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**THE  
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HISTORY  
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MAGAZINE**

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**Volume 9 No 4 Autumn 2020**

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## EDITORIAL

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Our autumn 2020 magazine offers readers a paper on that radical, campaigning journalist, W T Stead, who met his end on the *Titanic* in April 1912. Stead was through and through a Congregationalist, from his family, his education and his attitudes. For this paper we are grateful to Dr Philip March. We are pleased to have an elegiac piece from Prof Clyde Binfield on the closing of Emmanuel Church, Cambridge. In his inimitable way Clyde comments on gowns, buildings, worship style etc. This may all be a mite ‘foreign’ to some of our readers but Cambridge looks to gown and town, as well as in this case to its dissenting roots. We also include here the final part of Roger Ottewill’s exhaustive investigation of Portsmouth’s Congregational churches, taking his story to 1972. His studies of dissent in these southern counties have made him unquestionably a historian to consult for an informed opinion.

## NEWS AND VIEWS

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### **Dawn Watling and Elsie Chamberlain**

John Stewart-Smith has contributed a ‘new Elsie Chamberlain story’ which he has told the people of Chulmleigh whilst a few older residents in the town still remember her. The tale relates to a childhood friend of his, Dawn Watling (1932–2018), who was house matron at St Augustine’s College, Canterbury when Elsie went there in 1965 to lecture to the students on her work at the BBC. In typical fashion, she threw out a challenge to all the students, postgraduate Americans and aspiring bishops from Africa among them, to write a four minute script for her BBC radio slot. Daringly she said that if the scripts were good enough then she would use them on air. Dawn, with reluctant permission from the college’s warden, was allowed to add her script to the collection from the students. Elsie replied to Dawn’s script, stating that ‘If the delivery matches the content, I can use this’. None of the other entries submitted made the grade! So Dawn’s scripts were her first sermons, broadcasting to the nation a life changing experience. 29 years later she was among the first group of female candidates ordained in the Church of England in Bristol Cathedral in 1994. In 2019 John Stewart-Smith secured permission from BBC Written Archives to reproduce Dawn’s scripts. Her broadcasts, under Elsie’s tuition, dealt firstly with Death and secondly with Suffering, and gave comfort to those coping with these experiences.

## Mayflower Commemorations — 1620–2020

**Mayflower 400 UK** is a commemoration, based in Plymouth, of the ship's sailing from England to America in 1620. The aim is for visitors to the website to be given insights to the experiences of the Pilgrim community on the Mayflower voyage. It seeks to examine the history from different perspectives, not least the severe results of colonisation which followed.

The commemoration involves four nations, not only this country and the USA but also the Netherlands and the native Americans whom the Pilgrims encountered, that is the Wampanoag. The exhibition delves into the religious and commercial motives for the voyage. At [www.mayflower400uk.org](http://www.mayflower400uk.org) visitors may read articles and watch videos on the Mayflower, the Pilgrims, and on numerous locations across England connected with the community and their voyage.

Although the events programme has been affected by the Covid 19 crisis, some activities are still expected to occur. Most are in Plymouth, with choral society and symphony orchestra performance dates to be confirmed.

On 28 October 2020 **Southwark's Mayflower youth awards** ceremony will be held online.

On 26 November 2020 the town of **Boston, in Lincolnshire**, will be illuminated by 1,620 lanterns.

Exhibitions include new art inspired by the Mayflower in **Bassetlaw museum, Retford, Nottinghamshire** 17 Oct 2020 — 21 Jan 2021.

Native American art and culture will be exhibited at the **Guildhall, in the City of London** 8 Jan — 14 Feb 2021. It then is moving to **Lincoln, Southampton and Plymouth**. For the latest news about the commemoration, see the website.

## Robert Stivey's Chapels in the Valleys

Robert Stivey who ministered at Highbury Quadrant Congregational Church, in north London, has bought fourteen Welsh chapels (some in good condition but some derelict) and hopes to reopen them as places of worship. Robert, now based at Treherbert in Rhondda Cynon Taf, has bought well. Among his purchases is Calfaria Chapel in Aberdare and another Calfaria in Porth, the latter being now open with its own congregation, as is also Tabernacle, at Treharris. The chapels are in the Cynon valley, in the Rhondda and in the Merthyr valley. These are mostly former Baptist and former Welsh Independent chapels.

Robert explained that on his visits to south Wales he noticed that several chapels were being closed, demolished or converted into flats. He was horrified and felt called to act. He stated that, 'these chapels must be saved, reopened and used again for their original purpose'.

He hopes to open them for worship and states that Calfaria, Aberdare, is 'a magnificent building which deserves to resound with the praises of God once again'. Although it once had congregations in their hundreds every Sunday, Robert does not expect to recreate those times but knows that there are people willing to listen to the gospel. He will start small and build up over the years.

He has largely used inherited funds to buy the chapels and recognises that sadly he may not be able to reopen them all. Yet members of the *Congregational History Society*, knowing that chapels of different denominational affiliations are closing up and down the country, will be interested to learn of his brave attempts and will wish him well, holding this cause in their prayers. At the least, his chapels have been rescued from demolition and will be there for other Christians to use. He welcomes messages of support and is open to enquiries at 074 940 28009.

Robert Stivey's chapels call to mind the poetry of the Welsh bard R S Thomas, especially the following.

*The Chapel*

A little aside from the main road,  
 becalmed in a last-century greyness,  
 there is the chapel, ugly, without the appeal  
 to the tourist to stop his car  
 and visit it. The traffic goes by,  
 and the river goes by, and quick shadows  
 of clouds, too, and the chapel settles  
 a little deeper into the grass.

But here once on an evening like this,  
 in the darkness that was about  
 his hearers, a preacher caught fire  
 and burned steadily before them  
 with a strange light, so that they saw  
 the splendour of the barren mountains  
 about them and sang their amens  
 fiercely, narrow but saved  
 in a way that men are not now.

R S Thomas (1913–2000) from *Laboratories of the Spirit* (1975)

## Death of Ted Milligan

It sometimes behoves us to cross sectarian boundaries and note the saints of other traditions. Among such quiet godly men was Edward Hyslop (Ted) Milligan (1922–2020), a lifelong Quaker, a historian and for many years a trustee of Dr Williams's Trust and Library. He had been a junior member of staff at the library 1938–40, worked in a university library, and later still was librarian of Friends House, Euston Road, London. He was a trustee of Dr Williams 1960–2011 which is a very long time to serve, travelling from his home in Reading.

Yet Ted's quality lay in his warm generosity, his Christian openness to all. He was wise, helpful and friendly. If going the second mile for others is a Christian virtue, Ted had this in spades.

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## CORRESPONDENCE

The recent closure of *Emmanuel United Reformed (formerly Congregational) Church, Cambridge*, after its having united with St Columba's (once Presbyterian), prompted not only Clyde Binfield's article but one of our readers to reflect on her experiences there.

Having worked as a resident nurse at The Leys School, Cambridge, just up the road from Emmanuel, for 32 years Maureen Williams went intermittently there as well as to the school chapel. Derek Wales was Emmanuel's minister when she first went. She already knew him from visits to his church in Winchester where he had ministered, on her return from Council for World Mission (CWM) work in Papua New Guinea. Derek Wales had himself been in Zambia with CWM. In the holidays Maureen went home to Cheltenham to be with her mother. She made many friends at Emmanuel and still keeps in touch. Among others, she met Cyril Blackman who told her that he was the last person to take charge of Cheshunt College, Cambridge. He also told her that he was one of those who had dealings with the last John Williams ship. She met lots of interesting people there but sometimes never got to know their histories until she read the obituary! But she did contribute to a book one member put together of those who had served on the mission field with CWM, so she told her story along with many others. Interestingly The Leys School came into being in 1875 and Emmanuel only the year before. The Leys became famous for the character which James Hilton developed in his tale *Goodbye Mr Chips* (1934) which has been filmed several times.

Maureen has appreciated keeping contact with friends at Emmanuel during this dreadful pandemic. She still visits Cambridge fairly regularly so will hope one Sunday to worship in the new arrangement.

## Responses to Receiving the *CHS Magazine* by email

The Covid 19 crisis meant that the first copy of the Spring 2020 issue of our magazine was sent by email. Confounding all his expectations, our CHS treasurer, Chris Damp, wrote in response only one day after having received the magazine by email. He confessed that, ‘Contrary to what I have said in the past about reading on a screen, I find that I have read most of the magazine already. Excellent as ever.’

He then commented on the contents of that issue, especially Chris Idle’s thoughts on Albert Bayly. ‘I well remember Albert Bayly’s wife, Grace. She was brought to Kentish Town Congregational Church along with her sisters, Winnie and Elsie. The Fountain family had been members at Hawley Road Chapel and, when that united with Kentish Town around 1918, the family became a key part of church life at Kentish Town. Win went on to be lay pastor of the KT church in the 1960s but she was for the URC and left when the church remained Congregational. Elsie was a member of KT up to her death whilst Grace would come and attend morning service at KT — Elsie’s son would pick her up from Chelmsford and drive her over to KT and then we would all have fish and chips together after the morning service! Grace passed on copies of Albert’s books which still sit on the shelf in my study. She was a lovely individual, warm, encouraging and always interested in the church where she was brought up.’

The *CHS Mag* in email form was also ‘much appreciated’ also by Sara Iles. She wrote, ‘An interesting range of articles about individuals and ministries, as well as church groups. I always appreciate the book reviews and read the obituaries. I expect, like many others, that I prefer a paper copy as it is good to have paper in front of one’s eyes, and not a screen all the time! But the format works well as an e-copy so if this was more cost effective it is certainly adequate and still a welcome magazine.’

One CHS member [Paul Burnham] commented favourably about the magazine in general which he finds ‘really good ... wide ranging’, ‘catholic in the John Wesley sense’. Another reader added encouragingly (perhaps showing some bias) that it puts the Methodist history magazine into the shade.

The ‘stray organist’, Nicholas Page, was grateful for the magazine which, ‘as ever, was much appreciated’.

**Roger Ottewill has written,** ‘In Spring 2020’s issue of the *CHS Mag* I outlined a project being undertaken for Avenue St Andrews URC in Southampton. This is funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Needless to say, it is a casualty of Covid-19. However, work has now resumed with a



revised action plan. It is hoped that additional output will result in an article for the *CHS Mag*, exploring the origins and early years of Avenue Congregational Church. This was a late Victorian example of ‘extending Nonconformity’, or what today would be ‘church planting’, with a key role in establishing the church played by Avenue’s first minister, Revd Arthur Martin.

Another Southampton project, with Congregational links, adversely affected by the pandemic is that celebrating the 400th anniversary of the consecration of Pear Tree Church. This is claimed to be the first Anglican Church consecrated after the Reformation. That aside, for *CHS Mag* readers, it is relevant because celebrations include a Study Day devoted to ‘The Religious Landscape of Pear Tree Green from the 16th to 19th Centuries’ and later, one contribution is a talk about Pear Tree Independent/Congregational Church, from its foundation in the early nineteenth century to 1972. When the chapel opened in 1840 it was somewhat patronisingly described in a press report as ‘the little structure [which] rears its head opposite to the Ancient Church on Pear Tree Green’ (*Hampshire Telegraph*, 21 September 1840). Hopefully, the Study Day will now be held in July 2021. For further information, see the Peartree 400 website: <http://www.peartreechurch.org.uk/peartree-400/4594428783>.

## SECRETARY’S NOTES

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### **We are all History-Makers now!**

Little did he know it at the time, but one of our young people was very much a History Maker. Growing up in Highbury Congregational Church, Cheltenham, he was a stalwart at Hy-Tec, the youth group that started a year before I arrived as minister. Highbury Youth — the Eternity Club was a bit of a mouthful, but it worked as an acronym, not least because of a popular brand of trainers that was all the rage at the time. That it celebrates its thirtieth anniversary this year and is still going strong is testament to the youth workers at the church. They have always finished their Sunday evening meetings with a quarter of an hour for worship in the church itself, led by the worship group that began at much the same time, and still contributes to Sunday worship at Highbury, Hy-Spirit. It was a privilege to join them for their worship at what was for me the third service of the day.

Since its release by Delirious in 1996 one of their favourite worship songs was one that I found an inspiration every time I joined in singing it: *I’m gonna* (sic!) *be a history maker in this land*. As we joined in singing that song, little did any of us think that he would be a history maker in a way not envisaged by Delirious or any of us who shared in those times of worship.

Three or four years ago, when he was in the sixth form, he approached me, wondering whether he could do a project for his Duke of Edinburgh's Gold Award. He wanted to help out with the older people in the church and he came up with the idea of doing something ground-breaking. With the help of the church's High Tech computer experts, he set up a webcam to livestream some of our Sunday morning services. Having set it up in church, he took his iPad to one or other of our older people in care homes and nursing homes. He sat with them and helped them to share in the service, albeit from their own rooms. It was moving to lead a service, knowing they were with us.

Little did we know at the time that within three years his ground-breaking work would be common-place up and down the land. Nor did my wife, Felicity, and I think when we retired from Highbury in 2018 that within a couple of years we would share with their new minister, Jason Boyd, in Highbury's worship every Sunday morning for six months. On the first Sunday after lockdown, Jason Boyd, the current minister at Highbury, worked with one of the Hy-Tec leaders and others in setting up a YouTube service. And, even though the church now meets again on Sunday mornings, they will not lose their online presence and so the services are live-streamed, just as that Hy-Tec member had pioneered!

Of course, Highbury is not alone. Not since the seventeenth century have churches been closed in the UK by government diktat. How different the reasons are ... and how much more universal. Just as in the seventeenth century our forebears refused to be silent, so too today churches continue to worship ... online, by phone, circulating news sheets. We are all history-makers now.

From time to time in my Secretary's notes I have reflected on what we do when we write a church history. I do hope that each of our churches will record what they have done in the face of the pandemic so that future generations will be able to write the history of this remarkable and unsettling time.

Each of the denominational websites has a directory of online worship. The Union of Welsh Independents, with Council for World Mission funding, had set up a TV studio with facilities to make their own TV programmes a few years before. The experience informed well-crafted online services each Sunday for all churches to use. The Congregational Federation celebrated the 400th anniversary of the Mayflower with a Mayflower Fest, complete with a Worship Tent, a Theology Tent and a Children's Tent. It's online for posterity. How important it is that a record be made of those denominational initiatives too.

In his controversial book which was published, withdrawn and re-written, *the Dignity of Difference — How to avoid the Clash of Civilisations*, Jonathan Sacks made the observation that 'there have been three great information revolutions in the past.' The first was the invention of writing itself, marking 'the genesis of civilisation'. The second was the invention of the alphabet, heralding 'far-

reaching social and political possibilities'. The third was the invention of printing, an invention which had 'almost incalculable consequences': more than any other invention 'it paved the way for the transition from the medieval to the modern age.' He did not finish there. 'There have been three great information revolutions in the past,' said Jonathan Sacks, 'and we are living through the fourth'.<sup>1</sup>

A year before Hy-Tec began, according to the World Wide Web Foundation, Tim Berners Lee 'laid out his vision for what would become the web in a document called 'Information Management: A Proposal'. By the time Hy-Tec began in 1990 he 'had written the three fundamental technologies that remain the foundation of today's web': HyperText Markup Language (HTML), Uniform Resource Identifier (URI) and Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP) and the web was launched at CERN in Switzerland. It was in the year my ministry at Highbury began that 'people outside CERN were invited to join this new web community'.<sup>2</sup>

The rest is history. Or is it? Perhaps it would be better to say, the rest is history in the making. And we are the history makers. Jonathan Sacks suggested that 'the impact of the present transformation will not be known for decades, even centuries to come.' But he was willing to give a provisional verdict on this fourth information technology. What he wrote in 2002 may perhaps give us grounds for hope as we struggle with the pandemic ... and at times with the technology!

Information technology is more than a technology: it has a profound impact on the democratisation of human dignity. There is a story to be told about personal computers, modems, e-mail and the Internet [and I would add, about all those online services and Zoom coffee mornings and prayer meetings] that is, in its way, both spiritual and political and a source of genuine hope.

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*Richard Cleaves*

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<sup>1</sup> J Sacks *The dignity of difference: how to avoid the clash of civilizations* (2002) chapter 7. My edition was withdrawn following adverse reactions; it was then re-written and re-issued in 2003.

<sup>2</sup> For the World Wide Web see World Wide Web Foundation's 'History of the Web' [www.webfoundation.org](http://www.webfoundation.org) (accessed 22nd September 2020). The World Wide Web Foundation was established in 2009 by Sir Tim Berners-Lee to 'advance the open web as a public good and a basic right'.

## WILLIAM THOMAS STEAD (1849–1912): NONCONFORMIST, NEW JOURNALIST, AND SOCIAL CAMPAIGNER.

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### A *Titanic* Loss

At noon on Wednesday 10 April 1912, the White Star liner, the *RMS Titanic*, set sail from Southampton on its much-heralded maiden voyage to New York. Travelling at the invitation of the American Men and Religion Forward Movement was W T Stead. Nine days later, the movement's Christian Conservation Congress met in New York to hear addresses on world problems and their possible remedies: central to the discussions held at the Carnegie Hall was the application to everyday life of New Testament teaching.<sup>1</sup> At the heart of Stead's own campaigning and crusading press engagement lay a Christian faith shaped by his Congregational upbringing, formal education, and lasting church membership. In Stead, commercial, political, and social concerns combined with strong religious commitment in a productive admixture of action, ideas, and passion invested by Protestant Nonconformity and the growing power of a modernising and innovative press. Five days after having embarked upon a journey that had captured the imagination of the world's press, Stead was confronted by events that called upon the full spiritual resources of his Christian faith.

