

Richard Preston

‘The eccentric and reverend Mr Smith’: the Reverend Herbert Smith, 1800-1876

Few nineteenth-century clergymen can have lived such a full and varied life as the Reverend Herbert Smith, and yet be so little remembered by later generations. In this short essay, I hope to begin his rehabilitation.

Herbert Smith was by birth a member of the establishment. He was the third and youngest son of the Reverend Charles Smith, sometime scholar of Winchester College (admitted 1768), fellow of New College, Oxford (1776-1792), rector of St Mary Aldermanbury in the City of London and rector of St James, Southrepps in Norfolk, where Herbert was baptised on 20 July 1800. One of his elder brothers, Robert, was also a clergyman. The City connection is significant, for Herbert was nephew to Samuel Smith (1755-1793), principal of the banking house of Samuel Smith of Aldermanbury, treasurer of the Levant Company and a director of the East India Company. Herbert himself worked for a time in one of the large mercantile houses in London. He later, as we shall see, made a good marriage.

Herbert Smith was only two years old when his father died, and the family moved to Southampton. Here three years later Herbert entered King Edward VI Grammar School, a contemporary of James Henry Hurdis, later a renowned engraver (as an aside, the copy of Smith’s ‘Winchester political economy papers on ecclesiastical, military, and social reform’ in Winchester Local Studies Library was presented to Charlotte Hurdis, his widow). In later life, Smith remembered the discipline and scholastic obedience of the school, enforced by the rod and cane. The family worshipped in Holy Rood Church. In Michaelmas Term 1822, Herbert matriculated at Caius College, Cambridge, and proceeded to BA in 1827. Whilst an undergraduate, between November 1824 and April 1825, Smith attended a series of lectures

at the University of St Andrew’s on Moral Philosophy and Political Economy by the Reverend Dr Thomas Chalmers, an inspirational teacher and minister. It altered Smith’s view of the world, revealing to him that social and economic issues could be analysed with mathematical precision. The certainty of political economy, fused with an unshakable truth of the Bible, became his two shibboleths. In June 1826, when his residence at Cambridge ended but before graduation, the young enthusiast went to work in the large but then much neglected parish of Egham in Surrey, where within a year he had established schools for 300 children, built school houses for the master and mistress and obtained grants from George IV.

Herbert Smith was ordained a deacon in the Church of England on 20 January 1828 at the first ordination of the new bishop of Winchester, Charles Richard Sumner, a day after his enthronement. He was licensed as curate to the Reverend Thomas Clarke in the parish of Micheldever with East Stratton as his principal cure, and took up residence in the parsonage house there. The patron of the living of East Stratton was Sir Thomas Baring, member of one of the greatest banking firms in Europe and owner of the 10,000-acre Stratton Park, inside whose boundaries the church lay (figure 1). To William Cobbett (*Rural rides*, August 1823), ‘The Barings are now the great men in Hampshire.’ Three months after coming into his new parish, Smith married Cassandra Cecil Chamberlayne, born in Plymouth of an eminent naval family. Her father was Admiral Charles Chamberlayne and her first cousins included Admiral Sir Charles Hamilton and Vice-Admiral Sir Edward Hamilton. Her great uncle was James, third Duke of Chandos. In the beginning it looked so promising: an energetic young priest, well-connected, with a new wife



Drawn by J.E. Neale.

Engraved by J.C. Varrall.

STRATTON PARK,
HAMPSHIRE.

Proof

London: Pub. Dec. 11. 1819. by J.E. Neale, at Bennett's, Blackfriars Road, & Sherwood, Neely & Jones Paternoster Row.

Figure 1. Stratton Park and church. Source: J P Neale, 'Views of the seats of noblemen and gentlemen in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland', volume 2, 1819. Print in Winchester Local Studies Library: also accessible via: www.hantsphere.org.uk

who shared his parish work, an influential patron and at the start of a new episcopacy. He quickly found an issue which propelled him into national recognition: Lord's Day Observance. Southampton to London coaches daily used Bradley Farm within the parish as a changing place for horses, denying the stable-keepers and ostlers who worked there the opportunity to attend divine worship on Sunday. Smith took up their cause, ultimately brokering a short-lived agreement between the 23 coach proprietors on the Portsmouth and Southampton roads, including Benjamin Horne and the Chaplins, voluntarily to suspend Sunday services. Part of his published correspondence was used as evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the Observance of the Lord's-day in 1832.

This minor triumph, however, could not disguise the disaster of his curacy, for within seven years Smith had been ejected from the parish. In February 1835, Sumner wrote to his brother-in-law the Reverend William Wilson, vicar of Holy Rood and rural dean, what even at this early stage could be his epitaph. 'Mr Herbert Smith is a pious man, but I think he is physically incapacitated from professing duty. You are doubtless aware of the alternate excitement and depression to which he is subject, and of the serious evil to which his diseased state of mind led at Stratton.' (SRO D/S 1/1/31). Our view of events comes almost exclusively from three letters written, and published, in May 1839 by Smith to those who had been his bishop, patron and vicar. As a churchman of the old school, Smith abhorred the divisive Evangelical beliefs of this trinity. The regime in East Stratton showed 'the most deplorable ignorance of, and prejudice against, current Church principles...; it was little better than a system of Dissent under the name of Church.' He deplored Clarke's failure to instruct the Church catechism in the parish schools (the school mistress was professedly a Baptist), the way in which the Lord's supper was administered at Easter, his rejection of the doctrine of general redemption and his performance of the baptism service, which Smith considered to be against the Rubric.

