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Magazine

Volume 9 Number 3
Spring 2020

**THE
CONGREGATIONAL
HISTORY
SOCIETY
MAGAZINE**

Volume 9 No 3 Spring 2020

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EDITORIAL

This issue contains the first part of Roger Ottewill's survey of Congregationalism in Portsmouth since 1750. This is a major town and the story there may be singular or representative of wider trends. Roger concentrates on the ministers, following the surviving records, but one should like to know more of the church members. He will continue this story in our next issue. We also have the delights of Chris Idle's admiration and exploration of the twentieth century hymnwriter, Albert F Bayly. The title, 'Quietly Rejoicing', may sum up the curious fact that Bayly's fine work has not received the praise accorded to others. It may be that he was almost too British—modest and unassuming—but those adjectives also point to clear Christian virtues. We may hope that, in some small way, this article will bring Bayly's hymns a little more attention. Thirdly we have a short article highlighting in this commemorative year, 400 years after the sailing of the *Mayflower*, that other religious refugees found a haven in the Netherlands at that time. The *Mayflower* is also mentioned in our notes from the Secretary and in the book reviews.

I should be pleased, as ever, to have from readers their responses to these articles and news of their activities, relevant to our theme.

NEWS AND VIEWS

Readers may be pleased to know that old copies of the *CHS Magazine* and its predecessor, *The Congregational History Circle Magazine*, are available online. This work, begun by Digby James (at conghistsoc.org.uk), has been taken forward by Rob Bradshaw, to whom our gratitude is due. This is a work in progress and further past issues remain to be added with a three year gap between the on line version and the current issue. We should be pleased to have your responses to this development. The web address is: biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_congregational-history-circle-01.php

Congregational Lecture

Our CHS treasurer, Christopher Damp, has reported on meeting the 2019 Congregational lecturers, Prof Jeanne Shami and Dr Anne James of the University of Regina, Canada, whose lecture is among those items reviewed:

'We had a lovely time chatting over supper at the Reform Club with Jeanne and Anne after the lecture. They were a real delight! I greatly enjoyed their

Congregational Lecture which prompted me to look out a book of manuscript sermons preached at a Congregational church in Kent in 1712. J and A will come and examine this next time they are over here. I was also prompted to look at some eighteenth century printed sermons—I found several funeral sermons for children which were fascinating. So it opened up something new for me! I thought it was a very good evening, although we perhaps need to think about lectures in the future which don't always focus upon a historic subject.'

Jeff Cox

It is with a heavy heart that I must report that one of our long-time members, Professor Jeffrey Cox, of the University of Iowa, died unexpectedly in February. He taught British history there after completing his PhD from Harvard where he was considered the brightest star of his very bright year. A Texan, with a love for the churches, Jeff was an Anglophile who invariably studied every summer in the British Library and delighted in visits to the London theatres with his wife, Lois, a professor of law at Iowa. Brought up a Southern Baptist, Jeff joined the Society of Friends. Some five years ago, he and Lois entertained the Democratic senator, Bernie Sanders, in their home where they and others were instrumental in persuading Sanders to run for the US presidency.

CORRESPONDENCE

On receiving the autumn 2019 issue of the *CHS Magazine*, Michael Fleming turned immediately to the article on Geoffrey Nuttall and Shropshire. Having encountered Geoffrey in person once, Michael was rather taken with this piece and now plans to visit Church Stretton! GFN would be pleased.

However Barry Osborne's timely note on nonconformist worship practices gained more notice.

John Thompson wrote:

'Barry Osborne's piece on *Pastors and Priests* emphasises the generally understood vocational differences between the two and counsels against the use of certain words and practises by the former which tend to obscure this difference. Most will agree that his examples could be read that way but there is also the bigger point that a plain Nonconformist ... communion service as a simple memorial may appear to deny the presence of Christ, of which the elements are a powerful symbol. Christ used those elements himself as symbols of his own sacrifice. We reverence Him by reverencing them. If certain words have crossed traditions it may be an attempt to meet this point rather than ...

imply a belief in transubstantiation. The old habit of leaving during the last hymn may be less than it was but the idea of communion as an add-on still survives. Nonconformist chaplains in the Great War learnt that men before a battle saw communion as a great personal need, whoever conducted it in whatever way; this was a revelation compared with their experience at home. Words used have to match that need.'

Also commenting on Barry Osborne's comments, Ian Gregory wrote:

'I was pleased to read Barry Osborne's plea for a proper regard of our heritage. I had to remind a minister recently (with due courtesy) that his benediction should not ask a parting blessing on 'you' but on 'us' as we are not priests. Neither does the minister have a priestly function at the communion service. A curious issue has also arisen over extempore prayer, and I hesitate to point it out, as the minister is otherwise well ordered in this area. His prayers have become by my understanding mini sermons, in that he is usually talking ABOUT God, whereas I have always thought intercession is TO God.'

Ian made a second but allied point:

'The Congregational church at Newcastle-under-Lyme has a side pulpit, leaving the communion table exposed. I gather that at one time the table was fenced off from the congregation, as in Anglican and Methodist churches. However during the 1920s the fence was removed, and the pulpit taken from the middle of the church to the side, so that we can all see what a pretty pipe organ we have.'

Finally Ian Gregory ventured his verdict on our magazine:

'The *CHS Magazine* as a whole is very well worth reading. I have written to Gordon Campbell in appreciation of his recent article on the Bible women of Scotland. My wife, who was brought up in the churches mentioned, was heartened by it, as was I. In retirement my father led a harbourside church in Aberdeen which was mentioned in a recent BBC election broadcast, which recalled that it was built as a Congregational Church.'

On another score Roger Ottewill writes,

'In correspondence published in the last edition of the *CHS Mag* I mentioned that Avenue St Andrews (ASA) URC, Southampton was seeking financial support for a major renovation project. Thanks to a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund this is now underway, one strand being the exploration of 'the congregation's story as a church that helps others.' This is being pursued by a team of volunteers, including myself. We are focussing on three main themes: (1) the use made of the Church Hall during World War 1 as a social and

recreation centre for troops billeted on the adjoining Southampton Common prior to their embarkation for France; (2) Isaac Watts was born in Southampton and had close familial links with Above Bar Congregational Church from which ASA claims lineal descent; and (3) James Cubitt, who designed Avenue Congregational Church, the predecessor of ASA. Quoting from the project overview document, the wider educational outcomes are:

- A permanent record ... displayed through a heritage trail ... [in] the church sanctuary using information banners.
- Interpretation and leaflets for 'self-guided' tours ... the objective [being] to share the story of the church and enhance appreciation of the building's architectural heritage by regular users and casual visitors alike.
- An Open Day to celebrate the work.

It is planned to produce these by summer 2020. Help is being sought from experts, such as Clyde Binfield. Should any readers of *CHS Mag* have any thoughts on, or experience of, such projects, particularly the educational aspects, please get in touch. My email address is rogerottewill@btinternet.com.'

With regard to women's ministry, Roger Stuart has written:

'I have an excellent publication *A Short History of Baptist Women in Ministry* by Baptists Together which traces a time line from 1640. In 1917 it generously shows Constance Coltman because Mansfield College, Oxford was then a joint Congregational/Baptist college. However in 1990 they erroneously have Caroline Eglin as the first woman chaplain in the British armed forces, somehow managing to overlook Elsie Chamberlain in 1946.' Roger intended to notify the BU.'

SECRETARY'S NOTES

'O Mayflower, ship of fair renown'

I sang it for the first time sixty years ago this year. I've tried tracking down the words but have failed. In September 1960 I was issued with my school hymn book which I kept for the four years of primary school. It was an abridged *Songs of Praise*, complete with prayers for the church year and published by Leicester Education Authority. Inside the back cover we stuck the words of the school hymn. I can almost hum the tune. I suspect it made for a better sing than I realised at the time. By the time I left I could sing it by heart. Now all that remains in my memory is the opening line: 'O Mayflower, ship of fair renown ...'.

Mayflower Junior School had opened in 1951. My mother had joined the staff two years before I arrived. I grew up with the Mayflower Story: the school badge, school assemblies, projects ... you name it, we did it! I may have moved to secondary school by the time it came out but I was proud to have the Jackdaw folder of facsimile documents compiled by Richard Tames, *The Mayflower and the Pilgrim Fathers*, with its record of the Pilgrims' request to settle in Leyden, pages from Edward Winslow's 1624 pamphlet encouraging more settlers, an extract from William Bradford's *A History of Plimouth Plantation*, and broadsheet 'newspaper' accounts of 'the England they left', 'the Mayflower' and 'Of Plimoth Plantation'. For the 350th anniversary, my father painted and constructed an Airfix model of the *Mayflower* which took pride of place in my mother's classroom.

The narrative I grew up with idolised the *Mayflower* and the Pilgrims. It was a tale of flight from religious persecution, of the pursuit of freedom and an egalitarian approach to church life and civic life. The narrative involved the separation of church and state, the affirmation of the Congregational way of being church, and the beginnings of democracy in the United States and in Britain. A hymn of choice at church was then the anthemic *We limit not the truth of God to our poor reach of mind*, with its rousing chorus based on John Robinson's parting words in Leiden: *The Lord hath yet more light and truth to break forth from his word!*

In the 1970s disillusionment set in. Having grown up with the Lone Ranger and Tonto, the Wild West and Cowboys and Indians, I began to feel ill at ease with this world. Were the American Indians really the baddies? Might it have been the other way round? What about the indigenous American peoples who the 'Pilgrim Fathers' encountered? The first broadsheet in my Jackdaw Folder was proudly headed, 'the First Colony'. I can't remember when I began to lose faith in the 'Pilgrim Fathers', whether it was a TV documentary or the publication of a book.

By 2000 I felt more than uneasy about the earlier narrative. The story of the *Mayflower* had lost importance. The hymn I so liked singing was omitted from subsequent hymn books and I rarely chose it when using *Congregational Praise*. A number of factors drew me back to their story.

My wife and I had our first holiday in Holland, staying in the seaside resort of Wijk aan Zee. On a trip to Leiden we browsed through leaflets on the rack in the station concourse. One offered a working tour in the footsteps of the Pilgrims. It shaped our day and has shaped my re-discovery of a period of history that had once been so influential. We went to John Robinson's church, to the landing stage from which they set off for Rotterdam where they would embark on the *Speedwell*, and to the so-called Leiden American Pilgrim museum. (www.leidenamericanpilgrimuseum.org) It was a small early seventeenth century house furnished as it would have been in 1620 and home to a small but fascinating museum. We spoke to the person we took to be the janitor. Two

hours later our riveting conversation with Jeremy Bangs ended and I had a new perspective on the Pilgrims. Jeremy Bangs had spent a lifetime researching those first Pilgrims. He was then working on his magnum opus, *Strangers and Pilgrims, Travellers and Sojourners: Leiden and the Foundations of Plymouth Plantation* (General Society of Mayflower Descendants, 2009). His contribution to a major book on *Recent Themes in Early American History: Historians in Conversation* edited by D A Yerxa (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2008) was about to come out with its wonderful title 'Re-bunking the Pilgrims'.

Bangs had researched in the Leiden archives and in the USA. He held that the first Pilgrims had been fairer to the indigenous peoples than subsequent generations. Indeed, the story making such headway since the 70s, that the settlers had cheated the indigenous peoples of their land by getting them drunk had been mis-read. In fact, those guilty of that were tried and judged by the settlers whose legal system decided in favour of the American peoples. Bangs showed us an engraving of a whale, beached between Scheveningen and Katwijk, and said it had played a vital role in the development of the thinking. He remonstrated with me when I tried to take a photo of the print. 'You must wait until it's published,' he said. It is on page 508 of *Strangers and Pilgrims*. The sixty-foot whale had died on the beach and became a tourist attraction. Among those searching for meaning was the Mennonite historian and theologian, Pieter Twisck, who was gathering material for a history of the world conceived as a history of the downfall of tyranny. That, however, was not what had brought Twisck to that part of the world. A Mennonite, he had come to Leiden to engage in discussions with the separatists there. John Robinson was not persuaded of his Mennonite views, either on baptism or pacifism. 'Nonetheless,' Bangs continued, 'the visit introduced Robinson to the author of the first history or compendium of sentiments in favour of religious toleration' which was published in 1609 with a long title that starts, *Religion's Freedom, A brief Chronological Description of the Freedom of Religion against the Coercion of Conscience*. That, Bangs suggested, left its mark on Robinson.

Soon after, we visited Scrooby and Gainsborough for the first time and the story of the flight from persecution caught my imagination again. Someone who later became secretary of my church in Cheltenham had recently retired to Cheltenham. She had been a veterinary surgeon in Plymouth and with the local Soroptomists had been instrumental in changing the plaque that marked the departure point of the Pilgrims. They had protested that it only contained the names of men, commemorating the so-called 'Pilgrim Fathers'. They insisted it be replaced with a plaque listing all the men, women and children, not as the 'Pilgrim Fathers', but as the Pilgrims. They were known as such until 1799: only in the nineteenth century had they been called the 'Pilgrim Fathers'. A return to the earlier description was long overdue. When the Congregational Federation

held its assembly in Plymouth we made our own pilgrimage to what I think of as Sue's plaque!

That weekend I also purchased two prints of the *Mayflower* setting off. I knew exactly how I should use one! It's a beautiful painting by K Vaudin (of the Deep Impressions studio in Plymouth see deepimpressions.co.uk). At the top is a quotation from William Bradford: 'As one small candle may light a thousand, so the light here kindled hath shone to many, yea in some sorte to our whole Nation.' I had one print framed and presented it to South Cerney United Church who placed it in their re-furbished foyer. A joint Methodist Congregational Federation church at the time Reta-May and Paul Matthews shared the leadership of the church. Paul contributed not only to the church but to the Methodist District and the Congregational Federation: we miss him greatly since his death in 2018. Reta-May, an American, was thrilled with the gift. My concern was that, as in many Methodist churches, a portrait of Wesley hung in the foyer but nothing represented the Congregational tradition. It felt wrong to install the portrait of a Congregational worthy. This painting seemed just right, standing for the light of religious freedom and toleration.

The other print took pride of place in the hall of our manse. I have long since lost my father's Airfix model of the *Mayflower* but have a smaller model that's just as evocative! Before I retired, Highbury had just purchased *Church Hymnary 4*. The tune Ellacombe appears three times. I saw to it that each copy had fastened to the inside back cover a copy of George Rawson's *We limit not the truth of God*. Changing hath to has, our fore-fathers to those fore-runners makes it a powerful contemporary hymn. It captures something precious in our tradition, not least an openness to Scripture and all that God has in store for us.

I should love to find the words of that school hymn but alas the school doesn't have a copy. It's good to see the *Mayflower* is still the school emblem and there's a thumbnail account of that historic voyage on the school website. They're having a special exhibition in summer term 2020 to mark the anniversary. How important it is to affirm the indigenous American peoples in marking the celebrations.

As I rekindle my passion for the Pilgrims, and my pride in Mayflower Junior school, I should like to focus on the quest for religious toleration that made its mark on John Robinson. During my mother's time at the school it welcomed its first pupils from what were called the West Indies. Towards the end of her time they welcomed children who with their families had fled Idi Amin's Uganda. Now it's a thoroughly multi-cultural school that takes pride in those who once fled religious persecution in search of freedom in the context of religious toleration.

PROSECUTING THE FAITH: CONGREGATIONALISM IN PORTSMOUTH

c. 1750–1972

PART I

Introduction

In the late summer of 1900 readers of the *Hampshire Telegraph* would have been able to familiarise themselves with the origins and subsequent development of Congregationalism in Portsmouth. Published in two parts, in a series devoted to various aspects of the history of Portsmouth, an extended article entitled, ‘A.D. 1746—How the Congregationalists came to Portsmouth and Prosecuted their Holy Faith’, appeared in successive editions of the newspaper.¹ The article was well illustrated with line drawings of key personalities and church buildings and highlighted the contribution made by Congregationalism to the spiritual life of Portsmouth from the second half of the eighteenth century to the late nineteenth century. Perhaps it is not unreasonable to suggest that underlying the article was the unspoken question of what next? Would Congregationalism continue to thrive or would the forces of secularisation, already apparent, stifle its progress and lead to its eclipse and eventual demise?

In this two part article it is intended to explore how Congregationalism in Portsmouth developed both before and after 1900. In so doing, the establishment, growth and decline of Portsmouth’s principal Congregational churches to the formation of the United Reformed Church in 1972 is charted. Particular attention is given to the pastors and ministers, who guided and sustained their churches during good times and bad. The text is divided into four sections. The first focuses on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when Congregationalism gained a foothold in Portsmouth. The second covers the rapid expansion of Congregationalism in the nineteenth century. The third concentrates on the Edwardian era, a time of consolidation. The fourth and final section charts the gradual decline of Congregationalism from the end of the First World War to the merger with the Presbyterians in 1972. This was characterised by a degree of resilience in response to the vicissitudes that the churches faced. The first two sections constitute Part I of the article and the second two sections, Part 2.

