

Don Jorge and the School for the Poor: George Lawrence (1830–1894)

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Reports of nineteenth-century Brethren missionary work can leave readers in English wondering about the cliff-hanger of Robert Chapman taking William Gould and George Lawrence to Spain ‘whom he left there’.² Answers may be found by the readers becoming visitors to the small town of Caldes de Montbui in Catalonia, on the east coast of Spain, where the municipal cemetery has two gravestones of historical significance: one commemorates the life and work of George Lawrence, who first arrived in that town in 1873; the other is a marble stone memorial to civil war casualties of the same year. Yet another permanent reminder is one of the town’s old buildings, known as Casa de les Trabucades [House of the Troubles] which still bears the marks of those hostilities. We now know that George Lawrence came to the spa town of Caldes³ after reports appeared in the newspapers, including *The Times*, on the events of the third civil war between Carlists and Republicans. The Scottish Bible Society (SBS), one of the main organisations supporting his work, gave the following account:

BARCELONA.—Writing in December, Mr. Lawrence refers to the fact that the city is under martial law, and adds that the only group allowed to gather is that which constantly surrounds the [Bible] carriage. . . . Mr. Lawrence has now liberty to enter the prisons and hospitals, into which he delights to carry the gospel of freedom and salvation. Accompanied by Mariano, he visited the hospital of Caldas de Montbuy, a town of 6000 inhabitants, which had a short time before been attacked by a large force of Carlists . . . While the colporteur went from house to house, making the first offer of the Scriptures ever enjoyed by this town, Mr. Lawrence entered the

¹ Christina Lawrence is a great-granddaughter of George Lawrence, her paternal grandparents being Thomas Edward Lawrence and Ester Rodriguez y Suão.

² W. H. Bennet, *Robert Cleaver Chapman of Barnstaple* (Glasgow, 1902), 96.

³ Latin *Aquae Calidae*, Castilian Spanish *Caldas*.

hospital, where his eye was immediately caught by a wounded man reading his New Testament.⁴

Medical aid was needed for many reasons, including epidemics such as cholera. When yellow fever broke out in 1870, it also claimed the life of a local missionary co-worker and poet, Mateo Cosidó;⁵ his wife continued supporting the missionary work, particularly in the educational domain. This epidemic of 1870 developed with especial virulence in Barcelona and its surrounding areas.⁶ The city was then approaching 300,000 inhabitants, and there were 35,000 people officially recorded as being in poverty, in addition to many thousands whose needs were not statistically captured; many people were also too ashamed to ask for help. Lawrence supplemented medical outreach with a soup kitchen that provided for 331 people on a daily basis. Ninety boys and girls also received bread and coffee every morning, followed by school lessons for two and half hours. On 4 June 1874, he opened the ‘Cottage Hospital for the Sick Poor’ in the village of Gràcia (nowadays a district within Barcelona) at Calle de San Pablo.⁷ The inauguration ceremony was attended by over 600 people, including invited journalists and representatives of the municipal authorities.⁸ This hospital, which was in operation until 1877, admitted patients without discrimination of any kind, neither political nor religious, allowing Catholic patients who requested it to be attended to spiritually by priests.⁹ This great need was the stimulus for the opening of a new health care centre in 1879,¹⁰ closer to the location of Barcelona’s ‘celebrated mineral waters of the

⁴ *Annual Report* (Scottish Bible Society, Edinburgh, 1873), 49–50.

⁵ Himnos Cristianos, “Mateo Cosidó”, <<http://www.himnescristianos.com/bio/cosido.html>>, accessed 16 July 2015.

⁶ J. González i Pastor, *Un segle de Protestantisme a Catalunya* (Barcelona, 1970).

⁷ George Lawrence, open letter, 29 May 1879.

⁸ *La Aurora de Gracia* (6 June 1874).

⁹ J. Martínez, *La España evangélica ayer y hoy: esbozo de una historia para una reflexión* (Terrassa, 1994).

¹⁰ *La publicidad*, 23 Aug. 1879.

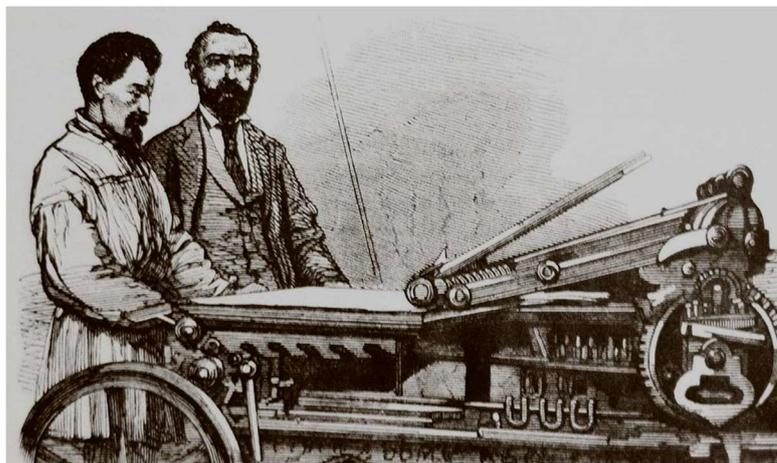


Figure 1. George Lawrence (right) at his printing press

Montaña Pelada'¹¹ at Park Güell, which George Lawrence founded with the Swiss Presbyterian Alexandre Louis Empaytaz (1837–1926),¹² the English Brethren missionary Henry Payne (1841–1938), and the Methodist Robert Simpson.¹³

To meet increasing demands, another new location was chosen in 1893, under the name 'Evangelical Infirmary'. George Lawrence, jnr was for some time on its board of directors. During the Spanish Civil War of 1936–39 it was supported by international aid through the Red Cross (Christina's grandfather helping as a stretcher bearer). After many vicissitudes, it became in 2010 Nou Hospital Evangèlic (New Evangelical Hospital),¹⁴ remaining through the years in its original locality of the suburb of Gràcia. In the missionary reports,

¹¹ A hill known alternatively as Monte Carmelo.

