



GEOFFREY NUTTALL

Geoffrey Fillingham Nuttall

1911–2007

Formative influences

GEOFFREY F. NUTTALL, ecclesiastical historian, was born 8 November 1911 and died 24 July 2007. Although it was his achievement as a historian, especially as an ecclesiastical historian, that ensured his election to the British Academy in 1991, he was educated as a classicist and he became a minister of religion. Pastoral ministry remained his vocation.

To all outward appearance he followed a conventional career for a man of his background. His father was a general practitioner in a rising health resort. On both sides of his family there had been generations of parsons, professional men, superior tradesmen and prosperous farmers. Several of them were JPs. All were the sort to provide civic ballast for country towns nationwide. Geoffrey Nuttall took great pride in this. His understanding of it informed his work as a historian. His roots encompassed Cumberland, Lancashire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire and Yorkshire. They were small-town and rural but they incorporated a broader urban experience: Edinburgh, Liverpool, London, Manchester. As with all such families, there was vicarious satisfaction in grand, if ill-defined and distant, connections (the Listers of Gisburne, Barons Ribblesdale) and in links with industrial paternalism (Sir William Hartley, the jam manufacturer, was ‘Cousin Jam’; he was in fact Nuttall’s second cousin twice removed).¹ There was a closer link with an intelligent bishop,

¹ Sir William Hartley (1846–1922). See D. J. Jeremy, ‘Hartley, Sir William Pickles (1846–1922)’, in D. J. Jeremy and C. Shaw (eds.), *Dictionary of Business Biography: a Biographical Dictionary of Business Leaders Active in Britain in the Period 1860–1980*, 3 (London, 1985), pp. 96–9.

F. R. Barry, Bishop of Southwell, whose wife was Nuttall's second cousin once-removed.²

Nuttall's own generation maintained this solidity. His elder brother, James, was a chartered accountant with Pilkingtons, the glass manufacturers. His younger sister, Evelyn, was responsible for Girl Guide training centres in the golden age of the Guiding movement. For himself, there was prep school (run by an aunt's husband), boarding school, Oxford (he was inordinately proud of being a Balliol man) and the Church. He looked the part. He was the scholar parson incarnate, refined in voice, manner and appearance, more wiry than frail, searching in gaze, reflective, quizzical and more than capable of firm judgements. He was not a renaissance man because he had neither much knowledge of, nor much interest in, science, but in all other respects his mind was richly furnished. He was at ease in Dutch, French, German, Italian and Welsh, as well as Greek, Hebrew and Latin. His literary appreciation ranged from Dante and Erasmus to Rilke and Virginia Woolf; he wrote on each of them. He had a keen aesthetic sense: his evaluation of three French cathedrals—Amiens, Bourges and Chartres—was vividly, even radically, catholic. He visited Chartres: 'It was May, and Mary's month'. The cathedral was 'as dark as Amiens is a palace of light ... the relatively low piers in the nave looked like working men carrying the slenderer columns, the seers and prophets, on their shoulders as they soared ... The flying buttresses just cannot contain their delight at sustaining this place, where the Most High has come amongst men.' He went on to Bourges. There he found 'room to breathe ... but it is not of man's pride in his accomplishment that the cathedral speaks, but of a place for the ordinary man ... You feel secure, as in a family party at Christmas. The cathedral is like an old-fashioned envelope with many flaps ... [T]he love of God envelops you, not straining to lift you heavenwards as at Chartres but coming to meet you on your own level.'³ It is almost as if a worker-priest, now in his mid-seventies, has come home.

Nuttall was a passable pianist, an agile conversationalist and an indefatigable correspondent. He kept his friendships in careful repair, tailoring his letters to the interests of each correspondent: a genealogical spine, perhaps; inimitable reminiscence, certainly; comment on the current academic and ecclesiastical scene; clear-eyed advice, not always easy to take;

²For Frank Russell Barry (1890–1976), Bishop of Southwell 1941–63, see *The Times*, 25 October 1976.

³G. F. Nuttall, 'Briefly', *The Friend*, 144 (27 June 1986), 814.

and an over-arching pastoral concern. He exercised a powerful epistolary ministry, and it was reciprocated.

There was, however, an unexpected twist to each turn of this thoroughly conventional life and background. Its motor was Protestant Dissent.

It has become increasingly hard to appreciate the power behind this motor. If the integrating force in Geoffrey Nuttall's life was his Christian faith, that was given colour, accent and attitude by his family's tradition of religious Dissent unbroken since the earliest eighteenth century and probably since the seventeenth century. It was significantly Baptist but primarily Congregational. The many parsons in his family tree were Dissenting parsons. His grandfathers, a great uncle by marriage, two great-great-grandfathers, one great-great-uncle by marriage and two great-great-great-uncles were Congregational ministers. Several were prominent in their denomination and each provided an intersecting point for an intellectually and politically articulate web of connection. There were few Congregational or Baptist families of note with whom Geoffrey Nuttall could not claim relationship. He belonged to a national establishment in constant critical and sometimes radical dialogue with the National Establishment.

His family also bridged Old and New Dissent. His prep school headmaster uncle belonged to a notable Wesleyan clan; Cousin Jam, of course, was a Primitive Methodist; and in Geoffrey's boyhood the Nuttalls worshipped at St John's, the Wesleyan church close to their house. Indeed his father became a Circuit Steward. That might explain the place of hymns in Geoffrey's life, and especially of Charles Wesley's hymn, 'Come, O Thou Traveller Unknown', sung to the tune *Peniel*. This Methodism had its Quaker counterpoint, which owed something to his Quaker boarding school and rather more to his Quaker wife. Nonetheless Geoffrey Nuttall remained a Congregationalist in all essentials, even though in 1972 he became a minister in the United Reformed Church, a union of the Congregational Church in England and Wales and the Presbyterian Church of England, joined in 1981 by most of the Churches of Christ. It was his instinctive Congregationalism, however, which allowed Nuttall to get within the skin of Baptists, Methodists and Quakers. It explained the cast of his history writing. It was the unifying factor in his cultural, professional and spiritual life.

This can be seen in his immediate background, the parents and grandparents of the man. His paternal grandfather, James Kirkman Nuttall (1839–1900), sustained an energetic ministry in a succession of demanding pastorates (Bradford, Sunderland and Liverpool); he was relatively

unusual among Congregational ministers in his support for the Keswick Movement.⁴ His maternal grandfather, James Muscutt Hodgson (1841–1923), a Glasgow graduate with doctorates from Edinburgh and Glasgow, combined pastoral, administrative and teaching skills. For forty years he taught theology in Manchester and Edinburgh. For him, as for his grandson, Congregationalism ‘claimed and evoked personal adventure in spiritual things’.⁵

Hodgson had a lively mind and a characterful wife. Geoffrey Nuttall warmed to characterful women. His mother, Muriel Hodgson (1880–1931), was an Edinburgh graduate (1900), educated at Whalley Range, the Manchester girls’ high school established by her father, and teaching for a while at Wentworth College, the Bournemouth girls’ school established by another notable Congregational minister, J. D. Jones.⁶ After her marriage she channelled her gifts into the education of her children:

She gave me my first lessons at home and instilled in me a love of history (and later ecclesiastical history), and would herself read books that were interesting me at school, e.g. Froude’s *Erasmus*, so that we could discuss them when I came home; she also read poetry, e.g. Tennyson, aloud to me, encouraged me to love birds and flowers, and taught me to play the piano and to knit. Her death from cancer at the age of 50, when I was 19, was the hardest thing I have had to bear.⁷

In due course her son dedicated his first and weightiest book, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (1946), to her: ‘Matri translatae primitias iamdiu sponsas dedicat filius’.⁸

Geoffrey Nuttall’s father, Harold Nuttall (1871–1949), was also out of the ordinary. He too was an Edinburgh graduate, intending to become a medical missionary, and for a while he served in Edinburgh as the Student Christian Movement’s Inter-Collegiate Secretary (1897–8).⁹ He was one of those fired by enthusiasm for the evangelisation of the world in their generation. His son did not warm to that aspect of missionary imperialism but in common with his generation he was steeped in more general admiration for missionary endeavour. Grandfather Nuttall’s sudden

⁴ *Congregational Year Book*, 1901, 198–9.

