

## CHURCH, PLACE AND ORGANIZATION

### The Development of the New Connexion General Baptists in Lincolnshire, 1770-1891<sup>1</sup>

The history and development of the New Connexion of the General Baptists represented a particular response to the challenges which the Evangelical Revival brought to the old dissenting churches. Any analysis of this response has to be aware of three key elements in the life of the Connexion which were a formative part in the way it evolved: the role of the gathered church, the context of the place within which each church worked and the structures which the organization of the Connexion provided. None of them was unique to it, nor did any of them, either individually, or with another, exercise a predominant influence on it, but together they contributed to the definition of a framework of belief, practice and organization which shaped its distinctive development. As such they provide a means of approaching its history.

At the heart of the New Connexion lay the gathered churches. In the words of Adam Taylor, writing in the early part of the nineteenth century, they constituted societies 'of faithful men, voluntarily associated to support the interests of religion and enjoy its privilege, according to their own views of these sacred subjects'.<sup>2</sup> These churches worked within the context of the places where they had been established, and this paper is concerned with the development of the New Connexion among the General Baptist churches of Lincolnshire. Moreover, these Lincolnshire churches played a formative role in the establishment of the New Connexion, so that their history points up the particular character of the relationship between churches and the concept of a connexion as it evolved within the General Baptist community.

There were, by the early eighteenth century, seventeen General Baptist churches in Lincolnshire served by eighteen ministers, often with a history stretching back for the best part of a century. The fifty-five Baptist conventicles recorded in episcopal visitation returns of the period reflected the wider spread of church members into the towns and villages of the county: a feature of local Baptist life which was to remain important into the nineteenth century. It has been estimated that some 2,360 people attended Baptist worship in Lincolnshire in this period, making them the largest nonconformist body in the county before the development of Methodism.<sup>3</sup>

Lincolnshire was distinctive because of its relatively large number of General Baptists, who were proportionately one of the largest groups in the counties of England in the early eighteenth century, comprising 1.23% of the total population. Only Kent and Buckinghamshire had larger proportions with 1.8% and 1.26% respectively.<sup>4</sup> Yet, despite their numerical significance, the Arminianism of the General Baptists meant that they differed doctrinally from most other nonconformist churches in the county. This isolation was compounded by the divisions which developed between individual churches in the course of the century and which encouraged their perception of themselves, in the imagery of the Old Testament, as

enclosed gardens. Theological heterodoxy, and the debates which it occasioned, was a further cause of division. While some of the churches and ministers in the Lincolnshire Association of General Baptists continued to adhere to 'the principles which had distinguished the English General Baptists in their best days' into the middle of the eighteenth century, others denied entirely such central teachings as the Divinity of Christ, the Atonement, Justification by Faith Alone and Regeneration by the Holy Spirit, or discussed them in ways which the more orthodox considered to detract from their dignity and essential truth.<sup>5</sup>

John Hursthouse of Boston, writing as early as 1729, contrasted the 'former prosperous' condition of the Lincolnshire Baptists with their 'present declining state' - a 'consequence of their unhappy divisions'. He looked back to the second half of the seventeenth century when the Gospel had been spread, the people gathered in several places and churches settled. His prescription for a restoration of Baptist strength included the need for spiritual renewal, including fervent prayer, meditation, the reading of God's Word, and using all possible means to increase the sense of God's love in the hearts of the people. While warning against an excessive interest in worldly affairs, he argued that the framework for recovery lay in a greater concern with church order and ministry.<sup>6</sup>

During the first half of the eighteenth century existing forms of association between both churches and their ministers were too weak to counteract the divisions which developed among the General Baptists of Lincolnshire. The decline in the authority of the office of Messenger - a minister appointed with the consent of the churches in the area to act as an overseer of them, as well as a mediator between and within them - was a particular manifestation of this weakness.<sup>7</sup> Even by the time Gilbert Boyce was ordained a Messenger in 1753, the sense of division and decline, which Hursthouse had described earlier, was pervasive.<sup>8</sup> In this condition the Lincolnshire General Baptist churches adopted a defensive attitude to the Evangelical Revival as expressed in Methodism. In 1745 the Lincolnshire Association of General Baptists declared Methodist faith and practice to be 'contrary to the holy scriptures, and to the peace and welfare of the societies'. Discipline was to be exercised against Baptist church members who attended Methodist meetings.<sup>9</sup>

