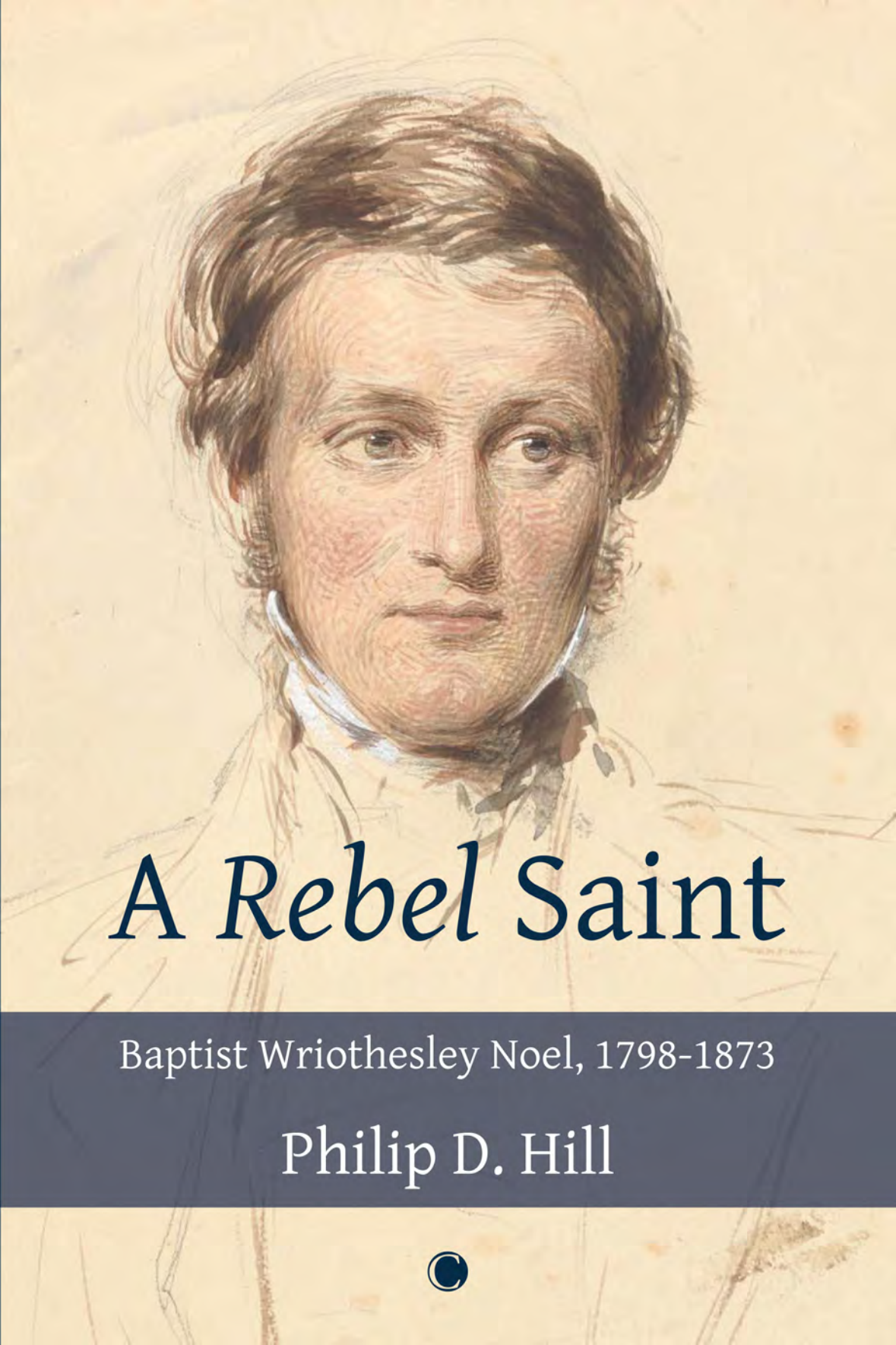

# A *Rebel* Saint

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Philip D. Hill

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Noel as a young man (date unknown)
Yale Centre for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

