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**THE
CONGREGATIONAL
HISTORY
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MAGAZINE**

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EDITORIAL

This issue of the *CHS Magazine* has something of an Anglo-American flavour, with an article on the building of the John Robinson Memorial Church at Gainsborough in Lincolnshire and its importance for Anglo-American relations. This is by Erik Goldstein who is Professor of International Relations and History at Boston University, Massachusetts and a Fellow of the Royal History Society. We welcome him to our pages. In addition we have Meegan Griffin exploring the Lyman Beecher Lectures 1872–1914 which also takes us into the trans-Atlantic world.

Our third article continues our investigations into the Bible Women's movement, concentrating this time on Aberdeen, guided there by Gordon Campbell. Finally we turn to more recent events and to that exceptional scholar whose life and work have influenced so many of our readers, Geoffrey Nuttall, who was rightly called, some years before his death, the doyen of modern Congregational historians.

I hope that you like the mix of articles and should be glad to have your responses to them.

NEWS AND VIEWS

Friends of Dr Williams's Library Lecture

The Friends' Annual General Meeting and annual lecture is on **Thursday 17 October, 2019**. The lecturer is **Alexandra Walsham**, Professor of Modern History at the University of Cambridge and Fellow of Trinity College. She has specialised on the religious and cultural history of early modern Britain. Her title is **'Archives of Dissent: Family, Memory and the English Nonconformist Tradition'**. Family archives reveal the relationship between dissenting minorities and record-keeping in the period from the Restoration to the mid-eighteenth century, offering insights into poignant and touching aspects of individual lives and raising questions about why private documentation became part of the public history of English Dissent. The lecture will take place from **5.30pm–7.00pm at St. Pancras Church**, Euston Road, London, NW1 2BA. If you are planning to attend please email either honsecfdwl@dw.ac.uk or conference@dw.ac.uk to book. It is also possible to ring the library on 020 7387 3727.

The Congregational Lecture

This is to occur on Thursday **21st November 2019** at Lumen United Reformed Church, 88 Tavistock Place, London, WC1H 9RS with the annual general meeting at 4 pm, the tea at 5 pm, and the lecture at 5.30 pm. The two lecturers will be Prof. Jeanne Shami and Dr Anne James of Regina University, Saskatchewan, Canada. They are compiling a database of sermons in English from c.1480 to c.1720 and have entitled their lecture **Remembering the Dead: The Role of Manuscript Sermons & Sermon Notes in Researching Early Modern Memorial Practices**. Their researches have resulted in a curiously exciting archive which has emerged from explorations in libraries and record offices in Canada, the USA, Britain, Ireland and elsewhere. They have collaborated on a project entitled *The Gateway to Early Modern Manuscript Sermons (GEMMS)* which aims to create an open-access, comprehensive, fully searchable, online bibliographic database of early modern sermon manuscripts from the British Isles and North America. The database is a finding aid for all types of manuscripts related to sermons, including complete sermons, sermon notes and reports of sermons, held in numerous repositories in the UK, Ireland, the USA and Canada. They have spent considerable time researching the collection in the Congregational Library. Please come. You will not be disappointed.

CORRESPONDENCE

Barry Osborne has submitted what he sees as a corrective to habits which he has detected creeping into Congregational churches. What do others think? He has entitled his piece

Pastors or Priests?

I have been troubled by a tendency I have observed in some Congregational churches to adopt certain practices, common in Catholic and Anglican churches, but alien to Congregational theology and practice. Some of these are regularly emulated by the Methodist and United Reformed Churches, but why do they then find their way into our churches? It seems to me that either it is a lack of understanding or a loss of confidence.

Of course, some will argue that our churches are independent, so we should be free to adopt whatever practices we like. But care is needed if we are to avoid inadvertently denying what it really means to be Congregational, a tradition formed from careful theological reflection and the scriptures. In particular, I am particularly concerned about the way in which our ministers are sometimes seen to act in a priestly way.

Take for example, how we preside at communion. In Catholic and some Anglican churches that believe in transubstantiation (that the bread and wine *in reality* become the body and blood of Christ), the officiants hold up the bread and afterwards the wine and say, 'this is my body', and 'this is my blood'. These acts mark the moments of consecration and in catholic traditions usually a bell is rung to signify the 'real presence of Christ' in the elements. But it is my understanding that most Reformed and Congregational theologians would affirm communion as a memorial act and as symbolic. Nothing magical happens to the bread and wine.

Similarly, when serving bread and wine, care should be taken with what is said. In our tradition we do not believe that we are really eating the body of Jesus or drinking his blood, so to use the words 'the body of Christ' and 'the blood of Christ' is surely inappropriate. If it is symbolic only something like, 'Eat in remembrance ... drink in remembrance ...' is far better.

Of course, in the priestly traditions, only an episcopally ordained priest may preside at eucharist. In some Free Church traditions, only an ordained minister may preside. But in our tradition, anyone duly authorised by the church meeting may preside. So, we should be happy for a lay preacher to preside. It is not a bad idea for the minister to step aside sometimes and allow someone else to preside so that we enact our beliefs in being non-priestly.

In Roman Catholic and some Anglican churches (and some others) genuflecting or quickly dropping to one knee is practised as a sign of respect for the 'real presence of Christ' in the consecrated elements kept in the container and known as the reserved sacraments. Some may also see it as a gesture of reverence to Christ as shown hanging on a crucifix. Clearly this is unlikely to be common practice in our churches, but it is increasingly common that the bearers and director at a funeral service will do it. I had to make a point of asking the undertakers not to genuflect towards a bare wall. Often, they do not know why they genuflect, but think it is what should be done. I make a point of asking the funeral directors not to do this when using our premises.

There are two other priestly acts that have crept into some Congregational churches. The first of these is the pronouncement of absolution following confession during Communion. Within the Catholic and Anglican traditions, only an episcopally ordained priest may announce an absolution, identifying those being absolved as 'you'. The liturgy for lay readers uses the inclusive word 'us' in its place. To avoid acting like priests, a prayer of common thanksgiving for the grace and mercy of God would be more appropriate, or simply quoting 1 John 1:9.

The other priestly act is the pronouncement of the benediction or blessing at the close of a service. In the catholic traditions, the priest blesses the people, and the words used support that. In Anglican traditions where the service has been

conducted by a curate not yet priested, or a lay reader, they are not allowed to use that form of blessing. In other words, in the priestly traditions, only a priest may pronounce a blessing. So, what is appropriate in a Congregational tradition that has pastors and not priests? In many UK nonconformist churches it is quite common that everyone in the congregation blesses everyone else using an adapted form of the Pauline prayer recorded in 2 Corinthians 13:14 *'May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and forever'*. Good words to end a service. Just avoid using 'you'!

Priestly practices all too easily creep into what we say and do on all kinds of occasions, including baptisms. The only priesthoods we believe in are the continuing ministry of Jesus in the heavenlies and the priesthood of all believers. So, please, let us use inclusive language that does not imply the minister as something distinct from the other members of the congregation. Let us understand and apply our Congregational practices. They are not inferior but communicate the gospel and Kingdom of God principles.

In addition our indefatigable correspondent Roger Ottewill writes:—

I was intrigued that in the last issue of the *CHS Mag* were references to both Avenue St Andrew's URC (formerly Avenue Congregational Church) in Southampton and Clarendon Park Congregational Church in Leicester. The Southampton church is close to my home and, in response to a request from the minister for background information in support of the efforts to raise funds for the major renovation project, I provided a report of its opening in 1898 from the *Southampton Times*. I also read, with interest, Richard Cleaves' poignant article, explaining his links with the Leicester church and how a letter from P T Forsyth accepting the call to be Clarendon Park's first minister 'had shaped [his] own understanding of ministry'. Prompted by Clyde Binfield, I had highlighted some similarities and differences between these two churches in an article, 'The Avenue Quartet: Exemplars of Edwardian Congregationalism', which was published in *The Journal of the URC History Society* in 2014. This referred to their locations in what were newly developed, salubrious, middle class suburbs; 'the style' and size of each place of worship, 'designed by distinguished architects, James Cubitt and James Tait respectively'; and the composition of their building committees which included 'leading figures from the business communities and political élites of Southampton and Leicester'. However, there were differences with respect to their choice of first minister. As Richard Cleaves makes clear, Forsyth already had considerable experience when he was called to Clarendon Park. By contrast, Avenue's first minister, Arthur Davis Martin, had just completed his training at Hackney College, with members being 'swayed by his obvious potential as opposed to a proven record in preaching and pastoral

ministries'. That said, Martin's father was a minister, 'so as a son of the manse he would have been well aware of the demands involved'. Aged twenty-five when appointed, Martin was fifteen years younger than Forsyth when he went to Clarendon Park in 1886.

No less welcome is the endorsement of our long time CHS member, Neil Chappell who states appreciatively:—

With regards to the *Congregational History Society Magazine*, I have to say what a great publication it is—easy to get to grips with, well laid out, extensive articles and reviews and news. It is a highly specialised magazine and therefore its appeal is somewhat limited. But I imagine that the subscribers are very happy with their lot. I am unsure how you might grow the readership. Perhaps marketing could be better. The Society website is brief and to the point! But it tells you the needed info.

BUILDING THE ANGLO-AMERICAN RELATIONSHIP—THE JOHN ROBINSON MEMORIAL CHURCH, GAINSBOROUGH, LINCOLNSHIRE¹

In June 1896 the first United States ambassador to Britain travelled to Gainsborough, in Lincolnshire, to lay the cornerstone of a new Congregational church. This new house of worship was intended as a memorial to John Robinson, the separatist theologian who had died in self-imposed exile in the Netherlands almost 270 years before and had never set foot in America. It was such an unusual occasion that it attracted trans-Atlantic reporting. For the ambassador it was a useful exercise in public diplomacy, intended to symbolize the common heritage and values of the two countries. The timing was important, and marked in many ways the beginning of a subtle shift in British-American relations. In 1895 the two countries had almost come to blows, over a border dispute between American supported Venezuela and the British colony of Guiana. There had long been concern in many quarters that the rising United States and the established British Empire would inevitably come into conflict. Working to avert such a calamity, an ever growing sub-diplomatic network of individuals and groups had been working towards better relations. It was an effort the new American ambassador sought to encourage. One tool for symbolizing their commonalities were shared commemorations, in which the Congregational churches, in both countries, heartily participated.

Among those who sought ways to avoid armed conflict was a movement for the adoption of arbitration treaties. Given the similarities in Anglo-American legal traditions, it was relatively easy to establish common ground on how this might be accomplished, by applying rules of good governance rather than armed force to settle disputes. The Congregational churches were at the forefront of those advocating this approach, growing out of their own traditions of governance. The trans-Atlantic link in this tradition was often symbolized by the Pilgrims, who established the Plymouth colony, governed from its beginning by the self-agreed, not imposed, rule of law, embodied in the *Mayflower Compact*. John Robinson, whose early career had roots in Gainsborough had been the

¹ The author would like to thank for their assistance the staffs of The Congregational Library, Boston; The Congregational Library, London; and Dr Williams's Library for their unfailing goodwill and assistance, and in particular Dr David Wykes, director of Dr Williams's Library, and David Powell of the Congregational Library, London. A special debt of gratitude is due to the trustees of Dr Williams's Library for an honorary visiting fellowship during 2018. The author is likewise grateful to Paul Howitt-Cowan of Gainsborough for information on the local Church of England.

leader of the group that came to be known as the Pilgrims, provided a trans-Atlantic symbolic link. For the local Congregational pastor at Gainsborough Robinson's memory was a useful aid to raising funds for a much-needed new building. For the wider Congregational community it provided an opportunity to signal its contribution to the Anglo-American world, and for a wider trans-Atlantic community it symbolized shared values.

The building of the John Robinson Memorial Church was the result of an unlikely convergence of local churchgoer needs, growing national and international Congregational activity, and Great Power politics.

The first independent church in Gainsborough had been a Presbyterian Chapel in Ratton Row (later called Beaumont St.), which eventually became Unitarian. In 1773 another group of Independents applied for a Bishop's License to worship in a room in the Old Hall, and in 1776 a Countess of Huntingdon Chapel was licensed. In 1797 the Ebenezer Chapel was built at Morton, the memorial stone of which was later placed in the church parlour of the John Robinson Church. In 1815 this congregation became independent of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion, and in 1821 a new chapel was opened in Caskgate Street.²

As the population of Gainsborough grew Caskgate Congregational Church reached its seating capacity. In late 1891 it called to its pulpit an energetic new minister, Rev Hugh S Griffiths, born at Whitchurch in south Wales, on the outskirts of Cardiff, the son of a Baptist minister. Griffiths had studied for the ministry at the Academy, Pontypridd, and Western College, Plymouth, before occupying pulpits at Congregational churches in Bangor and then Bollington in Cheshire.³ The Caskgate Church had enjoyed little continuous leadership since 1869, having had eight ministers. Griffiths found a church that, soon after he arrived, had a membership of 130, with Sunday evening services numbering 300–400, with much of the attenders being working class. Although there was a group of 130 Sunday scholars, Griffiths noted, 'The smallness and want of ventilation of the rooms were great drawbacks.'⁴ It was 'an ill-placed and

2 C Anwyl *A Brief Record of the Congregational Church assembling at Gainsborough* (1967).

3 Hugh Steele Griffiths (1856–1941). Born at Whitchurch, educated at the Academy, Pontypridd, and Western College, Plymouth, where in his second year he was awarded the Rooker scholarship. He was pastor at Bangor 1882–86; Bollington 1886–91; Gainsborough 1891–1902; special missionary, South Wales Union 1902–06; Mansfield 1906–10; Bethel, Bury 1910–18; Lowther St, Kendal 1921–27. *Congregational Year Book* (1943) 429.

