same: from the highbrow of George Eliot to the lower represented by Silas Hocking.<sup>132</sup> The impact and efficacy of this *genre*, along with its value to the historian, are, therefore, further considerations.

### Contention

Throughout this thesis the uniqueness of Methodism is emphasised. Each separate feature might not be deserving of the claim, but it was the combination of factors which rendered the Methodist experience extraordinary and the repercussions profound. There was the eighteenth-century timing of its birth with the particular economic, political and social upheavals.<sup>133</sup> There was the lack of response to these problems from the Church of England or, indeed, any other organization.<sup>134</sup> A situation ripe for intervention coincided with the leadership, drive and energy of John Wesley. His impact should not be underestimated.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Thompson, "The Churches and Society in Nineteenth-Century England", 275. Here Thompson states 'that nowhere so far has it been suggested that belief had anything to do with church attendance.'

<sup>131</sup> Ellen T. Fowler, *The Farringdons* (New York: D. Appleton and Co, 1900), 211.

<sup>132</sup> Silas K. Hocking, *Her Benny: a Story of Street Life* (Great Britain: Okitoks Press, 2017, originally published 1879); George Eliot, *Adam Bede* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1976, originally published 1859).

<sup>133</sup> Herbert Butterfield, "England in the Eighteenth Century," in *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, Volume 1, eds. Rupert Davies and Gordon Rupp (London: Epworth Press, 1965), 3-33.

<sup>134</sup> David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 13. There were, in the eighteenth century, certain individual thinkers who were addressing the issues. David Hume in Scotland can be cited. See Ernest C. Mossner, *The Life of David Hume* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

<sup>135</sup> Maldwyn Edwards, "John Wesley," in *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, Volume 1, eds. Rupert Davies and Gordon Rupp (London: Epworth Press, 1965), 35-80.

He was a man with both a message and a method for its delivery. To understand the former and its appeal to the people it is his Arminianism which needs to be highlighted. Calvinism dominated the theology of evangelicals at the time, and it offered what has been referred to as a 'pessimism of Grace.'<sup>136</sup> Wesley was emphasising something completely different. The original thinking of Arminius, a Dutch pastor and theologian who lived from 1560 to 1609, was particularly complex and, although it met with the approval of certain High-Church Anglicans, its initial impact in Britain was unpropitious.<sup>137</sup> Wesley, however, was able to turn it into a practical theology which was both understandable and appealing. The grace of God and the Atonement wrought by Jesus Christ were available to all. The doctrine of predestination was 'a blasphemous fable.'<sup>138</sup> Wesley's Arminianism meant that he also believed that it was possible to fall from grace and he, therefore, emphasised the need for a life devoted to holiness. John Walsh summed this up by pointing out that:

The Christian life to which a Methodist convert was called was one of unending advance through a better life to a better world.<sup>139</sup>

This was Wesley's distinctive, and inherently optimistic, teaching of entire sanctification. Calvinists believed that the struggle against sin could not end before death.<sup>140</sup> Wesley, on the contrary, held that a state of perfect love was attainable on earth. It came through faith and was normally achieved after a long quest. It was to come about at a recognizable time and, although similar to the conversion experience, it was a step beyond. It could be expected to result in increased zeal.<sup>141</sup> Bebbington describes the doctrine as 'the jewel in the crown of the [Methodist] tradition.'<sup>142</sup> He also points to changes in emphasis as the nineteenth century progressed. For example, he links the move towards respectability to a

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<sup>136</sup> Gordon Rupp, "Introductory Essay," in *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, Volume 1, eds. Rupert Davies and Gordon Rupp (London: Epworth Press, 1965), xxvi.

<sup>137</sup> John Lawson, "The People Called Methodists – 2. 'Our Discipline'," in *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, Volume 1, eds. Rupert Davies and Gordon Rupp (London: Epworth Press, 1965), 208.

<sup>138</sup> Rupert Davies, "The People Called Methodists – 1. 'Our Doctrines'," in *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, Volume 1, eds. Rupert Davies and Gordon Rupp (London: Epworth Press, 1965), 166.

<sup>139</sup> John Walsh, "Methodism at the End of the Eighteenth Century," in *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, Volume 1, eds. Rupert Davies and Gordon Rupp (London: Epworth Press, 1965), 314

<sup>140</sup> David Bebbington, *Holiness in Nineteenth-Century England*, (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2000), 61.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid*, 61.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid*, 65.

toning down of certain emotional requirements and an increased emphasis on regular church going and Bible reading as signs of this 'sanctification'.<sup>143</sup> This variety of holiness, however, clearly required activities which would both help people to attain and then sustain it.

For his methods Wesley turned to another group of Christians who had impressed him while on his travels in America. These were the Moravians with their origins in Bohemia and then Germany. Wesley was impressed by their simple devotion and while questioning some of the theology it was their life in community which most impressed him.<sup>144</sup> Much of his thinking about the significance of conversion came from them and then his band meetings, class meetings, love feasts and conferences owed much to the Moravian influence.<sup>145</sup> Both Arminianism and Moravianism helped to lead Wesley and Methodism towards its distinctive style of participatory worship with its emphasis on hymn singing, sermon giving and the Bible.<sup>146</sup>

With its message and methods becoming established during the eighteenth century, the nineteenth century uniqueness of Methodism could then include its ubiquity. It spread throughout England even though it undoubtedly became stronger in certain areas which included the West Midlands and Yorkshire.<sup>147</sup> The secessions from the parent body meant that it also came to offer choice.<sup>148</sup> With chapels built, towns but also villages provided multiple opportunities to worship as a Methodist with relative strength for Wesleyanism being the urban setting and for Primitive Methodism the rural.<sup>149</sup> There was then the range of activities and the frequency of them. The possibility of three services on a Sunday with additional provision for children was joined by compulsory mid-week activity in the form of the class meeting. There were also the opportunities for social gathering.<sup>150</sup> All of this is of relevance to the chapters which follow. It was the uniqueness of the Methodist offering

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid, 66-67.

<sup>144</sup> Rupp, "Introductory Essay", xxxiv.

<sup>145</sup> Edwards, "John Wesley", 52.

<sup>146</sup> Hempton, *Empire of the Spirit*, 68.

<sup>147</sup> K.D.M. Snell and Paul S. Ell, *Rival Jerusalems: The Geography of Victorian Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 121.

<sup>148</sup> Julia Stewart Werner, *The Primitive Methodist Connexion: Its Background and Early History* (Madison WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984). 157.

<sup>149</sup> Snell, *Rival Jerusalems*, 126, 201.

<sup>150</sup> Hempton, *Empire of the Spirit*, 55-85.

which meant that communities were created, identities formed, and respectability eventually fostered. The uniqueness of the Methodist experience will, in this thesis, be explored through an analysis of its use of space both physical and spiritual.

From the death of Wesley to the demise of Victoria changes occurred to the way Methodism used space. The contention here is that it turned itself inside-out by literally turning from the outside-in: it changed markedly, and this can be explained by examining its use of space. In general terms it moved from outdoors to indoors and, when towards the end of the nineteenth century there was a reemergence into the open air, it was often for different purpose than sacralisation. What appeared to be signs of success for community, identity and respectability can be reinterpreted as worrying indications of desacralisation and, ultimately, secularisation. With this there were implications for the people called Methodists and how they perceived themselves and were looked upon by others.

Certain phases, with no strict boundaries, can be identified along with Primitive Methodism's ultimately failed attempts to halt the process. A first phase is exemplified by Wesley himself. For most of his life Methodism was connected to the outdoors. In the early years, parish clergy, with their natural antipathy, would refuse permission for him to preach in their churches. A famous statement of Wesley's refers to the whole world being his parish.<sup>151</sup> This emphasises his view that he could go anywhere, at any time. It points to the pertinence of a spatial approach. His open-air preaching commenced as early as 1739 when he announced his intention to 'instruct the ignorant, reform the wicked and confirm the virtuous.'<sup>152</sup> He decided to meet them where they were rather than where the Established Church thought they should be. In theological terms his preaching was kerugmatic: there was no point having a doctrine and not preaching it. This combination of the message and the man meant that spectacle was created. No one in the vicinity could be ignorant of his presence. Temporarily he was responsible for the goings-on in the space. The effects were longer lasting.

These goings-on had nothing to do with issues such as respectability. Indeed, the situation appeared quite the opposite. Wesley's preaching elicited an emotional response and

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<sup>151</sup> John Wesley, *The Journal of the Rev John Wesley A.M. from October 1735 to October 1790*, Vol I (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1864), 190.

<sup>152</sup> Roy Hattersley, *A Brand from the Burning: the Life of John Wesley* (London: Little, Brown, 2002) 145.

condemnation followed. Parish clergy and the magistracy were not alone in claiming Methodism to be disruptive and even dangerous.<sup>153</sup> Brief reference to Wesley's work-ethic emphasises the impact he exerted. A first sermon delivered at five o'clock in the morning would be followed by several more during the day.<sup>154</sup> His journal provides the proof for the various calculations which estimate twenty thousand miles travelled on horse-back each year with eight hundred sermons preached.<sup>155</sup> The enthusiasm of the responses meant that conversions were commonplace. The impact was both visual and auditory. Huge crowds were listening to something new, that was directed towards them, specifically using words that they understood. The Methodist leader might be encouraging social instability precisely because he was utilising outdoor space. There was also nothing respectable about the response from the onlookers. They were far from being disinterested observers. Often arranged by local clergy or dignitaries, the inciting of mob violence was commonplace.<sup>156</sup> The impact could, therefore, also be physical.

Wesley's success meant that there was too much to be done by one man. The systems put in place by him also serve to emphasise the importance of the outdoors to Methodist success. The preachers who joined with him were known as itinerants.<sup>157</sup> They were defined by their travelling and the impact of Methodism was, therefore, spreading. For example, it has been estimated that Wesley alone travelled over 280,000 miles during his lifetime.<sup>158</sup>

A reminder of the absolute importance of the outdoors to the history and success of Methodism is given by referring to the secessions from the Wesleyan parent body, which took place in the years surrounding the turn of the century. For the Black Country and the East Riding Wolds it was Primitive Methodism which was of significance although the Methodist New Connexion did infiltrate the industrial region.<sup>159</sup> Burke speaks of 'cultural

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<sup>153</sup> William Townsend, Henry Workman and George Eayrs, *A New History of Methodism*, Vol 1 (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1909), 323.

<sup>154</sup> William J. Abraham, *Methodism: a Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 7.

<sup>155</sup> John Wesley, *The Journal of the Rev John Wesley A.M. from October 1735 to October 1790*, Vols I-IV (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1864).

<sup>156</sup> John Wesley, *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley A.M. From October 1735 to October 1790*, Vol I (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1864), 394-397, 410-414.

<sup>157</sup> Kenneth D. Brown, *A Social History of the Nonconformist Ministry in England and Wales, 1800-1930* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988) 8. Brown speaks of the hostility and physical violence encountered and the shift from Wesleyans to Primitives in the receiving of it.

<sup>158</sup> Hattersley, *A Brand from the Burning*, 188.

<sup>159</sup> Eric Hobsbawm's essay "Methodism and the threat of Revolution in Britain" sums up the Primitive Methodists as 'the most serious of the seceders.' Eric Hobsbawm, *Labouring Men* (London: Weidenfeld

borrowing', and this can be related to the Camp Meetings which were first used by American evangelists and then adopted by these Primitive Methodists.<sup>160</sup> They were held outside and Sandy Calder refers to the 'noisy, emotional revivalism.'<sup>161</sup>

A second phase, already hinted at, came about with Wesleyan Methodism's very definite move indoors. From the early years of the century, chapel building became the *raison d'être*, although use of this indoor space still worked in tandem with outdoor space. Importantly, both were being used for purposes directly connected to proselytization or retention. Born out of the necessity for converts to meet, chapels were a key symbol of success as well as a home for community. No longer to be ridiculed, these Methodists were meeting together to take part in their very own and distinctive means of grace. What is possibly most surprising is the speed with which the move to acceptance occurred. It was a time, perhaps, of unconscious respectability. The leadership's distaste for the 'roarings and screamings' of the past was successfully translated into organised services with their routine of hymn singing, sermons and prayers.<sup>162</sup> The adherents were walking into their own buildings. They were no longer having to borrow space; they were owning it. Almost private but not quite; entry was available to all but, to be involved, conscious decisions had to be made. Membership tickets were distributed and fitness to possess one was reviewed on at least four occasions during the year.<sup>163</sup> Membership mattered, and identities were hewn. It provided somewhere to go, somewhere with set patterns, somewhere requiring you to wear your best clothes.<sup>164</sup> Visibly you might be removed from the gaze of the onlooker, but the hymn singing could still be heard, and you were noticed as you made your way, with others, to and from your chapel.<sup>165</sup>

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and Nicolson, 1979, originally published 1964), 26. For a summary of the history of the Methodist New Connexion see E. Alan Rose, "The Methodist New Connexion 1797-1907: Portrait of a Church," *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* 47, (1990): 241-253.

<sup>160</sup> Burke, *Cultural hybridity*, 40. The Wesleyan Conference of 1807 referred to Camp-Meetings as 'highly improper...and likely to be productive of considerable mischief.' See Rupert Davies, A. Raymond George and Gordon Rupp, eds., *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, Vol IV (London, Epworth Press, 1988), 320.

<sup>161</sup> Calder, *The Origins of Primitive Methodism*, 111.

<sup>162</sup> Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*, 33.

<sup>163</sup> Townsend, *A New History of Methodism*, Vol I, 288.

<sup>164</sup> Roland Barthes, trans. Matthew Ward and Richard Howard, *The Fashion System* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983, originally published 1967), 64-65; Anne Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes*, (London: Penguin Books, 1988, originally published 1978) 366.

<sup>165</sup> Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*, 68-74.

The outdoors was still used but in a far more structured and managed fashion. Newspapers might advertise a particular chapel's event, or a church, chapel or Sunday School could join in an occasion of import for a town or community. Initially the Primitive Methodists kept to their original methods: they were known as Ranters.<sup>166</sup> Over time, they too, however, acquiesced. The preaching became less corybantic as the chapels were built. For Burke, cultural borrowing is primarily a pejorative term and Primitive Methodism could not resist the temptation to ape Wesleyan vocabulary and Wesleyan ways.<sup>167</sup>

This was the situation in the first half of the nineteenth century. The focus was on piety and the means of grace. Personal holiness was to the fore and the leaders were determined to preserve the 'methodistic' character of all that took place. The link can be made to the use of space, sacralisation and unconscious respectability, therefore, with the Sunday service developed into a form that became familiar.<sup>168</sup> The class meeting, a particular feature of Methodism, was a weekly happening in homes and the chapel and there were prayer meetings and love-feasts to attend. It was understood that there was work to be done in England to convert those who had not already succumbed to the Methodist message. Even during Wesley's lifetime, a number of the relatively well-to-do showed allegiance and, in towns throughout England, there were businessmen and their families who found that Methodism appealed.<sup>169</sup> David Hempton, however, asks why this Methodism particularly appealed to those on the social margins.<sup>170</sup> They might have been attracted to something attended by those regarded as their social betters, but it is the case that these people, far from the centre of cultural power, were now occupied and given purpose. Unconscious respectability might be a fair summation of what was being inculcated or, at the very least, there was an identity to be formed. Regarding what was to develop later in the century, at this juncture, the range of activities on offer was relatively narrow and was centred around

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<sup>166</sup> Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, part 1 (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1971) 387.

<sup>167</sup> Burke, *Cultural Hybridity*, 40.

<sup>168</sup> John M. Turner, "Methodist Religion, 1791-1849," in Davies, R., George, A.R. and Rupp, G., (eds.) *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, Vol 2, eds. Rupert Davies, A. Raymond George and Gordon Rupp (London: Epworth Press, 1978), 118.

<sup>169</sup> There are well documented examples for the West Midlands. Wolverhampton's Isaac Jenks is a case in point, and he is discussed in chapter 4.

<sup>170</sup> Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*, 131.



the chapel.<sup>171</sup> The outdoors was used but in moderation and still chiefly for the recognition of the core purpose – worshipping God and bringing new converts into the fold.

A next phase is recognisable during the second half of the nineteenth century. This coincides with the time when Methodism is traditionally considered to have been at its most influential, and when historians have claimed England to be, in straightforward terms, religious.<sup>172</sup> This second point rather emphasises the impact of the first. It was the period when inside space appeared to be used to greatest effect. It is the phase which bears greatest scrutiny, however, precisely because appearances can be deceptive. The changes which took place, usually subtle but not always, were significant. The claim here is that it was a time, for many, of conscious respectability, and that this, ultimately, adversely affected Methodism itself while contributing, at the macro level, to secularisation.<sup>173</sup>

This period was defined by a second wave of chapel building. For Wesleyanism, these were not as a rule new; they were replacements. Not by accident have commentators referred to Mahogany Methodism and the buildings were inevitably grander edifices with increased seating capacity.<sup>174</sup> A significant development, both physically and symbolically, was the attention given to the erection of additional halls and rooms. They meant that activity could increase, and greater numbers might be accommodated. They also represented a shift in focus away from the purely religious.<sup>175</sup> What might have seemed to the outside world to be success, and a possible sign of community strength and respectability, was accompanied by huge debts which contributed to the change in focus from the purely religious to the money-gathering.<sup>176</sup> In examining the role of women in this much is revealed. The additional halls

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<sup>171</sup> Turner, “Methodist Religion, 1791-1849”, 100.

<sup>172</sup> Thomas E. Jessop, “The Mid-Nineteenth Century Background,” in *History of the Methodist church in Great Britain*, Vol II, eds. Rupert Davies, A. Raymond George, and Gordon A. Rupp (London: Epworth Press, 1978) 169.

<sup>173</sup> Martin Wellings speaks of ‘the tension between respectability and revivalism.’ He also refers to the nineteenth century divide between those who celebrated Wesleyan success and those who saw the departure from ‘Methodism as it was.’ Martin Wellings, ed., *Methodism in Victorian Oxford* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2023), 13-14.

<sup>174</sup> Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*, 116; John Kent, *The Age of Disunity* (London: Epworth Press, 1966) 225.

<sup>175</sup> See, for example, Darlington Day School Managers’ Meeting Minutes 1845-1871, Wolverhampton Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, M-DS/2/2, Wolverhampton Archives. Also, Darlington Street and Newhampton Road Trustees Minutes 1863-1911, Wolverhampton Wesleyan Circuit, M-DS/2/5, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>176</sup> For example, see entry for Darlington Street and Newhampton Road Trustees Minutes 1863-1911, 8 March 1881, Wolverhampton Archives.

and rooms were, perhaps, their territory as they were asked by men to arrange bazaars, form sewing groups and increasingly involve themselves in Sunday Schools.<sup>177</sup> On one level respectability was sealed precisely because they performed to type.

This was also the period of greatest geographical expansion and Hempton's book, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*, does more than hint at the link between Methodist growth and nineteenth century imperialism.<sup>178</sup> Symbolically, effort to convert was moving overseas; away from the doorstep. Methodist missionary societies were successful: they raised huge sums of money and sent people to far-flung places across the globe. Respectable reasons to meet, and socialise, were created but there were implications locally for desacralisation and nationally for secularisation as people entered chapel premises for purposes not directly linked to their own, or indeed their neighbours', spiritual well-being. Respectable Methodists became interested and involved in all sorts of other issues, too. The link between Methodism and campaigns to stem the evils of drink are clear.<sup>179</sup> Methodist involvement in issues related to the education of children can also be cited.<sup>180</sup> Laudable these efforts may have been, but attention was shifting away from the purely religious.

That which was seemingly purely religious underwent changes that had repercussions. What was done ostensibly for the glory of God had implications for respectability. Unaccompanied hymn singing was no longer acceptable, and harmoniums installed were then, in time, replaced by pipe organs which became grander over time.<sup>181</sup> This hymn singing, always a key feature of Methodism, was then supposedly aided by the introduction of choirs, and these choirs were required to practise.<sup>182</sup> If there is such a thing as respectable behaviour, it was

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<sup>177</sup> 'Ladies of the congregation be requested to interest themselves in a bazaar towards the liquidation of the debt.' See entry for Bilston Road Wesleyan Methodist Chapel Trustees Minutes 1875-1906, 8 February 1894, Wolverhampton Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, M/BR/4. Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>178</sup> Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*.

<sup>179</sup> Brian Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians: the Temperance Question in England 1815-1872* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971). For information about Methodism's link to The Band of Hope see entry for Darlington Street and Newhampton Road Trustees Minutes 1863-1911, 11 June 1880, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>180</sup> See, for example, Darlington Day School Managers' Meeting Minutes 1845-1871, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>181</sup> For an example see entry for Darlington Street and Newhampton Road Trustees Minutes 1863-1911, 3 May 1886, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>182</sup> Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*, 68-84. John Lowerson speaks of allodoxia to sum up lower middle-class taste and this is spoken of in detail in relation to Methodism in chapter four of this thesis. John Lowerson, "An Outbreak of Allodoxia? Operatic Amateurs and Middle Class Musical Taste between

being encouraged in all that was going on. Although there might have been a delay, Primitive Methodism accelerated its shift towards the Wesleyan standard.<sup>183</sup>

A key feature of these years was the widening of activities, and the increased number of times during the week that the doors to the chapel, or schoolroom, were opened. On the surface everything points to greater success. More people were entering the buildings and to know a Methodist was to understand that they were involved in something giving them a purpose which was fine and upstanding.<sup>184</sup> A far cry from the earliest days. There were the activities connected, however tenuously, to the means of grace. Spectacle that had once been provided in the open air was now created in the form of special services such as the Sunday School Anniversary, Chapel Anniversary and Harvest Festival. Platforms were erected with connotations of performance rather than worship and special clothes were worn.<sup>185</sup> Those who were on the periphery were encouraged to attend. Advertisements were placed in the local press; bills were posted in shop windows and invitations distributed.<sup>186</sup> The need to raise funds was shamelessly joined by the belief that Methodists could be entertained or, at least, fed.<sup>187</sup> Opportunities to demonstrate your respectability came in a range of ways: although not articulated, people felt that their involvement provided them with a certain standing, a certain place within the community.<sup>188</sup> Space was clearly being used differently.

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the Wars,” in *Gender, Civic Culture and Consumerism: Middle Class Identity in Britain, 1800-1940*, eds. Alan Kidd and David Nicholls (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 198.

<sup>183</sup> For a discussion related to Primitive Methodism and its use of choirs see Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit Committee Meeting Minute Book 1843-1853, Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit, R/M/Sc/1/2/5, North Yorkshire Record Office.

<sup>184</sup> Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society*, 204-211.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid, 229-230. For information relating to the Yorkshire Wolds see Beverley Wesleyan Circuit Trustees Meetings 1879-1909, Beverley Wesleyan Circuit, MRB/1/6, East Riding Archives. Also Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1862-1881, Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit, R/M/Sc/1/2/12, North Yorkshire Record Office. For information relating to the Black Country see Darlington Street and Newhampton Road Trustees Minutes 1863-1911, Wolverhampton Archives. Also Toll End Primitive Methodist Leaders' Book 1853-1863, Primitive Methodism, NC38/2/1/1, Sandwell Archives.

<sup>186</sup> See, for example, *Wolverhampton Chronicle*, November 14, 1866. Information relating to this is present in almost all minute books for both Wesleyan Methodism and Primitive Methodism whether on the Wolds or in the Black Country. As an example, see Bilston Road Wesleyan Methodist Chapel Trustees Minutes 1875-1906, Wolverhampton Archives.”

<sup>187</sup> Information relating to this is present in almost all minute books for both Wesleyan Methodism and Primitive Methodism whether on the Wolds or in the Black Country. As an example, see Wolverhampton Wesleyan Methodist Circuit Sunday School Union Minute Book 1860-1873, Wolverhampton Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, MC-BW/15/1, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>188</sup> See, as an example, Darlington Street Chapel Trust Minutes 1836-1854, 25 September 1844, Wolverhampton Wesleyan Circuit, M-DS/2/1, Wolverhampton Archives. Women provided trays of food for fellow Methodists, neighbours, and people unknown. There were many business opportunities:

Religious worship requiring rehearsal and priority being given to social activity can be interpreted as a form of desacralisation.

Use of the outdoors was particularly revealing. Events were organised for Sunday School scholars which were celebratory in style and exuded confidence to the onlooker. Methodism had a right to be occupying streets and public spaces such as parks as well as private land belonging to farmers.<sup>189</sup> Simply to parade with a banner announced that it was acceptable, indeed desirable, to be a Methodist. These events were for the arrived rather than the yet-to-arrive. There was nothing spontaneous or risky, nothing that could detract from the respectability of the participant. Employer and employee might both be Methodists, and this is testament to the special type of community, with its identity formation and respectability, that was engendered.<sup>190</sup> Methodism had, however, inadvertently introduced these same people to more than evangelical religion and a next phase was ushered in: a phase where external pressures would come to the fore to affect it.

This phase, therefore, came to dominate the decades surrounding the turn of the century. In spatial terms it involved retreat: both physically and symbolically. The large buildings, thought to be the key to success, were draining the finances and the energies which might have been expended in other ways.<sup>191</sup> The means of grace continued but they, and the special occasions that had developed over the century, remained the same. Methodism was catering for Methodists with serious implications for growth. True enough, all thoughts of ridicule and humiliation had been forgotten, and without doubt, community was formed, identity created, and respectability perceived. The retreat indoors, therefore, was partly aimed at keeping it this way. The outdoors was still used but, in spatial terms, the observer can be as important as the observed and these onlookers either had other things to watch or, increasingly, other things to do. Much has been written about the implications of

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provision of china, supplying goods, being awarded contracts to paint the buildings. Time and time again specific people are mentioned because of their contribution and so that they can receive the thanks from committee members and the congregation. As an example, see the various entries related to Mr and Mrs Isaac Jenks, Mr Tunnicliff, Miss Louisa Fowler and many, many more in Darlington Street Leaders' Meeting Minute Book 1856-1894, Wolverhampton Wesleyan Circuit, M-DS/2/4, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>189</sup> See, for example, Wolverhampton Wesleyan Circuit Darlington Street and Newhampton Road Trustees Minutes 1863-1911, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>190</sup> Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society*, 194-204, 237-242. For the Wolds and Black Country see entries in the various Trustees' Minute Books.

<sup>191</sup> Debt is a recurring theme in minute book after minute book and in correspondence and newspaper reports.

increased leisure time and the growing range of opportunities available.<sup>192</sup> Methodism had been aware of the need to occupy and entertain. This had removed energies from the core purpose even if it had served to retain numbers. With added competition, some of what Methodism offered could be secured in other ways. Possibly, fourth space had been neglected with Methodism making the same mistake as those academics identified by Erdozain: the removal of soteriology.<sup>193</sup>

Wesley, all those years before, had finally proved prophetic:

...true scriptural Christianity, has a tendency in process of time to undermine and destroy itself...it saps its own foundation.<sup>194</sup>

In theological terms the eighteenth-century hordes had been ready to hear, in the raw, the message of salvation. This was no longer so obviously the case a century later. Alongside modernity, it could be that the creep of respectability had left its mark. If so, the Methodists were, inadvertently, responsible, in part, for their own problems with the emphasis on the sacred being gradually diluted and replaced by more secular activities and attitudes.<sup>195</sup>

In spatial terms these last thoughts bring with them some fascinating developments. Eric Schmidt moves from the visual implications of space to the aural.<sup>196</sup> On one level he asks that thought be given to the religious sounds that emanate at particular times. As with the visual, also with that which is heard: religious insiders and outsiders, another symbolic spatial reference, hear noise differently. At a camp meeting the participants made sense of the noise as it was part of their experience. The dispassionate listener might have made no sense of the sound.<sup>197</sup> As time passed, however, the outsider may have had less to be confused about. Spontaneity decreased and the sounds became more predictable. The most

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<sup>192</sup> Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978). Michael Huggins and James A. Mangan, eds., *Disreputable Pleasures: Less Virtuous Victorians at Play* (London and New York: Frank Cass, 2004).

<sup>193</sup> Erdozain, *The Problem of Pleasure*.

<sup>194</sup> Albert Outler, *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol 4 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987) 95-96.

<sup>195</sup> Erdozain, *The Problem of Pleasure*, 15. Evidence for this is provided in the chapters which follow for both the Black Country and the East Riding Wolds. See, for example, Darlington Street Leaders' Meeting Minute Book 1856-1894, Wolverhampton Wesleyan Circuit, M-DS/2/4, Wolverhampton Archives. Also, Beverley Wesleyan Circuit Trustees Meetings 1879-1909, Beverley Wesleyan Circuit, MRB/1/6, East Riding Archives.

<sup>196</sup> Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Hearing Things: Religion, Illusion, and the American Enlightenment* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press 2000).

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid*, 15.

predictable of all Methodist sounds was the hymn singing and, throughout the nineteenth century, it announced that Methodists were present, proud, and wanting to be heard.<sup>198</sup> Familiarity meant that others could join in if they so desired. It became a respectable noise but so, too, did the cantata and light opera *aria*: symbols of desecralisation.

A further point made by Schmidt pushes at the boundaries of the symbolic significance of what was taking place. In talking of liminal space, he is bringing God well and truly into his thinking. This is the space:

where the spirit and the flesh were under constant negotiation [and where] noises were silent yet heard, external yet internal, transient yet deathless, in the body yet beyond the body.<sup>199</sup>

Early Methodism appeared to create these opportunities in relation to the presence of God: opportunities to fill a fourth space.<sup>200</sup> This was dependent on the stance or desire of the person present and the effectiveness of what was taking place. Attending chapel was not supposed to be an end in itself but, perhaps as time passed, this became more likely. Respectability might have meant that He needed to be kept at a distance. Certainly, as the years passed, there is reason to believe that the religious outsider would have been less aware that God was being grappled with, and the primary sources used here indicate this to be the case.<sup>201</sup>

In *Her Benny* by Silas Hocking the sights and sounds of Methodism are present from beginning to end and the main protagonist is affected by them. Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler would have known Benny to be a creature of the fourth dimension. In George Eliot's *Adam Bede* a camp meeting starts the novel, but Seth ends it knowing that he, and Dinah, have settled for something less visceral. Arnold Bennett charts Methodist change with palpable scepticism. Methodism had turned inside-out by turning outside-in.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*, 68.

<sup>199</sup> Schmidt, *Hearing thing*, 15.

<sup>200</sup> Wilson, *Constrained by Zeal*. Soja, *Thirdspace*, 56.

<sup>201</sup> The plethora of references to special services, concerts and lectures can be referred to here.

<sup>202</sup> Silas K. Hocking, *Her Benny: a Story of Street Life* (London: Frederick Warne & Co, 1879); Ellen T. Fowler, *The Farringdons* (New York: D. Appleton and Co, 1900); George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, (London: Dent, 1976, originally published 1858), 15-33 and 513-516; E. Arnold Bennett, *Anna of the Five Towns* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1902).

## Content

For sense to be made of the relationship between history and the landscape, between people and the space they inhabit, the areas under investigation need to be chosen carefully.<sup>203</sup> By writing *The Making of the English Landscape*, W.G. Hoskins was inviting others to join him in a new branch of historical investigation. These others have had no qualms in naming this book the 'inaugurating moment' for landscape history.<sup>204</sup> Making the link between topography and the people, the iterations which followed very definitely shifted the focus onto modernity, the urban environment and its connection to individuals and groups. The link to spatial history was, therefore, confirmed. A particular vocabulary emerged to capture the essence of what was happening. Following on from de Certeau's 'urban text,' there is the move by Gunn and O'Leary to performance. By describing the city centre as a stage, they are fitting in with Lewis Mumford's 'theatre of social action.'<sup>205</sup> Mark Girouard takes a different tack by referring to urban space as a battlefield.<sup>206</sup> These symbolic references are useful: they enable analysis of issues such as relationships and power as they are played out in town and city. It could be forgotten, however, that the majority of England's population still lived in the countryside right through to 1851.<sup>207</sup> It is as though these people were not even writing let alone reading. Not on the stage, rural living could be interpreted merely as a rehearsal. With fewer onlookers, activity might somehow be seen as less important and as preparation only for the transition to urban living. These thoughts raise interesting issues, especially as Methodism was definitely a movement which affected both town and village. This renders its position as potentially unique.

The decision to focus on two geographical areas has, therefore, been deliberate. They are not dissimilar in size, are alike in having boundaries which are somewhat fluid and are so

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<sup>203</sup> For an introduction to the link between landscape and history see William G. Hoskins, *The Making of the English Landscape* (Toller Fratrum, Dorset: Little Toller Books, 2013, originally published 1955).

<sup>204</sup> William Boyd, "Introduction," in Hoskins, *The Making of the English Landscape*, 9.

<sup>205</sup> de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 93; Simon Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class: Ritual and Authority in the English Industrial City 1840-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 29; O'Leary, *Claiming the streets*, 1. Lewis Mumford, (1937) "What is a city," (1937) in *The City Reader*, eds. Richard T. Le Gates and Frederic Stout, (2011) (London & New York: Routledge, 2011), 91-95.

<sup>206</sup> Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class*, 13.

<sup>207</sup> For information related to population trends see John Saville, *Rural Depopulation in England and Wales 1851-1961*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957).

named because of their geology.<sup>208</sup> During the nineteenth century, however, the similarities were few and arrival of one of the various Methodist magazines might have been the only time when a resident of Black Country town would come across names and happenings connected to Yorkshire Wolds village, and *vice versa*.<sup>209</sup>



A first reason for choosing these areas is that the growth of Methodism in both mirrored what was happening throughout the rest of the country. Wesleyan and Primitive Methodism were represented with the former being stronger in the urban setting and the latter having relatively more influence throughout the agricultural community. The pattern of growth, issues faced, events and routines, were indicative of what was occurring elsewhere without attention being garnered because of particular strength or perceived weakness.<sup>210</sup>

The second reason is that their differences could not have been more stark. The region to the north-west of Birmingham only came to be known as the Black Country from the third decade of the nineteenth century.<sup>211</sup> Defined by the South Staffordshire coal field, the new

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<sup>208</sup> Michael Pearson, *The Black Country in the Great War* (Barnsley, Pen and Sword Books Ltd, 2014) 8; Alan Harris, *The Rural Landscape of the East Riding of Yorkshire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961) 1.

<sup>209</sup> See *Primitive Methodist Magazine* and *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, John Rylands Library, The University of Manchester, Manchester.”

<sup>210</sup> Holliday B. Kendall, *Origin and history of the Primitive Methodist church*, vol 1, (London: Edwin Dalton, 1907). Townsend, *A New history of Methodism* vol I. Davies, *A history of the Methodist Church* Vol 1.

<sup>211</sup> David Philips, *Crime and Authority in Victorian England* (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1977) 25.



name symbolised industrialisation and the changes which came with it. The Wolds had been so named from time immemorial, and farming remained its purpose.<sup>212</sup>



The Black Country<sup>213</sup>

In talking of the nineteenth century Black Country landscape, Hoskins says a great deal by saying nothing. He simply comments that 'one can hardly begin to describe it.'<sup>214</sup> Writing in 1868, Elihu Burritt, an American consul based in Birmingham, had summed it up as 'black by day and red by night.' He was sure that no other similarly sized area of the globe could claim production which was so 'vast and varied.'<sup>215</sup> Dickens in *The Old Curiosity Shop* paints the most dismal of pictures and concludes that the area was 'the horror of oppressive

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<sup>212</sup> For information related to agriculture and its development on the Wolds, see Isaac Leatham, *General View of the Agriculture of the East Riding of Yorkshire* (London: Board of Agriculture and Internal Improvement, 1794), 8; Henry E. Strickland, *A General View of the Agriculture of the East Riding of Yorkshire* (London: Thomas Wilson and Son, 1812) 14; Harris, *The Rural Landscape of the East Riding*, 31. For information on landownership see John T. Ward, *East Yorkshire Landed Estates in the Nineteenth Century* (Hull: EYLHS, 1967).

<sup>213</sup> The colours refer to administrative divisions and are not related to Methodist organisation.

<sup>214</sup> Hoskins, *The Making of the English landscape*, 210.

<sup>215</sup> Elihu Burritt, *Walks in the Black Country and its Green Borderland* (London: S. Low, Son, and Marston, 1868), 1. See also Charles Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973, originally published 1841), 335. Links are made to Dante's *Inferno* in Jane Berard, *Dickens and the Landscape Discourse* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 34.

dreams.<sup>216</sup> Scholars of his work make the link between this and Dante's *Inferno*.<sup>217</sup> The Wolds had simply been summed up by William Marshall as 'the most magnificent assemblage of chalky hills.'<sup>218</sup>



The Wolds

A key feature of the Wolds was the relative isolation. Described as less visited than almost any other part of England, the area stretches in a crescent fashion from Flamborough Head

<sup>216</sup> Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, 335.

<sup>217</sup> Berard, *Dickens and the Landscape Discourse*, 34.

<sup>218</sup> William Marshall, *The Rural Economy of Yorkshire*, Vol I (London: T. Cadell, 1788) 1. For information related to Wolds topography see Arthur Mee, *Yorkshire: East Riding and York city* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1941), 15. Also, Strickland, *A general view of the agriculture of the East Riding*, 13.

down to the Humber Estuary.<sup>219</sup> The seventy-nine parishes under review were either on or above the one-hundred-and-fifty-foot contour line. Agricultural pursuits totally dominated and, although these parishes varied hugely in acreage, a considerable proportion of the area's population lived within noticeably small communities. Parliamentary enclosure had aided dispersion by creating outlying farmsteads.<sup>220</sup> Patterns of land ownership ranged from open parishes to those dominated by a single landlord and this had implications for religious observation.<sup>221</sup> The Sykes family was the most significant of these landowners with their estate house in the village of Sledmere.<sup>222</sup> They performed to type by giving generously to the Established Church and it was common knowledge that 'turnabouts' were not welcome on their land. Tenants were threatened with dismissal if they gave hospitality to Methodist preachers.<sup>223</sup> That these preachers were effective in inculcating the desire to be identified as Methodists is shown by this family's capitulation as the century progressed. Wesleyan and Primitive Methodist chapels were built on their land.<sup>224</sup> The population of the whole area had reached its peak by 1861 with many of the parishes experiencing decline by 1881.<sup>225</sup> Fewer actors were available, and audiences were smaller.

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<sup>219</sup> Marmaduke C.F. Morris, *The British Workman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1928) 23. For attempts to reduce this isolation see Frederick Duckham, *The Inland Waterways of East Yorkshire 1700-1900*, (York: EYLHS, 1972) 39; Kenneth A. MacMahon, *The Beginnings of the East Yorkshire Railways* (Hull: EYLHS, 1977).

<sup>220</sup> See Harris, *The Rural Landscape of the East Riding*, 20. Also Hoskins, *The Making of the English Landscape*, 170; M.B. Gleave, "Dispersed and Nucleated Settlement in the Yorkshire Wolds 1770-1850," *IBG Transactions and Papers*, 30 (1962): 106.

<sup>221</sup> See B.A. Holderness, "Open and Close Parishes in England in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Agricultural History Review*, 20 (1972): 126; Obelkevich, *Religion in Rural Society*, 155. For the domination of the Church of England in close parishes see D.G. Hey, "The pattern of nonconformity in South Yorkshire 1660-1851," *Northern History*, 8 (1973): 86-118. For further information related to Wolds parishes in relation to size, population and land ownership see Appendix. Obelkevich, *Religion in Rural Society*, 155; Hey, "The Pattern of Nonconformity," 86.

<sup>222</sup> John Fairfax-Blakeborough, *Sykes of Sledmere* (London: Phillip Allan & Co. Ltd, 1939), 41.

<sup>223</sup> Henry Woodcock, *Piety Among the Peasantry: Being Sketches of Primitive Methodism on the Yorkshire Wolds* (Huddersfield: J. Toulson, 1889), 129.

<sup>224</sup> Driffield Wesleyan Circuit Minutes of Quarterly Meetings 1870-1880, 3 June 1878, Driffield Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, MRD/1/2/2, East Riding Archives. Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Statistics Documents 1861-1880, Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRD/2/5/5, East Riding Archives.

<sup>225</sup> United Kingdom, Parliament, *Census Enumerators' Books*, Vol. 16, Cmd J301.H65Pop (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1970). For information related to the towns of the Wolds see Keith J. Allison, *The East Riding of Yorkshire Landscape* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1978), 222-236. The population of the towns continued to grow making the rural depopulation a more significant feature.

The most common demarcation for the Black Country was the ‘ten-yard seam.’ Defined by its coal, the area was also rich with iron, clay and limestone deposits.<sup>226</sup> By the 1780s it was already a leading centre for coal and iron production due to its use of coke and the puddling process.<sup>227</sup> These raw materials, in turn, influenced the type of industries which developed and, with the network of canals and with railway tracks criss-crossing the region, goods could be received from, and sent out to, all compass points with relative ease.<sup>228</sup> With a famously fluid perimeter it is generally accepted that Wolverhampton, Stourbridge, West Bromwich, and Walsall formed its corners with Dudley, designated by some as the unofficial capital, in the centre.<sup>229</sup> Each of these towns specialised in the manufacture of certain goods.<sup>230</sup> The area experienced huge population growth throughout the century.<sup>231</sup> There were actors and audience in abundance.

In relation to prosopography, it would be assumed that any common background characteristics were few and far between.<sup>232</sup> Hardship was possibly the exception. It was easily detected in the Black Country. Observers commented on a landscape of slagheaps, mines, and industrial waste.<sup>233</sup> Samuel Sidney, writing in 1851, knew that ‘steam-engines thud and hiss, and long chains clank.’<sup>234</sup> Houses were not arranged in continuous streets, but

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<sup>226</sup> Malcolm Dick, David Eveleigh and Janet Sullivan, eds., *The Black Country in 100 Objects* (Alcester: West Midlands History Limited, 2019), 2. Pearson, *The Black Country in the Great War*, 8.

<sup>227</sup> Pearson, *The Black Country in the Great War*, Barnsley, 27. Coke and the puddling process were used for smelting.

<sup>228</sup> For information on the canals see Dick, *The Black Country in 100 objects*, 7.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid, p.8. Philips, *Crime and Authority*, 25.

<sup>230</sup> Wolverhampton, the most eclectic, was known for its tinsplate, Japanned iron, and *papier mâché* articles, as well as the manufacture of locks and safes. Stourbridge was the leading centre for glass production. West Bromwich was pre-eminent in the making of cast-iron goods. Walsall’s more unique offering was the making of leather goods and Dudley specialised in the production of hand-wrought nails. See Philips, *Crime and Authority*, 28-29. Also see George C. Allen, “The Industrial Development of Birmingham and the Black Country: 1860-1914” (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 1928) 62 and 108.

<sup>231</sup> Dick, *The Black Country in 100 Objects*, 7/8. For further information on railway development and the link to industrial expansion in the Black Country see Philips *Crime and Authority*, 28. For information on the towns and Dudley’s designation as the unofficial capital, see Pearson, *The Black Country in the Great War*, 25.

<sup>232</sup> The study of people in their historical context. Lawrence Stone “Prosopography,” *Historical Studies Today* 100, (1971): 46-79.

<sup>233</sup> Janet C. Sullivan, “Paying the Price for Industrialisation: the Experience of a Black Country Town, Oldbury, in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries,” (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2014).

<sup>234</sup> Samuel Sidney, *Rides on Railways* (London: William S. Orr & Co, 1851).

were interspersed between the grim industrial features. They were ‘thrown up’ quickly and entire rows were reported to have collapsed into neglected pit-shafts.<sup>235</sup>

Adversity for the agricultural worker on the Wolds might appear less obvious, but it certainly existed. Married labourers, in their rented cottages, faced long walks to the isolated farmsteads, where they worked for extremely long hours. This work was physically taxing and precarious: winter unemployment was widespread.<sup>236</sup> Wages were invariably low.<sup>237</sup> Many were hired at annual fairs and casual workers were paid piece-rates and enjoyed no security whatsoever.<sup>238</sup> The cottages varied hugely in quality and were in short supply.<sup>239</sup>

For prosopography, one thing was certain: Methodism was making its presence felt in both Wolds village and Black Country town. The former was dominated by its landowners who played a vital part in altering the rural landscape and in enhancing agricultural techniques.<sup>240</sup> While families such as Sykes, Londesborough and Strickland were thus engaged they were also attempting to uphold the influence of the Church of England.<sup>241</sup> They were observing their tenant farmers and labourers who were identifying themselves as Methodists.<sup>242</sup> Most

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<sup>235</sup> Philips, *Crime and Authority*, 33.

<sup>236</sup> Stephen Counce, (2006) “Mechanisation in English Agriculture 1850-1914,” *Rural History*, 17 (2006): 23-43.

<sup>237</sup> Strickland, *A General View of the Agriculture of the East Riding*; George Legard, ‘Farming in the East Riding of Yorkshire’, *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society*, ix, (1848): 85-136.

<sup>238</sup> Gary Moses, “East Riding Farm Servants 1850-1875,” *Agricultural History Review*, 47: (1999) 78-9; Angela Antrim, (1981) *The Yorkshire Wold Rangers* (Driffield: Hutton Press, 1981) ch.4.

<sup>239</sup> Strickland, *A General View of the Agriculture of the East Riding*, 94 and 285; Adams, M.G. (1977) *Agricultural change in the East Riding of Yorkshire 1850-1880*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Hull; Allison, K.J. (1976) *The East Riding of Yorkshire landscape* London, Hodder and Stoughton, p.193.

<sup>240</sup> Michael G. Adams, “Agricultural Change in the East Riding of Yorkshire 1850-1880” (PhD diss., University of Hull, 1977) xii and 44. For information related to the highly cultivated farms on the Wolds see James Caird, *English Agriculture, 1850-51* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1852), 310. For information relating to the application of modern techniques such as the steam powered threshing machine by the 1850’s and the self-acting delivery reapers by the 1860s see J. H. Tiffen, “Prize Essay on the Agriculture of East and North Ridings of Yorkshire,” *The North British Agriculturalist*, 36 (1884) 735; William Wright, “On Improvements in the Farming of Yorkshire Since the Date of the Last Reports in the Journal,” *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England*, 22 (1861) 125. For further information related to yields per acre and other matters see Appendix.

<sup>241</sup> The largest landowners by size of estates were the families of Sykes, Londesborough, Strickland, Hotham, Middleton, Legard and Osbaldeston. These farms were often in excess of one thousand acres: conducive to the implementation of new methods. See Harris, *The rural landscape of the East Riding*, 126; Barbara English, “Patterns of Estate Management in East Yorkshire,” *Agricultural History Review*, 32 (1984) 29-48. For the influence of the Sykes family on the Church of England see John Fairfax-Blakeborough, *Sykes of Sledmere* (London: Philip Allan & Co. Ltd, 1939), 154.

<sup>242</sup> See, for example, Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit, Kirkburn Trustees Book, 1886, Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRD/2/23/2, East Riding Archives. For detailed correspondence between Lord

of the smaller Black Country towns had very few people of professional status living within them.<sup>243</sup> This was not the case for the larger towns with their main thoroughfares, town squares, civic buildings, and housing for the more well-off.<sup>244</sup> Wolverhampton had by far the greater population and a considerable number of wealthy coal and iron masters, along with manufacturers, merchants and bankers lived there.<sup>245</sup> Many of these seemingly respectable men, and their families, entered the stage as Methodists and they relished their audience.<sup>246</sup>

Methodism was there in the rural settings provided by the novels of Eliot and Hocking. It was present in Bennett's five towns. Thorneycroft Fowler resided in the Black Country and her urban portraits are only very thinly disguised versions of Wolverhampton and its hinterland. Her family members, and the characters in her novels, were those people who combined aspiration with their Methodism.<sup>247</sup> As Methodist communities proliferated, there were repercussions for identity and respectability. It is possible that investigation into these repercussions could suffer because of what Burke refers to as social amnesia.<sup>248</sup> Novels can be an aid to social memory and chapter one delves deeper into this before subsequent chapters examine the Methodist contribution to community, identity, and respectability.<sup>249</sup> Throughout the thesis it is the extensive use of primary sources that enables conclusions to be drawn in relation to the changing use of space, sacralisation as well as desacralisation and the significance of being a Methodist for individuals and groups.

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Londesborough and the Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit see Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit, Letters 1878, Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRD/2/7/2, East Riding Archives.

<sup>243</sup> Philips, *Crime and Authority*, 31. The financially well-off could afford to live away from the sight, smell and sound of industrialisation.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid*, 32. Fewer well-to-do resided in West Bromwich compared to the other large towns.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid*, 32. Although the population of West Bromwich grew rapidly during the first sixty years of the century, it could still be seen as an aggregation of villages connected by turnpike roads rather than a cohesive town. See M. Leon Faucher, *Etudes sur l'Angleterre* (Paris: Librairie de Guillaumin, 1845), 95-100.

<sup>246</sup> As an example, see Edith H. Fowler, *The Life of Henry Hartley Fowler, first Viscount Wolverhampton: by his Daughter Edith Henrietta Fowler, Hon. Mrs. Robert Hamilton*, (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1912).

<sup>247</sup> Hocking, *Her Benny*; Fowler, *The Farringdons*; Eliot, *Adam Bede*; Bennett, *Anna of the five towns*; Ellen T. Fowler, *Concerning Isabel Carnaby*, (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1899).

<sup>248</sup> Burke, *Varieties of Cultural History*, 57.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid*, 47.

## Chapter One

### A Novel Approach

With a single drop of ink for a mirror.

*Adam Bede*<sup>250</sup>

George Eliot and Arnold Bennett are novelists who, albeit to varying degrees, have stood the test of time. They had at least one thing in common: both wrote about Methodism. Eliot's *Adam Bede* and Bennett's *Anna of the Five Towns*, quite literally, bookended the nineteenth century.<sup>251</sup> Published in 1859, the former was set during the last decade of the eighteenth century with a concluding, important glimpse at the year of 1807.<sup>252</sup> Bennett's book, first read by the public in 1902, had gestated over the previous decade. The focus of each was on Wesleyan Methodism. Its sweeping changes were on display. The works of Silas Hocking and Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler are now, by contrast, almost forgotten and yet they reveal much about Methodism and attitudes towards it. Although Hocking was prolific, it is *Her Benny*, originally published in 1879 and involving one of the lesser-known Methodist secessions, that is of significance.<sup>253</sup> Aside from its plot, it was the first novel written in English ever to sell over one million copies, and this, in itself, is significant.<sup>254</sup> All four novelists provide much that bears scrutiny in relation to the Yorkshire Wolds and the industrial Midlands. Added weight is given to Fowler's output, however. Not only are her novels steeped in Methodism;

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<sup>250</sup> George Eliot, *Adam Bede* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1976), 7.

<sup>251</sup> George Eliot, *Adam Bede* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1859). E. Arnold Bennett, *Anna of the Five Towns* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1902).

<sup>252</sup> Secessions from the parent church had already taken place: for example, the Methodist New Connexion had been formed in 1797. In 1807 the Wesleyan Conference had decided against allowing female itinerant preachers. Interestingly, the origins of Primitive Methodism can be traced to this date – a first camp meeting having been held at Mow Cop, Staffordshire on 31 May 1807.

<sup>253</sup> Silas K. Hocking, *Her Benny* (London and New York: Frederick Warne and Co, 1879). Hocking was a minister of the United Methodist Free Churches.

<sup>254</sup> Alan M. Kent, *Pulp Methodism: the Lives and Literature of Silas, Joseph and Salome Hocking* (St Austell, Cornwall: Cornish Hillside Publications, 2002), 7.

their setting is a very thinly disguised Black Country. Announcing publication of *The Farringdons* to American readers, an edition of *The New York Times* in May 1900 was able to point out, on its front page, that thirty-six thousand copies had already been purchased in England within a matter of weeks.<sup>255</sup> The efficacy of using these works of fiction to enhance historical understanding is explored. The role of Methodism in each is then discussed alongside the implications for it. Each novelist describes Methodist use of space in different ways and conclusions can be drawn in relation to sacralisation, desacralisation and secularisation.

Whether the study of history and the use of literature are compatible has been a moot point. Sceptics cite Plato: art was, put simply, a lie.<sup>256</sup> It is surely not by accident that it is, in the main, cultural historians who include the fictive in their analysis. One such, whose work focuses on eighteenth century France, is Allan Pasco and he has synthesised the arguments in order to validate his approach.<sup>257</sup> For him, much hinges on verisimilitude.<sup>258</sup> Eliot and Bennett invented plot and character but, in constructing a backdrop, their quest was for realism.<sup>259</sup> As any analysis unfolds, the perspicacious nature of these two authors is revealed; providing reassurance as to the value of their novels for historical study. Indeed, while stressing the need for historians to be cautious, Valentine Cunningham sets Eliot apart as the Victorian novelist most capable of compassion and fairness in her treatment of topics she does not necessarily agree with.<sup>260</sup> Hocking, by contrast, railed against this realism and supplanted it unashamedly with the idealistic and, in his own words, the ethical.<sup>261</sup> Of these novelists, however, it is Hocking who makes use of real locations that can be navigated by

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<sup>255</sup> Ellen T. Fowler, (1900) *The Farringdons* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1900). *The New York Times*, 12 May 1900, 313.

<sup>256</sup> Philip Stewart, (1994) "This Is Not a Book Review. On Historical Use of Literature," *Journal of Modern History* 66, no. 3 (1994): 524.

<sup>257</sup> Allan H. Pasco, "Literature as Historical Archive," *New Literary History*, 35, no. 3 (2004): 373-394.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid*, 380.

<sup>259</sup> Most critics address this issue. See, for example, Jennifer S. Uglow, *George Eliot* (London: Virago Press, 2008), 123. Here Uglow states that, in *Adam Bede*, George Eliot develops 'her theme of realism with passion.' Philip Davis, *The Transferred Life of George Eliot* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) 241. Here Davis develops the theme of Eliot as super-realist. See also Barry Howarth, "The Craft of Arnold Bennett" (PhD thesis, University of Liverpool, 2016) 8. Howarth speaks of Bennett's 'celebrated affiliation to realism.'

<sup>260</sup> Valentine Cunningham, *Everywhere Spoken Against: Dissent in the Victorian Novel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 9. Cunningham draws on the work of Iris Murdoch to discuss 'openness' in the Victorian novel.

<sup>261</sup> Kent, *Pulp Methodism*, 15.



the reader. He refers to towns and villages by their actual names and the buildings entered, which are often chapels, did exist. The details given in relation to Methodism are also recognised to be extremely accurate.<sup>262</sup> Fowler had no such rigid stance. In *The Farringdons* there are idealised endings, fanciful coincidences and much use is made of symbolism.<sup>263</sup> All of this sits comfortably alongside precise geographical detail and an intimate and knowledgeable expression of what it meant to be a Methodist. Just as her style is less straightforward, there is also ambiguity in her message, and this leaves it ripe for scrutiny. Fowler also uses humour to emphasise the foibles of organised religion. Although approached from different angles, all four authors clearly identified Methodism to be important. From the outset, the historian is surely capable of separating the useful from that which has come about because of poetic licence.<sup>264</sup>

Pasco speaks of mirrors and windows to sum up this utility but, by so doing, it is Eliot herself who provides the most cogent challenge. For Pasco, novels are not the former: there can be no absolute relationship with objective reality. Here, the concept of the mimetic fallacy comes into play.<sup>265</sup> Eliot uses *Adam Bede* in her attempt to overturn such reasoning: ‘With a single drop of ink for a mirror,’ is how the novel commences.<sup>266</sup> Her desire for realism is so strong that ‘the story pauses a little’ and she tells the reader that her:

...strongest effort is...to give a faithful account of men and things as they have mirrored themselves in my mind. The mirror is doubtless defective; the outlines will sometimes be disturbed, the reflection faint or confused; but I feel as much bound to tell you as precisely as

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<sup>262</sup> Ibid, 213.

<sup>263</sup> For example, Elisabeth and Christopher inevitably marry and it is discovered that he is the long-lost cousin who will inherit instead of her. See Fowler, *The Farringdons*, 197. The same can be said of her novel, *Isabel Carnaby*. Everything works out for Paul, and this is because he was ‘brought up in the good old Methodist style.’ See: Ellen T. Fowler, *Concerning Isabel Carnaby* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1899) 10.

<sup>264</sup> Indeed, the historian can be used to restrain poetic licence. See Michel A. Xhignesse, “The Trouble with Poetic Licence.” *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, 56, no. 2 (2016) 149-161.

<sup>265</sup> Gary M. Boyd, *The Reflexive Novel: Fiction as Critique* (London and Toronto: Bucknell University Press, 1983), 168.

<sup>266</sup> Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 7.

I can what that reflection is, as if I were in the witness-box narrating my experience on oath.<sup>267</sup>

The reader is, therefore, left in no doubt as to her intention. However strong this reasoning though, Eliot is pointing to a potential cloudiness. She is, after all, a realist.

Handled judiciously, and when the questions asked are appropriate, it is certainly as a window into the past that novels can serve.<sup>268</sup> For Pasco this means that insight is given into the common opinions and attitudes of the ordinary people. This is a sentiment shared by Febvre, who proposed studying the arts in order to develop a sense of the way people felt about both the small and large events of the day.<sup>269</sup> In literary terms, this is cultural materialism which can be summed up with reference to Hocking's novels.<sup>270</sup> They were originally castigated by modernist critics for their pulp qualities, and because they were read outside of their original context.<sup>271</sup> They can now be valued because acknowledgement is given to the political, economic, social and religious conditions at the time of the text's moment of production.<sup>272</sup> Because of the historian's use of multiple archives, the fictive reality can be tested.

There are inevitably caveats to the use of novels for historical investigation. A weakness is the tendency to consult only a single text. Conclusions are more likely to be suspect when this is the case. Once material has been selected, it must be considered with discretion and interrogated both as a piece of literature and as an historical document. Context is key. Writing in 1838, Balzac warned of the need for authors to satisfy the demands of the bookstore and the newspaper. His concern was the skewing of content to satisfy the public.<sup>273</sup> Indeed, Arnold Bennett was described as a profiteer; a *pisseur de copie*.

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<sup>267</sup> Ibid, 171. For a full explanation see Joseph H. Miller, J.H. *Reading for Our Time: Adam Bede and Middlemarch Revisited* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012) 7.

<sup>268</sup> Pasco, "Literature as Historical Archive." 374.

<sup>269</sup> Lucien Febvre, "*La Sensibilité et l'Histoire: Comment Reconstituer la Vie Affective d'Autrefois?*" *Annales d'Histoire Sociale*, 3, no. 1-2 (1941): 5-20.

<sup>270</sup> Kent, *Pulp Methodism*, 211.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid, 13

<sup>272</sup> See reference to Scott Wilson in Kent, *Pulp Methodism*, 32.

<sup>273</sup> Pasco, "Literature as Historical Archive," 379.

Modernists are also suspicious of him for this pandering to mass culture.<sup>274</sup> Identifying what it was that suited the tastes of the newly created nineteenth century reader is, however, important, and a reason why the works of Bennett, Hocking and Fowler are worthy of consideration. All three wanted to write about Methodism and gauged that their books would be purchased because of this content. Fowler was particularly adept at this. With Methodism a key theme, there was plenty to satisfy both the married woman and the spinster. In *The Farringdons*, endless comment about husbands, most of which would amuse the unmarried, is joined by knowledge of Anne, the saintly spinster, who ‘broke hearts so gently’ and was perfectly content on her own.<sup>275</sup> Fowler’s women read the novels and magazines of the time.<sup>276</sup> Inevitably, however, the Bible and Methodist hymn-book remain their preferred tomes.<sup>277</sup> Cross-referencing is beneficial and demonstrates that the actual details related to Methodism are not at variance.

Here, there are additional reasons, a different dimension, as to why the novels of Eliot, Bennett, Hocking and Fowler bear scrutiny. Any historical study of space and place has grappled with the significance of symbolism. It is central to the analysis. In the grappling, historians can glean much from literary criticism and the literary critic. There is more to be searched for than the factual content. On one level, the motivations of the authors provide rich pickings and can be considered alongside the interests of the readers. Subject matter is important. On another, it is analysis of the texts themselves that reveals so much. Just as history helps literature in its quest for realism, literature reminds historians that there are emotions and feelings involved, too. Two intertwined yet untapped approaches are used to clarify. They are a spatial study of the novels and a Methodist reading of them.<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>274</sup> See Howarth, “*The Craft of Arnold Bennett*,” 307. See also Geoffrey M. Harvey, “Narrowing the Abyss: Arnold Bennett’s *Anna of the five towns*.” *Etudes Anglaises* 60 (2007): 1. Bennett thought of himself as a writer with strong mercantile instincts.

<sup>275</sup> Fowler, *The Farringdons*, 12 & 42. Men, lacking grace, ‘are the same as kittens...you never know what bad habits they may have formed or what queer tricks they will be up to.’

<sup>276</sup> Ibid, 9. Mention is made of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* and *The History of the Fairchild Family* by Mary Sherwood. Elisabeth ‘regularly perused...two periodicals, called...Early Days and The Juvenile Offering.’

<sup>277</sup> Ibid, 9-12. Elisabeth delights in the imagery of the Book of Isaiah but her favourite is the Book of Ruth: a message as to the importance of women.

<sup>278</sup> For a study of Methodism in the novels of the twentieth century see David Dickinson, *Yet Alive? Methodists in British Fiction Since 1890* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016).

## Space, Place and Gender

By the time *Adam Bede* was written, Eliot had forsaken her faith in God. A follower of Feuerbach, and translator of his works, a harsh portrayal of all things religious might be expected, but this is not necessarily the case.<sup>279</sup> Philip Davis feels that her novels develop in tandem with herself, so that in *Adam Bede*, her first novel proper, religion is treated with less scepticism than in later works.<sup>280</sup> Certain features of her writing require emphasis. Her quest for realism is combined with an overarching sympathy for the characters and their lot.<sup>281</sup> It is argued that *Adam Bede* pivots on the tension between these two facets: a balance between scientific rigour and the desire to retain aspects of religious faith and its moral judgments.<sup>282</sup> Uglow sums this up as 'realism with passion.' In other words, a nod to idealism is made.<sup>283</sup> Chapter seventeen, seen by many as the novel's crux, commences with an assessment as to the worth of Mr Irwine, the Rector of Broxton. He could have been used solely to personify the need for reform and yet, for much of the novel, he is treated with fondness.<sup>284</sup> Dinah Morris, the female itinerant Methodist preacher, can be viewed as the novel's heroine, even though her rhetoric is contrary to Eliot's own thinking. Cunningham emphasises 'the authentic feel and tone of Dinah's Methodism.' The reader can see, however, that Dinah changes: her religious views become less overbearing.<sup>285</sup> It is also clear that the good she does is down to her and not God: Hetty is helped by Dinah's compassion and not because of divine intervention.<sup>286</sup>

There are links to be made between the novels of Eliot and the Five Towns fiction of Bennett. Described as the quintessential regional novelists, their devotion to realism is joined by common themes and generic characteristics, even though the former are rural

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<sup>279</sup> Eliot's translation of Ludwig Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity* had been published in 1854.

<sup>280</sup> Davis, *The Transferred Life*, 221.

<sup>281</sup> Uglow, *George Eliot*, 124.

<sup>282</sup> Miller, *Reading for Our Time*, 20.

<sup>283</sup> Uglow, *George Eliot*, 123.

<sup>284</sup> Kathryn Hughes, *George Eliot: the Last Victorian* (London: Fourth Estate Ltd, 1999), 276 & 283. Here, Hughes points to Blackwood, the publisher, warning to Dinah's relentless Methodist piety and hoping that Irwine might get more Godly as the story moves on. She also gives a full assessment of Irwine and the reasons Wesley had set up Methodism – for people who feel themselves 'unmoved by the tepid rituals of Sunday church services.' This is why Dinah came to Hayslope.

<sup>285</sup> Cunningham, *Everywhere Spoken Against*, 169.

<sup>286</sup> Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 427-437.

texts and the latter urban. Both give detailed description of their settings and dialogue is used which reflects the status of the characters.<sup>287</sup> In their treatment of Methodism, however, the similarities come to an end. In part, this is simply because of the changes which had taken place over the period of one hundred years. The beauty of Heyslope and the newness of Methodism can be compared to the ugliness of the Potteries and the then situation of the Wesleyan denomination. Criticism has been levelled at Bennett because, by the time of his writing, realism, as a dominant aesthetic, was being called into question.<sup>288</sup> It was regarded by many as outmoded. In similar vein, the question arises as to whether Methodism, too, was being seen as *démodé*. A further analogy: did the reduced popularity of Bennett's works in the early years of the twentieth century go hand-in-hand with the lessened appeal of Methodism in the build up to World War One? Eliot's focus had been on the sacralised Treddleston and the sacralising of Heyslope's village green by Dinah. Bennett, by contrast was, in effect, emphasising that desecralisation was taking place. Times had changed.

Critics refer to Bennett's Methodist upbringing to explain his jaundiced treatment of it in *Anna of the Five Towns*.<sup>289</sup> Reference is made to his immersion in Wesleyanism, which was particularly centred on the Sunday-school.<sup>290</sup> Undoubtedly, he did set out to expose aspects of existence which particularly interested him and he was fascinated by Methodism.<sup>291</sup> He was also preoccupied by issues related to patriarchal power. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that these two themes come together when scrutinising the life of Anna.<sup>292</sup> On close examination, the relationship between the characters and their religious affiliation is revealed to be more complex, however. Just as Eliot needs to be read in multiple ways, the same applies to Bennett. Harvey contends that two of these ways relate to his attempt to satisfy both the mass and the elite markets for fiction: obsessed with the idea that he could unite the inclusive majority of lower-middle-class, first-time purchasers and borrowers, with the exclusive minority of sophisticated readers. According to Harvey, Bennett is attempting

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<sup>287</sup> Phyllis Bentley, *The English Regional Novel* (New York: Haskell House, 1966), 19-20.

<sup>288</sup> Howarth, "The craft of Arnold Bennett," 8.

<sup>289</sup> Bentley, *The English Regional Novel*, 19-20.

<sup>290</sup> Harvey, "Narrowing the Abyss," 6.

<sup>291</sup> Howarth, "The Craft of Arnold Bennett," 88.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid*, 88-89. The novel is described as a psychological study of a young girl and her partial liberation from her emotional and material confinement: Bennett as an observer of *moeurs de provence*.

to 'narrow the abyss' within the single text by employing a complex narrative strategy.<sup>293</sup> This is best summed up by Bennett himself. In *The Book of Carlotta*, he states that *Anna of the Five Towns* 'is tragic, but not necessarily so.'<sup>294</sup> It is revealing that he employs this tactic by focusing on Methodism: a book attempting to cater for different readers by concentrating on a religious denomination which was trying to meet the needs of different groups within its congregations.

It is doubtful whether Fowler ever set out to satisfy the more rarefied readership. She did, however, strive to attract those whose interests differed and the novels do have depths. For the devotee of romantic fiction, in *The Farringdons* there were Elisabeth's relationships with three men.<sup>295</sup> For the Methodist, there was the relief in discovering that she would see sense and marry the lifelong chapel attender.<sup>296</sup> For the more discerning, there was Elisabeth's inner turmoil as she was tempted: firstly, by Alan's secularism and then by Cecil's thoughts on the transcendence of art. She finally comes to full understanding as to the benefits brought about by belief in God.<sup>297</sup>

Fowler's observations relating to patriarchal society appear to be so different from those of Bennett. In his novel, the men run the manufactories, hold office in the chapels and rule their domains. He even states that the 'women of a household were the natural victims of their master.'<sup>298</sup> Fowler's emphasis is always on the women. Men might think they are in charge, but author and reader know that this is not necessarily the case. It is the two Farringdon sisters who own the Osierfield ironworks, and it is women who rule in domestic settings. Real insight into Methodism is provided by the humorous *badinage* between Mrs. Bateson and Mrs. Hankey. Only referred to by their married surnames, they cope because men are their main topic of amusement. Mrs. Hankey cannot agree with her friend's assertion that 'any sort of a husband is better than none.'<sup>299</sup> This might be because her husband is not of the same calibre as Caleb Bateson. Caleb is, after all, the local preacher

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<sup>293</sup> Harvey, "Narrowing the Abyss," 2. The strategy involves a dominant, de-constructed discourse which is intercalated with reading directions that signal the possibility of an alternative view.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

<sup>295</sup> Fowler, *The Farringdons*, 59 & 149.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid*, 211.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid*, 211.

<sup>298</sup> Bennett, *Anna of the Five Towns*, 75.

<sup>299</sup> Fowler, *The Farringdons*, 29.

and office holder described by Miss Farringdon as ‘a worthy man and a good Methodist, as his father was before him.’<sup>300</sup> Unlike Bennett, Fowler is showing respect for some Methodist men. Maria and Anne Farringdon own the ironworks, but they rely totally on Richard and Christopher Smallwood who can, indeed, be depended on. Fowler’s readers would have been, in the main, women.<sup>301</sup> It is highly probable that they, along with the author, knew ladies akin to Mrs. Hankey.

Both *Anna of the Five Towns* and *The Farringdons* end with highly symbolic marriages. They also reveal a great deal about the authors’ attitudes towards gender issues and religion. Bennett’s Anna marries Henry Mynors, the stalwart Methodist. Throughout the novel, all indications have been that this will be the ideal conclusion. Only in the final pages is her love for another revealed, and it is discovered that the marriage will be a sham. Just as Anna begins to see Henry’s ‘condescending superiority,’ the reader is guided into similar thoughts about Wesleyan Methodism and Wesleyan Methodists.<sup>302</sup> Elisabeth Farringdon’s marriage to Christopher has been anticipated by the reader from the outset and, when the wedding is finally announced, everyone knows that it is the fitting ending and that fulfilment for both will follow.<sup>303</sup> For Bennett, Methodism’s influence is such that it is synonymous with religion. Fowler separates the two and tackles certain profound theological issues at the same time as raising questions about Methodism. The humour directed towards Methodism certainly shows her intimate knowledge of it but, in pointing to certain trivialities, she may be hinting at an outmoded organisation or an organisation that has forgotten its core purpose. Mrs. Bateson is thrilled for her daughter:

Oh! Lucy Ellen lives in one of the best circuits in the Connexion...they have an ex-president as superintendent, and three ministers under him, and a supernumerary as well. They never hear the same preached more than once a month; it’s something grand.<sup>304</sup>

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<sup>300</sup> Ibid, 22.

<sup>301</sup> Kent, *Pulp Methodism*, 16.

<sup>302</sup> Bennett, *Anna of the Five Towns*, 122.

<sup>303</sup> Fowler, *The Farringdons*, 213-214.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid, 62. A supernumerary minister is one who no longer travels.

As for Lucy Ellen, she, too, is delighted to live in a place where Conference is held. To her:

it seemed for all the world like heaven, to see so many ministers  
about, all in their black coats and white neckcloths.<sup>305</sup>

Fowler's affection for all things Methodist, remains.

Silas Hocking, novelist and Methodist minister, made no attempt to hide his bias. He wrote within a specific cultural context and his desire was to direct people towards the straight-and-narrow.<sup>306</sup> His heroes are rescued because of their affiliation to the chapel. He knew he was writing popular fiction, and he had no other grandiose aspirations. The sales figures were enough.<sup>307</sup> The novels' significance, therefore, does not lie in their literary worth.<sup>308</sup> They are, however, of value to the historian because much can be discovered about the interests and preoccupations of the readers as well as the writer. This form of escapism, rooted in Methodism, was clearly desired. The theory is that popular fiction helps readers to define a sense of themselves. While it is possibly shaping their desires, fantasies, imagined pasts and projected futures, the historian is also being helped.<sup>309</sup> According to Alan Kent, the Hocking novels did affect the way readers looked at life and religion: an influence that would have been both conscious and unconscious. *Her Benny* undoubtedly reflects much of what was going on in Britain, and specifically Liverpool, at the time. The effects of industrialisation and the prevalence of religion can be verified by the historian. It can also be noted that the decline in religious observance during the second half of the century was matched by the gradually reducing popularity of the Hocking novels.<sup>310</sup> There is an irony about the Hocking books: though they were intended to be a modernising influence, their language and debate quickly became dated: another possible metaphor for Methodism.<sup>311</sup>

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<sup>305</sup> Ibid, 63.

<sup>306</sup> Kent, *Pulp Methodism*, 15

<sup>307</sup> Ibid, 7. Silas Hocking published just short of one hundred novels. For a time, they were the most purchased texts in English-speaking territories.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid, 211.

<sup>309</sup> Tony Bennett, ed., *Popular Fiction: Technology, Ideology, Production, Reading* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), ix.

<sup>310</sup> Kent, *Pulp Methodism*, 143.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid, 212.



The spatial positioning of Methodism within the novels themselves is as significant as its occurrence in the village of Hayslope, the towns of Bursley and Silverhampton, and the city of Liverpool. It is at the very start of *Adam Bede* that Methodism is alluded to. It is because his head is so full of being a 'Methody' that Seth fails in his joinery task. This is also why he is ridiculed and why, in return, he does not rise to the bait. His personality traits are admirable: tramps knew that they could elicit money from him, whereas they would not even speak to Adam, the Anglican brother. Methodism is present right through to the end and Seth reveals a great deal about what was happening to it. In favour of female itinerant preaching, he identifies the Conference decision of 1807 to ban it as a constraint on Christian liberty. Just as he loses out to Adam in relation to Dinah's affections, he acquiesces and remains a Wesleyan. He points to the breakaway movements that are about to surface, but his failure to join one of them is a portent, too, of their ultimate demise.<sup>312</sup> One hundred years later and the opening scene of *Anna of the Five Towns* reveals a Methodism that would have been unrecognisable to Seth Bede. Agnes, clutching her Sunday-school prize, waits for her sister, Anna, in the yard, which is enveloped, on three sides, by Connexional buildings.<sup>313</sup> Chapel, school, lecture-hall and chapel-keeper's house have been built and counting the number of windows is a task that tests. The free-flowing jocundity surrounding Methodism at the start of *Adam Bede* is replaced by the stage-managed teasing of Agnes by Henry Mynors, who, we are informed, is the morning superintendent of the Sunday-school and the conductor of the Sunday afternoon men's Bible-class.<sup>314</sup> Times have changed. Not by accident, *Anna of the Five Towns* also ends with Wesleyan Methodism, but the focus is on the bazaar. It is the 'greatest undertaking of its kind' in Bursley, and the Town Hall has been hired for the occasion. This is a spatially significant detail with implications for both sacralisation and desacralisation. With Methodist influence spreading into secular spaces the former could be claimed. However, the changing priorities of Methodism can point to the latter.<sup>315</sup>

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<sup>312</sup> Miller, *Reading for Our Time*, 20. Miller even sees Seth's love for Dinah as analogous to the collective religious feeling of the early Methodists. Methodism is described in the same language as that used to describe individual acts of love. We note also that Seth's ardour wanes. Valentine Cunningham points to Seth being 'oddly stranded' at the novel's end but this phrase could also be used to sum up the fortunes of Wesleyanism at the end of the eighteenth century. See Cunningham, *Everywhere Spoken Against*, 70.

<sup>313</sup> By this time worldwide Methodism was referred to as The Connexion. That no explanation of this is needed is significant.

<sup>314</sup> Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 9. Bennett, *Anna of the Five Towns*, 3.

<sup>315</sup> Bennett, *Anna of the Five Towns*, 139.

*The Farringdons*, too, refers to Methodism on first and last page as well as on all leaves in between. Fowler's method, however, is to use dialogue and direct instruction. From the outset readers learn that 'in the eyes of Sedgehill it was as necessary to salvation to pray at the chapel as to work at the Osierfield.'<sup>316</sup> It is because of their Methodism that the Farringdons, with 'stateliness but very little luxury, regarded sofas and easy-chairs in very much the same light as they regarded theatres and strong drink.'<sup>317</sup> At the end, with engagements and happy conclusions, readers are reminded of how deeply engrained Methodism was. To introduce a note of caution, Mrs. Bateson points out that brides tend to think of their husband-to-be as 'such a piece of perfection that the President of the Conference himself isn't fit to black his boots.'<sup>318</sup> Mrs. Hankey knows that these women will be disappointed. Throughout the novel, it is often left for Caleb Bateson to sermonise. The doctrine espoused, whether to socialist-leaning Alan, or downtrodden Jemima, is described, by her, as 'comfortable.' This comfortable creed is easily lampooned by Alan but Fowler makes sure that Caleb's prediction is correct: Alan will be converted. Methodism's methods have altered over the years but, perhaps, its message is still relevant.

The opening passages of *Her Benny* portray the wretched existence of the characters, precisely because Methodism is not yet present in their lives, or indeed, the book. Joe Wrag shows kindness to Benny and his sister, but knows he is 'none o' the elect' and the town missionaries have thus far failed.<sup>319</sup> The transformative power of Methodism is demonstrated at the end of the novel. The link between Benny's conversion, his becoming the most diligent Sunday-school teacher, and his material as well as marital success, is clear.<sup>320</sup>

In *Adam Bede*, all Methodist activity takes place either outside or away from the novel's action. While addressing the villagers, Dinah contrasts what they will have heard inside the village church with the message given by two people who preached in the open air. If Christ sacralised the banks of the Sea of Galilee, John Wesley had done the same by 'preach[ing]

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<sup>316</sup> Fowler, *The Farringdons*, 6. Here, Methodism is referred to as 'the established religion of Sedgehill.'

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid*, 212. The President of Conference was appointed as the most important minister.

<sup>319</sup> Hocking, *Her Benny*, 17-18.

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid*, 119.

out of doors.’ The link with Jesus is swiftly followed by the inference that Wesley, with his very long white hair, just might have been God himself.<sup>321</sup> It is noteworthy that this perfect view, this pure form of Methodism, is already in the past. Dinah tells us that Wesley had died eight years previously.<sup>322</sup> Because of Dinah preaching on the village Green, the scepticism and intrigue felt by the villagers who had gathered to observe, is made clear. The Methodists were distinct: in their clothing, behaviour, and because of their position in the scene. They were huddled together near to the preaching cart. Some critics have described Seth as a peripheral character with an ambiguous role.<sup>323</sup> This summation could have been meant for Methodism itself in the late eighteenth century Heyslope. Methodist activity takes place in the town of Treddleston, which is three miles distant and only referred to when we learn that Seth has ‘gone somewhere else a preachin’ and a prayin.’<sup>324</sup> Seth departs from the novel’s action and what he and the other Methodists get up to is a mystery to the majority of Heyslope’s inhabitants.<sup>325</sup> This is historically accurate, as Methodism was yet to make inroads into rural living. The traveller states:

...you’ve not got many Methodists about here, surely – in this agricultural spot... You’re all farmers, aren’t you? The Methodists can seldom lay much hold on them.<sup>326</sup>

There is no doubt whatsoever of the impact Methodism was having on the Bursley of *Anna of the Five Towns*. The reader is introduced to this by description of the imposing buildings, which stood as a reminder to all who passed by. For Anna, there is the symbolism of her eventual, and overdue, release from her Sunday-school duties.<sup>327</sup> Even then, however, she is immediately in thrall to Henry Mynors, the unremitting Wesleyan. For Anna, there appears to be no escape, and this is confirmed when the two finally marry. Again, this is to be

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<sup>321</sup> Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 25-26. Here Dinah explains that Jesus ‘spoke out of doors’ to the poor.

