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**Volume 9 No 1 Spring 2019**

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## EDITORIAL

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This issue includes a discussion of the Christian ministry from our CHS secretary, Richard Cleaves, inspired by his own retirement and his discovery forty years previously of P T Forsyth's letter of acceptance of the pastorate of Clarendon Park Congregational Church, Leicester. We wish Richard a long, happy and healthy retirement, although we suspect that it will not be an idle one.

We also have Roger Ottewill revisiting pre-1914 Congregationalism, specifically at East Cliff, Bournemouth, a church which may have been overlooked by historians, given its more celebrated neighbour Richmond Hill. Our third article offers a discussion of the Bible women, a little known movement set up by the equally little known Victorian social reformer, Ellen Ranyard. All three articles therefore keep our readers firmly in the Victorian and modern era, although the first deals with the borderland between theology and history, the second is more institutional in nature, and the third concentrates on the contribution of women to radical changes in society, informed by one woman's Congregational upbringing. All our readers should find some morsel to their taste.

## NEWS AND VIEWS

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The Centre for Baptist History and Heritage, Oxford and the Baptist Historical Society marked the tercentenary of the **Salters' Hall Debates of 1719** with a study day entitled **Trinity, Creed and Confusion** with three speakers and a round-table discussion at Regent's Park College, Oxford on 23 March 2019. We hope that the papers and even a summary of the discussion may be published in the near future.

### **Mary Challis House and Garden, Sawston**

In these days of climate change, global warming and green issues, the involvement of Congregationalists in the development of gardens and orchards is well worth recording. The Mary Challis House and Garden at Sawston, about seven miles south of Cambridge, deserves particular mention in this respect. Thomas Challis (1754–1816) was a farmer and one of the founders of Sawston Congregational Church. His son Jonathan married a daughter of James Everard of nearby Pampisford and from his father-in-law he gained Monk's Orchard

in Sawston. Jonathan's son, Arthur James Challis, built the family house in the High Street about 1850 and also developed Monk's Orchard which is now known as the Mary Challis Garden. Mary (1925–2006) was Arthur's granddaughter and, after her father's death in 1942, she dedicated her life to the care of the estate and also to her mother. Mary was a Sunday School teacher and a lay preacher. On her death in 2006 she left her house and two acres of garden in trust for the benefit of Sawston and its neighbourhood.

The house now has a library, a meeting room, and a small exhibition room. Since 2007 volunteers have maintained a well-stocked ornamental garden, lawns, a pond, winter garden and a small orchard. See the website <http://challistrust.org.uk/challis-house> for visiting hours.

The well known historian of seventeenth century puritanism and of Richard Baxter, **Professor Willie Lamont**, died peacefully aged 84, after a long illness on 31 December 2018. He was a lively, stimulating scholar, open to students and researchers and much loved by family, friends and fellow historians.

**Avenue St Andrew's URC, Southampton**, is running a major renovation project on its church building which, as Avenue Congregational Church, was designed by the distinguished architect James Cubitt (1836–1912) and his colleague George Frederick Collinson, and built in 1897–98. As part of the project, the minister and members are hoping to do some research into Cubitt's principles of church design and how that was worked out in the sanctuary there. The church fellowship and in particular the minister, Dr Sarah Hall, would welcome any observations from others worshipping in churches designed by Cubitt. Check the website [asauc.org.uk/church-archives/](http://asauc.org.uk/church-archives/) for contact details.

We should also draw our readers' attention to **John Ruskin** (1819–1900) on this the 200th anniversary of his birth. The Victorian sage Ruskin was the leading English art critic of his age, as well as an eminent social thinker and philanthropist. His writing ranged widely over geology, architecture, literature, education, science and political economy. He was brought up in what is now south London just off Denmark Hill, Camberwell, and with his family attended an Independent church, just off the Walworth Road.

Since he was born in February, some of the events listed on [www.ruskin200.com/](http://www.ruskin200.com/) may already taken place when you receive this magazine. However the exhibition **Ruskin, Turner and the Storm Cloud: Watercolours and Drawings** will be at York Art Gallery, York, March 29–June 23, moving to Abbot Hall Art Gallery, Kendal, 12 July–5 October. Others may visit **John Ruskin: Art & Wonder** at the Millennium Gallery, Sheffield, 29 May–15 September. A conference **Art for the Nation: John Ruskin, Art Education and Social Change** will be at the National Gallery, London 20–21 September. Emphasizing that 'Turner's Venice became Ruskin's Venice and Turner became

one of the great shaping forces of Ruskin's life', the exhibition **Incandescence: Turner's Venice** will be at Ruskin's home, Brantwood, Coniston, Cumbria, 11 April-4 August. Such a variety of events and exhibitions does demonstrate that we should not underestimate the importance of Ruskin. I confidently predict radio and television programmes on this intriguing figure.

An exhibition **Van Gogh and Britain** from 27 March to 11 August 2019 will be held at Tate Britain, London. With over 40 works on display, this will be the largest collection of Van Gogh's paintings in the United Kingdom for 20 years. The artist's Christian upbringing and especially his likely involvement with Congregationalism in his years in England are little recorded.

**The Friends of the Congregational Library—summer event.** This will be held on Saturday, 1st June 2019 at the London Inter-Faith Centre, St Anne's and St Andrew's LEP, West Kilburn, 125 Salusbury Rd, London, NW6 6RG. The nearest station is Queen's Park on the Jubilee Line. Revd Dr John Parry will speak on T E Slater who was an LMS missionary in India. Contact Patricia Judd—[patriciajudd11@yahoo.com](mailto:patriciajudd11@yahoo.com)—for further details

**The United Reformed Church History Society** is holding a study conference at Westminster College, Cambridge from the afternoon of Wednesday 26 June to lunch on Thursday 27 June 2019. The conference theme is Beyond Borders. Dr Stephen Brown will give the society's Annual Lecture on Ecumenism in Socialism: The Protestant Churches in the German Democratic Republic and their Ecumenical Contacts. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Federation of Protestant Churches as a separate group of regional churches in East Germany (the GDR), distinct from those in West Germany. The lecture will focus on the ecumenical contacts of this 'Kirchenbund' with churches beyond the GDR, including those in Britain.

Other papers will examine the reception of the Bible in the Waldensian valleys of northern Italy, reflect on the dissenting traditions in the trans-Atlantic world of the 18th century and offer a perspective on Africa, Versailles and religion.

Twenty residential places have been booked, with day visitors also welcome. The cost for residents will be c. £90. The society would find it helpful to have definite expressions of interest at an early stage.

## **Dr Williams's Library**

As some of you may know, Dr Williams's Library moved to its present site in Gordon Square, Bloomsbury in 1890. The building had originally been designed, 45 years earlier, as a hall of residence for dissenters at the University of London. A recent survey has discovered that the weight of books (about

300,000) is too much and the whole structure needs strengthening. As a result the Library is now closed to readers until all essential building work has been satisfactorily completed. Estimates suggest that this may be a year or two.

## CORRESPONDENCE

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Michelle Thomasson has written to say that on 18th November 2018 a blue plaque was unveiled for **Minnie Turner** at Sea View, 13 Victoria Rd, Brighton, the guest house that she ran as a refuge for suffragettes who were recovering from imprisonment and forced feeding. Sea View is now a residence for students of Sussex University. Councillor Alan Robins, Chair of the Tourism, Development & Culture Committee, said: ‘I am extremely proud that, in this Centenary Year of Women’s partial achievement of the vote, we are unveiling the first of four very special blue plaques. They will not only provide a record of the huge contribution made by Minnie Turner and others to the suffrage movement in the city but also act as a permanent reminder for future generations of the struggle for democratic equality for women in Britain.’ Jean Calder, Secretary of the Brighton & Hove Women’s History Group added, ‘This memorial for Minnie is long overdue. She was a formidable woman who made Sea View a hub for the suffrage movement. It is fitting that the unveiling will happen on the anniversary of “Black Friday”, the day, 18 November 1910, when 300 suffragettes marching to Parliament were violently attacked by police for six hours. Minnie was present, as were several of her former guests and, in particular, her boarder, **Mary Clarke**, the WSPU organiser for Brighton [and Emmeline Pankhurst’s younger sister], who later tragically died.’ She was the first of three women to die following Black Friday—well before Emily Wilding Davison’s dramatic death under the King’s horse on Derby Day 1913.



image from Phelim Mac Cafferty

Jean Calder writing in the *Brighton and Hove Independent* on 17 January 2019 also stated that Brighton and Hove have few memorials for women and no statues other than of Queen Victoria. Three more such plaques at Brighton are not enough. An appeal has been made to fund a statue of Mary Clarke, as a symbol of equality, democracy and women’s rights. After her death she simply vanished from history and deserves to be restored to her rightful place in it.

Roger Ottewill has written:—

Here are just a few thoughts stimulated by another engaging issue of the *Congregational History Society Magazine*. Two articles in particular caught my

attention. McClune Uffen's ministry at Dorchester Congregational Church had many parallels with the pastorates of a number of Congregational ministers in late Victorian and Edwardian Hampshire. Their involvement with political issues, especially the campaign of passive resistance triggered by the Education Act 1902; close relations with other Free Church denominations; and working with young people were all much in evidence. It is a pity that Uffen left Dorchester in 1911 since I would be very interested to know how the church celebrated the 250th anniversary of the great ejection in 1912, especially in view of William Benn's experiences. Most of the '1662/3 Congregational Churches' in Hampshire used this opportunity to remind members of their heritage and the rights and privileges which they now enjoyed.

The second article was that about Minnie Turner. There are still many stories to be told of those who, like Minnie, were active in the campaign for women's suffrage at the local level. Her commitment and that of others I have noted, while researching the campaign in Basingstoke and Hampshire, deserve greater recognition. It would be good to know more about the involvement of Congregationalists, both clerical and lay, in promoting the cause of votes for women. One such was Alfred Clegg, minister of Boscombe Congregational Church 1910–17. In 1912, for example, he chaired a meeting of the Bournemouth branch of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies and provided, from a Christian perspective, a closely reasoned justification for giving women the vote.

I am also grateful to Peter Flower for his response to my observations concerning the status and role of women in Congregational churches in the hundred years between 1828 and 1928 and for directing me to his article in the *Journal of the Richmond Local History Society*. I appreciate that in some churches women did participate on equal terms with men from an early date. However, this was not universal, as Peter acknowledges, it was not until the 1930s, 'one hundred years after the founding of [Vineyard] church [that] women were playing leading roles in the church on an equal footing [with] men'. Consequently, I simply want to make a plea for the adoption of a more nuanced approach to this issue.



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

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

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

## **P T Forsyth and his Call to Clarendon Park Congregational Church, Leicester**

With some excitement, I came across the letter written by the church's first minister in accepting the call to be minister of Clarendon Park CC. It seemed a document of some importance and worth including in an appendix to the church history and I recently found the rough typescript I then made of that letter. Re-reading it, I was struck by the extent to which it had shaped my understanding of ministry. Indeed, some ideas I had considered my own were far from original.

On 14th January, 1886, 27 people had gathered together to pass the following resolution: 'that we whose names have now been read over do hereby unite together for the purpose of constituting a Christian Church according to the faith and order of the Congregational denomination, for the purpose of Christian worship, for the instruction of its own members in Christian truth and

duty and for the propagation of the gospel among those who have not received it.<sup>1</sup>

A fortnight later six deacons were elected and on 2nd March, 1886 the first services were held. On 18th April a church meeting unanimously agreed to call their first minister. The minutes record ‘that we, the members of Clarendon Park Congregational Church do hereby cordially invite the Rev P T Forsyth, MA, to become our Pastor, and pledge ourselves to do all in our power in every respect to aid him in his work of developing and building up the Church of Christ in our midst.’<sup>2</sup>

This was no mean appointment: the stipend was £400 per annum. The equivalent today can be variously measured: on the basis of the retail price index it would be £40,900; in relation to average earnings it would be £188,000; and in relation to per capita GDP it would be £295,000.<sup>3</sup> Born in Aberdeen in 1848, the son of a postman, Peter Taylor Forsyth ‘grew up in extremely frugal circumstances’<sup>4</sup> He achieved a first class degree in classics from Aberdeen University and became assistant lecturer and tutor at Göttingen, undertaking further studies with Albrecht Ritschl (1822–89). Already suffering with poor health, he attended New College, London to train for the ministry but was unable to complete the course. He became pastor of the Congregational Church in Shipley, Yorkshire, a church outside the Yorkshire Congregational Union, and was ordained in 1876. The following year he spoke at a Leicester Conference, convened by theologically liberal Congregationalists: his speech was entitled, ‘Free Trade in Theology’ and he advocated relying not so much on Paul, but leaning ‘simply on Christ’.<sup>5</sup> He aroused the ire of many in the Yorkshire Congregational Union for denying the substitutionary theory of the atonement.<sup>6</sup> Attending classes for young ministers led by his fellow Scot A M Fairbairn (1838–1912) newly appointed principal of Airedale College in Bradford, Forsyth’s views began to change.

In 1877 Forsyth married Minna Magness in a small church near Notting Hill Gate, London. Not long after he accepted a call to minister to the Congregational church in St Thomas’s Square, Hackney. By now his theology was undergoing a sea change. He describes what happened in an autobiographical comment in a key book, *Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind*,<sup>7</sup>

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1 N Waddington *The First Ninety Years - Clarendon Park Congregational Church, Leicester* (Leicester 1976) 1–2.

2 Waddington *Clarendon Park* 4.

3 ‘Five Ways to Compute the Relative Value of a UK Pound Amount, 1270 to Present’ [www.measuringworth.com/ukcompare](http://www.measuringworth.com/ukcompare) .

4 R McA Brown *P T Forsyth: Prophet for Today* (Philadelphia 1952) 17.

5 Brown *Forsyth* 18.

6 W L Bradley *P T Forsyth: The Man and His Work* (1952) 32.

7 P T Forsyth *Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind* (1907) 192–98.

There was a time when I was interested in the first degree with purely scientific criticism. Bred among academic scholarship of the classics and philosophy, I carried these habits to the Bible, and I found in the subject a new fascination, in proportion as the stakes were so much higher. But, fortunately for me, I was not condemned to the scholar's cloistered life. I could not treat the matter as an academic quest. I was [as a Minister] kept close to practical conditions. I was in a relation of life, duty, and responsibility for others.... I looked beyond my immediate charge, and viewed the state of mind and faith in the Church at large—especially in those sections of it nearest myself. And I became convinced that they were in no spiritual condition to have forced on them those questions on which scholars so delighted and differed. They were not entrenched in that reality of experience and that certainty of salvation which is the position of safety and command in all critical matters.<sup>8</sup>

It was not that he rejected a critical approach to faith and the Bible: he felt that such an approach should be founded on faith rooted in experience and the certainty of salvation. It is that certainty of salvation he went on to describe:

It also pleased God by the revelation of His holiness and grace, which the great theologians taught me to find in the Bible, to bring home to me my sin in a way that submerged all the school questions in weight, urgency, and poignancy.<sup>9</sup>

Forsyth is often seen as one of the great British theologians of this period, a Barthian before Barth.<sup>10</sup> This sentence contains much of his thinking on the holiness of God and the grace of God, on the revelation of God in the Bible. The next sentence captures the heart of the transformation that was so significant in Forsyth's thinking:<sup>11</sup>

I was turned from a Christian to a believer, from a lover of love to an object of grace.<sup>12</sup>

Not that Forsyth wanted to avoid scholarship: 'there was something to be done, I felt, before they could freely handle the work of the scholars on the central positions.'<sup>13</sup>

Forsyth does not date this transformation. Bradley argues, on the basis of correspondence in the *British Weekly* following Forsyth's death, that it happened early in his Hackney ministry. Forsyth went on to outline in his inimitable style,

8 *Positive Preaching* 193.

