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PREACHERS AT THE PIT

Methodists and County Durham Mining Disasters, 1880-1909

February 16 2009 marked the centenary of the West Stanley colliery explosion. In what was County Durham's worst mining disaster, 168 men and boys lost their lives. Methodism, along with other denominations, played an important role in the aftermath of both this and other disasters. Methodist Ministers, local preachers and trade union officials all provided both spiritual support and practical relief for the survivors and the bereaved.

The connections between mining and Methodism in County Durham have been the focus of much scholarly attention.¹ The various branches of Methodism formed, in effect, the 'established church' of the coalfield. The prominence of Methodists, particularly Primitives, in the Durham Miners' Association (D.M.A.), requires little introduction.² What has been neglected, however, is the role taken by Methodists in the aftermath of that blight of mining districts, the pit disaster .

Death underground was a regular occurrence in mining communities and often passed with little external comment. The dangers of roof falls, minor explosions, transport accidents and gas were day-to-day realities, as were the various mining-related diseases.³ It was, however, the spectacular disaster, which only ever accounted for a minority of all lives lost underground, which drew national and newspaper attention. Durham was, in the period from 1880 to 1909, severely afflicted with

¹ For the classic work, see: Robert Moore, *Pitmen, Preachers and Politics* (Cambridge, 1974).

² See Robert Wearmouth, *Methodism and the Trade Unions* (London, 1959). Wearmouth's *The Social and Political Influence of Methodism in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1957), contains information on Durham's trade union leaders.

³ John Benson, *British Coalminers in the Nineteenth Century* (Dublin, 1980), pp. 38-9.

disasters. In these years nationally, eighty-six disasters claimed 3,567 lives. Fourteen of these disasters occurred in Durham, killing 622 men and boys. This study examines the role of Methodists in four of Durham's largest disasters of the period: Seaham (1880), Brancepeth (1896), Wingate Grange (1906) and West Stanley (1909). Methodists played important roles both amongst miners trapped underground and in meeting the needs of the distressed on the surface following all four of these disasters. It was, however, the actions of the Primitive Methodists John Wilson and John Johnson, both leading figures in the D.M.A., which provided Methodism's leadership role following the Brancepeth, Wingate and West Stanley disasters.⁴

I

Faith played an important role for some miners trapped underground after explosions. The most touching accounts are of those men who, aware that life was leaving them, prepared for death and left messages which were later found by rescuers. One classic account is from the Hartley disaster (Northumberland, 1862). The overman, Robert Amour, recorded in his notebook that trapped miners, including at least four Primitive Methodists, had held a prayer meeting. When the bodies were recovered several men were found in a kneeling position, having died whilst praying.⁵ In similar fashion, following the Podmore Hall disaster (Staffordshire, 1918), the body of one Samuel Richardson, a Wesleyan local preacher, was recovered. He was found seated, wearing his glasses and with his Bible open on his knee.⁶

Methodists were active underground following Durham disasters. Prayer meetings were means of both passing the time and preparing for death. Richard Cole, a victim of the Seaham disaster and a Primitive Methodist, left behind a message written on a board. It stated: 'The Lord has been with us, we are all ready for heaven. Bless the Lord we have had a jolly prayer meeting, every man ready for glory. Praise the Lord.' Other accounts from Seaham found by rescuers also recorded prayer meetings and hymn singing, although the denomination of the authors is unclear.

At West Stanley, the actions of the Primitive Methodist Robert Henderson received much press attention. Henderson, trapped with a group of miners, took the lead in keeping up spirits and in leading the men to safety. Hymn singing filled the time whilst awaiting rescue, with 'Lead Kindly Light' being repeatedly sung. One, evidently non-Christian, miner trapped with the group recalled:

⁴ For details of the Church of England's involvement in mining disasters, see: Robert Lee, *The Church of England and the Durham Coalfield* (Woodbridge, 2007).

⁵ Bastow Wilson, *A Primitive Methodist Diamond Field* (Hull, 1909), pp. 43-4.

⁶ Mervyn Edwards, *Potters in Pits* (Leek, 1998), p. 63.

'What did we sing? Well, there was five or six songs. I don't remember exactly what they was. Hymns? Come to that there was hymns. I mind one in particular. We didn't know it, all us rough 'uns, but Robert Henderson did. He's a bit of a preacher is Robert.'⁷

II

The dreaded sound of an explosion instigated a liturgy of mourning. First, there was the descent by wives, children, fellow miners, clergy and local officials on the pithead. As hope turned to despair, blinds were drawn and coffins rested in cottages. This was followed by the funerals, frequently observed by massed crowds of both genuine mourners and the morbidly curious. Methodists took an important role throughout these proceedings; they comforted the grieving and provided spiritual leadership for the whole community.

The newspaper reports of events following disasters generally focused, in terms of spiritual provision, on the words of senior Anglican ecclesiastics who visited the stricken communities and addressed the assembled crowds with words of comfort. There are, however, occasional references to the actions of Methodist local preachers and ministers. At West Stanley, following the funerals of the miners, 'local preachers visited many of the stricken houses, and prayed with the sorrowing relatives.'⁸ The same occurred following the Brancepeth disaster where the acting colliery manager, David Grieves, was a Wesleyan local preacher. Despite spending most of his time after the disaster at the colliery, 'he managed to drop into at least one miner's cottage ... and there he wept and spoke consoling, if broken, words to the widows and fatherless'.⁹

The actions of Methodist ministers received relatively little attention from the local newspapers. It was the Anglican clergy who looked to take a leading, if not always appreciated, role. This included: organising relief funds at Seaham and Wingate; episcopal sermons and visits; and conducting burials. This role occasionally excluded the Methodist ministry. At Seaham there was some suggestion of denominational friction: at the burial of Michael Henderson, a Primitive, his minister applied to give an address over the grave. This was refused by the vicar, William Scott, owing to members of other denominations being simultaneously interred in the mass grave and insufficient notice having been given.

Methodist ministers were still often able to take an active role, despite the heavy involvement of the Church of England. The Superintendents of the Wesleyan Bishop Auckland circuit and the Primitive Crook circuit

⁷ *New York Times*, 21 February, 1909.

⁸ *North Star*, 9 March, 1885.

⁹ *The Crook Circuit Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1896, p. 23.

were in attendance following the Brancepeth disaster and Methodist ministers were amongst the pithead crowds at West Stanley. The ministers conducted funeral services in the various chapels for their deceased members, which included in 1909 that of Henry Wright, a 'zealous local preacher'.¹⁰ The Wesleyans at West Stanley organised a memorial service which was addressed by the Chairman of the District, the Reverend Haigh. His message, like those of the Anglican clerics, reflected on the mystery of life. He then addressed the challenge which disasters posed to faith by acknowledging that people would be asking: 'Where is God? What is He doing?'.¹¹ He concluded by delivering a message common amongst those preaching in disaster villages:

'Although pain was hard to bear and sorrow was like a shroud, yet they had one great companionship. Christ was a Man of Sorrows, and in their sorrow at Stanley they were surely entering into something of the meaning of Christ. They had followed in his suffering.'¹²

There is no direct evidence to suggest that disasters caused apostasy in mining villages although the combined words of Haigh and other clerics would suggest that there was a perceived fear of this happening.

Methodists were, along with many other organisations and individuals, also involved in providing relief for the bereaved. At Seaham and Wingate, it was the respective vicars who led in organising relief funds. At Wingate, however, the high-handedness of the vicar and his attempt to control the relief effort met with community criticism. As a consequence, the West Stanley fund was a purely secular affair. John Wilson stated that 'this fund knows no religion' and William House, Primitive preacher and D.M.A. official, called for the fund to sink 'all creeds, dogmas and religions'.¹³ This message did not reach two Wesleyan ministers who were invited to the fund's committee meeting in error. The meeting was only allowed to begin after the men had taken their leave, having pledged their support to the fund.¹⁴ Despite never having taken a leading role in initiating or running relief funds, Methodists joined the many individuals and organisations which made donations: dedicated collections were often taken in chapels. One of the largest individual donations to the Wingate fund, of fifty pounds, came from the Primitive jam maker, William Hartley.

¹⁰ *Methodist Times*, 23 February, 1909.

¹¹ *Consett Chronicle*, 5 March, 1909.

¹² *Durham Chronicle*, 5 March, 1909.

¹³ *Durham Chronicle*, 26 February, 1909

¹⁴ *Northern Echo*, 20 February, 1909.

