

**The Early Development  
of Arthur Augustus Rees  
and his relations with the Brethren**

Timothy C.F. Stunt

There was little predictable about the career of Arthur Augustus Rees (1815-1884) who was the seventh child of a landowner in Carmarthen, South Wales. His childhood was unsettled. For reasons that his biographers<sup>1</sup> declined to reveal, his father John lived for some years in France, while his mother Anne (daughter of the American consul in Bristol, Elias Vander Horst) took little interest in her youngest son with the result that ‘from the age of five to thirteen he was tossed about the country at various schools’.<sup>2</sup>

In 1828 when Arthur was thirteen, his father (who had earlier seen service at the battles of Camperdown and Copenhagen) returned from France and obtained for him a position in the Royal Navy as a first class volunteer. The boy’s naval service lasted some five years with a few months break on land in 1831-1832 after which he was promoted to the rank of midshipman and served mainly in Portuguese waters. During his earlier period of service (on HMS *Wasp*) in the aftermath of the Battle of Navarino (1827), during the Greek war of

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1. There are three accounts of Rees’s life. The earliest was written during Rees’s lifetime, by a Methodist, and reflects the author’s dislike of the establishment. Anglican episcopacy is never let off lightly in James Everett, *The Midshipman and the Minister; the Quarter-deck and the Pulpit* (London, 1867). Everett’s work was used by both William Brockie, *Memoirs of Arthur Augustus Rees, Minister of the Gospel at Sunderland* (London, Sunderland, 1884) and by Sydney E. Watson, *Bethesda Free Chapel [Sunderland] Centenary 1845-1945* ([?Sunderland, 1945]), pp.9-42. For details of Everett see the article by O.A. Beckerlegge in D.M. Lewis, *Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography 1730-1860*, 2 vols. (Oxford 1995) [cited as *BDEB*].

2. Everett, *The Midshipman*, p.6. The statement is repeated almost *verbatim* by Brockie, *Memoirs*, p.4, and Watson, *Bethesda*, p.10. However, his admission papers at Lampeter refer to a school at Hammersmith; see note 10 below.

independence, Rees's boat was sailing in the eastern Mediterranean and this gave him a chance to see several classical sites including Athens, Thermopylae, Pompeii and Carthage as well as to land in Algiers just after the French had captured it in 1830. There were several moments when his life was in danger—moments perceived by his biographers as occasions when he was spared for 'higher service'—but he was not involved in hostile engagements in the way that a slightly older generation of 'naval brethren' had been.<sup>3</sup> Being a somewhat head-strong lad, Rees found himself more than once on a collision course with his superiors and on several occasions (as one would expect of the British navy in the early nineteenth century) he was subjected to corporal punishment. His being 'invalided' out in 1833 was at his own request after just such a confrontation with his commander.

One of the earlier occasions when Rees was the object of naval discipline is of some interest for readers of this journal as the episode sheds some light on the early life of the man who ordered the lashing. The Honourable William H.G. Wellesley (1806-75) appears to have been in charge of HMS *Wasp* sometime between 1829 and early 1830<sup>4</sup> when, on at least one occasion, he ordered Rees to be flogged.

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3. Both Leonard Strong (1797-1874) and W.G. Rhind (1794-1863) had been in active service during the Napoleonic Wars, H.Pickering [ed.] *Chief Men among the Brethren*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London [1931]), pp. 22-24. See also the following paragraph above, for the naval experience of W.H.G. Wellesley.

4. There are fuller details of Rees's early naval career in Everett's biography (pp.7-19) where Wellesley is said to have succeeded Richard Dickenson as commanding officer of the *Wasp* prior to Brunswick Popham's appointment. In P. Benyon's 'Index to Late 18th, 19th and early 20th century naval and naval social history' [http://www.pbenyon1.plus.com/Extracts/1828/;1829/1830](http://www.pbenyon1.plus.com/Extracts/1828/;1829/1830;); [consulted 27/6/06]) the *Wasp* is described as being in the charge of Dickenson (from August 1828) presumably until his appointment in May 1830 to be in charge of HMS *Talbot*. Popham's appointment to the *Wasp* is given as 31 May 1830. There is no reference to Wellesley being in charge of the *Wasp*, though there appears to have been an interim period in late 1829 to early 1830 when someone other than Dickenson was in charge.

