





# Changing Spiritual Identity: St Andrew's Street Baptist Church, Cambridge, from the 1730s to the 1920s

**Ian Randall**

Ian Randall is a Research Associate of the Cambridge Centre for Christianity Worldwide and a Senior Research Fellow of the International Baptist Theological Study Centre.

ian.m.randall@gmail.com

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## **Abstract:**

The story of St Andrew's Street Baptist Church, Cambridge, from the 1730s to the 1920s illuminates the place of those in the 'Dissenting' tradition in the context of a university setting in which for much of that time they were outsiders. The spiritual identity of this strategic church did not remain fixed over time, although there was clear continuity. This study focuses on the influence of those who were pastors of the church over the course of two centuries. It is not that the pastors shaped everything that characterised the church's life. However, those examined in this article each brought a distinctive emphasis, often addressed to the context of the period in which they served. The main emphases considered are freedom, spiritual improvement, a commitment to spreading the gospel, Christian work issuing from God's blessing, and witness to a growing university population. Although elements of all of these aspects were present throughout the period, I argue here that the church's spiritual identity underwent significant change.

## **Keywords:**

Baptist; Cambridge; university; spiritual identity

## **Introduction**

The story of St Andrew's Street Baptist Church, Cambridge, from the 1730s to the 1920s illuminates the place of those in the 'Dissenting' — later usually termed 'Nonconformist' and still later 'Free Church' — tradition in the context of a university setting in which for much of that time they were outsiders. The spiritual identity of this strategic church did not remain fixed over time, although there was clear continuity. This study focuses on the influence of those who were pastors of the church over the course of two centuries. It is not that the pastors shaped everything that characterised the church's life. However, those

examined here each brought a distinctive emphasis, often addressed to the context of the period in which they served. The main emphases considered in the course of this article are freedom, spiritual improvement, evangelism, work issuing from God's blessing, and witness to a growing university population. Although elements of all of these aspects were present throughout the period, I argue that the church's spiritual identity underwent significant change.

### **'A Free People': 1730s–1780s**

Baptists in England in the seventeenth century were part of a wider movement of dissent from the Church of England.<sup>1</sup> In Cambridge, as elsewhere, this led to new congregations starting. In 1689, the Toleration Acts gave an increased measure of freedom in worship to those outside the Church of England, although civic restrictions continued. It was in the late 1720s that the Baptist fellowship in Cambridge which became St Andrew's Street Baptist Church was formed. These Dissenters met in a refitted stable and granary, known as the Stone Yard, in St Andrew's parish. Their pastor for the first decade was Andrew Harper. Little is known about him. A notable successor of Harper as minister of the congregation, Robert Robinson (1735–1790), described him as 'a real Christian, a Protestant dissenter on principle, a Baptist indeed, neither ashamed to practise immersion himself, nor afraid to tolerate his brethren that differed'. He was loved by the church. The first record of members shows a small group of twenty-one (thirteen men and eight women). Gradual growth took place under Harper's ministry, which ended when he died in 1741.<sup>2</sup>

From 1745 to 1758 the Stone Yard pastor was a Scot, George Simpson, who had a Master of Arts degree from Aberdeen University, indicating an unusual level of scholarship for Baptists of that time. He had wide experience, having had three previous pastorates. In theology

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<sup>1</sup> For background see Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters, Vol. 1: From the Reformation to the French Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).

<sup>2</sup> Robert Robinson, in *Church Book: St Andrew's Street Baptist Church, Cambridge, 1720-1832* (London: Baptist Historical Society, 1991), p. 15; G. F. Nuttall, 'The First Seventy Years', in *St Andrew's Street Baptist Church*, ed. by K. A. C. Parsons (Cambridge: St Andrew's Street Baptist Church), pp. 1–18 (p. 3).

he was high Calvinist.<sup>3</sup> Although while he was pastor some members were called into Baptist ministry, the Stone Yard church as a whole did not flourish. Membership declined. Robinson, as successor to Simpson, was uncompromising in his judgement: Simpson was ‘a rigid Baptist, of a violent temper, a Lord in his church’. According to Robinson, the happy congregation to which Simpson was called became ‘sour and disunited’, and ‘dispirited with their prospect’. For a few months, all services ceased.<sup>4</sup> Simpson moved to Norwich, and through contacts in Norwich and in the Cambridge area, principally the influential Anne Dutton, who ‘knew everyone worth knowing in the Evangelical Revival’,<sup>5</sup> the Stone Yard congregation received the message that the twenty-three-year-old Robinson ‘might perhaps be persuaded to undertake the pastorate’.<sup>6</sup>

Robinson’s first occupations had been as an apprentice to a hairdresser and then to a butcher in London. He experienced evangelical conversion through the preaching of a leader in the Evangelical Revival, George Whitefield. When Robinson heard Whitefield, he initially pitied ‘the poor deluded Methodists’ — his own inclination was to rationalism — but he came away ‘envying their happiness’. His conversion followed three years later.<sup>7</sup> He moved to East Anglia, where he took up farm work, became a popular young preacher with the Methodists, and kept in touch with Whitefield. In 1759, however, he was baptised by immersion and soon some Baptists who knew him were struck by his unusual ability.<sup>8</sup> He preached for two years at the Stone Yard and received many requests from members to be their pastor, but was hesitant because of his lack of experience and training: he was self-taught. In 1761, he accepted a call and wrote later of how the members ‘tenderly loved him’. He and his wife Ellen found ‘fathers, brothers,

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<sup>3</sup> For high Calvinism, see Peter J. Morden, ‘Continuity and Change: Particular Baptists in the “Long Eighteenth Century” (1689-1815)’, in *Challenge and Change: English Baptist Life in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by Stephen Copson and Peter J. Morden (Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 2017), pp. 1–28 (pp. 8–12).

<sup>4</sup> Robinson, in *Church Book*, p. 18.

<sup>5</sup> Nuttall, ‘The First Seventy Years’, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Graham W. Hughes, *With Freedom Fired* (London: Carey Kingsgate Press, 1955), p. 16.

<sup>7</sup> Luke Tyerman, *The Life of the Rev. George Whitefield*, 2 vols, 2nd edn (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1890), 2, 408.

<sup>8</sup> Nuttall, ‘The First Seventy Years’, p. 5; Hughes, *With Freedom Fired*, p. 16.

sisters'. His description of his role was that he was 'the free minister of a free people' (in part a reference to the Church of England's 'conformity'), who were in 'covenant' to 'walk in faithfulness, forbearance, and tenderness to each other'.<sup>9</sup>

The Stone Yard members numbered thirty-four in 1761. Not much could be given to Robinson as financial support, yet he and Ellen welcomed needy people into their home.<sup>10</sup> Membership gradually grew, largely through conversions. By 1774 it was 120.<sup>11</sup> This is no guide to the dramatic growth in the numbers attending. With financial help from some wealthy supporters, a chapel was built seating six hundred. It was filled and over-filled on Sundays. The new building attracted people who would not have come to the previous meeting-place, which was damp, cold, and in a deteriorating state.<sup>12</sup> Members of any church were welcome to the Lord's Supper, which was celebrated monthly. In line with his advocacy of 'toleration', Robinson insisted on 'open' or 'free' rather than 'closed' communion.<sup>13</sup> In some instances, those baptised as infants but not as believers became church members. More might have sought membership, but the giving of testimony and the answering of questions about their spiritual experience was probably frightening for some.<sup>14</sup> Among those attending by the 1770s were students of Cambridge University. Dissenters were barred from graduating from the University, and most students would have known only Church of England worship. Some were attentive. Others interrupted the services, until in 1773 Robinson preached and published a satirical sermon about them and improvement ensued.<sup>15</sup>

The congregation was known to cater for a wide variety of needs. Many of the poor who attended were helped financially. Deacons were elected, with part of their duties being practical care, and Robinson

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<sup>9</sup> Robinson, in *Church Book*, pp. 20–21, 25–26.

