

William Jay of Bath (1769-1853)

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I declare that this thesis has been composed by me and that the work which it embodies is my work and has not been included in another thesis.

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Abstract

William Jay (1769-1853) was an Independent minister of the Argyle Chapel in Bath for sixty-two years. His career bridged the time between the Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century and the formal Congregational denominationalism of the nineteenth century. Jay's autobiography is used among historians for its first-hand accounts of other notable evangelical figures such as William Wilberforce (1759-1833), Hannah More (1745-1833) and John Newton (1725-1807). Too often his own influence has been overlooked, but at the time he was regarded as one of the foremost Dissenting preachers of his era. His ministry within a fashionable spa city increased the respectability of evangelical religion among the growing middle classes in Bath. This thesis examines the evangelicalism of William Jay in the context of his times.

The scope of Jay's life and popularity will be examined in six chapters. Following the introduction, chapter two will examine his direct impact through the Argyle Chapel upon Bath. Chapter three will review the early life of William Jay that was much neglected by his biographers. It will demonstrate the formation of his evangelicalism first introduced to him by Joanna Turner (1732-1784) and instilled in his training by Cornelius Winter (1742-1807). The social composition of the Argyle Chapel will be evaluated in the fourth chapter. Those that Jay attracted to the chapel not only promoted his cause to advance the gospel, but also increased the prestige of the minister and his place of worship. In chapter five, Jay's preaching, which attracted celebrity and commoner alike, will be analyzed for form, style, content, delivery and the receptivity of his audience. Likewise, the spirituality of the man, which will be reviewed in chapter six, induced similar qualities to stimulate evangelical religion. Finally, the polity and ecclesiology of William Jay will be examined in the seventh chapter. The Argyle Chapel was under strong pastoral guidance for the vast majority of the minister's service until Jay lost that influence shortly before his retirement in 1852. The biography will conclude with an appraisal of R.W. Dale's (1829-1895) categorization of Jay and his chapel as representative of older evangelical religion and criticism of the early participants of the revival found in Dale's sermon *The Old Evangelicalism and the New* (1889). William Jay promoted a religious perspective

that exhorted the individual to dwell on the self yet sought to do so through a united Christian movement that crossed denominational barriers.

Acknowledgments

Little did I know back in 2003, when I pulled a copy of William Jay's *Short Discourses to be Read in Families* off the shelf in a second hand book shop, that it would initiate the journey that would cause me to move to the United Kingdom and write a new biography upon his life. The end is within sight and I am so grateful for those who assisted me along the way. You are told when you begin work on a thesis that you do not produce it alone. This manuscript is no different. There are a host of people who deserve my gratitude for the help they provided in this work. I would like to thank the staff of the Birmingham City Library, the Bristol City Library, the Bristol Record Office, the Dr Williams's Library, the Dupont Library of the University of the South and the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre. But two archivists deserve special mention. Anne Buchanan of the Bath Central Library and Colin Johnston of the Bath Record Office went far beyond their normal duties in the assistance they provided me during my research. I am indebted to Dr Mary Ede and Sheena Carter from the Central United Reformed Church in Bath in granting me access to the old Argyle Chapel records as well as hosting me in their homes to discuss Jay and his chapel. I also would like to thank Dr Clyde Binfield of the University of Sheffield for lending me his expertise through his correspondence letting me know the various connections of Congregational families and where material might be located.

I am appreciative of my church family at the Old Baptist Chapel in Bradford-on-Avon. Jay frequently preached from the pulpit of this chapel and his second wife grew up attending the church. Upon discovering that William Jay was my subject, the good people of this congregation became immediately excited, not just because of the Argyle minister's association with its history, but because of the influence of a former member, Hubert Alsop (1905-1984). His seven children, who all still attend the chapel, told me of their father's great love for the writings of Jay and how he regularly quoted from the books he kept under his bed. He did so with such frequency that the grandchildren believed that 'Mr. Jay lived under his bed'. The people of this church kept me energized in my studies by their willingness to listen to every new discovery.

I am truly grateful to my supervisor, Professor David Bebbington. His careful editing, suggestions, and encouragement were invaluable. Most of all, David portrays

the true ideal of a historian and gentleman, an example I hope to emulate. I consider it a privilege to have worked under his supervision.

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List of Abbreviations

BCL	Bath Central Library
BRO	Bath Record Office
Birmingham CL	Birmingham Central Library
BFBS	British and Foreign Bible Society
Bristol RO	Bristol Record Office
CURC	Central United Reformed Church, Bath (formerly the Argyle Chapel)
DWL	Dr Williams's Library
GRO	Gloucestershire Record Office, Gloucester
LMS	London Missionary Society
<i>ODNB</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i>
SRO	Somerset Record Office, Taunton
<i>TCHS</i>	<i>Transactions of the Congregational History Society</i>
WSHC	Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre, Chippenham

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Chapter One: Introduction

William Jay (1769-1853) stood at the culmination of the Evangelical Revival. In many ways he was a transitional figure between the evangelical Nonconformity of the late eighteenth century and the denominational Congregationalists who followed in the later nineteenth century. The pedigree of his teaching began with George Whitefield (1714-1770), the great Anglican preacher of the revival, who took Cornelius Winter (1742-1807) as his final disciple shortly before his last trip to America and his subsequent death. Winter, who was never able to receive orders from the Church of England, became the tutor and mentor to William Jay. Winter's young protégé, who enjoyed enormous success, was therefore the fruition of the ideal Evangelical Nonconformist minister that sprang from the seeds of the Revival.

Perhaps Jay's significance in this role can be seen in an event nearly a hundred years after he commenced his pastoral ministry in Bath. In October 1889 the Argyle Chapel celebrated its centenary. No other Nonconformist chapel in the city had such a storied past. For the first six decades in the history of the church that met at Argyle Street, the chapel had only one minister, William Jay, whose shadow loomed large over the event. The main speaker, R. W. Dale (1829-1895), consistently referred to Jay. It was a celebration recognizing the successes of the past in addition to establishing a hopeful outlook towards the future of the church.

Some context is necessary as the Chapel had not much to be optimistic about in the period prior to the event. Earlier in the year, the current minister, Thomas Stephens (1857-1912), had resigned his position. Three years previously, he had been elected minister by the slim margin of 79 votes to 55. An unpleasant campaign of anonymous letters had forced his resignation.¹ However, he had agreed to be a speaker at the anniversary and needless to say his presence made some attenders feel uncomfortable. The centenary also followed just a week after the members heard the discouraging news that the man chosen to be Stephens' replacement would not be accepting the call to the pastorate of the Argyle Chapel. The noted preacher Urijah Rees Thomas (1839-1901), the first minister of Redland Park Chapel in Bristol, after

¹ Ede, Mary. *The Chapel In Argyle Street, Bath, 1789-1989* (Bath: Central United Reformed Church, 1989), 40

carefully considering the invitation for three weeks, declined the church's offer, believing his work in Bristol was not yet complete.² Redland Park had been twice enlarged under his ministry up to that point. He would later become the chairman of the Congregational Union of England and Wales in 1895.³ It had been hoped that Thomas would restore the Argyle Chapel to its former glory days when William Jay was the minister. If that was to happen, it would be under another's ministry.

In addition to this, there had been a controversy among the membership over the date of the anniversary nine years previously. Some, including the deacon William Titley (1818-1882), saw the foundation date as 1780 when the first members seceded from the Countess of Huntingdon's Chapel.⁴ The chapel historian, William Tuck, had been arguing for a foundation date of 1785 when a church was formally constituted from members of the congregation. The argument even spilled out into the editorial pages of the local papers. Two deacons, including Titley, resigned over the matter. The settlement was a commemoration of when the Chapel had been established in Argyle Street rather than when the fellowship formed after seceding from another chapel.⁵ Needless to say, the celebration had a most inauspicious start.

The committee in charge of planning the event had prepared a full schedule of activities including teas and speeches spread over seven days. There were visits from noted dignitaries such as J. Guinness Rogers (1822-1911), minister of Grafton Square Congregational Chapel, Clapham and Handel Cossham (1824-1890), a Bristol MP and former mayor of Bath. It is obvious from the newspaper accounts that the majority of accolades for the chapel were accorded to William Jay. Joshua C. Harrison (1813-1894), who had also held the chairmanship of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, stated that in his younger days 'the names of Jay and Bath were so closely connected that one was scarcely thought of without the other'. The Baptist philanthropist and MP, Thomas Blake (1825-1901), said in his speech, 'Whenever one thought of Bath, the name of Jay always presented itself.' He also noted how astonishingly little was known of Jay's personal history as his memoir had

² Argyle Chapel Minute Book, 1881-1918, BRO, 480/1/2/1/4, 126

³ Thomas, David. *Urijah Rees Thomas: His Life and His Work* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1902), 317, 323

⁴ In his younger days, Titley played a major role in Jay's resignation from the chapel and the eventual split of the congregation. See chapter 7, 182-185

⁵ The entire episode including transcripts of the deacon correspondence is recorded in The Papers of William Tuck, 1879-1880, BRO, 0480/2/21 & 0480/2/22

been out of print for several years. It was his hope that the centenary would inspire a new biography to be published. H. Arnold Thomas, the minister of Highbury Chapel, Bristol, gave testimony that Jay preached the very first sermon in his chapel. And Thomas Mann (1814-1898) of the Trowbridge Tabernacle noted that when he first came to Trowbridge, 'Jay was the patron saint of all the churches of their denomination in the neighbourhood'. Both ministers and dignitaries desired to pay homage to Jay.⁶

The keynote address was delivered at midweek by R.W. Dale, minister of Carr's Lane Chapel in Birmingham and another former chairman of the Congregational Union of England and Wales.⁷ Dale's discourse, later published as *The Old Evangelicalism and the New* (1889), was much more tempered than those of his contemporaries who lavished praises on Jay. The thrust of Dale's speech was that William Jay and the Argyle Chapel constituted a 'monument and memorial' of a past evangelicalism connected with the revival of the previous century and that a new form had supplanted it. Dale praised Jay for the style and the content in his preaching. He commended the Argyle minister for clearly communicating his thoughts in his sermons rather than using a pretentious 'intellectual manner' in preaching.⁸ He also said that Jay presented 'evangelical truth in solution', meaning the practical outworking of doctrine, rather than focusing exclusively on the controversial doctrinal issues of the day.⁹ And he also admired the great passion for souls among the older evangelicals and held their attitude up as an example for the church at the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁰ Dale could appreciate some aspects of the former ministries of earlier evangelicals like Jay.

But Dale was also critical of those who had gone before him. He stated there was an overall 'ethos' of evangelicalism that also had negative aspects. He felt there were many instances in which those in the previous generation had been in error. First, he said the movement 'encouraged what is called an undenominational temper' which impeded the development of ecclesiastical polity. He stated the relationship

⁶ A full account of the centenary celebration along with the newspaper articles is found in the Argyle Chapel Minute Book, 1881-1901, 480/1/2/1/4, 128-131

⁷ The original designation of Carr's Lane Chapel will be used over the modern usage of Carrs Lane Chapel.

⁸ Dale, R.W. *The Old Evangelicalism and the New* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1889), 11

⁹ *Ibid.*, 12

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 13-14

among early evangelicals was a ‘fellowship of an accidental and precarious kind’. It was because of this loose confederation that the movement that was supposed to be a unified body was actually an ‘ally of individualism’.¹¹ Since early evangelicalism was focused on the individual, it failed to explore the relationship of the Christian ‘to the general order of human society, or the realization of the kingdom of God in all the various regions of human activity’, particularly in the realms of art, science, literature, politics, commerce and industry.¹² Dale also felt the older evangelicalism was wanting in ‘a disinterested love of truth’. There was not a pure regard for spiritual accuracy for its own sake, but only as a ‘necessary instrument’ in conversion.¹³ Overall, it was the older evangelicalism’s care for the salvation of the individual soul to the exclusion of all else that held back the progress of the movement.¹⁴

This was not the first time Dale had been critical of the Evangelical Revival that had preceded him. In his youth, the Carr’s Lane minister had been thoroughly entrenched in the Calvinistic theological heritage he had inherited from those like Jay.¹⁵ However, over time he began to adopt divergent views. In his very first sermon at Carr’s Lane, he advocated universal redemption.¹⁶ In his first series of addresses after becoming the co-pastor of Carr’s Lane Chapel, he rejected the concept of an inherited depravity from Adam and double predestination.¹⁷ In turn, this led him to embrace a form of universalism. But after some consideration upon the scriptures, he came to hold conditionalism as the eternal destiny of the reprobate.¹⁸ Dale fully relinquished his Calvinism by 1860. Then twenty years later he pronounced it ‘dead’ and declared that to reflect on it then was ‘unlovely, hideous, and disgusting’.¹⁹ Dale was still searching for a theological system in Congregationalism to replace it.²⁰ Finally, Dale thought that the descendants of the Evangelical Revival ‘ought to have accepted the responsibility of carrying forward the moral reformation which

¹¹ Ibid., 17

¹² Ibid., 18-19

¹³ Ibid., 19-20

¹⁴ Ibid., 21-22

¹⁵ Dale, A.W.W. *The Life of R.W. Dale of Birmingham* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1899), 11, 17

¹⁶ Ibid., 18

¹⁷ Ibid., 110-113

¹⁸ Ibid., 149

¹⁹ Dale, R.W. *The Evangelical Revival and Other Sermons* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1880), 194-195

²⁰ Ibid., 22

Protestantism had only begun'.²¹ He stated the movement had done 'very little to give us a nobler and more Christian ideal of practical life'.²² This was because the revival did not foster the concept of the church body over individualism in order to have a greater impact on the world. The only contributions to the reformation of society and the development of the church were the Wesleyan concepts of the doctrine of Christian perfection and the class meeting.²³ The former of the two would have certainly been despised by Dale's predecessor John Angell James (1785-1859) and his contemporary, William Jay. The merits of Dale's thesis of the differences between Jay's old evangelicalism and the new will be assessed in the conclusion.

To evaluate these claims, it is desirable to produce a new work on William Jay. There was sufficient reason for the hope that another biographical sketch of Jay would be produced after the Argyle Chapel anniversary. Between the death of William Jay and the centenary four memoirs of the preacher had been published.²⁴ All of them have their faults, with the key deficiency being that they fail to provide much detail regarding the minister's first forty years of service. Wallace knew the minister intimately only in the final decade of his life. Wilson had only minimal contact with Jay and borrowed heavily from others.²⁵ Even the *Autobiography* fails to deliver details of the minister's earlier career. In a letter to Jay's grandson, one of Jay's closest friends and admirers wrote, 'no one who knows much of Mr. Jay's bountiful learning, and his godly course of actions, can be at all satisfied. The editors had rich material placed in their hands and with small diligence they might have acquired more. What they had they used unskillfully, and produced a memoir carelessly edited, and lamentably deficient as to detail.'²⁶ One of the editors of the *Autobiography*, John Angell James, wrote to a friend that the manuscript he received was lacking in details and he was 'desirous of gathering more letters – though Mr. Jay was never much of a

²¹ Ibid., 35

²² Ibid., 38

²³ Ibid., 31, 39

²⁴ In order of their appearance: Wallace, Thomas. *A Portraiture of the Late William Jay of Bath* (London: Arthur Hall, Virtue & Co., 1854), Redford, George and James, J.A., (eds.), *The Autobiography of William Jay* (London: Hamilton, Adams, & Co., 1855), Wilson, S.S. *The Late Rev. William Jay: A Memoir* (London: Binns & Goodwin, 1854), Jay, Cyrus. *Recollections of William Jay of Bath* (London: Hamilton, Adams and Co., 1859).

²⁵ The book seller Charles Godwin had both of these works bound together with the title 'Attempted Biographies Mr. Jay'.

²⁶ Charles Godwin to William Jay Bolton, 9 June 1862, BCL, A.L. 1978

correspondent'.²⁷ When the book was released, he admitted that it failed to satisfy the curiosity of Jay's admirers and as far as the section where Jay reminisced about his various friends and contemporaries, many of the characters 'had become strangers to the public'.²⁸ The second attempt by his son, while providing more candid anecdotes of the family's life, failed to illuminate the father's early career that had not already been presented in the *Autobiography*. These early biographies of Jay fail to do justice to the complete life of the minister.

Since the centenary only three other evaluations of William Jay have been produced. The first was Iain Murray's article based on his lecture at the 1971 Leicester Ministers' Conference.²⁹ Murray presented Jay as model for contemporary preaching in what he called 'the first major resurgence of Calvinism in England since the eighteenth century'.³⁰ Murray saw Jay as the ideal culmination of preaching derived from the Puritan divines and the participants of the Evangelical Revival. Murray's lecture and the article that followed inspired the first republication of Jay's autobiography in nearly 120 years. In a similar assessment, John Taylor, a United Reformed Church minister and historian, wrote that Jay became 'a last relic of the early and uncorrupted era of the Evangelical Revival'. However, Taylor's evaluation is certainly less flattering, and while noting an interest for historical analysis, Jay's impact on contemporary thought is held to be 'nothing to exult about!'³¹ In 1950, Henry Pressely produced a Ph.D. thesis at the University of Edinburgh entitled, 'Evangelicalism in England as Exemplified in the Life and Works of William Jay'. Unfortunately, the author offers little more than a recapitulation of the *Autobiography*. And despite a promising title, he fails to demonstrate how his subject is representative of evangelicalism in nineteenth-century England.³² Pressely also makes claims that he is unable to substantiate. An example is that when summarizing Jay as an author he states, 'it was as a popular religious educator that he [Jay] really shone'.³³ This claim

²⁷ J.A. James to Joshua Wilson, 28 Jan. 1854, Dr. Williams's Library, He 9/43

²⁸ J.A. James to Joshua Wilson, 23 July 1854, Dr. Williams's Library, He 9/45

²⁹ Murray is the Editorial Director of the Banner of Truth Trust.

³⁰ Murray, Iain. 'William Jay: The Preacher', *Banner of Truth* (April 1971), 17

³¹ Taylor, John H., 'William Jay (1769-1853) and His Admirers', *Journal of the United Reformed History Society*, 1 (1974), 78

³² Pressely, H.E. 'Evangelicalism in England as Exemplified in the Life and Works of William Jay' (University of Edinburgh, Ph.D. Thesis, 1950). Pressely makes no mention of Dale's centenary sermon. Most likely he was unaware of it.

³³ *Ibid.*, 173

is made without providing any evidence as to its accuracy. There are also a host of minor mistakes throughout the thesis such as the remark that Jay's assistant R.A. Vaughan (1823-1857) removed to a chapel in Manchester when in fact it was in Birmingham.³⁴ However, Pressely can be credited with first noticing the error in the received date of birth for Jay, even if his methodology in obtaining the correct date was flawed.³⁵ Oddly enough, all three studies focus on the evangelicalism of William Jay, yet a full biographical study addressing the subject has yet to be produced.

It is perhaps at this point that a definition of 'evangelicalism' should be proposed. Exactly what constitutes an evangelical has been a matter of debate. Several criteria for the movement have been suggested. For example, Richard Pierard of Indiana State University views the norms as stress on the sovereignty of God, the scriptures being divinely inspired, infallible and authoritative, an emphasis on the total depravity of man, a belief in Christ's atonement, salvation as an act of unmerited grace, and heralding the word of God.³⁶ Pierard's definition is from a theological rather than historical perspective and might be seen as too narrow as it would exclude many Arminians, and later liberal evangelicals past the eighteenth century. Perhaps the best known definition is provided by David Bebbington of the University of Stirling. He places the standards for being evangelical within his quadrilateral theory of '*conversionism*, the belief that lives need to be changed, *activism*, the expression of the gospel in effort, *biblicism*, a particular regard for the Bible, and what may be called *crucicentrism*, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross'.³⁷ Alister McGrath, Professor of Theology at King's College, Cambridge, tries to condense Bebbington's distinctives as an emphasis on the Bible, the cross, the need for personal conversion, and a commitment to evangelism.³⁸ But evangelism should be viewed as more than just a gospel presentation. Evangelicals have participated in a host of activities to create the right environment for evangelism to occur, with a gospel presentation being only a single facet of that activity, albeit an important one.

³⁴ Ibid., 102

³⁵ Ibid., 254-256. Pressely attributes the correct date to Jay's successor Henry Dyer, who was instrumental in erecting a memorial tablet to Jay in the Argyle Chapel. He states on page 255, 'The Rev. William H. Dyer knew the aged minister well.' Yet, the two barely knew one another prior to Dyer's settlement at the chapel and they were hardly on friendly terms afterwards.

³⁶ Pierard, R.V. 'Evangelicalism', in Elwell, Walter, (ed). *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Basingstoke: Marshall Morgan & Scott Publications, 1985), 379-380

³⁷ Bebbington, David. *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 3

³⁸ McGrath, Alister. *Christian Spirituality* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 18-19

Additionally, some evangelicals have heard a call to transform their world for Christ that extends to more than just conversion. Indeed Dale addresses the Christian's role in society beyond an emphasis on the 'death to life' moment.³⁹ The activism proposed by Bebbington includes these engagements. There has been some criticism directed toward his original thesis as to the origin of the movement and how distinct certain features such as the concept of assurance were to the movement.⁴⁰ Yet there is still a general consensus that Bebbington offers the best definition of evangelicalism in its phenomenological expression over time. It will be through this definition that the evangelicalism of William Jay will be examined in comparison to Dale's later assessment.

This biography will focus on the evangelicalism of the Argyle minister. The second chapter will examine his direct impact at the Argyle Chapel and in Bath. It will be demonstrated that Jay brought respectability to evangelicalism within the fashionable city that the movement had failed to enjoy prior to his arrival. Following this section, a third chapter on the early life of William Jay will show the formation of his evangelicalism first introduced to him by Joanna Turner (1732-1784) and instilled in his ministry by Cornelius Winter. It would be this foundation laid by early adherents of the revival that Jay refused to dislodge. The social composition of the Argyle Chapel will be thoroughly evaluated in the fourth chapter. Those that Jay attracted to the chapel not only promoted his cause to advance the gospel, but increased the prestige of the minister and his congregation. Jay was known first and foremost for his preaching. His abilities as a preacher drew celebrity and commoner alike. For Jay, his sermons were the primary vehicle to induce conversion and inspire a life of evangelical devotion. Jay's preaching will be analyzed for form, style, content, delivery and the receptivity of his audience in chapter five. Likewise, the spirituality of the Bath pastor induced similar qualities to encourage evangelical religion which will be reviewed in chapter six. Jay promoted a lifestyle that he felt could be universally applied to evangelicals across the board. Even in William Hale White's (1831-1913) novel, *Clara Hopgood* (1896), Jay's books were listed among the safe Nonconformist writers an Anglican could read. Although a Dissenter, he 'was

³⁹ Dale, *Old Evangelicalism and the New*, 43

⁴⁰ See Bebbington, David, 'Response' in Haykin, Michael and Stewart, Kenneth (eds.), *The Advent of Evangelicalism* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2008), 417-432

undoubtedly among the redeemed'.⁴¹ Finally, the polity and ecclesiology of William Jay will be examined in the seventh chapter. The Argyle Chapel was under strong pastoral guidance for the vast majority of the minister's service. But Jay lost control of the church as he aged and the chapel became more denominational in temper. The biography will conclude with an appraisal of Dale's categorization of the Argyle Chapel minister as representative of the 'old' movement and the Birmingham preacher's criticism of the early participants of the revival. William Jay will be found to be an ideal example of a full-time Nonconformist minister shaped by the Evangelical Revival.

⁴¹ White, Mark Hale, *Clara Hopgood* (London: Unwin, 1907), 14

Chapter Two: Bath and the Argyle Chapel

In the novel, *Miss Mackenzie* (1865), Anthony Trollope (1815-1882) parodies the city of Bath under the thinly disguised pseudonym of 'Littlebath'. As the story opens, the heroine Margaret Mackenzie is in London caring for her dying brother. Soon after his death, she inherits his substantial fortune. Margaret is now a wealthy, thirty-four-year-old spinster. With no close connections in London, she decides to indulge herself and move to the city of 'Littlebath'. She rents a home in the Paragon, where 'the assembly rooms were quite close'.¹ She is excited over the prospects of branching out into new relationships. But upon her arrival, she discovers she must make an immediate choice of with whom to align her allegiance: either the evangelicals who follow the clergyman Mr Stumfold or those who do not. There was no middle ground. Trollope writes:

Mr. Stumfold at Littlebath had very special views, and was specially known for them. His friends said he was evangelical, and his enemies said that he was Low Church ... and he was always fighting the devil by opposing the pursuits which are the life and mainstay of such places as Littlebath. His chief enemies were card-playing and dancing as regarded the weaker sex, and hunting and horseracing - to which might be added everything under the name of sport - as regarded the stronger. Sunday comforts were also enemies which he hated with a vigorous hatred, unless three full services a day, with sundry intermediate religious readings and exertions of the spirit, may be called Sunday comforts.²

It would be a mistake to assume the clergyman was grim and gloomy. In fact, he was quite jovial and attractive. He was well liked despite his rigid religious beliefs. Mackenzie's neighbour asks the spinster, 'Have you known Mr. Stumfold long?

¹ Trollope, Anthony. *Miss Mackenzie* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), 17

² *Ibid.*, 19-20

Perhaps you have come here to be near him; a great many ladies do.’³ Trollope’s parody poses the possibility that there was a strong evangelical presence in Bath and that it was significant enough to attract outsiders to the city. By the mid-century, evangelicals were ensconced in the Established Churches of the city which was much different from when Hannah More (1745-1833) complained in 1793 that she had to attend the Argyle Chapel because it had ‘the only preacher of religion in this very silly, dissipated place’.⁴ This chapter will examine the changes of early eighteenth-century Bath and the role that the Nonconformist William Jay played in that transformation.

The metamorphosis of Bath from a provincial town to a fashionable resort city occurred during the eighteenth century. Bath can trace its origins as a spa to the Roman period when baths and temple complexes were erected between the years 60 and 70 A.D. Its first recorded name was Aquae Sulis.⁵ In 1091, the Bishop of Wells, John of Tours (d. 1122), was granted permission to move the see to Bath, but after his death the abbey was officially made a cathedral priory. From this period the town became dominated by medieval prelates.⁶ Elizabeth I granted Bath a new charter of incorporation in 1590 officially awarding the appellation of city, removing power from the bishops and vesting it in the local civic authorities.⁷ A fundamental change occurred early in the eighteenth century that would lead to a contrast between spa towns in Britain and their austere religious counterparts in France.⁸ Dr William Oliver (1695-1764) settled in Bath and began promoting *both* the drinking and bathing of spa waters as a cure-all. His *A Practical Dissertation on Bath Waters* (1747) told potential patients the waters would act as a laxative, skin moisturizer, skin cleanser and purgative cleanser. Proper use of the waters could cure gout, rheumatism, palsy, convulsions, lameness, colic, consumption, asthma, jaundice, scurvy, leprosy, head colds, epilepsy, fevers, weak joints, indigestion, loss of appetite, kidney stones,

³ Ibid., 32

⁴ Chatterton, Georgiana. *Memorials, Personal and Historical of Admiral Lord Gambier* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1861), 210

⁵ Davis, Graham & Bonsall, Penny. *A History of Bath: Image and Reality* (Lancaster: Carnegie Publishing, 2006), 12-14

⁶ Ibid., 39

⁷ Ibid., 51

⁸ Porter, Roy (ed.), ‘The Medical History of Waters and Spas’, *Medical History Supplement*, 10 (1990), ix

fainting spells, rickets, poxes, menopause and infertility.⁹ Thousands of visitors and medical professionals began to descend on Bath to take advantage of the waters. The city particularly attracted the wealthy with the easy optimism of the doctors and apothecaries promising not only to cure their disabilities, but also to protect them against the gratifying excesses of pleasurable living.¹⁰ And if the visitors did not bring their own pleasures, the city would provide them.

Eighteenth-century Bath became a leisure city to indulge the senses. Every form of entertainment and vice was offered in Bath. The expensive fashionable season spanned from September to May. Visitors were welcomed by the dashing Beau Nash (1674-1762), the official Master of Ceremonies of the city. Balls were regularly held at the Assembly Rooms in which visitors hoped to catch glimpses of those above their social station. When not at a ball, visitors might enjoy the theatre with performances by the famous actors David Garrick or Sarah Siddons. Or they might take in a concert to hear Handel or Paganini. Even as late as 1830, it was reported, ‘the concerts were unrivalled, the theatre second only to London’.¹¹ But vices such as gambling, pornography and prostitution flourished as well. John Skinner (1772-1839), a Somerset rector, commented ‘I was a little astonished, as I walked through Bath, to observe the streets so crowded with prostitutes, some of them apparently not above 14 or 15 years of age.’¹² Charles Wesley (1707-1788) called Bath Satan’s ‘head-quarters’ and warned a Wesleyan society member that she should leave the city from the text, ‘Depart, I pray you, from the tents of wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest you be consumed with their sins.’¹³ Its numerous attractions lured celebrity making it a place to be seen. The total number of visitors distinguished enough to be listed in the *Bath Journal* rose from 510 in 1746 to 5,341 in 1801.¹⁴ By 1800, it has been estimated that there were some 40,000 visitors a year with an average weekly

⁹ Oliver, William. *A Practical Dissertation on Bath-Waters* (Bath: James Leake, 1747), 86-118

¹⁰ Neale, R.S. *Bath: A Social History, 1680-1850* (London: Routledge & Keene, 1981), 13

¹¹ *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette*, 12 January 1830, 3

¹² Coombs, Howard, and Coombs, Peter, (eds), *Journal of a Somerset Rector, 1803-1834* (Bath: Kingsmead Press, 1930), 395

¹³ Jackson, Thomas (ed.), *The Journal of Charles Wesley* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1980), i.285-286; Biblical reference Numbers 26:26

¹⁴ Davis, *A History of Bath*, 112

attendance of 8,000 over the season.¹⁵ The purpose of the city was to offer pleasure to a British society beginning to be enamoured with the concept of leisure. Bath was its major supplier.

Among the more tempting attractions of Bath were the shops with their superb variety of goods, low prices and convenient shopping. The selection in the Bath market was said to rival any in London and was usually cheaper. One visitor remarked in the early nineteenth century that Bath had a ‘multitude of splendid shops, full of all that wealth and luxury can desire, arranged with all the arts of seduction’.¹⁶ Manufacturers took notice of the retail value of Bath as various tradesmen flocked to the city. Josiah Wedgwood (1730-1795), the Staffordshire potter, chose to launch his product lines from the streets of Bath in 1772. City shops imported goods from the continent to compete with shops in London. To accommodate customers, Bath developed fixed ticket prices earlier than other cities, allowing customers to avoid the hassle of haggling. The first bank was opened in the city in 1768. Visitors found them convenient in making funds readily accessible for purchases. They also provided secure protection and avoided the need to carry large sums of money while travelling. Within twenty-five years there were five additional banks.¹⁷ By 1800, two short streets in the inner city alone were able to boast several jewellers, specialty shops, three circulating libraries, a lace merchant, a hairdresser and perfumier, three drapers, a dealer in scientific and optical instruments, a pastry shop and the Wedgwood shop. Bath became the premier showroom for goods and fashions not just from Britain, but by century’s end, from all over the world.¹⁸ Trade was reflected in the attendance of the Argyle Chapel as shopkeepers and wholesalers made up thirty-nine per cent of the congregation over the span of Jay’s ministry. They were the largest group among professions at the chapel.¹⁹ The commercial opportunities were not only attractive to wealthy visitors, but also to an increasingly growing middle-class contingent of tradesmen desiring to service them.

¹⁵ Neale, *A Social History*, 46

¹⁶ Simond, Louis. *A Journal of a Tour and Residence in Great Britain 1810 and 1811* (Edinburgh: James Ballentyne and Co., 1817), i.20

¹⁷ Davis, *A History of Bath*, 92

¹⁸ Fawcett, Trevor. ‘Eighteenth-Century Shops and the Luxury Trade’, *Bath History*, 3 (1990), 56-73

¹⁹ See chapter 4, 80, 100

To accommodate the growing number of visitors and commerce, better access became available to the city. The state of roads in Britain made travelling both dangerous and uncomfortable. Bath was able to compensate by its canals. The first cargo barge by the Avon Navigation Company reached Bath as early as December 1727. By mid-century, there were two regular passenger boats daily each way from the port city of Bristol to Bath.²⁰ The Bath Turnpike Company improved the quality of roads, increasing the coach services. Seventeen weekly coaches serviced Bath in 1740. Fifty years later there were 154.²¹ The Bristol to Bath railway arrived in 1840. Services ran ten times each way on a daily basis, with four on Sundays. The London to Bristol line was completed in July 1841.²² With the coming of the railways, Bath was open to the entire kingdom, making it one of the easier cities to reach in Britain. The better transport also made the pulpit of the Argyle Chapel more accessible to visitors from outside the city.

As in most of England and Wales during the eighteenth century, Bath's population was growing in an unprecedented manner. The resident population of Bath doubled from 3,000 in 1700 to 6,000 in the middle of the century. It rose to 34,000 by the century's end.²³ From that point its population increased at a modest rate until it reached 54,240 in 1851. The dramatic residency change in the latter half of the eighteenth century was not due to an increase of the aristocracy but to an influx of genteel retired persons mostly made up of widows, clergy, admirals, generals and lesser pensioned officers along with those who came to service them. Bath became an attractive place in which to retire, not due to the glamorous activities of the social elite, but because of a lower cost of living. Bath had lower municipal, water, and poor rates than London.²⁴ The middle classes filled the pump rooms and crowded the Assembly Rooms. In *Northanger Abbey*, set in the early nineteenth century, the main characters found on their arrival at the Assembly Rooms that 'the season was full, the

²⁰ Davis, *A Bath History*, 84-85

²¹ Neale, *A Social History*, 42

²² Salter, Richard. 'Bath and Its Entertainments', in Wroughton, John (ed.), *Bath in the Age of Reform* (Bath: Morgan Books, 1972), 77-8

²³ Peach, R.E. *The Historic Houses of Bath* (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1883), xiv

²⁴ Davis, *A History of Bath*, 185 and see Ede, Mary. 'Bath and The Great Exhibition of 1851', *Bath History*, 3 (1990), 150

room crowded and the two ladies squeezed in as well as they could'.²⁵ Still capitalizing on its past attraction to the upper echelons of society, magazine articles touted Bath as not only a beautiful city for retirement but also as providing the opportunity to be surrounded by the right sort of people.²⁶ Within the first ten years of Jay's ministry, Bath was the tenth largest city in England.²⁷

Table 2.1 Spa Population in England

<u>Town</u>	<u>1801</u>	<u>1811</u>	<u>1821</u>	<u>1831</u>	<u>1841</u>	<u>1851</u>
Bath ²⁸	33,196	38,408	46,700	50,800	53,206	54,254
Brighton ²⁹	7,339	12,012	24,429	40,634	46,661	65,569
Buxton ³⁰	760	934	1,036	1,211	1,569	1,235
Cheltenham ³¹	3,076	8,325	13,396	22,942	31,411	35,051
Tunbridge Wells ³²	4,371	5,932	7,406	10,380	12,530	16,548

But the rise in population also had a detrimental effect. It initiated what David Jeremy called 'the social decline of Bath'.³³ The elite upper classes were reducing their visits to Bath because it was not exclusive enough. With the increase of visitors and inhabitants the upper classes retreated either into private parties or to other spa cities such as Brighton which was patronized by the Prince Regent and Cheltenham, visited by George III in 1788. When the war with France ended, many preferred to visit the newly reopened continent rather than Bath. Though growing in population, by the first quarter of the nineteenth century Bath lost its original appeal as the place to be seen among aristocrats. But this 'social decline' was a boon to the Argyle

²⁵ Austen, Jane. *Northanger Abbey*, in Chapman, R.W. (Ed.) *The Novels of Jane Austen*, Vol. 5 (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1988), 20

²⁶ Davis, *A History of Bath*, 153-154

²⁷ Porter, Roy. *English Society in the Eighteenth Century*. New York: Penguin, 1990, 227

²⁸ Neale, R.S. *Bath: A Social History, 1680-1850* (London: Routledge & Keene, 1981), 430

²⁹ Minchin, George S. 'Table of Population' in Page, William (ed.), *Victoria History of the Counties of England: History of Sussex*, Vol. II (London: Archibald Constable and Co., 1907), 225

³⁰ Minchin, George S. 'Table of Population' in Page, William (ed.), *Victoria History of the Counties of England: History of Derby*, Vol. II (London: Archibald Constable and Co., 1907), 196

³¹ Minchin, George S. 'Table of Population' in Page, William (ed.), *Victoria History of the Counties of England: History of Gloucestershire*, Vol. II (London: Archibald Constable and Co., 1907), 177

³² Minchin, George S. 'Table of Population' in Page, William (ed.), *Victoria History of the Counties of England: History of Kent*, Vol. III (London: Archibald Constable and Co., 1907), 362

³³ Jeremy, David. 'The Social Decline of Bath', *History Today*, 19 (1967), 242-249

Chapel. Though members of the aristocracy visited to hear Jay, the membership could boast few connections to this group. The middle classes and retired gentlemen were the most significant groups with continued growth throughout Jay's ministry.³⁴ Despite the 'social decline' of the top strata of society, the increase of the middle classes was a great benefit to the Argyle Chapel.

The city also expanded through building to accommodate visitors and residents. It is estimated that some £3,000,000 were invested in the building of eighteenth-century Bath.³⁵ There were four building booms in Bath: 1726 to 1732, 1753 to 1755, 1762 to 1771 and 1785 to 1792. With each building boom, housing expanded upward in elevation both north into Lansdown and west into Bathwick to avoid the flooding that occurred in the southern part of the city. Between the years 1766 and 1801 housing in the city expanded by 250 per cent.³⁶ The Argyle Chapel benefited from the housing boom as thirty-four per cent of membership came from the artisan classes with the vast majority of them connected to the construction industry.³⁷ The majority of the buildings were constructed from Bath stone, extracted from local quarries. The stone is an oolite limestone that gives the appearance of being solid white when first used but later attracts soot and begins to rot. Jane Austen's character, Anne Elliot, dreaded 'all the white glare of Bath' in the heat of September.³⁸ With its stringent building codes to keep the appearance of the city uniform, the buildings of Bath became a marvel to behold. The building industry would provide much needed employment for many at the chapel.

Richard Warner (1763-1857), rector of Chelwood, Somerset, wrote in 1801, 'Bath has little trade, and no manufactures, the higher classes of people and their dependants constitute the chief part of the population: and the number of lower classes is small.'³⁹ His statement had some merit in that the city's main occupation was the service industry, but that it had little trade, no manufactures or an unusually

³⁴ See chapter 4.

³⁵ Davis, *A History of Bath*, 86

³⁶ Neale, *A Social History*, 42-45

³⁷ See Chapter 4, 83

³⁸ Austen, Jane. *Persuasion*, in Chapman, R.W. (ed.) *The Novels of Jane Austen*, Vol. 5 (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1988), 33

³⁹ Warner, Richard. *The History of Bath* (Bath: R. Cruttwell, 1801), 344

low number of lower classes are inaccurate. The Quaker Ralph Allen (1693-1764) had quarried Bath stone as early as 1729. Between 1731 and 1733 he exported some 1,800 tons by the Avon.⁴⁰ Bath stone was shipped to Bristol, Liverpool and Ireland.⁴¹ Both cabinet-making and coach-making developed in the eighteenth century and expanded in the nineteenth. At William Jay's fortieth anniversary in 1831, the Chapel presented him with a new carriage manufactured in Bath.⁴² At the turn of the century the city was producing fuller's earth, paper and various textiles. Coal mining developed in the northern part of Somerset at the turn of the century, but had stopped production by 1870.⁴³ At the Great Exhibition in 1851, Bath had forty-six exhibits and only fourteen other towns had more. Four of these exhibits won awards.⁴⁴ The city did have both industry and trade to employ the middle and lower classes, though on a smaller scale than in the industrial towns of the north.

Bath also acquired a high level of impoverished people. Most were attracted to Bath to find work. Others were seeking cures from the waters. The Royal National Hospital was established in 1738 as a way of extending charity to the poor, but its care was limited to a maximum of seventy patients at a time and dealt with only a few types of infirmity. Patients were selected by the likelihood of being cured and reported in newspapers upon discharge as a means of promoting the success of the waters. Many of the poor settled in the southern part of the city near the river in Avon Street, Corn Street and Milk Street and just across the river to the south in Widcombe and Lyncombe. Because of flooding from the Avon, the more affluent citizens had migrated to the newer suburbs of Lansdown and Bathwick at higher elevations. The Baptist minister John Paul Porter (1759-1832) recorded in his diary in 1809 that a flood had carried ten bodies from the ruined houses in the lower part of the cities.⁴⁵ Avon Street became a street of ill repute, a focal point of the inhabitants for the cast-offs of society. Charles Wesley mentioned removing a woman from Avon Street to

⁴⁰ Davis, *A History of Bath*, 86

⁴¹ Harper, Duncan. *Bath At Work* (Bath: Millstream Books, 1989), 24

⁴² Jay, William 'The Autobiography of the Rev. William Jay : with reminiscences of some distinguished contemporaries, selections from his correspondence, etc', ed. George Redford and John Angell James. *The Autobiography of William Jay*. (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 187

⁴³ Harper, *Bath At Work*, 28, 62-3

⁴⁴ Ede, 'Bath and the Great Exhibition', 156

⁴⁵ Cater, Philip. *Memoirs of the Life and Character of the Late Rev. John Paul Porter* (Bath: A.E. Binns, 1834), 109-110

London who came from a ‘wicked house’ on the street and ‘confessed it was hell’.⁴⁶ Twenty-one years later, the Rev. John Penrose (1713-1776) tried to avoid passing through Avon Street as it was ‘a street of ill fame’.⁴⁷ Labourers received low wages. By 1800, they were paid between 4s. and 8s. a week, which was insufficient to meet the cost of living.⁴⁸ A man in full work required at least one additional member of his family of four also to work in order to meet basic subsistence levels.⁴⁹ Crime was also severe. The city was reputedly one of the worst criminal centres outside London with an estimated sixty per cent of labouring-class boys involved in unlawful activity.⁵⁰ The years during the Napoleonic Wars were particularly hard as some fourteen charitable societies were established.⁵¹ By the mid-nineteenth century the Avon Street area, less than a square half mile, housed 10,000 people. The *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette* described one home in Avon Street in 1821 as containing ‘at least 300 people who obtain a living by begging, thieving, or on the miserable wage of prostitution’.⁵² In contrast, according to annual value of real property in 1815, Walcot in the upper districts of the city was the ninth wealthiest parish in the country.⁵³ Bath had its social extremes, but the impoverished sections of the city would provide opportunities for evangelical philanthropy.

A large portion of the population was dependent on servicing the more affluent classes. The renowned Marxist historian, R.S Neale, classified four distinct social strata living in the first half of nineteenth-century Bath. Fourteen per cent were the leisured and professional classes. The tradesmen made up twenty-six per cent. Artisans ranging from printers to shoemakers made up thirty-three per cent. And unskilled labour constituted nineteen per cent.⁵⁴ The census return of 1831 demonstrates that of the 8,556 males over the age of twenty, only 1,196 were

⁴⁶ Jackson, *Journal of Charles Wesley*, i.406

⁴⁷ Mitchell, Brigitte & Penrose, Hubert. *Letters from Bath, 1766-1767 by the Rev. John Penrose* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1983), 103

⁴⁸ Neale, *A Social History*, 79 also see Neale, R.S. ‘The Standard of Living, 1780-1844; A regional and Class Study’, *Economic History Review*, 29 (1966):590-606, for comparisons with surrounding counties.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 282

⁵⁰ Davis, *A History of Bath*, 208

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 149

⁵² *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette*, 20 November 1821, 2

⁵³ Neale, *A Social History*, 47

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 275

classified as ‘capitalists, bankers, and other educated men’. The remaining 7,360 were mostly artisans, master craftsmen, shop assistants, retailers in small business and non-agricultural labourers.⁵⁵ The largest segment of the population was women. Females were fully allowed to participate in the social scene at Bath, unlike other places. Outside of politics, they could participate in every conversation and every outing.⁵⁶ This attraction made it an ideal settlement for widows and spinsters such as Trollope’s *Miss Mackenzie*. There were five women for every two men at the Argyle Chapel in the latter part of Jay’s ministry.⁵⁷ At least one third of the city’s women were employed as domestic servants.⁵⁸ Ten per cent of the women were employed in the tailoring and millinery trades.⁵⁹ Several independent women at the Argyle Chapel had their own shops in these occupations.⁶⁰ A woman could make from £15 to £40 annually as an assistant dressmaker. But this also created dilemmas for females. Once their employments terminated at the season’s end, many were forced into less reputable trades. By 1850, 87.4 per cent of the total population who worked in the main city parishes devoted their time and energy to providing services and goods to wealthy consumers.⁶¹ The majority of business in Bath was for the consumption of the minority upper class visitors and residents.

Despite the frivolity, eighteenth-century Bath did have its religious side. Accounts from the period seem to indicate that congregations of the Established Church were well attended. John Penrose, a vicar from Cornwall, was surprised to hear in 1766 of four people ‘at the Pump Room who offered money for a seat at St. James Church but could not be admitted for want of room’.⁶² When he had sufficiently recovered from his own illness, he delighted to serve between 200 and 300 communicants in the Abbey Church, and this at the end of the Bath season.⁶³ The generosity of the city was noted. Collections were regularly taken for the Bath

⁵⁵ Neale, R.S., ‘The Industries of the City of Bath in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century’, *Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society’s Proceedings*, 108 (1964), 132

⁵⁶ Mitchell, Brigitte, ‘English Spas’, *Bath History*, 1 (1986), 202

⁵⁷ Chapter 4, 91

⁵⁸ Neale, ‘The Industries of Bath’, 133

⁵⁹ Neale, ‘The Industries of Bath’, 133

⁶⁰ Chapter 4, 91

⁶¹ Wroughton, John, ‘Bath and Its Workers’ in *Bath in the Age of Reform* (Bath: Morgan Books, 1972), 6

⁶² Mitchell, *Letters from Bath*, 44

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 125

Hospital and charity schools to serve the poor. The amounts from each church were reported in the *Bath Journal*. Penrose was pleased to report that almost £140 had been collected for the hospital in one day. He also revealed a penchant to hear the famous preachers who came to the city. During his two-month stay he was excited to hear the Rev. Dr Goodall, archdeacon of Suffolk, at the Abbey Church and begged off reading prayers at St James in order to hear the Rev. Dr Frampton, ‘a famous extempore preacher’.⁶⁴ Penrose also heard the Methodist John Fletcher (1729-1785) at the Countess of Huntingdon’s chapel but was not impressed. He told his daughter, ‘I probably shall go no more unless I could hear Madan or Whitefield.’⁶⁵ The established churches in the city were well attended.

The complaint against religious Bath was not its lack of activity, but its lack of sincerity. The complaints came mainly from evangelicals. George Whitefield was welcomed into the city in 1737 and even allowed to preach at the Abbey church on five different occasions. But two years later he found the pulpits closed to him.⁶⁶ The resistance to evangelicalism seemed to stem from a fear of upsetting the existing state of affairs in Bath. Whitefield wrote, ‘Many adversaries must be expected in so polite a place as Bath.’⁶⁷ The preacher said that the city reminded him of the pool of Bethesda in the gospels in that people were concerned about healing their physical infirmities, but he prayed that God would heal ‘the diseases of their sin-sick souls’.⁶⁸ When John Wesley (1703-1791) began preaching in Bath, he was confronted by Beau Nash demanding to know what authority he had to be preaching in the city. Nash was concerned that Wesley’s ‘preaching frightens people out of their wits’.⁶⁹ Despite being filled to capacity, the combined sittings of the four churches and two proprietary chapels in 1750 (some 3,000) were hardly enough to meet the needs of the city’s resident population (some 6,000 in 1750) and the annual visitors to the city (some 2,500 in 1760). The best attended church, St James, did not have sermons but

⁶⁴ Ibid., 82

⁶⁵ Ibid., 49

⁶⁶ Whitefield, George. *George Whitefield’s Journals* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1978), 82-84; 213

⁶⁷ Ibid., 12 March 1739, 232

⁶⁸ Ibid., 24 March 1739, 236

⁶⁹ Watson, Richard. *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley* (New York: B. Waugh & T. Mason, 1836), 75

had only prayers read till the later nineteenth century.⁷⁰ Wesley was disturbed by the complete lack of seriousness of the Christians that lived there. He was prompted to ask in his journal, ‘Hath God left himself without witness?’⁷¹ The contrast between those attending church and their secular lives was striking to the evangelicals. Both Wesley brothers and Whitefield used the same word in describing Bath in their journals: ‘Sodom’. Whitefield prayed that God would send the city ‘some faithful labourer’.⁷² His prayer would be answered fifty years later in Jay.

When Jay arrived at the Argyle Chapel, there were only three other evangelical causes in Bath. The Baptists had been the first to establish a foothold in Bath as early as 1718 that would eventually evolve into the Somerset Street Chapel. But near the time of Jay’s arrival there was a public dispute between the minister John Paul Porter and the previous pastor’s son, Thomas Parsons (1744-1813) over who would replace the father in the pulpit. Due to the instability of the situation, many of the church members left the Baptist chapel, transferring to Argyle Chapel shortly after Jay’s arrival.

The Methodists had made inroads as well. According to his journals, John Wesley made 100 visits to Bath over a span of fifty-one years.⁷³ While he had great success in attracting large crowds to his preaching, he made little progress in enrolling people in the local Methodist society. Charles Wesley, on his visit in 1741, remarked, ‘Satan took it ill to be attacked in his head-quarters ... he raged horribly in his children.’⁷⁴ The first Methodist society met in a room on Avon Street, the poorest community in Bath. In 1755 the membership was no more than thirty-five.⁷⁵ Two years later a class list showed there were only seventeen members with all but three residing on Avon Street.⁷⁶ By autumn 1769 there were only eleven or twelve.⁷⁷ Wesley seemed to attribute the decrease in attendance to the opening of the Countess

⁷⁰ Mitchell, *Letters from Bath*, 44

⁷¹ Benson, Joseph (ed.), *The Works of John Wesley*. (London: Conference Office, 1809), ii.122

⁷² Whitefield, *Journals*, 236

⁷³ Crofts, Bruce (ed.), *At Satan’s Throne: The Story of Methodism in Bath over 250 Years* (Bristol: White Tree Books, 1990), 13

⁷⁴ Jackson, *Journal of the Rev. Charles Wesley*, i.286

⁷⁵ Crofts, *At Satan’s Throne*, 25

⁷⁶ Neale, *A Social History*, 29

⁷⁷ Crofts, *At Satan’s Throne*, 29

of Huntingdon's chapel in the Vineyards. He lamented in 1765 he had only the poor to hear him preach at Avon Street 'there being a service at the same time in Lady H's chapel'.⁷⁸ But some time shortly after, Wesley's efforts strengthened as the Countess's chapel gave standing to Methodism. He was pleased to note in his journal in 1772 that the room in Avon Street, 'though considerably enlarged will not yet contain the congregation, which is still continually increasing'.⁷⁹ Wesley had such success that in 1777 he was able to lay the foundation stone for the New King Street Chapel, designed to accommodate up to 650 people. The chapel opened on 11 March 1779 and by 1806 claimed to have 277 members.⁸⁰ To judge from existing chapel records, most of the congregation was pooled from the surrounding streets of the labouring population and had a high turnover rate.⁸¹ And of course the itinerant system was used at the chapel. Quality ministers were not always assured among the Wesleyans. As evangelicalism grew in the city, the Methodists had great appeal among the labouring and artisan classes.

But prior to the Wesleyan success, it was the Dowager Countess of Huntingdon who truly established Methodism in Bath. Selina Hastings (1707-1791) was a strong-willed aristocrat willing to put her financial resources behind the evangelical cause. She was first a member of Wesley's Chapel in West Street, London, but by 1744 she was openly speaking against Wesley's concept of 'sinless perfection' and aligned herself with George Whitefield's Calvinistic Methodism.⁸² The countess first came to Bath in the 1730s. Her physician advised her to take the waters due to her constant 'colic' problems related to her early frequent pregnancies.⁸³ The fashionable watering places offered the potential of evangelizing her aristocratic friends who were also visiting the spas. Her strategy was to build private chapels in these locations in the hope of reaching the upper strata of society. The services were carefully staged in a salon-like atmosphere where she invited the titled and wealthy to

⁷⁸ Curnock, Nehemiah, (ed.), *The Journals of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.* (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1901), v.148-149

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 484

⁸⁰ Croft, *At Satan's Throne*, 59

⁸¹ New King Street Methodist Chapel Registers, BRO, M1.14.(1)

⁸² Schlenther, Boyd Stanley. *The Queen of the Methodists* (Durham: Durham Academic Press, 1997), 25.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 6-7

take tea and hear the most popular evangelical preachers of the day. Admission to the chapels was by ticket only, thereby creating an aura of exclusiveness. The majority of seating at the morning services was reserved for the elite. But she allowed the lesser ranks to occupy the remaining spaces in the morning with the evening services open to all. The countess argued that as a peeress of the realm she was entitled to attach chapels to her private residences. Therefore they were exempt from episcopal jurisdiction, giving her the right to appoint openly evangelical ministers. George Whitefield opened her chapel in Bath on 6 October 1765 in buildings known as ‘The Vineyards’. Because she was a loyal member of the Church of England till the 1780s, her ministers were either ordained or at minimum desired episcopal ordination. Although the rule was not universally implemented across her connexion, she insisted on using the Book of Common Prayer in her services.⁸⁴ Whitefield, William Romaine (1714-1795), Martin Madan (1726-1790), Thomas Haweis (1734-1820) and the Wesley brothers all served at some time as chaplains in the Countess of Huntington’s connexion. In order to maintain the quality and interest in the preaching, she never allowed her ministers to settle in one location. This was a policy she kept until her death.⁸⁵ Selina Hastings desired to lure the aristocracy by having services in a beautiful atmosphere with ardent, high-quality evangelical preaching.

While popular to attend, the chapel services were not universally liked. Penrose commented, ‘had there been no Preaching nor extempore Prayer the whole had been much to my satisfaction’.⁸⁶ Katherine Plymely (1758-1829), a Shropshire lady, complained the services had ‘mostly women’, ‘too much singing’ and ‘you had to pay an admittance fee to get in’.⁸⁷ Because most of the countess’s wealth came from her over seas plantations worked by slavery, Hannah More made sure she was never seen worshipping in any of Lady Huntington’s chapels.⁸⁸ But others were impressed. John Wesley commented regarding the congregation at her chapel, ‘I know not when I have seen a more serious or deeply attentive congregation. Is it

⁸⁴ Harding, Alan. ‘The Anglican Prayer Book and the Countess of Huntington’s Connexion’, *TCHS*, 20 (1970), 364-367

⁸⁵ Schlenther, *Queen of the Methodists*, 162

⁸⁶ Mitchell, *Letters from Bath*, 47

⁸⁷ Quoted from her unpublished diary in Wilson, Ellen. ‘A Shropshire Lady in Bath, 1794-1807’, *Bath History*, 4 (1992): 97

⁸⁸ Schlenther, *The Queen of the Methodists*, 163

possible? Can the gospel have place where Satan's throne is?'⁸⁹ For some the Vineyard Chapel provided a much needed validation to the Evangelical cause, but for others it was little more than a novelty.

Difficulties developed across the connexion. The countess struggled to supply her pulpits with ordained ministers. Bishops were refusing to ordain those she recommended due to their resentment of Hastings's policy of by-passing episcopal authority. She had trouble not only acquiring ministers but also keeping those within her employ. Several left the connexion. The countess kept a tight rein on her chaplains. She had a tendency to create tension with the result of either the minister resigning or her dismissing him. 'I have this day received a sudden dismissal', wrote one of her ministers, '(without a moments warning) from Lady H.'s connection by a letter under her own hand.'⁹⁰ Also the regular attendants of her chapels were growing increasingly impatient with the constant turnover in ministers. Some took the initiative to secede from her connexion and become Independent chapels. The first to do so was her chapel in Dublin in 1772. She made it quite clear that while her call was 'a general and universal one' the congregation could no longer expect her 'protection' by becoming a Dissenting church.⁹¹ But once the door was opened, several chose to become independent of the countess. It was in such an environment that Argyle Chapel began.