The Lincolnshire Messenger, Gilbert Boyce, had met John Wesley when Wesley visited Coningsby in 1748 but, although the pair 'confirmed their love towards each other', there was a vigorous discussion at the end of their meeting 'on the point of baptism'.<sup>10</sup> It was a debate which continued for over twenty years. A concern with the form rather than the substance of the debate was demonstrated in Boyce's *Serious Reply to the Revd. Mr. John Wesley*, published in 1770, which, although it emphasized the central importance of the distinctive Baptist teachings on baptism, was redolent of the lack of an appreciation of the wider significance of the Evangelical Revival in many churches.<sup>11</sup> Yet the Revival provided the spiritual renewal for which Hursthouse had looked some fifteen years earlier and 'the warmth

and affection which animated the new professors triumphed, in many instances, over the decrees and threatenings of this feeble synod'.<sup>12</sup>

Although their Arminianism had not provided the General Baptists with a sufficiently strong theological bulwark against introversion and division, it was the basis on which they could respond to revival. It was the Arminianism of Daniel Taylor, and the need to reconcile it with his belief in the centrality of believers' baptism, which took him from Halifax into Lincolnshire in search of baptism by a minister who would accept his theological position. Taylor, a collier, had experienced evangelical conversion among the Wesleyan Methodists, but had come under the influence of the Particular Baptist churches of the Hebden Bridge area of West Yorkshire where he had gathered a congregation. In February 1763 he attempted to contact a group of General Baptists at Boston in Lincolnshire, but before he reached them he came upon a Baptist church at Gamston in Nottinghamshire. The minister there was willing to baptize Taylor and a companion in the river, after which they returned home.<sup>13</sup>

Taylor's quest for a more vigorous style of evangelism anticipated that of the leaders of the later major offshoots of Methodism - the Bible Christians and the Primitive Methodists - which also had highly localized origins.<sup>14</sup> His instinct for association, however, coupled with a sense of the need for order, meant that he was from the outset more than an individualist driven by the imperatives of revival who created a church in his own image, although the links that he developed had a strong personal element. The leadership provided by individual ministers, such as Taylor, was an important element in the formation of the New Connexion, but the work of these ministers remained rooted in the churches; when Taylor renewed his attempts to contact the Lincolnshire Baptists in the summer following his baptism, he used their Association meeting in May 1763 to do this. Here he finally established the connection with the Boston General Baptist church he had attempted to make earlier in the year. Taylor went with the minister of the Boston church, William Thompson, to the town where Thompson's diligent work for a revival was another expression of the considerable importance of the work of individual ministers in this phase of Baptist life and had led to the growth of the church since he went there in 1762. Thompson also visited Taylor's Yorkshire congregation and formally constituted it as a church, while Taylor strengthened their relationship by travelling to Boston to preach at the opening of the new meeting house there in 1764.<sup>15</sup>

Taylor had also come into contact with a group of Arminian Baptists at Barton in Fabis in Leicestershire which had not gone the way of the Lincolnshire General Baptists and had remained theologically orthodox and actively evangelistic. They had spread into neighbouring towns and villages so that by the time Taylor encountered them they had five separate churches.<sup>16</sup> The emphasis which the Leicestershire Baptists placed on spiritual unity based on the 'genuine doctrines' of Christianity, as well as the necessity for a separate organization for all who shared them, became the foundation on which the New Connexion of General Baptists was

built. Religious revival based on doctrinal agreement superseded past divisions over teaching and practice. It was a measure of the extent to which this was rooted in the spiritual experience of individuals and lived out at the heart of Baptist life rather than imposed from above that made it impossible for Gilbert Boyce to exercise his traditional role as a Messenger. The churches in the New Connexion separated themselves from older arrangements for association, repudiating the concept of the office of Messenger as one of divine obligation. This rejection of central authority in favour of local experience pointed up the particular character of the connexionalism of the General Baptists. The Connexion grew out of the needs of the churches and their ministers and meant that it was markedly different from the better known connexionalism of the Wesleyan Methodists. Relatively transient, full-time Wesleyan ministers ultimately derived their authority - pastoral as well as constitutional - from the connexion through which they were placed in their stations. This was a potential source of friction between local societies and a ministerial cadre. The ministers of the General Baptist New Connexion were called by the churches and derived their authority from them. It was an authority which the ministers had acquired individually and it provided them with a base from which to exercise the personal leadership which sustained the evangelistic ethos of the churches.<sup>17</sup>

