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# Herbert Baston Pitt of Trowbridge – J. R. Anderson's twentieth-century publisher

ROY MIDDLETON

In the twentieth century the one name that is associated with practically all the volumes that either contain Jonathan Ranken Anderson's sermons or chronicle his career is that of H. B. Pitt. The purpose of this short paper is to sketch the life of the man who more than any other drew attention to Anderson's name and witness in the last century.<sup>1</sup>

## I. Parentage

Herbert Baston Pitt (1870-1958) was the son of John Frederick Pitt and his wife Ann who were both members of the Strict and Particular Baptist Church in Abingdon, Berkshire,<sup>2</sup> established by William Tiptaft in 1832. Tiptaft (1803-1864), the Vicar of Sutton Courtney, seceded from the Church of England in 1831 in protest against a State Church that failed to discipline its members and seemed to disavow its Calvinistic doctrines. In his resignation letter to Thomas Burgess, the Bishop of Salisbury, Tiptaft details fourteen reasons why he considered it his duty to secede from the Church of England.<sup>3</sup> In the winter of 1830-31,

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<sup>1</sup> The writer gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Dr. Matthew J. Hyde of Maidstone in supplying documents and making helpful suggestions for this paper.

<sup>2</sup> Abingdon-on-Thames was historically the county town of Berkshire but has been in the administrative county of Oxfordshire since 1974.

<sup>3</sup> *A Letter to the Bishop of Salisbury by William Tiptaft, containing various reasons why he resigned his living and cannot continue a member of the Church of England, Seventh Edition; To which are added, Three Letters from the Bishop to Mr. Tiptaft threatening him with legal proceedings for*

at the very time Tiptaft was troubled about his relationship to the Church of England, his friend Joseph Charles Philpot (1802-1869),<sup>4</sup> who was perpetual curate of the neighbouring villages of Stadhampton and Chislehampton in South Oxfordshire, was taken seriously ill and was nursed back to health in Tiptaft's vicarage. Philpot's friendship with Tiptaft resulted in him meeting both the Baptist John Warburton and other Anglican seceders, which in turn was a factor in his leaving the Established Church in March 1835. William Tiptaft opened a new place of worship called Abbey Chapel on 25th March 1832, when one of the preachers was John Warburton of Trowbridge.<sup>5</sup> Tiptaft ministered to his flock at Abingdon for a further decade before the congregation formally became a Strict and Particular Baptist cause in January 1843.<sup>6</sup>

John Pitt was brought up in the Church of England and seems to have come under a concern for his soul at the age of twenty. Finding no spiritual food in the parish church, and in the face of remonstrations from his parents, he began attending the ministry of Tiptaft in 1856. That was the year in which he believed he was called by grace and in which he was baptised. The following year a nineteen-year-old girl, who had been brought up a General Baptist and had been baptised at Cole Chapel, near Bampton in Oxfordshire, but could find no one to whom she could open her mind regarding her spiritual exercises, came to live near Abingdon. She began to attend Tiptaft's ministry and in him found one who well understood her concern of soul. Five years later this young

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*preaching in unconsecrated places and Mr. Tiptaft's answers, Second Edition* (Manchester, 1834). The letters to Tiptaft on behalf of the Bishop are from J. L. Alford who was his Proctor.

<sup>4</sup> Philpot married Tiptaft's niece in 1838 and was the sole editor of the *Gospel Standard Magazine* from 1849 until his death in 1869. He had, however, editorial involvement with the magazine from 1836, just a year after his secession. For details of Tiptaft and Philpot, see J. H. Philpot, *The Seceders (1829-1869): The story of a spiritual awakening as told in the letters of Joseph Charles Philpot and of William Tiptaft* (3 vols., Vols. 1 and 2, London, 1930-32; Vol. 3, ed. S. F. Paul, Brighton, 1960); J. C. Philpot, *Memoir of the late William Tiptaft* (London, 1867); *Letters by the late Joseph Charles Philpot with a Brief Memoir of his Life and Labours* (London, 1871); S. M. Houghton, *The Life of William Tiptaft* (Abingdon Chapel, 1982); Matthew J. Hyde, *The Last Part of William Tiptaft's Religion* (Southampton, 2015). See also the articles on Philpot and Tiptaft in Donald M. Lewis (ed.), *The Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography, 1730-1860* (2 vols., Oxford, 1995), Vol. 2, pp. 884-885, 1110-1111.

<sup>5</sup> John Warburton (1776-1857), along with William Gadsby and John Kershaw, were the main founders of the Gospel Standard Strict Baptist Churches. For biographical details, see John Warburton, *The Mercies of a Covenant God* (Reiner Publications, 1971); John Broome, *John Warburton: Servant of a Covenant God* (Harpenden, 1996).

<sup>6</sup> For a history of the Abingdon Strict and Particular Baptist Church, see S. F. Paul, *Further History of the Gospel Standard Baptists: Vol. 6, Some Wiltshire and other Western Churches* (Harpenden, 1969), pp. 289-324.

lady was to become John Pitt's wife. John and Ann Pitt were married on 18th October 1862 by William Tiptaft. Herbert Pitt's parents were the only couple Tiptaft ever married after he left the Church of England.<sup>7</sup> It is clear from the spiritual exercises of both John and Ann Pitt, recorded in their obituaries in the *Gospel Standard*,<sup>8</sup> that Herbert Pitt was brought up in a godly home in an atmosphere of real piety and reverence for God and fidelity to His Word. His parents were married for twenty-one years and had nine children. Though they were far from affluent, it was their delight to welcome friends from other congregations who were seeking the truth into their humble home on the Lord's Day. Ann Pitt was at times subject to fears regarding her spiritual state. However, in 1870, the year Herbert Pitt was born, she was travelling home from Gosport when a verse of a hymn broke upon her soul which caused her to weep like a child. It was clearly a time of refreshing to her soul. The verse was:

The work which His goodness began  
The arm of His strength will complete;  
His promise is Yea and Amen,  
And never was forfeited yet.  
Things future, nor things that are now,  
Not all things below nor above,  
Can make Him His purpose forego,  
Or sever my soul from His love.

Mrs. Pitt, who was a member at Abbey Chapel, died on 20th September 1883 at the early age of forty-five. Her husband has recorded at length her spiritual exercise and the touching scene as she approached death. He concluded the narrative as follows:

On being asked if she felt the Lord's presence, she said, "Yes, I do. Make haste, O Lord, make haste. Now, Lord, do come." At midnight I was hastily summoned to her bedside. She raised her hand, and I was struck with the solemn change, finding it icy cold. Seeing me weep, she said, "Don't fret". I replied, "No! I can bless the Lord your hour is come. Is Christ precious now?". "Yes," she

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<sup>7</sup> *Gospel Standard*, Vol. 50 (1884), p. 45. The fact that the Pitts were the only couple Tiptaft married after he seceded from the Establishment may be an indication that his Abbey Chapel congregation was composed largely of older people.