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid*, 26.

<sup>323</sup> R.E. Sopher, “Gender and Sympathy in *Adam Bede*: the Case of Seth Bede,” *George Eliot-George Henry Lewes Studies* 62/63 (2012): 1.

<sup>324</sup> Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 482.

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid*, 447.

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid*, 17.

<sup>327</sup> Bennett, *Anna of the Five Towns*, 2.

compared with Elisabeth Farringdon who voluntarily returns to the fold having previously removed herself.<sup>328</sup>

Description of Methodist activity, for Bennett, is largely restricted, literally and metaphorically, to the inside of buildings. The interior of the chapel is described as is the position of the people within it. A hierarchy is introduced as Mynors takes his place in the singing seat; prominent within the orchestra.<sup>329</sup> The revival service reveals much. Firstly, that such a thing is required at all, and secondly, that everything connected to it takes place inside the confines of the sanctuary. Spontaneity is absent in Bursley and the reader is even privy to the planning meetings: there were to be hoardings and great posters.<sup>330</sup> The large choir and disinterested organist are mentioned alongside the 'frou-frou' of dresses.<sup>331</sup> Readers are, however, simultaneously, aware of the large attendance and electric atmosphere.<sup>332</sup> What could be seen as successful sacralisation was co-existing with signs of desacralisation. Anna's own presence is revealing: wrestling with God because of her need for conversion, she struggles to find an available seat. In envying men for not being fettered, it is Mynors who is referred to as God.<sup>333</sup> It is he who casually observes that a conversion is not strictly necessary: 'It is a question of living, of constant endeavour, with the example of Christ always before us.'<sup>334</sup> This can be compared to Dinah and early Methodism and we are mindful of the struggle for Anna and the ease of Henry.

The issues related to the interior of the chapel in *Anna of the Five Towns* can be compared to the first one entered in *Her Benny*. It:

abutted close to the street...and Benny wondered what they did  
inside. He had never been inside a church or chapel; they were most  
of them so grand, and the people that went were dressed so well,

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<sup>328</sup> Fowler, *The Farringdons*. 214 & 149. Elisabeth has had a successful time in London where she won prizes for her artwork.

<sup>329</sup> Bennett, *Anna of the Five Towns*, 15.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid, 27.

<sup>331</sup> Ibid, 35.

<sup>332</sup> Ibid, 37.

<sup>333</sup> Ibid, 41.

<sup>334</sup> Ibid, 47.

that he had concluded long since that they were not for such poor little chaps as he.<sup>335</sup>

It is as though he is describing Anna and Henry's place of worship. The Liverpool chapel, however:

was anything but grand-looking, and the people who were going in did not look very smart.<sup>336</sup>

Hocking is deliberately addressing criticism which was being levelled at the Methodism of the time. It is significant that Benny and his sister were made welcome. A man even guides them to his own seat: "'Here,'" he said, pushing open a green baize door.'<sup>337</sup> Details offered in relation to the two chapels are remarkably similar. Benny thought that there were three hundred present but, unlike Anna, he is in awe of the organ playing, hymn singing and sermon-giving.<sup>338</sup> The distinction is made between the warm house of prayer and the cold wintry street.<sup>339</sup>

There is so much more to Bursley's Methodism than worship in the chapel. To explain, Bennett utilises the internal dynamics of extraneous Wesleyan buildings, before moving to subtle comment on the use of domestic settings. By introducing the various meetings, Bennett is determinedly showing the organisational requirements, plethora of responsibilities, positions of authority, and preoccupations of the members. Mention of the Special Teachers' Meeting suffices. It is described in such detail that the 'oppressively warm' evening is matched by the effect it is having on Anna's mood. With furniture described, heating explained, and Biblical wall hangings noted, no stone is left unturned. Details of the prayers and business of the meeting are given and, sitting at the back and in the corner, it is little wonder that Anna felt 'on the fringe of the Methodist society.' These feelings were added to when the 'atmosphere became suddenly fervent, emotional and devout.'<sup>340</sup>

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<sup>335</sup> Hocking, *Her Benny*, 29.

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid*, 29.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid*, 29.

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid*, 30-31.

<sup>339</sup> *Ibid*, 32.

<sup>340</sup> Bennett, *Anna of the Five Towns*, 29.

Methodists were evidently still capable of putting on a show. Some were also still willing to meet for the early-morning prayer meeting. For this seven o'clock act of piety, it is Anna and the spinster housekeeper of the Sunday-school superintendent who are the focus of attention. The latter, 'found her sole diversion in the variety of her religious experiences.'<sup>341</sup>

The sewing meeting, preparation for the autumn bazaar, reveals much. Attendance was by invitation from Mrs. Sutton, the 'leading lady.' It was inevitably held in her house, and she was determined that the Sunday-school stall should be the best.<sup>342</sup> The message is, therefore, of elitism and a certain amount of competition. Readers already know that the Suttons are one of only two chapel-going families to own a carriage. It is no surprise, therefore, that Mrs. Cayton Vernon, owner of the other, is positioned in the dining room ready to oversee the work of a second group of sewers. Although Anna is nervous, and knows her place in any pecking order, she has escaped from the confines of her domestic drudgery. It is also the first social gathering that she has ever been party to. Bennett also places emphasis on the conversation, which takes place while the women sew.<sup>343</sup> They are socialising. All of this demonstrates the potential tension between the restrictions and freedoms offered simultaneously by Methodist affiliation. While the importance of the two statuesque women is noted, there are reminders that their prominence is due, in large part, to their marriages. Mr. Sutton, an alderman, enters with the superintendent minister. They arrive in time for the elaborate meal and are seated at opposite ends of the long table.<sup>344</sup> Mrs. Sutton has spent the day organising. She plays a crucial role in the 'triumphant and unparalleled success' of the bazaar which, with its seven stalls, lasted for four nights in the Town Hall.<sup>345</sup> It is, however, her husband who is the circuit steward.<sup>346</sup>

In *Her Benny* and in *Anna of the Five Towns*, Methodist use of outdoor space is limited to the happenings at the Sunday-school treat. This implies ubiquity in relation to such events. They also bore a remarkable similarity. Both catered for hundreds of children and numerous

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<sup>341</sup> Ibid, 42.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid, 50-51.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid, 54.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid, 59.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid, 143.

<sup>346</sup> The circuit steward was the most prominent lay position: a circuit being a group of chapels with a number of ordained clergy.

teachers, who were all dressed in their finest clothes. Each involved an exciting mode of transport and a destination that took the participants away from their usual environment. The sports and games were identical. Hymns were sung. The bun loaf and cup of milk, offered in *Her Benny*, was upstaged by the bread-and-butter, currant cake, Eccles-cake, and Bath-bun, placed in the bags for the Bursley scholars, but the thinking was the same. What differed was the welcome given to Benny. Although covered in mud, he was soon able to join the other pristine children. Not even an attender, he lagged behind the others in the race before, finally, overtaking them all and winning the 'brand new sixpence.'<sup>347</sup> The expectations for the children in *Anna of the Five Towns* are dashed, however. The 'treat ended disastrously,' as the weather changed, and costumes were ruined. The boys 'were causing their bags to explode with appalling detonations.' Anna's melancholy is recorded. Only Mrs. Sutton, because of her carriage, returned home dry.<sup>348</sup> Onlookers, and readers of these novels, would have been aware of Methodist presence and would not, therefore, have been mindful of any links to desacralisation. It is, however, possible to regard this as desacralisation of Methodist activity and to ponder on the eventual secularising consequences.

Seemingly, therefore, Methodism was making less use of outdoor space as the nineteenth century progressed. Arnold Bennett takes time to describe the alternative Sunday afternoon activity, now available in the new park. The band plays, and the place is crowded 'with people going up to...enjoy the latest outcome of municipal enterprise.'<sup>349</sup> There appears to be added competition for the chapels, but it can be noted that the Methodists were there too, prior to attendance at evening service. For the person not attending chapel, there was perhaps now, only 'the quick but sober tramp of the chapel goers [which] fell peacefully on the ear.'<sup>350</sup>

*The Farringdons* adds considerably to these thoughts on the use of outdoor space. There is an absence of activity. There is not even any mention of the Sunday-school treat. The one social event spoken of is the annual tea-meeting held within the East Lane chapel but, in

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<sup>347</sup> Hocking, *Her Benny*, 46.

<sup>348</sup> Bennett, *Anna of the Five Towns*, 82-86.

<sup>349</sup> *Ibid*, 6-8.

<sup>350</sup> *Ibid*, 12.

describing this as 'their one and only dissipation,' it was also remarked that 'tea-meetings may be very well in their way [but] they hardly seem to fulfil one's ideal of human joy.'<sup>351</sup> Fowler goes a step further. Alan Tremaine, the socialist dabbler, wants 'to show people that pleasure and religion have nothing to do with each other' and he is particularly concerned for the poor, who are forced to pray even when attempting to enjoy themselves.<sup>352</sup> He states that 'the rich have tried to choke them off with religion.'<sup>353</sup> Even when he successfully arranges a day out for the Osierfield workers, however, he cannot stop them all from singing grace at the start of their meal.<sup>354</sup>

In *The Farringdons*, mention is made of chapels. Elisabeth's place of worship has its morning service at eleven which is far too late for Mrs. Bateson and Mrs. Hankey. They know that 'half-past ten is the Lord's time' giving as it does 'the chance of getting home and seeing to the dinner properly after chapel.'<sup>355</sup> While reassuring to learn that Mrs. Bateson disapproves of the habit of leaving before the singing of the last hymn, the priorities of some Methodists are being alluded to. Fowler, again and again, demonstrates the significance and prominence of Methodism while hinting at a cosiness and a straying from any original ardour. Mrs. Bateson equates worship with recreation.<sup>356</sup> A hint as to why is given by the description of the Sunday School Anniversary. It is 'the great day.'<sup>357</sup> While the children sing, 'the congregation sat swaying to and fro to the tune.'<sup>358</sup> In discussing sermons, Mrs. Hankey 'thought that part about punishment of the wicked was something beautiful.' She has, however, 'lost all pleasure in Mr. Sneyd's discourses since [hearing] as he wished to introduce the reading of the commandments into East Lane Chapel.' For her this was the 'thin end of the wedge' in relation to ritualism.<sup>359</sup>

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<sup>351</sup> Fowler, *The Farringdons*, 59.

<sup>352</sup> *Ibid*, 48 & 59. Alan 'indulges in the not unfashionable luxury of doubts.' Tremaine describes faith as 'merely an amiable feminine weakness.'

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid*, 60.

<sup>354</sup> *Ibid*, 66. 'Be present at our table, Lord.'

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid*, 129. The two women do not hold with the habit of leaving chapel before the last hymn for the sake of the dinner.

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid*, 129.

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid*, 11.

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid*, 11.

<sup>359</sup> *Ibid*, 131. Discussion of such matters in Wolverhampton Methodist meetings was commonplace.



It is undoubtedly in domestic settings that we glean most from Fowler about Methodism. Elisabeth's childhood home is where her cousin, Maria, attempts to 'provide a strict Methodist training.' In essence, this involves imbuing 'the young with an overpowering sense of their own inferiority and unworthiness.' What could appear oppressive is brought some light relief when Elisabeth is told:

'if you serve God and do your duty to your neighbour, you will find plenty of people ready to love you; and especially if you carry yourself well and never stoop.'<sup>360</sup>

Once more Fowler shows two views of Methodism: the critical and the sympathetic. Symbolically, this is represented by the cousins who raise Elisabeth. Maria reprimands, while Anne loves. Undeniably, however, the home has been sacralised, or at least infiltrated, by Methodism.

In the breakfast-room of the Farringdon home, there are two pictures. Pride of place, above the mantelpiece, was given to a photograph of 'The Centenary Meeting' with rows of men in 'suffocating cravats.' Elisabeth's grandfather appeared 'in this galaxy of Methodist worth.' The second, hung above the door, is of a young John Wesley.<sup>361</sup> The same situation presented itself in Mrs. Bateson's parlour: a picture of her husband 'in the attire of a local preacher' alongside a print showing Wesley's death-bed scene.<sup>362</sup> Methodism as it had been on display with what it had become.

In *Adam Bede*, it is only a very few Methodists who are referred to, whereas, in *Her Benny* there is a proliferation and, in *Anna of the Five Towns*, nothing but. The nineteenth century was, after all, a period of seemingly rapid growth for nonconformity with Bebbington estimating just under two million members in the main denominations by 1900.<sup>363</sup> *The*

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<sup>360</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>362</sup> Ibid, 24.

<sup>363</sup> David Bebbington, *The Nonconformist Conscience* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), 2. David Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism: The Age of Spurgeon and Moody* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press), 253. Growth continued between the middle and end of the century even if the percentage increase was less than the percentage for the population as a whole.

*Farringdons*, published at roughly the same time as Bennett's book, has Methodists in abundance but Fowler purposely introduces characters who represent the challenges being faced by religion, and Methodism, at the turn of the century. Small in number, but the three Methodists associated with Heyslope reveal much in relation to its already realised, and potential, characteristics. It is because he is a 'Methody', that Seth Bede is introduced to the reader as a saint.<sup>364</sup> This is, however, a classic example of Eliot's use of irony. Seth behaves impeccably, but it is Adam who holds sway and chastises his pious brother. In saying that 'there's such a thing as being over-spiritual' and in wishing that 'their consciences 'ud let 'em stay quiet i' the church,' Adam is giving more than hints as to the behaviour of many early Methodists and how they were perceived.<sup>365</sup>

Seth's love for Dinah has been regarded as analogous to the collective religious feeling of the early Methodists: Eliot describes Methodism, using the same language as that used to highlight individual acts of love.<sup>366</sup> There is a fervency connected to it. Seth's displacement by Adam in the marriage plot can also be related to Methodist fortunes, therefore. Seth, the bachelor uncle, finally settles into an auxiliary role and this is a role which Methodism might finally need to come to terms with. Seth's denial of romantic fulfilment can be linked to the failure of Methodism to fully realise its potential. Perhaps it emphasises the eventual loss of ardour, as Seth settles for something less than the ideal in both his personal life, and religious attachment. At the end of the novel, we already know that Methodism hasn't grown or developed in the way that he would have wanted.<sup>367</sup>

Much has been written about the two Bede brothers and the fact that they are diametric opposites: one, the devout Methodist, the other, a steady follower of the Church of England.<sup>368</sup> Seth's gentle, forgiving nature carries with it a suggestion of inferiority and the point made by critics is that, while Adam's virtues are masculine, Seth's are feminine.<sup>369</sup> The world of work, quantity and judgment, in contrast to the realm of spirit, caring and

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<sup>364</sup> Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 11.

<sup>365</sup> *Ibid*, 11.

<sup>366</sup> Miller, *Reading for Our Time*, 20

<sup>367</sup> Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 513. For a thorough investigation into the role of Seth, see Sopher, "Gender and Sympathy in Adam Bede."

<sup>368</sup> *Ibid*, 7. Sopher points to Wiry Ben who compares Seth to a lamb: weak and sacrificial.

<sup>369</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

tenderness:<sup>370</sup> Bricks and stone compared to intuition and the mysterious.<sup>371</sup> The implications of this for the religion of the day, however, are not well explored. In pointing out, stereotypically, that Seth's emotions are legible while Adam's are not, the ostentation of the early Methodists is glimpsed. Seth's domesticity fits in with the increasingly strong link being made between religion and the feminine private sphere. It is Seth who occupies the symbolic third space, as he leaves Heyslope to attend worship.<sup>372</sup> While acknowledging the various ways to regard Seth as inferior, it is also obvious that he gains purpose because of his Methodism. Although spoken of as, 'poor Seth' to the very end, he remains totally happy and fulfilled. Something, therefore, perhaps akin to the experience of Methodist women. Both the mother and Dinah love Adam more but they also accommodate Seth's foibles. In Heyslope, Squire Donnithorne and the Established Church are inextricably linked but the Methodists are also tolerated as part of the community.<sup>373</sup> Seth endures and this is a quality admired by Eliot. The early Methodists had certainly endured before finally being accepted. In the final paragraphs, the reader learns that 'to walk by Dinah's side, and be tyrannized by Dinah and Adam's children, was Uncle Seth's earthly happiness.' With such proselytising zeal at the outset, Methodism too comes to settle for a comfortable existence alongside its former adversaries.<sup>374</sup> Seth, at the end of the novel, is the most enlightened and yet, he acquiesces. He has, however, influenced his brother.

From the outset, Dinah is a focus of attention for the other characters and for the reader. She is the intrigue and the interest, just as any female itinerant preacher would have been towards the end of the eighteenth century. The same can be said of Methodism, which was itself new and having impact. Dinah's true worth, however, for a study of Methodism, is in her change from the iconoclastic, committed preacher to the contented wife and pastoral visitor. Two episodes in the story demonstrate this change. On her arrival at Heyslope Green, there was novelty in her appearance: both in the wearing of her Quaker-like costume and in the mounting of the cart to preach. The unnamed traveller is mesmerised by her and what

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<sup>370</sup> Uglow, *George Eliot*, 125.

<sup>371</sup> *Ibid*, 138.

<sup>372</sup> Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 477. For discussion on the idea of third space see, Wilson, *Constrained by Zeal*. Also dealt with elsewhere in this thesis.

<sup>373</sup> Eliot, *Adam Bede*. Chapter five is entitled 'The Rector.' He makes it clear that the Methodists should be tolerated.

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid*, 10.

she has to say. For the villagers, she had created 'quite a stir.'<sup>375</sup> Mr. Casson, landlord of the Donnithorne Arms, points out that Parson Irwine lives away from the village, only visits on a Sunday, and that the Heyslope parsonage is not fit for habitation.<sup>376</sup> Dinah is sacralising the most important communal space for the Methodists in the middle of the week. The traveller on horseback, Eliot's device for describing the scene as it unfolds on the village Green, is in effect the only member of the audience: all the other characters are actors on the stage. There is the knot of Methodists separated from the other villagers. The villagers are almost all there and they are affected. Joshua Rann, shoemaker and parish clerk, is doing his best to 'maintain the dignity of the Church in the face of this scandalous irruption of Methodism.'<sup>377</sup> Bessy Cranage's ear-rings do not escape Dinah's attention and the spiritual gulf between the two women is there for all to see.<sup>378</sup> The traveller had needed to leave the scene, but could not tear himself away from Dinah, who had spoken for at least an hour.<sup>379</sup> Preaching out-of-doors could be an emotional experience. Methodists knew how to 'groon.'<sup>380</sup>

Dinah had been called to preach. She had 'felt a great movement in [her] soul' and this was accompanied by a good deal of trembling and shaking.<sup>381</sup> It is a surprise, therefore, that, only a handful of years later, she acquiesces and comes to agree with Adam that women preachers do more harm than good. Indeed, she believes it 'right to set th' example o' submitting.'<sup>382</sup> The comparison needs to be made with Dinah's time with Hetty, while in prison and on the way to the gallows. The ultimate example of pastoral care: it is not as preacher, but as visitor, that she manages to bring 'the obstinate criminal to confess.'<sup>383</sup> Arthur Donnithorne brought the paper securing Hetty's physical release, but it is Dinah, the woman, who ensures her spiritual well-being. Dinah had already been described as an angel, when visiting Lisbeth after her husband dies: an angel, who cleaned the house 'so

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<sup>375</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>376</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>377</sup> Ibid, 21.

<sup>378</sup> Ibid, 31.

<sup>379</sup> Ibid, 33.

<sup>380</sup> Ibid, 22.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid, 90.

<sup>382</sup> Ibid, 516.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid, 443.

thoroughly', while praying and singing the hymns of Charles Wesley.<sup>384</sup> Dinah's Methodism, with the potential to be different, had settled into a more traditional, perhaps acceptable, pattern. She is, of course, still occupied by it and her works undoubtedly benefit others. The links with the fortunes of Methodism, and the role of women within it, are palpable.

Methodism had the power to transform. It is the unnamed traveller, who mentions knowing only two types: 'the ecstatic and the bilious.'<sup>385</sup> If Seth is the former, Will Maskery had been the latter. Capable of speaking 'unbecomin' words' about the rector, he had been a 'wild drunken rascal, neglecting his work and beating his wife.'<sup>386</sup> Methodism is the only explanation offered for his change into a decent man, who comes to live comfortably with her.<sup>387</sup> If Methodism was capable of changing people, those spoken of by Eliot were clearly not basking in respectability. It was identity that Methodism was giving to these rural dwellers: something outside of the norm. At the Village Games, Seth is singled out as, 'a Methodist, but a very good fellow.'<sup>388</sup> The emphasis here is on the 'but'.

With the squire's grandson ever-present, there are events which highlight the long unchanged rhythm of rural life.<sup>389</sup> The great dance takes place on the same day as the Village Games. Everyone is there, but it is the squire and the rector, with their families, who are escorted to the striped marquee. The rector's mother is Godparent to the future squire. The villagers are entertained, while the neighbouring gentry will wait until the next day for their grand dinner.<sup>390</sup> The scene had been the same for generations. There is an expected order to things, but the intrigue, in the form of gossip, is about Methodists. Almost at the novel's ending, there is description of the Harvest Supper: a secular affair and provided free of expense to the 'good farm-labourers.'<sup>391</sup> Uglow describes this as, 'that extraordinary realised world' and comments on Eliot's portrayal of the solidarity of the rural community.<sup>392</sup> There

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<sup>384</sup> Ibid, 112-116 and p.471.

<sup>385</sup> Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 23.

<sup>386</sup> Ibid, 59.

<sup>387</sup> Ibid, 59.

<sup>388</sup> Ibid, 264.

<sup>389</sup> It is to be remembered that Arthur Donnithorne is the villain for most of the book and that he removes himself from the scene. See Uglow, *George Eliot*, 137.

<sup>390</sup> Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 262.

<sup>391</sup> Ibid, 494. Uglow describes it as 'that extraordinary realised world.' Uglow, *George Eliot*, 125.

<sup>392</sup> Uglow, *George Eliot*, 125. See also Hughes, *George Eliot*, 282. Here she talks of Arthur's coming of age and the tenants who sit down, being ranked according to the size of their land.

are no Methodists present, but it is Dinah's absence, which is commented upon. Knowing this, the reader is then introduced to the harvest-song and the drinking ceremony that accompanied it. Tensions increase with political talk, which is only tamed because thought returns to Dinah.<sup>393</sup> With Dinah's Methodism will come hymns, instead of frivolous song, and a certain attitude towards drink. The harvest supper might change over the coming years, depending on the number of Methodist converts and chapels built.

### **Identity, Respectability and Gender**

The chapels had been built in the Bursley of *Anna of the Five Towns* and the people identified themselves, and were identified by others, as Methodists, or more specifically, as Wesleyans. There is more attached to their religious affiliation than this, however. Over the years, and with the shift in focus to the urban scene, the quest here was for a respectability that only chapel attendance could, seemingly, offer. With Bennett as author, this is not straightforward as, for some, it comes at the cost of their freedom and, for others, is shown to be a sham. The obvious example of a restricted life is Anna herself. Released from within the chapel buildings at the start of the novel, she is immediately under the influence of two powerful, Wesleyan men: Ephraim, the domineering father, and the young Henry Mynors. There appears to be no escape. The men even go into business together. Also, her new-found wealth offers no release, as it will be controlled, firstly by the father, and then by her husband. Critics have summed up the novel as an account of the repression and marginalisation of women, because of the industrial world and religious authoritarianism.<sup>394</sup>

Whatever the truth about Anna, the people of Bursley perceive her life to be successful. She is wealthy and her marriage brings with it status and a role within the chapel. She is altogether respectable. The 'inclusive majority' might also feel sympathy for Anna, because of the hold over her, by the two men and by her enthrallment to the powerful ideologies of Wesleyan Methodism and capitalism.<sup>395</sup> She had never:

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<sup>393</sup> Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 494-505.

<sup>394</sup> Harvey, "Narrowing the Abyss," 6.

<sup>395</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

permitted herself to dream of the possibility of an escape from parental servitude. She had never looked beyond the horizons of her present world, but sought spiritual satisfaction in the ideas of duty and sacrifice.<sup>396</sup>

The twenty-first century reader, and the exclusive minority at the time, however, can see all of this and more. Her conversion is not assured and she is on the fringe of all that takes place.<sup>397</sup> She does not flout convention and, because of her marriage to a surrogate father, her individuality collapses. Any recovery is strictly on society's terms. It has been described as a realistic accommodation with life.<sup>398</sup> Another possible reading by the 'exclusive minority' is indicated. She could simply be a weak and selfish girl, who, placed in a position of power, betrays her true self and those who depend on her. After all, she is implicated in two deaths.<sup>399</sup> In spatial terms, the Methodism that is seen on the surface could have been very different to its effects, which are hidden.

Anna's only freedom appears to come from the trip to the Isle of Man: spatially significant, as it is as far removed from Bursley as she could imagine. Methodism also plays no part at all, for her, in the visit. Except, of course, that it does. Without it, she would not have known the Suttons, who invited her. Without it, her horizons would not have been broadened at all and she would have remained in the kitchen, in the house in Bursley. The Isle of Man as another metaphor for Methodism.

If Seth Bede exudes feminine characteristics, which shed light on Methodism, it can be suggested that Anna's seeming growth in independence, involves her in the appropriation of masculine space and with it, masculine authority. In her immaculate kitchen, she possesses the traditional domestic virtues, which amplify her attractiveness for Henry when he visits. Abandoning this feminine sanctuary, the counterpoint is found in Anna's tour of his factory: she walks into the hot kiln. It is a daring entry into the masculine world. So too is her invasion of Ephraim's sacred study. She even takes over the bedroom of the revered, but

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<sup>396</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>397</sup> Howarth, "The Craft of Arnold Bennett," 91.

<sup>398</sup> Harvey, "Narrowing the Abyss," 6. Here described as 'a novel of accommodation.'

<sup>399</sup> Ibid, 7.

disgraced, Sunday-school superintendent. Each sortie is, however, accompanied by either discomfort or guilt. Perhaps, as a woman and as a Methodist, there had been the potential to rise above stereotypes. Ultimately, however, she does not and instead, she is initiated into the rituals of middle-class marriage...and middle-class Methodism. After all, she had initially been attracted to Mynors because of his masculinity.<sup>400</sup> It is, in the end, therefore, Anna who possibly clings most tightly to the respectability brought about by Methodism. This can be seen in her love for Willie and yet her marriage to Mynors. Her individuality is submerged beneath that of her husband; and her life is made to run within the comfortable tramlines of middle-class Wesleyan Midlands society.<sup>401</sup> There is the sobering thought that, without Mynors, Anna's life might have been similar to that of the spinster housekeeper of Titus Price, the Sunday-school superintendent. Without Methodism, of course, this woman would have had nothing. Heyslope's village green had also seemed to offer hope which was eventually dashed.

That Methodist respectability might not have been all that it appeared to be is summed up in the character of Titus Price. As the Sunday-school superintendent, he has a certain standing in the community. At the Sunday-school treat he is the Master of Ceremonies who distributes the prizes and makes the decisions. On Sundays he is 'arrayed in his rich, almost voluptuous, broadcloth' and he has no qualms in dismissing the girl from the Sunday-school for stealing a Bible. The contrast is made between the Titus of Sunday and the Titus of Monday: Anna sees before her a 'vast and torpid male slattern,' whose manufactory is in a dreadful state.<sup>402</sup> Titus the embezzler, debtor and promise breaker has been revealed:

Here was a man whom no one respected, but everyone pretended to respect – who knew that he was respected by none, but pretended that he was respected by all...They were aware of the astonishing fact, which takes at least thirty years to learn, that a Sunday-school superintendent is a man.<sup>403</sup>

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<sup>400</sup> Ibid, 22.

<sup>401</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>402</sup> Bennett, *Anna of the Five Towns*, 24.

<sup>403</sup> Ibid, 116.



Price's eventual suicide is announced with great drama.<sup>404</sup> The over-riding concern, however, is that Bursley's Wesleyanism might be shamed and branded.<sup>405</sup> Titus was found out. 'Now your worship' is how Alderman Sutton is greeted by his daughter, Beatrice. Fortunately, nothing has prevented him from becoming the mayor.<sup>406</sup> This is the kind of respectability that a Wesleyan, such as Sutton, could come to expect. On a different level altogether, there is the revivalist who comes to Bursley's Wesleyan chapel. Not simply respected, he has reached a certain celebrity status and, in the porch as Anna leaves the chapel, she spots the photographs of him, which can be purchased for the sum of one shilling.<sup>407</sup>

Looked at together, Anna's husband and her father shed further light on dichotomies within the novel and complexities for Methodism. Mynors is introduced using Agnes' description of him. To her, he is 'perfect.'<sup>408</sup> This is the view of a child and we are at liberty to think of it as a naïve summation. As the most consistent and active member of the congregation, he is the personification of Wesleyan Methodism within the town. As with Henry, therefore, any wholly positive image of the denomination will need some correction. Undoubtedly, Mynors is a handsome fellow; Bursley's Wesleyan buildings are imposing. Mynors exudes masculine authority and is contemptuous of failures such as Titus Price.<sup>409</sup> Wesleyan Methodism was a power to be reckoned with and could look down on those not in its fold. Mynors is excessively concerned for the reputation of Methodism, rather than doing the right thing. When Titus Price dies, he states that 'it's an awful thing for the Wesleyan Sunday-school, and the whole society, too.'<sup>410</sup> Undoubtedly, Wesleyan Methodism guarded its reputation jealously. It needs to be remembered, however, that Mynors offered a unique opportunity for Anna to escape the authority of her father. Wesleyan Methodism certainly offered something completely different. There was drudgery connected to life in a town such as Bursley. Henry Mynors, the orphan with no inherited money, spends ten years working his way up in a large firm in Turnhill, before becoming a fine-and-upstanding self-made man

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<sup>404</sup> Ibid, 113.

<sup>405</sup> Ibid, 116.

<sup>406</sup> Ibid, 129.

<sup>407</sup> Ibid, 39.

<sup>408</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>409</sup> Harvey, "Narrowing the Abyss," 9.

<sup>410</sup> Bennett, *Anna of the Five Towns*, 113.

who is capable of love.<sup>411</sup> It is due to his judicious firmness, that the feast of St. Monday, 'that canker eternally eating at the root of prosperity,' is less keenly observed in his manufactory. Henry is most certainly regarded as respectable, but it is his future wife, who notes, in relation to Willie Price, his 'condescending superiority.'<sup>412</sup> How the Wesleyans looked upon the other Methodist offshoots is of interest. As with Henry, analysis of Wesleyan Methodism is not straightforward.

Ephraim Tellwright provides a counterbalance to his future son-in-law: another reminder of Methodism's complexities. Born into a family of prominent Methodists, his is inherited wealth.<sup>413</sup> By the age of twenty-eight, he had saved fifteen hundred pounds, and he is introduced as 'The Miser.'<sup>414</sup> He is clearly far from perfect. As a younger man, he was described as 'a good Wesleyan.' He had, after all, been a class-leader and local preacher. The emphasis, however, is on his role as the circuit treasurer.<sup>415</sup> His chief concern was with fiscal schemes of organisation: 'it was in the finance of salvation that he rose supreme.' From Ephraim we learn that debt-raising provided 'lasting excitement for nonconformists.' He served the Lord in committee.<sup>416</sup> Bennett holds no punches. Ephraim 'grew garrulous with God at prayer-meetings,' but we immediately learn that he did these things 'as routine...because they gave him an unassailable position within the central group of the society.'<sup>417</sup>

Bennett's bleak assessment of Ephraim, with its implications for Wesleyan Methodism, is met with a twist. As he sinks lower in everyone's estimation, Ephraim is, in fact, distancing himself from the denomination. He gives up everything, except his pew in the chapel. The circuit was astonished by this sudden defection and views it as an 'inexplicable fall from grace.'<sup>418</sup> While falling, however, Bennett may be giving Methodism a reprieve.<sup>419</sup>

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<sup>411</sup> Ibid, 35.

<sup>412</sup> Ibid, 122. For a study of Saint Monday see Douglas Reid, "The Decline of Saint Monday 1766-1876," *Past and Present*, no. 71 (1976): 76-101.

<sup>413</sup> Ibid, p.12.

<sup>414</sup> Ibid, 9. & 35.

<sup>415</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>416</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>417</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>418</sup> Ibid, 14.

<sup>419</sup> Ibid, 13.

There is an alternative view of Ephraim, the tyrant and miser. Bennett provides certain positive images of him. He tries hard to provide a home for Anna and Agnes: by the setting of tiles in the lobby, pointing a wall and working in the garden. The more menial jobs within the chapel did need to be carried out by someone and success with the finances could only be beneficial. His tyranny at home possibly amounts to little more than his insistence on a strict domestic regime and rare reprimands. A chapel did need some discipline. Ephraim is further humanised by Mrs. Sutton's mysterious hold over him.<sup>420</sup> He finds it impossible to relinquish all links with the chapel. He still pays for his seat.

The role of Mrs. Sutton is important for shedding light on Methodism and the place of women within it. It is precisely because she is a woman that she affects Ephraim Tellwright; thus, ensuring that his behaviour modifies. She is the nurturer of Henry Mynors. It is she, who is there to guide Anna and offer her opportunities: invitations to the sewing meeting and the Isle of Man, advice at the revival meeting. Her approach is a direct contrast to the sanctimonious cold charity of the male entrepreneurs.<sup>421</sup> It is because of Mrs. Sutton that we understand women to have played a significant part in the life of the chapel. She is, after all, the most successful fund-raiser at the bazaar. Her remit extends to making the decisions regarding the repairs to the minister's house. Indeed, she 'has to stand between the minister's wife and the funds of the society.' She is crucial to the success of the building fund.<sup>422</sup> All this, and yet we read that, 'the women of a household were the natural victims of their master.'<sup>423</sup> This might be easier to understand in relation to Anna, as Mrs. Sutton appears to be at ease with her lot. True, her destiny is determined by her husband, but her life is different because of him and because they are Wesleyan Methodists. Beatrice knows that her father is 'filled with pride' on becoming mayor, but hints that it is far more significant for her mother:

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<sup>420</sup> Harvey, "Narrowing the Abyss," 14.

<sup>421</sup> Howarth, "The Craft of Arnold Bennett," 92.

<sup>422</sup> Bennett, *Anna of the Five Towns*, 80.

<sup>423</sup> *Ibid*, 75.

As for the mayoress--? Mother said I wasn't to mention it...lest you should think we were putting on airs.<sup>424</sup>

There is the spatial reassurance that Mrs. Sutton and her alderman husband live next door to the doctor, the vicar, and the Wesleyan superintendent minister.<sup>425</sup> Ephraim Tellwright and his daughters, inevitably, live on the opposite side of the street. It is good to know that she 'gave to the society monetary aid and a gracious condescension.'<sup>426</sup>

Even Mrs. Sutton would have found competition for status from the two Farringdon spinster sisters, whose 'time was taken up by the making of iron and the saving of souls.'<sup>427</sup> These ladies had no immediate neighbours because their home 'was called the Willows and was separated by a carriage-drive of half a mile from the town.'<sup>428</sup> Its oak staircases and Adam chimneypieces were impressive. Description of the East Lane Chapel, an example of third space, speaks volumes. The distinguishing feature of the sanctuary 'was a sort of reredos in oils, in memory of a dead and gone Farringdon.' If these siblings were respectable, there were others who aspired to be. Mrs. Bateson met with approval because she was 'a God-fearing woman, and her husband [had] worked at the Osierfield for forty years.'<sup>429</sup> That religion and respectability should be inseparable is summed up by Elisabeth when asked what she has been taught are the two chief aims for any woman: 'To be first a Christian and then a gentlewoman.'<sup>430</sup> Here, it is fair to equate religion with Methodism. Mrs. Hankey despairs because a niece has married a churchman: 'you'll be wishing you'd not been in such a hurry to get married, but had waited till you had got a good Methodist.' Fortunately, a younger niece has done just that and no mother, 'not even a duchess born,' could wish more for a daughter:

...he's a chapel-steward and a master-painter, and has six men under him. There he is, driving to work and carrying his own ladders in his

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<sup>424</sup> Ibid. 129.

<sup>425</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>426</sup> Ibid. 4.

<sup>427</sup> Fowler, *The Farringdons*, 6.

<sup>428</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>429</sup> Ibid, 22.

<sup>430</sup> Ibid, 22.

own cart, like a lord...and there he is on a Thursday evening, letting and reletting the pews and sittings after service, like a real gentleman...when a man is a chapel-steward at thirty-four, and drives his own cart, you begin to think that he is too good for this world, and that he is almost ripe for a better one.<sup>431</sup>

In *Her Benny* there is no scepticism and identification as a Methodist leads, unequivocally, to a respectability which sets the well-lived person up for life. Benny's state of ignorance, at the start, is matched by the terrible conditions in which he and his sister are living. She is saved, before her premature death, by the message given within the confines of the Methodist chapel in Liverpool. He is saved, while living in the open countryside: symbolically on the other side of the river. He finds love and kindness with the family, who look after him: his body mends. He finds love and kindness within the Methodist chapel: his soul mends. In return, he saves the life of Eva, and he will be repaid.<sup>432</sup>

So much about Benny and Methodism is found out in tandem. He learns to read and write by going to Sunday-school.<sup>433</sup> He grows morally because of his attendance at chapel.<sup>434</sup> The superintendent of the Sunday-school informs that Benny was the most punctual, diligent, and successful of teachers.<sup>435</sup> This was a superintendent who could do no wrong: he is no Titus Price. Benny is converted.<sup>436</sup> There is none of the watering-down acceptable to Henry Mynors. The reader is even taught how to pray by Benny. Once back in Liverpool, he seeks out his old Sunday-school and tells the children how bright their future might be, if they are only prepared to become a Methodist.<sup>437</sup> Everything turns out to be alright in the end: a partner in the business, which has 'become more prosperous than ever,' a marriage to 'the angel...who brightens his home,' and a 'beautiful house of his own.'<sup>438</sup> Anna Mynors remains childless, but Benny can gather his children around his knee. Elisabeth Farrington is yet to marry Christopher, but the omens are good. The future of Methodism in Bursley may be in

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<sup>431</sup> Ibid, 27-28.

<sup>432</sup> Hocking, *Her Benny*, 102.

<sup>433</sup> Ibid, 64.

<sup>434</sup> Ibid, 67.

<sup>435</sup> Ibid, 96.

<sup>436</sup> Ibid, 96-97.

<sup>437</sup> Ibid, 119.

<sup>438</sup> Ibid, 120.

doubt, but in Liverpool, it is secure when Benny's eldest lad 'thinks how he will be brave and true like his father, and so grow up to be an honourable man.'<sup>439</sup>

### A Fourth Dimension

Identity, respect, and something to do week in, week out. For some, the most important dimension is missing still. There is need to include the theology and that which, elsewhere, has been summed up as fourth space. Each novelist does not disappoint. Each adds to an understanding of what Methodists believed. Silas Hocking gives the most straightforward explanation, but it is Ellen Fowler who goes above and beyond what might ordinarily have been expected. In *Her Benny*, the emphasis is on the theological shift from Joe Wrag's Calvinism, with its elect, to the 'whoso'er' of Methodism:

...what kind o' glory can it be, to bring folks into the world doomed  
aforehand to eternal misery? To give 'em no chance o'  
repentance...<sup>440</sup>

With this grasped, everything in the end, and at the conclusion of the novel, works out well. Hocking teaches and the reader can learn alongside Benny. At the outset, he is told that 'all bairns are the Lord's.'<sup>441</sup> When Benny asks if 'folks go somewhere when they die?' he is simply told '...aye, Ben, that they do.'<sup>442</sup> Few novelists would risk quoting passages of scripture, but Christmas is explained with reference to the second chapter of Matthew's Gospel.<sup>443</sup> Back to basics is Hocking's approach. After all, Benny had asked 'who's He?' on being told of Christ. Fortunately, 'God is more marcyfuller [sic] than we think.'<sup>444</sup> The reader does not need to feel sorry for the dying Nelly, who has been told by the man in the chapel

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<sup>439</sup> Ibid, 120

<sup>440</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>441</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>442</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>443</sup> Ibid, 25.

<sup>444</sup> Ibid, 26.

that 'whoso'er' means everyone.<sup>445</sup> Joe, too, sees 'the iron wall of his creed melt and vanish.'<sup>446</sup> Grace is for all, if there has been repentance.

Fowler's novel certainly has theological content. *The Farringdons* has one recurring motif taken from the book of Exodus.

And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night.<sup>447</sup>

Fowler either believed that the reader would know this passage or felt they should be taught it. The theophanic event involves the Israelites being freed from Egyptian bondage. God does not leave them.<sup>448</sup> In the novel, 'the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night' is the repeated, abbreviated phrase employed.<sup>449</sup> Initially it is used to show 'that the Black Country is a wilderness we are travelling through.'<sup>450</sup> There were literally clouds of smoke during daylight hours with the glow from the furnaces at night.<sup>451</sup> Elisabeth, the young Methodist, clearly knew her bible and was able to apply it to a practical Christianity. By watching the pillar, she believes the workers will be stopped from:

idling in their work, or selling bad iron, or doing anything that is horrid or mean, because it is a sign to them that God is with them, just as it used to be to the Children of Israel.<sup>452</sup>

The symbolism continues as the people eventually leave the wilderness, or life on earth, to live in the heavenly 'country over there.'<sup>453</sup>

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<sup>445</sup> Ibid, 34.

<sup>446</sup> Ibid. 35.

<sup>447</sup> King James Bible, Exodus 13:21.

<sup>448</sup> Ibid.

<sup>449</sup> Fowler, *The Farringdons*, 146.

<sup>450</sup> Ibid, 146

<sup>451</sup> See, for example: Dick, Eveleigh and Sullivan, *The Black Country*. Reference has been made in the introduction to this thesis to Elihu Burritt who described the Black Country as 'Black by day and red by night.' See Burritt, *Walks in the Black Country*, 1.

<sup>452</sup> Fowler, *The Farringdons*, 18.

<sup>453</sup> Fowler, *The Farringdons*, 18.

In the battles Elisabeth has between her intellect and religion, encapsulated in her relationship with Alan, it is the same quotation which is referred to. Although only a temporary aberration, Elisabeth comes to think that 'the pillar was only the smoke and the flame of human industries' and this brings sadness.<sup>454</sup> During her dalliance with art, the potential exists for her to be tempted away from religion. It is her 'great Academy picture,' the one to bring her fame, which rescues her. Not surprisingly the painting is entitled 'The Pillar of Cloud' and it becomes clear that God and art are not mutually exclusive.<sup>455</sup>

Fowler introduces the concept which proves portentous. Elisabeth speaks of a 'fourth dimension' and initially has difficulty in articulating its meaning. She simply knows that people who have not found it, bore her. Christopher, the steadying influence, attempts to discover her meaning:

What do you mean by the fourth dimension? There are length and breadth and thickness, and what comes next?<sup>456</sup>

Just as the novel is about the development of Elisabeth, it is also, from this moment onwards, a teasing out of this idea. Elisabeth responds:

I don't know what its name is. Perhaps eternity would do as well as any other. But I mean the dimension which comes after length and breadth and thickness, and beyond them, and all round them, and which makes them seem quite different, and much less important.<sup>457</sup>

Elisabeth feels that three-dimension people do not grasp what is meant when 'such words as religion and art and love' are spoken of. Together, the two friends decide that the difference is akin to a fourth-dimension Sonata by Beethoven and a third-dimension pantomime song.<sup>458</sup>

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<sup>454</sup> Ibid, 92.

<sup>455</sup> Ibid, 146.

<sup>456</sup> Ibid, 132.

<sup>457</sup> Ibid, 132.

<sup>458</sup> Ibid, 132.



The novel reaches its crescendo with the final working out of what it really means for Elisabeth and Christopher to be fourth-dimension people.<sup>459</sup> They are to inherit eternity because their 'ears are opened to the message...and they shall never see death.'<sup>460</sup> It is no surprise that the messenger is a cloud-clad angel. Public space and domestic space are used effectively in *The Farringdons* to demonstrate the place of religion, and specifically Methodism, in the lives of the people. Issues related to gender are bound up with the same. The third-space of church and chapel is alluded to. Fowler's fourth-dimension elides with what, elsewhere here, is referred to as fourth-space. It points to the importance of theology in fully understanding the role of religion generally, and Methodism in particular. Fowler's ambiguity is also useful. Her fourth-dimension people have clearly found God but have they also found Methodism? As Elisabeth gains clarity in her thinking, the references to Methodism diminish. Her conversion takes place in an Anglican church, and it is unclear as to whether, following the death of the Methodist cousin, she is attending chapel. Her final remark, however, is addressed to her Methodist friends:

It is very good to come back to you all, and to dwell among my own people.

Caleb and Mrs. Bateson, and even Mrs. Hankey, are fourth-dimension people. As Elisabeth and Christopher left their presence, they:

passed through the doorway into the evening sunshine, which was flooding the whole land and turning even the smoke-clouds into windows of agate whereby men caught faint glimmerings of a dim glory as yet to be revealed.<sup>461</sup>

A fairer place beyond the Black Country awaits.

In contrast, Arnold Bennett's opinion of Wesleyanism is demonstrated by the lack of theological content. His Methodists have other priorities. Henry Mynors pacifies Anna who

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<sup>459</sup> Ibid, 211.

<sup>460</sup> Ibid, 211.

<sup>461</sup> Ibid, 214.

has not been converted. Being a Christian is about 'constant endeavour' and this comes in the form of money-gathering efforts.<sup>462</sup> Anna's most blatant dalliance with the example of Christ comes when she visits the works of Titus and Willie Price. She sees 'blessed are the meek' as a test for herself, but it is a test which ends in failure:

Blessed are the meek, blessed are the failures, blessed are the stupid, for they, unknown to themselves, have a grace which is denied to the haughty, the successful, and the wise.<sup>463</sup>

She does not make the transition. The Bursley Wesleyan Revival does not espouse Methodist theology. Instead, it is dominated by a visiting evangelist with the rejoinder that 'God's precious business cannot be carried on, even by a mountebank, without money, and there will be a collection towards the expenses...'<sup>464</sup>

The Wesleyanism of Bursley had definitely distanced itself from the early Methodism: the Methodism preached by Dinah on the village green. Her sermon had not shied away from talk of sin and 'everlasting fire.' The focus, however, was on the 'eternal sun,' which comes from belief in God.<sup>465</sup> Eliot uses Adam to explain the difference between 'th' Arminians and the Calvinists.'

The Wesleyans you know are strong Arminians; and Seth, who could never abide anything harsh, and was always for hoping the best, held fast by the Wesleyans from the very first.<sup>466</sup>

In Heyslope, there had been two contrasting preachers. Mr. Irwine delivered his message in the old, lichened church, with the Donnithorne arms on its walls: emblem of the patriarchal authority of church and state. The villagers linger in the churchyard, not enthusiastic to hear the message.<sup>467</sup> Dinah is involved in a spontaneous gathering on the village green.<sup>468</sup> He had

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<sup>462</sup> Bennett, *Anna of the Five Towns*, 47.

<sup>463</sup> *Ibid*, 50.

<sup>464</sup> *Ibid*, 37. The tension between sacralisation and desacralisation is being played out here.

<sup>465</sup> Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 32.

<sup>466</sup> *Ibid*, 177.

<sup>467</sup> Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 188.

<sup>468</sup> Uglow, *George Eliot*, 125.

concentrated on ethics, she on sin and salvation. Both, however, have a talent for comradeship and compassion and Hetty's tragedy shows each in a good light. Dinah heals the soul and, in bringing Hetty to repentance, demonstrates her Methodist theology.<sup>469</sup> Irwine helps the family. Religion sets neither Irwine nor Dinah apart or above the community.<sup>470</sup> This is in stark contrast to Bursley's superintendent minister, who is too busy to carry out his pastoral duties.<sup>471</sup>

Methodist theology, in essence, is centred on the doctrine of Divine Grace.<sup>472</sup> Eliot, Hocking and Fowler understand this. Their Methodists come to know of the benefits it will bring. Bennett's Wesleyans are aware of it too, but they struggle: either, like Anna, they feel on-the-edge of proceedings, or they are preoccupied by the organisational trappings. From free-grace to airs-and-graces. Nonconformity did provide a way of life as well as a system of beliefs and Methodism attempted to appeal to a broad-church.<sup>473</sup> This is symbolically shown by the four novels; and the readers. Eliot moved in elite literary circles and her novels were read accordingly. Bennett had set out to write a book to be read by both the inclusive majority and the exclusive minority.<sup>474</sup> Fowler's appeal would, in the main, have been with women readers and Hocking wrote books for the masses. Whether the high-brow of Eliot or the low-brow of Hocking, by the end of the nineteenth century, there was a proliferation of women in the chapels and these chapels were possibly finding it easier to accommodate Bennett's middle-brow. Benny had been aware that most Methodist chapels catered for those other than him. The Sutton family and the Vernon family gained a lot by being prepared to show a degree of condescension.<sup>475</sup> John Lowerson writes of 'allodoxia' to

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<sup>469</sup> Hughes, *George Eliot*, 278.

<sup>470</sup> Uglow, *George Eliot*, 127.

<sup>471</sup> Ibid, 126. Uglow states that Adam Bede explores the way religious feeling is expressed through active sympathy rather than doctrine.

<sup>472</sup> See, for example, Thomas A. Langford, *Methodist Theology* (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 1998).

<sup>473</sup> Wilson, *Constrained by Zeal*, 5.

<sup>474</sup> Harvey, "Narrowing the Abyss," 30. Harvey feels Bennett succeeds in uniting the two extremes and sums it up as 'a successful endeavour to narrow the abyss that separated the mass and elite cultures at the turn of the twentieth century.'

<sup>475</sup> Bennett, *Anna of the Five Towns*, 56.

highlight the prevalence of *petit bourgeois* taste.<sup>476</sup> It is a term that can be related to Methodism and Methodists.

What is certain, and what the reading of these novels confirms, is that the people attending worship, or sewing for the bazaar, had widely varying motives and emotions. This is a crucial realisation and, if beyond the historical archive, the windows and mirrors offered by fiction can only serve to enhance understanding of what occurred on the Wolds and in the Black Country.

## Windows, Mirrors and Doors

### A Window onto the East Riding Wolds

These novels serve as a window into what was happening on the Yorkshire Wolds. The two purely urban texts imply that it was in the towns that everything Methodist was happening: sorties to the villages were limited to leisure.<sup>477</sup> At the time of *Adam Bede*, there were no chapels in Heyslope and Seth made his way to Treddlestone for Methodist activity.<sup>478</sup> By the mid-century publication of *Her Benny*, the village chapels had arrived, and yet, the focus was still on Liverpool.<sup>479</sup> There is symbolism here. Fewer Methodists in a village, fewer purchasers of fiction also. Continued need for rural Methodist to visit the nearby town for meetings and special events, more records preserved pertaining to urban happenings. Dinah's activity on the village green, coupled with the eventual strength of Methodism 'on the other side of the Mersey,' however, give indication that there is much to be teased out. The created window, frames or gives structure, to this study of rural Methodism. Firstly, it

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<sup>476</sup>Lowerson, "An Outbreak of Allodoxia?", 198. Allodoxia describes the middle-brow, *petit bourgeois* taste and its implications for Methodism are discussed in chapter four of this thesis.

<sup>477</sup> For a description of 'the treat' see Bennett, *Anna of the Five Towns*, 82-86. Also, Fowler, *The Farringdons*, 59-71.

<sup>478</sup> Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 477. 'Seth being often away the entire day.'

<sup>479</sup> Hocking, *Her Benny*, 119.

urges investigation into the use of space in the Wolds villages. This done, exploration of community development and identity formation are inevitable corollaries.

Dinah's eighteenth-century encounter with John Wesley is a plausible spatial happening.<sup>480</sup> He had commenced his outdoor preaching in April 1739, having 'heard Mr. Whitefield preach in fields.'<sup>481</sup> His first excursion to the East Riding took place on 25 April 1752, when he 'took a horse, and made it to Pocklington.'<sup>482</sup> On this occasion, he did 'not like...the devil's drunken companions' being, as they were, 'plentifully furnished with stones.'<sup>483</sup> A second visit to Pocklington occurred in July 1757. In the intervening years, roots had been established and he was able to lodge with a sympathiser. He still stood in the main street to deliver his message.<sup>484</sup>

Throughout the subsequent decades there were further, occasional, trips made by Wesley to the towns on the periphery of the Wolds. Certain points can be elicited. As in *Adam Bede*, he concentrated his efforts on the urban settings. He did not venture into the villages of the Wolds proper. As with Pocklington, his earliest dalliance with Bridlington was difficult.

...and in the evening preached in the town, to as stupid and ill-mannered a congregation as I have seen for many years.<sup>485</sup>

As the years went by, his visits were met with less opposition and there were trouble-free occasions in both Bridlington and Beverley, where the only issue was finding a suitable location to preach. By the penultimate decade of the century, it was no longer taken for

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<sup>480</sup> Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 25-26.

<sup>481</sup> John Wesley, *The Journal of the Rev John Wesley, A.M*, vol 1 (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1864), 174. George Whitefield (1714-1770) was an Anglican cleric and evangelist; one of the Methodist founders.

<sup>482</sup> John Wesley, *The Journal of the Rev John Wesley, A.M*, vol 2 (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1864), 247.

<sup>483</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>484</sup> *Ibid.*, 396. This was, of course, to disturb and not to celebrate.

<sup>485</sup> John Wesley, *The Journal of the Rev John Wesley, A.M*, vol 4 London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1864) 21.

granted that he would be preaching out-of-doors. In Beverley, 'the house, though greatly enlarged, was well filled with high and low, rich and poor.'<sup>486</sup>

By the time of Wesley's death, there were few physical reminders of Methodist presence on the East Yorkshire Wolds. *Her Benny* is an indication of what happened over the subsequent decades. It is in the village chapel at Scoutleigh that Benny is finally converted. The hymns sung during the service would have been familiar to all Methodists, wherever they were in the country. The same could be said of the theology espoused. The Sunday School functioned like those in urban settings.<sup>487</sup> A glimpse of what transpired on the Wolds is, therefore, given: by 1851 there were no fewer than eighty-five Wesleyan chapels and sixty-three Primitive places of worship.<sup>488</sup> This building programme highlights the profound effect of Methodism, both spatially and for individuals. So, Methodist communities could take root and identities could emerge.

*Adam Bede* speaks of the role of a squire and his family in rural affairs. This is in stark contrast to urban society. While the Methodists are a topic of conversation for the Donnithornes, there appears to be no animosity. All appears convivial.<sup>489</sup> Being mindful that Squire Donnithorne has not had to contend with any Methodist encroachment on his land, the link to the great land-owning families on the Wolds is made.<sup>490</sup>

### **Black Country Methodism Reflected**

These novels mirror what was being experienced in the towns of the Black Country. Hocking, Bennett and Fowler were, after all, well versed in Methodism and the vagaries of urban living. Bearing in mind the author's family background and its setting, Fowler's *The*

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<sup>486</sup> Ibid, 408.

<sup>487</sup> Hocking, *Her Benny*, 97.

<sup>488</sup> "Census of Great Britain, 1851. Religious Worship, England and Wales. Report and Tables, (compiled by Horace Mann). Printed by Eyre and Spottiswoods for H.M.S.O., 1853."

<sup>489</sup> Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 262.

<sup>490</sup> See, for example, John Fairfax-Blakeborough, *Sykes of Sledmere* (London: Philip Allan & Co. Ltd, 1939). See also Sykes Family Papers, DDSY/4-97, University of Hull. Also, Sykes Family Correspondence, DDSY/101-110, University of Hull.

*Farringdons* is the exemplar *par excellence*. The reader has sight of a Black Country with industrial prowess and a Methodism which was ubiquitous. Questions were clearly being asked about the relevance of religion when compared to art and science.<sup>491</sup> Fowler's credentials add the gravitas; the reflective qualities. Born in Wolverhampton, her books are set in the Black Country because this was the place she knew.<sup>492</sup> The novels are almost palpably autobiographical. Sedgehill is Sedgley and Silverhampton, Wolverhampton. The Osierfield Works of *The Farringdons* is described as 'the largest ironworks in Mershire in the good old days when Mershire made iron for half the world.'<sup>493</sup> Father and maternal grandfather were highly significant Wesleyan Methodists, and it is no coincidence that the Farringdons are described as 'the royal family of Sedgehill.'<sup>494</sup> That her own family formed something akin to a Black Country Methodist Monarchy, is given added credence by referring to the succeeding generations and the role of women.<sup>495</sup>

Fowler did not dwell on specific Methodist activities, but those mentioned were accurately portrayed. Her Sedgehill Sunday School Anniversary had the girls dressed in white frocks and blue neckerchiefs and the boys wore black suits and blue ties. The hymn sheets were strewn across the pews and the congregation was an audience: it did not participate. Time and time again, available Black Country records confirm this to be an authentic portrayal. There were yearly decisions to be made in relation to the number of posters and hymn sheets to be printed. Many Sunday Schools began by purchasing handkerchiefs for the children, which

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<sup>491</sup> Fowler, *The Farringdons*, 146. Reference is made to the symbolism of the Pillar of Cloud as depicted in Exodus 13:21 and in Elisabeth's artwork.

<sup>492</sup> See, for example, Ellen T. Fowler, *A Single Thread* (London: Hutchinson, 1899). Here, Lord and Lady Silverhampton are introduced from the outset.

<sup>493</sup> Fowler, *The Farringdons*, 6.

<sup>494</sup> *Ibid*, 6. Her father, Henry Fowler, is discussed in chapter four of this thesis. See Fowler, *The Life of Henry Hartley Fowler*. Her grandparents are discussed in chapter four of this thesis. It was her grandmother who was the more ardent Wesleyan Methodist and they attended chapel together. The children were brought up as Methodists. For details of the men and their business interests see: *Wolverhampton Chronicle*, 10<sup>th</sup> April 1851. In *Anna of the Five Towns*, the young Henry Mynors can eventually establish his own business because of the patronage of Titus Price, the revered factory owner, and Sunday School superintendent. A similar scenario existed in Wolverhampton with George Thorneycroft and Isaac Jenks which is outlined in chapter four of this thesis. See, Bennett, *Anna of the Five Towns*, 20.

<sup>495</sup> Again, this is discussed in chapter four but, for examples, see Darlington Street Church Missionary Committee Minutes 1867-1878, Wolverhampton Wesleyan Circuit, M-DS/2/6, Wolverhampton Archives.

were usually white and blue. Ties were then provided and, increasingly, rulings were made in relation to dresses and trousers.<sup>496</sup> Platforms were constantly being erected.<sup>497</sup>

Hocking and Bennett provide more examples of the Methodist use of space. There are the services, with detailed explanation as to seating arrangements, choir singing, organ playing and sermon giving.<sup>498</sup> There are the meetings, revivals, and bazaars. Then there is the use made of the outdoors; particularly focusing on the Sunday School outing. Nothing here is contradicted when reference is made to the events proper, and the historical archive is vast in relation to Black Country Methodism.<sup>499</sup>

All four novelists allude to Methodist theology and how it manifested itself in daily life and during the various acts of worship. In *The Farringdons* much is gleaned from the numerous conversations that the reader is privy to. The importance of sermons is emphasised, and they are dissected. Mrs. Hankey is troubled by her minister's desire to introduce the reading of the Ten Commandments into East Lane Chapel: 'it is the thin end of the wedge.'<sup>500</sup>

Meetings in Wolverhampton, attended by Fowler's own relatives, were debating the very same issues.<sup>501</sup>

Clearly, a relationship exists between fiction and fact. Metaphorical windows and mirrors aid explanation, but they possibly do not do total justice to the symbiotic relationship that exists between novels and the history being studied. Readers step into stories just as historians attempt to enter the past. Windows and mirrors allow people to look. Doors enable exploration. Reading the novels of Eliot, Bennett, Hocking and Fowler can encourage the historian along certain paths. *Cul-de-sacs* aside, these novels, as doors, help to confirm the pertinence of the chapters which follow. They demonstrate Methodist community, identity

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<sup>496</sup> Toll End Primitive Methodist Society Teachers and Leaders Meeting Minute Book 1861-1865, Primitive Methodism, NC38/2/1/2, Sandwell Archives.

<sup>497</sup> Ibid.

<sup>498</sup> Hocking, *Her Benny*, 29. Bennett, *Anna of the Five Towns*, 15.

<sup>499</sup> See, for example, Darlington Street Sunday School Committee Minutes 1900-1913, Wolverhampton Wesleyan Circuit, M-DS/2/10, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>500</sup> Fowler, *The Farringdons*, 131.

<sup>501</sup> This is discussed in chapter four. For examples, see Darlington Street Chapel Leaders' Meeting Minute Book 1856-1894, Wolverhampton Wesleyan Circuit, M-DS/2/4, Wolverhampton Archives."



and respectability while emphasising changes over time in relation to sacralisation and desacralisation.

## Chapter Two

### Methodism as Community

‘...built with an exuberance of faith and a deficiency of funds.’

*Scenes of Clerical Life*<sup>502</sup>

First and foremost, the four novelists were writing about community and the relationships therein. Methodism has a role within each novel, and within each community. Its importance *as* community then comes to dominate the pages. This concept of community is of interest to historians too, and yet the significance of these Methodist communities has not been fully explored. Certain theoretical considerations are outlined here before attention turns to Methodism on the East Yorkshire Wolds and throughout the Black Country. The link is made between use of space and the development of community so that the unique role of Methodism can be shown. With community confirmed, identity and respectability can then be discussed as they relate to individuals and groups. Subtle changes to these three concepts can be seen in the analytical context of sacralisation, desacralisation and secularisation.

Whatever the more recent complications related to advanced transportation and the advent of digital communications, nineteenth century communities were all about their geographical locations.<sup>503</sup> They related to the physically close-knit. While the concept has remained notoriously ill-defined, community could always be regarded, therefore, as a spatial construct.<sup>504</sup> This is given added credence by the attempts to clarify meaning. By studying the work of one hundred academics, Cobigo, Martin and Mcheimech identified seven core elements before suggesting that:

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<sup>502</sup> George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, originally published 1858), 78.

<sup>503</sup> David Matarrita-Cascante and Mark A. Brennan, “Conceptualizing Community Development in the Twenty-First Century,” *Community Development* 43 (2012): 295. For a discussion on the ‘post-place community’ see Ted K. Bradshaw, “The Post-Place Community: Contributions to the Debate About the Definition of Community,” *Community Development* 39 (2008): 5-16. Also, Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>504</sup> Nickie Charles and Graham Crow, “Community Re-Studies and Social Change,” *Sociological Review* 60, no. 3 (2012): 99.

a community is a group of people that interact and support each other, and are bounded by shared experiences or characteristics, a sense of belonging, and often by their physical proximity.<sup>505</sup>

This conclusion sits easily alongside the view of Ferdinand Tönnies who, for the nineteenth century, spoke simply of individuals with close social ties. It was Aristotle who wrote of community as a compound of parts having functions and interests in common. For him, communities needed to serve a purpose.<sup>506</sup>

These definitions point to the appropriateness of studying Methodism in its local context, as community. Its people did, after all, have a stated shared purpose: the worship of God.<sup>507</sup> Obelkevich's examination of nineteenth century South Lindsey preempts this because, from preface to conclusion, the role of religion in shaping society is acknowledged.<sup>508</sup> The intricacies of community, and any theories related to it are not, however, a preoccupation and neither, therefore, is the impact of Methodism itself as community fully explored. Similarly, Davidoff and Hall's *Family Fortunes* also speaks of 'the religious community' but without any specific concentration on either brand of Methodism.<sup>509</sup> Both studies act as catalyst, therefore, for further investigation into why and how Methodist affiliation mattered to individuals and groups.

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<sup>505</sup> Virginia Cobigo, Lynn Martin and Rawad Mcheimech, "Understanding Community," *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies* 5, no. 4 (2016): 192. The seven core elements identified are physical proximity, shared values, networks or group identity, the importance of exclusion as well as inclusion, interaction, a sense of belonging and support. A further six elements are also outlined. Bhattacharyya has summed up the development of community as 'the pursuit of solidarity and agency.' See Bhattacharyya, J. (2004) 'Theorizing Community Development', *Community Development*, 34, p14 and p.25.

<sup>506</sup> See Ferdinand Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (Leipzig: Fues's Verlag, 1887). Also, Nnaemeka I. Onwuatuegwu, "Concept of Community: Aristotle's Perspective," *International Journal of Research and Scientific Innovation* 7 (2020): 60. See also Fred D. Miller, *Nature, Justice and Rights in Aristotle's Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 27-31.

<sup>507</sup> In 1842, Wesleyan Methodists were referring to themselves as community. See Thomas Jackson, *An Answer to the Question, Why Are You a Wesleyan Methodist?* (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1842), 21. Linda Wilson speaks of Methodist chapel as community but without dwelling on the intricacies of community development. See Wilson, *Constrained by Zeal*, 11 & 178.

<sup>508</sup> Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society*, vii & 322

<sup>509</sup> Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002, originally published 1987), 100. The focus on Birmingham means that more is written about Quaker and Unitarian influence than might otherwise be expected. See xiii-xl & 36-69. For a critique of Davidoff and Hall see Eleanor Gordon and Gwyneth Nair, *Public Lives: Women, Family and Society in Victorian Britain* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2003), 1-3.

In more recent times, certain theoretical studies have explained community as an elastic process: something that must be managed and maintained to survive.<sup>510</sup> Others stress that community is not formed at a single point in time. Instead, it requires collective action and participation and can develop and become more sophisticated over time.<sup>511</sup> These latter subtleties are particularly pertinent because Methodist growth necessitated the introduction of complex organizational and administrative systems. There were also changes to the ways people interacted. By examining the development of Methodism over time, particularly focusing on its use of space, the impact on its people can be revealed.<sup>512</sup> Tangible space, use of the outdoors and indoors and its becoming place, can be looked at alongside the symbolic space connected to sacralisation and the individual's relationship to and with God.<sup>513</sup> Howard Chudacoff succinctly points out that studies of community 'show the importance of interactions between place and behaviour.'<sup>514</sup>

Those who examine the fundamental changes to the structure and make-up of communities over time inevitably focus on the process of urbanization. De Haan and Zoomers, for example, speak of the erosion of communal solidarity and the emergence of multilocal livelihoods and networks.<sup>515</sup> They also point to the possibility of engaging in rural and urban life simultaneously.<sup>516</sup> Study of nineteenth century Methodism is revealing on several levels, therefore. It can be regarded as one of the significant, if not the most significant, of these communities-within-communities. By existing in both village and town, and its organization straddling the two, it was potentially in a unique position to bridge traditional divides. It is

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<sup>510</sup> Lewis Goodings, Abigail Locke and Steven D. Brown, "Social Networking Technology: Place and Identity in Mediated Communities," *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology* 17 (2007): 463-476. Also, Erin D. McClellan, "Narrative as Vernacular Rhetoric: Understanding Community Among Transients, Tourists and Locals," *Storytelling, Self, Society* 7 (2011): 188-210. Patricia H. Collins, "The New Politics of Community," *American Sociological Review* 75, no. 1 (2009): 7-30. Julie A. Pooley, Lynne Cohen and Lisbeth Pike, "Can Sense of Community Inform Social Capital?," *The Social Science Journal* 42 (2005): 71-79.

<sup>511</sup> Ibid. Also Peter P. Nieckarz, "Community in Cyber Space?: The Role of the Internet in Facilitating and Maintaining a Community of Live Music Collecting and Trading," *City and Community* 4, no. 4 (2005): 403-423.

<sup>512</sup> For a definition of society as a more abstract association of individuals who do not necessarily share feelings, space and time, see Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*.

<sup>513</sup> Virginie Cobigo stresses the need to remember that community is, at its core, a personal experience of belonging to a group. See Cobigo, Martin, and Mcheimech, "Understanding community," 194.

<sup>514</sup> Howard Chudacoff, "Integrating Working-Class History," *Reviews in American History* 7, December (1979): 535-541.

<sup>515</sup> Leo J. de Haan and Annelies Zoomers, "Development Geography at the Crossroads of Livelihood and Globalization," *Journal of Economic and Social Geography* 94 (2003): 351.

<sup>516</sup> Ibid, 358.

important to gauge whether the Wesleyan and Primitive Methodist experience was inherently similar or markedly different.

Meaning can be assigned to what might seem to be vagaries related to space usage. Historians, geographers, and sociologists have certainly started to grapple with the implications of using outdoor space for religious purposes. Croll's work related to South Wales, can be cited along with the studies of Cornwall by Harvey, Brace and Nichol. Peter Yalden's work concerns itself with both of these areas.<sup>517</sup> Others, and especially Jeanne Halgren Kilde, have examined the architectural implications of internal religious spaces.<sup>518</sup> What no one has done is to focus on the relationship between the two, and yet, it is this which is both dynamic and revealing in relation to community development. Suggested here is the idea that, for Methodism, it was the movement from outside to inside which sealed community formation. The happenings within chapels, along with the richness of the Methodist experience occasioned by the class and cottage meeting, moulded the communities while their re-emergence into the open-air provided a statement in relation to what they had become. By turning from the outside in, Methodism was turning itself inside-out. There were definite repercussions because of the changed approach and the move towards the comfortable. For example, this chapter will explore issues related to insularity along with thoughts concerning the importance of the things theological. By so doing it will bring cohesion to the range of theoretical considerations. For example, Methodism's elastic and increasingly sophisticated community can be directly related to Demerath's sacralisation and the nuances related to desacralisation.<sup>519</sup>

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<sup>517</sup> Andy Croll, *Civilizing the Urban: Popular Culture and Public Space in Merthyr c1870-1914* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000). Peter Yalden, "Association, Community and the Origins of Secularisation: English and Welsh Nonconformity, c1850-1930," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 55, no. 2 (2004): 293-324. David C. Harvey, Catherine Brace and Adrian R. Bailey, "Parading the Cornish Subject: Methodist Sunday Schools in West Cornwall, c1830-1930," *Journal of Historical Geography* 33, no. 1 (2007) 24. David C. Harvey, Catherine Brace and Adrian R. Bailey, "Religion, Place and Space: a Framework for Investigating Historical Geographies of Religious Identities and Communities," *Progress in Human Geography* 30, no. 1 (2006): 28-43. For a sociological view see Paul Chambers, *Religion, Secularization and Social Change in Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005).

<sup>518</sup> Jeanne H. Kilde, *When Church Became Theatre: the Transformation of Evangelical Architecture and Worship in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>519</sup> Beckford and Demerath, *The SAGE Handbook*, 57.

## Creating Community

### Sacralisation of First and Second Space

John Wesley's understanding of the significance of space is exemplified by his visits to the Black Country and the East Riding Wolds. Indeed, with space turned into place because people could meet with God, sacralisation is clearly underway.<sup>520</sup> This immediately enables the views of Mircea Eliade and Jonathan Smith to co-exist: the substantive indwelling of the supernatural only becoming possible because of the situational role of the preacher.<sup>521</sup>

During Wesley's lifetime, Methodist communities were certainly developing. However, he was transitory, so were the other preachers, and the societies were fledgling. While it is true that people were identifying themselves, and being identified as Methodists, they were still being met with hostility and violence so that any positive concomitants were few and far between. His use of outdoor space, although crucial to Methodist development, could be seen to be encouraging social instability rather than fostering unity. The response from onlookers might be interpreted as the reaction of established community against that which was striving to set down roots. The most notorious series of events from throughout his entire ministry took place in the Black Country town of Wednesbury. On one occasion the mob '...was ready to swallow the ground with rage.'<sup>522</sup> Neither did Wesley escape issues on his visits to the Wolds. Standing in the main street of Pocklington in July 1757, he was not only confronted by a large mob but also by the ringing of the church bells by men paid by the church warden to do so.<sup>523</sup> Being a Methodist was clearly not for the faint-hearted. An immediate consequence might involve being pelted with stones. Trouble with the law or their employment might follow.<sup>524</sup> Cohesive they were not, and Methodism as settled community with its routines and general acceptance was something for the future. However, outdoor activity and indoor services with sermons and singing were pointing towards

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<sup>520</sup> Beckford and Demerath III, *The SAGE Handbook of the Sociology or Religion*, 57.

<sup>521</sup> Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*. Smith, *To Take Place*.

<sup>522</sup> Wesley, *The Journal of the Rev John Wesley* vols I-IV. Mobs from Darlaston and Walsall took the opportunity to 'drag him by the hair.' Ibid, vol I, 411.

<sup>523</sup> Ibid, vol II, 396.

<sup>524</sup> Ibid, vol I, 414.

Methodist community as something desirable. Sacralisation, at this stage, was the key to this community formation and example can be provided related to the East Riding Wolds.

In this phase where Methodist communities were developing, outdoor space was clearly utilised to great effect.<sup>525</sup> Obituaries from early in the nineteenth century demonstrate this to be the case. Tabitha Chapman, a Wolds woman who died in 1830, was able to be 'triumphant in death' because:

Upwards of sixty years ago she obtained a knowledge of the plan of salvation by faith in Christ under a sermon preached by Mr. Wesley in the city of York.<sup>526</sup>

The ninety-two-year-old John Ardington, from the village of Goodmanham, had heard Wesley preach at Beverley and this led to him being 'faithful and affectionate' to the cause.<sup>527</sup> Those not fortunate enough to have heard Wesley himself included Amos Street. He remained a Wesleyan Methodist until his death in 1837 and he had his 'first awakenings occasioned by a sermon at Birdsall in the open-air.'<sup>528</sup> This was typical, and Thomas Lamplough was:

...often heard to say that he could point out the place in a field where the Lord set his soul at liberty from the guilt and power of sin.<sup>529</sup>

These preachers were urging communion with like-minded souls and once back on their horses, there was the need for converts to meet. The Methodist leader understood this although Frank Baker points out that there was no initial plan and Wesley only introduced the local societies 'as expedients.'<sup>530</sup> These societies, which came to be so crucial to Methodist organization, were grouped into circuits and, as they grew in size, chapels became

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<sup>525</sup> *Yorkshireman's News*, October 25, 1868. The use of tents in the villages near to Market Weighton at the end of the eighteenth century is recorded.

<sup>526</sup> *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, July 1830, 509.

<sup>527</sup> *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, April 1836, 316.

<sup>528</sup> *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, December 1837, 953.

<sup>529</sup> *Ibid*, June 1835, 494.

<sup>530</sup> Frank Baker, "The People Called Methodists-3. Polity," in *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain* Vol 1, eds. Rupert Davies and Gordon Rupp (London: Epworth Press 1965), 213.

their dominant space and place.<sup>531</sup> Initially, however, these developing communities gathered together in homes and hired buildings.<sup>532</sup>

Use of dwellings by Methodism in the eighteenth century is shown by referring to their cottage meetings and it is Deborah Valenze who points to the link between the sacred and the ordinary in this particular use of space:

By elevating domestic space, cottage evangelicals found a way of combatting physical and economic hardship while sanctifying their struggle to survive.<sup>533</sup>

With this merging of religion, family and society there are certain points to be emphasised. There was an elevated role for women in the sacralisation of their homes. They could be responsible for inviting the evangelists inside. They too could be the evangelists in the security of the domestic setting and this might entrain them for proselytizing activity outside the home.<sup>534</sup> Then, with what Valenze calls the 'new civilizing impulse' of Wesleyanism there was the central role of these cottage meetings in the sectarianism which emerged at the opening of the nineteenth century.<sup>535</sup> Within Primitive Methodism there were roles for women in evangelism for longer. Valenze writes of the conflict between the chapel and the cottage and, therefore, there may be a spatial explanation for the eventual decline in importance of the domus to both Wesleyan and Primitive Methodism and also to the narrowing of roles for women.<sup>536</sup>

Fellowship was clearly nurtured in the home, but it is the importance of the class meeting in particular which needs to be fully appreciated in relation to the development of community and the sacralisation of the domestic setting.<sup>537</sup> Each class consisted of a relatively small number of people, and it met weekly. Wesley himself was firmly of the opinion that

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<sup>531</sup> Ibid, 215.

<sup>532</sup> For the use made of domestic settings during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries see obituaries published in the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* and the *Primitive Methodist Magazine*.

<sup>533</sup> Deborah Valenze, *Prophetic Sons and Daughters: Female Preaching and Popular Religion in Industrial England* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985), 28.

<sup>534</sup> Ibid, 51-52.

<sup>535</sup> Ibid, 74.

<sup>536</sup> Ibid, 74.

<sup>537</sup> David Bebbington, "The Evangelical Quadrilateral: A Response," *Fides et Historia* 47 (2015), 87-96. <https://dspace.stir.ac.uk/bitstream/1893/22422/1/Evangelical%20Quadrilateral%20-%20A%20Response.pdf>. Bebbington makes the very strong link between the Methodist class meeting and the nurturing of fellowship.



attendance was not optional and tickets of membership were issued at these gatherings from the 1840s.<sup>538</sup> In essence the meetings were the essential referent for early Methodist commitment with participants being accountable to one another.<sup>539</sup> Members were, quite literally, encouraged to bare their souls. David Lowes Watson makes the link between the happenings in the class meeting and the theology of Methodism.<sup>540</sup> He highlights the consonance of the Wesleyan doctrines of justification and sanctification with the interpersonal relationships encountered.<sup>541</sup> Andrew Goodhead calls the class meeting the 'crown of Methodism' and its central feature.<sup>542</sup> For him the fellowship was joined by conversion and discipleship, financial accountability and discipline. It was this particular combination of reasons to meet which enables him to examine the link between class attendance and identity formation.<sup>543</sup> An enhanced sense of affection between members could be encouraged by the format of the meetings.<sup>544</sup> There was a certain intimacy.<sup>545</sup> These historians emphasise the importance of the class meeting in relation to small group dynamics. For example, a sense of security, commitment and belongingness was nurtured and, because of this, the links to community are clear.<sup>546</sup> Both also point to inevitable developments. For Watson the *communitas* of the class meeting was bound to relinquish something of its hold once further structures were put in place.<sup>547</sup> Goodhead is even bolder in his assertion that the class meeting was becoming outdated prior to Wesley's death.<sup>548</sup> In relation to the class meeting and its role in the formation of community, however, certain points should be stressed. There were the benefits of meeting in a small group setting but its success meant commitment and commitment led to the growth of Methodism. It encouraged the development of the larger gatherings which necessitated the finding or construction of additional accommodation. Class meetings were, in effect, intimate

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<sup>538</sup> Baker, "The People Called Methodists", 223. David Lowes Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting: Its Origins and Significance* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 1985).

<sup>539</sup> Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting*, 2.

<sup>540</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>541</sup> *Ibid.*, ix and 129.

<sup>542</sup> Andrew Goodhead, *A Crown and a Cross: The Rise, Development and Decline of the Methodist Class Meeting in Eighteenth Century England* (Eugene, Oregon: WIPF and Stock, 2010), 166 and 180.

<sup>543</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

<sup>544</sup> Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting*, 94.

<sup>545</sup> Goodhead, *A Crown and a Cross*, 166.

<sup>546</sup> Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting*, 129.

<sup>547</sup> *Ibid.*, 127-128.

