

1-1-1981

The History and Growth of the Winstanley Free Methodist Church, Wigan, Lancashire, England

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Recommended Citation

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THE HISTORY AND GROWTH OF THE
WINSTANLEY FREE METHODIST CHURCH,
WIGAN, LANCASHIRE, ENGLAND

A Research Paper
Presented to
the Faculty of
Western Evangelical Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
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May 1981

*Approved.
W. Stanley Johnson
May, 1981*

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Free Methodism in England is ten years old. One of the reasons for writing this work is to provide some relevant historical data about the work of one of the churches in the English District.

Winstanley is one of the smallest churches in England, and yet it is representative of the growth struggle experienced by many such establishments.

Eighteenth century England was faced with corruption in society at many levels, not the least being within the church, as its leaders failed to give the spiritual leadership which was so desperately needed. Wesley and the "Methodist" people were used to providing some spiritual direction to a struggling England.

The twentieth century has also witnessed a decline in spiritual leadership within the establishment of organized religion in England. The Free Methodist Church has been born in that society, and is providing a strong Methodist witness within a land which has recently not been very concerned with anything too spiritual. Free Methodism is declaring a strong and attractive statement of the possibility of a living holiness.

The aim of this study is to demonstrate some of the difficulties of a small church involved in this ministry. It will show minus experiences as well as plus experiences. It will also attempt to make suggestions which will be helpful to the church for future development

and growth as it observes these facets of its history.

Struggles in life and in the church are many, and that is not of so much concern here. Rather to be concerned with what is to be done with these struggles and how to learn and grow from them. Winstanley people have known what it is to struggle greatly with personal relationships within the body; with financial commitments; program developing and goal setting. On the whole they have dealt with them well because they have been constant in prayer. God desires that His servants should succeed, and whilst Winstanley has been slow to see too much success in terms of conversion growth, it is now beginning to witness a change in this facet of its life.

B. T. Roberts, the spiritual forefather of all Free Methodists, was convinced that being a success does not come by chance in the work of the Lord. He wrote in his book, Fishers of Men, "He who works for God never loses the fruit of his labors. Failure is clearly beyond the range of possibility."¹ The church at Winstanley is working hard and should be encouraged by this statement towards expecting success under the influence of God's indwelling Spirit.

THE PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem

The problem with this study was: (1) to examine factors which brought the Winstanley Free Methodist Church into existence and which have brought it to present growth. (2) To clarify and understand

¹Benjamin T. Roberts, Fishers of Men (Rochester, New York: B. T. Roberts, 1892), p. 18.

approaches which have been made with regard to church growth, and to observe how these have been applied in the church. (3) In conclusion to suggest possible directions for future ministry and growth.

Justification of the Study

A church without a sense of purpose and some clear-cut goals toward which it will work may occasionally show some evidence of growth and there will perhaps be people coming to Christ, but often such a church is standing still or even losing ground.

Many people believe that a congregation is accomplishing much when all of its programs are being well attended and when all financial demands are being met. Donald McGavran makes an interesting observation which addresses this point:

Many churches feel that they are carrying on activities which may sometime or other lead to church growth. They are quite comfortable in the belief that their efforts will eventually lead to growth. Whether or not activities lead to growth right now really doesn't matter. Once a church gets saddled with this attitude, it is almost certain not to grow.²

A church must have its sights firmly and realistically set, no matter how small its membership may be. The initial goal of this small church was to reach the estate in which it is situated for Christ. This study will make clear just how well this goal has been reached; what have been the peculiar difficulties attached to this work; where the church is heading as it enters the second decade of its life.

Limitations of the Study

This study is a brief overview of one of the Free Methodist Churches begun in England ten years ago. It will attempt to observe

²Donald A. M. McGavran, and Win C. Arn, How to Grow a Church (Glendale, California: Gospel Light Publications, 1973), pp. 43-44.

some very practical aspects of church growth as they relate to the establishing of a new, small, evangelical church community. Comparative graphs will be included which will allow for some observations to be made in the area of attendance figures, but the main body of the work will be confined to the history and growth experiences of this one church.

Assumptions of the Study

The main assumption is that the Winstanley Free Methodist Church was established by God for the express purposes of bringing lost souls into a saving knowledge of Christ and of providing an evangelical environment suitable for discipleship and maturity.

Some members of some congregations are not convinced that churches are meant to grow. Others by their words say they believe that churches should grow but they are either unwilling to "pay the price" for growth or are not prepared spiritually to do the work God has called them to. Acts 11:22-24 says about Barnabas that he "began to encourage them all with a resolute heart to remain true to the Lord; for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord." This suggests the necessity of looking at the situation of the Winstanley Free Methodist Church with eyes of faith, seeing in the community the potential of bringing many who do not have a saving relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Winstanley Free Methodist Church, if it is to be true to its calling, must come to the position of which Paul spoke when he said, "I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some."

(1 Corinthians 9:22). The urgent and important task is that of evangelism. The very purpose for the church's existence is to be the means of saving some.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

In order to better communicate there needs to be a clarification of what is meant by certain terms used, and so the following definitions are given:

Church Growth

This refers to a concept of evangelism which includes concern and prayer for enlisting people for Christ, incorporating them into existing churches so these churches increase numerically, and also to the process of planting new congregations all under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

Sect

This is a "Christian" denomination that is narrow or bigoted so as to be exclusive in the matter of de-Christianizing other churches and claiming to be the "only true church."

Cult

A non-Christian religious organization or system of worship of a deity which denies traditional or orthodox views on the Bible, Creation, the deity of Christ, which may even seek recognition as a Christian body or denomination.

Liberal

A Christian or pseudo-Christian who is not bound by orthodox beliefs about God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Bible, or salvation,

especially pertaining to those who deny some or most evangelical tenets and support the National and World Council of Churches.

Evangelical

A Christian adhering to conservative or moderate religious views who holds traditional or orthodox beliefs about the Bible, God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, salvation, and the Church, basing his theology on the Bible as the Word of God.

Society Meeting

An official business meeting of a local congregation of the Free Methodist Church with the pastor normally presiding, composed of all full members of the church who are present as voting members.

Official Board

Elected officials of the local congregation of the Free Methodist Church (paragraph 402 of the Discipline, 1979) with the pastor normally presiding, which body is amenable to the Society Meeting.

ANALYSIS OF THE COMMUNITY

Metropolitan Borough of Wigan

The Metropolitan Borough of Wigan is the largest geographical district in the Metropolitan County of Greater Manchester encompassing some 51,461 acres. The Borough is an amalgamation of fourteen local authorities: Abram Urban District Council (U. D. C.); Ashton-in-Makerfield U. D. C.; Aspull U. D. C.; Atherton U. D. C.; Billinge and Winstanley U. D. C.; Leigh Metropolitan Borough Council (M. B. C.); Orrell U. D. C.; Standish U. D. C.; Tyldesley U. D. C.; Wigan Civic Borough Council C. B. C.; Wigan Rural District Council R. D. C.

Wigan is located to the extreme West of the Greater Manchester County in the Southwest of the County formerly known as Lancashire. It is a town that has known the hustle and bustle of the industrial revolution and has thrived in its main industries of coal mining and weaving. In more recent years major industries have seen decline and the town has experienced more than its fare share of unemployment. If the local propaganda is accurate then it would appear that this trend is being halted and new industry and employment is being offered. Indeed it would appear that unemployment in the area is currently significantly above the national average and many of the firms in the old industrial area of the Borough are operating and being replaced by newer and more efficient complexes which are at last beginning to provide more job opportunities.

The name of Wigan has produced a number of music hall jokes which, in the writer's humble opinion are unnecessary. Wigan is not, as tradition would have us believe, a dull and totally built up area. There are many extensive stretches of delightful open country and the many public parks, with bowling and tennis, etc. provide recreational facilities. The town also supports a variety of other sporting activities, including a soccer team competing in one of the major leagues of the National Soccer Association; a first division Rugby League team; an International swimming pool; a number of golfing facilities and even a small scale zoo.

"Progress with unity" is the motto of the Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council and is exemplified by the way in which the fourteen former authorities work towards improving life within the district. Certainly it is true that the Borough Council is keen to develop this

town of approximately 85,000 people into an area which will eventually break free from the stigma that had for so long been its cross--that of the coal-dirt, cloth-capped man with little more intelligence than the most primitive of God's Creation. It has never been a true picture, and it would appear that the Council is succeeding, at last, to dispel this vaudeville image.

The area of Wigan is full of historical interest and has real potential in education, industry, culture and medical services. Whilst the inner city area is industrialized, travel in any direction for about ten minutes will take you into beautiful countryside, and provide access to motor ways which will lead either to the lovely Lake District or the dynamic delights of the Paek District.

Despite the decline in the coal and cotton industries there has been a large diversification of industry. Many people are now engaged in employment such as food, engineering, plastics, and textiles. New industrial sites are being developed around the district as a result of the excellent communications Wigan enjoys with the country as a whole.

The area of Winstanley is located on the Southwest side of the town and has an immediate population in the region of 15,000. The Free Methodist Church is located on a new, developing housing estate and to date of writing is the only evangelical witness to the community. The only other church in the community is a Roman Catholic church. There is an Anglican Church about one mile from the community and a number of very small non-conformist churches within a five mile radius (including Methodist, belonging to the denomination from which many of the Winstanley membership came).

Greater Manchester County

This was organized, as previously stated, in the year 1974, and contains the Borough of Wigan. Greater Manchester is a centre of transport and communications, linking the area by sea and by air with all parts of the globe. Its rail link ties in with the nations system and within a matter of four or five hours a person can be transported by this means to almost anywhere from the Northern most tip of Scotland to the Southern most reaches of the Southwest coast. The great motor ways M6 (running North/South); M62; M56 (running East/West) are first class systems which enable the motorist to get to any destination within the United Kingdom with relative ease.

It was in this densely populated part of the Northwest of England that the Industrial Revolution was born. Just over two hundred years ago, men of vision like Sir Richard Arkwright, James Hargreaves, and Samuel Crompton applied their genius to inventing machines which vastly improved the productivity of the region's traditional cotton industry.

They may not have realized it at the time, but they also paved the way for all forms of mass production in every industry throughout the world. Though based mainly on its cotton and coal industries, the cities, towns and villages which now make up the County of Greater Manchester quickly established a joint reputation as the workshop of the world, able to provide everything from a pin to a locomotive in the time it took to complete an order form.

Inflation has taken its toll and this now densely populated County (2.7 million) is now feeling the pinch of having to economize in

every strata of life. Yet there prevails an optimism which reflects the spirit of Lancashire folk. Their ability to remain with the task in hand is really quite remarkable. It is against this background that the Free Methodist Church was born, and but for the tenacity and forceful drive of the faithful would not have survived for any great length of time here, and possibly not at all in any other part of the Country.

The town of Wigan is predominantly a Roman Catholic town, but the work of the few evangelical churches is beginning to have its effect, and the birth of the Free Methodist Church has given some renewed vigor to this part of the vineyard. Wigan is a hard place (if that is ever the correct phrase to use) in which to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and for that reason, when souls are won to the Lord it is so very rewarding to observe.

Chapter 2

WIGAN AND THE BEGINNING OF FREE METHODISM

1970 was a critical year for the people who were to become the founding members of the Winstanley Church. Denominational pressures inside the Methodist Church were increasing as talks intensified between the hierarchy of the Anglican and Methodist Churches.

The grass-roots membership was constantly being asked to consider statements involving doctrinal issues which appeared to be working towards compromise. Such areas of issue involved the authority of Scripture, the Sacraments, Baptism, and others. After much prayer and thought the extremely difficult decision was taken to resign membership of the Methodist Church, and to seek God's guidance for a possible future ministry.

At this time this same group of people individually informed Pastor Ronald Taylor of the decision which each had made to leave the established Methodist Church and his reply was that he had made a decision also. His decision was to resign his position as a Methodist Minister. After further talks we discovered the fact that he had been requested to form a new Free Methodist Church. We were particularly delighted because we had been convinced that the Methodist tradition and distinctives were God given and that God had not removed those distinctives or His commission to spread the doctrine of Holiness throughout the land.

We were also aware of the sort of opposition we would have to face. It came swift as a bolt of lightning upon our resignation from offices in the local church and our withdrawal as Lay Ministers for the Methodist Church.

"Sheep Stealing"

It was not long before a group of about nineteen began to pray and have fellowship together on a regular basis. Many people accused Pastor Taylor and others of "sheep stealing." Such people were certainly ignorant of the true circumstances of our coming out of the established Methodist Church. Each person in our newly formed group had been definitely directed of the Lord and each had a personal testimony to that effect.

Redemption Ground

As the weeks passed we were faced with the prospects of finding land upon which we could build a church. In a wonderful way the Lord provided land in an ideal position and at a price which was well below the normal cost of land at that particular time. So absolutely sure of the fact of God's provision for us and that it was to be our commission to reach the lost for Jesus in that area we were deeply moved to call the ground "redemption ground." Our small group stood on the very area of land on which the first Free Methodist Church in England would be built and we prayed. It was a deeply moving experience and one which none of us will ever forget. The land was duly claimed for the Lord and the vision was, at last, given hands and feet. In a matter of weeks we had purchased the land, parsonage, and the church was being erected. The testimonies of how the Lord helped in time of planning

and design, and in numerous other ways are so many that, probably a separate account of these could be published.

The new church was opened in November, 1971 and, although we were initially only a few in number, it was not long before we saw spiritual and numerical growth. Of course a number of major issues confronted us and we had constantly to throw ourselves upon the Lord for direction, and His wisdom in discerning many new things.

Probably the most problematic area lay in the fact that this small group of people were now out of their main-line churches and thrown together in their own new building. In the old settings we had all experienced what may have been observed by some as mounting almost to persecution. The Gospel message, which we observed in evangelical terms, was not regarded with any degree of sympathy or enthusiasm. In fact it was seen as being just one of many ideas and to claim, as we did, that this was the Biblical position was seen to be positively uncharitable. At every turn, it seemed, there was strong opposition to such people, and yet it was those very people who held the positions of responsibility within the churches. Those who poured out their scorn were often the ones who would have little to offer in terms of their time and talents. Simply stated those "evangelicals" were allowed to get on with it so long as it did not interfere with the "ordinary" flow of things.

In short, then, in our previous situations we experienced, in no small measure, some broad opposition to the standards we represented. I am convinced that this sort of opposition placed us into much closer fellowship than we may have otherwise experienced. We united in prayer for each other's efforts and in concern for the furtherance of the

Gospel, initially in those churches. With the formation of the Winstanley Free Methodist Church this group of very different people (personality wise) were at last thrown together without any opposition. At first, this proved to be quite a problem and there was certainly an unspoken power struggle which faced us all. We rejoice that the Lord had His hand upon the whole concern, and soon differences in temperament were being moulded into one unified body of people trying to serve the Lord on this new housing estate.

The paradox of Christian living is that the Redeemed of the Lord still have their problems and confrontations; their trials and temptations; their growing pains. At the same time the wonderful and endless resources of the power of the Holy Spirit of God is constantly made available in the relentless efforts of God in the equipping of His saints for the temporal battle on earth. Further problems were to face this original group of believers in the new church, and yet as the difficulties were honestly faced God, in His Mercy, enabled victory after victory to be realized.

The whole corporate body had the real problem of facing a new situation and the very new challenge of establishing an evangelical church in an unchurched area. None, in positions of leadership had (to my knowledge) ever undergone any leadership training (with the possible exception of the Pastor) and few, if any, had any understanding of managerial responsibilities. In the cool light of day it can only be said that for this little church even to get off the ground was an outstanding miracle by the Grace of God. But get off the ground it certainly did. Fellowship became rich. Prayer was fruitful and encouraged faith. Sunday worship was truly "in the Spirit." The future, at last, began

to look encouraging.

