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MAGAZINE**

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## EDITORIAL

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We welcome to our pages the retired Church of England minister and hymn writer, Christopher Idle, who writes about his school days at Eltham College and has many friends in the United Reformed and Congregational churches. He spent thirty years in parish ministry in both urban and rural settings. In addition Roger Ottewill investigates the long life and times of the minister, Ernest James Thompson, and his work in Canada and England. In our third paper Meegan Griffin returns to Carr's Lane Congregational Church, Birmingham, for further observations on the role of women within and beyond the local church in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Finally we cast a glance at the subject of nonconformist portraits which has long required more serious treatment than it has received hitherto. Is it time for a register of such works?

## NEWS AND VIEWS

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### **Day in Dorchester—2 June 2018**

The Friends of the Congregational Library and the Friends of Dr Williams's Library are holding a joint summer event this year. This is to be held on 2 June in Dorchester at the invitation of The United Church, South Street. The programme begins at 11:15am and includes papers on 'William Benn and the Great Ejectment' by David Cuckson, 'Peter Mann' by McClune Uffen, 'Thomas Hardy's Congregational Schooling' by Alan Argent and 'The Casterbridge Congregationalists' by John Travell. At lunch time a guided tour of the town is an available option for participants.

### **Chapels of England**

Readers of our magazine will be pleased to learn of the special offer on Christopher Wakeling's recent book *Chapels of England* (see the Reviews section of this magazine). The publishers, Historic England, are offering a 40% discount with free postage and packing. For this order at <https://retail.historicenglandservices.org.uk> using the discount code 7220170009. The offer ends on 30th June 2018. Alternatively, order the book by email from [direct.orders@marston.co.uk](mailto:direct.orders@marston.co.uk) or by phone on 01235 465577.

## **Van Gogh in London forthcoming exhibition**

An exhibition concentrating on the influence of London on the development of the art of Vincent Van Gogh is planned for 2019. It will be called *Van Gogh and Britain* and will be held at Tate Britain which gallery's officers predict that it will be a 'blockbuster'. Considering that young Van Gogh was then an active Christian and lay preacher, and that he lived in London (or its outer suburbs then) for three years, firstly not far from Brixton Road on which stood the very well attended Brixton Independent Chapel, and then later in Lambeth and at Isleworth, very close to Isleworth Congregational Chapel, we may wonder if some mention of Congregationalism will be made in the exhibition or its accompanying literature. I rather presume that we might expect one or more television programmes on the great man. Yet perhaps we should not be surprised if his Christianity does not figure prominently in the exhibition. This web page <https://brentfordandchiswicklhs.org.uk/publications/the-journal/journal-10-2000/van-gogh-in-chiswick/> details Van Gogh's involvement with Turnham Green Congregational Church and also with Methodist churches in Richmond and Petersham.

## **The Richard Baxter Treatises**

In June 2018 a fully annotated catalogue of the several 'volumes' of treatises, numbering some 369 items in total, deposited at Dr Williams's Library, and associated with Richard Baxter (1615–91) is to be published by Boydell and Brewer. The volumes cover the years from the 1630s to the 1690s and cover tracts, disputations, sermons, letters, exercises, miscellaneous papers and drafts. They are not all by Baxter but offer a rich mine of information for research. This substantial work has been prepared by the *CHS Magazine* editor, Alan Argent.

## **Stephen H Mayor**

We are sorry to learn of the death of Dr Stephen H Mayor who has been living in retirement in Cambridge for some years. He had taught at Westminster College there since the 1970s, first on applied theology and then his favoured subject, church history, publishing several works of note.

## CORRESPONDENCE

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In response to the last issue of the *CHS Magazine*, **Roger Ottewill** has written.

‘Firstly, the article about the early history of St Paul’s Chapel Hawley Road resonated with me. This is because, in researching dissent in Basingstoke for the new Victoria County History Project and the Family and Community Historical Research Society’s Communities of Dissent Project, I have developed an interest in the Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion. Unusually (I think) the town had a CHC Church (known as Immanuel after 1894) for over 200 years from c.1755 to 1969. Along with London Street Congregational Church, it was one of the standard bearers of Nonconformity in the town, albeit that its first trust deed stipulated that it had to use the Book of Common Prayer in all services.

As an aside, I note that the Revd Samuel Smith’s *A Collection of Psalms and Hymns for the Use of St Paul’s Chapel Hawley Road*, published in 1842, can be viewed on Google Books.

Secondly, I am amazed that there was a Congregational Church in Petrograd in 1917. I wonder if other Congregational ministers, like James Key and Joseph Clare, witnessed such dramatic historical events as the Russian Revolution. Surely here is scope for further research.

Thirdly, alongside other projects, for the last 18 months or so I have been assisting with research into the history of Ashburton Court in Southsea, initiated by one of the residents, David Denison. These flats were built in the 1960s, on the site of Christ Church Congregational Church, itself demolished in the 1950s after bomb damage during the Second World War. My contribution has been to write a history of the church from its origins in the 1860s until its demise in 1999. This can be viewed at <http://www.ashburtoncourt.co.uk/wiki/>. Currently, I am trying to contact anyone who worshipped at Christ Church (URC after 1972) during its final years, when services were held in the church hall. The ‘survivors’ now worship at Christ Church Milton URC—named in recognition of its links with the church in Southsea.

I greatly enjoyed Peter Flower’s article about Revd Henry Beresford Martin and the early years of Vineyard Congregational Chapel, in the last *CHS Magazine*, not least because I lived in the Richmond area from the mid-1940s to the late-1960s. However, I want to query one of Peter’s comments which, I feel, requires some qualification. On page 41 he states that from the vantage point of 1928, when women acquired the parliamentary franchise on the same terms as men, women church members ‘had enjoyed full voting rights in dissenting churches for a hundred years.’ I wonder if this is accurate since I

know of at least one Congregational church in Hampshire, Gosport, where this was not the case. As I have written elsewhere:

Until the appointment of Rev. Robert Teasdale to the [Gosport] pastorate in 1903, women members had been unable to participate in the choice of minister. In that year, however, the rules were changed to enable them to do so and before accepting the pastorate Teasdale insisted on a postal ballot so that all members and seat holders, who were not members, could vote and 271, both women and men, did so (“‘Skilful and Industrious’: Women and Congregationalism in Edwardian Hampshire 1901–1914”, *Family & Community History*, 19(1), April 2016, p.54)

My source here is John Hern’s *A History of the Dissenting Independent Congregational: Bury Road United Reformed Church in Gosport 1663–1986*, published in 1989.

A further point to make is that there were few, if any, women deacons during the nineteenth century. The first female deacon in Hampshire was Edith Lucy Sharp, appointed to the diaconate of Lymington Congregational Church in 1910 (see “‘A Unanimity of Feeling’: Lymington Congregational Church in the Edwardian era: 1901–1914”, *Congregational History Society Magazine* vol 7 (5), pp.214–5). Arguably, their exclusion from the post of deacon meant that they were excluded from the inner circle of decision-makers within their church.

I should like to learn the observations of CHS members on this subject and whether or not Gosport Congregational Church was exceptional in treating women as ‘second class’ members during the nineteenth century.’

Another valued correspondent, Tony Tucker, has written to Richard Cleaves and the editor.

‘Thanks for your interesting article in the last *CHS Mag* and congratulations on contributing to *The Early Christian World*. It sounds a fascinating book though probably too demanding for me these days, not to mention the price! Looking back at my time at Mansfield in the early ’50s—not the best time as Nathaniel Micklem was running down and John Marsh was not into his stride—Will Cadman taught us to look critically at the NT texts, though I do not recall much mention of their setting in the Roman and early Christian world. In those days Erik Routley was the more charismatic teacher and I owe much to him. It is good that theological scholarship remains strong at Mansfield (incidentally ‘John’ Rasmussen is ‘Joel’) though I regret the college no longer provides the ordination training course. In the same way I regret the fracturing of our Congregational family with the formation of the URC. At the time I felt it was right, though—perhaps with hindsight—I am less convinced. It proved a delusion to hope that the Congregational/Presbyterian union

would pave the way to wider unions, and perhaps it would have been better for the Congregationalists and Presbyterians to have deepened their covenant relationship without seeking the union of two different traditions which had less in common than we had supposed. There is much to regret but thankfully Mansfield, being recognised by both the URC and Congregational Federation, enabled ordinands from both traditions to learn from and respect each other. And thanks again for your article—I am always glad to read the *CHS Mag.*

It saddens me still that in the search for Christian unity the Congregational family became divided. In places where there had been good relations between the Congregational churches, after union it was as if a wall had been built between us. Little thought, if any, was given to what would happen to the 'non-uniting' churches. I confess my own guilt in that regard.

I do appreciate the *CHS Magazine* and like the high quality of the articles.'

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## **CALLED TO BE A MINISTER OF CHRIST AND OF THE CHURCH UNIVERSAL REFLECTIONS ON 40 YEARS OF MINISTRY**

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**O**n 17th September, 2017, Felicity and I celebrated our Ruby Wedding anniversary. A month later, on 15th October, we shared with our church family and friends the 40th anniversary of my ordination. It was good to know that Alan Argent was celebrating the 40th anniversary of his ordination in the church where he has remained for all of those 40 years that very weekend. I had just announced my intention to retire in July 2018.

Many people have shaped my ministry over the years. First and foremost among them have been the people of the churches to which I have belonged in Maidenhead, Leicester, Oxford, Bangor, Harden, Pontesbury, Minsterley and Cheltenham. As I came to the end of my first year of training for the ministry at Coleg Bala Bangor in north Wales, I was drawn into a project which my home church in Leicester was undertaking. It was the summer of 1975. The following year the church would be celebrating its 90th Anniversary. Norah Waddington, Head of Newarke Girls Grammar School in Leicester, and a deacon, had been commissioned to write a history of the church. I became involved in some of the research into the early minute books of the church.

With some excitement I discovered the letter written by the church's first minister when accepting the call to be minister of Clarendon Park Congregational Church. It seemed to me a document of some importance and worth including in an appendix to the church history. Recently I found the typescript I had made then of that letter. Reading it again, I was struck by the extent to which it had shaped my understanding of the ministry to which I too had a call. Indeed, as I find so often happens, some of those ideas I had over the years considered to be my own were far from original.

Chief among these ideas helping to shape my understanding of ministry was P T Forsyth's conviction that to belong to one gathered church was to belong to the One Universal Church of Jesus Christ. Indeed, it has been of fundamental importance to me that I was ordained 'a Minister of Jesus Christ and of the Universal Church' at the service in Harden Congregational Church all those years ago. My father preached 'the charge to the Minister', basing his sermon on words from 1 and 2 Timothy as Paul addressed his thoughts to 'my son'. It was important to me that that ordination took place in the local church that had called me to their ministry and that their deacons laid hands on me. But it was also significant that representatives of other Congregational Federation churches and of churches of other denominations locally also shared in the laying of

hands. Roy Jenkins, then minister of the church I had belonged to in Bangor, Pen'rallt Baptist Church, shared the ordination prayer. It was great to welcome Roy and Liz to the celebration of my 40th anniversary and to interview him about his vision for the church of the future. He regularly contributes to Radio 4's Thought for the Day and has a weekly religious affairs programme on Radio Wales, All Things Considered. He was joined by Yvonne Campbell and a one-time volunteer at Highbury, Cheltenham, who is now a producer on Songs of Praise, David Waters on the interview panel.

That was not the end of the service, however. For I went on to be inducted to the pastorate of Harden Congregational Church. Tudur Jones, principal of Coleg Bala-Bangor where I had trained, and also the supervisor of my research project, then preached 'the charge to the church'. Looking back now, I am pleased that that understanding of ordination that under-pinned the service was owed to the first minister of the church in which I had grown up and which had recognized and verified my call, Clarendon Park Congregational Church, Leicester.

It was that understanding of church and of ordination which prompted P T Forsyth to outline in his letter the faith that was important to him and to stress the freedom his ordination as a minister of Jesus Christ, and of the Universal Church, gave him to preach as he was led.

At that ordination service, when I was inducted into the pastorate at Harden, and at subsequent induction services in Pontesbury and Minsterley, and later at Cheltenham, I shared a statement of the faith that was important to me and made it clear that was the faith that would be at the heart of my ministry. I hope I have claimed the freedom over the years to preach that faith without being beholden to the people I have ministered to.

Thinking of my impending retirement, I have been quoting Tony Benn. When he retired from the House of Commons he said it was to devote more time to doing politics. I remain as passionate about the Kingdom and the Gospel as ever. But I feel ready to retire as 'the Minister' of 'a Church'. I hope however to spend more time 'doing' ministry!

Re-discovering that typescript of P T Forsyth's call to Clarendon Park has helped me begin the process of making sense of my retirement. I may no longer be 'the Minister' of 'a Church'. But I remain in Forsyth's words, a 'Minister of Jesus Christ and of the Universal Church'. I look forward to exercising that ministry in ways which yet I have to discover. I hope to publish the letter and my reflections on it in a future issue of the *Congregational History Society Magazine*.

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*Richard Cleaves*

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## ELTHAM COLLEGE: I WAS THERE; BY CHRISTOPHER IDLE, BORN 1938

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The year was probably 1980. Having safely negotiated the southbound lanes of the Blackwall Tunnel, the white minibus gathered speed and headed off towards Kent on what we used to call the Sidcup by-pass, or A20. Soon, on our right, the square brick tower of Eltham College rose briefly but unmistakably above the trees. Cue for two of us, unprompted and unplanned, to launch into a spirited rendering of:

Sing we the men whose steps have trod  
the stones of Blackheath and the Eltham fields;  
scholars and sportsmen, servants of God,  
armed with the weapons the strong soul wields:  
Da-da-Da-da-Da-da Daa ....