⁵ *Congregational Year Book*, 1924, 97–8.

⁶ For Jones see S. M. Berry, ‘Jones, John Daniel (1865–1942)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34234>, accessed 7 May 2015. Nuttall’s sister Evelyn was later a pupil at Wentworth.

⁷ ‘Some Autobiographical Notes compiled by Geoffrey F. Nuttall at the request of the British Academy August, 1991’, 1–2.

⁸ G. F. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (Oxford, 1946).

⁹ T. Tatlow, *The Story of the Student Christian Movement of Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1933), p. 903.

death, however, curtailed Harold's missionary ambition. With a widowed mother and sisters to support, he turned to general practice in Colwyn Bay, importing his expertise in ophthalmology and an early specialism in X-rays into his work, and devoting his executive skills to the enlargement of the resort's Cottage Hospital into something more impressive.¹⁰

Baswich, Bootham and Balliol

Boarding school was inevitable. For Harold Nuttall it had been Tettenhall College, the Nonconformist school near Wolverhampton. For his sons there was Baswich House, a recently established preparatory school near Stafford, followed in James's case by Clifton College, more established in every sense than Tettenhall but attractive to well-circumstanced Free Church parents, and in Geoffrey's case by Bootham, the Quaker school at York.¹¹ Geoffrey was unhappy at both. Nonetheless he made his own space at both. At Baswich (1921–5), relatively undisturbed within the fender of its recreation room fire, he could read voraciously. *Ivanhoe*, *Kenilworth*, *The Cloister and the Hearth* coloured his historical imagination; Euripides' *Medea* confirmed his classical bent; primers of Congregationalism strengthened his denominational pride; and his incorrigibly pigeon-holing mind, alert to whatever might seem out of step, noted with satisfaction that Baswich had belonged to a Tory banking baronet and that the 'F. A.' of his headmaster uncle's initials stood for 'Francis Atterbury', after the Tory Jacobite bishop.¹² Bootham (1925–8) introduced him to Quakerism,

¹⁰ Nuttall, 'Some . . . Notes', p. 1.

¹¹ What lay behind the choice of school? Harold Nuttall's brother-in-law, G. F. A. Osborn (b. 1872), was the second headmaster (1910–15) of Rydal Mount, the Methodist school within a very easy walk of the Nuttalls' house in Colwyn Bay. Harold Nuttall was the school doctor but the school was in (temporary) difficulties when Osborn left to start Baswich House, a preparatory school which closed in 1947. So perhaps that (and the close proximity) ruled out Rydal though not Baswich. Similarly, Harold Nuttall's best man, Horace Pearson (1878–1946), son of the minister who preceded J. K. Nuttall in his Liverpool pastorate, had taught at the largely Congregational Tettenhall College until 1920, when he left, perhaps after tension with its headmaster. That probably ruled out Tettenhall in the 1920s, although Pearson returned to Tettenhall as headmaster in 1927. Pearson, unlike Osborn, was a born teacher and a fine headmaster: P. Watkinson, *The Osborns and Rydal Mount School (1885–1915)* (Rydal Penrhos, 2004), pp. 82–93; G. V. Hancock, *History of Tettenhall College* (Wolverhampton, 1963), pp. 118, 140–73.

¹² Baswich had belonged to Sir Thomas Salt of Weeping Cross (1863–1940); any family link between the Osborns and Francis Atterbury (1662–1732, Bishop of Rochester 1713–23) depended on a connection, yet to be proved, with Atterbury's wife, Katherine Osborn, or on descent from the bishop's son, Osborn Atterbury.

confirmed his instinctive pacifism and prepared him for Oxford. His future as a classicist seemed assured. He read Plato, he made his own translation of the *Antigone*, he lectured his schoolfellows on Roman Britain. He could not take up his entrance scholarship because he was not a Quaker but, as compensation, he requested (and eventually read) Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*. And he moved on. He lectured his schoolfellows on English Monastic Life; the Erasmian world, for which *The Cloister and the Hearth* had prepared his imagination, now gripped him with Froude's *Life and Letters of Erasmus*; and it was at Bootham that he first encountered the infinite possibilities of the *Dictionary of National Biography*, noting how Dissenting worthies colonised its entries, testing out his instinct for lists and compounding his own Dissenting sense of identity. He came increasingly to the notice of prominent Congregationalists, alerted by his parents and grandmother and keen to foster such a sense in the younger generation.

Bootham had prepared Geoffrey Nuttall for Oxford, but only up to a point. To secure a scholarship, he would need coaching, so he left Bootham to prepare for 'Lit. Hum.' under E. A. Upcott and to lodge with his grandmother's formidable Oxford cousin, the widowed Mrs George Buchanan Gray.¹³ Although she provided an invaluable *entrée* to the University's Dissenting circles, her young cousin-twice-removed failed to secure a scholarship. He was, however, offered places at Corpus and Balliol.

The attraction of Corpus lay in its President, P. S. Allen, the Erasmus scholar.¹⁴ Allen interviewed Nuttall, they impressed each other, and their conversation turned Nuttall's school-boy captivation into life-long fascination. In due course Nuttall would become acquainted with Mrs Allen, now widowed, and would proofread two volumes of the Allens' joint *Opus Epistolarum Erasmi Roterodami*; eventually she invited him to index all eleven volumes (1906–47). They would provide a model for his own *Calendar of the Correspondence of Philip Doddridge* (1979) and for his and N. H. Keeble's jointly edited *Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter* (2 vols, 1991).¹⁵

¹³ For Gray, an outstanding Old Testament scholar, see G. R. Driver, rev. J. W. Rogerson, 'Gray, George Buchanan (1865–1922)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33526>, accessed 7 May 2015.

¹⁴ See J. B. Trapp, 'Allen, Percy Stafford (1869–1933)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30389>, accessed 7 May 2015.

¹⁵ G. F. Nuttall, *Calendar of the Correspondence of Philip Doddridge DD (1702–1757)* (London, 1979; it also forms *Northamptonshire Record Society*, 29, and *Historical Manuscript Commission Joint Publications*, 26); G. F. Nuttall (with N. H. Keeble), *Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter 1615–91*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1991).

