

Brontës, Luddites ...and Moravians

Kit Shorten

Introduction

In 1837 Anne Brontë was a seventeen year old pupil at Roe Head School in Mirfield, Yorkshire. Roe Head was the school where Charlotte Brontë began her friendship with Ellen Nussey and Mary Taylor a few years earlier, and where she was now teaching.

Towards the end of that year, Anne fell ill. Such was the severity of her symptoms that she began doubting her religious conviction and fearing for her soul. Requesting a minister, the Reverend James La Trobe from the nearby Wellhouse Moravian chapel was sent for. The messages Anne heard from Rev La Trobe were of God's redeeming love and universal salvation, and they gave her a spiritual peace of mind. Although Anne recovered from her illness, her experience of those meetings with the Moravian remained with her for the rest of her short life, and may have influenced scenes for her novel *Agnes Grey*.

The conversations that took place between Rev La Trobe and Anne were a common occurrence amongst Moravian ministers and the ailing members of their congregation. Why Anne - someone who was not a member of the Moravian Church - should seek and accept devotional comfort in the words of a Moravian minister has already occupied the thoughts of several writers. As the daughter of a clergyman, there were plenty of alternative men of religion Anne could have considered: "an abundant shower of curates" according to the opening line of Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley*.

However, a desire from those who were not members of the Moravian Church to seek redemption and salvation in the words of a Moravian preacher was not isolated to just Anne. I have recently uncovered two similar meetings with non-Moravians, and some additional background to Rev La Trobe's letter, which was thought to be lost. Specifically:

William Sheard's meeting with Luddite Samuel Hartley after the attack on Rawfolds Mill.

James La Trobe's letter to William Scruton about meeting Anne Brontë, with an additional letter by James Connor.

Henry Lauten's meetings with Mr Taylor.

As we approach a series of Brontë bicentenary anniversaries, commencing with Charlotte Brontë's birth date in April 2016, I believe these findings are deserving of a wider audience. I hope you will enjoy reading my *Notes*, and that they may motivate others to investigate further the influence and its consequences of the Moravian Church in what we today call 'Brontë Country'.

Kit Shorten
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Note: Members of the Moravian Church refer to their colleagues as Brother (Br) and Sister (Sr).

William Sheard's meeting with Luddite Samuel Hartley after the attack on Rawfolds Mill.

Readers of Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* will be familiar with her fictional interpretation of unrest at the beginning of the nineteenth century, especially the attack on a Yorkshire mill by a body of rioters known as Luddites; textile workers who used destruction to protest against the use of newly developed machinery that threatened the end of their trade and way of life.

My research into Moravian - Brontë connections has revealed a rare narrative, written shortly after the infamous Luddite attack on William Cartwright's mill at Rawfolds, Cleckheaton, Yorkshire in 1812. It is a true account involving one of the rioters, Samuel Hartley, and his meeting with a Moravian preacher.

By way of setting the scene, the following is my transcript of the summary hand-written at Gomersal Moravian chapel:

"April 12: In the course of last night or early this morning, the mill of Mr Cartwright at Rawfolds near this place was attacked by a mob, with intention to destroy his cropping machinery. The mill being well guarded, the assailants could not effect their purpose and were obliged to decamp leaving two of their company wounded on the spot, viz. Booth, an apprentice to a tinner at Huddersfield, and Hartley, a cropper. Booth's leg was broke, and the bone so shattered that an amputation was found necessary. He died soon after the operation. Hartley was shot in a slanting direction from one shoulder to the other. He died in the course of the next night. It is supposed many more were wounded of those who made their escape. The mob were provided with fire-arms, hammers, axes, yet they could only break the windows, but were not permitted to enter the mill. Mr Cartwright and his men received no injury. The above subject occupied the minds and conversation of the neighbourhood this day, so that few people attended our chapel this afternoon - and it being the regular communion day (tho' put off to the anniversary on the 17th) there was no preaching in the afternoon."

For days before 11th April, possibly even weeks before, local whisperings had been rife with the rumour of an imminent raid at Rawfolds. Mr Cartwright made sure his mill was well prepared for its defence. However, the severity of the attack, when it happened, still came as a surprise to the men, women and children in the Moravian congregations at Gomersal and Mirfield. The ferocious noise of the rioters' onslaught and mill's defence resounded around the valley and could plainly be heard at the Wellhouse Moravian chapel and school, about two miles away. Alarmed by the sudden and incessant firing, members of the congregations and their neighbours were roused from their sleep, confusion and fear spreading throughout the cottages.