Griffiths settled at Bollington, 26 Dec 1886, where the great event of his time was the purchase of an organ. Financial difficulties led in 1890 to a proposal to reduce his stipend from £150 to £90. Not surprisingly in 1891 he moved to Gainsborough. J E Farrar *Bollington Congregational Church: A brief history* (Macclesfield 1949).

4 Minutes of meeting 3 Feb 1893. Minute Book of the John Robinson Memorial Committee, London, Congregational Library, London (hereafter JRMC).

inconvenient building'.⁵ In Griffiths view 'newcomers to the town would not attend'.⁶ The Gainsborough congregation would clearly benefit from better facilities, but would need external support to pay for it.

Griffiths' arrival at Gainsborough coincided with English Congregationalism beginning to develop international links. In July 1891 the first International Congregational Council was convened in London, with representatives from around the world, including the United States. Of this first oecumenical meeting of the denomination *The Christian World*, a widely read, Congregational edited, weekly observed, 'For the first time the descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers, the empire builders of the United States, fraternise with the sons of the Puritans who remained at home to fight the battle of English freedom with Cromwell and Hampden'.⁷ After the Council concluded its work, there was a pilgrimage by the American delegates to the little village of Scrooby, on the border of Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire. There John Robinson had first gathered his little society of independents in a room over the stable of the Manor House. The American group went on to Leiden to place a plaque in memory of Robinson on the church near where he lived in the last years of his life, and beneath which he lies buried.⁸ Robinson was generally seen as the guiding light of the Pilgrims who would sail in the *Mayflower* to found the Plymouth colony. Robinson planned to follow them, but died before he could do so.

The attention paid to Robinson's memory by the American visitors may well have given Griffiths inspiration, as at the time it was generally thought that Robinson had been born in Gainsborough (it was only later determined that he had been born at Sturton, Nottinghamshire), although Gainsborough had been ignored in the 1891 American visitation to the area. Although Robinson never set foot in America, except spiritually, his was a name with trans-Atlantic resonance. A painting of the Pilgrims departing Holland, being led in prayer by Robinson, was one of the eight great historical narrative paintings placed in the rotunda of the United States capital building. Yet, there was no memorial to him in the land of his birth. This provided an opportunity for the Gainsborough congregation.

5 'The John Robinson Memorial Church, Gainsborough' *The Congregational Magazine* ns. vol. 4 (July 1896) 184-6.

6 Minutes of meeting 3 Feb 1893 JRMC.

7 'The International Congregational Council' *The Christian World* 16 July 1891 p 581.

8 'The Pilgrim Fathers' *The Christian World* 23 July 1891 p 606; From our Special Correspondent, 'The Pilgrimage to Scrooby' *The Christian World* 23 July 1891 p 606; The International Congregational Council: Honour to John Robinson, the Trip to Leyden' *The Christian World* 30 July 1891 p 629. 'Proceedings of the Unveiling of the John Robinson Memorial Tablet in Leyden, Holland, July 24, 1891' (Boston 1891). Eventually the \$500 surplus left from the Robinson Memorial Tablet was donated to the John Robinson Memorial Church fund. E Lyman Hood *The National Council of Congregational Churches of the United States* (Boston, Mass 1901) 153.

The 1860s had seen a wave of Congregational church building, spurred in part by the bicentenary of the Act of Uniformity which had caused the Great Ejection and the beginnings of nonconformity. As a Congregationalist put it, ‘Churches and chapels are springing up on all sides to commemorate the gallant resistance of our forebears to the edict of a tyrant king’.⁹ Two of these, in London, had successfully raised funds in the United States, the Church of the Pilgrim Fathers at Southwark, and Christchurch, Lambeth, the latter with a chamber dedicated to George Washington and a tower to Abraham Lincoln. The 1890s would see a wave of trans-Atlantic commemorations, a product of warming Anglo-American relations.¹⁰ Combining a church initiative with Anglo-American commemoration would be timely. The idea of raising funds through an appeal, with more than a local base, for a new church as a memorial to John Robinson, has generally been ascribed to Griffiths.

In early 1892 Griffiths began to visit ‘various Gentlemen’ to discuss the idea of a new church, and by May it had been decided that it was necessary and desirable to have a new church and school.¹¹ There were, however, the twin hurdles of finding a site and obtaining funding. Griffiths in the meantime had already begun to reach out to the wider Congregational community. One supporter of this scheme, Dr John Brown, would be going to America to attend the Triennial Council of the National Council of Congregational Churches in Minneapolis in October 1892, and would present the plan for a memorial church in Robinson’s memory.¹² Brown was the minister of Bunyan Meeting, Bedford, and achieved renown as the biographer of Bunyan and his scholarly efforts were recognized with the award of a DD from Yale University in 1887. In 1891 he was elected chairman of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, and in 1892 he published a book on *The Pilgrim Fathers*. Well known in America he began the process of fundraising there for the Robinson Memorial Church.¹³ Interest was forthcoming, with the American lead being taken by Dr C R Palmer of the First Congregational Church at Bridgeport, Connecticut, who had been involved with the fundraising for a Robinson memorial tablet at Leiden.¹⁴

9 W H Embling, surgeon, letter to the Editor, 14 Aug 1862. ‘Correspondence’ *The Christian World* 22 Aug 1862, p. 243.

10 M Hall and E Goldstein ‘Writers, the Clergy, and the “Diplomatization” of Culture: The Sub-Structures of Anglo-American Diplomacy, 1820–1914’ in A Best and J Fisher (eds) *On the Fringes of Diplomacy* (Farnham 2011) 127–54.

11 Committee of Management Meetings 16 and 23 May 1892. Minute Book, Caskgate Street Congregational Church, Gainsborough (hereafter CSGC).

12 Minutes of Special Committee Meeting 14 July 1892 CSGC.

13 *Congregational Year Book* (1923) 100–01.

14 Charles Ray Palmer (1834–1914), son of Rev Ray Palmer, author of the hymn, ‘My Faith looks up to Thee’. Educated Yale, BA 1830, DD 1889. Pastor, Bridgeport, Conn. First

Griffiths had originally proposed a building, seating no more than 700 and a school, which could also serve as a lecture hall, for 400. Later the seating estimate was reduced to 600. To accomplish this object, at the start of 1893, the chapel had local promises of £200, and hoped to raise a further £500 by holding a bazaar in October. There were also promises of £250 from the United States arising from Dr Brown's visit, and Dr Palmer hoped in the end that £500 might be raised. The congregation also had a current debt of £125. Several sites were considered, ranging in cost from £1,350 to £3,000.¹⁵ All were too expensive. The problem was resolved when one of the members of the Gainsborough Committee, John Heinlè, who had recently bought the site of the former Anglican vicarage on Church Street, just south of the Anglican parish church of All Saints, offered most of the site for an equitable price.¹⁶

The pace of events in Lincolnshire clearly did not match American expectations of progress, as in early 1893 Palmer was already complaining to them about their slowness.¹⁷ In fact only in January 1893 did the Gainsborough church firmly decide to proceed with the scheme but yet had to purchase a site.¹⁸ To move the scheme along, the Congregational Union of England and Wales established a national John Robinson Memorial Committee, which held its first meeting in February 1893. A prominent member of the committee was Rev Dr Alexander Mackennal.

Mackennal was a figure of national stature. In 1891 he has been elected chairman of the Congregational Union, and he was among the denomination's most successful fundraisers. He was also one of the driving forces behind the International Congregational Council in 1891, which he served as the English secretary, and of the National Free Church Council in 1892. He had experience of the challenges of building new churches, early in his career having overseen the building of a more commodious church in Surbiton. In 1893 Mackennal published *Story of the English Separatists* and in 1899 *Homes and Haunts of the Pilgrim Fathers*. It was later recalled of him that the erection of the John Robinson Memorial Church 'was also largely due to his persistency and persuasiveness; especially in America'.¹⁹ Mackennal took the initiative to write to the American ambassador, Thomas Bayard, and invited him to lay

Congregational Church, 1872–1896, Pastor Emeritus from 1896. Official delegate of Yale University and the National Council of Congregational Churches of the United States at formal opening of Mansfield College, Oxford, 1889. Delivered an oration at unveiling of memorial tablet at Leyden to John Robinson, 1891.

15 Minutes of meeting 3 Feb 1893 JRMC.

16 Minutes of Special Church Meeting 20 Sep 1893 CSCG; Minutes of meeting 6 Feb 1894 JRMC; Minutes of meeting 6 Feb 1895 JRMC.

17 Minutes of Meeting 1 Feb 1893 reporting a letter from Palmer, CSCG.

18 Minutes of Meeting 4 Jan 1893 Minute Book, CSCG.

19 *Congregational Year Book* (1905) 174–6.

the foundation stone of the new church. Bayard accepted and Mackennal's participation in the planning of the Gainsborough ceremonies lifted a provincial church building effort to national and international attention.

The national committee eventually became frustrated by the low level of local financial commitments. By February 1895 the local committee had promises amounting of only £495 towards an anticipated expenditure of £5,000 for the building and £1200 for the land. Both Mackennal and Brown had admonished the local committee verbally and now the national committee wrote 'that more must be done locally or this Committee will be unable to proceed further in the business'.²⁰ This stern warning had the desired effect, as in April Gainsborough was able to report promises of £855, with expectations of being able to reach £1000.²¹ If the needed funds were to be raised, however, more work would be required to boost the visibility of this project. While it was acknowledged that the enterprise was 'being pushed with much spirit' by Griffiths, he had no experience of fundraising on the necessary scale.²²

There was some discussion as to the style of the new church building with the Chapel Building Society expressing the opinion that an appropriate style would be Elizabethan 'of the domestic rather than the monumental character'. They pointed to the Unitarian Church at Knutsford as providing suggestive views of the exterior, advised that a tower would not be required nor should the walls be too lofty. This should allow the new building to cost no more than £5000. The national committee found a set of designs submitted by R Sutton, 'to admirably represent the spirit of the period it is desired to commemorate'.²³ Two illustrations were reproduced in the 1895 *Congregational Year Book*, showing an idea of the exterior and interior. The national committee sought to keep in mind that the church was a memorial to Robinson and, as such, 'was considered desirable by them that an effort should be made to reproduce as far as possible, a structure with the distinctive marks and characteristic features of the Meeting-houses of the era in which he lived'.²⁴

What suddenly moved a local church building aspiration to an event that attracted national and international attention, was the decision of the American ambassador, Thomas Bayard, to accept an invitation to lay the cornerstone. Bayard was a figure of consequence. He had served as a Senator and then as Secretary of State, and had been seriously considered as a Democratic candidate for the presidency. When, in 1893, the United States decided to elevate its key diplomatic posts from legations to embassies, London was the first so promoted.

20 Minutes of meeting 6 Feb 1895 JRMC.

21 Minutes of meeting 1 Apr 1895 JRMC.

22 'Gainsboro' and the Pilgrim Fathers', *Sheffield Independent* 4 Jan 1896 p 12.

23 Minutes of meeting 6 Feb 1894 JRMC.

24 Minutes of meeting 6 Feb 1895 JRMC.

Bayard in turn became the first person in American history to hold the title of ambassador, arriving in June 1893. Aware of the heightened visibility of his position, and with keen political skills, he took an active part in public life. While other ambassadors in London focused their attention solely on the governing elites, Bayard engaged in a broader public diplomacy. This made the ambassador much more visible to the public than his predecessors or other ambassadors. He was active in the saving of Thomas Carlyle's house in London in late 1895, and he served on the committee to erect a monument of Robert Louis Stevenson in Edinburgh. In the area of mutual commemoration he had unveiled a memorial window in the church at Widford, Hertfordshire, to John Eliot, one of the earliest settlers of New England, known as the 'Apostle to the Indians'. He also spent part of his time delicately negotiating the return to the New World of William Bradford's *The History of Plymouth Colony*, which recorded the founding and early years of the settlement at Plymouth, and contained the text of the Mayflower Compact, seen by many as the world's first written constitution.²⁵ An Episcopalian himself, Bayard was very proud of his Huguenot ancestry. Bayard also had a political agenda, aimed at closer Anglo-American relations, and to this end he was active in promoting an arbitration treaty for the settlement of disputes between the countries.

In early June 1895 the national committee recorded that Bayard had indicated his willingness to travel to Gainsborough to lay the cornerstone of the memorial church. They then communicated with the local committee, urging it to proceed at once with the actual conveyancing of the land and contracting for the laying of the foundations. It was hoped to have Bayard there in the first week of September.²⁶ Unexpected difficulties over the conveyancing forced events into 1896.