Despite that ultimately fruitful interview, Nuttall turned Corpus down in preference for Balliol. He claimed never to have regretted that choice, yet his Balliol years (1929–33) were more productive for their friendships than their intellectual stimulation. The college's tuition lacked flair, although he respected C. R. Morris, the future Vice-Chancellor of Leeds, and from the Master, A. D. Lindsay, he learned that to ask the right question might be more important than to give the right answer. But they struck few sparks.¹⁶ Perhaps that was because he was already leaving the Classics for Church History. Perhaps his mother's illness and death had more to do with it. Muriel Nuttall died in May 1931, shortly before Geoffrey took Mods; he was awarded a Third Class. Another followed when he took Greats. He had become bored with Greats; he whiled away C. G. Stone's lectures on Roman history by writing a paper on the Cluniacs. That paper remained unpublished but his first published piece had already appeared in *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*.¹⁷ Its theme, 'The Puritan Spirit through the ages', drew together much of what had been forming in his mind and it indicated the future trajectory of his scholarship. It embraced in overview the Cistercians, Savonarola, Lollards and Separatists, Cromwell, Milton and Fox, Quakers and ancestors—he quoted a letter from his great-great-grandmother Muscutt to his grandfather Hodgson. It was the first of a long line of such articles, eight decades worth, more indeed, since some were published posthumously. Three followed almost immediately, two on Oliver Cromwell, one on more letters addressed to grandfather Hodgson.¹⁸ None was on a classical theme.

Nuttall was cast down by his Thirds. They announced mediocrity, they stared from his c.v., there could be no disguising them, no appointing panel could ignore them, they suggested an inability to apportion his time. In other ways, however, Balliol completed his education. Above all it allowed for friendship. At the Balliol Freshmen's Dinner Nuttall sat between R. W. Southern and J. H. Joachim. He shared 'digs' with Southern,

¹⁶ See F. Dainton, 'Morris, Charles Richard, Baron Morris of Grasmere (1869-1990)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/39813>, accessed 7 May 2015, and G. McCulloch, 'Lindsay, Alexander Dunlop, Baron Lindsay of Birker (1879-1952)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34537>, accessed 7 May 2015.

¹⁷ G. F. Nuttall, 'The Puritan spirit through the ages', *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*, 11 (1931), 164–73.

¹⁸ G. F. Nuttall, 'Cromwell's toleration', *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*, 11 (1931), 280–5; G. F. Nuttall, 'Was Cromwell an iconoclast?', *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*, 12 (1933), 51–66; G. F. Nuttall, 'Letters written to J. M. Hodgson', *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*, 12 (1933), 20–30.

whom he regarded as a 'prime educator' of his sensibility.¹⁹ Joachim introduced him to his father, Professor H. H. Joachim, who became a 'prime educator' of his reasoning powers.²⁰ The Joachims introduced a further dimension. Mrs Joachim was one of Oxford Quakerism's three *Grandes Dames*. The others were Lady Mary Murray (wife of the philosopher and classicist Gilbert Murray), and Mrs A. D. Lindsay. Nuttall was partial to *Grandes Dames* and throughout his life he worshipped frequently with Friends. He made two more life-long friends at this time. W. R. Niblett, later Dean of London University's Institute of Education and the first holder of a Chair in Higher Education, was a Congregationalist; P. A. Spalding, later compiler of *A Reader's Handbook to Proust* (1952) and a nephew of Norman Baynes, the Byzantinist, came from a not dissimilar background to Nuttall's own.²¹ Indeed the Congregational Spaldings and Baptist Bayneses were duly incorporated into one of Nuttall's extended family charts. One mutually respectful acquaintanceship, however, did not develop into a close friendship. Christopher Hill was three months Nuttall's junior.²² Their backgrounds and education were similar; Hill's father was a Wesleyan solicitor and the boys had met while Hill was at St Peter's, York. They met again at Balliol. Hill's historical path was clear but his attraction to radical Puritanism had a political foundation and a secular bearing. Hill and Nuttall were like chalk and cheese.

The papers in Congregational *Transactions* demonstrate that this apparently undistinguished, though manifestly interesting, Balliol man had already mapped out his future as a scholar. He was now clear that it lay in Church History. That meant tackling the Middle Ages, and then the Puritans. For the former he needed direction, hence his work for an Oxford BD on 'Faith and Reason in the Works of Bishop Pecock', awarded in 1937 and effectively published as two more pieces for *Transactions*, 'The Lollard Movement after 1384', and 'Bishop Pecock and the Lollard

¹⁹ Nuttall, 'Some . . . Notes', p.4; for Southern, see M. H. Keen, 'Southern, Sir Richard William (1912–2001)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/75440>, accessed 7 May 2015.

²⁰ Nuttall, 'Some . . . Notes', p.4; for Joachim see G. R. G. Mure, rev. M. J. Schofield, 'Joachim, Harold Henry (1868–1938)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34192>, accessed 7 May 2015.

²¹ For William Roy Niblett (1906–2005), see C. Binfield and J. Taylor (eds.) *Who They Were in the Reformed Churches of England and Wales 1901–2000* (Donington, 2007), pp.164–5; for Baynes, see J. M. Hussey, 'Baynes, Norman Hepburn (1877–1961)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30654>, accessed 7 May 2015.

²² For Hill see R. Briggs, 'Hill, (John Edward) Christopher (1912–2003)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/89437>, accessed 7 May 2015.

Movement'.²³ *Transactions* was more, however, than Nuttall's springboard for publication; it signalled and explained the next stage in his Dissenting evolution—his vocation as a Congregational minister.

Mansfield and ministry

Nuttall's Oxford years lasted until 1938. From 1933, however, his collegiate base was Mansfield rather than Balliol. Today Mansfield is a full college of the University. In 1933 it was a Congregational theological college with a new principal, Nathaniel Micklem.²⁴ Micklem was finding his way. He allied a fine intellect to a prickly personality. He wrote with sinewy clarity. He was to become a denominational statesman. Like Nuttall he had inherited a strong sense of public responsibility, to which he added an ability to work through key people, and he was developing distinctive views of the place of Reformed churchmanship in contemporary Congregationalism. He was a New Genevan, to use an expressive phrase of the time; he would be one of the architects of the United Reformed Church. His was a cast of mind which Nuttall found unsympathetic.

In the 1930s Mansfield was the setting for Common Room tensions. Micklem's students were dissatisfied with set services in the college chapel and lectures ending with Aquinas. This was training for priesthood, not ministry. Micklem suspected that Nuttall had engineered the dissatisfaction. Nuttall had not, but he had redrafted the students' very badly written letter of protest. He was a marked man.

Nuttall was marked in other ways. His introduction to Mansfield had come largely through Micklem's predecessor, W. B. Selbie, Principal from 1909 to 1932.²⁵ Selbie was a family friend as well as a denominational heavyweight, a scholar-preacher much more to Nuttall's taste as Congregationalist and personality. Nuttall warmed to Selbie's interest in psychology, especially the psychology of dreams. Selbie remained a friend and mentor, as did Mansfield's other outstanding personality, C. J. Cadoux, a specialist in

²³ G. F. Nuttall, 'The Lollard Movement after 1384: its characteristics and continuity', *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*, 12 (1935), 243–50; G. F. Nuttall, 'Bishop Pecoock and the Lollard Movement', *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*, 13 (1938), 82–6.

²⁴ For Micklem (Principal of Mansfield College, 1932–53), see E. Kaye, 'Micklem, Nathaniel (1888–1976)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/31443>, accessed 7 May 2015.

²⁵ For Selbie see E. Kaye, 'Selbie, William Boothby (1862–1944)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36008>, accessed 7 May 2015..

Biblical Studies who had returned to Mansfield in 1933 to teach Church History.²⁶ Cadoux and Micklem had only pacifism in common.