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# Foreword

In 1848 Baptist Wriothesley Noel published an *Essay on the Union of Church and State*. The book gained immediate notoriety as a sustained critique of the established status of the Church of England. Noel, himself a distinguished Anglican minister, had reached the conclusion that it was wrong to bind church and state together. The Bible, he held, condemned the principle of the blending of the spiritual with the secular in the financial and constitutional arrangements of the land. Christians should support their pastors voluntarily, and so for acts of parliament to enforce the payment of the clergy was wrong. The influence of the union of church and state was damaging because pastors could live negligent lives in security. The subject of his book, Noel explained at the outset, was 'Whether it is the will of Christ, as deducible from the word of God, that the Christian congregations of this country should receive the salaries of their pastors from the State, and be consequently placed under its superintendence?'[1] His answer was a sustained and resounding no: established churches were wrong.

Noel had come to this position after agonising reflection on the practical arrangements of the day. Mission to the people of England was inhibited by the structures of its national church. In 1835 he had prepared the ground for the creation of the London City Mission, an interdenominational society designed to support door-to-door visitation of the homes of the poor in the capital. Far from welcoming the new venture, however, almost all the Anglican clergy resisted it, fearing its disregard for 'Church principles'. The Mission employed laymen, ignored parish boundaries and entailed joint efforts with Dissenters from the Church. Noel had to defend the Mission against the scepticism of the

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1. Baptist Wriothesley Noel, *Essay on the Union of Church and State* (London: James Nisbet and Co., 1848), p. 11.

Bishop of London and many others, arguing that its supporters could be loyal to the Church while employing this means of reaching the mass of the people. Noel found it dispiriting to have to vindicate an obviously effective method of evangelism against his fellows in the ministry. After another decade or so he had decided that the relations of church and state were to blame for their opposition.

Noel began his analysis from the premise that 'there was a clear distinction between evangelical and unevangelical clergymen; between those who preach the Gospel and those who do not preach it'.[2] He was a major figure in the Evangelical movement within the Church of England, a rising tide during the period from the 1820s to the 1840s when he occupied one of the leading pulpits of his party in central London. He worked amicably with his Evangelical colleagues but found that even they did not generally share his enthusiasm for co-operation with other denominations in the spread of the gospel. So he came to the parting of the ways in 1848. Having published his condemnation of the establishment principle, he became a Dissenter himself. In the following year he was baptised as a believer, issued a tract and two substantial books on baptism and received a call to the pastorate of John Street Baptist Chapel, close by his former Anglican place of worship. He remained dedicated to co-operative Christian work, helping Anglicans as well as other Nonconformists in ministry, but he had taken a decisive step in seceding from the Church of England.

That was possible, as Philip Hill shows in this thorough biographical study, because he was an independent-minded man. He came from an aristocratic family and his father conducted his personal life in idiosyncratic ways. Baptist Noel himself was given to thinking out his own point of view on a vast array of issues—social, political and educational as well as religious—and frequently made his views public in books and pamphlets. He was responsible for about ninety of them during his lifetime. Towards the end of his career, for example, he published two substantial books in favour of the North in the American Civil War because he abhorred the pro-slavery stance of the South. As a gifted orator, one of the ablest preachers of his day, Noel was used to expressing himself in persuasive ways. He was also a distinctly spiritual man who, while holding strong opinions, resolutely believed in maintaining respect for opponents. 'No religious cause', he wrote at the end of the *Essay on the Union of Church and State*, 'requires irreligious means for

2. Noel, *Church and State*, p. vii.

its advancement.'[3] By examining family papers as well as a wide range of printed sources, Philip Hill has revealed something of the temper of the man alongside his achievements. Baptist Noel was a resolute Evangelical who believed in conducting himself 'in a Christian spirit'.[4]