In the early morning of 15 April 1912, in a shocking reversal of all claims and expectations, the *Titanic* struck an iceberg and sank near Cape Race off the North American coast. Although *The Times* initially published the heartening news from Reuter's that 'No lives were lost', subsequent agency cables became increasingly sombre until it was finally reported that more than 1600 crew and passengers had died in an 'ocean disaster'.<sup>2</sup> Amongst the stories recounting the events of the final hours, one claimed that as the vessel was being abandoned, Stead had asked the ship's orchestra to play the Nonconformist hymns 'Autumn'

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1 V Pierce Jones *Saint or Sensationalist? The Story of W. T. Stead* (East Wittering 1988) 78. The American Men and Religion Forward Movement had been established for one year in order to promote 'social and religious betterment': G Eckley *Maiden Tribute: A Life of W. T. Stead* (Philadelphia 2007) 375.

2 *The Times*, 16 April 1912.

and the ever poignant 'Nearer My God To Thee' with the express intention of stiffening resolve and offering spiritual comfort to those in peril and distress.<sup>3</sup>

At the well-attended memorial service held for Stead on the evening of 25 April 1912 in Westminster Chapel, Buckingham Gate, *The Times* reported the presence of 'People of all classes [...] representatives of foreign states, distinguished Pro-Consuls, Cabinet Ministers, workers in many fields of social reform, political organizers, representative journalists, and sympathizers of almost every shade of religious and political opinion'. Such a range of social status, nationality, reforming principle, political allegiance, and religious affiliation had brought together a full congregation united in affection and respect for the man and his achievements. Dr John Clifford, a leading London Baptist minister and long-time friend, spoke of Stead's 'enthusiasm, his optimism, his restless and untiring zeal in all causes which appealed to his sympathies, and of his unfailing faith in God', characteristics that his family, friends, and colleagues would have recognised as shaping the man who had so influenced the press development contentiously qualified as 'new'.<sup>4</sup>

New Journalism ushered in transformative developmental changes that turned the reading of a newspaper into a less austere activity than had previously been the case. The commuter on bus or train wanted reading material which was lighter than that to be found gracing a gentleman's club or his breakfast table. The greater immediacy in emotional impact and rational comprehension aimed to provide a more satisfying and aesthetically pleasing experience. To this end, headlines and crossheads were introduced to signpost and highlight the printed material and to break up the often densely packed columns that filled the pages. Other New-Journalistic innovations included 'display advertising' spread across more than the usual single column, line-drawing illustrations, and a 'bright' style of writing. Leader articles were reduced in length and more news items were carried at the expense of political opinion pieces and long verbatim reports of parliamentary proceedings. Further, the press ownership model of single editor or individual family proprietorship was being replaced by the emergence of large companies capable of generating and maintaining substantial sales of their titles. New Journalism catered for readerships that wanted more than just an orthodox diet of political, legal, and financial news, and which found increasing satisfaction, at least in part, in the sensational news reports of public and private scandal.<sup>5</sup>

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3 Pierce Jones *Stead* 81. On p 80 Pierce Jones reproduces an American cartoon showing 'Uncle Sam' holding in his left hand a list of the famous people who had perished in the *Titanic* disaster: heading the list is Stead.

4 *The Times* 26 April 1912. B Weinreb and C Hibbert (eds) *The London Encyclopaedia* (1995 edn) 103.

5 J H. Wiener, 'How New Was the New Journalism?' in J H Wiener (ed) *Papers For The Millions: The New Journalism in Britain, 1850s to 1914* (Westport, Connecticut 1988) 52-4, 57. For a

Such scandalous stories had already become familiar to readers of sensationalist fiction from the 1850s and 1860s onwards through the novels of Wilkie Collins, including *Basil* (1852) and *Hide and Seek* (1854).<sup>6</sup> New Journalism also took on the task of investigating major social questions such as the lack of decent housing for the poor and criminal municipal mismanagement.<sup>7</sup> The influence of sensationalism upon the press can be traced in part to the development of the Sunday papers of the 1840s. Designed primarily to offer distraction, vicarious entertainment, and a relief from the drudgery of routine existence, the Sabbatarian sensationalist press nonetheless did not neglect to provide political analysis.<sup>8</sup> The New Journalism of the 1880s went on to recruit the sensationalism of news stories in order to amplify the impact of its investigations. This was sensationalism with a serious social purpose, justified by the important issues being addressed by modernising journalists and newspaper proprietors, conscious of the need to continue the positive values of the more orthodox sections of the press. For Stead, the motors of social renewal lay with the twin democratising engines of New Journalism and evangelical activism.

## Upbringing, Education, Apprenticeship

Born on 5 July 1849, in Embolton, near Alnwick, Stead moved to Howdon, near Newcastle a year later when his father, the Rev. William Stead, was appointed minister of the congregation there. His early education was under the guidance of his father until, aged 12, he was enrolled at Silcoates school, originally founded for the education of the sons of Congregational ministers. He only stayed for two years but retained fond memories of the headmaster, the Rev. Dr James Bewglass, and an appreciation of the religious revivalist influence which swept the school during his time there.

Stead began writing for newspapers while working as an apprenticed accounts clerk for an import company in Newcastle. In 1865 and 1868, he saw the publication of two press articles, the first on the assassination of President Lincoln in ‘a little Jarrow weekly paper’, and the second, for the *Sheffield*

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recent account of the emergence of ‘New Journalism’ as expression and concept, see, P March ‘Case Study 3: New Journalism’, in D Finkelstein (ed) *The Edinburgh History of the British and Irish Press, Vol 2: Expansion and Evolution, 1800–1900* (Edinburgh 2020) 176–180.

6 The beginning of the sensationalist novel is usually located in the early 1860s. However, Tamara Wagner cites these Collins novels as evidence for a beginning in the 1850s. T Wagner, ‘Stretching “The Sensational Sixties”’: Genre and Sensationalism in Domestic Fiction by Victorian Women Writers’, *Victorian Review*, 35:1 (2009) 215. Further, one of the most sensational works of the period appeared in 1859 in Darwin’s discussion of evolutionary theory, *On the Origin of Species* (1859).

7 Wiener ‘New Journalism?’ 55–6.

8 K Williams *Read All About It! A history of the British newspaper* (2010) 119.

*Independent*, on the disestablishment of the Irish Church.<sup>9</sup> Stead wrote nothing more until 1870 when he began to send articles, occasional notes, and leaders to the *Northern Echo* (1870–) based in Darlington.<sup>10</sup> His first such contribution, ‘Indiscriminate Charity’, was published on 7 February 1870, and, like his other freelance pieces, did not earn its writer any remuneration.<sup>11</sup> Although the founding editor of the *Northern Echo*, John Copleston, was unable to meet Stead’s request for at least some token payment, Stead nonetheless decided to continue providing material on an unpaid basis.<sup>12</sup> It was in this largely informal way that Nonconformists were able to train up and to try out individuals motivated to enter journalism and thought capable of agitating for the political and religious aims of Dissent.

In the 1870s, Stead represented not so much a precocious press pioneer as one amongst other journalists of similar background who came to prominence during an important period of change for newspapers. Many of these journalists would have had some knowledge of the work of the former Methodist become Congregational minister John Campbell, ‘one of the most successful nonconformist editors of his age’.<sup>13</sup> Campbell founded and edited the weekly *British Banner* from 1848, and, after he lost the confidence of the Congregational Union, the weekly *British Standard* (1857–67), which he launched under his own auspices and to which many readers previously loyal to the *British Banner* transferred.<sup>14</sup> In reality, therefore, the view that Stead was a particularly gifted journalistic talent tends to ignore the presence of other individuals of similar age, background, and religious denomination, who had either already begun a purposeful press career or who were on the point of doing so. These journalists often shared Stead’s formative experiences which included a relatively foreshortened formal education, initial employment as a clerk in a commercial concern, a parallel interest in writing articles for the press, and the subsequent entry into the journalistic profession itself.

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9 Eckley Stead 13; G McClelland ‘W. T. Stead: The Formative Years’ in *NewsStead*, no 11 (Fall 1997) 7. C Lloyd *Attacking the Devil: 130 Years of the Northern Echo* (Darlington 1999) 37: The Jarrow paper would have been either the *Jarrow Guardian* or the *Jarrow Express*. I suggest that the *Jarrow Guardian* is the better choice as it is the paper that printed Stead’s affectionate obituary of his father, entitled ‘My Father’, on 29 February 1884. The description, ‘a little Jarrow weekly paper’, was Stead’s, quoted in J W Robertson Scott *The Life and Death of a Newspaper* (1952) 92. A J Lee *The Origins of the Popular Press: 1855–1914* (1976) 88, 138, 171–3, discusses the perceived moderate Liberalism of the *Sheffield Independent* and the opposition it provoked for the owners, the Leader family, from the Sheffield radical MP, H J Wilson.

10 Robertson Scott *Life and Death* 94.

11 W T Stead ‘Indiscriminate Charity’ *Northern Echo* 7 February 1870, reprinted in *NewsStead* no 12 (Spring 1998) 1–2.

12 Robertson Scott *Life and Death* 94–95.

13 For Campbell see ODNB.

14 J L Altholz *The Religious Press in Britain, 1760–1900* (Westport, Connecticut 1989) 69–70, 183–4.

Such a path towards a press career was taken, for example, by the Congregationalist H W Lucy who was initially employed as a junior clerk (1856–64) to a hide merchant in Liverpool during which time he also wrote newspaper articles. He became a local reporter for the *Liverpool Mercury* (1858–1904) before gaining further experience of the press in the provinces.<sup>15</sup> Between January and June 1870 he was appointed to act as sub-editor of the newly launched morning edition of the evening daily *Pall Mall Gazette* (1870), but the experiment proved to be unsuccessful and was therefore abandoned.<sup>16</sup> Another journalist, this time, like Stead, from the north-east of England, Thomas Wemyss Reid (1842–1905), was the second son of the Newcastle Congregational minister Alexander Reid and of Jessie Elizabeth, the daughter of Thomas Wemyss of Darlington, a Hebrew scholar and noted Biblical critic.<sup>17</sup> Like Lucy and Stead, Wemyss Reid began his working life as a clerk, this time in the Wentworth Beaumont Lead office at Newcastle. Again, like Lucy and Stead, Wemyss Reid showed an early interest in journalism sending reports on local topics to the *Northern Daily Express*. In January 1866, he became the chief reporter of the *Leeds Mercury*, and, on 15 May 1870, was appointed its editor in which capacity he succeeded in transforming the publication into the first provincial newspaper capable of competing with the metropolitan press.<sup>18</sup> Other significant newspaper figures included the Liberal Congregationalist, journalist, politician, and educationist, Edward Baines (1800–1890). His father, also Edward, owned and edited the *Leeds Mercury* (1718–1939), which campaigned for political reform and extended civil liberties, until surrendering the editorship to his son, who later offered the post to Wemyss Reid.<sup>19</sup> Aged fourteen, Baines had begun to teach in Congregational Sunday schools just as Stead had done for his minister father at Howdon.<sup>20</sup> Baines's public actions were shaped by his Nonconformist faith and his opposition to London's dominance of politics and to the power of Anglican landowners.

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15 Lee *Origins* 140, 275: the *Liverpool Mercury* (1858–1904) was a moderate, one-penny, Liberal paper.

16 *Pall Mall Gazette* (1865–1923) was a leading example of clubland journalism which, in the 1880s, espoused, firstly, Gladstonian Liberalism, and, secondly, under Stead's editorship, the campaigning mission of New Journalism. See L Brake and M Demoor, (eds) *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism in Great Britain and Ireland* (2009) (hereafter *DNCJ*) 477–8.

17 To bolster his limited experience of the press, Stead visited Wemyss Reid, editor of the *Leeds Mercury*. Demonstrating Stead's early confidence in his own ideas, far from Wemyss Reid offering advice to Stead, the supposed pupil used the occasion to inform the teacher of how he would run a newspaper. Eckley *Stead* 14.

18 Lee *Origins* 274: the *Northern Daily Express* was a one-penny, Liberal, paper, founded 21 April 1855 in Darlington before moving to Newcastle in October of the same year. It ceased publication in 1886. The date of cessation of publication is incorrectly given as 1866 by Lee (p 175). For Lucy see *DNCJ* 382–3 and *ODNB*; for Reid see *ODNB*

19 For *Leeds Mercury* see *DNCJ* 354. For Baines see *ODNB*.

20 Robertson Scott *Life and Death* 92.



Like Edward Baines, the Congregational businessman, politician, and philanthropist, Samuel Morley (1809–1886), was born into a manufacturing family. Aged sixteen, he joined the accounts department of the London branch of the family's hosiery firm, and, by the 1860s, he had risen to become the head of the company. He entered into newspaper ownership by acquiring a major holding in the *Daily News*, founded by Charles Dickens in 1846, which, under Morley's influence, became a major promoter of Liberal ideas.<sup>21</sup> Morley was involved in the struggle for religious equality and the unsuccessful battle for the disestablishment of the Church of England. He occupied the chair of the electoral committee of the Liberation Society, founded in 1844 as the British Anti-State Church Association by the Congregational minister, Edward Miall (1809–1881), and renamed the Society for the Liberation of Religion from State Patronage and Control in 1853. Miall had launched the *Nonconformist* (1841–80) on 14 March 1841 from Stoke Newington in London with the principal aim of campaigning for the abolition of compulsory church rates and for Church disestablishment in England and Wales.<sup>22</sup>

The Congregational minister, Robert Vaughan (1795–1868), began the high-quality *British Quarterly Review* (1845–86) in January 1845. In part, this was because of his dissatisfaction with the Nonconformist monthly *Eclectic Review* (1805–68) and its support for the militancy of Miall, and, partly, in order to furnish Nonconformists with a publication that displayed the same cultural values as other reviews. These included the high-Tory, wide-ranging, *Quarterly* (1809–1967), the Whig-supporting *Edinburgh* (1802–1929), and the liberal, increasingly eclectic, *Westminster* (1824–1914).<sup>23</sup> Vaughan's son, Robert Alfred Vaughan (1823–1857), also a Congregational minister and writer, contributed to both *Fraser's Magazine* and the *British Quarterly Review*, while yet another son of a Congregational minister, George Newnes (1851–1910), the newspaper owner and politician, had been a contemporary of Stead's at Silcoates.<sup>24</sup>

On 22 October 1881, Newnes launched *Tit-Bits* (1881–1984) which brought to a working-class readership short newspaper items written in good English and of a

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21 For *Daily News* (1846–1912) see *DNCJ* 158. This pro-reform paper was also noted for its war reporting. For Morley see *ODNB*.

22 For *Nonconformist* (1841–1900) see *DNCJ* 456–7. This middle-class, pro-Liberal party paper dealt with politics, religion, trade, and commerce. For Miall see *ODNB*.

23 D W Bebbington 'Gospel and Culture in Victorian Nonconformity' in J Shaw and A Kreider (eds) *Culture and the Nonconformist Tradition* (Cardiff 1999) 45. For the *British Quarterly* and the *Eclectic*, see Altholz *Religious Press* 58–9. For *British Quarterly Review*, *Quarterly Review*, *Edinburgh Review*, *Westminster Review* see *DNCJ*. For Vaughan senior see *ODNB*.

24 For *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country* (1830–1882) see *DNCJ* 229–30. *Fraser's* was a leading monthly miscellany with progressive views on politics and social questions. For Newnes and Robert Alfred Vaughan see *ODNB*.

purposefully agreeable nature.<sup>25</sup> Newnes and Stead eventually formed a partnership to launch in January 1890 the democratic, Christianising, compendium *Review of Reviews* (1890–1936), but the working relationship only lasted six months, leaving Stead sole proprietor of what proved to be a very successful publication.<sup>26</sup>

Overall, these journalists represent an array of Congregational influence and talent that contributed both to the radical campaigning mission of journalism and to the more respectable and less agitating dissemination of news and opinion. Stead's evident potential for journalism saw him, a Congregationalist, engaged for the *Northern Echo*, founded at the suggestion of a Quaker family, the Peases, by John Hyslop Bell, a former Methodist minister turned newspaper owner.<sup>27</sup> This association of Old and New Dissent and of Liberal political engagement on the one hand, and of the Nonconformist pulpit and the northern press on the other, was part, then, of a wider pattern of unplanned alliances that included newspaper proprietors and employees of Nonconformist religious denominations. Stead remained for nearly a decade (1871–80) at the *Northern Echo* until he accepted an offer from Henry Yates Thompson (1838–1928) to join the London *Pall Mall Gazette* to work, firstly, as assistant editor to John Morley (1838–1923), the future Liberal MP for Newcastle and, later, chief secretary to Ireland, and, secondly, as the senior editor.<sup>28</sup> Before then, at the *Northern Echo*, he became a nationally recognised journalist whose political influence and ability to work up a successful newspaper campaign made him someone of whom to take note and even of whom to be wary.

## The Northern Echo

On 1 January 1870, after three months of print trials, the first half-penny morning newspaper in the country was launched from a former thread and shoelace factory in the Priestgate district of Darlington.<sup>29</sup> Edited by John Copleston, the *Northern Echo* (hereafter *NE*) was a four-page broadsheet publishing material 'on all matters of social, commercial, or political interest'.<sup>30</sup>

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25 For *Tit-Bits* see *DNCJ* 630. *Tit-Bits* included short news items and content suggested by readers' questions and letters.

26 For *Review of Reviews* see *DNCJ* 537–8.

27 Robertson Scott *Life and Death* 95. The Pease family had extensive political and business interests in Darlington, and generally in South Durham, and counted on the *Echo* for support: Lloyd *Northern Echo* 23–5.

28 For Thompson and Morley see *ODNB*. Stead was assistant editor 1880–83 and senior editor 1883–89.

29 Lloyd *Northern Echo* 15.

30 Hyslop Bell had taken over the weekly *South Durham and Cleveland Mercury* in 1855: Robertson Scott *Life and Death* 95; *DNCJ* 457–8; T Nicholson 'The Provincial Stead' in L Brake et al (eds) *W. T. Stead: Newspaper Revolutionary* (2012) 10; J Hyslop Bell *Northern Echo Prospectus* (Darlington 1869).