The new timetable, unexpectedly, had a significant advantage. *The Congregationalist*, the leading denominational publication in the United States, published in Boston, had organized a tour, or rather a 'Pilgrimage' to Britain, advertised in early 1896.²⁷ It was now decided to have the dedication of the cornerstone converge with the American *Congregationalist* pilgrimage, and plans were made to hold the ceremony on 29 June 1896.²⁸ Mackennal and Rev William J Woods, the secretary of the Congregational Union of England and Wales met with Bayard at the American embassy on 28 February to

25 E Goldstein, 'Diplomacy in the Service of History: Anglo-American Relations and the Return of the Bradford History of Plymouth Colony, 1897' *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 25:1 (March 2014) 26–40.

26 Minutes of meeting 11 June 1895 JRMC.

27 Advertisement *The Congregationalist* 9 Jan 1896.

28 Minutes of meeting 22 Jan 1896, and of 23 Jan 1896 JRMC.

arrange matters.²⁹ Mackennal, together with many nonconformists, shared Bayard's desire for an Anglo-American arbitration treaty. Just a few days after their meeting Mackennal was a signatory to a printed memorial calling for an arbitration agreement, prepared by the National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches of England, assembled at Nottingham 9–12 March 1896 and addressed to churches in the United States. Mackennal provided Bayard with a copy.³⁰

Mackennal also took the opportunity that would arise from attention being attracted by the Gainsborough effort to write to the churches for Congregational collections in support of the effort.³¹ But Mackennal was not alone in seeing the possibilities of the Congregational pilgrimage. Rev Newman Hall, the chief figure in the building of Christ Church, Lambeth, wrote to Woods about the American 'pilgrimage', making the case that 'if a public reception be given them, it might, as the most appropriate place, take place under the shadow of the Lincoln Tower—with its Washington Chamber'.³² The American visitors did go to tea at Newman Hall's church, straight after attending a service at Westminster Abbey. The American pilgrims then wended their way northwards, via Cambridge and Boston, until they came to lodge at Lincoln, from where they travelled to Gainsborough for the grand event.

The big day at Gainsborough received a great deal of coverage, and Bayard's arrival was treated almost as visiting royalty. Indeed the *Chicago Tribune* ran an article with the headline 'Bayard Now Ranks With Royalty', and the comment, 'Ambassador Bayard now ranks next to royalty as at attractive figurehead'.³³ He was presented with an address in the Market Place, and then taken to an elaborate luncheon at the Old Hall. The *Leeds Mercury*, in reporting proceedings, noted the legend that Alfred the Great had been married there. Alfred, as it happened, was also the subject of another planned Anglo-American commemoration.³⁴ The speeches were full of observations on Anglo-American amity.³⁵ The American pilgrims arrived a bit late, but happily in time to walk in procession along the streets of Gainsborough waving the stars and stripes. Among their number were several *Mayflower* descendants.

Bayard was presented with, and duly wielded, a silver trowel engraved with an image of the *Mayflower*, before delivering a knowledgeable disquisition on

29 W J Woods to Bayard, 23 Jan and 24 Jan 1896. Bayard 163. Thomas Bayard Papers, Library of Congress, Washington DC.

30 The printed memorial with a note by Mackennal is in Bayard 165.

31 Minutes of meeting 25 Mar 1896 JRMC.

32 Newman Hall to W J Woods, 6 May 1896. RG. 4938, Congregational Library, Boston.

33 'Bayard Now Ranks Next to Royalty' *Chicago Daily Tribune* 30 June 1896 p 1. [from *New York Journal*].

34 E Goldstein 'America and the King Alfred Millenary Commemorations' in T G Otte ed *The Age of Anniversaries: The Cult of Commemoration 1895–1925* (Abingdon 2017) 36–60.

35 'The American Pilgrims at Gainsborough' *Leeds Mercury* 30 June 1896 p 5.

the life and works of John Robinson. In the course of his remarks he referred to King James I as a 'pedantic bigot'. Bayard's main purpose though was to promote Anglo-American amity. He hinged his remarks on the observation that Robinson's 'name and character create a tie between those who feel the kindred, not merely of a common language—the mother tongue of both peoples—but the thoughts and feelings of which language is but the clothing and the symbol; and out of these thoughts have grown convictions of mutual duty'.³⁶ Such events as the shared commemoration of John Robinson served, 'to bring together the people of the two countries'. Always mindful of his diplomatic objectives, Bayard observed that he 'was in this country not to discover difficulties but occasions of agreement', or as the Illinois *Aurora Daily Express* told its readers, 'Says he is not there to raise Cain, but to propagate good feeling'.³⁷ The vicar of Gainsborough, Canon Charles Moor, was clearly unhappy with the proceedings, and was reported as commenting that, 'he did not believe in these weak-kneed Churchmen who were now patting on the back persons whom they believed to be heretics and schismatics'.³⁸ During Bayard's address the vicar arranged for the bell to toll from the nearby parish church.³⁹ Despite this campanological interlude, the festivities continued into the evening with packed events in the Wesley Hall and an overflow meeting in the Primitive Methodist School. Here Dr Parks of New York concluded the evening with the comment that, 'England and America united could rule the world, but if they quarreled, civilisation would be paralysed'.⁴⁰

Not all the arrangements flowed as well as the organizers might have hoped. Senator G F Hoar of Massachusetts, a key figure in foreign affairs and someone deeply interested in the Pilgrim links, had thought the event would be a few days earlier, and therefore missed attending, though he did visit subsequently. He had been meant to represent both the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the American Antiquarian Society.⁴¹ Griffiths later wrote to the American Antiquarian Society that 'It is my sincere hope that this church may be the means of attracting to this quaint and historic town many of our transatlantic

36 T F Bayard 'The Life and Character of John Robinson' *The Congregationalist*, 30 July 1896 pp 150–1. This is the full text of Bayard's address.

37 Ibid.; 'Bayard's Mission' *Aurora Daily Express* [Illinois] p 2.

38 'Notes by the Way' *The Christian World* 9 July 1896 p 549. The entire speech is reprinted.

Charles Moor (1857–1944). Educ. Keble Coll., Oxford (BA 1880; MA 1883; BD 1904; DD 1908; Sarum Coll., 1882) Curate, Grimsby, 1882–86; All Saints, Knightsbridge, 1887–89; Vicar, St. Mary's, Barton-on-Humber, 1889–94; Vicar of All Saints, Gainsborough, and Prebendary of Lincoln Cathedral 1894–1901. While at Gainsborough he helped with the building of a public hall, the Fanny Marshall Memorial Institute, and wrote a *History of Gainsborough* (1904).

39 'Notes by the Way' *The Christian World* 2 July 1896 p 523.

40 'The American Pilgrims at Gainsborough' *Leeds Mercury* 30 June 1896 p 5.

41 Hoar to Bayard, 17 June 1896. Bayard 166, Bayard Papers, Library of Congress.

friends, who, hitherto, have not visited us'.⁴² A few days after the event further excitement occurred when a delayed letter was received by Griffiths from the President of the United States. President Cleveland wrote to Griffiths that he was pleased to learn that he would be remembered at the John Robinson events, and that the significance of the Pilgrim emigration would be recalled. News of such a letter received regional newspaper attention.⁴³ Of the events of that day, Bayard in writing to thank his host at the Old Hall, Sir Hickman Bacon, who was also the premier baronet of England, commented that 'I think the John Robinson church will be a tie of mutual good feeling between the inhabitants of New and Old England'.⁴⁴

There remained the problem of financing the building. Within a month of Bayard's visit arrangements were being made for a £4000 appeal, and a statement prepared 'suitable for both sides of the Atlantic and appending Mr. Bayard's address ...'. The national committee also wanted to send Griffiths to America as part of the appeal for funds.⁴⁵ In January 1897 Griffiths wrote to Bayard, who was to return home soon, that the Congregational Union proposed sending him to America to raise \$10,000.⁴⁶ Bayard sent a supportive reply, leading Griffiths to express the sentiment, 'May your Excellency live long to bind in closer bonds of love the two great English-speaking nations of the world is the desire of yours truly'.⁴⁷ The timing for fund raising, however, was not ideal, as the USA was in an economic slump, and Rev C R Palmer warned 'that it would be long before the financial depression in America would be overcome', though he remained optimistic that £1000 might be raised.⁴⁸

The idea of appealing for funds in America was also becoming more widespread, as churches looked for historical links. The memory of William Bradford, one of Robinson's best known disciples, was in the news, as his

42 Griffiths to E F Barton (Librarian, American Antiquarian Society) 4 Oct 1896, reprinted in 'Report of the Librarian' *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 11 (Oct. 1896) 226–7.

43 Grover Cleveland (Executive Mansion, Washington) to Rev Hugh S Griffiths, 20 June 1896, reprinted in *Sheffield Independent* 6 July 1896 p 8; *Leeds Mercury*, 6 July 1896, p 5. The delayed letter arrived after the ceremonies but its release to the press provided further news coverage.

44 T F Bayard to Sir Hickman Bacon, 3 Jul 1896. File marked: 'Gainsborough Religion—John Robinson Memorial Church'. Local History Collection, Gainsborough Public Library. Bacon returned the sentiment in his reply, Bacon (Gainsborough) to Bayard, 6 July 1896. Bayard 166.

45 Minutes of meeting 29 July 1896 JRMC. This was to occur, providing his church would free him to do so and cover the pulpit fees in his absence. Rev W J Woods wrote to the Gainsborough church proposing the idea, Minutes of Meeting, 7 Sep 1896. John Robinson Memorial Church Minute Book.

46 Griffiths to Bayard, 13 Jan 1897. Bayard 170.

47 Griffiths (Robinson Memorial Church) to Bayard, 16 Jan 1897. Bayard 171.

48 Minutes of meeting 8 Feb 1897 JRMC. Palmer attended this meeting in person, as he was temporarily supplying the Kensington Congregational Church, London, having just retired from his church in Bridgeport, Conn.

history of the Plymouth Colony was about to be repatriated to New England through the efforts of Ambassador Bayard. The church at Austerfield, from which Bradford had come, was in the process of being restored and appealing for funds, leading the *Congregationalist* to complain, 'American people are being told that they may erect a brass tablet to Bradford's memory in the church if they will give a substantial sum toward the repairs. In these and other little churches looking this way for collections brass enough can be furnished for tablets if Americans will furnish the gold'.⁴⁹

Once underway the Gainsborough building did not take long, and in June 1897 the new church was opened. This time the celebrations were a lower profile event, but nonetheless attracted publicity. In Washington there had been a change of administration, and the new ambassador was yet to arrive. The United States Consul at Birmingham, G F Parker, however attended the opening, maintaining an American diplomatic presence. At the public luncheon before the dedication service the health of the American president was proposed by Sir Hickman Bacon, and both national anthems were sung. Also attending was Marianne Farningham, who edited the *Christian World*, which had covered the efforts to build the church and which avidly covered Anglo-American relations.

In the end the building had cost about £7000.⁵⁰ Funds though were scarce, and the Gainsborough church still owed money for the American Pilgrims luncheon at the stone laying.⁵¹ *The Congregational Year Book* for 1898 pleaded the case for donating funds, 'It should be treated as a national, and to the extent of American Congregationalism, even an international opportunity of expressing gratitude for the life and work of a Christian minister, to all who love civil freedom and appreciate spiritual illumination, and we of all men are particularly indebted'.⁵²

Griffith's ability to concentrate on fundraising may well have been hampered by family problems. In July 1897 he and his brother, a collier from Llanbradach, were summoned to Aberdare Police Court in connection with a case involving their father. The elder Griffiths had until recently been a Baptist minister in charge of a church at Aberaman, but was now paralyzed and in receipt of parish relief. Hugh Griffiths had been sending his father 2s 6d a week, but had not done so for two months. Despite protesting the precipitate action of the Merthyr Tydfil Guardians in taking action against him, and offering to pay 2s a week in support of his father and step-mother, the court ordered him to pay

49 'Current History' *The Congregationalist* 27 May 1897 p 746.

50 Minutes of meeting 7 Sep 1897 JRM.C.

51 Minutes of Committee Meeting 9 Sep 1897. John Robinson Memorial Church Minute Book, Gainsborough.

52 *Congregational Year Book* (1898) 67.

5s a week, and refused to grant any costs for the case.⁵³ The distraction, added financial burden, and the unwanted publicity cannot have been easy for the active minister.