David Bebbington
Stirling, January 2022

3. Noel, *Church and State*, p. 630.
4. Noel, *Church and State*, p. 630.

# Chapter One

# Introduction

The Honourable and Reverend Baptist Wriothesley[1] Noel (1798–1873)[2] was a towering figure in nineteenth-century English Evangelicalism whose influence has been undervalued since his death, by Anglicans because he seceded to the Baptists at the height of his ministerial career and by Baptists because his secession has been the major fact they have remembered. Since then, aspects of his emphases have been recalled in various discussions but not his overall significance. As a corrective of this neglect, this book examines his life and ministry in relation to the Church of England, the Baptist denomination,[3] and English Evangelicalism.[4]

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1. Pronounced by the family today 'Roths-lee' with a short 'o'.
2. Different years have been proposed in the past and evidence for these being correct will be presented in due course.
3. There were historically two main Baptist denominations, the Particular and the General Baptists. Particular Baptists held the Calvinist doctrine of a limited, or particular, atonement and General Baptists the Arminian doctrine of a universal, or general, atonement. In 1832 the Particular Baptists changed their confessional stance in favour of becoming a broader Evangelical body, though some maintained the older position in their churches. Noel associated with them. The two bodies united in 1891. For further information see J.H.Y. Briggs, *The English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century* (Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 1994), ch.5, pp. 96–157.
4. In view of the increasing use of 'Evangelical' as a synonym for 'zealous', the term will be capitalised in this study as an indication of its reference to a distinct religious movement.

Noel was an aristocratic minister with a remarkable reputation for saintliness. The Scottish Disruption minister Thomas Brown said of him, 'He was one of the most estimable and lovable of men, whose "memory is blessed"'.[5] In the Evangelical Alliance Annual Report for 1873 his death was noticed and it was said of him, 'It is not easy to name anyone more highly or universally esteemed during a long career than Mr Noel'.[6] From 1826 to 1848 he ministered within the Church of England and from 1850 until his retirement from local church leadership in 1868 within the Baptist denomination. An immensely popular preacher,[7] he was also an intellectual who published some ninety books and pamphlets, two thirds of them devotional in nature and the remainder dealing with religious or political controversies, in particular Protestant orthodoxies or rejections of Roman Catholic and Tractarian beliefs, and social and ecclesiastical reforms. The American scholar Grayson Carter has reckoned that 'by 1848 nine of his published works had sold over 108,000 copies, making him one of the most popular religious authors of the Victorian era'.[8]

During his Anglican period Noel would become an internationally known preacher, a respected controversialist, a royal chaplain, and a prominent Evangelical whose advice on social and religious affairs was widely sought, including by the British government. From the mid 1830s onward, Noel built ever closer relationships with his Nonconformist ministerial neighbours in London while turning an increasingly critical eye upon his own tradition. Paradoxically, during the same period he also sought to build his Anglican identity, leading to his appointment in 1841 as a royal chaplain. Nevertheless, he grew increasingly disillusioned with the Church of England. In 1848 he resigned his ministry and in 1849 seceded. Within a few months he underwent credobaptism before entering

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5. Many testimonies to his character will be found in this study. This one comes from Thomas Brown, *Annals of the Disruption 1843* (Edinburgh: MacNiven and Wallace, 1893), p. 534.
6. *Evangelical Christendom*, vol.XXVII, 1873, p. 35.
7. Eugene Stock, the late-nineteenth-century historian of the CMS, recorded Baptist Noel and his older clerical brother Gerard as 'two of the most powerful speakers and preachers of the day' but singled out Baptist not only as the greater of them but as one of the greatest Anglican preachers of the century. See Stock's *History of the Church Missionary Society* vol.1 (London: CMS, 1899), p. 259. According to one newspaper report, he was the most highly regarded English preacher by Merle D'Aubigné (*The Atlas,* Saturday 19 February 1848, p. 10).
8. Grayson Carter, *Anglican Evangelicals: Protestant Secessions from the Via Media, c.1800–1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 314, fn. 9.

the Baptist ministry. He would remain nationally famous and successful, an advocate for Evangelicalism, the key leader in London of the 1858–63 revival and twice was elected as chairman of the Baptist denomination. Yet, by the time of his death his star had completely fallen. There was not even produced the usual 'tombstone biography' beloved of Victorians, perhaps because his family would not give access to his private papers because they had not agreed with Noel's move into Nonconformity.

