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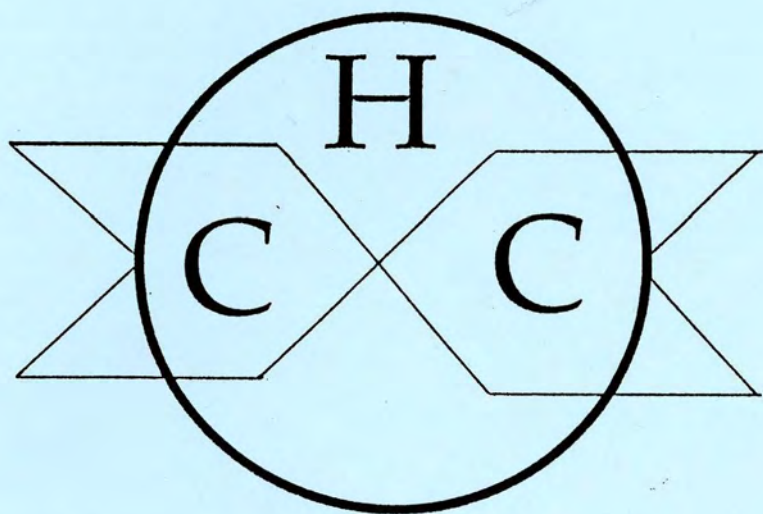
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# Congregational History Circle

Volume 3 Number 3



Spring 1995

# The Congregational History Circle Magazine

Volume 3 No 3 Spring 1995

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## EDITORIAL

This issue of the Congregational History Circle Magazine contains an article by Dr Brenda Richardson on the gender-based characteristics attributed to God by English poets since the seventeenth century. Dr Richardson was brought up a Congregationalist in Leeds and is a graduate of Oxford University. She holds an Oxford D.Phil and has lectured in Belfast and Kingston, Surrey. We welcome her contribution and interest. In addition Bill Ashley Smith has contributed an article based on his own reminiscences of childhood at Ealing Green Congregational Church and his experience of Little Church.

## NEWS AND VIEWS

1795 not only was the founding year of the London Missionary Society but it also marked the birth of one of the LMS's most distinguished and pioneering missionaries, Robert Moffat, who was born on 21st December at Ormiston, East Lothian. Moffat, later to be David Livingstone's father-in-law, established a famous mission station at Kuruman in south Africa in 1824. He last preached there in March 1870 and, returning to this country, he was honoured by Queen Victoria, the universities and the churches. Moffat retired to live in Brixton, south London and was buried in West Norwood cemetery in 1883. Alan Butler, who until his own recent retirement from the Kuruman Moffat Mission had served the pastorate there for many years, plans to hold commemorative events, including a thanksgiving service at the graveside on December 21st, 1995. All enquiries with regard to this should be directed to the editor.

Dr Edwin Welch has written a new life and assessment of Selina, the Countess of Huntingdon, entitled Spiritual Pilgrim (University of Wales Press, 1995). Dr David Cornick of Westminster College, Cambridge, CB3 0AA, has several copies, subsidised by the Cheshunt Foundation, available at the reduced price of £25 (plus £1.50 p&p). Spiritual Pilgrim is the result of painstakingly thorough research and reveals a remarkable woman of influence and faith, set against the male-dominated eighteenth century English world.

Another two hundredth anniversary to be celebrated this year is that of Nazeing Congregational Church in Essex. Their minister, Norman Bonnett, has arranged a number of events to mark the occasion: May 14th, 10.30am, a service in 1795 dress to celebrate the church's founding; May 21st, 10.30am, a service to mark the part played by Selina, Countess of Huntingdon and Cheshunt College in the formation of the church; June 10th, 7.30pm, a pageant, summarizing the history of nonconformity, with special reference to Nazeing. For further information contact Mr Bonnett at Lanshaven, Middle Street, Nazeing, Waltham Abbey, Essex, EN9 2LQ (Tel.099-289-2003).

The conference of the Association of Denominational Historical Societies and Cognate Libraries is to be held at Westhill College, Selly Oak, Birmingham from 28th to 30th July 1995. The conference theme is "Protestant Nonconformists and the West Midlands of England". Speakers will give papers on R.W.Dale and the civic gospel, Bourne College, the Welsh contribution to nonconformist life in the West Midlands, Birmingham and the 1791 Priestley riots, among other subjects. The CHC Mag editor will speak on the founding of the LMS and the West Midlands. The conference fees are a) B&B, all meals, and conference fee of £5 : £95, or b) excluding B&B, £59. All those interested should contact Dr E.Dorothy Graham, 34 Spiceland Road, Birmingham, B31 1NJ (Tel. 021-475-4914)

The CHC secretary, Colin Price, has reported on books recently acquired and placed on the reserve shelves at Nottingham, among the collection held by the Congregational Federation at Castle Gate. He specifically mentions J.Wibberley's recent History of Greenacres Congregational Church, Oldham, G.T.Streather Memorials of the Independent Church at Rothwell, Northants. , R.Rooke's histories of Bassingbourn URC, Melbourn URC, and Great Chrishill URC, all in south Cambridgeshire, and a history of Chulmleigh Congregational Church, in Devon. He also states that he and Chris Damp, the CHC treasurer, "unearthed many interesting items at Nottingham which might be further sorted out at the archive day in October. They include many photographs of buildings and people. Also a collection of engravings of Congregational ministers, each with an autobiographical piece of handwriting. There are about 150 of these from the early eighteenth century until the advent of popular photography in the mid-nineteenth century, and a collection of minute books from various churches. We are still short of many histories of individual Congregational churches and of histories of county unions. Is anyone able to supply these from their own collections?" Colin also welcomes, as do we all, the interest in Congregational history being shown by Scots Congregationalists and he looks forward to a fruitful and mutually beneficial relationship.

On June 6th 1995, Yvonne Evans will speak to the 1662 Society on the Victorian lady hymn writer, Cecil Frances Alexander, at Trinity Congregational Church, Brixton, London, SW2 at 7.30pm. All are welcome to the society's meetings.

On August 26th 1995 the St Bartholomew Day ejections of 1662 and the Puritan sufferers of 1660-62 will be commemorated by the laying of a posy on the plaque outside Memorial Hall, Fleet Lane, London, EC4 at 2.15pm, followed by a service at Cole Abbey Presbyterian Church, Queen Victoria Street, EC4 at 3.00pm. Further details may be obtained from the editor.

The CHC annual general meeting in Sheffield last May followed a fascinating presentation of slides on Sheffield nonconformist churches and chapels, given by Dr Clyde Binfield of Sheffield University who is also the editor of the Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society. Characteristically he spoke with his usual clarity and erudition and, after the meeting, some stalwarts set out on their own unplanned chapel crawl of the city. We are grateful to the members of Trinity URC, Sheffield for their hospitality.

## **GENDERING THE DEITY: AN HISTORICAL SURVEY**

The context of this historical survey is a desire to show that the biblicism of the Protestant Reformation, shared in the early seventeenth century by Anglican clerics and members of the sects, but latterly much less generally diffused, insisted on imaging the divine in ways which validated all male and all female attributes. This preserves the divine as a paradox, limitless but intimate, just but tender. It also conduces to a climate of what 1995 calls "parity of esteem" for man and woman, intellect and emotion, private and public worlds. Dissent has at times become very rationalistic. The Anglican Church has sometimes slipped into an unreformed sense that the male and particularly the male priest himself enshrines the image of Christ and of God. But to emphasise the transcendent and all-embracing nature of the divine is to emphasise the insight that no one gender, still less one individual person, can adequately personate God.

To Milton Paradise was a little community, with Adam and Eve enjoying each other's difference, sharing God's image and entertaining angel guests. The nonconformist sense of Christ personated in the varied Christian community has a venerable history.(1) We should not let critics dismiss opponents of the "male-making" of the divine person as silly opportunists who want to replace the Judaeo-Christian God with a trendy pagan Earth-Mother. Independency has had women preachers since the seventeenth century, albeit not continuously, as part of its endeavour to use all human gifts to the greater glory.(2)

In the Daily Telegraph of 23.6.94 I read that an Anglican vicar was seeking an injunction to ban a hymn which he claimed "blasphemously refers to God as Mother" and had frequently been used at women's ordinations.

"From your Self we take our nature,  
Mother, Father, Love Divine"

He failed to get his injunction but he crystallized a problem. Whereas the press rather trivialized the problem as one of "Equal Opportunities" in the Church of England, in reality Anglican women seeking ordination are up against a special problem. For a section of Anglican opinion believes that God is male, and that therefore women cannot adequately represent Christ in his ministry. Nonconformist women could do with articulating rather more firmly and loudly that any problems in our churches are only to do with conflicts between social concepts of authority and spiritual truth: even in 1995 men do not like being told what to do by women! We certainly believe that all people, women and men, share the image of the divine.

At the time I saw this claim of blasphemy I had been working with some students on "metaphor" and had looked at several poems with multiple metaphors, including the poem which concludes George Herbert's The Temple, 1633, Love III.