Griffiths' problems may explain why Mackennal decided to make an appeal for funds in his own name, in February 1898, in a printed circular. He pointed out that given the links to John Robinson a church put up in Gainsborough 'must need be somewhat monumental in character'. He went on to note Bayard's participation and that 'England and America have come a little nearer to one another in consequence'. Mackennal hoped to raise £1000 in this way.⁵⁴ The national committee in consequence of this asked the Gainsborough church to release Griffiths for a day a week, so that he could canvass the country for funds. Griffiths did indeed make a concerted effort, sending out 900 letters to churches for collections.⁵⁵ In July 1898 at the Triennial Council of the American Congregational churches, meeting at Portland, Oregon, Mackennal succeeded in having a committee appointed to raise money for the John Robinson Memorial Church. Mackennal was a figure to be reckoned with, and at the Portland gathering, 'The reception accorded him was both dramatic and most cordial, the audience rising with tumultuous applause'.⁵⁶ He may also have been aided by a new sense of Anglo-American friendship that had emerged in the course of the Spanish-American War, fought in the Spring of that year. Britain was seen as having tilted in favour of America in the conflict, and Mackennal recalled that when he spoke at Portland, placed behind him were the flags of both countries.⁵⁷

With a substantial debt still outstanding the Gainsborough committee considered sending a representative to the forthcoming 1901 Triennial Council of the American Congregational Church at Portland, Maine. The national committee, however, declined to support such an expense, but agreed to cooperate with the celebrations planned for 1902 to mark the tercentenary of what was thought to be the first Separatist gathering in Gainsborough.⁵⁸ The John Robinson Memorial Church did send an illuminated address to the Portland, Maine assembly, showing the Old Hall in an oak frame fashioned from the communion rail of the old church, with an invitation to participate in the

53 'Minister and His Father: Summons for Non-Maintenance' *South Wales Daily News* 7 July 1897 p 2.

54 A Mackennal 'John Robinson Memorial Church' 15 Feb 1898, printed leaflet with minutes of meeting 9 Feb 1898 JRMC.

55 Minutes of meeting 31 May 1898 JRMC.

56 Lyman Hood *National Council* 175.

57 'England and America: Dr Mackennal Reports' *The Christian World* 20 Oct 1898.

58 Minutes of meeting 18 Dec 1900 JRMC. This was the first meeting of the committee since 1898.

planned 1902 tercentenary celebrations. It was their goal that the English and American committees would have liquidated the debt by then.⁵⁹

The hope that this round of celebrations would complete the fundraising was fulfilled.⁶⁰ To coincide with the 1902 tercentenary celebrations, the John Robinson Memorial Church was able to announce it was debt free. In recognition of the substantial American support for the project it was decided to place a tablet in the porch of the church, to be unveiled as part of the festivities. The words were drafted by Mackennal and noted the cooperation of American and English Congregationalists to commemorate John Robinson.⁶¹ At the top of the plaque is an image of the *Mayflower*. The American representative, Rev George R W Scott, read a letter from President Theodore Roosevelt, expressing gratification at the building of this church as a tangible tribute 'to the pastor and leader of the pilgrims who did do much in laying the foundation of the world-wide supremacy of the English-speaking folk'. Scott also presented the cheque from the American churches for £1000, which cleared the outstanding debt.⁶²

Of the key figures in the building of the John Robinson Memorial Church; Griffiths moved on in 1902 to become a special missionary for the South Wales English Congregational Union, then becoming the minister in Mansfield, then of Bethel Chapel at Bury, and finally Lowther Street Church in Kendal. He did, however, return to Gainsborough to celebrate the jubilee of his ministry, by which time he had been a key figure in the building of five churches. None however attracted the attention that Gainsborough had. Bayard completed the inaugural American embassy to Britain by returning home with the original manuscript of Bradford's *History of the Plymouth Colony*, the product of one of Robinson's followers. He died soon after, in September 1898, and Griffiths conducted a special service in his memory in the church whose cornerstone he had laid.⁶³ Mackennal became caught up in the events of the Boer War and, as an active member of the Peace Society, called for an ending of the conflict. Mackennal emerged from this turmoil an aged and disillusioned man: he averred

59 'Gainsborough to Portland Greeting' *The Congregationalist and Christian World* (12 Oct 1901) p 550. The address was presented on their behalf by Rev J M Gibbon of the Stamford Hill Congregational Church, London.

60 Minutes of meeting 2 Sep 1901 JRMC.

61 Minutes of meeting 24 Mar 1902 JMRC.

62 'Chronicle of the Churches' *The Christian World* 19 June 1901 p 3. The sum was about \$5000. Among the American donors were President Eliot of Harvard, Bishop William Lawrence, and Governor Crane of Massachusetts. Scott had replaced Palmer as head of the American committee. Scott died suddenly in September, while visiting Berlin, and a memorial service was held for him in the John Robinson Memorial Church. Extracts of Griffiths' sermons are in M E Dow Scott, *In Memoriam: Rev George Robert White Scott* (Boston, Privately Printed, 1902).

63 'Memorial Service' *Stamford Mercury* 14 Oct 1898 p 5.

in his *Sketches of Congregationalism* of 1901 that he was ‘sick of class churches’. He died in 1904.

The Gainsborough events were symbolic of the beginning of a pivotal moment in Anglo-American relations. James Bryce, at the time of his appointment as British ambassador to Washington in 1907, recalled that when he first visited the United States in 1870 there was still a good deal of bitter feeling towards Britain, and that there were men yet living who recalled the War of 1812.⁶⁴ It was a series of small, symbolic acts such as the joint effort to erect the John Robinson Memorial Church that helped to change that atmosphere, focusing not on differences but a sense of a shared identity and language based on shared values, constitutional government, law, and civil and religious rights. The year 1895 had closed with a very real danger that Britain and the United States could drift into war, over the Venezuela border dispute. Mackennal thought that ‘The first check to an imperious temper came from the pulpits of America and England, and it was decisive’. An important facilitator was ‘The daily and increasing personal intercourse between the citizens of the two countries; the worship in each other’s churches; the visits paid and the sermons preached by ministers of the various denominations which have a home equally in your land and ours ...’.⁶⁵ In 2016 mention was made in an adjournment debate in the House of Commons to Bayard’s presence at Gainsborough in 1896 in connection with the John Robinson Memorial Church. In doing so the mover of the motion expressed a sentiment entirely in accord with the efforts that led to the building of that memorial, ‘There are huge principles that unite us and our strongest ally’.⁶⁶

Erik Goldstein

64 ‘Mr Bryce on America: Pilgrims’ Farewell Dinner’ *Manchester Guardian*, 7 Feb 1907, p 7.

65 A Mackennal ‘Great Britain and the United States as Affected by the Events of 1896’ *The Congregationalist* 14 Jan 1897 p 49.

66 Hansard, Commons, 9 Mar 2016, vol 607 col 391. The mover of the adjournment motion was John Mann (Labour, Bassetlaw).

A 'SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP'. THE LYMAN BEECHER LECTURES 1872–1914

Recently, much has been talked of in the media about the 'Special Relationship' that exists between the United Kingdom and the United States of America. This unofficial political term is a phrase that was created to reflect the cooperation between the two countries, and was most particularly used by Winston Churchill during the Second World War. It encompassed military planning, military operations, nuclear weapon technology and intelligence sharing as well as economic activity, trade and commerce, much of which still holds true today. However, even before this, public opinion in the mid-nineteenth century was aware of a special relationship between the United Kingdom and the United States based on an entirely different set of values, those of language, migration, liberal traditions and evangelical Protestantism. It comes as no surprise therefore that towards the later nineteenth century this special relationship manifested itself in a period of much nonconformist interactivity between the two countries, especially the Presbyterian and Congregational denominations.

From 1871 to 1914, this interactivity is clearly illustrated in the Lyman Beecher Lectures held during this time at Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, USA. These annual lectures, with the exception of only four since 1872, are unique in that they continue to this very day. The lectureship was established at the Yale Divinity School in 1871, funded by a gift of ten thousand dollars from Henry W Sage, a rich New York businessman who was also a trustee and chief benefactor of Cornell University, Ithaca, New York. He was a member of Plymouth Congregational Church, Brooklyn, New York, where Henry Ward Beecher, son of Lyman Beecher, was pastor for forty years.¹

Lyman Beecher (1775–1863) was a Presbyterian and Congregational minister who held pastorates in East Hampton, Long Island in New York, Litchfield in Connecticut, and Boston, Massachusetts. He was also the first President of Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati, Ohio and served in the Second Presbyterian Church there for ten years. He had attended Yale in 1797, when Yale was a collegiate school for the training of ministers and lay leadership for the state of Connecticut. The Divinity School was founded in 1822 as a means of providing a Congregational theological education. The governing board of Yale College was comprised of the President and fellows of the College and was known as the Yale Corporation, a term which continued when the College was

1 E de W Jones *Royalty of the Pulpit* (New York 1951, repr 1970) xxiii.

renamed Yale University in 1887. The gift proposal to the Corporation from Mr Sage specified that it was for

the founding of a lectureship in the theological department in a branch of pastoral theology, to be designated, 'The Lyman Beecher Lectureship on Preaching'.

The Yale Corporation was to be charged with appointing any successful minister of any evangelical denomination within the Christian ministry. With the consent of Mr Sage, in 1893, the terms were extended to include laymen.²

It is not surprising that the honour of delivering the first lecture series should be given to the son of Lyman Beecher, Henry Ward Beecher, a notable preacher in his own right. Like his father before him he had the gift of preaching. His close association with Henry Sage meant that he more than anyone understood what these lectures aimed to achieve. The lectures were usually given over a period of a few days and covered all aspects of the art of homiletics. The lecture format used by Henry Ward Beecher formed the basis of what was to follow for many years to come. It is significant however, that 3 out of the 4 preachers directly after H W Beecher had their origins in Great Britain or Ireland. There was no dearth of American preachers in the late nineteenth century, yet from the period 1872 to 1914, a total of 15 out of 39 who were invited to speak were from these shores. It may well be that the first two, John Hall and William Mackergo Taylor, were invited because of their geographical location; both were already based in New York City, and also had proven reputations. However, Great Britain was seen as being a rich source of good preachers especially in the Congregational and Presbyterian denominations, though not all were invited and some had no desire to cross the Atlantic.

The aim of the lectures was not to provide a platform for the speakers to promote their own theological ideology, but to share their knowledge and experience of their calling. The lectures were after all initially intended for the seminary students, members of the faculty and local clergymen, although they later attracted a far wider audience from the ministerial and academic world. Some lectures were regrettably never published but, from those that were, many studies have been made, both homiletic and theological. The American Edgar de Witt Jones (1876–1956) wrote biographical sketches of each lecturer and analysis of the lectures from 1871 to 1951 in his book *The Royalty of the Pulpit*.³ In this work he makes a resume of the speakers, critically assesses their homiletic content, and then categorises them into divisions that reflect his personal opinion of their performance. He acknowledges that it is not only analysis of

² Yale Divinity School, *Bibliography of the Lyman Beecher Lectureship on Preaching* <http://www.library.yale.edu/div/beecher.html> (accessed 17/01/2019).

³ Jones *Royalty of the Pulpit* xxiii.

the spoken word that influences this judgement but that it is often presentation that determined their greatness. Each speaker brought his own qualities to the address, even though theologically they might hold very different views.

The first three annual lectures were given by Henry Ward Beecher, a total of 33 addresses over three years in which he covered every aspect of ministry from the sermon itself to pastoral visitation and personal problems. He admitted that his first lecture series was unscripted, a testament to how comfortable he was within his ministerial role. Most speakers that followed used notes or scripts, though there were a few whose deliverance was such that it was almost indiscernible that they were not speaking extemporaneously.

Henry Ward Beecher was indeed an incredibly hard act to follow, but this accolade fell to John Hall, a quietly spoken Ulsterman and minister of Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York.⁴ The Yale Corporation undoubtedly chose an admirable candidate in Hall. The contrast between Dr Hall and Mr Beecher, who were contemporaries for some twenty years in what were then separate New York municipalities and would be considered as acquaintances rather than friends, was startling. Both men were of distinguished appearance, but Beecher was volatile and exuberant whereas Hall was stable and reserved. Beecher's dramatic delivery contrasted with the quiet but nevertheless powerful delivery of Hall. His theology was liberal whereas Hall retained traditional methods and Calvinism. Individuality and diversity were to be defining characteristics of the lectures.

William Mackergo Taylor holds the distinction of being the only one of the 15 who was invited to speak twice, in 1876 and again in 1885.⁵ He was a Scotsman brought up in the Presbyterian tradition but called to New York to become pastor at the Congregational Broadway Tabernacle in 1872. His invitation to speak came only four years after his residency in the United States, reflecting the high regard and reputation he had gained in a short time. He was an orthodox preacher with reputedly a powerful melodious voice, and a prolific publisher of his sermons.

The fifth lecture in 1877 was offered to the internationally regarded theologian Robert William Dale, minister of Carrs Lane Congregational Church, Birmingham.⁶ He was the first non-resident of the United States to be invited, and given his involvement and interest with Springhill Training College in Birmingham. the offer was one that he could not refuse. He relished every moment, from praise of the accommodation he was provided with, in 'a charming wooden house', to the eminent professors with whom he discoursed

4 J Hall *God's Word Through Preaching* (New York 1875).

5 W M Taylor *The Ministry of the Word* (New York 1876). *The Scottish Pulpit* (New York 1887).

6 R W Dale *Nine Lectures on Preaching*, (New York 1878).

and the young men of his audience. He proclaimed that giving the lectures was a pleasure rather than a task. It was somewhat inevitable that this would be the case, given that the history of Connecticut and Yale was rooted in Congregationalism, and that ten members of the Yale Corporation were always to be Congregationalists. His enjoyable experience was such, that at the request of the Corporation he tried to encourage Charles Spurgeon and Alexander McLaren to accept an invitation. However, his efforts were in vain, with Spurgeon declaring, 'I sit on my own gate and whistle my own tunes and am quite content.'⁷ The American dream was not for everyone.