<sup>8</sup> The obituary of John F. Pitt is in the *Gospel Standard*, Vol. 69 (March 1903), pp. 107-112, and is written by H. B. Pitt. The obituary of Ann Pitt is in the *Gospel Standard*, Vol. 50 (January 1884), pp. 44-47, and was written by her husband.

said; "Write," I said, "Write, 'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord'." "Yes, yes," she replied. She then asked for the children, and took farewell of each of them, adding, "The Lord bless you all!". Then raising her hands and eyes heavenwards, she exclaimed, "Now, Lord, once more", – her lips moving rapidly, but we could not catch what she said. Thus her ransomed spirit took its flight to be with the Lord.<sup>9</sup>

One can only imagine the solemn effect this scene would have on her nine children, one of whom was the thirteen-year-old Herbert Pitt.<sup>10</sup> Ann Pitt's burial took place, rather unusually, on the following Lord's Day and was conducted by Joseph Tombs a Strict Baptist Minister of the Gospel in Berkshire.<sup>11</sup>

John Pitt was forty-seven when his wife died. Herbert Pitt was later to write, "My father had a large family of children, and for many years he had a hard struggle to maintain them; but he found that 'When the Lord's people have need, His goodness will find out a way'."<sup>12</sup> After William Tiptaft died, John Pitt and others were responsible for keeping the Abbey Church pulpit supplied with faithful ministers of the gospel. He remarried and was appointed a deacon at the Abingdon Church.

John Pitt was an exercised Christian. In the early part of 1895, when he was fifty-nine, he remarked to his son:

If you want your father's experience since the Lord called him by grace, you will find it in Psalm 107. This poor shattered vessel has been down into the deeps so that the waves and the billows went over me: yet even there the dear Lord appeared for my help and said, 'Peace be still', and lo there was a great calm . . . so I found Him to be today and I trust He will be the same for ever and ever.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Gospel Standard*, Vol. 50 (1884), p. 47.

<sup>10</sup> Ann Pitt was visited shortly before her death by Robert Parminter Knill, a minister whose preaching she greatly appreciated. When, through ill-health, J. C. Philpot retired from his ministry in the Strict Baptist congregations of Stamford and Oakham and went to Croydon, Robert Knill was called to be his successor. For details of Knill, see S. F. Paul, *The Seceders*, Vol. 3, pp. 23-26.

<sup>11</sup> There is an obituary of Joseph Tombs in the *Gospel Standard*, Vol. 51 (1885), pp. 41-42. He lived for less than a year after Ann Pitt and died at the age of forty-eight.

<sup>12</sup> *Gospel Standard*, Vol. 69 (1903), p. 110.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, p. 111.

## II. Marriage

Herbert Pitt seems to have made a profession of faith in his teenage years and was baptised at the Abbey Chapel in Abingdon around 1890.<sup>14</sup> The following year he moved from Abingdon to Trowbridge to work for George Rodgers, a Trowbridge ironmonger whose shop was in Church Street. John Warburton, the first minister of Zion Chapel in Trowbridge, was a highly respected Strict Baptist minister and a close friend of William Tiptaft. Though Warburton had died in 1857, the Strict Baptist witness at Zion was still vibrant and was a draw to young men seeking employment. However, Herbert Pitt's links with Abingdon were very far from broken. His elderly father still lived there, as did Charles and Eliza Hicks and their daughter Caroline.

Charles Hicks was the son of Thomas Hicks, a God-fearing man who lived in Abingdon, and was one of the first members of Tiptaft's Strict Baptist Church at Abbey Chapel. As a youth, he attended the Church of England, and when Tiptaft became the Vicar of nearby Sutton Courtney in February 1829,<sup>15</sup> Thomas Hicks went occasionally to hear him. After Tiptaft seceded and opened Abbey Chapel in Abingdon he would go to hear him after the Anglican service had concluded so as not to be seen by others. His son Charles wrote of him: "He used to stand at his door and look both ways; to see if anyone was coming that would see him go down the Abbey. It was not so easy to go to the Abbey Chapel in those days as it is now."<sup>16</sup>

Thomas Hicks was a confidant of Tiptaft<sup>17</sup> and became a deacon in his congregation. As he neared eternity his son observed: "He was full with the blessing of the Lord; his cup did indeed run over. He said, over and over again, 'To be forever with the Lord, to see him as he is'; 'My beloved is mine and I am his'; and 'I have fought a good fight', &c. He

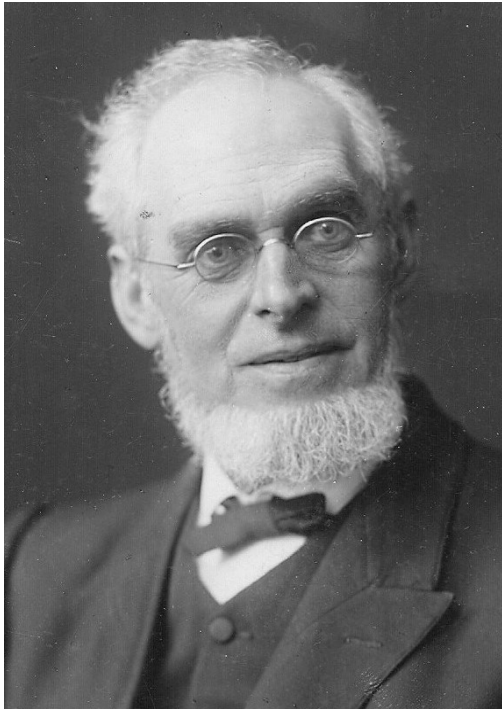
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<sup>14</sup> Regrettably, there is no obituary of Herbert Pitt in the *Gospel Standard*. A notice of his death, written by Jabez Lee, a minister and member of the same congregation as Pitt, appeared in the September 1958 edition (Vol. 124, p. 288), stating that a fuller account would follow. This did not take place. The writer's main sources of information on Herbert Pitt are two letters written to him in 2001 by two men with extensive knowledge of Gospel Standard Strict Baptist history; one was from John R. Broome (1931-2013) of Trowbridge, and the other from Malcolm Pickles of Coventry. Mr. Broome also forwarded an article on Pitt that had appeared in the *Wiltshire Times*, 17th July 1953, on the occasion of the Pitts' Diamond Wedding.

<sup>15</sup> Philpot, *Memoir of the late William Tiptaft*, p. 16.

<sup>16</sup> *Gospel Standard*, Vol. 48 (March 1882), p. 146.

<sup>17</sup> M. J. Hyde has in his possession twenty-four manuscript letters between Tiptaft and Thomas Hicks. Twenty are from Tiptaft to Hicks and four from Hicks to Tiptaft.



*Henry Bradford, the Strict Baptist Minister of Grove Chapel, Eastbourne.*

said to his sister, ‘I have been fearing for fifty years that when I came to die I should be wrong after all.’<sup>18</sup> His son, Charles Hicks, was of a weak constitution, a condition with which he was afflicted for the greater part of his life. He was converted in 1870, an experience he spoke of for the rest of his days as his “great blessing”. There is a letter in the *Gospel Standard* written by his father to John Pitt that details Charles Hicks’ conversion.<sup>19</sup> His weak constitution appears to have been a link in the chain that led to the conversion of his daughter Caroline. Due to his ill health he went in 1888 to Sussex on the South coast. He was accompanied by his

daughter who had been the subject of many prayers. It was whilst she was in Eastbourne with her father that these prayers were answered. The preaching of Henry Bradford (1845-1920), the Strict Baptist minister, was blessed to her conversion. He was the minister of the Eastbourne Strict Baptist Church called Grove Road Chapel from 1871 to 1912. Bradford’s pastorate began when he was in his twenties. Under his ministry the church was blessed and the congregations increased until the chapel could scarcely hold the worshippers. A site was purchased and a new chapel opened in 1881. Ralph Chambers writes concerning him: “Mr. Bradford was known and loved in a far wider circle than his own people, and there can be no doubt that his influence and personality left a decided impress upon the growing town of Eastbourne.”<sup>20</sup> For Caroline Hicks, her stay in Eastbourne was the day of salvation. She did not make a public profession, however, until sixteen years after she was married. She was baptised at Hilperton Chapel in 1909 by the well-known Strict

<sup>18</sup> *Gospel Standard*, Vol. 48 (March 1882), p. 147.