Reverend Charles Augustus Pohlman, the minister at Wellhouse, expressed that Sunday 12th April was a day "...much as we had never experienced here, nor ever hope to again." In the day's sermon and Lovefeast, he worked hard to settle the agitated minds of his congregation, taking his cue from the Moravian text for the day:

“The Lord God of Israel has given rest to his people.”

Br Pohlman afterwards observed that the Holy Communion provided “much needed refreshment”!

But that day was not yet over.

As recorded in the Gomersal summary, at the scene of the attack two of the mob lay wounded on the blood stained ground, crying out in pain. Identified as John Booth and Samuel Hartley, they were eventually taken to the Star Inn at Roberttown, about a mile from Wellhouse chapel. Once there, their wounds were roughly treated, and the dying men were pressed to reveal the names of their accomplices. The inn was kept by a man called Tommy Sheard, and Mrs Sheard apparently had to intervene when the dying men were faced with torture.

Booth died in the early hours of Sunday morning, shortly after a hastily executed leg amputation, but Hartley lingered on.

This is what we already know about Hartley: he was an unmarried Methodist in his twenties, a private in the Halifax Local Militia (of which William Cartwright was a captain) and a cropper who had once worked for Mr Cartwright. Due to his knowledge of the mill, Hartley may have been at the forefront of the attack when he was shot. Neither Booth nor Hartley revealed any names of their accomplices, and it was assumed that neither showed any remorse for their lawless actions.

I’ve discovered an unpublished description of that weekend’s events which reveal that such an assumption may not be totally correct, at least in the case of Hartley.

Sometime late on Sunday, Hartley, perhaps knowing that his end was near, requested to speak to someone in a spiritual capacity.

Much has been written of the actions and attitudes of the Church of England minister Reverend Hammond Roberson following the attack on the mill. Charlotte Brontë would portray Rev Roberson as the strong minded Rev Matthewson Helstone in *Shirley*. Clearly, a staunch Luddite baiting clergyman wouldn’t be the man Hartley wanted at his side. Fortunately for Hartley, the people at the inn were acquainted with a Moravian called William Sheard, who lived about a quarter of a mile away.

Br Sheard was not an ordained minister, but he did work with Br Pohlman at Wellhouse, and was authorised by the Church to take meetings and assist with preaching. The proposal to send for Br Sheard was readily accepted by Hartley and his relatives.

In an act of faith that would later be repeated by the Moravians Br La Trobe to Anne Brontë, and Reverend Henry Lauten to Mr Taylor, when Br Sheard heard it was Hartley’s own desire that he should visit, he immediately went to where the young man lay. He found Hartley very near his death, and too weak to say much.

Br Sheard was cautious about agitating Hartley's state of mind, and if any conversation took place about the dying man's accomplices, it is not recorded. Rather, Br Sheard concerned himself only with the religious reason for his visit, and in this matter he afterwards related the conversation to Br Pohlman.

"To those questions which related only to the awful and eternal concerns of his immortal Soul, he gave such answers as proved that he earnestly wished to be saved, tho' a great Sinner, and hoped thro' the all atoning sacrifice of Him to be accepted in mercy. As much as time and circumstances would permit, the imperious necessity of genuine repentance and true faith was impressed upon his mind; and upon his own request, fervent prayer was offered up to him, and the Saviour of Sinners, intreated for his mercy and blood's sake to pluck this poor Soul as a branch out of the burning and to save him from eternal death."

To these questions of repentance, Hartley replied "he had" and expressed himself very thankful for Br Sheard's visit, as did his relations who were "plunged into deep grief in consequence of this distressing circumstance". Hartley died soon after.

Br Pohlman reflected on what he had heard and Hartley's fate following this confession of sin.

"We can make no comments on this awful subject but only express a hope that the Lord, who in mercy grants him what may be called the eleventh hour, as he was not left dead on the field, but had time given him to reflect and cry for mercy - may have extended his mercy to him to the eternal Salvation of his Soul."