The lectures in 1881 changed direction and adopted a different format which was not repeated again until 1939. They were given by 5 different speakers, one of whom was Llewellyn David Bevan. He was a Welshman, who after a short time as pastor at Whitefield's Tabernacle, London coinciding with a professorship at New College, London, relocated in 1876 to Brick Presbyterian Church, New York City. In 1882 he moved back to Highbury Quadrant Chapel, London, but in 1886 moved to Australia to Collins Street Independent Church, Melbourne and died there in 1919. It is possibly for this reason that his name is not so familiar as others. There are no published details of the lectures for this year and so the titles, dealt with by each speaker, remain unknown. Fortunately, all the other British interest lectures were published.⁸ Some retained their original content but others were revised by ministers, extending their work for publication.

These early speakers reflected the value the Yale Corporation put on preachers from the United Kingdom and Great Britain, and from the beginning they were eager to establish a rapport. Increasingly invitations to give the lectures were offered to the British Isles, and from 1891 to 1913 ten went exclusively to British preachers, the others being given by Americans. When the Scotsman James Stalker gave his lecture in 1891, he warmly acknowledged the generosity of the faculty for the invitation, and in particular for including denominations of evangelical Christians other than their own.⁹ The open-mindedness of the Corporation at this time, to follow the original remit of the lectureship to include speakers from differing evangelical denominations, gave an ecumenical dimension to the lectures which is possibly why they have continued to this day.

In 1882 the terms of the lectureship were amended by the Corporation with the consent of Mr Sage, to include lectures 'on any other topic appropriate to the work of the Christian ministry'.¹⁰ This gave later lecturers greater freedom of approach to aspects of preaching, although the majority still worked closely

7 A A W Dale *The Life of R W Dale of Birmingham* (New York) 335-339.

8 Yale Divinity School has copies of all published addresses online.

9 Jones *Royalty* 181.

10 Jones *Royalty* xxiv.

within the parameters of preaching and its importance with regard to pastoral care. There were some however who did noticeably diversify, and introduced their own agenda. In his second series of lectures in 1885 William Mackergo Taylor's content was very much on Scottish history, whereas James Stalker in 1891 particularly emphasised the importance of the biblical apostolic role of the preacher.¹¹ He was followed by another Scot, the scholarly Andrew Martin Fairbairn, who in 1892 preached on *The place of Christ in Modern Theology*.¹² The youngest of all the preachers was the Oxford educated Robert Forman Horton, whose lecture in 1893, *Verbum Dei*¹³ likened the preacher to a prophet receiving direct communication from God.

The next two preachers were again both Scots. John Watson who gave the lecture in 1897¹⁴ was born in England but brought up in Scotland. He was known in America because he was a prolific writer, and much of his work written under the pen name of Ian Maclaren was hugely popular. His best-selling work was *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush*.¹⁵ His presentation was reportedly the most entertaining and given extempore. In 1899 the academic George Adam Smith, who was born in Calcutta, but spent most of his life in Scotland, presented what was to be considered the most controversial lecture of the series thus far. His advanced views expressed in his lecture on *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament*,¹⁶ was to lead to charges of heresy being brought against him when he returned home. A complaint was made to the College Committee of the Free Church Assembly in Scotland, a lengthy process of deliberation ensued, which was only resolved in 1902 by a 2-1 vote which deemed no further action was necessary.¹⁷

One of the most interesting speakers must have been John Brown, the much-loved Congregational pastor of Bunyan Meeting, Bedford, who in 1900 linked his lectures with historical figures representing puritanism.¹⁸ His final lectures however, were devoted to a study of those whom he considered to be modern puritans, the more recent Thomas Binney, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, R W Dale and Alexander Maclaren. Acknowledged as a fine biographer of John Bunyan, his discourses were considered equally captivating.

The 1903 lecture was given by perhaps the least known household name of all the British preachers. He was George Angier Gordon, who was born

11 J Stalker *The Preacher and his Models* (New York 1893).

12 A M Fairbairn *The Place of Christ in Modern Theology* (New York 1893).

13 R F Horton *Verbum Dei* (New York 1893)

14 J Watson (Ian Maclaren) *The Cure of Souls* (New York 1896)

15 Jones *Royalty* 380.

16 G A Smith *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of The Old Testament*, (New York 1901).

17 http://www.glasgowwestaddress.co.uk/1909_Glasgow_Men/Smith_Rev_George_Adam.htm

18 J Brown *Puritan Preaching in England* (New York 1900).

in Scotland, but moved to the United States aged 18, and was ordained as a Congregational minister in America at 24 years. He surprised everyone with his lectures, by abandoning his usual humorous and illustrative themes in favour of a most earnest approach.¹⁹ Another remarkable Scot, Peter Taylor Forsyth, also delivered a compact theological lecture in 1907.²⁰

The one speaker who stands apart from the others because he was not a nonconformist, was the Englishman, Herbert Hensley Henson.²¹ He was an Anglican canon at St Margaret's, Westminster (later Bishop of Durham 1920–39). He had an outgoing personality and a love of preaching. He seemed to delight in controversy but later expressed dismay that though his lectures, given in 1908, had been well received, when published they had little circulation.

By contrast the lectures of John Henry Jowett received much acclaim.²² He spoke in 1912 but surprisingly stated that the experience had not been particularly joyful for him. His biographer recalls that he took a strong dislike to the student appreciation which was not the usual cheering but a sort of heckling.²³ He also holds the distinction of being the only preacher in the lecture series to represent two of the churches for a second time, as minister of Carrs Lane, Birmingham and Fifth Avenue Presbyterian, New York.

In 1914 it fell to another Englishman, Charles Silvester Horne, to have the difficult task of presenting the lecture, only weeks before the outbreak of World War I. He was minister at Whitefield's Tabernacle in London, where Llewellyn Bevan had also been pastor. He gave what was regarded by some as the epitome of all the previous lectures for its elegance, evangelistic fervour, and the lasting impression it made on his hearers.²⁴ What made this lecture even more poignant was that Silvester Horne died 3 days later on a steamship bound for Toronto.

It has to be remembered that the lectures given by these *Pulpit Princes* of Britain were interspersed with equally erudite lectures by their American counterparts. All the lectures were given by educated men with a passion for their chosen profession, and held in high regard both sides of the Atlantic. Yet the selection of speakers also reflected the predominant social attitudes at this time to preachers and preaching. In such an academic environment it was an all-white male preserve. No women preacher was invited to speak until the 1950s, and even then, Helen Kenyon was part of a consortium of six speakers. Nowadays it would not have been considered unusual if Lyman Beecher's daughter Harriet Beecher (later Stowe) had succeeded her brother Henry as the

19 G A Gordon *Ultimate Conceptions of Faith* (Boston 1903).

20 P T Forsyth *Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind* (1907).

21 H H Henson *The Liberty of Prophesying* (New Haven 1909),

22 J H Jowett *The Preacher his Life and Work* (New York 1912).

23 A Porritt *John Henry Jowett* (1924) 154.

24 C S Horne *The Romance of Preaching* (New York 1914).

next speaker, as she is known to have been a good orator. But in some matters Yale was ultra conservative and tradition prevailed.

As English speakers, it was obvious that British preachers had greater appeal to Yale audiences than other Europeans. Their shared language was instrumental in nurturing an exchange of ideas and thinking which united them in their diversity, but also lessened their feelings of isolation. It brought together different groups of nonconformists in a manner that was unknown in continental Europe. The warmth of the reception given by the Corporation, members of the faculty, clergymen and students of Yale gave many of the lecturers the opportunity of making transatlantic friendships for life, thus adding to the rich tapestry that defines Protestant nonconformity. More importantly it nurtured the concept of a ‘Special Relationship’ between Great Britain and the United States.

Lyman Beecher Lectures—UK preachers 1874–1914.

- 1874–75 Hall, John
- 1875–76 Taylor, William M
- 1877–78 Dale, R W
- 1880–81 Bevan, Llewelyn David; [Duryea, J T; Harris, George; Herrick, Samuel; Burton, Nathaniel Judson]
- 1885–86 Taylor, William M
- 1890–91 Stalker, James.
- 1891–92 Fairbairn, A M
- 1892–93 Horton, Robert F
- 1896–97 Watson, John (Ian Maclaren)
- 1898–99 Smith, George Adam
- 1899–00 Brown, John
- 1902–03 Gordon, George A
- 1906–07 Forsyth, P T
- 1908–09 Henson, H Hensley
- 1911–12 Jowett, J H
- 1913–14 Horne, Charles Silvester

BIBLE WOMEN IN ABERDEEN

Introduction

Alan Argent has helpfully brought to light the Bible women movement initiated in London by Ellen Ranyard.¹ Though largely overlooked now, at one time it was reckoned that Bible women, in some form, existed in almost every town in England.² The British and Foreign Bible Society declared, in 1862, that Bible women were ‘becoming invaluable’ as on a daily basis they ‘came in close contact with the masses ... reached by no other means’.³ In Liverpool, it was stated that:

Many young and friendless girls who, in various ways, earn but a bare subsistence, have been much encouraged by the efforts of the Biblewomen to persevere in the paths of virtue.⁴

By 1879, the London Bible and Domestic Female Mission employed more than 170 Bible women, and the movement:

spread rapidly throughout England and to North America, to Australia and to south-east Asia.⁵

The first Bible woman in Scotland

Somewhat surprisingly, it took just three years for the Bible women movement to reach Scotland—with the first appointment being made not in Edinburgh or Glasgow, but in the north-east. It was in 1860 that Albion Street Congregational Church, Aberdeen⁶ advertised:

Wanted, a Person to devote Fifteen to Twenty hours per week as a

¹ A Argent ‘Mrs Ranyard and the Bible Women’ *Congregational History Society Magazine* 9.1 (2019) 43–48.

² E Ranyard, *The True Institution of Sisterhood: or a Message and its Messengers* (1862) 16.

³ ‘British and Foreign Bible Society’ *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* 10 Oct 1862 p3, 11 Oct 1862 p11.

⁴ ‘Liverpool Ladies’ Bible and Domestic Mission’ *Liverpool Mercury* 12 Mar 1862 p5.

⁵ Argent ‘Ranyard’ 46.

⁶ The advertisement does not bear the name of any church, just the name of a Mr Scatterey to whom applications were to be sent. A McCall ‘The Biblewomen of Aberdeen’ *History Scotland* 13.3 (2013) 30 attributed the notice to Trinity Congregational Church—but this was not formed until 1878 as recorded by H Escott *A History of Scottish Congregationalism* (Glasgow 1960) 257, 338

Biblewoman, disposed to impart religious advice, and would take an interest in the Domestic Order and Cleanliness of those visited.⁷

The successful applicant was Margaret Abel, aged 46, and she would work in the Shiprow area of Aberdeen until her death in 1885. For her is claimed not just the distinction of being the first Bible woman in Scotland,⁸ but the first 'agency of the kind she represented' appointed outside London.⁹

Aberdeen

In the mid-nineteenth century, Aberdeen's population was 70,000. There were 41 churches, able to accommodate 30,000 people at a time, yet, in 1847, it was estimated that:

above ten thousand adults ... attended no place of worship, many of whom were sunk to the lowest point of social degradation. Industrial schools had done much to reclaim the outcast young, but very unsuccessful had been the efforts to reclaim the outcast old.¹⁰

Congregationalism had a strong presence in Aberdeen. In 1851 Congregational churches accounted for 12.2% of the available seats across the city, and 11.2% of church attendees.¹¹ In 1865 the deacons' court of George Street Congregational Chapel actually:

agreed to apply for two policemen to be in attendance on Sabbath evenings at the door to prevent crowding and confusion.¹²

Albion Street

In Aberdeen in 1848, 'a handful of people assembled in a small room of a miserable house in a wretched locality'.¹³ This meeting-place measured just 12 feet by 6, with the ceiling at a height of just 5 feet 6 inches. Lighting came from a 'penny candle on the preacher's table'. When typhus fever struck the families occupying other rooms in this property, it was decided that it:

7 *Aberdeen Journal* 21 Nov 1860 p4.

8 McCall 'Biblewomen' 30.

9 J B Allan *Rev John Duncan DD, Trinity Congregational Church, Aberdeen, A Memoir and a Tribute* (1909) 72.

10 'The Aberdeen Ragged Kirk' *The Leisure Hour, A Family Journal of Instruction and Recreation* (ed) W H Miller 1 April 1852 p210.

11 D J Withrington 'Aberdeen since 1794: as Place and as Community' in T. Brotherstone & D J Withrington (ed) *The City and its Worlds, Aspects of Aberdeen's History since 1794* (Glasgow 1996) 17.