R.S. Neale claimed that the secession from the Vineyards forming Argyle Chapel occurred over the issue of Calvinism.⁹² This is not a possibility considering the moderate Calvinism of the countess remained the abiding theology of the group that seceded from her connexion. Selina Hastings's biographer claimed that the group was 'not approving of forms of the Established church'.⁹³ But according to Isaac Titley (1750-1836), one of the seceding members and first deacons of Argyle Chapel, the split occurred over the countess refusing to allow Rowland Hill (1744-1833) and Torial Joss (1731-1797) to preach in her chapel. Titley stated that after an evening

⁸⁹ Curnock, *The Journals of John Wesley*, v.198

⁹⁰ Wills to Webster in 'A Feminine Pope', *TCHS*, 10 (1970), 44

⁹¹ Seymour, A.C. *The Life and Times of Selina, Countess of Huntingdon* (London: William Painter, 1844), ii.162

⁹² Neale, *A Social History*, 316

⁹³ Seymour, *The Life and Times of Selina*, ii.73

church service in 1781 a Rev. J. Boddley read a letter from Lady Huntington saying, 'I am under the painful necessity of informing my friends at Bath that having received so many insults from the Dissenting party of the kingdom, I feel obliged to say that no Dissenter or lay preacher shall ever preach in my pulpit again, more particularly Rowland Hill and Torial Joss.'⁹⁴ It is not entirely clear why either was no longer allowed in her chapels. But Hill had fallen out of her favour. She emphatically wrote Henry Venn (1725-1797) on 10 July 1781 that 'Mr. Hill CANNOT preach *for me*' and that she would explain in person when she next saw him.⁹⁵ The congregation from the Vineyards had great respect for both men. Several decided to form their own church and sought advice from the leaders of Whitefield's former connexion at the Tottenham Court Road Chapel in London. The response was the offer to send a preacher if a suitable meeting place could be found. The small group was able to secure a stable loft on Tyburn Road (now called Monmouth Street) on the west side of the city. The following week the London Tabernacle sent the preacher John Holmes to Bath. Shortly afterwards, the group was able to erect a meeting house at 14 and 14a Morford Street on the north side of the city.⁹⁶ One of the assembly, the mason Tomas Bolwell, was already involved in construction in that area.⁹⁷ The chapel was called the Tabernacle and built at the cost of £400. Bolwell and Holmes, along with the salt refiner Isaac Titley, the carpenter Samuel Nichols (1743-1815), the shoemaker Robert Brushfield and the blacksmith Charles Bick, registered the chapel as an Independent meeting house. The Tabernacle opened on 11 June 1783. Rowland Hill conducted the services.

The Tabernacle existed for only a little over a year. The Argyle Chapel historian William Tuck (1829-1907) claimed the distance from the city was a factor in its demise. Tuck also alluded to 'very strong opposition' by the Vineyards'

⁹⁴ Eyres, Mary. 'The Origin of the Church and Congregation Now Meeting on Argyle Chapel Bath being the Narration of the Late Isaac Titley' in the 'The Papers of William Tuck' MSS. 0480/2/16 BRO

⁹⁵ Seymour, *The Life and Times of Selina*, ii.318

⁹⁶ Tuck, William. *Notes on the History of Argyle Chapel, Bath* (Bath: Fyson & Co., LTD, 1906), 10

⁹⁷ Ede, Mary. *The Chapel in Argyle Street, Bath, 1789-1989* (Bath: Central United Reformed Church, 1989),4

managers.⁹⁸ Another chapel historian, A.W. Wills (1872-1949) claimed that the managers of the Vineyards purchased the property when the lease expired as ‘vindictiveness’ on the part of the countess.⁹⁹ No evidence exists to prove either claim. Titley’s account does not provide reasons for the Tabernacle’s failing. He did confirm that the managers of the Vineyards purchased the Tabernacle premises in August 1784. But Titley gave no hint of malice involved. The former deacon does reveal in his account that ‘different preachers’ were used during the Tabernacle’s existence.¹⁰⁰ John Holmes was only an itinerant and never intended as a permanent minister. The only other record of Holmes is a baptism he conducted of Charles Bick’s daughter in April 1783.¹⁰¹ The Tabernacle congregation had been operating under the same itinerant system used in their previous experience at the Vineyards Chapel.

It was at this point that George Welch (1717-1797), an Independent philanthropist, entered into the endeavour. Welch was a wealthy banker from Cornhill, London, the senior partner in Welch, Rogers and Company. His partner was Thomas Rogers, father of the poet Samuel Rogers.¹⁰² Welch’s involvement has created some confusion for historians for two reasons. First, his name is often misspelled in the form it was pronounced, ‘Welsh’. Jay makes the mistake of misspelling his name in his autobiography under the heading ‘_____ Welsh, Esq’.¹⁰³ The second reason for misunderstanding was that George Welch’s name appears to be confused with the given name of his partner. George Welch is sometimes referred to as ‘Thomas Welsh’ in secondary sources. Seymour did this in his *Life and Times of Selina*.¹⁰⁴ Congregational historian R. Tudur Jones also made the same mistake.¹⁰⁵ George Welch had strong ties to Independent evangelicalism. His first wife was the daughter of Thomas Bradbury (1676-1759), minister of the Independent Fetter Lane

⁹⁸ Tuck, *Notes on the History of Argyle Chapel*, 11-12

⁹⁹ Wills, A.W., *The History of the Argyle Congregational Church, Bath: 1781-1938* (Bath: Harding & Curtis Ltd, 1939), 4

¹⁰⁰ Eyres, ‘The Origin of the Church’ in ‘The Papers of William Tuck’ MSS. 480/2/16 BRO

¹⁰¹ Ede, *The Chapel in Argyle Street*, 5

¹⁰² *Autobiography of Jay*, 423

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 422

¹⁰⁴ Seymour, *The Life and Times of Selina*, ii.73

¹⁰⁵ Jones, R. Tudur. *Congregationalism in England: 1662-1962* (London: Independent Press, 1962), 151

Chapel in London.¹⁰⁶ He was a member of the ‘Societas Evangelica’, a committee of wealthy businessmen and ministers in London who sought to provide the educational expenses of promising young preachers itinerating in villages and establishing chapels. The society was instrumental in establishing the academy at Hoxton.¹⁰⁷ In addition to this activity, Welch solely provided the expenses to establish the academy at Gosport under David Bogue (1750-1825) in 1789.¹⁰⁸ According to his *Autobiography*, Jay encouraged Welch to contribute more to Independent education.¹⁰⁹ Jay wrote that three causes were selected. Two for certain were substantial donations to Cornelius Winter’s academy at Painswick and James McQuhae’s academy at Blackburn.¹¹⁰ It is unclear whether Gosport was the third since Jay does not give a date for when this conversation occurred. But this is a strong possibility since Jay was ministering in Bath as early as 1789. Welch was a frequent visitor to Bath for his health and willing to advance the cause of the Tabernacle. It would be easy to speculate that Jay might have been instrumental in the foundation of Bogue’s missionary academy at Gosport.

Welch supported the Bath enterprise in two ways. First he provided the financial backing for the new Independent meeting. He encouraged the group to erect a chapel on the ruins of the former Roman Catholic chapel on St James Parade. The site of the chapel, which had been burnt down during the Gordon Riots of 1780, was closer to the centre of the city and closer to the homes and workshops of many artisans than the meeting house on Monmouth Street.¹¹¹ Welch also agreed to provide a minister’s salary for three years if the members would supply the funds for a new chapel. His second means of support was to recommend Thomas Tuppen of Portsea (1742-1790) to their pastorate.¹¹² Tuppen was converted under Whitefield and was associated with the Tabernacle in London. He became minister of the Independent chapel in Portsea in 1770 and led his congregation through moderate growth until his

¹⁰⁶ *Autobiography of Jay*, 423

¹⁰⁷ Jones, *Congregationalism in England*, 177-178

¹⁰⁸ Bogue, David and Bennett, James. *The History of the Dissenters* (London: Frederick Whestley and A.H. Davis, 1833), ii.281.

¹⁰⁹ *Autobiography of Jay*, 424-25

¹¹⁰ *The Monthly Magazine* (1797), 447

¹¹¹ Neale, *A Social History*, 274, for the Gordon Riots see Chapter 3, 44

¹¹² *Autobiography of Jay*, 423

wife died nine years later.¹¹³ Suffering from depression after her death and trying to meet the demands of the chapel, Tuppen resigned as minister ‘after he ruptured a blood vessel’ in 1782.¹¹⁴ After a period of recovery, Welch enlisted Tuppen to the new work at Bath in 1785. Welch would continue to be a supportive contributor to the chapel until his death on 27 November 1796. He died in Bath and was buried in the Argyle cemetery in Snow Hill.

The congregation at this time was meeting at Hetling House and Tuppen preached his first sermon on 22 February 1785.¹¹⁵ The assembly called him to be the minister and opened the new chapel two months later. The congregation officially organized into a church the following September. Listed on the new licence were Tuppen and seventeen members. The group quickly outgrew its facility. The Baptist minister, Philip Cater, working from secondary sources, wrote fifty years later that as many as 200 were converted in the first four years under Tuppen.¹¹⁶ While conversions may have been high, membership remained low. The membership was at forty-six just prior to Tuppen’s death in 1789. The ‘seven or eight hundred’ claimed in Seymour’s *Life and Times of Selina* seem at best to be the overall hearers to multiple services or the season’s total visitors to the chapel considering the size of the premises.¹¹⁷ It was obvious that the leaders of the chapel would need to acquire larger accommodation.

A better site could not have been chosen for the new chapel than Bathwick. William Johnstone (1729-1805) was the second son of a Scottish landowner, who in 1760, upon his wife’s inheritance, took the family name of Pulteney.¹¹⁸ The family owned the entire parish of Bathwick. Pulteney quickly recognized the potential for the property when land values for housing increased during the third building boom between 1762 and 1771. He initiated the development, which obliged him to obtain three acts of parliament and borrow £12,000. Construction of the Pulteney Bridge

¹¹³ Anon. ‘Memoir of the Late Rev. Thomas Tuppen Predecessor of the Rev. W. Jay at Bath.’ *Evangelical Magazine* (March, 1805), 97-102

¹¹⁴ *Autobiography of Jay*, 455

¹¹⁵ Ede, *The Chapel in Argyle Street*, 5

¹¹⁶ Cater, *Life and Character of John Paul Porter*, 75

¹¹⁷ Seymour, *The Life and Times of Selina*, 75

¹¹⁸ Wallis, Peter & Edith (eds.), *Bathwick: Echoes of the Past* (Bath: Bathwick Local Historical Society, 2008), 7-8

across the Avon to reach the property from the city began in 1769 and was completed in 1773. But in 1771, the building economy took a downturn, forcing Pulteney to negotiate low contracts to maintain his income to keep his dream alive.¹¹⁹ The fourth and final building boom of the century began in 1788. Between the years 1780 and 1793 the overall housing in the city increased by forty-five per cent.¹²⁰ In March, 1788 the *Bath Journal* announced the laying of the foundation stone for Laura Place on the opposite side of the Pulteney Bridge.¹²¹ The Bathwick area rapidly became the new suburban community for the wealthy elite. And later, the Cleveland Bridge was completed in 1827, providing greater access by connecting Bathwick with the London Road.¹²² Just a short distance from the new chapel resided several celebrities of the day. Just prior to his death, William Pitt (1759-1806) lived on Johnstone Street; William Wilberforce (1759-1833), Hannah More, the Duchess of York (1767-1820) and Lord Thurlow (1730-1806) resided on Great Pulteney Road. When Louis XVIII and Queen Charlotte visited the city in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, both stayed in Bathwick. Though not a celebrity during her time at Bath, Jane Austen (1775-1817), along with her family, lived for a period at Sydney Place.¹²³ All of them would pass by the Independent Chapel in Argyle Street on their way into the city.

The leaders of the young church were able to negotiate a favourable lease just prior to the fourth building expansion in Bath when Pulteney was desperate for lessees. The lease, dated 1 April 1788, rented the land for the chapel for £10.5s.0d annually for ninety-nine years to be made in quarterly payments. George Welch witnessed the lease.¹²⁴ Signing the lease on behalf of the church were Thomas Tuppen, Henry Griffith (currier), Samuel Nichols (carpenter), Isaac Titley (salt refiner), and Philip Thicknesse, Esq., the third son of Lady Elizabeth Touchet and the elder Philip Thicknesse. Thomas Baldwin (1750-1820), the famed city architect, planned the architectural layout of Bathwick, keeping the appearance uniform from

¹¹⁹ Neale, 'Society, Belief and the Building of Bath', 266-267

¹²⁰ Davis, *A History of Bath*, 127

¹²¹ *The Bath Journal* 31 March 1788, 4; Laura Place was named after Henrietta Laura Pulteney, the daughter of Frances Pulteney.

¹²² Wallis, *Bathwick: Echoes of the Past*, 37; the Cleveland Bridge was designed by Henry Edmund Goodridge (1794-1864), a member of Argyle Chapel.

¹²³ Peach, *The Historic Houses of Bath*, 138-147

¹²⁴ Argyle Church Minutes 1815-1888 MSS. 480/1/2/1/1 BRO

the bridge to the end of Great Pulteney Street. He was paid £4.4s.0d to design the façade of the chapel.¹²⁵ Samuel Nichols, the carpenter, erected his personal home and workshop next to the chapel and supervised the construction of the building.¹²⁶ The chapel was built in a low-lying area of the River Avon just on the opposite side of the new Pulteney Bridge. The marsh-like nature of the land required greater expense of establishing a stronger foundation for the building. A chapel historian wrote that it was not unusual for foundation stones in the area to sink beneath the ground overnight, requiring them to be reset the next day.¹²⁷ Half the total sum of construction was spent on the foundations alone. The costly erection of the £2,000 building required securing several bonds. The bulk of the money, £1,000, was a mortgage from local banker, John Bull, at five per cent interest.¹²⁸ The rest came from those connected with the chapel. George Welch lent the church £200 at five per cent interest but cancelled the debt in 1795. Nichols was wealthy enough to advance £500 himself and gave £60 outright.¹²⁹ The debt would eventually be cleared in 1815. The chapel in Argyle Street officially opened on 4 October 1789.

While the chapel was under construction, Thomas Tuppen's illness returned. To supply the pulpit of the chapel on St James Parade, the services of William Jay were sought out. Jay had been serving first at the Independent Chapel in Christian Malford and later at Hope Chapel in Hotwells outside Bristol as a chaplain of Lady Maxwell's (1742-1810) who patronized the cause in the manner of the Countess of Huntingdon. Tuppen heard Jay on a visit to London when the young man was supplying Rowland Hill's Surrey Chapel in 1788. He was intrigued enough to hear the young preacher on numerous occasions during his visit.¹³⁰ During that particular engagement Jay drew tremendous crowds from the full spectrum of classes and denominations. The membership at Argyle also would have been able to count on the recommendation of Jay's mentor Cornelius Winter, who on occasion had supplied the Countess of Huntingdon's chapel. Tuppen's illness was long and severe, keeping him

¹²⁵ 1788 Argyle Account Book MSS. 480/1/3/1/1 BRO

¹²⁶ Ede, *The Chapel in Argyle Street*, 9

¹²⁷ Wills, *The History of the Argyle Congregational Church*, 7

¹²⁸ Argyle Account Books MSS. 480/1/3/1/1 BRO

¹²⁹ Ede, *The Chapel in Argyle Street*, 9

¹³⁰ *Autobiography of Jay*, 66

from opening the chapel. Jay was invited by the deacons to perform the service. The young man preached the message from the text, ‘The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth.’ It became Jay’s first published sermon.¹³¹ Thomas Tuppen died on 22 February 1790, never having the opportunity to preach in the new chapel.

When it became apparent Tuppen would not recover from his illness, the deacons began enquiries for his replacement. Two names rose to the forefront: Jay and John Sibree (d. 1820) who was also supplying the pulpit at Rook Lane Chapel in the neighbouring town of Frome.¹³² Tuppen’s dying recommendation made the decision. When deacons Titley and Hallet asked for his advice, at the mention of Jay, their pastor responded with ‘That’s the man.’¹³³ Shortly after Tuppen’s death, the church members voted unanimously to extend an invitation to Jay to be their minister. There was a slight delay between call and ordination as Jay became engaged and married to Anne Davies (1765-1845), whom he had met on his first visit to London. Jay was officially ordained over the church on 30 January 1791 and remained the minister for the next sixty-two years.

The relationship between Jay and the membership at Argyle was complementary. Jay wanted to be a preacher first and foremost. He was not comfortable with pastoral duties. He disliked visitation. For those that complained about his lack of visiting he responded, ‘No little of this censured neglect was *voluntary* with me, and, therefore, it did not aggrieve my mind.’¹³⁴ Proclaiming the gospel to the masses was Jay’s first concern. Prior to his pastorate in Bath, Jay speculated if he would settle in one place. Rowland Hill and Cornelius Winter had instilled the idea of mobility in Jay, sending him out ‘preaching from place to place as opportunity offered’.¹³⁵ When he was courting his future wife he wanted their

¹³¹ From John 4:23, *Autobiography of Jay*, 67

¹³² Tuck, *Notes on the History of Argyle Chapel*, 16, also see the Surman Index Online at <http://surman.english.qmul.ac.uk>

¹³³ Eyres, Mary. ‘The Origin of the Church’, ‘The Papers of William Tuck’ MSS. 480/2/16
BRO

¹³⁴ *Autobiography of Jay*, 154

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 79

relationship to be prepared for heaven, not settled for one particular location.¹³⁶ A friend wrote, ‘In no religious engagement did he appear to take [greater] delight than in preaching to the villages.’¹³⁷ The congregation desired a consistent preacher and was willing to offer Jay the freedom to preach in other locales. Jay’s passion to continue the ministry of proclamation throughout Wiltshire and Somerset would be fulfilled at Argyle Chapel.

The chapel in Bath offered an exceptional situation for him. In Jay’s *Autobiography* he wrote, ‘I never felt that I was where I ought to be, or was likely to remain, till I became, as a preacher, an inhabitant of Bath; but from that time I said ‘This is my destination, whatever be its duties or trials.’¹³⁸ The attraction to the chapel and the city was not merely the opportunity to preach to the upper classes. Jay would have had more opportunity for that at Hope Chapel in Hotwells under Lady Maxwell.¹³⁹ While filling in for Tuppen, he told his future wife in reference to Bath, ‘the longer I stay here the more I like the situation, and the harder it will be to dissolve the connexion’.¹⁴⁰ The poor stone mason from the countryside felt comfortable in the affluence of Bath.

There are three reasons for Jay’s comfort in Bath. The first was that the early members of Argyle had no expectation of Jay to be more than a preacher. When they were at the Vineyards, the Countess of Huntingdon never allowed her ministers to settle in her chapels. Having a capable and consistent preacher was a novelty. It was said of the first minister, Thomas Tuppen, he kept ‘too great a distance from his people.’¹⁴¹ Jay remarked, ‘Mr. Tuppen’s disposition was recluse, his element retirement; his home the study and the pulpit.’ He praised Tuppen for taking considerable time for ‘reading, prayer, meditation’ and the study of his Bible in preparation for his sermons. For this, Tuppen ‘well deserved the character of a great

¹³⁶ Ibid., 483

¹³⁷ Godwin, Charles. ‘Reminiscences of the Rev. William Jay’ (c. 1860) MSS. CURC, 34

¹³⁸ *Autobiography of Jay*, 65

¹³⁹ Chapter 3, 63-64

¹⁴⁰ *Autobiography of Jay*, 483

¹⁴¹ Anon. ‘Memoir of the Late Rev. Thomas Tuppen’, 102

man and a prince of ministers'.¹⁴² This primary focus on preaching was emulated by Jay. Charles Godwin (1789-1872) was a month old when Jay came to Argyle and later became a deacon. He said, 'I have no remembrance, at any time early in life, of being won by his deportment out of the pulpit, but in it he was nearly irresistible.'¹⁴³ Godwin remembered that members would be waiting outside the pulpit to speak to Jay, but the minister would quickly exit, passing them by. Yet the members would respond with pride, 'there goes our pastor', and 'God bless Mr. Jay'. The church permitted Jay to go on extensive preaching tours for the London Missionary Society in Scotland and the Irish Evangelical Society in Dublin.¹⁴⁴ Jay was allowed eight weeks during the summer to preach at Surrey Chapel, a commitment he maintained for forty years.¹⁴⁵ The members of the congregation seemed to take pride in the growing fame of Jay as their preacher. He drew considerable attention to Argyle Chapel. The early members of the chapel were willing to accept Jay on the merits of preaching alone.

In addition to being willing to forego Jay's pastoral duties, the church provided a strong and active leadership base to operate the chapel. For example a deacon, Samuel Nichols, undertook the supervision of the building of the church. Other deacons also demonstrated their leadership ability. Among them was Samuel Whitchurch (1755-1817), who founded the Sunday School Union in Bath, along with Henry Griffith (1758-1841) and Thomas Kingsbury, who were both involved in the Wiltshire and East Somerset Congregational Union, providing mediation between disgruntled congregations and ministers and legal advice respectively.¹⁴⁶ Charles Godwin became the secretary for the Bath Auxiliary of the British and Foreign Bible Society.¹⁴⁷ Deacons Samuel Hallet (1749-1825), and James Evill (1763-1840), along with Griffith and Whitchurch, helped organize the collection for the Bath

¹⁴² Jay, William. *A Token of Respect to the Memory of Thomas Tuppen, who died at Bath February 22, 1790* (Bath: S. Hazard, 1790), 20

¹⁴³ Godwin, 'Reminiscences of the Rev. William Jay', 2

¹⁴⁴ *Autobiography of Jay*, 135

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 248

¹⁴⁶ Minutes for the Wiltshire and East Somerset Congregational Union 1797-1834 and 1834-1855 MSS. 2755/1-2, WSHC, 7 Oct 1830

¹⁴⁷ Godwin, 'Reminiscences of the Rev. William Jay', 33

Penitentiary.¹⁴⁸ Many in the congregation had substantial affluence. The brothers Henry and Charles Godwin retired from their book selling business independently wealthy. The iron magnate Henry Stothert (1797-1860) had his children baptized at the Argyle Chapel. Whitchurch was wealthy enough to issue his own silver and copper tokens during the small currency crisis in the second decade of the nineteenth century.¹⁴⁹ The middle-class membership of Argyle Chapel matched the prestige of their minister.

Finally, the key factor that made the relationship between the chapel and minister so successful was the commitment of both to evangelical religion. At his ordination at Argyle, Jay defined their mission. ‘The glorious Gospel of the blessed God our Saviour is the great object of our attention as minister and people; this only am I allowed to preach, this only are you allowed to hear.’¹⁵⁰ Early in Argyle’s ministry, Jay’s friend William Wilberforce reminded him in 1803 of the unique opportunity he had in Bath when people visited the chapel. ‘Consider the situation in which you stand,’ wrote Wilberforce, there was ‘not another minister in Bath, whom any of the poor wretched upper classes are likely to hear, who preaches the Gospel.’¹⁵¹ The Anglican-supported *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette* confirmed afterwards that at this period the ‘Establishment presented few attractions’ to evangelicals prior to Jay’s arrival.¹⁵² Argyle Chapel was in a perfect site between the shops in Bath and the new elite homes growing in Bathwick along Great Pulteney Street. The location of the chapel offered a steady stream of ‘sinners’ crossing the Pulteney Bridge into town whom Jay could address and influence.

The partnership between the Argyle Chapel and its minister was tremendously fruitful. Together they led the way as evangelical activity broke out en masse at the turn of the century. The congregation started the first Bath Sunday School for children in 1802 and jointly formed the Bath Sunday School Union in 1812 with the Methodists. Bath Adult Schools were opened to teach older people how to read the

¹⁴⁸ *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette*, 10 February 1813, 1

¹⁴⁹ Ede, *The Chapel in Argyle Street*, 17

¹⁵⁰ *Autobiography of Jay*, 72

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 300

¹⁵² *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette* 4 January 1854, 3

Bible in 1814.¹⁵³ Jay began offering two services in the week for his Bible lectures on Monday and Thursday evenings. Wednesday night meetings would spotlight some missionary activity or social ministry. These events were advertised in the newspaper and open to the public. In 1812 a Wednesday evening lecture from Joseph Lancaster (1778-1838) on ‘The Education of Poor Children in Ireland on the Lancasterian Plan’ inspired the chapel to adopt the Lancasterian model in Sunday School and led to the formation of the Bath Sunday School Union.¹⁵⁴ In 1798 the chapel began the Sick Man’s Friend Society to alleviate the afflictions of local working-class families. Within the city, the Bath Tract Society was formed in 1827.¹⁵⁵ Also, Jay was instrumental in the formation of a local auxiliary of the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1812, giving the church a wider scope for outreach beyond the city. Together with Thomas Haweis of the Vineyards, Jay founded the auxiliary of the London Missionary Society in 1816 (later the Bath Missionary Society). Along side the Somerset Street Baptist Chapel, the Argyle Chapel planted a Dissenting interest in Widcombe and in Combe Down. Jay was also a founder of the Wiltshire and East Somerset Congregational Union in 1797, providing a wider effect in spreading evangelical religion in surrounding communities.¹⁵⁶ Even Jay marvelled at the transformation of Bath over forty years. As long as evangelical conversion remained the focus, the church and minister stayed in perfect harmony. The church never experienced any internal conflict during Jay’s sixty-two-year career. ‘The cause here,’ Jay proudly proclaimed on his fortieth anniversary, had ‘been a candlestick holding out the light to others’.¹⁵⁷ At the time of Jay’s death, Argyle Chapel could boast no fewer than five evangelistic organizations operating on the chapel premises. Jay and his congregation believed that together they would accomplish great things for God in the spirit of evangelicalism

The effect of all this activity was apparent in its criticism and assimilation.

The Rev. Richard Warner of St James Church attacked evangelical ministers ‘for their

¹⁵³ *Bath and Cheltenham Chronicle* 13 December 1815, 4

¹⁵⁴ *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette*, 21 October 1812, 3

¹⁵⁵ *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette*, 15 January 1828, 2

¹⁵⁶ Wiltshire and East Somerset Association Minute Book, WSHC 2755/1, 5 July 1797,

¹⁵⁷ Jay, William. ‘The Retrospect. A Sermon Preached at Argyle Chapel, Bath on Sunday Morning, January 30, 1831, being the Fortieth Anniversary of His Ordination’, *The Pulpit*, 425 (1831), 170

want of humility and charity' in that they thought they alone were correct in their interpretation of scripture and that only the converted are saved.¹⁵⁸ But the influence of evangelicalism was beginning to be seen in the Establishment. A letter to the editor of the *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette*, signed 'A member of the Church of England' complained that, unlike the Dissenting chapels, no churches offered services on weekday evenings.¹⁵⁹ Between 1820 and 1832 four new Anglican churches were built in reach of the city. In 1828 the city's Church Missionary Society invited the highly Evangelical clergyman, Edward Bickersteth (1786-1850), to speak at its Bath meeting.¹⁶⁰ In 1836 the Simeon Trust purchased the advowsons of the Abbey and St James Church.¹⁶¹ More evangelical clergymen were appointed to Bath Anglican pulpits. By 1840, an open letter to the mayor complained,

The clergy of this town [have] for a long time past, but particularly more recently, by their preaching and exhortations, to endeavour to suppress the various amusements of this place; and indeed so comprehensive have been their denunciations, that scarcely an entertainment of public character of which the inhabitants were wont to partake, has escaped; concerts, balls, races, theatrical exhibitions, and even horticultural shows, have each of them in turn been the subjects of clerical vengeance and pulpit anathematization. The clergy of this city, of nearly all denominations, but particularly those of the established church, have been unremitting in their exhortations to their various flocks to discountenance these entertainments ... the terrible condemnation to eternal punishment itself, has been held out as the consequence to all those who may give these scenes of pleasure their countenance.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette*, 1 July 1828, 3

¹⁵⁹ *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette*, 12 February 1828, 2

¹⁶⁰ *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette*, 1 April 1828, 4

¹⁶¹ Stone, Barbara. *Bath Millennium: The Christian Movement 973-1973* (Bath:Ebdons, 1973),

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¹⁶² LUD HUDIBRAS. *A Letter to the Mayor of Bath, on the Causes of the Present Declining Condition of the City* (Bath: Williams and Thorley, 1840), 11

The first meeting of the Evangelical Alliance uniting all denominations in Bath occurred in January 1848. And yet, the following week, Francis Close (1797-1882), the evangelical Rector of Cheltenham was in Bath advocating separation from the Dissenters who seemed to be reaping all the rewards.¹⁶³ Evangelicalism had become a formidable movement within the Established Church as well.

Evangelicalism was in the ascendancy in nineteenth-century Bath. Prior to 1785, the evangelical movement had made little impact on the city. The catalyst for the change appears to have been the arrival of William Jay. Bath was entering into a time of unprecedented economic prosperity as Jay settled into his pastorate. The city was being transformed from just a tourist attraction to a place of ease and retirement. Visitors were still lured to Bath as a spa resort and their numbers were increasing. The social decline of Bath actually aided Jay's cause. The growing population became more middle-class and suburban. The influx of the lower classes and particularly women was a boon to Jay's ministry. Both are known factors benefiting evangelicalism.¹⁶⁴ The Argyle Chapel was located in the centre of an affluent audience. And while the members of Argyle Chapel had good financial resources and leadership, they had yet to make an impression among the fashionable elite. Jay bridged that gap. The chapel had no rifts or strife like its evangelical predecessors. The social needs of a metropolitan city like Bath stimulated the evangelistic activism of the membership, keeping the focus on the external spread of the gospel over the possibility of internal strife. And the congregation allowed Jay to exercise his gift of preaching at the expense of his pastoral duties. Jay could be a distinct evangelical voice from a secure station. As Jay's celebrity grew nationally through his preaching and publishing, so did the chapel's reputation. The Argyle Chapel became the main evangelical attraction in Bath. By the end of Jay's career there was a distinct evangelical presence in Bath to justify Trollope's nineteenth-century characterization of the city.

¹⁶³ *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette* 19 January 1848, 4 & 26 January 1848, 2

¹⁶⁴ Bebbington, David. *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s*. (London: Routledge, 2002), 26

Chapter Three: The Early Life of William Jay

William Jay had a humble beginning. His ‘rags to riches’ story of a boy stone mason becoming a celebrity preacher was a surprise even to him. ‘On what apparently casual and slender causes do consequences the most interesting in our history often hinge!’ he exclaimed.¹ It would long reinforce his Calvinistic concept of God’s sovereignty in the leading of his life and establish his sense of destiny as a preacher. The transition occurred over twenty-one years between his birth and 1790. But it was during these early years in Wiltshire that both people and events would shape Jay within the mould of the ‘old evangelicalism’ as described by R.W. Dale – particularly the zeal for men’s souls and its broad ecumenism to the exclusion of developing concepts of the church and denominationalism.² Also during this period, Jay would formulate his opinions on Catholicism, the evangelical revival and women. It was in this segment of his life that he received his calling and education as a preacher. It would culminate in the summer of 1788 when Jay made his London debut. This pivotal event would lead to his eventual settlement in the fashionable city of Bath in 1791. The environment of his rearing and those who influenced his early thinking would have the greatest impact on his core beliefs for the rest of his life.

Jay was born on 8 May 1769 to William Jay and Sarah Mead in Tisbury, Wiltshire. The Jays had five children. William was the only boy and was the second to last child. There is some discrepancy over this date of birth.³ Both the editors of the autobiography and his son Cyrus give the date as 6 May 1769.⁴ The *ODNB* also gives the date of 6 May.⁵ However, the memorial tablet at Argyle Chapel, which was

¹ William Jay, ‘The Autobiography of the Rev. William Jay : with reminiscences of some distinguished contemporaries, selections from his correspondence, etc’, ed. George Redford and John Angell James. *The Autobiography of William Jay*. (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 65

² Dale, R.W. *The Old Evangelicalism and the New*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1889, 17, 21

³ H.E. Pressely first noticed the incorrect date in his dissertation. However, he made it based on the memorial tablet alone. The tablet was not erected until many years after Jay’s death. The letter and Anne Jay Bolton’s diary confirm the date of 8 May. (in Pressely, H.E. ‘Evangelicalism in England in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century as Exemplified in the Life and Works of William Jay, 1769-1853’. University of Edinburgh, Ph.D.Thesis, 1950, 254-256).

⁴ *Autobiography of Jay*, 17, and Jay, Cyrus. *Recollections of William Jay of Bath*. (London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co., 1859), 1

⁵ G. C. Boase, ‘Jay, William (1769–1853)’, rev. Anne Pimlott Baker, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14672>, accessed 16 April 2012]

erected several years later, provides the date of 8 May.⁶ But an entry in Jay's daughter's diary states the latter date of 8 May is correct. She had good reason to remember it as it was also the date of her wedding anniversary.⁷ At the annual meeting of the London Missionary Society on 8 May 1826, in his speech Jay hoped he might be forgiven for making reference to himself. 'as he was that day 57 years old'.⁸ And in a letter to one of his deacons dated 8 May 1846 Jay stated 'I am this day, seventy and seven years old.'⁹ So the later date is correct for the minister's birth.

Jay came from a family of modest means. His parents were married in the parish church on 27 February 1760. His father could sign his name in the parish register, his mother could not. The elder William Jay (b. 1734) was the son of a farmer. He was apprenticed unusually late in life to a mason at the age of twenty-one.¹⁰ Within ten years of his apprenticeship in 1765, he had leased a cottage, land and one of two quarries from Lord Arundell.¹¹ His son described him as a 'mechanic working at the business of a stone-cutter and mason'.¹² Jay said their property was located almost an equal distance from the Arundells' Wardour Castle, from Pythouse, the home of the Bennet family, and from the Fonthill estate of William Beckford (1709-1770), twice Lord Mayor of London and wealthy Jamaican plantation owner. Jay described his parents as 'respectable, that is poor and religious'.¹³ They were poor in that they had to live frugally and religious in that they had to observe a practical morality.

Jay only mentioned working at Fonthill House; however, the editors of the *Autobiography* assumed in a footnote that the younger Jay worked on the elaborate Fonthill Abbey also known as Beckford's Folly.¹⁴ The *ODNB* also states that Jay worked on the Abbey.¹⁵ They were incorrect. Construction on Fonthill Abbey did not

⁶ Jay, *Recollections*, 330

⁷ Bolton, W.J. *Footsteps of the Flock: Memorials of the Rev. Robert Bolton, Rector of Pelham, United States and Chaplain to the Earl of Ducie and of Mrs. Bolton*. (London: Hamilton, Adams and Co., 1860), 77-78

⁸ *Evangelical Magazine* (1826), 205 & 2059

⁹ Jay to Charles Godwin, 8 May 1846, BCL, A.L. 3062

¹⁰ Dale, Christabel. *Wiltshire Apprentices and Their Masters, 1710-1760*. (Devizes: Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society, 1961), 83

¹¹ Lease grant of Lord Arundell to William Jay, Tisbury, 9 February 1765, WSHC, 2667/1/13/285.

¹² *Autobiography of Jay*, 17

¹³ *Autobiography of Jay*, 17

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 24

¹⁵ G. C. Boase 'Jay, William (1769–1853)' [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14672>, accessed 16 April 2012]

begin until 1795, four years after Jay became the minister of Argyle Chapel.¹⁶ But Beckford left a huge fortune to his son, William Thomas Beckford (1760-1844). The younger Beckford, in 1781, came into his estate which included the 6,000 acres of Fonthill.¹⁷ He hired a builder in Tisbury, Josiah Lane, to construct a romantic grotto in 1784. And no doubt he would have drawn upon the closest quarry on the Jay property which confirms the likelihood that Jay worked on Beckford's estate.¹⁸

There was little in terms of formal education available to Jay. At the time of his youth, Tisbury did have a charity school. But there was no school building and the pupils, aged four to ten, were taught in the homes of their teachers.¹⁹ While the school offered a rudimentary education, the Jay children assisted one another. His oldest sister, Mary Ford (1760-1825), said in teaching the young William to read: 'We thought he would never have learned.'²⁰ At the time of their marriages, only two of the four sisters could sign their names. Jay's oldest surviving letter, written to his future tutor at the age of fifteen, contains poor grammar and frequent misspellings.²¹ Three of Jay's sisters married men of 'humble' means. His older sister, Betty (b. 1766), was the only one to marry into property. She wedded into the Combes family of Tisbury. Her husband, John Combes (d. 1821), owned a large flour mill. He was also an expert on water drainage and watercourses and did consulting work for Beckford's Fonthill Abbey.²² Jay recorded very little about the influence of his family. He never mentions the death of his parents or sisters. When given the opportunity to hold up the ideal of the family, he did not present his parents as an example but praised the family life of his mentor, Cornelius Winter.²³ Thus William Jay had an unpretentious origin that would allow him in later life to identify with members of the lower classes.

¹⁶ Gemmett, Robert. *Beckford's Fonthill: The Rise of a Romantic Icon*. (Whilby: Michael Russell, 2003), 73 and Germann, Georg 'Gothic Revival' in Turner, Jane (ed.), *The Grove Dictionary of Art: From Renaissance to Impressionism*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 125

¹⁷ Gemmett, *Beckford's Fonthill*, 59

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 65

¹⁹ Drury, Jill and Peter. *A History of Tisbury*. (Tisbury: Elemental Books, 1980), 67

²⁰ *Autobiography of Jay*, 19

²¹ Letter from William Jay to Cornelius Winter 30 January 1785, in *Autobiography of Jay*, 37

²² Jay, *Recollections*, 202

²³ Jay, William. 'Short Discourses to Be Read in Families' in *The Works of William Jay*, Vol. XII, (London: C.A. Bartlett, 1843), 62 and Jay, William, 'The Memoirs of the Late Rev. Cornelius Winter' in *The Works of the Rev. William Jay*, Vol. V. (London: C.A. Bartlett, 1843), 229-248

Jay's native village, Tisbury, had the distinction of having one of the highest concentrations of Roman Catholics in England. The reason for this was due to the local aristocracy. James I recognized Thomas Arundell's (1560-1639) loyalty to the crown by making him Baron Arundell of Wardour in 1605. From that point fifteen successors to his title were all Roman Catholics.²⁴ The Arundell family was granted special dispensation to practise their religion by Charles II in exchange for their fidelity to the restored monarchy. And despite his avid Catholicism, the House of Lords in 1674 declared Lord Arundell was not a 'convicted recusant' and 'shall have privilege of parliament and be discharged of all proceedings against him'.²⁵ The family kept a chapel on the estate attracting other Catholics, and even employing Jesuit chaplains.²⁶ The estate offered protection for Catholics seeking the freedom to practise their religion.

It is estimated that the Catholic population of England by the end of the eighteenth century was no more than 80,000, about one per cent of the total population. By contrast the Catholic population in Tisbury made up as much as nineteen per cent of the population. In 1767, the vicar of Tisbury had to report to the Bishop of Salisbury why he had nearly 200 papists in his parish. 'To account for so great a number', he wrote, 'I must observe ... that Lord Arundell of Wardour is Lord of the Manor and living near us, and consequently many of the lower class of people are depending chiefly on him for their subsistence.' The nearby incumbent of Fonthill Gifford, accounting for his thirty-four papists, reported, 'A much greater number than I could wish ..., but we are situated too near Lord Arundell.'²⁷ By 1780 the number of known Catholics in Tisbury had grown to 324.²⁸ According to the recusancy registers, the majority listed were from the lower classes working on the Arundell estate and each of the other individuals was merely designated as 'poor person'.²⁹ Through Arundell's influence, magistrates were appointed who provided a certain amount of

²⁴ Crowley, D.A. 'Tisbury' in Crowley, D.A. (ed.) *Victoria History of the Counties of England: History of Wiltshire*, Vol. 13. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 243

²⁵ *Journals of the House of Lords*, xii.622, quoted in Williams, J. Anthony. *Catholic Recusancy in Wiltshire, 1660-1791*. (Newport: Catholic Record Society, 1968), 18

²⁶ Williams, J. Anthony. 'Benedictine Missions in Wiltshire in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', *The Downside Review*, 78 (1960), 264

²⁷ S.D.A. Returns of Papists, Box 1: Tisbury and Fonthill Reports, 767, Salisbury Diocesan Archives, quoted in Williams, *Catholic Recusancy in Wiltshire*, 82

²⁸ Drury, *History of Tisbury*, 43-44

²⁹ Williams, *Catholic Recusancy in Wiltshire*, 193-194

leniency to Roman Catholics in the district. The Arundell estate became a haven for Catholicism.

In addition to a residence, the Arundells also provided the Jay family with a place of employment. The Arundell castle, known as Old Wardour Castle, was besieged and destroyed in 1643 during the Civil War. Henry, the eighth Lord Arundell (1740-1808), had inherited the estate in 1756 and erected the New Wardour Castle in 1770, one mile from the ruins of the old structure.³⁰ Construction for the new castle took place between 1771 and 1776.³¹ With the elder Jay's quarry being leased from the Arundell estate, the family certainly would have worked on the new castle.

Jay formulated views in favour of Catholic Emancipation while growing up in Tisbury. Prior to 1829, Roman Catholics in the kingdom were still restricted from higher civil offices. Most evangelical Nonconformists, who could identify with resentment against the restrictions, favoured Catholic relief. But they could not compete with the propaganda of the anti-Catholic clergy, for whom there was always a fear of papal authority rivalling that of the English Crown.³² Jay was known as an early advocate of Catholic Emancipation.³³ As a young boy, his son Cyrus (1795-1870) recalled his father debating the subject in a local bookshop with William Howells (1778-1832), minister of the Long Acre Episcopal Chapel in London.³⁴ Jay told Lord Barham (1781-1866) that the best way to win over Catholics, if not through conversion, 'is to convince them that we love them, and desire to do them good'. Jay stated unequivocally in 1835, 'I was, therefore, and I am still a friend, to Catholic Emancipation.'³⁵ Speaking at his fortieth anniversary of being the minister of Argyle Chapel in 1831, he believed the most substantial political achievements during his tenure were 'the abolition of the Test and Corporation Acts, and the carrying of the

³⁰ Walsh, V.H., 'The Arundells of Wardour', in Dryden, Alice (ed.), *Memorials of Old Wiltshire*. (London: Bemrose and Sons, 1906), 106

³¹ Drury, *History of Tisbury*, 45

³² Machin, G.I.T., *The Catholic Question in English Politics, 1820 to 1830*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 7, 17

³³ *Autobiography of Jay*, 508

³⁴ Jay, *Recollections*, 41

³⁵ William Jay to Lord Barham, 11 July 1835, *Autobiography of Jay*, 507

Catholic Emancipation Bill'.³⁶ The treatment of Catholics in Britain was distasteful to Jay.

Jay promoted Catholic relief even in the face of severe criticism. When his sermon on the 300th Anniversary of the English Bible was published, it contained the remark 'that Dissenters are less adverse to Popery than many of their brethren in the Establishment'. And 'we admit and acknowledge our cordial wishes that our fellow Catholic subjects might obtain and enjoy all civil rights and privileges with ourselves'.³⁷ Thomas Lathbury (1798-1865), curate of Mangotsfield, wrote a scathing review of the sermon. He was troubled because 'Mr. Jay's influence in Bath is considerable; nor is that influence confined to his own religious body, but extends itself even among those who belong, or at least profess to belong, to the Church of England.' Lathbury believed it was 'impossible to view Mr. Jay in any other light than that of an enemy to the church'.³⁸ For opposing the venerable Jay, Lathbury was rewarded with the curacy of Bath Abbey a year later in 1838. Normally Jay avoided controversy, but he openly championed the rights of Catholics despite public opposition to his stance, demonstrating a preference of being hospitable to those of differing beliefs.

Jay firmly asserted his theological differences with Catholicism but advocated their freedom. 'We abhor popery' he said.³⁹ He declared none should 'suppose that because we are friendly to what we deem the civil claims of this class of our fellow subjects, we think the more favourably of their religious system, or of their faith and worship, or the sectarianism and despoticalness [*sic*] of many of their principles'.⁴⁰ But Jay had two reasons for supporting Catholic Emancipation. First, Roman Catholicism held no fear for him. He did not believe the rise of the Catholic population was due to proselytizing. 'They increase proportionably [*sic*] with other parts of the population; and they may exceed in a particular district; but take the cause at large, and ask Papists themselves whether their Church is prosperous and

³⁶ Jay, William. 'The Retrospect: A Sermon Preached at Argyle Chapel ...being the Fortieth Anniversary of his Ordination', *The Pulpit*, 425 (1831), 167

³⁷ Jay, William. *General Remarks on the Reformation: A Sermon Delivered in Argyle Chapel, October 4th, 1835, Being the Three Hundredth Year that Very Day of Publishing the First Complete Version of the Bible in English*. (London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co., 1835), 10

³⁸ Lathbury, Thomas. *A Review of a Sermon by the Rev. W. Jay on the English Reformation*. (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green and Longman, 1837), iii, 10

³⁹ William Jay to Lord Barham, 11 July 1835, *Autobiography of Jay*, 507

⁴⁰ Jay, *General Remarks*, 10

multiplying?’⁴¹ Jay also believed the Bible taught Catholicism could not overcome the true Protestant Church. ‘According to our views of Scripture, the Papal system, as such, is doomed to perish.’⁴² And he believed the current practice of the United States already demonstrated that Catholicism was not a threat to Britain. ‘See America,’ he wrote. ‘Is popery, civilly and politically, more dreaded than any other denomination? The reason is, they are all tolerated, and none exclusively favoured.’⁴³ Secondly, Jay had another and more substantial reason to support the Catholic cause. He believed the government was guilty of persecuting Catholics. In 1798, Jay was scheduled for a preaching tour of Ireland. He happened to arrive in Dublin the day before the Irish Rebellion. The city was under martial law, which prevented Jay from being able to fulfil his plans to preach outside the city. As he rode through the impoverished streets, he saw what he termed the ‘entire corruption’ of the oppression.⁴⁴ The effect left an impression still on his mind thirty years later. In his Reformation sermon of 1836, he continued to ask, ‘Is there nothing to be done in Ireland, that beautiful and interesting, but degraded, suffering and distracted country?’⁴⁵ Not only did Jay see oppression in Ireland, but he also witnessed it growing up in Tisbury. During the 1780 Gordon Riots in London, 210 people were killed outright, and another seventy-five died in hospitals from resulting injuries. Property damage was estimated at £100,000.⁴⁶ In nearby Bath, a mob burned the Catholic chapel and sought the life of the priest who barely escaped the city. As fears mounted, the magistrate in Tisbury received word a mob was determined to burn the chapel at Wardour Castle and called out government troops for protection.⁴⁷ Living on the Arundell estate, Jay’s family would have also feared injury to personal property. Jay would have witnessed the poor, lower-class Catholic recusants he lived alongside face harsh financial penalties. With no evidence that English Catholic landlords forced their tenants into religion, they would have been penalized only for their beliefs.⁴⁸ ‘Everything like Persecution is hateful to the

⁴¹ Ibid., 28

⁴² Ibid., 29

⁴³ *Autobiography of Jay*, 508

⁴⁴ Jay, *Memoirs of Cornelius Winter*, 6

⁴⁵ Jay, *General Remarks*, 37

⁴⁶ Stevenson, John. *Popular Disturbances in England, 1700-1832*. (London: Longman, 1992), 101

⁴⁷ Williams, *Catholic Recusancy in Wiltshire*, 67

⁴⁸ Bossy, John. *The English Catholic Community, 1570-1850*. (London: Dartman, Longman, & Todd, 1975), 173-174

meek and lowly religion of the Lamb of God', he said.⁴⁹ To Jay, not only was persecution contradictory to Christian love, but he added oppression was the only environment in which Catholicism had an opportunity to grow.⁵⁰ Jay witnessed first-hand what fear of Roman Catholicism was capable of doing. It therefore made him a supporter of Catholic Emancipation.

It was also in Tisbury that Jay made his first contact with the Evangelical Revival. Prior to this moment, Jay's family attended the first Dissenting meeting house in Tisbury. It was initially registered in 1689 as Presbyterian and met in a barn in nearby Chicks Grove. Later the congregation erected a chapel on High Street in 1725 and formed into an Independent church. The minister to the Jay family was John Morgan (d. 1796).⁵¹ Jay described him as a 'Clarkean Arian' who 'never dealt much in doctrine'. He described his preaching as 'dry and dull'. But despite his unorthodoxy, Jay remembered him fondly as 'a lovely character, and exceedingly tender-hearted, kind and generous'. When Jay was able to read, Morgan presented Jay with his first books, John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and Isaac Watts' *History of the Old and New Testament*.⁵² It is perhaps John Morgan's kindness that impressed Jay always to be cordial with unorthodox ministers he met later in life. Morgan drew his congregation into his Arian views, but he sensed in Jay a spiritual dissatisfaction. Jay says that Morgan 'strangely put into my hands a letter' which had been written from a Methodist father to his son desiring his conversion. The curiosity of the letter drove Jay to attend the new Methodist meeting in Tisbury.⁵³ The attendance at the meeting would lead to Jay's conversion to evangelicalism.

Jay's conversion narrative is somewhat unusual. He specifically says that unlike others, he could not point to a particular moment of his conversion with 'certainty and exactness'. There was no event with 'a distinct and unique experience, immediately produced, originated, and finished at once; and perfectly determinable as to its time and place and mode of accomplishment'. He hoped such an event was not necessary, 'for I have no such narrative to afford'.⁵⁴ Interesting enough, both his contemporary John Angell James and his mentor Cornelius Winter had similar

⁴⁹ William Jay to Lord Barham, 11 July 1835, *Autobiography of Jay*, 507

⁵⁰ Jay, *General Remarks*, 11

⁵¹ Crowley, 'Tisbury', 244

⁵² *Autobiography of Jay*, 18

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 22

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 22

gradual conversions.⁵⁵ But despite declaring no such moment, Jay presents his born-again experience within the typical conversion narrative of the Evangelical Revival, giving the appearance that such an event did take place, yet with subtle differences.

Bruce Hindmarsh posits that evangelical conversion narratives followed a structure ‘as microcosms of the biblical story of Creation, Fall, Redemption, new Creation. Each story was the story in miniature.’⁵⁶ The typical pattern is the narrator describing childhood as a relative state of innocence and promise, with some sort of early spiritual impressions. Adolescence became a period of hardening of the heart and learning habitual sin with the early religious impressions repressed. Then a spiritual ‘crisis’ occurred as the narrator faced the law of God with impending judgement due for personal sin. The crisis built in intensity until there was a resolution of salvation by the mercy of God through the gospel of Jesus Christ, followed by the comfort and assurance of a post-conversion experience.⁵⁷ The normal form had the narrator portray his conversion in such a way that a converted reader could locate his or herself within common themes or, if unconverted, experience the story in such a way that could lead the individual to salvation also.⁵⁸ This was the typical pattern for the conversion narrative.

Jay’s narrative is similar, but with unusual differences. Regarding his childhood Jay claimed ‘a distinction is not always made between depraved nature and actual transgression’. He could not ‘speak as some do of going great lengths in iniquity’. He felt his childhood was relatively ‘free from immoralities’. And rather than coming to terms with an abundance of sins or the continuous struggle with a particular sin that represented of all others, Jay recalled only one: ‘it was the uttering of a falsehood, accompanied with an oath ... as I was intensely at play.’ He describes his spiritual struggle or crisis in one sentence. ‘I now began to see and feel deficiencies with regard to duty, and to be dissatisfied with the state of my heart towards God.’ Usually the common narrative went to great pains to build the tension as the subject came to his spiritual crisis. Both John Bunyan (1628-1688) and John Newton (1725-1807) wrote whole books to describe their experience. Jay summarized

⁵⁵ Dale, R.W. *The Life and Letters of John Angell James* (London: James Nisbett, 1861), 34 and Jay, *Works*, v.14-15. James will be discussed in Chapter 5.

⁵⁶ Hindmarsh, D. Bruce, ‘My chains fell off, my heart was free’: Early Methodist Conversion Narrative in England’, *Church History*, 68 (1999), 922

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 922-925

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 929

his entire conversion in only one and a half pages.⁵⁹ Jay's spiritual crisis was not just aimed at resolving sin. Rather it targeted inadequate preaching. It was at this point that John Morgan gave him the letter and Jay attended the opening of the new Calvinistic Methodist meeting house. On the first night, he heard a sermon from 1 Timothy 1:15, 'the faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners'. Jay said the preaching 'was like rain upon the mown grass, or cold water to a thirsty soul. I scarcely slept that night for weeping, and for joy'.⁶⁰ His narrative does not express a sense of being under God's condemnation for breaking the law leading to redemption through Christ's substitutionary atonement on the cross (though he may have implied that by the sermon text). Jay's resolve and joy came from the evangelical service itself. 'The singing, the extemporaneousness of the address and the apparent affection and earnestness of the speaker, particularly affected me.' The preaching, particularly, made such an impression on Jay that he woke early the next morning to be the first to hear it resumed.⁶¹ In later life, Jay would state, 'The end of preaching should always be regarded to win souls to Christ.'⁶² Jay does not centre on how the gospel message released him from his sin. Instead his conversion narrative made evangelical preaching the focal point of his experience.

Jay's conversion narrative can be summarized in two observations. First, Jay did not have the typical conversion of a single event that produced his salvation. However, Jay felt it necessary to portray his religious awakening within the conventional genre of conversion narrative. With Jay there was no adolescent hardening of the heart, nor was there a continuous struggle with indwelling sin. It is interesting to note that none of Jay's three biographers, including his son, mentions Jay's conversion even in passing. Jay uses his conversion narrative to convey a different purpose rather than to convert the reader. The second observation is that evangelical preaching is at the heart of his narrative. By making preaching the emphasis, Jay displayed the motivation and purpose of his life. While the gospel message was important, it was the gospel through the power of preaching that had the ability to change lives. Jay's narrative is not intended to be didactic for the

⁵⁹ *Autobiography of Jay*, 22

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 23

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 23

⁶² Wallace, *A Portraiture of the Late Rev. William Jay* (London: Arthur Hall, Virtue & Co., 1854, 136

unconverted. It teaches that preaching changes lives. He is defending his role as a preacher over other roles that he had to relinquish in order to follow his call.⁶³ Jay's narrative is less about his actual conversion, and more about justifying his call to preach.

The influence of Joanna Turner in the life of Jay cannot be overlooked. It was Turner and her husband who began the new chapel in Tisbury. Joanna Turner was the daughter of a wealthy clothier in Trowbridge. In her diary, she spoke of her constant struggle with pride and vanity, particularly as it related to fashion. At the age of seventeen, she too was converted by an evangelical sermon, in her case through preachers of George Whitefield's connexion.⁶⁴ She frequently visited the Tabernacle in Bristol and had regular contact with Methodists of both Whitefield's and Wesley's connexions, seeing merits to both sides. As a single woman, she opened up her home in Trowbridge for Methodist meetings. Being a Calvinist, she invited preachers in Whitefield's connexion to provide the teaching, while she conducted times of prayer and ministry to the poor. At thirty-four years of age, she married Thomas Turner, a successful grocer in Trowbridge. He saw himself as a partner in her endeavour to plant a Methodist chapel in Trowbridge. After their marriage, Joanna moved in with Thomas, and her former residence remained the location for the assembly. Her cousin, John Clark (1745-1809), of whom Jay wrote a memoir, began to preach regularly to the group. Together the three devoted themselves to erect a permanent chapel in Trowbridge.

The next project for the couple was to plant a Methodist chapel in Tisbury, Thomas Turner's native village. A house became available in the spring of 1781 and with a £100 legacy of a friend the couple proceeded with the plan. Joanna regularly resided in Tisbury to supervise the new work while Thomas remained in Trowbridge to operate the store. The chapel officially opened on 22 May 1782 with itinerants supplying the pulpit. Joanna proudly noted in her diary the spiritual improvement of those attending. 'Women opened their mouths sweetly in prayer-meeting: and a boy told his father, after hearing a minister preach on the duty of family prayer, that if his father did not pray in the family, he must! And the boy prayed, both in the family and

⁶³ *Autobiography of Jay.*, 152-154

⁶⁴ Wells, Mary. *Memoirs of Mrs. Joanna Turner, as Exemplified in Her Life, Death and Spiritual Experience.* (New York: John Midwinter, 1827), 14

church, occasionally, from that time.⁶⁵ Jay revealed in his *Autobiography* that he was the lad. He said that his father relinquished the responsibility from inability and the son took it up as a ‘kind of domestic chaplain’.⁶⁶ It was Joanna Turner who met Jay as she opened the door of the chapel the morning after hearing his first evangelistic sermon. This meeting began a close friendship. She appears to have been the first adult to provide evangelical instruction to Jay. By this time, Jay had been apprenticed as a stone mason with his father and was working on the Fonthill House. On his way home from work, Turner would meet him and converse as they walked. Jay said, ‘her information and addresses were more useful than many of the sermons I heard’.⁶⁷ Turner was instrumental in Jay’s early spiritual formation.

Not only was Joanna Turner valuable as an instructor, but she became a model of Christian womanhood for Jay. Joanna Bowen Gillespie suggests that Joanna Turner is a woman who broke free from social norms of male authority and created new boundaries within evangelicalism. In evaluating Turner, Gillespie states ‘Far from being subordinate to a husband who was supposed to be head-of-household, Joanna Turner remained a loving and not at all subservient wife, fully her husband’s equal, perhaps even his companionable and affectionate leader ... In that sense Joanna Turner is a stunningly contemporary model for today’s heterosexual Christian feminists, rather than an uncomfortably narrow model of evangelical womanhood.’⁶⁸ Gillespie presumes that separate spheres ideology is at work in the late eighteenth-century gender roles. The basic idea of separate spheres ideology is that women and men were relegated into distinct roles in which they lived their lives. Women of the middle classes increasingly retreated into the private domestic world and conceded the public business world to men. Each had her own separate sphere in which they moved and influenced with the culmination of the separation occurring in the early- to mid-nineteenth century. But Amanda Vickery argues against this theory. She writes that early nineteenth-century religious work ‘looks like an expansion of the female role, not a diminution’. To Vickery texts advocating separate spheres actually ‘signalled a growing concern that more women were seen to be active outside the

⁶⁵ Ibid., 186

⁶⁶ *Autobiography of Jay*, 34

⁶⁷ Ibid., 23

⁶⁸ Gillespie, J.B., ‘Gasping for Larger Measures: Joanna Turner, Eighteenth Century Activist’, *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 3 (1987), 50

home rather than proof that they were so confined'.⁶⁹ Joanna Turner appears to support Vickery's case rather than fit Gillespie's model.