<sup>19</sup> The letter is contained in Charles Hicks’ obituary that was written by Herbert Pitt. *Gospel Standard*, Vol. 68 (April 1902), pp. 173-177. The letter is on pp. 174-175.

<sup>20</sup> Ralph F. Chambers, *The Strict Baptist Chapels of England: Vol. 2, The Chapels of Sussex* (Thornton Heath, n.d.), p. 48.

Baptist minister Caleb Sawyer, later the minister of Mayfield Strict Baptist Chapel in Sussex.<sup>21</sup>

### III. Division among the Trowbridge Strict Baptists

Two years after he had moved to Wiltshire, Herbert Pitt and Caroline Hicks were married at the Abbey Chapel in Abingdon on 17th July 1893. They made their home in Trowbridge. The previous year, in April 1892, when he was twenty-two, Pitt transferred his membership from Abbey Chapel in Abingdon to Zion Chapel in Trowbridge.<sup>22</sup> Little did he realise that within a few years he would be involved in a division at Zion Chapel and the setting up of a separate Gospel Standard Strict Baptist witness in Trowbridge.



*William Applegate, deacon at Zion Chapel.*

The division at Zion is stated in the centenary account, published in 1913, to have been due to a difference of opinion among the deacons, and at no time was there any doctrinal difference.<sup>23</sup> According to Andrew Jones, the division occurred in 1893 when William Applegate,<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Information supplied to the author by John Broome, 24th September 2001. Hilperton is a village two miles from Trowbridge. For details of the Hilperton Chapel, see W. Doel, *Twenty Golden Candlesticks* (Trowbridge, 1890), pp. 142-148; Andrew D. Jones, *Twenty Golden Candlesticks Revisited* (privately published, 2008), p. 111; Robert W. Oliver, *The Strict Baptist Chapels of England: Vol. 5, Wiltshire and the West* (Strict Baptist Historical Society, Fauconberg Press, 1968), pp. 67-68. For Caleb Sawyer, see *Life, Letters and Sermons of Caleb Sawyer* (Harpenden, 1964).

<sup>22</sup> Information supplied to the writer by John Broome.

<sup>23</sup> See Andrew D. Jones, *Two Centuries of Grace* (Trowbridge, 2012), p. 58. This more recent volume cites the centenary booklet of 1913. See a similar statement in Andrew D. Jones, "Zion Chapel, Trowbridge: the first hundred years", *Strict Baptist Historical Society Bulletin*, No. 40 (2013), p. 18.

<sup>24</sup> There is no obituary of William Applegate (1818-1907) in the *Gospel Standard*. Brief notes on him will be found in Andrew D. Jones, *Two Centuries of Grace*, p. 65, and in S. F. Paul, *Further History of the Gospel Standard Baptists, Vol. 6*, p. 68. When Zion Chapel installed an organ in 1899, which was not surprisingly regarded by many as an unscriptural innovation, Applegate purchased an expensive American organ for the congregation. The introduction of an organ had been agreed by a majority of the congregation in a ballot; see Andrew D. Jones, *Two Centuries of Grace*, p. 60.

a deacon at Zion, informed his fellow deacons that he wished to make a gift in order to extend the premises to create more space for the growing Sunday school. Applegate had bought a row of eight houses that were situated on one side of the chapel. Four were demolished in order to provide a new side entrance to the chapel. On the cleared land, a pastor's vestry and three additional classrooms were built. In addition, Applegate paid for the classrooms to be furnished with chairs, a leather-topped desk, and a secretaire. This was undoubtedly a very generous gift to the church by Applegate, but it was a gift that led to a division at Zion. The problem in the reception of the gift was that it was money that had come from Applegate's clearly thriving wines and spirits business. In late Victorian England the Temperance movement<sup>25</sup> was very strong and seems to have had some ardent supporters at Zion Chapel. Andrew Jones has observed that it would have been seen by some in the 1890s as similar, in a modern context, to a church taking money from the proceeds of a raffle or a lottery.<sup>26</sup>

Matters came to a head at a meeting of the four deacons on 28th March 1894. Two days after the meeting, three deacons left Zion Chapel, leaving only William Applegate on the Zion diaconate. Along with the three deacons, another thirty-three members left the church, one of whom was Herbert Pitt. Letters were sent to those who had left seeking for reconciliation, but when this failed their membership was suspended from 7th September 1894. This must have been a rather sad time at Zion as many of those who left had been long-serving members. Their suspension is said to have been in consequence of "repeated unscriptural practice".<sup>27</sup> What this refers to is unclear; whether it was their views on temperance, or their holding separate meetings we cannot be sure. The latter seems the more probable.

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<sup>25</sup> It was estimated in 1860 that half the Baptist ministers in England were either teetotal or sympathetic to the Temperance movement. Amongst Baptist teetotallers were Charles Spurgeon and John Clifford, men of quite diverse theological commitments. See Brian Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971), pp. 179-195, especially p. 181. For the broader ecclesiastical and political background to the Temperance movement, see Henry Carter, *The English Temperance Movement: A Study in objectives* (2 vols., London, 1933); A. E. Dingle, *The Campaign for Prohibition in Victorian England* (Rutgers University Press, 1980). In Scotland the Temperance movement embraced men like John Cairns of the United Presbyterian Church and Robert Rainy of the Free Church. A recent defence of abstinence from alcoholic drink is found in Peter Masters, *Should Christians Drink?: The Case for Total Abstinence* (London, 1992).

<sup>26</sup> Andrew D. Jones, *Two Centuries of Grace*, p. 57.

<sup>27</sup> Andrew D. Jones, *Twenty Golden Candlesticks Revisited*, p. 111.



At first the dissenters held separate week-night meetings in a hired room, seeking the Lord's guidance, but at this stage continuing to attend Zion on the Sabbath. How long that went on is not clear; it seems probable that by September, when they were suspended, they were also meeting separately on the Sabbath. In February 1896 they began to meet in a room in Marlborough Buildings on Roundstone Street, both on the Lord's Day and Thursday evening. In October 1896 the group decided to break their connection with Zion entirely and form a new Strict Baptist Church. The new church later obtained a meeting place in the Halve<sup>28</sup> in Trowbridge. The church book of the dissenters has the following record of events:

Believing the Lord's presence has been from time to time experienced in our midst we whose names are hereunto subscribed, after spreading our cause (secretly and socially) before God by prayer, now conclude that it would be more conducive to peace and our spiritual profit (nearly all of us having been suspended more than two years ago by the church of which we stood members, in consequence of the course we have taken, and seeing no possibility of reconciliation taking place between ourselves and those who suspended us) we, therefore mutually and heartily agree to join together and to be a distinct church of Christ of Strict Baptist persuasion maintaining the following divine and important doctrines and truths.<sup>29</sup>

The doctrines to which they adhered were the thirty-one articles of the Gospel Standard Baptist Churches of 1872. Significantly the four articles added in 1878 were not part of the original basis of those meeting at the Halve. These "Added Articles", the substance of which had appeared previously in the *Gospel Standard* of 1841, had been a matter of contention among Strict Baptists. They were formally added to the thirty-one articles at the time of the formation of the Gospel Standard Poor Relief Society.<sup>30</sup> The Added Articles make explicit what was

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<sup>28</sup> The seceders from Zion began to occupy their present chapel in 1908. It is approached by a narrow passage from a street called the Halve. See R. W. Oliver, *The Strict Baptist Chapels of England*, Vol. 5, p. 66.