¹² A son of the *dissident* pastor Henri Louis Empaytaz of the Bourg-de-Four assembly in Geneva, see T. C. F. Stunt, *From Awakening to Secession: Radical Evangelicals in Switzerland and Britain 1815–35* (Edinburgh, 2000), 372.

¹³ Església Protestant Barcelona-Centre, "History of the Barcelona-Centre Church", <<http://www.esglesiatallers.org/esglesia/historia-en/>>, accessed 16 July 2015.

¹⁴ Església Evangèlica Carrer Terol, '125 Aniversario de las AA.HH. en Cataluña' (Barcelona, 1988).

the letters of George Lawrence, snr often tell of the necessity to spend time away from the city centre of Barcelona, mainly for the benefit of the children, to escape the air pollution caused by a range of environmental factors. His daughter Bessie emphasized the benefits of hydropathy in the hospital work.¹⁵ Nevertheless, his wife, Sara Sophia Mytton, died in 1885 of chronic bronchitis, in Cardiff where George Lawrence was the proprietor of a teetotal coffee tavern, as shown on the death certificate.¹⁶

Minister of the gospel

In his hometown of Monmouth (on the border between Wales and England), Lawrence's family were registered over two past generations for life events at the main Anglican church in the centre of town, in the parish of St. Mary's, but there were numerous evangelical churches, including the Brethren assembly that would later support his missionary work abroad. The advancing railway resulted in two stations, Troy and May Hill, which connected the town with the surrounding areas, including Herefordshire. It was in addition to the slower transport option of the rivers Monnow and Wye, and it made Monmouth a centre for stonemasonry as the railway gave much opportunity for building work, supplied by the many stone quarries from the excavations.¹⁷ Monmouth had long had trade links with Bristol,¹⁸ the place of Müller's activity. Lawrence records his own age of conversion as 17 years.¹⁹

¹⁵ Bessie Lawrence, *The Aurora in Spain: Dawnings of Gospel Light in the Past and Present of that Country* (Barcelona, 1880), 57.

¹⁶ Occasional furlough months in Leominster were also needed for other bereavements (his daughter Lydia as a baby, close together with an infant son Robert Paget) and his own temporary illness of bronchitis.

¹⁷ Thomas Lawrence, the father of George Lawrence, is mentioned in legal documents as the stonemason holding the rights to the railway land owned by the Duke of Beaufort (see Affidavit, February 1853, D3929/26 <http://www.gwentarchives.gov.uk/media/13792/d3929the_dean_forest_monmouth_usk_and_pontypool_railway.html>, accessed 11 August 2016).

¹⁸ K. Kissack, *Monmouth: the making of a county town* (Chichester, 1975).

¹⁹ G. Lawrence, *The Gospel in Spain: Some Account of Labours in that Country from Letters of Various Servants of the Lord* (London, 1872), 3. (Spanish translation:

By 1857, he was preaching a sermon that later earned him recognition in Brethren history. These were the times of the 1859 Revival movement, which appeared across the British Isles, in Canada, the USA, Australia, and South Africa.²⁰ In the audience of that sermon was a 14-year-old James Ellis Hawkins, who was asked by Lawrence: “James, you are quick at figures, here is a sum for you, ‘What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?’”²¹ The direct question resulted in Hawkins making a firm commitment in 1861 at the age of 18 years. He later became the partner of William Yapp, whose sermons had also influenced him, and in 1872 it was they who would publish Lawrence’s semi-autobiographical book *The Gospel in Spain*, written at the home of Robert Chapman (New Buildings, Barnstaple). Müller noted in his *Narrative* a Mr L. as one of the teachers in residence at the Bristol Orphanages, which may refer to George Lawrence and explain the wording ‘here is a sum for you’.

Before coming to the Iberian Peninsula (starting out in Portugal), Lawrence had already been an experienced ‘minister of the gospel’. The records for the Brethren Assemblies in Leominster and Hereford document the support for Lawrence’s preaching and missionary work from 1856 onwards, the monetary sums being administered in his absence by William Yapp and Thomas Maunsell. The Brethren burial registers from Leominster (Newlands) regularly recorded Lawrence as holding the funeral services for people from all walks of life, as part of his pastoral responsibilities for the Brethren assemblies in the area. When he married Sara Mytton in Leominster in 1860, he was already 30 years-old. As newlyweds expecting their first child, Bessie, they were visited by an older missionary couple from London, William and Hephzibah Carter,²² whose missionary work

CEFB Madrid, 2011). This content was also published by the Trinitarian Bible Society under ‘Letters from Spain’ in the quarterly records.

²⁰ Janice Holmes, *Religious revivals in Britain and Ireland 1859–1905* (Dublin, 2000), 3–48.

²¹ Hy. Pickering, *Chief Men among the Brethren*, (2nd edn, London, 1931), 214.

²² Ron Woollacott and Michèle Louise Burford, *Buried at Nunhead —Nunhead Notables* 3 vols (London, 2014), 3: 25–26.

included relief for the many homeless people in the city.²³ It seems that Lawrence was preaching at the Brethren Assembly connected with them at Alderminster Road.²⁴ A drawing from 1866 of the night refuge, colloquially known as Carter's Kitchen, shows one of their volunteers with the Bible carriage, which is how we can also picture Lawrence on the streets of London. Carter's team of volunteers distributed provisions on site from the refuges and by horse-drawn cart across south-east London. In the month of January 1867, during a severe winter, Carter's South London Mission used £1200 of donations for the work with the homeless, amounting to about £54,840 today.²⁵ Apart from a caring attitude, some tenacity was also needed. Carter's highly successful gospel preaching met with the hostility of others who wanted the large buildings, such as Victoria Hall ('Old Vic'), for cheap but profitable mass entertainment that invariably turned the districts into high crime areas.

