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VICTORIAN VALUES AND
INDUSTRIOUS CONNEXIONS

The Wesley Historical Society Lecture 2002

I
Family connections are part of the poetry of history'.¹ What are we to make of that? I first read Noel Annan's celebrated essay, 'The Intellectual Aristocracy', not too long after it came out. Or, rather, at that stage in my evolution I glanced at it. It has since been reissued and slightly revised as an annexe to his elegiac *The Dons*.² Annan's dons peaked imperially between the 1940s and the 1960s. They have been crashing ever since, although they are still somehow there.

The constants of their aristocracy seem to have been a degree of power and a much greater degree of influence, underpinned by a degree of property and a much greater degree of independence: that is to say, the right degree of economic independence to allow for moral independence. That independence expressed itself in a kaleidoscope of attitudes but it was also shot through by a kaleidoscope of shared values. There is little spiritual, intellectual, or political uniformity although there is a common respect for intellect and we should not underestimate the extent to which variation results from sharing. Perhaps that is where family and family relationships are fundamental. Certainly the shared dimension is important if we are to understand an aristocracy, particularly if we are to understand Britain's complex of aristocracies, steadily interwoven in land, commerce, politics, law, culture, and the universities. Here there comes to mind the cliché beloved of Congregationalists when organic church union seemed to be the order of the day: 'unity but not uniformity'. Independence born of the confidence which comes from shared values can be the mark of an aristocracy.

¹ N. Annan, 'The Intellectual Aristocracy', Annexe to *The Dons. Mentors, Eccentrics and Geniuses*, (1999, pbk edn. 2000) p. 304.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 304-341.

What makes Annan relevant for my purposes is the play he made of the evangelicalism which initially stimulated his families of intellectuals. It was Evangelical rather than Catholic. His networked souls were more Cambridge Saints than Oxford Movement. The Clapham Sect turned up everywhere. He made less play of the religious Nonconformity discernible in this intellectual establishment, although it nestled there quite naturally once it had become tolerated but before it had become wholly assimilated. For Annan's interconnected intellectuals included Quakers and Unitarians as well as Clapham Sectarians. The patient explorer can find Congregationalists among them and even some Baptists. But where are the Methodists? For intellectual Methodists there must have been, however far they had strayed from their origins. Sir Charles Firth, the Oxford historian? John Couch Adams, the Cambridge astronomer?

Certainly Methodism appears in Annan's *The Dons*. It is there in the guise of Herbert Butterfield, whom Annan clearly did not much like and whose Methodism he hides in an ignorant phrase: 'he was a lay preacher'.³ For those who knew, it could be discerned in that more recent titan of the intellectual establishment, Fred Dainton, whom Annan treats honourably, although one feels that they were not natural buddies.⁴ We do not need to be told that there was Methodism in the universities, particularly between the 1940s and the 1960s. University towns usually had strong Methodist churches. There were Methodist theological colleges in Bristol, Cambridge, Leeds, London, and Manchester, all of them university towns with strong university departments of theology. Student MethSocs flourished. Faculty names come readily to mind: Basil Willey, John Kent, Gordon Rupp, W.R. Ward, Henry Rack, Roger Anstey, Charles Coulson, Harold Miller, none of them names to trifle with, and - save for the last two - this is only a selection of lettrists and historians. Sheffield was a proudly secular university but it was really more of a Methodist university; it could not be otherwise in such a city. Methodism had its schools, its training colleges, and its Vice Chancellors too.

So why had it no place in the Annan aristocracy? Was there something more Catholic than Evangelical about it which put it at a distance? Were Wesleyans masters of assimilation and other Methodists too tied up in their connexions? Or was it that Annan had not looked? He was aware of denominational distinctions but they did not greatly interest him. Yet so much can be missed if an accent is missed.

My own interest in such accented webs of connexion began less with Annan, though I was aware of his essay, and more with the ministerial obituaries which were such a feature of *The Baptist Handbook* and *The*

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 264-6, 246, 252.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 275-7, 130. Dainton, a stonemason's son, later Baron Dainton of Hallam Moors, attended the Sunday school of what is now Banner Cross Methodist Church, Sheffield.

Congregational Year Book. From their necrologies a ministerial network of nature's independents began naturally to congregate in my mind, frequently bringing their deacons with them, for it must not go without saying that wives, daughters, sisters, mothers, aunts, play a key role in spinning the web. I dislike the concept of a 'Dissenting Aristocracy' - aristocracies are best left to Whigs and Labour - and 'élite' is a word best forgotten even by Calvinists but these leaders in their churches were sustained as my aristocracy is sustained by broadly shared spiritual values, intellectual perceptions, political attitudes, and a modicum of economic independence. All this allowed for the variety which was their strength. They also liked each other. That should not be forgotten. The dreadful childhoods, the loveless marriages, the sexual and aesthetic repression, the instinctive patriarchy, which are now the stuff of writing by perceptively agonised liberals, were in real life surprisingly often quite the reverse. Whole men and women flourished even in Nonconformist homes, perhaps especially in Nonconformist homes. Maynard Keynes, who was brought up in one, said so in one of his most suggestive asides.⁵

So what about a Methodist aspect of the poetry of history?

We might note three things. First, networks can be found, therefore imagined, everywhere. That will delight the conspiracy theorist. Secondly, Nonconformist networks have a local emphasis: their strength is on the ground. Thirdly, the Methodist network has nonetheless a distinctively national dimension: its ministry. Methodist travelling preachers, men (in the period covered by this paper) under orders, are stationed. They have no abiding place, though their siblings and those of their wives abide to great effect.

That noted, we might envisage a recipe for leadership, a five-fold leadership mix. First comes economic independence. Next comes spiritual certainty. There follow communal sensitivity (Methodists, like Quakers, homed in on the religious *society*), civic responsibility, and political acuity. That, surely, provides the ideal mix for commercial, industrial, professional, and political leadership. 'Leadership' is an important word. There are several types of leader. Nonconformists probably do not make natural Commanders-in-Chief, although Nonconformity has produced some fine bishops, but they certainly make good officers at all ranks from the non-commissioned to the humbler sort of general. There have thus been Methodist captains of industry but have there been Methodist Napoleons? And if names come to mind, then a quality assessment of their Methodism must be in order. Perhaps the ultimate secular test for qualities of leadership comes at Westminster, where all are leaders. What, however, of the Prime Ministers, or indeed

5. '...perhaps no one who was not brought up as an evangelical or a nonconformist is entitled to think freely in due course....' G. Keynes ed., J.M. Keynes, *Essays in Biography*, (1961 edn.) p.326.

the Speakers? How far has the Nonconformity at work in the formation of Speakers Whitley, Selwyn Lloyd, King, Thomas, Weatherill, or Prime Ministers Asquith, Lloyd George, Chamberlain, Wilson, Callaghan, Thatcher, contributed constructively to whatever was successful in their conduct of office?⁶

So to Sheffield, a crucible of folk Methodism for values and connexions, nationally significant yet in constant counterpoint to national themes.

II

In popular historical estimation Sheffield is new, industrial, radical. Popular estimation is not wholly wrong. Sheffield became a city in 1893, a borough in 1843. It had no directly elected MPs before 1832. Its foundation has been the heavy and light metal industries, the former reaching their dominant position in the 1850s. Its political leadership, where Liberal, has been Radical; where Tory, it has had a populist dimension, and where Labour it has tended to Old Labour, although Old Labour has always had its trimming tendency. Its religion has been Protestant with a recognisably Methodist accent.⁷

Now rethink. It has been a town of at least the second rank since the sixteenth century, consistently based on metal. What does that say about this most industrial of cities and what used to be called the Industrial Revolution? It has had a complex of what might loosely yet reasonably be termed civic structures since the thirteenth century. They are the Town Trustees, who claim to be England's oldest charity, the Church Burgesses, who emerged in the mid-sixteenth century, and the Cutlers' Company of Hallamshire, which was formed in the early seventeenth century.⁸ These might be presented by an industrial Trollope as self-perpetuating oligarchies. They were not representative in any directly responsible way. In practice, however, they proved to be surprisingly representative, and they worked. They still exist. Capitalism's long-established human face in Sheffield has been more successful than Communism's brief human face anywhere.

6. That egregious Methodist commander-in-chief, President George W. Bush, does not fall within the purview of this paper, since American Methodists are not Nonconformists.
7. The various strands in the history of Sheffield are treated in C. Binfield *et al.*, *The History of the City of Sheffield 1843-1993* 3 vols, (Sheffield: 1993), especially Vol I: Politics and Vol II: Society.
8. See C. Binfield, *'For Charitable and Public Purposes'*. *A Short History of the Sheffield Town Trust 1297-1997*, (Sheffield 1997); G. Tolley, *We, of our Bounty. A History of the Sheffield Church Burgesses*, (Durham 1999); C. Binfield and David Hey, eds., *Mesters to Masters. A History of the Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire*, (Oxford 1997).

Until the M1 cracked it, Sheffield was geographically isolated. It was consequently homogeneous. There were no great successive waves of Welsh, Irish, Scots, or Jews, and English immigrants were pretty localised. Yet for so homogeneous a town there was a strong and consistent tradition of Dissent. This is, on the face of it, surprising. Many towns had a long Dissenting tradition but most of those had a more varied commercial base and a larger professional sector than Sheffield and few had so grand a ground landlord as the Duke of Norfolk. Yet Sheffield's Quakers, Congregationalists, and Unitarians (who emerged from what might be called Sheffield Congregationalism's Presbyterian tendency) prospered conservatively; Baptists and trinitarian Presbyterians came later. Despite the Duke of Norfolk, Sheffield's Roman Catholics were not in their league, although thanks to the Howards there had been a socially respectable Catholic Dissenting presence for as long as there had been a Protestant Dissenting presence. Like much of Sheffield Dissent, Sheffield Catholicism was low key in significant respects.

Reasons for this might be found in a fivefold clutch of contingencies.

The first is old-style family history. The dukedom of Norfolk swung from branch to branch of the Howards. Some dukes preferred Worksop, more preferred Arundel. Their profitable Sheffield estates, sensibly run by local Catholic middle-men, well in with Sheffield's movers and moulders, were held on a light leash. Indeed, it was really only in the nineteenth century, with the accession of the Glossop Howards, that the ducal Catholicism intensified, nationally as well as locally.⁹

The second contingency follows from the first. For some very complex reasons, of which the Howards's Catholicism was only one, the patronage of the vast parish of Sheffield (the parish church is now the city's Anglican cathedral) was not theirs. Moreover, it tended to be Puritan; the vicars, though men of considerable influence, commanded only a relatively moderate income; and from the nineteenth century they were Evangelicals.¹⁰

The third contingency follows from the second. The parish church's staff were ejected at the Restoration and Sheffield's two leading Dissenting chapels, Upper and Nether (now Central United Reformed Church), both originally Independent, grew from that ejected ministry. In Sheffield they were as truly church as the parish church.

So to the fourth contingency. Sheffield had no municipal corporation from which Dissenters were barred. Dissenters could not, of course, be Church Burgesses but they could be Town Trustees and Freemen and Members of the Cutlers' Company, and they were.