The Moravian minister Reverend Richard Grimes, who succeeded Br Pohlman at Wellhouse towards the end of 1812, prior to taking up a ministry at Gomersal, also offered up a prayer for Hartley in the Mirfield chapel's end of year summary:

"Memorabilia 1812: ...The sick both in & out of our connection have been visited with blessings, some of the latter have departed rejoicing in hope of the glory of God being brought to an acquaintance with their last conscience and redemption in the blood of Jesus by means of the Holy Spirit applying what was said to them on their death beds. We even hope this was the case with one of the 2 persons that were shot in the riotous scenes at Mr Cartwright's Mill, Rawfolds."

Interesting connections:

Possibly the first friendly face to arrive at Rawfolds Mill after the attack was that of Thomas Cockill - a dyer from Liversedge and a friend of Mr Cartwright. A petition to a local Justice of the Peace asking for soldiers to be stationed in the valley as a deterrent to the growing threat of Luddism was signed by Thomas Cockill, Hammond Roberson and several others on 29th February 1812, just a few weeks before the attack.

A Thomas Cockill from Liversedge was married to Hannah Greenfield in 1808. Their daughters - another Hannah, Sarah and Elizabeth - would grow up to run the school at Oakwell Hall during the time of Charlotte Brontë. Elizabeth Cockill would be a pupil at Roe Head with Charlotte Brontë and her friends Ellen Nussey and Mary Taylor.

Ellinor Cockill, Thomas's sister, married the Moravian minister Reverend James Liley in 1807 (Thomas and another sister, Lydia, are witnesses on the marriage certificate). In 1821 Br and Sr Liley had a daughter called Mary. Br Liley became Gomersal's minister in 1823, immediately prior to Br Grimes's second ministry there. As a child, Mary attended Fulneck School with some of the Grimes children and a 'real' Jane Eyre. In her memoirs, Mary recalls her aunt and cousins' Oakwell Hall School, where Mary taught music. Mary also attended Birstall church with her Cockill cousins and Ellen Nussey, and Rev Hammond Roberson's church in Liversedge with her uncle and aunt. At Liversedge church, she remembers seeing Mr Cartwright amongst the congregation.

Mentioned alongside Thomas Cockill on the petition of February 1812 was James Lister, landlord of the Shears Inn (at that time called the Clothworker's Arms) when the Luddites plotted there. Several generations of the Lister family have lived in Hightown and some were amongst the first subscribers for the building of the Gomersal Moravian chapel in 1751. One of the descendants of James Lister's relations was Jane Lister Charlesworth, a Moravian at Gomersal who married Joshua Taylor. Joshua was the older brother of Charlotte Brontë's friend, Mary Taylor. (See Henry Lauten's meetings with Mr Taylor).

James La Trobe's letter to William Scruton about meeting Anne Brontë, with an additional letter by James Connor.

As an elderly bishop writing almost forty years after the event, Rt Rev James La Trobe was to recall his visits to Anne Brontë in a letter to a fellow Moravian, the historian and Brontë biographer William Scruton. Scruton revealed the content of the letter in *Reminiscences of the Late Miss Ellen Nussey*. He said that Charlotte Brontë's life-long friend Ellen Nussey was said to have taken much interest in the letter.

Scruton's article prompted much speculation as to why the daughter of an Anglican priest would send for a Moravian minister when suffering a crisis of faith. Whatever the reason, the reassuring words Br La Trobe spoke to Anne would remain with her for the rest of her life.

It's worth mentioning a few words about Br La Trobe's wife. Scruton's *Reminiscences* not only made reference to the ministers Br La Trobe and Br Lauten, but also to the Moravian Reverend Richard Grimes. Br Grimes had been the minister at the Gomersal Moravian girl's school when Ellen Nussey was a pupil there. As both the girl's school and minister's house adjoined the chapel, Ellen would have known of Br Grimes's first born child, a daughter called Mary. Mary married Br La Trobe in 1833. It wasn't unusual for a minister to visit the sick with his wife, so Mary could well have accompanied Br La Trobe when he received the call to visit Anne.