Turner saw her marriage as a partnership that would allow her to be more zealous in her desire to win souls for Christ. At thirty-four and already involved in religious activity, she was unsure whether to marry rather than remaining single in doing her work. 'For a considerable time, I thought I should be permitted to remain single. My Maker is my husband; but may his will be done.'⁷⁰ She feared her marriage might restrain her work for God. The turning point in the decision came when she was convinced that Thomas desired to be involved with her work to establish an evangelical cause in Trowbridge. Yet after her marriage, she threw herself wholeheartedly into his grocery business in addition to the church planting. She invested her own money in his business. She assisted with the accounting. And she helped stock the store and worked the counter. Ironically, the woman who was saved from the vanity of fashion took delight in picking out the fabrics to be sold in the store. The success of the business provided for the material need of the church. She also used the store as a platform for evangelization as she engaged customers with the gospel message. It was with one accord the couple invested their profit in the building of the permanent chapel in Trowbridge and later in Tisbury.⁷¹ The couple never had children and so Joanna was free to remain in Tisbury and provide spiritual guidance for youngsters like Jay. Joanna saw marriage as an increase in her role as an evangelical woman rather than a contraction of it.

Jay, no doubt influenced by Joanna Turner, had a high view of the evangelical woman. 'It will be confessed' wrote Jay, 'that there are some differences between the male and female character, produced by nature and enlarged by education. But the very differences render them the more mutually eligible as companions. The defective qualities of each are provided in the attributes of the other.' From Mrs. Turner, Jay

⁶⁹ Vickery, Amanda, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', *Historical Journal*, 36 (1993), 400

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 97

⁷¹ It is interesting to note that Joanna Turner's name is not specifically mentioned in the Tabernacle's history within the church minutes 'Mr. John Clark being instrumental in raising and collecting together in Trowbridge they agreed among themselves with the said John Clark, that he should be their pastor; and in consequence of this Mr. Thomas Turner, Grocer (one of the members of this church) built the original place of worship and called it the tabernacle. This was done in the year 1771 and on the twentieth of November the same year it was dedicated.' (Minutes of the Tabernacle Independent Chapel, Trowbridge, WSHC 1417/7)

learned that far from servitude or retreating into privacy, the role of women was valuable both in and out of the church. His concept of submission had ‘more equality in it- accords with the idea of a helper, a companion, friend- springs originally from choice- and is acquiesced in for the sake of propriety and advantage’.⁷² He viewed women within the same framework of compatibility as Turner demonstrated.

Jay’s understanding of the role of women can be seen in an unusual example. At an ordination, it is the normal procedure for an older minister to give a charge to the new minister. In 1829, Jay not only performed a charge for the minister, but also for his wife. He admonished the young wife, ‘You are expressly forbidden to occupy the office of your husband, and publicly teach in the church.’ However, he also told her ‘Regulation is not degradation . . . Limitation is not obstruction. It confines indeed but it is the confinement of direction, not of hindrance.’⁷³ From here Jay proceeded to demonstrate other areas in which she was to contribute. He encouraged her to participate in alms-giving with her husband, learn medicine to help others, make visits and evangelize on behalf of the church, raise godly children, and teach in the Sunday schools (but being careful not to neglect the teaching of her own children). Also, she was to take part in the spiritual growth of her minister husband by taking charge of the secular affairs at the home in order that he might have time for study and sermon preparation.⁷⁴ Essentially, Jay assigned this young minister’s wife duties that could be considered pastoral with the exclusion of publicly teaching in the church.

Jay subsequently sought to promote the advantages of women. Perhaps this can be seen best in his work, *Lectures on Female Scripture Characters* (1854). It would be best discussed here in view of Turner’s influence. Jay first presented this series of lectures as Sunday evening sermons at Argyle Chapel in 1805, but it was the last of his works he edited and published. The idea for the series came to him as he was ‘reflecting on the importance of the female character, and on the influence which women must naturally have, in every condition, period, and relation of life’.⁷⁵ Each

⁷² Jay, William, ‘The Mutual Duties of Husbands and Wives: A Sermon Occasioned by the Marriage of Robert Spear, Esq. of Manchester’ in *The Works of the Rev. William Jay*, Vol. VII. (London: C.A. Bartlett, 1843), 10. This was a sermon delivered in the year 1801 at the Argyle Chapel in honour of the wedding.

⁷³ Jay, William, *A Gift from the Lord: A Charge intended to have been addressed to the Wife of a Minister, at the ordination of her husband*. (London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co, 1829), 4

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 9-36

⁷⁵ Jay, William. *Lectures on Female Scripture Characters*. (London: Hamilton, Adams and Co., 1854), ix

sermon is based on a female character in the Bible with the intent to use the example as instruction. The lectures demonstrate how Jay held women in high esteem over his long career.

Five remarks can be made about the *Lectures*. First, the lectures were directed specifically to women. They had the purpose of ‘addressing women from the pulpit distinctively’.⁷⁶ He felt the lectures to be warranted in order to help the improvement of women to observe the distinctions God ordained for them. Second, all the lectures pointed to constructive examples of women (with the exception of the last one). There are twenty-two sermons on fifteen females. Each has an attribute to be admired and cultivated by women. The woman of Canaan in Matthew 15 is praised for her persistence in prayer. Anna, the prophetess in Luke 2, is praised for making Christ known and recommended to others. Dorcas in Acts 9 is praised for her charity. Some have multiple characteristics requiring more than one sermon. The Shunamite woman of 2 Kings 4, for example, is praised for her refusal of self-advancement and the courage of her faith in God. The only negative example is the last, Lot’s wife. She is presented as a warning. Of her Jay says, ‘Bad examples may be profitable as well as good.’⁷⁷ She represents the typical evangelistic appeal at the end of a work to turn away from sin and towards God. A third remark is that Jay frequently admonished men for neither recognizing nor promoting the attributes of women. In the sermons on Hannah, he faulted Eli for mistaking her devotion to God as drunkenness and notes that he was ‘open to conviction, to acknowledge himself mistaken, and ready to make amends for the injury he had done her’ and to husbands he said, ‘If you have a Hannah, be grateful, and faithful, and kind, and tender.’⁷⁸ He shamed husbands again for ‘carrying on any separate design’ by excluding wives from their affairs. ‘How shameful is the conduct of some husbands,’ he wrote. ‘They gamble, they speculate in business, they engage themselves in the affairs of this life, and pull down ruin on their families, while their suffering wives ... know nothing till they feel the crash, and their hearts are desolate within them.’⁷⁹ The Samaritan woman of John 4 is held up in admiration for her zeal in the promotion of the gospel and he included men when said,

⁷⁶ Ibid., x

⁷⁷ Ibid., 349

⁷⁸ Ibid., 82, 101

⁷⁹ Ibid., 5

‘I fear we all stand condemned by the example of this woman.’⁸⁰ Fourth, Jay used the authority of the Bible to promote women. He writes, ‘There is no book which females are so bound to regard and honour as the scriptures. It is there alone that they appear not only as lovely, but as reasonable and immortal beings; as ‘‘heirs together’’ with us ‘‘of the grace of life’’; personally responsible; eminent in usefulness; and often peculiarly honoured of God.’⁸¹ And the final remark is that Jay used each of these scriptural examples to demonstrate that men and women should complement one another. The Shunamite woman is commended for seeking the consent of her husband. This comes not from a sense of deference but ‘by the very nature of their union, the parties have given themselves up to each other, and are no longer their own’ and they should ‘maintain a unity of views and interests’.⁸² In this work, Jay was also clear that women were not allowed to be ministers or publicly teach, ‘because inspiration has interposed its authority and said “I suffer not a woman to teach” in the church’. The reasons why ‘are not to be sought for in supposition of incapacity for the discharge of a function, but in the order of nature, and in the line of demarcation which defines and separates the destinies and duties of each sex’. Jay instructed women, ‘Let me tell you that you are all bound to preach Christ: not by assuming the ministerial office but ‘‘as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.’’⁸³ The *Lectures* reveal the type of value he placed upon womanhood that he learned from Joanna Turner.

Jay promoted the value of womanhood in Christian marriage. He believed the distinctive role of women was as important as the role of men. Women ‘had the blessings of ringing forth Immanuel, they were the last at the cross and first at the tomb. We see Jehovah listening to your supplications. We see you the DAUGHTERS of the LORD ALMIGHTY.’⁸⁴ Therefore Jay encouraged women to improve themselves. The Bible taught that women ‘are capable of greater beauty than the body yields - that they ought to adorn the mind - that their endeavours to decorate their persons should be infinitely surpassed by their attention to intellectual accomplishment’. Jay asked, ‘Are you designed for toys or rational beings? the play-

⁸⁰ Ibid., 230

⁸¹ Ibid., 253

⁸² Ibid., 5

⁸³ Ibid., 230

⁸⁴ Jay, ‘Mutual Duties’, 29

things of the senses, or improving companions?’⁸⁵ Jay promoted the latter, knowing women could be asked to manage their homes, contribute to family income, promote the gospel, and be lifelong partners to their husbands. Jay warned women, ‘If you have management of the ship, see that a fool is not placed at the helm.’⁸⁶

The importance Jay placed on women can be seen in his personal relationships. When he was presented with testimonial gift of £650 upon his jubilee at the Argyle Chapel, he passed the purse to his wife, believing she was more deserving of it.⁸⁷ He regularly encouraged Hannah More in her writing of fiction for the tract society and believed her talent as author was equivalent to any man’s.⁸⁸ He frequently discussed theology in his correspondence with Marianna Jane Head (1781- 1857) who would later become his second wife.⁸⁹ But most significant was Joanna Turner. When Jay opened new Sunday School rooms at the Trowbridge Tabernacle in November 1842, he publicly acknowledged his debt to Turner. ‘At the close the preacher attended in the most impressive manner to Mrs. Turner the foundress of the Tabernacle and the first Christian who discovered him at his native village, Tisbury, and introduced him to the Rev. Cornelius Winter.’ He declared that without Joanna Turner’s influence, ‘in all probability he would have never been known either as a pastor or a preacher’.⁹⁰ Jay passionately believed in the value of evangelical womanhood because he had witnessed it in the life of Joanna Turner.

By far the most significant influence over Jay in his formative years, however, was his tutor, Cornelius Winter. Like Jay, he had a humble beginning. Born in London, Winter’s parents died at an early age. He was forced to live in a workhouse for several years before he was eventually apprenticed to his uncle, an alcoholic who physically abused him for most of his apprenticeship. Early on, Winter felt a ‘very strong prejudice against the Methodists and Dissenters’, but his views changed after he heard George Whitefield in 1760.⁹¹ Like Jay, he was moved by evangelical preaching. And similarly, he could not point to one specific event when he experienced salvation. He merely stated that he sat under Whitefield at the Tabernacle

⁸⁵ Ibid., 15-17

⁸⁶ Ibid., 23

⁸⁷ Anon. *The Jubilee Memorial of the Rev. William Jay*. (Bath: C.A. Bartlett, 1841), 104

⁸⁸ *Autobiography of Jay*, 337-338

⁸⁹ Ibid., 512-513

⁹⁰ *Evangelical Magazine* 1843, 596

⁹¹ Jay, *Memoirs of Cornelius Winter*, 13

and Tottenham Court Chapel in London for five years until his conversion. Winter attributed the delay to the weakness of the Methodist preaching at the chapels: aside from Whitefield, ‘the supplies were not very considerable’.⁹² Eventually, Winter received Whitefield’s patronage and accompanied the revivalist on his final trip to America in 1769, intending to secure orders and become a chaplain to the black population of Georgia. ‘I only knew I was bound for Georgia and that I was going to teach the negroes the way of salvation.’⁹³ In return, Whitefield pledged his support to have him ordained in the Church of England. The young protégé admired Whitefield, but was not above criticizing the famous preacher. He disapproved of his elder’s lack of preparation in preaching, only spending ‘an hour or two before he entered the pulpit with Clarke’s Bible, Matthew Henry’s Commentary, and Cruden’s Concordance’.⁹⁴ He criticized Whitefield’s relationship to his wife, saying, ‘her death set his mind much at liberty’.⁹⁵ But most of all, he felt Whitefield had misled him as to what to expect in Georgia. On the passage to Savannah, ‘he told me what he had concealed while on the English shore, that if I had as many to preach to as his bed-cabin would hold, I might think myself well off, and that I might expect to be whipped off the plantation when I had done’.⁹⁶ Whitefield’s prediction turned out to be true. While Winter had considerable success among the black population, the majority of the white residents opposed him. And unbeknownst to Winter, they sabotaged his prospects for ordination. Whitefield died in America. Winter returned to London, carrying Whitefield’s will and hoping ordination would improve his situation back in the colonies.

Upon his return to England in 1771 he discovered the damage done to his reputation by letters from leading planters and clergymen in America to the Bishop of London. Still called to the ministry, but with no hope of ordination, Winter became a Dissenting itinerant in southwest England among chapels connected to Whitefield and the Countess of Huntingdon. Marrying Mariam Brown on 21 April 1779, he eventually settled into a pastorate at Marlborough.⁹⁷

⁹² Ibid., 15

⁹³ Ibid., 57

⁹⁴ Ibid., 17

⁹⁵ Ibid., 59

⁹⁶ Ibid., 67-68

⁹⁷ Phillimore, W.P.W. *Wiltshire Parish Registers*, Vol. 2. (London: Phillimore and Co., 1906), 114

Winter saw a great need for evangelical ministers. He opened the Marlborough Academy late 1779 to early 1780.⁹⁸ It was financially supported by Thomas Hancock, a gentleman of the town, and the Anglican philanthropist John Thornton (1720-1790) of Clapham. Later, the academy would move to Painswick, Gloucestershire, in 1791. Jay entered the academy in April 1785.⁹⁹ Winter noticed the young man's attention to spiritual things on one of his itinerant visits to Tisbury and invited Jay to his school. Jay could not afford his tuition and could at best provide his own clothing, but Thornton paid his expenses.¹⁰⁰ While in Marlborough, Winter would greatly influence Jay through education and ministerial connections.

Frank Pritchard, an educational historian, believed that Winter's academy was based on the system devised by the evangelical clergyman John Newton in *A Plan of Academical Preparation for the Ministry* (1782).¹⁰¹ There are remarkable similarities between the two. Newton's plan was implemented at William Bull's (1738-1814) academy in Newport Pagnell in 1783.¹⁰² But considering that the Marlborough institution was in operation at least two years prior to Newton's publication, it is highly probable that the scheme Winter used in Jay's training influenced Newton, rather than the other way round

Winter's educational method was much more practical than philosophical. Winter, like Newton, had not received a formal education at either of the two universities. Winter's instruction was closer to the concept of apprenticeship than to the lectures of a tutor. While a Calvinist, he avoided extremes and arguments. He told his pupils, 'It is possible to defend your own fort without storming another's battery. Maintain by scriptural argument, your own principle and practices with modest confidence; but rail not, insinuate no reflection on your opponents; name them not - unless with respect.'¹⁰³ He claimed to be 'a Dissenter by principle', but unlike Newton he was never offered ordination.¹⁰⁴ He still maintained an appreciation for the Church of England and was even known to read the liturgy in services.¹⁰⁵ Winter left

⁹⁸ Jay, *Memoirs of Cornelius Winter*, 130-132

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 139

¹⁰⁰ *Autobiography of Jay*, 38, 45

¹⁰¹ Pritchard, F.C. *Methodist Secondary Education*. (London: Epworth Press, 1949), 72

¹⁰² Pritchard, *Methodist Secondary Education*, 63-73

¹⁰³ Jay, *Memoirs of Cornelius Winter*, 254

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 408

¹⁰⁵ Hulbert, Charles. *Memoirs of Seventy Years of an Eventful Life*. (Providence Grove: C. Hulbert, 1852), 209

the choice of whether to enter the Established Church to his pupil's conscience.¹⁰⁶ It is most likely that Jay learned his ecumenism, along with a wariness of controversy, from Winter.

The curriculum was based first and foremost on acquiring a better understanding of scripture. 'Never did a man more value erudition, in all its various branches, and for all its legitimate purposes' with those purposes being able to understand and to communicate the truths of the Bible properly.¹⁰⁷ When he first arrived at the academy, Jay described the problem of trying to keep up with the sheer amount of reading as 'insuperable'.¹⁰⁸ Winter had 'more than a competent knowledge of the original languages, and read the scriptures in them'.¹⁰⁹ He both read and wrote Latin. Occasionally, he wrote his letters to Jay in Latin to maintain his skills.¹¹⁰ Outside the Bible and *Matthew Henry's Commentary*, no other texts are mentioned by his students. That is not to say that the tutor did not use books. Upon his death, he left a substantial library to David Bogue's academy at Gosport.¹¹¹ It was Winter's plan to teach his students how to think and educate themselves.

Winter trained a variety of students over his tenure as tutor. His first student, Thomas Higgs (1769-1789) was ten years old when the tutor accepted him. He educated John Yockney (1754-1820) when the young man was in his twenties. In addition to those preparing for the ministry, he also took in pupils training for secular professions. The Hancocks, who pioneered innovations in the rubber industry, were taught by Winter.¹¹² And there is some evidence that Winter and his wife possibly opened their home to teach young girls.¹¹³ Despite the wide variety, the students never numbered more than twelve at one time.

But Winter's primary goal was to train young men for the ministry, particularly for the purpose of preaching in the villages. 'To carry it on was always an object with me.'¹¹⁴ And in his training he was very successful. From Winter's *Memoir*

¹⁰⁶ *Autobiography of Jay*, 47

¹⁰⁷ Jay, *Memoirs of Cornelius Winter*, 184-185

¹⁰⁸ *Autobiography of Jay*, 39

¹⁰⁹ Jay, *Memoirs of Cornelius Winter*, 185

¹¹⁰ Cornelius Winter to William Jay, 3 November 1787, *ibid.*, 192

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 249

¹¹² Loadman, John, and Francis, James. *The Hancocks of Marlborough*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 7

¹¹³ Jay, *Memoirs of Cornelius Winter*, 139. Winter refers to 'the worthy female friends who made a part' of their group.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 137

and the *Autobiography* twenty-one Congregational ministers trained by the tutor can be identified. In 1826, Winter's students occupied a third of the pulpits in Gloucestershire Independent chapels.¹¹⁵ Jay mentions that Winter had at least two others enter Oxford and Cambridge to become clergymen. In fact, at one point Winter consulted with Rowland Hill's brother, Sir Richard Hill (1732-1808), and John Thornton as to whether or not Jay should enter Oxford. But with Jay's uncanny ability for public speaking, they all agreed the young man should be out preaching as soon as possible.¹¹⁶ Academy alumni were stationed in Hampshire, Buckinghamshire, Wiltshire, Somerset, Gloucestershire and the Established Church.

Winter's main goal was to have his students learn to preach and to do so extemporaneously. It was Winter who developed Jay's passion for preaching. 'He engaged his students to preach very early after they were with him.'¹¹⁷ The teacher instilled a zeal for souls in his students. Jay said that as a preacher, Winter was 'not striking' in the pulpit. He was, in fact, 'rather slow and inanimated [sic]'. He preached 'without notes' and generally with 'only a skeleton outline'. Winter's strength was taking a particular scriptural text and breaking down its divisions. At this he 'excelled'.¹¹⁸ Jay said at the time of his training, 'The spiritual condition of many villages was deplorable, and the people were perishing from lack of knowledge.' Jay believed Winter licensed several meeting houses specifically to provide pulpits from which students could preach, but Winter is listed on only two licences in Wiltshire.¹¹⁹ Nevertheless Winter had his students preaching almost daily, sometimes under his supervision, sometimes without, and at times presenting more than one sermon a day. Jay believed he had preached almost 1,000 sermons by the age of eighteen.¹²⁰ It was Winter's desire to propel as many evangelical preachers into the field as possible. Jay acknowledged that the constant preaching inhibited his education, but both he and Winter felt it was justified because of the great need.

Winter's former ministerial students had certain common characteristics. First, they developed a deep love for the local church. Most remained ministers at their

¹¹⁵ *Congregational Magazine* (1826), 705

¹¹⁶ *Autobiography of Jay*, 42-43

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 188-189

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 206

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 40, and Chandler, J.H., *Wiltshire Dissenters' Meeting House Certificates and Registrations 1689-1852*. (Devizes: Wiltshire Record Society, 1985), 34-35

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 44

initial church of service until they were removed by health or death. After Yockney left the academy, he became minister at Staines, Middlesex, until his death thirty years later. William Richardson (1772-1847) was pastor at Frampton-on-Severn for forty-six years.¹²¹ Until disabled by paralysis, John Horlick (1787-1859) preached at the Ruardean Chapel for fifty years.¹²² Charles Daniell (1773-1832) was minister at Kingswood, Wotton-Under-Edge, for twenty-six years. And of course, Jay was minister at the Argyle Chapel for sixty-two years. Second, Winter's students were strongly involved in missions. William Bishop (1765-1832) was the secretary of the Gloucestershire Association overseeing church planting and itinerancy in the county villages.¹²³ John Griffin (1769-1834), of Portsea, was Winter's second student, after Jay, to preach before the London Missionary Society in 1798 and 1807. He also wrote the memoir of James Wilson (1760-1814), captain of *The Duff*, the first ship owned by the London Missionary Society. And third, Winter's students were known for their preaching, not for their engagement in doctrinal or political controversy. While most published sermons, it would seem none of them engaged in the debates of the day through their publications. With few exceptions, most of students at the academy had long tenures to their respective churches, were involved in missions and placed a priority on preaching.

Jay believed Winter's most valuable lessons were gained by being able 'to accompany him in his visits to the chamber of sickness, and the house of mourning' or attending his preaching in the neighbouring villages. Jay recalled these times as 'so much melting pleasure ... going with him - walking by the side of his little horse, and occasionally riding - on a fine summer's evening, into a neighbouring village, and returning again the same night, or very early morning'. 'It was a privilege', Jay said, 'rather than a task, to do anything before him.' He summed up his mentor by saying, 'He was a father with sons, rather than a tutor with his students.'¹²⁴ Two of his other former students also used the term 'father' in describing their former teacher.¹²⁵

¹²¹ *Congregational Yearbook* 1901, 607

¹²² *Congregational Yearbook* 1859, 201-202 (Horlick was the only student of Winter to outlive Jay)

¹²³ *Evangelical Magazine* (1832), 400

¹²⁴ Jay, *Memoirs of Cornelius Winter*, 187

¹²⁵ Golding, Thomas. *A Token of Grateful Esteem for the Memory of the Late Rev. Cornelius Winter*. (Taunton: J. Poole, 1808), 5 and Bishop, William. *Strict Fidelity and Holy Fear: A Sermon on the Much Lamented Death of the Rev. Cornelius Winter*. (Gloucester: D. Walker, 1808), 19

Clearly, Winter affected his students more through his example than through his lectures.

The editors of the *Autobiography* admit Jay's education at the Marlborough Academy 'was not the system patronized by dissenters generally'. They reveal, 'to take this Academy as a specimen of what was then, or is now, the average of Dissenting Educational Institutions, would be to fall into a great mistake'. The editors stress Winter's practices were uncommon and designed to supply the lack of preachers for the Evangelical Revival as quickly as possible. Winter's academy was atypical of the modern academies founded in the tradition of Philip Doddridge's (1702-1751) Northampton Academy which were, in their opinion, comparable to the colleges of the establishment.¹²⁶ J.A. James had a vested reason for making such a statement as he was a trustee of Spring Hill College in Birmingham (which would later become Mansfield College in Oxford). Jay's editors did not want to give the appearance of sanctioning the sending out of uneducated or inexperienced ministers into the field.

But others lamented the change. A 'J.H.' wrote to the *Protestant Dissenters' Magazine* in 1796 complaining that current preachers were not improving in their preaching skills for lack of experience. He appealed to the Methodist tradition of uniting 'practice with theory'. He applauded the Hoxton Academy for opening a chapel to allow the students to have a rotation in preaching. 'If candidates for the Christian ministry preach often', he wrote, 'it will tend also to sanctify their studies, and to convince them by experience, what they should principally apply to, as conducive to their main design.' He proposed that better preaching was the greatest need in 'the present state of society'.¹²⁷ At one point Jay entertained the possibility of training men for the ministry in the same way he was trained. But later he chose to send men to the newer academies, where they would benefit from more rigorous academic study.¹²⁸ He sent his son, Edward, to Wymondley College to prepare for the ministry.¹²⁹ Obviously, Jay saw advantages in both methods.

¹²⁶ *Autobiography of Jay*, 45

¹²⁷ J.H., 'Hints for the Improvement of the Education of Divinity Students', *Protestant Dissenters' Magazine*, 3 (1796): 421-424

¹²⁸ *Congregational Yearbook* (1855): 238-240

¹²⁹ *Autobiography of Jay*, 496

Not only did Winter provide Jay with an education, but he also introduced him to his key ministerial connections. Winter was associated with the powerful Bristol Methodist connections that interlaced between Whitefield's Calvinistic Methodists and the Wesleyan Methodists. Though a confirmed Calvinist, Winter maintained a cordial relationship with both groups. John Wesley told Jay, 'Cornelius is an excellent man.'¹³⁰ Winter introduced Jay to Sir Charles Middleton (1726-1813) in Clifton, comptroller of the Navy and a Lord of the Admiralty. Jay was to have a long-term relationship with his family for three generations.¹³¹ Also, it was Winter who secured Jay's first supply at Christian Malford (though he did not desire him to settle there).¹³² But above all, it was Winter who recommended Jay to fill in for the great evangelist, Rowland Hill, at Surrey Chapel in London, during the summer of 1788.

These eight weeks in London would change Jay's life in two ways. The first was through the connections he would make in the metropolis. Winter had been friends with Hill ever since 1771 when Hill became estranged from his family for his Methodism. They assisted one another regularly. Though established in his own London chapel, Hill continued to preach among the rural poor at Wotton-under-Edge and elsewhere in the surrounding areas. When he left on these excursions he sought preachers to fill his pulpit. Though Hill had intended to meet Jay before he took the pulpit, he did not have the opportunity. He accepted Jay based on Winter's recommendation alone.¹³³ Jay's preaching won him much attention in London. Each time he preached the chapel was filled to capacity. Apparently the previous supplies had not performed to the level of 'the boy preacher'.¹³⁴ Upon his final sermon, a multitude of admirers followed him to his dwelling house and would not disperse until he addressed them from his window.¹³⁵ Hill had to ask his chapel manager to 'keep the crowds from flocking to the vestry' after services lest Jay be 'lifted up by pride'.¹³⁶ The Baptist, John C. Ryland (1723-1792), and clergymen, John Newton and Richard Cecil (1748-1810), came to hear him preach. All later became close friends. Also, he was heard by the Rev. Thomas Tuppen of the Argyle Chapel in Bath, whom

¹³⁰ Jay, *Memoirs of Cornelius Winter*, 413

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 113

¹³² Cornelius Winter to William Jay, 7 September 1788, *Ibid.*, 196

¹³³ Rowland Hill to James Neale, 12 June 1788, DWL, C86/18

¹³⁴ *Autobiography of Jay*, 50

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 48

¹³⁶ Rowland Hill to James Neale, 2 July 1788, DWL, C86/19

he would later succeed. He was so successful that Hill contracted Jay to return and preach for him eight weeks annually. Jay would keep the commitment for forty-five years, though not always for the full term.¹³⁷ An admirer reported that in 1824 the preacher was attracting audiences near capacity (about 3,000) even on weekday evening services.¹³⁸ Jay would have continuous access to a fashionable London pulpit for his entire life.

Second and most notably, it was in London that Winter gave Jay a letter of introduction to the Rev. Edwin Davies (d. 1812). Davies was an evangelical clergyman educated at Jesus College, Oxford. In 1759 he had been ordained a deacon to serve as a curate in the Bristol diocese. By 1762 he was at Bengeworth and Hampton near Evesham, Worcestershire, where he invited John Wesley to fill his pulpit.¹³⁹ In 1768 Lady Charlotte Edwin appointed him to Coychurch, Bridgend, but Davies had difficulty speaking Welsh. With most of the congregation Welsh speakers, the minister employed curates to minister at Coychurch while he resided in London. Davies and his family also had strong ties to the Countess of Huntingdon. It was on this visit that Jay met Davies' daughter Anne, whom he began courting. At the time, Rowland Hill was worried about Jay receiving 'secret invitations' that Jay kept from him on his subsequent visit to London. Hill speculated that Jay had an attachment to Miss Davies.¹⁴⁰ Three short weeks later, on 6 January 1791, Hill conducted their wedding. The summer of 1788 not only granted Jay a certain measure of celebrity, but he also acquired relationships that would affect the rest of his life.

After London, Jay returned to Christian Malford, Wiltshire, where he was regularly filling the pulpit. The village was Winter's first pulpit, where he had struggled to gain the full support of the congregation. He hoped Jay's gifts would be more acceptable. Jay felt comfortable in the quaint environment of the small chapel, enjoying the quiet with which to prepare sermons. But it was not to last. The congregation at Christian Malford refused to support Jay adequately, and judging by Jay's scathing 'Farewell Sermon' they also did not appreciate his evangelistic zeal. 'My success has not equalled my acceptance' he said. 'It becomes you to inquire what

¹³⁷ *Autobiography of Jay*, 350 and Rowland Hill to James Webber, July 1788, DWL, C86/20

¹³⁸ Wallace, *Portraiture*, 21

¹³⁹ Curnock, Nehemiah (ed.), *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, Vol. 5. (London: Charles Kelley, 1901), 250

¹⁴⁰ Rowland Hill to James Webber, 23 December 1790, DWL, C86/29

on your part has prevented it; and with sorrow to lament that you have not improved the help you have enjoyed.’ Winter obviously approved of Jay’s sentiments. He both encouraged Jay to publish the sermon and wrote a commendatory preface.¹⁴¹ Both mentor and student failed to stir the congregation at Christian Malford to an evangelistic fervour.

It was also shortly after Jay left the academy that he began to question the theological foundation of his education. It is not clear as to all the various speculations he pursued. He confessed to his future wife, Anne Davies, ‘I frequently doubt the truths I preach to others.’¹⁴² But the concern among others was great enough for Rowland Hill to express caution about any future association by Jay with the Surrey Chapel. Hill wrote his chapel manager, ‘People have rather raised my fears concerning him; some say he is an admirer of the writings of Robinson the Socinian; that he talks about candour in a dangerous style’.¹⁴³ Jay admitted that his curiosity was piqued when he was younger. But he soon entrenched himself in orthodoxy.¹⁴⁴ He told Thomas Wallace (1803-1889) within the last few years of his life ‘The great principles which I received early in life, I maintain now.’¹⁴⁵ By the time he was ordained in Bath, he was able to deliver a highly orthodox and Calvinistic confession of faith.¹⁴⁶ He was still unsettled over some aspects of this theology, but he would come to embrace a version of it through the teachings of Andrew Fuller (1754-1815).¹⁴⁷ The Argyle minister would not depart from the theological convictions instilled in his youth.

In 1789, Jay removed to Hotwells in Clifton, just outside Bristol, to supply the pulpit of Hope Chapel. The Hotwells had been an exclusive and fashionable spa since 1743.¹⁴⁸ The *St. James Chronicle* noted in 1769, ‘We hear from the Hot Wells that there is a good deal of very good company already; seldom less than 200 at the public breakfasts with cotillions, and fuller balls than were last year at the height of the season’. It also added that the ‘virtues of the waters’, along with the social amenities

¹⁴¹ *Autobiography of Jay*, 50-59

¹⁴² Jay to A. Davies, [n.d.], *Autobiography of Jay*, 487

¹⁴³ Allon, Henry. *Memoir of the Rev. James Sherman*. (London: James Nisbet, 1863), 255

¹⁴⁴ *Autobiography of Jay*, 123 & 169

¹⁴⁵ Wallace, *Portraiture*, 138

¹⁴⁶ *Autobiography of Jay*, 76-88

¹⁴⁷ Chapter 6, 134-135

¹⁴⁸ Latimer, John. *The Annals of Bristol in the Eighteenth Century*. (Bristol: George’s, 1970), 244-245

of the quality lodging houses and playhouse, ‘induced several persons of independent fortune either to purchase or take houses in order to live there winter and summer’.¹⁴⁹

The Annals of Bristol noted its success and popularity:

Down to 1789 the Hot Well was crowded during the season by the aristocracy and gentry. Between noon and two o’clock the pump-room was generally so thronged that it was difficult to reach the drinking tables. In the afternoon the Downs were alive with carriages and equestrians. Three large hotels were fully occupied; two assembly rooms were kept open (a third, on Clifton Hill, was added in August 1790); while lodging-house keepers although charging only 5s. per room weekly in winter and 10s. in summer frequently retired from business with comfortable fortunes.¹⁵⁰

Two titled ladies, Lady Henrietta Hope (1750-1786) and Lady Willielma Campbell Glenorchy (1741-1786), came to the spa for their health in 1784, and desired to erect an evangelical chapel. Henrietta Hope set aside £2,500 for the purpose but died in early 1786 before the work could begin. The work was left to Lady Glenorchy alone, who also passed away later in the year. Lady Glenorchy left the legacy and work in the hands of her dear friend and Scottish compatriot, Darcy, Lady Maxwell (1742-1810).¹⁵¹ Both Lady Henrietta and Lady Glenorchy were Calvinists and desired the preaching of the chapel to reflect their theology. Lady Maxwell, however, was an Arminian and close associate of John Wesley. Though Wesley admonished her for it, she erected the chapel and saw that those who supplied the pulpit expressed the desires of the founders.¹⁵² The chapel opened on 31 August 1788. It was named after the original foundress, Henrietta Hope, who was reburied under the chapel upon its completion. Jay began to supply the pulpit regularly a few months later. He performed so admirably that both Lady Maxwell and the congregation desired him to continue on a full-time basis.¹⁵³ The chapel was well endowed with a fashionable audience in an exclusive neighbourhood. Since Jay had no patrimony, it would satisfy Edwin Davies’ desire for Jay to have a secure source of income before allowing the young man to marry his daughter. There was every reason for Jay to stay at Hotwells. Yet Jay soon chose to leave Hope Chapel for Bath.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 390-391

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 490

¹⁵¹ Jones, Ignatius. *Bristol Congregationalism: City and Country*. (Bristol: J.W. Arrowsmith Ltd, 1947), 36-37

¹⁵² Thomson, D.P. *Lady Glenorchy and Her Churches: The Story of 200 Years*. (Crieff: The Research Unit, 1967), 57

¹⁵³ *Autobiography of Jay*, 60-61

Jay had preached at Argyle Chapel as early as January 1789, while its minister, Thomas Tuppen, was ill. Jay had a vested interest in visiting Bath as much as possible. The family of Anne Davies, his future wife, had moved to Batheaston (2 miles away from the city of Bath) after her father became the curate at the parish church.¹⁵⁴ But Jay was under the notion that the appointment at Bath was only short-term.¹⁵⁵ The young preacher made such a favourable impression that the deacons procured his services to open the chapel on 4 October 1789. While Jay had success both in numbers of attendance and conversions at Hope Chapel, the situation there became increasingly miserable. When Lady Maxwell was in Scotland, she left the chapel in the hands of a manager to handle the temporal affairs. Hope Chapel was supervised by a ‘Mrs. C.’ who desired the officiating ministers to conduct Episcopal worship rather than Dissenting services. She particularly preferred liturgy over preaching to cater for the more exclusive clientele of the spa.¹⁵⁶ Cyrus Jay said, ‘This female wished to dictate to the preacher on doctrinal points’.¹⁵⁷ The circumstances became more difficult for Jay. Even the Countess of Huntingdon saw this as an opportunity to claim the promising young minister. She wrote to her manager in Bath, ‘Jay, I find to be married to Davies, the clergyman’s daughter, and I think he would unite heartily with us if wisely applied to.’¹⁵⁸ Once Tuppen died, calls to fill the pulpit in Bath increased.¹⁵⁹ Lady Maxwell began to suspect Jay might bolt for Bath. ‘I believe Mr. Jay will leave the Wells about the end of May, having had a call to succeed Mr. Tuppen at Bath.’ Lady Maxwell was frustrated with the controversy over the type of services. Hoping to reconcile the parties she also appointed a male manager, who failed to stand up to the domineering ‘Mrs. C.’. Lady Maxwell wrote a friend that the new manager ‘takes no active part, from weak spirits and nerves’.¹⁶⁰ But Jay resolved to leave the exclusive Hotwells spa for Bath due to the state of affairs. He stated his reason for leaving: ‘I do not plead for female ecclesiastical rule

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 93

¹⁵⁵ William Jay to Anne Davies, 2 February 1789, *ibid.*, 483

¹⁵⁶ Lancaster, John, (ed.), *The Life of Darcy, Lady Maxwell, Compiled from Her Diary and Correspondence*. (London: J. Kershaw, 1826), 396

¹⁵⁷ Jay, *Recollections of William Jay*, 12

¹⁵⁸ Selina Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon to Thomas Haweis, 6 March 1790, Bridwell Library, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Letter 116

¹⁵⁹ F. Ford to Selina Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon, 26 February 1790, Cheshunt Foundation, Westminster College, Cambridge, F1/2119

¹⁶⁰ Darcy Maxwell to Elizabeth Johnson, 26 May 1790, in Lancaster, *The Life of Lady Maxwell*, 378

whether supreme or subordinate.’¹⁶¹ Jay greatly respected women as exemplified in Joanna Turner, but he could no longer tolerate the manager’s meddling. In 1790, he left the Hope Chapel to accept the call to be the minister of Argyle Chapel.

His move to Bath was highly fortunate. It is of interest to note what happened to the Hotwells after Jay departed. Lady Maxwell conceded to the demands of ‘Mrs. C.’ and the congregation at Hotwells became more restrictive and less evangelical, a source of consternation to the minister who followed, Brian Collins (1753-1799).¹⁶² Furthermore, the Hotwells ceased to be fashionable by the end of the decade. A Clifton physician wrote of the area in 1816, ‘It has the silence of the grave, ... Not a carriage to be seen once an hour, and scarcely more frequently does a solitary invalid approach the neglected spring. One of the ballrooms and taverns has been long ago shut up, and the other with great difficulty kept open. The lodging-houses, or such of them as still remain open, are almost entirely empty in summer, and not very profitably filled even in winter.’¹⁶³ Had Jay remained in Hotwells, he might not have secured the national influence he readily assumed in Bath.

The factors that influenced Jay’s early life continued much later. Coming into contact regularly with Roman Catholics in childhood dispelled any prejudice and allowed him to promote Catholic Emancipation. In his conversion narrative, it was preaching that won Jay over to evangelical religion and preaching would become the focus of his ministry even to the neglect of pastoral duties at Argyle Chapel. Both Turner and Winter gave Jay an allegiance to the wider ecumenism of evangelicalism that Dale criticized, yet even more for the zeal for saving souls that he admired.¹⁶⁴ Joanna Turner’s influence shaped his concept of women and their roles in ministry. Cornelius Winter, also a product of the Evangelical Revival, educated Jay with the intent of fashioning him into a preacher. And it was Winter’s connections that initiated Jay’s debut in London for the summer of 1788 which won him acclaim as a preacher. Some of these factors initiated his move to Bath. Even after his experience in London, Jay never lost his desire to preach near his rural roots. Jay experienced from his conversion and learned from Cornelius Winter that preaching transformed

¹⁶¹ *Autobiography of Jay*, 65

¹⁶² Darcy Maxwell to Brian Collins, 19 October 1791, in Broadley, A.M. ‘The Correspondence of the Rev. Brian Bury Collins, M.A.’, *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, 9 (1913), 80-81

¹⁶³ Waite, Vincent. *The Bristol Hotwell*. (Bristol: Camelot Press, 1977), 13

¹⁶⁴ Dale, *The Old Evangelicalism and the New*, 17, 21

lives. He was urged to remain in London, but he had no desire to settle in the metropolis. 'I find a longing desire,' he wrote to Hill in 1788, 'to preach again to the dear country people in Wiltshire.'¹⁶⁵ Moving to Bath allowed Jay to continue his work in nearby Wiltshire while exercising his gifts before the city's fashionable audience. Thus the early influences on William Jay molded him into the ideal of an Evangelical Nonconformist minister growing into respectability.

¹⁶⁵ William Jay to Rowland Hill, July 1788, in *TCHS.*, 10 (1927-29), 41

Chapter Four: The Social Composition of the Argyle Chapel

On a Saturday evening in April 1823, Charles Godwin received a brief letter from William Jay. The note read ‘Lest you should not have been informed of it by any of our friends, this is to say that Mrs. Godwin was cordially admitted a member of the church, and that we hope to see her at the communion tomorrow, when three more will be partakers with us for the first time.’¹ Godwin’s family was originally Baptist and began to attend the Argyle Chapel just prior to Jay’s arrival. He was sixteen months old when Jay was ordained. Godwin would later become a deacon and the secretary of the Bath Auxiliary of the British and Foreign Bible Society.² The note from Jay indicates that chapel membership was something of an accomplishment distinct from a regular attender of the chapel. This chapter will focus on the membership and congregation of the Argyle Chapel. It will examine the admission requirements of the chapel, the social composition of those that made up the congregation and the activities and rituals of the members both individually and corporately.

The services of Argyle Chapel attracted not only the members of the chapel but also a great number of visitors to its congregation. The guests included representatives of the upper strata of society. Sir Richard Hill, Lady Duncan (1748-1832), the wife of Admiral Lord Duncan, and Sir William Knighton (1776-1836), physician to George IV, all worshipped at the Chapel.³ The Earl of Gainsborough (1781-1866) and his mother Lady Barham (d.1823) were ‘regular and attached hearers of Mr. Jay’.⁴ The Argyle Chapel minister attracted visitors from both far and near. Henry Johns (1803-1859), chaplain of the United States Senate, reflected fondly on having enjoyed the opportunity to hear Jay in his pulpit.⁵ Not unusual was the case of the successful clothier, William Henry Tucker (1814-1877), who as a young man

¹ Jay to Charles Godwin, April 1823, BCL A.L. 3058

² Godwin, Charles, ‘Reminiscences of The Rev. William Jay’, 4, CURC

³ Jay, Cyrus. *Recollections of William Jay of Bath* (London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co.), 1859.

⁴ Godwin, ‘Reminiscences’, 46-47.

⁵ William Jay, ‘The Autobiography of the Rev. William Jay : with reminiscences of some distinguished contemporaries, selections from his correspondence, etc’, ed. George Redford and John Angell James. *The Autobiography of William Jay*. (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 221-224.

walked from Trowbridge to Bath, a distance of ten miles, to hear the celebrated preacher.⁶ Some visitors attended the chapel on a consistent basis. Both the abolitionist William Wilberforce and the evangelical philanthropist Hannah More attended the chapel on their frequent visits to Bath, even though each was a member of the establishment.⁷ The clergyman Thomas Haweis left the Countess of Huntingdon's Chapel and began to worship regularly at the Argyle Chapel until his death.⁸ On the morning of the 1851 Ecclesiastical Census, the Argyle Chapel had the highest attendance among Bath churches, both in total number and in percentage of sittings. The worshippers on that morning occupied 1,200 out of 1,280 seats. When combined with the children's Sunday school that ran concurrently with the worship service, the overall attendance at Argyle Chapel was as high as 1,600. The closest turnouts were at the Abbey Church with an attendance of 1,100 in the 1,275 available sittings and at St Michael's with 602 present in the 1,200 places.⁹ In 1882, the first chapel historian, William Tuck, estimated the total number of members of the Chapel in 1852 as 500.¹⁰ Church members held distinct privileges above others that participated in the congregation. If Tuck was correct, then a significant majority of worshippers on the day of the census were either visitors or those who attended regularly without becoming members.

From the beginning of Jay's ministry, admittance to the membership was much less public than at other Independent chapels. Candidates at the Trowbridge Tabernacle were required to face an 'examination before the members of the church' prior to 1838.¹¹ Hale White recalled 'it was the custom to demand of each candidate a statement of his or her experience' at the Independent chapel of his childhood.¹² And the Carr's Lane Chapel in Birmingham required candidates to present written testimonies of their conversions which were read before the church meetings.¹³ A formal policy for joining the Argyle Chapel was not implemented until 1853 after

⁶ Rogers, Helen (ed.). *The Diary of William Henry Tucker, 1825-1850* (Chippenham: Wiltshire Record Society, 2009), 22.

⁷ Jay, *Recollections*, 16 and *Autobiography of Jay*, 321.

⁸ *Autobiography of Jay*, 479.

⁹ 1851 Ecclesiastical Census Returns for the Bath Area, SRO, T\PH\pro/11

¹⁰ The Papers of William Tuck, BRO 0480/2/19

¹¹ 28 March 1838, Trowbridge Tabernacle Church Minute Books, WSHC, 1417/7

¹² White, Mark Hale, *The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford* (New York: Jonathan Cape and Harrison Smith, 1929), 57

¹³ 3 April 1794, Carrs Lane Chapel Church Minute Book 1783-1810, Birmingham CL, CC1/4

William Henry Dyer (1817-1878) became minister.¹⁴ But the general practice prior to that date can be inferred from secondary sources. There appear to have been only three requirements: a professed desire to become a member of the church body, an account of the person's conversion, and a trial period of one month to allow other members opportunity to interject any objection. Once candidates communicated their desire to join the church, they were privately interviewed to give an account of their conversion experience in order to maintain a regenerate membership.¹⁵ The examination could be conducted by any male member of the church. The church minutes reveal that the interviews were normally conducted by either the minister or deacons who would 'propose' a candidate's name at the monthly members' meeting. But there are occasions of non-office holding members nominating candidates, such as W.E. Saunders offering two names in 1849, or Joshua Wilson Coombs proposing a name in 1852, though he himself had become a member only the previous year.¹⁶ Also, it was not uncommon to have men propose the names of an immediate family member. Other chapels had tighter restrictions over who could join the fellowship. But under Jay's leadership, there were less rigid standards. He complained about the exacting nature of other churches that required either oral or written testimony presented publicly to the congregation. He said such 'modes of admission keep back many who ought to be encouraged to come forward' and likened church leaders who required such measures to 'lions placed at the doors of entrance'.¹⁷ Jay must have felt this strongly because he told his wife he had to battle the chapel deacons on this issue regularly when times of communion drew near.¹⁸ Jay wanted to make church membership as accessible as he possibly could.

In a footnote, the editor of Jay's *Autobiography* objected to Jay's interpretation of contemporary practices, saying that such standards in Independent churches were 'certainly never so strict nor so common as he intimates'. The editor attributed the more extreme procedure to the Methodists or possibly the Baptists.¹⁹ Most likely this was the opinion of George Redford (1785-1860), who took on the

¹⁴ 30 May 1853, Argyle Chapel Church Minutes 1848-1862 BRO 0480/1/2/1/3

¹⁵ *Autobiography of Jay*, 90.

¹⁶ Argyle Chapel Church Minutes 1848-1862, BRO, 29 January 1849, 27 September 1852

¹⁷ *Autobiography of Jay*, 90, 168.

¹⁸ Jay, *Recollections*, 228.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 168-169.

bulk of the editing, rather than John Angell James.²⁰ But some chapels did maintain exacting standards. Charles Cashdollar cites the examples of London's New Broad Street Church and Liverpool's Great George Street Chapel, showing that there a candidate could 'expect their behaviour to be investigated fully and their life story to be laid open by all'.²¹ Clyde Binfield cites the example of the Burwell Chapel in Cambridgeshire that still required its candidates to make a public profession before the church even after a private conference with the minister.²² It was only after the mid-point of the nineteenth century that the standard practice of interviewing was made more private.²³ While acknowledging that individual churches could choose their own modes of admission, John Angell James, as minister of the Carr's Lane Chapel in Birmingham, encouraged candidates for membership to present their testimonies publicly.²⁴ It may be that in 1854 Redford was witnessing a relaxing of the standards for membership among Independents, but earlier in the century the Argyle Chapel appears to have had less rigid criteria than most in how it received members.

The members of Argyle Chapel had to subscribe to a single doctrinal standard prior to admission into the church. The church body as a whole adhered to a credal statement, yet required prospective members to hold only one doctrine according to conscience before allowing entrance to the fellowship. The Church Minute book explains,

The doctrines holden by this church are those which are generally denominated Calvinistic or such as was maintained by the compilers of the Assembly's catechism and although it does not enjoin unanimity of sentiments in lesser matters, and nonessential points of belief, it requires that all candidates for membership shall profess faith in our Lord Jesus Christ as the only saviour of sinners and at the sincerity of repentance and reality of faith shall be

²⁰ John Angell James to Joshua Wilson, 23 July 1854, DWL He/9/45

²¹ Cashdollar, Charles. *A Spiritual Home: Life in British and American Reformed Congregations, 1830-1915* (University Park: Penn State Press, 2000), 101

²² Binfield, J.C.G. 'Nonconformity in the Eastern Counties 1840-1885 With Reference to Its Social Background', Ph.D. Thesis, University of Cambridge, 1965, 79.

²³ Cashdollar, *A Spiritual Home*, 101-102.

²⁴ James, J.A. *Christian Fellowship, or The Church Member's Guide* (Boston: Lincoln and Edmunds, 1829), 157.

evinced by an irreproachable character, a blameless life and a holy conversation.²⁵

The only doctrinal requirement was that members articulated their faith in Christ and exemplified it in their public life. If the profession of faith proved satisfactory, then the candidate's name would be proposed to the church for consideration. Jay relished the ease of the doctrinal standards. He boasted his congregation admitted not only traditional Congregationalists but also professing Baptists. 'We have not only had mixed communion,' wrote Jay in his *Autobiography*, 'but have extended full membership, and even office-bearing to our Baptist friends'. And, quoting his friend John Newton, stated 'The dipped and the sprinkled have dwelt in peace.'²⁶ Jay argued doctrinal requirements should be more lax as new believers would not have sufficient knowledge of a definitive creed and would need time to grow. He preferred discipline to be enforced after admittance once one was sufficiently mature to know better rather than denying entrance to the uninitiated.²⁷ The church accepted applicants on their profession of faith in Christ and did not require adherence to other doctrinal points.

A brief trial period occurred after a prospective member's name was proposed. The candidate's desire to join with the chapel was announced at the monthly church meeting. If after one month no questions in regards to the person's character arose, the candidate was officially admitted into the fellowship without further review. Even here Jay tempered this evaluation period with leniency. 'We are not qualified to judge the person's heart', he said, for it was always possible for 'an improper person' to profess the creed and demonstrate exemplary behaviour if the person was 'resolved to enter'. But Jay's attitude was always to 'lean to the side of Charity rather than of suspicion'.²⁸ In contrast, the New Broad Street Chapel in London expected not only a written account of the person's religious experience but also the names of two reliable referees willing to verify the experience.²⁹ In Bath, the Somerset Street Baptist Chapel was so adamant on believer's baptism it would not admit a person to be buried in its cemetery unless he or she had been *only* baptized by immersion or paid a steep 'fine'

²⁵ Argyle Chapel Church Minute Book 1815- 1888, BRO 0480/1/2/1/1, 3

²⁶ *Autobiography of Jay*, 88.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 168.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 89.

²⁹ Cashdollar, *Spiritual Home*, 102.

of 10s. in addition to the burial costs.³⁰ Jay complained to his son, 'I regret the strictness of Dissenters towards those who wish to become members of our church, and have done everything in my power to relax it.'³¹ He felt strongly that such exacting standards inhibited their spiritual growth.³² The overall membership requirements of Argyle Chapel were more lenient than those of many of its contemporaries.

There was some variation in the mode of how the church received members of other churches as 'transfers'. Entrants from other Independent churches were accepted immediately without interview, trial period or an official vote, if they provided a recommendation from their previous minister or a 'certificate' issued by the church clerk. In the chapel membership roll, the candidate's previous church, along with the name of the current officiating minister was noted. Members of other denominations were proposed by church members at the monthly meeting without the trial period. By the fact they had to be proposed, it can be assumed they were interviewed by a church member. It would seem likely that Godwin's wife, introduced at the beginning of the chapter, was a transfer from another denomination and did not need a trial period. Most transfers came from other evangelical Dissenting chapels, but occasionally members were received from established churches such as or Elizabeth Drake who transferred from Christ Church in Bath.³³ All transfers were accepted by vote on the night their names were proposed without the normal trial period. Thus transfers were immediately allowed to participate as full members.

Precise identification of members over Jay's tenure as minister is somewhat difficult. The original membership roll for the chapel has not survived. But there is a membership roll created in 1853 that recorded the members remaining at the church when the chapel fractured to form Percy Chapel. The reconstructed list provides the earlier dates for when older members joined the chapel. The first membership roll for Percy Chapel still exists, recording those members who transferred from the original chapel. Also, the first historian of the chapel, William Tuck, had access to the original documents. From them, he made meticulous notes, though not comprehensively. In

³⁰ Those sprinkled as infants and later baptized by immersion only had to pay half the fine. Birch, Kerry. *Waters of the Son* (No place listed: Kappa Beta Publications, 2009), 94.

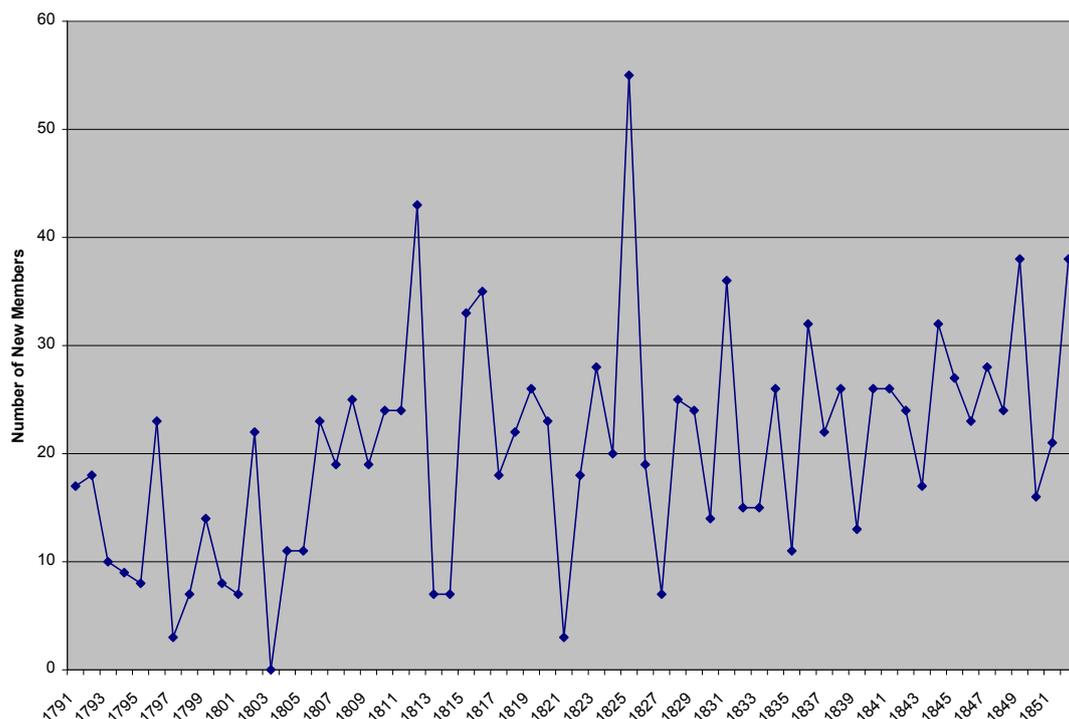
³¹ Jay, *Recollections*, 228.

³² *Autobiography of Jay*, 90.

³³ Argyle Chapel Church Minute Book 1848-1862, BRO, 27 November 1848

addition, there is ample evidence from other sources such as the church minute books, the baptismal register and burial records that provides relevant information about who was a member of the chapel. Enough sources have survived to give an accurate picture of those participating at the Argyle Chapel. Through careful reconstruction it has been possible to identify 1,575 members and regular attendants of the chapel. At the time of Jay's ordination in 1791, there were just forty-six members of the chapel. By his retirement in 1853 a total of 1,265 people had joined the chapel membership, not counting transfers.³⁴ At an average rate, slightly over 20 people were joining the chapel in each year of Jay's ministry. The low points were 1797 and 1821 when only three people joined the chapel. But the high points were in 1812 when forty-three members were added and in 1825 when fifty-five were included (fig. 4.1). Overall, the chapel experienced significant growth under the ministry of its minister.

Figure 4.1 New Members added to Argyle Chapel under William Jay, 1791-1852



There are no data available for 1803. The chart does not include members transferring into the chapel.

³⁴ In most circumstances, Tuck noted number of members joining each year rather than names in citing the original roll.