<sup>29</sup> The church book is cited in Andrew D. Jones, *Twenty Golden Candlesticks Revisited*, pp. 111-112. Zion Chapel finally removed the seceders from membership on 11th February 1897. Up to that point they had been under suspension.

<sup>30</sup> Besides being a statement of faith of the churches, the articles were to ensure that beneficiaries of the Society's funds, and that of another society designed to help aged and



*Zion Baptist Chapel.*

already implicit in Article 26 which begins by asserting, “We deny duty-faith and duty-repentance”. Their purpose was to counter preaching that embodied a “free-offer” of the gospel and to explain the nature of saving faith.<sup>31</sup>

With the passing of a few years the position between the two groups seems to have hardened. A new pastor came to Zion in 1896. Five years later he gave notice that he would propose to the congregation that “Four members be appointed to visit the members who left in 1894 to

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infirm ministers and their widows, were members of churches that had subscribed to these doctrines. See Kenneth Dix, *Strict and Particular: English Strict and Particular Baptists in the Nineteenth Century* (Baptist Historical Society, 2001), p. 111.

<sup>31</sup> For a helpful analysis of how J. C. Philpot’s fifteen articles, which he drew up for his church at Stamford in 1843, grew with additions and amendments into the twenty-six articles of 1866 and were then enlarged to the thirty-one articles of 1872, with finally the Added Articles of 1878, see Kenneth Dix, *Strict and Particular*, Appendix 3 – “The Gospel Standard Articles”, pp. 297-310; K. F. T. Matrunola and T. Abbot, *Articles of Faith: Why and Where from?* (Harpندن, 2011).

For the text of the Added Articles and for a defence of their contents, see John Hervey Gosden, *What Gospel Standard Baptists Believe: A Commentary on the Gospel Standard Articles of Faith* (Kington Langley, Gospel Standard Societies, 1993); see also Grey Hazlerigg, “Notes regarding the Added Articles”, *Gospel Standard*, Vol. 44 (June 1878), Wrapper pp. xvi-xvii; J. K. Popham, “Preaching the Gospel”, *Gospel Standard*, Vol. 84 (1918), pp. 271-278; F. Windridge, *The Four Added Articles* (London, 1922); S. F. Paul, “Gospel Standard



*The Halve Chapel.*

find out if they were willing to return to Zion”. When the church met, a deacon who had been appointed following the secession stated on behalf of the deacons that “at a church meeting in September 1894 the members who left had been suspended from membership and therefore the minister’s resolution was out of order and could not be put to the meeting”.<sup>32</sup>

Whilst it appears to be true that the division at Zion, and the formation of the church meeting at the Halve, did not have its immediate source in doctrinal issues, especially as the seceders adopted the 1872

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Societies and Articles”, *Gospel Standard*, Vol. 133 (1967), pp. 282-287; L. S. B. Hyde, “Our Gospel Standard Articles”, *Gospel Standard*, Vol. 152 (1986), pp. 208-210; J. A. Watts and G. D. Buss, *A Goodly Heritage or an insight into the Gospel Standard Articles of Faith* (Harpden, 2006). For a critique of the Added Articles, see Bernard J. Honeysett, *The Sound of His Name* (Banner of Truth, 1995), pp. 80-89; Bernard J. Honeysett, “The Three ill-fated articles”, *Reformation Today*, Vol. 2 (Summer 1970), pp. 23-30; S. M. Houghton, *My Life & Books* (Banner of Truth, 1988), pp. 29-33; David H. J. Gay, *Septimus Sears: A Victorian Injustice and its Aftermath* (Brachus, 2010), pp. 33-62; David H. J. Gay, *No Safety before Saving Faith: Septimus Sears, John Gadsby and the Gospel Standard Articles* (Brachus, 2013). See also Robert W. Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists* (Banner of Truth, 2006), pp. 332-335. Matthew Hyde has written a helpful history of the controversy, “A History of the Gospel Standard (1870-1880)”, unpublished typescript, 2010.

<sup>32</sup> Andrew D. Jones, *Two Centuries of Grace*, pp. 63-64.

articles without the contentious “Added Articles”, nevertheless some difference of emphasis could well have been emerging between the two groups by the mid-1890s. Andrew Jones, in concluding his 2013 Strict Baptist Historical Society Annual Lecture, asks the question, “Was the church (Zion Chapel) moving away from its position as a Gospel Standard Church by the time of the centenary?”. His response is instructive:

The church had never adopted the additional articles of the Gospel Standard churches in 1878, although the church articles were based on the 1872 Gospel Standard beliefs. Secondly, after the formation of the church in the Halve in 1896, the Halve increasingly became the Gospel Standard cause in the town. J. K. Popham, the renowned editor of the *Gospel Standard*, only once preached at Zion, that being the evening service of the centenary services in January 1913, whereas he preached at the Halve on quite a number of occasions.<sup>33</sup>

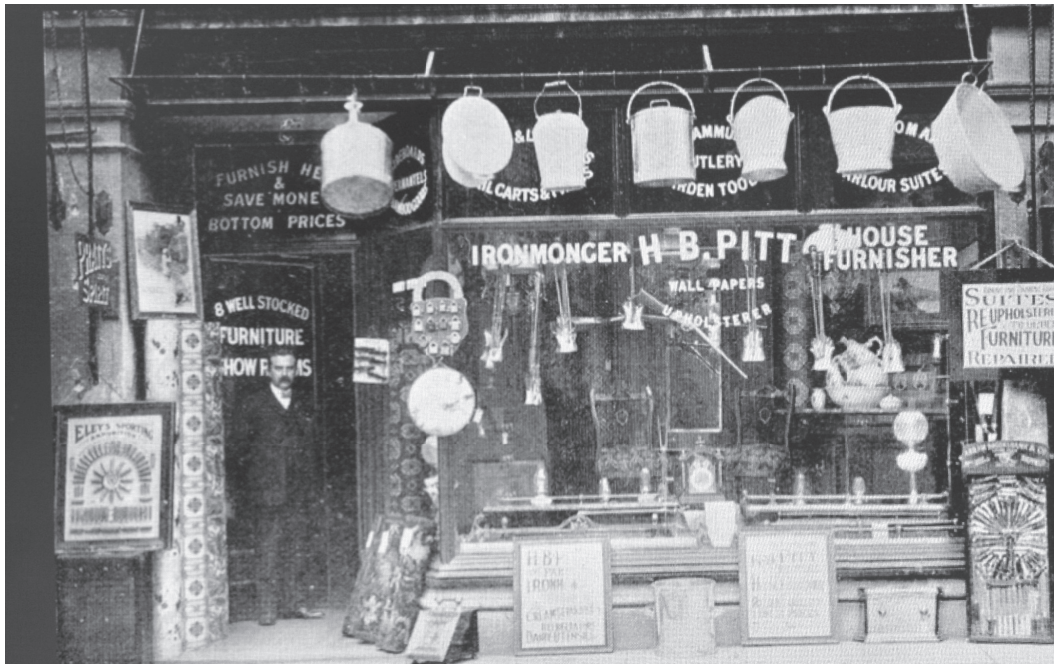
After Charles Guy became the pastor of Zion Chapel in 1928, he received a letter from the Gospel Standard committee asking for his endorsement of the Gospel Standard articles and rules. This he felt unable to do because he did not regard them as based on biblical principles. The church discussed the matter and agreed to support their pastor. This marked the end of Zion’s connection with the Gospel Standard Churches.<sup>34</sup>