Run according to progressive management techniques, printed on improved presses, and speedily distributed by train from the foremost railway-hub town of the north-east of England, the *NE* was part of the expanding modern newspaper industry of the 1870s.<sup>31</sup>

In 1871, Stead replaced Copleston as editor of the *NE* and spent the rest of the decade developing the newspaper into a regional success with a national reputation. By the end of his tenure, he had seen the *NE*'s circulation figures increase 'sevenfold in seven years', witnessed John Bright (1811–1889), the radical Quaker MP, qualify the paper, with no negative judgement to be adduced, as 'a triumph of cheap literature', and Gladstone, the Liberal party leader, dub it 'a most ably conducted journal'.<sup>32</sup> Stead was responsible for promoting the political interests of the Pease family in Darlington, but he also, and more importantly, broadened the scope of the *NE* so that it became a leading political platform for the regional advocacy of Gladstonian Liberalism and a pulpit from which to promote Nonconformist moral standards.

At the heart of Stead's journalism lay his conviction that Christianity had a major role to play in both the life of the individual and of the nation. His Congregational upbringing, religiously inspired moral values, and evangelical inflection influenced the development of his journalism at the *NE*. The evangelical priorities of conversion and activism shaped his crusading purpose while the Nonconformist conception of freedom of conscience found political expression in Liberal ideas of civic equality. As Congregational doctrine evolved, Stead followed the shift of emphasis from the Atonement of Christ to the Living Jesus, and accorded greater importance to the need to improve the material living conditions of the poorer members of society.<sup>33</sup> This suggested that what mattered more immediately was a decent moral existence in the here and now rather than the promise of a better life for the soul in God's Kingdom of the hereafter.

Stead's New Journalistic practice became most readily identified with novelty for the sake of novelty which itself became linked to a sensationalist approach. Yet, his own evaluation of his use of innovative press practice was to stress the need to create an effect so that understanding could be advanced. His aim was not to create a series of mere impressions but to express relevant ideas in the pursuit of a Christian reforming mission.

While at the *NE*, Stead maintained on-going campaigns in support of temperance and against the Contagious Diseases Acts (hereafter CD Acts) which followed the orthodox evangelical view that individuals were responsible for

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31 Hyslop Bell *Northern Echo Prospectus*.

32 *May's British & Irish Press Guide and Advertiser's Dictionary and Handbook, 1879* (1879) 55, 77. Bright was a Quaker, radical Liberal politician, and parliamentary reformer. For him see *ODNB*.

33 D W Bebbington *Victorian Nonconformity* (rev edn, Eugene, Oregon 2011) 2–3.

their own salvation whether it be temporal or eternal. This was evident in his suggestion that temperance societies be set up in all churches, that a 'Band of Hope' be established in every Sunday school, that 'a few words' be addressed to the young on the subject of temperance at their confirmation, and that 'an earnest appeal' upon the matter be made to those being admitted to Church membership. Informing the organising structures was the recommendation that 'The Rules and Regulations of these societies may, nay must, vary as infinitely as do the local circumstances of each church and congregation'.<sup>34</sup> This highlighting of the need for variation was more than just a call for flexibility: it was a reminder that Congregational churches were independent, each free from any external hierarchical authority, although able, nonetheless, to unite loosely for shared objectives.

This call for the introduction of 'Bands of Hope' appeared fresh in its exhortation, but was, in fact, for a movement that had begun in 1847, in Leeds, under the auspices of Jabez Tunncliffe, a General Baptist minister, and Anne Carlile, widow of an Irish Presbyterian pastor.<sup>35</sup> Organised primarily for children, with the aim of encouraging as many as possible to take the pledge to abstain fully from alcohol, the movement counted three million members by the end of the nineteenth century and made highly effective use of periodical publications.

While at the *NE*, therefore, Stead supported a Liberal politics that emphasised restricted state intervention, and the revival of Christian values to counteract the perceived moral weakening of the social fabric. Rates of alcoholism in the population represented markers of overall poor living and working conditions as well as of existential distress and remained a problem, exacerbated by vested interests. Amongst these, the breweries and publicans stood firm to protect their commercial viability and overall profitability; religious denominations had identified a social concern that represented fertile terrain for their evangelical approach; and government intervention on a collective scale risked the long-term alienation of wide sections of the population. Even gradual legislative action had become problematic in a sphere where temperance had become synonymous with *intemperance* and where legislative action did not have the support of the religious denominations.

The second on-going campaign for social reform undertaken by Stead and considered here concerned the series of laws known collectively as the Contagious Diseases Acts against which Stead consistently spoke out to the extent that, for this issue alone, he refused to allow any positive advocacy to

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<sup>34</sup> *NE* 17 October 1874.

<sup>35</sup> M R Watts *The Dissenters Volume III: The Crisis and Conscience of Nonconformity* (Oxford 2015) 149.

appear in the publications he edited.<sup>36</sup> His participation in the campaign against the CD Acts was in part formed by his mother's strong opposition to them, as well as by his own belief in their absolute unacceptability; it also contributed to a general north of England movement for the removal of the Acts from the statute book. Founded in 1872, the Northern Counties League for Repeal aimed to rally the support of churches and chapels and to influence parliamentary candidates and existing members of parliament against this legislation.<sup>37</sup> Consequently, the *NE* reported with approval that 'The opponents of the Acts would not merely succeed in repealing an obnoxious, immoral law, but would raise permanently the standard of public morality'.<sup>38</sup> Stead was emphasising that it was not acceptable for a law to be just legal; it had to be both legal and moral.

This time, the campaign concerned the repeal of existing legislation rather than opposition to new laws being enacted. The CD Acts of the 1860s represented what Philip Harling has described as the Victorian state's 'most infamous effort at moral control beyond prison walls.' Formidable opposition to this legislation was offered by Josephine Butler and the Ladies' National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts founded by Butler and Elizabeth Wolstenholme in 1869.<sup>39</sup> After the Crimean War, the state of health of men in the British army and navy was found to be very poor and the Acts had been passed to secure some control over sexual health by preventing the spread of venereal disease in garrison and dockyard towns. The Acts had the consequence of legalising prostitution and of empowering the police to compel women, suspected of being prostitutes, to be medically examined and, if required, held for treatment for up to nine months. The legislation brought to the fore complex attitudes, including opposition to state intervention in moral issues, thought to be properly the province of individual conscience; disapproval of the reinforcement of sexual double standards, whereby men escaped censure and women were subjected to invasive procedures and personal humiliation; and condemnation of the temporary loss by women of rights considered fundamental in English law.<sup>40</sup>

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36 W S Robinson, *Muckraker: The Scandalous Life and Times of W. T. Stead Britain's First Investigative Journalist* (2012) 3.

37 Watts *Dissenters III* 296.

38 *NE* 13 November 1874.

39 P Harling 'The Powers of the Victorian State' in P Mandler (ed) *Liberty & Authority in Victorian Britain* 37–8. For a discussion of Stead's contribution to feminism in the late Victorian period, see A Easley 'W. T. Stead, Late Victorian Feminism' in Brake et al *Stead* 37–58.

40 H Rogers 'Women and Liberty' in Mandler *Liberty & Authority* 125; D W Bebbington *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (Abingdon 1989) 134–5; J R Walkowitz *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (1992) 22–4; P Levine 'Consistent Contradictions: Prostitution and Protective Labour Legislation in Nineteenth-Century England' *Social History*, 19:1 (1994) 22–25.

Feminist opponents of the CD Acts judged prostitution to be a moral evil and, consequently, very quickly secured the support of the Nonconformist churches for their campaigning. Resistance to the abolition campaign came from leading figures in society which included MPs, a large part of the medical profession, the military authorities, and Anglican clergymen, all of whom were male. Some considered themselves to be pragmatists tolerating for the time being what they considered to be, nonetheless, an evil; some medical and political opinion positively supported the measures.<sup>41</sup> Under Stead, the *NE* was an uncompromising adversary of the legislation and swung its weight behind Butler and her National Association.

Stead's support for Butler's 'Social Purity' campaign involved him in several major interconnected public issues. Religion as an indispensable and effective means of confronting a 'perverse and unbelieving generation' underpinned Butler's campaign against sexual exploitation.<sup>42</sup> The leaders of the repeal movement and many supporters were Dissenters, with particularly strong support from Quakers. Stead found himself out of step with his own denomination because Congregationalists joined the campaign later than most, largely because Alexander Hannay, the secretary to the Congregational Union, barred public discussion of the topic until 1881.<sup>43</sup> Such an agitation also confronted what Stead presented as the conniving silence of newspapers on a subject where they were more interested in not losing readers or advertisers, than in dealing with difficult subject matter. Stead believed the newspaper editor's moral, civic, and journalistic duty was to speak out, and he did so through the *NE* just as he would in the 1880s at the *PMG*, where, most famously, he launched the 'Maiden Tribute' crusade which also received little or no support from the other major London daily papers. The publicity of Stead's noisy journalism worked to break the silence that colluded with the immorality of individual and collective conduct.

In May 1878, Stead created out of the *NE*'s intervention a wide-scale condemnation of the overall political spirit that it believed was underpinning Disraeli's Conservative government. Stead suggested that a common bad spirit underlay a series of socially disturbing occurrences: the original passing of the CD Acts (ironically, for Gladstonian Liberals, the work of Lord Palmerston's last Liberal ministry), the Tory election victory of 1874, the Blackburn and Lancashire cotton mill strikes and riots, and demonstrations in Hyde Park. Stead represented this spirit of national destabilisation as the work of 'the World, the Flesh, and the Devil', principles that ignored 'human wrongs and sufferings' and which set themselves in 'cynical defiance of all Divine law or Constitutional

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41 H McLeod *Religion and Society in England, 1850-1914* (1996) 129.

42 *NE* 3 December 1877.

43 Watts *Dissenters III* 295-6.

principle which has now become incarnate in the Administration of Lord Beaconsfield'. Stead suggested that the legal violation of women under the provisions of the CD Acts and the inadequate policy of Disraeli's government regarding the Turkish ill-treatment of Bulgarian Christians were linked by a similar disregard for 'liberty' and 'morality' and thereby put to the test the 'reality of Conventional Christianity'.<sup>44</sup> Stead denounced what he characterised as the selfishness of whole swathes of the population, the vacuity of a Christianity that he contended played more a role of fashion in society than one of informing religious truth, and, amongst the wider population, a conspicuously complete loss of faith. He also declared that, as editor of a daily newspaper, he had the potential to energise public opinion in favour of evangelical religious action, thereby protesting against morally bankrupt legislation and encouraging the inculcation of Christian values. Just as importantly, he understood that a good newspaper campaign that concerned matters of public health and sexual conduct had to run the risk of offending the very readers that it sought to persuade of the correctness of its arguments. This was because he understood that euphemism, circumlocutory tactics, and, at the worst, complete silence, could all be used to soften, and, even, falsely divert, the direction of a reforming campaign.

These two moral crusades for temperance and against the CD Acts exemplified the tension that existed between appeals for greater individual effort, as espoused by evangelical Christianity and the liberal philosophy of self-improvement, and the advocacy of increased state intervention in the lives of the population. At the same time, the causes of temperance and the protection of women against enforced medical examination and possible detention differed in that the first concerned both men and women while the second demonstrated a gross inequality of treatment according to gender. In 1876, Stead became involved in what was fundamentally a political battle against British foreign policy. Launching a campaign to highlight Turkish aggression against the Christian population in Bulgaria, Stead called for Christian-inspired moral judgements to be made and for government inaction to be roundly censured.

Stead supported the popular movement against Turkish oppression by launching between 23 August and 27 September 1876 the first stage of the *NE*'s 'Bulgarian Atrocities' campaign. In so doing, he employed rhetorical and presentational strategies that became, in the 1880s, constitutive elements of his conception of New Journalism. During the campaign, Stead invested political action with Christian values by proclaiming the need for the country to support the weak and to deplore the moral bankruptcy of political expediency. Other elements that were to prove intrinsic to the development of New Journalism included the capacity both to report and to shape public opinion and to foster

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44 *NE*, 22 May 1878.

extra-parliamentary public pressure in favour of popular demands. Campaigning techniques included sensationalist reporting designed to appeal to the emotional understanding of the readership and, in deploying these press strategies, Stead showed for the first time that he was able to influence matters at a national level.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, such was the success of the campaign that Stead has been credited with giving Gladstone sufficient reason to resurrect his temporarily stalled political career.<sup>46</sup>

To bring a crusading campaign to life in newsprint involved conveying and combining the enthusiasm of an evangelical revival and the clear argumentation of the issue. David Bebbington has described how spontaneous religious revivals of the early nineteenth century were shaped by the uninhibited expression of their religious fervour. As the century advanced, the adoption of specific evangelising techniques such as the isolated ‘anxious seat’, where individuals were encouraged to repent and confess their belief, became central to the planning of ‘arranged revivals’. Evangelicalism went on to achieve impact by the organisation of ‘regular methods of mission’ to include home visitation, Sunday services focused on the evangelistic task, and Bible classes.<sup>47</sup>

The ‘Bulgarian Atrocity’ crusade represented a nationwide campaign that combined expression of public indignation, the reporting and shaping of public opinion, and the association of Christian morality and politics on an issue that mobilised a large part of the population against Disraeli’s government. It was an example of extra-parliamentary agitation that engaged the support of parliamentary representatives and which appealed beyond them to the electorate and to those not yet enfranchised. Anyone with the money to buy a newspaper or the opportunity to visit a public reading room was able to participate in the campaign.

In the spring of 1876, an attempt by Bulgarian Christians to throw off Turkish rule was put down with great brutality. Britain’s government position had historically been that of physician to the ‘Sick Man of Europe’, as Turkey had become known, but, by its initial refusal to believe the accounts reaching England, the Conservative government seemed to be supporting an atrocity-

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45 NE 23 August 1876; S J Goldsworthy, ‘English Nonconformity and the Pioneering of the Modern Newspaper Campaign’, *Journalism Studies*, 7:3 (2006) 388; R Shannon *Gladstone and the Bulgarian Agitation 1876* (Hassocks 1975); M Milne *The Newspapers of Northumberland and Durham* (Newcastle upon Tyne 1971) 93; D Griffiths *Fleet Street: Five Hundred Years of the Press* (London 2006) 117; P Adelman *Seminar Studies in History: Gladstone, Disraeli and Later Victorian Politics* (1970) 38; Robinson *Muckraker* 28; T Nicholson ‘The Provincial Stead’ in Brake et al *Stead* 12.

46 J O Baylen ‘The “New Journalism” in Late Victorian Britain’ *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 18 (1972) 371.

47 Bebbington *Evangelicalism* 116–17.



perpetrating regime.<sup>48</sup> Britain's support for the Ottoman Empire was based on perceived national interests: bolstering Turkey was seen as creating a bulwark against any potential Russian threats to British imperial hegemony in India.<sup>49</sup>

More detailed information only reached the British government when the *Daily News* published the first of a series of accounts by its 'special commissioner', Januarius Aloysius MacGahan.<sup>50</sup> Liberal party anger against such government diffidence was increased by the reports emanating from Turkey declaring that England was determined to help end the revolt and to defend the regime against Russia. Gladstone joined the protest with the publication on 5 September 1876 of his pamphlet *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*, and, struck by the relative cohesiveness of the Nonconformist protest, went on to re-establish a working alliance between Liberalism and Nonconformity.<sup>51</sup> The connection of influence and debt of gratitude that came to exist between Gladstone and Stead is partly explained by the *NE* having caught and created a strong regional identity in the support offered for the indignation meetings. Further, more prosaically and quite simply, Stead had provided Gladstone with copies of the *NE* with the relevant articles helpfully marked for his attention.<sup>52</sup> This method became part of Stead's projected scheme in 'The Future of Journalism' and represented part of a system whereby editors could gauge public opinion on specific issues.<sup>53</sup>

Stead formally launched the *NE* crusade on 23 August 1876 when, in his leader article, 'The North Country and Turkish Atrocities', he positioned Darlington and Hyslop Bell's newspaper at the heart of the extra-parliamentary agitation. The declaration of regional pride — the campaign began 'in the North' — served to emphasise the perceived moral emptiness of the metropolitan centre and invested the north-east generally with the projected capacity to represent what was considered to be national right-minded conviction. Stead succeeded in suggesting a close link between the regional and the national campaigns by confidently asserting that 'all true hearted Englishmen' would find their views echoed in the *NE*'s leader articles while the communities of the north-east would express their opinions in the accents, outspokenness, and the free expression 'of outraged Humanity'. The sacred and the secular, Anglican clergy and Nonconformist ministers, established-church

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48 The phrase 'The Sick Man of Europe' is usually attributed to John Russell quoting Tsar Nicholas I before the outbreak of the Crimean War.

49 D Cannadine *Victorious Century: The United Kingdom, 1800–1906* (2017) 376.

50 Goldsworthy 'Newspaper Campaign', 388; Eckley Stead 19–21.

51 Watts *Dissenters III* 255–7. K T Hoppen *The Mid-Victorian Generation 1846–1886* (Oxford 1998) 622. Watts places the date of publication of Gladstone's pamphlet one day earlier than Hoppen who agrees with Shannon in this. R Shannon *Gladstone: Heroic Minister 1865–1898* (1999) 172.

52 Robinson *Muckeraker* 30.

53 W T Stead 'The Future of Journalism' *Contemporary Review* 50 (1886) 673–74.

attendees and Dissenting-chapel members were all proclaimed to be rising up to express forceful moral indignation. In declaring the newspaper's wish to uphold the cause of 'Humanity, Civilization, and Christianity', Stead conjured up the image of a processional banner carried at the head of a demonstration of popular discontent.<sup>54</sup>

This propagation of a moral political message resounded with evangelical fervour and conviction of faith. At a time of crisis, Stead combined the power of regional affiliations to Liberalism and Nonconformity in a direct call upon national government to change its policy towards international affairs. The campaign deployed presentational strategies that expressly promoted reader interest in the material published. To avoid the enforced perusal of columns of densely printed reporting, the paper adopted a diverse approach that included editorial comment, accounts of town hall meetings, with, or without, lengthy verbatim speech extracts, reports wired from Bulgaria, telegrams from Constantinople, parliamentary summaries, and readers' letters.<sup>55</sup> The coverage was multi-layered and supported by a typographically multi-textured presentation. Headline stacks proved adept in giving to the newspaper accounts a narrative structure and an index of matters to be explored. This presentational layout helped to build up anticipation in the reader and to impart partial understanding before the main points were enlarged upon in the newspaper reports themselves.