The narrative has been constructed from a variety of primary sources,

1 *Hampshire Telegraph* (hereafter *HT*) 15 August 1900 and 1 September 1900.

including local newspapers, church minute books, manuals and related records and the annual reports of the Hampshire Congregational Union. Where possible these have been supplemented with secondary sources, in particular a number of histories of the churches and chapels of Portsmouth.

Origins: The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

According to Bronwen, in an article published at the beginning of the twentieth century, both the vicar of Portsmouth, Benjamin Burgess, and the vicar of Portsea, William Bicknell, were ejected in 1662.² Burgess, together with two other ejected ministers, is reported as 'holding conventicles in Alverstoke malthouse, near Gosport ... [which were] frequented by hundreds of all sorts—sailors and tradesmen ... [while] Mr Bicknell went to Alton, and afterwards to Farnham'.³ Neither appears to have preached or held meetings within Portsmouth itself.

Until the mid-eighteenth century the historical record is silent as far as Independency in Portsmouth is concerned. This does not mean that nothing happened, simply that, to date, no traces of activity have been found. However, it seems likely that some foundations were laid, since with the Evangelical Revival there was sufficient positive interest in the preaching of George Whitefield and his followers. As it was put in the account published in the *Hampshire Telegraph*:

in all probability it was through ... [an] invitation sent by some earnest Christians of Portsmouth that the Rev. Mr Cennick visited the town about the year 1746 and preached in the open air. Then other ministers came ... and in 1749 George Whitefield himself. After his visit it would seem that a small society was formed ... With great energy this little community entered upon its work, arranging for the expenses of the preachers who visited them by collecting weekly subscriptions ...⁴

Assisted by further visits from Whitefield, numbers increased and having purchased a site in Orange Street on Portsmouth Common, the first Independent place of worship in Portsmouth was opened in 1754. Known as 'The Tabernacle' it measured 'fifty-three feet by thirty, though it was neither ceiled, plastered, nor floored'.⁵ In the words of Offord, this became 'the Mother Church of all Congregational Churches' in Portsmouth and environs.⁶

2 G Bronwen 'Congregationalism in Hampshire' in *Transactions of the Congregational History Society Vol 1 1901–1904* 283–98. For Bicknell and Burgess see A G Matthews *Calamy Revised* (1934) 53, 87.

3 Bronwen 'Congregationalism' 289.

4 *HT* 25 August 1900. For Cennick see *ODNB*.

5 *HT* 25 August 1900.

6 J Offord *Churches, Chapels and Places of Worship on Portsea Island* (Portsmouth 1989) 87.

Beginning ‘as a congregation of Calvinistic Methodists inspired by the preaching of George Whitefield’, in 1769, after 15 years of growth, the numbers were sufficient to constitute a church.⁷ The initial church roll contained 42 names, at the head of which was Thomas Tuppen, who was subsequently invited to become the church’s first pastor. Writing to Whitefield in June 1769 he confirmed the progress made:

I have never preached on a Lord’s Day but on some parts of it I have had five hundred hearers, many times double that number, and on week days never less than two or three hundred, which I think some encouragement, and there is reason to believe that the Lord owns and blesses His word, and that He has many people in this place.⁸

The success of Tuppen’s ministry was such that the congregation outgrew The Tabernacle and in 1773, the Chapel ‘was rebuilt in contemporary Georgian style’.⁹ The new premises were ‘sixty feet long by forty feet wide ... [and had] galleries on three sides’. Due to failing health, Tuppen resigned in 1785 and was replaced by William Dunn, from Horsleydown in Surrey, ‘who well sustained both the numbers and efficiency of the church’. During his ministry a library was established, thereby signalling the church’s commitment to meeting the intellectual as well as the spiritual needs of those it served.

Following Dunn’s departure in 1793 and on the advice of Cornelius Winter of Painswick in Gloucestershire the church invited John Griffin to become pastor. This was a momentous decision since: ‘With his advent there began a period of such great prosperity as has made the name of the church and its pastor historic and memorable in the annals of the town and district.’¹⁰ Notwithstanding a touch of hyperbole, no doubt John Griffin’s pastorate was extremely successful. A number of aspects stand out. First, there were very profitable pulpit exchanges with the ‘deeply loved and highly regarded’ evangelical preacher, Rowland Hill.¹¹ Second, Griffin was closely associated with the founding of the London Missionary Society in 1795. Third, during his ministry a Sunday school was founded in 1804, through which large numbers of poor children received a basic education. Fourth, Griffin lent his support to a campaign for the adoption of inoculation against smallpox, publishing a pamphlet on the subject also in 1804. Fifth, the outward looking stance of the church was displayed in its support for good causes. For example, in 1822 it

7 N Yates *Church and Chapel in Portsmouth and South-East Hampshire, 1660–1850* (Portsmouth 2003) 20.

8 *HT* 25 August 1900.

9 *Offord Churches* 87.

10 *HT* 25 August 1900.

11 For Rowland Hill (1744–1833) see *ODNB*.

was reported that: ‘The Congregation of King-street Chapel, Portsea, made a subscription of 10l. [£10] for the ... laudable object of ... mitigating the severe calamities of disease and want, under which some of the labouring classes are now suffering in Ireland’.¹² Last, and perhaps most significantly, due to the success of Griffin’s ministry in attracting new members, the church outgrew its premises in Orange Street. This led to a site being obtained in King Street and funds raised to build a new larger chapel, which opened for worship in September 1813. ‘The chief features of the new chapel were its severe simplicity of style and its great size being capable of seating some 2,500 people’. Orange Street chapel was retained for Sunday school and later, day school purposes. Thanks to Griffin’s reputation as a preacher and a pastor the new premises were filled to capacity Sunday after Sunday and the church became ‘numerically one of the largest in the South of England’.¹³

By 1830 Griffin was experiencing health problems and the church invited a student of Highbury College, Thomas Cousins, to join him as co-pastor. As with Griffin’s appointment, this proved a far-sighted move with Cousins taking up the reins in full when Griffin died in 1834. The esteem in which Griffin was held can be seen in this contemporary account of his funeral:

We never recollect seeing a more public expression of interest and sympathy for the loss of any individual, than was manifested on this mournful occasion. The road from the house of the deceased to the burial ground, extending nearly two miles, was lined with crowds of spectators, all of whom, as the procession advanced, showed the most marked respect to the memory of one, who had been during his ministry of 40 years, a blessing to the town and neighbourhood in which he lived.¹⁴

The magnitude of his impact on the life of the church and town is also reflected in the inscription on a marble tablet which was erected in the chapel. Given the significance of the wording it has been reproduced in full (see Figure). Griffin’s death can be regarded as the culmination of the first phase of Independency in Portsmouth.

Expansion: The Nineteenth Century

Throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century, King Street Chapel continued to be regarded as the ‘Mother Church’ by Congregationalists and the spiritual power house of Congregationalism in Portsmouth. Notwithstanding the loss of Griffin, Cousins proved an exemplary successor. Moreover, given the

¹² *HT* 29 July 1822.

¹³ *HT* 25 August 1900.

¹⁴ *HT* 28 April 1834.

SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF
THE REV. JOHN GRIFFIN.

HE WAS BORN AT WOOBURN, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE, APRIL
25TH, 1769; EDUCATED FOR THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY,
AND ORDAINED IN 1794 TO THE PASTORAL OFFICE,
OVER THE INDEPENDENT CHURCH, ORANGE-STREET, PORTSEA.
THE CONGREGATION,

HAVING GREATLY INCREASED BY HIS MINISTRY ERECTED,
UNDER HIS AUSPICES, THIS SPACIOUS CHAPEL, IN WHICH HE
CONTINUED HIS LABOURS WITH DISTINGUISHED ABILITY
AND SUCCESS UNTIL THE CLOSE OF HIS LIFE.

AS A PREACHER

HE WAS CHARACTERISED BY HIS SOUND DOCTRINE, NERVOUS
STYLE, AND PERSUASIVE DELIVERY, AND WAS HONOURED
OF GOD IN BUILDING UP THE CHURCH AND
BRINGING MANY TO RIGHTEOUSNESS

AS A CHRISTIAN AND A PASTOR,

HE WAS A BEAUTIFUL EXAMPLE OF THE TRUTHS HE PREACHED
AS AN AUTHOR,

HIS WRITINGS REMAIN A BRIGHT MEMORIAL OF THE
EMPLOYMENT OF HIS TALENTS FOR THE BENEFIT OF
LITERATURE, HUMANITY AND RELIGION.

IN PRIVATE LIFE,

HE WAS A PATTERN OF ALL THE SOCIAL AND DOMESTIC
VIRTUES

FOR PUBLIC SPIRIT,

HE WAS EMINENTLY DISTINGUISHED, HE WAS ONE OF THE
MOST ZEALOUS DIRECTORS OF THE LONDON MISSIONARY
SOCIETY, AND AN EFFICIENT PROMOTER OF OTHER
BENEVOLENT INSTITUTIONS DESIGNED FOR THE
TEMPORAL AND SPIRITUAL WELFARE OF
MANKIND.

HE DIED THE 16TH OF APRIL 1834,
IN THE 65TH YEAR OF HIS AGE, AND THE 41ST OF HIS MINISTRY

THIS TABLET IS ERECTED BY THE CHURCH AND CONGREGATION
AS AN AFFECTIONATE TRIBUTE TO THE WORTH OF
THEIR DEPARTED PASTOR.

John Griffin's Memorial Tablet

Source: Hampshire Telegraph 25 August 1900

demands of such a large church for fairly lengthy periods its work was overseen by two pastors (see Appendix).

Cousins served at King Street for 33 years from 1830 to 1863. As recorded:

Endowed with many natural gifts—a prepossessing appearance, a voice full yet clear as a bell, and of considerable power—Mr Cousins would hold the attention of his hearers by his graceful eloquence and presentation of truth, while the discourse lasted about forty-five minutes.¹⁵

In the circumstances it is not surprising that during his ministry King Street became the favoured place of worship for many of ‘the great and the good’ of Portsmouth as well as those from humbler backgrounds.

Successive Mayors of the Borough, Magistrates and other civic dignitaries, together with officers and men of the Navy, as well as tradesmen and workers employed in H.M.’s Dockyard and many artisans of the town met regularly in the chapel to profit by Mr Cousins’ ministry.¹⁶

Thus, he was able to maintain the numerical strength of the church and, as claimed in his obituary, ‘The Congregation at King-street during his ministry was the largest in the South of England’.¹⁷ At the time of the Religious Census of 1851, around 1800 people were attending services in the morning and evening at King Street (see Table 1).

Table 1: Results of 1851 Census of Religious Worship for Portsea Island¹

Independent Churches	Sittings²	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Buckland Chapel	615	483		450
Milton Chapel	200	62		44
Zion Chapel	130	146		130
King Street Chapel	2,540	1,790	200	1,820
Bethel Chapel	480	360	313	500
Highbury Chapel	598	267	—	307
Sub-Total: Independent Churches	4,563	3,108	573	3,251
Church of England	12,230	7,378	4,076	4,455
Other Churches	13,783	9,666	1,963	9,046
Total All Churches	26,013	17,044	6,039	13,501

¹⁵ *HT* 1 September 1900.

¹⁶ *HT* 1 September 1900.

¹⁷ *HT* 27 June 1885.

Notes:

¹ Portsea Island was divided into four sub-districts, Kingston, Portsea Town, Portsmouth Town and Landport.

² Of the 4,563 sittings in Independent Churches, 1,193 were free and 3,370 appropriated.

Source: J A Vickers (ed) *The Religious Census of Hampshire 1851* (Winchester 1993).

However, following the retirement of Cousins in 1863 came a succession of relatively brief pastorates (see Appendix) during which numbers attending King Street gradually declined. Surprisingly, the church was unable to find someone of his stature to fill the position of pastor. An invitation was issued to James Griffin, son of the former pastor, but he declined and not until late 1865 did the church secure the services of William Rose. He was an experienced evangelist and pastor, having served a number of churches and joined King Street from Newfoundland Street Church in Bristol where he had ministered since 1854. Undoubtedly he was much respected as this resolution, passed by the church members when he left King Street in 1872, confirms.

That this meeting, while accepting the resignation, desires gratefully to recognize the faithful and devoted services of the Rev. W. Rose during his ministry amongst us, extending over a period of seven years, during which time nearly three hundred members have been received into church fellowship; and that the very large majority of the members of the church deeply regret that he feels it his duty to retire from the pastorate and pray that God may direct him in his future work, and abundantly bless his labours, by still converting very many souls to Christ.¹⁸

William Rose's successor was David Thomas who came from Aberdare. At the meeting welcoming Thomas, the senior deacon Mr J Jones referred to the fact that:

For a very considerable period there had been a painful decrease in the church and congregation, such a state of things being a matter of deep regret to those who felt for the spiritual wants of the church.¹⁹

He did not elaborate, however, on the causes of this state of affairs. That said, an important factor was almost certainly the movement of population away from the area in which the church was located.

Perhaps a declining congregation was one of the reasons why Thomas served for only three and half years from January 1873 to June 1876, to be replaced by J. J. Goundry a student straight from Hackney College. Again his ministry was a relatively short one of approximately five years lasting from June 1877 to August

¹⁸ HT 4 September 1872.

¹⁹ HT 25 January 1873.

1882. At the conclusion of his opening sermon ‘he expressed a hope that the Divine blessing might rest upon the church, the people, and the pastor, and that their union might prove to be a grand work for God, and for the good of their fellow men’.²⁰ During Goundry’s ministry, a survey of churchgoing conducted by a local newspaper in 1881 recorded attendances at King Street of around 260 in the morning and evening, thereby confirming the dramatic decline in fortunes from the days of Griffin and Cousins (see Table 2). In his final sermon, Goundry remarked that ‘he had preached to them Christ and him crucified, had endeavoured to proclaim to them a happy Gospel, and not a miserable or dull Gospel, and a need of a full salvation’.²¹

Table 2: Survey of Churchgoing in Portsmouth December 1881

Congregational Churches	Sittings	Morning	Evening
Buckland	850	431	563
Service at School			107
King Street	2,000	261	265
Highbury Street	450	73	79
Zion	250	118	230
Christ Church, Kent Road, Southsea	550	365	277
Milton	80	–	34
Sub-Total: Congregational Churches	4,180	1,248	1,555
Church of England	19,880	12,076	11,319
Other Churches	17,760	8,119	11,798
Total: All Churches	37,640	20,195	23,117

Source: *Hampshire Telegraph* 21 December 1881.

The next pastor at King Street was William Lewis, who commenced his ministry in November 1883. On his first Sunday:

There were good congregations at both morning and evening services. In the morning the rev. gentleman took as his text Matthew 11th chapter. 25th and 26th verses and in the evening he preached from the 8th chapter, 3rd verse.

²⁰ *HT* 20 June 1877.

²¹ *HT* 30 August 1882.

Both discourses were of an eminently practical character, and were marked at times by considerable earnestness. Mr Lewis addressed the Sunday scholars in the afternoon at the school-room in Orange-street, Portsea.²²

Like his predecessor, Lewis stayed at King Street for about five years.

He was succeeded by John Watkin Davies. Little was it known at the time of his appointment that, apart from a break of three years from 1892 to 1895 due to ill health, his ministry would last until 1940. Indeed, as pointed out in his official obituary King Street was his only charge ‘during a long ministerial life’.²³

From the outset it was recognised that due to ‘the state of the church and the vastly altered conditions of Portsea owing to the migration of the population to Landport, Fratton and Southsea’ another site was required for a new place of worship. It was the strain of finding a suitable site and raising the necessary funds to purchase it that resulted in the breakdown of Davies’ health and the need for complete rest ‘with a prolonged stay in Switzerland and the south of France’.²⁴ During this period the pastorate was held by George Sadler. It was while he had charge of King Street that disaster struck and made finding new premises an urgent necessity.

In February 1893, a portion of the ceiling of the chapel fell in, providentially when the building was not being used, and upon subsequent professional examination the chapel was condemned as being unsafe for public worship. After worshipping in the chapel for seventy-nine and a half years the church and congregation returned to Orange-street, where, upon the site of the first church, and in the old chapel, worship was once more carried on ...²⁵

It was indeed providential or fortunate that the ceiling had not collapsed during a service. Curiously, given the historic importance of King Street Chapel, the collapse of the ceiling does not appear to have been reported in the local newspaper at the time it occurred.

Having taken up the reins of the pastorate again, Davies oversaw the move into new church buildings in June 1896, when King Street became Edinburgh Road Congregational Church. As it was put by the Church Secretary at the official opening ‘it was the newest Congregational building in the town, but it perpetuated the work of the oldest Independent Church of the borough’.²⁶ Described as a place of worship that was bright and airy, it was given due recognition in Davies’ official obituary: ‘The Edinburgh Road Church at

22 *HT* 24 November 1883.

23 *Congregational Year Book* (hereafter *CYB*) 1942 415.

24 *HT* 1 September 1900.

25 *HT* 1 September 1900.

26 *HT* 20 June 1896.