A perplexing thought has been that numbers have never increased to anything great, but God has seen fit to build up the body of believers and take from its ranks those who have been able to serve Him in other parts of the vineyard, and through their various ministries, many others have been won to the Kingdom. Of those who have remained, and those who have joined the fellowship, it must be said that they have accepted their responsibilities well and the Lord certainly is using them in many different roles, not the least of which is that of supporting those who are scattered abroad in His service by their prayers, letters, and financial help.

The road has, at times, been very uphill and difficulties have arisen, but it is quite clear to any observant person, that God has truly directed this work and in this year of 1981 is permitting very real growth to be experienced.

Community Impact

In terms of visibility the Church had a good impact in the local community. The structure had to be designed in such a way as to be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. Plans submitted were approved and the structure was built and in use within six months. The Church was, at the time of building (1971), the only church on the estate, and that in itself was a good impact.

Some of the people encountered in door-to-door evangelism were of the opinion that the church, because of its American connection, was to be treated with some skepticism, and this appeared to do mainly with the type of saturation outreach which the Mormons had done in the area.

The Sunday School had a good impact and influence. Through the take-home material of the children parents began to take interest in what was being taught, and some actually asked questions about the Church. It must be said, however, that this golden opportunity was not used to the best advantage in reaching the parents.

Outreach ministry, in the form of door-to-door work and open air preaching in the local shopping precinct has also declared the presence of the Church. In that regard the Church is having a good impact.

The Scriptures encourage Christians to "test the spirits to see if they be of God." (John 4:1, RSV). The first decade of the Church's life in Winstanley has been a matter of the community doing that kind

testing of the Church. There is now a greater acceptability and a belief that the Church has shown itself to be trustworthy, and not a cult. Much is yet to be accomplished in terms of community impact, but families have responded to the Savior who were originally confronted by door-to-door ministry, and the future will, in part, depend upon these families, in turn, reaching out in love to their neighbors.

Chapter 3

DISCOVERY, DECISION, DEVELOPMENT

When Mr. Trinder assumed the role of the Superintendent he was also the Pastor of the Old Park Free Methodist in Belfast, Northern Ireland. This area is situated in one of the most troubled areas in that unfortunate city. Mr. Trinder now has his conference home and office situated in a beautiful rural area of Cheshire. His home is well located with easy access to major freeways and has ready access to Manchester airport so that he is within easy reach of any one of the English churches by road and can quickly be on board an airplane which would whisk him to Ireland within a matter of minutes.

Free Methodism Begins in England

Mr. Trinder became Superintendent of the United Kingdom District in 1968. The Free Methodist Church has launched a campaign of advertising in the Christian Press in England. At the same time Mr. Trinder had involved himself with the International Revival Convention in Southport, Lancashire (a Holiness Convention).

This offered the possibility to have a publicity stand for the Free Methodist Church, and interestingly enough the first contact that I made with the people who were eventually to become Free Methodists were people that I met at the Southport Convention.

First contacts were made with Ronald Taylor and people from what was formerly the Garstang Circuit in the Methodist Church. So it was that the real beginnings of the work stemmed from personal contacts at that Convention. Those enquiries eventually became more serious when the

Anglican/Methodist conversations concerning the union of the two bodies were coming to a climax, and when other things were happening in the Methodist Church. It was a compounding of several things which led the people to feel that some alternative should be considered, and of course, the Free Methodist Church became one of the first options.

Growth Potential

Speak of potential and growth to any Free Methodist Pastor in the United Kingdom and you are immediately met with people who are eager to share their feelings. Mr. Trinder is no exception at this point. As I spoke to him I was aware of excitement tinged with sadness because, whilst the potential is apparent the resources are not quite so apparent, but the optimism grows: "I think that the potential is quite enormous. If we had the kind of resources that are necessary there probably would be as many doors to go through as we could provide personnel to enter."

This is the sort of excitement which grips the Pastors of the United Kingdom District, and not without reason as Mr. Trinder is quick to point out:

The church at Frodsham is an excellent example of what can be done today by going into a situation where there isn't even a single contact, but into an area where, after survey, a need is recognized for evangelical witness. This church has grown from the Rev. 'Skip' Ball and his wife, Linda standing on the side path with an open air meeting; having a puppet show and attracting an interest just to passers-by, and establishing personal contact with people.

I was encouraged to observe that the English people, from the Superintendent down (if that is the right way to put it) are really "fired-up" and ready to go. People are becoming more aware of the need to be personally involved in their witness for the Lord at their work,

through their churches (in fellowship and in outreach) and in their homes. The work of the Free Methodist church in the United Kingdom is growing and going and this is due in no small measure to the committed leadership at every level.

A final area which I was keen to cover with Mr. Trinder was that of morale. His reply was not altogether surprising, but it was interesting and very much worth noting:

Our experience at the present time is that we are a pioneer group gripped by a pioneer spirit, and whilst this is maintained we will find success; whether we work in Lancashire, County Down (Northern Ireland), Glasgow (Scotland) or in Oregon is incidental . . . there is a very high expectation and morale is, I would say, as high today as I have know it, and I think that the recent success we have had in situations like Frodsham, Leyland, and Glasgow, and the phenomenal growth of the church at Fulwood will do more to encourage the people into yet greater achievements for the Lord.

Characteristically Mr. Trinder had only positive things to observe about the work and the people of the United Kingdom, and that is right as he seeks to lead a people into a bright, yet difficult future, in an economic and political climate which is not exactly encouraging at the present time. As with all growth and its related excitement and thrust there must be also the experience of consolidation and Mr. Trinder had one final observation which speaks well to this issue:

Our people in the United Kingdom are very spiritually motivated and we have established a fairly aggressive District Board of Evangelism and Church Extension here in the English District which is doing an excellent job of monitoring new church planting situations and beginning to explore other potential areas for the Church. One of our chief concerns, of course, is to conserve fruits from our labors, rather than to be just running in all kinds of different directions with the Gospel without having some kind of plan to conserve the fruits of the work.

Pastor Taylor

Because one of the main sins of this research paper is to speak to the point of history as it relates to the Winstanley Free Methodist Church it has been necessary to make certain investigations through personal interviews. Upon completion of each interview opportunity was given for editing and permission was obtained verbally to use that which would ultimately be considered relevant to the paper.

Ronald Taylor was the first man in England to be approached by a Free Methodist leader with regard to representing the denomination in England. It is for this reason that we will observe his position and comments first of all.

The Rev. Ronald Taylor had been a Methodist Minister for some twenty-two years before eventually leaving to establish the work of Free Methodism in England. He is a man of strong spiritual character and determination; tireless in the struggle to declare what he knows to be the true distinctives of Methodism in the land of its birth. He is a recognized convention speaker and Bible teacher on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean and has held positions of great responsibility with both the Evangelical Alliance (the American equivalent would be the N.A.S.) and the Methodist Renewal Movement. In the writer's humble estimation, Ronald Taylor is a man of remarkable administrative qualities who has yet the gift of warmth in dealing with even the most awkward people. He is a man of determination, and when the Lord has impressed upon him the way he should go, then he resolutely makes progress in that way often with disadvantage to himself.

It was that Methodism had come to a place where it had begun to openly acknowledge itself to be a comprehensive church. They recognized the evangelical position; equally they recognized the liberal

position, and some of us felt that we couldn't accept this. The Biblical position was the evangelical one; we couldn't settle for a compromise.

After twenty-two years in the Methodist ministry to come out of its organization meant a loss to the Taylors, and no thanks from his previous employers. His reward--a mere \$800 and the loss of all his pension rights. To some this may appear to be somewhat foolish to make such a move, but the simple truth of the matter is that this was the way that God was leading and this was the way this servant would go.

Many of the people who eventually joined forces with the Taylors had our own battles to fight, and some of them, like our Pastor, were hard and had much heartache. One question to be asked was, "Why Free Methodism?" For Ronald Taylor, at least the answer was clear:

Well, of course, no other church really entered into my thinking. You see, when I came into Free Methodism, it wasn't at the time that I was contemplating leaving the Methodist Church; it was because definite invitation had been given to me, or rather I had been asked to pary about it, so no other entered in, but if there had been a choice I don't think that I would have entertained the Nazarenes because I feel that their view of Holiness is, perhaps, very narrow and more American nineteenth century holiness.

The last remark is interesting because a feeling of the people in England is that, whilst the holiness message bears the distinctive marks of Methodism it is only as we find it declared through the Free Methodist Church that it appears to take on the light of practical relevant statement for twentieth century living. In other words the Free Methodist Church declares the doctrine of holiness in such a way as to make it attractive without is seeming to be legalistic.

The question of how Rev. Taylor learned of Free Methodism has been one that has not been accurately reported on in the past. Question: "How did you learn of Free Methodism?" Answer:

Well, let me say, right away, I did not learn of it, as the Americans would have us believe. There are those who seem to suggest that we learned of Free Methodism through the Light and Life Hour. I think they plug that because they want funds for the Light and Life Hour. I learned of Free Methodism by visiting an Inter-denominational Convention (The International Revival Convention in Southport) and while there I did visit the stand of the Light and Life Hour, but only just to have a chat with the Superintendent (I didn't know that he was the Superintendent at the time). I just had a chat with him to sort of see what Free Methodism was all about. Knowing my position of leadership in Methodism, he later asked could he bring the Director of Evangelism to meet with me because he wanted to know more about the position of evangelicals within Methodism.

An area of great interest to so many these days is in the area of Church Growth. It is very much different when personally involved on the ground work of establishing a new work. To head up such a work was demanding for Pastor Taylor, and the next area of questioning was designed to relate to the matter of Church Growth and the setting of objectives, etc.

When the Holy Spirit of God is truly involved in a project, there is order. This was certainly the case in the establishing of the Winstanley Free Methodist Church. When considering a site upon which to build one of the major considerations was to existing churches, and eventually a location was found on a new housing estate where no other church had any plans of going. Another major factor was that, originally, Pastor Taylor did not "organize."

I just explained my position that I was leaving Methodism and why I was leaving and other people came and identified themselves with me. That was all. Some actually said that this was what they had been waiting for.

Pastor Taylor has been proved to be correct in his initial summation of vision for the future of the Free Methodist Movement in England at least. Many have questioned why there was a need to establish a new denomination in such a small country that had such a poor

national average of church attendance (less than 3%).

When I came into Free Methodism it was to maintain an evangelical Methodist witness; to maintain the message and mission of Methodism. As far as I am concerned those goals and visions have not changed, but I think, sometimes, that they are at risk because, wherever you get life in churches you get people hungry for life as they join themselves to you. They want the life, but I am not sure (and maybe I am unduly suspicious here) that they always want the doctrine. They don't always want to identify with your message and mission. They want something broader sometimes.

Now this is not the case in the churches that I am responsible for, and in saying this I might be barking up the wrong tree, but I still feel there is a danger that has to be watched.

My vision, to come back to the question, was of maintaining the mission and message of Methodism and if you want that summed up we have it in the four 'alls.'

1. All men need to be saved.
2. All men may be saved, but not all will be.
3. All men may know themselves saved.
4. All men may be saved to the uttermost.

Pastor Taylor has some very strong beliefs concerning the future of the work and he is certainly very concerned that the future work should take a very wide step away from the involvement of some churches with the ecumenical movement. A strong feeling with Pastor Taylor is that England stands in need of a real revival and awakening, and until that happens he sees growth as being very slow and steady, and he appeared not at all convinced that the future lies with declaring a united front with other evangelicals.

I think that the main thing about this question concerning the future of the Free Methodist Church in the United Kingdom lies in maintaining an uncompromising evangelical witness, free from the ecumenical involvement, by which I mean involvement with 'doubtful' evangelicals.

Of course I pursued the phrase, "doubtful evangelicals," and, when pressed, Pastor Taylor had the following to say:

Evangelicals who are tending to compromise a little. I do not wish to be misunderstood on this one. You see I have good fellowship with ministers from the Church of England, Baptists, and

Methodists in this locality. We meet together and organize activities together, but then all these men are evangelicals; we are thinking alike, we are on the same wave-length. I can have some sort of involvement with them, but I think the danger comes when some would open the door too wide and bring in others who, on some points of doctrine, would be doubtful.

Mr. Taylor's difficulty seems to be in relating too closely with people who would not take a firm stand on the authority of the Scriptures, and in a country that has experienced tremendous opposition in evangelical circles this point of view is both understandable and commendable. In the case of the Winstanley Church there was never any real involvement with other evangelical churches in the town since, in the early days at last, the nucleus was totally engaged in the establishing and building up of the local body and really did not have too many opportunities for fellowship outside the Free Methodist umbrella.

In order to be completely objective it is always necessary to speak to weaknesses as well as strengths. Pastor Taylor had some interesting observations when considering some positive and negative aspects of the life of the church. On the negative side his observations fell roughly into three categories. The first was that of the geographical situation of those who worshipped at Winstanley. Most of the people, in those early days lived in the area which approximated the church from which they had come, and this involved them travelling distances of approximately five miles in each direction. Pastor Taylor was of the firm opinion that, for the church to be truly effective and part of the community it must have its membership at least living in the immediate area it seeks to serve.

For really effective work within the community he felt that it was necessary to be a living part of the people you are attempting to

reach, since the Gospel is not simply a collection of pleasant ideas, but rather to be expressed in the practical work-a-day situations of the neighborhood.

Another major problem area was (and maybe still is) that the people of the church were reluctant in the area of leadership. There was certainly a power struggle of sorts going on in those early days which, had it been properly recognized and used, may have resulted in a far more effective lay leadership, which would in turn, had resulted in a more rapid expansion in terms of conversion growth and involvement of the total church body in order for the church to have been not simply evangelical but rather evangelistic.

To this point, however, there was one great mitigating circumstance in that the Church body at Winstanley was new, and most of its new membership had never been involved with such a project before, not had they been exposed to techniques and statistics which probably a new group in America might have the advantage of. These new babes in Free Methodism were beginning to walk and they were not finding it easy. They had been strong leaders in their old situations, and many of them had had to fight for every inch they gained spiritually. Now, in this new church, they were finding out that every individual had well developed minds and intentions, and frankly some of these clashed. The wonderful testimony is, however, that the Lord took these people and began breaking and melting down the vessels and out of the residue He began to build something which would begin to become more like Him for service in the community.

A final observation at this point is that a number of this original group were strongly individualistic and Pastor Taylor made the

following point: "Most people wanted to do their own thing, and I think that was a hindrance, not a very serious one, but it was a little bit of a hinderance."

Possibly the greatest lesson that the new group needed to learn which took longer than it should, was the need to see itself as a body. Initially the arms and legs were going in every direction and the idea of a concerted effort to pull together in the same way was not always apparent.

The greatest positive note is that these people were hungry for the Word of God. Pastor Taylor was one who was well able and gifted to shepherd the flock in such a way as to feed them with very necessary doctrinal food in such a way that they felt the need of more. The mid-week fellowship for Bible study grew and became quickly established. People travelled in from some of the churches from which we had come in order to receive some teaching which they were not getting in their own establishments.

This felt need to grow was, in no small the way, the very thing which would lead to a problem area at a later period in the church's development. Winstanley, possibly unwittingly, became, in some measure, introverted. There are churches that choose the introvertive pattern of life so that they may devote most of their attention to perfecting the Christian experiences of their people. Now this is not to say that this was a deliberate choice of the people at this time, but it was a fact that they needed to grow spiritually. In order to do this the Pastor provided teaching opportunities which were conducive to those desires. The unfortunate thing was that this desire for growth turned in to be a purely selfish desire for more food (all be it spiritual)

and many got what can only be described as "spiritual indigestion."