In fact Nuttall was developing his own high view of ministry, though it was a view of *Congregational* rather than *Reformed* or ‘Genevan’ ministry and in essentials it was closer to Micklem’s view than either might have cared to admit. Thus Nuttall reflected on ministerial bearing, that of the Christian gentleman, and ‘the genuine Reformed ministerial dress, e.g. at Zürich, where Hooper noted and admired it, as that of a merchant/city father’:

This is how I thought I should appear in the pulpit when I was ordained, whether with or without M.A. or B.D. [*not* Geneva] gown and hood, *not* with clerical collar or ministerial bands, but as a decent neat gentleman doing a serious job in a dignified way, like any lecturer or public speaker, e.g. Gilbert Murray.²⁷

There was, of course, more to ministry than bearing. In 1968 he delivered a paper on ‘The meaning of ordination’.²⁸ It fleshed out that image of the gentlemanly minister. For epigraph he turned to Richard Baxter: ‘The people will likely feel that *you have been much with God*’. The mystique of ordination repelled him, ‘I did not have laying on of hands at my own ordination—and I would not have episcopal hands, even Gore’s, laid on my head for all the unity in Christendom.’²⁹ The meat of the matter was much simpler than that. It was that ‘you might be *made* by *Him* to become *fishers of men*’. No theology or ecclesiology could be attached to those words. Ordination was simply a useful way of *ordering* what was incumbent on all Christians but what for some Christians was the *one* thing that they were called to do: to preach the gospel, to lead in public prayer and pastoral care. Nuttall’s account gains from his characteristic underlining and the punctuation which allows his voice to be heard:

You are ordained to pastoral care—to bear your people on your heart. To play an active part in directing...them on their way from time to eternity. *And no one*

²⁶For Cadoux, see E. Kaye, ‘Cadoux, Cecil John (1883–1947)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/41137>, accessed 7 May 2015.

²⁷Geoffrey Nuttall to Clyde Binfield, 8 July 1977; for Murray, see C. Stray, ‘Murray, (George) Gilbert Aimé (1866–1956)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35159>, accessed 7 May 2015.

²⁸G. F. Nuttall, ‘The meaning of ordination’, typescript (1968), bound under *Miscellanea*, and read while in possession of G. F. Nuttall.

²⁹For Gore, Bishop of Worcester, Birmingham, and Oxford, see A. Wilkinson, ‘Gore, Charles (1853–1937)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33471>, accessed 7 May 2015. Gore was naturally in Nuttall’s mind in 1968 since in that year he gave the Charles Gore Lecture, Westminster Abbey.

else will do it. Will you live that men may be forgiven? that they may be good? that they may be transformed—conformed to the image of God's son? Will you live for this? No one else will! Of course there will be frustration in this—bear it! There is much ministry in the world, thank God, but this, pastoral care, is what you were ordained for—and some will rely on you all their lives. Many will be old women—so tiresome: but they called you, and pay for your stipend (which the young don't).

That was delivered to old students of his, forty years after his own ordination. He spoke as one minister addressing others from the depths of his being. He also spoke as one who had come early to see that his particular ministry was to teach and train fellow ministers. He directed his Mansfield life accordingly, utilising his gift for languages and working on an academic strategy. Thus his friendship with the Hebraist, D. R. Ap-Thomas, later of University College, Bangor, encouraged him to enter for the Buchanan Gray Memorial Prize for Hebrew, which he won two years running, keeping it—as it were—in the family; it also encouraged him to learn Welsh. A third language entered his repertoire: German. He spent successive summers in Marburg, with a winter semester (1936–7) thanks to a Travelling Scholarship from Mansfield. There he encountered the Puritan scholar, Theodor Sippell (and helped correct the proofs of Sippell's *Werdendes Quäkertum* (1937)), and he took tea with Rudolf Otto. He also sat under Rudolf Bultmann, preferring his preaching to his lecturing (or his theology).³⁰ A dozen years later Nuttall's ease with German played its part in post-war reconciliation. In 1949 he gave two courses of lectures in Marburg, one in English, on Puritanism, the other in German, on 'Religion as a Matter of Experience'; he was the first Englishman to lecture in that war-torn town, filled with refugees.

Congregational ministers, however, were not ordained to types of ministry. Induction into such ministries might follow but ordination itself depended on a first call to a pastorate. Nuttall's first (and only) pastorate was at Common Close, Warminster, Wiltshire, after he had preached with a view to an assistantship at two historic churches, Bunyan Meeting, Bedford, and Old Meeting, Norwich. He was ordained at Warminster, 4 May 1938. His stipend, £250, did not cover the costs of a manse.

³⁰ For Rudolf Otto (1869–1937) and Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976), see F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone (eds.), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd edn. (Oxford, 1997), pp. 1202 and 250–1.

Warminster and Woodbrooke

No first pastorate is easy and Nuttall's first pastorate was complicated by the outbreak of war. Common Close was such a church as any of his forebears would have recognised. The small change of its life was hardly new to him but wartime ministry in a town so close to Salisbury Plain was demanding for a pacifist. Even so, his years there (1938–43) were remembered with respect. They also allowed Nuttall the Church historian and Nuttall the Congregational minister to accommodate each other.

Geoffrey Nuttall did not regard himself as a theologian (though in that he was too modest) and he recognised that his ignorance of other faiths was a serious weakness.³¹ He also, again too modestly, preferred to call himself a church historian rather than a historian *tout court*. His addiction to lists, humanised by the infinite possibilities of biography—he was a born prosopographer—predisposed him to History, but his attachment to that discipline was determined by his conviction of the Christian Gospel's historicity. This was integral to his ministerial being. It was of great importance to him that Jesus lived *as a man*, that Jesus was neither God-man nor man-God, but man. Here Nuttall took equal issue with Unitarianism and Quaker Gnosticism. If that historicity were destroyed, Christianity itself would be destroyed. It was that historicity which confirmed his devotional attachment to the Divine Presence. Nuttall stood with Paul: 'The Lord stood by me' could only be said of someone who had existed in History. He saw no contradiction between his emphasis of the *immediate* and his attachment to the past, for it was possible to get back to share the experience of people in the past and to apply a similar methodology to people in the present as to people in the past. Historians were trained to get beneath the surface, to distinguish between levels of reliability, to sniff out the mythological and the embroidered, to do, in fact, what every minister should be doing as a matter of pastoral course.

What was striking about Nuttall's approach was its focus on individuals. Historians who saw the past in terms of types and models diminished it into a tool; it ceased to be time extended to eternity. Nuttall, the Christian historian, with the historian's inbuilt scepticism, was nonetheless gripped by the implications of Jesus as a man, an individual, and

³¹This section is derived from notes taken in conversation with Geoffrey Nuttall, but see also A. P. F. Sell, 'Geoffrey Nuttall in conversation', and 'Is Geoffrey also among the theologians?', *The Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society*, 8 (2009), 266–90; (2011), 558–86; (2012), 624–39.

therefore knowable. Nuttall's interest in thought grew from that, since ultimately thought was related to individual men and women. Nuttall's interest in theology, like his interest in devotion, was equally based on that hard core of historicity. It gave him the confidence to examine as worthy of special attention anything that took him by surprise, or seemed contrary to what was orthodox or generally accepted. No wonder he belonged to no school of history and no wonder that historians of any school would—should they have had the wit to encounter him—be continually surprised by the broad sympathies and sheer relevance of this scholar with—apparently—so narrow a base.

