

Husband: **Robert ASPLAND** #3228

Born: 13 Jan 1782 in Wicken, Cambridgeshire<sup>1</sup>  
 Died: 30 Dec 1845 in Hackney, London<sup>1</sup>  
 Occupation: Unitarian Minister  
 Father: Robert ASPLAND #3209 (Grocer)  
 Mother: Hannah BROOK #3214

EXTRACT FROM A BOOK ON SPINNEY ABBEY AND WICKEN:

In the first half of the 18th century, THE REV. ROBERT ASPLAND was a distinguished member of The Unitarian Community, living in Hackney, London. The Unitarians had been the first non-conformist group to meet in WICKEN on 27th ?? 1798, their meeting place was at the CHESTNUTS, the home of the Asplands.

BIOGRAPHY:

ASPLAND, ROBERT (1782-1845), unitarian divine, son of ROBERT ASPLAND by his second wife HANNAH BROOK, was born at Wicken, Cambridgeshire 13 Jan 1782. His first schooling was obtained at the Soham grammar school under JOHN ASPLAND, a relative.

In his twelfth year, 1794, he was placed first at Islington and then at Highgate, and in August 1795 he was sent to Well Street, Hackney., where he stayed till midsummer 1797. In April 1797, Aspland was publicly baptised at the baptist chapel, Devonshire Square, and was elected to a Ward scholarship at the Bristol Academy as a student for baptist ministry.

He was placed in November under the Rev. Joseph Hughes (afterwards founder of the Bible Society), then residing, not in the academy, but at Battersea, in charge of a small baptist congregation. Staying at Battersea only a few months, but long enough to give his tutor reasons for doubting the "soundness" of his doctrine, Aspland went home to Wicken in the summer of 1798, becoming popular there and in adjacent villages as the boy-preacher, and reached Bristol on 31 July to find himself assigned to Dr. Ryland, the theological tutor. He proceeded in due course, October 1799, to Marischal College, Aberdeen; but his "unsoundness" becoming more and more

manifest, he was excised from membership at the chapel at Devonshire Square, 29 Oct. 1800, and he quitted the university and relinquished his scholarship at the same moment.

Aspland at this juncture was offered a share in a trade. He knew a prosperous dealer in artists' colours in St. Martin's Lane, London, whose daughter, SARA MIDDLETON, he afterwards married; and taking a part in his future father-in-law's business in the week, he devoted his Sundays to preaching for any London preacher in want of sudden help. Amongst the pulpits thus opened to him was that of the General Baptists (otherwise Unitarians) in Worship Street, City; the pastor of this church, the Rev. John Evans, recommended him to the General Baptists at Newport, Isle of Wight, then unprovided with a minister. Aspland visited them 17 April 1801, and was requested to remain. His marriage followed in May; he became Secretary to the South Unitarian Society in 1803; he published a sermon entitled "Divine Judgements" in 1804, and he left Newport, February 1805, to take charge of a larger congregation at Norton, Derbyshire. Passing through London on his way thither, however, he was invited to be minister at the Gravel Pit chapel, Hackney, and merely going to Derbyshire till he

could be honourably released from his engagement there, he returned to Hackney for 7 July 1805, taking possession on that day of a pulpit which he retained for forty years.

Aspland established, or aided in the establishment of several unitarian periodicals and societies. The first of these was the "Monthly Repository", containing biographical sketches, theological disquisitions, political criticisms, etc. This, Aspland edited, and he had the opening number ready for February 1806. In the same month he was instrumental in establishing the Unitarian Fund, with himself as secretary. He took an additional secretaryship in 1809 when he succeeded in forming the Christian Tract Society. In 1810 he brought out "A Selection of Psalms and Hymns for Unitarian Worship", used subsequently in his own chapel, though not without some opposition. In 1811 he became one of the trustees of Dr. Williams' charities, and was active in opposing the alteration of