III

The Methodists were also represented after disasters by the county's trade union officials. The D.M.A. was served by twelve agents in the period prior to 1914. Nine of these had strong Methodist connections, the majority being Primitives. Two of these were especially active following mining disasters, namely John Wilson and John Johnson. Wilson had experienced a 'classic' Methodist conversion, namely away from alcohol and gambling to a life of Christian service. Ironically, his agreement - whilst nursing a hangover - to become a Sunday School teacher led to him ultimately becoming a popular preacher. This background served him well as he rose to lead the D.M.A. and enter parliament.¹⁵ Johnson was, similarly, a Primitive local preacher, and M.P. for Gateshead. The eulogies at his funeral in 1911 paid tribute to his prayerful character and his love of Christ.¹⁶ These men were held in great affection by Durham Methodists, and in many ways can be regarded as figureheads for both the Primitives, and also for the other Methodist branches in whose chapels they preached.¹⁷ A Durham Primitive preaching plan for 1906 was surmounted with photographs of both Wilson and Johnson.¹⁸ Moore gives the example from the Deerness Valley of Matt White, a prominent local Primitive, who advised a young preacher looking at the picture of Wilson on the D.M.A. Waterhouses Lodge banner to 'try to be like that man, he was a great man'.¹⁹ This respect was earned and the men's actions following disasters undoubtedly contributed to this.

Wilson and Johnson, along with other union officials, joined the rescue parties at Brancepeth, Wingate and West Stanley, as well at other smaller disasters and accidents. In this capacity they combined their roles as trade unionists and Methodist figureheads. On hearing word of the Brancepeth disaster, Wilson cancelled his departure for London and went underground wearing the clothes he had put on thinking he would be attending the Commons. The Crook Wesleyan Magazine commented:

"There were many who looked with pride on Messrs. Wilson and Johnson as each day they returned from the pit with black faces and dishevelled appearance."²⁰

¹⁵ For a fuller account, see: John Wilson, *Memories of a Labour Leader* (London, 1910), and Barbara Anderson, 'The Life and Work of John Wilson M.P.', *Bulletin of the North East Branch of the Wesley Historical Society* 26 (Sept. 1976), pp. 9-31.

¹⁶ *Durham Chronicle*, 6 January, 1911.

¹⁷ John Wilson's pocket diary 1903. Wilson preached on thirty-one Sundays in the year. Twenty-three of these were in County Durham. Four were in Wesleyan and four in New Connexion pulpits.

¹⁸ Durham County Record Office, D/X 188/15, Durham Primitive Methodist Circuit Preachers' Plan, 1906.

¹⁹ Moore, *Pitmen* p.146.

²⁰ *Crook Methodist Magazine*, p. 22,

Wilson and Johnson also provided words of comfort to assembled gatherings, especially following the Wingate and West Stanley disasters. They acted primarily in their trade union capacity and so their addresses often assumed a secular and practical focus concerning: mining issues; the need to prepare for emergencies; the levelling of social classes through disasters; the heroism of the miners; and the necessity of relief efforts for the survivors, widows and orphans. Their words did, however, often include a Christian message. Both men spoke at Wingate in a meeting chaired by the Wesleyan and Primitive ministers. Johnson delivered an address which 'had running through it a beautiful vein of spirituality' and asked his listeners to elevate their minds 'for a higher and better service'.²¹ Wilson also spoke at the Wingate burials. He provided a strong Christian message for the mourners:

It is this: that while you do your work in the bowels of the earth, striving for the bread that perisheth, but which man wants, to pay attention to the immortal wants of your soul. These occasions are too solemn to pass without enforcing the lessons they teach.²²

Wilson also addressed the mourners at the mass funerals of the West Stanley victims. He had originally planned to speak on the first day of the burials but the crowds were so immense, and the danger of crushing so great, that he postponed his address to the following day. He spoke alongside Johnson and also the diocesan canon-missioner George Body, a man whom Wilson respected and who himself made considerable efforts to comfort the bereaved following several disasters. Wilson's graveside oration stressed the youth of the deceased and, as in his D.M.A. circulars, called for the mines to be made safer. He also, though, included a Christian message. He made reference to the actions of donors and rescuers: "That is the great law the world requires" he added, "the law of self-sacrifice as taught by the Saviour".²³ Wilson preached later in the week in a memorial service held in the Co-Operative Hall. His text was 'be ye also ready', a common passage of scripture on disaster memorials.

IV

Wilson and Johnson and, to a lesser degree, other Methodist D.M.A. officials provided a form of spiritual leadership following disasters. It stood in contrast to the often florid messages provided by the Anglican ecclesiastics.²⁴ The Methodists led from the front and were able to

²¹ *Northern Echo*, 28 October, 1906.

²² *Durham Chronicle*, 26 October, 1906.

²³ *Durham Chronicle*, 26 February, 1909.

²⁴ Lee, *Church of England*, p. 268.

minister through actions as well as words. Where religious messages were delivered, they were of a practical nature. A similar theme echoes through Wilson's sermons and autobiography: both were of a practical nature and warned others, among other things, of the dangers of lost time and the value of education, pertinent points in communities where death could come quickly.²⁵

It is worth noting that Wilson especially was very humble about his role during mining disasters. Whilst his pocket diary of 1903 refers briefly to visiting Sacriston following a flooding there, his serialised autobiography makes no mention of the disasters. This was commented on by his contemporaries and the published volume of *Memories of a Labour Leader* includes a letter from W. C. Blakett drawing attention to Wilson's omission and commenting on it frequently being his lot to 'risk his life in forming one of those eager explorers who always, in Durham, flock to the aid of the unfortunate on such occasions.'²⁶ In the same volume, an appreciation by Bishop Moule focussed on Wilson's actions at West Stanley. Moule commented on Wilson's words of 'affection, cheer, wisdom and Christian hope' and praised him as being 'informed, resolute, statesmanlike, Christian.'²⁷

V

Methodists played an important role in the aftermath of County Durham mining disasters. Their faith influenced actions both below ground and on the surface. They ministered to the bereaved, with both ministers and the laity taking a significant, if underreported, role in this. The main Methodist presence, however, came from John Johnson and John Wilson. These men combined their union positions with that of their faith and offered a form of spiritual leadership to the miners which appears to have been more meaningful and practical than that offered by the Anglican clergy. In the face of disaster the values of Methodism, of practical action, social concern and a persisting faith shone through. Mining disasters made extraordinary demands on ordinary people. Methodism responded to these demands through its preachers at the pit.

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²⁵ Wilson, *Memories of a Labour Leader*, pp. 317-20.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xv.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. xii-xiii.

THE 1829 MINUTES OF THE ARMINIAN BIBLE CHRISTIANS

In February 2004 Roger Thorne¹ told what was known of the Arminian Bible Christians, the 1829 schism in Bible Christian ranks, when founder William O'Bryan, falling out with the majority James Thorne-led body, went his own way with a small band of loyalists, who retained the original name of the Connexion believing themselves to be the true successors to what O'Bryan had started. Roger Thorne made the reasonable statement ...

It is unlikely that there is a major cache of denominational documents waiting to be discovered ...²

The recent acquisition of a set of Bible Christian *Minutes of Conference* for 1819-1829 from a bookseller in New Jersey, USA, was driven by the description of the final volume:

EXTRACTS OF MINUTES OF THE ELEVENTH YEARLY CONFERENCE, BETWEEN WILLIAM O'BRYAN AND THE PREACHERS IN CONNEXION WITH HIM, COMMENCED AT LAKE, JULY 23RD, 1829; ADJOURNED TO LISKEARD 27TH, AND CONCLUDED 30TH. Liskeard, 1829, W. O'Bryan. First edition. 16 pages.

This is not the description of the eleventh volume of the mainstream Bible Christian *Minutes*.

Prior to the 1829 Conference a preliminary meeting took place at Lake Chapel in Shebbear in an atmosphere of dissension.³ The preachers were seeking to replace O'Bryan's rule by Conference rule, a process that had begun in 1826. O'Bryan had been humiliated by the change in the title page of the *Minutes*. The first nine volumes of the *Minutes* referred to Conferences between William O'Bryan and the preachers in Connexion with him. The 1828 *Minutes* removed all reference to O'Bryan, referring to the tenth annual Conference of 'the people denominated Bible Christians.' As a consequence of that change and others, the 1829 meeting was stormy. O'Bryan sought to hold his place as 'Father' of the Connexion, but it was impossible in the face of the preachers' opposition. Thus O'Bryan declared, "I will do no more business with you, I adjourn this conference to Liskeard next Monday," and walked out. The Conference at Lake continued in the absence of O'Bryan, and its *Minutes* were issued in the continuing Bible Christian series.

O'Bryan's adjourned meeting did take place, at Liskeard, probably at his own house - for the 1829 *Minutes* recently acquired are the minutes of that occasion. The small volume is thus the first 'Connexional' document of the Arminian Bible Christians to re-emerge. I will call it « [the] ABC *Minutes* » and unattributed quotations are taken from it.

¹ *Proceedings* Vol. 54 Part 4, pp124-134.

² *ibid.* p132.

³ *ibid.* p126.

As the description reveals, the public humiliation of the change of title page was reversed: O'Bryan's name reappears. And for the first time a text appears on the title page: Isaiah 1:2:

Hear O heavens; and give ear O earth, for the Lord hath spoken; I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.

When his grandson, Samuel Ley Thorne, preached a funeral sermon for O'Bryan in 1868 he stated, "He was ... plain in speech."⁴ We might prefer to say, he did not pull his punches.