Three generations were served by William Jay's preaching. If his retirement year is included, his career in Bath spanned a total of 63 years. This was highly unusual, as can be demonstrated by the list in the *Congregational Yearbook* of 1849 of ministers who died between 1800 and 1849. Of the 658 ministers, only sixteen could claim to have served in the ministry for sixty years or more.³⁵ And only one served at the same church as minister for the whole period.³⁶ The changes over the membership and congregation will be evaluated best through three different periods of years: 1791 to 1811, 1812 to 1832 and 1833-1853, which can be called periods A, B and C. They represent twenty-one equal time frames and three generations of church members throughout the minister's ministry.³⁷

In order to understand where those that attended Argyle Chapel lived, it is important to have knowledge of the city parish boundaries. During Jay's life time, the city of Bath consisted of six parishes (map 4.1).³⁸ In the centre of the city was the parish of St Peter and St Paul with the abbey as the parish church. Just to the south was the parish of St James that included the earliest dwellings of the eighteenth century. To the north of St Peter and St Paul was the parish of St Michael. The heart of the commercial district was in these three parishes during the Georgian period. Making a crescent around the north of these parishes from the west of the city all the way to the north east was the parish of Walcot, nine times the acreage of the three city parishes. The city expanded northward into this area during the building booms of the eighteenth century. Since the property encompassing this parish was so large, it will be discussed in three sections: Walcot West extending from the River Avon to what was then the Bristol Road (now the Upper Bristol Road), Walcot Central extending north from the Bristol Road to Margaret's Hill, and Walcot East moving eastward from Margaret's Hill down the London Road to the parish boundary. Just south of St James parish and across the Avon was the parish of Lyncombe and Widcombe that contained the quarry of Ralph Allen.³⁹ And to the east of the city, just across the Pulteney Bridge, was the new development of Bathwick where the Argyle Chapel

³⁵ *Congregational Yearbook* (1849): 120-131.

³⁶ David Richards (1759- 1846) of South Petherton, Somerset (population 2,600 in 1841 according to the *V.C.H.*). *Congregational Yearbook* (1846): 170.

³⁷ Except where specifically noted, the evaluation will include the entire regular-attending congregation and not just church members.

³⁸ See page 77.

³⁹ For Allen see Chapter 2, 17

stood. The city of Bath was located mostly within these six parishes during Jay's lifetime.

In Jay's first phase of his ministry, period A, the majority of the congregation came from the central part of the city (fig. 4.2).⁴⁰ Nearly half resided in the two parishes of St Peter and St Paul and St James in equal portions. A third of the membership lived in Walcot, with seventy-five per cent of these living in the central part of the parish near the original location of the chapel on Morford Street. This area has been identified as an area where a significant number of craftsmen resided in the last quarter of the eighteenth century.⁴¹ Only one family resided in Walcot West, where the slum area of Avon Street was located. This was in great contrast to the Wesleyan New King Street Chapel, which drew fifty-seven per cent of its membership from this area during the same period.⁴² Most of the New King Street Chapel membership dwelt near the doors of their chapel. The Argyle Chapel, however, was able to draw eleven families from the poorer section of Lyncombe and Widcombe around the Holloway and Claverton Street district. Only six families from the membership resided in the parish of Bathwick where the chapel was located. No communicant lived outside the six central parishes. In the first two decades of the Argyle Chapel's existence, the data indicates that the majority of its membership came from the central part of the city where mostly tradesmen resided.

In the intermediate years of Jay's ministry, period B, there was a movement of the membership toward the north-east portion of the city. The number of people attending the Argyle Chapel increased proportionately in all six parishes by at least fifty per cent. However four areas show a considerable change (fig. 4.3).⁴³ The attendants from St Michael's parish nearly quadrupled in size from twenty-six to eighty-eight. A great number of them resided on Milsom Street, Broad Street and Bond Street, the heart of the fashionable shopping district of the city.⁴⁴ Although only just under ten per cent of the church overall, the numbers coming from Bathwick

⁴⁰ See page 78.

⁴¹ Davis, Graham and Bonsall, Penny. *A History of Bath: Image and Reality* (Lancaster: Carnegie Publishing, 2006), 207.

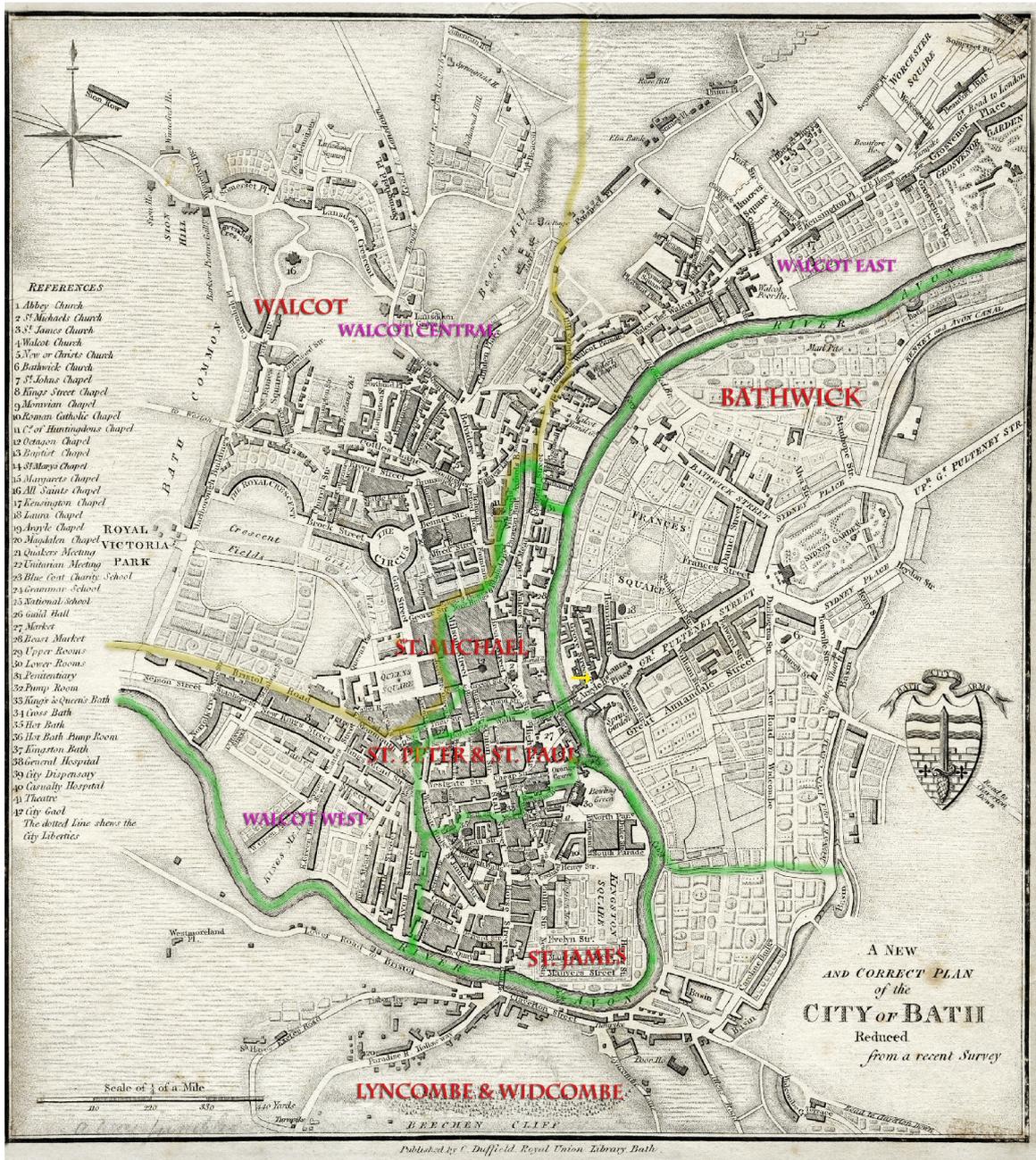
⁴² Based on Baptism Register addresses in New King Street Methodist Chapel Registers, BRO, M1.14.(1)

⁴³ See page 78.

⁴⁴ Neale, R.S. 'Class and Ideology in a Provincial City 1800-1850', *Our History*, 42 (1966), 13

quadrupled as well. Possibly only one of these members carried the status of gentleman at the time. These were no doubt drawn to the trade opportunities from the growing development of Bathwick. The members residing in Walcot parish tripled in numbers. Whereas in the previous period, seventy-five per cent resided in the central

Map 4.1 Bath Parish Boundaries 1830 (yellow arrow marks location of Argyle Chapel)



Map courtesy of Bath In Time - Bath Central Library Collection

Figure 4.2 Location of Argyle Chapel Membership in Period A (1791-1811)

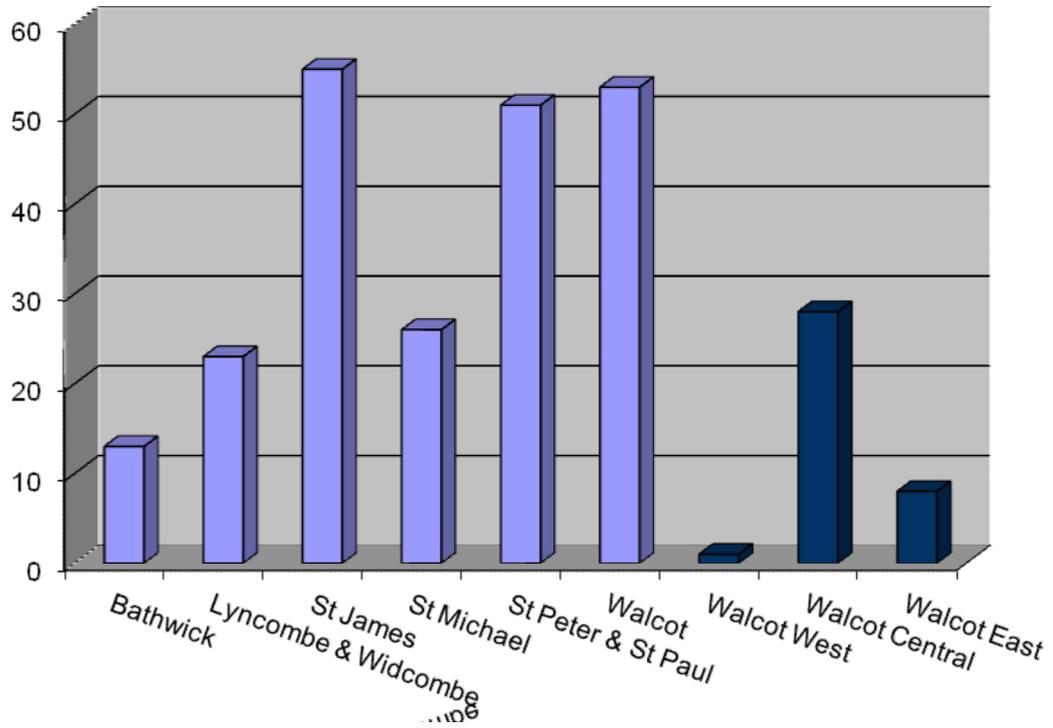


Figure 4.3 Location of Argyle Chapel Membership in Period B (1812-1832)

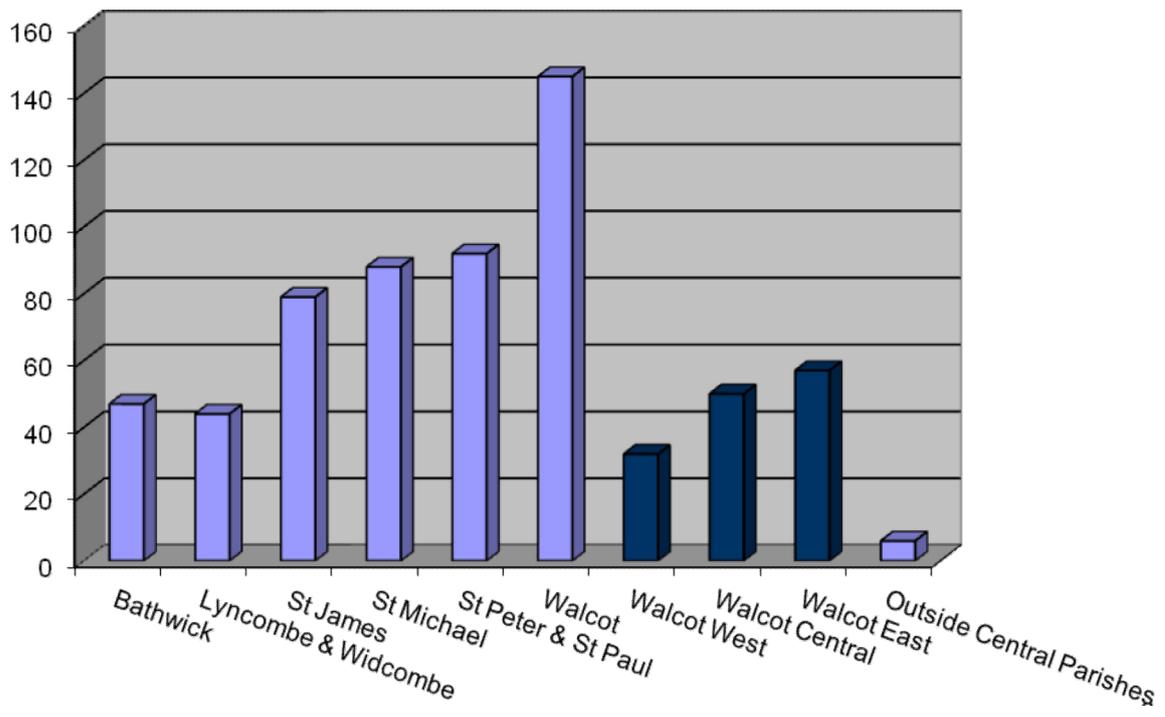
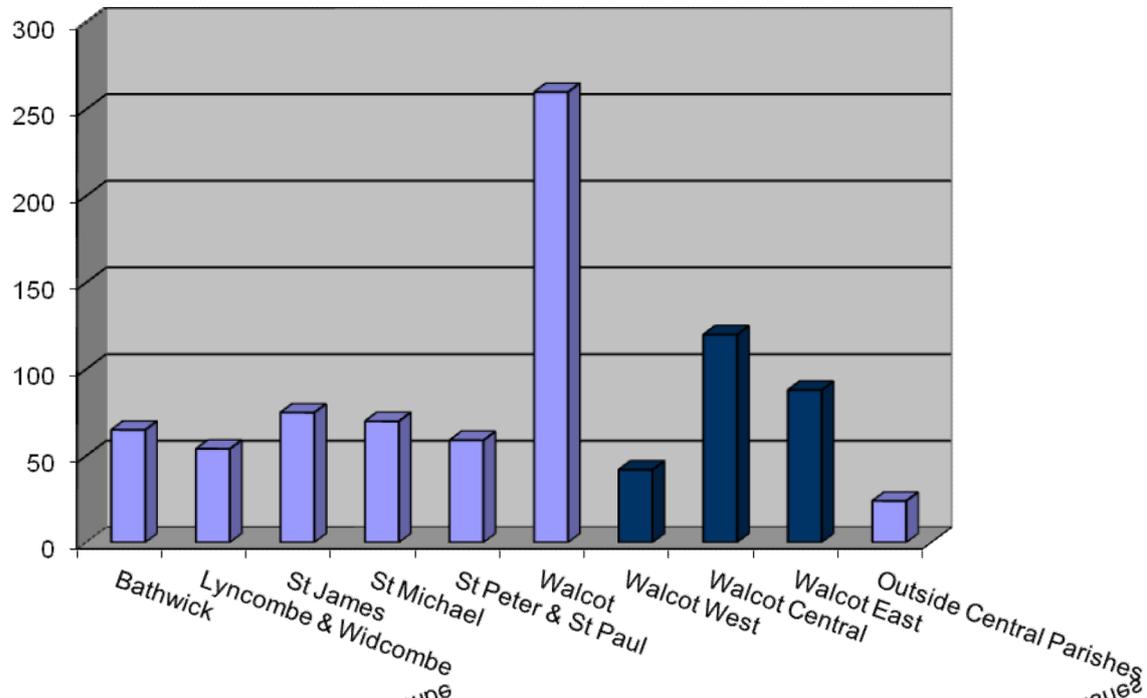


Figure 4.4 Location of Argyle Chapel Membership in Period C (1833-1853)



part of the parish, only thirty-six per cent resided in this section in period B. Forty-one per cent of the membership from the parish resided in Walcot East, where a significant number of those who worked in the building trades dwelt. William Jay lived in this area at 4 Percy Place along the London Road. His home was at the same distance of one mile from the Argyle Chapel and one mile from the village of Batheaston where his father-in-law was the local curate. The Walcot West area of the parish was up from one family to eleven. Ten of these families had children, which may be due to the Sunday school which began in 1802. The poor would have been attracted to the potential for improved educational opportunities as well as possible social connections for their children to find employment among the chapel's entrepreneurs. But most certainly, the majority of membership was drawn from the areas where there was great potential to make money.

In the final period of Jay's career, the figures from the six parishes were roughly the same as in the previous period with two exceptions. Fewer members were coming from the central parish of St Peter and St Paul. The numbers dropped from eighteen and a half per cent in the period B to only ten per cent in period C. The

attendants coming from Walcot nearly doubled (fig. 4.4).⁴⁵ The increases occurred in the central and eastern part of the parish, with the western portion remaining the same. But the strongest numbers were in the central portion of the parish, up from 50 to 120, as wealthier members began to reside in the more fashionable district of the city from the Circus to Lansdown. During this period, congregants began living apart from their shops, keeping their dwelling places separate from their place of business. The currier James Bryant (d. 1866) conducted his business on Broad Street in the parish of St James but lived at The Vineyards in Central Walcot.⁴⁶ Likewise, the architect H.E. Goodridge (1797-1864) had an office on Henrietta Street near the Argyle Chapel yet lived at the fashionable Montebello House on Bathwick Hill.⁴⁷ Another significant change was the ability of the chapel to draw numbers from outside the six parishes. After 1830, roads improved and people were willing to travel greater distances to attend services. Families came as far away as Batheaston (two miles), Bathampton (five miles), Claverton Down (six miles), Combe Down (nine miles), Monkton Combe (nine miles), Twerton (four miles) and Weston (two miles). At least forty individuals were consistently coming to the chapel from these outlying villages. The data from period C demonstrates a growing number of attendants of the chapel were residing in the wealthier sections of Bath and the chapel was attracting members from outside the central city parishes.

Over the length of Jay's ministry, an overwhelming majority of members of the chapel came from the middle classes. As McCord and Purdue have pointed out 'there are serious problems identifying a coherent middle class within nineteenth-century society.'⁴⁸ When trying to define this group words like 'sketchy' and 'dynamic' are employed.⁴⁹ As Jeremy Black notes founding assumptions on function alone can lead to a misunderstanding of the concerns of the middling orders.⁵⁰ 'Power could be derived from more unofficial attributes such as personal status and property.'⁵¹ Of the 504 men and women who listed an occupation at the time they

⁴⁵ See page 79.

⁴⁶ Anon. *The Bath Directory*. (Bath: H. Silverthorne, 1833.), 29.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁴⁸ McCord, Norman and Purdue, Bill. *British History 1815-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 112.

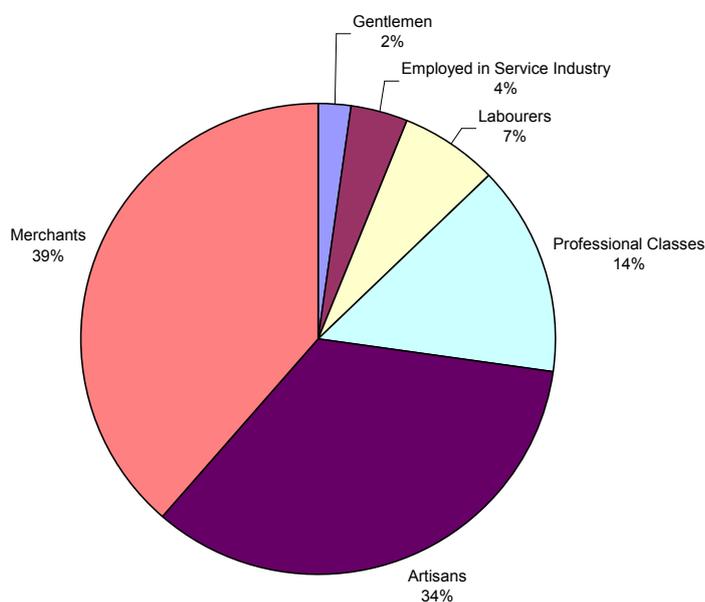
⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 114 and see O'Gorman, Frank. *The Long Eighteenth-Century: British Political and Social History 1688-1832* (London: Arnold, 1997), 108

⁵⁰ Black, Jeremy. *Eighteenth Century Britain 1688-1783* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 103

⁵¹ McCord, *British History*, 115

either joined the congregation or had a child baptized at the chapel, nearly seventy-five per cent were employed as either merchants or artisans (fig. 4.5).⁵² Many attendants involved in both occupations can be classified as middle-class because they wielded great leadership within the community. After the Municipal Corporations Act in 1835, the Church of England members lost their monopoly on the Town Council. At the first council elections in 1836 six members of the chapel were elected to the Town Council: Thomas Kingsbury, an attorney, Richard H. Griffith (1791-1864), a former currier, Henry Godwin (1777-1864), a retired bookseller, Henry Stothert, the ironmonger, Thomas Harris, the cabinet-maker, and William Jay's son, Edward, a solicitor.⁵³ Most of these men had already been serving as City Commissioners. The vast majority of the artisans at the Argyle Chapel appear to come from the upper echelons of the rank representing more employers than employees. The chapel contained slightly more merchants than artisans with a margin 195 to 172. When combined with the professional classes (architects, physicians, lawyers, retired military) and those working in the service industries (innkeepers, artists, coachmen),

Figure 4.5 Occupations by Class at Argyle Chapel 1791-1852



⁵² See page 81.

⁵³ Anon. *The Bath Directory* (Bath: H. Silverthorne, 1837), 201.

the middle classes made up ninety-two per cent of the congregation, compared with only eleven gentlemen and thirty-three from the labouring classes. In a similar environment, though with a smaller population, the membership of the Independent chapel in the spa town of Cheltenham consisted of eighty-three per cent from the middle classes between the years 1810 and 1852. However, the Cheltenham congregation leaned more towards artisans, who made up fifty per cent of the congregation. Labourers made up nearly fifteen per cent of the assembly in contrast with seven per cent at the Argyle Chapel.⁵⁴ At Castle Green Independent Chapel, the oldest Free Church in Bristol, artisans formed the largest occupational group, making up forty-five per cent of the congregation. The next highest groups were merchants at twenty-seven per cent and the professional classes at twenty-four per cent. Castle Green was served by three ministers over the period of Jay's ministry including the hymn writer, Joseph Hoskins (1745-1788), the well educated, William Thorpe (1771-1833) and the logic-orientated Scottish preacher, John Jack (1834-1854).⁵⁵ However, Castle Green attracted a minimal number of labourers (less than one per cent) and not a single gentleman.⁵⁶ The data indicates that Independent chapels were much more likely to attract those in the middle classes than those in the lower orders. Of the forty-six members at the Bath chapel when Jay became minister, only one member, Mary Rogers who joined in 1789, is listed as being in the labouring classes. She would become the household servant to William Jay. And only one could claim gentlemanly status, Philip Thicknesse (b. 1760), the younger, the second son of Captain Philip Thicknesse (1719-1792) and Lady Elizabeth Touchet (1725-1762). Thicknesse's father was an eccentric author who advocated the use of laudanum and criticised the medical profession of Bath. When the younger Philip and his brother came into their inheritance, the elder Thicknesse launched a public feud with his sons, accusing Philip of making a poor marriage with a Bath milliner.⁵⁷ Only a few came from either extreme in the range of the classes. The Argyle Chapel was dominated by the middle classes.

⁵⁴ Cheltenham Independent Chapel Baptism and Burial Registry, GRO, D775/1/1

⁵⁵ Jones, Ignatius. *Bristol Congregationalism: City and Country* (Bristol: Arrowsmith Ltd, 1957), 11-14

⁵⁶ Castle Green Independent Chapel Registers, Bristol RO, 44121/R/1

⁵⁷ Turner, Katherine, 'Thicknesse, Philip (1719–1792)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); online edn, Jan 2008
[<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27181>, accessed 3 Nov 2010]

Two occupations stand out within the Argyle Chapel artisan group: carpenters and shoemakers. The large number of carpenters is not surprising as nearly thirteen per cent of the overall congregation was employed in the building trade. It has been estimated that between 1720 and 1800, 5,000 houses were erected at Bath, a rate of seventy a year, generating vast amounts of employment.⁵⁸ Though slowed by the Napoleonic War, the building in Bath increased again afterwards, mostly in the commercial and ecclesiastical sectors.⁵⁹ The chapel had several prominent builders, architects and developers. No doubt various carpenters, along with painters and masons would have been attracted to the employment opportunities through their chapel associations. The Cheltenham chapel also lured a large number of those in the building trades (twenty-two per cent of the congregation). A building boom occurred in Cheltenham between 1815 and 1840 after the Napoleonic Wars.⁶⁰ It was highly speculative, as testified by the bankruptcy in 1828 of Jay's eldest son, who was an architect.⁶¹ However, Castle Green Chapel had far fewer members in construction with those that were in that category involved in shipbuilding. This increase in builders may have been more indicative of the growth of spa cities as a place of retirement in the nineteenth century. The construction trade would have also been of interest to other occupations at the Argyle Chapel. The numerous ironmongers (eleven total), such as James Tuck (d. 1829) who served as a treasurer of the chapel and was father of the first chapel historian William Tuck, would have seen opportunities to sell iron-fencing, hinges, gratings and stoves to the builders. Also cabinet makers and upholsterers (twenty-eight total) were prominent, hoping to find a market for their furniture and soft furnishings. The furniture-maker James Barnard, who had three children baptized at Argyle, could make as much as £12.0.0 for a table, chairs and sideboard in such a market.⁶² The congregation appealed strongly to those associated with the housing industry.

Shoemakers were the other leading artisan trade at Argyle Chapel. A total of thirty-three boot and shoe makers is recorded, the highest of any single occupation of any of the classes. Two were able to serve the congregation as officers in the earlier

⁵⁸ Hembry, Phyllis. *The English Spa, 1560-1815*. (London: Athlone Press, 1990), 124.

⁵⁹ Davis, *A History of Bath*, 157.

⁶⁰ Hart, Gwen. *A History of Cheltenham* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1981), 161-176.

⁶¹ *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette* 30 September 182, 4.

⁶² Barnard Invoice, Bath Trade Cards Collection, BCL, TCB/012/1, n.d.

period of the church. The historian R.S. Neale classified all shoemakers among the labouring poor rather than as artisans because he desired to expose the poverty behind the façade of Georgian Bath. Neale emphasized the plight of the shoemakers in Bath by citing *The Sanitary Conditions of the Labouring Population in Great Britain of 1842*.⁶³ In this report, the Rev. Whitwell Elwin reported the average age of shoemakers in Bath to be fourteen - eleven years less than the average of other labourers.⁶⁴ However, for the shoemakers at the Argyle Chapel the situation was not as dire as Neale suggests. Not all the Argyle shoemaker deaths are recorded due to the migration of the membership, but of those that are, the average age of death is sixty-eight with no variation over the three periods. Two of the shoemakers lived to be eighty-three while the youngest to die was thirty-eight years old. Some consideration for the longer life span might be attributed to the shoemakers attending the chapel being shop owners rather than common labourers, however, only a third of the names were listed in the trade directory. The remaining two-thirds would have most likely been common shoemakers. It would appear the Bath Congregational shoemakers were in a better position than that described by Neale.

When Sir William Knighton, the physician of George IV, attended the Argyle Chapel in 1833, he commented, 'The chapel was quite full, and, seemingly, with well-dressed people.'⁶⁵ The chapel must have been 'well-dressed' indeed, because twenty-five per cent of the merchant classes were employed in the clothing trade.⁶⁶ Looking presentable would have been an appropriate advertisement for the businessmen. But even when properly dressed, outside the chapel, merchants and the fashionable rarely mingled socially.⁶⁷ The merchant classes were the faces that welcomed the visitors of Bath who came to do their shopping. Like most shopkeepers, the merchants of Bath rarely confined themselves to one enterprise.⁶⁸ The chapel deacon Charles Godwin not only operated his successful book shop and circulating library, but he was also the

⁶³ Neale, R.S. *Bath : A Social History 1680-1850* (London: Routledge & Kegan, 1981),278-289.

⁶⁴ Chadwick, Edwin. *The Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain* (London: 1842), 94.

⁶⁵ Knighton, Dorothea. *Memoirs of Sir William Knighton* (London: R. Bentley), ii.86.

⁶⁶ Surprisingly, despite the close connection to Dissent, and the numerous weavers along the Avon, only one weaver attended the chapel.

⁶⁷ Hembry, *The English Spa*, 135.

⁶⁸ Horn, Pamela. *Behind the Counter* (Stroud, Suttton Publishing, 2006), 143.

agent for the Norwich Union Insurance Office and sold lottery tickets.⁶⁹ The chemist William Bennett (1809-1881) not only sold ‘Bennett’s Stomachic Dinner Pills (of quinine and other tonics, for assisting digestion, and particularly useful in cases of general debility)’ but he also distributed ‘fine English honey, strong pickling and table vinegars, Lamp Oil, and Perfumery of every kind’.⁷⁰ The merchant classes looked for innovations to improve their business such as Charles Stockman the hairdresser who in 1811 offered ‘private apartments’ so that patrons would not have to endure the prospect of being ogled while having their hair cut.⁷¹ The chapel offered advantages to the shopkeeper that went beyond attracting clientele. The appellation of ‘shopkeeper’ was not highly regarded. Accusations of adulterated products, short weighting and unethical business practices surrounded the occupation.⁷² Association with the chapel under-girded the reputation of the merchant. Stockman proudly proclaimed on his advert, ‘NO business done on Sundays’ in proof of his loyalty to the Lord’s fifth commandment. An assumption would have been made that since Stockman observed this commandment, he would keep the others and could be trusted. Association with the chapel provided benefits that went beyond the spiritual for the merchant classes.

In 1846, shortly after Jay became a widower, the domestic servants of the chapel presented him with an engraved silver sugar-basin in appreciation of his ministry to their particular class. According to his son Cyrus, Jay was deeply touched by the gift. He reciprocated with an inscribed copy of one of his books to each servant.⁷³ The present of a book each must not have proved too much of a hardship on the minister for there were few of the labouring classes attending the chapel. Of the thirty-three labouring members of the chapel, only eighteen were listed as servants. Surprisingly only six were women in an age when women were well represented in domestic service.⁷⁴ Porters were also significant among the lower orders of the chapel. These men were servants hired to carry packages for customers or deliver them after ordering. They were licensed by the city council and limited to thirty a year. Porters

⁶⁹ Anon. *Keenes’ Improved Bath Directory* (Bath, 1824) [no p.] and Godwin Advertisement Bath Trade Cards Collection, BCL, TCB/142/3, n.d.

⁷⁰ Anon. *H. Silverthorne’s Bath Directory*. (Bath, 1833)

⁷¹ Stockman Advertisement, Bath Trade Cards Collection, BCL TCB- access no. 118, n.d.

⁷² Horn, *Behind the Counter*, 127.

⁷³ *Autobiography of Jay*, 218-219 and Jay, *Recollections*, 211.

⁷⁴ Walvin, John. *English Urban Life, 1776-1851* (London: Hutchinson, 1984), 53.

had to wear a badge during work to identify theirs as a lawful occupation.⁷⁵ The Argyle Chapel listed seven porters among its membership. There were few sittings for the poor in the chapel. The seats by the walls with poor sightlines were designated as free. Sittings were a constant source of irritation for the trustees of the chapel. As the chapel prospered in attendance, each sitting became more valuable since space was limited. In 1818, the chapel put the previously free sittings up for rent. The deacons were criticized in the *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette* for profiting from the former free sittings ‘to the utter exclusion of the poor, who cannot now partake of the blessed truths of the Gospel in that chapel’.⁷⁶ The problem was alleviated in 1821 when a new gallery was installed in the church. Most likely, many servants would have attended with the families that employed them and sat in the family pew. Nevertheless, few in the lower orders joined the membership of the chapel.

In addition to the previous classes, there was also the elusive title of gentleman. As Geoffrey Best has stated ‘there were no rules to determine the social status’ of these individuals, but the ‘short answer’ was making sure one had the favour of the ‘appropriate social authority’.⁷⁷ Gentlemen were individuals who had sufficient means to live comfortably and did not have to work or handle money. Neale estimates that between 1800 and 1820 fourteen per cent of the population of Bath fell into this category.⁷⁸ It would appear the Argyle Chapel made little progress in attracting men from this category to commit to membership in the chapel. At the time they entered the church record either as members or spouses of members, only eleven men were designated as ‘Gentleman’. None was registered in the first twenty years of Jay’s ministry. Seven entered the chapel in the second period between 1812 and 1832 and of these two were sons of previous members who had inherited the status from their father’s work and another was Jay’s son-in-law, Robert Bolton (1788-1857). The low numbers appear to parallel those of Cheltenham Chapel which registered only three gentlemen covering the same period. Castle Green Chapel in Bristol had none. But the lack of the designation does not mean there were no more ‘gentlemen’ in the congregation. Many of the middle-class business men rose in rank and became gentlemen after a period of work. The case of the Godwin family is illustrative. A

⁷⁵ Fawcett, Trevor. *Bath Commercialis’d* (Bath: Rutton, 2002), 82.

⁷⁶ *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette*, 23 September 1818, 3.

⁷⁷ Best, Geoffrey. *Mid-Victorian Britain 1851-75*. London: Fontana Press, 1979, 268 & 271

⁷⁸ Neale, *Bath: A Social History*, 274.

trade advertisement in 1822 announced that Henry Godwin owner of H. Godwin's Circulating Library and Reading Room, was retiring from business and was sure excellent service could still be obtained from the hands of his brother, Charles.⁷⁹ Thirty years later, the younger brother was able to make a similar announcement when he sold the business to his fellow church member, Joshua Wilson Coombs.⁸⁰ Numerous examples abound. All seven of the first deacons of the chapel amassed sufficient money to live by independent means. In the 1830 *Bath Directory*, eight church members were listed under the title of 'Nobility and Gentry'.⁸¹ By 1848, fourteen members or their widows were listed in the section of 'Court Guide or Fashionable Directory'.⁸² Over the span of Jay's ministry several of Argyle Chapel's membership improved their social position by means of prospering in trade.

The Argyle Chapel contained many of the leading entrepreneurs of Bath. A few are remarkable due to their involvement in business and the chapel. One was Samuel Whitchurch, who became a church member in 1788 and a deacon in 1810. Originally from Frome, he moved to Bath after naval service in the American War of Independence. He was involved in three major engagements and his wounds were severe enough to leave visible scars for the remainder of his life.⁸³ In 1785 he opened his own ironmongery shop only a short distance away from where the Argyle Chapel would later stand.⁸⁴ In addition to his ironmongery, he became involved in other enterprises. He was the agent for an annuity scheme during the last decade of the century and began purchasing commercial real estate in the city.⁸⁵ He became wealthy enough to have commissioned a marble bust of his likeness done by the sculptor Lucius Gahagan (1780-1866).⁸⁶ He rose in prominence to assist the city by issuing trade tokens during the small currency crisis in the second decade of the nineteenth century. Whitchurch was reputable enough to issue tokens for shilling silver pieces and copper pennies. But the outstanding feature for Whitchurch was his high level of involvement in evangelical activism. As well as his service as a deacon, the

⁷⁹ Godwin Advertisement, Bath Trade Cards Collection, BCL, TBC/122/1, n.d.

⁸⁰ Godwin Advertisement, Bath Trade Cards Collection, BCL, TCB/122/2, n.d.

⁸¹ Anon. *The Bath Directory* (Bath, 1830), no page number

⁸² Anon. *Hunt & Co. Directory and Court Guide for the Cities of Bath, Bristol, & Wells* (London: E. Hunt & Co. 1848), 10-32.

⁸³ Sydenham, Sydney. *Bath Token Issue of the 19th Century* (Bath: Bath Herald, 1904), 15-16.

⁸⁴ *The Bath Chronicle*, 10 November 1785, 3

⁸⁵ *The Bath Journal*, 31 January 1791, 4 and Leases, BRO BC 134/48

⁸⁶ Now lost, although the Central United Reformed Church archives possess a picture of the bust.

ironmonger was engaged in the early years of the Argyle Chapel Sunday school. The records indicate that he purchased a pair of shoes for a young boy in 1805.⁸⁷ He was active in the British and Foreign Bible Society. As secretary and accountant, he collected subscriptions for the Bath Penitentiary, which was an organization to rescue fallen women in Bath and treat them for venereal disease.⁸⁸ He was instrumental in the formation of the Bath Sunday School Union, serving as its first secretary.⁸⁹ And Whitchurch was involved in the Bath Missionary Society and the Wilts and East Somerset Congregational Association in 1816.⁹⁰ Samuel Whitchurch provided leadership in both business and evangelical activity.

Another intriguing member was Thomas Parsons. Parsons was the son of Robert Parsons (1718-1790), a prominent stone carver and the minister of the Baptist chapel in Bath. Thomas followed his father's footsteps in both occupations. As a stone carver, he was as successful as his father, eventually rising to gentlemanly status. As a minister, however, he proved ineffective. Prior to his father's death, the younger Parsons assisted the elder in his ministerial duties. He was licensed by the Baptist chapel to preach in 1771. Upon his father's death in 1790, he had assumed he would take up the mantle of minister. But as a preacher he was unpopular and the congregation chose a different pastor, John Paul Porter of Workingham (1759-1832). When the church settled on Porter, Parsons chose to make his grievances public in a printed letter attacking both the newly appointed Porter and the congregation as a whole. Though the epistle was Parsons's explanation for severance with the Baptist fellowship in Bath, the church responded with a printed response which terminated his membership.⁹¹ Both Parsons and the Baptist deacon Richard Singer (1723-1813), the grandfather of Henry and Charles Godwin, joined the church of the Argyle Chapel shortly after 1791 demonstrating some variety of religious opinions within the congregation.⁹²

Within the community of Bath, Parsons was able to elicit varying reactions from the public. On many occasions, Parsons supplied Jay's pulpit when the minister

⁸⁷ Argyle Chapel Sunday School Society Minutes, BRO 480/1/4/2/1

⁸⁸ *Bath & Cheltenham Gazette*, 16 December 1812, 1

⁸⁹ *Bath & Cheltenham Gazette*, 31 March 1813, 1

⁹⁰ Wiltshire and East Somerset Congregational Association Minutes, WHS, 2755/1

⁹¹ Birch, *Waters of the Son*, 119-126.

⁹² Jay, William. *The Loss of Connexions Deplored and Improved: A Sermon Preached at Argyle Chapel on Sunday Morning Septempber 26, 1813, occasioned by the Death of Mr. Thomas Parsons*. (Bath: Gye and Son, 1813), 31.

was away. Unlike his father, he had a high regard for secular education. Thomas Parsons was a founding member of the Bath and West Society. The organization was formed in 1777 for the purpose of encouraging development in agriculture, manufacturing, commerce and the arts among the nobility and gentry. In addition to providing awards for innovations in these areas, the society met to hear papers presented by members. The roll included Dr William Falconer (1744-1824), fellow of the Royal Society, the botanist, Thomas Curtis (1739-1784), William Herschel (1738-1822), the discoverer of the planet Uranus, and the philosopher Joseph Priestley (1733-1804).⁹³ Parsons was active in the society for over twenty years and presented a paper on fossils in 1780.⁹⁴ But Parsons could also attract controversy. Parsons was a devout pacifist. In 1800, he published his *Letters to a Member of the British Parliament, on the Absurdity of Popular Prejudices; The Causes of the Present High Price of Food; The Means of Speedy Alleviation; and the Measures Most Proper for Securing Future Plenty*, decrying the taxation on foodstuffs for the purpose of war. And he joined the public fray surrounding the Anglican Rev. Richard Warner's sermon *War Inconsistent with Christianity* (1804), publishing a series of letters in support of Warner's unpopular position during the Napoleonic War. Parsons endorsed Warner's position, but he certainly did not support the Establishment when he published *High Church Claims Exposed, and the Dissenters and Methodists Vindicated* (1808). When Jay preached Parsons's funeral sermon he was candid, remarking, 'What I least admired in the subject of this address, was too great a love of singularity in his general opinions, which led him to dissent from almost everything that was said in company, and turned conversation into an intellectual contest: a willingness to perplex people as to his principles, or to excite suspicions of his heterodoxy.'⁹⁵ Parsons certainly did not reflect Jay's preference of avoiding public controversy. In his honest opinion of Parsons, Jay did not fail to make an example that arguments are won best though demure living rather than rigorous controversy.

In the later years of his ministry, Jay's chapel contained two other leading businessmen of Bath. H.E. Goodridge was the son of chapel member James Goodridge (1766-1849), who was a prominent carpenter and builder in Bath in

⁹³ Lim, Helena. 'Bath & the "Bath and West of England Society", 1777-1851', *Bath History*, 6 (1996), 112-113.

⁹⁴ Birch, *Waters of the Son*, 115-116.

⁹⁵ Jay, *Loss of Connexions Deplored*, 34-35.

addition to serving as a trustee of Argyle. Through his father's influence, the younger Goodridge became interested in architecture. He was responsible for designing several well-known sites in Bath. He provided the plans for the Cleveland Bridge (1827), the shopping arcade known as the Corridor (1825), the Auction Mart and Trade Bazaar (1824) and several Italianate villas in the Bathwick development after 1829. But his most famous work was the design of Beckford's Tower (1825) in Lansdown. Goodridge was William Beckford's personal architect and designer after the Fonthill Abbey fiasco, when the wealthy playboy went bankrupt trying to erect his personal pleasure palace.⁹⁶ It was Goodridge who was connected to Beckford and not Jay as his biographers originally suggested. And it was Goodridge who presented the eccentric man with an inscribed copy of Jay's *The Christian Contemplated* (1826), about which Beckford was highly complimentary.⁹⁷ In addition to the architect's secular works, he was closely associated with church buildings of Nonconformity and Catholicism. He designed the Benedictine chapel and school of Downside College (1820) and oversaw the restoration of Malmesbury Abbey in Wiltshire (1822). He designed the enlargements of the Argyle Chapel (1820) and the Trowbridge Tabernacle (1835). The architect served on the planning committee to celebrate Jay's jubilee at the chapel.⁹⁸ And when Percy Chapel (1854) was formed, Goodridge and his son Alfred Samuel Goodridge (1827-1915) designed and erected the building. The other leading businessman in Argyle Chapel was Henry Stothert. He was the son of George Stothert who owned the iron foundry of Stothert and Pitt in Bath. A brilliant design engineer, he soon recognized the potential of the rail system. He opened his own foundry in Bristol in 1836 and manufactured the first locomotives for the Great Western Railway in 1837. He also designed and manufactured the Stothert and Pitt crane, a device used for the loading of heavy goods on trains and ships. His design proved so successful it sold and shipped all over England and as far away as the United States. He was greatly concerned about improving public sanitation and wrote *A Plan for Removing and Deodorizing the Sewage of London* (1850). He showcased his sewage design, along with his crane and an engine to turn boat propellers, at the

⁹⁶ Frost, Amy. 'From Classicist to Eclectic: The Stylistic Development of Henry Edmund Goodridge; 1797-1864' (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Bath, 2009)

⁹⁷ *Autobiography of Jay*, 26.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 201.

Great Exhibition of 1851.⁹⁹ It was Stothert's firm that supplied the iron girders for the enlargement of Argyle Chapel.¹⁰⁰ He was also among the first members of the chapel elected to the Bath Town Council in 1837.¹⁰¹ Both Goodridge and Stothert provided leadership and credibility to the rising success of the chapel in the community.

In only one period can gender in the chapel be assessed with accuracy. The reason for this is that male members are easier to identify throughout the entire length of Jay's ministry because their names appear more frequently in the church records. Women were allowed neither to hold office nor to vote upon business transactions of the church. A few were independent in business, such as the tea-dealer Ann Gauntlet (1778-1871) or the milliner and dress-maker Elizabeth Hutchence (d. 1858). The records contain fourteen such self-employed women, with most operating as dressmakers. However, the final twenty years of Jay's ministry do offer complete records. During this period, women outnumbered men by a ratio of five to two. This was even above the overall population of Bath in which women outnumbered men at a ratio of three to two.¹⁰² Most likely it would be safe to assume women outnumbered men in the congregation throughout Jay's ministry.

It is difficult to present an accurate representation of families at Argyle Chapel because here, too, figures are incomplete. Members may have had children prior to entering the chapel or upon leaving the chapel due to the migratory nature of the population in Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. To demonstrate, in period C (1833 to 1853), twenty-one per cent of the identified membership moved away from Bath at some point after joining the congregation. Also, not all children were entered into the baptismal register because of death prior to baptism and the chapel allowing members the option of practising believer's baptism. However some facts may be inferred from the information available on those that did have children during their tenure at the chapel.

As might be expected, the size of families varied. The average family consisted of two parents and 2.72 children. There was some deviation over the span of Jay's ministry. Parents at the beginning of his ministry had 2.88 children. In the

⁹⁹ Torrens, Hugh. *The Evolution of a Family Firm: Stothert and Pitt of Bath* (Bath: Stothert & Pitt Ltd., 1979), 31-49.

¹⁰⁰ Frost, 'From Classicist to Eclectic', 64.

¹⁰¹ See page 79.

¹⁰² Davis, *A History of Bath*, 163 also see Chapter 2, 19

second period of his ministry the number increased to 3.15 children. But in the final phase of his ministry the number dropped to 2.11 children. Fewer young families were attending the chapel. This would account for the fear younger church members expressed about the failure to attract young families in the twilight of Jay's career. This fear prompted them to hire R.A. Vaughan as an assistant pastor in 1848.¹⁰³ What they did not sufficiently realize was that while population in Bath was growing, it was also ageing as the community was becoming a place of retirement.¹⁰⁴

Class and wage-earning appear to have had no effect on determining the size of the families within the chapel. The house painter John Bussell had the largest family with fifteen children. And the second largest belonged to John Griffith Mansford (d. 1863), the surgeon, who had twelve children. Even the servant Jacob Baggs (1785-1856) had as many as eight children. Those families having five or more children are almost distributed proportionately along class categories (fig. 4.5 and 4.6).¹⁰⁵ However, members of the congregation who came from a larger family of five or more children were twenty-one times more likely to have five or more children also. The only factor that appears to have determined a large family was whether or not the parents came from large families themselves.

The life span of church members was unusually long for the period. The mortality rates are much better than those given in the 1842 *Report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Labouring Population of Great Britain* (table 4.1). They are also better than the national average. F.B. Smith states that between 1838 and 1854 the average life expectancy in England and Wales was 39.9 years for males and 41.9 years for females.¹⁰⁶ A member of the congregation who survived past the age of eighteen lived to an average age of fifty-nine. Less than nine per cent over the age of eighteen died below the age of thirty. Fifty-eight per cent of the congregation lived past the age of sixty. Women lived an average of sixty years, only a single year more than men. This is all the more astonishing when the second quarter of the nineteenth

¹⁰³ Ede, *The Chapel in Argyle Street, Bath, 1789-1989* (Bath: Central United Reformed Church, 1989), 33.

¹⁰⁴ Walton, J.K. *The English Seaside Resort* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 7

¹⁰⁵ See page 80 and 93.

¹⁰⁶ Smith, F.B. *The People's Health 1830-1910* (Aldershot: Gregg Revivals, 1990), 197.

Figure 4.6 Percentage of Families with Five or More Children by Occupational Group

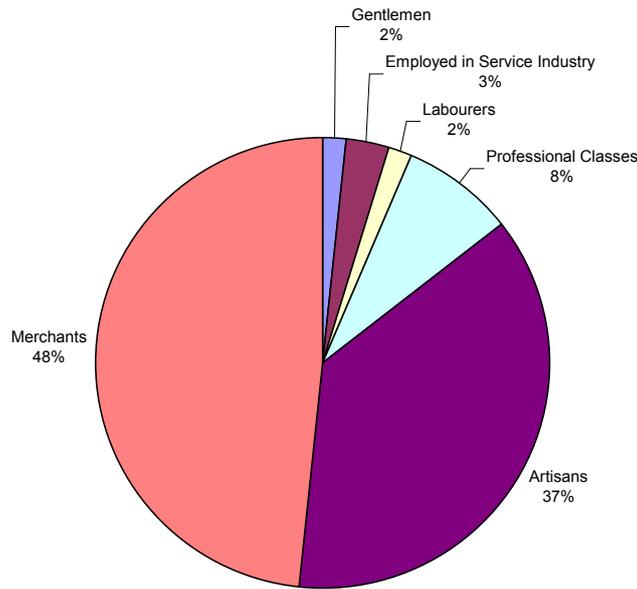


Table 4.1 Average Age of Death in Argyle Chapel and Select Cities, 1841

	Argyle Chapel, Bath	Bath*	Bethnal Green*	Liverpool*	Bristol**	England and Wales***
Average Male	59				29	39.9
Average Female	60					41.9
Gentleman & Professional Classes	74	55	45	35		
Tradesmen and farmers	59	37	26	22		
Mechanics, Labourers, agricultural labourers	47	25	16	15		
Shoemakers	46	14+				

* Figures from *General Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain, 1842* as quoted by Neale, R.S. *Bath: A Social History 1680-1850* (London: Routledge & Kegan, 1981), 287.

** Figure taken from Szreter and Mooney, 'Urbanization, Mortality, and the Standard of Living Debate' *Economic History Review*, 51 (1998), 93

*** Figures from Smith, F.B. *The People's Health 1830-1910* (Aldershot: Gregg Revivals, 1990), 19.

+ Figure for Bath Shoemakers from Neale, *Bath: A Social History*, 264

century was considered a period of decline in life expectancy.¹⁰⁷ For example, between 1801 and 1851 the average life expectancy in Bristol was twenty-nine.¹⁰⁸ As might be expected, class and occupation made a significant difference in mortality. The professional occupations reached an average age of seventy-six while labourers averaged only forty-seven years. Surprisingly artisans gained two more years than those from the merchant trades. However, artisans were fifty-two per cent more likely to have a child die under the age of ten. But overall the attenders of Argyle Chapel lived much longer lives than both their city and national counterparts.

There are four significant reasons that the life spans at the chapel for those who lived past infancy were much longer than in the rest of the nation. First, the purpose of the *Report on the Sanitary Conditions* was to draw attention to the squalid living conditions of the poor. While Bath had its slums as well, it would have rated much more favourably than overpopulated areas such as Bethnal Green and Liverpool. Including Bath as a comparison city might have been with the intention of showing how much better conditions could be. Secondly, Bath overall was a healthier place to live. Citizens had access to some of the best medical care in the kingdom. Doctors did not have the poor reputation in Bath that they had in other places, where often there was great fear in committing oneself to a physician since the cure could be worse than the disease.¹⁰⁹ Third, being a member of the chapel meant one resided in Bath rather than being a visitor. Very few *members* of the congregation would have been included within the ill visitors of the city coming to Bath to find cures for their ailments. Confining the statistics to chapel membership and regular attendance ensures healthier base numbers. And finally, as already presented, the vast majority of those who attended the chapel did not reside in the poorer districts of the city such as Holloway or within the vicinity of Avon Street. Therefore they would not have been exposed to these unhealthy surroundings and the potential for disease would have been minimized. Better environment both in community and chapel would account for a longer life span.

¹⁰⁷ Szreter and Mooney, 'Urbanization, Mortality, and the Standard of Living Debate: New Estimates of the Expectation of Life At Birth in Nineteenth-Century British Cities' *Economic History Review*, 51 (1998), 108

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 93

¹⁰⁹ Walvin, *English Urban Life, 1776-1856*, 31-32.

There were expectations of the members of the church associated with the chapel. Members had to attend worship services, to partake in the ordinances of chapel, to participate in the business of the church and to show integrity in their personal behaviour as befitted a Christian. The involvement in each activity could vary. Outside the rule of scripture, none of these expectations was defined in any formal policy until after the efficient Henry Dyer became the minister in 1854. Therefore, they could not be considered 'requirements'. But though unwritten, it was clear that a member was expected to meet these standards or risk the possibility of being disciplined by the church at large. The issues of moral behaviour, business meetings and church discipline will be considered in the chapter on the polity of the chapel, but the other expectations will be discussed here.¹¹⁰

Attendance at worship services was the first expectation. The order and elements of the worship services rarely varied. 'Divine service' occurred twice every Sunday: in the mornings at eleven o'clock and in the evenings at six o'clock.¹¹¹ Services began promptly. Despite the frequent visits of dignitaries to the chapel, Jay was fond of saying, 'I wait for nobody. When the hour of worship arrives I begin.' According to Cyrus Jay (1795-1870), on the hour at eleven and six, the congregation was sure to see Jay mount the steps of the pulpit 'with his large Bible under his arm'. Early in his career, as was the custom of the day, he preferred to lead the entire service himself. He would choose the hymns and have the church secretary list hymn numbers on a board beside the pulpit. Jay was conscious of his hearers in 'the heat and crowded state of the chapel' and chose short hymns or even just a few verses of a hymn.¹¹² In addition to the music, reading a passage from scripture and a public prayer were also preliminary to the sermon. In the reading of the scripture, Jay 'never forgot ... he was enunciating the words of the Most High'.¹¹³ He also led the prayer. The Argyle preacher told a fellow minister, 'I like to whet my own scythe', when in actuality he preferred a shorter prayer.¹¹⁴ Fifteen minutes was long enough for Jay; rarely did he exceed this, particularly since he liked to kneel as he delivered his

¹¹⁰ Chapter 7, 168-171

¹¹¹ Anon. *Keenes' Bath Directory*. (Bath, 1829).

¹¹² Jay, *Recollections*, 42-43.

¹¹³ *Autobiography of Jay*, 544.

¹¹⁴ Jay, *Recollections*, 43.

prayer.¹¹⁵ Then Jay would deliver his sermon, the focal point of the service. Though Jay lamented the long sermons of his day, Charles Godwin remarked, ‘by far the greater part of his discourses, exceeded an hour in the delivery’.¹¹⁶ Even an admirer and biographer, Thomas Wallace, admitted that at times he found the sermons ‘too long’ and ‘tedious’.¹¹⁷ But they may have been incorrect. While some sermons did exceed an hour, the vast majority, at least in print, were less depending on the occasion.¹¹⁸ The services concluded with a hymn and a final short prayer.

But it was Jay’s sermons that attracted such middle-class patrons. Jay preached with a giftedness that met the approval of aristocrats and celebrities, yet also appealed to working-class sensibilities. The themes of his sermons were very practical to the individual believer.¹¹⁹ The Argyle minister was a model of ‘plainness of speech, on all occasions’.¹²⁰ His points ‘at once struck every hearer, every person who listened to him’.¹²¹ His universal appeal was a marked feature of his ministry. Because he could attract the occasional elite personality, it no doubt ensured participation from those who wished to have access and be seen among the more renowned.

There were only two changes during his tenure: how music was handled and how the preliminary portion of the service was handled in Jay’s advanced years. As early as 1804 a singing gallery was erected and the organ was opened the following year. The first paid organist was Thomas Goodall (1792-1827) in 1826. He was paid twenty pounds for his services with the later addition of a five pound gratuity.¹²² By 1851 the choir had successfully lobbied the trustees to employ a song leader in the service.¹²³ As Jay’s health began to weaken, he led only the morning service. The officiating minister for the evening would ‘lead the introductory devotions of the assembly’ to allow Jay to maximize his energy for the sermon.¹²⁴ Regardless of the changes, the focal point of the service was always Jay’s sermons.

¹¹⁵ Wallace, Thomas. *A Portraiture of the Late Rev. William Jay* (London: Arthur Hall, Virtue and Co, 1854), 80.

¹¹⁶ Godwin, ‘Reminiscences’, 31.

¹¹⁷ Wallace, *Portraiture*, 92.

¹¹⁸ See Chapter 5, 126

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 106-107

¹²⁰ Wallace, *Portraiture*, 96

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 97

¹²² Argyle Chapel Church Book 1815-1888, BRO 480/1/2/1/1, 14 May 1826

¹²³ Argyle Chapel Church Minute Book 1848-1862, BRO 480/1/2/1/3, 10 January 1851

¹²⁴ Wallace, *Portraiture*, 82.

Evening services could be just as full as the morning services. It was the evening service that attracted visitors after they had worshipped at their own churches in the morning. Household servants were also more likely to attend in the evening. The *1851 Ecclesiastical Census* reveals the Argyle Chapel had 1,160 in attendance at the evening service on Census Sunday. Apart from the Abbey Church, it was the only later service that came close to meeting capacity of sittings. Most churches in the area failed to reach half their sittings in attendance at later services.¹²⁵ At the Argyle Chapel there was an expectation that members would attend both services.

