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A table of contents for the *Congregational History Society Magazine* can be found here:

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Autumn 2017

**THE  
CONGREGATIONAL  
HISTORY  
SOCIETY  
MAGAZINE**

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**Volume 8 No 4 Autumn 2017**

**Contents**

Editorial	2
News and Views	2
Correspondence	
Secretary's notes <i>Richard Cleaves</i>	8
St Paul's Chapel, Hawley Road, Scenes from church life in Camden Town in the 1840s <i>Stephen Orchard</i>	11
Congregationalism on the Island of Bute <i>Gordon A Campbell</i>	25
Revd Henry Beresford Martin 1808-1844 <i>Peter Flower</i>	39
A Congregational Church in Revolutionary Petrograd <i>Alan Argent</i>	57
Reviews	65

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## EDITORIAL

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**W**e welcome to our pages Stephen Orchard, the former principal of Westminster College, Cambridge, and Peter Flower of Vineyard Congregational Church, Richmond-upon-Thames. Stephen investigates life in a Congregational church in a north London suburb in the 1840s. Peter concentrates on the work of his chapel's first minister. In addition, Gordon Campbell returns to the history of Scottish Congregationalism, in this instance on the Isle of Bute. All are welcome. We also mark a memorial with an article on the former Congregational church in St Petersburg.

In our 'News and Views' section, you may notice a particular emphasis on the Reformation. That is continued in our reviews where Tim Corcoran contributes his thoughts on the work of that perceptive Catholic scholar, Eamon Duffy.

## NEWS AND VIEWS

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### **New College, London history 1840–1977**

Plans are afoot for a scholarly history of New College, London, the former Congregational ministerial training college on Finchley Road which closed in 1977. Those involved are still at an early stage in their proceedings but past students, denominational historians and other interested parties are aware of the developments. New College, London, resulted from the merger of Homerton, Coward and Highbury Colleges in 1850, for which a new building was erected in St John's Wood, London. It remains the most important college for training Congregational ministers still without a modern study. The Trustees of the New College Foundation have commissioned a new history and an editorial committee has been formed to oversee the writing and publishing of a new multi-authored volume. The memories of past students and friends will be a valuable resource for the committee.

### **Avebury Chapel, Wiltshire**

CHS members may wish to know that the former Congregational chapel at Avebury in Wiltshire is now the property of the National Trust. The chapel stands at the centre of the prehistoric stone circle which is already in the Trust's care. The chapel had been on sale since 2015 when the United

Reformed Church decided that dwindling congregations and the closure of the information centre which had operated there left few options. The fellowship traced its foundation to about 1670 when believers from neighbouring Devizes, Calne and Marlborough gathered together to form one meeting at Avebury which safely lay beyond the punitive restrictions imposed on nonconformists by the Five Mile Act.

The Avebury chapel was partly built from broken standing stones and is a rare example of a Christian building within a prehistoric henge and stone circle. We must allow that at Knowlton in Dorset one stands within a Neolithic henge but without a stone circle. The National Trust hopes to restore the chapel sympathetically and then use it to highlight conservation work and to engage visitors with the unique landscapes surrounding this World Heritage site. The Trust states that ‘this unique and beautiful building’ should enable visitors ‘to share our passion’ for the site’s ‘abundant nature and world-renowned archaeology’. The building is to become ‘a welcome and information space’ for both locals and visitors.

## **Remembering the Reformation**

Amid the many commemorations of the Reformation this year the **University of Cambridge** has recently launched its website which investigates how the Reformations were remembered, forgotten, contested and re-invented. Those of you who visit [www.rememberingthereformation.org.uk](http://www.rememberingthereformation.org.uk) will find set before them a feast of material to delight their senses and intellects. I recommend it to you all.

## **St Andrews University and the Reformation**

In the 1520s St Andrews was one of the first Scottish towns to come into contact with Lutheran ideas. St Andrews is the designated Scottish city in a Europe-wide initiative, ‘Reformation Cities’ and the university there is marking the Reformation jubilee with a series of events for October 2017 and an exhibition in the university museum. For more details see: <http://2017.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/> where there are links also to a recording of Prof Alec Ryrie’s 2016 Reformation lecture and other relevant news items.

## **British Library**

A free display on ‘Martin Luther’ in The Sir John Ritblat Treasures Gallery opens at the BL on 31 October 2017, featuring among other exhibits an original copy of Luther’s 95 Theses and examples of contemporary pro- and anti-Lutheran propaganda. This display offers a look at Luther’s life and work and at his lasting influence.

A study day entitled ‘The Reformation Outside Germany’ will be held in the library’s Foyle Visitor and Learning Centre on 27 November 2017. It will take a look at the Reformation in Germany from British, Dutch, Italian and Eastern European perspectives.

## **Senate House, University of London**

An exhibition ‘Reformation’, focusing on London through the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, traces the impact of the Protestant Reformation on culture and society; the way its communications industry drove change; and the consequences of the emergence of a new world order. The results of removing England from the family of Catholic states were profound, and had a major impact on London, throughout the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, as it grew into one of the world’s largest cities. On display in the Senate House Library, it runs from 26 June to 15 December 2017. To book a visit see: <http://reformation.senatehouselibrary.ac.uk/visit>

There is also an on line exhibition at: <http://reformation.senatehouselibrary.ac.uk/>

## **Musée virtuel du Protestantisme**

This web site provides a wealth of material in English (and French and German). It is a collaboration between numerous Protestant museums throughout France and also Geneva. Just one example of this is <https://www.museeprotestant.org/en/parcours/leducation-dans-le-monde-protestant-de-la-reforme-a-la-revolution/> which is a ‘tour’ of Protestant education. Those who visit this site will be reminded of the European nature of the Reformation and will not be disappointed.

## **Constance Coltman et al**

The first woman to be ordained in a trinitarian denomination in Britain was Constance Todd (1889–1969) who was ordained at the King’s Weigh House on 17 October 1917. The next day she married Claud Coltman, her fellow former student at Mansfield College, Oxford, and her newly made colleague at Darby Street, the King’s Weigh House mission in the east end of London. Certainly this pioneer deserves to be remembered. Yet we should recall that the first woman to be recognised as a minister in the UK was the Unitarian Gertrude von Petzold (1876–1952) who was inducted in Leicester in 1904. See both women’s entries in the *ODNB*. I spotted the other day that Margaret Crook began a six months ministry at Octagon Chapel in 1918, having turned down invitations from four other churches. She had first class degrees in anthropology

(London) and theology (Oxford) and had worked among refugees in the Somme Valley with the Society of Friends during World War One.

## **Maurice Lawrance**

In September 2017 the secretary of the Congregational Memorial Hall Trust, Maurice Lawrance, retired after 17 years in the post. He has brought a great fund of Christian goodwill to the work and an obvious warmth for people. At his leaving, Maurice was presented with a framed digital print of Dennis Flanders' drawing from 1942 of the former Memorial Hall which stood in Farringdon Road, London. This is an evocative image of the CUEW's offices with the centre of London seeming so (deceptively) peaceful then in the middle of wartime. We wish Maurice well in his retirement.

## **Christianity and Roman Britain**

Our CHS secretary, Richard Cleaves, has contributed a chapter to P F Esler (ed) *The Early Christian World* (2nd edition, Routledge, 2017—see: <https://www.routledge.com/The-Early-Christian-World-2nd-Edition/Esler/p/book/9781138200074>) His chapter's title is 'Reading the New Testament in Roman Britain' (chapter 16). It is disconcertingly priced at £175 (hardback) which means it is aimed at Libraries rather than the general reader, or the average CHS member. However interestingly, Routledge are obviously publishing in a new way as the electronic copy is only £25 which for 1250 pages and 61 chapters is not bad value! The first edition appeared in 2000 and encompassed the origins, development, character and major figures of early Christianity.

The book includes hundreds of illustrations and maps. A quarter of the text in the second edition is new and the remainder has been revised. Some new material relates to Christian culture but there are also new essays on: Jewish and Christian interaction in the early centuries; ritual; the New Testament in Roman Britain; Manichaeism; Pachomius the Great and Gregory of Nyssa.

Richard has written more below on his contribution and how it came about.

The electronic copy can be found on this link: [https://play.google.com/store/books/details?id=8sEtDwAAQBAJ&rdid=book-8sEtDwAAQBAJ&rdot=1&source=gbs\\_atb&pcampaignid=books\\_booksearch\\_atb](https://play.google.com/store/books/details?id=8sEtDwAAQBAJ&rdid=book-8sEtDwAAQBAJ&rdot=1&source=gbs_atb&pcampaignid=books_booksearch_atb)

## **Congregational Federation Records**

As previously reported, Janet Wootton has undertaken to help assemble a much needed CF archive. She writes that 'For some time I have been concerned about the lack of a proper archive for the Congregational Federation, and am aware of cognate bodies (URC, EFCC, UCCC) archiving their records, and lodging them, with arrangements for ongoing maintenance, at the Congregational

Library in Gordon Square, London. Now that I have retired, this is something I should like to help set up and give some time to. I've been involved in lodging the archives of a number of organisations in various places over the years, so I know a bit about the organisation required, though I am not, of course, an archivist.'

She has held informal discussions with interested people but hopes to begin the process of identifying what falls within the scope of a CF archive, to find out what needs doing, who can do it, and how much it is likely to cost. She then aims to produce a costed proposal for the CF Council, and plans to start work next year, perhaps with an exploratory meeting in the spring of 2018. She wants to put out feelers for people who might support the process, and help with these initial investigations. Clearly it would be useful to have reactions to her proposal, and to have ideas about the various elements, or places she might go for expertise (for example in retrieving material from outdated electronic media). If you wish to be involved and have relevant expertise, please contact Janet Wootton ([revjwootton@btconnect.com](mailto:revjwootton@btconnect.com)) or the CHS treasurer.

A propos of this task, I can report that in the basement of Dr Williams's Library has been found a fairly good run of *Congregational News* (dating from 1972) plus some other items, CF year books, a few CF presidents' addresses and other pamphlets. These appear to be donations from Bill Ashley Smith or his family.

## **Dissenting Deputies' Annual Meeting and Lecture**

All are invited to the annual lecture of The General Body of Protestant Dissenting Deputies & Ministers to be held at Free Churches House, 27 Tavistock Square, London WC1 on Monday, 6 November 2017 at 6.00 pm. The lecture entitled 'Luther's Revolution—then and now' will be given by Dr John Bradbury, the minister of Emmanuel URC, Cambridge and former vice-principal of Westminster College. Any wishing to attend should let Sabina Williams know by email—[Sabina.williams@freechurches.org.uk](mailto:Sabina.williams@freechurches.org.uk)—or phone 020 3651 8334

## **Historic Libraries Forum**

The Historic Libraries Forum is planning a visit to Spalding Gentlemen's Society in association with CILIP Library & Information History Group. This joint visit will take place on Tuesday, 17 November, 2017 from 2pm. The event is free, but booking is essential as space is limited. For more information please visit the booking page: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/visit-to-spalding-gentlemens-society-cilip-lihg-historic-libraries-forum-tickets-37268803996>

In addition the Annual Meeting and Conference of the Historic Libraries Forum for 2017 will be held on Monday 13th November, hosted by Lambeth Palace Library. The event will follow the usual format of keynotes and case

studies but, to celebrate the Forum's 25th anniversary, it will conclude with a wine reception for the first time. Further details will be released as they become available, and booking will open in September.

## **GEMMS Research Assistant**

The Gateway to Early Modern Manuscript Sermons team need a new part-time research assistant for about 20 hours a month, based in the UK, probably in London or Oxford. The researcher would be taking part in a worthwhile international project. Hours are flexible, enabling the researcher to carry out work on their own researches. Full details are available from the GEMMS blog: <http://gemmsproject.blogspot.ca/2017/09/job-opportunity-gemms-research.html>

Recently GEMMS announced that they had added their 10,000th record to the sermon database.

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## SECRETARY'S NOTES

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### Reading the New Testament in Roman Britain

**W**ith his work on Paul, apostolic preaching, the Fourth Gospel and the Jesus of history, and his key involvement in the New English Bible, C H Dodd established a tradition of biblical scholarship which continues to this day in Mansfield College, Oxford. It's a line of scholarship that recognizes the importance of a historical study of the text of the Bible and may be traced through John Marsh, George Caird, John Muddiman to the present staff at Mansfield.

John Marsh published the Penguin Commentary on John which served a generation of students and preachers. George Caird's lectures on the Theology of the New Testament and Biblical Language and Imagery were an inspiration to all who heard them and laid the foundations for the next generation of biblical scholarship: John Muddiman co-edited the Oxford Bible Commentary which has done for this generation what the two editions of Peake's commentary did for earlier generations. And George Caird's doctoral students, Tom Wright and Marcus Borg have contributed immeasurably to popularizing the new quest for the historical Jesus.

Though no longer training ordinands for the ministry, Mansfield College Oxford continues to admit five students each year to study Theology and Religion and is one of the colleges in Oxford with the largest number of students studying Theology and Religion. Three of its four academic staff are specialists in Biblical Studies. Dr John Jarick is Lecturer in Theology (Old Testament) and is Book Review Editor for the Journal of the Study of the Old Testament; Dr Philip Kennedy is Senior Research Fellow in Theology, specializing in among other things Historical Jesus Research; Jenn Strawbridge is currently Associate Professor of New Testament Studies at Oxford and G B Caird Fellow in Theology at Mansfield College: the web site lists her interests as Pauline Epistles, Patristic reception of the NT, History of Interpretation, Papyrological and epigraphic sources and the NT, Gospel of John. The fourth member of staff is Prof John Rasmussen, Tutorial Fellow in Theology and Religion: his interests are listed as Theology, philosophy, and the history of Christianity, with a focus on the interactions of Protestantism, modern philosophy, and literature.

The three years I worshipped at Mansfield College Chapel, where I heard George Caird preach a wonderful series of eight sermons on the portraits of Jesus in the New Testament and attending his lectures on Biblical Language and

Imagery and the Theology of the New Testament, left their mark on me. In my teaching of the New Testament with the Congregational Institute for Practical Theology and in my preaching I have become more convinced that the Church today needs a strategy for reading the Bible that takes seriously its historical roots.

While Principal of Mansfield College and Dean Ireland Professor of Biblical Exegesis in the University of Oxford, Caird identified a problem as real now as it was then. It goes to the heart of our reading of the Bible and of our Christian faith. We do not live in the world of the Old or New Testament and are unacquainted with what to Isaiah's or Paul's contemporaries were 'familiar, everyday objects or experiences, and it is therefore easy for us to miss the affinities which imposed themselves on the inward eye of the biblical writers.'<sup>1</sup>

Some remarkable news broke in the summer of 2016. For the first time the everyday writings of some contemporaries of Paul had been discovered in the City of London. 405 waxed stylus writing tablets, together with two stylus tags and two ink writing tablets were discovered during excavations carried out by the Museum of London Archaeology group on the site of the new European headquarters for Bloomberg LP between 2010 and 2014. Fifteen are more or less complete, eighty carry legible traces of text and 185 are catalogued in R S O Tomlin's *Roman London's first voices: Writing tablets from the Bloomberg excavations, 2010–2014* (2016). Many of the tablets were written in and around the market square that became London's forum, discarded and then used as landfill beside the Walbrook stream, a tributary of the Thames. Some were found in a room that could well have served as an office. A significant number of them date to the AD 50s and 60s and so are written by contemporaries of Paul. The wax has long since disappeared, but marks were left on the wood of many of the tablets by the stylus and so they can be deciphered and translated.

To read the loan note Tibullus, a freedman, wrote to another freedman, Gratus, on 8 January AD 57 is to enter the world of Philemon and Onesimus. Language Paul uses to assure Philemon that he will repay any debt owed is the language of the Bloomberg tablets. When he says, 'I, Paul, have written this with my own hand: I will repay it' it is exactly the language Tibullus uses when he says, 'I Tibullus the freedman of Venustus, have written and say that I owe Gratus the freedman of Spurius 105 denarii from the price of the merchandise which has been sold and delivered.'—Wax Tablet 44. Of the 80 legible tablets no fewer than 25 are loan notes. The Romans brought to Britain an economic system built on debt that was familiar the length and breadth of the Roman empire. It is the issue of debt so often addressed by Jesus in his parables and most significantly in the prayer he taught his disciples.

Large sums of money are involved in many of the transactions taking place

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1 G B Caird *The Language and Imagery of the New Testament* (1980) 145.

in London in this period. There is a note of urgency in what remains of Wax Tablet 35 (AD 65/70–80).

... to pay ... ?he was not surprised to watch over ... for it 200 denarii which I have given (as) deposit ... would you send me what you owe ... you will ...

Honour makes it possible to put down the significant sum, roughly equivalent to £12,000 today, as a deposit. The word translated ‘deposit’ is the word ‘arram’ which again comes from the Middle East. It is a transliteration of a Greek word which in turn comes from Hebrew and stands for the first down-payment made by this unknown writer in anticipation of more payments to come. It is a word used three times by Paul in 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5 and Ephesians 1:13b–14, when the giving of the Holy Spirit is regarded as the first instalment, the guarantee, the seal of what is to come, or as the NIV puts it ‘a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance’. When seen through the eyes of this anonymous writer seemingly technical theological jargon is recognised for what it is: metaphorical language as familiar in the business dealings of London as in the commercial transactions of the eastern Mediterranean.

A year before their discovery I had completed a sabbatical in which I had researched the world of the New Testament in Roman Britain. I had been greatly helped by Philip Esler, Portland Chair in New Testament Studies and Director of the International Centre for Biblical Interpretation in the University of Gloucestershire in Cheltenham.

The morning after the ten o’clock news told the story of the Bloomberg Tablets he was on the phone. He invited me to contribute a chapter to the second edition of a book that had already established itself as a standard work on the world of the New Testament and of early Christianity. My church gave me the opportunity to write my chapter. The book, edited by Philip Esler, *The Early Christian World* (2nd edition), is a treasure trove of 61 chapters divided into 10 parts: The context, Christian origins and development, community formation and maintenance, everyday Christian experience, Christian culture, the intellectual heritage, the artistic heritage, external challenges, internal challenges and 14 profiles of the great thinkers of the first centuries of Christianity.

My thanks to that tradition of Biblical scholarship that is still going strong in Mansfield and my thanks to Philip Esler for his encouragement and support in enabling me to contribute a chapter entitled Reading the New Testament in Roman Britain.<sup>2</sup>

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*Richard Cleaves*

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<sup>2</sup> See above for details of the new edition of the book.

## ST PAUL'S CHAPEL, HAWLEY ROAD: SCENES FROM CHURCH LIFE IN CAMDEN TOWN IN THE 1840s

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Living in Camden Town in the 1840s was not for stick-in-the-muds. New buildings and streets were springing up everywhere and the population was growing in proportion. The building of the London & Birmingham Railway brought about social and economic change, as well as carving a slice out of the landscape. Amongst the entrepreneurs seeking to take advantage of this situation were the Christian denominations. The 1851 census would reveal that across England approximately half the population attended church services. Allowing for a bias towards rural areas, even if only a third of Camden and Kentish Towns' population could be induced to come to worship there was a shortage of chapel sittings. The parish structure of the Church of England constrained its response to such population growth. No such inhibitions were felt by Dissenters, Methodists and other groups. By 1848 the parish of St Pancras, in which Camden Town and Kentish Town were the dominant settlements, contained six Congregational chapels alone, and fourteen others originating in old Dissent and Methodism, against two chapels of ease and three proprietary chapels supplementing the parish church. On Tottenham Court Rd, Whitefield's 1756 Tabernacle still held sway under Dr John Campbell. On Warren St the new Park Chapel of 1843 catered for the middle classes, as did the Tonbridge Chapel (1810), standing roughly where St. Pancras station is now, and Albany Chapel (1835) in Regent's Park. The Trafalgar Place Chapel (1812) had been the original village chapel for Kentish Town. This was now supplemented by Ebenezer Chapel, Camden Town (1835) created by the efforts of a local upholsterer, Thomas William Gittens, who became the full-time minister on his retirement from business. Some Camden residents walked to Regent's Square to attend what was then known as the National Scotch Church. However, the chapel whose origin is the subject of this article was built in Hawley Road in 1842 and for its first few years was regarded as part of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion. From 1869 it appears in Congregational Union lists, under the ministry of Edward White, and is described as Union Church (1851). How are we to understand this transformation?