<sup>548</sup> Goodhead, *A Crown and a Cross*, 166.

communities within Methodist communities which were, in turn, within the wider communities of town and village. Class meetings undeniably did also remain a feature of Methodism throughout the nineteenth century whatever Goodhead asserts.<sup>549</sup>

Thomas Marshall, from the village of Sancton, had been ‘brought up in utter ignorance of evangelical religion’ and was the companion of drunkards. All apparently changed for him when he ‘finally attended a [Wesleyan] cottage meeting in his native village.’<sup>550</sup> The domestic setting was so very important. Cottages, farm kitchens and barns were used for services and other spaces were appropriated. During Wesley’s lifetime specially designed preaching houses were built but they were relatively few in number during the eighteenth century. By 1760 there were only forty with around four hundred by the end of the century. His description of them as Preaching Houses is important. It refers to the domestic while indicating his insistence that the parish church should be attended for full sacramental worship.<sup>551</sup> In the village of Kilham, throughout the 1780s, the preaching took place in an old barn, and it was here that Thomas Sowersby experienced his conversion.<sup>552</sup> Kilham’s first chapel was sanctioned before the turn of the century and Sowersby helped to build it.<sup>553</sup> Thomas Marshall found it ‘became an easy thing for him to go again’ once he was able to attend a Wesleyan chapel.<sup>554</sup> The link between this creation of permanency and the burgeoning of community can be summed up with reference to James Seller from the village of Norton. He had introduced Methodism ‘by street and cottage preaching’ but the Reverend Daniel Jackson felt society was formed because James:

...lived to see the erection of a chapel not far from his own dwelling;  
and, having worshipped a few times in that beautiful little sanctuary,  
renewing his strength, and increasing his joy, he went to worship in  
the upper temple, to go out no more for ever.<sup>555</sup>

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<sup>549</sup> Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting*, 129. Goodhead, *A Crown and a Cross*, 180. For example, the following are emphasised: sense of security, commitment, belongingness, participation, affection, feelings and emotions, self-assurance and self-perception.

<sup>550</sup> *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, February 1839, 151.

<sup>551</sup> Baker, “The People Called Methodists”, 228.

<sup>552</sup> *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, May 1836, 391.

<sup>553</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>554</sup> *Ibid.*, February 1839, 151.

<sup>555</sup> *Ibid.*, November 1858, 1054.

Wesleyan Methodism did make use of the outdoors throughout the nineteenth century for proselytising purposes, but it came to be a relatively rare occurrence. Not a single Wesleyan Quarterly Plan from 1824 onwards made mention of preaching in the open-air.<sup>556</sup> On the Wolds and in the Black Country, as the decades passed, it becomes clear that there was no enthusiasm for it, and this was perceived to be a national issue. In an essay of 1849, entitled “Remarks on Wesleyan Methodism,” the need for an aggressive form of evangelism was commented upon and open-air preaching was specifically called for.<sup>557</sup>

We wish it to be distinctly understood that we are pleading for the aggressive, and not for what may be designated the attractive, principle: the attractive principle is simply this, erecting a chapel, securing some popular minister to attract all the sermon-hunters from every quarter of the town, drawing hearers from other places of worship, without even increasing the number of church goers, or making the least inroad upon the ungodly masses of the immediate neighbourhood.<sup>558</sup>

Comprehending the problem was not the same as dealing with it.

In March 1855, the Scarborough Wesleyan local preachers did decree that there should be outdoor services in the village of Sherburn and at ‘suitable localities in the town.’<sup>559</sup> This, however, was the only such entry in their minute books which, commencing in 1843, spanned a period of fifty years.<sup>560</sup> In other circuits, those who mentioned outdoor services were usually thinking of them as a source of financial gain or as a response to specific difficulties. For the Pocklington Wesleyans, it was a special occasion when, in August 1875, a Mr Pawson’s offer to conduct open air services was accepted as long as he was prepared to

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<sup>556</sup> See, for example, Beverley Wesleyan Circuit Preachers’ Plans, 1824-1900, Beverley Wesleyan Circuit, MRB/1/19, East Riding Archives.

<sup>557</sup> *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, January 1849, 72-81. ‘Let our motto be, “aggression, aggression, aggression.”’ 81.

<sup>558</sup> *Ibid*, 76.

<sup>559</sup> “Scarborough Wesleyan Methodist Circuit Local Preachers’ Meeting Minute Book 1843-1874, 26 March 1855, Scarborough Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, R/M/Sc/1/1/9, North Yorkshire Record Office. The population of Sherburn in 1851 was 656.

<sup>560</sup> *Ibid*. Also Scarborough Wesleyan Methodist Circuit Local Preachers’ Meeting Minute Book 1874-1893, Scarborough Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, R/M/Sc/1/1/10, North Yorkshire Record Office.

preach in the chapel afterwards.<sup>561</sup> When, in 1878, the Market Weighton Wesleyans were bemoaning 'the state of the work of God in the circuit' they decided 'that something ought to be done either in open-air preaching or house-to-house visitation.'<sup>562</sup> This rather indicates that both methods were seen as unusual steps to take. It was agreed to hold a meeting to discuss the subject but three months later, it had not been convened and there is no evidence to suggest that either method was finally adopted.<sup>563</sup> By 1880 there were still concerns as to the 'state of the circuit' but the possible solutions at this time made no further mention of the outdoors.<sup>564</sup> The Beverley circuit local preachers said nothing of such services until deciding in April 1880, that a committee might be:

formed to communicate with friends at the different places for the purpose of fixing dates for open-air services.<sup>565</sup>

This could be regarded as a whim as the group did not appear to meet beyond this year. The changing use of the outdoors can be summed up by the Beverley Wesleyan circuit's arrangements to hold 'Open-Air Services' some ten years later, in the summer of 1890. There was certainly nothing spontaneous about the printing of large notices and small bills. In the July of this year, the village of Cherry Burton was to have open-air preaching at 2.30pm and 5.30pm with a Love-Feast to follow. The same arrangements were made for the following week in the town of Beverley itself.<sup>566</sup> Love-feasts were reserved for those already committed to the Wesleyan cause and it becomes clear that similar arrangements for preaching outdoors in 1891 and 1892 were being made specifically to raise funds for a larger chapel in the town.<sup>567</sup> There is a touch of irony connected to the cancelling of certain

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<sup>561</sup> Pocklington Wesleyan Methodist Circuit Minute Book of Leaders' Meetings 1867-1885, 3 August 1875, Pocklington Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, MRP/2/4, East Riding Record Office.

<sup>562</sup> "Market Weighton Wesleyan Circuit Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1876-1880, 24 June 1878, Market Weighton Wesleyan Circuit, MRM/1/1, East Riding Record Office.

<sup>563</sup> Ibid, see entries for 24 June and 23 December 1878. In June 1873 the Driffield Wesleyan Methodist Circuit was also discussing the 'state of the work of God' and although outdoor preaching was mentioned it did not form part of their solution. See Driffield Wesleyan Methodist Circuit Minutes of Quarterly Meetings 1870-1880, 27 June 1873, Driffield Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, MRD/1/2/2, East Riding Record Office.

<sup>564</sup> Ibid. See entry for 27 September 1880. This time the solutions included cottage prayer meetings and special services in the chapel.

<sup>565</sup> Beverley Wesleyan Circuit Local Preachers' Minute Book 1868-1880, 5 April 1880, Beverley Wesleyan Circuit, MRB/1/122, East Riding Record Office.

<sup>566</sup> Beverley Wesleyan Circuit Preachers' Plans, 1824-1900, East Riding Archives.

<sup>567</sup> Ibid.

Wesleyan activities in the Driffield circuit, 'due to the holding of the Primitive Methodist Camp Meeting.'<sup>568</sup>

Black Country Wesleyanism told a similar story. The main towns had chapels built by the 1820s and from then on little attention was given to the use of the outdoors.<sup>569</sup> Indeed, there was a hiatus which lasted well into the 1850s. That there was a certain disdain for this type of evangelism is demonstrated by one of the few references made to such preaching. In 1859, the Wolverhampton local preachers were considering whether to:

offer their services to assist in efforts to evangelize the lowest strata of the dense population of the town by helping to conduct open-air services.<sup>570</sup>

To reach these people, a Wesleyan Local Home Mission was established, but the very first action was, 'to erect a large wooden shed on the Bilston Road.'<sup>571</sup> Referring to missionary work a little later in the century, the use of a certain vocabulary is of interest. With more than one meaning there was interest shown in the number of people who had been 'brought in' by the special efforts; all of which had, in fact, taken place indoors.<sup>572</sup> They were, presumably, being brought into community. It was during the late 1860s and 1870s that some of the Wesleyan circuits in the Black Country began to report concerns about membership, finances, and commitment.<sup>573</sup> In 1868, for example, the local preachers in Bilston recorded 'a desultory conversation...respecting the state of the circuit.' The recommendation was 'the holding of outdoor services in connection with every chapel in the circuit during the summer months.'<sup>574</sup> Evidently, in Bilston anyway, a link was made

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<sup>568</sup> Driffield Wesleyan Methodist Circuit Sunday School Union Book 1853-1856, 6 July 1856, Driffield Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, MRD/1/2/13, East Riding Record Office.

<sup>569</sup> For example, the first iteration of Wolverhampton's Darlington Street chapel was opened on 26 August 1825. See original handbill for the opening celebrations in Darlington Street Chapel, Material Relating to the Opening of the New Church 1901, Wolverhampton Wesleyan Methodist, M-DS/6/1/6, Wolverhampton Archives. The first Bilston Wesleyan chapel had been established in 1794 on land given by Miss Loxdale, an early convert. See Bilston Wesleyan Circuit Minutes of Quarterly Meetings 1896-1912, Bilston Wesleyan Methodist, MC-BW/1/2, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>570</sup> Wolverhampton Wesleyan Circuit, Darlington Street Chapel Miscellaneous Items, Engraved Sheet Placed in Bottle and Deposited in Memorial Stone, Wolverhampton Wesleyan Methodist, M/BR/7, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>571</sup> Ibid.

<sup>572</sup> Darlington Street Leaders' Meeting Minute Book 1856-1894, 9 March 1874, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>573</sup> Ibid, 21 September 1874.

<sup>574</sup> Bilston Wesleyan Methodist Circuit Local Preachers' Meeting Minutes 1864-1909, 29 June 1868, Bilston Wesleyan Methodist, MC-BW/4/1, Wolverhampton Archives.

between revival and the use of outdoor space. Two years later, in the June of 1870, it had changed from the desultory to:

an interesting conversation on open-air preaching and it was agreed that the brethren should use every available opportunity for such exercises.<sup>575</sup>

Awareness of the need to act in order to enhance community is again emphasised by the same local preachers. In 1871 they:

resolved that during the summer months the evening preacher of each chapel shall take with him two brethren. One to preach in the open-air at five o'clock and the other at eight o'clock (weather permitting).<sup>576</sup>

In this area of the Black Country, this very limited use of open-air preaching did continue into the 1880s and 1890s. Decisions to hold these services were almost always made because of worried conversations about 'the work of God in this circuit.'<sup>577</sup> Sacralisation of outdoor spaces was seen as the solution and there were often reports of them being 'well attended and very encouraging.'<sup>578</sup> Although this was the case, a lack of Wesleyan enthusiasm can be detected. The already gathered-together members of the Hurst Hill chapel community were, in 1888, having to be 'earnestly requested as the friends on the spot to co-operate.'<sup>579</sup> They were clearly content with the happenings inside the building, and it was presumably because of this that the local preachers were giving extra thought to requesting the assistance of the Ettingshall and Stonefield Mission Band only one year later.<sup>580</sup> Through to the end of the century, the Wesleyans did not hold outdoor preaching spontaneously or as a matter of course. Only ever arranged for the summer months, it was often left for individual chapels to decide whether to hold them and they usually declined. Even though proselytising in the open-air was thought to be advantageous, there was a reticence demonstrated by the already established Wesleyan communities. In the final years of the

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<sup>575</sup> Ibid, 27 June 1870.

<sup>576</sup> Ibid, 26 June 1871.

<sup>577</sup> Ibid, 25 June 1883.

<sup>578</sup> Ibid. See, for example, entry for 24 September 1883.

<sup>579</sup> Ibid, 25 June 1888.

<sup>580</sup> Ibid, 24 June 1889.

nineteenth century, those who recognised the need began to remove the responsibility from the communities themselves: evangelists were employed and, in 1900, it was 'thought advisable to have the Gospel Car for two months in the early part of the year.'<sup>581</sup> Those Wesleyans who were brought to God after the first decade of the nineteenth century were unlikely to have outdoor conversions mentioned in their obituaries.<sup>582</sup>

This scenario fits well with the thinking related to why there were secessions from the Wesleyan parent body in the first decades of the nineteenth century. For the Black Country and the East Riding Wolds, it was Primitive Methodism which was of significance, although the Methodist New Connexion did provide added choice in the urban setting.<sup>583</sup> Wesley himself had concentrated on the newer urban areas and these Primitive Methodists came to be particularly associated with agricultural communities.<sup>584</sup> It was distrust of the changes being made from the time of Wesley's death which saw the Primitive Methodists specifically renewing the focus on preaching in the open air. Borrowed from American evangelists, the Camp Meeting was adopted as their *modus operandi*. Indeed, in their earliest days, they were known as the Camp Meeting Methodists.<sup>585</sup> Religion as spectacle was being retained with the setting up of preaching platforms, erection of tents and arrival of teams of evangelists. These camp meetings served as a reminder of what Methodism was fundamentally about and, for a time, they demonstrated a sharp contrast between the two main Methodist bodies. The one already had community, the other needed to create it. There was nothing hidden about these events. If Primitive Methodism was carrying out a mopping-up exercise throughout the country, it certainly met with initial success and the link between the use of the outdoors for evangelistic purpose and the growth of the movement

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<sup>581</sup> Ibid. See entries for 24 June 1895 and 18 June 1900.

<sup>582</sup> See *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* from 1850 to 1900. Henry Anderson of Kilham was born in 1766. He was 'brought the glad tidings of salvation' by a sermon delivered in the open-air and he 'almost immediately felt it to be his duty to go to the surrounding hamlets to call sinners to repentance.' See *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, June 1847, 521. His was the last Wesleyan obituary for the Wolds to mention an outdoor conversion experience.

<sup>583</sup> Eric Hobsbawm's essay "Methodism and the Threat of Revolution in Britain" sums up the Primitive Methodists as 'the most serious of the seceders.' See Hobsbawm, E. (1979) *Labouring Men*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson (originally published 1964), 26.

<sup>584</sup> John Kent, "The Wesleyan Methodists to 1849," in *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, vol II, eds. Rupert Davies, A. Raymond George and Gordon Rupp (London, Epworth Press, 1978), 214.

<sup>585</sup> Abraham, *Methodism*, 73.

is certain. The agricultural labourers who were being converted because of these Primitive Methodist camp meetings were about to affect their identities.

The Primitive Methodist desire for simplicity and original fervour was initially well served by this use of the outdoors. It was crucial to the forming of community, and this can be seen with reference to the Black Country.<sup>586</sup> By the 1820s, the Wesleyans already had some chapels here: communities already formed.<sup>587</sup> The Primitive Methodists were working hard to establish themselves and were initially co-ordinated into one extensive circuit with Darlaston as its beating heart. Arrangements were made here for all that went on from Walsall to Wolverhampton, West Bromwich to Willenhall, and from Stourbridge to Dudley. Birmingham, too, was under its auspices.<sup>588</sup> This was far too wide an area for feelings of intimacy to be engendered. Arrangements appeared to be somewhat *ad hoc* and, while this was the case, use of the outdoors featured. Camp meetings were planned at short notice throughout the area. Energies were diverted towards them: they were the priority for the time being. The Tipton Camp Meeting, held on the first Sunday in the June of 1826, was important enough for the decision to be that 'the whole circuit [is] to attend.'<sup>589</sup> The Lye Waste Camp Meeting, which was arranged for a Sunday in August 1826, was not untypical. As the name suggests, any patch of land could be deemed suitable for the propagation of the gospel. Ten men assisted the superintendent minister and it was decreed that, 'all places within three miles of camp meetings are to give up preaching.'<sup>590</sup> These places were largely hired rooms or domestic dwellings and, although they provided somewhere for likeminded people to gather, they were not able to create the same feelings of belonging and

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<sup>586</sup> With Wesleyan Methodism already established, Primitive Methodism inevitably had some catching up to do. As mentioned, Primitive Methodism tended to focus initially on the more rural areas such as the East Riding Wolds.

<sup>587</sup> Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit, Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1824-1832, Primitive Methodism, 42/1/1, Walsall Archives.

<sup>588</sup> Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1824-1832, Primitive Methodism, 42/1/1, Walsall Archives.

<sup>589</sup> Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1824-1832, 20 March 1826, Walsall Archives.

<sup>590</sup> Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit, Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1824-1832, 6 July 1826, Walsall Archives. Lye Waste: a dump for strongly alkaline cleaning fluid residue. The Camp Meeting held at Birmingham on Sunday 26 September 1824, had only needed eight people to assist. See entry for Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit, Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1824-1832, 22 September 1824, Walsall Archives.



commitment engendered by entry into chapels.<sup>591</sup> Samuel Bowen, the minister, lived in Darlaston but he was truly peripatetic. Within a matter of months his required presence at camp meetings meant that he had travelled well over one hundred miles.<sup>592</sup> The society formed at Darlaston was having to do without its leader while he travelled to outdoor gatherings held elsewhere.

The desire for converts meant that, at this time, other opportunities were seized to utilise outdoor space. In May 1827 the Quarterly Meeting of the Darlaston circuit was stating categorically:

That if the leaders and stewards of any place in this circuit request the preacher pland [sic] to them to preach out of doors and he refuses, censure shall be pass'd [sic] according to rule.<sup>593</sup>

It was regularly decreed for the various towns throughout the Black Country 'that theair [sic] be Preaching in the Open Air.'<sup>594</sup> Bilston's outdoor services, for example, were held at ten o'clock on Sunday mornings.<sup>595</sup>

The pre-community status of Primitive Methodism throughout the Black Country during the 1820s is emphasised by referring to the need for missionaries who were sent forth from Darlaston into the surrounding towns.<sup>596</sup> It is intriguing that the committee established to oversee their work was having to decide in July 1826, 'that a missionary cannot possibly be sent to Birmingham at present.'<sup>597</sup> Trials and tribulations were still being reported; so much so that hand bills were to be printed and 'a reward ...offered to any person who shall impeach on the persons who have persecuted our society.'<sup>598</sup> Towards the end of the decade, and even in Darlaston, the preaching was still taking place in rooms which were

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<sup>591</sup> Obituaries of Wesleyan and Primitive Methodists throughout the nineteenth century repeatedly mention love of, and commitment to, chapels. Use is constantly made of possessive adjectives. This is not the case when mention is made of worship in domestic or hired settings. See *Primitive Methodist Magazine* and *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*.

<sup>592</sup> Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1824-1832, 31 May 1827 and 4 July 1827, Walsall Archives.

<sup>593</sup> Ibid, 31 May 1827.

<sup>594</sup> Ibid, 23 June 1828.

<sup>595</sup> Ibid.

<sup>596</sup> Ibid, 26 June 1826.

<sup>597</sup> Ibid, 6 July 1826.

<sup>598</sup> Ibid, 5 April 1827.

hired for the purpose.<sup>599</sup> In 1827, Wolverhampton's Sunday service was held in a house and the fluctuating fortunes of the Birmingham congregation are shown by the reported reopening of its room in the October of the following year, 'after a worrying period of decline.'<sup>600</sup> Stourbridge at this time was also having its preaching curtailed and this emphasises the transient nature of so much that was taking place. Each month there would be outdoor sermons or new preaching rooms allocated throughout the region. A week or so later and these places were often being closed and yet more new venues attempted.

That Stourbridge go off the plan. Deepdale Bank go off the plan. That Lower Lye go off the plan...That the preaching be removed from Thorns. That Pensnatt [sic] go on the plan at six o'clock. That the Workhouse Lane in Tipton have preaching once a fortnight on the weeknight.<sup>601</sup>

The differences between the Wesleyan and Primitive Methodists at this time can be explained in spatial terms related to community development. With Wesleyan societies already formed, the focus was on activities within the chapels: activities for the community. The Primitive Methodists attempted to remain true to their original calling but, as soon as roots were established, it was evidently impossible for them too to resist the shift in focus to the building of chapels. They did, however, certainly retain more of an interest *en plein air*. Early in 1827 the decision was made to build a chapel and, by the November, they finally felt able to have:

a collection for [a] chappel [sic] at Darlaston. One thousand hand bills printed and distributed threw [sic] the town. There shall be a collection every Sunday night in the room at Darlaston.<sup>602</sup>

The opening services took place in March 1828.<sup>603</sup> During the late 1820s, other chapels were built, and mention can be made, for example, of those at Cradley Forge and Dudley, Bilston

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<sup>599</sup> Ibid, 1 November 1827.

<sup>600</sup> Ibid, 24 December 1827 and 2 October 1828.

<sup>601</sup> Ibid, 23 June 1828. Pensnett is the area referred to here. It was only three months later that the decision to remove preaching from Workhouse Lane was taken. See entry for 22 September 1828.

<sup>602</sup> Ibid, 1 November 1827. It was in December 1825 that a committee had been formed to 'search out ground for a chapel to be erected in Darlaston.' See entry for 18 December 1825.

<sup>603</sup> Ibid, 12 February 1828.

and Pensnett. The chapel at Sodom had been built by December 1829.<sup>604</sup> Having held regular camp meetings at Lye Waste throughout the decade, it was not until 1830 that, ‘beging [sic] for Lye Waste Chapel’ was being thought of as a possibility.<sup>605</sup> Primitive Methodism in the Black Country was on the cusp of community formation. It was, however, over the coming decades that chapels were built in earnest with all the attendant repercussions.

Although this replicated the Wesleyan experience, albeit with a delay amounting to decades, it is also the case that Primitive Methodism did retain its interest in using the outdoors throughout the remainder of the century. From the 1830s, with Wesleyan Methodism behind doors, sacralisation of the outdoors was safer in its hands. Camp meetings remained a constant feature and this was particularly true of the situation on the Yorkshire Wolds. Yearly reports, which were completed by each circuit and returned to headquarters, always asked whether ‘proper attention [had] been paid to the Camp Meeting regulations.’<sup>606</sup> All answers for the Filey circuit, for example, were in the affirmative. Their importance to Primitive Methodism generally is demonstrated by the advertisement distributed to the members and adherents attached to the thirty-eight chapels and preaching places in the Driffield circuit in 1859:

A Book for the Season – JUBILEE OF THE ENGLISH CAMP MEETINGS,  
by W. Garner. Cloth 1s, Gilt 1s 4d. “Your Jubilee ought to be read by  
every person wishful to be thoroughly versed in the rise and progress  
of our Connexion.”<sup>607</sup>

The same scenario repeated itself throughout the Wolds. In the 1830s, 1840s and 1850s, there were camp meetings in the towns and in village after village. They were seen as a crucial strategy in the securing of ‘improvement.’<sup>608</sup> When Pocklington and Market Weighton’s were being planned in 1839 and 1840, the same people were arranging ‘that

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<sup>604</sup> Ibid, 1 January 1829, 23 1829, and 3 December 1829. At this time Sodom was a hamlet on the edge of Walsall.

<sup>605</sup> Ibid. 20 September 1830.

<sup>606</sup> Filey Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly Schedules 1862-1885, Filey Primitive Methodist Circuit, R/M/Fil/1/1/6, North Yorkshire Record Office.

<sup>607</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Preachers’ Plans 1844-1880, August-October 1859, Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRD/2/6/1, East Riding Archives.

<sup>608</sup> Bridlington Primitive Methodist Reports 1849-1879, 1852, Bridlington Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRQ/3/20, East Riding Archives.

there be a camp meeting between Bugthorpe and Youlthorpe.’ This hints of evangelistic purpose: sacralising space in between settlements in an attempt to attract people from a wider area.<sup>609</sup> More might have attended from Bugthorpe as, for the ensuing years, it was this village, along with Huggate and Warter, that continued to be a venue.<sup>610</sup> During the 1840s, for purposes of intrigue and interest, the organisers of the Pocklington Primitive Methodist Camp Meeting were particularly keen to inform people when they had secured the services of a female preacher.<sup>611</sup> Throughout the 1850s, the Pocklington circuit was arranging five or six camp meetings each year with villages such as Yapham, Goodmanham and Fridaythorpe frequently being mentioned.<sup>612</sup> Bridlington and Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuits were just as busy with their camp meeting arrangements. The villages of Thwing, Bempton and Wold Newton held them regularly and Bridlington Quay’s was guaranteed a larger number of attendees because of the decision not to hold services in several chapels in the vicinity.<sup>613</sup> They were also not reserved for the summer months, although this began to alter during the 1850s.<sup>614</sup> Primitive Methodist Preachers’ Plans were produced quarterly and, from the 1830s, they did still contain information relating to camp meetings. For example, in 1845, throughout the months of July and August, they were held in several villages close to Driffield and at each one at least eight preachers were directed to attend. Throughout the Wolds they usually commenced at 9.30 am.<sup>615</sup> Clearly, sacralisation

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<sup>609</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarter Day Minute Book 1839-1844, 18 July 1839 and 16 March 1840, Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRP/4/9, East Riding Archives.

<sup>610</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarter Day Minute Book 1845-1851, 20 July 1845, 26 June 1846, 16 March 1847, 15 May 1847, 14 March 1848, 15 May 1848, March 1849, 19 June 1849, 19 March 1850, 18 June 1850, Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRP/4/10, East Riding Archives.

<sup>611</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Minute Book of Leaders’ Meetings 1832-1854, 23 July 1840, Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRP/4/5, East Riding Archives.

<sup>612</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarter Day Minute Book 1852-1858, Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRP/4/11, East Riding Archives. Also, Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarter Day Minute Book 1859-1863, Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRP/4/12, East Riding Archives.

<sup>613</sup> Bridlington Primitive Methodist Minute Book of the Quarterly Meeting 1855- 1874, 7 September 1855, Bridlington Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRQ/3/5, East Riding Archives. In 1856 the Bridlington Quarterly Meeting arranged to hold nine camp meetings in their Wolds chapels. See Bridlington Primitive Methodist Minute Book of the Quarterly Meeting 1855-1874, 7 March 1856, 6 June 1856, 4 June 1858, 17 June 1859, 19 June 1863 and 18 March 1866. Bridlington Primitive Methodist Minute Book 1855-1870, 3 August 1857, 15 July 1867, Bridlington Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRQ/3/4, East Riding Archives.

<sup>614</sup> Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit Local Preachers Meeting Book 1835-1841, 2 March 1835, 27 February 1837, 21 March 1842, Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit, R/M/Sc/1/2/1, North Yorkshire Record Office. For the shift towards summer Camp Meetings see Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit Local Preachers Meeting Minute Book 1850-1856, 27 March 1855, Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit, R/M/Sc/1/2/4, North Yorkshire Record Office.

<sup>615</sup> Bridlington Primitive Methodist Circuit Minutes of Quarterly Meetings 1855-1874, 17 June 1864, East Riding Archives.

started early. In 1849 there were eight camp meetings held in the Driffield circuit and ten in 1850.<sup>616</sup> By 1859 the number arranged by the Driffield Primitive Methodist circuit during the same two-month period remained at this level. Several could be scheduled for the same day and on 31 July, the camp meetings at Lund, Wetwang and Frodingham involved at least twenty preachers. Those that did commence in the afternoon required fewer preachers. Only four were asked to attend the Bainton Camp Meeting which commenced at 1pm on 21 August.<sup>617</sup> Arrangements were relatively simple with minute books frequently recording only that 'a waggon and field are needed for the camp meeting.'<sup>618</sup> The same scenario continued throughout the 1860s but, as time passed, there are indications that fewer were arranged and this coincided with the new instruction 'that camp meetings should be left with the plan makers.'<sup>619</sup> It becomes clear that the securing of new converts had to be considered alongside the requirement to make the camp meetings of relevance to those who were already affiliated.<sup>620</sup> This was often attempted by the addition of love feasts at the end of proceedings: events which were the preserve of members.<sup>621</sup> Interestingly, in the 1830s, it had been the tradition also to hold Love Feasts at the chapel in anticipation of the camp meeting and the hoped for new converts.<sup>622</sup> There is some evidence to suggest that, by the 1870s, they were also of shorter duration.<sup>623</sup>

As time passed, there was the tendency for camp meetings to be planned on a far grander scale. The District Camp Meeting, held at Driffield in May 1865, can be cited. Those

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<sup>616</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarter Day Minute Book 1849-1880, 16 June 1849 and March 1850, Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRD/2/2/11, East Riding Archives.

<sup>617</sup> Ibid. A couple of villages in the Bridlington circuit also held Camp Meetings which commenced in the afternoon. See Bridlington Primitive Methodist Circuit Minute Book of Quarterly Meetings 1855-1874, 17 June 1864, East Riding Archives.

<sup>618</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Committee Minute Book 1845-1851, 29 May 1845, Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRD/2/2/1, East Riding Archives.

<sup>619</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1863-1870, 15 March 1864, Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRP/4/13, East Riding Archives.

<sup>620</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Committee Minute Book 1859-1866, 9 May 1861, 20 June 1861, 1 May 1862, Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRD/2/2/3, East Riding Archives.

<sup>621</sup> Ibid. 24 July 1845. This entry speaks of the East Lutton Camp Meeting held on 9 August 1845 and the Little Driffield Camp Meeting. Contra to this it was decided 'that there be no camp meeting at Gembling next Sunday, the people there not desiring one.' See entry for 13 August 1852 in Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Committee Minute Book 1851-1859, 13 August 1852, Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRD/2/2/2, East Riding Archives.

<sup>622</sup> Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit Local Preachers' Meeting Minute Book 1835-1841, 29 February 1836, North Yorkshire Record Office.

<sup>623</sup> Bridlington Primitive Methodist Minute Book of Quarterly Meetings 1855-1874, 19 June 1874, East Riding Archives.

unaffiliated would hopefully be encouraged to attend because of the spectacle of Primitive Methodists arriving in the town from a wide area:

That Brothers Foster and Miller engage two women to wait upon the friends from the country who may attend the camp meeting on May 7<sup>th</sup> and avail themselves of the accommodation provided in the Driffield School Room.<sup>624</sup>

The expectations of the organisers can be summed up by their request for three waggons, rather than the usual one, for the use of preachers.<sup>625</sup> It was not at all unusual for attendance at a camp meeting in one location to be bolstered by the closing of chapels in nearby villages:

That there be no preaching services at Little Driffield and Elmswell on July 23<sup>rd</sup>, as Great Driffield Camp Meeting is to be held on that day.<sup>626</sup>

There are implications for community. Primitive Methodists from the villages had somewhere to visit in the town, they met people who were familiar to them, and they were partaking in something that they knew about.

These district camp meetings became a feature right through to the end of the century. When it was Bridlington's turn to host the event in 1878, they set about securing a big enough field near to the gravel pits.<sup>627</sup>

The changing nature of camp meetings is revealed by the frequent need to identify specific preachers who would be asked to address the children.<sup>628</sup> In 1853 the Driffield Sunday

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<sup>624</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Committee Minute Book 1859-1866, 27 April 1865, East Riding Archives.

<sup>625</sup> Ibid.

<sup>626</sup> Ibid, 13 July 1865. The practice of cancelling services in surrounding chapels to increase camp meeting attendances was not new. In 1854 eight villages were to have no preaching on account of the District Camp Meeting held in Driffield. See Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Minute Book of Quarterly Meetings 1852-1873, 17 March 1854, Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRD/2/2/5, East Riding Archives.

<sup>627</sup> Bridlington Primitive Methodist Circuit Minute Book of the Quarterly Meeting 1875-1880, 7 March 1878, Bridlington Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRQ/3/6, East Riding Archives.

<sup>628</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Committee Minute Book 1845-1851, 18 July 1850, East Riding Archives. Here the arrangements for the Driffield Camp Meeting are explained. The same request was being made in July 1870. See Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Committee Minute Book 1866-1874, 22 July 1870, Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRD/2/2/4, East Riding Archives.

School scholars were led, by their teachers, to the field.<sup>629</sup> Once there, the expectation was that a preacher would direct attention to them in the morning before concentrating efforts on the adults for the remainder of the day.<sup>630</sup> These mid-century camp meetings begin to offer insight into Primitive Methodist confidence because of community already established: confidence made manifest by the desire and ability to step out from the chapel and process to the camp ground. In these instances, there were processions which departed from the chapel at nine o'clock in the morning and in the early afternoon. Routes were carefully choreographed. In 1846, the procession to the Drifffield Camp Meeting was to commence at eight o'clock from the chapel and, to extend the route, they were to 'proceed to the River Head [before] processing the streets to the campground.'<sup>631</sup> For each occasion consideration had been given as to who could lead the singing.<sup>632</sup> Sacralisation was occurring and those already in community were involved.

Possible proof of this sacralisation is gleaned because people reacted to it in polarised fashion. There were the Primitive Methodists who processed together and the people who were intrigued by what was going on. There were also those who took exception, for whatever reason, to the taking over of space in such a bold way. This is demonstrated by the frequent requests for a police presence. At the District Camp Meeting, held on the edge of Drifffield, it was felt necessary to ask for two policemen 'to assist in keeping order at the meeting.'<sup>633</sup> They were to receive tickets for the tea scheduled to take place on the Monday evening. At the smaller camp meetings, it was thought appropriate for only one officer of the law to attend. So, in readiness for the meeting held in Drifffield in July 1867, it was deemed acceptable for Brother Foster to, 'speak to the Superintendent of the Police Force requesting him to send a man to look on and keep order.'<sup>634</sup> The Filey camp meeting had

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<sup>629</sup> Drifffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Committee Minute Book 1851-1859, 15 July 1853, East Riding Archives.

<sup>630</sup> Ibid, 14 April 1854. Prior to the children processing to the field there had been an hour's prayer meeting attended by, amongst others, the teachers. The Camp Meeting concluded with a Love Feast at 6pm. In 1855 it was decided to hold a Camp Meeting over two days, but this experiment does not appear to have been repeated. See entry for 30 March 1855.

<sup>631</sup> Drifffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Committee Minute Book 1845-1851, 28 May 1846, East Riding Archives.

<sup>632</sup> Ibid.

<sup>633</sup> Drifffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Committee Minute Book 1859-1866, 27 April 1865, East Riding Archives.

<sup>634</sup> Drifffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Committee Minute Book 1866-1874, 25 July 1867, East Riding Archives.

employed a policeman to keep order from the early 1840s and they were still doing so almost half a century later.<sup>635</sup>

The early 1870s still saw a plethora of camp meetings being arranged in the Wolds towns and villages.<sup>636</sup> Subtle changes can be detected, however. It was often left for the villages to request a camp meeting instead of it being an overt proselytising strategy of the travelling preachers.<sup>637</sup> The need to obtain a wagon and suitable field was joined by the requirement for certain gentlemen to procure seats for those who gathered. In the July of 1872, the task was entrusted to Brother Railton while, in 1873, it was decided 'that Brothers Gibbons and Wright be requested to provide seats on the campground at Driffield next Sabbath and Brothers Foster and Miller a waggon.' Three men were now being selected to lead the singing.<sup>638</sup> These hints towards comfort and finesse very possibly provide clues as to why there eventually came to be fewer references, though references there were, to camp meetings in minute books.<sup>639</sup> Numbers could be guaranteed by the holding of circuit camp meetings rather than the organising of many smaller events. This was one strategy employed by the Bridlington circuit in 1873.<sup>640</sup> In 1876, the Flamborough Camp Meeting demonstrates the supposed need to devise different strategies. It was to be led by the Filey Fishermen and so there would have been something of the concert about proceedings.<sup>641</sup> By 1880, the Pocklington Primitive Methodists appear to have been the most assiduous in maintaining

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<sup>635</sup> Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit Committee Meeting Book 1843-1853, 30 May 1844, Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit, R/M/Sc/1/2/5, North Yorkshire Record Office. Also Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit Committee Meeting Book 1853-1875, March 1871, R/M/Sc/1/2/6, North Yorkshire Record Office.

<sup>636</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Committee Minute Book 1866-1874, 22 July 1870, 8 September 1870, 18 July 1872, 24 July 1873, 30 July 1874, East Riding Archives. Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1870-1880, 17 June 1871, 14 March 1873, 19 June 1874, 11 June 1875, 7 March 1879, Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRP/4/14, East Riding Archives.

<sup>637</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Minute Book of Quarterly Meetings 1852-1873, 11 December 1868, East Riding Archives. By the 1870s the Pocklington circuit was still arranging camp meetings but they were relatively rare and they were, again, only held during the summer months. See Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Minute Book of Leaders' Meeting 1854-1880, June 1874, Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRP/4/6, East Riding Archives.

<sup>638</sup> Ibid. 18 July 1872, 24 July 1873. Also Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Leaders' Meeting Minute Book 1869-1872, Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRD/2/2/13, East Riding Archives. As early as 1863 the Driffield circuit was being asked to consider methods to enhance 'the convenience of the Camp Meeting.' See Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Committee Minute Book 1859-1866, 30 July 1863, East Riding Archives.

<sup>639</sup> Ibid, 3 July 1874. The August Driffield Camp Meeting was arranged, and it was expected that people from the villages would travel to it.

<sup>640</sup> Bridlington Primitive Methodist Minute Book of the Quarterly Meeting 1855-1874, June 1873, East Riding Archives.

<sup>641</sup> Ibid, 16 June 1876. The Filey Fishermen were known to sing at venues around the area.



their camp meetings. Indeed, ten were held in villages throughout the circuit.<sup>642</sup> In the same year, the Scarborough Primitive Methodist circuit was holding a camp meeting in the village of Sherburn and the Driffield Primitive Methodists were recording that camp meetings should be held 'as far as practicable.'<sup>643</sup> Although they did survive into the early 1880s and beyond, practicability appears to have been perceived as an issue. They were no longer being mentioned as a matter of course by those who produced the Preachers' Plans.<sup>644</sup> Primitive Methodist communities appear to have succumbed to the same temptation that overwhelmed the congregation in the village of Etton some twenty years previously. They had decided that 'Brother Garner [should] preach two sermons in the chapel... instead of holding the intended camp meeting.'<sup>645</sup> The Primitive Methodist community in this village was satisfied.

Sacralisation of the outdoors occurred in other ways, and this was emphasised by the Driffield Primitive Methodists in 1874:

We have not missioned any new places. We have processioned the streets and highways and in the open air blown the great trumpet to those who are ready to perish, and these means have saved some.<sup>646</sup>

Trumpets, both metaphoric and actual, were blown at open air services throughout the period. The comment that, 'we have not missioned any new or fresh places, but we have held open air services in various parts of the circuit' was common from the 1860s onwards

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<sup>642</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1870-1880, 4 June 1880 East Riding Archives.

<sup>643</sup> Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1862-1881, 1 March 1880, Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit, R/M/Sc/1/2/12, North Yorkshire Record Office. Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Minute Book of Quarterly Meetings 1874-1880, June 1880, Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit, East Riding Archives.

<sup>644</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Preachers Plans 1844-1880, East Riding Archives. Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Minute Book of Quarterly Meetings 1874-1880, 13 March 1874, 12 March 1875, June 1877, East Riding Archives. By 1879 and 1880 the Pocklington Primitive Methodists were only referring to one annual Camp Meeting which was to take place in Pocklington itself. Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Committee Meeting Minute Book 1854-1880, 24 July 1879, 30 July 1880, Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRP/4/7, East Riding Archives. The Bridlington circuit was holding three or four camp meetings instead of the eight or nine of ten years previously. Bridlington Primitive Methodist Minute Book of the Quarterly Meetings 1875-1880, 6 March 1879, 3 June 1880, East Riding Archives.

<sup>645</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Committee Meeting Minute Book 1851-1859, 3 September 1857, East Riding Archives. In 1873 the Primitive Methodists of Etton were being directed to hold a camp meeting. Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Minute Book of Quarterly Meetings 1852-1873, 14 March 1873, East Riding Archives.

<sup>646</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Statistics Documents 1861-1880, East Riding Archives.

throughout the Wolds.<sup>647</sup> Primitive Methodist communities were prepared to step outside if they could remain in familiar territory. That said, there were still fewer references to outdoor preaching towards the end of the century.

These Primitive Methodist open-air services took place from the earliest of times and they were held wherever was thought most appropriate. For Filey, this was often on the beach and fortnightly throughout the summer.<sup>648</sup> Bridlington made use of its seaside location and held them by the harbour.<sup>649</sup> In Pocklington and Driffield, it was sacralisation of the Market Place; the most prominent position in the towns.<sup>650</sup>

In Driffield, in 1845, 'the' open-air service was referred to.<sup>651</sup> This rather implied regularity without frequency.<sup>652</sup> In 1854, those who attended a particular meeting were being encouraged to take this form of worship seriously:

We believe they do a great deal of good and stir up the chapels to increased piety.<sup>653</sup>

It was 1858 when it was recommended that outdoor preaching, over the summer months, should take place on each Sunday evening.<sup>654</sup> The same situation presented itself during subsequent years.

In 1859, it was decided that two preachers were to be assigned, seemingly to add gravitas.<sup>655</sup> By 1864, there were also plans to hold open-air services in thirteen of the villages close to

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<sup>647</sup> Ibid, 1861. Also Filey Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly Schedules 1862-1885, North Yorkshire Record Office. Also Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Station Reports 1870-1879, Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRP/4/29, East Riding Archives.

<sup>648</sup> Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit Local Preachers Meeting Book 1835-1841, 1 June 1835, North Yorkshire Record Office.

<sup>649</sup> Bridlington Primitive Methodist Minute Book of the Quarterly Meeting 1855-1874, 7 September 1855, East Riding Archives.

<sup>650</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Minute Book of Leaders' Meeting 1832-1854, 17 July 1843, East Riding Archives.

<sup>651</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Committee Minute Book 1845-1851, 9 August 1845, East Riding Archives.

<sup>652</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Committee Minute Book 1866-1872, 9 June 1870, East Riding Archives.

<sup>653</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Minute Book of Quarterly Meetings 1852-1873, 16 June 1854, East Riding Archives.

<sup>654</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Committee Minute Book 1851-1859, 14 May 1858, East Riding Archives.

<sup>655</sup> Ibid, 23 June 1859.

Driffield.<sup>656</sup> These already had chapels and the preaching was usually conducted in their vicinity or on the village green.<sup>657</sup> One year later, in 1865, there were open-air services in sixteen different venues.<sup>658</sup> In subsequent years it continues to be noted that, 'much attention has been paid to open air worship.'<sup>659</sup> Indeed, it appears to be the main form of outreach employed and, by 1869, it is 'special attention' to open-air worship which is being called for.<sup>660</sup> Whether as a result of this or not, the Driffield circuit was able to report that, 'in every respect we are prosperous.'<sup>661</sup> Their perceived importance is emphasised by the decision of the Driffield Primitive Methodists in the June of 1874:

and a note be put on the plan requesting the friends in the various places of the circuit to hold open air services during the quarter.<sup>662</sup>

The Bridlington circuit can be used to emphasise the pattern over time. During the 1850s, and for most of the 1860s, open air preaching was carried out as a matter of course during the summer months in towns like Bridlington and Flamborough and in several of the villages.<sup>663</sup> It was regarded as a main way to mission those who were not already persuaded.<sup>664</sup> Sacralisation was deliberate. By 1867, however, it is being recorded, quite defensively that, although no new place has been missioned, 'we have held out of door services.'<sup>665</sup> Two years later, in 1869, the only remark is to the effect that they had 'held a few open-air services.'<sup>666</sup> Singing in the streets, along with praying and preaching in the open-air, continued into the 1870s but, by 1873, there were far fewer references to these activities.<sup>667</sup>

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<sup>656</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Committee Minute Book 1851-1859, 10 October 1851, East Riding Archives. Also Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Statistics Documents 1861-1880, 1864, East Riding Archives. The Market Place continued to be used throughout the 1860's. See Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Committee Minute Book 1859-1866, July 1865, East Riding Archives.

<sup>657</sup> Ibid.

<sup>658</sup> Ibid.

<sup>659</sup> Ibid, 1867-1874.

<sup>660</sup> Ibid, 1869.

<sup>661</sup> Ibid.

<sup>662</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Minute Book of Quarterly Meetings 1874-1880, June 1874, 8 March 1878, East Riding Archives.

<sup>663</sup> Bridlington Primitive Methodist Circuit Minute Book of the Quarterly Meeting 1855-1874, 7 September 1855, 14 September 1860, 14 June 1861, East Riding Archives.

<sup>664</sup> "Bridlington Primitive Methodist Reports 1849-1879, 1852 and 1862, East Riding Archives.

<sup>665</sup> Ibid, 1865.

<sup>666</sup> Ibid, 1869.

<sup>667</sup> Ibid, 1869, 1871-1879.

Open-air services frequently took place in the hour before the scheduled evening service. Members of the society could then retreat indoors for that which was familiar to them.<sup>668</sup> This was certainly the case in the Bridlington circuit and in Pocklington, Market Weighton and surrounding villages such as Huggate, where there was more attention given to this form of preaching from 1859 onwards.<sup>669</sup> In Pocklington they attempted to attract attention by advertising that the open-air worship would immediately be followed by a female preaching in the chapel.<sup>670</sup> That the familiar was preferred is hinted at by the addition of a comment on the Preachers' Plan:

That a note be on the plan to the effect that open-air services are as important as other services, and we request the societies to aid at open-air services.<sup>671</sup>

Community was already formed but the Driffield Primitive Methodists were being encouraged to take part in open-air worship on a fortnightly basis.<sup>672</sup> The Pocklington circuit showed its commitment by stating, in 1870, 'that open air services be held at every place where practible [sic].'<sup>673</sup> Their commitment was demonstrated by Friday night open air preaching, which took place in Pocklington from 1878 onwards.<sup>674</sup>

From the 1870s, it was far more likely to find that outdoor worship was preceded by street processioning.<sup>675</sup>

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<sup>668</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Committee Minute Book 1866-1872, 21 May 1869, East Riding Archives.

<sup>669</sup> "Bridlington Primitive Methodist Circuit Minute Book of Quarterly Meetings 1875-1880, 12 March 1875, East Riding Archives. Also Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarter Day Minute Book 1859-1863, 21 June 1859, East Riding Archives. Also Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1863-1870, 17 March 1868, 16 June 1868, 15 September 1868, East Riding Archives. In Pocklington and Huggate they were, in 1868, reserved for the spring and summer months.

<sup>670</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Minute Book of Leaders' Meeting 1832-1854, 17 July 1843, East Riding Archives.

<sup>671</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Minute Book of Quarterly Meetings 1852-1873, 14 June 1867, East Riding Archives.

<sup>672</sup> Ibid, 14 June 1867.

<sup>673</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1863-1870, 17 June 1870, East Riding Archives.

<sup>674</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1870-1880, 7 June 1878, East Riding Archives.

<sup>675</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Committee Meeting Minute Book 1859-1866, 16 August 1860, East Riding Archives. Also Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Statistics Documents 1861-1880, 1870, East Riding Archives.

We have attended a great deal to street processioning and open-air services but have not missioned any new places.<sup>676</sup>

Primitive Methodists were certainly capable of seizing opportunities. For instance, they held an outdoor service on the day of Drifffield's Agricultural Show.<sup>677</sup> On the special occasion of the visit to the Drifffield chapel of the Filey Fishermen, it was decided to hold Street Services throughout the afternoon.<sup>678</sup>

It was in 1871 that the Bridlington Primitive Methodists were arranging to hold a Great Gathering at the Quay during the summer months, and they endeavoured to provide tea for one thousand persons.<sup>679</sup> This became a trend during the 1870s. For example, in 1878 the Pocklington Primitive Methodists felt it appropriate to hold a Circuit Great Gathering which would take place over two days. A secretary and treasurer needed to be appointed and bills, cards and tickets had to be printed.<sup>680</sup> In the following year, the villages of Huggate and Fridaythorpe were at liberty to hold their own Great Gathering and they did so again in 1880.<sup>681</sup>

For both Wesleyan and Primitive Methodism, the use of the outdoors, therefore, came to be marginalised because of the desire to establish a credible organisation: an organisation which hinged on the building of chapels. For Primitive Methodism, there was a time delay and more of a commitment, anyway, to the use of the open air for proselytising purposes. The trend, however, was clear. For community it is important to note that there was no distinguishable difference between the urban and rural experience. Denomination mattered more than location, and this emphasises the importance of a person's allegiance for the nurturing of community.<sup>682</sup> Whether a day trip to attend a camp meeting or permanent

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<sup>676</sup> Ibid, 1872 and 1873.

<sup>677</sup> Drifffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Committee Minute Book 1866-1874, 23 June 1870, East Riding Archives.

<sup>678</sup> Drifffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Minute Book of Quarterly Meetings 1874-1880, 7 December 1877, East Riding Archives.

<sup>679</sup> Bridlington Primitive Methodist Circuit Minute Book of Quarterly Meetings 1855-1874, March 1871, East Riding Archives.

<sup>680</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Committee Meeting Minute Book 1854-1880, 26 April 1878, East Riding Archives. Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1870-1880, 7 June 1878, East Riding Archives.

<sup>681</sup> Ibid, 18 April 1879, 12 August 1880.

<sup>682</sup> With Wesleyan Methodism already established, Primitive Methodism inevitably had some catching up to do. As mentioned, Primitive Methodism tended to focus initially on the more rural areas such as the East Riding Wolds.

migration for the gaining of employment, a member of society would be met with the familiar.

Sacralisation of outdoor space meant that roots were established in village after village, and town after town, but there was a perceived need of permanency for community to flourish. The village of Middleton had been visited by missionaries during the second decade of the nineteenth century and there had been much outdoor activity.<sup>683</sup> It was recorded, however, that:

The progress of the cause has not been equal to the desires of its friends, owing we think, to the insufficient accommodation provided for the worship of God.<sup>684</sup>

The rented room was deemed 'unsuited to the wants of the congregation.'<sup>685</sup> What they desired was a chapel which would become their 'spiritual home.'<sup>686</sup> The obituary of Ann Knaggs from Wetwang sums this up:

She loved the house of prayer, but the people of her choice had no chapel at that time; but she did not rest till the desire of her heart was obtained by the erection of a chapel on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1824. At that time, she rejoiced much in the Lord.<sup>687</sup>

This same Ann Knaggs acts as a reminder for passing reference to be made to the sacralisation of the domestic setting. With this there are implications for the development of community. It was recorded that, 'in her closet devotions she was regular and importunate.'<sup>688</sup> Her Primitive Methodism was clearly brought into the home and the inference is that this could cause annoyance to some: to people who were not in sympathy, or community with her. At any rate, it elicited a response. The reader is left to speculate about this but there is no doubt that her transference into the cottage of community values and activities was greeted positively by her husband and a granddaughter. He had joined

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<sup>683</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, January 1865, 55.

<sup>684</sup> *Ibid*, June 1865, 370.

<sup>685</sup> *Ibid*, January 1865, 55.

<sup>686</sup> *Ibid*, July 1861, 399.

<sup>687</sup> *Ibid*, July 1862, 437.

<sup>688</sup> *Ibid*.

with his wife in welcoming itinerant and local preachers into their home. The granddaughter had become a pious member of the society precisely because of her grandmother's witness within the house.<sup>689</sup> Similar examples abound. Mary Cowling was one of many praised for using her home to train her children to fear the Lord and know of Methodist ways. Her time in the closet was spent 'gaining knowledge of Divine things' and she loved to commune with God in private.<sup>690</sup>

Homes were used for more than private devotion and family prayers. Most importantly for community development and cohesion, they could be the location of the Methodist class meeting. This weekly happening was unique to Methodism. It was a distinguishing mark of community because of this regularity but also due to the content and nurturing of relationships. Ann Knaggs was reported never to have been absent from hers over the course of thirty years. While she listened to members of her society bearing their souls, they also heard her.

Her experience was always clear: she always felt that God, for Christ's sake, had pardoned her sins, and her soul rejoiced in the hope through our Lord Jesus Christ. In zeal she excelled many. In proof that she loved the gates of Zion more than ease at home.<sup>691</sup>

A certain intimacy was perhaps unavoidable. A sense of the perceived richness of Methodist community is offered by Mary Cowling's obituary writer: 'Her class was a banquet. Her delight was in the company of God's people.'<sup>692</sup>

Throughout a fifty-year period, from 1830 until 1880, almost half of Primitive Methodist obituaries, for people who lived and died on the East Yorkshire Wolds, mentioned attendance and conduct at these meetings.<sup>693</sup> For huge numbers this involved entering the home of the class leader. These people did fulfil a particularly important function within society. They were often venerated, and much can be gleaned about Methodism as

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<sup>689</sup> Ibid, 437-438.

<sup>690</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, May 1862, 309.

<sup>691</sup> Ibid. July 1862, 437. John Taylor of Driffield was thought to have been absent from his class-meeting on three occasions in thirty-three years. He and his class-leader were reported frequently to pray all night: 'wrestling till the break of day for the salvation of souls.' His class-leader knew that 'a prince and a great man is fallen in Israel.' See *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, September, 519-520.

<sup>692</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, May 1862, 309.

<sup>693</sup> See *Primitive Methodist Magazines* 1830-1880. Seventy-five out of one hundred and sixty-six (45%).

community by focusing on this role. George Hayton of South Cave welcomed his class into his home over many decades. While being praised for his efficiency, George's obituary reveals much more of the possible concomitants of being in community with fellow Methodists:

He understood well the art of administering consolation to the depressed in spirit; cheering the downcast, strengthening the courage of the faint-hearted, urging the growing Christian further into the life of God, and stirring up those who would rest on the lap of sloth. Between him and the members of his class there existed a strong attachment.<sup>694</sup>

This was the same man who used his house to erect an altar to God and to teach his children the 'fear of the Lord.' As well as the use made of their own homes, class leaders were expected to enter the dwellings of those in their care. The actions of Henry Quarton, from a village in the Pocklington circuit, demonstrate how Methodist community infiltrated the domestic setting. His obituary recorded that, as class leader, 'he would often go seven or eight miles to comfort, encourage, strengthen or admonish someone under his charge who needed special attention.'<sup>695</sup> Being a member of the Methodist community was not to be taken lightly. It went beyond the trivial and yet, for community, both the sacred and the profane are of relevance. After all, attending chapel did mean the forging of friendships, or, perhaps, the birth of rivalries.<sup>696</sup> There was potential throughout the Black Country and the Yorkshire Wolds:

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<sup>694</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, March 1852, 134.

<sup>695</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, July 1874, 436.

<sup>696</sup> It can be assumed that the trivial would have been there, too. The novels of Thorneycroft Fowler are particularly relevant here. In particular the *badinage* between Mrs. Bateson and Mrs. Hankey can be cited. See Fowler, *The Farringdons*, 27. Also, for rivalries, see Bennett, *Anna of the Five Towns*, 56. Here, at the sewing meeting, Mrs. Sutton, described as the 'leading lady' is in the drawing room while Mrs. Clayton Vernon is present the dining room. Novels do shed light on the significance of the home for Methodism as religious denomination and Methodism as community. See, for example, Hocking, *Her Benny*, 96. The Black Country novels of Thorneycroft Fowler can be read alongside the biography of her father, Henry Hartley Fowler, written by her sister Edith. These books shed light on Methodism and the home. See Fowler, *The Farringdons*. Also, Fowler, *The Life of Henry Hartley-Fowler*. For comment on Methodism as community see Fowler, *Concerning Isabel Carnaby*, 56. Also Fowler's biography of her father, 565-566, 595, 599 and 601.



The ladies of the congregation had been working for some months in anticipation of a Bazaar being held in the Autumn in aid of the proposed scheme.<sup>697</sup>

The conversations were not recorded by the secretaries of Methodist meetings, but the point is made.

Stepping out from the home and entering the chapel was, however, what confirmed community and sealed a person's involvement in it. At a time when traditional community was changing and urban centres growing, Methodism offered much.<sup>698</sup> There were opportunities aplenty and, crucially, it provided choice: arguably lacking in the lives of most. Becoming a Methodist was one such but there was also the decision as to whether loyalty should be given to the Wesleyans or the Primitives. Choice of chapel threshold mattered so much for multiple reasons. Second generation Methodists of either persuasion may well have questioned this ability to choose, precisely because their community was already assigned, and affiliation ran deep. Converts might claim it to have been a *fait accompli* depending on how, where and by whom the conversion had been occasioned. People of the fourth dimension, occupiers of fourth space, could have refuted that it was anything to do with choice; the pull being irresistible. Finally and crucially, Methodism offered continuity. This was true for the person whose affiliation to the same chapel remained constant: relationships strengthened, and feelings of belonging deepened over time. It was also true for those who migrated. Community that was familiar was awaiting them.

## **Community**

### **Third and Fourth Space**

The vocabulary of building and buildings adds both literal and metaphoric clarity to Methodism and community creation. As foundation stones were laid, Methodist communities were about to be consolidated. Indeed, the laying of these stones was carried out with both celebration and ceremony. There were local dignitaries, silver trowels and services held indoors and out. There were great swathes of trestle table for the serving of

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<sup>697</sup> Darlington Street and Newhampton Road Trustees Minute Book 1863-1911, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>698</sup> Ibid.

teas.<sup>699</sup> It mattered not whether Primitive or Wesleyan, on the Wolds or in the Black Country. In 1864, Mr. Grubb's donation of a site for a chapel in Middleton-on-the Wolds led to 'the laying of the foundation-stone of the new edifice.'<sup>700</sup> There were processions and a ceremony as statements of intent.<sup>701</sup> It was after the chapel was built that the feelings of belonging were fully realised. It was then that the full range of Primitive Methodist activity could be introduced. The new chapel was 'intended to seat two hundred persons' and it was announced that 'a new era has now, by the blessing of God, dawned.'<sup>702</sup> During the same decade Wolverhampton's Wesleyans were thanking Mr. Aston for the gift of land for the erection of a chapel. There was a public tea meeting held after Mrs. Thorneycroft, wife of Captain Thorneycroft, had laid the stone.<sup>703</sup>

So many examples can be cited. There were, after all, a huge number of chapels:

The best site for chapel purposes in a village in the Driffield circuit has been granted by Sir T. Sykes. On Friday, November 18<sup>th</sup>, the foundation stone of the new edifice was laid by Mr. H. Wilson, of Langtoft, and an address was delivered by the Rev. T. Waumsley, of Hull. In the evening a public meeting was held...A good influence attended these services.<sup>704</sup>

Walls and roofs then stood symbolically as did the thresholds:

Application was made to Sir Tatton Sykes, of Sledmere, for a slip of land in Wetwang which he kindly and generously granted...It is a

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<sup>699</sup> This would have been the case for almost all of the many, many chapels, both Wesleyan and Primitive, built throughout the East Riding Wolds and the Black Country. See, for example, Market Weighton Wesleyan Circuit Quarterly Schedule 1860-1880, MRM/1/19, East Riding Record Office. The foundation-stone laying for the chapel at Cranswick in the Driffield circuit was followed by a public tea and 'more than six hundred and fifty partook.' See *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, August 1864, 501.

<sup>700</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, January 1865, 55.

<sup>701</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>702</sup> *Ibid.*, June 1865, 55.

<sup>703</sup> Darlington Street and Newhampton Road Trustees Minutes 1863-1911, 16 April 1862, 16 June 1862, Wolverhampton Archives. William Whyte, *Unlocking the Church: The Lost Secrets of Victorian Sacred Space* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) 26. Here Whyte refers to 'the Victorian notion of sacred space measured in ecclesiastical bricks and mortar.'

<sup>704</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, April 1865, 246.

substantial and beautiful structure, quite an ornament to the village,  
and it has already been the birthplace of precious souls.<sup>705</sup>

By passing through the doors of chapels, a statement was made and the language of the possessive adjective secured community: my chapel and our chapel as well as the equally important her chapel and their chapel. The obituary of Thomas Horsley of Huggate, who died in 1852, described the chapel simply as 'his place.'<sup>706</sup> Daniel Whisker's was referred to as 'his home.' It was so common for obituary writers to refer to 'our chapel' and 'our people.'<sup>707</sup>

From the outset, Methodism understood the value of community and the synonym of society sums this up.<sup>708</sup> There was the Wesleyan Methodist Society and the Primitive Methodist Society. This referred to the whole denomination and there was a tendency for the Wesleyans to refer to this far more frequently. For example, their obituaries, almost without exception, made mention of it:

At Thwing in the Bridlington circuit aged fifty-two, Mrs. Mary Braithwaite, who for twenty-five years had been a consistent and exemplary member of the Wesleyan Society. Her piety was deep.<sup>709</sup>

There was also the more intimate society, which referred to each individual chapel. It was far more likely for the Primitive Methodists to use this vocabulary, but it was certainly not unique to them. In 1863 it was recorded that Richard Craggs had 'joined our society at Bridlington.' It was because 'he was diligent in his master's work' that his employer and fellow workmen knew he was a Methodist.<sup>710</sup> In 1819, because of his preaching in the open air, Mary Adamson had been influenced by a Primitive Methodist missionary in the village of

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<sup>705</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, February 1871, 118. In *Her Benny*, Benny and Nell are introduced to the Methodist community by 'pushing open a green baize door.' See Hocking, *Her Benny*, 29.

<sup>706</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, July 1852, 445.

<sup>707</sup> *Ibid*, July 1861, 399. For examples of 'our chapel' see, for example, *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, March 1859, 190 and May 1860, 316.

<sup>708</sup> Jackson, *An Answer to the Question*, 21 & 76. Here the words community and society are both used.

<sup>709</sup> *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, August 1844, 685. In the same edition the death of William Lindsley from Driffield was recorded. He had been 'forty-seven years a member of the Wesleyan Society.' See 688. The Primitive Methodist Society was also referred to although not as a matter of course. Jonathan Wardill, for example, 'joined the Primitive Methodist Society.' See *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, December 1858, 715. Grace Pinkney was 'a consistent member of the Primitive Methodist Society till the day of her death.' See *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, January 1859, 59.

<sup>710</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, January 1865, 60.

Givendale. The building of the chapel was said to be the moment when ‘a society of Primitive Methodists [was] formed.’ It was then that ‘Sister Adamson became a zealous, consistent and useful member at that place.’<sup>711</sup> A Wesleyan from Sancton in the Pocklington circuit, named Thomas Marshall, died at the age of eighty-six in 1839. He had been ‘for upwards of thirty years a well-known and consistent member of the society in the village.’ Having attended the village chapel, ‘it became an easy thing for him to do again.’<sup>712</sup> Each chapel had society stewards and there was the regular society-meeting.<sup>713</sup> This neatly elided Society with society and, by so doing, said something important about community:

It marks a separation between the church and the world. It reminds men that not a few who come to the house of God, and hear His word, are yet lacking in one thing. They are “hearers only.” They go part of the way to heaven, but yet stop short...It becomes more thoroughly known who is in the Society, and who is not in it...The meeting not only recognises the church as distinct from the congregation, but as superior to it; as sharing a larger measure of ministerial esteem and love and deserving a special amount of pastoral care and attention. It strengthens brotherly love. The society is not merely put together, it is “*knit together in love.*”<sup>714</sup>

The sentiments expressed here are given context by mentioning William Foster of Goodmanham. He lived long enough ‘to see a neat chapel built, a considerable congregation collected, and a society of from forty to fifty well-established members.’<sup>715</sup> Congregation was not automatically community, therefore. This is reinforced by the obituary of James Cape

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<sup>711</sup> Ibid, April 1860, 250.

<sup>712</sup> *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, February 1839, 151. Stephen Pudsey from Ganton died on 20 December 1830. For twenty years he walked to neighbouring villages but it was the building of a chapel in his own village that meant ‘a society was formed.’ See *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, August 1832, 70.

<sup>713</sup> See, for example, Scarborough Wesleyan Circuit Stewards Committee Minute Book 1874-1921, Scarborough Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, R/M/Sc/1/1/17, North Yorkshire Record Office. Filey Primitive Methodist Circuit Society Stewards’ Account Book 1862-1867, Filey Primitive Methodist Circuit, R/M/Fil/2/2/7, North Yorkshire Record Office. Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Chapel Stewards’ Account Books 1866-1877, Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRP/4/53, East Riding Archives. In 1872 it was, for example, recorded that George Tesseyman who lived towards the northern extremity of the Wolds had been a society steward for more than thirty years. See *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, September 1873, 553. Society was not, of course, unique to Methodism. Quakers and The Society of Friends can be alluded to.

<sup>714</sup> *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, April 1861, 339-348. See 341-342.

<sup>715</sup> Ibid, February 1848, 248.

who was a Wesleyan from the village of North Burton. He died in 1848, and it was recorded that, 'when increase of congregation and increase of society rendered a more commodious place of worship needful, he gave the ground for the site of a chapel.'<sup>716</sup>

Linda Wilson's notion of chapels as third space is of significance.<sup>717</sup> Not being quite public nor quite private brought with it a uniqueness which facilitated an individual's involvement with fourth space: the space filled by a relationship with God.<sup>718</sup> Both third and fourth spaces, in their turn, allow for refining in relation to chapels and the various community-formation theories.<sup>719</sup> Succinctly put, community came about because of the concatenation of shared place and shared purpose. There was so much shared potential which perhaps was not eventually realised.

### Shared Place

If shared spaces become shared places because they are imbued with meaning, chapels are the latter. If becoming place did confirm community, the number of chapels built during the nineteenth century, in two such different regions, gives indication of both Wesleyan and Primitive significance.

Scrutiny of Black Country Methodism emphasizes certain points. Primitive Methodism's Darlaston chapel was built in 1828 so that the one hundred and eighty-six members could worship in a building that was theirs.<sup>720</sup> During the 1830s the Darlaston circuit sanctioned the erection of at least twelve more chapels and a further eleven were built in the 1840s. Nineteen more came into being during the 1850s.<sup>721</sup> This was by no means all of the

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<sup>716</sup> Ibid, December 1848, 1287.

<sup>717</sup> Wilson, *Constrained by Zeal*.

<sup>718</sup> Ibid, 1. Fourth space is referred to in both the introduction to this thesis and chapter 1. See Fowler, *The Farringdons*, 132.

<sup>719</sup> Tönnies, F, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*. Also, Onwuatuegwu, "Concept of Community," 60. See also Miller, *Nature, Justice and Rights*, 27-31. Also, Cobigo, Martin and Mcheimech, "Understanding Community," 192.

<sup>720</sup> See entry for 12 February 1828, and list of members on back cover of Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1824-1832, 12 February 1828, Primitive Methodism, 42/1/1, Walsall Archives.

<sup>721</sup> Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit, Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1832-1838, Primitive Methodism, 42/1/2. Also Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit, Quarterly and Committee

Primitive Methodist building activity because, during these first five decades, separate circuits were formed with their own ability to construct places of worship.<sup>722</sup> It more accurately reflects the chapel building which occurred to the area's western side and emphasises that distances between chapels were short. For Primitive Methodism across the Black Country, it was the 1850s that saw this building spree reach its crescendo. Although chapels continued to be built in subsequent decades, the emphasis shifted from the new to the enhancement of what already existed: an important distinction.<sup>723</sup>

Wesleyan Methodism in the Black Country had certain advantages in relation to its chapel building programme. John Wesley had shown interest in the area and chapels had come into existence from an early date.<sup>724</sup> All of the main Black Country towns had their first chapels built around the turn of the century. Mention can be made, for example, of Bilston's which opened in 1794.<sup>725</sup> By the early 1860s there were fifteen other Wesleyan chapels within a five mile radius of this town.<sup>726</sup> Taken together, the Bilston and Wolverhampton circuits could boast twenty-one chapels in 1864 and by this date similar numbers were clustered

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Meeting Minute Book 1840-1842, Primitive Methodism, 42/1/3, Walsall Archives. Also Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit, Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1842-1848, 42/1/8, Walsall Archives. Also Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit, Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1850-1853, 42/1/5, Walsall Archives. Also Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit, Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1853-1859, 42/1/6, Walsall Archives.

<sup>722</sup> For example, it was recommended in 1832 that the Brierly Hill Branch should become a separate circuit. Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit, Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1832-1838, 17 September 1832, Walsall Archives. Dudley was a separate circuit by 1841. Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit, Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1840-1842, 15 March 1841, Walsall Archives. West Bromwich was a separate circuit by 1853. Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit, Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1850-1853, 19 June 1854, Walsall Archives. Bilston became the lead chapel in a new circuit by 1854. Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1853-1859, 19 June 1854, Walsall Archives. Wolverhampton had to wait until the 1860s to form its own circuit. Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit, Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1867-1885, September 1868, Primitive Methodism, 42/1/8, Walsall Archives.

<sup>723</sup> Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit, Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1853-1859, Primitive Methodism, 42/1/6, Walsall Archives. Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit, Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1859-1867, Primitive Methodism, 41/1/7, Walsall Archives. Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit, Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1867-1885, Walsall Archives. Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit, Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1885-1896, Walsall Archives.

<sup>724</sup> Wesley's first recorded visit to Bilston was on 9 November 1745. He recorded 'it was exceeding dark when we rode through Bilstone [sic].' Bilston Wesleyan Circuit, Correspondence and Papers, Bilston Wesleyan Methodist, MC-BW/12/1/16, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>725</sup> For details of Bilston's first Wesleyan chapel see the introductory pages in Bilston Wesleyan Methodist Circuit Minutes of Quarterly Meetings 1863-1896, Bilston Wesleyan Methodist, MC-BW/1, Wolverhampton Archives. The first Primitive Methodist chapel in Bilston was opened in 1841 in the High Street. Bilston Wesleyan Circuit, Correspondence and Papers, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>726</sup> Bilston Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, Minutes of Quarterly Meetings 1863-1896, 28 December 1863, Wolverhampton Archives.

around the towns of Stourbridge, Dudley, Walsall and West Bromwich.<sup>727</sup> Wesleyanism's earlier start meant that its chapel building activity had reached its peak during the 1820s and 1830s.<sup>728</sup> From then on, there was also the emphasis on existing societies and whether their chapels were thought to be in need of improvement or enlargement.

Horace Mann's census of 1851 offers a snapshot of the number of religious establishments in the Black Country at the time. It shows that there were eighty-one Wesleyan chapels and fifty-six Primitive Methodist chapels.<sup>729</sup> This does, of course, represent a more accurate picture for Wesleyanism of the situation for the remainder of the century. It can also be noted that the population of only the five largest towns was already more than three hundred and eighty thousand.<sup>730</sup> This makes the statistics for the East Riding Wolds even more fascinating. With seventy-nine parishes within its boundaries, there were seventy-seven Wesleyan and forty-four Primitive Methodist chapels, which were 'a separate and entire building used exclusively as a place of worship.'<sup>731</sup> The Wesleyans made use of seven other indoor spaces, while the Primitive Methodists held services in fourteen domestic dwellings.<sup>732</sup> Chapel building was clearly the desired outcome. Several of these temporary facilities were replaced by chapels over the coming years and, particularly in relation to Primitive Methodism, there was also chapel building activity in parishes with no regular preaching in 1851.<sup>733</sup> With a population in 1851 of sixty-six thousand, there was seating in Methodist chapels for almost exactly one third of the inhabitants.<sup>734</sup> This can be compared to the Black Country where, with its far larger population, roughly fifteen per cent of the population could potentially have been seated.<sup>735</sup>

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<sup>727</sup> Ibid. 28 March 1864.

<sup>728</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Trust Minutes 1836-1854, Walsall Archives. Great Britain, Parliament, *Census of Great Britain 1851, Religious Worship, England and Wales Report and Tables* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode for H.M.S.O, 1853).

<sup>729</sup> Parliament, *Census of Great Britain 1851, Religious Worship*, 1853, Division VI, 73-74.

<sup>730</sup> Wolverhampton, Walsall, West Bromwich, Dudley and Stourbridge. United Kingdom, *Extracts from Census Tables 1811-1891*, LD312, Dudley Archives and Local History Centre, 14. Bilston Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, Minutes of Quarterly Meetings 1863-1896, 28 March 1864, Wolverhampton Archives. The population of Wolverhampton in 1864 is given as 65,000 and Bilston as 25,000. It states that 'in both places there is yet a large proportion of the population not reached.'

<sup>731</sup> Parliament, *Census of Great Britain 1851, Religious Worship*, 1853.

<sup>732</sup> Ibid.

<sup>733</sup> Pocklington Circuit Committee Meeting Minute Book 1854-1880, Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRP/4/7, East Riding Archives.

<sup>734</sup> A population of 66,095 and seating for 22,631.

<sup>735</sup> A population of 380,000 and seating in the three Methodist denominations for 57,195.

The building of Methodist chapels (in parishes which all had Anglican churches) speaks of the desire for community-within-community and a wish to be different.<sup>736</sup> The dearth of other places of worship then emphasises the importance of both Methodist denominations and their significance for community formation. There were only eight 'Independent or Congregational' and eight Baptist chapels of one persuasion or another on the Wolds.<sup>737</sup> These were almost exclusively in the market towns on the area's periphery. They were certainly not positioned in the truly rural parishes, and this highlights one of the unique roles of Methodism. Countryside dwellers could worship where they wanted to without the need to travel. An intimacy was available to them and the use of 'my' became a possibility. Heft is also given by recording that none of these alternative places of worship, the one Quaker Meeting House and two Catholic churches included, were built after the second decade of the century and several had been constructed during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>738</sup> One hundred and twenty-one chapels on the Wolds by 1851, with more still to be built, is testimony to Methodist prominence and dominance. Only seven of the Wesleyan chapels were built in the last decades of the eighteenth century, with the busiest period for chapel building again being the 1820s. Most Primitive Methodist chapels then came into being during the subsequent three decades but, in essence, Methodism was keeping the local traders and craftsmen busy for a fifty-year period and beyond.<sup>739</sup> This mirrored the experience in the Black Country and the number of Methodist societies formed in each area speaks for itself. The symbolism of chapel building is redolent with meaning. They stood as a message to all: to those who entered and to those who remained outside.

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<sup>736</sup> Bridlington Primitive Methodist, Thwing Chapel Book 1840-1880, 1840, Bridlington Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRQ/3/61, East Riding Archives. Bridlington Primitive Methodist, Rudston Chapel Accounts 1839-1876, 1839, Bridlington Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRQ/3/59, East Riding Archives. It is explained that the chapel was built in 1827, after much negotiation, on land belonging to a Mr. Hopkinson. Trustees had a ninety-nine-year lease.

<sup>737</sup> Ibid. There was one Quaker Meeting House, one Unitarian chapel and two Catholic churches. The twenty places of worship were, almost without exception, in the towns on the edge of the Wolds and not in the villages. Parliament, *Census of Great Britain 1851, Religious Worship*, 1853.

<sup>738</sup> Ibid.

<sup>739</sup> Beverley Wesleyan Circuit Annual Trustees Meeting Minute Book 1879-1909, 26 March, 1879, Beverley Wesleyan Circuit, MRB/1/6, East Riding Archives. Many other minute books also contain lists of traders who have been employed to carry out works. Calder refers to the 'small and overlapping set of builders.' See Calder, *The Origins of Primitive Methodism*, 182.



That proper steps be taken to procure land to build a place of worship for the use of the society at Walsall. That a building thirty feet long and twenty feet wide be recommended.<sup>740</sup>

Just as the number of chapels is important, the size of the congregations is also of huge significance. On census Sunday in 1851, for the seventy-nine parishes on the Wolds, it was recorded that there were 13,993 attendances at Wesleyan places of worship and 6,989 at Primitive Methodist services. The two denominations were remarkably consistent in that, sixty-three per cent of Wesleyan attendances and sixty-four per cent of Primitive attendances were in the more rural parishes.<sup>741</sup> The total Methodist attendances of almost twenty-one thousand can be compared with the Established Church figure of just over eleven thousand.

The choice offered by Methodism is again gleaned from the census of 1851. There was the choice between Church of England and Methodist and this was offered in sixty-five of the seventy-nine parishes on the Wolds. Sixty-three of the parishes had a Wesleyan and forty-eight a Primitive place of Worship. The choice between Wesleyan and Primitive Methodist was important in relatively small communities: not least it increased the number of happenings and the number of roles to be filled. It meant choosing who to sit alongside and who not to. Forty-six of the parishes did indeed have both a Wesleyan and a Primitive place of worship but there would never have been far to travel to reach one or the other. All parishes with over four hundred occupants had at least one Methodist chapel except Sledmere, the ancestral home of the Sykes family. However, it would not be long before even this parish had both a Wesleyan and a Primitive Methodist chapel. Seven of the nine parishes with between three hundred and four hundred inhabitants had at least one Methodist place of worship. The village of Reighton, with a population of two hundred and forty-seven, was the least populated parish to have chapels of both denominations. There were enough seats for one hundred and twenty of these inhabitants, and it was also recorded that there was room for a further fifty to stand.<sup>742</sup>

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<sup>740</sup> Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1842-1848, 4 September 1848, Walsall Archives.

<sup>741</sup> Calculated by removing the attendance figures for Driffield, Bridlington, Beverley, Market Weighton and Pocklington.

<sup>742</sup> Parliament, *Census of Great Britain 1851, Religious Worship*, 1853.

In one sense, urban living did provide more options. On the Wolds it was a binary choice between the Wesleyans and the Primitives: a dividing line sharply drawn. In the sprawl of Black Country towns, there were further possibilities. In particular, the Methodist New Connexion had established itself early in the century with thirty-six chapels built.<sup>743</sup> These, however, were mainly clustered around the towns of Dudley and Stourbridge.

That there were Methodist communities in abundance all over the Wolds and throughout the Black Country is undeniable. The distinction, however, between the members of the society and those who were simply part of the congregation again needs to be emphasised. This is explained by the comment made by a contributor to the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* in 1861:

They come to the *house*, but not to the *table*. They are outer-court worshippers.<sup>744</sup>

Those who attended without becoming members were destined to remain on the periphery. They were certainly not able to partake of communion. It was those in the inner-court who formed the backbone of communities and the two denominations, both in the Black Country and on the Wolds, were preoccupied by the collation of figures.<sup>745</sup> The hope was that a year-on-year increase could be demonstrated as an indication of success and membership numbers were recorded on a quarterly basis.<sup>746</sup> The Darlaston Primitive Methodists highlight this. In March 1826, this circuit covered the entire Black Country and the names of every one

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<sup>743</sup> Ibid, "Places of Worship, Sittings, and Attendance in England and Wales," Division VI, 73-74.

<sup>744</sup> "Society-Meetings", *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, April 1861, 341. Most chapels did the same as the Wesleyans of Warter. In 1878 they recorded twenty-five members of the society and sixty regular hearers. See Pocklington Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, Warter Chapel Book, 1878, MRP/1/71, East Riding Archives.

<sup>745</sup> Davis, George and Rupp, *A History of the Methodist Church*, vol IV, 272. Here, an extract from the *Minutes of Conference* of the Wesleyan Methodists, held in Liverpool in 1820, is advocating the return of Quarterly Schedules by all circuits.

<sup>746</sup> For Wesleyan Methodism, the so-called Fly Sheets controversy, between 1844 and 1849, did cause a temporary decline in membership. By the late 1880s there was concern that, even with membership numbers increasing, 'the advance...in recent years...is far from satisfactory, when viewed in relation...to the growth of the population.' See the *Minutes of Conference*, appendix XI, for 1889, in Davis, George and Rupp, *A History of the Methodist Church*, vol IV, 572. Quarterly, meaning every three months, became important to Methodist organisation.