Yes, that was our old school song, *Floreat Elthamia*, of which more later.<sup>1</sup> The other singer was Michael Saward,<sup>2</sup> six years my senior, whom I had come to know better in adulthood (well, he nearly matured) while co-editing more than one collection of hymns and Psalms. The other half-dozen passengers rolled their eyes at our impromptu duet, and on we sped to an intensive day or two drafting and fine-tuning our new book.

Michael and I worked together, sparred, wrote, prayed and sang together; his best-known hymn is still 'Christ triumphant' which appears in over 200 books worldwide.<sup>3</sup> He died suddenly, aged 82, in 2015; when we disagreed, almost to the end, he would clinch an argument by saying 'Remember, Idle, you're just a *little* boy!'

### School with a mission

What made my parents choose Eltham, formerly SSM, School for the Sons of Missionaries, first for my brother David in 1943 and then for me, both from the age of eight? It was a Free Church, mainly Congregational, foundation; we

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1 'Floreat Elthamia'; full text, and music of the refrain, in C Witting (ed) *The Glory of the Sons* (1952) 264–265; reprinted in C Porteous (ed) *Eltham College, Past and Present* part 2 (1992). The history has been enlarged and updated by Mark Stickings in *Our Century: Eltham College in Mottingham 1912–2012: a Pictorial History*.

2 For Michael Saward (1932–2015) see *The Daily Telegraph* 2 Feb 2015, *Church Times* 20 Feb 2015.

3 Written in 1964; first published in *Youth Praise* (1966).

were solid (fairly solid) Bromley Anglicans. We had no friends there, but clearly its reputation counted for something. David seemed to get on well, revelling in maths and model railways where I did not. So it was natural for me to follow, surviving the early banter of ‘Are you any relation to your brother?’ and of course ‘Idle by name, idle by nature’.

Unlike David, I had spent my eighth year at the prep school Sutherland House, presided over by the sister-in-law of Eltham’s Headmaster, and taught by the wife of one of his staff.<sup>4</sup> So I was well-prepared for starting at the college in 1946, where I stayed for the next ten years. In those days I thought little of cycling the two miles to school along main roads, though normally I would settle for the 126 bus.

## Houses and homes

Throughout most of that decade there was still a substantial boarding house, of boys whose parents were based abroad, usually in the cause of the Christian gospel. What was then the LMS (London Missionary Society, Congregational) and BMS (Baptists) were well-represented among missionary families. In the Junior School, then still physically part of the main buildings, we were taught by the long-serving and much-loved Miss (Joan) Brown and drama enthusiast Miss (Dora) Jones; the two ‘houses’ were Bentley and Gilmour. The senior over-elevens had Carey (blue), Chalmers (red), Livingstone (green) and Moffat (yellow).

Much competition and most sport were organised on house lines; sixty years on we still know which one a contemporary belonged to, because we remember the thin coloured stripes on his tie! Me? Like my brother and, as it turned out, my closest friends, I was happily assigned to Carey; what a man! It is sobering to reflect that we were closer in time to two of these historic heroes, than we are now to our schoolboy selves.

We enjoyed our Speech Days and Sports Days, house drama in the gym and lecture competitions in the chapel, Travel Club journeys to France and Austria or, more mundanely and less excitingly, to Twickenham to see Oxford play Cambridge. Someone would then be sick on the coach—usually me.

One significant failure, as it now seems to me, was the lack of any attempt to interpret the boarders’ background to us ‘day-bugs’, and probably vice versa. The former, as a minority group, enjoyed their own camaraderie and spaces ‘out of bounds’ to the rest of us; they often excelled at sport while sometimes struggling academically after a difficult start overseas. I recall no great problems between the two groups; my Mum was among those who welcomed boarders home for tea or birthdays. But not often; we still had little understanding of

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4 Respectively Mrs Reeves, née Lawson, and Mrs Moss.

what our opposite numbers were facing, including (before days of cheap or quick flights) long separation from their parents. We simply knew that the boarders had these mysterious ‘guardians’ behind them; how many hidden and unsung stories are here, of sometimes costly commitment and love?

But some notable ‘failures’ at school went on to outstanding academic and/or professional achievements. Recent studies suggest a sharp divide between those missionaries’ sons (no-one called them ‘kids’ in those days) who were glad to follow their parents’ adventurous faith, and those who left school wanting anything but that.<sup>5</sup>

But as an overwhelmingly male community, we ‘didn’t do’ emotion. When a popular nine-year-old classmate died, no-one told us how, or even mentioned his name again. He just didn’t come back next term; something, as well as someone, was missing here? We shouted, laughed, sang, ran and sometimes fought, but we didn’t cry, let alone ‘sneak’. We chattered and argued in the old or new quad, the cloisters or the Tuck Shop, with a worn tennis ball normally within reach. A window was occasionally broken; me again. ‘Idle, you are a nuisance’. Or, for a different offence, the equally unanswerable: ‘Idle, when will you grow up?’

## Friends for life

I made many friends from my own year; room to mention two special ones. **Robert Emery** even predates our Eltham days; we first met at the age of four, so have known each other for 75 years, and counting. He shone at tennis; studied at the London Bible College and in 1964 was ordained as a Congregational Minister, serving for four years in England.<sup>6</sup> With wife and family, he then emigrated in 1968 to Australia, failed to persuade me to follow him, and served both pastorally and academically in the Uniting Church in New South Wales. He did persuade me to write two hymns, in 2004 (written barely a mile from his old home at Bickley) and 2016. Each marked an anniversary; his own forty years of ministry,<sup>7</sup> and then 150 years—ancient for Down Under—of one of the rural churches he served.<sup>8</sup> We still try to meet when he comes to visit the UK branch of his family, including a golden wedding celebration for him and Sheila.

Another Carey House companion was **Tony Naden** who, like Robert, embraced a vibrant and personal Christian faith before I did. He commuted to

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5 See B Richardson (ed) *Sons of Missionaries: Recollections by Boarders at Eltham College* (2011).

6 He was minister of Long Buckley and East Haddon from 1965 and had oversight of Yelvertoft and Swinford from 1966. See *Congregational Year Book* (1967–8) 239, 241.

7 See my collection, C M Idle *Walking by the River* (2008) no 74.

8 Due for publication in C M Idle *Trees along the River* (2018); written for Cambewarra Union Church, New South Wales.

school from distant Biggin Hill,<sup>9</sup> and something of his bold witness and example rubbed off on me. At the age of 16, Tony and I spent our summer holidays hitch-hiking to Greece and back; later with three other Oxford students (including Old Elthamian and future Librarian **John Towler**) we bought a second-hand London taxi, which through many dangers, toils and snares, just made it to Jerusalem and back, over land and bits of sea.

Tony followed his 1st-class degree in theology and upper-2nd in oriental languages with a D Phil; ordained (Church of England) in 1962, he spent nearly forty years in Northern Ghana with Wycliffe Bible Translators. He built a house (as one does) for wife Diane and their two children, put the Mampruli dialect into written form for the first time, with local support, and headed a team that by the time they left had completed the New Testament and much of the Old in that language. There's a biography waiting to be written here, but that will do for now.

At Eltham, Tony's game was rugby; I dabbled in cross-country, unofficial cricket and (supremely) 'quad soccer'. With another football-loving friend<sup>10</sup> I also found time to enjoy the beautiful round-ball game elsewhere. But how we took for granted the extensive playing-fields literally on our doorstep, while so many other schools had to run fleets of coaches to their distant sports-grounds!

Not all my pals were Christians; I shared my Oxford accommodation with a brilliant athlete from Eltham who would be after my blood if his name appeared here. He once came to the Christian Union (OICCU) and even to hear Billy Graham, but his student days were busy with snooker in the smoky Union bar, or endless coffee, paperbacks and musical vinyl '78s' in his room. He got his degree (Modern Languages, 3rd) on about one hour's study a week, so far as anyone could see.

I value other friends too, and in spite of more limited travel these days I am still in effective contact with **Brierley** (statistics), **Carpenter** (finance), **Pearson** and **Siderfin** (education), and **Sturdy** (music) ... But our school was also peopled with other forms of life, such as the staff including the masters. The last survivor who taught me has passed on only recently; let me get this down while there is time.

## Saints from the staff room

Space forces me to be selective. But outstanding among teachers was **Mr (C S C) Duchesne**, an inspirational head of classics. He it was whose love of everything Greek sparked our Athens hitch-hike, and the Greeks we met were wonderfully kind to two filthy English schoolboys. I wish he had launched us

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<sup>9</sup> Glimpses of his teenage years come in *The Moving Church* (1956) by his vicar, Vivian Symons.

<sup>10</sup> For the record, Bob Milner.

on Latin too; I never quite recovered from a wobbly two years under a less gifted master, though (almost too late) I came to savour the rhythms of Horace, Virgil and Cicero.

But easier to my ear was English, which became my degree subject; take a bow, Parky! The black-gowned foul-pipe-smoking **C A A Parkinson** was the author of the school song quoted above; tune by music-master Ernest Connolly. In spite of what are labelled ‘discipline problems’ (he couldn’t keep order) Mr P nurtured my growing love of prose and poetry: Chaucer, Shakespeare, Johnson, Lamb, Byron, Browning and countless others, even the outrageously modern T S Eliot. Parky was fine with a set of half a dozen who wanted to learn; the back row of a full classroom did not progress much. Like Tony, I scribbled a lot of witty nonsense, and some of it graced the pages of the termly magazine *The Elthamian*. But CAAP was a Gilbert and Sullivan promoter and producer too, and his favourite Bible chapter was Matthew 6.

And then ‘Tuff’; sorry, **Mr Geoffrey Turberville**, Headmaster seemingly since time began, and another ‘great life’ if all were ever to be told. A small, meek and formal man, disregarded by some of the tougher lads (but not when he entered the room, and not by any of his staff). As the years went by many of us came to respect his quiet wisdom in new ways; I was in his Greek class of three. The brilliant Tony and Mike<sup>11</sup> must have been great to teach, but how patient he was with my own struggles to keep up!

One game-changing moment was when Tony and I went to a Christian pacifist meeting one evening in Eltham. There on the ‘peace’ platform sat ... our Headmaster! Hitherto we had no idea of his convictions in that direction; some of his staff, it transpired, had been imprisoned as conscientious objectors in World War One. But while the issue was debated at school, like all the other global and moral questions we confidently sorted out, at no point was any ‘line’ given us by Mr Turberville or the others. (One Lower Sixth forum was the ‘Diacrinomatic Society’, complete with formally elected officers, voting on motions, and a handsomely solemn minute book.) Other staff had army records, but unlike some schools in those war and post-war years, we had no Officers’ Training Corps. For the record, I completed my own ‘National Service’ as a ‘conchie’, portering at Grove Park Hospital whose grounds backed on to the school playing-fields.

Eltham was generous in its prize-givings, and I collected a few on the way; sometimes a group of us went to Foyle’s in Charing Cross Road to make our selections. My favourite trophies came from the annual essay competition, when some of us voluntarily filed into Room One to find the range of that year’s

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<sup>11</sup> Later, the parliamentary ombudsman Sir Michael Buckley, who was strictly the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration and Health Service Commissioner for England, Scotland and Wales (Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman) between 1997 and 2002.

topics, hitherto unknown and now listed on a big board, for a couple of hours of flexing our literary muscles. Yes, ink-wells and ‘blotch’ (blotting paper) were provided.

My O-levels were no more than adequate; the Lower Sixth was an exam-free breeze, but a year later I must have done enough to gain a standard three A-levels (Latin, Greek, English); no grades then, but sufficient to persuade Oxford’s St Peter’s Hall (as it then was; soon to be ‘College’) to let me in. Even that had for me a providential dimension. At my interview I shamelessly milked our Greek adventures, and in the examination room I happened to quote the only substantial poetry I knew by heart (Wordsworth, of all people, thanks to Parky) which unknown to me was the top favourite of the examiner, my future English tutor.<sup>12</sup>

But I digress; time fails me to tell of Bill Scott and Ray Stirling (History), ‘Macky’ (McIver, Art), ‘PB’ (Thomson, English), ‘Gad’ and ‘Moses’ (Calderwood and Moss, French), even ‘Occy’ (Ocomore, Physics and cricket, with his brutal tongue and occasional cane, but wonderful pastoral heart for the boarders in his care). The Chaplains too played their part, in chapel and ‘R E’; ‘HJ’ (Holy Joe) was the butt of many jokes, but Eric Sutton-Smith from Sri Lanka was a quietly wholesome influence in his short stay with us.

## Church and Chapel

Chapel of course was a daily routine, unimaginative by today’s exacting standards, endured by some but rarely complained about. Its memorable ingredient for me: the hymns! With my family on Sundays, a middling-to-high church with *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, I learned the classics of Heber and Lyte, fine paraphrases by John Mason Neale, with a reluctant nod to Wesley or the Free Church James Montgomery. At school, enriched by the 1951 arrival of the bright blue *Congregational Praise*, replacing the duller *Congregational Hymnary* of 1916, I found that the lines that moved me most were credited to one Isaac Watts, 1674–1748. He has been my favourite almost from then on; as I have written elsewhere, ‘Even “the prisoner leaps to lose his chains” (though I did not know who the prisoner was or what were his chains) came with strong force to me ... “Jesus shall reign” remains a top favourite of mine’.<sup>13</sup>

So memories fade and names depart, but some things last. In the 1970s, encouraged by Headmaster Christopher Porteous, Marjorie and I were confident enough to send our four sons to Eltham from east London. They would paint a more mixed picture of the place, its sometimes oppressive Oxbridge and sporting culture and elitist philosophy. But they too made friends, learned skills,

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<sup>12</sup> Ralph E C Houghton; and see the Old Elthamians’ *Plane Talking*, (January 2013).

<sup>13</sup> Porteous *Eltham College* 222.



won prizes, played sport, did gap-years, travelled and earned degrees. And now that even they, turning fifty, have joined the ranks of the veterans, I have this 21st century to add to my memories.