Portsmouth with its fine hall now stands, free from debt, a memorial of his devoted and untiring energy'.²⁷

In its heyday, in addition to serving as a vibrant place of worship in its own right, King Street was the catalyst for the planting of new Congregational churches on Portsea Island. Of these the most noteworthy in terms of its subsequent contribution to the Congregational cause was Buckland. Over time it was to become the largest of Portsmouth's Congregational churches and overtake King Street in the size of its membership and congregations. Although the year of its foundation is formally recorded in the *Congregational Year Book* as 1822, other sources suggest that this was the culmination of activity which had started a few years earlier with Sunday school work beginning in 1807²⁸ and other meetings being held in a room in what was then the 'little and picturesque village of Buckland'.²⁹ According to Offord, 'the first chapel was erected in 1820',³⁰ but it would seem that this was the year in which the foundation stone was laid with the chapel being 'completed and opened for worship in 1822'.³¹ Initially, Buckland was formally a branch of King Street. Then in 1835 a separate church was formed by 'dismissal of 14 members from King-street'.³² Absalom Jones, an assistant at King Street, had oversight from 1834 and was ordained pastor in 1836. He was succeeded by Henry Hastings in 1864. By the late 1860s Buckland had outgrown its original premises and the first chapel was replaced in 1869 by a more substantial building with seating for 850 or more. Some idea of the character and scale of the new premises can be gained from a contemporary description at the time of their opening:

The building ... [is] like a pretty village church. It is a gothic structure built of red bricks with stone dressings, and has a tower and spire, which can be seen from a considerable distance. Its dimensions are about 80 feet by 50 feet, while the height from the floor to the centre of the roof is 35 feet, the height from the floor to the roof over the galleries being 23 feet. The galleries, which run completely round the building, are supported by two tiers of cast-iron columns, which also support several gothic arches and the roof. The building is capable of accommodating over 900 worshippers ... The improved system of reclining pews without doors has been introduced, and will be found much more comfortable than the old style of box-pews. Light is introduced in day time by a number of large windows, and in the evening by large pendants, the centre one

27 *CYB* 1942 415.

28 C E Surman *Outline Notes on Three Hundred Years of Congregational Ministry in Hampshire* (Birmingham 1961).

29 *HT* 25 August 1900.

30 Offord *Churches* 90.

31 *HT* 25 August 1900.

32 Surman *Outline Notes*.

having 36 jets ... The pulpit has steps on either side, and is provided with an improved telescopic book rest. The whole of the interior has a light and cheerful appearance, the wood work being of varnished fir.³³

Not surprisingly, at the opening service and follow up meeting considerable satisfaction was expressed with the successful completion of the project. However, it came at a price with the total cost in the region of £2,860, of which £1,490 still had to be found. The debt was eventually cleared in 1878, thanks in part to a sizeable donation from John Kemp Welch of Sopley Park.³⁴ The new church buildings, however, proved to be a very sound investment. The population of the neighbourhood within which Buckland was situated was rapidly growing and this was reflected in the increased membership of the church, which extended its activities in 1882 through the establishment of a preaching station in Buckland Street. As the survey of churchgoing undertaken in 1881 indicates, by now Buckland's congregations were nearly double the size of those of King Street (see Table 2).

Buckland was also well served by capable pastors. Henry Hastings was succeeded by Henry Barron in 1872 and then by one of Buckland's more flamboyant pastors, Edward Dial Braimbridge who had charge 1879–87. As Offord observed:

... [He] was so fiery and dramatic when preaching, that he found the pulpit too confining, so he had a rostrum built. With sweat pouring, he would tear off his gown, declaring, 'I cannot preach with that on' ...³⁵

Notwithstanding, or perhaps because of, these histrionics his ministry was extremely successful in terms of church growth. Moreover, he was not unduly modest about his achievements and in his farewell sermon, preached on the evening of Sunday 25 December 1887, he regaled his congregation with some impressive statistics:

... in drawing attention to the results of his ministry he mentioned that from a rough calculation he found that he had preached 1,200 sermons, had been incapacitated only two Sundays and two week day evenings, that the actual number he had received into the church had been 557 (an average addition of about six each month), that although there had been deaths and removals, at the present time there were still 544 members' names on the books, as compared with 222 when he came, the church now being probably the largest Congregational Church in the county in point of numbers, that 1,063 additions to the [Sunday

33 *HT* 26 June 1869.

34 For further details of John Kemp Welch see D Denison 'Congregationalism and Commerce' *Hampshire Field Club & Archaeological Society Newsletter* 70 (Autumn 2018) 24–7.

35 *Offord Churches* 90.

school] scholars had taken place, the number now being 900, as against 600, in August, 1879, that a total sum had been received in the church of £7,500, that the church had been improved and the new schools scheme advanced at a total cost of about £1,650, and that a number of new societies had been started and maintained in their working.³⁶

Given his somewhat exuberant personality, it is not really surprising that his official obituary records that he experienced ‘a nervous breakdown in health’ later in his ministerial career.³⁷

Braimbridge’s pastorate was followed by a somewhat calmer period. His immediate successor was Walter Talbot, who had charge of Buckland from 1888 to 1902. According to his official obituary, he presided over what were:

characterised as “the halcyon days of the church’s history”. During his ministry membership was greatly increased and commodious school buildings were erected, the three foundation stones being laid by W.T. Stead [the son of a Congregational pastor and a pioneer of investigative journalism] and representatives of Australia and America respectively.³⁸

Thus, at the time of his departure Buckland was in extremely good shape and had become the foremost site of Congregational witness in Portsmouth.

In addition to Buckland, King Street was behind the initiative that laid the foundations in the early nineteenth century of the Independent cause in the ‘small village’ of Milton. At the time, Milton ‘seemed very remote from the town of Portsmouth, but [was] very picturesque and attractive with its green fields and pleasant lanes’.³⁹ Some idea of its origins and ongoing survival during the nineteenth century can be gained from the following report of a statement which was read at a well-attended meeting in May 1883 to celebrate the anniversary of the formal establishment of a Congregational church in Milton:

In this the origin (70 years ago) of the independent cause at Milton under the Rev John Griffin (of King-street chapel) and the building of the chapel during the ministry of the Rev. Thomas Cousins at Portsea (in the year 1842) were referred to, as also the efforts of the congregation at King-street to maintain the cause, Mr Dyer ..., who had preached at the cottage meetings in the village more than fifty years ago, being mentioned, as also the late Mr George Bayne. For the past 25 years Mr David Knight, of Milton, had had charge of the place, and by contributions from his purse, superintendence of the Sunday-school, and, in many other ways had sustained the cause. “Humanly speaking, but for him,

³⁶ *HT* 31 December 1887.

³⁷ *CYB* 1934 256.

³⁸ *CYB* 1943 439.

³⁹ *HT* 1 September 1900.

the doors must have been shut years ago.” Mr Kendall had lived in the village for 16 years, and had during that time superintended the pulpit arrangements. He had made house-to-house visitations to every cottage in the village and for a considerable distance around.⁴⁰

The account went on to indicate that despite the precarious existence of the cause, there was still a considerable amount of activity. Moreover, under the leadership of its lay pastor, Thomas Kendall, who served for 43 years and, as recorded later, was to be memorialised in the naming of successor church premises, a Congregational presence was sustained.

As sometimes happened amongst Congregationalists, as with other nonconformists, dissension was often a trigger for setting up a new church. Accordingly, the establishment of Zion Congregational Church in Landport came about as the result of dissatisfaction ‘with some of the views held and taught by the Pastor of King-street’⁴¹ on the part of one of the members, James Haslett. A separate church was constituted in 1842, with Haslett being ordained pastor and serving until his death in 1856. He was followed in quick succession by James Deighton, who had charge for two years, and Henry Cullis, five years.

In 1863, however, Zion acquired the services of William Griggs who was to pastor the church until 1889. The high regard in which Griggs was held was demonstrated on the church’s 50th birthday, which coincided with his celebration of 25 years of ministry at Zion. At a tea meeting to mark the event ‘special reference ... [was] made to ... [his] influence with working-men, especially in connection with the Dockyard, and his genial disposition.’ He was also presented with a drawing room clock, a pair of candelabras and £10 in appreciation ‘of the valuable services rendered by him’.⁴² Sadly for Zion he died just over a year later at the relatively young age of 51. Such was his renown that the *Hampshire Telegraph* made reference to him in its editorial columns:

There was not an idle moment in the life of this good and true man. He worked during the day with his hands in the Dockyard, earning his bread like his fellow-riveters with the sweat of his brow. At night and on Sundays he devoted his energies and zeal to mission work. There was the ring of true metal about our late townsman ...⁴³

This combination of secular employment and sacred calling was a characteristic of a number of Zion’s pastors and undoubtedly facilitated its evangelistic endeavours.

⁴⁰ *HT* 26 May 1883.

⁴¹ *HT* 1 September 1900.

⁴² *HT* 29 September 1888.

⁴³ *HT* 12 October 1889.

That said, Griggs' successor was a full time minister, Harry Schofield. Despite the fact that his pastorate was a relatively short one of four and a half years, judging by the following extract from his obituary he also made a considerable impact during his time at Zion:

His ministry there was very happy and successful and the church entered upon an era of prosperity, the membership being largely increased and a spirit of unity prevailing. The Sunday school, Band of Hope, and Mutual Improvement Society flourished, and in his varied ministry Mr Schofield won the highest respect and affection of his people.⁴⁴

From Zion he went on to spend many successful years at Pokesdown Congregational Church near Bournemouth.

There was undoubtedly a hope that Schofield's replacement, William Akehurst Bevan, would stay for longer. As the senior deacon, Mr Crouch, commented at the new pastor's recognition meeting:

[They] most heartedly welcomed Mr Bevan as a brother in Christ to be their Pastor, their leader, and their guide and trusted that he might go forth from time to time richly laden with the truths of the Gospel, and that he might long be spared to deliver his ministry in that church.

In his response Bevan indicated that 'his object was to bring Zion to the front and get that chapel filled with listeners to God's truths'.⁴⁵ How far he succeeded in doing so is far from clear since he was only pastor for four years.

In 1900, James Gittings, a former Wesleyan preacher in the town was appointed Bevan's successor. Although born in South Wales, he had lived in Portsmouth for several years, working as a smith in the dockyard.⁴⁶ He was to serve for two separate periods and make his mark on Zion.

Another outreach venture of King Street in the early nineteenth century was the purchase of premises in Pembroke Street with the intention of establishing a Congregational church in the area. Sunday school work was undertaken and mission services were held. However, in the early 1840s, as a separate enterprise, Highbury Chapel was established in St Mary's Street. This meant that there was no longer any need for an additional place of worship in Pembroke Street. As recorded:

Highbury Chapel owed its existence chiefly to the energetic efforts of the Rev D. Mudie and other prominent Independents resident in the district. A

44 *CYB* 1935 288.

45 *HT* 25 May 1895.

46 *HT* 11 August 1900.

comfortable and commodious chapel was erected ... [and opened in 1842], whilst some large premises at the rear were adapted for Sunday-school work.⁴⁷

In 1844 a church was formally constituted under the leadership of George Jones.

On Wednesday, the 14th of August inst., two important religious services were held in Highbury Independent Chapel, Portsmouth. In the morning, the Rev J. Angell James (of Birmingham) preached an admirable and deeply impressive discourse. We do but speak the unexaggerated truth, when we say, that its delivery excited the most thrilling emotions throughout the large assembly that listened to it. In the evening of the day, the Rev. George Jones was recognised, according to the custom of this body of protestant Nonconformists, as pastor of the church recently formed in Highbury Chapel.⁴⁸

After this very promising start, the chapel had a somewhat erratic history by comparison with most of the other Congregational churches in Portsmouth. George Jones died prematurely after only four years as pastor. The teachings of his successor T.W. Chignell 'gave rise to such church dissensions that the Trustees interfered in February, 1855; the minister resigned and for ... [three] months the church was closed'.⁴⁹ Although the chapel reopened, many of the subsequent pastors only remained for short periods and appear to have made little impact. The only exceptions were William Young during whose ministry from 1856 to 1862 'a season of prosperity again returned ... and much useful work was done' and W. Tidd Matson, who served 1879–85 and 'whose memory—not only in ... [Portsmouth] but throughout Christendom, is honoured for his beautiful hymns'.⁵⁰ The last pastor of Highbury appears to have been Wesley Wood. Following his resignation in about 1887 various attempts were made to sustain the work but eventually the building was sold and the proceeds, £500, were donated to Victoria Road Congregational Church, Southsea.

Notwithstanding its demise, Highbury Chapel was instrumental in promoting the cause of Congregationalism in the rapidly growing area of Southsea, described by Patterson as 'a Victorian seaside resort ... [with] piers, hotels, ornamental gardens and a railway line'.⁵¹ It was members from Highbury Chapel, as well as King Street, who constituted the initial Congregational presence in this part of Portsea Island. As Offord records, 'The first small church [which was to become known as Christ Church and was, in fact, the school

47 *HT* 1 September 1900.

48 *HT* 19 August 1844.

49 *HT* 1 September 1900.

50 *HT* 1 September 1900.

51 A Temple Patterson *Portsmouth: a history* (Bradford on Avon 1976) 127.

room] was built in 1865 in Ashburton Road. The congregation rapidly grew, and a large new church was built in 1871 on the corner of Ashburton and Kent Roads'.⁵² The foundation stone was laid in September 1870, a few months after the arrival of the church's first pastor, Henry Arkell. In comments made at his recognition service held in March by Rev J.G. Gregson, the emphasis was very much on collaboration between churches:

... the work in which they were engaged was too high and noble to admit of jealousy or competition. With a population of 120,000 there was room for more labourers ... There should ... be sympathy between ... [churches] but no meddling, kindness of spirit but not interference, and there should be faithfulness and common honesty in speaking of each other, and not sycophantic hypocrisy.⁵³

This theme was pursued by other ministers including F Baldrey the Vicar of St Simon's, an indicator of the ecumenical spirit prevailing in Southsea.

The new church building was formally opened by Edward Miall MP in July 1872. However, at this stage it was still incomplete as far as some of the detail was concerned:

The church, which is in the late early English style of architecture, consists of nave, transepts and aisles, with an apse formed by counter-arches. At the south end of the nave, an organ chamber is also formed by a similar series of arches on the east side of the apse. In the back is a spacious school room and vestry, which has for the last two years been used for worship. The arcades on each side of the nave are carried on granite shafts, with Bath-stone bases and caps. The latter have been prepared for carving; but the funds have not yet come in, they are left unfinished ... No pulpit has yet been erected, a small platform being occupied by the preacher; nor has any furniture been provided for the apse, in consequence of the lack of funds. For this cause also there is no organ, a harmonium being used for the musical portion of the services.

In the sermon at the morning service, it was highly appropriate that the visiting preacher Rev Dr Stoughton, should stress that 'all material architecture was subordinate to the spiritual house not made with hands'.⁵⁴

The effectiveness of Henry Arkell's ministry which lasted until 1881 was attested in comments made by one of the deacons, Mr A J Sapp, at his farewell meeting:

The result of the [pastor's] beneficent teaching upon the congregation, both in

⁵² *Offord Churches* 90.

⁵³ *HT* 26 March 1870.

⁵⁴ *HT* 20 July 1872.

the church and in the [Sunday] school, was to be seen in the Dorcas Society, the Young Men's Improvement Society, and in the visits which had been paid to the sick, to the outcasts, and to the dying.⁵⁵

Thus, the church had already made its presence felt in performing not only a spiritual role but also a social one. It is also noteworthy that representatives of other denominations were again present at this event.

At his pastoral recognition in December 1882, George Sandwell, who replaced Henry Arkell, described himself as being of 'broad views' but one who 'held with great tenacity the cardinal truths of religion, which he hoped to preach with earnestness and simpleness in their midst.' He believed 'in quiet and unostentatious work' and that he wanted to be not simply their teacher 'but their friend at all times'.⁵⁶ It appears that he succeeded in fulfilling these lofty aims and at an event held in 1889 to say 'good-bye', the chairman, gain Mr Sapp, 'spoke of the high and thoughtful tone of ... [Sandwell's] ministry, and of the commanding influence he had maintained for nearly seven years in the borough'. That he was presented with a beautiful clock plus a purse of £50 was clear indication of the esteem in which he was held. Furthermore, he had been recruited to 'the pastorate of a large and prosperous church in Toronto',⁵⁷ an appointment which confirmed his standing as a minister.

The seven-year ministry of John Oates who followed Sandwell appears to have been equally successful. Born in South Africa and originally a Methodist, he came to Portsmouth from Reading, where he was regarded as 'one of the leading Nonconformist ministers in Berkshire'. His pulpit style was described as 'broadly evangelical and earnest ... his voice ... musical, his manner intense, and his delivery easy and fluent.' In short, his preaching retained 'the old Methodist fervour'.⁵⁸ The move to Southsea rather than to a church in a more urban environment was primarily for health reasons. At the time of his departure in 1896 much was made of his happy memories; the fulfilment of his 'duty as a Christian citizen'; and 'the peculiar kindness which he had received from the clergy of the Church of England'.⁵⁹ Once again a substantial amount was collected for his leaving gift.