In case the reader should think that everything in this small church community was bad allow me to assure them that God was at work performing many miracles in the hearts of people. There were cases of the healing of human hurts that were just beautiful to be a part of and there was an atmosphere in worship that grew more wonderful, it would seem, every time we met for fellowship and worship on the Lord's Day. The reason for inclusion of some very real problem areas at this point is to say that God really does use ordinary individuals to accomplish His work, and this He was doing in Winstanley.

In conclusion of my interview with Pastor Taylor I asked him to relate areas of special interest in the first year of growth in the Winstanley church and his response demonstrates the truth of what has been claimed in the statement that God was with us in those early days in an inspiring and challenging way:

I think the one thing that stands out as being the most crucial point was when we came to the election of offices. We were a small group of people so that, on the one hand, there was the danger of giving offices out like Sunday School prizes in an irresponsible manner, and on the other hand, being so small in number, there was the possibility of leaving some people with the feeling left out. I think that it was a really critical issue, but it was gone into so prayerfully, so responsibly, that I believe we escaped the dangers.

Also in that first year there was the obviously traumatic experience of coming out from the denomination in which some of us had been born and grown up with at least suspicion and even a measure of persecution. There was the coming out of a fairly well-attended church, where the services were inspired, and finding ourselves just a handful of people. The problems associated with this were overcome because we developed a quality of fellowship which itself was so rewarding, that the other things paled into insignificance. We were learning to be more open with one another and we also used to be very keen to minister in the Spirit to one another.

The church was engaged in a learning process, and people, young or old, do not learn everything in one moment. The learning experience

is a process and somewhere along the road there will be mistakes made. There will also be many great strides made, and this was precisely the experience of the Winstanley folk.

Pastor Mollitt

Pastor Taylor, the Winstanley Board and the District Superintendent had all come to the conclusion that the time was right for a change in the leadership. The man who was appointed to take over from Pastor Taylor in September of 1979 had recently graduated from the Emmanuel Bible College. He was already a respected preacher and had a degree in History from Manchester University from where he had graduated to become a High School teacher. Pastor Jim Mollitt had been converted a few years earlier and spent his early Christian years in the fellowship of the Morecambe Free Methodist Church.

Upon taking up his role as Pastor, Mr. Mollitt was encouraged to find morale good:

I think the feeling was that Mr. Taylor had laid a good foundation for the church, but I think that many of our folks knew that he was ready for a move . . . people were viewing the future with optimism, and they felt that the time was right for a change in the leadership.

There are many areas which, with the right number of people involved, could be improved and increased. Indeed there are many things which could be started with a larger man power. The fact of the matter is, however, that numbers are still relatively small and to introduce too much too soon would possibly have spelt trouble for this church community. Pastor Mollitt showed an obvious concern to do something for the elderly, and also to produce activities for unchurched parents by the provision of a play group. Yet he had to operate with

the manpower he had and was content to work on the good foundations laid by his predecessor.

Pastor Mollitt was a product of the Morecambe Free Methodist Church where he had been converted some seven or eight years prior to taking up office at Winstanley. He had worked with Christian Youth Crusaders and Sunday School groups. His secular career after university had been to teach History in a Senior High School, and he had very good rapport with Senior High School students.

Through his Bible College training it was readily observed that he had strong academic abilities which included a thorough interest in Greek, and an outstanding preaching ability.

It is difficult to make current observations as to his impact on the Winstanley Church since he has only been in office for one year, but it is noticeable that the people are showing enthusiasm towards his ministry and a general air of expectation is accompanying his ministry. Pastor Mollitt has the type of aggressive energy which is required in this community and an infectious enthusiasm which, under God, will see positive results.

Youth Work

In the early days of the church it had been decided to follow the denominational pattern and provide youth activities through C.Y.C. Over the years those people who have involved themselves in this work have labored long and hard (and let it be said, in conditions far less than suitable). The work of this dedicated group of individuals is bearing fruit and young lives on the housing estate surrounding the church are certainly being reached with the Gospel through this

valuable work. Said Pastor Mollitt: "The last session (1979) was outstanding. We must have had fifty children attending each week, and they attended regularly from September, right through to the close in May."

All is not rosy, and there is a definite problem when it comes to older children. The church has never had more than just a handful of older children, and when that trend has been started it is really difficult to break away from it. Pastor Mollitt sees the major problem here resting in the fact that there is a lack of personnel who are sufficiently qualified and capable of working with youth:

You see, we have had film outreaches which have drawn in hordes of teenagers, but the follow-up has been very poor and weak, and we haven't really held on to any of those we have attracted to the building.

The facilities are not really conducive to youth ministry in that the total building consists of a Sanctuary which has a prayer room, a vestry, a portion of the main building referred to as a foyer (which will seat 40-50 people) and a small kitchen. Quite simply the whole construction was put up without having sufficient finances and perhaps without giving sufficient planning for youth ministries. None of this is to imply that there is no interest in the affairs of the youth, but it is to observe that with limited facilities and manpower the task is so very much more difficult. It could well be, during the course of the next few years, if funds become available that there will be opportunity to expand the premises and provide more suitable accommodation in which young people will be attracted and where they may come into that vital saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Outreach

The material which is described under this heading is wide and varied. The outreach program is being better understood now in its wider sense. For a number of years the majority of people within the church, regarded outreach as being that activity which involved a few people meeting for a short period of prayer and then being sent into the estate with a few pieces of Gospel literature and, in twos, going to the doors in order to share the Gospel. It is valuable and there are people who have been won to the Lord through this ministry in the Winstanley church. This type of outreach is, however, only one tool of many to be used in reaching the lost for Christ.

One such means is that of regular worship services. I asked Pastor Mollitt what provisions he had made for services which would cater for the unchurched. His reply was interesting:

Well, when I took over as Pastor I felt that this was one of the weaknesses of the church, that most of our services did seem to cater for converted people, and very few of them seemed to be outreach services, catering for the unconverted.

His plan was to introduce more "special" services, and over the last twelve months this has been done with the emphasis being upon the whole family. I felt this summer that there was a real sense of family within the church and that these plans laid out by the Board will eventually bring results and families will start to worship together as we know they ought.

Another means of outreach to the community has been the feature, over the years, of the monthly demonstration and declaration of the Gospel on the local shopping precinct. Pastor Mollitt has maintained this form of outreach because he feels, along with others, that it

serves the purpose of reminding the people of the estate that it is the Lord's Day, and it reminds the people that there is a church on the estate: ". . . the people are not coming to the church, so we are going to the people."

This particular outreach tool involves a number of people meeting at the Church approximately an hour before the evening service. They will walk to a pre-planned road junction in a strategic location. One member will arrive in a car with loud speaker equipment. The whole group, accompanied by a guitar or piano accordion, will sing a few verses of a hymn. This will be followed by a short testimony and invitation to the service. The group will then move to another location, and the process will be repeated approximately three or four times before returning to the Church for the evening service. Whilst this is an attempt to build a bridge to the people on the estate there is still little if any involvement of the people of the church with the affairs of the local community outside the context of the church. This of course raises the issue of commitment to the local church (which has such a small membership and needs all the support it can get) or to spread people more thinly inside the church in order to involve them more fully outside. The question is an old one and will never be answered fully to this writer's satisfaction. Pastor Mollitt, as with his predecessor, also makes the observation about the flock not being geographically located in the community:

I feel that outreach on the estate would be much more effective if more of our people were living on the estate . . . in actual fact there is only a handful of us living here at the present time, and I really do feel that this is a draw-back . . . the number of people coming to the church from the estate is very few.

There are those who could make legitimate observations about not being resident on the estate, but without laboring a point, it is very necessary to answer the question concerning identification. Can a church really minister to a group of people without totally identifying with them? After all, Jesus left His home in Glory simply to identify with a lost human race (whilst that race was lost in sin) that people might find a vital relationship with Him and through Him come into assurance of Salvation.

Pastor Mollitt rightly pointed out that people did not live on the estate because of a lack of commitment. He made the point that it might be simply put down to a cultural thing that people in Britain generally do not move home as often as people in other countries may and are simply quite content to remain where they are and travel in to church. Then, changing the mood quite dramatically, he observed:

I think, to be honest, the church hasn't really got the out-reach vision that I feel it ought to have and I think there is a real danger of what I call 'fellowshipitis' developing. We are having a good time; we are enjoying the fellowship (I am enjoying the fellowship) but whether we have that vision for the estate as we ought to have (the burden for souls) I sometimes wonder.

So that the reader will not get the wrong impression of the situation at Winstanley at the present time let it be clearly stated that there is a growing awareness that all is not as it should be and there is a healthy examination of ways to improve the potential for growth and to improve the conversion growth from the estate which so far the church has not really enjoyed.

One of the major qualities which the current Pastor observes is the growing spirit of love and unity and prayer. In this there is a tremendous hope for the future, but he points out that until that spirit and vision for evangelism is experienced by the whole body then

the function of the church will remain somewhat restricted.

The Evangelical Movement as a whole seems to stand in need of becoming the new threshing tool of which Isaiah spoke when he said, "Behold, I will make of you a threshing sledge, new, sharp, and having teeth." (Isaiah 41:15). The Winstanley Free Methodist Church is a member of that Evangelical Body which I believe is on the verge of receiving its new teeth.

Para-church Involvement

An interesting feature of Free Methodist life both in England generally and at Winstanley specifically is the involvement of some key members in the organization known as the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International.

The Full Gospel Fellowship is relatively new in England and very new to the area of Wigan. In fact the Wigan chapter opened in October, 1980. It is an organization of lay people who seek, through their business associations to lead others to Christ. The meetings they hold are lively occasions and include vibrant testimonies. In many of their meetings people will be saved and healed in both body and spirit. At other times men and women alike will be "Filled with the Holy Spirit" and will speak in tongues, and all that is properly associated with that experience. To this point many of our English Free Methodists have no problem in associating. However, it should be pointed out that the one doctrinal stance with which the Free Methodist Church cannot associate is the idea built upon only part of Scripture and which is by no means conclusive, which says that the initial evidence of one who is "filled with the Spirit" will, as evidence of that experience, speak in tongues.

Originally this movement was to encourage lay people to get involved more in the life of their local congregations. It is quite successful, for the most part in doing just that, and the Winstanley church has certainly benefitted. Pastor Mollitt, when questioned about the movement, had the following to observe:

Well, I'm quite happy for people to be involved in the Full Gospel Fellowship as long as it doesn't weaken their loyalty to the Winstanley Church. I've no doubt about it that the Full Gospel Fellowship has given some of our people a greater zeal and enthusiasm for the work of God.

Having made that observation he went on to highlight a facet of the movement which has, in some cases, proved to be divisive when the local chapter has required rather more involvement of its membership than some others perhaps have:

I do feel that there is a danger that, if you are not careful, it can also weaken their loyalty to the church, and to be quite honest there have been one or two over the past twelve months when the Full Gospel Fellowship has come before the local church, just on the part of one or two people, and I wouldn't like to see that develop or spread.

Pastoral Predictions

It is important to note at this time that to speak of programs within the English setting creates a certain amount of suspicion since the system within the evangelical context would regard this (in general) as being something rather less than spiritual. Having said that Pastor Mollitt was free to talk about his hopes and aspirations for the future of the Winstanley fellowship.

Pastor Mollitt declared that he intended to provide a more effective training system. He also planned that people should be answerable to each other in that team members would be paired off and would make their own arrangements for calling and for follow up work.

This would provide adequate opportunity for those who engaged in the work to be better acquainted, and to develop their spiritual understanding and their own outreach approach. Pastor Mollitt said that these teams of people would be working "zoned" areas and would be responsible for a given number of roads which, "over a period of six months, they would visit and re-visit so that the folk in those particular roads really got to know the people who are doing the visiting."

Yet another team would be responsible for observing when vacant housing became occupied and would visit such people as they moved into their new home with a welcome from the church and some sort of Gospel presentation and literature.

A nearby Bible College in Birkenhead has a regular door ministry and send out teams of students one afternoon each week throughout the academic year. The Winstanley church (when this interview with Pastor Mollitt was being undertaken) was planning to link up with those students and have them come to the church and aid them in outreach on the Winstanley Estate.

A major problem area involving the Winstanley church is a problem facing evangelicals in general, and Pastor Mollitt summarized that problem when he observed: "I think that the real problem at Winstanley is that so many of our committed people don't have a circle of unconverted friends."

Certainly it is true that the evangelical world has tended to rightly put a stress on the fellowship of the saints. It has been derelict in so far as it has not provided sufficient involvement with a lost world. It is true that we are ambassadors for Christ, but it is also true that we have not, in recent years, been getting hold of the

opportunities to exercise that ambassadorship. It is possibly true that evangelicals have become more and more introspective because of their desire to keep as far away from the tainting of the liberal movement as possible. As well as needing to have a vertical experience of the Creator, it is also necessary to keep a horizontal pattern which will provide adequate expression of the faith which is in us. The Epistle of James expresses this perfectly: "For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so faith apart from works is dead." (James 2:26, RSV).

The Winstanley situation provides some beautiful balances. Whilst it is true that many of the folk have a limited number of friends who are not Christians it is also true that the Church is the only evangelical church on the Estate, and therefore has that extra responsibility to the community. It is the hope of many that this fact will sink into the minds of these people and that they get a renewed vision that they are the ones God has chosen to be His Hands and Feet in that selected area of the world.

Encouraging Signs

Since human beings constitute the church it is fairly accurate to say that the perfect church on earth is not yet functioning. Every church has had, and will have, its negative experiences as well as its more positive times. It is certainly true of Winstanley that both ends of that particular pole have been realized. Conversation with the present Pastor demonstrates that the people of this church community are again being "fired up" and getting a fresh vision of what the Lord wishes to accomplish through their work and witness.

Another arm of outreach which the Lord is using with good purpose is that of the Young Wives meetings which were guided by the Pastor's wife, Linda. This meeting is providing a lovely two-fold opportunity for growth. In the first place the unconverted wives from the Estate are being drawn in and in the second place the young wives of the congregation are being encouraged to share their faith in ways which are, maybe, new for some of them.

Possibly one of the greatest thrusts of encouragement came when the Winstanley church was able to satellite a church in the nearby township of Shevington in 1978. Since that time this small group of believers has been meeting in homes for Bible Study and then for Sunday worship services. For a time they met in a local High School, and as numbers increased it became apparent that there was need for a building of their own. After much prayer, frustration and battles with local authorities, this faithful band of individuals has at last accomplished their hearts desire to move into a building. They have been able to purchase a church in their area which, for one reason and another, could not make a decisive witness in the community.

The Shevington daughter church was commenced at a time when the mother Winstanley church barely had fifty members. This of course seems to contradict all that we are told about such situations. However, the witness of the Holy Spirit is that He makes some exceptions to the rules and He certainly seems to have done just that in this particular case since the current reports are that both communities are beginning to grow.

Pastor Mollitt and his wife are filled with confidence for the future of the Winstanley church. The people have come through the

various fires and challenges normally associated with the establishing of a new church community, with some added trials associated with establishing a new denomination. They have grouped and re-grouped; the banner has once again been flown in the face of the enemy and they are now beginning again to experience the forward march in the triumphant name of Jesus.

Chapter 4

THE BIRTH OF A SUNDAY SCHOOL

Opening Statement

Sunday Schools in the British churches have a very different involvement than they do in America. In the first place they are generally aimed at reaching children of school age (five years) and through the age of early youth (fifteen years). The idea of Adult Sunday School is just not considered these days, since a greater stress is laid upon the importance of the midweek meeting as being a Bible study. This provides adequate opportunity for adult teaching which otherwise a Sunday School setting would be expected to give. Again there is a matter of facilities which will generally not permit many churches the luxury of Adult Sunday School, and Winstanley is no exception to that rule.

