

ANDREW GIFFORD AT TEWKESBURY ACADEMY (1719)

Near the beginning of his biography of Andrew Gifford, *Farthing Rushlight* (1961), Dr Champion describes a collection of letters preserved in the Library of Baptist College, Bristol, which were written to Gifford when he was a student at Tewkesbury in 1719. Most of them are from his father, Emanuel Gifford, the minister of the Pithay church in Bristol. The information in these is conventional, the domestic interest of any family letters. Among the other letters¹ one, from Richard Pearsall of Kidderminster, is of more significance. It brings Andrew Gifford to life at a stage in his career about which little is known (and that not altogether to his credit).² It also illumines the situation in one of the most noted of the early Dissenting Academies at a critical juncture shortly before the death of its tutor, and in Dissenting circles in Tewkesbury more generally.

A Baptist church had existed in Tewkesbury for more than fifty years,³ but there is no evidence that Gifford was associated with it during the period he spent in the town. There was also a Paedobaptist Dissenting church, the minister of which in 1719 was James Warner.⁴ From Pearsall's letter it appears that relations between 'Mr. Warner's Congregation' and the 'family' of Samuel Jones (i.e. his household, including the students) were not comfortable. In 1719 one of Jones's recent pupils, Edward Godwin, after a brief ministry at Hungerford, returned to Tewkesbury to be pastor of another congregation in the town. 1719 was the fatal year of Salters' Hall, a year of disruption in churches in many parts of the country. The writings of the two Tewkesbury ministers suggest that the difference here also was doctrinal, Warner's theology tending towards the High Calvinist, Godwin's being more evangelical.

Andrew Gifford's training at Tewkesbury and the society of his fellow-students there may be partly responsible for the position he held in later years somewhat apart from his brethren, when he was chaplain to Sir Richard Ellys, Bt., and a good friend of George Whitefield, Howel Harris and the Countess of Huntingdon. That his father should have sent him to Tewkesbury may seem surprising; but as yet no Baptist Academy existed apart from Bristol, and this was not only of very recent foundation but under Caleb Jope was hardly prospering.⁵ Jope had himself been at the Tewkesbury Academy, and it may be that Andrew was sent there with the thought that he might return to teach at Bristol, as for a short period he did.

In any case, Gifford was not the only Baptist at Tewkesbury. The most eminent pupils, such as the future Archbishop Secker and the future Bishop Butler, Jones had trained earlier, at Gloucester or soon after his removal to Tewkesbury in 1712;⁶ but among Gifford's contemporaries, in addition to those mentioned in Pearsall's letter, two at least were Baptists. One was Timothy Thomas, who in 1717 succeeded his father as minister of the Baptist church at Pershore but died three years later, leaving behind him a record of his fervent evangelical sentiments, in part written while he was at Tewkesbury, which was eventually published anonymously in 1752 under the title *The Hidden Life of a Christian*.⁷ The letters to Gifford at Bristol include two from Thomas, one unsigned but endorsed by Gifford 'This was wrote by my dear Friend Timothy Thomas'. The other Baptist at Tewkesbury was John Phillips of Rhydwylym, who after Samuel Jones's

death in 1719 became Foskett's second pupil at Bristol, had ministries in Usk, Wrexham, London (Collier's Rents) and Guildford, and translated David Rees's *Remarks on some reproachful and scandalous passages* (1732) into Welsh, but who after his death in 1761 left a reputation for 'sottishness'.⁸ It may be seen as in line with Gifford's openness for fellowship with others than Baptists that the churches at Pershore, Wrexham and Collier's Rents were at this time all Open-Communion.

Richard Pearsall (1698-1762) was a minister of evangelical sentiments who held pastorates at Bromyard, Herefordshire, and Warminster, Wiltshire, and finally at Taunton, an important charge. He came of a pious, journal-keeping family, and himself published contemplations and meditations on a variety of subjects from Scripture to butterflies, the ocean and the last judgment. He was a friend of James Hervey, and also of Philip Doddridge, some of his letters to whom are still extant.⁹

A transcript of Pearsall's letter to Gifford made by Joshua Wilson with fair accuracy is preserved among the MSS of New College, London, now in Dr Williams's Library.¹⁰ Wilson also drew up a list of Tewkesbury students.¹¹ I am grateful to Dr Williams's Librarian as well as to the Rev. C. Sidney Hall of Bristol for access to the documents under their care.