Later in the year, Oates, now ministering to a church in North Finchley, spoke at the public recognition of the new pastor Robert Clegg, who came to Southsea from Peterborough. He stated that Clegg 'was known to be a good preacher, a good worker, and a man of character, who wore the white flower

⁵⁵ *HT* 13 April 1881.

⁵⁶ *HT* 6 December 1882.

⁵⁷ *HT* 4 May 1889.

⁵⁸ *HT* 7 December 1889.

⁵⁹ *HT* 5 September 1896.

of a blameless life'.⁶⁰ In short, he was a worthy successor. A fuller picture of Clegg's personality and approach to ministry can be gained from his official obituary:

He was not one who desired to be in the public eye, or who would be classed as one of the 'popular' preachers of his day. He abhorred 'stunts' ... In the pulpit his voice had a fine range of tone and volume, yet it was those softer passages which perhaps held the deeper attention of hearers. He was truly a kind, friendly, and lovable gentleman, one who must be ranked amongst the great and good men who have served ... [Congregationalism] ... he was a great reader and a deep thinker, and carried out his pastoral duties ... effectively ...⁶¹

Clegg was to lead Christ Church into the twentieth century by which time it was second only to Buckland in the size of its membership.⁶²

A second Congregational cause in Southsea at Victoria Road, which benefited financially from the closure of Highbury Chapel, was initiated in the 1880s. Its foundation is described in a record contained in the church minute book:

In the year 1883, a few friends interested in Congregational Church Extension, recognising that one Church of the denomination in Southsea would soon be inadequate to answer every facet of our share of the spiritual needs of that rapidly growing suburb of Portsmouth, formed themselves into a Committee, and largely with borrowed money purchased the present site at the junction of Albert, Victoria South and Stafford Roads ... Fresh accessions augmented the number of the little band of pioneers, and on 6th November 1884, they formed themselves into a church, the proceedings being conducted by the Rev James Knaggs of Stratford, supported by Rev Wm Lewis of King Street Church, Portsea (the mother church of the borough) and Rev Wm Griggs of Zion Church Portsea. Fourteen members signed the first Church Roll ... On 11th January 1885, the Rev E. Newman of Hackney College, accepted the call to the pastorate, retaining oversight for two years ...⁶³

At Edward Newman's recognition meeting, reference was made to the church being in 'an excellent neighbourhood' and, although this was his first charge, he was seen as an 'excellent minister'.⁶⁴ However, it appears that he did

⁶⁰ *HT* 11 June 1898.

⁶¹ *CYB* 1959 417.

⁶² For further details, see Roger Ottewill, 'A History of Christ Church Congregational Church Southsea 1865–1972', <https://www.ashburtoncourt.co.uk/wiki/> (accessed 17 June 2019).

⁶³ Victoria Road Church Record Book (hereafter VRCRB) 1902–1911 Portsmouth City Record Office (hereafter PCRO) CHU 95/1A/2.

⁶⁴ *HT* 25 April 1885.

not possess the qualities needed to nurture a fledgling church and, as indicated, he did not stay for long.

At his departure, 'the little cause' was noted in the church history as being 'in a very low state and the struggle for existence was so severe that there seemed a prospect of utter extinction'.⁶⁵ However, Alfred Bennett, the new minister, in seven years at Victoria Road turned the situation around. An early step was to secure a permanent place of worship with the purchase and erection of a second-hand tin church for £400, which had first been used by Anglicans during the erection of St Mary's, Kingston. This achievement was mentioned at a farewell gathering in 1895, together with the fact that under his stewardship the membership of Victoria Road increased from 30 to 120. He was given a 'purse of 17 sovereigns' together with the good wishes of the congregation for his new venture of 'farming and preaching' in Canada.⁶⁶

Later in the year the members welcomed John Stockwell Watts, a well-known figure in nonconformity, as their new pastor. He was no stranger to the area since from the age of 5 he had grown up in Portsmouth and worked at Haslar Military Hospital before entering the ministry. However, as reported in the *Hampshire Telegraph*:

... [it was] in the capacity of Hon. Secretary of the Liberator Relief Fund that ... [he was] best known to the world, and his admirable conduct of its affairs for three years ... [had] endeared him to many thousands who ... [had] never seen his face, but ... [had] felt that they had before them the example of a practical exponent of Christianity, who was striving his utmost to bring back hope to those whose ruin had been wrought by the great financial disaster.⁶⁷

Unfortunately for Victoria Road after just two years, a combination of ill health and a desire to complete the task of assisting those investors rendered penniless by the Liberator Building Society crash, Stockwell Watts felt compelled to relinquish the pastorate. Despite their disappointment the members at a special meeting passed the following resolution:

... while they accept his resignation [they] beg to tender him their heartiest sympathy in this his time of affliction, in the earnest hope that he may soon be restored to his normal state of health and strength, coupled with expressions of gratitude to Almighty God for the good work He has enabled Mr Watts to perform for mankind in general, and this Church in particular, and with the assurance of its prayers and best wishes for his future welfare and Christian work.⁶⁸

65 VRCRB 1902–1911 PCRO CHU 95/1A/2.

66 *HT* 30 March 1895.

67 *HT* 30 November 1885.

68 *HT* 4 December 1897.

Stockwell Watts died in 1908.

The last of Victoria Road's nineteenth century pastors was William Daniel who came from a ministry in Limehouse. At his recognition meeting, 'the Church was congratulated on having so speedily secured a minister'.⁶⁹ Daniel had previously served churches in some of the poorer parts of London 'caring for the bodies as well as the souls of those under his influence'.⁷⁰

Conclusion

How then might the overall progress of Congregationalism in Portsmouth, in the years up to 1900, be judged? During the nineteenth century, the number of Congregational churches increased from one, King Street, to six. In addition to King Street, renamed Edinburgh Road, these were Buckland, Milton and Zion and in Southsea, Christ Church and Victoria Road. However, while such expansion appears impressive, a number of qualifications need to be made. First, one church, Highbury, had already closed by the end of the century. Second, during the second half of the nineteenth century Congregationalism faced strong competition from a resurgent Church of England (Yates, 1983)⁷¹ as well as from every conceivable variety of nonconformity. This resulted in a dramatic fall in the percentage of worshippers attending a Congregational church as evidenced by the 1851 census (see Table 1) and 1881 newspaper survey of religious observance (see Table 2). In 1851, 18.2 per cent of those worshipping in the morning and 24.0 per cent in the evening attended Congregational churches. By 1881 this had fallen to 6.2 per cent in the morning and 6.7 per cent in the evening. Third, Portsmouth's population had increased from 32,160 in 1801 to 188,133 in 1901 or by 485 per cent, thus there was a rapidly growing number of potential church members. However, notwithstanding the population increase, during the second half of the nineteenth century there were signs that churches were finding it harder to recruit new members as secular counter attractions multiplied. That said, it was by no means all 'doom and gloom', Congregational churches continued to be led by competent pastors, who combined preaching skills with intellectual prowess, and thereby remained important institutions within not only the religious but also the social and educational life of the community. In the main, they also enjoyed good relations with members of other denominations, including the Church of England. Thus, they faced the new century with a degree of optimism.

69 *HT* 18 June 1898.

70 *CYB* 1929 211.

71 N Yates *The Anglican Revival in Victorian Portsmouth* (Portsmouth 1983).

Appendix: Portsmouth's Congregational Pastors and Ministers Prior to 1900

Orange Street, King Street and Edinburgh Road

1769–1785 Thomas Tuppen
 1705–1793 William Dunn
 1794–1834 John Griffin
 1830–1863 Thomas Cousins
 1834–1835 Absalom Jones (co-pastor)
 1852–1856 William Rowe (co-pastor)
 1858–1860 Robert Carpenter (co-pastor)
 1861–1863 Edward Cecil (co-pastor)
 1865–1872 William Rose
 1872–1876 David Thomas
 1877–1882 J J Goundry
 1883–1888 William Lewis
 1889–1891 John Watkin Davies
 1892–1894 George Sadler
 1894–1941 John Watkin Davies

Buckland

1836–1864 Absalom Jones
 1864–1872 Henry Hastings
 1872–1879 Henry Barron
 1879–1887 Edward Braimbridge
 1888–1902 Walter Talbot

Highbury Chapel

1844–1848 George Jones
 1849–1853 Thomas Chignell
 1855–1856 T G Stamper
 1856–1862 William Young
 1864–1865 Elvery Dothie

1866–1874 William Jones
 1875–1877 Edward Pyle
 1877–1879 J W Ingram
 1879–1885 William Tidd Matson
 1885–1886 Wesley Wood
 Chapel closed during the 1890s.

Zion Chapel (Sultan Road from 1956)

1842–1856 James Haslett
 1856–1858 James Deighton
 1858–1863 Henry Cullis
 1863–1889 William Griggs
 1889–1894 Harry Schofield
 1895–1899 William A Bevan

Milton (Kendall Memorial Church from 1913)

1868–1910 Thomas Kendall (lay pastor)

Christ Church, Southsea

1869–1881 Henry Arkell
 1882–1889 George Sandwell
 1889–1896 John Oates
 1898–1906 Robert Clegg

Victoria Road, Southsea

1885–1887 Edward Newman
 1888–1895 Alfred Bennett
 1895–1897 John Stockwell Watts
 1898–1903 William Daniel

QUIETLY REJOICING: THE HYMNS OF ALBERT F BAYLY, 1901–1984; A PERSONAL TRIBUTE AND REFLECTION¹

Thanks to the novelist, journalist and critic George Orwell (aka Eric Arthur Blair, 1903–50) the year 1984 was famous long before it arrived.² His classic novel of nightmare totalitarianism was published in 1949; there are various explanations of his choice of title. But 1984 stands out for me for more personal reasons. This was the year when my parents died within two months of each other, one at 79, the other 80. I found myself responsible for sorting and sharing out their property, and arranging two rather different and far-separated funerals. They had lived apart for some years; Mum left almost nothing, Dad—well, I still have some unsorted files from his hoarded treasures. It's in our DNA.

Between the two events I had one of several operations at Moorfields Eye Hospital; this was for a detached retina, which ruled out driving for my many essential travels. Before the eye trouble showed up, I attended the annual conference of the Hymn Society of Great Britain and Ireland at Chichester that year. I had become a member two years earlier, and subsequently made the conference a priority for each July—not infallibly but usually.

And now my readers' patience will be rewarded; for there I met for the first and last time the Revd Albert Frederick Bayly, hymnwriter extraordinary. That is, if being introduced and saying 'Good morning' constitutes 'meeting'. Ah, if only!—but life is generously sprinkled with missed opportunities; for Albert was by then a frail elderly man, and died following a sudden heart attack, still in Chichester, the day after the conference ended (26th July). Having been widowed when younger, he was survived by his second wife Grace, who had been with him at the conference. His first wife Marjorie, married in 1933, died in 1948; like her, Grace, married in 1950, was a constant support, not least in his hymnwriting. And half a generation later my late wife (and finest critic) was Marjorie Grace.

Why do I use the word 'extraordinary'? Let us return to the start of

1 Some of this material appeared in C Idle *Exploring Praise* Vol.2 (2007), a companion to the hymn-book *Praise!* which itself draws on various other sources. The writer's 3rd collection of hymn texts, *Trees along the River*, was published in 2018. One major source is the *Bulletin* of the Hymn Society of Great Britain and Ireland, for its reviews, correspondence, obituary and other articles.

2 For Orwell see *ODNB*.

the twentieth century; when in Bexhill, East Sussex, Albert entered the world on 6th September 1901, in a Christian family committed to the local Congregational Church. He had a younger brother and sister; at the age of thirteen he was received into church membership. To us, 120 years later, this looks like undue keenness.

Albert attended Hastings Grammar School but left early to train as a shipwright at Portsmouth's Royal Dockyard School. He loved the technical side of the work but found that building warships presented a moral dilemma. When the family moved to nearby Waterlooville he attended the Baptist church there with them. But with great discipline he gained through part-time study an external BA (London) in 1924, with a view to the Congregational ministry, to which he was ordained at Whitley Bay near Tynemouth in 1929. This followed a course at Mansfield College, Oxford (1925–28)—at and about which he wrote several affectionate poems. Mansfield achieved full collegiate status in the university only in 1995, but by Free Churchmen and women it had long been held in undisputed honour and loyalty.³

By this time Albert had moved decisively to a Christian pacifist position, following disillusion with his earlier job, and the 1914–18 war and its aftermath. He shared this conviction with other Congregational and later United Reformed Church hymnwriters, including George Bradford Caird (1917–84), the former Mansfield principal, who died just three months before Albert, and John Ferguson (1921–89), while others such as Alan Gaunt (b 1935) and Fred Kaan (1929–2009) came close to that view.⁴ In 1938 he moved as pastor to Morpeth, Northumberland, joining the Red Cross and serving in a First Aid unit when war was declared in 1939.

Albert's pacifism remained unwavering whatever the international situation, 'when so many people [are] reverting to old illusions of security in arms'. He organised peace meetings, rallies and pageants, while regularly welcoming members of the armed forces to the manse—'even if after serving a refugee or entertaining troops, the cupboard was bare save for porridge oats'.⁵ Not surprisingly, his outspoken views aroused some local opposition, but the church in wartime supported his right to speak out, in a formal resolution decisively passed. His zeal for true peace is reflected in many texts, occasionally becoming angrily explicit:

Then why, with harsh intrusion

3 E Kaye *Mansfield College, Oxford: Its Origin, History, and Significance* (Oxford 1996)

4 For Caird see ODNB; for Ferguson see *Canterbury Dictionary of Hymnology* hymnsam.co.uk/john-Ferguson (accessed 11/1/2020); for Gaunt and Kaan see J Taylor and C Binfield (eds) *Who They Were in the Reformed Churches of England and Wales 1901–2000* (Donington 2007) 122–3.

5 B Braley *Hymnwriters 2* (1989) 157.

of hatred, strife and madness,
 should we destroy
 God's peace and joy,
 put order in confusion,
 and cast o'er life death's sadness?

O sin! God's work undoing
 to mar his love's creation;
 his trust betray,
 his image slay;
 in blood our hands imbruing.
 Deserve we not damnation?⁶

This 1950 'Hymn of Peace', 'What holy strain is swelling', echoing some of Charles Wesley's anti-war verses, is included in the posthumous 2004 collection of his verse.⁷ Thirty two years later Albert was still praying and singing such lines as these (absent from the 2004 book):

Living God, your church awake
 to the urgent work of peace:
 till the nations all forsake
 deadly arms, and conflicts cease.⁸

After twice being rejected for overseas service, first for medical and then for mainly financial reasons, Albert ministered in Morpeth 1938–46, and towards the end of his time there wrote his first hymn. 'Rejoice, O people' which provided the title for his first printed collection in 1950, and the later edition of 2004.

Albert's next Congregational pastorate was at Hollingreave, Burnley, Lancashire, from 1946 to 1950. Here he wrote more hymns and a 1950 carol, 'If Christ were born in Burnley'. This was a conscious but more hopeful, gentle and lyrical echo of the lines by G A Studdert Kennedy ('Woodbine Willie'),⁹ 'When Jesus came to Birmingham', verse 2 of 'When Jesus came to Golgotha' (1920s):

If Christ were born in Burnley
 This Christmas night, this Christmas night;

6 A F Bayly *Rejoice O People: Hymns and Verse* (1950) 33. The copyright for all Albert's hymn texts is held by Oxford University Press.

7 D Dale (ed) *Rejoice, O People: Hymns and Poems of Albert Bayly* (Chipping Norton 2004).

8 Surprisingly, none of the records quoted here state whether he joined the interdenominational Fellowship of Reconciliation, the Christian pacifist body founded in 1914 and still active. One passing reference in B Braley *Hymnwriters 2* (1989) 157 indicates that he knew of its existence.

9 See *ODNB*.

I know not if the moors would shine
 With heav'nly light, with heav'nly light,
 But this I know, my heart would glow,
 And all its inner radiance show
 If Christ were born in Burnley.

Further appointments brought him to Swanland, near Hull in the East Riding (1950–56); Ecclestone, St Helen's, Lancashire (1956–62); and for another decade in Thaxted, Essex. He retired to Chelmsford in 1972, the year of the launch of the United Reformed Church, for which he wrote a celebratory hymn! Like so many, Albert continued in a much-valued 'auxiliary ministry' during his remaining years.

But here is a disclaimer: this is a collection of tributes and reflections; it is not even a potted biography! Inevitably, like most of us, Albert had other things to do besides writing hymns; but for a fuller account of his life and achievements, the best available records, of both large events and small details, are found in Bernard Braley's *Hymnwriters 2* (1989) and David Dale's introduction to *Rejoice, O People* (2004).¹⁰

While in full-time ministry Albert was a committed Congregationalist, he gladly embraced the United Reformed Church, for which like others he had high hopes. Yet he showed a lifelong openness to other traditions and a true catholicity towards all who follow Christ. He was moved to write of grand cathedrals (Chelmsford, Lichfield and Liverpool) as of small village churches (not all of his own persuasion). Mansfield College and its chapel remained unsurpassed in his affection, except perhaps by Thaxted; but he also warmed to the historic Quaker Meeting House (Society of Friends) at Jordans, Buckinghamshire, and to the global vision of more than one overseas mission society.