"Love bade me welcome: yet my soul drew back  
Guiltie of dust and sinne.  
But quick-ey'd Love, observing me grow slack  
From my first entrance in,  
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning,  
If I lack'd any thing.



A guest, I answer'd, worthy to be here:  
Love said, You shall be he.  
I the unkinde, ungratefull? Ah my deare,  
I cannot look on thee.

Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,  
Who made the eyes but I?  
Truth Lord, but I have marr'd them: let my shame  
Go where it doth deserve.

And know you not, sayes Love, who bore the blame?  
My deare, then I will serve.  
You must sit downe, sayes Love, and taste my meat:  
So I did sit and eat."

The dominant image here is of the guest at a banquet. It may be the banquet of the parable, where the humble folk were compelled to come in to replace those too proud to accept the invitation (Matthew 22:3); or the other one where the Lord of the feast might say, "Friend, go up higher" (Luke 14:7); or it might have overtones of the great bridal feast of the Lamb adumbrated in Revelation 21-22. Many years previously, however, a friend had pointed out to me that while the "guest" seems to be the poet "in propria persona" and therefore male, "Love" is female. She is "quick - ey'd" and questions "sweetly". The image is not the stern Host, but the gracious Hostess, the Lady of the Feast, Shakespeare's Desdemona rather than his Othello! And the image is sustained in references to what were traditionally in Judaism and seventeenth century English houses female roles: the provision of food, "meat", for guests, the gracious welcome, the attentiveness to the needs of a male guest. If one doubts that this is the intention, one's notice should be drawn to the very explicit underlying sexual metaphor. For this to work decorously Welcoming Love has to be female to accommodate the eager guest who first "enters" and then "grows slack".

Herbert is daringly but seriously exploiting the orthodox position that while God incarnate in history became a man, God in glory, the fullness of the Godhead, is beyond human sexual differentiation, incorporating all that is finest in both or either sex and properly imaged as the perfect complement to the longing believer. Donne offers an equally daring but opposite use of the metaphor in his Holy Sonnet (c.1609) "Batter my heart" when he asks a

vigorously male and sexual “Three-person’d God” to “enthrall” and “ravish” him, John Donne, imaged here as passive and female, the helpless “betroth’d” of the “enemy”. Where Herbert yearned for the generous openness of the “feminine” aspect of Godhead, Donne longs to be knocked over, seized, overborne by a force more than male.

What has happened between 1633 and 1994? Herbert, it is worth noting, was not writing private poetry. The Temple was deliberately conceived as a didactic work for his parishioners. It is therefore strictly comparable to the hymn. As this is the conclusion and climax, Herbert clearly believed strongly that Love Divine was all things to all people: that which is in God but characteristic of the female in this world, softness, sweetness, gentleness, generosity is as worthy of honour as the masculine power.

Herbert is, of course, scrupulously biblicist. The Song of Songs is a good place to start looking for images in which consideration of which is man and which is woman, speaking or described, is insignificant in comparison to the truth that to each other the lovers are very perfection and the love that informs their embrace is beautiful and holy. Traditionally it is allegorized as a representation of the relationship between Christ and the Church (cf Revelation) though the personae seem almost interchangeable. Though the man may be the Christ persona still he has attributes of beauty and tenderness as well as strength: and likewise the woman has stature, a wonderful physique, health and the promise of fertility as well as the more narrowly defined attributes of “female beauty”. This has to be noted as a Bible validation of men’s capacity to possess physical beauty and to know sensual enjoyment. There is no sense here that man is “mind” and woman “body”. Instead the poet revels in the shameless physical and sensual eroticism of both parties.

Love III is the most explicit instance of a female image for the Divine in Herbert, but “The Collar”, also from The Temple, seems to me also to invoke this sense of God as appropriately imaged in whatever human image will complete the sense of God as Opposite and Completion. This poem ends

”.....as I rav’d and grew more fierce and wild  
At every word,  
Methoughts I heard one calling, Child!  
And I reply’d My Lord.”

Commentary often refers the reader to the Old Testament story where the Lord was not in the earthquake, the fire, or the whirlwind, but in the still, small voice. (3) Consideration began to alert me to the extent to which 1990 has been brainwashed into “Think God, Think Male” and how much richer was the biblical closeness of Herbert. What gender, if any, does a still, small voice have? More recent translations of the Bible have dispensed with it: New English Bible offers “a low murmuring sound” and Good News Bible “a gentle whisper of a voice”. My point however is that Herbert, we assume, used Authorized Version, and its famous rendering in his era had female connotations, as witness the instruction to Flute in A Midsummer Night’s Dream that to play Thisbe the lady fair he may “speak as small as [he] will”.

Herbert, I suggest, is thinking of the prophet in the desert experiencing real storm and tumult as he experiences tumult of passionate anger and frustration. The tumultuous cleric hears a mother’s voice (nb the careful “One”) as the voice of divine gentleness and appeal, “Child” in the midst of his tantrum: though he responds to divine authority as to a social superior, male, “My Lord”. God is experienced as both a mother’s rebuke by gentle example and a Lord’s command. There is a strong contrast between the strong, even violent but futile anger of the human male “child”, and the gentle serenity of the mother-like divine parent. And of course the context of Elijah’s experience is his need to know how to reply to violence. God seems to say, “Be vulnerable: be gentle”. It is an endorsement of the archetypal female behaviour rather than the archetypal male response of fighting back. In the same way Herbert needed to accept that as a parish priest he might be humiliated, frustrated, even abused, but he must endure without retaliation, like a good child or wife.

After Herbert, we reach Milton, still more and more often explicit in evoking images of the divine nature and equally biblicist. Most evidence is to be found in Paradise Lost (1674). Adam and Eve are described in Book IV (1.288ff) appearing in shared divine dignity, “Two of far nobler shape erect and tall” emphasising Milton’s belief that God created Man and Woman jointly in his own image. Milton adds a non-biblical platonic excursion into the anatomy of angels to underline the belief that higher spiritual beings are beyond human anatomical sexual differentiation, but emphatically not beyond love or mutual interdependency for pleasure (PL VIII, 615ff). Milton’s treatment of God emphasises that a simple anthropomorphic and male image will not do. Milton refuses to attempt to describe God directly: the opening to Book III

suggests the divine attributes obliquely through the famous "Hymn to Light" and a little later the Divine Spirit is imaged as a dove both brooding over and impregnating the primal chaos. God the Father is always "Glory" or "the Sovran Voice" or some other non-visual title. When an active dramatic figure is demanded Milton always names him "The Son", whether in Creation (Book VII) or the War in Heaven (Books V and VI). It is worth noting how the anthropomorphism of the conversation between God the Father and God the Son is offset by the mysticism of the "chariot of Paternal Deity" with its flashing flames and mystical cherubic beings which the Son mounts to rout the rebellious angels.

Throughout *Paradise Lost* God the Son has beauty, strength, gentleness and reason. Adam and Eve share the divine and human attributes of beauty, strength, gentleness and reason as appropriate to their roles: Adam has abstract reasoning powers, Eve is more practical; Adam's is a harder beauty, Eve's a gentler one: but there is no suggestion that she is vapid or unintelligent.

Perhaps it is also worth noting that as Adam and Eve (following Genesis 1) enshrine jointly the image of God so in early seventeenth century country house poems it is the perfect community that deserves the accolade of the name "earthly paradise": Jonson's "To Penshurst" (c.1611) commemorates Penshurst and the whole Sidney family, lord and lady, Robert and Barbara.<sup>(4)</sup> Aemilia Lanier's "The Description of Cooke-ham" (1611) celebrates an all-women household, that of Margaret and Anne Clifford and herself, their ward or companion, the only male presence the occasional one of the Earl of Dorset who married Lady Anne in 1609. I would not go as far as Barbara Keefer Lewalski (*Writing Women in Jacobean England*, 1993) in stressing the all-female character of this locus amoenus: rather I would point to these two virtually contemporary poems as showing that in 1611, the date of the publication of the King James' Version of the Bible, the ideal is an orderly community with good human relations: Robert and Barbara Sidney are happy, have a large family, contented servants and villagers and extend hospitality to poets like the writer; the widowed Margaret Clifford brings up her daughter in godliness and likewise her young charge, Aemilia, and the daughter can remember her courtship there by a good young man, so that the idea of fertility can be included. Cookham is less paradigmatic and romanticized than Penshurst but neither worse nor better for being headed by a woman. Community demands authority to support order and open-handedness to promote joy. The simplest

model is male authority and female generosity, as with Adam and Eve in Milton's Eden or Robert and Barbara Sidney, but other combinations, or perhaps with the Countess Dowager, one person in alternating aspects, can supply these basics.

Where does the movement away from this ideal begin? The early to mid seventeenth century is an age where the ultimate authority is still the Bible, without the sanction of which no assertion about the nature of God can be made. In the next century man's mind becomes the judge of truth, what is 'reasonable'. God, perhaps, begins to be re-made in man's image and becomes, unsurprisingly, exclusively male.

