

Methodism and Abstinence: a History of The Methodist Church and Teetotalism

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Abstract:

This thesis has two overarching aims. The first aim is to understand the origins and development of temperance and abstinence in British Methodism, particularly through the theology that informed what may broadly be called the Methodist teetotal movement in its period of greatest popularity from 1830 until 1919. The second is to consider the downfall of this movement in the period from 1945 until 1974, when the Methodist Connexion adopted the view that each Methodist “must consider his personal attitude to all drugs in relation to his Christian vocation”.¹ The need for the study arises from the relative dearth of historical investigation regarding Methodism and abstinence. Representations of Methodism and abstinence tend either to be partisan or to lack wider understanding of the abstinence movement, or the theology of Methodism. Methodologically, this thesis attempts to hold together historical and theological considerations; it is important to consider both the socio-economic contexts in which diverse abstinence and teetotal movements arose and the theological motivations that drove British Methodist belief and practice.

Regarding the origins and development of temperance and abstinence in British Methodism, it is proposed in this thesis that the Bible Christians were the first organised Methodist abstainers, and that their practice was likely to have been influenced by John Wesley's theologies of sanctification, holiness and Christian perfection. The thesis is an attempt to counter the Bible Christian's diminished historical significance, as well as to investigate the likely impact of the theological underpinnings for their abstinence. Regarding the downfall of temperance and abstinence in British Methodism in the period from 1945 until 1974, this thesis will propose that a loss of focus upon holiness as a catalyst for abstinence was detrimental to the growth and continuation of the teetotal movement throughout Methodism after World War Two. It will highlight the general rejection of this focus on encouraged abstinence in the second half of the twentieth century, acknowledging the changes and disagreement within British Methodism to which this dismissal led. Concluding comments allude to the need for a renewed witness within British Methodism to societal and theological imperatives for both temperance and abstinence.

¹ A Methodist Statement on the Non-Medical Use Of Drugs: Adopted by the Methodist Conference of 1974 states that “the sincerity and integrity of those who take differing views on whether they should drink or abstain is fully recognised”.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

Overview

The purpose of this thesis is twofold. First it is to understand the origins and development of temperance and abstinence in British Methodism, particularly through the theology that informed what may broadly be called the Methodist teetotal movement in its period of greatest popularity from 1830 until 1919. Second it is to consider the downfall of this movement in the period from 1945 until 1974, when the Methodist Connexion adopted the view that each Methodist “must consider his personal attitude to all drugs in relation to his Christian vocation”.²³ Abstinence is the action of not drinking alcohol. Teetotalism is a pledged abstinence, the idea of which emerged from a group from Preston who promoted this choice from 1831 onwards. Temperance is the name given to the decision to consume alcohol in moderation, which was linked with an earlier group that also emerged from Northern England in the late 1820s.

Firstly the thesis will propose that the often overlooked Methodist faction known as the Bible Christians were the first organised Methodist abstainers, and that their decision to become so may well have been influenced by a seedbed theology of sanctification, based upon John Wesley’s theologies of sanctification, holiness and Christian perfection. This thesis will evidence suggestions within relevant historical sources that these foundational beliefs led the Bible Christians to become the first Methodist group historically to corporately promote a teetotal stance. The thesis intends to recover some of the Bible Christian’s diminished historical importance in order to show the significance of their theological underpinnings in the light of their abstinence.

Secondly, the thesis will propose that a loss of focus upon holiness as a catalyst for abstinence was detrimental to the growth and continuation of the teetotal movement throughout Methodism after World War Two. Chapters 5 and 6 will highlight how some other more influential Methodist factions, particularly the Wesleyan Methodist Church and Primitive Methodist Church engaged with the idea of teetotalism, but not necessarily the ethos of the Bible Christians. Ultimately, the Methodist people largely rejected this focus on encouraged abstinence in the second half of the twentieth century,

² A Methodist Statement on the Non-Medical Use Of Drugs: Adopted by the Methodist Conference of 1974 states that “the sincerity and integrity of those who take differing views on whether they should drink or abstain is fully recognised”.

³ “Connexion” is a word now regarded as unique to Methodism, and still used as an archaic spelling of “connection” denoting the particular relationship between all Methodist communities, which sees all groups as interconnected.

which changed the community directly and indirectly, and caused significant disagreement about the future of the church, and the identity of the community.

To meet the first aim, that is, to understand origins and development of temperance and abstinence within Methodism, including the theology that informed the Methodist teetotal movement 1830-1919, requires attention to be given to three parts of Methodism within this period: the Bible Christians, the Primitive Methodist Church, and the Wesleyan Methodist Church. There are several historical studies of these movements but none that combine an historical investigation of the groups, with an analysis of the theology that undergirded temperance and teetotalism.⁴ George Thompson Brake writes about Methodism and abstinence in broad historical terms, and uses his work to give significant opinions on the downfall of the movement; therefore his text is valuable and necessary to this work.⁵ Brian Harrison, Norman Longmate, Lillian Shiman and Andrew Barr give larger overviews of both the abstinence movement, and the general habits of alcohol consumption.⁶ However, there is no historically informed study of the potential theological reasoning behind the Methodist teetotalism of this period. This thesis addresses the gap.

To meet the second aim of this thesis, the current project will consider the downfall of this movement in the period from 1919 until 1974 (which included the second Methodist Union in 1932, which was the act of uniting the United Methodist Church, of which the Bible Christians became part in 1907, the Wesleyan Methodist Church and the Primitive Methodist Church).⁷ This decline of the Methodist teetotal movement began after the First World War and coincided with the start of what is regarded by some as the general decline of Methodism, which until this point was not acknowledged.⁸ Chapter 7 analyses official documentation from the Methodist Conference and related Connexional bodies that bear upon the debate surrounding alcohol in this period. Of particular interest are arguments that contributed to the shifting of abstinence down the Church's agenda. It is a truism that 'history is written by the victors' but this thesis find this to be more-or-less accurate with respect to the

⁴ These include Pyke, *Origins and History of the Primitive Methodist Church* (1905). Shaw, *The Golden Chain* (1908) and *The Bible Christians* (1965). Davies and Rupp, *A History of The Methodist Church in Great Britain* (1983).

⁵ Thompson Brake *Drink. Ups and Downs in Methodist Attitudes*: 1974.

⁶ Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians 1815-72* (1971). Longmate, *The Waterdrinkers* (1968). Shiman, *Crusade Against Drink in Victorian England* (1988), Barr, *Drink, A Social History* (1998).

⁷ There were two unions within Methodism, firstly the United Methodist Church (UMC) was formed in 1907, an amalgamation of the Bible Christians, the United Methodist Free Church and Methodist New Connexion. Secondly, in 1932 the UMC joined with the Wesleyan Methodist Church and the Primitive Methodist Church.

⁸ On this, see *Reports from the Department of Christian Citizenship*, from The Methodist Church.

official recounting of both this decline, and also the initial rise. As part of this project, a survey of Methodist people in the United Kingdom was undertaken. This is the first widespread survey of Methodist people on the topic since 1973. This work was driven by a need to clarify how abstinence fits with The Methodist Church and British Methodist people today. The results of this survey are located in chapter 8. This information is compared with historical studies and surveys, and analysis of these arguments forms the basis for the comparative work done in chapter 9, to contrast the various periods of increase and decline throughout the movement.

Chapter 1 of this thesis introduces the project, its aims and methods. The literature review is found in chapter 2 and reviews the existing work which this project builds upon. Sections of the thesis devoted to historical material begin in Chapter 3. Chapter 3 gives an overview of the first movement of corporate abstinence that preempted Methodist teetotalism. This movement deliberately avoided association with the church. This study is necessary in order to understand the social pressure for abstinence that was influential upon communities striving for holiness. Chapter 4 offers an overview of John Wesley's theology of sanctification and Christian perfection and its influence on the Bible Christians, particularly in the South West of England. Chapters 4 - 7 draw heavily on archive material, (some sources being previously unpublished), pertaining to the Bible Christians, the Primitive Methodist Church and the Wesleyan Methodist Church, with particular focus on England between 1830 and 1880. Much of this material was sourced from a private library, based in Exeter, Devon and also from the library of the Institute for Alcohol Studies, based at Caxton Street, London.⁹ The inherently theological nature of some of the resources used here has required awareness and sensitivity to the doctrinal commitments of the various Methodist denominations and the other groups considered. The overview of John Wesley's theology occurs in Chapter 4, and makes full use of the scholarship already in existence with regards to the familiar themes of holiness, sanctification and Christian perfection. The originality of this thesis lies within the exploration of how these theological underpinnings were applied to the practical principle of abstinence.¹⁰

⁹ I am particularly indebted to Mr. Roger Thorne, of Exeter for granting full access to his collection of rare Bible Christian texts and literature, and to Katherine Brown, Director of The Institute for Alcohol Studies, for access to their library. The IAS is located at Alliance House, 12 Caxton Street, London.

¹⁰ For Wesley's own theology, see *John Wesley's Forty Four Sermons*. Also, on Wesleyan theological analysis, see Rack – *Reasonable Enthusiast* (1989), Marquardt – *John Wesley's Social Ethics* (1992), Lindstrom – *Wesley and Sanctification* (1950), Stone – *John Wesley's Life and Ethics* (2001) and several chapters within Abraham and Kirby (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies* (2009).

Chapters 5 and 6 explore the historical abstinence of the Primitive Methodist Church and the Wesleyan Methodist Church between 1830 and 1900, and how the theologies and practices differed between these two communities, and the aforementioned Bible Christians. As will become apparent, these practical and theological positions did not always match across the denominations, or even within the same community. In particular, the Bible Christian ways of thinking became lost as the other Methodist movements grew in influence and size. This thesis will propose that the subtleties of Bible Christian teaching on personal holiness, which led indirectly to the formation of a significant community of abstainers, became swamped when Union took place, amidst conflicting convictions from the Primitive Methodists and Wesleyan Methodists about their reasons for abstinence. Much of the originality of this thesis resides in the archival work that leads us to this claim.

Methodism as a broad institution and set of beliefs that spans several hundred years, has created a propensity for internal groups to be distinctive from one another. The movement known as “Methodism” and the people known as “Methodist” can be difficult to quantify. There is no set grouping that has ever owned these names, nor the legacy of these ideas. This diversity became particularly apparent after the death of founder John Wesley. In the nineteenth century United Kingdom, after Wesley’s death in 1791, the movement progressed and the central community grew, becoming established as the Wesleyan Methodist Church. The Wesleyan Methodist Church was the most widely known model for the continuation of Wesley’s work. But, as well as this model, new interpretations of Christian community, influenced by John Wesley, also sprang up; most notably the Primitive Methodist Church, formed in 1820 in North Staffordshire, and the Bible Christian Church, founded in 1815 in North Devon. There were also other, smaller factions including the Methodist New Connexion (formed in 1797), which broke away from the original Wesleyan movement.¹¹ The New Connexion joined with the Bible Christians (and the United Methodist Free Churches) in 1907 to form the United Methodist Church. This group in turn joined with the Primitive Methodist Church and the Wesleyan Methodist Church in the Methodist Union of 1932 to create a unified Methodist Church throughout the United Kingdom.¹² Today, we can speak about one Methodist Church and its characteristics and policies, but this was not always the case. As we review historical events, different sections of this thesis will

¹¹ Connexion is a term widely used within Methodism, as an archaic spelling of “connection”. It indicates a joining of all members, societies and churches. All parts of British Methodism have used the term to describe their own national community.

¹² Townsend, Workman, Eayrs, 1909: 481-551

refer to these different factions, acknowledging particular points of union or division, and the arguments that occurred at these times.

Thesis Aims

With regards the first aim of this thesis, I shall investigate how and why Methodist people and Methodist communities, including the Bible Christians, Primitive Methodist Church and Wesleyan Methodist Church adopted the practice of teetotalism, and made it their own. I shall propose to show the likely foundational reasoning behind the Bible Christian teetotalism, and to highlight the practical application of Wesleyan sanctification and Christian perfection. To achieve this aim, this thesis will consider: “holiness”, “sanctification” and “Christian Perfection” as foundational stones of Wesleyan theology. It will establish the idea of teetotalism as a secular movement working in parallel with eighteenth and nineteenth century Methodist social action. Drunkenness in society was a pressing social problem during Methodism’s early life, through the nineteenth century and onwards.¹³ John Wesley, worked, preached and built Methodism in the eighteenth century, which was a time of huge social change, and most significantly for us, was a time of new levels of alcohol abuse. As will be shown, the peak of Methodism in the following century coincided with a new era of social shifting, where the poor could become rich, and the ruined could become reformed.¹⁴ Abstinence was not championed during Wesley’s lifetime, but later Methodists appear to have used his community and legacy to point towards the value of a teetotal life for a Christian. With the aim of investigating how some Methodists came to adopt abstinence in mind, this thesis will chart the beginnings of organised abstinence, and the significant growth of Methodist teetotalism. It will focus upon the Bible Christians, due to their lead on this issue. Their aim for individual holiness seems to have intertwined with their convictions about abstinence. As will be discussed below, this project is based upon a “*Histoire de Mentalités*” methodology, which encourages focus on individual abstainers and the cottage industry of the Bible Christians, and to observe their role, in order to highlight wider themes within society.

¹³ Barr calls it “the high point of alcohol consumption in Britain” (Barr, 1995: 33).

¹⁴ See also Malcolmson – *Life and Labour in England 1700-1780* (1981), May – *An Economic and Social History of Britain 1760-1990* (1996) Pawson – *The Early Industrial Revolution* (1979) and O’Brien and Quinault – *The Industrial Revolution and British Society* (1993).

Secondly, this thesis will attempt to show why and how this widely adopted movement of abstinence was no longer promoted by The Methodist Church corporately. It will explore different justifications for abstinence between the Primitive Methodist Church, and the Wesleyan Methodist Church towards the end of the nineteenth century, acknowledging that these differences possibly became part of the decline. This analysis of differences between Methodist groups will occur through historical study, theological analysis and the consideration of documentation through these methods. The project will acknowledge the current separation of the movement of abstinence from Methodism, and the bitterness that has sometimes accompanied this debate. This second aim necessitates a simple observation of when abstinence faded from central Methodist concerns, and how the arguments surrounding the subject changed over time to eventually offer a new viewpoint. This section on the changing approach to abstinence by the church also allows the parallel issues within Methodism, where the decline in church membership mirrored that of commitment to abstinence, to be highlighted, through the use of a survey of Methodist people, an acknowledgement of current views regarding social action in The Methodist Church, and various reports about alcohol and alcohol abuse. These sources and comparisons will show why approaches from the past regarding alcohol are not necessarily applicable today.

The boundaries of the study are England, Scotland and Wales from the mid eighteenth century when Wesley returned to work in England, until the present day, with acknowledgement of a particular focus from the 1830s until 1974.¹⁵ Using eyewitness accounts, journals, magazines, legal documentation and historical reports, this thesis acknowledges the changing faces of society through these times, so that an understanding of the similarities, changes and challenges from then until now can be gained. In addition to this work, studies of alcohol and its consumption, plus the laws that governed its production, taxation and availability from these two centuries will be used. There is abundant scholarship on the issues of alcohol, secular temperance and societal shifts in the UK, and this work is acknowledged and used here.¹⁶ Teetotalism in this period began as a secular movement, and had political associations, so the political theories of the adherents and instigators are important. These movements ran in advance of, and then in parallel to denominational initiatives on abstinence. As will become apparent, it was a small subsection of society that promoted teetotalism. This group

¹⁵ The 1830s saw the birth of teetotalism, and 1974 saw a Methodist statement acknowledging that teetotalism had shifted away from the Methodist conscience.

¹⁶ See below, including Barr - "*Drink*" Shiman - "*Crusade Against Drink In Victorian England*" and Longmate - "*The Waterdrinkers*".

proved to be the catalyst for much wider movements, and thus must be considered accordingly, through their own journals, publicity and later understandings of their work. In addition to a reliance on academic theological and historical work, this project uses relevant literature on alcohol, and abstinence, produced by these groups throughout history.¹⁷

The theological aspect of this project is centred on the work of John Wesley and those who were influenced by him. John Wesley's mission was particularly shaped for increasing Christian discipleship. He encouraged individuals towards "holiness".¹⁸ Wesley's mission took a particular shape because many of those who he met were in pressing need of practical as well as spiritual help. Wesley's work was not purely as a theologian, but also a pastor to many, so his theology matches many of his own experiences, and the lives of those he supported. This thesis will apply Wesley's thoughts on the holy life to consider how abstinence from alcohol fits with the belief that all believers can work towards Christian perfection. It is important to note that Wesley's structure of discipleship was built upon levels of commitment. He believes that all Christians were justified, some became sanctified, and with effort a person could achieve Christian perfection. These distinctions and more are considered by the scholarship of Manfred Marquardt, Ronald Stone, Harold Lindstrom and William J. Abraham, amongst others.¹⁹

Teetotalism as a Movement Outside of the Church

Of particular relevance to this thesis is the historical abstinence movement that became known as teetotalism, in advance of Church support. This movement developed outside, but alongside, different church communities. This project focuses particularly on the movement's genesis in 1831. In the years following as it reached a peak, it became a significant national phenomenon that encouraged considerable numbers of individuals to actively abstain from drinking alcohol, and was not beholden to faith groups and their particular justifications.²⁰ The movement included educational programs for children,

¹⁷ Andrew Barr - "*Drink*" Lillian Shiman - "*Crusade Against Drink In Victorian England*" and Norman Longmate - "*The Waterdrinkers*" are particularly useful.

¹⁸ On this, see significant scholarship by Marquardt, Stone and Lindstrom. They amongst others have studied Wesley's sermons and writings in significant detail.

¹⁹ Marquardt, 1992 *John Wesley's Social Ethics*, Stone, 2001 *John Wesley's Life & Ethics*. Lindstrom, 1950 *Wesley and Sanctification* and Abraham, 2009 *The Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies*.

²⁰ Examples of the scholarship on this subject are Shiman - *Crusade Against Drink in Victorian England* (1988) and Barr - *Drink* (1998).

awards systems for achievements related to lengths of abstaining, and further programs to help those who struggled with the addictive nature of alcohol. This organised movement is no longer formally in existence in the twenty-first century. Organisations that began with the sole purpose of encouraging and enabling teetotalism either no longer exist, or have rebranded to such an extent that their origins are no longer obvious. This thesis will examine the changes from moderation, to abstinence, into the dissolution and reorganisation of the movement and its relationship to wider Methodism. Chapter 3 will consider the social atmosphere at the time of the initial crusade, and the individual personalities that encouraged and caused this movement to occur. The thesis will consider the industrial revolution and the introduction of different working and living patterns, resulting in changes to alcohol consumption. Other scholarship has highlighted the sociological issues that emerged at this time, and the nature and philosophies of some of the groups involved in early abstinence.²¹ This thesis will use this prior scholarly work for an exploration of the roots of the movement, and the ideas that were carried forward.

Holiness and Sanctification as Theological Foundations of Methodism

In chapter 4, this thesis will provide evidence to suggest that John Wesley's theologies of sanctification and Christian perfection were influential in the subsequent uptake of teetotalism amongst Methodist people, from the very start of the Methodist abstinence movement. The chapter will use Wesley's own texts, evidential work provided by those influenced, and the scholarship that examines his theology. Moving into chapter 5, the Methodist tradition of extensive documentation serves our purpose well. This, and the following chapters will make use of diaries, autobiographies and contemporary reports, as well as historical studies written within living memory. The communities mentioned all produced much in terms of literature, pamphlets and propaganda. This is particularly true of the Bible Christians, and the Primitive Methodist Church, operating independently to the more structured and established work of the Wesleyan Methodist Church. The availability of this information has allowed much historical work to take place on projects that are well informed and detailed. Our work here is reasonably straightforward, but it is not without its pitfalls; like any movement that is its own historian, some information given can be misleading; this is even more so the case when

²¹ Joseph Livesey, the teetotal instigator wrote his own histories – *Life and Labours of* (1885), the *Lees and Raper Lectures* give significant oral accounts of these pioneers within living memory. Rowntree and Sherwell cast a more critical eye over the work of these men and women – *The Temperance Problem and Social Reform* (1899).

considering the work of a community that deals with spiritual and ethical issues. There are some critical primary documents, but an essential critique of all these historical sources will take place within this thesis. The Bible Christian and Primitive Methodist historians used here can probably be better described as enthusiastic rather than academic: Brian Harrison's complaint that scholarship is often "partisan and antiquarian" rings true.²² Nonetheless, the material available does allow a useful and unique insight. A further problem is that wider Methodist scholarship sometimes seems intent on not taking the Bible Christians seriously as a legitimate faction, and so at times suggests itself to be just as partisan as the Bible Christian supporters themselves.²³ As previously mentioned, Christian and Methodist teetotalism is viewed with some embarrassment in the twenty-first century and so is on occasion not given the status that its importance at the time warrants. An unexpected example of this can be seen in the *T&T Clark Companion to Methodism*; there is no mention at all of temperance, teetotalism or abstinence, which is surprising for a book of 600 pages.

If we return to the primary and secondary documents produced by the denominations and communities themselves, three approaches to justify teetotalism emerge. These are a theological justification for teetotalism, a societal justification for teetotalism and a political justification for teetotalism. We can describe these approaches as such:

- 1) A theological belief in a faith that requires high personal conduct. This manifests itself in terms like personal sanctification and Christian perfection, which led some towards a life of abstinence;
- 2) An understanding that one's actions and abstinence can benefit others, particularly in terms of a Pauline belief that "the strong ought to put up with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves".²⁴ This passage acknowledges the understanding that one person's struggles can be lessened if another's actions help to ease burdens. In this case, one person not consuming alcohol may aid another, otherwise tempted to consume damagingly;
- 3) A sociological and political understanding that money is saved and productivity is increased if less alcohol is consumed.

²² Harrison, 1971: 19

²³ Thompson Brake, 1974: 88. In this example, Thompson Brake dismisses the Bible Christians as "not immersed in the politics of the alcohol problem", which is grossly unfair, given how active the denomination was in terms of individual abstinence throughout the existence of their Connexion. Presumably due to their unfair reputation as only a provincial grouping, paired with their relatively small size of membership, and short period of independent existence, their voice wasn't always heard, or seen as significant.

²⁴ Romans 15:1

All three factors resonate with aspects of Methodism, and have been used to encourage and promote abstinence over the past 190 years, but at the time, and even more so over the course of a number of years, these justifications have become blurred, and their origins lost. This thesis will show how John Wesley's teaching about holiness, sanctification and Christian perfection appear to have provided a theological framework, from which appeals to abstain were made by the pioneers of Christian and Methodist teetotalism. It is claimed in this thesis that the Bible Christians were significant forerunners within this innovative movement. While acknowledging the paucity of direct evidence for this claim, the statement will be explored more in chapter 4, in the light of the circumstantial nature of the information.

The Bible Christians saw themselves as sharing in the inheritance of John Wesley's work, and so can also be seen as part of a lineage that stretches back across Europe through the Protestant movement. As has been stated, Methodism was built upon and continually influenced by John Wesley's theology. This theology drew upon Arminianism, the movement for which the work of Jacobus Arminius was a starting point.²⁵ In Arminius' 1610 work, *The Remonstrance*, it was declared "election to eternal life is conditional upon good works in this life, that grace can be resisted and lost, that Christ died for all men".²⁶ Wesley is known to desire that all disciples work towards a better standard of conduct in line with Christian teachings, and this Arminianism informs the notion that each individual can be responsible for their own life choices, and that those choices have some bearing upon the individual's salvation, as well as their behaviour. Arminius believed that "a believer who ceases to trust God is no longer a believer... (It is) impossible for believers, as long as they remain believers, to decline from salvation".²⁷ Wesley's writing states this idea as; "Even he who standeth fast in the grace of God, in the faith that overcometh the world, may nevertheless fall into inward sin, and therefore 'make shipwreck of his faith'".²⁸ This theological sentiment was accepted in Methodism, and encouraged believers to take the opportunity and follow Wesley's example of a life lived well, where the believer's actions can be identified as "sanctified". Chapters 4 and 5 will highlight how this process of "sanctification" (as Wesley expressed it) can inform the choice to abstain from alcohol. The Bible

²⁵ As stated, Arminianism is a theological framework based upon the work of Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609). He was part of the reformation movement, but distinctive from Luther, Calvin and Zwingli.

²⁶ Chadwick, 1990: 220.

²⁷ Bangs, 1971: 349.

²⁸ Wesley, 2005: 184.

Christians read Wesley and felt compelled by the Arminian argument of vigilance in their behaviour. We know that the Bible Christians saw themselves as Arminian from their very beginning – founder William O’Byran even prefixed their name with the title “Arminian” until 1819.²⁹ An Arminian outlook leads towards a view of sanctification as “the death of the ‘old man’ and the quickening of the ‘new man’”.³⁰ We can draw a connecting line from Arminius, through Wesley, to the Bible Christians, and see that the latter group felt convicted that an individual is saved by grace and this salvation is assured as long as the individual remains a believer. For Wesley and the Bible Christians, this salvation could be assured through an active approach to sanctification; a continual striving towards the Christian perfection that Wesley highlights, and hopes for. At the time, and since then, few scholars have made the leap from teetotalism to “being sanctified”, but this thesis intends to suggest that it is more than a coincidence that the Bible Christians promoted both of these ideals, and this project will consider how the two ideas supported each other. We know that the Bible Christians did assert their faith through a drive for holiness, and they believed in the value of abstinence. This thesis intends to connect these two journeys and viewpoints to highlight an interesting and valuable connection.

Chapter 4 uses those who have provided significant scholarship in the fields of sanctification and Christian perfection within Wesleyan theology, including Manfred Marquardt, Ronald Stone, Henry Rack and William J. Abraham. These scholars contribute a variety of views on Wesley’s own struggle to define his thoughts on this subject, and they explain different ways in which his theological perceptions were applied to his social ethics.³¹ These thinkers provide useful insight into the expressions of sanctification and perfection in social and practical terms, which this thesis applies to the abstinence movement as another example of social ethics influenced by Wesleyan ideas. John Wesley has of course commanded a huge influence over all of Methodism, but the Bible Christians ran their community based upon Wesley’s teachings, despite there being no direct link between themselves and the wider Methodist Church.³² This unique arrangement certainly shows the appeal of Wesley’s work, even when disconnected from the church that he formed, and the people he trained.

²⁹ Vickers, 2000: 29.

³⁰ Bangs, 1971: 346.

³¹ On this, see Rack – *Reasonable Enthusiast* (1989), Marquardt – *John Wesley’s Social Ethics* (1992), Lindstrom – *Wesley and Sanctification* (1950), Stone – *John Wesley’s Life and Ethics* (2001) and several chapters within Abraham and Kirby (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies* (2009).

³² Although William O’Byran was a Wesleyan Methodist who had been expelled, he soon left the Bible Christians too, and his successors (who then chose to abstain) were not directly related to Methodism. On this, see Pyke – *The Golden Chain* (1908) Hayman – *Methodism in North Devon* (1871) and Bourne – *The Bible Christians* (1905).

Nineteenth century Methodism's Social Ethics

Methodism is well known for its responses to social needs; health care, poverty relief, slavery and more have all been challenged, and solutions provided from within Methodism.³³ The issue of alcohol was no different. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 will consider the work that was done under the standard of teetotalism, and the successes and failures that it had with those inside and outside of the church, throughout the wide variety of Methodist groups. While those within Methodism were encouraged not to drink excessively, the church also worked with those who had no particular affiliation to Christianity, but who encountered projects run by the church community. These groups included meetings, entertainment, sports and clubs for children, and were not always designed to help the cause grow, but were often a significant further sharing of the ethos of Methodism to those outside of it.³⁴ While the backbone of the justification for teetotalism was often built upon Christian principles, the extended projects were able to work, and recruit people without participants becoming Church members, or Christians. The thesis will analyse what the implications were for the lives of participants in this movement, whether a committed Methodist or otherwise.

Methodism grew enormously in eighteenth century England, and continued to spread in the following hundred years.³⁵ Further communities formed in the wake of Wesley's influence. In the nineteenth century, teetotalism made the Bible Christians and some Primitive Methodists unpopular with those outside their own community. This ill feeling was not limited to Methodists; other teetotal groups were also unpopular.³⁶ It also made some individuals disliked within the Wesleyan Methodist Church. This disagreement between Methodists about abstinence confirmed for the Church of England that much of Methodism was focussed upon internal agendas, and these values were not necessarily those espoused by Christ. Even amongst the supportive realm of the Bible Christians, there are recorded disagreements about whether teetotalism was distracting congregations from higher priorities.³⁷ It also confirmed for the general public the belief that the sect was attempting to prevent life from being enjoyable. Despite this initial variation of viewpoints, within fifty years abstinence had become a

³³ Yrogoyen Jr. (ed.), 2010: 293.

³⁴ For further information, see Shiman - *Crusade Against Drink in Victorian England* (1988).

³⁵ See Rack, 1989 *Reasonable Enthusiast. John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism*.

³⁶ Bible Christian founder James Thorne wrote that in Tiverton on April 18th 1841, "we were saluted by one of the beer shop owners who appeared quite ready to take vengeance on us: Thorne, 1873: 254.

³⁷ Pyke (105-107) records the Conference discussions about how far the denomination should take their enforcement of abstinence.

totem and gathering point for much of the Methodist movement to agree upon and rally around. This was certainly true in large part until the First World War. However, disintegration of the teetotal mind-set had progressed significantly by the end of the Second World War. After this point, Methodism as a movement became more homogenised and a singular viewpoint was often searched for across the community. Furthermore, members saw the damage caused by some aspects of ardent abstinence, and started to feel embarrassment and concern about the issue, and step away from it as a promoted ideal. As well as its significance for members, the teetotal cause also became the most common representation for the public view of Methodism. Many within Methodism found this unacceptable, and at odds with their greater purpose.

This thesis is enabled by use of Bible Christian and Primitive Methodist literature and historical studies — some of which, as mentioned, are unpublished and available only in private libraries. Arguments for and against a stance on alcoholic drinks were often used, and were justified in a variety of nuanced ways. This project has taken advantage of access to these rare documents to report upon historical events using these rediscovered viewpoints.³⁸

The Separation of Methodism from Abstinence

The second aim of this thesis is to consider the downfall of the abstinence movement in the period from 1945 until 1974, when Methodist Conference adopted the view that each Methodist “must consider his personal attitude to all drugs in relation to his Christian vocation”.³⁹ In other words, the thesis will highlight how justifications for abstinence became redundant for the majority of Methodist people, and how Methodism shifted on from these ideas.

Chapter 7 contains a historical analysis of the decline of abstinence within Methodism since the end of the Second World War. As will be shown, by 1974 teetotalism was no longer a concern for many Methodists or the organisation itself. Some members felt that it had distracted the community from more significant issues. The details of this decline

³⁸ Using specifically the previously mentioned private collection of Bible Christian literature owned by Mr. Roger Thorne, of Exeter.

³⁹ A Methodist Statement on the Non-Medical Use Of Drugs: Adopted by the Methodist Conference of 1974 states that “The sincerity and integrity of those who take differing views on whether they should drink or abstain is fully recognised”.

have been covered extensively in other texts and studies.⁴⁰ In short, the drop in popularity, in both Methodism and teetotalism coincided with the rejuvenation of morale, previously so affected by two world wars and the poverty and fear that these events caused. The positive boost in public feeling seemed to reduce reliance on both abstinence and church. Finally, any residue of the idea that Methodists were in some way defined by their teetotalism was dismantled in the minds of many by the successful application for a license to sell liquor by Westminster Central Hall, one of the largest Methodist churches in the country.⁴¹ This period of separation is analysed through reports from various departments of the church's legislative body, as well as news reports and correspondence within the structures of the church.

This section of the thesis highlights the ways in which the decline was encouraged by the uneasiness of the central church organisation regarding the topic. Encouragement stemmed also from various parts of the general membership, unhappy about how dogmatic and divisive the issue had become.⁴² Many feared that it also showed the church to be a one-policy party, which also highlighted an air of remoteness from much of society. In essence, a modern interpretation replaced a Victorian justification as the Methodist Church developed into a twentieth century corporation. When reading the central diatribes on the issue chronologically, a gradual shift can be observed, which suggests that a bigger plan was at work. The evidence of correspondence with the Methodist Recorder newspaper on issues of alcohol being sold in Methodist training colleges tells us that many were uncomfortable with either option; some staunchly believed in encouraged teetotalism in the 1990s (as they still do today), while others were desperate to leave behind what they viewed as out-dated and outmoded ways of working.

Historical Methodology

For the historical elements of this thesis, there will be a recreation of the process that is known as "*Histoire de Mentalités*", also known as the Annales School of historical

⁴⁰ David Clough and George Thompson Brake both cover these issues, and are referenced in chapter 7.

⁴¹ Memorial 28 from Methodist Conference, 2005 was written in opposition, but the licensing remains, despite complaints including... "That rooms commemorating teetotal ministers William Sangster and Donald English would be licensed" and "That the proposed licensed floor area in the Liquor Licence Plan would put the Westminster Central Hall in the top ten of the 3,600 licensed premises in the City of Westminster." This memorial was declined.

⁴² Chapter 7 shows Munsey Turner's belief that, due to an insistence on abstinence being part of the Methodist agenda, the church "appears isolated and self-absorbed" (Munsey Turner, 1998: 13)

research. The use of this will particularly occur in Chapters 3 - 7, where much of the historical and archival work occurs. This historical method originates with the School of Annales, so named because of the French journal that published much of the material that pertained to it. The journal “*Annales d’Histoire Économique et Sociale*” came into existence in the first half of the twentieth century, and was based upon the work of Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch. Febvre and Bloch also created the “*Histoire de Mentalités*”, and edited the Annales journal, first published in January 1929, while they worked together at the University of Strasbourg. It is the periodical’s refined title of ‘*Annales History*’ that gives the movement its title.⁴³ “*Histoire de Mentalités*” is in fact one particular part of this wider philosophy, and was especially championed by Bloch. The concept is intended to work as an alternative reading of history. Until the advent of “*Mentalités*”, academic history was largely said to consider battlefields, governments, Kings and Queens. Instead, what “*Mentalités*” proposed was to encourage a closer look at the wider cultural and social groups, and the questions and stances that occurred in those communities. Since the inception of “*Mentalités*”, historians have moved towards the use of the accounts of ‘lesser’ figures as useful sources. The example given might include the records of the ship’s kitchen staff on Captain Cook’s expedition to Australia, or small, seemingly inconsequential villages in France and their worldview, or the accounts of tobacco farmers in North West America as they bought and sold in the United States. Bloch and Febvre were the first protagonists of this “new” history.

Both Febvre and Bloch came from a historical standpoint, but worked across disciplines to increase what could be learned about past events: Febvre linked his work with geography as well as history, and Bloch worked with sociological approaches, utilised after his time as a student of Durkheim at the Ecole Normale. As one of the experts on this process, Peter Burke states, “both men were thinking in an interdisciplinary way”.⁴⁴ Bloch’s studies at the time involved assessments of the primitive beliefs of peasants in France in relation to their feelings about the King, while Febvre considered the mind-set of the clergy during the Reformation. Bloch’s most regarded text “*The Royal Touch*” examined the perceived miraculous healing of peasants by contact with members of the French Royal family. The study was initially met with some surprise; particularly that Bloch would spend time on such a limited study; however, according to Burke “it was a case study that illuminated major problems”.⁴⁵ Again, Bloch’s best-known work,

⁴³ For more on the history and growth of this academic approach, see Burke (1990): 21-23.

⁴⁴ Burke, 1990: 16.

⁴⁵ Burke, 1990: 18.

'Feudal Society' is unlike earlier studies of the feudal system. In Burke's words, "it is not confined to the relation between land tenure, the social hierarchy, warfare and the state. It deals with feudal society as a whole: with what we might now call 'the culture of feudalism'".⁴⁶ "Bloch was prepared to adopt the phrase "memoire collective" and to analyse peasant customs in these interdisciplinary terms, noting for example the importance of grandparents in the transmission of traditions".⁴⁷ Bloch's work had revealed how much could be learnt from not simply observing culture as an indistinguishable whole, but instead focusing on individuals and how they lived. In Peter Burke's words, Bloch believed that we should avoid the notion that there is ever "homogeneity of thought".⁴⁸ So, in their view, a historian should not take a snapshot and give an overarching opinion. In the details of an individual's mindset, we can discover a rich resource of reoccurring and differing points of view. Bloch had been influenced by other disciplines, and he put these other focuses to good use in this detailed analysis.

This methodology is used with a caveat. It is widely considered that "the history of mentalities is not easy to define to everyone's satisfaction".⁴⁹ Peter Burke elucidates the approach as having three distinctive features:

1. "Collective attitudes rather than individual ones"
2. "Unspoken and unconscious assumptions"
3. "How people think as well as what they think".⁵⁰

In essence, this approach seeks to reduce the power of a singular voice, and instead looks to view a social group with more width than just the loudest, wealthiest or most prominent individual. Also, it looks to show more than simply the surface of a historical event. Other aspects of Bloch's work have also surprised some historians. First, "Bloch chose the period to fit the problem", rather than the other way around.⁵¹ Second, "the (first) book was a contribution to what Bloch called 'religious psychology'". This multi-discipline approach was a new idea. "His book was a contribution to what we now call the history of 'mentalities'", for which he also uses the term "collective representations".⁵² Third, he used the idea of "comparative history".⁵³ This meant for

⁴⁶ Burke, 1990: 24.

⁴⁷ Burke, 1997: 45.

⁴⁸ Burke, 1990: 30.

⁴⁹ Burke, 1997: 162.

⁵⁰ Burke, 1997: 162.

⁵¹ Burke, 1990: 18-19.

⁵² Burke, 1990: 18.

Bloch that historical events could be compared with other events, at other times, in other places. For this thesis, Bloch's approach means that we can look as far and wide as necessary in order to produce a relevant and cohesive explanation of the origins of the teetotal movement; we are not limited to England, the nineteenth century or even Methodism. Also, we can use a multi-disciplinary approach that allows space for the theological work of John Wesley and his influences, as well as the specifically historic events that occurred in the midst of this theology. Finally, we can use this approach to allow us to compare the historic events of the nineteenth century with conditions today, or similar versions of the movements at other times and in other places.

The Nazis executed Bloch in 1944 for his role in the French Resistance, but Febvre avoided such a fate and went on to become the de facto leader of the Annales school and "*Histoire de Mentalités*". Febvre's article on the Reformation states that the reason for this significant change was the rise of bourgeois feeling, which needed "a religion that was clear, reasonable, humane and gently fraternal". Burke believes that Febvre's approach was a successful one, stating, "the invocation of the bourgeoisie now seems a little too glib, but the attempt to link religious to social history remains inspiring".⁵⁴ His model was not dissimilar to the way Bloch worked, and after the war had ended, his reputation and influence continued to increase. "Annales gradually became the focus of a historical school. It was in the 1930s and 1940s that Febvre wrote most of his attacks on narrow empiricists and specialists, and his manifestos and programmes for the 'new kind of history' associated with Annales – pleading for collaborative research, for problem orientated history and so on".⁵⁵ Progress continued and Fernand Braudel, the inheritor of leadership after Febvre, wrote in his PhD thesis that Febvre "time after time... goes out of his way to emphasise the insignificance of events and the limitations on the freedom of action of individuals".⁵⁶

The legitimacy and value of this approach, particularly in the context of this thesis is that historical study need not confine the project to purely historical processes. The theology that underpins this work can be seen as complementary to the processes that historical study can achieve. The ideas of holiness and sanctification are not often considered in historical studies of the impact of Methodism in the eighteenth century, but do enable further understanding of this group's behaviour. As Burke states, "the

⁵³ Burke, 1990: 19.

⁵⁴ Burke, 1990: 20.

⁵⁵ Burke, 1990: 26.

⁵⁶ Burke, 1990: 34.

Annales group has extended the territory of the historian to unexpected areas of human behaviour and to social groups neglected by traditional historians”.⁵⁷ For the “*Histoire de Mentalités*”, anything that could help with historical research should be used. “Bloch and Febvre asked the present to help us better understand the past”.⁵⁸

Of course, this approach is not without problems. With regards ‘*The Royal Touch*’, “Febvre chided Bloch for failing to discuss individuals in more detail”.⁵⁹ It is worth noting that the criticism was not leveled in later texts, so was not necessarily an issue with the approach, only with Bloch’s execution on this occasion. A more repeated criticism from a later member of the Annales school (Goubert writing in 1982) attacks Bloch’s “‘grandfather law’, (because) in the seventeenth century at least, on the grounds that grandparents rarely survived long enough to teach their grandchildren, but he does not cast doubt on the importance of the social transmission of tradition”.⁶⁰ This might be a flaw in Bloch’s work, but does not mean that the principle cannot stand when examining later periods of time, with longer life expectancy.

Also, Bloch (writing before a Marxist approach to history had gained influence) does not ask the pertinent question of in whose interest was the propagation of the idea that, for example, the King or Queen could miraculously heal skin disease. Thus, this thesis might include the questions asking who benefitted from abstinence, acknowledging that Bloch’s approach did not do this.⁶¹ That abstinence was a positive for certain individuals is undeniable, but for an entire social class to adopt a belief would certainly have been encouraged in some quarters, and completely discouraged in others. We see later that the wartime British Prime Minister David Lloyd George knew that an abstinent workforce was a productive one, and some parts of the Methodist Church were so delighted to hear a Prime Minister praise their stance that they may well have forgotten that the productivity that Lloyd George hoped for, also meant that war was pursued. It serves this thesis well to remember that not all who pushed for abstinence wanted it exclusively to benefit the individual who hoped to improve their existence in some way. Finally, “the most serious of these (issues) may be called the problem of immobilisation of the static picture. Historians have proved much more successful at describing mentalities at a particular point in the past than explaining how, when or why

⁵⁷ Burke, 1990: 110.

⁵⁸ Burguière, 2009: 24.

⁵⁹ Burke, 1990: 25.

⁶⁰ Burke, 1997: 45.

⁶¹ See Burke, 1997: 165 - *Varieties of Cultural History*, and Bloch, (Eng. Trans 1973) – *The Royal Touch*.

they changed”.⁶² While acknowledging these issues, this thesis will still use a “*Histoire de Mentalités*” approach. This will help to explore those ‘unsaid’ ideas and beliefs that certainly existed in Methodism during the periods of time explored, and probably still exist today. There can often be unwritten or unobserved social norms and assumptions, which can become tangible actions. This is why the origins of teetotalism amongst Methodists are not always apparent – previous historians have taken the corporate opinion as fact, while the truth is a much more complex and subtle thing than this process would suggest.

“*Histoire de Mentalités*” does not work within formalised periods of time. Bloch believed that “as long as we confine ourselves to studying sequences or phenomena in time, the problem is simple. We should look to the phenomena themselves for their proper periods”.⁶³ Bloch notes “society is not a single thing... do the forces acting upon a young worker necessarily operate, at least with equal intensity, upon a young peasant?”⁶⁴ Thus we see the point made; history (and people) cannot be put into boxes; to do so will result in poorly made judgements of past events, and will inevitably fail to give either a useful analysis, or the stories, ideas and answers we search for. Therefore, Methodism is the broad field for this study, and the historical work generally focuses on those people who identified as Methodists between 1830 and 1974. 1830 is the time when Joseph Livesey, the first organiser of abstinence, started having conversations about the issue, and 1974 is the end of Methodist abstinence, as much as we can ever set such a marker, although this project follows the downfall to the present day. In order to create a project that is manageable in size, this study highlights abstinence in England, Wales and Scotland primarily. This is not a period or geographical area that is concrete. The use of “*Histoire de Mentalités*” means that a certain flexibility is available and so while primarily a study of Methodist teetotalism in the nineteenth and twentieth century, this thesis acknowledges the influence of the European reformation, the working classes and the industrial revolution in the UK and the changing attitudes to alcohol and abstinence in Britain and America.

While Peter Burke analyses the Mentalities, he considers what Bloch and Febvre had done to develop this approach, but his critique of it actually focuses much more upon a consideration of newer academic approaches within this realm, but finds that actually,

⁶² Burke, 1992: 93.

⁶³ Bloch, 1992: 151.

⁶⁴ Bloch, 1992: 153.

even recent scholars make the same mistake. Thus, he rejects wholesale the process of mentalities, for “they continue to be preoccupied with the history of everyday thinking”.⁶⁵ While a legitimate complaint, this thesis will continue under this banner, and will strive to understand the everyday thinking of the abstainers. The teetotalism of Methodism in the nineteenth and twentieth century was often a simple act based upon a daily or hourly decision of whether to drink alcohol or not. The aim of this thesis is to rediscover what these regular thoughts were, and whether those thoughts can speak to us, or stand up to critique today.

“Why does one individual or group find absurd precisely what another takes for granted?” asks Burke. The answer given professes his belief that “there is a difference in mentality, in other words different assumptions, different perceptions, and a different ‘logic’”.⁶⁶ While two people are similar in their abstinence, they could be entirely different in their rationale. Thus, there is significant value in discovering the reason behind the choice for each individual who makes that selection. If that is not possible, at least each faction can be examined, which is essentially what has to happen with this project. As already stated, Methodism morphed into, and out of, a number of different factions with different approaches to their faith: too often, the subtle differences of these groups have been lost over time. The mentalities approach aims to avoid two “opposite dangers”. The first danger would be a dismissal of a group “as irrational or unworthy of historical consideration”; we might be led to this thought because of their obscurity, size or lack of recent historical study. The second danger to avoid is “sweeping examples under the carpet”. We might do so because a singular man or woman does not fit with all the other parts of our analysis.⁶⁷ Neither of these approaches is satisfactory, and so “the great strength of the idea of mentality” says Burke “is to make it possible to steer a course which avoids the two opposite hazards”.⁶⁸ It must be proposed that to fully consider all aspects of historical events upon individuals might be beyond the realms of possibility, but nonetheless, the “*Histoire de Mentalités*” approach is clearly very appropriate to this study, and at least attempts to hear all voices. This is beneficial because some of the variety of histories of different Methodist groups have been lost over time, but can be rediscovered. This approach reasserts the validity of smaller groups stories being read and examined.

⁶⁵ Burke, 1997: 182.

⁶⁶ Burke, 1997: 165.

⁶⁷ Burke, 1997: 169.

⁶⁸ Burke, 1997: 169.

Some Methodist historical study has not acknowledged all parts of the church's history. On occasion, historical studies read as if the stronger group has written the histories, and the weaker group has been omitted from the textbooks. This is particularly relevant in Methodism for two reasons – 1) during the course of the church's history, there have been at least two significant and formal amalgamations, which have joined different factions into one larger whole. Inevitably, whether this was attempted sensitively or not, some factions have ended up being on the 'losing side' when it came to deciding upon policy, choosing hierarchy (or lack of), agreeing particular stances or having their voice heard in historical study. 2) The Methodist Church has become a large corporation, and it is within its corporate interests to present a clear and uncomplicated view of such an organisation. So, an individual church community in a certain part of the country might have an interesting and unique opinion and stance on alcohol or gambling, but this subtlety will inevitably be lost as a corporate group of people tries to present themselves cohesively. This can be counteracted by a "*Histoire de Mentalités*" approach, and a willingness to seek out other voices. The quieter story being heard is particularly beneficial with an issue such as this, where certain ethical beliefs have been whitewashed in favour of a homogenised appearance. Marc Bloch as initiator announced his belief: "the object of history is, by nature, man behind the features of landscape, behind tools or machinery, behind what appears to be the most formalised written documents, and behind institutions... it is men that history seeks to grasp".⁶⁹ He states, "Human reality, like the physical world, is vast and variegated".⁷⁰ This viewpoint is hugely beneficial to this thesis, and serves as a cautionary tale to us as readers of corporately produced history.

If our historical focus is based upon the "*Histoire de Mentalités*", and the history we are to uncover is often obscured or forgotten, then one role of this thesis is not just to seek out those individuals speaking on abstinence, but also to acknowledge the reasons for their choices. As has been stated, the first purpose here is to 'understand the theology that informed what may broadly be called the Methodist teetotal movement in its period of greatest popularity'. As already proposed, the Wesleyan traditions became the mainstream views after Methodist Union, and their opinions have become the dominant view. It is the duty of this thesis to refer to individuals like James Thorne; propagator of Bible Christian Methodism in North-West Devon, and instigator of teetotalism and abstinence as part of their faith-community, and their daily lives. This thesis also

⁶⁹ Bloch, 1992: 21-22.

⁷⁰ Bloch, 1992: 119.

intends to dig deeper still - Thorne and his friends are uncovered through the Bible Christian archives, their biographies, writings, and the primary historians of the Bible Christians. In order to understand the Bible Christian stance on alcohol, we must understand James Thorne. However, in addition to seeing James Thorne as the magnified example of what people in his community were doing at this time, we also must consider that the Bible Christians were in fact a very small aspect of Methodism throughout history too. Despite their close links and their future agglomeration, at this point in time they were a reduced subsection of even this fairly localised faith group of Methodists. Eighteenth and nineteenth century Methodism is renowned for record keeping, self-promotion and documentation, which allows for some facts to be rediscovered. This material exposes certain events and decisions. In addition, the purpose of this thesis is not just to observe the past, but also to analyse why these past choices were made, and how the choice to abstain from alcohol became a national phenomenon.

By the “*Histoire de Mentalités*” process, the current project explores the process of encouraged teetotalism, and observes where abstinence flourished and whom it flourished with. Conversely, we can hope to establish whom this ethos did not agree with, and what that disagreement meant for the individual, the church and the society they were part of. Marc Bloch discusses the difficulty of being a historian through an analogy. He believes one of the aims of the historian is to be partisan, and that there are “two ways of being impartial: that of the scholar and that of the judge... however there comes a moment when their paths divide. When the scholar has observed and explained, his task is finished. It yet remains for the judge to pass sentence”.⁷¹ As historians then and theologians, it is our role to avoid passing sentence, but show clearly and without prejudice the failings and achievements on both sides. Our judgements can never be scientific, because we are well outside the realms of science. Others’ theological assessments, and our opinions upon their theology are not transferable to all people. This is key, but does not mean that a proper explanation of how an opinion came to be formed cannot be given. This is an emotive subject, and has been so throughout its history. To separate a strongly held opinion from provable facts is vital in the following chapters.

⁷¹ Bloch, 1992: 114-115.

If the current project is going to make claims about the historical situations, much of what occurs here has to be observational, not judgemental. Bloch insists that we “can never condemn or absolve without accepting a table of values which no longer refers to any positive science”.⁷² It is the quantifying that produces a negative effect. Bloch asks: “Are we so sure of ourselves and of our age as to divide the company of our forefathers into the just and the damned?”⁷³ The role here then must be to show, through detailed examination of individuals, and lesser known and studied groups, with an intentional impartiality, that some people with opinions outside of the victorious paradigm had different but valuable attitudes. For us, this means that views on the tangible benefits of teetotalism, or the problematic adoption of a dietary choice as an ethical stance in the nineteenth century, have to be considered without a personal consideration of which point of view would be most likely to find our sympathy. This statement is made with the acknowledgement that it is unrealistic to believe that no personal considerations will be taken into account, but instead to make efforts to set personal agendas aside, as much as possible.

Finally, in discovering these varieties of abstinence, there is the consideration of how these varieties and viewpoints differ from the community today. There emerged obvious and various problems with the teetotal movement in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as well as positive aspects to what occurred. How these two eras differ will be part of this study. This work will take place particularly through those dissenters and varieties of people who worked at the time by sharing their concerns, and worked against the mainstream reasoning both in favour of the abstinence that was prevalent, and against it when it proved problematic. Essentially, this thesis will avoid neat categorisation of successes and failures, with an aim instead of exposing interesting and surprising justifications and concerns for this ethical choice, as well as the voices that came from the mainstream, and the corporate expressions too.

⁷² Bloch, 1992: 115.

⁷³ Bloch, 1992: 115.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The review of literature undertaken in this chapter indicates that there are significant gaps in knowledge from existing academic work, particularly with reference to how and why abstinence came to be a part of wider Methodist culture. This review demonstrates that some early historical analysis produced from within Methodist sects understood how abstinence settled within the various Methodist communities, but it further reveals that the facts acknowledged by these texts did not transfer into later Methodist historical works, or historical works regarding abstinence. It is the intention of the current thesis to fill these gaps, and give wider understanding to the origins of abstinence within Methodism.

The review below charts historical scholarship that considers the separation of abstinence from the Methodist community. However, this review indicates that this new understanding about the origins and reasons for the Methodist abstinence movement is not fully utilised. In fact, there is little, if any literature available which applies this new and recovered understanding about holiness as a factor contributing to Methodist teetotalism to the historical separation of teetotalism from the church. This review shows that there is a lack of detailed academic study about the demise of the abstinence movement in the Methodist Church. Accordingly, this chapter sets the course for the rest of the thesis to consider how this separation can be understood in the light of this new evidence.

The literature review of the thesis is ordered on a categorical basis, and explores material broadly relevant to the current project. For each category, this review specifies a) what the subject area actually considers, b) the rationale for the inclusion of both the subject and the material, and how the subject area links to the wider aims of the thesis c) the limits of the subject area, and (if relevant) why other related areas and materials are not included in this review and thesis d) key points made within particular texts under a particular subject heading.

Methodist Theology

This subject area considers works of theology or theological analysis that are focused on Methodist beliefs and doctrine. This grouping considers John Wesley's works as the

start point, and also reviews the works that influenced Wesley, and the theology and academic study influenced by him. Principally Wesley's ideas on holiness, sanctification and Christian perfection are the key focus. This category of study is highlighted because of the link between the practical application of holiness that influenced some Methodist members in the nineteenth century to change their lifestyle, and the teetotal movement within British Methodism. The study of this subject is limited by the scarcity of scholarship regarding teetotalism in a Methodist context, but does include scholarship considering Wesley's theology, the theology of later Methodists, and some twenty-first century scholarship, which gives an overview of the theology of Methodism at the present time.

Harold Lindstrom's "*Wesley and Sanctification*" (1950) is clear in its understanding of how strongly Wesley's insistence on self-improvement was a cornerstone of the new community at the beginning of Methodism.⁷⁴ From this foundation, Lindstrom shows how Methodists in that era could be identified as Wesley's inheritors because of their behaviour and outlook. Lindstrom's text considers the impact of a theology of sanctification on believers, but his work does not consider this in terms of total abstinence and teetotalism. His work also does not draw upon how the Bible Christian community took up the challenge of holiness, which is a necessary discussion in the light of their support of abstinence. The focus of Manfred Marquardt's "*John Wesley's Social Ethics. Praxis and Principles*" (1992) is similar.⁷⁵ Both of these texts explore Wesley's thoughts on the practical existence of a transformed believer. This is useful to this project, but again, it does not speak specifically into the idea of avoiding alcohol, and gives no indication of the value of the work of the Bible Christians with their firm regard for sanctification.

Both Hugh Price Hughes' "*Social Christianity*" (1890) and Aldom French's "*Evangelism. A Re-interpretation*" (1921), are theological texts written in what might have been regarded as halcyon days of the Methodist Church. Both these authors attempt to encourage the Methodist community to change their community focus, and to steer a course more in keeping with Wesley's own words.^{76 77} Both studies suggest that at the time of writing in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, and in the light of contemporary trends, a reassessment of the Church's aims was needed.

⁷⁴ Lindstrom, Harald, 1950.

⁷⁵ Marquardt, Manfred, 1992.

⁷⁶ Hughes, Hugh Price, 1890.

⁷⁷ French, E. Aldom, 1921.

Hughes desires that there is a rediscovery of the type of social concern with which John Wesley and early Methodism was so synonymous within the church. Hughes is still considered a significant voice on this issue over a hundred years later, and is very regularly cited in the histories of Methodism. While Hughes notes Wesley's work in this regard, he does not consider social concerns within other forms of Methodism. French takes a different tack because of his concern that The Methodist Church was beginning to decline numerically and in terms of standards and expectations. By the time of his writing in 1921, he already considers the momentum that followed Wesley's work and teaching to be losing pace. As such, he hopes for a new evangelism that reinstates "vigour, drive, new ideas".⁷⁸ French's powers of observation show him to be accurate in his predictions, giving his opinions some serious weight. These texts are both written when Methodist teetotalism was thriving, and the absence of any consideration of abstinence is significant. Presumably, the pursuit of abstinence neither took away from, nor fully supported what both of these men were trying to do. Perhaps it had already become a distraction, away from their higher priorities. These challenges are not considered within French's text, and are therefore discussed in the present work.

From further into the twentieth century, Maddox's *"Rethinking Wesley's Theology for Contemporary Methodism"* (1998) contains helpful articles on a variety of Wesleyan themes, for a late twentieth century audience.⁷⁹ Again, there is no specific discussion on abstinence (which is obviously not a Wesleyan theme), but there are chapters detailing sanctification and Christian perfection. There is scant reference to the Bible Christians engagement with this process, and little expression past Wesley's own direct work. In fact, the Bible Christians dedication to holiness made them very visible and known in their locality in the nineteenth century, and although direct interaction with Wesley was not possible, their engagement with his conviction on this issue continued his work for a significant time, in a significant way. Their holiness, and potentially their abstinence, was linked to his work. These texts have become foundational for the present work regarding Wesley's theology enabling the initial drive to encourage abstinence.

The twenty-first century work of Ronald Stone in *"John Wesley's Life & Ethics"* (2001) describes how real change in individual people was a regular occurrence in the Methodist movement under Wesley.⁸⁰ These people "found freedom and strength in

⁷⁸ French, 1921: 11.

⁷⁹ Maddox, Randy L. (ed.), 1998.

⁸⁰ Stone, Ronald H., 2001.

their acceptance”.⁸¹ Wesley’s work was transformational in how individuals viewed themselves, and so the behaviour shifted accordingly. With Stone’s emphasis on the direct influence of Wesley on Methodist people during his life, this text describes how he expected Methodist members to choose their lifestyle carefully, in keeping with scriptural teachings. Thus, it should not be surprising that this Methodist community welcomed abstinence within a hundred years. This idea of broad change within the lives of converts is not a theme that features in historical Bible Christian studies, but it seems likely that social change would have been as significant for the Bible Christians, as it was for the early Wesleyan Methodists.