In all this, Nuttall was his own man but he was not without models. The historians whose style he came most to admire were Richard Southern, a friend since their Balliol Freshmen's Dinner, and David Knowles, whose friendship lay in the future. He regarded Southern on Anselm (*The Life of St. Anselm*, 1963) as the model for his own work on Baxter, and the impact on him of the opening pages of Knowles's *Monastic Order in England* (1940) and its three-volume sequel, *The Religious Orders in England* (1948–59), remained undimmed.³²

Southern and Knowles were far from Warminster, but it was while there that Nuttall's interest was aroused by four manuscript collections ripe for exploration: Philip, Lord Wharton's correspondence with ejected ministers, the letters of Richard Baxter, the letters of Philip Doddridge, and early Quaker letters, to be found respectively in the Bodleian Library, Dr Williams's Library, New College, London, and Friends House. He was encouraged in this by three older Congregational historians, each of them a Mansfield man: C. J. Cadoux, Albert Peel, whom Nuttall joined as co-editor of Congregational *Transactions* in 1938, and A. G. Matthews, who most closely resembled Nuttall as a type of scholar-minister.³³

There was also one audacious scheme. On the day he graduated BD, Nuttall travelled to Scotland by night train for a fortnight's holiday with Anthony Spalding. That journey crystallised his intention to pursue a DD by thesis. An Oxford DD, which must be unsupervised, could not be submitted less than thirty-three terms after matriculation. That would give Nuttall seven years before his earliest opportunity for taking it. Success

³² For Dom David Knowles see C. N. L. Brooke, 'Knowles, Michael Clive (1896–1974)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/31322>, accessed 7 May 2015.

³³ For Peel see A. Argent, 'Peel, Albert (1887–1949)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/41137>, accessed 7 May 2015. For Arnold Gwynne Matthews (1881–1962), see Binfield and Taylor, *Who They Were*, pp. 149–150.

would make him an exceptionally young DD; it might expunge the mediocrity of his Thirds; it would demonstrate beyond peradventure his status as a scholar. His subject, however, was another matter. The 'Radical Puritanism' on which Nuttall was now concentrating was regarded in English academic circles as problematic, fit for Americans but incapable of sustained or rigorous research. Yet he proposed the Holy Spirit in Puritan faith and experience as the subject for his Oxford DD. He intended 'to offer a theological elucidation of a historical phenomenon: to examine the religious convictions prompting a spiritual and denominational movement during the Commonwealth and Protectorate, and to inquire why this was in one direction only'. He worked on it in Warminster; he found space for writing it in Birmingham.

In 1943 Nuttall was awarded a fellowship at Woodbrooke, the Quaker college at Selly Oak. This had been engineered by W. B. Selbie and Woodbrooke's recently appointed Joint Warden, Leyton Richards. Richards was also a Mansfield man; until 1941 he had ministered at Carrs Lane, Birmingham, one of Congregationalism's largest and most celebrated churches; since 1914 he had been an uncompromising pacifist and by 1943 he was *en route* to Quakerism. He was, needless to say, no New Genevan.³⁴

For a bachelor pacifist minister fresh from a military town Woodbrooke was a liberation. Nuttall found it intellectually and spiritually alive, and there he found his wife. Mary Powley (1901–82) was recently widowed. She was also the Warden's secretary. Her family, the Prestons, were leading Congregationalists in Fleetwood, Lancashire, but she had become a Quaker. Nuttall, with his quietly sharp humour, was drawn to her 'merri-ness'. She was a compact, active, jauntily hatted Friend, already making her redoubtable way in Quaker causes. Mary Powley and Geoffrey Nuttall were married at Colthouse, a picture-postcard Friends Meeting House across the valley from Hawkshead, on 5 September 1944. Their marriage was the model of an up-to-date Puritan partnership, two contrasting personalities, complementing each other to perfection.

Psychologically released by Woodbrooke and matrimony, Nuttall found that thesis writing came easily. His fellowship had been renewed for a second year, this time for work on the Swarthmore Manuscripts, for which a Calendar was envisaged. Then came a call which was not to be refused.

³⁴For Leyton Richards (1878–1948), see Binfield and Taylor, *Who They Were*, pp.189–91. Edith Ryle Richards (b. 1884), Richards's wife and Joint-Warden, was a sister of Horace Pearson.

New College London

The year 1945 saw Nuttall's DD and appointment to a post which he held for thirty-two years. He was the second Free Churchman to be awarded an Oxford DD by thesis. The first, the Methodist Newton Flew, was one of his examiners.³⁵ A year later it was published as *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience*. Its linking of faith and experience has been described as Nuttall's 'quiet protest against the emphasis of neo-Thomists and neo-Calvinists upon a closed system of doctrine', written 'in a mood of defiance against the general moral and mental chaos of the war years'.³⁶ Its importance was undoubted.

In March 1945 Nuttall was sounded out for a post in Church History at New College, the Congregational theological college in London. Since its well-appointed buildings on Finchley Road were still requisitioned for the war effort, Nuttall was interviewed in two London restaurants. The first, with Sydney Cave, the Principal, was on Ludgate Circus; the second, with the college governors, was in Victoria Street.³⁷ His salary on appointment was £650. When he retired in 1977 it had risen to £2600. He lived first at 16 Woodstock Road, Golders Green, and then, from 1950 to 1979, at 2 Brim Hill, on the edge of Hampstead Garden Suburb. He became a member of Lutyens's monumental, but unfinished, Hampstead Garden Suburb Free Church, a flourishing union of Baptists and Congregationalists, while Mary Nuttall worshipped in Fred Rowntree's deceptively vernacular Friends Meeting House nestling nearby in a corner of North Square.

It was a persuasive call. The college was a Divinity School of the University. There was the certainty of steady and stimulating academic contacts: everyone came through London. In addition to the college's own holdings, there were those at Dr Williams's Library, in Gordon Square, and the Swarthmore manuscripts, on which he was currently working, now returned to Friends Library, in Euston Road. The appointment, moreover, confirmed Nuttall's vocational role as teacher and trainer of Congregational ministers.

His duties were to teach Elementary Hebrew, Roman History from Sulla to Marcus Aurelius, and Church History 1–451 AD. Since his

³⁵ For Flew, see E. Kaye, 'Flew, (Robert) Newton (1886–1962)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/39614>, accessed 7 May 2015.

³⁶ D. M. Thompson, 'Geoffrey Nuttall', *The Independent*, 14 August 2007, 39; *Daily Telegraph*, 14 August 2007.

³⁷ For Cave, see R. Bocking, 'Cave, Sydney (1883–1953)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/39612>, accessed 7 May 2015.

Church History students were in their second and third years and his Hebrew students were in their first year, it was through Hebrew that he came to know them. He was an innovative teacher of Hebrew and for his History teaching he introduced essays and tutorials to a college that had a tradition of neither. Over the years the syllabus was modified; Roman History was dropped, Hebrew was demoted to an option, 'Reformation and Counter-Reformation' was offered as an alternative to Church History 1–451, and eventually Nuttall was encouraged to introduce a course for fourth-year students on the History of Nonconformity. This attracted Methodists from Richmond College, Catholics from Heythrop and Anglicans from King's. Nuttall, in short, became known as a good, if demanding, teacher; Mary, for one, preferred his lectures to his sermons. He exercised an undoubted influence over generations of students in a college with a wide denominational reputation—John Huxtable, Sydney Cave's successor as Principal, was to become a Free Church statesman, one of what Archbishop Michael Ramsey liked to call the 'Dissenting Primates'.³⁸ Even so, however close Geoffrey Nuttall was to a denominational centre of things, the detached observer is bound to feel that his finest abilities were wasted and his career thwarted.