This leaves the fifth contingency. The structures, or politics, of Upper

9. J.M. Robinson, *The Dukes of Norfolk. A Quincentennial History*, (Oxford: 1982).

10. D. Lunn, *Chapters Toward a History of The Parish and Cathedral Church of St Peter and St Paul*, (Sheffield, 1987).

and Nether Chapels, like their congregations, reflected Sheffield's administrative structure rather more than they reflected some mythical 'classic Congregationalism'. Sheffield by 1714 (which is when Nether seceded from Upper) had a long tradition of charities. The town was rife with trustees. It was full of the voluntary sector. The relationship of Upper Chapel's trustees to its congregation, of Nether Chapel's emerging deacons to its church meeting, grew from the practice of men used to seeing how the Church Burgesses or the Town Trustees or the Company of Cutlers worked: the relationships, for example, of the Company to its Freemen or the Burgesses to the staff of the Parish Church. Sheffield may have been a divided town religiously and politically from the 1660s, but it also managed to retain a distinctive homogeneity when it came to how things were run.

Sheffield's Methodism grew from this. Take the case of Thomas Holy. Holy was Sheffield Methodism's lay godfather. He was a successful businessman at a time of critical economic change. His interests stretched overseas as well as locally. Like many prospering Sheffielders he was seriously into property and, another Sheffield trait, he had fingers in most pies, from turnpikes to chapel trusts. Unlike some Sheffielders he kept, indeed enhanced, his fortune and his son Thomas Beard Holy continued what his father had begun. Thomas Holy was Carver Street Wesleyan Chapel at a time when Carver Street had come to believe that it was Sheffield.¹¹

He did not, however, come from nowhere. The Holy family were an Upper Chapel family, part of a propertied network whose names still signpost a surprising number of Sheffield streets. Thomas had been educated at a Dissenting school in Northampton. Doddridge was dead but Northampton remained a resonant place for Dissenters. Upper Chapel in Holy's youth was moving slowly into Arianism but young Holy turned to Methodism. Thus the man whose family were pillars of the oldest Dissenting chapel on Sheffield's Norfolk Street was the man primarily responsible for building its newest. It is still there, as the Victoria Hall. Holy kin continued to figure at Upper; others moved into Anglicanism, patriotism, and Toryism. They all knew about each other and sat as trustees alongside each other. Their fissiparousness was real enough but so was their underlying homogeneity. Seen thus, one can begin to see what it might mean when Sheffield was described as a Methodist city.¹²

11. For Thomas Holy (1752-1830) and Thomas Beard Holy (d. 1867) see J.A. Vickers ed. *A Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland*, (Peterborough, 2000) pp. 161-2.

12. For the Upper Chapel background see C. Binfield, *A Public Meeting House in Sheffield: Upper Chapel 1700-2000*, (Sheffield n.d. [2001]), p. 26. For Holy's school at Northampton (run by Baptists) see T. Whelan, 'John Ryland at School. Two societies in Northampton boarding schools', *Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. 40, April 2003, pp. 90-116, esp. p. 111 n. 16.

None of this is to gainsay passion or excitement. The agonies of the 1660s and the tensions of the 1700s were real enough and they were replicated in their way by the primal-religious agonies of the Wesleyan impact. Wesleyans shivered Sheffield's religious timbers in a lifetime which had also to take in enormous population growth and continuous industrial intensification. They shivered and were shivered, for religious enthusiasm disrupts the enthusiasts too. The lifetimes of Thomas Holy, father and son, saw Carver Street (as well as Norfolk Street, Park, and Brunswick) become Sheffield at prayer but they also saw New Connexion Methodists, Primitive Methodists, United Methodist Free Churchmen, and Wesleyan Reformers. All of them flourished. Scotland Street, Cambridge Street, and Hanover chapels were also Sheffield at prayer. And all that was on the eve of Sheffield's real industrial revolution, the 1850s, when heavy metal's dominance was recognised in Sheffield and the Cutlers' Company admitted steel manufacturers as well as cutting tradesmen to its freedom.

That was in 1859, year of Darwin, and of *Mill On Liberty*, as well as Dickens's *Tale of Two Cities* and Wilkie Collins's *Woman in White*. In 1859 plenty of Sheffield Methodists would have known until well within very recent living memory elderly people who had heard Wesley on his visits. They had also seen Methodism fissiparous. For every spiritual opening there had been a secession. They had observed the expansion of Old Dissent, especially Congregationalism, meeting in societies which owed more to Methodism than to Calvinistic Independency and turning them into gathered churches. Fissiparousness became a way of life. They were also seeing how the Church of England was responding to local opportunity with real administrative intelligence. So was Roman Catholicism, munificently pump-primed now by the Duke of Norfolk.¹³

It was a Vesuvius of a situation, ready for the Sheffield Outrages, the rattenings, the classic but nonetheless real stories of slum and proletariat. It was socially as fluid as it had ever been. Newcomers came and prospered. Fortunes were made and vanished. Banks collapsed. Yet there was also stability and continuity. Sheffield remained a place for connexions: the canny solicitors, architects, and accountants whose partnerships served Church and chapel, Liberal and Tory; the representative lightning conductor provided from the 1840s by the Town Council; the training in strategic democracy successively provided by elections for Improvement Commissioners, Poor Law Guardians, Town Councillors, the School Board, Parliament; the tensioned convergence of a city clearly made for Socialism with a city which owed more to Methodism than to Marxism; the providentially chance stationing in the prime Brunswick Circuit in the 1890s of S.E. Keeble, a Methodist

13. See D. Evinson, *The Lord's House. A History of Sheffield's Roman Catholic Buildings 1570-1990*, (Sheffield, 1991).

minister who really had read Marx, and yet stayed loyal;¹⁴ the social interaction of industrialists, professionals, and tradesmen, each able to place the other and what the other believed. We have here the mental and spiritual as well as the social fabric of a great industrial city. Methodism is integral to it.

III

It is temptingly plausible to explain nineteenth-century and much of twentieth-century Sheffield primarily in terms of Methodist connexions. In the cutlery world the firm of James Dixon set the tone for quality. The Dixons were Anglicans but the man who marketed them onto the industrial map was a Dixon son-in-law, William Fawcett (1807-1864), Mayor of Sheffield 1855-6, and Fawcett was both Wesleyan and dynast.¹⁵ In the steel world Methodists were commonplace: the Wesleyan Osborns and Woods; the New Connexion Firths, Wardlows, Skeltons; the Wards, who divided between Wesleyan and New Connexion Methodists. In the retail world there were the Wesleyan Coles and Hoveys, the Atkinsons, Banners, and United Free Binnses. In coal, Sheffield had a lien on the Northumbrian Bainbridges. Then there were the professional men: solicitors like the Wesleyan Arthur Neal, who became a Coalition Liberal MP in 1918, or the Wesleyan William Irons, who was Lord Mayor in 1917; architects like the ponderously dependable Wesleyan Joseph Smith or the inventively monumental Wesleyan W.J. Hale; estate agents and surveyors like the innumerable Wesleyan Toothills; quality builders like the Wesleyan Hodkins and newly arrived motormen like the United Methodist Kennings. There was also a degree of bewildering diversification: the Wesleyan Bassetts were into coal and overalls as well as confectionery; the Wesleyan Meggitts and Johnsons were into steel, chemical manure, and furnishing; Wesleyan Johnsons and Appleyards combined furniture and confectionery; Wesleyan Franklins combined beds with fabric cleaning. All were connected by marriage as well as business.

There were, of course, the schools. Wesley College was architecturally Sheffield's finest, for its façade announced those of Earl Fitzwilliam's Wentworth Woodhouse and Huddersfield's railway station; the West Riding had no grander buildings. Educationally too, Wesley College was probably Sheffield's best. But we should not ignore other sorts of school such as the School of Painting run by Isabella Howlden whose grandmother, it was claimed, was the last surviving Sheffielder to have heard John Wesley; that memory was celebrated in the name of the

14. For Samuel Edward Keeble (1853-1946) see Vickers, *Dictionary*, pp. 187-8; M.S. Edwards, *S.E. Keeble* (1977)

15. For Dixon's, see G. Tweedale, *The Sheffield Knife Book: A History and Collector's Guide*, (Sheffield 1996), pp. 184-5; for Fawcett see W.H. Tindall, *Memorial Sketch of the late William Fawcett, Esquire, Justice of the Peace*, (1865).

Howlden house, Wesley Tower.¹⁶ For those whose circumstances allowed them to look outside Sheffield there were for their sons well-beaten Sheffield Wesleyan tracks to Rydal in North Wales and The Leys in Cambridge and there was a proprietary Sheffield United Methodist interest in Ashville, Harrogate. For their daughters there was Penrhos in North Wales, where the formative headmistress was Sheffield's Miss Hovey, and for the more adventurously prosperous there were Miss Simon's Wintersdorf in Southport and Miss Pipe and Miss Pope's Laleham in South London's Clapham Park. These were unusual and unusually good schools. Both had their Sheffield constituency.

With these schools we have, for those who could afford them, a broadening of horizons: marriages to distant schoolfriends' sisters, or brothers, careers beyond steel, a world beyond Hallamshire. For the less well-circumstanced, horizons were forcibly enlarged by emigration, and for Methodists there was always vocation. It was a rare Sheffield Methodist family of consequence that did not have a minister or an overseas missionary somehow connected to it, at least in its formative generations. The Sheffield Osborns produced Marmaduke Clark Osborn (1827-1891) and his great-nephew George Robson Osborn (1905-1979). Marmaduke's brother Samuel (1826-1891) was the founder of that family's industrial success. Two of Samuel Osborn's sisters and one of his sisters-in-law married Wesleyan ministers (although one of them later entered the Church of England). Two of his sons and one of his daughters married children of the manse, one of them Wesleyan, the others Presbyterian, and another daughter married a Wesleyan minister. Two of the women in successive generations, each a Mary Osborn, were second wives, taking on boisterous and ready-made young manse families, thus raising some questions about Methodist concepts of obligation, vocation, opportunity, calculation, and family, for which there can be no straightforward answers.

The Osborns provide one intricate example. We could add the Beets, the Waddys, the Hodkins and their Findlay connexions whether in India, Leeds, or Manchester, the Hales and Toothills and their Fordham connexions in Tonga or Fiji. The Methodist family has become quite literally a Methodist world. How far did its members realize that fact?

Inevitably this is selective history, indeed it is not even history for it is a string of names which are bound to be mostly meaningless. But there are enough clues between them to suggest that we are looking at a significant society. It is a collection of quite distinct Methodisms which nonetheless also overlap; and they lap over into Anglicanism, Congregationalism, indeed into the broad secular world beyond, accenting it, colouring it, sometimes defining aspects of it, always

16. Isabella Howlden (d. 1913) was a mainstay of Sheffield's Stephen Hill Wesleyan Church. Her grandmother (d. 1867) met Wesley in 1782. (Barbara Greatorex, *A History of Stephen Hill Methodist Church 1886-1986* (Sheffield 1986),

helping to explain it. In the Sheffield context that has happened within the constraints of my five contingencies.