## Moving on

I have appreciated Old Elthamian Jonathan Gooch's talents as a musician and church elder, meeting him (and now his growing family) at Hayes Lane Baptist Church in Bromley and back at school. We have even combined in a hymn or two.

But among other notable OEs (Mervyn Peake, Lord Fenner Brockway, George Band of Mounts Everest (1953) and Kanchenchunga (1955), Gerald Moore<sup>14</sup>), none has greater or more deserved fame than the Olympic gold-medallist and missionary Eric Liddell. At the age of nine, while his parents were in China, he made the move from 'the stones of Blackheath' to 'the Eltham fields'; his story is told in at least five biographies,<sup>15</sup> and with much film-makers' licence in the popular 1981 movie *Chariots of Fire*.

No, I'm not quite old enough to have met him; born in 1902, Eric died in a Japanese prison-camp in 1945, the year before I joined his old school (where he still held the 100 yards [*sic*] record). But what an unexpected joy it was to meet, at more than one school event, his daughter Patricia Russell, over from Canada with her Presbyterian minister husband. My best tribute to his memory, and indeed our school, was the hymn I wrote by request and which she chose for a special 'Songs of Praise': 'This is the man who runs with God'. I hope her father would have approved the final couplet:

Praise God for all whose race is won  
and each new life in Christ begun.<sup>16</sup>

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*Christopher M Idle*

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<sup>14</sup> For Peake and Brockway see *ODNB*. For Band see *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Guardian* both 29/8/2011. For Moore see his 'sometimes shocking' autobiography *Treading in Treacle* (1983).

<sup>15</sup> The most recent being D Hamilton *For the Glory* (2016); also see *ODNB*.

<sup>16</sup> Idle, *Walking by the River* no 88.

## DAUGHTERS OF THE CHURCH

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The July 1897 issue of Carrs Lane, Birmingham, Congregational Church's *Monthly Record* proudly reminded its readers that the church currently had three female members and former school teachers serving at overseas missions, Miss Hargreaves, Miss Marris and Miss Coombs. They were among the growing number of young women recruited for missionary work in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Missionary societies had come to realise that their work was more acceptable and more likely to succeed by initial approaches to overseas communities via medicine or teaching, and so relaxed their attitudes towards employing single women who had the skills to do such work. The result was that by the end of the nineteenth century there were more women than men listed as serving missionaries overseas, though most were still under the supervision of men.

Ellen Louise Hargreaves, born in 1855 in Edgbaston, was the daughter of James Beverley Hargreaves, a bank cashier and deacon of the church before his death in 1897. She was a music teacher and, at the time of the *Monthly Record* publication in 1897, her brother James Hargreaves, a solicitor, had also become a deacon. Also a teacher was Ada Jane Marris, born in 1856 at Kings Norton, whose father George Marris was a businessman employing around 100 people and a Justice of the Peace. George Marris was regarded as senior among the deacons of Carrs Lane, and was instrumental in the appointment of John Henry Jowett as pastor following the death of R W Dale in 1895.<sup>1</sup> She who became the most well-known however was Edith Anna Coombs, also a teacher, born in 1862 in Edinburgh, the daughter of a notable Congregational minister, Joshua Wilson Coombs. Census returns shows each of these young women as living and teaching in the Birmingham area,<sup>2</sup> and all three were members of Carrs Lane Church.<sup>3</sup>

Whilst each of these women shared similarities of lifestyle in Birmingham and a strong bond with Carrs Lane Church, particularly under the leadership of Dr Dale, their experience of missionary life was to be very different. They were all daughters in Victorian middle class families, with each household having domestic servants. Their callings were to take them to different continents or sub-continents, and although their missionary work was apparently similar they had very dissimilar experiences and knew marked differences in its outcome.

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1 Birmingham Central Library (hereafter BCL), CC1/25, 'Deacons Meeting Minute Book 1895-1903', June 17th.1895.

2 Census returns at The National Archives: Hargreaves, RG12/2357; Marris, RG/11/3084; Coombs, RG.12/2433.

3 BCL, CC1/16, 'Carrs Lane Church Roll, 1866-1889'. Hargreaves-1245, Marris-1073, Coombs-2266.

The only shared missionary experience they had was that they were away from home and in a culturally different environment. Yet in their determination to improve the spiritual lives of others, these single women were prepared to face conditions that were alien to western women. Previously most women missionaries were the unpaid wives of serving men, whose presence was deemed necessary for the sake of propriety, and which furthered the Victorian Christian family ideal of a harmonious home with the wife and mother at its heart.

## Ellen Louise Hargreaves

Ellen Louise Hargreaves was recruited by the London Missionary Society in 1893 and sent to Palapye in what was then Bechuanaland, now Botswana, in southern Africa. She was to serve at the mission run by William Charles Willoughby, an ordained Congregational minister, who had studied at Spring Hill College, Birmingham. He first went to Africa in 1882 but contracted malaria and in 1883 returned to England. He was born in Cornwall but in 1885 had married Charlotte Elizabeth Poutney of Birmingham,<sup>4</sup> whose social circle may well have included Ellen Hargreaves. In 1892 he returned to Africa with his wife and family and in 1893 Miss Hargreaves aged 38 years joined his mission there.

Africa was considered a dangerous place for single women missionaries to go until the twentieth century. This was not only because of the heat and sparse living conditions but also because of the many warring tribal factions. Yet the Bechuanaland region was not as inhospitable as some areas and by the 1890s it already had a Christian community of nearly 8,000. William Willoughby also distinguished himself as a skilled negotiator, working with local tribal leaders, and during his time there he managed to alleviate any major difficulties.<sup>5</sup> Ellen Hargreaves would perhaps have considered herself in the early years as being in a relatively safe place among friends. Her duties at Palapye would most likely have been teaching related and, given the innate love of rhythm and music of many African natives, her musical training was no doubt put to good use. The Botswana National Archives have a photograph taken by William Willoughby in 1898 showing the 'Musical Drill at the Native Elementary School, Palapye', which includes a back view of a woman playing a piano-like instrument which may well be Miss Hargreaves.<sup>6</sup> However, the situation at Palapye deteriorated towards the end of the century with the Boers requisitioning land, and the relocation of the Bamangwato tribe to Serowe.<sup>7</sup> The mission also moved to Serowe but it would appear that Ellen Hargreaves decided to return home to England.

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4 <http://www.mundus.ac.uk/cats/4/248.htm>, 27th February 2002.

5 N Goodall *A History of the London Missionary Society 1894–1945* (Hereafter *LMS*) (Oxford 1954) 256–8.

6 <http://www.kurangu.com/shoshong/images/9-school.jpg>. Posted May 2014, Jacob Knight.

7 Goodall *LMS* 247, 261.

The thoughts and inner lives of those in the mission field rarely become known. The School of African and Oriental Studies in London advises researchers of family history that a general lack of information exists concerning the everyday life of overseas missionaries. Whilst SOAS holds the records of the London Missionary Society, the correspondence from the mission masters is comprised of accounts and official information and procedures, with very little mention of private details relating to individuals. Such information is really only contained in letters sent to family and friends and, if still in existence, is rarely made available to scholars or the public in general. Ellen Hargreaves returned to England in 1900<sup>8</sup> which seemingly marked the end of her career with the London Missionary Society. She died in Birmingham in June 1924 aged 69, leaving her total effects of £1155 7s 4d to be administered by her two nephews. They were James B Hargreaves, a solicitor, and Charles Oscar Moreton, a theology student, who later became a recognised botanist and author, and was the vicar of Bloxham, Oxfordshire, 1949–1958.<sup>9</sup>

## Ada Marris

The remoteness and mud huts of Palapye were in stark contrast to Benares, India, where Ada Marris was sent. Benares, also known as Varanasi, was and still is a bustling centre, considered the holiest of the Hindu sacred cities. Situated in the north of India, its long history is reflected in its architecture of over 2000 temples, and around 87 ghats, which are riverside steps leading down to the river Ganges. India under British rule at this time was considered politically calm, and missionary opportunities were optimistic. Ada Marris, aged 26 years, was not alone in facing the challenges of whatever lay ahead, as she was accompanied by her younger sister Rose, aged 24 years. The two sisters were recruited together by the London Missionary Society and sent to Benares in 1882, into the care of Revd Edwin Greaves.<sup>10</sup> Their work there was focussed on the women in the community but involved going into the homes of women, known as zenana work.

Ada and Rose Marris were well educated and by all accounts self-assured young women. They both unfortunately suffered bouts of illness whilst in India, with Ada having to convalesce in Almora. This left Rose alone in Benares in 1884, which caused some consternation to the Revd John Hewlett when she refused to move into more protective mission accommodation. He wrote to the foreign secretary of the London Missionary Society, Ralph Wardlaw Thompson, complaining that she should not be living alone but, according to Rhonda

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8 Goodall *LMS* 605.

9 *Calendar of the Grants of Probate and Letters of Administration made in the Probate Registries of the High Court of Justice in England* (1924) 55

10 Goodall *LMS* 31.

Semple, this grievance was really an older male missionary society administrator trying to exert his authority over a single-minded young lady who was a relative newcomer.<sup>11</sup> Tensions between missionaries were not uncommon, and it is possible that some may have felt threatened by Rose Marris, who had outshone Edward Greaves (later to become a recognised Hindi scholar) when they both sat the newly instituted language examinations.<sup>12</sup>

These two young women were not reticent about approaching Ralph Wardlaw Thompson directly when an issue of concern to them arose. This was evident when in 1887 the local district committee was not following the rules of women's role on the committee. Ada was the more diplomatic and channelled her view via Edwin Greaves, whereas Rose successfully appealed directly to the London Missionary Society.<sup>13</sup> They were determined and self-confident young women, something that they had perhaps learned from their father. George Marris acknowledged the importance of women in society and valued their contributions to the church at Carrs Lane. He was instrumental in proposing that women church members should be given the voting power in the election of new ministers, which the diaconate duly accepted.<sup>14</sup> Rose left missionary service in 1887, returned to England and was married in 1888 to Thomas Haynes, a railway contractor agent, director and employer, and moved to live in London. Ada is recorded as being at home with her parents on the 1891 census, obviously then on furlough. All missionaries were given a break from their duties every few years, when most would return to their families and friends in England.

Ada Marris spent 34 years in India and, even after her retirement in 1916, she continued to work for the London Missionary Society by organizing a Home Preparation Union, a correspondence school for missionary candidates prior to their formal training. She had totally embraced the missionary way of life and wrote two books for the London Missionary Society about her experiences in India. In 1929 the London Missionary Society could no longer ignore that missionary endeavours in the United Province areas where she and her sister had served were no longer a viable proposition and moved its efforts to southern India. Ada Jane Marris died on 8th March 1944 aged 88 years, at her home in Stroud, Gloucestershire. She left £1,212 18s 1d., though like Ellen Hargreaves, she had spent so many years in retirement that it would be wrong to surmise that this was any indication of reward for her work done in the mission field for the LMS.<sup>15</sup>

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11 R A Semple *Missionary Women: Gender, Professionalism, and the Victorian Idea of Christian Mission* (Woodbridge, Suffolk 2003) 98.

12 *Ibid* 99.

13 *Ibid* 97.

14 BCL, CC1/25, *Deacons Meeting Minute Book 1895–1903*. May 24th 1902.

15 *Calendar of the Grants of Probate and Letters of Administration made in the Probate Registries of the High Court of Justice in England* (1944) 481.

## Edith Anna Coombs

Edith Anna Coombs, aged 36 years, joined the China Inland Mission in 1897 which recruited missionaries from various Christian denominations, many of whom were unpaid. Missionary work in China was considered particularly difficult due to the long standing hostility towards foreigners, so most foreign missionaries there lived in compounds. It was also different in character with mission centres isolated within vast swathes of the country. Edith Coombs had apparently expressed her desire to become a missionary in China whilst teaching at the prestigious Edgbaston High School for Girls in Birmingham. She was by all accounts extremely popular. She was also exceedingly clever, educated from the age of 12 in Switzerland at Neuchatel, and then at 19 years she entered Somerville Hall at Oxford where she graduated in literature. She was an ideal candidate for the challenges of the Chinese language.

Edith Coombs was unfortunately caught up in the political agitation of the Manchu dynasty, and became the first Christian missionary martyr of what is now known as the Boxer Rebellion.<sup>16</sup> She suffered a cruel fate when on June 27th 1900 she was burnt to death in harrowing circumstances. The most comprehensive account of her last hours is well documented by the Revd E H Edwards, a missionary who returned to China in 1901 after a furlough. He carried out a thorough investigation into the background, causes and events of the uprising, which he documented and published in his book *Fire and Sword in Shansi: the story of the martyrdom of foreign and Chinese Christians*. It appears that, when the missionary compound was attacked and the missionaries told to flee, Miss Coombs realised that two girls Fuh Jung and Ai T'ao were left in the school room who could not walk very well as their feet had recently been unbound. When the building was fired she returned to help them, but stumbled and fell whilst carrying the heavier girl Ai T'ao and was pelted by sticks and stones. Edith Coombs was dragged from shielding her and pushed repeatedly into the fire. Ai T'ao managed to escape with the help of a male bystander, but it was a bitter sweet rescue as he sold her into slavery, and it was some years before she was able to regain her freedom. Fuh Jung was also sold but was treated like a daughter by the elderly couple who took her in and stayed with them until she married. The remains of Edith Coombs were buried in the Mission Compound.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> The Boxer Rebellion was an uprising led by the Yihetuan, a nationalist society opposed to overseas imperial interests in China which included all Christian missionary activity.

<sup>17</sup> E H Edwards *Fire and Sword in Shansi: the story of the martyrdom of foreign and Chinese Christians* (nd [1903]) 64–5.