The Journal of William Copeland Astbury, who lived in Camden Town for fourteen years, gives a full account of the building and opening of the Hawley

Road Chapel.<sup>1</sup> This fills out other records and enables us to see how it might be regarded as part of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion and how it might well have failed and been taken over by Edward White. White's obituary in the *Congregational Year Book* for 1899 merely mentions his coming to Hawley Road from Hereford in 1852. The publication of White's *Life in Christ* in 1846 had closed some Congregational doors to his ministry. He was encouraged by the support of Henry Dunn (1801–1878), secretary of the British and Foreign School Society. In 1852 'White found and secured the unused St Paul's Chapel, Hawley Road, in Kentish Town'.<sup>2</sup> Quite how it came to be unused becomes more obvious when we see how it opened.

St Paul's, Hawley Road was originally built at the expense of its first minister, Samuel Smith. It cost him nearly £3,000 to secure the land from the Hawley estate and build the chapel. Smith complained to Astbury about the 'avaricious, over-reaching character' of Oughton, who held the lease from the Hawleys. Astbury met Smith at the North Western District Penitent Females Asylum, a home for young women rescued from the streets, in Camden Town, where Smith led Sunday evening services. He had been recommended to the Asylum by a Mrs Perkins.<sup>3</sup> Astbury was acquainted with Mrs Perkins through their mutual friends Mr and Mrs S B Harman. Harman was a stockbroker in the City, with a house in Islington. This Mrs Perkins is almost certainly the same as the Mrs Perkins who subscribed, as did Astbury, to the Christian Philanthropist Fund of 1839, set up to provide an income for David Nasmith, founder of the London City Mission. We might also suppose that she is related to Richard Perkins who, with Nasmith and Edward Carver, formed the British and Foreign Town Missions Society the day after Nasmith resigned from the London City Mission, a victim of the rivalry between the Church of England and Dissent.<sup>4</sup> Edward Carver was a close friend of Astbury and London City Missioners supplied the Sunday morning service at the Camden Town Asylum. Various other people, including Smith, led the evening worship. Samuel Smith emerges, then, from these particular evangelical circles, where the premium put on non-denominationalism favoured Dissenters. He lived with his father, Joseph Smith (born c1771), in Camden Rd Villas, Kentish Town, a short step from Hawley Road. T W Gittens, who had no reason to favour an interloper, told Astbury that there was a 'trial in which it came out he [Smith] hired a man to get him a rich wife in the country—was himself a poor man—married a rich wife—His father dares not speak. Quarrelled violently with the workmen at his chapel.

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1 'The Journal of William Copeland Astbury', Cheshunt Archives, Westminster College, Cambridge. (hereafter Astbury—followed by the volume and page nos)

2 L E Froom *The Conditionalist Faith of our Fathers* (Washington DC 1965) vol II 327.

3 Astbury IV 164, 275.

4 J Campbell, *Memoirs of David Nasmith* (1844) 358 408.

Never was at any college. Is a friend of the Rev Mr Stoddart.’<sup>5</sup> This not only provides us an answer to the question of where Smith found his £3,000 but tells us more about his ecclesiastical status. Robert Stodhart was the minister of Pell St Chapel, the successor to Mulberry Gardens Chapel, in the Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion. Stodhart was one of those who had encouraged the young James Sherman to become a minister.<sup>6</sup> By the time Smith was planning his chapel Sherman was the admired successor to Rowland Hill at the Surrey Chapel. This did not prevent Robert Ainslie, Nasmith’s successor at the London City Mission telling Astbury that ‘Stodhart who is to open Smith’s chapel is a person in no repute, his congregation dwindled down to about 30.’<sup>7</sup> On another occasion Ainslie had talked with Astbury about Smith and ‘intimated /only/ doubts about him; ‘In this day a man must be accredited’; and recommended. ‘Who knows anything about him. Who recommends him?’<sup>8</sup> Given Ainslie’s tidy mind and his deep suspicion of Nasmith and his methods, if Samuel Smith had emerged in Nasmith circles and been supported by the Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion, his credentials would be dubious. Astbury was prepared to give him the benefit of the doubt, at least, at first.

It was 3 June 1842 when William Astbury first visited the building site, ‘took a walk to Hawley Rd Chapel looked round and inside it—saw Mr Tilden the manager—who said it would not be ready it is considered until August.’<sup>9</sup> Like many such estimates this turned out to be wildly optimistic, even though a few days later Smith was able to show Astbury the vestry. The builder, Tilden, was ready with his excuses. On 12 September Astbury went ‘to inquire of Mr Charles Tilden, the foreman & manager, when it would probably be ready, saying I thought of going to Eastbourne. He said he thought there was the finest sea view on the coast, and the parade extending about 2 miles, was also superior to any he had seen. In answer to my supposition that the Chapel would not be opened for a month he said, that would not.’ In November he forecast a Christmas opening, ‘The delay has been occasioned by not having a work shop.’<sup>10</sup>

Astbury walked by the chapel regularly over the summer months, monitoring its progress. Perhaps the workmen saw him coming for he always noticed that they were working ‘diligently’ or ‘rapidly’. Part of the delay was no doubt caused by fitting out the interior, which is always more elaborate in a chapel

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5 Astbury IV 211–212. See also Astbury IV 71, where Smith is reported as preaching for Stodhart.

6 H Allon, *Memoir of the Rev James Sherman* (1863) 79.

7 Astbury IV 284.

8 Astbury IV 272. Robert Ainslie, Minister of New Court Chapel (Congregational), then Secretary London City Mission. He lived at 38 Park Village West in 1841.

9 Astbury IV 12. Charles Tilden was the foreman and manager in charge of the building.

10 Astbury IV 23, 131, 197.

than a hall or schoolroom. Thus the workmen could be seen ‘proceeding rapidly’ on 16 August, when the floor had been laid and they ‘were clearing to draw lines across previous to fixing the pews.’ Smith was particularly proud of the ‘skilful arrangements and comforts of the pews.’ There was a pulpit, a reading desk with its own seat and a carved communion chair. In the course of the next year Astbury contributed a clock and Smith ‘two commandment tables in a gilt frame.’<sup>11</sup> No-one seems to have noticed, in the heat of summer, the absence of one item which was to prove critical when the chapel eventually opened—some form of heating.

What did concern Astbury in the summer months was the form the services were to take. The Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion favoured, rather as the Wesleyan Methodists did, a service modelled on the Book of Common Prayer. During August Astbury advised Smith on a selection of prayers from the Prayer Book. Eventually Smith was to produce his own customised Prayer Book and hymn book. Smith, encouraged by all this interest, felt he had inveigled Astbury into being his reader, while Astbury delicately tried to find a way to decline such an office. Although Astbury was rather less grand than his Copeland cousins he did not see himself as a humble assistant to Smith.<sup>12</sup> Matters came to a head as Astbury inspected the nearly completed chapel with Smith on November 15.

To Rev Sam Smith’s chapel—saw him & his father with Tilden the foreman there. I asked him to set my name down for a sitting—this led to an *eclaircissement*. He said—pointing to the reading desk that is your seat & inquired whether I did not intend to read prayers for him. I said I had given the matter much consideration & that situated as I was *between* parties—Church & other Dissenting ministers, besides himself—that it would not be advisable. He was at first disposed to be angry. He took me outside & we promenaded in Hawley Road for about half an hour. He then asked me to accompany him & his father to his house in order to give me Mr Cope’s card who had called upon some months since & offered to make himself useful in the school &c.<sup>13</sup>

The stage was now set for the entry of the Cope family into the affairs of the chapel. The alliance which was to develop between the Copes and Smith illustrates the closeness of the Connexion and Congregationalists, a closeness which was to blur the distinction between the two denominations as time went on.

Perhaps feeling some obligation to Smith Astbury went immediately to call on Cope.

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<sup>11</sup> Astbury IV 100, 135, 189, 199, 200, V 218.

<sup>12</sup> Astbury IV 135, 200. Astbury’s cousin, William Taylor Copeland, had been Lord Mayor of London and a Member of Parliament.

<sup>13</sup> Astbury IV 199.

On to Mr W L Cope's 23 College Place—& saw Mrs Cope, she said Mr Cope had offered his services by desire of his father the Rev Dr Cope of Penryn, Cornwall but, that Mr Cope was not pleased with the manner of Mr Smith the 1 time he went he could not see him—Note, but, this afterwards appeared to have been on a Sunday Evening. <sup>14</sup>

Dr Richard Cope, 1776–1856, of Penryn, Cornwall, was a senior Congregational minister. Originally trained as a lawyer he went to Highbury College, from where he went to minister in Launceston. He was then recruited, in 1820, to run the Home Missionary College in Dublin, where he was unhappy and moved to Salem, Wakefield in 1822. Although he stayed in Wakefield for 14 years in 1829 he resigned from Salem and opened the Quebec Chapel. He removed to Penryn in 1836. William L. Cope, son of the minister, was a wine merchant. It now appeared that it was his father's services as a supply preacher that he had been offering to Smith. However, he seemed pleased to be invited to read the service and Smith was quite reconciled with Astbury once this arrangement had been made. The reader was to wear a surplice, while Smith had bought himself a cassock for presiding. William Cowley, poulterer, of Kentish Town, was recruited to act as clerk. The only other job to be done, which again Smith tried to give somewhat inappropriately to Astbury, was that of renting the sittings to local people. Astbury recommended William B King of Caroline St., who had acted as messenger for the Asylum.<sup>15</sup>

As the time of the opening drew near the sense of competition for church-goers in Kentish Town began to intensify. We have already seen how Gittens was wary of Smith and how Ainsworth dismissed him as an interloper. Astbury had been negotiating to let a house to J Michael Angelo Garvey BA, LLB, ordained as assistant minister at the other Congregational chapel, Trafalgar Place, Kentish Town, in 1840 and had introduced Garvey to Smith. Garvey subsequently confessed his uneasiness about the possible competition from the new chapel, as 'they do not manage very well' at his own. More subtly, at the very beginning of the building in the summer 'a deputation from the St Pancras Church Building Society had waited upon [Smith] offering to rent his chapel for 3 years—not acceded to.'<sup>16</sup> It was one thing to say more chapels and churches were needed in St Pancras parish but quite another thing to welcome competition. Smith's Hawley Road was not a mission hall but an elegant chapel directed towards the middle classes.

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<sup>14</sup> Astbury IV 200.

<sup>15</sup> [W L Cope] *The autobiography and select remains of the Rev. Richard Cope, LLD, edited by his son* (1857). The account in the *Congregational Year Book* 1857 is inaccurate; cf *ODNB*. Astbury IV 200, 201, 242, 262, 267.

<sup>16</sup> Garvey saw no future in Congregationalism; he had left Trafalgar Place by 1846 and disappears from the list of Congregational ministers from 1853. Astbury IV 62, 236.

In securing Astbury as an ally and building a conventional chapel in an area of population growth Smith had drawn his plans well. He continued to falter in the execution of them. Astbury had waited all summer for the chapel to be finished. Now he learnt at second hand when it was to be opened.

Returning from my first walk I met Mr Holland in Park St, who informed me that St Pauls Chapel would be opened on Tuesday 7 inst. He said he saw a bill in the window of the Cooks shop next the Britannia, where I afterwards saw it. Note. This is the first intimation I have received of the time of its opening.<sup>17</sup>

Not for the first time relations between Astbury and Smith were fraught. Although Smith had already told him in confidence that the chapel was to be named St Paul's he should clearly have given him private notice of the opening day as well.

Afternoon: Relaxation Rev. S. Smith called 1 ½ just as Hannah & I had sat down to dinner—to acquaint me of the opening of the chapel & to ascertain if I would hold a plate—to the latter I agreed if Gibbins would—meaning to secure Gibbins. Told him plainly of my surprise at hearing from a friend to whom I had engaged to communicate the information that bills were issued advertising the particulars of the intended opening of the chapel. I said I of course expected to receive a note having called the attention of *many* persons to the chapel, who were repeatedly inquiring of me when it was to be opened. He apologised saying he thought I should know it from the bills!<sup>18</sup>

Perhaps Smith had enough charm to extract himself from these situations. In any event, Astbury was mollified. Joseph Gibbins, who was to hold a collection plate with Astbury, was born about 1790, an offshoot of a Birmingham Quaker family who were bankers. Gibbins was associated with Astbury in various Evangelical projects and lived in Mornington Crescent. He was a Fellow of the Royal Botanic Society. The endorsement of two leading citizens, soliciting contributions at the opening, gave Smith the right sort of start. So we come to the opening itself, on 7 December 1842.

To the opening of St Pauls Chapel Hawley Road, Kentish Town Road, with Hannah, who shortly followed me. Called & saw Rev. T. W. Gittens on my way. Went into the Vestry & saw Mr. Cope the prayer reader & the Rev. John Wood minister of Sutherland Chapel, Walworth & formerly of the Malvern Hills. The Rev. Robert Stodhart minister in the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion afterwards came in & shortly after Rev. Samuel Smith minister of the chapel. Gave each of them a copy of the Report of Camden Town Visiting Society. Joseph

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<sup>17</sup> Astbury IV 282.

<sup>18</sup> Astbury IV 285. Hannah was Astbury's unmarried sister.

P. Gibbin & I having been previously engaged to carry the plates round, we sat together with Hannah & took between us the proper right or West side of the chapel during the singing at conclusion & 2 other parties the opposite side.

Rev Robert Stodhart preached from 27 Psalm 4 ‘One thing have I desired of the Lord, &c. The subjoined is an abstract of the divisions. I In the 1st place here is a most interesting object presented before us—the house. II Dwelling. III The *reasons* he assigns for wishing to dwell in the house. About 1 hour & 10 minutes. An able discourse but I could not hear above about  $\frac{2}{3}$  of it. The chapel was not heated at all & the day the most wintry & cold perhaps, we have had. My old friend Mr Mann & family were there & I spoke to them as they were going out.<sup>19</sup>

Astbury could see at once that an unheated chapel could be a disaster. He wrote to Smith, ‘candidly calling his attention to the necessity of the chapel being heated. And also to the lowering price of hymn book to 2/. /is now 2/6 / was 3/./.’ However, having read it over to Hannah he took her advice and did not send the letter.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps as he shivered on subsequent Sundays he wished he had.

The cold seems to have permeated Astbury’s subconscious at the first Sunday service on 12 December. The sermon lasted for 47 freezing minutes. ‘In my opinion a cold meagre discourse—wanting to unctious; earnestness, zeal, fervour & impressiveness.’

The chapel still not warmed: & was *very* cold. A respectable attendance in every respect. Went into the vestry after service. Smith received me coolly. I told him that Gibbins was not there, nor did I expect him on account of the coldness. I speedily took my leave.

Just to make matters worse for Astbury, ‘Hannah attended Gittens’s heard an excellent sermon & was very comfortable.’ Later in the week Astbury told Gittens, ‘The chapel was cold—the minister was cold—& the people were cold. And that I judged the chapel would be passed over to the Church.’ To complete Astbury’s sense of anticlimax Cope called on him to see if Astbury could prevail on Smith to shorten his sermons.<sup>21</sup>

Things were not so bad that they could not get worse. Perhaps weakened by the cold Smith was ill with a fever when Astbury called on him on 1 March 1843. Three days later Astbury found the weather still bitter as he did his errands in Camden Town and went home to wrap up before calling on Smith.

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19 Astbury IV 289. John Wood (1795–1866) was another protégé of Stodhart. Mr Mann was a manufacturer of floor-coverings. Astbury records meeting him at Regent Square in Edward Irving’s time there and at Haslock’s Camden Town Chapel.

20 Astbury IV 291.

21 Astbury IV 293, 294, 298.

Home for Combomere great coat<sup>22</sup> & on with intention of calling to see Rev. S. Smith & inquire Miss Jones. Passing Mr Everingham's I saw him at his door he called his grandson Master Drake to tell me the particulars relative to Rev. S. Smith it appears that he has been seized with delirium & is missing. Miss Mary Jones, in the same state of danger she was—brain fever. On to Rev S. Smith's saw the Female Pew opener who is sister to Mr Smith's servant. She informed me that between 12 & 1 oc to-day at noon, he locked them all in & went out in his morning gown, a velvet slipper on one foot /which I believe is bad/ and a boot on the other & they could not find him. She informed both the Kentish Town & Albany Station divisions of Police—& home. Received a letter from James. Gibbins called & also Rev T.W. Gittens about Smith.

The day wore on before there was definite news.

Seeing Mr Smith Senior pass I followed him, he had just overtaken Tunnalley<sup>23</sup> who is attending Mr Smith & was speaking to him. Tunnalley & I agreed that I should go & sit with Rev. S. Smith until he came & brought a keeper. I did so & met an old pious German, taking tea with Rev S. Smith it appears that Smith went to Mrs Stodhart's, Islington, the Rev Mr Stodhart being at his native place Newcastle on Tyne. She was alarmed & sent the above person well known to Smith with him home. They were sitting in Smith's chamber & I joined in a general conversation. Smith quite rational, but, conscious that he had not been, or, was not right. Tunalley came I judge within the hour & brought with him a person whom he introduced as his nurse. A mild, intelligent & *strong* young man. Smith received him kindly & thanked Tunalley. Newstead, Mr Smith's Solicitor was present also. I took leave accompanied by Mr Newstead, Tunalley having desired Smith to go to bed, he was perfectly compliant & apologised for having insulted him & Mr Cope. And said what he wanted was to be kept quiet. Mr Newstead said that last evening Mr Smith had settled his affairs & made certain provisions for his relatives &c. Evening: 1 Chronicles 7. Varieties. At 7 ½ Mr T. Cope brother to Rev Dr Cope called accompanied by his nephew Mr [ ] Cope assistant minister to Rev Sam. Smith to acquaint me that the draft of a deed of Trusteeship was executed by the Rev S. Smith under the direction of Mr Newstead apparently seven trustees for the maintenance of Divine worship with the Liturgical Services of the Church of England in his chapel /St Pauls/ Viz Rev [ ] Stodhart, Rev Dr Cope, Mr Thomas Cope his brother, himself—/ the assistant minister/. Messrs Mann, Gibbins & I. And they asked me whether I would consent to act I assented at once. Mr Cope Junior proposed that his father the Rev Dr Cope should be written to & invited to supply for six weeks, to which I

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22 Combomere great coats were advertised by Fletcher's, military tailors of New Bond St in 1836, in Alexander's East India & Military Magazine. Lord Combermere was one of Wellington's aides.

23 Charles Tunalley, bc1810, surgeon, High St., Camden Town

cheerfully agreed. Adjourned to meet at 8 ½ oc this evening at Rev. S. Smith's. DW. To Rev. S. Smith's met Messrs Cope at the gate. Mr Newstead was gone. We saw the Keeper who wishes Mr Smith to be kept quiet. Has great hopes of his recovery, on returning I called at the Asylum & acquainted both matrons.

... Two days of great excitement. What a gracious overruling Providence. Mr Smith was conscious of & lamented his own inefficiency as a preacher & named it after each service to his servants—& *that* Mr Cope Junior says is the cause with a cold probably taken in the chapel & the decreasing attendance—of his malady.<sup>24</sup>

In fact, Smith was out of action for a month and the pulpit was supplied by local ministers and students of Cheshunt College.<sup>25</sup> Although the chapel was still unheated attendances grew in the absence of the minister.

Mr Cope & pew opener informed me that the best attendance there has yet been was last Sabbath Evening the centre filled & many persons in the side pews. A lady who had not been to a place of worship for 9 months from affliction came into the vestry to express the benefit she had derived & to inquire if Mr Allen [Allon] would preach again here next Sunday, or when he preaches.

The prospect of Smith returning to the pulpit began to look less appealing to Cope, who hinted to Astbury that he might give up—'he saw clearly that Smith wished to have every thing his own way—and, that it was with that view he built the chapel.'<sup>26</sup> Astbury, too, was soon disenchanted by Smith's resumption of the pulpit on 9 April 1843.

Forenoon: Early to St Paul's Chapel. Rev Samuel Smith recommenced preaching & intends to again in the Evening. 62 Psalm 8. 'Trust in Him at all times, &c'. Mr Smith announced 3 long divisions; I could not retain them. Matter diffusive, & introduced subjects sufficient for three Sermons as Mr W. L. Cope justly said. I heard him in pain—so much common place & want of connexion & unnecessary diffuseness. About 50 minutes.<sup>27</sup>

He had promised Smith he would attend St Paul's for four or five Sundays. His 'voluntary engagement' was fulfilled and he could find better sermons in warmer chapels.<sup>28</sup> For a month Astbury went to other places of worship but St Paul's drew him back at the beginning of May.

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<sup>24</sup> Astbury IV 312–313.

<sup>25</sup> Specifically mentioned are Charles Hyatt (1776–1846) minister of Ebenezer Chapel, Camden Town, Henry Allon (1818–1892), trained at and subsequently secretary of Cheshunt College, and a Mr Shirley, student; Astbury IV 328, 338.

<sup>26</sup> Astbury IV 338.