In the late seventeenth century John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, (d.1680) wrote "Upon Nothing". Nothing, the primitive chaos, is predominantly characterized as female, with a womb, but also, e.g. in stanza 2, is capable of "begetting". Rochester teasingly imparts to "Nothing" the characteristics of his devout predecessors' deity in as much as gestation and engendering are both within its power. It is worth noting, however, that as he daringly toys with blasphemy Rochester tilts the image towards the female and towards the irrational, destructive, and chimaerical: the anti-Deity who is less than securely male is not the great architect, the Prime Mover, the Creator Spirit of Paradise Lost: instead She is a great deceiving, devouring maw. Rochester's world is governed not by a great male Reason but by a great female Chaos or Oblivion. Gender polarization is creeping in, and with it the demonization of the female. At roughly the same time Andrew Marvell (d.1678) is declaring that,

"Two Paradises twere in one,  
To live in Paradise alone", ("The Garden")

Philosophic man, unlike Adam's God, thinks it good for man to be alone. Just after the turn of the eighteenth century Daniel Defoe, an educated Dissenter, developed at length the idea of Paradise as man alone with his God. Defoe is emphatically not John Bunyan.(5) There is no visionary ecstasy here; no outpourings of religious emotionalism. And there is no equivalent to Christiana to partner and complete Crusoe as she did Pilgrim.

Defoe's is a rational God in Robinson Crusoe (1719). For him and his castaway, it seems, the female is part of the passion, the distraction, which Defoe's scheme determines shall be missing from the paradise island. It is noteworthy that the little community described so complacently by Robinson Crusoe as his "family", himself, his parrot, his dogs and the livestock, has the order imposed by his authority, but no joy, and no affection. I do find myself wondering whether the Defoe who was educated for the ministry in the dissenting academy can have meant this altogether unironically, so remote is it from the bliss of Adam and Eve in Paradise Lost Book V.

The God with whom Crusoe is so keen to square his account is a rational, reasonable, male friend, like the sea-captain, or the Spanish captain rescued from the savages. (Penguin ed, 1965, 106-7) Sometimes he is Creator and Judge, distant and impersonal. There is nothing very surprising except the total absence of any suggestion of transcendence: God is in his creation; he is in the Bible which Crusoe finds among his gear. There is no sense that he is to be imagined as transcending the reason and self-discipline to which Crusoe aspires, a being of another order, where a fiery zeal might combine with a dispassionate justice, or a woman's tenderness weep for Crusoe's misery!

I am not saying that Crusoe necessarily deliberately excludes the female from God; it is a silent assumption, gender polarization having lodged in the male consciousness: the model of a rational world is a world of men; God is Reason; therefore all God's attributes are those of Men but writ a little larger: Crusoe sees God as a kind of super-shipping agent who knows not only where all his ships are on their proper routes but even where the ship-wrecked Crusoe is; he is a super-judge meting out justice for Crusoe's faults over years and miles; he is the force behind a vast and orderly Creation. If the loveless family is meant unironically then we have an instance in which the attenuated figure of God as male, rational and powerful, but without an emotive aspect, underpins the exclusion of both the male principle and the actual woman from both the good life and its abstract definition: there is no woman on the island and Crusoe does not feel any lack.

The biblicist strand remains alive, however. William Cowper's Olney Hymns (1779), written for the Anglican parish of Olney, continue both the earlier sense of mystery in the Godhead ("God moves in a mysterious way/ His wonders to perform" with its allusions to the psalmist's imagery and the emphatic line, "Judge not the Lord by feeble sense") and the passionate, empathising, yearning side to the divine, typified as supra-feminine, "Hark, my

soul, it is the Lord”:

“Can a woman’s tender care  
Cease towards the child she bare?  
Yes, she may forgetful be  
Yet will I remember thee.”

The point is not that women forget their children but that the Lord is even more tenacious in his loving than the mother with a child at breast (Isaiah 49.15)

Throughout the eighteenth century and beyond biblicism is the property of only one strand of religious writing, and a small one at that. The dichotomy is not exactly between public and private, or Anglican and Dissenter, or even early and late. Cowper writes for Anglicans at the end of the century: Isaac Watts’ great hymn, “When I survey the wondrous Cross” about the paradoxical divine, all-suffering and all-mighty, appealing to man’s sense of justice as well as his love, belongs to the beginning of it (1707); Joseph Addison’s “The spacious firmament on high” which states that “In Reason’s Ear [the planets] all rejoice” appeared in *The Spectator* for August 23, 1712. All three are hymns, for public consumption. The distinction seems to be that Addison like Defoe writes for general, semi-secular consumption, while Watts and Cowper write for church audiences. The challenging biblical concept of the divine as a paradox of love and justice, beyond anthropomorphism or the human categories of male and female, validating all human experience, is reserved to Believers, while popular writers assimilate the Divine to human social categories. Thus progressively the image of God presented in general literature is more attenuated, more “male” in the sense of conforming to a social stereotype of male character and behaviour.

Once an objective, transcendent God defined eternally in the Bible is no longer axiomatic in all literary contexts, to image God as Reason, and make Reason a male preserve over against a female preserve of Passion seems to be to clarify rather than to distort. The imaginative realm is polarized and the male becomes the Creator, the Energizer, the Builder, the Planner; the female at best the unstable passion, needing control to attain form; or worse the matter with which the male builds; or worst of all the Chaos into which all that male Reason builds will fall if she prevails.

There is furthermore a shift in such literature from the biological to the mechanistic. The biological creation image inevitably involves a male and a female principle, both present in Transcendent Deity, and the corollary that the sustaining of creation requires (male) justice and (female) mercy. The mechanistic creation image reduces creation to a Master Craftsman (male) working on his raw Material (inanimate). The Clock-maker stands back once the clock is set going; God's on-going relationship to the world is reduced to that of Judge and Ruler: both imaged in male terms. God no longer yearns over men's disobedience like Rachel weeping for her children.

Watts' sense of a human, vulnerable "young prince" who is also mysteriously, "Christ my God" may be contrasted with Addison's monolith, Reason, with its crude and easy anthropomorphism,

"In Reason's ear they all rejoice  
And utter forth a glorious Voice,  
For ever singing as they shine,  
' The Hand that made us is divine.'"

My difficulty is less with the maleness of Christ-as-God than with the way even Christ incarnate shrinks in these contexts from the very special status of incorporating all qualities, those appropriate to men in particular societies and those appropriate to women, to the figure of a particular society's concept of male perfection. This is consummated in Tennyson's opening to *In Memoriam*, where the "strong Son of God" is the "Highest, holiest Manhood". God, whether we mean the Godhead in glory or Jesus, becomes a public sphere being and male as the public sphere is male. God the Creator is the Great Architect. Holman Hunt's painting *The Shadow of the Cross* depicts Christ glorified through the image of Jesus Carpenter. Effectively, this excludes any feminine admixture to Christ's unique quality, because crafts and professions are defined as male. Back in the Augustan age when Addison was imaging the divine as a male "savant" Queen Anne was mocked for her female intrusion into the male sphere of Affairs "Doth sometimes counsel take and sometimes tea" (Alexander Pope: *The Rape of the Lock* 1712/14). Only Kings and male politicians properly take counsel of each other or of philosophers and learned men, not women, even Queens.



Between Addison and Tennyson or the Pre-Raphaelites is William Blake. Blake is an unorthodox thinker, a radical, a reformer. In his drawing of The Ancient of Days (c.1794) we can see a development of the reasonable God of Addison, the Great Original, with his hand and his ear. It is a strange and eccentric but powerful development. In his prophetic books Blake identified his figure of Urizen, God of limit, with the Ancient of Days and with an aspect of Jehovah. The compasses image shows him circumscribing and limiting creation. But Blake found such might, imaged in the mature male figure, without pity or gentleness, terrifying, tyrannical and almost repellent. The same feelings inform his attitude to the tiger,

“What immortal hand or eye  
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?”

It is tempting to suggest that Blake solved his problem by producing a different dichotomy, though still one harmful to a full Christian understanding of the nature of God. He put the love, the joy and the gentleness into humanity, where children and female figures abound both in his *Sons of Innocence* and in the engravings that accompany them. And his God was this ambivalently viewed tyrant. However it was left to Sir Robert Grant (1779-1838) to incorporate the biblical phrase “the ancient of days” into a popular hymn without any ironical or ambiguous intention,

“Our shield and Defender  
The Ancient of Days,  
Pavilioned in Splendour,  
And girded with Praise.”