<sup>10</sup> George Dyer, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Robert Robinson* (London: G. and J. Robinson, 1796), pp. 136–38.

<sup>11</sup> Robinson, in *Church Book*, p. 51.

<sup>12</sup> Len Addicott, 'Introduction', *Church Book*, pp. i–xl (p. xiii).

<sup>13</sup> See Robert Robinson, *The General Doctrine of Toleration Applied to the Particular Case of Free Communion* (Cambridge: W. Cowper, 1781).

<sup>14</sup> Nuttall, 'The First Seventy Years', pp. 8–9.

<sup>15</sup> Hughes, *With Freedom Fired*, pp. 20–22. The sermon as published was *A Lecture on a Becoming Behaviour in Religious Assemblies* (1776).

took a personal interest in those struggling. Lists of church members showed their occupation, with the largest group being labourers. Some others were skilled workers, such as carpenters, shoemakers, and glovers. Farmers were well represented and Robinson himself took up farming to support his large family. Among the occupations of women in the church were nurses, seamstresses, and grocers.<sup>16</sup> One member, Mary Morris, was described by Robinson as ‘the servant of the church’, perhaps a role similar to later deaconesses. Robinson set up Methodist style ‘classes’, including for children. Recognising the variety in his congregation, Robinson shaped the main services for those who formed the bulk of the worshippers, while on Sunday evenings he gave lectures that employed, as he described it, ‘another language’, appealing to ‘town and gown’. Those drawn in over time included lawyers, school teachers, business people, and a University Professor of Music, John Randall.<sup>17</sup>

As a preacher, Robinson’s style was ‘more conversational than oratorical, reasoning from the scriptures, teaching, pleasing, persuading, delighting’.<sup>18</sup> He was also an advocate of lively hymn-singing in worship, and composed several hymns. He drew from John Randall’s expertise.<sup>19</sup> As well as preaching in Cambridge, Robinson engaged in wider ministry around Cambridgeshire villages, which meant he was in touch with thousands of people. He would preach in a village at 5.00 a.m., before work began, or at 6.30 p.m., when work and meals had finished. One of his published books contained sixteen ‘discourses’ that were ‘addressed to Christian assemblies in villages near Cambridge’.<sup>20</sup> At busy times, such as harvest, he did not arrange meetings. His love for those in rural areas was such that he became known as the ‘bishop of barns and fields’.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>16</sup> For an analysis, see Faith Bowers and Brian Bowers, ‘After the Benediction: Eighteenth-century Baptist Laity’, in *Challenge and Change*, ed. by Copson and Morden, pp. 233–258 (pp.236–37).

<sup>17</sup> L. G. Champion, ‘Robert Robinson: A Pastor in Cambridge’, *Baptist Quarterly*, 31, no. 5 (January 1986), 241–46.

<sup>18</sup> Addicott, ‘Introduction’, p. xii.

<sup>19</sup> The best known was ‘Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing’. See Benjamin Flower, ed., *Robinson’s Miscellaneous Works*, 4 vols (Harlow: B. Flower, 1807), 4, 346.

<sup>20</sup> Robert Robinson, *Sixteen Discourses on Several Texts of Scripture: Addressed to Christian Assemblies in Villages near Cambridge* (London: Charles Dilly, 1786). For further background, see Raymond Brown, ‘Church Planting in the Evangelical Revival: A Cambridgeshire Baptist Perspective’, *Baptist Quarterly*, 47, no. 3 (2016), 95–109.

<sup>21</sup> E. Paxton Hood, *The Vocation of the Preacher* (London: Hodder, 1886), p. 498.

When baptisms took place in the villages, they were usually in a river. By the 1780s, Robinson was known further afield and was being asked by Baptists and other Dissenters to preach and write. He was a voracious reader, and through university friends he was able to borrow books for research. In an erudite history he wrote of the Baptist movement, amounting to 650 pages, he saw the Anabaptists as part of the story.<sup>22</sup>

While Robinson's priority was the health of Dissenting communities in and around Cambridge, he was also concerned about national affairs. Several speeches and writings — in favour of the American Revolution and political reform in Britain, and against slavery, which he called 'a dishonour to humanity'<sup>23</sup> — were addressed to Parliament. Other Baptist ministers were active campaigners, but Robinson was one of the most outspoken. A petition appeared in *The Cambridge Chronicle* in 1775 opposing the warlike measures of the British government, with Robinson and Joseph Saunders, the Congregational minister in Cambridge, prominent among signatories. In the early 1780s, Robinson and some members of his congregation called for 'correction of all abuses in the expenditure of public money'.<sup>24</sup> In 1783, Robinson formed the Cambridge Constitutional Society, which met in the Black Bull tavern. Ebenezer Hollick and William Nash, a trustee and deacon at St Andrew's Street respectively, were central figures in what was a forum for revolutionary ideas. Robinson wrote that he preached 'civil and religious liberty' there, and following that, 'when tea comes, theology'.<sup>25</sup> It was alleged by some that his theology moved towards Unitarianism near the end of his life, but this has been refuted.<sup>26</sup> In 1789, writing about spiritual and civic freedom, he saw the 'merit' of congregations of 'us poor anabaptists' as being 'a love of liberty'.<sup>27</sup> In

<sup>22</sup> Robert Robinson, *The History of Baptism* (London: Couchman and Fry, 1790). See Hughes, *With Freedom Fired*, pp. 64–68.

<sup>23</sup> See for example, George Dyer, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Robert Robinson* (London: G. and J. Robinson, 1796), p. 196.

<sup>24</sup> James E. Bradley, 'Baptists and National Politics in Late Eighteenth-century England', in *Challenge and Change*, ed. by Copson and Morden, pp. 150–51, 158–59. See Robert Robinson, *A Political Catechism*, 2nd edn (London: W. and J. F. Leppard, 1784).

<sup>25</sup> *The Cambridge Chronicle*, 16 January 1790; Hughes, *With Freedom Fired*, pp. 48–49.

<sup>26</sup> Addicott in his 'Introduction', pp. xvii–xviii, shows the fallacies on which that view was based.

<sup>27</sup> Benjamin Flower, *Posthumous Works of Robert Robinson* (Harlow: B. Flower, 1812), pp. 304–10.



this period, Robinson's calls for religious and political freedom shaped St Andrew's Street's spiritual identity.