Thomas Baring was condemned as an overbearing patron, bringing the whole parish into abject dependence on himself or, vicariously, his steward. He wound up the Friendly Visiting Society, established in 1831 with Smith as superintendent, when he perceived his interests to be threatened. Smith himself was excluded from meetings of the vestry and given notice to quit the parsonage house (where he lived rent-free) after condemning their proceedings as improper and illegal. There was a religious dimension as well, for Baring actively interfered in the ministry of the parish. It is instructive that when William Cobbett visited Micheldever (*Political register*, 4 August 1832) he characterized the patron as rector and the vicar as curate.

The real sticking point for Smith was the way in which he was dismissed. It was the vicar who, in November 1833, shut him out of the pulpit at East Stratton at one day's notice. Smith believed he was still curate until the bishop revoked his licence, and this Sumner never did. To resign was to accept that the continuance in office of any curate depended on the approval of his parishioners or on the will of the parson, whereas the law made him subject alone to the bishop. Smith held out until April 1834, renting a house in the parish to maintain residence, but finally, worn out with anxiety and his health failing entirely, he accepted *force majeure*. So began a vendetta against that 'nest of vipers' whom Smith believed had deprived him of his life's work. There were two key targets. The Reverend Alexander Robert Charles Dallas, bishop's chaplain and recipient of the lucrative living of Wonston from Sumner's hands in 1828, had manipulated the East Stratton affair for Sumner and had procured the vacant curacy, at double the stipend, for his cousin and brother-in-law Charles Dallas. The Reverend Henry Carey, curate to another of Sumner's chaplains Philip Jacob, rector of Crawley, fulfilled most of Smith's duties during the interregnum ('employed to prevent me from discharging my duties'). For decades, Alexander Dallas and Philip Jacob were effectively stalked in their own parishes, Dallas even being confronted by Smith in his own rectory and denounced as a

Pharisee. Henry Carey became a closer victim. On the day in April 1853 that he 'read himself in' as rector of All Saints in Southampton, stating that he subscribed to the thirty-nine articles of Anglican doctrine, who should confront him in the vestry with a fistful of pamphlets protesting the appointment but Herbert Smith.

For the next twenty-five years, Smith used the full panoply of propaganda to try to regain his curacy. Endless pamphlets were published, press advertisements taken on the anniversary of his ejection, appeals made at bishop's visitations, appeals for an enquiry and a dogged insistence on styling himself 'Curate of Stratton'. Direct action to seize the pulpit led to three spells in Winchester Gaol as Smith refused to give magistrates an undertaking that he would commit no further breaches of the peace in pursuit of his right. In 1848 he was arraigned before Hampshire Michaelmas Sessions in the Grand Jury Room at Winchester, charged uniquely under the Religious Toleration Act of 1688. Ever the publicist, Smith appeared in the dock in full canonical dress, with the bishop, subpoenaed to give evidence, sitting throughout in the public gallery. Six years later Smith preached an open air sermon outside the door of the chapel to a congregation of one: the chapelwarden, there to ensure that Smith did not enter the building. On one Sunday afternoon in March 1855, Smith simply entered the empty chapel half an hour before the service was due to start, strode into the vestry, put on the surplice and mounted the reading desk. Twice more before 1860 he was removed by police, deployed by the then patron Sir Francis Baring, from the public path leading to the chapel. Such myopic insistence on his assumed right speaks volumes for the mental state of the erstwhile curate.

Smith was only in his mid-thirties, but had already been denied his chosen calling following his father's footsteps as a parish priest. Alternative employment for a clergyman outwith the diocesan system was limited, and often poorly paid. In 1835 he was appointed by the Board of Ordnance as chaplain at the

Marchwood Magazine, which lay in a kind of spiritual wilderness over two miles from the nearest parish church (Eling). He resided with his family in rooms in the officers' quarter at the paltry salary of £25 *per annum*: his predecessor received double having been given more parochial responsibilities in the neighbourhood by Sumner, responsibilities denied to Smith. Nevertheless, Smith tried to expand his work. He campaigned for a new church for Marchwood, serving the Magazines, the village and surrounding scattered communities, five years before the youthful lord of the manor, H.F.K. Holloway, built the present, much over-budget, cathedral-like St John's. Smith also experimented with temperance reform, selling malt without the imposition of Malt Tax to enable local people to brew small beer at home, without recourse to beer shops. The appointment ended in 1845.

In March 1837, Smith received a second non-diocesan post, as chaplain to the New Forest Union Workhouse, an appointment solely in the gift of the Board of Guardians, at a 'trifling' £50 *per annum*. As with the Magazines, the workhouse, at Ashurst, lay sufficiently far from the parish church (again, Eling) to justify the appointment of a dedicated clergyman. Ostensibly, Smith's attention to the work was assiduous, as his 'Account of a union chaplaincy, containing extracts from the chaplain's book', published in 1839, shows. However, the script written at East Stratton was reworked. He fell out with the Board of Guardians, who twice removed him from office, in December 1839 (subsequently re-elected) and in spring 1842. He refused to accept the regulations of the workhouse. A test case came in his distribution of tobacco to the men's ward (typically, together with tracts on the evils of smoking), in direct contravention of the rules. He usurped the authority of the Guardians, especially as we shall see shortly in his advocacy of alternatives to the workhouse. He complained that the Guardians were slack in their attendance to workhouse affairs. He refused to accept the mediation of the Poor Law Commissioners in London. Again, as at East Stratton, he simply refused to go, as resignation

would be tantamount to admitting that the charges brought by the Board were true. For two years, he soldiered on despite a complete breakdown of relations with the Guardians, until ill health caused him to accept the inevitable.