With hindsight one sees that because of the grammatical gendering of pronouns, God is interpreted in reading as male unless, as in the biblicist seventeenth century or deliberately paradoxical later hymns, the reader is constantly prodded to see the metaphors for what they are : a dove both male and female; Love with female receptive genitals or Love a storm of male invasive passion; a “young prince” who is also the King of Glory, a God who is “Mother” and “Father”. For all it is a century later Watts’ “When I survey

the wondrous Cross” is closely comparable to Donne’s “Good Friday Riding Westward” as both expend considerable pains to emphasise the uniqueness of Christ who is both fully real and human, in a particular fleshly guise (young) or a particular place (in the east) and also glorified, transcendent, his hands spanning the poles, crowned with glory as with thorns. This makes Christ no more female but universal: though he has become man he is not simply man, for his maleness is a function of his incarnate limitations, not a part of his divine nature. It is not only women who lose by the “making male” of God: men lose the sense of the otherness, the transcendent, the unexpected, as well as the validation of their own tenderer impulses.

The transcendent creator God has an important role to play in the formulation of religious poetry for, as Philip Sidney had said in Apologie for Poetry (written c. 1580, pub 1595) the poet is the image in little of the Creator, making worlds by a quasi-divine fury working on the stuff of Nature, “she” : “with the force of a divine breath he bringeth things forth far surpassing [Nature’s ] doings”. Milton, as already mentioned, made the Creator Spirit a brooding and an engendering dove, mother and father. In Paradise Lost his inspiration is characterized as the Heavenly Muse, Urania ; in Lycidas the classical muses assist. Strenuous poetical reason, predominantly identified with the poet’s male intellect, is seen combining with a passion or energy, or urge to give birth which is imaged as female: Sidney only half ironically images his own sonnet-writing as giving birth. Creation is the act of a transcendent beyond gender Being.

By the nineteenth century this is problematized. Gestation is unmentionable; poetry is the work of the mind and women are not supposed to have minds. Christina Rossetti is defensive and humble, “What can I give him, poor as I am?” . The female gift of the feeling heart is disparaged in comparison to male gifts of learning or the fruits of labour, the wise man’s part or the shepherd’s lamb. Rossetti said in a letter to her brother, “women are not men and you must not expect me to possess a tithe of your capacities”.(6) Though there may be self-irony nuancing what Christina said to the overbearing Dante Gabriel it is significant that the female pose perceived as appropriate to formal exposure in lyric verse is this self-deprecating one.

Emily Bronte, parsonage bred and raised, manifests an insecure self-image, speaking often through male dramatic personae and using a male pseudonym. The creative act, and the establishment of a poetic voice, are made alike difficult for a woman. Meanwhile the divine Being seems remote from female experience in his rational male manifestation.

Emily Bronte's "O thy bright eyes", 1844, seems to locate the divine within:

"I..... gave my spirit to adore  
Thee, ever present, phantom thing -  
My slave, my comrade, and my King!"

An objective divine was more readily available to Aemilia Lanier in 1611. God the Father was transcendent; even Jesus was traditionally treated as more than female in his gentleness and more than male in his strength. Barbara Keefer Lewalski indicates how Lanier's religious poem, "Salve Deus Rex Iudaeorum" builds on a tradition of meditation associating the poet or his/her patron with the Virgin at the cross, or Mary of Magdala, and so the female Christian is given a point of intersection where traditionally meet human and divine, male and female stereotypes, justice and love. Christ is seen as both human and divine, perfect manhood and yet more than mere man, while the Virgin, God's chosen vessel, offers an image of all that is highest and holiest in female humanity. The male tormentors serve as a warning that ordinary manhood is not perfect as is Christ's, while the women at the Cross emphasise the particular female capacity for endurance and loyalty.

This poem begins with a "feminised" "sweet Jesus" common to this particular strand of sentimental Renaissance piety; accented here by a desire to characterize as male the violence turned against Jesus and as female the tender concern for his sufferings manifested by the poet, Mary the Virgin, Mary of Magdala and the other women. I also note the conclusion where the incarnate Christ of the passion becomes transcendent: a fountain of sweets, the sweet water of salvation, a relatively rare example perhaps of translating the feminised Christ to the dimension of glory. This, virtually contemporary with Donne's "Good Friday 1613", reminds us how carefully ample is the imagery used of Christ, and how ungendered are the attributes of Christ. The feminine virtues are untainted with ideas of weakness and are as naturally associated with Christ as the strength and purpose that sustains the world.

With these poems or "When I survey the wondrous Cross" may be contrasted Algernon Swinburne's "Hymn to Proserpine", 1866. For Watts Christ is vibrantly strong in supreme weakness; love and sorrow; beauty and

death; vulnerability and omnipotence are all equally parts of a great all-embracing paradox of divinity. But for Swinburne Christ has become man and the passion, the mystery and the potency remain with the pagan goddess Proserpine, Queen of Death.

“Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean; the world has grown  
grey from thy breath.”

Already it seems in the mid-nineteenth century Swinburne saw Christianity as a tidy, passionless, suburban little religion with a God from whose realm all passion, strength and mystery had been expelled. Milton in contrast had laboured to show how all the vibrancy of pagan culture, beauty, passion, even violence and betrayal, could be subsumed under the rule of the Almighty. We might also look at Swinburne’s attenuated Mary, “pale and a maiden and sister to sorrow”, contrasted with Cytherean Venus,

“Clothed round with the world desire as with raiment and fair as the foam,  
And fleeter than kindled fire, and a goddess and mother of Rome”.

To Herbert Mary’s very name suggested the “Army” of the “Lord of Hosts” while Lanier dwells on her as “Queen of Woman-kind” and pays tribute to her fortitude as she sees “this sweete offspring of [her] body [die]”. By the nineteenth century femininity has negative connotations: the effeminacy of the “pale Galilean” invalidates his claim to meaningful divinity: Christ incarnate must be portrayed all-male, a Super-Man: Tennyson’s “Strong Son of God” or Holman Hunt’s muscular Jesus.

“Thou seemest human and divine,  
The highest, holiest manhood thou:”

“Muscular Christianity” as evinced in Thomas Hughes’ The Manliness of Christ (1879) is perhaps the last stage in “maling” the divine: the transcendent divine has been gendered male because of his “public role” and the eviction of feelings and the processes of procreation from the public into

the private sphere: now the incarnate Christ is made emphatically and particularly male; opposed to the scorned “pale Galilean” of agnosticism he is a young Aryan warrior, tall, healthy, strong.

The social changes are complex. In seventeenth century religious poetry strong emotion may be publicly displayed; so may intimacy: the traditional “pieta” or deposition invites worship to focus on Christ and his mother locked in reciprocal agony. By the nineteenth century public and private, male and female, reasoned and passionate have all three been separated and polarized. The public Christ is drained of passion, seen as lurid, carnal, indecent. The male Christ is separated from all female attributes, smacking now of weakness, dependency and domesticity. The reasonable Christ is serene and impassive. Swinburne’s scorn demonstrates just how diminishing is the process of gendering the divine.

A male-gendered divine is inaccessible to the female poetic sensibility, especially in the nineteenth century when women are conditioned to think of strength, rationality, and authority as qualities alien to themselves. Emily Bronte initially discards an objective Other for the depths of her Self. But her “O thy bright eyes” has as its last verse

“And am I wrong to worship where  
Faith cannot doubt nor Hope despair  
Since my own soul can grant my prayer?  
Speak, God of Visions, plead for me  
And tell why I have chosen thee!”

The mystery of Godhead, its Otherness, is restored, but at the price of Emily Bronte’s seeming a private, esoteric vision, characterized by the singular, “I”. Any intimation of the divine as personal, tender, must be fleeting and private. Where in the eighteenth century there seems to have been a category of “church” intermediate between literature intended for general public consumption and private meditation, by the mid-Victorian era “Church” seems to have been taken over by the “Public Deity”, male and austere.

Tennyson writes public poetry, confident, assured. "We" is the key-word. The opening of In Memoriam, written c.1833, published 1850, crystallizes the solid, unmysterious, human God-as-Christ that so limits universality of appeal:

"Strong Son of God, Immortal Love  
Whom we, that have not seen thy face  
By faith and faith alone embrace  
Believing what we cannot prove.....  
Thou seemest human and divine,  
The highest, holiest manhood thou:"

For Tennyson mystery is a function of the failure of private faith rather than an inseparable part of the definition of deity. The Godhead is no longer transcendent, male and female. Furthermore, later, Sorrow is a "Priestess" with a "lying lip" deserving to be crushed "Upon the threshold of the mind". Emotion is now bad, is female: contrast the heroic grief of Mary at the cross. God is male; the fullness of the Godhead is in an all-male incarnate Christ; the mourning believer is male, and Arthur Hallam, the friend he mourns, is the very type of those already seeing face to face: women and the womanly are totally excluded. And yet this is cast in the idiom of public utterance. It appeared, edited, in Congregational Praise.

The Christ-of-History-as-God school of thought is very constraining. George Eliot needed visual reminders of Christ on the Cross as she translated Strauss's Life of Jesus(1846) to remind her that there was a transcendent dimension. (6) Mary Ann Evans described to her friends Charles and Caroline Bray how "dissecting the beautiful story of the crucifixion" sickened her and she had recourse to her cast of Thorwaldsen's Risen Christ or her engraving of Delaroche's Christ to carry her through.(7) These are both neo-classical interpretations, tending to the idealizing and generalizing rather than the particularizing method.