<sup>27</sup> Astbury IV 343.

<sup>28</sup> Astbury IV 348.

Forenoon: St. Paul's chapel. Went into vestry met Mr. & Mrs. W. L. Cope there. Mr. Cope shewed me in the general vestry room a large bell to be suspended in the bellfry & pulled along the roof from the above room. Told me also that he had obtained of Smith a proper prayer book for the communion table.

Rev S Smith came in—was cordial—& looking remarkably well. He preached from 3 Malachi 16, 4 divisions, but others he did not repeat, I did not note them. 37 minutes.

Miss Mann & Master Mann sat in the same pew with me. After service I went into the vestry & Cope acquainted me with the intelligence that 3 ladies sat usually in same pew, my friend Mr. Mann of Kentish Town having taken 3 sittings. The chapel by degrees becoming better attended. And several persons have taken sittings.

Walked with Mr. & Mrs. W. L. Cope to corner of Pratt St. Mrs. W. L. Cope told Smith plainly one evening recently when supping with them that he must be shorter in his discourses & he has acted upon it. I complimented him upon the accommodating length or rather shortness of his Sermon & quoted the practice of Whitefield.<sup>29</sup>

Encouraged by this new brevity from Smith, Astbury went again to St Paul's the next Sunday.

Forenoon: To St. Paul's chapel: heard the bell in Hawley Crescent rung this morning for the first time. Is a fine toned bell. Went into the vestry, saw Cope. Told him for 2 or 3 time that he should stand during whole of Communion service, which he did this morning in consequence. Is going to have a cushion to elevate the prayer book. Rev S. Smith & his father came in afterwards. Rev S. Smith preached on 1 Epistle Corinthians 1 clause 23 verse. 3 divisions. 44 minutes. Walked with Cope to corner Pratt St. he told me that a brother of his has written 2 tracts against Puseyism & sent copies by a lad last evening to the residence of Bishop of London.

He was for some time (query 2 years) at Magdalen Hall, Oxford, his name is still on the books, but the conduct of the students drove him away & determined him to become a dissenting minister.<sup>30</sup>

For Evangelical laymen of the stamp of Astbury, Mann's and Cope's St Paul's offered the Low Church formality of a Prayer Book service allied to an Evangelical discourse. If the Church of England were to be compromised by

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<sup>29</sup> Astbury V 10–11.

<sup>30</sup> Astbury V 17–18.

the Puseyites then there was a Free Church to which they could rally. There was already talk of a grand Christian Union of Protestants against the resurgent Roman Catholics and the Romanisers.<sup>31</sup>

Smith now addressed the lack of a mid-week meeting at St Paul's. All self-respecting Evangelicals expected their church to hold at least a prayer meeting and preferably a mid-week service. Astbury provides us with a description of just such an occasion on 29 May 1843.

To St. Paul's Chapel early at 20 to 7 first week-day service. And was held in the vestry. The bell having been rung 20 or more minutes Rev. Samuel Smith, standing in front of a cross table, in front of the closed fire place, gave out, 188 hymn in his own collection—'Dear Shepherd of thy people hear;' that sung he called upon me by name saying 'Our friend Mr. Astbury will now pray.' He then gave out 187 hymn 'Religion is the chief concern'. He then read & afterwards paraphrased, or rather, preached from 122 Psalm, then concluded; he gave out another hymn & finished with prayer. The service occupied, Mr. Cope said to him, & he assented, about 1 hour.

Two hall-like chairs were placed on each side in front of each end of table & opposite each other. I sat on that to the right of Mr. Smith & Cope on his left. Mrs. & Miss Deed were there. In all including Smith about 11. Cope & walked to West end of Pratt St. together. He recommended me a book of his father's published by Smith Holborn:—skeletons of sermons.<sup>32</sup>

It seemed that in spite of the delays and Smith's illness the chapel was beginning to become established. Smith's sermons were becoming briefer and more coherent. More sittings were being let. This was critical to the finances of the chapel. A man like Astbury would attend a selection of places of worship in the course of a year but his contribution was only guaranteed in those few where he rented a seat. Smith needed a return on his capital in order to sustain his ministry at St Paul's. It was possibly the growing support for St Paul's which led to Gittens smartening up his chapel. By 9 July Smith had preached what the demanding Astbury rated 'a good sermon', 'the best discourse she had heard him preach' said Mrs Cope. The text was Galatians 2.21, 'I do not frustrate the grace of God'.<sup>33</sup> When, after a long absence, Astbury looked into St Paul's again for an evening service on 5 November 1843 he was gratified to find Smith preached for only thirty-five minutes.

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31 Astbury attended a packed meeting in the Exeter Hall on 1 June 1843 to promote "Christian Union"; this marked the beginning of the process leading to the Evangelical Alliance. Astbury V 36.

32 Astbury V 32–33. Mrs Deed became a regular supporter of St Paul's. Her son, J S Deed, was a leather dealer.

33 Astbury V 58, 80.

More connected I thought than usual & much better & more compact on account of his limiting himself in the delivery. After service I went as usual into the vestry. He looked at me & I at him & both smiled, and I then thanked him for his connected & short sermon.

He said in an open frank way that he had taken my advice, that, he was sure it was right.<sup>34</sup>

This enthusiasm soon terminated. A summer had gone by and Smith had still not invested in proper heating. Astbury stayed away and thought about giving formal notice to leave. Eventually, in December 1843 St Paul's closed for a few weeks while stoves were put into the two vestries, with warm air vents into the chapel. The gratings of these vents were 'handsomely ornamented with lacquer work' and fires were kept burning for days in order to warm the fabric of a building which had stood unheated since it was completed.<sup>35</sup> During this gap Cope's year as Reader concluded and he declined to continue. In spite of his doubts Astbury was unable to stay away from the re-opening of the chapel on 21 January 1844.

To St. Pauls chapel for day of re-opening after fixing of 2 stoves one in each vestry to warm the chapel.

Mr Chapman read prayers for the first time in succession to Mr Cope. Many defects for want of greater attention to the rubric, and, practice. Rev. Samuel Smith, 52 Psalm 7 'Lo this is the man that made not God is strength'. 33 minutes. Well attended in proportion to the former attendance for the re-opening. The chapel *quite* warm enough. Smith appeared in very good spirits.<sup>36</sup>

Astbury's connection with St Paul's was nearly at an end. He attended twice more in 1844 but his preferred place of worship was the new Park Chapel off Warren Street, which was patronised by smart Congregationalists, such as Joshua Wilson and Roger Cunliffe. Cope was distracted by business losses.<sup>37</sup> This did not stop Smith turning to him after a rash exercise of his ministerial authority.

Mr. Cowley, Poulterer, Kentish Town, late clerk at St. Paul's chapel has left in consequence of his requesting a young man not to sing as he put him out. Rev. Samuel Smith, was very angry on the spot at a prayer meeting & afterwards without notice discharged Cowley, sending him 3. 3/.<sup>38</sup> Cowley under those circumstances demanded his whole salary & threatened legal proceedings. Smith

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34 Astbury V 234.

35 Astbury V 281, 306.

36 Astbury V 309.

37 Astbury VI 1, 17.

38 ie 3 guineas.

advised with Cope /went to Cope's house expressly/ & Cope advised him to pay, which he did 15. 15/.<sup>39</sup>

Chapman, the new Reader, had to leave Camden Town soon after his appointment, when he secured a better full-time job out of London. Astbury himself was finding that Camden Town had lost its rural charm. As he was no longer committed to daily travel to Lincoln's Inn Fields to work for Copeland and Garrett he searched for a new home for himself and Hannah and settled on the market gardening area of Fulham. This gave him the excuse to resign his sitting at St Paul's. He seems to have done this without rancour. When a neighbour in Camden Town, a Mr Hopps, asked if Astbury could help secure a pulpit supply at Park Chapel for Mr Richards of Bath, he referred him to Smith at St Paul's. In September 1844 Astbury travelled from Fulham to Camden Town by omnibus to hear one of a series of sermons given by Dr Cope. He met Smith's new clerk, a man called Pallin, an agent of the London City Mission. Smith and his father were given a formal invitation to tea at Fulham, an invitation which was never taken up. At the end of the year Astbury sent Smith a copy of 'The Churchman's Almanac' for use in the pulpit.<sup>40</sup>

This is effectively the last we hear of the details of life at St Paul's, Hawley Road from this source. Astbury gathered a little more news in 1848 through his contacts with the Deeds family. Mrs Deeds reported that Smith now had a curate and an afternoon service on Sundays. Her son, whose leather-selling business was in Little Newport Street, said that he had stopped going to St Paul's. Only his mother attended.<sup>41</sup>

What seemed an established chapel in 1848 became White's empty building of 1852. Not only was the new Warren Street chapel competing for the Protestant pew rents but the old Kentish Town Independent Chapel in Trafalgar Place was rebuilt and reopened in August of 1848. As we might expect, Astbury was present, making a special journey from Fulham by omnibus. On Wednesday 16 August 1848 he records:

Set out about 10 to 10, rode to Charing Cross, on per Camden Town omnibus to Red Cap. Walked on to the new congregational *church*. Opened & dedicated to-day. Rev. Dr. Raffles preached. The minister of the church Rev. W. Foster was the only other minister who officiated, he prayed twice, read a portion of scripture—Solomon's dedication of the temple & gave out the psalms & hymns. A lady acted as organist, & another sat with her—they also sang. No curtain

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39 i.e. 15 guineas; Astbury VI 17.

40 Astbury VI 18, 74, 81, 188, 268. Astbury describes Richards as "formerly minister of the little chapel in Chapel Court, High St., Camden Town, since pulled down". This was Revd J J Richards, trained at Oswestry, who died in Bristol c1850.

41 Astbury VIII 315, 330.

at least at present. The style of architecture is Gothic, no closed pews, but handsome forms with backs—the effect good.

John 12. 27, & 28 & part of 23 verse. 1. The hour. 2. The seeming reluctance of the Redeemer to meet this hour. 3. The grounds on which that reluctance was overcome.

1. They regard himself. 2. They regard his people.

3. They regard his Father.

How, is the Father glorified by the Mediator's work. There were other important sections.

The discourse was written, but, admirably delivered with energy, earnestness & proper action. And occupied about 1 hour 20 minutes. A gentleman led me to a seat, on proper right of the communion table about 3 seats back, & next to Mr. Hodge Senior, father of the architect of the church & partner with Spalding. His daughter next to him. Mr. Thomas Spalding, the chief founder & contributor to the church, introduced the Doctor /Raffles/ to front form at the corner, where he sat until he retired to the vestry to robe.<sup>42</sup>

In its reference to 'Union Church' later *Congregational Year Books* give the tantalising clue that some change of ecclesial status occurred at Hawley Road in 1851. The obvious conclusion is that a union was effected between a congregation of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion and some other group, or that, like Union Chapel, Islington, the name reflects an unwillingness to embrace a denominational label. If the latter were the case that would chime in with Leroy Froom's 'empty building' of 1852. Eventually, in 1869, under White's leadership, Hawley Road Chapel applied to join the Congregational Union. Quite what had happened to Smith is not clear. Either bankruptcy or death may have terminated his ministry at St Paul's. In the free market of Protestant places of worship in Camden Town Hawley Road probably found itself with no minister and no rich lay patron. White's arrival would almost certainly signal the end of the use of Smith's prayer and hymn books. Hawley Road Congregational Church would now become a possibility, a very different place to Smith's St Paul's.

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*Stephen Orchard*

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42 Astbury VIII 290–291. Thomas Spalding, bc1805, lived at Camden Cottages, Camden Town. He and Hodge were partners in a stationery business in Drury Lane. Spalding was superintendent of the Sunday School at Trafalgar Place in 1830, (Astbury I 155). Thomas Raffles, 1788–1863, of Liverpool was a national figure in Congregationalism and a popular preacher. William Foster is last listed at Kentish Town in the 1853 *Congregational Year Book*.

# CONGREGATIONALISM ON THE ISLAND OF BUTE

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## Introduction

**O**n 24 January 1826, a young student wrote from Hertfordshire to his uncle:

Your account of the scenery of Scotland moved all the Highlander within me ... All the graphic descriptions of Scottish scenery which are found in Walter Scott's poetry and prose ... revived in my mind when I read your letter ... that ... I should have reached the age of twenty without ever being favoured with beholding any scenery that deserves the epithet of 'fine'. The dull, lifeless uniformity of Huntingdonshire has been before for the greater part of my life. The views, in some parts of Hertfordshire, are certainly sweet and picturesque; but I have never yet looked upon scenery which reaches even the faint and contracted conceptions of my own imagination.<sup>1</sup>

Six years later, the same student had the opportunity to tour the Scottish Highlands briefly with a friend. They walked, climbed and rowed—but the holiday would prove far from restful! His letter of 21 May 1832 to his uncle recorded that:

For several nights after, my dreams were so crowded with scenes of fairy loveliness and awful grandeur, that I woke in the morning exhausted rather than refreshed.<sup>2</sup>

Seven years later still, he was preaching regularly on a Scottish island—in a Congregational chapel recently built for the benefit of the Gaelic population. The 'melancholy fits' which had plagued him in his bachelor days, had:

fled away altogether ... Although I have had much to be thankful for in ... my life, I never knew, till I was married, how happy life may be.<sup>3</sup>

The minister was the Rev. John Morell Mackenzie and his island church was

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<sup>1</sup> *Remains of the late Rev John Morell Mackenzie AM with a selection from his correspondence and a memoir of his life* (hereafter RJMM) (Edinburgh 1845) 6–7.

<sup>2</sup> RJMM 82.

<sup>3</sup> RJMM 155.

on Bute. We shall return to his brief, island ministry but first, let us understand the area and how the Congregational cause came to be established there.

## Buteshire

The County of Bute, also known as Buteshire, was one of the 34 traditional counties of Scotland. It comprised the main islands of the Firth of Clyde—ie Bute, Arran, Great Cumbrae, and Little Cumbrae. The county town, Rothesay, had been a Royal Burgh since the granting of a Charter by King Robert III in 1400. The Scottish King frequently stayed in the castle here, and was the first to give the title Duke of Rothesay to his son.<sup>4</sup>

The granting of Royal Charter status in 1700 to Campbeltown may seem of little relevance to our story. Yet as Campbeltown's fortunes grew (with incentives offered by the Campbells for people to settle there), so Rothesay's declined. Within sixty years of Campbeltown becoming a Royal Burgh, Rothesay's population had halved, with nearly half the houses 'allowed to fall into ruins'.<sup>5</sup>

In 1779, a 'cotton manufactory' was established here, just a year after Scotland's first mill opened in Penicuik. It would be nice for the Congregational story had this mill come under the ownership of David Dale. Dale was a leading Old Scots Independent, one of the 'native movements' which predated 'modern Congregationalism'. Dale's Rothesay proprietorship acknowledged him as 'founder of the extensive cotton mill at New Lanark, and father-in-law to the well known Robert Owen, the projector of New Harmony'. In fact, although David Dale did express interest in the mill, and made an offer in the mid 1780s, he was never owner here. Indeed his interest even led to rumours of spying on Rothesay's technology, which was considered to be advanced.<sup>6</sup> By the 1830s, Rothesay was 'struggling to maintain its position as an industrial

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4 In 1975, Bute and Inchmarnock islands became part of Argyll and Bute Council area, with the other islands coming under the authority of North Ayrshire Council. J Wilson *Wilson's Guide to Rothesay and the Island of Bute* (Rothesay 1848) 1. For Robert III see *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (hereafter *ODNB*).

5 M MacDonald 'The Royal Charter and its Implications' in *The Campbeltown Book* (Campbeltown 2003). R. Craig 'Parish of Rothesay' in *New Statistical Account of Scotland Vol 1* (Edinburgh 1834–45) 101.

6 I Donnachie and G Hewitt *Historic New Lanark: The Dale and Owen Industrial Community since 1785* (Edinburgh 1993) 11. H Escott *A History of Scottish Congregationalism* (Glasgow 1960). J Willox *Lizars' Views of the Principal Cities and Towns of Scotland* (Edinburgh 1843) 40. S M Nisbet 'Early Cotton Spinning in the West of Scotland (1778–1799) in *Transactions of the Buteshire Natural History Society Vol 26* (2004) 39.43. For Dale see *ODNB*.

town yet beginning to cater for summer visitors. In 1833, visitors could find accommodation in about half of the 600 houses in Rothesay.<sup>7</sup>

Bute, in the early 19th century, was divided into two Church of Scotland parishes. Rothesay Parish covered both the Royal Burgh and the country areas in the north of the island (which later would become the parish of North Bute). There were two Church of Scotland churches, both in Rothesay (the parish church and a chapel of ease). Also there were Original Secession (from 1764), Reformed Presbyterian (from 1829), and Scottish Episcopal (from 1838) churches. Kingarth parish in the south had its church on high ground between Kilchattan and Stravanan bays.

## Independency on Bute

Mention is made of Baptist and Congregational missionaries on Arran and Bute from 1800. James Haldane and John Campbell certainly visited Bute.<sup>8</sup> Campbell recorded:

I shall now relate some ... circumstances which took place during a journey, which Mr. Haldane and I intended only for Arran. ... On the way ..., we visited the little island of Cumbrae, which is about three miles long, and has one good looking village, where we preached evening and morning, then went in a boat to the isle of Bute, which is about twelve miles long; from thence sailed to Arran, and preached in the villages round it.<sup>9</sup>

This visit was too brief to establish an Independent cause! Whatever the earlier influences, it seems fair to date the founding of a Congregational Church on Bute to 1835, when Archibald MacEwan began preaching here.

## Ministry of Rev. Archibald MacEwan

Details of MacEwan's life are sketchy. Even his date of birth is unclear.<sup>10</sup> What is known is that he was a native of the island of Islay, and a member of the Congregational church at Port Charlotte. This church was established in 1820 with Malcolm Maclaurin ordained and inducted as its first minister in July 1822. Itinerancy was a feature of Maclaurin's ministry on Islay. Previously he had been employed by the Congregational Union as an itinerant preacher—with a patch

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<sup>7</sup> R D Whyte 'Rothesay 100 Years Ago' in *Transactions of the Buteshire Natural History Society Vol 11* (1935) 48, 49.

<sup>8</sup> N Yates *Preaching, Word and Sacrament: Scottish Church Interiors 1560–1860* (2009) 24. For Haldane and Campbell see *ODNB*.

<sup>9</sup> R Philip *The Life, Times and Missionary Enterprises of Rev John Campbell* (1841) 285.

<sup>10</sup> Surman Index.

extending north south from Fort William to Inverary (68 miles by road) and west east from Craignish to Tyndrum (57 miles by road).

MacEwan worked as a teacher—and attributed his own conversion to itinerant Congregational preaching on Islay. When he enrolled at the Glasgow Theological Academy from September 1822, he was the second student for the ministry from the Port Charlotte church, which was only two years old! MacEwan's studies in Glasgow finished in 1825. In April that year, he supplied at Campbeltown for three months, before moving to assist at Oban. From 1826, MacEwan was ministering in Perthshire, at Callander where he was ordained—probably in 1827. The move to Bute was partly due to his wife's delicate health.<sup>11</sup> Sea air was perceived as healthy. The mildness of the climate led to Rothesay being called the Montpellier of Scotland, and Bute the Madeira. The discovery of a sulphur spring at Bogany Point in 1831 enhanced further Bute's attractions as a centre for health and recuperation.

Between June 1835 and July 1836, services were held, as MacEwan noted 'either in Bannatyne or Rothesay in a school house, or in the open air according to circumstances'. The Church of Scotland minister recorded that in 1837 Port Bannatyne (also known as Kamesburgh) had a population of 300—with 4,924 living in Rothesay. A further 865 people lived across the rest of the island.<sup>12</sup>

MacEwan's peripatetic preaching lasted just a year. On 17 July 1836, a chapel opened at Ardbeg, between Rothesay and Port Bannatyne. Ardbeg comes from the Gaelic *aird* meaning height, head, or promontory. The chapel was built at a cost between £500 and £600 for the Gaelic population in Rothesay and its vicinity. The New Testament had only been available in Scots Gaelic since 1767, and the whole Bible since 1801, but 'very few Highlanders could actually read Gaelic'.<sup>13</sup> The Ardbeg church building was held by trustees for the Congregational Union of Scotland. Donations for the project came largely from Glasgow (none of the trustees were resident on Bute).

We know that a church had not yet formed by 22 October 1836—when a communicants' roll was still to be compiled. Yet of the 430 available seats, in excess of 200 had been 'let' with 'many of the unlet seats occupied by strangers and poor'. All parties involved must have been encouraged that after just 16 months of services, and three months of a building, the average attendance at services was 300. Services were held twice on a Sunday and sometimes three

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<sup>11</sup> J Ross *A History of Congregational Independency in Scotland* (Glasgow 1900) 257. W D McNaughton *Early Congregational Independency in the Highlands and Islands and the North-East of Scotland* (Tiree 2003) 68, 70, 102.