In *Reminiscences*, Scruton chose not to include details of a letter from yet another Moravian minister, a minister with which he was well acquainted, the Reverend James Connor. Perhaps he felt Br La Trobe's letter had confirmed all that needed to be known. However, Br Connor's letter was instrumental in prompting Scruton's correspondence with Br La Trobe. This second letter gives a slightly different perspective of the 1837 meetings. I should point out, however, that Br Connor was only providing his interpretation of events from the point of view of a third party, whereas Br La Trobe was speaking from first hand experience, albeit both letters were written many years after Anne's death.

I feared the whereabouts of Br La Trobe's complete letter may be unknown, but I discovered it amongst Scruton's papers, deposited in the West Yorkshire Archives in Bradford.

Rather than comment further, I thought it worthwhile instead to reproduce in the following two pages the passages of text from both minister's letters where they refer to Anne Brontë, transcribed from the original letters written by the minister's own hand.

From James Connor to William Scruton:

Ockbrook nr. Derby. Aug 8th 1876

My dear Br Scruton,

I hasten to answer your enquiries, though I regret that the information at my command is but very meagre. When Br James La Trobe was minister at Wellhouse, he was asked to visit Anne Brontë during an illness she had at Roe Head, the Vicar of Mirfield, in whose parish Roe Head is situated, being from home at the time. Br La Trobe, if I mistake not, had several interviews with her and was very much struck by her thoughtful, enquiring turn of mind. This is all I remember hearing Br La Trobe say, except that he added, "I believe I have some memoranda of the visits somewhere." I have no doubt Br La Trobe would gladly give you further information.

The lines you quote of Anne Brontë's are exceedingly beautiful; they have a spirit of submissive resignation and fervent devotedness. She had, unquestionably, a much clearer apprehension of Gospel truth than her more highly gifted sister Charlotte.

I have lately been engaged in preparing three Papers for the Messenger on John Wesley, consisting chiefly of extracts from his unpublished Letters to James Hutton in our Provincial Archives. I think you will read them with interest. Cossart, whose remarkable life I contributed to the July number, was great-grandfather to Br A.C. Hasse of Lower Wyke.

I regretted very much not having an opportunity of seeing you at Whitsuntide, when I had the pleasure of shaking hands with most of our dear Horton members. I rejoice to learn that you are now comfortable in your present situation.

Sr Connor unites with me in kind love to Sr Scruton and yourself, and believe me your affectionate Brother.

James Connor

Best love to all Horton friends.

From James La Trobe to William Scruton

Victoria Square, Cotham, Bristol. 15 August 1876

Mr Wm Scruton, Bowling, Bradford.

Dear Brother,

After looking over my Diaries from 1836 to 1841, the period of my ministry in Mirfield, written so small as to require a magnifying glass, I have failed to find the brief entry or entries then made of my visits to A. Brontë & being just now very busy preparing for leaving home, & so I cannot progress the search any further. Indeed it is little beyond what Br Connor told you, that I should find as tho' I saw she was no common character, yet I did not apprehend anything out of the usual course of my sick visits, which were then very numerous.

She was suffering from a severe attack of gastric fever, which brought her very low, & her voice was only a whisper, her life hung on a slender thread. She soon got over the shyness, natural on seeing a perfect stranger, the words of love from Jesus opened her ear to my words, & she was very grateful for my visits (perhaps three). I found her well acquainted with the main truths of the Bible respecting our salvation but seeing them more thro' the law than the gospel, more as a requirement from God than his gift in his Son, but her heart opened to the sweet news of salvation, pardon, & peace in the blood of Christ, & she accepted his welcome to the weary and heavy laden sinner, conscious more of her not loving the Lord her God than of acts of enmity to Him, and had she died then I should have counted her his redeemed and ransomed child. It was not till I read Charlotte's life that I recognised my interesting patient, at Roe Head, where a Christian influence pervaded the establishment, & its decided discipline.

I am sorry I can tell you no more.

[Paragraph omitted as unrelated to Anne Brontë]

I am Yours affectionately,

James La Trobe.

Interesting connections:

Several of Anne Brontë's poems have been used in Moravian hymn books. They may have included the verses that had so moved Br Connor when he wrote "The lines you quote of Anne Brontë's are exceedingly beautiful; they have a spirit of submissive resignation and fervent devotedness."

The Moravian Hymn Book with Supplement published in 1911 included three of Anne's poems, shown here with their hymn number and first verse:

#236

Oppressed with sin and woe,
A burdened heart I bear;
Opposed by many a mighty foe,
But I will not despair.