12 P Hillis 'Religion' in *Aberdeen 1800-2000, A New History* (East Linton 2000) 348.

13 'Aberdeen Ragged Kirk' *Ragged School Magazine* (1855) 73, 159.

was no longer safe to meet there, and for a time the mission was suspended; but, to provide against any such contingency in future, it was resolved to erect a mission chapel in the same locality ... The site of this wooden erection had long been occupied as a penny theatre.¹⁴

Thirty people attended the first evening service at the Albion Street mission in January 1848,¹⁵ sixty the next, and:

soon after, the chapel, which held a hundred people, was crowded to excess.¹⁶

It had been intimated in the district that ‘seat rents were free’ and that ‘there would be no collection’!¹⁷

The driving force ‘under whose auspices the project was opened and chiefly conducted’ was James Hall Wilson, a deacon of Frederick Street Congregational Church.¹⁸ Wilson left school aged 12 to assist in his father’s cooverture, and after a spell as a:

clerk in a shipping office ... and having gained some experience as occasional correspondent to the local newspapers¹⁹

became a journalist. As his work increased with the Ragged Kirk (as it became affectionately known), Wilson gave up his editorship of the North of Scotland Gazette in March 1852.²⁰ Financial support came from a wide variety of sources, including the Congregational Union of Scotland. Sometime around 1857, the mission was constituted as Albion Street Congregational Church, and Wilson was ordained as its the first pastor.²¹ From 1858, Wilson was based in London as ‘organising secretary’ of the ‘home mission schemes’ of the Congregational Union of England.²²



Figure 1
Rev Dr J Hall Wilson²³

14 Miller ‘Ragged Kirk’ 210.

15 W D McNaughton *Early Congregational Independency in the Highlands and Islands and the North-East of Scotland* (hereafter *ECIHINE*) (Tiree 2003) 450.

16 Miller ‘Ragged Kirk’ 210.

17 *ECIHINE* 449–50 quoting *Scottish Congregational Magazine* 1849, 59.

18 *ECIHINE* 452.

19 ‘Death of Rev Dr J Hall Wilson’ *Aberdeen Weekly Journal* 20 Aug 1897 p4 & *Aberdeen Weekly Journal* 25 Aug 1897, p6.

20 *ECIHINE* 452 quoting *Scottish Congregational Magazine* 1852, 95.

21 *ECIHINE* 453.

22 *Aberdeen Weekly Journal* 25 Aug 1897.

23 *Aberdeen Weekly Journal* 25 Aug 1897.

That, however, is to jump ahead. *The Leisure Hour* (produced by the Religious Tract Society 1852–1905) did not indulge in idle April foolery. The cover page of the 1 April 1852 edition (Figure 2)²⁴ carried visual representations of Aberdeen’s Albion Street on Hogmanay in two different years. In the second picture, the population is more orderly and better dressed, the buildings restored to good condition ... even the street seems cleaner. The accompanying article extolled the benefits resulting from the replacement of the theatre with a mission chapel. This is not, however, the original wooden kirk—but a replacement chapel ‘of stone and lime’ built on the same site, opened in October 1849, and capable of accommodating 250 to 300 people.²⁵ Queen Victoria contributed £20 towards this work.²⁶

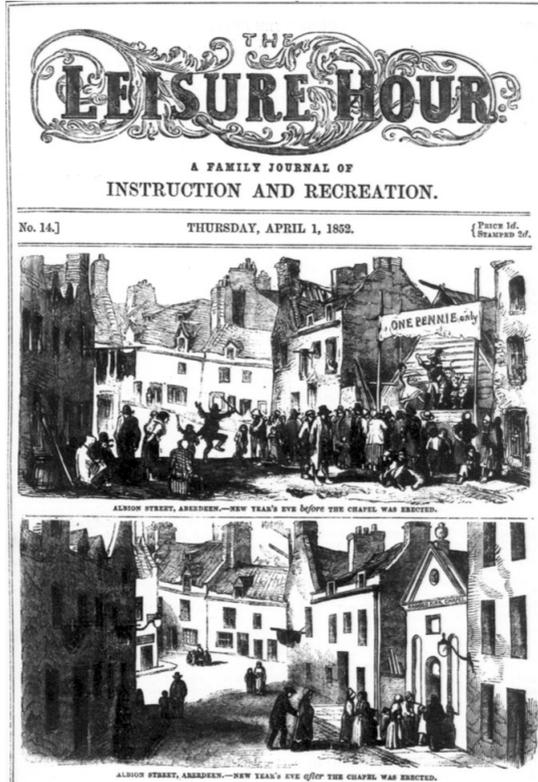


Figure 2—Albion Street—before and after the Mission Chapel was built

Within 7 years, the Mission was able to report varied activities including schools (for 230 children—and to which Queen Victoria donated a further £25²⁷), Sunday Schools (for 280), a penny bank (the first in Aberdeen and

24 *The Leisure Hour* 209.

25 *ECIHINE* 452 quoting *Scottish Congregational Magazine* 1852, 15; A Gammie *The Churches of Aberdeen, Historical and Descriptive* (Aberdeen 1909) 238.

26 ‘Donation by the Queen’ *The Standard* 5 Oct 1849, *The Morning Post* 6 Oct 1849; ‘The Court’ *The Examiner* 6 Oct 1849 p631.

27 ‘Royal Donation’ *The Standard* 30 Sep 1851; *Nottinghamshire Guardian* 2 Oct 1851 p7; *The Belfast News-Letter* 3 Oct 1851; *The Leeds Mercury* 4 Oct 1851 p12; *Ragged School Magazine*, 159.

with 4,500 savers), and a Temperance Society (with 500 members excluding the junior Band of Hope).²⁸ In addition:

eight public-houses in the neighbourhood have been closed for want of custom, and their places supplied by butchers' and bakers' shops, temperance coffee-rooms, and eating-houses.²⁹

In due course, this chapel was replaced by a larger one, opened in 1855 and able to accommodate 500 people.³⁰ Queen Victoria donated for a third time, sending £50 towards the expenses.³¹

Bible women in Aberdeen

The appointment of Abel as Bible woman took place not during Wilson's Aberdeen ministry—but during that of his successor, John Duncan.³²

By many of the sick and aged women of the neighbourhood Miss Abel was regarded with a positively reverent affection, while to great numbers of young and inexperienced mothers, appallingly numerous in a district of the kind her counsel was invaluable.

On Tuesday afternoons, Abel organised a gathering when

the women came, not into the church, but into the less imposing hall ... with no attempt at dressing for the occasion, but in shawls and aprons.

Officially called the Women's Meeting, this gathering was known locally as the 'Wivies' Meeting'!

Over time, other women

were enlisted in the work, and they met with Mr. Duncan regularly on Monday afternoons to report, and for consultation and prayer. The value of the agency became so obvious that after a time it was adopted as part of the general evangelistic organisation of the city.³³

²⁸ 'Remarkable Exemption from Cholera' *The Standard* 5 Jan 1855; *The Morning Chronicle* 6 Jan 1855 p7; *The Bradford Observer* 11 Jan 1855 p3 & *Ragged School Magazine*, 159.

²⁹ 'Practical Christianity' *The Manchester Examiner and Times* 25 April 1857; *The Leeds Mercury* 6629.

³⁰ *ECIHINE* 453 quoting *Scottish Congregational Magazine* 1855, 231.

³¹ *The Standard* 5 Jan 1855; *The Morning Chronicle* 6 Jan 1855; *The Bradford Observer* 11 Jan 1855; *The Wesleyan-Methodist magazine* 152; 'The Aberdeen Ragged Kirk' *The Scotsman* no 5889 p3.

³² H Escott *A History of Scottish Congregationalism* (Glasgow 1960) 257 recorded Duncan's 'famous ministry of twenty-three years' at Trinity Congregational Church—but Duncan had a twenty-year ministry at Albion Street prior to that (Escott 337).

³³ Allan John Duncan 73, 74.

A Bible Women's and Evangelical Association was formed, its objective being to:

secure the spiritual and temporal elevation of the people in those poorer districts within the city and neighbourhood not overtaken by any evangelical congregation.³⁴

There was, however, another motivating factor for the formation of an Association. Duncan had been paying Abel a weekly contribution:

out of his own pocket ... On learning by accident where her payments were coming from, she stoutly refused to touch another penny, and the resulting deadlock was one of the factors which led to the official organisation of the work.³⁵

In 1872 it was recorded that the Association, by working in parts of Aberdeen:

unoccupied by other agencies, has been the means of effecting a large amount of good ... especially among the friendless poor and dying.³⁶

The Association employed eleven Bible women in Aberdeen in 1872³⁷ and in 1896,³⁸ and ten in 1899.³⁹ At the 1895 meeting, it was noted that two of the appointments were funded by individuals, three partly by churches, and six entirely by the Association.⁴⁰ The number of appointments, however, did fluctuate. In 1886 it was reported that eight Bible women were 'actively engaged, but that the vacancy created by the death of Margaret Abel had, 'not yet been filled up owing to the state of the funds'.⁴¹ Abel's successor did not have as long a period of service. In 1888, it was noted that the previous year the Church had:

appointed a Bible woman in connection with the church; but this agency for good had been put an end to owing to the inability of the woman to carry on the work through ill health.⁴²

In addition to visiting the sick and dying, and providing advice on household matters, the Aberdeen Bible women

34 'Aberdeen Biblewomen's Association' *Aberdeen Journal* 27 Jan 1886 p7.

35 Allan *John Duncan* 118–119.

36 'Aberdeen Evangelistic and Bible Women's Association' *Aberdeen Journal* 19 June 1872 p4.

37 *Aberdeen Journal* 19 June 1872.

38 'Aberdeen Bible Women's Association' *Aberdeen Weekly Journal* 12 Feb 1896 p6.

39 'Aberdeen Biblewomen' *Aberdeen Weekly Journal* 31 Jan 1899 p7.

40 'Aberdeen Bible Women's and Evangelistic Association' *Aberdeen Weekly Journal* 12 Feb 1895 p2.

41 'Aberdeen Biblewomen's Association' *Aberdeen Journal* 27 Jan 1886 p7.

42 'Trinity Congregational Church' *Aberdeen Weekly Journal* 26 Sep 1888 p5.

sold Bibles and portions of the Bible on instalment plans and distributed huge numbers of tracts free of charge ... They distributed soup kitchen tickets, new and second hand clothing, bedding and household items.⁴³

When smallpox and fever hit Aberdeen, there was a concern that the community should be protected by isolating patients. Striking quickly and spreading easily, smallpox has been described as the most infectious, known, human disease.⁴⁴ Perhaps a third of those who caught it died—and those who survived could be permanently scarred or blinded. Plague struck periodically. Smallpox, by contrast,

was always present, filling the churchyards with corpses, tormenting with constant fear all who it had not yet stricken, leaving on those whose lives it spared the hideous traces of its power, turning the babe into a changeling at which the mother shuddered, and making the eyes and cheeks of the betrothed maiden the objects of horror to the lover.⁴⁵

A new responsibility was given to the Bible women with the Ladies' Sanitary Association asking them (and 'district visitors') to urge the removal of patients to hospital.⁴⁶ Some tasks, though time-consuming, were altogether more pleasant. In 1893, following a 'very successful' flower service at the Aberdeenshire town of Turriff:

The large collection of flowers was dispatched to the district Bible Women in Aberdeen, for distribution among the sick and poor people.⁴⁷

Bible women in Scotland

Bible women started to appear across Scotland but the employing body varied. In 1864, an 'Experienced Biblewoman' was being recruited for Coatbridge, suggesting that the concept was known and understood.⁴⁸ The United Presbyterians had 195 'missionaries, Biblewomen, and catechists paid by ... various congregations' in 1871,⁴⁹ though it is unclear what proportion Bible women formed of the total. The following year there was an increase of 19 to 214.⁵⁰ In 1872, Glasgow Presbytery of the Church of Scotland was employing

43 McCall 'Biblewomen' 30.

44 S R Duncan, S Scott, C J Duncan 'Smallpox Epidemics in Cities in Britain' *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 15:2 (1994) 255.

45 T B Macaulay *The History of England from the Accession of James II* Vol 4 (1879) 72.

46 'Ladies' Sanitary Association' *The Aberdeen Journal* 22 Feb 1865 p5.

47 'District News, Turriff, Flower Service' *Aberdeen Weekly Journal* 20 July 1893 p7.

48 *Glasgow Herald* 3 Dec 1864 p1.

49 'The United Presbyterians' *Glasgow Herald* 7 Sep 1871 p4.

50 'United Presbyterian Synod, Report on General Statistics' *Glasgow Herald* 15 May 1872 p4.

seven Bible women.⁵¹ According to the returns from Presbyteries, the Church of Scotland was employing 32 Bible women in 1877.⁵² The Free Church of Scotland was employing 22 Bible women in foreign missions in 1885;⁵³ and the 1894 Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland noted the work done by Bible women in Peterhead, Fraserburgh, Wick and Stornoway, as well as in Aberdeen.⁵⁴ Although

Almost all of Aberdeen's Biblewomen were unmarried ... in other parts of Scotland, they tended to be widows.⁵⁵

Margaret Macgregor would become known as the 'Bible woman of Govan'.⁵⁶ She served as Lady Superintendent of the non-denominational Fairfield Works Mission for more than thirty years—initially alongside her husband, and then in widowhood after 1883.⁵⁷ Macgregor is probably unique in Scotland in having a church named in her memory (built 1902–1904 and demolished 1994).⁵⁸

Over time, there were more and more suggestions as to the causes which Bible women might advocate. The Directors of the Glasgow Model Lodging Homes Association believed that their occupancy rates would be increased if

city missionaries, Biblewomen, and others similarly situated, were aware of the comfortable arrangements of the home.⁵⁹

A speaker at the AGM of the National Security Savings Bank urged all employers to promote savings banks—but also asked that 'clergymen, missionaries and biblewomen should do the same'.⁶⁰

The Poor Children's Dinner Table Society started in Glasgow in the winter of 1868 to provide free meals for destitute children in the city. Within 3 years, the Society was operating from five locations, with plans for a sixth. 'Proper precautions' were taken to ensure that only needy children attended—with tickets being distributed by ministers, missionaries, Bible women, and the police. In addition, each table was 'superintended' by Bible women, missionaries and

51 'Established Presbytery of Glasgow' *Glasgow Herald* 8 Aug 1872 p4.