<sup>12</sup> *Eighth Report by the Commissioners of Religious Instruction, Scotland* (hereafter *RCRI*) (Edinburgh 1838) 423. Craig 'Rothesay' 105.

<sup>13</sup> McNaughton *Highlands* 102. J King Hewison *The Isle of Bute in Olden Time* Vol 1 (Edinburgh 1843) 289. D E Meek 'Baptists and Highland Culture' in *Baptist Quarterly* 33.4 (1989) 8.

times. A portion of the congregation would attend two services. Twice a week MacEwan met ‘for prayer and religious instruction with all who will attend’, and a monthly prayer meeting (which probably resembled a service) was held.<sup>14</sup>

Edward Campbell of Islay was admitted to the Glasgow Theological Academy two years ahead of MacEwan and ‘laboured under no small disadvantage from his lack of familiarity with the English language’.<sup>15</sup> Donald Galbraith of Islay was admitted to the Glasgow Theological Academy in 1846. He later served in Campbeltown, where the congregation had reservations about his ability to express himself freely in English.

MacEwan, however, seems to have had no difficulty operating bilingually. The morning service he conducted in Gaelic, with an English service in the afternoon.<sup>16</sup> MacEwan’s ministry, however, was certainly not without its challenges. Though MacEwan’s

amiable and consistent deportment did much to remove prejudice and reconcile people to the Congregational form of Government, which was particularly obnoxious to the natives ... Means were employed to draw away the people ... by representing him and his denomination as not preaching sound doctrine, making faith too simple ..., saying that prayer was not the duty of a sinner, and other unfounded aspersions, calculated to alienate ...the Inhabitants who could not well distinguish minute points of doctrine.<sup>17</sup>

MacEwan ministered here until his death on 13 July 1839.<sup>18</sup> He died of consumption attributed to sitting in damp clothes on a trip to England, where he was fundraising to alleviate church debts.

## Rev. Henry Lea Berry—a puzzle

Henry Lea Berry’s connection with Rothesay is unclear. Born in Wiltshire, Berry studied at Glasgow University from 1822, graduating BA in 1824 and MA in 1825. He was chaplain at Homerton Academy 1826–31, then chaplain and headmaster of the Protestant Dissenters’ Grammar School at Mill Hill, London 1831–34. He resigned due to ill-health.<sup>19</sup> So far, so good.

Berry was then recorded as at the ‘Free Kirk, Rothesay’ from 1836 until an unknown date. The Free Church of Scotland was not formed until 1843—so

<sup>14</sup> RCRI 423.

<sup>15</sup> Glasgow Theological Academy Minutes quoted by McNaughton *Highlands* 68.

<sup>16</sup> McNaughton *Highlands* 68, 422.

<sup>17</sup> McNaughton *Highlands* 103.

<sup>18</sup> W D McNaughton *The Scottish Congregational Ministry 1794–1993* (Glasgow 1993) 89.

<sup>19</sup> W Innes Addison *A Roll of Graduates of the University of Glasgow from 31st December 1727 to 31st December 1897* (Glasgow 1898) 43. J White *Intelligence, Destiny and Education: The ideological roots of intelligence testing* (Oxon/New York 2006).

it is not obvious what Free Kirk is referred to here. Berry does appear to have been minister of Tabernacle Congregational Church, Ayr, from 1837 until 1840. In 1840, he became Classical Tutor at Homerton Academy, London. He died in November 1884, in the house where he had lived in Hampstead for 38 years.<sup>20</sup>

## Rev. John Morell Mackenzie

MacEwan's death must have dealt a huge blow to the congregation he had been forming. At the time of his death, the church had just 16 actual members. The Church of Scotland minister would comment that the independent church had 'no minister and no means of supporting one'.<sup>21</sup> Bute's next Congregational minister was the correspondent with whom this review began. He did not live on Bute, at least not all year round. Nor was he a Gaelic speaker and he was never inducted to the charge.

John Morell Mackenzie was from Huntingdonshire. The Mackenzies traced their roots to Cromarty (in particular, Scatwell) in the far north of Scotland. On his mother's side, he was connected with 'several Dissenting families in the south of England'. Mackenzie's middle name Morell was a mark of the esteem in which his parents held the Rev Thomas Morell, their Congregational pastor. Morell's ministry, indeed, was the motivation for the family's moving from Godmanchester to St Neot's. His father, John, was a 'wharfer and lighterman'. One of Mackenzie's brothers was the actor Charles Mackenzie, whose stage name was Henry Compton. Charles' grandson was the writer Sir Compton Mackenzie. One of Mackenzie's nephews was Sir Morell Mackenzie, regarded as the father of otolaryngology in the UK.<sup>22</sup>

The editor of Mackenzie's memoir would state that it was:

impossible not to feel disappointment at the paucity of materials which Mr Mackenzie left for his biographer. With the exception of a few contributions to the English and Scottish Congregational magazines, ... chiefly reviews, Mr Mackenzie himself published nothing. ... From the time he had mastered his letters, he was seldom to be found without a book in his hand.<sup>23</sup>

Mackenzie was tutored for a while by the Rev. Jonathan Edwards at Godmanchester, and benefited from funding set aside by Wymondley College for 'promising youths' to undertake elementary studies before formal

<sup>20</sup> Surman Index; McNaughton *Congregational Ministry* 307; *The Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle* Vol 18 (1840) 284; *The Morning Post* 18 November 1884, Issue 35072, 1; *The Bury and Norwich Post, and Suffolk Herald* (Bury St Edmunds 1884) 18 November, Issue 9345.

<sup>21</sup> Craig 'Rothesay' 113.

<sup>22</sup> McNaughton *Congregational Ministry* 94–95. *RJMM* v, xii. H R Haweis *Sir Morell Mackenzie: Physician and Operator* (London 1893). For Charles, Sir Compton and Sir Morell see *ODNB*.

<sup>23</sup> *RJMM* iv, vi.

recognition as candidates for the ministry. On being asked if he would like to go to the University of Cambridge, he replied that, he 'should be very glad to receive the advantages of a University education but he had made up his mind to be a dissenter'. Mackenzie studied at the dissenting academy, Wymondley Hall, Hertfordshire from 1824, where the family's former minister, Morell, was one of his tutors.<sup>24</sup> He described Wymondley as:

a sort of "ultima Thule", the fag-end of the world, from which we can hear only the distant murmuring, the busy and confused hum, of the active and civilized portion of mankind.

Yet he considered that the advantages of the monastic 'manner of life' in the 'solitary planet at the outskirts of creation' considerably outbalanced its 'inconveniences and privations'.<sup>25</sup>

He studied at Glasgow University 1829–32 with 'distinguished success'. Archibald Campbell Tait, future Archbishop of Canterbury, was not just a contemporary at Glasgow, but also a friend. Mackenzie graduated MA, but felt that 'illness in the winter, which made a chasm of six weeks in my studies, prevented me from going up for the highest honours'. On 10 May 1830, Mackenzie wrote to his mother from Leicester, where he was providing pulpit supply. He wrote of a 'smooth and pleasant' voyage from Glasgow to Liverpool—which lasted 33 hours!<sup>26</sup>

Glasgow he found much more intellectual than anything he had previously encountered:

my desire to devote my life to the work of the ministry is much increased and strengthened. The dark and melancholy views of life which used to oppress my mind, have almost entirely given way to what I hope are more rational and pious conception of the subject.

He claimed that it was not uncommon for him to go to bed at two and rise at seven—and

twice or thrice have been obliged to sit up all night at my books and papers. ... The Scotch are overrun with dialectics. The reason is cultivated, while the discipline of the feelings and passions is comparatively neglected.

But he stated, that perhaps this was better than 'the declamatory style' so prevalent in England. The 'common people' are:

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24 *RJMM* ix, xiii, xiv.

25 *RJMM* 10–15.

26 Tait followed Arnold as Headmaster of Rugby, with Lewis Carroll among his pupils. See *ODNB*. Addison *Roll* 386. *RJMM* 64, 81.

incomparably better acquainted with the principles of theology than those ... in England. Hence few ... modern heresies spread very widely here.<sup>27</sup>

Mackenzie was ordained on 10 April 1833, and served as co-pastor with a Mr Durant at the Skinner Street Congregational Church in Poole, Dorset. Durant had written to Ralph Wardlaw asking if he could recommend anyone. Mackenzie was given particular responsibility for work with young people in the church. Durant would observe that Mackenzie ‘abhorred writing’ and seldom made any ‘written preparation’ for the pulpit. Yet his discourses were ‘remarkable for their continuity and arrangement of thought, and freshness and vitality of sentiment and illustration’.<sup>28</sup>

On 27 July 1837, Mackenzie was inducted as assistant and successor to Greville Ewing at Nile Street Congregational Church in Glasgow. The catalyst for the appointment of an assistant seems to have been a deterioration in Ewing’s sight—‘soon its extreme weakness precluded him from writing or reading’. Just the next month, Ewing suffered a slight stroke. While he made a partial recovery, Mackenzie was ‘called upon by the supporters of the Glasgow Theological Academy to render assistance to supplying the place of Ewing in the institution’. In 1838, Mackenzie’s marriage is recorded, in Edinburgh, to Joanna, daughter of the late Lieutenant General A Trotter.<sup>29</sup>

After two years of juggling church and college responsibilities, he recognised that he could not do justice to either, while he continued to have charge of both, and, accordingly, resigned his pastorate. Soon after, he was appointed to a Chair in Criticism and Church History at the Academy. (It appears that the Nile Street Church considered it imperative that, in the event of Ewing’s death, the church should have ‘a pastor exclusively devoted to their service’.<sup>30</sup>)

Few men were better qualified to discharge its duties. His intellect was strong and clear; his learning varied and profound; his capacity for communicating instruction remarkably felicitous; and his disposition amiable and engaging.<sup>31</sup>

In 1839 and 1840, Mackenzie was preaching regularly in Rothesay in English. Rothesay was 3½ hours steamboat journey from Glasgow—but the journey time could be reduced to 2½ hours by taking the train from Glasgow to Greenock, and

<sup>27</sup> RJMM 64, 66–7.

<sup>28</sup> J Sydenham *The History of the Town and County of Poole* (Poole 1839) 344. RJMM xxvi, 81. For Wardlaw see ODNB.

<sup>29</sup> J Fletcher *The Independent Magazine* (1844) 338. *The Gentleman’s Magazine* (1838) 543. For Ewing see ODNB.

<sup>30</sup> W D McNaughton *Early Congregational Independency in Lowland Scotland* Vol II (Glasgow 2007) 43.

<sup>31</sup> *Manchester Times and Gazette* Issue 773 (Manchester 29 July 1843).

picking up a steamer there.<sup>32</sup> Sometimes the Mackenzies would go to Rothesay on a Friday night, returning to Glasgow on Monday morning. In 1839, he wrote of taking ‘a little cottage in Rothesay once more, and for four months’.<sup>33</sup>

In 1840, writing to his aunt, Mackenzie reflected that the Highland air during this summer sojourn had ‘materially benefited’ his health. In addition to preparing for winter classes at the Academy, he:

preached twice on the Lord’s day, and once in the week. My services were gratuitous, the people being poor; but they were gratefully received, and I have reason to think that they were blessed to the conversion of some and the edification of others.<sup>34</sup>

Sometimes, apparently, Mackenzie:

spoke with a quickness of utterance disagreeable to the Scottish ear. His delivery was energetic, but the gestures of his action were not uniformly graceful ... Sometimes his ideas appeared to flow upon him with greater promptitude than his language. ...

On occasion, indeed, it seemed that he was rather thinking aloud.<sup>35</sup>

It seems doubtful that Mackenzie would have visited Bute every weekend throughout the year when he was not resident but if so, it is unclear who supplied the Ardbeg pulpit in his absences.

## Rev. Anthony McGill

The final ministry at Ardbeg Congregational Church was that of Anthony McGill.<sup>36</sup> He preached in the church from around 1840, and then appears to have been the minister from 1842.

In July 1843, the congregation must have been shocked to learn of the death of the Rev John Morell Mackenzie, aged just 36. Mackenzie died, en route to visit his parents, when the steamship Pegasus (travelling from Leith to Hull) was wrecked off Holy Isle. The tributes were fulsome.

He was possessed of brilliant talents, large acquirements, and distinguished virtues, and was engaged in his last moments in exhorting and praying with those who perished on the mournful occasion.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Wilson 1.

<sup>33</sup> *RJMM* 140.

<sup>34</sup> *RJMM* 153.

<sup>35</sup> *RJMM* ciii–civ.

<sup>36</sup> McNaughton *Congregational Ministry* 90.

<sup>37</sup> *The Bradford Observer; and Halifax, Huddersfield and Keighley Reporter* Issue 494 (Bradford 27 July 1843) 8.

Amid the dire commotion and distress—  
 This scene of nameless horror and despair—  
 Forth came the man of God them to address  
 And proffer to Omnipotence the prayer,  
 With looks commanding, and divine-like air:  
 Fixed in his faith, resigned and undismayed  
 In spite of all he then was doomed to bear;  
 To him no matter how Death came arrayed  
 He had the pledge of joys that never fade.<sup>38</sup>

The circumstances of his gathering around him the shrieking passengers and crew, while he and they stood on the very brink of eternity, and solemnly invoking the mercy of the Creator on the immortal souls which were soon to render up their account, is the most deeply touching incident connected with this mournful tragedy. That Mr Mackenzie could be calm and collected at such a moment, shows him to have been possessed of no ordinary strength of mind, and of a degree of fortitude worthy of the devoted Christian.<sup>39</sup>

At a special meeting of the Glasgow Theological Academy, held in Edinburgh on 1 August 1843, the committee:

in affectionate remembrance of his worth ... record in their minutes their high admiration of the very great ability with which he discharged the duties of his office ... rejoice to know that, by Divine Grace, he was enabled to finish his course in a manner becoming of the gospel, enjoying peace which passeth all understanding, amidst the shrieks and confusion of a frightful shipwreck, and labouring to the last, by prayer and exhortation, to bring others with himself, through 'the Way, the Truth and the Life', he had long acknowledged, to the 'glory, honour, and immortality' they are fully persuaded he now inherits.<sup>40</sup>

An evangelical tract was even issued, with the starting point being the vividly described image of passengers and crew kneeling, as Mackenzie led them in prayer, his voice distinct, even amidst all the noise and shouting.<sup>41</sup> Mackenzie's body was found floating immediately over the wreck on 7 August. He was missing his hat and shoes—but his purse was still in his pocket, together with two slips of paper, apparently containing sermon notes in short-hand. For weeks afterwards, various items were washed up along the Northumbrian coastline—including a carpet bag containing some of Mackenzie's books.

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38 A Steel *The Poetical Works of Andrew Steel* 2nd ed (Edinburgh 1863) 136.

39 *The Ipswich Journal* Issue 5441 (Ipswich 29 July 1843).

40 *The Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle* Vol 21 (1843) 508.

41 *The Loss of the Pegasus, A Steam Ship Sailing From Leith to Hull in July 1843* Religious Tract Society No 1619 (1843).

It is on record that McGill stayed on Bute until 1848, ‘after which the church ceased to meet’. From 1848, McGill was certainly employed as a City Missionary by Argyle Square Church in Edinburgh. It appears that the church may have stopped meeting before 1848. Certainly they were no longer worshipping in their church building after 1847, when it was sold. Congregationalism was later revived briefly on Bute. It is recorded that Rothesay Independent Church met in the Good Templars Hall in Rothesay around 1943.<sup>42</sup> The details of this church, its activities and when it ceased, are unclear.

## Conclusion

St Paul’s Scottish Episcopal Church in Rothesay originated with twenty people meeting in a drawing room in the burgh. From then it took 8 years for an incumbent to be appointed and a further 15 years to build a wooden church. It took another 8 years to build a stone church, and to clear the debts to allow it to be consecrated! From the group meeting to the church’s consecration took 31 years. In contrast, Arbeg church opened, completely unsaddled by debt, some 13 months after Congregational preaching started on Bute.<sup>43</sup> Had Congregationalism come to Bute earlier, it might have established deeper roots. A probationer of the Original Secession Church recorded that he found the Kingarth Church of Scotland minister to be extremely hospitable. Yet:

He often found me writing, and when I told him I was studying a sermon or lecture; he laughed at my diligence, asking me if I had any old discourses, and assuring me that they would do perfectly well in Bute.<sup>44</sup>

The probationer went on to allege that the parish minister, Rev James Thorburn, said he just had 4 sermons—which he went through each month, simply changing the texts. Thorburn was in post for 44 years—but he had died in 1810. In many other places in Scotland, Congregationalism thrived because it provided an evangelical alternative. By the 1840s, however, there were many other evangelical voices on Bute. Indeed, around 1848, it was claimed that on Bute, although

long ... accustomed to the cold system and legal doctrine of the Established Church ... they had now evangelical Ministers in all the churches.<sup>45</sup>

The Arbeg Church was built for the benefit of the Gaelic population.

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<sup>42</sup> J Ross *A History of Congregational Independency* (Glasgow 1900) 240. McNaughton *Congregational Ministry* 461.

<sup>43</sup> *Glasgow Herald* (Glasgow 1862) 6 September, Issue 7069.

<sup>44</sup> W Mackelvie *Annals and Statistics of the United Presbyterian Church* (Edinburgh 1873) 573.

<sup>45</sup> McNaughton *Highlands* 103

Many of the first adherents were Gaels, frustrated that Rothesay Parish Church stopped holding a Gaelic forenoon service (certainly this has ceased by March 1836). In 1837, however, the Church of Scotland opened a Gaelic Chapel of Ease in Rothesay. This was large enough to accommodate a congregation of 600. Some of those disaffected drifted back to Rothesay. For those who lived in the burgh, the Chapel of Ease would be more convenient than Ardbeg. Mackenzie, the second minister, did not speak Gaelic—and it is unclear whether or not McGill did.

In any event, the use of Gaelic was in decline.

The English language is generally spoken by the natives, and the Gaelic has rapidly fallen into disuse during the last forty years. Scarcely any of the children now learn or understand it.<sup>46</sup>

In many parts of Scotland, Congregational Churches split over the question of infant or believers' baptism. The Haldane brothers themselves changed their views and, having helped form the Congregational Union of Scotland, went on to help found the Baptist Union of Scotland. A Baptist church was founded on Bute and met in the Ardbeg church. Yet its establishment does not seem to indicate divisions amongst Congregationalists, as happened elsewhere.

Ardbeg Church was bought by a Mrs Shirreff 'to establish and maintain the ministry of the Gospel by preachers of the Baptist denomination'. Her late husband had been a Church of Scotland minister who later became a Baptist. Mrs Shirreff relocated to Rothesay with her daughter 'for the benefit of the sea air' after her son's death 'removed all inducement to remain in Glasgow'. On Bute she continued to suffer bouts of ill-health but her strong character shines through across the decades. She told a visiting friend once

I have not slept, and suffered excruciating pain, but I told Satan that, let him do his worst, I would praise my God in spite of him.<sup>47</sup>

Opening services for the new Baptist Church were held in November 1847—though a church was not formally constituted until 1855 when Thomas Callendar was appointed as the first minister. Callendar joined the Secession Church from another denomination, but left the Secession to become a Baptist. Irritated, no doubt, at this defection, the denomination's historian unkindly recorded that Callendar

after announcing his text ... usually closed the pulpit Bible, and delivered

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<sup>46</sup> Craig 'Rothesay' 106.

<sup>47</sup> M Shirreff *The Hidden Life, A Memoir of Mrs Shirreff, Wife of the Rev William Shirreff* (Edinburgh 1865) 215–216, 245, 275.

his discourse with such energy that the perspiration flowed copiously, and his audience ... looked on with more wonderment than edification.<sup>48</sup>

The Baptists did not install a baptistery in the Ardbeg Church. The church was conveniently located across the road from the beach and full immersions were carried out in the sea.

The largest ever gathering on the island was actually when the Baptist, Charles Haddon Spurgeon,<sup>49</sup> conducted an open-air service. This was on 28 July 1878 and the porch roof of a house used as a pulpit!