9 *Positive Preaching* 193.

10 Karl Barth, the Swiss theologian, (1886–1968). See *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*.

11 A Paddison 'P.T.Forsyth, "the Positive Gospel", and the Church' *Ecclesiology* 5 (2009) 29.

12 *Positive Preaching* 193.

13 *Positive Preaching* 194.

what could be his manifesto for the church and his ministry: he had recourse to what we would regard today as bullet points. The layout is mine:

And that something was to revive the faith of the churches in what made them churches;

- to turn them from the ill-found sentiment which had sapped faith;
- to re-open their eyes to the meaning of their own salvation;
- to rectify their Christian charity by more concern for Christian truth;
- to banish the amiable religiosity which had taken possession of them in the name of Christian love;
- and to restore some sense not only of love's severity, but of the unsparing moral mordancy in the Cross and its judgment, which means salvation to the uttermost;
- to recreate an experience of redemption, both profound and poignant,

[all of] which should enable them to deal reasonably, without extravagance and without panic, with the scholars' results as these came in.<sup>14</sup>

At this time in Hackney Forsyth left his mark on young people. Bradley quotes a medical student, 'unsettled in matters of belief by the scientific teaching of the materialist school', who attended a mid-week course taught by Forsyth. 'A sentence that has remained fixed in my memory was this,' wrote the student quoting Forsyth, 'Make it the one aim and supreme endeavour of your life to understand Christ, for of all Divines he is the most divine'.<sup>15</sup>

Forsyth moved to Cheetham Hill Congregational Church, Manchester, in 1885. Among his first published works is a collection of children's addresses, *Pulpit Parables for Young Hearers* and also a study of art and music, *Religion in Recent Art*. His ministry had a strong political edge which led him to contribute regularly to the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Manchester Examiner* under the pseudonym Publicola. In 1888 he addressed the Lancashire Congregational Union on 'The Relation of the Church to the Poor'.<sup>16</sup>

No doubt his involvement with the church in Manchester and the little time he had been there caused the delay in his response to the deacons at Clarendon Park. Their call was dated 18th April 1888 but he did not reply until 12th May, his 40th birthday. His letter of acceptance reflects the transformation in his Christian life: it encapsulates his understanding of the church and its ministry.

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<sup>14</sup> *Positive Preaching* 194.

<sup>15</sup> Bradley *Forsyth* 35–36.

<sup>16</sup> Bradley *Forsyth* 42.

The letter affected me 43 years ago when I was preparing to enter the Christian ministry.

## **P T Forsyth's Letter of Acceptance**

Cheetham Hill  
Manchester  
May 12 1888

To the Church and Congregation  
Clarendon Park  
Leicester

My dear friends,

### **Church and Congregation**

Forsyth deliberately addressed 'the Church and Congregation'. He rooted his theology of the church in the New Testament. 'There are in the New Testament but two ideas of the Church ... the local community, and the totality of believers in heaven and on earth—the totality of those who are in Christ.'<sup>17</sup> Forsyth went further to maintain that 'these two are ultimately one.'<sup>18</sup> For him 'the local Church was a community which was not self-contained, but which included spiritually all Christians elsewhere. In a word, the local Church was but the outcrop there of the total and continuous Church, one everywhere.'<sup>19</sup> As far as Forsyth was concerned, the church meeting in Clarendon Park was nothing less than 'the one community of faith everywhere which crops out there.'<sup>20</sup> That begs the question, why he should address them as 'the Church and Congregation'. Maybe in the word 'Congregation' he is thinking of 'the empirical meeting or society' which in Revelation and in James is referred to as συναγωγή (synagogue) something he goes on to suggest cannot actually be separated from the totality of those who are in Christ.<sup>21</sup>

### **Dear Friends**

There is affection in the style of his address, 'My dear friends'. Honoured as a great theologian, one may easily forget that he was minister in Shipley, Hackney, Manchester, Leicester and subsequently Cambridge for twenty-five years before becoming principal of Hackney College, Hampstead in 1901. His theology was developed while involved with all manner of people in church ministry. Indeed

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17 P T Forsyth *The Church and the Sacraments* (1917) 62–63.

18 *Church and Sacraments* 62.

19 *Church and Sacraments* 65.

20 *Church and Sacraments* 66.

21 *Church and Sacraments* 65.

by 1895 he had written enough to warrant an honorary doctorate from his own University of Aberdeen. Here in his letter of acceptance he anticipated that he would be joining those he would soon regard as ‘my dear friends’.

### **A Christian Call to be a Servant in Jesus Christ**

I have the honour of your Christian call; and you are aware of the special reasons for my delay in reply. I cannot longer defer my decision. I am your servant in Jesus Christ, if, when you hear the whole of this letter, you still will have it so. And let us trust that our interpretation of the Lord’s will is right, and that we unite because He will have it so.

It was not an invitation that he had received or an appointment he would undertake: Forsyth was clear he had received from Clarendon Park ‘a Christian call’. The invitation had been to be their pastor: he regarded himself as their ‘servant in Jesus Christ’. The primary meaning of the word ‘minister’ is ‘servant’: but it is wrong simply to think of a minister as a servant of the church to which he/she has been called. Forsyth was clear that he came as a ‘servant **in Jesus Christ.**’ On one occasion he reflected on the nature of such a ministry in an ordination address (undated): ‘lest you be overwhelmed with the greatness of your task, remember no church is given to any man without the Saviour of the Church and of him. After all it is Christ’s Church more than yours. He is the real Pastor of every real Church, and the Bishop of its minister. You are but his curate.’<sup>22</sup> Not until 1917 did Constance Coltman become the first woman ordained in a Congregational Church.

In his letter Forsyth gave priority to the Lord Jesus Christ. He instructed that his letter be read to the church and congregation. He would outline his own convictions. He recognized that the church and congregation should confirm their call in the light of his letter. There cannot be certainty: there can only be trust that both Forsyth and the people who make up the church and congregation have interpreted the will of the Lord aright. They come together only ‘because He will have it so.’ To read Forsyth aright one must hear a powerful Victorian preacher well versed in the art of rhetoric and in the power of language. In his acceptance he expressed his own convictions.

### **The twofold footing of P T Forsyth’s ministry**

In coming to you I come on a twofold footing which it is important to understand.

At the outset, he clarified his own stand. But note the metaphor. When he stated he came ‘on a twofold footing’ he chose his metaphor carefully. These

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22 H Escott *P T Forsyth and the Cure of Souls* (1970) 112.

truly are the two feet on which he stands. Each is of equal importance. Take one away and he falls.

## **1: The Task and the Faith**

First, I come, not, in the main, to make a certain congregation a prosperous concern, but as a minister of Christ and of the Church Universal, to declare and to apply the gospel of the Cross. I believe in the Incarnation of the Eternal Son of God in the sinless person of Jesus Christ; in the Redemption of Mankind through His death; and in His risen life as the unseen personal power which guides both the world and the Church to fulfil the Kingdom of God—especially through personal union with the Saviour.

You have a right to know thus clearly my position on such central points.

In accepting the call of the church in Leicester Forsyth was fully aware that it was a new church, built in the town's rapidly expanding suburbs. Until recently Clarendon Park had been farmland outside Leicester. As fields were sold for development, their outline may still be seen in the plan of the terraced streets of Clarendon Park. A small membership of 27 had built an imposing building with a seating capacity of 650. Herein lay a danger Forsyth was aware of. Note the word he used. He was not in the business of making a certain 'congregation', that's to say, an empirical meeting or society of like-minded people, 'into a prosperous concern'. He was called to something very different.

## **'I come ... as a minister of Christ and of the Church Universal'**

This statement resonated with me forty years ago. I had sensed a call to ministry at a young age and in choosing arts, not sciences, at 12 and Greek, not German, at 13 I was making choices at school that would lead towards studying Religious Education at A Level, Theology at university and training for the ministry. I had shared my sense of a call with my home church, Clarendon Park Congregational Church, Leicester. Two things deterred me. First, the thought that I was simply following in my father's footsteps. Second, the view espoused by many that I should have some experience of the world first and return to ministry in ten or twenty years' time. I resisted both.

My own church confirmed that call. I was accepted for ministerial training at Coleg Bala-Bangor with support from the newly formed Congregational Federation. Now Harden Congregational Church, not six miles from the Shipley church of Forsyth's ordination, called me to their ministry. In that ordination service I was clear, and those taking part - Tudur Jones, principal of my college who preached a charge to the church and my father, R W Cleaves

who preached a charge to me – that I was ordained a ‘minister of Christ and of the Church Universal.’ Indeed, representatives of Congregational and other churches shared in the laying on of hands. That part of the service over, I was inducted as ‘a minister of Christ and of the Church Universal’ into the pastorate of Harden Congregational Church.

It is a constant danger in ministry, not least in an independent Congregational church whose members are responsible for funding that ministry, to be beholden to the church to which you minister. Indeed, in today’s litigious world of employment law, it is tempting to think of oneself, as the law does, as ‘employed’ by the particular church to which you minister. That is not as it is. I was ordained as ‘a minister of Christ and of the Church Universal’: it is to Christ and to the totality of the Church that I owe my allegiance. That does not mean that I need not have regard for the people to whom I minister in the church of which I am minister. For, as Forsyth argued, the totality of the church universal ‘crops out’ in that very church.

Significantly Anglicans, Methodists as well as Congregationalists shared in the laying of hands at my ordination. Each local church has within it the rich variety of those who make up the totality of the Church. Forsyth was clear that ‘*The* [his italics] Church was not an aggregate made up by piling local communities together, but it was, like the Humanity Adam shared, a direct and collective creation of God’s Word. It descended and branches into these communities.’<sup>23</sup> That is a key way of understanding what Forsyth described as ‘the totality’ of the Church, ‘the Church Universal’. The Church was not created by the churches ‘but realised in them.’

His description of a local church is one we should recognize today and indeed has been true of all the churches where I have ministered. ‘Each local or sectional Church is at the same moment an ecumenical community, whose largest part is out of sight, as in an iceberg. This and that Church are but the tips of a submerged continent representing the whole Church, present and future, on earth or in heaven.’<sup>24</sup>

Forsyth was passionate about the need for unity in the church, a subject much to the fore 40 years ago. ‘We cannot preach peace among the classes or the nations so long as we are rivals among ourselves.... The one Gospel can only be presented effectually by a great Church, whose unity is (as now it is not) more striking than the diversities which it commands.’<sup>25</sup> In arguing the case for unity in diversity and against the kind of organic union that envisaged the creation of a single national church organization, my father drew heavily on Forsyth, not least *The Church and the Sacraments*.

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<sup>23</sup> *Church and Sacraments* 106.

<sup>24</sup> *Church and Sacraments* 106.

<sup>25</sup> *Church and Sacraments* 106–7.



Forsyth advocated ‘a unity corresponding to our Gospel’. The church has been at its most divided, he argued, when there has been a desire to identify ‘the Church invisible with some visible form of it, either by Rome or by a sect. Each practically says, ‘My visible circumference encloses the invisible Church. If my pale had might as it has right it would be the Christianity of the world.’<sup>26</sup>

With a rhetorical flourish, Forsyth asked, ‘Must we wait at the gate of the traditional and imperial Churches, cap in hand? Must we return as penitent prodigals and be reabsorbed in some form of Catholicism, either Roman or Anglican?’ Answering his own question Forsyth outlined an understanding of the Church’s unity that caught my father’s imagination and contributed not only to the naming of the continuing Congregational denomination after the formation of the United Reformed Church, but also to the vision he shared of a deeper and more varied unity.

Forsyth asserted, ‘Nay, there is a more excellent way—the way of federation.’ The adventure of this kind of commitment to unity is that it is not organizational, but it is no less real. Indeed, it is more real precisely *because* it is not organizational. ‘No one visible organization is identical with the true, invisible Church. No polity has the divine right to gather the rest under wings for salvation. No one corporation can gather into itself the whole wealth of Christian tradition and promise. The Church’s unity can never more be realised in one spiritual Empire to whose genial spell and imposing rule all the sects must return that it may cover the world. The note of the future, the true reunion, is federation, with a relative constitutional independence. It is no new monarchy, but *the United States of the Church.*’ [Forsyth’s italics].<sup>27</sup>

This was inspirational to me and has shaped my commitment to working ecumenically wherever I have served as a minister.

## **I come ... to declare and apply the Gospel of the Cross.**

While in Leicester Forsyth reflected on the personal transformation he had experienced, not least in his understanding of the Cross of Christ. He had initially reacted against the substitutionary view of atonement and been drawn to a more liberal understanding of the example set by Christ in going to the cross. But that he found inadequate. It did not address the inadequacy and sinfulness that at times weighed him down and that was real for many people. ‘We are not a very religious people, compared with some. Our tendency is not to faith, but

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<sup>26</sup> *Church and Sacraments* 107.

<sup>27</sup> *Church and Sacraments* 107.

to scepticism benumbed by action.... It hurries us into mere philanthropy, as if that were the Gospel, and pity were the power that redeemed.’<sup>28</sup>

Such an emphasis on philanthropy had grown up with a renewed emphasis on the Kingdom of God. Forsyth was convinced that the Kingdom of God should be at the centre of faith. But that did not banish the need for the Gospel of the Cross. That too was all important. It was not a case of either the Kingdom or of personal salvation: instead it was ‘both—and’. Drawing on his mentor, Ritschl, he argued that ‘the system of belief should not be regarded as a circle, with that one centre [of personal redemption] but as an ellipse, with the two foci of the Cross and the Kingdom.’<sup>29</sup>

In Leicester Forsyth longed for a ‘great book to rescue the study of the Atonement both from the legalism, the pietism and the neglect into which it has fallen, to deal largely instead of meanly, and seriously instead of contemptuously with its subtler problems, to popularise and moralise them, to revive for a truer science of faith, the potent embers of old orthodoxy, and to guide the new Christian socialism by the principles of the one act which constitutes Christian society.’<sup>30</sup>

The cross has to do not only with personal redemption but also with human society. ‘The person and cross of Christ emerge more distinct than ever as not only the certainty but the *power* of Christian society. We are only called to the *conflict* by the revelation of a foregone *victory*; by the *revelation* of it too, let it be marked, not by the *promise* merely. That is by the Cross. The resurrection itself was not the victory; in it God bore witness to the victory after it had been gained. It was gained upon the cross.’<sup>31</sup> It is this sense of victory won on the cross, confirmed in the resurrection, that enables Christians to work for the Kingdom for ‘the Kingdom has little to hope for except from the men and women who owe themselves to the Cross, and in it overcome the world.’<sup>32</sup>

This is not simply a theory. It is not something only to be spoken about. It is to be acted upon, it is the driving force of the Christian: ‘the Gospel of the Cross is to be declared and applied.’