Without David Clough’s article from “*Theology Through Social and Political Action in Unmasking Methodist Theology*” (edited by Clive Marsh et. al – 2004), this thesis would be unique as a twenty-first century conversation about Methodism and teetotalism. Clough draws attention to the long forgotten question of abstinence in terms of theological standing, and Methodism’s role in the rise and fall of abstinence amongst the general membership.⁸² While Clough gives a helpful interpretation of the teetotal movement within Methodism as an indicator of socially minded ethics, he is speaking of it in the wider context of applicable ethical choices, and so uses the issue as a gateway into wider questions about the origins and reasons for practical action. His article is the source of some historical facts that are not considered elsewhere, outside of meeting and Conference minutes. Clough acknowledges reasons for the disintegration of the abstinence movement and states that “the way in which Methodists in the UK have engaged in social and political activism since the union of the Church in 1932 is crucial for appreciating how they understand the nature of the Church, its mission and the Christian life”.⁸³ This article is almost unique in discussing the demise of teetotalism after Methodist Union. He focuses on the statistics, and feedback from communities that show the decline clearly, before shifting his focus towards other social issues of concern to the modern Methodist Church. These include the alleviation of poverty and the continuation of missional activities. This, Clough believes is indicative of the fact that “the Methodist Church in the UK has changed its emphasis from a balance between attention to the personal and the social, to a clear preference in its proclamation for issues of social holiness and justice”.⁸⁴ While some might, Clough himself does not believe this to be a detrimental shift because “previously, much of the Church’s address

⁸¹ Stone, 2001: 167.

⁸² Clough, 2004.

⁸³ Clough, 2004: 41.

⁸⁴ Clough, 2004: 45.

to society was negative and critical... this is a picture of the Church grappling with changed times”.⁸⁵ Clough concludes by suggesting that the shift that the Methodist Church has made is a positive one, and allows for three defining features to shine through – “a public church... a social mission... a corporate Christian life of action”.⁸⁶ Clough is not critical of the idea of abstinence, but acknowledges why the movement was untenable in its later throes. This issue deserves a wider conversation, and this thesis focuses entirely on the question of abstinence as either beneficial or detrimental to individuals, society and the church in a way that David Clough’s article does not.

Stephen Long’s *“John Wesley’s Moral Theology: The Quest For God and Goodness”* (2005) is useful because it traces the theology that influenced Wesley, and examines how Wesley’s own theology might be applicable in a contemporary context.⁸⁷ Long analyses the works of Thomas Aquinas, and essentially concludes that both Aquinas and Wesley have become outdated. This is not unlike the conclusions that David Clough, Randy Maddox and William J. Abraham have reached. This thesis does not explicitly seek to apply Wesleyan moral theology today, but attempts to track its influence through the generations of Methodists, again acknowledging the direct line from Wesley to the Bible Christians. David Clough (as stated in the previous paragraph) has already shown that a shift needed to take place in the interpretation of Wesley’s teaching. Long foresees an issue with taking Wesley as our own moral teacher because of the huge changes that society has undergone in the time between Wesley’s life and our own; “His world was more like that of Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) than like ours”. Long also believes that Wesley’s work “only makes positive sense in the light of the tradition of moral theology that came before him”.⁸⁸ Long’s text charts the parallels that can be drawn between Wesley and theologians including Heidegger, Malebranche and Henry More, as well as Aquinas. Again, in this work there is no mention of the ethical implications of alcohol or abstinence, although Long is pleased with Wesley’s prediction that “‘ethics’ would be the downfall of Christianity”.⁸⁹ We can relate concerns about teetotalism replacing the gospel message with this assertion, and the acknowledgement that an emphasis on abstinence has sometimes damaged the mission of the church.

⁸⁵ Clough, 2004: 45.

⁸⁶ Clough, 2004: 47.

⁸⁷ Long, Stephen D., 2005.

⁸⁸ Long, 2005: xix.

⁸⁹ Long, 2005: xix.

William Abraham's chapter titled "*Christian Perfection*" in his "*Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies*" (2009) is a significant examination of the current understanding of spiritual perfection.⁹⁰ Abraham calls the notion of Christian perfection, "at best a dead letter and at worst a source of political delusion amongst contemporary Methodists".⁹¹ A key value of this chapter is the understanding by Abraham that Wesley's theology of Christian perfection tells believers that they "do not have to live morally defeated lives".⁹² Abraham however believes that the doctrine was "an accident waiting to happen".⁹³ This might mean that a misinterpretation of what is a complicated theological idea could lead some Christians down difficult and dangerous paths – for example, an early Methodist preacher named Thomas Maxwell believed that a significant number of Christians reaching perfection could bring about the end times. Wesley was often working to challenge these kinds of beliefs, and he held this theology closely to keep control over it. But, Abraham suggests that as disagreements grew louder towards the end of the nineteenth century, they "inevitably shook the whole tradition to its foundations and have left it scurrying for identity and unity for over a century".⁹⁴ In the wake of these problems, "Wesley himself was set aside as a creature of his times; his work may have been fine for the eighteenth century... but not sufficient for the troubles and challenges of a new day".⁹⁵ This chimes with Stephen Long's assessment of Wesley as an outdated thinker. Most worryingly, Abraham believes that "Wesley's insistence that holiness was the heart and soul of the faith paved the way for a radically anthropocentric turn that bedevils the tradition as a whole".⁹⁶ Abraham's article mirrors Clough's assertion that abstinence took over from other more gospel-led ideals and hopes. It had, in Abraham's words, "drifted off into a life of its own".⁹⁷ Therefore, Methodism had become its own religion that had little to do with either Jesus' teaching and sacrifice, nor the traditions of holiness from which it had found its energy and origins. However, the initial worth of Wesley's teaching is not lost. As Abraham states, "Methodism preached a vision of perfection as a real possibility for all believers here and now; it offered entire sanctification for the masses rather than postpone it till death or limit it to the chosen few in the monastery".⁹⁸ A recovery of this enthusiastically shared hope could be hugely beneficial to the community, and the world

⁹⁰ Abraham, William J. and Kirby, James E. (ed.) 2009.

⁹¹ Abraham and Kirby (ed.), 2009: 587.

⁹² Abraham and Kirby (ed.), 2009: 587.

⁹³ Abraham and Kirby (ed.), 2009: 591.

⁹⁴ Abraham and Kirby (ed.), 2009: 592.

⁹⁵ Abraham and Kirby (ed.), 2009: 592.

⁹⁶ Abraham and Kirby (ed.), 2009: 593.

⁹⁷ Abraham and Kirby (ed.), 2009: 593.

⁹⁸ Abraham and Kirby (ed.), 2009: 597.

at large, if it could be contextualised fully. The Bible Christians found some of this energy and used it to significant effect.

Methodist History

This section reviews literature written in consideration of Methodist history, specifically the history of the relationship between the denomination and the teetotal movement. Historical study is key to both aims of the current project, so analysis of previous work on these topics is essential. The subject area within this project is limited to the history of the origins of Methodism, the Wesleyan Methodist Church, the Primitive Methodist Church and the Bible Christians, and the two unions that brought these groups together. Although the thesis spans John Wesley's working life until the present day, there is particular focus upon historical study that considers British Methodism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The key faction for this thesis is the Bible Christian community, so there is more consideration of them than any other group. The Primitive Methodist Church had conversations about abstinence, so the historical writing that acknowledges this are also included. The texts that explain the Wesleyan Methodist Church's decision to not support teetotalism, and their later decision to change focus are included. Much that occurred historically during and after the two key unions of the church in 1907 and 1932 give significant answers to questions regarding policy. Finally, this review acknowledges texts that explain how abstinence within British Methodism as a corporate idea disappeared.

This section of the literature review has been split into further subsections, corresponding to different fragments of Methodism. Within each subsection, the work is considered chronologically with regards publication. This might seem unnecessarily complicated, but many of these subsections of Methodism were unaware of the details of their sister organisations, and so are presented as the limbs of the body as they were at the time. Innovations were often mirrored across the groups, but these factions did not know of (or at least acknowledge) these coincidences until later on. The two mainline Methodist Unions (firstly creating the United Methodist Church in 1907, and then joining the United Methodist Church with the Primitive Methodist Church and Wesleyan Methodist Church in 1932) meant that these shared values were joined, but often the origins were different, and not always vocalised. Sometimes these differences were lost or whitewashed. While this is understandable in the complexity of an

amalgamation, it often means that the delicacy of certain theological reasons and differences were lost. This loss of detail is particularly an issue with regard to abstinence and teetotalism. To study the relevant parts of Methodism again with this focus in mind allows for these ideas to be exposed.

Wesleyan Methodist Church History

The texts regarding Jabez Bunting, who was General Secretary and President of the Wesleyan Methodist Church several times, are significantly useful concerning Methodism in the nineteenth century – it is Bunting who is credited with turning a fairly disparate group of Methodist believers and communities into an effective denomination. These works give a valuable critique of a man who was both popular and unpopular in equal measure.⁹⁹ Most texts acknowledge that while it was Bunting's work that brought solidity to the Wesleyan Methodist Church as a denomination, he also removed some of the vigour and pioneering spirit from it, in order that it could become fully established. Rigg's "*Jabez Bunting. A Great Methodist Leader*" is not especially academic in tone, and gives Bunting a generous legacy.¹⁰⁰ This text displays clearly an issue that will arise again – this thesis at times relies upon hobbyist historians and biased overseers for evidence. Rigg was a good chronicler but not an analyst. Despite this issue, both this text and the collection of his correspondence, tells the reader that Bunting's focus on cementing the church's foundations was indicative of a wider feeling in Methodism. It was this corporate process that led to the creation of groups like the Primitive Methodist Church, who were a reaction against, and victims of new regulations.¹⁰¹ This thesis uses these texts to consider the impact that his denomination construction had upon emergent teetotal groups at the time, and finds his work culpable, not just in his dismissal, but his unwillingness to understand the value of the movement. This decision unsurprisingly enraged those who saw teetotalism as a value that was drawn down from the Christian gospel.

Hayman's "*Methodism in North Devon*" (1871) shows some of the challenges that were caused by Wesleyan and Anglican authorities for the Bible Christians in Devon, and in parallel, the similar struggles faced by the Primitive Methodist Church in the

⁹⁹ Marles, H. 1865.

¹⁰⁰ Rigg, James H. Publication date unknown.

¹⁰¹ Primitive Methodism began when some Wesleyan Methodist preachers were expelled for continuing to organise and preach at outdoor "camp" meetings. Their attitudes worked in direct contradiction to Bunting's hopes for the future in terms of stability and establishment.

Midlands.¹⁰² Hayman shows the reader how all of these factions, despite their significant number of similarities, sometimes struggled to work together, and is a helpful exposé of the refusal to see beyond community boundaries. The kind of tribalism displayed here inevitably influenced the future struggles regarding co-operation and the avoiding of duplication. Similarly, the clear refusal to tackle difficulties is taken up when considering the background to the whole movement, given in Fitzgerald's "*The Roots of Methodism*" (1905). This text gives significant basis for the stories of the Wesley family and Whitefield, and is far enough removed in years to be critical of some historical failings.¹⁰³ The focus here is on the social history of the movement and its originators, as well as the origin of some converts. A different focus is gained through Townsend, Workman and Eayrs' "*A New History of Methodism*" (1909). This work gives a contemporary history while the community was still in the ascendancy.¹⁰⁴ This text reflects an optimism that the Methodist movement will continue to make strides forward (with its promotion of abstinence included in this progress) and a new era for the nation will dawn through the advancement of the church. Much of this book's early history contains useful scholarship, but what actually materialised in terms of church decline shows a false view of the future. This causes us to question their other opinions, and revisit their ideas as outlined in chapters 3, 4 and 5.

In contrast to this, Ward's "*Early Victorian Methodism: The Correspondence of Jabez Bunting 1830-1858*" (1976) benefits from the gift of hindsight.¹⁰⁵ Published over a hundred years after Bunting's death, we can see in some detail how much consternation was caused by the promotion of teetotalism by some Methodists within the Wesleyan Connexion. The letters that Bunting receives, and the replies given, show very clearly a sense that the teetotal movement was getting in the way of the stability that Bunting worked towards. While he was not specifically opposed to the ideal of abstinence, Bunting had higher priorities than this one issue, and his missives prove this to be the case. While Bunting's work established the Wesleyan Methodist Church as an acknowledged denomination, some teetotal promoters are recorded as agitating the stewards and ministers in local situations. This collection of letters shows the situation clearly from Bunting's point of view. It is a reminder that some within Wesleyan Methodism were keen on abstinence, but the organisation blocked the growth of the

¹⁰² Hayman, John Gould, 1871.

¹⁰³ Fitzgerald, W.H.B., 1905.

¹⁰⁴ Townsend, W.J. Workman, H.B and Eayrs, George 1909.

¹⁰⁵ Ward, W.R., 1976.

teetotal movement within the church. This is in contrast to some other Methodist organisations, explored in this thesis.

Harrison, Aquila Barber, Hornby, and Tegla Davies' text titled *The Methodist Church. Its Origins, Divisions and Reunion* (1932) was written to coincide with Union, and endeavoured to explain what each faction brought to the tradition.¹⁰⁶ While uncritical in its appraisals, it is a useful document in highlighting what most Methodist people's understandings of each other would have been. This text fits into the category of 'enthusiastic', rather than 'accurate'. The interpretation of what is taking place suffers accordingly, but gives insight into how Methodism was always going to struggle when difficult disagreements arose – the text highlights that little of the impact of tribalism and genuine concerns about difference had been considered at the point of Union. It is a point for comparison, between the vision shown for the future of the church, and the later realities. Although work has taken place regarding union and its difficulties, its effect on abstinence within the church has not been considered. This problem is addressed in chapter 7.

Bates' "*The Methodist Church*" (1977) presents a snapshot view of the late twentieth century church, and what it might appear like to those outside it.¹⁰⁷ This is essentially a pocket guide, but as such, Bates, mentions Methodism's history with regard to abstinence, but also acknowledges "not all Methodists are total abstainers".¹⁰⁸ This theme is held in tension in much of the literature from this time, which will be seen when primary material is considered. It appears that Bates writes in full knowledge that some readers would insist that abstinence is a key feature of Methodism, while others would insist that its requirement was partly to blame for Methodism's malaise at the time of writing.

In contrast to the aforementioned snapshot, Davies, George and Rupp's "*A History of The Methodist Church in Great Britain*" (1983) is an all encompassing and hugely extensive collection of essays.¹⁰⁹ It requires four volumes and contains articles on all aspects of British Methodism. It is invaluable to this study, and in fact, all contemporary studies of Methodism. Almost every chapter bears some relevance to this thesis, while

¹⁰⁶ Harrison, A.W., Aquila Barber, B., Hornby, G.G., Tegla Davies, E., 1932.

¹⁰⁷ Bates, Jim, 1977.

¹⁰⁸ Bates, 1977: 47.

¹⁰⁹ Davies, Rupert, George, Raymond A. and Rupp, Gordon (ed.) 1983.

some chapters provide evidence for the work of the thesis. This text is essential to this project, and to wider studies of the Methodist Church.

Hempton's "*Methodism and Politics in British Society 1750-1850*" (1987) and Rack's "*Reasonable Enthusiast. John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism*" (1989) build on the work in the aforementioned collection; Rack contributes significantly and his text is particularly useful in its understanding and explanation of John Wesley's role in the growth of Methodism. Rack explains that the strengths of character that Wesley possessed allowed the movement to spread in a particular way. Essentially, Wesley's uniqueness led to a Christian community that would not be easily replicable. More so, as we have shown from other texts, including the work of Clough and Abraham, once John Wesley died, there was a struggle to even keep order and hold the Connexion together, let alone to make sure that the same elements of the Methodist genetics were maintained in balance, or even built upon. This issue is key to our understanding of other groups within British Methodism, who were not part of the Wesleyan Methodist Church. The specific difficulties shown here directly led to a failure by the Church community to express, understand or compare how different factions operated, when union took place. This meant that Methodist people have been presented with a variety of expressions of abstinence, the understanding of this fact being key to this thesis.

Turner's "*Modern Methodism in England 1932-1998*" (1998) gives a fairly stark prediction of the future of the Methodist Church through an appraisal of what has happened in the sixty years that the text covers. The author believes the disagreements surrounding abstinence to be indicative of wider problems; essentially an unease and dissatisfaction with what has been achieved, and a degree of unhappiness about the future trajectory of the denomination. Turner's frustration is based upon the belief that when the final Methodist Union took place, it solved no problems, and created more issues, largely because of the unwillingness of the Connexion to make difficult decisions. He believes that "union was a merger without the toughness to be found in commercial and industrial amalgamations... at a local level it soon became obvious that Methodist Union had offered no really new ideas about church organisation, but simply provided an uneasy compromise which yielded little experimentation".¹¹⁰ Turner's exasperation is understandable, and his attention to detail allows his readers to benefit from an approach that helpfully mirrors our own "*Histoire de Mentalités*". The historian

¹¹⁰ Turner, 1998: 10.

successfully sees the wider issues that appeared after Methodist Union by paying attention to the local details. By observing a very small part of the corporation, he takes note of the difficult day-to-day issues that emerged, and expands upon them relevantly. This work and technique is used within this thesis, and Turner's analysis has influenced how the present work views the Methodist Church, after union.

One of the most contemporary texts in this selection also deals with some of the most distant history. John Newton's text on "*Susanna Wesley and the Puritan Tradition in Methodism*" (2003) gives useful insight into John Wesley's grounding in Puritanism, which came about through Susanna's maternal influence.¹¹¹ Certainly, his mother's beliefs had an enormous impact upon John's life, and in the light of a Methodist Church that took certain moral issues very seriously this is a useful text with a worthwhile selection of parallels to draw. Newton does not make the comparison between the failings of, and backlash against the Puritan movement, and the similar (although less severe) occurrences in Methodism, but the present work makes those valuable connections, thanks to this book.

Vickers' "*Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland*" (2000) is exactly what the title suggests.¹¹² In a universe of acronyms, vague title variations and complicated historic events that exist in Methodism, this work of compilation and order is incredibly valuable. Many definitions given in this thesis come courtesy of this book, and are used because they are as brief and insightful as can be hoped for. Yrigoyen's work, titled, "*T&T Clark Companion to Methodism*" (2010) however does not achieve the same levels of completeness or competence.¹¹³ Through its attempt to include discussions of theological difference and diversity, as well as historical events, it considers none of these things to a satisfactory level. As only one example, but in relation to this thesis, Yrigoyen's book neither discusses nor mentions abstinence, teetotalism or alcohol as any part of Methodism in the past or today. While it cannot be expected that every form of Methodism can be documented in depth, it is surprising to find a text that makes no mention of such a significant area. Perhaps this gives a sign that Methodism and teetotalism are currently viewed as very separate.

¹¹¹ Newton, John 2003.

¹¹² Vickers, John A. 2000.

¹¹³ Yrigoyen Jr, Charles, 2010.

Primitive Methodist Church History

Our understanding today of the Primitive Methodist Church is largely based upon the communities' most extensive historian – H.B. Kendall. He produced two separate histories, one intended to be a lighter version. Both are detailed and academic in tone, but Kendall's work and consistency as the pinnacle of Primitive Methodist reporting is a highlight amongst other more parochial and biased historians, some of whom are also used here. The present thesis makes some use of the journals of the two founders of the Primitive Methodist movement, in particular using "*The Journals of William Clowes*" (1844).¹¹⁴ Clowes can probably be described as the more socially aware of the founding partners, and was certainly the less keen of the two founders of the Primitive Methodist Church regarding abstinence and teetotalism as movements. He considered them unworthy of the support of their community. His words highlight in a personal way the problem with declaring oneself abstinent. He understands the issue as essentially a dressing up of an individual as one who is 'progressing'. In actuality, Clowes believed that the choice could take away the belief in a need for salvation. This process of adopting teetotalism may have instead taken focus away from the journey that a person should make as a Christian, and the declaration they should make of absolute deference to God. Davison's "*The Life of the Venerable William Clowes*" (1854) uses the aforementioned journal as its primary source.¹¹⁵ It is therefore unsurprising that it comes to similar conclusions, and paints Clowes as the much more 'politically moderate' personality in the partnership between himself and Hugh Bourne. Clowes is sometimes shown here as the voice of reason when the teetotal movement has lost its head with enthusiasm and fervour. Alternatively, by comparison, Jesse Ashworth's "*The Life of the Venerable Hugh Bourne*" is most guilty of this enthusiasm, creating an image of his mentor Bourne as "very remarkable" and "very wise", amongst other attributes.¹¹⁶ This praise is based upon Ashworth's view of Bourne as a near-ultimate authority on ethics and churchmanship. This type of claim appears to have been accepted by some factions, and led to the kind of zealousness that caused the church many of its future problems.

The present work depends heavily on Kendall's "*History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion*" (1888) and "*The Origins and History of the Primitive Methodist Church Volumes I and II*" (1905). These books are comprehensive studies of this different

¹¹⁴ Clowes, William, 1844.

¹¹⁵ Davison, John, 1854.

¹¹⁶ Ashworth, 1888: 13-14.

version of Methodism, and their contribution here is invaluable.^{117 118} Kendall's work is particularly detailed, even documenting the actions of different circuits of the Primitive Methodist Church, so that we are able to have significant anecdotal evidence about those who chose teetotalism in the community, and their reasons for doing so. The benefit of this minutiae is reinforced by Petty's "*A History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion*" (2008), which is not as detailed as the encyclopedic work of Kendall, but gives extra valuable information, particularly on the Primitive Methodist Church's relationship with the Bible Christians, useful in the assessment here of how the Bible Christian leader James Thorne came to hear of the teetotal mission.¹¹⁹ In addition to Kendall, Julia Stewart Werner's work titled *The Primitive Methodist Connexion. Its Background and Early History* (1984) uses the works of Kendall to produce a concise analysis of how the Primitive Methodist Church came to exist, and the struggles and successes that occurred in its early years.¹²⁰ The author uses the same primary texts as this thesis, and so the conclusions are understandably useful.

All but one of the texts on the Primitive Methodist Church noted above are over a century old, but Price's "*Turning the World Upside Down*" (2012) is a contemporary view in a concise form.¹²¹ Price shows how the early Primitive Methodist forms of evangelism were what made the community grow and suggests that the twenty-first century church needs the same type of zeal if it hopes for reform and new growth. While this agenda is not useful to this project, it is helpful to have another contemporary view on this subject matter, and the members of the Primitive Methodist Church. Price's work ultimately struggles because of his lack of engagement with the contemporary Church, but his historical process is beneficial for its broad overview.

Bible Christian history

Bible Christian history relies upon the scholarship of a group of Bible Christian leaders who worked from the end of the nineteenth century, throughout the creation of the United Methodist Church and into the time of Methodist Union. It seems likely that these scholars saw the importance of recording their experiences and the work of the Bible Christians, before the subtleties of their unique group were lost over time. Richard

¹¹⁷ Kendall, H.B., 1888.

¹¹⁸ Kendall, H.B., 1905

¹¹⁹ Petty, John, reprinted in 2008.

¹²⁰ Stewart Werner, Julia, 1984.

¹²¹ Price, Dave, 2012.

Pyke and F.W. Bourne were most significant of this group. Since their era, very little has been written about the Bible Christians.

James Thorne, the primary protagonist of the Bible Christians, wrote his own memoirs, but these have been compiled and edited by his son, with much additional material interspersed by diary entries: titled “*James Thorne of Shebbear: a memoir*” (1873).¹²² From these records we are shown a man who takes on the huge task of bringing a Methodist type of religious enthusiasm to a part of the country that had not previously adopted Methodism; the text shows that he thrives because of these problems. Thorne is less prosaic with his notes than John Wesley, so we see his struggles written down in a somewhat emotional form. Through this we are shown his belief that a striving for holiness is extremely important within a Christian journey. Frustratingly, Thorne Sr. and his son gloss over the period directly after his adoption of teetotalism, and so our conclusions about his early responses that took him from a mere acceptance, to the head of a community that became synonymous with abstinence will always be conjecture to some extent. An aim of this thesis is to properly consider why Thorne chose to abstain, and what his degree of commitment actually was, in addition to the information given within his biography.

One of the most prominent Bible Christians was F.W. Bourne, who worked a generation later than Thorne. He was also a significant historian of the denomination, so Bourne’s “*The Bible Christians*” (1905) endeavours to give a complete history of the community, including almost every notable preacher and church member.¹²³ The author allows some room for contributions to an understanding of Bible Christian theology. Bourne records that “at the first Bible Christian Conference, they endeavoured to decide upon their Creed, a part of which reads as a proclamation: “I love holiness, the whole that was in Christ, and I pursue it”.¹²⁴ At the fifth Conference they agreed upon the recited: “we are labouring to raise up a holy church”.¹²⁵ For the 1867 Conference, James Thorne’s sermon speaks of Ministers, who like the Apostles “preach the doctrines of justification through faith in the atonement of Christ, and of regeneration and sanctification through the operation of the Holy Ghost, exemplifying in their own lives the powerful effects of the doctrines they teach”.¹²⁶ This text strongly indicates that the Bible Christians are

¹²² Thorne, James, 1873 *James Thorne of Shebbear: a memoir. Compiled from his diaries and his letters by his son.*

¹²³ Bourne, F.W., 1905 *The Bible Christians.*

¹²⁴ Bourne, 1905: 80.

¹²⁵ Bourne, 1905: 125.

¹²⁶ Bourne, 1905: 393.

particularly inclined towards holiness, which may well have allowed for space for the promotion of and support for teetotalism. They soon became the teetotal pioneers that we know them to have been. Bourne is a primary source, and used prominently in the present thesis.

Richard Pyke's "*The Golden Chain*" (1908) is a précis of Bourne's lengthier and more detailed text.¹²⁷ Unfortunately, Pyke is much more inclined towards anecdote and rhetoric than historic detail or theological exposition. This makes for frustrating reading, and the information imparted about the community's theological choices is minimal. The text does refer to the later Bible Christians being open to ecumenism, which is a theme not heard elsewhere, but otherwise the text is repetitious and less detailed than other books that are contemporary to it.

Shaw's "*The Bible Christians 1815-1907*" (1965) gives a complete picture of the Bible Christian movement and is contemporary with the community's final decade.¹²⁸ The author focuses on the genesis of the group, the nature of the people involved and the further establishment of the movement, which Shaw believes to have been notable for its separatism from the established churches. He states "a conservative estimate, thirty percent of the first recorded Bible Christian membership was formerly Methodist... the Bible Christians represented a schism not only from Methodism, but from the Church of England".¹²⁹ Shaw's text is one of history in every sense; he is concerned with physical occurrences and practical and measurable matters. He does not spend much time describing or explaining theological stances or even disagreements. We are told "a non-conformity to the world was expected of all members in the earliest days".¹³⁰ Shaw believes that the Bible Christians "knew they were heirs of John Wesley's Arminianism and theologically they could not be anything other than Methodists".¹³¹ He describes the denomination as "a scion of eighteenth-century Methodism which inherited its evangelical, pietistic and puritanical features more completely than its traditional ones".¹³² Shaw also quotes from Charles Wesley's hymn '*Ye that do your Master's will*', which he calls the "the goal of Christian living". The second verse of the hymn proclaims "Sing, ye happy souls that press towards the height of holiness".¹³³ Shaw also

¹²⁷ Pyke, R. 1908 *The Golden Chain*.

¹²⁸ Shaw, Thomas, 1965 *The Bible Christians 1815-1907*.

¹²⁹ Shaw, 1965: 39.

¹³⁰ Shaw, 1965: 110.

¹³¹ Shaw, 1965: 98.

¹³² Shaw, 1965: 103.

¹³³ Shaw, 1965: 104.

quotes a letter from the founder and James Thorne's predecessor, William O'Bryan: "(I) have but one great business... to be as holy and as much like my Saviour as I possibly can". Shaw concludes, "The Bible Christian would have admitted that his ascetic behaviour was in essence a self-discipline" and "among the Bible Christians the theology of conversion and sanctification was constantly emphasised".¹³⁴ "Sanctification is the believers privilege but that continuance in the state of salvation depends upon 'maintaining a life of humble and obedient faith'".¹³⁵ This text is used to significant effect in the present work.

Alcohol and Abstinence

This subject area considers works of historical, social and ethical analysis on the topics of alcohol and abstinence. This subject area is included because this project has to analyse religious abstinence, non-religious abstinence, and arguments that dismiss this teetotal stance. A variety of literature within this section tackles all of these ideas. The subject area is limited to work that considers alcohol and abstinence in Britain, and this project primarily focuses upon books that focus upon the drinking of alcohol since the eighteenth century. The key texts in this category set the tone for this thesis' consideration of the wider subject of alcohol, and their conclusions give the least biased available indicators and opinions concerning the failings of the temperance and teetotal movements. Also, most of these texts embed the teetotal and temperance movements much more satisfactorily into wider history than the self-promoting denominational histories are able to do. Possibly the most two significant books in the entire bibliography for this project are found in this section, specifically the secular study; Harrison's "*Drink and the Victorians*" (1971) and Thompson Brake's church study, "*Drink. Ups and Downs of Methodist Attitudes to Temperance*" (1974).^{136 137}

Harrison's work is based upon a socio-political historical framework, and gives insight into the failures of the temperance movement and the hostile takeover by the more extreme version, teetotalism. His work analyses what the social make-up of these abstaining communities was, and whether that changed over time. He also considers what an individual's life after the decision to abstain would look like without the pub as

¹³⁴ Shaw, 1965: 105-106.

¹³⁵ Shaw, 1965: 107.

¹³⁶ Harrison, Brian, 1971 *Drink and the Victorians*.

¹³⁷ Thompson-Brake, George, 1974 *Drink. Ups and Downs of Methodist Attitudes to Temperance*.

part of it, and how the teetotal societies approached this quandary. This too allows for a conversation about what changes this phenomenon brought about in society, and how these switches started to make some of the teetotal society's activities surplus to requirement. This was coupled with an undermining (or increased irrelevance) of their work by changes made by government and the drinks industry. Harrison's work is of deep significance to this project, particularly on account of his acknowledgement that the abstinence movement was peppered with problems, and was likely to have caused its own downfall.

Harrison's most significant contribution to this project is his recording of what could be called the secular teetotal movement, and those individuals within it who were concerned by negative religious influence. They felt that theological justification was being applied to their cause, and the church was retaking control, after they had lost their own temperance cause. Harrison pays particular attention to the leaders of this movement, and what their backgrounds and influences were. He also asserts that the age of these individuals meant they would have seen how campaigning had affected the slave trade, and therefore what campaigning could achieve. According to Harrison, these people were part of the "nation-wide radical working class".¹³⁸ This chimes with this project's understanding of how ambitious the church, particularly the working class portion of Methodism, became in terms of its goals, in parallel to the ambition of the secular abstinence movement.

Thompson Brake gives a historic review of specifically Methodist involvement in the teetotal movement. This work may appear to be essentially the same as the present project, however, Thompson Brake's emphasis is towards the Wesleyan Methodist Church, and he is unaware or unwilling to see or acknowledge earlier developments within the wider family of Methodism. He does however acknowledge that holiness is a particularly sound reason for abstinence, but any origins for holiness as a cause of abstinence are not mentioned, and this assertion appears very late in his work, making it hard for him to justify. He does not draw the links between this idea of holiness, and what the Bible Christians did, or what Wesley proposed for a life working towards sanctification. Much emphasis in the present thesis is on challenging and dismantling some of Thompson Brake's assumptions, which have become prevalent through the denomination because of his work.

¹³⁸ Harrison, 1971: 140.

Longmate's "*The Waterdrinkers*" (1968) is a fairly brief history of temperance and teetotalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the British Isles.¹³⁹ The author focuses on the individual pioneers of the movement, including Livesey in England and Father Mathew in Ireland. Longmate believes that "the teetotalers were inspired by a conviction that their work was God-given... such language did not sound out of place in the non-conformist chapels which were the site of so many early temperance meetings... without the widespread support of the free churches the infant movement might not have survived".¹⁴⁰ Longmate offers a useful overview specifically of the temperance and teetotal movements, and gives a seemingly unprejudiced view of these groups, which is helpful when considering the swathes of amateur historians and their biased historical work. He understandably does not acknowledge or consider theological reasoning for these choices amongst Christians. Confusingly, Longmate believes the first teetotalers in the whole nation (ahead of Livesey and the men of Preston) to be The Cowherdites, a small Christian sect, who also happened to be known as Bible Christians in some quarters. This bears no relation to the present thesis (except to perhaps doubt Livesey as the first organiser of teetotalers) but might spark some questions. This potential issue is noted here. Longmate does not mention the North Devon Bible Christians at all, except to tell us that these Cowherdites bear no relation to our southwestern Bible Christians.

Williams and Thompson Brake's "*Drink in Great Britain 1900 to 1979*" (1980) is part of George Thompson Brake's work that does not focus on Methodist abstinence.¹⁴¹ Thompson Brake, as a previous member of the United Kingdom Alliance Temperance group uses the findings of several reports to show that alcohol is not just an issue for Methodists who abstained, but for wider society too. His work is different to the aforementioned Methodist approach, and he and Williams endeavour to clearly show the societal effects, without emotive language attached. This work is useful in parallel to Thompson Brake's other book, and highlights some of the issues that led to the different forms of abstinence.¹⁴² Lillian Shiman's "*Crusade Against Drink in Victorian England*" (1988) is an eminently helpful work that maps out the different abstainers of the UK at different times and in different places.¹⁴³ Shiman shows the connections between different groups, and the subtleties of difference between them, as well as the severity

¹³⁹ Longmate, Norman, 1968 *The Waterdrinkers*.

¹⁴⁰ Longmate, 1968: 52-53.

¹⁴¹ Williams, Gwylmor Prys and Thompson-Brake, George, 1980 *Drink in Great Britain 1900 to 1979*.

¹⁴² Thompson-Brake, George, 1974 *Drink. Ups and Downs of Methodist Attitudes to Temperance*.

¹⁴³ Shiman, Lilian Lewis, 1988 *Crusade Against Drink in Victorian England*.

of the politics that often hindered the work of societies. Regrettably, this text does not acknowledge the Bible Christians (Shiman, like others is hindered by the Bible Christians' sometime use of 'temperance' as a title above 'teetotalism') as forerunners. Another disappointment is a lack of any acknowledgement of theological encouragement amongst denominations for this ethical choice. Nevertheless, her work enables a broad range of abstainers to be noticed and considered. When paired with Thompson Brake's work, and the studies of Barr and Harrison, we gain a reasonably representative picture. The present thesis observes the gap in Shiman's work, and endeavours to provide additional information.

Andrew Barr's "*Drink, A Social History*" (1998) is an extensive study of the history of British habits regarding alcohol.¹⁴⁴ Barr's work spans from the middle of the first millennium until the present day and considers pricing, laws and health, as well as the ethical questions, sociology and psychology that all fit into the wider issues regarding alcohol. Barr gives some context to the question of why Wesley's view on alcohol differed from that of James Thorne less than a century later. He also contextualises how the campaigning that took place by the temperance societies caused changes in the law. Given these successes, Barr shows why there was some momentum, which also led to campaigns for prohibition. Barr casts a critical eye over the abstinence movements, and gives a useful outside perspective. He too, chooses not to acknowledge the theology behind these issues, or even the role of the Bible Christians. Views of those outside the teetotal campaign who hoped for wartime prohibitions are represented, including the factory owners who hoped for a "root and branch" treatment of the problem.¹⁴⁵ Barr also places particular emphasis on how different drinks, or indeed different types of abstaining attracted different classes of people. This text is valuable specifically regarding legal issues on alcohol, and the background information on how changes in those laws came to pass. This thesis aims to build upon this overarching perspective to explore the religious approaches from some of these pioneers.

Christopher Cook's "*Alcohol, Addiction and Christian Ethics*" (2006) is a significantly relevant text.¹⁴⁶ The book is contemporary to the present work, uses historical study and states a belief that the Christian faith still has something to say in the face of problems caused by alcohol and addiction. Cook uses those who have previously spoken out

¹⁴⁴ Barr, Andrew, 1998 *Drink, A Social History*.

¹⁴⁵ Barr, 1998: 301.

¹⁴⁶ Cook, Christopher C.H., 2006 *Alcohol, Addiction and Christian Ethics*.

against drunkenness (for example, St Paul and Martin Luther) to reiterate the tradition that exists and can possibly be built upon. The present thesis differs from Cook's project in two particular ways. The framework for Cook's work is the field of psychology (he is both an ordained Anglican and a trained Psychologist), but there is much relevance for this project in terms of both how addiction and community values come to take root. The two projects also differ in the hoped for outcomes; Cook is speaking particularly of those who suffer with alcohol addiction, and what within the Christian faith can address this struggle. This is of course relevant to the present study, but this thesis addresses the notion that alcohol can also be problematic and abstinence can likewise be beneficial to those not addicted. Cook shows an understanding of why abstinence was encouraged, and is empathic to it. But, he explains the difficulties of a society that sees alcohol as taboo. There is always the potential for inadvertently driving alcohol consumption and trading underground. This potential problem clashes with Cook's hope that the conversations about alcohol that take place in churches can be encouraging, non-judgment and beneficial, rather than accusatory. His exchange on this issue is a salient reminder of some of the many potential pitfalls for any future abstinence movement, and highlights how serious the consequences can be when abstinence and alcohol are not handled carefully. Cook's text is highly relevant to this study, and while the starting points for the studies are not the same, they share ideas about how encouraging abstinence can be both beneficial and problematic.

The nineteenth century American minister Lyman Beecher is central to Cook's work, and it is Beecher's reasons for abstinence that are considered in the most depth by Cook. Beecher's work was scriptural in basis, but he looked for a political solution to the problems caused by alcohol and addiction. Cook explores others who work in a similar vein, including Norman Kerr, Dawson Burns and Thomas Bridgett. Within Cook's work, we are not given either much detail on Joseph Livesey or the Methodist groups that became abstinent. It is an assumption that because of the lack of detail in relation to the reasons for their choice, Cook has chosen more useful subjects. This is understandable, and shows the crux of why the present project is necessary and treads new ground. Cook helpfully offers a clear theological framework for how all aspects of alcohol consumption can be understood, and what can be gained from better understanding. This theological framework is expressed as 1) "Alcohol as desirable commodity; both to Christians and non-Christians."¹⁴⁷ 2) "Addiction as theological

¹⁴⁷ Cook, 2006: 172.

disorder”; nothing is more desirable to humanity than God, but when something else stops us desiring God, it can be called a theological disorder. Alcohol addiction is one of many such things.¹⁴⁸ 3) “The supreme good as goal of addiction treatment”: minimisation of harm and the public good are important aims, but they need to be seen in the broader context of achieving the supreme good, a desire for God.¹⁴⁹ 4) “The common good as aim of alcohol policy”: if the supreme good is the aim of treating addiction, then the common good requires premeditative work when policy is written.¹⁵⁰ Ultimately, while the Methodist voice that this thesis hopes to explore and consider has spoken of an increased holiness for the individual, Cook takes the model further. He believes that excessive drinking and addiction are eschatological issues; “drunkenness and addiction... are inconceivable in the eschatological context of the gathering together of all things in Christ himself”.¹⁵¹ This notion is not at odds with the idea of individual holiness, but extends it, considering what holiness might mean for the whole of creation. The key difference between the present work and that of Cook is the question of whether it is alcohol that needs action or whether drunkenness is the problem to be tackled. Cook sensibly avoids that decision, and this is a salient lesson for those who did not; legalism is surely as much a barrier to the Kingdom of heaven as addiction is.

In conclusion, this review has asserted the need for further work to take place in order to consider both the origins of the Methodist abstinence movement, and reasons that Methodism and abstinence became so closely regarded. This further work needs to take place in particular because there are early nineteenth century versions of these studies, but these are all significantly outdated. There are notable gaps in the study of this topic, and some of the work that is available is unhelpfully focused upon particular sects, rather than the wider Methodist picture. In addition, the current work can consider what our new understanding of these original values change about how we consider the downfall of the movement in the twentieth century. Also, the disagreements about the role of abstinence in the community, and its benefits or otherwise have meant that most work that considers the decreasing connection between teetotalism and Methodism has partisan qualities. This chapter has highlighted all of these issues, and so the current project intends to answer the questions that remain, in the light of pre-existing literature. It also intends to avoid assumptions, and is able to do so because of the distance

¹⁴⁸ Cook, 2006: 177.

¹⁴⁹ Cook, 2006: 184.

¹⁵⁰ Cook, 2006: 189.

¹⁵¹ Cook, 2006: 201.

between these original disagreements and the present time, unlike some of the authors considered here, who had significant involvement in the various abstaining communities.

Chapter 3 – The Origins of Teetotalism in England

This chapter aims to identify the origins of the nineteenth century teetotal movement in England. This work will include an examination of the events that occurred before collective teetotalism became widespread, and will consider the mindsets of those people who chose to abstain as part of the groups that formed in the North of England in the early 1830s. This chapter considers the social statuses of the abstainers, widely regarded as the first in England, known as the “seven men of Preston”. The focus upon the earliest abstainers allows for the “*Histoire de Mentalités*” approach to be used appropriately – a historical study of individuals to show wider societal issues. The benefit of this approach should highlight that the “Seven Men” who abstained did so for a range of individual reasons. The secondary aim of this chapter is to examine the historical teetotal movement in the 1830s, through the examples of some individuals who were involved. This passage will consider the way in which alcohol was consumed for the one hundred years directly before the teetotal group of seven men formed, and how this heavy consumption led to the flourishing of an anti-alcohol movement. So, in addition, this chapter will explore the extent of the problem of alcohol abuse during the eighteenth century, which led to the growth of the teetotal movement in the next century. It will also examine the work of the earlier temperance movement from the 1820s, which existed to encourage moderation as a solution to the problem of alcohol abuse.

This chapter will also scrutinise the shift that took place from the 1830s onwards, when some individuals in England shifted from a commitment to temperance into a commitment to teetotalism, or in other words, from moderation into total abstinence. This was an alteration that a large percentage of temperate people engaged in, in parallel to other people who were drawn directly into the teetotal movement from a position where alcohol had been consumed heavily. This chapter will also support the idea that many people had high hopes for the teetotal mission, considering the strategic practices of teetotal campaigners who worked to evangelise on the benefits of the movement. Importantly, using contemporary records and reports, as well as current historical work, this chapter analyses information regarding those who abstained and their motives. In acknowledging the attitudes of particular people, the historical approach of Febvre and Bloch is utilised. This section then leads towards the themes of chapter 4, where the adoption of teetotalism by Methodist people and their denominations is examined. It is anticipated that with an analysis of the initial aspirations of teetotalism, and what later

corporate Christian teetotalism hoped for, this work will show clear reasons why the two movements were able to join up, and will highlight shared values at the confluence. This analysis focuses on the point in history before the Methodist teetotal movement became the dominant force, and before justification for abstinence changed in Methodist circles. Acknowledgement of this change is an integral part of this thesis.

Drawing upon information about the attempted solutions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to the problems caused by alcohol consumption, this chapter recognises that this era is particularly significant because of how the consumption of spirits increased dramatically, and because of the subsequent backlash to this phenomenon. Here, the present thesis will refer to academic work concerned with how the initial and pressing problem of dangerous spirituous alcohol consumption was dealt with to some extent by governmental measures in the eighteenth century. However, these same sources highlight the notion that these initiatives were not sufficient to stop the tide of negativity that was caused by irresponsible alcohol consumption. Despite the introduction of new laws, many individuals and families remained victims of alcohol abuse, and the health of many who drank to excess continued to be compromised. As we shall see in this chapter, principle Methodist John Wesley was one of several who were concerned by these problems in the eighteenth century. The Bible Christians and Primitive Methodist Church, who were heirs of Wesley, were similarly disquieted in the next century. Their struggles and initiatives are covered in the following chapter. Many who were apprehensive about the plight of those living in deprivation were able to see the promotion of abstinence as a potential extension to their work, which aimed to alleviate poverty with further positive consequences. Some of these aforementioned groups, influenced by the dedication of teetotal and temperance societies also took the opportunity to encourage a life without alcohol, with a hope for an improved situation throughout England for those people affected by drink-related problems.

We shall see that all the measures were necessary because of the seriousness of the predicament that the nation found itself in. In the words of Andrew Barr, the eighteenth century was “the high point of alcohol consumption in Britain”.¹⁵² Barr also highlights the introduction of gin as the starting point for a significant increase in social problems. This novel variation in alcoholic drink was low in price, but high in strength. This was a new phenomenon for the English. Until this point in history, alcoholic spirits were not

¹⁵² Barr, 1995: 33.

affordable drinks for the poorest in society. With the new habit of gin drinking growing amongst the unaccustomed, the strength of liquor meant that the drinker needed a smaller volume to feel its effects, and therefore required fewer portions for drunkenness to occur.¹⁵³ The newly available drink was then consumed in ways unsuitable for its strength. Because of the speed at which gin arrived into the national consciousness, for a time it had serious societal implications. As previously stated, the law was modified in response, but some campaigners felt that not all the problems were halted by the changes in regulations. This chapter shows how these issues became problematic enough to cause change in some mind-sets, and led towards an abstinent lifestyle, and the promotion of the teetotal choice.

Joseph Livesey (1794-1884) lived in Preston in northwest England, and had already gained a reputation as a man involved in several causes and protests, and as an agitator, before his significant promotion of abstinence began. He came to be best known as the leader of the teetotal movement, and he worked tirelessly to spread his understanding of the possibilities of a life lived without recourse to alcohol. Under Livesey's leadership, this movement grew rapidly and was credited with the transformation of some individuals. Both Livesey as the head, and the organisation itself became significantly known in England. Livesey had already published pamphlets and periodicals focusing on a number of different causes; he has a body of work that reinforces his position as a reformer and man of social concern. He was also well acquainted with the benefits of good publicity and a positive story. Thanks to him we have much evidence for the progress that the movement made, and the individuals that became involved. Our "*Histoire de Mentalités*" approach is rewarded in the use of Livesey's work to examine what took place in England at that time, and what the profile and background of the people involved were. This chapter will build these foundational and primary analyses of the social make-up of early teetotalism, in order to show that this individual social concern ran in parallel to, and chimed with the Christian message being promoted by John Wesley's inheritors at the same time. Thus, some members belonged to both groups. Chapter 4 will then examine this parallel Christian work that later overtook Livesey's secular movement, arguably making the Bible Christians, the Primitive Methodist Church, and eventually the Wesleyan Methodist Church the most prominent promoters of teetotalism and total abstinence in England. This chapter will note and explore the identifiable features of Livesey's teetotalism, so that in the chapter that

¹⁵³ Liquor was not the only issue. "Beer consumption was vastly higher during the early 1700s than it has been since, and spirit consumption reached a peak during the notorious 'gin epidemic'". Heath, 1995: 252.

follows, the thesis highlights how the beginnings of a Christian adoption of abstinence in the Methodist Church was based upon both Livesey's work, and further Christian values, probably including an insistence upon a striving for holiness amongst all members. Furthermore, this project shows that this likely combination of teetotalism and holiness was not incompatible with the teetotalism that had originated from Preston. This was not news to the Bible Christians who adopted the cause and would have seen it to fit with their beliefs, but this understanding has been lost over time. The compiled evidence upon which this claim is rooted is unique to this thesis. It is based upon well-regarded affirmations that Livesey's movement impacted on nonconformist Christians, but is also based upon primary research that uncovers the earliest organised Methodist abstainers to be the Bible Christians, a fact that is recovered in this project. Once this idea has been established, the Bible Christian reasoning can be fully examined in the light of its significance.

Teetotalism began as a new and separate movement. It was not attached to any pre-existing cause, and did not grow from another cause. The similar, and pre-existing 'temperance movement' was not involved in the genesis of this new movement. The campaign by the "Seven Men of Preston" which encouraged their fellow workers and extended social groups to abstain from drinking any alcohol was successful and significant all over England, from its start in 1831, particularly in the factory towns of the North. It achieved this in its own right.¹⁵⁴ The reasoning behind the campaign involved concern for health and well being, as well as consideration for the safety of colleagues and a hoped for goal of improvement in living and working conditions, through an understanding of the varieties of damage that excessive consumption of alcohol caused. This damage included poor health, drunkenness leading to industrial accidents, drunkenness leading to abuse of family members, and poverty through money spent on alcohol. These seven men, and the others who subsequently joined them, were practical reformers who hoped that through their actions and encouragement, others might choose to be abstinent. The main focus for their philosophy was that alcohol consumption was damaging, and caused financial, physical, social and psychological problems. An individual might grasp that by not drinking alcohol they could reduce the potential of these harms occurring. This chapter will explain how the Preston seven promulgated their ideas so effectively. This mission had a level of success, which meant that through interaction with these abstainers, more and more people also became

¹⁵⁴ Livesey's own autobiography, pages 65-73 covers the geography of the movement, and its successes.

teetotal. Others also chose teetotalism as members of other groups, with agendas that built upon the ideas of the seven. Thus, we observe sections of Methodism adopting this approach, and also extending the seven's justifications for abstinence. This chapter will show how the positive reactions to this secular movement within the Christian community spread the message of teetotalism, but also how differing reactions meant that the Church was a serious critic of the movement at other times.

In its beginnings, the teetotal movement (despite individual support and pockets of enthusiasm) had no organised or official input from any particular denominational hierarchy. Livesey's autobiography states that "the society was formed on a broad basis and its constitution forbade the introduction of party politics or sectarian religion".¹⁵⁵ Responses in individual churches and groups of churches varied from positive embrace, through indifference to disdain, from both the clergy and the laity. Looking back, we observe that the Bible Christians as a group were clearly the most positive, while the Primitive Methodist Church showed some positivity (one of their leaders, Hugh Bourne, was particularly motivated by an avoidance of alcohol), and the Wesleyan Methodist Church's leadership were not impressed as a group, although the Wesleyan Church had some members who were involved and offered support. Despite this, teetotalism was initially adopted by a group that shared some members and some ideals with nonconformist churches in England, rather than becoming a philosophy where a number of organisations found a shared purpose. However, these initial frameworks progressed and changed later on in the nineteenth century, and absorbed some contemporary groupings into its membership. Finally, there was hostility to this growing enthusiasm for individual abstinence from at least three different and opposed factions. Firstly, the alcohol industry was unsurprisingly unimpressed with attempts to reduce their custom. Secondly, some of the Church was concerned that abstinence was not a 'gospel value' and distracted from the teachings of Jesus. Thirdly, there were those within the anti-alcohol movement who felt that encouraging individuals to abstain was not effective enough, and would not cause real change. They hoped for a change in the law, which would have created a situation similar to the prohibition that was later temporarily achieved in the United States.¹⁵⁶ These factions of opposition are also examined in this chapter.

¹⁵⁵ Weston, 1885: 55

¹⁵⁶ Prohibition in the US ran from 1920 until 1933, and was partly encouraged by American Protestants. For more on this, see Barr – *Drink* (1998) and Livesey – *Life and Labours Of* (1885).

Much historical and sociological scholarship has already taken place highlighting both the gin craze and the social struggles of the nineteenth century, as well as the legal approaches and the societal consequences that emerged during that time of crisis. This thesis uses the appropriate scholarship of Barr, Pawson, Daunton, Longmate and Shiman to advance this discussion, in light of their earlier work. Barr writes from an all-encompassing view of the many habits and facets of drinking; including changes in the law, societal shifts and different fashions of consumption and abstinence. Norman Longmate specifically documents the movement of abstainers that appeared in the wake of the production of clean water being prioritised by government after the Cholera epidemic. Lillian Shiman also focuses on those Victorians who championed self-improvement, specifically with regard to abstinence, and Pawson and Daunton look at the wider world of England from the mid-eighteenth century until the beginning of the twentieth century.¹⁵⁷ Brian Harrison has already cast a critical eye over this period of activism, and his detailed study gives a solid basis for an analysis of these pioneers, and an analysis of the historians and sociologists who predated him.¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, the teetotal pioneer Joseph Livesey knew the importance of promotion; he left a significant base of work behind him in print. Therefore, much can be learnt from his work as a primary source.¹⁵⁹

Alcohol and Abstinence after the Industrial Revolution

All accounts of the eighteenth century in the United Kingdom acknowledge it as a time of social upheaval. No historical event “has had such far-reaching effects on the pattern of human existence as the Industrial Revolution that began in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (and)... the undisputed leader in this transition from a traditional rural to an urban-industrial society was Britain”.¹⁶⁰ The population was beginning to shift from country life into urban centres; this included many people moving to particular locations suitable for finding employment but that were not yet urbanised.¹⁶¹ The days of agriculture as the nation’s primary occupation were coming to an end, and even within farming, there were also changes within the industry that meant

¹⁵⁷ Shiman - *Crusade Against Drink in Victorian England* (1988), Longmate – *The Waterdrinkers* (1968), Pawson - *The Early Industrial Revolution: Britain in the Eighteenth Century* (1979) and Daunton - *Progress and Poverty: An Economic and Social History of Britain 1700-1850* (1995).

¹⁵⁸ Harrison – *Drink and the Victorians* (1971).

¹⁵⁹ Livesey - *Life and Labours of*. (1885).

¹⁶⁰ Pawson, 1979: 13.

¹⁶¹ For an economic analysis of this period and change, see Pawson *The Early Industrial Revolution* or Daunton *Progress and Poverty*.

it no longer guaranteed a reasonable income, or an assured role. This change caused rural poverty as a by-product, which also led to workers moving into new locations in search of employment. This shift and the availability of different types of work led towards the growth of cities and large towns, as well as brand new centres being built. This meant that there were more varied opportunities to make money, making these centres attractive for much of the populous, which in turn increased the potential for poverty with many travelling in hope of work. In the changing of long held social situations and changes in working patterns, stability and safety was not always guaranteed, and in fact were on occasions, absent. The economist Trevor May insists, “For many people the period of the industrial revolution was one of great distress. With hindsight we can see that the miseries of the time were, in fact, labour pains accompanying the birth of industrial capitalism and the new industrial society. But to contemporaries there was nothing inevitable about the process”.¹⁶² The industrial revolution changed almost everything about life in England for those who were impacted. Many were affected, and many were impacted to a large degree. Changes in alcohol availability and alcohol consumption were also inevitable.¹⁶³

It was within the industrial revolution’s early throes that the alcoholic spirit gin became widely accessible to the English. It was a drink with which the country became quickly familiar.¹⁶⁴ This growth in popularity and availability can be traced to its production in the Netherlands, and was therefore linked to the Dutchman, but adopted King of England, William III. William of Orange’s succession to the British throne occurred in 1689, and it unsurprisingly increased Anglo-Dutch trade and Orange influence in England. By the 1730s, gin was untaxed and not yet part of British trade and licensing laws, but had become something of a widely obtainable commodity. Furthermore, its high alcoholic content was something of a revelation to the many English people who had previously been unable to afford to drink spirits. This discovery led to the increased drinking of gin by the English, who were certainly consuming more than might otherwise have been recommended or afforded. What followed was the predictably drunken behaviour of some of the population, which was a prominent occurrence for a number of years. Barr states, “On Sunday mornings there was chaos and turmoil outside gin palaces, with people swearing, fighting and bawling obscenely, and others lying on

¹⁶² May, 1996: 58.

¹⁶³ For further reading on historical perspectives on the conditions for the population in the 18th and early 19th centuries, May’s *An Economic and Social History of Britain* and Malcolmson’s *Life and Labour in England 1700-1780* help us to gain a picture of the world that Methodism thrived in.

¹⁶⁴ Barr and Shiman in particular believe that cheap spirits allowed for a different kind of alcohol intake to become commonplace.

the pavements dead drunk”.¹⁶⁵ Triggered by what he saw, the artist William Hogarth created his famous ‘Gin Lane’ print in 1751. The deprivation and misery shown there was both a revelation and a shock to respectable society. The illustrated Gin Lane is inhabited by a drunken mother inadvertently dropping her baby because of her inebriation, as well as a workman pawning his tools and a woman selling her cooking pots in order to buy more of the spirit. The image of ‘Gin Lane’ is meant as a partner to Hogarth’s contrasting ‘Beer Street’. This opposing print shows a place where the artists are inspired by ale, and that same ale refreshes labourers. Beer is a positive influence, while some of the consequences of consuming these spirits as suggested by Hogarth to include hunger, suicide, premature death, poverty, fighting, illness and animalistic behaviour.



Gin Lane, by William Hogarth

Hogarth’s sketch was indicative of wider public feeling, but it was also meant as an educational tool for the middle and upper classes. David Bindman states that “historians cannot tell us whether anyone was led to constructive virtue by the sight of Hogarth’s prints, but we can be sure that his claim was believed by those people concerned with

¹⁶⁵ Barr, 1995: 138.

social improvement, like schoolmasters and parsons, and his plates were certainly known beyond the circles of the comfortable middle class”.¹⁶⁶ Bindman is clear in his thinking that there were those who were already of a mind that this was an issue of importance, but there were also those observers who now knew of this problem, made aware by Hogarth’s prints. This work was circulated widely at the time, and for a number of years after its creation. It continued to influence public opinion on excessive alcohol consumption long after the English authorities had dealt with the particular issue of unregulated gin.

In fact, the widespread phenomenon of excessive gin drinking was largely resolved within a few years, thanks to legal restrictions that were made on sales and methods of selling. Stuart Andrews believes that the “worst excesses were in fact checked by the Act of 1751”.¹⁶⁷ He explains this through Webb’s collaborative and comprehensive text on liquor licensing in the UK. It is stated that after the gin craze, Justices of the Peace gave out fewer spirit licenses to counteract the problematic sales of gin, but the ‘Beer Act of 1830’ meant that beer could be sold simply by paying for an excise license.¹⁶⁸ Within 6 months of this act, 24,000 of these licenses were paid for, which reinstated beer as popular choice of drink for the general population. Justices of the Peace then tried to regain control of alcohol sales by persuading publicans to change their business again. This time, the authorities proposed that publicans should apply for and make use of Spirit licenses. This would have meant that the Magistrates could regain their control: but for now, the industry had stayed one step ahead of the government. It is widely recorded that Henry Goulburn MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer, thought that ‘The Beer Bill’ would reduce drunkenness. However, many remained unconvinced. Sydney Smith, the writer and Anglican Priest wrote at the time that “everyone is drunk: those not singing are sprawling”.¹⁶⁹

This new and unexpected difficulty was probably not just an issue of stronger alcohol (than for the pre-gin population) being available, but also that it had become obtainable from more locations. Barr also documents that “the licensing justices only began to impose restrictions on opening hours in the late eighteenth century, when in many areas they had started to make it a condition of granting or renewing licenses that alehouses (which sold beer) should close at a specified time in the evening, generally 9 p.m. in the

¹⁶⁶ Bindman, 1981: 183.