George Müller employed the talents of Lawrence at every opportunity during the summer-long international exhibitions of Crystal Palace (1862), Paris (1867), and Le Havre (1868). When Müller recorded his annual Bible distribution work in many languages at these international exhibitions, he noted a marked increase whenever Lawrence was involved. Coming from a middle-class background, Lawrence was told to position himself where he was most likely to be able to speak to individuals from the influential social strata of different nationalities. Even though this strategy yielded good results, he was aware that he was missing out a significant section of society, thereby catching more of the spirit of the time: the Victorian age of social concern and approximation

23 T. Archer, *The Terrible Sights of London and Labours of Love in the Midst of Them* (London, 1870).

24 A. Mace, *Preaching Christ for 65 Years* (Sydney, 1934), 10, <<http://www.brethrenarchive.org/archive/open-brethren/memorials/preaching-christ-for-65-years/>>, accessed 11 Aug. 2016. According to Mace, William Carter disassociated himself from the Brethren assembly for a time but later re-joined. J. N. Darby preached on one occasion at the Willow Room, Alderminster Road, South London, which shows that some members welcomed a Darbyite approach.

25 The National Archives, 'Currency converter', <<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency/>>, accessed 11 Aug. 2016.

between the classes. In 1867 he wrote to Müller from the Paris exhibition:

I take a little corner of the building, which brother H [=Hawke] asked me to take, as just there a great number of the aristocracy of all nations visit; and here I sit down and pray the Lord to send me some whom He may have prepared to receive a little portion of His truth. . . . On Last Lord's day I had an extraordinary day of service among the crowds who were here. For four hours I never moved from one spot, dealing out with both my hands to the outstretched hands, the majority of which were hands hardened by toil; by which I could see, without looking in their faces, that they were peasants.²⁶

In this same decade of the 1860s, the reports of the SBS noted how individual board members gave much urgency to missionary work for the Iberian Peninsula. This was matched by the Brethren preacher Robert Chapman, and Dr. Ethelbert W. Bullinger of the Trinitarian Bible Society (TBS).²⁷ By 1874, The American Bible Society explained in their report that with so much support from all the other societies, their input was becoming superfluous. The decision to become a missionary in Spain was Lawrence's own, but supported by Müller's Scripture Knowledge Institution.²⁸ Lawrence remembered how he had one day been reading in Paul's Epistle to the Romans 15: 24: 'Whensoever I take my journey into Spain'. In his own words: it 'set me searching to see if there was any further mention of his intended journey; but nothing could I find.'²⁹ He was then also surprised to discover that despite 'these days of missionary movement', Spain was one country almost completely closed to such activity. The incarceration of the Spanish evangelical leader Manuel Matamoros (1834–1866) was in the news. The cultural sensitivity needed for such work to be successful can be understood by

26 Dust and Ashes, 'A Narrative of Some of the Lord's Dealings with George Muller: Part 4.4', <<http://www.dustandashes.com/free-books/>>, accessed Apr. 2015.

27 'Trinitarian Bible Society', *Grantham Journal*, 19 Oct. 1872, 2.

28 For SKI, see: Neil Summerton, 'George Müller and the Promotion of Mission' in N. T. R. Dickson and T. J. Marinello (eds.), *Brethren and Mission* (BAHN, forthcoming).

29 Lawrence, *The Gospel in Spain*, 5.

Lawrence being from a pluricultural family background, through his Welsh mother and Huguenot French wife. It becomes evident in the letter he sent in 1873 from Folkestone ferry port to *Echoes of Service*:

January 17th.—We are just about to bid farewell to English shores. We strain our eyes across the water, and though the Channel is not wide which separates us from France, yet what a difference in the land. How marvellously has God put a difference between us and other nations by these natural boundaries!³⁰

The Missionary Echo report informed its readers that the group, travelling via Paris and Perpignan to Barcelona, already consisted at that point of ‘Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence and family, and Miss Taylor (from Hopton), Messrs. Pundsack (a German brother), Sennington (from Bristol), Wigstone and Blamire (from Carlisle)’, accompanied by the highly multilingual Chapman, himself, from Bristol to London. The initial group in 1863 had only been: ‘Mr. R. C. Chapman, Mr. W. Gould, myself, wife, and two children,³¹ and a young friend, Miss K. H.’ When referring to their coming to London prior to their first arrival in Spain, T. S. Marks wrote in his open circular letter in 1879:

About 17 years have elapsed since it was our privilege to welcome to Hackney, in 1862, the first little band of workers, consisting of George Lawrence and his wife, and our dear departed brother Gould, who, accompanied by that beloved and honoured servant of Christ, Robert Chapman, of Barnstaple, tarried amongst us for a while prior to their departure for Spain, to serve the Lord in the Gospel there. Since then, amid evil report and good report, the work of Evangelisation has been prosecuted, schools have been established, the Word of God circulated, the Gospel preached, and Hospitals for a time established, while these pioneers, who indeed hazarded their lives for the Gospel, cleared the way for others who have entered into their labours.³²

³⁰ *The Missionary Echo*, Feb. 1873, 20–21, and Mar. 1873, 34–35.

³¹ The second child was the daughter Henrietta (Hetty), who was born in Barnstaple in 1863. Her burial place with her husband Christian Pundsack is Montjuïc Cemetery in Barcelona.

³² T. S. Marks, *Mr. George Lawrence's Bible Work in Spain* (London, Mar.1879) [3].

As Timothy Stunt noted for these Brethren assemblies at Tottenham and Hackney, the ‘North London meetings derived more in origin from dissenting denominations’, and ‘there was comparatively little internal division over the sorrows of 1845–9’. They were open to Müller’s influence from Bristol and were ‘responsive to the challenge of missionary labour’.³³ The names of a wide range of supporters given by Marks are the familiar James Hawkins (now at Baker Street, London); William Hawke of the Crystal Palace Bible Stand; Thomas Maunsell from the Brethren assembly in Hereford; John Gadsby of the TBS; ³⁴ the publishers Morgan and Scott; and John Stewart of Kilmarnock.³⁵ Such combined efforts of individuals and organisations were needed in the face of the situation in Spain caused by a succession of civil wars.

Missionary work

We may appreciate the dangers that had to be faced when we read of Robert Chapman’s family trying to prevent him from visiting the Iberian peninsula in 1838.³⁶ Undeterred, Chapman travelled to Spain in that year, with Pick and Handcock as co-workers. He chose to continue on his own, travelling across the country, often on foot,³⁷ carrying only a rucksack full of Bibles for distribution in private conversations. When he returned in 1863 with Lawrence and ‘the first little band of workers’, it was still during the reign of Queen

33 T. C. F. Stunt, ‘James van Sommer, an Undenominational Christian and a Man of Prayer’, *Journal of the Christian Brethren Research Fellowship* 16 (1967), 2–8, spec. 7.