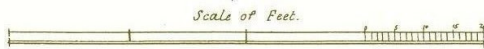
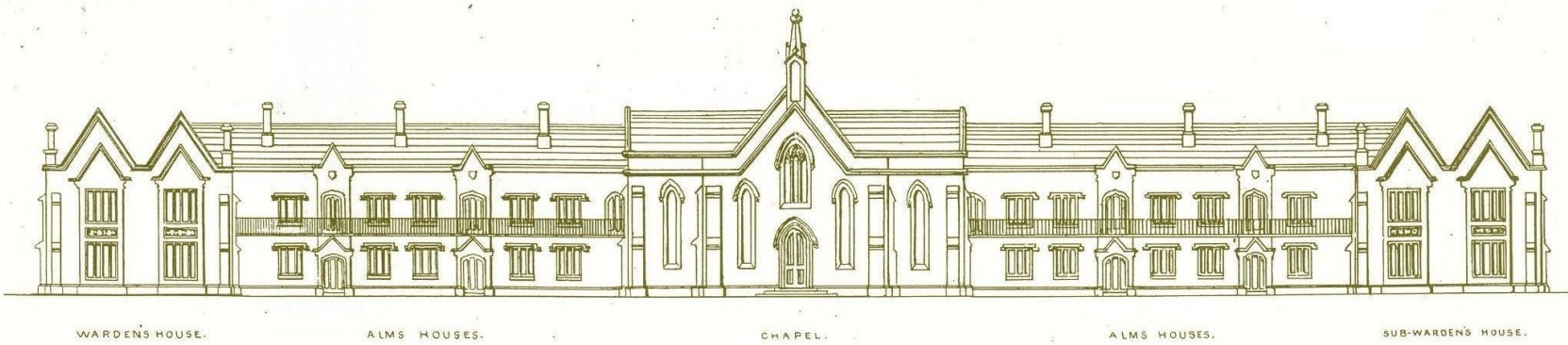
Smith never wanted to be a workhouse chaplain, but his experiences in the New Forest opened up fresh chapters in his life. He took to heart the plight of the deserving aged poor who, after decent, God-fearing lives, had to eke out their final years in the repressive, prison-like atmosphere of the poor house. His solution, first formulated in 1838, was the creation of a National Almshouses Society, funded by private bounty, almsgiving at church, parliamentary grants and a form of social insurance. A model constitution was drawn up, management of the almshouses shared by clergy and laity. Meetings were organized in London, and petitions to both Houses of Parliament prepared. The New Forest offered a stage on which to give substance to his vision. Immediately after his re-election to the chaplaincy, he memorialized the Commissioners of Woods and Forest to grant part of their extensive New Forest landholdings for the building of almshouses at Longdown to accommodate fifty inmates, together with a chapel (to serve the almshouses and surrounding district) and warden's house. The young Southampton architect William Hives was employed to draw up plans (figure 2). In anticipation of royal patronage, they were to be styled 'Queen Victoria's Alms Houses'. The trenching of the ground was to be entrusted to able-bodied men in the workhouse, in the same way that Clement Hoare had recently used unemployed labour to transform a barren plot of land on Shirley Common into a vineyard.

It soon became clear that the scheme attracted no support, and within a few months Smith had transferred his attention to a site in Shirley, close to St James's Church (and incidentally not far from Hoare's vineyard). The proposed almshouses were originally to house fifty inmates, with 32 separate apartments in a building 100 feet long by 100 feet wide, although the specifications were later scaled down. There was to be no separate warden's

lodgings and, with a district church close by, no separate chapel. New designs were commissioned from William Hives, who had earlier designed St James's Church, and contracts for building solicited in July 1840. The revised building was completed in April 1841, commemorated by Mr Skelton's lithographic sketch (figure 3). Even though located in the poor law union of South Stoneham, the inmates were to come primarily from the New Forest workhouse, living rent-free, their accommodation paid for by the transference of their poor relief.

It was an immensely bold, even reckless, scheme. Smith borrowed the £2000 required (£320 for the land; £1300 for the main building; £250 for outbuildings, fencing and garden; £106 for advertising [*sic*]) at 4% before having any commitment of financial support. Finance was a major stumbling block. An initial public appeal raised just over £53, with only one contribution over £10, and this despite door-to-door collections by Smith himself. Desperate circumstances required desperate remedies. Perhaps the shopkeepers of Southampton could rise two hours earlier in the morning and close two hours earlier in the evening, donating the saving of gas and candle-light to the project? A major blow came when the Poor Law Commissioners refused to sanction the transference of poor relief between unions. Smith himself was forced to further expense by personally paying the costs of some of the inmates. What saved the project was the administrative nicety that Southampton, as a pre-existing union, was exempt from the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act and thereby lay outside the control of the Commissioners. The rents of Southampton inhabitants could be paid directly to the almshouse. At a stroke, the Shirley homes lost their New Forest nexus, and were occupied by the aged from Southampton and the South Stoneham Union. The Shirley Asylum had, in its first incarnation, a life of about two years. All twelve of its rooms were occupied, largely with widows between the ages of 55 and 77. The financial uncertainties, the coldness of potential supporters and the sheer hard work, however, took its toll on Herbert

DESIGN
 FOR
 ALMS HOUSES, CHAPEL, &c.
 Proposed to be erected at
 LONGDOWN,
 in the Parish of
 ELING.



W^o HINVES.
 Architect.
 St Mary's Street.
 SOUTHAMPTON.

Drawn & Printed at T.H. Skelton's, Lithographic Establishment, 48, Above-Bar St., Southampton.