¹⁶⁷ Andrews, 1970, 74.

¹⁶⁸ Webb, in Barr, 1995.

¹⁶⁹ Andrews, 1970, 74.

winter and 10 p.m. in the summer. In introducing evening closing, the justices were responding to the changing nature of work patterns consequent upon the Industrial Revolution, which was occurring in parallel to these changes in alcohol consumption. The magistrates and other authorities were concerned that heavy drinking in alehouses was obstructing the introduction of more regular, systematic work practices in factories and workshops”.¹⁷⁰ Barr acknowledges that “compared with agricultural labour, working in industry required less physical effort but greater sobriety”.¹⁷¹ As we shall see, this was also a concern for the first teetotallers. Despite these legal changes, the massive social upheavals caused by the revolution meant “industrialisation fostered drunkenness by forcing migrant labourers into a strange environment and weakening traditional sanctions on conduct”.¹⁷² In short, the discipline, embarrassment, or social disapproval felt when living in the same village as parents was now no longer a concern. Many industrial workers had left behind the support of a closely-knit community. Magistrates too “were concerned that heavy drinking in alehouses was obstructing the introduction of more regular, systematic work practices”.¹⁷³ Understandably, the consequences of a drunken mistake as a shepherd or dairyman were much less serious than the danger faced when under the influence of alcohol in a factory, without serious safety measures in place at that time. On a less dramatic note, productivity within these industrial work places would presumably have been diminished by alcohol consumed excessively the night before someone was due to work. Barr’s comprehensive work acknowledges these issues, but also sees other problems. He wrote that “the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when the upper classes drank themselves stupid on port and the working classes consumed excessive amounts of porter, may well mark the high point of alcohol consumption in Britain”.¹⁷⁴ Greater availability, greater need, lower cost, increased strength and less inhibitions amongst the population then seem to give clear suggestions as to why this was such a high point for the consumption of alcoholic drinks. When this high level of alcoholic intake existed in addition to the increased dangers of new and difficult working situations, then unsurprisingly, the consequences could be disastrous. Even if disaster were avoided, many would have considered this to be an era of serious moral decline; the results of drunkenness would have been social, ethical, economic and physical. It is of no surprise that many decided to take action. This action manifested itself in different ways.

¹⁷⁰ Barr, 1995, 137.

¹⁷¹ Barr, 1995, 138.

¹⁷² Barr, 1995, 138.

¹⁷³ Barr, 1995: 137-138.

¹⁷⁴ Barr, 1995: 33.

Temperance and Teetotalism as a secular movement

As we have seen in Hogarth's work, there was an increase in public awareness about the changing nature of alcohol, and the changes in drinking habits in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. During the early years of gin's commercial availability, the first attempts towards a better understanding of the physical and social damage caused by alcohol were recorded. These attempts led to the formation of temperance societies. At that time, temperance has to be understood in terms of 'being careful about what you drink, and how you drink it'. This might mean that the temperate person consumed no alcohol, but total abstinence (where no alcohol is consumed) was certainly not a given. Moderation was the watchword of the first movement. It is best understood as a statement against drunkenness, not alcohol per se. Shiman quotes Edgar, who wrote in answer to the potential for a complete ban on alcohol at that time. He said "to command to abstain is anti-Christian".¹⁷⁵ These societies were groups that gathered the like-minded, who were all concerned by the effects caused by alcohol both on society and the individual. They met together, and organised and campaigned for legal changes in different aspects of the alcohol chain. Their actions were not designed to encourage individuals to make a significant lifestyle change, but to tackle the mechanisms that led to drunkenness.

Temperance as a notion came earlier, but in the nineteenth century, temperance societies started to appear across England, and were particularly prevalent in Northern England; Bradford's was the first English society, formed in 1830. The formation of Bradford's society was soon followed by an emergence of new groups in similarly industrialised places like Manchester and Blackburn; towns that had become significant because of the Industrial Revolution, and had populations that relied upon the new factories. These societies were formed and sustained by the middle and upper classes "inspired by fears of what the working classes would do after drinking too much spirits".¹⁷⁶ It is also significant that these were secular societies, but Shiman's text "*Crusade Against Drink in Victorian England*" suggests that many of the protagonists were dissenting Ministers, happy to keep 'work' and 'normal life' separate.¹⁷⁷ There is little in Shiman's work that confirms this beyond an anecdote. What can be said with evidence is that some Methodist groups were inclined to speak out positively for this

¹⁷⁵ Shiman, 1988: 12.

¹⁷⁶ Barr, 1995: 290.

¹⁷⁷ Shiman, 1988: 13.

early movement of temperance, but the same groups were not later inclined towards teetotalism for fear that it was removing emphasis from the spreading of the gospel.¹⁷⁸ This is a theme that we will see continued.

Returning to temperance, despite this particular later objection, there was significant shared membership between the temperance assemblies and other socially minded pressure groups; with the estimated belief that “meetings for the promotion of Temperance... probably exceed the aggregate of those for all other social and political objects” at that time.¹⁷⁹ According to Harrison, the British and Foreign Temperance Society (BFTS) was the most prominent and organised of these groups. However, they, like others, failed to achieve anything of significance with their pamphlets and propaganda “partly because tract-writers often failed to appreciate what caused drunkards to drink, but more often because the problem was to make action accord with belief, rather than to inculcate the belief itself”.¹⁸⁰ The outside perspective of this group presumably would have found short shrift with those who drank to excess, if this perspective was ever shared with them at all. Temperance societies had seen the problems caused by alcohol abuse and had acknowledged that some kind of solution was needed. This answer was often suggested from within the boundaries of ‘respectable society’, from politicians, the middle classes, and with relevance for this thesis, from the Anglican Church. Harrison records that “the BFTS was a London-based organisation, and relied largely on clergymen for its local contacts. By contrast, the teetotal phase of the temperance movement (which came next) depended even more firmly on support from the north, and from dissenters rather than from clergymen”.¹⁸¹ In political terms, the struggle was taken up by some political figures, but with little success. J.S. Buckingham (MP for Sheffield, and chair of the Commons inquiry into drunkenness in 1834) made efforts to encourage temperance, but his “efforts revealed... a powerlessness of the temperance movement at Westminster... but the society refused to campaign for legislation, and its equivocal stance no doubt lent fire to a new development within the temperance movement: the emergence of teetotalism”.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁸ The first chapter of *Drink* by Thompson-Brake allows us some insight into the to-ing and fro-ing of opinion, particularly from the Wesleyan Methodist community.

¹⁷⁹ Rowntree and Sherwell, 1899: 1.

¹⁸⁰ Harrison, 1971: 108.

¹⁸¹ Harrison, 1971: 108.

¹⁸² Harrison, 1971: 112.

Temperance was clearly attempting to give answers to a societal need because, to quote Sydney Smith again: “the sovereign people are in a beastly state”.¹⁸³ Smith was writing in relation to the Beer Act of 1830, and the implications that might follow from a tax-free British alcohol industry. Temperance seemingly failed because it was by its very nature not different or radical enough to properly challenge the culture of alcohol that had become all consuming within some social groups, and had been enabled by poor governmental decisions. In retrospect, teetotalism took steps to reach the groups of people who were untouched by temperance campaigns, and it was successful in doing so. Therefore, when teetotalism had to justify its existence either alongside or in the place of temperance, it attacked, and did so by being “formulated, however, or perhaps rationalised, as a condemnation of (temperance’s) inability to reclaim the drunkard”.¹⁸⁴ While the temperance movement’s existence had admittedly worked effectively as an undercurrent through some parts of society, within a few years of its existence the teetotal movement had largely superseded it.¹⁸⁵ Shiman understands that “the teetotalers believed that the moderation movement was incapable of bringing about any significant reduction in the role of alcoholic beverages in English life”, which surely would have been a primary aim.¹⁸⁶ In extension, Harrison believes that “teetotalism gave the anti-spirits movement that precision of aim so necessary to a reforming movement... the temperance movement was thus being launched on its path towards extremism... and the movement’s original aim, the prevention of drunkenness, was subordinated to the pursuit of consistency”.¹⁸⁷ Temperance retreated and became thought of as a common sense approach (and not a movement in its own right), or it increased in intensity and became teetotal.

Across the western world, not far behind temperance, teetotalism was becoming an active communal choice. The genesis of the British teetotal movement can be sourced to Preston, Lancashire. The “Seven Men of Preston” famously instigated the organisation, and were led by the weaver and philanthropist Joseph Livesey. In the introduction to Livesey’s autobiography, he is described as “the Father and Founder of the Total Abstinence Movement”.¹⁸⁸ The emergence of the movement can be accurately pinned down to “the leading article in the July number 1831 of *The Moral Reformer*, (which contains) the first avowal made by Mr Livesey of his adoption of the principle of

¹⁸³ Barr, 1995: 291.

¹⁸⁴ Harrison, 1971: 113.

¹⁸⁵ Shiman, Longmate et al, sees the early 1830s as prime “temperance” time.

¹⁸⁶ Shiman, 1988: 14.

¹⁸⁷ Harrison, 1971: 114.

¹⁸⁸ Livesey, 1885: lxxiii.

abstinence from all alcohols”.¹⁸⁹ As the leader of the fledgling movement, it was news of the attempts to prohibit spirits in the United States that reached Preston and influenced his understanding. Livesey does acknowledge that individuals had been teetotal before his work, but it was he, and his fellow abstainers that started the notion of organising and preaching (in a secular sense) on the subject. They did so because of the belief that “the liberty to take ale and wine in moderation was a fatal source of backsliding”.¹⁹⁰ Improving water supplies enabled this move, and so an alternative lifestyle was made possible. The “Seven Men of Preston” collectively signed a pledge to completely abstain from drinking alcohol in 1832, and based this choice upon Livesey’s rationale, as explained in his article.¹⁹¹ The ‘teetotal’ word itself, according to Livesey, came from one of their own; a convert and speaker on the subject named Richard Turner, who proclaimed “nothing but the tee-total would do”.¹⁹² There is some debate about the meaning of this statement, but it is largely agreed that Turner was looking for a complete and total avoidance of alcohol, not a partial choice. The earliest days of this movement involved a specific group of members. There were the seven original, plus twenty-eight further men.¹⁹³ Livesey describes them as such; “with two or three exceptions they were all working men, and about one half of the number were reformed drunkards”, further categorising them as “this band of humble, disinterested labourers”.¹⁹⁴

Teetotalism in its earliest formation was not shy about reaching those who were considered by some others to already be lost to the effects of alcohol abuse. In fact, the achievements of reaching the ‘unreachable’ meant that people outside the movement saw the visibly striking effects of these changes. Harrison believes that “teetotalism paraded some striking reclamations (and)... challenged the traditional belief that drunkards were irreclaimable”.¹⁹⁵ In fact, teetotalism turned the accepted hierarchy on its head. Within the teetotal world (as with some other reforming movements), there was an active avoidance of the idea that the working classes needed the middle and upper classes to contribute to their salvation. The trend within teetotalism from the earliest days seems to be that it was the working classes who joined the groups, and who continued the progress of the movement by organising and building the local

¹⁸⁹ Livesey, 1885: lxxvii.

¹⁹⁰ Livesey, 1885: 64.

¹⁹¹ Shiman, 1988: 18

¹⁹² Livesey, 1885: 65.

¹⁹³ Livesey gives the names and roles in the society (treasurer, secretary, poet etc.) on page 65 of his autobiography.

¹⁹⁴ Livesey, 1885: 65.

¹⁹⁵ Harrison, 1971: 114.

society. These people also used their newfound sobriety, matched with other skills to “achieve success in other spheres of life”.¹⁹⁶

The choice to discard alcohol from their diet might seem like a positive and life-affirming decision in the twenty-first century, but actually there was significant sacrifice involved at that time. This was because of the central role that alcohol played in the lives of working class men and women. The relinquishment seems great when we acknowledge, as Shiman does, that “the traditional lower-class entertainments were all intimately connected with drink”.¹⁹⁷ A life without alcohol would have been a very different life indeed for the abstainers, whether they struggled with alcohol abuse or not, once they had made the choice. The reports from the nineteenth century give further information, which stresses the strength of resolve of those early abstainers.

Inevitably, certain kinds of industry and work were entwined with an excessive intake of alcohol. Historians Rowntree and Sherwell wrote about the themes that emerged from a late nineteenth century survey on drinking habits. The survey took place between 1889 and 1893. The results suggest that “speaking generally, it may be said that drunkenness is chiefly prevalent in the seaport and mining districts... the worst counties in England and Wales are Northumberland, Durham, Lancashire and Glamorganshire”.¹⁹⁸ This information aligns with the information we have about where Livesey’s teetotal campaign had worked hardest, and found considerable success. As an aside, one hundred years previously John Wesley had done much of his most significant and memorable work in these places. It also shows that while the teetotal movement, and Wesley’s endeavour was not insignificant, neither ever came close to ending the consumption or abuse of alcohol in those, or any other places. The variety and levels of issues across regions was actually quite significant, not just in regard to alcohol, but also in terms of poverty, education and opportunities. This indicates why Livesey (and John Wesley) had particular pockets of high achievement around the country. Alcohol habits also often seemed geographically linked. Harrison states that “so pronounced were regional variations in drinking habits that only a teetotal pledge could achieve in beer-drinking rural England and Wales what an anti-spirits pledge could achieve in spirit-drinking Ireland and Scotland”.¹⁹⁹ This too might be linked to the eighteenth century backlash against gin in England. If so, this reinforces Livesey’s understanding

¹⁹⁶ Shiman, 1988: 30.

¹⁹⁷ Shiman, 1988: 30.

¹⁹⁸ Rowntree and Sherwell, 1899: 87.

¹⁹⁹ Harrison, 1971: 114.

that total abstinence was the only ethical choice that would impact upon the damage that alcohol caused, and the belief that a statement like Hogarth's 'Beer Street' was a flawed and unsustainable notion.

Despite this, there is some suggestion of co-operation between temperance and teetotal activists, although whether temperance campaigners had much choice left in the wake of teetotalism is debatable. Apparently, "teetotalers soon saw to it that pledges of total abstinence were adopted as the basis of membership in most parts of the (temperance) movement".²⁰⁰ This fitted with Livesey's reasoning, which stated that "while drinking continues, poverty and vice will prevail: and until this is abandoned, no regulations, no efforts, no authority under heaven, can raise the conditions of the working classes".²⁰¹ In the minds of the teetotal community, temperance was not doing enough. Livesey labels temperance severely as the "evil tendency of moderate drinking", for the reasons he laid out previously. The concerns about all types of alcohol abuse, and the many potential causes of this did not just appear amongst those who resolved to change their personal drinking habits. In fact, there were continued political efforts. According to Barr, an Act of Parliament in 1850 helped towns to support establishments that discouraged drinking alcohol. Essentially, this meant that temperance hotels and clubs were given tax breaks, but despite these multiple responses, "the consumption of alcoholic drink remained the principal recreation of the working classes". Even with the combined influence of government and the teetotal and temperance campaigners, an astounding "25 per cent of working-class earnings (was) spent on drink in the 1870s".²⁰²

To return to the origins, by the mid-1830s, teetotalism was a recognisable and well-known concept in England. Teetotalism had gained significant momentum and, temperance as an alternative to teetotalism had been superseded. As noted, Livesey felt that temperance had been of little use; in his view, its existence may even have been detrimental to the nation's wellbeing. In hindsight, this thesis can suggest that Livesey's bias downplays the commendable aspects to the temperance movement. Principally, the initial movement started a conversation not just on the issues of alcohol abuse and the damage that drinking to excess caused, but the personal endeavours that could be made to create solutions. While the temperance movement's work and conclusions did not make changes to the opinions and lifestyles of the populous at that time, there were

²⁰⁰ Shiman, 1988: 15.

²⁰¹ Livesey, 1885: lxxviii.

²⁰² Barr, 1998: 170.

residual beneficial effects. It can be said for certain that temperance provided a foundation and a starting point for the teetotal movement that followed on. Harrison states that, “society in the 1820s was ready to welcome a new solution to the drink problem paradoxically because it had already begun to solve it”.²⁰³ This starting point was the understanding that a personal choice was the vital element in a potential answer. The foundation of a group of individuals who were ‘choice-makers’ meant that their decision was reinforced within a social group of shared values and hopes. Through this grouping, like-minded moderate drinkers knew each other and were able to contribute to a collective mind-set. The bedrock was also academic; the merits of drinking less alcohol were already being discussed, justified and promoted through the writing and the oration of the organisation before Livesey increased the expectations of these people.

Although temperance societies and temperate people did not automatically become teetotal societies and teetotal people, some groups and individuals did make the leap. The second movement could not have multiplied in the way, or at the speed it did, without the framework that was already in place across England, in the form of temperance societies. It was not always that temperance became teetotalism, but there were already connections between many people and groups who would become teetotal when they learnt of the new movement, or who were already teetotal, but had not yet described themselves as such. This meant that much momentum was already behind the changing approach to abstinence. Numbers for membership are hard to come by, but Harrison reports that “in June 1830 the Temperance Society Record, the first British Temperance Periodical, listed a total Scottish membership of 3,332”.²⁰⁴ The peak year for donations to the BFTS was 1834. By 1848, donations to this organisation had essentially ceased.

Despite the quickly promoted teetotal movement, which overtook the alternative temperance message, Shiman too believes that the temperance movement was a powerful starting point. She states that temperance societies were “surprisingly successful in publicising the evils of intemperance - never again was the problem of excessive drinking completely ignored”.²⁰⁵ The starting point for teetotalism had shifted significantly throughout the decades of temperance. If those involved in temperance were able to recognise teetotalism as being a project with the same goals in mind, the

²⁰³ Harrison, 1971: 96.

²⁰⁴ Harrison, 1971: 100.

²⁰⁵ Shiman, 1988: 15.

longevity of the group was assured. Many of these foundations and organisations still exist today, and their current efforts to limit the impact of alcohol in the UK are still built upon these same ideals. The groups that began during the temperance and teetotalism eras and still prevail in some form in the twenty-first century are probably able to do so because their view of alcohol and abstinence was not dogmatic, but flexible and minded towards decreasing the harm caused, not necessarily to make all people teetotal. Proposals that are grounded in common sense (whether temperance, teetotalism or something else) are still a part of the nation's psyche in some ways today; reducing the harm caused by alcohol is not a hope just for those who reduce or stop their own alcohol intake.

Hindsight is a wonderful thing, but when teetotalism started its journey, there was a significant belief from within the movement that their work would lead to a newly ordered world. In essence, they believed that their cause made so much sense that individuals could not fail but become part of it too. Presumably in their thinking, all that the listener needed was to hear the idea, and they would be convinced enough to change their attitude towards, and desire for alcohol. Livesey recalls in his autobiography that “from the first I have been an out and out advocate of abstinence from alcohol, and so convinced were I and my fellow workers of the soundness of our principles, and so delighted with the results of our early advocacy, we flattered ourselves that in about seven years the drinking system would be destroyed root and branch”.²⁰⁶ Simply through changing individual habits, Livesey and his colleagues thought that the population consuming alcohol would become a thing of the past. He acknowledges that much of the scheme's momentum had by the time of writing been lost (in 1885).²⁰⁷ We too now know that teetotalism did not become the mind-set of the majority, but many of the same questions remain for us today, as they did for Livesey over a century ago. His hypothetical question asks, “Why should drink reign, and drink selling tread national prosperity, domestic peace, morality and religion under its feet? Nothing I believe, is wanting but a strong, combined resolution; unity of action among all lovers of sobriety and goodness, and a willingness to sacrifice present and personal pleasures for the deliverance and happiness of our fellow creatures”.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ Livesey, 1885: 63.

²⁰⁷ Andrew Davison's article “The Built Heritage of the Temperance Movement” offers the suggestion that momentum was also lost when societies put too much effort into building Temperance Halls and Hotels, instead of continuing to work with those looking to abstain.

²⁰⁸ Livesey, 1885: 63.

Livesey believed that it was a selfishness that caused intemperance, a failure to see the greater good, and it was those who chose temperance who made Livesey feel most disappointed, because he saw it as an acknowledgement of the problem by those people, but still an unwillingness to embrace the challenging lifestyle change. Entwined within this disappointment perhaps was a greater level of distrust. Harrison states that “underlying teetotal attacks on the BFTS show there existed a nonconformist distaste for its aristocratic and Anglican structure... nonconformists were sometimes embarrassed at having to act under the local vicar”; Livesey and his friends styled themselves as “the militant dissenter”, but perhaps more importantly for Livesey is the lack of practical commitment by these men. “Criticism of the BFTS had been rife almost from the start... few clergymen were prepared to set an example by taking the pledge”.²⁰⁹ For the teetotal movement, they needed the support of those who did not have personal problems with alcohol abuse, but who still saw the value in their own abstinence. Livesey saw other people’s refusal as a form of classism, and an unwillingness to put other people’s needs above their own. This view was understandably coloured by a number of things, including a divide between northern teetotal and southern temperance viewpoints, plus the belief that temperance was a middle class pursuit, while teetotalism was the hardened and determined working class version, also, the hope for religious detachment from nonconformist and secular teetotalers but the conjoined temperance of the Anglican Church.

The initial teetotal movement in England was not necessarily one for nonconformists, but it certainly gained credence amongst those with a predisposition to shun the authority of the established church, as well as the wider establishment in general. This might be because teetotalism existed in opposition to the (possibly assumed) alliance between the temperance lobby and the Anglican Church. Teetotalism however was certainly a movement that did not want to be directly aligned with any one particular organisation or persuasion. Harrison writes, “The anti-spirit leaders were alarmed. Teetotalism seemed to be moving in secular directions, and was giving too much power to uncultivated laymen; the clergymen who dominated the British and Foreign Temperance Society found themselves losing control of the movement they had helped to establish”.²¹⁰ The overall national swing from temperance to teetotalism was particularly traumatic for the older groups who were losing power, and apparently difficult for some of these originators to grasp. Harrison tells us that the BFTS “sought

²⁰⁹ Harrison, 1971: 113.

²¹⁰ Harrison, 1971: 134.

to confirm the sober in their sobriety rather than reclaim the intemperate... by contrast the early teetotal orator... also appealed to reprobates, many of whom had lives transformed... for the teetotaler the drunkard's will had been paralysed by alcohol, and he deserved sympathy... Livesey and Whittaker (another of the founding seven men of Preston) could be seen walking through the streets arm-in-arm with drunkards whom moderationists spurned as an embarrassment to their cause. The unexpectedness of a teetotaler's kindly look 'went right to my heart', said J.B. Gough, the American reformed drunkard".²¹¹

There was some controversy surrounding Livesey's claims about Preston as the pioneering British town. Livesey's edit of Dearden's "*The Dawn and Spread of Teetotalism*" disputes a suggestion that Preston was beaten to the title of 'first total abstinence society'. The author notes; "Mr E Morris of Glasgow (whose) visit to Preston led to his being the means of establishing the first Teetotal Society in Scotland. It is said that a few persons signed a total abstinence pledge in Scotland as early as 1830; if this be so, they must have hid their light under a bushel, and it was left to Mr Morris, after his visit to Preston, to uncover it".²¹² There are other sources that concur with an earlier Scottish group; according to some annals from the Scottish town of Dunfermline, Fife, in 1830, "a Total Abstinence Society (was) formed by Mr. John Davie and some other members of the Dunfermline Temperance Society, 21st September. The pledge was drawn up by Mr. Davie, and the Society was the first in Scotland".²¹³ If this is correct, and we have no reason to doubt it, then Preston takes second place, but Livesey's declaration of its waning would also seem to be true. It can certainly be said that it was those from Preston that took this movement to a wide audience, and it was this movement that gave specific reasons for their choices. We know, as Harrison has previously acknowledged and explained, that British society was finding sobriety increasingly interesting. It is unsurprising that different groups had similar thoughts. Once teetotalism had conquered temperance and became the only cause, it spread quickly and was advocated widely, particularly in the north of England, although in actuality, it reached all over the United Kingdom within months.

The growth of teetotalism at the speed it occurred can indeed be attributed to the temperance movement that had gone before, but also to the nonconformist circles that

²¹¹ Harrison, 1971: 115.

²¹² Dearden (in Livesey), 1885: 103.

²¹³ Stewart, 2011: 34.

were interlinked with it. These two kinds of societies allowed the new cause to swiftly advertise and muster support amongst those already committed either to temperance or radical worldly change. Those interested in sobriety (whether actively thanks to temperance or passively thanks to sources including the New Testament scriptures that condemned drunkenness) knew each other and would have shared ideas, pamphlets and information. As can be imagined, this interaction was not always received gladly, often leaving temperance societies changed beyond recognition, decimated by teetotal recruitment drives, or seen as a distraction from ‘proper Christian work’. Shiman records the bitterness of the shift; “sometimes the temperance battles became so serious that they were transferred to the courts”.²¹⁴

Despite the regularly expressed displeasure that Livesey vocalised regarding the earlier temperance doctrine, he explained that “all our meetings at that time went by the common name of ‘Temperance’”.²¹⁵ So, this term was used to apply to both teetotalism/total abstinence and temperance/moderation. This inevitably causes confusion when we observe these events and groups from afar. The problem is clear: Livesey travels to London to give his teetotal point of view while identifying as a man of temperance, but meets the previously mentioned ‘British and Foreign Temperance Society’ who “contended for the moderate use of fermented drinks”, and not for total abstinence. This problem was a common issue for some time, especially for the societies that shifted into total abstinence but were still named as temperance groups. Shiman records; “by the end of the 1830s the moderation movement was dying and for the next three decades temperance became synonymous with total abstinence in English reforming circles”.²¹⁶ This problematic distinction will also appear in chapter 4, with some significant consequences.

To find figures or statistics about the amount of teetotalers at any particular point in history is not particularly straightforward. There were a huge variety of teetotal and temperance groups in the nineteenth century. There were councils, leagues and alliances that were umbrella organisations, and some of these groups collected some statistics. These figures often counted members who had “signed the pledge” of abstinence. We cannot know whether these pledge signers kept their promises, or whether an abstainer would join one group, or many. If they joined more than one group, did they also sign

²¹⁴ Shiman, 1988: 42.

²¹⁵ Livesey, 1885: 68.

²¹⁶ Shiman, 1988: 15.

another pledge with their second community? If a person did sign a pledge, did their abstinence last an evening, a year or a lifetime? Any figures must be treated with caution. Despite these reservations, there is some significant information, which even when handled carefully and sceptically, still gives staggering results. For example, the youth organisations known as “Bands of Hope” which encouraged children to choose abstinence before they became adults had an enormous membership. Longmate reports that “by 1897 (there were at least) 3,200,000” children who were members of Bands of Hope in the United Kingdom.²¹⁷ Longmate believes that “these figures help to explain the striking build-up in anti-drink sentiment during the last quarter of the nineteenth century”.²¹⁸ These members were spread across at least 5,500 separate Bands. This implies at least 5,500 leaders to run the groups. Abstinence was a choice that people wanted to encourage in the youth of the UK.

This type of organisation and membership was not exclusively a youth movement. The Independent Order of Good Templars, initially an American society was imported into England in 1868 and within six years “there were nearly 4,000 Lodges, with more than 200,000 members”.²¹⁹ The population of the United Kingdom numbered approximately 31,500,000 people in 1871. For ministers of the nation, “A survey in 1873 claimed 4,000 of the 34,000 Protestant clergy in the British Isles as total abstainers, but this included only 660 out of 23,000 Anglicans”.²²⁰ You could re-adjust this statistic, to note that 3,340 non-Anglican Protestant clergy abstained from alcohol. Furthermore, the Armed Forces had their own teetotal organisations. We know that “by 1875, 7,000 of the 60,000 sailors in the Navy had signed the pledge”.²²¹ In 1887, The National Temperance League’s Jubilee Fete in the Crystal Palace drew “43,000 enthusiastic non-drinkers”.²²²

Despite these successes, and the large groups of people who became involved, Livesey and others were working against the background of opinion that most of England considered that teetotalism would be an end to their social lives. The general populous saw teetotalers (in Harrison’s words) as a “dreary group of people”. But despite this widespread attitude, the teetotaler was not easily dissuaded; hence the significant growth that still took place. This growth was numerical, influential and visible; it was

²¹⁷ Longmate, 1968: 124.

²¹⁸ Longmate, 1968: 124.

²¹⁹ Longmate, 1968: 214.

²²⁰ Longmate, 1968: 188.

²²¹ Longmate, 1968: 212-213.

²²² Longmate, 1968: 241.

not rare for properties to be purchased or constructed in order to house teetotal activities. “Many of the teetotal activities... were really attempts to enable teetotalers to survive in a drink-ridden society”, especially when different options were not numerous.²²³ The societies knew that old lives couldn’t be left behind without viable alternatives. Perhaps because of the conviction that substitute lives needed to be provided for all abstainers, then “the teetotal movement between the 1830s and the 1870s always remained, in Kate Courtney’s words “too narrow to take the whole world in”.²²⁴ Nevertheless, we should not be surprised that newer Christian communities including the Bible Christians and the Primitive Methodist Church were drawn into this movement. Many of these groups saw parallels between the ideas behind teetotalism and Christ’s teaching, and drew the conclusion that teetotalism and Christianity complemented each other. In fact, those Christians who did not abstain were viewed suspiciously in some of these quarters. The religious theme was continued when the shift from temperance to teetotalism was described by Livesey; “as Christianity was fettered a long time with Judaism, and found it difficult to get clear of its traditions, so was teetotalism with the universally received doctrine of abstinence from spirits only”.²²⁵ With a historian’s viewpoint, we can see why there would have been difficulty and confusion for Christians and temperance campaigners who were not convinced by total abstinence.

Despite these potential pitfalls, teetotalism became a gateway to religious faith for some. In the words of Harrison again, “The temperance conversion often accompanied a separate religious conversion, for in those days Christians could still be distinguished by appearance as well as belief... In a society with few recreations beyond religion and drink, there was no middle way. Teetotal tracts correctly portrayed the individual as poised between dramatic alternatives”.²²⁶ Pubs offered a multi faceted social life, but non-alcoholic drinking options were not within the understanding of the establishment. Leaving this social group was often the only option to give an individual’s abstinence a chance, but to leave such a group meant a new existence. We know that teetotal organisations were well aware of this problem and instigated clubs, hotels and cafes to allow the abstainers a real alternative. The chapel too was a different option for the new abstainer. The links between church and abstinence increased, when teetotal societies sought out potential locations for their meetings. It is an important fact that Livesey and his friends would travel to new towns, and as his autobiography reports, they would use

²²³ Harrison, 1971: 116.

²²⁴ Harrison, 1971: 345.

²²⁵ Livesey, 1885: 68.

²²⁶ Harrison, 1971: 132.

halls that could be hired or borrowed from sympathetic landlords; often these were Primitive Methodist Chapels, Quaker Meeting Houses, or Methodist New Connexion Halls.²²⁷ In this way, and in the way of shared membership, there would have been plenty of crossovers with these religious, nonconformist groups, despite no direct affiliation. Shiman even notes that the Preston society was “modelled on the Primitive Methodist Connexion”. For some, this made perfect sense, but there were “too many parallels drawn” (between gospel conversions and teetotal ones) for some churches and Christians.²²⁸ This complaint appeared throughout congregations and communities in England, as will be shown in more detail in chapter 4. Despite the split opinion amongst churches concerning this fast growing ethical choice, “many (nonconformist denominations) contributed individuals prominent in the new movement... The official Wesleyan Methodist Church condemnation of teetotalism in 1841 was never unanimously accepted within the denomination, and many teetotalers fought battles in the 1840s for entry into their chapels”.²²⁹ Norman Longmate expands upon this theme, describing a particularly explosive encounter in West Cornwall: “Teetotalism first appeared among the clay and tin miners and fisherman of St. Ives with the arrival of the Preston Temperance Advocate in September 1837, and... a teetotal society was formed. Within three months it had more than a thousand members and was holding crowded meetings in alternate weeks in the two Methodist chapels, belonging respectively to the Wesleyans and the more rigid Primitive Methodists. Within two years nearly 3,000 in a population of about 5,000 had signed the pledge...” There were, claimed the jubilant teetotalers “many instances... proving the connection of teetotalism with... the extensive revival of religion’ which had occurred during the year and soon many Methodists were demanding that their clergy should give a lead against drink”.²³⁰ The links and disruptions between those who considered themselves teetotal and Christian, and the church were numerous, resulting in a split between church and community, and a very disgruntled Minister.

Despite negative challenge and positive encouragement, Longmate claims, “by 1841, no nonconformist church had officially condemned drink”.²³¹ The Bible Christians made a

²²⁷ Livesey’s text from 65-73 includes mention of towns including Blackburn, Haslingden, Bury, Heywood, Rochdale, Oldham, Ashton, Stockport, Manchester, Bolton, Birmingham, London, Sheffield, Halifax; buildings including an Independent Methodist Church, the Mechanics Institution, a Friends Meeting House, Livery Street Chapel, Sheffield Town Hall, the Mariners Church, a Zion Chapel and people including a Wesleyan Minister, the MP for Ashton, a schoolmaster and the MP for Sheffield.

²²⁸ Shiman, 1988: 19-21.

²²⁹ Harrison, 1971: 180.

²³⁰ Longmate, 1968: 98.

²³¹ Longmate, 1968: 99.

move towards teetotalism in 1837 (see chapter 4), but the “official condemnation” was not a pre-requisite of that move. Some individual congregations and ministerial staff did completely condemn the ethical decisions to abstain and to organise other abstainers. As an aside, it was these aforementioned men and women of St Ives who started the “Teetotal Wesleyan Methodist Church” as a direct response to their Minister, who confronted ‘the problem’ head on, and caused the abstainers to walk out of his church. As we have seen, many nonconformists happily linked teetotalism and their radical faith, and were unhappy when clergy or laity doubted, questioned or even attempted to block the link.

Despite this upheaval, effort and change, it is important to recall that “the teetotal movement did not initiate the practice of teetotalism... its achievement was simply to advertise teetotalism as a remedy for social evils”.²³² This reminder shows that drinking to excess was publically seen as a problem, and this movement did its work with such success that many people took the pledge. But, more than that, it was an identity that people could choose for themselves, join with, and be empowered by. Perhaps this was self-denial; perhaps it was a way of living alternatively or without societal shackles. Certainly, Harrison believes that “teetotalism was a convenient way of combining political and religious radicalism”.²³³ Despite this positivity, Harrison notices, “Livesey’s basic complaint about the later temperance movement was that it had become almost exclusively religious... He wanted it to influence the whole population, not merely the church and chapel-goers”.²³⁴ The secular movement had become Christianised.

²³² Harrison, 1971: 116.

²³³ Harrison, 1971: 117.

²³⁴ Harrison, 1971: 190.

Chapter 4 – John Wesley, the Bible Christians and the beginnings of a Methodist Teetotal Movement

The purpose of this chapter is to show that the Bible Christians were the first Methodists to organise themselves as abstainers in Britain, giving them significant status, despite their relatively small size, and limited influence. More specifically, this chapter has three aims. First, to show that the Bible Christians were the first group who identified as both Methodist and teetotal, and who actively promoted this choice. Second, to show the strength of the above claim in the face of assertions to the contrary. These assertions, considered below, have claimed other groups exclusively as front-runners, and have discounted the pioneering work of the Bible Christians. Third, to show there was a distinctive motivation amongst the Bible Christians, notably their association with John Wesley's theological arguments for holiness and sanctification. My claim is that the practice of temperance and abstinence amongst the Bible Christians was based upon their strong seeking for holiness as individuals, and the role that abstinence could play in that hope. The Bible Christian theology of holiness was the seedbed of motivation for, and justification of, abstinence. Evidence for this belief is circumstantial but ample, and is presented on the working assumption that the connection between holiness and abstinence is significant.

The Bible Christians were clearly influenced by the teaching of John Wesley for whom holiness (which might also be called sanctification, or even Christian perfection) was a very strong theological theme. Thomas Shaw, historian and significant figure within the Bible Christian community writes of them, "Their theology was plainly Methodist and Wesleyan".²³⁵ Even in the details, they remained close to Wesley: "The first *Rules of Society* were drawn up by O'Bryan and Thorne in 1817. 'We kept as close as possible to Mr. Wesley's *Rules*,' says Thorne".²³⁶ My claim in this chapter is that the foundational nature of Wesley's work for the Bible Christian community encouraged abstinence as an extension of an individual's holiness. I seek to clarify the origins of Bible Christian abstinence, and argue specifically that the Bible Christian approach was distinctive because of the community's understanding of holiness. Conclusions about how this can be affirmed through circumstantial evidence are reached here, and are consolidated in the final section of this chapter. Chapter 6 will take the conclusions reached, and will

²³⁵ Shaw, 1965: 22.

²³⁶ Shaw, 1965: 22.

then compare the Bible Christian approach with that of the Wesleyan and Primitive Methodist Churches, and again highlight the variations between the groups. This will lead at the end of the thesis, to comparisons between all the views from the nineteenth century and current views.

This chapter will strengthen the overall claim of the thesis that the Bible Christians' adoption of abstinence was uniquely early within Methodism during the growth years of the teetotal movement. The work of the Bible Christians has been relatively understudied and, indeed, almost removed from historical interpretations concerning the genesis of Methodist teetotalism. This chapter aims to show evidence for their pioneering work, and hopes to critique the sources that do not acknowledge the achievements of the Bible Christians. This will lead to a new understanding of the historical Methodist teetotal movement that challenges our understanding of the later failings of the movement, because of the Bible Christian's assumed and posited approach to abstinence.

Secondarily, in regard to the Bible Christians' own theological values, this chapter will present John Wesley's 'theology of sanctification' and his hopes for believers to achieve 'holiness' and 'Christian perfection' as the primary theological influences for their community, acknowledging how a second generation of Methodists (starting in the nineteenth century, after the death of John Wesley) embodied by the Bible Christians, used and understood holiness as a justification for their ascetic lifestyle choices. This chapter suggests that the abstinence they promoted fitted in with this attitude, and was likely to have been adopted because the ideas corresponded. Thus, it seems justifiable to say, despite evidence for this belief being circumstantial, that it is likely that John Wesley's theology became an encouragement for the Bible Christians pioneering teetotal work, despite Wesley's own view of holiness not resulting in his abstinence.

This chapter uses the Bible Christians' own historical analyses and the movement's original documentation pertaining to Conferences and rules, as well as magazines and wider reports. This has been achieved by using archives from that community, and fits with the "*Histoire de Mentalités*" philosophy of this project. Given the small size of the Bible Christian community, and detailed historical reports, the "*Histoire de Mentalités*" approach allows for an attention to individual viewpoints, and an acknowledgement of their validity and significance. The archives include original Conference minutes, early

texts, publicity, certification and propaganda from the denomination. This investigation confirms what the Bible Christians themselves knew, that they were the first group within Methodism to actively promote teetotalism.

The most influential secondary literature for this thesis is also considered in this chapter. This section challenges George Thompson Brake's explanation and analysis of Methodist teetotalism. Thompson Brake is the only scholar since the Methodist Union of 1932 who has worked extensively on teetotalism within Methodist circles. He offers an almost entirely 'Wesleyan Methodist' view of the movement, despite his text "*Drink*" claiming to consider British Methodism in its entirety. This chapter will argue that Thompson Brake offers a blinkered view of the historical movement, and therefore makes significant errors. He cites the Wesleyan Presbyter W.B. Pope's 1883 justifications for abstinence as foundational ideas within Methodism. Pope's understanding is that teetotalism should be adopted for two particular reasons – 1) "for the sake of peace, edification and of charity" and 2) to help the salvation of others: "what was the value of a mere indulgence compared with the salvation of many 'for whom Christ died'".²³⁷ This chapter will indicate that different Methodist traditions justified their abstinence in other ways, including the theological stances of individual sanctification and Christian perfection that John Wesley himself expounded. The early Bible Christians abstainers were likely to have been influenced by a belief in sanctification. Methodist abstinence was not pioneered by members of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, to which Thompson Brake gives his full attention, but by this alternative group. Brake's narrow worldview does the Bible Christians as teetotal pioneers a disservice, by ignoring their very significant contribution and replacing their achievements with an errant view of both them and the Wesleyan Methodist Church's role. Significantly, Brake promotes a view that he wishes to see revisited, without fully understanding how the position he writes from was created. With that flawed vantage point, he is unable to give a plausible response to any comparison between eras. Thus, his drive to re-encourage certain practises is ultimately a damaging one.

One of the aims of this chapter is to show that for many Methodists in the nineteenth century, abstinence as a choice became significant because of the theological and ethical foundations set by John Wesley. Spiritual discipline and social action were key factors for members of the Methodist movement. Missionary work with those who were not

²³⁷ Thompson Brake, 1974: 8.

Christian was also important, and often, a new view of alcohol was one result of Christian conversion. For the Bible Christians and other Methodists, sanctification and Christian perfection were possible for all believers, and so a conversion could lead onto a gospel-centred life of discipleship. Furthermore, the doctrinal instruction provided by Methodism was also available to all people not yet believers. The Methodist class system (which all members were organised into) allowed for growth in an individual's spiritual life, spiritual education and spiritual aspirations; this in turn encouraged and gave opportunities for a Christian to find ways to be sanctified as a believer, working towards perfection. In finding these opportunities, many would be empowered by their new faith to help those in need of assistance, and John Wesley had already lived out this example. Wesley was a man of "literate religious seriousness... at ease in both humble, rural settings and higher education".²³⁸ He had "stamped upon him the duty of practical love of neighbour".²³⁹ "Wesley was one of the first, not only to see the poor as recipients of alms and objects of charitable care, but also to set forth the genuinely Christian duty to eliminate their wretchedness".²⁴⁰ This was deeply significant in a country at a time when the divide between classes and levels of affluence was enormous. Wesley's work was influential enough to create a large group of people who felt the same as him with regards the practical outworking of the gospel, and its life transforming nature.

Because this thesis will highlight a belief that John Wesley's theologies of sanctification and Christian perfection created a seedbed that allowed for a strong adoption of Methodist teetotalism at its very beginning, Wesley's sermons are used as primary sources. Material and records produced by Methodist factions are also used as primary components. As is widely known, Methodism is a well-documented movement; this is due in large part to the efforts of those who were integral to the community, whose work was contemporary to the events. The community itself produced swathes of literature, pamphlets and propaganda. Much historical writing already exists using these sources; this thesis makes use of this work, with the reservation that this material needs to be used cautiously. Any movement that is its own historian can give misleading information; this is probably more the case when considering the work of a movement that deals with spiritual and ethical issues. There are some critical primary documents, but an essential critique of those historical sources will need to take place within this

²³⁸ Stone, 2001: 21.

²³⁹ Marquardt, 1992: 26.

²⁴⁰ Marquardt, 1992: 27.

thesis. The Bible Christian and Primitive Methodist Church historians in particular can be justifiably described as enthusiastic rather than academic. Wider current Methodist scholarship shows no particular interest in the Bible Christians, and also has moved past the consideration of issues of abstinence and organised teetotalism, with the exception of David Clough's essay on *Theology Through Social and Political Action*.²⁴¹

This thesis will suggest that three approaches have been influential upon the teetotal cause within Methodism during its history. Not all of these approaches are acknowledged consistently throughout historical studies of this subject. These differing approaches are a) A theological justification for the promotion of teetotalism. b) A political justification for the promotion of teetotalism. c) A societal justification for the promotion of teetotalism. All three categories resonate with aspects of Methodism, but this thesis aims to find clear markers of how and where these assertions occur. Over time, all of these choices have become blurred, but this thesis acknowledges that there are reasons for all choices that individuals and groups make, and given the seriousness with which the Bible Christians took both abstinence and holiness, this creates a strong circumstantial case for the support of one by the other. Thus, this chapter will propose that John Wesley's ideas about sanctification and Christian perfection were theological catalysts for many things, and their presence in communities created a foundation for abstinence.

John Wesley's life and a view of Methodist origins

John Wesley was born in 1703 in Epworth, Lincolnshire. His father Samuel was the Rector of the Parish Church, but it is his mother Susannah (née Annesley) whom most historians focus upon. Her influence on her children is said to have been significant. She came from a family with a strong non-conformist tradition. Her father, John Wesley's grandfather, was a Dissenting Minister.²⁴² Susannah is said to have passed these traditions, with an added mixture of Puritan ideals on to her nineteen children, of whom nine lived past their infant years.²⁴³ As well as a strong educational focus at home, John

²⁴¹ With the understandable departure of abstinence from regular Methodist agendas, its estrangement can appear to be final within some of these sources.

²⁴² Fitzgerald, W.H.B., 1905 *The Roots of Methodism* in particular highlights the Wesley family's traditions that were passed to all the children of Susanna and Samuel Wesley.

²⁴³ "Wesley's mother, who taught her children, exerted a far stronger influence than did their father, the pastor of Epworth" (Marquardt, 1992: 51).

and all his siblings were expected to learn and gain an education.²⁴⁴ After his initial schooling, John gained a place at Christ Church, Oxford, and was ordained as a deacon in 1725, and a priest in 1728. Once ordained, he returned to Lincolnshire to assist his father in the duties of the Parish, but he did not remain there for long.

When John Wesley returned to Oxford in 1729, he found that his younger brother Charles (born 1707, now also an Oxford student) was spending his time with other students who were also “religiously inclined”.²⁴⁵ This inclination (sometimes labeled ‘enthusiasm’) has periodically been described as the eighteenth century’s version of ‘fanaticism’, and these enthusiasts did not have many points of view that they shared with the general populous. John Wesley joined this group, and through their activities, the group gained the nickname of ‘Holy Club’. Their time as a community largely consisted of “prayer, reading the Bible and other literature, religious conversation and weekly church-going”. As he became more established among them, “John Wesley’s seniority and natural flair for leadership gave him an informal influence, but no official status”.²⁴⁶ The group became more inspired by their communal prayer life, scriptural study and reading, and so it became a particular purpose for them to aim towards a life where they imitated Christ who “went around doing good”.²⁴⁷ The club took on a role as regular visitors to the city prison to spend time with debtors and later, those prisoners who were condemned. Despite and through all this, other students and members of the University treated the Holy Club with disdain. Various derogatory nicknames were created but because the group “followed the methods of study laid down by the university”; they were most famously labeled as “Methodists”.²⁴⁸

John Wesley suspended his time in Oxford, and left England in 1735 when he travelled to the new colony of Georgia in the Americas. His role was as a pastor to the new settlers, and potential evangelist to the natives. He records the purpose of his mission in his journal “to live wholly to the glory of God”.²⁴⁹ However, it was not a successful trip, and his work there did not last. In the aftermath, Wesley wrote “I went to America to convert others (but I) was never myself converted to God”.²⁵⁰ John Wesley’s time abroad only lasted until early 1738, which was when he returned to London, much

²⁴⁴ For more on this, see Newton (2003) *Susanna Wesley and the Puritan Tradition in Methodism*.

²⁴⁵ Vickers, 2000: 380.

²⁴⁶ Vickers, 2000: 162.

²⁴⁷ Acts 10: 38.

²⁴⁸ Bates, 1977: 18.

²⁴⁹ Jay (ed.), 1987: 12.

²⁵⁰ Jay (ed.), 1987: 25.

earlier than was intended or expected. His venture was curtailed thanks to some struggles with inter-personal relationships between pastor and community, and Wesley felt that his mission had been a failure. Wesley recorded in his journal that he “preached the Gospel there – not as I ought, but as I was able”.²⁵¹ However, despite the relative failure of the work, the significant change to come in Wesley’s life and theology was made possible thanks to these journeys. In the course of his travelling abroad, John Wesley first encountered the Moravian believers. Moravia is a region now found in the Czech Republic, but this title refers in particular to a group of exiled Protestants who were defined by their belief in a personal salvation, gained by faith.²⁵² This belief was revelatory to John Wesley, that “a true living faith in Christ is inseparable from a sense of pardon for all past, and freedom from all presents sins... this faith was the free gift of God and He would surely bestow it upon every soul who earnestly and perseveringly sought it”.²⁵³ By the time of their encounter with Wesley, the wider community of Moravians had found refuge in Saxony, as well as travelling to the new colonies across the Atlantic. This different approach to salvation and faith struck a significant chord with Wesley, and “accordingly Monday, 6, I began preaching this new doctrine, though my soul started back from the work”.²⁵⁴

Once back in London, under the encouragement of some Moravian friends, Wesley visited a Religious Society. These societies existed as places much like Wesley’s own Holy Club – a place for Enthusiasts to read, pray and discuss together. On the occasion of his attendance, he heard the reading of some of Martin Luther’s words from his preface to the Epistle to the Romans, and Wesley famously felt his heart “strangely warmed”.²⁵⁵ From this juncture onwards, Wesley fully understood the theological implications of personal salvation by faith alone, and had a spiritual experience that “marked a significant turning point” for his rational mind towards the truth of this doctrine.²⁵⁶ Certainly, from this moment in his life Wesley became part of the Evangelical Movement, which was already running apace in parts of Europe. By 1739, George Whitefield, another member of this same faction, had started to preach outdoors, enabling large audiences to hear him. He encouraged John Wesley to do the same. Wesley did so with some initial reluctance, but the increased visibility resulted in

²⁵¹ Jay (ed.), 1987: 25.

²⁵² The Moravian Church began in 1457 in Kunvald, Bohemia. They followed the teachings of Jan Huss, and saw themselves as inheritors of the Hussites. They left this part of what is now the Czech Republic in 1722 to escape increased persecution at the hands of the Jesuits, a male only branch of Catholicism.

²⁵³ Jay (ed.), 1987: 34.

²⁵⁴ Jay (ed.), 1987: 28. Writing on March 6th 1738.

²⁵⁵ Jay (ed.), 1987: 34. Writing on May 24th 1738.

²⁵⁶ Vickers, 2000: 380.

significant growth for Wesley's message, popularity, and demand. "Societies looking to him for leadership began to be formed further and further afield and it was not only evangelical zeal, but the need for pastoral care... which lead to his ever increasing journeys throughout the British Isles".²⁵⁷ Wesley's impressive work-rate, and intention to go wherever he was wanted meant that the influence of his preaching and theology became widespread. The phrase used for those who became joined with John Wesley's ministry and organisation was to be "in connexion with Mr. Wesley".²⁵⁸ Within twelve months, Wesley and his associates were building rooms for the use of newly named Methodist societies, after the nickname of that club in Oxford, and growth of the movement continued.²⁵⁹

As well as "salvation by faith", this connexion had certain other characteristics. Demographically speaking Methodism was a working class movement – "although (Wesley) welcomed upper and middle class converts, the lower classes remained his chief concern... he expended much effort on enabling the lower-classes to be self-sufficient in relieving the needs of their own class".²⁶⁰ Incidentally, this mirrors the passage and purpose of the initial teetotal movement. While the marked theological choice and ethos are hugely significant reasons for Methodism's success, without Wesley's guidance, the movement would never have achieved all it did. Vickers states that "John Wesley was a born organiser and leader and so was able to consolidate results of his own preaching and that of others".²⁶¹ Furthermore, he was a natural teacher – his theology "warrants serious scholarly attention", and the topics covered across his *'Forty Four Sermons'* are theologically and doctrinally extensive.²⁶² "He gained the attention of those new masses of the population which the cumbrous organisation of the Established Church was unable to reach".²⁶³ Finally, it is important to note that because of his statesman-like reputation within the universe of Methodism, Wesley's sermons and writings are often mined and re-mined in order to find a definitive answer on some matter of church, belief or ethics.

²⁵⁷ Vickers, 2000: 380.

²⁵⁸ Vickers, 2000: 380.

²⁵⁹ Jay (ed.), 1987: 41-42 gives details of the earliest planned rooms and the subscriptions that would pay for them. Wesley was keen not to rest on laurels – "before I knew where I was, I had contracted a debt of one hundred and fifty pounds".

²⁶⁰ Jay (ed.), 1987: xxvi-xxvii.

²⁶¹ Vickers, 2000: 381.

²⁶² Vickers, 2000: 381.

²⁶³ Davies and Rupp (ed.) vol. I, 1965: 63.

Wesley lived and worked for a significantly long period of time; his missionary work was extensive and his legacy was large. In 1784, John Wesley took the necessary step before his death of making “provision for the continuance of the (Methodist) movement through the Deed of Declaration”.²⁶⁴ This Deed created a supreme legislative body, which followed the rules Wesley created with regard to annual meetings, procedures and officials of ‘The Conference’. This Conference (an annual nationwide gathering of church representatives) had the right to accept and expel preachers, and control the property that John and his brother Charles Wesley had created, accumulated and maintained throughout their lives and mission. This was a necessary action based upon Wesley’s hope for the future, but as a result, Methodism shifted away from the Anglican Church, and became a denomination. Wesley had already taken the step of allowing ordination of American preachers in 1784 after the War of Independence. This stood him at odds with the Church of England, who claimed he acted outside of his jurisdiction.²⁶⁵ Despite this, for many years he had seen his mission as the “spiritual renewal of a lethargic Church of England”, but the success of Methodism meant that it was to be much more than a rejuvenation of the Established Church.²⁶⁶ His decision meant that Methodism, (or what became known as the Wesleyan Methodist Church) “would speak with its own accent and through its own preachers to the whole world”.²⁶⁷

Methodism after Wesley’s death

John Wesley died in 1791, aged 87. By this time “the Methodist Connexion had proved itself a great and permanent organisation in the national life”.²⁶⁸ With Wesley’s death, the future became uncertain, largely because of his incredibly significant influence, and constant leadership. The idea of any one individual replacing Wesley seemed to present instant difficulties. Wesley held a number of issues in great tension: the respect that Wesley was given by those preachers who had laboured under him during his lifetime was not going to be easily shifted to another leader. There was the potential for huge turmoil, or at least, some significant upheaval. Some wondered if this juncture might allow an opportunity to move closer to Anglicanism, while others hoped that Methodist laymen might be given an equal role to those ordained.²⁶⁹ As it was, Wesleyan

²⁶⁴ Vickers, 2000: 382.

²⁶⁵ For more on this, read Davies and Rupp (ed.) vol. I, 1965: 68-70.

²⁶⁶ Vickers, 2000: 381.

²⁶⁷ Davies and Rupp (ed.) vol. I, 1965: 72.

²⁶⁸ Davies and Rupp (ed.) vol. I, 1965: 278.

²⁶⁹ For more on this, see Davies and Rupp (ed.) vol. I, 1965: 280 onwards.

Methodism stayed largely as John Wesley had established it. There were splits away from the central organisation, and factions that could never join (such as the Welsh Calvinist Methodists, due to the polarity between the two theological stances), but the Wesleyan Methodist Church at the end of the eighteenth century was a thriving community; “not merely a church within a Church, it was almost a nation within a nation”.²⁷⁰

Despite the rootedness and observed stability of the organisation, “the present state of Methodism’, said Joseph Entwisle in 1797, ‘is very different from what it was fifty years ago. The Methodists are become a numerous and respectable body... many are persons of fortune, respectable tradesmen and men of good repute’”.²⁷¹ Wesleyan Methodists had, through their good behaviour and the constantly improving public perception of them, become trusted, and some had become wealthy, and in turn recruited others of wealth to their faith group. Factory owners as well as factory workers now attended the same chapels. And through their example, they became trusted and upright members of society: “Sir Robert Peel the elder (the creator of the modern Police Force) declared in 1787: ‘I have left most of my works in Lancashire under the management of Methodists and they serve me excellently well’”.²⁷² The Wesleyan Methodist Church was fully established, and inevitably, as establishment took place, other factions or renegades were disregarded in favour of the maintenance and status quo of what already existed. This situation leads this thesis to ensuing versions of Methodism, which came into existence for a variety of reasons. These later believers still saw themselves as inheritors of Wesley’s work, but they now existed outside of the Wesleyan Methodist Church and its influence.

John Wesley the figurehead

Regarding John Wesley, Davies believes, “throughout his life he remained the Oxford tutor... in his concern for the education of the itinerant preachers and his society members as a whole, in his educational ventures and above all in his writing and publishing”.²⁷³ Without Wesley, there would have been no movement, and his influence to this day still outweighs any other person’s influence. Wesley found God’s

²⁷⁰ Davies and Rupp (ed.) vol. I, 1965: 311.

²⁷¹ Davies and Rupp (ed.) vol. I, 1965: 308.

²⁷² Davies and Rupp (ed.) vol. I, 1965: 310.

²⁷³ Vickers, 2000: 381-382 – Wesley wrote over 500 different titles.

unconditional love “guiding and inspiring him in everything he did. He found others who in the same way responded to the message of this love. The story of a man became the story of a movement”.²⁷⁴ His writings were “an instrument for strengthening the cohesive force of Methodism”, and the very nature of Methodism is construed throughout his texts, letters and journal.²⁷⁵

The Bible Christians, considered in depth later in this chapter, are an example of how Wesley’s influence continued, even outside the Wesleyan Methodist Church. Often and with strength, this new community confirms their wish to “imitate Mr. Wesley”.²⁷⁶ In fact, his extensive writing was often revisited, to show how some aspect of Methodism was being misinterpreted, or how the community should be acting according to Wesley. Even long after his death, Wesley was still the final arbiter when other authoritative figures were in disagreement. When disagreement was not a concern, his theology was the point from which many took their own inspiration and understanding. This is not surprising, given John Wesley’s hope that his writing would be educational and formative. Wesley, particularly in his *‘Forty Four Sermons’*, considers “the essentials of true religion”.²⁷⁷ Wesley wrote, “I have endeavoured to describe the true, the scriptural, experimental religion, so as to omit nothing which is a real part thereof, and to add nothing thereto which is not”.²⁷⁸ As such, those sermons express topics including ‘salvation by faith’, ‘justification by faith’, ‘the way to the kingdom’, ‘the fruits of the spirit’, ‘the Christian witness’, ‘grace’, ‘new birth’, ‘the sermon on the mount’, ‘the law and faith’, ‘enthusiasm’, ‘bigotry’, ‘sanctification’, ‘Christian perfection’, ‘temptation’, ‘denial’ and ‘money’. It is an extensive work, so this chapter will necessarily focus upon sanctification and Christian perfection as influential ideas for the Bible Christians, as gained from Wesley’s own theological work.