The ABC *Minutes* were printed at Launceston by 'Eyre, Printer', probably the T.Eyre of Church Street, who had printed the *Minutes* until 1823, when Samuel Thorne at Stoke Damerel, in modern Plymouth, took over. Samuel printed the 'official' 1829 *Minutes*. He was James Thorne's brother, and from 1825 the husband of William O'Bryan's daughter Mary. In 1825 Thorne reprinted earlier *Minutes*, and the 1819 and 1820 *Minutes* in the set purchased are 1825 Thorne reprints.

The ABC *Minutes* is headed ...

THE MINUTES OF CONFERENCE,

HELD AT LISKEARD

Begun on Monday 27th, and ended Thursday 30th of July, 1829.

They follow the usual Question & Answer form initiated by John Wesley and replicated in previous Bible Christian *Minutes*, and open ...

Question 1st.- *Why was the CONFERENCE adjourned to Liskeard?*

ANSWER.- To save time and preserve peace.

Q.2nd.- *In what respect?*

A.- JAMES THORNE, in a Pamphlet, named "*A Vindication of the acting members of the Financial Committee,*" published various falsehoods, on WILLIAM O'BRYAN. ...

The Financial Committee was the executive Committee of the denomination, established in 1827.⁵ It was one of the vehicles by which the preachers sought to curb what they saw as O'Bryan's 'excesses'.

The response to the second question begins as above on page three, and continues to page six. It provides an insight into the dispute from O'Bryan's side. He seeks to address the point made in *A Vindication* concerning the accounting for £20, given 'for the cause' according to *A Vindication*. O'Bryan argues that James Thorne was making false accusations. He claims that he showed that the sum was received on behalf of Innis Chapel - which is a little disingenuous, as he owned Innis Chapel privately; it stood on land from his own family. Throughout the answer to the second question O'Bryan is arguing about money, disputing the sums of money that - as far as he saw things - were at the core of the disagreement. Questions of authority and leadership and the

⁴ Thorne S.L. (1878), *William O'Bryan - Founder of the Bible Christians*, Bradford (Yorks), p126.

⁵ Shaw T. (1965), *The Bible Christians 1815-1907*, London: Epworth, p46

rule of Conference or William O'Bryan are completely ignored. These were the themes motivating the dispute as advanced by the Thorne party - and history is always written by the victors.

He is also making very direct accusations against his former friend James Thorne, calling him "this man, If I may call him a man," and adding In a footnote ...

Our Lord counts some men only as animals, and not men, who by mean shifting and base conduct, had unman'd themselves ...

...referring to Matthew 23:33 and Luke 13:32. There was clearly much ill will, O'Bryan even directly accusing Thorne of making 'a serpentine excuse for a known falsehood'.

A vote was forced on James Thorne. That is interesting: why on James Thorne? Clearly (in the 1829 ABC *Minutes* record) O'Bryan felt that Thorne was in the wrong, but the general tenor of subsequent Bible Christian reporting of the event⁶ suggests that O'Bryan was the one being examined. However ...

... when it was put to the vote - "Is James Thorne guilty or not;" and those that held him not guilty were to hold up their hands, when (astonishing to tell) the greater number held up their hands. *Not guilty* !! Some of us present were surprised at such glaring partiality and bareface [sic] decision.

At this O'Bryan called his adjournment, and left.

Two more pages of accusations against Thorne are entered under question four, referring to O'Bryan's own pamphlet *Reply and Statement of Facts*⁷ - while question three addressed its answers to judgements on the previous year's *Minutes*. Here in a signed statement from "The Conference of Preachers in connexion with Wm O'Bryan" we find the five names who seem to have made up that Conference: Wm O'Bryan, Richard Mollon, James Arthur, William Rodd, John Parkyn.

Questions five and six address the issue of how to make decisions - and the answer was "Either by unanimity or lot;" majority voting - such as had favoured James Thorne at Lake - was excluded. O'Bryan used the lot often; was this common in the early nineteenth century? Four reasons are presented for relying on it, including ...

Fourth.- Church history informs us of majorities voting for error and against truth. The *Synod of Dort*, by majority voted that *you*, instead of *thou*, should be used in prayer to the Deity; which is contrary to the plain text of scripture.

Here surely the Arminian bias of O'Bryan against Calvinism in all its aspects is heard speaking, rather than the voice of reason!

Preachers and their stations is the subject of questions seven to eleven,

⁶ Thorne J. et.al. (1865), *A Jubilee Memorial of Incidents in the Rise and Progress of the Bible Christian Connexion*, London: Bible Christian Book Room; Bourne F.W. (1905), *The Bible Christians, their Origin and History*, London: Bible Christian Book Room - which largely replicates Thorne (1865).

⁷ No copy seems to exist.

and here we have much new information. Richard Uglow had died; a brief obituary note is entered; the 1829 Bible Christian *Minutes* also carried an obituary. Both parties could lay claim to the dead saints, it would seem. The reply to, "Who have left us?" is fascinating:

We cannot at present determine, as all were not at Lake, when I adjourned the Conference here. But as few of those who were there are come here, it seems those have left us, having departed from the rules of our original system. As to those who were out in the circuits, their decisions remain to be known.

The assumption is that the rump of O'Bryan loyalists was the true heritage. In spite of the numbers as they became apparent over the next year, what began in 1815 continued in O'Bryan's eyes through the meeting at Liskeard in 1829, not that at Shebbear.

Four preachers are considered for "received into full connexion". R. Mollon merits no further comment in the ABC *Minutes*. He had begun with the Bible Christians at Kilkhampton in 1821, but is not stationed in 1823. Readmitted on trial in 1826 he was stationed at Kilkhampton again. He is lost from the Bible Christian *Minutes* from 1829. Roger Thorne lists him.⁸ R.Parkyn, Senr. had desisted in 1821 ...

But now feeling it his duty, to give himself up wholly to the work, we readily give him the right hand of fellowship, and on account of his past labours think him worthy of being received into full connexion.

Neither John Nance Keivill nor James Langdon was present; thus their reception was delayed. James Langdon is not a name otherwise known, and he is not listed by Roger Thorne.⁹ John Nance Keivill is likewise unknown.¹⁰

Three preachers are admitted on trial. Two - Joseph Parkyn and William Parkyn - are not in the Bible Christian *Minutes*. The latter however is known from Roger Thorne's researches.¹¹ The third, William Patterson, was, with John Parkyn junior, stationed in the ABC *Minutes* in the Northumberland Mission.¹² What is slightly curious is that both also appear in the 1829 Bible Christians *Minutes*, stationed in the Northumberland Mission. Yet they were O'Bryan loyalists, for they abandoned Northumberland and came down to the south west.¹³ No doubt the delays in communicating with the north east meant that the

⁸ Op.cit. p134.

⁹ *idem*. A John Langdon continued with the James Thorne-led majority.

¹⁰ Beckerlegge O.A. (1968), *United Methodist Ministers and their Circuits*, London: Epworth, p167, lists a James Nancekevill at Mevagissey in 1836 (the year after the return of the Arminian Bible Christians to the main body) and at Breage in 1837, before disappearing .

¹¹ Op.cit. p134.

¹² See Short C.C. (1995) *Durham Colliers and West Country Methodists*, Kidderminster: Short, pp11-16, 175.

¹³ *idem* and Shaw (1965) pp46-7.

Bible Christian *Minutes* had to be printed before the loyalties were known. The Northumberland Mission remains the only loss to the Bible Christians caused by the separation.

In question eleven we come to *How are the preachers stationed ?* The stations listed are ...

Liskeard	William O'Bryan; and to visit the connexion as formerly. James Arthur, for a while; and when prepared, he is to go a Missionary to Pennsylvania.
Luxilian [sic]	Joseph Parkyn, and another.
Truro	One to be sent.
Falmouth	One to be sent.
Breage	James Langdon, and another.
Penzance	One to be sent.
St.Columb	One to be sent.
Egloshayle	One to be sent.
Kilkhampston	R.Mollon and W.Rodd
Langtree	J.Nance Keivill
Brentor	William Parkyn
Exeter	J.Parkyn
London	One to be sent.
Isle of Wight	One to be sent.
Jersey	One to be sent.
Northumberland	J.Parkyn, jun. and W.Patterson

The list includes no females. Yet a note follows it: "Females to travel occasionally."

There are seventeen stations; the 1828 Bible Christian *Minutes* listed thirty-five. These are the circuits O'Bryan understood to be loyal to him. How true this was is open to question. The list includes Penzance, and there is no evidence for any impact of the separation on the Penzance Circuit.¹⁴ Whether any Arminian Bible Christian preacher was subsequently appointed to Northumberland after Parkyn and Patterson left is unknown, but unlikely. Yet the circuit for which Roger Thorne identified Plans and Class Tickets¹⁵ - the Tiverton and Kingsbrompton Circuits [sic; plural] and then the Tiverton and Chard Missions - is not included. It existed at least from August 1831 to December 1834, and the implication of the Class Ticket lettering is that the circuit had begun by September 1829. Things were obviously still very ill defined at the Liskeard meeting in July.