Figure 2. Design for almshouses and chapel at Longdown, in the parish of Eling. Lithograph by T H Skelton, 1840 Reproduced by permission of Hampshire Record Office (TOP108/2/1(L))

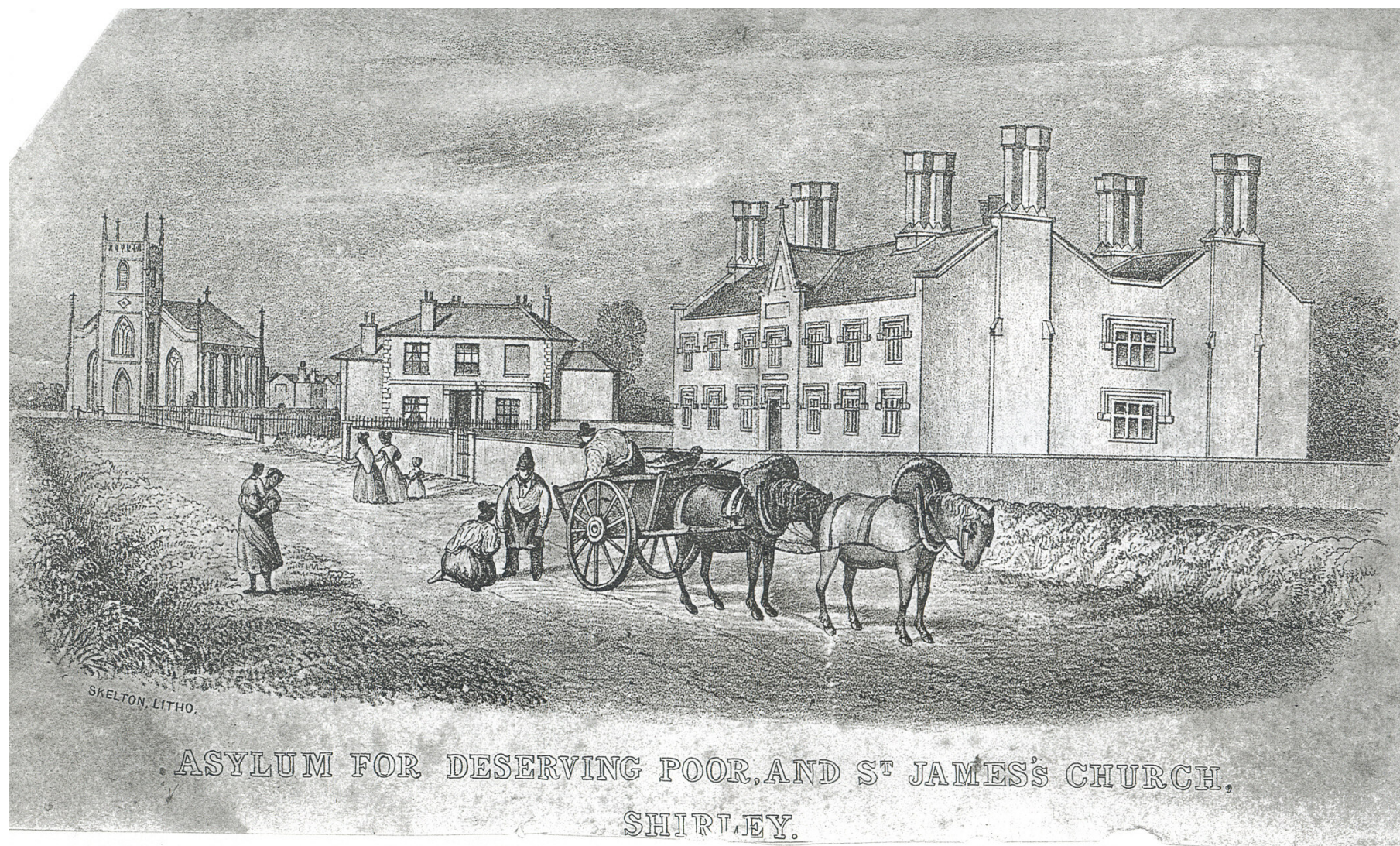


Figure 3. Shirley Asylum for the Deserving and Aged Poor. Lithograph by Thomas Skelton, 1841. Print in Winchester Local Studies Library: also accessible via www.hantspere.org.uk

Smith, and in mid-1842 he suffered a complete mental breakdown. A committee of twelve clergymen from Southampton and Millbrook took over the running of the Asylum, but without the energy of its founder it had closed by early 1843.

Given Smith's mental instability, such a breakdown is understandable. His condition was worsened by the unremitting zeal with which he pursued, often simultaneously, a multitude of other causes. Twice, in June 1838 and December 1839, he travelled to London to bring court cases against the proprietors of the *Weekly Dispatch*, *John Bull* and *Observer* for selling their newspapers on the Sabbath, actions that the Society for the Better Observance of the Sabbath had declined to take. Acting as his own counsel, Smith lost both cases. He commonly attended temperance rallies and meetings, being one of those pelted with mud near the bottom of East Street during the Temperance Festival of July 1841. He established a coffee house for the poor in Southampton, supplying tea, coffee and soup. As a political economist who believed that the price of labour depends on demand and supply like any other marketable commodity, Smith supported emigration of 'surplus' labour to the colonies. He advocated County Emigration Societies. He founded the Labourers' Friend Society in Southampton, taking rooms at 13 French Street for the reception of clothes, books and money to give to those about to emigrate. On one occasion, in April 1842, a dinner was given to 24 emigrants on the eve of their departure for Gravesend to set sail for New Zealand on the *Sir Charles Foster*. The men were supplied with tools for their trade and the women with linen and other necessities for the voyage. During the turbulent days of 1842, Smith attended meetings of both the Complete Suffrage Union and Chartists. In April, at the Long Rooms Chartist meeting to elect two delegates to the National Convention, he followed on the platform Ruffy Ridley ('Rough-and-ready'), who a few weeks later was to ride on horseback at the head of the procession to present the Chartist petition to Parliament. Smith declared himself to the

cheering meeting in favour of THE CHARTER AND THE BIBLE.