Sometime after 1833<sup>5</sup> Wellesley left the navy from conscientious motives. For a time his ‘speaking-trumpet of a voice’ rendered him something of a celebrity with those who attended the meetings of the evangelical societies at Exeter Hall<sup>6</sup> but by 1840 he was definitely associated with the Brethren.<sup>7</sup> Rees, in whose chapel Wellesley later preached on several occasions, recalled that his senior officer’s conversion two years earlier had ‘originated in the contemplation of the horrors of the battle of Navarino’ in October 1827.<sup>8</sup>

Arthur Rees’s situation on leaving the navy is far from clear. He had a good singing voice and, having learnt to play the guitar, he spent some time in London on the fringes of the theatrical world and toyed with the idea of a career in entertainment, but he seems to have had no gainful employment during these three years. Equally imprecise are the circumstances attendant on his conversion. There is mention of a rebuke from his sister, which led him, for a while, to say the Lord’s prayer in his hammock during his second period of service, but more important was the testimony of one of his brothers in 1834 or 1835 to some aspect of prophecy and its fulfillment. This stimulated the nineteen year old to study his Bible as a result of which he adopted a more serious approach to life and after further study became a ‘thorough-going’ Christian<sup>9</sup>. Evidence for the single-mindedness of

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5. His resignation from the navy cannot have been before his return in HMS *Winchester* from Jamaica in May 1833

(<http://www.pbenyon1.plus.com/Extracts/1833/02.html> [consulted 27/6/06]).

6. Anon, *Random Recollections of Exeter Hall in 1834-1837, by one of the Protestant Party* (London, 1838), p.124, cf pp.16-17 cited in J.H. Newman’s review of the book in *The British Critic*, xxiv (July 1838), pp.207, 201.

7. See H.H. Rowdon, *The Origins of the Brethren 1825-1850* (London 1967), pp.167, 169, and H. Pickering, *Chief Men*, p.40. For Wellesley’s preaching in 1844, see Charles Stanley, *The Way the Lord hath led me; or incidents of Gospel work* chpt. 2 (London [1889]).

8. Everett, *The Midshipman*, p.12.

9. Brockie, *Memoirs*, p.11, cf. Everett, *The Midshipman*, pp.23-5. Rees’s early biographers agree in presenting his conversion as the result of personal study and reflection rather than a response to his brother’s challenge. Watson however has Rees trusting Christ in response to his converted brother’s testimony and then setting about studying the Scriptures, Watson 14.

this new convert is to be found in his buying grammars and teaching himself Latin and Greek during the next few months. This must have been a significant factor in his winning the support of some Bristol clergymen who raised funds for him to attend St David's College, Lampeter where he was admitted as a student on 1 March 1836.<sup>10</sup>

In the same month, another earnest young man, four years older than Rees, entered the college, and together with Rees, was a student there for the next three years preparing for ordination. Henry James Prince (1811-99) is one of the more unusual of the many strange personalities, who enliven the religious history of the nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup> The youngest son of a West Indian plantation owner Prince was born in Bath and was brought up by his impoverished mother and her lodger, Martha Freeman. After studying medicine at Guy's Hospital he was appointed as medical officer to the General Hospital in Bath but resigned in 1835. A little earlier he had experienced an evangelical conversion and was now intent on ordination. It was with Prince that Arthur Rees was closely associated for the next three years at St David's College, where they were at the centre of a group of earnest Christian students known as the 'Lampeter Brethren'. Although the college authorities disapproved of their meetings and their exaggerated piety, this did not prevent Rees from being elected Hannah More scholar in 1837 and Butler scholar in 1838.<sup>12</sup> When he graduated in 1839 or 1840 Rees appears to have spent some time at Prince's home in Bath where he met Prince's sister Ellen (whom he later married) and where he received an invitation to become the

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10. I am indebted to Professor Nigel Yates, the Keeper of Archives and Manuscripts at the University of Wales, Lampeter, for his provision of the archival details of Rees's career at Lampeter.

11. For Prince see my article in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (which contains a full bibliography) and the article by A.F. Walls in *BDEB*.

12. For the few known details of the Lampeter Brethren see Owain W Wilson, 'Prince and the Lampeter Brethren' *Trivium* (1970), pp.10-20. For a sample of the 'exaggerated piety', see H.J. Prince, *Letters addressed by H.J. Prince to his Christian Brethren at St. David's College, Lampeter*, 2nd edn, (Llandovery [William Rees] 1841).

curate of the Rev. William Webb, Rector of Sunderland to whom he had been recommended by his tutor at Lampeter, Alfred Ollivant (1798-1882) later Bishop of Llandaff.