A more personal reason for his neglect will also be explored in this study. Baptist Noel, it will be argued, was a man without followers, a lone figure at the end of his life because he was a lone figure throughout it, a man drawn by his independence of character and sense of personal honour to disagreeing not only with his theological opponents but with his Evangelical friends as well, though with unfailing courtesy to both. He was more a luminary than a leader. This neglect meant that his significance came to be overlooked and then forgotten. Noel did not simply die but was effectively deleted from the story of Evangelicalism in the nineteenth century despite having been a remarkably important figure within it.

Evangelicalism is now generally accepted in scholarly studies as a movement characterised by four emphases in biblicism, activism, conversionism, and crucicentrism: the so-called 'Bebbington quadrilateral'.[9] Although that encompasses the Evangelicals with which this study will be mainly concerned, it is necessary to realise that it encompasses also people they would not themselves have recognised as fellow Evangelicals. One sure indication of this was the doctrinal basis of the body designed to provide a place of mutual recognition and cooperation, the Evangelical Alliance, drawn up at its foundation in 1846 to provide a minimal statement of commonly agreed Evangelical convictions. Furthermore, the term will apply not to the Anglican Evangelicals alone, but to all those who held the same concepts of atonement and personal conversion, both Anglican and Nonconformist, because as Bruce Hindmarsh has convincingly argued, they all belonged to the same theological movement and even a spiritual network that straddled denominational boundaries,[10] the latter point especially being emphasised by John Wolffe.[11]

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9. See David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: a History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 2,3.

10. Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Spirit of Early Evangelicalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), chs.1–3, pp. 77–103.

11. See the diagram of Evangelical interdenominational relationships in John Wolffe, *God and Greater Britain: Religion and National Life in Britain and Ireland 1843–1945* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 24.

I will use various terms to describe Evangelicals working together across denominational boundaries. 'Interdenominational' will describe cooperation between people of different denominations without them lessening their commitment to their own tradition. 'Pan-denominational' will describe cooperation between people without them regarding such denominational allegiances. 'Non-denominational' will refer to cooperation between people in movements which included within their purpose or practice creating events or bodies independent of, but not hostile to, denominational allegiances. 'Undenominational' will refer peculiarly to congregations or individuals that eschewed entirely any identification with a denominational structure.[12]

Noel, rather than being all his life a non-denominational or at least pan-denominational Christian as portrayed by previous scholars, progressed through an original interdenominational approach to fellow Evangelicals to a pan-denominational one while still an Anglican and may, late in his life, have adopted an even looser attitude. He was a man whose choices had more to do with obeying principle than with pleasing people, though concerned *about* people he certainly was.

Noel received virtually no scholarly attention until comparatively recently, even if one includes older works written since his death. Three articles appeared a generation ago in the *Baptist Quarterly*. In 1963 Kenneth Short discussed Noel's social conscience and courage as a controversialist[13] and in 1966 he analysed Noel's engagement in fighting against the 'Corn Laws'.[14] In 1972 a young David Bebbington provided the very first general, if brief, assessment of his life and work, in which with solid research on limited sources he represented the key to understanding Noel as him being 'undenominational'[15] throughout his ministry.[16] In

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12. See the essay by Tim Grass, 'Undenominationalism in Britain, 1840–1914' in Pieter Lalleman, Peter J. Morden and Anthony Cross (eds), *Grounded in Grace: Essays to Honour Ian M. Randall* (Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 2013), ch.5, pp. 69–84.