¹⁴The membership in the circuit does fall from 1829 to 1835, but then, after the year reunion was achieved an even larger fall occurred (1835-6). In Breage, where there is clear evidence for Arminian Bible Christians (Short C.C. (2005), 'Early Bible Christians in the Lizard-Breage area', *The Journal of the Cornish Methodist Historical Association*, Vol.10 N^o3, pp119-126) a large fall over 1829-30 is balanced by a large rise 1835-6.

¹⁵Op.cit. pp127-9, 132-3.

The next five questions address the matter of the Preachers' Fund, of which O'Bryan was Treasurer. The substance of them is that £117 had been subscribed to the Fund, but in 1826 it was lent to the book-room, and, according to the *Minutes*, "two brethren belonging to the committee have borrowed it of the treasurer on interest". But now, as 'several of the preachers are separate from us' the Fund should be dissolved, each subscriber receiving back what he had subscribed, as soon as those who have borrowed it pay it back. This is typical of the convoluted financial affairs of the infant Connexion, and perhaps the preachers' inexperience in handling and accounting for such large sums. There were questions of financial accountability and transparent - or otherwise - dealings between O'Bryan and the preachers. And as O'Bryan himself sought to hold the reins of the Connexion close to his chest - another ground of dissent - he was therefore culpable of apparent mismanagement.

Acrimony creeps in again as the *Minutes* move on to 'the Book business'.

Some time ago, Wm O'Bryan in brotherly confidence permitted James Thorne, William Mason, Harry Major, William Courtice, William Reed, Edward Hockin, and Samuel Thorne, to manage the business for the connexion of people in church fellowship with him. He has lately called on them to give an account of their *stewardship*, but they have refused him an investigation of the business.

O'Bryan reveals his clear understanding that he is absolutely in charge, that it was at his permission and delegation that the book committee operated, and that they are responsible to him to give account. This lies at the heart of the dispute. Was the business of the infant denomination the responsibility of O'Bryan himself, or of the Conference?

The discussion of the Book business goes on. Question 18 asks whether O'Bryan had not required a bond of these people. The answer is that he had not, for, 'he so confidently relied on their word and honesty as professing Christians and preachers of the gospel of truth'. Yet O'Bryan was neither the first, nor the last, to be let down by the fallibility of flawed humanity - if indeed he was: in 1829 opinions varied. He claims to have advanced £256 to the printing business, £116 of it having been "of the preachers' fund money". There's that issue again. The book accounts have not been "read over in the conference" (Q&A 20), but it is "high time, to have a fair and impartial investigation". Thus O'Bryan, noting that William Mason, James and Samuel Thorne and William Courtice "in the circular dated 17th January 1829, page 9th, promise to meet Wm. O'Bryan" appoints Thursday 26 November to meet Samuel Thorne at O'Bryan's house in Liskeard. Samuel Thorne had been Book Steward since 1827 as well as being the Connexion's printer.

Here again we have the autocrat, setting, determining, calling. To William O'Bryan all the affairs of the Connexion in fellowship with him,

and the activities of its preachers, were his to command. But now that the separation had occurred, to whom was Samuel Thorne responsible? There must be more than half a suspicion that O'Bryan was right, as ungraciously as he expressed his righteousness!

The final blow in the Book business matter is expressed in the 22nd Question:

Have [sic] any one a right to sell books published by William O'Bryan? Certain not, without his consent; if they do they are liable to a prosecution.

O'Bryan seems to mean books of which he was the author/compiler - but what books might those be? The 1824 hymn book, certainly; agreement had to be reached on that at the 1835 reconciliation, although James Thorne seems to have had some part in its compilation¹⁶ and his name was to be found in the volume as its publisher. The 1818 'Rules' seems likely - and did O'Bryan include the *Minutes* from 1819?

The far from veiled threat in question 22 takes us back to question 19 which intrudes into the Book business. Its curiousness merits repeating in full:

Q.19th.- *What is meant by the couple of curses which James Thorne in his pamphlet says, Wm. O'Bryan left behind him?*

A.- being grieved to the heart by their ill treatment; he wrote down the following passages of scripture, and laid on the table for their warning. Deuteronomy xxvii.16. "*Cursed be he that setteth light by father or mother.*" Ezekiel xxii.7. "*In thee have they set light by father and mother.*" And another curse may be justly added, as expressed by Jeremiah, (see xvii. and 5.) "*Thus saith the Lord, cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.*"

The first two texts mean dishonouring, or treating with contempt father or mother: O'Bryan is wanting to illustrate his feelings about their treatment of him who is their spiritual 'father-in-God'. The third is a little more opaque. Perhaps it harks back to the matter of majority voting - the ways of man rather than God. But O'Bryan clearly does not regret what he wrote.

The matter of chapels arises in the penultimate question (# 23) - and here O'Bryan and his loyal rump found themselves in difficulty. Few chapels had been established on adequate deeds, and in particular few had been confirmed with the proposed model deed of 1825, not least because the preachers objected to their settlement by that deed on O'Bryan himself. Yet in the ABC *Minutes* he asserts that all chapels "so enrolled belong to, and are for the use of the people and preachers in connexion with William O'Bryan, and no other preachers have any legal right to preach therein". That there were in fact few of them was an

¹⁶ Bourne (1905) p122-3.

inherent weakness of the O'Bryan loyalists, although in Breage in west Cornwall it does seem that the loyalists retained use of the chapel.¹⁷ This might though have been through sheer weight of numbers: the O'Bryan loyalists outnumbered the Thorne-party 7 to 1!

Contention runs through the ABC *Minutes*. But the final question at least refers to the spiritual practices of a day of fasting and prayer and a day of thanksgiving.

On the 15th page of the ABC *Minutes* appears the address ...

To those whom the Lord hath kept united together, and who have not been drawn aside to the delusions of the enemy; but who for a longer or shorter time have borne the name of Arminian Bible Christians.

O'Bryan did not pull his punches! There follows, first a justification of the name: why 'Arminian' was needed (as many Christians are truly Bible-based) and thus, by implication, that the James Thorne party are wrong. Then O'Bryan seeks to justify himself:

Whose ox, or whose ass have I taken? Whom have I defrauded? I have laid no tax or burden on any of you. ... How then could you possibly believe those, who would fain persuade you that I had taken too much from you?

Finance, finance, always finance; never any admission from O'Bryan of any issue of governance.

Though those with whom you intrusted [sic] your money have withheld all my quarterly and connexion expenses for the last quarter, and other monies before, amounting to between thirty and forty pounds in all, in the last year; yet I am not discouraged; nor do I think you will let it lie as a matter of indifference whether I am reimbursed or not.

Is that blackmail? The tiny band of his loyalists had a financial burden before they started. James Thorne, of course, comes in for some abuse, first for reporting that O'Bryan had complained 'of ingratitude from the connexion'.

... he never heard me charge them with ingratitude; but as to himself, I need not explain, or relate the many acts of ingratitude, which I have received in private, from him; he has given proof public enough, to convince all discerning persons on that head; and that my reproofs and warnings were not unfounded.

Dear Friends, consider how God in all ages hath punished rebellion against himself, and the order of his providence, and how he hath rewarded fidelity, and the keeping of faith, - or faithfulness. Iniquity is sure to meet its due reward, sooner or later.

Finally O'Bryan turns to spiritual matters, advising '... avoid bitterness of spirit, and resentment against those who may oppose us ...' - not, we might feel, that he has set a good example - and somewhat spoiling the effect by adding 'knowing that God is the avenger of his people's wrongs.' Then soon after, we're at the benediction, and all is ended.

¹⁷Short (2005) p124.

Two major questions follow from the re-emergence of this 1829 ABC *Minutes of Conference*: Were there any more in other years? ... and ... Whose were this set? The former question can only yield the answer, Who knows? - another serendipitous discovery might be made.

The latter question needs consideration in the light of the facts that the set was on sale in New Jersey, and they end in 1829. The American bookseller was asked for provenance, but offered none. What remains is speculation. The end-date might suggest an emigration soon after 1829. But how many Arminian Bible Christians went to the United States of America? Although there was a considerable migration stream from Cornwall, even in the 1830s, conversely the ABC community was very small. We know of one ABC emigrant for sure: William O'Bryan himself, who went in 1831. Yet it is unlikely that O'Bryan would have had to obtain 1825 reprints of the earlier *Minutes*; he should be excluded. James Arthur, due to go to Pennsylvania, might be a better guess. He first appears in the *Minutes* in 1824, and to collect a full set of *Minutes* he might have needed to get the 1825 reprints. Yet the suggestion is only a guess; the *Minutes* could well have belonged to someone otherwise unknown to us.

COLIN C. SHORT

(The Rev Colin Short is a minister in the Mounts Bay Circuit)

AN UNPUBLISHED PAWSON LETTER

This letter is held by the Queens College in the University of Melbourne. It belongs to the Sugden collection there. It is kept in a small black box, known as the Eggleston Box after an early Methodist minister in Australia, the Rev John Eggleston (entered the ministry 1834). He appears to have made a collection of early Methodist materials, some of them relating to Newark, Notts, where he and his family originated. I have tried partially to modernise it for better reading. Brackets thus () indicate words or letters missed out by Pawson. Brackets thus [] show letters put in by him which I think are best omitted. A small part of the letter is torn. I would like to express my thanks to Ms Louise Elliott, Librarian for the Sugden Collection.