### **'Spiritual Improvement': 1790s–early 1800s**

Robinson died in June 1790, following a nervous breakdown which seems to have been precipitated by the death of his seventeen-year-old daughter Julia.<sup>28</sup> The St Andrew's Street members mourned their 'brilliant' minister. They also began looking for a successor. Soon they were in touch with Robert Hall (1764–1831), who had trained at Bristol Baptist Academy. After studying for a Master of Arts in Aberdeen, he returned to the Academy as classical tutor. He had a reputation for incisive preaching and was 'exceptionally well read in both classical and modern thought'.<sup>29</sup> Hall came to preach at St Andrew's Street as a result of an invitation in September 1790 and found a congregation that was large, but that had declined somewhat. The church in Cambridge which was now attracting many students was Holy Trinity Church, where Charles Simeon was established as a major evangelical influence, not only in Cambridge but far beyond.<sup>30</sup> Hall was invited to St Andrew's Street for six months. At that stage he was given an insight into the church's identity: a letter to him on 16 October spoke of the church having 'no doctrinal covenant or any other bond of union than Christian love and virtue'. They had been 'well instructed by their late excellent pastor in freedom of enquiry'.<sup>31</sup>

The next step was that Hall was called as pastor in June 1791. He accepted a month later. He was being invited to what was now a significant church, as someone with 'intellectual stature and preaching ability' considered unrivalled in Baptist life in England.<sup>32</sup> In his

<sup>28</sup> George Cubitt, 'Reminiscences', *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, 5 (1849), 598–99.

<sup>29</sup> B. R. White, 'Robert Hall and his Successors', in *St Andrew's Street Baptist Church*, ed. by Parsons, pp. 19–39 (p. 19); J. H. Y. Briggs, *The English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century* (Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 1994), p. 161.

<sup>30</sup> Charles Simeon once asked advice from Robinson about evening lectures. The only advice from Robinson was to join the Dissenters (Hugh Evan Hopkins, *Charles Simeon of Cambridge* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1977), p. 192).

<sup>31</sup> William Hollick (on behalf of the church members) to Robert Hall, 16 October 1790, *Church Book*, pp. 75–76.

<sup>32</sup> Addicott, 'Introduction', p. xix.

acceptance letter, read to the congregation, Hall hoped that with God's help his 'endeavours for your [the church's] spiritual improvement may be successful'. He asked for their prayers, as he felt his own 'inability'.<sup>33</sup> Whereas Robinson had found his way into Baptist life, Hall was the son of a much-loved Baptist minister who wrote a book that influenced William Carey and helped to bring to birth the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS).<sup>34</sup> Some in St Andrew's Street apparently saw their new pastor, 'a man of splendid talents', as '*almost* as liberal and unshackled' in theology as they wished.<sup>35</sup> Hall had certainly proved at Broadmead Baptist Church, Bristol, and at the Academy that he could communicate widely, including to students: he showed 'a masterly grasp of ideas, intellectual depth and superb use of language'.<sup>36</sup>

At St Andrew's Street, Hall was determined to keep intellectual aspects of his interests secondary to his major aim of 'spiritual improvement'. His first sermon was on the atonement and its practical application to life. Immediately after the sermon, someone in the congregation confronted him. This was probably William Frend, a fellow of Jesus College and a tutor in the University who later embraced Unitarian views. A debate ensued in which Hall defended his evangelical doctrine. When told that his theology would suit only 'old women' seeking comfort as they thought of death, Hall replied that if a doctrine was true then it was for old women and everyone.<sup>37</sup> Although a few left the church in protest, numbers overall grew. Hall did not shy away from controversy, and like Robinson, he became very widely known through his political writings. In 1793, for example, he wrote advocating the freedom of the press and 'general liberty'.<sup>38</sup> His writing on political topics was stimulated by a study group in Cambridge which included some Anglicans as well as Dissenters. He later considered that it was a

<sup>33</sup> Robert Hall to St Andrew's Street Baptist Church, 24 July 1791, *Church Book*, p. 77.

<sup>34</sup> William Carey said regarding Robert Hall Snr's book, *Helps to Zion's Travellers*, that he had 'never read a book with such rapture' (Samuel Pearce Carey, *William Carey* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1923), pp. 33–34).

<sup>35</sup> Olinthus Gregory, *A Memoir of Robert Hall* (London: Holdsworth and Ball, 1833), pp. 49–50.

<sup>36</sup> Addicott, 'Introduction', p. xix.

<sup>37</sup> Gregory, *A Memoir*, pp. 51–52. For Frend, see Frida Knight, *University Rebel: The Life of William Frend* (London: Gollancz, 1971).

<sup>38</sup> Robert Hall, *An Apology for the Freedom of the Press, and for General Liberty* (Cambridge: W. H. Lunn, 1893).

mistake for a minister to be so politically outspoken, although his reforming views remained unchanged.<sup>39</sup>

As a pastor, Hall was fully involved with his congregation. He looked out for those who were new to the services, and had a scheme by which he visited all the church members and as many as possible of the congregation once every three months. Hall enjoyed being with others and as a bachelor he was happy to be out in the evenings, spending time with families and often arriving early to meet the children. The congregation varied greatly, and with some he engaged in philosophical and theological conversation. When with those whom he knew could afford to provide evening meals, he accepted offers with relish. But when he visited poor members, he tended to eat very little so as not to involve them in undue expense.<sup>40</sup> As B. R. White noted, Hall encouraged small groups for study, spiritual discussion, and prayer. Most of these met weekly in the winter and fortnightly in the summer. For Hall, his involvement with these gatherings, either as visitor or host, enabled him to assess — as if using a ‘thermometer’ — the spiritual state of the church.<sup>41</sup>

In 1795, against the background of some university students moving from Holy Trinity Church to St Andrew’s Street, Charles Simeon preached against the Baptists: as recorded by Hall in a long open letter, Simeon had warned in a sermon ‘of the artful methods they [Dissenters] took to draw men off from the Church [of England]; and that the BAPTISTS in particular would never be satisfied till they got your people under the water’. In his letter, Hall suggested that Simeon’s ignorance of the controversy between the Established Church and Dissenters must be ‘extreme’ if Simeon thought that ‘general invectives’ would resolve the issues.<sup>42</sup> Hall was encouraged that the numbers in Cambridge University questioning a state Church were increasing. In 1798, William Mansel was appointed master of Trinity College and when there was discussion in the University of the fact that up to sixty

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<sup>39</sup> White, ‘Robert Hall and his Successors’, p. 20.

<sup>40</sup> Gregory, *A Memoir*, pp. 64, 67.

<sup>41</sup> White, ‘Robert Hall and his Successors’, p. 20.

<sup>42</sup> Robert Hall, ‘Letter to the Rev. Charles Simeon, A.M.’, 7 August 1795, in *The Works of the Rev. Robert Hall, A.M.* (New York: Carvill, 1830), vol. 2, pp. 349–55 (capitals in original). This was an early edition of Hall’s *Works*.

students and tutors regularly attended the Baptist congregation, Mansel defended Hall. Some wanted to forbid anyone in the University from attending Dissenting worship, but Mansel stated that he had great admiration for Hall, and added that he might have been in Hall's congregation but for his position in the University.<sup>43</sup>

In 1804, Hall, who had suffered from physical pain throughout his life, found himself in a state of depression. The church gave him financial support to take time away from Cambridge, but although he experienced some recovery, he had to resign from the pastorate in 1806. In his resignation letter, he spoke of the 'uninterrupted harmony' which had marked his years as pastor. He thanked the members for their 'candour, kindness and generosity', and prayed that 'the truths it has been my humble endeavour to inculcate among you may take deeper and deeper root in your hearts and lives'. Replying to Hall, their 'Dear Brother', the deacons, on behalf of the church, affirmed that 'the prevailing desire of your heart, and the constant object of your labours was, to disseminate among us the knowledge of the true God and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent'. They prayed that 'the important truths which you have so repeatedly and energetically inculcated may be constantly adhered to by us'.<sup>44</sup> After recovering from his illness, Hall became the minister of the church at Harvey Lane, Leicester, where William Carey had been pastor, and he remained there for twenty years, preaching to capacity congregations.<sup>45</sup> His vision was for spiritual renewal, and this re-shaped the identity of St Andrew's Street.