Forsyth in his letter identified three things at the heart of his faith.

‘I believe

- in the Incarnation of the Eternal Son of God in the sinless person of Jesus Christ;

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28 *Church and Sacraments* 6.

29 *Church and Sacraments* 88.

30 P T Forsyth *The Old Faith and the New* (Leicester 1891) 26

31 *Old Faith and New* 26–27.

32 *Old Faith and New* 27.

- in the Redemption of Mankind through His death; and
- in His risen life as the unseen personal power which guides both the world and the Church to fulfil the Kingdom of God—especially through personal union with the Saviour.’

Again much of Forsyth’s theology is present in these words. These three elements to his faith are present in his most significant books: *The Person and Place of Jesus Christ*, *The Cruciality of the Cross*, *The Work of Christ* and *The Soul of Prayer*. At the heart of his faith is Jesus Christ. This is not just the Jesus of critical scholarship, important though that is, it is the Jesus who is the self-emptying of God. For Forsyth ‘Faith in Christ involves the Godhead of Christ. Faith in Christ in the positive Christian sense, means much more than a relation to God to which Christ supremely helps us. It is a communion possible not through, but only in Christ and Him crucified. It means that to be in Christ is to be in God.’<sup>33</sup>

He was convinced that ‘there are three great aspects of the work of Christ: 1) its triumphal aspect; 2) its satisfactionary aspect; 3) its regenerative aspect’.<sup>34</sup> Both the person of Christ and all that he has done makes a difference in the life of the Christian and through the Christian in the world at large.

In day to day ministry he was concerned to release the power of the risen Christ into the lives of those in the church so that they could make a difference in the world—he speaks of fulfilling the Kingdom of God. There is a strong social dimension to that kingdom which he sought to work out in his involvement in the community wherever he ministered. But that social dimension to the kingdom owes its vibrancy to the risen life of Christ released in that very personal relationship the believer has with Christ. Nowhere is that more powerful than in prayer.

There is something practical about his reflections on prayer that relate to people living in a troubled world. One cannot but feel that his wise words of counsel derive from an experience of prayer that underpinned a lifetime of ministry.

Go into your chamber, shut the door, and cultivate the habit of praying audibly. Write prayers and burn them. Formulate your soul. Pay no attention to literary form, only to spiritual reality. Read a passage of Scripture and then sit down and turn it into a prayer, written or spoken. Learn to be particular, specific, and detailed in your prayer so long as you are not trivial. General prayers, literary prayers, and stately phrases are, for private prayer, traps and sops to the soul. To formulate your soul is one valuable means to escape formalising it. This is the

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33 P T Forsyth *The Person and Place of Jesus Christ* (1910) 6.

34 *Person and Place*, 109

best, the wholesome, kind of self-examination. Speaking with God discovers us safely to ourselves. We 'find' ourselves, come to ourselves, in the Spirit. Face your special weaknesses and sins before God. Force yourself to say to God exactly where you are wrong. When anything goes wrong, do not ask to have it set right, without asking in prayer what it was in you that made it go wrong. It is somewhat fruitless to ask for a general grace to help specific flaws, sins, trials, and griefs. Let prayer be concrete, actual, a direct product of life's real experiences. Pray as your actual self, not as some fancied saint. Let it be closely relevant to your real situation. Pray without ceasing in this sense. Pray without a break between your prayer and your life. Pray so that there is a real continuity between your prayer and your whole actual life.<sup>35</sup>

Forty years on, I come back to Forsyth's letter and see how he sums up the faith that is so important to him and I find echoes in my own thinking and practice. Though I am also challenged by what he says and wonder whether I have taken my eye off the ball too often.

## **2: The freedom to be a Minister of Christ in the Church Universal**

He came to the church in Leicester 'on a twofold footing'. We come now to the other thing on which he stood. We return to a ministry carried out in a local place but exercised by one who is a minister of Christ in the Church Universal.

But, secondly, I view these great truths not as a mere seal of orthodoxy, not as confining the action of the human mind, nor as hedging it up, so to speak, against mistake. But I view them as a Gospel as the charter and impulse of the Soul's liberty and the guide to heights and ranges of freedom both in heart and head, which without Christ's gospel we should never have won. While, therefore, I should think it my duty if ever I departed from these truths to release you from any obligation to retain me among you, yet it is of the greatest importance that I should make clear this spirit in which they are held. In my present congregation I have the completest freedom in this respect. And I should not sustain the idea of a change to any sphere where my freedom should be less. This applies both to the specific ways of applying these truths to modern conditions and to my own personal style of phrase and speech. I always feel that my freedom is a responsibility, that the feelings of others are entitled to respect, and that it is cowardly to use the privilege of the pulpit to the disadvantage of those who have both to listen and perhaps to differ. I ask for no agreement with me except in such great principles as I have specified. And outside the region of

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35 P T Forsyth *The Soul of Prayer* (1916) 64.

thought and teaching, in the practical affairs of the Congregation, I am as any other member, who must either persuade the majority or go with it. But in the matter of teaching the concession of the liberty aforesaid is paramount, and no other possible advantages I might gain in coming to you would atone for the loss of it as I have it here. The deacons quite understand this, but I am anxious there should be no mistake about it on the part of the Church and congregation. I may farther add that I have neither time nor energy to waste on such contentions as sometimes arise in Churches on doctrinal points. And if you received me, and if you should desire in course to be rid of me, an ordinary vote of the Church with a decided majority to that effect will be quite sufficient for the purpose.

Forsyth came as a minister not with a doctrine to impart but with a Gospel to share, a charter for the church. That Gospel liberates the one who receives it and brings true freedom. Most importantly it frees the minister from being beholden to the church of which he is minister. He is quite clear that should he depart from those 'great principles', the truths in his letter, he would expect to be dismissed. But he is equally clear that he regards himself as having a freedom to preach as the Spirit leads and to minister as a minister of Christ and of the Universal Church.

In his ministry week by week he saw it as his task not only to expound these truths but also to relate them to the world of his day, doing that in his own inimitable style. There is a freedom at the heart of his ministry that should be at the heart of any and, I hope, has been at the heart of my own. It is so important not to feel under obligation to reflect the thoughts of those in the congregation, but to declare the Gospel with the freedom of Christ.

Forsyth acknowledged a responsibility that goes with that freedom, a responsibility not to abuse the pulpit and peddle his own ideas to the detriment of others. He recognizes that people differ. These are salutary words for any preacher: I trust I have not overstepped the mark too often.

Then comes an insight into ministry that is often misunderstood. Forsyth had confidence in the Gospel that he shared. In that he was a minister of Christ and of the Universal Church. He was beholden to none in the congregation. However, in all other matters he was one member among many. Notice his use of the word 'congregation' in this context. 'Outside the region of thought and teaching, in the practical affairs of the Congregation, I am as any other member, who must either persuade the majority or go with it.' The implication of that is that it is not for the church meeting to discuss at length the content of the minister's teaching and thinking. Indeed, Forsyth goes further. One wonders whether he has had his fingers burned, perhaps in the stand off from time to time with the Yorkshire Congregational Union when he was minister at Shipley. 'I have neither time nor energy to waste on such contentions as sometimes arise in Churches on doctrinal points.'

I give thanks that, with regard to that freedom of thought and teaching Forsyth so treasures, the churches of which I have been minister have had real respect. I hope that in practical matters I have either persuaded the majority or gone with it! Herein lies a great insight into the way church meetings should function. Forsyth was quite clear: he may be asked to leave and he will leave at the request of a ‘decided majority’.

## **To God’s great glory and the obedience of His Son**

The final paragraph of his letter is a reminder that in issuing and accepting a call to ministry there is always a sense of taking a step of faith.

I did not think it would be so hard for me to reach this decision as I have found it to be. I need not trouble you with any reference to the considerations which make parting more than difficult—painful, here. And I am far from absolutely certain that I have done the right thing. But I have used such effort as I could to attain a right judgment. I must go forward, like so many greater ones in a faith which is content not to see everything perfectly clear. I cast myself upon the help of the Spirit we serve and upon your Christian hearts. No man surely can make a fatal mistake who does that. May God help us to bind all our personal hopes, fears and ambitions to His great glory and the obedience of His Son.

And may you be found to have no more made a mistake in me than I in you.

I am yours for Jesus Christ,

P.T.Forsyth

I have always sensed a call to each of the churches to which I have ministered. Yet on each occasion I could echo the uncertainty expressed by Forsyth. Often it has been my experience that we ‘must go forward ... in a faith which is content not to see everything perfectly clear.’

How good that we have a strength beyond ourselves in the unseen power of the Holy Spirit and how important to cast ourselves ‘upon the help of the Spirit we serve.’

The final prayer of the letter is one to which all called to ministry can say Amen. Just as he introduced his letter in terms of affection and friendship, there seems to be more than formality in his signature when he says, ‘I am yours for Jesus Christ’. The use of the word ‘for’ makes that signature so special.

## **Called to be a Minister of Christ and of the Church Universal**

I find it helpful at my retirement to reflect on a letter I read as I anticipated starting my ministry. Maybe it will help me to make sense of the prospect of

retirement. I find myself quoting Tony Benn who when he retired from the House of Commons said that it was to spend more time doing politics. I feel ready to retire as 'the Minister' of a church but am as passionate as ever about the Kingdom and the Gospel. Maybe I should bring to mind my ordination and remember that I am first and foremost 'called to be a minister of Christ and of the Church Universal'.

### **A Ministry Shaped by Personal Experience**

P T Forsyth's ministry in Leicester lasted six years before he moved to Emmanuel Congregational Church, Cambridge, a ministry that enabled him to develop his theological work in an academic setting. As principal of Hackney College from 1901 he was able to develop his involvement in the world. He died on 11th November, 1921 aged 73.

Theologian though he was, one factor apparent from this remarkable letter is that his theology is rooted in personal experience and in the life of the Church that brought him into contact with people and their needs. His was a faith honed by the troubles of a troubled life.

On 28th April, 1966, Forsyth's daughter, Jessie Forsyth Andrews wrote to my father from Fen Place, a care home for retired Congregational ministers and their families. She had heard that, after adapting the house next door to the church in Leicester for church and community use, one room had been named the Forsyth Room and a small library of his books had been collected. She enclosed the gift of a biography of her father which she criticised for its excessive use of lengthy quotations. Shortly afterwards, I accompanied my parents in visiting her at Fen Place. She finished her letter with the briefest of comments: 'I was only a child in my father's day at Clarendon Park.'

That little sentence conceals a great deal of heart-ache. While at Clarendon Park Forsyth's wife became ill. Only three weeks after their move to Cambridge she died, an experience that deeply troubled Forsyth who had a prolonged period off work at that time. Later he had two years suffering from depression and debilitating health.<sup>36</sup> On hearing of Mrs Forsyth's death, the church at Clarendon Park sent a 'letter of deep regret at the death of [their] friend Mrs Forsyth.' The letter, a copy of which was kept with the minutes, reflected the high esteem with which Forsyth's pastoral ministry was held.

This letter recalled how Forsyth had 'in the past shared their griefs and troubles' and they promised that 'they would pray that the same Healer and Consoler he set forth to them may be his consolation.'<sup>37</sup> Thus they surely echoed Forsyth's own pastoral ministry. In the ordination address quoted above, he had

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<sup>36</sup> Bradley Forsyth 47.

<sup>37</sup> Waddington *Clarendon Park* 8.

spoken of Christ as ‘the real Pastor of every real Church, and the Bishop of its minister.’ Now the church at Clarendon Park reflected these sentiments to their former minister.

Norah Waddington took up the story, ‘Forsyth could not reply at once as he was ill in bed for a fortnight, but in due course a letter was received in which he wrote:

Your letter came to me like a warm air from the circle of those who knew her and esteemed her so well.... But she is free and at rest, and crowned with glory and honour, having tasted of death in Him who tasted it for us all. Her life was a long death to herself. Her new life is a new living to God—and I must believe also, living for us whom He has visibly left but not spiritually forgotten.’<sup>38</sup>

Those touching words show that Forsyth’s theology was rooted in dark experience. For three years Forsyth lived with his young daughter, Jessie. He married again in 1897, Bertha Ison. Before the move to Hackney he toured Europe, revisiting places he had first visited in the 1880s. With his letter to Clarendon Park Forsyth sent some verses in memory of his wife: later published in the *British Weekly*. She had suffered latterly from paralysis. The poem’s rich imagery captures a simple, yet profound, faith that was at times sorely tested.

### **The Healing of the Paralytic**

‘Relaxed in death!’ From death released also;  
Blest double sense of Faith—loosed, and let go.

I’ve seen her drag herself to meet  
Me home from foreign stay;  
And lumber down the perilous stair  
Her poor pathetic way.

I’ve seen her in the house unseen,  
Devoted, tireless, free,  
Smiling on her transfigured grief  
Seen through the crystal sea.

And down the golden stair I’ll see  
Her run with stately life,  
When from earth’s foreign inn I turn  
And go home to my wife.

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*Richard Cleaves*

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# 'A FLOURISHING CAUSE': EAST CLIFF CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH 1901–1914

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## Introduction

East Cliff was one of the largest of Bournemouth's Congregational churches, second only in membership to the prestigious Richmond Hill Congregational Church. Its origins, however, were relatively humble:

As with most of the Nonconformist causes East Cliff began with cottage meetings, a few people assembling in Mr Dumper's house, in Holdenhurst Road, for Divine Worship and for Sunday School work. The work was under the control of the Richmond Hill Church during the pastorate of the Rev Nicholas Hurry. The next step was the building of a Mission Hall at a cost of £400, in 1867, on the site of the present handsome building. The hall was capable of accommodating 250 people ... on Dec 17th 1877 ... [it] was constituted as a separate and Independent Church [with] thirty-two members being transferred from the mother church to form the communion ... Soon a larger place was needed ... The memorial stone was laid ... on February 26th 1879 ...<sup>1</sup>

In December of that year the opening ceremony was performed. The building, which survives to this day and has a grade II listing, had seating for 1000 worshippers (see Figure 1). At that time the membership was only 56 so the leadership of the church was clearly planning for future growth. Over the next 20 years East Cliff did in fact expand rapidly and by the opening of the twentieth century, membership had quadrupled to 243.