The objection raised to John Everett Millais' painting Christ in the House of his Parents (1850) was that it reduced the holy to a mundane level. To me it over-particularizes the attributes of divinity, excluding women, non-white races, the aged, crippled, or un-beautiful! The Light of the World (1853) by Holman Hunt is likewise is very gender-, race-, and culture- specific. However, it is the same artist's The Shadow of Death(1870-73), which represents the

climactic point, perhaps of enshrining God in a perfect, male, human body. In contrast to George Eliot's sense that the crucified Christ gave access to a wider reference than the historical carpenter Jesus of Nazareth Holman Hunt's picture locates the crucified saviour in that particularized social, historical and gendered setting. One may contrast the effect of the Christ of icon painting, serene, epicene, gilded and surrounded with symbolic detail which lifts the incarnate Jesus up to the transcendent Godhead rather than the other way around.

There is abroad an idea that the concept of God is somehow diminished if we admit to it the feminine. I hope I have indicated enough to show that it is rather the enshrining of Godhead in the stereotypes of either human limited gender that diminishes divinity and that I will have provoked further investigation. The all-male Christ and the Godhead located in the male public sphere and identified with a male-gendered reason arise in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in response to complex social and cultural developments. The biblical deity as interpreted by the seventeenth century poets incorporates female elements essential to the idea of transcendence and this is what 1995 should be emulating as it comes to terms with a world where parity of esteem is demanded by both genders and all races and cultures. Our faith must proclaim a God vaster and more varied than the most diverse of human communities and allow no-one to go on thinking that the image of God is implanted in only half the world's people.

Brenda E.Richardson

- 1) Emphasized in numerous induction and ordination services of women ministers.
- 2) See for example Anne Laurence, "A priesthood of she-believers: women and congregations in mid-seventeenth century England" in W.J.Sheils and D.Wood (eds) Women in the Church, Studies in Church History 27, Ecclesiastical History Society (Oxford 1990) 345-363, and also other studies in that volume.
- 3) Elijah: 1 Kings 19, 11-13.
- 4) It was published in 1616 but written before 1612 when Prince Henry died.
- 5) Pilgrim's Progress (1678)
- 6) See a review of Jan Marsh's biography of Christina Rossetti, Times Literary Supplement 17-2-95.
- 7) G.S.Haight George Eliot: A Biography (Oxford 1968) 58.

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## EALING GREEN AND LITTLE CHURCH

As my father and I stroll across Walpole Park on our way home from morning worship one Sunday in 1922, he remarked, "I expected Mr Horder was going to preach about Whittier". "How did you know?" I replied. "Well", said Dad, "I saw that all the hymns were by Whittier". "How did you find out who wrote the hymns?" I enquired. "The name of the author is at the end of the hymn", he explained. Thus began my hymnophilia, no doubt caught from the Horder atmosphere.

Our minister, Garrett Horder, was a noted hymnologist. (1) His book The Hymn Lover (1889) was deservedly popular. (2) Julian described it as "The most useful and attractive work on its special subject". (3) The title described the author. He really believed in hymns. He decried the practice of some preachers who sit down and pray or revise their notes during the hymn before the sermon. "They should finish their preparation earlier!" he complained, and always sang every note with the congregation.

In his choice of hymns, Horder shared, with many in the fashionable, larger churches of the time, definite Victorian preferences. "The fact is", he wrote, "Watts, responding to the call for hymns, wrote too much..... a process of spiritual selection is going forward which will render him known to posterity, not by five or six hundred, but by the surpassing excellence of some twenty-five or thirty, which will remain among the favourites of the Church at large." (4) The Table (5) indicates statistical hardening when Horder came to produce his own hymn book. Charles Wesley, wrote Horder, "Is the most fertile, and, taken altogether, probably the most brilliant of English hymnists. As in the case of Dr Watts, however, we cannot help wishing that the number had been fewer, and the finish greater." (6) Horder therefore found space for the Quaker Whittier, and T.T.Lynch, whose untheological hymns had precipitated the mid-nineteenth century Rivulet controversy.

Horder's hymn book, Worship Song (1898), and its revision Worship Song with Accompanying Tunes (1905), did not catch on although the latter was used at a number of churches besides Ealing Green Congregational. The Congregational Union of England and Wales refused to adopt it as successor to G.S.Barrett's Congregational Church Hymnal (1887), which remained the denomination's usual hymn book until the appearance in 1916 of Congregational Hymnary.

When I was ten we removed to another part of Ealing, and transferred to West Ealing Congregational Church just before the arrival of Enoch Thomas as minister.(7) Here the music was not elegantly performed nor presented - despite a highly qualified choirmaster. But hymns which spoke of the human predicament, the infinite saving love and power of God were sung every Sunday. How memorable were their language - pictures! "Behold th'amazing gift", "the whole realm of nature..... were a present far too small", "My soul repeat.....days are as the grass", "join our cheerful songs with angels", "Before the hills in order stood.." (though I supposed the 'sons of time' to be human), "Give to our God", (why, I commented, did we jump from the creation to the New Testament? Years later I discovered the two verses omitted nowadays). Who was the author of this hymnic feast? The discovery that Isaac Watts was a Congregationalist confirmed my denominational allegiance.

My change was not entirely due to a different hymn book, although the Table displays some aspects of this. Ealing Green was a leading outer London church, wealthy, self-confident, seeing itself as an influential repository of both the freedom of the earlier Congregationalists and the optimistic political and social calling of our late nineteenth century churches. The chapel (commonly referred to it as the "Church", thus implanting or reinforcing the idea of the Church as an institution rather than the company of Christ's people) was a well-known example of Victorian Gothic. The minister emerged into the pulpit from stairs in the schoolroom. He was thus unable to indulge in the popular little procession to the table below to receive the collection. In the pulpit the preacher was the focus of all eyes, at both gallery and floor level - except the eyes of the choir who were beneath him, facing both the congregation and the organist, at his detached console in the front pew. I appreciated his restraint while I was an observer during communion; the silence throughout the distribution was real - no intrusive music to disturb our thoughts and prayers.

Everything at Ealing Green was done properly. A printed order of worship was ready each Sunday. This was produced with moveable type, and was therefore too expensive to be common. It meant the minister need not announce the hymns nor the secretary the notices.

The Sunday School met on Sunday afternoon. It was reported, probably with exaggeration, that none of the teachers, nor the pupils, attended the church. The Sunday School served the nearby less prosperous Baker Street area (Ealing's nearest - but not so near - approach to a slum). Thoughtful church members probably regarded this work as a proper extension of the church's support of the Joseph Lancaster Elementary School. At Joseph Lancaster the pupils enjoyed scripture lessons in which the Bible was read but commentary

restricted by the requirements of the 1870 Education Act that it include nothing denominationally distinctive.

No provision was made for children attending church with parents. They left during the hymn before the sermon; or were provided with notebooks and crayons or directed to suitably readable and memorable Bible stories to keep them busy during the sermon. Neither the problem nor the solution were new - both are mentioned in the statutes of the schools founded by Archbishop Holgate in the sixteenth century. Bernard Manning's career as an hymnologist began when, in these circumstances at Caistor, Lincolnshire, he turned his attention to the hymn book (the Wesleyan book then).(8)

On Garrett Horder's retirement Wilton Rix became minister at Ealing in 1922.(9) Sixteen years later, at his own retirement, Rix said, "When I came to Ealing I wanted to build and was bursting with ideas".(10) Under Rix's leadership the church turned its attention to the children. The inspiration may have come from Theodolph of Orleans who, in the eighth century, organized separate worship for children. Other Christians, Anglicans and Congregationalists, were then thinking along similar lines

Children, aged eight and thirteen (though I believe younger siblings were included) were to depart from worship after the second hymn, and pursue their own worship elsewhere. They were supervised by four adult leaders in turn, who thus were enabled to hear three sermons out of four. The addresses were given by a larger rota of church members, including, once a quarter, Wilton Rix himself, who abandoned his pulpit for the occasion. "Since we have a Sunday School run in parallel, we do not concentrate upon the teaching given in the addresses so much as upon the practice of worship", he wrote, and added a remark of general application: speakers should be those who have been trained to give definite teaching "on Bible teaching and Christian conduct".(11)

Rix stated that it was easier to acquire adult volunteers to participate because a fixed liturgy was used. He added that they were free to depart from the set prayers if they thought fit. He believed children preferred a set order of service.(12) His own position, he described, as that of "a free-churchman who believes we are the better men of prayer if we can use the forms that have passed through centuries of use, and yet will determine to pursue the practice of creating prayer out of our own hearts however feebly".(13) The leaders were provided with a two year lectionary. A forewarned child read the reading but there was also an imaginative innovation - the "Little Chapter", a single verse or pair of verses read or recited by a small child.