<sup>746</sup> For Wesleyan Methodism on the Wolds see, for example, Driffield Wesleyan Methodist Circuit Minutes of Quarterly Meetings 1870-1880, East Riding Archives. Also Market Weighton Wesleyan Circuit Quarterly Schedule 1860-1880, 1880, Market Weighton Wesleyan Circuit, MRM/1/19, East Riding Archives. Pocklington Wesleyan Methodist Circuit Schedule Book 1870-1884, Pocklington Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, MRP/1/11, East Riding Archives.

of the nine hundred and ninety-five members were recorded.<sup>747</sup> There were twenty-six societies, and this included Tipton, Dudley, Stourbridge, Wolverhampton, Walsall and Birmingham. While Darlaston had one hundred and eighty-six members, there were only seven meeting at Coseley.<sup>748</sup> The Beverley Wesleyan circuit retained its records of membership, chapel by chapel, from the 1830s right up to the end of the 1880s. The Quarterly Meetings gave comment in relation to the figures presented.<sup>749</sup>

Building chapels was the strategy employed to retain these numbers and hopefully experience growth. When, in 1835, the Wesleyan chapel was built in the village of Lund, there were twenty-one named members of the society. The chapel could accommodate far more than this but the main concern of the indenture, signed in the same year, was telling:

...the erection of a chapel with such appurtenances as may be thought convenient for the use of the people called Methodists.<sup>750</sup>

There was seemingly a difference experienced on the Wolds by the two denominations in relation to upheaval. Whereas the Wesleyans, from one circuit to another, generally recorded a small number of removals to other areas of the country, the Primitive Methodists were, at times, overwhelmed by the exodus. Wesleyan records indicate that each circuit might expect to lose around ten members in this way each year.<sup>751</sup> The Driffeld Primitive Methodist experience was indicative of what all other of their circuits connected to the Wolds had to face. The numbers departing for pastures new increased markedly during the 1860s and 1870s. In 1862 there were eighty-eight 'removals' but this rose to one hundred and twelve in 1871 and one hundred and twenty in 1872.<sup>752</sup> This hints at the constituency of the two memberships, and the greater likelihood of Primitive Methodist families needing to

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<sup>747</sup> Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit, Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1824-1832, 42/1/1, Walsall Archives. This information is recorded towards the back of the book. At this time Wolverhampton only had twelve members, Stourbridge fifteen and Walsall ten.

<sup>748</sup> Ibid.

<sup>749</sup> Beverley Wesleyan Circuit Schedule Books 1836-1887, 1836-1887, Beverley Wesleyan Circuit, MRB/1/21-MRB/125, East Riding Archives. Also Beverley Wesleyan Circuit Quarterly Minute Book 1844-1884, Beverley Wesleyan Circuit, MRB/1/121, East Riding Archives.

<sup>750</sup> Driffeld Wesleyan Circuit, Lund Chapel Book 1835-1874, 8 August 1835, Driffeld Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, MRD/1/28/1, East Riding Archives.

<sup>751</sup> See, for example, Driffeld Wesleyan Circuit Minutes of Quarterly Meetings 1870-1880, East Riding Archives. Also, Market Weighton Wesleyan Circuit Quarterly Schedule 1860-1880, 1880, East Riding Archives. Pocklington Wesleyan Circuit Schedule Book 1870-1884, East Riding Archives.

<sup>752</sup> Driffeld Primitive Methodist Circuit Statistics Documents 1861-1880, East Riding Archives.

remove themselves for employment purposes. It is remarkable that these figures were added to because of death and 'backsliding' and yet membership figures remained relatively stable: testament to the proselytising capabilities.<sup>753</sup> For obvious reasons related to the search for work, the Black Country circuits benefited from the pull of employment opportunities. The Primitive Methodist experience was still the more volatile as greater numbers tended to move to, or from, the neighbouring towns.<sup>754</sup> For the individual member moving from the Wolds, or into and around the Black Country, the significant point to be made is that of the continuity of community, offered by both brands of Methodism.

Credentials would be sent and received:

Dear Brethren in the Lord, the bearer of this credential whose name is Henry Wheeler has been a regular member with us...As far as we know, his removing to your circuit is regular and orderly. And we know of no charge or complaint in existence against him.<sup>755</sup>

Once received by the Quarter Day Meeting of the Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit, Henry, along with countless others, could enter his new chapel confidently knowing what was about to occur. The Filey Primitive Methodist circuit was in the habit, each quarter, of recording the names of the members who had removed from their society. Appended to the list was always a note as to whether they had been 'credentialed' or not.<sup>756</sup>

### **Shared Purpose**

Once choice had been exercised, and thresholds crossed, there were three internal spaces that enabled the consolidation of community. These were the chapel itself, the vestry, and the schoolroom: places because of identified purpose and each capable of fostering a spirit of togetherness.<sup>757</sup> This was the same for the Wesleyans of Darlington Street in

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<sup>753</sup> Ibid. In 1862 there were one hundred and forty-five described as 'fallen' with the loss of membership totalling two hundred and fifty-two. However, because of new members, the circuit membership only declined by twenty-three. There were one thousand members of the Drifffield circuit at this time. Even after the removals and backsliding, there were one thousand two hundred and eighty-six members in 1871.

<sup>754</sup> Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1867-1885, 4 March 1878, Walsall Archives.

<sup>755</sup> Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1850-1853, 15 March 1852, Walsall Archives.

<sup>756</sup> Filey Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly Schedules 1862-1885, 1868, North Yorkshire Record Office.

<sup>757</sup> Schoolrooms were built so that Sunday Schools could meet.

Wolverhampton, the Primitive Methodists of Toll End in Tipton and all who worshipped in the villages on the Wolds.<sup>758</sup>

In essence, chapels existed so that religious services could take place.<sup>759</sup> Community was emphasised in several ways, both obvious and subliminal. In all chapels, for example, there was the distinction made between the regular attenders and those deemed to be strangers. The Wesleyans of Darlington Street in Wolverhampton were assigning friends to watch over the strangers in each aisle during the 1830s and members were still being assigned to various areas of the chapel for the same purpose some fifty years later:

The stewards are to engage two efficient men to take charge of the chapel to keep order during divine service and provide strangers with a seat.<sup>760</sup>

A heightened sense of community can be emphasised with reference to the Darlington Street chapel thresholds. For one series of services, the pew holders were to gain entry 'by way of the back door entrance.' The strangers were to be admitted at the front. This symbolic divide was added to. Those entitled to use the back door were to arrive at least half an hour before the others. Already in situ, they could make themselves at-home: it was their familiar setting. Placards were printed in advance bearing this information.<sup>761</sup> Copies of the hymn book were bought specifically 'for the use of strangers.'<sup>762</sup> The six-dozen purchased for the chapel in 1886 was nothing compared to the one hundred and fifty obtained at the turn of the century.<sup>763</sup> Another distinguishing feature: those committed to

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<sup>758</sup> Toll End Primitive Methodist Leaders' Book 1853-1863, Sandwell Archives.

<sup>759</sup> Beverley Wesleyan Circuit Preachers' Plans, 1824-1900, East Riding Archives. Bridlington Primitive Methodist Reports 1849-1879, East Riding Archives. Toll End Primitive Methodist Managing Committee Minute Book 1861-1863, Primitive Methodism, NC38/2/2/1, Sandwell Archives.

<sup>760</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Trustees Minutes 1854-1889, 3 June 1870, Wolverhampton Wesleyan Methodist, M-DS/2/3, Wolverhampton Archives. Also Bilston Road Wesleyan Methodist Chapel Trustees Minutes 1875-1906, 11 February 1884, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>761</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Trustees Minutes 1854-1889, 16 August 1871, Wolverhampton Archives. It was often recorded that there were difficulties, due to the number of seats reserved for those already part of the community, for people to make the transition into it. See Darlington Street Chapel Trustees Minutes 1854-1889, 17 November 1876, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>762</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Trust Minutes 1836-1854, 22 February 1841, Wolverhampton Archives. Darlington Street Chapel Leaders' Meeting Minute Book 1856-1894, 16 January 1872, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>763</sup> Darlington Street and Newhampton Road Trustees Minutes 1863-1911, 19 August 1886, 17 June 1901, Wolverhampton Archives.

the society were expected to walk to chapel with their own copy or it could be left in the pew as a way of marking territory.

Hymn books were important to Methodists. Familiarity with the contents distinguished those in community from those who were not. Possession and use of either the Wesleyan or Primitive version was a distinguishing mark. They were part-and-parcel of Methodist routine and routine helped to shape community. Knowing what to do and when to do it, what to sing and when to sing it was significant. Affiliation to Darlington Street Wesleyan chapel could be confirmed by the purchase of one of the books embossed with its name and replicating the larger versions placed in the main and 'lower' pulpits.<sup>764</sup>

There were many other routines associated with Methodist services and familiarity bred community. There was the shared listening to passages of scripture, to prayers and the sermon.<sup>765</sup> There was the reciting of the Lord's Prayer. Week-in, week-out, the next happening could be anticipated. With minor variation this was the case whether attending in a village on the Wolds or town in the Black Country. One thing was sure: an offertory would be taken. Those who regularly attended the services at Darlington Street chapel would never have been caught unawares. They, undoubtedly, held opinions as to the best method to adopt. They might have sided with the gentleman who donated eighteen plates, or they could have agreed with the decision to use bags. Either way, they would have known what to do when the receptacle arrived.<sup>766</sup>

The Lord's Supper came to be known as communion and, as routine, this sums up something of community. It was held at the conclusion of the service: strangers and those who were not members would leave. A divide enhanced, it was a time and place specifically for

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<sup>764</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Letters, Receipts and Accounts 1871-1873, 24 May 1872, Wolverhampton Wesleyan Methodist, M-DS/3/1/2, Wolverhampton Archives. This was a receipt from William Hirst.

<sup>765</sup> See discussions related to this in Darlington Street Chapel Trustees Minutes 1854-1889, 16 August 1871, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>766</sup> Darlington Street and Newhampton Road Trustees Minutes 1863-1911, 23 August 1886, 4 February 1888, Wolverhampton Archives. Interestingly, plates were to be used on occasions when a greater number of strangers might be expected: a strategy to obtain more! In 1872 there had been worry because of 'the noise the bags made at divine service.' See Darlington Street Leaders' Meeting Minute Book 1856-1894, 4 March 1872.

members. As community, they could be guided to the front of the chapel, to a place set aside, to receive the sacrament.<sup>767</sup>

Vestries were there for a purpose. They were used for class meetings, prayer meetings and for Bible Study. This was certainly the case for the Darlington Street chapel. For prolonged periods there were class meetings held on most weekday evenings at eight o'clock, on Saturdays at 7.30pm. and at various times on Sundays.<sup>768</sup> Throughout the century there were prayer meetings and Bible classes. In the 1850s there were frequently daily prayer meetings at midday. They were often arranged because of specific issues related to the chapel itself, the country, or the world.<sup>769</sup> The same arrangements were made in the 1870s:

Special prayer meetings to be: Tuesday for the conversion of the children of the members of our congregation, Wednesday for the unconverted part of society, Thursday for backsliders, Friday for the sanctification of the church.<sup>770</sup>

The sustained popularity of the adult Bible class meant that, during the 1880s, there were concerns being raised as to the inadequate size of the room.<sup>771</sup>

The schoolroom was just that. Varying in size depending on need and funds it was primarily the space for the Sunday School. The Darlington Street chapel had several such rooms because so many scholars needed to be accommodated. By no means an exceptional year, in 1860 there were five hundred and fifty of them. In the whole of Wolverhampton just under three thousand children attended Wesleyan Sunday Schools.<sup>772</sup> The stated aims were 'to

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<sup>767</sup> Much attention was given to the furnishings and fittings for the communion area. See Darlington Street and Newhampton Road Trustees Minutes 1863-1911, 19 November 1871, Wolverhampton Archives. Also Bilston Road Wesleyan Methodist Chapel Trustees Minutes 1875-1906, 3 December 1878, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>768</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Leaders' Meeting Minute Book 1856-1894, 3 November 1856, 9 March 1857, 26 October 1857, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>769</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Leaders' Meeting Minute Book 1856-1894, 21 November 1859, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>770</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Leaders' Meeting Minute Book 1856-1894, 15 January 1872, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>771</sup> Darlington Street and Newhampton Road Trustees Minutes 1863-1911, 1 May 1890, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>772</sup> Wolverhampton Wesleyan Methodist Sunday School Union Circuit Minute Book 1860-1873, 5 October 1860, Wolverhampton Archives. In 1877 a letter from the Sunday School to the trustees of the chapel informed them of an attendance of five hundred and fifty-six which was a ten per cent increase on the previous year. See Darlington Street Chapel Letters, Receipts and Accounts 1873-1907, 1877, Wolverhampton Wesleyan Methodist, M-DS/3/1/5, Wolverhampton Archives.

instil into the minds of the little ones the sacred truths of the Bible' and to 'work for the conversion of the young.'<sup>773</sup> It was fortunate that the committee felt able to state that 'many were of the right stamp.'<sup>774</sup>

Even if it did attempt to do things on the grandest of scales, Darlington Street Wesleyan chapel was not the exception. The same scenario existed throughout the Wolverhampton Wesleyan circuit and for all the other Black Country circuits. Primitive Methodism took longer but got there in the end. When their chapels were first built, it might have been more difficult to distinguish the member from the stranger. Benches were hired or borrowed, and people sat down on a first-come-first served basis:

Willenhall's benches to be moved to Darlaston.<sup>775</sup>

Pews came later.

The services and routines were also like those of the Wesleyans:

That every place on the plan where there is a chapel have [sic] sacrament once a quarter.<sup>776</sup>

Vestries and schoolrooms were often added later when finances allowed:

There shall be a Sunday School built in Darlaston.<sup>777</sup>

The third space provided by chapels certainly nurtured community in the villages of the East Riding Wolds. Services were of the same format and frequency, whether held in Wolverhampton, Driffield or Wetwang. There were the same gatherings. The Driffield Wesleyan Circuit Plan for 1877 announced:

That Prayer Meetings be held in every place, at the most convenient hours. The new Wesleyan Hymn Book, authorized by the Conference

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<sup>773</sup> Wolverhampton Wesleyan Methodist Sunday School Union Circuit Minute Book 1860-1873, 10 March 1871, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>774</sup> Ibid, 8 September 1868.

<sup>775</sup> Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1824-1832, 5 January 1826, Walsall Archives.

<sup>776</sup> "Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1832-1838, 5 September 1833, Walsall Archives.

<sup>777</sup> Ibid. 3 July 1834. This was several years after the chapel had been built. The Primitive Methodists of Wednesfield waited until 1852 to erect their schoolroom. See Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1850-1853, 15 March 1852, Walsall Archives.



to be used in all our Chapels, and may be obtained of the Superintendent, and through the Society Stewards in the Country Places.<sup>778</sup>

At the same time, the Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Preachers' Plan was emphasising the services to be held, the meetings to be attended and the Sunday Schools to be inspected. Wetwang, for example, had two services each Sunday and one during the week. This was identical to the Wesleyans in the same village. Its Sunday School was to be inspected on 28 October 1877, and there were class meetings and prayer meetings.<sup>779</sup> There were inevitably differences between the town and village communities. Even though still called strangers, the non-members were more likely to be known in the village setting and this could make the contrast between those in community and those not even more stark. Smaller spaces meant even greater intimacy: fewer staying for communion but fewer leaving also.

Everything about the use of third space mentioned thus far was ostensibly related to the fourth dimension and people's quest for a relationship with God. It had been about the filling of the further, fourth space. John May died on 15 November 1860. He was a Primitive Methodist from the village of Huggate but his sentiments speak loud the possibilities related to chapel attendance for people throughout both areas. According to the writer of his obituary, he knew that religion had to 'take possession of the heart.' It formed a place within. From deep inside to heavenly edifice:

Just before death he said, "but I have a building above, a house not made of hands, eternal in the heavens."<sup>780</sup>

For the Methodist it was conversion which enabled chapel-based community to be experienced. For fourth space it was conversion's assurance of salvation which secured the place above. The Primitive Methodists of Middleton-on-the-Wolds were reported to leave their chapel in one of two ways. They 'removed to other parts of the kingdom in search of

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<sup>778</sup> Driffield Wesleyan Circuit Preachers' Plan 1877-8, Driffield Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, MRD/1/6/1, East Riding Archives.

<sup>779</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Preachers Plans 1844-1880, 1877-1878, East Riding Archives.

<sup>780</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, May 1861, 262.

employment' or they were 'transplanted into [the] celestial clime.'<sup>781</sup> Either way, a new community awaited. A few miles away, at Garton-on-the-Wolds, the direct link between third and fourth space was emphasised:

...the friends assembled together every evening, to pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the conversion of sinners; and their prayers were not in vain, for at the close of the sabbath seven or eight souls were made partakers of salvation. The society has nearly doubled its number of members and the converting work is still alive. Glory be to God!<sup>782</sup>

Brother Brown was one of this number. When, in September 1852, he emigrated to Australia, he went knowing that Methodist community was available to him: in all four spaces.<sup>783</sup>

Successful proselytising had necessitated the putting down of roots. The seemingly inexorable move towards chapel building had served, although perhaps not literally at this time, to cement community. Disparate people became united under one roof and, throughout Victoria's reign, a spatial process was let loose by those charged with moving Methodism forward. The reduction of events *al fresco* and the very definite retreat indoors was seen as the key to success. Nuance might have been provided by the advent of Primitive Methodism with its determination not to lose sight of original aims and methods, but the century was very definitely dominated by chapel building, rebuilding and renovation.

It is the latter two of these ventures, connected to third space, which can be used to highlight the things of importance related to both the strength of community and its ultimate decay. In the towns, the building of replacement chapels, which were always larger

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<sup>781</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, November 1845, 549.

<sup>782</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, November 1845, 549.

<sup>783</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Minute Book of Quarterly Meetings 1852-1873, 17 September 1852, East Riding Archives.

and grander than their predecessors, was a common theme.<sup>784</sup> In the villages it was usually improvement or extension to those already existing that was the preoccupation.<sup>785</sup>

Wesleyan Methodism's presence in Wolverhampton's Darlington Street is the outstanding example. From the building of the first chapel in 1824, it went through several iterations before the erection of the final, and enormous, domed structure at the turn of the century. It sat at a crossroads in more ways than one. The site was at the intersection of the town's two main thoroughfares thus providing a statement as to the supposed significance of Wesleyanism for the town. It straddled the divide between the Victorian and Edwardian ages but, though full of optimism, its opening left debt, and other issues in its wake.

The goings-on in the Darlington Street chapel can be compared with the building of Primitive Methodist chapels in villages throughout the Yorkshire Wolds. In September 1859 the Wolverhampton Wesleyans were instructing architects to add ornamentation to the south and east sides of the sanctuary. Ambitions were only heightened when thoughts turned to the design of the new building and stained glass came courtesy of several benefactors.<sup>786</sup> In Fimber the members of society could feel pleased that:

The situation of the chapel is very good, and its exterior and interior appearance very creditable. It is about thirty feet in length by twenty-six in width, and fifteen feet high from the boarded floor to the ceiling. It is lighted by seven circular-headed windows, which are filled in with opaque glass.<sup>787</sup>

The two chapels mentioned here provide comment on community and insight into issues of change and continuity, similarity and difference. The urban experience was prone to far more upheaval with very definite repercussions. A first way for this to manifest itself was in alterations to the communal experience of worship within chapels: changes to the way service time was used. The roles played by a father and son in the life of Darlington Street's

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<sup>784</sup> Bilston Wesleyan Circuit, Minutes of Trustees Meetings 1876-1907, March 1883, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>785</sup> Beverley Wesleyan Circuit, Walkington Chapel Trustees Minute Book 1879-1897, 21 February 1879, Beverley Wesleyan Circuit, MRB/1/116, East Riding Archives. Beverley Wesleyan Circuit, Newbald Chapel Treasurer's Account Book 1855-1918, 1855, Beverley Wesleyan Circuit, MRB/1/108, East Riding Archives.

<sup>786</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Trustees Minutes 1854-1889, 22 September 1859 and 26 September 1859, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>787</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, February 1864, 113.

Wesleyan community can shed light. In 1844, Henry Hinde was given the responsibility of lead singer with a small monetary allowance. There was an organ, but this was frequently out of commission due to its poor state of repair. The emphasis was on the entire congregation singing together with as much gusto as could be mustered. Henry set the tone.<sup>788</sup> By the end of the decade, the focus had shifted. The inferior instrument was to be advertised and a new, much grander, organ purchased. Mr. Baker, organist for a period of years, was deemed not to be proficient enough.<sup>789</sup> Although it was hoped 'that the organist [would] do it gratuitously' the proposal did not meet with the approval of the new incumbent, who happened to be Henry's son, Arthur.<sup>790</sup> This possible act of nepotism hints at a benefit of being part of the close-knit community. With the introduction of the new organ and the recently appointed organist, changes were made. A recurring theme began to be worries related to the poor quality of the singing.<sup>791</sup> In 1855 this resulted in the forming of a committee 'with a view to the improvement of the congregational singing.'<sup>792</sup> Particular problems with afternoon services were to be eased by a person being 'deputed to start the tunes.'<sup>793</sup> Choirs were established, and potential leaders interviewed:

To take the entire superintendence of the Singing Department of Public Worship with reference first to the selection of members of the choir and second the tunes to be used and third the measures to be adopted for the improvement of the singing generally.<sup>794</sup>

The longest serving was William Brotherton, who spent many years vying with Arthur Hinde for recognition and hoped for stipend improvement.<sup>795</sup> Between them they oversaw the introduction of weekly choir practice and the singing of anthems. There were organ voluntaries and bigger and better meant that new instruments were installed every decade

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<sup>788</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Trust Minutes 1836-1854, 22 January 1841, 11 February 1844, 26 July 1844, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>789</sup> Ibid, 14 February 1848, 14 January 1849, 12 March 1849. The attempted tuning of the organ had failed to improve the situation sufficiently. Mr. Baker was asked to tender his resignation.

<sup>790</sup> Ibid, 12 March 1849.

<sup>791</sup> See, for example, Darlington Street Chapel Leaders' Meeting Minute Book 1856-1894, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>792</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Trustees Minutes 1854-1889, 3 April 1855, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>793</sup> Ibid.

<sup>794</sup> Ibid, 8 September 1856.

<sup>795</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Leaders' Meeting Minute Book 1856-1894, 4 December 1871, Wolverhampton Archives. On 1 July 1857 it was recorded that the organist should be allowed £16 instead of £12 per annum 'as long as he plays on Monday evenings.'

or so. Whenever this happened, the Sunday services for several weeks were devoted 'to a celebration of the new organ.'<sup>796</sup> Differentiation within the service, with congregation listening rather than participating, meant division within community. To emphasise this, by the 1870s, it was being decided that to retain a choir of quality, the members would need to be remunerated.<sup>797</sup>

The familiar routine was also, eventually, tempted into ritual, and this definitely caused unease within community. The introduction of spoken responses and the chanting of psalms was voted on during the 1860s with the conclusion being that:

These proposed changes just at the present time might lead to serious complication and difficulties.<sup>798</sup>

Much is revealed in a report compiled by trustees of the chapel some ten years later. Their desire had been to make services 'more attractive and more in accord with the advances of musical knowledge and taste.'<sup>799</sup> The solutions included bringing the commandments before the congregation with sung responses. They were also keen to record that the opening, extemporaneous, prayer 'might be advantageously shortened.'<sup>800</sup> Chants and the singing of psalms were now to be encouraged. Repercussions for community cohesion were summed up thus:

These alterations would be improvements which would satisfy the wishes of those who desire to see the services brought more into harmony with the present requirements... and yet respect those good friends who regard with some jealousy any departure from the forms of worship which for some years have been in use in this chapel.<sup>801</sup>

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<sup>796</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Trustees Minutes 1854-1889, 22 August 1861, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>797</sup> Ibid, 17 November 1876.

<sup>798</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Leaders' Meeting Minute Book 1856-1894, 22 February 1869, Wolverhampton Archives. There were fifteen votes against the introduction of chants and only two in favour.

<sup>799</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Trustees Minutes 1854-1889, 24 May 1878, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>800</sup> Ibid.

<sup>801</sup> Ibid.

Change was not swift. It took until 1887 for the trustees to be in full accord regarding 'occasional' chants and the congregational repetition of the Lord's Prayer.<sup>802</sup>

Jeanne Halgren Kilde speaks of religious space as dynamic in connection to the relationships formed and the possible displays of power.<sup>803</sup> In her thinking, she is greatly influenced by the work of Mircea Eliade. In explanations related to the sacralisation of space he introduces hierophany to sum up irruptions of the sacred.<sup>804</sup> These irruptions mean that, for an individual, there is something of the vertical which is occurring: the filling of the fourth dimension between worshipper and God. The horizontal does, however, play its part and this is what Kilde acknowledges. The sacred seeps out to the profane fringes or those fringes infiltrate the sacred.<sup>805</sup> The trustees of Darlington Street chapel, along with Arthur Hinde and William Brotherton, played their part in all of this with implications for community. Indeed, these men can highlight Jonathan Smith's point that human behaviours do sacralise space.<sup>806</sup> Moreover, they can also be the instruments of desacralisation.

### **Upside-Down and Outside-In**

Human behaviours and the built environment are inextricably linked, and it is Kilde who explores in detail the specific role of church architecture. Buildings, as she points out, are not static.<sup>807</sup> In her church-related exploration of architectural change in nineteenth century America, the buildings are read as texts. The two most accessible findings are a propensity for massiveness and the development of theatre-style characteristics.<sup>808</sup> Taken together there is parsing to be done on behalf of the external observer and the internal participant. Darlington Street Wesleyan chapel's many building projects saw growth in size throughout the century. Its final version, the one opened in 1901, was certainly massive but the trustees

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<sup>802</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Leaders' Meeting Minute Book 1856-1894, 25 April 1887, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>803</sup> Jeanne H. Kilde, *Sacred Power, Sacred Space: an Introduction to Christian Architecture and Worship* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) 3.

<sup>804</sup> Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 11.

<sup>805</sup> Kilde, *Sacred Power, Sacred Space*, 4-5. Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 11-16.

<sup>806</sup> Smith, *To Take Place*, 56-60.

<sup>807</sup> Kilde, *Sacred Power, Sacred Space*, 200.

<sup>808</sup> Jeanne H. Kilde, *When Church Became Theatre: the Transformation of Evangelical Architecture and Worship in Nineteenth Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) 5.

were also aiming for the magnificent.<sup>809</sup> This was the repeated tendency for other chapels, which increasingly came to be called churches. In the Black Country, for example, the Bilston Wesleyans erected:

a substantial brick building, capable of seating at least six hundred persons...for an opportunity of worshipping the Lord in the beauty of holiness.<sup>810</sup>

The towns on the periphery of the Wolds all had either new chapels built or improvement projects undertaken throughout the second half of the century.<sup>811</sup>

The internal participants could, increasingly over time, also be actors or audience. Some of this has been hinted at because of changes to the format of services. Architectural modifications, or supposed enhancements, added emphasis. Kilde speaks of God, clergy, and laity meeting and negotiating their respective relationships within church spaces.<sup>812</sup> She refers to stages replacing pulpits, huge organ consoles, balconies, and arcs of curved pews.<sup>813</sup> In Wolverhampton galleries were incorporated. Darlington Street's original chapel had one, but in 1860, there were meetings arranged for the sole purpose of discussing plans for the new, and larger one.<sup>814</sup> A later decision was for cornices to be added.<sup>815</sup> Although often temporary constructions, platforms were erected. In 1867 it had been decided:

...that the platform be inspected, and green baize purchased if necessary.<sup>816</sup>

Twenty years later similar discussions were still taking place:

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<sup>809</sup> Darlington Street Material Relating to the Opening of the New Chapel, letter dated 29 October 1901, Wolverhampton Wesleyan Methodist, M-DS/6/1/6, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>810</sup> Bilston Wesleyan Circuit, Minutes of Quarterly Meetings 1863-1896, 20 July 1863, Wolverhampton Archives. It was to cost £900 'without any affluent persons in the Society. The bulk comprised of men who toil in great dangers.' For Primitive Methodism in the Black Country see Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit, Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1896-1913, 6 September 1898, Walsall Archives. Darlaston Wesleyan Circuit Building Committee Minute Book 1883-1885, 42/2/44, Walsall Archives.

<sup>811</sup> "Opening of the Wesleyan New Chapel, Market Weighton", *Yorkshireman's News*, October 1, 1868.

<sup>812</sup> Kilde, *When Church Became Theatre*, 10.

<sup>813</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

<sup>814</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Trustees Minutes 1854-1889, 3 January 1860, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>815</sup> *Ibid*, 10 September 1860.

<sup>816</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Missionary Committee Minutes 1867-1878, 30 August 1867, Wolverhampton Archives. Galleries became *de rigueur*. In 1857 the Wednesfield Wesleyans was seeking an estimate for adding a gallery to their already existing chapel. See Darlington Street Chapel Trustees Minutes 1854-1889, 1 July 1857, Wolverhampton Archives.

A deputation met the trustees respecting the fixing of a platform for the children to sing upon at the School Anniversary. It was decided that one be placed on the tile pavement level with the floor of the communion rail.<sup>817</sup>

Stalls were added for the choir and then, in 1879, a gallery specifically for its use was introduced. There were especial seats for the lead singers.<sup>818</sup> The link between altered architecture and changes to the community dynamic can be highlighted by the letter written by members of the newly built chapel's choir:

...the singing would be greatly improved if the choir faced the congregation instead of as at present arranged.<sup>819</sup>

So, it was the members of the choir, and not the congregation, who were initially wanting this distinguishing feature. If there was need of a conductor, by 1890, they had ceased to refer to the pulpit and were mentioning the rostrum instead.<sup>820</sup>

Some of this was a very urban trend. With buildings bigger and populations larger, choirs could expect to have more songsters and there was greater potential for an audience. Village chapels were not, however, immune from architecture's influence. In 1864, Fimber's newly built Primitive Methodist chapel had taken the following into consideration:

To increase the comfort of the worshippers, the backs of the pews are made to recline, and a neat platform has been erected for speakers at public meetings or preaching services.<sup>821</sup>

West Lutton's new Primitive Methodist chapel did have a 'handsome gallery and semi-circular orchestra.'<sup>822</sup>

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<sup>817</sup> Darlington Street and Newhampton Road Trustees Minutes 1863-1911, Wolverhampton Archives, M-DS/2/5." See entry for March 26<sup>th</sup>, 1887.

<sup>818</sup> "Wolverhampton Wesleyan Circuit Darlington Street and Newhampton Road Trustees Minutes 1863-1911, 28 February 1879, Wolverhampton Archives. The choir was campaigning for a particular style of book rail to distinguish them from the rest of the congregation.

<sup>819</sup> Darlington Street and Newhampton Road Trustees Minutes 1863-1911, undated letter, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>820</sup> Ibid, 17 February 1890.

<sup>821</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, February 1864, 113.

<sup>822</sup> Ibid, March 1864, 182.



Although smaller, the village Methodist chapels were still built with size as a defining feature, and they were roomy enough for large numbers to attend. The West Lutton chapel had accommodation for three hundred people: almost large enough for the whole village to be seated.<sup>823</sup>

Buildings that were larger and adorned with the features and embellishments mentioned were intended to stand as symbols of success. The Wesleyan and Primitive Methodist communities, however, knew that everything came at a cost. A member of society in financial difficulty would find that their membership had been revoked:

The removal of Mr. G.E. Lambert in September 1863 in consequence of financial embarrassment [sic].<sup>824</sup>

It was almost unheard of, however, for a newly built chapel, or renovation scheme, to be completed without incurring debt. Minute book after minute book throughout the century, for the Wolds and Black Country, are filled with evidence of this double standard. They contain details, for chapel after chapel, of what was owed and the thoughts as to how solvency might be restored. The West Lutton chapel had cost six hundred pounds to build:

three hundred pounds of which have been obtained or promised by means of a Bazaar, Tea Meetings, donations, and the opening services. The remaining three hundred pounds have been borrowed on note at four per cent.<sup>825</sup>

Those who orchestrated the building of the new Darlington Street chapel at the close of the Victorian age knew that the total cost was, 'upwards of nineteen thousand pounds.' Their solution was to establish a Sankey Memorial Fund to liquidate the debt. John William Sankey, a wealthy man and member of society, had died and there was to be a permanent

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<sup>823</sup> Ibid. In 1821 the population of West Lutton was 311.

<sup>824</sup> Bilston Wesleyan Methodist Circuit Minutes of Local Preachers Meetings 1864-1909, 27 March 1865, MC-BW/4/1, Wolverhampton Archives. There are so many examples for both Wesleyanism and Primitive Methodism. See, for example, Bridlington Primitive Methodist Minute Book of the Quarterly Meeting 1875-1880, 27 December 1875, East Riding Archives. Brother Weldon's insolvency is thoroughly discussed.

<sup>825</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, March 1864, 182.

memorial erected to his memory. It was hoped that this might encourage his family to contribute.<sup>826</sup>

The building of these ever-grander chapels, with their new features, coupled with the accumulated debt, had a huge effect on what occurred within. In turn, there were consequences for community as intricacies related to sacralisation and desacralisation were played out. Firstly, the week-in-week-out routine was increasingly interrupted by the introduction of special services. These would always be arranged for the opening or re-opening of a chapel but, over time, the reasons came to border on excuses:

That a week of special services be held!<sup>827</sup>

This was the decision of the Darlington Street chapel trustees to celebrate the painting and repair of the roof. Special services often meant inviting special preachers to deliver the sermon: a special treat for those in community:

Special people to be invited to conduct the services.<sup>828</sup>

These people were not always easy to find but the effort was thought worthwhile. In 1873, it was hoped that the President of the Wesleyan Conference would visit Wolverhampton to deliver sermons. When the request was declined, a deputation was sent to Liverpool 'to secure one of their ministers.' This failed attempt then resulted in the panic of 'sending a telegram to Leamington.'<sup>829</sup> The focus here might still, of course, have been on the edification, and strengthening of community.

This, too, could have been the case with the introduction of two particular special services: the Anniversary and the Harvest Festival. There was the Sunday School Anniversary and the Chapel Anniversary, and both highlight some of the subtle changes which were occurring.<sup>830</sup>

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<sup>826</sup> For a 'request for Permanent Memorial dated 1901' see Darlington Street Chapel Letters, Receipts, Accounts 1873-1907, 1901, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>827</sup> Darlington Street and Newhampton Road Trustees Minutes 1863-1911, 1 September 1871, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>828</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Missionary Committee Minutes 1867-1878, 30 August 1867, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>829</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Trustees Minutes 1854-1889, 13 February 1873 and 18 March 1873, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>830</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Trustees Minutes 1890-1914, 25 September 1891, Wolverhampton Wesleyan Methodist, M-DS/2/7, Wolverhampton Archives. This entry actually refers to six Anniversaries: Sunday School, Chapel, Foreign Missions, Home Missions, Trust Funds and General Hospital.

The first of these was designed as a way of recognising and celebrating the Sunday School and there were periods when the emphasis was on the securing of preachers who would 'address the scholars and others who would be present.'<sup>831</sup> Over time the emphasis altered, the specially erected platforms had to be decorated and the children became performers who had practised for many weeks. What amounted to a costume, or uniform, was worn: girls were often to wear white dresses and boys a tie of particular hue.<sup>832</sup> Men were appointed to train them and specially formed sub-committees chose the music and ensured that the printing was done.<sup>833</sup> When those present were referred to as audience it was clear that change had occurred.<sup>834</sup> When the children were asked to repeat the anniversary music on a week-night evening it was another step away from worship.<sup>835</sup>

Harvest Festivals might well have been introduced for congregational singing of well-loved hymns and the giving of thanks for God's bounty. Other motivations, however, were also afoot. There were invitations for the mayor to attend.<sup>836</sup> Committees were formed to plan and decide on appropriate decoration.<sup>837</sup> In 1888, for example, the Wolverhampton Wesleyans decreed that it should take the form of a Flower Service with musical items. Invitations were sent to all the other chapels in the circuit.<sup>838</sup> Their worship could be cancelled with no qualms.

It became increasingly obvious that these events were being arranged to maximise revenue. This is illustrated by the Darlington Street Chapel Anniversary, held on Sunday, 8 April 1883. Sermons were preached and choirs sang, but the printed sheet, handed to all as they entered, declared that 'collections will be made at the close of each service on behalf of our

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<sup>831</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Missionary Committee Minutes 1867-1878, 20 September 1869, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>832</sup> Darlington Street Sunday School Bushbury Branch 1892-1903, 7 April 1894, Wolverhampton Wesleyan Methodist, M-DS/2/59, Wolverhampton Archives. At this time the committee was relieved 'that the boys be congratulated on the improvement in singing.'

<sup>833</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Sunday School Committee Minutes 1900-1913, 20 February 1901, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>834</sup> Ibid.

<sup>835</sup> Darlington Street Sunday School Bushbury Branch 1892-1903, 23 September 1899, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>836</sup> Bilston Road Chapel Trustees Minutes 1875-1906, 26 July 1899, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>837</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Leaders' Meeting Minute Book 1856-1894, 20 August 1888, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>838</sup> Ibid, 3 September 1888.

funds.' The other information supplied was that the debt of two hundred and sixty-eight pounds required those present to be as liberal in their support as possible.<sup>839</sup>

Society members were attending their chapels but with implications for community because of all that was unfolding. Two examples which highlight the changes to internal space usage can be given. Advertisements were everywhere. There were fees paid to advertising contractors and to those who posted bills. Printing firms competed for the work: possible prestige as well as monetary reward. During the 1860s, the Darlington Street Wesleyans made use of George Williams and Company. A usual order to announce an anniversary included one hundred large posters, three hundred and fifty window bills, one hundred fly-leaf circulars and one thousand small bills.<sup>840</sup> A calculation must have been made that the eight-pound charge was financially worthwhile. During the 1870s, the contract was awarded to John Wilkes and Son and the order was very similar.<sup>841</sup> The same arrangements were made throughout the remainder of the century and beyond.<sup>842</sup> Indeed, in 1897, there were concerns and a particular meeting 'was of the opinion that it is desirable to have our services more widely known.' The solution was for even larger posters to be placed in front of the chapel.<sup>843</sup> Increased use of newspapers had been advocated for a while:

That the Anniversary be well advertised including an insertion in the daily papers of the town for Friday and Saturday and the weekly papers for Saturday.<sup>844</sup>

Inviting people into the space by advertisement rather than by proselytising was certain to affect the experience of community. There was a definite implication that the congregation, increasingly an audience, would be bolstered by those who were transitory. The intimacy of

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<sup>839</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Correspondence 1870-1882, Printed Advertisement 8 April 1883, Wolverhampton Wesleyan, M-DS/5/1, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>840</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Letters, Receipts and Accounts 1866-1872, Wolverhampton Wesleyan Methodist, M-DS/3/1/1, Wolverhampton Archives. See receipts from George Williams and Company dated 1866-1870.

<sup>841</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Letters, Receipts and Accounts 1876-1878, 23 November 1876, Wolverhampton Wesleyan Methodist, M-DS/3/1/7, Wolverhampton Archives. See receipt from John Wilkes and Son.

<sup>842</sup> See, for example, Darlington Street Chapel Letters, Receipts and Accounts 1870-1873, Wolverhampton Archives. Also Darlington Street Chapel Letters, Receipts and Accounts 1873-1907, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>843</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Leaders Meeting Book of Record 1895-1941, 17 June 1897 and 21 October 1897, Wolverhampton Wesleyan Methodist, M-DS/2/9, Wolverhampton Archives, M-DS/2/9.

<sup>844</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Trustees Minutes 1890-1914, 3 March 1890, Wolverhampton Archives.

community might be harder to sustain. Members of the community might feel sidelined or increasingly involved depending on whether they had a role. A second example, or symbol, for what was occurring comes in the form of the notice board, placed by the front door to the chapel. Not something that had always been considered, in 1870, the Darlington Street Wesleyans were wanting to erect one so that the times of Divine Service and prayer meetings could be displayed alongside information about other activities. The names of the minister and the chapel-keeper were to be added.<sup>845</sup> There soon came to be protracted discussions related to the material to be used and the type of lettering:

...prepare and submit a design of a notice board: the wood to be number one specially picked well-seasoned pine, three coats of paint finishing coat of good black, lettering in best English gold leaf, and varnished afterwards.<sup>846</sup>

Tenders were obtained and the preference was for it to have three panels.<sup>847</sup> This increase in size indicated that there was more activity to be announced. Interpreted as a sign of success, it emphasises a further step away from the original purpose for chapel community, with changed architecture and subsequent debt playing their part. Anthony Steinhoff's analysis of nineteenth century Strasbourg is useful here.<sup>848</sup> His claim is that historians of the town largely exclude religion from their studies by emphasising the image of the secular metropolis.<sup>849</sup> He reasserts its role by speaking of the music concerts held in churches and the voluntary associations linked to them. By appropriating forms of *bürgerliche Öffentlichkeit* they advanced their own interests while participating in the development of urban culture.<sup>850</sup> Advancing their own interests is precisely what nineteenth century Methodist chapels thought they were doing, but it is the nuance linked to this which is significant. There were consequences in terms of the original core purpose and for its community.

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<sup>845</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Trustees Minutes 1854-1889, 4 January 1870.

<sup>846</sup> "Darlington Street and Newhampton Road Trustees Minutes 1863-1911, 9 July 1897, Wolverhampton Archives. The previous board had been re-lettered in black and white.

<sup>847</sup> Ibid.

<sup>848</sup> Steinhoff, "A View from Strasbourg," 152-187.

<sup>849</sup> Ibid, 153.

<sup>850</sup> Ibid, 155. Here he is referring to the civic, the public.

With the architecture of size and theatre, and the need to pay for it, Methodism made the move to events which were totally secular. Desacralisation of place and the return to space was, therefore, facilitated. An ultimate example of this for Darlington Street chapel came in 1897:

It was proposed and seconded that the following Thursday service should be given up in favour of a concert.<sup>851</sup>

There had already been times when mid-week services were cancelled so that temperance meetings could take place.<sup>852</sup>

There were, however, countless examples of this insidious creep towards secular use from the 1860s onwards. The Darlington Street chapel choir started to give an annual entertainment, but it would also give concerts at short notice if it needed to raise money for any reason.<sup>853</sup> It became so well known as theatre and lecture hall that it was used by others to assist with their debt reduction:

...that we solicit the Revd. J. Dunn to deliver a lecture in our chapel towards the liquidation of the debt on Whitmore Reans chapel.<sup>854</sup>

By the turn of the century, it had become common practice for a series of Winter Concerts to be held. The erection of the platform came at a cost, but it was regularly decided to charge the organisers of each event a sum of five pounds to ensure the outlay was recouped.<sup>855</sup> This hints at the length of the series and the number of events held. It also points to the chapel being used independently of the community of worshippers for whom it was originally intended. The scenario was replicated throughout the Black Country and on the Wolds with some variation evident. Bilston Road Wesleyan Chapel, for example, needed to instal its platform so that it could be the venue for public meetings.<sup>856</sup>

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<sup>851</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Leaders Meeting Book of Record 1895-1941, 2 December 1897, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>852</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Leaders' Meeting Minute Book 1856-1894, 13 March 1893, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>853</sup> "Darlington Street Chapel Trustees Minutes 1854-1889, 24 May 1878 and 26 January 1882, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>854</sup> Darlington Street and Newhampton Road Trustees Minutes 1862-1911, 9 February 1866, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>855</sup> Ibid. See entries for 1895-1904.

<sup>856</sup> Bilston Road Chapel Trustees Minute Book 1875-1906, 24 November 1876, Wolverhampton Archives.

The desacralisation of internal place is emphasised by the altered usage of those two other venues of importance. The vestry continued to be used for bible studies and class meetings throughout the century, but these gatherings of the pious came to share the facility with many other groups.<sup>857</sup> To cope with demand, more and more vestries were added from the 1860s onwards. It was in 1862 that:

Plans be accepted and a second vestry added. The estimate of Mr. Evans be accepted with the option of building another for twenty pounds within six months.<sup>858</sup>

The third vestry was indeed added, but during the 1870s, yet more were built. By 1878 there were at least six, but complaints were received that this was still not sufficient.<sup>859</sup> They varied in size with organisations competing for the use of those designated large.<sup>860</sup> Fortunately for them, further vestries were added in 1885 and also a lecture room.<sup>861</sup> By the end of the century there were at least eight with the promise that the new building would have even more.<sup>862</sup>

Vestry need could turn to vestry envy as group after group requested use of the space. Many met for purposes related to the smooth running of society and these rooms could, therefore, facilitate the gathering together of community in even more intimate ways. The leaders' meeting, trustees' meeting, meetings of Local Preachers: they were all held in vestries. Indeed, in 1879 an argument broke out when the allocation of a large vestry for the Local Preachers necessitated the prayer meeting being relegated to a smaller one.<sup>863</sup> Arrangements for the Anniversaries and Harvest Festivals were enabled by the booking of a vestry. There were meetings to plan meetings:

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<sup>857</sup> For evidence of prayer meetings and class meetings continuing to gather in vestries see Darlington Street Chapel Leaders Meeting Book of Record 1895-1941, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>858</sup> Darlington Street and Newhampton Road Trustees Minutes 1862-1911, 10 May 1862, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>859</sup> Darlington Street Trustees Minutes 1854-1889, 6 March 1877 and 25 September 1878, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>860</sup> Ibid, 3 March 1883.

<sup>861</sup> Ibid, 25 June 1885.

<sup>862</sup> Darlington Street Sunday School Committee Minutes 1900-1913, 2 May 1900, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>863</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Leaders' Meeting Minute Book 1856-1894, 22 September 1879, Wolverhampton Archives.

There shall be a meeting of ladies in connection with the Darlington Street and Trinity congregations – convened to consider arrangements for the breakfast meeting to be held on October 19<sup>th</sup>. A group of ladies will form a committee of management for the breakfast.<sup>864</sup>

Requests were not always acceded to, but the reasons could vary. In 1860, the approach from the Mental Improvement Society for the use of a room was not met with a favourable response. This was not, however, due to the secular nature of the group. It was purely ‘on the ground of the inadequacy of the amount of rent offered.’<sup>865</sup> Those that did meet over the years included the Wesley Guild and the Young Men’s Wesleyan Institute.<sup>866</sup> Among many others there was the Ladies’ Sewing Meeting for those who could use their needlework skills to ‘raise funds.’<sup>867</sup> Links to the sacred, however, tended to become ever more tenuous. At one time or another it was decreed that there was no availability for Sunday scholars to make use of a vestry. This coincided with the Fraternal Society being granted permission and Mr. Gregory’s drawing class receiving the go ahead.<sup>868</sup> Two examples stand out. Towards the end of the century, the Wolverhampton Wesleyan Cycle Club had its headquarters in a vestry at the Darlington Street Chapel. In 1890, it was decided that there should be no charge for this while the proposed Adult Bible Class was requiring further discussion.<sup>869</sup> Three years later and permission was being sought for a plate bearing the title of the club to be attached to the outer wall of the chapel: notice boards mattered.<sup>870</sup> It took time to persuade, but it was finally resolved, in 1900, ‘that permission be given to place a sign on the pillar at the entrance to the vestry.’<sup>871</sup> At the very same time the trustees were receiving a further request:

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<sup>864</sup> Darlington Street Church Missionary Committee Minutes 1867-1878, 6 September 1872, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>865</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Trustees Minutes 1854-1889, 30 January 1860, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>866</sup> *Ibid.*, 8 September 1856.

<sup>867</sup> Bilston Road Chapel Trustees Minute Book 1875-1906, 8 March 1890, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>868</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Trustees Minutes 1854-1889, 18 October 1889, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>869</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Trustees Minutes 1890-1914, 27 June 1890, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>870</sup> *Ibid.* 10 February 1893. The Mutual Improvement Class had, as far back as 1875, already requested ‘permission to place in the porch of Darlington Street Chapel a small frame for the announcement of the meetings.’ Darlington Street Chapel Letters, Receipts and Accounts 1875-1908, 5 October 1875, Wolverhampton Wesleyan Methodist, M-DS/3/1/6, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>871</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Trustees Minutes 1890-1914, 6 February 1900, Wolverhampton Archives.



...from the young men for a room to be used in connection with their football club for dressing *et cetera* – use of Number 3 vestry [allowed] as long as they satisfy the chapel keeper for extra labour incurred and also that they make and adopt a rule that only persons be allowed who are in some way connected with the society or Sunday School and that it be a distinct understanding that no games be allowed in the room and that their stay upon the premises be not prolonged.<sup>872</sup>

The new century was confirming that community had changed or that it was functioning in a very different fashion. These changes, which had been taking place from the 1860s, are explained by Hugh McLeod. For him, there was the spontaneous formation of sports clubs, for added fellowship, by members of Bible classes. There was then the creation of clubs specifically to retain teenage boys who were thought to be the group most in danger of losing interest in their chapel. While the provision of sporting facilities might hopefully attract outsiders, it was, of course, perfectly possible that the secular was being advocated at the expense of the spiritual. McLeod points to this particularly manifesting itself in the opening years of the twentieth century with the cricket and cycling clubs which emerged.<sup>873</sup>

The importance of the use of space to an understanding of this is further demonstrated by the Schoolroom activity. Sunday Schools in the Black Country and on the Wolds were successful and, as the name suggests, they made use of this facility and turned it into their place, whatever its size. Wolverhampton's Darlington Street Sunday School was larger than most, but its regular attendance of between five and six hundred was not so unusual.<sup>874</sup> It did mean that one schoolroom was never going to be enough and there were building schemes throughout the century.<sup>875</sup> The same scenario presented itself throughout Wolverhampton and beyond:

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<sup>872</sup> Ibid.

<sup>873</sup> Hugh McLeod, "Thews and Sinews': Nonconformity and Sport," in *Modern Christianity and Cultural Aspirations*, eds. David Bebbington and Timothy Larsen (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 29-46.

<sup>874</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Correspondence 1870-1882, letter dated 10 March 1877, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>875</sup> Darlington Street and Newhampton Road Trustees Minutes 1863-1911, 21 February 1868, Wolverhampton Archives.

At Hurst Hill the comfort of the teachers and practical benefit upon the scholars would be greatly increased either by enlarging the room or building additional classrooms.<sup>876</sup>

As the rooms became larger, or there were more of them, they became the venue of choice for so many activities. Their use could be regarded as a chief debt reducing strategy. From chapel to chapel, the list was the same. There were Tea Meetings with tickets printed and sold.<sup>877</sup> Concerts occurred, year-in-year-out.<sup>878</sup> The schoolroom was regarded as the ideal setting for all sorts of lectures: if a fee was forthcoming, or they were in aid of chapel funds.<sup>879</sup> Breakfast Meetings were joined by Public Meetings. There were entertainments aplenty.

Mr. I. Sankey kindly undertook to give an evening's entertainment and a committee was formed to carry the matter out.<sup>880</sup>

In earlier times, the community of worshippers might have disapproved strongly, but it appeared that nothing could stop the encroachment of the magic lantern.<sup>881</sup> At the turn of the century, the Darlington Street schoolrooms were hosting a successful course of cookery lectures, and the young men of the Wolverhampton Athletics Society were holding their Annual General Meeting.<sup>882</sup> Above all else, there was The Bazaar. Involving huge amounts of preparation and held over several days, the only aim of the organisers was profit and as much of it as possible. Advertised widely, amounts could be announced from the pulpit.<sup>883</sup>

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<sup>876</sup> "Wolverhampton Wesleyan Methodist Sunday School Union Minute Book 1860-1873, 17 December 1869, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>877</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Leaders Meeting Book of Record 1895-1941, 23 September 1897, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>878</sup> Darlington Street Day School Trust Minutes 1895-1936, Wolverhampton Wesleyan Methodist, M-DS/2/8, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>879</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Correspondence 1870-1882, letter 1 April 1882, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>880</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Leaders' Meeting Minute Book 1856-1894, 3 November 1885, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>881</sup> 'The Rev. Hardcastle promised to go to Cherry Burton and give them a Magic Lantern Entertainment with the object of raising funds for repairing the chapel.' Beverley Wesleyan Circuit Annual Trustees Meeting Minute Book 1879-1909, 17 March 1900, Beverley Wesleyan Circuit, MRB/1/6, East Riding Archives. The Bilston Primitive Methodists did, however, condemn the use of the schoolroom for mesmeric experiments. Bilston Primitive Methodist Circuit, Minutes of Circuit Committee 1867-1882, 12 March 1868, Bilston Primitive Methodist, MC-BILP/1/1, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>882</sup> Darlington Street and Newhampton Road Trustees Minutes 1863-1911, 13 February 1901, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>883</sup> The majority of Quarterly Meeting Minute Books and Leaders' Meeting Minute Books refer to bazaars. Particularly useful: Driffield Wesleyan Circuit Minute Book of the Ladies Sewing Meeting 1878-1880, East

This use of space was virtually identical from one Wesleyan chapel to another and for Primitive Methodism wherever it might be.<sup>884</sup> It mattered not whether in the Black Country or on the Wolds. Village chapels had their moments, but there was also the widening of community for village Methodists as certain events, those perhaps requiring larger spaces, drew them into the towns such as Driffield, Market Weighton and Pocklington. This affected the dynamics of community for both the village and town chapels. Smaller chapels with limited variety might have retained their original community feel for longer.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century there were attempts by Wesleyanism at a national level to address perceived pressing issues. Most noteworthy was the Forward Movement and Roger Standing emphasises that it was based on Arminian theology and Wesley's doctrine of entire sanctification.<sup>885</sup> He points to it being a vigorous attempt to develop the principles of 'Social Christianity.'<sup>886</sup> Practically, and spatially, it led to the birth of Central Mission Halls in urban settings where evangelism could be combined with social concern and political debate.<sup>887</sup> There were certainly implications for community with bigger buildings and widening remits. The leading exponent was Hugh Price Hughes. He was interested in the benefits of recreation, and he campaigned for improvements to sanitation and housing. His concern was that Christianity ran the risk of becoming irrelevant.<sup>888</sup> The movement gained momentum during the last decade of the century. Hughes visited Wolverhampton and Bilston in 1892 at the invitation of the Wesleyan circuit.<sup>889</sup> No mission hall was built but the Forward Movement was mentioned when, finally, the new Darlington Street Chapel came into being at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>890</sup>

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Riding Archives and Driffield Wesleyan Circuit Collection and Bazaar Register 1836-1850, Driffield Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, MRD/1/2/12. For the Black Country: Darlington Street Chapel, Leaders' Meeting Minute Book 1856-1894, East Riding Archives. Also, Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit, Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1885-1896, East Riding Archives.

<sup>884</sup> Calder, *The Origins of Primitive Methodism*, 113. Calder refers to teas and the like as a 'consequence...of slowdown.'

<sup>885</sup> Roger Standing, *The Forward Movement: Evangelical Pioneers of 'Social Christianity'* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2015), 3.

<sup>886</sup> Ibid.

<sup>887</sup> Ibid, 109.

<sup>888</sup> Ibid, 76.

<sup>889</sup> Bilston Wesleyan Circuit Minutes of Quarterly Meetings 1863-1896, MC-BW1/2, 21 December 1891, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>890</sup> Darlington Street Material Relating to the Opening of the New Chapel 1901, M-DS/6/1/6, Wolverhampton Archives.

## Upside-down and Inside-out

The Methodism of concerts and entertainment appeared to exude confidence. So too, it could be argued, did its new-found ways of utilising space outside of chapel confines. Again, it is its use of both indoor and outdoor space that can inform and, that which appeared to symbolise success, is found to be more complex. The implications for community and for sacralisation or desacralisation are not straightforward.

The use of other indoor space came about for two reasons. There was a need to find alternative accommodation for services while a new chapel or schoolroom was being built, upgraded, or simply decorated. There was also the desire to hold events in bigger, perhaps on occasion, grander settings. Both required community to step out from the familiar. It was generally the same for Wesleyanism and Primitive Methodism.

In Wolverhampton it was initially the Saint George's Hall that was used by the Wolverhampton Wesleyans, but The Exchange and the Agricultural Hall came to be the venues of choice.<sup>891</sup> The Exchange emphasised its spacious platform and orchestra, the ventilation, and Six Star lighting system. The galleries had cushioned stalls and the auditorium was capable of seating two thousand persons. In 1879 the trustees of Darlington Street chapel were charged three guineas per Sunday for its use and the sum was paid even though the financial state of the circuit, due to the economic depression, was being lamented.<sup>892</sup> The Agricultural Hall was rented for thirteen Sundays, from December 1899 to March 1900, at a cost of forty-five pounds.<sup>893</sup> It was this same location that was used two months later by the Primitive Methodists. Their purpose, however, was the holding of a mission.<sup>894</sup> In most Black Country towns, such as Stourbridge, Dudley, Wednesbury and Darlaston, it was the Town Hall that was utilised. The Darlaston Primitive Methodists, for example, felt the hiring of theirs was a worthwhile enterprise when the President of

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<sup>891</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Trustees Minutes 1854-1889, 30 November 1859, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>892</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Correspondence 1875-1882, Notice from The Exchange 6 August 1879 and letter 11 June 1879, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>893</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Letters, Receipts and Accounts 1873-1907, bill receipt March 1900, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>894</sup> Wolverhampton Primitive Methodist Second Circuit Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1898-1922, 5 September 1899, Wolverhampton Primitive Methodist, MC-WP2/1, Wolverhampton Archives.

Conference came to lead their special services in 1897.<sup>895</sup> On the Wolds the same scenario prevailed with town chapels making use of Town Halls. This was the case for the likes of Market Weighton and Pocklington. Choice was greater at the seaside with Scarborough and Bridlington offering Assembly Rooms and the like.<sup>896</sup> Driffield, however, had its Corn Exchange.<sup>897</sup> Options for village chapels were limited if their doors needed to remain closed. They were more likely to avail themselves of the worship in a neighbouring hamlet.<sup>898</sup> They were used to travelling those distances.

With worship being held in these venues, the sacralisation of secular space can be claimed. The potential success of the strategy is summed up with reference to the Darlington Street Anniversary services right at the end of the century:

The Agricultural Hall proved too small to accommodate the large congregations which flocked to the services and considerable numbers failed to gain admission.<sup>899</sup>

It is telling that the only other comment referred to the collections which amounted to eighty-two pounds.<sup>900</sup> The situation was not necessarily straightforward, therefore. People were attending in their droves, but it was far from being a traditional Methodist act of worship. The children had rehearsed for an extended period, and it had far more of the concert about it. There were implications for community. The members of society could bask in the supposed success of the venture, but they were removed from the familiar and placed

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<sup>895</sup> Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1896-1913, 4 January 1897, 42/1/10, Walsall Archives.

<sup>896</sup> Bridlington Primitive Methodist Minute Book of the Quarterly Meeting 1855-1874, March 1871, East Riding Archives. Tea to be provided for over one thousand persons. Pocklington Wesleyan Circuit Trustees Treasurers' Account Book 1861-1880, 30 September 1861, Pocklington Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, MRP/4/21, East Riding Archives.

<sup>897</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Minutes of Trustees Meeting 1852-1865, October 1863, Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRD/2/2/10, East Riding Archives.

<sup>898</sup> Pocklington Wesleyan Circuit, Huggate Chapel Account Book 1837-1963, 1869, Pocklington Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, MRP/1/53, East Riding Archives. Pocklington Wesleyan Circuit, Nunburnholme Chapel Accounts 1852-1879, 19 December 1879, Pocklington Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, MRP/1/54, East Riding Archives. At the opening of the new Nunburnholme chapel the members provided a tea for those from the surrounding village chapels.

<sup>899</sup> Darlington Street Sunday School Committee Minutes 1900-1913, 10 January 1901, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>900</sup> Ibid.

in the impersonal. A few months earlier, a service not designed in any way to be special was the cause of some concern:

...unsatisfactory attendance due to certain extent to the services taking place in the Agricultural Hall.<sup>901</sup>

Chapel as third space was important for the fostering of community: alternative venues were not necessarily capable of encouraging the same. For Methodist community the link between third and fourth space is clear.

There are so many examples of these same extraneous venues being used for Methodist happenings that were far from the sacred. Lectures in Town Halls from Beverley in East Yorkshire to Wolverhampton in the Black Country covered topics many and varied. The Reverend Punshon's talk on Lord Macaulay was much heralded and when the Wolverhampton Wesleyans secured his services for February 1862, the Corn Exchange was booked.<sup>902</sup> It continued to be hired, year-in-year-out, and by 1870, tickets of admission were one shilling and six pence for a seat in the gallery, one shilling at the front and six pence at the back.<sup>903</sup> Financial gain was the obvious motivation for so much that occurred. The Darlaston Primitive Methodist circuit's solution to a 'current deficiency of funds' was to hire Wednesbury's Town Hall for a three-choir extravaganza. Their added strategy was for the mayor of Wednesbury to be in attendance and to take the chair.<sup>904</sup> Nothing, however, can compare to the moving of The Bazaar to venues away from the chapel. The respective hirings of the Darlaston and Driffield Town Halls speak of the same motivations and results. The first of these was kept busy with Methodism. It was hired at various times by both the Primitive Methodists and the Wesleyans. In 1884 it was the Primitive Methodist ladies who formed a committee to plan six months ahead. Their decision to erect seven Swiss Pattern Stalls and to decorate the room with flags was approved and the contract given to a London company who charged eighteen pounds for the five-day duration of the event. The Darlaston String Band was engaged to perform on four evenings and the sum of two pounds was to be

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<sup>901</sup> Ibid, 11 October 1900.

<sup>902</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Trustees Minutes 1854-1889, 26 February 1862, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>903</sup> Ibid. 23 June 1870.

<sup>904</sup> Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1885-1896, 25 March 1887, Primitive Methodism, 42/1/9, Walsall Archives.

paid in lieu of providing refreshments.<sup>905</sup> When it was decided to build a new Wesleyan chapel in Pleck, an appeal was made and collecting books were prepared and distributed. The main source of income, however, was inevitably the bazaar.<sup>906</sup> Frank Prochaska speaks of them as a 'last resort' for clergymen in relation to fund raising.<sup>907</sup> The Methodist experience would indicate that they were far more than this. They were part-and-parcel of the yearly round.

The preparations for bazaars, and the bazaars themselves, show how the temporary use of space added to the sense of community with people working and socialising together. They also demonstrate Prochaska's point that they were 'pre-eminently a female affair [and] both cause and effect of the expanding influence of women in philanthropy.'<sup>908</sup> This can be seen in the case of the previously mentioned bazaar. The ladies with their sewing meeting were an important consideration and, while their stated purpose was to work together for the good of their chapel, they were engaged in a huge range of tasks and were offered relief from the domestic routine.<sup>909</sup> They were a community-within-community and an intimacy was occasioned because of their society membership. These ladies were invited by a Mr. Horton to his home, The Grange, 'to talk matters over and make arrangements.'<sup>910</sup> Thus, another link between Methodism and domestic space was made. It might be tenuous to claim sacralisation of the home, just as a Bazaar would make it difficult to claim sacralisation of the Town Hall. As a profit from this Bazaar of nine hundred and thirty-two pounds was announced, it would be easier to claim that desacralisation of Methodism itself was taking place: at least for onlookers. Those who bought tickets might associate it with refreshments and embroidered doilies instead of the preaching of lengthy sermons.<sup>911</sup> The same could be

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<sup>905</sup> Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit Sunday School Committee Minute Book 1875-1895, 23 September 1884, 25 September 1884, 30 March 1885, Primitive Methodism, 42/1/87, Walsall Archives. T. Baker and Company was hired to decorate the room.

<sup>906</sup> Pleck Wesleyan Methodist Chapel Building Committee Minute Book 1899-1900, 13 March 1899, Wesleyan Methodism, 42/2/79, Walsall Archives.

<sup>907</sup> Frank K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in nineteenth-century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 47.

<sup>908</sup> *Ibid*, 57.

<sup>909</sup> *Ibid*, 66.

<sup>910</sup> Pleck Wesleyan Methodist Chapel Building Committee Minute Book 1899-1900, 20 May 1899, Wesleyan Methodism, 42/2/79, Walsall Archives. Here there are huge similarities with the arrangements in *Anna of the Five Towns*. See Bennett, *Anna of the Five Towns*, 50.

<sup>911</sup> *Ibid*, 23 June 1900.

said for those who attended the Primitive Methodist Bazaars in Driffield's Corn Exchange, even if it did garner less impressive sums: thirty-nine pounds and six shillings in 1866.<sup>912</sup>

Chapel thresholds are a useful image for important change. Halgren Kilde points to earlier buildings not being consistent in relation to the location of entrances.<sup>913</sup> Not necessarily the most difficult of tasks, they would still have needed to be found and there might have been an element of uncertainty for the first-time entrant. Methodism did not take their entry for granted and the outdoors had to be used by them to encourage people to step inside; to find the door and persuade people to become one of them. They certainly did this by preaching outside and the Primitive Methodists continued with their camp meeting strategy throughout the century: but in a far more orderly and less corybantic fashion. Sacralisation sums up the process. As time passed, these doors moved to a central position on the short, street-facing wall.<sup>914</sup> A confident statement, they were opened wide for the already established community, the community created by what had transpired inside, to step back onto the street. They emerged as Methodists to be observed by others. The desire to increase numbers was still there but strategies had changed. Being seen outside as already established community could, however, have given a message of exclusivity rather than inclusion. The Wesleyans of Pleck, on the outskirts of Walsall, purchased the land for their new chapel in 1899. It was a prominent and, therefore, expensive plot and from the outset they understood the need to raise funds and increase membership. The solution suggested by a Mr. Keathley was for him to construct a large notice board on the new site, indicating to passers-by that 'Wesleyans have purchased this site.' His friend, Mr. Massey, had offered his services as sign-writer.<sup>915</sup> Display of success, a certain flaunting and air of entitlement: this was now seen to be sufficient as proselytising energy waned. A tide of Methodists emerging from the chapel would not necessarily encourage growth, even if they thought so.

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<sup>912</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Minutes of Trustees Meeting 1852-1865, 22 June 1865, East Riding Archives. Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Chapel Account Book 1859-1873, 1866, Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRD/2/3/2, East Riding Archives. The two hundred advertising circulars had cost five shillings.

<sup>913</sup> Kilde, *When Church Became Theatre*, 4.

<sup>914</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>915</sup> "Pleck Wesleyan Methodist Chapel Building Committee Minute Book 1899-1900, 20 February 1899, Walsall Archives.



Outdoor space usage as time passed was encapsulated in two activities; both of which have been commented upon by academics. Intertwined, there was the procession and the treat, and both relied heavily on the Sunday School scholars: the supposed already established next generation of community. Historical geographers have shown particular interest with Harvey, Brace and Bailey focusing on the entraining of the young into Methodist practices. They explore the interplay between the sacred and the secular and conclude that both happenings helped in the creation of religious place.<sup>916</sup> As geographers they are not concerned with change over time and Andy Croll, in his study of Merthyr's public sphere, is aware of the creep of competition and need for chapels to respond.<sup>917</sup> This had implications for both the observed and the observer, and O'Leary's use of metaphor is particularly pertinent. In speaking of the urban stage, parades and the like were noted and evaluated by an audience.<sup>918</sup> He talks of outdoor space being 'captured' by religious organisations and sees the turning of secular space into religious place as sacralisation.<sup>919</sup> Just as the events were entwined, so too sacralisation and desacralisation. These writers, in dealing with the move from third space back into the public sphere, are not concentrating on any notions of a fourth dimension and their interpretation of sacralisation reflects this. With football teams and cycling clubs taking over space within chapels, secular activities such as these also meant increased competition for public space. As Yalden points out, secularisation was happening, and it required a response from the churches.<sup>920</sup> This, he points out, could be innovative. It certainly had implications for the future of Methodism as community.

Urban Methodism presented the same conundrum related to sacralisation and desacralisation of outdoor space, whether in the Black Country or the East Riding towns. For the Black Country Primitive Methodists, the activities related to Toll End chapel over a limited number of years are revealing. There were processions to the campground, processions linked to the anniversary and processions related to the town of Tipton's charity days. In 1863, there was also a special one, when the Toll End and Great Bridge Sunday Schools combined to honour the wedding of Prince Albert Edward to Princess Alexandra of

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<sup>916</sup> Harvey, Brace and Bailey "Parading the Cornish Subject," 25.

<sup>917</sup> Croll, *Civilising the Urban*, 178.

<sup>918</sup> O'Leary, *Claiming the Streets*, 4.

<sup>919</sup> *Ibid*, 127

<sup>920</sup> Yalden, "Association, Community and the Origins of Secularisation," 322.

Denmark.<sup>921</sup> Some directly related to religious purpose and others not. All of them designed to demonstrate a show of strength and unity. The children were addressed at the campground on a religious theme.<sup>922</sup> For the anniversary parade, three ladies were selected to:

put on the children's handkerchiefs [sic] and they be not altered afterwards.<sup>923</sup>

No one was left in any doubt as to who they represented. Their procession was headed by the two preachers in their clerical attire and, at some point, sermons were preached and addresses given.<sup>924</sup> Hymns were sung and sheets printed.<sup>925</sup> All of this, however, was combined with other considerations:

Seventy posters and four hundred circulars. Seven hundred hymn sheets. That the senior teachers on each day walk together and the superintendents and assistants lead the procession. That we take the old route. John Duffell and Luke Ingram attend to the starting of the hymns. Cake for the children as usual.<sup>926</sup>

Croll begins to explain how outdoor space was used for demonstrations of power.<sup>927</sup> There were the people selected to lead processions but there were also those who were to be served before others: 'the lead singers to get their cake first.'<sup>928</sup> In addition, there were those who would receive rewards and those who would not:

That all the children that have been here three Sundays be allowed to have the treat.<sup>929</sup>

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<sup>921</sup> "Toll End Primitive Methodist Society Teachers' and Leaders Meeting Minute Book 1861-1865, 11 May 1862, 26 April 1863, 10 May 1863, 22 July 1863, NC38/2/1/2, Sandwell Archives.

<sup>922</sup> Ibid, 11 May 1862.

<sup>923</sup> Ibid, 10 May 1863. By the March of 1865 handkerchiefs had been replaced with ties. Mrs. Padley had been entrusted with the purchase of them. See entry for 5 March 1865.

<sup>924</sup> Ibid.

<sup>925</sup> Ibid, 3 July 1863.

<sup>926</sup> Ibid, 30 April 1865.

<sup>927</sup> Croll, *Civilising the Urban*, 7.

<sup>928</sup> Toll End Primitive Methodist Society Teachers and Leaders Meetings Minute Book 1861-1865, 7 May 1865, Sandwell Archives.

<sup>929</sup> Ibid, 1 March 1863.

Not only attendance but behaviour was considered:

That we give the children a month trial and if not altered they shall  
be expelled.<sup>930</sup>

There were committees formed to make such decisions and these provided opportunities for demonstrations of power.<sup>931</sup>

The complicated nature of what was occurring is emphasised by the planning of a procession and the allocation of rewards in 1865. No children were to be allowed to take part 'without money.'<sup>932</sup> They had been allocated collecting cards some weeks previously. They, too, were embroiled in the reduction of debt. There were processions where the focus was definitely on the concluding tea party.<sup>933</sup> There is nothing recorded to suggest any religious theme in connection to the celebration of the prince's wedding: other than that they were walking and celebrating as Primitive Methodists and would have been observed as such.

From Black Country Primitive Methodism to Wesleyanism on the Wolds, the story was the same. There was even a similar arrangement made by the Driffield Sunday School teachers to celebrate the wedding of the Prince of Wales.<sup>934</sup> A glance at this Sunday School's activity over the same limited number of years sums up Methodism's relationship with the outdoors. They too were arranging processions and looking forward to anniversaries. They left the church building with apparent confidence and much thought had gone into the purchase of the 'good, neat and durable banner' which was to be procured. The wording was bold, the motivation less so:

THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH. DRIFFIELD WESLEYAN SABBATH SCHOOL.  
ESTABLISHED IN 1812.<sup>935</sup>

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<sup>930</sup> Ibid, 27 July 1862.

<sup>931</sup> Croll, *Civilising the Urban*, 7. Toll End Primitive Methodist Society Teachers and Leaders Meetings Minute Book 1861-1865, 6 September 1863, Sandwell Archives.

<sup>932</sup> Toll End Primitive Methodist Society Teachers and Leaders Meetings Minute Book 1861-1865, 7 May 1865, Sandwell Archives.

<sup>933</sup> Ibid, 3 July 1863, 10 May 1863.

<sup>934</sup> Driffield Wesleyan Circuit Sunday School Minute Book 1838-1874, May 1863, Driffield Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, MRD/1/2/12, East Riding Archives.

<sup>935</sup> Ibid, 1864.

It was purchased in the hope ‘that parents would be induced to send their children.’<sup>936</sup> There were clearly worries, and the same meeting spent its time on two further agenda items. It was decided that the children should be taken into Mrs. Witty’s field where nuts to the value of five shillings would be ‘promiscuously scattered amongst them.’<sup>937</sup> There was also to be a trip to the seaside.<sup>938</sup> Excursions to the coast featured from then on with Bridlington being the destination of choice.<sup>939</sup> Wolverhampton Wesleyans, at the end of the century, were debating whether their treat should be to Brewood by boat or Codsall by train. Practicality was weighed against a perceived need to be adventurous. Fortunately, the teachers who were members of the Darlington Street Chapel Cycle Club could be prevailed upon to ride out into the countryside to secure the use of a field for the sports and activities.<sup>940</sup>

From the 1860s onward, the ostensibly religious and blatantly recreational use of the outdoors continued simultaneously. Coupled with the changes to inside happenings, there were implications for sacralisation and desacralisation with consequences for tightly knit Methodist communities. With less reason to step outside, and smaller numbers attending anyway, the village chapel experienced less upheaval: unless the trip to the town to partake of events is considered. Whatever was being played out, the use of space was crucial. Whatever was being played out, the possibilities of fourth space were, however, ever present. When the Reverend William Harvey was presented with an umbrella at the Darlaston Camp Meeting in the August of 1899, the silver inscription stated that it was for:

His consistent, persistent and faithful work and his sound evangelical preaching, his unwavering visitation and his uniform Christian character.<sup>941</sup>

The hope is that he and his umbrella were not turned inside out as much as Methodism had been. The camp meeting was, after all, seemingly being used for reasons of self-satisfaction rather than soul-searching. Aristotle might have considered the purpose not to be so clear

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<sup>936</sup> Ibid.

<sup>937</sup> Ibid.

<sup>938</sup> Ibid.

<sup>939</sup> Ibid, 4 May 1868.

<sup>940</sup> Darlington Street Sunday School Bushbury Branch 1892-1903, 18 June 1901, Wolverhampton Wesleyan Methodist, M-DS/2/59, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>941</sup> Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1896-1913, 19 August 1899, Walsall Archives.

but, whether community changed or not, Methodism certainly gave individuals an identity and the chance to be thought of as respectable. These two concepts are explored in the following chapters.

## Chapter Three

### Identity and the East Riding Wolds

He knew but two types of Methodist – the ecstatic and the bilious.

*Adam Bede*<sup>942</sup>

The Reverend Henry Woodcock, writing in 1889 about Primitive Methodism on the Yorkshire Wolds, appears to have had no qualms in choosing *Piety Among the Peasantry* as the title for his book.<sup>943</sup> Piety was sought but whether the seekers could accurately be described as peasants was to become a moot point for historians during the twentieth century.<sup>944</sup> By many the term was avoided altogether because of the belief that the peasantry had disappeared from English society by the later Middle Ages.<sup>945</sup> Phrases such as ‘small owner occupier’ came to be used in its stead.<sup>946</sup> Others have continued its use precisely because of the links to the possession of land.<sup>947</sup> Indeed, some saw the need to campaign for an increase in its usage. One such is Alun Howkins who emphasized that, for him, these small family producers were, inescapably, peasants.<sup>948</sup> There has undoubtedly been a tendency by many to ignore the intricacies of land ownership, while pointing out that a *paysan* was simply any countryman. Dennis Mills, author of *Lord and Peasant in the Nineteenth Century*, still feels able to assert that England’s rural dwellers were not peasants in the continental sense of the word.<sup>949</sup> For him, the term is a useful way to describe those who were at the

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<sup>942</sup> Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 23.

<sup>943</sup> Henry Woodcock, *Piety Among the Peasantry: Being Sketches of Primitive Methodism on the Yorkshire Wolds* (Huddersfield: J. Toulson, 1889).

<sup>944</sup> Piety is discussed later in this chapter. It was an oft mentioned quality in obituaries of the time.

<sup>945</sup> See, for example, Kenneth B. McFarlane, *The Nobility of Later Medieval England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 215. Also, Phillipp R. Schofield, *Peasants and Historians: Debating the Medieval English Peasantry* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016).

<sup>946</sup> See, for example, Jonathan D. Chambers and Gordon E. Mingay, *The Agricultural Revolution 1750-1880* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd, 1966), 200.

<sup>947</sup> William G. Hoskins, *The Midland Peasant: the Economic and Social History of a Leicestershire Village* (New York: Macmillan St. Martin’s Press, 1957). Joan Thirsk, *English Peasant Farming* (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1957).

<sup>948</sup> Alun Howkins, “Peasants, Servants and Labourers: the Marginal Workforce in British Agriculture c1870-1914,” *Agricultural History Review* 92, no. 1 (1994): 49-62. See also, Michael Reed, “Nineteenth Century Rural England: a Case For ‘Peasant Studies’?,” *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 14, no. 1 (1986): 78-99.

<sup>949</sup> Dennis R. Mills, *Lord and Peasant in Nineteenth Century Britain* (London: Routledge, 1980).

bottom of the social ladder in rural England.<sup>950</sup> This was also how Henry Woodcock and other nineteenth century commentators saw it.<sup>951</sup>

The search for a collective noun is, of itself, revealing. If the aim was clarity and simplicity, John Beckett pointed to its failure by announcing ‘terminological confusion.’<sup>952</sup> For the East Yorkshire Wolds it is, anyway, other classifications which need to be stressed. With the domination of large landowners, and farms averaging over one thousand acres, tenant farmers were the managers, and cottage-dwelling labourers the workers, alongside live-in servants. Among arable counties, the continued hiring, on a yearly basis, of this latter group throughout the nineteenth century was a unique feature of the East Riding.<sup>953</sup> This search for categories, although understandable, has undoubtedly led to these rural dwellers being treated as a homogeneous group and it has dictated areas of investigation.<sup>954</sup> A study of Methodism’s role can offer something else. Perhaps these *paysans* did have minds of their own and the desire to make choices. As individuals identified with Methodism they were, in effect, creating an identity of their own and, with this established, its concomitant respectability was quite literally a step beyond. Spatially significant, it was connected to movement around the Wolds and arrival at the urban setting.

Identity as a concept has been discussed and used by cultural historians and social scientists over a prolonged period. Much of the original thinking was carried out by Erik Erikson during the 1950s who, in turn, had benefited from the sociological approach of G.H. Mead.<sup>955</sup> It was Erikson who coined the oft-used phrase ‘identity crisis’.<sup>956</sup> This indicates that the initial thrust was psychoanalytic in nature, but it soon came to permeate the language of both social and

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<sup>950</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>951</sup> See, for example, Francis G. Heath, *The English Peasantry* (London: Warne, 1874). Also, Richard Heath, *The English Peasant* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1893).