Attendance at such meetings was probably less an expression of political radicalism than a way to give public utterance to his views on social matters. There was not a meeting he attended at which Smith did not court favour for his almshouses. If there were no such meetings, he engineered his own. He called a public meeting at the Long Rooms in April 1842 to expound on his asylums for the poor. In order to attract an audience larger than that he alone could command, he opened up the floor. There followed arguably the most bizarre public meeting Southampton has known. Apart from Smith himself, there was Samuel Bartlett, a Chartist lecturer, James Rigby, Deputy Governor of the Owenite community at Queenwood and the Reverend Dr Milton ('inglorious Milton'), a mountebank of the first order: moustachioed ex-missionary, Original Baptist, Chief Rechabite, fraudulent proponent of the 'New Sailor's Home' and agent for Morison's Vegetable Universal Medicine, who was to re-emerge in Australia in 1854 holding gospel tea meetings ('tea and salvation'). The extent to which Herbert had been unbalanced by the events of 1842 is suggested by his final letter to the Poor Law Commissioners on 6 April, praying for support for the Shirley Asylum: 'I wish I could persuade you, as the Poor Law Commissioners, Sir Robert Peel, Sir James Graham, and all the Members of both Houses of Parliament ... to engage a special train by the Southampton Railroad, and come and see the Shirley Asylum for the Deserving Aged and Infirm Poor. Her Majesty and Prince Albert, with their known kind consideration for the Poor, might also be induced to condescend to accompany the Peers and Commons of the Realm. Why should not her Majesty and the Peers and Commons of the Realm come to Southampton to please the people, as it is well known they kindly go to Epsom and Ascot Races?...'.

Smith continued to live quietly in the barracks at Marchwood until his appointment ended. Attempts were made to sell the former asylum

property in 1844 and early 1845 for continued use as a charitable institution, for conversion into a manufactory or brewery, for division into three houses or with the 24 rooms being let separately. It proved impossible to sell, and in January 1846 Smith moved his family into the property, renamed Norfolk House. Smith became a local benefactor in Shirley. He was appointed a vice-president of the Shirley Literary, Scientific and Book Society. In autumn 1846 he established an industrial school as an adjunct to the Shirley National School, training boys in the cultivation of the soil by spade. In the severe winter that followed, unemployed men were set to work producing firewood and making bricks, the £100 expended being found by Smith himself. In their zeal, however, earth was removed not only from Smith's own land but also from the public highway. Thomas Brainsby, a local grocer, took a court case for restraint of trade against Smith for blocking up access to his shop. Punitive damages were awarded to the defendant, against which Herbert unsuccessfully appealed to the Home Secretary.

Denied a calling inside the organized church, Smith devoted his energies to reaching those in the community who themselves lay outside the formal structure of the Church of England. He argued for the restoration of the order of deacon to its original purpose of pastoral care and visiting, and in April 1847 proposed that Norfolk House be converted into a college for preparing candidates for the office. The burgeoning use of non-ordained scripture readers was denounced on the grounds that only ordained ministers had authority to preach scripture. Later that year he formed his own society for Southampton, the Church of England Town Mission, in direct opposition to the newly-formed Southampton Auxiliary to the Town Missionary and Scripture Readers' Society, a joint venture by Anglicans and Dissenters. Smith's mission had effectively a membership of one. This was followed in the 1850s by the English Free Church Mission for the Parish of Millbrook, to bring the Bible to the heathen of the district. The work was made more pressing in the mid-1850s by the creation of the new estate at Freemantle, consequent on

the sale of the 142-acre Freemantle estate on the death of Sir George Hewett. The rapid and unregulated sale of lots through freehold land societies saw an influx of clerks, artisans and tradesmen, the population reaching an estimated 1200 by November 1855. The editor of the *Brighton Herald*, visiting Freemantle in 1855, spoke of a chaos of bricks and mortar.

The diocesan authorities acted speedily in response. By the end of 1855, Freemantle had been created an ecclesiastical district, arrangements made to buy a plot of land for a district church, a subscription launched and a pastor, the Reverend Abraham Sedgwick, appointed by the bishop. Herbert Smith had reacted even quicker. Before any diocesan appeal had been made, Smith began to erect a mission church, dedicated to St Stephen, the first deacon, to be a pattern for other home mission churches. Smith, calling himself 'Clergyman of Freemantle', was to perform divine service gratuitously. A 'rectory' was provided, in Amwell Bury on Freemantle Cliff, to which Smith moved his family in November 1855 as Norfolk House became too expensive to maintain (that same month he appeared before Southampton County Court for the non-payment of a bill of £1.17.6). The mission, however, ended in failure. In March 1857 Smith demolished what one critic had called his 'proposed shed': a ludicrous erection, consisting of a few wooden railings, posts and bricks, according to the unimpressed *Hampshire Independent*.

Smith's attitude to the diocesan church at Freemantle was mixed. He was happy to lend his support, on the proviso that it was not financed by pew rents. He gave £5 to the subscription list. He praised the financial intervention of Miss Hewett, 'a second Deborah [who] rose as a Mother in Israel'. He approved the original 'beautiful' architectural plans of William Hives and Alfred Bedborough, although the Incorporated Church Building Society, who grant-aided the building, later rejected these. What Smith, however, could not stomach was the absorption of the new district into the Evangelical web. Sedgwick was seen as

yet another of Sumner's Evangelical appointees, joining those at Wonston, Crawley, Alton, Buriton, Fawley and, within Southampton, St Mary and All Saints. In August 1857, Herbert made such a scene at the evening tea meeting following the opening by Archdeacon Wigram of the new schoolroom, which through the use of sliding doors between the boy' and girls' classes converted into a temporary church, that he had to be removed by the county police.