Rees was ordained by the Bishop of Durham in January 1841 but his career as a minister in the Church of England was to be a short one. His total commitment to the evangelical faith seems to have marked him out as bit of an eccentric who would not mince his words and who was not very adept in the worldly skills of diplomacy and tact. It seems that as Curate of Sunderland most of his ministry was performed in a daughter church, St John's Chapel, rather than in the more respectable Parish Church of Holy Trinity. For a while Rees appears to have been given quite a free hand and his congregation grew as did his popularity. In November 1841 however he was invited to preach at Houghton-le-Spring whose curate had been a fellow midshipman with Rees. Here his audience was a little more refined and complaints were made to the Bishop about some of his uncompromising language. When asked for a copy of his sermon, Rees had to admit that it had been delivered extempore at which point the Bishop forbade him to preach outside his own parish and gave him strict instructions to write his sermons out in full. In spite of these developments he was ordained as a priest in December of 1841 and a further nine months elapsed before his rector's patience was exhausted and Rees was given three months' notice to quit. The local press gave an approvingly sympathetic account of Rees's farewell sermon to a 'serious and attentive congregation' of some three thousand people, 'spell-bound by the thrilling fervency of his warning and appeal'. They also published a cheap edition of the text of the sermon, which characteristically 'was commenced and concluded with extempore prayer.'<sup>13</sup> Although a local petition was drawn up requesting the Bishop to licence Rees 'to preach in connexion with the Established

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13. *Sunderland and Durham County Herald*, 9 Dec 1842 p. 2 col. G; see also *Farewell sermon of the Rev. Arthur A. Rees: Curate of Sunderland, delivered on Sunday evening, Dec. 4, 1842, in St. John's Chapel, Sunderland* (Sunderland [R. Vint and Carr] [?1842]).

Church in the Bridge Road Chapel, Monkwearmouth'<sup>14</sup> the Bishop refused and found further fault with Rees for allowing former parishioners to visit him for pastoral help in his lodgings.<sup>15</sup> Early in 1843 Rees, who in the previous year had married Eleanor Prince, left Sunderland and returned to Bath to stay with her family.

In Bath Rees was not without friends and after some unsuccessful applications he was invited by Sydney Widdrington the Rector of Walcott St Swithin, to take responsibility for a chapel in Thomas Street that he (the Rector) had recently bought from the Baptists and in September his appointment was announced.<sup>16</sup> Rees predictably took up his duties, as his rector later bore witness, 'with zeal and energy... specially among the poorer population'.<sup>17</sup> However for his appointment to be canonically confirmed and licensed by the Bishop, the testimonials, provided by seven Anglican incumbents and countersigned by two bishops, had to be endorsed by the Bishop of Durham who adamantly declined to do so. In spite of the protests of both the rector and congregation Rees was evicted from his ministry without an hour's warning.<sup>18</sup>

Rees later came to believe that he was 'born to be a dissenter' but he preferred the label nonconformist because 'dissenter implies opposition to doctrines, whereas I was never opposed to the doctrine of the Establishment. Nonconformity imports opposition to discipline,

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14. *Ibid.*, 13 January 1843, p. 2 col. B.

15. Everett, *The Midshipman*, p.40.

16. *Sunderland and Durham County Herald*, 19 September 1843, p. 5 col. C. Watson, wrongly refers to Thames Street Chapel, *Bethesda*, p.21. A subsequent minister, the Rev. Peter Hall is said to have called the chapel *Saint Thomas's* Chapel even though the name was originally derived from the street, which was named after a shoemaker named Thomas Cottle, see R.E.M. Peach, *Street-love of Bath: a record of changes in the highways and byways of the city* (London 1893)

141. I am indebted for this reference and other help to Mr. Colin Johnston of the Bath and North East Somerset Record Office.