13. K.R.M. Short, 'Baptist Noel', *BQ*, vol.XX (1963), pp. 51–61.

14. K.R.M. Short, 'English Baptists and the Corn Laws', *BQ* vol.XXI (1966), pp. 309–20.

15. Using my categories the term 'non-denominational' rather than 'undenominational' better expresses Bebbington's meaning, though I shall argue that Noel, in his mature life, was more committed to a pan-denominationalist approach to cooperation.

16. David Bebbington, 'The Life of Baptist Noel: Its Setting and Significance', *BQ* vol.XXIV (1972) No.8, pp. 389–411. The limitation of this otherwise

1972 Clyde Binfield published a history of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in which he paid considerable attention to the important role of Noel in its early years.[17] Roger H. Martin, in his 1983 study of pan-denominational societies mentions Noel and his father-in-law, Lord Barham. He notes that Noel was among the leaders of the Bible Society[18] and was even considered as a potential secretary for the Religious Tract Society,[19] and notes the involvement of Noel's father-in-law but significantly not Noel in the London Society for the Promotion of Mission to the Jews (popularly known at the time as *The Jews' Mission* even though there were others). Noel was decidedly not a pre-millennialist.[20]

Donald M. Lewis, in his survey of urban evangelism in London,[21] pays attention to Noel's influence on pan-evangelical strategies and to his social concerns, though he wrongly ascribes Noel's secession to a change of mind over paedo-baptism.[22] He also traces the upsurge in Anglican Evangelical urban mission, especially from the 1820s onward, to the increasing popularity of pre-millennialism;[23] but as noted above Noel remained a postmillennialist while exercising one of the most significant such Anglican ministries in London. In 2016, Noel received mention in the modern editorial content of a collection of nineteenth-century essays on baptism, one of which was written to answer Noel's arguments for credobaptism.[24] Apart from these, it will be shown in what follows that, with one major exception, there has been little interest in him other

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excellent article is that it was written before the discovery in 1977 of a large collection of family papers, in which various items throw a different light on several of his conclusions.

17. Clyde Binfield, *George Williams and the YMCA: A Study in Victorian Social Attitudes* (London: Heinemann, 1973).

18. Roger H. Martin, *Evangelicals United: Ecumenical Stirrings in Pre-Victorian Britain, 1795–1830* (London: Scarecrow, 1983), p. 91.

19. Ibid., p. 167.

20. It is of interest to note that Martin supplies in an Appendix forty-one short biographies of leading Evangelicals of the era under his discussion but does not include Baptist Noel despite mentioning his prominence several times.

21. Donald M. Lewis, *Lighten Their Darkness: Evangelical Mission to Working-Class London 1828–1860* (London: Greenwood, 1986).

22. Ibid., p. 183.

23. Ibid., pp. 32–33.

24. David W. Layman (ed.), *Born of Water and the Spirit: Essays on the Sacraments and Christian Formation: John Williamson Nevin, Philip Schaff and Emanuel V. Gerhart* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2016).

than a modest acknowledgement of his concerns for the alleviation of poverty and for social reform, notice of his secession and credobaptism, and a more recent focus on Noel's sacramental views during his Baptist phase. The major exception is the inclusion of Noel in a discussion of the Gorham Case by Grayson Carter in *Protestant Secessions*.[25] Dealing especially with Noel's growing disaffection with the Church of England and eventual secession, Carter provides a significant overview of his life and work.

In addition to the work which has focussed on Noel directly, there are occasional historical items referring to Baptist Noel elsewhere. General surveys of Free Church history mention him, notably those written by Bogue and Bennett[26] and Skeats and Miall.[27] Also, there is a little from within Anglican circles and somewhat more from Baptist ones. To these we now turn.

## *Relation to Anglican scholarship*

Regarding Anglican writings, we may begin with the late-nineteenth-century history of Anglican Evangelicalism by the high-church cleric W.H.B. Proby, *Annals of the Low-Church Party in England, Down to the Death of Archbishop Tait* (London: J.T. Hayes, 1888). Noel is mentioned three times: as the opponent of John Bate Cardale, one of the earliest supporters of Edward Irving's teaching on 'supernatural' gifts;[28] as a member of the Parker Society Committee;[29] and as a secessionist to the Baptists.[30] Four notable early twentieth-century accounts exist of nineteenth-century Anglican Evangelicalism. In 1901, the strongly

25. Grayson Carter, *Protestant Secessions*, pp. 312–55.

26. David Bogue and James Bennett, *History of Dissenters from the Revolution to the year 1838* (London: Adams and Co., vols. 1 and 2 1833, vol.3 and 4, 1839).