In addition to the worship services, members of the chapel and community had the opportunity to attend meetings throughout the week. For a period of time, Jay engaged to provide ‘lectures’ twice during weekdays. One occurred on Mondays (including prior to the church members meetings held monthly) and the other occurred on Thursdays. Wallace said his Monday evening lectures drew between 200 and 300 in attendance.¹²⁶ Jay said he considered these gatherings like meeting a smaller ‘party in a room for conversation’. He relished the opportunity to feel that he had the opportunity to greet his congregation in a more familiar way, and by consequence avoid the arduous task of visitation.¹²⁷ At these meetings Jay would present a devotional address in an informal atmosphere for the edification of the membership. Many of the lectures were published posthumously as his *Thursday Evening Lectures* (1879). They resemble more the length and structure of his sermons than the devotional addresses of his *Morning Exercises for the Closet* (1828). At some point the meetings were reduced to just one to which the public was invited. By 1829, only the 7:00 Thursday evening service was listed in *Keenes’ Bath Directory*. Extra meetings could also occur on Wednesday nights that would spotlight some missionary activity or social ministry. These were advertised in the newspaper and open to members of the public. In 1812 a Wednesday evening lecture from Joseph Lancaster (1778-1838) on ‘The Education of Poor Children in Ireland on the Lancasterian Plan’ inspired the chapel to adopt the peer tutoring scheme in Sunday school and initialized the formation of the Bath Sunday School Union.¹²⁸ The meetings not only provided

¹²⁵ It is probable the Abbey figures are inaccurate. The same number is recorded for all three service times by the signatory. 1851 Ecclesiastical Census for the Bath Area, SRO

¹²⁶ Wallace, *Portraiture*, 86.

¹²⁷ *Autobiography of Jay*, 159.

¹²⁸ *Bath & Cheltenham Gazette*, 21 October 1812, 3.

Jay with an opportunity to exercise his gifts, but also demonstrated to the community the presence and unity of the congregation within the Bath area.

The second expectation of members was to participate in the two church ordinances of communion and baptism. As mentioned in the introduction, when Jay wrote to Charles Godwin, he looked forward to the following Sunday when three people would take part in communion for the first time. Communion services occurred on the first Sunday of the month. The practice consisted of the communicant sipping wine and eating bread symbolizing the blood and body of Christ. The ritual was a demonstration of solidarity among the membership in identifying with their common link to Jesus. Unlike a 'closed' communion where only church members were allowed to participate, the communion table at Argyle Chapel was open to all professing believers. But all communicants had to be examined and pre-approved by the church body prior to the rite. To signify the catholic spirit of the congregation, it was willing to allow other evangelical Christians to participate in the service who might be visiting the chapel, particularly those who were from outside the Bath area. The minute books of the church meetings make a clear distinction between those who were being approved as members of the church and those coming merely as communicants. The writer and philanthropist Hannah More mired herself in the 'Blagdon Controversy', when Thomas Bere, the curate of Blagdon in Somerset, accused her of being disloyal to the Church of England by citing her participation in communion at the Nonconformist Argyle Chapel as proof.¹²⁹ She tried to minimize her part in the communion service by admitting it did occur but only once. Jay, however, remembered it as being frequent. More wrote to Jay of her certainty, 'There is no event of my life about which I am more clear. You who administer [the sacrament of communion] to so many are indeed less likely to be certain than the individuals who were concerned. Mrs. Jay's account confirms my own, and I always sat near her. It would be a very painful necessity ... to say anything that must look like a contradiction of anything which you may [the word 'may' has been inserted above the sentence] have mistakenly said- To your useful preaching and to your talents which alone draw me to Argyle Chapel, I always bear my willing

¹²⁹ Stott. Ann. 'Hannah More and the Blagdon Controversy, 1799-1802', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 51 (2001), 319 .

testimony.¹³⁰ Jay understood the message. He never publicly said another word about the controversy. Even in the ‘Reminiscences’ in the second part of his autobiography, Jay is careful in his wording of the event neither to confirm nor deny More’s claim, only to uphold her veracity as she remembered the event.¹³¹ But more to the point, church members were regularly to participate in communion, signifying their unity with the body of believers.

The other ordinance was baptism. But here there is also some confusion as to the exact expectation of the members. The Argyle Chapel as an Independent church endorsed paedobaptism, meaning the children of the members were sprinkled with water signifying the covenantal nature of the church and the responsibility of the parents towards the spiritual growth of the infant. But when a contingent from the Baptist chapel came to the church in 1791, it appears allowances were made for the children of Baptists who held that baptism should occur only after a person had made a profession of faith. For example, James Evill (d. 1840), who held Baptist tenets, never had his children baptized at the chapel. Even in light of his Baptist views, Evill was allowed to become a deacon in the chapel. There is only one example in the register of an adult being baptized. It is the curious example of John Cuff, in 1797 described as ‘a black aged 30’.¹³² There are occasions in which entire families were baptized at once. When William Alexander (1783-1838), a hatter, joined the church in 1810, all five of his children were baptized, including three between the ages of ten and thirteen. In theory, at least one of the parents had to be a member of the church, though there are examples of Jay baptizing children of colleagues and family, such as the sprinkling in 1818 of his grandchild, John Bolton, who was born in Bath while his daughter was visiting from her home in Liverpool.¹³³ But for the most part one of the parents was a member of the chapel. At first baptisms were conducted as needed with only Jay and the family. But beginning as early as 1792, children were baptized biannually, then by 1831 on a single day of the year, usually on Monday evenings when church business meetings occurred. Cyrus Jay remembered the services occurring quarterly on Sunday afternoons, but the evidence in baptismal register does

¹³⁰ H. More to W. Jay, 14 August 1802. Boston, Mass. Public Library, MS. Eng. 197(2)

¹³¹ *Autobiography of Jay*, 330.

¹³² Argyle Chapel Baptismal Register 1785-1854, BRO 0480/1/1/1

¹³³ Cashdollar, *A Spiritual Home*, 69 and the Argyle Chapel Baptismal Register 1785-1854

not support this.¹³⁴ After Jay's first year, all the baptisms were recorded on single days biannually. Limiting the services not only consolidated the ceremony for the sake of time, but it also ensured that Jay, with his multiple speaking engagements, would be able to perform the rite. There is no indication in the register that during Jay's career the baptisms occurred in any location other than the chapel. By contrast Castle Green Chapel and Bridge Street Chapel in Bristol normally conducted baptisms primarily in the homes of their members. Most likely Jay would have observed baptism as a 'teaching ordinance'.¹³⁵ In question 165, the Westminster Larger Catechism stated, 'parties baptized are solemnly admitted into the visible church'.¹³⁶ Public baptisms would have acknowledged the children's admission and church's responsibility in their care. The church meeting of 30 June 1845 must have been extremely trying in length as twenty-six children were baptized in one service.¹³⁷ Baptisms at the chapel transformed from being a private event in which only parents of the child participated to becoming a spectacle which the full membership witnessed.

In conclusion, four observations can be made regarding the social composition of the Argyle Chapel. The first observation is that the majority of the congregation was determined by economic factors. A person participating in the chapel was likely to be employed as either an artisan or a merchant and moving toward independent means. In many ways there was a reciprocal relationship between William Jay and his congregation. The numerous dignitaries visiting the chapel would affirm the congregation's status. As the minister grew in respectability, so did his chapel. Second, the congregation grew in affluence and influence. The majority of the membership resided in the centre of the city and expanded outwards into newer and more comfortable areas of Bath over the course of Jay's career. A significant number of chapel members were leaders in business and the community, as exemplified in Samuel Whitchurch, Thomas Parsons, H.E. Goodridge and Henry Stothert. Jay's prestige would escalate as his membership became more respectable. Third, the long length of Jay's career and the steady growth of the congregation provided stability for

¹³⁴ Jay, *Recollections*, 227.

¹³⁵ *The Congregational Magazine* (1827): 426-429.

¹³⁶ Anon. *The Larger Catechism of the Westminster Assembly*. (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1841), 337-338

¹³⁷ Argyle Chapel Baptismal Register 1785-1854, BRO 0480/1/1/1

pastor and people. Three generations would have sat under the same preaching for six decades. With a life expectancy of nearly sixty years and the city becoming a place of retirement, the maturity of the Argyle minister would have great appeal. And lastly, pastor and people were concerned to preserve unity. Community and chapel involvement were more important than strengthening defining ecclesiology. Requirements for admittance were less stringent at Argyle Chapel than at other chapels. Baptism was based upon one's individual conscience about the rite. However, members were expected to fulfil expectations of public worship attendance and participation in the sacraments in order to maintain their status of membership. During Jay's ministry admittance to church membership was conducted privately, while baptism became public. Membership meant conformity to the Argyle Chapel body which represented a significant presence in the community of nineteenth-century Bath. And the congregation reciprocated a growing respectable community gathered by Jay's preaching.

Chapter Five: The Sermons of William Jay

John Angell James edited Jay's autobiography shortly after the pastor died in 1854. In the conclusion, he wrote, 'Mr. Jay's whole character as a public man may be summed up in that one word, THE PREACHER; and it is in this view he must be contemplated by all who would conceive of him aright.'¹ The speaker was well qualified to place Jay in perspective. James himself was pastor of the Carr's Lane Congregational Chapel in Birmingham for over fifty years.² He too was a published author and preacher of some renown. The two men became close associates after Jay preached James' ordination sermon in 1806; though at the time James wrote of him in a letter to a friend, 'he was clever, but not so much as I expected', attributing the weakness to Jay suffering from an illness.³ But from that point James developed a tremendous respect for Jay. Throughout his seventeen volumes of works, James makes reference or quotes the preacher no fewer than twenty-seven times, referring to him as 'the venerable Jay'.⁴ Jay not only desired James to edit his autobiography, but he also requested James to deliver his funeral sermon in Bath. And according to James' successor, R.W. Dale, Jay's portrait hung in James' study alongside those of the preachers Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847) and Robert Hall (1764-1831).⁵ James greatly admired Jay and his assessment of the Argyle Chapel pastor was correct. The role of 'the preacher' shaped Jay's entire life.

This chapter will analyze the preaching of William Jay. A sample of 120 sermons, or thirty per cent, was selected out of a total of 400 published messages. They were chosen with consideration to having a balance of sermons from three equally divided periods of Jay's career at Argyle Chapel (1791-1811, 1812-1832 and 1833-1853), used also in the chapter on the social composition of the congregation, in

¹ William Jay, 'The Autobiography of the Rev. William Jay : with reminiscences of some distinguished contemporaries, selections from his correspondence, etc', ed. George Redford and John Angell James. *The Autobiography of William Jay*. (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 542

² The original designation of Carr's Lane Chapel will be used over the modern usage of Carrs Lane Chapel.

³ James to Joseph Phipson, 15 May 1806, in Dale, R.W. *The Life and Letters of John Angell James* (London: Hamilton, Adams and Co., 1861), 87

⁴ James, John Angell. 'A Tribute of Affectionate Respect to the memory of the Fathers and Founders of the London Missionary Society', in James, T.S. (ed.), *The Works of John Angell James* (London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co., 1860), ii.267

⁵ Dale, *Life and Letters*, 3

order to evaluate possible changes over time.⁶ Also taken into consideration were the occasions preached (Sunday morning, Sunday evening, weekdays, and events away from Argyle Chapel). All sermons recorded by a second party, such as from *The Pulpit* magazine, that were known at the time of analysis were chosen to note differences in which the homilies were reported as opposed to how Jay may have presented them in printed form. A similar percentage of sermons was selected from the volumes in which Jay edited. Three additional sermons from prior to his pastorate were also included for consideration of possible change. Also, a sample of thirty per cent of John Angell James' sermons was selected for comparison. The Carr's Lane pastor seemed a suitable equivalent to Jay as, like him, he served a long pastoral tenure in a city outside London and was widely published. William Jay's sermons were analyzed for his intended purpose, for his form, style and delivery, and for the receptivity shown by his listeners.

Purpose

Jay's sermons should be evaluated in the context of how the man perceived his role as pastor of the Argyle Chapel. He believed strongly that he was responsible for the spiritual life of his congregation. Evangelical preaching changed his life when he was a young stone mason.⁷ As the minister, he believed that nothing was more important for the congregation than the sermon. Because of this motivation, the sermon was the pre-eminent element of the weekly service. Sermons were often referred to as 'messages' because they were considered messages from God and pastors were the messengers. Jay averred, 'Ministers appear in the name, and officiate on the behalf, of Him who said, "I am come that they might have life and have it more abundantly."⁸ 'The Christian', said the preacher 'welcomes the message and the messenger.'⁹ He considered his duty as pastor greater than that of any other occupation, proclaiming, 'The office of the minister is unspeakably the most important of all because his concern lies with the soul.'¹⁰ And to meet this need, he

⁶ Chapter 4, 75

⁷ Chapter 3, 46-47

⁸ Jay, William. *The Works of William Jay* (London: C.A. Bartlett, 1844), vii.382-383

⁹ Jay, *Works*, xi.120

¹⁰ Jay, *Works*, vii.392

understood the best way to assist his hearers was to ‘feed and lead, and fold the flock together or collectively’ (emphasis his).¹¹ A common belief was that the sermon conveyed the truth of God’s word and that there was scriptural warrant for so doing.¹² Jay believed his congregation needed to be served ‘spiritual meat’ on a weekly basis and his job was to serve the meal through preaching. He said ministers were ‘rightly to divide the word, and give each a portion of meat in due season’.¹³ In his role as pastor, preaching the sermon was by far his most important function.

Jay avoided speaking in public for any other reason than preaching. His son said he had ‘a great repugnance to platform speaking’ and ‘seldom made his appearance as a public speaker’.¹⁴ And even on those rare occasions there was always a religious purpose to advance the cause of the gospel. He refused to bring politics into the pulpit. He did relent on one occasion during the Bath parliamentary elections in 1847 when he refused to endorse the Nonconformist-friendly radical J.A. Roebuck (1802-1879) over the evangelical Lord Shaftesbury (1801-1885). The following Sunday his apology was ‘in a mode so honest and truly Christian’ that the opposition journalist, Cyrus Redding, stated he ‘almost felt sorry’ he ‘had not let his comments pass’.¹⁵ James said Jay ‘fixed his eye on the pulpit’ and concluded ‘if he would do one thing well, he must concentrate his powers on that; and make everything else give place. Or become subservient to it’.¹⁶ Jay reserved all his abilities for his sermons.

Preparing this weekly message caused a constant battle for time. The teaching ministry took precedence over any other service to his people. In order to create periods for sermon composition, as he confessed, he neglected pastoral visits. To preserve his voice he refused to visit those who smoked. He refused to visit the ‘self-indulgent’ and the gossip, reasoning that he could spend better time resting his mind. Even the ‘truly pious’ were neglected by Jay.¹⁷ He thought they were better served by their reading or meditation than by receiving a call from him. He believed that to present a sermon of quality he must be prepared. He had no use for ministers who did

¹¹ *Autobiography of Jay*, 156

¹² Dickson, J.N. Ian. *Beyond Religious Discourse: Sermons, Preaching and Evangelical Protestants in Nineteenth –Century Irish Society* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007), 50

¹³ *Autobiography of Jay*, 149

¹⁴ Jay, Cyrus. *Recollections of William Jay of Bath* (London: Hamilton, Adams and Co., 1859), 109

¹⁵ Redding, Cyrus. *Fifty Years Recollections, Literary and Personal, With Observations on Men and Things* (London: Charles Skeet, 1858), 64

¹⁶ *Autobiography of Jay*, 540

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 154

not study. 'I am persuaded that I was better sub-serving, not only my own welfare, but that of my people and of the public, in my study, than in gadding about without aim, wasting time in idle interviews and nursery talk.'¹⁸ No ministry was more important than the public declaration from the pulpit. Carving out time in preparation was a high priority for Jay.

Members of his congregation recognized that their minister was more suited for the pulpit than for other pastoral duties. Charles Godwin, a deacon, had no recollection of 'being won by his department' out of the pulpit. 'But in it, he was nearly irresistible.'¹⁹ He was known for briskly walking by his hearers after services in Bath, 'almost running over them' with 'a friendly nod and word' as he raced home. Yet his congregation still admired him.²⁰ When a church officer lost two children to death, the family received a letter from Jay rather than a visit.²¹ Clearly, Jay thought the best way to shepherd the flock was from the pulpit.

Naturally, in bringing the word of God to his people, Jay relied heavily on scripture. His sermons were laced with a staggering number of verses or verse fragments from the Authorized Version of the Bible. Not only were they numerous, but very few were taken out of context and nearly all were germane to the topic. For example in describing the 'fool' in his sermon 'Owls and Dragons' he recalled phrases from Psalms 4:2 and 94:8, and Proverbs 4:2 in support of his point.²² In the sample, Jay averaged nearly forty complete verses verbatim per sermon in addition to the text on which the sermon was based. By contrast, James averaged only eight. Quoting scripture was a distinguishing mark throughout Jay's career. At the opening of Argyle Chapel, he quoted forty-eight verses and an additional fifty-one verse fragments.²³ Two Sunday morning sermons each contained over ninety verses within a forty-minute span.²⁴ In print, verses and verse fragments were in quotation marks to indicate the author was lifting these words from the Bible, providing confirmation that

¹⁸ Ibid., 156

¹⁹ Godwin, Charles, 'Reminiscences of The Rev. William Jay', Unpublished manuscript, CURC, 2

²⁰ Ibid., 53

²¹ *Autobiography of Jay*, 488-489

²² Jay, William. *Sunday Evening Sermons and Thursday Evening Lectures* (London: R.D. Dickson, 1879), 29

²³ Jay, William, *A Sermon Preached at the Opening of the Independent Chapel in Bath, Sunday, October 4, 1789* (Bath: S. Hazard, 1789).

²⁴ Jay, 'The Privileges of Righteousness' and 'The Nature of Genuine Religion' *Works*, ix.23-44, 235-256

he was presenting the truth of God. Jay was aware of the criticism that he indulged in excessive quotation, but he responded ‘if this be error, it is surely on the right side’ and if it was excessive it was probably due to his ‘familiarity with the language of the Bible, having, before many other books came in my way, read it much and committed much to memory’.²⁵ But some found it inspiring. One listener in Birmingham recorded in her diary the morning after hearing Jay, ‘O Lord renew my heart my soul and spirit, and give me a better *memory* and love to thy blessed word.’²⁶ As Jay relied on the Bible as the source of his authority, he quoted from it generously.

The type of verses on which the sermon was based were also characteristic throughout his ministry. In choosing the texts for the sermons, Jay appears to have followed the precept of the well-known rhetorician John Lawson’s (1708-1759) *Lectures Concerning Oratory* to ‘Chuse [sic] out one [verse] of moderate length, so as not to puzzle the attention, or burthen the memory of the hearer.’²⁷ In the sample of 120 addresses only six covered more than three verses. Ninety-five sermons concentrated on a single verse. Despite his deacon Charles Godwin’s insistence that Jay usually preached *lectio continua* or verse by continuous verse through a book of the Bible, the evidence does not bear this out.²⁸ The dates and texts for the entire corpus of Jay’s sermons for both Sundays and weekday lectures do not indicate that Jay preached through an entire book of the Bible. For example, during an eight-month period in 1852, he preached from sixteen different books of the Bible and only twice did the text come from the same chapter.²⁹ Also, the scripture references from his devotional literature, *The Morning Exercises* and *The Evening Exercises*, indicate a continuous progression was unlikely. There is supporting evidence that Jay did sometimes cover a particular chapter of scripture, possibly taking occasional breaks and returning to the passage at later dates. Most evangelical preachers had a distinct bias towards the New Testament and avoided passages either difficult to interpret or appearing to lack relevance in the promotion of evangelical religion.³⁰ Jay neither heavily favoured New Testament texts over the Old Testament nor avoided specific

²⁵ *Autobiography of Jay*, 150

²⁶ 5 June 1805, ‘Diary of a Lady at Carr’s Lane c. 1805’, Birmingham CL, CC1/86

²⁷ Lawson, John, *Lectures Concerning Oratory* (Dublin: George Faulkner, 1759), 375

²⁸ Godwin, ‘Reminiscences’, 25-26

²⁹ Wren, Thomas (ed.). *The Final Discourses at Argyle Chapel, Bath, by the Rev. William Jay* (London: Arthur Hall, Virtue & Co, 1854).

³⁰ Dickson, *Beyond Religious Discourse*, 103-104

texts in the Bible. ‘We must keep nothing back that is profitable, but declare the whole counsel of God’, said the pastor.³¹ Of the entire corpus of Jay’s printed sermons, New Testament texts ran only slightly ahead of Old Testament texts by a ratio of 206:194 or fifty-one per cent. Fifty-four of the sixty-six books of the Bible are represented by full sermons. Eight of the remainder are included in his *Exercises*.³² By contrast, seventy-three per cent of James’ sermons were from the New Testament. Jay was not reluctant to preach from the Old Testament. He was also willing to take requests to preach on certain texts.³³ He had no scruples in choosing a text that grabbed people’s attention for the sake of sensationalism. For the re-opening of his chapel after enlargement he chose ‘Be ye also enlarged’, from 2 Corinthians 6:13. At a communion service he preached from John 6:70, ‘One of you is a devil’. For both Rowland Hill’s and Robert Hall’s funeral sermons he chose the text ‘Howl, fir tree; for the cedar is fallen’, from Zechariah 12:2.³⁴ Jay’s choice of text appears to have been chosen to suit his personal intention in the sermon.

Jay had a consistent purpose in the themes of his sermons. Contrary to normal expectations of an evangelical preacher, the sermons of William Jay and John Angell James were not primarily preached with conversion in mind. Of the 120 sermons in the Jay sample, only thirty-five contained an appeal to respond to the gospel. James had only two. But a significant majority of both men’s sermons contained the theme of Christian living and piety. Over a third of Jay’s sermons were related to this theme alone (figure 5.1).³⁵ James dedicated forty per cent of his sermons to the same field (figure 5.2).³⁶ Both men preached that Christians should live holy lives, set apart from the rest of society. They believed that a distinctly higher morality among those professing the Christian faith would have a greater effect on those outside. It was not enough to profess belief. Actions had to follow belief.

The Gospel is Holy; its Author Holy; its maxims and commands holy; its promises, ordinances, designs holy; and there is nothing by which it is so much distinguished and glorified as by the holiness which pervades it ... in

³¹ *Autobiography of Jay*, 152

³² The only unrecorded books of the Bible Jay did not preach from were Jonah, Obadiah, Habakkuk and Jude.

³³ Wren, *Final Discourses at Argyle Chapel*, ii

³⁴ *Autobiography of Jay*, 559

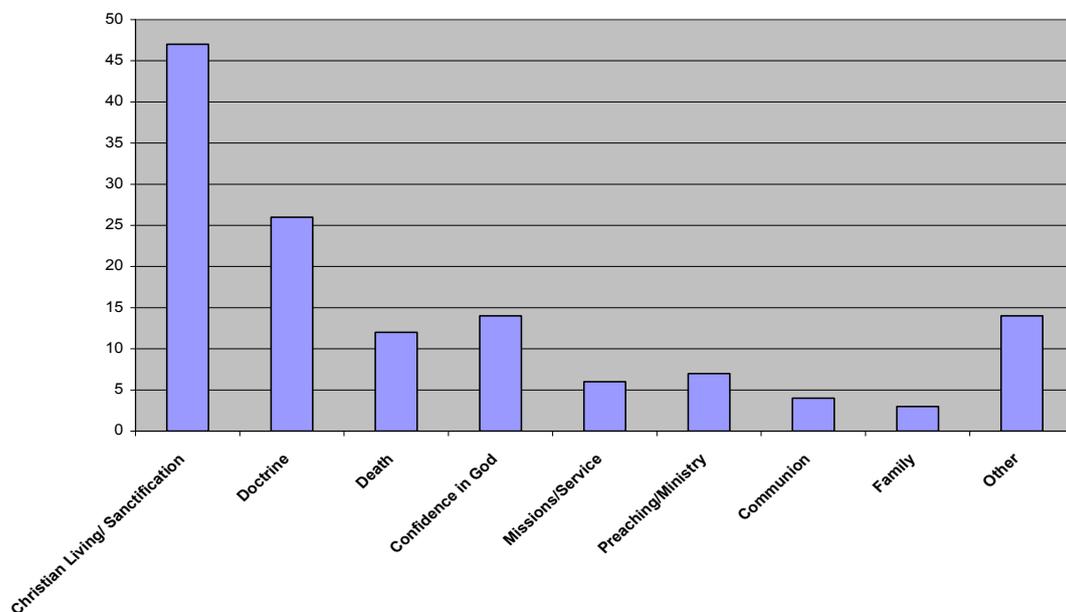
³⁵ See page 108, also see chapter 6, 135-136.

³⁶ See page 109.

your notion of the Gospel, do not imagine with some, that it was designed to furnish a substitute for holiness; and that it will excuse your being holy, provided you are orthodox.³⁷

The only way to be content in God was to be holy. ‘God himself cannot do that which contradicts the essential perfections of his nature; and he cannot make us happy with Himself till He has made us holy like Himself.’³⁸ Likewise, James also focused on Christian performance. The word ‘duty’ appears in the title of ten per cent of the Carr’s Lane minister’s sermons. Both pastors placed a premium on holiness in the believer. Second behind the theme of Christian living were doctrinal sermons. Both James and Jay would focus on a specific doctrine with the intent that a correct understanding of the doctrine would produce holy living. Jay specifically focused on Christology and its implications for Christian living. Over half of his doctrinal sermons were on this subject. Similarly in funeral sermons, the deceased was held up either as a godly example or falling short of it. For example, at the funeral of a miserly woman, Jay proclaimed, ‘with her it was the dying grasp as well as the dying gasp’.³⁹ Despite using various themes, both Jay’s and James’ purpose in preaching was to urge their congregations to be distinct from the rest of society.

Figure 5.1 Themes of the Sermons of William Jay

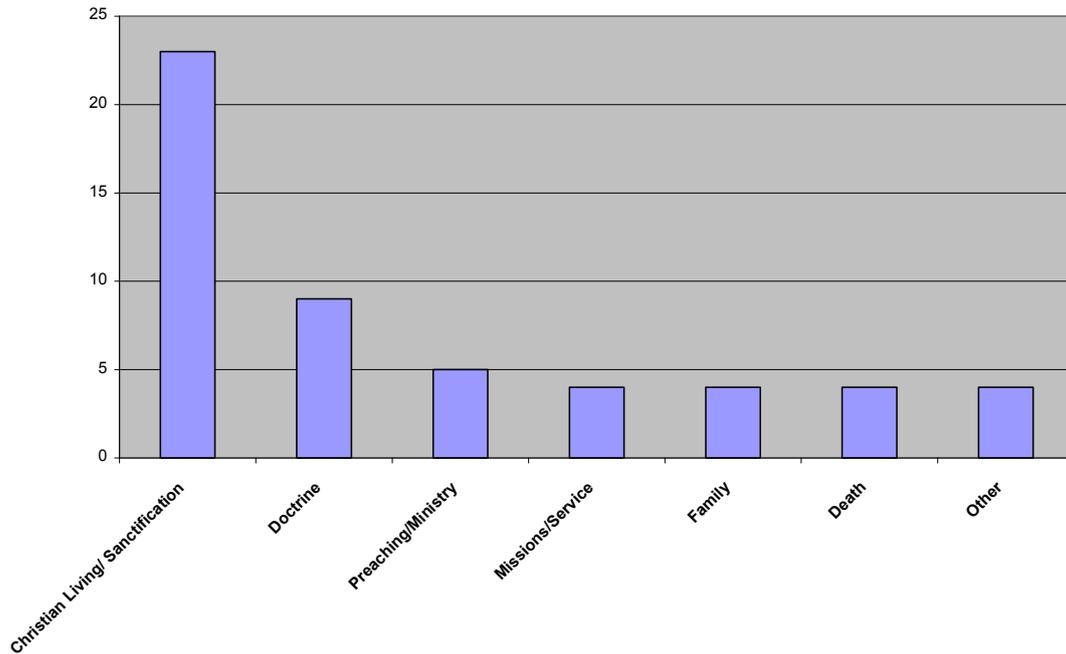


³⁷ Jay, *Works*, iii. 23

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 85

³⁹ Godwin, ‘Reminiscences’, 25

Figure 5.2 Themes of the Sermons of John Angell James



While both men had similar intent, their methodology in utilizing these themes was different. James tended to preach entire series on a particular subject. He normally preached a doctrinal sermon at the start of a series and then preached the implications of the doctrine in the following messages. For example, in his series entitled *The Family Monitor* (1828), James introduced the topic of domestic ministry, followed by an exposition on the doctrine of Christian marriage in two sermons and then explored how the doctrine affected family life in the next seven sermons.⁴⁰ This not only allowed James to preach through the topic for his congregation but also allowed him to publish books related to the theme. James was able to produce seven books related to a single theme of Christian living. Preaching the same topic through a series of sermons was a consistent characteristic of the Carr's Lane pastor.

Jay, on the other hand, usually covered his theme within a single sermon rather than developing it over a series of sermons. Each sermon is an ample exposition of the text of the service and covers Jay's point fully. This is not to say that he did not preach series with common themes. Two would become *The Christian Contemplated* (1826) and *Lectures on Female Scripture Characters* (1854). But each sermon stands alone and does not build upon the preceding sermon. Most likely this

⁴⁰ James, *Works*, xii.15-292

was due to the transitory nature of his audience in Bath who came and went throughout the spa seasons.

Jay consistently used four motivations to inspire his listeners toward holy living. The first was self-examination. The listener was expected to evaluate his or her spiritual state before a holy God on a consistent basis. Typically Jay used rhetorical or disarming questions that appealed to the listener's conscience and sense of decency. For example, in the sermon 'The Value of Life' (1803), the preacher asked his audience:

What think you of the man who indulges himself in the excess of intemperance, which breeds and nourishes all manner of disease? What think you of the man who harbours evil passions, and suffers anger to consume him, envy to gnaw him, anxiety to corrode him? What think you of the man who by pursuing too much business oppresses nature, injures his faculties, deprives himself of rest and relaxation and ease? ... What think you of those who to amass money, will deny themselves the conveniences and necessaries of life? What think you of those martyrs of vanity, who, to appear in fashion, will avail themselves of modes of apparel, I will not say incompatible with decency, but hazardous to health?⁴¹

If sin was discovered, then listeners were anxiously to address their short-comings. 'Do not be satisfied with a conclusion that rests upon the lowest degree of evidence in your favour,' he challenged his church members, as there was the possibility they 'might accidentally wake up in hell' with paltry confirmation.⁴² Secondly, if listeners passed their own assessment, they were reminded they must pass another examination. The Almighty was constantly observing his children and nothing escaped his eye. An example is found in Jay's sermon, 'Martha and Mary', where the preacher tells the audience, 'He [Jesus] who approved Mary's choice is here this evening to witness yours.'⁴³ The listener who certainly did not want to disappoint God would respond in fear. The third idea was that the Christian was in constant spiritual conflict and expected to hold the line against the tide of evil. References to military

⁴¹ Jay, *Works*, vii.52

⁴² James, *Works*, xv.178, 182

⁴³ Jay, *Works* xi. 493

and spiritual warfare abound in Jay's sermons. The Christian was to march boldly into the world and champion the cause of Christ.⁴⁴ In *The Christian Contemplated* (1826), Jay warned of withdrawing rather than engaging the world: 'this is not overcoming the world, it is refusing combat!'⁴⁵ And the final motivation, as was typical of his contemporaries, was the approach of death.⁴⁶ Even apart from funeral sermons, twelve per cent of the sample included death as a motivator. It was a fear less of facing judgment than of dying without meeting the full potential of all that could be accomplished before terminating life. Upon the death of a deacon in his congregation Jay exclaimed, 'O that you would so conduct yourselves, as not to pain your ministers while you live, nor plague them when you die!'⁴⁷ Death became more of a motivator in the latter period of Jay's ministry as both pastor and congregation grew older. However, graphic descriptions of hell were not incentives that Jay used. Like many of his evangelical contemporaries, Jay preferred to promote the blessings of heaven.⁴⁸ He was unwilling to embellish the concept of hell and preferred to refer to it as 'everlasting torment'.⁴⁹ Jay's use of motivators in preaching was integral to his role as the pastor shaping the behaviour of God's people.

The preaching style of John Angell James is a natural comparison with that of Jay. He used the same motivators as Jay. Self-examination was particularly frequent in James' messages. The two used similar techniques. However, the Carr's Lane pastor called for stricter standards from his listeners. In one sermon alone, James gave fifteen disarming questions that were sure to unearth some deficiency in the walk of the believer.⁵⁰ But James also preferred to describe vivid scenes to persuade or to dissuade the congregation into particular forms of behaviour. He described these scenes in great detail, eliciting strong emotions from his listeners. In several sermons he described the beauty of heaven.⁵¹ He described the ideal mission field waiting to be harvested.⁵² But these dramatic descriptions could also be used to dissuade the

⁴⁴ An excellent example is Jay's sermon, 'Forward' in Jay, *Sunday Evening Sermons*, 469-479

⁴⁵ Jay, *Works* vi. 123

⁴⁶ Wolffe, John, 'British Sermons on National Events', in Ellison, Robert (ed.), *A New History of the Sermon: The Nineteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 204

⁴⁷ Jay, *Works* III. 280

⁴⁸ Bebbington, David. *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*. (London: Routledge, 1989), 6

⁴⁹ Dickson, *Beyond Religious Discourse*, 93

⁵⁰ James, *Works*, xv.326-327

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, xv 330

⁵² *Ibid.*, ii.62

listener, such as portraying the nominal Christian or graphic images of hell, where ‘Satan governs beings, many of them more like demons than men’.⁵³ These descriptive scenes appear in twenty per cent of James’ sermons. Similar descriptions are found in only two of Jay’s addresses. And unlike Jay, James was likely to use the fear of hell as a motivator. For James, the concept of damnation was not used to urge conversion in the non-believer, but it was used primarily to stimulate Christians into action to behave as believers to prove the genuineness of faith lest they be under a false sense of assurance. It was also used to counteract inactivity lest they be the cause of friends and family members terminating in eternal torment. The dread of the underworld appears in twenty per cent of the sample. In addition to this motivator, James was also apt to use the threat of ‘Popery’. It was not just a fear of the Roman Catholic Church itself, but also a fear that Catholic doctrine might once again sully the purity of Protestant religion. As mentioned in a previous chapter, Jay was much more kindly towards Catholicism.⁵⁴ But James saw the spectre of Rome as a means of motivating his fellow Protestants into action, even noting Jay’s neglect of the threat in the elder preacher’s autobiography.⁵⁵ These anti-Catholic statements appear in over a quarter of James’ sermons. Just four instances occur in the Jay sample of 120 orations. While James was capable of using all the same motivators as Jay, it was these three that were most prevalent in his sermons. Jay was much less likely to use fear as an inducement to modify behaviour.

Style and Form

William Jay was aware of six distinct categories of preaching. He describes these ‘styles’ while assessing the homiletic abilities of his mentor Cornelius Winter. The categories were essay, expository, observational, ‘characteristical’ [sic], topical and textual.⁵⁶ Jay used all six styles in his preaching.

The essay style began with a single proposition and then proceeded to prove it by a series of points. At first, Jay disliked the method because it could ‘hardly be said

⁵³ Ibid., ii.92

⁵⁴ Chapter 3, 43-45

⁵⁵ *Autobiography of Jay*, 509

⁵⁶ Jay, *Works*, v. 206-207

to treat a text at all'.⁵⁷ He was much more comfortable beginning with a text of scripture as the launching point and expounding it rather than proving a proposition. Later, however, especially after his preaching tour of Scotland, Jay commended the essay and hoped to become better at it.⁵⁸ And even though it was not his preference, he could admire the technique in his friends Robert Hall and John Foster (1770-1843).⁵⁹ Jay published only two sermons in this style. The first was *An Essay on Marriage* (1806), which he was asked to produce and publish for the Wiltshire Association.⁶⁰ It was poorly structured and demonstrates Jay's discomfort at using this method. However, James thought well enough of the content to quote extensively from it in his sermon 'The Formation of the Marriage Union' in 1828.⁶¹ The second was a discourse on death Jay delivered at the interment of the Rev. William Humphryes of Hammersmith in 1808.⁶² It was published at the request of the family and included the funeral sermon delivered by Dr Robert Winter (1762-1833). With only two sermons published in this category, clearly Jay was not fond of the essay for his own use.

But the other styles Jay employed frequently (figure 5.3).⁶³ The expository style 'explains a portion of scripture as it lies, intermixed with practical addresses' as it is presented verse-by-verse in a particular passage. He used the expository style when he produced his series on the twenty-eighth chapter of Acts.⁶⁴ Jay preached through the entire chapter on six consecutive Sunday morning sermons in the spring of 1821. The observational style 'peculiarly applies to historical passages, and contains a succession of remarks, founded upon circumstances which require improvement rather than explication'.⁶⁵ This method is utilized in his sermons on the historical narratives contained in his *Short Discourses to be Read in Families* (1805), where he explains that this style was easier for use with children and servants.⁶⁶ His

⁵⁷ Ibid, 206

⁵⁸ *Autobiography of Jay*, 140

⁵⁹ Ibid., 382-383, 402-403

⁶⁰ Jay, *Works*, viii.292

⁶¹ James, *Works*, xii.85-104

⁶² Jay, *Works*, viii. 509

⁶³ See page 114.

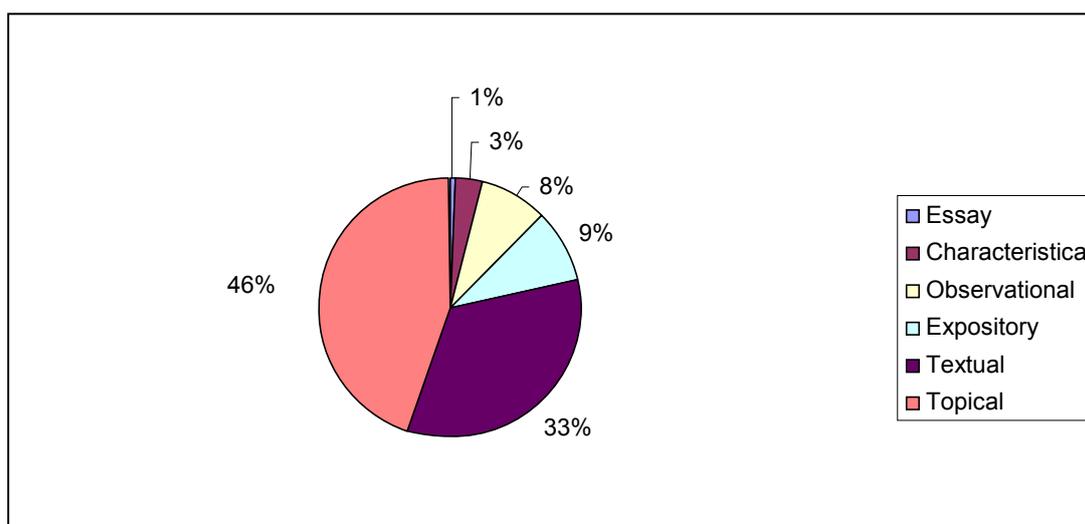
⁶⁴ Godwin, Charles, 'Notes on Six Lectures on the 28th Chapter of Acts', 1827, Unpublished manuscript, CURC

⁶⁵ Jay, *Works*, v.207

⁶⁶ For examples, see Discourse XVI and Discourse XLI in Jay, *Works* ix.161-172, 481-494. He appears to have used this style frequently in covering the Gospel of Luke.

final published work (though preached in 1801), *Lectures on Scriptural Female Characters* (1854) was in the ‘characteristical style’. Each lecture took a female character from the Bible and held up the qualities to be regarded or disregarded. Each of these methods was utilized by the pastor.

Figure 5.3 Sermon Styles Used by William Jay



By far, however, Jay relied most heavily on the topical and textual styles. The topical style focused on a single ‘theme or a proposition derived from the design of the words’.⁶⁷ Jay preferred this method over the essay because it allowed him to start from a scripture text and then prove its merits. His well received work *The Christian Contemplated* (1826) is an excellent example of this style. There he presented the ethic of Christians in various situations such as in families, in the workplace and in adversity together with the appropriate response to each occasion. Forty-six per cent of the sample sermons are topical. The textual style deduced ‘the divisions and materials from the language of the texts’.⁶⁸ One-third of the sermons in the sample can be classified within this category. Jay could separate each clause of a verse and explain the meaning under a series of headings. In a way, each heading became sermon in miniature. And while James’ topical style allowed him to publish his sermon series on a particular theme, the textual style allowed Jay to divide his texts into smaller segments that could be utilized in his devotional volumes *Morning*

⁶⁷ Jay, *Works*, v.207

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 207

Exercises for the Closet (1828) and *Evening Exercises for the Closet* (1831). Jay varied his approach in style according to the circumstances in which he delivered his sermons.

The formula of Jay's sermons showed very little variation. Cicero defined the parts of a speech as the exordium (or introduction), narrative (reason for the speech), partition (the divisions of the speech), confirmation (exposition), refutation (answering arguments against the main points) and peroration (summary conclusion).⁶⁹ Like most of Jay's evangelical counterparts, he used a reduced form of Cicero's classification. Typically Jay sermons followed the pattern of an introduction, an announcement of the divisions or headings of the text (the partition), the body of the sermon (the presentation of the main points or the confirmation) and a conclusion. Within the sample, there is only a single example of Jay using a refutation in his sermon. Funeral sermons might contain a narrative, but it came after the exposition of the text when speaking of the deceased. Sermons delivered on national days of prayer and thanksgiving also contained narratives, but the remainder do not. Most of his messages follow the pattern of exordium, partition, confirmation and peroration.

Jay's introductions were usually brief. The majority were under five minutes or less. This was in great contrast to John Angell James, who usually spent up to a third of his time on the introduction, briefing his audience on the importance of what he was presenting. Earlier in Jay's career, his introductions were much longer. They were normally used to place his selected text within the greater context of his biblical narrative. His two earliest published sermons, *A Farewell Sermon Preached at Christian Malford* (1789) and *A Sermon Preached at the Opening of the Independent Chapel in Bath* (1789), reflect this technique. Before the end of the century his introductions were shortened to give the bulk of his time to the presentation of the body of his sermon. In a message from 1806, Jay assumed his congregation was 'familiar with the circumstances of the history'. He claimed he need not 'detain' them 'a moment in referring to them' in order to move quickly to his main points.⁷⁰ Jay considered his introduction to be a short transition into the exposition.

⁶⁹ Cicero, Marcus Tullius, *De Inventione, De Optima Genera Oratorum*, Hubbell, H.M. (trans.). (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 41

⁷⁰ Jay, *Works* xii. 652

After the introduction, the partition was presented to the congregation. These divisions consisted of two to eight headings which were each to contain evidence in a topical sermon or explanations in a textual sermon. The partition was a mainstay for Jay. ‘I always loved arrangement and division’, said the pastor.⁷¹ Jay took great care in preparing the divisions of his sermons and his cleverness at doing so was noted.⁷² Whereas James rarely presented a partition, nearly all the sermons that Jay edited contain a partition. It is uncertain with the sermons occasionally reported by others if the partitions were omitted by the journalists or by Jay. The pastor might have eliminated them either for the sake of time or if he thought the headings were obvious. However, even if unannounced, the headings were always presented in the main body of the sermon. The partition provided the framework of the oration to the congregation in order to mark where Jay had reached as he preached his sermons.

The main body is where Jay concentrated most of his time in preaching. The body of the sermon presented each heading with proofs or explanations of the scriptural texts. In print, the headings were usually numerically indicated or preceded with the words ‘first ... second ... third...’ In most instances the entire heading was capitalized. Topical sermons presented the headings as sub-topics related to the overall subject. For example, in the sermon ‘The Young Admonished’ the text was 1 Kings 18:12, ‘I fear the Lord from my youth’ and the headings focused on younger listeners: ‘I. THE MOST FAVOURABLE SEASON IN WHICH TO COMMENCE A RELIGIOUS COURSE- II. SHEW THE BENEFICIAL INFLUENCE OF EARLY PIETY OVER YOUR FUTURE LIFE- III. AND EXAMINE, IN THIS AWFUL CONCERN, THE CONSEQUENCES OF PROCRASTINATION.’⁷³ Textual sermons presented the headings in the order Jay wished to explain the divisions of the text. For example, in the sermon ‘The Sufferings of Our Saviour Necessary’, Jay proceeds to divide and explain Hebrews 2:10, ‘For it became Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.’ The headings for this particular sermon were: I. The Character of the Supreme Being- ‘For whom are all things and by whom are all things’, II The End Which Keeps God’s Grace in View’- ‘to bring many

⁷¹ *Autobiography of Jay*, 141

⁷² *Ibid.*, 556-557

⁷³ Jay, *Works*, ix.117

sons unto glory’, III. The Means by Which He Executes His Design- ‘The Captain of Their Salvation’, IV. The Manner in Which He Obtained His Distinction- ‘Is Made Perfect Through Sufferings’, and V. The Reasonableness and Expediency of such a Dispensation- ‘It Became Him’.⁷⁴ Under each heading, Jay would deliver the material related to his points and make a general application of each one of them. James differed from Jay by rarely noting his headings (occasionally he enumerated them in the printed text). And rather than consecutively presenting his points with applications, James divided his body into two large sections. The first division presented all the points with proofs and the second contained all the applications. The body of Jay’s sermons lent itself more to the divisions of a textual style while James’ were better suited for the propositions of an essay or a topical style.

For Jay, the main headings were supported by a series of sub-headings under each point. The sub-headings were never announced in the partition. A general rule was the more headings, the fewer sub-headings, and the fewer the headings, the more sub-headings. Normally, each heading had no more than four sub-headings. He was careful not to tax his listeners with too many divisions like the Irish Evangelical, Alexander McKay, who in 1839, divided his sermon on Psalm 8:4 into forty-three sub-points.⁷⁵ In contrast to this method, James rarely employed sub-points under his headings. Over his career, Jay’s sermons always retained their main headings, though later he prepared fewer sub-headings overall in his sermons. For example at the age of eighty-three his sermon, ‘Our Weakness and Our Strength’, had three headings and no sub-headings.⁷⁶ Here, Jay preferred to make a single observation under each point. Jay’s diminished use of sub-headings was less likely due to contemporary trends and more likely due to the laborious process of delivering extended sermons in his later years. Near the end of his life, he was already preaching while sitting in a chair at the Argyle Chapel.⁷⁷

In presenting his main points, Jay used a combination of rhetorical devices to connect the listener with the passion and force of his argument. In the sample, fourteen rhetorical devices were significantly repeated over his career (Table 5.1).⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Jay, *Works* ix. 92-102

⁷⁵ Dickson, *Beyond Religious Discourse*, 15

⁷⁶ Jay, ‘Our Weakness and Our Strength’, in *Sunday Evening Sermons*, 400-406

⁷⁷ Argyle Chapel, Bath, Church Minutes Book 1815-1888, BRO, 0480/1/2/1/1, 10 October 1852

⁷⁸ See page 130.

Some would be used multiple times in a single sermon. It was here that Jay excelled in varying the methods of exploiting these devices throughout his messages.

Scripture was Jay's chief means of evidence for his arguments. His favourite devices utilized verses from the Bible confirming the truth of his messages. The creation of a scriptural dialogue was the most prevalent. Here, Jay would take on the persona of his listener, either asking questions or making statements related to the point to which Jay would respond with the appropriate verse or verse fragment. 'Discourse CIII: The Grand Inquiry', contains a fine example using Psalm 4:6, Psalm 106:4 and 1 Samuel 15:14.

Would you say you love him? No: You dare not. You know that his love is not in you. You know that you prefer a thousand objects to his favour, and image, and service. You know that you constantly ask with the world, 'Who will show me any good?' But you never pray 'Lord lift up thou the light of thy countenance upon me.' 'O remember me with the favour thou bearest among thy people. O Visit me with thy salvation.' You Love him! - 'What meaneth this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and this lowing of oxen which I hear?' Your whole lives contradict your avowal, and render it your folly as well as your guilt.⁷⁹

To each assertion given in defence by the listener, the preacher responds with a verse. He used this method in seventy-three per cent of his sermons with 165 different occurrences in the sample. Scriptural dialogues were a common feature of his sermons and are found equally distributed in all three periods of his ministry.

Second to the dialogues was his use of a scriptural triad to make his point. Jay would quote three different scriptures in quick succession without comment as evidence for his argument. For example, in his sermon on 'The Abuse of Divine Forbearance', Jay quotes 2 Peter 3:3, Psalm 50:21 and Psalm 10:13 to attest that generally men will continue in sin thinking God will never enforce justice.⁸⁰ In his sermon on 'Hope', Jay's point is that God's love is reserved for the elect alone,

⁷⁹ Jay, *Short Discourses, Works* II. 388

⁸⁰ Jay, *Works* iii. 368-369

quoting Romans 8:28, James 1:12 and James 2:5.⁸¹ Jay employed these triads in over half the sermons analyzed. Pulling verses from a variety of places in the Bible in the scriptural triad would verify the veracity of his reasoning.

On similar occasions, Jay would go beyond the triad to prove his ideas. He would quote multiple Bible verses in a strand to strengthen the force of his case. Usually it was a rapid stream of four to five verses. In the sermon opening Argyle Chapel, to demonstrate how much greater is God than man, Jay produced fourteen different verses or fragments of verses in quick succession.⁸² At another place in the same sermon he quotes eight consecutive verses.⁸³ The preacher frequently used this device early in his career. It appears in a third of the sermons before 1832 but is in less than fifteen per cent after that period. Whether or not it was dropped because it taxed his listeners or because Jay was devoted more to different rhetorical devices is unknown. Despite its infrequency in the later period, the number of scripture references did not diminish. But the ‘rapid-fire-quotation’ device provided even more godly vindication for Jay’s headings.

Biblical illustrations also feature heavily in Jay’s sermons. Jay did employ illustrations from various occupations such as trade, the medical field and agriculture no doubt appealing to the tradesmen in his congregation. But each of those is not frequent, only appearing in five or fewer sermons in the entire sample. Historical references and personal anecdotes appear slightly more. If Jay was to utilize an illustration in his sermon, he was three times as likely to pull an illustration from a biblical story. These would have greater appeal to audiences made up of various social classes. They would provide universal reference from the servant to the aristocrat. Biblical illustrations are displayed in forty per cent of the sample.

In addition to devices that utilized scripture, Jay was fond of quoting hymns.⁸⁴ The corpus of hymn-writers includes: Augustus Toplady (1740-1778) with five references, Charles Wesley with six references, Philip Doddridge with fourteen references, and his friend John Newton with twenty-eight references. But fellow Independent minister Isaac Watts (1674-1748) is referred to the most. This tendency was most likely from the use of Watts’ *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* hymnal in

⁸¹ Ibid., 312

⁸² Jay, *A Sermon Preached at the Opening of the Independent Chapel in Bath*, 8-9

⁸³ Ibid., 26

⁸⁴ See Chapter 6, 143 and 149-150

services. Quotations from his hymns appear in fifty per cent of the sample and there are 111 occurrences over all. Stanzas from hymns were chosen to reinforce the concepts taught or encourage application.

Also in the sermon sample, Jay quoted lines from numerous poets. He cited Edward Young (1681-1765) with nineteen occurrences, John Milton (1608-1674) with four occurrences, Oliver Goldsmith (1730-1774) and James Thomson (1700-1748) with two occurrences. But his greatest admiration is reserved for the poetry of William Cowper (1731-1800). His poetry appears in twenty-three per cent of the overall sermons. Jay also made reference to John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) on eight different occasions in the sample. But these do not appear until after 1825 and might have been influenced by the developing relationship with his second wife, Mariana Head, who, like Bunyan, was a Baptist.⁸⁵ Jay's literary quotations would have enabled him to make emotional connections with his listeners as well as affirming the doctrinal points in his messages.

By contrast, John Angell James' literary devices were much less likely to include quotations from hymn-writers and poets (Table 5.2).⁸⁶ He relied heavily on theological writers as authorities in his messages. Theological quotations appear in seventy-six per cent of his sermons but in only thirty-five per cent of Jay's. And when quoting fellow ministers, James had a tendency to recite multiple pages of long passages while Jay referred to only a sentence or two at most. The younger pastor was also very negligent in citing the source of his quotations. In the James sample, fifty-three quotations appear without referencing the author. While Jay was inclined to focus more on scripture, James felt the need to rely on the strength of other theological works to build his arguments.

Another device of which Jay was fond was the creation of a pithy saying to illustrate his point. Indeed, several of his listeners remarked on these sayings.⁸⁷ These adages usually were no more than two sentences. Jay noted the power of using this device in the teachings of Jesus, 'The generality of mankind are much more influenced by detached and striking phrases, than by long addresses, or laboured reasoning, which require more time and application than they are either willing or

⁸⁵ *Autobiography of Jay*, 513

⁸⁶ See page 131.

⁸⁷ *Autobiography of Jay* 557

able to afford.’⁸⁸ Jay crafted these phrases to ‘strike and abide’ in the memory of the listener.⁸⁹ An example noted earlier was ‘God cannot make us happy with himself, till he has made us holy like himself.’⁹⁰ In inspiring support for the Home Missionary Society, he proclaimed, ‘He, whom you are required to serve, has always been serving you.’⁹¹ Referring to ministering without integrity he asked, ‘who loves to take his meat from a leprous hand?’⁹² On not conforming to the world, he said, ‘A dead fish can swim with the stream but only a live one can swim against it.’⁹³ Sometimes the sayings could be quite graphic, ‘But now take a real Christian: if you were to give him the liberty to sin, it would be like placing before a man a piece of human flesh, and saying, Sir, you may eat it if you like it. Could he like it? Why, every feeling would revolt from it.’⁹⁴ Forty-nine of these aphorisms have been identified in the sample. The phrases worked to great effect. Charles Godwin recorded no fewer than fifty of these sayings in his personal notes.⁹⁵ In addition to being striking to Jay’s listeners, they would assure Jay of being quoted in future by his colleagues in the ministry.

Jay also employed more general rhetorical devices. He relied heavily on asking questions of two types. The first were rhetorical questions where the listener was assumed to provide the same answer to at least three or more questions. When referring to the floods of discouragement a Christian may face, Jay asked, ‘But do these great waters never come near the people of God? Did they not come near Joseph when he was in the pit, and in the prison? Did they not come near Job when he was stript [sic] of all he had? Did they not come near Jeremiah when he was cast into the dungeon? Did they not come near David when he said, “All Thy waves and thy billows are gone over me?”’⁹⁶ The listener would be able to answer these questions in the affirmative and know he or she too might face discouragement. Rhetorical questions appear in forty-two per cent of the sample.

The second type of question was disarming questions. These were a string of three or more personal questions designed to disarm the listener of any objections and

⁸⁸ Jay, *Works* ix. 165-166

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, xi.xxv

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, ix. 248-249

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, vii. 275

⁹² *Ibid.*, vi. 58

⁹³ *Ibid.*, ix 19

⁹⁴ Jay, *Sunday Evening Sermons and Thursday Evening Lectures*, 57

⁹⁵ Godwin, ‘Reminisces’, 73-86

⁹⁶ Jay, *Sunday Evening Sermons and Thursday Evening Lectures*, 197

concede Jay's argument. During an application of one of Jay's funeral sermons he says, 'It is for you to determine whether the world or the things of this world are swaying you or you are living as you will wish you had lived when you come to die. You have long heard the gospel. Have you received it? From a child you have heard the Holy Scriptures. Have they made you wise unto salvation? You have seen that the saints are the excellent in the earth. Is all your delight in them? You have now much in heaven. Are you to be connected with it, or separated from it forever?'⁹⁷ The disarming questions were designed to create enough anxiety to compel the listener to respond to the preacher's point. This was a favourite device that J.A. James particularly liked to use. It motivated his listeners toward self-examination. In one instance, the Carr's Lane pastor asked eighteen consecutive disarming questions.⁹⁸ Jay never attained that score, but he deployed this device in thirty-six per cent of his sermons.

Three other general devices appear in Jay's sermons. He frequently used characterisation where the preacher upheld several heroes or villains to be admired or rejected as examples. These appear in thirty per cent of the sample. Also, antithesis occurs in nineteen per cent of the sermons. But most frequent was the use of repetitive phrases or words as a mnemonic device. These appear in sixty per cent of Jay's sermons. Jay's use of multiple rhetorical devices in his confirmation provided a variety of means in communicating his point to his audience.

The vast majority of Jay's conclusions were as short as his introductions. Few of his concluding thoughts carried an application, as that was considered within the body along with his points. Generally Jay tried to end his sermons with a type of inspiration that would motivate the congregation into action and response to his theme. Usually this would be a passage of scripture, a brief prayer or blessing and possibly a few stanzas from a hymn. For example, when preaching prior to communion he motivated his listeners to self-examination by concluding with the Watts hymn, 'What have I done for Him who died to save my wretched soul?'⁹⁹ His favourite method was to end the message with a different verse, yet one related to his sermon text that virtually agreed with the principal topic of his message. When

⁹⁷ Jay, *Works*, vii.249

⁹⁸ James, J.A. *Pastoral Addresses*. (London: Religious Tract Society, n.d.), 185-186

⁹⁹ Jay, *Sunday Evening Sermons and Thursday Evening Lectures*, 479

preaching on the benefit to the believer from the atonement in Hebrews 2:10, Jay concluded the sermon with Revelation 1:5-6, 'Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.'¹⁰⁰ Fifty-two per cent of the sample sermons end with a different text from the one on which he preached. By book-ending his sermons with scriptures that taught the same truth, Jay was establishing that his sermons were messages from God.