To Mr Gifford in Tewksbury

Kidder: July 1st 1719

Dear Chum

I wonder I have not heard from you Since your Vacation, Especially since you can't but Suppose I am wholly Ignorant of the affairs of the Great house or indeed of Tewksbury in general; I Expect therefore in Your next a Solution of the following Questions & of 20 More which I can't think of now, but you may; viz¹⁰; How the Difference is, whether it increases or decreases or to w^t height it is grow'n between your family and M^r Warner's, & how the people of the town, I mean M^r Warner's congregation, carry themselves during this Commotion; Let me know too, Who is gone away this Last Vacation & who Returned, w^t Number of New Ones are come, & whence they are & who they are [sic] are; By the by I hear of one that is coming from Wolverhampton; Send me word, How the closets are dispos'd of, whether you are in the Same Situation as formerly (for you can't but Suppose, it's pleasant to hear of Every little thing about the Academy that I had always Such an affection for) I shou'd be glad to hear y^t M^r Jones is in a more confirm'd State of Health than formerly. However Send me word how he does, & Indeed how all the family dose too; Whether M^r Godwin is come, & how that matter goes on; Whether you hear any thing, & if you do What you hear of them that are gone away of late, Where Lewis¹² is, & how Hunt¹³ & Chandler¹⁴ dispose of themselves, and how Mounsieur Cock¹⁵ of Westminster goes on, whether he has took his D^r's Degree or no; & Whether M^r Sedgely¹⁶ Intends to stay at Tewksbury Still; Whether he has took orders or no, & if he has, Let me know all how & about it; Who Reads Divinity; How Arianism Goes on in the West &c.

I Expect a Long Letter from you soon; M^r Wowen ¹⁷ of your Meeting att Bristol is, I believe, at Bewdly his native place, however he was there Last week; I suppose, you hear y^t M^r Johnson ¹⁸ has Quite Resigned the Ministry & Left off preaching, the Occasion you know; I am Sorry for him; I have as full business for preaching here in this country as I desire. Pray give My Humble service to M^r Jones & his Lady ¹⁹ & M^{rs} Pearce ²⁰ and all the House; I can't particularly name them because I don't know who are there; Only M^r Sedgly & M^r Griffith ²¹ to whom Service particularly, & all the rest as if named.

I Suppose M^r Brooks ²² will have occasion to Send to me Soon, Let me hear from you at the same time.

I am Sir, Your Humble Servant,

R: Pearsall

In a further letter Pearsall writes from Kidderminster on 26 August 1719:

... I hear M^r Godwin is come (tho' not by you) and y^t the Contention Creases.

...When you write next, tell me somew^t about M^r Godwin & the difference between your family & M^r Warner's; Tell me something about the Divines, how they go on & whether They have begun to preach in the house, if they did how they did it; particularly; how G. Hamnet's ²³ Amour Goes on; tell him, I saw His Mistriss a Little while agoe at Stowerbridge, & shall see her again L^d's day Sennight when I shall preach there; so that, If he will but write wⁿ you do (at the time hereafter Mention'd) I will deliver the Letter to Her wth M^r Hamnet's Love & service... Tell me somew^t about Lewis whether he's gone, & how the difference is between M^r Thomas and M^{rs} Jones on the one side and Him on the other; How M^r Thomas dose now; whether He has Resolv'd to stay at Pershore...

I Rest Your Loving Friend & since Humble serv^t

R. Pearsall

To M^r Andrew Gifford at the Great House in Tewksbury

On 11 October 1719 Samuel Jones died, aged 37. The Academy was offered to Edward Godwin, but he declined it. For a few years it was continued at Nailsworth by Jones's nephew Jeremiah, who had been his pupil; but in 1724 Jeremiah Jones ²⁴ also died, aged 30 or 31.