The number of people who originally stood together in establishing the Free Methodist at Winstanley were very few and the work they were faced with was a tremendous burden requiring unusual commitment. Even with this knowledge the group knew also that it would be necessary to provide adequate facilities for the children's Spiritual education and so the need was expressed to form a Sunday School to commence on the opening day of the church in November, 1971.

There were people talented in many ways but the lot of Sunday School Superintendent falls upon one who was also a qualified teacher in a State grade school, Mrs. Muriel Ablard.

Of course it must be mentioned that before the church building was opened, worship and fellowship meetings were all held in the Manse (Parsonage), and this included a type of Sunday School for the children whose parents were involved in the fellowship. Elisabeth Taylor (daughter of the first Pastor, Ronald Taylor) was the one who held that early responsibility. After a while, and before the church building was dedicated, my wife, Muriel, was appointed Sunday School Superintendent.

Beginnings

The major concern on my mind was the fact that this Free Methodist Church was looked upon in the area as being an American organization. Therefore we expected suspicion and mistrust. We also found, as we planned the opening of the Sunday School, the Official Board wished that the Sunday School began on the first day as the Church was opened. I anticipated problems over the staff not knowing the geography of the building. Also members of the Church, less than twenty in number, had not had any experience in the field of organizing a Sunday School from the beginning. I couldn't find any literature on that subject, and so I just had to go step by step, as far as I was able.

The other problem that came to my mind was that we had very few children who were part of the family of the first Free Methodist Church, and the recruitment was going to be a major issue.

These were some of the very real problems which faced the staff in those early days. Another issue was that of enrollment. Just how do you go about it, and what methods do you use? Well, it transpired that the strongest method of enrollment was personal recommendation by the children. They simply started to bring their own friends. The staff had prayed together that the Lord would undertake for their own shortcomings, and this He certainly did. Classes were attractive and the children positively enjoyed the experience of Sunday School in this new building. Their recommendation carried a lot of weight.

The catchment area is that area of the surrounding district from which the children are drawn. In the case of Winstanley it was the area of approximately one mile in the immediate vicinity of the church. The most prominent building on the new estate was the Roman Catholic Church, which included a very large day school, church and Social Club. The catchment area also included a large, well attended Anglican School and a State School which catered for children ages 5-11 years.

I also found that the area contained many families (church going families) who, on Sundays, reverted back to the church they had been brought up in, taking their children with them, so our focus was really upon unchurched children.

The method involved for communication the fact that the church was open and that the Sunday School was already available was in a letter which was delivered to every household on the estate. This letter described the activities of the church and the scope of the Sunday School. Whilst the response to this was not overwhelming there was some response and so it was felt that this method had certainly served its original purpose.

Staffing

One of the basic essentials of a good Sunday School teacher is the ability and willingness of that teacher to visit on a weekly basis. One of the major problems in this area, which is also basic to the problem of staffing in general, was that of transportation. "All of the teachers lived away from the housing estate, and they had problems actually getting to the Sunday School; problems in visitation and follow-up."

These early beginnings were difficult times not only for the Superintendent but for most of the staff.

The teachers who had taught before had taught in the very well established Methodist Sunday School where the children were very much more regular and lived within walking distance of the church, and where they knew the children's homes and families.

A final observation to make with regard to staffing is that of innovation. It matters not where the church is located, or how long it has been in existence, there always seems to be a certain amount of reticence when it comes to the idea of having to digest new ideas. This is also topped with the British reserve and the problem is somewhat compounded. The simple fact of the matter is, however, that people were scared of new innovation; of the idea of training classes; the idea that they would be unable to have separate rooms for each class. Difficulties were faced, and to the admiration of all concerned problems were endured and made good of. Even the kitchen became a busy environment for one enthusiastic group.

Professionalism--Good or Bad?

Muriel is a State qualified teacher; a trained and experienced teacher of some sixteen years experience. I was interested in finding her reaction to the question as to whether Sunday School teachers need to have at least some professional training. I found her answer very interesting and challenging:

No! I don't think they need to be professionally trained. In fact working in a State School can have an adverse effect. I don't think that it is good for anyone to be teaching for six days per week, but I do like to see Sunday School teachers who have a different kind of job during the week and who are willing to be trained.

This statement leans very heavily on the fact that every Christian is called to be a servant, in the same fashion as the Master who

said, "The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve." (Matthew 20:28). The role of teacher in Sunday School is a difficult one. Whoever takes on such a position needs to be supported very thoroughly in prayer and practical helps. Training is one of those areas which needs sensitive encouragement and it is also an area which few people are really willing to be involved with. A purely subjective view of those days would be that there was a certain willingness to do the job and yet a reluctance to be properly equipped for the task. On the other hand the age old problem was the arch enemy: too many jobs; too few people.

Training

Since the subject has already been mentioned it would now be in order to address this problem as the Superintendent saw it.

In the first instance the first days leading up to the actual Sunday School being started there just was not enough time to set up a training program. Each teacher was approached and the Superintendent simply covered the material with each staff member on an individual basis.

I would give a demonstration type of lesson and explain the difficulties and advantages of the geographical situation within the School. I would encourage each member of staff to contact me directly if they found something which was an embarrassment or difficulty.

So it was that this the first training sessions were on an individual basis. As time passed and confidence grew there were training sessions held for departments and people were progressively getting hold of the idea that it was not weakness which caused their problems and that they could share difficulties and actually be helped by group

participation. A further help was the Scripture Press training conferences held in the area.

Members of staff were reluctant to attend these. Some felt that they were not very 'spiritual' and some felt that the Holy Spirit alone should be their teacher, that these sessions were bordering on professionalism, which was looked upon as a bad thing.

I was pleased to discover that the Superintendent had a very sound answer to this particular accusation:

I tried to explain to them that any work for the Kingdom of God should be better in quality than secular work. We have to have more concerns and interests than the secular profession usually displays and we have to eradicate the competitive spirit from our ranks.

Curriculum Materials

One of the very wrong approaches to teaching Sunday School is that which claims that all we really need is a Bible and a bunch of children and that the Holy Spirit will simply flood the mind of the instructor and cause him to communicate the material that is before them. This attitude may, for a few short sessions be remotely passable, but long term it is doomed to failure, since the instructor would inevitably centre on material of his own choosing and it is very likely that a good, balanced presentation of the whole counsel of God would not be apparent.

A better alternative would appear to be to use materials which are firmly not liberal and clearly based on the effort to teach the whole of Scriptural truth without favor or exception. Children are far more capable of understanding Biblical material than adults sometimes give them credit for. With this in mind the question as to how curriculum material was selected for use at Winstanley was posed.

This was one of the pleasant tasks because the teachers who had taught in the former Methodist Sunday School were weary of liberal

materials, and they wanted Bible-based materials. We looked at Scripture Union and found that they were catering more and more for the Church of England organization. We also found that their visual-aid materials were far below the standard (at the time) of many. We were encouraged by the Discipline of the Free Methodist Church to have the Aldersgate material.

In fact the Aldersgate material was not the one chosen for a number of reasons. The most important reason which mitigated against the use of this material was that it is produced in the United States of America:

The distance from Winona Lake to Winstanley made it such that materials were arriving probably six weeks after they were needed, and if any children came and needed more materials, there was no way we could get them without tremendous cost, and we were simply not in a position to be able to afford to engage in such a proposition.

Distance was not the only reason for not using the Aldersgate material. There were some cultural differences also.

We were given a whole set of beautiful pictures but the children had never seen such peculiar things as pumpkins, and did not know of the different caps that the uniformed organizations used (e.g. fire, police, etc.).

In the end, then, it was not anything found to be doctrinally wrong with Aldersgate material, but it simply was not suitable for our situation. Eventually it was found that in fact Scripture Press (although American based) had begun to publish its materials in England with the English cultural perspective. Even though this material was priced very high it was possible to make some careful selections and so this arrangement worked out for the best.

Visitation

The visiting of homes by Sunday School teachers is always a good opportunity for outreach ministry, and teachers need to be aware of this as they reach out to the children in their care. Many are the

occasions when parents will be open to a Gospel presentation in their homes where on other occasions within the church building they are somewhat more withdrawn. Careful and prayerful visitations is so essential in the total role of the Sunday School teacher. The next enquiry concerning the Sunday School at Winstanley was in this realm of visitation.

One of the things we observed during the first few months was that the unchurched children were coming to the Sunday School one Sunday, and the following Sunday parents would take them visiting with family out of town, so a lot of children came alternate Sundays. Initially we were very worried about this and then we discovered that this was going to be the pattern for many of the children.

It must be realized that this did cause something of a problem initially because when a child missed once the teacher would visit and this began to be dealt with by the parents in a rather suspicious manner. Fortunately it did not take long for the staff to understand what was happening and they learned that they had to treat each individual case differently. They adjusted their visiting accordingly.

Problems

There are always some kind of problems associated with any new job or situation. The Winstanley Sunday School was again no exception to that rule. The main difficulty, it would seem, was the plan of the building. Every room had to be used and this created some problems because it meant that classes could not have any permanent displays available to them, and at the end of every session everything had to be taken up and away so that the building was available for the evening worship service.

The second problem was that there appeared to be a different Sunday School each week because the child would come and the next week

would be taken away by parents to visit out of town relatives.

In the main, the biggest difficulty lay in the proportionment of space. Because many people did not understand the requirements of the small, preschoolers, there was a constant frustration of simply not having enough space or equipment for them. On looking back at those early days it is quite obvious that God's Hand was so clearly upon that Sunday School because, in spite of the lack of adequate facilities and the problems stated, the number of children attending each week grew, and there were many who came to know the Lord Jesus as their personal Saviour.

Organization

The children were organized by age groups and the departments were as follows: Nursery Department; Pre-Primary; Primary (3); Juniors (2); and Young People's Department.

The Nursery met in the foyer (the largest area), and this was very difficult to organize because the teacher who had several children all wanted that room. The difficulty was compounded because the foyer had to be travelled through in order for other children to get to the restrooms.

The main Sanctuary was divided off into five areas and both Junior and Primary Departments met there. The Young People had the veiled privilege of meeting in the kitchen (cold in winter, and boiling hot in the summer).

It is quite clear to appreciate the difficulties which were experienced, but it is so wonderful to realize that God worked through all of this because of the dedication of this staff and as a result of their hard work and their prayerful support of the children to whom they were ministering.

Strengths

The whole staff had difficult situations to face, but did so with a cheerful willingness, but there were some other real strengths which were evident:

In the first place there was a unified curriculum. People knew where they were going next and the children had a greater unity. In the second place, contacts with the unchurched people who were thrilled at the personal interest taken in their families in problems and difficult situations. Then, thirdly, was the enthusiasm of the children themselves, in the sense that they brought other children into the Sunday School.

Although we have stated that the planned situations of the classes was a difficulty, it is also true to say that it worked out to be a great advantage since every teacher was clearly visible and was therefore careful in preparation and delivery, and so a difficult situation was turned for the better and was to be a contributory factor in the maintaining of teaching methodology.

From the point of view of the rest of the church community an apparently negative thing was that they demonstrated very little direct interest in the Sunday School. In fact this worked out to the benefit of the school since it also resulted in the fact that there was no interference:

Complete free reign was given to the staff. In some senses we felt isolated, but when we realized that we had come from a situation where the Sunday School in Methodism even had its own finances we found that certain members of the church expressed definite concern for the Sunday School. The impression we got from the others was that they just trusted us implicitly . . . whenever I had to give a report at the Annual Society Meeting people were really interested, but somehow didn't know how to phrase their interest in words. This situation did, however, improve later on.

Vacation Bible School

The problem with Vacation Bible School lies in the fact that parents seem to regard it as just another opportunity to get rid of

their children for another few hours in the day. Vacation Bible School can easily be thought of as just another play group, only this time organized by the church. Of course in this English system, and given the factor also that Wigan is a predominantly Roman Catholic town, parents were not at all Vacation Bible School minded since "they did not know what it was a certain amount of educating had to be done for the parents also." At this point it would be absolutely fitting for the Superintendent to tell it just as it was, and to share her beliefs about the values and concepts of Vacation Bible School:

I think that Christians need educating as to what Vacation Bible School is all about. I am not sure that we even know what the goals of Vacation Bible School really are except as a highlight of the summer vacation. I believe they should be used to contact more people, more children, and also to give parents an insight as to what is going on in this more informal basis.

Bible School was first held at the Winstanley Church in 1972 and the staff of the church were helped considerably by an American family from Michigan. Because the summer vacation of school children in Britain is only very short, and parents need, for the most part, to arrange their personal vacations around these school holidays, the writer is not totally convinced that Vacation Bible School is the best way of reaching children through the local church.

Personal Experience

This Superintendent used her skills in teaching to the fullest measure of her ability. To many it was obvious that her skills as a teacher in day school were of quite definite advantage. A prime example of this demonstrated itself in what she called T.H.T. (Total Hour Teaching). In this, "I tried to encourage them to see every minute of that hour as being essential in the learning process." She was, and is,

very aware of the fact that the children have to attend their day school situations five days in the week and that Sunday School was a voluntary experience, and so every moment of that hour must count.

A special feature at Winstanley was what was referred to as "Pre-session." These were activities geared to the age group. This was the responsibility of the Superintendent and was presented to the children the moment they entered the door of the church. This activity would commence at 2:30 p.m. the teachers would arrive, and very often the "pre-session" would be under way. As the teachers arrived they would have their own departmental worship times; then class groups, followed by the learning activities of a more informal nature.

The supreme aim of Sunday School is to lead children to the Lord, and Winstanley made no apology for agreeing with that particular concept. The professional skills of one or two staff members was a clear help towards this end. In particular such staff members are particularly sensitive to the needs of children and have the ability to hear what the words or actions of their students are actually saying. Many will question the idea that young children can have any concepts about accepting Christ as their Lord and Saviour, but the Superintendent of this school was convinced that they could, and it is true that many did.

The concept that I tried to create was the fact that Jesus was with them all the time, and He is a friend, wherever we are, and whatever the child is doing. In this way children came to know that there would be times when they would do something and be able to say 'Jesus wouldn't like that.' But the idea was that Jesus knew about them, loved them, and cared for them was the aim.

Certainly the careful and the prayerful support of the teachers towards each other and their students led to many children coming into

a saving relationship with Jesus. If the Sunday School lacked a little in finesse it made up in the area of loving concern for the spiritual birth, growth and development of its children, and it is quite a comfortable notion that this would have pleased the Master, since He Himself said, "Suffer the children to come unto me, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." (Luke 18:16).

How to!

There are never any easy solutions to the problems of planning for and establishing a new Sunday School. The Superintendent with that responsibility at Winstanley had the following suggestions and advice to give to others faced with a similar role.

Number one. Visit at least twelve Sunday Schools in your area with the objective of doing nothing but observe, asking questions and that sort of thing. I would also encourage them to read about Sunday Schools and their goals. I would encourage them to read about child development, and how to train members of staff. I would have quite a period of time of not having any children, but simply training members of staff. Children should be brought in at a much later stage than we did.

We have the responsibility to those who are of the household of faith, but I believe that, in the early stages of a Sunday School, the big thing is for the training of the staff. In one sense you train as you go along, but in another sense, why spend so much time making so many mistakes which could be avoided with training?

With regard to the specific responsibilities of the Superintendent in establishing a new Sunday School this threefold declaration was shared:

I believe that the basic requirements of a Sunday School Superintendent are: (1) an intense love of children; (2) an ability to communicate with those who are not professionally trained; (3) an ability to work in often difficult situations, and to enjoy the challenge of it.

A concluding thought or two may be in order.

The Sunday School should know itself well. It should be able, on a simple scale, to publish a brochure about itself. It should lift itself above the idea of the 'joyful chorus times' and get to the real concept of reaching children for Christ. There is no substitute for good teaching and no excuse for the lack of it.