Words like 'wasted' and 'thwarted' might seem to be too strong for a scholar with so sustained a reputation. He chaired the University of London's Board of Studies in Theology (1957–9) and was Dean of its Faculty of Divinity (1960–4) and in both roles demonstrated administrative, executive, and political flair. From 1950 he served on the editorial board of the newly established (1948) *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, and in 1961 he was a founder of the Ecclesiastical History Society, formed in large part by that journal's contributors. Nuttall's presence with David Knowles on its committee (1961–5) was proof that the new society was not an Anglican preserve, perhaps an overdue recognition 'that denominational allegiances have some bearing on historians' appreciation of authority in the Church'.³⁹ In 1972–3 he was the Society's President, the first and for many years the sole non-professorial holder of that office. A parallel involvement was with the London Society for the Study of Religion, which he served as Secretary, and of which he was President in

³⁸For Huxtable, see A. P. F. Sell, 'Huxtable, (William) John Fairchild (1912–1990)', see *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/39615>, accessed 7 May 2015. Ramsey's background was also Congregational.

³⁹S. Fletcher, *A Very Agreeable Society'. The Ecclesiastical History Society 1961–2011* (Southampton, 2011), p. 13.

1966. And there were invitations to examine, to lecture and to preach. He was external examiner for at least fourteen universities, with a fearsome reputation for the maintenance of high standards. His public lectures included the Hibbert (1962, in Cambridge), the Charles Gore (Westminster Abbey, 1968), F. D. Maurice (King's College London, 1970) and Ethel M. Wood (University of London, 1978). His University sermons were delivered in Leeds (1950), Cambridge (1958), London (1968) and Oxford (1972, 1980). He contributed to eight Festschriften between 1975 and 1991 and the contributors to his own Festschrift (1977) included the leading church historians of the day: Geoffrey Dickens, Owen Chadwick, Patrick Collinson, Gordon Rupp, Johannes van den Berg, Christopher Hill; its title, *Reformation, Conformity and Dissent*, testified to the breadth of his reputation.⁴⁰

In the sphere of Puritan scholarship Nuttall became, and remained, pre-eminent. His work on the Swarthmore Mss resulted in 'Early Quaker Letters'; this was never published, although twenty-five typescript copies were eventually deposited with major libraries. His work on the Baxter Correspondence began in 1948 when he was obtested a Trustee of Dr Williams's Charity.⁴¹ He remained a Trustee until December 1997, when he was elected the Trust's first Honorary Fellow, but his work on the Library's Baxter material was put aside in 1951, the year of his Friends of Dr Williams's Library Lecture, 'Richard Baxter and Philip Doddridge: a study in a tradition', and only resumed in the 1980s.⁴² Teaching commitments and what he called 'more creative writing' prompted that long delay, but with retirement came the culmination of three-quarters of the work that he had planned in his Warminster years in the shape of his *Calendars* of the correspondence of Philip Doddridge (1979) and, at last, in collaboration with N. H. Keeble, of Richard Baxter (1991). Only Lord Wharton's correspondence remained uncalendared; that awaited a return to Oxford, which was not to be.

The denominational recognition was perhaps the firmer for being unofficial: President of the Friends' Historical Society (1953), President of the Congregational Historical Society (1965-72), President of the United Reformed Church History Society (1972-7) and a transatlantic foray in 1958 which combined his interests—during four months as a

⁴⁰R. B. Knox (ed.), *Reformation, Conformity and Dissent. Essays in Honour of Geoffrey Nuttall* (London, 1977).

⁴¹Trustees are obtested (that is the word used) on formal admission to the Trust.

⁴²G. F. Nuttall, *Richard Baxter and Philip Doddridge: a Study in a Tradition* (London, 1951).

Visiting Lecturer at Pendle Hill, a Quaker college near Philadelphia, he lectured at Harvard Divinity School on Richard Baxter.

There were two other widening spheres of influence and recognition. The first was in Wales. His proficiency in Welsh, perhaps unique among English historians, and reflected in his *Howel Harris, 1714–1773: the Last Enthusiast*,⁴³ contributed to invitations to lecture in Swansea, Aberystwyth, and Bangor, to the Vice-Presidency of the Hon. Society of Cymmrodorion (1978) and an Honorary Doctorate, University of Wales (1969). His proficiency in Dutch, reflected in his friendship with Johannes van den Berg of Leiden, issued in invitations to lecture at Leiden and Utrecht and honorary membership of the Kerkhistorisch Gezelschap (1981). He made his way even in the world of Congregational politics. Papers on the early Congregational conception of the Church, the Ministry and the place of women within it were published in the 1940s.⁴⁴ In 1964 he contributed to a *Declaration of Faith*, published by the Congregational Church in England and Wales, and his joint editing with Owen Chadwick of *From Uniformity to Unity 1662–1962*, essays ‘prepared under the auspices of a Committee of the Three Denominations (Baptist, Congregational, and Presbyterian) and of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, with the support of the Church Historical Society’, indicated the confidence felt in his contribution as a historian to the twentieth century’s ecumenical high tide.⁴⁵ He was not, however, in sympathy with the ecclesiasticism which, he considered, lurked in the ecumenical movement, especially as expressed in one of that movement’s contemporary prophets, Bishop Lesslie Newbigin, who, in retirement, lived close to Nuttall, ‘but in another world’; and Nuttall confessed to a temptation to write reflections on Newbigin’s autobiography, *Unfinished Agenda*, which he would call ‘“The failure of S. C. M. Religion”, but “for private circulation only”!’⁴⁶ Yet Congregationalists, chief among them John Huxtable, were pacesetters in that ecumenical movement. That Huxtable and Nuttall remained

⁴³G. F. Nuttall, *Howel Harris 1714–1773: the Last Enthusiast* (Cardiff, 1965).

⁴⁴G. F. Nuttall, ‘The early Congregational conception of the Church’, *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*, 14 (1944), 197–204 (reprinted as a pamphlet, 1946); G. F. Nuttall, ‘The early Congregational conception of the Ministry and the place of women within it’, *Congregational Quarterly*, 26 (1948), 153–61; G. F. Nuttall, ‘The principles of Congregationalism in their historical setting’, *Congregational Quarterly*, 28 (1950), 301–9.

⁴⁵*A Declaration of Faith* (London, Congregational Church in England and Wales, 1964, 2nd edn. 1967); ‘Publisher’s Note’, G. Nuttall and O. Chadwick (eds.), *From Uniformity to Unity 1662–1962* (London, 1962).

⁴⁶Geoffrey Nuttall to Eric Allen, February 1986; for James Edward Lesslie Newbigin (1909–98), see Lesslie Newbigin, *Unfinished Agenda. An Autobiography* (London, 1985).

friends, and mutually supportive colleagues at New College, speaks well for both men.