To give an example. One of Sheffield's twentieth-century success stories is that of the Sheffield and Peak District Committee of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England.¹⁷ Its origins go back to 1924 and for seventy years its inspiration was that of a small, determined Sheffield woman, Ethel Haythornthwaite (1894-1986), and her rather younger architect and planner husband, Gerald Haythornthwaite (1912-1995), who was from the other side of the Pennines. She was probably agnostic, with an anthroposophist sister. He was more steadily and conventionally Anglican. Their committee's power as a pressure group depended in part on its formidable expertise and in part on its careful composition. Every Sheffield connexion was utilised to make it work. To an outsider it reflects a humanistic civic culture born of Arts and Crafts sensibility and a liberal education. To a Sheffielder it illuminates the workings of a benignly complex natural establishment. In fact, if the origins of its protagonists are explored, and certainly if their money is taken into account, it might seem to reflect just as much a Methodist culture, secularised certainly but not without spirit.

The Osborn family has already appeared. It is time to return to them.

IV

For over a century the Osborns typified industry and Methodism in Sheffield.¹⁸ They reflected the five elements of economic independence, spiritual certainty, communal sensitivity, civic responsibility, and political acuity. They represented Victorian values and the value of industrious connexions. Theirs was a success story, now vanished, which can be used to draw the strands together.

Their story begins in contingency, a more neutral word for historians than either 'luck' or 'providence'. There is no known family relationship between the Sheffield Osborns and those other notable Wesleyan but Kentish Osborns represented by George (1808-1891), President of Conference and a founder of the Evangelical Alliance, and his son Thomas George, founder of Rydal School.¹⁹ The Sheffield Osborns were not really Osborns at all but Whithams, the first Samuel Osborn (c. 1796-

17. M. Jones, *Protecting the Beautiful Frame. A History of the Sheffield Peak District and South Yorkshire Branch of the Council for the Protection of Rural England*, Sheffield 2001.

18. In preparing this section I must express my gratitude for the help provided by the late S.M. de Bartolome, the late Mrs. M. Bayley, the Revd. Michael Bayley, the late A.N. Cass, the late Miss R. Cole, the late Lt. Col. Gerald Haythornthwaite, the late Arthur Humphrey, Lord and Lady Judd, Mrs. G.T. Lambert, Derek Osborn, Sir John Osborn, the late Miss G.M. Pye-Smith, Mrs. R.L.S. Pye-Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Nicholas Pye-Smith, Mrs. M Wombwell, the late Gerald F. Young.

19. Vickers, *Dictionary*, p. 262.

1832) taking the name of his stepfather, George Osborn, rather than that of his natural father, William Whitham.²⁰ Economic independence was within reach of the first Samuel, for he was a partner in Clark & Osborn, merchants and manufacturers of pen and pocket knives, razors, brushes and tortoiseshell combs, typical of the small independent businesses which characterized contemporary Sheffield. But he died in his thirties, leaving a widow and five children under the age of ten.²¹

Here contingency, character, and Wesleyan Methodism come into play. The eldest son, Charles (1822-1849), became a traveller for John Brown. In his prime Brown was probably Sheffield's best-known industrialist, a man in a new mould, but Charles Osborn died of cholera in Oswestry still in his twenties, so John Brown was not to open the Osborn route to success.²² The second son, Samuel (1826-1891), generally called Sam, who clearly shared his elder brother's alert approachability, was also intended for new style enterprise. He entered a drapery house. Although that business, Cockayne's, remained a Sheffield landmark well into the twentieth century and although Sam Osborn's immediate superior, Thomas Cole, was shortly to start a business which remains a Sheffield landmark in the twenty-first century, drapery was not to open the Osborn route to success either. In the words of Sam's brother-in-law, 'the work proved...too much for his strength'. So, improbably, he left linen for steel. As a senior employee loyally put it, 'Mr. Osborn was not made to handle silk and muslin fabrics, but the more refractory materials, such as iron and steel'.²³

In fact it is clear that Mr. Osborn did have an eye for the future. He understood the processes of steel and tool manufacture but his forte lay in marketing the product. Like Charles he proved to be an excellent traveller and his brother-in-law's patriotic assertion that Sam was 'wishful to be associated with one of the great leading industries of his native town' tends to obscure the calculated commonsense of the decision.²⁴ It was in character.

It was also in Methodist character. The long-widowed Mrs. Osborn lived trimly and respectably. Her house of 1851 survives in that Sheffield rarity, a terrace named after Robert Peel. Her sons received the standard

20. J. Robson, *Before We Were Here* (priv. 2005), p. 37.

21. T.A. Seed, *Pioneers For A Century 1852-1952; A History of the Growth and Achievement of Samuel Osborn & Co. Limited, Clyde Steel Works Sheffield*, (priv. Sheffield 1952) p.1.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

23. W.H. Tindall, *Memoir of Samuel Osborn JP*, (priv. Sheffield 1892), pp. 11-14. Cockayne's, rebuilt after the Second World War, is now an Argos store: its exterior remains impressive; Cole Brothers, now renamed John Lewis, as part of the John Lewis Partnership, was also impressively rebuilt after the Second World War; its Yorke, Rosenberg, and Mardall premises are zoned for redevelopment.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

Sheffield education for their class, Eadon's School until their mid-teens, with Carver Street Chapel on Sundays. As has been seen, the younger son, Marmaduke Clark Osborn, became a prominent Wesleyan minister and two daughters married Wesleyan ministers.²⁵ Sam Osborn reacted against none of that. The Eadons were Dissenters, Cockayne's was a Dissenting business house, the Cole brothers were firmly Wesleyan, and so was Henry Rossall whose steel business was the second for which Sam worked and with whom 'his business life really commenced'.²⁶ On 1 April 1852 he set up on his own account as a file maker. Four years later he advertised himself as 'Steel Converter and Refiner, Manufacturer of Engineers and Machinists Improved Cast Steel Files, Superior Saws, Tools etc., and General Merchant'. A year after that he became a steel manufacturer in his own right.²⁷

It is not wholly true to say that he never looked back because in April 1874 his business was forced into liquidation at the point at which his domestic, public, and commercial life had seemed to be crowned with success. He had been recognised as a significant player in the Town Council and elected Master of the Cutlers' Company; Robert Lowe, Gladstone's brilliantly difficult Home Secretary, was the chief guest at his feast. His business was now of international note transformed in the last few years by the opportune application of a revolutionary process for tool steel whose inventors lacked the capital and flair to develop on their own account. He lived unostentatiously well on the best side of Sheffield, close to Wesley College, downhill from Broomhill's fine new Wesley Church, overlooking the Botanical Gardens and within the easiest distance of the fine establishments of his wife's large family.²⁸

No skulduggery was imputed and Osborn's judgement was not questioned. He managed to save his business and the way in which he rebuilt it and his own public reputation was the stuff of which romantic myth is made.²⁹ He died at the second point at which success crowned his domestic public and commercial life: during his mayoralty, inaugurated by a civic service at his chapel rather than at the Parish Church, at which the preacher was his younger brother Marmaduke.³⁰ That year, 1891, which saw Marmaduke's death shortly before his own, saw the birth of his first grandchild, a third Samuel Osborn (although he was always called Eric). Since it was reported that a thousand workmen

25. Emma Osborn (b. 1829) married Revd. John Wesley Aldom, who became an Anglican, incumbent at Penistone, near Sheffield, and Thornton Hough, on the Wirral, Mary Osborn (1823-1899) was the second wife of Revd. John Kirk (d. 1875), author of *The Mother of the Wesleys* and of Lincolnshire farm-labouring stock.

26. Tindall, *Osborn*, p. 14.

27. Seed, *Pioneers*, pp. 2, 4.

28. *Ibid.*, pp. 12-22; Tindall, *Osborn*, pp. 27-31.

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 34-41.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 67-71.

marched from the works to Osborn's house and thence accompanied the hearse to the grave, there was ground for the development of a responsibly fostered dynastic sense.³¹

The business certainly never looked back after 1874. Its story was one of accumulating success until the 1970s. The high points came with the two World Wars, when output was almost wholly devoted to the war effort, but the 1950s and 1960s were regarded as halcyon decades and the 1920s and 1930s were breasted with considerable confidence. Profits were encouraging (dividends were fifteen per cent in 1937 and 1938; only 1931 and 1932 saw years without a dividend), competitors were overtaken as well as taken over, the workforce was steadily enlarged (1,500 in 1922; 1,700 by 1937, with a dip to 1,300 in the early 1930s but approaching 3,000 in the 1950s and Sheffield's ninth ranking firm by 1964).³² There was also a consistent reputation for quality of product, shrewd marketing, and technical innovation; and for security in service - in the 1950s fourteen per cent of Osborn's workforce had been with the firm for over twenty-five years.³³ By 1950 there were subsidiary companies in South Africa (where links had been strong since the 1880s), Canada, India, and Rhodesia (the most recent), and there were agents in Western Europe, Latin America, Australasia, South East Asia, and the Middle East; the China branch was 'temporarily closed'.³⁴ At home the complexity was intensified. By 1968 Osborn's operated in thirteen separate works in South Yorkshire, each autonomous. But it was now, in the words of Sheffield's steel historian, 'a management nightmare....It cried out for rationalization'.³⁵

At that point the factors which had conserved the firm became liabilities. For most of the 1960s it was still a family affair. Its active directors and most senior managers in the past century had included Sam Osborn's three sons, two grandsons, and three great-grandsons, a step-nephew and a nephew, and two brothers-in-law. The first non-Osborn chairman, Frank Hurst, was appointed in 1951 but he had been with the firm Methodist man and boy.³⁶ Only in 1967 did a palace revolution lead to the removal of family interests from central control and an Osborn remained an active director (and a potential Master Cutler) until the business was taken over in 1978 by Aurora Holdings, an engineering combine. Four years later, its assets stripped, the firm which had launched the modern tool industry had ceased to exist. The manifest

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 86-91.

32. Seed, *Pioneers*, pp. 42-6, 55-64; G. Tweedale, *Steel City*, (Oxford 1995) pp. 193-4, 219, 234, 305, 329, 332..

33. Tweedale, p. 327.

34. Seed, *Pioneers*, pp. 71-3, 78-9.

35. Tweedale, pp. 354-5.

36. Frank Arnold Hurst (1884-1967), had been with the firm since the 1890s, a director since 1925: Seed, *Pioneers*, p. 17; Tweedale, p. 327.

strength of leadership which it had demonstrated for most of its existence proved no match for the world-class buccaneers exploiting the recession and competition of the 1970s.³⁷

V

Methodism's impact on firm and family was inescapable. Osborn's finest qualities were conservative. It kept itself in good repair. On the shopfloor and in the boardroom long service was a feature not an exception and its rewards, while not excessive, were tangible. That societal aspect will be considered later. The avowedly Methodist aspect was inevitably expressed in formal commitment, particularly that of Sam and his sons. Thereafter the commitment diminished although the family's recognition of the tradition did not. Sam Osborn was a member from his teens, cheerfully sabbatarian, assiduous (when travelling permitted) in attending Joshua Moss's class every Thursday evening in Carver Street's stewards' vestry, chapel trustee, district committee man, latterly steadily elected to Conference, and on the Missionary Society's General Committee.³⁸ Reared in Wesleyan Methodism, he married into it and his sons were brought up to follow him.