Many had caught one of the steamers that worked the river Clyde, travelling “doon the watter” from nearby Glasgow ... to hear him. These joined the holiday makers ... already there<sup>50</sup> ... when the time came for Spurgeon to preach, a staggeringly large crowd ...gathered, ... estimates suggesting that as many as 20,000 people were present ... Many ...later perched along the ... wall in their thousands, waving goodbye as the boat carrying the speaker made its way out of the bay.<sup>51</sup>

## Postscript

And ... a foolish man ...built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.<sup>52</sup>

A lot of energy is devoted in the 21st century to discussing how best to plant new churches. The Congregational Federation has had its discussions. Where do you start a new church? How many people do you need? How much money do you need to start a new church? The right to call a minister is recognised as a fundamental right of a church (by Congregationalists and Presbyterians alike)—yet how does that work with a new church, when an appointment may be made before the community is gathered?

Ardbeg’s first minister had the Gaelic population as his priority. The second minister ‘secured the attention and respect of many in the higher walks of life’. When the congregation ceased with the third ministry, a contemporary source commented that:

The Independent cause has suffered more from professed friends than external foes. Some of the most active office bearers and members have ... given occasion

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48 D Scott *Annals and Statistics of the Original Secession Church* (Edinburgh 1886) 622.

49 ODNB.

50 This being the middle of the Glasgow Fair Fortnight.

51 P J Morden ‘The Bible for the Masses: The Popular Preaching of C H Spurgeon’ in I Stackhouse & O D Crisp *Text Message: The Centrality of Scripture in Preaching* (2004) 100.

52 St Matthew 7: 26b-27 (Authorised Version).

to the enemy to speak reproachfully, and the people have not sufficiently distinguished between those who are really Members, and those who have been cut off from the fellowship.<sup>53</sup>

All had begun so well on Bute—yet within 12 years it had all fizzled out.

James Haldane wrote to Mrs Shirreff about her work on Bute. By this time Haldane had transferred his allegiance from Congregationalism to the Baptist cause.

I never had the smallest doubt that the part you took in the matter was a sacrifice, acceptable, well-pleasing to the Lord but this does not ... imply that the plan will succeed, but we will wait on the Lord ...

... you were led to fix on a field for your exertions which was not very promising but I trust that by perseverance and prayer, you shall yet bring home your shaves with gladness. ... the only thing which gave me hope of success was your prayers.<sup>54</sup>

In 1997 problems with the roof rendered the Ardbeg building unsafe, and the Baptists moved worship to their church hall in King Street, Rothesay. This had been gifted by the Brethren congregation when it disbanded in 1995. In 2004 the Ardbeg Church was sold.

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*Gordon A Campbell*

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<sup>53</sup> McNaughton *Highlands* 104.

<sup>54</sup> Shirreff 247, 251.

## HENRY BERESFORD MARTIN 1808–1844, A REMARKABLE YOUNG VICTORIAN MINISTER

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**H**enry Martin, the first pastor of Vineyard Congregational Chapel, Richmond upon Thames, died in 1844 aged 36. Little is known about his life before he came to Richmond in 1835. It was his first and only post as a church minister. No portrait painting of him has survived; no description of what he looked like has been found.

The only personal records are some notes in his handwriting that he made of sermons which he had heard as a student; also a list of the Richmond church members that he revised a year before he died and wrote in the church records.<sup>1</sup> He suffered debilitating ill health in the last three years of his short ministry. But despite this setback, this young man provided wise spiritual leadership, bound together a divided and fractious fellowship, saw the congregation grow to some 500 souls and laid the foundations of a growing church in what was then little more than the village of Richmond.

The church records show that he was a man of prayer and great faith. His character shone through. His obituary stated that he was sincere, zealous and a devoted shepherd of his flock, ‘respected by his neighbours and beloved by his people’.<sup>2</sup> This is an account of the impact that he made on Richmond and the legacy that he left.

The history of how the church came into being and what occurred under Martin’s ministry is described in the Vineyard Chapel Book. Written in the language of the day the prose has a beauty of its own. Today planting a new church in a city generally starts with a small group meeting in someone’s home before they are ready to hire a school or something similar for public services. This was not the case for the small congregation formed in 1831. For them it started with a well appointed chapel built on a quarter acre of land purchased in 1828 for £500 by the wealthy benefactor, Thomas Wilson.<sup>3</sup> He also paid £2,000 for the construction of the chapel.

It is probable that there were dissenters in Richmond from the 16th century but no records survive. A house in Richmond belonging to Daniel Bullen was

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1 Two booklets of Martin’s notes on sermons that he heard in 1830 and 1831 in Birmingham, London and Worcester. These are in the Congregational Library, Case 11 Shelf D 31. The Vineyard Chapel Book 1831–1857 (hereafter VCB) end piece.

2 VCB March 1844 entry; *Congregational Magazine* (1844).

3 For Thomas Wilson see ODNB and J Wilson *A Memoir of the Life and Character of Thomas Wilson* (1846).

registered in October 1773 as a place of public worship for Independents and in November a building called the Old Play House was certified as belonging to Independents too. The Old Play House was located on Richmond Hill and converted into a Methodist chapel. It appears that a riot took place there in 1773 on one Tuesday; a few days later on a Friday another disturbance broke out after a Mr Hill preached but the mob was dispersed once a Justice of the Peace arrived. A little later, in 1797 the Bethlehem Chapel in Richmond was built for an independent Calvinist church. This was opened by William Huntington who was a frequent visiting preacher in the early years.<sup>1</sup> From 1810 onwards another small congregation met for a time in the 'Chapel House' in the Kew Foot Road. In 1908 this name could still be seen on the outside of this building which was situated at the rear of the building used by the Salvation Army. By 1830 these meetings had been abandoned. Some of those who remained decided to join the new fellowship in the Vineyard.<sup>2</sup>

The vision of the founders was:

a Missionary effort by carrying the preaching of the Gospel into the midst of a forgetful and slumbering people to endeavour by means adapted to the ends, to remove their prejudices and awaken them to a sense of their obligations and danger and lead them to 'the Lamb of God who taketh away the Sins of the World'.<sup>3</sup>

The church opened for worship on 21 July 1831. The first church meeting occurred on 21 December 1831. All that is recorded<sup>4</sup> is that the meeting was presided over by Revd J. Brunton, a local minister, and that nine people were admitted into membership. Six were women, and three were men. Of these, two were married couples. They were a Mrs Day, Mrs Fuller, Mrs Faulkes, Mr Fuller (all by 'dismissal' from other churches) and Mr Gandee, Mrs Gandee, Mrs Ford, Mr Pranklin, and Mrs Frances (by profession of faith). Mr Gandee was an art and science teacher and Mrs Gandee a lacemaker<sup>5</sup>—later to Queen Victoria. Mrs Fuller moved away in 1834, Mrs Faulkes died in 1834, as did Mrs Fuller; Mrs Ford died in 1842. The Gandeys left in August 1844 shortly after Martin's death. It is not clear if his death was connected to their decision. The chapel building could accommodate 500–600 people and it must have seemed a daunting task for the nine who assembled to start their mission.

A second meeting was held a month later on 27 January 1832 without a minister presiding when a discussion took place as to how communion should be

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1 <http://www.bethlehem-chapel.org/a-brief-history.html>

2 E E Cleal *The Story of Congregationalism in Surrey* (1908) 269–70.

3 VCB 'The origin of the building' Front piece.

4 VCB church meeting, 21 December 1831.

5 1841 Census.

celebrated (administering the Ordinance of the Lord's Supper, as it was termed). Services then began to be held. Regular meetings of the church members also took place mid week every month sometimes presided over by a local minister but more often than not by one of the founding members: Mr Fuller. Initially, the main purpose of these meetings was to confirm those who were put forward or applied to become formal 'members' of the church. All members had a say in the running of the church. Before women gained the parliamentary vote in 1928 they had enjoyed full voting rights in dissenting churches for a hundred years. Some of those accepted into membership came with a written reference from the minister of another church and others made a profession of faith as Christians. At the church meeting held in March 1832 concern was expressed at rumours about the character of Mr Day who was proposed as a new member.<sup>6</sup>

A close investigation was made by the friends appointed to converse with him into the truth of such reports and the result was that in every case they appeared to be without foundation and to have originated either in error or through malice.

The congregation was too small to support a paid minister; various local independent dissenting ministers helped with preaching and leading services. Notable Congregationalists John Stoughton and Thomas Binney and also Robert Ashton (from Putney) filled the pulpit.<sup>7</sup> Ashton was to make a significant contribution to the development of the little church. Students from Highbury College also led services. This Congregational ministerial training college had been established in 1826 on land provided by Thomas Wilson who continued as treasurer from its predecessor, Hoxton Academy. It eventually became part of New College, London.<sup>8</sup> Wilson kept a close eye on the 40 or so students and their potential. The decision to appoint a minister was actively pursued by July 1832; for instance, a letter<sup>9</sup> was written to Revd John Barling who was resigning his pastorate in Halifax. Having left Square Chapel, Halifax, he eventually settled in George Street Church, Croydon in 1833. He had trained at Hoxton but, recommended by Wilson, visited Richmond, preached at the chapel and left his mark.<sup>10</sup> Once Barling had declined Richmond, a student, Samuel Luke, was approached later in the year, but he too decided not to come.<sup>11</sup>

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6 VCB church meetings, 27 January 1832, 30 March 1832.

7 Cleal *Surrey* 270.

8 D Thompson 'Hoxton [Independent] Academy (1791–1826) and Highbury College (1826–1850)' *Dissenting Academies Online: Database and Encyclopedia* Dr Williams's Centre for Dissenting Studies (March 2012) <https://dissacad.english.qmul.ac.uk/sample1.php?parameter=academyretrieve&alpha=70>; R T Jones *Congregationalism in England 1662–1962* (1962) 235.

9 VCB, church meetings, 3 July, 27 July 1832.

10 Surman Index.

11 Surman Index.

After one year church members numbered 26. They formed the core of the congregation but it is probable that those worshipping on Sundays were more; however the building, capable of seating 500, must have dwarfed the congregation.

In March 1833, a discussion took place at the church meeting<sup>12</sup> about the possibility of approaching another student from Highbury College who had taken services: Mr Nivern (perhaps Adam Niven, then a Highbury student). He also eventually declined. Yet another student, Henry John Bevis, was thought by some to be a likely candidate and was asked to spend two months in Richmond on probation. However, some in the church had reservations about Bevis and wanted a longer period of probation. A compromise of three months was initially agreed at the church meeting<sup>13</sup> in August 1833.

Elsewhere, at the end of August the momentous Act to abolish slavery throughout the British Empire received Royal Assent just after William Wilberforce, the evangelical Christian who had campaigned tirelessly for this measure, died. He had nonconformist friends among them Thomas Wilson. The Vineyard church would have mourned his passing but rejoiced at the end of slavery.

It was now that serious difficulties within the church began to surface. Sadly, tensions emerged over several issues: finances, personal relationships and in particular, whom to appoint to pastor the little flock. As reports filtered through to Wilson from Richmond he must have been deeply alarmed; local ministers drawn in to chair meetings must have shared his feelings.

At a meeting<sup>14</sup> held in mid September 1833 chaired by Mr Fuller, the members, numbering 23, were split—13 were in favour of Bevis coming, seven were against and three were ‘neuter’ (e.g. abstained). Bevis was informed of this situation and two days later at a further special meeting<sup>15</sup> his response was read out. A neighbouring minister, Edward Miller of Putney,<sup>16</sup> was asked to chair this meeting given the lack of consensus. Seventeen members attended. It was reported that Bevis had said that he intended to come to Richmond given the majority in his favour. However, at the meeting it transpired there had been some behind the scenes activity by a ‘young man named Ramsey from Richmond’, a brother in law of one of the members. Ramsey was ‘neither a member of the church nor a seat holder’ but had written to Bevis to urge him to come. Some at the meeting voiced concern that it was ‘most undesirable’ for Bevis to return to the church. A vote took place and, of the 17 present, seven

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12 VCB church meeting, 29 March 1833.

13 VCB, church meeting, 5 August 1833.

14 VCB church meeting, 20 September 1833.

15 VCB church meeting, 22 September 1833.

16 Surman Index.

wanted him to return and ten did not. The division was underscored by the fact that in the original resolution signed by 21 members (some of whom were absent from the meeting) 13 were not in favour of his coming, nine were and two abstained. The church was evidently divided with strong views held by either side. It seemed that two members—Mr Pranklin and Mr Moody were particularly in favour of Bevis's appointment and two others, Mr Fuller and Mr Gandee were not.

The parlous state of the church finances had been raised earlier<sup>17</sup> in the year by Mr Fuller, who chaired many of the church meetings if a local minister was not available. He suggested that a committee should be formed to look into this as expenditure was exceeding income by some £50 which was then a large sum. Fuller had personally made good the deficit as well as paying £8 10s 6d for the 'cloth lined books'. He suggested that a way of reducing the deficit could be to sell plots in the graveyard at the rear of the building. He also suggested appointing a 'Collector' to ensure that pew rents were paid quarterly. These annual fees ensured that a place on a pew was reserved. One of the other founding members, Mr Gandee, offered to take on this role and a committee was nominated comprising Messrs Day, Gandee, Jameson and Pranklin. The latter proposed two others, Grey and Moody. As will be seen later, the seeds of division had been sown.

Bevis' probationary period was the subject of a further special meeting held a month later<sup>18</sup> chaired by Revd Miller. Efforts had been made within the fellowship to reconcile differences but Bevis had upset some when he preached a sermon the Sunday evening before the meeting about reconciliation. This produced the opposite effect. The meeting became more cantankerous when Fuller said that Pranklin had publicly accused him of 'base falsehoods'. Apparently he had said that 'those who manage the Chapel are liars'. When Fuller confronted him about this remark accompanied by another member, Pranklin denied it. Pranklin was not at the meeting to respond to this account so a deputation from the church was appointed to see him as soon as possible. Then the meeting was told about another incident when Gandee and others said that Moody had publicly 'hissed him' on leaving the chapel the previous Sunday evening after Bevis had preached. This was taken as a serious sign of Moody's disapproval of Gandee. This too caused great concern. As Moody was also not at the meeting to defend himself, another deputation was appointed to speak to him.

Edward Miller, chairing this meeting, faced a further problem. It was brought to his attention that absence of an 'officer to act in the name of the

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17 VCB church meeting, 25 May 1833.

18 VCB, church meeting, 25 October 1833.

church' was causing difficulties. Gandee felt that without a minister or deacons anyone could call a church meeting so causing confusion. He suggested that the role of 'Manager and Treasurer' should be combined until a minister was found and deacons appointed. Fuller had chaired church meetings over the last year or so and he agreed to fill this role. However, he wanted to share his concern over the finances. Rumours were circulating, he said that he 'had never given any account of monies received and was afraid to produce his books'. He defended his position by saying that the minutes of a previous church meeting in May were clear. A committee had been appointed to look at the finances but he had not made use of it as he suspected that Pranklin had suggested it to 'promote his own party purpose'. The outcome agreed was for a committee comprising different members to be formed

So, after only 18 months, deep divisions split the small church.

Less than two weeks later a further meeting<sup>19</sup> was held, this time chaired by another local minister, Revd Midcutt. More internal wrangling emerged between Fuller and Jameson; they had agreed a few weeks earlier to accept the arbitration of four ministers and abide by their decision. Jameson admitted after discussion that he was in the wrong and his admission was acknowledged. The Pranklin's accusation of Fuller's lying was then discussed and the outcome of the visit to see him was that he denied the accusation. However, at the meeting he took this back and said that originally he 'been taken unawares' and that he had 'totally forgotten about it'. It was proposed that Pranklin should be suspended from communion until 'his conduct should prove his repentance sincere'. Pranklin then said that he wished to leave the church. It was not quite as simple as that, as it was important that the manner of his leaving was clarified so that a letter of transfer to another church could be written if requested. Without such a letter acceptance into membership of another church was unlikely. It was agreed that he might leave provided that he acknowledged his fault and promised within a short time to 'contradict the opinions he had made'.

The concerns about Moody were followed up; he was clearly hot headed. It was felt that 'his offence had been committed under the influence of strong excitement'. He was told not to conduct himself again like this. Three weeks later another church meeting<sup>20</sup> was held with a Revd Fuller presiding. There is nothing to indicate he was related to Fuller. The committee looking into the finances comprising Gandee, Day and Mrs Steele had met and found that the accounts had been kept accurately and with great care by Fuller. In fact he had bankrolled the church with his own money to the tune of £65 6s 5d. A vote of thanks was given to him and assurance of the church's confidence in him. At

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<sup>19</sup> VCB, church meeting, 1 November 1833.

<sup>20</sup> VCB, church meeting, 25 November 1833.

the next meeting<sup>21</sup> a month later in December, Fuller informed members that he needed to move to London and proposed that Gandee took over his role. This was unanimously agreed.

Since January 1833 only four people had become members of the church; a sad reflection of a turbulent year of division. The church was in danger of imploding. One visiting preacher was the Revd Joseph Gibbs who made quite an impact; in January 1834 it was agreed by members that he should be invited to come for three months with a 'view to final settlement'.<sup>22</sup> This meant a permanent appointment. But with the affairs of his widowed mother pressing and his need to visit his family in America, he turned the offer down.

Thankfully, the rancour of the last six months seemed to abate; meetings were no longer chaired by local ministers and Messrs Fuller and Gandee presided over most of them. Numbers joining the church were still small: only three were admitted to membership in the first six months of 1834. The church was still also relying on students from Highbury to take services but the challenge of what to do during the summer holidays came round again. Wilson came to the rescue by getting hold of three ministers –Mr Taylor for six weeks, Mr Conchee for three weeks and Mr Martin for three weeks. When vacancies occurred, in the words of his son, Wilson was:

always ready upon application being made to him to recommend persons whom he considered suitable for the station and he generally showed great sagacity and judgment in this matter.<sup>23</sup>

Little is known about Martin. As a student at Highbury College he was single and needed to have produced testimony about his piety to be enrolled. In 1830 and 1831 he spent time at Independent and Wesleyan churches in Birmingham, Worcester and London as his handwritten notes of sermons attest. Revd Robert Ashton from Putney recommended Martin who had been a member of his own old church in Warminster as well as previously in a church in Silver Street, east London.

As time would tell, Wilson's and Ashton's recommendations proved prophetic. By the end of September Martin had made his mark as it was resolved to hold a special meeting as 'his services seemed generally approved'.<sup>24</sup> After 'many and fervent prayers' for godly wisdom and direction, with Gandee presiding, an almost unanimous resolution was passed that Henry Martin be 'requested to supply the pulpit for two months with a view to final settlement'.<sup>25</sup>

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21 VCB, church meeting, 27 December 1833.

22 VCB, church meetings, 2 and 9 January 1834.

23 Wilson *Memoir* 403.

24 VCB, church meeting 26 September 1834.

25 VCB, church meeting 29 September 1834.

Notably, this is the first time in any of the church meetings that prayer is mentioned. Perhaps the passage in 2 Chronicles 7:14–15 was in their thoughts:

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land. Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place

A month went by and Martin wrote back to say that he was waiting the outcome of a visit to Peterborough.<sup>26</sup> At the end of November a letter was read out from Martin in which he ‘cordially accepts the invitation and intends to commence his probationary labors (sic) on the first Sabbath in the new year’.<sup>27</sup> Peterborough’s loss was Richmond’s gain. God had plans for Martin.

A special prayer meeting was held three weeks into January 1835 and presided over by Gandee that the

Divine blessing and guidance might be vouchsafed in preparatory to the decision it would be necessary we should come to at the next church meeting in terms of the result of mr (sic) Martin’s probationary period.<sup>28</sup>

At the end of another evening prayer meeting held at the end of February a special meeting, again presided over by Gandee, was held. It unanimously agreed to invite Martin to be the pastor of the church and he was to be informed that evening by Messrs Day, Fuller, Gandee and Cox.<sup>29</sup> How different this was from the discord 18 months previously.

The letter for him was signed by 20 members of the church and 73 members of the congregation. This meant that those worshipping at the Vineyard regularly numbered just under 100 at the end of 1834.<sup>30</sup> Martin’s stipend was set at £100 per annum. This was approximately £8,500 per annum or £163 per week in today’s money. In comparison, a skilled factory worker might earn about £7,280 per annum or £140 per week.<sup>31</sup>

Martin’s subsequent acceptance was read out at the meeting that followed on 20 March.<sup>32</sup> At a further meeting before he was formally inducted as minister, the members agreed that any agenda items in future had to be put through Martin as the minister; also Messrs Day and Cox should assist Gandee

<sup>26</sup> VCB, church meeting 24 October 1834.

<sup>27</sup> VCB, church meeting 28 November 1834.

<sup>28</sup> VCB, church meeting 23 January 1835.

<sup>29</sup> VCB, church meetings 20 and 23 February 1835.

<sup>30</sup> VCB, transcribed, undated letter entered after church meeting 20 March 1835.