34 John Gadsby was a printer in Manchester who supported the Anti-Corn Law League together with his father, William. Both men also edited the *Gospel Standard Magazine*: see B. A. Ramsbottom, ‘William Gadsby’s Deep Concern for the Suffering’, <<https://justifiedbychristalone.com/2011/10/31/b-a-ramsbottom-william-gadsbys-deep-concern-for-the-suffering/>>, accessed 15 Aug. 2016.

35 Stewart is described in N. T. R. Dickson, *Brethren in Scotland 1838-2000: A Social Study of an Evangelical Movement* (Carlisle, 2002), 43–4, as ‘a wealthy Kilmarnock clothier’ who had joined the Brethren in 1842.

36 W. H. Bennet, *Robert Cleaver Chapman of Barnstaple* (Glasgow, 1902), 96–97.

37 F. Holmes, *Brother Indeed: The Life of Robert Cleaver Chapman* (London, 1956), 83.

Isabella II, who was noted for her zeal in exterminating ‘the Protestant heresy’ and its adherents, so much so that in 1868 Pope Pius IX awarded her the ‘Golden Rose’ as a trophy for her efforts. She had refused to grant clemency to the various evangelical leaders incarcerated in Granada, such as Manuel Matamoros, ignoring the requests of the international group of governments for the release of these prisoners. She finally relented in 1863,³⁸ and commuted the prison sentence to permanent exile from Spain, after sustained pressure from the commission of representatives from various European countries supported by the British Evangelical Alliance. The Australian *Launceston Examiner* reiterated the international outcry in April 1863 with a translated quotation from a Swiss-French newspaper:

It is not forgotten that Spain made, not long ago, an attempt to take her place among the great powers of Europe. The attempt was unsuccessful. It is fortunate that it was repulsed; it would have been too painful to have seen seated in the first rank of the council of nations [i.e. the Concert of Europe] a power which wittingly and voluntarily continues to lower itself to a level with the very last.³⁹

Lawrence’s eldest daughter Bessie later remembered the first visit to the Iberian peninsula:

I was a wee-one⁴⁰ when our party entered those provinces, but I have a special remembrance of that devoted man of God, “M. le Pasteur” Nogaret of Bayonne, who speaks the Basque language, and who has laboured so earnestly for many years to convey Basque gospels among the natives. At his house we met Matamoros, who had just arrived pale and haggard from the dungeons of Granada.⁴¹

Lawrence recalled how they ‘just shook his hand to welcome him, and rejoice in his liberty, and to have his “God speed,” as we were

³⁸ W. Greene, *Manuel Matamoros: His Life and Death: A Narrative of the Late Persecution of Christians in Spain* (London, 1889), 199 and 207, available at <<https://archive.org/details/manuelmatamorosh00greerich>>, accessed 16 Aug. 2016.

³⁹ *Launceston Examiner*, 11 Apr. 1863, 2, <<http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/41459986>>, accessed 15. Aug. 2016.

⁴⁰ This could be a rendering of the Scots-Irish ‘wean’.

⁴¹ Lawrence, *Aurora in Spain*, 43.

about to enter that land from which he had just been banished.⁴² Lawrence lost no time to rent premises in Madrid in front of the parliament, from which he distributed and sold Bibles, Gospels, and New Testaments, these books arriving clandestinely with the help of English naval engineers. The selling price was kept very low, and much of the money earned was used to buy food for the needy, because famine was one of the most visible social ills of the time. Typical incidents that hindered the work involved the Bible carriages being fired at. For example, the SBS reported this for 1869 in Toledo, and 1871 for Barcelona and Mallorca. The largest Bible carriage, specifically designed by Lawrence in Spain to accommodate sleeping benches and a fold-down table for meals, was drawn by two strong young horses, who earned themselves the names *Noble and Soldier*, based on the lyrics of a popular hymn, and was driven by an enthusiastic coachman who was converted during this time.

In 1865 Lawrence and his co-workers were charged with the crime of distributing Bibles, and were sentenced *in absentia* to nine years forced labour in the Spanish navy (shipyards and other naval units)—a medieval punishment purposely chosen as a deterrent, with its associated loss of human dignity and civil identity, little hope of survival, and no recognition of a spent sentence even after the required years had passed. This is what was meant by being sent to the galleys,⁴³ as the outdated legal jargon termed it, instead of being given a prison sentence. During their escape they were attacked in Vitoria by an intimate friend of a politically powerful priest, which they survived by a hair's breadth. The nature and length of the penal sentence that was pronounced over Lawrence and his fellow missionaries seemed to preclude any possibility of return to Spain. Despite the political turmoil, Müller emphasized in his *Narrative* in 1868:

During the latter part of the Exhibition at Havre, the state of Spain gave hope to our brother L., who had laboured there before in the Gospel, that he would be able to go on with circulating the Holy Scriptures and preaching the Gospel in Spain, so dear to his heart;

⁴² Lawrence, *Gospel in Spain*, 5.

⁴³ Tatford, *That the World May Know*, 373.

but which some years ago he had been obliged to quit with his fellow-labourer, our brother G. [Gould], because of want of liberty. Accordingly, as the land seemed to be open, when the Exhibition at Havre was over, he set out with his family for Bayonne, that on the borders of Spain he might embrace the first moment, that appeared to him favourable, for entering Spain, to preach the Gospel, and, especially, to circulate the Holy Scriptures, for which purpose I ordered a large quantity of Bibles and New Testaments to be sent to Bayonne, to be used by our brother and his fellow-labourer, our brother G.⁴⁴