Domestic life in the Smith household disintegrated during the mid-1850s. The 1851 census shows an apparently model family at Norfolk House: Herbert, his wife Cassandra, daughter Margaret and unmarried brother-in-law, Captain John Chamberlayne RN. It is an illusion. The brothers-in-law were within two years at each other's throats, literally and drawing blood. We only have Smith's accounts (in letters he wrote, and published, to Chamberlayne's solicitors, Coxwell and Bassett, in July 1858). He blamed their client, who, 'having spent the chief part of his days in riotous living – in idleness, drunkenness and profligacy – is full of malice and envy against me, whose days have been very differently employed.' The captain eventually moved out to Berkeley Lodge, in Anglesey Road, Shirley, initially to be with his son-in-law Charles Harcourt Smith, a Lieutenant in the Royal Navy who had commanded the gunboat *Insolent* during the Crimean War, taking with him Herbert's wife and daughter. A court order in July 1858 banned Herbert from trespass on Chamberlayne's property, but one night in March 1859 he forced an entry into Berkeley Lodge through a small window. By mischance, Smith found himself in a locked china cabinet and, unable to make an exit, was discovered in the closet the next morning. At the subsequent trial, Smith defended himself with such violent irrationality that the magistrates ordered a medical examination into the state of his mind. John Chamberlayne died in February 1861, and the subsequent census reveals Cassandra a patient in a private lunatic asylum in Alton (Westbrook House). She died there thirteen years later. One consequence of the family breakdown was that Herbert moved to

Winchester, there to live in a succession of humble lodgings in Sussex Street, Newburgh Street and Gladstone Terrace. It was a time of personal poverty. In September 1859 he approached Winchester City Bench for advice on the recovery of a quantity of shirting he had entrusted to Miss Fanny Mootham (characterized as a protégé of his) to make up. She had decamped without returning either the linen or the made-up clothes.

Formerly, Smith had lived in country parishes or on the urban fringe. He was now in the claustrophobic atmosphere of a garrison town and cathedral city. He identified with the underclass of Winchester, metamorphosing into the Poor Man's Advocate, the Working Man's Friend, the Labourers' Friend, the Soldiers' Friend, the Prisoners' Friend, the Political Economist of Winchester and an advocate of an individualistic Christian Socialism. As soon as he arrived in the city, he took rooms at Mr Sayers in Upper High Street as campaign headquarters, which also served as the Sabbath Emancipation Office. He confronted the 'social evils' of the city, particularly the twin spectres of drunkenness and prostitution so prevalent in a garrison town with troop numbers swelled by the Russian War. He urged the local clergy to visit the lower parts of the city, the courts and alleys, where they would find many as ignorant and degraded as any heathen or savage. He proposed that coal stores in Newburgh Street, close to his lodgings, be converted into a church so that Christians of every denomination may unite in the practical piety of the Book of Common Prayer. He campaigned for the rights of the wives, widows, children and orphans of soldiers, supporting the planned new married quarters in the barracks. As an interim measure, he had suggested that property in Upper High Street be purchased to create immediate family accommodation. He organized and paid for lavish peace celebrations for the benefit of military families. He campaigned on behalf of prostitutes, whom he saw equally as victims of life in a garrison town. He attended meetings called by Josephine Butler for the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act, which was held to formalize prostitution. He supported the

Winchester Refuge for Fallen Women in Minster Street, an outlier of the County Female Penitentiary in Southampton of which he had been a committee member since 1835. He campaigned for better food for the poor, supporting the Winchester Society of Vegetarians (he styled himself 'a disciple of Soyer') and improvements to the market. He campaigned for the better education of the children of the poor, advocating a Children's Friend Society and an industrial school in North Walls.

Residence in Winchester not only brought Smith into the turmoil of city life. It also opened up the hinterland of central Hampshire to his ministrations. John Wesley may have travelled on horseback to follow his calling. Herbert Smith walked. We have seen how East Stratton and the parishes of those he held responsible for his unjust treatment now lay within a day's walk. So also was a new audience for his pamphlets, which even in the 1850s were counted in thousands. Morgan Featherstone, a pedestrian himself, recorded a meeting with Smith (described in 'A march through Surrey, Hampshire and Berkshire', published in the *Northern Times*, 28 June 1856). 'A few miles from Winchester, an old gentleman with an ecclesiastical cravat, his hands filled with pamphlets, came up, and offering his tracts, addressed us. After looking at him a moment or two, I recognised the speaker as a philanthropic, but eccentric, Protestant Clergyman [who] now traverses every town and village for miles round Winchester, distributing tracts on Political Economy and Church Reform.' They walked in company the eighteen miles to the Hospital of St Cross. To reach a more widespread audience, Smith established a weekly penny paper in 1860, the *Hants Examiner* (the British Library holds a run between 12 May and 3 November). Its remit was the entertainment, instruction and benefit of the thousands of the working classes of Hampshire. Its chief sale was expected to be at local markets, or through local agents. Smith may have resided in Winchester, but he lived a peripatetic life. He was in Southampton as much as he was in the county town. As we have seen, his work at Freemantle continued after he

ceased to be resident in the district. As late as April 1858, he argued that the Elmfield estate, to be sold on the death of Miss Hewett, should be purchased by the diocese to create a new church for the inhabitants of Hill and Four Posts, with the relocation of the Female Penitentiary and the of Refuge for Fallen Women from their cramped town quarters to this new site.