17. In a letter dated 13 February 1843 quoted in full in Watson, *Bethesda*, pp. 21-22.

18. *Sunderland and Durham County Herald*, 16 February 1844, p. 5 col. A.

polity and rites.’<sup>19</sup> He gave brief but cogent expression to his indignation at the treatment he had received by publishing in Bath a *Solemn protest before the church and nation*<sup>20</sup> but by the middle of March he had returned to Sunderland where he was welcomed by many of his former parishioners who immediately formed the nucleus of a new congregation acknowledging Rees as their pastor. A year later in March 1845, Bethesda Free Chapel, Sunderland was opened and it was here that Rees ministered until his death in 1884.

In the words of Harold Rowdon, who perceptively included a miniature account of Rees’s career in *The Origins of the Brethren*,

Rees shed many of his Anglican ideas, and at the close of 1845 sent for George Müller, who had become acquainted with him, to baptize him as a believer. The church, which he gathered never developed into a Brethren assembly, however, since Rees retained an almost autocratic ministerial position as well as a somewhat eccentric character. There remained a close and warm link between Rees and Müller, at least, among the Brethren.<sup>21</sup>

At this point however, it is necessary to re-examine the events of 1839-44 that we have considered, but in a wider context and to do this we must go back to Rees’s circle of friends when he finished at Lampeter. Henry James Prince was an Anglican but his sympathies lay primarily with evangelical Christianity and there are indications that he was in touch with Brethren. His journal records a visit in August 1835 to Sir C[harles] B[renton] who was connected with the Brethren in Bath.<sup>22</sup> Three years later in July 1838 he attended services at Clifton at which Henry Craik and George Müller preached to

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19. Watson, *Bethesda*, pp.19, 23.

20. *Solemn protest before the church and nation of the Rev. Arthur A. Rees, late minister of Thomas Street Episcopal Chapel, Bath, against his virtual ejection from the ministry of the Church of England* ([Bath] T. Noyes, 1844).

21. Rowdon, *Origins*, pp.173-74.

22. H.J. Prince, *Br[other] Prince’s Journal, an account of the destruction of the works of the Devil in the Human Soul by the Lord Jesus Christ* (London [Arthur Hall, Virtue and Co] 1859), p.14. For Brenton’s connection with Bath see T.C.F. Stunt, *From Awakening to Secession: Radical Evangelicals in Switzerland and Britain 1815-35* (Edinburgh 2000), pp.296-298.

Prince's great satisfaction. He noted in his journal that Müller's 'praying was in the style of a *child* addressing his father with reverence and confidence; his appearance solemn and impressive; his manner of preaching very mild and persuasive. Our spirits clave to him.'<sup>23</sup> A little earlier than Rees, Prince was ordained in 1839. In June 1840 he became Curate of Charlinch, near Bridgewater, Somerset, where the rector, Samuel Starky, was permanently absent on account of ill-health. Prince laboured for a year on his own in this very rural parish with very little sign of any impact on its bucolic population. However in the summer of 1841, when Rees in Sunderland had just begun to make an impression on his urban flock, things changed for Prince. By a curious chance, his rector, who believed he was near to death, was given and read a copy of a sermon by Prince and after reading it made a full recovery.<sup>24</sup> He hastened back to Charlinch to find that his curate was beginning to make an impression on the parish.

Prince's account of his success in Charlinch makes clear that he used a variety of far from conventional evangelistic activities.<sup>25</sup> Weekly prayer meetings became the order of the day, women sobbed and shrieked, children collapsed under conviction of sin. When Prince tried to separate the truly converted from the traditional churchgoers he upset some of the local gentry and in May 1842 the Bishop dismissed him from his curacy.<sup>26</sup> Probably with help from Starky's

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23. *Ibid.*, p.352.

24. This part of the story is dependent on Starky's much later account given to Hepworth Dixon, see W.H. Dixon, *Spiritual Wives* (London 1868), p.240. There is no surviving sermon of Prince published in 1841. However Starky may have seen an earlier edition of H.J. Prince, *Strength in Jesus* (Bath [T. Noyes] 1842) or H.J. Prince, *How you may know whether you do, or do not, believe on Jesus Christ* (Bath [T. Noyes] 1842).

25. H.J. Prince, *The Charlinch revival: or, an account of the remarkable work of grace which has lately taken place at Charlinch, in Somersetshire* (London [Nisbet] 1842), *passim*.

26. See J.J. Schwieso, 'The Founding of the Agapemone at Spaxton', *Proceedings of the Somersetshire Archaeological and Natural History Society*, cxxxv (1991), p.114.

good social connections<sup>27</sup> Prince obtained another remote curacy at Stoke-by-Clare in Suffolk but by November 1842 the Bishop of Ely had also prohibited him from preaching.