(Six verses from *Confidence*. Written by Anne whilst at Thorpe Green, June 1st 1845.)

#370

Spirit of faith, be thou my guide!
O clasp my hand in thine!
And let me never quit thy side;
Thy comforts are divine.

(Six verses. Adapted from *The Three Guides*. Written August 11th, 1847. This hymn also appears as hymn #311 in *The Moravian Hymn Book and Liturgy* from 1960, which is still used by the Moravian Church today.)

#881

Believe not those who say
The upward path is smooth,
Lest thou shouldst stumble in my way
And faint before the truth.

(Six verses. Adapted from *The Narrow Way*. Written April 24th 1848.)

Henry Lauten's meetings with Mr Taylor.

'We were all there,' said Miss Mary - 'mamma and all of us. We even persuaded papa to go. Hannah would insist upon it. But he fell asleep while Mr. Langweilig, the German Moravian minister, was speaking. I felt quite ashamed, he nodded so. 'And there was Dr. Broadbent,' cried Hannah - 'such a beautiful speaker.'

Charlotte Brontë knew about the Moravian chapel at Gomersal, and probably visited it several times. The Chapel was only fifteen minutes walk from Mary Taylor's home (now Red House Museum), connected by both a road and a number of footpaths. In Charlotte's time, the land between the two buildings was uninterrupted, with few or no buildings between Gomersal Hill Top and the chapel. Charlotte was acquainted with the chapel's minister, Rev Henry Lauten. Maybe she had met him at Red House, or listened to him preaching in the chapel. However she became acquainted with Br Lauten, she felt she knew him well enough to depict him in her novel *Shirley* as the German Moravian minister, Mr Langweilig.

Charlotte's good friends Mary Taylor, Ellen Nussey and Ellen's sisters had strong associations with the Gomersal chapel. Ellen had been a pupil at its school during the ministry of Rev Richard Grimes and continued to sit in on services there into her old age. Along with Ellen, Mary Taylor may also have been a pupil at the chapel's girl's school, before moving on to Roe Head. Mary's eldest brother, Joshua Taylor, married a Moravian. Joshua would also become a member of the Gomersal Moravian congregation.

Although Br La Trobe was never a resident minister at Gomersal, he sometimes preached there when he was still the minister at Wellhouse, Mirfield.

Br Lauten was to mirror Br La Trobe and Anne Brontë's conversations on doctrines and salvation at Mary Taylor's home in Gomersal, when his presence was requested at the Taylor's Red House by Mary's family in March 1840. Although depicted in a different setting, the events that took place between Br Lauten and the Taylor's over the next ten months show a remarkable similarity to the scene with 'Mr Langweilig' in *Shirley*. The background to those events started a few years earlier.

Henry Lewis William Lautenschläger was born in Weinsberg, Germany in 1772. More commonly known as Rev Henry Lauten, he moved into the Manse at Gomersal Moravian chapel in January 1836 and would remain its minister for the next ten years. It was a decade that would see many changes for Charlotte and Mary. The day that Charlotte and her sister Anne Brontë returned to Roe Head, Br Lauten visited families in Great Gomersal, presumably calling at the Taylor's Red House for the first time.

The woman in Br Lauten's congregation who accepted Joshua Taylor's proposal of marriage was the Single Sister Jane Lister Charlesworth. Joshua and Jane were married by Rev Hammond Roberson in Liversedge at Christ Church on Thursday 13th September, 1838 - the Moravian chapel not having been licensed to conduct weddings at that time. That day, Br Lauten wrote of the newly married couple:

"He has for a length of time been a regular attendant at our chapel, and is - we believe - a serious character, under which circumstances, she will be allowed to keep her privileges as a member of our Church."

Charlotte makes no mention of the marriage in her letter to Ellen Nussey in October 1838, although it seems that Mary and her sister Martha Taylor, who had been on holiday in Wales, only just made it back in time for their brother's wedding!

Thus began Joshua Taylor's association with Br. Lauten and the Moravian Church at Gomersal. Over the next twelve months, Br Lauten and his wife were to visit and "take tea" several times with Br and Sr Taylor at their home in Spen Hall. From Br Lauten's notes, we learn that Sr Taylor was subject to "bilious headaches".