Growth continued in the years leading up to the First World War, and East Cliff thrived under the leadership of the Revd William Moncrieff, from 1901 to 1907, and the Revd John Phillip Rogers, from 1908 to 1915. The only serious setback, as discussed a little later, was the tragedy of the premature death of William Moncrieff in 1907. The ministers of East Cliff Congregational Church, together with the diaconate, church life and organisations, church anniversaries, engagement with the wider community and the Malmesbury Park and Spring Road Missions are the principal themes of this article, which focuses on the

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<sup>1</sup> A Webb *The churches of Bournemouth: the history of 56 churches in the Borough of Bournemouth with full page illustration of each* (Bournemouth 1910) 51. For further details of the early history of the cause, see East Cliff URC website: <http://www.eastcliffchurch.org.uk/> (accessed 21 November 2018).

period from the accession of Edward VII in January 1901 to the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914. For primary source material considerable reliance has been placed on church records and newspaper reports.<sup>2</sup>

## Statistical Review

Drawing upon the statistical data published in the yearbooks of the Hampshire Congregational Union (HCU) and the Congregational Union of England and Wales (CUEW) it is possible to chart the progress or otherwise of churches, individually as well as collectively, in recruiting members and Sunday school scholars and teachers. The figures for East Cliff covering the period 1901 to 1914 are shown in Table 1.

Between 1901 and 1914 net membership increased from 243 to 402 or by 65 per cent. Such totals, however, hide the considerable movement of people joining and leaving the church roll. Unfortunately, comprehensive details for East Cliff are not available. However, glimpses can be obtained from the reports of the church secretary given at church anniversary meetings. Thus for the year 1901: 'There were 209 on the membership roll in March last, when the Rev W. Moncrieff began his ministry, and since that time 63 others had been received into church fellowship, 49 by vote on profession [of faith] and 14 by letter of transfer [from another church], whilst 27 had been dismissed, seven by letter [of transfer to another church] and 20 by lapse of membership, the number on the roll at the end of December being, 245, a net increase of 34.'<sup>3</sup> Likewise at the annual church meeting held at the end of 1913: 'The Secretary's report showed that the year ... began with a membership of 361, 62 have joined during the year (36 by vote of the church and 26 by transfers from other churches). Two members have died during the year ... 5 resigned membership, 12 transferred to other Churches having left the District, and 10 were found to have lapsed on the revision of the Church Roll, leaving a net increase of 33. The Church Roll now standing at 394 members.'<sup>4</sup> For the membership to grow it was, of course, necessary for gains to exceed losses. As the data in Table 1 indicate, in two years 1908 and 1910 there was a net loss of members, probably due to a rigorous revision of the church roll and the removal of those who had ceased to attend and/or had not formally transferred to another church. Overall, however, the

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<sup>2</sup> Records for the period, now held by East Cliff United Reformed Church, include minute books and church magazines. I am grateful to Mrs Linda Pain, Leader and Secretary of East Cliff URC, for giving me permission in 2013 to access and utilise material from the church archive, the source of the illustrations.

<sup>3</sup> *The Bournemouth Visitors' Directory* (hereafter *BVD*) 21 December 1901.

<sup>4</sup> East Cliff Congregational Church Meeting Minute Book 1913-33 (hereafter *ECCMMB*) 1 January 1914.



Figure 1: East Cliff Congregational Church c.1900

church enjoyed significant growth, which must have heartened both members and leaders alike.

Although the membership figures are impressive they by no means represent the full extent of East Cliff's sphere of influence. There would have been a substantial number of adherents. They closely identified with the church but for various reasons did not wish or feel able to take the ultimate step of making a profession of faith to become a member. Since surveys of churchgoing were not undertaken in Bournemouth during the early years of the twentieth century it is not possible to estimate the number of adherents, but on the basis of those taken elsewhere it is probable that a typical congregation would have comprised an equal number of members and non-members.

The situation in the Sunday school was not quite as positive as that for the membership. A high point of 444 scholars in 1902 was followed by an almost continuous decline to 290 scholars in 1914. Nonetheless, the school was one of the key instruments of outreach and further reference will be made to it later in the article.

It was frequently stressed that for their effectiveness Congregational churches required, in human terms, a close rapport between, on the one hand, members and adherents and, on the other, the minister and deacons. Indeed, one of the

**Table 1: Membership and Related Data for East Cliff  
Congregational Church 1901–1914**

Year	Members		Sunday School	
	No	3 Year Average	Scholars	Teachers
1901	243	237	34 <sup>8</sup>	32
1902	268	261	444	30
1903	273	278	357	30
1904	293	286	369	31
1905	293	305	369	31
1906	329	321	365	31
1907	341	335	338	31
1908	335	341	325	32
1909	348	340	320	30
1910	337	349	n.k.	47
1911	361	355	306	48
1912	367	374	309	38
1913	394	388	290	40
1914	402	392	290	40

**Notes**

- Most of the data in this table have been taken from the Yearbooks of the HCU (Hampshire Record Office: Ref 127M54/62/46 to 59).
- The three year moving average has been calculated to even out sudden changes in the figures for individual years.
- It seems likely that the church did not submit returns for 1905 and consequently the figures for 1904 were simply repeated.
- Membership figures include those for the Malmesbury Park and Spring Road Missions. The numbers of Sunday school scholars at the Missions were reported separately, although the record for Spring Road is by no means complete.

key responsibilities of the minister was to motivate and encourage the members and thereby secure their contribution to the work of the church.

## Pastorates

In view of its size, it is not surprising that the two pastors who served East Cliff during the period covered by this article both had substantial gifts. William Moncrieff (see Figure 2) was a Scotsman who came to East Cliff from Bowdon

Downs Congregational Church in Cheshire, where he had been an assistant to the redoubtable Alexander Mackennal.

Although he was only 29, he quickly made an impact as is evident in comments made about him in a church history:

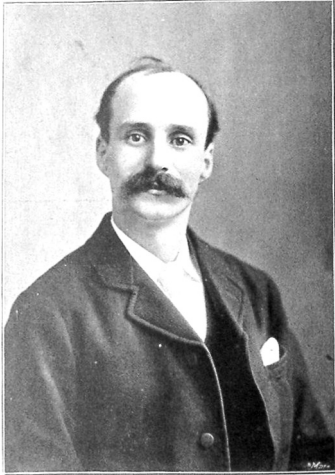


Figure 2: Rev William Moncrieff

A friend writing of him says: ‘His preaching was marked by a strong evangelical fervour. He moved among his people and got into personal touch with them and ere long the influence of his preaching and the impact of his personality began to take effect ...’ He was recognised as a man of ability and power and the calls made upon from without were many.<sup>5</sup>

He was an ‘ardent Radical’ and advocate of social reform. However, ‘his enthusiasm was very much in excess of his strength’ and in July 1907 he died in harness, while on holiday at Chagford in Devon, aged just 34.<sup>6</sup> The cause of his premature death was gastric influenza. At the 1907 church anniversary celebrations, J J Allen JP, who chaired the evening meeting, ‘referred with

feeling to the death of their late Pastor ... [and to his] great and noble work in Bournemouth.’<sup>7</sup>

In the resolution passed following Moncrieff’s death, reference was made to the fact that members were conscious of the difficulty of finding so ‘gifted and faithful a minister.’ In the event, they did so with a unanimous invitation to Phillip Rogers (see Figure 3) in May 1908.<sup>8</sup> Rogers moved to Bournemouth from Robertson Street Congregational Church in Hastings, where he was an assistant to the Revd Charles New and shared his competence as a preacher and his youthfulness. As the *Bournemouth Graphic* reported, ‘Mr Rogers is endowed with pulpit abilities very much above the ordinary; he has a pleasing presence, a popular style, is intensely

5 *East Cliff Congregational Church Bournemouth Jubilee Souvenir 1877-1927* (Bournemouth 1927) (hereafter *ECJS*) 18-9.

6 *Congregational Year Book* (hereafter *CYB*) 1908 188. Moncrieff was buried in Wimborne Road Cemetary.

7 *BVD* 21 December 1907.

8 *ECCMMB* 1901-13 21 May 1908. This was following receipt of a letter from the Revd James Wylie ‘who declined to allow his name to be put forward at a church meeting, owing to his being quite convinced that his work remained at Birmingham.’ At the time he was minister of Soho Hill Congregational Church.

earnest, is a graphic word painter, occasionally dramatic, is breezy, fresh and up-to-date.<sup>9</sup>

This is confirmed by his official obituary, where he is described as a ‘preacher of compelling power.’ Here reference is also made to ‘the magnetic quality of his personality and to his constant friendliness and sympathy.’<sup>10</sup> Such qualities were very much in evidence at his previous church. In the words of a representative from Robertson Street at Rogers’ recognition meeting, ‘the more they had got to know him the more the bonds of affection were tightened.’<sup>11</sup> In addition, as it was put in a testimonial Rogers received on leaving East Cliff in 1915, his ‘influence extended beyond the precincts of the Church.’ This was, in part, a reference to his holding the position of President of the Bournemouth Free Church Council and of the West Hants and East Dorset Sunday School Union. He was also a popular guest preacher at other churches and was especially remembered, at East Cliff, for his work amongst the young.

On a personal note, at the time of his arrival at East Cliff, Rogers was living with his sister, Eunice, who was described by the Robertson Street representative as ‘a more gentle, kind, unassuming, lovable lady one had hardly ever met.’<sup>12</sup> This was not an uncommon arrangement, especially for unmarried ministers. However, while at East Cliff, Rogers married his first wife, Margaret Winter Haydon (see Figure 4), in September 1912.<sup>13</sup> As a wedding gift, East Cliff presented Mr and Mrs Rogers with a piano. Following his marriage,



Figure 3: Rev J. Phillip Rogers



Miss Margaret Winter Haydon

9 *Bournemouth Graphic* 10 September 1908.

10 *CYB* 1971/2 437.

11 *Bournemouth Guardian* (hereafter *BG*) 12 September 1908.

12 *BG* 12 September 1908.

13 She was the only daughter of Mr and Mrs William Haydon of Lansdowne Baptist Church. The wedding was conducted by the church’s minister, the Revd A Corbet.

**Table 2: Deacons of East Cliff Congregational Church in 1901**

Name	Age	Occupation	Address	Ser
George Briggs	46	General draper	135, Holdenhurst Road	I
James Durham	53	Upholsterer's manager	The Ivys, Rawls Road	I
Rowland R Gadsden	56	Stationer and sub-postmaster	219, Old Christchurch Road	O
Charles Giles	64	Carpenter and joiner	250, Holdenhurst Road	O
William Hoare	n.k.	n.k.	n.k.	n.k.
Charles Lacey	62	Living on own means	Hawkhurst Lodge, Southcote Road	I
George Joseph Lawson <sup>2</sup>	48	Architect and surveyor	Bonoylehurst, Christchurch Road	I
Alfred Lickfold	47	Grocer and shopkeeper	139, Holdenhurst Road	O
Frederick King	n.k.	n.k.	272, Old Christchurch Rd	n.k.
Charles John Shears	30	General building contractor	Warrendean, Stafford Road	O
George Shears <sup>I</sup>	55	Builder and contractor	Chalbury Lodge, Wellington Road	I
<b>Notes</b>				
1. Church Treasurer		2. Church Secretary		
Ser = number of live-in servants, an indication of the status of deacons				
n.k. = not known				
Source: 1901 Census Returns				

Rogers' sister moved away while he remained at East Cliff until 1915, when he accepted a call to Charles Street Congregational Church in Cardiff.<sup>14</sup>

To sustain and support the ministry of Congregational churches, it was necessary to have not only a competent minister but also a strong and dedicated team of deacons. This was of particular importance when a church was without a minister and during periods when a minister was ill. Indeed, as the minister of Lansdowne Road Baptist Church commented at Rogers' recognition meeting

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<sup>14</sup> His subsequent ministries were at Sherwell Congregational Church, Plymouth, from 1925 to 1934; Heavitree, from 1934 to 1940; and Tavistock, from 1945-46. He retired to Exeter where he died in 1971. Margaret died in 1932 and he subsequently married Dr Jesse Gilbert, 'a close friend of his first wife'.



‘when sickness laid aside their pastors he admired the loyal way in which the deacons and the Church stuck to them.’<sup>15</sup>

## Diaconate

East Cliff had a relatively large diaconate of eleven members. Deacons were elected annually by the members. Not surprisingly, they had to be on the church roll but in keeping with the traditions of many churches at this time the rules stipulated that only male members were eligible to serve. Details of the eleven deacons in 1901 are shown in Table 2.

Apart from its size and the status of its members, as evidenced by their occupations and the number with live-in servants, East Cliff’s diaconate was also notable for its stability. Deacons were invariably re-elected and the only changes occurred when someone died or decided not to seek re-election. Thus, between 1901 and 1911 there were only two changes. William Hoare died in 1906 and Charles Giles resigned in 1908. Their replacements were Walter Troath and William Wightman respectively. Table 3 lists the deacons in 1911. As can be seen, the diaconate was primarily composed of tradesmen and those in professional occupations, thereby affording East Cliff access to valuable expertise of various kinds. Throughout the period under review the two key figures on the diaconate were undoubtedly George Lawson, the church secretary, and George Shears, the church treasurer (see Figure 5).

Lawson was a man of formidable energy, who was closely associated with East Cliff for all of his life. As it was put in a booklet published to celebrate the church’s first fifty years in 1927, he ‘attains his Jubilee as Secretary of the Church at the same time as the Church itself, having watched over its fortunes and well-being from the commencement ... As Superintendent of the Sunday School for many a year, as a deacon, and as Secretary he has endeared himself to all and this year ... still finds him ‘bearing the yoke,’ still young, still hopeful, carrying on with his work, and rejoicing in the Church’s progress.’<sup>16</sup> In addition to his contribution to East Cliff, he was heavily involved in local affairs. He was a councillor and alderman until 1907 and served as mayor for the municipal year 1900–1. His principal achievement was Bournemouth’s Electric Tramway System, which he vigorously championed against stiff opposition. However, ‘after a long legal battle the system came into being in December 1902.’<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> BG 12 September 1908.

<sup>16</sup> ECJS 27.

<sup>17</sup> M Ponsford *East Cliff United Reformed Church: The First Hundred years 1877-1977* (Bournemouth: 1977) 12. Prior to Bournemouth becoming a county borough in 1900, Lawson was a member of Hampshire County Council from 1889 to 1892 and from 1899 to 1900 representing Boscombe.