When this division occurred in 1894, Herbert Pitt was just twenty-four years of age and it does not appear that he took a prominent part in the events. However, he adhered to the seceders and would for the rest of his life be connected with the Gospel Standard congregation at the Halve. After working for George Rodgers for nine years, at the turn of the century Herbert and Caroline Pitt set up their own ironmongery business in Roundstone Street in Trowbridge. Within a year of beginning their business, Pitt lost his father who died on 2nd June 1901 at the age of sixty-five. Herbert Pitt visited his father and saw him for the last time the week before his death. He has recorded for us the few minutes’ conversation that he had with his dying father. “He was enabled to tell me of the great goodness of God to him in the fulfilment of the promises

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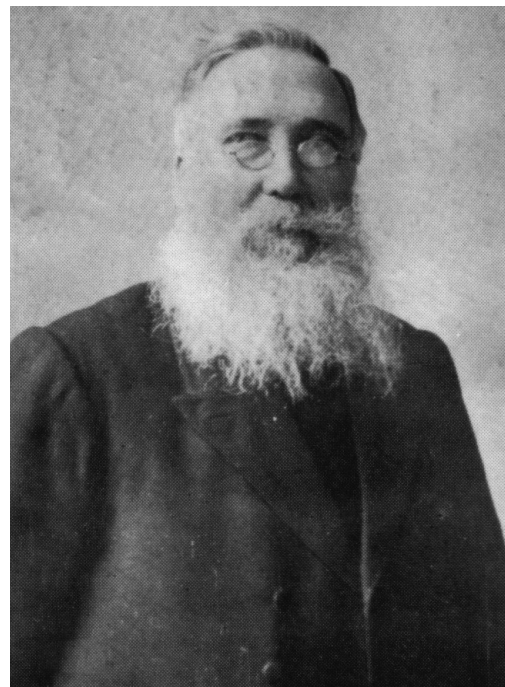
<sup>33</sup> Andrew D. Jones, “Zion Chapel, Trowbridge: the first hundred years”, p. 19.

<sup>34</sup> Andrew D. Jones, *Two Centuries of Grace*, pp. 73-74.



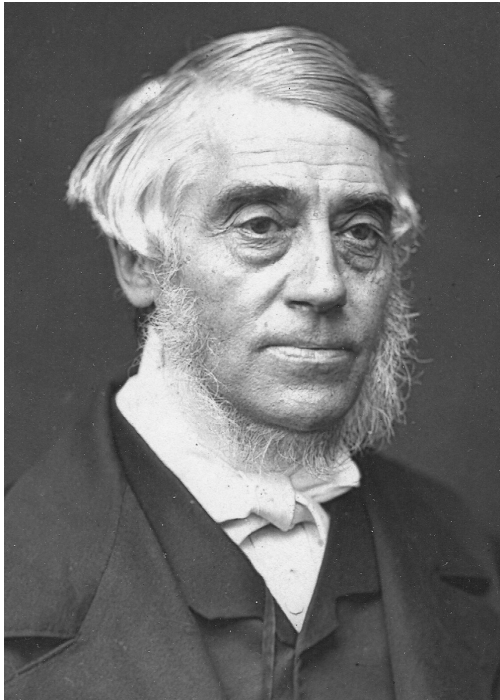
*Above: Herbert Pitt in the doorway of his ironmonger's shop in 1905.  
Below: William Westell West, the minister who conducted John Pitt's funeral.*

to the support of his mind; after which I entreated the Lord to further bless his soul, and give him an abundant entrance into his everlasting kingdom when his change should come." The son adds, "He followed my supplications with his blessing in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost".<sup>35</sup> John Pitt expressed his mind regarding his funeral to William Westall West,<sup>36</sup> who was then a deacon at the Strict Baptist Chapel in the village of Grove just over eight miles from Abingdon. He said to him, "I should like you to bury me,



<sup>35</sup> *Gospel Standard*, Vol. 69 (1903), p. 112.

<sup>36</sup> William W. West, at the age of sixty, commenced a pastorate at Heathfield Chapel in East Sussex which lasted for seventeen years until his death in 1924. Following a sixteen-year vacancy the next pastor at Heathfield was Frank Gosden, who was the minister until 1959 when he became the pastor of Galeed Strict Baptist Chapel in Brighton. A short



*Joseph Charles Philpot – Minister at Stamford and Oakham and sole Editor of the Gospel Standard from 1849 to 1869.*

but do not mention the creature in any way to praise him; but let Christ alone be exalted”.<sup>37</sup>

#### **IV. Pitt’s first interest in Jonathan Ranken Anderson**

It was around the time of his father’s death that Herbert Pitt’s interest in Jonathan Ranken Anderson became more intense. His first acquaintance with Anderson had, however, come sixteen years earlier in 1887, when he was just seventeen, as a result of what he calls, “a very favourable review of Mr. Anderson’s sermons by the late Joseph Charles Philpot, Minister of the Gospel in Stamford”.<sup>38</sup> That Philpot’s review was “very favourable” may be questioned. The first part of the

review, in the April 1852 *Gospel Standard*, beyond having three of Anderson’s publications at the head of the article, neither mentions Anderson nor his writings. It is entirely taken up with an outline of the history of the Scottish Church, pointing out that in Scotland the Reformation was more complete than in any other country in Europe, yet being highly critical of National Religion, the Establishment Principle, and the practice of infant baptism. Philpot concludes by stating that in his opinion whilst Scotland in the 1850s had a sound creed it was, in fact, “dry, hard Calvinism”, devoid of experimental truth.

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memoir of William West is in the *Gospel Standard*, Vol. 91 (1925), pp. 172-175. For Heathfield Chapel, see S. F. Paul, *Further History of the Gospel Standard Baptists: Vol. 2, Some Sussex Churches* (Brighton, 1954), pp. 82-97; Chambers, *The Strict Baptist Chapels of England: Vol. 2, The Chapels of Sussex*, pp. 59-62; *Life, Letters and Sermons of Frank L. Gosden* (Harpenden, 1982).

<sup>37</sup> *Gospel Standard*, Vol. 69 (1903), p. 112.

<sup>38</sup> H. B. Pitt (ed.), *Life and Sermons of the late Rev. J. R. Anderson*, Vol. 2 (Glasgow, 1937), p. 5. Philpot’s reviews are in the *Gospel Standard* of April and May 1852, Vol. 18, pp. 129-136, 164-172. The Anderson titles that Philpot reviewed were *A Warning to Ministers*; *A Day in John Knox’s Free Church*; and some of his *John Knox Tracts* (however, only Tract 11 is referred to in the review).