At this juncture we should glance briefly at an even wider framework for these strange events. In the United States the followers of William Miller had proclaimed 1842-43 as the year of Christ's return. The impact on British society was much less dramatic but the letters of the Adventist Robert Winter (1817-1909) indicate that there was fertile ground for the Millerite seed of millennial preaching.<sup>28</sup> It was only in 1844 with the 'Great disappointment' that the popular response began to wane. It is in this context that we should consider Prince's unusually wild revivalism. He now moved back nearer to the region of his previous ministry. While Starky went to work in Weymouth, Prince began preaching in Adullam Chapel, Brighton. Now, however, he was an independent evangelist proclaiming that his rejection by the established church was not only proof of its apostasy but a further sign of the imminent return of Christ. The parallel with the experiences of Arthur Rees in Sunderland and Bath is immediately apparent. The more critical of Prince's biographers however draw attention to another less attractive aspect of his conduct. Whereas Rees had recently married Prince's impecunious sister, Prince's somewhat unexpected first marriage in 1838, when he was a student at Lampeter, to his mother's considerably older (and wealthier) lodger, Martha Freeman, had been financially more advantageous. When she died in April 1842 and, barely three months later, Prince married Julia

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27. His maternal grandfather was Sir Andrew Baynton-Rolt, 2<sup>nd</sup> Bt, whose wife was a daughter of the 6<sup>th</sup> Earl of Coventry.

28. See Robert Winter's letters from England dated May and Nov 1843 published in *The Midnight Cry* for 1843 and 1844, quoted in chpt 10 of Francis D. Nichol, *The Midnight Cry* (Washington DC, 1945), which can be consulted online at [www.maranathamedia.com.au](http://www.maranathamedia.com.au). To this we may add that there are some reasons to believe that J.N. Darby may have expected the Second Coming to occur in 1842, see F.R. Coad, *History of the Brethren Movement* (Exeter, 1968), p.118. For other exaggerated adventist expectations among Brethren in France on the last day of 1844, see C. Gribben, T.C.F. Stunt [eds], *Prisoners of Hope? Aspects of Evangelical Millennialism in Britain and Ireland 1800-1880* (Carlisle, 2004), p.66.

Starky, the sister of his well-connected former rector, there was, hardly surprisingly, some adverse comment.<sup>29</sup> In the days before the Married Women's Property Act (1882), a wife's assets were automatically at the disposal of her husband. To the more cynical observer, Prince seemed to have realized that, without a position in the Church of England, he would need some other source of financial support.<sup>30</sup>

Nevertheless, by early 1843, many evangelical Christians in the West Country were aware that there were two enthusiastic evangelists, recently cast off by the establishment, Arthur Rees and Henry Prince, both of whom had been in touch with Brethren and indeed were regarded favourably by them. One Brethren evangelist in particular, James George Deck (1807-1884)<sup>31</sup>, a leading member of the Brethren

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29. Typically hostile is the account of Prince's marriages in C. Mander, *The Reverend Prince and his Abode of Love* (East Ardsley, Wakefield, 1976), pp.53, 67. Mander unfairly and inaccurately writes of Julia Starky 'She was no beauty, would not see fifty again and had little to offer, apart from an annuity.' In fact according to the *International Genealogical Index* she was born in 1813 and at 29 was two years younger than Prince.

30. Significantly, one of the factors that, a few years later, completely ruined Prince's reputation with the world at large, was the revelation in the Courts of the dubious way in which he had arranged for the Nottidge sisters (spinster heiresses) to marry three of his followers. The case of *Nottidge v Ripley and another* (1849) and some of its sad, albeit slightly comic, attendant circumstances are conveniently summarized in A. Scull, *Social Order / Mental Disorder: Anglo-American Psychiatry in Historical Perspective* (Los Angeles, 1989), pp.282-83.