### **'Spreading the Knowledge of the Gospel': 1830s–1870s**

Over the next thirty years there were successively four pastors of St Andrew's Street. Three of the pastorates were of relatively short duration,<sup>46</sup> but Thomas Edmonds (1784–1869), who came in 1812,

<sup>43</sup> Graham W. Hughes, *Robert Hall* (London: The Carey Press, 1943), pp. 49–50.

<sup>44</sup> Robert Hall to the Church, 4 March 1806; William Hollick, on behalf of the Church, to Robert Hall, 9 March 1806, *Church Book*, pp. 78–80.

<sup>45</sup> For Hall's life as a whole, see as above: Hughes, *Robert Hall* (1943).

<sup>46</sup> These were F. A. Cox (1806–1808), whose subsequent career in London was one of great influence, but who had ill health in Cambridge; Samuel Chase (1809–1810), who also had poor health; and Joshua Gray (1832–1836), who had doubts about his call to ministry. For Cox, see

stayed almost twenty years. He had studied at Bristol Baptist College and had a Master of Arts from Aberdeen. Edmonds was well respected in the Cambridge area and beyond. In 1819, he preached in London for the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS), published under the title ‘Christian Missions Vindicated and Encouraged’.<sup>47</sup> He wrote a circular letter in 1834 on ‘Christian Union’, addressing the increasing number of Baptist churches and ministers in Cambridgeshire, encouraging an Association, and advocating ‘cordial affection of Christians towards each other’ and ‘generous co-operation on Christian principles’. He noted that particularly for Baptists, union was of ‘real disciples of Christ, manifestly declared to be such by their public profession of his name, by their cordial attachment to his truth and cause, and by their participation of his spirit’.<sup>48</sup> By this time, there was greater freedom for Nonconformists (as they were increasingly called) in public life. A new Chapel was erected for the St Andrew’s Street congregation, and while without a building the congregation joined the Congregationalists, with whom relationships were close.<sup>49</sup>

In November 1837, Robert Roff (1800–1850) began as the St Andrew’s Street pastor. Edmonds, who had almost lost his sight, remained in the church and gave help in ministry. Roff had trained at the Bristol College and had been a pastor in Swansea, Wales. He came to Cambridge at a time when St Andrew’s Street was playing a central role in a network of Baptist churches in the area.<sup>50</sup> In the same year as Roff began his ministry, Henry Battscombe, a fellow of King’s College, gave up Anglican ministry, was baptised, and joined St Andrew’s Street. The church meeting minutes noted that he was ‘making great pecuniary sacrifices’. Supported by St Andrew’s Street, Battscombe pioneered a new Baptist cause in Cambridge, which became Zion Baptist Church.<sup>51</sup> Roff’s early years saw steady growth, with membership at 240 in 1846,

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J. H. Y. Briggs, ‘F.A. Cox of Hackney: Nineteenth-Century Baptist Theologian, Historian, Controversialist, and Apologist’, *Baptist Quarterly*, 38, no. 8 (October 2000), 392–411.

<sup>47</sup> T. C. Edmonds, *Christian Missions Vindicated and Encouraged* (London: Button & Son, 1819).

<sup>48</sup> T. C. Edmonds, *Christian Union* (Cambridge: W. Metcalfe, 1834), p. 4.

<sup>49</sup> White, ‘Robert Hall and his Successors’, p. 25.

<sup>50</sup> For the emergence of an Association, see Raymond Brown, *Cambridgeshire Baptist Association: Centenary, 1878-1978* (Cambridge: CBA, 1978).

<sup>51</sup> Minutes of Church Meeting, 1 May 1937. A2/1; W. V. Pitts, *Zion: One Hundred Years of Baptist Witness, 1837-1937* (Cambridge: Zion Baptist Church, 1937), pp. 5–10.

but also set-backs, the most notable being a valued deacon, James Nutter, resigning from the diaconate and membership for a time because of ‘failure and bankruptcy’.<sup>52</sup>

Roff produced a church *Manual* in 1846 and this was distributed at a special meeting and social tea in the Chapel. It contained a sketch of the church’s history and set out a ‘Constitution and Order of the Church’. The church ‘should consist of real Christians’, with its life based on ‘agreement to the essential doctrines of the gospel’ and ‘evidence of personal piety and holiness’. St Andrew’s Street held to ‘the right of private judgement’, to ‘liberty of conscience’, and to Christ alone as ‘the head of the church’. Coming after these statements, there was an affirmation of ‘the Holy Scriptures as a rule of faith and practice’. Seven objections to the Church of England were made: to the supremacy of the king or queen over the Established Church; to the support of religion being enforced by the civil power; to the orders of bishops, priests, and deacons, since the New Testament had only pastors and deacons; to Anglican ceremonies; to absolution offered in visiting the sick; to patrons who chose ministers, since they should be chosen by the people; and to the lack of Scriptural discipline. After this damning list, the *Manual* moderated it by saying of many ministers and members in the Church of England that we ‘embrace them in true Christian love’.<sup>53</sup>

The picture conveyed in the *Manual* is of Roff as a very active minister with a focus on evangelism. Work being done among young people included Sunday Schools in different locations, with up to thirty members as teachers, and Bible Classes, some of which were led by Roff. There was an emphasis on service for the needy, which was not seen as separate from evangelism. Through a ‘Dorcas Society’, women in the church organised distribution of clothing to the poor. Opportunities for prayer included Sunday prayer meetings at 7.00 a.m. and 8.00 p.m. and also one on a Monday evening. Sunday School teachers had their own prayer meetings.<sup>54</sup> Roff looked for ways to help young people to develop spiritually and he set up a library of ‘valuable

<sup>52</sup> Minutes of Church Meeting, 28 April 1842. A2/1.

<sup>53</sup> *A Manual for the Members of the Church in St Andrew’s Street Chapel, Cambridge* (Cambridge: St Andrew’s Street Chapel, 1946), pp. 6–9. L1/1.