The second part of the review, in the May 1852 *Gospel Standard*, continues in the same vein by critiquing the lack of experimental religion in Scottish Presbyterianism. Philpot then cites at length a Free Church probationer who criticises the ministers of his Church over the mechanical way in which they prepared their sermons, depending entirely on books and commentaries, along with their almost total lack of dealing with spiritual experience. Philpot then turns his attention to Anderson. Adding the two parts of the review together, it is sixteen pages long; only in the last five pages does the reviewer deal with Anderson's material from which he provides three lengthy quotations. The first contains a statement similar to that of the Free Church probationer, whilst the second is from Anderson's Presbytery lecture that was printed as a booklet entitled *A Warning to Ministers*. The third citation is from *John Knox Tract 11*, "The Best Robe". From these citations Philpot concludes: "the Free Church as a body is as nearly sunk in carnality and formality as the Kirk or the United Presbyterians."

With respect to Anderson, he notes that he is much prized by the few in Scotland who value experimental preaching, "a thing in the land of Rutherford now hardly known by name". Having spoken favourably about Anderson he then goes on to criticise him for "language which savours most strongly of free-will". "These dead flies," says Philpot, "taint the ointment." However, he clearly views Anderson as far better than most Scottish ministers and concludes: "He is a man, we understand, of eminently consistent life and prayerful habits, adorning the doctrine that he preaches. We therefore conclude by wishing him well in the name of the Lord, as what we have heard of him from private sources leads us to esteem him highly in love for his work's sake."<sup>39</sup>

## **V. The remnant of Anderson's congregation**

It was this two-part review by Philpot that was Herbert Pitt's first introduction, as a teenager, to Jonathan Ranken Anderson. Writing in 1937 Pitt observes: "Since that date (1887), but more especially from the year 1903, these (Anderson's) sermons have been the means used for profitable spiritual teaching, and of direction to the Lord Jesus Christ, the alone Saviour of sinners." What sermon material Herbert Pitt had access to from 1887, and more particularly from 1903, we do not know.

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<sup>39</sup> The pages in which Philpot deals directly with Anderson are *Gospel Standard*, Vol. 18 (May 1852), pp. 167-172.

Whether at that stage he had seen the unpublished hearers' notes that he would eventually be the principal agent in editing and printing, we cannot be sure, but it seems improbable. That situation changed in April 1908 when he and a godly friend were invited to a meeting in Glasgow, convened by some aged former hearers of Anderson, with a view to seeking guidance in connection with a project to publish Anderson's writings.<sup>40</sup> This statement of Pitt in the preface to the second volume of Anderson's *Life and Sermons* provokes a few interesting questions to which we regrettably have no definitive answers. How did a Trowbridge Gospel Standard Strict Baptist come to know Anderson's aged hearers in Glasgow? Why was Pitt invited to this meeting convened by them?<sup>41</sup> We can, however, be reasonably sure who the group were that convened the meeting.

Following Anderson's death in 1859, the congregation continued to meet for thirty-six years, reading his sermons in public worship, until 9th October 1895 when they were received as a congregation of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Though over three hundred people had signed a document asking Anderson to be their minister at John Knox's Tabernacle after he left the Free Church in 1852, their numbers were severely reduced by 1895. The signatures of those petitioning to join the Free Presbyterian Church were just over thirty. The connection of the greater part of these with the Free Presbyterians was to be very short. On 11th January 1898, after being in the Church for less than two and a half years, the greater part of the congregation left and returned to their former separate position.

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<sup>40</sup> *Life and Sermons of the late Rev. J. R. Anderson*, Vol. 2, p. 5.

<sup>41</sup> At this stage we can only conjecture what Herbert Pitt's links were to Scotland. It seems probable that he would have obtained the *John Knox Tracts* that were still being published intermittently at the end of the nineteenth century; this would have put him in contact with Anderson's followers and members of the Anderson family. Several Gospel Standard ministers known to Pitt had close links with Scotland. The most prominent of these was James Kidwell Popham (1847-1937), a minister who preached at the Halve in Trowbridge. For these Scottish connections, see Matthew J. Hyde (ed.), *According to Mine Heart: The Collected letters of James Kidwell Popham* (Harpenden, 2010), Appendix 7, "Mr. Popham's Scottish links", pp. 415-417. Another Gospel Standard minister with close Scottish connections was Richard M. Wakeley (1836-1907), the pastor of the church at Rainham in Kent. There is an obituary of Wakeley in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 12, p. 239. Matthew J. Hyde has a volume in his library that belonged to Herbert Pitt which was previously owned by Richard Wakeley.

The origin of these various Strict Baptist links with Scotland seems to have been Lady Lucy Smith (d. 1865) of Wilford House near Nottingham. Lucy Smith attended the Gospel Standard Chapel in Nottingham and had family connections in Scotland. She was the grand-daughter of John Thornton who, along with William Wilberforce, was a leading



The main reason for this, according to themselves, was that the Free Presbyterian Church had refused to identify itself with the testimony of Jonathan Ranken Anderson, and that their minister, James S. Sinclair, who was the editor of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, had printed material by ministers who did not share Anderson's distinct testimony against the Free Church – men such as Archibald Cook, John Kennedy, James Begg, and Hugh Martin. The elders of John Knox's stated these things in a Memorial to the Southern Presbytery; they also asked that Sinclair be relieved of either the editorship of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* or the ministry of the Tabernacle congregation.<sup>42</sup>

The Southern Presbytery's response was to point out to Anderson's son, Jonathan, who was leading the group, that when they joined the Church in 1895 it had been on the same footing as any other congregation, and that his father's testimony had never been under consideration. In addition, the Presbytery "declined to acquiesce in the suggestion anent the works of such men as mentioned above (Cook, Kennedy, etc.), and find that such of their writings as may be useful to the public be published". Regarding their desire that James. S. Sinclair be removed as either the editor of the denominational magazine or as their minister, it was made clear that such a request "was *ultra vires* for the elders to ask without relevant grounds or for the Presbytery to grant".<sup>43</sup> After Anderson's supporters left the Free Presbyterian Church, Sinclair and those who adhered to the Free Presbyterian witness had to vacate John Knox's Tabernacle and find a new place of worship.<sup>44</sup>

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member of the Clapham sect. Lucy Smith was acquainted with Alexander Moody Stuart and arranged for the Lancashire Strict Baptist minister, John Kershaw, to preach in Free St. Luke's, Moody Stuart's church, and in the Free Church Assembly Hall. On his visit to Scotland, Kershaw met and had a conversation with John (Rabbi) Duncan. See *John Kershaw: An Autobiography of an Eminent Lancashire Preacher* (Gospel Tidings Publications, 1968), pp. 315-331. An obituary of Lady Lucy Smith, written by J. C. Philpot, is in the *Gospel Standard*, Vol. 32 (1866), pp. 92-100. See also Philpot, *The Seceders*, Vol. 2, pp. 125-128; S. F. Paul, *Further History of the Gospel Standard Strict Baptists, Vol. 3, Some Midland and Eastern Churches* (Brighton, 1958), pp. 93-111.

<sup>42</sup> MS., *Minutes of the Southern Presbytery of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland*, Vol. 1, June 1896-January 1901, p. 40.

<sup>43</sup> *Minutes of the Southern Presbytery of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland*, Vol. 1, pp. 21-22, 40.

<sup>44</sup> It will be observed from a perusal of the bibliography printed elsewhere in this journal that in the first two volumes of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* there were eight sermons or addresses by Anderson. After the bulk of the John Knox's congregation left the Free Presbyterian Church in 1898, other than a sermon translated into Gaelic in Volume 7, it was another thirty-eight years before a sermon of Anderson's appeared in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* and that was when John Colquhoun was editor *pro-tem* in the absence of the editor, Donald Beaton, who was overseas.