The question of a hymn book was raised. Many Sunday Schools used Carey Bonner's Sunday School Hymnary (1905). An alternative was the Congregational Union's Congregational Sunday School Hymnal. This consists of most of a proposed new edition of Horder's The Book of Praise for Children (1875), 378 hymns, with a supplement making a total of 500. The Table (5) indicates some features of contents, and includes the Congregational Union's School Worship(1926) for comparison. The Table indicates that differences between the other two contenders might not be great.

Ealing Green, however, discovered the most important consideration, and Little Church used Worship Song: surely the correct choice to contribute to the aim of Little Church in providing a smooth pathway to Big Church. A choir practised weekly at the Ealing Common home of the Misses Robinson who included themselves on a rota of Sunday pianists.

Members of Little Church had various responsibilities. Eight of the older ones were "deacons" for a short period, meeting regularly for discussion. One or two of them might volunteer to sit with fidgety younger children. Two of the boys (sic) took charge of the collection.

My Book of Church Membership was prepared. Church membership required memorising substantial material according to age (Authorized Version, except Revised Version \*).

Age 9: Ps civ 24, Isa vi 3\*, Ps li 10-11\*,

Mk i 14-15, Jn i 29, Ac x 38, Jn xiv 7-8, Lk xxiii 33-34, Lk xxiv 5-6,  
Prov iv 7\*, Prov ii 4-5\*, Jn xiii 35, 2Cor iii 18.

Age 10: Ps viii, Isa vi 1-8\*, Isa liii 1-6\*, Jn iv 5-14, 1Cor xiii 1-13\*, Rev xxi 1-5.

Age 11: Hymns: The King of Love; Praise my soul; O worship the King;  
Awake my soul;

Our blest Redeemer; For all the saints; O God our help; All praise to thee;  
Soldiers of Christ arise; There is a green hill; O Lord of heaven and earth and  
sea; Love divine.

Age 12: Poetry; So here hath been dawning; God who created me; If; Beyond  
the East the sunrise; The quality of mercy; Earth hath not anything to  
show more fair.

Even if, as seems probable, the learning of such considerable amounts (reduced in later editions) was often imperfect, the effort impressed ideas upon the mind. Was the resulting outline of the Gospel appropriate? Or is there a lack of reference to such items as undeserved grace, the primacy of faith, forgiveness of sins through the Cross? It is desirable not to burden the young mind with intricate theology, but some theology might be of benefit later. We may denigrate learning by heart but is today's singing of choruses by young people preferable?

My Book of Church Membership expanded in subsequent editions to become My Little Church Book (4th edition 1930). After a brief preface, there follows a 'Record Page' - dates when I joined Little Church, when I joined Preparation Class, when on Junior Roll, when joined Big Church, when I took up service in the Church, and What service?

Next is a certificate of membership; '..... has been enrolled a Member of Little Church and intends to be present at Worship every Sunday.' Subsequent pages are set out to give quarterly attendance statistics. Two, later expanded to three, fixed orders of worship follow. They differ only in the set prayers. A few of these are from the Book of Common Prayer; others display Rix's notable qualities of urgency, relevance and realistic delineation.(14)

For a few months Little Church met in the schoolroom behind the pulpit. The wall was by no means soundproof. But Ealing Green was not deterred by financial considerations, and soon there arose, at the end of a corridor, a beautiful little Norman church building. The blue of the pulpit, lectern and reredos and other curtains toned well with the plain white walls and ceiling. The architect was P R Morley Horder, son of the former minister. (15)

Adult church members felt that their own chapel (Big Church) created an inferior impression. In 1928 refurbishment was completed, and it, too, was resplendent in blue and white, with no side galleries, clean scrubbed pews, a false vaulted ceiling with concealed electric lighting, and a chancel produced by boxing off rectangular spaces in the two eastern corners. The architectural norms of Congregationalism were forgotten. The blue-gowned choir faced each other across the chancel, and still efficiently led the opening responses, the chant and the hymns. When Ealing Green co-operated financially in the foundation of the new Perivale Park Free Church in 1936, that building, too, was of medieval shape.

The new plan, with plenty of space in the chancel and between it and the front pew, provided opportunities for drama, of which Rix took full advantage. I remember an impressive week-night presentation of Pilgrim's Progress. If the architectural modifications provided a home for a continuing and vigorous church, what degree of success followed the Little Church experiment? The first three years saw twelve Little Church members on the way to church membership: a worthwhile result!

Other churches followed Ealing Green's lead, if often limited by lack of finance or of personnel. And, more important, by lack of the driving force and imagination of a Rix. Possible variants include a "kipling system", whereby a small group of all ages is linked to a church friend with whom they sit for their brief period in Big Church, and who may accompany them to Little Church to act as speaker or pianist for the day.

On the whole, however, churches have not been able to call upon the number of talented people required to reproduce Rix's scheme. In some cases the children depart from Big Church for an old-fashioned graded Sunday School. If they then learn, or re-learn a hymn, they may sing a verse or more of it by themselves the following Sunday morning - though this is not likely to be a worthwhile exercise, unless they sing unaccompanied or their Little Church accompanist is able to use a piano in Big Church. Worshipful atmosphere has not infrequently been disturbed by faltering efforts of children to sing with an unaccustomed organ. Several churches have arranged for children to process (or skip) back from Little Church in order to join in the final hymn. This involves careful timing, sometimes assisted by a pulpit bell-push by which the preacher indicates when he has two minutes to go. In some churches the returners report back to the congregation on what they have been doing in Little Church. Such devices emphasize to both parties their unity in the church.

Rix did not remain alone in describing and recommending Little Church. Rev. Herbert Hamilton was an influential ally.<sup>(16)</sup> As Education Secretary of the Congregational Union and then as Principal of Westhill College, Birmingham, the Free Churches training college for Sunday School teachers, he was able to make his ideas known, and to produce handbooks and lesson schemes.

Not all churches approve of syphoning off part of the congregation. A recent article by Lewis Erlanger, in the news-sheet of the United Reformed Church and Congregational Federation Lay Preachers, urges that all should

worship together. Hamilton's schemes involved this once a quarter. A small church with a few children can, however, do so weekly. The minister has to speak to all ages all the time. He will often be able to propose a subject for them to illustrate during the sermon; paper, rests and pencils provided. After the blessing, the congregation of all ages move to the schoolroom if necessary. While the children, assisted by orange juice, continue their artistic efforts, the adults circulate with their coffee cups admiring the children's work. Every church must find its own way of incorporating children in worship; solutions will differ, as churches differ. Meanwhile, thank God for Rix who indicated many important considerations and demonstrated one solution.

J.W.Ashley Smith

- 1) William Garrett Horder (1841-1922). Trained Cheshunt College. Pastorates: St Helen's 1866-8, Torquay 1869-73, Wood Green 1873-83, Bradford College Chapel 1893-6, Ealing 1896-1922. He died a few months after retiring.
- 2) W.G.Horder The Hymn Lover (1889).
- 3) J.Julian Dictionary of Hymnology (2nd edition 1907), appendix 1, sv Horder.
- 4) \*Table

	Cong Ch Hymnal Barrett 1887	Worship Song Horder 1905	Cong Hymnary 1916	Cong Sun Sch Hymy	Sun Sch Hymnary 1905	School Worship 1926
Watts	61	14	46	7	6	11
Doddridge	12	4	11	4	2	2
Wesley	42	15	45	7	6	5
Whittier	4	24	11	0	7	4
Lynch	8	14	9	11	5	4

- 5) *ibid.* , W.G.Horder Worship Song (1905) 102,104.
- 6) *ibid.*, 109 f.
- 7) Enoch Thomas (1884-1954) Trained New College. Chaplain in France 1916-19; Park, Camden Town 1919-25; West Ealing 1925-36; Charlotte Street, Carlisle, 1936-44; Elswick 1944-52. Congregational Year Book (1955) 527.
- 8) For P.R.Morley Horder (1870-1944) see J,C.G.Binfield "Holy Murder at Cheshunt College: The Formation of an English Architect" in Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society IV 103 ff, May 1988.
- 9) B.L.Manning The Hymns of Wesley and Watts (1942) 8.
- 10) Wilton E.Rix (1881-1958). Trained Mansfield College. Pastorates : Morley 1907-1911; Benson 1911-13; Oxted 1913-22; Ealing 1922-39. Congregational Year Book (1960) 435.
- 11) Middlesex County Times 3 Dec 1938.
- 12) W.E.Rix Little Church ( ) 12.
- 13) *ibid.*, 10.
- 14) cf W.E.Rix Private and Public Prayers (1945) 10.
- 15) Herbert Alfred Hamilton (1897-1977). Trained Lancashire College. Pastorates: Bolton 1924-9; Soho Hill, Birmingham 1929-31; Secretary, Congregational Union Youth and Education Dept 1933-45; Principal, Westhill College, Birmingham 1945-54; Brighton Union Church 1954-63; World Council of Churches 1963-66. See United Reformed Church Year Book (1979) 259, The Times 19 Nov 1977



## BOOK REVIEWS

**William Tyndale: A Biography.** By D.Daniell. ISBN 0-300-06132-3, Pp x + 429, 1994, Yale University Press, £19.95.

Tyndale's translation of the New Testament was the earliest to be printed in English and proved the basis of later English Bibles. For his efforts Tyndale was seized in Antwerp, imprisoned and strangled in 1536 and his body was burned at Vilvoorde, six miles north of Brussels. At the time of his death he had only half-completed his translation of the Old Testament but his NT of 1534 was incorporated almost verbatim in the King James' version of 1611. Before leaving England to undertake his work of Biblical translation in exile in Germany and in the Low Countries, Tyndale prophesied to a learned man, in a memorable saying, "If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scripture than thou dost".