<sup>54</sup> *Manual*, pp. 16–20. L1/1.

books' for young people and others. It is likely that he inspired a report which stated that 'the great Head of the Church has vouchsafed his abundant blessing' on the church's Sunday Schools. They had been used in 'spreading the knowledge of the Gospel', and 'large numbers have thereby been savingly converted to God', with many 'eminently useful both at home and abroad'.<sup>55</sup>

The church suffered a shock in 1850, when Roff died after being ill for only three days. He was much missed. The concern he had shown for developing the next generation was highlighted a year after his death, when one of the young St Andrew's Street Sunday School teachers, C. H. Spurgeon, became pastor of the Baptist Chapel in the nearby village of Waterbeach. As B. R. White notes, the prayer by St Andrew's Street that God would abundantly bless Spurgeon's ministry was 'certainly answered'.<sup>56</sup> At about the time Spurgeon went to Waterbeach, William Robinson (1804–1874) came to St Andrew's Street. He had been a pastor for twenty-two years at Fuller Chapel, Kettering, and stood in the tradition of evangelical Calvinism.<sup>57</sup> He was a supporter of world mission, particularly through the BMS, an advocate of Congregational church government, and a participant in debates about the Bible and science. His writings covered all these subjects.<sup>58</sup> In his expository preaching his 'whole being was aflame with the realised presence of the ever-living Christ'.<sup>59</sup>

Although William Robinson was a reasoned defender of Baptist ecclesiology, he argued in his book *Biblical Studies* (1866) that divisions in Protestantism were 'a disgrace', and he looked forward to the end of 'denominationalism' and to a fuller Christian union.<sup>60</sup> His Baptist standing led to his being elected to the presidency of the Baptist Union in 1870, and during his presidential year he gave an address at Baptist Union meetings in Cambridge on lessons from Baptist history. In his

<sup>55</sup> This report was reproduced in the Church Meeting minutes, 2 April 1846. A2/1.

<sup>56</sup> White, 'Robert Hall and his Successors', p. 29.

<sup>57</sup> See Peter J. Morden, *Offering Christ to the World* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003).

<sup>58</sup> White, 'Robert Hall and his Successors', pp. 29–32.

<sup>59</sup> James A. Aldis, 'Reminiscences of the Abolition of Religious Tests in the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge', *Baptist Quarterly*, 4, no. 6 (April 1929), 249–258 (p.252). Aldis had attended St Andrew's Street as a student.

<sup>60</sup> William Robinson, *Biblical Studies* (London: Longmans, 1866), pp. 255, 260.

address he spoke about the new Baptist movement from Germany, which he estimated as seventy thousand strong across Europe and ‘of which Mr Oncken is the leader’. He also offered a positive portrayal of the sixteenth-century Anabaptist movement.<sup>61</sup> This was at a time when English Baptists were giving little attention to the Anabaptists.<sup>62</sup> In 1872, Robinson urged St Andrew’s Street to be true to the doctrine of the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ.<sup>63</sup> Under Thomas Edmonds, Robert Roff, and William Robinson, the congregation of St Andrew’s Street was inspired and guided by an evangelical vision for spreading the knowledge of the gospel.<sup>64</sup>

### ‘Good and Blessed Work’: 1880s–1900s

William Robinson resigned in 1873, and the church was without a minister for five years. Membership had reached 368 in 1870. Despite some falling off after that, during the years without a minister several plans were agreed: for welcoming visitors, for a new church hall, and for an extensive local evangelistic programme.<sup>65</sup> A meeting in 1878 in the home of James Nutter brought the Cambridgeshire Baptist Association into being.<sup>66</sup> A year later, Graham Tarn became the new St Andrew’s Street minister. He had trained at the Pastors’ College (later Spurgeon’s College), London, the first pastor of St Andrew’s Street to do so. His ministry before coming to Cambridge was in Peckham, South London. Although trained in a Calvinistic theological environment, Tarn came to St Andrew’s Street knowing it had stated during the search for a new minister that its ‘fellowship as a church’ was based ‘not on any exact

<sup>61</sup> ‘A few lines of Baptist history and their lessons’, *The Baptist Handbook* (London: Baptist Union, 1870), pp. 17–18.

<sup>62</sup> Some work had been undertaken on the Anabaptists through the Hanserd Knollys Society in the 1840s. See E. A. Payne, *The Baptist Union: A Short History* (London: The Carey Kingsgate Press, 1959), pp. 66–68. For later study, see J. H. Y. Briggs, ‘Richard Heath, 1831–1912’, in *Freedom and the Powers*, ed. by A. R. Cross and J. H. Y. Briggs (Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 2014), pp. 67–82.

<sup>63</sup> William Robinson, *The Fatherhood of God* (Cambridge: St Andrew’s Street, 1872).

<sup>64</sup> The evangelical distinctives portrayed by David Bebbington in *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 2–17, were clear: conversionism, activism, biblicism, crucicentrism.

<sup>65</sup> ‘St Andrew’s Street Church Book’, vol. 2, pp. 164–65, St Andrew’s Street Archive.

<sup>66</sup> Brown, *Association*, p. 9.



conformity to any precise statement of belief but on agreement to the essential doctrines of the Gospel'. Tarn was certainly attracted by the church's following statement: 'We cheerfully admit the eminent piety of many of the Anglican clergy and members [...] with whom we would readily join in religious exercises.'<sup>67</sup> The growth of pan-denominational evangelicalism was significant for him.

As pastor, Tarn wanted to lead by example in what the deacons were later to call 'good and blessed work'. He highlighted the prayer meetings on Sundays and changed the afternoon service on Sundays to one of Bible study and fellowship. The minutes of deacons' meetings in 1879–80 show Tarn discussing a range of topics: visiting the congregation; promoting prayer for world mission; supporting other Baptist churches; and taking account of temperance views by providing a separate cup at communion with unfermented wine for those — amounting to fifteen — who would not drink alcoholic wine.<sup>68</sup> The St Andrew's Street membership was growing rapidly. Congregational records show 353 members in 1881, 398 in 1882, and 427 in 1883. Among the new members were some attending Cambridge University, which now allowed Nonconformists to graduate.<sup>69</sup> A mission outreach was opened in Mill Road in Cambridge, with George Apthorpe from St Andrew's Street taking a lead.<sup>70</sup> For Tarn, the challenge as more people joined the church was to see spiritual commitment deepened. An example is Florence Doggett, who joined the church in 1882 at age fifteen, was a Sunday School teacher for four years, and went in 1889, at age twenty-two, as a missionary to China with the interdenominational China Inland Mission (CIM). She and her husband and three children were tragically murdered in 1900 in the Boxer Uprising.<sup>71</sup>

In January 1884, Tarn drew attention in a deacons' meeting to issues of worship. He spoke of 'the miserable singing in the sanctuary',

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<sup>67</sup> G. W. Byrt, 'The Last Hundred Years', in *St Andrew's Street Baptist Church*, ed. by Parsons, pp. 40–41.

<sup>68</sup> Minutes of Deacons' Meetings, 29 September 1879, 4 May 1880, 28 Sept 1880. B1/1.

<sup>69</sup> Statistics in File L1/4.

<sup>70</sup> Minutes of Deacons' Meetings, 2 May 1881. B1/1.