27. H.S. Skeats and C.S. Miall, *History of the Free Churches of England 1688–1891* (London: Alexander and Shepheard, 1891).

28. W.H.B. Proby, *Annals of the Low-Church Party in England, Down to the Death of Archbishop Tait* (London: J.T. Hayes, 1888), gives a description of the Irving episode which is interesting for his sympathy with Irving's position but critical view both of Noel and the Bishop of London at the time (vol.1, pp. 314–40).

29. Ibid., p. 448.

30. Ibid., p. 508.

Evangelical Bishop of Durham, Handley Moule (1841–1920), provided an anecdotal account of 'the Evangelical School' of the previous century. He did not mention Baptist Noel and identified the Earl of Shaftesbury (1801–85), as the natural 'party leader' after the deaths of the two outstanding figures in the early decades of the century, William Wilberforce (1759–1833) and Charles Simeon (1759–1836).[31] The great London preacher and Evangelical polemicist of the time was, in Moule's opinion, William Goode (1801–68), who was vicar from 1835 until 1860 of a succession of parishes in the City area of London and Dean of Ripon thereafter.[32]

Goode was certainly a very capable writer who produced a well-respected paedo-baptist apology[33] just after the publication in 1849 of Noel's work advocating credobaptism. Goode was also the editor for some years of the 'moderate' Anglican Evangelical periodical *Christian Observer*, but neither his publications nor his preaching nor his influence can be compared for popularity with those of Noel. Another work of Anglican Evangelical history was produced by G.R. Balleine in 1908. He provided two items of information about Noel:[34] that he was one of several leading Anglicans who opposed the anti-Apocrypha party in the Bible Society; and (mistakenly) that his secession was a reaction to the so-called 'Gorham Case', in which an Evangelical cleric took his high-church bishop through the ecclesiastical courts, charging him with refusing to institute him on inadequate grounds. The bishop had repudiated his Evangelical interpretation of the Book of Common Prayer declaration that after baptism an infant is regenerate, holding the alternative sense that baptism was the sacramental bestowal of eternal life.[35]

Thirdly, the ex-Evangelical Tractarian, the Right Hon. George W.E. Russell produced in 1915 *A Short History of the Evangelical Movement*. Russell noticed Baptist Noel for three things. Firstly, he considered that

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31. Handley G.C. Moule, *The Evangelical School in the Church of England: Its Men and Work in the Nineteenth Century* (London: James Nisbet, 1901), p. 32.
32. Although it is tempting to wonder as much, I have found no evidence that one of Goode's promotions, in 1849, was intended to fill the gap in central London Anglicanism created by Baptist Noel's secession.
33. William Goode, *The Doctrine of the Church of England as to the Effects of Baptism in the Case of Infants* (London: Hatchard, 1849).
34. G.R. Balleine, *History of the Evangelical Party in the Church of England* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1908), p. 134.
35. Ibid., p. 184.

when Noel wrote against paedo-baptism at the time of his secession, he fell into a common Evangelical 'misapprehension' that there was no distinction in traditional Anglican belief between baptismal regeneration and a later experience of conversion.[36] Secondly, he acknowledged that Baptist was 'conspicuous in the world's eye'.[37] Thirdly, he included him in a (very incomplete) list of nineteenth-century Protestant seceders from the Established Church.[38]

Finally, L.E. Elliot-Binns[39] published in 1928 a study of Evangelicalism in the Church of England.[40] Though an able scholar, he neglected to mention Baptist Noel at all, effectively dismissing him from Anglican Evangelical history.