## Elizabeth Moore

In 1897 the readers of Carrs Lane Journal could never have imagined the diverse paths the future of these young women would take. The very notion of missionary work conjured up excitement and reward when the reality was discomfort, hard work, and home-sickness. Carrs Lane magazine also shows another of their Sunday school teachers as being a missionary at this time.<sup>18</sup> This was a Miss Elizabeth Moore who, aged 28, was sent by the London Missionary Society to Samoa in the Phillipines.<sup>19</sup> Her father was Ebenezer Moore a cabinet maker, but neither she nor her family appear to be on the church membership roll. According to the London Missionary Society's records, she was in Samoa from 1890 to 1920 and died aged 57 at Papauta. She apparently was physically frail and constantly suffered ill-health, but she was instrumental in establishing a high school for the daughters of warring chiefs and by 1895 over seventy girls had enrolled. When she died a male colleague at the Mission compared her to Mary Slessor, the eminent early missionary in Nigeria, and stated that the Society had lost one of its greatest women missionaries.<sup>20</sup> She left effects of £633 9s 2d.<sup>21</sup>

## Conclusion

There were many reasons why young women volunteered for missionary service overseas, ranging from a sense of adventure, escape from situations at home, a sense of purposefulness and use of their skills, to the attraction of a salary with accommodation and a pension.<sup>22</sup> These young women from Carrs Lane were among those who responded to the missionary call, revealing the power of religion within their lives as well as their Christian compassion. What they had in common was a tremendous awareness of other people's lives, no doubt influenced by the teachings of R W Dale, and they saw no other way of fulfilling their love of God. Carrs Lane Congregational Church was and remains justifiably proud of these daughters of their church.

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*Meegan Griffin*

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<sup>18</sup> BCL, CC1 *Our Monthly Record*, September 1898.

<sup>19</sup> Goodall LMS 359.

<sup>20</sup> Goodall LMS 359.

<sup>21</sup> *Calendar of the Grants of Probate and Letters of Administration made in the Probate Registries of the High Court of Justice in England* (1920) 296.

<sup>22</sup> R Seton *Western Daughters in Eastern Lands* (Praeger, California 2013) 33.

# THE REVD ERNEST JAMES THOMPSON 1875–1973: A CONGREGATIONAL MINISTER IN ENGLAND AND CANADA

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## Introduction

Interest in Ernest James Thompson, a minister who had charge of Congregational churches in both England and Canada, was initially stimulated by the fact that his entry in the Surman Index of Congregational Ministers is incomplete. This indicates that, following two pastorates at Ashurst Wood in Sussex (1898–1903) and Petersfield in Hampshire (1903–09), he moved to Keswick Ridge in New Brunswick, Canada (1908–18). It is then recorded that there were ‘no Colonial returns 1919–25’ and he was ‘gone when resumed in 1926.’<sup>1</sup> Thus, there is no official obituary for him in the *Congregational Year Book* and consequently a potentially valuable source of biographical information is missing. However, traces of him do exist in census returns, local newspaper report and church records and consequently it is possible to construct a partial account of the life of this fascinating minister.

In what follows consideration is given to aspects of his early life; his pastorates at Ashurst Wood and Petersfield; and his Canadian pastorates in New Brunswick, Alberta and British Columbia from 1910 to 1939/40. By way of conclusion, an attempt is made to evaluate his career and character.

## Early life

Ernest was born in Huntingdon on 10 February 1875.<sup>2</sup> His father Samuel came from Bakewell in Derbyshire and was aged 33 at the time of Ernest’s birth. His mother Eliza was 15 years younger than her husband and was almost certainly his second wife. She was only 18 when Ernest was born. In the 1881 census returns, Samuel’s occupation is shown as that of ‘labourer’. These also indicate that Ernest had an older half-brother, Samuel, and a younger brother, Charles

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1 The Index was produced in card form by the Congregational minister, Charles Surman (1901–86). It can now be accessed on-line at <http://surman.english.qmul.ac.uk/> where a summary of the history and contents of the Index can also be found. [Editor’s note: always check the actual card images.]

2 The exact date comes from information contained in the local branch publication of the Cobourg (Ontario) Union Cemetery where Ernest is buried.



Henry. By the time of the 1891 census the family had moved to Nottingham and, now aged 16, Ernest's occupation is described as 'Clerk (Lace warehouse)'.

It is not known at which church the family worshipped or indeed what influences were at work that led Ernest to decide to train for the Congregational ministry. At some point, however, during the early to mid 1890s Ernest secured a place at the Congregational Institute for Theological and Missionary Training. Colloquially known as Paton College after its principal, it had been established in 1860 'to train less qualified students.'<sup>3</sup> Initially located in Manchester it moved to Nottingham in 1863. The Revd John Brown Paton (1830–1911) was principal for the next 35 years. In his *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* entry he is described as 'a gifted teacher and a man of deep personal piety ... [but] was above all a social crusader ... a pioneer in seeking to embody Christian principles in practical schemes for social improvement.'<sup>4</sup> Thus, in coming under Paton's influence, Ernest would have been imbued with some of the principles of the social gospel alongside a more traditional evangelical commitment to the personal gospel and the primacy of the conversion experience.

## Ashurst Wood

As indicated in the Surman Index, Ernest's first charge, from 1898 until 1903, was Ashurst Wood Congregational Church in Sussex. Situated in the civil parish of Forest Row, three miles south east of East Grinstead, the church had been built in 1859. In a contemporary source it was described as 'a small building, with a school attached.'<sup>5</sup> However, it could accommodate up to 220 worshippers. Membership was between 40 and 50. Although Ashurst Wood was essentially a rural community, it was situated in a scenically attractive area, with the result that during the second half of the nineteenth century many wealthy people bought property in the area thereby providing alternative employment opportunities to those in agriculture.

The first known newspaper reference to Ernest at Ashurst Wood was in January 1898 when at the annual Christmas treat for Congregational Sunday School children it was reported that he delivered 'a most eloquent address impressive and appropriate to the occasion.'<sup>6</sup> At the end of March he was ordained, with the ceremony being attended by the Revd Ambrose D Spong, President of the Sussex County Association, and ministers from a number of neighbouring Congregational churches, including Tunbridge Wells and East

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3 A Argent *The Transformation of Congregationalism 1900–2000* (Nottingham 2013) 283.

4 *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

5 *Kelly's Directory of Sussex* (1899) 335.

6 *East Grinstead Observer* (hereafter EGO) 15 January 1898.

Grinstead. From Ernest's responses to various ordination questions, it is possible to glean something of his faith and aspirations. As reported:

... Mr Thompson gave a brief sketch of his religious life and the circumstances which conveyed towards his future, also a very lucid and definite confession of faith, the following being some of the principal points: He believed the principal doctrines were the Holy Trinity the Being and character of God; the incarnation and atonement of the Son of God; man sin and redemption; repentance and faith, the work of the Holy Spirit and the future life ... [and that] the Church was a body of believing men and women, banded together for the purpose of Divine worship, mutual edification and concerted Christian service.

The whole scene was described as being 'profoundly impressive'.<sup>7</sup>

In August 1898, Ernest married Edith Marion Goddard from Wallington in Surrey.<sup>8</sup> Tragically, however, the marriage was short-lived since she died in December 1899 'a few days after giving birth to a daughter', also named Edith Marion.<sup>9</sup> In tributes paid to her, she was described as 'very popular, and greatly esteemed for her kindness and amiability'—fitting qualities for a minister's wife.<sup>10</sup> Thus, by 1901, aged 26, Ernest was already a widower. The census returns for that year show him living with his daughter, aged 1, and his mother at 1 Rose Villas, Forest Row, East Sussex. Presumably, his mother was there to help him look after his baby daughter.<sup>11</sup>

Following the death of his wife, Ernest remained at Ashurst Wood for another four years. In addition to leading his own church he was involved in events elsewhere. For example, as early as May 1898 there is a report of him speaking at the anniversary of Zion Chapel (Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion) in East Grinstead. In his talk he 'urged greater recognition on the part of members of the churches of their responsibilities to their ministers and their church.'<sup>12</sup> He was also very supportive of the local branch of the Band of Hope.<sup>13</sup>

Notwithstanding the personal sadness associated with his time at Ashurst Wood, Ernest's first pastorate seems to be a considerable success and he entered

<sup>7</sup> EGO 26 March 1898.

<sup>8</sup> EGO 20 August 1898. As a wedding present, the church presented Ernest with an 'excellent library table, together with an illuminated address.' EGO 24 September 1898.

<sup>9</sup> EGO 30 December 1899.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> The 1911 census returns show Eliza back home with her husband, Samuel, in Nottingham. By then Ernest and Edith were in Canada.

<sup>12</sup> *Sussex Express* (hereafter SE) 28 May 1898.

<sup>13</sup> At a Band of Hope meeting during the autumn of 1901, 'Rev. E.J. Thompson ... gave an interesting lantern lecture, entitled "A Temperance Peep Show"'. EGO 5 October 1901.

fully into the life of the church.<sup>14</sup> In so doing, he was able to demonstrate his capabilities as a minister and indeed future potential, both as a sensitive pastor and ‘eloquent’ preacher.<sup>15</sup> In recognition of his ‘sterling qualities’, in January 1903 he was unexpectedly presented with ‘a purse of ten sovereigns ... [by] church members and friends, as a mark of the high appreciation and esteem in which he ... [was] held by them’. At the presentation, a member also ‘congratulated him upon the generous feeling that abounded throughout the congregation towards him, and ... [mentioned] that the chalice ... presented to the church some months ago was given in his honour’.<sup>16</sup> A further indication of his growing reputation was that a few days later he received a call to the Congregational church at Petersfield, which had more than double the membership of Ashurst Wood. Links with his first charge, however, were sustained because in 1908, he returned to his old church and took ‘a prominent part in the anniversary services.’<sup>17</sup>

## Petersfield

Ernest was appointed minister of Petersfield Congregational Church in February 1903, following a near unanimous vote in his favour.<sup>18</sup> John Gammon of Herne House, who chaired his public recognition meeting in July, commented that the first time they had heard Ernest preach ‘they were drawn to him very closely, and during the short time he had been with them they had got to love him more and more.’ He went on to express the hope that this ‘was just the starting point of the good work that was to be done.’<sup>19</sup> Another speaker the Revd Arthur John Summerhill, the Wesleyan Methodist Minister, welcomed Ernest on behalf of his members ‘all the more heartily because they understood that he was essentially and thoroughly evangelical, and there never was a time in the history of Petersfield and the entire district when a man of that description was needed more than to-day.’<sup>20</sup> Why this should have been the case is not entirely clear. Perhaps it was simply that the evangelical free churches of the town were in need of some new blood and evangelistic fervour. Although a widower,

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14 There are many reports in the *EGO* of Ernest preaching and speaking at Church events, including harvest festivals, celebrations to mark the anniversaries of the church and the Sunday School and, more prosaically, sales of work.

15 *EGO* 30 September 1899.

16 *EGO* 24 January 1903.

17 *SE* 17 October 1908.

18 Of the 39 present at a special meeting to consider the ministerial vacancy, following the resignation of the previous minister, the Revd Thomas Clare Jones, due to ill health, 38 voted in favour of inviting Ernest to fill it with 1 abstention. Petersfield Congregational Church Minute Book (hereafter PCC MB) (1899–1908) Hampshire Record Office (hereafter HRO) 91A02/B1/3.

19 *Hants and Sussex News* (hereafter HSN) 15 July 1903.

20 *HSN* 15 July 1903.

Ernest was still a young man and undoubtedly full of energy and keen to make his mark.

Petersfield was a substantially larger community than Ashurst Wood. Located in south-east Hampshire, close to the border with Sussex, it was a market town with a population of 3265 in 1901. In addition to the Congregationalists and Wesleyan Methodists—Primitive Methodists, members of the Salvation Army, Anglicans and Roman Catholics all had places of worship in the town. Based on evidence from other parts of Hampshire, it is probable that on a typical Sunday between one third and one half of the population would have attended a church service.

At the time of Ernest's appointment, the Congregational church had a membership of 95 and there were 98 Sunday school scholars. In addition to Sunday and weekday services and Sunday school classes, the church sponsored a variety of other ministries. Ernest, for example, was instrumental in establishing a local branch of the Men's Own Brotherhood or Pleasant Sunday Afternoon (PSA) Movement, which was targeted at adult males, who would not normally have attended a place of worship. Meetings were designed to be 'brief, bright and brotherly' and achieved considerable success. Ernest was President of the Petersfield PSA until his departure for Canada in early 1910.

During the time he spent in Petersfield, Ernest closely identified himself with many different aspects of not only his church but also the wider Christian community in the town. As president of the town's Christian Endeavour Union he contributed to its influential ministry amongst young people. In 1906, having extolled the virtues of Christian Endeavour, he argued that 'they needed in their societies young men and women who sought not to be entertained and amused, but who had a mighty desire to work for Christ and His church'.<sup>21</sup> Such a lofty goal clearly reflected his high ideals.

In addition, Ernest played an important part in the affairs of the Petersfield and District Free Church Council, which had been founded in 1899. Interestingly, the Congregational church was initially unsure about joining this body. Indeed, it only voted in favour of sending representatives to the Council at the same church meeting as the one at which Ernest was invited to become minister. This was somewhat fortuitous since it is clear that he was very sympathetic towards the ecumenical spirit which underpinned the Free Church Council movement. He was twice president, in 1905/6 and 1909/10, and served as vice-president in 1908/9.<sup>22</sup>

The Council combined a religious role with what can be described, in the language of today, as that of a pressure group. Thus, as well as organising

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<sup>21</sup> *HSN* 21 February 1906.