After a meeting at Lincoln in 1769, at which Daniel Taylor and William Thompson, the Boston minister, met representatives of the Leicestershire churches, the New Connexion of General Baptists was formally established in 1770. Its first Association meeting was held in London in June of that year and was attended by people from fourteen churches. A deputation was sent to the General Baptist Assembly, which was meeting at the same time, with a farewell message. This gesture, together with the fact that the six articles of religion drawn up by the New Connexion Association were not seen as an inclusive creed but dealt with the main points of dispute between them and the old General Baptists, could be seen as a continuation of the tradition of debate which had so weakened General Baptist life in the earlier part of the century. It also showed the consciousness of the New Connexion's roots in the gathered churches of the old Baptist tradition. The concern with salvation by faith, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit, and the provision that 'every minister do . . . give an account of his religious experience' at the Connexion's next Association were indicative of the positive evangelical impulse which informed and motivated it.<sup>18</sup>

The New Connexion churches in Lincolnshire grew from a total of 126 members in 1770 to 1,688 in 1890, with a peak of 1,963 in 1884. This growth came in a variety of ways, each of which contributed to the character of the Connexion. These were of three main types:

1. growth from the accession to the Connexion of churches which had been in existence, often for a long period, before they joined it;

2. growth from the recruitment of individuals from outside the existing churches, sometimes leading to the establishment of new branches of them or of new churches;
3. growth from within existing churches, particularly from the families of church members.

The last two types of growth and church development could be found generally among the nonconformist churches and were not peculiar to the General Baptist New Connexion. A new church established itself through the recruitment of new members and, as it matured, tended to maintain its position through the addition of others, including the children of those already within it. The relative importance of these two patterns of growth affected the character of individual churches. While a church which remained attractive and relevant to people outside it, they would continue to be recruited into an increasing membership. Where growth depended on internal recruitment, which would include children of existing members and also people whose contacts were as peripheral as occasional attendance at worship, mainly on special occasions, or the presence of their children in Sunday schools, then the maintenance of existing structures and institutions became a predominant element in church life.

The contrast between these two types of church development was less marked in Lincolnshire because of the relatively dispersed church membership of the General Baptist churches. This meant that individual family units might be the only type of Baptist presence in places away from the town or village from which a church took its name so that they provided the bases on which an expanding church was built. It was, however, particularly the accession of mature gathered churches to the General Baptist New Connexion, not just at its foundation but as a continuing process throughout its existence, which added a distinctive feature to its development. The result was that varied patterns of church growth, which in other contexts might have been part of a sequential process of historical development, took place simultaneously, as individuals recruited from outside became a second generation concerned with the maintenance of churches established in response to increasing membership.<sup>19</sup>

The distinctive characteristics of local churches shaped by their patterns of growth were particularly important in a Connexion where authority was defined by the voluntary acceptance of advice and adoption of practice. As established churches entered the New Connexion they brought with them, to contribute to its development, a considerable range of experience both in terms of their histories and their engagement with the particular contexts in which they were located. That at Maltby le Marsh joined the New Connexion in 1772 and was the fourth church to do so. Its twenty-two members were motivated by the desire to promote 'vital religion', for which they agreed they would exert themselves, encouraging ministers who preached 'the essential doctrines of the blessed Gospel of Jesus Christ'; at the

same time they would maintain church doctrine and discipline.<sup>20</sup> Daniel Taylor's preaching tours, undertaken both before and after the formation of the New Connexion, were based on existing churches. His concern to work within existing structures as he sought to arouse evangelical zeal among the members could be seen in the tour that he made for a week in March 1797, when he visited a group of churches in the south Lincolnshire fenland. Yet, however strong the evangelical impulse which drove Taylor's initiative, the autonomy of local churches, like that exercised at Maltby le Marsh, and the particular qualities which this autonomy secured, remained paramount. Some of the churches visited by Taylor in 1797 were already in the Connexion, others were not to join it until later, some only after a number of years, bringing their individual contribution to its development at various stages of its growth.<sup>21</sup> The long-established church at Coningsby, with its ninety-nine members, did not join the New Connexion until 1830, while one of Grimsby's Baptist churches, which had been founded in response to the development of the town, joined with forty members as late as 1870.<sup>22</sup> Taylor's own church in Yorkshire and the Leicestershire churches based on Barton in Fabis had only a tenuous connection with the General Baptist tradition yet made a significant contribution to the New Connexion.<sup>23</sup>