**Table 3: Deacons of East Cliff Congregational Church in 1911**

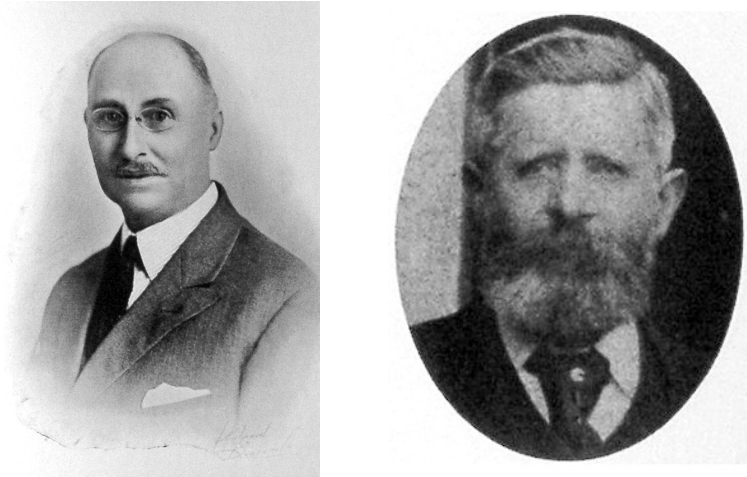
Name	Age	Occupation	Address	Ser
George Briggs	56	General draper	135, Holdenhurst Road	0
James Durham	n.k.	n.k.	n.k.	n.k.
Rowland R Gadsden	66	Retired stationer (dealer)	75, Chatsworth Road	0
Frederick King	n.k.	n.k.	n.k.	n.k.
Charles J. Lacey	72	No occupation	Hawkhurst Lodge, Southcote Road	I
George Joseph Lawson <sup>2</sup>	58	Architect & surveyor	Butley Dean, 34, Christchurch Road	I
Alfred Lickfold	57	Grocer and provision dealer	139, Holdenhurst Road	0
Charles John Shears	41	Builder	Warrendean, 33, Stafford Road	0
George Shears <sup>I</sup>	65	Builder. House	Chalbury Lodge, Portchester Road	I
Walter Troath	49	Head teacher	Langley, 53, Chatsworth Road	0
William Wightman	60	Retired bank sub-manager	21, Lowther Road	I
<b>Notes</b>				
1. Church Treasurer		2. Church Secretary		
Ser = number of live-in servants		n.k. = not known		
Source: 1911 Census Returns				

Not surprisingly, when he died in May 1936 much was made of his public service and his Christian faith. At his funeral, the then minister of East Cliff the Revd Henry Thomas Maddeford, had this to say:

He went out and among us in all sorts of weather and under all conditions, facing up to all sorts of situations and problems; never boisterous, never authoritative, never arrogant and never assuming, but gentle, considerate, kind hearted, winning his way and making friends, by reason of his very evident desire to do all the good he could, and serve wherever duty called him. He lived and died in simple faith in the Lord. He was no theologian, no school-master, no lover of religious controversies, for he was eminently peace loving, but he made

religion the business of his life, and out of his simple and strong faith, and his love for his church, sprang the spirit which enabled him to discharge all his duties as a Christian.<sup>18</sup>

Reference was also made to his 'moral courage' particularly with respect to his commitment to the cause of temperance.



*Figure 5: George Lawson and George Shears*

When George Shears died in 1922, it was observed that 'in numerous ways [he had] proved himself an invaluable helper.'<sup>19</sup> He was church treasurer throughout the Edwardian era and was later honoured by being made a life deacon.

One other notable deacon of the Edwardian era was Councillor Alfred Lickfold. In 1910, the local newspaper published a profile of him in which he was described as:

... one of the quiet workers of the Town Council. Modest, thoughtful, conscientious ... he is always at hand when there is work to be done, but he makes no fuss about it. He rarely talks, but when he does he always impresses his hearers with a sense of earnestness; with the assurance that he is not talking for talking's sake, but because he is compelled by a deep sense of conviction—because he feels that to remain silent would be a dereliction of duty. No man enjoys to a fuller extent the respect of his colleagues ...<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> *The Bournemouth Times and Directory* 5 June 1936.

<sup>19</sup> *ECJS* 28.

<sup>20</sup> *BVD* 2 November 1910.

At his death in 1922, mention was made of his membership of the council for over 20 years on which he served as both a councillor and an alderman retiring a few months before his death. As recorded:

In politics he was a Liberal and he was also a staunch supporter of the temperance cause ... He was an extremely well known figure of the East Cliff Congregational Church, of which he became a member in 1880, and took a prominent part in the activities of the Church.

For nearly 40 years he was secretary of the Sunday school.<sup>21</sup>

Men like Lawson, Shears and Lickfold exemplified a central strand in Edwardian Congregationalism, namely a blending of business acumen and public service with a strong faith. Without their skills and above all zeal and dedication, Congregational churches, such as East Cliff, would not have thrived to the extent that they did and church life would have been somewhat the poorer.

## Church Life and Organisations

Central to the life of East Cliff were the regular Sunday morning and evening services; a week night service; and related activities, such as prayer meetings and Bible classes. These were complemented with services for special events, such as the anniversaries of the founding of the church and of the minister's settlement; harvest thanksgiving; and hospital Sunday. While services on Sundays were generally well supported, at the church anniversary meeting in 1906 the minister felt the need to plead 'for an increase in the attendance at the week night services, and at the Sunday prayer meeting.'<sup>22</sup>

Notwithstanding the importance attached to spiritual matters, by the early years of the twentieth century, in a similar manner to most Congregational churches, East Cliff also embraced the institutional principle. This meant that provision was made for the meeting of social, recreational and educational needs alongside those of a more spiritual kind. In other words, East Cliff adopted a holistic approach to its ministry which was expressed through a plethora of subsidiary organisations, most of which operated for the whole of the period covered by this article.

As might be expected, one such organisation with a particularly high profile was the choir. There was also a church orchestra. By the Edwardian era music had become a key ingredient of church services and social events and anyone with appropriate ability and interest in this field was encouraged to join the choir, the orchestra or both.

Earlier in the article reference was made to the Sunday school and while this

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<sup>21</sup> BG 7 October 1922.

<sup>22</sup> BVD 15 December 1906.

was the most extensive component of East Cliff's ministry to children and young people it was by no means the only one. Its work was accompanied by that of the Band of Hope, the principal temperance organisation for the young; and senior and junior branches of Christian Endeavour, which sought to foster in its members the principles of Christian discipleship and their practical application. There was also a Bible Class and a Girls' Guild. To meet the physical and recreational needs of young people, East Cliff also sponsored gymnastics classes and a swimming club.<sup>23</sup> In 1912 an Institute was established to co-ordinate all East Cliff's work with the young to which, as indicated earlier, Phillip Rogers gave particular attention.

As their titles suggest, the primary objective of the Young People's Work Party/Sewing Meeting and Ladies' Working Party/Meeting was the production of items for sale at fund raising events. Although meetings were also opportunities for fellowship, their existence was a reminder that Congregational churches were self-financing and had to raise sufficient monies each year to cover the minister's stipend, which in the case of Phillip Rogers was £300 per annum at the time of his appointment; the running costs of the church; and the servicing, as well as repayment, of debts incurred on building projects. Sales of work and bazaars were regular features of church life and were required to supplement the regular weekly income from the collection plate.

The main organisation dedicated to what would be called today 'lifelong learning' was a Literary and Debating Society. Here a wide variety of subjects were discussed many of which would have been of a secular character and of topical interest, such as the women's suffrage movement and the nature of Socialism. Until the borough council provided public libraries, part of East Cliff's premises was used for this purpose. Its library and reading room was open from 9.30 a.m. to 9.30 p.m. daily (Sundays excepted) and offered users, who were asked to make a voluntary contribution towards expenses, access to national and local newspapers as well as books.<sup>24</sup>

Lastly, East Cliff sponsored a Slate club. This was essentially a savings and sick pay scheme, which was 'open to all between the ages of 15 and 50 years who attend[ed] any branch of Church or Mission. Ladies as well as gentlemen [were] admitted.'<sup>25</sup> The principal sources of income were the entrance fees and contributions of members, while the outgoings mainly consisted of dividends and sick pay.

Unusually, East Cliff did not sponsor a branch of the Men's Own Brotherhood or Pleasant Sunday Afternoon Movement (at least during the period covered by this article) unlike many other Congregational churches in

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23 Church sponsored sporting activities of this kind were still relatively rare in Hampshire Congregational circles.

24 For further details see *ECJS* 13.

25 ECCMMB 1901-1913 29 December 1910.

the Bournemouth area and further afield. This is surprising, but may perhaps be explained by the absence of a champion amongst the deacons and/or a lack of interest on the part of the ministers.

## Church Anniversaries

As was common practice in Congregational circles, a key event each year was the celebration of the founding of the church. At East Cliff, this consisted of special services held on a Sunday in December, including a service for children in the afternoon, and on the following day a tea and public meeting, at which the Church Secretary and Treasurer would outline the progress and financial position of the church. The Revd J D Jones, the renowned minister of Richmond Hill, attended on a regular basis, thereby symbolising the close links between the two churches and in 1905 he ‘happily conveyed birthday greetings, and spoke of a church anniversary as like unto a man’s birthday.’<sup>26</sup>

Anniversaries were also occasions when members, adherents and guests could hear visiting speakers of note. For example, in 1901 one of the speakers was the Revd Dr P T Forsyth, the leading Congregational theologian and recently appointed principal of Hackney College in Hampstead and, in the words of Albert Peel, ‘a bulwark of orthodoxy’.<sup>27</sup> The other was Joseph Compton-Rickett, Liberal MP for Scarborough and ‘well-known throughout the country as a vigorous Free Church speaker.’<sup>28</sup>

From the, albeit partial, reporting of the anniversaries in the local press it is possible to identify various themes which the speakers frequently addressed. One of these was the nature of Congregationalism. In 1901 Compton-Rickett argued that it was ‘the freest of the Free Church’ denominations, which had been drawn into closer union’ as a reaction to the growing ‘influence of the Tractarian Movement on the religious life of the country’ and the ritualism with which it was closely associated. He believed, with excessive optimism, that they were on ‘the threshold of a great revival of evangelical faith’. At this time evangelicalism remained a key strand in the doctrinal stance of the Free Churches. Moreover, ‘their Christ ... was not the Christ of history alone, but the Christ of today—the Christ who went with them in their daily work.’ Another speaker on this occasion, the Revd Alfred Martindale, the newly appointed minister of Westbourne Congregational Church, went as far as to describe ritualism and rationalism as ‘evils’ which had existed in the early church and ‘had not passed away.’<sup>29</sup>

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26 BVD 16 December 1905.

27 A Peel *The Congregational Two Hundred* (London 1948) 242

28 BVD 21 December 1901. The names of the Sunday preachers and meeting chairmen speakers at later anniversaries can be found in Table 4.

29 BVD 21 December 1901.

**Table 4: Church Anniversaries**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Ann</b>	<b>Sunday Preacher</b>	<b>Meeting Chairman</b>
1901	24	Revd Dr P T Forsyth (Hackney College)	J. Compton-Rickett
1902	25	Revd Albert Goodrich (Manchester)	Ald Beale
1903	26	Revd William J. Evans (Lewisham)	Ald Beale
1904	27	Not known	Not known
1905	28	Revd John G. Stevenson (Brighton)	The Mayor
1906	29	Revd Timothy E. Davies (Beckenham)	W. Moncrieff
1907	30	Revd Ernest W. Franks (Sherborne)	J.J. Allen JP
1908	31	Revd J Phillip Rogers	Ald Beale
1909	32	Revd William Thomas (London)	Luther Moss
1910	33	Revd William Justin Evans (Bromley)	Ald Hunt Mayor
1911	34	Revd William C. Pigott (Bedford)	Edward Biker
1912	35	Revd David Walters (Bristol)	Alfred Peach
1913	36	Revd F. G. Lintern (Woodford Green)	Montagu Holmes
Notes: Ann = anniversary                      Ald = alderman			

A year later, in the context of remarks about ‘the polity of the Congregational Church’, the Revd Dr Albert Goodrich from Chorlton Road Congregational Church, Manchester claimed that Congregationalists were ‘good Christians’; ‘good Churchmen’; ‘good High Churchmen’; and ‘good citizens’.<sup>30</sup> ‘They believed the Church was constituted not simply of baptised persons and parishioners of any single parish, but it should be composed of Christian believers.’ ‘The Sacerdotalist put the Church first, while the Evangelical put Christ first.’ With respect to denominationalism, he argued that ‘... it was through their several great denominations that God presented in varied form the complete truth so as to meet varied types of mind and different classes of experience.’<sup>31</sup> As Argent points out, while upholding traditional tenets of Congregationalism, Goodrich also ‘sought to defend collectivism and the churches’ growing involvement in social reform’.<sup>32</sup>

Congregationalism and its role and character was also a theme that appealed to J D Jones and one to which he gave considerable attention on a number

<sup>30</sup> BVD 20 December 1902.

<sup>31</sup> BVD 20 December 1902.

<sup>32</sup> A Argent *The Transformation of Congregationalism 1900-2000* (Nottingham 2013) 63.

of occasions. In 1908, he argued that Congregationalism, with the other Free Church denominations, still had 'its part to play in securing a consistent Protestantism in the religious life of England'. Moreover, 'their attention was so often called to the brave stand their forefathers had made for religious liberty, that they were apt to forget that Congregationalism was born in a passion for evangelism'.<sup>33</sup> In 1910, the close identification of Congregationalism with evangelicalism was to the fore:

Congregationalism ... was born in evangelicalism, and it was the evangelical position in the hearts of the early Congregationalists that formed the Church. Congregationalists were nurtured in evangelicalism.

On this occasion, Jones also made reference to what many considered to be the defining feature of Congregationalism, namely the church meeting:

Congregationalism ... was not a democracy, and never would be; it was a Christocracy. Their church meeting was not a place where one came to say what one thought or to push one's way and struggle for one's own end, it was a place where only Christ was heard to speak and where Jesus reigned alone.<sup>34</sup>

In 1913, once again the evangelical credentials of Congregationalism were stressed, it 'was not simply a church method, it was a church method arising out of a great Christian faith. It was built on their belief in the real presence of the Living Lord ... The Congregationalist simply could not help himself being evangelical'.<sup>35</sup>

As these examples illustrate, there was clearly a desire to ensure that audiences had a clear understanding of the position of Congregationalism within the religious landscape of Edwardian Britain. It was seen as one of the bastions of Protestantism which had come to be closely associated with the evangelistic drive of the Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century. Many speakers saw a clear dichotomy between, on the one hand, evangelical Protestantism, and on the other, what was variously described as Tractarianism, Sacerdotalism, Ritualism and Catholicism. As the Revd John Stevenson from Brighton put it in 1905, in relation to the ongoing dispute over religious education in publicly funded schools, there were 'only two types of religion ... [that] were before the people today. One was Catholic ... and the other that associated with the Free Churches. The one dominant note of the Roman Church was submission, and if they put submission on the one side and individuality on the other, they could not work together.'<sup>36</sup>

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33 *BVD* 19 December 1908.

34 *BG* 17 December 1910.

35 *BG* 20 December 1913.

36 *BVD* 16 December 1905.