<sup>22</sup> His second presidency was cut short by his move to Canada.

missions, open air services and weeks of prayer, it expressed views and campaigned on the political issues of the day. This duality is evident in a newspaper report of Ernest's address at the Council's sixth annual meeting in 1905:

... one of the seven wonders of the world was the indomitable vitality of Nonconformity. He dealt in a masterly style with the Education Act [1902] and why they opposed it ... [it] had reduced the control of Education in this country to one of the greatest farces of the 20th century. They wanted not favour, but justice and liberty of conscience. It was the children's battle; it was the Church's battle; it was the Lord's battle. The Government's Licensing Act then came in for its share of condemnation. The curse and ravages of the drink traffic were brought prominently before the minds of his audience. The address closed with an appeal for greater devotion to God's service, and for a deeper passion for souls.<sup>23</sup>

At the equivalent meeting in 1906, he referred, during the course of 'a vigorous and much applauded speech', to 'a tightening of the bonds of unity amongst the Free Churches, and that they still stood as a linked battalion to wage war against all forms of evil, and to carry on the spiritual and regenerating work of Jesus Christ.'<sup>24</sup> Given that his speech was delivered just a few weeks after the landslide victory of the Liberals in the general election, it is not surprising that much of what he had to say related to the hoped for repeal of the Education Act 1902 and its replacement with legislation incorporating principles that Nonconformists considered to be far more just and equitable. In the event, due to opposition from the House of Lords, the Government was unable to honour its commitment to reform the education system giving rise, in due course, to both disappointment and disillusionment.

A more immediate cause of dismay in 1906 was the failure of the religious revival in Wales to spread to England. This caused Ernest to pose the following questions: 'Was it that a spirit of worldliness had invaded their churches, was it that materialism was killing their spirituality, was it that they had lost the burning desire of the Apostles for souls?'<sup>25</sup>

At the annual meeting of the Free Church Council in 1909, when Ernest was again President he delivered what was described as 'an impressive address,' during which he highlighted further disappointments. First, 'they were longing to see the power of the drink traffic arrested, fondly hoping that they might be permitted to strike a fatal blow at its thralldom'. However these 'hopes had been shattered,' notwithstanding their powerful moral arguments in favour

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23 HSN 5 April 1905.

24 HSN 28 March 1906.

25 HSN 28 March 1906.

of legislation. Second, they had also failed to secure a just solution to the educational issue, which would ‘put a stop to all those deplorable squabbles and quarrels about doctrine and dogma which were so prejudicial to the education of this country.’ A third concern was what he saw as the undermining of Britain’s Protestant heritage with ‘monasteries and convents ... springing up like mushrooms in every part of the land.’ This he also linked to ‘the apathy, worldliness ... [and] stagnation which seemed to characterise the churches ... at the present time.’ Thus, stronger bonds between the free churches were needed more than ever.<sup>26</sup>

From the surviving traces it would seem that Ernest endeared himself as both a leading and a widely respected figure within the Free Church fraternity of Edwardian Petersfield. Moreover, judging by the generous gifts that he received from his Church when his ministry ended in 1910, following the acceptance of a call to the pastorate of Keswick Ridge in New Brunswick, it would seem that the expectations of him had been fully realised. Amongst these was an illuminated address in which reference was made to ‘the esteem and respect’ in which he was held.<sup>27</sup> That said, the number of church members did decline during his pastorate from 95 in 1902 to 80 in 1909 and they increased to record levels under his successor. It is, of course, invidious to judge the record of a minister on the basis of quantitative data alone and all the qualitative evidence points to his Petersfield pastorate being a successful one.

It would appear, however, that his resignation was unexpected and caught the church ‘off guard’. In a letter informing church members of his intentions, Ernest wrote:

It is only right that I should say that for some time I have been considering the call to another charge and after quiet & serious judgment I have felt led to accept it. It would be idle to say I lay down the work in Petersfield without regrets.

In his reply, the church secretary observed: ‘Your letter of resignation came to us somewhat as a surprise & naturally gives rise to mingled feelings.’<sup>28</sup> In the language of today, Ernest had undoubtedly ‘played his cards close to his chest’.

## **Keswick Ridge**

In the Canadian source material there are some clues as to how Ernest came to be minister of the church at Keswick Ridge. For example, in considering the question of ‘Vacant Churches’ at the Annual Meeting of the Congregational Union of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick in September 1909 it was agreed:

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<sup>26</sup> HSN 17 March 1909.

<sup>27</sup> HSN 16 February 1910.

<sup>28</sup> PCC MB (1908–1914) HRO 91A02/B1/4.

That Revs Anthony and Carmon be a committee, with Secretaries Gunn and Hooke to get into touch with certain pastors in England reported to be desirous of taking up work in Canada, to the end that Keswick Ridge, becoming vacant through the resignation of Rev Mr Rose, and other churches, may obtain settled pastors.<sup>29</sup>

Presumably Ernest had indicated his interest in ‘taking up work in Canada’. However, why this should have been the case is not known. Possibly it was for personal reasons, a desire to put the past behind him and make a fresh start for his daughter and himself. Perhaps, it was prompted by an adventurous spirit combined with a sense of calling. At his farewell gathering in Petersfield he is simply reported as saying that: ‘He was going forth, not because he had no regrets in leaving ... but because he was confident that it was right for him to go’.<sup>30</sup>

Passenger lists indicate that, a few days after this gathering, Ernest sailed on the Grampian of the Allen Line from Liverpool to St John in New Brunswick.<sup>31</sup> He travelled alone. His daughter accompanied by the lady who was to become Ernest’s second wife, Miss Elizabeth Crook, made the crossing in May 1910.<sup>32</sup> In the June 1911 Canadian census returns, they are shown as living as a family in York County, New Brunswick.<sup>33</sup> When and where Ernest and Elizabeth married is not known.

Keswick Ridge was a considerable contrast to Petersfield. Established in 1826, the church served a mainly rural community, situated about 20 kilometres from the provincial capital of Fredericton.<sup>34</sup> It was built of wood as opposed to brick. The climate was also very different, as indicated by the fact that in 1911 the church purchased for Ernest ‘a new sleigh and buffalo robe at a cost of \$31.00 and \$19.00 respectively’.<sup>35</sup>

That said the membership at around 100 was very similar to Petersfield,

<sup>29</sup> *Canadian Congregational Year Book* (hereafter *CCYB*) (1909–1910) 205–6.

<sup>30</sup> *HSN* 16 February 1910.

<sup>31</sup> His ship left Liverpool on 10 February 1910 and arrived in St John on 22 February 1910.

<sup>32</sup> Elizabeth Crook was born in Petersfield on 5 May 1863, thus she was 12 years older than Ernest. At the time of the 1901 census she was living with a family in Winchester and her occupation was that of ‘monthly nurse’. In the minutes of a church meeting held on 29 July 1903 it is recorded that ‘Miss Crook was accepted as a member by transfer from Winchester on a proposition of Mr Bradley seconded by Mr Rickard’. PCC MB (1899–1908) HRO 91A02/B1/3. Thereafter she is mentioned in the minutes on a variety of occasions—serving on committees and visiting prospective church members to assess their Christian credentials.

<sup>33</sup> Keswick Ridge is situated in York County. Their nationalities are shown as English.

<sup>34</sup> The church had oversight of five preaching stations at Scotch Lake, Scotch Settlement, Bear Island, Queensbury and Douglas.

<sup>35</sup> E Grant and R Timmins *A History of Faith and Dedication through 165 years* (Mouth of Keswick NB 1991) 21.

although the number of Sunday School scholars at between 20 and 30 was substantially lower.<sup>36</sup> Ernest remained at Keswick Ridge until 1921, thus his ministry included the challenges arising from the First World War, in which many Canadians fought. In June 1917, he ‘spoke to a large congregation who had come to pay their respect to ... [Arthur Donald Graham] a young man [from Keswick Ridge] who had given his life for the cause of freedom’.<sup>37</sup>

In their history of the church at Keswick Ridge, the authors make few further specific references to Ernest’s ministry beyond the fact that he preached there from 1910 to 1921 and was Sunday School Superintendent in 1914. They do, however, include a photo of Edith, who was appointed a Sunday school teacher in 1916 and served as church organist. Although the membership of the church fell a little during Ernest’s ministry, there was some increase in the number of Sunday school scholars.

On a couple of personal notes, first the family made a trip to England, travelling from Halifax, Nova Scotia to Liverpool in September 1919 and returning in January 1920. It is not known where and who they visited while in England, but it possible that they spent some time in Ashurst Wood and Petersfield. Second, one of Ernest’s final acts as minister at Keswick Ridge was to conduct the marriage service in October 1921 for his daughter Edith and James William Burt, a member of a family with close connections to the church.<sup>38</sup>

Ernest’s interest in the cause at Keswick Ridge was evident in the fact that he researched and wrote a history of the church, which survives in manuscript form and is dated March 1913. His concluding paragraph reads:

Since Mr Sykes Ministry [which came to an end in 1898] others have presided over the business of the Church, and preached the everlasting gospel in neat white edifice on the hill, and some future historian ... will continue the record of Congregationalism on Keswick Ridge.<sup>39</sup>

He, of course, made a valuable contribution to ‘the record of Congregationalism on Keswick Ridge.’

In addition to his local church duties, Ernest played a leading role in the affairs of the Congregational Union of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

<sup>36</sup> Statistics recorded in *CCYB* indicate that 300 persons were ‘under the pastoral care’ of Ernest.

<sup>37</sup> Grant and Timmins 23.

<sup>38</sup> Edith’s father-in-law had been church secretary at the time of Ernest’s appointment as minister. Information from the Canadian Voters List for 1945, indicate that Edith and James had two daughters Nellie and Kathleen.

<sup>39</sup> Manuscript held in the United Church of Canada Maritime Conference Archive, Sackville, New Brunswick.



Acknowledged as a new member at the Annual Meeting in 1910, he served on the Union Committee from 1911. He was chairman for the year 1912 and from 1913, secretary for the next eight years. In 1913, Keswick Ridge hosted the Union's Annual Meeting. In his speech of welcome, Ernest 'referred to the interesting fact that the church ... was of staunch Puritan ancestry'.<sup>40</sup> Some idea of his range of interests can be gained from the titles of the addresses he gave at the Annual Meetings of the Union.<sup>41</sup> At his first in 1910, when he was designated 'Union Preacher', his title was 'The Cross our Justification';<sup>42</sup> in 1911, 'The Church's Life and Work' and 'Effectual Prayer';<sup>43</sup> as retiring Chairman in 1912, 'The Condition of Revival';<sup>44</sup> in 1914, 'The Young and the Stewardship of Life';<sup>45</sup> and in 1915, 'The Lost Christ'.<sup>46</sup> In 1917, he preached on Chapter 10, verse 8, of the Song of Solomon, 'Go thy way forth besides the footsteps of the flock and feed they kids besides the shepherd's tents'. This was described as 'a very timely plea for a faithful adherence to the Gospel amid the changes which must come with the Great War'.<sup>47</sup> It would seem that Ernest's skills as a preacher were well respected.

In 1920, he was appointed superintendent of the Congregational Churches of the Maritime Provinces, a clear indication of the high regard in which he was held by his fellow ministers. In this capacity he represented the Union on all denominational boards, including those of the Canadian Congregational Missionary Society and the Senate of the Congregational College of Canada. Thus by 1921 he appears to have reached what would appear to have been, in the light of future developments, the peak of his ministerial career. This, however, only lasted for a very short period.

## Later Canadian Pastorates

In 1921 Ernest moved from Keswick Ridge to Chebogue in Nova Scotia for what was to be only a few months.<sup>48</sup> The reasons for the move are not known, but an explanation for the short stay is to be found in the *Year Book of the Canadian Congregational Union*:

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<sup>40</sup> CCYB (1913-1914) 145.

<sup>41</sup> It is also of interest that his wife sometimes attended these meetings as Keswick Ridge's delegate.

<sup>42</sup> CCYB (1910-1911) 192

<sup>43</sup> CCYB (1911-1912) 175 and 180.

<sup>44</sup> CCYB (1912-1913) 139.

<sup>45</sup> CCYB (1914-1915) 152.

<sup>46</sup> CCYB (1915-1916) 95.

<sup>47</sup> CCYB (1917-1918) 88-9.

<sup>48</sup> He is listed as Chebogue's minister in CCYB (1921-1922) 127. The Zion Congregational Church in Chebogue had been founded in 1762 and was described as 'the oldest dissenting church in the Dominion, with an authentic written history'. CCYB (1909-1910) 209.

At Chebogue they had a good summer under student Jackson who was followed in the fall [of 1921] by the settlement of Rev. E.J. Thompson who also acted as associate pastor at Yarmouth in the union of our church there with the Methodist Church. The sudden death of Mrs Thompson was a great loss to the church as well as to her husband ... Work at Rockville which the Baptist[s] expected to turn over to our Chebogue church has been reopened by them. As a result of these circumstances Rev Thompson left the field in April [1922] and it is now vacant, though arrangements for its supply are being planned.<sup>49</sup>

Widowed for a second time and perhaps unhappy about the changed situation in Chebogue, once again Ernest seems to have wanted to make a fresh start, this time in another part of Canada.

In the autumn of 1922 he was appointed pastor of the First Congregational Church in Calgary, Alberta. As the *Year Book* for 1923 records: 'Calgary, last fall secured a new pastor, Rev E.J. Thompson, whose services they must appreciate.'<sup>50</sup> In the same source, he is listed as Calgary's minister.<sup>51</sup> By comparison with his previous pastorates, Calgary was very much an urban environment. Although the city was, at the time, only about 50 years old, it was enjoying a boom thanks to the discovery of oil in the vicinity. It also had a large number and variety of churches and therefore the First Congregational Church faced considerable competition. Ernest spent approximately two years in Calgary, leaving in the fall of 1924.<sup>52</sup> Few traces of his life and ministry in Calgary have survived. It is recorded, however, that he was one of the contributors to the Week of Prayer held at the beginning of 1923, speaking on the subject of 'Thy Kingdom Come'.<sup>53</sup>

In 1925, most Congregational churches joined the newly formed United Church of Canada.<sup>54</sup> Ernest became a minister in the United Church and this triggered a move even further west to British Columbia, where he spent nearly

49 *CCYB* (1922) 47. Ernest's wife died in Yarmouth Hospital on 18 December 1921, aged 57. She is buried at Keswick Ridge in the Pickard-Merrithew (also known as Mouth of Keswick) Cemetery.