The establishment of the fenland church at Gedney Hill illustrates the way in which growth through the recruitment of individuals from outside the existing churches, but based on a nucleus provided by dispersed church membership, led to the establishment of a new church. There had been preaching in the settlement in the 1790s, but the church established there in 1820 came into existence through the enthusiasm of three members of a family who initially travelled eleven miles to the village of Fleet and became members of the church there. The meetings they held in their house at Gedney Hill, at which one of them preached, supported by occasional visits from a minister, attracted a growing congregation so that by 1811 the house had become too small for them. A meeting-house was built and became the base for further expansion into the surrounding fenland communities. By 1843 there were two chapels associated with the separate Gedney Hill church.<sup>24</sup>

At Long Sutton the active evangelism of Henry Poole, initially minister at Fleet, was of central importance in the development of the church. He had attended the first meeting of the New Connexion but he was considered to be 'too methodistical' by the Fleet church and did not carry the church with him, although it joined at a later date. Poole left Fleet and moved a few miles away to Long Sutton where he formed another church which was admitted into the Connexion in 1773. A meeting-house was built and membership reached a height of thirty-four in 1778, but the failure of efforts to increase membership by extending its activities into other places meant that the Long Sutton church became extinct in 1793 when it had only twelve members. It was a situation exacerbated by a change in Poole's theological position which led to him and a handful of followers leaving the New Connexion. The eventual re-establishment of the church in Long Sutton by the Fleet church, which

had by then joined the New Connexion and which had also been involved at Gedney Hill, is a further example of the complex patterns of growth which were subsumed within the New Connexion and which contributed to its development.<sup>25</sup>

The accession of the long established churches at Boston and Bourne to the New Connexion brought to it the attitudes and concerns characteristic of the dissenting churches of the market towns, while the churches formed in Grantham and Grimsby were a response to the industrially related urban growth which took place in Lincolnshire in the nineteenth century. The small market town of Holbeach was undergoing its greatest period of population growth in the nineteenth century. Here the development of the New Connexion reflected the potential for church growth in the small town and in rural communities of Lincolnshire: this came by working through the essentially local networks which characterized General Baptist life in the county.

The establishment of the church from a rural base at Fleet mirrored patterns of migration in the period. Preaching had begun in the town in 1840 and by the next year this was being held in a public room which was reported as being filled and sometimes crowded. A chapel was built in 1844 on the newly developed Albert Street and the occupations of those members of its trust who lived in the town reflected its strong community of tradesmen and craftsmen.

The way in which a local church could become an integral part of the life of the local community of which it was a part was also manifest in the composition of the trustees of the chapel of the fenland farming community of Sutton St James. Here one of the most proletarian and least literate leaderships in the area, with five farmers and four labourers, a servant, and a minister, of whom one farmer and two labourers signed the deed with a mark, reflected the life of the area which it served.<sup>26</sup>

The figures for the total membership of the New Connexion in Lincolnshire, which was 126 in 1770 and 1,688 by 1890, subsume the varied patterns of growth in the churches of the county. Boston and Fleet, with 76 and 50 members respectively, were the first churches to join when the New Connexion was established in 1770. The number of churches had grown to nine by 1811 with a total membership of 416, ranging from 19 at Maltby le Marsh to 91 at Boston. By 1820 there were 699 members in twelve churches; in 1851 1,556 members in seventeen churches; in 1870 1,963 members in eighteen churches. Although the total membership in the New Connexion in Lincolnshire fluctuated in the early 1870s and into the late 1880s, the number of churches had increased to twenty-one by 1880. By 1890, just before the Connexion ceased to have a separate existence, there were seventeen churches with a total of 1,688 members.<sup>27</sup>

The average membership of these Lincolnshire churches was 46 in 1811 and had risen to 58 by 1820, 79 by 1840, 91 by 1851, 101 by 1861 and 109 by 1870. A decline in membership in the county in the 1870s was accompanied by a drop in average church membership to between 87 and 88 by 1880; although total

membership in the county declined further, the number of churches also decreased, so that their average membership rose to 99.<sup>28</sup>