In September 1839, whilst Sr Taylor was pregnant with their first child, Br Taylor injured his knees in a fall. He was confined to bed at Red House, where he was visited by his friend Br Lauten. A few weeks later, Br Taylor had recovered sufficiently to return to his normal business, and in time for the birth of their child on 28th October 1839 - a boy whom Br and Sr Taylor asked Br. Lauten to baptise in November.

It appears Br. Lauten left a favourable impression with Mary Taylor's family from his visits to Red House. In March Mary's father, Mr Taylor, was afflicted with a serious illness. Like Anne Brontë a couple of years earlier, Mr Taylor was struck by a great mental anguish. Conventional Brontë history states that Mr Taylor showed no preference towards any religious body, but in *Shirley*, Charlotte Brontë may have left us a clue as to the state of affairs in the Taylor household:

Theoretically, Mr Yorke placed all sects and churches on a level. Mrs Yorke awarded the palm to the Moravians and Quakers, on account of the crown of humility by these worthies worn.

Charlotte's use of the word "humility" is interesting. It is a reference we shall be returning to later.

Whilst the family doctor was summonsed to tend to Mr Taylor's physical agony, Mr Taylor was persuaded to send for the Moravian Br Lauten for religious relief and guidance. When Br. Lauten arrived at the Red House on the evening of 9th March, 1840, he found Mr Taylor confined to his room with a serious and painful illness. Br. Lauten wrote in his diary:

"Had some profitable conversation with him as to his eternal interests and prayed with him".

Only three days later, Br. Taylor called at the Red House again, recording

"...had some satisfactory conversation with [Mr Taylor]. At his request engaged in prayer, his wife and daughters being present."

Throughout 1840 Br Lauten selflessly and tirelessly continued to comfort Mr Taylor, often calling on him weekly, sometimes twice a week. Their discussions were deeply religious. Through his painful and lingering illness, Mr Taylor suffered greatly, and was aware that the time of his death must be nearing, but he took reassurance from Br. Lauten's visits. They prayed together often. It must have been a deeply distressing time for Mr Taylor's wife Ann, and their children. They welcomed Br. Lauten into their home, and would frequently assemble as a family in the presence of this engaging Moravian minister to listen to what he had to say. It must be remembered that, like Anne Brontë and Samuel Hartley before him, Mr Taylor was not a member of the Moravian Church. Yet, like Mrs La Trobe and Sheard, Br Lauten faithfully did what he could, and as much as he would have done with any member of his congregation. Br. Lauten visited Mr Taylor at his home over thirty times between March and December that fateful year, and their conversations are peppered with references to prayer, profitable discourse, doctrine, redemption and salvation.

Charlotte Brontë was another visitor to the Taylors and Red House during this time. She may have been amongst the groups Br Lauten noted as being present at some of his conversations with Mr Taylor. There is much similarity between Br. Lauten's conversations with Mr Taylor and what we know of Br La Trobe's visits with Anne Brontë, and this may not have been lost on Charlotte. Perhaps reports of the meetings found their way back to Anne Brontë, re-kindling memories from those worrying days at Roe Head, and strengthening the dialogue she would later commit to prose in scenes from *Agnes Grey*.

Two days before Christmas Day, 1840, Br. Lauten visited Red House. Mr Taylor appeared to be more comfortable, acknowledging the words of the gospel and accepting his fate. The minister wrote:

"Visited Mr. Taylor of Great Gomersal and found him less afflicted with pain. Commended him in prayer to our compassionate Saviour."

On 29th December, Br. Lauten received the news that Mr Taylor had died during the night.

A few days later, on a snow covered Monday afternoon, Mr Taylor's funeral was held at the family's private burial ground in the wood behind Red House. It was attended by his family, a few of his work people and the fellow mill owner, Thomas Burnley. Fulfilling a wish that had been made by Mr Taylor some time before, he was laid to rest by Br. Lauten, who:

"offered up a prayer at the grave, and concluded with the New Testament blessing".

Charlotte Brontë reflected on Mr Taylor's death the day before his funeral, when she wrote to Ellen Nussey.