It was hard for Smith to find weaknesses in the Evangelical monopoly in Winchester, although this was not through want of trying. In the dying months of Sumner's episcopacy he was excluded from the cathedral and summoned before the city magistrates for leaving anti-Evangelical cards on seats there. Southampton, however, was freer, more liberal, and his most notorious and public denunciations against the Evangelicals were made in that town. Let one example out of many suffice. The Southampton Auxiliary of the Irish Church Missions to the Roman Catholics (the parent society was the child of the Reverend Alexander Dallas) met in the Victoria Rooms in February 1859. In the midst of the proceedings, Herbert Smith stood up and demanded to be heard. The Chairman (Archdeacon Wigram) refused. An altercation followed:

Mr Smith: Then it is most unfair. You, Mr Archdeacon, are as much a pope as the Pope of Rome (hisses, 'turn him out', and confusion). The Chairman asked Mr Smith to desist and restore order, or they must send for a policeman to turn him out.

Mr Smith: Send for the police, then, and turn me out. It's the two factions. As it has been previously said, it is a fight for the popedom between Mr Archdeacon and the Rev Herbert Smith (laughter). You, Mr Archdeacon, and all your party, are trying to ruin the Church of England, and I, as a clergyman of the Church of England, protest against the unfair manner of conducting these controversial meetings ('cracked' and laughter). Several attempts were made to induce Mr Smith to withdraw, but he persisted in his interruptions for a considerable time, ultimately retiring, to the apparent gratification of every one.

Joseph Wigram was no menial opponent. He was a son-in-law of Peter Arkwright of Willersley, Derbyshire (third generation of the Arkwright dynasty of Masson Mills) and a future bishop of Rochester.

Smith was increasingly a pariah within Southampton. Yet there was one issue that did much to redeem him to contemporaries. The campaign to reform the pre-Reformation almshouses of God's House Hospital benefited greatly from Smith's adept use of 'the furnace of newspaper discussion', his pamphlets and his direct intervention with the Fellows of Queen's College, Oxford (the landowners) and the Government Inspector of Charities, all at a personal expenditure of over £200. A successful conclusion in 1860 saw the rebuilding of the hospital and increases in the allowances to the eight aged inmates. And this without the need to go to law, in contrast to the ruinous legal disputes which accompanied the reform of the Hospital of St Cross and St John's Hospital in Winchester. An illustration of the almshouses by T G Hart was displayed at the 1897 'Ancient Southampton' exhibition. The caption reads: 'Alms Houses of God's House, taken down 1860 and now rebuilt, and the funds to the inmates increased. Great interest was taken in this matter by the Rev Herbert Smith, who has lost his gown – for why I know not, though he is a singular person.' Smith, incidentally, was never defrocked, but it is interesting that at least some thought he was. Smith continued to fight for the hospital long after the first battle had been won, arguing, partly successfully, for the constant residence of a clergyman in the hospital and the performance of divine service in the English language (it also served as a Huguenot chapel) twice every Sunday in its chapel.

The God's House campaign melded in well with the resurrection of the Shirley Homes for the Aged. As we have seen, the original project foundered in early 1843. Shortly after the Smith ménage left Norfolk House, the almshouses were reopened, giving rent-free accommodation to 24 poor, respectable and aged women. As initially propounded, in January 1856, the

management was to be placed under a committee of twelve parochial clergymen and twelve laymen. As so often before, the actual management and subvention of the scheme fell solely on Herbert Smith, at a cost he could ill afford of £80 *per annum*. Towards the end of his life, Smith wrote regretfully of the failure of any minister of any denomination, with the exception of Basil Wilberforce, rector of St Mary's, ever to visit the homes.

Herbert Smith left Winchester in 1873 to become a lodger at 5 Upper Portland Terrace, Southampton. His landlord was Alfred George Dane, a foreman at the High Street outfitters shop of James Cocks. Herbert did not mature with age. He was if anything even more confrontational, opinionated and hyperactive than he had been in earlier life. He continued to rise at 5am, sometimes earlier. He remained active, organizing an open meeting at the Victoria Rooms to consider all aspects of church reform within a few weeks of his death. The forthrightness with which Smith confronted those with whom he disagreed, even at the most emotionally-charged public meetings, never faltered. He disputed toe-to-toe with the republican Charles Bradlaugh on the merits of kingship, proclaiming George III as one of the best kings that ever existed. He stood up at a packed meeting called to petition for the abolition of income tax to propose an amendment (not seconded) for its continuance. He told a volatile meeting of striking shipwrights that it was their duty to uphold to the utmost the landed gentry, the capitalist and the employers of labour (cries of 'sit down'). In old age Smith found a new conduit to express his views. The proprietors (Rayners, husband and later widow) of the *Southampton Observer* threw open their weekly correspondence column to Smith, allowing him to publish unfettered what he called his weekly sermons. He inveighed against the Godless people of Southampton with a vocabulary of impressive richness: fools, hypocrites, self-righteous, ignorant, irreligious, proud, pompous, 'little men and women engrossed in money and dissipation', untoward, disrespectful, tyrannical, oppressive, unjust, adulterous, licentious,

profligate, 'corrupt, corrupt, corrupt', Southampton itself an abomination of abominations. Truly he was 'that well-known agitator and tormentor.'