Finally, all of these versions of Methodist Christianity fit under the banner of ‘nonconformity’. The term originates with the choice of a set of Anglican clergymen who did not conform to the 1662 Act of Uniformity. This act called upon all Anglicans to lead compulsory prayers using the Book of Common Prayer. Both of John Wesley’s grandfathers chose to rebel against this ruling, and were ejected from the Church of England. From this point onwards, an English person who was a member of a Protestant

²⁷⁴ Bates, 1977: 23.

²⁷⁵ Jay, 1987: xiii.

²⁷⁶ For more on this, see Bourne, F.W. 1905 *The Bible Christians*.

²⁷⁷ Wesley, 2005: v.

²⁷⁸ Wesley, 2005: vi.

church, but was not in Anglican Communion became known as a nonconformist. The Act of Toleration in 1689 was the point in English history when Dissenters of a non-Anglican nature were allowed their own places and occasions of worship, as long as they pledged allegiance to the crown. Essentially, this was the moment in history when Protestantism was allowed to exist wholesale, while Catholicism remained taboo. The term ‘nonconformist’ came to encompass all aspects of Methodism when this group came into existence too.

Wesley’s Theology of Sanctification

Although the creation of a Methodist community was not entirely the work of John Wesley, nor was it his plan to instigate a new denomination, it was his energy, enthusiasm, teaching, organisation and theology that made the movement so significant. His colleagues and supporters, including his brother Charles, George Whitefield, John Fletcher, Mary Fletcher, and The Countess of Huntingdon, all played very significant parts, as did many others, but it was John Wesley who made this movement so nationally and historically significant. This section is concerned with Wesley’s theology because it is foundational for the Bible Christians. Maddox writes that Wesley was “devoted to understanding, teaching, proclaiming, and appropriating the historic faith. Indeed, he thought theologically, spoke and communicated theologically, preached and taught theologically, strategised theologically, administered the Methodist movement theologically, and he even died theologically”.²⁷⁹ Wesley’s self-assessment of his life and theology led him to conclude that a person’s actions and their own spiritual journeys are not isolated, but related. Wesley was convinced that holiness was to be strived towards, and conceived his theologies of sanctification and Christian perfection to help understand what it meant to aim to become holy. This thesis intends to show that a life of abstinence can be and has been directly influenced by these two key theological standpoints.

Wesley’s theology was not revolutionary within Christendom, but it was not without its critics: some were unhappy with his ideas about holiness, sanctification and perfection.²⁸⁰ In addition, opponents who were aligned with Calvinism berated him

²⁷⁹ Maddox (ed.), 1998: 23.

²⁸⁰ See Abraham (ed.), 2009: 618.

throughout his ministry. He was also criticised by some of the Arminians that he identified with, supposedly swaying too closely to the Calvinist belief system. Despite some controversy around the idea, he believed that “God must be seen to be offering salvation to all, and all must be free to accept or reject it. Even though we are saved by grace through faith and not by our own works, we must actively pursue salvation, prepare for it, build upon the grace offered after conversion and pursue perfection”.²⁸¹ He believed that all are freely given salvation by God’s grace. However, the caveat is that all must work to act as those who are saved. This idea remained solid and became a cornerstone for the denomination he founded, even though some of Wesley’s theology changed and evolved as he moved through life, despite his claims to the contrary. For clarity, Abraham states “Wesley was naïve to think that there were not twists and turns in the development of his position”.²⁸² Despite some discrepancies, his theology of holiness was maintained. Abraham reiterates that “Christ is deadly serious in the call to perfection; the Scriptures portray a model of pure religion in which those who are born of God do not commit sin; it really is possible in this life to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind and to love our neighbours as ourselves. By the grace of God, human agents... can have the mind of Christ here and now... To omit these themes or to marginalise them is to miss the heart and soul of Christianity”.²⁸³ As followers of Christ, and thinkers through the lens of John Wesley’s work, the Bible Christians also held that a person’s salvation was not dependent on the acts of that person. And they too believed that the gift of salvation was deserving of a life of affirmative ethical action. The Bible Christian’s 1838 *Summary of Doctrines* states, (in Shaw’s words) “sanctification is the believer’s privilege but that continuation in the state of salvation depends upon ‘maintaining a life of humble and obedient faith’”.²⁸⁴

To see the full picture of the foundational understanding for both Wesley and the Bible Christians of holiness, sanctification and Christian perfection, it is necessary to step backwards slightly, and draw focus on the theological values of Arminianism. As mentioned, Arminianism is the school of thought that emerged from the theology of the Dutch Reformed Protestant thinker Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609). This approach is known for being a soteriologically diverse version of Protestant Christianity. John Wesley encountered it as an idea around the time of his ‘conversion experience’ and

²⁸¹ Rack, 1989: 388.

²⁸² Abraham (ed.), 2009: 588.

²⁸³ Abraham (ed.), 2009: 589.

²⁸⁴ Shaw, 1965: 107.

took it as a basis for his work after this date. According to Abraham, “Wesley defended an Arminian position over and against the Calvinistic views of his fellow evangelist and good friend George Whitefield, and he did so with both vigour and impressive rigour”.²⁸⁵ The Bible Christians followed this theme, fully identifying themselves with Arminianism. William O’ Bryan went so far as “prefixing Arminian to it (their title) as an indication of his theological standpoint”.²⁸⁶ The Arminianism which Wesley, and subsequently O’ Bryan identified with was expressed through the Five Articles of Remonstrance. These articles asserted 1) ‘*Conditional Predestination*’ - salvation was based upon the faith of a person, which had been graciously given by God. 2) ‘*Universal Atonement*’ - all people can have atonement, but only the Christian believer is forgiven. 3) ‘*Saving Faith*’ - it is only through the Holy Spirit that a person can respond to this grace. 4) ‘*Resistible Grace*’ - any good achieved is through this grace, but all can refuse to respond. 5) ‘*The Uncertainty of Perseverance*’ - it is only thanks to the Holy Spirit that a believer is able to avoid sin.²⁸⁷ In opposition to this, Calvinism (following the theology of John Calvin (1509-1564)) conceived a different and contrasting viewpoint. Calvinism holds that all people are ruined by sin, but thanks to God’s grace, He chooses to give salvation to some. According to Calvin, humanity is incapable of taking the steps to achieve salvation for itself, and so relies on God’s redeeming grace. He shows mercy to some, but not all, and Calvin asserts that He is just in doing so, because none deserve salvation anyway.

In Wesley’s own writing we see Arminianism supported, and Calvinism dismissed – the idea of *Resistible Grace* is considered in some depth – any good that is achieved by a person is done so through God’s grace. In his 14th sermon, Wesley declares “the plain indisputable meaning of the text (*1 John 5:3* “this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments”) – this is the sign of proof of love of God, of our keeping the first and great commandment, to keep all the rest of his commandments. For true love, if it be once shed abroad in our heart, will constrain us so to do; since whosoever loves God with all his heart cannot but serve Him with all his strength”.²⁸⁸ For Wesley, the redemption that we have been given can never be repaid, but keeping God’s commandments is a positive signal of intent - a way of showing gratitude, while we have to acknowledge that producing enough gratitude is impossible.

²⁸⁵ Abraham (ed.), 2009: 618.

²⁸⁶ Initially known as William O’ Bryan’s Arminian Bible Christians. Shaw, 1965: 22.

²⁸⁷ Schaff, 1877: 516-519.

²⁸⁸ Wesley, 1944: 170-171.

In the words of Ronald Stone, “Wesley argued from Scripture that the God of power and love cured evil that human conscience could reveal but not cure. But God would not force happiness on humanity, nor force it to be miserable. Humanity had real choices to make”.²⁸⁹ Wesley valued this discovery: all people could find redemptive faith in God, and this faith is of our choosing. Wesley’s later theology “pictured the process of salvation... beginning with the gift of grace...progress is made towards conversion expressed in justification and sanctification... It is both instantaneous and gradual: it begins from the moment of justification, but grows until we are cleaned from all sin”.²⁹⁰ “Wesley retained the basic notion that justification comes by grace through faith (but), he was constrained by experience to allow that this could be prepared for by good works which had some real value”.²⁹¹ Good works had their own value, not just for kudos, although this required a necessary balance theologically. “Wesley is always a Christian moralist, never a mere humanitarian... sinful man has of himself no power effectively to keep the discipline of the righteous life. This can only be done through the operation of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer in Christ”.²⁹² Once salvation has been given though, the individual can work accordingly. In Rack’s words, for Wesley “the true goal of the Christian life is sanctification, holiness even to the point of perfection. This goal was never abandoned”.²⁹³

Sanctification might suggest a life of meditation and quiet contemplation, but for John Wesley, a person’s inward spiritual change had to be represented by an outward action. So although a person’s salvation is only achieved through Christ, God and humanity judge a person based upon their life’s actions. Stone points to Wesley’s repeated use of the word ‘character’; “most of these uses (344 uses of ‘character’ in the standard edition of his complete works) are in reference to the moral character of human beings and to their selves as moral agents”.²⁹⁴ Therefore, the inference is that good character is not gained or judged positively by living a life removed from the world. Stone believes the term to be “humanistic, goal-orientated and works orientated”, which made Wesley unique amongst most contemporary Protestant thinkers. The implication is a Wesleyan acknowledgement that an inward sanctified spirituality needed to show outward actions. The spiritual change in the believer meant a change in their behaviour. For the Bible

²⁸⁹ Stone, 2001: 154.

²⁹⁰ Rack, 1989: 389.

²⁹¹ Rack, 1989: 391.

²⁹² Lawson in Davies and Rupp (ed.) vol. 1, 1983: 184.

²⁹³ Rack, 1989: 395.

²⁹⁴ Stone, 2001: 217.

Christian community it even initiated a change of dress code: in the words of Shaw, “a non-conformity to the world was expected of all members... ‘Let none remain among us... who copy after it’”.²⁹⁵

A class and society-based Methodist in the eighteenth century would have been encouraged, in the light of their spiritual conviction, to work towards an improved character. In the course of this journey, they would have understood it in terms of sanctification. Lindstrom explains that “although justification and sanctification are closely associated, Wesley nevertheless thinks it necessary to distinguish between them... justification only implies... the forgiveness of sins and the acceptance incident to it. In this way it is distinguished from sanctification, which begins in man with new birth”.²⁹⁶ If sanctification is a signifier of new birth, this should mean a beginning or change in relation to a believer’s behaviour, following from their acceptance of salvation. While justification involves a “relative change”, sanctification brings about a “real change”; Lindstrom calls it “a real renewal in man himself”; while justification is God doing something for us, sanctification is Him doing something “in us”.²⁹⁷ “Simultaneously with justification, sanctification begins”.²⁹⁸ The Bible Christians believed absolutely in salvation as Wesley described it, and they called it “the believer’s privilege”.²⁹⁹

This theology should not create an insistence on good works at all costs. “Wesley affirms the way of faith and grace instead of works... Although sanctification and good works are necessary consequences, the latter does not as such include them”.³⁰⁰ It is vitally important to acknowledge that God’s grace is not dependent on, or a reward for a person’s good works. “Sanctification in Wesley has often been restricted to this latter notion of entire sanctification, with the result that an incomplete and distorted view of its importance in his theology has been obtained... the fact that it also comprises a gradual development of the Christian life has not been realised”.³⁰¹ This is a balancing act that is as old as Christian theology itself, and Methodism perhaps struggles more with it than some other aspects of the church, simply because Wesley and his successors

²⁹⁵ Shaw, 1965: 110.

²⁹⁶ Lindstrom, 1950: 84.

²⁹⁷ Lindstrom, 1950: 84.

²⁹⁸ Lindstrom, 1950: 86.

²⁹⁹ Shaw, 1965: 107.

³⁰⁰ Lindstrom, 1950: 88.

³⁰¹ Lindstrom, 1950: 123.

were convinced that acting as someone who was sanctified was an important part of a person growing in holiness. Wesley was a man for whom “there is nothing that cannot be expressed in terms of degrees and measures... the idea of a gradual progression in sanctification extends beyond the boundaries of life on earth. Wesley imagines a development... even after death”. But “in the process of salvation this idea of gradual development is combined with an instantaneous element”.³⁰² Scholars note this as a significant difference between Wesley’s theology and other Protestant views on sanctification. The Bible Christians were also notable for their acknowledgement in a life-changing belief; “the importance of church, ministry and sacrament was affirmed from the beginning, but these things were overshadowed by a tremendous emphasis on personal religion”.³⁰³ For the Bible Christian community, everything else took a backseat to personal religion. These were deeply religious people, working out how their religious beliefs should impact upon their life and deeds. Accordingly, their dress, charity and abstinence were some of the many things that highlighted them as separate from what they viewed as ‘worldly values’. Because the Bible Christian’s understanding of sanctification does not match the majority of Protestantism, but rather matches Wesley’s work, we have another example of the link between the Bible Christians and the Wesleyan Methodist Church.

Wesley’s beliefs then informed how Methodist (Wesleyan, Primitive and Bible Christian) societies worked; individual Christians became members of Methodist bands or Methodist classes. These groups encouraged each individual Christian towards the next level of discipleship, by increasing their understanding, their prayer life and, in theory, their holiness. Long explains that “the members belonged to one or the other of these according to their spiritual state and experience”.³⁰⁴ “The membership of the band was not dependent upon attainment to holiness, or assurance. The simple condition is that of an entire earnestness to attain, cost what it may”.³⁰⁵ There was no “creedal subscription... but discipline followed upon joining”.³⁰⁶ Lawson, quoting the rulebook states “in *The Rules of the Society*’ we read that the Methodist Society is ‘a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united to watch over one another in love’”.³⁰⁷ The Bible Christians too drew up societies that were the same, and

³⁰² Lindstrom, 1950: 120-121.

³⁰³ Shaw, 1965: 106.

³⁰⁴ Long, 2005: 146.

³⁰⁵ Lawson in Davies and Rupp (ed.) vol. 1, 1983: 191.

³⁰⁶ Stone, 2001: 87.

³⁰⁷ Lawson in Davies and Rupp (ed.) vol. 1, 1983: 192.

worked in the same ways as those of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, “sometimes supplementing, and sometimes plainly duplicating the work of the Methodists”.³⁰⁸ Accordingly, these groups too are categorised by the membership’s stage of discipleship – Wesley “believes that the Christian moral life begins in repentance”.³⁰⁹ The stages can be categorised correspondingly: “first repentance, (then) justification and (finally) entire sanctification”.³¹⁰

In the words of Ronald Stone “it was the love of God itself that animates the moral rigour Wesley breathes into his exhortations”.³¹¹ In practice, D. Stephen Long believes that Wesley mirrors what Thomas Aquinas believed about the moral life: that “the first precept of the natural moral law (is) central to the Christian moral life. Aquinas stated that the first precept of the natural law was ‘good is to be done and pursued, and evil is to be avoided’”.³¹² As with Wesley, Aquinas sees that “the end of the Christian life is deification, which occurs when our lives are ordered by the Beatitudes”.³¹³ Sanctification can become perfection, which Wesley at times refers to as “entire sanctification”. Lindstrom tells us “it is true that in practice he did not always observe the distinction, but he did in principle. Thus, and particularly in later years, ‘sanctification’ alone often designates Christian perfection”.³¹⁴ The term ‘Christian perfection’ is less prevalent in the world of the Bible Christians, but ‘sanctification’ is used and encouraged often. As we have seen, it was “constantly emphasised”.³¹⁵

Wesley’s “Christian Perfection”

Further on in this chapter, this project will draw focus upon the Bible Christian community’s insistence upon ‘sanctification’. Before O’Bryan and Thorne applied it in their community, Harold Lindstrom believes that “Christian perfection became an essential theme in Wesley”.³¹⁶ Henry Rack even believes it to be “his most central and characteristic doctrine”.³¹⁷ John Wesley persistently preached that all believers were

³⁰⁸ Shaw, 1965: 22.

³⁰⁹ Long, 2005: 146.

³¹⁰ Lindstrom, 1950: 122.

³¹¹ Stone, 2001: 97.

³¹² Long, 2005: 186.

³¹³ Long, 2005: 188.

³¹⁴ Lindstrom, 1950: 127.

³¹⁵ Shaw, 1965: 106.

³¹⁶ Lindstrom, 1950: 129.

³¹⁷ Rack, 1989: 381.

made perfect in God's sight, through Jesus' actions on the Cross. William J. Abraham sees Wesley's theme as a scriptural idea: "given that Christ himself had called on his followers to be 'perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect' (*Matthew 5:48*) he did not draw back from using the language of perfection".³¹⁸ In addition to this gifted perfection, through the transformative power of Christ, Wesley believed all Christians were still to strive towards a state of perfection, working in order to become holy. They were to do this because, "Wesley defines holiness as both inward and outward righteousness".³¹⁹ Because of the visibility of these changed actions, Methodism soon became an identifiable feature of individuals and families within impoverished working class communities, although in truth, this was probably more an observation of cleanliness, conscientiousness and studiousness. Of the Bible Christians, it is said, "theirs was the religion of the Bible pietistically understood".³²⁰ In the shadow of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, and all that had been achieved there, this was a significant acknowledgement.

Marquardt acknowledges "by grounding the dignity of the poor in God's love, Wesley intended to alter the attitude toward the poor and to create a willingness to improve their general situation".³²¹ Wesley believed that it was the Christian responsibility to improve the lot of all around, but also to encourage those that they met to encounter Christ too. After a person has experienced the transformative power of Christ, Wesley then believed all Christians were to strive towards perfection through this power, and this "applied to all men".³²² In his 35th sermon on "*Christian Perfection*", Wesley tackles why this is the case. Using the text from Philippians 3:12, ("Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own") Wesley declares, "Christian perfection, therefore, does not imply an exemption either from ignorance, or mistake, or infirmities, or temptations. Indeed, it is only another term for holiness. They are the same thing. Thus, everyone that is holy is, in the Scripture sense, perfect".³²³ He adds: "this is the glorious privilege of every Christian... it can be affirmed they are in such a sense perfect".³²⁴ So, in the

³¹⁸ Abraham in Abraham and Kirby (ed.), 2009: 589.

³¹⁹ Lindstrom, 1950: 158.

³²⁰ Shaw, 1965: 107.

³²¹ Marquardt in Yrogoyen Jr. (ed.), 2010: 293. He also notes how willing JW was to alleviate poverty through practical actions – "Methodist ministry for and with the poor extended beyond individual service. Wesley regarded poverty as an evil to be eliminated".

³²² Lindstrom, 1950: 128.

³²³ Wesley, 2005: 458-462.

³²⁴ Wesley, 2005: 472.

words of Lindstrom, perfection is “synonymous with entire sanctification... one of the stages in the process of salvation”.³²⁵

This theological understanding of perfection did not start with Wesley; Stone believes that “Wesley himself attributed his early emphasis on perfection to Jeremy Taylor, Thomas a Kempis and William Law”.³²⁶ William Law (1686-1761), also using Philippians 3:12 as his inspiration exhorts us to “devote ourselves wholly unto God. Make the ends and designs of religion, the ends and designs of all our actions.... To avoid all pleasure and cares which grieve the Holy Spirit and separate him from us”.³²⁷ Law asks his reader to “suppose that strict sobriety was the sole End of Man, the necessary condition of happiness, what would you think of those people, who knowing and believing this to be true, should yet spend their time in getting quantities of all sorts of the strongest liquors?”³²⁸ Law’s writing tells us of a belief that a life of perfection is more desirable than any other life. In aiming for this perfection, Law understands that there is a necessity for each person to prepare himself or herself properly. As such, a person should not be shocked if they cannot match up to God’s standards when times are hard or temptation is present, if they have not spent their days still devoted to God when times are not hard and they are not tempted. Jeremy Taylor (1613-1667) too speaks eloquently of the troubles of sin; not just that the sin itself causes damage, but that it shows the lack of will in an individual to do as they are encouraged to do by God’s love, and Christ’s actions. Thomas à Kempis (1380-1471) wrote: “If men used as much care in uprooting vices and implanting virtues as they do in discussing problems, there would not be so much evil and scandal in the world, or such laxity in religious organisations. On the day of judgement, surely, we shall not be asked what we have read but what we have done; not how well we have spoken but how well we have lived”.³²⁹ We can observe the clear thread that joins all of these thinkers with John Wesley – that God’s gracious love demands a response, and for these four men, the response has to be a moral existence. Stone believes that Wesley found *1 John 2:4-6* significant; “whoever obeys his word, truly in this person the love of God has reached perfection. By this we may be sure that we are in him: whoever says, ‘I abide in him’,

³²⁵ Lindstrom, 1950: 126.

³²⁶ Stone, 2001: 146.

³²⁷ Law, 1726: 499.

³²⁸ Law, 1726: 500.

³²⁹ Kempis, 1940: 6.

ought to walk just as he walked”.³³⁰ So the perfection of God’s love can only be received if the person responds fully.

All these influences gave Wesley a significantly broad view of perfection. In Stone’s understanding of Wesley’s thinking, perfection “was instantly given as grace as the Moravians taught (but), he also held to the view that it could be acquired gradually”. Tellingly, Wesley “often feared that his Methodist preachers would drop the emphasis on perfection and that omission would lead to the decline of the movement”.³³¹ We can suggest therefore that he considered the idea to be central to the movement. Stone acknowledges that Wesley’s promotion of perfection “focussed the meaning of total love of God and love of neighbour as the self. It was intended as a guard against enthusiastic Christians falling into a disregard of ethics because they had been justified”. For these believers, justification should not allow a moral free rein. Lindstrom explains that perfection in Wesley can be boiled down to “the primary meanings of purity of intention, the imitation of Christ and love to God and our neighbour”.³³² It is not hard to imagine the problems that the use of a word like ‘perfection’ might cause. Stone notes its problematical nature: the complication exists because “perfection is a difficult claim for ethics... perfection implies a total achievement which is not possible in human life in time and space”.³³³

Calvinism unsurprisingly challenged Wesley’s regular use of the term. In what Stone calls Wesley’s period of “maturation”, he shifts his understanding. Lindstrom believes that “perfection ceased to be a requirement”.³³⁴ Perfection as a goal needed to be a secondary aim: what mattered was the overcoming of sin. So, perfection might arrive as part of an overcoming of sin; in Stone’s words, “while for some it was overcome immediately, and for others gradually, for all real Christians its power was broken by grace received in faith that exhibited love. Love of course produced good works; and they effectively were part of the on-going overcoming of sin”.³³⁵ Perfection can be defined in short as “the imitation of Christ”.³³⁶ It could be added that it would be the ‘complete imitation of Christ’. John Wesley promoted the possibility of perfection, but “he never claimed perfection for himself. He admitted that many had fallen away from

³³⁰ Stone, 2001: 146.

³³¹ Stone, 2001: 146.

³³² Lindstrom, 1950: 129.

³³³ Stone, 2001: 148.

³³⁴ Lindstrom, 1950: 135.

³³⁵ Stone, 2001: 149.

³³⁶ Lindstrom, 1950: 130.

perfection, but he could not give up the knowledge that humanity was to grow towards perfection. He trusted in a coming Kingdom, and he knew that people were capable of loving acts”.³³⁷ In truth, if you read the history of Wesley’s theology with a focus on Christian perfection, he was often under fire and trying to work his way through this minefield, because as William J. Abraham’s scholarship shows, this whole life’s work of Wesley’s was “the massive experiment in the spiritual life that was at the core of Methodism”.³³⁸ With experimentation come successes and failures, and a range of people might describe this theological notion differently. Nevertheless, Wesley highlighted for a great many people a new opportunity for exploring the Christian gospel, and in turn an opportunity for a new way of life, which involved the practical outworking of the faith which became synonymous with Methodism. The Bible Christians used this approach throughout their existence, and were recognisably similar to the early Methodists who Wesley worked so closely with. In fact, “Mr O’Bryan was as strongly attached to Methodism as the Wesley’s were to the Church of England”.³³⁹

Despite the undeniable triumph of his work, Wesley was dogged by claims of promoting a ‘salvation by works’; the belief that God could be won over by our attempts to be holy, which of course contradicts the Christian understanding of grace. It was not a criticism that stuck, and Henry Rack believes that what actually concerned Wesley about his work was “the realities of pre- and post-conversion experience in moral terms; the need to make converts grow moment by moment and not to trust one ‘experience’... He did not deny justification by faith in his later years, but sought its reality and above all its development into perfection”.³⁴⁰ Accordingly, William J. Abraham believes that Wesley “knitted his doctrine of perfection seamlessly into a robust vision of human happiness. So there is no need to call into question the orthodoxy or the humanity of Wesley’s views”.³⁴¹ In extension, Wesley expected not only that grace brought salvation, but also that we become partners in grace. Marjorie Suchoki expands Wesley to tell us “God invites us to utilise prayer to become partners with God in the deepest works of divine grace: salvation and sanctification. It is by grace that we are made partners in grace”.³⁴² Thus, with the determination of John Wesley, and the bold theology with which to support affirmative action, a practical outworking of this faith appeared, and duly caused significant changes not just amongst

³³⁷ Stone, 2001: 151.

³³⁸ Abraham in Abraham and Kirby (ed.), 2009: 591.

³³⁹ Bourne, 1905: 559.

³⁴⁰ Rack, 1989: 393.

³⁴¹ Abraham in Abraham and Kirby (ed.), 2009: 588.

³⁴² Suchocki in Maddox (ed.), 1998: 51.

the communities that Wesley's Methodists existed in, but also the individuals that made up those communities, as they committed to the Christian faith. Because of John Wesley's belief in this idea, and the necessary endurance he showed to win the idea some breathing space, the Bible Christians were able to adopt it with an ease that was never available to John Wesley at the time of his writing.

As we have seen, Abraham finds the results of Wesley's theology of sanctification problematic later in Methodist history, writing "Wesley's insistence that holiness was the heart and soul of the faith paved the way for a radically anthropocentric turn that bedevils the tradition as a whole... the development of narrow forms of legalism and social activism are not inevitable but they are more likely to occur".³⁴³ It was incorrect to say that Wesley's teachings created a new moral code, and thus a disregarding of God's grace, but this remained a concern. The unfortunate tradition continued when some abstained from alcohol as a form of legalism, rather than a form of striving towards perfection. This critique does not necessarily destroy the value or potential value of sanctification, but it is important to note the severity of Abraham's belief that "once the doctrine of entire sanctification was abandoned, dissolved or transmuted. Methodism (or at least Wesleyan Methodism) died. Methodism lived on institutionally as a disparate and distinctive network... but there was no deep coherence or consensus at the level of liturgy, doctrine or experience".³⁴⁴ Despite this, Abraham has to concede that "Methodism preached a vision of perfection as a real possibility for all believers here and now; it offered entire sanctification for the masses rather than postpone it till death or limit it to the chosen few in the monastery... Methodism's doctrine of perfection was a noble experiment in spirituality that gave birth to a host of fresh expressions in the Christian faith that continue into the present".³⁴⁵

Practical examples of Wesley's Theology

John Wesley's work caused significant change amongst some of the poorest and most deprived people and places in England. This has to be attributed in part to Wesley's own theological conviction that positive works became part of a Christian person's life and outworking of their own faith. Even if this practicality simply meant an increased level of care for one's family, the changes became apparent in those who found faith.

³⁴³ Abraham in Abraham and Kirby (ed.), 2009: 593.

³⁴⁴ Abraham in Abraham and Kirby (ed.), 2009: 594.

³⁴⁵ Abraham in Abraham and Kirby (ed.), 2009: 597.

And by all accounts, these changes were numerous and widespread. Despite this, unsurprisingly, the historian Turner, cited in Davies and Rupp, shows the divided contemporary opinions on both the values and problems with Methodism.³⁴⁶ Positively, he quotes The Tory *Quarterly Review* from 1810... “Go into the collieries, or to the manufactories of Birmingham and Sheffield, and inquire what are the practical consequences of Methodism wherever it has spread among the poor; - industry and sobriety, quiet and orderly habits, and the comfort which results from them will be found in fruits’. But he pours scorn on Methodist pleasures or the lack of them, and asserts that: (They) ‘wither every flower of loveliness and of innocent enjoyment’”.³⁴⁷ Why this was particularly problematic for the Tory writer is unknown, but Turner himself gives a more generous interpretation of what was happening; “the call of the Methodists for this period was for disciplined, simple, pious lives removed from worldly pleasures and centred on home, chapel and business. The duty of hard work, the evils of luxury and extravagance, the virtues of foresight and thrift, moderation and self-discipline, were instilled into ordinary church members and provided an undergirding to the moral earnestness characteristic of Victorian England”.³⁴⁸

There was an air of social improvement amongst even the very earliest Methodists. They were directed towards this path by John Wesley’s own example. This manifested itself in different ways; greater levels of education, improved healthcare, a reduction of greed and hunger were all on the agenda. The fledgling Methodist movement did not take a specifically anti-alcohol tone; Wesley encouraged his preachers to drink ale, instead of the tea, which was considered an expensive indulgence.³⁴⁹ But he did lambast drunkenness, much like his nonconformist and Protestant predecessors. Methodism shared an agenda with the previously mentioned Hogarth. This was not an uncaring institution or collection of people, and the solution to problematic drunkenness was within Wesley’s plan. It is fair to claim that the ‘moral improvement’ gained by the education and ethical instruction of Methodism meant a reduction in high levels of drinking among Wesley’s followers, but Methodists were only a niche group at this time, and had little outside influence. However, Methodist influence upon individuals within the discipleship movement was strong from its very origins, and thus appropriated to its members a number of ethical stances. A life without drunkenness was certainly part of this code. This is not surprising. Luther and Calvin took similar

³⁴⁶ Entitled *Methodist Religion 1791-1849*, Turner explains this period as the “Victorian Prelude”.

³⁴⁷ Davies and Rupp (ed.) vol. II, 1965: 99-100.

³⁴⁸ Davies and Rupp (ed.) vol. II, 1965: 110.

³⁴⁹ Wesley, John 1825 *A Letter To A Friend Concerning Tea*

approaches earlier, all referencing St. Paul. We have several examples: “do not associate with anyone... who is a drunkard” (*1 Corinthians 5:11*), “drunkards (etc.)... none of these will inherit the Kingdom of God” (*1 Corinthians 5:10*), “the works of the flesh are obvious... drunkenness. Those who do such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God” (*Galatians 5:19-21*). Sobriety was already on the Methodist agenda, because it was already on the nonconformist agenda. Wesley’s teaching and advice on drink and alcohol was not extensive; it was often based around either not drinking tea to save money, or avoiding strong liquor. But it is the nature of the whole of Methodism that helps us to understand what happened in the nineteenth century regarding abstinence.

The Wesleyan Methodist Church “was that part of John Wesley’s movement which stemmed most directly from his ministry and the provisions he made towards the end of his life”.³⁵⁰ The Primitive Methodist Church was “the largest of the non-Wesleyan groups”.³⁵¹ They originated in Burslem, Staffordshire, and were an early nineteenth century breakaway movement from Wesleyanism, taken “chiefly among lower classes... in 1932 there were 222,000 members”.³⁵² But, the Bible Christians were significant in the South West of England, working outside of the pre-existing Wesleyan Methodist Church’s structures, much like the Primitive Methodist Church. The key difference is that the Bible Christians arguably started as a new movement, rather than a breakaway group, although initiated by the breakaway individual, William O’Bryan.

Bible Christian Teetotalism

The Bible Christians (sometimes called The Bryanites) are often a footnote in Methodist history, viewed as a less significant regional version of the larger Primitive Methodist Church. In fact, there is huge significance in their primary quest as a holiness movement, and their positive view of abstinence and teetotalism. The instigator of the Bible Christian movement was William O’Bryan (1778-1868) (also known as William Bryant). He was born in Gunwen near Bodmin, central Cornwall, and was eager to become one of Wesley’s preachers.³⁵³ O’Bryan’s parents were members of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, and he quickly became known as a young enthusiast

³⁵⁰ Vickers (ed.), 2000: 387.

³⁵¹ Yrigoyen Jr. (ed.), 2010: 78.

³⁵² Vickers (ed.), 2000: 281.

³⁵³ Bourne, 1905: 13.

among his friends and neighbours. Historians record that O'Bryan was a person of a "naturally ardent temperament".³⁵⁴ However, O'Bryan's career was fairly tumultuous, culminating in his being formally excluded from his local Methodist society. Bible Christian scholarship holds that this society was "jealous probably of his growing popularity and usefulness".³⁵⁵ Thus O'Bryan was no longer a 'Methodist', but as his work became itinerant, he continued to represent the spirit of the movement, and embraced the idea of himself as a direct descendent of John Wesley. From this itinerant work came *Mr O'Bryan's Bible Christians*, a collection of communities around the South West of England. The group, later known as the *Bible Christians*, found its spiritual centre thanks to O'Bryan's mission to the village of Shebbear, North-West Devon. Shebbear at this point did not have an established Methodist presence, showing no result from the work and travels of Wesley, Whitefield and their colleagues in the eighteenth century. For whatever reason, the first generation of itinerant preachers either never reached, or never had an impact upon these people. This is particularly curious because of Shebbear's proximity to those Cornish missions that were so synonymous with the outreach and mission of Wesley and his peers, but perhaps related to a tradition of evangelical clergymen based in the village, thus not needing Wesley's influence, as he saw it. The Bible Christian historian F.W. Bourne confirms that "in 1802 it was reported that the number of members (of the Wesleyan Methodist Church) had fallen to 504" in the whole of Devon, which at the time had a population of 343,000.³⁵⁶ In comparison, the neighbouring county of Cornwall had 55 chapels, yet only a population of 194,500.³⁵⁷ Bible Christian history states that the 'newly converted clergyman' Daniel Evans, Shebbear's curate, had gained O'Bryan's attention, and he undertook preaching work in that area.

While doing so, O'Bryan met James and John Thorne, two brothers from Lake Farm, Shebbear, who invited him to preach at their home. On October 9th 1815 he did so. It is recorded that a spiritual change took place in the household and the Thorne family formed a Society, using the blueprint of Methodist organisation, without the Wesleyan Methodist Church structures and frameworks (for example, an annual Conference, training colleges, etc.) that was already in place with Wesley's direct descendants. This new society was started at O'Bryan's behest after the Thorne family's conversion, and so a new Methodist movement began. As this group grew they took on various titles,

³⁵⁴ Hayman, 1871: 167.

³⁵⁵ Bourne, 1905: 17.

³⁵⁶ Bourne, 1905: 13.

³⁵⁷ Online Historical Population Reports, 2007 *Histpop* [online] (www.histpop.org) [3 Jan 2012].

and settled eventually upon the *Bible Christians*. Despite this distinct name, they continued to be largely associated with Methodism, and were specific on several occasions about their wish to imitate Mr Wesley and his mission.³⁵⁸ Although William O'Bryan formally left the group in 1829, most scholarship considers the Thorne family to be the main motivators of the community and so the movement continued to grow. James Thorne (1795-1872) is widely acknowledged as the leader who moved the Bible Christians from being a small grouping of classes into a nationally regarded Church. As this progression took place, James Thorne became the figurehead of the organisation. The Bible Christians became a church, but also a publisher, an educational industry, and a nationwide denomination. F.W. Bourne (1830-1905) was a significant part of the Bible Christian movement as Thorne's biographer, editor of the *Bible Christian Magazine*, and President and Secretary on several occasions. Importantly, in Bourne's *The Bible Christians*, James Thorne's death is regarded as "the greatest individual loss that the Connexion sustained".³⁵⁹

When Methodist historians acknowledge the Bible Christians, they often appear as not much more than a footnote. Their legacy is often considered insignificant, and they are recorded as being people unable to influence the central core of Methodism. However, when they are mentioned, as we shall see, their quest for holiness is considered most noteworthy. The record of what had occurred before Union, written concurrently with Union, states that the community was "born of an evangelical ardour similar to that from which Methodism itself drew origin".³⁶⁰ The first Bible Christian Conference (in 1819) attempts to formulate a tangible description of theological beliefs.

Question 11 of their agenda ponders, "*In what state is man born into the world?*

In a state of moral depravity, through which, we incline to evil, and are averse to good".³⁶¹

Question 15 asks, "*have all men sufficient grace offered to them, to enable them to turn to God? Yes. We believe all at least under the Christian dispensation*";

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men,

³⁵⁸ This association wasn't formalised, but sharing took place if personal or local politics didn't interfere. Because the Bible Christians (excluding O'Bryan) had not been a separatist group, they were largely accepted within Methodist circles.

³⁵⁹ Bourne, 1905: 455 – F.W. Bourne was a second generation BC minister, as well as their President and is acclaimed as their most significant historian. Therefore, his opinion on James Thorne should be held in some regard.

³⁶⁰ A.W. Harrison, Aquila Barber, Hornby, Tegla Davies, 1932: 139.

³⁶¹ From the *Minutes of the first conference of the preachers in Connexion with William O'Bryan* (1819) Devon (Stoke Damarel) 1825.

teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly righteously, and godly in this present world.' *Titus 2:11-12* ".³⁶²

This is the bedrock of the community's theology, which began to form around a central desire for self-improvement, often described as holiness. As has been shown earlier in this chapter, Wesley had spoken and written on this subject in significant depth, and this background informed the Bible Christian's thoughts on mission, evangelism, preaching, and ecclesiology, all of which were solidified within the first few years of the church, for Thorne and the burgeoning organisation.

The above use of *The Epistle of Paul to Titus* should chime with our parallel understanding of John Wesley and his quest for sanctification. It can be asserted that because of O'Bryan's desire to "imitate Mr Wesley", and the passing of this passion to James Thorne, there are shared notions between Wesley, O'Bryan and Thorne regarding sanctification. Thorne wrote in his diary (28th April 1817) "read Mr Wesley on Perfection. Oh what a divine! Who seemed to preach no more than he practised".³⁶³ Thorne also states in conversation: "Mr Wesley was not against present salvation".³⁶⁴ God's grace, which brings salvation, also teaches us how to live accordingly as receivers of grace, which can be called 'present salvation'. Wesley writes in his thirtieth sermon "*The Law established through faith*" that "all good works, though as necessary as ever, are not antecedent to our acceptance, but consequent upon it".³⁶⁵ Lindstrom records that "Wesley is insistent that the means of grace should be used, but at the same time he is careful to warn against their misuse. They are means and must not be turned into ends... The function of the means of grace is to 'advance inward holiness'... Grace here is seen primarily as... a real, inherent change in the human soul".³⁶⁶ To reassert the point, Shaw writes of the Bible Christians; "their theology was plainly Methodist and Wesleyan".³⁶⁷ Even in the details, they remained close to Wesley: "The first *Rules of Society* were drawn up by O'Bryan and Thorne in 1817. 'We kept as close as possible to Mr. Wesley's *Rules*,' says Thorne".³⁶⁸

³⁶² From the *Minutes of the first conference of the preachers in Connexion with William O'Bryan* (1819) Devon (Stoke Damarel) 1825.

³⁶³ Thorne, 1873: 59.

³⁶⁴ Thorne, 1873: 76.

³⁶⁵ Wesley, 1944: 401.

³⁶⁶ Lindstrom, 1950: 122-123.

³⁶⁷ Shaw, 1965: 22.

³⁶⁸ Shaw, 1965: 22.

The first Bible Christian hymnbook, compiled by O'Bryan, and published by the denomination in 1820 chooses significant verses to show their high regard of a striving for holiness too. Some highlights include:

“So don't begin to make excuse,
Do not you his grace refuse.
All worldly cares and pleasures leave,
Take what Jesus waits to give”.³⁶⁹

“Such was the Saviour of mankind,
Such pleasures he pursu'd;
His manners gentle and refin'd,
His soul divinely good”.³⁷⁰

“To thee by whom we live,
Our praise and lives we pay,
Praise, ardent, cordial, constant give,
And shout to see thy day:
The day of saving grace,
The consecrated year,
When the bright Sun of righteousness,
Doth to our world appear”.³⁷¹

If the hymnal is not straightforward enough in its hope for sanctification, then Shaw acknowledges greater evidence for a movement shaped by holiness. He shows that “the pietistic spirit of the denomination in its early days is shown in a letter sent to O'Bryan and published by him in the 1823 *Magazine*, in which a correspondent says: ‘I consider myself as an arrow swiftly passing through the air; who during my short stay here, have but one great business: (comparatively speaking) not to interfere about states, or kingdoms, but to be as holy and as much like my Saviour as I possibly can’”.³⁷² Holiness was undeniably a key value for the Bible Christians. Shaw is clear in his understanding of this rare striving for holiness. He says, “A deeply engrained puritanism accompanied

³⁶⁹ O'Bryan, 1820: 25.

³⁷⁰ O'Bryan, 1820: 64.

³⁷¹ O'Bryan, 1820: 99.

³⁷² Shaw, 1965: 105.

this pietistic theology”.³⁷³ In fact, the Bible Christian would have admitted that their ascetical behavior was in essence a form of self-discipline. It is not to say that other theological factors were not important for this community, but the group certainly gave precedence to the value they attached to these ideas. Shaw again writes, “the importance of church, ministry and sacraments were affirmed from the beginning but these things were overshadowed by a tremendous emphasis on personal religion”.³⁷⁴ In fact, this was a theme that was reinforced amongst the community “among the Bible Christians the theology of conversion and sanctification were constantly emphasised”.³⁷⁵

As James Thorne took the lead within the Bible Christians, it seems likely that he and those he led maintained the drive for holiness and a quest for sanctification. What we can say with certainty is that Thorne’s leadership included a positive choice to make a personal pledge of abstinence, which led towards much of the community making the same choice. Richard Pyke (1873-1965) was ordained as a Bible Christian minister in 1894, and was a historian and governor of Shebbear College, as well as President of the United Methodist Conference in 1927, and the first Bible Christian to be President of the (recently united) Methodist Church of Britain in 1939.³⁷⁶ He wrote: “in nothing did the early Bible Christians disclose a more advanced regard for the general good than in relation to the drink traffic. In the days when public opinion was vastly different from that which happily prevails today, they were bold and outspoken. This, at any rate, is one of the aspects of the Denomination that may be contemplated with gratitude and with pride. In 1837 the first Bible Christian Temperance Society was formed at Langtree, and it was afterwards claimed to be ‘the first Total Abstinence Society in the county of Devon’”.³⁷⁷ Pyke shows that this society was named ‘temperance’, but was ‘teetotal’, and that it was said to be the first in the county of Devon.

To step backward slightly, the denominational historians tell us that James Thorne returned to Devon from Kent and London in 1837 having visited a Total Abstinence Meeting. While there, Thorne signed a pledge to abstain from alcohol at that meeting, and over time, came to take; “the lead in a strong trade against the traffic”.³⁷⁸ We know that Thorne would have travelled to these locations to visit the Bible Christian missionaries who were located there, in order to support them in their mission. Just

³⁷³ Shaw, 1965: 105.

³⁷⁴ Shaw, 1965: 106.

³⁷⁵ Shaw, 1965: 106.

³⁷⁶ Beckerlegge, 1968.

³⁷⁷ Pyke, 1908: 104.

³⁷⁸ Pyke, 1908: 104.

prior to this particular journey, his diary reports a conversation with G. Boulton: who “gave me some interesting account of the ‘Teetotal’ or Total Abstinence Societies. He and his family have all joined, and they say there are 800,000 persons in the United Kingdom who have joined them, many of whom are reclaimed drunkards”.³⁷⁹ This conversation took place on April 16th 1837. Something within this conversation may well have led Thorne to attend a teetotal meeting, and so his diary records that “May 2nd (1837)... in the evening I attended a Total Abstinence Meeting, and was much interested. I also signed the pledge, as I do not see any harm that can accrue from it”.³⁸⁰ This quotation suggests an acceptance by Thorne that there might be some value in abstinence, and so he gives his name towards the cause. There is nothing particular in this record that suggests a huge fervour for the cause from Thorne at this time. But, other records tell us that after this straightforward consideration and acceptance, the leader of the Bible Christian movement signed the teetotal pledge, and then committed to a life of abstinence. Although lacking in contemporary documentation, later records state that Thorne shifted from a participant to an activist. Inevitably, Bible Christian history becomes most exaggerated in its descriptions of James Thorne, but with that acknowledgement, James Thorne’s support for abstinence receives especially high praise, as written by his son in the biography of his father:

“It was a movement which commended itself to his common sense and his earnest philanthropy, and he threw himself into it with his whole soul. His platform efforts in its service were peculiarly happy. There was a judicious mixture of fact, persuasion, and passion, irradiated by flashes of humour, the whole accompanied by such an overmastering earnestness as was irresistible. He was the largest contributor of that permeation of the neighbourhood where he lived with such a sentiment in favour of temperance that the effects are visible to this day. And his views on this question were so heartily adopted by his colleagues and successors as early to give the Bible Christian Connexion an honourable place in the vanguard of Temperance Effort”.^{381 382}

If Thorne’s son as his biographer is correct and James Thorne became such an enthusiast for the cause, there was clearly quite significant growth in his persuasion towards the idea. The first report of his signing up suggests a lukewarm response, but

³⁷⁹ Thorne, 1873: 238.

³⁸⁰ Thorne, 1873: 238.

³⁸¹ Thorne, 1873: 237.

³⁸² Also of note, that ‘temperance’ is used, when teetotal is the meaning.

by the time of his memoir's publication, it was thought that he had "thrown his whole soul into it". Such a summary tells us something of how this decision was valued. Unsurprisingly as a Protestant, nonconformist and Methodist movement, the community already had strong opinions about the dangers of alcohol. The first "*Rules of Society*" for the Bible Christians from 1819 shows concern about alcohol before 'teetotalism' was a possibility; it names public houses as "places of dreadful infection and corruption".³⁸³ It is debatable whether the legacy of Thorne's choice was the catalyst for the abstinence of a national community of millions, but Thorne, and the Bible Christian community were indeed very early in their active promotion of teetotalism as a positive choice for Christians from the Methodist tradition. It seems reasonable to claim that James Thorne had quite different characteristics to Hugh Bourne, his equivalent in the Primitive Methodist Church. Whereas Bourne offered numerous quotable expressions on the value of abstinence, as seen in chapter 5, Thorne was much less likely to do so. He was less of a figurehead than Wesley or Bourne, but all accounts suggest that through him, change occurred. And while his accounts only record his acceding and little more, later accounts from Bible Christian contemporaries confirm that it was Thorne that drove wider enthusiasm for abstinence within his community, and "took the lead".³⁸⁴ In addition, this thesis wishes to explore whether this community were the first group to abstain, and why there is a potential belief that the value that the Bible Christian church placed on sanctification, holiness and Christian perfection is significant.

One reason for the confusion in academic historical work about initial Methodist teetotal groups is how these movements were named or how they recorded their work. Pre-existing histories concerning Methodist teetotalism (namely the work by Thompson Brake, Shiman and Andrews) state that either this Bible Christian teetotalism did not happen until the second half of the nineteenth century, or it was actually a temperance society, not one of total abstinence. This is essentially an issue of semantics. Let us clarify that George Thompson Brake acknowledges that James Thorne started a group in Langtree in 1837, but Thompson Brake names it incorrectly as "the first Bible Christian Temperance Society" in contradiction to Pyke's previous assertion.³⁸⁵ Because of Thompson Brake's view that the word "temperance" must only indicate moderate drinking, he therefore believes erroneously that the Wesleyan presbyter W.B. Pope

³⁸³ *Rules of Society*, 1818: 1.

³⁸⁴ Pyke, 1908: 104.

³⁸⁵ Thompson Brake, 1974: 84.

(who first promoted teetotalism in 1883, and will be discussed in chapter 6) was the spearhead of the Methodist teetotal movement, when in fact the Bible Christians became total abstainers much earlier, even though they occasionally used the word temperance to describe their choice. The fifty-year gap becomes a choice between choosing to acknowledge either Thorne's signing of the pledge, or Pope's speech as the inception of this movement, and the decision that Thompson Brake made gives a dramatically different result. Thompson Brake's bibliography does not suggest that he ignores the Bible Christians, but presumably was presented with the de facto Wesleyan notion that Pope held this movement in his hands when he chose to support it. In the face of this information, Thompson Brake was happy to accept it. In retrospect, a twenty-first century reader can see how 'various traditions within the realms of Methodism' got turned into 'the facts about the Methodist Church', which gave license for whole traditions and nuances to be brushed aside. The issue of alcohol and abstinence is just one example of this unofficial process. In fairness to Thompson Brake, the Bible Christian archives do not make it easy for us to decipher what occurred. At this juncture, it is worth noting that Richard Pyke as Bible Christian biographer and historian also uses the words 'temperance' and 'teetotalism' interchangeably, as many others have done. Given Pyke's proximity to the Methodist hierarchy (as stated, he was President of Methodist Conference in 1939, as well as a Bible Christian initially) we can assume this to be a common exchange in this community.

If we take the evidence shared in chapter 3 that temperance was largely a middle class, town and city based, ordained Anglican endeavour, then it is not surprising that the rural nonconformist Bible Christian layperson was of a different persuasion. Thus, Pyke's Bible Christian history is keen to emphasise the high regard for the new ethical choice that James Thorne led the community towards.³⁸⁶ It is possible to extract four valuable pieces of information from Pyke's text. First, the Bible Christian Total Abstinence Society is said to be "the first Total Abstinence Society in the county of Devon".³⁸⁷ This asserts the pioneering nature of the work of the Bible Christians, not just in Christian circles, but in the secular world too. Second, Pyke believes that the Bible Christians' protests against the alcohol industry "is one of the aspects of the Denomination that may be contemplated with gratitude and pride".³⁸⁸ Third, the pioneering nature of this

³⁸⁶ This is a prime example of how Methodist history is often found to be wanting academically; we regularly find this form of opinionated and unsubstantiated scholarship where enthusiasm is high, but concern with impartiality is absent.

³⁸⁷ Pyke, 1908: 104.

³⁸⁸ Pyke, 1908: 104.

attitude: “in those days, when men of sober sense opposed the (abstinence) movement, and many nonconformist ministers and leaders would be no more likely to open the doors of their chapels to a temperance meeting than a circus, the Bible Christians passed a resolution that temperance meetings should occasionally be held instead of the regular preaching service”.³⁸⁹³⁹⁰ Fourth, Pyke gives the uncorroborated claim that “for many years the proud boast of this denomination (was) that every one of its ministers was a teetotaler”.³⁹¹ Pyke is a direct source, and although a clear supporter of the movement, we have no reason to disregard his evidence, especially given the specifics he is able to report, and his reasonable (rather than inflated) language, refreshingly free from hyperbole.

These four statements, and other similar ones throughout all connexions have probably caused the unshakeable link between teetotalism and Methodism in the public psyche. Pyke is unaware, or considers it unimportant, that not only were the Bible Christians founders of the first abstaining group in Devon, but also the first Methodist connexion to formalise the encouragement of abstinence. This will be one of the reasons why the Bible Christians are not widely acknowledged as the first Methodists to abstain as a group at this time.

For clarity, there was never any ruling within any mainline Methodist community at any time that drinking was banned for the laity or the clergy, yet this is not widely known; in fact, the common assumption is that the consumption of alcohol was completely prohibited. This is a supposition. As hinted by Pyke, at the beginnings of teetotalism in the 1830s, Wesleyan Methodist, Anglican and Catholic Churches viewed temperance, teetotalism and total abstinence with some suspicion. This makes the Bible Christian’s adoption of their stance significant and it is striking that a small Christian community were the first recognised group to bring this movement to the county of Devon, and also the first group to tie teetotalism in with their Christian Methodist beliefs.

Given that Pyke lays these claims out with clarity, and given that he worked in a position of such authority as President of the Methodist Church, why can it be the case that the Bible Christians are not noted outside of their community for their pioneering work, even if Pyke fails to make the largest statement? Lillian Shiman makes an

³⁸⁹ Pyke, 1908: 105.

³⁹⁰ Again, Pyke switches between ‘temperance’ and ‘teetotal’ with wild abandon.

³⁹¹ Pyke, 1908: 105.

inaccurate claim about the Bible Christians as Methodist abstainers. She states, “Not until 1882, long after other Churches had set up total abstinence societies, did the Bible Christians inaugurate one for their members”.³⁹² She is correct to say that an overarching total abstinence society and department for the denomination was created in 1882, but does not acknowledge the variety of local arrangements and societies which began within the Bible Christian organisation, even though they were encouraged centrally, as we see from the Conference minutes further on in this chapter. It is not impossible that Shiman would have taken this idea from the Bible Christian history “*The Bible Christians 1815-1907*” written by Thomas Shaw in 1965. Shaw (a Methodist Minister based in Cornwall) is described in his obituary as “a stickler for accuracy”.³⁹³ This accuracy could have led to the slightly misleading picture that appeared. In Shaw’s text, we read that “although James Thorne was so enthusiastic an advocate of the movement it was not until 1882, ten years after his death, that the conference officially established the “Bible Christian Total Abstinence Society””.³⁹⁴ It is the claim in this thesis that it seems very likely that individual local societies were encouraged by James Thorne (who had as influential a role for the Bible Christians as John Wesley did for his community) to create abstinence networks, after he was convinced of the value of the movement, even though the Bible Christians did not create a connexion-wide teetotal society until much later. We know he was convinced of the value of the choice thanks to his son stating, “he lived with such a sentiment in favour of temperance that the effects are visible to this day”.³⁹⁵ Thus, the teetotal work of the Bible Christians flourished, as evidenced in Pyke’s work, cited above. Shiman, Shaw and Thompson Brake are not entirely incorrect, but their assertions are not fully justified, nor have they observed all the facts, and this results in their inaccuracies blighting the full picture.

To re-emphasise, this study is hampered slightly by (amongst others) Pyke and James Thorne, who use the two words ‘temperance’ and ‘teetotalism’ to both mean a total abstention from alcohol. This has clearly led to some confusion. Pyke is linguistically convinced that this move into teetotalism is also a move into temperance. He is not incorrect; both moderationists and total abstainers used the word temperance interchangeably as acknowledged by Joseph Livesey in chapter 3. The meaning shifted

³⁹² Shiman, 1988: 57.

³⁹³ *The West Briton*, May 31, 2001 [online news] (<http://archiver.rootsweb.ancestry.com/th/read/CORNISH/2001-06/0991778217>) [Accessed December 3, 2014].

³⁹⁴ Shaw, 1965: 54.

³⁹⁵ Thorne, 1873: 237.

from a moderate approach to drinking alcohol, towards a complete total abstinence. This took place over the first few years of the teetotal movement. But history has pushed the term ‘temperance’ aside to help with definitive explanations of events. For clarity, those who are temperate can also be teetotal, but not all who are temperate completely abstain from alcohol (it is doubtful that anyone was told not to be part of the temperance movement because they drank too little). It can be presumed that Thorne and Pyke name this new movement as temperance because they did not anticipate the slight confusion for future readers, and it is possible that the word ‘teetotal’ was not readily available or fully understood by listeners when Thorne pioneered this movement in South West England, so instead was used interchangeably with the word ‘temperance’.

We already have Pyke’s assertion that James Thorne set the Bible Christians on the teetotal path, and it can be stated that if the date of 1837 is correct, it sets the Bible Christians as the earliest organised total abstainers within Methodism. Furthermore, the unique image below shows further evidence that Thompson Brake, Shaw and Shiman were incorrect in their dismissal of the Bible Christians as teetotal pioneers. The medal shown here features the countenance of James Thorne on one side, and on the other it gives the details explaining the award. The medal is titled ‘The Bible Christian Total Abstinence Society’ and tells us that it was “instituted at Langtree, Devon by Revd. James Thorne. June 18th, 1837”.³⁹⁶



³⁹⁶ This medallion held in the private collection of Mr. Roger Thorne, of Exeter, to whom this project is greatly indebted.

This medal is clear evidence of claims about the already acknowledged society, but given the attachment of Thorne's name and profile, this medal signifies a major adoption of the cause.

Frustratingly, the Bible Christian "*Arminian*" magazine, and the Bible Christian Conference minutes give little indication of what occurred throughout the denomination, but we have further indication of this progress through a book review within the magazine. From "*The Bible Christian Magazine*" for July 1839, a published sermon titled "*The Character of Strong Drink*" by Henry Mudge, "a Wesleyan Local Preacher of the Bodmin circuit".³⁹⁷ The sermon itself is unremarkable, but the Magazine's comment is significant; it reads; "it is our decided opinion, that it is the duty of every professor of Christianity to examine the principles on which the total-abstinence, or teetotal societies are founded, that, if it shall be found, (as we believe it will) that those societies are calculated not only to prevent vice, poverty, disease and wretchedness; but also to promote the salvation of immortal souls, they may have the hearty support of every Christian philanthropist".³⁹⁸ This quotation is of value for its mention of teetotal societies, which is the first time such a thing is mentioned within this publication.

The evidence provided in Thomas Shaw's "*The Bible Christians 1815-1907*" only increases our conviction that James Thorne shaped much of that community, and its policies. As seen above, Shaw chooses not to acknowledge the Bible Christians as forerunners because of their lack of official organisation regarding abstinence until after Thorne's death. However, Shaw still believes that "because Thorne joined the Total Abstinence Movement, the denomination became teetotal in advance of the rest of Methodism".³⁹⁹ Shaw ponders the assertion of complete abstinence; "it is questionable whether the ministry (of the Bible Christian community) itself was ever one hundred percent teetotal".⁴⁰⁰ However, because of Thorne's own writing, the clear evidence of his support through the medallion, and Pyke's work on the subject, we can use Shaw's belief, to state that the Bible Christians were the first Methodist denomination to actively support and promote teetotalism. It seems clear through references made by Thorne's son as his biographer, and by Pyke, that after Thorne signed the pledge in Kent, he travelled back to Devon, and shared this notion with his Church, his

³⁹⁷ Bible Christian Magazine vol. IV, 1839: 161.

³⁹⁸ Bible Christian Magazine vol. IV, 1839: 165.

³⁹⁹ Shaw, 1965: 53.

⁴⁰⁰ Shaw, 1965: 53.

neighbours and his friends, and they responded as Thorne himself had done, by becoming teetotal in large numbers and with conviction.