Stead's journalism both reported upon and shaped a press campaign that promoted a sense of collective moral indignation and showed that he was a skilled gatherer and disseminator of relevant newspaper material. The campaign represented an example of extra-parliamentary action bearing down upon a government judged to be disconnected from the public's disapproval of its foreign policy. The existence of an identifiable public opinion which could be articulated and broadcast, as well as projected and focused, gave the press the capacity to exercise great influence.

Behind the public face of Stead's contribution to the 'Bulgarian Atrocities' campaign lay the private pain that he experienced. For many years, at New Year and on, or soon after, his birthday in July, Stead was accustomed to giving an account of the events of the previous few months. In January 1877, he wrote of the 'Bulgarian Atrocities' crusade and of his delight in the national leadership role that he felt had fallen to him. The time preceding his decision to work up a campaign is laden with the unmistakable characteristics of evangelical

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54 *NE* 23 August 1876. 'The North Country and the Turkish Atrocities' or 'The North Country and the Atrocities' became the usual heading in the *NE* for discussion of the campaign's progress.

55 See, for example: (leader article) *NE* 23 August 1876; (reports of meetings) *NE* 30 August 1876, 31 August 1876, 4 September 1876; (letters) *NE* 31 August 1876, 6 September 1876.

conversion narratives and led to the jubilant declaration that he had been instrumental in persuading Gladstone to oppose Disraeli's government policy. Stead believed that he had been divinely called upon and that the agitation had led to rejuvenated patriotism, renewed Liberalism, and revitalised faith in God. He described the physical disturbance of his conversion in the following terms:

I had a terrible afternoon. It was like a Divine possession that shook me almost to pieces, wrung me and left me shuddering and weak in an agony of tears. [...] I knew not how it would be taken [...] I threw myself heart and soul, and the paper heart and soul, into the movement [...] It was with fear and trembling that I went to the first meeting at Darlington, but it was a great success.<sup>56</sup>

Symptoms of anxiety and fear commonly marked religious conversion narratives as signs of authenticity by those describing the moment when they believed that God had entered their lives. Stead's conversion here concerned acceptance of what he saw as the divine will that he should become involved in advocating a change in Disraeli's foreign policy. For Stead, the meetings that followed the inaugural assembly in Darlington, and, more particularly, Gladstone's eventual assumption of the lead political role, validated his actions. Overall, Stead gave the campaign the form of a crusade:

I look back with unfeigned joy to the strain and exertion of that exciting time. I wrote dozens of letters a day, appealing, exhorting, entreating and at last I roused the North. I felt that I was called to preach a new crusade.<sup>57</sup>

Through these instances, we gain important insight into Stead's conception of his motivation, of his call to religious action, and of his need to convert others to the opinions he supported. Stead was not unique in this because such activism was fully commensurate with evangelical expectations and a worldview that he shared, for example, with Gladstone, himself a High-Church evangelical Anglican. It is also important to recall that Stead was primarily responsible for the launch of a successful campaign that was regional in extent rather than nationally inspirational as is sometimes claimed.

Despite the success of the 'Bulgarian Atrocities' crusade, Stead was not yet ready to trust unreservedly the use of extra-parliamentary agitation, since to override parliamentary democracy with populist movements brought with it still disturbing evocations of French Revolutionary fervour and the power of the undifferentiated, destabilising, masses. Moreover, after decades in which Liberals and Nonconformists had fought for increased democracy through parliamentary

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<sup>56</sup> Robertson Scott *Life and Death* 104.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

representation, it would have been incomprehensible to have agitated for the removal of the same institutions.

Three years into his editorship of the *NE*, Stead experienced a period of self-doubt. His intention had been to bring to the role of the journalist the power of the preacher and the strength of the prophet, but instead he found himself more preoccupied with the form of his journalism rather than with the issues that he examined. At this pivotal moment, he asked:

What is my message? That is what troubles me. I have not got a message. I am not by any means so ardent a Radical or as ardent in anything as I was. [...] At present almost the only fixed principle which I possess, almost the only message which I have to deliver is the duty of England as a civilising power among the weaker, more degraded nations of the earth.

Stead feared having lost his commitment to the cause of the poor and felt that he no longer believed that international arbitration could prevent the need for nations to go to war. He explained matters by comparing the contentment he derived from his family life and home comforts with the dissatisfaction he experienced at the dissipation of his religious convictions. He expressed this in the following terms:

My religion hitherto has not been so much of a peace as of unrest. It has given me fiery, restless impulse. It made me uneasy unless I was working with the last pound of steam on. Only in that vehement labour could I find the semblance of rest.<sup>58</sup>

For Stead, as an evangelical, religious faith needed to be experienced through an individual's whole being and not merely through spiritual otherworldliness. The Bulgarian Atrocities campaign reignited his sense of religious and civic duty.

Stead spent nine successful years as editor of the *NE*, which led to the offer of a new post, this time in London. Once Stead had decided to move to the *Pall Mall Gazette* and to the opportunities afforded by contact with, and engagement in, metropolitan political circles, he brought with him the ambition to help rid the city of its morally poisonous conditions and attitudes. Stead came to be associated with the emergence of New Journalism in London during the 1880s and continued to develop a method of evoking and interweaving Christian values and rhetoric in campaigning secular journalism.

## **The *Pall Mall Gazette***

Upon his appointment in 1880 as assistant editor to John Morley at the *Pall Mall Gazette* (hereafter *PMG*), Stead settled in relatively rural Wimbledon,

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<sup>58</sup> Robertson Scott *Life and Death* 100–1.

necessitating a change of house and chapel. ‘Cambridge House’ fulfilled Stead’s needs for a new home and the local Congregational Church became the family’s place of worship.<sup>59</sup> Stead remained at the *PMG* until the end of December 1889, at which time, having made a name for himself which seldom met indifference, he left both the newspaper and the strenuous demands of full-time daily journalism.

The unexpected general election defeat in 1880 of Disraeli and the Conservative party prompted a change in the *PMG*’s ownership and political allegiance. The high-Liberal, anti-Gladstonian *PMG*, when owned by George Smith and edited by Frederick Greenwood, became a pro-Gladstonian Liberal newspaper when control passed to Smith’s son-in-law, the illuminated-manuscript collector and generous benefactor, Henry Yates Thompson.<sup>60</sup> This repositioning of the paper was designed to give full support to Gladstone’s second ministry and his brand of Liberalism from within the capital. This change of political allegiance represented a major reorientation given that, under Greenwood, the *PMG* had done the most amongst London newspapers to undermine Gladstone’s government.<sup>61</sup>

To understand Stead’s New Journalism at the *PMG* necessitates an appreciation of his developing religious motivations and of the particular Nonconformist inflection of his Christian faith. While at the *NE*, he had largely followed the complementary values of progressive Liberalism and of Nonconformist moral values. At the *PMG*, however, his political support for Gladstone did not preclude criticism of Liberal government policy nor the mobilisation of his moral principles against transgressive moral behaviour that was often left unpublicised. Stead, therefore, was not entirely at the service of particular Liberal party interests nor restricted to what the Nonconformist moral conscience considered seemly to investigate.

In the autumn of 1880, Stead set down in his private notes thoughts about journalism in general, and, more particularly, ideas about the direction in which to take the *PMG*. In quoting from the Lord’s Prayer — ‘Ideal to be aimed at, “Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven” ’ — Stead chose a line that in its simplicity confirmed in Christian social reformers

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59 As well as the *PMG* (1880–83); Morley edited the *Fortnightly Review* (1867–82) and *Macmillan’s Magazine* (May 1883–summer 1885); ODNB. Most residential roads in Wimbledon were not created until the 1870s and 80s: Weinreb and Hibbert *London Encyclopaedia* 992. Eckley Stead 31. Oliver Cromwell, Stead’s hero, represented Cambridge in the Short (1640) and Long Parliaments (1640–1649).

60 George Murray Smith was part of the publishing house of Smith & Elder and launched the *Dictionary of National Biography* and the *Cornhill Magazine*. Yates Thompson supported greater understanding between Britain and USA and donated valuable illuminated manuscripts to the nation. Robertson Scott *Life and Death* 2–4.

61 J P Parry *Democracy & Religion: Gladstone and the Liberal Party 1867–1875* (Cambridge 1986) 79.

their growing commitment to saving the most vulnerable from the morality-sapping degradation of material deprivation.<sup>62</sup> They concluded that for the soul to be saved, salve had to be applied to the distress caused by abject poverty. Stead's private notes reveal his ideals for the *PMG* in tones that are evangelical and incarnationalist, investing his plans in faith terms and references. He adhered to the evangelical belief that humankind, as planned by God's design, was perfectible, and that earnestness, 'To work on, to yearn on, in faith', together with belief in the example of the incarnated Jesus, were inherently amongst the soundest principles to adopt (p. 117).

New models for the combination of religious sentiments and ameliorative actions appropriate for modern social conditions were being developed when James Clarke & Co. published in October 1883 one of the more significant documents produced to examine these entrenched social difficulties. *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London: An Inquiry into the Condition of the Abject Poor*, a twenty-page, one-penny pamphlet written by the Rev. Andrew Mearns, then secretary to the London Congregational Union, brought the problems of overcrowded dwellings, insanitary conditions, wide-spread immorality, and exorbitant rents once again to the attention of politicians and the public. Insufficient and insalubrious housing represented an almost intractable problem in the capital that Mearns explicated in a manner that demanded substantial action from the State rather than reform through free-market forces.<sup>63</sup> These concerns over poor-quality housing also reflected church and chapel anxieties regarding the relative importance to be accorded to material and spiritual responses to such social challenges.

Six months after his election to Parliament in February 1883 as the Liberal member for Newcastle, John Morley resigned from the *PMG* leaving Stead in post as senior editor. Stead lost no time in launching his first major social-reform campaign at the *PMG*. The question of whether or not to include elements of religious engagement in the newspaper had resulted in an uneasy truce between Morley, an agnostic, and Stead, a committed Christian, according to which neither atheistic nor religious claims would be introduced into the newspaper.<sup>64</sup> With the departure of Morley, however, Stead set about a long-held aim which was to infuse his journalism at the *PMG* with the values of Christian morality that had until then been kept in check.

By the 1880s, a practical religious approach to tackling social improvement had emerged to shape contributions to the running of local and national affairs. As David Englander has discussed, Dr R W Dale (1829–1895) placed great importance on reducing the discrepancy between doctrinal matters and everyday

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62 Robertson Scott *Life and Death* 117.

63 L Jackson *Dirty Old London: The Victorian Fight against Filth* (Yale 2014) 210.

64 Robertson Scott *Life and Death* 119.

morality, between the beliefs to which people subscribed and the effects of their worship on their daily lives. Beginning in the 1860s, Dale had sought to promote a moral revival in the way that the community lived materially and spiritually by outlining 'a proper conception of practical righteousness and an appropriate moral training'.<sup>65</sup> He developed thoroughly and systematically his version of the 'Municipal Gospel' in which theology, morality, and evangelical religious thought shaped the implementation of policies for substantial civic reform. As a result, with the political ambition and energy of radical Liberal politicians such as the Unitarian Joseph Chamberlain, Birmingham saw the realisation of a range of identifiable, substantial material improvements. Dale's work married the theoretical and the practical in the belief that neither the churches nor the local authorities alone could achieve the radical social changes necessary for the betterment of the poorer classes.<sup>66</sup>

In the early 1880s, tenacity of character and religious conviction were still considered sufficient for individuals to effect improvement in their material lives even though, almost ten years before, reformers such as Octavia Hill had declared that concerted action on a far wider scale was needed. Hill had found that a gradualist approach to housing improvement was ineffective and that the task was beyond the capacities of individuals and philanthropic societies. As far as immorality was concerned, Hill took an uncompromising stance, declaring that 'those leading immoral lives are made either to reform or go'.<sup>67</sup> This stark choice made no concessions to rehabilitation through improved accommodation: better lodgings were the reward for sustained, ameliorated, moral conduct. Having concluded that improving the housing of the London poor would need the engagement of agencies above the level of individuals and associations, Hill nevertheless came to the view that society as a whole had nothing to gain by providing necessities of life such as accommodation for some members of the population. She believed that plans for re-housing people from slum lodgings were not beneficial overall and asserted that even if this were possible for all those in such a situation, 'the people themselves are not fit to be so moved, *and can only very gradually become so*'.<sup>68</sup> This approach countered the view shared by Stead that lodgings could significantly raise the character of individuals by removing the dehumanising aspect of dilapidated housing.

The ability of religious organisations to tackle social deprivation was no

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65 D Englander 'The Word and the World: Evangelicalism in the Victorian City' in Parsons (ed) *Religion in Victorian Britain Volume II: Controversies* (Manchester 1988) 29. For Dale see ODNB.

66 G Parsons 'Social Control to Social Gospel: Victorian Christian Social Attitudes', in Parsons *Religion in Victorian Britain II* 47–8.

67 O Hill 'The Homes of the London Poor' *Macmillan's Magazine*, 30:176 (1874) 131–2.

68 O Hill 'Common Sense and the Dwellings of the Poor: I Improvements Now Practicable' *Nineteenth Century*, 14:82 (1883) 926 (original italics).

longer a tenable position for those who saw in secular political ideologies the means to ending material poverty. The Fabian Socialists, for example, had set aside religious sentiment in their investigation of the housing crisis, focusing their energies instead upon empirical enquiry. In 1883, Beatrice Potter (later to become Webb), the social scientist and reformer, observed that the service of God had been replaced by the service of humankind concluding that the role of ‘social investigator’ would be ‘the most hopeful form of social service’. Potter’s evolving hopes for the future were influenced by Auguste Comte’s positivist philosophy and predicated upon ‘a deliberately scientific organisation of society’ and the instilling of a capacity to engage in altruistic service within the whole population.<sup>1</sup> In 1883, the Socialist Democratic Federation (SDF), founded by Henry Mayers Hyndman, adopted a programme that included nationalisation and an eight-hour working day and accepted Stead’s invitation to outline the SDF’s ideas in the *PMG*.<sup>2</sup> A letter from General William Booth, the leader of the Salvation Army, and the views of the evangelical Anglican, Lord Shaftsbury, were also accommodated in the newspaper.<sup>3</sup> These ideas represented a range of responses to the increasing urbanisation of society and the perceived diminution in religious belief that some judged to be the major causes of social and moral degradation amongst the working classes.<sup>4</sup>

*The Bitter Cry of Outcast London*, the relative brevity of which belied the impact that it was about to have, described the appalling material and moral conditions in which lived not only the impoverished inhabitants of the capital but also, and surprisingly to many readers, the working poor.<sup>5</sup> Mearns’s account is multi-layered being variously a religious sermon, a social investigation, institutional auto-criticism, and some self-congratulation, narrated in the language of colonial exploration and empirical enquiry. The document is partly sensational and partly documentary in its reporting of statistical findings, and it represents the influences of both Conservative paternalism and the Nonconformist municipal gospel.

Mearns came to two major conclusions. Firstly, in a reversal of what had

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1 B Webb *My Apprenticeship* (1926) 150–1. For Webb (1858–1943) see *ODNB*. Beatrice Potter did not marry Sydney Webb until 1892.

2 *PMG* 29 October 1883.

3 *PMG* 22 October 1883, *PMG* 12 November 1883.

4 In 1851, the population census showed for the first time the majority of the population lived in urban areas, while the first, and only, official religious census appeared to show a decline in church attendance.

5 A Mearns, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London: The Condition of the Abject Poor* (1883). Mearns acknowledged the help of James Munro and W. C. Preston regarding the surveying of housing conditions and the composing of the pamphlet, respectively. S Ledger and R Luckhurst (eds) *The Fin de Siècle: A Reader in Cultural History c.1880–1900* (Oxford 2000) editors’ note 1, p. 50. Parsons, ‘Social Control to Social Gospel’ 49.



largely been the standard view, he argued that before the Churches could succeed in raising the moral standards of the working classes, the state had to become involved in improving the housing of the metropolitan poor. Secondly, he established an explicit connection between the degrading material conditions in which the London poor lived and the immorality of their lives, a finding which, in effect, gave church and chapel permission to become involved in missions for social relief.<sup>6</sup> In its promotion of Mearns's pamphlet, the *PMG* aimed to combine calls for spiritual renewal and social reform in a religious crusade underpinned by the increasingly accepted advantages of methodical investigation of material problems.<sup>7</sup>

Stead's opening promotional article, "'Outcast London' — Where to Begin", appeared in the *PMG* towards the end of October 1883 and summarised public support for change. He did not explicitly mention religion, but he allowed the language of religion to percolate throughout the piece. The housing problems are qualified as 'an evil', 'the evil is a growing one', 'so vast an evil', and 'this tremendous evil', and subject to 'the evil influence of our system of building leases'. The response required characteristics associated with evangelical endeavour: 'real sincerity', 'men of the highest zeal', and the 'organised zeal' of volunteers.<sup>8</sup> The emotional intensity created had to be on a scale commensurate with the enormity of the immorality if the campaign were to succeed.

In promoting Mearns's campaign, Stead also employed the sensationalist rhetoric of the extreme and of the incontrovertible: the defective housing stock is described as a 'wail of hopeless misery' within which '[t]he exceeding bitter cry of the disinherited' was audible amongst 'the miseries of miserable men'. In representing the slums of the metropolis as foreign lands peopled by the untutored and the heathen, Stead asserted that 'morality is impossible, and indeed has ceased to exist' in such conditions.<sup>9</sup> Yet, these inhabitants were equally reckoned as exportable by the state to colonies abroad where they would be given the opportunity to be saved from the 'horrible corruption' in which they lived at home.<sup>10</sup> In the New Imperialism of the late nineteenth century, emigration for some represented a means of reducing the numbers of the urban poor and indeed was a policy that found favour with, amongst others, Stead and the Salvation Army.<sup>11</sup>

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6 H M Lynd *England in the Eighteen-Eighties: Towards a Social Basis for Freedom* (Oxford 1945) 333.