The size of a church as measured by both membership and the number of people who attended its services contributed to its individual character. In the case of the New Connexion, the way in which this membership was defined added a further variable to the factors which shaped the development of local churches. At the Census of Religious Worship of 1851, there was an attendance of 3,385 people at the morning services of the thirty-one New Connexion places of worship in Lincolnshire, 1,479 in the afternoon and 3,460 in the evening, with no return from one place. The membership of the Connexion in Lincolnshire at that time totalled 1,556.<sup>29</sup> On the assumption that the larger evening congregations included people who had also attended morning worship and that all members worshipped on Census Sunday, slightly over 55 per cent of New Connexion worshippers were connected to it by attendance at its services but not through full membership. However, the minister of the chapel in Gosberton noted on his Religious Census return that its morning congregation of some ninety worshippers and fifty-three Sunday Scholars was made up of people who came from a distance and did not attend in the evening. This meant that 'the same persons are not identified with both morning and evening congregations'. Since the evening congregation numbered 170, this meant that there was a total number of individual adult attendances in Gosberton approaching 260, so that, with a church membership there of fifty, the percentage of members among the worshippers was just over 19 per cent. This was very close to that for the whole of Lincolnshire, based on the assumption that each person only attended once on a Sunday: just over 18 per cent of a total of 8,504 attendances. At Long Sutton, another fenland chapel like Gosberton, the percentage of members among attenders was larger, at nearly 27 per cent, if it is also assumed that there were different congregations at each Sunday service. In the town of Grantham, where more varied patterns of attendance may have prevailed, the percentage of members was 64 per cent, assuming only one attendance by each person on Census Sunday, although 77 per cent based on average attendances over the past year.<sup>30</sup>

The varying relationship between church membership and attendance in different churches can be compared with the situation in other denominations in Lincolnshire in 1851. The Primitive Methodists had as low as 17 per cent of members among their congregations in some fenland areas. On the other hand, membership levels reached 40 per cent among the Wesleyan Methodists in the north of the county. In the case of the Methodists, a low percentage of members can be explained in terms of a 'missionary' situation in which a place of worship might be establishing itself in the local community, while a longer established chapel might attract a more settled congregation with a deeper commitment to membership.<sup>31</sup> The varied origins of the Lincolnshire New Connexion churches meant that their situation was less susceptible to explanation in these terms, so that the specific context in which each gathered church functioned, including the particular stage its development had

reached, was important. What was central to all was the distinctive nature of Baptist church membership and it was here that the evangelical impulse towards inclusiveness came up against the potentially exclusive issue of church membership. It was a point at which believers' baptism was of crucial importance.

The sixth of the articles on which the foundation of the New Connexion had been based maintained the centrality of believers' baptism as the means of initiation 'into a church state'. No person 'ought to be received into the church without submission to that ordinance'.<sup>32</sup> In fact, attitudes to baptism, as well as changing over time, also differed between churches and this affected church membership and contributed to the differing ratios of members and attenders in New Connexion churches. Despite moves towards open membership, which left the decision as to whether to be baptized as believers to the individual conscience of people who applied to join the churches, baptism remained the basis of membership among the Lincolnshire churches. However, the reports of the churches to the annual assembly of the Connexion included comments on attendance, so recognizing success or otherwise in this area of church life. Nonetheless, buoyant attendances were often contrasted with a less optimistic report on actual church membership, so that a report from the Spalding church for 1817 referred to large congregations and yet a lack of converts for the 'too much neglected ordinance of baptism'.<sup>33</sup> As late as 1889, when the church at Sutton St James reported in hopeful terms on the activities of some of its adherents, it was felt that the cause would not prosper until the earnest prayer that 'the Lord may soon lead them all through the water' was answered.<sup>34</sup>

It was at this point that the evangelical imperatives embodied in the organization of the New Connexion interacted with the gathered churches in particular places, challenging them to do more than merely confirm the salvation of individuals through membership, but also to become the instruments through which it was achieved.<sup>35</sup> The reports of individual churches reflected a culture where the inclusiveness of evangelicalism met the potential for exclusiveness of the gathered church membership. In the relatively loose pattern of association of the New Connexion, elective rather than prescriptive in its tone, exemplary rather than compulsive in the measures that it took, the evangelical impulse which had led to its formation was sustained, developed and expressed.