To move forward slightly, Shaw's doubt about a complete set of teetotalers amongst Ministers is confirmed. The facts and figures we gain from "*A New History of Methodism*" are helpful. They record that the Bible Christians at their 1840 conference confirmed that 32 of a possible 33 itinerant preachers were total abstainers, and 14 from a possible 17 laymen were of the same persuasion.⁴⁰¹ Surprisingly, the published records of these conferences do not mention these statistics, but within them there is a statement on abstinence from Richard Kinsman and William Reed, the current and future secretaries of the Bible Christian conference that year. The statement declares; "it is truly gratifying to us to witness the extensive and salutary reformation which has been effected by the exertions of the Temperance Societies (which can reasonably be read as total abstinence societies), in this, and other Countries, within the last few years". The secretaries offer their concerns that "almost every grade in society has suffered by indulging in the use of intoxicating drinks; and as these Societies direct their efforts to the entire suppression of drunkenness, we hope our friends will in every suitable way, zealously support these Institutions".⁴⁰² Within ten years of James Thorne's personal abstinence, the lifestyle choice became actively promoted to all members. Townsend, Workman and Eayrs' "*A New History of Methodism*" assert that for the Bible Christians, "temperance work was second only in importance to evangelical work".⁴⁰³ Because of his significant influence, Thorne's revelation was momentous for the community, but in his wake came another group of Bible Christian people willing to continue insisting upon the importance of this idea. James Thorne's influence was the catalyst, but he was not the only champion of total abstinence amongst the Bible Christians. Acknowledgement of individual Methodists and Christians from the United Kingdom who abstained is key, but Thorne's exertion of his influence within the Bible Christian community made him a uniquely successful advocate of teetotalism in these church circles.

Chapter 3 has considered the growing trend of abstinence, and chapter 4 so far has established that evidence points towards the Bible Christians taking a pioneering role in promoting teetotalism in the Methodist movement. What has not yet been considered is

⁴⁰¹ Townsend, Workman, Eayrs, 1909: 523.

⁴⁰² *Extracts from the Minutes of the Twenty Second Annual Conference of the Ministers and Representatives of the people denominated Bible Christians: 1840: 19.*

⁴⁰³ Townsend, Workman, Eayrs, 1909: 523.

how this idea came to take root in the Bible Christian movement, and what the characteristics of this new hybrid of Methodism and teetotalism were. We know that James Thorne attended a teetotalism meeting while he was in Kent, and it seems reasonable given the evidence below to suggest that Thorne's attendance came about through a Primitive Methodist Church connection in that area. Chapter 5 explores the strong links between Joseph Livesey's campaign and some Primitive Methodist members. The Primitive Methodist Church had also made links with the Bible Christians. They rarely shared geographic areas, but there were some uncommon parts of the United Kingdom where they intersected. H.B. Kendall's report on the Primitive Methodist Church's evangelist Sugden, mentions his journey to a Primitive Methodist Church mission in Kent. Kendall notes, "If there were no Primitive Methodists in London, there were Bible Christians who, as usual, showed a kindly spirit. P. Sugden then going into Kent".⁴⁰⁴ This thesis can ponder whether there were potential partners who linked teetotal societies and the Bible Christians when Thorne was in Kent. These partners were very plausibly the Primitive Methodists who lived in that area, some of whom could quite possibly have been involved in teetotal societies, if we recall that some of Livesey's original seven were members of the Primitive Methodist Church. The exact situation will remain unclear, but it is certain that Thorne found something worthwhile within this message of abstinence from the meeting he attended, and then brought the message home to the South West, creating the first teetotal group in the whole of Devon. In Richard Pyke's words, "he had recently visited London and Kent, and what he saw and heard there induced him to take the lead in a strong crusade against the traffic. In this he was readily reinforced by his ministerial brethren; and this attitude was never abandoned".⁴⁰⁵

Thorne's enthusiasm for the subject became significant: "in the advocacy of temperance especially his appeals were accompanied with an earnestness and power that were irresistible".⁴⁰⁶ This individual attitude grew through the denomination, and launched into the wider world. Hayman writes that the Bible Christians "early espousal of this Cause exerted a powerful influence in neighbourhoods where intemperance has long been a crying evil, and gave an impetus to the progress of the body".⁴⁰⁷ Pyke records that in contrast to other Christian groups, "the Bible Christians passed a resolution that temperance meetings should be held occasionally on weekdays instead of the regular

⁴⁰⁴ Kendall (vol II), 1905: 252.

⁴⁰⁵ Pyke, 1908: 104.

⁴⁰⁶ Hayman, 1871: 171.

⁴⁰⁷ Hayman, 1871: 172.

preaching service”.⁴⁰⁸ This was done “in order more effectually to carry out the objects of the great temperance movement, and more fully to secure ourselves as a Christian body”.⁴⁰⁹ Oppositely, the Wesleyan Methodist Church made in 1841 “a successful attempt... to persuade Conference to determine that no Wesleyan chapel should be used for teetotal meetings”.⁴¹⁰ Letters to Jabez Bunting, Secretary of the Wesleyan Conference, suggest that the reason for this persuasion was based upon the notion that teetotal meetings were seen as a wasted use of a building meant for preaching the gospel.⁴¹¹

Despite positivity around the Bible Christian promotion of abstinence, the community largely avoided dogmatism. In 1854, an attempt for all Bible Christian Local Preachers to become and be acknowledged as teetotal was rejected by Conference. The words of teetotal advocate Richard Pyke do not suggest a conviction that Conference made the correct decision. Pyke writes that “this attempt to take the Kingdom of Heaven by violence indicates a fervour wholly to be admired, but the methods adopted were not approved by Conference”.⁴¹² If we recall, the teetotal movement “found an early acceptance among the Bible Christians though Total Abstinence was never imposed as a condition of membership”.⁴¹³ James Thorne and his associates were convinced to make a decision that became wider and more public than they necessarily expected. Shaw also regards Thorne’s influence as key in this matter. Shaw writes, “Because he (Thorne) joined the Total Abstinence Movement, the denomination became teetotal”.⁴¹⁴ This refusal to insist upon the stance tells us that its adoption never reached the levels of fervour that were later witnessed in other parts of the church, and possible reasons behind this will be considered later. Clearly, the community had a huge regard for holiness, and their ready adoption of abstinence was likely to have been facilitated by the mind-set of sanctification. Abstinence was encouraged as self-denial in the name of their faith. This teetotal movement was driven by a hope for holiness and sanctification, and manifested itself as an individual choice for the Bible Christians.

In a text designed to lambast the teetotal aspect of the Bible Christians titled ‘The Heresy of Teetotalism’, another Thorne family member (E. Thorne) explains that “all

⁴⁰⁸ Pyke, 1908: 105.

⁴⁰⁹ *Rules and Regulations*, 1863: 58.

⁴¹⁰ Thompson-Brake, 1974: 4.

⁴¹¹ See Chapter 6.

⁴¹² Pyke, 1908: 106.

⁴¹³ Shaw, 1965: 53.

⁴¹⁴ Shaw, 1965: 53.

this (drinking and alcohol production) was thrown aside; the greater the self-denial and sacrifice of personal habits and customs, the more likely to be acceptable to God”.⁴¹⁵ He explains that within the Bible Christian community, “it came to be thought that a man would not exercise sufficient restraint and self-denial to abstain was not a true convert: a preacher who was not a teetotaler was unfit to preach to others, and most probably was unfit for the kingdom of heaven”.⁴¹⁶ This Thorne (we do not know what the ‘E’ represented) wrote this book to dismiss the teetotal aspect of the Bible Christian community, and he seems sure that the justification used by that community was based upon a quest for holiness, even though he does not use those exact words.

However, a pattern slowly emerges which will be reflected through the history of abstinence in the church. Unsurprisingly, the choice is made for differing reasons, even amongst the Bible Christian community. The itinerant Bible Christian preacher Henry Reed is presented by Shaw as stating in 1837: “This day I have formed the resolution to abstain altogether from fermented drinks, except at the sacrament, or as medicine; not with the idea that the quantity I drink has done me any injury, either in body or soul; or from a fear that I shall run into intemperance; it is unknown to me if ever I were intoxicated, but believing such drinks do me no good, and others much harm, I feel resolved at least for a time to deny myself of this little indulgence”.⁴¹⁷ In fact, ‘many took the pledge for example’s sake, and had no ‘past’ to atone for’.⁴¹⁸

Many within the Bible Christian community were definitely huge advocates of a teetotal life, but what the history books confirm is that as a corporation, the structures were never put in place, and there appears to be no desire to advance this philosophy in any other way than as a lifestyle choice. In contrast and by way of comparison, the slightly later teetotal movement in Wales in the second half of the nineteenth century aimed to convert the masses. The Welsh situation was led by “the best and most able writers on topics of the time (who) were ministers and clergy”. They turned “agitations for social betterment into religious crusades”.⁴¹⁹ The unashamedly secular origins of this influence of teetotalism on James Thorne and his contemporaries created a different focus for the Bible Christian’s promotion of abstinence. Two quite disparate pictures of the Welsh, or the Devonian and Cornish teetotal scenes are exposed. Evidence of the religiously

⁴¹⁵ Thorne, E, 1903: 17

⁴¹⁶ Thorne, E, 1903: 18.

⁴¹⁷ Shaw, 1965: 54.

⁴¹⁸ Harrison, 1971: 130.

⁴¹⁹ Lambert, 1983: 115.

inclined Welsh movement is recorded by Lambert: “what made the temperance movement in Wales an intensely religious phenomenon was the literal interpretation of the verse in Corinthians which stressed that ‘no drunkard... shall inherit the Kingdom of God’... Great stress was laid on the afterlife... so much so that temperance was... a matter of spiritual and religious conscience, almost totally divorced from the more practical human and social aspects of the drink problem”.⁴²⁰ Conversely, the Bible Christians understood their teetotalism as beneficial to society and the individual themselves, whereas the Welsh movement saw drunkenness as a stumbling block to the individual’s access to God’s kingdom.⁴²¹ Wesley’s emphasis on holiness is not a question of a Christian’s access to heaven, but a way of living better on Earth, and this is also how the Bible Christians understood it, whether or not it impacted upon a person’s abstinence. These two interpretations are significantly different, and the divergence almost certainly stems from the Welsh Calvinist persuasion that was prevalent in the nineteenth century, versus the Arminian and Wesleyan umbrella under which the Bible Christians stood.

To return to the smaller picture, it is noteworthy that teetotalism was already growing, and finding favour in some Bible Christian circles before Thorne’s work. For example, “two well-known Bible Christians, Thomas and Eliza Tregaskis, very quickly joined Henry Mudge, who signed the pledge and formed a small Teetotal Society at Bodmin on 15th May 1837. They soon became his most effective helpers... a meeting was held 23rd January 1838”.⁴²² There are lots of similar examples across the region. Although this does not appear to be a specifically Bible Christian group (it is not recorded as such in any other Bible Christian records), it again shows a willingness by individual Bible Christians to be involved in teetotalism as a movement, rather than claiming the movement for themselves.⁴²³ Harrison believes that “teetotalism was stronger in the Methodist offshoots from Wesleyanism (than in Wesleyanism itself) (because) they gave freedom to the layman as against the minister... Teetotalism made rapid strides among Bible Christians in the west of England, under the leadership of the denomination’s second-in-command James Thorne”.⁴²⁴

⁴²⁰ Lambert, 1983: 115.

⁴²¹ And Lambert seems justified in acknowledging “the Kingdom of God” as meaning hope for a positive afterlife to those who preached and heard this message in Wales at this time.

⁴²² Bourne, 1905: 240.

⁴²³ Indeed it was from this group at this time that the famous Bible Christian preacher Billy Bray signed the pledge, the man who perhaps did more for the reputation of the community than any other Bible Christian.

⁴²⁴ Harrison, 1971: 180.

This thesis asserts that it seems realistic to claim that teetotalism was viewed as (at the least) not a barrier, and probably an assistant, to a quest for holiness within the Bible Christian community, and likely found significant support within the group because of the seedbed of ‘worked-towards holiness’. The teetotalism that existed was couched in such terms – an individual choice never imposed, on the journey towards sanctification. We can be in no doubt about the value that Thorne places upon holiness. In James Thorne’s memoirs from 1815, he records that in the very early days after his conversion, “all my desire was to get holiness and promote it among others”.⁴²⁵ His understanding of this continued, and once sent out as a travelling preacher, Thorne declared that “(I) strove for holiness, for I saw more need of it daily”.⁴²⁶ His son as biographer declares that, “Thorne’s mind became increasingly exercised on the subject of holiness, or entire sanctification”.⁴²⁷, and he records Thorne’s desire: “O may I be a living and dying witness to the doctrine of heart holiness”.⁴²⁸ When preaching, he is recorded as giving the following advice: “press on after holiness”.⁴²⁹

The 1838 *Summary of Doctrines* professes, “Sanctification is the believer’s privilege but that continuance in the state of salvation depends upon ‘maintaining a life of humble and obedient faith’”.⁴³⁰ In straightforward terms, each person was responsible for their own continuance as followers of Christ. The earlier example of Henry Reed appears to show a version of useful abstinence to aid those who were in need of better examples, but it can be justifiably claimed that this altruism was not the only rationale at the heart of the Bible Christians and their teetotal movement. The majority of these men and women understood their role to be un-associated with the status quo and distinct from wider society. In Shaw’s words, “a non-conformity to the world was expected of all members in the earliest days”.⁴³¹ While the adoption of a secular movement’s idea is a form of conformity to the world, it would have been a counter-cultural idea at this time, and counter-culture can fit with the belief, as 1 Peter describes, of being “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people... I urge... to abstain from the desires of the flesh that wage war against the soul”.⁴³² Their desire for sanctification and holiness created a culture described as a “thoroughness of the religious life”.⁴³³

⁴²⁵ Thorne, 1873: 20.

⁴²⁶ Thorne, 1873: 22.

⁴²⁷ Thorne, 1873: 26.

⁴²⁸ Thorne, 1873: 49.

⁴²⁹ Thorne, 1873: 115.

⁴³⁰ Shaw, 1965: 107.

⁴³¹ Shaw, 1965: 110.

⁴³² 1 Peter 2:9-11.

⁴³³ Thorne, 1873: 27.

Therefore, it does not seem unreasonable to claim that the Bible Christian's teetotalism owed much to the sanctification that they were so committed to. Because of the broad and general commitment to holiness, rather than a prescriptive approach as shown by the Welsh Calvinists, the movement of the Bible Christians appears to have avoided becoming entrenched or high-handed.

While, during the hundred years of Methodism and teetotalism (from the late 1830s, until the outbreak of the Second World War), a dogmatic system emerged in some other areas of the church, the prevalent attitude within the Bible Christians towards alcohol was embodied by Thorne remaining committed to the pledge being a helpful tool for good, but no more. His memoirs record a letter that he was sent and shared with an abstinence meeting, which encourages them to "practice the good effects of temperance on your own conduct, without presuming to censure those who may be as good and as sober as yourselves, though they do not think it necessary to take your pledge or to join your society".⁴³⁴ It appears to have remained a gift rather than doctrine. This did not remain the case as other factions joined the cause, as shown in chapters 5 and 6. As we have noted, the Bible Christians were directly influenced and inspired by the first teetotal movement, instigated by Livesey. This created an understanding that sobriety brought its own benefits for all who partook. Similarly, they and Wesley understood God's grace to be available to, and needed by all people. In addition, striving for holiness was a gift and a task for all believers. Thus, their commitment to both ideas meant that their abstinence was part of the same journey, if they chose it to be. In the words of Thomas Shaw, "This was the pilgrimage which all the true Bible Christians undertook. For them, and particularly for their earliest generation, it meant the treading of a narrow way in joyous self-renunciation".⁴³⁵

Instead of seeing this choice as a purely spiritual movement towards abstinence, James Thorne "realised the value of good laws; and did not hesitate to take a hand in forming public opinion. He saw that good laws are less likely to come into existence if good men take no interest in making them".⁴³⁶ Thorne understood sobriety to be its own reward, as he and Wesley understood holiness to bring its own advantages. Thorne knew "no evil... could accrue from his signing the pledge, and if his example would be of any assistance in stemming the national evil of drunkenness he would unfeignedly

⁴³⁴ Thorne, 1873: 256.

⁴³⁵ Shaw, 1965: 113.

⁴³⁶ Pyke, 1908: 99.

rejoice”.⁴³⁷ Bourne also acknowledges that Thorne’s viewpoint was “so heartily adopted by his colleagues and successors as to early give the Bible Christians an honourable place in the vanguard of this movement”.⁴³⁸ Why these historical events and ideas shifted and disappeared are covered in chapters 5, 6, and 7.

How Wesleyan Theology defined the Bible Christians

This section will endeavour to show that the Bible Christian community’s leaning towards John Wesley’s theological arguments for holiness and sanctification created a mindset that led towards a motivation and justification for abstinence in their community. This theological attitude appears to be the catalyst for the radical rejection of alcohol. William O’Bryan was committed to following the practises and beliefs of John Wesley. His theology was “plainly Methodist and Wesleyan”.⁴³⁹ As the instigator and leader of the Bible Christians, he passed this commitment on to the new denomination, which James Thorne was equally committed to. We have read above about James Thorne’s joy at Wesley’s words about the idea of Christian Perfection, which he called “divine”.⁴⁴⁰ The Bible Christians were largely recognised as Methodist, but were outside of the Wesleyan Methodist Church. Despite this, their theological foundations were as indebted to John Wesley as was the Wesleyan Methodist Church, or the Primitive Methodist Church. All scholarship agrees that Methodism was in large part a product of John Wesley’s theology. Wesley in turn used Arminian theology as a starting point, although he was probably not identifiably ‘Arminian’ for his whole life. As seen, William O’Bryan, when forming the community that became known as the Bible Christians, “prefixed ‘Arminian’ to it as an indication of his theological standpoint”.⁴⁴¹ Wesley, O’Bryan, Thorne and the Arminians emphasised the power of an individual’s own will; so through this will a person made the particular choices that shaped their own life. Wesley was well known for his desire that all disciples would work towards an improved quality of life. The Bible Christians believed the same, and emphasised it as a “pietistic spirit” and “ascetical behaviour... in essence a self-discipline”.⁴⁴²

⁴³⁷ Bourne, 1905: 239.

⁴³⁸ Bourne, 1905: 239.

⁴³⁹ Shaw, 1965: 22.

⁴⁴⁰ Thorne, 1873: 59.

⁴⁴¹ Shaw, 1965: 22.

⁴⁴² Shaw, 1965: 105.

This hope for improvement is in line with all Christian teaching, while in extension Arminianism progresses the notion that each individual can be responsible for his or her own choice to have some kind of spiritual growth within their existence. Marquardt believes that “Wesley intended to alter the attitude toward the poor and create a willingness to improve their general situation”.⁴⁴³ This theology is acceptable to many Christians, though the practical application of it can be hard work. Shaw describes the visibility of Bible Christians, as “the happiness of Christian living for its own sake was a mark not only of their saints but of a multitude of their ordinary members”.⁴⁴⁴ This section has intended to highlight how a process of theologically informed “sanctification” was part of this community, and then suggest that this process may well have led many Bible Christians to abstain from drinking alcohol. It hopes to have highlighted how this journey was encouraged by John Wesley’s theology, which was a hugely significant part of the Bible Christian’s own doctrinal system. There seems to be no particular reason why some Christian believers who identified as inheritors of Wesleyan did not make the connection, despite being committed to both sanctification and abstinence, and why some believers did seem to make such a connection, but because almost all viewpoints have subsequently been lost to history, this chapter has to make some attempt to fill the gaps. This work has had to rely upon secondary sources that seem sure that both holiness and abstinence were key values of the Bible Christians, and, in the reality of no primary evidence to the contrary, plausibly connect these two ideas as a joint enterprise.

The history of the Bible Christians is not a long one, and so their promotion of teetotalism was not curtailed by the rapidly changing world of the industrial revolution and the Victorian era. Their adoption of the cause was pioneering, controversial and not widely known. It appears to have adopted an overall theological stance that was significantly striking in Christianity: that believers should strive towards holiness, because of the goodness of God’s grace and the life-altering nature of that grace demanded a response. For many members, this philosophy meant that abstaining from alcohol was a further choice and response to make. It was an idea that found encouragement and support, but it was not an enforced mandate. O’Bryan started this community, and actively based it upon Wesley’s direct instructions, despite the new group not being in connexion with the Wesleyan Methodist Church. Following directly from Wesley’s work and reputation, Methodism became known for its responses to

⁴⁴³ Marquardt, 1992: 26.

⁴⁴⁴ Shaw, 1965: 108.

social needs, including health care, poverty relief and slavery.⁴⁴⁵ Later members included responses to the issue of alcohol abuse into this context.⁴⁴⁶ This thesis considers the work that was done under the banner of Methodist teetotalism, and the impact this stance made upon the world both in and outside the church. While those within Methodism were encouraged not to drink, the Christian community also worked with those who had no particular affiliation to Christianity, but who were active within projects run from within Methodism. This included meetings, entertainment, sports and clubs for children. This also helped the teetotal cause to gain influence. While the backbone of the justification for abstinence was largely built upon Christian principles, these projects were able to encourage a teetotal lifestyle, without participants signing up to the church's beliefs wholesale. What the implications were for the lives of those who were partakers in this way is explored throughout later chapters. In both their 1863 and 1872 rulebooks, the Bible Christian community is still encouraged to hold teetotal meetings "instead of regular preaching services" when it was appropriate.⁴⁴⁷ The rules proclaim an "increased attachment to the Temperance cause" but acknowledge, "No coercive measures should be adopted respecting it".⁴⁴⁸ Their passion continued, and Pyke records a resolution made by the Bible Christian conference of 1900; "we desire to reaffirm our emphatic opinion that so great and terrible are the evils of the liquor traffic that the Church of Christ should be free from all complicity with the same".⁴⁴⁹ The Bible Christians merged with the Methodist New Connexion and the United Methodist Free Churches in 1907, and the new partnership's teetotal focus is taken up in chapter 7.

To recap on this chapter, the Bible Christian approach to abstinence has not been widely acknowledged. While there have been studies of abstinence and Methodism's role in it, the Bible Christians remain, at best, a footnote to the accounts. There are probably a number of reasons for this. It can be suggested that a lack of continuity of language was problematic – while some groups were speaking of teetotalism and total abstinence, the Bible Christians used temperance interchangeably with these other terms. This certainly caused confusion. Similarly, its understated origins meant that it was adopted locally before it became institutionalised, and so its early start was lost in the mix of different dates and starting points. Also, because the Bible Christians joined with other groups to become the United Methodist Church, all of the factions' policies became intermingled.

⁴⁴⁵ Yrogoyen Jr. (ed.), 2010: 293.

⁴⁴⁶ "The Conference appeals to Methodists at home and abroad to abstain habitually from the use of intoxicating liquors as beverages". (The Declaration of The Methodist Church on the Drink Evil, July 1948).

⁴⁴⁷ *A Digest of the Rules, Regulations and Usages*, 1872: 96 (1863: 58).

⁴⁴⁸ *A Digest of the Rules, Regulations and Usages*, 1872: 97 (1863: 59).

⁴⁴⁹ Pyke, 1908: 107.

While this made sense, and was a valid way to operate, the distinctiveness of rationale, origins and timelines were all superseded, and largely dismissed. Although the Bible Christians' own historians believed that their denomination's adoption of the idea of teetotalism happened earlier than any other part of Methodism, this fact was not publicised outside their own circles. In fact, it was only an issue for historians and archivists, and clearly not seen as important to the mission at that time. This community was not widely reported on – although there is documentation in place, we read reports of lengthy sermons and preaching meetings, but have little record of what was said: a particularly significant gathering might gain a record of the piece of scripture preached on, but little more. What mattered at the time was the wider mission, not how they had reached that point of understanding. Accordingly, there can be little surprise that this initiation of abstinence, or the values that they placed upon their stance, were unavailable, unknown or lost to the wider world. However, because of the work done here, the status of the Bible Christians as the first Methodist group to organise and promote abstinence is recovered and shared. The work conducted here includes an analysis of their own historical studies, which highlight clearly the year that James Thorne signed the pledge, and encouraged others to do so. Detailed reading of their own history also exposes the value that the community placed upon the concept, and how emphatically this group responded to it. There has had to be some unpacking of the variety of language used, where the phrases 'temperance', 'total abstinence' and 'teetotalism' were used interchangeably amongst the Bible Christian historians, meaning that at first glance, this community may not have appeared to have been endorsing total abstinence, but temperance instead. This has been made clearer by a detailed reading of these texts, as well as the discovery of a medallion that gives physical proof, and refers to a group that had been named as both temperance and teetotal. Accordingly, this chapter includes the sharing of this medallion given to members of a Bible Christian "Total Abstinence Society", highlighting the date of the first Bible Christian total abstinence group as 1837. This date is significant because it precedes other dates given from studies that aim to give a complete picture of Methodist abstinence. When viewed alongside Bible Christian historical studies, it seems clear that this evidence shakes the strength of contradictory views from scholarship completed in the twentieth century. Accordingly, this evidence shows that the Bible Christians began and maintained a form of organised abstinence as early as 1837, following on from James Thorne's signing of the pledge earlier in that year. This makes the Bible Christians the earliest organised abstainers within Methodism.

James Thorne, as the most significant leader of the Bible Christians, was clearly influenced by the secular teetotal movement, and his own journal suggests that he saw his decision to sign a pledge of abstinence as a matter of good citizenship and good sense at that time. However, this decision was not the end of Thorne's engagement with teetotalism. We know that he wished this stance on alcohol to be promoted, and led accordingly from his position as the church's most senior figure. However, there appear to be suggestions from both his biographer, and the curators of the Bible Christian journey that there was more to this choice than just common sense. This thesis chooses to take the stance that their abstinence became theological reinforced because in addition to their reputation for abstinence, the Bible Christians were undoubtedly very focussed upon holiness and sanctification, taking the idea from the example and work of John Wesley. Most studies of the Bible Christians consider this element of their faith and religion as foundational to the community, and they are described on occasion in almost puritanical terms, relating to their insistence upon certain types of dress and lifestyle. They saw themselves as inheritors of this facet of Wesley's work, and as people working towards present salvation. Accordingly, their outward actions were workings of their inner faith. This theological conviction, and identifying feature is widely acknowledged as the primary purpose of the community. In addition, there is in fact circumstantial evidence, which suggests that James Thorne's stance in continuing to abstain was bound up within his leading of the Bible Christians as a holiness movement. This was quite a unique combination at the time, when most abstinence was encouraged from outside of the church, and remained unique (as we shall see in later chapters) when different Methodist groups found different reasons to adopt abstinence. There is a paucity of direct evidence, but both Thorne's biographer and his biggest critic acknowledge that this holiness and striving for Christian perfection seems the likely energy behind his extended push for abstinence amongst himself and others, if not his initial adoption of the principle. We see that he wrote "all my desire was to get holiness and promote it among others".⁴⁵⁰ E. Thorne, the most outspoken critic of James Thorne and his abstinence, wrote that when James Thorne abstained it was because "the greater the self-denial and sacrifice of personal habits and customs, the more likely to be acceptable to God".⁴⁵¹ Thus, given the height of esteem that both ideas of holiness and abstinence were held, there is a strong possibility that abstinence gained such traction in the community because of this drive and desire for sanctification. We know that they

⁴⁵⁰ Thorne, 1873: 20.

⁴⁵¹ Thorne, E, 1903: 17

maintained a firm focus on both values until the Bible Christian community became part of the United Methodist Church in 1907. There has been no suggestion of this type of justification amongst other Methodist groups, and no record acknowledging this twin approach within other academic work about the development of temperance and abstinence in the Bible Christian community. The uncovering of the pioneering nature of their stance has led this chapter to express the strength of the suggestion that the abstinence of the Bible Christian community was promoted at least in part as a consequence of their being a holiness movement.

This chapter has endeavoured to show that the Bible Christians were the first Methodists to actively choose teetotalism, and that because of their predisposition towards John Wesley's focus upon a theology of sanctification and Christian perfection, this thesis believes that the circumstantial evidence suggests that the choice to abstain was an easy one to make, fitting in with their approach to holiness. This chapter has highlighted this unique view and allowed that within the Bible Christian community, it was a promotion of teetotalism through holiness as one potential route towards sanctification, which meant that a dogmatic view of abstinence was avoided, unlike that which is observed elsewhere in British Methodism. Thus, holiness as a likely primary catalyst for Methodist abstinence has been forgotten, rewritten or misunderstood, but this thesis hopes to have recovered some of the underlying justifications and strengths. After this version of abstinence within Methodism had been removed or overtaken, it was replaced with a more dogmatic approach, and this additional narrative proved less successful. While the legalistic movement entire has failed, the initial enthusiasm was not part of the downfall. Given that the Bible Christian rationale was not part of its failure, there is value to its strengths being re-understood.

The three aims of this chapter were thus: firstly, to prove that the Bible Christians were the first group who identified as both Methodist and teetotal, and who actively promoted this choice. This has been evidenced through written documentation, comparison with other groups, and physical evidence also. The second aim has been to show the strength of the above claim in the face of alternative academic assertions regarding the earliest Methodist abstainers. It has been shown how this scholarship falls short with respect to George Thompson Brake, Lillian Shiman and Norman Longmate. It has been shown that confusion around the semantics of temperance and teetotalism are at the root of this problem, as well as a priority given to bigger factions within the

umbrella of Methodism when researching this subject. Finally, this chapter has aimed to show the probability of the potential uniqueness of the Bible Christian motivation and justification for abstinence, likely based upon John Wesley's theological arguments for holiness and sanctification. There can be no doubt that Wesley's idea of holiness was key for the Bible Christians, and this approach could very likely have enthused them towards the prospect of abstinence as a further aspect of their holy life.

Chapter 5 – Primitive Methodist Abstinence

This chapter moves to consider abstinence in the Primitive Methodist Church. Like the Bible Christians, they were a group separate from the Wesleyan Methodist Church. They were considered to be “the largest of the non-Wesleyan groups”.⁴⁵² While the Bible Christians grew in the South West of England, and did not become established in the North of England, the Primitive Methodist Church grew in the North, but rarely ventured into the South West. The Primitive Methodist Church originated in Burslem, Staffordshire, and was considered to be a breakaway movement from Wesleyanism, originating in the early nineteenth century, with members taken “chiefly among lower classes... in 1932 there were 222,000 members”.⁴⁵³

This chapter has three aims. The first is to highlight how some members of the Primitive Methodist Church were involved in the genesis of the teetotal movement in 1831. Livesey’s “Seven Men of Preston” included some members of the Primitive Methodist Church, and (as noted in chapter 3) there is a suggestion that the Preston group was based upon the Primitive Connexional model. Furthermore, some Primitive Methodist Church members (including one of the co-founders of the church, Hugh Bourne) had already committed themselves to a life without alcohol, before Livesey’s movement began.

The second aim, to explore the views and justifications of those within the community who did not support the idea of total abstinence, is based upon some members of the Primitive Methodist Church (including the other co-founder, William Clowes) and their concerns about the heavy promotion of teetotalism as a lifestyle choice, for fear that it would interfere or detract from the bigger message of the Christian gospel. This led to an undefined and unclear Connexional view of teetotalism and the total abstinence movement. While some individual Primitive Methodists were incredibly committed (perhaps even more so than the Bible Christians), others sought to downplay the activities that focused specifically on alcohol, because they felt it was simply a distraction.

With regard to the third aim, to analyse the information about the Primitive Methodist Church and abstinence, in the light of what this thesis has asserted about the Bible

⁴⁵² Yrigoyen Jr (ed.), 2010: 78.

⁴⁵³ Vickers (ed.), 2000: 281.

Christians, chapter 4 has already established that the Bible Christians were the first group within Methodism to corporately promote teetotalism, even though some members of the Primitive Methodist Church joined the secular abstinence movement in advance of the Bible Christian adoption. This chapter will analyse whether the trailblazing Primitive Methodist teetotal pioneers and their individual reasoning has any effect upon claims of value about the Bible Christian role.

There is some value in comparing the Primitive Methodist Church and the Bible Christians, given their similarities as both part of the second generation of Methodists. They are also united by the extent of the Wesleyan Methodist Church's disregard for their mission. The Primitive Methodist Church's role as 'nonconforming, nonconformists' identified them as part of the Christian fringe, alongside the Bible Christians. As such, there are numerous examples of both groups (but particularly the Primitive movement) attracting members who already had strong social concerns (see below). This partnership of nonconformity and activism meant that ethical, political and spiritual resolutions became bolder, including some commitment to teetotalism and abstinence. Through historical documentation, recorded speeches and teetotal society records, this chapter will attempt to show that some members of this community were fully committed to the total abstinence movement, and other parts of the Primitive Methodist Church maintained a distance from, and scepticism about the new initiative. This movement did fit with some pre-existing feelings amongst some members and the leadership, in contrast to the Bible Christians, who found themselves in the position of having new opinions proposed through the teetotal movement.

The Primitive Methodist Church

The Primitive Methodist Church sprang from the north Midlands of England in the early nineteenth century and it is reported that the distinctive characteristics of the new movement were "zealous and passionate prayer with a strong evangelical focus". They named themselves "Primitive" in an attempt to highlight "a reversion to the early Methodism of Wesley".⁴⁵⁴ The movement had a dramatic impact upon the towns and cities of the Midlands, with their mission centred on the rural and newly urbanised areas around Stoke-on-Trent. The Primitive Methodist Church began as a partnership of those who had organised 'Camp Meetings' in that location, and those who followed the

⁴⁵⁴ Price, 2012: 35.

preaching of William Clowes. Camp Meetings existed to imitate the style of the American outdoor revival meetings that occurred as part of life on the American Frontier. Some of the organisers of this project in Staffordshire were expelled from their own Wesleyan Methodist circuits for persisting in their involvement in these events. Hugh Bourne (1772-1852) led this group both before and after their removal from wider Methodism. This faction joined with those known as the “Clowesites”, led by William Clowes (1780-1851). Both Bourne and Clowes were native to Staffordshire, and their mission work focused upon sharing the gospel with the working poor in the Staffordshire Potteries. Similarly to both John Wesley’s pioneering work and that of the Bible Christians, their mission was defined and recognised by the conversion of the poorest and the most unlikely people. This often means that historical Primitive Methodist Church reports show value in their focus upon converts who had been ‘drunkards’, which was in the mind of the church to be a mark of the redemptive and significant power of their salvation. There remains scholarly debate about when the Primitive Methodist Church actually began, probably because of the dispersed beginnings of their work, but H.B. Kendall (the church’s most in-depth historian, longtime editor of Primitive Methodist Publishing, and President of the Conference of the Primitive Methodist Church) believes that for “William Clowes, the history of the Primitive Methodist Church began when the Camp Meeting Methodists and the Clowesites came together in 1811 to form one united Church”.⁴⁵⁵

Hugh Bourne and William Clowes led the movement for a significant number of years, and were hugely influential in that community. They did not always agree on the issues that faced their church, and alcohol and abstinence were no exceptions. Bourne’s journal records that he often had cause to flee from his father’s violent drunken attention, and his devout mother was the positive example that he needed and imitated. William Clowes regularly found trouble as a young man, which he acknowledges was often caused by his excessive alcohol intake. The two founders and their variety of youthful experiences produced two different responses. While Bourne wore his abstinence on his sleeve, Clowes shied away from the public proclamations that on occasion defined his partner’s ministry. This chapter aims to highlight why these two opposing responses came to exist within these two men with so many shared interests, and what that divergence of view meant for the wider church. This chapter also hopes to acknowledge the huge debt owed to some members of the Primitive Methodist Church

⁴⁵⁵ Kendall (vol. 1), 1905: 1.

by the teetotal movement, but also the reticence of other individuals to become involved in the campaign. Clowes was not alone in his opinion that abstinence should not be a promoted and organised concept amongst Christians: some other significant members of the Primitive Methodist Church were unconvinced by the movement which hoped to be acknowledged as a Christian responsibility. The clear issue for this thesis and the problem for the main thrust of its argument is that the Primitive Methodist Church had members who were teetotal pioneers, and worked alongside Joseph Livesey, who instigated the entire movement, as mentioned in chapter 3. Therefore, a significant number of members of the Primitive Methodist Church had actively adopted teetotalism before the Bible Christians were teetotal or had even heard of the idea. How then, can this work claim that the Bible Christians adoption is more significant than that of the Primitive community? The key has to be that in spite of pioneers within the Primitive Methodist Church, the Bible Christians were the first group within wider Methodism to actively choose and promote teetotalism. Secondly, while this thesis has established suggestions for the 'Bible Christian reasons' to be teetotal, it is much more difficult to give the 'Primitive Methodist' justifications for the same stance. This chapter will define which Primitive Methodist Church members did and did not support abstinence, and why they did so, but also where the struggles for cohesion appeared.

The Primitive Methodist Church's primary historians are H.B. Kendall and John Petty, and their books are the foundational sources for this chapter.⁴⁵⁶ Also, thanks to access to the extensive journals of Clowes and Bourne, their motivations are also recorded.⁴⁵⁷ Present day analysis is available from overarching historical Methodist texts, particular Rupp and Davies' four-volume work.⁴⁵⁸ This chapter acknowledges that those who recorded this history wrote from within the movement. An analysis of all these texts hopes to show that a cohesive pioneering teetotal movement within Primitive Methodism never existed.

The Primitive Methodist Church and teetotalism

Brian Harrison writes, "the Primitive Methodist Conference recommended temperance societies as early as 1832, and in 1841 it ordered unfermented wine to be used at

⁴⁵⁶ Kendall - *History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion* (1888) and *The Origins and History of the Primitive Methodist Church Volumes I and II* (1905). Petty, *A History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion* (1864).

⁴⁵⁷ *The Journals of William Clowes* (1844), Davison, *The Life of the Venerable William Clowes* (1854), Ashworth, *The Life of the Venerable Hugh Bourne* (1888).

⁴⁵⁸ Davies and Rupp *A History of The Methodist Church in Great Britain Vol. 1-4* (1983).

communion”.⁴⁵⁹ Bible Christian teetotalism took shape in 1837 (as stated in chapter 4), so this recommendation of temperance by the Primitive Methodist Church happened at least five years earlier. In addition, one of the two founders, Hugh Bourne records that he was already abstinent as a young man in the eighteenth century. His biographer Jesse Ashworth writes, “another remarkable feature of Hugh Bourne’s early career was his devotion to total abstinence from drink... long before total abstinence reached its present popularity”.⁴⁶⁰ We must then take seriously the potential claim that the Primitive Methodist Church could have been the pioneering teetotal community within Methodism. However, this chapter aims to dismiss such a claim, on the grounds that although the Primitive Methodist Church was happy to co-exist, sympathise and even interlock with temperance and teetotalism, this denomination never wanted to wholeheartedly encourage teetotalism, unlike the Bible Christians.

One reason for this reticence was the joint leadership of Hugh Bourne and William Clowes. Their opposing views meant that the denomination did not always have easily agreed corporate policies. Bourne believed an encouraged abstinence to be positive, while Clowes was much less convinced. Neither denied that alcohol was a cause of significant damage in the communities of church members, but their responses were different. Hugh Bourne had rejected the consumption of alcohol in advance of the Primitive movement, which he attributes to his father’s alcoholism.⁴⁶¹ His Christian faith was encouraged from an early age, and this abstinence was interlocked with his ethical response to his faith. William Clowes became a Christian as an adult in 1805, and Primitive Methodism was largely a movement of new converts like him: H.B. Kendall describes the role of the Primitive Connexion to “gather into classes the fruits of the revival”.⁴⁶² Teetotalism was not a concrete and corporate concept when these new Christians, including Clowes, began their journey as believers.⁴⁶³ Thus, because of the dual leadership and emphases’, there was divided opinion regarding whether members of the Primitive movement should choose to be teetotal, and what their reasons for doing so might be.

Joseph Livesey (aforementioned instigator of the teetotal movement) appears in the same breath as the Primitive Methodist movement, and this can be attributed to the fact

⁴⁵⁹ Harrison, 1971: 180.

⁴⁶⁰ Ashworth, 1888: 13.

⁴⁶¹ Kendall, H.B., *The Origins and History of the Primitive Methodist Church* (1905).

⁴⁶² Kendall (vol. I), 1905: 43.

⁴⁶³ Primitive Methodism is dated with an 1811 start point. Livesey began working on total abstinence in 1831. The twenty-year gap is significant.

that Primitive Methodist Chapels were often used as locations for teetotal meetings to take place, and both groups flourished in similar places at the same time.⁴⁶⁴ However, this thesis has already acknowledged that Livesey's abstinence work was defined as a secular movement, and Livesey himself was disappointed when the campaign became overtly religious. Nonetheless, several of his six original colleagues were certainly Primitive Methodists. Harrison tells us of that group that "Thomas Swindlehurst, the most prominent Preston reformed drunkard, was a Methodist... Teare and Whittaker were both Methodist local preachers... Preston Temperance Society's first public meeting, presided over by a Wesleyan minister, was held in a Wesleyan preaching-room, the second was held in a Primitive Methodist Chapel".⁴⁶⁵ The connections are certainly strong between the two movements. Livesey himself talks of chapel and faith, but not Primitive Methodism specifically. His involvement was in passing, and through necessary co-operation for the cause rather than a commitment to Methodism on Livesey's part. His biography acknowledges that in 1811 he was "baptised in the Baptist Chapel", although he "occasionally visited the independents and the Methodists".⁴⁶⁶ H.B. Kendall attempts from time to time to make claims for Livesey's work as specifically Christian, writing "Preston... led the way in one branch of social reform — that which seeks by organised effort to work against intemperance. It showed how this kind of social service could be undertaken religiously, and temperance meetings be made to further the interests of the kingdom of God".⁴⁶⁷ He adds in extension "seventy years ago (1835), the ministers of Preston Methodist Circuit, and some of the members of old Lawson Street, as after of Saul Street, were the heart and soul in the new movement (of teetotalism)".⁴⁶⁸ But, despite his efforts, all signs acknowledge that this early teetotalism was outside of formal Christianity.

Livesey's work and successes are considered from a Primitive Methodist aspect within their own historical records; Kendall records that "on September 1st, 1832. — A special meeting was held for discussing the question of the total abstinence pledge. No decision was arrived at, but several tarried after the meeting, and seven signed the total abstinence pledge. Of these 'seven men of Preston', three were Primitive Methodists, viz., John King, Joseph Richardson, who was wont to say, 'I am the happiest man alive, for no man can be happier than a teetotal Primitive Methodist'; and the third was

⁴⁶⁴ Livesey, 1885: 61.

⁴⁶⁵ Harrison, 1971: 117.

⁴⁶⁶ Livesey, 1885: 21-22.

⁴⁶⁷ Kendall (vol. I), 1905: 128.

⁴⁶⁸ Kendall (vol. I), 1905: 128.

Richard Turner”. We can certainly conclude that Livesey (also one of the seven) was definitely never a Primitive Methodist, although it can be acknowledged that in April 1832 “The second memorable meeting (of the Preston Temperance Society) was held on May 3rd in Lawson Street Primitive Methodist Chapel, at which Mr. Livesey, in a forcible speech, took the line of total abstinence”.⁴⁶⁹ This confirms, at least in part, how the two movements came to be linked.

To extend this association, Kendall records that on “April, 1833. George Toumlin, the Secretary of the Lawson Street Sunday School, and Mr. Thomas Walmsley, moved the resolution, which resulted in the formation of the first Sunday School Total Abstinence Society, inaugurated April 18th. It was not till 1835 that the Preston Temperance Society became a strictly Total Abstinence Society, so that the Juvenile Society formed by the Primitive Methodists was the first society on a 'teetotal' basis in Preston, and, it is believed, the first Juvenile Teetotal Society in England”.⁴⁷⁰ Clearly, this means that the Primitive Methodists’ youth abstinence project began four years earlier than the Bible Christians, and the Preston Temperance Society (in its change to Total Abstinence) happened two years earlier than the Bible Christians. However, this Society was secular, whereas the Bible Christian’s society was Church-led, and the formerly mentioned youth scheme has to be seen as quite a different prospect than a scheme that works for adults, and adult abstinence.⁴⁷¹ Thus, at this juncture this thesis can maintain that the Bible Christian work for abstinence still remains the earliest such project for adults, supported by the whole church community.

Parts of the Primitive Methodist Church were moving in support of teetotalism, and Bourne and Clowes both viewed drinking and alcohol as being at odds with their Christian lives. But the pair had opposite views about the idea of active and encouraged abstinence. Clowes recorded in his own journals that while he was wrestling with God over his life choices and mistakes, “I took an oath before God that I would cease drinking to excess”.⁴⁷² His journals record that on the occasion of those writings, he broke his oath, but slowly his Christian conversion took hold, and his own predilection towards drunkenness ceased to be as much of an issue for him. Regarding total abstinence however, his biographer records that “he disappointed the hopes of many...

⁴⁶⁹ Kendall (vol. II), 1905: 129.

⁴⁷⁰ Kendall (vol. II), 1905: 129.

⁴⁷¹ Not to say that there wasn’t a very real issue of alcohol abuse within childhood at this point in history, but dissuading adults from drinking alcohol is an entirely different matter.

⁴⁷² Clowes, 1844: 14.

(by) not throwing himself into the (teetotal) movement”. Furthermore “he never could see his way clear to join the society and to come forward as a lecturer on that question”. Clowes’ reasoning behind this was “he had the most exalted views of the faithful preaching of the gospel to save sinners from all sin including the particular sin of drunkenness”, and that “the full exhibition of the gospel in its saving influences and the care of the churches was sufficient to occupy all the powers of his body and mind and that his mission fully included the question of scriptural temperance”.⁴⁷³ In essence, William Clowes stated his belief that the gospel was a life-changing force; it had the capability to draw everyone away from the temptations of drinking and drunkenness, amongst other things. In his opinion, a plan for redemption that only included a scheme for a life of abstinence was a plan that diminished the power of the gospel, and reduced the possibility of life in all of its fullness.

While Clowes believed that temperance and teetotal missions disempowered the wider scale evangelism he hoped for, Hugh Bourne took quite a different tact, and was supportive of the movement, showing significant commitment to the idea. When asked if he had joined a total abstinence society, he is recorded as proclaiming “No, they have joined me, for I was a total abstainer before they had such a Society at all”.⁴⁷⁴ Jesse Ashworth, a pro-abstinence supporter, as well as Bourne’s friend and biographer tells us that Hugh Bourne’s father was “a drinking, violent man” so it is unsurprising that “another remarkable feature of Hugh Bourne’s early career was his devotion to total abstinence from intoxicating drinks”. Ashworth explains “he was twice caught, as he calls it, by intoxication, and this, he adds, prejudiced him against the thing during the whole of his after life”.⁴⁷⁵ Instead, he “very wisely cherished a wholesome dread of intoxicating liquors; but as this was long before total abstinence reached its present popularity he was frequently subjected to many petty annoyances from his fellow workmen; but he continued firm to his well-formed resolution to the last”.⁴⁷⁶

Bourne shared his experiences with many who joined the Primitive Methodist Church, and found them to be interested because, in Ashworth’s words “most of the new converts had previously reduced themselves to poverty and degradation by their intemperance and vice”.⁴⁷⁷ Both Bourne and Clowes became proponents of the Pauline

⁴⁷³ Davison, 1854: 240-241.

⁴⁷⁴ Ashworth, 1888: 107.

⁴⁷⁵ Ashworth, 1888: 9.

⁴⁷⁶ Ashworth, 1888: 13-14.

⁴⁷⁷ Ashworth, 1888: 38.

avoidance of drunkenness as Luther, Wesley and others had done before.⁴⁷⁸ But it was Bourne alone who spoke of himself as a total abstainer, and in one of Ashworth's reports, we are given a definite picture of how strongly Hugh Bourne felt about personal and communal abstinence. Ashworth writes about a Conference where "legislation had been sent up from one of the districts to the effect that the trustees of chapels should be desired or required to provide wine for the use of the preachers, either before preaching, to give them a little spirit for their work; or after preaching, to revive their exhausted energies; or perhaps both. It should be remembered that this was before the days of total abstinence societies. Mr. Bourne made powerful speech over night, he came recruited by a few hours sleep, and perhaps some time spent in earnest prayer, to the renewal of the attack at six o'clock the following morning. No sooner was the Conference opened for business that he was on his feet, amid breathless attention he gave numerous calculations and arguments against this wine legislation; he was wrought up to such a pitch of earnestness, that he closed a telling peroration, by bringing down his clenched fist upon the table, the pens, ink and paper were sent flying into the air; and as he sat down overwhelmed with emotion, no-one ventured to reply, and the question was allowed at once to drop".⁴⁷⁹ Clearly, Hugh Bourne wished for the Primitive Methodist Church as an organisation to give alcohol a wide berth, and there is significant evidence for how he struggled to understand alternative views on the subject.

However, John Petty's in-depth history of the Primitive Methodist Church makes no mention of temperance or acknowledgement of their joint leader as a teetotaler at all. Instead we hear that preceding his conversion, and before becoming part of a partnership with Hugh Bourne, William Clowes "hastened back to Staffordshire, and, soon after, made some sincere, though at first unsuccessful, efforts to reform his conduct. He had previously entered into the marriage state, partly with a view of breaking off from his vicious companions, and leading a better life; and he now attempted to abandon the practice of excessive drinking, limiting himself to half-a-pint of beer a-day. He was still, however, ignorant of the way of salvation by faith in Christ".⁴⁸⁰ It seems that Clowes found that abstinence was not the exclusive answer to his problems, while later on, his faith changed his life, and so this resulted in a doubt that it was necessary for anyone else to adopt abstinence above and beyond their own faith journey.

⁴⁷⁸ As already noted, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, 5:11, 6:10; Galatians 5:19-21; Romans 13:3 all show Paul's opinions clearly.

⁴⁷⁹ Ashworth, 1888: 104-105.

⁴⁸⁰ Petty, 2008: 18.

Historian Petty acknowledges (in passing, through the words of Clowes) the clear benefits of sobriety, but does not seem to want to suggest temperance or teetotal programs were necessary, resonating with Clowes' own interpretation. Petty tells the reader that in Darlaston, West Midlands in 1848, it was reported, "in scores of families a delightful change was apparent. Sobriety and industry, peace and concord, domestic order, cleanliness and comfort, took the place of intemperance and sloth, brawls and contentions, poverty and filth, misery and degradation. Most of those who experienced the power of regenerating grace united in church-fellowship, and consequently great accessions were made to most of the societies".⁴⁸¹ Because Petty acknowledges the good news of 'less drunkenness' but does not report on Bourne's teetotalism, we can assume that either he disapproves, or he does not consider it worthy of note. Petty's text is over 400 pages in length, while Ashworth's biography of Bourne numbers just over 100 pages. Although Ashworth is specifically writing a biography of Hugh Bourne, he borrows significant parts of Petty's general historical text when talking about Bourne's early years. Ashworth the biographer was initially an apprentice of sorts to Bourne, before he became a colleague. The tribute to his mentor was published in 1888, while Petty was published in 1864, only 12 years after Bourne's death.⁴⁸² Although this thesis can acknowledge that Ashworth's close acquaintance with Bourne means the longer period of time does not necessarily affect his testimony; the closeness of Petty's work to the time of Bourne's death, and the fact that it has been used extensively within Bourne's biography means that his work must be taken seriously. So, it can be suggested that Ashworth's regular praising of Bourne's abstinence, while historically accurate, did not have the significance to the wider church at the time of writing that it did to Ashworth as an individual. It can be assumed (given their extensive promotion of the cause) that Ashworth and Bourne hoped that the Primitive Methodist Church would take a stronger corporate stance on alcohol, perhaps in the form of organised teetotalism. However, added to this information, when H.B. Kendall (the most in depth and extensive of the Primitive historians) takes a similar line to Petty, not Ashworth, we can see a trend.⁴⁸³ This inclination suggests that Ashworth, the ardent teetotaler and follower of Hugh Bourne had a vested interest in promoting Bourne's personal temperance as a denominational standpoint, an interest that needs to be set aside, in deference to the work of the more unbiased historians of the denomination.

⁴⁸¹ Petty, 2008: 373.

⁴⁸² Bourne died in 1852; 16,000 mourners reportedly attended his funeral. We can certainly say that his life and works were well known, and hugely influential in this community.

⁴⁸³ Kendall, perhaps more of a "scholarly historian" reports some of these incidents, but holds them at a distance.

An interesting side-note is the story of John Stamp, who was a preacher for the Primitive Methodist Church, having lived previously in Kent. In the early 1840s, he was to be found in the Yorkshire city of Hull. Kendall records “it was alleged that he had been expelled (from Kent) for his Teetotalism, without being heard and that the Connexion was in his debt”.⁴⁸⁴ Despite this claim, Kendall’s study suggests that Stamp was likely to have been in the wrong about some other issues, and he chose teetotalism as his excuse. There appears to be no other mention that teetotalism or temperance ever caused controversy or discord to the level of expulsion within the Primitive Methodist Connexion. A more common dispatch regarding a Primitive abstainer might sound like the words written about Henry Smethurst. We are told that he was “an ardent temperance advocate in a town which very much needed such advocacy”.⁴⁸⁵ Kendall sums up the situation, stating “the gradual advance in the Temperance sentiment of the Connexion which, beginning about 1830, had by the middle of the century become very pronounced... (But, it) was a long, slow process, a growth from ‘moderation’ as the accepted position of the generality of Christian people, to the acceptance of total abstinence as the right rule of life”. Furthermore, Kendall believes it was advances in medical understanding that proved the teetotal position to be correct, offering understanding of the problem of alcohol, that “it is a poison and as such ought to be labeled and shelved”.⁴⁸⁶ In fact, this matches with Livesey’s understanding, showing again the shared ideas and beliefs. Livesey was a societal forerunner with such an opinion: “it is impossible to consume alcohol ‘moderately’: the smallest amount of such a poison is excessive... ‘The physical influence of liquor cannot be neutralized by any spiritual influence’”.⁴⁸⁷ We can note here the beginnings of a different approach to the approach used by the Bible Christians – this Primitive line about Smethurst suggests that the perceived need for abstinence was no longer a personal realisation, and instead a corporate suggestion. Because of William Clowes’ reticence, we know that there was never a complete connexional view on abstinence in the early days of the movement. The relationship between Bourne and Clowes disintegrated to some extent, including Bourne’s “three hours vehement attack on Clowes and his policy”, which Kendall acknowledges came entirely from Bourne.⁴⁸⁸ Inevitably, an agreement on abstinence was unlikely as their mutual agreements struggled to outnumber their disagreements.

⁴⁸⁴ Kendall (vol. I), 1905: 435.

⁴⁸⁵ Kendall (vol. I), 1905: 462.

⁴⁸⁶ Kendall (vol. I), 1905: 469.

⁴⁸⁷ Harrison, 1971: 122.

⁴⁸⁸ Kendall (vol. II), 1905: 360.

Those early teetotalers within the Primitive Methodist Church are named by Kendall as “a small minority”, while the non-abstainers were “under the delusion... that the moderate use of intoxicating drink was innocent, and that beer was as bread. Hence there was no consciousness of wrong-doing in the habit of moderate drinking”.⁴⁸⁹ Kendall adds his belief that the lowest point of the denomination’s relationship to alcohol was the 1827 Conference in Manchester. This was the very same occasion that Ashworth reports Hugh Bourne’s lengthy response to the question of wine being held in chapels to help the preacher. Kendall believes that Bourne’s speech was a “turning of the tide”.⁴⁹⁰ Hugh Bourne soon retired, but was given the post of Editor of the Primitive Methodist Magazine, and “at the Leicester Conference of 1831 the Editor was ordered to devote a portion of the large magazine to the advocacy of temperance, which was a very agreeable task as to his views and feelings”.⁴⁹¹ In his retirement, Bourne was seen to be “labouring in all possible ways to advance the interest of his beloved Zion. One means he used was the earnest and persistent advocacy of temperance”.⁴⁹²

From the 1832 Minutes, the Primitive Methodist Conference stated that they “highly approved” of temperance societies and “recommend them to the attention of our people”. Kendall believes that there was “much less wear and tear in the societies (by which he means a rising and falling in their membership and attendance figures) after the inception of the (temperance) movement”.⁴⁹³ And Hugh Bourne “became more and more enthusiastic”, culminating here, writing about himself in the third person: “when the total abstinence system rose he had still more cause to thank God and take courage, as the Lord was raising up many to stand much on the same ground he himself stood on for so many years. And he believes the teetotal system has been, and is, a great handmaid to religion”.⁴⁹⁴ In Conference terms it appears as if this concern “was an expression of working-class concern about the social and economic effects of drinking”.⁴⁹⁵ This is not theological justification, and chimes with our understanding of what Livesey and the Seven Men set out to address, unsurprising given the crossover between the two groups. It is true that many others joined Bourne in this choice, and the General Committee wrote in 1841: “it is well known that our Connexion approves of

⁴⁸⁹ Kendall (vol. I), 1905: 469.

⁴⁹⁰ Kendall (vol. I), 1905: 470.

⁴⁹¹ Ashworth, 1888: 108.

⁴⁹² Ashworth, 1888: 112.

⁴⁹³ Kendall (vol. I), 1905: 469.

⁴⁹⁴ Kendall (vol. I), 1905: 470.

⁴⁹⁵ Stewart Werner, 1984: 162.

Teetotalism, and recommends the prudent advocacy of it”.⁴⁹⁶ The Bible Christians had already made this recommendation and adoption of the teetotal cause, but only four years earlier than the Primitive Methodist Church does here.

But, as stated previously, the Primitive justification was different to that of the Bible Christians; “total abstinence (in the Primitive Methodist Church’s form) was nothing if not altruistic”, and the choice was made, according to Kendall because of the “teaching of Paul – that the strong should be considerate of the weak, and abstain for their sakes, if not their own” and “the teetotaler, while deserving credit for his self-sacrificing intentions, has after all taken the line of enlightened self-interest and has benefitted himself while seeking to benefit others”.⁴⁹⁷ This can be defined as an action wholly for the benefit of the weaker brother. This is not necessarily all that we can see in Hugh Bourne’s actions, and it seems clear that he made his initial choice because alcohol personally displeased him, and clashed with his faith journey. He wished to extend that opportunity to others. Those who worked with Bourne, and took up his legacy saw the decision as a choice to support ‘the weaker brother’. Sanctification or a quest for holiness is not a key factor for the Primitive Methodist Church’s abstinence policy.