Within the framework of the Free Methodist Church the basic aims of the Sunday School should be to lead children into a saving knowledge of Christ and the Book of Discipline (1979) in paragraph 471 clearly states this intention when it says: "To lead children into a genuine experience of salvation from sin and a basic understanding of the ministry of the Holy Spirit." To this end every member of every Sunday School at least within our own denomination should be completely dedicated. No one in their right mind would ever suggest that the work of Sunday School is ever "easy" but it is rewarding and it does bear much fruit as sanctified hearts faithfully apply themselves to the ministry of children.

Chapter 5

FREE METHODIST CHARISMATICS

Charismatic Involvement

Many will justifiably ask why it has been necessary to include a chapter on charismata in a study which talks of church growth in a modern holiness church. The question is a fair one, and yet it must be appreciated that the paper is also making an attempt to share something of the historical experiences of the church and included in this is the experience that members of the church have very definite involvement with the charismatic movement. The aim will also be to tie in with the church at large in the United Kingdom Extension District and to demonstrate that, although our two cultures are very different, yet that difference is brought into wonderful unity by the Holy Spirit, Who is always aiding us in our various weaknesses.

The term "involvement" rather than "renewal" has been chosen at this point to talk about charismata in order to narrow the emphasis and relate it to the denomination of the Free Methodist Church and more precisely the United Kingdom Extension District, and in particular the Winstanley Free Methodist Church.

A Problem Stated

When looking for a new spiritual home many of our people were seeking a denominational setting which would allow for greater "freedom" in worship and fellowship. From the beginning it has been openly stated

that some of our people experienced many of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit (including glossolalia). Indeed we had a number of occasions in the Winstanley prayer meetings when God would speak to His people through the means of one speaking with tongues and another interpreting. Some of that which was spoken had direct bearing upon our involvement with the building program and our relationships as a group of Christians learning the art of spiritual growth together as a body.

Up to the point of entry into the denomination the only comments received were positive on this subject and lead the people to believe that, as far as they were concerned, there was nothing at all problematical. The occasions which prompted awkward feelings arose in 1972. In the first instance there was an article in the Light and Life magazine which clearly came out against the use of glossolalia. The second instance was somewhat more severe since it involved two young people in the District who had made application to serve as missionaries, and on the grounds that they had spoken in tongues, they were refused. The United Kingdom Extension District held a special meeting to discuss this matter and to plan a communication to World Headquarters which would clearly set out the firm belief of the English establishment of Free Methodists. The remainder of this chapter will address the various aspects of that letter, and will attempt to demonstrate that the Winstanley believer is not either weird or extreme, but rather one who dearly loves his Lord, his fellows, and his denomination, and in that order.

The Document

To have addressed the subject of charismata in anything than a completely official manner would have been to provide for the accusation

of "emotionalism" of irresponsibility. Since the District was in one voice and sharing a common theological stand it was good and wholesome that a unified statement be declared. Many may disagree with it, and that is their right, but it must be allowed that the statements contained therein are prayerfully and honestly arrived at. The writer originally felt that the document presented the argument in a way which was too strong and forthright but, coming back to observe its contents after eight years, has a change of mind in thinking that it was stated in the only way possible at the time. The document contained the following major headings:

1. The New Testament Evidence of Charismata.
2. Wesley and Methodism and Speaking in Tongues.
3. The Pastoral Problem of Charismata - 1 Corinthians 12.
4. Tongues can never be the Test of a Spirit-filled Life or a Normative Christian Experience.
5. The Pastoral Control of Tongues.
6. The Sufficiency of Scripture and Free Methodist Discipline.
7. English Free Methodism and Speaking in Tongues.

The main thrust of the declaration which will now be addressed is contained under the last two headings and the rest of the document may be read in the appendix.

The abuse of tongues is to be met not by demanding its non-use, but by teaching its proper use under the scriptural safeguards . . . to deny this teaching by adding to or subtracting from it is to become guilty of the same errors for which we condemn Modernism or Rome.

Out of the experiences which English Free Methodists had known in their former Methodist environment came such strong statements as the above. In case anyone should be quick to condemn, the idea must be communicated that these people had experienced some very traumatic things in former days. Compromise in doctrine as understood by the traditional evangelical was a great shock, because it had been felt that the leadership within the Methodist Church could be trusted in these matters. It

was then realized that they could not. Talks of union with the Anglican Church (which would have resulted in more compromise in such areas as Infant Baptism, the Lord's Supper, Scripture, and others) also highlighted many fears amongst the evangelical populous of Methodism.

Now the new denomination had been formed in England in which Methodists felt comfortable with the idea that they could again promote those things for which Wesley had so firmly stood. People wished to be related to their new surroundings and to break free from the fetters of a denomination which had so much restricted them. The Free Methodist Church was providing the environment which it was considered would allow these people to serve, worship, and operate in spiritual freedom of the purest kind.

Any thought of legislation against the use of any of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit (much less to single out one) is totally unjustifiable. The document proceeds to argue that a church does not have the right to legislate for or against anything on the grounds of expediency alone, since its leadership would be seen to be setting themselves up on a higher level of authority than the scriptures, and the concern is that a balanced view be held.

As Free Methodist Ministers and members of the Free Methodist Church we would seek to play a responsible role. We feel our churches can contribute in a humble way something from their own experiences to the life of the whole. In our fellowships there are those who enjoy the gifts of the Spirit including glossolalia. We have never attempted to hide these facts--indeed we were given explicit verbal assurances from Leaders and others on coming into the denomination that no antagonistic attitude to glossolalia or the gifts of the Spirit would be adopted as long as we did not make it a test of spirituality. This we were happy to do and we have kept this emphasis clearly before our people.

The understanding was clear from the beginning, and the people in England felt completely comfortable with what they knew. As far as

the Pastoral staff were concerned they had already made many sacrifices in order to enter the Free Methodist Church, and these they accepted willingly for the privilege. In coming out of the Methodist Church these men had lost all their pension rights; they had lost their buildings; many other dear and familiar associations in an eagerness to have a Biblical religion. To take a stand which would compromise the gift of the Holy Spirit known as glossolalia would, for them, have been to commence on another battle against the compromise of scripture which they had so gladly left behind. Their position is clearly stated and their concerns are clearly understood as they try to communicate their fears on this subject as they understand it to relate to Biblical principles:

Time and again we have had to face, in our previous denomination, Conference pronouncements which complete set aside Biblical precedent on the grounds of expediency. Our people would be utterly cast down and discouraged--troubles and anxieties would be created that need never be there if our Free Methodist leaders take up disciplinary attitudes or pass resolutions to exclude from Christian leadership or service in the denomination those who experience glossolalia. How would we enforce such disciplines? How could we even justify them to our people when we know them to be contrary to the Word of God?

Probably the main thrust of the problem and the reaction to it is set out more clearly in the words of the document under the heading "English Free Methodism and Speaking in Tongues."

We deplore the sending out of questionnaires to members of our congregations seeking full time Christian service under the auspices of the Free Methodist Church and Missionary Board, which give the suggestion that glossolalia is antagonistic to the Free Methodist Discipline. Such questionnaires are likely to drive the many young people now aiming for Bible College in our churches to seek their Christian service through other agencies and to lose them to the denomination. We believe that such methods are characteristic of the worst type of McCarthyism in American life where irrelevant data is made the basis of selection for employment. Such data would have excluded the Apostles from Missionary service in our denomination! This approach leaves out people with the impression

that secret standards or discipline are being applied to us over and above the standards of which we have been informed in our Church membership manuals. It denies that trust in the Holy Spirit in His people we are called upon to exercise. Such methods are foreign to our whole English way of doing things and we are repelled by them.

Differences in cultural interpretation can lead to some very real heart searching. There is a great need for both cultures to begin to appreciate the other. The English mind tends to always regard itself as being authoritative and alone capable of right thinking. On the other hand the American mind would demonstrate, generally speaking, a pragmatism which at times stimulates fears concerning compromise.

Unless anyone should draw wrong conclusions let it be said that the English Free Methodist is not seeking to lose his identity in the organization we call the "Charismatic Movement" but it rather wishes to embrace and underline the doctrines and distinctives which originally set the Methodist people apart from the formalism and deadness which prevailed in religion in England in the eighteenth century (and to a degree also today). The belief is that Free Methodism has much to offer to the present age, and the Englishman will do what is right and proper to promote the denomination in the firm belief that people will find salvation through Jesus Christ in the denomination.

It is enough to say that it is the desire of every Free Methodist who is a child of God to encourage the other to grow in faith and to use the means available to him in the infinite resources provided in Christ through the given Holy Spirit. Let everyone earnestly desire these things, not for his own gratification (which is the desire of the devil), but in order to be the best servant of Christ that it is possible to be.

Chapter 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The months of July and August, 1980 provided the opportunity to revisit the church which, in turn allowed the writer to make some objective observations. When faced with the question as to what people felt that the main aim of the Church was, most people responded that it was to build up the Christian community with "Bible-based preaching." Only a few put any emphasis at all on the idea of personal evangelism or taking the Gospel to the community, and none spoke of any social concerns. The main area for concern here is that the Official Board would do well to seek to have a declared plan of ideas and goals and job descriptions which are specific enough for the general congregation to get hold of. Such a plan of ideas would need to cover every facet of the life of the Church. One of the major problems facing any church, and Winstanley is no exception, is that it is just aiming in a rather vague way at reaching people for Christ. In His earthly ministry, Jesus had very definite plans and, knowing what lay ahead of Him, He pressed towards achieving all that His Father had required of Him.

The reply may come that there are cultural differences involved here and that the English people do not go about their churchianity in quite the same way as do Americans. That is true, and yet the English do go about planning many other areas of their lives very carefully. Would it be too much to ask for a more careful and deliberate planning and goals setting in the corporate body of the church? In any case

obtainable goals are very necessary in order for progress to be made. If a group of people will not set any type of goal then they will eventually be successful in achieving just that. Plans, goals, and job descriptions are good devices for the Christian which will aid good stewardship of time and effort and will give good information for intercessory prayer. The main thing is that these things will also give good accountability for the Board to the society and for all the Body together before God. Since no goals, plans or programs should ever be set unless and until they have been determined by the presence and inspiration of the Holy Spirit we can expect that, with His help, we can achieve and go on achieving in His name as long as we remain faithful to Him.

When some of these principles are applied often churches observe the Hand of God at work in their midst and Sunday Schools become revitalized; Youth groups are given greater diversity of expression in Christ, and worship becomes more meaningful and vital; the ministry of every saint is valued, and the expression "priesthood of all believers" ceases to remain a theory and becomes a reality.

Motivation is always important. The Winstanley people are warm, loving people. They are alive in Christ, and many of the Gifts of God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit are expressed and used to build up the Body, but there is certainly some need to tie things together in terms of future planning and goal setting. Each full member of the church must seek, before God, to raise their own hopes and expectations, and put feet and body to their faith. The Pastor must never be seen as the sole soul winner; each person in Christ has that commission:

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age. (Matthew 28:19-20, RSV).

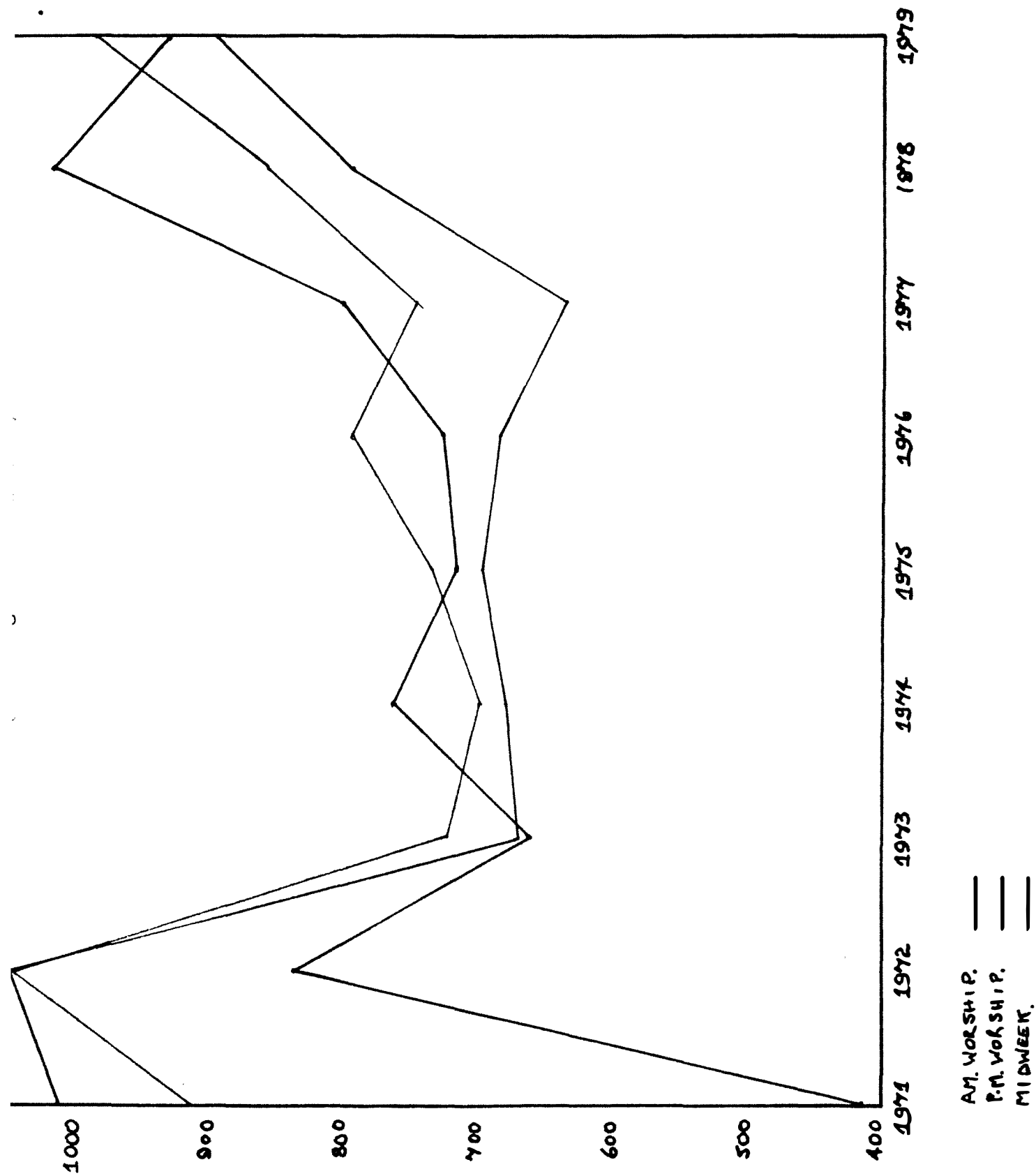
The hymn writer, William Pierson Merrill gives expression to future challenge rather well in the first stanza of a hymn:

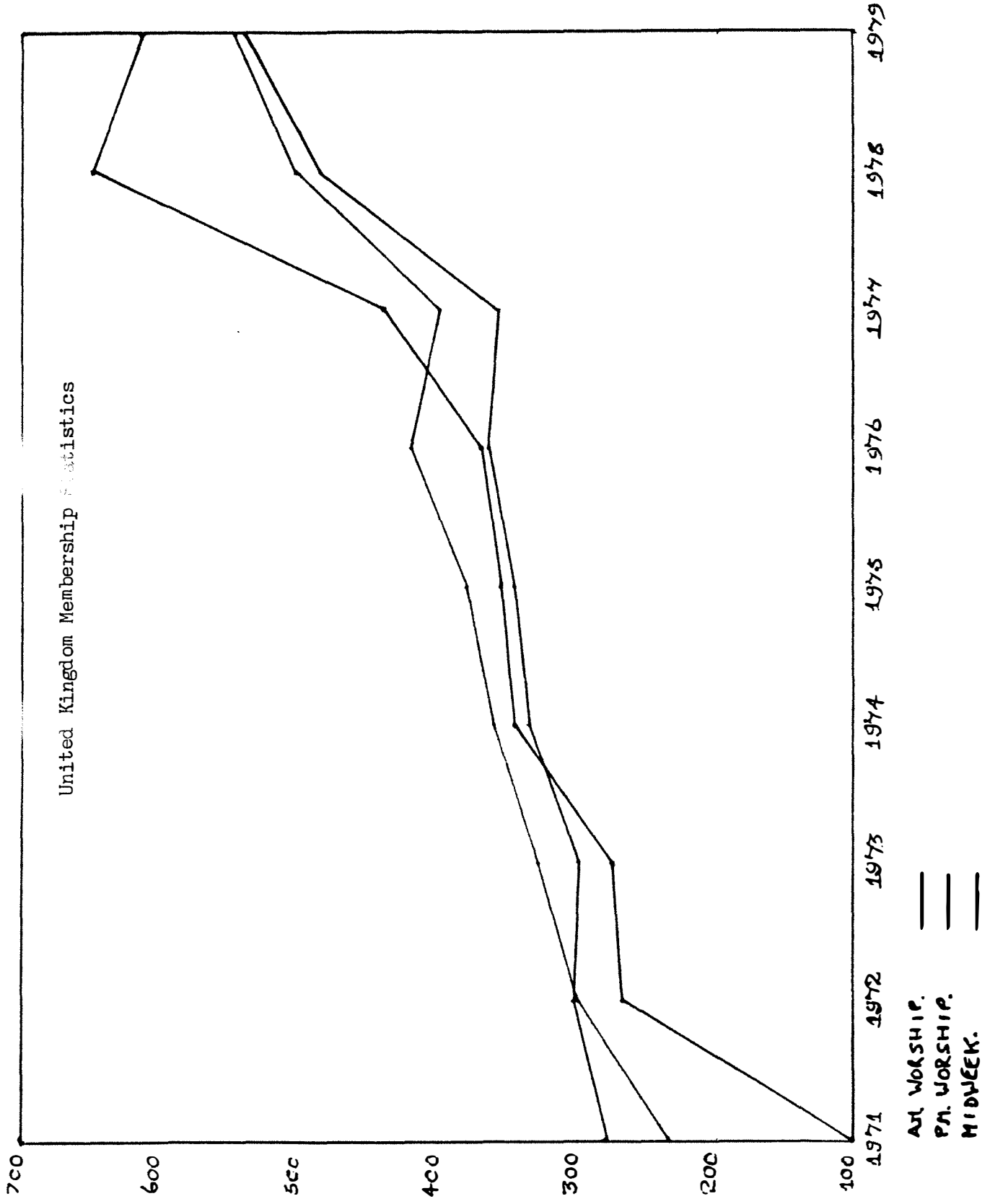
Rise up, O men of God!
Have done with lesser things;
Give heart and soul and mind and strength
To serve the King of Kings.

Graphs

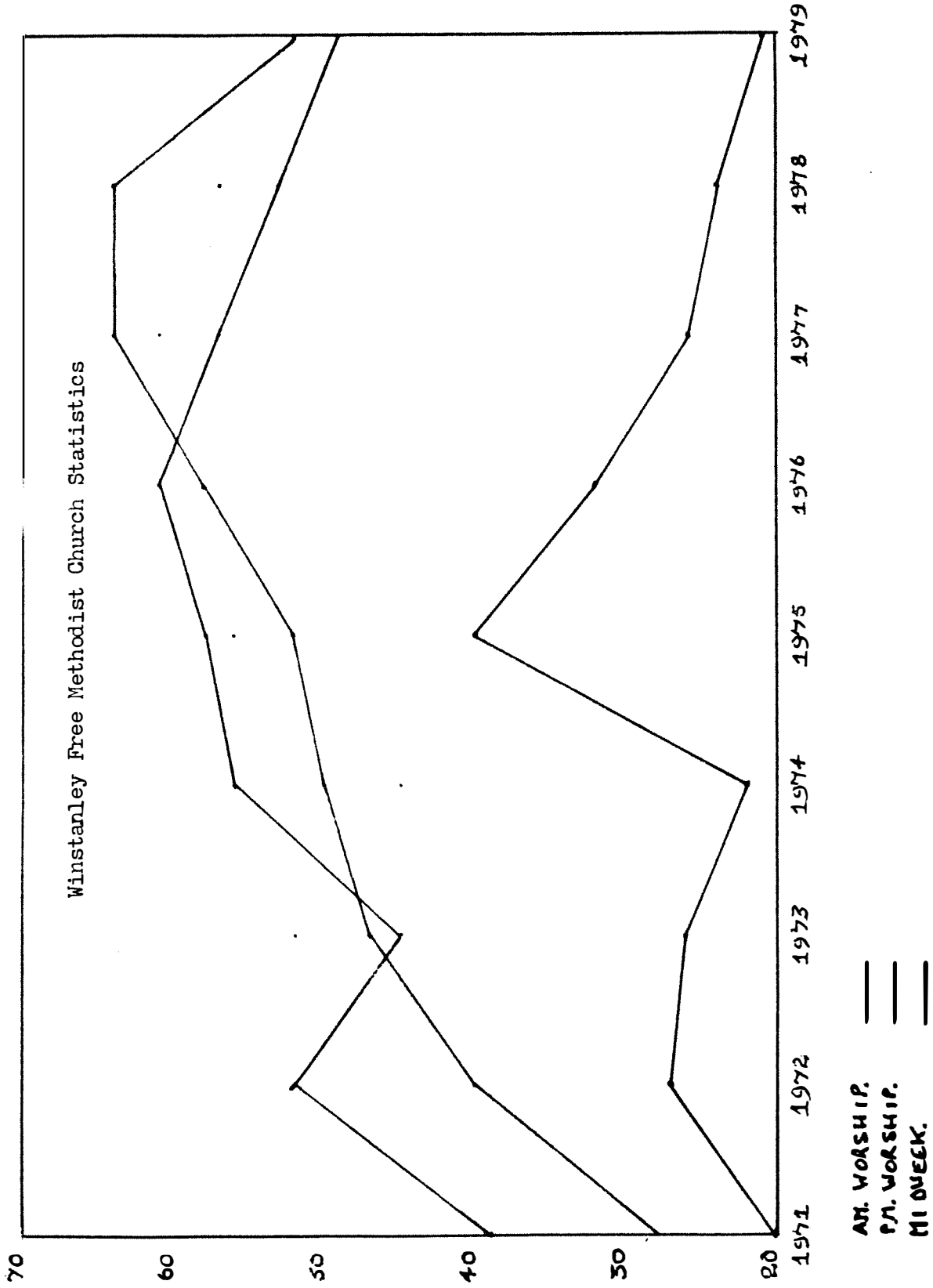
All three graphs shown here indicate numerical attendance at the three major adult meetings of the week (Sunday morning and evening services and Midweek Bible Study).

The first of these graphs is of the United Kingdom Extension District (including Northern Ireland). With the exception of 1972 the overall work is, to say the least, impressive. The explanation of the dramatic plunge in the 1972 figure resulted when a split occurred. Since 1973 the figures show some interesting facts. The first is that there is little difference in attendances of the Sunday morning and Sunday evening services. There is a big difference at this point with American statistics which, in Free Methodist churches, generally indicate that less than 50% of those who attend morning worship are in attendance for the evening service. Having now experienced both cultures it is the writer's considered opinion that this is due to two main reasons: a) Sunday School for adults is not known on the English Free Methodist scene, and therefore the amount of time spent at church on Sunday in Britain is no more, but there is a strong emphasizing of attendance at the evening service. b) A greater stress is laid on



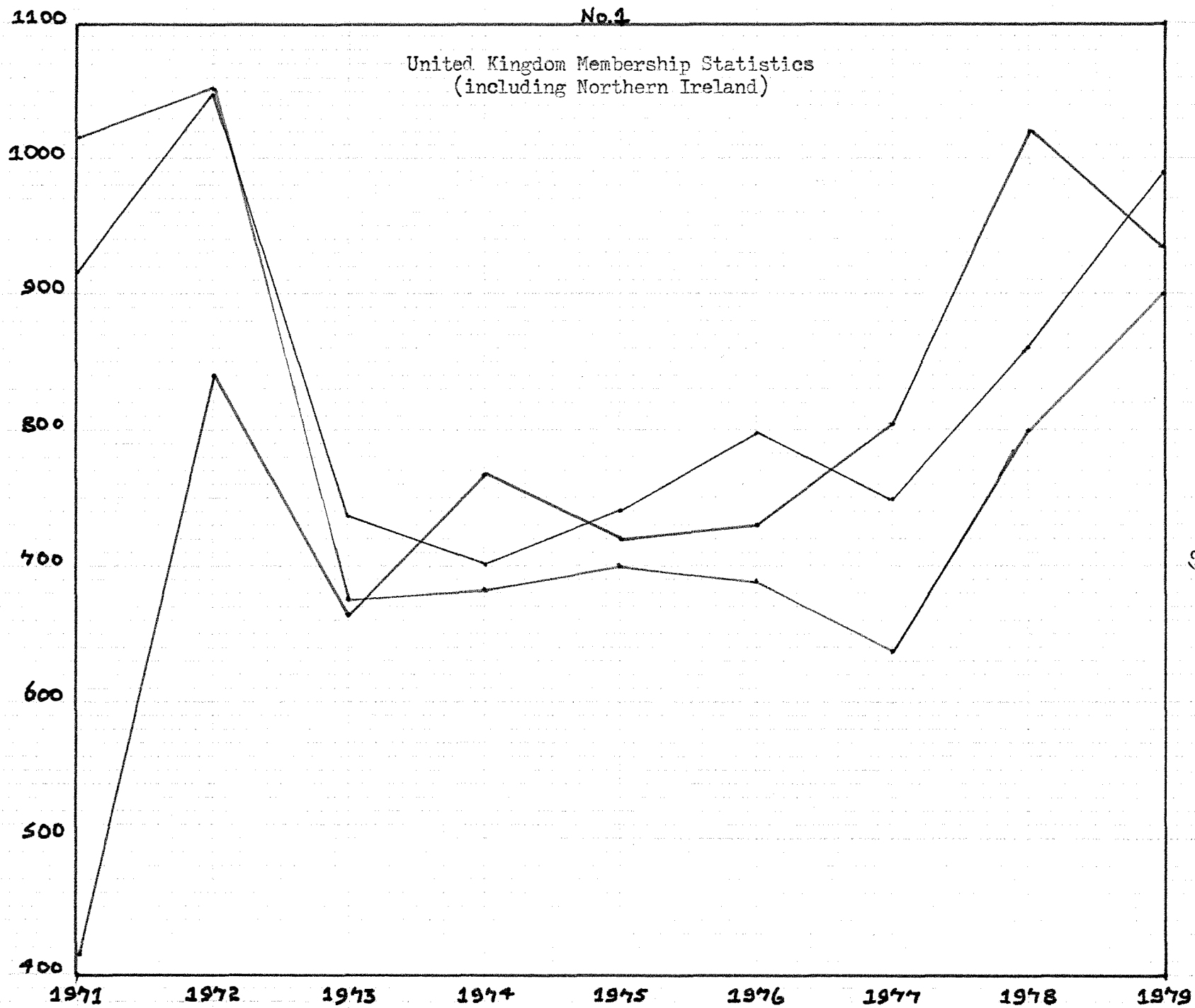


Winstanley Free Methodist Church Statistics



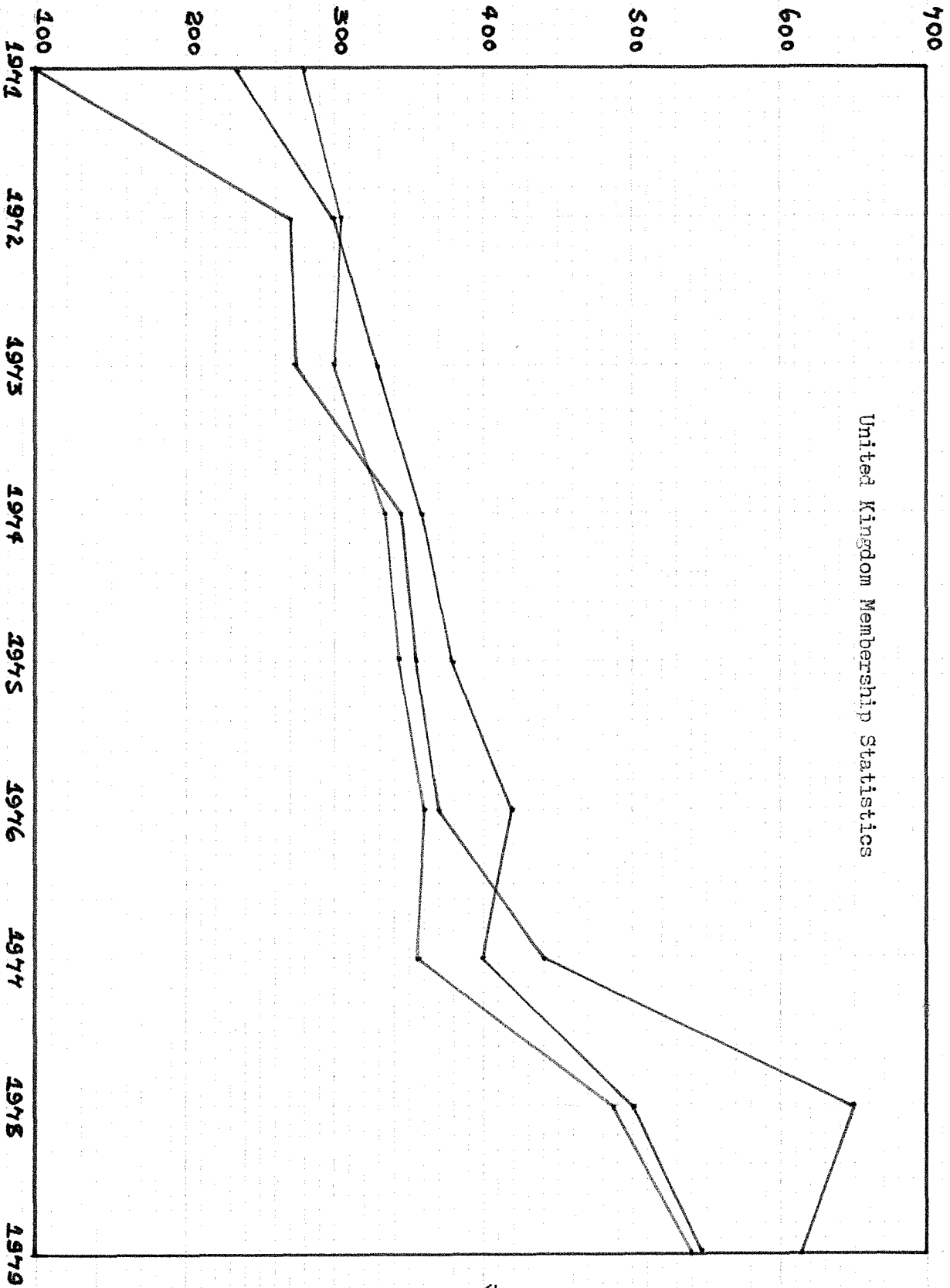
No. 1

United Kingdom Membership Statistics
(including Northern Ireland)