A military coup in 1868 ended the reign of Queen Isabella. Emilio Castelar y Ripoll, a president of the First Spanish Republic, expressed his sympathies with the Protestant movement, as noted by the American Bible Society in their 1874 report: ‘When asked why our republic is so much more prosperous than that of Spain, he replied that the founders received their education from an old book, “The Bible.”’⁴⁵ Lawrence opened the Bible Depot of the TBS in Calle de San Geronimo, Madrid. In that same year, he also began his work with the first evangelical school in Barcelona, located at Calle Ferlandina 47, followed by others in various parts of the city, for example Barceloneta, and the surrounding localities, such as Gràcia and Caldes de Montbui. Universal literacy across society for adults and children had a personal significance for Lawrence: his parents’ marriage certificate shows his mother, Hannah Davis, from rural Wales, placing the mark of the cross instead of a signature. At the evangelical school that Lawrence directed in Caldes, an estimated forty per cent of the population benefited from the teaching of literacy, numeracy and other subjects.⁴⁶ A pupil’s initial medium of instruction was in their mother tongue, Catalan, followed by Castellano (Castilian Spanish, then the country’s only official language). English was added to a greater or lesser degree, as

44 Dust and Ashes, ‘A Narrative of Some of the Lord's Dealings with George Muller: Part 5.4’, <<http://www.dustandashes.com/free-books/>>, accessed April 2015.

45 *Fifty-eighth Report* (American Bible Society: New York, 1874), 98.

46 G. Correa, ‘George Lawrence ocupa el carrer per voluntat popular’, <<http://www.catalunyareligio.cat/ca/node/173561>>, accessed 11 Aug. 2016.

appropriate for a pupil's further education.⁴⁷ A contemporary voice is given here in English translation:

I was a pupil at the evangelical school; I remember classes that were so enjoyable and clear. We had many subjects. For the most part these were in Catalan, some were in Castellano, and we also acquired some knowledge of English through popular songs. Several subjects were taught, through still images on glass slides projected with the magic lantern to make it easier to understand. I learned a lot. When we had exams, the parents could come to see and hear how we were examined. And the Christmas holidays: how all the girls were looking forward with great excitement to some small simple doll—and a different one each year! In our condition as a poor family, had it not been for *L'Escola dels pobres* [the school for the poor], almost certainly I would never have learned to read and write.—Mercè Codina (1889–1972), textile operative in Caldes de Montbui.⁴⁸

George Müller contributed to this school's work, seeing good results by the time he visited Spain in 1878, when he was able to inspect nineteen schools, with an attendance of 756 pupils,⁴⁹ then under the direction of Echoes of Service in Bath. At Lawrence's school in Caldes, each pupil, if able to afford it, paid ten centimos per week, equivalent to 0.6% of a labourer's wage. If we consider that the teaching materials were supplied by the school, we can understand that the fee was only a token amount.

For the purpose of increasing the purchasing power of families and to facilitate a higher standard of living for their children, Lawrence created a savings bank for the schoolchildren, based on the English cooperative model. They would deposit any money they could obtain, receiving interest at the rate of twenty-five per cent, promoting a spirit of solidarity among the schoolchildren. According to an account by the Anglican missionary Antonio Vallespinosa (who

⁴⁷ Sample text books viewable at <<http://www.protestantes.net/libros.asp?id=1321>>.

⁴⁸ 'Exposicio George Lawrence',

<<https://www.facebook.com/ExposicioGeorgeLawrence>>, accessed 11 Aug. 2016.

⁴⁹ J. González i Pastor, *Un segle de Protestantisme a Catalunya* (Barcelona, 1970).

Table 1. Publications of the Evangelical Press.

Year	Title	Number	Location
1868/1869 1871/1881	Gospels, Acts, Epistles	120,000 150,000	Madrid Barcelona
1869	Psalms	5,000	Madrid
from 1870 onwards	Individual gospels	37,000	Madrid and Barcelona
1871 1872 1878	New Testament	5,000 2,000 5,000	Barcelona
1875 1882	Bible	1,000 5,000	Barcelona

Source: E. Boehmer, *Spanish Reformers of Two Centuries from 1520* (London and Strasbourg, 1883), 290.

also attended the Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1862 with Lawrence),⁵⁰ Lawrence was known for his generosity, distributing all the money he received,⁵¹ and on one occasion dressed from head to toe more than 300 poor children with clothes made by the pupils of the schools he directed.⁵² Always assisted by his future son-in-law, Christian Pundsack,⁵³ Lawrence undertook an extensive publishing work. In 1879, a new printing press was supplied by the TBS, shipped in its constituent parts across the English Channel for that purpose. The output of the steam-powered machine was about a thousand sheets per hour.⁵⁴ Table 1 gives a list of publications.

⁵⁰ M. de León, "Biografía de Antonio Vallespinosa", <http://protestantedigital.com/blogs/1313/Biografia_de_Antonio_Vallespinosa>, accessed 16 July 2015.

⁵¹ His death certificate was accompanied by a testament listing his children that survived him, but recording that there was no financial inheritance for them.

⁵² J. Moreno Berrocal, *La historia evangelica de la comarca de Alcázar de San Juan: siglos xvi—xxi* (2005, Alcázar de San Juan), 19.

⁵³ B.1847, Bremen; d.1917, Barcelona; married Hetty Lawrence in 1888, Westbury-on-Severn.

⁵⁴ *Annual Report* (Trinitarian Bible Society: London, 1877), 33.

Pundsack noted the following for the period between 1868 and 1878, which would include sales made before the acquisition of the TBS printing press: 11,612 Bibles; 24,498 New Testaments; 145,639 Scripture portions.⁵⁵ He also listed the printing of 5,000 New Testaments in 1878 (see Table 1); 35,000 Gospels; 28,000 Gospels in large print; and 5,000 family reference Bibles (in six colours—for example, red or purple binding) that proved to be very popular. An evangelical bookshop was opened in the same suburb of Gràcia, at Calle Torrent de les Flors 92. The involvement of the TBS was preferred to the Bible translation of the British and Foreign Bible Society. Charles Spurgeon was a well-known supporter of the translations offered by the TBS for the Romance languages and Polish, avoiding the Catholic terminology of concepts like ‘penance’. To this day, the TBS publishes new translations based on the original texts in comparison with early Protestant translators of the relevant European language (such as Martin Luther, William Tyndale, Casiodoro de Reina, and Cipriano de Valera). In line with Luis de Usoz and other publishers, Lawrence chose an easy-to-read layout for sentences with parallel syntactic structures, for example in the poetic books of the Old Testament.⁵⁶ He published magazines with educational and theological content: *La Aurora de Gracia* (1873–1887) had an adult readership, while *La Estrella de Gracia* (1875–1887) was for children, and he collaborated on *El Evangelista Español*. From 1870 onwards single gospels were published, for use as reading practice supplemented by exercises in arithmetic. For example, John’s Gospel in its third edition was translated into Catalan, together with a primer: an explanation of the decimal system, multiplication tables and the alphabet. Very well known was his *Ensayo Metódico de Lectura y Aritmética* (*Methodic Testing of Reading and Arithmetic*), containing more than 1,600 arithmetic

⁵⁵ Marks, *Bible Work in Spain*, [2].