Teetotalism and total abstinence within the Primitive Methodist tradition was a movement aimed at helping the weaker brother. The plight of others was the primary concern of the community, and this is how the Primitive Methodist Connexion differed on the question of alcohol from the Bible Christians, who maintained their personal quest for Sanctification and Christian perfection, which has been suggested to be the driving force. While there are many similarities between the two groups, and potentially it was only through Primitive Methodist members that James Thorne even discovered the benefits of the teetotal movement, the subtle difference here is key – the Bible Christian community agreed the value of abstinence wholeheartedly, but lived with it in full awareness of the complexities of the issue and maintained a more healthy relationship with the concept. Probably due to Hugh Bourne’s exuberance and zealotry, and some negative reactions to that enthusiasm, this was an attitude that was never fostered within the Primitive Methodist Church.

It is clear that the teetotal movement and some members of the Primitive Methodist Church were linked. This has been highlighted by the links with Preston, Livesey and

⁴⁹⁶ Kendall (vol. I), 1905: 472.

⁴⁹⁷ Kendall (vol. I), 1905: 472.

the Methodist contingent as part of the original “Seven Men of Preston”. We have seen significant examples of how this link worked in practical terms. An exploration of the views and justifications of those within the community who did not support the idea of total abstinence culminates in the pivotal figure of William Clowes. Clowes had a mistrust of the adoption and value of abstinence, and held to the belief that the promotion of a teetotal life got in the way of the Christian gospel. This resulted in the Primitive Methodist Church not having an integrated approach to abstinence for many years. This leads us to acknowledge that the beliefs of the Primitive Methodist Church and Bible Christians were quite different regarding abstinence. Ultimately this difference was because of how seriously the issue was treated in relation to other gospel values, how much it was allowed to become a difficult issue, and whether other keenly held values could support it as an approach. Because the Bible Christians were able to avoid the friction encountered by the Primitive Methodist Church, their relationship with abstinence was able to thrive and flourish, while the Primitive Methodist Church often struggled to agree amongst their community when thinking about the issue, particularly when pressed to abstain by some factions within the church.

Chapter 6 – The Wesleyan Methodist Church

This chapter considers the Wesleyan Methodist Church, which was formed under the leadership of John Wesley, and grew rapidly in Britain throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It was regarded as the first central group of Methodism in the British Isles, and became influential both ecumenically and socially. It joined with other groups in 1932, to become The Methodist Church in Britain. The primary aim of this chapter is to indicate how the use of Wesleyan theology by the Bible Christians clashed with the Wesleyan Methodist Church's reluctance to promote abstinence. The second aim is to show a nineteenth century Wesleyan Church culture that was always unlikely to accept radical aspects to its mission, despite its origins. Third, to record when and why Wesleyan Methodism did eventually encourage abstinence. And fourth is to compare the origins and development of temperance and abstinence across British Methodist traditions.

This chapter considers information gathered from the time when the Wesleyan theology espoused by a second generation of Methodists encountered the Wesleyan Methodist Church. There will be a focus on the issues of abstinence, tracking the changing views from initial disdain for the teetotal movement from the Wesleyans, through to a supportive notion for abstinence. This chapter aims to show which rationale was used by the largest of the Methodist groups, specifically their desire to abstain in order to support those who might struggle with addiction, and why the Wesleyan version of events became the most commonly held reason for Methodist teetotalism in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This led to erroneous presentations of events, and justifies and validates the use of "*Histoire de Mentalités*" as a frame of analysis. This analysis hangs upon three seams of sources— Wesley's own work, the contemporary Wesleyan material still available (including but not limited to the Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine and Conference reports) and academic work on this subject. In this study, it becomes clear that the Wesleyan Methodist Church spent the nineteenth century in a process of transition moving from an organic community, transformed and organised into a denomination that amassed influence outside its membership, and into wider society.

This growth of the Wesleyan Methodist Church into a denomination broadly accepted by wider society was in contrast to the work of the Bible Christians, Primitive

Methodist Church, Methodist New Connexion and others, who not only clashed with some societal values, but increasingly clashed with the Wesleyan Methodist Church too. As we have seen, many of these groups came to be separated from the mainline Wesleyan Methodist Church because they could no longer operate within its confines.⁴⁹⁸

George Thompson Brake is the most prominent historian of teetotalism and British Methodism, and his work has already been referenced in this thesis. However, we have found on occasion that his conclusions are neither accurate nor justifiable.⁴⁹⁹ Thompson Brake seems to view this study of abstinence through a Wesleyan Methodist Church lens, and his suppositions do not always match with other non-Wesleyan sources. Thompson Brake is certainly the foremost scholar on this subject, but it is not a particularly competitive field. His focus on the Wesleyan Methodist Church is understandable given his own Wesleyan role and position, but too often he reads ‘Wesleyan’ to include all who were inspired by John Wesley’s work. The lack of attention given to both the Bible Christians and the Primitive Methodist Church, results in inaccurate conclusions. As we have discovered, the justifications and philosophies behind this same teetotal movement vary significantly across denominations. Thompson Brake’s assumptions mean that the noticeable differences between groups and their views on abstinence have not been investigated, considered or explained properly in one of the very few academic studies on this topic. As shown, the Bible Christians, and Primitive Methodist Church give varied justifications for their move into teetotalism, and the Wesleyan Methodist Church is no different. This chapter explores how, when and why the large and influential Wesleyan Methodist Church made the decision to change tack, and also came to advocate abstinence.

Finally, this chapter explores how the views of the Bible Christians and Primitive Methodist Church compares and contrasts with the work of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in regard to abstinence and teetotalism. This will be achieved through reference to chapters 4 and 5.

Wesleyan teetotalism

Chapter 4 has already considered John Wesley’s theology, but it is important to briefly explore his views on alcohol, and what he considered appropriate, in order to further

⁴⁹⁸ For example, Hugh Bourne who was joint founder the Primitive Methodist Church was expelled from his Wesleyan Circuit because of “his tendency to set up other than the ordinary worship”. (Ashworth, 1888: 58)

⁴⁹⁹ Thompson Brake – *Drink* (1974) and with Williams – *Drink in Great Britain* (1980).

understand the background and foundations of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, and how alcohol had been spoken about within its traditions. This will highlight the culture that existed in this church, which meant abstinence was not embraced initially. As is widely known, John Wesley was a man who had a lot of opinions about all manner of issues, and gave these opinions quite regularly in person and in print. We should not therefore be surprised to learn from Thompson Brake, who can be relied upon for his interpretation of John Wesley that “Wesley drew a distinction between spirituous liquor and mild ale”, “he expelled members from societies for drunkenness”, and declared that drink “reduced a man to a beast because it stripped him of reason and understanding”.⁵⁰⁰ Wesley’s eighteenth century England was significantly different to the nineteenth century nation of the Primitive Methodist Church and the Bible Christians, in a number of ways.

The cleanliness of water was a much more significant problem for Wesley and his associates than it was for people like Hugh Bourne and James Thorne, because of the advances in water filtration in the nineteenth century. James Simpson pioneered sand filtration to create cleaner drinking water for London in 1829, and the practice quickly spread around the UK.⁵⁰¹ However, Wesley’s England predated this innovation. John Wesley expressed in a letter to a friend that his personal drinking was limited to ale, and not spirits. He wrote “but how few understand, whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God?” in relation to whether tea is a valid expense.⁵⁰² He concluded that some refreshment was necessary, but not all expense was valid. He is recorded as asking of his Puritan mother which pleasures were allowed or disallowed, to which she replied that “whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off the relish of spiritual things – in short, whatever measures the strength of your body over your mind, that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may be in itself”.⁵⁰³ This then gives us an image of Wesley as a man of moderation, based upon his exacting standards of living. It shows how Wesley set foundational beliefs, and potentially is why the Wesleyan Methodist Church (whose existence was built upon his work) found temperance to be easy to adopt and agree with. This of course is in addition to the Pauline traditions found within the Epistles, which Wesley draws upon as a scholar of scripture, and as a descendent of the theology of Martin Luther, as noted in chapter 4.

⁵⁰⁰ Thompson-Brake, 1974: 2-3.

⁵⁰¹ Hendricks, 2006: 20.

⁵⁰² Wesley, 1825: 14

⁵⁰³ Thompson-Brake, 1974: 2-3.

Therefore, it is of no surprise to find that temperance (not total abstinence) was a relatively simple issue for the Wesleyan Methodist Church to find consensus on. George Thompson Brake records that “a reference in the Methodist Magazine in 1788 suggested that even before John Wesley’s death in 1791 the Methodists were moving towards an attitude of temperance; on grounds of spiritual experience they were urged ‘conscientiously to avoid the drink, the company and the occasion which would tempt or lead you to their use’”.⁵⁰⁴ The denomination was content during the opening salvos of teetotalism to adopt a moderate stance, in the 1830s. Thompson Brake cites minister George Cubitt in the early nineteenth century who insisted “the Methodist Society cannot be expected to be a Temperance Society... for a Temperance Society it has been from the beginning”.⁵⁰⁵ ⁵⁰⁶ While this is a valid and sensible understanding of eighteenth century Methodism, as well as the wider nonconformist movement, it must be acknowledged that temperance and Methodism were never formally joined. John Wesley’s assorted Rules were well known, but the terminology of ‘temperance’ was not part of the church’s criterion, or part of an individual’s understanding of what they signed up to, as part of that church.⁵⁰⁷

This chapter will later highlight how there came a point when the Wesleyan Church and teetotalism were connected, but to understand how much Wesleyan Methodism changed we only need to glance at Wesleyan Conference agendas. They show that retaining the holiness of the Sabbath was a bigger issue in the mid-nineteenth century for this church on a conference level than any fears about the personal and social effects of alcohol consumption.⁵⁰⁸ When total abstinence is first mentioned as a possibility, it is because the opening of public houses on Sundays has impinged on Sabbath keeping. This conversation is repeated in relation to Sunday trading laws on a semi-regular basis in Conference minutes until at least the 1863 conference.⁵⁰⁹ All records indicate that the Wesleyan Methodist conference was not interested in abstinence as a way of dealing with the issue of alcohol, or of having a relationship with teetotalism as a movement. As shown in chapter 3, the teetotalism movement was growing rapidly in England at this point. The difference in attitude between the Wesleyan Methodist Church and the

⁵⁰⁴ Thompson-Brake, 1974: 3.

⁵⁰⁵ Thompson-Brake, 1974: 5.

⁵⁰⁶ This statement should remind us of, and resonate with, Hugh Bourne’s declaration about himself that, “... the teetotalers have joined me”, in chapter 5.

⁵⁰⁷ We can note that some Methodists engaged in the work of temperance societies separately, which Lillian Shiman acknowledges in her work, and has been highlighted in chapter 3.

⁵⁰⁸ Conference Minutes from 1848 onwards include “Sabbath Observance” as a major point of order, alongside “Chapel Building” and “Preaching”. Found in Volume XI of “Minutes of The Methodist Conferences”.

⁵⁰⁹ George Thompson-Brake believes 1848’s conference to include the initial discussion, but “not so much an expression of opinion about temperance as about the observance of the Lord’s Day”. Thompson Brake, 1974: 16.

teetotal movement is well illustrated when, in 1853 when the United Kingdom Alliance (a network of regional Temperance and Teetotal Societies) asked for the Wesleyan Methodist Church's support in their work. Thompson Brake reports that when "Conference was asked to support the aims of the Alliance it was reluctant to do so".⁵¹⁰ He added, "Not all Methodists (meaning members of the Wesleyan Methodist Church) at the time were convinced of the obligation to abstain, nor the benefits which would flow from its widespread observance".⁵¹¹ There was even obstruction of the discussion to some extent. One example was of the 'suppression' of a leaflet called "The Demon of Destruction" which had been published by the Wesleyan Book Room Committee in 1850, as recorded by Thompson Brake.⁵¹² A second instance was caused by noted Wesleyan Methodist Presbyterian Abraham Scott, who wrote in 1839 that "many of the members of total abstinence societies are entirely of a worldly spirit and utter strangers to vital godliness; others of them are infidels; and implacable enemies of Christianity".⁵¹³ If these opinions were widespread, it goes some way to explaining the reluctance of the Wesleyan Conference to become involved in this cause.

Although the conference represented the democratic processes of the church, Wesleyan Methodist policy in the mid-nineteenth century was largely directed by the significant figure of Jabez Bunting (1779-1858). The relationship between abstinence and Wesleyan Methodism was no different. Bunting was opposed to what he saw as the disruption to the church caused by teetotalism. This phenomenon was based upon the enthusiasm some people felt for teetotalism, and the demands that they subsequently put upon the church in relation to abstinence. Of Bunting's biography, Rigg declares, "Dr. Bunting was by universal consent recognised as the most influential minister of his own Church, and as occupying a very high, if not the highest, place among the Nonconformist leaders of his time".⁵¹⁴ This opinion is based upon the belief that Bunting turned Methodism from a grass-roots movement into a legitimate denomination, viewed as such from within the church and from outside. Bunting's work was conducted as President of Conference on four occasions, and secretary of the Legal Hundred, the decision-making body of the church. His positions of influence allowed him to oversee change as he saw appropriate. Inevitably, not everyone welcomed his reorganisation. It also meant that newer expressions of Wesley's work could highlight

⁵¹⁰ Thompson-Brake, 1974: 17.

⁵¹¹ Thompson-Brake, 1974: 3.

⁵¹² Thompson-Brake, 1974: 4.

⁵¹³ Thompson-Brake, 1974: 6.

⁵¹⁴ Rigg, publication date unknown: 9.

the differences between Bunting's church and their own – in Bunting's own words, these other groups “took up teetotalism, an undenominational movement of moral reform with roots in artisan enterprise”.⁵¹⁵ This type of movement and change was not the qualities that Bunting, through his progressive and stabilising work wanted attributed to the Wesleyan Methodist Church. Instead, he hoped for a doctrinally sound and foundationally solid community, where order was expected, and whims of society were not to be indulged. Accordingly, he became a person who many assumed to hold opposition to this new movement. His actions suggest that he disliked the way in which teetotalism (as a philosophy held by some Methodist people) impinged adversely on the other business of the church.

Bunting received much correspondence on the subject. In a letter from Thomas Smith of York in 1837, it is pleaded “if to the tee-totallers we could become teetotalers, we should more easily than any other society, gain the tee-totallers”.⁵¹⁶ The writer is suggesting that a change of Wesleyan policy could allow the ‘recovery’ of members from the Wesleyan Association; another offshoot of the central church, back into the mainstream Wesleyan Methodist Church.⁵¹⁷ The correspondent, Smith is in no doubt why new people are joining this new alternative, and he believes that his church is not taking full advantage: “thanks to the zealous and almost general advocacy of teetotalism by Ministers of the Wesleyan Association, they are securing the majority of these new converts”. Bunting was unmoved. In a letter from John Wesley Thomas, based in St Austell in 1839, Bunting is asked for solutions. Thomas writes that “the trustees (of the chapel - JPC) unanimously refused (use of the chapel for a teetotal meeting - JPC)... and for twelve months we have been maligned and calumniated, in consequence of our alleged *opposition* to teetotalism. (So) consent was given to hold a meeting. That happens to be our preaching night... and I thoroughly feel the impropriety of giving up the preaching of God's word, and divine worship for such a meeting”.⁵¹⁸ We can see that these correspondents see teetotalism as a nuisance, or at least a distraction, and they clearly view Bunting as an ally in this disagreement. Bunting would have been inclined to agree with them. Bunting's biographer Ward records “at the conference of 1839 Dr. Bunting spoke of the annoyances arising from teetotalism”, explaining his positions on the subject: “there are two points on which we must insist: (1) The use of bona fide

⁵¹⁵ Ward, 1976: xv.

⁵¹⁶ Ward, 1976: 180.

⁵¹⁷ The Wesleyan Association, according to Vickers' dictionary “resulted from the Warrenite controversy of 1834-35 over the establishment of a theological institution (run by Bunting)... many felt that too much authority was being concentrated in one man's hands” (Vickers, 2000: 385).

⁵¹⁸ Ward, 1976: 218.

wine in the Lord's Supper; (2) the not allowing teetotal meetings in our chapels". Bunting secured resolutions to this effect, holding that "we are not enemies to sobriety, but to vituperation".⁵¹⁹ This issue caused tensions to run high, and Bunting's steadfast refusals probably did little to reduce the growing fury. Inevitably, there were wider consequences: as heard previously, some Cornish members left the Wesleyan Methodist Church to form the "Teetotal Wesleyan Methodist Connexion in 1841".⁵²⁰ Another letter to Bunting protests furiously at Bunting's unwillingness to see the dangers of alcohol, explaining, "I have banished the destructive cup from the Lord's table".⁵²¹ The chair of the Cornish district wrote to Bunting asking that his ministers be taken in hand on their refusal to use alcohol for communion, and similar correspondence came to Bunting from Superintendents of (amongst others) the Lynn circuit and the Chelmsford circuit.^{522 523}

The previously mentioned Wesleyan Association, (which became known as the Wesleyan Methodist Association) was a breakaway group, and this rift was caused because of a dispute with Bunting. The dispute began because Bunting accepted a post on a committee for theological education. Several Ministers felt that this was one responsibility too far for Dr. Bunting, and so, the group of about 20,000 members removed their membership from the Wesleyan Methodist Church in 1836. This not insignificant number joined with the Protestant Methodists, a breakaway group who regrouped in 1827, because of an argument about the installation of an organ in a chapel in Leeds. Clearly, the central Wesleyan movement experienced departures on a fairly regular basis. It is not inconceivable to imagine that the Church viewed teetotalism as a storm in a teacup, and certainly not worth changing centuries of tradition and theology for. Bunting is often portrayed as a bullish and headstrong figure, in this issue as much as any, but his role often seems more like a firefighter than inspirational leader. It is of little wonder that teetotalism and the possible adoption of it was not an important issue for him. If Bunting's role was the propagation of his church, his work was an enormous success. His maintenance of the Wesleyan Methodist Church meant that union was possible, for he made the church strong enough to survive when differences had been put aside. Perhaps inevitably, his approach caused some people within his Church to feel their attempts at organised abstinence were ignored. However, while Bunting and

⁵¹⁹ Ward, 1976: 219.

⁵²⁰ Ward, 1976: 219.

⁵²¹ Ward, 1976: 254. This correspondent was writing from Woodford in 1841.

⁵²² Ward, 1976: 275.

⁵²³ Ward, 1976: 299.

his colleagues worked to maintain tradition and ensure that a Wesleyan ecclesiology continued with its emphases on preaching, scripture and discipleship, a strong positive feeling about teetotalism was emerging amongst the people of local chapels. The tone in all directions suggests that even those who forbade teetotalism to be advocated in certain ways were not directly opposed to abstinence, but had reservations about the methods used. This attitude seems to have been centred on the priority that the promotion of abstinence appeared to be given over more traditional, or sacred church business such as planned preaching meetings, and love feasts. Bunting himself does not want to appear in opposition to the new abstinence groups, but some resistance appears when Bunting's correspondence suggests that there is little allowance for the sharing of premises and resources, despite our knowledge of large numbers crossing between the two groups. Nonetheless, no allowance for teetotal groups to use chapels was made at this time, and as seen, some obstructive work by chapel stewards certainly took place emphasising this lack of co-operation.

We have to advance nearly forty years to see a significant development in the Wesleyan Methodist approach to alcohol. Methodist historians Rupp and Davies report that, "in 1875 the Wesleyan Methodist Temperance Committee, like its Anglican counterpart, allowed for moderate drinkers as well as total abstainers." The wording here is confusing – the suggestion is that moderate abstainers have now been allowed to join the total abstinence movement. In truth, it was for total abstainers that the door was now opened.⁵²⁴ This permission took place over forty years after the Bible Christians and Primitive Methodist Church took less tentative steps, and it was now 44 years since the Teetotal Wesleyan Methodist Connexion came into being, after splitting from its parent organisation. The readiness for an acceptance of abstinence by the largest Methodist group had taken significant time. Once this move had been established, we start to see significant theological input into the discussion. Thompson Brake records that "the noted Methodist theologian Dr. W.B. Pope" preached a sermon in 1883 that was published, taking St Paul's letter to the Romans (15:1), and spelt out what he understood the issue to be: "We then that are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak".⁵²⁵ Pope understands Paul to be talking about two classes of Christian whose behaviour and character are not the same. Pope gives two reasons for those in the pews to make the move towards a life of abstinence. He sees it as an issue of 'strong' people supporting those whose 'weakness' leads them towards alcohol abuse, and all the wider

⁵²⁴ Rack in Davies and Rupp (ed.) vol. III, 1965: 144.

⁵²⁵ Thompson-Brake, 1974: 7-8.

consequences of that issue. ‘Strong’ does not necessarily indicate ‘Christian’, and ‘weak’ does not necessarily indicate ‘non-Christian’, but it seems rather to be a question of personality types. Pope states firstly, “for the sake of peace, edification and charity”, the stronger person should give up that which the weaker person struggles with. “Not a word is said in rebuke of the weak... nor are they bidden to raise themselves up to the level of the strong”. In point of this, Thompson Brake adds “there were no nobler Christians living than those who... abandoned the use of alcohol and other narcotics out of deference to feelings... of their fellow Christians”.⁵²⁶ Pope is stating that those who can abstain from alcohol should be willing to do so. They do this in order to set a positive example: if drinking alcohol in public is a cause of temptation for those who cannot easily abstain, then not drinking alcohol becomes a Christian’s spiritual duty.

Pope’s second justification for abstinence is explained in his question - “What was the value of a mere indulgence compared with the salvation of many ‘for whom Christ died’?”⁵²⁷ This statement suggests that a) drinking will inhibit the individual’s chances of salvation, and b) if your drinking cannot be put aside in order to ensure salvation for someone, then your priorities have gone awry. Across the two statements, Pope is not entirely explicit about his reason for why abstinence is beneficial to others, but we can assume that he believes that drunkenness is sinful, and gets in the way of a person’s Christian life, and if someone is drunk, or preoccupied with drinking, their life has taken the wrong focus. Whatever our view of these two statements, they informed and influenced the rapidly changing Wesleyan Methodist Church’s view of teetotalism, and so became the backbone of this newly adopted movement. Thompson Brake clearly considers Pope’s voice influential, and to be a significant factor in the change from a dismissive view of teetotalism into an embracing position, noting that “with which such powerful support it would have been remarkable if temperance societies and Bands of Hope had not flourished in the Wesleyan Connexion”.⁵²⁸

Much like the Bible Christian publications from fifty years earlier, there is scant mention of this adoption of teetotalism in the contemporary Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine, merely noting that there is a “crying need of the great Temperance movement” in a book review in 1888, and little else written that is noteworthy.⁵²⁹ This seems curious, but perhaps this decision was not seen as significant. Maybe this is due

⁵²⁶ Thompson-Brake, 1974: 8.

⁵²⁷ Thompson-Brake, 1974: 8.

⁵²⁸ Thompson-Brake, 1974: 9.

⁵²⁹ Wesleyan Methodist Magazine sixth series vol. 12: 79.

to the Wesleyan Methodist Church's adoption of abstinence being a gradual process, and so there was no particular day that their embrace of teetotalism began. Perhaps Pope's reasoning in encouraging this choice was driven by enough common sense that the ecclesiastical community simply adopted the choice once it was satisfied with the argument, and it became as if this had always been the way. Perhaps it was simply a gradual adoption, one member at a time, and at some point there were simply more abstainers in positions of power and influence than there had been before. The available evidence does not allow us to pronounce with certainty on these matters but the Wesleyan Methodist Church's Conference minutes record more activity regarding further adoption and integration of teetotalism. In 1873, the Conference resolved that a "temperance committee be appointed to meet, from time to time, as occasion may require... to consist of Ministers representing different views on the general question (and) the Committee... will inquire into the question of intemperance, in relation to Christian effort in general, and Methodism in particular".⁵³⁰ The Conference also asked for suggestions from this committee as to how "the influence of Methodism may be most effectually employed for the remedy of this wide-spread and demoralising evil".⁵³¹ The wording of the directive from the Conference suggested that the members wish to see action happen, and the terms "wide-spread" and "demoralising" tell us that they saw this possible action as necessary, urgent and within their responsibility. The movement of teetotalism within the Wesleyan Methodist Church was then rapidly adopted. It seems likely that once Jabez Bunting and his colleagues had dealt with measures needed to ensure that the Church could become properly established, the community moved into a new phase of action. This report sent from Conference regarding abstinence gave the clear impression that Conference wanted to revisit its social action origins, as the Bible Christians and Primitive Methodist Church were already doing, and follow Wesley's example once again.

By 1874, in response to the aforementioned Temperance Committee's work, the Conference resolved that, "the influence of Wesleyan Methodism in opposition to the evils of intemperance should be consolidated and further developed (and)... that any Connexional organisation which may be attempted should rest upon the hearty cooperation of all persons, whether they be abstainers or non-abstainers".⁵³² This phrase is key – that both abstainers and non-abstainers should be onboard with future plans.

⁵³⁰ Wesleyan Methodist Conference reports volume 19: 193.

⁵³¹ Wesleyan Methodist Conference reports volume 19: 194.

⁵³² WM Conference reports volume 19: 452.

This was to be a collaborative effort, which must have increased the chances of success, in opposition to the process that the Primitive Methodist Church went through, where the arguments about abstinence were detrimental to the community. The underlying value in this process was a shared understanding: there must have been an awareness of how alcohol had directly and indirectly affected others. The notion of an ethical choice, made to empower “the weaker brother” formed the backbone of this idea, as well as the belief that followers of Jesus should set aside desires because of higher purposes. This difference in reasoning created a contrasting situation for Wesleyans as opposed to the Bible Christians. For the Bible Christians, it has clearly been shown that their choice to abstain was largely based upon the significance of sanctification for that group, so an individual could largely be assumed to have chosen their path of abstinence for that reason. However, for members of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, an individual was encouraged or even instructed to take a path of abstinence for the benefit of the weaker brother. Because holiness does not appear to be a key point of observance for this part of the church, and its members, and because their abstinence was based upon the alternative value of acting to aid those showing weakness, two alternative forms of Christian teetotalism came to exist in these separate groups.

The concept of abstinence progressed through committees and statements over a few years, so that the Wesleyan Methodist Church’s Conference declaration in 1877 could explain that in “considering the magnitude of the evil of Intemperance, and the repeated declarations of previous Conferences that the Temperance work of Methodism ought to be further organised and developed, the Conference adopts the Schemes for Bands of Hope and Circuit Temperance Organisations which have been under the careful consideration of the Temperance Committee for the last two years, and directs that these Schemes be printed in the Minutes”.⁵³³ And so, the Wesleyan Methodist Church, its hierarchy, and its members too became agents of temperance, teetotalism and total abstinence, after fifty years of resistance.

Why was there such a delay in reaching this position, in comparison to their wider British Methodist counterparts? As acknowledged, Wesleyan Methodism had become established, was no longer looking to be radical, and did not believe it had the energy and time to be so. It was Jabez Bunting’s calling to make this branch of the John Wesley-led Methodist movement a church, and he did so with great success in the first

⁵³³ Minutes of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference, Volume 20: 418.

half of the nineteenth century. In the process of building firm foundations for a new church, particularly at the beginnings of Victorian England, we can see how it made little sense to tackle new ideas outside of a gospel remit, which may cause turmoil when the reduction of disagreement and difficulty are exactly what the work was aiming to achieve. The Bible Christians and the Primitive Methodist Church were operating with clean slates, and could do whatever they wanted within their work with an enthused and fresh membership. Accordingly, when teetotalism seemed like a good idea because of the perceived benefits from its adoption, they integrated it into their community. If some members did not like it, those members would move on, and their loss would not be obvious given the influx of others, and because of the smaller structures, which needed much less financial support. The Wesleyan Methodist Church no longer had this luxury and was working to consolidate its position.⁵³⁴

Commentators agree that Bunting was successful in his configuration of the Wesleyan Methodist Church. He is described as “the one man who had guided and helped in the final organisation of Wesleyan Methodism as an ecumenical church so that it stands clear and high on the sure foundations of Christian truth and teaching”.⁵³⁵ This ecumenism meant that the Wesleyan Methodist Church became viewed as a valid aspect of the national church by other established denominations. This achievement might well explain why we begin to see the abstinence discussion arrive later in the nineteenth century, as considered in the previous paragraph, but also why the ascent of abstinence was then so rapid. Hugh Price Hughes (1847-1902) the Welsh theologian and Wesleyan minister, writing in 1890 believed that “we have practically neglected the fact that Christ came to save the Nation as well as the individual”.⁵³⁶ Hughes wanted social responsibility to become the priority for the Wesleyans. He wrote about such things in “an attempt to show that the social failure of Christianity... is the fault of us Christians who have been selfishly individualistic”.⁵³⁷ Furthermore, it was his hope that his church would “in the name of God and humanity, combine heartily to abolish Slavery, Drunkenness, Lust, Gambling, Ignorance, Pauperism, Mammonism and War. After that is done.... the Glory of God, which is the happiness of men, will fill the whole Earth”.⁵³⁸ Historian Rack believes that “the social emphasis in Hughes’s preaching was a new style for the Connexion, contrasting strongly with the usual ‘evangelical’ themes,

⁵³⁴ We might even ask if it ever did, given John Wesley’s very regular efforts to keep Methodists within Parish arrangements, but that is a different issue for a different study.

⁵³⁵ Rigg, unknown: 109.

⁵³⁶ Hughes, 1890: viii.

⁵³⁷ Hughes, 1890: xii.

⁵³⁸ Hughes, 1890: xiii.

and reflecting more closely the preoccupations of the time”.⁵³⁹ This new style, approach and emphasis can be explained by noting that other issues for the Wesleyan Methodist Church had reached resolution. Hughes’ new found optimism for their future was indicative of the feelings of the whole Connexion and what they might be able to achieve, after the impact upon Bunting’s significant groundwork to ensure their future.

According to Davies and Rupp’s anthology, Hugh Price Hughes “was a radical holiness man...(and) carried the notion of protest further than most of his contemporaries. He rejoiced to belong to ‘the noble army of agitators’”.⁵⁴⁰ Hughes’ work marks a substantial turning point within Wesleyan Methodism – clearly respected, loved and admired in equal measure in quite a different way to the polarising Jabez Bunting, but also a man working towards a social gospel, and attempting to take the people and the corporate Wesleyan Methodist Church with him. The book commissioned by the Connexion to compare the factions at the point of Union state that Price Hughes “considered that the Church was blind to the social implications of the Gospel (even though) it might be earnest in its attack on intemperance”.⁵⁴¹ This might sound like a progressive movement, pointing up and away into the future, but it probably was more within Hughes and others’ understanding that they were moving circularly, heading back towards John Wesley’s own life and work. As is important to remember, “The Methodist Church at this time was an evangelical non-Anglican, or perhaps ex-Anglican, rather than a dissenting Church,” says Strawson in Davies and Rupp.⁵⁴² This was only cemented as a position through Bunting’s purpose of arranging the foundations of the church into something that could have longevity. Once some of those issues were resolved, this community was enabled to reassert a hope to regain some of its original purpose. Hughes had specific ideas about what this might look like, and this certainly included a discourse about alcohol and abstinence.

Did this change in ecclesiology, and the solidifying of a denomination cause a change in justifications for abstinence in the Wesleyan church? Probably not, although Christian perfection was something Pope (the original Wesleyan preacher of abstinence) was not insensible to. William Strawson believes that this thread of Wesley’s theology was strong within all Methodist movements; in his words, “Christian perfection or Scriptural Holiness... is especially emphasised by Methodists and is sometimes

⁵³⁹ Davies and Rupp (ed.) vol. III, 1965: 145.

⁵⁴⁰ Davies and Rupp (ed.) vol. III, 1965: 229.

⁵⁴¹ A.W. Harrison, Aquila Barber, Hornby, Tegla Davies, 1932: 72.

⁵⁴² Davies and Rupp (ed.) vol. III, 1965: 183.

regarded as their exclusive property”.⁵⁴³ We recall that the Bible Christians, in Shaw’s words had “a deeply engrained puritanism accompanied this pietistic theology”.⁵⁴⁴ He sees there being two strands of thought about perfection within Wesleyan Methodism; the central line, of which Pope’s understanding is representative, thinks, “Sanctification is possible and means a real change in the human heart, because the Spirit operates within man’s own nature”.⁵⁴⁵ Secondly, Strawson names the Cliff College work on this subject as the separate idea, a change from Pope’s central line and justification for abstinence. Joseph Beet is speaking for this version, when he talks about “the real possibility of the gift of holiness, which is only obtained by self-consecration”. Thomas Champness, of this tradition, too notes that: “holiness implies a high standard of conduct”.⁵⁴⁶ The ‘central line’ sees the Spirit as the catalyst and sustainer of one who abstains. The ‘Cliff College’ line sees the individual as complicit in this determination. Both approaches believe that abstinence is a part of a life of holiness, but it was the Bible Christians who had holiness at the very heart of everything they did, and so, given their pioneering abstinence, seem to have joined the two ideas up in the most complete way, in comparison to their future denominational colleagues. For the Wesleyan Methodist Church, teetotalism and sanctification both became part of their set of beliefs, and were connected in their broad theology, but it was the Bible Christians who emphasised both of these issues to the highest level, and so we can presume that, for them, unlike the Wesleyan Methodist Church, the two ideas informed each other. Hugh Price Hughes’ later insistence upon the social gospel was indicative of a wider engagement, after the consolidation period under Jabez Bunting, and would have found similarities to the work of James Thorne and the Bible Christians, despite coming from different origins with different justifications.

George Thompson Brake believes that the introduction and encouragement of Bands of Hope by the Wesleyan Methodist Church permanently changed the view of teetotalism within that denomination. Bands of Hope, and other equivalent youth abstinence movements already had significant influence amongst the youth of England, and Methodism proved no less susceptible. The Band of Hope was the scheme brought into being by the Baptist Minister Jabez Tunnicliffe in Leeds in 1847. It became a national organisation in 1855, and it focused upon encouraging young people and children to avoid alcohol, and live as abstainers. The decision was made based upon the realisation

⁵⁴³ Davies and Rupp (ed.) vol. III, 1965: 225.

⁵⁴⁴ Shaw, 1965: 105.

⁵⁴⁵ Davies and Rupp (ed.) vol. III, 1965: 225.

⁵⁴⁶ Davies and Rupp (ed.) vol. III, 1965: 228.

of how many men in prison had been through Sunday Schools as children, and how many of their crimes were exacerbated by alcohol, as well as how many other children had at one time or another been under the influence of Churches, and had yet not grasped the dangers of alcohol. In his diaries, Tunncliffe records that “Mr. T. B. Smithies... investigated the moral condition of Sunday schools in reference to strong drink, and found that an awful number of scholars became criminals and outcasts through intemperance”. He adds that Smithies’ statistics suggested “out of 10,361 inmates of the principal prisons and penitentiaries of our country, not fewer than 6,572 had previously received instruction in Sabbath schools”. In an individual prison, “Wakefield prison for example, it was stated that out of 310 prisoners, 93 had attended Sabbath school upwards of five years, 68 between three and five years, 50 between two and three years, 47 between one and two years, and 43 under one year. Admitting this to be a fair average of the whole, it will be seen that full fifty per cent, had attended Sabbath schools for upwards of three years”.⁵⁴⁷ Furthermore, a personal experience led Tunncliffe’s resolve to be strengthened. He was already a personal abstainer, but met with a dying man aged 28, who had previously attended Sunday School, but was now stricken, and soon to die because of his alcoholism. He asked Tunncliffe, “I want you, if you think it worth while to say anything about me when I am gone, to warn young men against taking the first glass”.⁵⁴⁸ So, Tunncliffe’s agenda was noted: “I suggested that as our hopes of large success in our Temperance movement depended chiefly on the education of the young in our principles, that if they were formed into a distinct organisation we might call the society ‘The Band of Hope’”.⁵⁴⁹

This youth movement was a huge success in the UK, and when the Wesleyan Methodist Church adopted the same project, it increased its popularity at a great pace. Thompson Brake records that “the first statistical report was made to the Conference in 1879 when the Temperance Committee reported 1,502 Bands of Hope with a membership of 136,629”.⁵⁵⁰ This is an extraordinary level of growth in such a short period of time. This growth was not just limited to the youth movement. In the following year (1880), there was a modest return of 117 adult Temperance Societies with 8,124 members, but by 1900 in Wesleyan Methodism alone, there were 4,733 Bands of Hope with 426,041 members, and the adult societies numbered 1,637, with another 94,653 members. This means there were a total of 520,694 members of Wesleyan Methodist Temperance

⁵⁴⁷ Marles, 1865: 212-213.

⁵⁴⁸ Marles, 1865: 215.

⁵⁴⁹ Marles, 1865: 215.

⁵⁵⁰ Thompson-Brake, 1974: 23.

Societies, in a nation with a population of 38 million people. Some of these societies were explicitly concerned with temperance and the avoidance of strong alcohol, rather than total abstinence.

There was significant momentum in this movement, which was maintained well into the twentieth century. In the 1930s, the Associate Secretary of the Temperance and Society Department was E.C. Urwin. He wrote a number of books with a view to assisting Sunday-School teachers in the explanation of abstinence to their charges. To give an example, those books contained particularly pointed proclamations including: “From earliest times, the world over, the power of intoxicating liquors can be traced as a dark stain polluting religion, perverting history and corrupting life”.⁵⁵¹ Also, “there is abundant evidence, it has been said, of political catastrophes due to intoxication of persons in responsible positions at critical times”.⁵⁵² And finally, “the virtue of sobriety needs to be presented in its most attractive guise. Beside the appeal of sobriety, the pleasures of intemperance are mean, sordid and base”.⁵⁵³ The Wesleyan Methodist Church had been late to the total abstinence movement, but the commitment to its adoption meant that it created as much strength of feeling as any of the teetotal frontrunners.

Methodist New Connexion

For the sake of inclusiveness, it is worthwhile for this thesis to consider the smaller factions within Methodism. The Methodist New Connexion was the product of a split from the Wesleyan Methodist Church at the end of the eighteenth century. The reason given by the instigators for the split was a belief that too much power was given to Ministers, and not enough to lay people. Vickers writes concerning the Methodist New Connexion that, “they came chiefly from the industrialising towns of the North and formed about 66 societies, all north of a line from Stoke to Nottingham. A minority held radical political views”.⁵⁵⁴ The split was caused when a minister from Sheffield named Alexander Kilham insisted on these problems of authority being resolved, and he was expelled from the Wesleyan Methodist Church. His church community stayed with him, and this denomination thrived, until joining with the Bible Christians and the United

⁵⁵¹ Urwin, 1933: 36.

⁵⁵² Urwin, 1933: 46.

⁵⁵³ Urwin, 1933: 90.

⁵⁵⁴ Vickers, 2000: 233.

Methodist Free Churches to form the United Methodist Church in 1907. The most well known member of this group was William Booth, who joined both the Methodist New Connexion and then the Methodist Reform Church. Booth is best known as the founder of the Salvation Army, whose officers are teetotal, and whose members are encouraged to abstain from alcohol, in an act of solidarity with those who suffer. Booth himself believed in “dealing head-on with the drink difficulty”, with “sympathetic but aggressive rescue”.⁵⁵⁵ The Methodist New Connexion itself had a membership of 40,000 people before the 1907 Union with the Bible Christians et al, forming the United Methodist Church.

Wesleyan Association

The Wesleyan Association, or Wesleyan Methodist Association formed in 1836. They are a very small part of the wider picture. They came to exist when they broke away from the mainstream Wesleyan Methodist Church. We already know of the Wesleyan Association, because of a letter to Jabez Bunting earlier in this chapter. The letter expressed dismay that this faction was picking up converts ahead of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, supposedly because of their willingness to be seen as teetotalers. The accuracy of this claim is debatable because no further evidence has been found. They did not split away because of this issue of abstinence, but surprisingly because of an issue surrounding music, and the installation of a church organ. Their history is largely unwritten, or undiscovered, but they were another of the parts of the conglomeration with the Bible Christians and the Methodist New Connexion in creating the United Methodist Church. When the Association began to formulate its separation from the Wesleyan Methodist Church, they declared a desire to “agitate the Connexion to its centre”.⁵⁵⁶ They are given an honourable mention in Harrison’s history, on account of their mistrust of ministers. He writes, “in any clash between laymen and ministers, the teetotal cause tended to be identified with the laymen. This seems to have lain at the root of the clash between teetotalism and the Wesleyan Conference in 1841. Methodist schismatic members seeking to increase ‘lay influence’ within the Wesleyan Connexion were reportedly more enthusiastic for teetotalism, at least until the 1870s, than the

⁵⁵⁵ Blocker, Fahey, Tyrell, 2003: 542.

⁵⁵⁶ *The Illuminator*, 1835 :3

Wesleyans. Thus in Rochdale in the 1830s Wesleyan Associationists steadfastly supported teetotalism, whereas Wesleyans steered clear”.⁵⁵⁷

Comparing the origins and development of temperance and abstinence across British Methodist traditions.

This chapter has indicated how Wesleyan theology, when applied by the Bible Christians, clashed with the ideals of the Wesleyan Methodist Church. This has been shown through the changing dynamic of the church, caused by the necessary alterations that Jabez Bunting and his colleagues made, in order to stabilise the organisation – and how this created a significantly different ecclesial community to that of the Bible Christians. While the new group was able to focus upon themselves as a group of disciples, the more established church had more pressing issues, which led to this divide in approach. This chapter has also shown a nineteenth century Wesleyan Church culture that was always unlikely to accept rigorous new aspects to its mission, despite its radical and missional origins. This has been highlighted through the analysis of reorganisation and stability that took place under the watch of Bunting. Finally, this chapter has highlighted when and why Wesleyan Methodism did eventually encourage abstinence. This change was enabled through (amongst others) the work of W.B. Pope and Hugh Price Hughes and their theological justifications. These justifications had an impact, but were significantly different to the pursuit of holiness, as hoped for by the Bible Christians. Instead, they were supported in this choice by thinking of others, who might need the example of an abstaining neighbor. While commendable, it was significantly different from the process undertaken by the Bible Christians.

There are several differences between the three prominent Methodist factions in this study (Bible Christians, Primitive Methodist Church and Wesleyan Methodist Church). Exploring these differences requires comparisons between ‘how and when the cause was adopted?’ and ‘how the position taken was justified’

When and in what way was the cause adopted?

The Bible Christian movement has been described in this thesis as the earliest group in British Methodism to adopt and encourage teetotalism corporately, with clear evidence

⁵⁵⁷ Harrison, 1971: 170.

and reasons for the choice displayed in chapter 4. There are some differences between the Bible Christians, Primitive Methodist Church and Wesleyan Methodist Church and this includes their views on, and their adoption of abstinence, These differences include: when each faction chose to abstain, whether they chose to abstain at all, and what their abstinence looked like. The Bible Christians chose to abstain in large numbers and seem to have been influenced in this choice by their quest for holiness. They were the first abstainers within British Methodism, as highlighted earlier through the primary evidence the issue of a medallion, in 1837. The Primitive Methodist Church could not decide whether or not to adopt abstinence as a policy, although some individuals did, for a variety of reasons. The Wesleyan Methodist Church took the decision to support abstinence, but not until the 1870s. Their justification was based upon support for “the weaker brother”. The proof of the medallion from a private collection, shown in chapter 4, illustrates that the Bible Christian group were promoting and organising abstinence in 1837. This evidence shows that the Bible Christians were the first abstainers, so their reasoning needs to be taken seriously.

Regarding the Bible Christians, James Thorne’s journal records that he signed a pledge to abstain earlier in that same year despite showing some previous reticence. His diary entry expresses this: “May 2nd (1837)... in the evening I attended a Total Abstinence Meeting, and was much interested. I also signed the pledge, as I do not see any harm that can accrue from it”.⁵⁵⁸ Because the medallion (featuring Thorne’s name and profile) was produced in the same year that Thorne signed the pledge, the assumption can be made that the cause came to be established soon after its introduction into that group. In addition, this commemorative medal seems to suggest that this promotion within the community came from James Thorne, because his name and face appears on that item. Because of Thorne’s influence, and numerous roles, he had the leverage to be able to make proposals and changes. There are no reports that his ideas met any resistance and so were adopted accordingly. This is in contrast to the issues that arose in the Primitive Methodist Church where arguments were rife regarding abstinence. Because the Bible Christian work, led by Thorne, appears to have been readily accepted by the community, it is inevitable that this would have had created a different type of philosophy in comparison to the focus on teetotalism within the Primitive Methodist Church, borne out of two opposing world-views caused by conflicting leadership.

⁵⁵⁸ Thorne, 1873: 238.

Some members of the Primitive Methodist Church were committed to abstinence at the very beginning of the teetotal movement. It is shown from Joseph Livesey's own records that some of the "Seven Men of Preston" were from the Primitive Methodist Church. The Primitive Methodist community's genesis preceded the teetotal movement by about twenty years. This meant there was a significant stability to their work. Accordingly, some individuals from the Primitive Methodist Church found themselves in a situation where they were inclined and committed towards abstinence when Livesey's philosophy came into being. As shown in chapter 5, from these seven men, "three were Primitive Methodists, (including) Joseph Richardson, who was wont to say, 'I am the happiest man alive, for no man can be happier than a teetotal Primitive Methodist'".⁵⁵⁹ Thus, from this platform, the Primitive Methodist Church produced a significant number of members who signed the document to pledge that they would abstain from alcohol. However, the Primitive Methodist Church did not adopt the philosophy corporately. This status seems to have hinged upon the shared leadership of Hugh Bourne and William Clowes. The decision-making process within the organisation often sat with the two figureheads. In Kendall's words: "the founders of the two sections which combined to form Primitive Methodism have equal claims to be adjudged our founders".⁵⁶⁰ The lack of committal to the teetotal movement can be largely attributed to the leadership pair having differing views on the subject. As observed, Hugh Bourne believed himself to be both committed to, and ahead of the curve in his adoption of the stance – recalling chapter 5, he proclaimed "I was a total abstainer before they had such a Society at all".⁵⁶¹ In contrast, William Clowes was opposed to drunkenness, but also opposed to the church committing to abstinence as a specific cause. He believed "in the faithful preaching of the gospel to save sinners from all sin including the particular sin of drunkenness", but also that "the full exhibition of the gospel in its saving influences and the care of the churches was sufficient".⁵⁶² Accordingly, this leadership team struggled to find common ground for agreement, from which to propose action.

If Clowes is highlighted for his reticence, then the Wesleyan Methodist Church could be noted for its outright dismissal of the teetotal movement. In 1853, when asked to support the Alliance of temperance (not even teetotal) organisations, "it was reluctant to

⁵⁵⁹ Kendall (vol. II), 1905: 129.

⁵⁶⁰ Kendall, 1919: 27.

⁵⁶¹ Ashworth, 1888: 107.

⁵⁶² Davison, 1854: 240-241.

do so”.⁵⁶³ One noted minister even calling some abstainers “implacable enemies of Christianity”.⁵⁶⁴ We can propose a number of underlying reasons for opposition here, acknowledging that it was not a wholesale rebuttal by all members. We have noted that at the time of early teetotalism in the 1830s, the Wesleyan Methodist Church was undergoing a process of reorganisation and restructuring, led by Jabez Bunting. It seems highly plausible that the total abstinence movement was seen as disruptive to these plans. Bunting calls them “annoyances arising from teetotalism”, and states that, “we are not enemies to sobriety, but to vituperation”.⁵⁶⁵ Although those committed to stability surely had a sense of mission within their strategy, the new idea of teetotalism, and the ‘evangelical’ meetings that accompanied it, were not exactly what was hoped for to enable the strengthening and consolidation of the denomination. In particular, there were issues and concerns felt in local situations when this new activity interfered with regular planned preaching, seen as one of the vital parts of the church’s mission. The Wesleyan Methodist Church saw teetotal meetings as secondary in value to what might be described as intentional Christian meetings. When local situations disagreed about this, arguments occurred. An example from Lincolnshire reports that, “during the course of the debate, the young men (who abstained) were repeatedly urged to disconnect themselves from their respective temperance societies”.⁵⁶⁶ Bunting’s influence is suggested to be visible in incidents like this – he was able to “exert a great influence upon the ecclesiastical and political outlook of Methodism”.⁵⁶⁷ Clearly, the value of teetotalism was not an opinion held by all of the membership, and particularly the hierarchy, but it was not universally disliked either. This Wesleyan Methodist Church had predated teetotalism by a century, so was a fully established entity when other Methodist people were exploring this new idea. Their foundational work had already acknowledged the problems associated with alcohol, much like the other groups, but perhaps because of their firm organisational structures, they did not feel flexible enough to incorporate the total abstinence movement initially. They did however, by small measures, get to a point of full adoption by the 1880s, notably “the first statistical report was made to the Conference in 1879 when the Temperance Committee reported 1,502 Bands of Hope with a membership of 136,629”.⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶³ Thompson-Brake, 1974: 17.

⁵⁶⁴ Thompson-Brake, 1974: 6.

⁵⁶⁵ Ward, 1976: 219.

⁵⁶⁶ Small, 1841: 24

⁵⁶⁷ Taylor, 1935: 118

⁵⁶⁸ Thompson-Brake, 1974: 23.

Regarding the Bible Christians, their insistence upon holiness as an important Christian value has been highlighted throughout chapter 4. In James Thorne's words, his desire was that "I be a living and dying witness to the doctrine of heart holiness".⁵⁶⁹ This is not a new assertion, and is widely acknowledged within historical studies. What is unique to this thesis are the claims about how this holiness affected the abstinence of the Bible Christians. The research undertaken in this thesis gives the firm suggestion that this holiness led directly or indirectly to a life of abstinence for many members of the community. They had made this choice based largely upon William O'Bryan, as founder, being committed to the work of John Wesley, even after his expulsion from the Wesleyan Methodist Church. Wesley emphasised that "we must actively pursue salvation, prepare for it, build upon the grace offered after conversion and pursue perfection".⁵⁷⁰ William O'Bryan was convinced of this approach, and passed these ideas on to his protégé James Thorne. As Thorne took the reins of leadership for the community, he too encouraged this approach as the main value of individual discipleship. The Bible Christians were known accordingly. In Thomas Shaw's words, "the importance of church, ministry and sacraments were affirmed from the beginning but these things were overshadowed by a tremendous emphasis on personal religion".⁵⁷¹ The acknowledgement of holiness as a key factor for the community is not a new idea. The new claim for this thesis, as proposed in chapter 4, is that this emphasis appears to have meant that when abstinence from alcohol became an idea in the community, their striving for holiness enforced this notion, and widespread adoption of teetotalism was not far behind. As this thesis has reported, "for many years the proud boast of this denomination (was) that every one of its ministers was a teetotaller".⁵⁷² This research has also made clear that although holiness was a significant part of their theological journey and attitude, abstinence was not seen as an absolute clause, and so remained a potential part of an individual's discipleship, even though in 1854 an attempt was made to make it an absolute condition "but the methods adopted were not approved by Conference".⁵⁷³

⁵⁶⁹ Thorne, 1873: 49.

⁵⁷⁰ Rack, 1989: 388.

⁵⁷¹ Shaw, 1965: 106.

⁵⁷² Pyke, 1908: 105.

⁵⁷³ Pyke, 1908: 106.

For the Primitive Methodist Church, this thesis has highlighted in chapter 5 that their stance on abstinence was non-committal. This decision was justified through a fear that the promotion of teetotalism would detract from a sharing of the gospel, and from the church's evangelistic work. But it was also a product of a leadership with differing viewpoints. Recalling his proclamation that 'the teetotalers have joined me', we can assume that if Hugh Bourne had been the only church leader making the choice, the Primitive Methodist Church would have become synonymous with the teetotal movement. Instead, William Clowes' insistence upon a different emphasis meant that teetotalism was not promoted corporately in the Primitive Methodist Church during their lifetimes. This consternation was based upon the disquietude Clowes felt about the level of insistence and focus that was placed upon abstinence, to the detriment of the evangelism that he expected of his preachers, and which he valued highly. His concern was particularly founded on how a person might realise their need for salvation – in his opinion and from his own experiences, abstinence would solve some of an individual's problems, helping them to feel that they were suitably improved. Accordingly, when an interaction happened with the gospel, it might prove harder for a person to see the intrinsic value in it after a teetotal conversion had already taken place, and had given just enough redemption on that occasion. He saw this as something much less significant and valuable than the salvation made possible by the message of Jesus. Clowes therefore saw the need to address alcohol abuse, but believed that it could be automatically addressed within the wider context of Christian salvation. In his words, "I have often blessed God that He gave me a religion of such an order that it enabled me to both to burn and shine, to love God with all my heart, and to act uprightly towards my fellow creatures".⁵⁷⁴ Hugh Bourne's extended diatribe about alcohol is recorded, due to its prominence within a conference debate. It occurred when there was a discussion at the annual Primitive Methodist conference regarding a proposal to offer a glass of wine to aid preachers if they are in need of refreshment. Bourne "gave numerous calculations and arguments against this wine legislation".⁵⁷⁵ Accordingly, it can be of no surprise that the two men, and subsequently the community at this time, could not find the common agreement necessary to facilitate a Primitive Methodist Church policy in regard to alcohol and abstinence. Again, we can acknowledge that many within the community would have committed to abstinence, and as we have seen, were at the forefront of the secular teetotal movement. This did not transfer into the church until much later.

⁵⁷⁴ Clowes, 1844: 29-30.

⁵⁷⁵ Ashworth, 1888: 104-105

As the Primitive Methodist Church and Bible Christians become involved in different ways with the idea of abstinence, the Wesleyan Methodist Church was left in a curious position. By 1837, the Bible Christians had organised their own teetotal society, and some Primitive Methodists had been part of Livesey's movement from the very beginning. The Wesleyan Methodist Church had no such bond. The theology that formed and informed the Wesleyan Methodist Church had also created the Bible Christians, but the two groups ended up in different positions, both ecclesial and teetotal. This can largely be ascribed to the hundred years between the beginnings of the two groups, and the different circumstances that the groups found themselves in as temperance and teetotalism took hold in the country. Accordingly, although Livesey notes that a Wesleyan minister was involved in the early stages of the teetotal campaign, there were few formal links between the idea of abstinence and the Wesleyan Methodist Church for about fifty years. In truth, there are significant records of the Wesleyan church conducting some work to make sure that teetotal efforts stayed at arms length from more specific 'church business'. This resulted in significant bad feeling, compelling one correspondent to label the Wesleyan Conference as "the most refined and despotic assembly in existence".⁵⁷⁶ The records of letters to Jabez Bunting in his various positions of authority often take the tone of complaint, and ask for decisive action to be taken against those promoting abstinence, or those who refuse to promote it. Examples include the steward who writes to tell Bunting "I have banished the destructive cup from the Lord's table".⁵⁷⁷ In truth, Bunting was personally regarded as having "a despotic rule".⁵⁷⁸ Accordingly, only the changes he deemed necessary occurred. Bunting died in 1858, and by the late 1870s, there were signs that these stances were shifting. Some suggestions emerged from committee reports that the denomination was loosening its stance on abstinence. The Conference of 1873 asked, regarding alcohol, how "the influence of Methodism may be most effectually employed for the remedy of this wide-spread and demoralising evil".⁵⁷⁹ From these beginnings, the denomination started to include the promotion of teetotalism as part of its work, and thus saw it as a valid expression within its community. The stance that largely took hold in this community was based around the idea of abstaining in order to assist others. W.B. Pope preached from Paul's text "We then that are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak".⁵⁸⁰ The Wesleyan version gained strength, and resources. Henry Carter for

⁵⁷⁶ Small, 1841: 39

⁵⁷⁷ Ward, 1976: 254. This correspondent was writing from Woodford in 1841.

⁵⁷⁸ Roberts, Roberts, Bisson, 2013: 377

⁵⁷⁹ WM Conference reports volume 19: 194.

⁵⁸⁰ Thompson-Brake, 1974: 7-8.

example, who was later regarded as the most prominent of Wesleyan abstainers, took a role in 1905 as a “temperance evangelist”.⁵⁸¹ The justification for the choice took longer than the other factions, but when it occurred, it became deeply significant. And so, by the time of Union in 1932 “the three uniting Churches had almost identical departments dealing with social issues” and “each of the Connexions had a pre-occupation with Temperance”.⁵⁸²

Comparisons have to begin with the versions of abstinence each group becomes associated with – both the Bible Christians and the Wesleyan Methodist Church created a culture of abstinence – examples of and reasons for, were ordained by those within the hierarchy, and this understanding filtered down to those who were part of the wider community. Because of the disagreement within the hierarchy of the Primitive Methodist Church, that community was given examples of both promoting abstinence, and avoiding the advancement of it. The Primitive disparity also highlights the inevitable repercussions when opposing groups lambasted each other’s policies. The clearest distinction between the three groups is the justification given for the choice made – while the Primitive Methodist Church was unable to reach a consensus, the Bible Christians explored the idea of abstinence within their journey towards holiness, as proposed within this thesis. The Wesleyan Methodist Church instead justified the prospect of abstinence by proposing to help others, by offering an example, and removing the opportunity for temptation.

The Bible Christian drive for holiness had the positive attribute of allowing for individual choice regarding abstinence, to the benefit or detriment of each person. In practice, it seems as if the choice was not quite as optional as may be hoped. The likelihood is as reports suggest, that most Bible Christians adopted abstinence, and so the pressure not to make that choice would probably have been quite intense. To call something voluntary is quite different when the majority voluntarily made the same choice. As E. Thorne’s text reports, “it came to be thought that a man who would not exercise sufficient restraint and self-denial to abstain was not a true convert: a preacher who was not a teetotaler was unfit to preach to others, and most probably was unfit for the kingdom of heaven”.⁵⁸³ There would presumably have been similar consequences regarding the Wesleyan approach; we know that all elements protested against

⁵⁸¹ Blocker, Fahey, Tyrell, 2003: 141.

⁵⁸² Thompson-Brake, 1984: 433.

⁵⁸³ Thorne, E, 1903: 18.

consumption. A statement from the Methodist Church after Union declared that, “the spiritual quality of human life is adversely affected by drinking habits, and the evidence that the drink evil militates most potently against the Kingdom of God”.⁵⁸⁴ If an individual chose not to abstain, the question would surely be asked as to why you did not care about your weaker brother, or why you chose to work against the Kingdom of God. Emotional blackmail was a side effect of both of these processes, as we see once the movement had become more settled, in the next chapter.