the Toleration Act. In 1812 he was a member of the committee of the Protestant Society for the Protection of Religious Liberty, being one of a deputation, in that capacity, which had an interview with Perceval 11 May, only two hours before he was shot. In 1813 Aspland set up the Hackney Academy at Durham House for training unitarian ministers; he was helping also, by letters of expostulation, by sermons delivered and printed, in the agitation for an act to relieve from certain penalties persons who impugn the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. The act received royal assent 21 July. In 1814 Aspland brought out "British Pulpit Eloquence", and some sermons of his own. In 1815 he established the "Christian Reformer, or New Evangelical Miscellany", a work the editorship of which he never relinquished. In the July of 1817 he formed the Non-con Club at his own house, Talfourd, Southwood Smith, W.J.Fox, and Walter Wilson being among the members; and on 18 December of the same year he was at Hone's side in the court of King's Bench, Guildford, finding authorities and furnishing him for his six hours' speech of defence, and he had previously been to Hone in prison, providing him with books from Dr. Williams' library.

In 1818 Aspland was compelled by ill-health to relinquish his unitarian academy and the secretaryship of the Unitarian Tract. On his recovery in 1819, he brought about the formation of the Association for protecting the Civil Rights of Unitarians and that being the year of the conviction of R.Carlile for publishing Paine's "Age of Reason", Aspland was engaged in some controversy on the subject in the "Times". In 1821 he became trustee of the Presbyterian Fund, drawing up likewise, the "Christians' petition to parliament against the prosecution of unbelievers", and being active in

bearing it all over the country for signature till it was presented to parliament in July 1823 by Joseph Hume. In 1825 Aspland worked at the fusion of the three societies, The Unitarian Society, the Unitarian Fund, and the Unitarian Book Society, into one body, the British and Foreign Unitarian Association. In 1826 he broke off his connection with the "Monthly Repository" after an unremunerative editorship of twenty one years and in 1827 he edited the "Test Act Reporter" till, on the bill for the repeal of the Corporation and Test Act's passing, in May 1828, the publication was no longer needed. Aspland also presented and made an address to the throne on 28 July 1820, and another on the accession of Victoria in 1837.

He was also secretary to the British and Foreign Unitarian Association from 1835 to 1841, and retained the acting editorship of the "Christian Reformer" till 1844. His health beginning to fail in 1843, he was provided with an associate in his pastorate. On 4 Feb 1844 he preached for the last time, and after being confined to his house for many months, he died 30 Dec 1845, aged 63. Aspland published many Sermons, a Catechism, Prayers, Tracts for the People, and other works, a complete list of which is given in his "Memoirs" (pp 607-611).

[The above is an extract from the "Memoirs of the Life, Works, and Correspondence of the Rev. Robert Aspland of Hackney" by R. Brook Aspland, M.A.; Christian Reformer, 1846]

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Wife: **Sara MIDDLETON** #3229  
 Married: 1801<sup>2</sup>

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Father:  
 Mother:

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F Child 1: **Sara ASPLAND** #3420  
 Born: 1802<sup>2</sup>

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M Child 2: **Robert Brook ASPLAND** #3639  
 Born: 19 Jan 1805 in Newport, Isle of Wight<sup>1</sup>  
 Died: 21 Jun 1869 in Hackney, London<sup>3</sup>

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M Child 3: **Theophilus Lindsey ASPLAND** #3421  
 Born: 1808<sup>2</sup>  
 Died: 12 Dec 1890 in Reigate, Surrey<sup>3</sup>

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F Child 4: **Ellen ASPLAND** #3422

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F Child 5: **Caroline ASPLAND** #3423

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F Child 6: **Mary Hughes ASPLAND** #3424

Born: 1814<sup>2</sup>

Died: 1894<sup>2</sup>

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M Child 7: **Sydney ASPLAND** #3425

Died: 24 Dec 1913 in California, USA<sup>3</sup>

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M Child 8: **Belgrave ASPLAND** #3430

Died: 25 Apr 1872<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Biography.

<sup>2</sup> Aspland Tree prepared by Phyliss Drake in 1985.

<sup>3</sup> ASPLAND Will Index.