50 *CCYB* (1923) 51. An advertisement for the Church which appeared in *The Calgary Daily Herald* (hereafter *CDH*) 21 September 1922, include the words: 'All welcome, we invite you to meet the new pastor'.

51 See also *Henderson's Greater Calgary Directory* (1924) 53.

52 At this point records suggest that the Church closed. For example, it is not listed in *Henderson's Greater Calgary Directory* for 1925, and by 1927 church buildings at the same address, 12th Street West and 12th Avenue intersection, were home to the Emmanuel Mission, described as 'Pentecostal in Faith and Doctrine'. See, for example, *CDH* 26 November 1927.

53 *CDH* 6 January 1923.

54 This was formed from a union of the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational churches.

40 years of his life.<sup>55</sup> From this it is reasonable to assume that he adapted well to the way of life in often remote communities. Indeed, he may well have been inspired by the ‘frontier spirit’ and the dramatic landscape.

Drawing upon information from *Walkington’s Directory* and various other sources it is possible to outline his ministerial career in British Columbia. This consisted of a number of relatively short pastorates followed by a longer one prior to retirement.<sup>56</sup> Initially, from 1925 to 1926, he was chairman of the Kootenay Presbytery, and appears to have had a charge of Giscombe United Church.<sup>57</sup> In 1927 he moved to Wilmer-Invermere United Church still in the Kootenay Presbytery for a year and situated in the Windermere Valley. Towards the end of this short pastorate he married for a third time. His wife, Mary Logan, was superintendent of Invermere hospital.

In 1928 he accepted a call to be minister of Chilliwack United Church in the Westminster Presbytery. As reported in the local newspaper, Ernest came ‘highly recommended as a preacher and pastor.’<sup>58</sup> He commenced his pastorate on 1st July 1928 ‘preaching inspiring sermons both morning and evening to large and appreciative audiences, ably supported by the choir.’<sup>59</sup> His themes were those of prayer and worship. Sadly in May 1930 his third wife, who ‘had made many friends’ in Chilliwack died after what was described as ‘a long and painful illness.’<sup>60</sup> A year later, Ernest was elected chairman of the Presbytery of Westminster.<sup>61</sup> Presumably, this was an indication of his standing and reputation within the United Church.

To mark the conclusion of his Chilliwack pastorate in 1932, a garden party was held in his honour. Some idea of the nature of the occasion and the esteem in which he was held is captured in these extracts from the press report:

The naturally beautiful setting was enhanced by Chinese lanterns strung across the lawns between the trees, and serving tables set for refreshments. The veranda served as a platform from which musical numbers and vocal solos were given and where a presentation was made to Mr Thompson on behalf of the congregation of the United church ... A large representative crowd assembled at 7 o’clock.

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<sup>55</sup> Although it is stated in E A Betts *Congregational Churches in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, 1749–1925* (Hantsport NS 1985) 220 that Ernest ‘did not come into Union,’ it is clear from other sources that Ernest did minister in the United Church. See also D Walkington *The Congregational churches of Canada: a statistical and historical summary* (Toronto 1979) 74 and the entry for Ernest in the 1925 and last edition of *CCYB*.

<sup>56</sup> D Walkington *United Church ministers, 1925–1980* (Toronto 1983) 769. However, this incorrectly shows Ernest’s previous denominational affiliation as Presbyterian.

<sup>57</sup> One source indicates that he was pastor at ‘Siscombe’ during this period.

<sup>58</sup> *The Chilliwack Progress* (hereafter *CP*) 24 May 1928.

<sup>59</sup> *CP* 5 July 1928.

<sup>60</sup> *CP* 5 June 1930. She was 48.

<sup>61</sup> *CP* 18 June 1931.

Ministers and their wives from other churches in the town ... were present ... Ladies of the choir had the musical program in hand and it was well carried out, the artists giving well chosen and beautifully rendered numbers ... Interspersed with musical numbers were speeches by various ministers who in most cordial and informal remarks revealed the sincere regard in which Mr Thompson is held among his ministerial associates ... The gift presented to the honoured guest of the evening was a gold watch suitably engraved, also a chain. Replying to the speech of presentation, Mr Thompson made all feel more keenly how much his presence will be missed. He appealed for greater opportunity for leadership among the young and said his keenest regret was in leaving so splendid a group of young people to whom he had become greatly attached during his ministry here.

In the presentation speech given by Mrs Forrest reference had been made to Ernest's 'sympathy, kindly helpfulness' and willingness to follow Christ's example 'in forgetting himself and giving unstintingly of his rich experience, the helpful uplift that sorrowing or suffering ones needed and exemplifying in his life the triumphant faith he has tried to teach by addresses and sermons.'<sup>62</sup>

After Chilliwack, Ernest's next very brief charge was at Michel-Natal United Church in the Kootenay Presbytery. He then moved again and the next six to seven years from 1933 to 1939/40 were spent on Salt Spring Island in the Victoria Presbytery. A press report indicates that following Ernest's induction 'a social reception was held in Ganges House when W.M. Mouat, recording steward, presided and extended a welcome on behalf of the congregation to the new minister.'<sup>63</sup>

At the time of his pastorate there were two United Churches on Salt Spring Island, one in the main settlement of Ganges and the other in the Burgoyne Valley in the south of the island. Known as, 'the little church in the valley', there is a reference to Ernest in a history of Burgoyne United Church:

In June of the same year [1935] Rev. Thompson reported that funds had been raised and repairs made to the Burgoyne Church, which had increased the '*small but regular and sustained*' attendance and interest.'<sup>64</sup>

While in a booklet published to mark the 100th Anniversary of Salt Spring Island United Church, Ernest, and his two predecessors, are associated with 'the organization of activities for the young people—especially that of the Trail

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<sup>62</sup> CP 30 June 1932.

<sup>63</sup> *Vancouver Daily Province* 5 August 1933.

<sup>64</sup> M E Davidson, *The Little Church in the Valley: Burgoyne United Church* (Fulford Harbour BC 1987) 13.

Rangers for young boys.<sup>65</sup> Reference is also made to his concern, along with that of his successors, at ‘the disruptive effects of rapid change in the world on ... [the] island population and ... local church.’<sup>66</sup>

## Conclusion

In 1940, aged 65, Ernest retired but, for a long period, remained on Vancouver Island living in Cobble Hill until 1959 and Victoria from 1960 to 1964. He then moved to Cobourg in Ontario for the last stage of his life. It seems likely that this was prompted by the need to be with his daughter and son-in-law who appear to have lived in the Cobourg area for many years.<sup>67</sup> Poignantly, in a letter written by Ernest in response to a request from the British Columbia Conference of the United Church for information about his life and career, and dated 29 May 1968, he indicates that his brief and not very informative reply was delayed due to his blindness.<sup>68</sup> Ernest died on 29th November 1973, just under three months short of his 99th birthday. He is buried in Cobourg Union Cemetery, which is also the final resting place of his daughter and son-in-law.<sup>69</sup>

Although many details of Ernest’s life and ministry are missing, it is a great pity that his contribution to Congregationalism on both sides of the Atlantic has not been recognised in the form of an official obituary. As revealed in this paper, he was a committed minister and effective preacher and appears to have been a keen advocate of Protestant principles. He was also someone who was well respected amongst his peers. Moreover, not only did he live for nearly 100 years he also ministered in a greater variety of locations than most clergymen and coped with a number of personal tragedies. For these reasons alone, he deserves to be remembered in some way.

It is perhaps fitting to close with some words from Ernest’s final sermon at Petersfield, which was on the theme of ‘Knowing the Divine Love’ and based on Ephesians Chapter 3 verse 8:

If they knew the love of Christ they would know what it was to love one another, they would know what it was to have a great pity, an overwhelming

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<sup>65</sup> *Salt Spring Island United Church 1899–1999 100th Anniversary* (1999) 8.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid* 10.

<sup>67</sup> *Canadian Census Returns* show J W Burtt and Mrs Edith M Burtt as living in Cobourg (Northumberland County) in 1963. Indeed the Canadian Census returns of 1968 show all three at the same address of 453 King Street East.

<sup>68</sup> The United Church of Canada. BC Conference. Bob Stewart Archives. Biographical files, Box 2091, file 57.

<sup>69</sup> See *Ontario Cemetery Finding Aid* at [www.islandnet.com/ocfa/](http://www.islandnet.com/ocfa/) James Burtt, Ernest’s son-in-law died in June 1971 and his daughter on 8 May 1982. She is also shown in the Canadian Voter’s List for 1974.

compassion for the sorrowing and the wounded world. It was Paul's supreme prayer for every one of them and they could help to fulfil the prayer.<sup>70</sup>

It is to be surmised that Ernest sought to live his own life in this spirit.

## Acknowledgements

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*Roger Ottewill*

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<sup>70</sup> HSN 16 February 1910.

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## PORTRAITS OF EMINENT DISSENTERS— RICHARD BAXTER

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**A**mong the items often overlooked in the collections of both the Congregational Memorial Hall Trust and Dr Williams's Library (DWL) in London are some hundreds of portraits. Yet modern researchers will realise how important such images have become (and always were, if formerly often unacknowledged). Indeed the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* is not alone, among recent reference works, in listing at the end of each article the several images of the subject and where they may be found. Attention has been drawn to the need for such portraits to be conserved by well qualified practitioners and as a result those of Isaac Watts (1674–1748) and the Jacobean minister, Nicholas Byfield (1578/9–1622), both in DWL's holdings, are among those receiving skilled attention at present.<sup>1</sup> We might wonder, in passing, whether the portraits of nonconformists and others in the (sometimes recent) past have been cared for as well as they might be, suggesting that the shift towards including some reference to the image in scholarly works is to be welcomed. Such a reference also demands some investigation as to what portraits survive, where they are and who owns them, let alone their condition.

DWL has a portrait of Richard Baxter (1615–91) which once adorned the reading room and has for many years gazed down amiably at readers and staff members from the gallery above the reception desk. Significantly this is the portrait used to illustrate Prof. Neil Keeble's authoritative article on Baxter in the *ODNB* but it is not that which a scholar of an earlier generation, the distinguished Congregational minister and historian, Frederick J Powicke, chose for his *A Life of the Reverend Richard Baxter 1615–1691* (1924).

### Likenesses

Under the heading 'Likenesses', Keeble listed in the *ODNB* the miniature and the oil painting, both kept in the National Portrait Gallery and both noted as after Robert White and dated 1670. In addition he noted a line engraving of 1783 by T Trotter, which is reproduced in J Middleton's *Biographia Evangelica* (1779–1786), copies of which are held in the British Museum and in the National Portrait Gallery. This engraving is itself based on the portrait in oils attributed to John Riley which is at DWL. The last likeness included by Keeble is Robert White's line engraving which is reproduced in Baxter's own work,

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<sup>1</sup> For Watts and Byfield see *ODNB*.

*Life of Faith* (1670), copies of which are noted at the British Museum and the National Portrait Gallery, although one probably is in DWL also.<sup>2</sup>

Keeble's *ODNB* entry did not include any mention of two other portraits of Baxter—one formerly in the collection at Rous Lench Court near Evesham, Worcestershire, and a second held at Virginia Wesleyan University, in the USA. Indeed Neil Keeble has admitted his own frustration, in common with others, at trying to trace certain portraits, in particular that once held at Rous Lench Court. Baxter was an indefatigable correspondent, writer and commentator on national affairs and unsurprisingly several portraits of him are known to have been made and still presumably exist. In consequence in 1924 Powicke included a lengthy note on portraits of Baxter at the beginning of his first lengthy book on his hero.

## Powicke on Baxter's Portraits

In 1924 Powicke decided that the 'least pleasing' portrait of Baxter is that by White which accompanied some later copies of Baxter's early publication *A Call to the Unconverted* (1658). This presents Baxter holding a small clasped Bible in his right hand, with a skull beneath it. According to Powicke this is obviously (except for the skull) an unimpressive rendering of the 'vera effigies', first prefixed to the *Life of Faith*, (1670)—showing Baxter aged 55 years—and was the engraving by White. Powicke characterised this as 'the conventional portrait' which may have answered to its name (*vera*<sup>3</sup>) when it was made. He believed that it brought out the sitter's

sad, sincere eyes, the high Roman nose, the lean cheeks, the firm, thin lips, the ample brow partly concealed by a skull-cap from which the hair falls down, in what was called lovelocks, upon his ministerial white band and black robe.

Powicke then turned to the portrait in the National Portrait Gallery which shows Baxter, wrote Powicke, in the early 1660s (after his marriage in September 1662). He sees this also as showing Baxter rather 'sad and somewhat worn, but very placid'. Here the ejected minister sports a beard which was then merely 'a tuft between the lower lip and the chin'.<sup>4</sup>

As a good nonconformist, Powicke did not overlook the portrait which had been bequeathed to the Baxter (Congregational, now United Reformed) Church, at Kidderminster, by the Rev Benjamin Fawcett (1715–80). This church claimed to have been founded in 1660 and in the 1920s their Baxter

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<sup>2</sup> *ODNB*.

<sup>3</sup> Baxter's literary executor, Matthew Sylvester, retained it for the *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (1696).