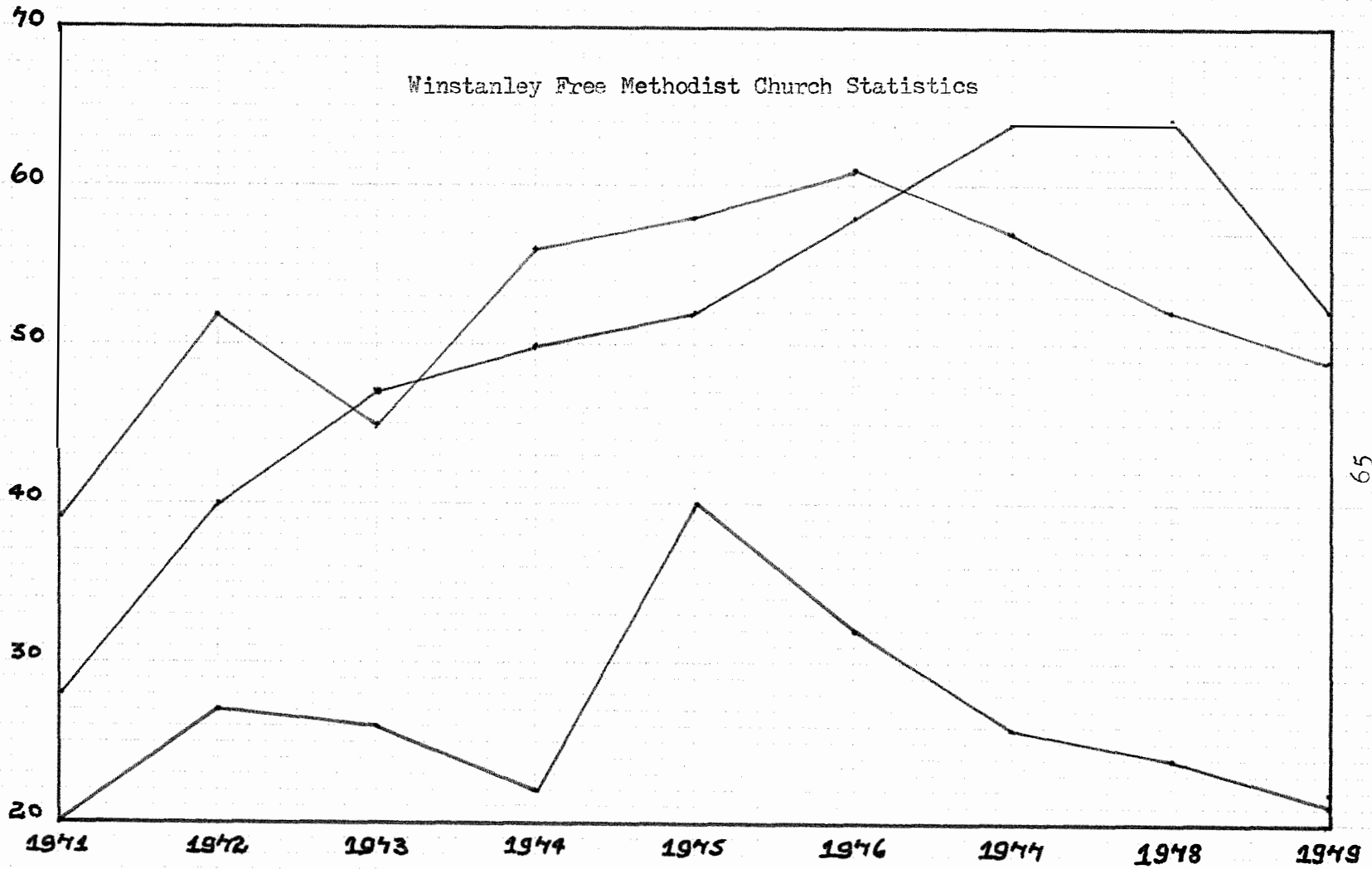


No.2

United Kingdom Membership Statistics



No.3



AM WORSHIP.
PM WORSHIP.
MIDWEEK.



preaching and more variety is offered for member involvement in the British system.

The second of the graphs is of the United Kingdom Extension District (excluding Northern Ireland). The reader should notice the steady increase in all areas over the years. Here an important feature is the dramatic growth of the Midweek meeting.

The third graph reveals the statistics as they relate to the Winstanley Church only. All the figures are as the writer observes them in the Year Books and so there are no personal biases expressed here and none are offered in writing either. The observation must be made, however, that the Sunday morning and evening worship services are generally in keeping with the rest of the United Kingdom District. Midweek is dramatically different. A significant increase in midweek was observed in 1974, and one of the reasons for this was a particular series of studies by the Pastor on "Gifts of the Holy Spirit." However the decrease since that time could be proportioned to several areas:

1. Proclamation of doctrines through Bible study which people were either reluctant or unwilling to receive.
2. Lack of imagination in the structuring of the meetings, resulting in a certain amount of disinterest.
3. Crisis in the ministry and life of the church in 1977/1978.
4. Too many jobs--too few people, resulting in members having to get priorities corrected and midweek suffered consequently.

Diagrams, charts, graphs and statistics can be made to say almost anything, but these are produced simply for the reflection of both reader and writer alike.

What of the Future?

1979/1980 proved to be a year of settling in for the new Pastor and his wife. The congregation seemed to have responded well to his

new approach to ministry. It must also be said that the same has been true of the former Pastor in his new situation.

The question remains: Will Winstanley attain its potential? The answer is in the affirmative because the people are demonstrating by their lives, involvement and willingness to learn that they need to grow. When people realize their needs and confess them before God, He answers.

A favorite hymn amongst the Winstanley people will here serve to show that there is a desire in each heart to grow in grace. The hymn is that of Johnson Oatman Jr., and written just before the turn of the century in 1898:

I'm pressing on the upward way,
New heights I'm gaining every day;
Still praying as I'm onward bound,
'Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.'

My heart has no desire to stay
Where doubts arise and fears dismay;
Though some may dwell where these abound,
My prayer, my aim is higher ground.

I want to live above the world,
Though Satan's darts at me are hurled;
For faith has caught the joyful sound,
The song of saints on higher ground.

I want to scale the utmost height,
And catch a gleam of glory bright;
But still I'll pray 'till heaven I've found,
'Lord, lead me on to higher ground.'

Chorus:
Lord, lift me up and let me stand
By faith in heaven's table land,
A higher plane than I have found;
Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.

The sentiments of this hymn are commendable and certainly every Christian should be able to agree with them. Planning and preparation at Society, Board, and individual level must go together with the

constant reaching out to the lost and the reaching up to the Son, since each in its own very special way, will result in souls being saved and Christians being strengthened and used to the glory of Almighty God. There is absolutely no doubt that this Free Methodist Church was started by God. Observations lead to the conclusion that He is willing to lead it into the next decade in a way that will be dynamic. When the congregation gets hold of the vision for souls, and become enthused about their individual outreach ministries then it is to be expected that the Winstanley Estate may well be won for the Lord. There is no short cut to growth; it is hard work and demands everything of effort on the part of each member. Contrary to the belief of some the people will not simply come in to the Sanctuary, indeed it is positively unfounded in Scripture to think thus. Reaching out in love and going the extra mile is the only way any church can grow. Winstanley is no exception to the rule that we must all observe if we are to be effective ambassadors for Christ. If Jesus is to mean anything, He is to mean everything.

Hopelessness, decline, gloom, spiritual birth, and other expressions may well be used of some churches in England today. Let no one ever try to paint such a picture of English Free Methodism, and in particular this Winstanley Free Methodist Church. The current feeling suggests hope, growth, anticipation, and spiritual maturity. The future is bright and, when a report of the church is published in another ten years time it will be seen that this body has grown and expanded; indeed it will be observed that it has reached out into many other areas of the community and the lives of men and women in the larger township of Wigan will be greatly affected by the presence of these few who are now longing "to scale the utmost heights."

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APPENDIX A

4200 S.E. Jennings Ave.
Portland,
Oregon 97222
June 18, 1980

Dear Mr. Trinder,

First of all let me thank you for informing the English Pastors of our visit in July/August. Ron Taylor, Ken Leech, and Jim Mollitt have been in touch with us and we are looking forward to being in fellowship with them in the near future. It will indeed be good to share fellowship with our friends and family in England again. I think we are, at last, beginning to realize the true significance of this visit since we are not likely to have the opportunity for a further visit for some years (except in the event of an emergency).

The visit is going to be busy because I will be working at a Research Paper towards my degree. My paper is headed: "The History and Growth of the Winstanley Free Methodist Church, Wigan, England." I have already completed a good amount of work and am in the process of sending out questionnaires so that I might obtain relevant statistics and some objective answers to questions relating to church growth.

I have requested interviews (which I propose taping) with Ron Taylor and Jim Mollitt and have furnished them with a copy of the questions I would like to cover. I would be very grateful if you would grant me some time to see you with a similar set of questions which would give me some understanding of the administrative requirements which were essential from the time that you were first approached about Free Methodism from our English people. I have taken the liberty of enclosing a copy of the questions I would hope you would answer on a taped interview. I should just add that, as soon as I have typed up the information I require the tape will be wiped clean and I will use only such material as you designate. If there is anything you think I may have missed, or anything you would wish to miss from my list of questions then I would be more than happy to accommodate your suggestions and accept any advice you may have.

Muriel and myself often pray for the work in the United Kingdom and we are always so pleased when some of the folk write to us and are so enthusiastic. We do hope that you have settled into your new home and are enjoying the surrounding countryside of Cheshire.

Yours in Christ,

APPENDIX B

4200 S.E. Jennings Ave.
Portland,
Oregon 97222
June 18, 1980

Dear Ron,

I had intended writing to you sooner than this, but I have only just recently finished classes and only now am I really into my Research Paper. The title of the paper is: "The History and Growth of the Winstanley Free Methodist Church, Wigan, England." I am really concerned to do a good job of this paper and I am eager to secure some time with you in order to conduct an objective interview. I know you are very busy, and for this reason I enclose a questionnaire in order that you may have the opportunity to read it before I see you in August. If there is anything you consider I should have left out or should have included I will be glad for you to make comment. I also realize that I may have worded one or two questions in an awkward manner; perhaps we can iron those out later, too.

We are so looking forward to our visit now with only three weeks to go. Most of our preparations for preaching etc. are under way and we anticipate good English Northcountry fellowship. Not only that but we can hardly wait to get our teeth around some real fish and chips and also the occasional black pudding.

We often remember you both in our prayers and we look forward to hearing just what the Lord is doing with you at Great Eccleston and Crown Lane. I expect that, by now, you will have got over many of the problems related to the house and be making it into a really nice home.

When we visit with you we will have our slides. These will be suitable for an after church fellowship and will consist of views of Oregon (coast and mountains); Western Evangelical Seminary; Free Methodist Church life. I do not want you to think that I am pushing these, but I do want you to know that we will have them with us if you want them.

As far as the questions are concerned I have not grouped them in any sort of order but simply laid down questions I thought might allow a greater freedom of response and which would produce a wider area from which to draw some conclusions and comments. Thank you, once again, for your cooperation in this matter.

Yours in Christ,

APPENDIX C

ENGLISH FREE METHODISM and THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
 - and their relation to Free Methodist Discipline

Recent years have brought Christians in the major denominations face to face with much spiritual ferment. None has caused greater impact than the Neo-Pentecostal or Charismatic renewal in which many testify to having been baptized in the Holy Spirit with signs following. Our own Free Methodist Church along with other Holiness churches has felt the challenge of this movement. Some unfortunate disciplinary attitudes have been taken up by some of the Holiness bodies resulting in Ministers and lay people being excluded from fellowship due to their congregational or private use of charismata, particularly glossolalia. The accompanying study is an attempt to present the view of the Ministers of the Free Methodist Churches in England on this subject in the hope that our own Free Methodist Church shall not bind upon us attitudes or disciplines that are not rooted in the clear teaching of the Word of God. Historically Methodism is directly related both to the Holiness movements of the nineteenth century and the Pentecostal movements of the twentieth century (Bruner--Theol. of the Holy Spirit, pp. 35-55). It would be sad if movements so closely related in their original emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit should adopt unscriptural positions in their attempt to preserve their own particular witness.

The New Testament Evidence of Charismata.

Spiritual gifts have a clear place in the New Testament description of the Spirit's work in the believer. In the Acts of the Apostles, mention is made of the gifts of tongues and prophecy being imparted to the disciples at Pentecost (Acts 2:4, 17), of the presence of healing gifts and signs and wonders in the life of the Church in Jerusalem subsequent to Pentecost. These gifts were exercised by the Apostles (Acts 2:43, 3:7) and by others (Acts 6:8). The beginnings of the work in Samaria were confirmed by the pouring out of the Holy Spirit in such a way that there was something visible in His manifestation (Acts 8:17-18 - N.B. "and when Simon saw . . ."). The Holy Spirit's presence and power was manifested upon the household of Cornelius, both by the inward work of purifying the heart by faith (Acts 15:9) and by an outward manifestation of speaking with tongues (Acts 10:45). Prophecy was part of normal congregational worship and experience by which men and women were directed and guided in the purposes of God (Acts 13:2, 21:9-11, 11:28). The Baptism of the disciples at Ephesus by Paul was accompanied by speaking with tongues and prophecy (Acts 19:6). Miracles of healing and even raising of the dead was known through the ministry of the Apostles, sometimes on a remarkably large scale (Acts 9:32-43, 5:12-16). The exercise of spiritual gifts continued in the early church as part of

their normal experience of congregational life and worship. Paul refers in Thessalonians to prophecy as a gift not to be despised - but to be accepted with some caution (1 Thess. 5:20-21); in Galatians of miracles being a real element in their church life (Gal. 3:5). He refers to speaking with tongues in Corinth (1 Cor. 12-14). He does not seem in any way to distinguish the Corinthian glossolalia from that of the early church at Pentecost. Indeed his reference to tongues being a sign to unbelievers (1 Cor. 14:21-27) seems to be a direct reference to the miracles of speech in Acts 2 in which all heard in their own tongue the mighty acts of God. Bearing in mind the troubled situation in Corinth - if Paul had felt the glossolalia there was fundamentally different from Acts - or even counterfeit - it seems hard to believe that he would not have used this point to repudiate the phenomena in Corinth. Paul himself claimed he spoke in tongues more than all others in Corinth (1 Cor. 14:18). If the lost ending of Mark's Gospel is to be accepted as genuine scripture, the reference to believers speaking in new tongues and experiencing healing and other miracles seems clear indication that such gifts were to be expected long after the close of the apostolic age (Mark 16:17-19). Even if not scripture it confirms the acceptance by the early church of this type of phenomena as part of the continuing experience of believers. The witness of Hebrews that God used these gifts to bear witness to the truths of the gospel reveals the place these gifts occupy in the purposes of God (Heb. 2:4). In every age they stand as confirmation of the super-natural origin of the Christian faith.

It has sometimes been argued by great scholars such as B. B. Warfield and others that subsequent to the original attestation in the apostolic age such gifts were withdrawn and are no longer to be expected. Although we respect the erudition of such men we see no solid reasons for accepting this view and many for rejecting it. There is no scripture to support this view of theirs. Paul's reference to "tongues ceasing and prophecy passing away" refers to the believer's experience of heaven not his pilgrimage here below. Each generation needs its own confirmation of the super-natural origin of the Christian faith. The twentieth century needs it as did the first century, for men's hearts are as hard today as they were then. The scripture also clearly teaches that "the gifts" as well as "the calling of God are irrevocable" (Rom. 11:29 - the word "gifts" here is "charismata"). Indeed there is strong evidence that manifestations of the Spirit have always been in evidence among God's people - particularly at times of spiritual awakening. From the days when Eldad and Medad prophesied in the camp of Israel and certain of Israel's leaders urged Moses to stifle such prophecy and he refused to do so, it seems God has been imparting such gifts and the orderly ecclesiastical mind has sought to eliminate them. (Num. 11:25-30).

Wesley and Methodism and Speaking in Tongues.