The proposal, made in 1810, that a minister should visit some of the ancient but decayed General Baptist churches of Lincolnshire in order to attempt to reinvigorate them, led to a subscription to meet the costs of the enterprise and the establishment of an Itinerant Fund which was connexionally based and became a Home Missionary Society from 1821.<sup>36</sup> The establishment of an academy to train ministers, the publication of a connexional magazine - *The General Baptist Repository*, the establishment of central funds to assist aged ministers and of a religious tract society, as well as the introduction of a hymn book, all maintained the identity of the Connexion, although many of these ideas and practices, including areas such as Sunday school work or the provision of friendly and benefit societies, were not

exclusive to the New Connexion and can be seen as a part of the wider pattern of nonconformist life of which it was a part.<sup>37</sup>

Like other nonconformist bodies, the New Connexion also became increasingly concerned with the maintenance of its institutions. The annual reports of the Lincolnshire churches in 1841, for example, included news of evangelistic enterprise, such as the expansion of preaching into the village of Swineshead, where a Sunday School had been established, and the opening of another Sunday School in a neglected part of Boston, but the prosperity of the Boston church was also expressed through a more introverted concern with the care and maintenance of existing structures. Side galleries were enlarged and other improvements made at the chapel. The additions and improvements, which were reported in the same year to the chapels and meeting-houses in Kirton in Lindsey, Louth and Alford reflected the same concerns.<sup>38</sup>

The fact that these concerns were not exclusive to the New Connexion was indicative of the integration of the gathered churches of the General Baptists into the main stream of nonconformist life. The New Connexion had been the principal means through which this had been achieved and the inclusiveness of the Evangelical Revival had been articulated within the context of a group of gathered churches working in the circumstances of the place in which they were established. This process had created a grid of experience and practice which strengthened its components yet was flexible enough to accommodate their particular responses. As such, it represented a distinctive response to the challenges which the Evangelical Revival brought to the old dissenting churches.

## NOTES

- 1 This paper was first given as a BHS Lecture at the Annual Meeting held in Leicester in 1996.
- 2 Adam Taylor, *The History of the English General Baptists*, part II. The New Connexion of General Baptists. 1818. pp.468-9.
- 3 Dr Williams's Library. London. MSS 38.5 and 6. Josiah Thompson's Lists of Dissenting Congregations in England and Wales. 1715-1773; *Speculum Dioceseos Lincolnensis sub Episcopis Gul. Wake et Edm. Gibson, 1705-1723*, ed. R.E.G. Cole. Lincoln Record Society. 4. 1913. p.ix.
- 4 Michael R. Watts. *The Dissenters: from the Reformation to the French Revolution*, vol.I. Oxford 1978. p.509.
- 5 Raymond Brown. *The English Baptists of the Eighteenth Century*, 1986. pp.7, 12, 19, 20-1, 26, 58; Taylor. *op.cit.* II. p.133.
- 6 John Hursthouse. *An Epistle to the Baptized Churches in Lincolnshire &c.* Lincoln 1729. pp.4, 15-7, 19-20.
- 7 Thomas Grantham. *Christianismus Primitivus*. 'First Book'. 1678. p.165; Taylor. *op.cit.* I. p.203.
- 8 *op.cit.* II, pp.112-3.
- 9 *op.cit.* II, pp.110-1.
- 10 *The Journal of John Wesley, A.M.*, ed. Nehemiah Curnock. vol.III. [1909]. p.360; Taylor, *op.cit.* II, p.111.
- 11 A.C. Underwood, *A History of the English Baptists*, 2nd impression, 1956. p.149.
- 12 Taylor. *op.cit.* II, pp.110-1.
- 13 Watts, *op.cit.* I, p.455; Underwood, *English General Baptists*, pp.150-1; Adam Taylor, *Memoirs of the Rev. Dan Taylor, Late Pastor of the General Baptist Church, Whitechapel, London*, 1820, p.55.
- 14 Robert Currie. *Methodism Divided: a study of the sociology of ecumenicalism*, 1968. p.55.
- 15 Taylor, *Memoirs*, pp.12-4; Taylor, *History II*, pp.128-9; Underwood, *English Baptists*, pp.151-2.
- 16 Taylor, *Memoirs*, p.17; Taylor, *History II*, p.76; Watts, *op.cit.* I, pp.454-5.
- 17 Taylor, *History II*, pp.134-5; *Minutes of the General Assembly of General Baptist Churches in England, with Kindred Records*, vol.II. 1731-1811, ed. W.T. Whitley. 1910. p.160; W. R. Ward. 'The Baptists