<sup>71</sup> 'Church Members who have Served on the Mission Field', in *St Andrew's Street Baptist Church*, ed. by Parsons, p. 58. Florence Doggett's husband was Charles P'Anson.

and it was agreed that someone competent in musical affairs be consulted about an organ.<sup>72</sup> The future Baptist historian W. T. Whitley was a student in the University in this period and became part of a group of singers leading from the front of the church, ‘assisted by a harmonium’.<sup>73</sup> Discussions about an organ continued at deacons’ meetings. It was decided to consult the organist at King’s College Chapel, and one church member, Dr A. C. Ingle, suggested a weekly meeting of singers, which he volunteered to lead.<sup>74</sup> Raising funds for an organ took years: it was ultimately installed in 1892. In the meantime, renovation work was done on the Chapel premises and when a Baptist mission in the Chesterton area of Cambridge asked St Andrew’s Street for expert help with building issues, it was agreed that a small group would guide the Chesterton Mill Road missions.<sup>75</sup> Tarn saw the deacons as well equipped to deal with practical matters, but in line with his priorities, he encouraged them to seek deeper fellowship through prayer. In 1886 they adopted a rhythm by which every three months they met for ‘our own spiritual improvement’, with each deacon sharing some thought for three minutes and prayer following each contribution.<sup>76</sup>

In the period from the mid-1880s to the mid-1890s there were typically over twenty new members welcomed at each church meeting, mostly through baptism rather than transfer from other churches. Membership grew to more than six hundred and attendance at church meetings reached about 250.<sup>77</sup> Each year Tarn suggested a church theme. In 1886 it was ‘Abiding and Faithfulness’. The 1888 theme, ‘No Condemnation in Christ Jesus’, was taken up by the deacons and linked with a change regarding visitors at the Lord’s Table. The previous invitation to ‘members of all Christian churches’ to come to the Table was seen as denominational and was replaced by an invitation to all ‘who believe in and love our Lord Jesus Christ’.<sup>78</sup> Tarn arranged for preachers

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<sup>72</sup> Minutes of Deacons’ Meeting, 1 January 1884. B1/1.

<sup>73</sup> Seymour J. Price, ‘Dr William Thomas Whitley’, *Baptist Quarterly*, 12, nos. 10–11 (1948), 357–63.

<sup>74</sup> Minutes of Deacons’ Meetings, 25 March 1884; 26 May 1884; 29 September 1884. B1/1.

<sup>75</sup> Minutes of Deacons’ Meeting, 30 November 1885. B1/1.

<sup>76</sup> Minutes of Deacons’ Meeting, 18 June 1886. B1/1.

<sup>77</sup> Minutes of Deacons’ Meeting, 6 January 1890. B1/1.

<sup>78</sup> Minutes of Deacons’ Meeting, 23 March 1888. B1/1; Minutes of Church Meeting, 30 May 1888. A2/1.

to come who were from outside the Baptist denomination, such as Grattan Guinness whose links were with the Brethren movement.<sup>79</sup> However, Tarn's denominational loyalty was firm. Special collections were taken for Bristol Baptist College and the Pastors' College in 1888, and twelve from St Andrew's Street went in that year to the Baptist Union Assembly. At that Assembly, a new prayer union of Baptist ministers was promoted, led by F. B. Meyer, a prominent speaker at the interdenominational holiness convention held annually in Keswick in the English Lake District. In 1889, Tarn invited Meyer to give a series of mid-week addresses at St Andrew's Street on a typical Keswick topic: 'The cultivation of a devout life.'<sup>80</sup>

The emphasis on inner spirituality — often 'the blessed life' — did not produce an inward-directed church. Reports in the late 1880s and early 1890s talk about bread and coal distributed to the poor; a fund for widows in need; a ladies' visitation committee; and help given during an epidemic in Cambridge. Outreach to young people and children was extensive, with over four hundred children in St Andrew's Street Sunday Schools and fifty in youth and student groups, with a 'Christian Endeavour' which encouraged youth leadership, and a library and swimming club designed for younger people. One hundred and sixty-eight young people were part of the International Bible Reading Association.<sup>81</sup> It was agreed that in 1892, the centenary of the BMS, 'a strong effort' would be made to highlight to everyone, including young people, 'the subject of Foreign Missions'.<sup>82</sup> Very substantial donations, as well as many smaller amounts, were given in 1892 by St Andrew's Street members to the BMS. In the following year, the church commended Kenred Smith, who had been a Sunday School teacher for ten years, to train at Bristol Baptist College and then at medical school. The church recorded, 'We have watched with deep interest and gratitude to God the development of his [Kenred's] spiritual life.' The statement spoke of his 'efforts for the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom' and saw him as 'in every way fitted for mission work'. He served with the BMS

<sup>79</sup> Minutes of Deacons' Meeting, 27 November 1888. B1/1.

<sup>80</sup> Minutes of Deacons' Meeting, 30 October 1889. B1/1. For Meyer and Keswick see Ian Randall, *Spirituality and Social Change* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2003), pp. 81–106.

<sup>81</sup> For example, 'St Andrew's Street Chapel and Mill Road Mission Hall Magazine' (1892). M2/2.

<sup>82</sup> Minutes of Church Meeting, 22 March 1891. A2/1.

in the Congo and married another church member, Maud Smith. She died of fever after only two years in the Congo.<sup>83</sup>

By 1895, Tarn was feeling the strain of leading a large and still growing church. Also, his wife was ill. He was approached by a Baptist church in Yorkshire about whether he would consider a move. He talked to the St Andrew's Street deacons in 1896, who in turn consulted the members.<sup>84</sup> The deacons found 'a small minority of the church and congregation desirous of a change', but 'an overwhelming majority' wanted Tarn to remain.<sup>85</sup> However, on the day the deacons communicated this outcome, Tarn wrote to them to say it seemed to him 'most clearly and unmistakably the Lord's will' that he accepted a call to Harrogate. He was near to 'nervous collapse' and there was 'the illness of my dear wife'. A move was 'in the order of Divine Providence'; among other things, he would benefit from the north's 'bracing air'. Tarn spoke of experiencing 'unfailing kindness and sympathy and support in joy and sorrow alike' at St Andrew's Street. He signed himself, 'your fellow labourer in the gospel'.<sup>86</sup> The deacons replied to their 'dear pastor and friend'. They, with the whole church, had been 'bound closely' in 'good and blessed work' and would miss his 'kindly guiding hand' and his wife as 'part of the ministry'. In Keswick-like language, they prayed for future 'richness and fulness'.<sup>87</sup>

Charles Joseph, who became minister in 1898, had trained at the Pastors' College, and pastorates in Birmingham and Portsmouth followed. Early in his time in Cambridge, he and the deacons felt St Andrew's Street needed a completely new building. Services moved to the Cambridge Guildhall while this was built. Joseph worked closely with experienced deacons, such as educationalist W. H. F. Johnson, who was the first Nonconformist to be awarded a Bachelor of Arts from Cambridge University, and George Apthorpe, who served as president of the Cambridgeshire Village Preachers' Association. During Joseph's ministry, the question of individual cups rather than a common cup at

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<sup>83</sup> Minutes of Church Meeting, 5 April 1893. A2/1.

<sup>84</sup> Minutes of Deacons' Meeting, 17 March 1896. B1/2.

<sup>85</sup> Minutes of Deacons' Meeting, 8 April 1896. B1/2.

<sup>86</sup> Graham Tarn to Deacons, 8 April 1896. Held with Deacons' Minutes. B1/2.

<sup>87</sup> Deacons to Graham Tarn, 9 April 1896. Held with Deacons' Minutes. B1/2.

Communion was discussed. In 1903, Joseph asked members to consider this issue.<sup>88</sup> At a subsequent church meeting, Dr Ingle supported the change ‘for hygienic reasons’ in the light of ‘newly discovered facts in science’. The change, which was taking place in other Baptist churches, was agreed.<sup>89</sup> In January 1904, the new church building was opened. F. B. Meyer preached at the celebratory service, an indication that Joseph had continued the emphases of Tarn on the deeper spiritual life. In 1910, Joseph moved to Plymouth.<sup>90</sup> St Andrew’s Street, a major centre of spiritual life and witness, looked for visionary leadership to continue and expand its work in a university setting.