John Pawson was a early Travelling Preacher, born in Thorner near Leeds in 1737, who began to travel in 1762 and died in 1804. He was President in 1793 and 1801 and his correspondence, which opens a light into Wesley's later years and the first 13 years of Methodism after Wesley's death, is otherwise published in a collection, edited by Jack Bowmer and John Vickers by WMHS Publications in 1994. Only one of those letters is earlier than this one.

The outside of the letter reads:

"Bishopsgate Street near the
Gates in
Norwich
Norfolk(.)"

There is a postmark which says "Congleton(.)"

Inside the letter reads;

"Congleton Oct(obe)r. 18th: 1766

My dear S(iste)r.

Although I never received an answer to my last Letter which I wrote to you, yet I take this opportunity to write(.) as I am perswaded it will be agreeable to you. Since I wrote my last(.) the Lord hath been very gracious. (I) have enjoy'd in the general a good degree of health and Strength and my Soul hath also been ke[el]pt by the power of my God from the hand of my Enemyes, I still find that Jesus is the only name given under Heaven in which my Soul can find true peace and valid satisfaction. He is the joy of my heart, the

¹ Bishopsgate is a street in Norwich near the Cathedral, going west east through the wall of the City (hence "near the Gates") towards the Bishop Bridge over the River Wensum. Pawson's correspondent was a housewife with a husband who travelled and a mother who was also a Methodist who had been to Leeds for the Conference held there in August 1766.

support of my Soul and will I trust be my eternal portion. I find his Strength is made perfect in my weakness, so that the Enemyes of my Soul (are) as (nothing.) I find that I (*torn*) all fight under his banner, and he will gird me with (*strength*) unto the battle. I am now removed into a new Round². (O) what abundant reason I have to praise the Lord for (the good) Partners he hath given me this year also, I believe th(ey are) very lively Preachers and also Pious holy Men, you d(o not) know any of them but Mr. Greenwood, who I believe is ve(ry)(*torn*).³ I hope we shall have a blessed work this year, I hope (that the) people will assist us with their prayers, to the Lord (God) of Sion and I trust the Lord will make bare his ho(ly arm,) so that Signs and Wonders shall be done in the Nam(e of the) Lord Jesus. O that he would now arrive and cause the (gates) of Satan (')s Kingdom to tremble. He hath all powe(r in his) hand both in Heaven and in Earth, when he shall a(lways) maintain his own cause (,) his Enemyes shall fly (from him). I was in hopes to have received many Letters by the Preachers from Norwich at the Conference, but I was quite dis(a)ppointed, but I hope I shall hear good News from you this Year. I hope Tomey Hansons comeing among you will be a blessing to the Society⁴ and I am well satisfy'd that you will like Bro(the)r Roods (.) he is a good Man I know, and I hope will behave as such among you⁵. I hope my dear sister you are still seeking for all that Mind which was in Christ, that you being Holy in heart and Life and in all manner of Conversation may be abundently happy in your own soul, amd may be [be] an ornament to the gosple(.),] (It is an unspeakable blessing to find our Souls thirsting and panting for the enjoyment of all that grace which the Lord hath promis'd in his holy word to bestow upon us, for the desires we feel will lead us often to the Throne of Grace that we

² Pawson was in 1766 in the Lancashire Circuit based on Manchester. Congleton was in the Circuit (*Minutes* 1766). He and Bumstead (see note 6 below) were the Travelling Preachers in Norwich 1764-5, though according to Pawson he had spent part of the time based in Colchester (*Early Methodist Preachers* iv 28-31).

³ According to the *Minutes* the other three Preachers were Peter Jaco, the Penzance born Assistant, Paul Greenwood, referred to here and John Allen. Paul Greenwood is mentioned because Pawson knew his correspondent knew him. Greenwood having been the Assistant for Norwich for the year 1760-1. Greenwood, who entered the ministry in 1746, died later that Connexional year in March 1767.

⁴ Thomas Hanson was the Assistant for Norwich that year. He was born at Horbury, West Yorkshire, in 1733, had entered the ministry in 1760, and was to die in 1804.

⁵ Benjamin Rhodes (only here spelt Roods) was chiefly known for his poetry, still sung by Methodism in the early 21st Century; "My heart and voice I raise, to spread Messiah's praise...." Born in 1743 at Mexborough, he entered in 1766, so this was his first appointment. He was the second preacher in Norwich that year. He died in 1815.

may make our request know(n) to God, who hath bound himself by his faithful[!] promise to grant us the request of our lips, there are three things which I would rec(c)om(m) to your v[e]arious consideration; first consider what great things God hath done for you(,) what unspeakable blessings he hath been graciously pleased to bestow upon you, and then I think you will be moved to praise Him with joyful[!] lips. Secondly(,) think of your own unworthiness to receive any (of) the least of these things at his hands and the little improvement you have made of them and then you will find you have sufficient cause to humble (yo)urself as in the dust before him. And thirdly(,) consider your manifold wants and neces(s)ity together with (the w)illingness of God to supply them all out of the Riches of his fullness, and then I think you will never (neglect) prayer as long as you live. Now I verraly believe if you duly emp(loy) these three things you will find them very profitable to your Soul. O my dear Sister be diligent that you may be found of him in peace without spot and blameless(.) I saw your Mother at the Conference. She was well at that time. I believe Br(other). Bumsted is well, I hear his Wife is come to him, so that he is now likely to stay in the North some time.⁶ I hope by this time your dear Husband is safely arrived, if he is(,) give my kind love to him and your dear Mother, may Jesus abundently bless her, give my love to Br(others). Hanson and Roods, tell Br(other). Roods I should be glad of a line from him, Norwich people are still dear to me(.) I long to hear of their prosperity(.) Pray give my kind love to Mrs Woodrow ('s) Family and to all my dear Friends I name, and write to me immediat(e)ly direct to me at Mr. Wesley ('s) Preaching House in Manchester(.) Lancashire(.) So Farewell for the present, I am your Affe(c)tionate Bro(the)r in Christ
 J. Pawson
 the Lord Jesus be with your Spirit(.)”

JOHN LENTON

⁶ Daniel Bumstead, a former Dissenter born in Colchester 1742, entered the ministry in 1762, and was in 1766 the third Travelling Preacher(of four) in the Birstall circuit, so in the North like Pawson. He had served in Norwich in 1764. He died in 1797. His wife, mentioned here, née Sarah Walleth, died in childbirth in 1773. Her delay in joining her husband may well have been because she had problems with expecting a child in the late summer of 1766. They had been in Sussex in 1765-6, so it would have been a lengthy journey.

LOCAL HISTORIES

Lyneal [nr Wem, Salop] Methodist Church 1827-2006 (47pp A4) by P & T Edwards. £5.00 post free from Mrs P Edwards, I Eckford Park, Wem, Shrewsbury, SY4 5HL. Cheques payable to P Edwards

Wesley's People-the Methodist Heritage of Fakenham (31pp) by Jim Baldwin. 2008. Copies £5.50 post free from the author at 11 Smiths Lane, Fakenham, Norfolk, NR21 8LQ

A Short History of the Falmouth Methodist Circuit 1817-2008 (12pp) by Alan Goodchild. Copies 50p plus postage from the author at 23 Penzance Road, Falmouth. TR11 4ED

The Mystery of Methodism in Honiton (170pp) by Patricia Batstone. 2008. Copies £5.95 post free from A.Bennett, 16 Cypress Close, Honiton, Devon, EX14 2YN

A Short History of Zion Methodist Church, Dinting [Glossop, Derbyshire] (93pp) by Marian Sidebottom. 2007. Copies £9.50 post free from the author at 61 North Road, Glossop, High Peak. SK13.

A Short History of Ellesmere Methodist Church 1840 -2008 (11 pp). Copies £3.00 post free from Mrs D.Davies, 'Broad Oaks', Elson Road, Ellesmere, Cheshire, SY12 9EU

A Church with a Mission-the history of Dorset Gardens Methodist Church, Brighton and the Dome Mission by M.R.Hickman. 2008. Copies, £10.00 post free from Angela Millanzi, Dorset Gardens church, Dorset Gardens, Brighton BN2 1RL. Cheques payable to Brighton & Hove Methodist Circuit.

Memories of Thorp[Bradford] Methodist Church, formerly Idle Wesleyan Chapel 1810-2008 (72pp) ed. Audrey Hall. Copies from Mrs P.M.Popple, 2 Ivy Place, Bradford, BD2 2BA

Two Centuries and More: Memories of Low Moor Methodist Churches [Bradford] recalled in 2009. (68pp). compiled by Jeff & Mary Twentyman. Copies, £4.00 post free from the compilers 13 St Abbs Fold, Bradford, West Yorkshire, BD6 1EC

Late Victorians: the Waddy Family in Shetland 1890-1893 by Rev H.R.Bowes. (24pp). 2007. Copies, £1.20p post free from the auther at 6 Greenspring Ave., Birdwell, Barnsley, S. Yorks. S70 SRW

BOOK REVIEWS

A Bibliographic Survey of the Published Works of the Eighteenth-Century Wesleys (Samuel the Elder, Samuel the Younger, Mehetabel, John, and Charles) compiled by Samuel Rogal. (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2008. Pp. 370. £74.95/ \$119.95. ISBN 978-0-7734-5219-0.)