7 *PMG* 16 October 1883.

8 *PMG* 23 October 1883.

9 *PMG* 16 October 1883.

10 *PMG* 22 October 1883.

11 W Booth *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (1890). See, especially Part II, Chapter 4, 'New Britain—the Colony Over Sea' 143–56. Stead helped Booth to write the text and shared Booth's opinions: Eckley Stead 187–8.

By the end of 1889, Stead had resigned from the *PMG* and set out to launch and establish the *Review of Reviews*, a monthly magazine digest and expression of re-Christianisation at home and abroad.

## **The Review of Reviews**

Amidst a flurry of signed welcoming notices from prominent public figures, and declaring that ‘We believe in God, in England, and in Humanity!’, Stead launched, in January 1890, the *Review of Reviews* (hereafter *RoR*), his last major New Journalistic enterprise.<sup>12</sup> The overarching values for this sixpenny monthly survey of journal articles and world events were religion, patriotism, and the progress of humankind. Central to the aims of the *RoR* featured the endowment of Christian values in socio-political engagement, the fulfilment of what was proclaimed as Britain’s divinely ordained imperial role, and the promotion of the reunion of Christianity. In recognition of this latter element, the *RoR*’s head office, ‘Mowbray House’, was named after W. T. Mowbray, the founder, in 1873, of the Home Reunion Society for the bringing together of the Christian Churches.

When Stead moved to London in 1880 to become assistant editor of the *PMG*, he introduced to the clubland newspaper Nonconformist moral values, a popularising press aesthetic, and a democratising mission. None of these elements that became constitutive of New Journalism had an instinctual home at the *PMG*, which, from its launch in 1865, addressed an influential metropolitan readership. In 1890, the *RoR* took the New Journalistic project a step further into the relatively rarefied domain of literary reviews.

Through the *RoR*, Stead promoted cooperative endeavour, public instruction, religious values, and an imperialist outlook, which he further highlighted through the publication of complementary periodicals. In doing so, he built upon his work at the *PMG* where he had issued a number of ‘*Pall Mall Extras*’ which republished compilations of articles and reports concerning major issues covered by the newspaper.<sup>13</sup> While at the *RoR*, Stead amplified his democratising and re-Christianising mission through the syndicated weekly

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12 W T Stead ‘To All English-Speaking Folk’ *RoR* 1 (1890) 17. ‘Some Autograph Introductions’ *RoR* 1 (1890) 3–13. Not until the fifth number of the *RoR* did Stead announce that Mowbray House would accommodate the new offices of the periodical. The building was situated in Norfolk Street, London, between the Victoria Embankment and the Strand.

13 Amongst the ‘Extras’ published as supplements, the *PMG* advertised the following: ‘England, Gordon, and the Soudan’ 7 February 1884; ‘The Condition of the National Defences/The Truth About the Navy and Its Coaling Stations’ 5 March 1885; ‘Too Late!/This new *PMG* “Extra” gives a clear and succinct statement of facts [...] dealing with [...] the controversy concerning the late mission of General Gordon’ 5 March 1885; ‘“*Pall Mall Gazette Extra*,” The Popular Guide to the New House of Commons’ 7 December 1885.

column 'The Church and the World' (April 1890–June 1891), his proposal for a Civic Church and the launch of the monthly journal *Help* (Feb. 1891–Dec. 1892), a campaign of opposition to the Second Boer War (1899–1902), during which he published the weekly journal *War Against War in South Africa* (Oct. 1899–Jan. 1900), and, in a further development of the democratisation of religious beliefs, the publicising of spiritualist tenets and the establishment of the specialist quarterly journal *Borderland* (July 1893–Oct. 1897).

Arnold's elitist proclamation had already been subverted by George Newnes's weekly *Tit-Bits* which had announced that the newspaper's conductors aimed to survey the vast array of print material available in order 'to find out from this immense field of literature the best things that have been said or written, and weekly to place them before the public for one penny.'<sup>14</sup> The *RoR* was to be a democratised version of higher review journalism, and a monthly review version of Newnes's weekly publication.

In a second introductory article to the *RoR*, entitled 'To All English-Speaking Folk', Stead reconfirmed the New Journalistic Christianising mission which had previously found expression in the *NE* and the *PMG* through promotion of Nonconformist moral values. Stead pledged that the items to appear in the review would be selected 'on a religious principle', that of their capacity to elevate the moral and spiritual qualities of its readers. He also referred explicitly to the prophetic role that his projected New Journalism would accord to the work of the editor-journalist in that the individual able to interpret these articles to the general reader would become the 'true prophet' of the period: in the context of the *RoR*, and in Stead's mind, that prophet was to be himself.<sup>15</sup>

Of central importance to Stead's conception of the ethical conduct of secular affairs was his continuing promotion of the need for a close relationship between Christian values and political matters. He maintained support for the ideas of the Municipal Gospel, as espoused by the Birmingham town councillors and Nonconformist ministers of the 1860s and 1870s, and of the Social Gospel, as promoted by the Methodist Forward Movement in the 1880s and 1890s.<sup>16</sup> In elaborating upon the reasons for adopting a Christian but non-partisan political platform in the *RoR*, Stead declared:

Neither party has at this moment any distinctive *body of doctrine*, any well-conceived *system of faith* which would justify me in labelling this new monthly with a party badge. *Creeeds* are at this moment in a state of flux [...] Neither party

<sup>14</sup> *Tit-Bits* 1, 1 (October 1881) 1. Quoted in K Jackson *George Newnes, and the New Journalism in Britain, 1880–1910* (Aldershot 2001) 58.

<sup>15</sup> Stead 'To All English-Speaking Folk' 15; W T Stead 'Government by Journalism' *Contemporary Review* 49 (1886) 66

<sup>16</sup> Parsons 'From Dissenters to Free Churchmen' in Parsons (ed) *Religion in Victorian Britain Volume I: Traditions* (Manchester 1988) 93; McLeod *Religion and Society* 136–7.

has any *creed* beyond the *fundamental dogma* [...] that it is wrong to do anything which would risk the loss of the next general election. Beyond that no party lifts its eyes.<sup>17</sup>

The religious rhetoric stood as an implicit criticism of the principal political parties and their perceived lack of spiritual mission and as an indicator of what would, however, be found in a positive form within the pages of the *RoR*. The deployment of religious markers to highlight the narrowness of party-political ambition led Stead further to declare:

What is wanted is a revival of civic faith, a quickening of spiritual life in the political sphere, the inspiring of men and women with the conception of what may be done towards the salvation of the world, if they will but bring to bear upon public affairs the same spirit of self-sacrificing labour that so many thousands manifest in the ordinary drudgery of parochial and evangelistic work.<sup>18</sup>

This declaration of millennial, revivalist, aspiration emphasised the importance of uniting Christian enthusiasm and political engagement. This was a general call to readers of the *RoR* to 'Be a Christ!' through a modern instantiation of messianic self-sacrifice: the giving of time and effort for the betterment of the world.<sup>19</sup>

Stead's war cry of belief 'in God, in England, and in Humanity!' found further expression in the journal's stated ideals concerning Britain's international position. Writing of 'the upward trend of human progress, and our position in the existing economy of the world', Stead asserted a commonly held view that the English-speaking peoples represented the most powerful agency for the moulding of the future of humankind.<sup>20</sup> However, these declarations of progress and national dominance were strongly contested at the time. Other prominent voices declared that Britain was in a state of degeneracy, morally and physically, while the rise of the United States and Germany as leading economic powers challenged the belief that Britain held an uncontested position on the international stage.<sup>21</sup>

At the *RoR*, Stead faced a series of fresh challenges shaped by a different material format, an unfamiliar periodicity of publication, and a new readership. Judging that a daily newspaper lost its impact after twenty-four hours, and that a weekly journal was still insufficient to disseminate ideas throughout the world, Stead had decided on monthly publication for the *RoR* as the best way to ensure

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17 Stead 'To All English-Speaking Folk' 15. My italics.

18 Stead 'To All English-Speaking Folk' 18.

19 Robertson Scott *Life and Death* 140.

20 Stead 'To All English-Speaking Folk' 15.

21 Cannadine *Victorious Century* 393.

a London journal's viability in an international market. This change from daily to monthly journalism affected the campaign possibilities of the *RoR*. In his investigations at the *PMG*, Stead had successfully exploited the positioning of the front-page leader article, with its emphasis on conciseness of editorial copy and force of reader impact, and the capacity to return each day with new revelations, on-going analysis, and fresh appeals to the readership for their further attention. While the monthly-review pattern did not exclude campaigns for reform, such ventures often had to take a much longer view of problems and their possible solutions. These considerations explain, in part, Stead's decision to launch campaigns through supplemental print material and to vary the periodicity of publication accordingly.

In the 1890s, Stead had more or less failed in each of his visionary, final-decade, projects for a Civic Church, a mainstream role for spiritualist beliefs, and promotion of Britain's federated, imperial, interests. Nevertheless, by the end of the nineteenth century, Stead had acquired, and consolidated, a major national and international reputation which his current relative obscurity belies. Beyond the nineteenth century, the 'Edwardian' Stead continued to campaign, and to crusade, for improvement in the lives of the least well-off, world peace, and the tenets of the Social Gospel.

Stead made two connected attempts to return to daily newspaper journalism. In 1893, the November number of the *RoR* published the objectives of this new venture and the details of a novel business plan that aimed to raise finance through a debenture bond scheme.<sup>22</sup> Resembling the *RoR* in format, the forty-page *Daily Paper* intended to report not only on politics, finance, and social questions, but also to contribute to the religious lives of its readership by including reports on matters of church and chapel interest. The specimen paper carried an article on 'The Church Congress at Birmingham', asked 'Is Rural Dissent Doomed?', and introduced features entitled 'In Place of Morning Service' and 'The Saint of the Day'.<sup>23</sup> These latter two features were designed to compensate for a perceived decline in attendance at morning services, in the holding of daily family prayers, and in religious belief. To Stead's disappointment, however, the project failed to gain traction and it was left in abeyance.

Running from 4 January to 9 February 1904, and promoted by an extravagant advertising campaign featuring canvassers, circulars, placards, sandwich-board advertisers, and the launching of pictures, cheques, postcards, and guncotton salutes from a balloon, a second *Daily Paper* was launched. Aimed at the subscribing 'domestic reader' rather than the commuting worker, the twelve-

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<sup>22</sup> 'An Offer of £100,000 to My Readers' *RoR* 8 (1893) 347-50; 'The Daily paper' *RoR* 8 (1893) 461-2.

<sup>23</sup> *Daily Paper* 4 October 1893.

page paper was to be delivered in the two hours before noon by a ‘Messenger Brigade’ which also had the responsibility of bringing back to distribution centres any red envelopes used to carry ‘messages, orders, letters to the editor, answers to puzzles, and advertisements’.<sup>24</sup> Such arrangements pointed to the ambition to create an interactive relationship between the paper’s readership and its producers, and was further testament to the value that Stead placed on the building of associative undertakings and activist communities.

Amongst the aims of the 1904 *Daily Paper* was the pledge to be politically non-partisan, of equal interest to men, women, and children, and to be a standard-bearer for the values of the home in the shaping of ‘municipalities, states, and Empires’. The paper aimed to be resolutely optimistic, and in declaring that it ‘will from day to day endeavour to do unto others as we wish others to do unto us’, Stead shifted the declared emphasis from the previously frequently proclaimed ambition of building the Kingdom of God on Earth to Christ’s message of turning the other cheek and returning kindness for malice.<sup>25</sup> However, this new daily newspaper venture proved too strenuous an undertaking and resulted in Stead’s severe nervous collapse and an end to the project.<sup>26</sup>

After his loss aboard the *Titanic*, Stead’s last will and testament stated that his papers and correspondence should be kept together:

I hand over for examination all my private papers, mss., letters to or for myself, automatic writing, diaries, and everything of an auto-biographical or private personal interest, to my eldest daughter Emma Wilson Stead, commonly called Estelle, to be dealt with by her at her sole discretion.<sup>27</sup>

The extent, content, and, even, whereabouts of the full Stead archive remain matters of conjecture suggesting that his life and work have much more to offer researchers and interested readers alike.

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*Philip March*

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<sup>24</sup> Eckley *Stead* 283–4, 286.

<sup>25</sup> *Daily Paper*, 4 January 1904.

<sup>26</sup> F Whyte *The Life of W. T. Stead* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1925) vol II p 235.

<sup>27</sup> Eckley *Stead* 374.

# A FAREWELL TO TRUMPINGTON STREET

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## I — Emmanuel's Last July

On 26 July 2020 the congregation of Downing Place United Reformed Church, Cambridge, gathered to worship for the last time in what from 1874 to 1972 had been Emmanuel Congregational Church and from 1972 to 2018 had been Emmanuel United Reformed Church. In 2018 Emmanuel and St Columba's, which until 1972 had been Cambridge's Presbyterian Church, joined to form what was now to be called Downing Place United Reformed Church.

It was a natural union. St Columba's and Emmanuel were within ten minutes' brisk walk of each other. In the late 1950s their joint membership topped 675; in 2019 it was 199. In the 1950s, which is when I first encountered them, they were like chalk and cheese. St Columba's was as Presbyterian as its appearance was Scottish. Emmanuel's appearance was not particularly English — discerning critics found a French accent in its Gothic — but its people were quintessentially Congregational. By 2019 such differences as remained were more easily accommodated. For over forty years birth-right Congregationalists had learned nationwide to handle Presbyterian ways, and vice versa.

It was also a sensible union. Emmanuel had received an offer it could not refuse from the college across the road; it would make an ideal concert hall for Pembroke, a suggestive addition to that college's eclectic architecture. It was also, historically speaking, an elegant union. In 1874 Emmanuel had moved to Trumpington Street from Downing Place, next, as it happened, to the site soon to be occupied by St Columba's. The name taken in 2018 by the newly conjoined Emmanuel and St Columba's was a fusion of retrospect, prospect, and present reality: Downing Place United Reformed Church.

That last Sunday service in the Trumpington Street building, late in July 2020, was a Communion Service. In hymns, music, dignity, and length it was wholly consonant with what I recalled from the six years (1958–1964) when I was a regular worshipper at Emmanuel, and yet it was in no sense stuck in a sixty-year-old groove. It drew on the Congregational, Presbyterian, and Churches of Christ traditions of the United Reformed Church. The Congregational infusion was distinctive: John Hunter and P.T. Forsyth.<sup>1</sup> So was the Presbyterian: Iona and North America. It was measured, clear, wholly unemotional, completely unflashy.

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<sup>1</sup> For Forsyth see *ODNB*; for Hunter see Surman's Index at Dr Williams's Library (hereafter Surman).

It was conducted by the minister, Nigel Uden, Moderator of Assembly 2019–2020. He was dressed in dog collar, Geneva bands, cassock, gown, hood, and stole, the very model of Presbyterian propriety, for he had ministered at St Columba's since 2010. In fact the whole of his ministry had been with the United Reformed Church apart from six years with the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (1987–1993). His stole reflected his year as Assembly Moderator, but it also reflected his Congregational service (and earlier training) in South Africa and it had a Presbyterian bearing because it had been the stole of Martin Lund, father and son, Moderators of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa. It was a gift from the younger Lund, to mark his friend's moderatorial year.<sup>2</sup>

The sermon was delivered by David Cornick, past Principal of Westminster College Cambridge, past General Secretary of the United Reformed Church, past General Secretary of Churches Together in England, and present member of Downing Place. His tie, gown, and hood were in the tradition of Emmanuel's ministers and his sermon amply filled the stone pulpit from which it was preached, for this was no occasion for a mere address, or modest reflection from an inconspicuous lectern. It was a historian's sermon, a minister's sermon; it was what that child of Emmanuel, Archbishop Michael Ramsey, might have called a Dissenting Primate's sermon.<sup>3</sup>

It began in the spirit of its text: 'If God is for us, who is against us?' (Romans 8:31). The tone of its beginning, weighty, orthodox, relevant, would have resonated with any of Emmanuel's ministers, even James Ward,<sup>4</sup> the first and most conflicted of them all:

We are here to celebrate and give thanks. With the whole church catholic we lift our voices in praise with the saints who have gone before us, with angels and archangels and the whole host of heaven, to give thanks to God for the creation of the world, and the gift of Christ our Lord, enthroned at God's right hand, secure in his victory over all those forces of evil that seek to destroy life, make us

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<sup>2</sup> Nigel Uden to C Binfield, 17 August 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Ramsey, son of A S Ramsey, of Magdalene College, a past Church Secretary of Emmanuel, was wont when presiding as Archbishop of Canterbury over the British Council of Churches, to refer to the United Reformed John Huxtable, the Baptist Ernest Payne, and the Methodist Kenneth Greet, as the Dissenting Primates; David Cornick stands in their tradition.

<sup>4</sup> For James Ward (1843–1925) see *ODNB*; Ward was minister from 31 December 1870 to 12 February 1872. His ministry, therefore, was exercised in Downing Place but he had been called with a view to a renewed church on a new site and with the university firmly in its sights. The Trumpington Street site had already been purchased and trustees appointed (indenture dated 29 September 1869). The partnership between Ward and his church was brief but the church continued in the path that it had set and Ward was to become a Fellow of Trinity and eventually first Professor of Moral Philosophy and Logic (1897).



less than whole and threaten our very planet. We give thanks for the cross and the empty tomb, and the gift of the Spirit poured out.<sup>5</sup>

The Cambridge saints whom Cornick picked out by name were chiefly ministers. Two of them, Francis Holcroft (d. 1692) and Joseph Hussey (1660–1726), were memorialised in stained glass with John Bunyan and Oliver Cromwell in Emmanuel’s apse, for this church was unusually conscious of its seventeenth-century beginnings. Holcroft, more apostle than minister, was instrumental in founding ‘the church in Cambridgeshire’; Hussey, painful preacher and painstaking pastor, was the Cambridge church’s first minister (1691).