52 F D Bardgett *Devoted Services Rendered, The Lay Missionaries of the Church* (Edinburgh 2002) 56.

53 'Foreign Missions' *Aberdeen Weekly Journal* 28 May 1885 p6.

54 'Free Church, The Highlands and Islands' *Aberdeen Weekly Journal* 1 June 1894, 12273, 6.

55 McCall 'Biblewomen' 30.

56 D P Thomson *Women of the Scottish Church* (Perth 1975) 326.

57 *Women of the Scottish Church* 322.

58 *Glasgow Herald* 4 April 1994 www.heraldsotland.com/news/12677068.car-park-to-replace-landmark-church/ (accessed 29/05/19).

59 'Glasgow Model Lodging Houses Association' *Glasgow Herald* 19 May 1870 p6.

60 'National Security Savings Bank of Glasgow' *Glasgow Herald* 4 Jan 1871 p3.

lady visitors.⁶¹ In 1870, Glasgow's Lord Provost presided at a New Year's supper in the City Hall, attended by around 1700 'poor persons' and Bible women. (Beef, potatoes, bread and butter, and plum pudding were served—with enough left over for everyone to take home something for the next day's dinner.)⁶² A little reference in a newspaper of 1898 suggest both the esteem in which Bible women were held, and the fact that they 'were poorly paid'.⁶³ In Christmas of that year, a

gentleman ... presented to all the missionaries and Bible women ... the seasonable gift of a fine turkey.⁶⁴

The end of an era

As living conditions for the poor improved:

and the risk of further outbreaks of ... contagious diseases abated, the need for Biblewomen reduced. Other professionals, such as nurses, undertook many of their duties and the state increasingly assumed responsibility for services formerly provided by churches and charities.⁶⁵

The opening of all roles equally to men and women was, of course, another factor leading to the decline in women-specific roles. Partick Congregational Church was the first church in Scotland (of any denomination) to call a woman minister when it appointed Miss Vera M M Findlay in 1928. The first female deacons followed in the same church in April 1929.⁶⁶ On 29 April 1929, the Congregational Union of Scotland:

carried a constitutional amendment which allowed 'Minister' to apply equally to women and men.⁶⁷

In the 20th century, Albion Street Congregational Church amalgamated with St Paul's Street Congregational Church (where Andrew Fairbairn,⁶⁸ the first principal of Mansfield College, Oxford had been minister). The new Albion Street and St Paul's Congregational Church called its first minister in 1938.⁶⁹ Both former church buildings were purchased by the town council 'to

61 'Dinners for Poor Children' *Glasgow Herald* 23 Jan 1871.

62 'New Year's Supper to the Poor' *Glasgow Herald* 6 Jan 1870 p4.

63 McCall 'Biblewomen' 30.

64 'Generous Christmas Gift' *Glasgow Herald* 31 Dec 1898 p6.

65 McCall 'Biblewomen' 30.

66 G S Fielding *Partick Congregational Church 1891–2011, One Hundred and Twenty, Not Out* (Glasgow 2011) Chapter 3 (no page numbers).

67 L O Macdonald 'Kenmure (nee Findlay), Vera Mary Muir' ODNB.

68 For Fairbairn see ODNB.

69 'New Minister for Aberdeen' *The Scotsman* 24 May 1938 p8.

be demolished to make way for schemes of public improvement'.⁷⁰ The Trinity Congregational Church building, which grew out of Albion Street Church, now forms part of the Aberdeen Maritime Museum.⁷¹

Gordon A Campbell

⁷⁰ 'Aberdeen Public Improvement Schemes' *The Scotsman* 1 Feb 1938 p14.

⁷¹ <http://www.aagm.co.uk/Visit/AberdeenMaritimeMuseum/amm-history.aspx> (accessed 29/05/19).

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‘A GODLY HONEST HEART’¹—IN SEARCH OF GEOFFREY NUTTALL AND THE WELSH SAINTS

In 2000 the historian of nonconformity, Geoffrey Fillingham Nuttall (1911–2006) suffered a stroke at his retirement flat in Selly Oak, Birmingham. He had been due to take his usual holiday at Oberhofen, Switzerland a few weeks later and I had agreed to accompany him. On visiting him in hospital I had suggested that when he had sufficiently recovered his health I was willing as a consolation to drive him to a holiday destination of his choice in this country, if air travel was now impossible for him. Some time later he decided that he wanted to have a few days in Shropshire, specifically at Church Stretton. He then sought advice from friends and neighbours and finally opted for a bed and breakfast establishment on Burway Road, Church Stretton. It transpired that Geoffrey had long entertained a fondness for the town, having been there with his family when he was young. In fact he told me that he had met Richmal Crompton, the author of the ‘Just William’ stories, there and played a game with her in their hotel. Church Stretton had been something of an inland holiday resort in the beginning of the twentieth century, as some of its buildings might still suggest.

Consequently we agreed to go after Easter and we did so repeatedly in each of the last five years of Geoffrey’s life. I would drive from London to his new home near Bromsgrove to which he had moved once it became clear that he could no longer cope for himself in his small flat in Queen Mother Court, Selly Oak. On leaving hospital he had moved to a large room in Burcot Grange, a spacious Edwardian house set in its own grounds where he was to receive something approaching full care. To that room he took as many of his books as he could, mostly reference works, his own writings (proudly filling almost a shelf of his bookcase) and his beloved volumes of Erasmus, Dante and a few other firm favourites. Thus he was able to reproduce most of the comforts he had enjoyed in Queen Mother Court. Of course, in Burcot Grange he was to continue to receive visits from many old friends, including Liz and Pat Collinson, Alexander Murray and several members of this historical society.

Before each of our jaunts to the Welsh Marches I was instructed in a matronly fashion by staff members at Burcot Grange to see that he took his

¹ Walter Cradock’s description of Thomas Froyssell. G F Nuttall *The Welsh Saints 1640–1660: Walter Cradock, Vavasor Powell, Morgan Llwyd* (Cardiff 1957) 16–17. For Froyssell and Cradock see *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (henceforward *ODNB*).

daily dose of tablets but all else in our programme was up to us. Geoffrey had already decided what he wanted to see and when he would take his daily rest. I was to take with me any work on Congregational history on which I was then engaged so that together we might discuss the merits and demerits of my efforts. However I also ensured that I had with me my copy of Geoffrey's book *The Welsh Saints* (Cardiff 1957), knowing that we would be close to the territory covered in that work and that almost certainly he would want to retrace his steps. He had made a good recovery from his stroke and his mind seemed as sharp as ever.

Once established in our rooms in the guest house our daily pattern was for me to walk downstairs at an early hour to warn Geoffrey of the time some 45 minutes or so before breakfast. Then, after breakfast, we would set off in the car on our excursion for the day. On one of our first outings he was keen to revisit the parish church of More, secluded amidst the hills near Bishop's Castle. The church has a sturdy, square medieval tower, though most of the remaining structure is Victorian. At More one of Richard Baxter's critics and correspondents, George Lawson (bap 1598?–d 1678), was rector from before April 1636 until his death in 1678 when he was buried there.² Baxter had a consistently high opinion of Lawson and Lawson proved to be Geoffrey's 'prime interest' on this trip. After his death Lawson's large library was sold in 1680 but Richard More (bap 1627–d 1698), the son of Lawson's patron, Samuel More (1594?–1662), gave a 'substantial teaching library' to the parish of More in that year, which library he valued at over £100, probably intending the gift as a memorial to Lawson. During the Civil Wars when attempts were made to set up a national Presbyterian system for the English Church, the parish of More was in Shropshire's 6th classical presbytery (often shortened to classis, the plural being classes), as was also neighbouring Lydbury North, another parish of interest to Geoffrey and the Welsh saints. Lawson did conform at the Restoration but evidence suggests that this may not have been easy for him and he retained several friends among the nonconformists. This remote part of south Shropshire, close to the borders of Herefordshire and Radnorshire allowed a sensitive scholar to retreat with his books and his conscience at a distance from the rigours of episcopal inspection.

On his sole previous visit to More Geoffrey remembered that he had found in the church itself a collection of old books—perhaps what remains of Richard More's gift. He wanted to see if they were still there and, if possible, he wished to examine them to see if they included Lawson's own writings. He realised that the lighting in the church might be poor and so he proposed to take a torch with us. He also wished to discover if any memorial tablets in the church

2 For Baxter, Lawson, Samuel and Richard More see *ODNB*.

related to members of the More family, some men of whom had been named as elders in the classis, although others from the parish had held office also in the 1640s and 50s. We found the More chapel dating from 1640 with its monument to Harriet More and in front the brass dedicated to Richard More.³ Lastly, of course, Geoffrey wished to see if a table of incumbents there might include Lawson's dates as rector. Of course, Geoffrey was correct and the books were still there, set aside in a transept of the church. The upshot was that he expected me to stand on a table to list the titles and authors of all the books, thirty or so as I recall.

However I have been informed recently that the More parish library is regarded as a 'very valuable asset' and is safely stored now among the archives at Hereford Cathedral. Certainly the books were vulnerable to thieves in the church but now are 'under lock and key'. They may still be seen on request in the archives if interested visitors and scholars wish to do so. All such enquirers are asked first to make an appointment.⁴

On another day Geoffrey encouraged me to explore Church Stretton itself. He accompanied me on a visit to the parish church and stood outside the P R Morley Horder designed Silvester Horne Institute whilst I made my investigations inside. The institute is named after the Congregational minister who made a dramatic impact on the Edwardian scene. (Charles) Silvester Horne (1865–1914) died unexpectedly on board a liner in the St Lawrence river in 1914 as the boat entered Toronto harbour and his body was brought back to Church Stretton where he had a home. He is buried in the graveyard there and a photograph of him is kept inside the entrance to the institute.⁵ It is not difficult to imagine the grand horse drawn coaches coming down the hill from the Hornes' large White House and pulling up on a Sunday outside the Congregational (now United Reformed) Church in the High Street, almost opposite the very handsome institute. I was then working on what was to become my *Transformation of Congregationalism* (Nottingham 2013) so Horne himself and his concerns, W B Selbie's *The Life of Charles Silvester Horne* (1920) and the world of early twentieth century Congregationalism figured largely in my thinking.

Whilst in Shropshire the weather was at times inclement, preventing us from discussing issues in the garden of our guest house, so we often took the car to the extensive National Trust territory, half a mile or so from the centre of Church Stretton at Carding Mill Valley. We would park in the car park and sit for an hour or more to turn over the next draft (perhaps a chapter or part of a chapter) of my writings. On these occasions Geoffrey would never agree to

3 M Moulder *A Shell Guide: Shropshire* (1973) 104–105.

4 Thanks to Sue Cooke, the administrator of the OnnyCamlad Benefice.

5 For Horne and P R Morley Horder (1870–1944) see *ODNB*.

my frustrated hope to have tea in the café. Rather we would watch the walkers depart on their excursions along The Long Mynd, the rocky outcrop which dominates the landscape of this part of the Marches and which name betrays its former Welsh occupants.

One interesting outing we made was to the unexpected (to me) delights of Langley Chapel, a small rectangular stone box-like place of worship, set in the fields, close to the former manor house, Langley Hall. It is far from any village or settlement but is a grade one listed building. This charming, early 17th century Anglican chapel, is totally unspoilt by later ‘improvers’, having been abandoned and thereby escaping modernisation and lacking the unnecessary addition of a chancel or a raised pulpit or a fancy reading desk. Built in 1601 on the site of an earlier chapel it was clearly too remote for the Oxford Movement to fret about its character and its settings for worship. The simple, unadorned Lord’s Table is on three sides surrounded by bench pews for communicants to sit on. No kneeling was likely to occur at the table because no communion rail nor cushioned kneeler existed or exists to encourage this. Langley Chapel was built in 1601, located some one and a half miles south of Acton Burnell. It is cared for now by English Heritage and has a complete set of original seventeenth century wooden furnishings—box pews, a musicians’ desk and a simple one-step-up pulpit. The carved and testered reading pew is sited so that the reader using it must always face the people. The absence of a chancel is in accord with the prevailing Protestantism of late Elizabethan England, as well as in line with the chapel’s small dimensions. Very few surviving churches date from this period, making Langley all the more special, as was clear to me on first acquaintance, and which point Geoffrey underlined. On a recent return visit for me, my wife was equally impressed, as I had first been. Although it took us on this visit some time to find the chapel, the mis-turnings were forgotten once we saw its unique beauty. Langley remains ‘a moving memorial to the simplicities of Puritan worship’.⁶

Despite its attractive simplicity, Langley Chapel’s east window has tracery in a plain Gothic style, although the doorways are vernacular, one with a flat lintel and another round-headed. The rectangular window at the north end is also plain. Replacing a medieval chapel, it provided worship for the nearby Langley Hall, whose ruined gatehouse now form part of a nearby farm complex. The fall of Langley Hall and labour-intensive farming in the nineteenth century saw the local population decline, causing the chapel to fall into disuse. In 1914, it was among the first buildings to come into the care of the then Ministry of Works, a rare time capsule.