Another theme addressed at anniversary events was that of how best to engage with the wider world and make the Church more appealing. A number of speakers argued that Christians ought to display more joy in their lives. In 1902, the Mayor and a leading member of Richmond Hill Congregational Church, Alderman John Elmes Beale, commented that ‘it was essential for a church’s life that the sun should shine ... and they must bring sunshine into the pew’. Moreover, ‘if the mission of the Christian Churches was not to make people happy, and if they could not carry sunshine into their services, they might as well close their church doors (applause)’.<sup>37</sup> These sentiments were echoed in 1910 by the Revd Alfred Clegg, the newly arrived minister of Boscombe Congregational Church:

Their Gospel ... was [one] of bright-heartedness through and through, it was a Gospel of joy, hope and optimism ... There was too much sombreness about their Christian life ... The world was not going to be saved by sadness, for whatever was going to save the world must have a spirit of joy as its central motive.<sup>38</sup>

As an antidote to the implication that the attitudes of some Christians and the atmosphere in some churches served as deterrents to those on the outside, a number of speakers were keen to emphasise the contribution of the Church to society. In 1902 Alderman Beale referred to ‘all the purifying and ennobling influence of the church life in Bournemouth ... for [which] he thanked God and took courage (applause)’.<sup>39</sup> While in 1905 J D Jones refuted negative attitudes towards the Church by claiming that it ‘had been in nineteen centuries the most potent, redeeming and regenerating agency.’<sup>40</sup>

There was also a clear recognition by some speakers of other challenges the churches, in general, and Congregational churches, in particular, faced. One of these related to work with children and young people. In 1910, the Mayor, Alderman Charles Hunt, made reference to this subject in his comments. As reported:

Referring to the new primary Sunday School Department of the church, he remarked that the younger they looked after the children the better citizens they became. He hoped they would try to get more of the little children into the schools and there were also children from another age—about 15 or 16 ... [for whom] there was something lacking in their work ... [if] they could not keep boys and girls of that age in their schools. If they could not do this, could they not get them into [Bible] classes, which they could make more interesting? They

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<sup>37</sup> *BVD* 20 December 1902.

<sup>38</sup> *BG* 17 December 1910.

<sup>39</sup> *BVD* 20 December 1902.

<sup>40</sup> *BVD* 16 December 1905.



knew that on Sunday there were hundreds of boys and girls with nowhere to go when they ought to be in some church or chapel.<sup>41</sup>

He might have added that a continuing concern was the failure to convert more than a handful of Sunday school scholars into church members.

Another, all pervasive, challenge was that of living in, what J D Jones described in 1905 as, ‘a very materialistic age.’ He argued that while:

It might sound absolutely Quixotic and fantastic ... what they really wanted for the prosperity of England much more than a revival of trade was a revival of religion (hear, hear). They wanted not simply to let the world see that the Church had the power of making new men, but they wanted these new men to go out into the world and live a new life.<sup>42</sup>

This was a call for, in the language of the time, a more aggressive form of Christianity which would make a greater impact on the world at large.

Looked at in the round, what many speakers at church anniversaries sought to do was blend a degree of heart searching with exhortation. They wanted to encourage their audiences to be both more reflective and more active with regard to their faith and the imperatives which flowed from it. In other words, they should be constantly looking for ways of engaging with the community of which East Cliff was an integral part.

## Community Engagement

During the nineteenth century one of the most overt forms of community engagement undertaken by churches was evangelistic crusades and missions. Although their popularity was on the wane by the Edwardian era, with the institutional principle coming to be seen as a more effective and appropriate mode of outreach, they had not been entirely superseded in Bournemouth. Thus, in April 1903 there was a special mission for children and young people, which led to 28 at East Cliff making a profession of faith, and in 1904 East Cliff assisted with a mission to the population at large led by, a popular evangelist of the time, Gypsy Smith.

A more prosaic and ongoing form of engagement was the church magazine, which was re-launched in 1907.<sup>43</sup> This was seen as meeting ‘a felt need’ and providing ‘a splendid medium for making known the various activities of the

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<sup>41</sup> BG 17 December 1910.

<sup>42</sup> BVD 16 December 1905.

<sup>43</sup> From 1887 to 1893, 1000 copies of the *East Cliff Illustrated Monthly* had been distributed free of charge to homes in the neighbourhood.

Church and creating a point of contact between the pulpit and the pew'.<sup>44</sup> It also served as a channel of communication with the wider community.

Through its subsidiary organisations and the facilities which East Cliff had developed within the church complex, many within the community were afforded opportunities for recreation of both an educational and physical nature. As Moncrieff commented at the anniversary celebrations in 1906, 'their church premises were for some meeting or other open every night in the week excepting Saturdays'. He went on to observe that 'this was as it should be, as he considered that a church was not doing its duty unless it was providing a means of healthy enjoyment for its young people'.<sup>45</sup> It was, of course, not only the young who made use of what was on offer.

In 1902, East Cliff appointed its first lady visitors. Although the record is silent as to their precise role, from similar schemes in other Congregational churches, it is reasonable to assume that they served as the eyes and ears of the minister and deacons with respect to the exercise of their pastoral responsibilities. It is also likely that within their 'patch' they would have acted as ersatz social workers offering help and support in cases of need. In this way, East Cliff went some way towards meeting the imperatives of what was known as the 'social gospel' defined by David Bebbington as 'an attempt to change human beings by transforming their environment rather than touching their hearts'.<sup>46</sup>

It was also the case that, in engaging with the community at large, the members and adherents of East Cliff did not shy away from political controversies. In 1904 Moncrieff nailed his colours to the mast with respect to opposition to the Education Act 1902 through passive resistance and was duly summoned to appear in the magistrate's court for non-payment of the education rate on conscientious grounds. In the same year, the church passed a resolution against the Government's Licensing Bill. A few years later, East Cliff members were active in the Sunday Defence League. In the autumn of 1912, to coincide with the municipal elections and the likelihood of a second poll on the running of trams on Sundays,<sup>47</sup> the League organised 'its forces for a strenuous campaign to maintain the quiet Sunday for which Bournemouth is renowned, and which we still believe, notwithstanding all that has been stated to the contrary, is one of its greatest assets.' Readers of the church magazine, whose names appeared on the burgess roll, were exhorted 'to VOTE, irrespective of creed or politics, on November 1st, FOR CANDIDATES who are opposed to SUNDAY TRAMS

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44 *ECJS* 13.

45 *BVD* 15 December 1906.

46 D W Bebbington *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (London 1989) 211.

47 At an earlier poll in 1906, 57.2 per cent of those voting opposed the running of trams on a Sunday.

and all that would follow in their train.’<sup>48</sup> However, despite the opposition, at a second poll those in favour of Sunday trams were victorious. Trams commenced running on Sundays in early 1913, although only in the afternoons.<sup>49</sup>

## Malmesbury Park Mission and Garfield Mission Spring Road

As a further demonstration of its commitment to outreach, East Cliff was instrumental in establishing two missions, one in Malmesbury Park, which had been established in 1894, and another in Spring Road, later renamed the Garfield Mission Spring Road, in 1898. Both had ministries focussed on children and women as well as the community at large. As indicated in the notes for Table 1, the Sunday school figures for the two missions were not included with those for East Cliff and are incomplete. That said, Malmesbury Park had, on average, approximately 120 scholars and 15 teachers. Spring Road was much smaller with probably around 30 scholars and a couple of teachers.

As the following extract from the report on the Malmesbury Park Mission for 1909 indicates, the work was both challenging and rewarding:

The work of the Mission during the past year has been steady, but progressive. Though it has been at times wrought with much weakness, yet there has always been a marked earnestness in the efforts of those who helped in carrying on the work, a spirit of hope, of trust, and of expectation seemed to rest upon the place. The same conditions of harmony and unity that have for so long a time been a characteristic of the work in general continue to prevail and give fair promise of success in the future.<sup>50</sup>

Similarly, in the Garfield Mission report for 1910 reference was made to the encouraging nature of the work and the successful experimentation with Sunday evening services, with the singing being led by a string band at one service a month and another being in the form of a Lantern service.<sup>51</sup>

## Conclusion

Throughout the Edwardian era, both in numerical terms and in other ways, East Cliff prospered. It did, of course, like all churches face problems, but in the main it was able to overcome them. Arguably the most formidable of these was the premature death of the Revd William Moncrieff. However, in having

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48 *East Cliff Congregational Magazine* 70 (Oct 1912) iv.

49 Sunday morning trams did not begin running until 1926.

50 ECCMMB 1901–1913 30 December 1909.

51 ECCMMB 1901–1913 29 December 1910.

a strong and resourceful diaconate and in quickly securing the services of the Revd Phillip Rogers, it was able to move forward from this misfortune with a minimum of disruption. Both ministers possessed qualities which enabled them to endear themselves to the members and adherents of East Cliff and other churches.

Another of East Cliff's strengths was the close and warm relations it enjoyed with Richmond Hill and other Congregational churches in the Bournemouth area. East Cliff also had a growing reputation within Congregationalism and nonconformity more widely. This is evidenced by the fact that in 1903 the church assisted with arrangements for the CUEW's autumnal meetings, which were held in Bournemouth, and in 1908 through hosting the autumnal meetings of the HCU. Indeed, at the latter event, William Haydon, the vice president of the Bournemouth Free Church Council and secretary of Landsdowne Baptist Church, congratulated Phillip Rogers 'upon becoming the Pastor of a loyal Christian Church, such as East Cliff was known far and wide to be.'<sup>52</sup>

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*Roger Ottewill*

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<sup>52</sup> *Lyminster Chronicle*, October 8, 1908. As indicated in footnote 13 it was Haydon's daughter, Margaret, who married Rogers.

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## **BOOKS WHICH MAY INTEREST CHS MAGAZINE READERS:**

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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 Ejectment of 1662* (2015) edited by Janet Wootton. £10

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

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

*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.

## MRS RANYARD AND THE BIBLE WOMEN

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Among the less well-known social reformers of Victorian England is Ellen Henrietta Ranyard (1810–79) who achieved sufficient distinction as a philanthropist to be included in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. She is not then among those many women who were unfairly overlooked but have been recognised somewhat belatedly in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. The significance of her contribution to national life was understood in her own time but has more recently been largely forgotten, perhaps because of her avowedly Christian motivation. Unquestionably Christian faith inspired her engagement with poverty and disease and led her to found the Bible Women movement, as it came to be known. This body, which developed to provide Christian nursing care, continued its life after the formation of the National Health Service but was finally absorbed into the London boroughs district nursing services in 1965.

Before Ellen Ranyard's movement began, the Quaker prison reformer Elizabeth Fry (1780–1845) had established a Society of Nursing Sisters in 1840, the first attempt to reform nursing in England, after she had seen at first hand the squalid living standards endured by the poor. Fry had called on women to be active in reforming the conditions forced on members of their own sex. A few years later Florence Nightingale (1820–1910) may have been inspired by Fry's example. She shocked Victorian England with her nurses and she gave her support to the District Nurse Associations being set up throughout the country. In 1862 the Liverpool merchant and philanthropist William Rathbone (1819–1902) involved Nightingale in establishing the Liverpool Training School and Home for Nurses. These pioneers fought dreadful conditions and prejudice alike and Nightingale was not alone in supporting the Association for Improving Workhouse Infirmaryes.<sup>1</sup> Ellen Ranyard's work should be seen in this context.

Ellen was born in Nine Elms, on the borders of Lambeth and Wandsworth, near Vauxhall, in what is now an upwardly mobile housing area and was then a quiet riverside location, but geographically close to pockets of social deprivation. Her father, John Bazley White, was a well-to-do businessman, a cement maker, and the family attended the Congregational Church in Walworth, a few miles to the south-east. This was York Street Chapel whose minister 1804–54 was George Clayton (1783–1862), one of the three sons of John Clayton (1754–1843), who all followed their father into the Congregational ministry. George,

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<sup>1</sup> For Fry, Nightingale and Rathbone see *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford 2004) (hereafter *ODNB*).

like his brothers, was evangelical, giving support to all ‘catholic institutions for the spread of the gospel’. He had a ‘gentlemanly demeanour’ and a ‘large intercourse with ministers and people of other denominations’. At this church in 1812 Robert Browning, the future poet, was baptised.<sup>2</sup>

She was the eldest child, with several younger brothers and sisters, whose mother equipped them all with a knowledge of the scriptures and taught them the ‘shorter catechism’ of the Westminster Assembly, the catechism then commonly used in the schools of Protestant dissenters.<sup>3</sup> At home Ellen discovered a taste for books, culture and especially art, retaining a desire to develop her talents. The White family had a connection with Wanstead some miles to the north-east where, aged 16 years, Ellen and her parents attended a ‘Bible meeting’ (a study group addressed by a speaker) from which she dated her ‘mission history’. In Wanstead they stayed with the Saunders family which had several daughters, one of whom, Elizabeth, was then losing a friend, on her moving to Manchester, to whom she had attributed her Christian conversion. Elizabeth was ‘a gentle and loving soul’ and Mrs White urged Mrs Saunders to let the downcast Elizabeth return home with the Whites for a rest.<sup>4</sup>

## Conversion

Probably back in London Ellen went with Elizabeth in 1826 to distribute Bibles to poor families, having identified some 35 families who had no copy of the scriptures. They collected 35 pence to help finance their mission and embarked on what was to become a transformative and Damascene experience for Ellen, as she later recalled.

‘I came home, having seen for the first time how the poor live; their ignorance, their dirt, their smells—for we went upstairs to more than one sick-room; and I heard my friend, in a way that I had never heard before (though religiously brought up), tell the good news of the love of Jesus to the consumptive and the dying. She spoke to them, but the Spirit of God carried the message home to me. ... when I went to bed at night I took up my Bible to read my usual chapter with a new feeling for it, and a new light upon it from all I had seen and heard that day, and I thought I would begin the Book over again for Elizabeth’s sake; and as I read “Let there be light,” from that hour there was

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2 J Stoughton *Reminiscences of Congregationalism Fifty Years Ago* (1881) 24, 67; E E Cleal *The Story of Congregationalism in Surrey* (1908) 67–70. For John Clayton senior and John Clayton (1780–1865) see *ODNB*.

3 L Alldridge *The World’s Workers: Florence Nightingale, Frances Ridley Havergal, Catherine Marsh, Mrs. Ranyard* (1885) 102–3.

4 Alldridge *Ranyard* 103–4.

light upon its pages never seen before, for my hard young heart was softened, and a quiet new affection drawn out to this new and gentle friend.<sup>5</sup>

Consequent upon this mission visit, both girls contracted typhoid fever which proved fatal to Elizabeth. On her recovery Ellen believed that she had found the cause to which she should devote her life. She stated,

‘I remember thinking that the Bible work was the one work to which I had been called by God, and to which I must keep faithful as one who had been baptised for the dead’.<sup>6</sup>

## Her Calling

Once she had regained her full health, Ellen returned to the 35 families and collected what money was remaining, a sum eventually rising to £6. She took this money to a women’s committee meeting of the British and Foreign Bible Society, of which her grandmother was president, and from which the original 35 Bibles had been obtained. She was herself in time to become a secretary of that committee.

Sometime during the 1830s her family moved from the then suburbs of London to Swanscombe, near Gravesend, in Kent, also alongside the River Thames. There she met Benjamin Ranyard (1792/3–1879), a barge owner of Millbank, Westminster, on the opposite bank of the Thames from her former Nine Elms home. They were married at York Street Chapel on 10th January 1839 and were to have two sons and two daughters, one son, Arthur Cowper Ranyard (1845–94) becoming a noted astronomer. Interestingly this son rose to distinction while living in the family home in Bloomsbury where he was eventually to die of cancer. He was noted for his generosity, his devotion to duty and to hard work, all qualities notable in his mother.<sup>7</sup>

In Swanscombe Ellen continued to work with the Bible Society and found pleasure in painting in watercolour and with oils, incorporating dried seaweed in her art. In 1852 she wrote a book for young people called *The Book and its Story; a narrative for the young on occasion of the jubilee of the British and Foreign Bible Society* (1853). This work proved very popular. She also wrote improving verses which were later published in collected form under her pseudonym LNR in *Leaves from Life* (1855) and a later collection *The Border Land and other poems* (1876).