More recent studies of Anglican Evangelicalism are more helpful, Noel being noticed by three scholars especially. Peter Toon, in his 1979 review of mid-nineteenth-century Evangelical responses to Tractarianism, briefly acknowledged Noel's influential opposition to the Tractarian movement.[41] Kenneth Hylson-Smith, in his survey of Anglican Evangelicalism covering the period from 1734 until 1984, made passing references to Noel as an enthusiast for open-air preaching and as a supporter of the Ragged School movement.[42] Nigel Scotland, in his survey of nineteenth-century Anglican Evangelicalism published in 2004, gave examples of his concern for social action and concluded that he was among the foremost Anglican social reformers of the period.[43] Little or no attention has been given to his prominence in Anglican life.

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36. G.W.E. Russell, *A Short History of the Evangelical Movement* (London: Mowbray, 1915), p. 16.
37. Ibid., p. 116.
38. Ibid., p. 125.
39. The name of this author is confusing because Elliott was both one of his Christian names and part of his hyphenated surname: Leonard Elliott Elliott-Binns.
40. L.E. Elliott-Binns, *The Evangelical Movement in the English Church* (London: Methuen, 1928).
41. Peter Toon, *Evangelical Theology 1833–1856* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1979).
42. Kenneth Hylson-Smith, *Evangelicals in the Church of England 1734–1984* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1988), pp. 170, 205.
43. Nigel Scotland, *Evangelical Anglicans in a Revolutionary Age 1789–1901* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004), see p. 204 especially.

## *Relation to Baptist scholarship*

Turning now to Baptist scholarship, G. Holden Pike (1834–1910[44]) mentioned Noel three times in his biography of C.H. Spurgeon, published in 1894. He presents Noel as principled, saintly, and warm towards Spurgeon[45] despite Noel's rebuke of the great preacher when Spurgeon sparked the Evangelical Alliance 'baptismal regeneration controversy' by denouncing Anglican Evangelical clerics as hypocrites for reciting the Prayer Book declaration that a baptised child is regenerate.[46] Thereafter, nothing is to be found until 1963 and then again in 1972, as mentioned above. Even the ex-Baptist Union (BU) minister who founded the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches, E.J. Poole-Connor, when he wrote a history of English Evangelicalism first published in 1951, failed to notice the significance of Baptist Noel as a fellow supporter of secession as a form of protest about matters of theological principle (from different denominations, of course) or even as a prominent Anglican Evangelical and then a prominent Nonconformist advocate of theological orthodoxy.[47]

When he wrote his magisterial history of British Evangelicalism, Bebbington took the opportunity to locate Noel in the context of the Evangelical movement.[48] He drew particular attention to him as an Evangelical leader, social reformer, critic of the Established Church and opponent of Tractarianism. Another Baptist historian did as much for

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44. The date of Pike's death has previously not been noted in scholarly literature but I found obituaries in 1910 newspapers.

45. Spurgeon's brother James remained on good terms with Noel, for example seeking to persuade him to preach at the Baptist church in Croydon in 1870 (James Spurgeon to Baptist Noel, 19 July 1870, Exton Archive: DE 1797 /1/89/1).

46. G. Holden Pike, *The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 6 vols (London: Cassell and Co, 1894; reprinted in two volumes – Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1991).

47. E.J. Poole-Connor, *Evangelicalism in England,* (Worthing: Henry E. Walter Ltd., originally 1951, revised edition 1966). For his summary of nineteenth-century Anglican Evangelicalism see pp. 204–13. Poole-Connor focusses only on Charles Simeon, William Wilberforce, Bishop J.C. Ryle and the seventh Earl of Shaftesbury in an admittedly sketchy overview of Anglican Evangelicalism in the nineteenth century. Noel's significance to all of these leaders will be discussed in due course.

48. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain,* pp. 121, 162.