In terms of overall comparison, because of the proposed reasons for abstinence within the Bible Christian community, this thesis can make these new claims, based upon new comparisons. However, it is a further discovery of this work that the differences between these groups have proved difficult to decipher. This is largely because the reasons to abstain were not often expressed, and ideas about the benefits of this abstinence have become blurred over time. In addition, as the three factions became one church and differences were homogenised, it is not hard to see how some subtleties were lost. The “Uniting Conference in 1932” ordained that each newly combined department created a revised joint statement, and the Temperance and Social Welfare Department was no different.⁵⁸⁵ Despite this unifying exercise, there had been clear differences between the three groups considered here. Most relevantly, only the Bible Christians adopted abstinence when the initial chance appeared, as shown in chapter 4. While parts of the Primitive Methodist Church would have made that same choice, other members of their community showed their opposition, and so they made no formal adoption until much later. This has been highlighted in chapter 5. The Wesleyan Methodist Church did not start to explore the idea of abstinence until the 1870s and 1880s, significantly later than the Bible Christians, as has been laid out in chapter 6. Secondly, and less obviously, the justifications for the choices have been shown here with clear differences. The evidence surrounding the Bible Christians gives the firm impression that the abstinence movement found a connection with this community. That potential was bound up in the Bible Christian hope for sanctification, working towards holiness. So too, it seems that this abstinence became a further facet of their drive for holiness. Inevitably, there were detrimental effects in this outworking, particularly with the sense that abstinence became a further requirement of members, or a standard which holiness was measured by – neither conclusion here being a satisfactory outcome. The Primitive Methodist Church chose not to give a reason, or support the idea corporately.

⁵⁸⁴ Thompson-Brake, 1984: 437.

⁵⁸⁵ Thompson-Brake, 1984: 433.

This is not to say that members of the Primitive Methodist movement did not choose abstinence, but that the influence did not come from the central organisation. Accordingly, this would have created a wide range of reasons for abstinence within this community. Furthermore, any falling away from the notion of abstinence also occurred for many reasons.

Comparison between the Bible Christians and the Wesleyan Methodist Church is based upon the decision by the church not to encourage abstinence. As teetotalism first appeared, individual Wesleyans became involved in the movement, and the wider church had the opportunity and option to engage in ways similar to the Bible Christians, but instead they chose to continue without adopting the cause. This gap in time allowed the teetotal movement to evolve and change, and in particular, the Band of Hope had become a formidable and vastly prevalent form of the campaign by the time of Wesleyan adoption. Perhaps the success of the idea showed itself to be worthwhile. For whatever the reasons, when the Wesleyan Methodist Church started to take decisions that led to their support of teetotalism, they did so with a justification that held subtle differences to that of the Bible Christians – it was a decision based upon helping those people who were in need of both a good example and safety from temptation. There is scope to see this decision of abstinence to help other people as not far removed from an attitude of holiness; to do something because of a higher calling, either to do as Christ would do around those in need, as his representative, or to act in a way that was as Christ-like as possible, because the greatness of His grace and sacrifice demanded it as a response. Of course, whatever the reasons, the practical application would have appeared the same. There can be little surprise that the small differences in the adoption of teetotalism by these different groups were somewhat lost in the amalgamations that followed.

Chapter 7 – The UMC, Union and the Twentieth Century

This chapter will consider the United Methodist Church, which was the name of the collection of Methodist groups who united in 1907 in Britain, specifically the Methodist New Connexion, the Bible Christians and United Methodist Free Churches. In 1932, The Methodist Church in Britain was formed when the United Methodist Church, the Wesleyan Methodist Church and the Primitive Methodist Church joined together in the act of Methodist Union. This chapter hopes to explore how the factions of Methodism reordered their differing approaches to alcohol and abstinence once they joined together as the United Methodist Church (in 1907), and in the wider and complete Union of 1932 as The Methodist Church. Secondly, this chapter will show clear evidence for how wartime and subsequent peacetimes had different impacts upon popular viewpoints of abstinence and alcohol. Thirdly, it will explain what the responses from The Methodist Church were to this changing post-war world.

Regarding the first aim, the Bible Christians with the Methodist New Connexion and the (pre-existing) United Methodist Free Churches formed the United Methodist Church in 1907. This chapter will explore how this arrangement came to pass, but no explanation is necessary to understand that some structural and doctrinal compromise for the newly formed denomination was needed. Teetotalism was widespread in most factions of Methodism by this time. Regarding the second aim, there was significant shift in governmental alcohol policy and public opinion during both the first and second world wars due to production issues and commercial limitations, which abstainers and campaign groups (including Methodist clusters) hoped to harness, in order to achieve change. Subsequent peacetime trends had different impacts upon popular viewpoints of abstinence and alcohol, which challenged the strong hope for a teetotal nation that had been expected by some who promoted the cause. The third aim is to highlight that public opinion had turned, reducing a need or desire for corporate Methodist responses since the 1950s, and abstinence has not been convincingly revisited by any part of Methodism since, aside from an individual or small group understanding.

The United Methodist Church and the First World War

The United Methodist Church formed in 1907 as a conglomerate of the Bible Christians, the United Methodist Free Churches (already a joining of the Wesleyan Association and

the Wesleyan Reformers) and Methodist New Connexion. All these groups adapted their structures, ideas and beliefs in order to accommodate the other sects, to become part of a bigger whole. This included for some a new understanding of their own teetotalism, so that as a corporation they could continue with this choice as a significant part of their mission and community. The Bible Christians were not the largest of these conjoined groups, but a systematic equal sharing of ideals and roles within the hierarchy meant that their attitudes to drink, which were appreciated by some members of other factions, were able to become the (assumed) attitudes of the whole.

This group of Bible Christians, the Methodist New Connexion and the United Methodist Free Churches (UMFC) amalgamated soon after the turn of the century, but the United Methodist Church (UMC)⁵⁸⁶ lasted for the next 25 years until Methodist Union took place in 1932. Growth had slowed in these groups considerably by 1900, and although contemporary reports suggest a feeling of positivity about this change, the uniting of these parts was in fact a form of consolidation. Wilson and Currie called it “an organisational response to adverse conditions”.⁵⁸⁷ There is little recorded evidence, or analysis of how the three factions worked out the amalgamation of resources and beliefs. According to Kitson Clark “their varying beliefs have little troubled the ordinary historian”.⁵⁸⁸ This was a significant group of the (Methodist) population that was consistently regarded as niche by mainline Methodism. Time has not changed this understanding, and details of the joining are not available in great detail.

Clearly, this merger required some reworking of policy and theological adaptation, and inevitably the question of abstinence was a key factor. The United Methodist Church’s stance on alcohol and total abstinence continued the Bible Christians work in much the way as described in chapter 4. The Bible Christians were not the largest faction in this new union, but all joining factions were given equal membership within negotiating committees. This proved beneficial for those wishing for Bible Christian approaches to alcohol to be carried forward into the new organisation. Not all parts of the UMC had consciously approved of abstinence, but were now persuaded to do so by others in the union.

⁵⁸⁶ Not to be confused with the American denomination of the same name, which formed in 1968.

⁵⁸⁷ Davies and Rupp (ed.) vol. III, 1965: 321.

⁵⁸⁸ Davies and Rupp (ed.) vol. III, 1965: 309.

It is not surprising to read that the UMC felt they were at a tipping point in British history as the First World War erupted around them. They would have surely felt this even more keenly when some surprising and unlikely issues became part of the political discourse at that time. David Lloyd George, Chancellor of the Exchequer, became Prime Minister of the UK in December 1916 after 9 years in the Treasury. His stance on how the war was progressing was perhaps unexpected. It is reported that “on 29 March 1915, Lloyd George told the Shipbuilding Employers’ Federation, ‘we are fighting Germans, Austrians and drink, and as far as I can see the deadliest of these is drink’”.⁵⁸⁹ Recording his thoughts on the subject in his War Memoirs, Lloyd George wrote, “One of the most serious obstacles encountered in the way of increasing the output of munitions was the heavy drinking in certain areas”.⁵⁹⁰ As a wartime politician, his rhetoric was inflated, but all accounts suggest that this was an issue that he believed was significant for the well being, and success of the nation. He records that his first speech on the subject of drink was in Bangor in February 1915. In regard to workers who drank alcohol to excess, Lloyd George said “Drink is doing more damage in the War than all the German submarines put together... We have got great powers to deal with drink, and we mean to use them discreetly, we shall use them wisely, but we shall use them quite fearlessly, and I have no doubt that, as the country’s needs demand it, the country will support our action, and will allow no indulgence of that kind to interfere with its prospects in this terrible war which has been thrust upon us”.⁵⁹¹ There is no information available to know how Lloyd George justified these proclamations, but wartime political speeches are not well known for their consistent referencing. What this statement does tell us is that some within the political hierarchy were convinced of the value of abstinence, although whether teetotalism had actually permeated the political elite is debatable.

Lloyd George, after the death of his father, had been raised by his uncle, Richard Lloyd who was “a life-long student of philosophy and theology, a lay preacher, with the greatest respect and admiration for learning and moral precept. He was a Baptist and a Radical Liberal”.⁵⁹² As Lloyd George was growing up “a great movement for temperance was sweeping over the country. Lloyd George never set foot inside a public-house during this period of his life”.⁵⁹³ Furthermore, “the Puritan faith of the

⁵⁸⁹ Hattersley, 2010: 200.

⁵⁹⁰ Lloyd George, 1938: 192.

⁵⁹¹ Lloyd George, 1938: 194.

⁵⁹² Earl Lloyd George, 1960: 19.

⁵⁹³ Earl Lloyd George, 1960: 31.

Lloyds had given them an overriding belief in the importance of working hard and of self-help and individual responsibility before God and man for all our activities. William George (D.L.I.G's father) came from a family of South Wales Baptists and he too took life and its responsibilities very seriously".⁵⁹⁴ Lloyd George recorded in his diary his struggle with the family tradition. He noted in his journal that he drank "a glass of porter... so that's keeping the Blue Ribbon Pledge grandly". The notes add "D.L.I.G had signed the Blue Ribbon Pledge (the total abstinence pledge) in 1882. The comment he made in his diary was: 'It may give me somehow an opportunity of exercising, maybe displaying (!) my oratorical (?) powers sometime' an obvious reference to being a platform speaker on behalf of the Temperance movement, an intention which he carried out with effect on many occasions".⁵⁹⁵ Thus "his taste for alcohol never developed from this modest beginning in the hot summer days of 1882".⁵⁹⁶ It is well worth recording Lloyd George's understanding of the political value of these words, and the side of the argument he was joining. "Lloyd George was fully aware of the importance of strongly held nonconformist opinions on issues of the day in the Wales of the 1880s and 1890s. As a member of a numerically tiny religious sect he could not rely on the support of the strong Calvinistic Methodist Connexion unless he could adopt and advocate their ideas of what constituted the good society".⁵⁹⁷ However, we have significant reasons for believing that Lloyd George's teetotal stance was not simply political, but a personal conviction, and an ideal supported by a significant part of the country. This view is reinforced by Winston Churchill's parliamentary tribute to Lloyd George when he died. Churchill said, "There was no man so gifted, so eloquent, so forceful who knew the life of the people so well".⁵⁹⁸

The Chancellor was not to be shaken from his concerns, and once Prime Minister, Lloyd George and his cabinet considered measures to tackle the problem of alcohol abuse. Other politicians (often from similar backgrounds to Lloyd George) held similar hopes. Norman Longmate writes: "Leif Jones (an MP for Nottingham and the son of a Welsh Congregationalist Minister) had complained of 'the waste of food in making drink'".⁵⁹⁹ This concern was an additional justification for a dry nation: at this point in time, arable farming was not as productive as it had previously been (given the removal of workers who were now fighting in the war), so some crops were in short supply. It

⁵⁹⁴ W.R.P George, 1976: 35.

⁵⁹⁵ W.R.P George, 1976: 104.

⁵⁹⁶ W.R.P George, 1976: 112.

⁵⁹⁷ W.R.P George, 1976: 111.

⁵⁹⁸ Gilbert, 2000: 833.

⁵⁹⁹ Longmate, 1968: 272.

was proposed in some quarters that the use of crops for brewing should be banned while the war continued, and all good crops could be used for food, not alcohol. National Temperance (by which he meant total abstinence, not moderation) was one of Lloyd George's propositions, and he hoped that King George V might be able to be an advocate for this scheme, and have some influence upon his subjects. One of the King's biographers records that, the Prime Minister "urged the King to set an example to the nation by abstaining from alcohol for the duration of the war".⁶⁰⁰ In a different scenario, this plan may have appeared unlikely and unworkable, but perhaps because of the ongoing conflict, and the strength of feeling from people like Lloyd George around the misuse of food and alcohol at this time, the idea was taken onboard, in order to benefit the nation. Rose writes, "although a man of temperate habits, the King was accustomed to drink a little wine with his meals and a glass of port after dinner. He nevertheless responded instantly to the call of patriotism. On 30 March 1915, Stamfordham⁶⁰¹ wrote to Lloyd George: 'If it be deemed advisable His Majesty will be prepared to set an example by giving up all alcoholic liquor himself and throughout his household, so that no difference shall be made so far as he is concerned between the treatment of rich and poor'".⁶⁰²

Despite this hugely significant patronage, Harrison believes that "teetotalism trenched so severely on social life that only the most exceptional situation could make it respectable enough for the British monarchy. Even when George V took the pledge during the First World War, his action was always something of an embarrassment".⁶⁰³ "His self-denial evoked ribaldry rather than respect", and Lloyd George (from his nonconformist background) may not have realised how much the drinking of alcohol was entrenched within high society, in the same way that his teetotalism was entrenched in the working classes of Wales. Harrison records that "both the King and Queen would have borne their self-imposed asceticism without complaint had it achieved its purpose and encouraged others to follow the royal example. Their gesture, however, was generally ignored and sometimes derided. The King did not hide his belief that Lloyd George had made him look foolish". However, Norman Longmate gives a different vision of the public, believing that "when a Royal Proclamation (regarding drink) was issued... not only teetotalers were supporting him".⁶⁰⁴ Undoubtedly, our loyal Methodist

⁶⁰⁰ Rose, 1983: 178.

⁶⁰¹ Arthur Bigge, 1st Baron Stamfordham – George V's Private Secretary.

⁶⁰² Rose, 1983: 178.

⁶⁰³ Harrison, 1971: 157.

⁶⁰⁴ Longmate, 1968: 272.

abstainers were delighted with the King's new stance, and the Prime Minister's belief in the cause.

And so, the United Methodist Church took the King's stance as a meeting of like-minds. The Young People's and Temperance Committee Report titled "Temperance" was delivered to the UMC Conference 1915 in Exeter, and records that "this Conference expresses great satisfaction at the action of His Majesty the King, in abstaining from the use of intoxicating liquor during the war, and calls upon all our people to follow the Royal example".⁶⁰⁵ Furthermore, full Conference wrote and sent a pledge of loyalty (included in the Conference report) to the King giving "devout thanks to Almighty God for the high ideals of the Royal House".⁶⁰⁶ There must have been something in the King's character that spoke to assembled Methodists, and made them believe in his concern for the mission of the church. On one occasion, the famous Wesleyan 'Lax of Poplar', "(Rev. W.H. Lax) speaking to King George V, said: "The Methodist Church, sir, is a loyal Church" (standing for) "the great evangelical message of conversion" (and) "the absolute necessity of rendering service to the community".⁶⁰⁷

It seems legitimate to believe that the memorial sent to George V was informed by the United Methodist Church's belief that not only was abstinence a high ideal worth pursuing, but that King George's decision to abstain affirmed their belief in the legitimacy of their drive. As we have already seen, parts of Methodism had become entirely convinced that the value of their abstinence was self evident and extremely worthwhile, so when the King adopted their stance (whether during the war or otherwise) those abstainers would have felt affirmation of their stance. This would have been especially the case, when it is considered that this turn of events was coupled with a Prime Minister who was a long-standing abstainer before the war had begun, and with a shortage of crops, which was often seen as an issue that supported abstinence. It must have felt to those who had spent their lives in the pursuit of societal abstinence that a breakthrough had been made, with their denomination in high spirits, and their cause supported at the highest level. In hindsight, however, this was to be the peak, and in truth, the decline of their movement was imminent.

⁶⁰⁵ United Methodist Church 1915 Conference Report: 370.

⁶⁰⁶ United Methodist Church 1915 Conference Report: 18.

⁶⁰⁷ Davies and Rupp (ed.) vol. III, 1965: 320.

The Union of 1932, when United, Wesleyan and Primitive Methodist Churches became one denomination, was touted as the catalyst for a bright future for a combined denomination growing in number and influence, but in truth, it was the moment where consolidation became formalised. Davies and Rupp's chronicle states that "Methodist Union was attended with great hopes, yet there were no illusions in the minds of men like Aldom French about the decline of Methodist membership, measured in real terms against population percentages, despite the numerical increase, against a rise of population (and) the general leadership of the United Church before World War II tended to lack vigour, drive or new ideas".⁶⁰⁸ Ernest Aldom French (1868-1962) was Secretary of the Methodist Union Committee from 1928, and had the responsibility of convincing the various parts of the potential new, combined church that Union was necessary. Therefore, we need not read his words as a critique of the process of union, but as a realistic statement on the state that he found the community in. It was his belief that "In England for years there has been a drifting from the churches and apparently from religion".⁶⁰⁹ The need resulting from this drifting was as such: "it is certain that if the social ideals we have cherished for so long are to be anything more than the baseless fabric for a dream... human nature must be profoundly and radically changed".⁶¹⁰ Some within Methodism were already acknowledging a loss of momentum, and the need for change. It was hoped that Union would address some of these concerns, but French appears to understand that it would do no such thing.

In acknowledgement, Turner too believes that "many 'local' Methodists would have put forward as *their* belief system a much more behaviour-centred theology, owing perhaps more to a late Victorian respectability than to the experience of the brothers Wesley".⁶¹¹ Turner quotes Ashby's "A Village Life" to suggest that "respectability, rather than reverence, was what filled the air of the Edwardian pseudo-gothic building".⁶¹² An abstinence from alcohol would absolutely have been part of the behavioural canon of respectability that was expected in these quarters. French and Turner knew of the serious effort that was needed to cause necessary change, but the energy had already been misplaced. The church had lost its radical nature, and become something other than its founders and those who prevailed had hoped for. In this scenario, a fervour for, and insistence upon abstinence had become one of the more energetically pursued ideals.

⁶⁰⁸ Davies and Rupp (ed.) vol. III, 1965: 340.

⁶⁰⁹ French, 1921: 11.

⁶¹⁰ French, 1921: 14.

⁶¹¹ Davies and Rupp (ed.) vol. III, 1965: 320.

⁶¹² Davies and Rupp (ed.) vol. III, 1965: 317.

But it was an ideal that in itself did not directly point towards real gospel values, and needed to be categorically drawn into those Christian notions to enable a Christ-centred theology. This did not happen at the grass roots of the church, and so as William Clowes had feared nearly a hundred years earlier, the cause took momentum away from the priorities of the gospel.

Methodist history has never properly presented how these rises and falls in success occurred, and parts of the Church's transition from temperance to teetotalism to the present view have struggled to be understood. Furthermore, historians have not been able to explain why different parts of Wesley's legacy chose different approaches to many things (including alcohol and abstinence) at different times, in different ways and with different reasons. In particular, scholarship continues to make mistakes, or omit truths when considering the relationship between Methodism and teetotalism. Henry Rack asserts that in the second half of the nineteenth century within Wesleyan Methodism, there was "the emergence of a species of 'Social Gospel'... a special expression of the general social conscience of the time: a condemnation of such things as gambling, drinking, dancing, the theatre".⁶¹³ This is correct, but Rack does the Bible Christians a disservice, neither mentioning them nor their abstinence reasoning on grounds of sanctification. He writes, "teetotalism spread unevenly from its origins in America and in Preston in the 1830s. The Primitive Methodists took it up quickly and enthusiastically. The Wesleyans were slower and less keen".⁶¹⁴ This is not incorrect as such, but the statement fails to capture the strength of the movement when a consensus of sorts was reached. The Wesleyans shifted from 'less keen' to 'incredibly keen', but Rack's half-history would have us believe that they never adopted this stance with vigour, and that the Bible Christians had nothing particular to add to the issue. Inevitably, much of this work is done through historians who have seen the falling away of commitment to temperance, and so our understanding of their work has to be tempered with a clear notion of their retrospective view, with their awareness of the failed movement. As discussed by Rack below, embarrassment about this issue was widespread amongst the following generations. Accordingly, the community line and explanation that stated 'almost all of us abstain' changed to 'lots of us never abstained' with time and reflection. The retelling of the anecdotal evidence has as many different emphases as needed, and this type of evidence is a large part of what Methodism has used as a community. In retrospect, it can be observed that some abstainers were too

⁶¹³ Davies and Rupp (ed.) vol. III, 1965: 144.

⁶¹⁴ This errant opinion can be found in the footnotes of Rack in Davies and Rupp (ed.) vol. III, 1965: 144.

committed to this choice, to the detriment of other aspects of their life and faith, while others were never convinced to abstain, but were not entirely visible or affirmed in that decision. Thompson Brake is correct when he says that “Methodists have never been wholly persuaded to adopt the total abstinence position”, in fact Methodism has produced those who felt that “the doctrine of redemption... demanded of them total abstinence”, while others have seen “no inconsistency between drinking and the demands of their doctrine”.⁶¹⁵

After Methodist Union

For many at the time of Union, the new community felt like “the providence of God” and people saw this as “the witness of social Christianity to God’s intention to build a new society, free from injustice and war”. But whether it was because of further war, or the other contributing factors of post-war England, the dream did not last. William J. Abraham believes “world events shattered this mood of confidence in the ability of Methodism to redeem the multitudes and help to create a new order. The mood has never returned”.⁶¹⁶ Abraham states “precisely at the time when Methodist leaders triumphantly saw themselves as the wave of the future, their ship was being torpedoed below the waterline”.⁶¹⁷ In other words, from Rupp and Davies’ anthology, “ever since (1910) Christianity in general... and Methodism in particular has had to battle against the prevailing climate of life and opinion”.⁶¹⁸ As Aldom French had observed, while Union was painted as having a brilliant future, in actuality something different and much less positive was happening.

Abstinence was still firmly on the table at this time. A later report records that “when the various branches of Methodism came together in 1932, the United Conference passed a regulation requiring a Superintendent Minister who nominated a candidate for the ministry to answer the question, ‘Is he a total abstainer?’. The question remained in standing orders until the mid-1960s”.⁶¹⁹ It is unclear whether a negative answer to this question impinged upon the individual’s chances of candidating successfully. John Munsey Turner’s scholarship has analysed Methodist Union, and the post-Union reshuffles. He uses the work of Henry Carter as a helpful example. Carter, a Presbyterian

⁶¹⁵ Thompson-Brake, 1974: 122.

⁶¹⁶ Davies and Rupp (ed.) vol. III, 1965: 363.

⁶¹⁷ Abraham in Abraham and Kirby (ed.), 2009: 594.

⁶¹⁸ Davies and Rupp (ed.) vol. III, 1965: 365.

⁶¹⁹ *Through a Glass Darkly*: 24-25.

and pacifist organiser “though at first embroiled in the teetotal issue, was a church leader who was aware earlier than most of the refugees from Nazism”.⁶²⁰ In Munsey Turner’s opinion, this shows Carter to be a forward thinking member of Methodism whose example highlights both his mindset as a person convicted to do good within a number of categories, and a man of good sense not simply focused on abstinence. Munsey Turner notes that while all within Methodism were clear in theory on the understanding that the battle against Hitler was one of the highest ethical priorities for the community, it is indicated that teetotalism had become an unnecessary and unhelpful distraction. While a person as useful and sensible as Henry Carter had noticed and acted upon the problems occurring in Germany, the inference from the quote above is that others still prioritised abstinence as the key issue. Perhaps it had become the only issue they understood. When further considering the approach to alcohol that Methodism had carved out, and even became entrenched in, Munsey Turner is not impressed; “the Methodist Church does not possess sufficient political ‘clout’, and appears isolated and self-absorbed. It is easy, too, to caricature the late Victorian and early twentieth-century concern of Methodism with what was called the ‘drink evil’”.⁶²¹ For Munsey Turner, the easy caricatures, self-absorption, lack of political clout, and isolated views are synonymous with the encouragement of abstinence. These negative traits are unsurprising in an organisation that associates itself closely with one particular issue, and while Methodism was never a single policy church, it clearly appeared to be so, to many people.

These negative views do not make the cause a bad one, but because teetotalism was being encouraged as a perceived detriment to other focuses and ideas, the church’s reputation was damaged. When this preoccupation met with the aforementioned decline in Christianity across the nation, it was unlikely to end happily. This is not to say that the abstinence work done by the newly unified church was not up to task. Munsey Turner praises Henry Carter’s approach: “his slogan ‘elevate, educate, legislate’ was always in terms of persuasion rather than prohibition”.⁶²² As such, it seems reasonable to assume Munsey Turner’s complaint is not with the cause, so much as the approach. We can imagine how dogmatic and law-like some who believed in this cause may have become. When we hear later on in the twentieth century of embarrassment and unrealistic expectations with regard to alcohol and abstaining, we cannot imagine that

⁶²⁰ Munsey Turner, 1998: 9.

⁶²¹ Munsey Turner, 1998: 14.

⁶²² Munsey Turner, 1998: 14.

Henry Carter's three-word proposal was the cause. Instead, there must be some responsibility given to the Youth Programs, and the general atmosphere of disapproval towards drinking felt by so many. Munsey Turner wonders if "this stance (of systematic enrollment in teetotal programs for children) made barriers between Methodism and the working class".⁶²³ He adds that "Methodism's isolation (is illustrated by) the horror of Dr. Eric Baker in 1959 when he asked some young people to draw a picture illustrating Methodism. A young girl drew a wine glass crossed out! Carter's 'Young Abstainers League' had ambivalent consequences".⁶²⁴ There is significant evidence for the value of abstinence but by the mid-twentieth century, many were concerned by the insistence upon the choice. Davies records convincingly that drink and gambling "had posed and continued to pose, very urgent social dilemmas, no-one with any knowledge of industrialised England at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth will wish to deny, but the Methodists had got them out of proportion so badly that they failed to see other yet more monstrous evils staring them in the face in their own country and abroad".⁶²⁵ By most accounts, the significance of the teetotal issue has become significantly distorted, and so some attempts to recover the church's reputation and future were made.

Many of these future plans were proposed around a desire for an increase in evangelism and mission activity, with a gospel (rather than teetotal) focus. The protagonists often used a call for evangelism as the main reason to shift away from (as they saw it) an energy sapping focus on abstinence. David Clough expounds the Methodist Church's slow shift away from teetotalism, which he believes took place after the Second World War. Clough records "as early as 1943... Liverpool district sent a memorial to conference asking that 'Temperance' be dropped from the title of the 'Temperance and Social Welfare' department. Conference rejected this suggestion, and other memorials in this period assert the continued importance of temperance. However, seven years later in 1950, the annual Conference approved the changing of the title so it became known as the 'Department of Christian Citizenship'".⁶²⁶ This change was upheld for the sake of inclusivity, although given later history, it seems reasonable to doubt if inclusivity is the only reason. In the 1949-1950 report from this same department, they recorded that they have sought to "present the appeal for Total Abstinence in this large

⁶²³ Munsey Turner, 1998: 14.

⁶²⁴ Munsey Turner, 1998: 14.

⁶²⁵ Davies and Rupp (ed.) vol. III, 1965: 370.

⁶²⁶ Clough in Marsh (ed.), 2004: 42.

context of the whole Christian social witness”.⁶²⁷ The report even states, “The title (of the department) has become an embarrassment”.⁶²⁸ Although the explanation for removing the term ‘temperance’ is based upon a lack of other roles mentioned, embarrassment seems far too strong an extension for what would otherwise be called re-organisation. There were clearly underlying feelings. But, some remained convinced of the necessity of abstinence promotion: there are clear signs of differences in opinion - Clough notes that “an accompanying report stressed the continuing importance of the issue of temperance alongside other concerns, and it continues to be reported on regularly”.⁶²⁹

This shift meant that the language used, and the message portrayed by this renamed department is confusing. While the cause was previously proclaimed as “embarrassing”, we still hear in 1951-1952 that “it is urgent that the new generation should be instructed in sobriety and the wisdom of avoiding the alcohol peril”.⁶³⁰ An interesting and telling word on the subject of temperance appears in the Report from 1952-1953. Under the banner of “Teaching and Propaganda”, it is reported, that “while there is a large section of the Methodist people who loyally accept the Conference appeal (to abstinence), there are others who appear either to ignore it or disregard it, and even in some instances to resent and challenge it”. The report noted that the ‘Abstainers Roll’, which named and kept count of young people who made the choice to abstain, had dropped by 3,917 to 98,712.⁶³¹ By 1953-1954, the Abstainers Roll is named as a “negative and irritating restriction”,⁶³² and the 1954-1955 report tells us that the Abstainers Roll had essentially been abandoned. Presumably what can be observed here are the outer signs of an inner struggle as factions wrangled over the future of the movement within Methodism. For something with an intended positive effect to be resented within a church community is worthy of notice, and it is therefore unsurprising that changes were being made.

Clough shows clearly how this shift would have become apparent to a local Methodist community, reporting, “A further 10 years later, in 1960, Temperance Sunday is renamed Christian Citizenship Sunday”.⁶³³ This change took place following a memorial sent to Conference from the Port Talbot circuit. It seems sensible to suggest that Port

⁶²⁷ Temperance and Social Welfare Department: Report of the General Committee 1949-1950: 2.

⁶²⁸ Temperance and Social Welfare Department: Report of the General Committee 1949-1950: 12.

⁶²⁹ Clough in Marsh (ed.), 2004: 42.

⁶³⁰ Methodist Church Dept. for Christian Citizenship: Report of the Gen. Comm. 1951-1952: 2.

⁶³¹ Methodist Church Dept. for Christian Citizenship: Report of the Gen. Comm. 1952-1953: 2-4.

⁶³² Methodist Church Dept. for Christian Citizenship: Report of the Gen. Comm. 1953-1954: 6.

⁶³³ Clough in Marsh (ed.), 2004: 42.

Talbot's feelings were not unique, and those not inclined towards the fervour once displayed about teetotalism were slowly tidying up discrepancies that remained from the previous mind-set of the denomination. At this point, the report from the Christian Citizenship Department records that "the proclamation of total abstinence is not universally popular, and there may well be a good deal of rationalisation in the arguments of those who desire a change (of name and approach)".⁶³⁴ The process of change advanced when, in the following year's report the department produced a twofold argument for a new approach. 1) "We believe that our total abstinence appeal can be made with greatest force and cogency when it is set in the context of a comprehensive programme of Christian social witness".⁶³⁵ 2) "We assert that it is more important than ever that the Methodist people should practise and advocate total abstinence".⁶³⁶ It can be suggested that the first statement is a very political statement, which actually says much more than the words used, and the second statement is lip service to those within Methodism who still believed that abstinence was important, and should be part of what the church was saying. It seems intentionally to address the belief that some within the church lauded abstinence as vital and Christian, but do not see other social issues in the same way, despite abstinence being a recent construct. These assertions can be made because of what happened next. 1964's report states, "The emphasis on total abstinence from intoxicants and gambling was hindering our evangelistic work".⁶³⁷ The departure from this emphasis on abstinence was occurring, and large parts of the Church were in favour. Davies believes that the Church's leadership (particularly in the department renamed 'Christian Citizenship' instead of 'Temperance') "have done something to destroy the persistent public image... of the typical Methodist as a rabid and humourless teetotaler who mistakes abstinence for Christianity".⁶³⁸

There was clearly some hard work being done behind the scenes to justify whichever choice the department ultimately made. There can be no doubt that they must have felt torn, and as if they were being pulled in opposing directions. In the 1962-1963 report, a survey of Methodist Presbyters tells us that of the 2,862 ministers who were surveyed, only 1,849 reported that they practised total abstinence.⁶³⁹ That's a total of 52.9% of ministers in the UK. With the church at the point of realisation that only half of these

⁶³⁴ Methodist Church Dept. for Christian Citizenship: Report of the Gen. Comm. 1958-1959: 24.

⁶³⁵ Methodist Church Dept. for Christian Citizenship: Report of the Gen. Comm. 1959-1960: 3.

⁶³⁶ Methodist Church Dept. for Christian Citizenship: Report of the Gen. Comm. 1959-1960: 24.

⁶³⁷ The Report of the Christian Citizenship Department of the Methodist Church, 1964: 4.

⁶³⁸ Davies and Rupp (ed.) vol. III, 1965: 370.

⁶³⁹ The Methodist Church Dept. for Christian Citizenship: *Report of the General Committee* 1962-1963: 2.

men abstained, the significance must have been felt and acknowledged by both the Methodist corporation and the church community. With these statistics in the background, the statement of 1966 accepted that, “We believe that total abstinence is still a valid and necessary Christian witness, but we must face the fact that the situation has changed and the old methods of propaganda are no longer effective”.⁶⁴⁰ These words left little room open for a return to Connexion-wide abstinence advocacy. Clough again records that in 1967 “Temperance ceased to be one of the main headings under which the Department of Christian Citizenship undertook its work, and in the same year the department decided to disband the Order of Christian Citizenship (OCC) with its pledge”.⁶⁴¹ The OCC was an order that attempted to organise subscribers into the ‘next level’ of Christian discipleship; doing that which ‘ordinary’ Christians might not consider within their capabilities. Ironically, this was not unlike the Bible Christian approach, modelled on Wesley’s emphasis, which saw striving for holiness through action as vital to their faith. Indeed, abstinence from alcohol was a big part of this order, and so the group ceased to exist because of the declining regard for teetotalism. The report of a Commission on Methodism and Total Abstinence in 1972 reported that only 30% of ministers declared themselves to be total abstainers, and thus concluded that there were merits in both the abstinent and non-abstinent positions, and suggested alcohol should be seen “in the context of other drugs issues”.⁶⁴² This commission also stated: “Methodism has not always supported the Total Abstinence position... when Wesleyan Methodism finally (1873) set up a Connexional Temperance Committee it ruled that half of its members should be total abstainers and half non-abstainers”.⁶⁴³ There was obviously some unpicking work to be done, presumably with those church members who believed that The Methodist Church was built upon ideas of abstinence. The commission added that “during the last quarter of a century there have been increasing doubts as to the strength of the abstinence conviction within Methodism”, and “official Methodist pronouncements do not seem to allow the possible validity of a non-abstinent position”.⁶⁴⁴ By the time of the 1974 report by the same committee, there is a section titled “Drugs and Alcohol”, but there is no mention of alcohol, abstinence or temperance. And so, something that had been so significant for the Methodist Church had been dissolved within 100 years of its final adoption by the Wesleyan movement,

⁶⁴⁰ *The Report of the Christian Citizenship Department of the Methodist Church*, 1966: 19.

⁶⁴¹ Clough in Marsh (ed.), 2004: 42.

⁶⁴² Clough in Marsh (ed.), 2004: 42.

⁶⁴³ *The Report of the Christian Citizenship Department of the Methodist Church* 1972: 3.

⁶⁴⁴ *The Report of the Christian Citizenship Department of the Methodist Church* 1972: 4.

and within 150 years of the Bible Christians and many Primitive Methodists declaring themselves teetotal.

Alcohol is not forgotten, but begins a new life under the broader category of “drugs”. In the 1974 “Methodist Statement on the Non-Medical Use of Drugs”, readers are given a rethinking of abstinence with regard to all drugs, including alcohol. The report states that “drugs are part of creation (but)... the misuse of drugs to the impairment of physical or mental well-being is a deviation from the Divine law”.⁶⁴⁵ And, “The Church must strive to “present every man perfect in Christ Jesus;” and it must offer society the prospect of a new creation. In personal terms the Methodist emphasis has not been concerned with a frail, individualistic piety, but with a robust holiness of life. The misuse of drugs is a threat to the quest for personal health and wholeness”.⁶⁴⁶ “Possibly the witness to Christian perfection alone offers an effective alternative to a drug-taking society”.⁶⁴⁷ The report also mentions the “regret that in recent years insufficient attention has been given to the education of boys and girls, young people and the Church membership as a whole about the nature of alcohol and its effects, its threat to Christian experience and witness”.⁶⁴⁸ It is of great interest to see this report return to a theme of Christian perfection, much like the Bible Christians did in the early days of teetotalism. The judgement is removed, and instead, a hope for another way of being human is restored. It emphasises the individual choice, rather than corporate guidance.

George Thompson Brake, Methodism’s most vocal and ardent abstainer in recent years, can be read as being hopeful for the ‘good old days to return’ when the Church was a haven for these practices, but tellingly, even he acknowledges that the movement had become out-dated quickly; “it might have fashioned something as brilliantly conceived as the Band of Hope to capture the spirit of gaiety for its cause, but it did not. It might have latched on to the cult of physical fitness, but it did not... The Temperance Movement suffered also because it had been wedded to the churches on the one hand and to the Liberal Party on the other. In the years between the wars, religious faith declined, and so did the Liberal Party; therefore, it was not surprising to find a decline in support for the Temperance cause from both sources”.⁶⁴⁹

⁶⁴⁵ *Statements of Social Responsibility*: 9.

⁶⁴⁶ *Statements of Social Responsibility*: 9.

⁶⁴⁷ *Statements of Social Responsibility*: 10.

⁶⁴⁸ *Statements of Social Responsibility*: 13.

⁶⁴⁹ Thompson Brake, 1974: 125.

“The 1987 report to conference, ‘Through a Glass Darkly’ spells out in simple terms the most recently held views of Methodism and abstinence: “initially it was the total abstainers who were reckoned to be unscriptural... however, the sentiment for Total Abstinence largely prevailed and several generations... have been urged to abstain from all intoxicants”. This report takes a further step in rethinking attitudes. It charted the social and health costs of alcohol consumption, and advocates either total abstinence or ‘responsible drinking’”.⁶⁵⁰ This report also confirmed the belief that the cause of “this change in attitude was a belief for many that total abstinence created a barrier between Christians and the very people with whom they should be building bridges. Some older ministers appeared to have been abstainers because of the stance of the church and now felt that the norm of many of their congregation was moderate use of alcohol; so whereas there had once been pressure for the ministry to take a total abstinence stand, pressure was now towards moderate use of alcohol”.⁶⁵¹ The report records that amongst ministers, declared non-abstainers numbered nearly 80% in 1982. This shift is striking, and worth noting. The laity felt negative towards total abstinence, and so took up the stance of moderation. The Presbyterian noticed this shift, and also shifted. The report also notes that “in recent years there has been a considerable shift... the narrow censoriousness which sometimes accompanied Methodist advocacy of total abstinence, and may even have repelled people from membership, has happily been replaced by a more generous and understanding answer... This shift of attitude must not, however, be allowed to drift into condoning or encouraging harmful drinking”.⁶⁵²

The final part of our journey must then fully acknowledge the decline of this movement. Social issues certainly played a part – in the same way that austerity had fitted with abstinence, so post-war wealth fitted with indulgence. By 1973 when Methodist Presbyters received a ‘pardon’ of sorts with regard to their (lack of) drinking habits, they were not surprised, despite some disappointment. The culmination of all these events surely has to be the application for a license to sell spirits by the trustees of Westminster Central Hall in 2005. This move was a significant change of course, from the emphasis of earlier years. Westminster Central Hall now has a license to allow alcohol to be served today, and the only stipulation that remains is that alcohol is not allowed on (any other) Methodist property, that employees of the Church cannot claim for alcohol related expenses, and that communion wine is always non-alcoholic. The

⁶⁵⁰ Clough in Marsh (ed.), 2004: 42.

⁶⁵¹ *Through a Glass Darkly*: 25.

⁶⁵² *Through a Glass Darkly*: 28.

abstinence movement within Methodism has had a rapid rise and fall. Traces remain, but they are legacies rather than active parts of a denomination, which is still known to many as a community of abstainers.

The most significant active voice within Methodism regarding alcohol is the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT), which is a collective grouping formed of the Methodist Church, Baptist Union, United Reformed Church and the Church of Scotland. They describe their work as “campaigning against legislative changes which will disproportionately harm the poorest in society, and campaigning against levels of inequality which harm all in society”.⁶⁵³ This work has most recently been giving positive assent to Minimum Pricing for units of alcohol, and is within Methodist structure, although in a reduced format from earlier years.

This chapter has explored how the factions of Methodism reordered their differing approaches to alcohol and abstinence once joined together as the UMC, and at the point of complete Union. The material here has shown that at the start of the UMC, particular effort was made to allow minority views to come forward, and the Bible Christian’s promotion of abstinence became a UMC supported scheme. At the point of Union, abstinence was widely acknowledged by all groups, but Wesleyan Methodist Church arguments seem to have taken over. Furthermore, origins were simply lost in the midst of other issues, and ‘a variety of traditions’ became ‘our tradition’, losing much of the subtlety of what had gone before. We have seen clear evidence for how wartime and subsequent peacetimes had different impacts upon popular viewpoints of abstinence and alcohol. This is highlighted through the work, and failures of David Lloyd George (encouraged by the church) to create a national abstinence program, which ultimately had no positive effect upon either the church, or the teetotal agenda. Finally, this chapter has offered explanation regarding the responses from Methodism to this changing post-war world. We have observed concern, embarrassment and anger from within British Methodism when abstinence overshadowed more pressing issues. It was felt in some quarters that it was not encouraged as a choice in useful and positive ways, and thus became both dogmatic, and a social stigma, which led others to become attached to moderation and a greater interest in alcohol.

⁶⁵³ jointpublicissues.org.uk [accessed 12th October 2015]

Chapter 8 - Current views on Alcohol and Abstinence amongst Methodist people in England, Wales and Scotland

The previous chapters have focused upon historic movements of abstinence within British Methodism. While this research has explored the background to the current footing of abstinence in the Methodist community, it has also revealed a lack of quantifiable evidence from the twenty-first century for current views amongst Methodist people regarding abstinence and alcohol. It is known that Methodist people in England, Wales and Scotland have made commitments to abstain throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A national survey of Methodist people was conducted in 1973 on this subject, and charted the views and habits of Methodist people at that time. No such survey has been undertaken and published since.⁶⁵⁴ Any understanding of current Methodist views and habits is therefore based upon assumption, anecdote and national policy. Given that this thesis aims to give a complete picture regarding how Methodism has viewed, and continues to view the drinking of alcohol, a survey of current views seemed necessary. The author conducted this survey between November 2014 and February 2015.

The salient points that emerge from these survey results are used in chapter 9, in comparison with information that has been made available through historic study in chapters 3-7. The key areas revealed within this survey, and carried forward into the next chapter include how people justify their choice regarding abstinence, how they feel about alcohol and abstinence, and what their opinions are in regard of the Methodist Church's rules about alcohol.

Objectives

The general objective of this survey is to ascertain current views on alcohol, and current drinking and abstaining habits amongst people who identify as Methodist within England, Scotland and Wales. The secondary objective is to highlight any key differences in viewpoint between sexes, different generations, and people who fulfill different roles within the church.

⁶⁵⁴ See Chapter 8, referring to *Drink* by George Thompson Brake (1973).

Limitations

The opportunity to take part in this survey was advertised nationally, using the Methodist Church's centralised email mailing list, which filtered through, via forwarded emails, notices given, and word of mouth to local churches. It was also advertised through social media – personal and corporate Facebook and Twitter accounts, and in the only national Methodist newspaper, the Methodist Recorder. Inevitably there were groups of people that were harder to reach, but this diverse approach produced responses from a significant and wide-ranging number of people. The primary method by which participants responded was online through the University of Exeter's CLES survey system. This system allows for both binary and extended answers to questions, and enables data to be analysed automatically. The online nature of this system inevitably excluded some participants, so a paper version was also made available by request, and posted to potential participants. 1.5% of respondents took the opportunity to take the survey in this way.

Descriptive Statistics

A total of 610 respondents from across England, Wales and Scotland responded to the survey, from a potential 200,000 Methodist people (approximately) in the UK. 1,000 people were invited to take part. There were a further 119 online surveys which the automatic system considered incomplete. Answers and statistics from these incomplete surveys have not been included within these results. It can be assumed that most of the people who produced incomplete responses restarted a new survey, due to technical issues and so are included within the results anyway.

More females than males undertook the survey with females numbering 54.9% of all respondents (see diagram a). The majority of respondents (66.39%) sit between ages 40 and 69 (see diagram b).

diagram a) gender of respondents

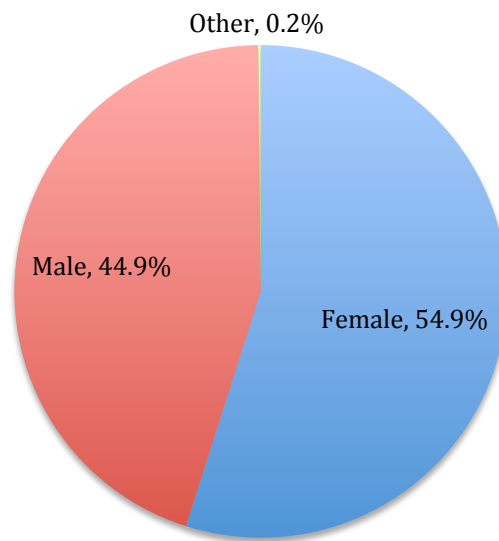
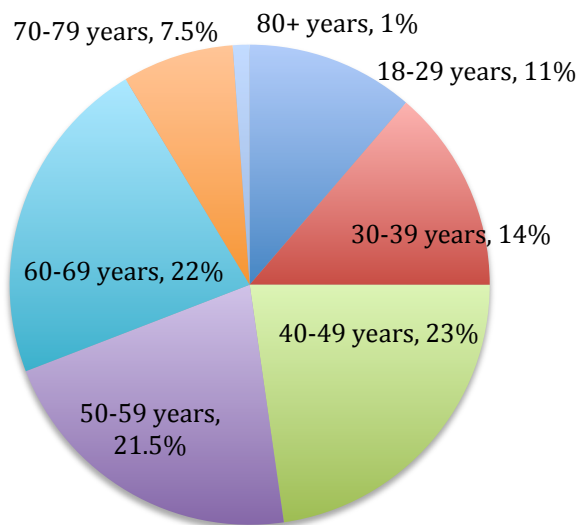


diagram b) age of respondents

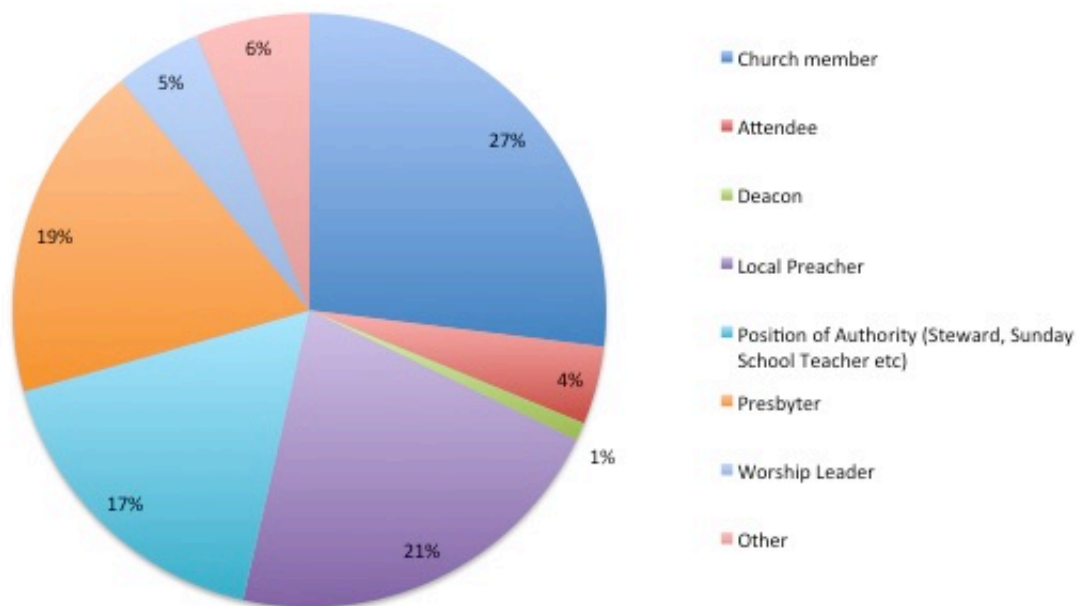


The respondents come from 63 different counties, giving the survey a wide geographic reach.

The Methodist Church gives its people and members different roles and permissions within its community. For example, Presbyters are ordained to the ministry of word and sacrament and can conduct marriages and communion services, as distinct from Deacons, who are ordained instead to a ministry of service. The Local Preacher's role is to conduct worship services, and preach in churches. Membership involves undertaking classes before membership is confirmed, and is necessary to church office holders. With this in mind, the survey asked respondents how they regarded their role within The

Methodist Church. Diagram c) shows that within the category of ‘ordained people’, 19% of respondents are Presbyters, and 1% are Deacons. The largest portion of respondents, 27% of the total cohort are those who primarily identify as Church Members. Furthermore, 21% of respondents identify as Local Preachers, 5% identify as Worship Leaders, and 17% of those surveyed consider themselves to be “in a position of authority”.

diagram c) Position of those surveyed within the Church



25% of those surveyed declare that they currently abstain from drinking alcohol, and therefore 75% are non-abstainers.

In addition, a further 24% of those surveyed declared that they have previously abstained. This means that 49% of those surveyed have at some point in their adult lives abstained from drinking alcohol. 51% of those surveyed have never actively abstained from drinking alcohol.

The profile of those who do abstain, or have previously abstained is noted here: Church members abstinence largely reflects the overall statistics for abstinence - 24.8% of them currently abstain, and a further 24.2% of respondents have abstained in the past. Those who describe themselves as being in a position of authority give a similar percentage split – exactly 25% of these people currently abstain, and 21% of these members have

abstained previously. The role of Local Preacher sees a slight rise in the percentage of those who currently abstain, with 26.7% declaring as such, and a further 18.3% of Local Preachers who used to abstain responded. However, it is with the categories of Church Attendee and Worship Leader that a change from this pattern can be observed. Of church attendees who responded to this survey, 34.6% currently abstain, while a further 23.1% used to abstain, and within the category of Worship Leaders, Currently 34.5% abstain, and a further 13.8% have done so previously.

Finally, in terms of ordained persons who responded to the survey, of the 6 Deacons who took part, three currently abstain, and one Deacon had previously abstained. Of presbyters who participated in the survey 20.3% of them currently abstain, and a further 31.9% have abstained previously.

19% of those surveyed believe that the Methodist Church has influenced them towards a personal decision to abstain from drinking alcohol, while 3.9% of respondents are unsure whether it has and 77.1% of respondents declare that The Methodist Church has not influenced them towards a decision to abstain from alcohol.

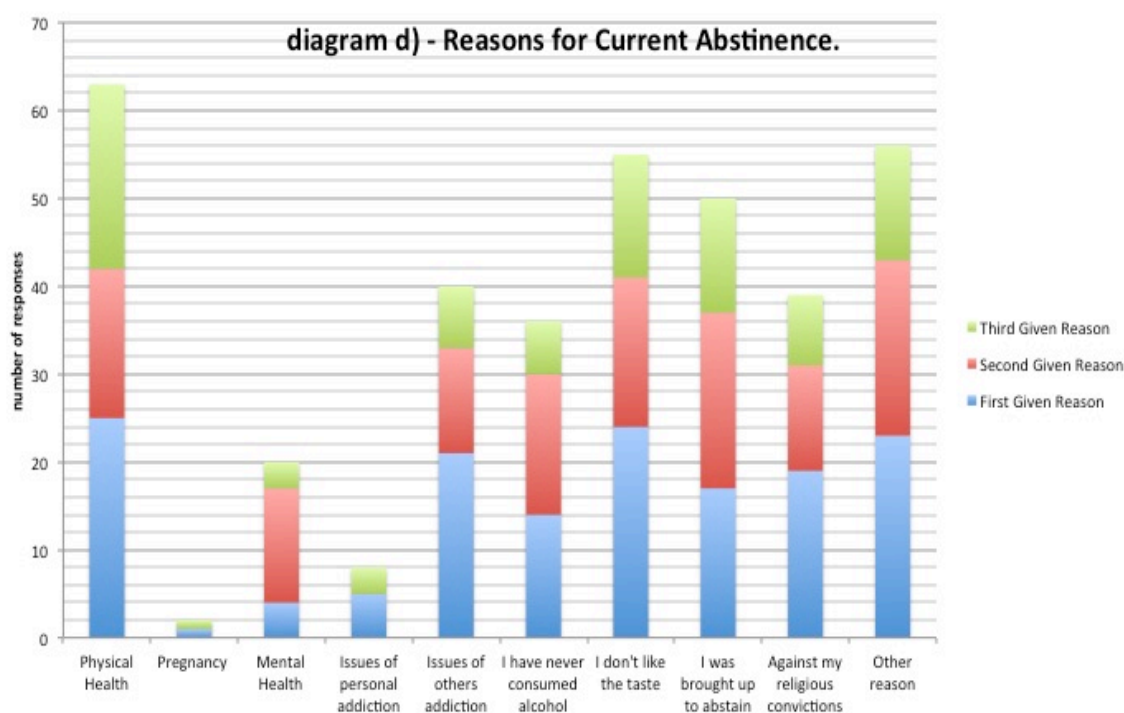
Of the above mentioned 19% who believe that the church has influenced them in a personal decision...

- 9.5% (1.8% of total cohort) state that the church has done so through direct teaching from a Minister.
- 10.3% (2% of total cohort) state that the church has done so through the direct teaching of a youth leader.
- 8.6% (1.6% of total cohort) state that the church has done so through membership or involvement in a teetotal group (Band of Hope, White Ribboners etc.)
- 42.2% (8% of total cohort) state it has done so through social or community influence or pressure.

30.7% of all those surveyed believe that another person has influenced their decision to abstain from alcohol. 66% of this grouping (19.3% of the total cohort) stated that the person who influenced them was involved in Methodism or The Methodist Church. 27.9% of those surveyed believe that there is some benefit in a revival of the tradition of Methodism and/or The Methodist Church supporting abstinence. 23.7% are unsure whether there is some benefit to this kind of support.

Reasons for current abstinence

Diagram d) shows that there is a wide spread of reasons given by Methodist people for their abstinence. Respondents were asked to give ‘up to three reasons’ for their abstinence. The answers could be ordered – so respondents could state which of their answers were more important. Aside from “pregnancy”, all categories have received a significant portion of votes. In the category of previous abstinence, there is a different picture given, as is shown in diagram e. This survey shows that there is not a definitive reason for a Methodist person’s abstinence.



This part of the survey offered the respondents the opportunity to give “other” reasons for their abstention. These responses have been sorted into the following 17 categories. If quoted they are unedited, and are offered without comment.

- a. To maintain control.
- b. For financial reasons.
- c. For medical reasons; examples being when alcohol is not compatible with a person’s medicine, when alcohol causes an allergic reaction, or in one case, the respondent, who has a disability and in is need of 24-hour care writes... “I don't think it would be fair on my carers if I drank alcohol because I have to be mindful, alert, courteous and co-operative with my carers at all times.” (f, 24, church member, currently abstains)

- d. Have lost control in the past and do not want to repeat this experience.
- e. In order to act as an example to others.
- f. Because the respondent is a recovering alcoholic in the 12 step plan.
- g. Because the respondent is likely to be in charge of a vehicle.
- h. Because the respondent was once unable to function as a Christian witness/apologist when drunk.
- i. Because the respondent has signed a pledge not to drink.
- j. Because the respondent always wants to be able to help others, and alcohol might inhibit this assistance.
- k. As an experiment.
- l. Because the respondent is always in positions of responsibility.
- m. As a demonstration of alternatives – “I found that my example gave others the confidence to do likewise when they would not have done so without an example to follow”. (m, 79, position of authority, currently abstains)
- n. Because the drinking of alcohol has lost its appeal.
- o. In order to raise money for charity.
- p. Because of the influence of a respondent’s parents.
- q. Because the respondent does not like the effects.

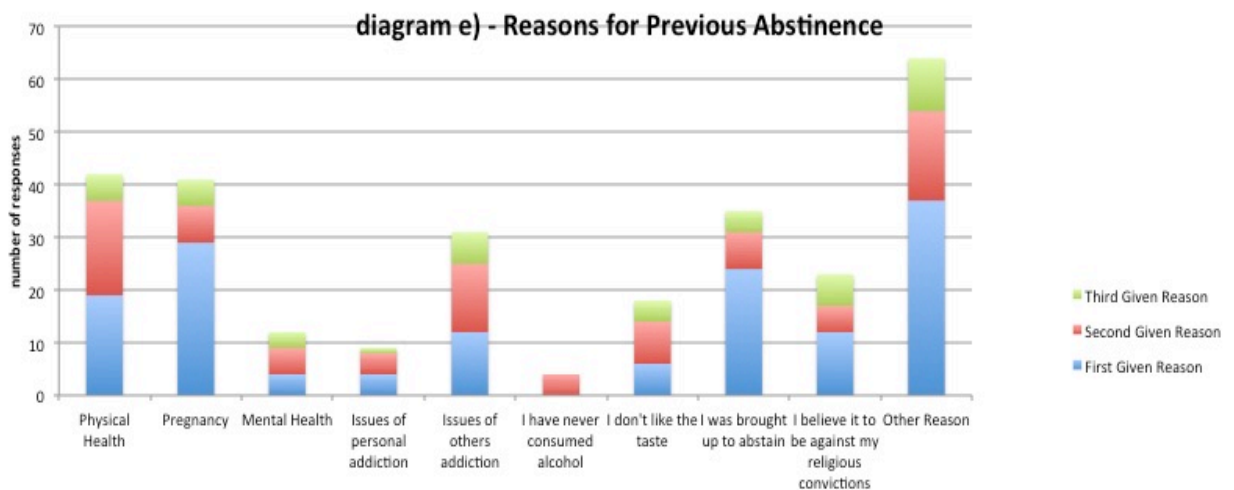
This portion of the survey also offers the chance to explain what each respondent might mean by the answer of “religious convictions” as a reason for their abstinence. These answers have been grouped into 18 types of answer.