Delivery and Receptivity

The Argyle Chapel pastor preached to bring change in the actions of his listeners.¹⁰¹ To inspire this transformation, he placed more of an emphasis on connecting with the emotions of his audience than on stimulating their intellect. John Angell James criticised his mentor for being 'somewhat deficient in not giving greater prominence to the chief truths of salvation in their dogmatic form'.¹⁰² This was precisely the same criticism that was to be mounted by R.W. Dale of Jay and the Evangelical Revival while at the same time commending Jay for his simplicity of style and his 'disinterested love of truth'.¹⁰³ Jay met this criticism by claiming he was striving for what he called an 'experimentality, or a constant blending of the doctrine and practice of the gospel strongly with the affections and feelings'.¹⁰⁴ This was not to say that Jay's aim was religious enthusiasm. He had a high regard for appealing to the intellect as well. There was a large level of assumption on Jay's part, typical of the period.¹⁰⁵ When presenting theological terms such as justification, repentance and, even at times, 'the gospel' he provides no explanation of what he means. He took for granted when he quoted theologians such as Doddridge, Howe and Baxter that the listener was familiar with these writers. Outside the scripture passage read prior to the sermon, he never cites the book, chapter or verse of the more than thirty scriptures he quotes throughout the sermon. In fact, twice he became irritated at the congregation for turning to the quoted passages in their Bibles, because he felt their page turning

¹⁰⁰ Jay, 'The Sufferings of Our Saviour Necessary' in *Works*, ix.111

¹⁰¹ See page 107.

¹⁰² *Autobiography of Jay*, 547

¹⁰³ Dale, R.W. *The Old Evangelicalism and the New* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1889), 11, 19

¹⁰⁴ *Autobiography of Jay*, 145

¹⁰⁵ Dickson, *Beyond Religious Discourse*, 79

was distracting. He openly complained, 'I have read it aright'.¹⁰⁶ But Jay believed the fault of early Dissenting preachers was not their doctrine but their failure to communicate it to their audience passionately. He credited the early Methodists for bringing about the change.¹⁰⁷ The congregation must be made 'to feel before they think' and even the more educated listeners, though they 'attend not to feel', 'must be made to feel in order to think'.¹⁰⁸ For Jay, it was emotion that stimulated the intellect and brought about life alteration.

The sermons were crafted with this type of transformation in mind. Jay believed a good sermon began with preparation.¹⁰⁹ The preacher should familiarise himself with the text until he 'felt he had grasped' his subject.¹¹⁰ From there the pastor should organize the sermon for the members of the congregation in such a way that would 'secure their attention'.¹¹¹ Jay wrote to a friend expressing his frustration with ministers who 'wish to appear to be learned and intellectual ... What can the mass of an audience do with nice distinctions, and abstruse reasoning, and long argumentative paragraphs?'¹¹² The address was to be well ordered and use illustrations with which the congregation could identify.¹¹³ The concepts were to be 'plain' to the listener. The language should be 'everywhere plain, and the exemplifications natural and familiar'.¹¹⁴ The message was to be 'dispatched with brevity and plainness'.¹¹⁵ And finally it was important for the sermon to be memorable so that the listener could retain and apply the message outwardly.¹¹⁶

The delivery was to enable this emotional connection to the audience. 'Animation is desirable', said the pastor, 'it must appear to be the result of feeling.'¹¹⁷ To accomplish this Jay believed the preacher must become detached from his notes in the pulpit. Unlike John Henry Newman who thought written sermons were superior to

¹⁰⁶ Jay, *Sunday Evening and Sunday Morning Sermons*, 469

¹⁰⁷ *Autobiography of Jay*, 144-145

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 142-143

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 155

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 141

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 142

¹¹² Jay to Head, no date given, *ibid.*, 512

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 147-148

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 141

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 143

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 141

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 143

extempore sermons, Jay's sermons were delivered from memory.¹¹⁸ He took only a skeleton outline into the pulpit. By contrast, James was known to read his sermons.¹¹⁹ Jay refused to read his sermons because spontaneity enabled him to be more passionate. It would appear that the man almost performed his sermons.

Jay's chief oratorical talent was the effective use of his voice. Every witness of Jay's preaching comments on his remarkable timbre and capacity for inflection to suit the mood of the subject. *The Bath and Cheltenham Gazette* reported, 'As regards his voice; its tones can many of them never be forgotten. They were capable of stirring the deepest founts of feeling and of exciting the finest sympathies of our nature.'¹²⁰ The American pastor W.B. Sprague (1795-1876) said 'every sentence was uttered in a way to secure to it the highest possible effect'.¹²¹ But Jay was very careful not to overstep conventional boundaries and to indulge in what were considered vulgarities of the day, especially in gestures. According to his biographer Thomas Wallace, he scarcely moved 'anything but a finger'.¹²² James said he 'seldom used any' action in the pulpit 'except an occasional elevation of his hand'. The Carr's Lane pastor felt he should have done more.¹²³ But while communicating the passion of what he was preaching, Jay did not want to offend the sensibilities of fashionable Bath. The missionary S. Sheridan Wilson (1797-1866) described Jay's preaching as 'the eloquence of reason, imagination and feeling blended'.¹²⁴ Jay was brilliant in harnessing pathos within the boundaries of social propriety.

The combination of Jay's delivery with the content of his message must have made a more favourable impression than merely reading his written sermons. Charles Godwin asked when reading Jay's writings, 'And who that heard that voice, does not seem still to hear the music of that voice, and to feel somewhat even now of the devotion its accent helped to inspire?'¹²⁵ The reviewer of *The Christian Contemplated* wrote 'it would be impossible for such a hearer to dissociate the intonations of his

¹¹⁸ For Newman, see Ellison, Robert H., *The Victorian Pulpit: Spoken and Written Sermons in Nineteenth-Century Britain*. (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1998), 35

¹¹⁹ James read the sermons on *Female Piety*, James, *Works*, iv. 3

¹²⁰ *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette* January 1854 BCL 3/23404

¹²¹ Sprague, William B., *Visits to European Celebrities* (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1855), 54

¹²² Wallace, Thomas. *A Portraiture of the Rev. William Jay* (London: Arthur Hall, Virtue and Co., 1854), 84

¹²³ *Autobiography of Jay*, 548

¹²⁴ Wilson, S.S. *The Rev. William Jay: A Memoir* (London: Binns and Goodwin, 1854), 78

¹²⁵ Godwin, 'Reminiscences', 17

melting voice ... [from] the written sermon'.¹²⁶ The contrast can be seen in the accounts of two American pastors. In 1828, W.B. Sprague made a tour of England with the intent of hearing the celebrated preachers of the day. After listening to Jay preach he wrote, 'His fine open, beaming face, his melodious voice and perfectly distinct articulation; his gestures as unstudied as his breathing; his elevated and yet familiar and affectionate style of address, I confess, gave him an advantage over most of the excellent speakers I have heard on either side of the water.'¹²⁷ In contrast, John Broadus (1827-1895), one of the founders of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, never heard Jay preach. Though he included Jay in his history of preaching for the early nineteenth century, he declared Jay was not a man of 'shining gifts'.¹²⁸ It was Jay's delivery that made the most favourable impression on his admirers.

It was important to Jay not to weary his listeners. 'There is nothing a preacher should be more guarded than length.' Jay stated he 'never exceeded more than three quarters of an hour at most'.¹²⁹ With a few exceptions, he remained true to his maxim. The average length of time for the sample sermons was just under thirty-five minutes. Occasion seemed to dictate the length of his sermon. Sunday morning sermons averaged forty minutes, while evening and weekday sermons averaged just under half an hour. However, sermons preached on special occasions such as chapel openings, ordinations or mission events lasted an hour or more. But even when the sermons exceeded forty-five minutes, Charles Godwin commented, 'Rarely did his hearers regret the length of their pastor's sermon.'¹³⁰ Jay's sermons definitely became shorter as he grew older. The length of time reduced from an average of three quarters of an hour between 1789 and 1831 to twenty-five minutes in the final period of his life. Toward the latter end of his career, long sermons tended to weary the pastor as much as the congregation.

Jay had no scruples about repeating topics or sermons. Godwin notes that he was prone to do this, particularly in funeral sermons and in his old age.¹³¹ Sprague

¹²⁶ *The Congregational Magazine* (1826):585

¹²⁷ Sprague, *Visits to European Celebrities*, 54

¹²⁸ Broadus, John. *Lectures on the History of Preaching* (New York, Sheldon and Company, 1876), 227

¹²⁹ *Autobiography of Jay*, 146

¹³⁰ Godwin, 'Reminiscences', 31

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 25

said the sermon he heard he recognized from an outline in the *Morning Exercises*.¹³² He preached the same sermon to the Dorset Home Missionary Society in Sherborne in 1822 that he used to open the Fulwood Chapel near Taunton in 1813.¹³³ The practice must have not been too unusual as a writer in the *Evangelical Magazine* advocated that pastors ‘who have been in the ministry for awhile’ should repeat sermons to their congregation ‘but with additional care in the study of the subject’.¹³⁴

It is difficult to measure the impact of a preacher, especially one that preached for seventy years. But perhaps success can be measured by the way Jay’s talents were recognized. Attendance and requests to speak outside the Argyle Chapel might be one type of measurement. Jay’s services were highly sought for the large crowds he drew at national events, but more particularly in the southwest of England. At the age of twenty-seven Jay was asked to be the main speaker at the first anniversary of the London Missionary Society. He was subsequently asked to preach at the event on four additional occasions, an honour no other minister received. On the last occasion, people arrived several hours early to make sure they had a seat and ‘thousands’ were turned away for lack of space.¹³⁵ He was the first minister to preach for the Home Missionary Society in 1820. One reviewer remarked that so great was his ‘ingenuity in applying the text to the occasion that our surprise was soon turned to admiration’.¹³⁶ On that occasion Jay inspired the auditory of Salters’ Hall to give £230 in the collection for the Society.¹³⁷ The Wilts and East Somerset Association met biannually. At each meeting the host church could pick the evening preacher from the ministers of the association. Between 1822 and 1837 he preached at each meeting with only one break when the association met at his chapel and he could choose the minister. He was frequently requested to preach at auxiliary society meetings in order to obtain large collections. He was also recruited for chapel openings because the substantial offerings would pay off the construction debts. Between 1813 and 1843 Jay averaged opening a new chapel once per year. The Argyle Chapel had to be enlarged three times in order to provide sittings for his hearers with the first within

¹³² Sprague, *Visits*, 54

¹³³ *Evangelical Magazine* (1813): 392 and *Evangelical Magazine* (1822):490

¹³⁴ *Evangelical Magazine* (1817):127-130

¹³⁵ *Missionary Magazine & Chronicle* (1844): 161

¹³⁶ *Evangelical Magazine* (1821): 22

¹³⁷ *The Congregational Magazine* (1820):573

two years of his settlement.¹³⁸ On Census Sunday in 1851, the Argyle Chapel was filled to capacity with 1,200 attendants.¹³⁹ The pastor consistently drew crowds throughout his career.

Personal testimony of how people felt after his sermons also might be a proper form of measurement. Visitors to the Argyle Chapel were greatly moved by the pastor's preaching. William Knighton, physician to George IV, wrote 'I underwent great emotion as he proceeded ... and never felt my heart more under the holy influence of religion.'¹⁴⁰ 'I have never heard more of the Gospel in a single sermon', wrote Henry Johns (1803-1859), rector of Christ Church, Baltimore.¹⁴¹ Jay's sermons motivated Thomas Stratten (1793-1854) and other young men at the chapel to go out in pairs on Sundays in order to evangelize the surrounding villages.¹⁴² His preaching stirred his own family. His daughter Ann Bolton (1793-1859) wrote in her diary in 1816, 'My dear father preaches better than ever ... the word comes from him indeed.' She went on to write, 'He is so holy! When I look at him ... I can only turn to myself and say "thou are only an almost Christian."¹⁴³ His granddaughter Abby Bolton (1827-1849) first heard him preach at Cambridge in 1848 before a packed chapel. Afterward, her reaction was 'What a privilege it is only to be near this man of God!'¹⁴⁴ From the casual acquaintance to the most intimate of relations, the sermons of William Jay affected the emotions of his hearers.

In conclusion, the preaching ministry was foundational to the persona of William Jay. His concept of delivering the word of God was emphasized over all his other roles as pastor. Preaching was his gift and most important duty. He stated, 'Preaching has been the element of my heart and my head.'¹⁴⁵ Sermon preparation became a high priority in order to achieve excellence. Throughout his career, Scripture was the basis and authority of his sermons. His texts were chosen to suit the

¹³⁸ Ede, Mary. *The Chapel in Argyle Street, Bath, 1789-1989*. Bath: Central United Reformed Church, 1989, 14

¹³⁹ The children's Sunday School ran concurrent with the worship service giving an additional 600 in attendance. 1851 Ecclesiastical Census Returns, SRO, T\PH\pro/11

¹⁴⁰ Knighton, Dorthea. *Memoirs of Sir William Knighton, Bart., G.C.H.* (London: R. Bentley, 1838), ii.86

¹⁴¹ *Autobiography of Jay*, 223

¹⁴² *The Congregational Yearbook* (1855) 238-240

¹⁴³ Bolton, William Jay. *Footsteps of the Flock* (London: Hamilton, Adams & Co., 1860), 78

¹⁴⁴ Bolton, Rhoda. *The Lighted Valley; or the Closing Scenes of a Beloved Sister*. (New York: Robert Carter Bros., 1860), 56

¹⁴⁵ *Autobiography of Jay*, 161

purposes of his sermons and overall, covered a broad range of scripture. To enhance the Bible even more, his sermons were laced with a prodigious number of biblical verses. The themes of his sermons emphasized practical theology in the daily exercise of holy living using the motivators of self-examination, God's judgment, spiritual warfare and impending death. The minister was likely to preach within a textual or topical style so that he could begin with a text of scripture as his launching point. The form of his sermons included brief introductions and conclusions with the majority of time devoted to expounding the divisions of his texts. His favourite rhetorical devices were those that allowed him to utilize the Bible within his arguments, thus emphasizing the authority of scripture even more. With the exception of his sermons becoming shorter as he aged, there was remarkable consistency and balance in his preaching over his career. Jay felt he needed to engage his listeners' emotions more than their intellects to inspire holy living. He used his voice, gave the appearance of extemporaneous speaking, and took into consideration the limitations of receptivity to connect with the emotions of his audience. His achievements were attested by the large numbers he attracted, numerous requests to speak and personal testimonies. With such success throughout the span of his ministry, Jay felt no need to alter his approach. The Argyle pastor was convinced that preaching changed lives, thus justifying the claim of John Angell James that Jay's whole character could be summed up in the single word, the preacher.

Table 5.1 Rhetorical Devices within the Sermons of William Jay

<u>Device</u>	<u>Number of sermons</u>	<u>Total Number of Occurrences</u>
Scriptural Dialogue	88	165
Repetition	72	156
Triad	65	96
Isaac Watts Hymns/Quotes	60	111
Ends with Different Verse	63	63
Pithy Sayings	41	49
Rhetorical Questions	50	66
Disarming Questions	44	68
Characterization	36	51
Conversion Appeals	35	38
Rapid Fire Bible Quotations	30	36
William Cowper Quote/Hymn	27	32
John Newton Quote/Hymn	23	28
Antithesis	23	30
References <i>Pilgrim's Progress</i>	5	8
Historical Illustrations	15	25
Biblical Illustrations	48	116
Personal Anecdotes	14	18
Hell as Motivator	7	7

Sample Size: 125 sermons¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ Jay, *A Sermon Preached at the Opening of the Independent Chapel in Bath*, 'Delivered from the Pit', 'God's Retributive Justice', 'Rest for the Weary', 'Mercy on Sea and Land', 'The Friend of Sinners', 'The Believer's Deliverance from Death', 'Examples Recorded for our Learning', 'The God of Peace', 'Easter Hopes', 'The Foundation of Zion', 'Owls and Dragons', 'The Future Triumphs of the Gospel', 'The Seed of Israel', 'Instruction and Peace', 'The Shepherd Smitten', 'Joshua's Final Charge', 'A Good Man Misunderstood', 'The Practice and Privilege of the Godly', 'David's Position and Purposes', 'The Soul Satisfied', 'The Right Use of Past Mercies', 'The Soul's Rest', 'Hear', 'The Father's Love for the Son', 'The Great Salvation', 'The Heart's Secrets', 'Plucked from the Burning', 'God's Knowledge of Our Life', 'Trust and Love', 'The Favour of God', 'Asaph's Conclusion', 'Songs in the Night', 'The Way of Good Men', 'Days to Be Remembered', 'Forward', 'The Harvest Feast', 'Thoughts for the New Year', 'Memorable Days', 'Forgetfulness of God', 'An Imperative Command', 'Our High Priest', 'Our Weakness and Our Strength' in *Sunday Evening Sermons and Thursday Evening Lectures*, 'The Christian in Christ', 'The Christian in the Closet', 'The Christian in the Family', 'The Christian in the Church', 'The Christian in Prosperity', 'The Christian in the World', *Works* vi, 'The Mutual Duties of Husbands and Wives', 'The Value of Life', 'The Scriptures', 'Anxiety Directed', 'The Riches of His Goodness', 'The Hand of God in Afflictions', 'Friendship in Death', 'The Importance of an Evangelical Ministry', 'An Attempt to Regulate the Claims of the Christian Ministry', 'The Saviour Glorified in His People', 'Sensibility at the Fall of Eminence', 'Prayer for the Success of the Gospel', 'The Jubilee', 'The Minister's Request', in *Works* vii, 'Reflections on Victory', 'An Address Delivered At the Interment of the Rev. William Humphryes, Hammersmith', 'Consolation in Death', 'The Loss of Connexions Deplored and Improved', 'The Wife's Advocate', in *Works* viii, 'Mistakes Concerning the Number of the Righteous', 'The Nature of Genuine Religion', 'Vows Called to Remembrance', 'The Triumphs of Patience', 'The Sufferings of Our Saviour Necessary', 'The Young Admonished', 'The Condemnation of Self-Will', 'On Progress in Religion', 'The Secure Alarmed', 'Concupiscence Punished', 'The Abuse of Divine Forbearance', 'Hope', 'The Condition of Christians in the World', 'The Privileges of the Righteous', 'The Gospel Demands and Deserves Attention', 'The Parable of the Two Sons', in *Works* ix, 'The Prayer of Nehemiah', 'Martha and Mary', 'Contentment with Little', in *Works* ix, 'The Death of Death', 'The Grand Inquiry', in *Works* xii, Jay, William. *A Farewell Sermon Preached at Christian Malford*. Bath: S. Hazard, 1789, *A Token of*

Table 5.2 Rhetorical Devices within the Sermons of John Angell James

<u>Device</u>	<u>Number of sermons</u>	<u>Total Number of Occurrences</u>
Scriptural Dialogue	4	5
Repetition	16	20
Triad	5	5
Quotes a Poet or Hymn	14	16
Ends with Different Verse	3	3
Pithy Sayings	0	0
Rhetorical Questions	10	12
Disarming Questions	20	24
Characterization	0	0
Conversion Appeals	2	2
Rapid Fire Bible Quotations	0	0
Antithesis	4	6
Historical Illustrations	15	25
Biblical Illustrations	14	26
Personal Anecdotes	6	9
Hell as Motivator	8	11
Quotes by Theologians	38	110
Quotes without Citing the Source	22	53
Extensive Quotations (one paragraph or more)	23	40
Anti-Catholic Statements	13	14
Descriptive Scenes	9	11
Quotes by Philosopher	9	11
Death as a Motivator	2	2

Sample Size: 50 sermons¹⁴⁷

Respect to the Memory of the Rev. Thomas Thompson. Bath: S. Hazard, 1790, *A View to the Gospel*. Bath: S. Hazard, 1791, *An Oration on the Death of William Thorpe*. Bristol: Philip Rose and Son, 1833, 'The Testimony of John The Baptist to the Saviour', 'The Dignity and Offices of the Son of God', 'Hezekiah's Estimation of Man's Life', 'Shall It Prosper?', 'What Have They Seen In Thine House?', *Five Sermons Preached at Cambridge*. Cambridge: J.Hall, 1837, *The Importance of Truth Relative to Ministerial Usefulness*. Bath: S. Hazard, 1791, *The Man of Uz*. London: W. Farmer, 1832, *The Union of Saints on Earth and Saints in Heaven*. Bath, 1850, *Where Is He? A Sermon Preached by William Jay at Highbury Chapel, Cheltenham*. Cheltenham: S.C. Harper, 1841, 'What Is Your Occupation?' in Godwin, 'Reminiscences', 'And It Shall Come to Pass', *The Pulpit* (1824): 49-57, 'Most Men Will Proclaim', *The Pulpit* (1825): 33-38, 'Parthians Medes, and Elamites', *The Pulpit* (1827):177-185, 'The Retrospect', *The Pulpit* (1831):161-173, 'Believers Rejoicing', 'God's People Secure from Harm', *The Pulpit* (1838):297-312, 'The Tenderness of God Towards His Afflicted People', *The Pulpit* (1840): 453-459, 'The Prerogative of the Saviour', *The Pulpit* (1849): 393-400, 'Christians Obedient Children', *The Pulpit* (1850): 337-342, 'A Christian Conversation', *The Pulpit* (1851): 498-508, 'The God of Bethel', 'Philip's Sermon', 'Confirmation', 'The Disposer of the World', in Bertram, R.A (ed.), *Sunday Morning Sermons*. London: R.D. Dickinson, 1878, 'God Saved the Queen', 'Christian Idolatries', 'A Plea for the Poor', Bath Central Library, MS Accession No. 23404

¹⁴⁷ James, 'A Pastoral Charge', 'Christian Activity', 'Christian Mercy Explained and Enforced', 'Parental Desire Duty and Encouragement', 'Parental Desire Duty and Encouragement (pt 2)', 'The Attraction of the Cross', 'The Crisis', in *Works* i, 'A Funeral Sermon for Mrs. James Sherman', 'A Tribute of Affectionate Respect', 'Missionary Prospects', 'A Sermon For the Centenary of the Tabernacle at Bristol', 'The Death of Eminent Ministers A Public Loss', in *Works* ii, 'The Charge Delivered to RW Dale', 'The Consolation and Duties of Churches Under the Loss of Eminent Ministers', in *Works* iii, 'The Conspicuous Place Which Woman Occupies in Scripture', 'Woman's

Mission', *Works* iv, 'Emigration', in *Works* v, 'Love Necessary to the Christian Character', 'The Nature of Charity', 'True Christian Love Distinguished from Spurious Candour', 'Faith in General', 'Faith in Relation to Justification', *Works* vi, 'Comparisons Between Professors of the Present and Former Generations', 'Conformity to the World', 'Motives to the Attainment of High Degrees of Piety', 'The Danger of Self-Deception', 'The Design and Duty of Profession', 'The Duty of Avoiding The Appearance of Evil', 'The Import of Professing to Be a Christian', in *Works* x, 'Brotherly Love', 'Duties of Professors as Citizens', 'The Influence of Professors', in *Works* xi, 'The Domestic Constitution', 'The Duties of Husbands and Wives', 'The Formation of the Marriage Union', 'The Respective Duties of Husbands and Wives', in *Works* xii, 'A New Year's Solemn Warning', 'Attendance on Weekday Services', 'Heavenly Mindedness', 'How to Spend a Sabbath Profitably', 'Increase of Holiness', 'Reading the Scriptures', 'Self-Examination', 'Sorrow for the Death of Friends', 'Spirituality of Mind', 'The Duty of Meditation', 'The Influence of Senior Christians', 'The Lord's Supper', 'The Spirit of Prayer', in *Works* xv

Chapter Six: The Spirituality of William Jay

Thomas Wallace was exposed to the ministry of William Jay throughout his life. Wallace's parents were members of the Argyle Chapel when he was a child. As a teenager, Wallace moved with his family from Bath to London where his father lamented not finding another minister capable of preaching to the standard of Jay. When Jay visited Surrey Chapel for his annual preaching engagement, the Wallace family was sure to be in attendance. Thomas continued the tradition until the time he attended Hoxton College to train for the ministry. Due to his health, Wallace returned to Bath to finish his career and rejoined the Argyle Chapel. As they shared common bonds in writing and ministry, Wallace developed an intimate relationship with his pastor until Jay's death twenty years later. In 1854, Wallace published his own reminiscences of Jay. In reviewing the minister's life, he claimed devotion to God was a 'peculiar feature' that marked the character of William Jay and was one of his 'most beauteous attractions'. Wallace reflected, 'Spirituality was his element, the atmosphere to which he was accustomed, and which he delighted to breathe.'¹ This chapter will examine that 'peculiar feature' of Jay's life by exploring his spirituality.

Building upon the work of University of Durham Theology Professor Philip Sheldrake, Ian Randall of Spurgeon's College argues for academic study of spirituality as a 'critical historical analysis of a broad range of lived experience'. Christian spirituality in this sense is 'the conjunction of theology, communion with God and practical Christianity'.² Using Randall's definition, it is possible to analyze how William Jay's brand of Christianity was expressed both individually and corporately. The Argyle Chapel pastor's spirituality will be found to be highly biblical, experimental and, at least in principle, universally applicable to evangelical Christians.

William Jay's spirituality was deeply rooted in his own conversion. Jay's conversion, as we have seen, was not dramatic enough for him to pinpoint the precise

¹ Wallace, Thomas. *A Portraiture of the Late William Jay of Bath* (London: Arthur Hall, Virtue & Co., 1854), 67-68

² Randall, Ian. *Evangelical Experiences: A Study in the Spirituality of English Evangelicalism, 1918-1939* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999), 2

moment of its occurrence though he did remember a definitive change occurring.³ As a child he was a seeker for spiritual fulfilment. He was finally satisfied when he experienced his first evangelical sermon in the home of Joanna Turner. His conversion occurred after hearing the gospel, a message that stimulated an awareness of both his personal sin and his need for Christ to save him from that sin. He distinctly remembered being confronted with 1 Timothy 1:15.⁴ He described his contact with early Calvinistic Methodism as ‘rain upon the mown grass, or cold water to a thirsty soul’.⁵ The event itself, however, was not as significant as the effects of the event. ‘I never think it of much importance to inquire how persons became religious, if it appears that they are actually in the possession, and under the influence of it.’⁶ Jay’s conversion was life-changing as he began to manifest Christian practice in his everyday behaviour.

Because Jay could not locate this immediate change at a specific time, his conversion supported his view of Calvinism. The historian Ian Sellers claimed that Jay was not a Calvinist since he did not use the word to describe himself in the *Autobiography*.⁷ But while Jay did not use the phrase, he did not deny his convictions on election.⁸ His son called him a ‘moderate Calvinist’ and the appellation reflects Jay’s thought.⁹ It would appear that Jay exemplified the Calvinism of Andrew Fuller, referring to him as ‘one of the greatest divines this country had ever produced’ and going as far as to preach a memorial sermon upon the death of the Baptist pastor.¹⁰ He said of Fuller’s system, ‘It is not only clear and convincing; to me it is perfect demonstration.’¹¹ Like Fuller, Jay believed in ‘an infinite worth and fullness in the sufferings’ of Christ that could embrace the whole of humanity, yet also the sovereign

³ See Chapter 3, 45-46

⁴ ‘the faithful saying, and worth of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners’.

⁵ William Jay, ‘The Autobiography of the Rev. William Jay : with reminiscences of some distinguished contemporaries, selections from his correspondence, etc’, ed. George Redford and John Angell James. *The Autobiography of William Jay*. (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 22-23

⁶ Jay, William. ‘Consolation in Death’ in *The Works of William Jay* (London: C.A. Bartlett, 1843), viii.203

⁷ Sellers, Ian. *Nineteenth-Century Nonconformity* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977), 20

⁸ *Autobiography of Jay*, 169-170

⁹ Jay, Cyrus. *Recollections of William Jay* (London: Hamilton, Adams & Co., 1859), 351

¹⁰ Godwin, Charles. ‘Reminiscences of the Rev. William Jay’ MS, CURC, 21

¹¹ Wallace, *Portraiture*, 154

election of God.¹² Jay was fond of using similar expressions. He referred to the ‘infinite value of the sacrifice’ meaning an unlimited atonement.¹³ This was not to say that all would be converted, but due to the infinite value of Christ’s redemption of the cross all could potentially be saved.¹⁴ Because of this connection, Jay could make a bona fide offer of the gospel to all. He also preached ‘the salvability [sic] of infants in virtue of the infinite meritoriousness [sic] of the death of Christ’ though he never specified an age at which they became responsible to respond personally.¹⁵ Within Fuller’s system the pastor could confidently and freely offer the gospel to all to whom he preached.

Yet Jay equally advocated that salvation was obtained by sovereign election. ‘We are not born Christians, but made such: and the operation is no less than divine.’¹⁶ God’s sovereignty extended to salvation. He brought conversion at the time and under the circumstances he deemed best. ‘There is no such thing as chance in his empire’ said the pastor, ‘his providence is not only real but universal.’¹⁷ Since Jay’s salvation had nothing to do with his response, it must have been a distinct work of God in his conversion in which he had no personal participation. As a result, Jay surrendered his life to the ministry- particularly that of evangelical preaching such as he had experienced at Turner’s chapel.¹⁸ Jay’s life was dedicated to encouraging the same conversion experience he had reached through the proclamation of the word.

The purpose of evangelical preaching was to encourage the manifestation of the converted life in the listener. The Christian was no longer content to enjoy the pleasures of the world, but now sought to enjoy the pleasures of God. The world was an unhealthy and hostile environment for the disciple of Christ. ‘Regeneration makes a man a stranger and a pilgrim’ in this world as the Christian is now a citizen of heaven.¹⁹ The believer was to await entrance to heaven through death. But until that

¹² Fuller, Andrew. ‘Defence of the “Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation”, in a Reply to Mr. Button and Philanthropos’ in *The Complete Works of Andrew Fuller* (Harrisonburg: Sprinkle Publications, 1988), ii.453

¹³ Jay, *Works*, ii.47

¹⁴ Haykin, Michael A.G. ‘Particular Redemption in the Writings of Andrew Fuller (1754-1815)’ in Bebbington, D.W. (ed). *The Gospel In the World*. (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002), 107-128

¹⁵ Jay, *Recollections*, 47

¹⁶ Jay, William. *Morning Exercises for the Closet: For Every Day In The Year*. London: Hamilton, Adams, & Co., 1831, 26 January, i.86

¹⁷ Jay, *Works*, vii.228

¹⁸ Chapter 3, 45-48

¹⁹ Jay, *Works*, ii.523

time, a true Christian was obliged to live a distinct life-style apart from the world. The convert was in a constant state of spiritual warfare against malevolent spirits that brought temptation and incited the fall of God's children.²⁰ It was important to Jay that his preaching should be 'devil-killing' to enable the believer to eliminate the spiritual threat.²¹ The Christian was to rely on the teachings of the Bible by which all behaviour and attitudes were measured. The convert was not expected to be perfect from the start, nor could he or she ever reach perfection.²² But with constant diligence the believer was expected to grow in his or her sanctification as each personally enacted the teachings of scripture in daily living. Christians were to have faith in God that this distinct living would be to their advantage and benefit.

If conversion was a process initiated by God alone, then sanctification was seen as a process in which the believer could participate. God and believer worked in conjunction as the Christian experimentally put into practice biblical teachings. 'Christianity must be an experimental thing', according to Jay, 'for it must enter the mind, affect the conscience and the heart, before it can pervade the conversation and the life.'²³ Referring to salvation and sanctification respectively, 'The one is perfect at once', he wrote, 'the other is gradual'.²⁴ Over time, one was expected to exhibit spiritual growth. Jay stated 'It is not enough that God is reconciled to us through the blood of the cross - but we must be also reconciled with God, and love his presence and choose his way.'²⁵ Believers were to eliminate certain forms of behaviour that reflected the world and add those that built godliness in their lives.

Success in this endeavour was to make use of the 'means of grace' meaning spiritual disciplines and ordinances. Failure to use the means of grace would not affect one's salvation, but it would limit the believer's sense of God's nearness in this life. The exercise of these practices would give confidence to the Christian that he or she was indeed a member of the elect. Jay believed the true believer 'will not, indeed, from a principle of duty, undervalue the means of grace and neglect private and public

²⁰ Jay, *Works*, iii.16-19

²¹ Jay to Charles Godwin, 11 August 1849, A.L. 3063, BCL

²² Jay, William. 'The Way of Good Men', in *Sunday Evening and Thursday Evening Sermons*. (London: R.D. Dickinson, 1879), 263-264

²³ Jay, *Works*, iii.510

²⁴ Jay, *Works*, iii.54-55

²⁵ Jay, *Morning Exercises*, 19 January, i.49

devotion'.²⁶ Practising the means of grace was a necessity. And these means of grace could be appropriated both individually and corporately.

Jay taught that the individual Christian should have a personal time of daily retirement for devotion. 'He who commands me to enter his gates with thanksgiving, tells me also to enter my closet.'²⁷ This period was to be utilized in contemplating the Christian walk through various means of grace to strengthen the believer for service to Christ. The appropriate time for this to occur was early in the morning when one first woke. Additionally, Jay advocated that the serious Christian should strive for another time of reflection at the end of the day. But if that could not be observed, at a minimum a morning devotional period should be maintained.²⁸ The practice was not uncommon among evangelicals. In surveying evangelical Nonconformist obituaries between 1825 and 1875, Linda Wilson discovered that forty-three per cent of the females and forty-four per cent of the males had a consistent time of daily devotion (the figure was as high as sixty-five per cent for Congregational women).²⁹ Jay rose early at five in the morning (verified by his personal doctor, William Bowie) for this purpose.³⁰ His son remembered Jay's evening retirements.³¹ The primary disciplines during this individual devotional time were Bible reading, prayer and self-examination. Secondary means might include singing, journal writing and an additional period of reading and learning. Central to the period was reflection upon and encountering the truth of the Bible.

To assist in this personal devotional time, Jay wrote both *Morning Exercises for the Closet for Every Day of the Year* (1829) and *Evening Exercises for the Closet for Every Day of the Year* (1832). There are seven hundred and thirty, brief three- to five -minute devotional reflections extracted from his sermons. Jay designed them to be a blend of doctrinal exposition and practical experience.³² Like his sermons, each exercise was highly biblical with scripture quoted frequently. The lessons were based on no more than two verses or portions of a verse and averaged five more verses in

²⁶ *ibid.*, 15 January, i.39

²⁷ *ibid.*, 14 February, i.114

²⁸ Jay, *Works*, iii.343-346

²⁹ Wilson, Linda. *Constrained by Zeal: Female Spirituality Amongst Nonconformists 1825-1875* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2000), 107

³⁰ *Autobiography of Jay*, 105, 251

³¹ Jay, Cyrus. *Recollections*, 96

³² Jay, *Morning Exercises*, ix

addition to the text on which they were based. And as titled, they were to be used to open and to close the day. Jay was careful to emphasize that the *Exercises* were not to be substitutes for Bible reading.³³ Additional perusal of the scripture was expected as well. Jay designed his meditations to be acceptable both in doctrine and practice to all Christians regardless of denomination. However, if people came across a point they disagreed with, he hoped they would be like an ox coming across a tuft of grass they did not like and simply move on to the other ‘large and rich pasturage’.³⁴ The *Morning Exercises* met with wide success both in Britain and the United States and among people of varying denominations. Within three years the volume had gone through ten editions. The Baptist Robert Hall considered it Jay’s best work.³⁵ The American Presbyterian W.B. Sprague praised both Jay’s ‘devotional spirit’ and his ‘truly catholic spirit’ in the *Exercises*.³⁶ And a minister of the Church of Scotland, Andrew Kennedy Hutchinson Boyd (1825-1899) commented that all the exercises were ‘so evenly good’ and lamented only that Jay was not a Presbyterian like himself.³⁷ While the studies were intended for personal use, the Rev. John Sheppard of Frome also used them for family worship.³⁸ The *Exercises* met with much approval to satisfy the need of personal devotions.

Bible reading was the top priority for the devotional time. The believer could not dispense with daily reading of the word of God either privately or in family worship ‘without injury or sin’.³⁹ Scripture was the standard of truth for all life.⁴⁰ The Christian was to read it as inspired by God and infallible. ‘This volume, you are bound above all other books to read.’⁴¹ The aim of the reading was ‘to know the Lord’.⁴² The Bible revealed God and the way he was to be obeyed. But here again, not just individual effort was needed by the Bible reader. It was a partnership with God.

³³ *ibid.*, vii-viii

³⁴ *ibid.*, xiii

³⁵ As related to Charles Godwin, January 1831, ‘Notes on The Evening Exercises for the Closet’, Accession No. 2/23390, BCL

³⁶ Sprague, W.B. ‘Character and Works of William Jay’, *The Quarterly Christian Spectator*, 5 (1833), 1-19

³⁷ Boyd, Andrew K.H. *The Autumn Holidays of a Country Parson* (London: Longman, Green & Roberts, 1865), 16

³⁸ As related to Charles Godwin, February 1870, ‘Notes on The Evening Exercises for the Closet’, Accession No. 2/23390, BCL

³⁹ Jay, *Works*, ii.423

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, iv.8-9

⁴¹ *ibid.*, iv.225

⁴² *ibid.*, iii.563

‘You must be taught of God; and it is only the Spirit alone that can guide you into all truth.’⁴³ The greater one’s understanding of the God of the Bible, the more confidence one could have in the Lord’s instruction and sovereignty over life’s events. To underscore this point, nearly twenty per cent of the *Morning* and *Evening Exercises* had confidence in God as their main subject. Jay possessed a personal Bible that he used specifically for making notations. It was so marked that ‘after his decease it appeared to be put in complete mourning from the great number of these black and distinctive marks’.⁴⁴ He referred to it as ‘my study Bible’. Inside the front, he inscribed hermeneutical warnings about misunderstanding the scripture and at the back he inscribed ‘THE WORKS OF GOD’ to remind him of each book of the Bible’s overall author.⁴⁵ Clearly, Bible reading was essential to Jay’s understanding of the Christian life.

Along with the Bible, prayer was vitally important. Jay considered prayer to be the ‘life of religion’.⁴⁶ Wilson notes that prayer was mentioned in twenty-eight per cent of the overall evangelical Nonconformist obituaries, and forty-three per cent of those of Congregationalists.⁴⁷ According to Jay, it was to be done confidently, but also with simplicity.⁴⁸ Prayer had to be ‘sincere and earnest’.⁴⁹ It was not just done in the mornings but was to be performed throughout the day. Prayer drew one closer to God. ‘It is we who are changed by prayer, not he [God] - the land is not drawn to the boat, but the boat to the land.’⁵⁰ Prayer taught the convert complete reliance upon God. The more one prayed for the desires of God, the more one was conformed to the will of God in order to receive his blessing. The believer was to pray for individual needs, others, the king, authorities, pastors, all the saints, missionaries and even enemies.⁵¹ Since prayer was to be constant, it kept the believer in a perpetual frame of devotion to God.

⁴³ Ibid., ii.323

⁴⁴ Jay, *Recollections*, 97

⁴⁵ *Autobiography of Jay*, 171, and Jay, *Works*, ii.425

⁴⁶ Jay, *Works*, ii.386

⁴⁷ Wilson, *Constrained by Zeal*, 112

⁴⁸ Jay, *Works*, ii.386-389

⁴⁹ Jay, *Morning Exercises*, 23 January, i.58, and Jay, *Works*, iv.51

⁵⁰ Ibid., ii.439

⁵¹ Ibid., iv.217-218

Consistent with evangelical spirituality was the concept of self-examination.⁵² The believer was to examine his or her own attitudes and forms of behaviour for sin, ‘for there are remains of this evil even in the subjects of divine grace’.⁵³ The discovery of sin should bring deep remorse and a conviction to repent and change. ‘He that delights in neatness will suffer more from a single stain than another would from wearing a filthy garment.’⁵⁴ Once sin was discovered it was to be confessed to God in order to ‘attain relief and comfort’.⁵⁵ The believer was to mark progress in spiritual growth and take into account the limited amount of time one has on earth. The prospect of death was always before the Christian in an age when infant mortality was high, women frequently died in child-birth and life expectancy and the national life expectancy was forty-one.⁵⁶ One out of every six of the *Morning Exercises* and *Evening Exercises* mentions death as a motivator for self-examination. Special occasions were used as memorials for self-examination. The last day of the year, birthdays, conversion anniversaries, even the hour before bed were used to reflect on spiritual progress. Self-examination was a personal obligation to ensure growth was occurring in the believer.

Furthermore, the converted person was expected to contemplate Christ’s sacrifice at the cross on a regular basis. The cross of Christ was not merely for the conversion of the unbeliever, but also vital to the sanctification of the converted. ‘We therefore glory in his cross; there he becomes the author of eternal salvation.’⁵⁷ Reflection on the cross made believers aware of the magnitude of individual sin and the price of the Christ’s death in redeeming them. This meditation brought about a sense of gratitude and the obligation of Christian service. ‘The love shed abroad in their hearts by his cross, will make them long to resemble him.’⁵⁸ The cross or Christ’s atonement featured in nearly one in three of Jay’s daily exercises. Remembering and contemplating one’s conversion through the cross produced

⁵² Gordon, James M. *Evangelical Spirituality: From the Wesleys to John Stott* (London: SPCK, 1991), 86

⁵³ Jay, *Works*, iii.45

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, iii.47

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, iv.449

⁵⁶ Davis, Graham and Bonsall, Penny. *A History of Bath: Image and Reality* (Lancaster: Carnegie Publishing, 2006), 213-214 and Szreter and Mooney, ‘Urbanization, Mortality, and the Standard of Living Debate: New Estimates of the Expectation of Life At Birth in Nineteenth-Century British Cities’ *Economic History Review*, 51 (1998),104

⁵⁷ Jay, *Works*, ii.502

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, ii.27

humility, gratitude, confidence, pity for those outside the faith and zeal for activism in the life of the believer.⁵⁹ Regular contemplation of the cross was a prominent feature of Jay's spirituality.

Secondary means of grace were emphasized as well. While stressed, they were not considered to be essential like the previous four. For example, learning and reading were considered valuable for personal edification.⁶⁰ Jay taught himself French in order to read the works of the French master preachers Saurin and Bossuet.⁶¹ Listed in the auction catalogue of Jay's personal library were volumes on art, philosophy, history, literature and natural sciences.⁶² One of his deacons, who was also a bookseller, testified that his pastor's study contained more than 3,500 volumes.⁶³ Jay commended his twelve year old daughter for her fondness of 'reading and improvement'.⁶⁴ He particularly encouraged reading biographies. He urged Thomas Wallace to read the memoirs of Philip Henry, David Brainerd, Henry Martyn and Thomas Scott. The example of previous saints could inspire Christian living in the reader. Biographies made up ten per cent of Jay's collection of books. He wrote two biographies of his own. The first was of his mentor Cornelius Winter in 1808 and the second was of John Clark, pastor of the Tabernacle in Trowbridge, in 1810. He was pleased to write the preface for the life of Sarah Savage, daughter of Philip Henry and sister of Matthew Henry, in 1818.⁶⁵ And he did the same in 1849 for the biography of his granddaughter Abby Bolton, which was written by her sister.⁶⁶ Winter's biography was the most inspiring and the best received. John Jebb (1775-1833), Bishop of Limerick, was very fond of the work.⁶⁷ Even the Anglican *Christian Observer* and *Monthly Review* commended the inspiration of Winter's life and the writing of the author despite feeling the necessity to point out all the places where they differed with

⁵⁹ Jay, *Morning Exercises*, 3 February, i.86-87

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, iv.224-225

⁶¹ *Autobiography of Jay*, 561

⁶² Anon. *Catalogue of the Extensive and Valuable Library of Books, Household Furniture ... of the Late W. Jay*. (Bath: Messrs Combes & Bracher, 1858).

⁶³ Godwin Notation, Accession No. 24160, BCL

⁶⁴ Letter of Jay to Statira Jay, 30 Oct. 1830, in *Autobiography of Jay*, 489

⁶⁵ Williams, J.B. *Memoirs of the Life and Character of Mrs. Sarah Savage*. (London: Holdsworth & Ball, 1829), vii-xxiv

⁶⁶ Bolton, Rhoda. *The Lighted Valley; or the Closing Scenes of a Beloved Sister*. (New York: Robert Carter Bros., 1860).

⁶⁷ Forster, Charles, *The Life of John Jebb*. (London: James Duncan, 1836), 11

Nonconformist ideology.⁶⁸ No doubt the success of the *Memoirs of the Life and Character of Cornelius Winter* was the reason that Jay wrote his own autobiography in the form of letters similar to those his mentor wrote to him. Within each of his biographies and prefaces, Jay emphasized the subject's achievements in learning, particularly those obtained without a formal education. 'Knowledge of every kind is ornamental and valuable', said the pastor. Jay was adamant to prove each of his subjects was not from 'a Gospel savage'.⁶⁹ And there was an emphasis on the person accomplishing great things for God under difficult circumstances. The acquisition of knowledge and the inspiration of others was an important secondary means to enhance the believer's understanding of God's world and fuel work in God's kingdom.

Another secondary means was the use of a diary. Diaries and journals were useful in the act of self-examination. Many of Jay's Evangelical contemporaries charted their spiritual growth through entries in journals. They could also be used as a private confessional.⁷⁰ William Wilberforce, Hannah More, John Ryland (1753-1825) and John Newton all kept diaries. But Jay never utilized a diary. Most likely it was because he hated writing for personal reasons.⁷¹ His penmanship remained poor throughout his life. Rowland Hill chastised the Argyle pastor that if he was going to write letters, he would prefer it to be legible rather than in 'Jay's claw'.⁷² Because of this displeasure, his wife had to urge him constantly to respond to his correspondence.⁷³ He even had to make sure his own son was able to read his letters.⁷⁴ Jay appreciated the diaries of others and even advocated their use.⁷⁵ He took great pains in distinguishing the beneficial differences between an autobiography and a diary.⁷⁶ But even though Jay never kept a devotional journal, it did not stop him from recommending the use of one for self-examination.

⁶⁸ Anon. 'Review of Jay's Life of Winter', *The Christian Observer*, 7 (1808), 588-589 and Anon. 'Jay's Memoir of Winter', *The Monthly Review*, 59 (1809), 195-203

⁶⁹ Jay, *Works*, viii.402

⁷⁰ Hennell, Michael, 'Evangelical Spirituality', in Wakefield, Gordon, (ed). *A Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*. (London: SCM Press, 1983), 138

⁷¹ *Autobiography of Jay*, 5-7

⁷² Sprague, W.B. *Visits to European Celebrities*. (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1855), 51

⁷³ Jay, *Recollections*, 221

⁷⁴ Letter of Jay to Edward Jay, 2 March 1816, in Redford, *Autobiography*, 497

⁷⁵ Jay, William, 'Memoirs of the Late Rev. Cornelius Winter', in *Works*, v. 299-301

⁷⁶ *Autobiography of Jay*, 13-14

Most important among the secondary means, however, was the hymnal. In addition to family and congregational worship, individual devotional singing was encouraged. The music was not expected to affect the believer as much as the lyrics. Jay was an enthusiastic advocate of hymns. Lines or verses of hymns are found in forty-three per cent of the *Exercises* and seventy per cent of his sermons. Some of the quotations could be quite obscure, taken from middle stanzas of the hymns or just a couple of lines from a verse. As in Jay's sermons, Isaac Watts was the preferred lyricist.⁷⁷ Watts' lyrics appear in sixty-five per cent of the overall hymns used in the *Exercises*. Jay produced his own hymnal in 1791 for the Argyle Chapel as a supplement to Watts' *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*. He published revised editions in 1797, 1815 and 1831. In the front of each was printed 'to be had in the vestry of Argyle Chapel', letting attenders know the hymnals were available for purchase, ensuring private as well as corporate use. Within the hymnals, Jay provided a topical index to the contents to allow the user to find the hymn that would address any individual situation. His favourite gift at his jubilee was to be memorialized in a James Montgomery (1771-1854) hymn.⁷⁸ While the theology inferred from the lyrics was most important, the music could serve as a mnemonic device memorizing the verse. Hymns were a great tool for instilling spiritual truth.

In addition to using these means of grace, the individual was expected to exude the attitudes of living a life of moderation and of accepting suffering according to the will of God. Refraining from the appearance of bad habits was important to the evangelical mindset. To appear without obvious flaws gave credence to the gospel message. The believer was to abstain from overindulging in a host of worldly pleasures. These included (but were not limited to): fame, recreation, sleep and alcohol.⁷⁹ The latter two were particularly prevalent in Jay's writings. While understanding the need for rest, Jay had no tolerance for those who slept in late.⁸⁰ He had little regard for alcohol. And over time his attitude to strong drink became even stricter. He wrote a letter in 1839 to the Teetotal Society in Bath, 'I believe that next to the glorious Gospel, God could not bless the human race so much as by the

⁷⁷ Chapter 5, 119

⁷⁸ *Autobiography of Jay*, 211

⁷⁹ Jay, *Morning Exercises* 10 February, i.104-105

⁸⁰ Jay, *Works*, iv.668

abolition of all intoxicating liquors.⁸¹ Jay told the society he had become a committed teetotaler six years before and ‘generally’ for twenty-five years prior to that. There is some evidence that at least one of his sons might have had a drinking problem.⁸² This might explain why Jay became a teetotaler at a late stage in life. But aside from this letter, which was quoted in tracts in America, there is no indication that Jay participated in any of the Temperance Societies. Jay also despised smoking. The only people he tolerated indulging in a pipe were Robert Hall and John Newton.⁸³ The Argyle Chapel historian A.W. Wills insinuated that Jay had issues with over-eating and that this was the reason for the carriage presented to him by the congregation in 1831.⁸⁴ Contemporary accounts point to the contrary. His eating habits and exercise were commended by his personal physician.⁸⁵ The carriage was given to aid Jay’s debilitated wife after her stroke.⁸⁶ The appearance of excess was to be avoided. Living and promoting a lifestyle of temperance were important to the evangelical witness.

Doreen Rosman suggests that evangelicals could be distinguished by the actions in which they refused to participate.⁸⁷ But she also concedes that there was no hard-and-fast rule as to the limits of these activities.⁸⁸ It would appear that Jay trod carefully when condemning the forms of behaviour to which most evangelicals objected. He spoke out only once against the theatre, a demarcation which cost him the patronage of a prestigious member whose family was ‘addicted’ to theatrical amusements.⁸⁹ Other pursuits such as dancing and novel reading, however, were never condemned by Jay, but observed with the same careful attitude of moderation. Not only did he encourage Hannah More to publish her religious fiction, but he enjoyed having the writings of Charles Dickens (1812-1870) read to him during his sea-side vacations.⁹⁰ Perhaps he was careful because Jay had developed close relationships with those in the arts. Both the actor Charles Young (1777-1856) and the

⁸¹ *Autobiography of Jay*, 106

⁸² Jay, *Recollections*, 336, 338-339 and Godwin wrote that Jay ‘declared himself a teetotaler (perhaps for a family nature)’, in Godwin ‘Reminiscences’, 41

⁸³ Jay, *Recollections*, 59

⁸⁴ Wills, A.W. *The History of Argyle Congregational Church, Bath: 1781-1938*. (Bath: Harding and Curtis, 1939), 22

⁸⁵ *Autobiography of Jay*, 251

⁸⁶ See letter from Jay to Thomas Kingsbury, 29 January 1831, *ibid.*, 187-188

⁸⁷ Rosman, Doreen. *Evangelicals and Culture* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), 69-70

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 71

⁸⁹ Godwin, ‘Reminiscences’, 48

⁹⁰ Jay, *Recollections*, 92

playwright Richard Sheridan (1751-1816) visited the Chapel.⁹¹ The artist William Etty was a frequent guest at Percy Place.⁹² And literary figures such as Dr Thomas Cogan (1736-1818), a founder of the Royal Humane Society, the poet Michael Wodhull (1740-1816), Elizabeth Hamilton (1756-1816), authoress of the novel *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* (1800), and Mary Grafton, author of *Spiritual Gleanings*, were regular visitors to the chapel.⁹³ Watering-places were notorious for being vacation spots where evangelicals were more lax in their behaviour.⁹⁴ Jay would have preferred sharing the benefits of the gospel over promoting religious strictures.

Connected to moderation was the evangelical attitude towards suffering. Upper- and middle-class Christians might have to bear reproach from their peers for their self-denial in moderation or for advocating their beliefs. Indeed many did bear reproach with labels such as ‘enthusiast’ or ‘Methodist’. Jay’s concept of suffering fitted well with his Calvinism. God was in control of all circumstances. ‘Nothing now occurs by chance; everything falls under the regulation of Divine Providence.’⁹⁵ Under his sovereignty, God could take away wealth, health and even reason.⁹⁶ If believers were stricken with affliction, they should take comfort by being reminded that they too were participating ‘in the fellowship of his [Christ’s] sufferings’.⁹⁷ The scriptures predicted suffering, and consequently believers could take even more ‘confidence’ in the promises of the Bible.⁹⁸ The believer enduring under the strain of suffering brought glory to God. ‘God’s excellence cannot be increased, but it may be made known; and this is the design of God in all his operations.’⁹⁹ Suffering became a consistent theme in Jay’s teaching and preaching as he grew older. Bath with its medical facilities attracted large numbers of people afflicted with various ailments. These messages would have brought the comfort that the misery had purpose. Jay was not immune to difficulties either. He repeatedly suffered from headaches and bowel

⁹¹ Wallace, *Portraiture*, 37, 38, & 160

⁹² Jay, *Recollections*, 98

⁹³ Godwin, ‘Reminiscences’, 47

⁹⁴ *Evangelical Magazine* (1816), 260-262, also see Porter, Roy. *English Society in the Eighteenth Century*. New York: Penguin, 1990, 227

⁹⁵ Jay, *Works*, ix.151

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, vii.228-229

⁹⁷ Jay, *Works*, iii.386

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, iii.339-343

⁹⁹ *ibid.*, ii.26

problems. At one point the headaches caused him to lose both ‘sight’ and ‘consciousness’ in the pulpit. The difficulties were so severe in 1819 that he credited his friend Wilberforce with saving his life through the recommendation of a physician.¹⁰⁰ His own doctor boasted that ‘he never murmured’ during this trial.¹⁰¹ His youngest daughter, Statira (1801-1820), died of typhoid fever. Yet even in his deep grief he was able to offer ministerial advice to a colleague five days later.¹⁰² Jay’s first wife, Anne, had a series of strokes between 1829 and 1830 that left her mentally unbalanced for the last fifteen years of her life. Witnesses say he admirably cared for her for the rest of her days.¹⁰³ Acquiescing in suffering as the will of God was a marked trait of Jay’s spirituality.

The corporate means of grace, to which we now turn, ranged from intimate occasions to global pursuits. Most intimate was family worship. The head of the house was expected to lead both family and servants in scripture reading and in prayers. Visitors to the household were allowed to participate as well. The requirement of family prayers was a deep conviction of Jay since childhood when he confronted his father for not leading them.¹⁰⁴ Jay’s son remembered worship occurring precisely at seven in the morning at breakfast and just before dinner in the evening. Jay assembled the family in his library and read to them from books such as Job Orton’s *Exposition of the Old Testament* (1788). Jay would question the servants as well to ensure they were listening.¹⁰⁵ After his first visit to the household, Jay’s future son-in-law Robert Bolton wrote, ‘Everything in Mr. Jay’s family pleased and profited me. I saw religion at its loveliest.’¹⁰⁶ To aid others in family worship he created two resources, *Short Discourses to be Read in Families* (1805) and *The Domestic Minister’s Assistant* (1820). As the titles suggest, they encouraged fathers to be ministers of their own personal church within the home, both in teaching and in prayer. Both books were well received as useful domestic tools. Family worship was a means Jay sought to promote.

¹⁰⁰ *Autobiography of Jay*, 104

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*, 252

¹⁰² William Jay to J.N. Goulty, 5 September 1820, Eng. MS 370, John Rylands Library

¹⁰³ *Autobiography of Jay*, 217-218

¹⁰⁴ Wells, Mary. *Memoirs of Mrs. Joanna Turner, as Exemplified in her Life, Death and Spiritual Experiences*. (New York: John Midwinter, 1827), 186, and Chapter 3, 48-49

¹⁰⁵ Jay, *Recollections*, 32, 96-97

¹⁰⁶ Bolton, William Jay. *Footsteps of the Flock: Memorials of the Rev. Robert Bolton*. (London: Hamilton, Adams, & Co, 1860), 49

As the title suggests, the *Short Discourses* were brief family devotional reflections. For this work, Jay was awarded an honorary doctorate in Divinity from Princeton University.¹⁰⁷ The 102 discourses were derived from Jay's sermons but in a condensed form. He desired them to be no longer than ten to fifteen minutes to hold the attention span of children and servants.¹⁰⁸ However, when read aloud verbatim, most of the discourses run to twenty minutes or longer. Additionally, Jay hoped children and servants would find these particular discourses 'entertaining and interesting' as well as instructive. For this reason he specifically based the lessons on 'historical' and 'figurative' passages of scripture but still retained the numerous Bible quotations typical of Jay's preaching style.¹⁰⁹ There is a presumption that churchmen could use them in their families. He included lessons covering Christ's birth and his ascension that could be read on Church holy days.¹¹⁰ And like the *Exercises*, the *Short Discourses* avoided controversial subjects that might prohibit some families from using them, thereby securing an appeal for evangelicals of all denominations.