Speaking in tongues can create some special problems, but before dealing with these, we would just refer to the relation that Wesley himself had with such gifts of the Spirit. In general Wesley accepted such gifts believing that they were withdrawn only through neglect or unbelief. He writes "That the grand reason why the miraculous gifts

were so soon withdrawn was not only that faith and holiness were well-nigh lost, but that dry, formal, orthodox men began even then to ridicule whatever gifts they had not themselves or to decry them all as either madness or imposture" (Journal Vol. III p. 490). Wesley came into contact with glossolalia through a Huguenot group in London called by some the 'French Prophets' and known to the Fetter Lane Society with which Whitefield and the Wesleys were connected in their early Christian days in London. The French Prophets seem to have stemmed from the time in 1685, when Louis the XIV of France revoked the Edict of Nantes and called upon the Huguenots to return to the Roman Catholic Church. He reinforced his urging with severe persecution and the Huguenots experienced such phenomena as "strange sounds in the air; the sound of a trumpet and a harmony of voices." Glossolalia broke out affecting as many as 8,000 in one province alone. The episodes continued until 1711 (see R. Heath, *The Little Prophets of the Cevennes*). It seems to have been elements of this refugee group met by Wesley in his early Christian days in London (see Arnold Dallimore, *Life of Whitefield*, Vol. 1). John and Charles Wesley were introduced to glossolalia through some of this group and investigated the phenomena. John Wesley's attitude may perhaps be described as open minded caution. He was unimpressed, unlike others in the Society, but did not seem to have ever found it necessary to forbid it. Charles Wesley, however, took up an antagonistic attitude to it. Thomas Walsh - one of the most brilliant and saintly of Wesley's veterans and preachers, records in his diary that "I was enabled to praise God in a new tongue this day." John Wesley, writing to a Miss Bolton on Dec. 5th 1772 cautioned her:

George Bell, William Green and many others, then full of love were favored with extraordinary revelations and manifestations from God. But by this very thing Satan beguiled them from the simplicity that is in Christ. By insensible degrees they were led to value these extraordinary gifts more than the ordinary Grace of God and I could not convince them that a grain of humble love was better than all those gifts put together. This, my dear friend, was what made me fear for you.

No doubt, further research would reveal more information linking the early Methodists in their various branches with these gifts. What does seem clear is that John Wesley's whole approach seems to have been a balanced attitude in which open mindedness and acceptance is mingled with certain cautions.

The Pastoral Problems of Charismata - 1 Cor. 12.

Charismata generally can create certain pastoral problems in a church. These problems were present in the early Church as in our day and are dealt with in 1 Cor. 12-14.

Some of these problems stem from the very nature of these gifts themselves. Part of the difficulty is that they are not given universally to all believers. Fruit is for all - gifts are for those for whom they have been prepared. There is a sovereignty about their disposal -

the Holy Spirit giving them according to His Will (1 Cor. 12:11). Paul uses the illustration of the body here. No gift apparently is expected to be universally distributed amongst the believing community else all the body would be an eye - an ear - or a hand etc. (1 Cor. 12:14-26). To the question "Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?" Paul expects an emphatic 'No' (1 Cor. 12:28-30). This does not imply that any gift is not needed, for even the humbler parts of the body are regarded as significant and are invested with great honor on occasions (1 Cor. 12:23-24). But those not gifted in a certain way should not be made to feel jealous or less a part of the body than others with a particular gift (1 Cor. 12:14-16) however impressive.

It is at this point that Paul makes his appeal that the body should act as a body of Christ - i.e. as one man - thinking, feeling, suffering for each other, being glad for each other if one is honored with this gift or that (1 Cor. 12:25).

Then follows his great chapter on love. In this he clearly shows, not that love is to be seen in opposition to the gifts of God, nor that it is intended to outlaw them - after all giving and martyrdom are included in the list! Rather, love is to be the motive and means of their operation for without love these gifts could cause rivalry, jealousy and disorder - something that had already happened at Corinth.

Before mentioning the details of 1 Cor. 14 we would note certain conclusions both the Pentecostal and Holiness groups need to learn from this teaching of 1 Cor. 12-13. Unless we rob this passage of its plain, natural meaning it must mean:

- a) Tongues can never be the test of a Spirit-filled life or a normative Christian experience.

This is surely a word to the large sections of the Pentecostal groups which do make tongues such a test of spirituality. We believe that such an emphasis, apart from being unscriptural and by its incapable logic condemning mighty men like Wesley, Whitefield and others who did not possess it - has certain sad consequences. It would make sad those whom the Lord had not made sad and could drive to despair those not gifted in this way. Even worse, it could produce psychological and other imitations by the very pressure of such an insistence. Pentecostal leaders themselves acknowledge this fact. Donald Gee, one of the world leaders of the Pentecostal movement in an article entitled "Tongues and Truth" in the Sept. 1953 number of 'Pentecost' writes:

The ever present temptation that has dogged the Pentecostal revival for over 50 years is to try to 'make' seekers apparently speak with tongues so that it can be claimed that they are 'through' into the promised personal Pentecost.

He goes on to say:

The speaking with tongues is a sheer delight and sets the spirit free as never before to declare the wonderful works of God in a language of ecstasy. But if it is not the overflow of a divine fullness, but only the worked up imitation of the truth, a swift and sad disillusionment will follow. There will be no lasting joy, no deepening and strengthening of the spiritual life, no passion for souls, no longing after holiness, no love for the Lord that burns like fire.

b) Tongues can never be outlawed on the grounds of expediency.

There can never be justification on pastoral or other grounds for excluding those who possess this gift or any other on the ground that they can find fellowship in other groups more akin to their way of thinking. To do so would be to violate love as completely as the first emphasis and would completely deny the teaching of 1 Cor. 12:26 "If one member is honored, all rejoice together." Let it be remembered that the 'honoring' spoken of here is in the realm of grace-gifts, not natural gifts. To thrust people out on non-scriptural grounds using expediency as the excuse is to do precisely what a previous generation did to B. T. Roberts. It is to become guilty of building the tombs of the prophets, while being partners of those who killed them. Inevitable cruelties and injustices are involved in this type of action.

The Pastoral Control of Tongues - 1 Cor. 14.

With this general teaching in mind Paul comes to the practical working out of this in a pastoral situation where personal and congregational use of tongues is involved. Certain very clear principles emerge.

i) They are not to forbid speaking in tongues (1 Cor. 14:39).

Prophecy is not to be despised even when it comes in an unknown tongue and needs interpretation (see also 1 Thess. 5:20). To outlaw tongues would be to outlaw the Apostle Paul himself and drive him out of the Church for he claims he speaks with tongues more than them all (1 Cor. 14:18). (By analogy it would also exclude Peter, and all the other Apostles of the early Church.) Paul believes like Moses here - his counterpart in the Old Testament - when requested to forbid Eldad and Medad from prophesying in the Camp "Would that all the Lord's people were prophets" - so Paul says "I would that ye all spake with tongues but rather that you may prophesy" (1 Cor. 14:5).

ii) Tongues speaking can pose special difficulties.

The same problems confronted Paul as confront us. Some seem to have used tongues then as now as a test of 'superspirituality.' The fact that Paul has to claim that what he writes is a command of God (1 Cor. 14:37) and is 'spiritual,' reveals that even his authority is under question by some. His remark that "he speaks in tongues more than they all" is part of his argument that none can claim a superspirituality over him at this point. The presence of groups built around

personalities in Corinth with their own cosy camaraderie - feeling an in-group and regarding others as an out-group, reveal the divisiveness which spiritual gifts and other things can be used to foster. The histrionic display and disorder which he rebukes in 1 Cor. 14, reveal that then as now glossolalia often provide an excuse for an emotional extravaganza that may not have any direct link with the Holy Spirit at all (1 Cor. 12:1-3), and may lead non-Christians in the meeting to conclude they are mad and by implication to drive them from God (1 Cor. 14:23). The fact that Paul urges caution in the congregational use of glossolalia reveals that preoccupation with it on the part of the immature could easily lead to selfish enjoyment of personal experiences which glossolalia produces (1 Cor. 14:4) rather than the building up of the whole Church which may be more needful (1 Cor. 14:12).

Because of these difficulties he applies certain pastoral cautions:

- a) In Congregational use - It is better to speak 5 words in a known tongue than 10,000 in an unknown tongue. 1 Cor. 14:19.
- b) In Congregational use - Tongues should appear sparingly "two at the most three, each in turn and then only with interpretation." 1 Cor. 14:27.
- c) In Congregational use - If no one is present who can interpret, the persons with the gift of tongues are to keep silent and speak to themselves and to God (1 Cor. 14:28). Such a discipline is not to quench the Spirit for the Spirit of the Prophets is subject to the Prophets and God is a God of order and not of confusion (1 Cor. 14:32-33).
- d) In the Congregation - We are to understand the psychological perplexities of the unconverted (1 Cor. 14:23). Paul's reference to unbelievers and tongues being an obstacle to them seems to conflict with his reference to tongues as a sign to unbelievers (1 Cor. 14:22). Perhaps a possible interpretation here is that in certain situations - as at the day of Pentecost or in a multi-racial setting, God did and could still use tongues as a medium to declare the gospel to men. In normal situations unbelievers would be 'put off' by glossolalia - unless interpreted.
- e) In the Congregation - The overriding concern is that things should be done decently and in order whatever gifts are manifested (1 Cor. 14:40).

In Summary - Scripture teaches:

- i) Tongues speaking can be a genuine gift of God
- ii) That we are not to forbid speaking in tongues
- iii) That we must exercise caution in our use of the gift particularly in public. The edification of all is to be sought and the removal of stumbling blocks to the unconverted.

- iv) Tongues can not be made a test of spirituality or a normative Christian experience, nor for that matter, can any spiritual gift.

The Sufficiency of Scripture and Free Methodist Discipline.

In view of such comprehensive teaching in Scripture on this subject, remembering that the Apostle Paul faced the same type of abuses as we seem to face. We affirm that the true approach to this subject is therefore to apply this teaching in our pastoral situations. The abuse of tongues is to be met not by demanding its non-use, but by teaching its proper use under the scriptural safeguards mentioned above. To deny this teaching by adding to or subtracting from it by ecclesiastical discipline which has no support in scripture is to become guilty of the same errors for which we condemn Modernism or Rome. It would deny the clear teaching of our own Article of Religion V (Discipline, par. 25). "The Scriptures contain all things necessary for Salvation, so that whatsoever is not read therein nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of faith or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation."

It has never been safe for the Church to depart from Scripture however much expediency may be urged as an excuse for doing so. Our own Church and our own Bishops need to be under the Word of God and not above it. The Sheep need to hear the Good Shepherd's voice as it comes to them through His Word. Under-shepherds will be followed only as they speak with His Voice. Strangers the sheep will not follow albeit they might have ever so exalted an ecclesiastical position. "The Church is the Kingdom of Christ" said Calvin, "and He reigns only by His Word" it is his "sceptre" (Institutes, Vol. 2, p. 309).

It has been said that Article 15 "Of speaking in the congregation in such a tongue as the people understand" commits Free Methodism to forbidding glossolalia in the congregation. We repudiate this suggestion. The article was phrased as it now appears, by the English Reformers, to rebut the declaration of the Council of Trent which declared a curse on anyone who urged that the Mass should be conducted in the language of the common people. Though the principles of 1 Cor. 14 support this Reformation view, you cannot use the principles of 1 Cor. 14 to deny the teaching of 1 Cor. 14! This would be to set the Word of God against itself. No self respecting biblical scholar who applies the normal rules of exegesis, of grammar and of logic to 1 Cor. 14 can make this passage condemn private or public use of glossolalia with safeguards. We repeat - the answer to error is correct teaching. Let our Church teach 1 Cor. 12-14 in its fullness and the Word of God will slay any dragons we fear. Failure to do this would reveal a failure to trust the Word of the Lord.

English Free Methodism and Speaking in Tongues.

As Free Methodist Ministers and members of the Free Methodist Church we would seek to play a responsible role. We feel our Churches

can contribute in a humble way something from their own experience to the life of the whole. In our fellowships there are those who enjoy the gifts of the Spirit including glossolalia. We have never attempted to hide these facts - indeed we were given explicit verbal assurances from Leaders and others on coming into the denominations that no antagonistic attitude to glossolalia or the gifts of the Spirit would be adopted as long as we did not make it a test of spirituality. This we were happy to do and we have kept this emphasis clearly before our people. We feel it would be a breach of faith if having invited us into the denomination on this understanding the Church were then to take up positions - which are clearly doctrinal positions - by ignoring such verbal assurances and by doing so in such a way as to completely ignore the whole procedure whereby our Church deals with changes of doctrine. We have already suffered the loss of our Pension rights - of our buildings - and many other dear and familiar associations in our eagerness to have a biblical religion. Time and again we have had to face, in our previous denomination, Conference pronouncements which completely set aside biblical precedent on the grounds of expediency. Our people would be utterly cast down and discouraged - troubles and anxieties would be created that need never be there if our Free Methodist leaders take up disciplinary attitudes or pass resolutions to exclude from Christian leadership or service in the Denomination those who experience glossolalia. How could we enforce such disciplines? How could we even justify them to our people when we know them to be contrary to the Word of God?

We deplore the sending out of questionnaires to members of our congregations seeking full time Christian service under the auspices of the Free Methodist Church and Missionary Board, which give the suggestion that glossolalia is antagonistic to the Free Methodist discipline. Such questionnaires are likely to drive the many young people now aiming for Bible College in our Churches to seek their Christian service through other agencies and to lose them to the denomination. We believe that such methods are characteristic of the worst type of McCarthyism in American life where irrelevant data is made the basis of selection for employment. Such data would have excluded the Apostles from Missionary service in our Denomination! This approach leaves our people with the impression that secret standards of discipline are being applied to us over and above the standards of which we have been informed in our Church membership manuals. It denies that trust in the Holy Spirit in His people we are called upon to exercise. Such methods are foreign to our whole English way of doing things and we are repelled by them.

But though we speak strongly, we do not wish to be misunderstood. Our Churches are not pale replicas of Pentecostal or Charismatic groups. We are not seeing anything more than a biblical Methodism. If no one enjoyed Charismata amongst us, we would still maintain the same position just because it is the Biblical position. We want to be Bible Christians. We are not particularly eager to have more glossolalia than we now have. We desire to be proud to belong to a Church that is big enough to take a Bible stance on these matters as on all others not only in England but also in America. We are apprehensive that desire to escape the extremes of some Charismatic groups could lead the Free Methodist Church to adopt unscriptural positions that would do more to

confuse the situation than clarify it. We do not believe that following the lead of the Church of the Nazarene or other holiness groups which outlaw glossolalia is right or scriptural. Dr. George E. Failing may be right when he states "Pentecostalism is the protest movement of our day. It is a protest against the coldness of holiness denominations" (see Maynard James, *I Believe in the Holy Ghost*, p. 114). It is necessary to try the spirits and see whether they be of God - but let scriptural tests be applied.

Free Methodism needs to follow Christ through the scriptures; to pursue a brave and an independent role as it always has done, and never to lose sight of paragraph 10 in the discipline:

Free Methodists endeavour to promote spirituality and simplicity in worship. Congregational singing is universal. They believe in the Holy Ghost. If men are really converted and sanctified, it is through the Spirit of God. When He works there is a stir. As President Edwards said, 'Eternal things are so great, and of such vast concern that there is great absurdity in men being but moderately moved and affected by them.' 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.' The Free Methodists, while they do not believe in any mere formal noise, yet, when the Spirit comes, like 'a mighty rushing wind,' as on the day of Pentecost, do not dare to oppose the manifestations of His presence. As Edwards says, 'Whenever there is any considerable degree of the Spirit's influence upon a mixed multitude, it will produce, in some way, a great visible commotion.' To resist His operations is to hinder the work of God.