His heroes included, not unnaturally, the Independent hymn-writing patriarch and polymath Isaac Watts, but also Columba, Albert Schweitzer (who often visited and played the organ at Mansfield College), Charles F Andrews of India and Vincent de Paul of France.¹¹ Certainly he found limitations in all earthly saints and shrines, but never descended to cynicism nor superior judgements. He held on to a dream of a greater unity than the world has yet known, seeing in some united gatherings a true foretaste of the new creation where divisions will be no more.

Perhaps significantly, apart from Burnley (famous for its football team), most people would need an atlas to locate his other homes, in fairly small churches over 43 years. He included sport and leisure among his hymn topics and wrote

¹⁰ Dale *Rejoice, O People* ix–xviii.

¹¹ For Watts and Andrews see *ODNB*. For Columba, Schweitzer and Vincent see *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*.

lighter verse about cricket; but appears not to have been greatly moved by Burnley Football Club, among the top teams of the 1940s. He had a keen sense of place, and developed a deep love for all these locations, both scenery and people, expressed in spoken addresses, written letters and printed verse. Particularly moving are verses such as this, one of many he wrote for Thaxted, in 1963:

Dwelling in this fair town upon a hill,
 Spire soaring high beside an ageing mill,
 Homes bowed with years along a curving street.
 Down to the Guildhall where old highways meet;
 Where faithful hearts adore, we worship still.

But his vision was never less than world-wide and future-focused. He wrote the text for several missionary pageants, focused largely on the (mostly Congregational) London Missionary Society but also the Anglican CMS (now the Church Mission Society), and librettos for cantatas by William Lloyd Webber (1914–82), father of the more celebrated Andrew Lloyd Webber.¹² The many causes he supported included the National Trust, the Council for the Preservation of Rural England (notably footpaths; he never owned or drove a car) and Amnesty International. I discovered another small affinity when learning that he sometimes drafted a hymn during a bus-ride. Charles Wesley famously worked out many lines on horseback, and more recent hymns owe their form (and rhythm) to train journeys; but few of us have buses to thank for our inspiration.

Fascinated when young by astronomy, he became a pioneer in relating scientific advances such as space exploration to expressions of praise in hymns. For this reason alone he has been called a forerunner and ‘pioneer ... of the renaissance of English-language *hymnwriting* which began in 1960s Britain’.¹³

His fellow Congregational minister Leslie Ivory (1921–2018), another Hymn Society stalwart, delighted to hail his friend as ‘the last of the old and the first of the new’, quoting the Anglican scholar, composer and broadcaster Cyril Taylor (1907–91), one of his first and most crucial encouragers, to the same effect. He may not have been the only hymnwriter to be thus defined (Ian Fraser, 1917–2018 *sic*, came close), but no-one deserved the title more than Albert. He has also been called ‘the father of modern hymn-writing’ and (by Valerie Ruddle in 2004) ‘a man before his time’.¹⁴

The immediate and outward sign of this double description was the fact

¹² *The Guardian* 16 April 2004.

¹³ *Rejoice O People* xxxii.

¹⁴ *Rejoice O People* vii, xxiii. For Taylor and Ruddle see *Cambridge Dictionary of Hymnology*. For Fraser see *The Herald* 18 April 2018.

that his first, and possibly all his hymn-texts were written, naturally enough, with the older ('King James') pronouns 'thee' and 'thou'. His later work follows (or anticipates?) the 1970s Bible versions by modernising what was already in print and using 'you' for the Godhead. Some writers (George W Briggs, 1875–1959; Frank Houghton, 1894–1972) came just too early to live through the change; some (Timothy Dudley-Smith, b.1928) were young enough never or hardly ever to need the older pronouns or archaic verb forms ('wilt', 'wast', 'hast' etc.).¹⁵ Rosamond Herklots (1905–87), James Seddon (1915–83) and the Canadian Margaret Clarkson (1915–2008) were among those who, like Albert, began with the old but happily embraced the irreversible changes.¹⁶

One set of editors paid their tribute to our subject by stating in their printed 'Companion', 'With charitable forbearance the author allowed us to make these alterations'. More conservative Welsh writers (W Vernon Higham, 1926–2016; Graham Harrison, 1935–2013), charitable or not, declined such permission.¹⁷ But many old-style authors, forward-looking in other ways, missed out on the posthumous privilege or misfortune of having their texts freshened up or dressed in new fashions—always depending on permission from the copyright-holders.

But life is more than pronouns! We can no longer live with some of the racial stereotypes or even names in, for example, the hymns for children. But Cyril Taylor's description of Albert Bayly reflected a fresh way of thinking and writing that would have been all-but-impossible before the Second World War. In the world of hymns, Albert was in the vanguard of a scientific, technical but still authentically Christian mindset. Dare I suggest that we have to go back to Isaac Watts to find such delight in new discoveries so happily wedded to reverent wonder in worshipping the divine source of such marvels? But not even Watts, nor probably any hymnwriter since, has put the question so directly as Bayly did for children: 'Does life grow on other worlds too?' (from 'We praise you, O God, for these wonderful days', 1979).

The significance of this and similar hymns is that the scientific references grew naturally from his own lifelong studies, and were never awkwardly tacked on to make a dull text more 'relevant'. It came naturally to him that some favourite words are 'atom', 'galaxies' and 'light-years'! In 1999 Professor J R Watson of Durham, perhaps the UK's foremost hymnologist, said in a Hymn Society lecture (revised for print in 2000), 'there has to be a way in which we

¹⁵ For Briggs and Houghton see *Who Was Who*.

¹⁶ For Herklots and Seddon see *Canterbury Dictionary of Hymnology* hymnology.hymnsam.co.uk/t/rosamond-herklots and hymnology.hymnsam.co.uk/j/james-edward-seddon (accessed 8/3/20). For Clarkson see *Evangelical Times* Sept 2008.

¹⁷ For W Vernon Higham see *Evangelical Times* 14 Sept 2016 and for Harrison see *Evangelical Times* August 2013.

can incorporate modern theology (and philosophy and science) into hymn-writing; the most persistent exponent of this art was Albert Bayly’.

A typical tribute to his character came from another friend, Edward Jones, who called him ‘A devoted servant of God, characterised by gentleness and joy’. Alan Gaunt, who selected the hymns for the 2004 book and quoted those words in 2006, added that ‘Everyone who has written about Albert has drawn attention to his natural reticence, his gentleness and his dedication to the pastoral ministry. And this is what shines through the many hymns that he wrote’.¹⁸

It seems somewhat unfair that, partly because of Albert’s quiet and self-effacing humility, he is rarely *bracketed* with those other Free Church pioneers of the ‘hymn-explosion’, Fred Pratt Green (1903–2000), Fred Kaan and Brian Wren (b.1936).¹⁹ In fact he preceded them by having one hymn (his first) in the 1951 *Congregational Praise*: ‘Rejoice, O people, in the mounting years’, which Baptists and Methodists were quick to choose for their next major books. But even in 1951, the *CP* editors could have discovered more; there was ‘much gnashing of teeth about what we had missed’—Erik Routley (1917–82), quoted by David Dale.²⁰ Like many texts of this period, the hymn includes phrases which we might now prefer to emend; but as each of its six stanzas is addressed to ‘O people’, it has no need of problematic ‘divine pronouns’.

In fact, perhaps Bayly should not be ‘bracketed’ with anyone! To the late-starter Fred Pratt Green he was ‘the forerunner of the remarkable revival of hymn-writing in the 1960s and 1970s’; to Brian Wren, ‘Of the “hymn-explosion” in Britain he [Bayly] was the forerunner’. Routley, T Caryl Micklem, Eric Sharpe and more recently Elizabeth Cosnett, Valerie Ruddle and others have spoken in similarly warm and perceptive terms, while in his turn Alan Gaunt (though a year older than Wren) picked up the distinctively Free Church baton.²¹

Several Anglicans and one or two Roman Catholics were also active in the immediate post-war years. Just as it was once fashionable to decry any pre-Beatles pop-songs as insignificant, so the 1940s and 50s hymnwriters have often been unfairly overlooked. Some made a permanent mark, but they were striking out in different directions from those nonconformists I have mentioned.

Between 1969 and 1981 a mini-flood of small ‘Supplements’ appeared, partly to add a contemporary flavour to existing denominational books which were too early to catch the ‘Pratt Green’ effect, partly to fly the flag for new hymnals to come. They all comprised a hundred (or a few more) hymns, arranged

18 For Gaunt see Binfield and Taylor *Who They Were* (Donington 2007) 73–4.

19 K L Parry (ed) *Companion to Congregational Praise* (1953) 349. For Wren see Taylor and Binfield 252–3.

20 *Rejoice O People* xxii. For Routley see Taylor and Binfield *Who They Were* 196–7.

21 *Rejoice O People* xxxii. For T C Micklem (1925–2003) see Binfield and Taylor 156–7.

alphabetically, and usually with melody-line editions. Their indexes varied in quality, sometimes making it hard to trace authors or composers.

Somewhat surprisingly, neither his fellow Congregationalists nor URC entrepreneurs did Albert's hymns most justice in their selections. The three Anglican books featured respectively 5, 2 and 1 of Bayly's hymns; the Baptists had 5, the Methodists 3, and the fledgling United Reformed Church 4. A similar collection, *Broadcast Praise* (1981), from the BBC at the end of this series included two from AB. As a collective relic of the times, instructive now as to what lasted and what did not, that small UK 'Supplement' selection has much overlapping. Curiously, though, the only two texts to feature in all five of the 'primary' books, were Sydney Carter's 'Lord of the dance' and 'Forgive our sins, as we forgive' by Rosamond Herklots. Each is unique in its content; many subsequent full-scale books have also counted these as indispensable.

Around the same time, several North American hymnal editors had begun to recognise his work; *A Survey of Christian Hymnody* (Hope Publishing, USA, 4th edition 1999) noted that 'the freshness of [Bayly's] hymns... helped prepare for the rising tide in hymn writing that swelled in the 1960s'. *The Hymnal 1982 Companion*, not published until 1994, briefly described him as 'a prolific poet', adding notes to the three items included in the parent Episcopalian hymnal. Transatlantic recognition also was evident in his election as an Honorary Fellow of Westminster Choir College, Princeton, New Jersey.²² From Australia, too, *Songs for the People of God*, the 1982 'Companion to *The Australian Hymn Book* aka *With One Voice*, also with three hymns, commented that 'few hymnals published since 1950 lack one or more from his pen'. In 1999 this *AHB/WOV* had a completely new edition in *Together in Song*, which retained the same three.

David Dale, introducing the 2004 collection, stated 'There are echoes of Albert's work being heard in many parts of the English-speaking world and he has undoubtedly sown seed that will germinate in many another mind and bear a harvest richer than he in his modest way had ever hoped to see'.

One wonders whether the editors or publishers of the seemingly unstoppable expanding series of *Mission Praise* editions ever reflect on why they virtually bypass the major fourfold (at least) Free Church contribution to late 20th-century writing and singing, in favour of much that is less original, less well crafted and arguably less biblical than the best work of these gifted writers.

However among major and mainstream hymn-books, *Hymns and Psalms* (1983), optimistically subtitled 'A Methodist and Ecumenical Hymn-book', did most credit to both Albert Bayly and itself by including twelve of his texts. Whatever happened to Methodism in the next 28 years it is astonishing that its successor *Singing the Faith* (2011) cuts Bayly down from twelve to two, while

22 D Dale *Rejoice, O People* (2004) xxiii.

filling its pages with the hymnological equivalent of junk food supplied by the growing ranks of so-called singer-songwriters. The newer editors continued their predecessors' policy of changing texts without asking, let alone receiving, permission, presumably having discovered (like some American publishers) that you can get away with it. It is a long time since John Wesley was summoned to court for introducing unauthorised changes to other people's hymns. To adapt a famous introductory claim, 'Methodism was born in song-changes'.

In his early days as a hymnwriter, Albert sought the advice of arch-hymnologist Erik Routley who, as well as suggesting suitable tunes, was one of some thirty composers to provide new ones for his texts. Small home-made words-only booklets of 'hymns and verse' were issued in 1950 (*Rejoice, O People*), 1967 (*Again I say Rejoice*), 1971 (*Rejoice Always*), 1977 (*Rejoice in God*) and 1982 (*Rejoice Together*—spot the happily insistent imperative verb!—which included a 12-hymn supplement prepared by Rodborough Tabernacle, near Stroud, Gloucestershire). The last of these also included 45 hymns repeated with some revisions from the first book, which was by then out of print.

Whether we call these booklets modestly produced (the second cost 7s 6d—37½p.) or just plain dull, the fact remains that rarely have five such uninviting covers concealed such delights. Since this article is subtitled 'personal', I can confess that on re-reading these booklets—where some verses were familiar, many more not so—I am deeply humbled by this man's extraordinary gifts, to write so beautifully, naturally and tellingly about subjects great or apparently small. Who am I, who have ventured into the same craft, to comment on such near-perfection?

Albert's life and work featured in the second of Bernard Braley's three studies *Hymnwriters 2* (1989). In a volume shared with John Newton, James Montgomery and Henry Williams Baker from earlier centuries, this supplied details of Albert's life beyond hymn-writing, and the social changes and political upheavals through which he lived. The thirty pages devoted to Bayly are rich in photographs, sermon extracts and quotations from contemporary documents, sacred and secular.

But David Dale's belated hymn-collection with introduction and notes reverted to the original title *Rejoice, O People*. This was named after his first text ('A Hymn of the World-Wide Church'), written in 1945 for the 150th anniversary of the London Missionary Society and featured in major hymnals from 1951 (*BBC Hymn Book* and *Congregational Praise*) onwards. It is one of his five hymns in the Baptist supplement *Praise for Today* (1974), three of which were retained for *Baptist Praise and Worship* (1991). In 1981 he told the Anglican editor Geoffrey Whitehead that 'I do not require any personal fee for the use of my hymns'.

Routley's magisterial *A Panorama of Christian Hymnody* (1979, 2nd edition

2005 edited and expanded by Paul A Richardson) included three of AB's hymns with Routley's own commendation of Albert as 'the most sought-after writer of his generation. ... who could successfully handle what were then modern ideas and modern language'. The chosen examples are 'O Lord of every shining constellation / that wheels in splendour through the midnight sky' ('a good Christian layman's prayer in a scientific milieu'); 'What does the Lord require' in two versions, 'original' 1949, and 'as revised by the author', 1969 ('which expounds Scripture with admirable directness and candour'); and less obviously, the delightful, 'Joy wings to God our song' ('a lyric in an unusual metre written much later'). Routley also proved an invaluable adviser on the choice of tunes.

The second of these, based on Micah 6:6–8, is one of a series drawn from the twelve 'Minor Prophets' of the Old Testament; in this enterprise he preceded Timothy Dudley-Smith (b 1926) by several decades.²³ How good it would have been to hear a dialogue between these two masters of the art, about what is involved in such an attempt! Micah 6 has been much quarried, but rarely if ever again for such a series of twelve.

Also from this sequence, the hymn on Hosea is both strong and moving; covenant-based and Christ-centred. It begins:

O faithful love, enduring still,
 though in your very shrine betrayed,
 no mockery or falsehood swayed
 the saving purpose of your will.

Did the lines (and applications) of Daniel or Zechariah come more easily, perhaps, than those on Amos or Obadiah?²⁴

One early hymn (from January 1949) not included by Routley is 'Lord of the boundless curves of space'. This has had mixed fortunes at the hands of revisers and editors. Prompted by a BBC radio talk by Dr Jacob Isaacs on 'Poetry and Science', which observed that science and Christian faith are often (quite unjustifiably) 'set in opposition' to each other, Bayly's original fifth stanza ran:

Science explores thy reason's ways
 but faith draws near thy heart;
 and in the face of Christ we gaze
 upon the love thou art.

At some stage this was amended to;

²³ T Dudley-Smith *A House of Praise: part two* (2015) xiii–xiv.

²⁴ Bayly shared the dominant academic view that there was more than one 'Isaiah'. See J A Motyer *The Prophecy of Isaiah* (1993).

Science explores thy/your reason's ways
 and faith can this impart
 that in the face of Christ our gaze
 looks deep within thy/your heart.

But Brian Wren's revision of the hymn with added verses, as published in *Hymns and Psalms* (1983) whose editors were known to make unauthorised textual changes, omitted these four lines which have seldom been restored. Other changes have made it hard to establish the text preferred by the author—who was not above accepting suggestions for tidying or fine-tuning his earlier work. From the second half of the twentieth century onwards, the constant 'improving' of such texts, by their authors (notably Wren himself) or others, has proved a minefield for anyone looking for originals, of which this is only one example from AB's work, in a time of rapidly changing language not least in the church.