Although Holcroft and Hussey provided the essential foundation for this sermon, it was Emmanuel’s opening sermon, preached on 19 May 1874 by Alexander Raleigh, the most engaging of London’s contemporary pulpit princes, which encouraged its closing preacher to weave some of its ministers — P T Forsyth and W B Selbie — into his theme.<sup>6</sup> Words from Forsyth, written in 1917, in the wake of three books in which he had wrestled with the impact of war, informed the communion part of the service. The prayers were politically, socially, and internationally alert; there was a greeting from Cambridge’s MP, Daniel Zeichner; and at the close there was a triumphant organ voluntary, William Walton’s ‘Crown Imperial’, which some hearers, imbued with the Emmanuel spirit as exemplified in the years between the Wars by Bernard Lord Manning, would have translated into the Crown Rights of the Redeemer.<sup>7</sup>

That, however, was not the end of it. ‘Crown Imperial’ morphed jauntily (there was nothing irreverent about it) into Vera Lynn’s ‘We’ll meet again’. There was a topical and characteristically Emmanuel elegance — that word is again appropriate — about the transition from Sir William to Dame Vera, because it reprised the Queen’s recent broadcast to the nation in which she too had done something similar. There was a wit about it which would have delighted any past members of Prongsoc and its predecessor Congsoc who had returned to worship on this particular occasion.<sup>8</sup>

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5 I am grateful to Dr Cornick for the text of his sermon.

6 Ward, Forsyth, and Selbie did not continue in pastoral ministry; Ward’s spiritual future lay in agnosticism; Forsyth and Selbie turned to the preparation of candidates for ministry at Hackney College and Mansfield College, Oxford, respectively. The exception among these men was the one unmentioned by Dr Cornick: William Smith Houghton (1854–1943). His ministry at Emmanuel (1879–1891), described in his obituary as ‘twelve years of triumphant success’, was followed by thirty-seven years at Edgbaston; there, with a membership second only to Carrs Lane, he ‘changed the whole tone of the service’: *Congregational Year Book* (hereafter *CYB*) (1944) 429. For Raleigh and Selbie see *ODNB*.

7 For Manning see *ODNB*.

8 Some, of course, because undergraduates can be very buttoned up, would have been shocked. Congsoc (the Cambridge University Congregational Society) united with Presbysoc (the Presbyterian equivalent) to form PresbyCongsoc; Prongsoc was its logical conclusion.

Those hearers, of whom I was one, were in fact watchers because Emmanuel's last service had one peculiarly distinctive note. It took place at the height of the first wave of the coronavirus pandemic which held the world in thrall in 2020. Services were severely restricted, in line with current regulations. At Emmanuel the sermon was preached and communion was offered by conventionally robed ministers, but Daniel Zeichner gave his greeting from his book-lined study. There was a choir, but it was informally dressed — shirtsleeves and not a tie to be seen — and carefully spaced behind the table in the apse. There was no congregation, or, rather, the singers were the congregation and the nave was empty, its seats as carefully spaced as those in the apse, but with no-one to sit in them. There were, however, sufficient seats for those who would normally have been there, and each one was marked accordingly. So where was that congregation? It was scattered, or, better, gathered nationwide, watching on YouTube.

For distant watchers, especially those who had not visited Emmanuel in recent years, it was at once a jolt to the memory and a revelation. It was a revelation because the building could be seen to full advantage, above all when the camera gave the pulpit's eye-view. The warm brown pews, which held the nave together, had all but gone. Some, in a bow to the past, lined the walls, making a comfortable feature of the wooden dado, but chairs had replaced the rest. The chairs were light, even bright, in appearance. Were they quite right? Certainly they transformed the congregational space. One could now realise the breadth as well as the length and height of this place for worship. The determined watcher could also see the baptistery, inserted with liturgical propriety close to the entrance to the church, in celebration of the tradition of the Churches of Christ. And was it a jolt to the memory?

## **II — Mid-century Retrospect**

Many Congregationalists and some Presbyterians are tolerant of heresy. For most, however, admiration, even affection, for a church building is a heresy too far. The church is not the building. That is an orthodoxy on which all must agree. Yet when memory comes into it, church building and church fellowship are insensibly fused. Faces mingle with fixtures and fittings. My own Congregational (now United Reformed) church life is chiefly associated with five buildings, two in Cambridge. Of the three outside Cambridge one is now a burnt-out shell, perhaps destined to be flats, and one became the gymnasium of the local Girls' High School; the third survives as originally intended. Of the two in Cambridge, Emmanuel (its pulpit and Willis organ intact) has become a college concert hall and Cheshunt College was sold decades ago to Freemasons; its chapel remains – but its use? The buildings of each, however, remain in my mind, home to the women and men of all ages who peopled them.

From 1958 to 1964 I was an undergraduate and then a postgraduate at Emmanuel College, lodging latterly at Cheshunt College. Cheshunt's President, Eric Pyle, a member of Victoria Road Congregational Church (and of Emmanuel College), regarded me as a member of the Theological House. Cheshunt's Tutor, Jack Newport, a member of Emmanuel Church (and a Peterhouse man), was, I sensed, uneasy with that: it was an untidy arrangement.<sup>9</sup> In those years Emmanuel was my church while I was in Cambridge. I became an associate member in 1961, welcomed to my first church meeting there on 13 December, and my membership was transferred from Dover to Cambridge on 23 October 1963. A year later it was transferred again, to Broompark, Sheffield. It would be hard to think of three more different Congregational churches than High Street Dover, Broompark Sheffield, and Emmanuel Cambridge or of a better training in Congregational churchmanship (a word that is not now often or easily used) than that given by Emmanuel.

It would also be hard to imagine a more liberating opportunity than that provided for a seventeen-year-old from a smallish provincial grammar school in 1958 by Cambridge's two Emmanuels, College and Church.

Emmanuel College was not, in 1958, a fashionable college. It was proud of its Puritan foundation and of its link with Harvard. Its Commemoration of Benefactors took an almost perverse pride in the *otium cum dignitate* which had characterised the college in the eighteenth century, and a set of rooms in Front Court's Georgian range was reserved for founder's kin; the founder's kin in October 1958 was the spit and image of his Elizabethan Mildmay ancestor. Its setting, however, was quietly incomparable, there was little undue heartiness, and mild eccentricity was taken for granted; so was the fact that learning was not just tolerated, it was expected.

Three other factors played their part. The first is now easily forgotten. In 1958 most freshmen had done National Service. They were men of the world, sometimes egregiously so. They also knew how to run things. For someone straight from school, they were role models of efficiency when it came to organising clubs and societies.

The second was the college chapel. Emmanuel's chapel was Wren to perfection. Its services were well attended. In part this was because the college had an unusual number of Anglican ordinands, a significant proportion of whom were Broad Church (those now forgotten Anglican divisions of High, Broad, and Low were then still potent). In part it was a reflection of the strength of CICCUC (the Cambridge Intercollegiate Christian Union). One could tell the strength of Emmanuel's CICCUC contingent because they refused to turn to face the altar for the Creed. This posed a problem for a Congregationalist who was

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9 For Newport see Surman.

SCM (Student Christian Movement) rather than CICCUC but who nonetheless disapproved of turning for the Creed and yet did not wish to be regarded as a CICCUC type. The answer was simple; a seat facing the altar, below the stalls reserved for the Master and Vice-Master.

There was more to college chapel, however, than turning, or not, for the Creed. Its Sunday evening sermons were invariably disappointing. Even celebrated preachers failed to set their hearers on fire in that lovely building. It was nonetheless truly welcoming. There was a chapel community and it was a genuinely ecumenical community. All members of the college were welcomed, the liturgy of matins, evensong, and communion had been intelligently modified, and communion was open to all in good standing with their churches. The dean and the chaplain made that clear. This communicant has never ceased to be grateful for the cadences of the Prayer Book as interpreted in 1958 by that college chapel. The dean, incidentally, was Howard E. (for Eugene) Root, an American whose English was perfectly modulated and wholly accentless, and whose sermons were incomprehensible. He was shy, hospitable, and regarded as a dangerous liberal by the theologically orthodox.

The third factor was that several of my fellow freshmen were Congregationalists; one indeed, Tony Coates, whose vocation for ministry was already apparent, was to be called to Emmanuel's pastorate sixteen years later. With them I found my way to Emmanuel Church, fifteen, perhaps twenty minutes' walk away. There I discovered that Ralph Lapwood, Fellow of Emmanuel, was a member of Emmanuel, and that John Derry, Research Fellow of Emmanuel (later of Downing), was a regular member of its congregation. The two Emmenuels complemented each other for this undergraduate.

My first impressions of Emmanuel Church were mixed. I had yet to become an enthusiast for Victorian architecture and to discover that good Victorian Gothic — which this was — was in fact Gothic, in no need of qualification. My admiration for Emmanuel's architect, James Cubitt, had yet to grow. What I found in 1958 seemed to me to be oppressive. It was out of all proportion to its neighbours in Trumpington Street and inside it was gloomy, old-fashioned in fact. On my first visit I was greeted at the door. 'You are ...?' Clearly some ministers had already alerted the church that some of their younger adherents might be coming this way. 'I am Mr Binfield', I pompously replied, because that is how the college porters addressed me. The man who greeted me (and smiled imperceptibly at my undergraduate pomposity) looked like a superior head porter, and even more like a bank manager. I soon found out that he was the minister, R.J. Hall, generally known as 'Dick'. In my six years at Emmanuel I came to see in him a model of Congregational ministry.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> For Cubitt see *ODNB*; for Hall see Surman.

Morning worship in Dick Hall's Emmanuel was not a time for fireworks, yet from the first it impressed this visitor. The sermons were always sound, their sentences carefully joined-up, and when there were visiting preachers, which was often, they were sometimes electric, though the responsibility of preaching to such a congregation weighed heavily on some. As for that congregation, it was large, it listened intently, it was comfortably at home, and it sang the hymns in a full-bodied, cumulative sort of way. I came to appreciate that there was a distinctive type of Emmanuel hymn and tune, more rounded than catchy. It was a settled congregation. Later I would realise what an interesting mixture of Town and Gown it was and how its composition was a microcosm of international Congregationalism: retired ministers, missionaries retired or on furlough, local businessmen and professionals, teachers, civil servants; some, frequently the least impressive, were of pace-setting distinction.

So large a congregation needed to be directed to its seats as well as greeted. Two stalwarts, Miss Few and Andrew Smith, did this in 1958, each of them the essence of Emmanuel. Miss Few (Cornelia) had been a missionary in India. The Fews for some generations had been pillars of Emmanuel and of St Andrew's Street Baptist Church, which was even closer to St Columba's than St Columba's was to Emmanuel. The Emmanuel Fews were related to the Spicers, a sure mark of old-style cats-whiskers Congregationalism. Miss Few was slight, grey-haired, and firmly smiling, the incarnation of the hymn, 'The faithful few fought bravely/ to guard the nation's life'. Andrew Smith fought by her side, though fighting was not perhaps his forte. He was a kind looking, frail looking man, devoted to his church and its people, to most of whom he seemed to be related. Years later I found him an unfailing repository of information about Congregational people. His family tree, when fully extended, covered the carpet.

In October 1958, however, I found more immediate interests. For someone from a small church in East Kent, the remarkable thing about Emmanuel on a Sunday morning in term time was less the size of its congregation than the number of students who were part of it. I had not realised that there could be so many Congregationalists of about my age and of both sexes, sharing so much of what I felt. After the service they spilled out onto Trumpington Street, unwilling to go their various ways, seeking out friends. That is how I learned of Congsoc, meeting over tea in the church hall that very afternoon.

Tea was a Congsoc art form and those Sunday afternoon meetings, addressed each week by a visiting and usually well-known speaker (an invitation to speak in Cambridge was not often declined) became a fixed part of my diary, except that in those days I did not keep a diary. Congsoc was an integral part of Emmanuel's life and witness, as it had been since the 1920s and the already mythical days of Henry Child Carter, minister from 1910 to 1944. Carter's nick-

name among students and inevitably more generally was ‘Polly’.<sup>11</sup> A parrot, Polly of course, was the mascot printed on each term’s Congsoc card. In Dick Hall’s time there were determined attempts to strengthen the ties between church and Congsoc. A number of the Society’s members, especially some who became postgraduates, joined the church, but for most it was the Sunday morning service that remained the link. Congsoc, not unlike the Sunday schools of previous generations, was more like one of the Commonwealth Dominions in its relationship to the Mother Country.

It was, nonetheless, a warm relationship, strengthened in my case by the occasional wandering elsewhere. Once a term I would slip next door to the service at Little St Mary’s, stronghold of Anglo-Catholicism, to get it out of my system. Back in college after one such visit I was greeted by a Baptist friend, a fellow historian who was firmly CICCUC. He knew at once where I had been; the incense of Little St Mary’s had infected my Sunday blue suit.<sup>12</sup>

### III — The Vision of Trustees

The undergraduate connection with Emmanuel preceded Polly Carter and the 1920s. Undergraduates had found their way to Downing Place in increasing numbers at least from the 1850s and noticeably so from the 1860s. From 1883 to 1916 there was the Cambridge University Nonconformist Union (CUNU). Its Roll Book for those years survives among Emmanuel’s records. Its membership is a roll call indeed of late Victorian and Edwardian Nonconformist youth and its potential, often achieved in the later service of the Free Churches. Young Congregationalists (and Congregational dons) played a prominent part in it.<sup>13</sup> Downing Place’s decision to move to Trumpington Street and build Emmanuel had been more than justified.

This might be illustrated by the sort of connection that would have delighted Andrew Smith. The first Vice-President of CUNU was W.H. Bennett (1855–1920), Fellow of St John’s and an authority on the Semitic languages.<sup>14</sup> He became a member of Emmanuel on 28 February 1883, was elected to the diaconate on 14 March 1883, but left Cambridge in December 1884 to take up a post at Rotherham College. The whole of his ministry was spent in the training

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<sup>11</sup> For Henry Child Carter (1875–1954) see *CYB* (1955) 509–510. For others ‘Polly’ Carter was ‘Father Henry’; Andrew Smith was his nephew.

<sup>12</sup> All has turned out well. That friend, still a Baptist though no longer recognisably CICCUC, has led worship occasionally and always acceptably at the church in Sheffield for which I am responsible for pulpit supplies.

<sup>13</sup> It had thirty-nine members at its foundation on 25 April 1883; Cambridge University Nonconformist Union Roll Book, 1883–1916.

<sup>14</sup> For William Henry Bennett, a founder and first President (1917–1920) of the Society for Old Testament Study, see *CYB* (1921) 103.

of Congregational ministers, first in Rotherham, then at Hackney (1888–1913), finally in Manchester at Lancashire Independent, where he was Principal. He married Ann Whibley and with her we can return to the twelve men appointed in 1869 as trustees for the site in Trumpington Street.

Not one was a university man although most were tradesmen whose livelihoods owed much to the university. Four were ‘gentlemen’, which perhaps means that they were retired men of some means. The remaining eight included two grocers and a tea dealer, a robemaker, a plumber, a brazier (ironmonger), a bookmaker (stationer), and a chinaman. One of the grocers was Mark Ives Whibley, Ann’s father.

The Whibleys, who were also to be found in Gravesend and Bristol, made waves in late Victorian and Edwardian Cambridge and its Congregationalism. They were a large, characterful, and hospitable family active at Downing Place, at Emmanuel in its early days, at Victoria Road (which, as is too easily forgotten, was then the larger of the two Cambridge Congregational churches) and especially at the Castle End Mission, where Mrs Whibley came into her own. For a while the Whibley business flourished; Ann’s brother Herbert (b. 1855) was Mayor of Cambridge in 1908/9. In him grocery turned into Clarnico sweets and toffees. Herbert and another sister, Margaret Whibley, married a brother and sister, Catherine and George Chambre Harris (1856–1923), and their brother was James Rendel Harris (1852–1941). The Harris were Plymouth Congregationalists; Rendel and George met the Whibleys at Emmanuel, where Rendel was a member from June 1875 to November 1877 and George from December 1875 to March 1878. Theirs was the sort of Congregationalism that turned naturally into Quakerism but they merit mention here in part for the Whibley connection, in part for the influence and friendship of their minister, Matthew Robertson, in part for Rendel’s association with the Presbyterian ‘Giblews’, the Ladies of Castlebrae, Mrs Gibson and Mrs Lewis, and their discovery of the Syriac Gospels, and not least for Rendel’s irrepressible gaiety of spirit. A Quaker great-nephew (and great-grandson, therefore, of Mark Ives Whibley) recalled Rendel’s ability at prayer in Friends Meeting to be so properly and so disarmingly intimate with God that he could reduce the Meeting to good, healthy laughter with his prayers.<sup>15</sup>

There is yet more to the Whibley connection. Another Whibley sister, Mary, married Leonard Horne (1860–1934), civil servant and brother of Charles Silvester Horne (1865–1914) whose pastorates in Kensington (where Alexander Raleigh had been a predecessor) and at Whitefield’s, Tottenham Court Road,

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<sup>15</sup> Robertson did not continue in pastoral ministry but stayed in Cambridge as a journalist; for him see Surman. G Ronald Howe to C Binfield, 17 December 1982. I am indebted to the late Ronald Howe for much information about the Whibleys and Harris. For the Giblews see A Whigham Price *The Ladies of Castlebrae* (Gloucester 1985).

set the pace for Edwardian Congregational ministry. There were also two Whibley cousins, Leonard (1863–1941), Fellow of Pembroke and classicist, and Charles (1859–1930), Fellow of Jesus and man of letters. These Whibleys were old-fashioned dons and proud of it. They were not at all the Emmanuel sort and Bernard Lord Manning would have had men like them in mind when telling Congsoc about some lapsed Dissenters. They cannot quite escape our net because not long before he died Charles Whibley married his God-daughter, Philippa Raleigh. She was the daughter of Sir Walter Raleigh, of King's as well as Oxford, and the grand-daughter of Alexander Raleigh, whose sermon opened Emmanuel in May 1874.<sup>16</sup> David Cornick's closing sermon encompassed both Alexander and Walter Raleigh.