I received the news in your last with no surprise, and with the feeling that this removal must be a relief to Mr Taylor himself and even to his family. The bitterness of death was past a year ago. when it was first discovered that his illness must terminate fatally; all between has been lingering suspense. This is at an end now, and the present certainty, however sad, is better than the former doubt.

Let's pause briefly to look at the elements that made up Br Lauten's visits and Mr Taylor's death.

We have Mr Taylor, who is Mary's father or 'papa'. He is persuaded to meet with the German Moravian minister. At various times, all the family are present, including Mr Taylor's wife, Mary's 'mamma'. Mr Taylor finds comfort in the words he hears, accepting his lot and attesting to his sins. At times, a doctor would have been present.

By comparison, let's return to Charlotte's portrayal of Henry Lauten as Mr Langweilig in *Shirley*.

'We were all there,' said Miss Mary - 'mamma and all of us. We even persuaded papa to go. Hannah would insist upon it. But he fell asleep while Mr. Langweilig, the German Moravian minister, was speaking. I felt quite ashamed, he nodded so.'
'And there was Dr. Broadbent,' cried Hannah - 'such a beautiful speaker.'

Using 'Langweilig' as the Moravian minister's name appears to be an unflattering term, as langweilig is the German word for boring, as in not very interesting! It could be that this is how Charlotte thought of Br Lauten. But, it may instead have been a reference to a character trait reflected by the word 'humility', as was used in the sentence "on account of the crown of humility by these worthies worn", i.e. a positive characteristic meaning Br Lauten was a humble man, considering himself to be not very interesting. This reference to an air of humility is further reflected in the phrase "I felt quite ashamed".

I found such a play on words to be entertaining food for thought. My interpretation may not be as far fetched as some may think. Brontë scholars know that Charlotte was cleverly adept at creating two or more meanings within a single paragraph or sentence. Br James Connor, when writing to the Brontë historian William Scruton, was of the opinion that Charlotte was 'highly gifted'. Despite Charlotte's protestations to the contrary, Scruton acknowledged her skills by recognising that she would often take characters and situations that she experienced in real life, and then creatively reinvent them in new locations and scenes. Ellen Nussey provided proof of this by pinpointing the places described in Charlotte's novels for the publisher's illustrated editions. Charlotte's circle of family and friends evidently spent much time identifying themselves within the pages of her books, and no doubt some will have recognised scenes that conveyed a personal message or meaning to them. Br Taylor, Mr Taylor's son, perceived the depth of Charlotte's private knowledge of his family when, after reading *Shirley*, he said:

"Either my brother Joe wrote that book, or someone who knew him very intimately".

A final point to make here is Charlotte's use of the phrase "papa... fell asleep" as a metaphor for Mr Taylor's death. It may simply be a reference to Mr Taylor literally having died in his sleep. But it is also a religious metaphor. There are several examples in the Bible of sleep meaning death.

Moravian minister's often recorded someone who had died as having 'fallen asleep'. Emily Brontë alluded to the metaphor in her poem *Sleep Brings No Joy*. The same theme is used by one of Charlotte's favourite poets, John Milton, in his epic *Paradise Lost*. The theme of sleep representing death connects the fictional world of 'Briarmains' and the 'Yorke' in *Shirley*, via Milton's *Paradise Lost*, to the real life home and family events of the Taylors.

The Oxford Companion to the Brontë's says this about Milton:

A favourite of Revd. Patrick Brontë, Milton was familiar to the Brontë siblings from childhood, and his works echo in their juvenilia, novels, and Charlotte's letters. In her fiction Charlotte quotes from... in all four of her novels... Paradise Lost. A reference to Milton in Shirley captures a personal association for Charlotte: the Yorke family's residence Briarmains, an attractive site of both familial comfort and aesthetic culture, features stained glass windows depicting Shakespeare and Milton, details derived from the home of her girlhood friend Mary Taylor.

Whatever Charlotte's intentions were with this part of *Shirley*, the reasons for the Mr Taylor favouring a Moravian minister to hear his confessions cannot be in doubt.

Interesting connections:

The special relationship the Taylors held with the Moravians did not begin with Br Lauten. As early as 1797, Reverend John Hartley, the Moravian minister and headmaster at Fulneck School, was asked to preach at the Taylor's private chapel, probably one of the first ministers invited to do so. This Br Hartley did in August that year, after taking his service at Gomersal chapel. He was a popular speaker. It is on record that he preached to a "numerous auditory".