⁵⁶ E. Boehmer, *Spanish Reformers of Two Centuries from 1520* (London and Strasbourg, 1883), 354; Boehmer’s book was printed at Francke’s Orphanhouse in Halle, Germany, and based on research by B. B. Wiffen.

exercises plus Matthew's Gospel for reading practice,⁵⁷ which reached its sixth edition in 1876. Scans of some of these antique books can be viewed online, provided by Professor Gabino Fernández Campos of Madrid,⁵⁸ including the popular family Bible.

Article 21 of the Spanish constitution of 1869 promised the following:

The nation is obliged to maintain the worship and ministers of the Catholic religion.

... The public or private practice of any other worship is assured to all those foreigners resident in Spain, without any additional limitations than the universal rules of morality and law. If any Spaniards profess a religion other than the Catholic, all the provisions of the preceding paragraph are applicable to them.⁵⁹

The last sentence would indicate religious tolerance, but if foreigners are specified here in the Spanish constitution, it implies that to be non-Catholic is to be not truly Spanish. Accordingly, Canon Vicente Manterola of Vitoria, one of the constitutional advisors, stated somewhat melodramatically: 'If religious freedom is granted, the greatness of Spain's past will die.'⁶⁰ Spain suffered under civil war in three stages, which occupied almost the entire nineteenth century. The working class and the peasantry lived in chronic poverty. The Carlists were a militant political faction attempting to usurp the Spanish throne for Carlos, who was an uncle of Queen Isabella and followed an even more extreme line in conservative politics and religious intolerance. In between those times, the Italian-born King Amadeo inherited the Spanish throne in 1870. This is a king not so well-known today, who reluctantly abdicated in February 1873, when Spain was yet again in a state of anarchy. Bessie Lawrence noted that Amadeo's short reign had been experienced as an atmosphere of increased religious tolerance, the

57 J. M. Quero Moreno, *Educación integral y de vanguardia: los colegios evangélicos en España* (Madrid, 2009), 183.

58 Example: *Ensayo Metódico de Lectura y Aritmética* (1876), Protestantas.Net: Publicaciones, <<http://www.protestantes.net/libros.asp?id=1321>>

59 Martínez, *La España evangélica ayer y hoy*, 144.

60 Martínez, *La España evangélica ayer y hoy*, 145.

king happily accepting Bible carriage literature himself on several occasions.⁶¹ His abdication can be explained by his reign serving neither the aims of the Republican movement, nor those of the nobility represented by Queen Isabella or her contender Carlos. Religious tolerance was promised again in 1874, when the 17-year-old son of Isabella became King Alfonso. Lawrence claimed this in practice for the evangelical movement by applying political pressure in 1877 through the British Prime Minister Lord Derby,⁶² so that every aspect of the work (educational, medical, publication and distribution of the literature) had official protection and any complaints of harassment, even against local authorities, were taken seriously under the revised interpretation of the constitution. Lawrence expressed his hope ‘that the moral pressure which has been used with the Spanish Government may be the only one used in the forthcoming conference of nations, and that wrongs may be redressed without appeal to the dreadful sword!’⁶³ Lawrence’s willingness to approach higher authorities made the difference,⁶⁴ which followed biblical examples like Paul stating “I am a Roman citizen”.

When George Lawrence’s youngest son, Thomas Edward Lawrence (Christina’s grandfather), was born in 1876, the birth certificate had the home address coinciding with that of Lawrence’s Bible depot: Calle de San Juan, Gracia, Barcelona. The name of the witness on the birth certificate is that of Henry Payne, whose photo also appears on a glass diapositive projector slide that was only recently discovered in the Christian Brethren Archive at the University of Manchester Library. The slide probably dates from 1918, and it bears the caption: ‘R. C. Chapman with some of the

⁶¹ Lawrence, *Aurora in Spain*, 44.

⁶² Like Gadsby, Lord Derby was a supporter of the Anti-Corn Law League, see I. Petticrew, ‘Speech of the Earl of Derby at the county meeting, on the 2nd December 1863’, <http://gerald-massey.org.uk/waugh/c_cotton_famine_%286%29.htm>, accessed 15 Aug. 2016.

⁶³ *Annual Report*, Issue 46 (Trinitarian Bible Society: London, 1877), 29.

⁶⁴ A parallel might be drawn, for another cause, with the Canadian wildlife activist R. D. Lawrence, who was a grandson of George Lawrence (Christina’s uncle; see <<http://www.crywild.com/about.shtml>>).



Figure 2. Evangelical School in Sabadell, c.1904. Hester and Bessie Lawrence are marked with crosses (respectively fourth and fifth in the third row from the back)
© Amics d'en George Lawrence.

workers for whom he prayed 80 years ago.' In the left of the image (BLS/84) is the overarching photo of Robert Chapman. Henry Payne's photo on the right appears within a circular arrangement over the map of the Iberian Peninsula, along with the other pioneers whose portraits are also well known from the missionary archive materials:⁶⁵ Charles Faithfull (Madrid), Thomas Rhodes (Vigo and Madrid), Albert Fenn (Madrid and Barcelona), and James Wigstone (Galicia). Such projector slides (for the 'magic lantern', also called 'dissolving views') were typically used at Brethren missionary conferences, and on visits with the Bible coach with the content of biblical stories and hymn lyrics. A group photo, bottom centre, includes one young man with a moustache who bears a strong resemblance to George

⁶⁵ F. A. Tafford, 'The Conquistadors' Homeland', in id., *That the World May Know*, 10 vols (Bath, 1985), 8: 353–434.