<sup>952</sup> John V. Beckett, (1984) “The Peasant in England: a Case of Terminological Confusion,” *Agricultural History Review* 32, no. 2 (1984): 113.

<sup>953</sup> Nicola Verdon, *Rural Women Workers in Nineteenth Century England: Gender, Work and Wages* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2002) 77.

<sup>954</sup> For example, for the effects of enclosure on these rural dwellers see the seminal work by John L. Hammond and Barbara Hammond: Hammond, J.L. and Hammond, *The Village Labourer* (London and New York: Longman, 1978, originally published 1911).

<sup>955</sup> George H. Mead, *Mind, Self and Society* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1934), 186-192. Mead was an advocate of the Symbolic Interactionist school of thought.

<sup>956</sup> Erik Erikson, “The Problem of Ego Identity,” *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 4 (1956): 56-121.

political analysis.<sup>957</sup> Since then, however, according to some, it has become overcomplicated and somewhat unclear as to how it is best summed up and utilised.<sup>958</sup> As early as the 1970s, W.J.M. Mackenzie pointed to identity being 'driven out of its wits by over-use' but, as the decades have passed, it has continued to feature.<sup>959</sup> The most significant criticism of this has come from Brubaker and Cooper.<sup>960</sup> This is not because of objection to the work being carried out. It is precisely because, with its widespread use, they fear ambiguity. For them it is a concept which is simply employed to do too much and so, instead, they propose a cluster of other terms. Unfortunately, these are somewhat unwieldy: as shown by the need for lengthy definitions and by the fact that other academics have not seized the opportunity to employ them.<sup>961</sup> If, however, identity is perceived to be of inherent use, there is clearly a need to avoid obfuscation.

Attempts to clarify have focused on two interlinked themes. These are the social and personal circumstances which result in identity formation.<sup>962</sup> For the former, a group of people might be set apart by a label, and some sort of membership with a set of rules attached. For the individual it would be about the development of distinguishing characteristics which a person might take pride in, and which would be socially consequential. In merging the two, attention is drawn to what it is that provides a person with self-respect, dignity, and a sense of recognition.<sup>963</sup> A straightforward way to understand identity might, therefore, be to focus on the answer to a straightforward question: who are you?<sup>964</sup>

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<sup>957</sup> Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy* (New York: Anchor Books, 1990). Anselm L. Strauss, *Mirrors and Masks: the Search for Identity* (Glenco, Ill: The Free Press, 1959). Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (London: Doubleday Anchor, 1959).

<sup>958</sup> See James D. Fearon, "What is Identity (As We Now Use the Word)?," Stanford University (November, 3<sup>rd</sup> 1999): <https://researchgate.net/publication/229052754>. See also Zygmunt Bauman, *Identity* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004), 2. In the introduction Benedetto Vecchi points to identity being 'elusive and ambivalent.'

<sup>959</sup> William J.M. Mackenzie, *Political Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978), 11-15. Here Mackenzie talks of the word identity having been murdered.

<sup>960</sup> Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond Identity," *Theory and Society* 29, no.1 (2000): 1-47. On page 2 they state that identity 'saddles us with a blunt, flat, undifferentiated vocabulary.'

<sup>961</sup> Fearon, "What is identity," 6. Here, Fearon simply states that Brubaker and Cooper have given up too quickly.

<sup>962</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>963</sup> Ibid, 6. Also see Brubaker and Cooper, "Beyond identity," 2.

<sup>964</sup> Fearon, "What is identity," 11.



The close relationship between religion and identity has been recognised and commented upon. Emile Durkheim deserves particular mention and then, for the nineteenth century, John Wolffe points to the link being particularly strong.<sup>965</sup> This bond is emphasised by Bellah with his comment that ‘human identity is a necessary and universal function of religion.’<sup>966</sup> Fascinatingly for this study, Hans Mol defined religion as the ‘sacralisation of identity.’<sup>967</sup> In any exploration, the urban experience was the initial focus.<sup>968</sup> Over time, in an attempt to broaden the analysis, a small number of studies related to rural society did follow.<sup>969</sup> There was also the shift away from institutionalised religion towards an examination of the popular aspects of it.<sup>970</sup> A consequence of this has been the development of understanding as to how particular religious activities, rituals specifically linked to a community, helped to shape the identities of those communities: how a sense of place, interest, and attachment was aided.<sup>971</sup> While laudable, the identities formed specifically through the religious affiliations within a community have tended to be neglected.<sup>972</sup> Charles Tilly’s observation starts to redress the balance. He knows identity to be a ‘blurred but indispensable’ concept and he specifically uses religious affiliation to sum it up as:

...an actor’s experience of a category, tie, role, network, group  
or organisation, coupled with a public representation of that

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<sup>965</sup> Stephen F. Friend, “A Sense of Belonging: Religion and Identity in Yorkshire and Humber Fishing Communities, c1815-191” (PhD thesis, University of Hull) 1. See John Wolffe, *God and Greater Britain: Religion and National Life in Britain and Ireland 1843-1945* (London: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>966</sup> Robert Bellah, in *Society and Identity: Toward a Sociological Psychology*, eds. Andrew J. Weigert, J. Smith Teitge and Dennis W. Teitge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 19.

<sup>967</sup> Hans Mol, *Identity and the Sacred: a Sketch for a New Social-Scientific Theory of Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1976), 1 & 10. Mol sees religion as a stabilising factor in the forming of identity.

<sup>968</sup> See Wickham, *Church and People*. Also, Inglis, *Churches and the Working Classes*.

<sup>969</sup> Friend, “A Sense of Belonging,” 3. For studies of rural society see Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society*. Also, Rod Ambler, *Ranters, Revivalists and Reformers* (Hull: Hull University Press, 1989), 85.

<sup>970</sup> For a focus on popular religion see Harvey Cox, *The Feast of Fools* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1969). Also, Timothy Jenkins, *Religion in Everyday Life* (New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1999); Andrew Greeley, *God in Popular Culture* (Chicago: Thomas More Publishing, 1988).

Specifically for the importance of ritual and performance see Tom F. Driver, *Liberating Rites: Understanding the Transformative Power of Ritual* (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1998).

<sup>971</sup> Friend, “A Sense of Belonging,” 10 & 56. Gerard Delanty, *Community* (London: Routledge, 2003), 4. Here community is imbued with a sense of place and a sense of belonging.

<sup>972</sup> See, Erdozain, *The Problem of Pleasure*. His work is discussed in the introduction to this thesis.

experience; the public representation often takes the form of a shared story, a narrative.<sup>973</sup>

In other words, it meant something to be called a Methodist and yet this has not been fully explored.

The contention here is that Methodism played both a crucial and unique role in the forming of identities for both congregations and individuals in rural communities. It created a distinct sameness among its members while enhancing feelings of 'selfhood' for individuals. Identity is, therefore, the correct term to use because people did say Methodist when asked that question.<sup>974</sup> The East Riding Wolds is ripe for investigation because of its social structure and geographical layout: remote villages but with towns strategically placed around its periphery.<sup>975</sup>

Methodist nomenclature was hugely significant. Just the appellations on their own carried meaning. They also highlight that Methodism, by the opening decades of the nineteenth century, was not monolithic. It came to offer a choice of identities at a time when there were scant opportunities elsewhere. The earliest 'secessions and new commencements' were, respectively, the Methodist New Connexion and the Bible Christians.<sup>976</sup> Followers of the former were signalling a need for a fresh start.<sup>977</sup> Adherents of the latter were implying criticism, while emphasising that the scriptures were all that was required.<sup>978</sup> They were demanding evangelical simplicity.<sup>979</sup> For the East Riding Wolds, as with the Black Country, the protagonists were the Wesleyans and the Primitive Methodists.<sup>980</sup> A further reason to focus on these areas is, indeed, the relative strength of both throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>981</sup> Carrying the name of the founder was important to Wesleyanism and Wesleyans.

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<sup>973</sup> Charles Tilly, ed., *Citizenship, Identity and Social History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 7.

<sup>974</sup> Or, of course, 'Wesleyan' or 'Primitive Methodist'.

<sup>975</sup> M.B. Gleave, "Dispersed and Nucleated Settlement in the Yorkshire Wolds 1770-1850," in *IBG Transactions and Papers* 30 (1962): 105-118.

<sup>976</sup> See Townsend, Workman and Eayrs, *A New History of Methodism* vol I, 487.

<sup>977</sup> *Ibid*, 495. The Methodist New Connexion was established as early as 1797 by Alexander Kilham.

<sup>978</sup> *Ibid*, 507. Bible Christianity was founded in Devon in 1815 by William O'Bryan. It was not only a reaction to Wesleyanism. It was also a comment on the reliance on the Prayer Book by the Established Church.

<sup>979</sup> Richard Pyke, *The Early Bible Christians* (London: The Epworth Press, 1941), 22.

<sup>980</sup> From the introduction onwards the comparison with the Black Country will have been made clear.

<sup>981</sup> The added bonus of this being that archival records exist for both.

This was the parent body from which the secessions occurred. The ramifications of being the original were to play out over the years with profound effects on identity. Primitive Methodism was the largest of the offshoots and was formed in 1811.<sup>982</sup> That this was the chosen name is important. Leaders and the led were, without much subtlety, casting aspersions on the happenings within Wesleyanism. Even before it was adopted as the new denomination's name, parlance of the time was using the term to imply the need to return to that which had come first and was seen to be pure.<sup>983</sup> The implication was that the 'modern' Methodism of the late eighteenth century had lost its way.<sup>984</sup> For the Yorkshire Wolds, Frederick Ross, writing at the end of the nineteenth century, was in no doubt as to why Primitive Methodism came into being. He declared that it 'strove to restore the original simplicity of doctrine, devotedness of life, and fervour of worship.'<sup>985</sup> An undated Primitive Methodist broadsheet, costing one penny, attempted a tactful explanation:

It originated like Mr Wesley's in the enforcing of the doctrine of a present salvation; and not in any split or division from any other Connexion.<sup>986</sup>

Primitive Methodists knew why their name had been chosen, but this would not prevent the counter-interpretation of them as both basic and crude. It is revealing that this mattered not to the vast majority of Primitive Methodists. It could even have been a reason for its undoubted popularity.

Adopting the title of Wesleyan Methodist or Primitive Methodist was identity forming in itself and this is demonstrated with reference to the obituaries published in the respective magazines.<sup>987</sup> Taken together, between 1830 and 1880, the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*

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<sup>982</sup> Townsend, Workman, and Eayrs, *A New History of Methodism* vol I, 560.

<sup>983</sup> See Kendall, *The Origin and History* vol I, 38. Here Kendall mentions a tract of 1792 by George Whitefield entitled 'Sufferings of the Primitive Methodists at Wednesbury.' Interestingly, of course, Wednesbury was part of the Black Country. George Eliot also discusses this 'modern' Methodism in *Adam Bede*. Dinah Morris was 'not indeed of that modern type which reads Quarterly Reviews and attends chapels with pillared porticoes.' See Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 39.

<sup>984</sup> Kendall, *The Origin and History* vol I, 13. Here Kendall describes Hugh Bourne, one of the two founders, as a 'primitive' because of his focus on the Methodism of his parents.

<sup>985</sup> Frederick Ross, *Contributions Towards a History of Driffield and the Surrounding Wolds District, in the East Riding of the County of York* (London: Sagwan Press, 1898) 75.

<sup>986</sup> Reprinted in Davis, George and Rupp, *A History of the Methodist Church* vol IV, 379.

<sup>987</sup> For the significance of obituaries for the historian of nonconformity, see Wilson, *Constrained by Zeal*, 17.

and the *Primitive Methodist Magazine* published almost three hundred obituaries of adherents from the East Yorkshire Wolds.<sup>988</sup> These may well have related to those who were particularly ardent, and they inevitably carry with them the opinions of the writers. Caveats aside, however, people who, erstwhile, would have been forgotten, had their names recorded for posterity only because they were called a Wesleyan or a Primitive.<sup>989</sup> So, a Mrs. Rowntree, born in Pocklington in 1810, became 'warmly attached to the church and people of her choice.'<sup>990</sup> It had been her conscious decision to become a Wesleyan. The writer of the obituary for William Wiles, who died in 1851 in his eighty-eighth year, emphasised that, when Primitive Methodist Missionaries visited the village of North Dalton near Drifffield, he was the first to affirm that 'this people shall be my people, and their God my God.'<sup>991</sup> These Wolds dwellers were shaping their own identities.

Focusing on the names of the two denominations demonstrates another possibility in relation to identity formation. Individuals were free to change their minds. Repeatedly, the role of Primitive Missionaries was mentioned in the turning of committed Wesleyans into followers of the fledgling sect.<sup>992</sup> Mrs. Elizabeth Hodge, from Beverley, was one such. Her obituary, published in 1855, speaks of her move to Primitive Methodism and her attachment to it becoming 'fixed and abiding.'<sup>993</sup> Her identity would have been confirmed by the title of her purchased magazine, the name above the door of her chapel and also by the inscription on her tomb stone which was 'in the immediate vicinity of other disciples ...who recently adorned the Primitive Methodist section of the militant church.'<sup>994</sup> In concluding, the obituary writer commented about these Primitive Methodists that 'in life they loved each other, and in death they are not divided.'<sup>995</sup> One supposes that this spatial reference was meant in the metaphysical as well as the physical sense. Thomas Cooke, from the village of

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<sup>988</sup> During the fifty-year period the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* published one hundred and twenty-five obituaries of people who lived all or part of their lives on the Yorkshire Wolds. The number published by the *Primitive Methodist Magazine* for the same period was one hundred and sixty-six.

<sup>989</sup> One hundred and sixty out of the one hundred and sixty-six Primitive Methodist obituaries mention the precise details of the conversion experience (96%).

<sup>990</sup> *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, June 1863, 566.

<sup>991</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, May 1851, 317.

<sup>992</sup> Forty-one of the one hundred and sixty-six Primitive Methodist obituaries (or 25%) referred to a move from Wesleyanism.

<sup>993</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, April 1855, 201.

<sup>994</sup> *Ibid*, 205.

<sup>995</sup> *Ibid*, 205.

Warter, evidently told people that it was a direct instruction from God to relinquish Wesleyanism and become a Primitive Methodist.<sup>996</sup> The change could involve a move in the other direction. Miss Winteringham from Bridlington, for example, had been attracted by ‘the so-called “Primitives”’ before seeing the error of her ways and joining, along with others, the ‘old society.’<sup>997</sup> Decisions were made by individuals with individualism and identity being closely aligned. They were also made corporately. Yapham had to be removed altogether from the Primitive Methodist preaching plan when, in 1875, all the members en masse joined the Wesleyans.<sup>998</sup> Identifying together in this way would have had many layers of meaning.

That their titles were important is emphasised by the *sobriquet* of the Primitive Methodists. John Coulson, a resident of Driffield, had asked a friend about them. ‘They are not Primitive Methodists but Ranters, the offscouring of the town’ was the reply.<sup>999</sup> Ranters: at one and the same time a highly descriptive yet seemingly derogatory term.<sup>1000</sup> When Harriet Tinson of Pocklington joined the society, her father’s ‘opposition became more desperate because of his daughter associating with such a despised sect of people.’<sup>1001</sup> Opinion was polarised. Time after time, the reason for such hostility and ridicule was seemingly what was attractive to others. John Fairfax-Blakeborough, author of *Yorkshire Days and Yorkshire Ways*, gave the example of a Wolds inhabitant who stated that the only difference between the Ranters and Wesleyans was that:

...them there Ranters puts mair heart inti their singing an’ lets gan mair nor what t’Wesleyans diz.<sup>1002</sup>

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<sup>996</sup> Ibid, September 1859, 514 and May 1855, 257. William Driffield from Bridlington had been contacted by God in a dream with the same instruction.

<sup>997</sup> *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, June 1865, 569.

<sup>998</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1870-1880, 19 March 1875, East Riding Archives.

<sup>999</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, November 1863, 654. Offscouring could be used to refer to outcasts or even filth.

<sup>1000</sup> See Kendall, *The Origin and History*, vol 1, 185-187. Here Kendall emphasizes both the derogatory origin of the name and yet the way it came to contribute to the extension of the denomination.

<sup>1001</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, March 1858, 197.

<sup>1002</sup> John Fairfax-Blakeborough, *Yorkshire Days and Yorkshire Ways* (London: Heath Cranton, 1935) 63.

Leonard Mainprize's son ascribed his father's love of Primitive Methodism in Flamborough to its 'liveliness...and zeal' and this was precisely what others complained about.<sup>1003</sup> Although 'not demonstrative herself,' Hannah Honor of Bridlington was 'devotedly attached to Primitive Methodism' and 'indefatigable in serving the Church of her choice.'<sup>1004</sup> Mrs. Elizabeth Clarkson of Aklam in the Pocklington circuit, was 'much attached to our mode of worship, and for nearly forty years had been identified with the interests of Primitive Methodism.'<sup>1005</sup> It could be claimed that there was something inverted about the lauding of that which, by many, was regarded as more basic and more crude. It can be surmised that this had to do with identity formation.

It could be assumed that the overall trajectory of membership was upwards and, for most of the circuits, this was the case, with only minor setbacks along the way. The Beverley Wesleyans, however, experienced some quite torrid times. A membership of 869 was recorded in June 1850, but this had declined to 562 only eighteen months later. A 'spirit of unholy agitation' was blamed, but these stirrings were complex, and they say something of identity.<sup>1006</sup> Many were being told that they could no longer be a Wesleyan because of rule breaking.<sup>1007</sup> While some tried to resist their exile and cling to this identity, others decided that they could live without it.<sup>1008</sup> Individuals would be very aware, therefore, of changing identities locally. National membership figures were made known, and the global context was spoken of and written about.<sup>1009</sup> It was good to belong to, and identify with, an organisation when it was seen to be both growing and spreading.

Crucially, it was membership which brought with it a profound sense of belonging. Proof of this membership came in the form of a ticket.<sup>1010</sup> Understanding the significance of

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<sup>1003</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, November 1863, 653.

<sup>1004</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, February 1873, 114.

<sup>1005</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, April 1859, 255.

<sup>1006</sup> Beverley Wesleyan Circuit Quarterly Minute Book 1844-1884, 29 September 1851, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1007</sup> *Ibid.* March 1852.

<sup>1008</sup> *Ibid.* March 1852.

<sup>1009</sup> Circuit Missionary Committees were established and there were updates as to missionary activity and success, month by month, in the magazines. For example, the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* for 1843 published a series of informative articles entitled 'Letters from Madras.' See "Letters From Madras," *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, November 1843, 918.

<sup>1010</sup> John Wesley had commenced the practice in 1741 and the distribution of tickets had happened ever since.

Methodist membership, therefore, is greatly enhanced by focusing on both the symbolic and practical implications of ticket distribution. From the eighteenth-century, tickets were primarily used for either entry into entertainment venues or for travel purposes.<sup>1011</sup> They were ephemeral and, usually, returned to the vendor.<sup>1012</sup> Methodism did issue such tickets. The myriad tea meetings and social events, held all over the Wolds, bear testimony to this.<sup>1013</sup> Indeed, Methodism would have been one of *the* most prolific distributors in rural areas, if not the most prolific.<sup>1014</sup> There were two types of these tickets. The first was for events exclusively reserved for members and those felt to be in good standing with the chapel or circuit. Typical was the request of the Market Weighton Wesleyans in 1879 ‘that a Circuit Tea Meeting should be held, consisting of members of the society and congregation.’<sup>1015</sup> The second sort were those designated for public gatherings. Advertisements were placed in the newspapers and special notices were printed and then displayed by local businesses.<sup>1016</sup> When the Wesleyans of Beverley, towards the end of the century, invited friends from the town and surrounding villages to a tea and entertainment, they were summing up a practice which had taken place across the Wolds for decades:

Rev. W.A. Dallinger will preach on November 17<sup>th</sup> and lecture in the Assembly Rooms, on November 18<sup>th</sup> ... with beautiful limelight illustrations. Tea will be provided at one shilling each for friends from a distance, and to prevent disappointment they are advised to secure tickets for the lecture as soon as possible.<sup>1017</sup>

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<sup>1011</sup> See Gillian Russell, “Sarah Sophia Banks’s Private Theatricals: Ephemera, Sociability and the Archiving of Fashionable Life,” *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 27 (2015): 535-555.

<sup>1012</sup> Maurice Rickards, ed., *The Encyclopaedia of Ephemera* (London: Twyman, 2000).

<sup>1013</sup> They took place throughout the period but records suggest they increased in frequency from decade to decade.

<sup>1014</sup> Newspapers such as the *Beverley Guardian*, *Beverley Weekly Recorder* and *Yorkshire Gazette* advertised and then reported on such events. The Church of England and other nonconformist denominations occasionally held such events but not with such regularity. Other entertainments were advertised with the cost of tickets mentioned.

<sup>1015</sup> Market Weighton Wesleyan Circuit Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1876-1880, 29 December 1879, East Riding Archives. In 1843 the Driffield Wesleyan Methodists were providing a tea for ‘all who are friendly’ but it is unclear as to whether tickets were distributed. Driffield Wesleyan Circuit Sunday School Minute Book 1838-1874, 11 September 1843, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1016</sup> See, for example, the publicity for the opening of Market Weighton’s new chapel in October 1868 outlined in the *Methodist Church Market Weighton Centenary Brochure*, 1968, Market Weighton Miscellaneous Papers, MRM/2/28, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1017</sup> Beverley Wesleyan Circuit Preachers’ Plans, 1824-1900, November 1895, East Riding Archives.

Charging one shilling, a not insubstantial amount, was common from at least the 1860s onwards, and it was something the Wesleyans and Primitive Methodists appear to have agreed upon. Mention can be made, for example, of the Primitive Methodist Great Gathering at Driffield in 1868. A one shilling ticket secured service at the refreshment stall.<sup>1018</sup> The same Driffield Primitive Methodists were, however, deliberating in 1880 as to whether the tickets for the Fruit Banquet could be sold for as little as nine pence each.<sup>1019</sup>

While the Driffield Primitive Methodists were giving Brother Edmondson the instruction to 'see after the tickets for the tea meeting in time for distributing them,' the purchasers were demonstrating a financial as well as a time commitment.<sup>1020</sup> The number of tickets printed varied according to circumstance. It was a regular occurrence for the Primitive Methodists in Driffield to request that 'four hundred tickets for tea be printed.'<sup>1021</sup> At the opening of the new Wesleyan chapel in Market Weighton, the *Yorkshireman's News* reported that 'no less than seven hundred people took tea.'<sup>1022</sup> That Methodism was important is summed up by the same article:

...the principal shops were closed in the afternoon, for the purpose of giving the apprentices and those who were engaged in business an opportunity of joining the [events] of the day.<sup>1023</sup>

Town chapels hosted several occasions during a year. Village Methodists were quite accustomed, therefore, to travelling to the larger venue. They also arranged events themselves. The Primitive Methodists in Langtoft were busy in 1861 holding 'special efforts' to pay off their debts created by the building of a new chapel. Tickets to the bazaar were sold, for one shilling, at the door as well as in advance. Friends from neighbouring villages

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<sup>1018</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Committee Minute Book, 1866-1874, 22 November 1866, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1019</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Minute Book of Quarterly Meetings 1874-1880, 3 September 1880, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1020</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Committee Minute Book 1859-1866, 3 January 1861, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1021</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Minutes of Trustees Meetings 1852-1865, 29 August 1856, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1022</sup> *The Yorkshireman's News*, Saturday, October 3, 1868.

<sup>1023</sup> *Ibid.*



had shared in the preparations.<sup>1024</sup> When the Goodmanham Wesleyan Sunday School discussed the Public Tea Meeting linked to its anniversary, it was unanimously decided that one hundred and eleven tickets should be printed.<sup>1025</sup> The Walkington Magic Lantern Entertainment in 1880 raised over eighteen shillings and was declared a success.<sup>1026</sup>

These humble tickets indicated a great deal about identity. Members could demonstrate togetherness and shared purpose by attending events from which neighbours were excluded. The excluded neighbours were observing and could make up their own minds whether to attend any of the public events. In deciding on the price of a ticket for a fruit feast, or determining unusual numbers for ticket printing, responsibility was being taken. The focus on the gathering in of money meant that tickets could ensure that the affiliation of children was known. For example, in 1851, the Driffield Wesleyan Sunday School had resolved 'that six boys and girls belonging to the school canvass the town with tickets on the morning of the school feast.'<sup>1027</sup> Finance was not the only consideration. Committee members belonging to the Primitive Methodist cause in Driffield issued the policemen with free tickets to the tea meeting, to be held on 8 May 1865. It was their way of thanking them for keeping order at the camp meeting.<sup>1028</sup> Events in the town meant that villagers were required to travel. These same villagers were able to welcome others to their chapels. Tickets were sold on the understanding that fare would be provided. The standard request was for 'trays to be solicited from members of the congregation.'<sup>1029</sup> A person could oblige or decline the offer to assist. The response would have been noted as would the quality of the victuals. This increased use of tickets provides comment in relation to desacralisation.

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<sup>1024</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Langtoft Chapel Book 1839-1880, 1861, Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRD/2/24/2, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1025</sup> Market Weighton Wesleyan Circuit Goodmanham Chapel Sunday School Secretaries Minute Book 1864-1880, 5 June 1865, Market Weighton Wesleyan Circuit, MRM/1/32, East Riding Archives. The same event took place annually and in 1880 the profits amounted to four pounds and fourteen shillings.

<sup>1026</sup> Beverley Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, Walkington New Chapel Building Account Book 1878-1890, 1880, Beverley Wesleyan Circuit, MRB/1/116, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1027</sup> Driffield Wesleyan Circuit Sunday School Minute Book 1838-1874, 13 October 1851, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1028</sup> "Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Committee Minute Book 1859-1866, 27 April 1865, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1029</sup> See, for example, Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Trustees Minute Book 1847-1859, Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRP/4/21, East Riding Archives.

Changes to their purpose and the increased variety were invariably linked to entertainment and secular activity so that the focus on things theological was diminished.

The actual Methodist ticket-of-membership was so different from that which has just been described and it is, perhaps, for this reason that study of it has been limited. It was, indeed, a requirement for access to certain happenings. The class-meeting, Love Feast and Lord's Supper are the most pertinent examples. These were events which were exclusively the preserve of the ticket holding member, whose credentials had been tested.<sup>1030</sup> Anyone attending would have known who else could be present and Sarah Lloyd points out that, at one and the same time, the ticket was demonstrating 'individual singularity, as expressed in a name, while conveying an intense experience of community.'<sup>1031</sup> These exclusive occurrences, though, would certainly not have been described as entertainments.

Issued on four occasions during the year, the actual membership ticket was, in one sense, transitory. The member needed only to wait for three months for another to be presented. It was the on-going possession of one, however, which demonstrated lifelong commitment, or endurance, with very recent verification of upheld standards.<sup>1032</sup> It was not to be handed over or collected in. The possessor could decide what to do with it. The fact that Methodists tended to retain their previous tickets is potentially important. Lloyd sees a symbolic link between keeping practices and identity.<sup>1033</sup>

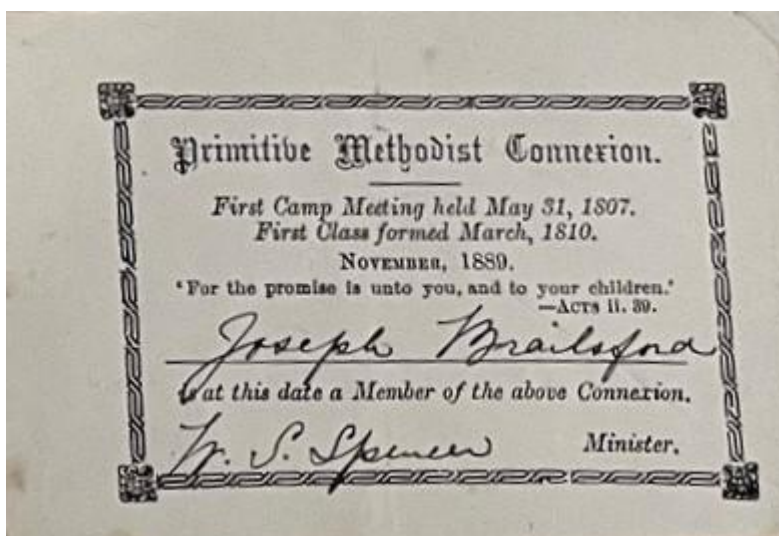
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<sup>1030</sup> These three happenings are discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>1031</sup> Sarah Lloyd, (2020) "The Religious and Social Significance of Methodist Tickets, and Associated Practices of Collecting and Recollecting, 1741-2017," *The Historical Journal* 63, no. 2 (2020): 365 & 372.

<sup>1032</sup> Discussed in detail elsewhere, it was at the class meeting that a member's 'fitness to continue' would be tested. See the *Minutes of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference* for 1889 for a detailed statement. This is reprinted in Davis, George and Rupp, *A History of the Methodist Church*, vol IV, 571-572.

<sup>1033</sup> Lloyd, "The Religious and Social Significance," 362.



Ticket of Membership<sup>1034</sup>

Over the years, the design of tickets changed, but there were consistent features. A bible verse was usually accompanied by the date and a statement, which confirmed membership and gave information about the origins of the denomination. Importantly, the member's name was written alongside the signature of the minister and, because of this, the ticket immediately became unique and personal. Elijah Jackson was a member of the Pocklington Primitive Methodist circuit and his ticket for August 1874 gave the dates for the initial camp meeting and first class formed. A verse from the *Acts of the Apostles* was urging him to 'speak the word of God with boldness.'<sup>1035</sup> All of this content, therefore, said something of identity. Where else might a spinster living in a village on the Wolds see her name in print? Crucially, where else might the labourer be in possession of something which spoke so profoundly of human equivalence? All members, whatever their status were, after all, embarked on the same journey and the ticket said something of this religious kinship. For the holder there was a possibility of relationships and interactions which, otherwise, might have been impossible to countenance. Being present at worship as a member of the congregation was the most obvious way to mingle, but there were many other

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<sup>1034</sup> Membership Ticket of Joseph Brailsford, November 1889, Membership Tickets, EMBPM:2006.096, Englesea Brook Chapel & Museum Collection.

<sup>1035</sup> Included in the Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Minute Book of Leaders' Meeting 1854-1875, East Riding Archives.

opportunities. For example, each chapel was required to have a group of trustees who were themselves Methodist members. It was viewed as a role of responsibility, they met regularly throughout the year, and their occupations were often noted. Differences between Wesleyan and Primitive Methodist practice can be detected. The trustees of chapels in the Pocklington Wesleyan circuit were, in the main, farmers. In 1880, the Nunburnholme chapel had seven farmer trustees and they were joined by a chemist, two drapers, a seedman and a veterinary surgeon. At Wilberfoss, the five farmers sat alongside a corn merchant, ironmonger, surgeon and carpenter. As early as 1858, the ten farmers who were trustees of the Bishop Wilton chapel were sharing their responsibilities with a schoolmaster and blacksmith. One solitary labourer attended the meetings.<sup>1036</sup> In the same village, the Primitive Methodist chapel trustees paint a very different picture. William Petch, a farmer from the village, and his son, Harry, described as a farmer's assistant, shared their duties with five local labourers. These men, whose names were recorded for posterity, were also being given the opportunity to fraternise with people from further afield. A stone mason, auctioneer and shop manager, all from Pocklington, joined them at their meetings.<sup>1037</sup>

In 1862, the Driffield Primitive Methodist circuit compiled a record of its chapels, with the names and occupations of trustees included. The town chapel's two labourers were outnumbered by the various tradesmen. The village chapels, all twenty-two of them, reflected to a greater degree, their congregations' preponderance of labourers. At Cranswick, the nine labourers shared the responsibilities with a farmer, tea dealer, blacksmith and grocer. At Kilham, eleven out of the twelve trustees were labourers. All told, there were some fifty different occupations represented: shepherds and farm servants sitting alongside the farmers and a stationmaster. A trustee could, therefore, be sitting in a room full of fellow labourers with decisions being taken, or he might be surrounded by those less familiar to him. Each of these scenarios carried implications for identity formation.<sup>1038</sup>

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<sup>1036</sup> Pocklington Wesleyan Circuit Chapel Book 1834-1879, Pocklington Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, MRP/1/16, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1037</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Trustees Minute Book 1847-1859, 23 June 1858, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1038</sup> "Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit List of Chapels and Trustees 1862," Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Committee Minute Book 1859-1866, 1862, East Riding Archives.

Lifelong membership, being in constant possession of a ticket, relied on a lifetime of commitment which was to be regularly tested. There was nothing casual about it and the rules were not for the faint hearted. From the earliest days, the enjoinder from John Wesley himself, had been to 'desire to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from...sins.'<sup>1039</sup> At the inaugural Primitive Methodist annual conference, held in Hull in 1820, this *leitmotif* was repeated:

Any person who earnestly desires to flee from the wrath to come, may be admitted to meet in class, on *trial*. But the earnest desire must be manifested, at least, three months before such a person is received into full membership.<sup>1040</sup>

The spiritual was met with instruction for daily living.

No person shall be continued a member of our society, who visits public or worldly amusements; nor those who waste their time at public houses, follow the fashions of the world, buy unaccustomed goods, who are not honest in all their dealings, or who are guilty of other acts of immorality.<sup>1041</sup>

All of this adds veracity to the contention that Methodism provided the social circumstances required for identity formation. What really set this Methodism apart, however, was how three constant features worked together for the individual and the onlooker during the century. Recognition, routine and responsibility were offered and, in the acceptance, something profound occurred: something not repeated in relation to anything else on the Yorkshire Wolds. The person who was not a Methodist would have been acutely aware of those who were, and vice versa. The ubiquity of Methodism, however, meant that the differences between Wesleyan and Primitive were every bit as significant as the distinction between Methodist and non-Methodist.

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<sup>1039</sup> Reprinted in Davis, George and Rupp, *A History of the Methodist Church*, vol IV, 59-60.

<sup>1040</sup> Reprinted in the *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1820, 206-221. Discussion would take place in the Leaders' Meeting with the class leader giving an account of the person on trial. If acceptable, the ticket would be awarded at the class meeting or handed to the new member by the minister.

<sup>1041</sup> Reprinted in the *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1820, 206-221.

## Recognition

Fleeing from the wrath to come was, almost always, made manifest by a conversion experience and this was, surely, the most blatant form of identity transformation imaginable. It was certainly the way to gain recognition as a Primitive Methodist.<sup>1042</sup> Henry Woodcock, the author who urged piety among the peasantry, also wrote *Wonders of Grace*. Here he outlined the influence of the Holy Spirit as shown by ‘three hundred and fifty remarkable conversions.’ His definition:

By conversion we mean that moral and spiritual change wrought in the heart and mind of a man by the Spirit of God, by which he obtains new views, experiences new feelings, enjoys new hopes and pleasures, and immediately begins to live a new life.<sup>1043</sup>

There is acknowledgement by him that some believed it to be possible for this conversion experience to be slow and gradual. The tenor of his writing indicated that he was not convinced, however. While stating that Methodism had saved Protestantism from ‘stagnation and death’, he added that ‘Methodists have nearly all been converted suddenly.’<sup>1044</sup>

Identity changed in an instant. Woodcock was a Primitive Methodist and available records do back up his assertion. The published obituaries were not encomia. They were frequently brutally honest about a person’s shortcomings and, even if some exaggeration or embellishment is present on occasion, they shout loud what the writer, as well as the deceased, would have wanted to stress about identifying as a Methodist.<sup>1045</sup> Linda Wilson emphasised their usefulness and left scope for further scrutiny.<sup>1046</sup> The examples which

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<sup>1042</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, March 1860, 187. Here, the writer of an obituary for John Welborn of Muston, states that, after his conversion in 1823, his identity changed ‘at once.’

<sup>1043</sup> Henry Woodcock, *Wonders of Grace or the Influence of the Holy Spirit Manifested in Upwards of Three Hundred and Fifty Remarkable Conversions* (London: Simkin, Marshall, Hamilton, 1879), 3.

<sup>1044</sup> *Ibid*, 32.

<sup>1045</sup> The memoir for J. Booth from the Driffield circuit stated that ‘as a preacher his talents were ordinary.’ See the *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, December 1843, 442. In May 1853, for example, it was said of William Howcroft that his preaching ‘did not occupy a high position.’ See *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, May 1853, 259. For an in-depth survey of conversion narratives in the eighteenth century see D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>1046</sup> Wilson, *Constrained by Zeal*, 3. This is supported by David Bebbington in his forward to the book.

follow are inevitably few in number, but they sum up what was typical for the many. They bring a personal touch to add resonance to the issue of identity which, in essence, is about rising from anonymity and obscurity. Two interwoven issues are also brought to the fore, and they are: the way language combines with emotion to assist in the defining of identities. It was, after all, precisely because of emotion and language that the Primitive Methodists very quickly came to be known as Ranters. The observation by Fehr and Russell that ‘everyone knows what an emotion is, until asked to give a definition,’ is apposite.<sup>1047</sup> For this study there is something fortuitous about the German term *gemüthsbevegung*, with its definition of the ‘stirring of one’s soul.’<sup>1048</sup> This is what the convert would have stated was happening. Language is seen by Kristen Lindquist as an essential ‘ingredient’ in the creation of emotional perceptions and experiences.<sup>1049</sup> It is certainly a key indicator of differences between Wesleyan and Primitive identities.

Almost without exception, the Primitive Methodist obituaries featured details of when and how the person had been ‘fully convinced of sin’ or had received the ‘saving grace.’<sup>1050</sup> As exemplifiers: John Slater of Bishop Wilton, near Pocklington, converted on the 2 August 1838, and Mary Darley, of Langtoft, who became a ‘meek and humble follower of the Lamb’ in January 1841.<sup>1051</sup> Each conversion would have meant the same as it did for the twenty-six-year-old Grace Pinkney from Cranswick near Driffield: ‘She gave her heart to God at once.’<sup>1052</sup> Grace joined the Primitive Methodists as soon as she was converted and again, this was the frequent occurrence. So many others did the same as Joseph Petch of North Frodingham. Converted ‘through the instrumentality of Primitive Methodism in a revival at Frodingham, [he] immediately cast in his lot, and became a member.’<sup>1053</sup> William Welbourne

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<sup>1047</sup> Beverley Fehr and James A. Russell, “Concept of Emotion Viewed from a Prototype Perspective,” *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 113, no. 3 (1984): 464. The sheer difficulty of defining emotion for historical study is also spoken of in Barbara Rosenwein, “Worrying About Emotions in History.” *American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (2002): 821-845.

<sup>1048</sup> Jan Plamper, *The History of Emotions: an Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) 11.

<sup>1049</sup> Kristen A. Lindquist, “The Role of Language in Emotion: Existing Evidence and Future Directions,” *Current Opinion in Psychology* 17, (2017): 135-139. See also Rob Boddice, *The History of Emotions* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018)1. Here Boddice even claims that history departments have taken the ‘emotional turn.’ Chapter two of this book explores the link between language and emotion.

<sup>1050</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, December 1834, 460 and November 1835, 438.

<sup>1051</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, September 1869, 570 and January 1852, 120.

<sup>1052</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, January 1859, 59.

<sup>1053</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, December, 1861, 756.

from Seaton Ross in the Pocklington circuit might have been a touch tardier, as he only became a member 'soon after' his conversion. The result, however, was the same.<sup>1054</sup>

Conversion affected people in different ways, but weeping was often involved for a Primitive Methodist. Convinced of his sin, Leonard Mainprize 'began to cry for mercy...and he did not cry in vain.'<sup>1055</sup> It was 'with many tears' that Joseph Booth from the Driffield circuit was released from the wrath of God.<sup>1056</sup> Emotions brought recognition of changed identity for the convert, but the onlooker was aware of something happening too:

...and one week-night the cries of sinners in distress, and the shouts of believers were so great, that the whole street was raised, and it was said the Methodists had gone mad.<sup>1057</sup>

Often the indication was that a *volte-face* had been enacted. John Taylor from Driffield was described as 'a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke' because of his enmity against God. At the age of forty-four:

...he had not to wrestle till the break of day, for at two in the morning he received the "Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father."

That his identity was forever changed was immediately recognised by those who lived nearby. He got up and 'went from house to house telling his neighbours that he had obtained mercy and exhorting them to seek the Lord.'<sup>1058</sup> George Martindale of Yapham evidently did not need to inform anyone. He had, according to his obituary writer, been such a slave to the prince of darkness before conversion, that all who knew him detected that divine grace 'had turned the lion into a lamb.'<sup>1059</sup>

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<sup>1054</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, March 1854, 189.

<sup>1055</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, November 1863, 653.

<sup>1056</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, December 1843, 441.

<sup>1057</sup> "The *Biography of Rev. John Coulson*," *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, January 1863, 6. Coulson was a travelling preacher in the Driffield circuit.

<sup>1058</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, September 1854, 519.

<sup>1059</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, July 1858, 445. William Pinder, from Nafferton near Driffield, only found 'salvation through the Saviour's precious blood' during the last year of his life but 'all who knew him were satisfied that he was a changed man.' See *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, April 1852, 254.



A conversion experience was thought essential, therefore, by the Primitive Methodists and this is explained by reference to Elizabeth Padget from Walkington, near Beverley. Unlike John Taylor, she had attended the house of God from childhood and was described in exemplary terms. She worshipped with her husband and was 'kind to the cause.' This was not enough, and it was only towards the end of her life that she could claim to 'fully understand the way of salvation by faith.' This happened on hearing a sermon preached by the aforementioned Henry Woodcock and she was, only then, able to become a member.<sup>1060</sup>

Conversion's role in identity formation was made even more significant because it was usually a very public happening. True, for the very few, it occurred while at home in the closet or over a gradual period of time.<sup>1061</sup> For the many there were camp-meetings, revivals, and the simple Sunday sermon, along with other such opportunities: occasions when it would have been impossible to go unrecognised. In 1819, Mary Adamson of Givendale was attracted by the large numbers who had gathered in the open air to hear the singing and preaching of the Primitive Methodists.<sup>1062</sup> Mary Clark knew that the word of God 'had reached her heart' when she went to the preaching in Beverley's market place in 1821.<sup>1063</sup> The camp-meeting held at North Burton, near Bridlington, in 1836, led to several conversions, including that of Ann Watson. She was to become a Primitive Methodist stalwart in her village.<sup>1064</sup> It was thought to be the novelty of Primitive Methodist missionaries, who were prone to sing and preach in the open air, that attracted the attention of one Pocklington resident and led her 'to bow in penitence.'<sup>1065</sup> Penitence was, indeed, a recurring theme with the penitents often loudly pleading for mercy. Their struggle for conversion was definitely witnessed. There were even people charged to intercede on their behalf. One such was Mary Cowling of Filey, and it is recorded that 'her soul filled with joy'

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<sup>1060</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, July 1863, 437. Mary Huntsman had been a seat holder at her Primitive Methodist chapel for eight years before receiving her assurance of salvation. See *Primitive Methodist Magazine* for January 1867, 47.

<sup>1061</sup> See *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, January 1852, 120: Mary Darley from Langtoft 'frequented her closet much, where she held sweet communion with her God, pleaded earnestly...and got her spiritual strength renewed.' See *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, November 1862, 1053: For John Warters 'his conversion was a case of gradual illumination and not of unusual alarm or very powerful awakening.'

<sup>1062</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, April 1860, 250.

<sup>1063</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, May 1834, 202.

<sup>1064</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, March 1855, 186.

<sup>1065</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, March 1858, 196.

when the penitents obtained pardon and peace.<sup>1066</sup> Chapels, and events such as camp-meetings, had penitents' forms. These were special pews set aside for the purpose, and there would be great rejoicing when one of those seated was converted.<sup>1067</sup> The already mentioned John Taylor had many duties 'but was most popular at the penitent form, pleading for mourners.'<sup>1068</sup> Funerals were, indeed, frequently used for the express purpose of gaining converts. Joseph Booth from a village near Drifffield specifically requested that his funeral should be used by the minister to 'improve' his death. The improvement took place in the form of three converts who, otherwise, might have remained unchanged.<sup>1069</sup> Two years later, the memoir of Thomas Hall, a local preacher from Market Weighton, stated:

I, Henry Knowles, improved his death in the hearing of a large and attentive congregation; and three souls were brought to the enjoyment of spiritual life, while several were deeply convinced of their lost state.<sup>1070</sup>

Presumably, the several would be more susceptible to conversion in the future. At the funeral of an eighteen-year-old farm labourer from Bempton, who had 'met with a dreadful accident when working at a steam sawing machine,' it was 'two souls that found mercy.'<sup>1071</sup> John Barnett's tragic demise, however, demonstrates something else that was extremely important in relation to identity formation. Converted at the age of fifteen, and already an exhorter who was about to become a local preacher, his greatest concern was for his family. He was purportedly heard to say to his relatives:

Do not weep for me. I am going home to heaven. Do pray much, get converted, so that I may meet you all there.<sup>1072</sup>

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<sup>1066</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, May 1862, 310. See also the memoir of Mrs. Hannah Honor of Bridlington, *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, February 1873.

<sup>1067</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, November 1852, 704.

<sup>1068</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, September 1854, 519.

<sup>1069</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, December 1843, 441.

<sup>1070</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, June 1846, 326.

<sup>1071</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, February 1862, 125.

<sup>1072</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, February 1862, 125.

Conversion and subsequent membership could divide or unite families. Elizabeth Hodge witnessed all her large family 'brought under the influence of saving grace.'<sup>1073</sup> This was exactly what Richard Bessingby, from a village close to Bridlington, desired. After work he would drop to his knees in a ditch, or behind a hedge, to pray for the conversion of his twelve children.<sup>1074</sup> One father of Primitive Methodist children, on the other hand, felt that they 'were all turning crazed.'<sup>1075</sup> The husband of Rachel Batty of Harpham, near Driffield, recorded that becoming a Primitive Methodist meant that she was hounded by her mother. This mother was strongly attached to the Church of England and the daughter associated this with being 'gay, and carnal, and thoughtless about the salvation of her soul.'<sup>1076</sup> Rachel Vasey's mother was so opposed to her daughter's new identity that, aged thirteen, she was forced to leave her home to find employment with a Christian family elsewhere.<sup>1077</sup> There were dilemmas also for the household with divided Methodist loyalties. Mary Rodman had been a Wesleyan for thirty years and 'an ornament of their society.' When her husband and a daughter connected themselves to the Primitive Methodist cause, she deemed it her duty to unite with them.<sup>1078</sup> It had been easier for Hannah Turner of North Driffield, as her husband had been converted by the Primitive Methodists at the same time as her.<sup>1079</sup> Friendships did not escape the problems either. John North, who lived in Pocklington, stood firm even though his friends were opposed and raised objections. He turned to his new acquaintances at the Primitive Methodist chapel to occupy his time.<sup>1080</sup>

Identity formation is demonstrated when a reaction is elicited from others. James Reed was an illiterate labourer from a village near Driffield who, after his conversion, was said to have suffered a great deal of persecution. There was opposition because he was a Primitive Methodist and also because he was very vocal about it.<sup>1081</sup> The ill treatment was more likely in the earlier days of the newer denomination. Ellen Smith was one of the first members of the society at Hutton, also near Driffield. It was recorded that she, along with her husband

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<sup>1073</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, March 1852, 190. After her conversion, Hannah Brown 'became anxious for the salvation of her relations.' See *Primitive Methodist Magazine* for February 1855, 122.

<sup>1074</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, January 1865, 60.

<sup>1075</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, March 1858, 196.

<sup>1076</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, November 1854, 694.

<sup>1077</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, June 1873, 375.

<sup>1078</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, May 1854, 313.

<sup>1079</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, February 1854, 69.

<sup>1080</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, October 1873, 613.

<sup>1081</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, January 1861, 58.

and many others, had to endure much persecution, but that she 'stood firm.'<sup>1082</sup> William Scruton of Hutton Cranswick was certainly ridiculed when, at the age of twelve, he was converted and joined with the Primitive Methodists. It was the writer of his memoir who had laughed at him on account of his religion.<sup>1083</sup>

These conversions were not isolated happenings. Their essential role, and a reminder of how many Primitive Methodists there were from village to village and town to town, says it all. Special efforts to secure conversions abounded. Example can be given of the ten-week protracted meeting which commenced in the Driffield circuit in the January of 1842. For the first seven of those weeks, prayer meetings were held every morning at five o'clock. Attendance was good. Each evening, for the full number of weeks, there was a service as well as a full programme of other events. The purpose was conversion which would, in turn, boost membership.

At the end of the first week, twenty souls found liberty. In the second week, souls were crying out for mercy on every hand. At the end of the ten weeks, one hundred and seventy souls showed that Satan's kingdom was so mightily shaken.<sup>1084</sup>

Here is a demonstration of how language and emotion combined to seal identities. So did the timing of events. Those leaving their accommodation to attend the meeting at five o'clock included both the committed and the curious. Those not present would have been aware of those who were.

The efforts of the Primitive Methodists could have a huge effect on villages, literally overnight. The Etton Salvation Meeting, held on 21 May 1843, meant that the number of members doubled. At North Burton, a month later, while 'the believers shouted aloud for joy, sinners cried for mercy and ten were brought into the liberty of the children of God.'<sup>1085</sup>

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<sup>1082</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, May 1862, 317.

<sup>1083</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, March 1865, 170.

<sup>1084</sup> Campbell, H. (1861) "On the work of God in the Driffield circuit," *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, January 1844, 23.

<sup>1085</sup> *Ibid*, 24.

At Flamborough, there was the addition of more than one hundred members in a short space of time. The opportunity was seized to sum up the occurrence, thus:

Within the last twelve months, scores of fishermen have been caught  
in the gospel net.<sup>1086</sup>

For travelling preachers, the number of converts was a defining detail. The Reverend Hugh Campbell, sometime resident in the Drifffield circuit who died while in Scarborough, was able to boast of fourteen hundred people who became members specifically because of his ministry.<sup>1087</sup>

In relation to Wesleyanism, it is both the content and the language used by obituary writers that emphasise a different role for the emotions in identity formation. If there was something visceral about a Primitive Methodist obituary, those of Wesleyan Methodists were far more circumspect. Only a very small number of their obituaries, published between 1830 and 1880, even employed the term conversion.<sup>1088</sup> It was more likely to be told, as with George Philliskirk of Bridlington Quay, that someone had simply been 'awakened.'<sup>1089</sup> The preoccupation, instead, was with the date from when a person had actually joined the society and had become a Wesleyan Methodist. Almost three-quarters of the obituaries stated the number of years the deceased had remained loyal to the cause.<sup>1090</sup> No crying or weeping was recorded. This does not mean that it had not occurred, but it says much about how Wesleyanism and Wesleyans wished to be perceived.

John Warters, a Wesleyan from the village of Norton, died in 1861, at the age of eighty-five. His obituary writer was prepared to state that his conversion was 'a case of gradual illumination...not of unusual alarm or very powerful awakening.'<sup>1091</sup> The contrast between this and the thoughts of Henry Woodcock is stark. It was far more common for a prospective Wesleyan to be brought 'to a sense of pardoning love' through listening attentively, and quietly, to a sermon. We are told that this had happened to Ann Weldrill of Beverley, who

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<sup>1086</sup> Ibid, 23.

<sup>1087</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, April 1861, 195.

<sup>1088</sup> Thirteen out of one hundred and twenty-five, to be precise.

<sup>1089</sup> *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, January 1832, 72.

<sup>1090</sup> Eighty-seven out of the one hundred and twenty-five.

<sup>1091</sup> *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, November 1862, 1053.

died in 1833. In 1787 the text had been: 'Tekel, thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.'<sup>1092</sup> Her response was contemplative. Pride could certainly be detected if the orator was none other than John Wesley himself.<sup>1093</sup>

The contrast between the Wesleyan and Primitive experience and personality showed itself in other ways. The former were not reported to have been so reprehensible prior to their changed state. There were no references to penitents' pews. Having become a Wesleyan, Francis Cole of Little Weighton was said to have been 'clothed in humility.'<sup>1094</sup> Meant as a compliment, it was said of a Mrs. Peart of Pocklington that 'her views of herself were always very low.'<sup>1095</sup> Such comment did not appear to cross the minds of Primitive Methodist writers! If all is to be believed, it would seem as though a Wesleyan could coexist with people of other persuasions, or they did not feel the need to mention such relationships. All of this can be summed up with reference to the death-bed scene. A Primitive Methodist obituary was not seemingly complete without reference to it, and almost all purported to recount the final words of the dying Christian. Overwhelmingly, a note of triumph would be sounded, or it was made clear that the battle was finally over. On being told that he was very ill, the thirty-four-year-old Joseph Stockdale of Filey was said to have spoken with confidence: 'All is well. Were I to die this moment, I am accepted by God; praise the Lord!' With his last breath he declared 'sing! sing! Glory! Hallelujah!'<sup>1096</sup> Not so often referred to, the end for a Wesleyan appeared more peaceful. Mrs. Wilberfoss of Wetwang simply 'approached death with the calmest tranquility,' while Mary Monkman 'calmly committed her soul into the hands of her saviour, through whom she looked for eternal life.'<sup>1097</sup> Most aspired to do the same. For the Primitive Methodist there appeared the need to

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<sup>1092</sup> *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, August 1836, 796. The text was taken from Daniel V:27.

<sup>1093</sup> Tabitha Chapman had 'obtained a knowledge of the plan of Salvation by Faith in Christ under a sermon preached by Mr. Wesley in the city of York.' See the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, July 1830, 509. John Ardington from Goodmanham, who died aged 92 in 1836, had heard Mr. Wesley preach at Beverley. See the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, April 1836, 316. Elizabeth, relict of the aforementioned John, had heard John Wesley preach in Bridlington Quay at a 5am gathering in 1778. See the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, June 1848, 685.

<sup>1094</sup> *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, June 1834, 560.

<sup>1095</sup> *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, June 1837, 477.

<sup>1096</sup> *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, September 1851, 579.

<sup>1097</sup> *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, July 1835, 558 and *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, October 1861, 960.

demonstrate the fight as well as the victory. For the Wesleyan there was something more akin to dignity which was being played out.

Becoming a Methodist was, therefore, transformative, but conversion was intended to be the catalyst for so much more. Margaret Cross from Flamborough was born in 1759 and, prior to her conversion, it was reported that she had 'been accustomed to imitate the gay and fashionable world.' On becoming a Primitive Methodist, she not only saw the evils connected to this:

She deemed it necessary to cast off every useless ornament, and to clothe her person in plain and modest apparel...deeming trifling conversation to be the bane of all serious godliness. Her language, like her person, became chaste and heavenly.<sup>1098</sup>

Mary Todd from Pocklington was born in 1776 and 'she was brought to God...through the instrumentality of the first Primitive Methodist missionaries' in 1820. It was her husband who found this difficult:

He was greatly opposed to her abandoning her finery, giving up her fashionable associates, and uniting with the church; but she calmly told him that in the things connected with conscience and her soul, she ought to obey God rather than man. Nor did she forget to pray that her partner might be brought into the liberty she enjoyed; and the Lord answered her prayer, and saved his soul...<sup>1099</sup>

Mr. Todd emphasises one obvious way for an identity to change. People might not have immediately recognised the newly dressed Mary, but it would soon become a distinguishing feature. Apparel aside, Henry Woodcock knew the importance of piety for the Primitive Methodists. Over one third of their obituaries specifically referred to the deceased person's possession of it. The remainder might have used a different vocabulary, but it amounted to the same. This piety was described in such a way as to appear synonymous with Primitive Methodism. It was what they strove to achieve. Wesleyans used the same term and, in an

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<sup>1098</sup> *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, April 1839, 151

<sup>1099</sup> *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, July 1854, 446.

article of 1865, it was summed up, thus: 'Piety, we all maintain, comes not by birth, but by change of heart.'<sup>1100</sup> They were more likely, however, to acknowledge that this change of heart could be attained by those other than themselves. Only a very small number of Wesleyan obituaries claimed piety for the deceased, but a great many pointed to the benefits of having pious parents.<sup>1101</sup> Here a pious person was, put simply, a religious person.<sup>1102</sup> During the mid-century decades, Wesleyan obituaries began to hint that other, more worldly, pursuits were worthy of recognition. John Bell of Rudston, near Bridlington, had spent fifty-five years convinced of his sin, but his attributes were recorded in this order: '...diligent in business, fervent in spirit.'<sup>1103</sup> The following year, it was the turn of Thomas West from Bishop Wilton.

To diligence in his master's service, he added diligence in business.

His piety was alike humble, sincere and practical.<sup>1104</sup>

His work for the master was mentioned before his business acumen but it was his piety which was, possibly, the afterthought. The more prosaic nature of the Wesleyan obituary is demonstrated with reference to John Hallam of Sancton, who died in in 1851. 'Being remarkably diligent, he at once prospered in business and grew in grace.'<sup>1105</sup> This is a gentleman who was clearly identified as a businessman alongside his Wesleyanism.

Added insight into Methodist identity is provided by referring to those who failed to live up to the required standards. The vast majority successfully followed the rules, and this would have had a bearing on how they were perceived by others in the community. If the Methodist life was about travelling onwards or upwards, the vocabulary of failure was clear: people were backsliding, sinking, or falling. An article, entitled 'Backsliding, with its Causes and Remedy,' was published in the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* in 1832. It was evidently identified as a problem and the causes were stated to be, either an unsound conversion or, a

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<sup>1100</sup> "The vocation of Wesleyan Methodism," *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, January 1965, 27.

<sup>1101</sup> William Spink's 'character was marked by great gentleness, by genuine humility, by transparent sincerity, and by the strong love of truth, and charity.' A Wesleyan, after his conversion, a Primitive Methodist might have described him as pious. See the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, July 1874, 671.

<sup>1102</sup> Only five Wesleyan obituaries between 1830 and 1880 described the deceased as pious.

<sup>1103</sup> *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, July 1862, 959.

<sup>1104</sup> *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, July 1863, 670.

<sup>1105</sup> *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, May 1851, 504.



lack of perseverance and earnestness.<sup>1106</sup> For both Wesleyanism and Primitive Methodism, the most significant manifestation of this came in the form of nonattendance at the *means of grace*. It is the other reasons for censure, however, that shed light on certain standards that the Methodists were expected to uphold: standards that set them apart.

The Wesleyans might have identified that they had a problem but, on the Yorkshire Wolds, they reported far fewer incidents of this backsliding than the Primitive Methodists. From their records, it is the importance of propriety in business and financial matters which is made clear. In the Driffield Wesleyan circuit, it was during the 1860s that some issues started to emerge. The local preachers felt the need, in the December of 1862, to call a special meeting, 'according to rule,' so that the financial difficulties of a Brother Merkin could be discussed.<sup>1107</sup> His situation had already been scrutinised by another gathering of office holders. In December 1864, the Driffield local preachers were having to discuss their Brother Calvert's 'recent failure in business.'<sup>1108</sup> Three months later, in March 1865, it became clear that he had been told to discontinue his preaching, but had failed to do so.<sup>1109</sup> Again he was reprimanded. In 1869 it was Brother Bell's turn to have his business failure scrutinised. The local preachers decided that the superintendent minister, with a society steward, should be asked to carry out the investigation.<sup>1110</sup> Even though, a few months later, issues relating to the same gentleman's moral character were referred to, his explanations were eventually deemed satisfactory.<sup>1111</sup> For the sake of remaining a Wesleyan Methodist, these men were prepared to defend themselves against accusations. There were certain standards to uphold if you were a Wesleyan businessman and others would know this. Being a Wesleyan Methodist possibly meant there was further to fall.

Other issues were dealt with by Wesleyans on the Wolds. During the 1830s, for example, a local preacher in the Driffield circuit was investigated because of a report of gambling taking

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<sup>1106</sup> *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, August 1832, 556-559.

<sup>1107</sup> Driffield Wesleyan Circuit Minutes of Local Preachers' Meetings 1835-1873, December 1862, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1108</sup> *Ibid*, 28 December 1864.

<sup>1109</sup> *Ibid*, 25 March 1865.

<sup>1110</sup> *Ibid*, 25 March 1865.

<sup>1111</sup> *Ibid*. These issues were not only confined to the Driffield circuit. In 1868, the superintendent minister of the Malton circuit was having to speak to a John Walker and his creditors to ascertain his financial circumstances. See Malton Wesleyan Circuit Local Preachers Meeting Minute Book 1857-1891, 30 March 1868, Malton Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, R/M/ML/1/2, North Yorkshire Record Office.

place within his house.<sup>1112</sup> His promise to ‘observe better order in the future’ was enough to allow him to continue preaching. In the 1860s, one gentleman faced suspension from preaching because of his attendance at a steeplechase, but there appeared to be no question of having to cease his membership.<sup>1113</sup> Ten years later, Brother Lyons, a Beverley Wesleyan, was being reported for singing with ungodly men and using threatening language. Two misdemeanours which did result in him ‘ceasing to have any connection with us.’<sup>1114</sup> Hints here as to expected behaviours which an onlooker might have struggled to understand.

Primitive Methodism was confronted by far more issues. Either that, or they were more determined to deal with them. After nonattendance, the most commonly encountered misdemeanours were immorality and intoxication. The former would, presumably, have been unacceptable to more than Methodists. These Primitive Methodists, however, were subjecting themselves to an extra dose of scrutiny and embarrassment. Problems related to alcohol consumption were well known and widespread but, again, onlookers would have known of the firm stance taken by the Primitive Methodists. Issues were being dealt with throughout the century with no discernible increase or decrease. In the 1830s, for example, numerous men, always men, were being summoned to meetings to answer charges of intoxication.<sup>1115</sup> Right through to the 1870s, drunkenness invariably meant that membership was revoked.<sup>1116</sup> The accusations of immorality leave much to the imagination, but punishment could range from temporary exclusion to permanent expulsion. At one end of the scale there was Brother Simms from the Scarborough circuit who, in 1872, was suspended for three months ‘for kissing two ladies.’<sup>1117</sup> At the other end, there was Brother Johnson from Pocklington whose immorality was deemed so serious that he was to ‘be

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<sup>1112</sup> Driffield Wesleyan Circuit Minutes of Local Preachers’ Meetings 1835-1873, 28 December 1835, Driffield Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1113</sup> Malton Wesleyan Circuit Local Preachers Meeting Minute Book 1857-1891, 26 March 1867, North Yorkshire Record Office.

<sup>1114</sup> Beverley Wesleyan Circuit Local Preachers’ Minute Book 1868-1880, 27 March 1878, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1115</sup> See Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Minute Book of Leaders’ Meeting 1832-1854, 23 February 1833, East Riding Archives, Also Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit Local Preachers’ Meeting Book 1835-1841, 31 August 1835, North Yorkshire Record Office.

<sup>1116</sup> Filey Primitive Methodist Circuit Leaders’ Meeting Minute and Account Book 1863-1878, 9 September 1871, Filey Primitive Methodist Circuit, R/M/Fil/2/2/6, North Yorkshire Record Office.

<sup>1117</sup> Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit Committee Meeting Book 1853-1875, 17 May 1872, North Yorkshire Record Office.

removed from the plan and immediately expelled from the Primitive Methodist connexion.<sup>1118</sup> At the same meeting, a six-month suspension from membership was all that was given to Brother Rooks of Huggate. He had brought scandal to the chapel by:

allowing his housekeeper on three occasions to attempt to enter his bed, when he was in it, for criminal purposes.<sup>1119</sup>

Advice was offered. He should have dismissed her from his service after the first offence or locked the door to his sleeping room!<sup>1120</sup>

Other issues for the Primitive Methodists ranged from those that would have been considered peculiar by anybody's standards, to those that made the Primitive Methodists themselves seem odd. In March 1864, the Pocklington Leaders' Meeting was summoning Brother Nelson:

to answer to the charges of perambulating the streets of Pocklington in a lady's crinoline, announcing races to be run and of being intoxicated on the same day.<sup>1121</sup>

Certainly peculiar, his expulsion was to be expected and would have been understood. Harder to grasp for the uninitiated might have been the worries connected to the Denton sisters from the Scarborough circuit. Brother Handley was sent to speak to them about 'some unbecoming parts of their dress' at the same time as Brother Boreman was having to see Mary Smith about the same issue.<sup>1122</sup> From decade-to-decade, people were being censured for a whole range of other concerns: baking on a Sunday, the use of foul language, playing cricket, fiddling books, fishing, card playing, shooting hares, lacking prudence, selling tobacco. The list goes on.<sup>1123</sup> There was certainly no mercy shown by the Scarborough

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<sup>1118</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarter Day Minute Book 1859-1863, 17 March 1863, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1120</sup> Ibid. Many other examples could be given.

<sup>1121</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Minute Book of Leaders' Meeting Minute Book 1854-1880, 14 March 1864, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1122</sup> Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit Local Preachers Meeting Book 1835-1841, March 1839, North Yorkshire Record Office.

<sup>1123</sup> For some of the misdemeanours mentioned see: Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit Local Preachers Meeting Minute Book 1841-1845, Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit, R/M/Sc/1/2/2,

Primitive Methodists to Elizabeth Gill. In July 1849 it was decided that she could 'be no longer a member of our society in consequence of being with child.'<sup>1124</sup> The fine and upstanding Primitive Methodist would certainly have gained recognition.

This recognition was anything but superficial. Becoming a Methodist meant being addressed as Brother or Sister. Use of these familial titles was significant. It indicated that relationships could be deep and meaningful. The new members immediately had brothers and sisters of their own. An intimacy was implied, and this became clear in a number of ways. If obituaries referred to Brothers and Sisters, and they invariably did, it meant that they had, in effect, been written by a brother. 'Thus died our brother,' was a frequent refrain.<sup>1125</sup> This demonstrates the widespread use of a particular personal adjective with all that it implied.<sup>1126</sup> Almost all meetings, from Scarborough in the north to Beverley in the South, adopted these forms of address.<sup>1127</sup> Salutations at chapel, or in the High Street, were likely to commence with the same: another symbolic nod to an equivalence which would be hard to encounter in any other context. In 1834, for example, a Wesleyan in Market Weighton would have been able to frequent at least three drapery businesses and two stationers owned and run by fellow members.<sup>1128</sup> Another division between the Wesleyan and the Primitive: clearly different families. Members of the Market Weighton Primitive Methodist chapel had slightly fewer tradesmen to choose from, but there was choice none-the-less.<sup>1129</sup> It would be pure supposition to imply that attending the same chapel as Brother Fowler, a Justice of the Peace, carried with it any benefits.<sup>1130</sup> There was a message being transmitted to those who were not able to address people in this way. The symbolism of fourth space

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North Yorkshire Record Office. Also, Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarter Day Minute Book 1845-1851, East Yorkshire Record Office.

<sup>1124</sup> Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit Leaders Meeting Minute Book 1847-1856, 6 July 1849, Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit, R/M/Sc/1/2/8, North Yorkshire Record Office.

<sup>1125</sup> Or Sister.

<sup>1126</sup> The possessive adjective 'our' was in constant use. See the obituary for George Hayton of South Cave: *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, March 1852, 136.

<sup>1127</sup> See, for example, Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit Leaders Meeting Minute Book 1847-1856, North Yorkshire Record Office. Also Beverley Wesleyan Circuit Schedule Book 1844-1859, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1128</sup> Pocklington Wesleyan Circuit Chapel Book 1834-1879, 2 June 1852, East Riding Archives. Many other examples could be cited.

<sup>1129</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Trustees Minute Book 1847-1859, 6 May 1847, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1130</sup> Scarborough Wesleyan Circuit Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1874-1917, 30 March 1874, Scarborough Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, R/M/SC/1/1/3, North Yorkshire Record Office.

was redolent too. These Brothers and Sisters existed only because of their belief in The Father. There was the shared experience, for example, of singing hymns and reciting together the Lord's Prayer. Real intimacy was created by the sharing of spiritual experiences in the class meeting.<sup>1131</sup>

### Routine

When events take place with metronomic regularity, routine is established for those in attendance. If these routines occur on, say, a weekly basis, identity is surely shaped. For Methodism of both persuasions, this was demonstrated by the production, and widespread distribution, four times in the year, of what simply came to be called 'The Preachers' Plan.'<sup>1132</sup> Printed on large sheets of paper, and carrying a huge amount of information, it was yet another tangible reminder of membership: of belonging. In essence, it was an *aide-memoire* and its name and function say something about the demise of spontaneity and the move from outdoor to indoor space. Whether Wesleyan or Primitive, from the start of the nineteenth century or towards its end, the essentials were the same: each place of worship in a circuit would be listed, along with the names of itinerant and local preachers.<sup>1133</sup> It was the stuff of routine which was being explained. The times of services for the three-month period were there, along with intelligence as to who would be presiding. Details were given as to the other *means of grace*. In the 1820s and 1830s, the Wesleyan Preachers' Plans contained information about Love-feasts and the Sacrament. The dates and times of various meetings were given and the Pocklington Plans also provided two dates for the observance of Quarterly Fasts.<sup>1134</sup> There appeared to be a preoccupation with notifications related to the special collections in aid of the Local Preachers' Horse Hire Fund.<sup>1135</sup> During the course of the next fifty years, more information came to be added in relation to special events and

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<sup>1131</sup> "Piety: a Necessary Qualification for a Class Leader," *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, January 1870. Here 'direct witness of the Holy Spirit [leads to] adoption into the family of God.'

<sup>1132</sup> These were not, of course, unique to the East Yorkshire Wolds. Every Methodist circuit in the country would have produced such documents.

<sup>1133</sup> See for example: Beverley Wesleyan Circuit Preachers' Plans 1824-1900, East Riding Archives; Drifffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Preachers' Plans 1844-1880, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1134</sup> Pocklington Wesleyan Circuit Preachers' Plans 1837-1880, Pocklington Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, MRP/1/1, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1135</sup> The same could be said of the Primitive Methodist Preachers' Plans.

services.<sup>1136</sup> If anything, the Primitive Methodist Preaching Plans were even more detailed. The earliest documents gave guidance for various brethren about how to carry out their duties. Advice for all was also proffered. In 1848, a Preachers' Plan for the Drifffield Primitive Circuit was, for example, using a verse from scripture to urge members, never to 'speak evil of any person, except you are absolutely obliged.'<sup>1137</sup> Prayer meetings were particularly highlighted by the Primitive Methodists, along with the 'renewing of tickets' and the dates of 'revival,' or 'protracted,' meetings. By 1880, the sheet of paper had to be larger or the print smaller. Recommended reading had been added along with adverts for the Primitive Methodist Provident Institution: possible insurance against loss of identity.<sup>1138</sup> Reminders about financial expectations were there, and these were printed next to the words of a hymn and a Bible verse:

Each member shall be desired to contribute weekly, and to subscribe at the renewal of the quarterly tickets as liberally as his circumstances will allow – *By order of the Conference, 1875.*

God and mammon together or, put differently, all that was required to be identified as a Primitive Methodist.<sup>1139</sup>

These Plans emphasise the possibilities for routine: habit forming tendencies observed by all. By the middle years of the century, a town such as Drifffield was offering two Wesleyan services and two Primitive Methodist services each Sunday. The timings came to be identical: both morning acts of worship commencing at 10.30am and, in the evening, taking place at 6pm. The Pocklington Wesleyans were holding three Sunday services by the middle

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<sup>1136</sup> See Beverley Wesleyan Circuit Preachers' Plans 1824-1900, East Riding Archives, Bridlington Wesleyan Circuit Preachers' Plans 1838-1880, MRQ/1/40, East Riding Archives, Drifffield Wesleyan Circuit Preachers' Plans, 1877-1878, East Riding Archives, Pocklington Wesleyan Circuit Preachers' Plans, 1837-1880, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1137</sup> See Drifffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Preachers Plans 1844-1880, February-April 1848, East Riding Archives. The verse was taken from James, chapter 3, verse 6: 'The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity; it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire of Hell.' A Pocklington Wesleyan Preachers' Plan for 1837 gave three quotations from scripture: 'Hear ye Him (Matthew xvii, 5), 'Time is short' (1 Cor vii, 29) and 'Feed my sheep' (John xxi, 17). Pocklington Wesleyan Circuit Preachers' Plans 1837-1880, 1837, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1138</sup> Drifffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Preachers' Plans 1844-1880, October 1877- January 1878, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1139</sup> Ibid. Here, the hymn, with music, was *Nearer My God to Thee* and the verse from Scripture was 'Save now, I beseech Thee, O Lord; I beseech Thee, send now prosperity' (Psalm cxviii, 25).

of the century, as were the Beverley Primitive Methodists.<sup>1140</sup> Stepping aside to let people pass as they made their way to the other chapel, ensured that identity and difference were acknowledged. The person walking to and from the Established Church could draw their own conclusions, along with the non-attender.<sup>1141</sup> Many of the village chapels also provided two services on the Sabbath. In the Driffield Wesleyan Methodist circuit, this came to be the case for twenty out of the twenty-four chapels, with afternoon services being far more common.<sup>1142</sup> The Driffield Primitive Methodist circuit maintained at least twenty-three village chapels, with fifteen sustaining two services.<sup>1143</sup> Many villages, therefore, had two Methodist chapels with almost all having at least one. Some would have had four Methodist Sunday services with a variety of timings. Those attending would undoubtedly have been conspicuous.

The distinct possibility of two services on a Sunday, or even three, was often supplemented by additional activities, for both the Wesleyan and the Primitive Methodist. Here, similarity certainly outweighed difference. The Sabbath could involve early morning, or late evening prayer meetings, as well as afternoon Sunday-school.<sup>1144</sup> There were week-night acts of worship, as a matter of course, in each chapel, with evidence of additional venues such as village cottages being used.<sup>1145</sup> Crucially, there were announcements in these Preachers' Plans related to the weekly class, details of a wide range of meetings, and advanced notification of special services and events. For Primitive Methodists, if not in one's own hamlet, there were protracted meetings, lasting for up to five days, taking place at a venue

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<sup>1140</sup> Pocklington Wesleyan Circuit Preachers' Plans 1837-1880, East Riding Archives. By 1880 this had been reduced to two services with the omission of the afternoon service. Also the Primitive Methodist Preachers' Plan in the Home Branch of Hull Circuit, 1844."

<sup>1141</sup> There is some evidence to suggest that attempts were made to ensure Methodist service times did not coincide exactly with those of the Established Church. See, for example, Malton Wesleyan Circuit Local Preachers Meeting Minute Book 1857-1891, March 1874, North Yorkshire Record Office. It was agreed to alter the time of the Sunday Evening Service 'to avoid clashing with the Church service at the same hour.'

<sup>1142</sup> Driffield Wesleyan Circuit Preachers' Plans, 1877-1878, East Riding Archives. Afternoon services due to the work commitments of labourers but also enabling preachers, both travelling and local, to preach up to three times on a Sunday.

<sup>1143</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Preachers Plans 1844-1880, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1145</sup> For example, the Driffield Wesleyan circuit, in 1878, was using a venue in Mill Cottages, once a fortnight, for preaching. The Driffield Primitive Methodist circuit had used Pry Cottages, once a month, for the same purpose. See Driffield Wesleyan Circuit Preachers' Plans, 1877-1878, East Riding Archives. Also, Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Preachers' Plans 1844-1880, East Riding Archives.

not too far away, on several occasions during the three-month period.<sup>1146</sup> Thus, for the committed Methodist, there were identity forming, regular events, held on a minimum of three days in the week. For many, if not most, the walk to chapel would have been even more frequent than this. The sacralisation of the home was also a definite happening when doors were opened for class and prayer meetings.<sup>1147</sup> Indeed, one of the most frequently recorded kindnesses, worthy of comment in obituaries, was the use of homes to give hospitality to travelling and local preachers.<sup>1148</sup> The domestic setting was, of course, also the setting for private prayer and devotion.<sup>1149</sup>

Identity and attendance at the *means of grace* were, therefore, inextricably linked. Divine worship, whether on Sunday or during the week, could, however, be attended by anyone. There would, nonetheless, have been a range of ways for the distinction between the member and everybody else to remain clear.<sup>1150</sup> Indeed, these signs, whether symbolic or real, would have both confirmed and strengthened identities. An obvious example is that of a chapel's seating arrangements. Pew-letting was a major source of income and C.G. Brown points to it being universally adopted in the churches of nineteenth century Britain.<sup>1151</sup> Traditionally, there have been negative connotations associated with the practice. Brown particularly focuses on its potential to alienate the working classes and sustain social exclusivity. He does this by examining the centrally managed system associated with Glasgow's Established Church congregations.<sup>1152</sup> S.J.D. Green recognises the practice to be far more complex and he dwells on the wider implications for people of making financial

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<sup>1146</sup> In 1848 the Driffield Primitive Methodist circuit was announcing nine Revival Meetings: Nafferton, Cranswick, Frodingham, Middleton, Kilham, Langtoft, Wetwang, Lund and Weaverthorpe. In 1878 there were Protracted Meetings at seven venues: Driffield, Middleton, Lund, Garton, Wetwang, West Lutton and Weaverthorpe. Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Preachers' Plans 1844-1880, 1848, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1147</sup> These gatherings could take place either in homes or in rooms attached to chapels.

<sup>1148</sup> For example, Jane Foston, who died in 1853, 'willingly and frequently left her bed...and slept herself on a bed of straw.' See *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, November 1853, 701.

<sup>1149</sup> In her closet devotions, Ann Knaggs of Wetwang was described as 'regular and importunate.' See *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, July 1862, 437. A Wesleyan, Peter Day from North Frodingham, was known 'never to neglect his duties of the closet, either in hay time or harvest.' See *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, August 1842, 695.

<sup>1150</sup> From seating arrangements to duties carried out. Familiarity with other members would have been obvious.

<sup>1151</sup> C.G. Brown, "The Costs of Pew-Renting: Church Management, Church-Going and Social Class in Nineteenth Century Glasgow," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 38, no. 3 (1987): 347-361.

<sup>1152</sup> *Ibid.*



contributions to voluntary religious organisations.<sup>1153</sup> He places importance on a person's willingness to subscribe to a chapel's collective ends and speaks of 'voluntary beneficence.' Pew-rents are, for him, a critical symbol of a very particular bond between these persons and those societies.<sup>1154</sup> They indicated belonging.

For Methodism, each chapel, whether in the town or village, would receive monies, four times a year, from the seat holders.<sup>1155</sup> The identical system operated for both Wesleyan and Primitive Methodism.<sup>1156</sup> Brown's Glasgow congregations were paying their fees to the town council and anonymous people were, therefore, making the decisions as to how the revenue would be spent. Methodists on the Wolds were engaging in Green's voluntary beneficence.<sup>1157</sup> When the new Wesleyan chapel was opened in Sewerby in 1830, the five people sitting in pew twelve were each paying six pence a quarter.<sup>1158</sup> In 1848, the Muston Primitive Methodist chapel had thirteen pews which could be let, and thirty-eight people paid six pence per sitting or two shillings and six pence for an entire pew.<sup>1159</sup> A statement about identity was being made.