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.measuringworth.com/ppoweruk/>

<sup>32</sup> VCB, church meeting 20 March 1835.

in managing the secular affairs of the church.<sup>33</sup> A way forward for leading the church had been found.

On 9th June 1835 Martin was ‘solemnly set apart to the pastorate office over the church’.<sup>34</sup> The service was very well attended by other Congregational ministers. Revds J E Edwards from Warminster, William Crowe from Kingston, Edward Miller from Putney were present and Revd Dr Fletcher from Stepney preached the sermon. Revd Robert Ashton latterly from Warminster and now at Putney gave ‘the charge to the minister’. At a service in the evening another minister, John Raven from Hadleigh in Suffolk (also a former Highbury College man and Martin’s former tutor) preached.<sup>35</sup>

Just eight days after his induction as minister of the Vineyard Chapel and aged 25 he married Louisa Peach Buckler in Warminster on 17 June 1835. Louisa was from Warminster where Henry first met her and she was two years older than him. It is not known where the newlyweds lived initially but at the time of the 1841 census the Martin family lived at 12, St John’s Grove, off Kew Foot Road, Richmond.<sup>36</sup>

The new Mrs Martin was accepted as a member of Vineyard Chapel at the end of October on the recommendation of Robert Ashton her previous minister. She was the 41st person listed in the records as a church member.<sup>37</sup> Her first son John Buckler was born a year after her marriage and he was ‘christened’ in Warminster in October 1836; presumably because of Louisa’s connections there rather than in the church in Richmond. Three other children arrived in short succession. Their Georgian house in St John’s Grove still stands today. It is a solid four bedroom detached property that they probably rented. At the 1851 census a widow named Mary Challener lived there with an aunt, her two daughters and a servant.



Martin’s influence on the church soon was felt. At the same meeting<sup>38</sup> that Louisa Martin became a member it was decided to reach out to those in need. The surplus remaining from the ‘Sacramental Alms’ collection, after the needs of the poor and sick in the congregation, was

33 VCB, church meeting 8 May 1835.

34 VCB, record of the service on 8 June 1835.

35 *Congregational Magazine* (1844)

36 1841 census.

37 VCB, church meeting 20 October 1835.

38 VCB, church meeting 20 October 1835.

apportioned to the relief of other objects of the charity according to the discretion of those appointed as Almoners of the Church.

Gandee and Day were to assist Martin in this task. Cox's name was added to the other three at the next meeting. The proportion of those who might be poor is unknown but 20 years on it was calculated that 10% of the congregation could be classified as 'poor'. A breakdown of attendance at the Lord's table 1851 showed 10 % working class, 24% lower middle class, 62% middle class, and 3.5% upper class against data from the national census.<sup>39</sup>

The appointment of Henry Wardley as a home missionary was made during the same year. The Home Missionary Society was formed in 1819 with the aim of evangelism, distribution of bibles, and teaching of children. In 1846 there were 139 'agents' or missionaries across the country working with local churches. As part of his role was outreach to the local needy it is possible that Wardley's appointment was linked to the decision about alms for the sick and needy.

At the end of 1835 nine new members had been admitted to membership—one more than in 1834. Stability, numerical growth and outreach to the community were in place. At the church meeting<sup>40</sup> in March 1836 it was agreed that the

Minister, instead of having £100 guaranteed to him as a salary for the past year should receive the product of the following sources: viz the regular contributions of Friends and Subscribers (the quarterly collections for incidental expenses ... *not* included), any occasional donations from visitors and others, the proceeds of the burial ground (after deducting the necessary expenses of digging graves) and the balance of an Anniversary.

As the church's income was derived solely from the giving of those attending this was a novel form of what today would be termed payment by results.

A period of consolidation followed as evidenced by very little being reported at church meetings during 1836. But by the end of the year a further ten members had been admitted to the Vineyard Chapel. From the names recorded in the church book<sup>41</sup> 52 had been added to the nine founding members. It is not easy to identify those who may have left or moved away during this time but steady and quiet growth was now happening.

1837 saw Victoria become Queen on 24 May. At a meeting<sup>42</sup> the following

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39 Jeanette King 'From riots in a rural retreat to salvation in a Surrey suburb: Evangelism in Richmond 1771–1881' (1999 Open University dissertation).

40 VCB, church meeting 3 March 1836.

41 VCB, from lists of members written at the end of the church book.

42 VCB, church meeting 4 June 1837.

month an interesting decision was universally agreed with the ‘exception of two or three present that merely declined to vote’. It was that Mr and Mrs Ramsey and Mr Pranklin be allowed to come to communion but were not to be admitted as church members. At their own request, they did not want to be involved in running the church. Pranklin was clearly still part of the Vineyard since the turbulent meeting at the end of 1834 and perhaps had no wish to get his fingers burnt again in church matters. Ramsey became very active and loyal in the church working closely with Martin. He actually became a full member in January 1842.<sup>43</sup>

Ramsey was a coachman who lived with his wife Ann and two sons and daughter in Down’s Building, Red Lion Street, Richmond less than a quarter of a mile from the church. His gravestone still stands hidden at the back of the Vineyard Church garden. The inscription reads:

In memory of Mr GEORGE RAMSEY who died of Cholera September the 11th 1849 the 65th year of his age. ‘a sinner saved by grace’ Eph 2. This stone is erected by a few members of the church and congregation as an expression of the esteem in which they had memory of the departed. He led in great zeal the Praises of God in the adjoining Sanctuary during a period of fourteen years. He was a Fond Father, a faithful friend and a warm hearted Christian.

A moving testimony to this man of God. His widow died 13 years later in 1862. It is not known if she was buried in the church yard next to her husband.

The chapel in the Vineyard had been certified by Thomas Wilson<sup>44</sup> in October 1830, with its denomination described as ‘Independent’. Perhaps because of a lack of knowledge at the time that the building was already certified, it was again certified on 1 November 1837 by Martin as the ‘Vineyard Chapel’. The denomination was not stated. A framed copy of the certificate<sup>45</sup> was hung in the church with a handwritten note, signed by Martin on the back, dated 22 January 1844, a few months before he died.

An interesting development took place in the summer of 1837 as Martin began to lead the church into a deeper spiritual journey; instead of the usual discussions about ‘church business’ at church meetings he spoke of religious revival and suggested that a day should be set apart for special prayer for this purpose.<sup>46</sup> The general feeling of all was that they ought to ‘humble themselves and pray more earnestly for the enlargement and prosperity of the church’. The seed had been planted. A day of prayer was then held three weeks later and

43 VCB, church meeting 13 January 1842.

44 Thomas Wilson’s association with the founding of Vineyard Chapel is told by the author in the *Journal of the Richmond Local History Society* No 23 (2002).

45 This certificate is held in the Vineyard Church archives.

46 VCB, church meeting 3 August 1837.

Martin reported that ‘God’s blessing appeared to have been on the amen’; he had afterwards met with several people who wanted to join the fellowship.<sup>47</sup> Seven new members were welcomed in December and Martin prayed for them at the end of the meeting.<sup>48</sup> By the end of 1837 the Vineyard had 13 new members.

At this same meeting Martin again encouraged the church to set aside another day of prayer in the New Year. This was set as Thursday, 4 January, starting at 10 am for ‘humiliation, and thanksgiving and prayer’. During the day individuals would meditate and pray privately then met again at 6 pm to renew their covenant with God and one another and be refreshed ‘in the presence of the Lord’.

Accordingly, on 4 January in the morning they met for an hour of special devotions and again in the evening. ‘The attendance was very full’. After singing and prayer Martin spoke of what had occurred within the church since his appointment which gave cause for thanksgiving. Towards the end they made a solemn undertaking to

give up ourselves afresh to the service of Him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light [1 Peter 2 vs. 9] and that we may not be unmindful of this obligation we do hereby renew our covenant with God and with each other to walk together in the Faith and Ordinances of the Gospel even to the end of our days. And that this may be our experience and practice we humbly implore the aid of the Triune Jehovah, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, whose grace we know to be sufficient for us and in whom is all our trust.

The congregation left with the conviction that they had ‘enjoyed a season of refreshment from the presence of the Lord’.<sup>49</sup> A good start to the New Year.

Queen Victoria’s coronation was held on 28 June 1838. A month earlier, the church meeting<sup>50</sup> was encouraged by the story of a couple, Mr and Mrs Marsden, who were proposed for membership. What occurred was ‘striking proof of the efficacy of Divine grace and the power of the word of God’. Sadly, no details were recorded in the minutes but clearly the testimony of their conversion had a significant impact. The writer went on to say

May such instances be multiplied a hundredfold and we will exclaim ‘not unto us Oh Lord not unto us, but to thy name be the glory for thy mercy and thy truth’s sake [Psalm 115 vs. 1].

The first marriage took place in the church on 1 October 1838 although

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<sup>47</sup> VCB, church meeting 31st August 1837.

<sup>48</sup> VCB, church meeting 1st December 1837.

<sup>49</sup> VCB, record of 4 January 1838.

<sup>50</sup> VCB church meeting 31 May 1838.

the names of the couple are not recorded.<sup>51</sup> An application had been made on 3 January 1838 by Thomas Wilson, the proprietor of the building, for it to be registered as a Place of Religious Worship for marriages to be conducted under the 1836 Marriages Act. It was signed by 23 members although Martin was not one of them; perhaps he was not a householder.

Further encouragement came later in October when three young persons, Ellen Hawkes, Anny Gregory and Rebecca Lewis became members.<sup>52</sup> Their youthfulness was a cause of celebration and the sentiment was expressed that ‘may many more such Lambs of the flock brought unto the Lord!’ The fruit of this was that the following year, in April 1839, seven more young people became members one of whom was Richard Hawkes, presumably brother to Ellen. ‘Unusual interest was felt on this occasion’.<sup>53</sup>

Later in the autumn, when there was no regular church business to address, Martin took the opportunity to exhort the members

to be more earnest in prayer for revival of religion in their own souls and to seek more zealously to promote religion amongst others.<sup>54</sup>

It was agreed to hold four evening prayer meetings from Monday to Thursday from 7 to 10 October the following week and many attended. ‘The most hallowed feel seemed to pervade the assembly on every occasion and everyone was ready to say ‘Lord it is good to be here’. [Matthew 17 vs. 4]. On the last evening they said goodbye with affection to Henry Wardley who had been employed for three years in Richmond as a Home Missionary.

His labours in visiting the poor and preaching in the cottages were much prized and no doubt the last great day will declare that much good was done through his instrumentality.<sup>55</sup>

The year ended with a total of 23 new members having been added.

The 1840 new year started with reflection and celebration on Thursday 2 January;<sup>56</sup> Robert Ashton from Putney, Martin’s mentor, took part in the evening service. Martin looked back over the years since 1831 and was encouraged that, taking account of those who had come and those who had moved away, about 80 were either members or part of the wider congregation.

Other good news was that Wilson had decided to invest the land and

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<sup>51</sup> Copy Certificate as a Place of Worship 3 January 1838 and typed note (undated and author unknown) from the Vineyard Church Archives.

<sup>52</sup> VCB, church meeting 4 October 1838.

<sup>53</sup> VCB, church meeting 4 April 1839.

<sup>54</sup> VCB, church meeting 3 October 1839.

<sup>55</sup> VCB, church meetings 7–10 October 1839.

<sup>56</sup> VCB, church meeting 2 January 1840.

building of the chapel into the hands of trustees without requiring any return of his investment or interest that might have accrued. The members were delighted with this news and passed a special resolution thanking Wilson which Martin was to pass on to him adding any words of his own. Clearly, Wilson was confident that he might leave matters now in the hands of the appointed trustees. He died three years later aged 79.

Sadly, a situation arose in April concerning the alleged immoral conduct of one church member. Martin, referring to it as 'a subject of a painful nature', called a special meeting a week later.<sup>57</sup> He informed everyone that it had been reported that Mrs Harriet Neile (who had separated from her husband because of his adultery) was pregnant by a young man of her acquaintance. This was found to be true; the sad case was 'considered with much penitence and tenderness on the part of the church'. There is no record of when she joined the church and perhaps the penitence was because she had received little pastoral care. Nevertheless she was formally 'cut off from the fellowship'—a decision that today would be considered harsh for a single parent. Martin was to inform her of the decision. Nothing is known of what happened afterwards.

During 1840 twelve new members joined. 1841 started with three members joining in April. Two, Eliza Stocker and Mary Ann Hamblin, had not been baptised so at the meeting Martin carried out this sacrament.<sup>58</sup> But over the spring and summer Martin was laid low by illness for some months; no church meetings were held from April onwards until a special one<sup>59</sup> was convened in his absence. At this meeting, chaired by Ashton, a medical report about Martin was given. Members were upset at the report as Martin was well loved; despite their concerns they had a 'cheerful hope' for him. The nature of his illness was not disclosed but it had been recommended in the medical report that he should go to Torquay in Devon for the winter to benefit from the milder climate, a period of silence and rest. The members agreed that they would continue to pay their subscriptions to his ministry so money would not be a worry and to raise funds to help him meet his expenses in 'so distant a part of the Kingdom'. They also said they would pray for his recovery. In Martin's absence, Ashton chaired meetings over the winter months. In April<sup>60</sup> it was reported that Martin would benefit from a further few months in Devon and it was agreed that he should stay there until the end of June. Ashton was thanked for his help and agreed to continue to act as a locum until then.

Martin returned in the summer and a special meeting<sup>61</sup> was held at the

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<sup>57</sup> VCB, church meeting 10 April 1840.

<sup>58</sup> VCB, church meeting 5 April 1841.

<sup>59</sup> VCB, church meeting 3 October 1841.

<sup>60</sup> VCB, church meeting 14 April 1842.

<sup>61</sup> VCB, church meeting 1 September 1842.

beginning of September 1842 to give thanks for his partial recovery and his return to Richmond. His health had improved and he was able to take the occasional service. Martin thanked the fellowship for their support, kindness and sympathy but asked for patience as he was only able to take occasional services during the winter. They were prepared to 'wait the Lord's time until His will should be made manifest and plain'. Grateful thanks were expressed to Ashton who was presented with two books in acknowledgement of his kindness and help.

Martin was able to carry out administrative work. He was asked to update the list of members taking into account those who had moved or were no longer involved. He reported at a meeting<sup>62</sup> before Christmas that 14 names should be removed. He rewrote the list which now had 93 names. If the same ratio of members to non-members that existed when Martin's letter of invitation was signed in 1835, then the total that formed the fellowship as 1842 drew to a close amounted to 553 souls. This was a remarkable achievement in just eight years.

That the church continued to thrive as 1843 dawned was seen by the initiation of a Christian Instruction Society with Martin as president. Its purpose was to address the 'ignorance and impiety which prevailed around them'.<sup>63</sup> The details were worked out at a subsequent meeting.<sup>64</sup> The instruction of children in the Sunday Schools was then discussed and Martin was also appointed as president, with the superintendent elected annually by the teachers. For the moment Mr Anderson was appointed to this post.

During May and June Martin was again seriously ill and no church meetings took place. However he was well enough to chair the meeting<sup>65</sup> in August but noted that only two had joined the church since the beginning of the year. He proposed another time of prayer which was held one evening a week or so later<sup>66</sup> when they prayed that 'showers of blessing would come down upon all the people' [Ezekiel 34 vs. 26]. The next meeting<sup>67</sup> did not take place until nearly three months later when Ashton chaired as Martin was unwell. Clearly he was suffering much. And the church's numerical growth was slowing; only three new members had joined during 1843.

Ashton chaired a short meeting<sup>68</sup> at the beginning of January 1844 when

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62 VCB, church meeting 16t December 1842.

63 VCB, church meeting 30 December 1842.

64 VCB, church meeting 3 January 1843.

65 VCB, church meeting 3 August 1843.

66 VCB, church meeting 15 August 1843.

67 VCB, church meeting 23 November 1843.

68 VCB, church meeting 7 January 1844.

three were admitted to the church. But Martin's health was clearly deteriorating rapidly; the testimony of his friends that

His faith was strong and unwavering. He was calm, tranquil and full of hope to the latest moment of his life. He died, leaving his beloved wife and three children to the care of a gracious God, and the kind and sympathising consideration of the Christian public.<sup>69</sup>

He died on 2 March. Martin had no death certificate. The only mention of his illness is a passing reference made in his obituary to 'fatal pulmonary symptoms'. With the length of his illness, this reference to his symptoms and that he spent months at the seaside to rest, it is possible that he died from tuberculosis or a chronic obstructive pulmonary disease such as chronic bronchitis. This disease, after the initial infection, lies dormant but may be reactivated by a weakened immune system due to other illnesses. Or he may have had an underlying respiratory condition such as asthma or perhaps a chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (such as chronic bronchitis or emphysema) involving damage to the lungs over time.<sup>70</sup> Consumption, as TB was then known, was a virulent, often fatal disease in the c19th and early c20th. Sadly, for such a young man, whatever the nature of his illness it was terminal.

His death is recorded in the church book

It is now the duty of the Officers ... to record the solemn truth that the hand which its proceedings have been these eight years past inscribed within this book is now cold in death—the Revd Henry B Martin the first pastor, after a short but happy pastorate, has been called to realise the blessedness of that heavenly state toward which he so zealously labored (*sic*) to direct the people of his charge.

He was buried on 8 March six days after his death in the graveyard behind the chapel. His funeral was attended by many local ministers including Revds John Richards of Wandsworth and Edward Miller of Chiswick who spoke at the service and at his graveside. His funeral sermon was preached on the Sunday evening by his mentor Robert Ashton on 'He being dead yet speaketh' taken from Hebrews 11 vs. 4. It must have been a very sad occasion.

His tragic death at the early age of 36 left a widow and four children, John was aged 8, and Eliza aged 6, Henry aged 5 and Charles aged 4. He had attempted to secure life assurance before he died but this was refused. He had no pension, there was no state welfare provision and Louisa Martin was left without means of support. Pension provision for the widows of Ministers was not set up until 30 years later with the establishment of the Pastor's Widows Fund in

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<sup>69</sup> *Congregational Magazine* (1844).

<sup>70</sup> Notes taken by the author from discussions with Dr Jenny Eades MBBS, BSc, DRCOG, MRCGP on pulmonary diseases.

1871 one of whose managers was Revd Robert Ashton—Martin's friend.<sup>71</sup> For Louisa Martin an appeal was set up to raise funds for her but no records survive as to what this amounted to.<sup>72</sup>

Louisa Martin remained part of the church until August 1845.<sup>73</sup> Little is known of what happened to her after the death of her husband but she never remarried. Sometime after 1845 she and her children moved to Lambeth where the 1851 census records her living at 16, Brunswick Crescent with her son John and her daughter Eliza. There were three servants and two visitors staying. Ten years later, in 1861 she was living at 7, Priory Grove, Lambeth and was recorded as being a 'Freeholder'. Her other son, Henry, was living with her and was a 'Silk Maker'. In 1871 Louisa was 63 and then living in Hackney St John. Retreat Cottages where she lived was accommodation provided for the widows of Congregational Ministers and she was deemed to be an 'annuitant'—a beneficiary of the charity.<sup>74</sup> She died there in 1884 aged 76.

Martin's coffin was discovered when the foundations for an extension to the church were being excavated in July 2004 and a workman broke through into unknown burial vault containing five coffins. One was that of Revd Henry Beresford Martin. His coffin was marked by a lead plaque inscribed with his name.

But much more remained after his death than his coffin.

Wilson deemed young Martin his friend and he was delighted that his confidence in him had been justified. Foundations had been laid for Sunday School work for children and instruction for adults with the Christian Instruction Society. Church finances were sound. Outreach to needy in the neighbourhood was in place. Prayer played an important part in the life of the church. Divisions had been healed. The congregation numbered some 500. He was remembered with great affection by his flock. His personal example of prayer and his firm faith inspired them through his remarkable ministry during the early years of the church.

Richmond's population was only 5,000 in 1830 but this grew rapidly 16 years later with the building of the station and railway line in 1846; this gave quick and easy access to London resulting in the growth of the town into a significant suburb. By then the church was poised for growth and the Independent Chapel of Congregationalists was able to provide a spiritual home to many who settled in the expanding town.

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<sup>71</sup> Records of the Pastor's Widow Fund 1871 and Surrey Fund for Widows 1876. Congregational Library.

<sup>72</sup> *Congregational Magazine* (1844).

<sup>73</sup> VCB's last record of her attendance at communion was August 1845.