The group of aged Anderson supporters whom Herbert Pitt and his friend met in 1908, with a view to publishing some of Anderson's writings, were those who had left the Free Presbyterians a decade earlier and would doubtless have included Jonathan Ranken Anderson's sixth child, Jonathan Anderson, who was a lawyer, and his son, Robert Wodrow Anderson.<sup>45</sup> Pitt concludes his preface to the second volume of Anderson's *Life and Sermons* by saying, "The call to help came to us, and has since been lovingly rendered".<sup>46</sup> The group in Glasgow clearly entrusted Herbert Pitt with the bound volumes of Anderson's sermons which appear to have been taken down initially in shorthand and then carefully transcribed.<sup>47</sup> Many of these volumes are now in the Free Presbyterian Library located in the St. Jude's Church, Woodlands Road, Glasgow. The present writer has carefully perused and indexed all these volumes and Pitt's annotations and editing of the sermons are clear to see. Whatever the Halve Church's views were with respect to the four Added Articles of the Gospel Standard, Herbert Pitt clearly approved of them as he either edited out or toned down Anderson's explicit "Free Offer of the Gospel" references.<sup>48</sup>

## VI. Publishing Anderson's sermons

Nineteen years were to pass before the first book of sermons was printed by Pitt in conjunction with Anderson's grandson, Robert Wodrow Anderson. By this time all Jonathan Ranken Anderson's children had died. Why there was such a protracted delay in proceeding with publication is unclear. There was, of course, the issue of selection from a vast amount of material and the making of typescripts from the handwritten hearers' notes. However, a major reason could well have

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<sup>45</sup> Jonathan Ranken Anderson's fifth child, and his oldest surviving boy, was also called Robert Wodrow Anderson (1838-1900). He wrote the preface to his father's book on *The Transfiguration on the Mount*. Anderson's sixth child, Jonathan Anderson (1840-1916) named his son after his elder brother. Robert Wodrow Anderson (1880-1939) subsequently assisted Pitt in the work of publishing his grandfather's sermons.

<sup>46</sup> *Life and Sermons of the late Rev. J. R. Anderson, Vol. 2*, p. 5.

<sup>47</sup> The office-bearers of John Knox's Tabernacle published a volume of his sermons shortly after his death. In the introduction they explain that the lectures and sermons were originally taken down in shorthand and thus exhibit the preacher's words "almost verbatim". See J. R. Anderson, *A Voice from the Wilderness* (Glasgow, 1859), pp. viii-ix.

<sup>48</sup> In Vol. 31, p. 385, of the "Third" series of transcriptions of Anderson's sermons, there is a note by Pitt that he had read the sermon in public worship up to the "mark on page 398". The last part of p. 398 and p. 399 is Anderson concluding his sermon with the free offer and overture of the Gospel.

been Pitt's developing business activities in Trowbridge. We learn from the *Wiltshire Times* that he transferred his ironmonger business in Trowbridge around 1913 from Roundstone Street to new premises on Silver Street.<sup>49</sup>

It was 1927 before Pitt published his first volume of Anderson's sermons. It was entitled *Free Grace Sermons* and contains fifteen addresses and, rather surprisingly, has neither preface nor introductory biographical material. From 1934 three further volumes were produced at three-yearly intervals. The first was Volume 1 of the *Life and Sermons of the Rev. J. R. Anderson*, which has a sketch of Anderson's life written by Pitt and eleven sermons. The second volume, with the same title, followed in 1937 with an enlarged biographical sketch, a further eight sermons, and extracts from Anderson's diary detailing his preaching tours to Caithness.<sup>50</sup> Finally, in 1940 Pitt reprinted the first four *John Knox Tracts* as a separate volume entitled *Free Grace Tracts*. From the very extensive corpus of Anderson's sermons in the thirteen years from 1927, just thirty-eight were published. It is a little surprising that relatively few sermons were printed as it is clear from research on the volumes of transcriptions of Anderson's sermons that many more than this were copied and presumably typed.<sup>51</sup> It could well have been that financial

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<sup>49</sup> *Wiltshire Times*, 17th July 1953.

<sup>50</sup> On the occasion of the Pitts' diamond wedding, the *Wiltshire Times* (17th July 1953) noted that in his business career Herbert Pitt appreciated the value of advertising. The article states: "He has been a diligent reader and a consistent advertiser in our columns. Our page one would scarcely seem the same without the distinctive advertisement of Mr. Pitt, which has been a feature for many years." Herbert Pitt seems to have followed a similar approach in seeking to distribute Anderson's sermons. The editor of the *Gospel Magazine*, in a short notice regarding Anderson's *Life and Sermons, Vol. 1*, writes: "Mr. Pitt desires a notice of this volume to appear in the *Gospel Magazine* for January (1935). We are obliged therefore to insert this notice without having read the volume through. What we have read indicates that Mr. Anderson was really sound in his teaching. Mr. Pitt himself has read many of Mr. Anderson's sermons 'with much soul profit', and in writing to us he desires that this volume 'may have world-wide circulation, for the glory of God and the good of precious souls in this awful day,'" *Gospel Magazine*, January 1935, p. 45. In addition, Pitt was also active in seeking to sell the books he had published. The December 1938 *Free Presbyterian Magazine* has an editorial note saying, "Mr. H. B. Pitt has written us saying he has still a few hundred copies of vol. II of Mr. Anderson's book", *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 43, p. 353.

<sup>51</sup> Next to the index page of Vol. 28 of the "Miscellaneous" series of transcriptions is a Memorandum, dated March 1940, that reads: "These sermons have been typed with a view to publication. H. B. Pitt, Trowbridge." Pitt also asked the editor of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* early in 1940 to print the following request: "Will friends having MS. volumes of Mr. Anderson's sermons kindly loan the same (with a view to publication) to H. B. Pitt, 4 Clarendon Road, Trowbridge, Wilts." See *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 44, p. 396.

considerations in the 1930s prevented further volumes, or larger volumes, being produced.

A careful examination of the volumes that Herbert Pitt handled also suggests that he was transcribing Anderson's sermons for other purposes. The writer was informed by John R. Broome that Pitt was elected as a deacon at the Halve in April 1940 and conducted reading services at the Strict Baptist Chapels in Corsham, Avebury, and Sandy Lane.<sup>52</sup> From pencil notes in the volumes of sermons it is clear Pitt was conducting services long before he was elected as a deacon. He read several of Anderson's sermons to the congregation at Sandy Lane in June and July 1925.<sup>53</sup>

By 1940 Pitt was seventy, and his helper in Glasgow, the solicitor Robert Wodrow Anderson, had died unexpectedly at the early age of fifty-nine following a coronary thrombosis. However, Pitt was to produce two further publications connected with Anderson. This time his helpers in Scotland were not the Anderson family but several Free Presbyterian young men who had become interested in Anderson's witness. Most of these men subsequently became office-bearers in the Free Presbyterian Church. One of them, Alex Ewen Alexander, who was later an elder in the St. Jude's congregation in Glasgow,<sup>54</sup> was a lodger in the home of two ladies whose father, William Morton, had been an elder in the John Knox's Tabernacle congregation. These ladies were the Misses Barbara and Isabella Morton. In their home, Alexander, who had been reared in the Church of Scotland, was brought face to face with a form of piety that he had never seen before. This led him to attend St. Jude's congregation where, under the ministry of Rev. Roderick Mackenzie, he was born again and became a communicant in 1936. Alexander and Donald Maclean (later the Rev. Donald Maclean of Portree and St. Jude's) organised a young men's prayer meeting in the Mortons' sitting room. Two more of those attending this prayer meeting were later to become Free Presbyterian ministers – William Maclean and Alexander McPherson. When both Morton sisters died, Alex Alexander wrote brief

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<sup>52</sup> For details of these congregations, see R. W. Oliver, *The Strict Baptist Chapels of England*, Vol. 5, pp. 18-19 (Avebury), pp. 41-42 (Corsham), and pp. 51-53 (Sandy Lane).