Hymns for Today's Church (1982 and 1987), the book of radical revisions for which I bear some responsibility, managed to include that most striking text, 'O Lord of every shining constellation / that wheels in splendour through the midnight sky'. His second stanza reads;

You, Lord, have made the atom's hidden forces;
 Your laws its mighty energies fulfil:
 Teach us, to whom you give such rich resources,
 In all we use, to serve your holy will.

The hymn goes on to sing of 'cell and tissue', of God's image stamped upon us, the prayer that we shall 'lift up our eyes to Christ', and a concluding address to the 'great Lord of nature'—'you made us more than nature sons to be.'

Following *Hymns for Today's Church*, my own next major project bore fruit in *Praise!* (2000) where we persuaded the editorial group to double the *HTC* quota by choosing the Micah 6 text and the quite different 'O God, your life-creating love' for the all-too-brief 'Families and Children' section. This was largely an evangelical Baptist production; this choice was echoed in a Hymn Society 'London Day' in February 2017, in a Festival of Hymns arranged on the themes of Baptism (including children), marriage and bereavement.

At a memorial service at Chelmsford in October 1984, another Mansfield man and URC hymnwriter, Caryl Micklem (1925–2003), chose 'integrity' as the first quality of Albert's work. 'I can't think of a line that is there just for effect—to give people a comfortable feeling or make them applaud the author's insight or with-it-ness. He wrote, as he conducted the rest of his ministry, as a servant of the Word already given us. Many of the hymns in *Rejoice, O People* are directly based on the Old Testament prophets. With unerring eye and ear, Albert could highlight a Scriptural phrase—as for instance "High and lifted up"

from Isaiah’s vision in the temple—in such a way that it seems the most natural thing in the world when it reappears later in the hymn as a description of our vision of God through Jesus.’²⁵

‘Another aspect of his integrity as a writer is that he never permitted himself the indulgence of a false stress in his prosody. Musicians liked composing for him because he doesn’t let them down, as Watts and Wesley [!] sometimes do ... Singing or reading his work one is impressed again and again by the youthfulness, in the best sense, of Albert’s mind. His sense of wonder and delight never turns samey or stale; his sensitivity to the world’s pain and need never gets calloused over; he is never nostalgic. He feels the amazement of modern man at the vast emptiness of space and the power-packed density of the atom. His compassion is wide but never strident. His confidence is unwavering but never facile. Full of realism about our human frailties, he is also full of joy—the authentic Christian joy which comes from God through the Gospel and which wings our song back towards God in the praise of the Church.’

The 1984 poem ‘God’s image’ perfectly illustrates that tribute: ‘God said “Let there be light.” ... Man said, “Let me be God”’.

His restless energies
turned to seek base ends:
hatred and envy, greed, desire and pride
wrecked God’s predestined harmony of man ...’

But of course there is hope in Christ, for ‘God said “I will seek man” ...’

I am convinced, some 35 years on, that this is not merely the rose-tinted admiration of a friend, expressed in the emotional aftermath of bereavement, but a sober assessment of a highly-gifted but relatively neglected author, all the more remarkable when we compare it with Albert’s own admission that his writing occupied ‘odd moments’ spared from a very busy ministry. Albert himself wrote in 1969 (in the North American Hymn Society’s journal *The Hymn*) that he aimed to write hymns ‘in small words and phrases, without bathos, without clichés, with a feeling for the proper dignity of worship and the rhythmic quality needed in a hymn... sensitive to the knowledge and modes of life and expression of [his] time.’ On another occasion he expressed caution (to put it mildly) towards ‘colloquial phrasing and easy rhythm’ in the popularising mode of Ira D Sankey and his post-1960 successors.

Micklethorp described his friend as ‘a true architect’ of hymn construction, in both his ‘large-scale pieces’ and his ‘more ordinary-sized hymns’. He adds that ‘Albert’s recognition by the editors of hymn-books was belated, but we rejoice

²⁵ For Micklethorp see Taylor and Binfield *Who They Were* 156–7.

that he lived to see it'.²⁶ Albert lived just long enough to see that the Methodists of 1983 were sufficiently keen or discerning to include his twelve texts in *Hymns and Psalms*. Remarkably, these are written in nine different metres; like the later URC choices and overlapping with them, they show how Biblical was his thinking. He was rarely tied to close paraphrase—though he could do this too—and while never in danger of being labelled a 'fundamentalist' (that ambiguous, misleading and usually hostile word!) he clearly loved his Bible and wrestled with the essential meaning of prophecy or parable, story or song. To call him 'liberal' (unless meant as a compliment) might be equally unfair; few of his more radical contemporaries would welcome with such poetic warmth the arrival of the *Revised Standard Version* of the Bible (three times!), the 350th anniversary of the Authorised (King James) Version, and a Bible Society jubilee. His versified tributes were meant to be sung, not merely admired. Whether he deliberately steered clear of extending an equal welcome to the *New English Bible* (New Testament, 1961) may be an open question.

Yet he has rightly been called a risk-taker, neither conservative nor conventional; even a kind of 'Renaissance man', 'always looking for new ways of communicating his wonder over scientific achievement in poetic language ... and helping others to that wonder too', said Kate Compston at his funeral service. He also mastered the art (used sparingly) of repeating a key line or phrase, with or without variation, in each stanza; see for example 'Joy wings to God our song'.²⁷

It is also striking that the poet of the vast universe and unexplored wonders of space is equally at home with simple (but never trite) hymns for family occasions including birth, marriage and bereavement. His eye and heart are on both the needy world and the resources of God in Christ to meet that need—not glossing over the cry for forgiveness. We have quoted several first lines: like many of his greatest predecessors, he also took pains to make his final lines or couplets worthy of their openings, rather than a merely conventional closing down or 'tidying up'. The carefully-chosen tunes, of course, are integral to this particular effect as with all the others. But here are a few of Bayly's conclusions:

From his first known hymn (1945), 'Rejoice, O people ...':

that word proclaimed where saints and martyrs trod,
the glorious gospel of the blessed God.

Or this, from two decades later:

and lead our hearts in Christ to find
in love the road to perfect day.

²⁶ For a fuller version of this address see the quarterly *News of Hymnody* no.13, January 1985.

²⁷ For how *not* to do this, see *Mission Praise*, passim.

Another early one on a ‘world mission’ theme closes with:

and all the world by Jesus liberated,
proclaims in jubilation, Christ is King!

He is sparing with his exclamation-marks but one is surely justified here (!).

The word ‘church’ does not feature much in his writing; though the reality undergirds all he wrote. One hymn which does include the word, ‘A glorious company we sing’, ends with:

with love and joy and faith and power
set all our days afire.

And here is a final stanza from 1947:

Now in this hour when faith burns low,
And scattered lies our proudest plan,
When ancient evils rankly grow,
And fears possess the heart of man;
Lord God of fire, and life, and light,
Revive us with thy Spirit’s might.

And we sometimes look back to the 1940s with nostalgia for the good times!

Aside from the various single-author books and *Hymns and Psalms* already noted, we turn to *Hymns Ancient and Modern New Standard* (1983) and *Rejoice and Sing* (1991) for the next best selection of Albert’s work. The latest and largest-yet edition of *A&M* (2013) suggests a waning enthusiasm for it in the generation since 1983; three hymns survive, in a 24 strong section (from Watts to Troeger, new to this series) called ‘Creation and the Environment’. Even the six in *R&S* seem a somewhat ungenerous helping, especially as ‘O Lord of every shining constellation’ is unaccountably absent from the URC book. He anticipates Thomas Troeger’s ‘Above the moon earth rises’ (2002) in the sonnet ‘Christmas in the space-age’, starting from Psalm 19 and continuing, ‘Now man considers earth from space, a sphere / more beautiful than moon or Mars ...’.

However these six, together with other hymns mentioned above, are a fair sample of AB’s work. Never afraid to innovate where that was deemed appropriate and necessary (and singable!), Albert remained content to address his hymns to, or speak naturally about, his and our ‘Father’ and ‘Lord’. Five of the six in *R&S* include the title ‘Christ’ which he normally preferred to ‘Jesus’. One of them, ‘Lord of all good, our gifts we bring to thee’, from Eccleston in 1962, has a final verse clearly and succinctly articulating his Trinitarian faith:

Father, whose bounty all creation shows,
Christ, by whose willing sacrifice we live,

Spirit, from whom all life in fullness flows,
to thee with grateful hearts ourselves we give.

As here, so often the third Person of the Godhead is the creative and Holy Spirit, loving, empowering and enlightening in every sense.

Yet the fairest way to survey Albert's lifelong work is to discover the 2004 publication of 108 hymn texts and 58 poems in *Rejoice, O People: Hymns and Poems by Albert Bayly with an Introduction to the man and his work* by David Dale. Current and recent Hymn Society members, even before opening the book, will have had the opportunity to reflect on the 4-page review in their *Bulletin* (no.243, April 2005), by the first woman to be elected as the Society's Executive President (formerly we had 'Chairmen'), Elizabeth Cosnett, lecturer in English and published hymn writer. Valerie Ruddle, another Hymn Society stalwart who had a major share in this publication, calls Albert's poems 'a sheer delight'.²⁸

After essays on 'The Man and his Ministry' and 'The Man and his Writing', the heart of the book consists of the hymns (words only but with recommended tunes) arranged instructively in chronological order of writing. The reviewer opts for 'Lord of the boundless curves of space;' and 'O Lord of every shining constellation' as 'perhaps still the finest hymns available to congregations wishing to take modern scientific thought seriously'. These date from 1945 and 1949 respectively; it is sobering to think what unimagined steps science has made since then; perhaps Andrew Pratt from the UK or the North American Thomas Troeger have done something to fill the ever-expanding gap, but British Sunday morning congregations have not noticeably been storming the aisles demanding more of the same.

The review points to themes arising from pastoral concerns, local events, national or global anniversaries. 'It is noteworthy', writes Elizabeth Cosnett, 'that the author never allowed a particular occasion, whether a major public event or something much more personal, to upstage the Christian theology which, however simple and restrained its expression was always his inspiration. Some younger writers might do well to imitate him in this respect.' Gotcha! Or should that be 'Ouch!?' Older or younger, all who aspire to address specific concerns while writing for a congregation will I hope be aware of that tension.

On the poems, Dale notes the verses about a young house-martin and (more poignantly but more Wordsworthian) a tiny doomed blue-tit; blackbirds, thrushes, robins, gulls and many others also spread their wings in his poetry, while his keen eye for flowers is also to be treasured. The first known ascent

²⁸ For Cosnett and Ruddle see *Canterbury Dictionary of Hymnology* <https://hymnology.hymnsam.co.uk/e/elizabeth-cosnett> and <https://hymnology.hymnsam.co.uk/v/valerie-ruddle> (accessed 13/1/2020).

of Everest (with the writer's own unconventional insight) is duly recorded; the eightieth birthday of another Albert, his lifelong hero Dr Schweitzer; Mansfield College; the Burns Unit at Whiston Hospital, and Oberammergau ('outstanding'—DD). And Holy Communion on the moon (a sonnet printed here in full; he was clearly drawn to this verse-form and used two of the classic 14-line patterns). 'This is a book to treasure ... [from] 'one of the great figures in twentieth-century English hymnody.'

Away from hymn-writing Albert loved walking and was committed to a simple life-style, disarmament and international, inter-church friendship. It will be no surprise to learn that he was a keen supporter and an Honorary Vice-President of the Hymn Society (of GB and Ireland), whose conference he had enjoyed in the days preceding his sudden death. His interest and skills in art are less well-known; I wake every morning to be cheered by his oil-painting of Freshwater, Isle of Wight; dated 1947. Was he on holiday from Burnley that summer? As it happens, I was there (from Bromley) just two years later; I have a black and white 'snap' to prove it; 'We bathed', I wrote, 'and saw several fish, crabs, shrimps etc' and had sandwiches on the beach. But my artwork aged ten, still lovingly preserved, is not quite in the same league as his. (I was back there again after another sixty years, minus art equipment.)

Albert often withdrew to the Cheviot Hills with his paints and brushes; some favourite holiday spots while he lived in the north. In later years when his eyesight began to fail and needed surgery for glaucoma, it was hard for him to travel and paint much less. From the eye ward in hospital at Chelmsford he wrote: 'and only one who waits here fully knows / the joy when loved ones enter at the door'. But typically, he also used his disability to beautiful effect in a technically perfect poem 'I have seen beauty in the hills'. After touching on the Parthenon, Michelangelo and Constable, his second stanza begins (before he reaches characteristically to Einstein!—but then, the Cross):

When age dims outward sight, give me, O Lord,
that inner vision which can see, within,
the beauty hidden from the outward eye ...²⁹

Another gem from Albert's later years is the four-verse 'Testimony' from May 1980: 'Jesus Christ I love and serve ... Jesus Christ called me in youth ... Jesus Christ has been my guide ... Jesus Christ my faith sustains.'

It is only right to slip in here an extraordinary example of lightning striking twice in the same place—or at least in the same hymnwriting business—many

²⁹ As a glaucoma patient myself, I wonder what else blind hymnwriters may have in common. John Milton (after his youthful hymnwriting), Georg Neumark (in his last year), Fanny Crosby (Frances van Alstyne) and George Matheson spring to mind, and currently Emma Turl of Waltham Abbey.

years after Albert's death. At some point, undated, a 1966 'family' hymn, 'Our Father, whose creative love', which made its way into several major hymnals, was published in a Canadian book over the name of a different author altogether, before the mistake could be corrected. More embarrassing because so near home was the inclusion of a 1949 Bayly text from his 'prophets' series, 'Day of the Lord, how shall we know your coming' (from Joel) in the second collection of my own hymns, *Walking by the River*, in 2008. How this was ever credited to me I can hardly now imagine; so far I know, no-one else noticed it until I spotted this indefensible howler in 2019. I have duly apologised to a small group of writers, editors and friends who might be interested, if not outraged, and hereby do so again to any others whom it may concern. It is not much compensation that some of my work has also been attributed to others!

To return to Chichester 1984. The centrepiece of the annual conference is by long tradition the 'Act of Praise', in 2003 renamed the 'Festival of Hymns'. To be represented in this showpiece event is like appearing on 'Desert Island Discs', except that there are twelve items rather than eight, and they are chosen by a small representative group each year. Albert featured in the Salisbury selection for 1977 with 'In the power of God's own Spirit'; and among the dozen sung at Gloucester in 1982 was 'Thanks be to God, for all that keeps us growing, / growing in spirit, though the flesh decays'.

At Coventry in 1985, the year following Albert's death and in fond memory of him, we sang 'Your light, O God, was given to earth / the light of truth, your wisdom's flame'—a short (16 lines) but classic hymn about wisdom, rooted in Christ and introduced by Fred Kaan. In 2005 (Chester) we sang 'Lord of the boundless curves of space'; 'one of Albert's most loved hymns', said the much-travelled musician, author and lecturer Gillian Warson in her introduction.

Perhaps most poignantly in 2001, to mark the centenary of Albert's birth, the choice for Bradford, gently modernised, was:

What does the Lord require
for praise and offering?
What sacrifice, desire,
or tribute bid you bring?
Do justly, love mercy,
walk humbly with your God.

Here was not only a singable metrical approach to Micah 6:6–8, but an unconscious self-portrait of the author himself. Having just written this sentence, I was not surprised to find that the thought was not unoriginal: Canon Alan Luff, hymnwriter, editor, former cathedral precentor and Hymn Society patriarch, said in 2001 that he was: '... shy and self-effacing to a fault ... If ever a man walked humbly with his God it was Albert.'

Now let us end where we began, in 1984 but looking forward as ever. In March of that year, aged 82 and four months before his death, Albert wrote what was probably his last hymn, appropriately enough for Easter: 'Life is born of death today'. The last of its four stanzas read, and sang:

Living Christ, your triumphs bring
death to wrong and sadness;
we would tell our joy and sing
our refrain of gladness;
Christ is risen; alleluia!
Christ is risen from the dead.³⁰

Christopher Idle.

30 For further reading, see almost any Companion or Handbook to a major hymnal.

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ENGLISH CHURCHES IN THE NETHERLANDS BEFORE 1640

Although 1620 is remembered for the voyage of the Mayflower to Massachusetts, carrying its cargo of separatists and others, several English churches remained in the Netherlands and Pastor John Robinson (1575/6?–1625) continued in Leiden where he was to die five years later. Indeed only a minority of Robinson's church members set sail in 1620 for the New World where they were joined in the years that followed by a few others from their church. By then the Netherlands had long been a haven for Protestants, French, English and others, fleeing unsympathetic regimes. Among these were radical puritans, refugees who decided that the established church of late Elizabethan and early Stuart England, although to a degree Protestant, was too suffocating, too unreformed and too repressive for them to worship God according to conscience. In contrast the Netherlands offered greater liberty than England and less danger than Massachusetts. The separatists rejected the Church of England and instead met in gathered congregations whose members covenanted together and tried to live as closely as possible to the Biblical pattern of the first and second century churches. However separatism was forbidden in English law.