Samuel Rogal has few equals when it comes to the number of books and articles on English Methodism he has written over the past three decades. He is perhaps best known for his *Biographical Dictionary of 18th Century Methodism* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997-99), a compilation that received praise for its extensive coverage and criticism for its numerous inaccuracies and regal price (about £400/\$800 for the set of ten volumes). As prolific as ever in retirement, Rogal continues to publish works on Methodism that exhibit many of the strengths and weaknesses of his previous efforts.

In this *Bibliographic Survey*, Rogal states that his main objective is to help 'students and scholars to observe the diverse literary productivity of a portion of an intellectually diverse eighteenth-century English family' (p. 7). Yet there is no disguising the fact that the result of his labour is primarily just another bibliography of the works of John Wesley. Over seven hundred entries are devoted to John Wesley's *oeuvre* while fewer than two hundred are allocated to the four other family members mentioned in the title. Mehetabel Wesley receives the least space, and the inconsistent and rather arbitrary handling of the nine entries devoted to her (nos. 111-119) curiously mirror the treatment she received in life. In compiling this work, Rogal does not appear to have made much use of the online English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC) or of Frank Baker's *Union Catalog of the Publications of John and Charles Wesley* (2nd ed.; Stone Mountain, Georgia, 1991). The reference numbers in both compilations are becoming standard features in the bibliographic field, and the ESTC now appears to be citing Baker's reference numbers on a systematic basis. For his part, Rogal expresses ambivalence about online information and the 'impatient fingers' that undertake 'voyage[s] through the electronic waters of the internet' with uncertain results (p.8). He makes no mention of impatient fingers that grasp dusty old tomes with similarly uncertain outcomes.

A glance at the John Wesley entries from 1778 to 1791 will give a some sense of what Rogal has accomplished. Fewer than half of the of the ninety-four entries for that period are devoted to new works wholly written by Wesley, the equivalent of an average of about three entries per year. The majority of the 'John Wesley' entries are devoted to the *Arminian Magazine*, the Conference minutes, hymns (most of which were written by Charles Wesley or by the two brothers together), and to post-1791 editions of works originally published during this time period. Rogal states that he has included the 'principal editions and printings beyond the initial imprint'

(p.8), but he has apparently decided that the vast majority of the ‘principal’ editions had appeared by 1800 and has thus included only a tiny sampling from the nineteenth century and after. Even when dealing with the hundreds of Wesley editions published in the eighteenth century, Rogal proceeds in a rather arbitrary fashion. For example, he does not explain why no. 309, *Instructions for Children* (London, 1745), is represented in the bibliography by six additional editions dating from 1745 to 1787 (nos. 310-15) but not by any of the other six editions dating from 1749 to 1800 found in the ESTC or, for that matter, by any editions published after 1800. Although the title specifies ‘published works,’ some entries are devoted to manuscript writings. Locations are then provided for some of the manuscripts but not for others. Here and throughout, it appears that Rogal’s main principle of selection and annotation has been old-fashioned serendipity, an approach not held in high regard by most bibliographers.

Rogal tries to make the compilation appear to be something other than an exercise in scholarly recycling by furnishing basic information on many of the printers and publishers of the works he lists. In fact, finding ‘the dimensions of the publication process in eighteenth-century England’ (pp. 7-8) becomes a secondary objective of this work. Rogal ultimately provides about as much information on this subject as on the textual contents of the various Wesley works themselves. Yet most of the material on the book trades has a musty air about it. Although Rogal only intermittently gives the sources for his potted biographical sketches, most of the relevant sources can be found in his brief volume, *John Wesley’s Book Stock and the Arminian Catalogue of 1798* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2006), pp. 39-103 (‘Printers and Booksellers’). Available for about £65/\$100, this appears to be the work from which a great deal of book trade information has been obtained for the volume under review. It becomes clear from the earlier work that Rogal continues to rely heavily on the old *Dictionary of National Biography* and the findings of Henry Plomer and others published in the first half of the twentieth century. The *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004) is the new standard biographical source, of course, and in recent decades numerous specialized publications have added considerably to our knowledge of the eighteenth-century book trades. Rogal, for instance, could find no information on the Chester printer John Harvie (p.237), but the researches of Derek Nuttall published during the last third of the twentieth century furnished basic information on Harvie’s career. Perhaps it would have helped if Rogal had tried to analyse the mountain of facts he has compiled in order to give a coherent picture of ‘publication process.’ Instead, he remains content with recycling nuggets of old book trade information in conjunction with old Wesleyana.

Even in such a costly publication, there are a number of factual errors and copy-editing problems. At one point, Rogal asserts that the brothers Nathaniel and Francis Gilbert ‘spent the next fourteen years (1760-1774) as Methodist itinerant preachers throughout the West Indies’ (p.237 n.398), a statement that is incorrect because Francis spent most of those years in

England, Nathaniel was never an itinerant, and neither man is known to have proselytized anywhere in the West Indies outside of Antigua. *A Short Account of Mary Langson* (no. 647) was printed in 1770, not 1769, and it is therefore presumably the same as the 1770 edition listed as no. 648. Likewise, the same books are probably being referred to by nos. 591-592 since the two entries repeat each other word-for-word. The reader told the following about no. 558: 'Initially bound with no. 558.' In one long stretch (pp. 12-48), the top of every page gives the wrong date of birth for Samuel Wesley the Elder. No. 765 is colourfully described as a broadsheet 'Singed at the end of the text, "John Wesley."'

In the end, the author and publisher of this *Bibliographic Survey* provide a useful illustration of the uneasy relationship between scholarship and Mammon. As they turn their backs on one in order to bow deeply to the other, author and publisher conjure up the kind of comic scene often found in eighteenth-century satiric prints. Yet Hogarthian satire, we should recall, was intended to promote greater introspection and awareness of the need for reformation. There is no evidence that serious reflections of this kind played any role in the decision to publish this volume.

ROBERT GLEN

Selina, Countess of Huntingdon by Alan Harding. (Epworth. 2007.xiii,220pp.£12.99.ISBN 978.0.7162.0611.8)

Do Methodists still need reminding that the Evangelical Revival was much more than the Wesleys and their followers? The 'Calvinists of the heart' were vitally important and, of them, Selina Hastings (1707-1791) was a significant, if somewhat eccentric, 'volatile and unpredictable' leader. In the last few years we have had Edwin Welch's *Spiritual Pilgrim* (1995), using all the primary sources; then B.S.Schlenther's *Queen of the Methodists* (1997) a very important critical study; and Faith Cook: *Selina Countess of Huntingdon* (2001), a much more sympathetic biography. Then came Alan Hastings' *The Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion* (2003), focussing on the operation of the Connexion rather than its founder, showing how one revivalist group worked. Now from the same author, an attractive biography aimed at the general reader as well as scholars.

He begins with a survey of religion in England in the early eighteenth century. The European and transatlantic revival was under way. In England there was the SPG, the SPCK, with religious societies and philanthropy, as well as the problem of non-residence in parishes. There were surely more than 15,000 Dissenters in 1740(p2)---150,000 perhaps?

Selina Shirley was born the daughter of the second Earl Ferrers in 1707. The Shirleys were a rather dysfunctional family. Selina, rather sexy, dare one say, in her younger days, married Theophilus Hastings 9th Earl of Huntingdon, in 1728. Tragically, he died in 1746. All her children, save for

Elizabeth, from whom she was estranged, predeceased her. Religious conversion came in 1739. By 1744 she was firmly in the neo-Calvinist camp with George Whitefield as her hero. She kept a relationship with Charles Wesley and nursed his wife Sally when she had smallpox in 1753. With John Wesley it was a different story--could there be a 'Pope John' and a 'Pope Joan'? as John Berridge put it. He himself complained of Selina's autocracy: 'You threaten me, Madam, like a Pope not like a Mother in Israel... and my instructions you know must come from the Lamb, not from the Lamb's wife.' Here lay the difficulty--Selina used her aristocracy and her femininity and expected subservience.

As an aristocrat she could appoint 'chaplains' and acquire chapels linked with places of residence. Some were in growing watering places like Brighton (1761) and spa towns like Bath., but her impact on fellow aristocrats was not great. Few were like Lord Dartmouth who 'wore a coronet and *prayed*' as Cowper has it. Many of her supporters came from the mercantile and artisan classes. In the 1750s she began to gather a coterie of clergy around her--such as William Romaine, James Hervey, Henry Venn and Thomas Haweis. When in 1768 six students were expelled as 'Methodists' from St Edmund Hall, Oxford., the Countess contemplated a college and in August 1768 it was opened by George Whitefield at Trevecka in Wales with the goodwill of Howell Harris. Usually called 'Trevecca', the college was at first meant to train 'Arminians of the heart' as well as Calvinists, with John Fletcher as President and Joseph Benson as a tutor. After a bitter conflict with Wesley over the 1770 *Minutes* Benson was dismissed and Fletcher resigned. In 1791 the college moved to Cheshunt, finally becoming Cheshunt College Cambridge, where in the 1950s a Methodist lay Vice-President, Victor Murray was Principal! In the early days only twenty students became Anglican clergy.