The Domestic Minister's Assistant was a remarkable subject for Jay to undertake. This was a volume of set prayers for the household which was highly unusual for a Dissenter to propose for his family. The families of the churchmen Henry Thornton (1760-1815) and William Wilberforce published the prayers of each man's family worship. But these were issued posthumously, in 1815 and 1835 respectively. The authors did not intend them to be used for public consumption. Jay, however, did intend his prayers to be shared with the public to assist fathers. In the preface, Jay still advocated extemporaneous prayers 'where it is practicable', but these forms were written for the man who might have 'a slender degree of religious knowledge', 'slowness of utterance' or a 'bashful temper'.¹¹¹ The prayers are in Jay's typical style. They use an abundance of Bible verses and scriptural phrases. They frequently refer to Christ's mediation on the cross as the reason one can approach God in prayer. And they advocate Christian activism particularly in missions and evangelism. Wilberforce's prayer book contained only one week of prayers.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ *Autobiography of Jay*, 185

¹⁰⁸ *Jay, Works*, xi.xxii

¹⁰⁹ Chapter 5, 105-106, 113-114

¹¹⁰ *Jay, Works*, xi.xxvi

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, x.16

¹¹² Wilberforce, Robert (ed.). *Family Prayers by the late William Wilberforce, Esq.* (London: J. Hatchard and Sons, 1835).

Thornton's book included five weeks of prayers.¹¹³ Jay's work had six weeks of prayers with forty-two additional prayers for particular circumstances, seasons, the dinner table and special days.¹¹⁴ Again Jay tried to assure his readers there would be nothing offensive.¹¹⁵ But Jay did receive criticism for the book, especially from his own denominational magazine. The reviewer complained 'that any book from Mr. Jay would have pleased us more than a book of prayers' while conceding that the prayers were done well and that those that might need 'the help of other men's legs' should 'lose as little time as possible in furnishing themselves with *The Domestic Minister's Assistant*'.¹¹⁶ The critic evidently preferred extemporaneous praying to a prayer book. Regardless of the censure, the volume went through seven editions in under three years. Obviously Jay's prayer book met a need in family worship.

A dimension of corporate spirituality was observance of the sabbath. A common complaint of spa towns was that Christian vacationers did not revere the whole of the first day of the week.¹¹⁷ Jay's friend the writer Hannah More chastised the upper classes for attending concerts on Sundays and employing hairdressers prior to worship services.¹¹⁸ Jay was convinced the first day of the week was to be set aside as sacred.¹¹⁹ He admonished those who disregarded the sabbath.¹²⁰ And in funeral sermons he was apt to praise faithfulness to the fourth commandment.¹²¹ The community was not only to attend church but was also to refrain from work and worldly pleasures on a Sunday. Argyle Chapel shop owners proudly displayed in their advertisements that they were closed on Sundays as an expression of their Christian faith.¹²² Their uncompromising principles demonstrated their willingness to avoid the sin of avarice. Even if one could not attend worship services due to illness, one could

¹¹³ Thornton, Henry. *Family Prayers and Prayers on the Ten Commandments*. (New York: Delisser and Proctor, 1859).

¹¹⁴ The U.S. version contains a prayer for the American holiday, Thanksgiving Day.

¹¹⁵ Jay, *Works*, x.19

¹¹⁶ Anon. 'Review of Jay's Domestic Minister's Assistant', *The Congregational Magazine*, 3 (1820), 670

¹¹⁷ *The Evangelical Magazine* (1816), 261

¹¹⁸ More, Hannah. *Thoughts on the Importance of the Manners of the Great to General Society*. (London: T. Cadell, 1788), 29-38

¹¹⁹ Jay, *Works*, iv. 517

¹²⁰ Jay, *Works*, 17 March, i.104

¹²¹ Jay, 'Friendship in Death', *Works*, vii.155 and 'Consolation in Death', *Works*, viii.206

¹²² Chapter 4, 85

still be in the Spirit of the Lord on his day.¹²³ Jay taught the sabbath offered respite from the business of life, promoted family unity, reminded the ‘rich and great’ of their lowliness before God and kept chaos from descending upon the British Empire.¹²⁴ Christians ‘are to be known, not only by their observance of the Lord’s day only, but by their endeared and exalted regard for it’.¹²⁵ All worldly activity was to cease for the benefit of reflecting on God.

The sabbath worship service was central to corporate worship. It was performed with strict decorum and reverence.¹²⁶ Jay was quite convinced that the miraculous gifts of the Spirit had ended with the Apostles.¹²⁷ Such displays of gifts were ‘much that was fanciful and enthusiastic and wild’.¹²⁸ Jay was aware that church services could degenerate into mere entertainment that might eclipse worship’s intended purpose.¹²⁹ Therefore it was necessary to bring all worship under submission to the preached word. The sermon was to be listened to attentively. Even though the worship service revolved around the sermon, other elements encouraged the believer to join in the communal means of grace. Hymn singing was employed to unite and reinforce the theology of the congregation. Watts’ *Hymns and Spiritual Psalms* was the primary text, but again Jay produced his own supplemental hymnal.¹³⁰ The volume included Independent lyricists such as Philip Doddridge and Watts, but it also promoted Jay’s broad evangelicalism by incorporating authors from other denominations. Selections were taken from John Cennick (1718-1755) a Moravian, the Methodist Charles Wesley, and the Churchmen John Newton and William Cowper as well as from the Baptists Anne Steele (1717-1778) and Benjamin Beddome (1717-1795). By the final edition in 1833 the hymnal had expanded from 228 to 531 titles. Jay took hymn singing seriously. ‘Singing is a Christian ordinance’, he wrote. ‘It is sanctioned by our Lord’s example.’¹³¹ He believed ‘persons should learn to sing decently, that when they join in they may aid and not injure’. Singing in family

¹²³ Jay, *Works*, iv.520

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, iv. 596-601

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, iv. 595-596

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, iii.62-63

¹²⁷ Jay, *Works*, iv.518

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, iii.510

¹²⁹ Jay, *Evening Exercises*, 25 February, i.170

¹³⁰ Chapter 5, 119

¹³¹ Jay, *Works*, ii.28

worship would be excellent practice for this.¹³² He said the hymns should be ‘felt in the exercise’.¹³³ At Argyle Chapel, a singing gallery for a choir was built as early as 1804 and an organ was installed in 1805 to aid the quality of the music.¹³⁴ Music was a very big part of corporate worship at the chapel.

In addition to music, the ordinances of baptism and communion were observed corporately. Both have already been described in the chapter on the chapel’s social composition.¹³⁵ Jay remained a paedobaptist all his life. But the chapel would not exclude from membership those who held strong convictions upholding believer’s baptism.¹³⁶ ‘Unity’, he said, ‘is not incompatible with variety’.¹³⁷ Baptismal services were held twice a year prior to the Monday evening church meetings. Interestingly, none of Jay’s children and only one of the fifteen grandchildren born in Bath was recorded in the chapel baptismal record, indicating that he chose to have his family baptized elsewhere. Anne Bolton, Jay’s eldest daughter, was baptized by Cornelius Winter, no doubt due to the sentimental attachment between pastor and mentor.¹³⁸ At least three of the grandchildren were baptized by Jay privately.¹³⁹ Perhaps this was a concession to his wife, Anne who officially never left the Established Church.¹⁴⁰ But generally at Argyle, both families and members observed the rite. Communion would also unify the body of the church. It reminded them, ‘by the participation of the same bread and the same cup, that they are all equally partakers of the same symbolized benefits’.¹⁴¹ Once a month, members and pre-approved non-members participated in memorializing Christ’s death on the cross by eating a small portion from the same loaf of bread and sipping from the same cup of wine. The ordinances of the chapel also allowed corporate worship opportunities for individuals.

¹³² Ibid, ii.570

¹³³ Jay, William. *Hymns, As an Appendix to Dr. Watts*. (Bath: George Wood, 1833), viii

¹³⁴ Ede, Mary. *The Chapel in Argyle Street, Bath 1789-1989* (Bath: Central United Reformed Church, 1989), 14

¹³⁵ Chapter 4, 98-100

¹³⁶ *Autobiography of Jay*, 90

¹³⁷ Jay, *Works*, iv.45

¹³⁸ Bolton, Robert. *Genealogical and Biographical Account of the Family Bolton*. (New York: John Gray, 1862), 170-171

¹³⁹ Ibid, 184-190

¹⁴⁰ Jay, *Recollections*, 22

¹⁴¹ *Autobiography of Jay*, 331

Attached to the chapel were varying occasions for corporate ministry and fellowship in smaller groups. First was the Sunday School begun in 1802.¹⁴² The Sunday School's purpose was to teach the poorer children in the city how to read in order to give them access to the scriptures. Every Sunday, members could become teachers, examiners or oversee the children's behaviour when they were in the weekly church services. Members that participated were invited to an annual tea as a reward for their service. The second consisted of additional Bible studies and meetings held throughout the week. Bible studies were offered on Monday and Thursday evenings. The attendance was smaller than at the Sunday services (though it could rise as high as 200). Jay 'considered this like meeting the party in a room for conversation'.¹⁴³ Many non-members, particularly from the Establishment, attended in order to have the opportunity to hear Jay.¹⁴⁴ On Wednesday nights the chapel hosted various speakers ranging from the educator Joseph Lancaster to Peter Herve (1779-1827), who gave a lecture on the National Benevolent Institutions.¹⁴⁵ These lectures were open to the community and promoted in the local papers. These smaller meetings allowed for more intimacy between pastor and people, though Jay justified their use as a reason to forego visitation.¹⁴⁶ Jay himself was fond of having fellowship with ministers and clergy of other denominations. When he was in London he frequently breakfasted in the home of John Newton with other ministers. It was usually made up primarily of Churchmen, but Nonconformist ministers were also invited. Newton had been having fellowship with ministers outside his denomination as early as 1775 when he was the rector of Olney.¹⁴⁷ Jay continued the practice after Newton's death, hosting breakfasts in his own home. Nathaniel Bridges (1778-1835), curate at St Mary's, Redcliffe, Bristol, was a frequent visitor to these breakfasts.¹⁴⁸ Opportunities for small group fellowship created intimacy among members and strengthened the bond of evangelical religion.

¹⁴² Ede, *The Chapel in Argyle Street*, 21

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 159

¹⁴⁴ See Wilberforce's letter to Jay to introduce the Dean of Durham's son, who heard Jay preach at a Thursday night Bible study. Redford, *Autobiography*, 303

¹⁴⁵ *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette* 21 October 1812, 3 and 17 March 1813, 3

¹⁴⁶ *Autobiography of Jay*, 159

¹⁴⁷ Nuttall, Geoffrey, 'Baptist and Independents in Olney to the Time of John Newton', *The Baptist Quarterly*, 30 (1983), 35

¹⁴⁸ Jay, *Recollections*, 97

In addition to the Sunday Schools and additional meeting times, members were encouraged to give monies to special offerings for various ministries and services in the city of Bath. The chapel gave the largest collections of any Dissenting congregation in Bath both to the widows of soldiers who died at Waterloo and to the Bath Auxiliary of the London Missionary Society.¹⁴⁹ Seeing the chapel name recorded in the newspapers would have given the members a sense of corporate pride in the work they were accomplishing. Also, there would be a sense of satisfaction at seeing their amounts exceed those given by some of the Established Churches in Bath. It would unite the chapel in work with other like-minded Christians in the city and throughout the world. Aside from the worship services, local ministries offered through the chapel provided opportunities for corporate spirituality.

Corporate spirituality, however, was not just local, for it could also extend regionally, nationally and even globally. Jay was a postmillennialist like the majority of his evangelical friends such as William Wilberforce and Henry Thornton. Postmillennial belief had a progressive outlook. The last of the opposition against the Christian church, on this view, was coming to an end and the final goal was the establishment of Christ's worldwide church before his return. For this reason evangelism, rather than alleviating social evils, was the primary objective. It was not that issues such as crime, medical relief and poverty were not concerns to Jay and his fellow evangelicals, but they were secondary to the conversion of the heathen.¹⁵⁰ The focus was the Christian's active commitment to evangelism and missions.¹⁵¹ Jay led the Argyle Chapel in endeavours that would promote this cause. The first was spreading the gospel to the surrounding villages and countryside. Early in his career, Jay oversaw and encouraged groups of men to go out on preaching excursions. Some of these individuals went on to have full-time careers in the ministry, such as James Bennett (1774-1862), a founder of the London Missionary Society and a Congregational historian. Bennett began his preaching career in Bath in 1792 on these outings.¹⁵² Another was the Congregational minister, Thomas Stratten. His obituary

¹⁴⁹ *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette* 26 July 1815, 2 and 11 November 1828, 4

¹⁵⁰ Hilton, Boyd. *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought 1785-1865.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 16-17

¹⁵¹ Jay, *Morning Exercises*, 27 February, i.144

¹⁵² Blaikie, W.G. 'Bennett, James (1774-1862)', rev. R. Tudur Jones. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2006) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2122>, accessed 17 September 2011]

reported, ‘In Mr. Jay’s church, there was a band of earnest and devoted young men, who were accustomed on the Sabbath to go out, two and two, into the villages around Bath.’¹⁵³ But these excursions stopped by 1812, after Wilberforce voiced his displeasure over unqualified preachers roaming the countryside.¹⁵⁴ Jay briefly considered educating the young men in the same manner that Cornelius Winter had educated him. But he relinquished the idea and instead recommended Stratten and his colleagues to Hoxton Academy.¹⁵⁵ Thereafter, Jay placed the endeavours of village preachers under the auspices of the Wiltshire and East Somerset Association. The minutes reveal Jay proposing the first employed itinerant of the Association and even acquiring the salary for the preacher through the Bath Mission Society.¹⁵⁶ Chapel members, Thomas Kingsbury, Henry Griffith and James Evill, all figure prominently in the leadership of the Association as well.¹⁵⁷ Since Jay was converted under preaching in his village of Tisbury, evangelical ministry in the region would be a life-long concern.

National evangelism was a matter of importance for Jay. With his strong commitment to biblicism, he felt the most effective form of evangelism was to put the Bible into the hands of his fellow British citizens. He was a lifelong advocate of the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) after its foundation in 1804. He was instrumental in establishing the auxiliary of the society in Bath, though his friend Charles Godwin confessed his disappointment that Jay was unwilling to nominate him for the post of secretary. Jay thought an older man in the position would bring more respect to the society. Godwin said ‘young people were often overlooked by Jay’ for this reason.¹⁵⁸ When the Trinitarian Bible Society encroached on the efforts in Bath over the tests controversy, Jay and several of the Argyle Chapel’s more prominent members led the counter-attack on behalf of the BFBS.¹⁵⁹ Jay preached the sermon, *The Scriptures: A Sermon Designed to Bear the Claims of the British and Foreign*

¹⁵³ Anon. ‘Obituary of Thomas Stratten’, *Congregational Yearbook* (1855): 239

¹⁵⁴ *Autobiography of Jay*, 319 and Wilberforce, R.I. and Wilberforce, Samuel. *The Life of William Wilberforce*. (London: John Murray, 1838), ii.361

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 240

¹⁵⁶ 9 September 1818 and 13 April 1819, Association Minute Book (July 1797-April 1834), 2755/1, WSHC, Chippenham

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 7 October 1830

¹⁵⁸ Godwin, ‘Reminiscences’, 4

¹⁵⁹ The Argyle members Evill, Griffith, Kingsbury and Henry Godwin are listed in the pamphlet ‘British Foreign and Bible Society’, 25 January 1832, in ‘Tracts of the Trinitarian Bible Society’, Accession No. 22936, BCL

Bible Society (1832) on Reformation Sunday in support of the society.¹⁶⁰ In appreciation of his services to the organization, the Bath auxiliary of the BFBS made Jay an honorary lifelong vice president in 1841. The movers of the resolution were all Churchmen with the exception of one Quaker.¹⁶¹ But the Bible Society was not Jay's only national endeavour. He made preaching tours of both Ireland in 1798 on behalf of the Irish Evangelical Society and Scotland in 1821 on behalf of the London Missionary Society.¹⁶² Jay worked on a national level to see the British Isles completely converted to Christ.

Jay's spirituality was not just expressed nationally but extended globally. With the exception of Jay's tour of Ireland, he never ventured off his native island. But he tirelessly threw his full support behind the London Missionary Society (LMS). He preached the Society's first anniversary sermon in 1796, and thereafter preached an additional four anniversary sermons, a feat no other minister could lay claim to accomplishing.¹⁶³ He became a society director in 1812, serving in that position on six different occasions.¹⁶⁴ But even as the LMS increasingly became a denominational entity by 1799, Jay supported missionary efforts of other like-minded Christians.¹⁶⁵ When tensions arose between the Society and other evangelical denominational missionary societies, it was Jay whom the LMS selected to smooth out the differences. Jay was the first Congregationalist to preach at the annual meeting of the Baptist Missionary Society in 1822 and at the 1823 annual meeting of the Wesleyan Missionary Society.¹⁶⁶ In 1819, Thomas Haweis, an Anglican founder of the LMS, wrote to George Burder (1752-1832), the editor of the *Evangelical Magazine*, regarding Jay. 'I think him without dispute one of the most useful and judicious men in the Kingdom, and whose heart is my heart in missionary work.'¹⁶⁷ Jay looked forward to the 'happy period! When the eyes of men, as of all the tribes of Israel, shall

¹⁶⁰ Jay, William. *The Scriptures: A Sermon Designed to Bear the Claims of the British and Foreign Bible Society*. (London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co., 1832)

¹⁶¹ *Autobiography of Jay*, 213-214

¹⁶² *Autobiography of Jay*, 132-135, see also *The European Magazine and London Review* (1819), 7 and *The Evangelical Magazine* (1821), 313

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 185

¹⁶⁴ Martin, Roger. *Evangelicals United*. (London: The Scarecrow Press, 1983), 213

¹⁶⁵ The Baptist Missionary Society was already formed in 1792. In 1799 the Anglican members split off to form the Church Missionary Society and the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society formed in 1817.

¹⁶⁶ Martin, *Evangelicals United*, 63 and Jay, *Recollections*, 191

¹⁶⁷ Quoted in Wood, A.S. *Thomas Haweis 1734-1820*. (London: SPCK, 1957), 261

be toward the Lord! And when in him all the families of the earth shall be blessed! The Lord hasten it in his time!’¹⁶⁸ William Jay’s missionary activism was truly a global concern to usher in the age of Christ’s full reign.

There are some anomalies to Jay’s spirituality. For example, fasting was not a discipline that Jay practised. His evangelical Anglican friends such as John Newton, Thomas Scott (1747-1821) and William Wilberforce kept fasts, so it was most likely due to his Nonconformist sensibilities that he did not.¹⁶⁹ Neither was visiting the sick and those in prison a priority for the pastor. He claimed the needs of a medical spa like Bath overwhelmed him.¹⁷⁰ There were Argyle Chapel members associated with the prisons, but Jay visited the jail only once. He had no desire to visit criminals.¹⁷¹ Another is in the area of giving. While members of Argyle Chapel adorn the newspapers in subscriptions to various causes from the widows of firemen to the Bath Penitentiary, Jay’s name is noticeably absent.¹⁷² There is some evidence that Jay personally gave to causes outside of corporate offerings. Charles Godwin wrote that Jay gave money ‘to ministers of limited means in the county of Wilts and the neighbourhood of Bath’.¹⁷³ And his son claimed he provided funds to George ‘Boatswain’ Smith (1782-1863), who was instrumental in establishing floating chapels to minister to seamen.¹⁷⁴ But aside from these references, not much is said about Jay’s giving. In at least one case, his affluence was a distraction. A local inhabitant wrote to the editor of the *North Wilts Mercury* that he once heard Jay preach in the Baptist chapel at Bradford-on-Avon, yet could focus only on the preacher’s diamond-studded ring.¹⁷⁵ But instead of giving directly, Jay was cognisant of his ability to draw a crowd for a collection. He was frequently called upon to preach collection sermons for numerous causes.¹⁷⁶ Later he found it to be taxing. In 1838, he wrote to Archibald Douglas, minister at Reading, ‘I have no objection to preach for you if agreeable on that evening, but not a collection sermon. . . .because I

¹⁶⁸ Jay, *Works*, ii.569

¹⁶⁹ Pratt, John H. *The Thought of the Evangelical Leaders*. (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1978), 94-95, also Wilberforce, *Life of Wilberforce*, ii.351 and iii.122

¹⁷⁰ *Autobiography of Jay*, 157

¹⁷¹ Jay, *Recollections*, 222

¹⁷² *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette* 16 December 1812, 1 and 26 July 1815, 2

¹⁷³ Godwin, ‘Reminiscences’, 52

¹⁷⁴ Jay, *Recollections*, 83

¹⁷⁵ *North Wilts Mercury* 6 March 1885

¹⁷⁶ William Jay to Rev. B. Jeanes, 9 August (no year), La.II.424/5, University of Edinburgh

hate to be always collaring my friends for money who occasionally hear me: I say I hate it!¹⁷⁷ His desire to preach collection sermons diminished despite the invitations increasing in later life. While examples of his good nature and amiable people skills abound, there is only one example of personal evangelism by the pastor. He led a Mrs Ulph to the Lord while in a carriage on the way to Chippenham, though he was unaware he had done so until visiting at her deathbed.¹⁷⁸ Jay appears to have placed a higher priority on living the Christian life and his pulpit ministry over a personal witness. ‘Preaching has been the element of my heart and my head’, he told his children.¹⁷⁹ Jay’s spirituality was focused on the proclamation of the word over asceticism, philanthropy or personal witnessing.

In conclusion, three observations can be made. First, William Jay’s spirituality had scripture as its central focus. It was Jay’s desire for himself and others to be confronted by the word of God. The encounter with the Bible he had experienced at his conversion was the same life-transforming catalyst he desired to share with others. His preaching was designed to bring his audience in contact with the word. The more opportunities for this encounter the better. His devotions, his family worship and his prayer were peppered with multiple verses from the Bible. As people interacted with the word of God, it would produce results. However, by focusing on brief texts of scripture, Jay left himself open to the accusation of proof texting made by R.W. Dale.¹⁸⁰ The second conclusion is that Jay’s spirituality was experimental and practical. The life and behaviour of the believer would validate the truth of the scripture. Interaction with the Bible would achieve results by bringing the elect to salvation. The spiritual disciplines would produce the sanctified life of the true believer. The disciplines were meant to be performed as an expression of one’s conversion. Biographies were to be read to promote experimental Christian living. Jay produced three biographies including his own. Believers were expected to be active in their service to God. Jay’s daily routine of early rising for the purpose of personal devotions, family worship, engagement in activism, participation at services three nights during the week and two on Sundays, and additional times of family worship and personal devotion prior to bed, left little time to be idle. Even backlash from the

¹⁷⁷ William Jay to Rev. Archibald Douglas, 20 March 1838, A.L. 3053, BCL

¹⁷⁸ *Autobiography of Jay*, 534

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 161

¹⁸⁰ Dale, R.W. *The Old Evangelicalism and the New*. (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1889), 24

world while living the evangelical lifestyle would produce the suffering taught in scripture again validating its truth. There was no quiet mysticism here. And finally, Jay promoted an almost pan-denominational, universal Christian spirituality. Jay was aware of the drawing power of the city of Bath with its array of celebrities. The life he advocated recognized no limitations of occupation, class or denomination. He desired his spirituality to have the greatest access. He wanted to offend no one, but to unite similar spirits. His writings such as the *Morning and Evening Exercises*, *The Domestic Minister's Assistant* and the *Short Discourses to Be Read in Families* were all intended to have broad appeal to those outside his denomination. His hymnal contained hymns from various denominations and the communion table at Argyle Chapel was open to believers of other persuasions. Mode of baptism was not a stumbling block to entering the church membership or leadership at Argyle. Jay was willing to alter his method of village preaching when his Anglican friend Wilberforce complained. His activism was vastly co-operative, as his corporate spirituality sought to promote catholicity among his fellow evangelicals. Jay was the ambassador to other denominations on behalf of the London Missionary Society. He felt he could participate in this unification without violating his conscience. The spirituality of William Jay was biblical, experimental and unifying, expressing itself both individually and corporately.

Chapter Seven: The Church Polity of William Jay

William Jay considered his church polity very broad. 'I do not think,' he wrote in his *Autobiography*, 'any very particular form of government is absolutely laid down in the New Testament.' His own views emerged out of the circumstances in which he was raised. He was firmly against Prelacy, had a few sympathies with Episcopacy, and was favourable to Presbyterianism. But he confessed 'the truth is, I never deeply studied the theories of ecclesiastical government'. Independency was ingrained in Jay at an early age from his first book written by Isaac Watts, to Joanna Turner's chapel, to Cornelius Winter, to studying Matthew Henry, John Owen and Philip Doddridge. Jay trained among the Independents and as such he remained an Independent. 'I agreed not in every iota of their system', wrote the preacher, 'but I approved of it in the main. Nothing within Independent philosophy violated my conscience, or abridged my liberty.'¹ Although Independent, the Argyle Chapel did operate within a framework of a particular church government. There was a clear pattern in the polity of the church and it was favourable to the preacher. But over time a change occurred in the structure that moved the chapel from its original form to a type of government conforming to the denominational norm of Congregationalism. This chapter will examine the polity of Jay's church beginning with the main features of Independency at the opening of the chapel formation of the church, then the four types of authority on which chapels in the period operated and conclude with a case study that marked the shift of authority towards the end of Jay's ministry.

In order to place the polity of William Jay in both its regional and denominational context, several church records from a similar time period were reviewed as a comparison. The Argyle Chapel was a member of the Wiltshire and North East Somerset Association. The congregations of the Trowbridge Tabernacle, the Common Close Chapel, Warminster, and the Endless Street Chapel, Salisbury, were also members of the association. Each had comparable records from the time period. In addition, the minutes of churches from and near Bristol in Gloucestershire

¹ William Jay, 'The Autobiography of the Rev. William Jay : with reminiscences of some distinguished contemporaries, selections from his correspondence, etc', ed. George Redford and John Angell James. *The Autobiography of William Jay*. (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 166-167

were also selected. These included the Gideon Chapel in Bristol, Whitefield Memorial Chapel in Bristol, the Kingswood Whitefield Chapel, Zion Chapel in Bedminster, Zion Chapel in Frampton Cottrell and Hope Chapel in Clifton. To compare the polity of nationally recognized pastoral figures, the records of the King's Weigh House Chapel in London which was under the pastorate of John Clayton, Sr (1754-1843), and Thomas Binney (1798-1874) and those of the Carr's Lane Chapel, Birmingham under John Angell James were also chosen. The proceedings of these churches provide a rich backdrop to the varying forms of government in Independent chapels between 1790 and 1850 that developed from old dissent and the Evangelical Revival.

The philosophy of Independency during Jay's lifetime merits discussion. The very nomenclature suggests there was variety in the polity of Independent chapels. When Jay came to Argyle Chapel in 1789, the Congregational Union with its Declaration of Faith and Order in which Independent chapels could unify was still over forty years distant. Yet there were some principles upon which Independents could agree. Some of these ideologies were shared by fellow Dissenting denominations. But there were enough differences for the Independents to have their own distinctive position.

There were three key features to eighteenth-century Independency in its polity. Jay appears to have followed John Owen (1616-1683) whom he referred to as 'the prince of divines'.² First was that membership in the church was reserved for those alone who could provide adequate proof of an inward working of the Holy Spirit. Independents argued that one was not a church member by being a citizen of a nation, subscribing to a particular catechism or through baptism alone. Since regeneration was a work of God, the state had no right to determine who was a member of the church at large. Only the local community of the elect could verify who could unite with the body of Christ.³ As discussed in the social composition chapter, the Argyle Chapel screened each applicant before admission into membership.⁴ Attenders to the service could be considered within the congregation, but only the converted recognized by the membership constituted the church.

² Ibid., 124

³ Owen, John. 'The True Nature of A Gospel Church and Its Government', in *The Works of John Owen*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1976), 12-19, also see Grant, J.W. *Free Churchmanship in England 1870-1940* (London: Independent Press, 1940), 10

⁴ Chapter 4, 71-73

A second feature was the autonomy of the local congregation in its selection of membership and leadership. Each particular congregation was self-governing within its membership; hence the term ‘congregational’, which later would become synonymous with Independency and eventually supplant it.⁵ Independents believed that apostolic authority had ceased and each congregation was under the direct authority of Jesus Christ. They recognized only the offices of pastor/elder and deacon who could be chosen exclusively by a regenerate membership. They rejected the right of bishops and aristocracy to choose the minister of the local congregation. They did not reject the authority of the crown, but only the right of the king to rule or appoint others to rule in spiritual matters. Jesus alone held the title of Ruler of the Church. In Independent thinking, Christ was still alive. Any attempt to place someone else as head of the church was usurping the role of Christ, whether that was the pope or an earthly monarch. Independents held firm to this idea throughout their history. The concept was particularly visible in their writings as they regularly appealed to ‘the Great Head of the Church’ in major decisions. The Endless Street Chapel in Salisbury, for instance, referred to ‘the Great Head of the Church’ as personally calling Charles Williams (1796-1866) to fill a pastoral vacancy in 1833.⁶ Even through three years of pastoral candidates rejecting its call, the secretary of the Carr’s Lane Chapel in Birmingham recorded in 1806 that the church ‘felt a considerable degree of confidence that the Great Head of the Church would not forsake us’.⁷ The church, that is to say, the duly constituted congregation, under the authority of Christ, chose its leaders.

The final feature was a resistance to creeds.⁸ The way one discovered the will of the ‘Great Head’ was through the scriptures. Independents believed the Bible alone was the word of God. No other creed, law or pronouncement could supersede it. Local churches might have a ‘rule’ to clarify it, but no other authority could supplant it. All other documents were to be subordinate to scripture and if any concepts were found to be contrary to the word of Christ, they were to be rejected. For most Independents, this included *The Book of Common Prayer*. Not only did they reject certain portions

⁵ Johnson, G.B. *A Statement of Principles: or, a Church Guide for Those Holding and Seeking Fellowship in Congregational Churches* (London: Ward & Co., 1840), 19-21

⁶ Endless Street Chapel, Salisbury, Minute Book, 1833-1860, WSHC 1279/4, 12 May 1833

⁷ Carr’s Lane Church, Birmingham Minute Book, 1783-1810, Birmingham CL CC1/4, 18 December 1803

⁸ Grant, *Free Churchmanship*, 16-19

of it, such as the rite of baptism which implied baptismal regeneration, but also they saw it as displacing the word of Christ as the ultimate authority of the church. *The Book of Common Prayer* could be admired, but it could not be a determinant in deciding issues before the congregation. Individuals united to church memberships based upon their individual conscience in the adherence of doctrine derived from scripture. Since credal statements were considered manmade, the Bible alone was to be the governing rule of the congregation.

In 1840, a popular tract on Congregational polity stated, ‘We have no Head of the Church but Jesus Christ our Lord- We have no creed but the Bible.’⁹ Even though chapels paid lip-service to the authority of the ‘Great Head of the Church’ between 1790 and 1850, Congregational churches rarely operated by seeking Christ’s will in the scriptures first. Independents conveniently saw the rule of Christ operating providentially through other modes than scripture. The actual authority of the churches tended to be found in one of four elements: the documents of the chapel, the democratic process of the membership, the officers of the church and, in some situations, the local association. While chapels could switch from one authoritative body to the other in differing periods in the life of the fellowship, the polity of the church was generally controlled by one of the four. And in times of conflict the prevailing authoritative element became apparent. All four will be examined below.

Some chapels operated under the provisions of documents decided upon by the congregation in the past. For most, articles of faith were a later development in Independent chapels. Baptists who were similar in polity adopted articles and rules much earlier. The St Andrew’s Street Baptist Chapel in Cambridge had seven articles relating to church government and a thirteen-point confession by 1761.¹⁰ Though most likely established earlier, the Particular Baptist Church at Chippenham, Wiltshire, had eleven articles of faith firmly in place by 1790.¹¹ Unlike their Baptist brethren and as a general principle, Independents resisted setting creeds and rules of faith that would supersede scripture and exclude others from communion.¹² An example was the scene of Jay’s second pastorate between 1789 and 1790, Hope

⁹ Johnson, *A Statement of Principles*, 7

¹⁰ Addicott, Len (ed.), *English Baptist Records 2: Church Book: St. Andrew’s Street Baptist Church, Cambridge 1720-1832*, (Bristol: Baptist Historical Society, 1991), 5, 22

¹¹ ‘A Declaration of the Faith and Practice of the Particular Baptist Church of Christ at Chippenham Wilts, 1790’, WSHC 1769/68

¹² Grant, *Free Churchmanship*, 17

Chapel in Clifton, which officially did not constitute as a church until 1820. It allowed open communion ‘to comply with the wishes of Evangelical Episcopalians who could not hear the Gospel in the parish church’.¹³ Rules and articles of faith were usually added slowly and only when it became apparent that chapels needed them to conduct business within the congregation in an orderly manner or to clarify orthodox beliefs prior to admission into the church. For example, the Trowbridge Tabernacle, which was planted by Jay’s friend John Clark, had only three rules prior to 1817. Two were related to burials in the graveyard and the last regarded pew lettings. In that year, the church adopted an additional rule regarding the Lord’s Supper in which members could be dropped for non-attendance.¹⁴ In 1826 the members adopted seven more, yet the sixth stated specifically, ‘That the rules for the church composed of doctrine and discipline shall be grounded solely on and taken from the scriptures, and put into the hands of every member.’¹⁵ When the Congregational Union of England and Wales formed in 1833, its ‘Declaration of Faith and Church Order’ disallowed ‘the utility of creeds and articles of faith as a bond of union’ yet carefully stated ‘what is commonly believed among them, reserving to everyone the most perfect liberty of conscience’.¹⁶ If no rules were in place, it was up to the church officers to interpret scripture to deal with discipline and polity. But if rules were adopted, they could be used as a strict authority and became the commanding document. At the Zion Chapel in Bedminster, the minister John Goode (d. 1843) was able to use a rule for non- attendance at the Lord’s Supper to dismiss John Hare (1752-1839) as deacon even though Hare personally built the chapel and was protesting against taking the supper from the minister’s hand due to Goode’s suspected adultery.¹⁷ Ironically, Hare had helped draft the rules two years earlier. During Jay’s pastorate, the Argyle Chapel had only one official rule. It regarded attendance at the supper and that was adopted in 1851 when the absence of members during the ceremony became noticeable.¹⁸ A full slate of

¹³ Hope Chapel Church Book, Bristol Record Office 38545/1 [If no date is provided with minute books then the information is taken from the historical prologue]

¹⁴ Trowbridge Tabernacle Church Minute Books WSHC 1417/7, 30 May 1817

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 19 December 1826

¹⁶ Peel, Albert. *These Hundred Years: A History of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, 1831-1931*. (London: Congregational Union of England and Wales, 1931), 70

¹⁷ Letters concerning a scandal at Zion Chapel, Bedminster, Bristol RO 8033/43

¹⁸ Argyle Chapel, Bath, Church Minute Book, 1848-1861, BRO 480/1/1/1/3, 24 February 1851

rules was not officially accepted by Argyle Chapel until 1880.¹⁹ During his tenure, Jay's church appeared to function well without official rules.

Second in importance among church documents was the church minute book. It normally began with a historical prologue describing the purpose of establishing the church, followed by the rules of the chapel (if any), the official transactions of various church meetings and then the roll of the church membership. In early Independency the focus of the historical prologue was the spiritual justification of dissenting from the Church of England. The minute book of the King's Weigh House Chapel in London proudly boasted that its 'first two pastors of the church with their assistants were Bartholomew confessors'.²⁰ In the later nineteenth century, the prologues in minute books dwelt on the physical accomplishments of the church. Zion Chapel in Frampton Cotterell, Gloucestershire, traced the history of the chapel from its beginning in 1795 with its small building costing £353 and with preachers supplied by Bristol laymen to becoming a self-sustaining chapel costing £1,400 with its own minister. Nonconformist struggles were not mentioned.²¹ The Percy Chapel prologue dwelt exclusively on the reasons why it seceded from the Argyle Chapel and that it had Jay's blessing.²² The historical prologue of the church was important in establishing the identity of the chapel. When in 1858, the Whitefield Tabernacle in Bristol invited John Glendenning (1812-1861) to be the minister, the church wrote to him, 'You are aware dear sir, that this church commenced with the labours of that devoted servant of God, George Whitefield and ... that it has also become the parent of several flourishing churches in this city.'²³ It implied Glendennings ministry would be an extension of the Evangelical Revival. The deacons of the King's Weigh House tried to lure Edward Parsons (1797-1844) from Halifax by reminding him of 'the paramount claim' of the King's Weigh House pulpit for the 'respectability and prosperity of the Dissenting interest' with its distinguished reputation connected to seventeenth-century Dissent.²⁴ Both chapels could appeal to their distinct histories as a matter of importance.

¹⁹ Argyle Chapel, Bath, Church Minute Book, 1881-1891, BRO 480/1/2/1/4

²⁰ King's Weigh House Chapel, London, Church Minute Book, 1795-1867 DWL Ms 38.3072

²¹ Zion Chapel, Frampton Cotterell, Church Minute Book, 1889-1821, Bristol RO 35230/114

²² Percy Chapel, Bath, Minute Book, 1853-1883, BRO 0480/3/2/1/1

²³ Whitefield Tabernacle, Penn Street, Bristol, Elder Meeting Minutes 1855-1874 Bristol RO 35481/PT/M2, 22 November 1858

²⁴ King's Weigh House Church Minute Book, 1795-1867, 30 May 1823

Following the history were any rules or articles imposed upon the membership of the chapel. Generally the rules were read to new candidates prior to joining the church. When four members who had previously left the church returned to the Endless Street Chapel during a pastoral controversy, two deacons were despatched to reread the rules so that they would be aware of those adopted in their absence prior to re-admittance as well as assuring their submission to the chapel body.²⁵ When no rules were in place, a general statement of faith was presented. The Argyle Chapel's was simply 'The doctrines holden by this church are those which are generally denominated Calvinistic or such as was maintained by the compilers of the Assembly's catechism and although it does not enjoin unanimity of sentiments in lesser matters, and nonessential points of belief, it requires that all candidates for membership shall profess faith in our Lord Jesus Christ as the only saviour of sinners and that the sincerity of repentance and reality of faith, shall be evinced by an irreproachable character, a blameless life and a holy conversation.'²⁶ Whatever the statement, members were expected to comply conscientiously with the organizing principles of the church.

The rules were followed by transactions of the church meetings. Some books contained the minutes of deacons' and trustees' meetings as well. The Argyle Chapel followed a similar model. But the overall purpose was to record the business matters conducted by the church and its officers. The membership met monthly for the admission and dismissal of church members as well as matters of discipline. These were carefully recorded in the transactions and church roll. The membership also met annually to hear a presentation of the accounts of the church. Most minutes give a brief overview of the meetings. Sometimes they could be quite detailed such as when Carr's Lane Chapel admitted William Hulse (aged 40) and Mr Tarton (aged 70) who were both 'reclaimed drunkards, but gave very satisfactory evidence of a change of heart as well as conduct'.²⁷ The transactions also recorded any new rules adopted by the church. Occasionally church secretaries would note non-church events that affected the life of the congregation. Zion Chapel in Bedminster documented when the Bristol riots in 1831 caused it to cancel the monthly meeting and in 1855 Percy

²⁵ Endless Street Chapel, Minute Book, 1833-1860, 5 August 1836

²⁶ Argyle Chapel, Bath, Church Minute Book, 1815-1888, BRO 480/1/2/1/1

²⁷ Carr's Lane Church, Birmingham, Church Minute Book, 1849-1856, Birmingham CL CC1/6, 30 January 1852

Chapel noted the death of the Emperor of Russia which initiated a prayer meeting in lieu of the normal business meeting.²⁸ The minute books also acknowledged special events in the life of the church such as the liquidation of debt for the King's Weigh House in 1841 or when the Carr's Lane Chapel met at the Corn Exchange during chapel repairs in 1856. Also the transactions could be used for affirmation or disaffirmation corporately to various individuals. When John Clayton received criticism for his preaching in Ireland, the church meeting at the King's Weigh House used it as an opportunity to affirm confidence in its minister.²⁹ The Argyle Chapel annually proposed a resolution to thank its treasurer for his services. Being recognized in the transactions by the church was considered an honour. However, it could also be a dubious distinction. The Argyle Chapel expressed its disappointment with John Martin when he became bankrupt with a comment not only when he was disciplined by the church in 1834, but also earlier in the church at the record of his election as deacon in 1824.³⁰ The Argyle Chapel minute books simply recorded the corporate proceedings of the church.

The final document of authority in the chapel was the trust deed. The trust deed empowered the trustees in supervising the temporal affairs of the chapel. Sometimes that power crossed over into the spiritual realm as well. Violation of the trust could result in the chapel being shut down by legal action. For example, according to the deed, if the Carr's Lane Chapel ceased to be an Independent chapel, the building had to be closed down and the property sold with the proceeds given to a like organization.³¹ The Whitefield Tabernacle expressly forbade Moravians from joining the church and all trustees had to be Calvinists as well as 'inclined to the Methodists'.³² The Zion Chapel of Frampton Cotterell could remove a trustee if he ceased to be a member of a paedo-baptist congregation.³³ The ultimate authority of the Kingswood Tabernacle resided in the trustees as the trust deed gave them the right

²⁸ Zion Chapel Minute Books, 1836-1900, 30 Oct 1831 and Percy Chapel, Minute Book, 1853-1883, 2 March 1855

²⁹ King's Weigh House Church Minute Book, 1795-1867, 4 July 1809

³⁰ Argyle Chapel, Bath, Church Minute Book, 1815-1888, BRO 480/1/2/1/1, 28 April 1834 & 1 August 1824

³¹ Documents relating to Carr's Lane Meeting House and Trust Estates connected therewith First deed dated 16 & 17 September 1746 Birmingham CL CC1/48

³² Schedule of Deeds Whitefield Tabernacle, Penn Street, Bristol, Bristol RO 35481/PT/CP1 (g)

³³ Zion Chapel, Frampton Cotterell, Church Minute Book, 1889-1921

to remove the chapel managers (which usually included the minister) at will.³⁴ The Argyle Chapel deed stipulated that the minister could be elected only by the majority of male members.³⁵ Trust deeds were difficult to modify as it took an act of parliament to do so. The trust deed could prove a very powerful document in the polity of a congregation.

If the ultimate authority did not lie in the church documents, then it could lie in hands of those attending worship at the chapel. Those empowered in the congregation were either subscribers, communicants or both. The term ‘subscriber’ had two designations. Subscribers were usually those that gave money to the erection of the chapel. By subscribing they were given some measure of involvement in the temporal affairs of the chapel, normally regarding renovations. When chapels were being built, whoever gave the largest subscriptions were given first choice of pews. When a pew was taken it was then let for an annual or quarterly fee for the lifetime of the subscriber. Those who rented seats were also called subscribers, who could be descendants of the original donor. Subscribers need not be communicants of the church. But needless to say their pecuniary interest in the chapel carried considerable weight. Minister Robert Ashton (1798-1878) continually complained of the deacons at Common Close Chapel putting the interests of the subscribers before those of the members.³⁶ In 1836, Charles Williams was elected minister over Endless Street congregation by 105 members, yet the minute book recorded that between 200 and 400 subscribers were present ‘to give their assent to the vote’.³⁷ Through the power of the trust deed, only male members who were also subscribers were allowed to participate in the financial meetings of the Argyle Chapel.³⁸ Subscribers could wield substantial influence in a congregation.

Members received within the chapel were also communicants. As the designations suggests, they were allowed the privileges of voting in church business and partaking in the Lord’s Supper. For this reason admission into the church was carefully regulated. Sarah Bartlett was denied admission to Endless Street Chapel in

³⁴ Trust Deed Notes, Kingswood Whitfield Tabernacle, Bristol, Bristol RO 30540/KW/ M4/1 (a)

³⁵ Argyle Chapel, Church Minute Book, 1815-1888, 9 March 1853

³⁶ Common Close Congregational Chapel, Warminster, Journal, 1832-1847, WSHC 2103/3, 16 May 1836

³⁷ Endless Street Chapel, Salisbury, Minute Book, 1833-1860, 5 May 1833

³⁸ Argyle Chapel, Bath, Church Minute Book, 1815-1888, BRO 480/1/2/1/1, 27 June 1838

1833 due to a 'lack of evidence' of her spiritual regeneration.³⁹ Carr's Lane Chapel made candidates write a personal testimony of their salvation prior to admittance. In 1794, the members delayed a Mr Small's admission into the church for six months due to an 'irregular dismissal from his previous church'.⁴⁰ Up until 1838, the Trowbridge Tabernacle allowed the entire membership to ask clarifying questions of candidates in front of the church. After that point deacons were appointed to vet candidates so they no longer had to 'pass through the former ordeal and torture their feelings of undergoing an examination before the members of the church'.⁴¹ As the century progressed membership standards were relaxed as assumptions were made regarding a person's spiritual state by his or her desire to become a member. As early as 1822, John Angell James was complaining that the door to membership had become 'too wide' in Independent chapels.⁴² Yet Jay expressed frustration in his autobiography that it had become too narrow due to the 'unconditional requisition of oral or written experiences delivered before the church'.⁴³ Chapels made membership more convenient for those who might have had objections over the older ways.

Membership brought responsibilities. At most chapels, communicants were expected to attend the Lord's Supper. Failure to do so could result in exclusion from the church. The first rule instituted at the Argyle Chapel insisted members who lived within a reasonable distance of the chapel must attend the supper at least once every six months.⁴⁴ The importance of the supper was highlighted by the example of Sarah Hopkins who was converted while witnessing communion at Hope Chapel.⁴⁵ Members were encouraged to attend monthly church meetings. Only members could propose and vote on resolutions. Some voting matters had further restrictions. When issues concerning church discipline arose at Common Close Chapel, women withdrew so that the men could vote.⁴⁶ During the deacons' election at King's Weigh House chapel in 1795 the men voted by lifting their hands, 'sisters by rising from their

³⁹ Endless Street Chapel, Salisbury, Minute Book, 1833-1860, 29 Dec 1833

⁴⁰ Carr's Lane Church, Birmingham, Church Minute Book, 1783-1810, Birmingham CL CC1/4, 3 April 1794

⁴¹ Trowbridge Tabernacle Church Minute Books WSHC 1417/7, 28 March 1838.

⁴² James, John Angell. *Christian Fellowship, or the Church Member's Guide*. (Birmingham: B. Hudson, 1822), 5-6

⁴³ *Autobiography of Jay*, 168

⁴⁴ Argyle Chapel, Bath, Church Minute Book, 1848-1861, BRO 480/1/1/1/3, 24 February 1851

⁴⁵ Hope Chapel, Church Book, Membership Roll, 1834

⁴⁶ Common Close Chapel, Minute Book, 1838-1872, 3 April 1840

seats'.⁴⁷ The trust deed at Argyle Chapel stipulated that only male members who were also subscribers could vote on financial matters related to the chapel.⁴⁸ The church body voted for officers, upheld church discipline, approved large items of expenditure, sanctioned lay preachers, confirmed candidates entering theological colleges, admitted candidates for membership and determined meeting times and worship practices for the congregation. Some church meetings took decisions on the minutiae of activities. The Common Close voted on whether or not to stand for the first hymn of the service.⁴⁹ The Whitefield Tabernacle took so long determining a pastoral package the ministerial candidate lost interest in the position.⁵⁰ Over time church officers became accountable to the church body. By the mid-nineteenth century ministers began giving their own reports at the annual church meeting alongside the reports of other ministries of the church.⁵¹ The pastoral reports covered the numerical increases within the membership. After mid-century, many chapels began the practice of printing membership manuals to assist members in church business. As important as the meetings were to the church, rarely did a majority of members attend. In 1833 the Endless Street Chapel had to postpone its church meeting for electing a minister from a weekday evening to a sabbath morning due to the lack of members present.⁵² A common complaint of ministers was the poor attendance at church meetings and prayer meetings. The concern was that a small minority who regularly attended would essentially have control over the body as a whole.

By far the most serious business of the church concerned church discipline. The exercise of discipline became an important tool for Nonconformity. Disciplinary cases were investigated by church officers who reported back to the church their findings. Penalties could range from a mild rebuke from the minister through temporary suspension from communion to full excommunication and exclusion from church membership. Discipline was exercised by the church when offences became

⁴⁷ King's Weigh House, Church Minute Book, 1795-1867, 15 December 1795

⁴⁸ Argyle Chapel, Church Minute Book, 1815-1888, 27 June 1838

⁴⁹ Common Close Chapel, Minute Book, 1838-1872, 4 February 1848

⁵⁰ Whitefield Tabernacle, Penn Street, Bristol, Elder's Meeting Minutes, 1855-1874 Bristol RO 35481/PT/M2, 27 May 1856 to 31 May 1858

⁵¹ Cashdollar, Charles. *A Spiritual Home: Life in British and American Reformed Congregations, 1830-1915*. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 178-179

⁵² Endless Street Chapel, Minute Book, 1833-1860, 3 May 1833

public and could reflect on its reputation. The most common offences were public intoxication and absence from the Lord's table. Members were expected to 'submit' to the discipline of the church.⁵³

In his study on Congregational discipline, Charles Cashdollar suggests that cases involving fornication were rare in comparison to extra-marital violations.⁵⁴ The records for English Congregational churches do not appear to verify his conclusions. Pre-marital indiscretions were considered just as frequently as adultery. Francis James was excommunicated from the Common Close chapel in 1840 for fornication. Similarly (and unrelated), both Jacob Silcox was excluded for his 'notorious immorality' in 1843 and Elizabeth Woodross for her 'Immoral gross conduct' in 1845. Likewise, in the same year, George Vallance and Sarah Howell were excluded for 'immoral conduct'. They were readmitted seven months later when both had the same surname of Vallance.⁵⁵ Outside one case of intoxication and another for malicious gossip, these were the only disciplinary cases dealt with between 1835 and 1845, making fornication the most frequent offence disciplined by the Common Close Chapel. The Carr's Lane Chapel created a disciplinary committee of ten members in 1840 to deal with reported sin. They also dealt with cases of fornication such as those of Miss Sarah Smith and Mrs Elizabeth Priestman who were both excluded after becoming pregnant with the latter trying to hide the evidence with a quick marriage.⁵⁶ The Argyle Chapel removed a W. Holt from the church books in 1849 when it was certain he had engaged in immoral conduct.⁵⁷ Issues related to pre-marital relations were frequently disciplined by English Congregationalists.

The Argyle Chapel historian A.W. Wills takes Jay to task for excluding members for bankruptcy rather than allowing them to resign from church membership.⁵⁸ Most likely this was in reference to the Ostler case in which a father and son were excluded on account of their business practices in 1850.⁵⁹ However,

⁵³ James, John Angell. *Christian Fellowship, or the Church Member's Guide* (11th edition). (London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co., 1859), 60

⁵⁴ Cashdollar, *A Spiritual Home*, 138

⁵⁵ Common Close Chapel, Minute Book, 1838-1872, Church Roll, 4 September 1840, 2 February 1843, 2 May 1845 and 1 November 1845

⁵⁶ Carr's Lane Church, Birmingham, Discipline Committee Minute Book 1840-1859, Birmingham CL CC1/31, 27 November 1844 and 20 October 1847

⁵⁷ Argyle Chapel, Church Minute Book, 1848-1861, 25 June 1849

⁵⁸ Wills, A.W. *The History of Argyle Congregational Church Bath: 1781 to 1938*. (Bath: Harding and Curtis, 1939), 51

⁵⁹ Argyle Chapel, Church Minute Book, 1848-1861, 29 July 1850

investigations into bankruptcy by chapels were quite common.⁶⁰ Bankruptcies were reported in the local papers, making them a matter of public record. The integrity of middle-class businessmen associated with the church was at stake. Generally, church members welcomed the investigations proving that their business failures were due to misfortune rather than fraud. The first case before the Carr's Lane Discipline Committee in 1840 was John Britain's bankruptcy. The group was able to report to the congregation that Britain was 'free of all moral blame, and is entitled to the sympathy and confidence of his church'.⁶¹ Jay's eldest son went bankrupt in 1828 working as an architect and builder in Cheltenham. His bankruptcy was due to the failure of the Cheltenham banks through over-extending their credit.⁶² If a member was dismissed then the offence would have been due to intentional fraud, requiring some measure of public repentance before restoration. The Ostler case was particularly troublesome because the father refused to open his books for investigation.⁶³ It must have been quite a shock when in 1834 the Argyle Chapel had to dismiss the silversmith John Martin (1775-1855) for bankruptcy. Martin had been both a deacon and a trustee of the chapel.⁶⁴ He had held Jay's confidence to the extent that he chaired several meetings in his absence and Jay proposed him as a trustee of the Trowbridge Tabernacle.⁶⁵ But the Argyle Chapel also exonerated another deacon, Samuel Fisher, over his bankruptcy in 1852.⁶⁶ Economic failure was a delicate matter in discipline cases, but the investigation was welcomed by those wishing to be absolved in accusations of fraud.

Unfortunately, the detailed minutes of the church meetings at the Argyle Chapel only extend back to 1848. It is clear that church discipline occurred because the results are recorded on the church roll prior to that date. But the roll reveals only cases that concluded in disciplinary action confirming guilt. The more complete records of the Carr's Lane Chapel might provide a better example of how cases were handled. These records demonstrate that members used the minister and church to adjudicate issues between church members as well as dealing with public sin. Citing

⁶⁰ Hilton, Boyd. *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought 1785-1865*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 139-148

⁶¹ Carr's Lane Chapel, Church Minute Book, 1838-1848, 1 May 1840

⁶² *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette* 30 September 1828, 4

⁶³ Argyle Chapel, Church Minute Book, 1848-1861, 30 September 1850

⁶⁴ Argyle Chapel, Church Minute Book, 1815-1888, see note dated 1 August 1824

⁶⁵ Trowbridge Tabernacle, Church Minute Books WSHC 1417/7, 30 January 1823

⁶⁶ Argyle Chapel, Church Minute Book, 1848-1861, 30 August 1852

the principle of 1 Corinthians 6:1-8, chapels were prepared to judge members' concerns particularly, when costs involved in using public courts were very high. At Carr's Lane, the discipline committee investigated the cases such as those of the ownership of a musical instrument, a broken engagement and a member who was defrauding his employees.⁶⁷ The group even disciplined a gentleman and his wife for mistreating a female servant in 1850.⁶⁸ The practice of church discipline provided a valuable resource for those within the church who had no other way of seeking justice.

When matters of importance needed to be decided quickly and in the interim between church meetings, authority was delegated to committees. The term of the committees only existed for the life of the project and the committees were expected to make regular progress reports back to the church body as a whole. For example, the Trowbridge Tabernacle appointed three deacons and three members annually to supervise the temporal affairs of the chapel.⁶⁹ The Argyle Chapel appointed a committee of six for the management of its orchestra in 1831.⁷⁰ Jay's church also appointed seventeen to oversee the enlargement of the premises in 1819.⁷¹ Through committees, powers were delegated to qualified members while ensuring that the ultimate authority resided with the church meeting.

If the final authority did not lie in the documents of the church or with the church members, it was usually under the power of the church officers. The offices were deacon, trustee and minister. In Independency officers were all elected by the church members. Even when trustees had the power to appoint their own trustees, they were still approved by the church even if only in a token measure. All officers were elected for life and could be removed only by death, resignation or disciplinary action by at least a majority of the church (trusteeship was until death unless the trust deed gave specific powers for the individual's removal). Therefore it behoved churches to be careful in their selection of those empowered with the responsibility of church office.