<sup>4</sup> Often described as an 'Imperial', since Napoleon III (1856). It appears in the 'vera effigies' and seems never to have been discontinued.



portrait was ‘a treasured possession’, as indeed it remains. In it, noted Powicke, ‘the beard, though short, is full’ and the sitter’s expression is ‘rather anxious as well as sad’ which, he suggested, may perhaps be attributed to ‘the troubled time about 1660’. The image is certainly that of a serious face, with clear eyes and a bony, prominent nose. Powicke maintained that this is certainly ‘a younger face’ than that portrayed in the National Portrait Gallery’s image. Fawcett himself had been educated at Northampton by Philip Doddridge and had ministered at Paul’s Meeting, Taunton, before moving to the Old Meeting, Kidderminster in 1745. He remained there until his death. The present minister was informed that Baxter is almost always depicted with a broken nose, after he was kicked by a horse in a Kidderminster street, and that the portrait at the church shows him before this disfiguring accident.<sup>5</sup>

A better known image is that which has hung in the reception area at DWL, and which is attributed to John Riley (1646–91) who was noted as being an excellent painter of heads, implying a deficiency in his depicting other bodily parts.<sup>6</sup> Powicke believed that this belongs to the years of Baxter’s ministry when he allowed himself no reason for sadness, and at a time when his health seemed ‘comparatively good’. The eyes are clear and thoughtful, gazing out at the watcher, ‘nearer smiling than sadness; the cheeks are not worn; and the beard has not yet been allowed to grow’, although Baxter wears a thin moustache. This portrait was not only used for the *ODNB* but also was included in Geoffrey Nuttall’s study of Baxter in 1965 and by Keeble and Nuttall in their *Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter* (Oxford 1991). In this last instance it was stated that it was one of six portraits presented to Dr Williams’s Trust by the executor of Martha Oakes in 1751. She was the widow of John Oakes who had died in 1746 and who was himself the grandson of an ejected minister (d 1688) of the same name. Oakes had ministered to the Presbyterian church in Hand Alley, Bishopsgate, London and was therefore the immediate predecessor of Daniel Williams as minister there.<sup>7</sup>

A similar portrait, perhaps a copy of this, was given to the Virginia Wesleyan University, Norfolk, Virginia, in 1988, and was held in the Auslew Gallery there, having been declined, when offered for sale, by the National Portrait Gallery in 1974. The donor, W V Morgan, had paid \$300 for it in 1962.

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<sup>5</sup> *Congregational Year Book* (1924) 245. For Fawcett see Surman Index. Thanks are due to Mrs S Green and Rev Andrew Mann-Ray. The National Portrait Gallery lists a portrait which had been owned by Fawcett as a mezzotint of 1763 by J Spilsbury. Dr Tom Charlton reports that Baxter in part 1 of his *Reliquiae Baxterinae* (1696) notes two incidents with horses but does not mention his nose being broken in either. However he does seem to suffer from frequent nose bleeds.

<sup>6</sup> *ODNB*.

<sup>7</sup> N H Keeble and G F Nuttall *Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter* (Oxford 1991) ii. For Oakes see *CR*. For further information see D Piper *Catalogue of Seventeenth Century Portraits in the National Portrait Gallery* (Cambridge 1963) 22.

This portrait derived from the ejected minister and friend of Baxter, Thomas Doolittle (1630/1633–1707) who had been born in Kidderminster and who regarded Baxter as his mentor. After Doolittle's death, the painting up to 1763 was in the possession of Doolittle's grandson, Samuel Sheafe of London, according to an inscription on the back of the portrait.<sup>8</sup>

Powicke's study of the Baxter portraits also led him to find 'a very different portrait', which he characterised as 'an heirloom'<sup>9</sup> among the treasures of the Standerwick family of Broadway, Somerset. This family had been 'faithful Nonconformists since Richard Standerwick laid out money for the 'Puritan Immigrants' of New England in 1632 and later. Richard's grand-nephew, William Standerwick, was said to have been an 'intimate friend' of Baxter, and this gentleman, it was alleged, had commissioned this particular portrait. However Powicke exposed a difficulty with this suggestion. William Standerwick is known to have died in 1716, although the date of his birth is uncertain but, if his birth is estimated to have been about 1640, he was unlikely to have become Baxter's intimate friend before 1660. That would mean that his commission for the portrait must be later than that, although this is, without doubt, a likeness of Baxter as a comparatively young man, much younger than the depiction in Riley's portrait in DWL. Powicke had no answer to this question but it remains intriguing. Later members of the Standerwick family, William (1800–76) and his son John William (d 1911), became Congregational ministers.<sup>10</sup>

## Rous Lench Court

At this stage Powicke began to wonder if an even earlier portrait of Baxter might exist, although he had never heard of one. Yet in 1922 he visited the large country house, Rous Lench Court, near Evesham, in Worcestershire, with his 'old and dear friend' Peter Adam, a Justice of the Peace from Kidderminster. They were there at the invitation of the owner and occupier of Rous Lench Court, Hugh Edmund Chafy, who personally conducted them around, 'that beautiful mansion'; and, in the drawing-room, they were arrested by a 'remarkable' portrait of Baxter manifestly different from the 'conventional'. In fact, this revealed a young minister of perhaps thirty years, 'grave but not sad, and aristocratic to the tips of his long, tapering fingers'. The portrait was by Robert Walker (1595x1610–1658), the artist closely associated with the Commonwealth, whose portrait of Oliver Cromwell (now in the National Gallery) was pronounced by John Evelyn (1620–1706) to be the truest

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8 Thanks to Prof Joyce Howell for help with this. For Doolittle see *CR* and *ODNB*.

9 Reproduced in *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*, vol ii, pp. 418, 419 (1905–6).

10 See Surman Index.

representation of Cromwell which he knew. Walker painted Evelyn but also several army officers including Fairfax, Ireton, Lambert and Fleetwood, as well as his rival artist, William Faithorne, the elder.<sup>11</sup> Although this portrait of Baxter bears the words ‘by Walker’ in the top left hand corner, signed and dated portraits by him are few.<sup>12</sup> Walker lived in London and he may have met Baxter when he visited his friend Sylvanus Taylor in the early summer of 1646. Powicke surmised that at that time Walker was requested to paint the ‘handsome young minister whose fame ... was already beginning to spread abroad’. Chafy allowed Powicke to take a photograph of the painting (not such an easy process in 1922) which was reproduced in his book. In that work Powicke included the following note which Chafy had written, in answer to his enquiries:

The portrait of Baxter which hangs in the drawing-room here was left to me by my father, the Rev Dr Chafy. I fancy he purchased it many years ago and gave a large sum for it. The only thing I know about it is that it was formerly part of the Reynolds Russell collection. Several experts have seen it from time to time, and all agree that it is authentic and original I think you can certainly state [this].

Powicke noted: ‘Dr Chafy was very careful over such matters and would not make statements without proper authority.’<sup>13</sup>

Rous Lench Court was sold by Hugh Edmund Chafy in 1928 to the Burn family who gave it, with a Rolls Royce car, to Thomas Burn as a twenty-first birthday present. He died c 1985 and in 1993 the court was acquired by Peter White, an architect who restored the house and gardens. Since then the property has been sold again. In 1986 Sotheby’s auctioned much of the contents, although the Baxter portrait was not included in the sales catalogues.<sup>14</sup> The exact whereabouts of the Baxter portrait have proved difficult to ascertain, although one report states that it was seen at Marshall Spink’s auction house in 1975 when it was described as a ‘wreck’. If this report is accurate, the portrait may not have survived.<sup>15</sup>

Recovering from illness, Baxter had stayed at Rous Lench Court in 1646, for about ‘a quarter of a year’, at the invitation of Lady Rous and there he wrote most of his *The Saint’s Everlasting Rest* (1650), the first part of which he dedicated to Sir Thomas (1608–76) and Lady Jane Rous (d 1656) whom Baxter regarded

11 *Reliquiae Baxterianae*(1696). For Walker, Evelyn and Faithorne see *ODNB*.

12 *ODNB*. Curiously the image has something of a resemblance to the later historian of Baxter, Geoffrey Nuttall (1911–2005), whom Powicke encouraged.

13 Revd Dr William Kyle Westwood Chafy died in 1916. The Reynolds Russell collection may refer to Sir John Russell Reynolds (1828–96), a physician and son of a Congregational minister. For Russell Reynolds see *ODNB*.

14 Thanks to Andy Rose and Jeffrey Eger for checking the Sotheby’s catalogues.

15 Thanks to Bo Salisbury for this.

as ‘a godly, grave, understanding woman’ who treated him as a friend and not a soldier. Powicke thought it appropriate that this portrait should be in the house from which Baxter journeyed to London in 1646, to which he returned a few weeks later and where he slowly recovered his vigour and strength. From Rous Lench Court he went to Kidderminster for his second ministry, and his letters indicate that his friendship with the Rous family continued and that he remained welcome there. Oliver Cromwell is said to have dined and stayed at Rous Lench Court on the eve of the battle of Worcester in 1651 and his portrait hung next to that of Baxter in the house.<sup>16</sup>

## Other Baxter Portraits

Yet other Baxter portraits, not recorded by Powicke, exist or existed around the country. Aberdeen University has a fine image in its museum collection which image was probably acquired in the aftermath of the Jacobite uprising of 1715. The portrait may have been part of a programme of conformity with the Hanoverian regime by both King’s College and Marischal College at that time. This painting by Charles Whyt of Forbes, Aberdeenshire, shows Baxter with long dark hair, sporting a moustache and a wispy beard. He is wearing clerical robes and a black skull cap edged with lace. Characteristically he holds a book in his right hand.<sup>17</sup>

In addition, the Almonry Museum, Evesham has a portrait of a careworn Baxter, again in clerical attire with dark hair, beard and moustache. I had wondered if this might be Walker’s portrait from Rous Lench Court but, having compared the images, it is clearly different. A dour looking Baxter looks to his right where in the picture is found his name in Latin, his age 75 years, and the year of his death 1691. Indeed the Latin inscription may have been added to the already existing portrait after his death.<sup>18</sup>

Westminster College, Cambridge is not alone in having a copy of another Baxter portrait in its collection. This copy was made by John Peddie (d. 1925), himself a faithful Presbyterian, about 1918 from a painting, the Roaf portrait by an unknown artist, once in the possession of Lancashire Independent College (hereafter LIC), Manchester.<sup>19</sup> This Baxter portrait was given to LIC by William Roaf, the minister of St Paul’s Congregational Church, Wigan. It was small in size and bore the inscription ‘Ricardus Baxter aetatis 75: 1690’. Roaf explained that it had been in the possession of Joseph Williams of Kidderminster

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<sup>16</sup> N H Keeble and G F Nuttall *Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter* (Oxford 1991) vol I pp 42, 53, *Country Life* 26 January 2012. For the Rous Family see ODNB.

<sup>17</sup> Thanks to Hannah Clarke, curatorial assistant of the University Museums, of the University of Aberdeen.

<sup>18</sup> Thanks to members of the museum staff.

<sup>19</sup> Thanks to Helen Weller, the archivist of Westminster College, for help with this.

who thought it to be ‘an original’.<sup>20</sup> Elaine Kaye, the historian of Northern College and its predecessors, including LIC, recorded Baxter’s portrait on the college walls in the 1840s but noted that, at the sale of Northern College’s building in Whalley Range in 1985, sadly ‘most of the portraits inherited from each of the colleges’ which formed Northern ‘had already been thoughtlessly disposed of in the 1970s’.<sup>21</sup>

## A Register of Portraits?

Not all nonconformists left or inspired as many portraits as Richard Baxter. Yet the question remains, is it time to ask for a register of nonconformist portraits, including those of Baxter? Such a register might note a portrait’s location, the artist, where known, and its provenance. This could be kept at Dr Williams’s Library but a similar (or as much as possible an identical) register could be held at John Rylands Library, Manchester, and in university libraries, regional centres and archive offices, with some necessary exchange of information between them. Such a register would be a great boon to scholars and general enquirers and is highly desirable.

Powicke closed his study of the portraits with this physical description of Baxter in old age given by his literary executor, Matthew Sylvester, in the funeral sermon, *Elisha’s Cry after Elijah’s God*, included in Baxter’s posthumously published autobiography, *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (1696).

His Person was tall and slender, and stooped much; his Countenance Compos’d and Grave, somewhat inclining to Smile. He had a piercing eye, a very Articulate Speech, and his Department rather Plain than Complemental. He had a great Command over his Thoughts.<sup>22</sup>

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*Alan Argent*

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<sup>20</sup> *Catalogue of the Portraits of Lancashire Independent College* p 5—pub with the *Annual Report of Lancashire Independent College* (1860). For Roaf see B Nightingale *The Story of the Lancashire Congregational Union 1806–1906* (Manchester 1907) 145–147. Thanks to Chris Damp.

<sup>21</sup> E Kaye *For the Work of Ministry. Northern College and its Predecessors* (Edinburgh 1999) 75–6, 235–6. One commentator said that the haste to dispose of unwanted items led to some artefacts almost being given away to dealers who may have included a passing ‘rag and bone man’.

<sup>22</sup> M Sylvester *Elisha’s Cry* p 16 included in *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (1696).

## REVIEWS

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***Martin Luther: Catholic Dissident.* By Peter Stanford. Hodder & Stoughton 2017. Pp xiv + 434. Paperback £10.99. ISBN 978-1-473-62167-1**

This work by the former editor of the *Catholic Herald* and a faithful Roman Catholic himself is the result of a conversation with the BBC Radio broadcaster, Roger Bolton, who told Stanford as a Catholic to write about Luther. This is a journalist's book, written for a popular audience, and offers a sympathetic approach to the great German reformer.

Stanford rightly sees Luther as protesting against the corruptions and abuses of the late medieval Church. That is he believes a 'reborn Luther' would respond well to Catholicism in 2018 because it echoes not only his practical reforms but his own words too. In support of this Stanford states that he receives bread and wine at his local Catholic church in Norfolk from a married priest (his priest is a former Anglican given this dispensation when he converted). He also believes that the Second Vatican Council introduced all sorts of reform which Luther would have approved.

Stanford clearly does like Luther whom he depicts as courageous and selfless in confronting the bishops, theologians, popes and princes of his day. He knew that this would probably cost him his life and he was prepared to do this alone and with a passionate intensity. What's more, writes Stanford, 'most remarkable of all: not only did he survive, but he triumphed, and we are all the better off because of him. What's not to like about that?'