Harding describes well the style of what was becoming a connexion. It could be described as 'high chapel' with the use of the liturgy, robed clergy and hymns--Selina produced a hymnbook from which she later omitted Charles Wesley. Christian perfection was not to be sung! The business of private chapels in the end proved fatal. In Clerkenwell she bought a large amusement house which became Spa Fields chapel. The parish priest, Sellon, opposed what he felt was a rival church plant. The chapel had to be registered under the Toleration Act. Presbyterian ordinations took place in 1783--the Countess's Connexion was now independent of the Church of England. At the death of Selina, the Connexion had 64 chapels, 35 ministers and 7000 members--the Wesleyans had 76,000 members at that time.

Harding ends his book by saying that Selina had made herself an 'odddity'. But she was after all the only aristocratic lady--save for Lady Glenorchy--to found a denomination. John Henry Newman said of her 'She devoted herself, her means, her time, her thoughts to the cause of Christ.'

I commend Alan Harding's book as an engaging read and a fine piece of scholarship.

JOHN MUNSEY TURNER

The Bousfield diaries. A middle-class family in late Victorian Bedford, edited by Richard Smart. (Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, 2007 pp.xxxii + 214, £25. ISBN 978 0 85155 072 5)

Charlotte Bousfield was the wife of the senior engineer at the world famous Britannia Iron Works and this volume presents a selection from her diaries for the years 1878 to 1896. Bedfordshire is one of the forgotten strongholds of nineteenth-century Methodism, with levels of attendance at worship in 1851 higher than any county except Cornwall, and the Bousfields were active Wesleyans. Indeed, taking their cue from her husband's employers, James and Frederick Howard, who built and ruled over St Mary's Wesleyan chapel next to the Iron Works, the Bousfields sponsored the erection of an appropriately more modest chapel, Southend, next to their own home in 1873. The diaries contain some wonderful insights into late Victorian chapel life including a prolonged, bitter and, with hindsight, hilarious power struggle for domination of the circuit ladies' sewing meeting that would have made Bismarck doff his pickelhaube in respect. Unfortunately, however, 'religious reflections and accounts of sermons' were among the classes of material which the editor chose to exclude from the volume, presumably because they seemed of little historical interest. They may well be, and their formulaic nature may well witness to the superficiality of late Victorian religious thought and its irrelevance to the lives people led; it may not. Without the evidence we are none the wiser.

Even allowing for those omissions, the diaries make an interesting contrast with those of two Bedford Wesleyan women from the previous generation, Mary Cooper and Susanna Row, published in 1855 and around 1867 respectively. Gone is the exclusive focus on the interior world of the spirit and the almost obsessive monitoring of mood, fostered one presumes by the weekly class-meeting. Charlotte lived in a bigger world with broader horizons, taking a keen interest in political, economic and cultural events, and the doings of her family, as well religious matters. She was a Poor Law guardian, a temperance lecturer and travelled regularly around the country visiting her far-flung family. Her children, of course, lived in a bigger world still and the diaries trace the disengagement of four out of five of her children from the chapel world which meant so much to her but which seemed so restrictive and stifling to them. In this domestic saga one of the roots of Methodism's decline, already well underway by this point, is watermarked in the pages.

Another volume about the Bousfields, *Glad for God. A history of the Bousfields of Newark and Bedford to 1903* by John Hamilton, was published in 2003.

JONATHAN RODELL

Dissent and the Gothic Revival: papers from a study day at the Union Chapel, Islington, Edited by Bridget Cherry (The Chapels Society occasional paper 3, London, 2007) pp.105(2) p/b £15.00 ISBN-13: 9780-9545061-1-7

Given that The Chapels Society' study day in 2004 was held in James Cubitt's remarkable and innovative Union Chapel, the papers, as now published, are related to its history, web of family connections, architecture and construction, as well as its archives. In taking this as his context, Chris Wakeling's 'Nonconformity and Victorian Architecture' considers some remarkable buildings and identifies possible Continental influences; the octagonal Harcourt Congregational, Islington (1855-6), the oval Westminster Congregational Chapel (1863-5) and the triangular Pin Mill Brow Congregational, Manchester (1866) all seem a world apart from Jobson's 1840s advocacy of Gothic especially for Wesleyan chapels.

Chris Pond's 'The Sunday School and the Life and Design of the Chapel' is perhaps the least satisfactory contribution to what is a complex topic and where further research is still required. Quoting the Halévy thesis that 'Methodism and the Sunday School contributed to saving Britain from the French revolution' is to suggest an unawareness of later research, especially by Laqueur. In considering developments in Sunday school layouts, no link is made with the larger urban School Board premises with their central hall and flanking classrooms where the same design emerged in the 1880s for Sunday schools.

Derek Watson's rather technical paper 'Music in English Baptist and Congregational Chapel, 1820-1916' is a reminder of the nature of chapel music before the organ and Victorian hymnody. Union Chapel, with Henry Gauntlett and Ebenezer Prout as its organists, and Dr. Henry Allon its minister, made a distinctive contribution to Victorian music in worship.

For those interested in Victorian and Edwardian Dissenting architectural developments and its related functions, this excellently illustrated booklet is recommended, if only to encourage further research. In context, however, there are limitations: Methodism is only briefly mentioned and perhaps inevitably, the balance of papers tend to draw their examples from the London area.

D COLIN DEWS

From Pedagogy to Photography: the life and work of John William Righton by Tom Norgate (Petersfield, 613 Books, 2008) pp152 p/b £14.95 ISBN 978-0-9558094-0-8.

From 1905 the Methodist Publishing House [MPH] began publishing a series of Methodist postcards, the inspiration behind this development being John William Righton (1857-1921), a Newbury photographer born near Pocklington in Yorkshire who initially trained at Westminster College, and taught at Snaith and in Gibraltar. Not surprisingly many of the photographs used on the MPH cards were by him and others he personally published bear the mark 'Righton'. A biography of Righton and his family background is included.

The writer's remarkably detailed research has resulted in an important reference work appealing both to the postcard collector as well as the Methodist historian, and provides lists of not only MPH postcards, but others produced by Righton, including those for the Newbury district, along with variations in the printing. The result, however, does not always lead to an easy read and perhaps the text would have benefited by the use of footnotes. Excellent use is made of high quality photographic reproductions, both black and white, and coloured.

The overall result is a significant contribution to a hitherto ignored aspect of Methodist publishing and history.

D COLIN DEWS

Feet of Clay. The Life and Ministry of William O'Bryan, Founder of the Bible Christians by T.Shaw., and C.C., Short, C.C., 2007. Privately, Porthleven ISBN 978-0 9524436-1-2. 256p, Bibling Index, List of works by Shaw. (£15incl p/p from Rev. C. Short, Boslan, Torleven Road, Porthleven, Cornwall. TR13 9AQ)

William O'Bryan (1778-1868) was a charismatic yet erratic Cornishman and nineteenth century apostle, founder of the Bible Christians, the smallest of the major Methodist denominations. His grandson S. L. Thorne produced a short biography in two editions, 1878 and 1888, but this dropped the curtain sharply over the events surrounding 'the separation', after which O'Bryan went to America. Tom Shaw, our greatly loved former General Secretary, spent a number of years preparing what was to be a modern account of this gifted yet flawed evangelist and church planter. Tom's death appeared to spell the end of this eagerly awaited project but very happily Joan Shaw made Tom's material available to Colin Short who has brought the work to completion. He has now published it privately as a substantial and welcome work, with many references to O'Bryan's career after 'the separation'.

Issac Foot. A Westcountry Boy. Apostle of England by Foot, M. and Highet, A.,

2006. Politico's London. 352p, Index, Illus. (£25) ISBN 10: 1-84275-181-6 and 13: 978-1-84275-181-7.

Michael Foot. A life. by Morgan, K.O., 2007. Harper Press, London. 568pp Index ,Illus. (£25) ISBN 13 978-0-00-717826-1 and 10 0-00-717826-3.

These two substantial books demonstrate that the Foot name still resonates although by 2010 Isaac (1880- 1960) will have been dead for half a century. *Isaac Foot* is not the biography it seems at first sight, being in fact an anthology of sympathetic pieces by and about the Foot family. After half a century Michael Foot is now the most widely known of the family, probably because long ago he abandoned his early attachment to Methodism and Liberal politics. However in *Michael Foot* Morgan provides us with a detailed and revealing but affectionate biography of a man who he describes as a 'unique combination of elitism and dissent.' Morgan's first chapter, 'Nonconformist Patrician', makes passing references to the shadow side of the Foot family: a corrective to the impression of perpetual sunshine given by Foot and Hight.