<sup>53</sup> See the notes by Pitt in Volume 13a of the "Numbered" series of transcripts, pp. 110, 135. Almost twenty years later, in the early part of 1943, Pitt was still reading Anderson's sermons to Gospel Standard congregations. See Vol. 31 of the "Third" series of transcriptions, pp. 141, 181, 353.

<sup>54</sup> There is an informative obituary of Alex E. Alexander by Donald Maclean in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 87, pp. 47-49.



*Some of the prayer meeting group that met at the Mortons' house, 53 St. Vincent's Terrace, Glasgow. Standing (left to right): Duncan Gillies, William Maclean, Alexander McPherson, Donald Maclean, Alex Alexander. Seated (left to right): James Henderson, Donald MacPhail.*

sketches of their lives and published them, along with extracts from letters to the sisters from an aunt in Canada<sup>55</sup> who had attended John Knox's during Anderson's ministry, and a piece by Anderson on "Vital Godliness". This little booklet, entitled *Beauty for Ashes*, was published jointly by Herbert Pitt and A. E. Alexander. Donald Maclean, whilst still in the Royal Navy, wrote the introduction.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>55</sup> The *Gospel Standard* of 1891 carries an obituary of another of Anderson's hearers, Neil Lamont, who, like the Mortons' aunt, had emigrated to Canada in the nineteenth century. Lamont was called by grace under Anderson's ministry in 1840 whilst he was still in the Church of Scotland. See *Gospel Standard*, Vol. 57 (1891), pp. 229-230.

<sup>56</sup> *Beauty for Ashes* (Glasgow & Trowbridge, 1945). For further information, see the enlarged introduction by Donald Maclean to the 2003 reprint of this booklet by Inverbooks, p. x. The 2003 edition also includes a number of photographs and maps giving the location of John Knox's Free Church and John Knox's Tabernacle. John Raven, the editor of *The Sower*, in reviewing the 1945 booklet, as the Second World War was ending, makes this observation: "One reads with interest of the little band of young men, now scattered in their country's service, who met weekly for prayer in the

A year after publishing the booklet on the Morton sisters, Alexander assisted Pitt in the production of the last Anderson volume with which he was associated. This was entitled *The Spirit of Grace and Supplications* and reprinted seven of Anderson's sermons from the time of revival in Kirkfield Church of Scotland at the end of 1839 and the beginning of 1840.<sup>57</sup> As we have already noted, Herbert Pitt found Anderson's sermons "profitable spiritual teaching and of direction to the Lord Jesus Christ, the alone Saviour of sinners".<sup>58</sup> He doubtless found in these sermons and saw in the aged followers of Anderson the same experimental piety he witnessed in his own and his wife's parents and amongst the people in the Gospel Standard congregations.

Herbert Pitt was seventy-six when the final Anderson volume with which he was associated was published. No one since Anderson's death had been so involved in keeping his memory green. He published five volumes of his writings, a booklet, and wrote two sketches of his life. This was achieved whilst running a substantial ironmongery business in which he was assisted by his wife and two sons. In the *Wiltshire Times'* article of 17th July 1953, it is said that he was the oldest tradesman in Trowbridge and was still in business at eighty-three years of age. The paper added,

Mr. Pitt's chief interest has been his religious work as a hard-working member of the Strict Baptist cause which has its meeting place in the Halve. Only this week he was discussing with a contractor work which is to be done to this little building where Mr. Pitt and his wife have given such devoted service for so many years. Mr. Pitt has also done a great deal in conducting services at this and many other village chapels over a wide area. He is keenly interested in the history and archaeology of the district.<sup>59</sup>

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old-fashioned house, and of others whose visits to that home were a means of lasting blessing to their souls. Oh that more young people were thus minded, and found pleasure in associating with those who are eminent for gracious experience, sober judgment, spiritual mindedness and godly conversation,' *The Sower*, 1945, p. 80.

<sup>57</sup> *The Spirit of Grace and Supplications* (Trowbridge, 1946). These sermons were a reprint from *Days in Kirkfield: Being Discourses on a Revival Occasion in Kirkfield Chapel, Gorbals of Glasgow* (London, 1872). For details of the revival, see Roy Middleton, "Jonathan Ranken Anderson and the Free Church of Scotland, Part I", *Scottish Reformation Society Historical Journal*, Vol. 4 (2014), pp. 151-154.

<sup>58</sup> *Life and Sermons of the late Rev. J. R. Anderson*, Vol. 2, p. 5.

<sup>59</sup> *Wiltshire Times*, 17th July 1953.



*Herbert and Caroline Pitt, a photograph printed in the Wiltshire Times in 1953 on the occasion of their diamond wedding.*

Caroline Pitt, according to John Broome, was a “business woman; she ran the shop and had a nanny to look after her five children; four sons and a daughter”.<sup>60</sup> She died at the age of eighty-eight on 15th May 1955. After her death, a diary was found giving some of her spiritual experiences in the years from 1908 to 1913. She speaks in this diary of her spiritual exercises, of being searched by a read sermon

of Thomas Goodwin, of hearing James Kidwell Popham and Caleb Sawyer preach, and of benefiting from reading J. C. Philpot’s sermon *Winter afore Harvest*.<sup>61</sup> Herbert Pitt died three years later on 16th July 1958. He, like his wife, was eighty-eight at the time of his death.

It is a tribute to Herbert Pitt’s witness as a Christian that he was also highly regarded by his colleagues in the ironmongery business. Following the announcement of his death, a short article was printed in the ironmongery trade journal, entitled “Of the Old School”. The article began as follows:

I remember a time when almost every community had its legendary figure – men whose prestige, force of character and achievements caused them to be regarded with a mixture of respect and awe in the localities in which they moved. Today there do not seem to be so many of such individuals and I was all the more sorry to read in your issue of August 2nd of the death of Mr. H. B. Pitt, of Trowbridge who was undoubtedly in this category. He had been in business for over seventy years and had his own business for nearly sixty years. His shop became an

<sup>60</sup> Information supplied to the author by John Broome.

<sup>61</sup> The obituary of Caroline Pitt, in the *Gospel Standard*, Vol. 122 (May 1956), pp. 95-96, was written by her husband. Extracts from her diary are printed in the same volume, pp. 149-153, 175-177, 220-223, 250-253, 284-286.

institution of which the Wiltshire farmers would say “Theekis geddit it Pitt’s” and they would come to him for local patterns of bill hooks, barging hooks and “taty-hacks” and be astonished at his local knowledge. The legend surrounding him was made more fascinating by his knowledge of antiques, his knowledge of pre-historic man and his tools, and his habit until the age of eighty-five of rising daily at 6.20 a.m. and walking to business . . . he was an ironmonger of the old school.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> *The Ironmonger*, 16th August 1958.