There was one area in which Nuttall could exert his generally underestimated political skills: the preservation of Dissenting libraries. His success was mixed, but at least he publicised the perils which beset such libraries. He turned up at Lancashire Independent College, to find that the keys to the bookcases of its valuable Raffles Library had been lost. At Nottingham's Paton College the books had been stowed in great trunks. At the Methodist Richmond College there had been a room full of seventeenth-century volumes; he failed to save them. At Swansea he saved some of the best for the surviving college at Aberystwyth, but at Western College, Bristol, there was the most disgraceful story of all. He had been assured that no old books of any value were there; he found that the books owned by the original academy at Ottery St Mary had indeed been sold, with no record kept, and that what remained was shelved higger mugger. Even so he saved enough of value for Dr Williams's Library. That left the New College library and the Congregational Library, then at Memorial Hall, and these he saved. He raised £10,000 for New College's work of salvation and when, in the 1970s, it became clear that New College itself must close and that the United Reformed Church and its architects were clear that this must be so, it was Nuttall who ensured that the closure was achieved with dignity.⁴⁷ He failed to ensure that a New College Trust was set up to provide for sabbaticals and the civilised context for theological formation but at least the buildings were vested in trust.

There was a backdrop of disappointment to this record of achievement. The death of C. J. Cadoux in August 1947 meant that Mansfield College's post in Church History was vacant. Nuttall was interviewed for it. He had been at New College for less than three years but here was an opening not to be missed. He was not appointed. The post went without interview to another Mansfield man, Erik Routley, already known as a hymnologist and a man of more than many parts but lacking Nuttall's academic depth.⁴⁸ In 1956 Nuttall, with Norman Sykes and David Knowles as referees, was interviewed for a new Chair in Ecclesiastical History at the University of Manchester; it was awarded to Gordon Rupp.⁴⁹ Two years

⁴⁷ It was Roy Niblett, on behalf of the United Reformed Church, who broke the news to him: W. R. Niblett, *Life, Education, Discovery: a Memoir and Essays* (Bristol, 2001), pp. 119–20.

⁴⁸ For Erik Routley (1917–82), see Binfield and Taylor, *Who They Were*, pp. 196–7.

⁴⁹ For Norman Sykes (1897–1961) see J. S. Bezzant, *The Very Reverend Norman Sykes, 1897–1961* (London, 1962); for Rupp, see O. Chadwick, 'Rupp, (Ernest) Gordon (1910–1986)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/40003>, accessed 7 May 2015.

later Nuttall applied for the new Chair in Ecclesiastical History at King's College London. Though never more than a Recognised Teacher at the University (in large part because New College could not afford to pay a salary at full lecturer's level), Nuttall was the University's incumbent Church Historian; the appointment went to C. W. Dugmore.⁵⁰ In 1968 he was third time unlucky, this time for the Dixie Chair at Cambridge. Once more he was beaten to the post by Gordon Rupp, who had recently become Principal of Wesley House, Cambridge; Rupp held the posts in tandem.

Retirement, recognition, retrospect

In 1977 Geoffrey Nuttall retired. New College closed. King's College London made him a Fellow, with the status of Visiting Professor (1977–80). Beyond hosting the launch of his *Festschrift* there was no recognition from Mansfield College. His election to the British Academy in 1991, however, brought him unalloyed pleasure. One other United Reformed minister was already a Fellow, Charles Cranfield, the New Testament scholar. Cranfield, originally a Methodist, was from the Presbyterian side of their church.⁵¹

The Fellowship coincided with the publication of the Baxter volumes. Nuttall's publications flowed ceaselessly and seamlessly, upwards of 600 by 2007, all of enviable quality. The Doddridge and Baxter *Calendars* testified to his mastery of primary sources and his ability to communicate that mastery usefully to all who consulted them. The host of essays, papers and articles testified to his catholicity and his ability to express a thesis in a sentence without ever being in thrall to any particular school. Three volumes of collected essays, not all of them previously published, indicated the freshness, breadth and relevance of his writing.⁵² This 'church historian' had a cultural, social and political understanding to which he was unwilling to lay claim. Here was a writer who would be constantly rediscovered. The essence of his scholarship, however, lay with two decep-

⁵⁰ For Clifford W. Dugmore (1909–90), see *Who Was Who 1981–1990*, 8 (1981–98), p. 216.

⁵¹ For Charles Ernest Burland Cranfield (1915–2015), see Binfield and Taylor, *Who They Were*, pp. 42–3.

⁵² G. F. Nuttall, *The Puritan Spirit. Essays and Addresses* (London, 1967); G. F. Nuttall, *Studies in English Dissent* (Weston Rhyn, 2002); G. F. Nuttall, *Early Quaker Studies and the Divine Presence* (Weston Rhyn, 2003).

tively slim volumes: *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* and *Visible Saints. The Congregational Way 1640–1660*.

The ‘Foreword’ and ‘Historical Introduction’ to the former brought all Nuttall’s characteristics and idioms into play. The purpose of the book was theological: it was a contribution to restoring ‘the centrality in the Christian religion of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, with its manifold implications for Christian faith and experience’.⁵³ He made no bones about where he himself stood and the reservations which he felt about the Neo-Thomist and Neo-Calvinist agreement ‘in laying emphasis upon dogmas and confessions’: ‘In the reaction against an optimistic humanism which seemed hardly to need any doctrine of the Holy Spirit, human incapacity through Original Sin has been so exaggerated latterly as virtually to deny the doctrine.’⁵⁴ He proposed ‘a fresh presentation’, from ‘a particular historical angle’, that of seventeenth-century English Puritanism, which gave the doctrine ‘a more thorough and detailed consideration than it has received at any other time in Christian history’.⁵⁵ He hoped that this would stimulate contemporary thinking. There was a further refinement. He proposed a particular focus on the spiritual climate, the radical Puritanism, in which Quakerism arose. For Nuttall early Quakerism was not a byway for enthusiasts; it was ‘of the first importance, because it indicates the *direction* of the Puritan movement as a whole’.⁵⁶

This was bold enough but he sustained his boldness with a keen appreciation of differing approaches within Puritanism. He began with the Reformation’s rediscovery of religion ‘as something individually experienced, a living, personal relationship, open to Everyman, between God and his soul’.⁵⁷ He explored the natural tendency in Puritanism to associate the Holy Spirit in man with man’s reason and man’s conscience.⁵⁸ He saw in the Puritan belief that ‘the foundation of prayer . . . is the conviction of God’s Fatherhood’ one of the ‘major rediscoveries brought about by men’s return to the Bible at the Reformation’.⁵⁹ He reflected on the ‘new-found spiritual liberty’ which this predicated. It ‘expressed itself both in a broad tolerance of difference within the fellowship of the Church, and in a demand for toleration as an established policy. The tolerance, which was

⁵³ Nuttall, *Holy Spirit*, p. vii.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. vii–viii.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. viii.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 36–7.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

the source of the demand for toleration, was itself the immediate issue of the contemporary religious enthusiasm, conditioned . . . by a new historical sense and by eschatological convictions . . . Toleration in the State, like tolerance in the Church, was a natural outcome of faith in “the liberty of the Spirit”.⁶⁰ He ended, quite logically, close to where he began—with personality, that late-comer to theology: ‘the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is a doctrine of a personal God, revealed in a Person and present in personal relationship with persons’.⁶¹