On the whole they did. Each of the three who survived into adulthood was dominant in the firm. That said, there was a division of energy. William Fawcett Osborn (1861-1936) devoted his to industry, Samuel Osborn (1864-1952) was the civic Osborn, and Frederick Marmaduke Osborn (1874-1950) was the voluntary sector Osborn. Each has an entry in the 1933 *Who's Who in Methodism*.

W.F. Osborn's is the shortest entry: chapel trustee, district treasurer for Foreign Missions.³⁹ Like his father he married into Wesleyan Methodism and Fulwood Wesley, strategically placed at the Broomhill confluence of Sheffield's finest carriage drives, was where he stately worshipped. His son and grandsons, however, were educated at Rugby and married Anglicans. This was the Wesleyanism which turned instinctively Churchwards.

Samuel's entry is the fullest. He remained at Carver Street, with an alternative at the Wesleyan St John's Crookesmoor, serving as Sunday School superintendent, circuit steward, trustee, trust treasurer, vice-president of the Wesley Guild.⁴⁰ He too married into Wesleyanism: his wife was a minister's daughter who was also a family connexion on his mother's side. It was a late marriage (the mayoralty was beckoning) and childless. Edith Osborn was by general repute a formidable woman, tactless, snobbish, conventional, but a slave to public duty. Samuel's too

37. Tweedale, pp. 354-7; Sir J. Osborn, *Conflicts of Interest: Recollections*, (priv. 2002), p. 8.

38. Tindall, *Osborn*, pp. 16-18, 58-61.

39. *Who's Who in Methodism*, 1933, p. 372;

40. *Ibid.*, p. 372. See also *Sheffield and District Who's Who*, (Sheffield 1905), p. 55.

was a Church-directed Methodism, for he lived increasingly in Derbyshire where he had built Heatherleigh, an extended family retreat named after his father's last house in Sheffield; he preferred its parish church, Eyam, to either Village Methodism or Cliff College.

Fred, the youngest, born in the year of the liquidation and the first Osborn to go to The Leys, where his sons and a grandson followed him, did not marry into Methodism. His wife was Scottish, the daughter of a leading United Presbyterian minister. That marriage had a significant impact on the firm's future direction and on that of Fred's Methodism. Fred Osborn too was a Fulwood Wesley man, chapel steward, circuit steward, chairman of Wesleyan Home Missions and an assiduous supporter of overseas missions, especially in China.⁴¹

Samuel Osborn's Heatherleigh, Grindleford, welcomed far-flung Osborns rather as his firm provided a degree of outdoor relief for more modestly circumstanced Osborns. Thus Sam Osborn's manse nephew, John Lee Osborn (1854-1940), was sent by the firm to Australia to extricate agents (among them two sons of an ex-Methodist manse) who had got into difficulties.⁴² Another manse nephew, Frank Kirk (1856-1916), worked his way up to the company secretaryship and a directorship; his successor as company secretary, Hamilton Breakey, was also a son of the manse, for his father had been the first minister of Sheffield's prime Scottish and Ulster outpost, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church.⁴³ South Yorkshire's links with Clydeside were intricate and Sam Osborn's Scottish business was assiduously cultivated. It was claimed that 'no English manufacturer had the run of the [Scottish] market like Mr. Osborn', and his main works was called Clyde Works.⁴⁴ Fred's marriage and that of his sister Kate into Scottish Presbyterianism were thus encouragingly natural developments. They led to the appointment of a 'Scottish' great-nephew, J.E. Robson (b. 1923), as Osborn's London Manager and eventually Deputy Executive Chairman, and another Scottish family connexion, Frank Martin (1899-1972), at once a son of the missionary manse and a son-in-law of the home manse, as a director and eventually managing director. Frank Martin sustained the position of St. Andrew's, Sheffield, as an Osborn church.⁴⁵

41. *Who's Who in Methodism*, 1933, p. 372; see also *Handbook and Directory of The Leys School* (14th ed. 1948), p. 204.

42. F.M.O [F.M. Osborn] "Tales of a Grandfather", typescript, (nd. c. 1940/1), p. 4, in possession of Mrs. G.T. Lambert when consulted.

43. For Kirk, strictly a manse step-nephew, see E.W. Kemp, *The Life and Letters of Kenneth Escott Kirk*, (London 1959), pp. 9-11; for Breakey, Company Secretary 1916-37, see Seed, *Pioneers*, p. 43.

44. Tindall, *Osborn*, p. 41; Seed, *Pioneers*, p. 11.

45. Frank Martin was an elder at St Andrew's Sheffield 1949-51, and a member from 1937; Seed, *Pioneers*, pp 30, 71; for both Martin and J.E. Robson see Osborn, *Conflicts of Interest*, pp. 7-8.

The mutuality of Osborn's and Methodism (and kindred religious commitment) was most notably demonstrated immediately after the liquidation of 1874. In 1875, having received a degree of help from his mother-in-law and considerable help from a Methodist businessman in Liverpool where Marmaduke Osborn was then stationed, Sam Osborn took four men into partnership, each providing some vitally necessary but uncompromised capital. One of them, Robert Woodward, had been instrumental in bringing the Mushet Special Steel process to Osborn's: the firm's future depended on its continuance. Two of them, George Wood and George Jackson Smith, were Sheffield Methodists, the former part of the Wesleyan cousinhood whose own family were to play a growing part in Sheffield's business life, the latter placed at Osborn's in his teens by a forward looking father. The fourth partner, Arnold Pye-Smith, had also been placed at Osborn's with an eye to the future. Pye-Smith was a resonant name in London and Sheffield Congregationalism but it was a ministerial, medical, and legal name rather than an industrial one. The partnership of 1875 confirmed a business link which lasted for over seventy years and through two generations of Pye-Smith directors. The Wood, Woodward, and Jackson Smith partnerships were invaluable but relatively short-lived; the Pye-Smith connexion introduced a significant qualitative dimension.⁴⁶

So far the emphasis has been on Church attendance and circuit office. Can more be extracted than that? What was the tone of the Osborn Wesleyan Methodism? The main clue for this lies in the memorial biographies of Sam Osborn and his father-in-law William Fawcett written by Sam's brother-in-law W.H. Tindall. Tindall was a Wesleyan minister. He had a shrewdly affectionate knowledge of his subject and of the Sheffield in which they operated but it is not easy to determine whether the tone of what he wrote distils more their Methodism or his. There is, for example, minimal reference to connexional disruption. On the other hand, there is also a decided *churchmanship* which is not to be ignored for it might explain Osborn commitment, Osborn pragmatism, and the Osborn ability in Sheffield's particular mix of divisiveness and homogeneity to be all things to all people.

Like Sam Osborn, William Fawcett, the cutler and silversmith, had been reared by a widowed mother (in his case remarried) in the loving discipline of a Wesleyan home in which the family was the precursor of the class, an island guarded faithfully from the daily temptations of the warehouse and the market place. 'It was quite natural that he should incline to the Church which had watched over his childhood', but membership was thought and worked through. It was not automatic. And it was a Church which he joined, not a Connexion. 'He had no doubt about the validity of Methodist Orders and Offices, nor did he at all question the soundness and vigour of Methodist teaching'. He knew

46. *Seed, Pioneers*, p. 24; *Tindall, Osborn*, p. 32.

his place in their discipline and he knew their place in protecting him in their constant conflict with the great enemy.⁴⁷

Fawcett's life evolved as a continual opening to the cultural and political opportunity provided by commercial success. Sam Osborn's life was cast in a similar mould. Fawcett was 'in truth, a catholic-spirited man...he loved Methodist pastures the best'.⁴⁸ So it was with Osborn:

In the cheerful piety, the doctrine of conversion, the assurance of personal salvation granted to the penitent sinner who believes on our Lord Jesus Christ, the blessed hope of eternal life, the friendly and helpful communion of saints, the eagerness to work for others, and the catholicity of spirit, all of which are so characteristic of the Church to which his fathers belonged, Mr. Osborn found all he needed to give his personal peace with God, and abundant opportunity for religious culture and usefulness. In the happy phraseology of his Church, 'he gave his heart to God and his hand to His people'.⁴⁹

And when he travelled on business there was surely a layman's echo of the travelling preacher. He represented 'a Church that lays stress on the relation of every unit in the family of man to the One God and Father of all; that insists on the need of personal conversion, and the maintenance of individual Christian life through continuous faith in our Lord Jesus Christ'. Osborn *realized* the truth of Methodism and that realization 'made him the man he was'. It was not an intellectual's creed but it perfectly suited an intelligent and surprisingly well-informed man for whom there was no pretence that here 'was a keen student of theology'.⁵⁰ Tindall was inclined to find Sam's pattern in their old class leader, Joshua Moss, 'a Methodist of the best type....Intelligent, very well read, thoroughly familiar with his Bible and Wesley's hymns, sagacious and kindly'.⁵¹

Fawcett was increasingly well-travelled, chiefly in Europe but also in North America. So were Sam Osborn and his sons. A daughter, indeed, recalled the novelties which Sam brought back from the States in the 1860s: tomatoes, pecan and peanuts, hickory, and maple sugar and corn cob, and an appliance for toasting it over the fire.⁵² The younger Samuel added Africa to the family tally and Fred added Asia, especially China.

It is here that overseas mission enters the picture. Wesleyan Missionary Society support came naturally to well-travelled Methodists and the Osborns had the incentive provided by Marmaduke Clark

47. Tindall, *Fawcett*, p. 13.

48. *Ibid.*, p.15.

49. Tindall, *Osborn*, p. 16.

50. *Ibid.*, pp. 56-7.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 51

52. *Ibid.*, p.53; MCH [Mary Clark Holdsworth] 'What Mary remembers' in 'I Remember, I Remember', typescript nd. c1941, p.16 in possession of Mrs G. T. Lambert when consulted.

Osborn's service as a General Secretary of the WMS.⁵³ In the 1890s, however, this took on an extra dimension for the family. In 1897 Fred Osborn joined Arnold Pye-Smith for much of a world tour. For Fred it was part business and part convalescence on the eve of marriage and final commitment to the firm. For Pye-Smith the tour was also a fiftieth birthday celebration which allowed him to visit emigrant relations and to explore one of his family's passions, the London Missionary Society's stations in the South Seas, China, and India. The China visit included a particularly evocative inland journey to Wu Chang.⁵⁴ This was hallowed LMS ground but it was also hallowed WMS ground. It is doubtless coincidence that Fred Osborn's younger son would serve for many years in Wu Chang but there was no coincidence in Fred's fascination with China or his open house in Sheffield for Chinese acquaintances, especially students, his organising of meetings on Chinese issues, his role as honorary Chinese Consul in Sheffield, or his firm backing for such bodies as the interdenominational China Inland Mission.⁵⁵

A prime impetus for this had been the marriages of Fred and Kate Osborn to Georgina and John Robson, the children of a notable United Presbyterian missionary family. Their father, John Robson (1836-1908) had served in India and written on Hinduism as well as more widely on overseas mission.⁵⁶ Their sister Agnes had married Frank Ashcroft, a missionary with service in India and East Africa who became Secretary of the Church of Scotland's Missions, and their sister Lilla also married into the United Presbyterian mission field. Her son, Frank Martin, entered the Osborn firm but her other sons Jack and Henry became missionaries in Malawi and Calabar respectively.⁵⁷ If a further layer of missionary involvement were needed, it was provided by the marriage of another of Fred's sisters, Mary Osborn, to W.W. Holdsworth (b. 1859) who had returned from service in India to teach at Handsworth and to collaborate with G.G. Findlay in the magisterial *History of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society*.⁵⁸

This was a background which predisposed one not just to mission but

53. He served 1881-91, having been Secretary of Conference 1878-80.

54. Arnold Pye-Smith's journal of the tour has been typed and edited by Nicholas and Wendy Pye-Smith, "A World Tour 1897-98. Journal of Arnold Pye-Smith of Croydon", (Sheffield 2000); and it has been covered in an unpublished paper by C. Binfield, "Some Implications of a Missionary Grand Tour", (forthcoming).