The seating arrangements for the Primitive Methodist chapel in Pocklington itself, highlight some of the complexities and hint at probable repercussions for identity formation. In 1866, those who rented a whole pew in the front row of the gallery were to benefit from a discount. They were to pay only five shillings per sitting, per annum, whereas a single sitting was to cost six shillings. Only one row back and the amounts were reduced to four shillings and five shillings respectively. There were different sums levied on all the other seats in the gallery, as well as 'the two family-pews and the three elevated pews in the body of the chapel.' Those designated as singers were seemingly fortunate in only being required to pay

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<sup>1153</sup> S.J.D. Green, "The Death of Pew-Rents, the Rise of Bazaars, and the End of the Traditional Political Economy of Voluntary Religious Organisations: the Case of the West Riding of Yorkshire, c1870-1914," *Northern History* 27 (1991): 198-235.

<sup>1154</sup> *Ibid*, 203.

<sup>1155</sup> See Filey Primitive Methodist Circuit, Muston Chapel Account Book 1848-1868, Filey Primitive Methodist Circuit, R/M/FIL/2/7/1, North Yorkshire Record Office.

<sup>1156</sup> *Ibid*. Bridlington Wesleyan Circuit, Sewerby Chapel Account Book 1825-1906, 1830, Bridlington Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, MRQ/1/55, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1157</sup> Green, "The Death of Pew Rents," 210. Brown, "The Costs of Pew-Renting," 350.

<sup>1158</sup> Bridlington Wesleyan Circuit, Sewerby Chapel Account Book 1825-1906, 1830, Bridlington Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, MRQ/1/55, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1159</sup> Filey Primitive Methodist Circuit, Muston Chapel Account Book 1848-1868, 1848, North Yorkshire Record Office.

six pence a quarter. They were, however, to seek permission to sit in the identified pew from Brothers Holmes and Richardson, who had ‘control over admitting persons.’<sup>1160</sup> It is worth noting that, almost a decade later, in 1875, the trustees of this chapel were agreeing to obtain one hundred seat- rent cards to be issued to the holders: another physical reminder of commitment to the cause.<sup>1161</sup> At exactly the same time, the Wesleyans of Pocklington were reconsidering their seating arrangements. An array of prices was on offer with it being ‘resolved that the pew by the left-hand entrance be four pounds per annum.’<sup>1162</sup> If this was the most expensive, it was also ‘resolved that sittings shall be provided for the poor near the pulpit on the ministers’ vestry side.’<sup>1163</sup> Those paying the most would have been seen by all on their way into, and out of, the chapel. Those occupying free seats would have been under the gaze of those who paid, throughout the service.<sup>1164</sup>

In 1876, the Beverley Wesleyan chapel had:

twelve pews known as Green Pews to be let at the old price of sixteen shillings a quarter but that single sittings for the future should be let at four shillings per quarter.<sup>1165</sup>

Methodism was clearly not immune to inflation, and the available evidence would suggest that town chapels charged extra, and that a Wesleyan seat could be more expensive.<sup>1166</sup>

The Primitive Methodist chapel in the village of Langtoft was typical. Its *Seat Letting Book* contained a plan of the chapel, and the names of all who paid were added to a particular pew.<sup>1167</sup> It went further, as the position in the pew was also specified. In 1853, the first pew,

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<sup>1160</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Trustees Minute Book 1865-1879, 26 March 1866, Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRP/4/22, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1162</sup> Pocklington Wesleyan Circuit Seat Rent Books 1813-1916, 1875, Pocklington Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, MRP/2/9, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1164</sup> This contradicts Brown’s Glasgow findings where the poor invariably sat at the back. Brown, “The Costs of Pew-Renting,” 355.

<sup>1165</sup> Beverley Wesleyan Circuit Trustees Minute Book 1875-1880, 30 June 1876, Beverley Wesleyan Circuit, MRB/2/78, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1166</sup> Pocklington Wesleyan Circuit Trust Book 1847-1939, 6 March 1875, Pocklington Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, MRP/2/11, East Riding Archives. It was resolved for the Pocklington Wesleyan chapel ‘that the pews in the centre of chapel as they fall at liberty shall be raised to the following dues: first row nearest door fifty shillings each per year...fourth row nearest the door thirty-five shillings per year.’

<sup>1167</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit, Langtoft Chapel Seat Letting Book 1853, 1853, Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRD/2/24/5, East Riding Archives.

for example, had two seats paid for by Brother Huntley and two by Brother Bielby. A Brother Stocks sat between them, and so, it is to be hoped that the relationships were amicable.<sup>1168</sup>

In November 1861, the seat holders of Huggate chapel in the Pocklington Primitive Methodist circuit were urged:

...to allow [sic] Mrs. Halden to sit first in the pew in respect of her senearity [sic]. That the other parties claiming to sit in the pew, sit as they come in.<sup>1169</sup>

In the Langtoft chapel, it was the second pew which was reserved solely for those who led the singing: another way to be identified.<sup>1170</sup> Inevitably, it was the supposed best seats which were paid for.<sup>1171</sup> Those making such decisions at the Bridlington Quay Wesleyan chapel made sure that there was a distinction between the better, plusher pews, and the rest. All free seats were again at the front, with the seventy-seven paid for pews behind. Here, the quarterly payment was due in advance and a month's notice was required if a pew or sitting was to be quitted.<sup>1172</sup> In the Langtoft chapel, there were eighty-six lettable sittings and thirty that remained free.<sup>1173</sup> In 1880, it was estimated that there was an average

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<sup>1168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1169</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Committee Meeting Minute Book 1854-1880, 15 November 1861, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1170</sup> In February 1856, in the Scarborough Primitive Methodist chapel, it was decided 'that the three leading singers alone, have the power to recommend to the committee individuals to enter the singing pew.' See Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit Leaders Meeting Minute Book 1847-1856, 29 February 1856, North Yorkshire Record Office. The Bridlington Branch of the Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit decided in November 1857 'that Richard Golden be informed by this meeting that he is not allowed to sit in the singers' pew any longer as he is not a member of society...' See Bridlington Primitive Methodist Minute Book 1855-1857, 8 November 1857, East Riding Archives,

<sup>1171</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit, Langtoft Chapel Seat Letting Book 1853, 1853, East Riding Archives. For details of the financial importance of seat letting for this chapel, see Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit, Langtoft Chapel Book 1839-1880, Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit, East Riding Archives. For the financial implications for the whole circuit, see Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Chapel Account Book 1859-1874, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1172</sup> Bridlington Wesleyan Methodist Circuit Seat Rent Account Book 1835-1873, Bridlington Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, MRQ/2/21, East Riding Archives. A diagram is included on the first page. The Driffield Primitive Methodists had to give advance notice to the seat holders in June 1862. They were 'affectionately requested to remove their books, foot stools and other personal possessions on Monday morning next as the chapel is to be cleaned.' See Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Minutes of Trustees Meetings 1852-1865, 8 June 1862, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1173</sup> This remained relatively constant from 1838 right through to 1880.

attendance at the chief services of seventy, with 'the population of the neighbourhood being two hundred.'<sup>1174</sup> People clearly identified as Primitive Methodists there.

There were three other Methodist means of grace which featured routinely. They were the Love-feast, Sacrament and class-meeting. It was this last one which most emphatically singled out the Methodist and contributed to identity formation. It stands as a unique symbol of sacralisation. In the July of 1865, the Reverend Joseph Gibson commenced his essay thus:

Class-meetings are peculiar to Methodism, and we believe them to be one of its most valuable peculiarities...at the class-meeting, the anxious inquirer after salvation had found peace, the erring had been corrected, the formalist had been aroused and led to the enjoyment of the power of religion, the weak had been strengthened, the sorrowful had been made glad, the tempted had been delivered, the ignorant had been instructed, and the strong had been abundantly edified.<sup>1175</sup>

All of this because the Methodist member was duty bound to meet in class, once a week, come-rain-come-shine, for at least an hour a week, either in the home of the leader or at the chapel.<sup>1176</sup> It was strictly the preserve of the ticket-holder or the person whose commitment was demonstrated by being placed 'on trial.'<sup>1177</sup> Indeed, people tended to associate their initial attendance at the class-meeting with the day they first became a Methodist.<sup>1178</sup> Obituaries for both Primitive Methodists and Wesleyans reserved the highest accolades for those who were regular and punctual as well as being Godly contributors. A Mrs. Catterson was born in the village of Etton in 1807. Like so many others, when she found peace with God:

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<sup>1174</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Chapel Schedules 1838-1848, Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRD/2/5/1, East Riding Archives. Also, Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Chapel Schedules 1880, 1880, Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit, 2/5/5, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1175</sup> J. Gibson, "An Essay on Class-Meetings," *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, July 1865, 385-386.

<sup>1176</sup> See "Hints to Class Leaders," *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, January 1871, 36-38.

<sup>1177</sup> Official records always gave two separate figures for those who were members and those who were on trial.

<sup>1178</sup> *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, August 1845, 817.

She commenced meeting in class and to the close of her life evinced her attachment to [it] by her punctual and regular attendance and by conscientiously making everything give way to what she believed to be her duty.<sup>1179</sup>

This Wesleyan lady was no different from countless numbers of Primitive Methodists. John Taylor from Driffield was absent from his class-meeting only three times in thirty-three years of membership.<sup>1180</sup> This was as nothing compared to Ann Knaggs, a farmer's wife from Wetwang. She was not known to have been absent from her class-meeting throughout the thirty years of ticket holding. Her class leader had estimated that this had involved walking at least ten thousand miles.<sup>1181</sup>

In walking these miles, towards that which was 'peculiar to Methodism,' Mrs. Knaggs was party to something truly unique.<sup>1182</sup> Throughout the Wolds, in keeping with what went on throughout the rest of the country, the number in a class could vary quite considerably. Although occasionally involving as many as thirty or as few as five, the average number in a class hovered around fifteen or sixteen members.<sup>1183</sup> In village settings this inevitably, and crucially, meant the mingling of the farmer and his wife with the labourer and tradesperson. There was nothing to stipulate which would be the class leader and which the humble attendee: this was a matter of significance. That something bordering on the intimate was

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<sup>1179</sup> *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, August 1841, 692-693.

<sup>1180</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, September 1854, 519.

<sup>1181</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, July 1862, 437.

<sup>1182</sup> Gibson, "An Essay on Class-Meetings."

<sup>1183</sup> In the Bridlington Wesleyan Circuit in 1850, for example, there were one thousand two hundred and ninety-nine members divided into eighty-eight classes. See Bridlington Wesleyan Circuit Schedule Book 1845-1882, 1850, Bridlington Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, MRQ/1/23, East Riding Archives. In the Pocklington Wesleyan Circuit in 1840, there were one thousand and eighteen members and fifty-nine classes. This meant that the average class size was slightly larger at seventeen. See Pocklington Wesleyan Circuit Schedule Book 1839-1846, 1840, Pocklington Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, MRP/1/9, East Riding Archives. By 1870 the average class size in the Pocklington Wesleyan circuit had been reduced to fourteen. See Pocklington Wesleyan Circuit Schedule Book 1870-1884, 1870, East Riding Archives. Similar information can be gleaned from Primitive Methodist records. See Filey Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly Schedules 1862-1885, 1868, North Yorkshire Record Office. Here, in 1868, the three hundred and seventy-nine members were divided between twenty-five leaders. Also see: Filey Primitive Methodist Circuit Station Report 1880, Filey Primitive Methodist Circuit, R/M/Fil/1/1/25, North Yorkshire Record Office. Here, there were four hundred and ninety members and twenty-six class leaders. A small number of leaders had responsibility for more than one class. Statistics for the Pocklington and Driffield Primitive Methodist circuits are remarkably similar. See, for example, Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Reports 1850-1880, Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRP/4/27-30, East Riding Archives.

created, is surely undeniable. The typical assemblage was expected to be involved in the singing of verses together. The saying of prayers in extemporary fashion by all was encouraged. In an article of 1871, Primitive Methodist class leaders were urged to:

Be on your guard against the use of cant, stereotyped phrases, that will give no idea of the work of God in your soul. Be careful to check the same in others...Monotony makes the class meeting a burden...To prevent that, teach each member to give his own experience in his own language and not to ape another.<sup>1184</sup>

In the local context, the Pocklington Wesleyan class leaders were simply 'urg[ing] each other to be faithful and to make the class meeting as attractive as possible.'<sup>1185</sup> Each member knew that they were expected to recount aspects of their Christian journey, undertaken during the previous week. In a document distributed to Pocklington's Primitive Methodists, it was stated that:

When people live much in the Lord, and are very clear in their acceptance with God, they are generally able to state the leading particulars of their experience in a few words.<sup>1186</sup>

At each meeting, absentees would be inquired after and arrangements to visit them, and the sick, were made.<sup>1187</sup> Class leaders came to know the people attending their meetings so well, so intimately, that it was they who made decisions relating to the distribution of money or coal to those deemed to be poor enough to require assistance.<sup>1188</sup> In 1878, the Pocklington Wesleyan class leaders:

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<sup>1184</sup> "Hints to Class Leaders."

<sup>1185</sup> Pocklington Wesleyan Circuit Minute Book of Leaders' Meetings 1867-1885, May 1867, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1186</sup> See "A Class Book," in Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Roll Book 1850-1880, 1869, Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRP/4/35, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1188</sup> Pocklington Wesleyan Circuit Minute Book of Leaders' Meetings 1867-1885, March 1867 and 24 November 1874, East Riding Archives.

resolved that one stone of flour be given to the fourteen persons who received coals in December last and an equivalent in cash to Brother Flint and Sister Addison.<sup>1189</sup>

The circumstances of the two named members were presumably so well known that the baking of their own bread was out of the question. Methodists, because of their allegiance to their class, were, therefore, able to receive alms not available to others. Regular attendance at his class-meeting meant that, in 1852, Brother Brown had been given:

...liberty to solicit pecuniary assistance from the friends in Driffield to facilitate his emigration to Australia, the circumstances of his case being peculiar and deserving sympathy.<sup>1190</sup>

He would be able to continue his identity as a Methodist as soon as he reached the Antipodes.

A class leader would have known of the 'duty to watch over the experience and moral conduct of those members under his care.'<sup>1191</sup> It was the task of the leader to record whether any of the class were, indeed, backsliders. Difficult decisions were not shied away from. While heinous acts were sometimes responsible, the most common reason for backsliding was simply the failure to meet in class. The Pocklington Wesleyan circuit recorded eight backsliders during the first three months of 1840. In the equivalent months of 1870 and 1880, there were nine and eleven respectively.<sup>1192</sup> Consistency might be hinted at here, but information related to the Bridlington Wesleyan circuit indicates that it all depended on the circumstances. In a three-month period in 1860, there were eleven backsliders recorded. One is left to ponder why, ten years earlier, over the same length of time, there were fifty-three removed from membership.<sup>1193</sup> Reactions to being told that you

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<sup>1189</sup> Ibid, 1 January 1878. That this was a yearly happening is shown by further entries in the minute book.

<sup>1190</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Minute Book of Quarterly Meetings 1852-1873, 17 September 1852, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1191</sup> "Hints to class leaders," *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, February 1871, 92.

<sup>1192</sup> Pocklington Wesleyan Circuit Schedule Book 1839-1846, 1840, East Riding Archives. Pocklington Wesleyan Circuit Schedule Book 1870-1884, 1870 and 1880, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1193</sup> Bridlington Wesleyan Circuit Schedule Books 1845-1882, 1850 and 1860, East Riding Archives. To redress the balance, the Market Weighton Wesleyan circuit recorded only one to have membership revoked in 1880. Market Weighton Wesleyan Circuit Quarterly Schedule 1860-1880, 1880, East Riding Archives.

could no longer 'meet in class,' varied. James Grewer of Market Weighton was so upset at having to relinquish this aspect of his identity that he caused great annoyance by continuing to attend his class. Because of this, further punishment followed. He was expelled from the singers' pew and was 'not allowed to take part in services...otherwise than as non-members are allowed to do.'<sup>1194</sup> Attempts to cling to his identity had failed.

Although not specified, Brother Grewer had clearly contravened the rules. Right the way through the century, there were countless examples of people being admonished for their failure to conform to Methodism's standards. During the 1830s, the Pocklington Primitive Methodists were frequently nominating leaders to speak with those who were omitting their class or failing to pay their monies. They were also deciding to 'eraze [sic] from the class paper' people who were shown to 'disturb the peace.' Into the 1840s and Harriet Dales was hearing that she could not meet in class 'on account of the instability of her character.' Class members were also not averse to reporting on each other. Mrs. Catton was described, in January 1843, as 'a steady member of our society.' At a special committee meeting she reported:

...that she went into Brother Manner's house...before the shutters were open and on opening the door found Brother West and Manner's wife in a criminal position.<sup>1195</sup>

Mrs. Catton was believed, and Brother West had sealed his fate in relation to Primitive Methodism. The level of scrutiny could be extreme. A couple of years later and the same committee was passing judgment on Brother Laister. He did not deny calling Sister Hall a 'lieing [sic] hussy', but his explanation was accepted because 'he said it in haste and is sorry for saying so as he could not prove it.'<sup>1196</sup> Proving it would presumably have caused Sister Hall more than the embarrassment she might already have experienced.

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<sup>1194</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1863-1870, 15 March 1864, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1195</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Minute Book of Leaders' Meetings 1832-1854, 6 January 1843, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1196</sup> Ibid, 16 January 1845.



The Love-feast and Sacrament were also the preserve of the member. Wesleyan Preachers' Plans emphasised that 'members are desired to shew their tickets at the Love-feast.'<sup>1197</sup> Although made difficult for others, attendance was, however, in theory, still possible. Added to this instruction in relation to Love-feasts was the enjoinder: '...and others desirous of attending, are to receive a note from the Preacher.'<sup>1198</sup> Effort was required from anyone wishing to emulate these Methodists. The Love-feast and Sacrament were closely allied, but they were not the same. The former had been adopted and adapted by Wesley himself, following his encounter with Moravianism.<sup>1199</sup> It involved the sharing of the simplest of food and drink with 'persons of whose new birth and enjoyment of peace with God there was no reasonable doubt.'<sup>1200</sup> At the same time, the opportunity was provided for individuals to 'give freest utterance [as] to what they feel.'<sup>1201</sup> In 1832, it was made clear to the Primitive Methodists of Pocklington and the nearby villages that nothing other than bread and water would be required.<sup>1202</sup>

These Love-feasts and the Sacrament were never held particularly frequently. Wesleyan and Primitive chapels in the towns tended to hold one of each, with a maximum of two, in every three-month period.<sup>1203</sup> A long time could pass in the villages with neither taking place.<sup>1204</sup> This infrequency would have heightened thoughts as to their special nature. As time passed, certain changes to practise did occur, and these developments may well have had repercussions for identity. In the early days of Primitive Methodism, Love-feasts were often arranged to coincide with camp-meetings.<sup>1205</sup> By 1867, the Primitive Methodists of Yapham

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<sup>1197</sup> See, for example, Driffield Wesleyan Circuit Preachers' Plans, 1877-1878, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1199</sup> Davies and Rupp, *A history of the Methodist Church* vol 1, 47.

<sup>1200</sup> "The history of love-feasts," *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, July 1866, 701-704.

<sup>1201</sup> Ibid. 704.

<sup>1202</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Minute Book of Leaders' Meetings 1832-1853, 8 September 1832, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1203</sup> In the 1830s the Beverley and Pocklington Wesleyan chapels had two Love-feasts a quarter and Bridlington and Driffield just one. See Driffield Wesleyan Circuit Preachers' Plans, 1877-1878, East Riding Archives, Pocklington Wesleyan Circuit Preachers' Plans 1837-1880, East Riding Archives, Beverley Wesleyan Circuit Preachers' Plans, 1824-1900, East Riding Archives, Bridlington Wesleyan Circuit Preachers' Plans 1838-1880, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1204</sup> On 18 May 1855 the members of the Warter Primitive Methodist chapel were petitioning the Pocklington Circuit Committee in the hope that a Love-feast could be arranged. Agreement was reached and one was held on 17 June 1855 with one of the travelling preachers presiding. See Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Committee Meeting Minute Book 1854-1880, 18 May 1855 and 28 May 1855, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1205</sup> Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit Local Preachers' Meeting Minute Book 1835-1841, North Yorkshire Record Office.

were creating something more akin to a spectacle. It was decided that Miss. Wilson, all the way from Hull, should preach in the chapel in the afternoon and 'lead a Love-feast in the evening.'<sup>1206</sup> In 1875, the Drifffield Wesleyans 'resolved that a Love-feast and Public Tea...be held on Good Friday...and that the committee of management be reappointed.'<sup>1207</sup>

Combining these two events, the one for the select and the other for all, meant that a physical division, as well as a symbolic one, was created. The going-in, and coming-out, could be witnessed by those not entitled to attend. An air of mystery would be attached to the Love-feast itself.<sup>1208</sup> Village Methodists intent on attending a Love-feast might well be required to undertake a trip to the town. A couple of years later, in 1877, this was pre-empted by the Beverley Wesleyans. A Love-feast for the entire circuit was organised and, with this, would have come affirmation and confirmation of identity on a wider scale.<sup>1209</sup> Those present could be privy to utterances, by some, of a deeply personal nature.<sup>1210</sup> It became relatively common practice for these Love-feasts to take place on Christmas day: something else to set the Methodist apart.<sup>1211</sup>

If a Love-feast could emphasise the divide between the Methodist and the person on the periphery, so too the Sacrament. It was either a separate event or it could be a continuation of the act of worship. Either way, it was only for the members. All others would either be removed from the setting, or they might observe something they could not be a part of. In 1862, the Drifffield Primitive Methodists were deciding 'that there be some new carpeting around the communion rails.'<sup>1212</sup> These members were, therefore, symbolically creating a

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<sup>1206</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1863-1870, 21 June 1867, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1207</sup> Drifffield Wesleyan Circuit Minutes of Quarterly Meetings 1870-1880, 7 January 1875, East Riding Archives. As early as 1828, the Wesleyans of South Cave were holding their Love-feast on Christmas day. See Beverley Wesleyan Circuit Preachers' Plans 1824-1900, Beverley Wesleyan Circuit, MRB/1/19, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1208</sup> The same would apply to the Love-feasts attached to camp-meetings. For example, East Luton was 'allowed to have a camp meeting and Love-feast...as long as they provide for it themselves.' See Drifffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Committee Minute Book 1845-1851, 17 August 1845, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1209</sup> Beverley Wesleyan Circuit Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1844-1884, 1877, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1210</sup> In August 1880 the Pocklington Wesleyans were arranging a series of special services, open to all. It was decided that a 'special Love-feast' should also be arranged. See Pocklington Wesleyan Circuit Minute Book of Leaders' Meetings 1867-1885, 24 August 1880, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1211</sup> See, for example, Drifffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Committee Minute Book 1845-1851, 31 October 1845, East Riding Archives. The same arrangement was still being made in 1871. See Drifffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Minute Book of Quarterly Meetings 1852-1873, 15 December 1871, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1212</sup> Drifffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Minutes of Trustees Meetings 1852-1865, 27 June 1862, East Riding Archives.

divide between themselves and all others as they moved to the front of the chapel: a physical reminder of their move into fourth space, or the fourth dimension.

The Sacrament also said something about the distinction between the committed and the even-more-committed Methodist: identity within identities. The Established Church showed its importance by the frequency of the Eucharist. Methodism demonstrated the special position of the Lord's Supper by limiting its occurrence. For the service-attending member there was usually the opportunity to partake once during a three-month period: the Pocklington Primitive Methodists had to seek permission, which was granted, to hold two during the last three months of 1878.<sup>1213</sup> Smaller, more rarefied, gatherings were offered the opportunity more often: a privilege reserved for the few. Attention should be drawn to the meetings of local preachers in the various circuits.

That this meeting recommends to the Quarterly Meeting that arrangements should be made for the administration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper after the ordinary business of the next meeting.<sup>1214</sup>

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper presented Methodism with either a relatively unique problem, or an opportunity to stamp its identity. Wine was to be sipped. The Pocklington Primitive Methodists were initially concerned 'that only British wine be used in the chapels on Sacramental occasions.'<sup>1215</sup> A meeting, held in the same town by the Wesleyans in March 1878, grappled with other issues. It was deciding to form a branch of the Wesleyan Temperance Society at the same time as 'express[ing] its utter disapprobation' towards a

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<sup>1213</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1870-1880, 6 September 1878, East Riding Archives. The typical situation is shown by the Bridlington Primitive Methodists: 'That the Flamborough friends have a sacrament once a quarter and that be at two o'clock.' See Bridlington Primitive Methodist Circuit Minute Book of the Quarterly Meeting 1855-1874, 16 December 1859, East Riding Archives. Also see Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Minutes of Quarterly Meetings 1852-1873, September 1873, East Riding Archives. Again, for Driffield, it was reaffirmed that the Sacrament should take place once a quarter.

<sup>1214</sup> Malton Wesleyan Circuit Local Preachers Meeting Minute Book 1857-1891, 24 June 1873, North Yorkshire Record Office.

<sup>1215</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarter Day Minute Book 1852-1858, 21 September 1858, East Riding Archives.

member who was involved in the sale of intoxicating liquor.<sup>1216</sup> At their next gathering, these Pocklington Wesleyans were noting that:

some conversation took place as to the occasional use of unfermented wine at the Sacramental service and most members expressed a wish that some provision should be made to meet the requirements of those who were at present kept from the Lord's table by conscientious scruples.<sup>1217</sup>

The Bridlington Primitive Methodists had already made the decision to 'recommend all our societies to use unfermented wine at Sacraments.'<sup>1218</sup> This became the accepted practice and the 'conscientious scruples' came to be synonymous with Methodist identity. These routines, therefore, which set Methodists apart, also provided other opportunities for identity formation.

### Responsibility

In March 1874, at the Quarterly Meeting of the Scarborough Wesleyan Circuit, the death of one Henry Fowler was recorded. He had been a class leader and a trustee of various chapels. He was also, at one time or another, the secretary and treasurer of the Wesleyan Missionary Society. He combined this with duties related to the Poor Society and he was also a circuit steward and local preacher.<sup>1219</sup> His fellow local preachers commented that, 'as the oldest local preacher in the Scarborough circuit, he laboured for fifty-two years with great zeal and success in preaching the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ.'<sup>1220</sup> Once accepted into the fold, and having demonstrated his commitment to the *means of grace*, Henry's skills and

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<sup>1216</sup> Pocklington Wesleyan Circuit Minute Book of Leaders' Meetings 1867-1885, 19 March 1878, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1217</sup> Ibid, 18 December 1878.

<sup>1218</sup> Bridlington Primitive Methodist Minute Book of Quarterly Meetings 1875-1880, 16 June, 1876, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1219</sup> Scarborough Wesleyan Circuit Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1874-1917, 30 March 1874, North Yorkshire Record Office.

<sup>1220</sup> Scarborough Wesleyan Circuit Local Preachers' Meeting Minute Book 1874-1893, 13 March 1874, North Yorkshire Record Office.

attributes were clearly utilised. Four years later and the same Scarborough Wesleyans were mourning the loss of Clarissa Cockerill:

Characterised by deep spirituality of mind, purity of heart and devotedness of life, her attachment to the services of the sanctuary was marked and unvarying. Her love for the devout reading of God's word and for Private Prayer was a subject on which she was wont to speak with deep and hallowed emotion when relating her experience in the classroom. She will be greatly missed in her home and at the class. She visited the Workhouse often...<sup>1221</sup>

Both of these Methodists were held in high esteem, but their memorials speak loudly of difference. While Clarissa was lauded for being a responsible Methodist, Henry was praised for being a Methodist with responsibilities. These responsibilities meant that there were things for him to do and decisions to be made. In the doing and the deciding, he was creating an identity for himself while shaping the opinions of others. The tasks performed by Clarissa might not have necessitated decision making, but they would have contributed to the forming of her identity, nonetheless.

The role of Methodism in shaping the identities of women is undoubtedly dichotomous. This is, in part, explained in a pamphlet of 1871:

...I would that...we really understood the true dignity of our position as Christian women. We should not then stretch ourselves beyond our measure, or meddle in worldly matters unsuitable to our calling.<sup>1222</sup>

It would be easy, simply to emphasise the confirming of stereotypes. Not stretching or meddling meant, in essence, doing exactly what Clarissa Cockerill appears to have done. Her focus was on the home and the *means of grace*. She was not alone and so many examples, both Wesleyan and Primitive, across the years, could be cited. Mary Ann Cowling can suffice,

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<sup>1221</sup> Scarborough Wesleyan Circuit Obituaries of the Members 1878-1885, 1878, Scarborough Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, R/M/SC/1/1/40, North Yorkshire Record Office.

<sup>1222</sup> *Christian*, February 9, 1871, 6. Dinah Morris, of course, had already come to this conclusion some seventy years previously. See Eliot, *Adam Bede*.

however. She was a Primitive Methodist from Filey, who died in 1861. Although 'her class was a banquet and her delight was in the company of God's people,' her 'exemplary Christian conduct' manifested itself mainly in the home.<sup>1223</sup> Mrs. Cowling's life would, indeed, appear to bear testimony to the notion of separate spheres.<sup>1224</sup> Devotion to husband and children might be the evidence required to substantiate this claim, but her religion meant that something else was afoot. The home was steeped in her Methodism to such an extent that, for her and her family, there might not have been any spatial divide whatsoever. She called upon Methodist tenets to 'comfort her husband when under severe trial.' Also:

Faithful to her household, she was very solicitous for the welfare of her children; knowing the excellency of true religion, she felt it indispensable to train them up in the fear of the Lord and she had the happiness of seeing two of her daughters converted to God, and in church fellowship.<sup>1225</sup>

All family members would have known of 'her attention to the duties of the closet' and also, presumably, of her love of 'communing with God in private.'<sup>1226</sup> It was this example, set by the mother, that saw the sixteen-year-old son 'come to love religion' and she ensured that all of her children knew their scriptures.<sup>1227</sup> This domestic sphere was definitely infiltrated by Mrs. Cowling's Methodist responsibilities and, by her relationship with fourth space, it was sacralised.

There are yet more stereotypes to be confronted when the focus shifts to the third space of the chapel buildings. Put bluntly, there were almost no responsibilities to be carried out by women in the sanctuary. Methodism did, however, allow women greater license to take control of their own religious destiny. Just to be present in the chapel was perfectly possible without the need for priestly, or indeed, a husband's intercession.<sup>1228</sup> The evidence also

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<sup>1223</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, May 1862, 309.

<sup>1224</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, May 1862, 309.

<sup>1225</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1226</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1227</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1228</sup> Jennifer M. Lloyd, *Women and the Shaping of British Methodism: Persistent Preachers, 1807-1907* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009) 23.

supports the work of Hempton and Hill who emphasise evangelical religion's importance in enlarging women's sphere of action.<sup>1229</sup> It was in the rooms attached to chapels that they were able to demonstrate their capabilities. Two examples, both incidentally linked to the gathering in of monies, reoccur throughout the years of the nineteenth century. Whether a Wesleyan or Primitive Methodist, from village or town, ladies were credited with the ability to prepare teas for both small and large gatherings. In relation to the calendar, it would be hard to exaggerate the importance of these meetings, both in relation to frequency and the finances. Mary Ann's own chapel held its annual tea meeting in the December of each year.<sup>1230</sup> The proceeds were regularly divided between missionary and chapel funds: demonstrating the responsibility placed on women; both to spread the gospel and reduce local debt.<sup>1231</sup> There were several other occasions throughout the year when Mrs. Cowling would have been called upon to provide, prepare and serve, and this was replicated all over the Wolds.<sup>1232</sup> Their skills as seamstresses were also utilised. Each circuit gathered a group of ladies together. In Pocklington, it was a Missionary Sewing Society that was established in 1851, with 'a code of laws or rules for its government [to] be drawn up'.<sup>1233</sup> Once drawn up, the members met in the chapel vestry, on alternate Tuesdays, at two o'clock in the afternoon.<sup>1234</sup> Thirty years later and the society continued to operate. It was recorded that the proceeds from the Ladies Sewing Basket were much appreciated.<sup>1235</sup> Teas and sewing were brought together in the annual Circuit Bazaar. An event lasting for several days, from

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<sup>1229</sup> David Hempton and Myrtle Hill, "Born to Serve: Women and Evangelical Religion." In *The Irish Women's History Reader*, eds., Alan Hayes and Diane Urquhart (London: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>1230</sup> Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit Local Preachers Meeting Minute Book 1841-1845, 10 December 1842, North Yorkshire Record Office. Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit Local Preachers Meeting Minute Book 1845-1850, 15 December 1845, Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit, R/M/Sc/1/2/3, North Yorkshire Record Office. Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit Local Preachers Meeting Minute Book 1850-1856, 16 December 1850, North Yorkshire Record Office.

<sup>1231</sup> Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit Committee Meeting Minute Book 1843-1853, 11 November 1853, North Yorkshire Record Office.

<sup>1232</sup> Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit Local Preachers Meeting Minute Book 1841-1845, North Yorkshire Record Office. Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit Local Preachers Meeting Minute Book 1845-1850, North Yorkshire Record Office. Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit Local Preachers Meeting Minute Book 1850-1856, North Yorkshire Record Office.

<sup>1233</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Minute Book of Leaders' Meetings and Circuit Committee 1832-1853, 16 August 1851, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1234</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1235</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Leaders' Meeting Minute Book 1854-1880, 11 September 1880, East Riding Archives. In 1864 the Pocklington Primitive Methodist circuit established a second sewing society. This time it was to be for the benefit of circuit funds 'and all the friends in the circuit are kindly requested to co-operate with it.' Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Committee Meeting Minute Book 1854-1880, 30 July 1864, East Riding Archives.

the middle of the century, they became *de rigueur* and, in the raising of large sums of money, they emphasise the responsibility being placed on the shoulders of women. Indeed, in certain instances, they began to hold sway:

That a Bazaar be held after the Harvest of 1879, subject to the approval of the Ladies Sewing Meeting and that the Rev. Harwood lay the matter before them the following Wednesday at their meeting.<sup>1236</sup>

The roles might well have been stereotypical, and they could be accused of inadvertently contributing to desacralisation. However, these women were given responsibilities that meant they had somewhere to go and something to do. A step beyond the work of Hempton and Hill would be to suggest that there was nothing to compare with Methodism in the widening of horizons at this time.<sup>1237</sup> In March 1879, the Quarterly Meeting of the Drifffield Wesleyan Circuit decided:

That a committee of ladies be formed to take the entire management of the Preachers Houses and that they have the proceeds of the Christmas tree.<sup>1238</sup>

It might have taken some time, but subtle changes for women had taken place within Methodism. Certain concomitant identities cannot be ignored. By providing occasions to meet, opportunities to be called a friend increased.<sup>1239</sup> There was the possibility of leadership in some guise or another.<sup>1240</sup>

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<sup>1236</sup> Drifffield Wesleyan Circuit Minute Book of the Ladies Sewing Meeting 1878-1880, 30 April 1878, Drifffield Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, MRD/1/2/11, East Riding Archives. At a special Bazaar meeting held in June 1878, there were sixteen gentlemen present and twenty-six ladies. Many ladies were allocated responsibilities. See Drifffield Wesleyan Circuit Minute Book of the Ladies Sewing Meeting 1878-1880, 20 June 1878, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1237</sup> Hempton and Hill, "Born to Serve".

<sup>1238</sup> Drifffield Wesleyan Circuit Minutes of Quarterly Meetings 1870-1880, March 1879, East Riding Archives. Christmas trees were used, in one way or another, to solicit donations.

<sup>1239</sup> For eighteenth century comment on this see Phyllis Mack, *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) 134-5.

<sup>1240</sup> Drifffield Wesleyan Circuit Minute Book of the Ladies Sewing Meeting 1878, 5 June 1878, East Riding Archives. Mrs. Allanson and Mrs. Walker agreed to take on lead roles in preparing for the bazaar.



Methodism meant that many women gained recognition as philanthropists. They took a lead role in collecting funds for the various missionary societies.<sup>1241</sup> Altruistic it may have been, but praise and appreciation were meted out. Across the Wolds, the sums collected were carefully recorded with kudos apportioned to those who raised the most. In 1830, for example, the Wesleyan Branch Missionary Society for the Driffield Circuit was pleased to name the five most successful collectors from the Driffield chapel. A Mrs. Walker was singled out for her efforts at Little Driffield.<sup>1242</sup> By the 1870s, the same society was continuing to name the most diligent ladies connected to each chapel. Everyone else would have known that, year after year, Mrs. Mason and Miss Hill of North Dalton had been identified as having more in their boxes than anyone else.<sup>1243</sup>

In significant ways, Methodism did enable women to carry out the same responsibilities as men, with repercussions for identity. They could become class leaders and Sunday School teachers. Although these roles enhance traditional views of women as educators and upholders of morality, no other affiliation offered this combination of opportunities.<sup>1244</sup> The number of females engaged in these ways was not insubstantial. An example can be given of the Filey Primitive Methodist Circuit. Smaller than most, from the 1830s onwards, it had seven chapels on the Wolds, with over four hundred members. Year in, year out, there were around twenty-five class leaders and women always featured.<sup>1245</sup> Divided between three Sunday Schools, in 1868, there were two hundred and thirty scholars under the supervision of seventy teachers. Twenty-nine of these were women, with parity between the sexes being almost achieved in the larger school at Filey.<sup>1246</sup> There was far more to it than the once-weekly happening of class meeting or Sunday School session. The Leaders' Meeting, for those in charge of classes was, perhaps, the most important decision-making gathering, and

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<sup>1241</sup> Both Wesleyan Methodism and Primitive Methodism had missionary societies. The purpose, in essence, was the propagation of the gospel across the globe.

<sup>1242</sup> Driffield Wesleyan Circuit Cash Book of the Missionary Society 1829-1873, 1 July 1830, Driffield Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, MRD/1/3/1, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1243</sup> Driffield Wesleyan Circuit Missionary Accounts 1873-1880, 15 June 1875 and 28 June 1876, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1244</sup> Anne M Boylan, "Evangelical Womanhood in the Nineteenth Century: The Role of Women in Sunday Schools," *Feminist Studies* 4, no. 3 (1978): 62-80. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3177538>. Gordon and Nair, *Public Lives*, 137-138. Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 289.

<sup>1245</sup> Filey Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly Schedules 1862-1885, North Yorkshire Record Office.

<sup>1246</sup> *Ibid.* In 1863 the new Sunday School at Hunmanby had 31 scholars, seven male teachers and twelve female teachers. Filey Primitive Methodist Circuit Annual Report of Sunday Schools 1863, 21 March 1863, Filey Primitive Methodist Circuit, R/M/Fil/1/1/24, North Yorkshire Record Office.

it occurred regularly.<sup>1247</sup> Sunday Schools involved a plethora of allied activities and decision-making opportunities. A glance at the secretary's minute book for the Wesleyan Sunday School in the village of Goodmanham confirms this.<sup>1248</sup> Anniversaries and teas were planned, rewards and prizes bought, and decisions relating to the repair and painting of the schoolroom made. The annual outing, often a 'treat to Weighton,' had to be arranged and budgeted for. It did also mean that these women had a day away from the usual routine.<sup>1249</sup> The Driffield Wesleyan Sunday School provided the opportunity for a Teachers' Quarterly Tea Meeting. In the September of 1863, thirty-four sat down to enjoy it and there were no interlopers.<sup>1250</sup> A special event for people with a certain identity. That the position of Sunday School teacher was a desirable one, and was not to be treated lightly, is confirmed with reference to the same Driffield Wesleyans. As early as 1838, late or absent teachers had to be prepared to pay a fine if they were to continue to be identified thus.<sup>1251</sup> Fines were paid.

In the early days of Primitive Methodism, there was one anomalous responsibility for women which has been well documented. There were a number of female itinerant as well as local preachers.<sup>1252</sup> Evidence for the Wolds exists in relation to this, and the Scarborough Primitive Methodist circuit can be used as an example. In 1835, the local preachers unanimously agreed 'that Jane Green's initials should appear on the plan as an exhorter.'<sup>1253</sup> During the following year, there were as many as ten women 'on trial' as local preachers and, in September 1840, a discussion took place as to whether a Sister Lancaster could be considered a suitable candidate for the travelling ministry.<sup>1254</sup> The trait was actually

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<sup>1247</sup> Wesleyan and Primitive Methodist Circuit Plans, and Leaders' Meeting minute books indicate that it was usual for these meetings to take place on a monthly basis. See, for example, Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Minute Book of Leaders' Meetings 1832-1853, East Riding Archives. Also Pocklington Wesleyan Circuit Preachers' Plans 1837-1880, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1248</sup> Market Weighton Wesleyan Circuit, Goodmanham Chapel Sunday School Secretaries Minute Book 1864-1880, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1249</sup> Ibid, 24 August 1865. 1865.

<sup>1250</sup> Driffield Wesleyan Circuit Sunday School Minute Book 1838-1874, 11 September 1863, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1251</sup> Ibid, 4 November 1838 and 2 December 1838.

<sup>1252</sup> See, for example: Davies, George and Rupp, *A History of the Methodist Church*, 385. and Lloyd, *Women and the Shaping of British Methodism*.

<sup>1253</sup> Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit Local Preachers Meeting Book 1835-1841, 1 June 1835, North Yorkshire Record Office. Exhorters were allowed to stand up and give testimony. It was a usual stage before becoming a local preacher.

<sup>1254</sup> Ibid.

relatively short lived and, from 1841, there were no further mentions made in local preachers' meetings.<sup>1255</sup> This did not mean that there were never ladies in the pulpit or on the platform. Throughout the Wolds, a small number continued to preach but in the guise of celebrity speaker or special preacher. They were spoken of as though they were something of an attraction. In the 1840s, the Pocklington Primitive Methodists resolved to ask Sister Knox to preach in the afternoon at their Camp Meeting.<sup>1256</sup> A Miss Walker began to gain a reputation for her abilities, but it was her father who was approached in the hope that he would 'let his daughter preach the anniversary sermons.'<sup>1257</sup> Similar arrangements were made from one year to the next.<sup>1258</sup> In the 1850s, a Miss Amery was asked to preach anniversary sermons in the chapel at Huggate, while a Mrs. Crake preached the Bugthorpe missionary sermons.<sup>1259</sup> The popularity of Mrs. Crake meant that, during the 1860s, she was still being approached to preach the chapel anniversary sermons in the villages of Fridaythorpe, Hayton and Shipton.<sup>1260</sup> Into the 1870s and it was noticeable that a Miss Whitaker was being called upon by chapels all over the Wolds.<sup>1261</sup> Another ruse was to ask a woman to come from further afield, in the hope that her arrival might garner interest. In 1855, Sister Moody, all the way from Grimsby, was asked to preach a series of missionary sermons at the Pocklington chapel, and in several of the outlying villages.<sup>1262</sup> In 1880, two ladies from York held revival services in the Bishop Wilton chapel.<sup>1263</sup> These particular ladies

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<sup>1255</sup> Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit Local Preachers' Meeting Minute Book 1841-1845, North Yorkshire Record Office. Also Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit Local Preachers Minute Book 1845-1850, North Yorkshire Record Office.

<sup>1256</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Minute Book of Leaders' Meetings 1832-1853, 23 July 1840, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1257</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarter Day Minute Book 1845-1851, 26 June 1846, East Riding Archives. Miss Walker had been placed on the Pocklington Primitive Methodist plan as an exhorter in 1839: 'she being signified by a star.' Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarter Day Book 1839-1844, 17 September 1839, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1258</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1852-1858, 16 March 1852, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1259</sup> *Ibid.* 14 March 1854.

<sup>1260</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarter Day Minute Book 1859-1863, 20 March 1860, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1261</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1870-1880, 11 September 1873, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1262</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1852-1858, 17 September 1855, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1263</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1870-1880, 4 December 1880, East Riding Archives. To confirm that this occurred from decade to decade, Yapham chapel's use of Miss Wilson from Hull during the 1860's can be cited. Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1863-1870, 21 June 1867, East Riding Archives,

would have seen their names on advertising posters and bills distributed throughout the towns and villages.<sup>1264</sup>

It is safe to say that women were in no way afforded exactly the same opportunities, by Methodism, as men. Nevertheless, opportunities it did provide. So much so, that it can legitimately be regarded as a catalyst, and a very important one, for future freedoms. It bears repeating that, for the women who have been mentioned by name, and for countless others, it offered the pathway to what they considered the greatest freedom of all: the freedom of fourth space. What else was providing a female with an identity which was other than wife, mother, or employee?

There were so many identity forming opportunities for men. Each chapel required a multiplicity of responsibilities to be undertaken. There were door keepers, chapel stewards, poor stewards, and trustees, to name a few.<sup>1265</sup> Once apportioned, people knew who should be carrying out specific duties:

That a letter be sent to Brother Wardill of Langtoft informing him that this meeting disapproves of his conduct in putting a note into the pulpit, that being the business of the Society Steward, and that Brother Wilson be requested to resume the office of Society Steward which he has resigned in consequence of Brother Wardill's conduct referred to above.<sup>1266</sup>

There were committees and meetings to attend and each required a chairman, treasurer and secretary.<sup>1267</sup> Class meetings had to be led.<sup>1268</sup> Harmoniums and organs needed to be played and the fabric of the buildings was to be maintained.<sup>1269</sup> Sunday Schools had their

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<sup>1264</sup> 'That 100 bills be printed...that 150 circulars be printed' was an oft repeated instruction. Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Committee Meeting Minutes 1859-1866, 24 July 1862, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1265</sup> Poor Stewards were responsible for all matters relating to a chapel's Poor Fund. This included the collection and distribution of monies.

<sup>1266</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Minute Book of Quarterly Meetings 1852-1873, 18 June 1852, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1267</sup> Three of the important meetings were the Quarterly Meeting, Leaders' Meeting and Local Preachers' Meeting.

<sup>1268</sup> "The Duties of Each Leader," in *A Class Book*, ed. unknown (London: T. Danks, 1860), 3-4.

<sup>1269</sup> For information relating to the purchase of harmoniums and organs, see Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Committee Meeting Minute Book 1854-1880, 6 December 1864, East Riding Archives.

superintendents to ensure the scholars, and the teachers, did what they should be doing.<sup>1270</sup> The grouping of chapels into circuits provided another echelon of possibilities: the position of circuit steward carrying with it the most gravitas.<sup>1271</sup> As time passed, circuits were grouped into districts and the topic of lay representation at the yearly, national conference, became a matter of huge debate.<sup>1272</sup> Obituary after obituary, and the records of meeting after meeting, show that identities came to be hewn from these roles.<sup>1273</sup>

### To Identity and Beyond

With the link between Methodism and identity stated, there is the need to look beyond. Indeed, beyond becomes a spatially significant and dynamic concept in relation to geography, time, and symbol. Connected to thoughts of travel and arrival, there was the widening of horizons due to movement around the Wolds and the reaching of urban settings. It is because of this that identity was able to migrate, evolve and develop meaning.

The liminal space between countryside and town was filled with issues related to individuals attempting to establish who they really were, while people formed opinions of them. There were no hard and fast boundaries; any divide was porous. That said, remaining in situ for most rural dwellers, did mean it was an identity that was desired and could be achieved, having become Methodists. Respectability, for example, was a step beyond. Much relates to the long-established patterns of employment and the supposed social cohesion of the village with its landowner's relationship to the parish church.<sup>1274</sup> This can be compared with the

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This entry explained the need for 'a company of singers to be obtained...to sing around the town at Christmas and collect for a harmonium.'

<sup>1270</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Minute Book of Teachers' Meetings 1878-1881, Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRP/4/24, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1271</sup> 'That Brother George Mainprize Senior be the circuit steward.' Bridlington Primitive Methodist Circuit Minutes of Quarterly Meetings 1875-1880, 12 March 1875, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1272</sup> Scarborough Wesleyan Circuit Quarterly Minute Book 1874-1917, 29 June 1875, North Yorkshire Record Office.

<sup>1273</sup> See *Primitive Methodist Magazine* and *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*. Also, Scarborough Wesleyan Circuit Obituaries of the Members 1878-1885, North Yorkshire Record Office.

<sup>1274</sup> See, for example, Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society*, 155: David G Hey, "The Pattern of Nonconformity in South Yorkshire 1660-1851," *Northern History* 8 (1973): 86.

newly developing scenario in the town with its opportunities and newly created working patterns.

Identity and respectability are, of course, not mutually exclusive. It is the former which can lead to the latter, and they are then able to co-exist. This is particularly important to remember in relation to what could occur in the urban setting. In acknowledging the shift for so many from rural to urban living, Grace Davie points to the importance of religion in maintaining identity in unknown settings.<sup>1275</sup> This is emphasised by Anthony Cohen who comments on people seeking out those from similar backgrounds when they move from their familiar locality.<sup>1276</sup> Methodism provides the required evidence. With membership numbers collated regularly, the movement of people away from the Wolds was a year-in, year-out issue.<sup>1277</sup>

That we give the following reasons for the decline, tho' we have had a good work in the circuit and have admitted 144 into society yet we have taken of [sic] the books 102 as removed, 106 fallen, and 7 joined Wesleyans, 13 dead. Making total of 233 taken off for the year and we have only received 8 from other circuits.<sup>1278</sup>

This one example, supplied by the Primitive Methodists of Pocklington in 1865, would have been particularly concerning. Whether net gains or losses were recorded, each circuit was certainly having to cope with the pull of its people towards the industrial areas. Each person leaving went with their membership ticket. Their identity in the new venue was thus confirmed. Those with particular responsibilities, especially local preachers, were bid *adieu* by being presented with information, to be passed to the new circuit, relating to their capabilities: 'That Brother Heap's name come off the plan, he being about to remove and

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<sup>1275</sup> Geoffrey Ahern and Grace Davie, *Inner City God: the Nature of Belief in the Inner City* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1987), 71-72.

<sup>1276</sup> Anthony P. Cohen, *Belonging, Identity and Social Organisation in British Rural Cultures* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982), 20.

<sup>1277</sup> See, for example, Filey Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly Schedules 1862-1885, North Yorkshire Record Office and Beverley Wesleyan Circuit Schedule Books 1836-1887, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1278</sup> See entry for 14 March 1865 in Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Minutes of Quarterly Meetings 1863-1870, 14 March 1865, East Riding Archives.

that he and his wife have their credentials.<sup>1279</sup> These credentials were a written nudge towards something beyond identity; to be used beyond the village. They just might have spoken of people's respect for Brother and Sister Heap. Complexity abounds, however. When Brother Scruton moved to York in 1866, it was decided that:

...his name come off the Plan but that owing to his marriage with his present wife after courting another person and treating the said person unrighteously [sic], his credentials be qualified accordingly.<sup>1280</sup>

If, in the new setting, he continued to be identified as a Methodist and local preacher, he would have to accept that opinions of him would be formed. Methodism was bridging the divide.

Identity could travel to the town, but could respectability reach the village? Martin Wellings emphasises that local preachers were 'central to the life and mission of Methodism, and expressive of its character and community.'<sup>1281</sup> The unique role is deserving of particular attention in relation to what was potentially taking place on the Wolds. Their routines and responsibilities do help to explain certain nuances connected to the spatial dimension of respectability. They had clearly created an identity for themselves, and people from their own locale knew of their designation. There were further possibilities. With so many chapels and, consequently, so many services, they were an essential feature. Scrutinised before acceptance, and having to undergo a period on trial, local preachers were then entrusted with a great deal.<sup>1282</sup> There were the issues of punctuality and attendance: chapels being far-flung, huge distances had to be travelled on foot or by horse.<sup>1283</sup> There was the expectation that the gospel would be preached, alongside Methodist doctrine, and that the manner of

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<sup>1279</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarter Day Minute Book 1845-1851, 18 December 1849, East Riding Archives. Wellings, *Methodism in Victorian Oxford*, 53.

<sup>1280</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Minutes of Quarterly Meetings 1863-1870, 12 June 1866, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1281</sup> Wellings, *Methodism in Victorian Oxford*, 1.

<sup>1282</sup> In June 1850 the Pocklington Primitive Methodists decided 'that as Bro Barker did not give satisfaction when preaching his trial sermon, he remain on trial.' Pocklington Primitive Methodist Quarter Day Minute Book 1845-1851, 18 June 1850, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1283</sup> In recognition of this, for example, it was decided 'that there be two traps from Weighton and two from Pocklington for local preachers.' Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Minutes of the Quarterly Meetings 1870-1880, 6 December 1878, East Riding Archives.

delivery would be agreeable. Being a local preacher, therefore, meant being identified by a far wider circle of people: spheres of influence were extended. Each quarterly plan demonstrates the miles travelled, and chapels visited, by individuals. In 1859, the Drifffield Primitive Methodist circuit was made up of thirty-eight preaching places with eighteen of them situated on the Wolds. Seventy-three local preachers were named but, due to age and infirmity, not all were available for services. From August to October, Brother Green from Garton preached at seven separate locations, while Brother Stather from Lund, travelled to nine villages. Both men had covered distances in excess of one hundred miles. They had not preached in their own village chapels. This was by no means exceptional. There were, after all, over five hundred preaching appointments to be carried out during this three-month period.<sup>1284</sup> Opinions of these men would have been formed. Away from home, a local preacher could be praised or reviled. Official meetings for the local preachers always involved a journey to the town.<sup>1285</sup> It was, again, while away from the village that they might have their abilities called into question, or where they would be party to decisions related to the capabilities and conduct of peers.

By teasing out just one aspect of a local preacher's lot, some clarity as to their status can be gained. Their names were not listed alphabetically in any documentation. Instead, there was a hierarchy created with, at the outset, the longest serving preachers appearing first. These men were to be revered. Brother Green, on the other hand was, in 1859, still relatively inexperienced and this was reflected in his allocated number: it was sixty-four.<sup>1286</sup> At meetings, if there was need to reprimand or sanction, and there often was, the decision would be made for a person 'to sink according to rule.'<sup>1287</sup> This meant being relegated to a lower position in the column of names and having a higher number allocated.<sup>1288</sup> The most common reasons cited were the neglect of appointments or late arrival at the chapel. In 1839, the Pocklington Primitive Methodists were deciding 'that Brother R. Richardson sink

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<sup>1284</sup> Drifffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Preachers Plans 1844-1880, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1285</sup> Ibid. For Brother Green, Drifffield was three miles away. Brother Stather lived nine miles away from the town.

<sup>1286</sup> Drifffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Preachers Plans 1844-1880, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1287</sup> See, for example, Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarter-Day Book 1839-1844, 15 December 1840, East Riding Archives. This was such a common occurrence that any Local Preachers' Meeting Minute Book could be consulted.

<sup>1288</sup> This was not unique to the Wolds. For example, see Wellings, *Methodism in Victorian Oxford*, 38.



for neglect of appointments according to rule.<sup>1289</sup> Ten years later and the Driffield Primitive Methodists were showing that all were treated alike: 'Sister Barrett sink one figure for neglecting Wetwang on 14 May. Her reasons not being supplied.'<sup>1290</sup> Tantamount to humiliation, congregations across the Wolds would be aware of misdemeanours having taken place. They would certainly have got to hear of Brother Weldon's insolvency, Brother Gospel's mental infirmity, and Brother Newton's immorality; all of which led to their names being removed completely.<sup>1291</sup> By contrast, it was equally possible, as a local preacher, to be in receipt of plaudits and admiration. Identification was one thing, judgment another: clues to what else might accrue. If opinions were forming, it was because of travel and responsibilities beyond the village. Most of the Methodists on the Wolds remained within the ambit of their chapel.

Having become a Wesleyan or Primitive Methodist, it was perfectly possible to be further identified in a plurality of ways.<sup>1292</sup> A local preacher could be just that, or he might also be a steward. Sunday School teachers also led classes. These micro-scale recognitions, occurring from within Methodism, were undoubtedly important in themselves. One member could be distinguished from another, while a person carrying out more than one responsibility might simply be thought of as distinguished. One Thomas Jackson was a Primitive Methodist in the Driffield circuit and he:

Very ably sustained the office of superintendent...and was the leader of an important class...His memory is still cherished with affectionate remembrance. We have heard him referred to as a "model man."<sup>1293</sup>

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<sup>1289</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarter-Day Book 1839-1844, 17 September 1839, East Riding Archives. Wellings, *Methodism in Victorian Oxford*, 48.

<sup>1290</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Minutes of the Quarter Day 1849-1856, 4 May 1849, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1291</sup> Bridlington Primitive Methodist Circuit Minutes of Quarterly Meetings 1875-1880, 27 December 1875, East Riding Archives. Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarter Day Minute Book 1845-1851, 16 March 1847, East Riding Archives. For Brother Newton's misdemeanor and Brother Gospel's health issue see Pocklington Quarter Day Minute Book 1845-1851, 16 March 1847 and 16 September 1851, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1292</sup> Henry Fowler, as well as being a local preacher, was at one time or another, a class leader, trustee, secretary and treasurer of the Wesleyan Missionary Society and Poor Society and a Circuit Steward. Scarborough Wesleyan Circuit Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1874-1921, 30 March 1874, North Yorkshire Record Office.

<sup>1293</sup> "Memoir of Mr. Thomas Jackson," *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, January 1865, 48-49.

Other issues require scrutiny. If Methodism could provide an identity or, indeed, identities, were there others available at the time? Historians have, indeed, pointed to the possibility of individuals possessing multiple identities and Peter Burke has focused on ‘cultural hybridity.’<sup>1294</sup> Here, because of ‘encounters,’ the mixing of identities is seen as inevitable, irresistible and happening throughout history.<sup>1295</sup> In relation to earlier times, the Wolds might be used to emphasise. After all, the Scandinavians infiltrated and the Norse influence on place names and dialect can be traced back many hundreds of years.<sup>1296</sup> However, the area’s isolation had created a hiatus in relation to the intermingling of peoples over a prolonged period.<sup>1297</sup> It is conceivable, therefore, to see the introduction of Methodism as a significant motivator for ensuing hybridization.<sup>1298</sup> At the very least it was an important ingredient in the make-up of countless individuals who could go on to exhibit these multiple identities.

Henry Fowler, the aforementioned Wesleyan Methodist, happened also to be a Justice of the Peace.<sup>1299</sup> A resident of Scarborough, his responsibilities clearly went beyond Methodism and his identity would have been that bit more complex because of it. Indeed, with his reputation preceding him, there is every possibility that he would have been deemed respectable by both village and town inhabitants.<sup>1300</sup> The situation was so different for the vast majority of people living on the Wolds, and this would have been particularly the case for the agricultural labourers and their families. Certain key points can be made. It is highly questionable how many opportunities existed for these people to signify independence and freedom of spirit.<sup>1301</sup> Writing towards the end of the century, Frederick Ross listed twenty institutions and societies that had functioned in the vicinity of Driffield over a prolonged period. Seven of these were reserved for landowners, farmers, or those with a military

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<sup>1294</sup> Burke, *Cultural Hybridity*.

<sup>1295</sup> *Ibid.* 9.

<sup>1296</sup> See Thomas Sheppard, *The Lost Towns of the Yorkshire Coast*, (London: A. Browne and sons, 1912), 275.

<sup>1297</sup> Some argued that Norse influence and geographical isolation combined to create a certain bluntness of manner and a low moral state. See, for example, Marmaduke C.F. Morris, *The British Workman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1928), 137-143; Woodcock, *Piety Among the Peasantry*.

<sup>1298</sup> The coming of the railways might also be viewed in similar vein.

<sup>1299</sup> Scarborough Wesleyan Circuit Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1874-1917, 30 March 1874, North Yorkshire Record Office.

<sup>1300</sup> Scarborough Wesleyan Circuit Local Preachers’ Meeting Minute Book 1874-1893, 13 March 1874, North Yorkshire Record Office.

<sup>1301</sup> Fearon, “What is Identity,” 12.

connection. Another seven were connected to charity or the saving of money. There was the Agricultural Labourers' Association, with its origins in the Joseph Arch agitation of 1876, and sixty-two men were enrolled at its outset. Apart from this, and the amateur brass band which had been formed in 1857, there were only groups with links to the churches or the temperance movement.<sup>1302</sup> No wonder that the role of Methodism was so important.

Anthony Cohen's view is that identity becomes most evident, possibly most visceral, when it is under threat.<sup>1303</sup> In rural communities such as the East Riding Wolds, identification as a Methodist could equate, therefore, to a profound message being broadcast to the landowners and employers who dominated lives, while often making their allegiance to the Church of England abundantly clear. Methodism was contributing to independence and freedom of spirit.<sup>1304</sup> This role is demonstrated by reference to the area's baptismal registers. Not necessarily an indication of membership, they certainly tell of adherence. From 1840 until 1880, the Bridlington Primitive Methodist chapel gave precise details about the employment of the father as well as the family's place of residence. Leaving aside those who lived in the town, there were five hundred and forty recorded baptisms of babies from Wolds villages. Three quarters of this number were the children of labourers or fishermen.<sup>1305</sup> The Driffield Primitive Methodist chapel, during the same period, made no mention of whether the babies were born in the town or villages. It recorded over two-and-a-half thousand baptisms and still, almost two thirds of the fathers were labourers.<sup>1306</sup>

An important distinction can be detected between Primitive Methodism and its Wesleyan counterpart. During the 1830s and 1840s, the Pocklington Wesleyan chapel certainly baptised the children of labourers: it was the second highest occupational category mentioned. The number of farmers bringing their babies to chapel for the same purpose was, however, almost double.<sup>1307</sup> A supposition would be that tenant farmers were showing their independence from landlords, while labourers were separating themselves from both.

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<sup>1302</sup> Ross, *History of Driffield*, 88-91.

<sup>1303</sup> Cohen, *Belonging, Identity and Social Organisation*, 3.

<sup>1304</sup> Fearon, "What is identity," 12.

<sup>1305</sup> Bridlington Primitive Methodist Baptismal Register 1843-1880, Bridlington Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRQ/3/1, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1306</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Baptismal Registers 1843-1879, Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRD/2/1/1, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1307</sup> Pocklington Wesleyan Circuit Register of Baptisms 1833-1880, Pocklington Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, MRP/1/1, East Riding Archives.

This was clearly about identity and theorists examine the idea that this is a dynamic as opposed to a static process. Jane Nadel-Klein, in relation to Scottish fishing communities, states that it has to be 'learned, lived, transmuted and always contextualised.'<sup>1308</sup> For this to be fully explained, Richard Jenkins focusses on similarity and difference.<sup>1309</sup> This is given clarification and weight by emphasising that Methodists were not simply that: being a Wesleyan or Primitive did, indeed, emphasise those two traits.<sup>1310</sup> The onlooker might have regarded them in the same light while the adherent would have guarded any distinctions jealously. A child's baptism was a statement of identity. The changes that occurred over time would have had an impact both on how the Methodists were perceived and how they thought of themselves.<sup>1311</sup>

A shift in emphasis which is pertinent here is the move to consider both imagined and symbolic concepts of community and identity.<sup>1312</sup> Cohen, for example, points to the reality of community lying in its members' perception of the vitality of its culture: community as a symbolic repository of meaning and a referent of identity.<sup>1313</sup> This would equate to Methodism providing a symbolic break with tradition while thoughts about identity, both real and imagined, were being formed.<sup>1314</sup> This can be better understood by referring to aspects of land ownership, patronage and paternalism as played out on the Wolds. Taken as a whole, the county of Yorkshire had a higher percentage of its land held in estates of over ten thousand acres than did England in its entirety.<sup>1315</sup> There were inevitably regional variations, and it was the East Riding which was proportionately more aristocratic than the other two. Indeed, the twelve largest landowners controlled 213,606 acres. Of these, the three largest landowners were in possession of 87,519 acres.<sup>1316</sup> The East Riding had ten per

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<sup>1308</sup> Jane Nadel-Klein, *Fishing for Heritage* (London: Routledge, 2003) 90.

<sup>1309</sup> See Richard Jenkins, *Social Identity* (London: Routledge, 2004) 2.

<sup>1310</sup> See Fairfax-Blakeborough, *Yorkshire Days*, 63.

<sup>1311</sup> Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 40. Here Jenkins speaks of the internal and external perceptions of selfhood: the image we have of ourselves being different to how others see us.

<sup>1312</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London & New York: Verso, 2006). Anthony Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (London: Routledge, 1985).

<sup>1313</sup> Anthony Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (London: Routledge, 1985) 56-57.

<sup>1314</sup> Both traditional Anglicanism and social tradition more generally.

<sup>1315</sup> Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 32.

<sup>1316</sup> John Bateman, ed., *The Great Landowners of Great Britain and Ireland* (London: Basil Montagu Pickering, 1876). J.T. Ward, *East Yorkshire Landed Estates in the Nineteenth Century* (Hull: EYLHS, 1967); United Kingdom, Parliament, *The Return of Owners of Land in England and Wales 1873*, Vol. 2 (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode for H.M.S.O., 1875).

cent more of its land in estates of over one thousand acres when compared with the percentage for the country as a whole. A significant number of these principal East Riding landowners were dominant on the Wolds.<sup>1317</sup> The distinction between close and open parishes has to be emphasised. The former were those controlled by a single family, while the latter had land divided between multiple owners.<sup>1318</sup> The implications could be significant. Obelkevich for Lincolnshire, and Hey for South Yorkshire, both point to the domination of the Church of England in parishes under the control of squire or single landlord.<sup>1319</sup> Alan Everitt studied the relationship between parish type and the strength of Dissent in the four counties of Kent, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire and Leicestershire. He concluded that the influence of landownership upon the spread of Nonconformity was overwhelming. Parishes 'in one hand' were very likely to have no Dissenting chapel whereas those that were 'much divided' were more than likely to have at least one.<sup>1320</sup> He does, for 1851, specifically make brief mention of the East Riding of Yorkshire's particularly high proportion of chapel-going Dissenters.<sup>1321</sup> By this he means Methodists and there are interesting findings with regard to the Wolds.

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<sup>1317</sup> Ward, *East Yorkshire Landed Estates*.

<sup>1318</sup> Holderness, "Open and Close Parishes," 126N

<sup>1319</sup> Obelkevich, *Religion and Rural Society*, 155. Hey, "The Pattern of nonconformity," 86.

<sup>1320</sup> Alan M. Everitt, *The Pattern of Rural Dissent: The Nineteenth Century* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1973), 21. He describes four categories: 'in one hand,' 'in a few hands,' 'subdivided,' and 'much divided.' These categories equate to the more commonly used categories of A to D.

<sup>1321</sup> *Ibid*, 47.

Land Ownership Structure of Wolds Parishes\*<sup>1322</sup>

<u>Definition</u>	<u>Number of Parishes</u>
Strictly Close Parishes – Landlord owning at Least Half of Land (A).	27
Parishes Dominated by a Small Number of Landlords (B).	20
Open Parishes – Average of Less than Forty Acres Each (C).	1
Divided Parishes – Combination of Large and Small Owners (D).	26

\*Not including the four Beverley parishes and the parish of Bridlington.

With twenty- seven close parishes on the Wolds, the very definite links between the owners and the Established Church are to be stressed. The Sykes family of Sledmere was the example *par excellence*.<sup>1323</sup> The first Sir Tatton (1772-1863) had rebuilt several churches on the Wolds.<sup>1324</sup> The second Sir Tatton (1826-1913), with an uncle a member of the clergy, had built at least seven, either on or adjacent to the Wolds:

...and many other restorations were undertaken by his munificence.

Over a million and a half was expended in this pious hobby in the

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<sup>1322</sup> United Kingdom, Parliament, *The Return of Owners of Land in England and Wales 1873*, Vol. 2, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode for H.M.S.O., 1875). John Bateman, *The Great Landowners of Great Britain and Ireland* (London: Basil Montagu Pickering, 1876), 10-432; B.A. Holderness, "'Open' and 'Close' Parishes in England in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Agricultural History Review* 20 (1972): 126-139.

<sup>1323</sup> The Sykes family owned all of the land in five of the close parishes (type 'A') and a large percentage of the land in many other parishes (type 'B').

<sup>1324</sup> Frederick Ross, *Celebrities of the Yorkshire Wolds* (London: 1878) 156. For his obituary see *Malton Messenger*, March 28, 1863.

East Riding, and probably Sir Tatton got ample return for his money from the pleasure it gave him to go the round – as he often did – of the churches he had either rebuilt or restored...<sup>1325</sup>

With this as backdrop, therefore, the Methodist presence in these parishes is particularly striking. Fifty-nine per cent of close parishes on the Wolds had at least one Methodist chapel by 1851 and this can be compared to Everett's calculations for Kent of fourteen per cent: clearly opposite extremes.<sup>1326</sup> With only one truly open parish and twenty-six divided parishes, however, there were Methodist chapels in eighty-nine per cent of them with seventy-four per cent having both Wesleyan and Primitive Methodist varieties.<sup>1327</sup> For the same two categories Everitt identifies eighty six per cent of these parishes in the Lindsey area of Lincolnshire as having at least one Methodist chapel.<sup>1328</sup> The relative strengths identified by Obelkevich, Hey and Everett are confirmed but with the success of Methodism on the Wolds emphasised.

This Methodist success in relation to close parishes did not necessarily come about with straightforward ease. The marriage of the second Sir Tatton Sykes in the July of 1874 necessitated a meeting of his tenant farmers. It took place at the Keys Hotel in Driffield 'to decide the means to be adopted for presenting a suitable bridal present to the future Lady Sykes.'<sup>1329</sup> Redolent of long-established practice and tradition, these men, along with their labourers, were dependent on the baronet for both their livelihood and accommodation. Correspondence, addressed to William Sissons, the estate manager, confirms that people supposed it advantageous to indicate allegiance to the parish church. One letter, for example, also dated July 1874, was written to solicit support for a certain Francis Johnson to be offered the tenancy of a vacant farm. Only two points were raised. He was 'a good practical farmer and also a good churchman.'<sup>1330</sup> Another, written in November 1874, was

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<sup>1325</sup> Fairfax-Blakeborough, *Sykes of Sledmere*, 154-155. For a detailed account of the building of these churches and the partnership with the architect, George Edmund Street, see James Bayly, *Four Churches of the Deanery of Buckrose* (London: Ackerman, 1894).

<sup>1326</sup> Great Britain. Parliament, *Census of Great Britain 1851, Religious Worship, England and Wales Report and Tables*. Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1854. Everitt, *The Pattern of Rural Dissent*, 21.

<sup>1327</sup> Parliament, *Census of Great Britain 1851*, 1854.

<sup>1328</sup> Everitt, *The Pattern of Rural Dissent*, 21.

<sup>1329</sup> *Yorkshire Gazette*, July 25, 1874. The sum of £300 was realized.

<sup>1330</sup> Letter from E.W. Bural to William Sissons, 22 July 1874, Letters to William Sissons of Sledmere Castle Sykes Papers and Correspondence, DDSY/101, University of Hull Archive.

asking if a vacant property could be let to a particular tenant farmer, on the understanding that the labourer occupying it would attend the parish church.<sup>1331</sup> Only a few months previously and the secretary of the Wesleyan Young Men's Christian Association had been required to send a letter of apology to Sir Tatton. He was expressing sorrow 'for not asking leave of you for to have our picnic on Monday last.'<sup>1332</sup> The assurance given by William Botterill, a Methodist tenant farmer, that 'he did not think Sir Tatton would have any objections providing we did not break the trees, or fences,' was clearly incorrect.<sup>1333</sup> These Methodists were setting themselves apart.

The young men who attended Driffield's Wesleyan chapel were persistent. In May 1875 a letter was written, well in advance, asking for the required permission to hold their picnic 'in the York Dale' owned by Sir Tatton.<sup>1334</sup> With his proclivities seemingly clear, the same tenacity was shown, over decades, by the men who petitioned, on behalf of Methodism, to buy or rent his land in order to build their chapels. Primitive and Wesleyan services had taken place in Sledmere cottages since the early 1820s.<sup>1335</sup> Little could be done to stop this. It being the village where the ancestral home was situated, he did appear most determined, however, to resist the requests for chapels to be built. In 1868, a deputation had been appointed 'to wait on Sir Tatton Sykes to ask the gift of a piece of land on which to build a chapel.' It was repeated in 1869, but to no avail.<sup>1336</sup> It took until the end of the 1880s, but his resistance did finally falter. It was 'in 1889 both societies erected neat and comfortable chapels, on sites kindly granted by Sir Tatton Sykes.'<sup>1337</sup> Deference was required but he had relented. It had not taken so long for the Sykes family to grant permission in other villages. In Garton, where all the land was owned by them, a plot had been granted to the Primitive Methodists as early as 1824. By 1871 a replacement, larger chapel was built with the

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<sup>1331</sup> Letter from Thomas Hornby to William Sissons, 18 November 1874, Letters to William Sissons of Sledmere Castle Sykes Papers and Correspondence, DDSY/101, University of Hull Archive.

<sup>1332</sup> Letter from W. Baker to William Sissons, 11 June 1874, Letters to William Sissons of Sledmere Castle Sykes Papers and Correspondence, DDSY/101, University of Hull Archive.

<sup>1333</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1334</sup> Letter from S. Tucker to William Sissons, 26 May 1875. Letters to William Sissons of Sledmere Castle Sykes Papers and Correspondence, DDSY/101, University of Hull Archive.

<sup>1335</sup> Frederick Ross, *Contributions Towards a History of Driffield and the Surrounding Wolds District, in the East Riding of the County of York* (London: Sagwan Press, 1898) 74.

<sup>1336</sup> Driffield Wesleyan Circuit Minutes of Quarterly Meetings Minutes 1854-1880, 30 September 1868, Driffield Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1337</sup> Driffield Wesleyan Circuit Notes Compiled for Centenary 1939, Driffield Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, MRD/1/7/25, East Riding Archives.



additional land being granted on a ninety-nine-year lease. Ten of the twelve trustees were labourers from Garton itself.<sup>1338</sup> It was in 1835 that the Wesleyans were opening a chapel in Lund.<sup>1339</sup> In 1864, the Primitive Methodists were awaiting a 'favourable answer to [the] request' in relation to building a chapel at Wansford.<sup>1340</sup> They did not have to wait long as, in April 1865, the *Primitive Methodist Magazine* was commenting on the new chapel: 'the best site in the village has been granted by Sir T. Sykes.'<sup>1341</sup> In 1869, a Brother Kendall had two interviews with Sir Tatton in relation to the building of Primitive Methodist chapels in Wetwang and Lund. He reported that 'we expect to succeed.'<sup>1342</sup> Eventually, chapels were built in each of the parishes where all the land was owned by the Sykes family. Farmers and labourers were determined to stamp their identity. Building chapels was an obvious strategy, even in villages with relatively small populations.<sup>1343</sup>

The other major landowners were involved in similar negotiations with the two Methodist denominations. Lord Middleton avoided any chapels being built in the five parishes where he was the sole proprietor.<sup>1344</sup> Lord Londesborough prevented chapels from being built in the village which bore his name but showed benevolence towards the Methodists in other ways. The *Beverley Guardian* for 26 July 1856, reported that:

...the Right Honourable Lord Londesborough has with his usual liberality...given a donation of £10 towards the Wesleyan Chapel now in the course of erection.<sup>1345</sup>

Much later, in October 1876, the *Yorkshire Gazette* reported that the new Primitive Methodist chapel in the village of Rudston, capable of seating two hundred people, had been made possible because of the land being sold to them 'at a nominal price' by Lord

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<sup>1338</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit, Garton Chapel Book 1871-1879, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1339</sup> Driffield Wesleyan Circuit, Lund Chapel Book 1835-1874, 8 August 1835, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1340</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Minute Book of Quarterly Meetings 1852-1873, June 1864, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1341</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, April 1865, 246.

<sup>1342</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Statistics Documents 1861-1880, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1343</sup> For example, in 1851 the village of Sledmere had a population of 437, Bugthorpe had 266, Nunburnholme 253. Cowlam, with only 35 residents, did not have a chapel built.

<sup>1344</sup> Fifteen of the twenty-seven close parishes eventually came to have chapels. Fourteen of these had both a Wesleyan and a Primitive Methodist chapel.

<sup>1345</sup> *Beverley Guardian*, July 26, 1856.

Londesborough.<sup>1346</sup> In 1878, correspondence from a solicitors' firm, to the Rev. Whitehead of Driffield, was confirming the receipt of nine pounds for the purchase of land at Little Driffield for the purpose of building a chapel 'which shall be sent to Lord Londesborough's solicitors by the next post.'<sup>1347</sup> It was the Duke of Devonshire who had sold the land which enabled the original North Dalton Wesleyan chapel to be erected in 1839. Five of the trustees were farmers from the village.<sup>1348</sup> In 1865, Lord Muncaster was approached by two Methodist gentlemen to ask if he would sell land for a new chapel at Warter.<sup>1349</sup> Not initially disposed to do so, it wasn't until 1874 that steps were finally being taken 'in order to purchas [sic] land on which to build chapels at Buckthorpe and also Warter.'<sup>1350</sup> This gradual relenting of landowners to Methodist requests reveals a shift towards acceptance as part of the larger social and Christian community and by the Anglican elite. The nature of the request relates to sacralisation or desacralisation. The granting of land acknowledged that Methodists had a right to be communing with God in their own way. The picnic taking points towards the growing importance of the secular activities.

The link between space and identity has been made by Jérôme Monnet. Connotations of power accrue with the creation of place, and any symbols are a concrete reality able to communicate intangibles such as values and feelings.<sup>1351</sup> A place is symbolic and identity forming, therefore, as soon as it means something to a group of individuals. These chapels, built all over the Wolds, were the most obvious spatial symbols of identity formation. Powerful messages were broadcast to all who knew about them and saw the people enter. They meant so much to those who walked towards and went inside. They did provide an identity. Once inside, the events taking place also held meaning. So too the positioning of people and the roles being performed. Identity was about being set apart. Third space was the chapel, but the giving of access to fourth space cannot be underestimated. In September 1872, Primitive Methodists all over the Wolds were urged to make the 'last Sunday in

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<sup>1346</sup> *Yorkshire Gazette*, October 14, 1876.

<sup>1347</sup> Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit, Letters 1878, Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit, MRD/2/7/2, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1348</sup> Driffield Wesleyan Circuit, Notes Compiled for Centenary 1939, East Riding Archives,

<sup>1349</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Minutes of Quarterly Meetings 1863-1870, 14 March 1865, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1350</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Minutes of Quarterly Meetings 1870-1880, 19 June 1874, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1351</sup> Jerome Monnet, "The Symbolism of Place: a Geography of Relationships Between Space, Power and Identity," *European Journal of Geography* (2011): 1. <https://doi.org/10.4000/cybergeogeo.24747>.

November a day of special prayer throughout the area for a general revival of religion.<sup>1352</sup> Chapels and homes either became, or enabled, fourth space. The Reverend Henry Woodcock, who urged the Wolds peasantry to be pious, wrote two further books. His *Seventy Sermon Outlines* and *Wonders of Grace* explained why and how it should be achieved.<sup>1353</sup> Members were encouraged to purchase the volumes which would have been read along with the Bible and one of the Methodist hymn books. Space on bookshelf helping fourth space to be filled.

Identity as a Wesleyan or Primitive Methodist on the Yorkshire Wolds carried meaning, was apposite and significant in itself. The space it occupied could be liminal and members might well have been on the precipice of something else. This something else was closely related to the transition from the rural to the urban: whether temporary or permanent. Already hinted at, the line between identity and respectability was narrow or blurred as could be the division between sacralisation and desacralisation. There were, however, opportunities available to the urban Methodist and these will be explored with reference to the contrasting milieu of the industrial Black Country.<sup>1354</sup>

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<sup>1352</sup> Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1862-1881, 20 September, North Yorkshire Archives.