### ‘In a University Town’: 1910s–1920s

On 30 October 1912, the deacons reported back to the church on the outcome of a unanimous call the members had given to Melbourn Evans Aubrey (1885–1957), who had studied in Cardiff and Oxford and was Associate Minister of Victoria Road Baptist Church, Leicester. The invitation spoke of Aubrey, then twenty-seven years old, being ‘especially fitted to meet the needs of our church, situated as it is in a university town’. There was mention of ‘the special gifts with which the Lord has endowed you’, and of the fact that ‘several honoured and trusted leaders of Nonconformity’ believed it was right for Aubrey to come to Cambridge. In reply, Aubrey spoke of he and his wife Edith initially feeling ‘very great perplexity’ before deciding it was a ‘duty to accept the invitation’. He asked for prayer, raising the possibility that he might be suited for ‘a more usual type of ministry’ rather than Cambridge. The deacons replied immediately to say they prayed that Aubrey’s move ‘to our university town’ might prove to be ‘of great advantage to both our church and denomination’.<sup>91</sup> The background was that St Andrew’s Street was having little impact in the University. Most Baptist students chose Emmanuel Congregational Church, where

<sup>88</sup> Minutes of Church Meeting, 30 September 1903. A2/2.

<sup>89</sup> Minutes of Church Meeting, 28 October 1903. A2/2.

<sup>90</sup> Byrt, ‘The Last Hundred Years’, pp. 44–5. In 1914, Joseph became president of the Baptist Union.

<sup>91</sup> The letters are included with Minutes of Church Meeting, 30 October 1912. A2/2. For more see W. M. S. West, ‘The Young Mr Aubrey’, *Baptist Quarterly*, 33, no. 8 (October 1990), 351–63.

they could hear the powerful ministry of P. T. Forsyth and then W. B. Selbie.<sup>92</sup>

In 1902 a Baptist students' society, the Robert Hall Society, had been set up by T. R. Glover, a fellow of St John's College, Cambridge.<sup>93</sup> Glover, 'one of the most highly educated British Baptist laymen of his generation',<sup>94</sup> was deeply concerned for the future of St Andrew's Street. In a letter to Aubrey on 12 September 1912, Glover referred to the problem of Baptist students not attending St Andrew's Street and described the church as a 'source of leakage and weakness in the Baptist denomination'.<sup>95</sup> Glover became a uniquely influential deacon at St Andrew's Street and a strong supporter of Aubrey. Although Aubrey wanted to make contact with students, and his warm personality, outstanding preaching, and awareness of contemporary issues were to attract many, at the commencement of his ministry Aubrey's priority was to visit all the church members.<sup>96</sup> When war broke out in 1914, many members were dispersed, while on the other hand there were new arrivals in Cambridge, including many soldiers. It was agreed in 1915 to launch a monthly *Church Magazine* for all members and contacts.<sup>97</sup> Five hundred copies of the *Magazine* — later *The Messenger* — were produced. It was announced in the first issue that the church membership had been divided into six districts of Cambridge for pastoral purposes. Members were notified in advance that Aubrey hoped to visit.<sup>98</sup>

The 'Minister's Notes' in copies of the *Magazine* during 1916 reflected Aubrey's concerns. He called for more earnest prayer. 'Let us wait before God', he urged, 'and carry about a more constant sense of

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<sup>92</sup> See Ian Randall, 'Emmanuel Congregational Church, Cambridge, 1874–1924: A "Representative Church"?' *The Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society*, 10, no. 2 (May 2018), 73–93.

<sup>93</sup> See Ian Randall, 'Baptist Students in Cambridge: Denominational and Ecumenical Identities, from the 1920s to the 1940s', in *Ecumenism and Independency in World Christianity*, ed. by Alexander Chow and Emma Wild-Wood (Leiden: Brill, 2020), pp. 144–161.

<sup>94</sup> Brian Stanley, "'The Old Religion and the New": India and the Making of T.R. Glover's *The Jesus of History*', in *The Gospel in the World*, ed. by David Bebbington (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002), pp. 295–312 (p. 296).

<sup>95</sup> T. R. Glover to M. E. Aubrey, 12 September 1912, cited in West, 'Young Mr Aubrey', p. 356.

<sup>96</sup> Minutes of Deacons' Meeting, 7 March 1913. B1/2.

<sup>97</sup> Minutes of Deacons' Meeting, 30 November 1915. B1/3.

<sup>98</sup> *Church Magazine*, January 1916. The *Magazine* has no pagination.

the presence of God.’ He spoke of the ‘shock and horror’ in the nation as the war proceeded and asked that he be given news of church contacts serving in the military, those wounded, and any who had died. With conscription introduced in 1916, Aubrey wanted to affirm pacifists who were conscientious objectors to war, as well as supporting the many soldiers who were Christians. The *Magazine* also covered congregational developments. In April 1916, for example, twenty-eight new members were welcomed, most after baptism. Despite the devastation of war, baptismal services were taking place almost every month. The University had very few students during this period, but the church’s Young People’s Society heard addresses on the lives of St. Francis of Assisi, John Wycliffe, Martin Luther, and General Booth, and a series on ‘Women in the Bible’ was planned. A Ladies Working Party of thirty-five women was supplying hospital wear for military hospitals. Children’s work at St Andrew’s Street was continuing, with 180 children.<sup>99</sup> In November a ‘Week of Prayer’ was held, which was well attended.<sup>100</sup>

Concern for world events continued throughout the war, with prayer meetings focusing on a desire for peace and on the needs of the world. Laurence Ingle, whose family were in St Andrew’s Street, joined the church in 1917, at age twenty-five, having completed medical training. Members were supportive of a call he felt to serve in China. A world vision was further stimulated in that year by a visit from W. Y. Fullerton, home secretary of the BMS and also at that time president of the Baptist Union. Throughout 1917 and 1918 Aubrey became more outspoken about the effects of the war. He wrote in January 1917, ‘Those who sought war are now weary of it. They know whatever the results they still hope for will not be worth the sacrifices made.’ Probably not everyone saw the situation as Aubrey did, but he was determined to give a lead. He described anxiety, sorrow, and loss being felt, and spoke of the importance of avoiding the prevalent spirits of ‘militarism’ and ‘vengeance’. Aubrey was encouraged at the numbers attending services, averaging six hundred in the morning and nine hundred in the evening,

<sup>99</sup> *Church Magazine*, April, June, May, September and December 1916.