Lawrence, jnr. Close to him is an inserted photo of what must be his father, George Lawrence, snr, as the earliest pioneer, whose book published in 1872 had the same title as the projector slide: 'The Gospel in Spain'.⁶⁶ A sequel to that book was published by Lawrence's daughter Elizabeth (Bessie), written in 1880 while the family was on furlough in Leominster, and published with the same printing press in Barcelona. Bessie (see Figure 2) translated and wrote many poems and hymns, in both Castilian Spanish and the Catalan language, which were incorporated in 1924 by the missionary Ermengol Felip into his hymn book, and eventually into the Catalan evangelical hymn book *Cants de gloria* [*Songs of Glory*].

In 1894 George Müller sent Christian Pundsack condolences to the family, as soon as he heard the news, perhaps through Lawrence's three children George, Nita and Tom (who were then living in Cardiff), that Lawrence had died of a stroke on 9 January at his home in Caldes. The funeral procession on 11 January was attended by over a thousand mourners:⁶⁷ a significant number, never before witnessed in the small town, with the number of inhabitants in that year being 3,737. Twenty-five visitors from Barcelona had to board the train at 6: 37 a.m. (Madrid standard time) to arrive in time for the funeral at 11 a.m. as advertised.⁶⁸

The town came to a standstill that morning. We should bear in mind that local people attending the funeral had to endure the societal pressures of the time, most certainly with threats of employment redundancies, even more so because the funeral date fell on a weekday. The Spanish and British flags were placed over the coffin. A group of fathers of the school pupils were the pallbearers.⁶⁹ The death certificate specified that the body was to be interred in the walled-in dissenters section of the municipal cemetery, in full

⁶⁶ Published by CEFB Madrid in 2011 in the translation by Catalina Wickham.

⁶⁷ J. Campistron, "Lawrence a la premsa de l'època (2)", *Revista Tot Caldes*, 10 Feb. 2014, <<http://www.revistatotcaldes.com/magazine-digital/lawrence-la-premsa-de-lepoca-2-2/>>, accessed Apr. 2015; *El Diluvio*, Barcelona, 13 Jan. 1894.

⁶⁸ *El Diluvio*, Barcelona, 10 Jan. 1894.

⁶⁹ J. Baubérot, J. P. Willaime, G. Fernández, and J. González, *El Protestantismo de la A a la Z* (Barcelona, 1990).

knowledge that it would mean an unmarked grave. As a comparison, the first family burial, for Lawrence's eldest son William (who died of polio in childhood), had been at the private cemetery of Horta that was usually chosen for British nationals, such as fellow Welsh missionary John Evans.⁷⁰ Lawrence had worked closely in Caldes with an athenaeum, a non-religious cultural society,⁷¹ which was also popular in the Victorian civic movements of cities like Manchester. This athenaeum had been founded by the mayor (José Serracant Grañé), whose wife, Isabel Mumbrú, ensured that George Lawrence and his daughter Amelia had a burial place in the municipal cemetery, with the other local evangelical believers.

In the winter of 1897, an aged Robert Chapman sent one of his many pastoral letters to console Bessie in her grief when her younger sister Amelia died from appendicitis, in the days before the invention of such medical marvels as antibiotics that we may take for granted today. As reported in *Echoes of Service*, Bessie felt 'overwhelmed by the kindness and love of the Caldas people—converted and unconverted too. We did not know we had so many true friends in the town.' Henry Payne wrote to *Echoes of Service*, who also published a group photo with a cheerful Bessie Lawrence among the evangelicals in Barcelona:

You will have heard about the departure to be with Christ of our sister Amelia Lawrence. In the winter she was a good deal in Barcelona, and regularly attended our meetings. Her departure is a great loss to us, for she was a link between us and others, and her godly gracious spirit always did us good. My dear wife and I with Enrique [Henry Payne's son] went out to the funeral on Saturday last. Her sister Bessie is wonderfully sustained; she led the singing both in the meeting-room and also at the grave, where she spoke to those around. Others from our meeting also attended the funeral.⁷²

As the *Echoes of Service* 'Missionary Candidates Book' indicates, Lawrence's children continued with the schools work after the death

⁷⁰ *Echoes of Service*, April 1874, p. 52.

⁷¹ A. Bosch i Datzira, *Estudio histórico sobre el 'Centre Democràtic Progressista' de Caldes de Montbui* (forthcoming in 2016).

⁷² *Echoes of Service*, 1 Dec. 1897.

of their father in 1894,⁷³ so that several generations of local families in Caldes, with its fairly constant population, were educated at the schools and were able to give their personal testimonies in our twenty-first century. Bessie and Hester went on to found another evangelical school in neighbouring Sabadell, becoming self-funding by additionally giving English lessons at their language school that employed other teachers, including a Swiss teacher of gymnastics.⁷⁴

Memorials in Caldes

The passage of time can have as much detrimental effect on the memory of historical figures as any accidental or intentional events. One morning in 1970, a bulldozer began breaking the wall of the Protestant burial ground in the municipal cemetery of Caldes, because it was deemed an obstruction in the path of visitors. A similar treatment awaited the memorial stone that had been erected in 1915 in memory of the casualties of the Carlist attack of 1873, a few years ago finding itself on the way to the municipal rubbish heap in its unrecognisable state of broken marble pieces. Nevertheless, as a happy coincidence, in 2015 the town council was able to rescue that marble stone, exactly 100 years after the memorial was made. The Museo Termàlia, the Caldes history museum and art gallery, reconstructed the broken marble pieces, showing Art Nouveau designs and the town's historical coat of arms.⁷⁵ Through the efforts of Joaquim Campistron and other local historians, it had been brought to the attention of the town council in 2012. It is now in the same cemetery as Lawrence's grave.

By another coincidence, a street in Caldes that had long been overdue for being renamed, in order to remove the name of a Carlist general, was also the location of a church founded by Lawrence. On

⁷³ *Echoes of Service*, Bath, Candidates Book 1, 1911 (a facsimile copy is held in the CBA); *Echoes of Service*, Mar. 1896, 68; Feb. 1897, 35; 1907, 259 (generally every letter sent after 1894 from Caldes and Sabadell).