55. *Handbook and Directory of The Leys School*, (1948), p. 204; F.M.O., "Tales of a Grandfather", p. 31.

56. D.F. Wright, "John Robinson (1836-1908)", *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, (Edinburgh 1993), p. 725.

57. I am grateful to Lord and Lady Judd for details about the Ashcroft, Martin, and Robson families. See also John Robson, *Before We Were Here*, esp. pp. 3-12.

58. 5 vols, of which Vol IV, 1922, covered Africa, Europe, and the Women's Auxiliary. For Revd. William West Holdsworth see *Who's Who in Methodism*, 1933, p. 108.

to ask questions about it. Fred Osborn's son, George Robson Osborn (1905-1979), asked some of those questions.⁵⁹

George Osborn was a Methodist *beau idéal*: scholar and prefect at The Leys, captain of football, swimming, and water polo, winner of the J. Hope Moulton Greek Testament Prize, Scholar of King's (Second in Classics), and Wesleyan missionary in China.⁶⁰ His elder brother, Ian Samuel (1900-1936), was intended - as his name might almost suggest - for the firm and quickly won golden opinions in it but his own heart was set on the mission field and his son recalls the family opinion that to undertake 'missionary activity in distant and dangerous parts' was to do the finer thing.⁶¹

There could be no doubt about the danger anywhere in China between 1930 and 1951, but why China? Robson and Holdsworth missionary service had been in Africa and India (although Holdsworth had been born in Jamaica, which Dr. John Robson had also written about). Were there memories of Arnold Pye-Smith's significant visit in 1897? Or was it the influence of school? Dr. Barker of the Leys was close to retirement when George Osborn entered his school; years earlier he had worked in China and been headmaster in Wu Chang and George's own service as missionary and minister was to be in educational work.⁶²

There was, however, another factor in the choice. His son believes that his parents (George Osborn met his wife at Cambridge) 'preferred the idea of working somewhere that was not in the British Empire, and where they would not be identified with a ruling class':

They always spoke with distaste of the attitudes of the British in India, and I think they would have felt that the authority of the missionary message there was to some extent compromised by being the creed of the alien rulers. Any direct linkage between religious and business interests would have been equally distasteful to them. In China in the later 20s there seemed at least the possibility of offering the religion and learning of the West in a non-imperialist, non-patronising way as a contribution to social development in a rapidly changing country.

He was the agent of 'a liberating creed in a country still imprisoned by traditional practices and restrictive social customs and ways of thinking'.⁶² Sam Osborn would have approved of that, but it was an instructive response from a family whose trade had followed the flag with egregious success and whose attitudes had inevitably been coloured accordingly, as the following incident might suggest.

At some point in the late 1960s or early 1970s George Osborn's cousin,

59. Vickers, *Dictionary*, pp. 262-3.

60. *Handbook and Directory of the Leys School*, (1948), p. 204.

61. Derek Osborn to author, 13 January 1998.

62. For Dr. William Theodore Aquila Barber (1858-1945) see Vickers, *Dictionary*, p. 19.

John Osborn, spoke in Fulwood Wesley to Sheffield's Free Church Society (as its University MethSoc had become) on South Africa. John Osborn was then the local MP. He had been baptised in Wesley and he was still a director of Osborn's, whose South African subsidiary celebrated the firm's oldest imperial links. It was a brave act, even so, the courage of a Daniel in the lions' den, but Sheffield's Methodist students were not won over by a judicious defence of extended business interests in the guise of what came close in their eyes to holiday slides.⁶³ Gladstone might have felt similarly when defending his family's holdings in Demerara. On his return to England George Osborn served for twenty years as Secretary of Methodism's Department of Education, responsible among other things for the nurture of the now proliferating MethSocs. It was an appropriate family tension: John Osborn, the industrialist, politician, and good constituency MP, revisiting his family's Methodism, and George Osborn the Methodist, proud of his family's business and enabled by it to live in a greater degree of comfort than most Methodist ministers might achieve. It was not the only such tension in the extended family, nor was it the only one which brings us back to the fringes of Noel Annan's dons.

Kenneth Kirk (1886-1954), Regius Professor of Moral and Pastoral Theology at Oxford, author of *The Vision of God*, 'one of the most massive works of theology of recent times',⁶⁴ and son of Frank Kirk, late Company Secretary and Director of Osborn's, must be allowed to rank among such dons. He too had been baptised at Fulwood Wesley but his path to scholarship lay through Sheffield's Royal Grammar School rather than Wesley College and his path to ministry began in South Yorkshire's coal and biretta belt, for Kirk was a High Churchman.⁶⁵ His was an Anglicanism which set its face firmly against the ecumenical movement, especially as advocated from a transformed mission field. As Bishop of Oxford he became the adviser of all 'whose objections to the United Church of South India were a matter of conscience and principle', a man who carried 'logical reasoning....to iron conclusions'. Was this distinguished career a total rejection of what should have formed it or was it a way of continuing it? In the obituary comment that his work 'gave the word casuistry a better reputation than it had', and in the testimony to his humour, charm, and 'true humility', the non-Wesleyan is tempted to find more than a touch of the original Wesley.⁶⁶

VII

There remains the related trinity of communal sensitivity, civic responsibility, and political acuity.

63. Personal information.

64. *The Times* 9 June 1954.

65. See E.W. Kemp, *The Life and Letters of Kenneth Escott Kirk. Bishop of Oxford 1937-1954*, (London 1959.)

66. *The Times*, 9 June 1954.

Sam Osborn's sons dominated the firm from the 1890s to the Festival of Britain. A younger Osborn who entered the firm as they bowed out reflects that for them 'industrial activity wasa means of providing a community to bond people together, as used to happen in the rural village. They knew and cared for those whom they employed, and their families....I sensed that the profit motive only became a priority after World War II'.⁶⁷

That is a proper assessment notwithstanding the view elsewhere in the industry that Samuel and Fred Osborn were as hard-headed businessmen as any; there were few pay rises at Osborn's. There was certainly a tradition of mutuality within the firm. When news of the collapse hit the Works in Spring 1874, the older staff offered their savings and the men of the Brookhill Works offered to take a five per cent pay cut for two years. And when, ten years later, Osborn's creditors were repaid in full (a sum of £28,000), the Brookhill men presented an address and the Clyde men greeted Sam Osborn's arrival on the day the news broke with hearty cheers.⁶⁸ The creditors too joined in the general congratulations when they presented 'a massive silver tray, a tea and coffee service, hot water and claret jugs, a handsome Japanese drawing-room timepiece and ornaments'. Suitably enough the silver was commissioned from James Dixon's (Cellini design) and just as suitably Osborn responded by quoting 'the precept of the good old Book, which tells us 'to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God' '⁶⁹

The workforce also shared in Osborn anniversaries. Sam's silver wedding and his eldest son's coming-of-age were jointly celebrated at the Cutlers' Hall when - as Fred recalled with an eight-year-old's sharpness - 'over 1000 sat down to a knife and fork tea - one man took a whole platter of bread and butter at one go, and another took the whole of a hare (it wasn't jugged) on to his own plate'.⁷⁰

Other opportunities for corporate identity were provided by war. The *Osborn's Chronicle* was said to have been the first works magazine to link with those who were on active service, and 1919 saw the formation of an Ex-Servicemen's Committee, a Sports Club, canteens, ambulance rooms, and welfare work. Hours were reduced, works committees were in vogue, and a Day Continuation School was set up with Doncaster's, the neighbouring Quaker firm: each apprentice had to attend its classes.⁷¹ The Second World War saw a Services Fund to help the families of the 396 employees in the Forces; it disbursed £37,000. There were a full-time medical officer, improved medical facilities, and a new canteen which provided meals for those on diets and cheap meals for adolescents. There were Joint Advisory Consultations and a Central Labour Office.⁷²

67. Sir John Osborn to author, 6 February 1998.

68. Tindall, *Osborn*, pp. 31, 34, 36.

69. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

70. F.M.O., "Tales of a Grandfather", p. 9.

71. Seed, *Pioneers*, pp. 44, 46.

72. *Ibid.*, pp. 63-4.

After the war the firm inaugurated an Apprentice Scheme. It was launched by the Master Cutler and the Lord Mayor, with Fred Osborn presiding. It was, declared the Lord Mayor, 'a boyhood dream come true', thanks to 'a firm with a soul'.⁷³

That ceremony expressed several aspects of the Osborns' concept of industrial community. Prime among them was the sense that they represented, indeed led, a national industry. That was why Christian probity had demanded the full repayment of creditors. Osborns were among the first steel manufacturers to enter the Cutlers' Company and Sam Osborn, his son William, and William's son (Samuel) Eric, became Master Cutler; so did William's father-in-law.⁷⁴ If the Home Secretary were the chief guest at Sam's feast, William Osborn's guests included the Japanese Baron Komura.⁷⁵ The Master's year of office was a major commercial and political opportunity but the Company had also accumulated considerable charitable and educational interests. Thus the communal responsibility rippled out.

In Samuel Osborn's case that responsibility included the Town Trustees, to which he was appointed in 1920 and for which he served as Town Collector in his last active years.⁷⁶ The Trustees too controlled considerable funds, on a par with the Osborns' preference for intelligent self and community help: health, healthy recreation, education, and rehabilitation. Thus William Fawcett, his grandson Samuel Osborn, and a great-grandson Eric Osborn were all Presidents of Sheffield YMCA. Sam Osborn was its Treasurer, so was Samuel Osborn, and Samuel Osborn's wife was President of its Women's Auxiliary. This made for a century of continuous family involvement. When the Association's flagship buildings were opened in 1891 Sam Osborn gave a luncheon, although his attendance was prevented by what turned out to be his last illness.⁷⁷

The other Osborn enthusiasm shared by Sam's younger sons was the Boys' Brigade. Samuel had been attracted since its arrival in Sheffield and it was through the Boys' Brigade that the Robsons and Osborns met and married.⁷⁸ Samuel became the Sheffield Brigade's battalion president.⁷⁹ It was not too far a cry from there to the Sheffield Boys' Working Home ('for boys who are

73. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

74. Samuel Osborn, Master 1873-4; William Fawcett Osborn, Master 1906-7; Samuel Eric Osborn, Master 1945-6; R.G. Holland, Master 1900-01; (Sir) John Osborn was set to be Master 1973-4 but his parliamentary commitments in Edward Heath's increasingly assailed administration put paid to that ("Conflicts of Interest", p.7).