NOTES

- 1 The collection also includes correspondence between Andrew Gifford's grandfather Andrew and Richard Blinman, and a letter of 8 March 1676/7 to his grandfather from Nehemiah Coxo, endorsed 'On Singing. Whether it is a Moral Duty'.
- 2 For this see Baptist Board Minutes for November 1735 and October 1736 (*B.H.S.T.*, v.213-16); Little Wild Street church book (now at Regent's Park College) for May 1735.
- 3 For extracts from the Tewkesbury Baptist church book for 1655-8, see *Association Records*, ed. B. R. White, 1971-4, pp.18-39.
- 4 An earlier Paedobaptist church appears to have dissolved before 1690: see *Freedom after Ejection*, ed. A. Gordon, Manchester 1917, p.46; but there was a minister prior to Warner, William Sloane, who at his death in 1716 was minister at Salisbury: see Gordon, p.366, and G. F. Nuttall, 'Assembly and Association in Dissent, 1689-1831', in *Councils and Assemblies* (Studies in Church History, 7), Cambridge 1971, p.297, n.3. See further William Davies, *Notes of the History of the Congregational Church, Tewkesbury*, Tewkesbury, n.d.
- 5 See H. McLachlan, *English Education under the Test Acts*, Manchester 1931, p.91; N. S. Moon, *Education for Ministry: Bristol Baptist College, 1679-1979*, Bristol 1979, p.3; Champion, p.16.
- 6 See McLachlan, pp.126-31; William Davies, *The Tewkesbury Academy*, Tewkesbury, n.d.
- 7 See G. F. Nuttall, 'John Ash and the Pershore Church: additional notes', in *B.Q.* XXII, pp.272-3, and 'Methodism and the Older Dissent: some perspectives', in *U.R.C. Hist. Soc. Journal*, II, pp.263-4.
- 8 See G. F. Nuttall, 'Welsh Students at Bristol Baptist College, 1720-1797', in *Hon.Soc. of Cymmrodorion Trans.*, 1978, p.196; D. H. Matthews, 'David Rees, Limehouse (1683-1748)' in *Welsh Bapt.Hist. Soc. Trafodion*, 1983, p.2; Baptist Board Minutes for 1735 and 1740 (*B.H.S.T.*, v.213, 218); Walter Wilson, *History ... of Dissenting Churches ... in London*, 1808-14, iv. 323-4. This John Phillips is to be distinguished from another minister of the same name, who also died in 1761, but who was not born till 1712, and who was not a Baptist, though the church to which he ministered became Baptist: *Cheshire Classis Minutes, 1691-1745*, ed. A. Gordon, 1919, p.199.
- 9 See *D.N.B.*; *Calendar of the Correspondence of Philip Doddridge*, ed. G. F. Nuttall, 1979.
- 10 D.W.L., New College, London, MSS. L 54/4/53.
- 11 *Ibid.*, L 54/4/57; printed in *Congregational Hist. Soc. Trans.*, v.78.
- 12 Benjamin Lewis, minister of Leominster: *Index to the John Evans List of Dissenting Congregations and Ministers, 1715-1729*, in D.W.L., compiled by John Creasey (D.W.L. Occasional Papers, 11), 1964, p.46.
- 13 William Hunt, minister at Hackney: *Freedom after Ejection*, p.289, sub John Hunt (his father).
- 14 Samuel Chandler: *D.N.B.*
- 15 Unidentified.
- 16 William Sedgley, minister at Bideford and Newbury: W. Densham & J. Ogle, *The Story of the Congregational Churches of Dorset*, 1899, p.340; H. H. Summers, *History of the Congregational Churches in the*

- Berks... Association*, Newbury 1905, pp.143-4.
- 17 Jonathan Woven: Walter Wilson, i.211 and iv.144-6, confusing him with John Woven (for whom see *Calamy Revised*, ed. A. G. Matthews, Oxford 1934, s.v.).
 - 18 Unidentified.
 - 19 Much ink has been spent on the identification and parentage of Samuel Jones's wife Judith Weaver, who after his death married Edward Godwin: for the fullest and most satisfactory account see R. T. Jenkins, *Yng Nghysgod Trefeca*, Caernarfon 1968, pp.116-45. See further *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*, as Judith Godwin.
 - 20 Unidentified.
 - 21 Vavasor Griffiths: *D.N.B.*, *Dict. of Welsh Biography*.
 - 22 Richard Brooks, M.D.: *D.N.B.*, as Brookes.
 - 23 George Hamnet, minister at Middlewich: *Cheshire Classis Minutes*, p.175.
 - 24 *D.N.B.*, *Dict. of Welsh Biography*, sub Samuel Jones.

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REVIEW

Evangelicals and Culture by Doreen Rosman. Croom Helm (London and Canberra), 1984. pp.262. £14.95 hb.

One of the functions of the good historian is to break down stereotypes which are always obstacles to human understanding. This is precisely what Doreen Rosman accomplishes with much skill and insight. She starts from the stereotype that all evangelicals were culturally philistines, a stereotype created partly through Matthew Arnold's scathing attack on nonconformists in *Culture and Anarchy*, but she focuses her book on the earlier period 1790-1833. Immediately she breaks down one artificial division by embracing in her study all 'evangelicals', whether Anglican or dissenting, whilst at the same time carefully distinguishing all the way through the nuances of difference between various groups and classes. The basis of this inclusive concept is the evangelical theology common to the low church wing of the established church and most of the dissenting churches. One of the key elements in the book is the chapter on The Theology of Evangelicalism in which Rosman illuminates in a fascinating way the theological foundations for social habits, tastes and leisure pursuits. In the following chapters she shows how these principles were applied (or circumvented, or disregarded) in social fashions, family life, recreations, the pursuit of music and the arts, and learning. Throughout she shows with a wealth of examples the many subtle distinctions and hesitations between a world-denying and a world-affirming attitude. Evangelical styles of life and cultural choices ranged all the way from the one to the other. Furthermore, the author points out how many of these attitudes were, in fact, shared with 'the world' from whose contamination so many Evangelicals sought to escape.