This book's publication marks the quincentenary of Tyndale's birth in 1494 and is the first major biography of the scholar since J.F.Mozley's life of 1937. Daniell is a Tyndale enthusiast and, for some, may be too uncritical of his subject but this book is a major achievement. Tyndale was a master translator with an "unsurpassed ability" in working with "the sounds and rhythms as well as the senses of English, to create unforgettable words, phrases, paragraphs and chapters". Daniell claims that "newspaper headlines still quote Tyndale, though unknowingly, and he has reached more people than even Shakespeare" (p 2). Just as Martin Luther gave a disunited Germany a common language so Tyndale, states Daniell, "made a language for England". He made phrases which have entered "English-speaking consciousness" - the birds of the air, the fish of the sea, for example - and invented words, like scapegoat (p 3).

Tyndale deserves to be better known and understood, and David Daniell advocates his cause with commitment and sympathy. It is difficult not to be moved by Tyndale's story, not to be impressed by his commanding scholarship, and not to be grateful for his courage.

Alan Argent

**The English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century** By J.H.Y.Briggs ISBN 0-903166-18-6 Pp432. Baptist Historical Society 1994 £15 paperback. £20 hardback.

This third volume of the history of the English Baptists is twice the size of its earlier companion volumes, on the 17th and 18th centuries. Briggs uses a thematic approach, rather than a narrative and chronological one, unlike that used in A.C.Underwood's older history, because, during the Victorian era, Baptist churches were protective of their differences. Briggs provides chapters on congregational life and worship, believer's baptism and communion, the ministry and ministerial colleges, theology, home missions, 'number, class and gender', education, society and politics. He considers the Baptist Union's role in the closer relations of Particular and New Connexion General Baptists, culminating in the union of 1891, and also outlines Baptist involvement in 'Associations, Alliances and the Wider Church'.

This book will undoubtedly prove a valuable work of reference, detailing a century of Baptist growth. Briggs has researched his subject thoroughly and each chapter is full of information. Great Baptist preachers like Spurgeon and Clifford, the tensions between the independency of the local church and the authority of wider groupings, the successive constitutions of the Baptist Union, and Baptist hymn writing are discussed. This book offers a full and stimulating treatment of a denomination's self-understanding and development and it repays careful study.

Alan Argent

**Memorials of the Independent Chapel at Rothwell (since 1972, Rothwell United Reformed Church)** By G.T.Streather ISBN 0 9524519 0 5 Pp 247, 1994 Rothwell United Reformed Church, Northants, £12.25.

This is a well-produced book, recording the story of an historic church from its origin in the 1650s in rural Northamptonshire to modern days. The author has a lifelong connection with the church, being a local man who has been a member for sixty years and served as a Sunday School leader, as church secretary, organist, among other posts, and a deacon/elder for forty years. Clearly this book is a labour of love and George Streather approaches his task with dedication and commitment.

The church began with secret meetings in Rowell woods and evolved to services in a barn. It consisted of thirteen men, eighteen women and their pastor John Beverly who had graduated MA from Trinity College, Cambridge in 1651. Streather tells his story against the background of contemporary events so that life at Rothwell unfolds in the 1790s, for instance, while Raikes opens Sunday Schools at Gloucester in 1794, the Baptist Missionary Society is formed at Kettering in 1792 (four miles from Rothwell), and Franz Schubert dies in 1791. Streather sensibly relies throughout on the church books which are extant and full. Rothwell gained fame for its academy, founded by Walter Scott who became minister there in 1813, and left in 1833 to become tutor at Airedale College.

The twenty-seven chapters cover the periods of each ministry, making for chapters of very unequal length. The book contains nineteen illustrations, a list of references to each chapter, a bibliography and a useful index.

Alan Argent

**Angel of Jesus, The Life and Work in Liverpool 8 of the Revd. Muriel Olympia Paulden MA (1892-1975) By D.Watson ISBN 1 899499 00 8, Pp76 1994 The Minister Press, The Old Church House, 5 Mill Lane, Wimborne, Dorset BH21 1JQ £3.99**

A personal tribute to a minister who was a great influence on his own life, and on many others, Derek Watson's short biography (an expanded version of the article which appeared in this magazine's last issue) is much more. It tells the story of "a teacher, an evangelist and a friend" who became "the first woman to have ministerial charge of a church in Lancashire".

Growing up in Yorkshire, Muriel Paulden was educated at a small public school in Hunstanton, where a nonconformist streak in her drew her to the services at the local Union Church which at that time was guided very much by the Baptist-Congregationalist principle of churchmanship. Here she was challenged by the call to Christian mission, and offered herself for missionary service, going to Carey Hall to begin two years of missionary training in September 1915. Derek Watson takes great care to explore the influences on the young Muriel Paulden in this early period of her life. It is a story which takes many unexpected twists and turns.

Personal circumstances made it impossible for Muriel Paulden to engage in mission overseas. As one reads her story one cannot help but feel that there is nothing new under the sun. Immediately after the first world war the Lancashire Congregational Union decided to re-open premises belonging to Berkley Street Congregational Church which had closed due to lack of support. It was not just the re-opening of a church however. Muriel Paulden accepted the invitation to be involved in developing an inter-denominational Christian Training Centre "for Sunday School teachers, youth leaders and others". Dr Watson describes in detail the curriculum she put together. How many Sunday School teachers nowadays would be prepared to undertake a course planned in three terms of eleven weeks of intensive night school study? We often bemoan the decline in the effectiveness of church work among children. However large Sunday Schools were the product of remarkable dedication on the part of teachers and leaders who devoted large amounts of time to the work and undertook extensive training.

Muriel Paulden's remarkable pastoral ministry drew people into the active life of the church and Derek Watson details her work among women and her encouraging of young preachers. She introduced new music and enriched the singing of her church by means of the Tonic Sol Fah system (if you have ever been baffled by the cryptic Tonic Sol Fah notation, Dr Watson gives a simple illustrated explanation!).

Derek Watson has succeeded at getting to the heart of the ministry of one who greatly influenced him. As an Anglican invited to write the foreword says, "Nobody who knew Muriel Paulden could ever have any doubts on the issue of the ordination of women priests".

Richard Cleaves

**'The Necessity of God' : The Message and Ministry of Leslie D. Weatherhead By J.Travell ISSN 0963 181X, Pp 32 1994 The Congregational Lecture, Congregational Memorial Hall Trust, Carone House, 14 Farringdon Street, London, EC4A 4DX £2.00**

Weatherhead was pre-eminently a popular preacher. He "continued to draw crowds whenever he preached, even long after he had retired", says Travell, and possessed "a rare ability to hold the attention of vast crowds and make each person feel that he was talking to them alone". Weatherhead thus contributed significantly to the re-building of London church life and churchgoing habits after the war.

His distinctive use of psychology, both pastorally and as a major constituent of his sermons, was not universally welcomed. It was, in fact, the refusal on these grounds of the Methodist Church to permit his becoming minister of Wesley's Chapel, which put him in a position to consider other denominations and so to accept the City Temple pastorate in 1936.

Were the Methodists right to be wary? If they were worried about Weatherhead's ability to draw crowds and interest them in Christ, they were entirely wrong. But as one reads Travell's account, one sees how limited was Weatherhead's Gospel. "The grace of God", he said in his thanksgiving sermon for the end of the war in 1945, "can achieve what wants achieving, but only if man co-operates with it, and dedicates himself to its high ends..." Most Methodists, whom we tend to criticize for their low view of the scope of free grace, would surely not go so far as to approve that sentence? And that a Methodist should escape to a Congregational pulpit to utter it would make some of our forefathers turn in their graves! Indeed, it epitomizes the unfortunate thinking of many present-day members of both denominations, who believe that a Christian is one who decides in his own wisdom what good things to do and then hopes for grace to achieve them. How unfortunate that so influential a preacher drifted so far!

Travell comments briefly upon Weatherhead's denominational position. He continued to report to Methodist Conference, which annually re-affirmed his appointment to City Temple. He described the Church as "not a Congregational church in the ordinary sense of the term"; a description which applied even more accurately when Weatherhead persuaded the church to adopt the Wesleyan system whereby the minister appointed the members of the church council, who were then approved by the annual church meeting. Travell comments "He did not seem really to appreciate the fact that it was the independent Congregational character of the Church which made it possible for him to become its minister, and for it to be above denomination in the way he felt it was".