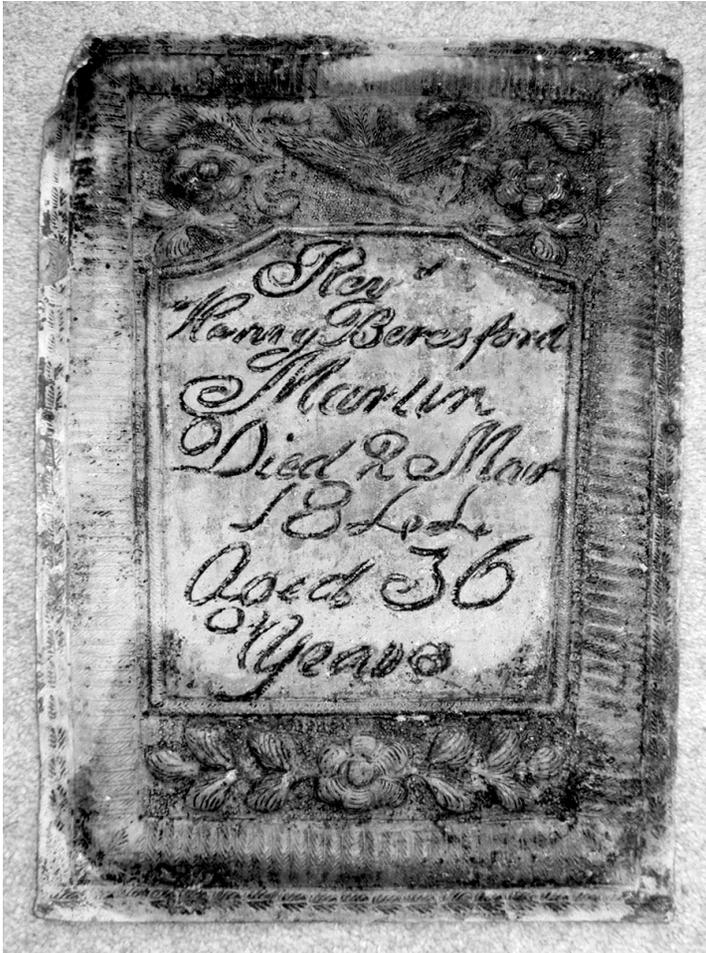
<sup>74</sup> 1851, 1861 and 1871 Censuses. No records have been found of the almshouses and their location is now a housing estate.

As his obituary said: 'His labours live in the faith and piety of many whom he blessed in bringing to God'. Henry Beresford Martin was a remarkable young minister.

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*Peter Flower*

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# A CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN REVOLUTIONARY PETROGRAD

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That a Congregational church existed in 1917 in Petrograd and had done so for many years may be a surprise to CHS readers. That in 1917 its ministers, both English, were caught up in the momentous events of that year of revolution will probably be equally unexpected. In the early twentieth century the *Congregational Year Book* regularly listed more churches than those in the British Isles. Churches in Ireland, Australia and other parts of the British Empire were included, as were some in mainland Europe. Among the latter was a church in Łódź, in what was termed 'Russian Poland' where the fellowship was described as Free Reformed (Congregational) and where services in 1917 were led by Pastor Bohumil Prochazka in the Czech and Polish languages.<sup>1</sup> The church in Petrograd (St Petersburg changed its name to be less German in September 1914<sup>2</sup>) did not stand out from the five pages or so listing such churches in Europe. The number of its members was not given, nor was the name and address of the church secretary. Yet the experiences which its members endured were unique.

## Revolution

Repeated military defeats in the First World War weakened the Tsar's position as head of the Russian state and exposed the incompetence of his government. By February 1917 the British ambassador, Sir George Buchanan (1854–1924), foresaw that the Russian political and economic situation was so critical that an armed uprising might be forthcoming. Riots in the city over the shortages of food spread further afield and resulted in the abdication of the vacillating Tsar Nicholas II in March, at which point his brother, Grand Duke Michael, refused to succeed to the throne. The revolution thus brought a provisional government into office which the British and Americans quickly recognised. Indeed in England the weekly nonconformist newspaper *The Christian World* in March welcomed this revolution as the 'breaking of despotism and the birth of a democratic nation' consisting of 180 million people. However Buchanan believed that Russia was not ready for democracy and he rightly expected political unrest to spread and both revolution and counter-revolution to follow. The British community in Petrograd, following the lead of Buchanan's wife, Lady Georgina, had opened a hospital for Russians wounded in the war.<sup>3</sup>

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1 *The Congregational Year Book* (hereafter CYB) (1917) 593.

2 <http://historyatstate.tumblr.com/post/89931024996/ambassador-george-t-marye-jr-1849-1933> accessed 5/10/18.

3 *The Christian World*—22 March 1917, ODNB.

Yet by November 1917 *The Christian World* was reporting that the Bolsheviks had overthrown the provisional government and ‘temporarily’ had Petrograd in their power. Among their first proclamations had been the abolition of private property. A week later the newspaper observed that ‘Events move so quickly in Russia that the only thing that can be predicted is that they are likely to go from bad to worse’. The Bolsheviks had then secured Moscow and Petrograd which the Cossacks, once friendly to the revolutionaries but having turned against them, had failed to recapture. Sir George Buchanan and many of the British residents were still in the city. At this stage the newspaper noted that the Baptist Union of Great Britain had sent a message to the Russian Baptists congratulating them on the revolution and the entrance of Russia into ‘the fraternity of the free peoples of the world’.<sup>4</sup> Their misunderstanding was widely shared.

Certainly the Revolutions of March and October 1917 were quite distinct from each other. The first led to the collapse of the Tsarist autocracy of the Romanov dynasty and the second resulted in its eventual replacement by the Soviet Union. The October revolution culminated in the ascendancy of the Bolshevik Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. The revolution spread from Petrograd to Moscow and from Moscow to Kiev and thence all over the empire.<sup>5</sup>

## The British and American Congregational Church

In 1917 the ministers of the church in Petrograd were James Key (1827–1919), a Londoner, who had enjoyed two periods as minister at St Petersburg, and a younger man, Joseph Clare (1885–?). After training at Cheshunt College from 1853 and serving two years as minister at Leamington, Key had first served as minister at the church in Alexandroffsky in the Russian capital in 1858, remaining there until 1865. He then spent two years at Wareham before returning to St Petersburg in 1867 where he stayed until 1918. Key was an unusual Congregational minister in the Victorian age. He had grown up at the Finsbury Tabernacle during the pastorate of Dr John Campbell<sup>6</sup> and then become a student at the Royal Academy. There he had met and become friends with William Holman Hunt OM (1827–1910)<sup>7</sup> the pre-Raphaelite artist who was later to remark, once he had acquired fame, much of it for his paintings of religious themes including ‘The Light of the World’, that Key had provided ‘the inspiration of all my work’. Key endured considerable hardship during the revolutionary struggles in Petrograd before he and his wife escaped to England where they settled at Wroxham, Norfolk. There he died in March 1919.<sup>8</sup>

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4 *The Christian World*—15 and 22 November, 1917.

5 G E Buchanan *My Mission to Russia, and other diplomatic memories* (1923) vol II, 86.

6 ODNB.

7 ODNB.

8 *CYB* (1920) 105.

Joseph Clare had studied for the ministry at Hackney College 1907–11 and after a brief pastorate at Friern Barnet had moved to St Petersburg in 1913. He had been in the city four years when the tumultuous events of 1917 unfolded.<sup>9</sup>

## Congregationalism in Russia

The Congregational church in St Petersburg, principally serving a community of merchants and diplomats, seems to have been founded about 1817 when a certain Glen is listed by Charles Surman in his celebrated 'Index of Congregational Ministers' as pastoring to a church there. In 1818 Glen appears to have had as his colleague the Scotsman William Swan who was dispatched by the London Missionary Society (LMS) to study Russian and Mongolian there, prior to his travelling on for 4,000 miles to Siberia to join Edward Stallybrass at his remote mission station. Swan remained in St Petersburg 1818–1819 and in the latter year journeyed east to Siberia. However by 1832 Swan was back in St Petersburg, perhaps on an extended furlough, where he spent another two years. By 1834 he was again in Siberia where he stayed until 1841. In 1844 he was home from overseas mission and was working in Glasgow Theological Hall.<sup>10</sup>

In 1821 Richard Knill (1787–1857) was noted as ministering to the English Congregational Church in the city. He had spent five years from 1815 as a missionary in India, notably at Travancore, with the LMS but there an outbreak of cholera brought him close to death. He was ordered to leave India and, after three years in England, medical advice suggested a colder climate would help correct any lingering health issues. Consequently he was instructed to travel to Siberia to overcome the 'Indian exhaustion' but in St Petersburg found himself urged by 'the little band of zealous and devoted Christians, British and American', to continue in that city. It was generally considered that 'the field of usefulness' in the town was 'great, both in relation to the English-speaking residents and to the outspread of religious truth throughout the Russian dominions'. In St Petersburg Knill 'laboured zealously and successfully'. He secured 'the confidence not only of his own flock, but of the Emperor and the royal family'. They both encouraged and supported his efforts to improve the welfare of the natives and foreigners in the city. Soon the church needed a larger place of worship and Knill visited England to obtain financial help which venture proved successful, although he was not to return to Russia. Arrangements, however, were made in St Petersburg for a new building. This may be when the church moved to Alexandroffsky.<sup>11</sup>

In St Petersburg Knill may have worked in conjunction with Glen and/or

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<sup>9</sup> The Surman Index of Congregational Ministers held at Dr Williams's Library, London.

<sup>10</sup> R Lovett *The History of the London Missionary Society 1795–1895* (1899) vol II 586–595, Surman Index.

<sup>11</sup> *CYB* (1858) 213.

Swan but Knill was certainly there until 1833. He was joined in 1823 by Cornelius Rahmn who was also in the employ of the LMS, having been a colleague of Stallybrass since 1817, most of that time in Siberia. Rahmn was a native of Gothenburg in Sweden and remained in St Petersburg until 1825. Swan's return in 1832 meant that he covered the year 1833 when Knill left to undertake other work for the LMS. By 1842 Knill was minister at Wotton-under-Edge in Gloucestershire where he remained for five years before moving to Chester.<sup>12</sup>

From 1834 to 1838 it is unclear who was acting as minister in the Russian capital but from 1838 to 1855 Thomas S Ellerby was the minister of what had now become the British-American Church at St Petersburg. He had studied at Highbury College from 1835, before travelling to Russia. Later in his life, from 1856 to 1866, he served a church in Toronto, Canada. In 1856 Edwin Corbold (1827–1921), having trained at Cheshunt College, moved to St Petersburg from which he returned to England in 1863 to become minister at Knaresborough in Yorkshire.<sup>13</sup> As stated, James Key then had his first sojourn in Russia 1858–65.

Andrew Findlater Simpson (1842–1923) was from Aberdour, in Aberdeenshire, and studied at the University of Edinburgh and the Scottish Theological Hall. Having served a pastorate in Duncanstone he spent a term at Berlin University in 1868 and then accepted a call to the Congregational church at St Petersburg where he remained until 1872 before returning to Scotland to Dalkeith. In 1885 he became professor of Old and New Testament Exegesis and Criticism in the Scottish Congregational Theological Hall.<sup>14</sup>

In 1870 Benjamin John Hall (1836–1908) was called from his ministry in East Hartlepool to St Petersburg. He stayed for nine years, achieving 'some success amid exceptional difficulties'. His obituary does not specify the nature of these difficulties but in a foreign city so far from home the possible difficulties must have been numerous. By 1880 he had a pastorate in Lutterworth in Leicestershire. During his time in Russia Hall would have known William Nic(h)olson who, like Key, had a lengthy stay in Russia. Nicholson was in St Petersburg for the British and Foreign Bible Society 1869–97. Following Hall came John Dawson Kilburn who arrived in 1880 and left after some years but returned in 1894 for a further ten years as Key's colleague. He was also joined in St Petersburg by Alexander Francis who was there 1889–1903.<sup>15</sup>

Andrew Ritchie moved from Greenock to St Petersburg in 1904, remaining until 1906. George Lawrence Parker moved from the Episcopal Church, USA in 1906 to the church in St. Petersburg, staying until 1908. His presence signifies that the church may have had an inter-denominational character, like other

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12 Surman Index, *CYB* (1858) 212.

13 *CYB* (1922) 101–102.

14 *CYB* (1924) 104.

15 *CYB* (1909) 175. Surman Index.

churches in capitals across the world, in drawing those temporarily exiled from their native countries. In 1907 William Orr, a Glaswegian by birth, was called from his first pastorate at Philiphaugh Church, Selkirk, to the British-American Church in St Petersburg, arriving in 1908. There he married in 1910 Daisy Maxwell who was the grand-daughter of David Bell, one of the founders of the Congregational church in the city. Yet by 1914 Orr was home in Airdrie.<sup>16</sup>

Simpson, Hall, Orr and others then had all been colleagues of the long serving James Key whose second term in St Petersburg began in 1867 and lasted until 1918. If some of the other British Congregational ministers in the nineteenth century could be accused of merely passing through Russia, and making an extended visit to St Petersburg, a kind of belated Congregational grand tour, Key then was definitely not visiting Russia. Rather he had made St Petersburg his home where he spent 58 years in all. His dedication to the church matched that of the Congregationalists at home who demonstrated a decided commitment to this bold foreign venture. Key must have been well known not only among the expatriate Europeans and Americans there but also among his Russian neighbours. Though much older than his colleague, Joseph Clare, Key might be expected to have smoothed the way for Clare to settle, introducing him not only to key individuals in the church fellowship but showing him how to move around the city and where he might safely spend his leisure hours.

The address of the British and American Congregational Church in 1916 was given as 16 New Isaac Street, perhaps suggesting that it had moved at some point from its earlier location. Among those who regularly worshipped there were many diplomats and officials from the American embassy. Indeed even the previous American ambassador and many of his staff had numbered among the congregation.<sup>17</sup> This might have been Curtis Guild Jr. (1860–1915) who came from Boston, Massachusetts and had served as governor of his home state before becoming ambassador to Russia, 1911–13.<sup>18</sup> Boston's first settlers were Congregational and many of the town's leading citizens attended the Congregational churches. Until its entry into the war, the U.S. embassy represented the interests of various belligerent countries, including Germany and Austria-Hungary, from the summer of 1914. The US ambassador 1914–16, George T Marye (1857–1933), may also have worshipped with the Congregationalists in Petrograd.<sup>19</sup>

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16 Surman Index. *CYB* (1923) 114.

17 H Rappaport *Caught in the Revolution: Petrograd 1917* (2016) 75.

18 <http://politicalgraveyard.com/bio/guess-gunderman.html> accessed 5/10/17.

19 Rappaport *Revolution* 8; <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/people/chiefsomission/russia> accessed 5/10/17.

## Witnesses to the Revolution

Joseph Clare left a manuscript account of his experiences in Russia which was later deposited at Leeds University and is kept in the university's Russian archive. There he describes witnessing one incident in February 1917 at the Znamensky Square when 'a dense mass of people from the Nevsky' Prospekt 'converged with another crowd' coming up Ligovskaya, the major thoroughfare south of the square'. Some police officers tried to disperse the mob by riding on horseback among them and ordering them to go home. 'The people knew the soldiers were sympathetic and refused to budge. However two detachments from the Volynsky regiment lined up outside a nearby hotel and their commander ordered his men to fire into the crowd. At first the soldiers begged people to leave so that they need not fire. Then they shot into the air and only then, when the commander forced each soldier to discharge his weapon into the crowd and he used his own pistol in that way, did a machine gun, from the roof of a building, open up and bodies start to drop. To complicate matters further a troop of Cossacks began firing at the roof tops to silence the maxim gun there. The crowd scattered to shelter and some among them also commenced firing. Hundreds were wounded and at least forty were killed. Clare's account is supported by others who were present.'<sup>20</sup>

The results of such violent scenes were that dead bodies, often of policemen—'shot, bayoneted, clubbed to death'—were left untouched on the streets which in central Petrograd were wide. Joseph Clare recalled that even surrendering to the mob in revolutionary Petrograd would not necessarily result in lives being spared. He knew a place 'where thirty or forty policemen were pushed through a hole in the ice without as much as a stunning tap on the head—drowned like rats'.<sup>21</sup>

## The Revolution Spreads

By December 1917 *The Christian World* was reporting that the Bolsheviks were negotiating a separate peace with the Germans. At that point Russia had descended into civil war, with various armies threatening Moscow and coal and corn supplies to Petrograd being held up. More particularly it stated that 'a loss of confidence in Lenin and Trotsky' (the foreign minister) was evident. By then the British and French ambassadors in Petrograd had published statements that their governments had no desire to keep Russia in the war against her will but they declared that a separate peace would put Russia at the mercy of Germany which has no sympathy with democracy and is imperialist in its aims. One

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<sup>20</sup> Rappaport *Revolution* 75–76.

<sup>21</sup> Rappaport *Revolution* 995.

week later the newspaper commented that the Revolution had ‘degenerated into a maniacal attack on the propertied classes, and on the whole framework of law and representative government’. It further offered the view that Lenin and Trotsky would probably ‘not be able long to hold their supremacy’. By late December the Bolsheviks were suing for peace with the central powers at Brest-Litovsk. It was noted that the Bolsheviks had ‘a rapidly growing movement against them, with an extending civil war’. In January 1918 Sir George Buchanan gave leave of his intention to return home, on grounds of health. He had carried on ‘in very difficult conditions’ but his departure was surely a signal to other Britons to find the means to leave also.<sup>22</sup> Indeed the scenes in Petrograd were as dismal as ever. ‘The horde of drunken and disorderly soldiers and sailors’ on whom the government depended still indulged ‘in wholesale brigandage and massacre’. Men of the Black Sea fleet had killed more than sixty officers, including four admirals, which caused the Admiral-in-Chief to resign in protest. The revolution in the countryside had led the peasants to seize and divide ‘all the landed estates without waiting for any laws’.<sup>23</sup>

By late January 1918 *The Christian World* had headlines like ‘Russian Reign of Terror’ and ‘Russian Civil War’ (Finland, the Ukraine and the Baltic states had by then broken away from the former empire). The historian A J P Taylor wrote that the Russian revolution (of March 1917) was ‘made in the streets of Petrograd’. In Trotsky’s words, ‘power fell into the street’. On 24 January 1918 *The Christian World* reported that on the previous Friday about 150 were killed on the streets of Petrograd, with former ministers of Kerensky’s government being shot dead in the hospital where they had been carried with their wounds. Despite such shocking reports the British at home were slow to realise the horror. The Salvation Army sent Commissioner Henry Mapp to Petrograd and he observed ‘the present chaotic condition of the country’ as ‘a serious hindrance’ to his organisation’s work. Yet he felt that ‘the Spirit of the Revolution’ was ‘entirely in favour’ of the Salvation Army and he predicted that in the next few years the army would be ‘enormous’ in Russia.<sup>24</sup> John Reed, an American reporter who was present in Petrograd, observed that the Salvation Army ‘admitted to Russia for the first time in history, plastered the walls with announcements of gospel meetings, which amused and astounded Russian audiences’.<sup>25</sup> If Commissioner Mapp was far too optimistic, then it is likely that the Congregational authorities at a distance similarly failed to understand the gravity of the situation for Key, Clare and their church.

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22 *The Christian World*—13 December 1917, 20 December 1917, 10 January 1918.

23 *The Christian World*—17 January 1918.

24 *The Christian World*—24, 31 January 1918; A J P Taylor ‘Introduction’ to J Reed *Ten Days that Shook the World* (Penguin 1977) x-xi.

25 Reed *Ten Days that Shook the World* 38.

## Others in Petrograd

Among those present in Petrograd throughout the revolution was the English journalist Arthur Ransome (1884–1967) who later wrote the *Swallows and Amazons* stories. From 1915 he was working for the *Daily News* and from 1919 for the *Manchester Guardian*. He knew well Lenin and Trotsky, even marrying the latter's secretary and, though he praised the Bolsheviks, he was also employed as a secret agent for the British.<sup>26</sup>

One English chaplain, attached to the British embassy and to the Anglican church in Petrograd from 1908, was Rev. Bousfield Swan Lombard (1866–1951). He was much liked by the Britons in the city but suffered arrest and internment by the Bolsheviks in 1918.<sup>27</sup> That he experienced such treatment was a warning and an incentive to other Britons to leave. They were no longer safe.