⁶⁷ Carr's Lane Chapel, Discipline Committee Minute Book, 1840-1859, 5 June 1840, 8 & 24 September 1845 and Church Minute Book, 1838-1848, 1 January 1841

⁶⁸ Carr's Lane Chapel, Discipline Committee Minute Book, 1840-1859, 3 & 21 October 1850

⁶⁹ Trowbridge Tabernacle, Church Minute, 3 February 1831

⁷⁰ Argyle Chapel, Church Minute Book, 1815-1888, 26 May 1831

⁷¹ Argyle Chapel, Minutes of Enlargement, 1819-1839, BRO, 480/1/2/4/1, 28 April 1819

The office of deacon was the position that was the most evolving within Congregational churches. The concept of deacon emerged from 1 Timothy 3:8-13, where the literal translation of *diakonos* from the Greek is ‘servant’. Prior to diaconal elections, preachers usually led congregations in a brief exposition of Acts 6:1-7 as examples of deacons who served the temporal affairs of the church to free the apostles for spiritual duties. Ministers continued to emphasize the expectation that deacons would manage the business of the chapel; however, over time the office evolved until it became synonymous with the concept of ‘ruling elder’.⁷² Rowland Hill dismissed the office of deacon completely. He complained in a letter to the chapel manager of the Trowbridge Tabernacle that the scriptures ‘know nothing of what the Independents call deacons, which seems to be a sort of elder among them, tho [sic] it means merely a servant. Tho’ many have been misguided by a barbarous translation of that word as tho some peculiar officer was appointed in the New Testament church.’⁷³ Deacons were to be a lifelong appointed committee to assist the minister in the life of the congregation and as such they were increasingly granted authority in the spiritual realm of the church. James referred to deacons as the minister’s ‘privy council in his spiritual government’.⁷⁴ As seen earlier, deacons were appointed to investigate cases of spiritual discipline. At the Argyle Chapel deacons had the responsibility of examining and proposing candidates for membership, most likely due to the large numbers applying for membership and Jay’s busy preaching schedule.⁷⁵ When a church was without a minister, the fellowship turned to the deacons to provide the supplies for the pulpit and oversee spiritual matters, as in the case of Common Close Chapel in 1838.⁷⁶ Yet at the Argyle Chapel, Jay always selected those who preached in his absence, though he would allow deacons to teach at weekday meetings.⁷⁷ Without a settled minister the managers of the Whitefield Tabernacle took upon themselves the title of ‘elder’, but only so that they could distribute the elements of the Lord’s Supper.⁷⁸ As spiritual oversight increased, so did the overall duties of the deacons. Deacons strove to be more efficient in their visits to

⁷² For the concept of ‘ruling elder’ see Owen, ‘The True Nature of a Gospel Church’, 107-130

⁷³ Rowland Hill to John Taylor, Trowbridge, 2 March 1822, WSHC 1417/7

⁷⁴ James, John Angell. *Christian Fellowship* (11th edition), 70

⁷⁵ Chapter 4, 70

⁷⁶ Common Close Chapel, Minute Book, 1838-1872, 12 January 1838

⁷⁷ Jay to Charles Godwin 28 October 1850, BCL A.L. 3073 and Jay to Charles Godwin, 29 September 1851, BCL A.L. 3078

⁷⁸ Whitefield Tabernacle, Elder Meeting Minutes, 1855-1874, 5 April 1855 & 25 June 1855

homes of the congregations. The wives of the deacons at Endless Street began to visit single females applying for membership in 1837.⁷⁹ Within eight months of the opening of William Henry Dyer's pastorate at Argyle Chapel in 1853, he had the community divided into five districts with a deacon overseeing each one for visitation and distribution of communion tickets.⁸⁰ With such responsibilities, men became reluctant to serve. When declining office, they normally cited a lack of time to devote to the duties. By 1863 the minister Samuel Luke (1809-1868) could find no one willing to serve as a deacon at Hope Chapel. He compromised by electing 'pastoral helpers' for one-year terms.⁸¹ Churches began to reduce the length of service of deacons in order to recruit men to serve. The King's Weigh House reduced deacon terms to five years in 1860.⁸² Carr's Lane followed suit in 1862.⁸³ Percy Chapel reduced its terms to three years and when en-acted the deacons already serving asked to be included in the elections.⁸⁴ Even Zion Chapel in Frampton Cotterell, with fewer than one hundred attending, did the same in 1881.⁸⁵ And in 1878, R.W. Dale led Carr's Lane in the unprecedented action at his chapel of electing women to the office of deacon.⁸⁶ The office of deacon evolved into one with more oversight of the congregation than originally intended.

Although deacons dealt with day-to-day issues at the chapel, the trust deed could endow trustees with greater authority. Trustees held the title deeds to buildings and, in most cases, all other properties being used for the purposes of the chapels. The original deed for the Argyle Chapel stated it 'was to be used and occupied and enjoyed as a meeting house, or place of worship and service of Almighty God by the church, society or congregation of Protestant Dissenters from the Church of England under the denomination of Independents, holding the sentiments contained in the Assembly's Catechism'.⁸⁷ Violating the trust deed could result in a closure of the chapel by the trustees. There could be as many as twenty-eight trustees serving. They

⁷⁹ Endless Street Chapel, Minute Book, 1833-1860, 1 July 1837

⁸⁰ Argyle Chapel, Church Minute Book, 1848-1861, 23 November 1853

⁸¹ Hope Chapel, Church Book, 18 February 1863.

⁸² King's Weigh House, Church Minute Book, 1795-1867, 18 December 1860

⁸³ Anon. *Church Manual for the Use of the Congregation at Carr's Lane*. (Birmingham: Hudson and Son, 1866).

⁸⁴ Percy Chapel, Minute Book, 1853-1883, 13 February 1868

⁸⁵ Zion Chapel, Frampton Cotterell, Church Minute Book, 1889-1821

⁸⁶ Carr's Lane Chapel, Church Minute Book, 1875-1882, 28 February 1878

⁸⁷ Argyle Chapel, Church Minute Book, 1815-1888

were elected for life and unless given permission by the trust deed could not be removed. John Martin remained a trustee on the deed of Argyle Chapel even after he was excluded from the church. Usually deeds made provision for the election of new trustees once the number was reduced by death to five. The Carr's Lane deed specified that trustees must be subscribers at the chapel and Independents but did not specify they had to be members. When the chapel was rebuilt in 1820 John Angell James included in the new deed that future trustees also had to agree with the church's articles of faith before appointment.⁸⁸ At the King's Weigh House, trustees could be elected by the congregation.⁸⁹ But only current trustees could elect new trustees at the Argyle Chapel and the Trowbridge Tabernacle. Throughout the nineteenth century, trustees were sets of men made up of laymen and ministers from varying age groups. It was also the practice to select non-resident trustees, the theory being that if the resident trustees should be led astray theologically from the purpose of the original trust or all die in a fire at the chapel, then the non-resident trustees would be prepared to enforce the trust. It was also the practice to try and include men from London who could seek parliamentary help if needed. In 1822 the members of the Trowbridge Tabernacle were powerless in selecting new trustees as only two resident trustees were still living and the remaining three were non-resident - meaning that the non-resident trustees, being a majority, were vested with the power to choose new trustees. Fortunately the non-resident trustees were William Jay, with London ministers Rowland Hill and Matthew Wilks (1746-1829). All three consulted members of the church before they made their selections. The trustees could be a very powerful body. For example the trustees of Trowbridge Tabernacle had to approve any new minister.⁹⁰ The trustees of the Argyle Chapel had to pass a resolution annually making the pastor and deacons a committee of management on behalf of the chapel.⁹¹ All alterations to chapel premises had to be approved by trustees as well. Trustees had tremendous authority in churches but their powers were limited to whatever the deed specified.

⁸⁸ Documents relating to Carr's Lane Meeting House and Trust Estates connected therewith first deed dated 16 & 17 September 1746 Birmingham CL CC1/48, 41

⁸⁹ King's Weigh House, Minute Book, 1795-1867, 16 February 1841

⁹⁰ Trowbridge Tabernacle, Church Minute Books WSHC 1417/7, see Trustee Correspondence at the end of the book between 24 February 1822 and 30 January 1823

⁹¹ Argyle Chapel, Church Minute, Book 1815-1888, 14 May 1826 and each subsequent annual meeting

Perhaps no other person wielded more influence over a congregation than a minister. Ministers were quite literally the face of the church. They were tasked to interpret and deliver the tenets of scripture over which Congregationalists prided themselves. Generally, Independents conceded to the minister the right to rule in the church.⁹² Ministers had the unique position of conducting church meetings. As the chairmen, they had the power to recognize who could speak before the church.⁹³ Jay was made a de facto member of all committees, and if he was in Bath, led them. The detailed business meetings reveal that from 1848 until his severe illness in August 1852, Jay missed chairing only four church meetings. The role of minister held great authority over the affairs of the congregation.

Between 1790 and 1850, ministers who could preach well were at a premium. Those who could were invited to preach in larger cities. London churches became the doorway to national success. Jay made his name at the Surrey Chapel in 1788 and preached there annually for the next forty years. John Angell James did not attract attention until he preached at Hoxton Chapel in 1812.⁹⁴ Successful preaching also presented the possibility of sermon publication gaining national recognition for minister and chapel. Ministers were paid well for first-rate preaching. Here too, the London churches were able to provide remuneration at higher levels attracting the better preachers. James Donney at the Trowbridge Tabernacle received £150 per annum in 1827. Endless Street in Salisbury offered Charles Williams £200 to be the minister in 1833. The Zion Chapel in Bedminster, Bristol, paid its minister £200 a year in 1842. As late as 1865 the Zion Chapel at Frampton Cotterell offered the new minister only £60 per annum but was able to increase it to £100 with grants from the Congregational Union.⁹⁵ Larger cities with the potential to draw greater crowds were able to provide more and the chapels did their best to keep their preachers. John Angell James received £120 per annum when he first began in Birmingham in 1805. By 1852 his 900-member church was paying him £500 (James was offered £700 with increases to £1000 to become a minister in London).⁹⁶ Thomas Raffles (1788-1863) in Liverpool began with £300 in 1811 and by 1841 it had increased to £700. London

⁹² Grant, *Free Churchmanship*, 55

⁹³ James, *Christian Fellowship* (1822), 143-144

⁹⁴ Dale, R.W. *The Life and Letters of John Angell James*. (London: Nisbet and Co., 1861), 121

⁹⁵ Zion Chapel, Frampton Cotterell, Church Minute Book, 1848-1889, February 1865

⁹⁶ Dale, *Life and Letters of John Angell James*, 496

ministers on average received similar salaries. Thomas Binney received £600 per annum at the King's Weigh House; Joseph Fletcher (1784-1843) received £800 per annum at Stepney; Craven Chapel paid £700 annually to John Leifchild (1780-1862).⁹⁷ In contrast to the well regarded preachers was Henry Mayo Gunn (1817-1886), who was pastor of Common Close Chapel in Warminster between 1847 and 1870. Gunn was an efficient organizer, acted as a competent historian and lecturer and worked tirelessly for the county association, yet his salary never rose above £150. He repeatedly had to go before the congregation and deacons about meeting his stipend.⁹⁸ Ministers known for their preaching drew crowds and helped alleviate the financial stress placed on Nonconformist chapels that did not have the resources of the Established Church. Chapels were anxious to retain the services of these gifted men.

In 1938, A.W. Wills criticised William Jay for being over-paid.⁹⁹ When Jay took the pulpit at Argyle Chapel in 1791 he received an annual salary of £120. It was increased to £400 per annum in 1813.¹⁰⁰ In 1830 the trustees began granting Jay an additional £105 annually as a gratuity for his service from remaining proceeds of the pew rents after expenses were paid.¹⁰¹ After this date there were no more increases. Yet, Jay consistently resisted calls to more lucrative pastorates. Jay was able to go on preaching tours during the enlargements of the chapel in 1791 and 1821. On the first he was able to collect the funds for paying off the entire debt and on the second his efforts paid for a quarter of the remaining debt on the construction.¹⁰² Later in 1848 Jay conceded £200 of his salary to enable the church to hire an assistant minister. Based on this information, Wills' criticism hardly seems justified. The benefits derived from the Argyle minister far outweighed his salary.

Churches evaluated potential pastors based upon their abilities to preach. The common method was for a candidate to fill a vacant pulpit for three to four Sundays. If the congregation liked the candidate, he was made a formal offer by the deacons usually by a posted letter. These letters were recorded in the minute books and acted as contracts between congregation and minister. The minister was expected to lead the people spiritually and consistently fill the pulpit. Candidates usually negotiated the

⁹⁷ Jones, *Congregationalism in England, 1662-1962*, 229

⁹⁸ Common Close Chapel, Minute Book, 1838-1872, 30 January 1863

⁹⁹ Wills, *The History of Argyle Congregational Church*, 12

¹⁰⁰ Argyle Chapel, Church Minute Book, 1815-1888, 27 July 1838

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 26 May 1830, in 1828 there was a balance of L293 after expenses.

¹⁰² Argyle Chapel, Minutes of Enlargement, 1819-1839, 25 October 1821

number of Sundays they were allowed to be away and if exceeded the minister was expected to pay a visiting preacher. In turn, the fellowship pledged its obedience to the pastor's spiritual leadership and presented a stated amount the minister could expect for his salary. Also common was a promise to increase the salary as the congregation expected attendance to increase under the minister's leadership. These letters were referred to when ministers felt congregations did not live up to expectations. R.A. Vaughan had a lively sequence of correspondence between himself and the deacons at Argyle Chapel when he felt the deacons failed to have him appointed co-pastor. His letter issuing a call was a point of dispute.¹⁰³ Usually, there was also a trial period of three to six months. At the end of the probationary period, these agreements were ratified in the ritual of the ordination of ministers over their new churches. Jay likened the ordination between pastor and people to that of marriage between husband and wife.¹⁰⁴ Ordinations were two-day events that included dinners and visits from other distinguished ministers. Whole communities were invited to witness the event and in some cases ministers from chapels of other denominations in the town were invited to participate. Ministers of other denominations read scripture and prayed at Charles Williams' service at Endless Street.¹⁰⁵ In 1820, the eminent Baptist John Ryland Jr participated in Henry Guy's ordination at Hope Chapel in Clifton.¹⁰⁶ The format of ordinations had a similar pattern. There was an opening statement justifying ordinations in Nonconformist churches, then a statement by a member on how God led the church in the choice of the candidate, a charge delivered to congregation, a testimony or doctrinal statement by the candidate and a charge to the new minister. Despite their length, ordinations were well attended. They provided the townspeople with the opportunity to hear the great preachers of the day. The full meeting houses would create expectations of similar attendances in the future. Pastors expected allegiance from their congregations and in return congregations expected a blessing manifested in the form of numerical growth to accompany the minister's work.

There was great hope on the part of congregations in calling new ministers. Particularly when churches endured extended periods with a vacant pulpit, a new

¹⁰³ Papers of William Tuck, BRO 480/2/32

¹⁰⁴ Jay to Rev. T. Haynes of Bristol, John Rylands Library, Eng. MS 379 (1070)

¹⁰⁵ Endless Street Chapel, Minute Book, 1833-1860, 30 October 1833

¹⁰⁶ Hope Chapel, Church Book, 20 December 1820

preacher offered fresh possibilities. Ministers who failed to deliver on expectations dispirited congregations. When the King's Weigh House in London called Edward Parsons to succeed the noted John Clayton in the pulpit, the congregation was crushed when it was discovered a year later that Parsons was an alcoholic.¹⁰⁷ The adultery of Jehoiadah Brewer (d. 1817), who preceded John Angell James, split the Carr's Lane congregation.¹⁰⁸ But even these dispiriting moments provided the following minister with the potential to assert his leadership. When Thomas Binney followed Parsons at King's Weigh House, within three months he streamlined the process for membership admission, making it easier for the candidates.¹⁰⁹ As more people entered the church, greater confidence was placed in Binney. Later in his career Binney was accorded almost *carte blanche*. No proposals of Binney's were opposed. John Angell James wielded the same type of authority. At his first church meeting ten people desired membership of the church. James would lead Carr's Lane to a membership of 986 by 1856. With no vote on the church floor, James unilaterally made the decision to discontinue baptisms in homes and officiated only publicly before the church. He also ordered days of fasting and prayer for the church without consent by the body.¹¹⁰ Jay commanded the same type of respect at Argyle Chapel. His predecessor had a respectable number of four hundred hearers attending the chapel. But in the first thirty years of Jay's ministry over five hundred had been admitted as members.¹¹¹ Census Sunday in 1851 recorded 1,200 in attendance.¹¹² The deacons were hesitant to act without consulting Jay. While the minister was traveling in 1838, the deacons sought his permission for a full financial audit of the chapel and its numerous societies.¹¹³ Again, while he was absent, Jay prohibited by correspondence a reception planned by the committee to raise funds for the chapel enlargement of 1821.¹¹⁴ The deacons at Percy Chapel who split from Argyle Chapel desired to have Jay interview and approve their pastoral candidate before officially calling him.¹¹⁵ Ministers who

¹⁰⁷ King's Weigh House, Church Minute Book, 1795-1867, 23 April 1828

¹⁰⁸ Carr's Lane Chapel, Church Minute Book, 1783-1810, 27 December 1802 to 9 January 1803

¹⁰⁹ King's Weigh House, Church Minute Book, 1795-1867, 27 October 1829

¹¹⁰ Carr's Lane Chapel, Church Minute Book, 1783-1810, 10 April 1805, May 1810, Church Minute Book, 1838-1848, 1 March 1839, and Church Minute Book, 1849-1856, 4 January 1856

¹¹¹ Ede, Mary. *The Chapel in Argyle Street, Bath, 1789-1989*. (Bath: Central United Reformed Church, 1989), 17

¹¹² 1851 Ecclesiastical Census Returns, Somerset Record Office, T\PH\pro/11

¹¹³ Argyle Chapel, Church Minute Book, 1815-1888, 27 June 1838

¹¹⁴ Argyle Chapel, Minutes of Enlargement, 1819-1839, 12 November 1821

¹¹⁵ Percy Chapel, Minute Book, 1853-1883, 2 May 1853

produced numerical growth and maintained their integrity commanded great authority in the government of the chapel.

One could assume that ministers with this type of authority would be reluctant to share it with an additional minister. The records do not appear to indicate that assumption - with only one exception, William Jay. As the respected John Clayton began to age, he desired an assistant to help with his duties. The King's Weigh House advertised for the position but found no suitable candidates. Clayton agreed to call the position co-pastor. The position still remained vacant as younger candidates were reluctant to share the leadership with a formidable figure like Clayton. Eventually Clayton resigned as pastor due to failing health and the position was open to a single minister.¹¹⁶ Binney became sole minister at the same church in 1829. Late in his career ill health caused him to reduce his preaching engagements. He sought out a 'junior pastor' to assist him in 1861 and offered equal duties at the church. The church decided on a suitable candidate but rescinded the offer at Binney's request when he discovered the candidate plagiarized his trial sermons and, after checking at his college, found he had a history of plagiarism.¹¹⁷ One of the most successful co-pastorates was that of John Angell James and R.W. Dale at Carr's Lane. James noticed Dale's organizational abilities early while the younger man attended the nearby Spring Hill College. James nominated Dale for several leadership positions at the chapel including oversight of the schools committees in 1852.¹¹⁸ Dale was invited to become James' assistant that same year at £200 per annum (with £100 of it taken from James' salary) and then co-pastor for £350 per annum in 1854.¹¹⁹ Upon James' death in 1859, Dale became the sole minister of the church.¹²⁰ As ministers aged and the responsibilities at the chapel increased, they were normally willing to share their authority.

Jay, however, was unwilling to concede any of his powers with a co-pastor. Due to Jay's plentiful preaching engagements and deteriorating health, both pastor and church agreed to hire an assistant. R.A. Vaughan was chosen to fill the position. He was the son of Robert Vaughan (1795-1868), president of the Lancashire

¹¹⁶ King's Weigh House, Church Minute Book, 1795-1867, 23 February 1826

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 2 July 1861

¹¹⁸ Dale, A.W.W. (ed.), *The Life of R.W. Dale*. (New York: Dodd Mead & Co., 1899), 76

¹¹⁹ Carr's Lane Chapel, Church Minute Book, 1849-1856, CC1/6, 1 July 1853 and 10 July 1854

¹²⁰ Carr's Lane Chapel, Church Minute Book, 1856-1860, CC1/7, 21 October 1859

Independent College. In his memoir, his father described him as a sensitive young man who loved poetry and frequently fought bouts of depression. The memoir also reveals that Vaughan continually sought the approval of his father.¹²¹ In 1847, the younger Vaughan had just returned after being educated at the University of Halle, where his father had encouraged him to engage the enemy of German liberal theology.¹²² The son accepted the role of William Jay's assistant in 1848 at £240 per annum.¹²³ The 'formal offer letter' from the deacons explicitly told him they were offering him the assistant pastor's position alone. Vaughan appeared to be well received and the circumstances of the church strengthened overall. By January 1850, the young man had his father write to Jay to ask him to solidify his position in the church by making him co-pastor. Jay brought the letter before the deacons to allow them to settle the matter. Most likely Jay knew he could rely on the decision of the deacons to uphold his sentiments, allowing the minister to maintain his relationship with Vaughan's father. The young man afterwards communicated that he desired to resign as assistant pastor in order to seek a permanent position. The deacons wrote back to Vaughan asking him to reconsider his resignation. They expressed to him their view that he had made a favourable impression on the congregation, yet they also said that Jay found the idea of a co-pastorate 'repugnant', citing the problems it caused at an unspecified chapel in London. Perhaps Jay thought the idea of a church with two ministers was a type of immoral intrusion into the marriage between pastor and people. The deacons went on to say that Jay had 'met us in a most concessive spirit unhesitatingly said that if it was the unanimous and earnest wish of the church that he would endeavour to overcome his reluctance'.¹²⁴ They offered to call a church meeting on Vaughan's behalf to deliberate on the matter. The undertones of the letter are quite clear. They had utmost confidence in Vaughan, desired to solidify his position, but were unable to do so because Jay did not desire it. Vaughan had no desire to call a church meeting to go against Jay's wishes and wrote to the deacons charging them with not being more assertive in the matter before the church. Shortly afterwards Jay met Vaughan, explaining that while he disliked the concept of co-

¹²¹ Vaughan, Robert. *Essays and Remains of the Rev. Robert Alfred Vaughan*. (London: Parker and Sons. 1858). xvii-xxiv

¹²² *Ibid.*, xxxvii

¹²³ Argyle Chapel, Church Minute Book, 1815-1888, 29 March 1848

¹²⁴ Papers of William Tuck, 'Account Related to R.A. Vaughan', 480/2/32, BRO

pastors, he wished the church to understand ‘that whatever appeared right to them would be so regarded by him and that he would give no hindrance to an agreeable settlement of things’. Jay told Vaughan he could expect more correspondence from the deacons. Later Jay would admit that he had always desired Vaughan to succeed him in the pulpit.¹²⁵ But Vaughan never received any additional communications from the deacons and he refused to back away from his resignation. The correspondence reveals that Vaughan had burned too many bridges with the deacons, two leading members in particular, as they tactfully tried to reassure him the pastorate would be his upon Jay’s resignation or death. To make matters worse, Vaughan made the details of the matter public, further hardening the stance of the deacons.¹²⁶ The event demonstrates three important points. First, Jay believed in a sole pastorate. And second, the deacons had no desire to counter the preferences of their minister before the membership. And finally, it was significant that Jay wished to be seen as acting under the authority of the church. Yet, it was obvious that as minister, Jay held the ultimate authority at Argyle Chapel.

The final influence potentially exercising authority over Independent chapels was that of the local association. Individual churches could conscientiously unite with other like-minded churches, but the right to self government was still upheld in the local church body.¹²⁷ The Argyle Chapel participated in the Wiltshire and Northeast Somerset Union consisting of fourteen churches. Jay was a founding member of the group in 1798. As Deryck Lovegrove has discussed, these groups of co-operating churches were founded to aid itinerancy in surrounding villages. Later as the associations became more denominationally minded, the groups began planting churches in villages where itinerants were having success. Because the association provided financial backing to these fledgling churches, it had a vested interest in their oversight to ensure denominational loyalty until the congregations were large enough to support themselves.¹²⁸ But associations could also provide other means of support to their member churches. When the congregation and the minister of Endless Street Chapel, Salisbury, were in dispute, a committee of ministers from the association was

¹²⁵ Jay, Cyrus. *Recollections of William Jay.* (London: Hamilton, Adams and Co., 1859), 261

¹²⁶ The entire episode is carefully transcribed in the papers of chapel historian, William Tuck, BRO, 0480/2/32

¹²⁷ For the views of John Owen and the Savoy Declaration see Grant, *Free Churchmanship*, 25-27

¹²⁸ Lovegrove, Deryck. *Established Church, Sectarian People: Itinerancy and the Transformation of English Dissent, 1780-1830.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 29

requested to arbitrate. The chair of the committee, Richard Elliot (1780-1843), minister of Devizes, even made a notation in the Endless Street Chapel minute book absolving the church's minister in the matter.¹²⁹ Jay was highly involved in the association. He usually chaired the meetings when present. He was invited to preach at the bi-annual meetings more than any other minister.¹³⁰ One of his sermons, in 1809, was entitled 'The Design and the Improvement of County Associations'.¹³¹ The Argyle pastor was requested frequently to provide names for itinerants.¹³² Individuals from the Argyle Chapel were involved in the financial support and providing legal advice to the churches.¹³³ The association became more of an influential entity over its member churches. Jay even advocated 'some power of appeal' beyond the individual church within Independent polity.¹³⁴ In 1839, he was called upon to settle a dispute at the Trowbridge Tabernacle when the minister was accused of indiscretion.¹³⁵ But in no instance in either the Wiltshire minutes or Argyle records is there an occasion on which the association wielded any influence over the Argyle Chapel. Evidence suggests, rather, that Jay and his congregation held the greater authority over those within the local union.

Jay appears to have gained his status at Argyle Chapel in over sixty years of service as its pastor. After all Jay had baptized and buried successive generations during his tenure. But the Vaughan incident may have marked a shifting of authority at the Argyle Chapel. A year and a half later, in 1852, Jay became severely ill with bowel trouble causing him to be absent frequently from the pulpit. He was eighty-three years old. There was no other assistant after Vaughan, nor had Jay suggested a possible successor. In that same year William Titley, George Northmore (1802-1883) and Charles Clark were elected as new deacons, all of whom played significant roles in the split at Argyle Chapel the following year. As Jay's absences became more frequent, the deacons became more anxious. There had been a growing faction among the younger members of the church who desired change and another group

¹²⁹ Endless Street Chapel, Minute Book, 6 August 1835

¹³⁰ Chapter 5, 127

¹³¹ Wiltshire Association Minute Books, 2755/1-2, WSHC, 11 April 1809

¹³² *Ibid.*, 15 April 1802, 9 September. 1818

¹³³ Wiltshire Association Minute Books, 2755/1-2, WSHC, 10 April 1828, 7 October 1830, 11 October 1837

¹³⁴ *Autobiography of Jay*, 168

¹³⁵ Rogers, Helen (ed.), *The Diary of William Henry Tucker 1825-1850*. (Chippenham: Wiltshire Record Society, 2009), 72

who were looking forward to a successor who would devote more time to pastoral visitation. While Jay was convalescing from his illness in Worthing, the deacons sent a letter to him encouraging him to resign.¹³⁶ The family withheld the letter from Jay, fearing it would hinder his recovery. Jay, however, recovered his strength and returned to Bath. His daughter, Anna Bolton, who had not been in Worthing, was in the streets of Bath when she was confronted by William Titley, who made reference to the letter saying that ‘Mr. Jay ought to resign’ and the congregation was talking of the expense of maintaining supplies. She in turn relayed the episode to her father. It was then that the rest of the family revealed the letter to Jay. Jay became very emotional and wrote a letter on 4 October to the deacons announcing his resignation to commence on the anniversary of his ordination on 31 January 1853. He cited his reason as ‘extreme depression and weakness’. His son suggested that Jay had hoped the deacons would not receive his resignation but the church accepted it by resolution on 13 October 1852. Jay was disappointed, telling his son ‘they will not permit me to die the pastor of Argyle Chapel’.¹³⁷ This was a wish that Jay had expressed in his fortieth anniversary sermon twenty-one years earlier and to his deacons as early as 1820.¹³⁸ Jay’s marriage to the chapel had ended.

With Jay’s resignation in hand, the deacons began the search for pastoral replacements. Two candidates emerged: William Henry Dyer of West Bromwich, who was recommended by John Angell James, and Samuel Luke of Orange Street Chapel in London, who was recommended by Jay. Both candidates were well received. The younger members preferred Dyer and Luke was well liked by ‘the older and more influential portion of the community’.¹³⁹ Jay had been familiar with Dyer, even suggesting him to supply a neighbouring church in 1846.¹⁴⁰ Prior to entering the ministry, Dyer had trained for the bar. His preaching appealed to the intellect and he was also an efficient organizer. Luke was the son-in-law of Thomas Thompson (1785-1865), the secretary of the Home Missionary Society in London. While a great communicator, he was deficient in organizational skills. When Luke became minister

¹³⁶ Jay, *Recollections*, 277-278

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 279-283

¹³⁸ Jay, William. ‘The Retrospect: A Sermon Preached at Argyle Chapel on Sunday Morning, January 30, 1831, being the Fortieth Anniversary of His Ordination’. *The Pulpit*, 425 (1831), 172 and *Autobiography of Jay*, 185

¹³⁹ Percy Chapel, Minute Book, 1853-1883,

¹⁴⁰ Wiltshire Association Minute Books, 2755/2, 14 April 1846

at Hope Chapel in Clifton, he made a note in the church book in 1863 that he had not kept up with the minutes for the past ten years because they had not been regularly adhered to prior to his coming (which was due most likely to the failing health of the previous minister).¹⁴¹ With both candidates having favourable reviews from the congregation, the two names were put before the church in deciding whom to ask to come preach with a view to a call. Dyer was preferred by vote of 104 to 57 of the members present. Then by resolution the church unanimously voted to ask him to come for an eight-week probationary period with a view to a call.¹⁴²

Dyer had preached less than a month before the first signs of trouble began. A memorial signed by 107 members was sent to the deacons expressing their dissatisfaction with Dyer's preaching and asking the deacons to notify Dyer that the outcome of his call was less than certain. Though he did not sign it, Jay approved the communication, saying 'it is proper'. The deacons met the trustees to consult about what should be done. It was discovered that a strong majority of trustees of the chapel also disapproved of Dyer. Both deacons and trustees drafted a resolution to be placed before the church asking for a committee of ministers to help arbitrate the matter with three being selected by those opposing Dyer and three selected by those who favoured him and a seventh to be chosen by the other six members. When the motion was put before the church, a counter resolution was put forward by William Gregory (1793-1874), stating the congregation 'acknowledging no other headship than the Lord Jesus Christ, feels called upon emphatically to oppose the impeachment of its liberties, or restraint of its legitimate and lawful and spiritual interests, as an Independent Church governed exclusively by Congregational principles'. The trustee/deacon-initiated resolution lost. The second resolution carried and a meeting was set the following week to vote on calling Dyer to the pastorate.¹⁴³

The meeting was held on 16 March 1853. Much campaigning occurred on the part of both groups. William Titley and George Northmore led those in favour of Dyer and Charles Clark was a leader against Dyer. Aware of the possibility that either party might secede from the chapel, Jay made a surprise appearance at the meeting and asked to address the congregation. The recently retired minister stated he was

¹⁴¹ Hope Chapel, Church Book, 1863

¹⁴² Percy Chapel, Minute Book, 1853-1883, 29 December 1852

¹⁴³ Argyle Chapel, Church Minute Book, 1815-1888, 9 March 1853

there to cast his vote. 'I come here to record my vote, not against Mr. Dyer, but against him coming here under existing circumstances.' Titley made a motion that there be no further discussion and the vote took place by ballot. The outcome was 152 votes for Dyer and 121 votes against. A scrutiny was called for based on a provision in the trust deed allowing only church members who had been members for twelve months to vote in pastoral elections. The church roll was consulted. After the scrutiny the final tally was 125 for Dyer and 111 against.¹⁴⁴ Both Clark and Titley wrote to Dyer. Clark told him that if he accepted the job then a considerable number of influential members would leave the church. Titley expressed to him that once he accepted the position any schism would eventually fizzle out. With such a slim majority, Dyer consulted with fellow ministers in London about the quandary. They advised him to ask for more time to preach in the chapel before accepting the pastorate so as to gain the favour of those against him. Dyer then came to Bath to consult with his supporters. A dinner of eighteen people from the church was held. Dyer asked for a straw poll of whether or not he should accept the call. Fourteen said yes, two were neutral and two said no. The two that said no were two of the four deacons that had voted for him at the church meeting. The following day Dyer met Jay. The elder minister was convinced Dyer's acceptance would split the church in two. Dyer assured him he would not come under the circumstances.¹⁴⁵ That evening, the church was called together to hear a communication from the candidate. Surprisingly, the chairman read a letter from Dyer saying he would accept the pastorate beginning in September. Immediately, three deacons resigned from their office.¹⁴⁶ In the following month, 119 members withdrew from Argyle. The group met in the corridor rooms and formed Percy Chapel the following month. Bath now had two Congregational churches.

During this episode, there was a distinct shift in authority at the Argyle Chapel. All four authoritative factors played a role in the chapel's polity from the time of Jay's inaugural year. But for the first sixty-two years of the chapel, Argyle Chapel was clearly a minister-led, deacon-assisted church similar to the churches under the ministries of John Clayton, Sr and John Angell James. The body of deacons and

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 16 March 1853

¹⁴⁵ Percy Chapel, Minute Book, 1853-1883, 29 March 1853

¹⁴⁶ Argyle Chapel, Church Minute Book, 1815-1888, 30 March 1853

church members deferred to Jay over the course of his ministry unlike the ministries at Common Close Chapel, Warminster, or the Kingswood Whitefield Tabernacle. Jay was an influential organizer in the local association. It trusted in Jay's leadership. Jay was used to having the predominant influence wherever he served for the vast majority of his career. In 1852, however, a change occurred which revealed dissatisfaction with his pastoral management. After his retirement, not even Jay's vote against Dyer could sway a majority of the congregation. It must be said that Jay's aloofness from the membership and his failure to share the eldership of the chapel weakened his position. The balance of power shifted to the congregation. William Henry Dyer led the Argyle chapel in the organization of districts overseen by deacons, annual tea meetings related to the business of the chapel, printed business reports and pastoral 'meet and greet' fellowships in the homes of deacons so that members and prospective members could associate with the minister. Yet despite his best efforts, Dyer never attained the authority that was held by Jay. And despite these newer measures, the Argyle Chapel never regained its national prominence. Both Titley and Northmore were erased from the church roll for non-attendance. Ironically, Titley left the church because he could not 'prosper under the ministry' of Dyer though he would return under a different pastor.¹⁴⁷ Dyer finished his career in ministry twenty-two years later. He returned to a legal career in 1875, frustrated with the opposition he received in Congregational polity.¹⁴⁸ The old focus of being centred on the preaching ministry of the pastor was replaced in favour by the authority of a diminishing congregation. After Jay's time, the central power in Argyle Chapel shifted from the pulpit to the pew.

¹⁴⁷ Papers of William Tuck, BRO, 0480/2/22

¹⁴⁸ Ede, *The Chapel In Argyle Street*, 37

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

The ministry of William Jay was fruit born from the Evangelical Revival. Jay became the quintessential minister of evangelical Dissent. He was transformed from stone mason to a celebrity of the nineteenth century. Even his friend Wilberforce was impressed with his success story.¹ Because Jay performed well as a preacher, he did not experience the persecution of his evangelical forbearers. His abilities as a preacher and author made his influence formidable both far and wide. The Argyle minister was able to enjoy a greater measure of acceptance and prominence than earlier adherents of the revival did not receive. As a minister he lifted evangelicalism from obscurity to respectability in one of Britain's most fashionable and elegant towns. R.W. Dale's assessment that William Jay represented the old guard of evangelicalism appears to be accurate, but there needs to be some revision to his thesis.

Jay was trained by Cornelius Winter for the single purpose of spreading the message of new birth arising from the Evangelical Revival. For this reason he was educated to be a practical gospel minister rather than a speculator in the realms of theological thought. The revivalistic preaching that made such an early impression on him as a boy became his chief aim. Jay saw that the greatest requirement in the human condition was sinful man's need to be reconciled to a holy God. If his preaching could bring about conviction of sin and conversion, Jay's postmillennial view of the world would be satisfied. Salvation would lead the individual to improve the self and thereby in turn create a desire to influence the world by advancing the gospel. In accordance with Dale's appraisal, Jay had a 'passion for saving men' rather than developing theological constructs.²

Jay, however, did dabble in religious speculation at the outset of his ministry. It was a concern to Rowland Hill, who was afraid the young man might stray from the path.³ But Jay came to agree with the logic contained in the systematic theology of Calvinism, though there were some aspects of it that he wrestled with emotionally. He

¹ Wilberforce, R.I. and Wilberforce, Samuel. *The Life of William Wilberforce* (London: John Murray, 1838), ii, 313

² Dale, R.W. *The Old Evangelicalism and the New* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1889), 26-27

³ Rowland Hill to James Webber, 25 December 1790, Dr. Williams's Library, II c86/29, also Chapter 3, 63

came to his conclusion because he believed it was what the Bible taught. And if this is what the scriptures portrayed, Jay saw no reason to adjust his position even if it failed to reconcile issues with his own conscience. The theological reasoning of Andrew Fuller helped Jay with his final reservations. By contrast, Dale's Romantic sense of God as the Father who loves his creation led him down a different path from that his predecessor, John Angell James. To Dale the notion of God eternally punishing the vast majority of humanity along with the idea of the atonement as a mere judicial transaction were intolerable. The Carr's Lane minister could not reconcile his concept of God with the old system of Calvinism and desperately longed for a new construct.⁴ Jay, on the other hand, saw no need to divert from the older evangelicalism which made conversion the guiding principle of ministry.

Jay led his congregation to emulate the same standard. The people were actively motivated by 'zeal for souls'. As Christian men and women, they were called 'out of the world' to participate in bringing about the conversion of others. The ministries of the chapel were focused specifically on that purpose. Spiritual reformation of the human being was the primary goal. Argyle's church members sought to bring about salvation and with it a change of behaviour in the individual. But as Dale noted, this did create an 'us' and 'them' mentality or, as he put it, a 'spiritual elitism'.⁵ The members of the Argyle chapel desired to pull people out of the world rather than interact with worldly society. The chapel focused on transforming individuals rather than transforming the cultural environment of nonbelievers, with the exception of making evangelicalism respectable. Corporate worship was the primary means of communicating this message. Participants listened to a scriptural sermon that could be appropriated individually in reforming their behaviour. The congregation was out to save the individual not the culture, but recognized that transformed individuals collectively might change the environment. Early evangelicals had the expectation that culture would be transformed only when their postmillennial hope was realized.

This single-minded purpose of evangelism also benefited the chapel. With the focus more on conversion and evangelism and less on theology and ecclesiology the chapel was unified in its goal. The Argyle Chapel experienced long-term harmony

⁴ Hopkins, Mark, *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2004), 63-64

⁵ Dale, *Old Evangelicalism*, 34

from its inception. This was a feature of which Jay was most proud. As has been demonstrated, the composition of the Argyle Chapel was rather heterogeneous. The majority of the membership was composed of members of the middle classes. As the congregation grew, so did its influence upon the city as the membership drew from the more affluent areas of Bath. Jay's preaching attracted captains of industry such as Henry Stothert and builders of the city such as H.E. Goodridge. It also attracted artists such as William Etty and Edwin Long (1829-1891) along with the writers Elizabeth Hamilton and Hannah More and the actor Charles Young.⁶ Politicians both local and national attended Jay's sermons. Dale's assessment that the evangelicalism of William Jay failed to focus on the Christian's relationship to the arts, sciences, literature, politics, commerce and industry is valid. Jay was not prone to address these particular topics, despite opportunities to preach to those engaged in them. He was more interested in building the character of individuals who would have the greater impact on society. Jay's challenge was to increase the respectability of evangelical Nonconformity in Bath. In this, he succeeded most admirably. Both chapel and minister worked to provide a stability that would grow into respectability. Over the course of Jay's ministry, evangelicalism went from being non-fashionable to gaining the ascendancy among the churches and chapels in Bath. At the turn of the nineteenth century, the city swelled with retired members of the middle-classes who offered even more stability to the evangelical cause. As Jay's reputation grew, so did the reputation of the chapel. The Argyle Chapel became the evangelical attraction in a city full of attractions. The numbers of dignitaries visiting the city who attended Jay's sermons heightened the prestige of the chapel even more. There was no other Nonconformist chapel that wielded similar influence in the city.

Dale's assessment that the old evangelicalism of Jay did not advance the cause of Congregationalism is also accurate. Jay was criticized for not being more active in planting additional Congregational churches in Bath. Wallace notes that it was not until the Argyle Chapel split after Jay's retirement that a city of 60,000 had a second Independent chapel.⁷ But this particular criticism was unjust. Jay had been active in promoting additional churches in the Bath area, such as the effort to plant a chapel in

⁶ For Long, see Hase, Pat, 'Edwin Long, R.A. 1829-1891', *Bath History Journal*, 12 (2011), 142-155

⁷ Wallace, Thomas, *A Portraiture of the Late William Jay of Bath* (London: Arthur Hall, Virtue & Co., 1854), 214

Widcombe. But Jay was a victim of his own success. Residents in the city still preferred the preaching at Argyle Chapel over the orations at these new projects and refused to leave. Perhaps if Jay was culpable, it was in not placing young ministers under his care to prepare them for the pulpit and to endorse their ministries when they set out on their own.

Jay was active in uniting Independent churches to work together. He was a founding member of the local association of the Wiltshire and Northeast Somerset Union and in its latter days chaired its meetings. Although Jay was not present at the formation of the Congregational Union of England and Wales in 1833, he did support the Union. He was a speaker when the denomination met for its autumnal meeting at Bristol in 1840.⁸ But Jay's purpose in promoting co-operation was to advance the cause of evangelicalism rather than advancing Congregational polity. Again, his concern was the spread of the gospel message over developing a theology of the church.

Dale praised old evangelical preaching for its emphasis on the atonement, justification by faith, regeneration and the sincere warning of eternal consequences in the afterlife.⁹ However, he had three criticisms of the earlier preaching. First, he claimed that the sermons lacked a disinterested love for truth and, second, that they leaned too much upon proof texts of scripture. The focus should have been 'to discover what the Bible really meant' and 'not merely for personal edification'.¹⁰ Dale felt that much of the preaching was too polemical and engaged too much in controversy. On this topic, he commended Jay for being the exception rather than the rule, and praised the Argyle minister for his 'simplicity and naturalness of style'.¹¹ But no doubt, he had Jay in mind for using proof texts in his sermons, especially considering that Jay averaged forty scripture quotations in his sermons and rarely preached *lectio continua*. However, it should be noted that, unlike Dale, Jay had perfect confidence in the theological system that he preached. He did not think it necessary to develop anything new, but to emphasize the conduct a believer should manifest within that system. Dale's third criticism was that old evangelical preaching placed too much emphasis on the 'life to death' moment of conversion and should

⁸ *The Bristol Mercury* 26 September 1840, 5

⁹ Dale, *Old Evangelicalism*, 37-38

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 25

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 11

have emphasized the incarnation more.¹² But this was not the case with Jay. The evidence has shown that only a quarter of Jay's sermons had an evangelistic appeal. The minister stated he could not pinpoint the precise moment of his own conversion, nor was it necessary, but rather stressed preaching as the means. And Jay did emphasize the incarnation. Over half of Jay's doctrinal sermons related to Christology. For Jay, the incarnation was important due to its relationship to the atonement. Dale, however, believed 'even part from the sin of the race, the Son of God would have shared the life of man, and man would have shared the life of God in Him'.¹³ In Dale's mind, the incarnation deserved the greater attention. Jay chose to emphasize the atonement.

Jay felt he was called to be a preacher and he took his craft seriously. He used whatever means necessary in his rhetorical devices to solicit a strong emotional response to action. The Carr's Lane minister suggested that fear of hell was a motivating factor in the early evangelical preaching of James and Jay.¹⁴ The Argyle minister did believe in the eternal torment of the soul, but it was not a significant feature of his sermons in urging a response from his listeners. He emphasized the eternal blessings of heaven and a confidence in God with a British culture ever changing and advancing throughout the Industrial Revolution. Again the underlying impetus between the two ministers was different. Jay's sermons were not primarily designed to appeal to the intellect but to encourage believers into action or to instil faith in God's sovereignty. Jay was motivated to transform the individual whereas Dale desired to transform all of society. The Argyle pastor's own 'rags to riches' success story offered validity to the immediate blessings of personal conversion.

Dale felt that the spirituality of the old evangelicalism 'had the fault of excessive subjectivity'.¹⁵ The principles of Christianity were applied individually with a vigorous rigidity. The scheme envisaged in Jay's spirituality began with the new birth. Conversion was a work done by God that was individually appropriated by the believer. Once converted, an individual had to focus on living by principles found in scripture. Christians were expected to use as many means as possible in order to expose themselves to the word, such as a daily devotional time, attention to sermons

¹² Ibid., 43

¹³ Ibid., 46

¹⁴ Ibid., 40

¹⁵ Ibid., 30

and weekday meetings. They had to be in a constant state of prayer and self-examination, leading them to maximize their absorption of scripture. The process also involved abstinence from certain forms of behaviour and types of attitude that could inhibit spiritual growth. The believer was to be resolute in the truths of God even in the most difficult of circumstances as a demonstration of growing faith. Participation in corporate spirituality was designed to develop the sanctification of the individual, which would in turn advance the cause of the gospel. For Dale, it was not just the individual but also all of society that must be redeemed. 'For the protection and development of the Christian and formation of the ideal Christian character', he declared, 'a Christian environment – a Christian society - is necessary.'¹⁶ Dale dismissed the concept of total depravity. He believed all people were capable of making good moral choices. Therefore, the Christian impact upon the world could be greater than just the salvation of souls. The believer living incarnationally, or dwelling within the world, could affect all walks of life from business to family by promoting a virtuous life. All of life was sacred and the Christian should not live with barriers against the non-believing culture.¹⁷ Christians were to be transforming agents in the redemption of the world. The spirituality of William Jay, by contrast, was aimed at delivering the believer out of his or her worldliness, not at improving the world.

For this reason, the spirituality of Jay was focused on solidarity of belief. He was much more open to other evangelicals, believing there was a one-size-fits-all spirituality. His devotional literature addressed the major themes rather than minor details in an effort to avoid controversy. Jay could overlook differences with other evangelical bodies, believing the unity of the church at large was more important than the dissimilarities between denominations. He was willing to advocate the advancement of the gospel in those that diverged from his thinking. He preached on behalf of the mission agencies of the Baptists and Methodists. He associated with a broad range of ministers from fellow Nonconformists to members of the establishment. He was even willing to open the chapels of other denominations.¹⁸ It also may be this spirit of inclusiveness that led him to champion Catholic

¹⁶ Ibid., 31

¹⁷ Dale, R.W. *Laws of Christ for a Common Life* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1893), 34-40, Dale, R.W. *The Evangelical Revival and Other Sermons* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1880), 41-59, and *The Old Evangelicalism*, 35

¹⁸ Jay opened the King Street Baptist Chapel, Bristol in 1817. *Evangelical Magazine* (1817), 191

emancipation in the hopes that those under the influence of popery would give evangelicals a hearing. The Argyle minister was much more accepting in his spirituality provided it was rooted in major evangelical themes, whereas his Birmingham counterpart was much more reserved.

William Jay's broad spirituality extended to his ecclesiology and polity. Each pastor viewed the concept of the church differently. Dale's theology informed him that believers and Christ were joined in a literal way through regeneration.¹⁹ He saw the assembly of the church as almost sacramental. He believed the presence of Christ inhabited the fellowship of the church. Because of this, Dale was a strong proponent of church discipline as members were representative of Jesus. Jay on the other hand believed the church was a tool to advance the cause of the gospel. For him church discipline needed to be enforced because sinful behaviour impeded the mission of the church. Within a memorialist view, Jay had no scruples about admitting communicants from other denominations to the Lord's table as representative of the church at large uniting together. Such participation would express unity in the cause. Dale would have recoiled at the notion of the church being a voluntary society.²⁰ He took something like a mystical view of the supper, believing that Christ was spiritually present in the ordinance.²¹ Dale would argue his chapel was united through participation in Christ. Jay's chapel maintained its unity by its common mission.

Most likely Dale would have had a stronger view of congregational oversight of the church. Dale believed that the minister was appointed by the will of Christ through the affirmation of the church membership.²² While Christ was the head of the body, the full authority of Christ resided in the fellowship when it met together. There were several instances in which the will of the church superseded Dale's wishes. The Carr's Lane pastor acquiesced in the desire of the church.²³ Jay, on the other hand, was accustomed to stronger pastoral oversight. As the chapter on polity showed, he was capable of influencing major decisions in the life of the church even from a distance and even though his sway was communicated through the officers and

¹⁹ Dale, *Old Evangelicalism*, 47

²⁰ Hopkins, *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation*, 75

²¹ Dale, R.W. *A Manual of Congregational Principles* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1884), 159; also see Argent, Alan, 'Dale and Congregationalism' in Binfield, Clyde (ed.), *The Cross and the City* (Cambridge: United Reformed Church History Society, 1999), 37-38

²² Dale, *A Manual*, 99

²³ Nordwood, Donald, 'Dale and the Church Meeting', *Cross and the City*, 65

committees of the church. Neither of the ministers had strong personal relationships to the members of the congregation. Each neglected visitation in preference to sermon preparation in the study.²⁴ But it might be Dale's occasional willingness to acquiesce in the decision of the church that allowed him to maintain his authority whereas Jay found his authority faded after his retirement when he could not influence the election of Henry Dyer as the new minister of the chapel. Both men were strong ministers but they had differing approaches to their polity.

The question remains of whether or not there was a significant change between the evangelicalism of the old guard represented by Jay and that of the new represented by Dale. There were some significant developments and differences in nineteenth-century Congregationalism in the forty years between the deaths of the two ministers. Dale had no desire to emulate the evangelicalism of his predecessor John Angell James. First, there was a change in the authority of scripture. As Mark Hopkins has shown, when the attack of criticism descended on the word in Britain, the emphasis shifted from the strength of the Bible to the authority of Jesus.²⁵ However, the scriptures still had significant relevance as they revealed Christ. Dale had hopes that both testaments would eventually be authenticated in a new theological construct, but he held that the books of the Bible 'contain the truth of God' rather than that they constitute the word of God.²⁶ The nineteenth-century attacks on the infallibility of scripture began to take their toll on Dale. Second, Dale proclaimed Calvinism was dead within his denomination.²⁷ While it was still upheld prominently in other denominations, and he appreciated its value to his early thinking, he felt he could safely pronounce it no longer held control over the vast majority of Congregationalists. Using more humane moral axioms rather than the scriptures, Dale could not reconcile Calvinism with his understanding of divine retribution. In light of this was the third change regarding the doctrine of hell. The old evangelicals believed 'that those to whom they preached were in danger of dwelling in fires, eternally unconsumed', but Dale supposed that in his day 'that belief has become incredible'.

²⁴ Dale, A.W.W. *The Life of R.W. Dale* (New York: Dodd Mead and Co, 1899), 509, and Redford, George and James, J.A. (eds), *The Autobiography of William Jay* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1974), 153-156

²⁵ Hopkins, *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation*, 59-62

²⁶ Dale, R.W. *Protestantism: Its Ultimate Principle* (London: Milton Publishing League, 1877), 73
Also see Hopkins, *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation*, 62

²⁷ Dale, *Old Evangelicalism*, 42, and *Evangelical Revival*, 20-22

In his thinking, he believed in a kinder view of God. While a judgment was to be faced, he preferred to claim ‘that the ultimate destiny of the impenitent remains unresolved’.²⁸ Dale’s concept of God as father along with the incarnation would not allow him to conceive of the Almighty inflicting eternal torment for sin. At first, he was led to universalism, but later, concluding there was eternal punishment, he changed his position to conditionalism.²⁹ In fact, it was the concern for this eternal judgment that caused Dale to hold up the conversionism of the early evangelicals as an example for his own day.³⁰ Fourth, because of the changes in the understanding of the authority of scripture, the incarnation began to eclipse the doctrine of the atonement in late nineteenth-century evangelicalism. This is not to say the atonement was ignored, but it had to be interpreted in light of Christ becoming fully human and restoring man to his full humanity.³¹ Therefore crucicentrism was still an important distinction for the later pastor. Dale’s most prominent theological work was the assimilation of the incarnation and atonement in his Congregational Lectures in 1875 and later published as *The Atonement*. The incarnation became the underlying principle in the Carr’s Lane minister’s understanding of the atonement, evangelism and activism. And last, due to the believer representing Christ in the world, Dale’s activism extended not just to the individual soul but also to the redemption of society. All four aspects of evangelicalism - biblicism, crucicentrism, conversionism and activism - remained. Yet there was a broader treatment of the categories than in the older evangelicalism of days of James and Jay.

Despite Dale’s differences, he was still welcomed within the evangelical fold. John Angell James was very much aware of the younger minister’s differing views when he sought to have him appointed as co-pastor. When the Carr’s Lane Chapel was rebuilt in 1820, James took the opportunity to revise the trust deed to hold the trustees and officers accountable to a statement of belief.³² When the officers met in the summer of 1854 to consider advancing the young minister from assistant pastor to co-pastor, it was Dale who brought to their attention that it would be a violation of the

²⁸ Ibid., 40

²⁹ Dale, *Old Evangelicalism*, 38-40, and Dale, *Life of Dale*, 149

³⁰ Dale, *Old Evangelicalism*, 27

³¹ Ibid., 48-51

³² Documents Relating to Carrs Lane Meeting House and Trust Estates, CC1/48, 30-41

trust deed.³³ The key issues for Dale were the doctrinal clauses that related to Calvinism. Yet both James and the officers chose to proceed anyway, knowing that Dale did not hold the same convictions. 'It was ultimately decided that the election should be conducted in accordance with its [the trust deed] provisions, but so far as possible, without assuming or establishing the clauses to which objection had been taken.'³⁴ Because this was what James wanted, Dale was elected to the co-pastorate unanimously demonstrating the strength of pastoral influence upon the congregation. Within a year, Dale began to assault the doctrine of total depravity while preaching through Romans. He even broached the concept of universalism in the same series.³⁵ The church membership was up in arms. Yet it was James who assuaged the congregation's fears, stating that the differences between himself and his colleague did not touch 'the substance or core of Evangelical truth'.³⁶ James may have felt that Dale's disbelief in Calvinism was merely an equivalent of the debates between Wesley and Whitefield. Or it might be that James had his own doubts regarding the system after another young minister confronted the elder. James had told the younger man, 'I hold the doctrines of Calvinism with a firm grasp'. But the younger rejoined 'but sir, you never preach about them'.³⁷ Regardless, it is clear that despite Dale's contrary views, James still felt his co-pastor was still within the boundaries of evangelicalism.

Clyde Binfield made a remarkable statement concerning R.W. Dale upon the centenary of his death. He wrote:

Here was a historian, a theologian, a citizen and man of affairs, an educationist, a pastor, a preacher, and a Congregationalist. He was grand, even outstanding, as each. He was formative in each. And yet in none was he original.³⁸

³³ Carr's Lane Church Minute Book, 1849-1856, CC1/6, 16 & 30 June, 2 July 1854

³⁴ Dale, *Life of R.W. Dale*, 89

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 110-111

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 114

³⁷ Dale, R.W. *Life and Letters of John Angell James* (London: James Nisbet and Co., 1861), 618

³⁸ Binfield, Clyde, 'Dale and Politics', *Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society*, 6 (supplement 1999): 91

Binfield's assessment is accurate. As Mark Hopkins has pointed out, none of Dale's works have modern reprints.³⁹ According to his son, originality is what R.W. Dale strived for the most.⁴⁰ Yet his chief strength seemed to lie with recognizing inconsistencies and assessing the state of things in his own day. Despite Dale being at the height of his popularity, and being the keynote speaker at the Argyle Chapel centenary, when he delivered his sermon, *The Old Evangelicalism and the New*, in 1889, the Bath newspapers hardly took any notice of his presence. Instead, they reported upon the speakers that regaled the Argyle Chapel congregation with stories of the glory days when William Jay reigned supreme as the evangelical preacher of his day and the Chapel was at the height of its popularity and success.⁴¹ They did not want to be reminded that they were a 'monument and memorial' of an evangelicalism that had passed.⁴²

Perhaps a similar assessment can be made of William Jay as was subsequently made of Dale. William Jay was representative of the old guard of evangelicalism. The aspects of the older form are evident from the previous chapters about his early life, his ministry in Bath and at the Argyle Chapel, his preaching, his spirituality, his ecclesiology and the reflections of his priorities within the social composition of the Argyle Chapel. The supreme aim of the salvation of souls, that Dale said was most prevalent in the earlier era, can be seen in each aspect of Jay's life and ministry. Jay was a remarkable preacher who appealed to evangelicals from a wide spectrum as had been George Whitefield, Cornelius Winter, and Robert Hall (1764-1831). In his writings and promotion of mission work, Jay was an advocate of the cause of evangelicalism on both national and international levels in the same vein as David Bogue and Thomas Haweis. And unlike Dale's works, his devotional writings are still published with an appeal to modern day evangelicals. Yet so are John Newton's and John Wesley's. In none of these roles was Jay original, yet he performed them extremely well.

³⁹ Hopkins, *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation*, 82-84

⁴⁰ Dale, *Life of Dale*, 50-51

⁴¹ Argyle Chapel Minute Book 1881-1918, Bath Record Office, 480/1/2/4, 128-131. The pages of the minute book contain clippings from all the Bath Newspapers regarding the centenary. Only two sentences are related to Dale.

⁴² Dale, *Old Evangelicalism*, 9

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