

## METHODIST NEW CONNEXION

The Methodist New Connexion came into being on 9<sup>th</sup> August 1797 when Alexander Kilham, William Thom, Stephen Eversfield and Alexander Cummin met at the Ebenezer Chapel in Leeds and formally set up the Methodist New Connexion [MNC], following the refusal of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference to discuss questions of administration which they felt were vital to the future expansion of Methodism.

These were:

1 Times of Sunday services should be determined by those who wished to attend them and not by an anxiety to avoid the usual hours of service in the Anglican Church.

2 Holy Communion should be administered by Methodist Itinerant Ministers in their own meeting houses.

3 Lay members should share in the government of the Church at Circuit and District Meetings and at the Annual Conference of Preachers.

The MNC took root in the Midlands and North of England. At its second Conference at Sheffield in 1798, 15 ministers and 17 laymen attended representing 10 organised circuits.

Sadly Alexander Kilham died of exhaustion on 12<sup>th</sup> December 1798 and was buried in the grounds of Hockley Chapel, Nottingham. The MNC also sent its first missionary to Ireland in 1798 and in 1825 sent John Addyman on a mission to Canada.

By 1847 its Golden Jubilee year the MNC had 20,000 members in the UK and 30,000 adherents in Canada. It had 141 ministers, 334 Chapels and 38,000 Sunday School scholars.

In 1866, the President of the MNC Conference, Rev Samuel Hulme sent a letter to the Wesleyan Methodist Conference suggesting the advisability of exploring the question of Methodist Unity.

Rev William Arthur, the President of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference, responded with these words. "We have seen days of division and breaking down. God grant that we may now see days of building up." Methodist Unity was not achieved until October 1932.

### **ALEXANDER KILHAM [1762-1798]**

Alexander Kilham was born at Epworth, Lincolnshire on 10<sup>th</sup> July 1762, the son of a linen weaver. An adherent of John Wesley, he became a Wesleyan local preacher preaching his first sermon at Luddington. He travelled widely as a preacher particularly in the Gainsborough area, in Pocklington, Whitby and Newcastle upon Tyne. In 1793 he preached at Aberdeen where he discussed church organisation with the local Presbyterian Church leaders

following which he published a pamphlet in 1795 called "Progress of Liberty." This attacked the power of ministers and demanded the right of lay people to share in Church Government. He also believed that each Church should be "complete within itself for government but within a framework of churches being associated for mutual help." These views were not shared by the Wesleyan Conference of 1796 who expelled him from the Church. A year later he helped to form the Methodist New Connexion. The MNC was organised along similar lines to the Wesleyan Church except that its Annual Conferences had equal lay and ministerial representation.

He died in 1798 at the age of 36. In 1860 the Kilham Memorial Chapel was opened in Epworth but was closed soon after Methodist unification.

After Kilham's death The MNC grew steadily with 5070 members in 1802, rising to 10,856 members in 1822, 21,836 members in 1840 and 30,972 members in 1872, by which year it claimed to have 78,670 Sunday School scholars.