I close by returning to that Whibley son and brother-in-law, W.H. Bennett. In his four years at Rotherham College, he also lectured in Hebrew at Sheffield's Firth College, the fore-runner of the university to which I went from Cambridge as an assistant lecturer in History in 1964. Bennett ended his service where he had trained for ministry, at Manchester's Lancashire College. In 1976 I became a Governor, and much later President of Governors, at Northern College, the name taken by Lancashire when it united with the Yorkshire college of which Rotherham College had formed part. Unions ... buildings ... people, threaded intricately together over successive generations; it might seem that the builders of Emmanuel knew what they were about.

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*Clyde Binfield*

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<sup>16</sup> For Silvester Horne, Charles Whibley and Leonard Whibley see *ODNB*.



# PROSECUTING THE FAITH: CONGREGATIONALISM IN PORTSMOUTH c1750–1972 PART 2

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## Introduction

In Part 1 of this article consideration was given to the establishment of Independency in eighteenth century Portsmouth and its subsequent development in the nineteenth century. In conclusion I argued that, notwithstanding the increasing challenges that Congregational churches faced in recruiting new members as ‘secular counter attractions multiplied’, they continued ‘to be led by competent pastors, who combined preaching skills with intellectual prowess, and thereby remained important institutions within not only the religious but also the social and educational life of the community’. At the same time, relations with churches of other denominations, including the Church of England, were generally very positive. ‘Thus, they faced the new century with a degree of optimism.’<sup>1</sup>

This second part of the article is devoted to the twentieth century which began with a period of consolidation followed by a long and lingering decline. The narrative ends in 1972 with the formation of the United Reformed Church.

## Consolidation: The Edwardian Era

The period between the middle of the nineteenth century and the First World War has been described by Reg Ward as ‘the golden age of Congregationalism’.<sup>2</sup> Arguably, this is reflected in the history of the denomination in Portsmouth. By the start of the Edwardian era in 1901, Congregationalism in the town had achieved its greatest reach as far as planting new churches and total membership was concerned. Since Congregationalists had become from 1899 assiduous compilers of statistics, in line with other Nonconformists, it is possible to chart trends in the town as a whole and of individual churches with a reasonable degree of accuracy.

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<sup>1</sup> R. Ottewill ‘Prosecuting the Faith: Congregationalism in Portsmouth c.1754–1972 Part 1’ *Congregational History Society Magazine* vol 9 no 3 (Spring 2020).

<sup>2</sup> R. Ward ‘Professor Clyde Binfield: A Critical Appreciation’ in Bebbington D & Larsen T (eds) *Modern Christianity and Cultural Aspirations* (2003) 16.

As the figures in Table 3 show, total membership hovered around 1100 for the ‘long’ Edwardian era, that is until 1914. However, there was considerable variation in the performance of individual churches. Although Edinburgh Road remained, by virtue of its antecedents, the ‘premier’ Congregational church, it lagged well behind Buckland and Christ Church, Southsea in terms of members. Indeed, its membership was not dissimilar to that of Victoria Road, Southsea.

**Table 3: Membership of Congregational Churches in Portsmouth and Southsea 1901–1914** (*numbers in italics are estimates*)

Year	Buckland <sup>1</sup>	Edinburgh Road <sup>2</sup>	Zion <sup>3</sup>	Christ Church Southsea	Victoria Road Southsea	Milton	Total
1901	506	150	107	231	163	35	1192
1902	425	145	117	236	154	35	1112
1903	441	142	122	250	154	35	1144
1904	449	124	123	247	150	35	1128
1905	449	124	123	247	150	35	1128
1906	453	114	123	236	125	40	1091
1907	463	110	89	202	129	40	1033
1908	476	117	90	202	130	40	1055
1909	494	133	60	206	133	40	1066
1910	500	139	67	190	133	28	1057
1911	525	135	79	191	135	28	1093
1912	525	128	89	126	138	47	1053
1913	515	121	90	126	142	114	1108
1914	515	120	61	205	138	129	1168

1. Includes membership of Buckland Street

2. Includes membership of Allen’s Field, Orange Street and Victoria Road

3. Includes membership of Kerry Street

Source: *Hampshire Congregational Union Annual Reports* (hereafter *HCUARs*) various years

Of the six churches, only Buckland and Milton had larger memberships in 1914 than in 1901. The very substantial increase at Milton was almost certainly due to its location in an area of Portsmouth with a rapidly expanding population. Where there were decreases in membership these ranged from 43 per cent at Zion to 11 per cent at Christ Church, Southsea.

With respect to Sunday school scholars, the pattern is fairly similar. The only real difference is that Edinburgh Road was clearly the second most important Sunday school provider after Buckland. Looked at in the round, however, the figures in Table 4 were undoubtedly a little worrying with four churches recording declines, the smallest being 16 per cent at Edinburgh Road and the largest 46 per cent at Victoria Road, Southsea. To compensate, there were increases of 10 per cent at Buckland and over 100 per cent at Milton.

**Table 4: Number of Scholars Attached to Congregational Sunday Schools in Portsmouth and Southsea 1901–1914** (*numbers in italics are estimates*)

Year	Buckland <sup>1</sup>	Edinburgh Road <sup>2</sup>	Zion <sup>3</sup>	Christ Church Southsea	Victoria Road Southsea	Milton	Total
1901	824	568	206	237	235	120	2190
1902	732	566	253	282	235	120	2188
1903	711	523	204	215	187	150	1990
1904	771	542	236	184	171	150	2054
1905	771	542	236	184	171	150	2054
1906	827	489	236	138	170	180	2040
1907	895	477	189	159	138	210	2068
1908	834	420	130	159	134	210	1887
1909	840	459	106	141	119	210	1875
1910	910	474	120	107	91	250	1952
1911	905	476	145	109	121	250	2006
1912	882	411	117	138	130	240	1918
1913	890	375	97	138	127	260	1887
1914	890	375	97	138	127	260	1887

1. Includes membership of Buckland Street

2. Includes membership of Allen’s Field, Orange Street and Victoria Road

3. Includes membership of Kerry Street

Source: *HCUARs* various years

Since the population of Portsmouth continued to grow throughout the Edwardian era, by 1911 only 0.7 per cent of Portsmouth’s adult population were members of a Congregational church, compared with 1.0 per cent in 1901, and only 3.9 per cent of those aged between 5 and 17 were Sunday school scholars, compared with 4.5 per cent in 1901. Moreover, Congregationalism contracted

relative to other denominations, as evidenced by a survey of churchgoing in Portsmouth undertaken by the *Portsmouth Evening News* in December 1902. This was a follow up to the survey of December 1881, which was mentioned in Part 1, and the results are summarised in Table 5. They show that the percentage of churchgoers attending Congregational churches had dropped from 6.2 per cent in the morning and 6.7 per cent in the evening in 1881 to 4.4 per cent and 4.1 per cent respectively in 1902.<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, this was to be the last of such surveys an indication perhaps that the newsworthiness of churchgoing was beginning to wane, although it by no means disappeared entirely.

**Table 5: Survey of Churchgoing in Portsmouth December 1902**

Congregational Churches	Sittings	Morning	Evening
Buckland	750	275	347
Edinburgh Road	560	96	143
Allen's Field	150	50	124
Zion	500	139	188
Christ Church, Kent Road, Southsea	650	259	218
Victoria Road, Southsea	350	163	173
Milton	100	—	58
<b>Sub-Total: Congregational Churches</b>	<b>3060</b>	<b>982</b>	<b>1251</b>
Church of England	27288	11797	16232
Other Churches	27167	10102	14280
<b>Total: All Churches</b>	<b>54455</b>	<b>21899</b>	<b>30512</b>

Source: *Portsmouth Evening News* 17 Dec 1902

Turning to the pastors who guided the churches through this challenging period, again Portsmouth was reasonably well served. At Edinburgh Road, Watkin Davies provided stability and continuity, with the high points during the period being the celebration of the Church's 150th anniversary in 1904 and the initiation of steps to extend the church in 1913. The anniversary services provided Davies with an opportunity for reminding his congregation of their historical legacy and the 'great principles' on which their church and denomination were founded. These included a basic tenet of Congregationalism 'that every Society of Christians, organised for worship as a Christian Church [such as Edinburgh Road] was independent of external control'.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Portsmouth Evening News* (hereafter *PEN*) 17 December 1902.

<sup>2</sup> *PEN* 7 November 1904.

At Buckland, in 1903 William Talbot was succeeded by William Miles whose 'years of ... ministry were marked by brilliant preaching and abounding congregations'.<sup>3</sup> He remained at Buckland until his death in 1921 when he was only 57. Like a substantial number of Congregational pastors, Miles was a Welshman and shared with many of his fellow countrymen a flair for preaching. Thus, he was greatly in demand as a speaker at church events throughout Hampshire. His achievements were summarised in a newspaper report of his death:

During his nearly twenty years at Buckland, his ministry has been attended by marked prosperity. He has sustained a church membership of five hundred people, and the church building has been renovated and modernised at a cost of over £2,000. Both Mr and Mrs Miles by their winsomeness of manner and devoted ministry have enjoyed the warm affection and utmost confidence of their people.<sup>4</sup>

The reference to Mrs Miles is a timely reminder that pastors' wives often played an important part in not only supporting their husband's ministry but also making a distinctive contribution of their own.<sup>5</sup>

At Milton Thomas Kendall remained as lay pastor until his retirement in 1910. One of the great stalwarts of Portsmouth Congregationalism, he died a year later. By way of tribute it was recorded that:

A very striking and singularly beautiful personality has been removed from us ... The world can ill afford to lose such a character, neither can it be sufficiently thankful for the example of such a life. He was a humble follower of his Master, and sincerity and simplicity was stamped upon everything he said and did. He was one of the pure in heart who saw and revered God in everything ...<sup>6</sup>

Following Kendall's departure, Milton was without a pastor for three years. As indicated earlier this was a period during which the membership grew rapidly, a testament not only to population increases but also to the quality of the lay leadership provided by the deacons. In 1913 Walter Elliott took up the reins. New church premises and accommodation for a Sunday school were opened at the start of his ministry. Named the Kendall Memorial Congregational Church

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3 *Buckland Congregational Church 1835–1935 The Centenary.*

4 *Hampshire Telegraph* (hereafter *HT*) 26 August 1921.

5 See R. Ottewill 'The Woman of the Manse: Recognising the Contribution of the Wives of Congregational Pastors in Edwardian Hampshire' *Congregational History Society Magazine* vol 6 no 6 (Autumn 2012) 309–18.

6 *PEN* 31 January 1911.

in honour of the long serving first pastor, Thomas Kendall, it could seat 350 and was officially opened by the mayoress in May 1913.<sup>7</sup>

At Zion James Gittings laboured faithfully until 1909. His was succeeded by Thomas Grant, another pastor with a Methodist background. He also had a long association with Portsmouth as evidenced by the following extract from his official obituary:

... in his earlier days he was associated with the United Methodist Church in Broughton Road, Southsea. Employed in the Royal Dockyard, Portsmouth, he found time to take part in evangelistic missions on Southsea Common. In 1910, he became pastor of Zion ... after serving for four years, [he] went on to war service, continuing to work among the troops until 1923. He then returned to Zion Church, and remained there until his retirement in 1929. His ministry is still gratefully remembered. His preaching, in which he held firmly to the older ways of thought, was truly evangelistic, and he was a devoted and sympathetic pastor. In 1936 he became a member of Victoria Road (Southsea), and for the rest of his life was a valued helper in that church's activities ... During his retirement, he was a welcome visitor in home and hospital, and a popular figure in the community. Friendly, sociable and keenly interested in the welfare of the church, he enriched the fellowship by his staunch character and prayerful spirit.<sup>8</sup>

Owing to its location, the links between Zion and the Dockyard remained strong throughout the Edwardian era and beyond.

At Christ Church in Southsea John Wills, who replaced Robert Clegg in 1906, also had a Methodist background like his predecessor. He came to Southsea from Croydon and in his official obituary is described as 'a preacher of outstanding ability'.<sup>9</sup> His reputation was such that at his recognition service a telegram from the deacons of his previous church simply stated: 'May Croydon's loss be Southsea's gain.'<sup>10</sup> For his part Wills 'assured his congregation that he would ever do his best to honourably fill his post.' Thus, once again, Christ Church had obtained the services of someone who could make his mark in the pulpit. That said it was during his pastorate that there appears to have been a dramatic fall in the Church's membership, especially between 1911 and 1912, as the figures in Table 3 indicate. There is nothing to suggest that there were difficulties with Wills' ministry, such as discord in his relations with deacons or the members more generally. Indeed, when it was announced at the beginning of 1912 that he had accepted a call to a church in Birmingham, it was reported that he had been a 'popular minister, and his scholarly and earnest preaching ...

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7 *HT* 2 May 1913.

8 *Congregational Year Book* (hereafter *CYB*) (1947) 478.

9 *CYB* (1938) 675.

10 *HT* 20 July 1907.

[had] been greatly appreciated in the church.’<sup>11</sup> Consequently, the reasons for the decline in the number of members must remain a mystery.

Wills’ successor, who commenced his ministry in 1913, was Crawford Stanley. First impressions were extremely favourable as the following account of services he conducted at the commencement of his ministry testify:

... in Mr Crawford Stanley, Christ Church possessed a man who would preach and work to develop its spiritual life. He is a young man with a good presence, a strong arresting face, and a cultured style. He creates the impression that he is a man with strong convictions. Possessed as he is of a clear, resonant voice, a power of simple direct expression which often verges on the poetical, the gift of speaking extempore, the faculty of impressing his sincerity, one experiences a desire to hear him again. There is a deadly earnestness, allied to deep sympathy and a kindly simplicity which enables everyone to follow his thoughts, whilst his slightly dramatic action adds its own emphasis to the spoken word.<sup>12</sup>

Praise indeed, with some of the traits evident in the contributor’s report being echoed in his official obituary, which recorded that Stanley ‘was always popular; admired for his splendid physique and his eager, vigorous personality, and he was loved for a certain unobtrusive humility’.<sup>13</sup> At Christ Church, however, his pastorate was cut short by his desire for war work as a chaplain to the Forces. In 1917 he was awarded an MC ‘for devotion to duty.’

At Victoria Road, following the untimely resignation of William Daniel in 1903 the Church was without a pastor for a fairly lengthy period and it was not until 1905 that a replacement was found. However, in George Felix Williams, the members secured the services of a pastor who was keen to set challenges, in particular the construction of new premises to replace the tin church mentioned in Part 1. In so doing, he reflected the optimism that was still prevalent amongst many Congregationalists at this time. Put another way, the members of this relatively small church were sufficiently confident of what lay ahead to embark on the challenging task of raising funds to finance the building of a brand new place of worship. When opened in 1911, this was described in the *Hampshire Telegraph* as ‘handsome ... beautiful in architectural design, graceful and dignified in style’ and Williams referred to the new permanent church as ‘a structure worthy of our denomination’.<sup>14</sup> In many respects, this can be regarded as a considerable achievement and represented a high water mark with respect to the physical presence of Congregationalism in Portsmouth.

Williams, however, must have had ‘itchy feet’ for he only remained for

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11 *PEN* 1 January 1912.

12 *HT* 13 May 1913.

13 *CYB* (1944) 436.

14 *HT* 8 December 1911.

three further years to enjoy the new premises at Victoria Road, which he had inspired, before accepting a call to Windsor Congregational Church. At his farewell gathering he 'urged that the unity of purpose which had characterised the church's work in the past would be preserved in the coming years ... [and] to make their present position but the stepping stone to greater achievements'.<sup>15</sup> With the benefit of hindsight, such exhortation to 'greater achievements' was somewhat idealistic given the challenges that all churches were to face in simply surviving during the remainder of the twentieth century.

Notwithstanding the mixed messages from the statistical record of Portsmouth's Congregational churches during the years between 1901 and 1914, overall it was period in which they sought to fortify the gains of the past, innovating if appropriate. For example, in 1905 at Christ Church Southsea, Robert Clegg introduced a series of special one hour services on Sunday evenings, designed to attract those who did not normally attend public worship. These enjoyed great success and were characterised in the *Portsmouth Evening News*' 'Voice of the Pulpit' series as 'simple, bright, appealing to the artistic, intellectual, and religious mind. Above all the spirit of worship ... [was] most manifest'.<sup>16</sup> Although the years leading up to the First World War cannot be portrayed as a 'golden age', it was nonetheless one of quiet satisfaction, enterprise and hope for the future. In the quality of its pastors and the dedication of deacons and church members, Congregationalism provided a spiritual home for those who appreciated an unostentatious yet heartfelt approach to worship and a commitment to outreach.

## Resilience and Decline: From the First World War until 1972

The history of Congregationalism in Portsmouth in the years following the First World War was in many respects a reversal of what had happened during the nineteenth century. This is illustrated by the data in Table 6. They were years for which Robbins' colourful phrase, 'Mammon was rampant', is a particularly apt description.<sup>17</sup> As Henry Parnaby, pastor of Buckland Congregational Church from 1922 to 1936, said of the 1920s:

People were experimenting with life. They had become aware of the wealth of this world and were beginning to enjoy it as they had never done. So wonderful seemed the world, with its ... motor cars ... its expanding cult of the open

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<sup>15</sup> *HT* 4 September 1914.

<sup>16</sup> *PEN* 6 February 1905.

<sup>17</sup> K Robbins *History, Religion and Identity in Modern Britain* (1993) 123.



air, its craving for games, that ... religious worship and attendance at worship everywhere declined ...