- a. “Drunkards will not inherit the kingdom”. (m, 24, church member, currently abstains)
- b. Because of a ‘general Methodist atmosphere’.
- c. The respondent adheres to Buddhist tradition as a training precept, and thus avoids intoxicants.
- d. So as not to ‘cause others to stumble’.
- e. ‘Not His will’.
- f. ‘Against God’s teachings’.
- g. Because they wish to help maintain The Methodist Church as a safe place for those who do not choose to drink.
- h. So as not to set a poor example
- i. “Against religious convictions is a bit extreme. More like a matter of religious identity and personal discipline”. (m, 34, church member, currently abstains)
- j. In order to live a life of holiness – “a personal conviction that drinking alcohol is

- not part of the way God wants me to live. He calls me to a life of holiness that is not compatible with drunken behaviour”. (f, 53, Presbyterian, currently abstains)
- k. Because the respondent views the body as a temple.
 - l. To set an example as a Christian youth worker.
 - m. Because of a responsibility to show “life in its fullness” –“because of my own religious convictions I believe that we have a responsibility towards one another and towards our society and indeed our environment as a whole. I believe that Jesus came to bring us life in all its fullness and that we need not therefore look for either solace or satisfaction elsewhere”. (f, 41, position of authority, currently abstains)
 - n. Because it is a cause of poverty
 - o. A general overview that it interferes with a Christian’s responsibilities: “Quite hard to explain! My religious convictions make me not want to ever be drunk - because it is harmful to our God-given bodies, because it's a derogation of responsibilities to God and to other people, because it's somehow ducking out of the real world for a time and I think God wants us to engage with the real world all the time. None of those would be reasons not to drink at all, and I do choose not to drink at all. That is also linked to religious conviction but in a different way - in that my faith gives me the confidence to reject the social norm that 'you have to drink to have a good time' or to be accepted. It also gives me a reason to reject these things - that life is pretty wonderful, there is much to be joyful about and I don't need alcohol to be happy”. (f, 40, church member, currently abstains)
 - p. In order to continue the Methodist tradition – “Methodism has had a long history of abstaining and I think it is very important that a church body still feels that this is important. I have worked as a paid member of staff in my local Methodist church and it was quite surprising when talking to non Methodists that wanted to hire our building that they felt it was good still to take this stand”. (f, 67, position of authority, currently abstains)
 - q. To be free from outside influence - “More ‘ethical’ than ‘religious’. I have no wish to allow anything else to control my mind.” (m, 67, position of authority, currently abstains)
 - r. In order to at all times be prepared to be the best Christian example possible - “I want always to be able to ‘give a reason for this hope that is in us’ so don't ever want impaired judgment”. (f, 74, Local Preacher, currently abstains)

Methodism might agree upon a broad reason for personal abstinence, they are unlikely to agree upon the specific details. Again, this highlights that there can be no agreed universal reason for Methodist abstinence in the twenty-first century.

A significant number of respondents (24.2%) do not currently abstain from drinking alcohol, but have done so in the past. Their reasons for doing so are recorded below, with the three columns referring to their first, second and third ranked reasons.



Again, this section of the survey offered the option for respondents who used to abstain, the opportunity to explain what the “other” answer might refer to.

These answers have been placed into ten categories, which are as follows, and are presented without comment.

1. For medical reasons.
2. For Lent and/or a spiritual discipline.
3. To highlight that alcohol is not necessary.
4. Because of a pregnancy.
5. Because of a particular culture of the home or situation.
6. Because of an awareness of the damage caused.
7. To raise money for charity.
8. For financial reasons.
9. Because the respondent was simply not interested.
10. Because of bad experiences with spiked drinks.

Furthermore, this same section of the survey offered the respondents the opportunity to expand upon what they might mean when stating that they “used to abstain for religious reasons”.

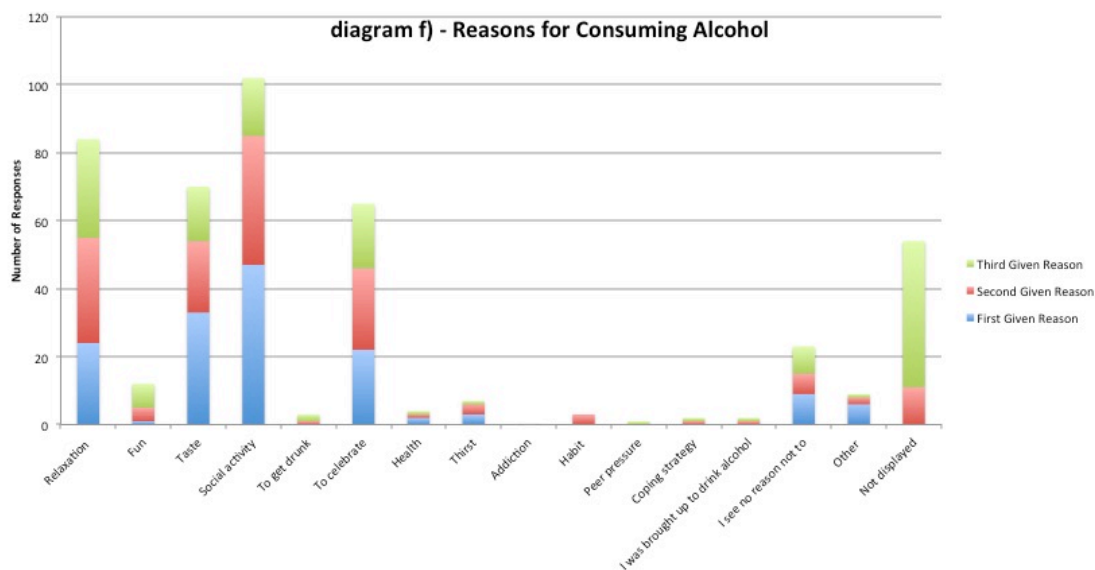
These reasons are given below, and placed into 13 categories

1. For Lent.
2. To aid the weaker brother.
3. Helping to set a “good example”... “The duty of people in situations surrounded by those in direst need is to set a good example, which includes not consuming alcohol which ruins households through poverty and drunkenness.” (m, 24, Local Preacher, has previously abstained) “it is the source of much poverty, violence and unhappiness. For your sake and the sake of others, abstain”. (m, 60, church member, has previously abstained)
4. Because it was compulsory within the denomination of which the respondent was a member.
5. Because they view the ‘body as a temple of the holy spirit’.
6. Because the household and family didn’t drink or allow alcohol.
7. Because “drunkenness increases likelihood of bad decisions”. (f, 25, Local Preacher, has previously abstained)
8. “Being in the world not of the world. Not drinking at university made me counter-cultural and people respected me for it. There is nothing "sinful" about alcohol period, but the misuse and dependence on alcohol is certainly an issue”. (m, 32, Presbyterian, has previously abstained)
9. “When I was in my late teens, I felt that being teetotal was making a statement about my Christian faith”. (m, 67, Supernumerary Presbyterian, has previously abstained)
10. To take a stand against drink culture.
11. “I believe that the drinking culture, particularly at university and amongst young people, is a sad indictment on an inability to socialise productively and also reflects a self-destructive hopelessness that many young people feel”. (m, 19, church member, has previously abstained)
12. Because the respondent was told to do so by a youth leader
13. An issue of personal behaviour – “I didn't always feel that I behaved well towards others in circumstances where I'd had a lot to drink, and I believe that treating others kindly is the right thing to do”. (f, 36, church attendee, has previously abstained)

Once more, this survey shows that at this point in time, those who have engaged with abstinence as Methodist people have a wide variety of reasons for that choice.

Reasons for drinking alcohol

This survey has highlighted that of all the respondents, 75% drink alcohol, and therefore do not currently abstain. These respondents were asked to give their reasons for drinking, if they were able to verbalise them. The answers could be ordered – so respondents could state which of their answers were more important. The responses are shown in diagram f) below.

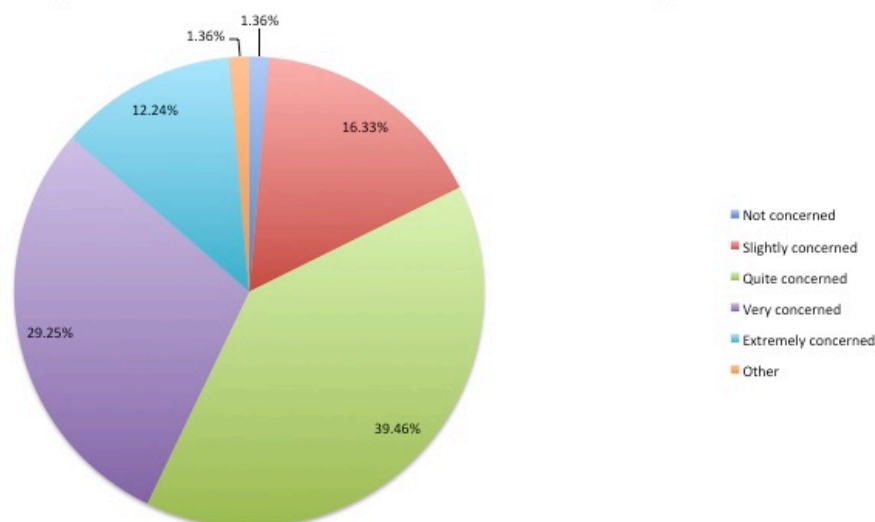


These results show that there are clear dominant reasons for drinking; relaxation, taste, social activity and celebration far out rank other responses.

Concern about alcohol

The following chart, diagram g) shows the levels of concern amongst participants of the survey about current levels of alcohol consumption. Over 40% of respondents are either very concerned or extremely concerned about the current trends.

diagram g) - Concern About Current Levels of Alcohol Consumption



Collated Comments

The final portion of the survey offered respondents the opportunity to give any final comments, or include any points that they were not able to share within the earlier parts of the study.

These comments have been grouped accordingly, and the wording is unchanged.

Moderation and the problems of drunkenness

The comments in the grouping, informally titled “a call for moderation” were based on the notion that moderate consumption of alcohol was not problematic, but excessive drinking, and subsequent drunkenness were a grave concern. Comments included “I am not concerned about drinking per se, but about the perceived need to get very drunk” (m, 61, Presbyterian, has previously abstained), and that it is “important to distinguish between binge drinking, drinking spirits etc. and drinking wine etc. with meals” (m, 65, Presbyterian, has previously abstained). The insights also included personal testimony, with one participant stating; “I run a nightclub and see first hand the pressure put on young people to have to join in with drinking and having to be actually drunk, not just having a drink in order to fit in” (f, 41, position of authority, currently abstains). The damage that this state of affairs causes was a regular issue for respondents: “City streets at night are full of people who have deliberately gone out to get drunk. They are then at risk of being victims of crime, or causing crime themselves and ending up in A&E. I see people whose lives are blighted by addiction causing huge financial and social problems.

I do consider alcohol to be the most problematic of all drugs” (f, 42, Worship Leader, has previously abstained).

Drunkenness is necessary in order to fit in

One respondent writes, “The culture of binge drinking encourages people to believe that they need to be drunk to have a good time and be popular” (f, 67, church member, has previously abstained). This type of understanding is not limited to those who have abstained: “I personally have no issues with social drinking but I am acutely concerned at rising addiction rates, the harm done to physical health, the increase in violence related offences, and a culture that promotes this kind of dangerous escapism” (m, 56, other role, currently abstains). There sits a suggestion too, that drunkenness has the potential to cause further problems; some responses couch this concern in spiritual terms, others do so in more social terms. Two examples: “In moderation I don't think that drinking its wrong but it has become excessive in society which causes people to sin. (Violence, adultery, murder all seem more common in people who are drunk)” (f, 21, church member, currently abstains) and “Alcohol consumption is clearly a problem in the UK. The City Centre near where I live is carnage at the weekend, and I have a number of good friends who rely on alcohol to get through the stress of their week, and I have family members who are alcoholics” (m, 41, Lay Minister, has previously abstained).

Addiction

If drunkenness is a concern for those surveyed, so too is the addictive nature of alcohol, the damage caused by addiction, and the role that the church can play in assisting in recovery for addicts. One participant believes that “as a church we should put more effort into reaching out to people who suffer from alcohol addiction. Helping them and supporting them rather than making the feel that we would be judgmental by banning alcohol in the church” (m, 45, church attendee, has previously abstained). Another writes, “Although I drink very rarely and then, often compulsively, I really do see the problems alcohol consumption causes. It would be good to see Methodism leading the way in abstinence” (f, 24, Local Preacher, has previously abstained). The issue of addiction is regularly mentioned in response, and many have concerns not just for the person with the addiction, but those around them too: “Alcohol use is an issue in a number of respects. It is a drug that affects all of us but does affect some people to a

greater extent. For people who are alcoholic and alcohol dependent it has an appalling effect on the quality of life of the individual and their families” (m, 44, Local Preacher, currently abstains). Also, “the over consumption (addiction) of alcohol destroys too many lives and families as well. It is horrendous to think that people as young as 18 or 19 are developing cirrhosis of the liver and will not have the opportunity to experience a full life” (f, 70, Worship Leader, currently abstains).

The Church's role regarding this issue

Often stated within this survey is a belief that the church needs to play a bigger role in offering help: “The Church needs to 'be there' and support those who are addicted, whose lives are suffering and for those who use it as a support measure” (m, 34, church member, has not abstained). This section of the survey has given the opportunity for some participants to share their own experiences, which helps to give an important picture. One respondent records that “I myself used to be a problematic drinker due to depression, bereavement and a marriage break up. I still uphold it is individual choice if you are not physically addicted. Once you are physically addicted, the only responsible way to keep yourself safe is abstinence. To me, my faith and the Church I belong to gave me support when I needed it most and they didn't judge” (m, 49, church attendee, has previously abstained). Church-led support for alcohol issues was important for many respondents and centred on a general concern about consumption levels, but also a belief that total abstinence or teetotalism was not necessarily the best approach. Some state: “We do need to bear witness against the ill effects of excessive alcohol consumption; but a position of expected total abstinence is not the most effective starting point for doing that” (m, 69, Local Preacher, has not abstained). Also, “I'm not sure abstinence is the answer, any more than I think we should tackle the obesity problem by never eating snacks again, or dealing with nicotine addiction by saying we can never enjoy an occasional cigar. I personally think the Church needs to promote moderation and offer answers/healing/transformation to the issues underlying people's need for alcohol” (m, 41, Lay Minister, has previously abstained). Again, a moderate approach is championed, when one response notes, “Rather than complete abstinence, I think the church should encourage people to moderate their alcohol consumption. The social aspect still remains, but without the loss of control that often accompanies excessive drinking” (f, 18, church member, has not abstained).

Commitment to teetotalism within Methodism

A significant number of responses (as shown in the 25% who abstain) wished to show again their commitment to teetotalism as Methodists, although the range of beliefs held within even this category is striking. This section will endeavor to highlight some of the contrasting views.

Some responses state both a commitment to teetotalism, and a wish that the Church would increase its own commitment to such an outlook. Replies include, “we should be bold in fighting our corner for abstinence at every possible level” and “I’m very concerned about the many, many broken lives, the result of alcohol originally innocently encountered, and leading on to destructive alcoholism. What its costs in medical, legal, social terms is an absolutely shocking amount, and it’s only responsible of Christians to stand up for abstinence” (f, 74, Local Preacher, currently abstains). Also, one person believes that “The Methodist Church prides itself on social awareness, but it is comparatively silent on alcohol. I think there are dangers in the current relaxation in the church's attitude and it is an area Conference would do well to re-visit” (f, 59, Presbyterian, currently abstains). And “I feel that a Methodist Church should be a place of total abstinence, where parents are assured that their children at youth activities will not be exposed to, or allowed, alcohol. Where recovering alcoholics can socialise in safety, even down to non-alcoholic communion ‘wine’. Where, by example, Christian behaviour can be valued” (m, 71, church member, has not abstained). Also, “I don't think we have always spoken out as we should have done” (m, 77, Presbyterian, currently abstains).

Acknowledgement of positive and negative sides of Methodism and teetotalism

A larger subsection than those mentioned above values a slightly different approach. This grouping believes abstinence and teetotalism to be something that is worthwhile, but has not always been a positive cause.

One writer concurs:

“I am teetotal by conviction and am pleased that the Methodist Church still refuses to have alcohol on its' premises. However, I am concerned that this sometimes shows our Church in a negative light. I want our Church to take a stance about a very important issue and to acknowledge that alcohol

consumption is a problem in our country without making it appear that we are obsessed with this issue and have views that many people feel are outdated. There is also a reminder that while Methodist people may or may not abstain; their primary calling is as Christians, not teetotalers. This may or may not result in a life without alcohol” (f, 57, position of authority, currently abstains).

“My faith in God/Jesus Christ as Saviour all leads me to my teetotal stance - I try to follow his example (whether he was TT or not) in my understanding of how I want to live and serve others” (f, 76, church member, currently abstains).

Both of these responses acknowledge that there will always be concerns when gospel values are linked to additional ideas. It threads a thin line, which is a worry for some people.

Comments regarding the negative effect of teetotalism upon Methodism

This survey has also produced a significant number of responses from those who fear that total abstinence has a damaging effect upon the relationship between Methodism and wider society. One respondent wrote; “I think levels of consumption need to be reduced but I don't think advocating abstinence is the answer, as I think that will alienate people from the Methodist Church more than they already feel they are” (f, 55, church member, not abstained), and “I honestly think abstinence would make us appear dated and out of touch with the real world” (f, 41, position of authority, not abstained), and “we need to work with our communities to buck the trends, but abstinence will make us appear out of date and out of touch” (f, 41, church member, not abstained). Also, “I think promoting universal abstinence turns people off and means they're unlikely to take our message seriously. However raising awareness of the damaging effects of inappropriate or excessive alcohol use (e.g. on children and families) is important” (f, 48, Presbyterian, previously abstained). Again, alternative responses that avoid some of the feared impositions are offered:

“The church has to be careful not to come across as ‘preachy’. We live in a post-modern world where people live by the maxim ‘as long as it hurts no one, it's ok’. The self is not included in that maxim, and neither is societal impact. People feel to get drunk is a right and that any fall out is someone else's problem.

The church should humbly step into the gap and absorb the fall out of societal impact, rather than allowing it all to fall on emergency services and innocent bystanders. THAT is how we should respond - not be simply preaching abstinence, but by active participation in the problems caused” (m, 32, church member, previously abstained).

This final quotation gives a clear example of the type of backlash that the abstinence movement in Methodism has suffered. It has meant that the conversation has shifted a long way from the nineteenth century assumption of temperance and abstinence.

Alcohol and Methodist premises

The survey does produce a very firm affirmation from most respondents that a continued ban on alcohol on Methodist premises is important: “There are clearly issues with binge drinking in the UK, which is why I will always support the Methodist Church maintaining a ‘no alcohol on the premises’ policy” (m, 40, Presbyterian, previously abstained). “A Methodist Church should be somewhere to go knowing you will not have to come into contact with (alcohol)” (f, 31, position of authority, previously abstained), and... “The Methodist premises ban on alcohol consumption makes a helpful safe space for some people” (f, 54, Presbyterian, not abstained). This type of response comes from both abstainers and non-abstainers. It is vocalised as; “Whilst I drink, I believe that Methodist churches should remain alcohol-free spaces. There are many spaces in our society where those who are happy around alcohol can socialise and we need more spaces for everyone. Methodist churches have the potential to be these unique spaces within our society” (f, 34, Worship Leader, not abstained), and “although I am not teetotal, I am opposed to allowing alcohol in Methodist Churches. There are plenty of places where I can drink alcohol, I do not need to drink it at Church” (m, 64, Local Preacher, not abstained), and “I’m disappointed that people within the church seem to think that alcohol is something that should be promoted. People are even upset that we can’t have alcohol as part of our meals on church premises” (f, 58, Presbyterian, currently abstains).

Communion and alcohol

There is also appreciation from those who would not receive communion if it were not non-alcoholic. Two responses state similarly: “I am delighted to be able to fully receive

at communion. I feel excluded in Anglican churches where I can only receive a wafer - even if I am presiding” (m, 60, Presbyterian, currently abstains), and “although brought up in the Anglican tradition, I joined the Methodist Church when I was in recovery from alcoholism. As a Presbyterian in the Methodist Church, I feel passionately that it should remain a 'safe place' from alcohol. I can take communion in a Methodist Church but not elsewhere” (f, 51, Presbyterian, currently abstains). Another response states “I think it is important that Methodism continues to use non-alcoholic wine for communion” (f, 49, Presbyterian, previously abstained).

The power to influence society as a church and individual

A strong view that was regularly communicated through the survey was a desire that changes to society could be encouraged through Church and individual responses. Individually, it was acknowledged, “I have frequently found others who have welcomed my abstinence as it has given them the strength to refuse alcohol which they really did not want to consume” (m, 79, position of authority, currently abstains). Also, there were numerous responses that hoped for political and social solutions to be pursued: “I am strongly in favour of our campaign, advocated by the Joint Public Issues Team, for a minimum price per unit for alcohol as a way of reducing the availability of cheap alcohol. I am in favour of a campaign on the responsible use of alcohol” (m, 58, Presbyterian, previously abstained).

One respondent offered a helpful insight on how embedded alcohol is into national policy:

“The Alcohol Industry has a very high influence on alcohol strategy which consequently places too much reliance on industry self regulation, This manifests itself in a fundamental flaw at the heart of public policy on alcohol, i.e. 'most people enjoy alcohol, and only some have problems as a result of alcohol' the premise should be re worded to reflect the understanding that most people who drink alcohol do not enjoy their first drink and therefore 'many people train themselves to like alcohol...' would be a more accurate starting place. We should explore the marketing that makes us want to get past the dislike for alcohol but not for sprouts or marmite! Maybe we should be honest and admit people like to get drunk (something you cannot get from green vegetables or yeast extract!!)

and that alcohol should be well and truly classed alongside other drugs” (m, 50, church member, currently abstains).

The acknowledgement of issues, and the hope for a Methodist response

Some respondents took the opportunity to express concerns at some of the current issues surrounding alcohol consumption. One response records that “The trend of binge drinking has become significantly worse in the past 10yrs. Supermarkets should also be limited in the special offers they can run as binge drinking has now become as common in peoples homes as in pubs/clubs and is currently endemic” (f, 29, position of authority, currently abstains), and “The Methodist Church should speak out to encourage tighter controls of alcohol pricing and availability and to give good advice to young people with regard to alcohol consumption” (f, 48, church member, currently abstains).

A third response in this category is those who hope for practical action: “While I do not see it as necessary or advisable for the Methodist Church to corporately advocate abstinence, I think it can and should support initiatives such as Street Angels and Street Pastors, and those working with problem drinkers” (m, 55, position of authority, currently abstains), and “Methodists and other Christians should set a good example by limiting their consumption of alcohol and not joking about it. Drinking alcohol and especially too much is a serious concern throughout the UK” (f, 63, position of authority, currently abstains). Even where there is distrust regarding an encouragement of abstinence, this example shows that there can still be an awareness of the value of the conversation, and a reconsideration of the issue.

A different involvement with alcohol

Finally, this survey accumulated a significant number of responses that wished Methodism to have a different involvement with abstinence and issues of alcohol. Some responses wish for a different view, focusing on the underlying issues rather than the drink itself. An example of this is; “My concern isn't about the amount of alcohol consumed, but the reasons why people drink heavily” (f, 57, Worship Leader, currently abstains).

Some responses were negative towards a Church led view, and focused upon the Biblical view of alcohol: “I find it bizarre that the church continues to promote a

position that seems very at odds with one of its central beliefs all be it for very laudable reasons. Jesus asked us to remember him whenever we drink wine and used it to symbolise his blood. He didn't say don't drink it" (m, 57, Church Member, previously abstained), and the natural position of wine, "Fruit of the vine and work of human hands" (m, 44, former church member, not abstained). There is also a concern that a more definitive support to abstinence would be detrimental to those who wished to drink: "If people want to, that is fine. I think there needs to be a choice. Wouldn't want people to become 'secret drinkers'" (f, 41, Presbyterian, previously abstained), and "if the Methodist church supported abstinence it would make me feel guilty" (f, 25, Lay Pastor, previously abstained). And "total abstinence is unfortunately quite an alienating experience as it is the social norm to drink" (m, 19, church member, previously abstained), with "promotion of abstinence by a church would be totally irrelevant to the vast majority of people" (m, 63, Local Preacher, not abstained). Finally, the following response, although largely positive, notes the extremes to which some have taken the cause, to the detriment of the church, and the people within it: "As a child, I remember being told I was an agent of evil for wearing a football shirt in church - the sponsor of this team happened to be a brewer. It was the brewers name that provoked the attack" (m, 35, Lay Worker, previously abstained).

As an additional note, several of those surveyed expressed concern that the reasons for Methodist abstinence, either current or historical, were not readily available or understood, which is an issue that this thesis hopes to remedy. Those responses included the statement that "I do think there needs to be a better understanding of why Methodists have abstained from alcohol as many people just think it is about not being much fun rather than it being about addressing social concerns" (m, 45, Presbyterian, previously abstained), and "I wish we had clearer guidelines in Methodism about sensible drinking, and the benefits of abstinence" (f, 72, position of authority, previously abstained).

Analysis of the Current Situation

From the results of this survey, it is possible to draw a picture of how alcohol and abstinence are viewed in British Methodism in the twenty-first century, both corporately and individually. The survey also clearly shows that several of the opinions held are in direct opposition to each other. Some values are held so strongly by some members and

parts of the church, and dismissed so forcefully by other sections that consensus is almost impossible to reach on some, if not all of these issues. This survey and thesis are not intended to be divisive, but instead an opportunity to gain a proper understanding of current views, without resorting to assumption. Any views that are clearly shown with a significant response or unique point are included here.

Survey Statistics

From the profile of the respondents

As revealed in the responses to this survey, the following facts about opinions and behaviour within Methodism have been ascertained...

- 49% of respondents either currently abstain (25%), or have previously abstained (24%).
- The figure of 25% of respondents currently abstaining is largely reflected throughout different roles within church communities. Strikingly, 34.6% of “church members” currently abstain, and 50% of Deacons currently abstain.
- 19% of respondents state that the Methodist Church has influenced them towards a personal decision to abstain from alcohol.
- 27.9% of respondents believe that there is some benefit in a revival of abstinence in Methodism, while 23.7% are unsure whether there is some benefit.

From the rationale for abstinence and drinking

As revealed in the responses made to this survey, the following facts about reasons for behaviour have been collected...

- Physical health is the most often cited reason for both current and previous abstinence by quite some margin.
- Amongst respondents who used to abstain, pregnancy is the second most often cited reason for their abstinence, and appears high in this category for obvious reasons.
- All other reasons for abstaining appear in a similar number of responses, with no clear leaders amongst this grouping.

From the concerns regarding alcohol

As revealed in the responses made to this survey, the following opinions have been highlighted...

- 41.5% of respondents are extremely concerned or very concerned about current levels of alcohol consumption in the United Kingdom.
- Over 80% of respondents, are at least quite concerned, or more concerned about current levels of alcohol consumption in the United Kingdom.

From the future of Methodist abstinence

As revealed in the responses made to this survey, the following beliefs are clearly shown...

- 27.9% of those surveyed believe that there is some benefit in Methodism supporting abstinence again, while 23.7% are unsure whether there is some benefit.

Positive responses

Many respondents were adamant that the church should remain as a safe space, where the possibility of drinking alcohol is removed; this is seen as especially valuable for those struggling with addiction. In extension, those surveyed believe that through this stance, the church can be a place removed from the pressures of advertising and outside influence, both societal and peer. Another significant group response was in praise, support and encouragement of a positive stance against the negative effects of drinking alcohol. There was agreement from many survey responses that society does not often speak about damaging effects of alcohol, but Methodism could harness the potential gained from its tradition of abstinence to speak about this damage, and the benefits of abstinence.

A small, but vocal group of respondents state that abstinence is in line with scriptural teaching. It is generally acknowledged within these responses that although teetotalism or an equivalent is not specifically a biblical idea, there is much within scripture to encourage and commend a stance of abstinence to Christian individuals, and even

corporate Christianity. Some responses believe that any continuation, reimagining or revisiting of abstinence or teetotalism could be regarded as a positive link to strong Methodist traditions. They note that the language, focus and ideals of abstinence are integrated within Methodist traditions, and many replies suggest that many within the community sympathetically view these values. The survey does not obviously contradict the suggestion.

Negative responses

This survey highlights that very few people within Methodism are accurately aware of the origins or justifications for abstinence within the movement, and so it has been promoted because it has “always been a part of Methodism”, instead of a promotion for its own merits. This suggests a feeling of positivity towards tradition for its own sake, rather than for a wider or greater benefit.

A large number of responses note that although drunkenness is critiqued in scripture, Jesus himself made wine and drank wine and so the drinking of it is both found within scripture and is accepted by Jesus himself. As such, they believe that the idea of teetotalism is definitively at odds with scripture. Accordingly, some survey respondents believe that some people within Methodism treat the idea with too much emphasis. In addition, some respondents feel quite strongly that those who choose to drink alcohol can feel excluded from the community by attempts to limit, influence or demonise their intake and choice.

Some note that while Methodist membership is in decline, there is a concern that further “regulations” will not help to address diminishing membership numbers. The proposal of teetotalism, or a largely teetotal community is seen as detrimental to attracting new members. The survey highlights again the divisive nature of this issue; the many points of view can lead to damaging and counterproductive arguments, both for the community itself, and how the community appears to those outside it.

In addition to potential divisiveness, some survey respondents believe that a revisiting of encouraged abstinence could lead to a two-tier view of Methodist membership. It is stated that there is scope for those who abstain to be seen as “true Methodists”, while those who do not abstain could be seen as second class Methodists.

Opportunities

Conversely, some respondents saw this issue as a chance for the church to appear relevant. They largely noted that while Methodist membership is in decline, and the ‘attractional church model’ is not the successful approach that it once was, there is scope for a stance on alcohol and other ethical issues to show the church to be incarnational, as it was at the beginning of Methodism, and in acknowledgement of some of the issues for people outside (and within) the church. There is also an opportunity to create sanctuary for many people. The damage caused by alcohol, and the all-pervasive nature of the alcohol industry means that there could be much value in offering space and activity where attendees will know that alcohol will not be present.

Implications of Survey Results

There are six principle implications that emerge from the survey results. These are explored here, and the definitive results give a useful platform to surmise on the current state of Methodism regarding abstinence, and thus allow comparisons to be made between now and previous eras. These implications are as follows.

Many Methodist people still abstain

Many Methodist people still abstain from drinking alcohol. The binary questions on personal abstinence show clearly that around a quarter of those surveyed currently abstain from drinking alcohol. The reasons given for doing so are varied, and most participants claim a number of reasons for their choice, including health concerns and financial implications. Of interest, only a small group within this section cites spiritual or ethical reasons for their choice. This is of course striking because of the known (and unknown) reasons that empowered the movement throughout Methodism in the first place. We have to assume that two things have occurred here: firstly that the spiritual and theological reasons to make this choice have ceased to be important, both to the individual who does not equate their faith with abstinence, and to the wider group which has stopped emphasising this idea. Secondly, despite there being no central thread or reason for abstinence, it continues amongst a significant percentage of the whole group. The key implication that can be gleaned here is that while abstinence is still considered

worthwhile amongst a large group, that group cannot give definitive reasons for their choice. Some respondents feel that the church encouraged their personal abstinence, and this seems to have happened in a variety of ways. Suggestions for this include the influence of the church hierarchy or as part of the discipleship process. Clearly, this influence depends entirely upon which particular community an individual would have been part of. There is also some strength to the opinion that families have been big influences on family members, and some saw this ethos as originating from the church. Others feel that they came to abstain because of other influences outside the church, which again might include individuals who were persuasive in word or deed, or medical or physical elements. Of interest, clearly much has been made of the influence of individuals upon each other, in contrast to a lack of influence from corporate sources, including either the church or other large groups. It could be argued that corporate policy influenced individual action, which led to secondary groups picking up this theme, but that seems unlikely, and what actually seems clear is that an attractive corporate policy was either not available, or more plausibly was ineffective, as the central emphasis upon abstinence diminished.

Many Methodist people who used to abstain, no longer do

Many Methodist people who used to abstain, no longer do. Again, the binary questions from the survey highlight that about a quarter of the whole faction used to abstain from alcohol but now do not. Many of these previous abstainers made an active and notable choice to engage, or re-engage with alcohol. The four largest responses from this group regarding reasons for abstinence was physical health, pregnancy, issues of other people's addiction, and being brought up to abstain. Thus, we can claim that all of these issues are ones that will have shifted over time; physical health improves, the period of pregnancy concludes, the situation of the other who is addicted changes, or you leave the house where you were brought up, and so make your own choice. The ending of abstinence for these responders should not be surprising. However, the column for "other" responses gives a more nuanced notion, largely being that a situation might have required abstinence at a certain time – pregnancy being the most straightforward example of this, but also that some respondents found that abstinence was not just an enforced idea, but a valid choice to make at a certain time. We can observe the following examples in the responses; this might be for reasons of behaviour – a work situation where sobriety was beneficial, such as a supervisor for a dry house. It also

might be for reasons of representation in a situation; it was valuable to be someone who lived without consuming alcohol. It also might be for support: perhaps to support someone in recovery, or who might benefit from association with a sober person. This gives the impression that the values that led to abstinence are not deep-set issues of avoidance for many who have abstained in the past, but instead issues that matter for a time, but perhaps not for an entire adult life. This is dissimilar to the idea of a lifelong pledge, which was one of the cornerstones of the teetotal movement and its expectations of individuals. It can also serve as a helpful reminder that abstinence is there to serve and help the individual and society, and not the other way around. We have seen examples of the idea being valued above those who have been a part of it.

These responses often suggest an expectation that alcohol equates to drunkenness, but in reality probably advocate the idea that total abstinence is easier to define and be representative of than temperance. So teetotalism as a philosophy has a clarity of vision that is not always found in alternative viewpoints.

A desire amongst Methodists for changes in societal drinking habits

Probably the clearest opinion that emerges from this survey is the desire amongst many Methodists to see changes in the drinking habits of the wider community. The survey also shows that there is support for campaigning on this issue by the church, both directly and indirectly. Although abstinence is only currently enacted by about a quarter of the people surveyed, many more than this have highlighted their belief that current trends of alcohol consumption are troubling. While alcohol as a drink is not seen as problematic by many, a large portion of Methodists here express concern about how it is used and promoted. The influence of the alcohol industry, and the assumptions about the positives of drunkenness that have become social norms are highlighted with concern within a large number of survey responses. This includes the industry's influence upon consumers, and the expectation of society on younger people to drink to excess, which clearly has serious implications. There is also acknowledgement that some of the groups that are supposed to control the advertising of alcohol are in fact funded by the alcohol industry. As such, praise for the work done by groups independent from industry is found in these responses. There is particular support for the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT), a campaigning wing of the Methodist Church that operates in collaboration with other denominations. JPIT works to lobby decision

makers and elected officials on issues that the church considers to be of social importance including laws and decisions referring to war, trade, gambling and alcohol. Praise for this work is prevalent in a significant number of responses, and thus reinforces the value of their work campaigning for legal changes and political support. Their work aims to challenge some of the systematic reasons for widespread alcohol abuse, caused by (amongst other things) the use of advertising to overly glamourise alcoholic products, and unhelpful pricing structures. The responses also included a general unease at the interpretation that since the demise of the teetotal movement (although not necessarily linked to it), acceptance of alcohol abuse has grown and become an unquestionable part of British culture. This is a striking shift, from abstinence being an accepted norm, to drunkenness being so instead. Some responses notice this, and are grateful for any challenges made to this notion, whether from the church or elsewhere.

Support for current Methodist rules

Most people surveyed here support the current Methodist rules regarding alcohol, which are specific and direct. In brief, alcohol is not allowed on Methodist premises, and is not used in communion. This idea seems to be linked to the point in the previous paragraph regarding widespread concern about the prevalence of alcohol abuse. The acknowledgement of rules is not in regard to personal conduct, but instead relating to legislation in connection with Methodist premises, and the ban on the consumption of alcohol within. Support for this policy, which has been in place since the days of the teetotal movement, remains strong, and the reasons for its enforcement are understood and approved of by almost all respondents. Agreement with this idea does not lead to a teetotal stance, but simply a belief that there is value in safe spaces away from alcohol, and an acknowledgement that alcohol is present in most other parts of society, so it does no harm, and some good, to have spaces where it is not available and cannot be consumed. This ruling also means that communion wine remains non-alcoholic, despite the concerns of a few respondents that this might negate the value or legitimacy of the Eucharist. This is a minority view, and is probably sidelined within Methodism by the clear belief, highlighted here, that alcohol is damaging to some people and so the church has a responsibility to limit that damage within its own spheres. This has not directly led in these responses to talk of help for the weaker members of the community, but has remained as a belief in a) the value of a consistently safe space, and b) not creating a

barrier to church for those who stay away from situations where alcohol is available, and so would stay away from the church.

Damaging effects of abstinence

The survey has produced a significant number of responses that acknowledge that there has been some damage caused by abstinence. Some responses within this survey express concern or sadness about the effects of the movement, particularly regarding their own situations. These feelings come from a situation where, because of the widespread and (at times) entrenched beliefs surrounding teetotalism, certain unhappy situations have arisen. These include an individual's desire to drink alcohol leading to their being ostracized from their community or family because of this choice. Also, these effects include the belief that alcohol abuse and addiction occur but are not spoken about, because of the general level of disapproval within the community. This has meant that on occasion, assistance and support has not been forthcoming, perhaps because of the taboo nature of the subject, or because of a lack of understanding of both alcohol, and alcohol abuse. These types of situations have occurred in church communities and Christian families, leading to pain and turmoil that could have been avoided. There is also an emergence from the survey responses regarding the creation (whether intentional or not) of a type of hierarchical Christianity, where the intrinsic belief emerged that those who consume alcohol are less worthy and poorer disciples than those who abstain. Ironically, this attitude is not only at odds with Christ's explicit teaching, but also against that understanding of grace that is a constant thread within John Wesley's work. This type of errant opinion has led to an assumed barrier, blocking access to the community, with those outside either expecting abstinence to be a prerequisite for membership and attendance, therefore avoiding the 'teetotal' church. This has even meant that some outside the community fear that their dependence upon alcohol will deny them wider acceptance. In both types of case, the individual will inevitably choose not to join or attend.

Uncertainty about origins of Methodist abstinence

Finally, there is a clear indication that many respondents are unsure, or completely unaware of how the previous and current corporate views on abstinence emerged, or what the church's current stance on alcohol and abstinence is. Survey responses offer

both errant views on the origins of abstinence in Methodist terms, and a large number of respondents unsure of how Methodism and abstinence came to be so closely associated. However, lots of the responses suggest a hope that this connection might be better understood, which is positive to the larger questions, and also to the work done in this project.

Chapter 9 – Comparisons between Eras, and Conclusions

The concluding chapter aims to offer a comparison between two eras: when abstinence and Methodism in Britain were viewed synonymously, and the current period shown through the survey results concerning teetotalism and British Methodism. It also aims to offer conclusions about these comparisons, and explore how these conclusions can be understood for British Methodist people today.

When comparing abstinence in both the historical period, and the current circumstances within British Methodism, this thesis concludes that the main differences between these eras are 1) that during the nineteenth century, teetotalism was organised and promoted within Methodism, but in the twenty-first century it is not organised as part of the denomination's mission, and has been discouraged as a promotable value to some extent. 2) In the previous era, British Methodism's work regarding alcohol included the promotion of abstinence in a variety of ways, but in the current era, its work regarding alcohol has become limited to challenges to laws and campaigning accordingly. This move is also an acknowledgement that abstinence is no longer widely considered integral to a person's drive for holiness. 3) The nineteenth century saw an initial dismissal of abstinence by some, but the normative view became, like James Thorne's view; "I do not see any harm that can accrue from it".⁶⁵⁵ However, the twenty-first century view of abstinence within British Methodism is much more nuanced. Some parts of the membership of the denomination acknowledge that harm has been caused by some of the ways in which abstinence, teetotalism and alcohol have been dealt with.

In short, something that was supported by most of the Methodist community and its hierarchy is no longer supported at a corporate level in the same way, and although a significant percentage of the community still abstain, it is not widely expected of others. The legacy of the abstinence movement, of which the Methodist Church was a big part, continues. It particularly carries on through the way in which the church is regarded publically, in association with abstinence. Also, its legacy continues in how the Church's rules are expressed including issues around non-alcoholic communion wine, and drinking alcohol on church premises. Furthermore, these values are still expressed in terms of the historical values that once led a community to abstain, but now are directed in different ways, including the Joint Public Issues Team's work in lobbying

⁶⁵⁵ Thorne, 1873: 238.

for improved legal systems surrounding alcohol and drugs. From the past, we know that some abstainers expected their campaigns to result in prohibition, or achieve complete abstinence in their community, while others saw the value in the decision to abstain at that time, but did not expect it to become the enormous issue that it grew into. We also know, thanks to the survey, that some members mourn the loss of this movement, while others wish that it had ended sooner. The material covered in chapter 7 regarding the many requests (by church members to the decision makers) for a rethink on what was perceived as enforced abstinence shows that much of the church was deeply unhappy about what took place in the name of teetotalism, temperance and abstinence. Still more so in the survey results, we have heard of the damage caused to individuals because of the lack of understanding about the issues surrounding alcohol and alcohol abuse.

The first point of comparison between eras is the degree to which teetotalism has been organised and promoted. Specifically, in the nineteenth century it was enthusiastically undertaken as a cause by the denomination, but by the twenty-first century, there is much less enthusiasm for the teetotal cause. Promotion of the idea was largely removed, and no more organisational energy was expended upon it. Because of these choices, this philosophy has largely disappeared from wider agendas within Methodism, although some individual enthusiasm remains. There is categorical evidence highlighted throughout this thesis that shows how different parts of British Methodism made choices to adopt teetotalism as a cause. We have seen how resources and enthusiasm was invested into this cause, to the extent that other parts of the church's mission was seen to suffer, while abstinence was promoted. We have also observed how this cause fell away, and how the systems that encouraged it were soon dismantled. Although the Church was the primary driving force behind the abstinence movement in the nineteenth century, it has removed its central support. Whatever the future looks like, it is clear that temperance and abstinence is now less important to British Methodism than it once was. We also know that the Methodist Church is in decline, and this diminishing has been in progress since (at least) the Methodist Union of 1932. The Methodist churches of Britain were once much more significant in the life of the nation, and subsequently their emphases on temperance, abstinence and their theological stances were of higher consequence to the British people before abstinence was removed from the agenda. This removal has meant that the emphasis on the transformative nature of the gospel leading social change has been disregarded to some extent. David Clough acknowledges that for Methodism "none of these issues can be reduced simply to a concern for standards of

personal conduct. Alcohol was a real social ill during the times when the temperance movement was at its height, with families going hungry for want of money spent on beer. Winning abstinence pledges was in many cases an important means of relieving economic hardship, and the relationship between alcohol consumption, crime, and ill-health remains significant”, and so the issue took on wider significance. Clough believes that approaches to lifestyle have changed: “taking together the moves to relax standards in relation to alcohol, gambling, Sunday observance, and sexual ethics, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that over a long period and on a broad scale Methodists have been placing progressively less emphasis on traditional standards of personal conduct”.⁶⁵⁶ This can also be understood as a reduction in the ideas of sanctification, holiness, Christian perfection, and acting with regard for the weaker brother, whether participants would have phrased it as such, or not.

Methodism’s reduction in abstinence promotion occurred at much the same time as the Methodist Church’s decline in terms of membership, attendance and influence. However, to abstain or otherwise will always be an individual decision. Thus, a movement may cease or change, but there is always the potential for individuals to adopt abstinence. Despite a lack of corporate support, many individuals are teetotal within British Methodism. The survey in chapter 8 gives the clear statement that a quarter of Methodist people still abstain from alcohol, although they give a wide variety of reasons for doing so. It is clear that those who have continued to abstain are not doing so because of particular encouragement from the church.

The second most striking difference between these two eras is how the church’s actions regarding activism have shifted. In the previous era, British Methodism’s work regarding alcohol included the promotion of abstinence in a variety of ways. In fact, the most significant resources were used to promote abstinence, instead of making legal challenges, or proposing policy. This thesis has shown how temperance evangelists, Bands of Hope and significant parts of conference agendas were all set aside and widely encouraged to maintain and build upon the teetotal work that was seen as so integral to the British Methodist mission. Political work also occurred at this time, and politics was even seen to do some of the work for the church, for example, when David Lloyd George as Prime Minister looked to discourage alcohol consumption. In the current era, the Methodist Church’s work has become limited to legal suasion and campaigning. If a

⁶⁵⁶ Clough in Marsh (ed.), 2004: 43.

comparison between the era of teetotalism and the present day is to be made, we can see some significant similarities, particularly regarding the damage done by alcohol, the behaviour of the alcohol industry and the church's responses to this industry. The successes of temperance and abstinence have always relied upon a public concern about levels of alcohol consumption and the damage caused by alcohol abuse, so a report published in 2010 would have not been a shock to Joseph Livesey or Hugh Bourne, even though much of the nation seemed surprised. In the article, titled *Drug harms in the UK: a multi criteria decision analysis*, the authors declare that "alcohol, heroin and crack cocaine are the most harmful drugs to others" and that overall, "alcohol was the most harmful drug".⁶⁵⁷ The Church's concerns as highlighted in both the survey, and wider materials are not seen as far-fetched. In the report it observes: "We are currently facing a public-health crisis of immense proportions. The increase in harms caused by alcohol over the last 50 years in the UK is comparable to the Gin Craze in the early eighteenth century". To reference the survey from chapter 8, one participant mirrors the opinions of many when they state, "we should respond - not be simply preaching abstinence, but by active participation in the problems caused". Accordingly, the survey results in the previous chapter show that 41.5% of Methodist people are either extremely concerned or very concerned about current trends of alcohol consumption. The issue is not whether something should happen to tackle these disastrous consequences, but rather, what form it should take. The pursuit of legal changes was part of the abstinence movement from its early stages. In fact, it is widely acknowledged that the issues that surrounded gin in the eighteenth century were only tempered by the restructuring of the law. Possible new proposals could range from a new minimum pricing structure for alcoholic drinks, through to the extreme measure of prohibition, where alcohol is outlawed. Campaigning for a variety of such changes has a long history within nonconformist churches, and can have some success, if the cause is an appropriate one, and the means are properly considered. Hermann Levy wrote in 1951 that "the temperance movement tries to achieve voluntarily, by mere moral suasion, what legislation would attempt by means of prohibition: once a person abstains from the consumption of drink of his own will the immediate effect is much the same as if prohibition had rendered alcohol unavailable. The temperance movement or any movement, which leads to abstention through moral suasion, is more comprehensive in its scope and more complete in its effect on the individual than any legislation based on partial restriction only. Legislation restricts the individual's freedom to drink and affects

⁶⁵⁷ Nutt, King, Phillips, vol 367, No. 9752, 2010: 1558.

the whole population in this limited way: the only criterion for success in moral suasion is the abatement of drinking as a step towards the ultimate goal of total and general abstention".⁶⁵⁸ Levy's argument has a ring of truth about it, and although a campaign for legal changes does not necessarily lead to a campaign for prohibition, there has to be significant value in a person feeling empowered to make a choice, rather than the choice being made for them. This is not to say that there is no corporate responsibility needed, but simply to acknowledge the benefit of an individual choice, in advance of a corporate ruling. There are groups working in the first quarter of the twenty-first century that campaign for legal changes to the way in which alcohol is sold (including the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT), working on behalf of the Methodist Church, United Reformed Church and the Baptist Union), in full acknowledgement that prohibition (and even abstinence) are incredibly tricky issues.

The question then might be asked as to why a church feels the need to comment on how alcohol is consumed and sold, when alcohol intake no longer bears any relation to a drive for holiness, and is no longer a large part of a discipleship movement? These campaigns which hope for changes to laws surrounding the alcohol industry must then exist in regard of the health and well being of the wider population, not just the holiness or support of Methodist people. Alcohol abuse is clearly as big a problem as it ever was. Undoubtedly, the forces that sought to dissuade abstainers then still exist, although their guise has perhaps changed. The alcohol industry today lobbies government and media, to keep their agenda heard, and Joseph Livesey, James Thorne and Hugh Bourne would surely recognise many similar traits amongst pro-alcohol voices now, as were heard in the past. They too would recognise the biological and sociological proclamations made by Nutt, which, although expressed in different language, speak of the same issues that they were familiar with. The work done by JPIT, and other organisations including Drink Aware and the Institute for Alcohol Studies regularly and systematically challenge these ideas, as the abstinence movement did, but does so with the methods needed today, rather than the soapbox empowerment, or tracts in the street that were so successful in the past. In Nutt's words, "The drinks industry wants to portray itself as serving an important social function... The existence of non-drinkers obviously threatens this portrayal of society, so the industry needs to dismiss them as having something wrong with them... Many people avoid the drug for religious or cultural reasons. These are all perfectly valid choices, yet non-drinkers are often heavily

⁶⁵⁸ Levy, 1951: 124.

pressured to consume alcohol in order to fit in with others. This message is constantly reinforced in the press, on TV, and in alcohol advertising”.⁶⁵⁹ These valid choices have been disregarded for years, but there can be no question that there have always been significant benefits to an awareness of the damage caused by alcohol. The ruling that no alcohol is allowed on Methodist premises remains a notable challenge to the widespread culture of alcohol consumption, and according to the survey results from chapter 8 is a value that the community is not willing to give up.

We can acknowledge that a movement much like the one that sprang from Livesey and the Bible Christians had significant value: it alleviated poverty, improved living standards, and had wider communal benefits. Levy also expressed the positive side effects of a broad movement, stating “the numbers of people affected by temperance teaching is of course much larger than the formal membership of the movement. The number of those who, directly or indirectly through moral suasion, have become more moderate drinkers, if not total abstainers, will never be known. For them, direct moral suasion has taken the form of teaching and instruction in and out of school. Indirectly, the movement has played a great part behind the scenes, for instance in the attempts to reduce accidents in industry and on the roads, and openly, as a vigorous protagonist for the promotion of restrictive legislation”.⁶⁶⁰ Thus, any movement that improved (and by that we mean reduced) how alcohol was used without enforcing anyone to do anything has to be seen as both positive and beneficial to society and to the individual. While the structures of the abstinence movements are now largely dissolved, there still remain clear examples of remnant values that were constructed at the time, including the ban on alcohol on Methodist premises. We can see that since the days of the turmoil caused by gin, and the licensing changes brought in to negate the effects, public feeling about the often unspoken dangers of alcohol has empowered individuals, groups and governments to make necessary improvements, proving worthwhile in retrospect. Whether we see these legacies as the licensing laws, the provision of dry spaces, or the continuing challenge to the alcohol industry, there should not be any doubt about the contribution that the temperance and abstinence movements have made. Both the teetotal and temperance campaigning movements were phenomena of their time, and would be unlikely to find favour in modernity or post-modernity. Furthermore, an increase in legalism would be as detrimental, if not more so, than it was at the height of the teetotal movement to the Christian community as a whole. Abraham believes that when

⁶⁵⁹ Nutt, 2012: 99.

⁶⁶⁰ Levy, 1951: 142.

legalism becomes the cornerstone of a community then “the deep truths of creation and redemption fade into the background and then disappear altogether... When the reduction of the faith to a doctrine of the Christian life is accompanied by wider developments in theology, culture and society then retaining any serious commitment to entire sanctification will be doubly difficult”.⁶⁶¹ It is ultimately an individual decision, but is at times taken away from the individual, due to the pressure of society. This was the same mistake that the teetotal movement itself made, of dragging individuals along against their will. The comparison might seem unlikely, but this thesis has already acknowledged that the pressure asserted by organised teetotalism was at times misplaced and undue, much like the pressure exerted on individuals to drink.

The rise in popularity and significance of Methodism happened at the same time as teetotalism was being promoted amongst this group. This project has endeavoured to show why this was not entirely coincidental, but also that the promotion of a life of abstinence was not the reason the church was a success; therefore, a reduction in abstinence is not the reason that membership is in decline, or even why some feel that the entire nation is in the midst of a moral crisis. What can be said is that the identity of a community built upon discipleship and holiness inevitably becomes confused when those key tenets are reduced. A strongly identifiable and explainable community is always more likely to be more attractive than a confused and murky one.

The final point of comparison between the two eras is that in the nineteenth century there was an initial dismissal of abstinence by some, but the normative view became, like James Thorne’s view, that “I do not see any harm that can accrue from it”.⁶⁶² However, the twenty-first century view of abstinence within British Methodism is much more nuanced. Some parts of the membership of the denomination acknowledge that harm has been caused by some of the ways in which abstinence, teetotalism and alcohol have been dealt with, but also some see positive values within the choice. A key difference today is the concern that exists amongst the Methodist Church and the wider Christian community about how an advocacy of abstinence looks in terms of public relations. Whereas Livesey and Thorne were working with a new, exciting and radical idea, any suggestion of teetotalism today is met with over a hundred years worth of baggage of opinion. Mentioning the word brings connotations, both positive and negative, to the minds of lots of people. Convincing those who are already against the

⁶⁶¹ Abraham in Abraham and Kirby (ed.), 2009: 594.

⁶⁶² Thorne, 1873: 238.

idea will prove difficult. In essence, the problems surrounding alcohol are the same, but any solution needs to be different. Any positive view of abstinence can be enabled by the acknowledgement that within Methodism, teetotalism is a valid choice for some people, as is temperance for others, and also the acknowledgement that while drunkenness has problems attached to it, and addiction to alcohol is deeply unhelpful to a person and their chances for a fulfilled life, alcohol is not inherently problematic, just as abstinence is not the solution to all the world's problems, and both options need to be treated as such. A stridency like the kind seen in previous years clearly led to the changes, and then the subsequent downfall of the whole movement. These negative effects are seen in the appeals to conference, shown in chapter 7, and also in survey responses, including "I think levels of consumption need to be reduced but I don't think advocating abstinence is the answer, as I think that will alienate people from the Methodist Church more than they already feel they are". If an idea to abstain is built upon a seedbed of sanctification, it could have the positive effects found within the Bible Christian movement, but if either the reason for abstaining is lost, or the pressure to abstain grows, then any new conversation or adoption could meet the same negative end as the previous campaign. What is clear is that there needs to be a conversation about alcohol, because it can be deeply damaging, but a silence on the subject can also be damaging. And what needs to be acknowledged is that certain elements of the abstinence movement were similarly harmful for some people.

Notably in the situation surrounding alcohol and abstinence in the present day, none of the issues are being addressed very successfully, but the idea of abstinence is in the ascendancy. The percentage increase of abstainers nationally cannot simply be ascribed to a growing Muslim population, and our knowledge of the Methodist population and their drinking habits (see the survey results in chapter 8) tell us that the growth in abstinence is not happening there either. While there is concern within Methodism that a promotion of abstinence will make the community appear out of touch, the increase in numbers of those who abstain tells a different story. The significance of a positive and affirming drive for holiness amongst the Bible Christians meant that many of that community undertook a life of abstinence, and this process could find resonance within society today, because of the positivity that it generated. The Methodist Church and Methodist people may choose to speak into, and use this situation, and this decision could have positive repercussions, if the mistakes of the past are avoided, and a

potential belief in abstinence is tempered with the good sense to realise that it is one option of many.

While the culture of the Church is often to desire to appear relevant, and some believe (as shown through the opinions given within the survey, and explored in chapter 8) that teetotalism can be seen as a barrier to that pertinence, in truth, the Church has always been most relevant when subverting the status quo or the agendas of the world. Relevance does not mean copying or mimicking the world's majority in order to fit in; it can mean reacting against what the major worldview has become. This type of applicability can be seen as a concern and something to fear, but in actuality, it is an approach that Wesley endorsed, and follows on from the life of Jesus.

Essentially, Methodism and the teetotal movement at large forgot why individual people, wider groups and humanity as a whole could benefit from being teetotal, but simply remained convinced that they should. This is quite the opposite of John Wesley's work, who "knitted his doctrine of perfection seamlessly into a robust vision of human happiness".⁶⁶³ Methodism itself has also changed in prominence over the last 100 years, which inevitably has led to changes in policy and influence, but also a reduction of the values that led to growth in the first place.

History appears to show us that an effort or drive for personal improvement, particularly when coupled with John Wesley's understanding of sanctification and Christian perfection, was not just a significant starting point for those who chose abstinence and teetotalism, but it was a notion that supported the journey, and was itself supported by the choice. That the Bible Christians were both the first Methodist group to fully focus on abstinence, and appear to have chosen to promote the cause, in line with their belief in a striving for holiness, is deeply significant. It suggests that the foundation for the movement was theologically and ethically solid, even if the later movement struggled to give better reasons for the choice, and subsequently suffered. This thesis has aimed to challenge myths about the origins of Methodist abstinence, and thus rebuild the foundational understanding of the movement.

Undeniably when abstinence became (imposed or assumed) dogma it was damaging in another way. The fallout after both world wars is clear evidence of negative reactions.

⁶⁶³ Abraham in Abraham and Kirby (ed.), 2009: 588.

Abstinence as a defining feature of the Methodist community was a flawed and unhelpful development. It has been said that this introduction contributed to the failings of the Methodist Church, and it is hard to disagree when the value put upon it was seen by many to be of a higher value than that of the gospel. But, at the points in history when teetotalism was another option to the otherwise homogenous drinking culture, it had worth. When abstinence was another choice to make that was both validated and supported, then clear dividends were seen.

The alcohol industry is an enormous advertiser, campaigner and lobbyist of government officials. Alcohol is advertised everywhere, and drunkenness is a constant presence in the United Kingdom. For an individual, or even a church to stand against such a behemoth by simply not entering into that paradigm is a very small counter-cultural act. This approach is not only valid, but deeply ingrained into what it means to be a Christian; to be the person who goes against the tide in a deliberate but sincere way, representing Christ; a quest for holiness in an earthy and sensible way.

When laid bare, we can see why the generation that emerged from the towering influence of their abstaining parents found themselves to be embarrassed and no longer abstinent. The culture of a Church or Chapel to be the only moral voice had shifted, and today that morality can seem to be something of a joke, especially when something like teetotalism is pursued with fervor, while other elements of struggle and need within the world are ignored. However, there is room again for a Christian voice, which could be based upon Wesley's theology of holiness and sanctification, which can express the idea that teetotalism is a valid and useful choice for any number of people. It can speak into the paradigm of consumerism and the culture of alcohol abuse, and show a viable alternative.

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