<sup>1353</sup> Woodcock, *Piety Among the Peasantry*. Woodcock, *Seventy Sermon Outlines*. Woodcock, *Wonders of Grace*. These books were advertised on the Preachers' Plans, along with many others.

<sup>1354</sup> Lloyd, *Women and the Shaping of British Methodism*, 144.

## Chapter Four

### Respectability and the Black Country

‘Net the large fish and you’re sure to have the small fry.’

*Scenes of Clerical Life*<sup>1355</sup>

One hundred and fifty miles separated Wetwang on the Wolds from Wolverhampton. They were, however, worlds apart: agricultural employment traditions of a bygone age compared to cutting-edge industrial practice. Fields and villages; collieries and foundries. It is hard to imagine that their inhabitants had anything in common until, that is, Methodism is mentioned. People of the Black Country gained identity from it, too, but three men, grandees of the town, with their families, can bring another issue to the fore. George Thorneycroft (1791-1851), Isaac Jenks (1816-1888) and Henry Hartley Fowler (1830-1911) lived lives which were entwined. George, the archetypal self-made man, had risen from foundry employee to owner of the town’s Shrubbery Ironworks. Seven hundred tons produced each week meant he was a leading contributor to Britain’s railway boom.<sup>1356</sup> Isaac, his protégé, left his employ to set up the Minerva Iron Works. Within ten years it was producing eighty per cent of the steel exported from the United Kingdom to the United States of America.<sup>1357</sup> Henry, a solicitor, was George’s son-in-law.<sup>1358</sup> All three became mayor of their home town and Henry was elected to be its Member of Parliament in 1880: a position held until 1908, when he was raised to the peerage.<sup>1359</sup> Each man started out as a Wesleyan Methodist of deep conviction and they all, at one time or another, worshipped at the town’s Darlington Street chapel. While the other two men remained steadfast, George did dally with the Church of England. Even he, however, remained a weekly Wesleyan worshipper. His dual adherence is intriguing in relation to what he might have considered necessary to court favour and be held in high esteem. Something that the other two, who

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<sup>1355</sup> George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, originally published 1858), 17.

<sup>1356</sup> Christopher Upton, *A History of Wolverhampton* (Chichester, West Sussex: Phillimore & Co. Ltd, 1998), 73.

<sup>1357</sup> *Ibid.* 84-85. He also opened the Beaver Works in Wolverhampton.

<sup>1358</sup> Fowler, *The Life of Henry Hartley Fowler*, 20. Not to be confused with the Henry Fowler from Scarborough.

<sup>1359</sup> *Ibid.*, 54 & 507. He became Viscount Wolverhampton.

lived later into the century, did not deem as necessary. George's wife also refused to deviate from Wesleyanism, and this is significant here. Eleanor, Mrs. Thorneycroft, was a force to be reckoned with, as were the wives of the other two men, and they shed light on the role of women, albeit through marriage, within the life of the chapel. No one could doubt that these people carried with them an unequivocal sense of respectability: the implications of which were teased out in the novels of Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler.<sup>1360</sup> She just happened to be the daughter of Henry and the granddaughter of George and Eleanor. Argued here is a reciprocity in relation to respectability, Wesleyan Methodism and certain of its members. These members, by their presence and their actions, enhanced the prospect of respectability for many others. They also emphasise the fine dividing line between sacralisation and desacralisation and what could eventually contribute to secularisation.

The quest for respectability has been a theme of ongoing interest to historians. According to John Mullen, the reasons for this are twofold: it was a preoccupation of the Victorians themselves and it is also the most powerful concept in defining who was valued and who was not.<sup>1361</sup> Geoffrey Best had even seen it as a sharper line of social division than that between rich and poor or employer and employee.<sup>1362</sup> Peter Bailey charted the related historiography before offering insights of his own.<sup>1363</sup> For him, there had been a shift in meaning. Respectability was no longer simply about social correctness. His reference to 'normative power' means that, for him, it is a yardstick against which people can be measured.<sup>1364</sup> He believes it was a small but significant sector of the working-classes that was linked to respectability, but this link was far more complex than others would have us believe. He explores the idea that, for the working classes, respectability was not a permanent code of values, but often something that was dipped into. Here he talks of 'the

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<sup>1360</sup> See in particular: Fowler, *Concerning Isabel Carnaby*; Fowler, *The Farringdons*.

<sup>1361</sup> John Mullen, "Victorian Respectability, 'Anti-Social Behaviour' and the Music Hall 1880-1900," in *Anti-Social Behaviour in Britain: Victorian and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Sarah Pickard (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 251. Other examples given are chivalry and decorum.

<sup>1362</sup> Geoffrey Best, *Mid-Victorian Britain 1851-70* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1971) 256. Other historians quote Best's comment that it exerted 'a socially soothing tendency.' See Mullen, "Victorian Respectability", 2.

<sup>1363</sup> Peter Bailey, "Will the Real Bill Banks Please Stand Up? Towards a Role Analysis of Mid-Victorian Working-class Respectability," *Journal of Social History* 12, no. 3 (1979): 336.

<sup>1364</sup> *Ibid*, 336.

existence of seemingly contradictory modes of behaviour within a single lifestyle.<sup>1365</sup> Respectability, for Bailey was, therefore, about choice as well as being a normative mode.<sup>1366</sup> With this comes his contention that there were fewer working-class 'respectables' than others would assert.

The penultimate decade of the twentieth century saw the publication of F.M.L. Thompson's *The Rise of Respectable Society*.<sup>1367</sup> In this he shifts attention back onto the middle-classes and it is their link to respectability which is explored. According to Thompson they were keen to differentiate their status from both the uncouth lower orders and the seemingly frivolous aristocracy.<sup>1368</sup> He argues that this desire to be respectable permeated all aspects of middle-class existence. More recently, some have argued that this search for respectability was not quite so uniform. Huggins felt it necessary to pose a question in relation to how respectable the middle-class actually was.<sup>1369</sup> His study of them mirrors, to some extent, Bailey's thoughts on the working classes. Just as the latter could behave in different ways at different times, the notion of an unrespectable set of middle class values is introduced.<sup>1370</sup> In their tracing of the historiography, Huggins and Mangan urge caution by referring to the 'peddling of a purified past.'<sup>1371</sup> They mention the use of antonyms by historians to sum up and simplify: reputable and disreputable, respectable and rough.<sup>1372</sup> Bailey had even spoken of the thinkers and drinkers as well as the virtuous and the vicious.<sup>1373</sup> Critical of these *leitmotifs*, there are others too, who express scepticism. Hugh Cunningham describes respectability as an extremely crude tool to use when explaining what happened.<sup>1374</sup> Even so, Huggins and Mangan still recognise a Victorian desire for decency.<sup>1375</sup>

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<sup>1365</sup> Ibid, 341. Mullen speaks of respectability being lost because of reprehensible behaviour. See Mullen, "Victorian Respectability," 1.

<sup>1366</sup> Ibid, 343.

<sup>1367</sup> Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society*.

<sup>1368</sup> Ibid, 250.

<sup>1369</sup> Michael Huggins, "More Sinful Pleasures? Leisure, Respectability and the Male Middle-Classes in Victorian England," *Journal of Social History* 33, no. 3 (2000): 585.

<sup>1370</sup> Ibid, 585.

<sup>1371</sup> Huggins and Mangan, *Disreputable Pleasures*, ix.

<sup>1372</sup> Ibid, x.

<sup>1373</sup> Bailey, "Will the Real Bill Banks Please Stand Up?," 339.

<sup>1374</sup> Cunningham, "Leisure and culture", 296.

<sup>1375</sup> Huggins and Mangan, *Disreputable Pleasures*, xi.

Bailey and Mullen, for the working classes, primarily use leisure to back up their views. Huggins and Mangan do the same for the middle classes.<sup>1376</sup> It is Thompson who is more open to the idea that religion was central to the middle-class lifestyle and that, as such, it could affect respectability. He sums up their non-attendance at church or chapel as scandalous.<sup>1377</sup> This suggests that the role of Methodism is worthy of investigation and, unlike the studies already referred to, it allows the implications for both the middle-classes and the workers to be examined simultaneously. Here there is the move to urban living with identity established. With its rules and procedures, Methodism did provide a set of standards against which to weigh people.<sup>1378</sup> It certainly attempted to put a stop to the 'dipping in and out' already referred to.<sup>1379</sup> Membership meant that choice had been exercised. If there were fewer working-class respectables than once thought, the role of Methodism is even more significant.

It is the lack of interaction between the classes that has previously been studied in relation to the Music Hall.<sup>1380</sup> With Methodism, the implications of shared space were huge and potentially very different from those provided by entertainment venues. People were together, ostensibly for the same purpose, and, because of this, there were repercussions for respectability. Use of antonyms, while convenient, does point towards certain unexplored issues. Respectability is seen as wholly desirable and not to be questioned. Study of Methodism will indicate that it possessed dynamic properties. Attained through association it could also develop into something with negative connotations: deference, embourgeoisement, self-aggrandisement to name a few. This quest for respectability saw Methodism grow but, ultimately, it may well have contributed to decline. A contention that respectability was naturally, and initially, a middle-class phenomenon leads to these people being scrutinised prior to examining any implications for workers. Keeping in mind the Victorian desire for decency, and the quest to be valued, the significance of employer and employed worshipping in the same building cannot be ignored: it went beyond identity.<sup>1381</sup>

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<sup>1376</sup> Bailey, "Will the Real Bill Banks Please Stand Up?." Mullen, "Victorian Respectability." Huggins and Mangan, *Disreputable Pleasures*.

<sup>1377</sup> Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society*, 251.

<sup>1378</sup> See Chapter 3.

<sup>1379</sup> Bailey, "Will the Real Bill Banks Please Stand Up?," 341.

<sup>1380</sup> A focus for both Bailey and Mullen.

<sup>1381</sup> Huggins and Mangan, *Disreputable Pleasures*, xi. Mullen, "Victorian Respectability", 251.

A contention here is that the concept of separate spheres is crucial, and remains relevant, to any understanding of Victorian respectability.<sup>1382</sup> Propounded by Davidoff and Hall, it is the distinction between the public and the private, between work and the home, which is made.<sup>1383</sup> For them, there were different implications for men and women which could immediately be detected. The former could occupy both settings with ease while the latter were confined to things domestic. These writers focused on the private sphere and on analysing the place of women in Victorian society. They speak pejoratively of 'ladies' and the protection that the domestic sphere seemingly offered them.<sup>1384</sup> Simon Gunn turns this on its head by examining the problems with the public sphere due precisely to its lack of women.<sup>1385</sup> This very much links to any scrutiny of modernity and the work originally carried out by Jurgen Habermas.<sup>1386</sup> Masculinity was identified with the public sphere of 'reason' while women were confined by 'nature' to the home.<sup>1387</sup> Janet Wolff simply argues that modernity rendered women invisible.<sup>1388</sup>

There are those who point to this thesis being an oversimplification and critics have included Linda Kerber and Amanda Vickery. The former feels that it obscures more than it illuminates. She claims it to be a static model.<sup>1389</sup> In agreeing, Vickery concentrates on how the scenario actually developed and casts doubt as to whether it was so markedly different from times past.<sup>1390</sup> Neither of these two points preclude its usefulness and even Vickery concedes that the notion of separate spheres has done women's history a great service.<sup>1391</sup> The great service here comes about precisely because it does not have to be Kerber's static model: women could be present in the public sphere and their use of space could and did develop

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<sup>1382</sup> Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society*, 197.

<sup>1383</sup> See Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*. Also, Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society*, 197.

<sup>1384</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*.

<sup>1385</sup> Simon Gunn, S. "The Public Sphere, Modernity and Consumption: New Perspectives on the History of the English Middle-Class," in *Gender, Civic Culture and Consumerism*, eds. Alan Kidd and David Nicholls (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 13.

<sup>1386</sup> Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992, originally published 1962).

<sup>1387</sup> Gunn, "The Public Sphere", 15.

<sup>1388</sup> Janet Wolff, "The Invisible Flaneuse: Women and Literature in Modernity," in *Feminine Sentences: Essays on Women and Culture*, ed. Janet Wolff (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), W4.

<sup>1389</sup> Linda Kerber, "Separate Sphere, Female Worlds, Women's Place: the Rhetoric of women's History," *Journal of American History* 75 (1988): 386.

<sup>1390</sup> Vickery, "Golden Age to Separate Spheres?," 413. Linda Kerber also feels that separate spheres can obscure more than it illuminates. See, Kerber, "Separate Sphere, female Worlds," 9-39.

<sup>1391</sup> Vickery, "Golden Age to Separate Spheres?," 413.



over time. Davidoff's comment that the public sphere was only available to women if it was well regulated is, however, successfully made.<sup>1392</sup> Domestically this can be emphasised by the discourse surrounding the original idea of the Angel-in-the-House.<sup>1393</sup> Not all women behaved in the same way. Over time the use of spheres can change, and they could be infiltrated.

There is then, specifically, the role of religion which, in relation to respectability in general, and to separate spheres in particular, has not been fully explored even though it is of significance. Habits relating to religious affiliation do not have to be unchanging and they have definite spatial implications. Linda Wilson introduces the idea that attendance at chapel was an activity which was neither quite public nor quite private.<sup>1394</sup> Refining the observation made by Davidoff, it was, perhaps, also 'not quite' regulated. Introduced by Wilson as the third sphere, for respectability it was essential for both men and women to be present. Men and women were present, and for the latter, the implications were significant.<sup>1395</sup> By adding a different dimension, Wilson is emphasising the importance of the original separate spheres thinking rather than detracting from it. It certainly does not need to be static and all three spheres, or spaces, can be considered in relation to respectability.<sup>1396</sup>

Linda Wilson's investigation into third sphere chapel leaves a spatial analysis of the implications for women, and men, ripe for investigation.<sup>1397</sup> The overlapping of chapel life with the private and public most certainly occurred and rendered the role of religion as seemingly unique. In relation to respectability, what took place in connection with the chapel is important. Bailey had already argued for scrutiny of the human geography of the

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<sup>1392</sup> Leonore Davidoff, "The Family in Britain," in *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950: People and Their Environment* vol 2, ed. Frances M.L. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 84.

<sup>1393</sup> Paulo Branca, "Image and Reality: the Myth of the Idle Victorian Woman," in *Clio's Consciousness Raised: New Perspectives in the History of Women*, eds. Mary Hartman and Lois W. Banner (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 179-191. Also, M. Jeanne Peterson, "No Angels in the House: the Victorian Myth and the Paget Women," *American Historical Review* 84 (1984): 693.

<sup>1394</sup> Wilson, *Constrained by Zeal*, 1.

<sup>1395</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1396</sup> It is noteworthy that Davidoff and Hall refer to the middle-class in the title of their book. This hints at the idea that respectability was, indeed, an urban concern.

<sup>1397</sup> Wilson, *Constrained by Zeal*, lii.

modern city in his analysis of working-class respectability.<sup>1398</sup> In his discussion of modernity he draws on the work of the Chicago School.<sup>1399</sup> Working originally in the 1920s and 1930s, those involved had indeed drawn on examples from nineteenth century London to comment on the effects of urbanisation. It had created new patterns of life in terms of time, space, and personnel. A key point made by Bailey is the compartmentalising of the social classes so that the one was little acquainted with the other. In *Disreputable Pleasures* Huggins and Mangan speak of the church as ‘a site of solidarity, visibility and significance.’<sup>1400</sup> In considering these three qualities the benefits of the currently untapped spatial approach to the study of religion can be appreciated. Those paving the way have included Croll who calls respectability an ‘inherently spatial concept’: notions of respectability are determined by spatial considerations.<sup>1401</sup> While individuals were learning new geographical patterns which marked out the private from the public, they were occupying space in both a real and symbolic fashion. They were at one and the same time experiencing the space and being observed. Kidd and Nicholls, by recognising that spatial patterns carry cultural meaning, link place with both class and gender.<sup>1402</sup> Kate Hill uses space to explore issues related to social control. She talks of the symbolic ‘ownership’ of public places by the middle-class male elite.<sup>1403</sup> Gunn, in dealing with respectable ritual, sees public spaces as places of contest and confrontation, especially for middle-class ladies.<sup>1404</sup> Craig Young uses spatial analysis to probe the creation of gender identities and returns the discussion to that of separate spheres by talking of the ‘intertwining of social and spatial ideals’.<sup>1405</sup> All of these historians are capable of using metaphorical representations of society to attach meaning to what was

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<sup>1398</sup> Bailey, “Will the Real Bill Banks Please Stand Up?,” 336.

<sup>1399</sup> *Ibid*, 340.

<sup>1400</sup> Huggins and Mangan, *Disreputable Pleasures*, XV.

<sup>1401</sup> Andy Croll and Martin Johnes, “A Heart of Darkness? Leisure, Respectability and the Aesthetics of Vice in Victorian Wales,” in *Disreputable pleasures: less virtuous Victorians at play*, eds. Alan Kidd and David Nicholls (London-New York: Frank Cass, 2004), 155.

<sup>1402</sup> Kidd and Nicholls, *Gender, Civic Culture and Consumerism*, 7.

<sup>1403</sup> Kate Hill, “Thoroughly Embued with the Spirit of Ancient Greece: Symbolism and Space in Victorian Civic Culture,” in *Gender, Civic Culture and Consumerism*, eds. Alan Kidd and David Nicholls (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 105.

<sup>1404</sup> Gunn, “The Public Sphere”, 112.

<sup>1405</sup> Craig Young, “Middle-Class Culture, Law and Gender Identity: Married Women’s Property Legislation in Scotland c.1850-1920,” in *Gender, Civic Culture and Consumerism*, eds. Alan Kidd and David Nicholls, D. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999) 134.

taking place, particularly in the public sphere. What they do not is reward religion with adequate consideration.

Another allied theme is how colour came to be used within the spheres and how this contributed to the turning of spaces into places: places where respectability could be played out. Primarily this relates to clothing, and it was Roland Barthes who spoke of a 'vestimentary code.'<sup>1406</sup> Within this code, and for the nineteenth century, it is black that requires attention because of its 'combined symbolic and optical power.'<sup>1407</sup> John Harvey's *Men in Black* is wide ranging in its scope. He speaks of the wearers of this non-colour colour being imbued with power, gravitas, authority and moral uprightness.<sup>1408</sup> The donning of black, in the first instance, carried meaning for the wearers themselves: '[...it tells] us we are or may be something we have meant to be.'<sup>1409</sup> It then sent these messages to the observers and, having accomplished this, it was possible for attempts to be made for subordinates to imitate their super-ordinates.<sup>1410</sup>

It was during the mid-years of the century that the wearing of black by men was at its height and when, inevitably, the distinction was most clear in relation to the colour of women's clothing. Women were able to wear white and they could show interest in fashion. Alison Lurie speaks of clothing as a language and, as such, she believes trimmings and accessories to be aspects of the grammar.<sup>1411</sup> Identity and respectability are touched on briefly by the likes of Harvey, but they do seem obvious concomitants worthy of further exploration.<sup>1412</sup> This is especially the case as the focus by academics thus far has been on either art history or the novel.<sup>1413</sup> The chapel is of interest on a number of levels. All there together, an unwritten code would have resulted in the concept of the 'Sunday best', with attempts to

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<sup>1406</sup> Roland Barthes, trans. Matthew Ward and Richard Howard, *The Fashion System* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983, originally published 1967), 64-65.

<sup>1407</sup> Anne Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes* (London: Penguin Books, 1988, originally published 1978), 366.

<sup>1408</sup> John Harvey, *Men in Black* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 1995), 10, 15 & 24. For Harvey, black is 'the signature of what [men] have: standing, goods, mastery.' 10. Dress is 'the complication of life made visible,' 15.

<sup>1409</sup> *Ibid*, 14.

<sup>1410</sup> Georg Simmel, "Fashion," *International Quarterly*, 1904, reprinted in *American Journal of Sociology* 62 (May 1957): 541-558.

<sup>1411</sup> Alison Lurie, *The Language of Clothes* (London: Heinemann, 1982), 5.

<sup>1412</sup> Harvey, in mentioning that black clothing demonstrated a certain coherence, refers to 'a society militantly respectable and militantly pious.' See Harvey, *Men in black*, 153.

<sup>1413</sup> *Ibid*.

irradicate work-related and social divides by some being met by the efforts of others to maintain difference.<sup>1414</sup>

When Arline Wilson studied the provincial, black-wearing, middle-class males of nineteenth century Liverpool, she focused on 'cultural identities.'<sup>1415</sup> For her, these revolved around notions of the urban and the civic and, because of the desire to hide links to the slave trade, she concentrated initially on their joint ventures, such as the development of the Botanic Garden and the introduction of the Literary and Philosophical Society.<sup>1416</sup> In Wolverhampton, the factory owners and ironmasters had no such need to act collectively. They were free to function as individuals. George Thorneycroft, Isaac Jenks, and Henry Fowler were most definitely focused on civic engagement and any thoughts of their own status were inextricably linked to ideas of respectability. In cities and towns throughout the country this all came to be demonstrated symbolically by artists, photographers, and their sitters. The three men from Wolverhampton can be used to highlight this.

In her work on the civic portraiture of early Victorian Manchester, Louise Purbrick emphasises the need to think of the paintings as constitutive of middle-class power.<sup>1417</sup> That there were thirty-six portraits received by the council between 1838 and 1850 is an indication of the men's standing and desire for recognition.<sup>1418</sup> They wore the uniform of respectability: black was the colour.<sup>1419</sup> Attention is drawn to this sameness. The men clearly felt the need to present themselves in a particular way with Davidoff and Hall pointing to their success being 'as clear in the standard of [their] dress as it was in the repeal of the corn laws.'<sup>1420</sup>

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<sup>1414</sup> In tracing the contribution of religion to the development of the wearing of black it is Calvinism that is mentioned by Harvey. However, in *Adam Bede* Dinah Morris is, at first, dressed in simple black. In *Middlemarch*, when her husband is disgraced, Mrs. Bulstrode 'put on a plain black gown...and put on a plain bonnet-cap which made her look suddenly like an early Methodist.' See Harvey, *Men in Black*, 202 & 214. The female use of black by Methodists clearly changed during the nineteenth century.

<sup>1415</sup> Arline Wilson, "'The Florence of the North?' The Civic Culture of Liverpool in the Early Nineteenth Century," in *Gender, Civic Culture and Consumerism*, eds. Alan Kidd and David Nicholls (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999) 31.

<sup>1416</sup> *Ibid*, 38.

<sup>1417</sup> Louise Purbrick, "The Bourgeois Body: Civic Portraiture, Public Men and the Appearance of Class Power in Manchester, 1838-1850," in *Gender, Civic Culture and Consumerism*, eds. Alan Kidd and David Nicholls (Manchester: Manchester University, 1999) 83.

<sup>1418</sup> *Ibid*, 84.

<sup>1419</sup> *Ibid*, 93.

<sup>1420</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 410.

George Thorneycroft became Wolverhampton's inaugural mayor in 1848. He was fifty-seven years old. As the first, his portrait was on prominent display in the Town Hall from the outset. It exuded the same signs and symbols as those paintings analysed by Purbrick.<sup>1421</sup> Dressed in black with crisp laundered shirt, there was nothing frivolous about this man. The dark, plain background means that all eyes are on him. His own gaze is steady, he has an expression which is calm and composed and, by occupying the front plane of the canvas, he is imposing. There is an aura of wealth, confidence and no-nonsense. He knows he matters.<sup>1422</sup>

### George Benjamin Thorneycroft

(1791-1851)<sup>1423</sup>



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<sup>1421</sup> Purbrick, "The Bourgeois Body", 93.

<sup>1422</sup> See, for example, Ingrid E. Mida, *Reading Fashion in Art*, (London & New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2020), 9.

<sup>1423</sup> Painting of George Benjamin Thorneycroft by Unknown Artist, 1848-1849, Wolverhampton Art Gallery, PCF6, Wolverhampton Arts and Heritage.

Isaac Jenks, an inventor and innovator in his working life, made use of the developing art of photography for his official portrait. This is a successful man, and we are left in no doubt: he is, after all, wearing the official regalia connected to his role and he is surrounded by the trappings of office. Surely this is a man of industry, hard work, and power. His hands are prominent and tell a story, his legs are in masculine pose, and he is sitting at a desk. This self-made man carries with him an authoritative air. He is to be taken seriously.<sup>1424</sup> Numerous photographs, sketches and paintings came to exist of Henry Fowler: he was a politician of note. Slighter in build, arms often folded or in his pocket, this was not a man of industry. Dressed for the city, sometimes with the backdrop of Westminster, he is a proud man who is at home in the grand setting.<sup>1425</sup> All three men are reputable, respected and respectable. Surely, they were conscious of all of this. As they occupied their picture frames, so too they inhabited the public space of nineteenth century Wolverhampton.



**Isaac Jenks**

**(1816-1888)<sup>1426</sup>**

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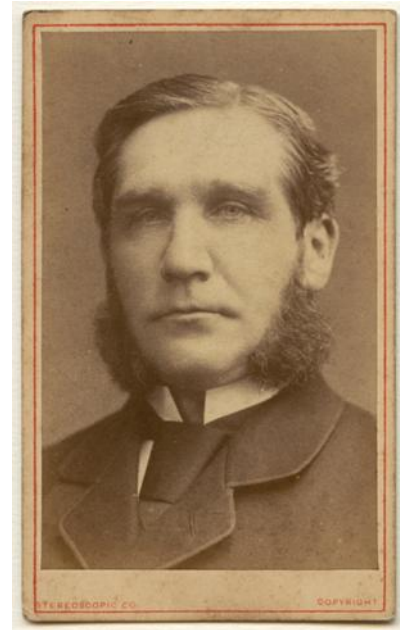
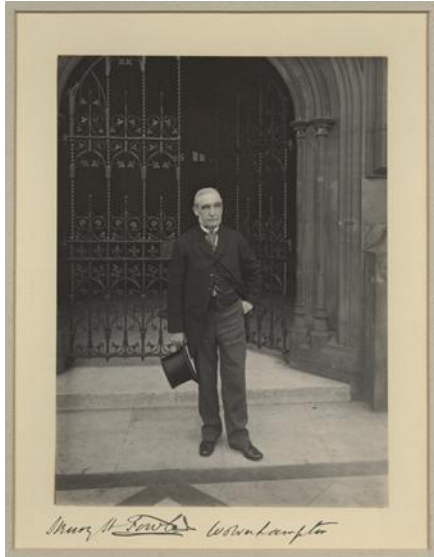
<sup>1424</sup> Martina Baleva, "Revolution in the Darkroom: Nineteenth-Century Portrait Photography as a Visual Discourse of Authenticity in Historiography," *The Hungarian Historical Review* 3, no. 2 (2014): 363. Here the constitutive role of photography is analysed.

<sup>1425</sup> Mida, *Reading Fashion in Art*, 163-178.

<sup>1426</sup> "Mayoral Photograph of Isaac Jenks, 1872-1873," accessed April 24, 2024, <http://www.historywebsite.co.uk/museum/OtherTrades/BCN/IsaacJenks.jpg>.

## Henry Hartley Fowler

(1830-1911)<sup>1427</sup>



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<sup>1427</sup> Portrait of Henry Hartley Fowler by Benjamin Stone, 1897, Photographs Collection, NPGx16026, National Portrait Gallery; Photograph of Henry Hartley Fowler by London Stereoscopic Photographic Company, 1890, Photographs Collection, NPGx136380, National Portrait Gallery; Painting of Sir. Henry Campbell-Bannerman and Henry Hartley Fowler by Sir. Leslie Ward, 1892, Primary Collection, NPG6182, National Portrait Gallery.



**Viscountess Wolverhampton<sup>1428</sup>**

The portraits of Purbrick's Manchester are all of men and so, inevitably, are the people of Wilson's Liverpool study. This says just as much about women and their role in the public sphere. A photograph of Viscountess Wolverhampton was published in the biography of Henry Fowler, her husband.<sup>1429</sup> Present due to her spouse and named because of him, too. Dressed in a dark colour, there are certainly embellishments that most women would have struggled to afford. The copious amounts of lace would have been expensive and difficult to launder. The brooch and intricate headdress were further grammatical statements, and she was, to all intents and purposes, in a domestic setting.

Each man was clearly at ease in public space and made use of it effectively. They carried with them the correct credentials. At the installation of Isaac Jenks as the town's mayor in November 1872, it was none other than Alderman Fowler who gave the address. In emphasising Wolverhampton's status as a metropolis of the iron trade, the point was made

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<sup>1428</sup> Fowler, *The Life of Henry Hartley Fowler*, 620.

<sup>1429</sup> Fowler, *The Life of Henry Hartley Fowler*, 620.



that Jenks was particularly suited to the role due to his professional interests.<sup>1430</sup> According to the future Viscount Wolverhampton, a mayor also needed to be of high personal character, a man of business acumen and of good social status. He was endorsing Jenks as a respectable man.<sup>1431</sup> Something else was also afoot, however. It was certainly no coincidence that nominee and sponsor were both Wesleyan Methodists. They knew each other extremely well in this capacity: worshipping together and attending the same meetings and social gatherings.<sup>1432</sup> They were, after all, Brothers. It could be assumed, of course, that civic duties helped these Methodists to gain respectability. While to an extent true, it must be recognised that, at the very least, it was a symbiotic relationship at play. Wesleyanism carried value in and of itself in this regard. This was made clear in the build up to the mayoral inauguration.

For weeks previous, speculation had been as to who the new mayor would be and the names of Councillor Jenks (Wesleyan), and Councillor Jones (Congregationalist) had been put in nomination. We are glad to state, however, that the choice was a perfectly unanimous one...Mr. Isaac Jenks, his proposer Alderman Fowler and carried with acclamation.<sup>1433</sup>

Religious affiliation had been the only aspect of his life deemed worthy of reporting, and he trounced the opposition. Further evidence is provided in the speech made by his proposer. The audience is reminded that Jenks had become a successful ironmaster 'with no hereditary advantage.' It is also pointed out that people in the southern states of America were as familiar with his name as those who lived in Wolverhampton. With this said, the oration concluded with the following words:

...a member of the Wesleyan Church, deservedly respected and has won the esteem of everyone who comes into contact with him.<sup>1434</sup>

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<sup>1430</sup> *Wolverhampton Chronicle*, November 13, 1872.

<sup>1431</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1432</sup> Darlington Street Leaders' Meeting Minute Book 1856-1894, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1433</sup> *Wolverhampton Chronicle*, November 6, 1872.

<sup>1434</sup> *Wolverhampton Chronicle*, November 13, 1872.

The link between Wesleyan Methodism, respectability and public space is clear. It becomes even more explicit in the words and actions of Isaac Jenks himself. His acceptance speech, at its beginning, pointed out that ‘his chief dependence was on the Almighty.’ This may well not have been a unique sentiment, and it was tradition for the new mayor and corporation to attend a Church of England act of worship. Jenks had initially wanted to abandon this practice and replace it with a service at his own chapel. He finally settled on what he deemed to be a ‘middle’ course:

He felt sure the Corporation would honour him with their company the following Sunday (hear, hear) at his own place of worship and it would gratify him very much if he could see a numerous attendance. He would promise them all the convenience which their large chapel would afford and a Godly sermon.<sup>1435</sup>

Wesleyan Methodism placed centre stage and the Reverend Eglington of Darlington Street Wesleyan chapel was to be his chaplain.<sup>1436</sup>

The ternion of men, Methodism and public space was, therefore, intersected by respectability. A further example is provided by the events surrounding Wolverhampton’s unveiling of its statue to commemorate Albert, the Prince Consort. His death in 1861 was followed by the forming of a committee to oversee arrangements and solicit subscriptions. Alderman Fowler was influential from the outset and the project took some five years to come to fruition. On 13 November 1866, a meeting of contributors was convened in the Town Hall to consider the arrangements for the inauguration of the statue. The competitive edge between dignitaries, as recorded in the newspapers, was almost palpable. Alderman Underhill, the chairman, was known to have defrayed the entire cost of the pedestal. He believed a Royal Personage should be invited. Alderman Hawksford went further. He attempted to silence those who were concerned about the expense. He believed there was plenty of wealth and loyalty in the town and was convinced that Her Majesty should be the one to come. Henry Fowler was ‘emphatic.’ He knew there to be ‘not the slightest use inviting the Queen’ as she had already declined to go to Manchester and Liverpool for the

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<sup>1435</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1436</sup> Ibid.

same purpose.<sup>1437</sup> In the week that followed, however, a special meeting of the Town Council carried a motion to invite Queen Victoria to the event which was scheduled to take place in only a few days' time.<sup>1438</sup> She accepted immediately and it was to be her first public engagement since her husband's death.<sup>1439</sup> Henry had been, temporarily, out-manoeuvred but Methodism came to his aid.

The statue was to be permanently situated in Wolverhampton's main square: a square which adjoined what was described as 'the finest thoroughfare in the town.'<sup>1440</sup> This was Darlington Street, home to the main Wesleyan congregation. The chapel was certainly one of the finest and most prominent buildings on the Queen's route from the railway station and the organisers were aware of its importance in relation to public space. When a deputation met with Henry Fowler, Isaac Jenks and others to ascertain their plans, the group of trustees was in no doubt that they:

...would suitably adorn the building and also illuminate if they found other religious bodies did so.<sup>1441</sup>

Fowler and Jenks made sure to spare no expense in ensuring that it stood out from other edifices. It was covered with flowers, flags and streamers.<sup>1442</sup> The *piece de résistance*, however, was:

...that a Platform be erected in the front and also on the side of chapel for the convenience of members of the congregation and friends on application and that a charge be made sufficient to cover the outlay.<sup>1443</sup>

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<sup>1437</sup> *Wolverhampton Chronicle*, November 14, 1866.

<sup>1438</sup> *Wolverhampton Chronicle*, November 21, 1866.

<sup>1439</sup> *Wolverhampton Chronicle*, November 28, 1866. Here she was said to be particularly pleased that it was an equestrian statue and that it had as its title 'Albert the Good.' The citizens of Wolverhampton were reported to be thrilled to have achieved something that had eluded Liverpool and Manchester.

<sup>1440</sup> *The Midland Counties Express*, Saturday December 1, 1866.

<sup>1441</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Trustees Minutes 1854-1889, 24 November 1866, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1442</sup> *The Midland Counties Express*, Saturday December 1, 1866.

<sup>1443</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Trustees Minutes 1854-1889, 24 November 1866, Wolverhampton Archives. The cost of the front platform would be £60 and the side platform £20. There were to be three tiers. Darlington Street Chapel Trustees Minutes 1854-1889, 27 November 1866, Wolverhampton Archives.

Tickets were either five shillings and six pence or ten shillings: a colossal amount at the time.<sup>1444</sup> That three hundred of each value were to be printed is telling.<sup>1445</sup> So many Wesleyan Methodists, seated on their own premises and distributed on three tiers, was an indication of the building's domination of important space; space which meant they were to have the best possible view of their monarch. Those who were not Methodist members would have known that they were in the company of the fine and upstanding. Buying such an expensive ticket rather ensured that a person would be surrounded by other respectables.<sup>1446</sup> The majority would have known who to thank. The two men had, also, prominent roles on the day. Although George Thorneycroft had died fifteen years previously, it was his son who paid for the evergreens which decorated the whole of Darlington Street.<sup>1447</sup> In the years to come, when he was the first Methodist member of Her Majesty's cabinet, Henry Fowler would be invited on numerous occasions to be a guest at Balmoral. He recorded his conversations and observations in letters sent to his wife.<sup>1448</sup>

Isaac Jenks and Henry Fowler continued to bring their Methodism, and their respectability, into public space. This was certainly the case during 1873: Isaac's year as mayor. Henry was the Chairman of the Wolverhampton School Board. At its yearly meeting presided over by Isaac, in his official capacity, Henry took advantage of the crowded assembly to deliver a speech which unashamedly had Wesleyanism as its major theme. No one would have been left in any doubt as to the significance of its role:

...whatever else Methodism had done, it had not neglected the religious education of the young...at the present time nearly seven hundred thousand Sunday School Scholars in the Kingdom under the control of the Wesleyan Conference...<sup>1449</sup>

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<sup>1444</sup> 10/- would be somewhere in the region of £50 in current twenty-first century calculations.

<sup>1445</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Trustees Minutes 1854-1889, 27 November 1866, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1446</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Letters, Receipts and Accounts 1866-1872, Wolverhampton Archives. Two years after the event, the trustees of the chapel were commenting that £35 of the expenditure had not as yet been recouped.

<sup>1447</sup> *Wolverhampton Chronicle*, November 28, 1866.

<sup>1448</sup> Fowler, *The life of Henry Hartley Fowler*, 643.

<sup>1449</sup> "Wesleyans and the School Board," Speech by Mr. H.H. Fowler, Darlington Street Chapel Miscellaneous Items, 20 October 1873, Wolverhampton Wesleyan Methodist, M/BR/7, Wolverhampton Archives.

He particularly emphasised the distinction between the development of ‘honest and manly Christian men’ and ‘virtuous and Christian women.’<sup>1450</sup> Only a week or so later and the press was reporting on the construction of a new Wesleyan Chapel on Wolverhampton’s Bilston Road. The Memorial Stone was to be laid by Isaac, as both mayor and Methodist, and the celebrations were to continue at the Darlington Street Chapel. This meant that eight hundred people sat down to tea. Although tickets were to cost one shilling, it was emphasised that three hundred of the sittings would be free. Respectability being on display was emphasised thus:

The site of the new chapel is in the centre of a dense population of chiefly labouring people and the chapel and schools will when completed help to supply a want that has long been felt.<sup>1451</sup>

That this respectability was nuanced is shown by the newspaper article’s concluding remarks:

The total outlay of about £5,500 towards which £3,500 has already been promised including the handsome donation of £1,000 from the mayor.<sup>1452</sup>

The readers would have also known that a Mr. Bayliss and a Mr. Wright had each promised £500.<sup>1453</sup> There was, therefore, even a pecking order to the donations. This was made very clear on the engraved sheet which was to be deposited in a bottle and set within the memorial stone. Those who contributed £100 and more were listed and the precise amounts given. The mayor’s name appeared first. The reason for the building of the new chapel was also stated:

At the December Quarterly Meeting 1859 a resolution was passed offering the services of the local preachers to assist the general Home Town Mission in their efforts to evangelise the lowest strata of the dense population of the town...A large wooden shed was erected

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<sup>1450</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1451</sup> *Wolverhampton Chronicle*, November 5, 1873.

<sup>1452</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1453</sup> Ibid.

and the present building is now too small and altogether inadequate for the congregation and Sunday School connected therewith.<sup>1454</sup>

It is noteworthy that several copies of the engraved sheet remained outside of the bottle, and in circulation, so that the contents could be known by a wider audience. Methodism, men, and public space was a natural combination. This same document reveals more. In detailing the history of Methodism in Wolverhampton, George Thorneycroft was named. The real plaudits, however, were reserved for his widow:

By the influence of the Holy Spirit...a site was purchased by Mrs. G.B. Thorneycroft at a cost of £105, a wooden chapel and vestry were erected at an outlay of £165. Towards this sum Mrs. Thorneycroft, with characteristic generosity, contributed £80.<sup>1455</sup>

This is a salutary reminder that there were women making decisions and performing roles in public life. It might also highlight how few there were. She was, inevitably, referred to by her husband's name and it would have been assumed that people knew the origins of her munificence. George was, perhaps, influencing public space from beyond the grave.

The erection of a platform with the capacity to seat six hundred, or the building of chapels in working class districts, reveals much about those who organised and donated the large sums of money. Their audience would have known that these were people worthy of respect. By paying ten shillings to see the Queen, or by observing the mayor lay the memorial stone, audiences were themselves using public space to share in this respectability: a respectability brought about by Methodism. In turn, they too were being watched. There were, however, hints in these events of troubles ahead. Two years after the Queen's visit, a deficit of thirty-five pounds was being referred to in relation to the original expense of the platform.<sup>1456</sup> Evidently some tickets had remained unsold. Chapel building almost always resulted in

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<sup>1454</sup> Copy of Engraved Sheet, Darlington Street Chapel Miscellaneous Items, 6 November 1873, Wolverhampton Wesleyan Methodist, M/BR/7, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1455</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1456</sup> Darlington Street Chapel, Letters, Receipts and Accounts 1866-1872, Wolverhampton Archives.

monies needing to be recouped over a prolonged period.<sup>1457</sup> It is conceivable that Methodism did not hold quite as much influence as was thought by some.

In contrast to the study of public space, the study of domestic space in Britain has recently focused on the twentieth century. This can, in part, be explained by the burgeoning of oral history with the possibilities that this period offered.<sup>1458</sup> Two insights are noteworthy. Claire Langhamer speaks of the development of a privatised family life.<sup>1459</sup> This carries with it the implication that it was not ever thus. Wildman and Moss lament the narrow view of the home in relation to the role of women and see it as a facilitator for activities ranging from the criminal to the entrepreneurial.<sup>1460</sup> In relation to these thoughts, religion does not form part of any debate. For the nineteenth century it must be taken seriously, and it is Thompson who explores its role in relation to the home. He states that it created a creed and code for the conduct of personal and family life: it contributed to the 'cult of the home' which is explained as a 'parlour-based' culture of respectability and domesticity.<sup>1461</sup>

For America, Gregory Schneider has specifically pointed to the role of Methodism in bringing about an evangelical domesticity which he links to affection and moral discipline. For him, this was in contrast to the competition and self-interest evident in the outside world.<sup>1462</sup> David Hempton found this compelling and concluded that 'at least in part' Methodism was responsible for the creation of a Victorian cult of domesticity on both sides of the Atlantic.<sup>1463</sup> Put another way, it was sacralising the home. From this it is possible to understand why analysis of respectability has been linked to a gendered approach to the study of what was occurring: especially if Hempton's observation that Methodism was 'predominantly a women's movement and needed to be treated as such' is taken seriously.<sup>1464</sup> Some have even claimed that respectability was both constructed and

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<sup>1457</sup> See, for example, *Wolverhampton Chronicle*, November 5, 1873.

<sup>1458</sup> Elizabeth Roberts, *Women and Families: an Oral History, 1940-1970* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995).

<sup>1459</sup> Claire Langhamer, "The Meanings of Home on Post-War Britain," *Journal of Contemporary History* 40, no. 2 (2005): 341-362.

<sup>1460</sup> Charlotte Wildman and Eloise Moss, "Challenging Domesticity in Britain, 1890-1990: Special Issue Introduction," *Women's History Review* (2022): <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2022.2126622>.

<sup>1461</sup> Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society*, 195.

<sup>1462</sup> A. Gregory Schneider, *The Way of the Cross Leads Home: the Domestication of American Methodism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), xvi-xxviii.

<sup>1463</sup> Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*, 139.

<sup>1464</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

maintained by women. After all, it was men who acted *sub rosa*.<sup>1465</sup> This is also important in relation to Methodism if it is accepted that opportunities for women to be independently in the public sphere were otherwise limited.

Opportunities to scrutinise the impact of Methodism, once the domestic threshold had been crossed, are not necessarily easy to come by. That there exists a biography of Henry Hartley Fowler is fortuitous: as long as any potential problems of it having been written by a daughter are weighed against the possible advantages.<sup>1466</sup> Details relating to one family are just that and yet they are revealing.<sup>1467</sup> According to the author it was her father who was 'the mainspring and the centre of everything' related to the home.<sup>1468</sup> It is even recorded that the mother 'certainly had no life, and no interests, apart from his.'<sup>1469</sup> Unsurprisingly, however, home-life was described as her vocation.<sup>1470</sup> By writing about the life at home it becomes clear that Methodism was pervasive.<sup>1471</sup> It dominated discourse and much is detailed in relation to the family's religious habits. These were habits aided by the fact that everything was ruled by routine.<sup>1472</sup> In mentioning Henry's 'deep-rooted' theory that a man must be a priest as well as a king in his own household, it was he who insisted on saying grace and he, too, who always led the family's daily prayers.<sup>1473</sup> Methodist publications were used as he did not hold with extemporisation.<sup>1474</sup>

That Methodism was part-and-parcel of the Fowlers' respectable lifestyle is not, therefore, to be disputed. Whether this respectability was enhanced or confirmed by it can be examined further. While Methodism seeped out from the Fowler family home it was also

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<sup>1465</sup> Huggins, "More Sinful Pleasures?," 587.

<sup>1466</sup> Fowler, *The Life of Henry Hartley Fowler*.

<sup>1467</sup> Wildman and Moss, "Challenging Domesticity." Study of the Fowlers does fit with the authors' view that 'the notion of an idealised vision of domesticity has been dominated by white, middle-class, middle English concepts of home.' This is, however, what is being spoken of.

<sup>1468</sup> Fowler, *The Life of Henry Hartley Fowler*, 598.

<sup>1469</sup> *Ibid*, 598.

<sup>1470</sup> *Ibid*, 624. Here it is also recorded that 'wifhood, as she exemplified it, was a profession in itself, and anything which it did not absorb was consumed in motherhood.' Wildman and Moss speak of 'the idealized vision of domesticity [being] dominated by white, middle-class, middle English concepts of the home.' Whether idealized or not, the Fowlers certainly conform to the latter part of the quotation. See Wildman and Moss, "Challenging Domesticity."

<sup>1471</sup> *Ibid*, 525. Here Henry's Methodism is described as 'so integral a part of his whole being that one can hardly separate it into a distinct subject.'

<sup>1472</sup> *Ibid*, 606. They were, indeed, Methodical.

<sup>1473</sup> *Ibid*, 599.

<sup>1474</sup> *Ibid*, 599.



infiltrated by it. This can be explained symbolically by the use made of the house address: written on envelopes to enter and on headed notepaper to exit. The Fowlers lived at Woodthorne and such was its significance as a dwelling that no street or other detail was required save from the addition, by those communicating from afar, of the town's name. Henry's devotion to it was reported to 'amount almost to a passion.'<sup>1475</sup> Into this home came:

a daily post-bag [which] was weighted with appeals of all kinds for help; but if the writer were a Wesleyan, then the letter was put on one side for a personal reply, and usually the type of reply which was sought. The most ordinary, uninteresting people, whom naturally he would never have noticed, who could quote Methodism, or even a Methodist ancestry, immediately became people of importance to him. But it was no use for any suppliant to assume a garb of Methodism. He knew the shibboleths, the free masonry, of Methodism so well, that no one could have deceived him.<sup>1476</sup>

Henry was a prolific letter writer and again, apart from his signature, it was the house name only that was supplied to recipients. An indication of confidence and privilege, advice on Methodist matters, and even proselytising on its behalf, issued forth from the domestic setting: respectable gentleman doing his bit to spread respectable Methodism.<sup>1477</sup>

Henry's daughter explained:

it would have shown no snobbishness...had he wanted a larger and more imposing dwelling-place.<sup>1478</sup>

Both Isaac Jenks and George Thorneycroft appeared to have desired these features. Jenks did remain in the same house over a protracted period, but he saw the need to curtail the use of the number, forty-three, and replace it with the grander sounding Eva Villa.<sup>1479</sup>

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<sup>1475</sup> Ibid, 597.

<sup>1476</sup> Ibid, 526.

<sup>1477</sup> For a selection of such letters see Fowler, *The Life of Henry Hartley Fowler*, 558-560.

<sup>1478</sup> Fowler, *The Life of Henry Hartley Fowler*, 597.

<sup>1479</sup> Darlington Street Chapel, Letters, Receipts and Accounts 1873-1907, Wolverhampton Archives.

Eventually he moved to Morley House on the outskirts of Wolverhampton. An imposing property, it had extensive grounds. George Thorneycroft lived in the grand Chapel Ash House which was very probably the largest domestic dwelling in Wolverhampton at the time. The gardens were large enough to sustain the building of properties for his daughters to live in.<sup>1480</sup>

Such was the standing of Henry Fowler, Isaac Jenks and George Thorneycroft within Methodism that they shared one very significant letter writing trait. They used their home addresses, or at times their official business stationery, to carry out all sorts of duties related to their Methodist chapels and their Methodist circuit: men and Methodism merged while boundaries blurred. Recipients would have been left in no doubt as to the pivotal role of these men. Fellow Methodists were in the same position as meeting after meeting dealt with the correspondence: giving approval to letters penned and hearing of replies written directly to the three.<sup>1481</sup>

Examples of the correspondence between these addresses and other interested parties abound. In relation to Darlington Street Methodist chapel, during the year of 1873 alone, evidence exists of forty-two cheques having been signed and sent by Isaac Jenks. Acknowledgements were also posted directly to him with all that this implies. The letter from a John Brotherton of the Imperial Gas Tube Works, while thanking him for the cheque to the value of five pounds, also made sure to send 'kind regards to Mrs. Jenks and family.' A certain obsequiousness can be detected when Mr. Brotherton adds:

The trustees and the congregation at large are quite welcome to my humble services and also of my family and I hope we will long be spared to render the same...<sup>1482</sup>

Isaac's perceived status and influence meant that he was the person with whom to be in direct contact. Pointing to Darlington Street Chapel as his demesne begins to appear a

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<sup>1480</sup> Beverley Parker, "George Benjamin Thorneycroft," <https://www.historywebsite.co.uk/genealogy>.

<sup>1481</sup> Darlington Street Chapel, Letters, Receipts and Accounts 1866-1872, Wolverhampton Archives. Also, Darlington Street Chapel, Letters, Receipts and Accounts 1873-1907, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1482</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Letters, Receipts and Accounts 1866-1872, Wolverhampton Archives. Also, Darlington Street Chapel, Letters, Receipts and Accounts 1873, Wolverhampton Wesleyan Methodist, M-DS/3/1/4, Wolverhampton Archives.

possibility. He held a lead role in appointing people to paid positions, was responsible for salary distribution and took receipt of letters requesting higher wages or informing of resignations. The protracted dealings with Arthur Hinde, the organist, over many years, and those related to Thomas Hayward, the organ blower, usefully demonstrate the deference shown towards Isaac. They also hint at his power and the desire to be seen in a good light by him.<sup>1483</sup> Official Wesleyan matters, emanating from its headquarters in Manchester, were also sent specifically to Isaac using his home address.<sup>1484</sup> Most telling of all are the communications relating to the various loans proffered by him for the completion of building schemes. Wedded to Methodism he might have been, but he was also a businessman. In 1870, he was writing on notepaper which heralded the Minerva Iron Works, to remind fellow chapelgoers that he was only charging a rate of interest of three-and-a-half per cent. This was a reduction from the four-and-a-half percent he received twice a year on a previous loan of one thousand pounds.<sup>1485</sup>

The same scenario existed for Henry Fowler in his dealings with Wolverhampton's Trinity Wesleyan Chapel. During the 1860s he was the principal advocate for its erection. By holding all the main offices of responsibility, it was possible for people to claim that 'he knew every stone and detail of the church.'<sup>1486</sup> Correspondence between trustees and Mrs. G.B. Thorneycroft was regular during the 1870s in relation to her offers to 'take pecuniary responsibility' for various schemes relating to the upkeep of Darlington Street chapel.<sup>1487</sup>

Wesleyan Methodism encroached on the domestic situations of these families in ways that emphasise their respectability, standing and usefulness. It was a regular occurrence for trustees of the various chapels to seek the permission of these people to hold money raising

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<sup>1483</sup> See entries in Darlington Street Chapel Letters, Receipts and Accounts 1871-1873, Wolverhampton Archives. A letter from Arthur Hinde dated July 1872 begins: 'I beg respectfully...' He is requesting an increase in salary from £16 to £20 per annum. Even in relation to the cleaning of the organ, it is Mr. Jenks who is contacted by the contractor on completion of the task. See Darlington Street Chapel Letters, Receipts and Accounts 1876-1878, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1484</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Letters, Receipts and Accounts 1866-1872, Wolverhampton Archives. The headquarters were in Manchester's Oldham Street.

<sup>1485</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Letters, Receipts and Accounts 1871-1873, Wolverhampton Archives. Letters were also sent from Eva Villa with Isaac arranging for preachers to deliver sermons and lectures. Darlington Street Chapel Correspondence 1870-1880, 15 August 1882, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1486</sup> Fowler, *The Life of Henry Hartley Fowler*, 534 & 557. Also, Trinity Chapel Finance Papers 1863-1974, Wolverhampton Wesleyan Methodist, M-TRI, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1487</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Letters, Receipts and Accounts 1866-1872, Wolverhampton Archives.

events in the grounds of their houses. This was certainly the case for the Thorneycroft family and their Chapel Ash House. Interestingly, although it was Mrs. Thorneycroft who was the staunch Wesleyan, both her husband and son remained supportive of such requests. George did continue to attend Darlington Street chapel's evening services throughout his life. In no way was he prepared to sever ties. There is no evidence to suggest that the son, known as Captain Thorneycroft to all in Wolverhampton, was as committed.<sup>1488</sup> By moving to Tettenhall Towers, he was providing an even more enticing venue:

June 16<sup>th</sup> 1862: Public Tea Meeting to be held and if permission can be obtained to be held on the grounds of Captain Thorneycroft at Tettenhall.<sup>1489</sup>

For Wesleyans it was too good an opportunity to miss and those who attended were making their own statement in relation to respectability. Maintaining these links with Wesleyanism, even though not a committed worshipper, was clearly important for this younger member of the family. The link between largesse and respectability is palpable. It is equally clear that the attraction of the prestigious location was emblematic of a desecralisation which was both appealing and encroaching.

That the links between the domestic and Methodism could have repercussions for respectability is emphasised by one final example. Relatively early in the history of Darlington Street Wesleyan chapel, in February 1843, there was discussion relating to its poor state of cleanliness. The solution, agreed upon at the Trustees' Meeting, was for 'each person to send a servant or houseman for one day to clean it.'<sup>1490</sup>

Death said a great deal about the respectability emanating from the lived experience of Methodism. In October 1889, to honour the life and work of Isaac Jenks, the trustees of Darlington Street Wesleyan chapel unanimously agreed to a memorial tablet being erected 'over the family pew.'<sup>1491</sup> Marble was being used to confer respectability for posterity. He was not alone. Throughout the century, but particularly towards its end, requests of a similar

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<sup>1488</sup> Upton, *A History of Wolverhampton*, 142.

<sup>1489</sup> Darlington Street and Newhampton Road Trustees Minutes 1863-1911, Wolverhampton Archives. Tettenhall Towers was an imposing mansion built in the Gothic style.

<sup>1490</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Trust Minutes 1836-1854, 16 February 1843, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1491</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Trustees Minutes 1854-1889, 18 October 1889, Wolverhampton Archives.

nature were granted. That approval was not a forgone conclusion is demonstrated by the request, in 1877, from the family of Joseph Wright. They were very specific and believed that his worship, over so many years, merited ‘the erecting of a memorial...at the end of the chapel under the gallery and against the wall of the second vestry.’ That this location was significant is shown by the acknowledgement that:

if this should make it desirable to alter the position of the gas bracket we should, of course, be pleased to pay any expense incurred.<sup>1492</sup>

Although the reply was in the affirmative, the trustees pointed out that they would need to see the particulars of the selected design and details of its proposed size. This clearly needed to be commensurate with the standing in which Mr. Wright was held. In 1892, the late Samuel Meridan had left two bequests of five hundred pounds to the chapel. One was to provide blankets for poorer adherents. His executors immediately sought permission to fix a tablet ‘in the chapel to [his] memory.’<sup>1493</sup> His benevolence appears to have been used to secure this final seal of recognition.

There were other ways for death to be used to denote respect. An ultimate example was the ‘putting into mourning’ of the chapel. This had occurred in 1861 when the demise of His Royal Highness Prince Albert was ‘lamented’ by the congregation.<sup>1494</sup> That the same honour was afforded to chapel worthies, such as trustees, says much.<sup>1495</sup> It was also not the preserve of men. For Mrs. Lacey, who died in 1873, the chapel remained in mourning for two consecutive Sundays.<sup>1496</sup> It could also have been a mark of respect that, on each of these

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<sup>1492</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Correspondence 1870-1882, 31 May 1877, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1493</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Trustees Minutes 1890-1914, 21 October 1892, Wolverhampton Archives. In 1870 the memorial erected in memory of the late J.B. Whitehouse was to be used to explain the details of his bequest to Darlington Street chapel. Darlington Street Chapel Trustees Minutes 1854-1889, 3 June 1870, Wolverhampton Archives. Three years later the Leaders’ Meeting decided against a framed printed memorial, as directed in his will, and decided instead on a ‘plain marble tablet.’ See Darlington Street Chapel Leaders’ Meeting Minute Book 1856-1894, 8 December 1873, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1494</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Trustees Minutes 1854-1889, 29 December 1861, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1495</sup> Ibid, 10 April 1872.

<sup>1496</sup> Ibid, 19 June 1873.

occasions, it was Mrs. Thompson who, singlehandedly, was entrusted with the task of adorning the chapel in black.<sup>1497</sup>

A more mundane way to demonstrate this respect in death was by the writing of letters. Isaac Jenks had died suddenly, and the Leaders' Meeting held on 30 January 1888, had wanted to:

...convey to Mrs. Jenks and the family the earnest and respectful sympathy of the members and to express their deep sense of the high personal character, the sustained service, the great liberality and devotion which he had ever displayed in connection with this church and the earnest prayer that the divine consolations may be granted to those who his sudden call by the master brings so great sorrow.<sup>1498</sup>

By pointing to the personality, work ethic, generosity, and fervour of their deceased Brother they were summing up the very qualities which had secured respect. The actual letter received by Mrs. Jenks used florid language to convey these sentiments:

We are silent beneath the heavy blow which our Church sustains by his removal to the upper sanctuary, but his memory will remain with us an inspiration to patient, consistent, wholehearted devotion to the master's cause.<sup>1499</sup>

Four years later and the same Darlington Street chapel sustained the loss of its treasurer. On this occasion the letter sent to Mrs. Tunnicliff, his widow, praised him for:

his consistent piety, intelligent loyalty to the church of his choice and his practical interest in everything that he deemed necessary to

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<sup>1497</sup> Ibid, 29 December 1861.

<sup>1498</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Leaders' Meeting Minute Book 1856-1894, 30 January 1888, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1499</sup> Ibid. Copy of letter attached to entry for 5 March 1888.

advance the efficient and spiritual power of the worship of the sanctuary.<sup>1500</sup>

This level of respect was garnered in a range of ways. For Henry Tunnicliff, as with Isaac Jenks, there were the loans of money which were paid back with interest.<sup>1501</sup> Everyone would also have been aware of the professions of these men. A document from 1858 which listed Wesleyan trustees made sure to state that Isaac Jenks was an ironmaster. Henry Hartley Fowler was the only one described as a gentleman while Mr. Tunnicliff is referred to as a dealer in fine china.<sup>1502</sup>

Henry Tunnicliff's purveying of crockery exemplifies the *quid pro quo* that operated within Wesleyanism. With the burgeoning of organised teas there was inevitably a need to purchase cups and saucers. Just one transaction in 1873, saw his selling of five full tea sets, ten bread and butter plates, six slop bowls and three large jugs.<sup>1503</sup> Respect for the chapel treasurer would have come from a perceived good deal while a profit was still made. There were similar scenarios from one decade to the next. Mr. Reynolds, a trustee, benefited over an extended period from the need for victuals. Just one occasion saw his grocery business supply for a breakfast the tea and coffee, ham and tongue, veal and ham pies, and the bread rolls for three hundred and fifty persons.<sup>1504</sup> George Williams was used repeatedly for the chapel's printing requirements. During 1867 and 1868 there were eight payments of seven pounds made to his firm for the regular production and posting of large posters, window bills, fly leaf circulars and 'thousands of small bills.' One commission was for especially printed sheets to notify seat holders of pew rent arrears. The irony for George was that his

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<sup>1500</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Trustees Minutes 1890-1914, 22 January 1892, Wolverhampton Archives. They did not deem it necessary to mention the loans made by Henry Tunnicliff nor the interest paid to him. See Darlington Street Chapel Letters, Receipts and Accounts 1875-1908, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1501</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Letters, Receipts and Accounts 1875-1908, September 1888, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1502</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Letters, Receipts and Accounts 1875-1908, 1858, Wolverhampton Archives. By 1909 trustees of both Darlington Street chapel and Newhampton Road Wesleyan chapel included a nut and bolt manufacturer and three trustees were lock manufacturers. This reflected the growing strength of these industries within the town. Darlington Street and Newhampton Road Trustees Minutes 1863-1911, 11 February 1891, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1503</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Receipts and Accounts 1873, 1873, Wolverhampton Archives. On another occasion Mr. Tunnicliff was asked to supply tablecloths as well as crockery. Darlington Street Chapel Missionary Committee Minutes 1867-1878, 8 October 1869, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1504</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Missionary Committee Minutes 1867-1878, 8 October 1869, Wolverhampton Archives.

family had a pew to themselves, but he was to be in receipt of one of his own notifications: by December 1866 he was four pounds in arrears.<sup>1505</sup>

There are so many more examples of Wesleyan membership resulting in benefits accruing to the owners of businesses.<sup>1506</sup> Coal was regularly bought from Thomas Ingram of the Albert Wharf and he was a trustee.<sup>1507</sup> Mr. Swindley, also a trustee, won several contracts to paint the chapel and its other rooms.<sup>1508</sup> This can carry with it negative connotations of respectability and the use that was being made of Methodism. There were also many acts of generosity not connected to business ventures and these would have done no harm to the donors' perceived respectability. Mr. Sankey and Mr. Larkinson followed a long list of benefactors when, in January 1900, they 'kindly undertook to defray all the expenses' of the Darlington Street society tea meeting.<sup>1509</sup>

Business transactions could clearly amass reciprocal benefits which were closely allied to the engendering of respectability. The same could be said for acts of charity or munificence. Wesleyanism provided scope for both. A donor received the thanks of the Leaders' Meeting for supplying, on the first day of January for many years, the poor members of the congregation with tea and sugar. At the same time, Isaac Jenks was acknowledged, along with two other gentlemen, for his gift of bread and butter.<sup>1510</sup> Potentially significant for George Parker and Henry Hughes, they shared the deed with Isaac. The trustees, en masse, would have added to their reputations by their regular alms giving. During the 1870s decisions were made regarding the distribution of goods to the poor:

Two trucks of coal to be purchased from the Darlaston Iron Company  
at eleven shillings per ton for the distribution amongst poor

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<sup>1505</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Letters, Receipts and Accounts 1866-1872, 24 December 1866, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1506</sup> Darlington Street Chapel, Letters, Receipts and Accounts 1876-1878, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1507</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Receipts, Accounts and Letters 1866-1872, May-October 1872, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1508</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Letters, Receipts and Accounts 1873-1907, 1880-1890, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1509</sup> Darlington Street Chapel, Leaders Meeting Book of Record 1895-1941, 14 December 1899, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1510</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Leaders' Meeting Minute Book 1856-1894, 5 January 1885, Wolverhampton Archives.



members and about 4 CWT given to each member. Mr. James Edwards to be employed to deliver as per list.<sup>1511</sup>

The theme of respectability-through-death is revisited because of the use of legacies to set up various trusts to benefit the poor. In 1874 the Whitehouse Bequest Fund was able to provide twenty-three 'poor cases' with sums of money and Brother Ward was granted two shillings and six pence per week. To honour Mr. Whitehouse an inscription was to be written on vellum and 'hung up' in the preachers' vestry. A marble tablet was to be placed in the chapel.<sup>1512</sup>

Mr. W. Bayliss acted alone when he paid for the 'fitting up' of the new vestry. Once completed, he was consulted as to its use, and he made it clear that he would prefer the Sunday School to find alternative accommodation.<sup>1513</sup> At the very next meeting, in October 1887, he was asking permission to plant ash trees in the chapel yard and to supply a 'small heating apparatus at his own expense.'<sup>1514</sup> It is probable that, at the meeting held in February 1888, he received what he was most desirous of: gratitude.

The thanks of the meeting where [sic] presented to Mr. Bayliss for his kindness in repairing the large window in the south end of the chapel broken by the late gale at his own expence [sic] at the cost of sixty pounds.<sup>1515</sup>

Sixty pounds was a great deal of money but, one year later, he was again 'receiving unanimous and hearty thanks for his kindness.'<sup>1516</sup> This time he had purchased the property known as Aston Villa which was to be used as a minister's residence. On the death of Isaac Jenks, William Bayliss became a trustee of the chapel himself. Described as a nut and bolt

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<sup>1511</sup> Ibid, 15 January 1877, 22 January 1877, 16 December 1878.

<sup>1512</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Leaders' Meeting Minute Book 1856-1894, 21 December 1874, Wolverhampton Archives. In the 1890's the death of Brother Meriden led to his charity being established. Primarily it distributed blankets and monetary gifts to the poor members of the chapel. For details, see entries from 1895 onwards in Darlington Street Chapel Leaders Meeting Minute Book 1895-1941, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1513</sup> Darlington Street Chapel and Newhampton Road Trustees Minutes 1863-1911, 26 March 1887, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1514</sup> Ibid, 1 October 1887

<sup>1515</sup> Ibid, 4 February 1888.

<sup>1516</sup> Ibid, 1 May 1889.

manufacturer, he soon became the chapel treasurer. A decade later and ‘the salary of the organist [was] to be left entirely in Mr. Bayliss’s hands.’<sup>1517</sup> Respect had surely been earned, as well as paid for.

Wesleyan Methodism’s roles and responsibilities had a direct link to how people perceived themselves and how they were perceived by others. Henry Fowler’s daughter spoke of her father holding all the administrative offices of the circuit.<sup>1518</sup> Isaac Jenks also.<sup>1519</sup> There were committees and subcommittees galore. Just one meeting of the Darlington Street trustees, held in June 1870, saw separate groups formed to variously tackle: repairs to the West Gallery roof, the behaviour of children while in said gallery and the hiring of The Exchange for a lecture later in the year.<sup>1520</sup> There were people to appoint and a link between respect and trust can be detected. Men were often called upon to interview candidates and, particularly in relation to matters musical, individuals were selected to make recommendations for the shortlists. In the protracted dealings related to the selection of a new organist, a Mr. Hathaway was prevailed upon to submit reports on the qualifications of the candidates. He was to make recommendations as to who should be called for auditions.<sup>1521</sup> There are so many similar examples and those chosen to perform tasks or sit on committees had at least one thing in common: they would receive the gratitude of those who had selected them and of those they had helped. Meeting after meeting commenced with ‘hearty thanks’ being offered for services rendered.<sup>1522</sup> In relation to respect, a letter from a Mr. Belcher to the trustees, dated 6 January 1871, speaks volumes:

...my grateful thanks for every kindness I have received at their hands. To many I feel deeply indebted. To Mr. I. Jenks and the Rev.

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<sup>1517</sup> Ibid, 10 March 1898. A further decade later and Mr. Bayliss purchased a piece of land next to the chapel ‘as a gift.’ This was ‘a further instance of his generosity to the Wesleyan Methodist Church and to the Wolverhampton Circuit in particular.’ See entry for 29 March 1909. Mr. Bayliss was not alone. Mr. Jesse Varley presented the chapel with a font and Mr. Chilton is provided new hymn boards. See entry for 25 March 1904.

<sup>1518</sup> Fowler, *The life of Henry Hartley Fowler*, 557.

<sup>1519</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Leaders’ Meeting Minute Book 1856-1894, 3 January 1859 and 24 January 1876, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1520</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Trustees Meeting Minutes 1854-1889, 3 June 1870, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1521</sup> Darlington Street and Newhampton Road Trustees Minutes 1863-1911, 26 October 1889, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1522</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Leaders’ Meeting Minute Book 1856-1894, 23 January 1882, Wolverhampton Archives. Mr. Tunnicliff and Mr. Jenks are thanked for their work.

Hurst for your kindness and sympathy, Mr. H. Tunnicliff, Mr. I. Tunnicliff and Mr. Brotherton have lain me under a heavy debt of gratitude for more substantial evidences of their kindness I hope never to forget...<sup>1523</sup>

On another plane altogether, a rarefied selection of men was either consulted about matters liturgical or felt able to express their own opinions. It was Isaac Jenks who received a letter from the Sunday School superintendent 'to seek approval of the trustees of the scholars audibly repeating the Lord's prayer after the minister in the chapel on Sunday mornings.'<sup>1524</sup> That it was not a question to ask the minister himself is significant in relation to responsibilities and standing.

In 1869 the trustees were asked to discuss the monthly reading of the commandments, with responses, and the chanting of psalms. The resolution that 'the introduction of these proposed changes might lead to serious complication and difficulties' was passed but with some opposition.<sup>1525</sup> Respected men could disagree, but the matter was raised again within a fortnight. This time, although a Mr. Wheeler was clear that the work of God would be seriously damaged, it needed the intervention of Isaac Jenks. He spoke against any form of ritualism, and it was then unanimously passed that 'the introduction of the chant book would be a serious injury to the congregation.'<sup>1526</sup> It can be surmised that Isaac's opinion was pivotal. Here was a group of respected men but one appeared more respected than others. A relationship between respectability and power, or at least influence, existed. It was in 1878 that these same trustees were commissioning a report on the conduct of modern worship. It was 'to retain a hold upon our young people and meet the wishes of many others of our congregation' that decisions were made to increase singing, shorten prayers, introduce the commandments with sung responses and chant a psalm.<sup>1527</sup>

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<sup>1523</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Receipts, Accounts and Letters 1866-1872, 6 January 1871, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1524</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Letters, Receipts and Accounts 1866-1872, letter 6 June 1872, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1525</sup> Darlington Street Leaders' Meeting Minute Book 1856-1894, 22 February 1869, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1526</sup> *Ibid*, 1 March 1869.

<sup>1527</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Trustees' Minutes 1854-1889, 24 May 1878, Wolverhampton Archives.

The trustees had hoped that these 'improvements' would satisfy those members of the congregation desirous of change while respecting the scruples of others.<sup>1528</sup> That they failed is shown by the fact that, twelve years later, in 1890, these tensions were still evident with the trustees being sent a letter and a petition 'in reference to the chanting of the psalms and canticles and the singing of the responses to the commandments.'<sup>1529</sup> Any decision was not recorded but similar issues continued to arise. It was in 1894 that the trustees were asked to alter the format of the service by taking the offertory before the sermon and allowing the choir to sing a short anthem, the title of which would be announced from the pulpit.<sup>1530</sup> The role of trustee was clearly a respected, if not revered one, but respect did not mean that they would be free from challenge or dissent. In these interactions it can also be detected that something was occurring which affected the respectability of Wesleyan Methodism itself. By 1900 a three-month trial was being arranged in relation to the singing of a vesper hymn immediately after the benediction. Bags instead of plates were also to be used for the collection.<sup>1531</sup> The nineteenth century had commenced with the desire to create distance from the Established Church. It appeared, at the end, as though moves were afoot to close the gap.

There were so many indications that Darlington Street Wesleyan chapel was the demesne of Isaac Jenks. He called people to early morning meetings so that his daily routine was not interrupted.<sup>1532</sup> Authority was given to him to make decisions and he was also skilled in bringing men around to his point of view.<sup>1533</sup> When there were building schemes it was he who liaised with architects and then communicated with builders.<sup>1534</sup> There were, however, a huge number of other men who carried out responsibilities and who would have been viewed as respectable Wesleyans as a consequence. Henry Tunnicliff and William Bayliss have been named examples but there were so many more. Scrutiny of the minute books for

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<sup>1528</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1529</sup> Darlington Street Chapel and Newhampton Road Trustees Minutes 1863-1911, 17 February 1890, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1530</sup> Ibid, 21 February 1894.

<sup>1531</sup> Ibid, 12 February 1900.

<sup>1532</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Letters, Receipts and Accounts 1866-1872, 9 May 1873, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1533</sup> Darlington Street Leaders' Meeting Minute Book 1856-1894, 1 March 1869, Wolverhampton Archives

<sup>1534</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Letters, Receipts and Accounts 1876-1878, 12 October 1878 and 15 October 1878, Wolverhampton Archives. Letters between Isaac Jenks and Mr. S. Loxton, architect reveal the level of his influence.

just the chapel's trustees' meetings, over a prolonged period, demonstrates this plethora of men and their responsibilities.<sup>1535</sup>

The study of women has also to be enhanced by an examination of their links to religion through the third sphere of church or chapel. If just under one half of the population attended worship on census Sunday in 1851, well over half of these were women. They walked the streets independently, or with family in tow. If an act demonstrating respectability, it was also symbolic in other ways. It certainly carried with it implications for the role of religion in the development of female activity and identity throughout the nineteenth century. So, while Davidoff and Hall show the link between evangelicalism and the shaping of separate spheres, there is a need for clarification. Helsinger, with a nod to these separate spheres, speaks of woman away from the home as 'the Angel out of the House.'<sup>1536</sup> In relation to the female role in the life of the chapel this is useful. While they were visible and afforded a certain amount of freedom, however, it might also indicate that their role within the church was simply an extension of their domestic activity.<sup>1537</sup> Certainly, for Methodism, Hempton sees no concerted attempts to challenge established gender boundaries.<sup>1538</sup> There is a tension for Methodism, therefore, between the confirming of stereotypes and the breaking out of the home to be occupied and interacting. Both had implications for respectability.

It has been stated that, in the broad sweep of Methodist historiography, to a large extent, women have been ignored and that even feminist writers have had too narrow a focus. Hempton, in commenting on the work of Olwen Hufton, agrees with her assertion that women need to be reintegrated into the past and not seen as mere appendages. In relation to Methodism, he reaches the dismal conclusion that, due to the surviving evidence, this may well be an impossible goal.<sup>1539</sup> This was said without reckoning on the significance of a

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<sup>1535</sup> Darlington Street Leaders' Meeting Minute Book 1856-1894, Wolverhampton Archives. Darlington Street Chapel and Newhampton Road Trustees Minutes 1863-1911, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1536</sup> Helsinger, E., Sheets, R.L. and Veeder, W. (1983) *The woman question*, Volume 1, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, xv.

<sup>1537</sup> Elizabeth Helsinger Robin Sheets and William R. Veeder, (1983) *The Woman Question*, vol 1, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), xv. Wilson, *Constrained by Zeal*, 189.

<sup>1538</sup> Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*, 140.

<sup>1539</sup> Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*, 145. Olwen Hufton, "Women, Gender and the Fin de Siecle," in *The Routledge Companion to Historiography*, ed. Michael Bentley (London: Routledge, 1997), 929-940.

spatial approach. Sundays were clearly a busy day for the third space, but there were events throughout the week which were equally predictable: the class meeting and prayer meeting to name just two. A rhythm to the week was created. Women encroached on the public sphere precisely because of religion; because of Methodism.

With attendance at church or chapel for Sunday worship, and for other happenings during the week, there comes other allied issues which are of interest. The *flâneur* is a frequently discussed topic but not the *flâneuse*.<sup>1540</sup> In relation to separate spheres this is understandable. Men were there, in public, women were supposedly not. Third space chapel immediately makes it apparent that females on the streets were given legitimacy at certain times during the week. As already mentioned, historians write of civic culture and the uniformity of male dress.<sup>1541</sup> For the working classes there was the possession of the Sunday best with implications for status and identity.<sup>1542</sup> This, as a code, was relatively easy to adhere to with the distinction being between those in black and those not; those in respectable attire and those not. Again, far less attention is given to women with Davidoff and Hall remarking on the lack of contemporary focus. In relation to Evangelicalism, they do comment on the 'lure of dress' and a preoccupation with personal adornment.<sup>1543</sup> No mention is made of the role of church attendance in providing reasons for women to step outside in clothing deemed to be respectable and that bit different from what was worn during the rest of the week. There was, however, real scope for the women as they engaged the milliner and dress maker.<sup>1544</sup> This was certainly true for Ellen, Lady Fowler, and it was her husband who specifically commented on the 'many well-dressed [women] in a morning congregation.'<sup>1545</sup> Women could demonstrate an amount of individuality in their quest to be recognised as respectable, but with this came issues. Their apparel could be compared and commented upon. In certain situations, this might have contributed to a hierarchy of respectables with certain individuals knowing their place. While Viscountess Wolverhampton was kitted out to meet Queen Victoria, and Mrs. Thorneycroft and Mrs.

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<sup>1540</sup> Wolff, "The Invisible Flâneuse."

<sup>1541</sup> Purbrick, "The Bourgeois Body". Croll, A. (2004) Croll, "A Heart of Darkness?", 165.

<sup>1542</sup> Bailey, "Will the Real Bill Banks Please Stand Up?," 342.

<sup>1543</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 410-415.

<sup>1544</sup> Gordon and Nair add weight to this by focusing on the proliferation of women employed as dressmakers and milliners during the century. Gordon and Nair, *Public Lives*, 182-183.

<sup>1545</sup> Quoted in Fowler, *The Life of Henry Hartley Fowler*, 539.

Jenks were suitably attired to lay foundation stones, the vast majority attended chapel in dress deemed appropriate and in accordance with what was expected of them. Specifically referring to the females attending worship at Darlington Street Chapel in 1860, it was recorded that ‘...the greater part were dressed very neat and respectable.’<sup>1546</sup> If a female member was reported to have dressed inappropriately, with a lack of decorum, it was within the remit of Methodist meetings to censure. Although a relatively common occurrence on the Yorkshire Wolds it was a rare happening in Wolverhampton. Indeed, Henry Fowler was able to distinguish the smartly dressed servant girls who attended evening worship.<sup>1547</sup> These females, who were typically employed in domestic service, walked together while their male counterparts also headed to the chapel for worship, the young men’s Bible study or meetings of the Wesleyan Mutual Improvement Society.<sup>1548</sup> The respectability offered by third space might well have provided these church-goers with some elements of the *flâneuse* and *flâneur*.<sup>1549</sup>

Hempton, specifically in relation to Methodism, also talks of women’s influence being reined in and diminished over time. In questioning whether Methodism could really be described as a Woman’s Movement, he wonders whether it was simply an organisation in which a few who were especially talented attained important roles.<sup>1550</sup> This is too narrow a view. Women should not need to demonstrate particular talent for their story to be important. Methodism might have played its part in emphasising traditional roles but, for the female adherent, it also provided an array of possibilities which ranged from the spiritual to the social. Nonconformity and the third sphere also gave opportunity for forming relationships but again, studies concentrate on those of men. Eve Sedgwick speaks of the ‘homosocial’ to describe the social bonds between those of the same gender which help to define class.<sup>1551</sup> The bonds between women must be worthy of consideration. On display, of course, were also relationships between women and men. Ostensibly Methodism brought the genders

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<sup>1546</sup> “Wolverhampton Wesleyan Sunday School Union Circuit Minute Book 1860-1873, 5 October, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1547</sup> Fowler, *The Life of Henry Hartley Fowler*, 539.

<sup>1548</sup> Darlington Street Trustees Minutes 1854-1889, 8 September 1856, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1549</sup> Wolff, “The Invisible Flâneuse.”

<sup>1550</sup> Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*, 141.

<sup>1551</sup> Eve K. Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985) 1. Diane S. MacLeod, “Homosociality and Middle-Class Identity in Early Victorian Patronage of the Arts,” in *Gender, Civic Culture and Consumerism*, eds. Alan Kidd and David Nicholls (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 65.

together because of a common purpose and fourth space theology can never be far away from the discussion. Divisions between women and men could have been less important than the battle that was to be had between the saved and the lost.<sup>1552</sup> Conversion experiences did bring people together into a life of devotion and service.