75. Seed, *Pioneers*, p. 37.

76. E. Shaw (comp.), *A Biographical Register of Sheffield Town Trustees September 1681-July 1967*. (Sheffield, 1967), p. 29.

77. D. Thompson, "Sheffield Young Men's Christian Association: A Centennial History 1855-1955", Typescript, Sheffield 1955, *passim*.

78. J. Robson, "Before We Were Here", p.7.

79. *Sheffield and District Who's Who*, 1905, p. 55.

exposed to physical or moral destitution, and to give them an opportunity of earning an honest livelihood'; Fred's son Ian Osborn made this his particular concern) and the Sheffield Servants' Home (for which Mrs. Fred Osborn was secretary) or to the Sheffield Youth Employment Committee (which Samuel chaired) or to the Sheffield Allotments for the Unemployed Committee (which Fred chaired) or, indeed, to the Sheffield Juvenile Court (which Samuel chaired; the formidable Edith Osborn had been a JP since 1928), and the Sheffield Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society (on whose committee Fred sat).⁸⁰ That leaves two major commitments: hospital work on Fred's part and the University of Sheffield on Samuel's part. In 1924 Fred Osborn became Chairman of the Royal Hospital and in 1934 Samuel became the University's Treasurer and a Pro-Chancellor three years later. That, like much else, was an inherited interest, for it had begun with Sam Osborn's promotion of Technical Schools for Sheffield in the 1880s and it had developed from Samuel's membership of the University College's Technical Committee from 1902.⁸¹

This varied but consistent grasp of community service from business to higher education bridged significant gaps in a city which was moving swiftly from Liberalism to Socialism. The Osborns' civic contribution began with William Fawcett whose involvement in municipal affairs within seven years of Sheffield's incorporation marked a considerable coming out. In Tindall's words, 'It was a crisis in his history, when he first assumed the position of a public man'; and Fawcett was careful to keep clear of party labels.⁸² His civic emergence after a decade of Wesleyan disruption and Chartist and Radical pressure is suggestive and Fawcett made a success of it in a town which his son-in-law described as 'not particularly noted for its public spirit', whose 'municipal arrangements' were 'scarcely abreast of the times', indeed in which 'private enterprise' was 'far ahead of public spirit'.⁸³ As the borough's thirteenth mayor (1855-6) Fawcett entertained generously at his expansive Clarke House (it boasted a purpose-built bathroom) but he expected his distinguished visitors to attend morning and evening family prayers and he stuck to his principles in refusing to attend the annual theatrical performance in aid of the Infirmary, of which the Mayor was customarily patron: he refused to attend, but he sent a cheque for the amount which might normally be expected.⁸⁴

80. These interests can be gleaned from successive Annual Reports of the Sheffield Council of Social Service (now Voluntary Action Sheffield), founded 1921.

81. Tindall, *Osborn*, p. 44; Shaw, *Town Trustees*, p. 29.

82. Tindall, *Fawcett*, p. 49.

83. *Ibid.*, p. 50

84. *Ibid.*, pp. 52-4. Clarke House, built in the late 1830s, was the last large house to be built of local bricks in Sheffield; it had cavity wall construction. Fawcett bought it in 1854. I am indebted to Dr. Nyra Wilson for information about the house.

It was during Fawcett's mayoral year that Sam Osborn proposed to his daughter Eliza. That marriage brought Osborn into the family circles of most of the people who counted in Methodist, Anglican, and Congregationalist Sheffield and it predisposed him in due course to civic involvement: from 1869 to 1872 (he left to concentrate on the Cutlers' Mastership) and from 1884, once his creditors had been repaid. Unlike his father-in-law Sam was avowedly Liberal and Tindall was judiciously appreciative of the brother-in-law who 'was a Liberal in politics; but....was also, what is by no means the same thing, a thoroughly liberal-minded man':

He had much of the old spirit out of which municipal institutions spring....He had enlightened views on municipal government, believing that communities should possess for themselves full control over all things necessary for their well-being, and deserved to be trusted with the unrestricted management of their own affairs.⁸⁵

The civic tone may not have improved greatly in the twenty years after Fawcett's death ('Sheffield has not done itself justice. Strangers do not carry away a very high opinion of the sagacity or public spirit of its citizens....the town itself does not give visitors a good impression') but Tindall was sure that, if other municipal leaders had been like Sam Osborn, 'Sheffield would soon be as much changed for the better as Birmingham has been.'⁸⁶

The family's avowed Liberalism was maintained outside the council by Sam's youngest son Fred Osborn and within it for over thirty years by his middle son Samuel who was elected in 1903 and was Lord Mayor in 1912-13. His entry in the Sheffield *Who's Who* was to the point: 'He is one of the non-talkers of the Council, but finds his business training very useful on the various Committees'.⁸⁷

Samuel Osborn was the most public Osborn and his knighthood came in 1941, officially for service to the Youth Employment Committee but equally for his interlocking voluntary, industrial, and civic interests. By 1941, however, the family's politics had long fragmented.⁸⁸

In the second half of the nineteenth century the Liberalism was almost inevitable. Something of its genesis even in the non-partisan Fawcett is suggested in a roundabout way by Tindall when referring to Fawcett's continental travels:

85. Tindall, *Osborn*, p. 43.

86. *Ibid.*, pp. 43-4.

87. *Sheffield and District Who's Who*, 1905, p. 55.

88. Seed, *Pioneers*, p. 67.

The connexion of religion with the growth of national life in different European countries also interested him much; and the power of the Greek Church in Russia impressed him even more than that of Rome in Austria, as the chief source of the miserable condition of the greater part of the population.⁸⁹

Thus might a Wesleyan become predisposed to disestablishment.

In the twentieth century the family's Liberal consensus, like its Methodist consensus, was steadily modified. Eric Osborn moved firmly into Conservatism and his son, John Osborn, followed him. Eric married the daughter of a Tory MP, soldier, and newspaper proprietor, and their elder son became the first Osborn MP, elected for Sheffield Hallam in 1959.⁹⁰ Hallam was South Yorkshire's one apparently unassailable Conservative seat, although it is suggestive that Osborn sat in his first Parliament as a National Liberal and Unionist rather than the full Conservative, horrified at the prospect of universal state intervention, that he knew himself to be.⁹¹ He had been advised to stand as he did because of the residuary Liberal element still presumed to linger in the anti-Labour coalition which had struggled in Sheffield's civic politics since the 1920s.

Beyond a stint as Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Commonwealth Secretary (Duncan Sandys) in 1963-4, Osborn's parliamentary career was passed on the backbenches, unadorned by office, as a conscientious constituency MP and an assiduous and prominent member of industrial, technical, scientific, and European parliamentary committees, associated in many of them with his step-third cousin, Sir Peter Kirk (1928-1977).⁹² John Osborn was an indispensable MP of what had become an older school. He was as natural a knight of the shires (interpreted industrially) as his great-uncle Samuel had been a civic knight.

VIII

As an interaction of Methodism, family, industry, and society the Osborn story is largely over. It is temptingly open to easy categorization. It tells of the conservatism bred by success. It offers a model of industrial formation and disintegration. What is truly representative, however, is seldom shapely and where the Osborn story is representative is in the several lights shed on a *Methodist* engagement with society and in its

89. Tindall, *Fawcett*. p. 60.

90. Eric Osborn married Aileen Holbrook (1894-1994), daughter of Sir Arthur Holbrook (1850-1946), MP Basingstoke 1920-3, 1924-9.

91. Osborn, *Conflicts of Interest*, pp. 9-10.

92. For Sir Peter Kirk, son of Bishop K.E. Kirk, MP Gravesend 1955-64, Saffron Walden 1965-77 see M. Stenton and S. Lees, *Who's Who of British Members of Parliament*, Vol IV, 1945-1979, (Brighton, 1981), p. 207.

demonstration of the varied nature of that engagement. It illustrates that independence born of the confidence which comes from shared values.

It provides locality and an almost Quaker sense of communal help: there is such a thing as society - certainly so for the good poor at home with us and for the still unreached overseas. It provides a careful interplay of attitudes and strategies - responsibility, duty, thrift, industry - all those qualities which historians have seen at various times as restrictive, even rather dreadful, marks of what has threateningly been called 'social control', preserves of the middle class, primarily masculine, for woman's was the sphere of 'mustn't grumble' and making the best of things. Even where admirable, such qualities have been cut to size, seen as only partially helpful. There has been a due sense of property and of education, held together by marriage and extended by family and providence - and by one's response to providence and to the vagaries of health and opportunity. This is a society which has developed the opportunity to experiment with common sense and pragmatism as well as with altruism and affection, for there was enough opportunity to stand back and take stock. Neither the pressures of labour nor the spaces of aristocracy were for these people.

The *Osborns* represent much of this: the relatively obscure but fortunate beginning (a death too many or the wrong sort of help and there would have been no beginning), then the self-help and the mutual help, then the crucial marriages (with the Fawcett family or the Robsons), then the opportunities taken in work, chapel, and community, and too a sense of communal dynasty (the Samuels cropping up in each generation).

The *Osborn* story may be over but its outworkings continue. It is a family memory that in the 1930s Eric Osborn had to be kept well away at family gatherings from Helen Ashcroft, a distant connexion on the Robson side; their political views were directly opposed. Eric's son carried the family banner into Parliament, as has been seen. So did Helen's son, Frank Judd, who was to maintain much of the Osborn, Robson, and Martin social witness, though strictly an Osborn *connexion*, as Director of *Oxfam* and President of YMCA England, while in Parliament his European work was to echo and continue, though from the Labour side, that of John Osborn and Peter Kirk.⁹³ Other aspects of that concern were to be sustained by Fred Osborn's grandson, F.D.A. Osborn, a career civil servant who became Director General of Environmental Protection, still able to 'feel the occasional tug of the nonconformist conscience',⁹⁴ and Michael Bayley, Anglican clergyman, Sheffield academic, and sociologist.

As for the old-style paternalism, even there the Osborn story has only recently ended. In 1952, which saw the firm's centenary and which

93. For Frank Judd, Lord Judd of Portsea, see *Who's Who*.

94. To author, 13 January 1998.

turned out to be the last year of his life, Sir Samuel Osborn established a fund 'to encourage personal development and education of employees or members of their families, and provide for their welfare'. For fifty years it facilitated Enterprise Scholarships, overseas training, leadership courses, as well as convalescent holidays for pensioners and home comforts after illness. In Spring 2002 the remaining funds were handed over to the South Yorkshire Community Foundation for the continued benefit of surviving Osborn employees and their families. Three of the four trustees at the handing-over ceremony belonged to the Osborn family.⁹⁵

The firm itself had been history for twenty years. The agent in its swift dissolution - it took five years - was Sir Robert Atkinson, 'energetic, audacious, and a clever publicist', who moved on to become Chairman of British Shipbuilders⁹⁶. With him we return finally to the world of Noel Annan's dons, for his brother James Atkinson, the Luther scholar, was a notable Professor of Biblical Studies at the University of Sheffield (and a Canon of Sheffield Cathedral).