In the early seventeenth century the Netherlands had a sizeable Anglo-Scottish community, numbering perhaps in the tens of thousands. This article deals with some of the most notable but others made a contribution, though often unnoticed. Many were there for economic reasons, merchants plying their trades. Some were soldiers in the English and Scottish regiments, engaged in the Eighty Years War for Dutch independence from Spain. By 1621 four English regiments and two Scottish regiments comprised 13,000 men when at full strength. A significant number of English migrants among the cosmopolitan population of Dutch cities were religious refugees who found that the United Provinces (set up in 1581 by those provinces which seceded from Spanish rule) would not return fugitives to their native countries. Here were opportunities for English speaking chaplains which enabled those preachers silenced by bishops at home to find employment abroad. Indeed English speaking churches existed in Utrecht, Leiden, Middelburg, Flushing, Delft and Amsterdam which latter town in 1623 had six such churches.¹

Robinson's separatist church, originally based in Scrooby, Nottinghamshire and similar in teaching to the Brownists (those English dissenters who followed

¹ K L Sprunger *Dutch Puritanism: A History of English and Scottish Churches of the Netherlands in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Leiden 1982) 4–6.

Robert Browne²), had decided to emigrate to the Low Countries in 1607. A large Brownist church, the so-called Ancient Church, had left London in 1593 and settled in Amsterdam where it aimed to be ‘as a light upon a hill’ for godly people in England. In the 1600s this church, with Francis Johnson (*bap.* 1562–*d.* 1617) as pastor and Henry Ainsworth (1569–1622) as teacher, was still in Amsterdam but was riven by internal disputes. Having been expelled from Cambridge University, Johnson had served 1590–92 as minister of the English Merchant Adventurers Church in Middelburg in Zeeland before he embraced separatist views. Ainsworth had espoused separatism after leaving Cambridge in 1591.³ Initially Robinson’s church and that of John Smyth (whose church had migrated from Gainsborough, Lincolnshire) had settled at Amsterdam. Francis Johnson had been Smyth’s tutor at Cambridge before Johnson’s expulsion and by 1607 Smyth (*d.* 1612) was himself a separatist.⁴

As well as the English separatist churches in Amsterdam there was also a well-supported non-separatist English reformed church with no love between the two groups. Smyth and his followers soon embraced believer’s baptism which fact contributed to Robinson’s withdrawal in 1609, with some 100 followers, to Leiden which was a busy if smaller town, attracting students to its university from all over Europe. Between 1575 and 1675 some 950 English speaking students matriculated at Leiden University. Significantly under Robinson’s care his church avoided the schisms suffered by other English refugee churches and at Leiden by 1620 it had grown to some 300 members. Its reputation was such at Leiden that after 12 years the town magistrates praised the church members for their pious living and good behaviour.⁵

Although Robinson’s separatists were well received in the Low Countries, some of their number experienced poverty and hardship. Dutch was not their native tongue and their children were becoming more Dutch than English. Moreover, the smouldering conflict between the Dutch and Spanish threatened the separatists’ freedom. Therefore a decision was made in early 1619 to emigrate to America. The ‘pilgrims’ embarked on the *Speedwell* from Delfshaven to London to join with the *Mayflower*. Unfortunately, 300 miles west of Land’s End, the *Speedwell* proved unseaworthy and turned back. Only thirty-five members of Robinson’s church actually sailed on the *Mayflower*, along with sixty-six people from London and Southampton who did not share their religious convictions.

2 Though influential, Robert Browne was a separatist only for a few years, 1579–85. For Browne (1550?–1633) see ODNB.

3 For Johnson and Ainsworth see B R White *The English Separatist Tradition. From the Marian Martyrs to the Pilgrim Fathers* (Oxford 1971) chapters V and VIII; ODNB.

4 For Smyth see White *English Separatist Tradition* chapter VI; ODNB.

5 S E Morison (ed), W Bradford *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620–1647* (New York 1952) 10, Sprunger *Dutch Puritanism* 8.

At the sailing of the *Speedwell* from Delfshaven, Robinson famously charged the migrants ‘before God ... to follow him no further than he followed Christ and if God reveal anything to us by any other instrument of His, to be as ready to receive it as ever we were to receive any truth from his Ministry. For he was very confident the Lord had more truth and light yet to break forth from His holy Word.’

On that occasion Robinson bemoaned the state of the reformed churches. For example, ‘the Lutherans could not be drawn to go beyond what Luther saw. For whatever part of God’s will, he had further imparted and revealed to Calvin; they [Lutherans] will rather die than embrace it. And so also, you see the Calvinists. They stick where he left them; a misery much to be lamented. For though they were precious shining lights in their Times; yet God had not revealed his whole will to them; and were they now living, they would be as ready and willing to embrace further light as that they had received.’⁶

By November 1620 the *Mayflower* reached Massachusetts where the settlers waited for some years for the arrival of Robinson and the rest of the church. Among those first settlers was William Bradford (c.1590–1657), later governor of Plymouth colony, who wrote of his fellows in the church that ‘they knew they were pilgrims’.⁷ However Robinson himself died on 1 March 1625 and was interred three days later at the Pieterskerk in Leiden. His church continued for some years but ceased to exist at some point in the 1640s.⁸

Although Robinson and his fellows had denounced the Church of England as a false church and he and others had condemned as sinful those who worshipped in its churches, his views changed. In 1614 Robinson published *Of Religious Communion* in which he defended the right to befriend individuals in the Church of England but still denounced participation in its worship. Nine years after Robinson’s death a manuscript of his was published as *On the Lawfulness of Hearing Ministers in the Church of England* (1634). In this he allowed that attendance at and participation in the public worship of the Church of England was permissible, so long as a godly parish minister was preaching.⁹ For this, Robinson’s views were harshly criticised. Yet he was influential in his followers becoming no longer exclusively separatist but rather semi-separatist. Among those who maintained this position was Henry Jacob (1562/3–1624) who had been in Middelburg in 1599 and had helped to draw up the puritans’ millenary petition in 1603, addressed to King James I, which was a plea for further reform in the Church of England. Jacob was in Leiden in late 1610

6 W W Fenn ‘John Robinson’s Farewell Address’ in *Harvard Theological Review* Vol. 13, No. 3 (July 1920), p 236. Winslow *Hypocrisy Unmasked* (1646)

7 S E Morison (ed) W Bradford *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620–1647*. (1952) 47.

8 K L Sprunger *Trumpets from the Tower. English Puritan Printing in the Netherlands 1600–1640* (Leiden 1994) 126.

9 White *English Separatist Tradition* 158.

where he probably met John Robinson, William Ames (1576–1633) and Robert Parker (c.1564–1614) and he with Ames may have swayed Robinson towards a less exclusive form of churchmanship. By 1616 Jacob was back in England where he entered a covenant with friends to set up a semi-separatist church in Southwark of which he was the pastor. Jacob continued to teach that total separation was not required and in this his church influenced the development of Congregational churches in the coming years.¹⁰

Robert Parker probably fled the Church of England for the Netherlands in 1607 and by 1610 had sought refuge with Robinson's church in Leiden. Parker found the separatist stance too severe but he was not a Presbyterian and could not settle in the English reformed church. Rather, like Henry Jacob and William Ames, he took a semi-separatist congregational position. This group held that links with the godly in the Church of England were permissible but saw each local congregation as autonomous. Contrary to these views, in 1611 Parker was worshipping in Amsterdam with the Scotsman John Paget's English reformed church but his well-known earlier standpoint precluded his advancement with this fellowship. In 1613 he was a chaplain to English soldiers and pastor of a small English church in Doesburg in Gelderland, near the embattled frontier. However he died in 1614.¹¹ Paget (c.1574–1638) was a Presbyterian and had been a military chaplain before becoming minister of the Amsterdam church (meeting in the former Catholic chapel in the Begynhof) in 1607. He proved to be orthodox and loyal to the Dutch church and attracted some discontented separatists to his congregation over the next thirty years.¹²

William Ames was a scholar of considerable reputation across Europe. At the end of his life he joined Hugh Peter (s) (1598–1660) in Rotterdam because of 'my Churches Independency', wrote Peter. Having known both Robinson and Peter, Ames provided a personal link between the earlier separatists and the later Congregationalists.¹³ From 1622 Ames was professor of theology at Franeker University in the northern province of Friesland and, on his move to Rotterdam, it was expected that some ten or twenty English students would go with him from Franeker. Ames understood English puritans as seeking a pure church, teaching and practising personal godliness, and taking the Bible as their authority. He was without doubt a forerunner of Congregational independency but advocated local self-governing autonomy which stopped short of separation.

10 For Jacob see ODNB. M Tolmie *The Triumph of the Saints: the separatist churches of London, 1616–1649* (Cambridge 1977) 3–4, 7–12.

11 For Parker see ODNB.

12 ODNB, White *English Separatist Tradition* 153, 155, A C Carter *The English Reformed Church in Amsterdam in the Seventeenth Century* (Amsterdam 1964) 23, 56–58.

13 H Peter *Mr Peters Last Report* (1646) 14, G F Nuttall *Visible Saints: The Congregational Way 1640–1660* (Oxford 1957) 9, 11.

In Ames' day the Netherlands had perhaps 25 to 30 English or Scottish churches, most of which followed Ames' lead in organising themselves with a written covenant, framed by the members themselves.¹⁴

Hugh Peter was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge and, after holding a lectureship at St Sepulchre's parish church, London, he eventually moved to the Netherlands, becoming the minister of the English church at Rotterdam in 1632–33. From there he migrated to New England, arriving at Boston in October 1635. He was made pastor of the church at Salem and also helped to set up Harvard College but returned to England in 1641. For his advocacy of the execution of King Charles I, he was hanged, drawn and quartered at Charles II's restoration in 1660.¹⁵

Hugh Peter was not the only refugee who went to the Netherlands and New England. John Davenport (*bap.* 1597–*d.* 1670) had been vicar of St Stephen Coleman Street, in the City of London, since 1624. He advocated aid for protestant refugees from the Thirty Years War in mainland Europe. Having failed in his attempt to persuade John Cotton and Thomas Hooker to stay in the Church of England, he was himself convinced to make no further compromises. In late 1633 he fled to Amsterdam where, prevented from taking a post in the English reformed church, he served various fellowships in Amsterdam and Rotterdam before leaving for England and then arriving in Boston, Massachusetts in mid 1637.¹⁶ Before migrating to Connecticut, Thomas Hooker (1586–1647) fled to Rotterdam and also considered an invitation to become Paget's assistant in Amsterdam's English reformed church.¹⁷

Among the religious refugees was the Scotsman John Forbes (*c.* 1568–1634) who had been found guilty of treason and exiled in 1606 for criticizing the king's authority over the church. By 1611 he was pastor of a church in Middelburg where the Merchant Adventurers supported a preacher and a chapel. Ten years later he moved to an English speaking church at Delft, like Middelburg a staple port, where merchants *were* numerous. In the 1620s Forbes was instrumental in operating a loose supervisory body called the English synod, which stimulated debates between the migrants on church government. However King Charles I eventually secured his removal from his post at Delft.¹⁸

Ainsworth was succeeded as pastor of the Amsterdam separatists in the

14 W Bradshaw and W Ames *Puritanismus Anglicanus* (1610) preface. K L Sprunger *Dutch Puritanism* (Leiden 1982) 8. For Ames see ODNB and K L Sprunger *The Learned Doctor William Ames—Dutch backgrounds of English & American Puritanism* (Urbana, Illinois 1972).

15 For Peter see R P Stearns *The Strenuous Puritan: Hugh Peters, 1598–1660*. (Urbana, Illinois 1954); ODNB,

16 Tolmie *Triumph of the Saints* 43, ODNB.

17 ODNB.

18 ODNB, Sprunger *Dutch Puritanism* 100–102, *Trumpets from the Tower* 35–36, A Hughes *Gangraena and the Struggle for the English Revolution* (Oxford 2004) 35.

Ancient Church by John Canne, a position the latter held from 1630 for some seventeen years. Canne returned to England in 1640 and again probably in 1647. By 1664 he was back in Amsterdam where he died in 1667.¹⁹

Not only Presbyterians and fledgling Congregationalists took flight to the United Provinces. The Nottinghamshire gentleman Thomas Helwys (c.1575–c.1616) had moved with Smyth to the Netherlands and he too had espoused believer's baptism. Smyth had gone on to accept the belief that only the Waterlanders, a group of Dutch Anabaptists who had separated from the Mennonites, were the true descendants of the early church. Helwys disagreed that only the Waterlanders administered a valid baptism and that only their elders might ordain elders. In 1612 he and a few others returned to England, believing that exile was wrong. From this small church the General Baptists in England trace their origins.²⁰

The flight to the Netherlands as an alternative to a move to the American colonies continued in the 1630s, that is in the years before the outbreak of the civil wars and only a few of the most outstanding have been identified in this article. Among these should be included Jeremiah Burroughes (1599–1646) who was preaching in London in the mid-1630s before he left in 1637 to become the teacher in the English church in Rotterdam. In 1639 also Thomas Goodwin (1600–80) and Philip Nye (1595–1672) left England to escape persecution and became teachers of a gathered church of merchants and others at Arnhem to which John Archer (d. 1639) was pastor. In 1630 Archer had been among those seeking relief in London for distressed European protestants.²¹ Burroughes, Goodwin and Nye, like many others, would return to London in 1641 before the war, as would also some from New England. In spite of the three wars between the Dutch and the British in the 1650s, 1660s and 1670s, the Netherlands remained a safe refuge for English religious radicals.

Clearly those who travelled on the *Mayflower* will be commemorated. Yet the many other English religious refugees in the Netherlands (those mentioned in this article are representative and not exhaustive) should not be forgotten. For generations the Dutch provided a sanctuary for troubled and tender consciences, a home for many who were unwelcome in their own country. For some the refuge was temporary, a precious pause on the way to America or a space for breathing before the return to England. For others the new home would be lasting. Yet later English nonconformity owes a considerable debt to the Dutch whose open-hearted generosity enabled ideas to circulate and warm hearts to beat freely.

Alan Argent

¹⁹ ODNB. *White English Separatist Tradition* 155.

²⁰ Tolmie *Triumph of the Saints* 70–1.

²¹ Tolmie *Triumph of the Saints* 44–5. For Burroughes, Goodwin, Nye and Archer see ODNB.

REVIEWS

The Journey to the Mayflower: God's Outlaws and the Invention of Freedom.
By Stephen Tomkins. Hodder and Stoughton, 2020. Pp xii + 372.
Hardback £20/£14. ISBN 978-1-473-64910-1

The former editor of the magazine, *Third Way*, and current editor of *Reform*, Stephen Tomkins has drawn on his journalism and his expertise as a historian to tell a riveting story. To mark the 400th anniversary of the Mayflower he has revisited his unpublished PhD thesis of twenty years ago, re-shaped it and succeeded in telling a story rarely told outside dissenting history. The story began in the second half of the sixteenth century and climaxed in 1620 with the sailing of the *Mayflower*. He finishes where most celebrations of the anniversary will begin. We all know how the story ends and yet the ending is as unexpected as many stages along the way. I would contest some of Tomkins' conclusions but to do so in a review might spoil what John Sentamu described justifiably as 'a rattling good read'.

The book begins: 'In 1648, the Governor of Plymouth, New England, William Bradford, was depressed.' Twenty-eight years after the *Mayflower's* arrival, Bradford's depression is caused, Tomkins suggests, by the loss of the vision of the first settlers. 'Bradford's solution was to tell ... a story' stretching 'back ninety-five years to ... an underground Protestant church during Queen Mary's reign of fire.' While not accepting totally Bradford's account, Tomkins makes 1553 and the martyrdom of John Hooper, Bishop of Gloucester, his starting point. In short chapters, making the book a page-turner, we meet underground churches, the Elizabethan settlement and the Puritan reaction. Close links with the Dutch reformation and the St Bartholomew's Day massacre in France are explored. Then comes Robert Browne, whose figure frames the story to its epilogue.

By 1581 Browne and Robert Harrison had formed the Congregational church in Norwich: it met secretly, abandoned all written liturgy as those who belonged freed themselves from the control of the state church. 'In a society where the word 'democratic' was ... pejorative, Browne's idea was scandalously egalitarian ... Covenant was Browne's way of understanding church: ... how the Church of England failed to be a church, and how he and his followers could become a church. 'The church is not an entire Christian state, but a voluntary Christian community ... Browne, Harrison and their congregation entered a covenant with God together in order to become a true church and join the worldwide people of God.'

Tomkins asks where Browne's 'extraordinary idea of religious freedom' came from and seeks an answer in what has been termed the 'illiberal' traits of Puritanism. These roots 'led the Separatist movement' to believe 'in freedom for the sake of purity and communal obedience'.