## London

In 1857 the Ranyards moved from Swanscombe to a new home at 13 Hunter Street, Brunswick Square, Bloomsbury, then close to slum housing. They

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5 Alldridge *Ranyard* 106–7.

6 Alldridge *Ranyard* 108.

7 For Arthur Cowper Ranyard see *ODNB*.

believed that their children would attain a better education in London than in the country. In June that year Ellen accompanied a retired physician, who knew London's poor districts well, on her first visit to 'the terrible Seven Dials, St Giles', a locality notorious for bad housing and lawlessness. In the late nineteenth century this area would be replete with model blocks of flats, mission halls and new streets but then Ellen was horror struck. She resolved to 'civilize' the area, hoping to bring the inhabitants of Seven Dials both spiritual and material assistance and believing, as she later commented 'If Jesus makes our hearts clean, our homes will soon be clean too'.<sup>8</sup> As before, she believed that her calling was to supply London's poor with Bibles and she argued that this was best achieved not by city missionaries but by ordinary, working-class women.

She turned for help to Mr McCree, the resident London City Missioner of Dudley Street District, St Giles's. The London City Mission had been founded in 1835 with a mandate to 'extend the knowledge of the Gospel among the inhabitants of London and its vicinity (especially the poor).' McCree recommended a local woman known as Marian B who, under the guidance of Ellen Ranyard, initiated the London Bible and Domestic Female Mission or less formally the Bible women movement.<sup>9</sup> This body depended directly on the poor themselves, not only as the recipients of charity, but also as the dispensers of that charity and goodwill. Initially her mission merely aimed to supply and distribute Bibles and, given this simple and easily understood goal, the movement spread rapidly throughout England and to north America, to Australia and to south-east Asia. Mrs Ranyard wrote of the society's work in a magazine entitled *The Book and its Missions, past and present* (volumes I to ix, 1856–64). The periodical was renamed in 1865 *The Missing Link Magazine, or Bible Work at Home and Abroad* (1865–79). By 1879 the mission employed more than 170 Bible women.

Under the initials LNR she wrote *The Bible Collectors, or Principles in Practice* (1854), *The Missing Link, or Bible Women in the Homes of the London Poor* (1859), *Life Work, or the Link and the Rivet* (1861), *The True Institution of Sisterhood, or a Message and its Messengers* (1862), *Stones Crying Out and Rock-Witness to the Narratives of the Bible Concerning the Times of the Jews* (1865), and *London and Ten years work in it* (1868), among other works. From its base in Covent Garden the movement spread east to Whitechapel and Poplar and south to Bermondsey. Soon the work of supplying Bibles was seen to be insufficient to meet the obvious need. Experience in the slums led Ranyard in 1868 to begin training nurses who also were drawn from the working women of the districts.

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<sup>8</sup> LNR [E H Ranyard] *Life Work; or, the Link and the Rivet* 108.

<sup>9</sup> [www.ucl.ac.uk/bloomsbury-project/institutions/ranyard.htm](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/bloomsbury-project/institutions/ranyard.htm), accessed 26/1/19; [www.lcm.org.uk/our-mission/history](http://www.lcm.org.uk/our-mission/history), accessed 26/1/19; LNR [E H Ranyard] *The Missing Link, or Bible Women in the Homes of the London Poor* (New York 1860) 20.



Eventually some 80 such nurses were active in London's poorest areas, attending the sick and the needy. They referred patients to hospitals, inspected babies and infants, and encouraged the poor to understand how to help themselves in medical matters.

Clearly Ellen Ranyard had a strong influence on her own household. She died of bronchitis in 11 February 1879 at home in Hunter Street and there, one month later, her husband also died. Both were interred at Norwood Cemetery. Lord Shaftesbury attended her funeral. At her death, with over 170 Bible women employed by the society, its takings (mostly at a penny a time) amounted to more than £130,000.<sup>10</sup>

## Conclusion

What should we make of Ellen Ranyard and her movement? Superficially we might dismiss her as just another Victorian Lady Bountiful, an evangelical do-gooder from a dissenting background, who held no small measure of contemporary prejudice against Jews, the Irish and Roman Catholics, and who sought to spread what she understood as the obvious benefits of Protestant civilization. Yet for all her conventionality she was not content to be the 'little woman in the house', as the Victorian caricature of a middle-class house wife would have it. We must allow that she read correctly the public mood and outwardly conformed to it, seeming to work within, rather than challenge, the widespread assumptions of her day. Yet the two pulls of tradition and modernity are evident in her life and work. She was not merely an exceptionally determined and energetic woman who knew how to promote her cause but she was innovative in understanding and releasing the potential of working-class women in London's slums. She might then fall into line with other women Christian activists, following the exertions of earlier evangelical women philanthropists like Hannah More (1745–1833) and anticipating those of a later generation which must include the charismatic and graceful Christian humanitarian Josephine Butler (1828–1906), although Ellen in that exalted company would occupy only a modest place.<sup>11</sup>

However Ellen Ranyard's success in using the energies of overlooked women in what was generally recognised as essential work for Christians who wished to bring enlightenment to 'darkest England', predated the better known efforts of General William Booth (1829–1912) and the Salvation Army. By not openly questioning the role society gave to women, she appeared to endorse the traditions she had inherited but the shock of her visits to the homes of the poor, allied to her own dynamic, forced her beyond docility. From her youth,

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<sup>10</sup> *Friends of West Norwood Cemetery Newsletter* No 32 (May 1998) 5.

<sup>11</sup> For More and Butler see *ODNB*.



## REVIEWS

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***Thomas Cromwell: A Life.* By Diarmaid MacCulloch. Allen Lane, London, 2018. Pp xxiii + 728. £30 hardback. ISBN 978-1-846-14429-5**

Diarmaid MacCulloch is Professor of the History of the Church at Oxford University. His biographical study of Thomas Cromwell's clerical confederate, *Thomas Cranmer* (1996), established his scholarly reputation, reinforced by the scale and authority of *Reformation: Europe's House Divided 1490-1700* (2004). His other works included a six part television series *A History of Christianity* (2010). He has become the 'go to' man for a lively judgment on ecclesiastical issues from gay rights to the early church and the media have beat a path to his door. Yet he is primarily an historian of the Tudor church and here he tackles the subject of Hilary Mantel's prize-winning fiction and he does so with authority and aplomb.

The book begins with a quotation from Hugh Trevor-Roper who described Cromwell as 'an iron-fisted bureaucrat' who 'overhauled the machinery of government' so drastically that it was not significantly altered until Victoria's reign. This radical overhaul was achieved in a very short time. And yet Thomas Cromwell himself remains a complex, shadowy figure, a mystery, full of introspection and unknowability, as actors have recently portrayed him. Cromwell himself has left thousands of papers but outgoing letters from him are on the whole missing; probably his household destroyed much after his arrest in June 1540. MacCulloch explains that he has waded through 'a torrent of paperwork' but still Cromwell's own voice is wanting. The book is dedicated to Sir Geoffrey Elton who saw Cromwell as 'not biographable' and MacCulloch believes that he is attempting to answer questions throughout the book that Elton might raise.

The man from Putney who must be accorded at least partial responsibility for the dissolution of the monasteries and the break with the Pope in Rome was described as a ruffian when young by his later biographer, William Cobbett. After his travels in Europe, Cromwell came to notice from 1524 as a servant of Cardinal Thomas Wolsey and the first part of the book, five chapters, deal with its hero's early life and work for Wolsey, taking the reader to 1530. Part two, 1531-1533, treats with Cromwell as the king's councillor, his rise to power and the marriage of Anne Boleyn to Henry VIII which led to Elizabeth's birth. Part three, 1533/4-1536, given Cromwell's earnest desire to promote evangelical religion, as he saw it, covers the fall of Sir Thomas More, treason, deaths for religion and the execution of Anne Boleyn. Part four takes the story

to 1538, with Jane Seymour's marriage (only eleven days after Anne's death), the Pilgrimage of Grace and Cromwell's survival from many dangers at the hands of traditionalists who plotted his destruction. However Jane Seymour's death in childbirth was not foreseen and by 1538 many wondered if Cromwell was too dangerous and would follow the falling stars of Wolsey and More (from the highest in the land to the lowest) and share their fate. Part five, *Nemesis*, tackles 1538–40 in which Cromwell's exceptional energy and talent seem to have been increasingly overshadowed by a lack of political wisdom, shown in the search for another royal bride and other matters. Working so closely with such an unpredictable monarch his downfall and death were always likely to follow.

This is an impressive book in every way from its external appearance to MacCulloch's weighty scholarship and stylish, witty writing. The reader knows from the start that he can trust this critic to guide him through the highways and byways of Henrician politics. The book has a wealth of illustrations and some helpful maps. Throughout MacCulloch relies on original documents and his book has a feast of illustrations, 150 pages of end-notes, bibliography and index and all for £30—a sheer delight! Those of you who read Hilary Mantel's fiction or who thrilled at Mark Rylance's acting of Cromwell on the television will find here the perfect companion, although this is a scholar's book, answering those questions fiction cannot handle.

***The Oxford Handbook of John Bunyan*. Edited by Michael Davies and W R Owens. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2018. Pp xxviii+704. £110 hardback. ISBN 978-0-19-958130-6**

This is the ideal book for all Bunyan enthusiasts both within and without the churches and, even in our irreligious days, many such enthusiasts still survive. Geoffrey Nuttall used to say that often students for the ministry at New College, London had pleaded with him over the years to be admitted to the ministry, without having to take any formal training, invariably citing Bunyan's example. 'Ah yes,' he would reply, 'but there was only one Bunyan!' Thus the classically trained scholar showed his admiration for the untutored tinker from Bedford while puncturing the inflated pride of the immodest student.

Here are thirty-eight essays on Bunyan's life and works by leading scholars in the field from across the world. Doubtless they would delight and excite Nuttall who would be working his way assiduously through the text with his biro, correcting and emending and expanding the ideas. He would be improving the index and finding cross references and, in his own nit picking, inimitable way, he would be making the book his own. But, like all Bunyan enthusiasts, he would be thrilled by the offerings between the covers.

After Michael Davies' introduction in which he presents Bunyan as the 'uncommon man' ready to fight in the name of an individual's rights and

liberties against an authoritarian, tyrannical government (does Bunyan's suffering for his nonconformist principles speak directly to pacifism, and to peaceful political transformation in a nuclear age?) the *Handbook* is arranged in four sections dealing with Contexts, Works, Directions in Criticism, and Journeys.

The essays in Contexts set the scene, beginning with a discussion of 'Bunyan's Life, Bunyan's Lives' from Michael Mullett in which he sees his hero in five sequences—the years leading to his conversion, a spiritual crisis, his joining the Bedford meeting, his 12 years' imprisonment, and lastly his growing reputation as an author. John Coffey outlines the England of Bunyan and 'The Trials and Triumphs of Restoration Dissent' and Anne Dunan-Page examines Bunyan and his church, making clear that she believes the Bedford sources deserve a 'more comprehensive treatment' than they have received so far. Dewey D Wallace Jr discusses Bunyan's theology, revealing a moderate evangelical Calvinist who warned against party labels like Anabaptist. Alison Searle writes on 'Bunyan and the Word', that is the scripture which stimulated his imagination and Roger Pooley on 'Bunyan's Reading' which included the broadsides and pamphlets that circulated in his day, as well as John Foxe's popular martyrology. Books stirred him and helped turn an ill-educated tinker into a powerful preacher and writer. Margaret J M Ezell tackles 'Bunyan and Gender', Neil Keeble brings his considerable learning to the question of separation and the 'Writing of Dissent', and Kathleen Lynch deals with 'Bunyan's Partners in Print', meaning those who brought about the publication of his works.

The second part, on Works, has eleven chapters each considering one or more of Bunyan's own writings. David Walker looks at his 'Early Works', David Gay on those works which emerged from his imprisonment in the 1660s, Nigel Smith treats with the spiritual autobiography *Grace Abounding*, Ken Simpson takes on the writings from the 1670s, Michael Davies on *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), Katsuhiko Engetsu on *The Life and Death of Mr Badman* (1680), Nancy Rosenfeld on *The Holy War* (1682), Arlette Zinck on writings from the 1680s, and Margaret Thickstun on *The Pilgrim's Progress, Part II* (1684). Elizabeth Clarke discusses Bunyan's poetry and Bob Owens examines Bunyan's posthumous publications. All well and good and set out for the reader in chronological order.

The third part, Directions in Criticism, includes Jeremy Tambling's discussion of emblem and allegory in Bunyan, Nick Davis (who died in June 2017) on the element of romance in Bunyan, Mary Ann Lund on his prose style, Julie Coleman on 'The Language of *The Pilgrim's Progress*'. Maxine Hancock considers Bunyan's marginal notes which I found fascinating. Tamsin Spargo weighs up his relation to the historians and Vera Camden discusses the notion of prison as a place of creativity for Bunyan. Stuart Sim tackles poststructuralism and postmodernism and Lori Branch handles the case for post-secular criticism in Bunyan, Theory, and Theology.

The fourth part with the Bunyanesque title *Journeys* explores such topics as Bunyan and the early novel (by Cynthia Wall) and other developments after Bunyan. Isabel Rivers considers *The Pilgrim's Progress* in the Evangelical Revival for which she is well qualified. Jonathan Shears treats with Bunyan and the Romantics and Vincent Newey deals with Bunyan and the Victorians. Joel Rasmussen considers Bunyan in America, Gary Day takes on the tricky subject of Class and Englishness, and Nathalie Colle looks at *Wayfaring Images: The Pilgrim's Pictorial Progress*. The last two essays consider the questions of Children (Shannon Murray) and Bunyan and Empire (Sylvia Brown). How did those imperialists use Bunyan as they spread the British word?

This is a comprehensive treatment. Some 19 of the contributors are female, hinting that Bunyan's appeal is as much, if not more, to women as to men. Was it ever thus? The contributors come from at least seven different countries, underlining Bunyan's global reach. Perhaps the preponderance of scholars of English literature in this book (28 in all), with a sprinkling of three or four professional historians and a few theologians to flavour the rich meal, accurately reflects the importance of Bunyan to English literature and the decreasing power of the churches, although many of these scholars have in truth become expert in a wider range of disciplines than their job titles may suggest. Yet the imbalance seems to state that Bunyan now belongs to the world, rather than to the churches and certainly not to those traditions which may legitimately claim to be Bunyan's lineal descendants. Does this *Handbook* signify that Bunyan now is the preserve of the intellectuals, the academics who may look with a mixture of wonder and scepticism at his conversion and at the mechanic preacher who emerged as a writer of genius? Admittedly his theology does receive some attention throughout the *Handbook* but, as Bunyan's fame rested well into the nineteenth century on his impact on the religious consciousness of his countrymen, should we not have here more emphasis on his religion? I should have liked some detailed examination of his reception by Anglicans, Roman Catholics and Quakers to all of whom he was vehemently opposed.