This is an easy read. Stanford's honesty shines through but he does not really tackle the considerable doctrinal differences between Luther and the Lutherans and the Roman Catholic Church of the early sixteenth century. These were, after all, the main reasons why Protestantism was not reconciled with Rome then and, despite all the friendliness and goodwill at local and official levels, has not yet been reconciled.

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Brian Middleton

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***Reformations: The Early Modern World, 1450–1650.* By Carlos M N Eire. Yale University Press, 2016. Pp xx + 893. Hardback £30. ISBN 978-0-300-11192-7**

This is a very substantial work of almost 900 pages, coming from the T L Riggs professor of history and religious studies at Yale University. For such a hefty hardback, at £30 it is not overpriced and is certainly a good and an authoritative

read. Carlos Eire writes well and easily convinces the reader to put his/her trust in this guide as he leads the reader through the labyrinthine tussles of the early modern world.

He steers his path from the 'obscure monk' Martin Luther and his 'simple act of defiance' which set off a chain reaction, to everyone's surprise, to the resulting 'conflagration of epic proportions'. Eire's point is that not only has nothing been the same since that defiance of 1517 which he terms 'an understatement' but that the reaction to that defiance 'still continues to shape our world today and to define who we are in the West'. Eire makes the assumption that no Westerner can ever know himself/herself without 'first understanding this crucial turning point' in history.

This is principally a narrative account of the 'Reformations'—Protestant, and Roman Catholic (not ignoring the radical reformation)—which emerged in the two centuries 1450 to 1650. As such he does not concentrate on merely one aspect of the faith divisions, devoting six chapters to the period 1450 to 1510, thus setting the scene and treating with religion and dissent in the late middle ages. He tackles Italian humanism and humanism beyond Italy and the forerunners of the Catholic Reformation. In his part two he deals with Protestants in seven chapters, with three of them given to Luther himself, but including Switzerland, Calvin and also the countries of the British Isles. A further six chapters in part three examine Catholics from 1564 onwards, touching on Catholic reforms, the Society of Jesus and missions to the New World and to the East Indies. He devotes eight chapters in part four to the consequences of the reformations in the first half of the seventeenth century. Finally his epilogue offers an assessment of the Reformations.

If you want one weighty book to inform you of the events of this turmoil and its effects, this is it. With a bibliography of 73 pages, ample illustrations, maps and an extensive index, this work wears its learning lightly but it should not be underestimated. I unhesitatingly recommend it.

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*Sheila Blake*

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***Heretics and Believers: A History of the English Reformation.* By Peter Marshall. Yale University Press, 2017. Pp xix + 652. Paperback £16.99. ISBN 978-0-300-23458-9**

Suitably adorned on the cover with the deceptively familiar picture of Sir Thomas More, his father, his household and his descendants (by Rowland Lockey, after Hans Holbein the younger), this work relates the well-known story of the English Reformation. However Peter Marshall, professor of history at Warwick University and a Reformation specialist, does a good job of incorporating the findings of recent scholarship into his text, especially those changes initiated by Henry VIII and his officials.

In brief Marshall here offers, in an easily digestible form, his ‘new look’ on the events and characters of the Reformation in England. His aim is to tell ‘the story of what happened to English people, of all sorts and conditions, in the course of a long and traumatic national quarrel about the correct ways to worship God’. He does so, in this lengthy account, as far as possible, chronologically and he sets out to explain why the English Reformation mattered then and, more controversially, ‘why it continues to matter now’. He arranges his material into four parts, firstly Reformations before Reformation (dealing with the stirrings of an English Catholic reformation, admirers of Erasmus, Lollardy), secondly Separations (Henry VIII’s hope for unity fractured unity beyond repair), thirdly New Christianities (diversity, after Henry) and fourthly Unattainable Prizes (Elizabeth’s religious settlement and the country).

Marshall makes clear that the ‘most unhelpful thing’ to say about the English Reformation is that it was an ‘Act of State’, imposed upon the people by successive governments, although he concedes that this ‘traditional assessment’ has its merits. Yet he argues that imposing the Reformation involved the State’s ‘empowering ordinary English people to think and reflect—and sometimes to refuse and resist’. The Tudor monarchs sought a national uniformity in religion but the Reformation which they initiated resulted not in uniformity but in diversity of belief and practice. Of course, national uniformity, however much desired by monarchs and prelates, had never in truth existed. But the Reformation meant that increasingly ‘pluralism and division’ were the norm, although paradoxically the pluralization of English religion occurred in the context of ‘consistent official intolerance’ of dissent. Indeed putting dissidents to death simply created martyrs whose sufferings seemed to confirm the rightness of their views.

Although the English people instinctively expected to obey their rulers the Reformation stretched that obedience to breaking point. Divergence surfaced when Catholics found themselves forced to make choices as a result of Reformation politics. At the opposite end of the spectrum, Anabaptists and radicals too found their conscientious views consistently rejected and were themselves persecuted. In the last part of his book, Marshall explores the emergence and growth of a godly, Puritan movement whose defenders saw their calling to assume responsibility for reformation and renewal, thus removing it from ‘a delinquent and ineffective state’.

In 2018 at a time when the anniversary of the Reformation has produced commemorations, learned tomes and works for the general reader galore, Marshall succeeds in giving a fresh, lively and accessible reinterpretation of a tortuously complex sequence of strategies and proceedings. Here is the tale of the English Reformation set out in clear and balanced prose.



***George Whitefield: Life, Context and Legacy.* Edited by Geordan Hammond and David Ceri Jones. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2016. Pp xiii + 329. Hardback £65. ISBN 978-0-19-874707-9**

The sixteen papers collected here are the work of British and American scholars—a mix of theologians, historians and English literature specialists. The volume aims to provide assessments of Whitefield's life and continuing legacy within a broad spectrum of themes and contexts which implies, of course, that the contributors may sit uncomfortably together and may disagree. The editors do not claim to have covered every possible topic in this book but rather hope to offer a balance between subjects of known importance and the less familiar. Laudably they believe that the collection presents 'new and creative research'.

Indeed the first essay, by Boyd Schlenther, on the 'tumultuous' personal life of George Whitefield (1714–70) reveals a complex and controversial character, beatified by some later devotees who stress his preaching and whitewash his faults. He was prickly and irritable, driving servants to tears and frequently descending into tears himself. Mark Olson, writing on Whitefield's conversion in 1735 and his early theology, traces his views on conversion, his development as a Methodist in Oxford and his acceptance of deep Calvinistic convictions in 1739/40. William Gibson, a specialist on preaching throughout the last three centuries, examines Whitefield's relation to the Church of England and especially the response of bishops and clergy to the great preacher. Did his dismissal of their anxieties lead to the failure of his desire to promote evangelicalism within the Church of England? Frank Lambert explores Whitefield and the Enlightenment and Carla Gardina Pestana turns to Whitefield and Empire, recalling that Whitefield gave much of his life to transatlantic travels and to the New World.

Three chapters deal with the key subject of revival. Geordan Hammond addresses Whitefield's friendship with John Wesley and the tensions that emerged between them. Kenneth Minkema, an authority on Jonathan Edwards, analyses Whitefield's developing contacts with Edwards, moving from caution to warm approval and consensus between these 'two fountainheads of modern evangelicalism'. Keith Edward Beebe and David Ceri Jones offer an assessment of Whitefield's influence on evangelicalism in Wales, Scotland and Ireland, depicting him more as a figurehead than an active presence among the Celts.

Brett McInelly tackles Whitefield's engagement with his critics in writing while Braxton Boren enters new territory, claiming that computer acoustic simulation suggests that Whitefield's voice might have been heard by 20,000 listeners in less than favourable circumstances but by a staggering 50,000 in ideal conditions. The literary scholar, Emma Salgard Cunha, by closely examining the sermon 'Abraham's Offering up his Son Isaac', finds parallels between Whitefield's preaching, and his ability to move the affections of his hearers, with the affectionate response upon the reader of contemporary verse and oratory.

Whitefield was the ‘emotive orator’, expecting his audience not to think but to feel and weep. Stephen Berry, who has published elsewhere on religion and the sea turns here to Whitefield’s thirteen transatlantic crossings and the influence of the voyage and the ship on his thought.

Peter Choi investigates the failed attempt of the older Whitefield to secure a royal charter which would have enabled him to convert his orphanage into Bethesda College. Georgia had long occupied a central place in his ministry and he sought to make a lasting cultural contribution. Mark Noll, the distinguished author of many works, especially on the eighteenth century, returns here to ‘Whitefield, Hymnody, and Evangelical Spirituality’. He shows that hymns were important in Whitefield’s rhetoric, that he stressed their Christological focus, and that hymns played a major role in his ministry.

The penultimate chapter deals with Whitefield’s reception in England 1770–1839, in which Isabel Rivers discusses the several ways in which evangelicals within the Church of England and dissent understood him. Finally Andrew Atherstone examines the various commemorations of Whitefield made in the USA and Britain in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

This is a scholarly work and will be essential reading for Whitefield’s many admirers. He remains a controversial figure whose name and fame have been employed by promoters of different parties—charismatic, reformed, ‘power evangelists’ among them. The diverse essays in this volume will better enable the reader to make his/her own assessment.

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Alan Argent

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***The Handmaid’s Tale: Ministry, Gender and Power.* By Fleur Houston. The Congregational Lecture 2017. The Congregational Memorial Hall Trust (1978) Ltd, 2017. Pp 32. £3.00. ISSN 0963-181X**

September 2017 saw the centenary of the ordination of Constance Todd whose ministry as Constance Coltman was marked in many ways during the year. This lecture by Fleur Houston makes a scholarly contribution to the celebration of Constance’s life and work. At the end of the lecture, reference is made to Luke 1 v. 48 where, in the King James Bible, Mary says that God has ‘regarded the low estate of his handmaiden’ but perhaps the lecture’s title is also meant to remind us of Margaret Attwood’s novel *The Handmaid’s Tale* which was televised as a drama series in 2017. The novel portrays women in a subservient, powerless role, but Fleur Houston uses Constance Coltman as a case study of a woman who is God’s ‘handmaid’ and yet a woman of power.

This lecture is well researched with full footnotes, testifying to the amount of study involved. There are references to various appropriate books and also comments made by individuals who knew Constance. Having read the text of the lecture you are left with a picture of an intellectually curious woman who

was influenced both by her parents and also by notable women of the period. Her husband, Claud, is quoted as saying that Constance had been 'a better wife and mother' because she had been a 'minister of the gospel'. Although Constance was both a suffragist and a pacifist, Fleur Houston presents her as a woman whose underlying motivation seems to have been her awareness of a call from God to become a minister despite any difficulties involved. In Houston's words 'the rootedness of ministers in the service of God is empowering' and this remains true whether the minister is male or female.

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*M Lesley Dean*

***Chapels of England: Buildings of Protestant Nonconformity.* By Christopher Wakeling. Historic England, Swindon, 2017. Pp vii + 312. Hardback £50 (see News and Views page for special offer). ISBN 978-1-84802-032-0**

This work concentrates on the buildings of the various Protestant nonconformist denominations outside the Church of England and extends from the seventeenth century to the present day. It also aims to provide a history of nonconformist architecture, drawing examples from existing buildings in almost every region of England. Here are found small wayside chapels as well as grand edifices in the towns. Wakeling examines not only the exteriors of buildings but pays attention to the interiors as well. Throughout photographs occupy a central role, supplanting prose impressively. Although many chapels have been closed, sold and or destroyed in the last fifty years, some twenty thousand nonconformist meeting houses remain in use in England. As a result the buildings included in this book are hardly representative. Nevertheless Wakeling has attempted to include the most influential nonconformist buildings and to provide examples of the most common types. However he confesses that the chosen chapels may not be the best of their kind and he has even omitted some of his own favourites.

He has adopted a chronological sequence with chapters covering places of worship before 1689, the age of toleration, enthusiasm and enlightenment, the age of Methodism, growth and renewal 1820–50, pluralism 1859–90, the nonconformist heyday? 1890–1914, and finally chapels since 1914.

He has depended heavily on two works which may be familiar to *CHS Magazine* readers. Christopher Stell's inventories of chapels and meeting houses and David Butler's *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain* are both indispensable. Yet, as Wakeling states, there is still much to learn and one must hope that other researchers will emerge to pursue further studies while so many chapels yet survive. Congregationalists will be pleased to find here: Old Meeting, Norwich, 1693; Bullhouse Chapel near Penistone, South Yorkshire, 1692; Walpole Chapel, Suffolk, 1689; Oulton Independent Chapel, Norfolk, 1731; Claremont Chapel, Pentonville Road, 1818–19 (now the Crafts Council); and Westminster

Chapel, 1863–65. As well as these joys, we find the Ancient Chapel of Toxteth, Liverpool, 1603–25; Bramhope Chapel, Yorkshire, c1650; The Friends Meeting Houses in Hertford, 1670 and at Brigflatts, near Sedbergh, 1675; The Old Baptist Chapel, Tewkesbury, 1670; The Presbyterian (now Unitarian) Chapel, Evesham, 1737; and Mary Street Baptist (now Unitarian) Chapel, Taunton, c1721. In his last chapter Wakeling looks at Wesley's New Room, Bristol, as restored 1929–30; Sutton Baptist Church, Surrey, 1934; Oxted Congregational (now United Reformed) Church, 1934–5; The Free Church, Letchworth, 1923; The Unitarian Church, Plymouth, 1958, among others.

This is, as you might expect, a handsomely illustrated book and Historic England are to be congratulated for its publication and appearance. Wakeling knows his stuff and how to ignite his readers' passion. After reading this, I am fired up to take three months off and set out on a journey to explore these buildings and, perhaps, discover others of similar worth. Perhaps others, inspired by Wakeling, will do the same. Needless to say, I have greatly enjoyed this work and I suspect that CHS members will enjoy it too.

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*Alan Argent*

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