Weatherhead's demonstration that pastoral work is helped, not hindered, by attention to the tenets of psychology, has proved most valuable. Sometimes his facile approach to knotty problems disappointed hearers, as for instance on university mission. His belief that he could prove immortality by referring to the character of God may have comforted hearers and readers in the 1920s, when so many mourned wartime losses; but it brought him an accusation of heresy (he was acquitted by the Methodist Conference) and exemplifies his easy-going approach.

So what was his theology? Being a Christian, Weatherhead says, means "acceptance of the gift of the friendship of Jesus", an excellent first step for some people! He was a pacifist until 1939, and worked hard then, and again after the war, to establish friendships between Christians across borders. Similarly he deplored divisions of class, colour, and so on. Travell closes his pamphlet with a quotation from Weatherhead's last broadcast sermon in 1975; "the world works only one way, and that is God's way". Travell comments;

"If, as his critics claimed, his theology was simplistic, and his social and political ideas seem somewhat idealistic and naive, this continues to be a message which those who believe in Christian truth still need to preach, and which the world still needs to hear".

J. W. Ashley Smith

**Gales of Change: Responding to a Shifting Missionary Context: The Story of the London Missionary Society 1945-1977 Edited by B.Thorogood, Pp viii + 345 Council for World Mission, 1994. £11.90**

Those who know Richard Lovett's two volume history of the LMS to 1895 and Norman Goodall's continuation of the story to 1945 may be disappointed with this book. This is not a unified history. Between an introduction and a conclusion by the editor are nine chapters, each with their own expert author, dealing with the various regions served by LMS and its successor agencies, and a tenth by Robert Latham outlining the process which led to the formation of the Council for World Mission. Important additions for historians are the three full appendices, listing the missionaries, associates and staff of LMS etc. 1945-1977/8.

The chapters (on southern Africa, Zambia, Madagascar, India and south India, north India, China and south east Asia, Papua New Guinea, Pacific Islands. Guyana and Jamaica) are of different size, style and quality. Thus the book suffers from a lack of cohesion. Nevertheless this is a welcome and a well-produced publication, even if the title is derived from the speech in Cape Town by Harold Macmillan in 1960 which acknowledged the inevitability of colonial independence. One might feel a volume detailing Christian missionary enterprise might warrant a title derived from the church rather than the world. It is unfortunate that the first sentence of the preface contains the mistake that the LMS was founded in 1975 (1795!!) and that the editor feels he must lecture his

readers uncritically on the merits of ecumenism. While denouncing narrow denominationalism which believes "truth and error can be readily judged" (p.11) he nevertheless feels he can pronounce that "Tradition has acted as a brake"(p.12). Tradition should properly provide an assortment of riches. We may wish to choose some part of these riches with which to build and thus to dispense with, or store away the other riches but to decry tradition (and the need to control the speed of acceleration) is a dangerous course.

Alan Argent

**Telling Another Generation. Edited by M Plant and A.Tovey. ISBN 0 9522675 0 0 Pp 112, 1994, An Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches, 10 Willow Grove, Beverley. North Humberside, HU17 8DS, £4.95.**

This book is intended to mark both the twenty-fifth anniversary of An Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches (1967-92) and the work of Stan Guest who retired from his post as its secretary in 1989. After a biographical tribute to Guest by his friend, Brian Dupont, nine essays are grouped under the broad headings - The doctrinal basis of Congregationalism, Preaching, Evangelism, and Pastoral matters. These concerns are primarily practical, of interest to ministers and church members alike. History is not a major concern of the contributors although, in a brief essay Roger Nicole discusses "The Lordship of Christ as the taproot of Congregationalism", while Derek Swann touches on the "great preaching tradition" of Congregationalism (p 58) and also recommends the little read The Soul of Prayer by P.T.Forsyth (p107) to his readers. However Alan Tovey, in his sensitive reflections on death and bereavement, consistently considers his subject historically, with quotations from Baxter, Bunyan, Gordon Rupp and the widow of the Anglican scholar, Geoffrey Lampe.

This is essentially a helpful book for Christians who think about the application of their faith. In that respect it reflects the interests of Stan Guest as preacher and pastor, if not as administrator.

Alan Argent

**Islington Chapels An Architectural Guide to Nonconformist and Roman Catholic Places of Worship in the London Borough of Islington By P.Temple ISBN 1 873592 06 X Pp xi + 156 Survey of London, Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England 1992 £9.95**

**Peckham and Nunhead Churches By J.D.Beasley ISBN 1 874401 04 7 Pp 108 South Riding Press 6 Everthorpe Road, London SE15 4DA , 1995 £5.95 post free from publisher, £6.95 in shops.**

Of these two works Islington Chapels is much grander, as might be expected from a Royal Commission. It covers the Nonconformist and Roman Catholic churches and chapels in the Borough of Islington, stretching from Clerkenwell and Finsbury in the south to Archway and Crouch Hill in the north, listing the places of worship considered by postal districts. An architectural description is given of each building, with occasional interesting historical details, such as the story of how the first New Court Chapel in Carey Street was attacked by mobs and its contents burned in Lincoln's Inn Fields. Sadly there are two former New Court Congregational churches listed and no current one. The splendid photographs, some from prints, taken by Derek Kendall, show the exteriors of most chapels and the interiors of many including Union Chapel, Highbury Quadrant and Islington Chapel. Notes on demolished chapels, a list of architects and descriptions of the various denominations round off this beautifully produced and comprehensive volume.

John Beasley in his preface states that every church should produce at least a booklet on its history. He lists many among his references. Denomination by denomination we are given a short note on the existing and former places of Christian worship in Peckham and Nunhead (the boundaries of which are not defined). Most churches and chapels discussed are also illustrated. We are told of notable ministers and celebrities associated with the churches. An extract from the Daily News church census of 1902/3 is included in an Appendix which also lists church schools in 1871, congregations using other church buildings for worship in 1994, and convents. The author has written a number of books on both Christian work and Peckham. This is a helpful guide to the churches of this part of south London.

P.I.Young



## OUR CONTEMPORARIES

The Baptist Quarterly (XXXVI Jan 1995, No 1)

V.Popov "Vasilii Gurevich Pavlov and the Baptist World Alliance", D.S.Russell "Church/state relations in the Soviet Union: recollections and reflections on the Cold War years", C.Binfield "The Coats family and Paisley Baptists", K.G.C.Newport "Benjamin Keach, William of Orange and the Book of Revelation: a study in English prophetic exegesis".

The Strict Baptist Historical Society Bulletin (No.21 1994)

R.Sheehan "C.H.Spurgeon : The prince of preachers", R.Hayden "A sprightly tune! eighteenth century Baptist hymnody and evangelical experience",

Transactions of The Unitarian Historical Society(XXI, No 1, April 1995)

R.Watts "To civil and religious liberty the world over", A.Kolaczowski "Jerom Murch and Unitarianism in Bath 1833-45), A.Hill "William Adam Unitarian missionary", A.Long "The Dissenters' Chapels Act after 150 years: part 2".

The Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society(Vol 5, No 4 May 1994)

N.I.Matar "Peter Sterry and the Comenian Circle: education and eschatology in Restoration nonconformity", J.H.Taylor "The riddle of Caerludd: Matthias Maurice's Social Religion Exemplified", E,Welch "Lady Glenorchy's Legacy", E.J.Neale "A type of Congregational ministry: R.F.Horton (1855-1934) and Lyndhurst Road".

(Vol 5, No 5 November 1994)

P.Collinson "Separation in and out of the Church: the consistency of Barrow and Greenwood", G.F.Nuttall "Philip Henry and London", K.B.E.Roxburgh "The Scottish evangelical awakening of 1742 and the religious societies", M.Lewis "The Newport Pagnell Academy 1782-1850", D.Cornick "'Our school of the prophets'. The Presbyterian Church in England and its college 1844-1876", E.P.M.Wollaston "The first moderators: 1919".

**Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society (Vol 49, Part 5, May 1994)**

C.H.Goodwin "James Caughey's challenge to Wesleyan concepts of ministry and church growth: 1841-1846", B.W.Coe "Who gyves me this wyfe?", P.B.Nockles "Methodist archives and research centre: a progress report", J.A.Dale "Books in the Methodist archives owned by Charles Wesley Junior".

(Vol 49, Part 6, October 1994)

D.N.Hempton "Motives, methods and margins in Methodism's age of expansion", G.E.Milburn "A Methodist artist re-discovered".

(Vol 50, Part 1, February 1995)

I.M.Randell "Southport and Swanwick: contrasting movements of Methodist spirituality in inter-war England", H.D.Rack "Methodist classics reconsidered: 1: Simon's Life of Wesley", J.H.Thompson "R.F.Wearmouth, army chaplain", "Obituary: Rupert Davies".

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