A Primitive Methodist chapel opened in Angel Crescent in 1851, but the cause had died by 1881. Wesleyan reformers met in the town in 1851 and in 1857 joined the United Methodist Free Church. This in turn joined the Bible Christians and met at their chapel until 1911, when Monmouth Street Chapel was built.

Monmouth Street Methodist Chapel

After Methodist Union in 1932 the chapel was the base of a small circuit which was incorporated in 1951 with the circuit based at King Street.

The Brethren

The Plymouth Brethren originated in Dublin in 1826 and take their name from a congregation formed at Plymouth by J. N. Darby (1800-1882). Although since undergoing changes in organisation, including a split into the Exclusive Brethren, the Brethren are perhaps the most faithful latter-day representation of the Puritan tradition. Although numerically small they have supplied numerous biblical scholars and scientists, charity administrators, missionaries and leading military figures. A new meeting house was built for the Exclusive Brethren at Showground Road, Huntworth.

The Salvation Army

The Salvation Army was founded in 1865 in the East End of London, by William Booth, a Methodist Minister, who ran an evangelical mission there. It was set up on military lines, with each unit being known as a corps, under the command of an officer of rank ranging from a lieutenant to brigadier, who is responsible to a divisional headquarters.

The movement spread rapidly, and the first Bridgwater corps was formed in 1880, established in the former Primitive Methodist chapel in West Street. In 1881 the Zion Chapel in Friarn Street was taken over, remaining the citadel until 1970. In 1972 the Army moved to the former Baptist Chapel in Moorland Road.

The Salvation Army is well known for its social concerns and for its ministry among the underprivileged. It is famous for its musical tradition, making great use of brass bands and vocal music.

A music weekend at Moorland Road

From the Salvation Army web-site

Pentecostal and Evanglical churches

Bridgwater has had a of pentecostal and evangelical churches over the years, meeting in various converted shop premises or at the YMCA. A congregation of the Norwegian-based Brunstad church worships at Marsh Lane, Huntworth,

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Bridgwater's Chapels and Meeting Houses

Christ Church, Friarn Street, Bridgwater's oldest chapel

Under Charles I, religion played a major factor in Parliament, which had become dominated by Puritans, and in the Commonwealth the parish churches were led by men of Presbyterian, Independent, Baptist and other sentiments. Under Charles II there was a return to strict Episcopalian ways. Bridgwater's John Norman was ejected from his living at Saint Mary's in 1660, and there followed a period of persecution from 1664 and lasting twenty five years.

The Unitarians

A Presbyterian meeting house was built in Friarn Street in 1688 in the ministry of John Moore. The theological shift towards Unitarianism occurred during the ministry of his son John Moore jr (1717-1747) John Moore founded an academy to educate nonconformists, and the first Sunday school in the town was established here. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the

poet, preached here, 1797-1798. There is a fine organ, given in 1853 which is still used.

The Baptists

The Baptists were established in Bridgwater by 1640. Their pastor, the Revd Tobias Wells was imprisoned in Ilchester gaol in 1663 with 13 other ministers, 17 Baptists and 50 Quakers. They had a chapel in St Mary Street in 1692 and by 1712 had 200 members. This chapel was rebuilt in 1837. By the 1870s groups were active in Albert and Union Streets. A mission was started in West Quay in the 1880s and another in Northgate in 1914. A chapel at Moorland Road, built by the Mariners' Christian Society, was acquired by the Baptists in 1965, and closed in 1972, when it was acquired by the Salvation Army.

Bridgwater Baptist Church, opened1837

The Society of Friends (Quakers)

The Quakers were dedicated to living the "Inward Light", without creeds, and clergy. John Anderdon, a Bridgwater goldsmith was an early convert in 1658, and spent time years in Ilchester gaol after holding meetings in his house in 1670. A meeting house was licensed in1689 and a burial ground in soon afterwards. In 1722 a meeting house for 200 people was built in Friarn Street, and enlarged in 1801.The Quakers were active in the abolition of the slave trade, and locally Thomas Clark the botanist was a member of the congregation. The meeting house was still in use in 2015, when it was sold to a congregation of Muslims as a prayer hall.

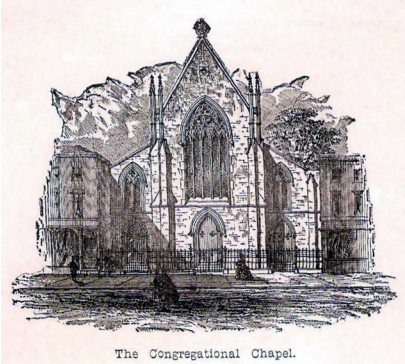
The Quaker Meeting House, Friarn Street

The Independents (Congregationalists)

The Friarn Street meeting house, known as Zion chapel was enlarged and later rebuilt in1822. It closed in 1865 and taken over by the Salvation Army in 1881. It has since been demolished.

Zion Chapel, Friarn Street

A new chapel was opened in Fore Street, in 1864 and known as Fore Street Congregational Chapel.



This chapel closed in 1964 and demolished, and the congregation moved to a new building next to Saint Matthew's Field known as Westfield United Reformed Church.

Westfield Church

The Methodists

Methodism began in the eighteenth century to reform the Church of England from within. George Whitfield came to the town in 1739, and John Wesley preached several times between 1746 and 1769. A house was licensed for worship by 1753. By 1800 a chapel and Sunday school was in use in Eastover. A chapel was built in King Street in 1816 and enlarged twice by 1860. A Sunday school, was added in 1924. The chapel closed in 1980 and has been converted into flats.

King Street Methodist Chapel