Don Quixote perhaps, but Smith did not just fight old battles. New enemies were eagerly confronted. The appointment to the see of Winchester in late 1869 of Samuel Wilberforce signalled the rise of High Church, or Ritualistic, principles within the diocese. The complexion of Southampton's clergy underwent a sea-change within five years as at every new appointment High Church priests replaced Evangelical pastors. By 1875, Smith believed the Reverend John Bullen of St Matthew's to be the only Evangelical minister remaining in Southampton. Smith, the former anti-Evangelical, reinvented himself as 'The Son of Thunder' (a reference to the apostles James and John), before whom the new schismatics must shudder and tremble. *The Times*, 9 July 1872, reported a confrontation with the extreme Anglo-Catholic Francis Maundy Gregory, vicar of St Michael's, at the reopening of the church after alteration. 'The Rev Herbert Smith ... had taken his seat in the centre aisle, and on the entrance of the vicar he rose and said he felt it to be his bounden duty to expose him. 'What', said Mr Smith, 'is to be done with you who set at defiance the authority of the bishop and churchwardens? People ought to leave the church.' The vicar endeavoured to remove Mr Smith, but he, notwithstanding a great disparity of age between the two, resisted stoutly, and a policeman was sent for and came. 'You', said the rev gentleman, 'represent the Queen, and I will accompany you directly', and he then left the church'.

For most of his life, Smith had remained neutral in party politics. In the early 1870s, he entered into the political arena, taking a position which drew both from the reforming tendencies of modern, Peelite Conservatism and old Toryism, allied to the financial probity of political economy. The Clerical Disabilities Act of 1870 gave clergymen the notional right to stand for Parliament. Smith sought to exercise that right during the dog days of Gladstone's first

administration when rumours of the dissolution of parliament were rife. He announced himself as the clerical candidate for the borough, urging electors to divide their votes between himself and Sir Frederick Perkins, the Liberal candidate ('Perkins and Smith for ever!!!'). He refused to canvass, believing the Ballot Act made that irrelevant. When a snap election was called, in January 1874, Smith retreated and did not stand. Nevertheless, he continued to be found on Conservative platforms, and endorsed the Southampton Working Men's Conservative Association on its formation.

Smith may have withdrawn from the Parliamentary election, but within two months he did face the Southampton electorate, standing at the first triennial re-election of the School Board. Created under the Education Act of 1870, the Board was an elected body enforcing school attendance and levying local school rates. To many clergymen, as to Smith, it was anathema: state interference in the family, bureaucratic, expensive, denying the church its traditional role. He did all in his power to denounce the Board and to support those parents taken to court for non-compliance. At the election, Smith stood as one of three independent candidates against a phalanx of six churchmen and six dissenters. He came bottom of the poll, with 194 votes from the 2791 burgesses who voted.

This apparent succession of misery and failure does not fully describe Smith's final years, for he took comfort in what, given his earlier life, seems a strange refuge. He became the first clergyman in Southampton to become a member of the Ancient Order of Foresters, joining in January 1873 Court Concord (with which Perkins was also associated). Management of the Order rotated annually, and for 1874/75 it was vested in Southampton. Smith was appointed the first High Chaplain. At the Foresters' Grand Festival in August 1875, dressed in the black gown with white bands of office, he sat in an open carriage pulled by a pair of fine grey horses as part of the mile-long procession through the town: had not the coachman been later than ordered he would

have been in the leading coach! Part of his duties was to attend Foresters' meetings – banquets with much carousing and drinking of toasts – in company with the High Chief Ranger. The convivial nature of Forestry aside, the appeal to Smith was as a mutual self-help society, providing for old age and supporting widows and orphans. It was the same impulse that had led him in the 1850s actively to support the provision of Penny Banks in Southampton and Winchester and the establishment of the Florenic Benevolent Society in Winchester, encouraging tradesmen to put aside a florin a month.

Herbert Smith died on 2 June 1876 in his lodgings in Upper Portland Terrace. He was buried in Southampton cemetery beside his wife and brother-in-law, more harmoniously we trust than in life. Just two mourners, Henry Palk, his doctor, and Charles Binstead of Portsmouth, his solicitor, followed the coffin. Mr Atkins of the Hampshire Bank, an old friend, joined them at the grave along with several poor widows, not as the *Southampton Observer* initially reported from the Shirley Homes but from Basil Wilberforce's Home for Widows in the town. There is a deep poignancy here. Smith was virtually penniless at his death having been saved from the soubriquet of 'clerical bankrupt' two years earlier by advertising for a 6-month loan of £100 at the exorbitant interest of 10%. At probate he left his daughter, Margaret Ann, then living in Highgate Road, Middlesex, less than £100 in effects. Although cash poor Smith still held the freehold of the Shirley Almshouses, which also passed to his daughter. These were sold to become, after the addition of two new wings, the Barlow and Ellyett Homes, which flourish today.

Few men can have revealed less of their personal and private life than Herbert Smith. His is a life without footnotes. In his early life we see him through the eyes of a hostile press. To the *Hampshire Independent*, 14 December 1839, he was 'this reverend and ascetic gentleman', the Intruder-General into other people's affairs, an obstreperous parson, showing cold, heartless and unholy indifference. 'He carries no personal

weight in this part of the country, for though we believe him to be one whose character is untainted, he is known to have a crookedness of mind that unfits him for any useful purpose. A more crotchety being never existed. He is made up of whims, fancies, and religion. Dissatisfied and discontented himself, he must be poking in other people's affairs ...' This is very different to the image of the septuagenarian Smith that comes through the pages of the *Southampton Observer*. Thirty five years later he is carousing with the Foresters, attending social clubs, giving renditions to all who would listen of his 'old and favourite song' 'Cock-a-doodle-doo', saying grace at dinners of the Licensed Victuallers' Friendly Society (a temperance man to the end, but never a teetotaler) and pestered by eager children for copies of the pamphlets, poems and songs from the leather case he always carried around. In Smith's own words, a peculiar ministry. But perhaps we should not be surprised at this bipolarity, for it is this vacillation between extremes that is the strongest trait of this deeply driven man.