One of his successors, Roy Currie, quoting Parnaby over forty years later, suggested that his words had ‘an uncannily topical ring’.<sup>18</sup>

**Table 6: Membership of Congregational Churches in Portsmouth and Southsea at ten yearly intervals 1911–1971**

Year	Buckland <sup>1</sup>	Edinburgh Road	Zion <sup>2</sup>	Christ Church Southsea	Victoria Road Southsea	Milton <sup>3</sup>	Total
1911	525	135	79	191	135	28	1093
1921	535	100	52	189	132	135	1143
1931	435	70	31	130	82	135	883
1941	331	40	20	50	90	140	671
1951	231	24	60	34	84	83	515
1961	177	–	47	29	115	116	484
1971	213	–	29	16	68	74	400

1. Includes Buckland Street to 1943.
  2. Sultan Road from 1956.
  3. Renamed Kendall Memorial Church 1913.
- Source: *HCUARs* various years

That said, although the statistics record a gradual and, after the Second World War, a rapid decline in the membership of Portsmouth’s Congregational churches, these years were not without positive developments. In other words, Congregationalism was characterised by a degree of tenacity and resilience as well as contraction.

For example, ‘when the Free Churches were first given oversight of their members in the Royal Navy, ... [John Watkin Davies] was appointed Naval Chaplain in Portsmouth, and later officiating Clergyman to H.M. Forces under the United Board.’ Not surprisingly, given its pastor’s role, ‘Edinburgh Road became a centre of naval and military Free Church work in the city’.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, the church building ‘was extended and re-opened in June 1930 free of debt’.<sup>20</sup>

Another example of Congregationalism’s ability to defy the odds was the saga of the Church at Milton. In the new premises Walter Elliott faithfully served

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18 *PEN* 10 June 1969.  
 19 *CYB* (1942) 415.  
 20 *HT* 20 December 1940.

the church until 1921 and under his two successors, Ernest Wallis and John Morris, 'the church continued to prosper; Milton, as a residential area continued to expand'.<sup>21</sup> In 1941, however, catastrophe struck when the buildings were destroyed during an air raid. The resilient congregation continued to meet for worship in Meon Road School and subsequently the church hall. Eventually, in 1955 new church premises were opened. These were funded with a grant from the War Damage Commission, loans from the Congregational Union's Reconstruction Fund and £1000 raised locally.

With hard work and effective leadership it was also possible to reverse the downward trend in membership, at least temporarily, as evidenced by Victoria Road and Milton during the 1950s and Buckland during the late 1960s and early 1970s. In 1960 the vibrancy of Buckland was captured in a *Portsmouth Evening News* series, 'Round the Churches'.

In 1959 this energetic congregation turned its attention [from structural improvements] to the spiritual life of the church and a Forward Committee was set up with the aim of suggesting revolutionary ideas for bringing new vitality into church life.<sup>22</sup>

One outcome of this initiative was an increase in church membership, with Buckland accounting for over half of Portsmouth's Congregational church members by the time of the merger with the Presbyterians in 1972.

Nonetheless, the underlying trend of retreat in the face of creeping secularisation and a growing disinterest in church life cannot be denied. Physical destruction combined with declining memberships and congregations led inevitably to rationalisation. From 1941 Edinburgh Road and Milton were combined as far as pastoral oversight was concerned, with Zion being included in this arrangement until 1943. Oversight was provided initially by John Morris and from 1951, Frederick Oliver. Edinburgh Road ceased to exist as a separate congregation in the first half of the 1950s, although the church buildings which had survived the war were not demolished until the 1980s.<sup>23</sup> This was a sad fate for a church which had played such a key role in advancing the cause of Congregationalism in Portsmouth during the nineteenth century. Another 'lost cause' was Christ Church, Southsea, which had its buildings damaged beyond repair during the Second World War and ceased to have a permanent minister from 1952, although the congregation did continue to meet for worship in St Jude's Mission Hall and later the church hall. The ruined church, although not the hall, was demolished in 1956, with the rubble being used as 'part of the foundations for Admiralty-owned maisonettes ... built in King's

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<sup>21</sup> *PEN* 11 February 1955.

<sup>22</sup> *PEN* 15 October 1960.

<sup>23</sup> J Offord *Churches, Chapels and Places of Worship on Portsea Island* (Portsmouth 1989) 91.

Terrace'.<sup>24</sup> Victoria Road, however, continued to serve as another outpost of Congregationalism in Southsea.

By 1972 the total membership of Portsmouth's Congregational churches was approximately one third of what it had been sixty years early. Although the number of those worshipping on a regular basis is not known it is probable that here the decline would have been very similar. Thus, as the century progressed, church buildings, erected during the Victorian era of expansion, seemed excessively large for current needs. However, churches did keep going and, although it became increasingly difficult to provide each one with a minister, through the dedication of deacons and the contribution of lay members services were held Sunday by Sunday. In short, Congregationalism maintained its distinctive Christian witness in Portsmouth.

## Conclusion

In some respects the history of Congregationalism in Portsmouth mirrors that of Christianity more generally. Here the dominant narrative is that of Evangelical zeal, associated with the first half of the nineteenth century, eventually succumbing to the inexorable of rise of secularisation in the twentieth.<sup>25</sup> As interest in church life decreased, Congregationalism with its focus on the local church was particularly vulnerable. That said, Congregationalists, along with their fellow believers in other denominations were constantly seeking fresh ways of prosecuting or pursuing the Christian faith, which enabled them to survive against the odds. This, in itself, represented something of an achievement in Portsmouth, as well as elsewhere.

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<sup>24</sup> *PEN* 14 September 1956. For further details of Christ Church during the post-Second World War period see R. Ottewill, 'A History of Christ Church Congregational Church Southsea 1865–1972' [ashburtoncourt.co.uk/wiki/](http://ashburtoncourt.co.uk/wiki/) (accessed 17 June 2019).

<sup>25</sup> See, for example, C Brown *Religion and Society in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Harlow 2006) and A Gilbert *The Making of Post-Christian Britain* (1980).

## Appendix: Portsmouth's Congregational Ministers and Pastors post 1900

### Orange Street, King Street and Edinburgh Road

1894–1941 John Watkin Davies  
 1941–1950 John Morris  
 1951–1954 Frederick Oliver  
 Combined with Milton from 1941 and closed in 1954.

### Buckland

1888–1902 Walter Talbot  
 1903–1921 William Miles  
 1922–1936 Henry Parnaby  
 1936–1940 William King  
 1941–1944 Francis Miller  
 1945–1954 George Dibden  
 1956–1964 Wallis Hayward  
 1965–1971 Roy Currie  
 1972–1975 Derek Lindfield

### Zion Chapel (Sultan Road from 1956)

1900–1909 James Gittings  
 1910–1914 Thomas Grant  
 1916–1923 James Gittings  
 1923–1929 Thomas Grant  
 1929–1935 M J Carter  
 1935–1943 Supplied  
 1943–1964 Harold Collins  
 1964–1965 Vacant  
 1966–1968 Supplied  
 1969–1977 Fred Mason  
 Combined with Milton from 1941, the same year in which the buildings were destroyed during an air raid, until 1943.

### Milton (Kendall Memorial Church from 1913)

1868–1910 Thomas Kendall (lay pastor)  
 1910–1913 Vacant  
 1913–1921 Walter Elliott  
 1921–1934 Ernest Wallis  
 1935–1950 John Morris  
 1951–1956 Frederick Oliver  
 1957–1961 Reginald Mansfield  
 1962–1966 Howard Bryant  
 1966–1969 Leonard Wigg  
 1969–1971 Vacant  
 1972–1976 Alan Thomasson (joint with Victoria Road)  
 Buildings destroyed during an air raid in 1941. New premises opened in 1955.

### Christ Church, Southsea

1898–1906 Robert Clegg  
 1907–1912 John Wills  
 1913–1916 George Stanley  
 1918–1924 William Woods  
 1925–1927 Howard Stanley  
 1928–1936 Fred Horrox  
 1937–1939 William Boxall  
 1940–1943 Vacant  
 1944–1947 Supplied  
 1948–1951 Norman Jenkinson  
 1952–1953 Vacant  
 1953–1972 Supplied  
 Church damaged during the war and subsequently demolished in 1956.

**Victoria Road, Southsea**

1898–1903 William Daniel

1905–1913 George Williams

1915–1924 John James

1924–1931 William Selby

1931–1945 Ernest Bridger

1937–1938 John Kent (assistant pastor)

1945–1950 Vacant

1950–1954 Roy Clarke

1956–1961 John Clarke

1962–1968 Dennis Spicer

1969–1970 G.A. Nunn

1970–1972 Vacant

1972–1976 Alan Thomasson (joint  
with Milton)

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*Roger Ottewill*

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## REVIEWS

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*Archives of Dissent: Family, Memory and the English Nonconformist Tradition.* By Alexandra Walsham. Dr Williams's Trust, 2020. Available from Dr Williams's Library c/o HonSecFDWL@dwl.ac.uk Pp 40. Paperback £5. ISSN 035-3962

This booklet contains the text of the Friends of Dr Williams's Library annual lecture given by Professor Alexandra Walsham of the University of Cambridge in October 2019. In her presentation she considers the role played by families and their archives in passing on the faith of dissenters and recording their history. At the beginning reference is made to Patrick Collinson and Christopher Hill who prefer to emphasise the effect of 'the surrounding environment in which religious affiliations were forged' whereas Professor Walsham seeks to study the 'genealogical perspective' in a new way. Her lecture demonstrates an awareness of 'natural and spiritual' families whilst examining the importance of the former in a time of discrimination. In her view record-keeping is encouraged within a persecuted community.

To illustrate her arguments Professor Walsham reviews records including two family archives now in Dr Williams's Library. The first is the archive of the Blackmore family and the second the Say family papers. Each of these exists in book form assembled by a later member of the family. The Blackmore documents are mounted in a nineteenth century binding and the Say family papers are pasted into an accounts ledger. Professor Walsham points out that the Blackmore writings avoid any mention of William Blackmore's (d. 1684) attempts to prevent the trial and execution of Charles I and involvement in a plot to restore the monarchy. She notes that this is an example of attempted family influence on how notable forebears might be remembered.

As is to be expected from such a distinguished academic, this is a well-researched and evidenced piece of work in which interesting questions are asked and conclusions drawn. Here are references to Edmund Calamy, the Quakers and the Muggletonians, amongst others. If you are interested in how nonconformity has passed down the generations or in examining the evidence on which its history is based you will enjoy reading it. If you were able to attend the original lecture in person, it is still beneficial to have time to consider the information at greater leisure.

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*M Lesley Dean*

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***The Oxford History of Protestant Dissenting Traditions. Volume I: The Post-Reformation Era, 1559–1689.* Edited by John Coffey. Oxford University Press, 2020. Pp xxii + 519. Hardback £110. ISBN 978–0–19–870223–8**

The five volumes of the Oxford History of Protestant Dissenting Traditions begin chronologically with this volume. These dissenters broke away from a state church characterised by bishops (*de jure divino*), the English prayer book, allegiance to the Thirty-Nine Articles, and by royal supremacy over that Church. Theologically their roots lie in the puritan reaction to an incomplete Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century, as this volume's starting date of 1559 suggests. The Act of Uniformity (1662) insisted that the use of the Book of Common Prayer was compulsory in Church of England worship which led directly to the widespread ejection of nonconforming clergymen, and their often large families, from their livings. This first volume takes the momentous story to the Toleration Act of William and Mary in 1689, a recognition of the support offered by dissenters to their 'glorious revolution'.

John Coffey's volume examines the relations between dissent and the establishment, stressing that dissenters, both Congregationalists, and especially Presbyterians, seriously challenged for control of the church. Separatists in the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I were numerically negligible. Indeed religious dissent was for the most part retained within the Church of England, as puritans hoped to achieve reform from within. During the Civil Wars and Commonwealth period, potential reformers gained political power but fragmented into competing factions. However, after 1660 and the return of Charles II, the subsequent removal of some 2,000 nonconformist ministers caused a swelling of the numbers of dissenters. This volume makes clear that puritanism did not necessarily lead to dissent, but the latter was the unlooked-for result of an uncompromising demand for further reformation. The story of dissent was to become that of persecuted minorities seeking religious toleration. However their contemporaries did not always see it that way.

Certainly after 1640, religious pluralism was an unavoidable fact in English life, with different denominations, like the Society of Friends, coming into being and toleration being championed. This volume explores how Presbyterians, Baptists, Congregationalists, and Quakers discovered their identities and takes the story from England to Wales, Scotland, Ireland, the Dutch Republic, New England, Pennsylvania, and to the islands of the Caribbean. The twenty-one chapters are written by specialists like Polly Ha, Elliot Vernon, George Southcombe — all on Presbyterians at different times — Tim Cooper on Congregationalists, Michael Haykin on Separatists and Baptists, and Ariel Hessayon on early Quakers. Outside England, among other scholars, Cory Cotter tackles English and Scottish dissenters in the Dutch Republic, R Scott Spurlock deals with Scotland, Crawford Gribben with Ireland, Francis Bremer

with New England and Lloyd Bowen with Wales. Among other contributions are those of W J Sheils on dissent in the parishes, Bernard Capp on the puritan revolution, Neil Keeble on print culture, Coffey himself on the Bible, Susan Hardman Moore on worship, and Rachel Adcock on women. Lastly (but not least) the chapter on lay experience in the gathered churches comes from Michael Davies, Anne Dunan-Page and Joel Halcomb.

This is a handsome and weighty book. Do not be put off by its high price. It repays careful and repeated reading.

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*Margaret J Collins*

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***The Oxford History of Protestant Dissenting Traditions, Volume II: The Long Eighteenth Century c.1689–c.1828.* Edited by Andrew C Thompson. Oxford University Press, 2018. Pp xxi + 464. Hardback £100. ISBN 978-0-19-870224-5**

Volume II of this impressive series traces the course of religious dissent between the Toleration Act of 1689 and the overdue repeal in 1828 of the Test and Corporation Acts (first passed in the reign of Charles II). The 'long eighteenth century' saw dissenters develop gradually from being a persecuted minority to achieving a level of confidence and social acceptance. Political equality still lay ahead but they were well on the road to that elusive goal. Andrew Thompson, as editor, has arranged these contributions so that the first part of the book deals with the history of the different English dissenting traditions. Therefore Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists and Quakers all have their own chapters, as do also the lively and fragmenting Methodists, part of the 'New Dissent' of the eighteenth century. The contributors are Alasdair Raffé on Presbyterians, Stephen Orchard on Congregationalists, Karen Smith on Baptists, Richard Allen on Quakers and Richard Heitzenrater on Methodists.

The second part of the volume moves beyond England. Here are the different stories of dissent in Wales (from Eryn White) and Ireland (Andrew R Holmes), where the state church was an imposed Anglicanism, and in Scotland (Stewart J Brown), where the dominant and established tradition was Presbyterian. This part also extends the story to religious dissent in the American colonies (Catherine A Brekus) which, after 1776, became the United States. There the relation between church and state was looser and developed very differently, with no single formally established church tradition. Katherine Carte Engel outlines dissent in the Atlantic world 1787–1830.

Part three is devoted to revivalism and its influence (Michael J McClymond), with a stress on the role of the missionary societies (usually but not always denominational as Brian Stanley notes) in spreading protestantism from the 1790s. Part four examines the relations between dissent and the state (Andrew



Thompson), particularly their engagement in the campaigns for the abolition of the slave trade (Grayson Ditchfield). Finally the fifth part treats with the daily lives and practices of dissenters. Here is their developing theology and their approach to the Bible (David Thompson), the importance of sermons (Francoise Deconinck-Brossard) and of hymns (J R Watson), their encouragement of schools and education (Mark Burden) and of their involvement in print culture (Tessa Whitehouse). Here also is an examination of their chapels and meeting houses in their architectural settings 1600–1830 (Carl Lounsbury).

I welcome this collection as a serious addition to the growing literature on the history of dissent.

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*Frances Lowe*

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***The Oxford History of Protestant Dissenting Traditions, Volume III. The Nineteenth Century.* Edited by Timothy Larsen and Michael Ledger-Lomas. Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp xx + 546. Hardback £110. ISBN 978-0-19-968371-0**

Volume III (the first to be published) of this Oxford series of five volumes considers the various Dissenting traditions in the nineteenth century, not only as they developed in the life of Britain but also beyond it, to the countries of the empire and to the United States of America. Here we find an overview of the writings on religious Dissent set within very different contexts, which yet enabled dissenters to be aware of their roots. The nineteenth century witnessed the formation of an extensive English-speaking and English dominated world which enabled Dissent to rise to a peak.

If the volume concentrates on England, Scotland Wales, Ireland, and North America, some chapters look further afield at colonial and missionary influences across the globe. A little over half the chapters offer treatments of denominations or movements. The rest tackle theology and political and social engagement.

Certainly slavery and the traffic of black slaves across the Atlantic was a factor in the history of dissent and several chapters here treat with American slavery. Yet, given the contemporary black lives matter movement, we should remember that some dissenters were slave owners, whereas others were active within the anti-slavery movement.

The scholars recruited to the volume are eminent, including the editors themselves and trusted and familiar names like Ian Randall, David Bebbington, Andrew Holmes and Mark Noll. Holmes tackles dissenting evangelism which, he states, stagnated for much of the previous century but after 1770, ‘political and social convulsions’ prompted the ‘growth of voluntary Protestantism’. The Welsh Baptist, Densil Morgan, surprisingly treats with ‘Spirituality, Worship,

and Congregational Life', and, as might be expected, American scholars, less well known to English readers, treat with subjects outside the United Kingdom.

This volume covers the inroads of liberal theology, German higher criticism and the researches of science and geology as well as the hell-fire preaching of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, with much ground in between. It also shows that in the late nineteenth century a zeal for an active intervention by the state existed in moral and educational affairs. Dissent assumed an identity which allowed it to play a role in political and constitutional affairs.

Some may have wanted more treatment of black Christian movements and of groups like the Salvation Army but overall this work is thorough and rewarding.

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*Robert Jones.*

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