Visible Saints might be seen as polemic at its most scrupulous. It was ‘an endeavour to re-present [the principles of the “Congregational Way”] as they were first enunciated and practised in a period of freedom and hopefulness’, c.1640–60. It was ‘an interpretation of the Gospel and a doctrine of the Church which arose out of the Reformation and . . . now arouses interest and attention in the wider circles of the World Church’.⁶² It was a focused sequel to *The Holy Spirit*, replicating its method and the historian’s even-handedness and sense of context, while communicating also the author’s personal stance. Its method depended on minute contemporary quotations, thickly and uncompromisingly applied. At its heart lay the early Congregationalists’ ‘conscious and explicit emphasis on . . . fellowship’, that natural yet essential element in a church’s life.⁶³ The balance between stated fellowship and freedom was a Congregational principle, almost a discovery, which gripped Nuttall: ‘Against the claims of external authorities more comprehensive and overriding, whether in Church or state, the liberties of the little man, of the small society, are felt secure only when brought within the stated confines of a constitution. Freedom and vagueness did never agree.’⁶⁴ Those confines allowed for tolerance: ‘To the Congregational men tolerance meant not indifference but the refusal of one willing mind to compel another. To dispute only, and not to fine, imprison or drive into exile, was already revolutionary; and in . . . dispute . . . they delighted’.⁶⁵ The implications were clear:

Those who had become members of Congregational churches had done so willingly and without constraint; . . . having done so, they had entered into a covenant . . . The church members no longer possessed the same freedom as

⁶⁰Nuttall, *Holy Spirit*, p. 113.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, p. 171.

⁶²G. F. Nuttall, *Visible Saints: the Congregational Way 1640–1660*, 2nd edn (Weston Rhyn, 2011), p. ix.

⁶³*Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, p. 103.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, p. 121.

individuals . . . The point which we have reached may be described as the limitation set upon the principle of freedom by the prior principle of fellowship. Within the fellowship large liberty could be granted and in the growing understanding of the truth one willing mind could be persuaded by another; but if the fellowship were broken, the opportunity of persuasion was gone, and freedom was gone too.⁶⁶

One can hear Geoffrey Nuttall lecturing to his students at New College and fearing that contemporary Congregationalism's New Genevans were unlikely to hear what he was saying.

From Queen Mother Court to Burcot Grange

In 1979 the Nuttalls left Hampstead Garden Suburb for Bournville and an apartment in Queen Mother Court, a retirement complex for teachers for which Mary was eligible. Quakerism and Bournville were synonymous but Queen Mother Court, as perhaps its name suggests, was not a Quaker foundation. On 15 June 1982 Mary Nuttall died; her funeral 'was a totally Quaker occasion. There were many references to her work for peace for which she was said to be a formidable fighter . . . Geoffrey was calm and serene, and perhaps stoical.'⁶⁷

Geoffrey Nuttall frequently worshipped at Bournville's Quaker Meeting but his own church allegiance lay eventually with Beaumont Road United Reformed Church, also in Bournville, an unadorned building which had come in with the Churches of Christ. Here, in this 'simple Rutherfordian back streets tabernacle',⁶⁸ he found a residue of radical Puritanism, a relief from what he had recently encountered in another Birmingham church: 'superficial flapdoodle, a mixture of unquestioned doctrinal evangelicalism with humanist moralism'.⁶⁹ That trenchant judgement appeared in an annual round robin to old students, which was in other respects decidedly upbeat. In the previous year thirty-seven friends had visited him 'and already this year I've had a Fellow of St Hugh's College, Oxford, a Professor from Italy, a retired Professor from King's, a Principal from Australia and a Lecturer from Stirling. "All roads lead to Queen Mother Court", as another visitor, a Fellow of Magdalene

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 126–7.

⁶⁷ R. Buick Knox to C. Binfield, 24 June 1982.

⁶⁸ The description is Patrick Collinson's: Patrick Collinson to C. Binfield, 9 September 2007.

⁶⁹ Geoffrey Nuttall to Eric Allen, February 1986.

said! Very flattering for an old josser . . .⁷⁰ Many of those visitors would have been given an authoritatively exhausting tour of Bournville.

At the turn of the century Geoffrey Nuttall left Queen Mother Court for Burcot Grange, a comfortable and rural residential home which, as a private house, had belonged to the Halfords, Methodists who had prospered on motor accessories, and before them to the Odgerses, from the cream of Birmingham Unitarianism. He became steadily more frail. His mind remained sharp but his correspondence all but ceased. He died 24 July 2007. His funeral was at Beaumont Road, Bournville, on 8 August, and there was a Memorial Service in London on 16 November. That service was held at Whitefield Memorial Church, Tottenham Court Road, its name commemorating George Whitefield, one of Nuttall's later heroes. The addresses delivered at those two services were published by the New College Old Students' Association, together with Nuttall's 'Reflections on "Come, O thou traveller unknown"', an examination of Charles Wesley's hymn, 'Wrestling Jacob', given to a reunion of New College students in 1998, the last occasion on which he spoke in public.⁷¹ That paper was characteristically rigorous. It combined Hebrew, history and devotion—his hearers were, after all, his old students. It paid particular attention to five of the hymn's original twelve verses, among them this verse:

'Tis Love!'Tis Love! Thou diedst for me!
 I hear thy whisper in my heart;
 The morning breaks, the shadows flee,
 Pure, universal love thou art;
 To me, to all, thy mercies move:
 Thy nature and thy name is love.

The Puritan historian and essential Congregationalist here linked arms with the boy who over seventy years earlier had worshipped at Colwyn Bay's Wesleyan church and, with his mother, had sung its hymns:

Methodist individualism? Arminian universalism? Revivalist sensationalism? Maybe, but with this verse, in which the poem reaches its climax . . . the Evangelical Revival is born, and the world has never been the same again.⁷²

Clyde Binfield
University of Sheffield

⁷⁰ Geoffrey Nuttall to Eric Allen, February 1986.

⁷¹ [Colin Richards, ed.] *Geoffrey Fillingham Nuttall 1911–2007* (Prestatyn, 2008).

⁷² G. F. Nuttall, 'Reflections on "Come, O thou traveller unknown"', *ibid.*, pp. 45–55 at 52–3.

Note: In the preparation of this memoir I have relied on three particular sources. The first is a typescript, 'Some Autobiographical Notes compiled by *Geoffrey F. Nuttall* at the request of the British Academy August, 1991'. The second is C. Binfield, 'Profile: Geoffrey Nuttall. The formation of an independent historian', *Epworth Review*, 25 (1998), 79–106. This profile depended on my third source, a combination of extended conversations with Geoffrey Nuttall in 1996 and 1997 (with the profile in mind) and a correspondence which began in 1967 (we first met in 1962). Dr Nuttall had similar conversations and correspondence with other friends, among them the Revd Dr Alan Argent and the Revd Professor Alan P. F. Sell, men at opposite poles of Congregationalism. Professor Sell's conversations, dating from 1982–3, have been published (see above, note 31). Dr Argent's correspondence, with much else, has been deposited at Dr Williams's Library, Gordon Square, London, to which Dr Nuttall made a generous bequest, including books and papers. Attention should also be drawn here to the entry in *ODNB* by Dr David Wykes, Director of Dr Williams's Trust and Library,⁷³ and another long standing friend, and to an appreciation from Princeton: Nigel Smith, 'Life and works with Geoffrey F. Nuttall', *The Congregational History Society Magazine*, 6 (2011), 159–70.

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⁷³D. L. Wykes, 'Nuttall, Geoffrey Fillingham (1911–2007)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/99038>, accessed 7 May 2015.