<sup>100</sup> Minutes of Deacons’ Meeting, 28 November 1916. B1/3.

and the generosity of the members at a time when prices were rising but incomes were not.<sup>101</sup>

Following the end of the war, Aubrey saw that a time of ‘binding up’ of wounds was needed. He was concerned for physical and emotional wounds. With his typical appreciative approach, he spoke of the ‘courage and power’ of the deacons and members. Aubrey explained that he had not been able to address all the needs, as he had been in touch with 1600 people and unlike Anglican clergy had no ‘staff or curates’ to help. In April 1919, at a church meeting, Roger Smart, on behalf of the deacons, proposed that Aubrey have three months of leave. This was agreed.<sup>102</sup> He travelled to the United States of America to meet fellow-Baptists and take part in celebrations of four hundred years since the Mayflower Pilgrims arrived there. Visitors, such as General Secretary of the Baptist Union J. H. Shakespeare, Meyer, and Fullerton, came to preach at St Andrew’s Street. In 1919, the year in which the first woman took a seat in the British Parliament, it was agreed that election to the St Andrew’s Street diaconate was open to women as well as men.<sup>103</sup> Later Mrs J. B. Bird became the first woman elected. In December 1919, Laurence Ingle spoke at a morning service prior to leaving with BMS for a post at the Tsinanfu School of Medicine, Shantung Christian University, China.<sup>104</sup>

The early 1920s saw sustained growth at St Andrew’s Street. The profile of the church within Cambridge University benefited from the appointment in 1920 of Glover as public orator of the University, the first Nonconformist to hold that office. Within Baptist life, St Andrew’s Street contributed preachers and teachers who served the villages and supported several missions in Cambridge. Aubrey wrote in the church magazine *The Messenger* (as it was from 1920) of the national ‘appetite for amusement’ and of the need for ‘a sense of the value and joy of service’. He praised the service of Sunday School teachers and encouraged more training for them as educational methods changed. The importance of

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<sup>101</sup> *Church Magazine*, January, June and September 1917, and February, March, September and October 1918.

<sup>102</sup> Minutes of Church Meeting, 2 April 1919. A2/2.

<sup>103</sup> *Church Magazine*, November and December 1918, and February, March, May and June 1919.

<sup>104</sup> Minutes of Deacons’ Meeting, 9 December 1919. B1/3.



service overseas was highlighted: the church's missionaries were now Jessie Gregg, who was an evangelist with the CIM, Laurence Ingle and Kate Kelsey with the BMS in China, and Herbert Starte with the BMS in the Congo. Alongside its wider ministries, Aubrey recognised the challenge of a large church being 'a real home'. He and his wife opened their home to many students. Over seventy students were in the Robert Hall Society and associate membership of the church was provided for them. More broadly, Aubrey wanted to offer the joy of the Gospel to 'every sort of hard pressed man and woman' in Cambridge.<sup>105</sup> At the end of 1922, he could report on new members, mostly through baptism, taking the membership well over five hundred. The missions from St Andrew's Street had now become separate churches. There were 450 children and young people in St Andrew's Street. Money had been donated by adults and children to Cambridge's Addenbrooke's Hospital. Aubrey spoke of the church's 'life and happiness'.<sup>106</sup>

A major change evident in Aubrey's time was that there were now warm relationships with Anglicans. Charles Raven, the dean of Emmanuel College, preached at St Andrew's Street, and there was an exchange of preachers with Holy Trinity Church. St Andrew's Street supported a week's mission in the Guildhall with Studdert Kennedy, an outstanding Anglican speaker working for the Industrial Christian Fellowship. The accomplished St Andrew's Street choir, with accompanying musicians, occasionally joined with Anglican choirs for concerts. Closer relationships continued with Free Churches (a term replacing Nonconformist) and joint events included Free Church garden parties hosted in the village of Histon by the Chivers family,<sup>107</sup> who were Histon Baptist members. Their large garden had a tennis court where any Free Church rivalries could be played out. Within all of this, Aubrey had a vision for Baptist renewal. He was delighted to be one of seven from Cambridge at a Baptist World Alliance Congress in Stockholm in 1923. He was able to address a youth meeting of three thousand.<sup>108</sup> In the same year, the church was pleased that Glover was

<sup>105</sup> *The Messenger*, April 1920 and February, March, May and June 1921.

<sup>106</sup> *The Messenger*, November 1922 and December 1922.

<sup>107</sup> The Chivers family were well-known jam manufacturers and employed over 2000 people.

<sup>108</sup> *The Messenger*, April 1923, June 1923, February 1924.

elected vice-president (and so incoming president) of the Baptist Union.<sup>109</sup>

Aubrey considered preaching a crucial element, and his sermons in 1923 and 1924 on ‘The 10 Commandments’ and on ‘The Life of our Lord’ were seen as outstanding. International visitors to Cambridge, including a significant number of Americans, found their way to St Andrew’s Street. Men’s meetings attracted two hundred men. Mission weeks were held. Work also continued on the church building. Hearing loops were installed and pronounced very effective, and a large stained-glass window was constructed, remembering those who had died in the war and strikingly portraying scenes from John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* under the headings ‘Freedom’, ‘Truth’, and ‘Self-Sacrifice’. It conveyed a continuing spiritual message.<sup>110</sup> The church reached 572 members in 1925, at a time when general church-going was declining. An energetic secretary was appointed: Cyril Ridgeon, who had a local builder’s business. It came as a blow, therefore, when Aubrey was approached about being nominated as the next secretary of the Baptist Union to succeed J. H. Shakespeare. He was torn, particularly as the deacons and the church expressed their ‘very real affection’, their ‘great gratitude’ for his work in ‘maintaining and increasing an unbroken unity in a large and vigorous Church’, and their appreciation of his ministry among university students and his influence in Cambridge.<sup>111</sup> Ultimately, Aubrey felt he must respond to the denomination’s call. At the Baptist Union Annual Assembly on 28 April 1925, Oswin Smith, on behalf of the St Andrew’s Street deacons, spoke of the church ‘giving to the Denomination’ someone known in Cambridge as ‘a prophet; a seer; a man of vision’.<sup>112</sup>

## Conclusion

The changes in the identity of St Andrew’s Street Baptist Church over

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<sup>109</sup> Minutes of Deacons’ Meeting, 16 May 1923. B1/4.

<sup>110</sup> *The Messenger*, August 21, May 1923, and March 1924.

<sup>111</sup> Minutes of Deacons’ Meeting, 21 January 1925. B1/4; Minutes of Church Meeting, 28 January 1925. A2/2; Byrt, ‘The Last Hundred Years’, pp. 44–45.

<sup>112</sup> *The Messenger*, June 1925.

the course of two hundred years were significant. They indicate the ways in which ministers of the church sought to exercise ministries that were relevant to their contexts. This did not mean that they went along with the prevailing currents. In the case of Robert Robinson, his call for political and religious freedom was a direct challenge to the established order in England. Robert Hall continued this emphasis, but saw the need for the church to be grounded more firmly in spiritual experience. Without that, a church's freedom would lack depth. The ministers who followed in the mid-nineteenth century period, notably Robert Roff and William Robinson, placed great emphasis on evangelism as being intrinsic to the church's identity. All of these elements continued through to the later nineteenth century, but Graham Tarn injected into the church the holiness spirituality of the Keswick holiness movement. M. E. Aubrey, in the final pastorate studied here, was a minister whose preaching and pastoral care had a remarkable impact on Cambridge and on student life in particular. At his farewell in 1925, Robert Hall Society members spoke of what the 'Baptist cause in the University' had achieved during Aubrey's ministry. Aubrey replied that 'support had been mutual'.<sup>113</sup> Throughout the course of two centuries there was mutuality, but it was to a considerable extent through its pastors that St Andrew's Street's spirituality identity was powerfully shaped and re-shaped.

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<sup>113</sup> Minutes of a General Meeting of the Robert Hall Society, 11 June 1925. S 2/2.