Is there a moral? One might be found in a Fulwood Wesley story although it concerns the Wards rather than the Osborns.⁹⁷ The Wards, who came a generation later to Sheffield Methodist prominence than the Osborns, rivalled and in some respects outdid the Osborns in their contribution to Sheffield's well-being. The Wards straddled Wesleyan and United Methodism. The United Methodist Joseph Ward (1864-1941) of Endcliffe Grange was a power in his Connexion and in many ways a complement to Sir Samuel Osborn.⁹⁸ His Wesleyan brother T.W. Ward (1853-1926) of Endcliffe Vale House worshipped latterly at Fulwood Wesley.⁹⁹ Their success was founded on steel scrap; they were expert shipbreakers.

The Sunday evening after Armistice Day, 1918, Carver Street's minister was planned at Fulwood Wesley. He was entertained afterwards at Endcliffe Vale. Conversation, prompted no doubt by the sermon or the Bible readings but also perhaps by recent *Punch* cartoons, turned to the changing of swords into ploughshares. T.W. Ward was convinced that it could not be done; the steel obtained from breaking up ships, let alone swords, was quite different from that used for making ploughshares.

Was Ward being obtuse? Had he missed the point? Or was his the irony of the instinctive critic? Carver Street's minister feared that it was

95. "Company name lives on for former workers", *Sheffield Telegraph*, 5 April 2002, p. 33.

96. Tweedale, p. 357.

97. I have heard this story from two sources: the late Arthur Humphrey, whose father was the minister concerned, and the late A.N. Cass.

98. For Joseph Ward see *Who's Who in Methodism*, 1933, p. 420; Shaw, *Town Trustees*, p. 32.

99. For Thomas William Ward see *Who's Who in Sheffield*, 1905, p. 252

the former; he would not otherwise have dined out on the story. This, however, introduces matter for a different paper, for it has a particular bearing on both Methodism and Sheffield in the twentieth century: the impact of war, and especially the two World Wars, on a Methodist city reliant on munitions and war-related work and the tensions between an increasingly public-school educated, OTC trained, Conservative inclined Wesleyan lay industrial establishment and the pacifism and communitarian socialism of other Methodists. That has not been touched on here. It could be as significant an omission on my part as the tensions of the 1840s and 1850s so carefully avoided by Tindall in his appreciation of William Fawcett and Sam Osborn, for perhaps such tensions marked a point at which values had ceased to be shared and independence was no longer at a premium.

CLYDE BINFIELD

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Branches Report

Forty or more years ago our 'Branches' began to be formed as local societies for the study of local Methodist history. Their main activities were intended to be lectures, visits and journals but soon some were offered historical material including plans, pamphlets and pottery. Often this was accepted with no real idea of what to do with it so that material might end up in a cardboard box in the Secretary's back bedroom! A number of our Branches maintain collections or libraries of varying scope and significance and two are mentioned here to show just how much a Methodist Topsy can grow and to highlight the considerable responsibilities inseparable from the possession of important historical material. These responsibilities include cataloguing, providing access, conserving, preserving and securing from theft or damage.

Cornish Methodist Historical Association. This collection is now housed within the county's 'Cornwall Centre' in Redruth and access is available during the opening hours of the Centre. The Centre also houses the county's own large collection of local and general Methodist history, which includes a large number of photocopies of circuit plans. The CMHA collection includes long runs of Bible Christian and Wesleyan magazines and many *Minutes* as well as a growing collection of hymn books, some with Cornish connections. It is planned to produce a combined catalogue of the county and CMHA holdings on the Internet next year. All material in the CMHA collection has been donated. There are other Methodist collections in West Cornwall, in particular the Royal Institution of Cornwall in Truro, which contains the books and notes of the late Tom Shaw, formerly the General Secretary of the WHS.

Yorkshire. This branch has an extensive library with a unique collection of local histories and plans relating to Yorkshire Methodism. For many years the library was housed in the Yorkshire Archaeological Society's premises at Leeds but the move to Huddersfield University Library should be completed by early 2006. It is hoped that the catalogue will then be computerised and put on the Internet. The library includes a wide range of Methodist material and with more space available it is intended to widen its scope, including Methodist literature. Funds have permitted some purchases and there have been significant donations from the collections of deceased members.

ROGER THORNE (Local Branches Secretary)

BOOK REVIEWS

A Corner for the Preacher by Sherrell Branton Leetooze (Bowmanville, Ontario: Lynn Michael John Associates, 2005, pp.iv,358; \$(Can)25. ISBN 0-9737330-2-0)
Bible Christian Chapels of the Canadian Conference by Sherrell Branton Leetooze (Bowmanville, Ontario: Lynn Michael John Associates, 2005, pp.vi,326; \$(Can)25. ISBN 0-9737330-1-2)
The Damascus Road by Sherrell Branton Leetooze (Bowmanville, Ontario: Lynn Michael John Associates, 2005, pp.vii,281; \$(Can)25. ISBN 0-9737330-0-4)

The late Tom Shaw in *The Bible Christians 1815-1907* mentions Canada in only seven sentences, but leaves the impression that the work was not unimportant for the Bible Christians. Just a few years before his death he had mentioned to me - and I think to others - the need to explore the Connexion's overseas work. It remains a challenge to which I have hardly responded at all, although others have done better, notably in the *Journal* of the Cornish Methodist Historical Association. For Canada that work has now been undertaken, in three volumes and over 800 pages, from Canada itself. I have been able to make small contributions to two of the volumes.

The Bible Christians' Canadian work began in 1831 when two ministers were sent to the separate colonies of Prince Edward Island, and 'Canada West' - modern southern Ontario. A separate Conference was established twenty three years later to administer locally what had grown into a cross border church in modern Canada and the USA; the British Conference confirmed the stations annually. The first union of Canadian Methodism occurred in 1874, from which the Bible Christians held aloof, but on June 1 1884 the Canadian Bible Christian Conference joined the united Methodist Church in Canada; from then the ministers were no longer recorded in the British *Minutes*.

These volumes explore first the migration to Canada and the settlement in

PEI and Ontario, in the second one the chapels, and finally the ministers of the Canadian work, mostly up to the 1884 union. They consider the Canadian side of the Story in a popular style rather than an historical one, using church, migration and genealogical resources, with a decided emphasis on the last. This does mean that a systematic Story of the Canadian history is hard to tease out, and there is nothing about Conference decisions or policy. Volume one is rich in the stories of people, but the mission and purpose of a religious movement gets lost. In the second volume the chapels of PEI and southern Ontario are described, and the question of what happened to the American societies after 1884 - an issue not addressed in British records - is mostly answered. However a major loss in this volume is that by concentrating only on the chapels there is no consideration of the work in Manitoba - the furthest west Canadian BCs reached - because there, it would seem, no chapels were built. This volume has only an index of personal names, where an index of places would have been useful. The third volume usefully fills in the details of the British-Canadian ministers for whom no biographical references are given in Beckerlegge (*United Methodist Ministers and their Circuits*). Here we can pick up a little of the Manitoba work - but there is no index at all to this volume. Moreover because no minister was ever sent to the station identified in Winnipeg, we don't have that story - whatever it was.

Regrettably the volumes show a lack of knowledge of Britain and British sources, and errors creep in, notably in the first volume, where even in an introduction from Elizabeth Howard, once of Devon, now of Norfolk, there are mistakes. Thus in the first volume ... the chronology wobbles backwards and forwards, creating wrong impressions - for instance by 1800 John and Charles Wesley were dead (p1f); the notion that Bible Christian practice was to build chapels every mile and a half along the roadways (p19) is clearly fallacious; the story of William O'Bryan might be told more accurately; there is no recounting of the middle to late nineteenth-century history of the British Bible Christians, nor why the British Conference would not tolerate entry into the 1874 union (some north American clues are there, though), nor why it hesitated over the 1884 union; the photo' on p6 is not Billy Bray (is it the Rev. William Bray ?); the caption to the photo' on p32 makes an error in deduction - the building alongside Redruth Treruffe Hill chapel was indeed the 'parsonage' (Canadian usage !); on p43, Plymouth was formed in 1914 by the amalgamation of Plymouth, Stonehouse and Devonport (Plymouth Dock until 1824); Stoke Damerel was the parish covering Plymouth Dock. In the third volume, Swansea is not in Hampshire, and Woolwich should have the silent 'w' (p159). We might go on noting errors relating to this side of the Atlantic, but to no profit; most of them will be readily identified, and the book is about the Canadian Bible Christians after all.

The volumes are an important contribution. The genealogists will find them most valuable. Anyone interested in the overseas work of the Bible Christians ought to own them. Unfortunately they're none too easy to obtain through British booksellers, but an e-mail to their authoress should enable their purchase: sheer.leetooze@3web.net

Wesleyan Methodism by John Munsey Turner. (Epworth Press, 2005, pp. 104. £14.99 ISBN 0 7162 0590 4)

This latest contribution to the Exploring Methodism series from Epworth continues the same successful format and high standard of its predecessors in presenting in a relatively easy and approachable way the history of Methodism in Great Britain since its foundation - only the price changes, ever upwards. This volume on the Wesleyan Methodism of the Original Connexion is dovetailed neatly into the chronologically earlier volume on *The Making of Methodism* and points gracefully towards the modern issues dealt with in the later volume, *Modern Methodism in England; 1932-1998*, supplying enough on earlier and later periods to make sense without duplication, though the author cannot refrain from a mischievous swipe at Tony Blair which probably breaks the Wesleyan 'no politics' rule! As in previous volumes, the format includes well-chosen primary source extracts inserted alongside the text and questions for discussion, should a revived class meeting wish to turn to Methodist history instead of Bible study. There is a useful guide to Further Reading and, to help the reader keep track of events, a series of Chronologies, reminding one of what was going on in Wesleyanism and in contemporary Britain. Thus, coincidentally we see that as Richmond College opened, the Scottish Kirk suffered the 'Disruption' of 1843, and the Leys School was opened in the same year as the Moody and Sankey Mission - 1875.

The achievement of this book is to cover a lot of ground briefly and in a relatively straightforward way without compromising the accuracy of the scholarship. This is achieved in four chronological chapters, on the periods 1791-1820, 1820-1860, 1860 -1902 and 1902-1932, interspersed with thematic chapters on 'Victorian Values - What was it like to be a Wesleyan?', 'Wesleyan Worship', and 'The Wesleyans and other Christians' which deals with both relations with the Established Church and the origins of the ecumenical movement. The chapter on 1860-1902 takes three sub-themes: Politics, Education and The Forward Movement, presented through the lives of Dr J. H. Rigg, Hugh Price Hughes and - not quite fitting into the scheme of things but nevertheless welcome, T. B. Stephenson of the National Children's Home and Orphanage. If it is true, as the author suggests, that Methodists are in danger of forgetting who they are and whence they came, this book will put them right. The distinctive theology of holiness is explained and the advantages of the Connexional polity are set out for those who had never thought about it. There is no attempt to play down those darker characteristics of Wesleyanism to which the other branches of Methodism owed their origins but as the implications of 1932 Union are finally absorbed by a shrinking Church, it is well to remember what Wesleyanism was, for good and ill. Above all the author manages to convey the special

characteristics of Wesleyanism at its best, neither Nonconformist nor Church of England and, having natural affinities with both Evangelicals and High Churchmen, a broader Church than the Established Church itself.