6 M Moulder *A Shell Guide: Shropshire* (1973) 91–92, J Leonard *Shropshire Parish Churches* (Derby 1994) 16.

I had managed in my memory to confuse Langley with Heath Chapel, also lonely, isolated and grade one listed, but near enough to Church Stretton for the confusion to arise. On our more recent sojourn in Shropshire, my wife and I drove then to Heath Chapel, full of hope, but on arrival leaving me a little humbled by my mistake. Heath is the sole survivor of a medieval village. To my eye Heath is not as appealing as Langley but such comparisons are futile and it too is modest and unprepossessing. It also stands alone in a field, 'far from the madding crowd', and has a charm which in this case dates back to its Norman, mid-twelfth century foundation.

Of course, Heath Chapel, like Langley, belongs to the Church of England and has been described as 'the perfect example of a rich little Norman chapel'. It has neither tower nor belfry but only small, slit windows, high up in the walls of this sandstone, barn-like building with a round arched doorway. Inside are five Jacobean box-pews and a double-decker pulpit, also dating from the seventeenth century, with another pew constructed from recycled medieval timber. In the Reformation period Heath's walls were whitewashed, covering the medieval murals, and pews were placed in both the nave and the chancel. In the early twentieth century some of the wall paintings were exposed to show St George on one wall and the Last Judgement above the chancel. The solid Norman font reinforces the ancient grace of the chapel.⁷ Geoffrey visited Heath Chapel with his parents as a young child and with me when he was 92 years old on St George's Day, 23 April 2003.

One further visit took us to the parish church of St Michael and All Angels at Lydbury North. This basically Norman church is large and imposing, with a massive buttressed tower (from the thirteenth century) which suggests its use for defence, if necessary, on the Marches. The present tranquillity has replaced a turbulent past with the area repeatedly changing hands between the Welsh and the English. During the late 1630s and 1640s Humphrey Walcot of Walcot, Lydbury North, and Sir Robert and Lady Brilliana Harley of nearby Brampton Bryan, had given protection to several puritan clergymen in the parish livings at their disposal. Geoffrey recalled that Thomas Froyssell of Clun had preached Humphrey Walcot's funeral sermon at Lydbury North in June 1650 and later published it as *The Gale of Opportunity* (1650). In this Froyssell described Walcot as being 'as meek as a Lamb', always ready to accept rebuke, even from an inferior. He was 'wonderfull free from the tang of revenge; I knew no man had such a rare art of forgiving injuries as he had: if any had spoke ill of him, or done ill to him, he would be silent, and passe it by with this, *They are but men, they shew themselves to be men*'.⁸ In the church at Lydbury North are a Jacobean

7 J Newman and N Pevsner *Shropshire: The Buildings of England* (2006) 295, J Leonard *Shropshire Parish Churches* (Derby 1994) 37-38.

8 G F Nuttall *The Welsh Saints* (Cardiff 1957) 4, 13-14.

pulpit, carved box pews and memorials to the Walcot family in the seventeenth century Walcot chapel. Although the church was restored in 1901–2 and has an elaborate rood screen from that time, it still retains the commandments and creed of 1615, alongside much of the woodwork which our puritan saints would have known.

Yet Geoffrey was not merely interested in the puritanism of Lydbury North. He was also intrigued by the Plowden family who were faithful and prominent Roman Catholics, providing Jesuits, jurists and a rector of Stonyhurst College. William Plowden somehow became the patron of Lydbury, against expectations because Roman Catholics may not be patrons of Church of England livings. If then he became an Anglican, in Geoffrey's words, that made him 'a rogue elephant' in the family. Certainly the Plowden chapel in the north of the parish church is fourteenth century. Plowden Hall is an Elizabethan house two miles away, which has its own private chapel.⁹

Geoffrey and I also made our way to Thomas Froysell's Clun, one of the villages celebrated in A E Housman's set of poems *The Shropshire Lad* (1896) which Geoffrey would sometimes quote.

Clunton, Clunbury,
Clungunford and Clun,
Are the quietest places
Under the sun

This verse may in reality be Housman's variant of a traditional jingle with alternative superlative adjectives, such as 'prettiest' or 'wickedest'.¹⁰

Froysell, although a Presbyterian, was a key figure in the story of the Welsh saints. He was 'a kinsman, friend, and correspondent of Sir Robert Harley', a friend of Walter Cradock's 'patron and friend, Humphrey Walcot' and a sponsor of Vavasor Powell. Richard Baxter described Froysell as an 'ancient Divine, of extraordinary worth', 'great for true Holiness both in Heart and Life ... No man at once more Heavenly and yet Humble'. Clearly Froysell influenced the three Welsh saints, sharing his 'gracious, eager, loving spirit'. He was not himself Welsh and never became an Independent, like them. However Geoffrey explained his relation to them in *The Welsh Saints*, in the words of his three heroes. Firstly Cradock wrote, 'Presbytery and Independency are not two religions; but one religion to a godly, honest heart; it is only a little ruffling of the fringe'. And Powell stated, 'if such a man hath union with the Lord, he hath right to have Communion with the Saints'. Finally the mystic Llwyd.

9 M Moulder *A Shell Guide: Shropshire* (1973) 97–98, J Leonard *Shropshire Parish Churches* (Derby 1994) 51.

10 D Eagle and H Carnell *The Oxford Literary Guide to the British Isles* (Oxford 1977) 64.

Men's faces, voices, differ much
 saints are not all one size
 flowers in one garden vary too
 lest none monopolize.¹¹

In their rural backwater, Froyssell surprised the three men with his generosity of spirit. When Geoffrey and I were walking arm in arm (he was frail) in St George's parish church we were surprised by the friendly greeting of the vicar who, it transpired, had himself been taught by Geoffrey in the University of London. The vicar had been educated at King's College and taken some classes which Geoffrey had taught. The two exchanged memories for a few minutes and then we continued to admire the Jacobean pulpit and its sounding board above. The nearby ruins of Clun Castle reminded us of the once bitter conflicts raging on the Marches.

I was especially keen to visit Llanfair Waterdine, four miles from Knighton and near the village of Knucklas south-west of Clun. This turned out to be the most remote of the settlements which had sheltered any of these saints. The village is situated on the southern edge of the Clun Forest, set in deep countryside, and was historically in Wales, lying west of Offa's Dyke. The River Teme has altered its course since the Act of Union with Wales 1535-42 and the border between Wales and England no longer follows the centre of the River Teme as it once did, but stays on what was the course of the river when these statutes fixed the border.

Llanfair Waterdine still feels remote. It has few amenities apart from a 16th century public house, now a restaurant and hotel, which Geoffrey flatly refused to enter, although it was past lunchtime, we were both hungry, and few, if any, customers seemed to be there. This inn originally served those drovers driving animals to English livestock markets. We returned to Church Stretton, finding something to eat along the way.

These visits to Shropshire were by no means a trial. Geoffrey would let his hair down and I could tease him. Yet I received a series of invaluable tutorials on my writings and I saw the churches which inspired and enabled movements of the Spirit among the people of Wales. Curiously we did not together visit Brampton Bryan nor Leintwardine which both figure significantly in his account of the Welsh Saints and their friends. Nor did we stop in Ludlow or at that fine fortified medieval manor house, Stokesay Castle, though I made a case for doing both and have since been to them and have at last been able to walk on the Long Mynd. We did visit Much Wenlock and the picturesque ruined Wenlock Priory which had been closed with the dissolution of the monasteries. Looking back I am left with a set of powerful memories which together form

¹¹ G F Nuttall *The Welsh Saints* (Cardiff 1957) 16-17.

a master class in field visits, especially in what to look for in the parish church when one is researching the puritans. In particular I am also thankful for a more recent saint whose 'godly honest heart' touched many lives and helped them to see the church and the world for the better.

Alan Argent

BOOKS WHICH MAY INTEREST CHS MAGAZINE READERS:

Selected from Congregational Federation publications available in 2019. Order form at: <https://www.congregational.org.uk/downloads/forms/publications-order-form-201804.pdf>

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

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

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

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

The Angels' Voice: A magazine for young men in Brixton, London 1910–1913 (2016) and *Elsie Chamberlain: The Independent Life of a Woman Minister* (2012) by Alan Argent are available from Amazon and other retailers.

REVIEWS

***Protestant Pluralism: The Reception of the Toleration Act, 1689–1720.* By Ralph Stevens. *Studies in Modern British Religious History, Volume 37.* The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2018. Pp xiv + 206. Hardback £65. ISBN 978-1-78327-329-4**

Toleration of those who disagree with the dominant group in any society is challenging and few societies truly attain it. A study of the Toleration Act of 1689 is long overdue. That act permitted Protestant dissenters to worship publicly without inhibition from the authorities. That is they were already an actuality but in 1689 they gained legal recognition. Now they were able to absent themselves from worship in the parish churches and to form their own churches (which, of course, they had been doing for some decades). Thus a new religious reality was established. Church of England clerics might still want to coerce their fellow Protestants into the parish churches and some Presbyterians might yearn for a more comprehensive established church, allowing them back in, but it was not to be. Religious plurality was to be the future. The Act marked the acceptance by the government that the campaign to force all subjects into one form of Christianity had failed.

This study concentrates on the new religious order, exploring the points at issue between the establishment and the dissenters. Stevens examines both the political and the pastoral consequences of toleration. He does this in seven chapters, dealing with religion after the revolution of 1688 and the overthrow of James II by William and Mary, public office (touching on occasional conformity), the reformation of manners (moral reform being a long desired aim of the reforming communities), education (dissenters were excluded from the universities), baptism, chapels, and Protestants in Hanoverian England.

By the 1720s a form of religious stability had developed. Yet local landowners and justices of the peace found it difficult to concede equal rights to those who affronted them. In a hierarchical society how does one allow one's inferiors to choose otherwise than the course ordered for them from above? Adjustment and acceptance across social barriers would take more than the passing of a statute. Of course, the coming of Methodism in the mid-18th century would only add fuel to the fires still burning.

This is not a long book and it is clear and insightful. Stevens succeeds in explaining an important but largely misunderstood piece of legislation and its

ramifications. The key is in his subtitle—the ‘reception’ of the Toleration Act. I like the work and recommend it to CHS Magazine readers.

Lesley Powell

***Crucicentric, Congregational, and Catholic: The Generous Orthodoxy of Alan P F Sell.* By David Peel. Pickwick Publications, Eugene, Oregon, 2019. Pp xvi + 298. Paperback £24.99. ISBN 978-1-5326-4076-6**

Alan Philip Frederick Sell (1935–2016) was a prolific author. He had an open face, with sharp, clear penetrating eyes, as the photograph on the cover of this book makes clear. He was always busy, researching, checking, preaching, attending, organising and speaking at conferences and he set himself targets in turning out his books every year. His many writings reveal a desire to recover the largely forgotten and overlooked contribution of various Congregational and Reformed thinkers to theology which, in consequence, meant that Sell himself was difficult to categorise. Was he a theologian, or a historian, or possibly even a philosopher? He would probably have seen himself as something of all three, although historians tend to see him as a theologian. Certainly his many publications range across the twin disciplines of church history and theology and David Peel, in this book, lists Sell’s writings over some 27 pages—a truly staggering total! Clearly in reading and reflecting on all these works, Peel has had a mammoth task before he could begin to write this study.

This then is not a biography. Rather it offers an insight into and exploration of Alan Sell’s theology which takes as its starting point Sell’s voluminous publications. Peel traces Sell’s own reliance on the mature theology of P T Forsyth and therefore on the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. Sell’s roots lay in Congregationalism although, as an ecumenist, he quickly came to regret the sectarian divisions in the church and argued for a revival of interest in unity. Hence the adjective ‘generous’ in the subtitle of this study.

Peel raises a series of challenging questions. For all Alan Sell’s adherence to the traditions from which he came, and his openness to other traditions, are his commitments and theological conclusions justified by Jesus’ own ministry and witness? And even more challenging—does Sell’s teaching tackle and address issues of concern to modern Christians? Do contemporary Christians find that Alan Sell is speaking to them? His understanding of Christianity was tested throughout his ministry in various jobs in England, in Geneva, in Canada and in Wales and the world is the same but subtly and significantly different in all these places. Although Jesus was able to speak directly to all, his followers among modern thinkers may not expect his facility in striking so unerringly at the heart of their hearers and readers.

David Peel has achieved much with this book—not only in posing entirely valid questions but in providing a synthesis of a complex man and his thinking.

For this we are in his debt. The church needs its thinkers and Alan Sell never stopped in his attempts to explain the church's insights to itself. For this and many other reasons this book deserves to be read, although one minor quibble presents itself. I wonder if readers might find the mouthful of a title disconcerting. Would it have been easier to cope with had the title and subtitle been reversed?

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