- and the Transformation of the Church, 1780-1830', in *Faith and Faction*, ed. W.R. Ward, 1993, p.209.
- 18 Taylor, *History II*, pp.135, 138-43, 212-3, 328; *General Assembly Minutes II*, pp.139-41.
- 19 Robert Currie, Alan Gilbert and Lee Horsley, *Churches and Churchgoers: Patterns of Church Growth in the British Isles since 1700*, Oxford 1977, pp.8-9.
- 20 Lincolnshire Archives, 16 BAPT 2, Maltby le Marsh Baptist Church Book, 1773-1791; James Taylor, *Statistics of the New Connexion of General Baptists, from its Formation in 1770 to 1843*, ed. J. Goadby, Aahby de la Zouche [1844], p.18.
- 21 Taylor, *Memoirs*, p.215.
- 22 *Minutes of the Sixtieth Annual Association of the New Connexion of General Baptists, held at Birchcliffe, Yorkshire, 1830*, Loughborough [1830] [sequence hereafter *Minutes*], p.3; *Minutes, Sheffield 1869*, Leicester [1869], p.15.
- 23 I am indebted to the Revd Frank W. Rinaldi for this point.
- 24 Taylor, *Statistics*, pp.55-6; *General Baptist Repository*, vol.IV, n.d., p.41; *Minutes, Loughborough 1843*, Leicester [1843], p.3; *Minutes, Peterborough 1887*, [1887], pp.37, 50.
- 25 Taylor, *History II*, pp.197-8, 285-6; Taylor, *Statistics*, p.68; *Minutes, London 1840*, Nottingham [1840], p.4.
- 26 R.W. Ambler, 'Local Baptist Leadership: a Lincolnshire study', *BQ XXXV*, 1, 1993, pp.48-9.
- 27 Taylor, *Statistics*, pp.11-2; *Minutes, Melbourne 1811*, n.p. [1811], pp.3-4; *Minutes, Spalding 1820*, Derby [1820], pp.3, 7, 9, 11; *Minutes, Derby 1851*, pp.6,7; *Minutes, Leicester 1870*, London [1870], pp.22-7; *Minutes, Nottingham 1880*, [1880], pp.32-7; *Minutes, Nottingham 1890*, London [1890], pp.62-74.
- 28 *Minutes*, 1811, 1820, 1840, 1851, 1870; 1880, 1890 cited above; *Minutes, Leicester 1861*, Leicester [1861], pp.10-2.
- 29 Parliamentary Papers, 1852-53, LXXXIX (1690) Population of Great Britain, 1851, Religious Worship (England and Wales) pp.6-7.
- 30 *Lincolnshire Returns of the Census of Religious Worship*, ed. R.W. Ambler, Lincoln Record Society, vol.72, 1979, pp.21-2, 32, 79-80; *Minutes, Derby 1851*, pp.6, 7.
- 31 *Lincolnshire Returns . . .* pp. lii-liiii.
- 32 Taylor, *History II*, pp.141-2.
- 33 Underwood, *English Baptists*, pp.210-1; *Minutes, Castle Donington 1817*, Derby [1817], p.11.
- 34 *Minutes, Castle Donington 1817*, p.11.
- 35 J.H.Y. Briggs, *The English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century*, Didcot 1994, pp.14-5, 18; Ward, 'The Baptists and the transformation . . .', pp.209-10.
- 36 Taylor, *History II*, pp.457-8; *Minutes, Loughborough 1821*, n.p., n.d., p.21.
- 37 Taylor, *History II*, pp.327, 464-7.
- 38 *Minutes, Derby 1841*, Derby [1841], pp.6-29.

R.W. AMBLER *Department of History, University of Hull*

\* \* \* \* \*

David Lazell, *Gipsy from the Forest*, Gwasg Bryntirion Press 1997, ISBN 1-85049-132 1, 256pp. £7.99.

Rodney 'Gipsy' Smith (1860-1947) was a gifted British evangelist who worked initially for the Salvation Army but later became a Methodist. Through his unique combination of preaching and singing he became well known internationally, particularly in the United States. David Lazell has devoted some years to the study of Gipsy Smith and this book is a thorough revision of a previous volume produced in 1870. It does not claim to be a scholarly treatment, but it provides important insights into aspects of the history of evangelism in the earlier twentieth century. Smith had connections with Methodism's Cliff College, and more work remains to be done on Wesleyan spirituality in this period. The book has a sympathetic and illuminating foreword by Thomas Acton, Reader in Romani Studies at the University of Greenwich, who notes that since the 1970s Smith has been rediscovered by leaders of Romany evangelicals.

IAN RANDALL *Tutor in Church History and Spirituality, Spurgeon's College*