31. For Deck see Peter J. Lineham in the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* (<http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/dnzb> [consulted 27/6/06]) but, *pace* Lineham, the chronology of Deck's time in India poses some problems. According to *DNZB* Deck returns to India in 1830, 'resign[s] his commission in 1835 and after his return to England he was rebaptized'. Certainly his rebaptism was after July 1835 when his son J.F. Deck was baptized in the church of Deck's father-in-law at Hatherleigh, Devon. Prior to that Deck had taken a vocally paedobaptist position against Groves in 1829 (H. Groves, *Memoir of the late Anthony Norris Groves...* 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London, 1857), p.231), and against B.W. Newton in early 1832 at Plymouth. ('Newton's Recollections' in the John Rylands University Library, Manchester, CBA 7057, p.315; 7059, pp.116-7, 7049, p.310.) Both incidents occurred in England. The chronology is further complicated by Norris Groves's encounter in Cape Town in

assembly in Weymouth was probably hoping that both Rees and Prince would throw in their lot with them.<sup>32</sup>

Unfortunately, Prince was rapidly moving in a different direction. For a time he kept his peculiar views to himself or shared them privately with Arthur Rees, but they may well have been a factor in Rees's decision to move back to Sunderland away from the area where his brother-in-law was operating. By 1844 it was apparent that not only was Prince claiming to be Elijah and calling Starky and himself 'the two witnesses' of Revelation xi, but he was also referring to himself as 'the Holy Ghost personified' and 'the Holy Ghost (in measure) manifested in the flesh.' The high hopes Deck and his fellow Brethren had entertained of Prince and the extent of his horrified disappointment will be apparent from some passages in a tract he published in 1845:

Men, whom many of us loved and esteemed as brethren and true servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, are now *openly* preaching in this and other places, new and unheard-of doctrines... God is my witness how often, with other brethren, I have remembered them in my prayers... I have letter upon letter by me, of different brethren, who have loved and honored him [Prince] with the deepest Christian affection. In June last [1845], when he and Mr. Starkey [*sic*] came into the neighbourhood of Taunton, I went with two other brethren, both of known and tried Christian standing and experience, to hear their preaching at the opening of the church at Charlinch: we desired, in dependance [*sic*] upon God, to *prove* for ourselves, whether their work was of God or not. The Lord knows how gladly we would have given the right hand of fellowship to our brethren, if we could have recognized their testimony to have been

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October 1834 with Lt. Deck 'packed up for a return to India' with his eyes 'quite turned away from the army', Groves, *Memoir*, p.348. Deck seems to have spent much more time in England or on board ship to and from rather than in India!

32. See P.L. Embley, 'The Origins and Early Development of the Plymouth Brethren' (PhD Dissertation, Cambridge, 1966, in University Library, Cambridge; now available online at <http://www.bruederbewegung.de/pdf/embley.pdf> [consulted 27/6/06]), pp.148-9. There is some truth (if not the whole truth) in Embley's point that 'to a large extent the Plymouth Brethren movement grew by absorbing disaffected Christians from other denominations', p.148.

of God: and how deeply we were grieved to be compelled to judge it otherwise...<sup>33</sup>

Peter Embley's observation was highly relevant when he observed that 'unlike some Brethren, Deck was never a prolific pamphleteer, and it seems most unlikely that he would have ventured into print unless at the very least some of the Brethren at Weymouth were in danger of associating themselves with Prince.'<sup>34</sup> Indeed, Newton in his recollections refers to friends among Brethren who 'had deeply valued his [Prince's] ministry' and for whom his later deviation was 'a bitter trial.'<sup>35</sup>

Prince's scandalous later life and the establishment of the Agapemone at Spaxton need not detain us apart from their effect on Brethren historians and Arthur Rees's biographers. The unsavoury details of Prince's subsequent career were an embarrassment and therefore any association with him was to be downplayed or if possible eliminated. Everett's account of Rees manages to make absolutely no allusion to Prince at any point while Brockie's *Memoirs* make a solitary reference to him but studiously conceal the fact that Rees's wife was Prince's sister. In contrast, Watson gives the name of Rees's wife but makes no mention of her brother—let alone providing information about him.<sup>36</sup>

The subsequent ministry of Arthur Rees may be characterized as zealously evangelical, orthodox, but independent. Everett claims that

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33. J.G. Deck, *A Word of Warning to all who love the Lord Jesus: The Heresy of Mr. Prince with extracts from his letters* (London [Simpkin and Marshall] Weymouth [Benson and Darling] 1845), pp.5-6. The tract contains transcripts of several letters that Prince had written to Rees and which the latter had made available to Deck. In this respect it is a more substantial pamphlet than Arthur Rees's own twelve page tract, *The rise and progress of the heresy of the Rev. H. J. Prince* (Weymouth [Benson and Barling], London [Simpkin and Marshall], [1846]).