## Conclusion

Probably Key and Clare returned to this country at the end of 1917 or the beginning of 1918. Certainly Clare was in Britain by the spring of 1918, suggesting that the elderly Key and his wife had returned with him or soon after. By May 1918 Clare had gone to America 'to fulfil a four months lecture and preaching tour for the Chautauqua Association along the Atlantic seaboard'. He was listed by Charles Surman as exercising some form of oversight in Liverpool 1917 to 1920 but emigrated to the USA in the 1920s, settling in Illinois, taking American citizenship.<sup>28</sup> However leaving his home and his life's ministry in Petrograd was surely a far bigger wrench for the veteran James Key who must have endured anguish over the sufferings of his many Russian friends and acquaintances. Like many others, were his dreams haunted by scenes of revolutionary excess and by guilt at his abandoning dependents? His death, aged 91 years, in March 1919 was not early but clearly did not occur where he had hoped and expected it. At his death he was attended by Canon Mason of Ely who later conducted a short service in his memory at Wroxham parish church. Among those present at his interment in Norwich were Mr and Mrs Coates of Petrograd, friends who understood at first hand the shock of his experiences.<sup>29</sup>

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*Alan Argent.*

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<sup>26</sup> ODNB.

<sup>27</sup> Rappaport *Caught in the Revolution* xxi.

<sup>28</sup> *The Christian World*—30 May 1918; Surman Index; Rappaport *Caught in the Revolution* xvii. The various Chautauquas constituted a popular US movement in adult education that peaked in 1924, the first having begun at Chautauqua Lake, New York State, in 1874. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/chautauqua-movement> accessed 8/10/17.

<sup>29</sup> *The Christian World*—20 March 1919.

## REVIEWS

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***Reformation Divided: Catholics, Protestants and the Conversion of England.* By Eamon Duffy. Bloomsbury, 2017. Pp vi + 441. Hardback £30. ISBN 978-1-4729-3436-9**

Published to mark the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's '95 Theses' (pinned to the church door in Wittenberg on 31 October, 1517 and generally considered to be the start of the Protestant Reformation) Eamon Duffy's *Reformation Divided* promises much. It encompasses both the Reformation and the Catholic Counter-Reformation, as viewed from an English perspective, and ranges over both the 16th and 17th centuries.

*Reformation Divided* aptly sums up Professor Duffy's contention that the Reformation was not the single, unified process which it is sometimes represented as being, but was in fact an ad hoc collection of increasingly diverse views and ideologies. The book is divided into three parts: 'Thomas More and Heresy'; 'Counter-Reformation England'; and 'The Godly and the Conversion of England'. This arrangement does not lead to a coherent structure and a more continuous narrative would have been preferable.

In the first section, Thomas More's humanism and friendly relations with Erasmus are dealt with at length. More is nowadays perceived as a controversial character, not least by Hilary Mantel in her 'Wolf Hall' novel, where the Catholic saint is effectively demonized for his intolerance towards the early Protestant movement. Professor Duffy considers the evidence and, rejecting the psycho-sexual analysis of Sir Geoffrey Elton, concludes that More was honourable in his beliefs, seeing predestination and confirmation by faith as destructive of Catholicism's emphasis on morality and salvation by good works. Curiously, there is little or no reference made to the elephant in the room, King Henry VIII, and his minister, Thomas Cromwell, whose part in the English Reformation is largely ignored.

The second part of the book, 'Counter-Reformation England', explores the English Catholic response to changed circumstances and the Council of Trent. Once again, as with Thomas More, it views this largely through potted biographies of the leading characters, Cardinals Pole and Allen and the lesser known Gregory Martin. Due emphasis is given to Allen's foundation of the English College at Douai and 'the recusant response to the Elizabethan religious settlement'.

The final section of the book, 'The Godly and the Conversion of England' considers post-Reformation England and the attempts by Puritans and other minority sects to displace conventional Anglicanism, on the basis that popery was still evident. Duffy does not claim that Protestantism was much loved by the populace at large and there are even suggestions that England was not truly Christian. Thankfully, Duffy does not accept the premise that the first millennium and a half of Christianity could simply be written-off until the advent of the reformed religion. Indeed, he contends that the Counter-

Reformation was as important as the Reformation itself. The section concludes with an interesting chapter on 'George Fox and the Reform of the Reformation'. The origins of The Society of Friends (Quakers) are well explained and provide a fascinating coda to the main themes of the earlier text, since Fox sought not merely reform, but destruction of the institutional Church altogether (a sobering thought, given the mild and peaceful nature of present-day Quakers).

Professor Duffy's book is erudite and seriously academic. It is not a book for the lay reader and certainly not a book for the beach.

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*Tim Corcoran*

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***Protestants: The Radicals Who Made the Modern World.* By Alec Ryrie. William Collins 2017. Pp xi + 513. Hardback £25. ISBN 978-0007465-03-3**

Another publication to mark the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation is Alec Ryrie's *Protestants*. Ryrie himself is a fine historian, professor of the history of Christianity at Durham University, a Reformation specialist and a serious Anglican. Here he writes from within the fellowship of worldwide Protestantism and is at home with his material.

At the outset, following Erasmus, he compares Protestants to lovers and fighters and finds both analogies fitting. He sees Protestantism as 'one of the most creative and disruptive movements' in history and claims for it about one eighth of the world's current population. He does not merely idealize, recognising that Protestants have not only challenged and overcome tyrants but have also persecuted dissenters and fought religious wars against each other.

He identifies three ingredients in our world which are rooted in Protestant Christianity—free inquiry, democracy and apoliticism—none of which at first sight echo the traditional Reformation watchwords of salvation by faith through grace or the priesthood of all believers. Nor do they immediately speak of anti-clericalism nor of the scriptures being translated into the language of the people but such translations themselves brought about the transformation which is meat and drink to Ryrie. And the triumph of the laity which the Reformation brought in its wake points toward democracy.

In the wake of Max Weber and R. H. Tawney, Ryrie sees Protestantism as 'starting new arguments and spawning new forms' which 'self-perpetuating dynamo of dissatisfaction and yearning' has fuelled the growth of capitalism in the past and still does today. He does not say that Roman Catholics and others would state that this restless dynamo or 'itchy instability' has led to constant fragmentation among the many different Protestant groupings and to the dissidence (if not dissolution) of Protestant dissent. Ryrie sees this as reacting against 'formalism and hypocrisy'. This is not chiefly a history of Protestantism but rather of Protestants who claim that they are God's chosen people. They include Luther and Calvin but also the Vermont preacher William Miller whose vision of apocalypticism swept across America in the 1840s and Choe Ja-Sil, the Korean nurse who helped to found a tent church which became at her death in 1989 the world's largest congregation.

Ryrie divides his book into three parts. The first deals with the Reformation age (six chapters), the second covers the modern age from the eighteenth century to the post World War Two period (six chapters), and the third addresses the global age (four chapters). An epilogue looks to the Protestant future. In his first part he relates the story from Luther and the reform movements he spawned to Calvinism, the heretics, martyrs and witches, and the civil wars in Britain and then the migration of Protestant refugees to the New World. The second part begins with Methodists and Moravians, discusses the emergence of Protestant slavery and the attempts to abolish it, the evangelicalism of the American west, the 'Ordeals of Liberalism, and the age of dictators and the Nazis. This part ends with a discussion of the religious left and the religious right. His third part tackles the influence of the missionaries overseas and the growth of indigenous churches in Korea and China and also of Pentecostalism and its global outreach.

Although it is a large book of over 500 pages, it is an easy read and is not overpriced at £25 for a quality hardback. I particularly appreciate the map of central Europe (in effect the Holy Roman Empire) at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The book would make a sensible choice for a Christian study group and would certainly stimulate discussion. I recommend it to you.

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*Anne Hayter.*

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***Challenge and Change English Baptist Life in the Eighteenth Century* Edited by Stephen L Copson and Peter J Morden. The Baptist Historical Society, Didcot 2017. Pp xiv + 304. Paperback £25. ISBN 978-0903166-45-4**

The Baptist Historical Society is to be congratulated for its initiative in bringing this series of essays together in this volume. The Baptists underwent serious challenges and changes in the tumultuous long eighteenth century, dating from the Glorious Revolution of 1688 to the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. At a time of growing industrialism and burgeoning dissenting ambition the Baptists founded the first modern missionary organisation in 1792 with the Baptist Missionary Society.

Specialists in their field address the various issues. Peter J Morden writes of the Particular Baptists and his fellow editor, Stephen Copson, tackles the General Baptists. The veteran scholar, John Briggs, outlines the New Connexion General Baptists also throughout the long century. Then successive chapters deal with the various themes of Baptist life. Christopher J Ellis describes local Baptist life under the attractive title, borrowed from John Ryland, of 'The Beauty of Social Religion', Karen E Smith considers the family and the household in Baptists at Home, and John Briggs turns to Baptists and the wider community, aware that the world at large had an unfortunately negative view of those often termed Anabaptist. He treats with the Dissenting Deputies, with business, and the growing confidence of Baptists to confront political and social concerns. The later 18th century is treated by James E Bradley who concentrates on Baptists and the public debates of national politics in England, especially those engendered by the American and French Revolutions. Michael A G Haykin, under another alluring

title, 'With light, beauty, and power', addresses the theme of educating English Baptists, citing at the outset that the Baptist theologian, John Gill, in 1754 regarded the Calvinistic Baptists in England as 'unhappily ignorant of the importance of learning'. The American scholar of English dissent, Tim Whelan, with another title that refutes the Victorian aesthete's critique of dissenting culture, 'No sanctuary for Philistines', weighs up the relation between Baptists and culture.

Faith and Brian Bowers ask what is known of the people in Baptist pews? They offer an analysis of the relevant information which they have endeavoured to recover, noting that a denomination dependent on the priesthood of all believers has left little data on its laity. Yet this is a fine essay. Lastly David Thompson sums up the Baptists' relations with other Christians throughout this period. He makes clear the changing geographical distribution of Baptists throughout the century and also states that the changing fortunes of Baptists, like those of other nonconformists, depended to a degree on the extent to which Anglican parsons were resident in their parishes.

This is an important book which I unhesitatingly recommend to the *CHS Mag* readers. It was commissioned as a replacement for Raymond Brown's *The English Baptists of the Eighteenth Century* (1989) and it is dedicated to Brown. It is a welcome addition to dissenting scholarship.

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Christine J Mount

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***Dr Williams's Library 1729–1793: 'A Good Library, under the Direction of the Dissenters'.* By Alan Argent. Friends of Dr Williams's Library Seventieth Lecture. Dr Williams's Trust, 2017. Pp 40. Price £5.00 (£2.50 to Friends of Dr Williams's Library). ISBN 978-0-85217-091-5**

The year 2016 marked the tercentenary of the death of Dr Daniel Williams, the most eminent and influential Dissenting minister of his age, under whose will the Trust and Library which bear his name were founded. It was appropriate, therefore, that in this year the annual Friends of Dr Williams's Library Lecture should be devoted to the early history of the institution. It is equally appropriate to point out the present reviewer, as both a Trustee of Dr Williams's Library and a former contributor to the series of lectures, is a well-informed, but hardly a completely impartial, commentator on the work under consideration here.

Dr Argent offers a detailed analysis of the Library's first sixty-four years of existence. Although designated by Daniel Williams as a 'publick' library, it was in practice open only to persons approved by the trustees nominated by the founder's will. Each of the twenty-three of those first trustees were Presbyterian (and fourteen were Presbyterian ministers), representing the largest and most prosperous Dissenting denomination of the early eighteenth century. But the Library became a vital repository for Independents and Baptists also, and developed into one of the most important Dissenting institutions of the country. Since its first premises were in Red Cross Street, Cripplegate, at the heart of the City of London, it was a convenient location for meetings of inter-denominational

Dissenting bodies, such as the 'Body of Protestant Dissenting Ministers of the Three Denominations', founded in 1727. As the author rightly observes, the initial provision for the Library did not include an allowance for the purchase of books. Accordingly, the 7,641 items which it possessed in 1716 came entirely from the collection amassed by Daniel Williams himself, which included that of his fellow-minister William Bates (d. 1699), which he had purchased on the latter's death. Accordingly, the Library relied almost entirely upon donations and legacies for the additions to its holdings of manuscripts, portraits and rare books, and relied heavily upon the generosity of its trustees, as recorded in the 'Book of Benefactors', an invaluable source of information for the Library's early (and subsequent) years. Moreover, as access to the Library widened, readers, too, became benefactors, and it was frequently the case that Dissenting authors donated copies of their works; notably examples were Edmund Calamy IV and Nathaniel Lardner. Predictably, then, the Library's books were predominantly theological, philosophical and historical, although works of natural history and medicine could also be found amongst them—a reflection, perhaps, of the multi-faceted role of the eighteenth-century Dissenting minister.

In June 1793 the trustees, beset by doctrinal divisions within Dissent and aware of the unease felt by many Dissenters in the immediate aftermath of the French Revolution, published an appeal for further support, lamenting the apparent lack of awareness of the library's essential functions and urging further financial contributions. Dr Argent takes 1793 as his terminal date and asks whether the apparent pessimism of the trustees in that year was fully justified. He concludes that it was not, and shows that the Library survived this difficult period and went on to prosper in the following two centuries. His Lecture is well documented and lucidly written; it has the further advantage of placing the Library in a wider context, drawing comparisons with other religious libraries of the time, including Sion College, which was a neighbour in Cripplegate of Daniel Williams's foundation. As a history of the Library it supplements Stephen Kay Jones's *Dr Williams and his Library* (1948), the very first lecture in this series. It will be of importance, too, for comparative purposes in the history of Dissenting education, ministerial training and scholarship; and will be worth reading in conjunction with the short but perceptive chapter on Manchester College in Paul Morgan's *Oxford Libraries outside the Bodleian* (1980). It will also take its place in the history of Dissenting philanthropy more generally, a subject of increasing interest to historians, as will be evident in the forthcoming volume of essays entitled *Protestant Dissent and Philanthropy in Britain, c.1660–c.1920* to be published by Boydell, which will include a chapter on Daniel Williams and his charities by David L. Wykes, the current Director of Dr Williams's Trust and Library. Meanwhile Alan Argent has made an important contribution to the literature and in doing so has maintained the high standard of the Friends of Dr Williams's Library lecture series.

***Mary Green, Bespoke Tailoress: Culture, Craft and Non-Conformity in an Industrial Textile Town of North West England, 1880–1920.* By Mary Cunningham. Ruddington Framework Knitters Museum 2015 Pp 47, with illustrations, notes and bibliography, plus a short appendix. Paperback £3.99 ISBN 978–1–872044–07–1**

This short biography offers a well-informed and fascinating glimpse of life in a very specific context, as described in the sub-title to the booklet. The focus is a woman of the middle classes, whose family background and nonconformist upbringing give her both opportunities and the confidence to make the most of them. We follow her through marriage, family life, bereavement and desertion, at the same time as she develops her skills and interacts with the church, which clearly played an important role in her life.

At each stage in the book, my curiosity: ‘Yes, but where did her non-conformist principles fit in ... how did the world of craft and industry actually work?’ was satisfied with brief, and well-illustrated insights into the cultural context. The only disappointment was the merely passing reference to non-conformist hymnody, in comparison with the fairly full description of the kind of literature she would have been reading.

The booklet would also have benefited from a little more attention to proofing and lay out. Too often, the figures are separate from the text that refers to them, and there are some small, but noticeable typographical errors. Occasionally, the writing moves away from narrative almost to note form.

But this little book is well worth reading. It is erudite and interesting, and opens up a set of perspectives which are often concealed from the historical narrative.

It ends with a postscript describing the circumstance which brought the story to light, a reminder that there must be countless similar narratives waiting to be discovered.

***In the Days of Rain: A daughter. A father. A cult.* By Rebecca Stott. 4th Estate 2017. Pp 394, including illustrations, endnotes and select bibliography. Hardback £16.99. ISBN 978–0–00–820916–2.**

This extraordinary memoir draws the reader immediately into the tormented, murky world of religious cultic obsession and never lets go. It is the memoir of a dying father, told by his daughter, who speaks right from the heart of the story. About a third of the way through the story comes a passage which, for me, perfectly locates the intensity and source of the paranoia which grip the book and the reader.

Most children, I guess, feel a dread of what they can’t see. Few children are told that they are right to be terrified, that their imaginary monsters are real devils sent by Satan, or that they might even be Satan himself. (p. 98)

Stott bases the book on her father’s memoirs and papers, and on discussions with him in the last weeks of his life. He has divided his reminiscences into ‘Before’, ‘During’ and ‘After’, and these are the three sections of the book—except that the last section is entitled ‘Aftermath’—that is, not simply what comes after, but the outworking of the harrowing tale that we have just read.

All three sections interweave the narrative in the memoir with the author's experience while writing it, and her own involvement in the story. This means that the central narrative plays out alongside two very powerful metanarratives, like the plaits Stott wore concealed under her headscarf during her childhood. The device never feels heavy handed, though it seems a little self-indulgent or even melodramatic, in the early chapters, until the emotional drive of the story gains momentum.

The unfettered child's imagination described in that quotation releases into the story some very powerful imagery. Both Stott and her father are shown grappling with the apocalyptic language of the Bible as children, in a context where it is taken very literally and applied directly to life. And the story itself descends into a darkness that is beyond even that imagining, when the controls are removed not only from childish thoughts but from adult fantasy.

'Before' charts Stott's own decision to make and keep her commitment to write the story. But it is also the 'before' of the story itself. Stott researches the family's background in Scottish fishing communities, where a strong dissenting tradition grew up in opposition to the tithes due to the Kirk. Generations of her own family are drawn through extreme hardship to an extreme form of religious dissent.

She and her father were born into the 'Close', or 'Closed' Brethren community, and their lives are defined by its overbearing patriarchy and internecine warfare. As a girl, she experiences the repressive silence and powerlessness enforced on women. She describes the community's descent into what she calls 'mania' through the eyes of a baffled and angry child, who survives by building an imaginary ark of refuge, into which she can escape to ride out the storm. The account is horrifying. While the powerful men at the centre devise more and more cruel ways to enforce separation from the world, their members are driven to family separation, loss of livelihood and even suicide.

Before she steps through the past back into the present day, she realises that she is no longer writing the book out of a sense of duty to her father, but:

I wanted to explain all of this to the child in the red cardigan I'd once been, the girl who'd done her best to understand the deranged world she was borne into, but who just ended up furious and confused. (p. 254)

But the story defied explanation, and this section of the book ends with questions:

How had so many clever, good people been led into such a cruel system? How had men like my father allowed themselves to become exactors and interrogators, bullying people into confessing to imaginary sins? (p. 254)

The 'Aftermath' works its way through the lives of the families and the people involved. Her father's life span out of control (Stott uses the analogy of 'the whirlpool I use to watch in the plughole of the bath as a very small child, that spiralling tunnel I feared would suck me down with it into the darkness.' (p. 314)), carrying the family with it.

Stott herself found a kind of resolution when she gained a scholarship to a grammar school that had been founded by two suffragist sisters in the nineteenth century, where she learnt to question, argue and debate. The bafflement and rage that had marked her childhood could now enter into dialogue with her own experience and the wider culture she was now encountering for the first time.

The last section stretches into Stott's adult life and the lives of her children until we find ourselves back in the room with her dying father, the place where the story began.

Although we are left with the tragedy that happened and the questions that remain, Stott knows there is a route to freedom: 'You'll never build an iron room (her father's name for the tin-roofed chapel, and the narrowness of cult life) strong enough or dark enough ... There'll always be a crack where the light gets in.'

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Janet Wootton

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***Undomesticated Dissent: Democracy and the Public Virtue of Religious Nonconformity.* By Curtis W Freeman. Baylor University Press, Waco, Texas 2017. Pp xvii + 269. Hardback. ISBN 978-1-4813-0688-1**

This book is a survey of the influence and importance of English religious dissenters through the examination of the most famous work of each of John Bunyan, Daniel Defoe and William Blake.

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## BOOKS WHICH MAY INTEREST CHS MAGAZINE READERS:

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Selected from Congregational Federation publications available in 2017. Order form at: [www.congregational.org.uk/downloads/forms/publications-order-form-2017.pdf](http://www.congregational.org.uk/downloads/forms/publications-order-form-2017.pdf)

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

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

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

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

*Serving the Saints—The History of the Congregational Federation's Training Board 1979–2010* (2010) by Alan Argent. £7.50

**Secretary:**

Rev. Dr Richard Cleaves  
17 Carlton Street  
Cheltenham  
GL52 6AG  
richard.cleaves@blueyonder.co.uk

**Editor and Reviews Editor:**

Dr A Argent  
125 Sudbourne Road  
London  
SW2 5AF  
alan.argent1@btopenworld.com

**Treasurer:**

Rev. C J Damp  
Bunyan Meeting  
Mill Street  
Bedford  
MK40 3EU

**Librarian**

Patricia Hurry  
Bunyan Meeting  
Mill Street  
Bedford  
MK40 3EU  
pathurry25@gmail.com

**Membership secretary:**

Peter I Young  
24 Daisy Dormer Court  
Trinity Gardens  
London  
SW9 8DW  
piy@live.co.uk

**Web site**

<http://conghistsoc.org.uk>

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