⁷⁴ *La Vanguardia*, 'English school—colegio ingles, 7 Jan 1917, 2.

⁷⁵ Ajuntament de Caldes de Montbui, "El Cementiri Municipal recupera una làpida carlina", <<http://www.caldesdemontbui.cat/actualitat/noticies/2015-11-04-el-cementiri-municipal-recupera-una-lapida-carlina.html>>, accessed 11 Aug. 2016.

20 February 2010, several evangelical churches, together with the organisation AGDE Barcelona (the evangelical archive founded by Josep Perera), presented a petition for naming the street after George Lawrence. By a clear majority, the public vote on 12 December 2011 favoured the name, and the sign was put in place on 15 February 2012. By another happy coincidence, the observant eye of a passing church member saved the Protestant graves from destruction. Quite unaware of its purpose as a burial ground, the town council had decided that the piece of land could be annexed into the remainder of the cemetery, but a local evangelical, Menna Casabayó Canals, happened to witness the start of the demolition work and quickly alerted the church elders, who then had to present an official complaint to the town council. The demolition work was halted,⁷⁶ the graves were marked with wooden crosses, and in the year 2010 with memorial stones. The main memorial plaque accounts for fifteen people by name, acknowledging others 'whose identities it has not been possible to determine', with the wording, given here in English translation:

In this precinct are the remains of evangelical Christians, who suffered misunderstanding and isolation because of their faith and obedience to Christ. The families, along with the Església Evangèlica de Caldes,⁷⁷ wish to give tribute and dignity to their deaths.

Today a history trail is offered by Amics d'en George Lawrence (Friends of George Lawrence), retracing the route of George Lawrence's funeral procession. The guided tour takes visitors along the streets that form the old Protestant quarter in Caldes: the houses of the local believers since those days; the sites of the schools for children and adults; and Casa de les Trabucades, the old building still showing the signs of artillery damage from the Carlist attack of 1873. The trail ends in the cemetery. The rendition of George Lawrence's

⁷⁶ Personal communication with Menna Casabayó Canals, the father-in-law of J. Campistrón.

⁷⁷ Pàgines Arco Iris Cristianas, "Directorio Cristiano: Asambleas de Hermanos", <<http://www.paginasarcoiriscristianas.com/iglesias/categoria.shtml?tipo=1&cat=ash&pag=6>>, accessed 11 August 2016.

name on the new gravestone reflects his obituary in the evangelical newspapers in Barcelona at the time of his death: a combination of Jorge,⁷⁸ followed by Lawrence and, in the style of Hispanic surnames, the addition of Davis, his Welsh mother's maidenname.

In 2014 a two-week exhibition in the public library in Caldes was accompanied by a Facebook page showing some of the exhibited materials.⁷⁹ The exposition was attended by local evangelicals and academics, as well as Guillem Correa Caballé (Secretary General of the Evangelical Council of Catalunya), and the deputy mayors to represent the town council as a gesture of the normality of religious tolerance in a democratic society. It also attracted the attention of the well-known Catalan academic Josep Lluís Carod Rovira, who gave a talk on Catalan Protestantism throughout history, in his role at the University Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona as director of the committee for social diversity. The library presentation included oral history in the form of transcribed interviews with the older generation, who had first-hand knowledge of the 'school for the poor', the colloquial term for these evangelical schools.⁸⁰ So the wording to be found on the street sign is this: *Carrer de George Lawrence, fundador de l'escola dels pobres.*

Appendix: Timeline

1830 George Lawrence is born into a stonemason family in Monmouth on 16 Sept. 1830.

1833 The first Carlist War begins in Spain. The civil unrest is started by the reigning queen's uncle as a usurper to the throne, lasting until 1840, and repeated 1847–1849 and 1872–1876.

1834 SKI is founded by George Müller.

⁷⁸ On one outing with the schoolchildren, they asked him: 'Don Jorge, shall we sing, going along?', to which he replied: 'Sing! Why not? If you do not, the very stones will cry out.' (Lawrence, *Aurora in Spain*, 50.)

⁷⁹ 'Exposicio George Lawrence'.

⁸⁰ A historical overview is given in J. M. Quero Moreno, *Educación integral y de vanguardia: los colegios evangélicos en España* (Madrid, 2009).

- 1838 Robert Chapman (1803–1902) visits the Iberian Peninsula with a rucksack full of Bibles.
- 1854 Lawrence is appointed Minister of the Gospel by the Brethren Assembly in Leominster, with duties of preaching and pastoral care in the local area.
- 1860 George Lawrence marries Sara Sophia Mytton in Leominster.
- 1861 Bessie Lawrence is born; Manuel Matamoros and fellow evangelicals are incarcerated in the dungeons of Granada.
- 1862 Lawrence works at the Crystal Palace Bible Stand (also in 1867 at Paris, and 1868 Le Havre).
- 1863 Lawrence visits the exiled Manuel Matamoros, and arrives in Madrid.
- 1865 Lawrence leaves Spain to escape a nine-year penal sentence of forced labour.
- 1868 The ‘Glorious Revolution’ deposes Queen Isabella of Spain.
- 1868 Lawrence opens the Bible Depot of the TBS in Calle de San Geronimo, Madrid.
- 1870 King Amadeo’s accession to the throne permits more religious liberty, but he abdicates in 1873 amid political anarchy. Civil war continues, with concurrent poverty and epidemics.
- 1872 Lawrence publishes *The Gospel in Spain* (London: Yapp and Hawkins).
- 1873 The charitable Evangelical Hospital in Barcelona is established. Despite the civil war, churches have continued to be planted, and free schools opened to combat illiteracy.
- 1874 King Alfonso’s accession to the throne promises greater religious liberty.
- 1877 George Lawrence secures the protection of religious liberty with the help of British Prime Minister, Lord Derby.
- 1894 George Lawrence dies at his home in Caldes de Montbui on 9 January 1894.
- 2011 A street in Caldes de Montbui, on which there is a church Lawrence founded, is named after him.