EDWARD ROYLE

Memoirs Methodist & Ecumenical: A Raymond George: Geoffrey Wainwright (Ed.) (Buxton, Church in the Market Place Publications, 2003 pp.viii, 295 £9.99 ISBN 1 899147 31 4)

When the Yorkshire Branch celebrated its Silver Jubilee in 1982 it was appropriate that it was held at the former Wesley College, Headingley - and that Raymond George (1910-1998) should be the speaker, for he delivered a dryly-humorous account of his time there. It was hard to imagine him as the Scout Master in shorts! There was perhaps a sense that if Raymond had a home then it was Headingley but would have been equally happy in a monastic community. A Yorkshireman by adoption, his autobiography records his years here and his support for the Branch.

Born in Gloucester, to Wesleyan parents, nevertheless his mother had a Churches of Christ background and Raymond was already a local preacher before being baptised, a belated requirement on his candidating in 1933. By this time he had already been to Balliol College, Oxford and his autobiography does raise the intriguing question as to the extent to which a very small group of his university contemporaries have disproportionately moved Methodism ecumenically, especially towards the Anglicans. Wesley House, Cambridge, and Marburg followed before entering a Methodist life of ministerial training colleges - Hartley Victoria, Headingley, Richmond, and Wesley College, Bristol.

There is no doubt that Raymond greatly enriched not just his much-loved Methodism but the larger church, especially through the ecumenical and liturgical movements, and election to the Presidency in 1975 was appropriate for one who had so much to offer. Yet there is in this still a difficult question to ask about the nature of ministry and whether an academic life from university to retirement has its limitations, creating a pastoral remoteness from the ordinary Methodist member. It was only because of wartime conditions that Raymond did temporarily travel in a circuit, Manchester (Great Western Street) of Primitive Methodist origins. If he had had more circuit experience would he have held the view that we should attend our nearest church, a recipe for closing central missions and quitting the inner city? He was also uncomfortable about inter-faith dialogue and worship. Perhaps his values were those of suburban Methodism. What does become clear is that Raymond had no sympathy with the maintaining of the Primitive

Methodist tradition of lay celebration of the sacraments at Hartley Victoria after Methodist Union but this also raises the question whether church union removes the traditions and practices of minorities.

This is an excellent read, full of interest and hindsight that does not suffer from being self-indulgent, a comment on Raymond's own humility. Like all autobiographies it has its limitations in that it does not see Raymond in a critical sense as others saw him. Yet we should be thankful for without Raymond recording so much, our understanding of developments within and without Methodism, especially in the post war years in which he played a significant part, would be lost to the historian. Those who knew Raymond will find this a fascinating read with some challenging insights.

D COLIN DEWS

Parliament and Dissent, edited by Stephen Taylor and David L Wykes. (Edinburgh University Press for The Parliamentary History Yearbook Trust, 2005, viii, 156 pp, £16.95. ISBN 0 7486 2195 4).

The present work, the eleventh in a series of special volumes sponsored by the journal *Parliamentary History*, comprises eight papers given at a Parliamentary History Conference at Dr Williams's Library in July 2002, with an additional introductory chapter by David Wykes, director of Dr Williams's Library and Trust. The eight papers are arranged chronologically, beginning with Dr Wykes' own paper on the 'Norfolk Controversy' of the 1690s (an abortive attempt by the Norfolk clergy to petition Parliament to suppress the Quakers). Mark Knights discusses the polemical strategies used in the debates over 'occasional conformity' (the practice whereby dissenters took Communion in the Church of England with sufficient frequency to qualify for public office). Andrew Thompson explores dissenting pressure for the repeal of the Test Act and James Bradley analyses disagreements within the dissenting constituency about political tactics in the 1720s, while Gervase Ditchfield examines the place of petitions in the parliamentary and ecclesiastical politics of the early 1770s. Clyde Binfield contributes a characteristic contextual study of the Congregationalist Whitworth family and their political adventures in the mid-nineteenth century.

Although Methodists feature marginally in the extensive Whitworth cousinhood, only two of the papers explore Methodism in any detail. Tim Larsen traces the politics of Free Churchmen in the nineteenth century, observing a distinction between the 'Nonconformist Conscience' of Old Dissent, emphasising liberty and religious equality, and the 'Evangelical Conscience' associated with Tories like Lord Shaftesbury which favoured

legislation to enforce morality. Larsen's case is that Buntingite Wesleyans supported the latter rather than the former in mid-century (James Heald appears as an example of Wesleyan Toryism), but that by the 1890s the two emphases had fused, somewhat uncomfortably, in broad Free Church endorsement for Gladstonian Liberalism. David Bebbington concludes the volume with a careful analysis of the Free Church MPs of the 1906 Parliament, exploring why the high hopes pinned by the Free Churches on what Silvester Home called 'an organised army of Puritans' remained largely unfulfilled. Among the causes adduced, in addition to denominational diversity, political disagreements and quarrels over tactics was the leadership of Sir Robert Perks. While not endorsing Beatrice Webb's damning description of Perks as 'a combination of Gradgrind, Pecksniff and Jabez Balfour', Professor Bebbington concludes that Perks' leadership was 'a disaster for political nonconformity'. Overall this is a useful volume, drawing attention to a group often overlooked by historians of Parliament and parliamentary politics.

MARTIN WELLINGS

The Independent Methodists - a History, by John Dolan, (James Clarke & Co, Cambridge, 2005, pp.320, £25 Pb, ISBN 0 227 67983 0)

John Dolan's book on the Independent Methodist Connexion is a very detailed history of the denomination within which he is a minister at Stockton Heath near Warrington. His position as honorary archivist to the connexion has clearly ensured that records at church, circuit and national level have been readily available to him, but a bibliography of twelve pages indicates a wide-ranging search for the information that has enabled him to produce what was described at the book launch in July as a 'warts and all' history, while Professor David Bebbington in his Foreword describes the book as 'thorough, persuasive and illuminating'.

Of the two earlier main histories, that by Mounfield in 1905 to mark the centenary of their first Annual Meeting, consisted of a history of the denomination, with details and photographs of the churches. Vickers, writing in 1920, followed a similar pattern but included more information on leading individuals within the denomination. Dr Dolan has not only brought the history of his church up to date, but he has done so with an objectivity that may well have shocked readers of earlier generations. Perhaps his most interesting assertions, to most readers of the *Proceedings*, are that a commitment to specifically Methodist doctrine has had no formal place in Independent Methodism since the Statement of Faith and Practice in 1927, and that the use of the title 'Independent Methodist' is now 'increasingly irrelevant' on the grounds that doctrinally the denomination is now in practice little different from other Free Churches.

Although this book marks the bi-centenary of the first Annual Meeting in

1805, it includes the period that started in 1796 when a group of Wesleyan members in Warrington left their society and became known as Quaker Methodists. Their first decade laid the foundations of Independent Methodism and determined what was to follow, including the autonomy of each society and the Free Gospel principle that was based on having a lay and unpaid ministry. Some difficulties currently facing the Independent Methodists, such as falling membership and ageing congregations, are common across the churches, but Dr Dolan assesses the long-term effects of the characteristic features of Independent Methodism. Their unpaid ministry was seen at first as a considerable saving when many members lived in extreme poverty, but the real cost over the years has been a lack of trained full-time ministerial leadership, and the fact that ministers and members of other churches have not considered their ministers to be of equal standing. Their lay status has added to their problems among ordained colleagues, while the denomination's members have found themselves increasingly separated from other churches by a reluctance to change their system of church government.

In the heyday of Independent Methodism in the 1930s there were 164 churches, some 400 ministers and over 9,000 members. By 2001 there were still 94 churches, but only about 100 ministers, serving less than 2,400 members. Sunday School numbers reached 27,000 before 1914, but are now less than a thousand. The recent Covenant Partnership with the Baptist Union of Great Britain means that by December 2009 each church meeting must decide either to formally become a Baptist Church, or to retain the Independent Methodist title and links with other I.M. churches while at the same time being a member church of the Baptist Union. Not surprisingly, the basic issues of baptism and ministry 'continue to receive attention'. Will this interesting study be, sadly, the final book on this denomination?

J. GORDON TERRY

James Crawfoot and the Magic Methodists by Henry Rack et al (2003, 49pp) is a collection of four papers on Primitive Methodist themes delivered at a day conference at Englesea Brook Chapel. The Bourne family and their business interests are described by John Anderson; the geography of Primitive Methodist circuits in Shropshire is outlined by Delia Garrett , while John Dolan examines the links between the early Primitives and the Independent Methodists of the Warrington area. Henry Rack's subject is James Crawfoot (1759-1839), the first PM paid travelling preacher, whose work centred upon Delamere Forest, Cheshire. His significance and influence, both on Hugh Bourne and the emerging connexion, is carefully and clearly explored in this important paper. Copies are available from Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum, Englesea Brook, Crewe, Cheshire CW2 5QW, price £3.50.

NOTES AND QUERIES

1572 REVIVALIST METHODIST HYMNBOOK

In *Proceedings* 54(1), February 2003, I appealed for information regarding a Revivalist Methodist hymnbook. Responses from the Revs. Kenneth Mankin and Colin Short were appreciated but did not help resolve the mystery. However, recently the Rev. David Tripp drew my attention to an item in the British Library and Dr. Clive Field has indeed confirmed that my copy is a second edition of one published for Ann Carr's Female Revivalists of Leeds, a secession from Primitive Methodism and surely also explaining the 'feel' of the collection. The title page describes it as *A Selection of Hymns, for the use of the Female Revivalist Methodists, new edition with additional hymns* (printed by R. Inchbold, Leeds, 1838, pp640), and also appropriately including the text from Micah 5(8), 'Thy kingdom shall come to the Daughter of Jerusalem'. The British Library copy also has written on the title page, presumably the names of the joint compilers) 'Carr (A) & Williams (M)'. Martha Williams one of the Female Revivalist leaders, wrote Ann Carr's biography, *Memoirs of the Life and Character of Ann Carr; containing her conversion to God, her devoted labours and her happy death* (HW Walker & M. Williams, Leeds, 1841).

The original edition, *A Selection of Hymns for the use of the Female Revivalist* (J. Wilan, Dewsbury, 1824, pp515) is also held by the British Library and has a preface signed by Carr, Williams and S. Eland.

For those seeking more information on the Leeds Female Revivalists and their secession from Primitive Methodism see my chapter 'Ann Carr and the Female Revivalists of Leeds' in Gail Malmgreen, *Religion in the Lives of English Women, 1760-1930* (Bloomington, 1986), based on my earlier chapter in *From Mow Cop to Peake, 1807-1932: essays to commemorate the one hundred & seventy fifth anniversary of Primitive Methodism, May 1982* (Leeds, 1982).

D COLIN DEWS

1573 A METHODIST VERSE

My great-great-grandmother's brother was David Jones, born about 1796, who went out to Antigua in 1817 but died of yellow fever on 30 Dec 1818. In one of his school books he had written some lines of verse (or doggerel) which ended:

'My hope in life is ever this
To live and die a Methodist

Was this rhyme original to him or was it more widely known? I would be very interested to know.

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