There were women who undertook some higher profile roles within Wesleyan Methodism and, for the Black Country, examples can be found to span the decades. A small number were called upon to address gatherings of children and others were invited to speak during acts of worship or at special events.<sup>1553</sup> Even in 1897 the Darlington Street Wesleyans were intent on finding a deaconess to work within the circuit. Confident that one could be found, it was the Ladies' Sewing Meeting which was relied upon to secure the necessary funds.<sup>1554</sup> This is significant because it was undoubtedly in the relatively mundane that most women showed themselves to be indispensable. Just as dress, from that of Viscountess Wolverhampton to the town's domestic servants, indicated a hierarchy and a desire for respectability, so too did the tasks performed.

To appropriate an idiom, there were those who wore their respectability on their sleeve.<sup>1555</sup> It was by dint of marriages or kinship to prominent men that a small number of females led rather than followed and were spatially positioned slightly apart: at the head of the table, on the platform or by being observed by an audience while performing a designated task. There are many examples for this coterie of women with Mrs. Isaac Jenks and her daughters being first amongst equals.<sup>1556</sup> In 1862 they were given the responsibility of being 'respectfully requested to solicit subscriptions in aid of the building fund.'<sup>1557</sup> They set to work with their successes recorded. At the opening of this new chapel, it was then Mrs. Thorneycroft who was selected to lay the memorial stone.<sup>1558</sup> These same women sat on many committees

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<sup>1552</sup> Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*, 141.

<sup>1553</sup> Wolverhampton Wesleyan Circuit, Sunday School Union Minute Book 1860-1873, 18 January 1861, Wolverhampton Archives. Darlington Street Sunday School Bushbury Branch 1892-1903, 28 January 1898, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1554</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Leaders Meeting Book of Record 1895-1941, 25 November 1897, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1555</sup> To make it known.

<sup>1556</sup> Darlington Street Sunday School Bushbury Branch 1892-1903, 14 March 1897 and 28 January 1898, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1557</sup> Darlington Street Chapel and Newhampton Road Trustees Meeting Minutes 1863-1911, 16 April 1862, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1558</sup> *Ibid.* 16 June 1862.



and, with them present, no other lady was seemingly allowed to organise proceedings. Their names always appeared first on any manifest. It was these same women who were called upon to distribute prizes to the children at the Sunday School Anniversaries.<sup>1559</sup> Mrs. Fowler played a very similar role. She was involved in the Wesleyan Methodist Sunday School Union, was responsible for 'a large number of young females' and arranged its meetings.<sup>1560</sup> In 1884 she introduced mothers' meetings to one of Wolverhampton's Wesleyan chapels and she was for ever organising teas.<sup>1561</sup>

For women, committee attendance was limited in its scope. It was the men attending the first meeting of the Darlington Street Wesleyan Missionary Committee, held on Friday, 30 August 1867, who called together a group of ladies to organise a proposed breakfast meeting.<sup>1562</sup> It was then Mrs. Jenks who rallied her troops. Two years later, in October 1869, a meeting of ladies was held in the Reading Room at the chapel. It was a decoration committee and the list of names of those selected is revealing. The first three recorded were those of Mrs. Isaac Jenks and her two daughters. The fourth name was that of Mrs. Henry Tunnicliff and she was the only other married lady to attend. While fifteen spinsters were making the embellishments, there was also an organising committee, chaired by Mrs. Jenks and this time it was attended by three other married ladies.

So, as long as there was someone set apart to chair meetings and organise, there were opportunities for women to demonstrate their brand of respectability by being engaged in activities related to their Methodist membership: even if marriage remained a significant demarcation. With Mrs. Jenks organising the fund raising and Mrs. Thorneycroft laying the memorial stone, it was still left to a committee of ladies to make the arrangements for the tea meeting.<sup>1563</sup> They formed a canvassing committee, for example, and four women were given the responsibility of waiting upon certain gentlemen in relation to the contract to provide the food. It was *fait accompli* that Mrs. Tunnicliff would ask her husband to provide

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<sup>1559</sup> Darlington Street Sunday School Bushbury Branch 1892-1903, 14 March 1897 and 28 January 1898, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1560</sup> Wolverhampton Wesleyan Methodist Sunday School Union Circuit Minute Book 1860-1873, 19 August 1860, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1561</sup> Bilston Road Chapel Trustees Minute Book 1875-1906, 11 February 1884, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1562</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Missionary Committee Minutes 1867-1878, 30 August 1867, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1563</sup> *Ibid*, 16 June 1862.

the crockery and tablecloths. While the fifteen lady committee members 'promised at once' to provide trays, it is noticeable that only Mrs. Jenks and Mrs. Thorneycroft were able to offer two.<sup>1564</sup> By 1874 a separate committee was formed specifically to solicit these trays and Mrs. Jenks, who had tasks to perform alongside her daughter, was now promising four of them.<sup>1565</sup>

There was clearly a pecking order but, with Mrs. Jenks at one end and the spinsters of the Decoration Committee at the other, there was another group of respectables who sat in between. There were no female trustees appointed in any of the chapels throughout the century, but there were plenty of trustees who had wives. The same can be said for the plethora of committees established to ensure the smooth running of each place of worship and each circuit. Being a wife could bring kudos, therefore. To pay for heating and the painting of the chapel it was decided that:

The finance committee be empowered to enlist the services of ladies of the trustees with Mrs. Thorneycroft and others in order to canvas the congregation for additional subscriptions.<sup>1566</sup>

Still, in 1900, a committee was:

most gratefully accepting the offer of the chapel stewards to invite the wives of the trustees and stewards to a cup of tea with a view to arranging for a sewing meeting.<sup>1567</sup>

It would be wrong to assume, however, that all responsibility and its allied respectability was dependent on men. The Sunday School supplied opportunities for Wesleyan women. Miss Louisa Fowler, Miss Fanny Cullwick and Miss Ada Wright are examples from different decades of ladies who were appointed to be leaders of junior classes because leaders were

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<sup>1564</sup> Ibid, 8 October 1869.

<sup>1565</sup> Ibid, 28 August 1874.

<sup>1566</sup> Darlington Street Trustees Minutes 1854-1889, 11 March 1861, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1567</sup> Bilston Road Chapel Trustees Minute Book 1875-1906, 21 November 1900, Wolverhampton Archives.

required.<sup>1568</sup> There was always a large number of female teachers.<sup>1569</sup> By 1893 there were even two female superintendents.<sup>1570</sup> Ladies were often called upon to use their skills to help in difficult situations. In 1894 a bazaar was suggested to contribute towards the liquidation of the debt and 'ladies of the congregation [were] requested to interest themselves in the same.'<sup>1571</sup>

As well as working towards a successful bazaar, there was another opportunity available to women that was quintessentially respectable, and it was connected to the spatially significant desire of Methodism to spread itself across the globe. The Wesleyan Missionary Society was formed in 1813 and the Primitive Methodist General Missionary Society came into being in 1825.<sup>1572</sup> John Pritchard emphasises the repercussions for the members who would never leave England's shores.<sup>1573</sup> He stresses that the need to raise vast sums of money was an aim from the outset and the responsibility for this rested with women.<sup>1574</sup> Lady Fowler was said not to be 'a moving spirit' in relation to public works but her daughter declared that:

...she took an active part [in] Foreign Missions. She always showed an intense and vital interest.<sup>1575</sup>

Amounts collected by numerous women were recorded and praise was heaped upon them. Miss Reed and Miss Fleece were recommended as additional missionary collectors and once accepted, they then regularly received the thanks of the committee members for their efforts.<sup>1576</sup> There were social gathering and events which required organization. Decoration

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<sup>1568</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Leaders' Meeting Minute Book 1856-1894, 20 September 1856, 11 March 1903, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1569</sup> See, for example, Darlington Street Sunday School Committee Minutes 1900-1913, Wolverhampton Archives. Also, Darlington Street Wesleyan Sunday School Bushbury Branch Minute Book 1892-1903, Wolverhampton Archives, M-DS/2/59."

<sup>1570</sup> Wolverhampton Wesleyan Circuit, Darlington Street Sunday School Bushbury Branch 1892-1903, 16 October 1893, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1571</sup> Bilston Road Chapel Trustees Minute Book 1875-1906, 8 February 1894, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1572</sup> John Pritchard, *Methodists and their Missionary Societies 1760-1900* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 23 and 188.

<sup>1573</sup> *Ibid*, xvii.

<sup>1574</sup> *Ibid*, 80.

<sup>1575</sup> Fowler, *The Life of Henry Hartley Fowler*, 624.

<sup>1576</sup> Bilston Road Chapel Trustees Minute Book 1875-1906, 14 November 1906, Wolverhampton Archives.

committees consisting entirely of women were frequently convened and these, in turn, necessitated canvassing and catering committees.<sup>1577</sup>

Men played their part in missionary activity but with differing roles. The Darlington Street Missionary Committee provided sixteen men with the opportunity to meet, discuss, make decisions and hint at their respectability.<sup>1578</sup> More often than not they met so that they could give instruction to the groups of women:

That the secretary be instructed to call a meeting of ladies to ascertain whether they would be willing to assist in holding a Breakfast Meeting.<sup>1579</sup>

Inevitably certain men performed more prominent roles. Isaac Jenks was the chairman for an extended number of years.<sup>1580</sup> Major Thorneycroft presided over Breakfast Meetings and various knighted gentlemen were also asked to perform this task.<sup>1581</sup> Each year chapels held missionary anniversaries with platforms built, services held, and meetings arranged. They were expected to be grand happenings with large sums of money raised.<sup>1582</sup> In 1869 the Darlington Street chapel arrangements included two special services on the Sunday with a carefully chosen preacher. Sunday school scholars were also to be addressed. On Monday there was a breakfast meeting followed in the afternoon by a tea for all the collectors. In the evening a public meeting was held, and one thousand five hundred bills were printed to be circulated throughout the town.<sup>1583</sup> Methodist men and women could demonstrate their respectability while raising money and praising God. Pritchard points to the appeal of 'car[ing] for the emigrants from home... evangelizing of the heathen, a mission to Islam, conversion of Roman Catholics.'<sup>1584</sup>

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<sup>1577</sup> Darlington Street Church Missionary Committee Minutes 1867-1879, M-DS/2/6, 30 August 1867, 8 October 1869, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1578</sup> Darlington Street Church Missionary Committee Minutes 1867-1879, M-DS/2/6, 30 August 1867, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1579</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1580</sup> Ibid, 14 October 1867.

<sup>1581</sup> Ibid, 30 August 1867 and 20 September 1869.

<sup>1582</sup> Primitive Methodism often referred to Missionary Sunday. See Wolverhampton Primitive Methodist Second Circuit Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1898-1922, MC-WP/2/1, 10 March 1899, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1583</sup> Ibid, 20 September 1869.

<sup>1584</sup> Pritchard, *Methodists and their Missionary Societies*, 81.

For all, women as well as men, there could simply be the straightforward belief that Wesleyanism and respectability were synonymous. While men were engaged in business meetings, ladies were frequently specifically called upon to engage with fourth space: implying it was, perhaps, more naturally their domain. They could be asked, for example, to hold prayer meetings at times when the chapel was experiencing difficulties. One such occurrence, in 1886, had them gathering, unsurprisingly under the supervision of Mrs. Nightingale, the minister's wife.<sup>1585</sup> This same lady also sums up how respectability could finally be sealed by death. When she met her end in 1889, the secretary to the Leaders' Meeting wrote to the husband. While referring to her 'untiring energy,' 'indefatigable zeal' and 'Christian love and charity' she was summed up as 'one of the brightest ornaments of the Methodist Church in this circuit, and indeed of Methodism.' Their loss was her eternal gain.<sup>1586</sup> Esteem because of her role with third space but the link to the fourth dimension was made.

### **Allodoxia**

Bebbington states firmly that the strength of Methodism lay among the working-classes and lower-middle-class.<sup>1587</sup> There are implications for the role of Nonconformity in the search for respectability and this is highlighted by referring to Methodism's relationship with the temperance movement during the nineteenth century.<sup>1588</sup> This movement also emphasises fundamental differences between Primitive and Wesleyan Methodism. Brian Harrison makes the distinction between the 'rough' and 'respectable' poor. He also speaks of the 'civilizing task' and argues that the gulf which existed within the working-class was greater than the division between it and the middle-class.<sup>1589</sup> By allying itself to the temperance cause, Primitive Methodism was, therefore, setting out to claim and encourage respectability for its adherents. According to Lilian Shiman this denomination gave wholehearted support from

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<sup>1585</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Leaders' Meeting Minute Book 1856-1894, Wolverhampton Archives, M-DS/2/4." See entry for February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1886.

<sup>1586</sup> Wolverhampton Wesleyan Circuit, Darlington Street Chapel Leaders' Meeting Minute Book 1856-1894, 10 May 1869, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1587</sup> Wilson, *Constrained by Zeal*, 5.

<sup>1588</sup> Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*. Lilian L. Shiman, *Crusade Against Drink in Victorian England* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988).

<sup>1589</sup> Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, 25-26.

the beginning.<sup>1590</sup> However, in the early years there were certain contradictions which highlight issues related to working class life. In the Black Country, complaints against individuals were taken seriously from the outset. In September 1831, for example, the Darlaston Primitive Methodists were reprimanding Noah Dunnand for his inebriation.<sup>1591</sup> Into the 1840s, it was John Cox's drunkenness which was of concern.<sup>1592</sup> In June 1845 Charles Carthy was told he could no longer be a local preacher because he had visited a public house.<sup>1593</sup> The Primitive Methodist decision makers clearly did not want the drinking habits of members to be witnessed but there was actually absolutely no expectation of teetotalism at this stage. Delegates to important circuit meetings were being provided with a pint of ale.<sup>1594</sup> These same people, however, were being told that they would not have 'a voice or a vote' if they were seen visiting a 'publick [sic] house' on the day of the meeting.<sup>1595</sup> 'Beer as usual' was recorded for meeting after meeting until, in 1857, it was finally stated that it would be 'very beneficial if water could be substituted instead of drink for use at quarter day.'<sup>1596</sup> From the late 1850s onwards any hint of double standards did diminish, therefore. Trustees were, from then onwards, frequently asked 'to let the temperance society have use of the chapel.'<sup>1597</sup> All Sunday Schools were eventually instructed to introduce a Band of Hope and each circuit elected a temperance secretary.<sup>1598</sup> Temperance Sunday, held in November, was observed in each chapel with preachers being 'requested to deliver sermons bearing upon the subject.'<sup>1599</sup> By the end of the century there were circuit temperance meetings held throughout the Black Country.<sup>1600</sup> In 1896 it was

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<sup>1590</sup> Siman, *Crusade Against Drink*, 56.

<sup>1591</sup> Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1824-1832, 6 October 1831, Walsall Archives.

<sup>1592</sup> Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1842-1848, 3 December 1842, Walsall Archives.

<sup>1593</sup> *Ibid*, 2 June 1845.

<sup>1594</sup> *Ibid*, 3 March 1845, 2 June 1845, 7 December 1846.

<sup>1595</sup> *Ibid*, 25 September 1843.

<sup>1596</sup> *Ibid*, 3 March 1845. Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1853-1859, 2 June 1857, 42/1/6, Walsall Archives.

<sup>1597</sup> *Ibid*, 17 March 1856.

<sup>1598</sup> Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1885-1896, 4 March 1895, 31 August 1896, 42/1/9, Walsall Archives. The first Band of Hope was established to promote temperance in Leeds in 1847. They were specifically for children who would be encouraged to sign the pledge. They were very often attached to Sunday Schools. See Shiman, *Crusade Against Drink*, 134-135.

<sup>1599</sup> *Ibid*, 31 August 1896.

<sup>1600</sup> Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1896-1913, 3 September 1900, 42/1/10, Walsall Archives.

recorded that fifteen out of twenty-seven local preachers in the Darlaston circuit were total abstainers.<sup>1601</sup> Teetotalism was certainly encouraged but it was never compulsory, therefore. Primitive Methodism had worked out its stance.

Wesleyan Methodism's relationship to temperance was far more complex. Indeed, Lilian Shiman states that it was the branch of nonconformity least sympathetic to the cause.<sup>1602</sup> This was certainly the case for its leaders through to the middle years of the century.<sup>1603</sup> They were preoccupied by a middle-class consciousness and the desire to avoid anything that might encourage schism.<sup>1604</sup> As the century progressed, however, there was eventually the realization that respectability was to be garnered rather than hampered by taking a supportive stance. Temperance had appeared to win the moral argument.<sup>1605</sup> It was in 1878 that the Wolverhampton Temperance Society was granted the use of a room connected to Darlington Street chapel for two public meetings each winter.<sup>1606</sup> It was then during the 1880s that the Wesleyans began to focus their efforts on the children who attended their Sunday Schools. Bands of Hope were established and the parents were written to if scholars did not also attend these meetings.<sup>1607</sup> It was regularly recorded that there would be 'special effort to lead our children into the paths of temperance and sobriety.'<sup>1608</sup> It was clearly respectable to encourage children to sign the pledge and, for Wolverhampton Wesleyans, Temperance Sunday was only ever regarded as a day for speakers to be invited to morning and afternoon Sunday School.<sup>1609</sup> It wasn't until 1893 that it was regarded as appropriate for a Darlington Street Chapel Temperance Committee to be formed.<sup>1610</sup> From then on there were monthly meetings which soon came to replace the mid-week act of worship.<sup>1611</sup> In the 1890s the Bilston Wesleyan Circuit was fully engaged with the Wesleyan Temperance Society and the largest chapel was the venue for temperance meetings with its

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<sup>1601</sup> Ibid, 7 December 1896.

<sup>1602</sup> Shiman, *Crusade Against Drink*, 53.

<sup>1603</sup> Ward, *Early Victorian Methodism*, xv. Shiman, *Crusade Against Drink*, 53-54.

<sup>1604</sup> Shiman, *Crusade Against Drink*, 54.

<sup>1605</sup> Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, 28.

<sup>1606</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Trustees Minutes 1854-1889, 6 November 1878, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1607</sup> Darlington Street Sunday School Bushbury Branch 1892-1903, 10 January 1892, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1608</sup> Darlington Street Sunday School Committee Minutes 1900-1913, M-DS/2/10, 21 January 1900, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1609</sup> Ibid, 28 September 1900.

<sup>1610</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Leaders Meeting Minute Book 1856-1894, 2 January 1893, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1611</sup> Ibid, 13 March 1893.

choir being asked to sing and five thousand handbills produced. Invitations were extended to all the other nonconformist chapels. Each chapel in the circuit was urged to hold a temperance meeting once every three months.<sup>1612</sup> Wesleyan Methodism had finally confirmed the relationship between temperance and respectability.<sup>1613</sup>

Pierre Bourdieu, the French sociologist, introduced allodoxia to explain the forms of hybrid activities which seep from high art.<sup>1614</sup> It is John Lowerson who then uses the term to sum up *petit-bourgeois* taste and cultural pursuits.<sup>1615</sup> Both relate this to the middlebrow which is an easily understood English phrase even though there is recognition that it does not fully convey a sense of the derogatory. It remains a useful notion: firstly, in relation to what Wesleyan Methodism had to offer and secondly, for respectability, summing up what some already were, and others aspired to be. There was much to be gained from being involved in Wesleyanism alongside the likes of Isaac Jenks and no one could doubt his claims to respectability. He would have balked at being himself described in such allodoxic terms, and yet he played a vital role in the securing of it for others. He was its guardian and a conduit for the conferring of respectability: throughout Wolverhampton generally and within Wesleyanism specifically.

This is best explained in relation to music. Isaac did not only possess talents as a businessman and ironmaster. He was also an impresario with musical abilities. The *Wolverhampton Chronicle* referred to these latter interests on a regular basis:

#### The Exchange, Wolverhampton

Mr. Isaac Jenks begs to announce an evening concert on Wednesday, 28<sup>th</sup> Inst, under distinguished patronage, when will be performed, for the first time in this town, Professor Sterndale Bennett's beautiful

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<sup>1612</sup> Bilston Wesleyan Circuit Minutes of Temperance Society 1894-1899, MC-BW/5/12/1, 9 July 1894, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1613</sup> Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, 167.

<sup>1614</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge, 1986), 323.

<sup>1615</sup> Lowerson, "An Outbreak of Allodoxia?", 198.



cantata “The May Queen” and a miscellaneous selection. Tickets –  
Gallery 2s; Front Floor 1s; Back Seats 6d.<sup>1616</sup>

This entertainment was to take place while the town’s St George’s Hall was welcoming ‘The American Slave Troupe with the wonderful Japanese Tommy.’ For Wesleyans it might have been hoped that the attraction of ‘fifteen real negro performers’ was as nothing compared to Jenks securing the ‘distinguished patronage’ of the Right Honourable Earl of Lichfield, a Member of Parliament, two men from the military and no less than three Wesleyan clergymen. It was also announced that Jenks himself was to be the conductor.<sup>1617</sup> Six years later, he used the same venue to preside over ‘A Grand Concert of Sacred Song.’ With a band and chorus of over two hundred performers giving their renditions of Handel’s *Messiah* and *Judas Maccabaeus*, Jenks was responsible for eliding the spiritual with the civic and it could be argued that the venue was being sacralised.<sup>1618</sup> He was also demonstrating his prowess and yet this was the man who sat in relatively intimate gatherings of Wesleyans and was always present at Sunday worship.

“The May Queen” and even Handel’s offerings would have appealed to broad tastes, but his skills were far more frequently employed in Darlington Street Wesleyan chapel. There was his role in the erection of its lecture halls and concert venues.<sup>1619</sup> There was his insistence on the tuning and cleaning of pianos and organs: organs that became larger and more powerful over time.<sup>1620</sup> It was Jenks who liaised with choirmasters: thanking them for their efforts, recommending hymns and introits and, at certain times, commenting on the poor conduct of members of the choir.<sup>1621</sup> If it was about the middlebrow, he wanted his chapel to offer the best middlebrow in town. This becomes evident from the correspondence between him and William Brotherton in 1876. This choirmaster wrote:

It has been reported to me that there has been great dissatisfaction  
as to the singing at Darlington Street and special allusion has been

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<sup>1616</sup> *Wolverhampton Chronicle*, November 14, 1866.

<sup>1617</sup> *Ibid*, November 21, 1866.

<sup>1618</sup> *Ibid*, October 23, 1872.

<sup>1619</sup> Darlington Street Trustees Minutes 1854-1889, 24 November 1866, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1620</sup> *Ibid*, 16 October 1868.

<sup>1621</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Correspondence 1870-1882, letter 19 January 1875, Wolverhampton Archives.

made to the Monday evening service...I should be the last to stand in the way of improvement.<sup>1622</sup>

Improvement was planned for by the engaging of two more altos and two extra tenors. Mr. Brotherton hoped to secure the services of members of his own family and, while most sopranos offered their voices for free, the altos, tenors and basses were to receive a salary. Those 'thought to most richly deserve it' could be awarded a bonus.<sup>1623</sup> When these strategies failed to satisfy Isaac Jenks, it was he who received the note from Brotherton stating:

It is a slight upon me and I beg most respectfully to tender you my resignation as choirmaster.<sup>1624</sup>

Isaac Jenks held sway for many years but the desire to improve standards did not start and end with him. With fewer references for the opening decades of the nineteenth century, by the 1850s there were definite attempts to enhance quality; to make things more respectable. In April 1855, for example, a singing class was established, and by the October, a leader had been appointed. It was agreed to introduce the system advocated nationally by a Mr. Waites with the congregation having the opportunity to test its merits.<sup>1625</sup> During the following year a committee of gentlemen had been appointed to:

take the entire superintendence of the Singing Department of Public Worship with reference first to the selection of members of the choir, second the tunes to be used and third the measures to be adopted for the improvement of the singing generally.<sup>1626</sup>

If allodoxia was being championed, the Darlington Street grandees did not wish to be outshone. Into the 1860s and it was thought that the new chapel needed a new organ. The main consideration was 'that a design similar to the organ lately erected at Hanley be accepted.'<sup>1627</sup> Wesleyanism clearly meant that allodoxia was everywhere. There were

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<sup>1622</sup> Ibid. Letter 21 September 1876.

<sup>1623</sup> Ibid,

<sup>1624</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1625</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Trustees Minutes 1854-1889, 3 April 1855 and 5 October 1855, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1626</sup> Ibid, 8 September 1856.

<sup>1627</sup> Ibid, 3 April 1861.

refinements, of course. The next new chapel, the one opened in 1901, had an instrument which was grander than ever and at its first service the anthem was the *Te Deum Laudamus*.<sup>1628</sup>

The observation has been made that church and chapel were the only communities to which the lower middle-class could belong without tainting their social standing or causing financial difficulties.<sup>1629</sup> The point made here is that they could improve the former while providing socially acceptable, respectable reasons for spending money. Attachment to chapel could be the exception that Bailey *et al* needed to be aware of when speaking of class and gender segregation.<sup>1630</sup> While attending worship and other events, there were no *cordons sanitaires* but, unlike other movement around the town, the need was also absent. Respectability was on display and the link between nonconformity and the middlebrow might have sealed class cohesion. It might also have encouraged desacralisation as it was, at times, responsible for moves towards the secular and away from the purely religious.

Isaac Jenks was the example *par excellence*, but there were so many other respectables with whom to rub shoulders. The aforementioned William Brotherton wrote his letters on notepaper of the Imperial Tube Works.<sup>1631</sup> It was precisely because he was being treated with a lack of respect, after all he had done, that he resigned. There were the owners and managers of large firms but also numerous examples of men who were responsible for medium sized and smaller firms. Details relating to the trustees demonstrate this to be the case.<sup>1632</sup> By 1891, they included ironworks owners and two ironworks managers as well as a surgeon, lock manufacturer, chemist and two accountants. Importantly, they now shared their responsibilities with a fruiterer, grocer, wheelwright, two tin plate workers, a builder, tailor, shoemaker, clerk and pawnbroker.<sup>1633</sup> Respectability was more than implied by the guests invited to the various events held at the chapel. At breakfast meetings it was often knighted gentlemen who were requested to take the chair, with mayors being another favourite. The services of Major Thorneycroft were called upon with his mother acting as the

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<sup>1628</sup> Darlington Street Chapel, Material Relating to the Opening of the New Church 1901, 29 October 1901, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1629</sup> Thompson, *The Cambridge Social History*, vol 2, 64.

<sup>1630</sup> Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England*.

<sup>1631</sup> Darlington Steet Chapel Correspondence 1870-1882, letters January 1875, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1632</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Letters, Receipts and Accounts 1873-1907, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1633</sup> Bilston Road Chapel Trustees Minute Book 1875-1906, 19 February 1891, Wolverhampton Archives.

go-between.<sup>1634</sup> Mr. Fowler was, inevitably, much sought after.<sup>1635</sup> At the opening of the new Darlington Street Chapel on 29 October 1901, there were three Members of Parliament present to hear the special hymns and anthems sung by the choir.<sup>1636</sup> That these Methodists wanted their respectability to be noticed is emphasised by the free tickets for these events given to representatives of the *Wolverhampton Chronicle*, *Birmingham Daily Post*, and the *Birmingham Gazette*.<sup>1637</sup>

Wesleyan Methodism's allodoxic music, and its link to desired respectability, was shown by the popularity of certain advertised positions. As early as 1843, auditions were held for the post of organist. After a competitive process a Mr. Baker was appointed on a salary of eight pounds per annum, but there was to be a trial period of three months. Having successfully completed this he did, however, remain under scrutiny. By the January of 1849, moves were afoot to purchase a more sophisticated instrument and there were clearly concerns about Mr. Baker's ability to play it to the required standard. The letter written to him pulled no punches. He was asked to give 'his constant personal attendance at the instrument or at once to tender his resignation.'<sup>1638</sup> Having tried to retain his position, by 1851 a new organist had been appointed with an increased salary of twelve pounds per year.<sup>1639</sup> The role was seen to be prestigious and each time it was advertised there were applicants from neighbouring chapels and those further afield.<sup>1640</sup> In 1872 there was a request from Henry Hinde, the incumbent, for his salary to be raised from sixteen to twenty pounds:

I will also add that no exertion on my part shall be wanting to bring the musical part of our services to perfection. Thanking you,

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<sup>1634</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Missionary Committee Minutes 1867-1878, 20 September 1869, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1635</sup> Ibid, 29 October 1869.

<sup>1636</sup> Darlington Street Chapel, Material Relating to the Opening of the New Church 1901, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1637</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Missionary Committee Minutes 1867-1878, 29 October 1869 and 12 September 1871, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1638</sup> Ibid, 19 January 1849.

<sup>1639</sup> Ibid, 22 September 1851.

<sup>1640</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Letters, Receipts and Accounts 1866-1872, 26 January 1871 and 9 May 1872, Wolverhampton Archives.

gentlemen for past kindness, I remain yours respectfully Henry  
Hinde, organist.<sup>1641</sup>

Feeling that he was, indeed, showing respect, this request was granted.<sup>1642</sup> However, when, in 1876, he was again asking for an increase to thirty pounds, there was a long discussion about supposed impertinence and his petition was denied.<sup>1643</sup> The prestige attached to the position meant that he did not resign, and he was still playing the organ and abiding by decisions over a decade later:

I have heard that there are complaints about [a] limited choice of  
tunes and I emphasise that I would be glad to try any tune suggested  
by the trustees.<sup>1644</sup>

Leading the choir was also a sought-after position which came with a certain amount of allodoxic pressure. It was in 1868 that a Mr. Hill was told that he could continue in the role for a further year, but only if there was a marked improvement in the singing.<sup>1645</sup> Any improvement was not sustained and, when the position was again advertised, a Mr. Lloyd summed up how keen someone might be to become associated with the chapel and its people. After sixteen years at Wednesfield Wesleyan Chapel, he commenced his letter to the trustees thus: 'I beg to offer myself...'<sup>1646</sup>

None of this musical middlebrow Methodism would have been possible without the services of the humble organ blower. After the installation of the new instrument in December 1861, it was announced that one shilling per week would be paid:

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<sup>1641</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Letters, Receipts and Accounts 1866-1872, letter July 1872, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1642</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Trustees' Minutes 1854-1889, 3 July 1872, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1643</sup> Ibid, 7 January 1876.

<sup>1644</sup> Ibid, 19 February 1886.

<sup>1645</sup> Ibid, 16 October 1868

<sup>1646</sup> Darlington Street Letters, Receipts and Accounts 1866-1872, letter 26 January 1871, Wolverhampton Archives.

...and, if the present blower declines, some other poor member shall have the position offered.<sup>1647</sup>

This is a reminder that the respectability of Wesleyanism offered opportunities to a wide spectrum. Put another way, opportunities existed for people to be drawn into the orbit of Methodist respectability. In relation to paid employment there was, from as early as 1837, the position of Chapel Keeper.<sup>1648</sup> Advertisements received large numbers of applicants. In March 1871, there were two hundred and forty-five, and one hundred and forty of these were 'members of our society.'<sup>1649</sup> One of these was a Mr. Michael who, in May 1873, applied for a second time. He held a similar position at the Bilston Wesleyan Chapel but clearly saw the available opportunity as more prestigious: possibly more respectable. He might have been swayed by the new livery which was to be made of black cloth with the coat braided.<sup>1650</sup> His eventual success was, in part, due to his references declaring him to be 'of excellent Christian Character.'<sup>1651</sup> He himself was thought to be respectable. At roughly the same time, pew openers and assistant pew openers were being appointed and 'two efficient men were engaged to take charge of the chapel and to provide strangers with a seat.'<sup>1652</sup> The link to respectability and these posts had been made some thirty years earlier:

that respectable friends be requested to attend in each aisle in order to conduct strangers to the pews.<sup>1653</sup>

There were other ways for those linked to the chapel to strive for improvement and respectability. It had its own reading room and library which remained open until ten o'clock at night and only closed during divine service on Monday evenings.<sup>1654</sup> There was also the Darlington Street Mutual Improvement Class which was specifically established for the

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<sup>1647</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Trustees Minutes 1854-1889, 6 December 1861, Wolverhampton Archives. The organ blower's salary had been increased to three pounds per annum by 1872. Darlington Street Chapel Trustees' Minutes 1854-1889, 12 August 1872, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1648</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Trustees Minutes 1836-1854, 15 November 1837, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1649</sup> Darlington Street Trustees Minutes 1854-1889, 10 March 1871, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1650</sup> Ibid, 4 January 1870.

<sup>1651</sup> Darlington Street Chapel, Letters, Receipts and Accounts 1873-1907, correspondence 14 May 1873, Wolverhampton Archives. By 1886 the position carried with it a salary of ten shillings per week. Darlington Street and Newhampton Road Trustees Minutes 1863-1911, 1 July 1886, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1652</sup> Darlington Street Trustees Minutes 1854-1889, 3 June 1870, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1653</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Trust Minutes 1836-1854, 22 February 1841, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1654</sup> Darlington Street Trustees Minutes 1854-1889, 4 January 1870, Wolverhampton Archives.

young men of the congregation. As well as for those who simply attended, this provided opportunities for leadership, public speaking and essay writing. During the 1870s the group's secretary was Mr. Cullwick, and he took pride in organising events. For example, he was particularly pleased to announce that Mr. Weaver was to read his essay on the subject of William III.<sup>1655</sup> Three years later, despite increased attendance, the leaders perceived a problem:

The want of a comfortable, attractive room [has] nullified the labour which has been expended. If improvements are carried out... there is a good prospect of the association flourishing and being the means of attracting even more thinking young men to the chapel, and of keeping together in a beneficial manner that part of the congregation which must be looked to for future workers and supporters.<sup>1656</sup>

Respectability appeared to come with certain expectations, but deference to those whose position was assured was not forgotten. Theodore Mill, president of the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Class in 1873, made sure to write regularly to the trustees thanking them for their support.<sup>1657</sup>

Wesleyan Methodism was, therefore, exuding a respectability that was confirmed by both what it had to offer and the attendance of certain people. These people mixed with those whose position was less secure. It would be wrong to assume that this did not, on occasion, present difficulties. For example, a conversation took place between trustees in 1870. They were having to debate:

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<sup>1655</sup> Darlington Street Chapel, Letters, Receipts and Accounts 1875-1908, 5 October 1875, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1656</sup> Darlington Street Chapel, Letters, Receipts and Accounts 1876-1878, 14 September 1878, Wolverhampton Archives. The 13 things desired included a heating apparatus, seats covered in leather and a covering on the floor.

<sup>1657</sup> Darlington Street Chapel, Letters, Receipts and Accounts 1866-1872, June 1873, Wolverhampton Archives.

how to procure better order during divine service and how to remedy the crowding of the pews in the gallery by free seat people who annoy those that do pay for sittings.<sup>1658</sup>

Examples such as this were rare, however, and the far more common division was between those inside and those who remained determinedly outside the chapel. It was a regular occurrence for the trustees to request the attendance of at least two policemen to minimise any disruption.<sup>1659</sup> A separation of attender and nonattender but also the respectable and the not respectable.

Allodoxic respectability was available from Wesleyan Methodism in so many ways other than the musical references already made. There were the endless teas and bazaars, outings and societies.<sup>1660</sup> Bailey, indeed, talks of the working-classes taking calculated advantage in terms of Sunday School events and the chapel's social activities. He ignores the converted and the committed, but it is important to remember that, in referring to all that took place in relation to third space chapel, there were those who gained their own worth, their respectability, because of a relationship to the fourth dimension. For these, the church or chapel provided a more permanent respectability than simply one where it was possible to opt in or out. When Brother Riley's bodily infirmities meant that he had to resign his class leadership, it was his service to the work of God that elicited a letter from the minister. It gratefully acknowledged his past services and pointed to the esteem in which he was held because of his Godly example.<sup>1661</sup>

Issues related to respectability were never far away when the Darlington Street Wesleyan haves spoke of those who had not. Class leaders met regularly throughout the year so that 'the poor cases were gone through.'<sup>1662</sup> In December 1859 it was:

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<sup>1658</sup> Ibid, 7 October 1870.

<sup>1659</sup> Darlington Street Trustees Minutes 1854-1889, 1 September 1872, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1660</sup> Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society*, 251.

<sup>1661</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Leaders Meeting Minute Book 1856-1894, 13 July 1891, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1662</sup> Ibid. For example, 27 January 1873.



Resolved that each of the leaders be requested to prepare a list of his or her poor members and that each should have a grant of 3lb beef, 2oz tea, 1lb sugar and a large loaf for Christmas Day.<sup>1663</sup>

It would be a mistake to assume the automatic conferring of respectability on those who were in receipt of these acts of charity.<sup>1664</sup> Their lot, however, was undoubtedly eased because of their affiliation to Wesleyanism and people outside the fold would have been aware of the benefits attached to membership. They would also have known when these Methodists were receiving visits from the likes of Isaac Jenks. He was, after all, a class leader and, for many years, a designated Society Steward with responsibilities connected to alms distribution.<sup>1665</sup> If not respectability, there was something here about dignity and fringe benefits.<sup>1666</sup>

The very poor were used to showing deference. In relation to the working-classes more generally, Brian Harrison emphasised how individuals could be 'captured' for a respectability which was about the shaping of independent convictions rather than any obeisance.<sup>1667</sup> He particularly used the example of temperance and brought into play the notion of the labour aristocracy: a group with a distinct class identity and leanings towards embourgeoisement.<sup>1668</sup> Darlington Street Wesleyan chapel was the venue of choice for the Band of Hope and other such rallying meetings: so it played its part.<sup>1669</sup> Its role as third space, enabling a deep-rooted relationship between respectability and the fourth dimension, must not be forgotten.

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<sup>1663</sup> Ibid, 19 December 1859.

<sup>1664</sup> Ibid. For details see, for example, entries from 1856 to 1894.

<sup>1665</sup> Ibid, 3 January 1859.

<sup>1666</sup> See, for example: Cunningham, "Leisure and Culture," in *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950: People and their Environment*, vol 2, ed. Francis M.L. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 296. Also, Huggins and Mangan, *Disreputable Pleasures*, xi.

<sup>1667</sup> Brian Harrison, B. *Drink and the Victorians: the Temperance Question in England 1815-1872* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971).

<sup>1668</sup> Henry Pelling, *Popular Politics and Society in Late Victorian Britain* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Limited, 1979 (originally published 1968)). Debate and criticism surround the concept of the labour aristocracy. See Alastair Reid, "Politics and Economics in the Formation of the British Working Class," *Social History* 3, no. 3 (1978): 347-361. Also, H.F. Moorhouse, "The Marxist Theory of the Labour Aristocracy," *Social History* 3, no. 1 (1978): 61-82.

<sup>1669</sup> Darlington Street Leaders' Meeting Minute Book 1856-1894, Wolverhampton Archives.

Allodoxia and its link to third and fourth space can be shown, but there were indications as time went by, of it being stretched to excess. Many examples could be cited. There were the endless discussions about cushions and hassocks.<sup>1670</sup> The need for more leg room in the pews came to dominate meetings and there was the constant desire to 'enhance the ornamentation' of the chapel.<sup>1671</sup> With Methodism's early attachment to outdoor preaching, forebears would have been shocked by this growing emphasis on the need for comfort. A preoccupation with draught can be used to sum up. In 1860 a temporary lobby was constructed on one side of the vestibule to obviate this problem and two half doors were to be placed in the gallery.<sup>1672</sup> By 1870 curtains were removed from around the building, replaced by glass doors.<sup>1673</sup> Early in the twentieth century Mr. Sutton resigned from his membership of the choir due to the discomfort caused by the draught and cold. He could not be dissuaded even when it was decided to pad the two vestry doors with India rubber on his behalf.<sup>1674</sup> The choir, with or without Mr. Sutton, had already received an allodoxic rebuff at the opening of the new chapel. The anthem singing was to be provided by Birmingham's Queen Street Choir or its Snow Hill Choir.<sup>1675</sup> Spatially, respectability appeared to be enhanced by links to the larger city. Home-grown was no longer good enough. Any close relationship between chapel, its core purpose and respectability was showing signs of strain. The buildings were huge, the concerts grand but the classes, so fundamental to Methodism, were starting to struggle:

It shall be urged upon each leader the great necessity of doing all in their power to keep the classes together, and to build up the system of Christian fellowship.<sup>1676</sup>

With that said, there is the final, fourth space caveat. There were the many people, respectable or not, who were still making their way to the Sunday evening prayer meeting

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<sup>1670</sup> Darlington Street Trustees Minutes 1854-1889, 7 March 1859, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1671</sup> Ibid, 26 September 1859.

<sup>1672</sup> Ibid, 24 February 1860.

<sup>1673</sup> Ibid, 12 September 1870.

<sup>1674</sup> Darlington Street and Newhampton Road Trustees Minutes 1863-1911, 13 February 1901, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1675</sup> Darlington Street Chapel, Material Relating to the Opening of the New Chapel, Tuesday, October 29<sup>th</sup> 1901, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1676</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Leaders Meeting Book of Record 1895-1941, 10 October 1901, Wolverhampton Archives.

and who, in 1900, knew why they would be attending ‘the service from eleven to twelve to be held on Good Friday morning with the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper being administered at the close.’<sup>1677</sup> When Brother Aston died and the chapel was shrouded in black, the main point to be made was that his Christian witness had led to his ‘heavenly rest.’ He had ‘gone to be with Christ.’<sup>1678</sup>

Darlington Street Wesleyan chapel did all it could to exude respectability and, undeniably, this quest was influenced by the presence of eminent Methodists such as George Thorneycroft, Isaac Jenks and Henry Hartley Fowler. Other Wesleyan chapels in the Black Country might not have been able to boast of members with national reputations but each town had its industries, businesses and civic responsibilities. Each town, therefore, had its prominent men and they had wives, children and families. Examples to explain can be drawn from just one of the other Wesleyan circuits. Over a period of decades, the Bilston Wesleyans were offering a ‘cordial vote of thanks’ to Mr. John Sankey who, as a local businessman, was called upon to chair meetings and was particularly lauded for his regular and generous donations to the various circuit trust funds.<sup>1679</sup> In January 1872 an embossed sheet was presented to the widow of Benjamin Beebee by the ministers and office holders of the same chapel. Sympathy was extended to:

...the widow and family of our late highly respected and beloved Brother who in the inscrutable Providence of God was, by the hand of death, removed from our midst, where he had been for many years a most useful and honored member and officer...and a zealous coworker in the vineyard of the Lord.<sup>1680</sup>

Benjamin’s wife regularly received ‘a very hearty vote of thanks’ for coordinating the work of the various ladies’ committees.<sup>1681</sup> In Bilston it was Alderman Harper who was the regular attender, treasurer of various committees, speaker at meetings and opener of bazaars.<sup>1682</sup>

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<sup>1677</sup> Ibid, 5 April 1900.

<sup>1678</sup> Darlington Street and Newhampton Road Trustees Minutes 1863-1911, 22 April 1886, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1679</sup> Bilston Wesleyan Circuit Minutes of Trustees Meetings 1876-1907, MC-BW/3/1, 10 May 1880, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1680</sup> Ibid, 25 January 1872.

<sup>1681</sup> Ibid, 28 March 1864, 25 September 1871.

<sup>1682</sup> Ibid, 29 December 1890.

Each Black Country town most certainly had its Wesleyan chapels with the same range of activities and office holders. To highlight these points, examples can also be given for the Black Country towns other than Wolverhampton. On census Sunday in March 1851 Dudley's largest Wesleyan chapel recorded congregations of three hundred and forty-two in the morning, one hundred and sixty-five in the afternoon and four hundred and ninety in the evening. The Primitive Methodist chapel in Dudley's George Street purported to have an evening congregation of five hundred. There were a further five Wesleyan chapels and four Primitive Methodist chapels in the borough.<sup>1683</sup> Stourbridge was a stronghold of the Methodist New Connexion, but its largest Wesleyan chapel still recorded over four hundred attendances on census Sunday while the Ebenezer Primitive Methodist chapel accrued over five hundred.<sup>1684</sup>

Holding office could clearly bring with it status, which was akin to respectability. The number of chapels meant that there were plenty of opportunities for the more ordinary members and the grouping of chapels into circuits, and circuits into districts, widened horizons and influence. This point is particularly emphasised by referring to Primitive Methodism which could not perhaps expect to attract the more eminent urban dwellers. From 1824 the Darlaston Primitive Methodists relied on their circuit committee to discuss all issues and make the decisions.<sup>1685</sup> To be a member meant reprimanding those who had 'fallen from grace.'<sup>1686</sup> It involved inviting preachers to occupy pulpits, assessing whether others had the necessary attributes to preach and arranging services, proselytizing activities and social events.<sup>1687</sup> The travelling preachers were expected to relinquish their journals to be scrutinized by committee members. In September 1825 one such was pardoned for not visiting five families a day as long as he 'promised to mend in future.'<sup>1688</sup> Circuit stewards

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<sup>1683</sup> Parliament, *Census of Great Britain 1851, Religious Worship*, 1853.

<sup>1684</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1685</sup> Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1824-1832, Walsall Archives. Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1832-1838, Walsall Archives. Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1840-1842, Walsall Archives. Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1842-1848, Walsall Archives. Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1850-1853, Walsall Archives. Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1853-1859, Walsall Archives. Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1885-1896, Walsall Archives.

<sup>1686</sup> Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1824-1832, 27 December 1824, Walsall Archives.

<sup>1687</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 June 1826.

<sup>1688</sup> *Ibid.*, 25 September 1825.

were elected to the most prestigious of lay positions and their responsibilities included overseeing the finances and fortunes of all the chapels, making decisions about ministers and manses and representing the circuit at district gatherings.<sup>1689</sup> These district gatherings meant that Darlaston Primitive Methodist circuit stewards would, therefore, meet with their counterparts from, among others, the Bilston Primitive Methodist Circuit. In Bilston the same responsibilities were being carried out and their circuit stewards were being regarded in the same light:

...that by the blessing of the Almighty and the skill of his physician  
our own Brother Clifford may be restored to health.<sup>1690</sup>

Henry Hartley Fowler was, almost inevitably, a circuit steward for the Wolverhampton Wesleyan circuit, but he served alongside a Mr. Bew who had exactly the same responsibilities.<sup>1691</sup> When these men were ill, they received identical letters written by the ministers to wish them a speedy recovery.<sup>1692</sup> When Mr. Bew died, his family was given a 'special' sheet extolling his virtues and offering verses of poetry.<sup>1693</sup> Each chapel, whether Primitive or Wesleyan, had its own society stewards and its own poor stewards. The former had responsibilities directly related to Sunday worship and financial management.<sup>1694</sup> Their elevated role was visible and understood by all the members in the congregation. The latter took charge of matters related to the Lord's Supper and made decisions related to the distribution of alms to the needy. These men worked together to benefit their chapels:

...the poor stewards were asked and kindly consented to assist the  
society stewards in their work at the Agricultural Hall at the Sunday  
Evening services.<sup>1695</sup>

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<sup>1689</sup> Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1853-1859, 17 March 1856, Walsall Archives. A manse was the house of a minister.

<sup>1690</sup> Bilston Primitive Methodist Circuit Minutes of Circuit Committee 1897-1903, 3 September 1900, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1691</sup> Bilston Wesleyan Circuit Minutes of Quarterly meetings 1863-1896, 28 December 1863, Bilston Wesleyan Circuit, MC-BW/1/1, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1692</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1693</sup> Ibid. Bilston Wesleyan Circuit Minutes of Quarterly Meetings 1896-1912, 3 March 1911.

<sup>1694</sup> Toll End Primitive Methodist Society Stewards' Account Book 1881-1927, Primitive Methodism, NC38/3/3/1, Sandwell Archives.

<sup>1695</sup> Darlington Street Chapel Leaders Meeting Book of Record 1895-1941, 14 December 1899, Wolverhampton Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, M-DS/2/4, Wolverhampton Archives.

While they played their part in the creation of community these stewards received affirmation from their fellow members. Bilston Wesleyans were not alone in offering:

...the usual vote of thanks to our stewards for their tireless work on behalf of our chapel and the work of God.<sup>1696</sup>

With or without public expressions of gratitude each Methodist chapel offered opportunities to organists and singers, Sunday School teachers and Sunday School Superintendents. Numerous secretaries and treasurers were required.<sup>1697</sup>

Primitive Methodism came about because of a desire to keep the focus on soteriology and the original proselytizing strategies. Into the final decades of the nineteenth century, it is true that there were still open-air services and camp meetings being held throughout the Black Country.<sup>1698</sup> They were, however, being arranged as spectacle alongside the bazaars and Services of Song so familiar to the Wesleyans.<sup>1699</sup> The temptation to copy strategies appeared irresistible and Primitive Methodists were staking their own claims to respectability. They certainly had their own men of note. At just one meeting, held at Darlaston in 1891, Brother Lawrence was being congratulated on his 'elevation to a position in the Town Council of Wednesbury' while Councillor Brownhill was praised for becoming the mayor of Walsall.<sup>1700</sup> This man's home had been used for many years as the venue for the annual garden party. There were, however, fewer examples and the Primitive Methodists used another strategy to demonstrate their standing in the community: respectability by association. In 1887, the mayor of Wednesbury, who was not a Primitive Methodist, was asked to take the chair at the next concert. He accepted the invitation.<sup>1701</sup> The grandest address in Walsall was that of Bescot Hall. In the same year, a deputation was sent to see its owner in the hope of securing the grounds for a grander-than-ever garden party 'on behalf

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<sup>1696</sup> Bilston Wesleyan Circuit Minutes of Trustees Meetings 1876-1907, 17 March 1890, Bilston Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, MC-BW/3/1, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1697</sup> See, for example, Bilston Wesleyan Circuit Minutes of Quarterly Meetings 1863-1896, Wolverhampton Archives. Bilston Primitive Methodist Circuit Minutes of Circuit Committee 1867-1882, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1698</sup> "Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1885-1896, 7 March 1887, 5 March 1888, 4 June 1888, Walsall Archives.

<sup>1699</sup> Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book 1885-1896, 4 March 1895, Walsall Archives.

<sup>1700</sup> *Ibid*, 14 December 1891.

<sup>1701</sup> *Ibid*, 25 March 1887.

of the circuit deficiency.’ James Slater was a businessman and church warden, but he appeared to have no hesitation in granting the request.<sup>1702</sup> Community, identity, respectability and Methodism’s allodoxic stage and audience: what else offered so much to so many throughout the nineteenth century?

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<sup>1702</sup> Ibid, 6 June 1887.

## Conclusion

### Returning

It is too possible that to some of my readers Methodism may mean nothing more than low pitched gables up dingy streets, sleek grocers, sponging preachers, and hypocritical jargon...That would be a pity.

*Adam Bede*<sup>1703</sup>

This study has set out to place on record the unique role of Methodism during the nineteenth century. It was ubiquitous and some might say pervasive. It influenced the lives of individuals and groups, within both rural and urban settings, in extraordinary ways. While making this clear, the changes over time have been explained and the concepts of sacralisation and desacralisation have been utilized and afforded full exploration because of the extensive use of primary sources related to both Wesleyan and Primitive Methodism. The views of historians have been considered with the works of sociologists, geographers and theologians acting as a conduit for aspects of the thinking. To retrace steps and conclude, therefore:

### The Novel Ending

Allan Pascoe's windows and George Eliot's mirrors enable readers to focus their gaze on the happenings within novels.<sup>1704</sup> While useful, both can encourage the sedentary and the passive: they are about observation. Doors, by contrast, stand at a threshold between spaces: one known and another potentially unfamiliar. They can persuade and coax. They imply movement and allow exploration and investigation. Doors, therefore, help to infiltrate so that place becomes a possibility.<sup>1705</sup> Because of this, they are an ideal metaphor for the relationship between fiction and cultural history. The door is ajar as long as the book remains open but the key to it is the historical enquiry itself.

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<sup>1703</sup> Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 38.

<sup>1704</sup> Pascoe, "Literature as Historical Archive," 373-394. Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 7.

<sup>1705</sup> Henri Lefebvre, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991) 40.



It is Methodism that prompted the unlocking here of the works by Eliot, Bennett, Hocking and Thorneycroft Fowler. Once opened, their novels do, indeed, provide insight. They give credence to a spatial approach for the study of Methodism, while emphasising that it was present in all directions and altered over time. Scrutiny of them points to the nineteenth century significance of community, identity, and respectability with the role of Methodism writ large.

The use made of space by all four novelists is significant in relation to religion generally, and Methodism specifically. George Eliot's *Adam Bede* commences with Dinah's open-air sermon sacralising the village green.<sup>1706</sup> There is intrigue and anticipation. The unnamed traveller is captivated but the Methodists are set apart and regarded by the onlookers with suspicion.<sup>1707</sup> Methodism proper takes place in the town.<sup>1708</sup> Arnold Bennett's *Anna of the Five Towns*, set towards the end of the century, is all about the urban but its opening shows the constraints of third space chapel and the hoped-for freedom of a desacralised outdoors.<sup>1709</sup> Use of space, therefore, highlights developments and this is emphasised by referring to these novels' endings. The eponymous Adam Bede informs the reader that Dinah will no longer proselytise:

...for Conference has forbid the women preaching, and she's given it up, all but talking to people a bit in their homes.<sup>1710</sup>

Opinions differ and if this was somewhat gleeful, the reply from his Methodist brother attempts to redress the balance:

Ah...and a sore pity it was o' Conference; and if Dinah had seen as I did, we'd ha' left the Wesleyans and joined a body that 'ud put no bonds on Christian liberty.<sup>1711</sup>

Seth is directing attention towards the secessions from the parent body and the novel remains informative, therefore, through to its conclusion. The Wesleyans of Bursley, one of

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<sup>1706</sup> Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 15-33.

<sup>1707</sup> Ibid, 20.

<sup>1708</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>1709</sup> Bennett, *Anna of the Five Towns*, 2.

<sup>1710</sup> Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 515.

<sup>1711</sup> Ibid.

Bennett's five towns, bring proceedings to a close by the opening of the bazaar in the Town Hall.<sup>1712</sup> It is described as 'the greatest undertaking of its kind ever known' and the competing spatial interpretations of Methodism immediately become evident.<sup>1713</sup> It is just possible that the venue is being sacralised, but it is equally possible to assume that Wesleyanism itself was being desacralised while contributing to the slow creep towards secularisation.<sup>1714</sup> No one could deny Seth and Dinah their identities as Methodists or the respect that Alderman and Mrs. Sutton thought they were due from the people of Bursley.<sup>1715</sup>

*Adam Bede* and *Anna of the Five Towns* end with Methodist scepticism.<sup>1716</sup> Not so *Her Benny* and *The Farringdons*: success for the Methodist in the former and definite contentment in the latter as Elisabeth returns to the fold.<sup>1717</sup> Silas Hocking's *Her Benny* also reminds that Methodism was just as much a rural phenomenon: there was equal joy to be found in village and urban chapel communities.<sup>1718</sup> Significantly, it is Methodism that offers continuity from one setting to the other when all else is alien. There is a chapel for Benny to feel at home in on both sides of the Mersey: all is familiar.<sup>1719</sup> It is Elisabeth and her Methodist community in *The Farringdons* that give a reminder as to the importance of all types of space. Detail of third space chapel is offered by three of the novelists.<sup>1720</sup> Public space is used by Methodism in each.<sup>1721</sup> It is Thorneycroft Fowler, however, who writes in detail about its domination of the domestic scene and domestic discourse. For every sermon preached there were discussions to follow in the parlour. There were favourite services, preferred hymns and particular prayers to be dissected.<sup>1722</sup> In part because of these, there was the filling of fourth space.<sup>1723</sup> Celebrated in *The Farringdons* and in *Her Benny*, the theology of Methodism is indeed explained.<sup>1724</sup> The complexities of faith are evident in *Adam Bede* and *Anna of the*

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<sup>1712</sup> Bennett, *Anna of the Five Towns*, 139-143.

<sup>1713</sup> Ibid, 139.

<sup>1714</sup> Ibid, 139-1143.

<sup>1715</sup> Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 515. Bennett, *Anna of the Five Towns*, 129.

<sup>1716</sup> Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 515. Bennett, *Anna of the Five Towns*, 143.

<sup>1717</sup> Fowler, *The Farringdons*, 120, 203-214. Hocking, *Her Benny*,

<sup>1718</sup> Hocking, *Her Benny*, 29 & 96.

<sup>1719</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1720</sup> Bennett, *Anna of the Five Towns*, 33-50. Hocking, *Her Benny*, 29-32. Fowler, *The Farringdons*, 10-11.

<sup>1721</sup> Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 15-33. Bennett, *Anna of the Five Towns*, 82-86. Fowler, *The Farringdons*, 59-71.

Hocking, *Her Benny*, 46.

<sup>1722</sup> Fowler, *The Farringdons*, 22-33 and 131.

<sup>1723</sup> Ibid, 132.

<sup>1724</sup> Ibid, 94. Hocking, *Her Benny*, 34.

*Five Towns*.<sup>1725</sup> With hubris on display in Bursley, there also needs to be the reminder that this does not necessarily preclude belief in God.<sup>1726</sup> This could still be present while things temporal were on the increase.<sup>1727</sup>

These novels do also demonstrate a changing Methodism: Methodism that sacralised and desacralised in often nuanced ways.<sup>1728</sup> Reading four novels is like opening four doors. These doors have facilitated a far more thorough search than that available from just a single opening. One thing is clear: the novelists knew that Methodism was influencing the lives of so many people. It was, at the very least, affecting the readers of popular fiction.<sup>1729</sup>

### Content

It speaks volumes that almost all Wolds villages had a chapel built during the century, with a great many having two. There was one, quite literally, around every Black Country street corner and they became ever more grandiose over time. If considered to be sacred spaces, they stood symbolically but also with purpose.<sup>1730</sup> Every chapel meant members and adherents. At a time when a gulf existed in so many ways between the rural and the urban, there are certain points to emphasise. Archival research has shown that Methodism straddled the divide by existing in both countryside and town and by encouraging movement between the two with a community to join when one did so. It did so at a time when similar opportunities were not on offer elsewhere. Explanation can be given by referring to the aptly named Horse Hire Fund. Every circuit, whether Wesleyan or Primitive, eventually came to have one. Its stated aim was to provide the means to convey preachers from their homes to the appointed chapels. Residents of Driffield or Pocklington had reason to visit the surrounding villages and travel between hamlets happened. Rural Methodists were invited

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<sup>1725</sup> Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 515. Bennett, *Anna of the Five Towns*, 50.

<sup>1726</sup> *Ibid*, 50-73.

<sup>1727</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>1728</sup> See, for example, Bennett, *Anna of the Five Towns*, 75-82.

<sup>1729</sup> Kent, *Pulp Methodism*, 7.

<sup>1730</sup> Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 20.

to circuit events in the more populated settlements. One Black Country town could avail itself of the services, literally, of neighbouring town inhabitant.<sup>1731</sup>

Travel to and from the Wolds was not easy and neither was journeying from village to village. Contemporary commentators drew attention to this and so, too, did the Methodists themselves. It was frequently recorded that travel was difficult because of weather conditions and the state of the roads. The Pocklington Primitive Methodists, for example, often reported that preaching appointments were 'neglected' but the reasons given were, relatively often, accepted as unavoidable.<sup>1732</sup> This was the case in relation to a certain Brother King in 1856. He was eventually fully exonerated after failing to attend the Primitive Methodist chapel in Warter. He had been on his way when, due to the storm, 'he could not proceed to his appointment because of the road being impassible on foot.'<sup>1733</sup> Horses were increasingly hired, or on rare occasions purchased, to make movement around the area easier.<sup>1734</sup> A Beverley circuit steward, in 1846, had been asked to:

Buy a horse to possess the following qualities. Strong, sure footed and good temperd [sic]. Capable of going six miles an hour.<sup>1735</sup>

The Pocklington Wesleyans eventually purchased their own gig with, a while later, the Primitive Methodists deciding to procure four traps: two to be kept at Market Weighton and two at Pocklington.<sup>1736</sup> When these preachers arrived, they were encouraged to provide congregations with information as to what was occurring at the other Methodist venues and invitations were extended.<sup>1737</sup> Even the fund itself generated reasons to travel as money-

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<sup>1731</sup> Pocklington Wesleyan Circuit Preachers' Plans 1837-1880, East Riding Archives. Beverley Wesleyan Circuit Quarterly Minute Book 1844-1884, 29 December 1856, East Riding Archives. Darlaston Primitive Methodist Circuit, Quarterly and Committee Meeting Minute Book, Walsall Archives. Bilston Wesleyan Circuit, Minutes of Quarterly Meetings 1863-1896, Wolverhampton Archives.

<sup>1732</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarter Day Minute Book 1839-1844, 17 December 1844, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1733</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarter Day Minute Book 1852-1858, 23 December 1856, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1734</sup> Ibid. Also Pocklington Wesleyan Circuit Minute Book of Quarterly Meetings 1855-1899, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1735</sup> Beverley Wesleyan Circuit Quarterly Minute Book 1844-1884, 23 September 1846, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1736</sup> Pocklington Wesleyan Circuit Minute Book of Quarterly Meetings 1855-1899, September 1863, East Riding Archives. Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarter Day Minute Book 1870-1880, 6 December 1878, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1737</sup> See, for example, Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Minute Book of Quarterly Meetings 1852-1873, 6 June 1860, East Riding Archives.

raising events multiplied.<sup>1738</sup> It also highlights, therefore, the relationship between sacralisation and desacralisation which was played out in so much that took place in the name of Methodism. Effort and inconvenience was, however, still a requirement for many. The Bridlington Primitive Methodists made it very clear that 'no money be paid out of the fund for a journey of less than six miles.'<sup>1739</sup> The travelling preachers were allocated thirty shillings per quarter 'for conveyance to the distant country appointments.'<sup>1740</sup>

Once off the horse and out of the chapel, preachers frequently needed sustenance and hospitality, and this provides another example of how Methodism narrowed divides and broadened horizons. The use of domestic space for Methodist purpose went beyond the prayer and class meeting. The opening of rural homes to visiting preachers and speakers was a sure way to secure appreciation from those who came from beyond the familiar, and it was an oft mentioned kindness in obituaries of both Wesleyan and Primitive Methodists. Elizabeth Padget from a village close to Beverley was the latter and she died in 1862. Her contribution, while reflecting that of others, emphasizes how Methodism infiltrated, educated, and contributed to social dynamics:

Immediately she joined the small society and proved a great ornament and helper. Her neat and comfortable home was always open for the ministers and friends of the cause, because she esteemed their company a privilege and pleasure. Her house was our Bethany home. Often tired in body and depressed in mind, [we] have gone to a friendly meal, and by her kindness and conversation, have been greatly invigorated and encouraged.<sup>1741</sup>

It was not only about the narrowing of divides by visiting. From both the Wolds and the Black Country there was the permanent departure to other areas and even foreign shores:

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<sup>1738</sup> Pocklington Wesleyan Circuit Minute Book of Quarterly Meetings 1855-1899, September 1863, East Riding Archives. Bridlington Wesleyan Circuit Minute Book of Quarterly Meetings 1875-1890, 24 December 1877 and 24 June 1879, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1739</sup> Bridlington Primitive Methodist Circuit Minutes of Quarterly Meetings 1855-1874, December 1871, East Riding Archives. In the earlier days it was also not thought necessary to use the fund during the months of May, June and July 'except in the case of bodily infirmities.' See Driffield Wesleyan Circuit Minutes of Local Preachers' Meetings 1835-1873, 25 June 1838, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1740</sup> Bridlington Primitive Methodist Circuit Minutes of Quarterly Meetings 1875-1880, 18 September 1875, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1741</sup> *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, July 1863, 437.

Our Brother's name shall come off the plan in consequence of him going to America.<sup>1742</sup>

He carried with him his letters of introduction to the Methodism that existed across the Atlantic Ocean.<sup>1743</sup>

### Contention

Communities within communities were formed and choice was available: whether to join and decisions about becoming a Wesleyan or Primitive Methodist. A contention throughout has been that space carried with it symbolic significance. There was then the turning of space into place because it was imbued with meaning.<sup>1744</sup> If Methodists were in it, they were showing their importance as a group whether outside, inside a chapel or occupying some other building. For individuals the repercussions were just as great and homes could play an important part. Conversion, membership and the filling of time meant that identities were formed and respectability, perceived or real, became a possibility. There were inevitably changes over time and it is the interpretation of these in relation to sacralisation and desacralisation that can contribute to the debates related to the long-term fortunes of religion in society.

Illustrative of these changes are two Black Country happenings. On a Saturday in the July of 1856, the *Brierley Hill Advertiser* reported on the 'Grand Nonconformist Sunday School Demonstration.'<sup>1745</sup> It took place in the town's Marketplace. Each chapel community (and they were almost all of Methodist persuasion) was gathered as a separate entity and identity was assured by the carrying of a banner bearing a suitable motto during the procession. Decisions had been made in advance about the order in which they should walk. Prayers were said and hymns sung as they gathered and while they processed. Streets and venue were sacralized as three thousand children, their teachers and the onlookers gathered. The

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<sup>1742</sup> Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarter Day Minute Book 1852-1858, 4 March 1857, East Riding Archives.

<sup>1743</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1744</sup> Certeau de, *The Practice of Everyday Life*.

<sup>1745</sup> *Brierley Hill Advertiser*, July 12, 1856, 1.

scene was described as 'imposing.' Respectability appeared to be on display amidst the 'greatest spirit of rejoicing.' Thanks were extended to the local dignitary who had given his permission for the event to take place. Garlands of flowers were strewn and there were silk flags and gold lettering. 'What an influence' was the opening remark from one of the men on the platform and it was the National Anthem which was sung immediately before the benediction was pronounced. All were then seated for the grand tea with each child being supplied with a large bun.

In July 1888, the Cradley Heath Primitive Methodist Sunday School treat took place. Hymns were still sung as the procession left the chapel on its way to the field. The chapel was still identifiable because of the new banner that had been made. Once on the field, the emphasis, however, was most definitely on the fun that was to be had. Mr. Yarnold had been requested to make his cakes better than the previous year and six balls were purchased for the sports which were to take place. A policeman's presence was requested. Methodist community and Methodist identity were discernible and so too was respectability, as the children were accompanied by teachers and a vote of thanks was offered to the two gentlemen who had procured the field.<sup>1746</sup> The scenario was, however, becoming more complex. These examples, along with the evidence provided throughout the thesis, emphasise that desacralisation of Methodism itself might well have been on display as the sacred was replaced by entertainment.

These events took place in urban settings with actors and audience in abundance. Village Methodism needed to visit the town if it wished to participate on the larger stage.

### **Context**

With novels being published contemporaneously with nineteenth century Methodist activity, there then came the twentieth century historians who recognised its importance. E.P. Thompson and Eric Hobsbawm are two such whose claims have already been noted.<sup>1747</sup> Social and cultural historians, writing towards the end of that century and into the twenty-

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<sup>1746</sup> Cradley Heath Grainger's Lane Primitive Chapel Teachers' Meeting Minutes 1886-1892, 24 July 1888, Methodism, N/M/CR/CC/8456, Dudley Archives and Local History Centre, Dudley.

<sup>1747</sup> See Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*. Also, Eric Hobsbawm, *Labouring Men* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1979 originally published 1964).

first, have been interested in the lives of ordinary people and this has been added to by those at the forefront of the spatial turn.<sup>1748</sup> Methodism, however, has not been their preoccupation. This study has scrutinized Methodist use of four spaces to offer comment on its significance to an understanding of nineteenth century society and the individuals within it. There were, after all, Methodists everywhere. A focus on community, identity and respectability emphasises the significance of this religious movement. Analysis of the subtle changes to its use of space reflects Methodism's gradual shift in emphasis and ultimately its fortunes. Perceptions of success could signify worrying trends. Dominic Erdozain pleads for the theology to be included in any investigation. The removal of soteriology from Methodist activity and academic study of it is certainly significant. One further comment can be made: whatever was happening to dilute the spiritual quotient, there were still, at the turn of the twentieth century, people who were having their fourth space filled because of an affiliation to Methodism. Even though these people of the fourth dimension were living in the East Riding Wolds and the Black Country, it is, of course, still possible to assert that secularization was taking place during the final decades of the nineteenth century. The process was not, however, complete and sacralization and desacralization continued to ebb and flow even if the tide was slowly retreating. The role of Methodism itself can help to 'narrow the abyss' between Callum Brown and Dominic Erdozain.<sup>1749</sup>

Methodist or no Methodist...it's the flesh and blood folks are made on as makes the difference. Some cheeses are made 'o skimmed milk, and some o' new milk, and it's no matter what you call 'em, you may tell which is which by the look and the smell.

*Adam Bede*<sup>1750</sup>

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<sup>1748</sup> Thompson, *The Cambridge Social History of Britain* vol 3. Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978). Gunn and Morris, *Identities in Space*. Croll, *Civilizing the Urban*.

<sup>1749</sup> Harvey, "Narrowing the Abyss," 29-41. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain*. Erdozain, *The Problem of Pleasure*.

<sup>1750</sup> Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 93-94.



The aroma of Methodism was everywhere. Due in part to its own actions, ever so gradually, it was changing and becoming less potent. It was turning itself inside-out by turning from the outside-in.

## Appendix

### The East Riding Wolds

I should have thought there would hardly be such a thing as a Methodist to be found around here. You're all farmers, aren't you?

*Adam Bede*<sup>1751</sup>

Acreage in 1841: 321,000<sup>1752</sup>

#### Distribution of Parishes by Size.<sup>1753</sup>

<u>Acreage</u>	<u>Number of Parishes</u>
1-1000	4
1001-1500	6
1501-2000	8
2001-3000	15
3001-4000	11
4001-5000	8
5001-7000	17
7001 +	<u>10</u>
Total	79

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<sup>1751</sup> Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 17.

<sup>1752</sup> United Kingdom, Parliament, *Census Enumerators' Books, 1841*, Vols. 3-5, Cmd J301.H65Pop (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1970).

<sup>1753</sup> Ibid.

Parishes by Population Size in 1841<sup>1754</sup>

<u>Size of Population</u>	<u>Number of Parishes</u>
Fewer than 250	12
251-500	27
501-750	20
701-1000	5
1001-2000	9
2001-3000	2
3000 +	<u>4</u>
Total	79

Population Figures for the Rural Wolds<sup>1755</sup>

<u>1801</u>	<u>1831</u>	<u>1851</u>	<u>1861</u>	<u>1871</u>	<u>1881</u>
22,141	31,897	39,905	41,640	41,300	41,152

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<sup>1754</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1755</sup> Parliament, *Census Enumerators' Books 1801-1881*, 1970. With the removal of the largest towns from the analysis, it becomes clear that the rural Wolds reached a peak population for the 1861 census. During the years up to 1881, the population remained almost stationary, while in many parishes, it declined considerably. Sex ratio is defined as the number of males per one hundred females in a population. In the rural parishes it was 106.9 in 1831 and 106.4 in 1881. This can be explained by the need for agricultural workers. The ratio was higher in close parishes. Ganton's ratio was 120 in 1831. In 1881, Boynton's ratio was 136.4. Parliament, *Census Enumerators' Books 1801-1881*, 1970. Rural depopulation after 1851 consisted of both push and pull factors. There was demand for labour from the expanding industries and coalfields. The decrease in population at Fridaythorpe was attributed to the migration of labourers to both iron and quarrying districts. The East Riding railways were an accelerating factor. Many migrated to obtain better wages. The situation is documented for the townships of Sledmere and Langtoft and for the parish of Cowlam. See Parliament, *Census Enumerators' Books*, 1871, Vol 16.

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Cradley Heath Grainger's Lane Primitive Chapel Teachers' Meeting Minutes 1886-1892, N/M/CR/CC/8456.

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Quarry Bank New Street Methodist Trustees Minutes, 1899-1914, N/U/QB/NS/8476.

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Sedgley Tipton Street Primitive Methodist Treasurer's Accounts, 1894-1927, N/M/SE/TS/8569.

Sedgley Tipton Street Primitive Methodist Trustees and Chapel Committee Minutes, 1884, N/M/SE/TS/8569.

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Beverley Wesleyan Circuit Book, 1841-1857, MRB/1/10.

Beverley Wesleyan Circuit Chapel Building Books 1828-1850, MRB/1/57.

Beverley Wesleyan Circuit Local Preachers' Minute Book 1868-1880, MRB/1/122.

Beverley Wesleyan Circuit, Newbald Chapel Treasurer's Account Book 1855-1918, MRB/1/108.

Beverley Wesleyan Circuit Poor Fund Account Book 1868-1897, MRB/1/17.  
Beverley Wesleyan Circuit Preachers' Plans, 1824-1900, MRB/1/19.  
Beverley Wesleyan Circuit Quarterly Minute Book 1844-1884, MRB/1/121.  
Beverley Wesleyan Circuit Removal Register 1865-1885, MRB/1/36.  
Beverley Wesleyan Circuit Report to the Education Committee 1860, MRB/1/69.  
Beverley Wesleyan Circuit Schedule Book 1836-1837, MRB/1/21.  
Beverley Wesleyan Circuit Schedule Book 1837-1844, MRB/1/22.  
Beverley Wesleyan Circuit Schedule Book 1844-1859, MRB/1/23.  
Beverley Wesleyan Circuit Schedule Book 1865, MRB/1/24.  
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Bridlington Wesleyan Circuit Schedule of Trust Property 1860-1872, MRQ/1/31.  
Bridlington Wesleyan Circuit School Statistics Book 1869-1875, MRQ/1/37.  
Bridlington Wesleyan Circuit Seat Rent Account Book 1835-1873, MRQ/2/21.  
Bridlington Wesleyan Circuit, Sewerby Chapel Account Book 1825-1906, MRQ/1/55.  
Bridlington Wesleyan Circuit Stewards' Account Book 1861-1896, MRQ/1/16.  
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Driffeld Primitive Methodist Circuit, Langtoft Chapel Seat Letting Book 1853, East Riding Archives, MRD/2/24/5.



Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Leaders' Meeting Minute Book 1869-1872, East Riding Archives, MRD/2/2/13.

Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit, Letters 1878, East Riding Archives, MRD/2/7/2.

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Driffield Primitive Methodist Circuit Minute Book of Quarterly Meetings 1874-1880, East Riding Archives, MRD/2/2/6.

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#### Londesborough Family Records, ERL.

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Market Weighton Wesleyan Circuit Quarterly Schedule 1860-1880, MRM/1/19.  
Market Weighton Wesleyan Circuit Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1876-1880, MRM/1/1.  
Market Weighton Wesleyan Circuit, Shipton Chapel Book 1844-1880, MRM/1/40.  
Market Weighton Wesleyan Circuit Sunday School Register 1818, MRM/2/10.  
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Parish of Bainton Curate's Memorandum Book, PE/5/35.  
Parish of Bainton Vestry Minutes 1833-1901, PE/5/19.  
Parish of Bempton Vestry Minute Book 1855-1918, PE/13/8/13.  
Parish of Bishop Burton Church Wardens' Disbursements and Vestry Minutes 1820-1861, PE140/11.  
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Parish of Etton List of Householdors 1838, PR3081  
Parish of Folkton Vestry Minute Book 1854-1917, PR/2776.  
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Parish of Fridaythorpe Parish Book 1841, PR/1677.  
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Parish of Kilham Church Wardens Book 1833-1880, PR/2029.  
Parish of Kirkburn Vestry Minute Book 1856-1932, PE24/13.  
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Parish of Sledmere Church Wardens' Account Book 1827-1871, PE/119.  
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- Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Account Books 1820-1870, MRP/4/40-48.
- Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Baptismal Register 1830-1870, MRP/4/1-2.
- Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit, Bishop Wilton Chapel Stewards Account Book 1870-1890, MRP/4/55.
- Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Certificates of Registration of Places of Worship 1861, MRP/4/76.
- Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Chapel Stewards' Account Books 1866-1877, MRP/4/53.
- Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Class Book 1852-1873, MRP/4/36.
- Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Committee Meeting Minute Book 1854-1880, MRP/4/7.
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- Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Declaration of Doctrine by Candidates for Preaching 1855-1911, MRP/4/77.
- Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit House Account Book 1868, MRP/4/64.
- Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit, Huggate Chapel Seat Rent Book 1870, MRP/4/70.
- Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit, Huggate Chapel Stewards' Account Books 1863-1886, MRP/4/52.
- Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Membership Books 1832-1848, MRP/4/3-4.
- Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Minute Book of Leaders' Meeting 1832-1854, MRP/4/5.
- Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Minute Book of Leaders' Meeting 1854-1880, MRP/4/6.
- Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Minute Book of Teachers' Meetings 1878-1881, MRP/4/24.
- Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarter Day Book 1839-1844, MRP/4/9.
- Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarter Day Minute Book 1845-1851, MRP/4/10.
- Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarter Day Minute Book 1852-1858, MRP/4/11.
- Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarter Day Minute Book 1859-1863, MRP/4/12.
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- Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Reports 1850-1859, MRP/4/27.
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- Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Reports 1870-1879, MRP/4/29.
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- Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Roll Book 1850-80, MRP/4/35.
- Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit, Shipton Chapel Collection Journal 1876-1890, MRP/4/60.
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- Pocklington Primitive Methodist Circuit Trustees Minute Book 1847-1859, MRP/4/21.
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### Pocklington Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, MRP.

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Pocklington Wesleyan Circuit, Nunburnholme Chapel Accounts 1852-1879, MRP/1/54.  
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### Englesea Brook Chapel & Museum Collection

Membership Ticket of Joseph Brailsford, November 1889, Membership Tickets, ENBPM:2006.096.

### National Portrait Gallery

Painting of Sir. Henry Campbell-Bannerman and Henry Hartley Fowler by Sir. Leslie Ward, 1892, Primary Collection, NPG6182.  
Photograph of Henry Hartley Fowler by London Stereoscopic Photographic Company, 1890, Photographs Collection, NPGx136380.  
Portrait of Henry Hartley Fowler by Benjamin Stone, 1897, Photographs Collection, NPGx16026.

## North Yorkshire Record Office

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### Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit, R/M/Sc.

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Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit Leaders Meeting Minute Book 1847-1856, R/M/Sc/1/2/8.  
Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit Local Preachers Meeting Book 1835-1841, R/M/Sc/1/2/1.  
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Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit Quarterly Meeting Minute Book 1853-1861, R/M/Sc/1/2/11.  
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Scarborough Primitive Methodist Circuit State of Chapels 1842-1851, R/M/Sc/1/2/10.

#### Scarborough Wesleyan Methodist Circuit, R/M/Sc.

Scarborough Wesleyan Circuit Local Preachers Meeting Minute Book 1843-1874, R/M/Sc/1/1/9.  
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Scarborough Wesleyan Circuit Stewards Committee Minute Book 1874-1921, R/M/Sc/1/1/17.

#### **Sandwell Archives**

##### Primitive Methodism, NC38.

Toll End Primitive Methodist Class Contribution Book 1864-1932, NC38/2/1/3.  
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Toll End Primitive Methodist Managing Committee Minute Book 1861-1863, NC38/2/2/1.  
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Toll End Primitive Methodist Society Teachers and Leaders Meeting Minute Book 1861-1865, NC38/2/1/2.

#### **University of Hull**

##### Estate Records, DD.

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