Noel in relation to Baptist life. J.H.Y. Briggs, in his survey of nineteenth-century Baptist life published in 1994, recounted his main denominational activities, though noting also his social concerns and his prominence within the Evangelical Alliance.[49] Other Baptist writers have taken an interest in particular aspects of Noel's life and thought. Ian Randall, in the history of the Evangelical Alliance he wrote jointly with David Hilborn, has drawn attention to Noel's significance as an important early committee member and advocate[50] while Kenneth J. Stewart's study of the Francophone Evangelical revival mentioned Noel as a prominent supporter of the work.[51] Recent interest in Noel's sacramental theology has also been shown. Anthony Cross regarded it as essentially Calvinist in nature,[52] although the Canadian scholar Stanley K. Fowler has rightly noted that Noel went so far as including credobaptism as an essential element of biblical conversion;[53] and Peter Morden has contrasted Noel's more Calvinistic view of baptism with the symbolic view held by Spurgeon, in his exploration of Spurgeon's spirituality.[54]

## *Noel's social and religious context in the early nineteenth century*

The Irish Tractarian hymnwriter Cecil Frances Alexander (1818–95) published in 1848 her famous children's hymn, 'All Things Bright and Beautiful'. In a sweeping dismissal of the social reforms that had taken place over the previous twenty years, she wrote:

> *The rich man in his castle,*
> *The poor man at his gate,*

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49. Briggs, *The English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century*.
50. Randall and Hilborn, *One Body in Christ: The History and Significance of the Evangelical Alliance* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001), pp. 22, 31, 47, 61, 78, 80, 161.
51. Kenneth J. Stewart, *Restoring The Reformation: British Evangelicalism and the Francophone 'Reveil' 1816–1849* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006).
52. Anthony Cross and Philip E. Thompson (eds), *Baptist Sacramentalism 2* (Studies in Baptist History and Thought, 25; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008), pp. 156–57.
53. Stanley K. Fowler, *More Than a Symbol: the British Recovery of Baptismal Sacramentalism* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2002).
54. Peter Morden, '*Communion with Christ and his people*': *The spirituality of C.H. Spurgeon* (Oxford: Centre for Baptist History and Heritage, 2010), pp. 87–89.

*God made them, high or lowly,*
*And order'd their estate.*[55]

The reality was that the emancipation of Nonconformists and Roman Catholics followed by the passage of the Great Reform Act of 1832 had already made it probable that further social change would follow, and rather at the expense of 'the rich man in his castle' – or at least at the expense of his political power. Noel would have hoped so. It will be shown in due course that in his mature years he became as liberal in politics as he was conservative in theology.

## *Revolution and reform*

Three crucial legislative pressures demonstrate a need for the kind of reforms for which Noel stood. One was government concern about a violent revolution, a concern that persisted for some fifty years after the Reign of Terror in France.[56] A second was the recognition that, even in the absence of revolution, reforms were necessary to assuage the growing anger and frustration both of middle- and working-class people over their political impotence and social exclusion.[57] Finally, there was the growing dissatisfaction of Catholics and Dissenters. Their emancipation became an urgent political issue from around 1800, the Dissenters because they would grow tenfold over the next thirty years, and the Catholics because in the following year[58] over four million Irish people, most of them Roman Catholic, became British subjects through the Act of Union between Ireland and Great Britain.[59]

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55. Cecil Frances Alexander, *Hymns For Little Children* (London: Joseph Masters, 1848: 4th edition 1851), p. 27.
56. Edward Royle provides a radical assessment of this threat in *Revolutionary Britannia? Reflections on the threat of revolution in Britain 1789–1848,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).
57. For a detailed examination of these issues, see also Eric J. Evans, *The Forging of the Modern State* (3rd edition, Harlow: Longman, 2001).
58. The Act of Union between Ireland and Britain was passed in 1800 but the Act came into force in January 1801.
59. A useful overview of these developments may be found in Kenneth Hylson-Smith, *The Churches in England from Elizabeth I to Elizabeth II*, vol.2 (London: SCM, 1997). See especially ch. 7: 'Dissenters and Roman Catholics: The Road to Emancipation', pp. 249–85.