Readers of this magazine may like to know that Congregationalism does receive mention, as do John Owen, Philip Nye, Thomas Goodwin and other notable contemporaries. Geoffrey Nuttall only appears once in the text.

Notwithstanding my quibbles, the editors are to be congratulated not only on a wide-ranging choice of essay topics but also on the galaxy of star contributors like Neil Keeble, Isabel Rivers and Nigel Smith. And Oxford University Press has produced a handsome volume which would be welcome on most book lovers' shelves. In my view, given the prices one must pay for books today, this is not overpriced and would make a fine gift to oneself or

a birthday present. However, if the price is daunting, then order it from your library; you will not be disappointed.

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*Alan Argent*

***The Ties That Bind. Siblings, Family, and Society in Early Modern England.* By Bernard Capp. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2018. Pp 222. Hardback £60. ISBN 978-0-19-882338-4**

Bernard Capp is a distinguished scholar of early modern England. In this work he examines one aspect of the family—that of sibling relationships—which from the sixteenth to the early eighteenth centuries played a significant role in almost everybody's lives. Yet curiously it has been largely overlooked. How then did contemporaries understand this relationship? And how did parents and children behave? 'Parental favouritism and sibling rivalry are timeless', as Capp points out, and doubtless many of our readers would agree. In the book's first part he considers sibling issues and in the second part, he deals with how these issues played out in five different families, only one of which had aristocratic links.

The Bible contains many stories of sibling jealousy—Cain and Abel, Esau and Jacob, Joseph and his brothers, among them. These stories involve fratricide and imprisonment and seem to ignore the Old Testament command from Leviticus 'Thou shalt not hate thy brother', although early modern Christians needed to remember also the New Testament teaching from 1 John that he who loves God must love his brother also and he who hates his brother 'is in darkness'.

Capp accepts that close ties and fierce rivalries between siblings may persist for a lifetime and that high mortality rates in the early modern period meant that families then, like today, often contained half-siblings and step-siblings. The conventional acceptance of gender roles also shaped the way in which siblings viewed each other, as did inheritance laws by which the eldest son inherited all his parent's goods, though such heirs were required to look after their brothers and sisters. Nevertheless resentful younger brothers especially could be seething with discontent at their poor treatment, as they saw it, while older brothers might see their siblings as idle, spendthrift and ungrateful. Yet the intimate language of the family extended beyond the home. Certainly puritans and nonconformists used the terms brother and sister to address each other but such usage was not confined to them.

Relying on letters, diaries and memoirs, Capp has laid bare the social dynamics of the families, although evidence for ordinary people is fragmentary, given the paucity of surviving original material. In the early modern period the family was considered the bedrock of political and social order. Male supremacy was not seriously challenged but the economic, political and religious upheavals of the time had their impact inflation meant smaller dowries or fewer daughters

marrying. It also meant that the wealthy were reluctant to slice off outlying lands to provide for younger sons.

The growth of Protestantism in the sixteenth century, when the eventual orthodox Christian faith was difficult to predict, led to crises in the family where allegiances might well be split. Yet the most common religious divisions were not between competing faiths in the family but between the committed and the easy-going. Of course, peaceful co-existence also occurred but is difficult to identify and evaluate.

This is an important study and a good read. I recommend it to any *CHS Mag* readers who are interested in the changing (and unchanging) shape of the family.

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Martin Spencer

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***Vanity Fair and the Celestial City. Dissenting, Methodist, and Evangelical Literary Culture In England 1720–1820.* By Isabel Rivers. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2018. Pp xvii + 457. Hardback £95. ISBN 978-0-19-826996-0**

In John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* in order to reach the Celestial City the pilgrims pass through Vanity Fair where all things are bought and sold. Isabel Rivers explores the reading material of those who believed that they were travelling, like Bunyan's Pilgrim, to their spiritual home. Her work provides a detailed study of the writing, editing, publishing and distribution of popular religious books by evangelical dissenters, Methodists and evangelicals in the Church of England in the years 1720–1820. In *Pilgrim's Progress* Christian is encouraged by Evangelist to begin his journey from the City of Destruction. On the way to the Celestial City, he travels sometimes alone, sometimes with companions, encouraged by guides but discouraged by opponents. Evangelist had found him reading his book (the Bible) and crying out 'What shall I do to be saved?' Midway through the journey at the town of Vanity Christian and Faithful encounter the worldly distractions of Vanity Fair which continues all year and where everything is for sale.

But Christian and Faithful are not at home there and are identified as aliens. They speak a foreign language, dress strangely and their presence creates an uproar. In particular they shun all the goods for sale because, as they state, 'their Trade and Traffick' is in heaven. Under examination their defence is that they are going to their own country, the heavenly Jerusalem and, when asked what they would buy, they say they would buy the truth. After a mock trial Faithful is burned at the stake and Christian escapes from prison, eventually reaching his goal with another companion Hopeful. On their journey they are helped not only by human guides but by books and parchments.

Rivers sees here a paradox. Those Christians, like Bunyan's Pilgrim who



shun the world, still depend on literary guides which become commercially very successful and rely for this success on worldly factors including the growth of literacy and better conditions for travel and commerce. How then did popular religious culture and the realm of printing interact?

She explores the most popular books and their readers, although popular often meant cheap and such cheap publications have not always survived in any numbers because they were considered not worth keeping. Rivers asks here some fundamental questions such as How large a proportion of publishing was religious? To what extent was the motive for such publishing commercial? How important was not-for-profit publishing and distribution? How did religious societies affect these publications and their distribution? What proportion of these books were published in cheap duodecimo format as opposed to expensive octavos and quartos? What problems does the fact that some have survived make for historical interpretation?

These questions and others are explored fully for a period in which profound religious changes occurred in British life. Rivers concentrates for the most part on Protestant Dissenters from the Church of England, particularly Congregationalists and Baptists who came to regard themselves as evangelical dissenters, Methodists, and evangelical members of the Church of England. However Quakers and unitarians also receive attention here. Consequently Rivers provides an entrée into the world of Protestant Christians in the eighteenth century, enabling her readers to understand better an age which transformed the dominant culture.

This is an absorbing read and I enjoyed it greatly. I recommend it to all those interested in these questions. Reading the works studied here occupied our predecessors and helped to shape the world in which they kept and taught their faith. We should know more of how they came to understand the Christian gospel and how they acted on that understanding.

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*Alan Argent*

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***Christianity in the Twentieth Century: A World History.* By Brian Stanley. The Princeton History of Christianity. Princeton University Press, Oxford, 2018. Pp xxii + 477. Hardback £27. ISBN 978-0-691-15710-8**

This volume, as its title indicates, deals with the world impact of Christianity, a study which Brian Stanley has made his own. He has published on the modern missionary movement and on modern evangelicalism and has throughout avoided taking a narrowly north-west European standpoint. Of course, the tumultuous events of the twentieth century—two world wars, the impact of clashing authoritarian ideologies, nationalism, the decline of empires, resultant decolonisation, civil wars and in some cases genocide (a crime which has

impacted on most of the world's continents)—have had varied effects on Christianity which Stanley discusses here.

In the 1900s Protestants believed that the twentieth century would bring the unquestioned triumph of Christian faith and values. Furthermore they saw the new century as ushering in an age of peace and harmony. Catholics too foresaw their growing influence on secular society. In hindsight both these sets of hopes seem pitiable. Others expected scientific rationalism and modernization would finally end religious superstition but the confidence of such secularists has also proved misplaced.

Stanley not only follows his themes chronologically but also in terms of the groups of nations concerned. He first covers the response of the British and American churches to the First World War and the situation between the wars. He moves on to the uneasy relationship between the churches and nationalism, touching specifically on Korea and Poland. Other topics covered include conversion in Africa and the Pacific, threats from secularism in France and the Soviet Union, 'belonging and believing' in such contrasting settings as Scandinavia and the United States, the Ecumenical movement—failure and success, genocide in Nazi Germany and Rwanda, Islam and its contacts with Christianity in Egypt and Indonesia, Christian mission in the modern world, human rights in Canada and South Africa, gender and sexuality, Pentecostal communities, Eastern Orthodoxy and migrant churches.

Stanley's use of case studies was inevitable, although it might leave some topics and some countries less well examined than others. Readers might wish to know more of Mexico, for instance, and of other countries of Latin America. They may have a particular interest in the peoples of the Balkans and the strife there in which religion has always played a part. What of the 1 million or more Armenian Christians whose massacre and starvation by the Turks outraged opinion in the West in 1915–16? Yet this last issue is tackled and only serves to show how little politicians have learned the lessons of the past, given the instances of genocide that have besmirched the last century.

This book is welcome. It is ambitious in scope and largely succeeds. If you want to know the Christian background to problems abroad or why the situation at home is not replicated elsewhere, then read this book.

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*Pamela Evans*

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***Four Hundred Years of English Congregational and Welsh Independent Churches in Liverpool (1618–2018)*. By Peter C Humphreys. Kilmainham Congregational Publishing, Dublin, 2018. Pp 119. Paperback—enquiries to [liverpoolcongchurches@gmail.com](mailto:liverpoolcongchurches@gmail.com) ISBN 978-1-5272-2935-8**

Peter Humphreys' well presented book is in response to his own research into Dublin Congregationalism which was the subject of his 2015 Congregational

Lecture. Sadly all the Congregational churches in Dublin have closed. Wondering whether the pattern of decline shown in Dublin was unique to that city or not led Humphreys to turn to another city that he knows well, Liverpool. As a thriving port, Liverpool has attracted, not only Irish Catholics and Protestants, but also numerous Welsh Dissenters to live there. Humphreys chronicles and tabulates the rise and demise or survival of every English Congregational and Welsh Independent church in that city.

It may be difficult to track the movements of churches which spring up and relocate, sometimes dividing over doctrine or personalities and at other times uniting with an existing cause. The Ancient Chapel of Toxteth is a case in point. During the Cromwellian period it functioned as a Presbyterian church. After the Restoration it becomes independent. However, although Humphreys lists it among the Congregational churches, as he states later in the book it was really English Presbyterian. The chapel still exists but is now the meeting place of a Unitarian church, since those holding to Trinitarian belief left in 1776, when the Congregationally inclined among them founded Newington Chapel.

There is an attempt in the narrative portion of the book to show where various worshipping communities (meeting in different locations) were the same church moving from place to place. However the table confusingly describes these places and the dates given as if each is a completely separate church from any other. It also fails to acknowledge the continuing presence of some of them within the United Reformed Church. Though both of these are acknowledged elsewhere, such information should not be absent at this point. The table format adopted for this information should perhaps have been replaced or supplemented by a family tree to supply the otherwise missing information.

Despite its limitations, this is a comprehensive survey. Anyone wanting to know more about Liverpool Congregationalism could go here as a first port of call before following Humphreys back to the original sources. His conclusions on the reasons for decline in Liverpool are worth considering.

***Through Erik Routley's Eyes: Theology, Ecumenism and Congregationalism in the 1950s and 1960s.* By David Cornick. The Congregational Lecture 2018. Congregational Memorial Hall Trust, 2018. Pamphlet £3. ISSN 0963-181X**

In an age of accelerating decline in church attendance, perhaps even more in Methodism and the Church of England than in Congregationalism, how did one man observe and comment on what was unfolding in the post-World War Two years up to the formation of the United Reformed Church? There are no diaries or letters quoted here but Erik Routley published numerous books and articles. David Cornick takes us on a ramble through these years, via Routley's own 1962 Congregational lectures and culminating in his 1970

presidential address to the Congregational Church in England and Wales. On the way we are given a flavour of the giddy excitement some felt in the 1950s and early 60s at the progress of ecumenical discussions. However, Routley is not the source of the enthusiastic quotes here. Rather they come from H F Lovell Cocks, Norman Goodall, John Weller, John Huxtable and others.

Routley was not directly involved in the ecumenical discussions. Perhaps this explains why his comments are more measured, mostly dealing with what Congregationalism could offer to this new 'Dissent against disunity'. In his Congregational lectures, the genius of Congregationalism was that friendship was at the heart of its church order but unfortunately what is understood among friends may not then be intelligible to those in other denominations. Later in the lectures Routley describes Congregationalism in terms of family relationships.

There are some unfortunate editing or printing mistakes here. On p10 there is a reference to an unnamed Congregational fund. Only by looking up Alan Argent's book footnoted here do we find this to be the Reconstruction Fund. On p11 we are told of the 'Baptist Advance' of 1949-5. Is this 1949-55? Or 1945-9?

There is much more in Cornick's lecture. We learn of Routley's view on evangelism and conversion and Billy Graham in particular. He wrote a favourable review of John Robinson's *Honest to God* (1963) before all the furore was stirred up by Robinson's article in *The Observer*. Routley was the author of *The Puritan Pleasures of the Detective Story* (1972). Cornick gives a wide ranging view of a man who he sees as 'ever the pastor' and 'that most friendly of theologians'. Only a passing reference mentions Routley's importance as a hymnologist but this study, constrained as it is by the lecture format, leaves us wanting to know more about an influential figure in 20th century Congregationalism. Cornick has given us only a taster of Routley's wide ranging abilities. Could there be more to come?

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*Peter Young*

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***The History of Harting Congregational Chapel. Compiled by Les Wooller and Mike Freeman. Harting Congregational Church, 2013. Available from Harting Congregational Church, Petersfield Road, South Harting, West Sussex GU28 5AQ. Pp 100. Paperback £8.50.***

As stated in its introduction, this history was compiled for the members and friends of Harting Congregational Church in West Sussex and therefore makes no claim to be an academic publication. As the church dates its foundation to 1800 the text begins with short accounts of Britain and Harting at this time, followed by a paragraph about Hackney College which made a major contribution to the foundation and life of the church. The main section of the work takes the reader chronologically through the history of the church,

heading each period of time with the name of the minister or 'Interregnum'. In each case a short biography of the minister is given after which events at the church are listed. It may be assumed that these details about church life are taken from church or deacons' meeting minute books, but this is not confirmed in the text. Facts mentioned include the concerns of the lay pastor, George King, in 1906 when he was both treasurer and secretary of the church as well as 'leading worship and evangelism' and the installation of a new pipe organ in 1935 at the cost of £185.

At the turn of the nineteenth century Rev Richard Densham worked from Petersfield as an itinerant preacher and was encouraged 'to form a fellowship in Harting'. The text contains excerpts from Densham's letters from this period but they do not make clear at which point the Harting church was actually founded. A detailed account of Densham's death in 1803 following an accident in a horse-chaise is quoted from *The Evangelical Magazine*.

The last section of this work consists of lists of members, baptisms, marriages and burials. Included in the members' list are the names of some who were communicants but not members. There are other additions including a very intriguing one which states that a church meeting in 1830 suspended John Lloyd, who was already a member in 1826, for 'improper conduct at a church meeting and bad behaviour in other respects'. Others in 1816 and 1817 are noted as being 'excluded from church' or 'suspended'.

Although this history leans heavily on the lives and work of ministers and pastors, it does benefit from references to officer holders and other members. Les Wooller and Mike Freeman who compiled the text obviously undertook a lot of research but a list of sources would be useful for any reader who might wish to follow their example and document the history of their own church.

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