ROGER THORNE

Southside Story: the first hundred years, 1907-2007 by Sheila Crossman & Bob Preston (Eds.): (Peter Tuffs, np, 2008, 184p. £11.99 plus £2.20 p&p (pbk) from Mrs. S. Crossman, 48 Deepdale, Guisborough, TS14 8JY).

Ben Rhydding Methodist Church, 1909-2009 by Kathleen Pinder (Smith Settle, Yeadon, 2008. 80p. £6.00 including p&p (Pbk) from the Author, 253 Leeds Road, Ilkley, S29 8LL)

Primitive Methodism became permanently established in Guisborough in the 1840s, after an abortive attempt in 1821, first using the former Wesleyan chapel of 1811, then building their own in 1861 and the present Southside in 1907. Enhanced by an excellent choice of photographs and ephemera, including architects' drawings, maps and statistics, the account also includes former manses and other churches in the town, resulting in a highly recommended, model Methodist history. An unusual feature is potted histories of the leading families, trustees and leaders, many of whom were attracted to the town by work in the then booming iron mines. The one error is to attribute Davidson of Newcastle as the architect of the present chapel when it was Howdill & Howdill of Leeds. This is a lesson in how collective memories can be lost, for thirty years ago the account was still alive of how the architect was locked in the vestry until he acquiesced to the trustees' demands thus explaining why a coffin cannot be taken into the chapel, but this story was unknown to the present writers.

Ben Rhydding's Methodism originated with Wesleyan class meetings

being held in the kitchen of Wheatley Hall and this ultimately led to a temporary building in 1880 followed in 1909 by the present, impressive, Arts & Crafts Gothic, towered, church, enhanced by fine fittings and stained glass, a school hall being added in 1967. In tracing both the events and activities in the church's history good use is made of photographs and memories. Although personalities connected with the church are recorded, what would be helpful is a further account recording more about such families as the Doves, Leeds carpet manufacturers but originally from Darlington, and the Tootals of Manchester, as in the Guisborough history.

D. COLIN DEWS

Wesley Historical Society Index to the Proceedings of the Local Branches. Volume 2 1995-2005 Compiled by C Jeffrey Spittal, (John Wesley's Chapel, The New Room, Bristol 2009, pp45 £5.50 P&P included)

The second volume of the *Wesley Historical Society Index to the Proceedings of the Local Branches* is a valuable resource for researching all branches of Wesleyan and Methodist history. It is an essential supply of information of articles on Wesleyan and Methodist history and personalities in the area local to the various branches. Volume 1, which is now out of print, covered the period from 1959 to 1995. This volume is an improvement on volume I by incorporating fuller cross-referencing such as 'Bardsley, Samuel see Wesley, John (Letters)'. At the foot of each page is a key list to the references of the various branch publications. Each entry gives the dates of the person referred to, the local branch publication, the volume and issue number, the date it was published and the page numbers. Jeffrey Spittal with the assistance of Nigel McMurray has unlocked a valuable resource of Wesleyan and Methodist history. It would have been helpful to have included a list of contributors and illustrations. This publication demonstrates the extreme care, and accurate recording of information. It is a clearly laid out publication by the Librarian of John Wesley's Chapel - The New Room, Bristol. The index is ongoing and the information on articles in local WHS Branch publications since 2005 is being updated.

DONALD H RYAN

NOTES AND QUERIES

1583 The PRIMITIVE METHODIST BAPTISMAL REGISTER for
BRIGHTON and HOVE

The current London Road Baptismal Register is the original Primitive Methodist Circuit Register for the area. Its first entry is for 10 April, 1842 and

contains 1,263 baptisms. I am very grateful to Doug Hopwood for allowing me to transcribe it, and to Tony Funnell for his knowledge of Primitive Methodism in the area which has been most helpful.

In the nineteenth century the Primitive Methodist Circuit included, at various times: Eastbourne: Lewes: Newhaven and Shoreham. For most of the period 1885-1915 there were two Primitive Methodist Circuits and this book contains the entries for only one of them, so comparative figures have to be treated cautiously. All the figures below refer to this register.

There is a lot that can be learnt from such a register and here I have space only for a few items. Nowadays we would expect most baptisms to take place on Sunday in the context of morning worship but this was not always the case. Before Methodist Union in 1933 only just over half the baptisms [53%] were conducted on a Sunday. The next highest day was Thursday with just over 20% followed by Tuesday with 11%. There was nothing special about Tuesday or Thursday. They seem to have been the days when a minister went to Newhaven or Shoreham. Most baptisms in Newhaven [54%] took place on Tuesdays, with Thursday and Sunday sharing second place with 19%. In Shoreham 44% of baptisms took place on Sunday, but 36% were on Thursday, with hardly any on Tuesday. There was a mission in Portslade at the start of the 20th century. Here Thursday was the most common day [43%] with Sunday and Friday coming equal second [23% each]. After 1939 almost all baptisms took place on Sundays. Not all baptisms were carried out by ministers, about twenty were by people identified as non-ministers, almost all in the nineteenth century.

Until the mid 1930s it was usual for the job of the father to be shown. This can tell us a lot. I cannot here give the full analysis but just over half the baptisms in Shoreham were from families connected with the sea, usually calling themselves 'mariners'. In Newhaven over 20% were connected with the docks: In Brighton almost 13% of baptisms were to families connected with the railway. There are some unusual jobs too, in 1921 the daughter of a Licensed Victualler's Manager was baptised; given the pre-eminence of teetotalism in Primitive Methodism this indicates a certain tolerance regarding who was baptised, as does the fact that there were some baptisms of illegitimate children.

Another interesting fact is that from 1840 to 1939 the average age at baptism of infants, [those under 1 year old] remained remarkably consistent, being an overall average of 65 days. However, from 1940 to 2000 there was a great change. The average age at baptism for infants doubled to 129 days. I hope over the next few years to transcribe the other Methodist registers in the area and build up a fuller picture of Methodist life.

MICHAEL R HICKMAN

1584

GRANDFATHER BENJAMIN

*Among upright and upward men
Was Grandfather Ben.*

Born in eighteen sixty-five
Never reached old age
In his fifties died;
Through much of youth faced a hostile tide:
Son of a miner whose death fell untimely
Ben left school when eight to keep his family
By toiling in pit mining for coal.
At a time of no dole whatever
He held the dreaded Workhouse at bay
And kept Mother, siblings and self together.

On the Winter day shift
He saw little light, felt the icy draught;
Once saw a friend stumble near the lift
And fatally fell down the shaft.
Ben, at fourteen, was hurt in the pit.
That, he said, was fair fortune
No longer could he work at it.
Self-education he now found opportune,
Soared in an insurance career
And, following his bent,
Became Justice of the Peace
Methodist lay Preacher,
Liberal Agent
Was urged to stand for Parliament
But from wife and children would not tear,
Became Councillor, Alderman and Mayor.

In Wenlock's Guildhall quaint and old
As I scanned the lettering bold
Naming the Borough's many mayors
Plain 'Benjamin Maddox J.P.' I did see
And my memory dares to say
Knights and Lords by the scene before
And after more and their heirs.
A son, in old age gave Ben's mayoral portrait
To Wenlock's Guildhall old and quaint,
We saw the large picture when we went,
The only Mayor's shown to our surprise;
Maybe others have been sent
But the lone display impressed me:

He rose from such adversity.

*Officials, glad of the gift, said gently
They felt Grandfather was 'not of the gentry'.*

JOSEPHINE TAYLOR (NÉE MADDOX)

THE ANNUAL LECTURE

will be held at Wesley Memorial Church, Oxford on

Saturday 27 June 2009 at 2.30pm

by the Revd Dr. Martin Wellings.

'The Methodist Revival Fellowship 1952-1987'

Chairman: Dr. John D. Walsh

The Annual General Meeting will begin at 12.45pm to

conclude no later than 2.15pm.

A warm invitation is extended to anyone who may be interested to attend this lecture and also an additional/supporting programme, which has been arranged for the evening of 26 June, when the Wesley Historical Society Library will be open until 7.00p.m. and the morning of 27 June, when the library will be open from 9.00a.m. until 12 noon with the librarian Mr John Lenton in attendance. An alternative programme of activities will take place in central Oxford, commencing with a guided walk of Wesley sites in Oxford led by Dr Peter Forsaith, departing from Wesley Memorial Church at 10.30a.m. and returning at 11.30a.m. There will then be a presentation on the Wesley Historical Society Library/Methodist Studies Unit/Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History by Dr Peter Forsaith from 11.30a.m. until 12 noon, when there will be a break for lunch. People are invited to bring their own food to eat at Wesley Memorial Church, where hot and cold drinks will be available. People will also be able to order a packed lunch in advance (price around £2.50) if they prefer by contacting Peter Forsaith [E-mail: pforsaith@brookes.ac.uk]; tel: 01865 488319]. Parking and overnight accommodation will be available at the Westminster Institute of Education (former Westminster College) and there is a regular bus service into central Oxford (parking in central Oxford is extremely difficult and expensive). There will be no charge for the day's programme but donations will be invited to cover tea and coffee and there will be an offering taken at the Annual Lecture to cover other expenses.