Br Lauten's service to Mr Taylor may not have been the only Taylor family event that Charlotte attempted to capture in *Shirley*. I draw the reader's attention to the following passage:

It may be supposed that the children of such a pair were not likely to turn out quite ordinary, commonplace beings; and they were not. You see six of them, reader: the youngest is a baby on the mother's knee; it is all her own yet - and that one she has not yet began to doubt, suspect, condemn; it derives its sustenance from her, it hangs on her, it clings to her, it loves her above everything else in the world: she is sure of that, because, as it lives by her, it cannot be otherwise, therefore she loves it.

The children in question are those of the 'Yorke' family. Established understanding is that the 'Yorke' are based on Mr Taylor's family. One reason for this is that Mr Taylor's children (six of them) can be matched to the six 'Yorke' children. However, there is a debate as to whether the baby 'Yorke' corresponds to the youngest member of the Taylor family, William Waring Taylor.

I propose a different theory. It is based upon facts that are not documented in Brontë textbooks.

Notice how Charlotte doesn't give the baby a name, or a gender. Instead, the baby is referred to as "it" eight times in a single paragraph.

Br Joshua Taylor married Sr Jane Lister Charlesworth in 1838. Jane was a descendant from the Hightown family of Lister's (amongst them James Lister, the landlord at Shears Inn from where the Luddites plotted their attack of Rawfolds mill).

After Mr Taylor's death, Br and Sr Taylor and their growing family lived at the Red House until 1845. Charlotte uses the house as her description for 'Briarmains' in *Shirley*. Charlotte's account of the Luddites in *Shirley* mirrors the social unrest Br Taylor faced as a mill owner in the 1840s, including the 1842 Chartist riots in Gomersal. By the time Charlotte was finishing *Shirley*, Br and Sr Taylor already had five children, but were expecting a sixth.

It took Charlotte several attempts to finish *Shirley*, interrupted as she was by the tragic deaths of her siblings Branwell, Emily and Anne. Whilst Sr Taylor wasn't pregnant with her sixth child when Charlotte began writing *Shirley*, Charlotte may have been encouraged by the pregnancy as a symbol for new life after so much death. Is it possible that Charlotte chose to keep the baby 'Yorke' genderless and nameless in anticipation of Br and Sr Taylor's impending new born?

The first printing of *Shirley* was published at the end of October 1849. Br and Sr Taylor's baby was born just a few weeks later - a baby girl. However, you will not find any details of this sixth Taylor child from 1849 in any of the history books. She does not appear in any published Taylor family tree. Why is this?

Unfortunately, the child died at birth. Br and Sr Taylor's stillborn infant was quietly interred in God's Acre, the Gomersal Moravian chapel's burial ground, in December 1849.

Like the baby in Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley*, she remained nameless.

These notes are a work in progress and may be edited, corrected, amended, or added to by me as I continue my journey of discovery. This version as of 24 November 2015.

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Recommended Reading

Reminiscences of the Late Miss Ellen Nussey by William Scruton BST Volume 1, Issue 8 (01 March 1898), pp.23-42

The Rescue: James La Trobe and Anne Brontë by Margaret Connor BST Volume 24, Issue 1 (01 April 1999), pp.55-56

Fact to Fiction: Anne Brontë Replicates La Trobe's Biblically Inspired Advice in Scenes from Agnes Grey by Mary Summers BST Vol 37, Issue 4 (November 2012), pp.352-358

Shirley by Charlotte Brontë, 1849

Spenn Valley: Past and Present by Frank Peel, 1893

William Scruton's Scrapbooks, WYAS: Bradford DB5/C39

Charlotte Brontë and her 'dearest Nell' by Barbara Whitehead, 1993

The Letters of Charlotte Brontë Volume One 1829-1847 edited by Margaret Smith, 1995

The Poems of Anne Brontë by Edward Chitham, 1979

The Oxford Companion to the Brontës, Alexander & Smith, 2006

Gomersal and Mirfield Moravian Church Archives, WYAS: Bradford

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Brontë 200 Network

**2016 celebrates the 200th anniversary of Charlotte Brontë's birth.
Look out for the Brontë 200 Network and get involved.**