Tomkins summarises the publications of the Separatists in few words, although I wished he had identified these books more clearly. In Thomas Cartwright, Henry Barrow and John Greenwood and others we find deep thinkers grappling with big ideas. We also meet humble Christians, like Anne Jackson who brought her servant Clement Gamble to the services for eighteen months. When he reported their activities, the authorities recorded what he described of their worship in the summer in fields outside London, in the winter in members' homes: 'They had no written prayers or liturgy, not even the Lord's Prayer ... preaching was not confined to the minister, but was expected of every member—or at least 'every man'. ... They ate together, taking a collection to pay for the food, and distributed the surplus to church members in prison.' With the Spanish Armada, such gatherings could be interpreted by the Elizabethan state as evidence of an 'enemy within'. By 1590 fifty-two Separatists were in six prisons in London. However big ideas were debated: Barrow and Greenwood advocating a 'Congregational' ecclesiology, Cartwright a 'Presbyterian' model. John Penry craved 'the liberty to live openly and to do justly' in Wales. Seeing themselves as the 'true upholders of Reformed Christianity in England' the Separatists had no time for the Church of England: 'Barrow, like Browne before him, had come to understand the church in a radically new way: ... as a gathering of believers called to live differently from nominal Christians in the world.' The trials of Barrow and Greenwood and their executions are soon followed by the execution of John Penry.

At the century's end some released Separatists voyaged on the *Hopewell* and the *Chancewell* to Canada: settlements that quickly failed. In Amsterdam are Pastor Johnson and Henry Ainsworth and a Brownist church. Hopes at James I's accession came to nought but other Separatists emerged. John Smyth formed a church in Gainsborough. John Robinson was inclined to join but, 'impressed by the middle way', he hoped 'to pray with godly people ... in the Church of England, though not to join their services.'

Robinson's conciliatory middle way prevailed in the Scrooby church which met 'in the palatial manor house of William and Mary Brewster': Brewster had known Penry at Cambridge and had worked for the English ambassador in the Netherlands. Perhaps that prompted this church in 1608 to flee persecution and take advantage of freedom in the Netherlands. In Amsterdam Smyth and his followers decided that babies should not be baptised, causing Robinson's frustration at the depth of feeling between different views. He wished to be on friendly terms with fellow radicals and his church moved from Amsterdam

to Leiden. Thomas Helwys, within that Baptist church, returned to England, to address the king. According to Tomkins, his ‘was the most far-reaching declaration of universal religious freedom yet seen in English: ‘Men’s religion ... is betwixt God and themselves; the king shall not answer for it, neither may the king be judge between God and man. Let them be heretics, Turks [i.e., Muslims, RC], Jews or whatsoever, it appertains not to the earthly power to punish them in the least measure.’ His return to England did not lead to the king’s conversion, as Helwys hoped, but rather to Helwys’s death in prison.

At the climax of his story, Robinson’s church, tired of an increasingly hostile Netherlands, despairs of a return to England and charters the *Speedwell* and the *Mayflower*. Worship prior to the departure of the *Speedwell* was ‘a day of impassioned, tearful prayer, solemn fasting, and a sermon from Robinson that lasted ‘a good part of the day’. Edward Winslow recalled Robinson ‘telling them not to idolise what he had taught them’ but to receive new revelation, ‘for he was very confident the Lord had more truth and light yet to break forth out of his holy word’.

Thus the story ends when for most, in this anniversary year, it will begin. One measure of Tomkins’ success is that Richard Sharpe, organist at Highbury Congregational Church, Cheltenham, who has read little church history, deemed it ‘Riveting’! Another measure is that Andrew Marr’s radio programme, *Start the Week*, marked the quatercentenary by interviewing Stephen Tomkins. *Puritans and God-given Government*, 20th January 2020 is still available on BBC Sounds.

I have one major criticism. There’s no bibliography, not even a list of the works cited, which makes using the endnotes irritatingly difficult! I invite Tomkins in any future issue to offer a ‘Bibliographical Essay’ to complement what is in other respects an excellent book.

Richard Cleaves

***Providence Lost. The Rise and Fall of Cromwell’s Protectorate.* By Paul Lay. Head of Zeus, an Apollo Book, 2020. Pp xx + 326. Hardback £18.99. ISBN 978-1-78185-2569.**

This is an account of Oliver Cromwell’s rule of 1653–59, of the republic extending over three kingdoms, an experiment with so much promise which somehow failed and resulted in a return (almost) to the kingly status quo in 1660. By the early 1650s the New Model Army had defeated its opponents in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. The ‘man of blood’, King Charles I, had been executed and then the problem remained of how to govern the kingdoms. If the war was won, how might the peace be won? ‘How might the nation’s elect make an elect of the nation?’ What settlement would the victors propose and finally impose on the people? The powerbroker throughout was the army.

By 1653 Cromwell had been persuaded to assume the mantle of Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland and Ireland. In 1654 he resolved to avenge the earlier loss to the Spanish of the English puritan colony of Providence Island in the Caribbean. His plan was to humiliate the Spanish in the New World, certain that God would bless this enterprise, as he had assuredly blessed the English seamen who had frustrated the Armada in 1588. However Cromwell's forces were repulsed in 1655 in their attack on the island of Hispaniola which disaster served to underline the fact that God had withheld his blessing. Cromwell and his closest confidants had hoped for an elect nation, uniquely chosen by God and, at this reversal of overseas initiatives, they decided to turn their attentions to domestic factors. In consequence, they introduced the rule of the major-generals to govern the regions of Britain. This proved counter-productive, alienating the people at large from their harsh rule and creating a backlash in favour of the exiled king Charles II.

This is a book for the general reader, few of which such books exist on the Protectorate. Here are portraits of leading figures like the military genius John Lambert, the traitorous religious convert Thomas Gage, the lean 'ghost' Sir Marmaduke Langdale, the Irishman Daniel O' Neill, the members of the Royalist conspirators in the Sealed Knot and many others.

Paul Lay provides a clear and convincing narrative throughout. He is himself the editor of *History Today* and a trustee of the Cromwell Museum, Huntingdon. This is a good read for any who wish to understand why Cromwell's republic failed. It has 15 illustrations and a full index.

Will Griffiths

***Church Life. Pastors, Congregations, and the Experience of Dissent in Seventeenth-Century England.* Edited by Michael Davies, Anne Dunan-Page, and Joel Halcomb. Oxford University Press, 2019. Pp xvii + 222. Hardback £65 ISBN 978-0-19-875319-3**

The ten papers included here began life in a one-day conference held at Dr Williams's Library in November 2013. It was part of the 'Dissenting Experience' project which seeks to promote and explore the history and literature of early Baptist, Congregational and Presbyterian churches in Britain and Ireland, especially through their manuscript records. Such an ambition is laudable and deserves the support of all those in the dissenting community today.

The editors set out their store with a consideration of John Bunyan's election to the pastorate of the Bedford church—'not so much an administrative decision as a congregational act of faith'. They note that Bunyan was qualified not through his learning but through his spiritual gifts and that the church's call was issued to Bunyan autonomously. 'The Bedford church alone would determine who held the pastoral (and any other) office: it alone was empowered

to ordain’—sentiments that some of us would endorse still. Women were expected to participate, as were members gathered from differing occupations and widespread locations.

The papers tackle issues of ecclesiological order, the formation of dissenting identities, the minister–church relation, the Westminster Assembly’s place for pastors in the reformed Church, John Owen, Richard Baxter, Ebenezer Chandler (Bunyan’s successor in Bedford), and the City of London parishes during the 1640s and 50s. One of the conference speakers expressed her irritation on the day that Richard Baxter has received so much more attention than the other notable ministers of the mid and late seventeenth century. Is this a plea for possible research topics? The editors realise that much more is to be said about seventeenth century Dissent, especially about the ‘anonymous women and men’ who remain ‘unknown Dissenters’.

This book is to be commended. It is not intimidatingly large, as so many recent, if useful, ‘handbooks’ have been. Yet it presents many pertinent issues in accessible language from a number of leading scholars. It is clearly encouraging for readers of this magazine to see a wider interest in the history of their own churchmanship. A good book on such subjects, well presented, is always welcome.

Susan Matthews

***Protestant Dissent & Philanthropy in Britain 1660–1914.* Edited by Clyde Binfield, G M Ditchfield, and David L Wykes. The Boydell Press. 2020. Hardback £65.00.**

This collection of essays concentrates on the efforts of Protestant Dissenters in Britain to provide charity and philanthropy over 250 years, from the Restoration of the Stuarts to the outbreak of the First World War. The book began as a means of marking the tercentenary of the death of Daniel Williams in 1716. Modern readers will know of Dr Williams through the London library named after him but his lengthy will provided for many other causes, including schools in north Wales and Chelmsford, for bursaries to study at Glasgow University, and help for students at Carmarthen and other academies. Significantly David Wykes treats with the period from which Williams’s benevolence emerged in a chapter on ‘Dissent and Charity 1660–1720’.

The editors make a clear link between religious dissent and philanthropy, with such altruism based upon Jesus’s injunction to love God and one’s neighbour (Matthew 22:37–40). One outstanding philanthropist from the eighteenth century was the Congregationalist from Bedford John Howard who pioneered prison reform. Hugh Cunningham dedicates his chapter to Howard. Jennifer Farooq tackles the neglected subject of charity sermons. Grayson Ditchfield examines the emergence of British Unitarianism c.1750–1820

and a rational approach to philanthropy. Other papers deal with the Scottish campaigner David Nasmith who founded the City Mission movement (by Stephen Orchard) and with the ‘indispensable stringpuller’ and building philanthropist Joshua Wilson who gave away one third of his annual income (by Clyde Binfield). Early Victorian Wesleyan philanthropy is considered by David J Jeremy who found that ‘funding faith’ relied on the sympathies of a wide group of middle- and lower-class supporters, as well as a few very wealthy individuals. Unitarians after 1844 are included in a paper by Wykes and Alan Ruston. John Briggs deals with a subject dear to many hearts, namely Nonconformist responses to vulnerable children and orphans. Mark Freeman turns to Quaker philanthropy, with a focus on the Rowntree family c.1880–c.1920, and lastly Elizabeth Gow treats with the copious generosity of Enriqueta Rylands (1843–1908), the founder of the John Rylands Library.

Few of the causes or individuals singled out here have strong Presbyterian links and Baptists also are not over represented. Congregationalists, in contrast, stand out. Of course, others might have been included like the Fry and Cadbury families (Quakers) and the Wills and Lever families (Congregational). Indeed Benjamin Waugh (also Congregational) of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children might easily warrant greater attention. All this provides room for another such study.

This is a ground-breaking collection on a curiously overlooked subject, setting out extraordinary acts of munificence and some exceptional Dissenters. The contributors are for the most part eminent scholars in the field and all have done well. We must hope that their knowledge and enthusiasm are passed on to younger researchers for some of these scholars are senior indeed. I recommend this book unreservedly to all readers of the *CHS Magazine*.

Martin Westbrook

***Remembering the Dead: The Role of Manuscript Sermons & Sermon Notes in Researching Early Modern Memorial Practice.* By Anne James and Jeanne Shami. Congregational Memorial Hall Trust (1978) Ltd. The Congregational Lecture 2019. £3.00.**

Anne James and Jeanne Shami are the principal investigators of GEMMS or the Gateway to Early Modern Manuscript Sermons which is a database of records of sermons and sermon notes and reports in libraries across Britain and North America. The database contains approximately 18,000 entries, some of which have been miscatalogued hitherto or have lain unnoticed and unidentified. In this Congregational Lecture the two scholars from the University of Regina, Canada, took two case studies. They spoke first of the death of Archbishop William Laud in 1645, the theatre of execution, and the Royalist Fast Sermon tradition. This is in itself an unlikely subject for the Congregational Lecture

but it succeeded well. Why should we reserve compassion only for those with whose ideas we agree?

Secondly they addressed the memorializing of children in seventeenth century funeral sermons. Given the very high mortality rates of the period, women had many children and sadly many of these children died in infancy. The sermons reveal that the babies were not forgotten but mattered deeply to those who mourned them.

The speakers point out in the printed copy of the lecture that manuscript sermons and sermon notes may enhance our understanding of early modern culture. Clearly this is both true and helpful because so many of the publications of that era are sermons, often funeral sermons. As the lecturers stated, the GEMMS database gives research opportunities into religious communities of all kinds, of preachers, notetakers, readers and hearers of sermons, book history, women, and performance. Sermons illuminate research in literature, history and theology.

Sarah Lloyd

***A Pilgrimage Around Wales.* By Anne Hayward. Y Lolfa, Talybont, Ceredigion, 2018.**

Coming from a Welsh family, having spent many holidays in Wales, having been to college in Wales and now retired to Wales, I know something about the Welsh. However, I have never encountered Wales in the way Anne Hayward did in 2015 when she was able ‘to take time out of ordinary life’ for three months. She walked around Wales, carrying her tent and provisions. It proved more than an adventure, not just a pilgrimage, but an opportunity to renew her faith. This attractive book, illustrated with her own photographs, is the fruit of that pilgrimage.

In planning her journey, she had several aims: to deepen her commitment to prayer, to extend her knowledge of early Christianity, Welsh history and the lives of the saints and ultimately, ‘to find a more peaceful, more reflective and happier place’ in life. The book is testament to the contribution her pilgrimage made to those aims. It seeks to do three things.

First and foremost, it records conversations she had on the way. Clearly, these helped her to a ‘happier place’ in life. Readers eaves-drop on conversations, sensing their impact on Hayward’s faith and outlook on life. There’s the couple who wanted to re-ignite their faith, prompting Anne to give them a book of prayers she had used, early on her pilgrimage. She met two people who described themselves as occasional church-goers but tried to live by Christian values. Her honesty rang a bell, ‘I very much regret not having the courage ... to ask them what they meant by this’. She surmises what they meant: ‘perhaps ... they tried to see all people as made in the image of God, that they

believed all had God-given gifts ... , that the vulnerable should be cared for, that' criminals 'deserved correction and rehabilitation, that lives are meant to be lived in community, and that life is more than acquiring greater comfort for ourselves'. Not a bad reflection.

Second, the book includes 'factual snippets' of 'background information, mostly historical'. Highlighted with a line down the text's margin, these highlight the significance of the sites visited. The trip was planned around four places of ancient pilgrimage: Holywell (Treffynnon) in the north east, the island of Bardsey (Ynys Enlli) in the north west, St David's (Tyddewi) in the south west and Llantwit Major (Llanilltud Fawr) in the south east. Each one might visit as a tourist. Indeed, since moving to Bridgend, my wife, Felicity, and I have come to love Llanilltud Fawr! Hayward calls it not so much a place of pilgrimage, more of ancient scholarship: 'a fifth-century university and Britain's oldest centre of learning'. She whets the appetite with a brief mention of the inscribed Celtic crosses displayed in a 'beautifully restored chantry chapel' adjacent to Galilee chapel itself on the site of the foundation of St Illtud who brought learning and gave the church its name.

Third, Hayward offers 'reflections on spiritual issues that cropped up'. Her encounter with Llantwit Major reminded her of 'the importance of study' and her 'own need of learning'. After a rushed visit to Bardsey, in the church where the poet R S Thomas had ministered in Aberdaron she discovered 'Riches, riches, riches' and commented simply, 'Am overwhelmed'.

A Pilgrimage around Wales is neither chronological nor a guide to her route. Rather it is organised thematically, with sections on visiting churches, on the people she met, on children and learning, on recent church history and on the natural world. There are also sections on the pack described as 'her burden' and the practicalities of making such a spiritual journey. Anne Hayward sees herself as blessed to be an Anglican, a member of the Church in Wales. While advocating a Christian unity that respects different experiences of church, her focus is on Anglican churches with the one exception of an Orthodox Church she visited in Blaenau Ffestiniog. Lessons may be drawn from this book. One is the value of conversation when visiting churches and places of interest. In his foreword John Davies, Bishop of Swansea and Brecon and Archbishop of Wales, distinguishes between pilgrimage and tourism. 'The latter,' he writes, 'is usually a 'bald' encounter with a place, a person or a thing. The former is an encounter with another, or with 'the other', in a Christian sense: an encounter with God.' His hope is 'that some who come as tourists to ... the holy places, grand or simple, with which ... Wales is blessed, may find themselves ... in conversations which ... take them beyond being tourists and into the territory of becoming pilgrims.'

BOOKS WHICH MAY INTEREST

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The Challenge of Preaching the Gospel (revised edn 2016) edited by Lisa Isherwood and Janet Wootton £10

The Spirit of Dissent—A Commemoration of the Great Ejectment of 1662 (2015) edited by Janet Wootton. £10

The Transformation of Congregationalism 1900–2000 (2013). Alan Argent examines a century of change for Congregationalists. £35

The Nature of the Household of Faith—Some Principles of Congregationalism (2011) by Alan Argent. £5

Serving the Saints—The History of the Congregational Federation's Training Board 1979–2010 (2010) by Alan Argent. £7.50

Also available from Amazon and other retailers.:

The Angels' Voice: A Magazine for Young Men in Brixton, London, 1910–1913

(Boydell and Brewer for the London Record Society, 2016) edited by Alan Argent.

Elsie Chamberlain: The Independent Life of a Woman Minister (2012) by Alan Argent

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