34. Embley, 'Origins', p.255 n.264. For Prince's success in Weymouth see J.J. Schwieso, "'This Frightful and Blasphemous Sect': Apocalyptic millenarianism in Victorian Dorset', in *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society*, cxiv (1992), pp.15-16.

35. 'Newton's Recollections' (JRULM, CBA 7061), p.20; cf. CBA 7057, p.355.

36. Brockie, *Memoirs*, p.12; Watson, *Bethesda*, p.18.

when he seceded Rees ‘became acquainted with several leaders of the Plymouth Brethren and was strongly urged to join their body.’<sup>37</sup> His authoritarian insistence on being ‘*the* minister’ of his chapel made such a possibility very remote, but he made no secret of his friendship and appreciation of many members of the Brethren. We mentioned earlier in this paper his continuing links with Captain W.H.G Wellesley—a friendship all the more remarkable as Wellesley sided with the Exclusive wing of the Brethren. In another interesting connection we should note that it was at the home of Henry Bewley, a leading brother in Dublin, that Rees first met D.L. Moody as a result of which his chapel was one of the first to host Moody’s English mission in 1873—it being Rees who coined the phrase, with reference to Sankey, ‘singing the gospel’.<sup>38</sup> It is in fact from Sankey that we learn of the reputation that Rees had for autocracy reflected in his local nickname ‘the pope of the North’.

In two *Friendly Letters* Rees engaged the Brethren on certain issues on which he took a different path from them, namely *Worship* and *Ministry*. In the second letter he described how at a Brethren conference in Freemasons’ Hall he had challenged them as to ‘whether those Christians who met without open ministry met in the name of Jesus’. After a pause a brother had stepped forward and replied, “No; let us never give up our principle on that point.”” Rees then claimed that although this answer seemed to meet with silent acquiescence from the assembled gathering, several brethren including John Eliot Howard had later assured him of their dissent from that point of view.<sup>39</sup> In a later comment, the first historian of the Brethren observed that if, among the Open Brethren, those who shared the dissenting view of Howard were in fact the majority, he could not help thinking

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37. Everett, *The Midshipman*, p.109.

38. See I. D. Sankey, *My Life and the Story of the Gospel Hymns...* (New York, 1907) at <http://www.wholesomewords.org/biography/biosankey3.pdf> [consulted 27/6/06] p.10-11. For Bewley, see W.B. Neatby, *A History of the Plymouth Brethren*, 2nd edn (London, 1902), p.150 n.2.

39. A.A. Rees, *A Second Friendly Letter to the Christian called “Brethren” on the subject of Worship and Ministry* (London [?1869]), p.4.

that ‘the majority sometimes allows itself to be “talked down”’.<sup>40</sup> Perhaps there would have been a place for Rees among the Brethren if those with truly open principles had given more vocal expression to them.

There are other aspects of Arthur Augustus Rees’s career that we have had to leave on one side. His fifteen years of mutually appreciative correspondence with Spurgeon,<sup>41</sup> his vigorous espousal of millennial views and his readiness to relate these to the rise and fall of Napoleon III,<sup>42</sup> the way his published opposition to the participation of women in the 1859 Revival<sup>43</sup> stung Catherine Booth into writing one of the great feminist pamphlets of the nineteenth century<sup>44</sup>—these are all facets of Rees’s lively and unique career that are worthy of investigation. Our purpose has been to establish the context of his early development and to explore some of the ways in which his earlier career in particular impinged on and at the same time was affected by Brethren life and practice.

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40. Neatby, *History*, p.202. It is Neatby who dates the episode as occurring in 1869.

41. Spurgeon’s side of the correspondence can be followed at <http://www.godrules.net/library/spurgeon/NEW2spurgeon19.htm> [consulted 27/6/06]

42. E.g. : *The moral of the war, the humiliation of France, and the dethronement of the never-crowned Napoleon...* (Sunderland, 1870).

43. *Reasons for not co-operating in the alleged "Sunderland revivals" ...* (Sunderland, 1859).

44. C.M. Booth, *Female Teaching: Or, The Rev. A.A. Rees versus Mrs. Palmer, Being a Reply to a Pamphlet by the Above Gentleman on the Sunderland Revival* (London, [1861]).